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Unexpected Landscapes: Literature and Revolution in Modern Ireland and Spain – 1913-39

Doctoral Thesis 2004

James Heaney

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Just as in our personal lives our worst fears and best hopes will never adequately prepare us for what actually happens, because the moment even a foreseen event takes place, everything changes, and we can never be prepared for the inexhaustible literalness of this "everything," so each event in human history reveals an unexpected landscape of human deeds, sufferings and new possibilities which together transcend the sum total of all willed intentions and the significance of all origins. It is the task of the historian to detect this unexpected *new* with all its implications in any given period and to bring out the full power of its significance.

Hannah Arendt, 'Understanding and Politics'

Introduction

In this study I examine the inter-relationship between literature and revolution in modern Ireland and Spain. I concentrate on the period 1913 to 1923 in regard to Irish affairs, a decade that saw the re-emergence of the militant politics in 1913, the 1916 Easter Rising, the Anglo-Irish War and subsequent internecine conflict, as well as the European War of 1914-18. My analysis of revolutionary literature in Spain focuses on the years 1930 to 1939, which encompasses the collapse of the Primo de Rivera military dictatorship and concomitant rise of the Second Spanish Republic in 1930, the workers' rising in the Asturias in October 1934, and the Civil War of 1936-39. In examining the literature of these revolutions I deal primarily with the work of four writers: Patrick Pearse and Æ (George Russell) in relation to the Irish revolution, and Manuel Azaña and Rafael Alberti in regard to events in Spain during the period under discussion. These writers were all leading figures in the cultural and political developments of their day and, as such, exerted an important influence on the development of their countries' respective revolutions. As well as presenting a detailed analysis of their writings, therefore, my analysis also considers how their work impinged upon the broader literary and social events of their time.

That the Irish and Spanish revolutions ended in 1923 and 1939 respectively is a matter of little controversy. The question of when these revolutions actually began is not so clear-cut, however, and so the rationale behind the dates 1913 and 1930 requires some explanation. There were three private armies formed in Ireland in 1913: the Ulster Volunteer Force was established in January of that year to underline unionists' opposition to the British government's plans to grant Home Rule to Ireland; the Irish Volunteers were created the following November to underline nationalists' determination that those plans would be acted upon; and the Irish Citizen Army (also formed in November) was set up to protect the lives of the workers involved in the General Strike that took place in Dublin that year. The General Strike marked the first outbreak of popular revolutionary activity in Ireland since the United Irishmen's Rebellion of 1798. As Eoin Neeson has observed, it also played a crucial part 'in helping to mould the climate of public opinion that made not only the Rising of 1916 a possibility, [but] helped to ensure the subsequent popular support for the movement of self-

determination and the War of Independence.'[1] Other groups agitating for change at this time included Irish Farmer associations, and the Irish women's suffragette movement.

Historians often refer to the Second Spanish Republic as a reformist regime that finally collapsed under the pressures exerted by revolutionary (and reactionary) movements such as the Spanish anarchists, fascists, and radical socialists. These latter groupings did advocate more extreme measures than those envisaged by the Second Republic, but one cannot conclude from this that the new regime was not, therefore, a radical one. My analysis contends that there are two senses in which its accession to power in 1930 marked the beginning of a revolution in Spain. Firstly, the establishment of a parliamentary democracy represented a fundamental break with previous forms of government;[2] and secondly, the constitutional and legislative changes that it *attempted* to introduce between 1931 and 1936 clearly illustrate that it was endeavouring to transform rather than reform the social and economic structures of Spanish society. It was, indeed, the radical nature of the regime's social and political programme that precipitated the civil war of 1936-39: following the victory of the Popular Front coalition in the national elections of 1936, right-wing forces perceived they would no longer be able to control the Republic by legal means (as they had with limited success during the previous five years of government) and so set about plotting the *coup d'état* that took place on the 17th July 1936.

Ambiguity between reformism and revolution highlights the need to clarify the meaning of the central concepts examined in this study. 'Revolution', as Crane Brinton points out in his influential study of this subject, 'is one of the looser words.'[3] Even if its range of significations is confined to the realm of politics, and political upheavals, one finds little consensus among critics and historians as to what constitutes a revolution. Does this kind of conflict necessarily involve violence? Does it have to be successful? How should success be defined? Should the analysis of revolutions be restricted to individuals and groups actively involved in these struggles or should it also include the societies and general populations in which they occur?[4] Attempts to define this concept also raise difficult meta-theoretical issues. To what extent should ideational objectives be taken into account? Hannah Arendt claimed that revolutions

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[1] Eoin Neeson, *Birth of a Republic* (Dublin: Prestige, 1998), p. 95.
[2] Spain had been ruled by the Primo de Rivera military dictatorship since 1923.
[3] Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), p. 3.
[4] These questions are posed by Michael S. Kimmel in his study *Revolution – A Sociological Interpretation* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1990), pp. 1-13.

aim at 'liberation from oppression'[5], but even the most repressive movements have legitimated their actions in such language – by what moral or political criteria should we distinguish liberators from oppressors? And is the liberation/oppression binary ever that clear cut in any case? What about the unsettling fact that even the most justified liberation movements seem to implicate their followers in acts of terrorism and oppression?

Michael S. Kimmel points out that our attitudes towards revolutions are, in large part, determined by our understanding of the nature of human society in general. If we believe that human communities *normally* function in a way that creates 'a harmonious blend of interests and ideals' between individuals and groups we will tend to view revolutions as occasions 'when things fall apart and the world seems to go mad'; but if we hold that social relations are inherently exploitative then they may appear in a more positive light: as times when *the illusion* of harmony is uncovered, 'the edifice of society is toppled and its structural foundations exposed.'[6] Kimmel proposes his own 'fairly fluid and simple definition':

> Revolutions are attempts by subordinate groups to transform the social foundations of political power. Such efforts require confrontation with power-holders, and must stand a reasonable chance of success.[7]

This formula raises its own problems, however: terms such as 'confrontation' and 'reasonable chances' are as loose as revolution. Should these chances of success be determined retrospectively or from the perspective of the insurgents themselves – two viewpoints that may provide radically different answers? And how does this definition cope with movements that view defeat in a manner that challenges the neat distinctions historians like to draw between winners and losers, failure and success? 'We seem to have lost', Patrick Pearse remarked at his court-martial in Dublin in 1916. 'We have not lost. To refuse to fight would have been to lose; to fight is to win.'[8] Antonio Machado voiced a similarly paradoxical outlook in Spain, in 1938, observing that 'for the strategists, the politicians and the historians, it will all be clear: we have lost the War', but 'speaking in human terms,' he continued, 'I am not so sure. Perhaps we have won.'[9]

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[5] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), p. 28.
[6] Kimmel., pp. 2-3.
[7] Ibid., p. 6.
[8] Quoted in Ruth Dudley Edwards, *Patrick Pearse: The Triumph of Failure* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1977), p. 318
[9] James Whiston, *Antonio Machado's Writings and the Spanish Civil War* (Liverpool: Liverpool U.P., 1996), p. 238. [Para los estrategas, los políticos y los historiadores, todo estará claro: hemos perdido la Guerra. Humanamente hablando, yo no estoy tan seguro. Quizá la hemos ganado.] (The translations in this Introduction are my own unless stated otherwise.)

In an attempt to resolve at least some of the above problems I shall follow Charles Tilly in distinguishing between 'revolutionary situations and revolutionary outcomes.'[10] The advantage of the former category is that – rather than over-prioritising variable factors such as violence, success, and ideational objectives – it focuses on the actual experience of revolution itself. It is this experience, as it is communicated in contemporary literature, with which the present study is concerned.

The meanings of the other major terms in the title of this study, literature, Ireland and Spain also require some clarification. As well as the genres of poetry, fiction and drama, literature in this work refers to autobiographical writings, journalism, political pamphlets, speeches, and epistolary texts. Ireland and Spain were, of course, undergoing a process of re-definition in these periods, the status of the provinces of Ulster, Catalonia and the Basque country proving especially contentious issues. This study examines how the four authors under consideration here conceptualised those socio-political entities, and how their writings and actions contributed to the re-definition of the two countries. Unless otherwise stated, however, the terms Ireland and Spain will refer to those territories as they were being administered at the beginning of the respective revolutions.

There are, of course, many important historical and political differences between the two revolutionary situations under consideration in this study. The roots of the Irish conflict can be traced as far back as the late-sixteenth century, to the policy of conquest and colonisation that an expanding British Empire adopted towards the country in this period. In the minds of many Irish revolutionaries, their cause took the form of a nationalist-led war of liberation that sought to extricate the country from the yoke of British imperialism. Spain, in contrast, had itself been a great imperial force during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and although it lost the last of its colonies in 1898 that legacy still exerted a powerful influence in the 1930-39 period of its history. Both conflicts gave rise to a broad range of – often competing – political and social movements; but the breadth and intensity of the divisions that emerged in Spain surpassed those of the Irish situation. Between 1930 and 1939 Spain became a veritable cauldron of antagonistic political doctrines, with anarchist, fascist, monarchist, nationalist (Basque, Catalan and Spanish), republican and socialist forces all contesting for power in this

[10] Quoted in Kimmel, p. 12.

period. Both revolutions gave rise to military conflicts, but whereas warfare in Ireland tended to take the form of low-key guerrilla campaigns with little 'outside' involvement of foreign governments, the Spanish Civil War was a massive military enterprise that implicated armies from Germany, Italy and Russia, as well as thousands of volunteers from all over the globe.[11] Less than 10,000 people died in Ireland between 1913 and 1923 as a result of the hostilities; at least 300,000 died in the corresponding period in Spain.[12]

There are also parallels, however. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries both countries were on the periphery of cultural and political life in Europe; and in socio-economic terms, they were both a peculiar mix of traditional-rural and modern-industrial elements: thriving shipping and manufacturing centres such as Belfast, Bilbao and Barcelona, existing alongside huge tracts of thinly populated farm-land that barely offered a subsistence-level existence to the tenantry that worked it. The political upheavals that occurred in Ireland and Spain between 1913 and 1939 reveal further similarities: both of these conflicts took the form of 'national revolutions'; they were both instigated by a predominantly middle-class elite, and occurred at a time when the established regimes were attempting to introduce reforms to their systems of government; they were both in 'the democratic tradition';[13] they gave rise to bitter internecine conflicts; they both failed (and their proponents were always conscious of the likelihood of failure, even when their advocacy of revolution was at its most enthusiastic); furthermore, if the revolutionary situation in Ireland is taken to include the effects that the Great War of 1914-18 had on Irish society – as this study argues it should – then the difference between the numbers of deaths incurred during both conflicts becomes gruesomely comparable.[14]

Religion is another important area of comparison between the Irish and Spanish revolutions. Historically, Catholicism had an immense influence on the culture and politics of both nations. Political and religious freedom had been closely identified in Ireland since the time of the

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[11] The revolutionary movement in Ireland did receive huge financial assistance from sympathetic Irish-Americans as well as a limited amount of military support from Germany.

[12] Paul Preston, 'The Legacy of the Spanish Civil War' in Stephen M. Hart (ed.) *'¡NO PÁSARAN!' Art, Literature and the Spanish Civil War* (London: Tamesis Books, 1988), p. 17.

[13] This is another loose concept, one which Brinton uses to characterize the general tendency of political struggles as diverse as the English Revolution of the 1640s, the American Revolution of 1776, the French Revolution of 1789, and Russian Revolution of 1917. Brinton, p. 262.

[14] There is no agreement among historians as to the exact number of Irishmen who in died in the First World War, most studies estimate the number at between 35,000 and 50,000 soldiers. For a discussion of this issue see Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), pp. 33-35.

Tudor Conquests, which had ended with the defeat of the combined Irish and Spanish forces at Kinsale in 1601. It also played a central role in the development of a national identity in Spain. Gerald Brenan refers to the Catholic Church as 'the cement' that held together the various kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[15] Although historians and literary critics have often noted the key part that religion – and particularly Catholicism – played in these revolutions, the complexity of that inter-relationship has not been fully explored. Whether it pertains to Protestantism, Catholicism, or more esoteric forms of belief, the tendency among Irish critics has been to treat the impact of religion between 1913 and 1923 as evidence of sectarianism and/or irrationality. The historiography and literary criticism of the Spanish Revolution has too rarely looked beyond the – useful but limited – Republican-secular-modernizing / Francoist-Catholic-traditionalist binary opposition. Where critics have drawn attention to the manner in which republicans employed Christian ideas and imagery in their work, they have usually treated it as a sign that the writer's atheism was breaking down under the pressures of war to reveal a dormant religious sensibility, or as an exception to the anti-religious tone of the majority of republican texts. Neither Irish nor Spanish critics have taken sufficient account of the underlying similarities between Christian doctrine and revolutionary politics.[16] It is one of the aims of this study to explore how the literatures of the Irish and Spanish conflicts highlighted those connections.

It is in terms of the impact of literature that the similarities between the revolutionary situations in Ireland and Spain are most striking. These conflicts were preceded by a remarkable renaissance in the artistic and cultural life of their nations. The beginnings of the Irish Revival can be traced to the1890s. As Declan Kiberd comments, with the collapse of the political movement for Home Rule in 1886, and Parnell's death in 1891, 'a younger generation of intellectuals turned from politics back to culture'.[17] The Irish renaissance affected all aspects of life, but it was especially prolific in regard to the literary arts. The work produced by Oscar Wilde, William Butler Yeats, John Millington Synge and James Joyce in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is among the finest writing ever produced in English.[18]

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[15] Brenan, *The Spanish Labyrinth - An Account of the Social and Political Background of the Spanish Civil* War, 2nd edn (Cambridge (Canto edition): Cambridge U.P., 1990), p. 39.

[16] Terry Eagleton has recently drawn attention to this issue in his study, *Sweet Violence – the Idea of the Tragic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003). See particularly, chapter two 'The value of Agony' pp. 23-41.

[17] Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland – the Literature of the Modern Nation* (London: Vintage, 1996), p. 25.

[18] Other notable writers in the early years of the renaissance include Æ, Augusta Gregory, Douglas Hyde, George Moore, and Standish James O'Grady.

Of the above writers only Yeats can be said to have produced overtly revolutionary literature; but the writings of the Revival as a whole were political in the sense that (with the exception of Wilde's texts) they focussed on 'the matter of Ireland' – its history and culture, languages, and the many anomalies and contradictions of Irish life. Furthermore, some of this literature had a direct effect on the socio-cultural and political developments of the time. The manner in which Douglas Hyde's lecture, 'The necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland', helped to inspire the formation of the Gaelic League in 1893; the way that plays by Yeats and Synge fired nationalist sentiment in the opening decade of the century; and that Æ's journalism helped to propagate the work of the Irish Agricultural and Co-operative Society are illustrative of this influence.

Revivalist literature also helped to inspire a younger generation of writers who *did* become directly involved in military and political affairs in the 1913-23 period, and whose writings reflect that involvement. As Kiberd remarks 'what makes the Irish Renaissance such a fascinating case is the knowledge that the cultural revival preceded and in many ways enabled the political revolution that followed.'[19] The poets Thomas MacDonagh, Patrick Pearse, Joseph Plunkett were central figures in the 1916 Rising; and many of Ireland's finest writers of the twentieth century such as Frank O'Connor, Peadar O'Donnell, Seán O'Faoláin, Liam O'Flaherty, Ernie O'Malley, and Francis Stuart were all involved in military action between 1913-23.[20]

The Spanish Revolution of 1930-39 was also 'preceded and [...] enabled' by a renaissance very similar to that in Ireland. The loss of its final colonies in1898 precipitated a crisis in Spain that called into question the very roots of its national identity and its future political direction.[21] These events coincided with the greatest resurgence in the cultural life of the nation since the 'Golden Age' of the seventeenth century. As in Ireland, the Spanish

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[19] Kiberd, p. 4.

[20] Other such writers include Erskine Childers, Joseph Campbell, Béaslaí Piaras, Desmond FitzGerald, Francis Ledwidge, Michael Farrell, Terence MacSwiney, Seán O'Casey, Thomas Ashe, Dorothy Maccardle, Susan Mitchell, Seán Kavanagh (Seán O'Chóta).

[21] Sebastian Balfour remarks that this event 'transformed the political climate in Spain. Criticism of the state of the nation previously levelled by a small minority of would-be reformers became a national polemic. From all sides, politicians, businessmen, writers, academics, officers, and a host of pundits and armchair philosophers joined in debate about the causes of Spain's decline and the remedies necessary to restore the nation's fortunes.' Sebastian Balfour, 'The Loss of Empire, Regenerationism, and the Forging of a Myth of National Identity' in Helen Graham and Jo Labanyi (eds.), *Spanish Cultural Studies – An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995), p. 25.

renaissance impacted on all the arts and sciences, but was especially productive in the field of literature. In the first two decades of the twentieth century the country produced a host of world-renown writers such as the poets Antonio Machado and Juan Ramón Jiménez, the novelists Pío Baroja and Ramón Pérez de Ayala, the playwright Miguel Valle-Inclán, as well as essayists and philosophic writers of the calibre of José Ortega y Gasset and Miguel de Unamuno.[22]

Although they did not form themselves into a specific political grouping until shortly before the emergence of the Second Republic, these writers (many of whom formed the 'generation of 98') were deeply engaged with the on-going national polemic concerning 'the Spanish problem'. Furthermore, in the absence of any political opposition, their literature became one of the primary sources of resistance to the Primo de Rivera military dictatorship of 1923 to 1930.[23] Following the establishment of the Second Republic in 1931, a number of these writers took up political posts in the new regime. Manuel Azaña is the most notable example in this regard, but Ramón Pérez Ayala, Ortega y Gasset and Unamuno also became deputies in the new government; and aside from those who entered the Cortes, dozens more became involved in the cultural and educational initiatives of the revolution. Antonio Machado was one of many poets and writers who promoted the work of the Pedagogical Missions [*Misiones Pedagógicas*], a body set up by the new regime 'to promote the extension of culture – literature, drama, painting, music and the cinema – to the remote and forgotten villages and towns of Spain.'[24]

Coincident with the beginning of the revolutionary period itself, a younger generation of artists and writers emerged whose work addressed political issues in a far more direct and explicit manner than their predecessors. Rafael Alberti was among the first to develop a committed poetry around the turn of the decade. In 1932 Federico García Lorca began touring Spain with

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[22] Other notable figures include the playwright Jacinto Benavente, Américo Castro, Joaquín Costa, Benavente, Ramiro de Maeztu, Gregorio de Marañón, Fernando de los Ríos and Manuel Azaña. Artists such as Picasso, Gris, and Miró also began to produce work in this period.

[23] Raymond Carr remarks that 'the Republic of 1931 seemed born out of [the] protest' of such writers. Raymond Carr, *Spain 1808 – 1875* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 532. Aldo Garosci comments that this generation of authors 'contributed in no small way, firstly, to the discrediting of the dictatorial regime and later to the aversion against the monarchy.' [Contribuyó en no pequeña medida al descrédito del régimen dictatorial en un primer momento y a la aversión contra la monarquía luego, esa actitud de los intelectuales.] Aldo Garosci, *Los intelectuales y la Guerra de España* (Madrid: Ediciones Júcar, 1981), p. 16

[24] James Whiston, *Antonio Machado's Writings*, p. 13. Whiston notes that artists and writers such as Alejandro Casona, Pedro Salinas, Arturo Serrano Plaja, María Zambrano, Rafael Dieste and Ramón Gaya were also involved in the work of the *Misiones*. Ibid., p. 14.

La Barraca theatre-company, bringing subversive plays such as Lope de Vega's *Fuenteovejuna* to the peasantry and working-class audiences. Luis Buñuel's cinematic portrayal of the lives of the peasantry in poverty-stricken province of Extremadura, *Las Hurdes* [*Land Without Bread*], first appeared in Spanish cinemas in 1933. This trend towards committed literature was greatly accelerated by the military rebellion of July 1936. As Johannes Lechner remarks, 'during the war itself, practically all the writers of the generation published in republican periodicals and participated in revolutionary activities.[25]

The writers whose work I examine in this study epitomize the manner in which literature and revolutionary politics inter-related with each other during the two revolutions. In chapter one I consider the writings Patrick Pearse (1879-1916). As editor of the Gaelic League journal *An Claidheamh Soluis* [*The Sword of Light*] from 1903 to 1908, Pearse's primary task was to help promote the Gaelic language and literature; but language and politics were inextricably linked in early twentieth century Ireland, and Pearse used his editorship to voice his views on many of the controversial issues of the day. He was especially vocal in relation to education-related matters, as he believed it was through the school-system that the British establishment had managed to pacify an overwhelming majority of the nationalist population. Pearse's educational texts have been largely neglected by critics but are among his most impressive writings. Of particular interest to this study is the manner in which he treats the goal of education as being to nurture pupils' individual personalities while at the same time linking this pedagogical objective to a specifically nationalist agenda.

The conflation of literary, religious and revolutionary ideas is a defining feature of Pearse's creative and political writings. There is little doubt that he viewed the cause of Irish nationalism as a holy one; however (unlike the Francoist campaign during the Spanish Civil War, for example), he did not treat the revolution as a religious crusade whose purpose was to rid Ireland of a heathen English enemy. Indeed, the lack of anti-English sentiment is a notable feature of his literature. Instead, the enemy in Pearse's writings is almost always *within*. There is a paradox at the heart of these texts which is sourced in Christian teaching: on the one hand, the character of the revolutionary in his plays, poetry and short stories is always a self-divided figure, deeply aware of his inadequacies and sinfulness; but at the same time the plot-lines are

[25] [Durante la contienda misma, casi todos los poetas de la generación publicaban en revistas republicanas y desplegaban actividades revolucionarias] Johannes Lechner, *El compromiso en la poesía española del siglo XX parte primera* (Leiden: Univ. Pers Leiden, 1968), p. 65.

driven by an optimistic belief in the possibility of redemption and transformation of the self. This ambivalence is also a feature of his political and educational writings. These texts are full of hopefulness *and* despair. In articles and pamphlets such as *The Murder Machine*, *The Spiritual Nation*, and *The Sovereign People* Pearse simultaneously attacks the Irish as an irredeemably corrupt and degenerate people and at the same time urges them to overcome that degeneracy and fulfil their intellectual and spiritual potential, a task which he maintained could not be accomplished while the country lay under British rule.

In chapter two I turn to an analysis of the literature of the Spanish Revolution, focusing particularly on the work of Rafael Alberti (1902-1999). Alberti was one of the most important young poets in Spain during the 1930s. He was also one of the first to write politically committed poetry. This trend in his work coincided with the emergence of the Republic in 1930, when he was inspired by the student protests against the Primo de Rivera dictatorship of the previous year. Alberti was initially supportive of the Republican regime. His highly romanticized dramatic account of the life of its first political martyr, *Fermín Galan*, opened in Madrid on the 1st June 1931. He spent much of the next few years abroad, studying developments in European theatre. His trips to Germany and Russia, in particular, had a catalytic effect both on his political thinking and his understanding of the relationship between politics and his art. He returned to Spain as a communist in 1932, and from this time until the outbreak of the war in 1936, he used his poetry, drama, and prose writings to express his frustration with the Republic's failure to alleviate the sufferings of the peasantry, and to help incite a workers' revolution in Spain.

Like many communists, however, Alberti lent his support to the Republic during the civil war. He was actively involved in the defence of Madrid in the 1936-7 period, serving in the Aviation section of the army. As secretary of the government-sponsored *Alliance of Anti-Fascist Intellectuals* during the war, and editor of the journal *The Blue Overalls* [*El mono azul*] he was also one of the central figures in the Republic's attempts to use art and literature to mobilize support for the regime among the indigenous population and the international intelligentsia. Aside from these activities, Alberti continued to write poetry and drama during the conflict, and helped to devise a form of Spanish *agitprop* theatre, which he called 'Theatre of Urgency' [teatro de urgencia]. His 1938 poetic collection, *Capital of Glory* [*Capital de la gloria*] contains some of the finest writing of the conflict, and his version of Cervantes's

Golden Age drama, *Numancia*, was one of the most popular of the Republic's war-time productions.

In chapter three I present a comparative analysis of the writings of Æ (George W. Russell) and Manuel Azaña. Æ (1867-1935) was one of the leading figures of the Irish Literary Revival. Like much of the literature produced by that movement his work abounds with references to heroic and tragic figures from Ireland's mythological past; but the vast amount of literature he produced during the Irish revolution traverses both fictional and non-fictional genres, and frequently engages with the most pressing social and political issues of the period. As editor of the popular weekly journal, the *Irish Homestead*, from 1905 to 1923, he also exerted an important influence on the careers of many of Ireland's younger writers. James Joyce, Padraic Colum, James Stephens, Seumus O'Sullivan, Austin Clarke and Frank O'Connor all had work published in this newspaper while it was under his editorship. Æ was involved in many of the most important social and political developments of his day, such as the 1913 General Strike and the Home Rule Convention of 1917; and throughout the revolutionary period he was the main organizer of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society (I.A.O.S.), a body which sought to radically transform the basis of Irish farming through the establishment of co-operative communities.

Twice Prime Minister of the Second Spanish Republic between 1930 and 1936, and its President during the 1936-9 Civil War, Manuel Azaña (1880-1940) was arguably the single most important politician of the republican era in Spain.[26] He was also a prolific writer. James Whiston notes that 'the sum of all his diaries alone amounts to a million words'.[27] Indeed, such was his interest in literature that some critics have suggested his real vocation was an artistic rather than a political one. 'In his inmost heart Azaña was an artist, that is, a man of aesthetic sensibilities – no more and no less', claims Ramos Oliveira.[28] Like Æ, Azaña's literary output extended over a broad range of genres. As well as his diaries, he wrote literary

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[26] According to Antonio Ramos Oliveira Azaña 'was the Republic and the Republic was Azaña.' In Antonio Ramos Oliveira, *Politics, Economics and Men of Modern Spain – 1808-1946* trans, Teener Hall (London: Victor Gollancz, 1946), p. 301.

[27] James Whiston, "'La virtud de la palabra": Manuel Azaña's Diaries of the Spanish Civil War', *Neophilogus,* No. 82, (1998), p. 414.

[28] Ramos Oliveira, p. 304. Azaña was in hiding in the months leading up to the Republican takeover of 1931, trying to complete his novel *Fresdeval*. The story is told that when news of the Proclamation of April 14th was brought to him, his reaction was to lament the fact that he only needed a few more weeks to finish this work. The novel remained uncompleted.

criticism, political essays, translations, drama, novels, and autobiography. In the early years of the twentieth century he also edited two of Spain's most prestigious literary-politico journals, *La Pluma* and *España*.

My analysis of these authors focuses on a comparative reading of two of their most important works: *The Interpreters* (1922) by Æ, and *Vigil in Benicarlo* [*La velada en Benicarló*](1939), by Azaña. Written during the civil wars that brought the revolutionary periods in Ireland and Spain to a close, both of these texts take the form of semi-fictional political dialogues in which a number of interlocutors express contrasting views on issues such as revolution, violence and national identity. As such, they provide two of the most noteworthy examples of how literature and politics impinged on each other during the Irish and Spanish revolutions.

There already exists a vast amount of criticism on the Irish and Spanish revolutions and the literatures they engendered. The originality of the present study consists in the fact that they have not previously been examined alongside each other. The objective of this comparative analysis is not to suggest that the two literatures are fundamentally alike, or that the Irish and Spanish revolutions were basically similar socio-political phenomena. The differences that exist in both these regards are manifold, and the importance of reading the texts in terms of the particular historical and political contexts in which they were produced is emphasized throughout. Obviously, this study has been undertaken because there are interesting parallels to be drawn between these subjects; however, such parallels are only noteworthy because there also exist fundamental differences between them. The writings I examine draws attention to the paradox that works of literature, political revolutions, and historical epochs can be fundamentally different from each other and yet – in other, equally important ways – very much alike. It is this curious fact that the present study seeks to explicate, and this can only be achieved if due consideration is given to the irreducible particularity of the subjects under discussion, as well as the similarities between them.

One of the primary advantages of this study is that it facilitates a deeper understanding of the connections between literature and revolution. That narrative plays a central role in the formation of nation-states has become a stable theme of literary and political studies since the publication of Benedict Anderson's seminal work, *Imagined Communities* (1983). In historical terms, nation states are relatively 'new' socio-political phenomenon, Anderson argues, but they legitimate themselves by means of narratives in which they 'loom out of an immemorial past

and [...] glide into a limitless future.'[29] Since the publication of Anderson's work, many critics have deconstructed this attempt by national discourses 'to produce the idea of the nation as a continuous narrative of national progress.'[30] In *Nation and Narration*, Homi K. Bhabha defines the task of the nationalist critic as being to investigate

> the nation-space in the *process* of the articulation of elements: where meanings may be partial because they are *in media res*; and history may be half-made because it is in the process of being made; and the image of cultural authority may be ambivalent because it is caught, uncertainly, in the act of 'composing' its powerful image.'[31]

Revolutionary situations present ideal opportunities to 'catch' these narratives in the process of construction. One of the fundamental differences between these and other forms of conflict is that revolutions do not simply endeavour to destroy or expel a 'foreign' enemy, but to *transform* a subject population into something other than it is. As Herbert McCabe has pointed out, a revolutionary is '*creatively* interpreting the life of his people.' This is why Brinton describes these upheavals as forms of 'internal or civil war'.[32] It is only retrospectively, however, that they acquire the coherence of a process of transformation, and only then if they have been successful. An on-going revolutionary situation is instead a dynamic and highly unpredictable experience of *change-in-progress*. It is a time when 'meanings [*are*] partial because they are *in media res*; and history [*is*] half-made because it is in the process of being made'.[33]

It is a weakness in many of the histories of the Irish and Spanish conflicts that they do not take full account of the anomalous and contradictory nature of these 'half-made' histories. Despite the empiricist approach adopted by the most historians, much of the existing work concentrates on how the various political ideologies that were being contested during these upheavals impacted (or failed to impact) on history, with insufficient consideration being given to how those complex histories may have impacted on people's ideological beliefs. David Fitzpatrick, for example, begins his study of Irish society between 1912 and 1939 with the observation that

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[29] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities – Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edn (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 11-12.
[30] Homi K. Bhabha, 'Introduction: Narrating the Nation' in Homi K. Bhabha (ed.) *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.1.
[31] Ibid., p. 3.
[32] Herbert McCabe, *Law, Love and Language* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1968), p. 144, and Brinton, p. 5, respectively.
[33] Bhabha, p. 3. Michael Kimmel remarks that not even Marx spells out the process of transition involved in the proletariat moving from *a class in itself* to *a class for itself*, so unpredictable are revolutionary situations. Kimmel, pp. 21-22.

'The partition of Ireland created two states embodying rival ideologies and representing two hostile peoples.'[34] The work itself then chronicles the development of unionist and nationalist outlooks from 1912 onwards. In his Preface to *A Concise History of the Spanish Civil War*, Paul Preston feels it necessary to warn the reader that this 'is not a book which sets out to find a perfect balance between both sides' involved in that conflict. 'There is little sympathy here for the Spanish right,' he continues, 'but I hope there is some understanding.' Like Fitzpatrick, he then negotiates what he calls 'the labyrinth' of the Spanish Civil War by charting the histories of the 'two sides' involved in that conflict.[35]

The problem with the approach adopted by these historians is not that they present biased or inadequate accounts of the political and military movements they examine. It is that the methodology they employ presumes that the conflicts are best explained through an analysis of the 'rival ideologies' that were implicated in these upheavals. The assumption here is that if we understand those ideologies, and how they fared in the periods under discussion, we will thereby also comprehend the revolutionary situations as a whole. The issue of ideology is, of course, at the heart of both the Irish and Spanish conflicts. As such, an in-depth knowledge of the relevant consciously- or unconsciously-held beliefs is essential to an understanding of these upheavals. However, revolutionary situations cannot be equated with the ideologies that are implicated in these struggles. They are, instead, occasions when those perspectives come into conflict with recalcitrant political cultures. These are confrontations that invariably result in a great deal of ambivalence and contradiction: order and lawlessness, heroism and cowardice, clarity of purpose and uncertainty. It is the manner in which they *combine* mutually exclusive actions and ideas, therefore, that characterizes these forms of conflict. The two emotions that motivate people's behaviour in these situations 'are despair and hope' Micheal Kimmel remarks. 'The revolutionary tradition is a heroic one,' writes Crane Brinton, but a revolutionary society is like a 'collective patient [...] thrashing his way through a delirium.'[36] What this illustrates is that studies which seek to negotiate the labyrinths of revolutionary situations in Ireland and Spain through an analysis of the part that ideologies such as republicanism, socialism, unionism, and nationalism played in those conflicts inevitably fail to convey the actual 'lived reality' of those epochs. They mistake 'the whole' (a highly complex

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[34] David Fitzpatick, *The Two Irelands 1912–1939* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1998), p. vii.
[35] Paul Preston, *A Concise History of the Spanish Civil War* (Fontana Press: London, 1996) p. xv.
[36] Kimmel, p. 12.; Brinton, pp. 259 and 256 respectively.

and anomalous revolutionary situation), for one of its more 'coherent' parts (one or more revolutionary ideologies).

One of the most interesting common features of all four writers is that their work gives full expression to the anomalies and contradictions that made up their experiences of revolution. Their writings reveal how they responded to the 'unexpected landscape[s]'[37] that opened up during those periods of conflict. Only a small portion of their work can be described as first-rate literature. And there is no question but that many of the texts are partisan and 'ideological'[38]; but the interesting point is that this is not *all* that they are. Among other things, they illustrate that the ambivalence which accompanied these periods of revolutionary transformation was not simply an external matter, it also affected the authors themselves. The tone of their writing varies between optimism and pessimism; confidence and despair. At times their work is declamatory, at other times deeply introspective. They can extol violence, but they can also express deep disgust at it. Furthermore, the literature often expose the weaknesses of their authors' own political philosophies. Modern literary theorists are often deeply sceptical about the idea that writing can reveal 'the truth' of human experience, but it is hugely significant that these 'political' writers are able to give expression to their own personal sense of confusion and failure. This aspect of their work reveals that language does not merely give expression to consciously or unconsciously held ideologies; it is also responsive, and 'truthful' in the sense that it can draw attention to its own *un*truthfulness and inadequacy in the face of the great demands that we make of it.

By focussing attention on the literature of these revolutions, the present study also gains a fuller understanding of how literature and social reality interacted with each other during these conflicts. One of the most fascinating aspects of the revolutionary situations examined here concerns the extent to which contemporary reality in Ireland and Spain gave rise to the kinds of experiences that we normally associate with works of literature. This is a phenomenon very similar to that described by Paul Fussell in his study of the literature of the First World War. Fussell draws attention to 'the simultaneous and reciprocal process whereby life feeds

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[37] Hannah Arendt, 'Understanding and Politics' Partisan Review 20:4 (July-August, 1953), p. 389.

[38] 'Theatre is a magnificent weapon of war against the opposing enemy and the enemy within', wrote the young Spanish poet and dramatist, Miguel Hernández, in 1937. 'I realize that now more than ever, all theatre, all poetry, all art, has to be a weapon of war.' [Creo que el teatro es un arma magnífica de Guerra contra el enemigo de enfrente y contra el enemigo de casa. Entiendo que todo teatro, toda poesía, todo arte, ha de ser, hoy más que nunca, un arma de guerra.] (11) Miguel Hernández, 'Teatro de la Guerra' (1937) in Dania Pérez Rubio y José Triana (eds.), *Teatro – Miguel Hernández* (La Habana: Editorial Arte y Literatura, 1976), p. 11.

materials to literature while literature returns the favour by conferring forms upon life.'[39] In *Modern Tragedy*, Raymond Williams makes a similar argument in regard, specifically, to revolutionary situations. Revolutions are like tragedies, he contends. They are tragic, firstly, in their 'origins': these conflicts are 'born in pity and terror, in the perception of a radical disorder in which the humanity of some men is denied'. And secondly, they are 'tragic in [their] action': their participants must themselves deny the humanity of some men if they are to defeat the problem that made their actions necessary in the first place.[40] Revolutionaries, therefore, are caught in a dilemma. 'The only action that seems adequate' to their situation, is to 'participat[e] in the disorder, as a way of ending it.'[41] It is this contradiction (rather than an acceptance of suffering, or defeatism), Williams contends, that constitutes the tragic quality both of revolutionary movements and tragic drama.

In *Sweet Violence – the Idea of the Tragic*, Terry Eagleton endorses this view; but whereas Williams treats the experience of ambivalence and contradiction that pertain to tragic action (in either a dramatic or revolutionary context) in a negative – though not a defeatist – light, Eagleton sees them, somewhat more positively, as paradoxes: 'though pain is generally to be avoided as an evil,' he remarks,

> there are kinds of affliction in which loss and gain go curiously together. It is around this aporetic point, at which dispossession begins to blur into power, blindness into insight and victimage into victory, that a good deal of tragedy turns. So does much revolutionary politics.[42]

The term 'tragedy' has been used on innumerable occasions to describe the Irish and Spanish revolutions. It is usually employed in a quite vague and imprecise manner, to mean something like 'extremely sad and regrettable'. Following Williams's and Eagleton's descriptions of this concept as relating specifically to anomalous and contradictory experience, that can occur in either a literary and social context, I will maintain that tragedy represents one of the most interesting ways in which literature and revolution impinged upon each other during the Irish and Spanish conflicts.

Like other individuals, writers participate in revolutionary situations two ways: by lending it their intellectual and moral support and/or by taking part in violence. The chapter structure of

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[39] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2000), p. ix.
[40] Raymond Williams, *Modern Tragedy* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1966), p. 77.
[41] Ibid., p. 82.
[42] Eagleton, p. 36.

the present study reflects these different modes of engagement. The writers I examine in the first two chapters –Patrick Pearse and Rafael Alberti – both took up arms in support of their respective causes. Notwithstanding their support for the revolutionary movements in their countries, the writers I consider in chapter three – Æ and Manuel Azaña – took no part in the military events in the periods under discussion. Clearly, the combatant/non-combatant distinction is not incontrovertible. For one thing, individuals who take up arms are, obviously, also committed at an intellectual and moral level. Indeed, both Pearse and Alberti would have seen themselves as artists and intellectuals rather then military men. There are, however, fundamental differences between the experiences of individuals who put their own lives 'on the line' in support of a political cause, and those who do not; and they are differences which are reflected in the literatures of both conflicts. There are no ethical implications intended by the distinction, therefore; it is simply that the similarities between writer-combatants from the Irish and Spanish revolutions are of greater import than those between combatant and non-combatant writers involved in the same struggle.

CHAPTER I

Patrick Pearse and the Literature of the Irish Revolution

Introduction

This chapter is divided into four sections. Parts I and II focus on Pearse's writings from 1906 to 1914. I begin with an analysis of his educational texts and this is followed, in part II, by a discussion of his poetry and prose fiction in this period. The second (and larger) half of the chapter relates to the years 1913 to 1916. This was the stage of Pearse's most intense engagement with revolutionary politics. His writings in these years show how his understanding of the Irish revolution as a movement committed to the radical transformation of economic, cultural and political structures in Irish society had attained a new maturity. They also explicate the processes that led to his eventual disillusionment with constitutional politics and his belief that Irish independence would not be achieved without recourse to violence. Part III considers the interrelationship between his literature, religious beliefs, and politics over the course of this period as a whole, while part IV concludes the chapter with an analysis of the ways in which his writing impinged on the events of the 1916 Rising.

Pearse produced a substantial body of writing in two languages. His educational writings and political pamphlets were written in English; but his dramatic output, and most of his poetry, was first composed in Irish. He translated these latter works himself, and it is these English language versions that I refer to here. Pearse did not translate his Irish short stories, however. In my discussions of these works I refer to Joseph Campbell's English versions in *Plays, Stories, Poems – Pádraic H. Pearse* (Dublin: Helicon, 1980).

I

Educational Writings

Take up the Irish problem at what point you may, you inevitably find yourself in the end back at the education question. (An Claidheamh Soluis, 18.4.1904*)*

Not much is known about Pearse's family history or the early years of his life. The second of four children, he was born in Dublin on the 10th November 1879. His father, James Pearse, was a stone carver from Bloomsbury, in England, who had moved to Ireland while still a teenager. By the early-1870s, James Pearse had married and set up business in North Brunswick street, on the south side of Dublin's city centre. He also converted to Catholicism in this period. He married Margaret Brady (Patrick's mother) in 1877. This was his second marriage, his first wife having died the previous year from an inflammation of the spine. Margaret Brady came from a Catholic, and strongly pro-nationalist family in county Meath. A number of her forebears were executed for their involvement in the United Irishmen's Rebellion of 1798. In a 1906 letter, Pearse remembers his great aunt Margaret on his mother's side as a woman who 'loved all who had striven for Ireland from the shadowy heroes of old to those of her own blood and ours who had died in '98 or been imprisoned in '67.'[1]

In 1884, the family moved to 'a modest but comfortable' house in village of Sandymount, a few miles to the south of the city.[2] Pearse was then aged five. At the age of seven he began attending a private school run by a Mrs Murphy, and in 1891 he and his younger brother Willie were sent to the Christian Brothers' school, Westland Row, in the centre of Dublin. Pearse sat the four grades of the Intermediate examination system at this institution, gaining results which he himself described as 'respectable and never brilliant'.[3] He graduated in 1896, at the age of

[1] Quoted in Dudley Edwards, p. 8. Most of the information I present here regarding Pearse's family history is drawn from the opening chapter of this work.
[2] Ibid., p. 9.
[3] Ibid., p. 14.

sixteen. It was this year that he joined the burgeoning Gaelic League, an organisation which was to play a vital part in his development over the next decade of his life.

The paucity of the information that exists regarding Pearse's early life precludes an in-depth analysis of how his childhood may have influenced his later character and political actions. Nevertheless, certain points do stand out. The fact that his parents came from such divergent backgrounds must have impacted on his personal development. Indeed, Pearse draws attention to this point himself in the few pages that he wrote towards an autobiography.

> When my father and my mother married there came together two very widely remote traditions – English and Gaelic. Freedom-loving both, and neither without its strain of poetry and its experience of spiritual and other adventures. And these two traditions worked in me, and prised together by a certain fire proper to myself – but nursed by that fostering of which I have spoken – made me the strange thing I am.[4]

His early life is also significant in relation to the subject of education. Pearse is probably best known today as one of the central figures in the 1916 Rising and, concomitantly, as the first President of the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic. In his own lifetime his name was familiar to the Irish public either as the editor of *An Claidheamh Soluis* [*The Sword of Light*], which was the weekly, bilingual journal of the Gaelic League, as a writer, and/or as one of the leaders of the Irish Volunteers. There can be little doubt, however, that he viewed himself primarily as an educationalist. This chapter highlights the extent to which his nationalism was influenced by his interest in pedagogical matters. His experiences at Westland Row were salient in this regard: it was as a student at this school that he first developed an interest in the Irish language; it was here also that he took on his first teaching duties, as a tutor of that subject. His time at Westland Row was also important in that it provided Pearse with first hand experience of the 'Intermediate System of Education', a regime which he castigates – both as an educationalist and a nationalist – throughout his later writings.[5]

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[4] Mary Brigid Pearse (ed.), *The Home Life of Pádraig Pearse* (Dublin: The Mercier Press, 1979 (1934)), p. 11. The fostering Pearse refers to here concerns the nationalist songs and stories he learned from his great aunt Margaret.

[5] Despite the patent lack of empirical information, a number of critics and historians have used Pearse's family history and early experiences to construct highly negative and speculative readings of his character and later political actions. Aside from Dudley Edwards biography see also Conor Cruise O' Brien, *Ancestral Voices: Religion and Nationalism in Ireland* (Dublin: Poolbeg Press, 1994); Seán Farrell Moran, 'Patrick Pearse and the European Revolt Against Reason' in Donald R. Kelley (exec. ed.) *Journal of the History of Ideas* Oct.-Dec. 1989 Vol. L No. 4. (Temple University, Philadelphia); and Micheal Böss, 'Country of Light: The Personal Nation of Patrick Pearse', in Anthony Roche (ed.) *Irish University Review* (Vol. 30 No. 2, Autumn/Winter 2000).

Pearse's interest in pedagogy is apparent in his earliest writings. Séamus Ó Buachalla notes that 'even while still a university student, he had begun in occasional literary reviews to draw attention to educational issues'[6]. This interest deepened through his subsequent membership of the Education Committee of the Gaelic League; and during his editorship of *An Claidheamh Soluis*, from 1903 to 1909, practically every issue of the paper contained articles on educational matters. Pearse's thinking on education was informed by his extensive teaching record at secondary and university-level. He taught at C.B.S. Westland Row, the Alexandra College in Earlsfort Terrace, Coláiste Laighean, the University College Dublin, and various Gaelic League Colleges. In 1909 he resigned from the editorship of *An Claidheamh Soluis* to set up his own school, St Enda's, in order to provide 'an elementary and secondary education distinctively Irish in complexion, bilingual in method, and of a high modern type generally, for Irish Catholic boys.'[7] Two years later he established St. Ita's, a school for Catholic girls, along the same educational lines. As Ó Buachalla notes, these ventures represented 'the working out in practice, of educational concepts and principles which he had elaborated and internalised during ten years of reading, analysis, reflection, writing and comparative fieldwork'. As such, they 'epitomised [Pearse's] personal commitment and the practical effort to reform.'[8] There has been little detailed consideration of Pearse's educational writings to date. As the quotation that begins this section indicates, however, he himself believed that this issue was of central importance to the revolutionary struggle. Furthermore, it is in his educational articles (rather than his overtly political pamphlets or his fiction) that Pearse's understanding of controversial issues such as history, language, religion, and the relationship between individual and national identity are most fully articulated.

Pearse maintained that the subjugation of Ireland in the modern era was not effected through violence, or the threat of violence, primarily, but through a kind of cultural assimilation in which the key weapon was control of the schools. 'When public education had been forbidden the majority,' he writes in 'The School and the Nation' (1910), 'and while the Irish language was widely spoken, the people retained a keen and vivid sense of their wrongs [and] were able to distinguish Ireland's friends from her foes'; however, the system of primary education introduced in 1823, he claims,

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[6] Séamus Ó Buachalla (ed.) *A Significant Irish Educationalist: The Educational Writings of P.H. Pearse* (Dublin: The Mercier Press, 1980), p. ix. (Hereafter referred to as Ó Buachalla, *Educational Writings*.)
[7] 'From the Prospectus of Scoil Éanna' in Ó Buachalla, *Educational Writings*, p. 317.
[8] Séamus Ó Buachalla (ed.), *The Letters of P.H. Pearse* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1980), p. 126. (Hereafter referred to as Ó Buachalla *Letters*).

> was cunningly designed to destroy our nationality. Its originators did not formally teach that Ireland, her language, literature, history, and industry, were unworthy of the attention even of Irish children, and consequently of the Irish people; but, by ignoring them, and by concerning Irish education with the affairs of England, and of her Empire, they attained the required result quite as effectually, and without the arousal of suspicion among the masses. [9]

This educational system had been so effective, he believed, that by the early twentieth century military rebellion and/or political legislation could only offer partial solutions to the quest for freedom: if Irish revolutionaries genuinely sought a radical transformation of society they needed to address the problem that *at an imaginative level* the majority of the Irish people had reconciled themselves to membership of the British Empire and had little interest in promoting a separatist agenda.

For Pearse, as for many other nationalists of the time, the restoration of the Irish language was a crucial element in the recovery of national identity. [10] The need to revive the use of Irish was one of the principal arguments made by Douglas Hyde in his seminal 1892 lecture, 'The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland'. Hyde's lecture led to the founding of the Gaelic League the following year, which was established with the objective of promoting the language among the Irish people. With almost 600 branches around the country by 1908, the League exerted a huge influence on the progress of the revolution.[11] As editor of *An Claidheamh Soluis* Pearse was centrally involved in this organisation's efforts to propagate the use of Gaelic. Notwithstanding the importance of the language-question to his political vision, however, few commentators have acknowledged the complexity of his thinking on this subject. This failure has encouraged the widespread view that he hoped Ireland would become a purely Gaelic-speaking nation following independence, and has thus contributed to his present image as a reactionary nationalist who looked upon the revolution as an attempt to totally eradicate the effects of colonialism from Irish society.

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[9] In Ó Buachalla, *Educational Writings*, pp. 251-2.

[10] 'The spiritual thing which is the essential thing in nationality would seem to reside chiefly in language' he wrote in one of his last political pamphlets, *The Spiritual Nation* (1916). In Ó Buachalla, *Educational Writings*, p. 302.

[11] Although initially conceived of as a non-political body, the League nevertheless had a huge influence on the political progress of the revolution. Tom Garvin remarks that the organisation 'became a forcing-school for future nationalist leaders and activists and produced a group of young people who were to be at the very centre of every advanced nationalist organisation during the following twenty years.' In Tom Garvin, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1981), p. 102.

His educational writings reveal that Pearse's views on the language question were both more pragmatic and more ambitious than many critics have allowed. Because there were in reality 'two living vernaculars' in early twentieth century Ireland, he maintained that the choice facing the nationalist movement was 'not between an Irish-speaking and an English-speaking Ireland. It is one between Bilingualism and Englishism.'[12] Rather than attempting to eradicate the use of English, he believed that the Irish should following the model of the Belgian nation, and become a bilingual people.[13] Pearse was convinced that promoting bilingualism was the only way Irish could be restored 'as a living medium of speech to the non-Irish-speaking three-fourths of the country'.[14] He frequently had to defend his ideas against nationalists who were opposed to the notion that English could form any part of an Irish educational system or an independent Irish state. In an article entitled 'A Move Forward' (1909), he responds to his critics by arguing that the purpose of his bilingual polices 'is certainly *not* to teach English to Irish speakers'. Neither, he continues, is it 'to teach Irish or to forward the interests of Irish at the expense of any really useful school subject. Its aim, he asserts, 'is simply to *educate* the child through the medium of both Irish and English, applying to him a double intellectual stimulus, bringing into contact with a two-fold culture, placing before him a view-point at once healthily national and broadly human.'[15]

This bilingual policy was more than a matter of making the best of an unfortunate situation: as an educationalist, Pearse maintained that a mind proficient in two or more languages was far preferable to a monolingual one. 'No one knowing only English can be either cultured or well educated', he writes in a November 1909 issue of *An Claidheamh Soluis*. 'No English or American educationalist would admit that it is possible to develop, train and inform the mind without a second language'.[16] In *An Macaomh*, the St. Enda's school magazine, he remarks that 'an Irish school need no more be a purely Irish-speaking school than an Irish nation need be a purely Irish-speaking nation [...] I do not think that a purely Irish-speaking school is a thing to be desired.'[17] These arguments are an indication of the extent to which Pearse's thinking on the issue of the language-education combined specifically Irish-nationalist

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[12] Pearse, 'Bilingualism' in *An Claidheamh Soluis* (195-9). In Ó Buchalla, *Educational Writings*, p. 195.
[13] Ó Buchalla notes that Pearse's trip to Belgium in 1905 to study its educational system and, in particular, its approach to language-teaching 'crystallised his understanding and confirmed him in the conviction that bilingualism was the most appropriate and most effective policy for Irish schools'. Ibid., p. xi.
[14] Ibid., p. 325.
[15] Pearse, 'A Move Forward', *An Claidheamh Soluis* (27/11/09), pp. 248-9. Ibid., p. 248.
[16] Pearse, 'The Meaning of Bishop Day's Attack', *An Claidheamh Soluis* (27/11/09). Ibid., p. 248-9.
[17] Pearse, *An Macaomh* (June 1909). Ibid., p. 324.

objectives with more broadly humanist principles. Given the centrality of the language-question to the nationalist movement as a whole, this feature of his thinking also needs to be seen as part of his political vision for Ireland.

Pearse's thinking on educational matters developed in direct opposition to the Intermediate system of secondary education that was introduced to Ireland in 1879, a system he referred to as 'the most evil thing that Ireland has ever known.'[18] He objected to this regime both as an educationalist and as a nationalist, however, the basis of his criticisms was the same in both instances: the utilitarian ethos that underpinned the system and, he believed, characterized the imperialist mindset as a whole.[19] For Pearse, the English educational system in Ireland could be described as utilitarian in the sense that it was not orientated towards the true, intrinsic aims of education (which he maintained involved the fostering of pupils' individual personalities[20]), but to an end beyond itself: its purpose was to provide the Empire with a product – a quiescent class of middle-ranking administrators, bureaucrats and businessmen. 'Our common parlance has become impressed with the conception of education as some sort of manufacturing process', he complained in February 1913:

> Our children are the 'raw material'; we desiderate for their education 'modern methods' which must be 'efficient' but 'cheap'; we send them to Clongowes to be 'finished'; when 'finished' they are 'turned out'; specialists 'grind' them for the English Civil Service and the so-called liberal professions.[21]

It was primarily by means of this educational regime, he argued, that large numbers of Irish men and women had come to view their political and cultural domination in a positive light; to

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[18] Pearse, *The Murder Machine* (1916). Ibid., p. 384.

[19] Utilitarianism is a system of ethics it is based on the notion that human actions are not intrinsically right or wrong, just or unjust. Instead, its advocates maintain that the only rational way of adducing their moral worth is to consider their consequences. According to Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), the English philosopher who first championed utilitarian philosophy, this means estimating whether a particular action will result in more pleasure than it will pain. Where the proposed action refers to a matter of social or political import its worth is to be decided on the basis of whether or not it is conducive to 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number', a dictum that Bentham adopted as the cornerstone of his system. With the rise of rationalist culture during the nineteenth-century, utilitarianism became a very important form of social and political philosophy in English society and, as such, was not simply of interest to academics, but exerted a great influence on educational, economic and political matters throughout the Empire.

[20] 'It is to the primacy of the individual personality that Pearse constantly returns, whether in his educational theories, or in his political tracts.' Joseph Lee, *The Modernisation of Irish Society* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1973), p. 148.

[21] Pearse, 'The Education Problem in the Home Rule Parliament'. (The article first appeared in the February 1913 issue of *The Irish Review*, a literary-political journal co-founded by Pearse's fellow- revolutionaries Thomas MacDonagh and Joseph Plunkett in 1911.) In Ó Buachalla, *Educational Writings*, p. 357. This remark also appears in Pearse's best-known educational pamphlet, *The Murder Machine* (1916). Ibid., p. 373. Practically all of the arguments in *The Murder Machine* had already been made by Pearse in earlier lectures and articles. The quotations I refer to here come mainly from the earlier texts; however, I also indicate where they can be found in *The Murder Machine*.

see themselves not as the 'slaves' of a foreign power, but 'respectable' subjects of a progressive, and wealthy, imperial government. The system was designed to make 'willing slaves of us', he complained in a 1912 lecture:

> It has succeeded; succeeded so well that we no longer realise that we *are* slaves. Some of us even think our chains ornamental, and are a little doubtful as to whether we shall be quite as comfortable and quite as respectable when a few of the links are knocked off by the passing of the Home Rule Bill.[22]

It was through the schoolhouse, therefore, rather than the poorhouse or prison-house that modern-day English imperialism sought to quell nationalist sentiment, Pearse believed. These schools did not operate by directly attacking the concept of Irish nationalism, he claimed, but through a more subtle process of interpellation that accustomed pupils to the same rational-utilitarian outlook that characterised the imperialist mind-set as a whole. The fact that the system was run by the Irish Catholic clergy made it harder to argue that pupils were receiving a foreign education at all.[23] Consequently, the classroom environment could achieve political ends far more effectively than older and more violent methods of imperialism. A political prisoner always ran the risk of turning into a martyr and generating more unrest than he ever did alive, thus undermining the purpose behind his initial incarceration; but not only did a 'finished' Clongowes pupil not usually foment unrest, his education often led him to identify his own self-interest with that of the empire. In this way the system managed to eradicate nationalist sentiment without resorting to violence, and thus 'left no graves'.[24]

In contrast to the standardized, examination-orientated emphasis of the Intermediate system Pearse contended that the primary purpose of education was to nurture pupils' individual

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[22] Pearse, 'Education Under Home Rule'. A lecture delivered at the Mansion House in Dublin in December 1912. In Ó Buachalla, *Educational Writings*, p. 355. Pearse is referring here to the third Home Rule Bill introduced by the Liberal government of Asquith in April 1912. In *The Murder Machine* Pearse changes the second sentence of this quotation so that it reads: 'Some of us even think our chains ornamental, and are a little doubtful as to whether we shall be quite as comfortable and quite as respectable when they are hacked off.' Ibid., p, 382. The fact that in the earlier version he treats the forthcoming Home Rule Bill as a *stage*, only, in the process of achieving full liberation illustrates that Pearse was already a political separatist in December 1912. The change of tone in the 1916 version is noteworthy in two respects: firstly, it expresses his disillusionment with constitutional politics and his acceptance of the need for violence; secondly, notwithstanding the metaphorical nature of the language, the greater violence of the latter version is indicative of the extent to which Pearse conceived the revolution as a movement directed against the Irish 'slave' population rather than their oppressors.

[23] 'To invent such a system of teaching and then to persuade us that it is an education system, an Irish education to be defended by Irishmen against attack, is the most wonderful thing the English have accomplished in Ireland; and the most wicked.' Pearse, *The Murder Machine*, ibid., p. 374.

[24] 'They think that they have foreseen everything, think that they have provided against everything; but the fools, the fools! – they have left us our Fenian dead, and, while Ireland holds these graves, Ireland unfree shall never be at peace.' Pearse, 'O'Donavan-Rossa – Graveside Panegyric' in Pádraic H. Pearse, *Political Writings and Speeches,* (Dublin: The Talbot Press, 1952), p. 137.

personalities. In 'The Philosophy of Education' (1904), he writes that 'the aim of education is [...] the training of the child to be a perfect man or woman - 'to prepare for complete living''. In the Prospectus to his own school in 1909 he remarks that 'the central purpose' of education at St. Enda's 'is not so much the mere imparting of knowledge (and not at all the 'cramming' of boys with a view to success at examinations) as the formation of its pupils' characters, eliciting and development of the individual bents and traits of each, the kindling of their imaginations'. And in *The Murder Machine* he states that 'the aim of education [...] first and last,' is 'to 'foster' the elements of character native to a soul, to help bring these to their full perfection'.[25]

This stress on fostering pupils' individual personalities went hand in hand with an equally strong emphasis on what Pearse called 'the national factor in education'.[26] For example, in the aforementioned article, 'The Philosophy of Education', he remarks that 'if actively or by acquiescence, we teach [children] to be ashamed of their country, to despise her speech, her song, her music, her traditions, we are as morally guilty as if we poisoned their minds against their own parents [...] Every Irish child', he writes here, has 'a fundamental right to be taught that Ireland is his mother - the duty to know her, the duty to love her, the duty to work for her. [...] The systematic inculcation of patriotism is part of the school *regime* of every enlightened country.'[27]

Phrases such as the 'inculcation of patriotism' inevitably hold connotations of indoctrination and thus raise the suspicion that Pearse was contradicting his own stated principle that the pupil's soul 'must be allowed to bring itself to its own perfection.' Pearse, however, did not believe that the dual emphasis on the individual personality and the national factor in his pedagogy were incompatible with each other. In his December 1912 lecture in the Mansion House, he remarked that

> If the true work of the teacher be, as I have said, to help the child realise himself at his best and worthiest, the factor of nationality is of prime importance, apart from any ulterior propagandist views the teacher may cherish. The school system which neglects it commits, even from a purely pedagogic point of view, a primary blunder. It neglects one of the most powerful of educational resources.[28]

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[25] In Ó Buachalla, *Educational Writings*, pp, 65 and 317 respectively.
[26] Ibid., p. 324.
[27] Ibid., p. 66.
[28] Pearse, 'Education Under Home Rule'. Ibid., p. 354.

Pearse had few doubts regarding what kind of moral qualities teachers needed to 'foster' in their pupils in order to help them live up to their finest selves. His pedagogical writings continually refer to what he terms 'Christian virtues' such as charity, gentleness, heroism, light-heartedness, self-sacrifice, temperance, and truthfulness in this regard.[29] Pearse believed that such qualities were not just desirable in an Irish context, but were valid at all times and in all cultures; however, he also held that such universally-good ideals could only be fostered in pupils through the 'lens' of their own particular time and culture: their family, school, local and national communities, traditions and, of course, language(s). Therefore, 'the national factor in education' functioned as a kind of conduit between the individual pupil and the attainment of the universal 'Christian virtues' to which his pedagogical system was orientated. The priority he placed on the individual-communal relation underlined for Pearse the difference between his own educational principles and a utilitarian-based pedagogy. Furthermore, because it ignored the importance of this linkage, and instead insisted that pupils across the globe to comply with its own imperialist 'regulation patterns', English educational structures instilled in pupils a spirit of self-interest and materialism.[30] Thus, in his view, the system was fundamentally anti-Christian.

In her biography, *Patrick Pearse: The Triumph of Failure*, Dudley-Edwards contends that Pearse was not widely read in English literature, but that he did enjoy Dickens's works.[31] Dudley-Edwards provides no evidence to support the former claim, but it is not surprising that the English novelist – also a fierce critic of utilitarian philosophy – was one of Pearse's favourite authors. The language and tone of his best-known educational text, *The Murder Machine* (1916) was clearly inspired by *Hard Times*, Dickens's satire on utilitarian economic and educational policies in nineteenth-century England. Like Pearse, Dickens objected to a utilitarian-based education on the grounds that it encouraged students in the belief that they were essentially autonomous individuals with only incidental ties to the communities in which

[29] In the Prospectus to St. Enda's Pearse writes that 'the School Staff constantly exerts itself to promote amongst the boys an active love and reverence for the Christian virtues, especially for the virtues of purity, temperance, fortitude, truth, and loving-kindness. A spirit of chivalry and self-sacrifice, gentleness towards the weak and courtesy and charity towards all, kindness towards animals and respect for their lives and well-being, as also a love of inanimate nature and of everything in the world that is fine and beautiful'. Ibid., p. 318.
[30] Pearse, 'Education Under Home Rule'. Ibid., p. 351
[31] Dudley Edwards, p. 116.

they lived.[32] In *Hard Times* we see Bitzer (the model-pupil of Gradgrind's utilitarian school system), remark that 'the whole social system is a question of self-interest. What you must always appeal to, is a person's self-interest. It's your only hold. We are so constituted.'[33] Similarly, Pearse writes in *The Murder Machine* that 'men and women, however depraved, have kindly human allegiances', but the 'Things' produced by Ireland's educational system 'have no allegiance. Like other Things, they are for sale.'[34] For both authors utilitarianism exacerbated pupils' selfish instincts because it provided them with no sense that they owed allegiance to anything or anyone they felt contradicted their own material self-interest.[35]

On account of the importance he placed on communal factors in the development of personality, Pearse was adamant that educational structures in an independent Ireland should take full account of the different cultures and traditions on the island. Indeed, he was as critical of the failures of English system in this regard as he was of its failure to address the needs of individual pupils. In an article he published in *The Irish Review* in March 1913 he complains that

> Our Irish systems took, and take, absolutely no cognizance of the differences between individuals, of the differences between localities, of the differences between urban and rural communities, of the differences springing from a different ancestry, Gaelic or Anglo-Saxon. The programme denies freedom to the individual teacher. Every school must conform to a type - and what a type![36]

As against this system, he argues that as the Irish nation gained its intellectual and political independence from the British Empire the different communities and cultures on the island were to be encouraged to organise and direct their educational affairs in ways that suited their own circumstances and needs; a policy which found its logical terminus in the figure of the individual pupil who would attain to 'the perfection and destiny meant for him alone.'[37] It is

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[32] Harold Höffding notes that Bentham 'starts from the conception that the race consists of isolated individuals, every one of whom is eagerly striving to get the greatest possible number of goods at the least possible cost.' This feature of the philosophy leads Höffding to the view that utilitarianism emerged as a specifically *liberal-capitalist* solution to the problems of decision-making: 'that which, with Adam Smith, is political economy,' he remarks, 'becomes extended under Bentham's treatment until it practically includes the whole of ethics.'
Harald Höffding, *A History of Modern Philosophy vol. II*, B. E. Meyer trans. (New York: Dover, 1955), p. 367.
[33] Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 1989), p. 383.
[34] *The Murder Machine*, in Ó Buachalla, *Educational Writings*, p. 371-2.
[35] The influence of *Hard Times* is also apparent in Pearse's play 'Íosagán' (1909), the opening scene of which focuses on the powerful imaginative capacities of three peasant children from the West of Ireland. The dialogue in this scene strongly echoes passages from the 'Murdering the Innocents' chapter in Dickens's novel. See *Pádraic Pearse, Plays, Stories, Poems* (Helicon; Dublin, 1980), p. 101-4.
[36] Pearse, 'Irish Education' (March 1913). In Ó Buachalla, *Educational Writings*, p. 364. (The same remark occurs in *The Murder Machine* although in the 1916 text Pearse refers begins by referring to 'Our English-Irish systems' as opposed to 'Our Irish systems'. Ibid., p. 379.)
[37] Pearse, 'Irish Education' (February 1913). Ibid., p. 360.

true that Pearse also speaks of Irish education being 'drawn together into an homogenous whole' and achieving 'an organic unity', but it is clear that these comments do not contradict his de-centralising policies.[38] Throughout his educational writings, he emphasises that 'schools should have autonomy.' Rather than imposing curricula on schools, 'the function of the central authority should be to co-ordinate, to maintain a standard, to advise, to inspire, to keep teachers in touch with educational thought in other lands'.[39]

That Pearse genuinely envisaged the different communities on the island organizing their educational affairs according to the lights of their own culture and traditions, following independence, is clearly illustrated by his views on the crucial issue of the Irish language. Such was the importance that Pearse placed on the language question that he looked upon the 'acceptance' of Irish as a 'duty' which the unionist population owed to Ireland. In 1909 he argued that the refusal of Protestant schools to admit Irish 'implies a belief of their own superiority over the Gaelic population of this country'; and while he recognised that 'the Catholic and Nationalist should be willing to allow the Protestant and unionist full freedom for religious and political opinions,' he contended that 'the Protestant should recognise that outside of his religion and politics there are duties to Ireland, the observance of which is as binding on the Unionist as the Nationalist. Loyalty to the Irish language is one of these.' Rather than 'a bone of contention', Pearse somewhat optimistically suggested that 'the Irish language [...] should be a link of unity between the followers of the two creeds.'[40] While many Protestants and unionists would have dismissed this notion, the important point is that Pearse accepted they had every right to do so. The Irish language (and, by extension, other Gaelic-based curricula activities) were not to be foisted upon communities 'springing from a different ancestry'. 'Where English is the home language', he reiterates in *The Murder Machine*, 'it must of necessity be the 'first language' in the schools'. There would also be 'a compulsory 'second language'', he comments here, remarking that 'five-sixths of the schools' would probably opt for Gaelic; but he recognized that some English-speaking schools and communities might well opt for a second language other than Gaelic. As he goes on to remark

[38] Pearse'Education Under Home Rule' (1912). Ibid., p. 356. (See also *The Murder Machine*, ibid., p. 383)
[39] Pearse, 'Irish Education' (March 1913). Ibid., p. 368. ('The first thing I plead for, therefore, is freedom: freedom for each school to shape its own programme in conformity with the circumstances of the school as to place, size, personnel, and so on'. *The Murder Machine*, ibid., p. 380.)
[40] Pearse, 'Irish in the Intermediate' (November 1909). Ibid., p. 247.

in *The Murder Machine*, 'in all the details of their programmes schools should have autonomy.'[41]

Too often the word 'freedom' in Pearse's writings is interpreted in a purely separatist sense. Such readings are invariably based on a facile reading of the more propagandistic passages in his political speeches and writings. His more reflective, educational literature reveals that he believed spiritual and intellectual freedom *internal* to the nation was every bit as important as political separation from England. 'In particular I would urge that the Irish school system of the future should give freedom', he writes in 'The Education Problem in the Home Rule Parliament',

> freedom to the individual school, freedom to the individual teacher, freedom as far as may be to the individual pupil. Without freedom there can be no right growth; and education is properly the fostering of the right growth of a personality.[42]

Many commentators have noted the important part that religion played in Pearse's political outlook. This aspect of his thinking has often been treated as evidence of a sectarian political vision. Richard Kearney, for example, claims a primary purpose of Pearse's writings was to 'enable the orphaned children of Erin to return to the security of their maternal origins: the mother church of Catholic revival'. For Conor Cruise O'Brien 'the fusion of Catholicism and Irish nationalism attained its maximum intensity in the psyche of Patrick Pearse'. And Séan Farrell Moran maintains that his politics were motivated by 'the myth of a noble Gaelic and Catholic Ireland.' [43]

There are important ways in which nationalism and religion overlap in Pearse's writings, he frequently made this connection himself; however, his educational writings clearly illustrate that this did *not* amount to a form of Catholic-nationalism. We have seen Pearse was adamant that 'Protestant schools' should be entitled to the same freedom and liberties as those from the Catholic tradition. The non-sectarian nature of his religious opinions is also apparent in his

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[41] *The Murder Machine*, in Ó Buachalla, *Educational Writings*, p. 384.

[42] Pearse, 'The Education Problem in the Home Rule Parliament' (February 1913) Ibid., p. 357. (See also *The Murder Machine*, ibid, p. 373.) Pearse's comments in *The Spiritual Nation* (1916) illustrate that this policy extended to political issues outside an educational context: 'Independence one must understand to include spiritual and intellectual independence as well as political independence', he writes here. 'Or rather, true political independence requires spiritual and intellectual independence as its basis.' Pearse, *The Spiritual Nation* (1916) in *Political Writings and Speeches*, p. 299.

[43] Richard Kearney, *Postnationalist Ireland - Politics, Culture, Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 118; Cruise O'Brien, *Ancestral Voices*, p. 96; and Farrell Moran, 'Patrick Pearse and the European Revolt against Reason', p. 628.

contributions to contemporary debates on the proposed New University for Ireland in 1908.[44] Like many in the Gaelic League Pearse believed the Irish language should be made a compulsory entrance subject for the New University (an argument which was opposed by the Catholic hierarchy). As strongly as he felt about this issue, however, he was even more adamant that the institution should be a non-denominational institution. In a December 1908 article he endorsed Eoin MacNeill's warning that

> If a University is now established which, as has been commonly and with good authority stated, will be acceptable to the Catholics of this country as Catholics, and which will not be acceptable to the Irishmen of this country as Irishmen [...] it will be the most portentous danger to Irish life that has ever been seen in Ireland.[45]

Religion was a core element of the curriculum at Pearse's own schools. In the Prospectus to St Enda's he remarks that 'the first care' of the school 'is to provide a proper religious and moral training for its pupils'.[46] Education in Ireland had been organized along denominational lines since 1831, and Pearse would have had no option but to establish St. Enda's and St. Ita's as *Catholic* schools.[47] Without the sanction of the Catholic hierarchy and, in particular, that of Dr. Walsh, the Archbishop of Dublin, neither establishment would have been able to operate. It is highly significant, therefore, that Pearse was determined the pupils at his schools would be taught by lay teachers. Indeed, such was the priority he placed on this matter that he referred to it as one of his main reasons for the founding the schools. In 1908, he wrote to the parents of prospective enrolees that the two main 'arguments in favour of the establishment' of St. Enda's were, firstly (as one might expect), that 'there is no Irish high school in Ireland', but

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[44] Ó Buachalla observes that during the first decade of the twentieth-century 'university reorganisation was a major theme in the educational debate. Trinity College was not acceptable to the Catholic Bishops who had in 1875 legislated against Catholic students attending there'. Neither was the Royal University of Ireland 'favoured by Episcopal approval and the only higher education available to Catholics was that provided by the remnants of Newman's Catholic University and in some colleges which prepared students for the examinations of the Royal University. Two commissions on University education, reporting in 1903 and 1907, failed to provide an acceptable solution; it was Birrell's Bill of 1908 which, by establishing the National University of Ireland created a multi-college institution and satisfied a long standing grievance.' Ó Buachalla, *Educational Writings,* p. xxii.

[45] Pearse, ibid., p. 212.

[46] In addition to the teaching of 'Christian Doctrine' for half an hour each day, the school would also promote amongst its pupils 'an active love and reverence for the Christian virtues, especially for the virtues of purity, temperance, fortitude, truth, and loving-kindness. A spirit of chivalry and self-sacrifice, gentleness towards the weak and courtesy and charity towards all, kindness towards animals and respect for their lives and well-being, as also a love of inanimate nature and of everything in the world that is fine and beautiful.' Ibid., p. 318.

[47] The national schools established under the Stanley scheme of 1831 were clerically managed on a denominational basis. The teachers in these schools received their training in colleges 'which were government funded, clerically managed and denominationally divided.' Ibid., p. xxi. Such was the Church's control in the area of education that some members of the Catholic hierarchy in Ireland maintained the teaching profession was part of their own vocation. Ó Buachalla notes that the Bishops' spokesman on education, Dr. Dwyer of Limerick, 'had declared unequivocally, that "no layman had the right to teach"'. In Ó Buachalla, *Letters*, p. 126.

secondly, that 'there is no high school for Catholic boys conducted by laymen in Ireland.' 'My idea', he continues, 'is to supply this two-fold need.'[48]

Historically, Catholicism had been very closely associated with the preservation of an independent national identity in Ireland. For Pearse, however, the role that the clergy now filled in the management of the country's anti-nationalist school-system was indicative of the extent to which the modern Church was itself implicated in the general trend towards bourgeois respectability in Irish society.[49] Matters came to a head in relation to the Church's attitude towards the status of the Irish language in the New University of Ireland established in 1908. The Church strongly opposed the Gaelic League campaign to have Irish made a compulsory subject at the new university.[50] This stance led to a series of very strongly worded articles by Pearse in *An Claidheamh Soluis*. In a 1908 article entitled 'Friends and Foes', he warns his readers not to forget that the Catholic Church is 'a religious order whose interests and activities are not confined to Ireland'.[51] When the following year the Irish Bishops dismissed the well-known Irish-language enthusiast, Dr. O'Hickey, from the Irish Chair at Maynooth College on account of his support for the League's position, Pearse responded by warning 'the Bishops of Ireland that the men and women of the League will not stand for tyranny [...] Has the splendid history of their own Church not taught them that a cause can in no way be so surely and swiftly advanced as by giving it a martyr?'[52] The next month he expanded his criticisms to include the hierarchy's treatment of patriotic priests generally, claiming that the Church was deliberately retarding the careers of its younger, more patriotic priests by sending them abroad: 'there was a period in Irish history when Dublin Castle

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[48] Ibid., p. 127.

[49] Pearse maintained that the modern church was abandoning its core doctrines in order to make itself more acceptable to modern culture. In May 1913 he remarked that 'the great enemy of practical Christianity has always been respectable society', and complained that the un-heroic 'commandments' of the modern Irish bourgeoisie were being presented as Christian doctrine within the church itself: 'One has heard this shocking morality taught in Christian schools, expounded in Christian newspapers, even preached from Christian pulpits', he complains. 'Those things about the lilies of the fields and the birds of the air, and that rebuke to Martha who was troubled about many things are thought to have no relevancy to modern life. But if that is so Christianity has no relevancy to modern life, for these are the essence of Christ's teaching.' Pearse, *An Macaomh* (May 1913), in Ó Buachalla, *Educational Writings*, p. 343.

[50] Kiberd observes that although the Catholic hierarchy supported the Gaelic league in many of its initiatives in the 1890s, 'the careers of many Irish language enthusiasts among the Catholic clergy had been stymied, in Maynooth and elsewhere, as a result of their high profile activities.' Priests such as 'Lorcán Ó Muireadhaigh, Dr. O'Hickey, and Walter MacDonald got into trouble with the ecclesiastical authorities for promoting Irish, for insisting on its central importance in the syllabus for matriculation, and so on.' Kiberd, p. 147.

[51] Pearse. 'Friends and Foes' (5.12.1908) in Ó Buachalla, *Educational Writings*, p. 208.

[52] Pearse. 'The Dismissal of Dr. O'Hickey' (26.6.1909). Ibid, p. 234.

allowed no patriotic priests to remain in Ireland', he remarks caustically in this article, before going on to ask 'are the penal laws it administered to be revived by the Irish Bishops?'[53]

Rather than religious sectarianism, his educational writings reveal Pearse looked upon religion as a source of potential unity between Irish men and women from different cultures, in terms of their common opposition to the secularism inherent in utilitarian education system. In 1909, he suggested that Irish Protestants and Catholics should join together 'in the effort to snatch our educational systems from the hands of the English Rationalists, whose aims in educational matters, when not political, are anti-religious. The tendency in England is to drive religion out of education.'[54] The manner in which Pearse came into conflict with the Irish hierarchy on account of what he believed was its complicity with the British establishment in the running of Irish schools, its stance on the language issue, and the respectable bourgeois values it preached from its pulpits, is also indicative of the extent to which he conceived of the Irish Revolution as a movement directed towards the problem of *Irish* attitudes and behaviour.

Religion also impacted on his pedagogy in more positive ways. It is no exaggeration to say that Pearse looked upon the teaching profession as a priest-like vocation.[55] Teaching could be likened to the priesthood in that both professions sought to 'foster' the moral development of children.[56] This approach to education was exemplified for Pearse by the system 'practised by the founders of the Gaelic system two thousands years ago.' Even 'the word for 'education' among the old Gaels', he observes, was the same as the word for fostering: 'to the old Irish the teacher was aite, 'fosterer', the pupil was dalta, 'foster-child', the system was aiteachas, 'fosterage''. Unlike contemporary educational practices in Ireland, in this system it 'was always the individual inspiring, guiding, *fostering* other individuals; never the State usurping the place of father or fosterer, dispensing education like a universal provider of readymades, aiming at turning out all men and women according to regulation patterns.'[57]

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[53] Pearse. 'The Maynooth Debacle' (3.7.1909). Ibid., p. 235.
[54] Pearse, 'Irish in the Intermediate' (13/11/09). Ibid., p. 247. In The *Murder Machine* he looks forward to 'the prospect of the children of Sandy Row being taught to curse the Pope in Irish'. Ibid., p. 375.
[55] 'Education is as much concerned with souls as religion is', he writes in 'An Ideal in Education' and *The Murder Machine*. Ibid., pp. 369 and 376 respectively.
[56] 'The function of a teacher', he maintained, is 'not primarily to 'lead up', to 'guide', to 'conduct through a course a studies', and still less to 'indoctrinate' to 'inform', to 'coach', but primarily to 'foster' the elements of character already present [...] To help the child realize himself at his best and his worthiest.'
Pearse, 'Irish Education'. Ibid., p. 359-60.
[57] Pearse, 'Education Under Home Rule' Ibid., p 351. (See also *The Murder Machine*, ibid, p. 376-7.)

Pearse maintained that in pagan times the Gaelic system had been inspired by 'the knightly tradition of Cúchulainn and the Boy-Corps of Eamhain Macha', and, in Christian times, by the 'Christ-like tradition of Colmcille'; but it was the way that the Old Irish had *combined* the best elements in these pagan and Christian sources of inspiration that he particularly admired. There is 'nothing nobler in the history of education', he commented in 1912 'than this development of the old Irish plan of fosterage under a Christian rule, when to the Pagan ideals of strength and truth there were added the Christian ideals of love and humility.'[58]

The manner in which Pearse turned to the past in support of his educational ideas has led to much unfair criticism; the prominent role that the legendary figure of Cúchulainn played in his pedagogy attracting particularly strong derision. In his influential study Francis Shaw points out that there is very little known about this legendary figure, and that what there is does not support Pearse's image of him as a patriot-soldier. 'It would seem that Pearse got many of his romantic ideas about early Ireland from the pages of Standish O'Grady', Shaw remarks. 'By a fantastic flight of fancy', he 'projected his own ideas into the vacuum of the past, and he fathered the lot on Cú Chulainn and the boys' brigade at Eamhain Macha'.[59] Such criticisms are unwarranted, firstly, because they misrepresent Pearse as being fixated with the idea of returning Ireland to a mythical past when in fact he was actually quite realistic about how much of the Old Irish system was suitable for the twentieth century schools. 'Civilisation has taken such a queer turn that it might not be easy to restore the old Irish plan of education in all its details', he writes mischievously in *An Macaomh*, 'I can well imagine how blue Dr. Hyde, Mr. Yeats, and Mr. MacNeill would look if their friends informed them that they were about to send their children to be fostered. But at least we can bring the heroes and seers and scholars to the schools (as we do at Sgoil Eanna) and get them to talk to the children'.[60]

Secondly, although he believed that the Old Irish system of fosterage had actually existed, Pearse understood perfectly well that there was very little that could be said with any degree of certainty about this period of Irish history. 'Cúchulainn may never have lived', he writes in the same article from *An Macaomh*, 'and there may never have been a Boy-Corp at Eamhain; but the picture endures as the Gael's idealisation of the kind of environment and the kind of

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[58] Ibid, p. 351. (See also *The Murder Machine*, ibid, p. 377-8) Pearse would later describe the Old Irish saga, the *Táin,* to 'a retelling (or is it a foretelling?) of the story of Calvary.'
[59] Francis Shaw, 'The Canon of Irish History - A Challenge' in *Studies* (Vol. LXV - 1972, Dublin: The Talbot Press), p. 130-2.
[60] Pearse, *An Macaomh* (Dec. 1909) in Ó Buachalla, *Educational Writings*, p. 331-2.

fostering which go to the making of a perfect hero.'[61] Pearse's remarks here suggest that the emphasis on Irish mythology in his educational writings can be seen as a typically modernist strategy of presenting new ideas in the guise of the old. As Joseph Lee remarks, 'once we look beyond the rhetoric to the substance of his educational ideas' we find that he was in fact a highly innovative progressive theorist who 'mobilised the sagas as weapons to achieve his goal of modernisation without Anglisation.'[62]

Pearse's comments in *The Murder Machine* also indicate that he was using figures from Irish mythology in an imaginative capacity rather than an historical one. Cúchulainn, he remarks here, exemplifies 'the thing most needful in education: an adequate inspiration.'[63] This description further illustrates the influence of Dickens's writing on Pearse's educational ideas. Chapter One of *Hard Times* is entitled 'The One Thing Needful'.[64] In Dickens's novel, of course, the one thing needful in education is 'fact'[65]. It is surely reasonable to suppose that Pearse expected his readers to recognise this allusion to Dickens's novel, as well as the fact that he was misappropriating the chapter title by substituting 'inspiration' for 'facts'. If so, then as well as indicating that he was employing the Cúchulainn legend in an imaginative and inspirational capacity rather than a factual and historical one, the phrase was also being used to delineate two opposing schools of educational theory: the rational-utilitarian approach which saw education primarily as the dissemination of information and preparation for exams, and Pearse's own 'fosterage' system, which sought to inspire the moral development of the child as a training for 'complete living'.

Notwithstanding the fact that he was using figures from Irish literary antiquity in an imaginative and inspirational capacity there can be little doubt this aspect of Pearse's pedagogy helped to cultivate an atmosphere conducive to revolutionary activity at the schools. Irwin Thompson observes that 'the first thing a boy would see upon entering St. Enda's was a mural of the boy Cuchulainn taking arms.'[66] And the pupils at St. Enda's were constantly regaled with heroic mottoes such as 'Better is short life with honour than long life with dishonour'; 'I

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[61] Ibid., p. 331. Shaw briefly refers to this quotation, but for some reason he still accuses Pearse of attempting to falsify history in relation to this character.
[62] Lee, p. 141.
[63] Ibid., p. 377.
[64] Dickens, p. 1. (Paul Schlicke observes that the phrase originally appears in The Gospel, Luke 10:42. Ibid., p. 409)
[65] 'Fact, fact, fact' is all pupils and teachers should concern themselves with, Gradgrind insists to his pupils in this chapter of the novel.
[66] William Irwin Thompson, *The Imagination of an Insurrection: Dublin, Easter 1916* (New York: Oxford U.P., 1967), p. 76.

care not though I were to live but one day and one night, if only my fame and my deeds live after me', and 'If I die, it shall be from the excess of love I bear the Gael' (supposedly Cúchulainn's and St. Colmcille's mottoes respectively[67]). Pearse claimed that these maxims helped to instil Christian virtues such as unselfishness and truthfulness in the pupils, and helped 'to teach Irish boys to be brave, and unselfish, truthful and pure.' [68] Clearly, they might also encourage them into revolutionary activity.

There were other aspects of life at St.Enda's that suggest the school instilled a revolutionary outlook in its students. Dudley Edwards notes that although the English-language version of the school's prospectus was relatively benign in regard to political matters, the Irish version stated that 'it will be attempted to inculcate in [the pupils] the desire to spend their lives working hard and zealously for their fatherland and, if it should ever be necessary, to die for it.'[69] Some of Pearse's comments in the school magazine are also noteworthy in regard to this issue. In the Christmas 1910 edition of *An Macaomh* he writes that he sometimes wonders whether, if he ever needs his students 'for any great service, they will rally, as many of them have promised to do, from wherever they may be, holding faith to the inspiration and the tradition I have tried to give them'; and indeed, a number of ex-St Enda's boys did 'rally' to him in Easter 1916. In the May 1913 issue of the same magazine he writes of a 'vivid dream' he had four years previously in which he saw a pupil of St. Enda's 'standing alone upon a platform above a mighty sea of people [...] about to die there for some august cause, Ireland's or another.' He then reveals that he had spoken of the dream to his pupils a few days later, 'telling them that I could not wish for any of them a happier destiny than to die thus in the defence of some true thing', and notes that they did 'not seem in any way surprised' by this remark, 'for it fitted in with all we have been teaching them at St. Enda's.'[70]

The suspicion that Pearse deliberately sought to indoctrinate pupils is not as clear-cut as the above observations suggest, however. Dudley-Edwards points that not all the boys at St. Enda's followed Pearse into the G.P.O. in 1916. Furthermore, in regard to 'the inculcation of

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[67] Pearse maintained that 'the story of Cuchulainn and of the story of Colmcille' are fundamentally alike in that both men committed themselves to 'a love and a service so excessive as to annihilate all thought of self' and were 'willing always to make the ultimate sacrifice – this is the inspiration', he remarks, 'that made the one a hero and the other a saint.' *The Murder Machine*, p. 377. Stephen MacKenna, the renowned translator of Plotinus, and friend to both Pearse and Æ, remarked that Pearse's 'ideal Irishman, whom he thought might be a living reality in our day, was a Cuchulain baptized.' Quoted in Irwin Thompson, pp. 76-7.
[68] Ó Buachalla, *Educational Writings,* p. 318.
[69] Dudley Edwards, p. 116.
[70] Ó Buachalla, *Educational Writings,* pp. 341-2.

patriotism' in schools, we should note that in the article where Pearse refers to this matter he is also at pains to emphasise that this should not involve the teaching of jingoistic propaganda: 'far more effective than the mere didactic preaching of patriotism', he remarks, 'would be well-directed efforts to bring the children into some direct relation with the country they inhabit - its natural beauty, its wild living things, its rocks, its rivers, its ruins.'[71] In Pearse's view, therefore, the teaching of patriotism involved making the child aware of her relation to the lived-environment – the 'life-world' – in which he or she was growing up.

It is also noteworthy that after remarking in the May 1913 issue of *An Macaomh* that none of his pupils seemed surprised when he related his 'vivid dream' to them, 'for it fitted in with all that we have been teaching at St. Enda's', Pearse then insists their reaction does not imply that his teachers 'have ever carried on anything like a political or revolutionary propaganda among the boys'. Instead, he maintains that they responded as calmly as they did because 'we have always allowed them to feel that no one can finely live who hoards life too jealously'.[72] Pearse saw it as part of the education process to encourage in pupils an acceptance of the inevitability of death and an understanding of the part that it played in engendering life, a policy he believed would enable them to live life all the more fully. In a 1913 article, he maintains that it was part of the function of education to 'bring a certain hardening' to the pupil in respect to realities such as their own mortality. 'One scarcely knows whether modern sentimentalism or modern utilitarianism is the more sure sign of modern decadence', he remarks here.[73] In the December 1909 issue of *An Macaomh* he defends his policy of dealing quite openly with the subject of death among his pupils: 'I have no sympathy with sentimentalists who hold that we should surround children with an artificial happiness, shutting out from their ken pain and sorrow, and retribution and the world's law of unending strife', he states here. 'I believe in gentleness, but not softness. I would not place too heavy a burden on young shoulders, but I would see that no one, boy or man, shirk the burden he is strong enough to bear.'[74]

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[71] Ibid., p. 66 In *An Macaomh* he writes that 'what I mean by an Irish school is a school that takes Ireland for granted. You need not praise the Irish language - simply speak it; you need not denounce English games - play Irish ones; you need not ignore foreign history, foreign literatures - deal with them from an Irish point of view.' Ibid., p. 324.

[72] Ibid., p. 343.

[73] Pearse, 'The Education Problem in the Home Rule Parliament', ibid.,357. See also *The Murder Machine*, ibid., pp. 373-4.

[74] Ibid., p. 332.

The following year in the school magazine he expands on what he means by 'the world's law of unending strife'. Towards the end of a passage relating the natural beauty of the school-grounds at St. Enda's, he describes a battle for life taking place between the trout and a freebooter in the river that ran through the school-grounds: 'I think it is partly to that freebooter', he remarks, 'we owe it that the trout are not as numerous as they of yore. Yet we will not intervene between him and the fish; let them fight on their old war, instinct against instinct.' When Pearse then turns to the rabbits that 'come out and gambol under the trees in the evening' in the woods, an even less sentimental picture of forest-life emerges: the rabbits, he remarks, appear to be

> happy, in the foolish way of rabbits, till one of the river rats wants his supper. So day and night there is red murder in the greenwood and in every greenwood in the world. It is murder and death that make possible the terrible thing we call physical life. Life springs from death, life lives on death [...] All of which would be very terrible were death really an evil thing...[75]

Notwithstanding the gruesome nature of these remarks (Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill claims the passage amounts to an 'overt death-wish'[76]), it is important to note that Pearse was fully aware his approach towards the subject of death in his schools was unconventional. He believed, however, this was because modern culture had instilled in people an unhealthy and repressive attitude towards their own mortality. His very frank approach to this subject at St. Enda's – as well as the manner in which the school valorised exemplars of the heroic life-ethic such as Cuchulainn and Colm Cille – must have influenced at least some of the ex-pupils who took part in the Rising. It is impossible to know for certain whether Pearse had consciously intended that outcome, but what it is clear is that the emphasis he placed on preparedness for death at his schools arose, at least in part, from his conviction that it was a teacher's duty to encourage a 'certain hardening' in his pupils towards their own mortality. Furthermore, given Pearse's belief that 'universal' human values such as fortitude heroism, and truthfulness could only be fostered through the life-world of the individual pupil, it was perhaps inevitable that some of his students would develop strongly nationalist attitudes. If, as we saw Pearse claim at the start of this section, the education system in Ireland was 'cunningly designed' to destroy Irish nationality by ignoring the language, literature and history of the country, then the very fact of their re-introduction to the St. Enda's syllabus was bound to 'awaken' some element of nationalist feeling among students.

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[75] Ibid., p. 338.
[76] Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, 'The Black Box' in Dermot Bolger (ed.) *16 on 16: Letters from the 'New Island'* (Dublin: Raven Arts Press, 1995), p. 215.

II

Early Fiction and Poetry

So does the spiritual always triumph over the actual (for the spiritual, being the true actual, is stronger than the forms and bulks we call actual), and a simple man's faith is found more potent than a negotiable instrument.
(An Macaomh, 1910)

We saw that Pearse's educational theories place a great emphasis on the human imagination. The system of fosterage that seeks to nurture the individual child's moral development focuses in large part on this faculty, hence the importance of the idea of 'an adequate inspiration'. His views on the human imagination reveal the closeness for Pearse of religious and nationalist factors in education. Virtues such as 'fortitude, truth and loving-kindness'[1] could not be fostered in children *as* universal Christian virtues valid for all times and all places, they needed to be revealed as an intrinsic feature of the children's particular life-world. This is why he maintained that emotive 'histories' such as that of Anne Devlin served an important pedagogical function. It was through these narratives that virtues such as charity, chivalry and self-sacrifice become real to the child.[2]

The imaginative faculty also plays a key part in Pearse's literary works. This is true not only in the obvious sense that his poems, plays and short-stories are all fictional creations, but in the sense that his work is frequently *about* the human imagination itself, particularly as it relates to the issue of spiritual experience. This dual emphasis is often viewed as a sign of the influence of the Romantic tradition. Irwin Thompson considers Pearse's literature alongside that of Thomas McDonagh and Joseph Plunkett. He suggests that 'if we examine the images of the self in the poetry of the rebels we can see the historical imagination of the revolutionary at work in the larger cultural phenomenon of romanticism.'[3] Terence Brown comments that Irish cultural nationalism was part of a larger European movement 'fanned into general life by the

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[1] Pearse St. Enda's 'Prospectus' in Ó Buachalla, *Educational* Writings, p. 318.

[2] Anne Devlin (1778-1851) helped Robert Emmet to plan the ill-fated insurrection of 1803, for which she was arrested and imprisoned in Kilmainham Gaol. Despite being tortured and enduring three years solitary confinement, she refused to give any information concerning her fellow conspirators. In the Christmas 1910 issue of *An Macaomh* Pearse refers to Devlin as epitomizing the kind of 'heroic spirit' he hoped to instil in the students at his schools. Ibid., p. 36.

[3] Irwin Thompson, p. 117.

fervour of Romanticism' in which 'the essential, spiritual life of a people is assumed to subsist in its culture, bequeathed to it from antiquity and prehistory.' Language is a core element in this understanding of national identity, Brown observes, because it 'is what bears the gifts of the past into the present and supplies a living link with a racial spirituality.'[4]

In terms of how it engaged with the 'real', or the political, these critics view the influence of romanticism in the literature of the Irish Revival in a highly negative light, as amounting to a form of false-consciousness. Brown, for example, suggests that the revivalists were responding to a widespread religious crisis in Victorian Britain, but did so with 'profoundly reactionary' and 'all too literary nostalgias about race and religion.' He describes Pearse as a 'social activist' who was 'distracted by [revivalist] images of antique chivalry and archaic purity of creed and blood,' and ended up 'taking its aesthetics as seriously as its politics.' [5] Irwin Thompson, rather more bluntly, claims that Pearse 'confused his own imagination with reality'.[6]

There is no question but that Pearse's writings, and those of the Revival in general, were greatly influenced by the romantic tradition. It is not certain, however, that this equates to an irrational or sectarian political vision. In *Imagination Under Pressure,1789-1832*, John Whale contends that the political significance of European Romanticism is often underestimated. He points out that the emphasis on imagination and spirituality in this literature often occurred as a response to what writers saw as a general trend toward utilitarianism in society, with its positivistic mind-set and prioritisation of the 'understanding' or 'practical reason' over the imagination.[7]

We have already seen the extent to which Pearse's politics were defined in opposition to utilitarianism; the same point could be made about many of the figures involved in the

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[4] Terence Brown, ed.,'Cultural Nationalism 1880-1930', in *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, 3 vols.,eds. Seamus Deane, Andrew Carpenter and Jonathan Williams (Derry: Field Day Publications, 1991), ii, p. 516.
[5] Ibid., p. 520.
[6] Irwin Thompson, p. 98.
[7] John Whale, *Imagination Under Pressure, 1789 - 1832 Aesthetics, Politics and Utility* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2000), p. 166. Rather than an attempt to occlude history and politics, Whale claims that for Romantics such as Coleridge the imaginative faculty 'is firmly linked to ideas of individual, historical, and social progress.' Ibid., pp. 166-7.

Revival.[8] Like the earlier, English romantics, Pearse viewed the 'subjectivity produced by imagination' as both 'prospective and propulsive,' and opposed to utilitarian ideology.[9] However, there were also ways in which he differed from them in regard to his understanding of this faculty. Whale's study illustrates that many romantics saw the imagination as functioning in a primarily mediatory capacity. It was seen as the faculty of the human mind that unifies subjective and objective experience by putting the experience of the senses in some kind of order, most characteristically, a narrative order. Rather than completely arbitrary and unconnected events, they believed that the imaginative faculty of the mind helps us to perceive external reality as proceeding from the past through the present into the future. In this scenario, therefore, imagination is a purely subjective phenomenon, one which 'processes' the data of external experience.

In Pearse, this binary distinction between subjective and objective reality is complicated by his spiritual beliefs. As the quotation at the beginning of this section illustrates, he believed that 'the spiritual' realm was actually 'stronger than the forms and bulks we call actual', and so would 'always triumph' over material reality. Furthermore, some of his short-stories suggest that he interpreted this 'triumph' in a quite literal sense: as implying that – at least in principle – spiritual reality could occur in as concrete a fashion as the material world. Insofar as it related to spiritual matters, therefore, he believed that the realm of the imagination was not confined to subjective experience, it could also manifest itself as part of the physical world.[10]

Most of Pearse's short stories focus on the West of Ireland peasantry, and it is primarily in terms of his representation of these people that the themes of imagination and spirituality figure in his fictional writings. The Irish peasantry were of central importance to the ideology of the Irish Revolution, as they were considered by many to be the one section of the populace that escaped the anglicization of the country. As such they embodied the essence of what it meant to be Irish. The notion that they led innately 'spiritual' lives was of particular

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[8] Seamus Deane, for example, points out, for Yeats, 'Irish politics enacted [...] the great cultural battle of the era between Romantics and Utilitarians.' See *Celtic Revivals – Essays in Modern Irish Literature 1880-1980* (Winston-Salem: Wake Forest University Press, 1987), p. 39.

[9] The very nature of 'the subjectivity produced by imagination', for Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Whale remarks, 'is prospective and propulsive, a selfhood based [...] on faith and hope'; one which he attempts to keep 'alive in the face of what he perceives to be the pervasive and dominant ideology of utility'. Whale, p. 166-7.

[10] In the few pages he wrote towards an autobiography Pearse demonstrated his awareness of the extent to which his imagination regularly 'triumphed' over what he called his 'actual' existence. 'Many of my failures have doubtless been due to the fact that my thoughts and emotions of yesterday, my ordeals and triumphs of tomorrow, have always been more to me than my deeds of today: the remembered or imagined experience more insistent than the actual.' Pearse, in Mary Brigid Pearse (ed.), *The Home Life of Pádraig Pearse,* pp. 7-8.

significance in this regard: the peasants' simple lifestyles and unquestioning faith in God was regarded as evidence that they had escaped the materialism of the modern age. Thus, they exemplified for many nationalists the fundamental difference between Irish and English culture.

In artistic terms, the peasantry were treated as a living connection with Gaelic literary antiquity. John Wilson Foster remarks that revivalists such as Daniel Corkery and W.B. Yeats were possessed of the 'half-historical, half legendary conviction' that the Irish peasantry, 'or at least the seers and story-tellers among it, held in productive custody the memory and art of a native aristocracy dispersed with the overthrow of the Gaelic order'.[11] By reproducing the ancient sagas of Gaelic literary antiquity, therefore, as well as the poetry and stories of the peasantry, revivalists were attempting to (re-) create an 'art of the people'. The issue of peasant spirituality was also of central importance in this regard. Wilson Foster notes that 'certain upper-class, mostly Protestant' revivalists believed 'they shared with the peasant a disdain for worldly possessions'. Yeats, for example, 'thought that both the peasant and the aristocrat were free from the anxieties associated with acquisitiveness and could thereby cultivate a spiritual existence.'[12]

Pearse had a slightly more complex view of the role that peasant culture should play in the Revival. As editor of *An Claidheamh Soluis* he was a leading figure in the attempt to nurture a *modern* style of literature. Consequently, he rejected the notion that Irish writers should look to traditional art forms for inspiration. Instead, he called upon them to discover new ways to express contemporary reality.[13] 'We hold the folk tale to be a beautiful and gracious thing only in its own time and place', he writes in 1906,

> and its time and place are the winter fireside, or the spring sowing time, or the country road at any season. Thus, we lay down the proposition that a living literature *cannot* (and if it could, should not) be built on the folk tale. The folk tale is an echo of old mythologies: literature is a deliberate criticism of actual life … This is the twentieth century; and no literature can take root in the twentieth century which is not of the twentieth century. We want no Gothic revival.[14]

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[11] John Wilson Foster, *Fictions of the Irish Literary Revival – A Changeling Art* (Syracuse: Syracuse U.P., 1987), p. 302.
[12] Ibid., p. 301.
[13] Kiberd refers to Pearse as '[T]he most influential apostle of Gaelic modernism'.
Declan Kiberd, 'Story-Telling: The Gaelic Tradition'. In Patrick Rafordi and Terence Brown (eds.), *The Irish Short Story* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1979), p. 18.
[14] Pearse, *An Claidheamh Soluis* (May, 1906). Quoted in Kiberd, *The Irish Short Story*, p.18.

Notwithstanding his rejection of traditional art forms, Pearse's fiction is characteristic of much revivalist writing in the sense that his stories highlight the supposedly innate spirituality of the West of Ireland peasantry. Wilson Foster remarks that his short stories 'cherish the notion of a blessed and enchanted west, site of a poverty and simplicity that induce miracles.' [15] As Foster's comment suggests, one of the most noteworthy aspects of Pearse's stories from both an aesthetic and a political perspective relates to their treatment of supernatural experience. It is primarily in relation to this theme that we gain an insight into his belief that spiritual reality could 'triumph over the actual' in the lives of the Irish peasantry.

'Íosagán' (1906) focuses on the character of Old Matthias, a well-loved member of a village community in the West of Ireland.[16] The narrator describes this character in highly idealistic terms. He is

> a man as honest, as simple, as natural as you would meet in a day's walking [...] There wasn't ever heard out of his mouth but the good word. He had no delight in drink or in company, no wish for gold or for property. He was poor, but it's often he shared with people that were poorer than he. He had pity for the infirm. He had mercy for the wretched. (232)

Old Matthias is an exemplary Christian, except for the fact that he does not attend church. We are told that he 'hadn't heard 'the sweet Mass' for over three score years.' (230) In the small community in which he lives, this has inevitably alienated him from some of his neighbours: despite being well-loved, this character is 'a man apart' (231) in the village. Interestingly, Pearse uses the character of the local priest to defend Old Matthias from villagers who want to ostracise him from their community on account of his non-attendance at Mass: Old Matthias spends practically all his time with the local children, we are told, and when one of the mothers in the village asks 'Father Sean' whether she should allow her child to spend his time with 'a man that frequents neither clergy nor church' (234), the priest replies that her child 'couldn't be in better company [...] If Old Matthias hasn't love for God - a thing that neither you nor I know' he warns, 'it's wonderful the love that he has for the cleanest and most beautiful thing that God created, - the shining soul of the child.' (235)

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[15] Wilson Foster, p. 305. This is a fair reflection of a large number of Pearse's stories, although it does not take account of his more complex treatment of peasant culture in one of his finest works, 'The Dearg-Daol'.

[16] 'Íosagán' was written in Irish and first published in *An Claidheamh Soluis* (22/12/1906) under the pseudonym Colm Ó Connaire. Pearse did not translate any of his Irish short stories into English (although he did write a dramatic adaptation of this work in English). The translation I use is by Joseph Campbell in *Plays, Stories, Poems - Pádraic H. Pearse*, pp. 227-245. (Hereafter referred to as *Plays, Stories, Poems*. Further references to this translation are included in the main text.)

No one in the village can remember why Old Matthias stopped attending Mass. Some villagers claim that he is an atheist; others that he committed 'some terrible sin at the start of his life' and when the priest refused him absolution he swore an oath that he 'wouldn't touch priest or chapel while he was living again'; and some even claim that he sold his soul to a 'Great Man that he met once on the top of Cnoc-a'-daimh, and that this person wouldn't allow him to frequent the Mass.' (231) The narrator insists, however, that he does not know if any of these stories are in fact true; and while it is tempting to read this character as an old Fenian who has been excommunicated by the Church, there is nothing further in the text to suggest that this is the case. What is clear is that Old Matthias is undergoing a spiritual crisis. He clearly still regrets the fact that he is ostracised from the Catholic Church. At the beginning of the story we see him sitting at the doorstep to his home listening for the bell for Mass, then watching wistfully as the other townspeople make their way to church, and finally letting out a 'weary and sorrowful' (235) sigh as the bell stops ringing and the mass begins without him.

The visions that Old Matthias has of Íosagán are directly related to this spiritual crisis. It is as the mass begins, and Old Matthias turns his face away from the church, that he first sees Íosagán playing with some local children on the village-green. This 'strange boy' whose face is 'as bright as the sun' (237) disappears before the old man has a chance to speak to him. On the third Sunday that he appears Old Matthias does finally manage to talk to the child. Íosagán then reveals his identity and suggests that he should visit His father's 'house'. Old Matthais rejects the invitation, however, remarking that 'I fear I haven't kept His law.' (239) The parishioners then start coming out from mass and Íosagán 'disappears'. Later the same night Íosagán calls to Father Sean's house and tells the priest that Old Matthias is dying and in urgent need of a priest to administer the Last Rites. Father Sean arrives just in time: Old Matthias makes his confession, receives communion, and is anointed just before he dies. 'I was praying God that you'd come' he remarks to the priest, 'but I hadn't any messenger to send for you.' 'But you did send a messenger' the priest replies and tells Old Matthias about the little boy with the white coat who called to his door. 'Íosagán!' Old Matthias exclaims and immediately expires. (243)

In terms of its treatment of peasant spirituality this story is of interest in several respects. Firstly, as noted, in Old Matthias Pearse creates a character who is a Christian individual yet in deep conflict with the Catholic Church. Furthermore, although some of the villages regard

him in a negative light (as an atheist, or someone who may have sold his soul to the devil) Pearse represents Old Matthias as being the only adult in the community worthy of seeing the Child Jesus. As Íosagán remarks to this character: 'my father gave me leave to show Myself to you, because you have loved His little children.' In this way, God himself is presented as being more sympathetic towards Christians outside the Catholic Church (both literally and figuratively) than those within it. After all, when the orthodox Catholics are solemnly attending Sunday Mass, the Son of God is to be found playing with the local children on the village-green and chatting to Old Matthias about how 'the grown people' are too 'blind' to see Him (239). However, these observations need to be qualified to some extent. Rather than deserting the church-goers for the children and the village-green, as a Divine being, Íosagán is capable of being present in more than one place at the same time: he tells Old Matthias that he is, in fact, simultaneously within and without the church: 'I do be among the people when they gather into My house. I do be among the children they do leave behind them playing on the street.' (239) Neither is the character of Old Matthias as rebellious as first appears: like many a lapsed Irish Catholic, he repents his secret sin and is received back into the Church before he dies. By the end of the story, therefore, 'natural' Christian sentiment and orthodox Catholicism have been reconciled.

It is also significant that Old Matthias's refusal to have anything to do with the Church for more than three-score years is represented as being due to his own personal sinfulness rather than any failing on the part of the Church as an institution. When he explains to Íosagán why he has not been to His father's house for so long, Old Matthais places the blame completely on himself, remarking that 'I was too timid - or too proud - to go into Your House, Íosagán' (240). As such, although the details remain shrouded in secrecy, it is clear that Old Matthais's spiritual crisis is a private, not a social matter; and one that finds its resolution within this character's own self when he finally lets the priest into his house and repents his sins.

There is, however, a further way in which the treatment of spirituality in 'Íosagán' is noteworthy. This story was first published in *An Claidheamh Soluis* in December 1906. Pearse's own one-act adaptation of the story appeared in a 1909 issue of *An Macaomh*, the Saint Enda's school magazine. In his editorial for this issue Pearse presents his own view of the work. Referring to his stage version of the story (which is also called *Íosagán* and does not differ from the original short-story in relation to any of the above-discussed points) Pearse observes that he intended to present a true 'picture' of contemporary life in the west of Ireland.

In regard to the dialogue, for example, he remarks that 'I have [...] religiously followed the phraseology of the children and old men in Iar-Connacht [...] anglicisms, 'vulgarisms', and all: if I gave anything else my picture would be a false one.'[17] Clearly, the biggest problem with the claim that 'Íosagán' (in either its short-story or dramatic form) presents a true 'picture' of West of Ireland life concerns the presence of a supernatural character in the work. In his *An Macaomh* editorial Pearse addresses this issue directly:

> In bringing the Child Jesus into the midst of a group of boys disputing about their games, or to the knee of an old man who sings nursery rhymes to the children, I am imaging nothing improbable, nothing outside the bounds of the everyday experience of innocent little children and reverent-minded old men and women. I know a priest who believes that he was summoned to the death-bed of a parishioner by our Lord in person; and there are many hundreds of people in the countryside I write of who know that on certain nights Mary and her Child walk through the villages and if the cottage doors be left open, enter and sit awhile in the firesides of the poor.[18]

As this quotation illustrates, Pearse did not view the presence of the Child Jesus as undermining the verisimilar quality of his story. Such 'encounters', he believed, were quite common for certain kinds of people. Furthermore, there is no suggestion in either the editorial or the story itself that such people see themselves as undergoing anything extraordinary: the young and innocent, the old and reverent treat the appearance of the supernatural in their lives as something quite ordinary and unexceptional, because for these people the 'spiritual' *is* the 'true actual'.

'The Mother' (1913) is another short story that highlights the peasantry's openness to spiritual experiences of a visionary nature.[19] In the above quotation from *An Macaomh* Pearse refers to 'people in the countryside I write of who know that on certain nights Mary and her Child walk through the villages', 'The Mother' concerns just such an experience on the part of a young wife. As this story opens a group of women are sitting up late spinning frieze. When one of the women's children starts to cry, Maire, the central character who has no child of her own, sings it back to sleep with an old lullaby. Una, one of the other women present, then remarks that it was the Blessed Virgin herself who made the lullaby that Maire was singing, 'to put the

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[17] Pearse, *An Macaomh* (December 1909) in Ó Buachalla, p. 334.
[18] Ibid., p. 334.
[19] Pearse wrote the story in Irish under the title 'An Mathair'. It was first published in *An Claidheamh Soluis* (20/12/1913). The translation I use is by Joseph Campbell in *Plays, Stories, Poems,* pp. 125-37. (Further references are included in the main text.)

Son of God [...] asleep when He was a child.' When she is asked how the people have come to know the tune, Una replies that

> 'Doesn't the world know that the glorious Virgin goes round the townlands every Christmas Eve, herself and the Child? [...] And don't you know' she continues, 'if the door is left ajar and a little candle lighting in the window, that the Virgin will come into the house, and that they will sit down to rest themselves?' (129)

Una's story has a deep affect on Maire, a woman who, after four years of marriage, is still 'longing' to conceive her first child. The following Christmas Eve, before she goes to bed, Maire leaves the door to her house on the latch. When she feels sure that her husband is sleeping, she rises again to await the Virgin's visit. As she waited, we read, 'there came a heightening of mind on her as it used to come betimes in the chapel, and she going to receive communion from the priest's hands [...] She felt, somehow, that the Presence wasn't far from her, and that it wouldn't be long until she would hear a footstep.' (133) Her faith is duly rewarded. The Virgin does call at her house, Maire takes the opportunity to ask her blessing for a child, and by the following Christmas Eve she has become a mother.

In terms of the treatment of peasant spirituality, 'The Mother' resembles 'Íosagán' in several respects. As in the earlier story, supernatural occurrences in 'The Mother' are represented as being part of 'everyday experience'. Granted that the presence of Virgin is not greeted with the same equanimity with which the characters in 'Íosagán' respond to the presence of the Child Jesus, but nevertheless, the *reality* of the Virgin's visitations is not doubted by the women: in Pearse's words, it is something that the people of the countryside 'know' happens.

'The Mother' also recalls the 'Íosagán' story in the sense that, here too, we see that supernatural experiences are only granted to those who are both worthy and in need of such experiences. In 'Íosagán' that meant innocent children and a spiritually troubled old man. In 'The Mother' it is a young woman who yearns to become pregnant and does everything possible to 'encourage' the spiritual to become 'actual'. It is noteworthy, too, that the character of Una proves unworthy of such experiences. She insists to Maire that the Virgin's visitations do occur; however, like Maire's husband, she is asleep and unaware of the presence of the Virgin in her house. Having tried to wait up one Christmas Eve, she confesses that 'a cloud of sleep fell on me [...] and when I opened *I thought I saw, as it would be*, a young woman and a child in her arms going out the door' (130, my italics). Una's sleepiness,

therefore, casts doubts on the depth of her faith and her 'need' to see the Virgin. The depth of Maire's need is incontestable. 'The great longing of her soul' for a child 'was plundering and desolating her' (131), the narrator tells us. Over the previous four years she has been doing all that she can to encourage God to bless her with a child. We learn that she has put herself through numerous spiritual penances in an attempt to win His favour. She would often spend hours on her knees 'praying God to send her a child'. When her husband was away from home she would frequently 'go to sleep without dinner and without supper.' Once, we are told, 'she drew blood from her shoulder-blades with blows she gave herself with a switch. Another time she stuck thorns into her flesh in memory of the crown of thorns that went on the brow of the Saviour' (131-2); and, unlike Una, on the night of Christmas Eve itself, she stayed awake watching and listening for the Virgin until she finally arrived.

Finally, 'Íosagán' and 'The Mother' are also alike in that the spiritual crises presented in these stories both find their resolutions within the central protagonists' individual selves. This feature is particularly noteworthy in relation to Maire. In longing to conceive a child, it would seem that her problem is a physical and 'worldly' one. However, Maire's spouse hardly figures at all in this story, either as part of the problem or the solution. He is described as 'a decent, kindly man', but he has no idea of the religiously-inspired penances through which his wife is putting herself. Significantly, the only occasion on which he is actually present in the story, he is lying asleep in the marital bed. As such, conceiving a child is represented as *Maire's* problem. We can, of course, presume that she had sex with her husband before she finally conceived, but she had been doing that for four years to no effect. Her eventual pregnancy is almost a kind of immaculate conception, as it is really due to the intervention of the Virgin Mary that she conceives, rather than anything that her husband does. If Maire's sleepy husband is one of 'the bulks we call actual', then in this story, as in 'Íosagán', it is the spiritual which proves itself to be the stronger reality.

There is no reason to suppose that Pearse was not in earnest when he suggested that he is 'imagining nothing improbable' in representing Old Matthais and the young boys as conversing quite casually with the Child Jesus, or when he says that many people in the countryside he writes of 'know' (as opposed to merely think or believe) that Mary and her Child sometimes walk through their villages and sit awhile at the firesides of the poor. There is an important difference, however, between believing that such supernatural events can occur to especially holy people, innocent children, and such like, and thinking that one has these

experiences oneself. Many critics claim that Pearse's literature indicates that he believed he underwent the kind of visionary experiences dramatised in stories such as 'Íosagán' and 'The Mother'. This has been treated a sign of an irrational mindset, further evidence of the 'illogical blend of radical fervour and occult yearnings' that informed Revivalist literature as a whole.[20]

In 'The Messianic Ideal', for example, Richard J. Loftus critiques Pearse's poetry alongside that of Thomas MacDonagh and Joseph Plunkett, and contends that 'all three were, by their own claim, 'visionary' poets, and the ideals, if one may call them that, which they celebrate in their verse, are meant to invoke a spiritual vision that is not only personal - although for each it is that, to be sure - but also national and racial.'[21] It is not clear why *none* of the values celebrated in Pearse's poetry can be confidently described as 'ideals', but it is the suggestion that he was a visionary poet which I wish to discuss here. Loftus states that 'by [his] own claim' Pearse was a 'visionary' poet, but does not indicate where Pearse makes this claim. He may be referring to the line in 'The Rebel' where the speaker describes himself as one who has 'vision and prophecy and the gift/ of fiery speech,'[22] however, as Loftus himself points out, in 'The Rebel' the speaker is 'a racial and national archetype' (147). The poem is not intended to be read as a visionary work in any literal sense of the word. If we treat the speakers in Pearse's poetry as expressing his own thoughts and dilemmas (and much of the work does strike the reader as being confessional), then the poems that show him seeking a sense of divine presence usually attest to a feeling of the absence of God. Rather than 'visionary poetry', or even poems that seek visionary experience, these works are primarily about *the failure* of the search for such experiences.

'Christ's Coming' is one of the more optimistic poems in regard to the possibility of spiritual experience.[23] In this short, two-stanza work, we read that the speaker has 'made my heart clean tonight/ As a woman might clean her house/ Ere her lover come to visit her'. In the second stanza he likens himself to a father eagerly awaiting the return of a much-loved son: 'I

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[20] Brown, p. 520.
[21] Richard J. Loftus, 'Pearse, MacDonagh, Plunkett: The Messianic Ideal' in *Nationalism in Modern Anglo-Irish Poetry* (Madison: University of Wisconson, 1964), p. 132.
[22] Pearse, 'The Rebel' in *Plays, Stories, Poems*, p. 338.
[23] Christ's Coming' ibid., p. 328. Originally titled 'Teacht Chríost', this poem was first published in *An Claidheamh Soluis* in December 1914. As with all of the poems I discuss here which were originally written in Irish, the translation is Pearse's own. Ó Buachcalla suggests that this was the last poem Pearse wrote in Irish, and notes that most of his translations were undertaken between 1913 and 1915. In Séamus Ó Buachcalla (ed.) *The Literary Writings of Patrick Pearse – Writings In English* (Dublin: The Mercier Press, 1979), pp. 13-4. (Hereafter referred to as Ó Buachcalla, *Literary Writings*).

have opened the door of my heart/ Like a man that would make a feast/ For his son's coming home from afar'. Nowhere in the poem is there any indication that either the 'lover' or the 'son' (who of course are metaphors for Jesus Christ) actually do appear. Instead both stanzas end with an exhortation to the absent loved-one: 'O Lover, pass not by!' appeals the 'woman' in the first stanza; while the 'father' cries out 'Lovely Thy coming, O Son!' At most the poem reveals the speaker's hopefulness in regard to the possibility of a visionary experience, a hope based on the fact that (somewhat like the character of Maire in 'The Mother') he has done all that he can to prepare himself and his 'house' for a visitation.

In other poems the sense of expectation is a great deal lower. In 'A Rann I Made' the speaker again represents himself as a lover of God, 'the king of kings'[24]:

> A rann I made within my heart
> To the rider, to the high king,
> A rann I made to my love,
> To the king of kings, ancient death.

The speaker does apostrophize God in the second half of this two-stanza work, but he is clearly not anticipating a response from this deity, whom he represents as 'ancient death'.

> Brighter to me than the light of day
> The dark of thy house, tho' black clay;
> Sweeter to me than the music of
> trumpets
> The quiet of thy house and its eternal
> silence.

Rather than the Divine *Presence*, the God apostrophized here is more akin to a divine absence, hence Pearse associates him with non-properties such as 'dark[ness]' and 'silence'. 'Long To Me Thy Coming' reveals a similarly morbid understanding of the Christian God.[25] In this poem the speaker looks forward to the coming of God's 'old henchman' death, the 'friend of all friends,' who will 'free me from my pain':

> O syllable on the wind,
> O footfall not heavy,
> O hand in the dark,
> Your coming is long to me.

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[24] Pearse, 'A Rann I Made' in *Plays, Stories, Poems*, p. 320. Originally published in Irish as 'Rann do Rinneas' in Pearse's only anthology of Irish poems: *Suantraidhe agus Goltraidhe*, published by the Irish Review in 1914. Ó Buachcalla, *Literary Writings*, p. 11.

[25] Pearse, 'Long To Me Thy Coming' ibid., p. 318. Originally published in Irish as 'Fada Liom do Theacht' in *Suantraidhe agus Goltraidhe* (1914). Ibid., p. 11.

In this poem also, therefore, God is imagined as absence and death. One of the curious features of this work, and of 'A Rann I Made', is that although God is represented in this manner, it does not to lead Pearse to doubt His existence. There is little sense that 'God is dead' in these poems, rather He *is* death.

A preoccupation with the subject of death is apparent in many of Pearse's poems. In 'A Woman of the Mountain Keens Her Son' death is recognised as an unwelcome, but inevitable element of life: 'Grief on the death' the speaker cries, 'it cannot be denied.'[26] A similar recognition occurs in one of Pearse's best known poems, 'The Wayfarer', where he laments 'The beauty of the world' that 'Will pass and change, will die and be no/ more'.[27] 'O Lovely Head' presents a very sceptical attitude toward the possibility of visionary experience indeed. The speaker in this poem mourns the passing 'of the woman that I loved'. His dead lover returns to him each night in his dreams, and he hears her 'low and beautiful' voice again, but when 'reality returns with the sun's whitening' he is forced to accept the brute fact of her death, and 'that the slender worm gnaws thee/ to-night.'[28]

Loftus contends that 'too frequently in their verse [the Rising poets] were forced to admit their inadequacy to commit to paper words that convey a sense of their vision.'[29] He cites Pearse's 'Renunciation' as an example of this 'inadequacy'. In this poem, he claims, Pearse 'covers his eyes against the light, closes his ears against the music, hardens his heart against the sweet taste of his visionary experience; for the light is too bright for human comprehension, the music too beautiful, the taste too sweet'.[30] 'Renunciation' is one of Pearse most difficult and important works. Rather than an inability to translate the beautiful vision into words, however, this poem can be read as rejecting such experiences as purely subjective chimeras. Admittedly, the work seems to begin by relating a spiritual vision: 'Naked I saw thee,/ O beauty of beauty'.[31] The first three stanzas then represent the speaker as turning away from

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[26] Pearse, 'A Woman of the Mountain Keens Her Son' in *Plays, Stories, Poems*, p. 313. Originally published in Irish as 'Bean tSléibhe ag Caoineadh a Mic' in *An Claidheamh Soluis* (14/12/1907). Ibid., p. 10.
[27] Pearse, 'The Wayfarer' in *Plays, Stories, Poems*, p. 341. Pearse is reputed to have written this poem the night before his execution.
[28] Pearse, 'O Lovely Head' in Plays, Stories, Poems, p. 318. Originally published in Irish as 'A Chinn Álainn' in *Suantraidhe agus Goltraidhe* (1914). Ó Buachcalla, *Literary Writings*, p. 11.
[29] Loftus, p. 137.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Pearse, 'Renunciation' in *Plays, Stories, Poems*, p. 324. Originally published in Irish as 'Fornacht do Chonnac Thú' in the *Irish Review* I, 12, 1912. Ó Buachcalla, p. 11.

this encounter: 'I blinded my eyes/ For fear I should fail' (stanza one); 'I closed my ears/ For fear I should falter' (stanza two); 'And I hardened my heart/ For fear of my slaying' (stanza three). There is a feeling of 'inadequacy' in these stanzas, therefore, but it is not certain that it arises out of the poet's inability - as wordsmith - to 'convey a sense of [his] vision'. The penultimate stanza provides a more convincing reason as to why the speaker turns away from this encounter.

> I turned my back
> On the vision I had shaped,
> And to this road before me
> I turned my face.

These lines suggest that the speaker rejects the 'vision' because he recognises it was a self-induced illusion; a vision he 'had shaped' himself. It is because he recognises his 'vision' was chimerical, that in the poem's final stanza the speaker chooses the way of action over the way of contemplative vision.

> I have turned my face
> To this road before me,
> To the deed that I see
> And the death I shall die.

These final two stanzas suggest that the speaker is not so much turning away from a 'vision' at all, as he is turning *towards* an alternative way of life: 'To this road before me,/ To the deed that I see'. The poem does not so much describe the speaker's inability to convey a sense of his vision (as Loftus maintains) but rather concerns a moment of personal crisis in the poet's life during which he rejects the idea of visions for more worldly experiences.

Though more critical in tone, Edna Longley's analysis of 'Renunciation' is quite similar to Loftus's reading. Comparing Pearse's poetry to that of Rupert Brooke, Longley suggests that 'Pearse's poetry shares with Brooke's patriotic sonnets an inversion - some might say perversion - of normative values'.[32] Both poets, she remarks, present 'renunciation - of all things earthly, bodily, sensory, human - as fulfilment.' 'Renunciation', however, reveals the Irish poet 'is quicker to mortify the flesh' than Brooke; Pearse 'lingers less on life in imaginatively taking leave'. For Longley, the poem's 'sequence of sensory self-deprivations resembles the masochistic penances undertaken by Stephen Dedalus.'[33] As we have seen it is

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[32] Edna Longley, 'The Rising, the Somme and Irish Memory' in *The Living Stream: Literature and Revisionism in Ireland* (Bloodaxe Books: Newcastle, 1994), p. 78.
[33] Ibid., pp. 78-9.

not at all certain that 'all things earthly, bodily, sensory, human' *are* being renounced in this poem. Rather than rejecting the earthly in favour of the mystical, 'Renunciation' can be read as moving in the completely opposite direction. The comparison with Stephen's sensory deprivations in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is also inappropriate. The most striking feature of Stephen's experiences is that they are 'real', we are in no doubt that Stephen undergoes those penances, this, indeed, is what makes them memorable for the reader. To interpret Pearse's poem in a similarly literal fashion is to read metaphor in the same way one reads realistic prose. Longley focuses on the image of the speaker blinding his own eyes, but the images at the end of the poem are especially 'visual' in nature: the speaker, we read, has 'turned my face/ To this road before me,/ To the deed that I see'. These images underline the metaphorical character of the speaker's 'penances'. If anything is meant to be taken literally in this poem it is surely the anticipation of death. We have seen that death is a recurring theme in Pearse's work, but despite the morbidity of this subject, death is also 'earthly, bodily, sensory [and] human'; indeed this, one feels sure, is the point that Pearse is trying to make in much of his poetry.

Loftus suggests that Pearse felt 'no struggles, no torments, no doubts concerning his religious belief'.[34] The evidence of his literary works suggests otherwise. The notion of a relationship to God that is characterized by feelings of absence and silence – which is how it is represented in poems such as 'A Rann I Made' and 'Long To Me Thy Coming' – could surely only be arrived at by someone who has struggled with his faith. Indeed, the primary emotion in all of the aforementioned poems is a feeling of spiritual *un*-fulfilment, *a longing for* a sense of the presence of God rather than a confident religious faith.[35] Pearse's poetry in this period of his life is, for the most part introspective, self-conscious and self-questioning. Many of his works focus on individuals trying to cope with an inner complexity they feel is undermining the strength and purity of their faith: 'is the knowledge true that tortures me?/ My grief, the tomb hath no sound or voice?' asks the speaker in the final lines of 'O Lovely Head'. In another

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[34] Loftus, p. 142.

[35] According to Desmond Fitzgerald's eye-witness account, Pearse's was still experiencing religious doubts during the Rising. In his conversations with Pearse in the G.P.O. FitzGerald recalls that 'time and time again we came back to one favourite which could not be avoided. And that was the moral rectitude of what we had undertaken [...] We each brought forward every theological argument and quotation that justified the Rising.' Fergus FitzGerald (ed.) *Memoirs of Desmond FitzGerald 1913-16* (London, 1968), p.142-3. Quoted in R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London: Penguin, 1988), p. 483.

poem of this period, the speaker complains that the 'desires of my/ heart' are

> Torturing me and paining me by day and
> by night?
> Hunting me as a poor deer would be hunted
> on a hill,
> A poor long-wearied deer with the hound-
> pack after him? [36]

Like his poems, we shall see that the conflicts dramatised in Pearse's plays also frequently arise out of a religious-based crisis of the self. 'Forgive me, Lord!' exclaims Ciaran, in *The Master* (1915). 'It is my weakness that cries out. 'I believe, I believe; help my unbelief.'[37] The character of McDara in Pearse's last play, *The Singer* (1916), undergoes a similar religious crisis in which he comes to doubt the very existence of God. One of the noteworthy differences between these dramas, and Pearse's poetry up to 1914 , is that his plays manage to resolve the religious crises they dramatise. Aside from 'Renunciation' this is not a feature of any of the poetic works I have discussed. This difference is partly due to generic issues: the crises portrayed in dramatic literature always require some sort of resolution in order for the plays to end, whereas those in poetry do not; but it is also due to the fact that there is a new attitude towards religious faith apparent in Pearse's later writings. Rather than searching for God within themselves, or through visions, the speakers and protagonists in these works turn outwards, and seek spiritual fulfilment by committing themselves more fully to the world in which they live. McDara's remarks to his old schoolteacher in *The Singer* encapsulate this change of approach: 'they say that to be busy with the things of the spirit is better than to be busy with the things of the body. But I am not sure, master. Can the Vision Beautiful alone content a man? I think a true man is divine in this, that, like God, he must needs create, he must needs do.'[38] In the following section of this chapter I suggest that this new emphasis needs to be viewed in the context of the momentous changes that were taking place in Ireland during the years 1913 to 1916.

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[36] Pearse, 'Why Do You Torture Me?' in *Plays, Stories and Poems*, p. 315. Originally published in Irish as 'Cad Chuige Dhibh dom Chiapadh?' in *Suantraidhe agus Goltraidhe* (1914). Ó Buachcalla, *Literary Writings*, p. 11.
[37] Pearse, *The Master* (1915) in *Plays, Stories and Poems*, p. 88.
[38] Pearse, *The Singer* (1916) , ibid., p. 31.

III

Literature and Revolution 1913-16

The years 1913 to 1916 were arguably the most intense and violent of the whole Irish Revolution. Among the military and political developments in this period were: the passing of the Home Rule Bill for Ireland through Westminster; the formation of the Ulster and Irish volunteer armies; the General Strike of 1913-14 (which led to the establishment of the Irish Citizen Army); the outbreak and first two years of World War; and the Rising of Easter Week in 1916. Notwithstanding the fact that the military and political objectives of many of these groups were diametrically opposed to each other, there were also some important resemblances between them. David Fitzpatrick has observed, for example, that 'every protagonist in Ireland's revolution proclaimed the ideal of liberation. Loyalists, nationalists and republicans, tenants, workers, and women all felt that their entitlements were menaced or withheld by others.'[1] There is a sense, therefore, in which it was the *similarity* of their aims that divided the different groups involved in the Irish Revolution.

The anomalies generated by the revolutionary situation in this period were especially apparent in relation to the activities of Ulster unionists. There was a real prospect of a revolutionary uprising in Ireland in 1913, but as Fiztpatrick notes it was not nationalists who were preparing for such an eventuality; instead, 'the most active threat' to the union emanated from the section of the population who were most determined that Ireland should remain within it – Irish unionists.[2] Unionists in the north of the country had responded to the introduction of the Home Rule Bill in April 1912 by establishing the Ulster Volunteer Force. In September 1913, the Ulster Unionist Council approved a constitution for a provisional government of Ireland and Edward Carson, the leader of the UVF, announced his readiness to assume control of this body upon implementation of Home Rule. As Fitzpatrick points out, this provisional government

[1] Fitzpatrick, p. 24.
[2] Ibid., p. 9.

was intended 'to defend the homeland from British and Irish foes alike.'[3] It was Germany's invasion of Belgium on the 3 August of the following year that averted a full-blown civil war in Ireland and the United Kingdom: instead of fighting the British army, the Ulster volunteers ended up enlisting in it, looking upon the Great War as an opportunity to demonstrate their loyalty to the empire and thus secure Ulster's place within it.[4]

Republicanism, as Joseph Lee points out, was still 'a fringe ideology' in Ireland in 1913.[5] Rather than an independent Irish state, the majority of the population supported the moderate, constitutional campaign for Home Rule led by John Redmond's Irish Parliamentary Party at Westminster. With the introduction of the Home Rule Bill in 1912 Redmond's methods seemed to have won for Ireland the limited amount of political autonomy that the British Government deemed compatible with its continued membership of the Empire.[6] It was the ferocity of the Unionist opposition to this bill, Lee maintains, that precipitated the collapse of constitutional nationalism in Ireland and the emergence of a revolutionary republicanism in its place. The National Volunteers were established in November 1913 as a direct response to the formation of the Ulster Volunteer Force. Redmond quickly won control of the organisation and, just as Carson had done in relation to the U.V.F., attempted to use his volunteer army as a bargaining-counter in relation to Home Rule. In September 1914 he exhorted the National Volunteers to join the allied war-effort, maintaining that by so doing they would be helping to assert the right of small nations to exist in the face of imperialist aggression, and demonstrating to the British that a Home Rule Ireland posed no security risks. This call caused a split in the force. A large majority, possibly 150,000 volunteers, supported Redmond's line; many of

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[3] Ibid., p. 45. Unionist leaders were quite explicit about their intentions to revolt should the Home Rule Bill be introduced. In October 1912 Carson responded to the British Attorney-General's claim that his polices and doctrines were leading to anarchy, by remarking 'Does he not think I know that?' Quoted in Neeson, p. 88. In May 1913 Alfred Lyttleton, M.P. for Cork remarked upon the 'certainty' of civil war, should the bill be forced through parliament. Ibid., p. 88.

[4] Jeffery remarks that the war 'provided unionists in Ireland, north and south, with an opportunity to subsume their efforts in the wider national enterprise.' He cites the following piece of doggerel published in the *Newtownards Chronicle* in October 1914 as indicative of unionist attitudes towards the conflict: 'And wherever the fight is hottest,/ And the sorest task is set,/ ULSTER WILL STRIKE FOR ENGLAND – AND ENGLAND WILL NOT FORGET.' In Jeffery, p.15.

[5] J. J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985: Politics and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1989), p. 20.

[6] Lee observes that the political changes proposed by the Government of Ireland bill of the12th April 1912 were 'so limited that it required all the persuasive powers of the Home Rule leader, John Redmond, to allay the chagrin of his followers.' He also notes, however, that Unionists could 'harbour the legitimate fear that this might be the first step towards complete independence'. Ibid., p. 7.

them enlisted. A minority of approximately 10,000 men remained in Ireland, re-establishing themselves as the Irish Volunteers. By April 1916 a total of 150,000 recruits from the north and south of Ireland had enlisted in the Allied war-effort.[7] Therefore, not only did the bulk of the nationalist and unionist 'armies' both end up in the British forces by the end of 1914 (an inconceivable scenario less than six months earlier), but they enlisted for diametrically opposed reasons: the National Volunteers in order to help secure Home rule for Ireland, and the Ulster Volunteers in order to prevent it.

The 1913 General Strike was one of the defining events of the Irish Revolution. As Eoin Neeson has remarked, this strike was 'not simply an industrial dispute on a grand scale [but] a social revolt – class warfare – in an age of entrenched capitalism and gross exploitation of workers', which generated 'a popular spirit of rebellion for human rights, for freedom and justice'.[8] It was organized by James Larkin and James Connolly, leaders of the recently formed Irish Transport and General Workers Union. The strike lasted from August 1913 until February of the following year and involved some 24,000 workers. Its immediate cause had been the refusal by Dublin employers to hire men who joined the new union, but the underlying roots of the conflict lay in the atrocious living conditions endured by the Dublin working classes.[9] As there was no security of tenure or welfare system in place at the time, the 'lockout' policy adopted by the employers against striking workers greatly increased the hardship already endured by the Dublin working class.[10] The bitterness engendered by the conflict was further exacerbated by the violence that the Irish police force (the Royal Irish

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[7] See Foster, pp. 471-4; and Tom Garvin, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillian, 1981), pp. 107-8.

[8] Neeson, p. 95. Irwin Thompson calls it 'one of the greatest strike and lock-out conflicts in the history of organized labor.' He also draws attention to the extent to which the strike influenced the Easter Rising. Dublin 'was in one of the ugliest moods of that city's peacetime history,' during the strike, he remarks, 'and it is important to keep this sordidness in mind as the real background against which Pearse and the others walked into their heroic martyrdom.' Irwin Thompson, pp. 82-3.

[9] Foster notes that Dublin had one of the highest urban mortality rates in the world at this time. Living conditions in the city 'were horrific by *contemporary* standards', with 25 per cent of families living in one-room tenements occupied by more than four people, and at least 16,000 families living below the poverty line. Foster, p. 437.

[10] Æ accused the employers of deliberately trying to starve the strikers into submission, 'to break the manhood of the men by the sight of the suffering of their wives and the hunger of their children', and called them 'Blind Samson's, pulling down the pillars of social order'. Quoted in Neeson, p. 95.

Constabulary) used against the striking workers, a policy which led directly to the formation of the Irish Citizen Army.[11]

The General strike also underlines the internecine quality of the Irish Revolution. It was the *Dublin city* employers who tried to starve the workers into submission by means of the Lockout policy.[12] When this threat of starvation became real and workers attempted to send their children to England for the duration of the conflict, it was the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, William J. Walsh, who ensured they were prevented from leaving Ireland because he feared the effect that contact with Protestants might have on their religious development.[13] Furthermore, although the Royal Irish Constabulary was an instrument of the British State, the vast majority of the men who made up this force – and who used such brutality against the strikers – were Irish Catholics.[14] All of which underlines the truth of Irwin Thompson's observation that 'The Dublin of 1913 was anything but noble and heroic, and Irishmen, rather than fighting the *Sassenach*, were tearing one another to pieces.'[15]

A total of approximately 210,000 volunteers from Ireland contributed to the Allied war-effort between 1914 and 1918, the greatest number of Irishmen ever involved a military conflict, before or since.[16] Until quite recently, the effects of Great War have been underemphasized in Irish historiography. As Keith Jeffery points out, however, events in Ireland in this period

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[11] Donal Nevin notes that 'On the very first day of the strike, Jim Larkin, denouncing the police brutality that had already manifested itself, advised the workers to take Carson's advice to the men of Ulster. Addressing the huge crowd outside Liberty Hall [...] he thundered, "if Sir Edward can call on the people of Ulster to arm, I will call upon you to arm. If they have a right to arm, the working men have an equal right to arm so as to protect themselves. If at every street corner there is a hired assassin ready to kill you, then you should arm."' Donal Nevin, 'The Irish Citizen Army' in Owen Dudley Edwards and Fergus Pyle (eds.) *1916 The Easter Rising* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1968), p. 119.

[12] The employers were led by the Irish Catholic entrepreneur, William Martin Murphy who sinisterly warned 'my friends, the workers,' at the start of the strike that the shareholders of his company would have three square meals a day no matter how long the conflict lasted, but that the workers could not be so confident. In Irwin Thompson, p. 84.

[13] The Archbishop's decision led Æ to remark caustically that the children were not to be permitted to leave 'the Christian atmosphere of the slums.' Quoted in Irwin Thompson, p. 84.

[14] 'Without exception they were Irish-born, their wives were Irish, at least 90 per cent. of them were Catholics'. In G. C. Duggan, 'The Royal Irish Constabulary – Forgotten Force in a Troubled land' in O. Dudley Edwards and Fergus Pyle, p. 92.

[15] Irwin Thompson, p. 83.

[16] David Fitzpatrick, 'Militarism in Ireland', p. 388. Quoted in Jeffery, p. 6. This figure excludes natives of Ireland who joined military units in Britain, the empire or the USA, and those who were already in the armed forces prior to the outbreak of the war.

should not be viewed as 'some completely separate narrative distinct from the world war, but as an integral part of essentially the same story.' He contends that 'the separate experiences of the Redmondites, unionists and advanced nationalists actually constitute a series of 'parallel texts' in which the similarities might be more significant that the differences, great though they were.'[17] Some of these similarities have already been noted: many of the National and Ulster volunteers enlisted in an attempt to influence the revolutionary situation in Ireland. The similarities are also apparent in terms of the fact that both sections of the volunteer armies who enlisted during the Great War, *and* the Irish revolutionaries who remained at home and 'rose' in 1916 were in many ways fighting for similar political ideals such as liberty, civilisation, the rights of small nations and so forth.[18]

The Great War also had a direct impact on the course of the republican-nationalist movement within Ireland: it reduced the Irish Volunteer Force to a fraction of the size it had been in the summer of 1914 and led to the postponement of the Home Rule Bill for the duration of the conflict. Furthermore, it was a crucial factor in the decision of Irish revolutionaries to rebel in Easter 1916. Because the attention of the British military establishment was focused on Europe and they could expect assistance from Germany, the 1916 rebels looked upon the war as an opportunity to advance the Irish cause. Not only did the Great War help to *cause* the 1916 rebellion, indeed, it also helped to determine its *effects*: it was largely on account of the fact that the rebels had risen in wartime that the British authorities responded to it with such severity – laying waste to the centre of Dublin city and executing almost the entire rebel leadership. It was this response that ensured the Rising had such huge implications for the revolution and subsequent Irish history as a whole.

The anomalies of the revolutionary situation in these years are also apparent in regard to artistic and cultural activities. In many ways, the remarkable explosion of interest in things Irish that commenced during the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century seemed to be

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[17] Jeffery, p. 2.

[18] Jeffery notes that although there is no 'monocausal explanation' as to why nationalist and unionist volunteers enlisted in the British army during the Great War, the conflict was widely perceived as 'the war for Big Words: King, Country, Freedom, Duty, Democracy, Liberty, and Civilisation'. In 1914, these concepts did not merely operate at the level of political rhetoric, he points out, rather, they 'had real meaning amongst those crowds of volunteers pressing to get into the recruiting offices.' Jeffery, p.10. As we have seen in this chapter – with the exception of the term 'King' – Pearse viewed the objectives of the Irish revolution in a very similar light.

failing by 1913. Although 'thousands of students' had enrolled in the Gaelic League's classes, Kiberd notes that 'few ever got beyond the learning of a few token phrases.' Pearse himself described the organisation as 'a spent force' in this year.[19] Between 1902 and J. M. Synge's death in 1909, the Irish National Theatre Society was producing some of the most innovative and exciting drama seen anywhere in the English-speaking world; but as Christopher Morash notes, by the start of the second decade of the twentieth century it was already largely dependent upon conventional rural comedies.[20] Yeats had hoped his theatre would help to turn Dublin into Florence, Irwin Thompson remarks, but the reaction of audiences to works such as Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* in 1907; the ignorance displayed by the Irish bourgeoisie who the following year protested against a gallery for modern art being opened in Dublin; and the cruelty and greed displayed by Dublin employers during the General Strike in 1913, indicated to many revivalists that their ambition to use art as a means of transforming the life of the Irish nation had failed. Yeats gave bitter expression to this sense of disillusionment and frustration in his poem, 'September 1913'; a work which Irwin Thompson notes, amounts to 'an elegy for the Ireland that he had hoped to create' through institutions such as the Irish National Theatre.[21]

> What need you, being come to sense,
> But fumble in a greasy till
> And add the half-pence to the pence
> And prayer to shivering prayer, until
> You have dried the marrow from the bone;
> For men were born to pray and save:
> Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,
> It's with O'Leary in the grave.[22]

The situation in 1913 was not so clear-cut as Yeats's elegy suggests, however. For many younger, and more politically-engaged nationalists, cultural activity in these years was entering a new, more intense and exciting stage of development. As Morash has observed, 'there is a strange sense of simultaneous *exhaustion and exhilaration* in the cultural life of Ireland in the years immediately preceding the 1916 Rising.' (my italics) With regard to the state of Irish theatre, for example, he points out that 'on the one hand', the patriotic melodramas and

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[19] Kiberd, p. 149, and Pearse, *The Coming Revolution* (November 1913) in *Political Writings and Speeches*, p. 91.
[20] Christopher Morash, *A History of the Irish Theatre 1601-2000* (Cambridge; Cambridge U.P., 2002), p. 157.
[21] Irwin Thompson, p. 84.
[22] W.B. Yeats, 'September 1913', in Richard J. Finneran (ed.) *Collected Works of W.B. Yeats Vol. I* (London: Macmillan, 1983), pp. 108-9.

conventional rural plays being produced by some Dublin theatres 'give the impression of a national struggle which had run its course', but on the other:

> there was a dizzying proliferation of societies whose aims blur the distinctions between cultural development and armed revolution – societies in which people who had never written a play before in their lives were turning to esoteric theatrical models in an attempt to reinvent the stage, and then rushing from rehearsals to the drill hall; or in which experienced actresses such as Maire Nic Shuibhlaigh were forsaking straight theatre for variety shows to raise money for guns.[23]

If the revolutionary quality (in aesthetic *and* political terms) of the work produced by the Abbey Theatre had started to decline in the years following Synge's death, other radical theatre groups were beginning to emerge in its place. The membership of these societies included some of the most prominent military and political figures of the revolution. Morash notes that Daniel Corkery and Terence McSwiney, two of the founding members of the Cork Dramatic Society in 1908, 'saw the modernist Europe-wide revolution in theatrical form as akin to their own revolutionary project.'[24] The membership of the Theatre of Ireland included the 1916 revolutionaries, Padraic Pearse, Constance Markievicz, Joseph Mary Plunkett and Thomas MacDonagh, and produced such 'forcefully revolutionary plays' as MacDonagh's *When the Dawn is Come* in 1908, and Pearse's *The King* in 1913.[25]

This overview of the 1913-16 period in Ireland highlights some of the anomalies and contradictions inherent in Irish affairs in these years. What is revealed here is a 'nation-space in the *process* of the articulation of elements'. It was a time when history was 'half-made because it [was] in the process of being made'.[26] Whether one focuses on political, social or cultural matters, the 'condition' of the revolutionary situation in this period defies simple explanation: 'dead and gone' claimed its arch-progenitor, W.B. Yeats; only coming of age according to its most influential 'foster' parent, Patrick Pearse.

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[23] Morash, p. 152.
[24] Ibid., p. 150.
[25] It is tempting to see 'a foreshadowing' of the Easter Rising in plays such as Pearse's *The King*, Morash remarks. Some of the plays being produced in Dublin at this time also 'foreshadowed' the 1913 Lockout: Morash notes that in the summer of 1912 and the week of 23 June 1913 – less than two months before the Irish Transport and General Workers Union declared a general strike – the Queen's Theatre in Dublin was presenting William Lacy's play *From Mill to Mansion: Or, the Story of a Great Strike*, 'the playbills for which were emblazoned with the logo: "All we ask is a fair day's wage for a fair day's work, but the masters grudge us even that."' Morash, p. 153.
[26] Bhabha p. 3.

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> There will be in Ireland of the next few years a multitudinous activity of Freedom Clubs, Young Republican Parties, Labour Organisations, Socialist Groups, and what not; bewildering enterprises undertaken by sane persons and insane persons, by good men and bad men, many of them seemingly contradictory, some mutually destructive, yet all tending towards a common objective: the Irish revolution.[27]

Pearse's analysis of the revolutionary situation in October 1913 was incorrect in two respects. Firstly, as we have seen, there were already a great many 'seemingly contradictory' political organisations operating in Ireland by this time; and secondly, they were not 'all tending towards a common objective'. His error results from the fact that he conflates 'the Irish revolution' with the aims and the ideology of *one* of the groupings involved in that phenomenon: the republican-nationalist movement to which he himself was affiliated. As noted in the introduction, however, a revolution is better conceived of as a time when opposing ideologies come into conflict with each other; a confrontation that results in a great deal of *genuinely* 'contradictory [and] mutually destructive' enterprises. Nevertheless, Pearse's writings in this period indicate that his understanding of the cultural, socio-economic, and political aspects of Irish life attained a new maturity in this period.

In his younger years, Pearse was prone to arrogant and narrow-minded opinions regarding Irish culture. This is apparent, for example, in regard to his attitude towards the notion of a national Irish literature in English. In 1899, Pearse (then aged 19) had a letter published in *An Claidheamh Soluis* in which he described Yeats as 'a mere English poet of the third or fourth rank' whose intention to found an Irish Literary Theatre should be 'crushed.'[28] He later came to perceive his mistake and publicly recognise both the greatness of Yeats's work and the poet's personal generosity: in the December 1909 edition of *An Macaomh* he refers to him as

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[27] Pearse, *The Coming Revolution* (Nov. 1913), in *Political Writings and Speeches*, p. 94.
[28] Quoted in Kearney, p. 114.

one of the 'heroes and seers' of modern Ireland;[29] and in 1913, one of Pearse's own plays, *An Rí*, was performed by the Anglo-Irish theatre company he had wished crushed in 1899.[30]

A similar situation arises in relation to his attitude towards J. M. Synge. When *The Playboy of the Western World* was first produced in 1907, Pearse referred to its author as 'a sort of Evil Spirit', and suggested his play should 'be left severely alone by all who did not care to listen to it'.[31] By 1913, however, his appreciation of literature had sufficiently matured for him to recognize Synge as 'one of the two or three men who have in our time made Ireland considerable in the eyes of the world'[32]; and in November of this year he satirized the type of Irish nationalist who took offence at Synge's work and modern art in general.[33] It is also noteworthy that it is in this period that he translated most of his Irish drama and poetry into English, and began to write creatively in that language for the first time. This resulted in some of his finest writing, such as the poems, 'The Fool' and 'The Wayfarer'; his best-known educational pamphlet, *The Murder Machine*; and the political treatise, *The Sovereign People*, all of which were written in 1916.[34]

Because the 1916 Rising was composed of two volunteer armies, one nationalist (under Pearse's leadership), the other socialist (under James Connolly), evidence of socialist thinking in the ideology of the 1916 rebels is usually accredited to Connolly's influence. While this makes for a kind of historical neatness, it does not reflect the complex reality of the situation.

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[29] Pearse, *An Macaomh* in Ó Buachalla, *A Significant Educationalist,* p. 331. The following year he refers to Yeats as a great and generous artist. Ibid.,p. 344.

[30] *An Rí* was performed at the Abbey Theatre on the 17 May 1913. This performance came about as a result of Yeats's desire to aid the St. Enda's school financially. Yeats had already attended a number of dramatic productions by the pupils at St. Enda's, and several of the school's actors had perfomed on the Abbey stage. Pearse's play appeared alongside Rabindranath Tagore's 'The Post Office'. Ó Buachalla notes that 'The double-bill had a special significance for Yeats; he had already described the Indian poet/pedagogue as doing for India what Pearse had done for Ireland and had called Tagore's ashram school "the Indian St. Enda's"'. Ó Buachalla, *Literary Writings* pp. 16-8.

[31] Quoted in Irwin Thompson, p. 71.

[32] Pearse, *Irish Freedom* (July 1913), in *Political Writings and Speeches,*p. 145.

[33]Ibid., p. 145. In November 1913, in a clear reference to the Irish bourgeoisie who had protested against modern art being exhibited in Dublin he observes dryly that although the presence of a member of the Dublin Chamber of Commerce in an art gallery is an 'incongruity', he 'will not do the pictures any harm, nor, unless he is as sensitive as some of the Gaelic Leaguers I have known (and that is impossible), will the pictures do him any harm.' Pearse, *Irish Freedom* (Nov. 1913), ibid., p. 182.

[34] One of Pearse's last works of fiction, 'An Choill/The Wood', was intended as a dual-language novel. In 1914, two excerpts of the English and Irish versions of this unfinished work were published concurrently as *An Choill/The Wood* in the *Irish Review*. In Ó Buachalla, *Literary Writings*, p. 9

It takes no account, for example, of the important part that socialist ideas played in Pearse's political thinking from 1913 onwards. Pearse was unambiguous in his support for the workers during the General Strike. In an article he wrote for *Irish Freedom* in October 1913, two months into the strike, he inveigled against the 'dire and desperate poverty' that existed in Dublin at the time: the many undernourished children in Dublin classrooms; the 20,000 Dublin families living on subsistence diets, and being charged high rents for derelict one-room tenements; and the brutal methods employed by the police against those who had decided they would no longer endure those injustices. 'These are among the grievances against which men in Dublin are beginning to protest' he remarks. 'Can you wonder that protest is made at last? Can you wonder that the protest is crude and bloody? [...] I do not know whether the methods of Mr. James Larkin are wise methods or unwise methods', Pearse continues, 'but this I know, that there is a most hideous wrong to be righted, and that the man who attempts honestly to right it is a good man and a brave man.[35]

Like Connolly, Pearse believed that the appalling social and economic hardships endured by the Dublin working class were ultimately a consequence of colonial misrule, but the General Strike also underlined for him the internecine quality of the revolution. There are only one or two brief references to imperialism in this October 1913 article. Most of it is taken up with attacks on the hypocrisy and lack of fellow-feeling that Dublin's well-off citizenry were displaying towards the poor of the city.[36] 'I would try the hunger cure' upon the city's 'well-fed citizens' he remarks. 'I would ask those who know that a man can live and thrive, can house, feed, clothe, and educate a large family on a pound a week to try the experiment themselves. Let them show us how the thing is done.' These people's callous attitudes towards the working classes was making revolution an inevitability, he warned. There are two ways of 'righting wrongs', Pearse writes here, 'reform and revolution'; but reform is only possible when 'those who inflict the wrong can be got to see things from the point of view of those who suffer the wrong.'[37] This failure of empathy is one of the main ideas animating the article as a whole, and is a feature that underlines the importance of his educational writings to

[35] Pearse (Oct. 1913) In *Political Writings and Speeches*, p. 179.
[36] In the article Pearse makes specific satirical reference to William Martin Murphy, the primary figure involved in the General Strike on the employers' side, and his newspaper, the conservative Catholic national daily, the *Independent*.
[37] Ibid, pp. 172-3.

an understanding of Pearse's political views: the attitude displayed the employers during the strike was indicative of how imperial governments robbed colonized countries of any sense of community or Christian fellow feeling, he believed, replacing it with a culture of materialism and self-interest. The social crisis that exploded onto the streets of Dublin in 1913 was, for Pearse, the result of a failure of imagination on the part of the Irish bourgeoisie – but it was a failure that the imperialist education system had been designed to 'achieve'.

Although he professes himself 'nothing so new fangled as a socialist or a syndicalist' in this article, socialist ideas become an increasingly prominent feature of Pearse's subsequent political writings.[38] His final, and most impressive political text, *The Sovereign People* (1916), is also his most radical in terms of its political and social proposals.[39] In this pamphlet he urges that land and infrastructure in an independent Ireland should remain 'the property of the nation to be administered by the nation for the public benefit'; and that 'all surplus wealth shall go to the national treasury to be expended on national purposes, rather than be accumulated by private persons.'[40] These proposals are combined with a characteristic emphasis on the State's responsibility towards the care of the individual citizen. Although 'no private right to property is good against the public right of the nation', he writes, 'the nation is under a moral obligation so to exercise its public right as to secure strictly equal rights and liberties to every man and woman within the nation.'[41]

Pearse's thinking on the question of political independence for Ireland also undergoes important changes in this period. Unlike many 'hard-line' nationalists, he welcomed the introduction into the British Parliament of the Home Rule Bill for Ireland in 1912. At a rally in Dublin in March of that year, he praised Redmond and called on his audience to support the Irish Parliamentary Party in their efforts to secure its passage through Westminster. Towards the end of 1913, and through the following year, however, he became convinced that the bill

[38] Ibid., pp. 176. Kiberd remarks that 'Pearse often seemed to out-socialize Connolly' as 1916 approached. Kiberd, p. 228.
[39] In particular, this pamphlet underlines the extent to which Pearse's thinking was influenced by the radical socialism of the 19th century Irish revolutionaries, James Fintan Lalor and John Mitchell.
[40] Pearse, *The Sovereign People* (1916) in *Political Writings and Speeches*, p. 240.
[41] Ibid., p. 336.

was not going to be enacted by the British government.[42] We know that he had joined the Irish Republican Brotherhood (I.R.B) by December 1913, and his writings from this period onwards are characterized by an emphasis on the need for military action – or at least military preparedness – in case the bill should fail to be implemented in full. In November 1913 he confessed that 'I do not think [independence] is going to be achieved without stress and trial, without suffering and bloodshed'; and the following month he suggests that 'the condition on which freedom is given to men is that they are able to make good their claim to it; and unarmed men cannot make good their claim to anything which armed men choose to deny them.'[43]

The emphasis on the need for military action in Pearse's writings from 1913 onwards has been treated in a reductive and negative light by many critics. Dudley-Edwards claims that until this time he had been a cultural as opposed to a political nationalist, and that he only turned to the idea of violent revolution for personal reasons – because his literary and business endeavours were failing. Edwards makes much of Pearse's 1905 statement that 'political autonomy … may … be necessary to the continued existence of the Nation - in the case of Ireland it probably is - but it is not, in itself, an essential of nationality.' This comment reveals that he 'was a very late convert to political rather than cultural nationalism', Edwards maintains.[44] The remark, of course, reveals nothing of the sort; the most hard-line political separatist might easily make the same point. The essence of a nation does not consist in its independence any more than the essence of an individual consists in her freedom. A slave is still a wo/man, and the person who points this fact out is hardly likely to be suggesting that slavery is therefore a relatively insignificant matter. Certainly, Pearse was not suggesting that the issue of Ireland's

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[42] Brian Murphy posits three stages in Pearse's disillusionment with constitutional politics: the first was Carson's mobilization of Ulster in resistance to the Home Rule Bill (a stage which includes the British government unwillingness 'to uphold the democratic process of law' in the face of the gun-running activities by unionists); the second related to Redmond's concession in the Summer of 1914 that parts of Ireland might opt out of the Home Rule Act, and his promise of Ireland's unconditional support for England in the event of war; and the third stage occurred in response to 'the composition of the new coalition government in England in May 1915' in which four of the most important posts in the Government were given to men who had led the Ulster campaign to use illegal means in opposition to Home Rule: William Carson (Attorney-General); F.E. Smith (Solicitor-General); J.H. Campbell (Attorney-General of Ireland) (1916); and Bonar Law (Secretary for the Colonies). In the context of these developments, Murphy notes, Pearse and many other nationalists began to have serious 'doubts about the promises of England and the reassurances of Redmond concerning Home Rule; doubts, too, about England's claim to be waging the war for the rights of small nations.' Brian Murphy, *Patrick Pearse and the Lost Republican Ideal* (Dublin: James Duffy, 1991),p. 42-5

[43] Pearse, *Political Writings and Speeches*, pp. 96 and 195 respectively.

[44] Dudley-Edwards, p. 71.

political sovereignty was unimportant in 1905. In his final political pamphlet, *The Sovereign People* (1916) he expands on the nature of the relationship between independence and nationhood: 'physical freedom is necessary to the healthy life, and *may even be necessary* to the continued existence of the nation. Without it the nation droops, withers, ultimately perhaps dies'.[45] (my italics) Even the words he uses here underline the continuity of his position on the issue between 1905 and 1916. The fact is that – as we saw in his educational writings – political independence was never the objective of Pearse's nationalism, at any stage in his life. Instead, he looked upon it as a vital *means* towards the attainment of nationhood. 'The end of national freedom', he states in *The Sovereign People* 'is individual freedom; therefore individual happiness.'[46] Pearse simply believed that at the level of both the individual and the nation freedom was a necessary precondition of human happiness: 'for physical freedom means precisely control of the conditions that are necessary to sane and vigorous life.'[47]

Even in 1912, when according to Dudley-Edwards he was still in his cultural nationalist phase, Pearse made it quite clear that he looked upon the Home Rule Bill as offering only 'an installment of liberty to Ireland.'[48] In July 1913 he envisaged the creation of 'a Gaelic Party within the Home Rule Parliament' if the bill were passed into law, a party which would 'determinedly set about the rehabilitation of this nation, resting not until it has eliminated every vestige of foreign interference with its concerns.' If the bill were not passed, however, then

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[45] Pearse, *The Sovereign People*, in *Political Writings and Speeches*, p. 335.
[46] Ibid., p. 335.
[47] Ibid., p. 336. It was because he viewed political independence as a means rather than an end in itself that Pearse did not see his support for the 1907 and 1912 Bills as in any way compromising separatist objectives. In relation to the Irish Council Bill of 1907, for example, he pointed out to his fellow-nationalist critics that - because it gave the Irish control of the educational system - 'we shall be on the eve of the greatest and most beneficent revolution in the modern history of Ireland.' Pearse, 'Educational Home Rule?' (June 1907). In Ó Buachalla, p. 130. When the Bill failed to be passed, Pearse wrote in *An Claidheamh Soluis* that 'we are aware that our attitude has been a scandal'; he still maintained, however, that 'we did not see, and do not see, that its passing would have retarded the attainment of the Irish political ideal by a single hour. On the contrary it would have hastened it.' Pearse 'The Dead Bill and Ourselves'. In Ó Buachalla, *Educational Writings*, p 132.
[48] Quoted in Dudley Edwards, p. 160. Pearse's attitude towards this bill was similar to that held by Michael Collins in relation to the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, which Collins described as a 'stepping stone to freedom'. Indeed Pearse's support for the 1912 bill was cited by pro-Treatyist during the Treaty debates in Dáil Eireann as proof that he would have accepted terms of peace offered by Britain in 1921.

efforts to secure independence 'must be made in other ways', he remarks, 'lesser ideals having proved unattainable and wiser methods more foolish.'[49]

Pearse's position is quite clear, therefore: nationalists should pursue the cause of Irish independence through the British law-system as long as that route lay open - indeed it was morally-beholden on them to do so - but should the political route be closed then they would have to resort to warfare.[50] Dudley Edwards purports to be baffled by the complexity of this position: 'Pearse's attitude to the Bill was strangely compounded of moderation and extremism', she claims. He was in 'a peculiar state of mind' when he wrote his remarks in *An Barr Buadh*. 'There were those who, in retrospect, believed that by this period he was unbalanced, his reason toppled at last by his own vanity and arrogance'.[51] As these comments indicate, Edwards only manages to create an image of Pearse as 'suffer[ing] for lack of an underlying complexity or subtlety of mind', by sticking resolutely to the notion that one must be *either* a cultural nationalist *or* a political separatist. When the evidence of her own research illustrates that Pearse managed the unremarkable feat of combining both positions, she avoids complicating her understanding of her subject by treating such evidence as a sign of emotionalism and irrationality.

The linkage between nationalism and spirituality is apparent in the earliest of Pearse's political writings. In 'The Intellectual Future of the Gael' (1898), he remarks that:

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[49] From A Hermitage (July 1913), in *Political Writings and Speeches*, p. 155. Pearse's criticisms of nationalists who wanted to reject the bill because it did not grant complete independence is also evident in an article he wrote for his own journal, *An Barr Buadh* in this year, in which he likens such nationalists to

> [a] prisoner who refused to have one of his manacles taken from him when his oppressors would not remove the second one too. That prisoner did not understand that to remove one of the manacles would make it easier for him to escape, and perhaps it would be a weapon in his hand given him by God. It is clear to us that, not only is this a proposal to take a manacle from the Gael, but it is putting into the hands of the Gael a weapon. Our honour and our advantage are on the one side this time.

(Quoted in Edwards, p. 160.)

[50] 'Obviously, if a nation can achieve its freedom without bloodshed, it is its duty so to obtain it. [...] if England, after due pressure, were to say to us, 'Here, take Ireland,' no one would be so foolish as to answer, 'No, we'd rather fight you for it.' But things like that do not happen. One must fight, or at least be ready to fight.' Pearse, *The Spiritual Nation*, in *Political Writings and Speeches*, pp. 323-4.

[51] Ibid., pp. 160-1.

> The Gael is not like other men; the spade, and the loom, and the sword are not for him. But a destiny more glorious than that of Rome, more glorious than that of Britain, awaits him. To become the saviour of idealism in modern intellectual and social life, the regenerator and rejuvenator of the literature of the world, the instructor of the nations, the preacher of the gospel of nature-worship, hero-worship, *God-worship!* - such is the destiny of the Gael![52]

Written in 1898, these remarks really belong to Pearse's juvenilia, but the same conflation between religion and Irish nationalism is a stable feature of all his writings, and it is one which comes increasingly to the fore in the volatile 1913-16 period. In July 1913 he famously began his oration at the grave of Wolfe Tone in Bodenstown cemetery by remarking 'We have come to the holiest place in Ireland'; in March of the following year, he suggested to an audience of Irish-Americans in New York that patriotism is 'a faith which is of the same nature as religious faith'; in *Ghosts* (1915) he writes that 'like a divine religion, national freedom bears the marks of unity, of sanctity, of catholicity, of apostolic succession'; in *The Spiritual Nation* (1916) 'Irish nationality is an ancient spiritual tradition'; and in his final political pamphlet, *The Sovereign People* (1916), the writings of Tone, Lalor, Davis, and Mitchel are said to comprise 'the four gospels of the new testament of Irish nationality'.[53]

A second sense in which religion impinges on his writings in this period is in regard to the manner in which he uses Christian doctrine to legitimate revolutionary violence. In March 1914, for example, he assured an audience of Irish-Americans in New York that 'some day we will overwhelm [England] with the wrath of God.'[54] And during his oration at the graveside of O'Donovan Rossa in August 1915, he voiced his belief that it is 'a Christian thing [...] to hate evil, to hate untruth, to hate oppression, and, hating them, to strive to overthrow them.'[55]

In his seminal article, 'The Canon of Irish History - A Challenge', Francis Shaw S.J. is extremely critical of the manner in which Pearse equated Christianity and revolution. Shaw

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[52] Pearse, 'The Intellectual Future of the Gael' in *Three Lectures on Gaelic Topics* (Dublin: M.H. Gill and Son, 1898), p. 49.
[53] Pearse, 'Oration at the Grave of Wolfe Tone' (1913), in *Political Writings and Speeches*, p. 53; 'Robert Emmet and the Ireland of To-Day' (1914), ibid., p. 65; *Ghosts* (1915), ibid., p. 226, *The Spiritual Nation* (1916), ibid., p. 303, and *The Sovereign Nation* (1916), ibid., p. 365 respectively.
[54] 'Robert Emmet and the Ireland of To-Day, II', ibid., p. 76.
[55] Pearse, 'O'Donovan Rossa - Graveside Panegynic' (1915) ibid., p. 136.

claims that in his *Oration at the Grave of Wolfe Tone* Pearse 'introduced a new idea' to Irish politics, 'the idea that patriotism and holiness are the same, that they are convertible concepts.'[56] It is the manner in which Pearse conjoins political violence and Christianity in his writings that Shaw finds most objectionable.

> When he speaks of war and blood-shedding (as against a tradition as old as Christianity), Pearse applies the words of Our Lord thus: 'The Christ that said: "My peace I leave with you, My peace I give you," is the same Christ that said "I bring not peace but a sword"'; in another place he says: 'Ireland will not find Christ's peace until she has taken Christ's sword.' He never cited the words of Christ to Peter: 'Put up thy sword; he who takes the sword will perish by the sword.'[57]

Pearse does attempt to justify revolution by reference to Christ's teachings, however, it is not true that he *only* focuses on the violent passages in the Gospels. We have seen that in many of his educational texts he also identifies gentleness, loving-kindness, nature-worship, and contemplative living as equally important elements of the Christian faith. Rather than denying that Christ's message is essentially one of love and peace, Pearse was exploiting the paradox that the Gospels also contain some very war-like sentiments. It is the combination of seemingly contrary emotions and passions, such as love and hate, peace and violence in the Gospels that Pearse uses to establish a linkage between Christian doctrine and revolutionary violence. 'It is because [John Mitchel] loved so well that his wrath was so terrible', he writes in *The Sovereign People*.[58] 'It is foolish to say of Mitchel as has been said, that his is a gospel of hate, that hate is barren, that a nation cannot feed itself on hate without peril to its soul [...] the answer to this', Pearse states, is that 'love and hate are not mutually antagonistic but mutually complementary [...] that love of good connotes hate of evil, love of truth hate of falsehood, love of freedom hate of oppression.'[59] Shaw maintains that Christ only sought to free bondsmen from the chains of sin, but for Pearse, some sins *were political*, this is why he felt entitled to invoke Christian doctrine in attacking them.

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[56] Shaw, p. 122.
[57] Ibid., p. 124.
[58] Pearse, *Political Writings and Speeches*, p. 365.
[59] Ibid., p. 366.

Neither were Pearse's views as 'new' or as 'aggressively unorthodox' as Shaw claims.[60] In particular, his opinions on the revolutionary significance of the Christian faith bear comparison with those of G.K. Chesterton, one of the best known religious writers in early twentieth century Britain. Like Pearse, Chesterton claimed that the practice of Christianity in modern liberal societies had been emasculated of its political meaning. In his 1908 study, *Orthodoxy*, he writes that 'Christianity came into the world firstly in order to assert with violence that a man had not to look inwards, but to look outwards.' Modern religious practices, he maintains, were characterized by an over-emphasis 'introspection, self-isolation, quietism [and] social indifference.'[61] In contrast to the priority placed upon 'the immanence of God' by the modern Church, Chesterton argues that the original, *orthodox* concept of God's transcendence engenders a spirit of 'wonder, curiosity, moral and political adventure [and] righteous indignation.' (199-0) Christianity 'may be true or not', he writes, 'but if the Divinity is true it is certainly terribly revolutionary.' (204)[62]

There is no direct evidence that Pearse had read Chesterton's work, but given the English writer's high profile, and Pearse's interest in literature and theological matters, it would be surprising if he had not. Certainly, there are striking similarities between their views on religion. Like Pearse, Chesterton looked upon Christianity as a heroic faith that managed to combine seemingly opposing passions such as mercy and severity, love and hate. He describes orthodox Christian ethics as a 'a high and strange *coup de théâtre* of morality' (140);

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[60] Shaw claims that the conflation of Christianity and revolutionary politics in Pearse's writings is 'in conflict with the whole Christian tradition and, indeed, with the explicit teaching of Christ'. Shaw, p. 123.

[61] G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1996) pp. 107-8. (Further references to this work are included in the main text.)

[62] Ibid., pp.152-3. At the latter end of the twentieth century theologians such as Herbert McCabe have also disagreed with the kind de-politicised interpretation of Christianity apparent in Shaw's article. Like Chesterton, McCabe contends in *Law, Love and Language* that such views are characteristic of the conservative understanding of Christianity which has gained widespread acceptance in liberal-capitalist culture. 'We are emerging from an era in which Christianity has been thought to be primarily about 'individual salvation',' McCabe contends, 'an era in which the gospel was held to do with the soul, a private and interior world, and to have only an accidental concern with the body and the public political world.' This amounts to a corruption of the revolutionary significance of the Christian faith, he claims: 'The relevance of Christianity to human behaviour is primarily a matter of politics, it is concerned first of all with the media of communication, the structures of relationship within which men live'. For McCabe, the 'Christian minister' is 'a revolutionary leader whose job is the subversion of the world through the preaching of the gospel. He exercises authority amongst his people but not as maintaining an established structure; he is the leader of his people in a movement towards a new community.' McCabe, p. 151-2

Christianity 'got over the difficulty of combining furious opposites', he claims, 'by keeping them both, and keeping them both furious' (137); it keeps 'love and wrath both burning.' (133)

In Chesterton's view the 'Christian paradox of the parallel passions' (139) extends to the issue of violence. He notes that Christianity has often been accused of 'the contradictory charges' of encouraging both submissiveness and violence and does not attempt to deny either charge: 'it *is* true', he remarks. What the church did, he claims, 'was to prevent either of these good things from ousting each other.' (141-2) Therefore, while many readers have been baffled by the way in which the Gospels seem to provide contradictory moral guidelines, Chesterton sees this characteristic in a positive light: it supports his view of Christian theology as 'a superhuman paradox whereby two opposite passions may blaze beside each other.' (218-9) Both of these writers emphasise the revolutionary significance of their religion, therefore; and we shall see that Chesterton's notion of Christianity as a '*coup de théâtre* of morality' closely parallels Pearse's outlook in the period leading up to the 1916 Rising.

Notwithstanding theological debates regarding the revolutionary significance of the Christian faith, there is no question but that Pearse had some unacceptably grisly things to say regarding bloodshed, warfare and death, and that he legitimated his opinions by reference to Christianity. Following the formation of the Irish Volunteers in November 1913, for example, he remarked that:

> We may make mistakes in the beginning and shoot the wrong people; but bloodshed is a cleansing and a sanctifying thing and a nation which regards it as the final horror has lost its manhood. There are many more terrible things than bloodshed; and slavery is one of them.[63]

Peace and the Gael (1915) is the most objectionable of his texts in regard to this subject. 'When war comes to Ireland she must welcome it as she would welcome the Angel of God', Pearse writes, and goes on the describe the previous sixteen months of the Great War as

[63] Pearse, *The Coming Revolution* (Nov. 1913) in *Political Writings and Speeches,* p. 98.

> the most glorious in the history of Europe. Heroism has come back to the earth [...] It is good for the world that such things should be done. The old heart of the earth needed to be warmed with the red wine of the battlefields. Such august homage was never offered to God as this, the homage of millions of lives gladly given for love of country.'[64]

It is often suggested that we need to historicize these remarks. Dudley Edwards, for example, maintains that 'Pearse's words need to be read in the context of their time. His rhetoric of blood was in keeping with much of contemporary political writing in republican and socialist papers, whose tone had to compete with the growing hysteria of British Army Recruitment propaganda in the face of the German threat.'[65] It is true that there were similar things being said in Britain at this time; not just by the army, but – as Dudley Edwards must know – by clergymen, journalists and politicians. Pearse's comments, we shall see, particularly resemble speeches by Winnington-Ingram, the Bishop of London during the war. This fact should not mean that the moral content of his remarks can simply be 'historicized away', however; regardless of how widespread such rhetoric was at the time, if Pearse really believed that millions of deaths on the battlefields of Europe amounted to a 'glorious' and 'august homage' to God then he was clearly deranged at the time of writing.

It is also significant that the kind of sentiments expressed in *Peace and the Gael* were not so endemic in Irish and British society that they did not have their critics. James Connolly responded to this pamphlet by remarking that 'No, we do not think that the old heart of the earth needs to be warmed with the red wine of millions of lives. We think anyone who does so is a blithering idiot. We are sick of such teaching, and the world is sick of such teaching.' Edwards suggests that Connolly's remarks 'hurt Pearse deeply, for he felt that Connolly should have agreed with every line [...] Labour's leader had rejected Pearse's bloody offering, and his language was moderated henceforth.'[66] One wonders how Edwards knows that Pearse was so hurt by Connolly's comments (she provides no evidence to support this claim), and if he did think Connolly 'should have agreed with every line' then why did he moderate his language henceforth? A more serious error in Edwards's analysis, however, is her description of

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[64] Pearse, *Peace and the Gael* (Dec. 1915) ibid., p. 216 (Sean O'Casey later incorporated these lines into his anti-war play *The Plough and the Stars* (1926).
[65] Dudley Edwards, p. 179.
[66] James Connolly, *Workers' Republic* (18/12/15) in Dudley Edwards, p. 245.

Pearse's remarks in *Peace and the Gael* as a 'bloody offering'. There *were* individuals making a bloody offering of hundreds of thousands of human lives in 1915, but Pearse was not one of them. As awful as his war-rhetoric reads, the fact remains that unlike many Irish and British journalists, politicians and clergy (both Catholic and Protestant), Pearse was urging his readers to stay away from the conflict. His texts were addressed to the 10,000 or so volunteers who had refused Redmond's call to join the war-effort, men whom he knew were *not* going to spill their portion of 'red wine' on the battlefields of Europe.[67]

That Pearse was urging his Volunteers not to fight in Europe makes his war-rhetoric all the more incongruous: what need had he of such excessive language if he was opposed to the European conflict? Perhaps he believed that the European conflict would spread to Ireland? In that scenario, an Irish war might well have entailed the 'homage' of thousands, if not exactly millions, of lives. The excessive nature of his war-rhetoric can also be explained in terms of the fact that he was directing his comments at a group of largely-unarmed, part-time, volunteers; men with no experience of combat, and who in a few months time, he knew, would have to face the most powerful military machine in the world. Joseph Lee has pointed that the Home Rule media in Ireland were dismissing the Irish Volunteers 'as either unnecessary, derisory or dangerous.'[68] In the context of such journalism, Pearse can be read as attempting to establish the seriousness of their intentions in the minds of his Volunteers: if these recruits had not considered the prospect of armed rebellion and death beforehand, they certainly would have done so after reading *Peace and the Gael.*

Declan Kiberd describes the violent rhetoric in *Peace and the Gael* as an exception to the general tone of Pearse's writings.[69] Be that as it may, there is no question but that soldiering and warfare are represented in very positive terms by Pearse throughout the 1913-16 period.

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[67] In his next pamphlet, *Ghosts* (also published in December, 1915) Pearse is deeply critical of the manner in which John Redmond 'sacrifices to England as a peace-holocaust the blood of fifty thousand Irishmen'. *Ghosts* (Christmas 1915) in *Political Writings and Speeches,* p. 232.

[68] Lee, *The Modernisation of Irish Society 1848-1918*, p. 144.

[69] Kiberd suggests that 'apart from one notorious speech by Pearse', the leaders of the 1916 Rising 'must have been the gentlest revolutionaries in modern history. They rose in the conviction that further involvement by Irish people in the Great War would lead to far more bloodshed than their Rising, which they hoped would take Ireland out of the war altogether.' Kiberd, p. 199. The notion that Pearse desired to take Ireland *out* of the war is a doubtful one. In the final section of this chapter I argue that, like James Connolly, he saw their revolution as part of the same conflagration as the European conflict.

Indeed, Desmond Ryan (a pupil of St. Enda's and Pearse's first biographer) maintains that he gloried in war for its own sake.[70] In truth, Pearse viewed the willingness to take up arms in defence of one's liberty as one of the defining characteristics of citizenship. Indeed, such was the priority he placed on this matter that in December 1913 he referred to the membership of the newly formed U.V.F as 'the only citizens Ireland possesses at this moment.' Unionists were wrong to believe that their liberty was threatened by the prospect of Home Rule, Pearse maintained, but insofar as they did feel threatened, he believed it was their *duty* to arm in defence of their rights. Furthermore, the occasions on which he reveals an over-zealousness for the life of the battle are not as exceptional as Kiberd suggests. In *Ghosts* (1915), he utilizes one of the un-Christian-like passages the Old Testament when he remarks that 'an aspiration of St. David haunts my memory when I think on Ireland and her wrongs: "*That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies, and that the tongue of thy dogs may be red through the same.*"'[71] And in *The Sovereign People* he quotes John Mitchel's contention that revolutionaries should look upon the destruction caused by their actions as itself as form of creation.

In *The Imagination of an Insurrection*, William Irwin Thompson maintains that Pearse had such sectarian and unrealistic notions of Irish identity that he viewed the idea of 'Irish evil [as] literally unthinkable.' Pearse was 'an intensely serious idealist and temperamentally lacked the imaginative flexibility to laugh at himself or Holy Ireland' Irwin Thompson maintains. 'This lack was not idiosyncratic,' he claims, but a feature of early twentieth century Irish nationalism as a whole.

> Irish Catholicism tends to be a rather severe form of Christianity. For the Irish Catholic aesthetic of the time, to be conscious of evil was to be morbid, neurotic, and evil oneself. There was simply no other way of coming to terms with the Vision of Evil except through dismissal and repression.[72]

Irwin Thompson does not refer to any of Pearse's writings to support this claim, and for a good reason, as there is not a single text (educational, literary or political) where he represents the Irish people in such naive and repressive terms. Certainly Pearse sought to sanctify the cause

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[70] Quoted in Dudley-Edwards, p. 342.
[71] Pearse, *Ghosts* (December 1915). In *Political Writings and Speeches*, p. 255.
[72] Irwin Thompson, p. 72.

of Irish nationalism, but he was invariably scathing in regard to what he believed was the materialism and moral degeneracy of his own generation of Irish men and women. As we saw in relation to his educational writings, he believed that the central problem confronting the nationalist movement in his day was that the majority of the Irish people had come to identify themselves and their nation with the British Empire. Consequently, the political situation in Ireland was too complex to admit of manichean oppositions such as 'Holy Ireland' and Evil England. This is why the vast majority of the vitriol in those writings is directed towards a native population obsessed with material gain and respectability.

This 'self-critical' quality is also a feature of his political texts. As we have seen, it is apparent in his attacks on hypocrisy displayed by Dublin's better-off citizens during the General Strike; and in terms of the way he mocked the prudery of Gaelic Leaguers who (like Pearse himself in 1907) failed to recognise Synge's genius, and who protested against Hugh Lane's paintings being displayed in Dublin. Thompson claims that Pearse and his fellow-patriots 'thought that art *must* uplift the people; it must convince them of their goodness, their innocence, and their justness in the face of their oppressors.'[73] While it is true that his educational and political literature idealize certain aspects of Irish culture, such as the Irish language and ancient Gaelic way of life, his observations in this regard are nearly always prescriptive in nature - they are intended to function as a source of 'adequate inspiration'. Furthermore, nowhere in his creative literature does Pearse attempt to convince the Irish of their *present* 'goodness' or 'innocence'. On the contrary, the degree to which he focuses on their *sinfulness* is one of the most striking features of these writings. 'Great my shame' laments the speaker in 'I am Ireland': 'My own children that sold their mother.' The speaker in 'The Rebel' is also deeply saddened by the manner in which his 'people' have acquiesced in their domination: 'Their shame is my shame, and I have/ Reddened for it,' he remarks, 'I could have borne stripes on my body/ rather than this shame of my people.'[74] Similarly, in short stories such as 'Íosagán' and 'The Dearg-Daol', and in his final play, *The Singer*, it is the excessive power that the Catholic hierarchy exert over their parishoners, rather than the English authorities or the

[73] Ibid., p. 72.
[74] Pearse, *Plays, Stories, Poems*, pp. 323 and 338-9 respectively.

educational system, which is represented as a primary cause of the moral degeneracy of the peasantry.

This emphasis on 'the enemy within' is also apparent in many of his political articles: 'God knows that we, poor remnant of a gallant nation, endure enough shame in common to make us brothers', he remarks in October 1913; 'For, after all, may it not be said with entire truth that the reason why Ireland is not free is that Ireland has not deserved to be free?' he suggests the following November. '[Irishmen] have suffered themselves to be deprived of their manhood [...] We are, in a strict sense, not fit for freedom'.[75] His views regarding the moral and political failings of the Irish people also impacted the representation of revolutionary violence in these political texts. Notwithstanding some exceptions – such as his promise to Irish-Americans that the Volunteers would one day 'overwhelm' England, and the passage he quotes from the Old Testament in *Ghosts*, quoted above – the primary emphasis in these writings is on the suffering that the *Irish people* (or a representative section of that people) will themselves have to endure in the course of the revolution. 'I do not think it [freedom] is going to be achieved without stress and trial, without suffering and bloodshed' he remarks in *The Coming Revolution*. The following January, he suggested that 'in each one of us there is much that is mean and compromising and insincere, much that were better burned out.'[76] In a sense, therefore, these texts do reveal Pearse using literature to 'uplift the people' as Irwin Thompson suggests; but rather than trying to convince them of their innocence or goodness, he does so by emphasising the 'redemptive' benefits of bloodshed and suffering. For example, in March 1914 in New York, he described Robert Emmet's death as 'a sacrifice Christ-like in its perfection.' Emmet died 'that his people might live, even as Christ died. Be assured', Pearse told his audience, 'that such a death always means redemption.'[77] The notion that the suffering induced by revolutionary violence can have positive moral and political consequences is, we shall see now, also one of the defining characteristics of his dramatic literature in the 1913-16 period.

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[75] Pearse, *Political Writings and Speeches*, pp.177 and 194-5 respectively.
[76] Ibid, pp. 96-7 and 205-6 respectively.
[77] 'Robert Emmet and the Ireland of To-day' (March, 1914) in *Political Writings and Speeches*, pp.69 and 71.

Seamus Deane has remarked that 'the literature of the Irish Revival is, in essence, an heroic literature; or, more precisely perhaps, it is a literature which draws heavily on the idea that the revival of heroism is a necessary and practicable ambition in Irish circumstances.'[78] Gaelic literary antiquity played a crucial role in regard to this ambition. The myths and legends contained in the Ulster, Fenian and Historical cycles, which were preserved in medieval works such as the *Book of the Dun Cow*, the *Book of Leinster*, and the *Yellow Book of Lecan*, provided the writers of this movement with a quasi-historical model of a heroic life-ethic which they hoped to diffuse through modern Irish culture. Standish James O'Grady's *History of Ireland: Heroic Period* (1878) (a version of the Cuchulainn legends taken from the Ulster Cycle of the old Irish sagas) was perhaps the single most influential text in regard to this ambition. In his introduction, O'Grady states that his intention in writing this work was 'to make this heroic period once again a portion of the imagination of the country, and its chief characters as familiar in the minds of our people as they once were.'[79] Whatever about 'our people', these heroic legends did become a very large 'portion of the imagination' of Irish writers: the notion that the Irish people were the dispossessed heirs of a great literary and cultural history quickly became a kind of founding principle of the Revival.

The influence of the sagas had an especially strong impact on dramatic literature of the period. The manifesto of the Irish Literary Theatre founded by Yeats, Augusta Gregory and Edward Martyn in 1898 stated its aim as being 'to build up a Celtic and Irish school of dramatic literature' that would show Ireland to be 'the home of an ancient idealism.'[80] The figure of Cuchulainn acquired an especially strong attraction for these dramatists, and his legend was popularised through works such as Æ's *Deirdre*, Lady Gregory's *Cuchulain of Muirthemne* (1902), and the five plays that Yeats wrote in which Cuchulainn is a protagonist.

We have seen that Pearse's fictional work concentrates on the modern-day lives of the West of Ireland peasantry and that rather than ancient heroes and legends, his largely confessional poetry reveals the influence of nineteenth century English romantics. His educational writings, we saw, do make much use of the ancient Irish heroic tradition, particularly the legend of

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[78] Deane, p. 63.
[79] Quoted in Irwin Thompson, p. 22.
[80] Quoted in Harrington (ed.), *Modern Irish Drama* (New York: Norton, 1991), p. 378.

Cuchulainn. This tradition is also central to his dramatic output. Pearse wrote two pageants based on stories from the *Táin Bó Cuailnge (The Cattle Raid of Cooley)*: *Mac-Ghníomhartha Chúchulainn (The Boy-Deeds of Cuchulainn)* which was presented in the grounds of St. Enda's in 1909, and *The Defence of the Ford*, performed in Croke Park in 1913.[81] The notion of a heroic Irish past also dominates plays such as *The King* (1913) and *The Master* (1915).[82] From a political perspective, the importance of the emphasis on heroism in Pearse's plays is that it dramatizes the process of transformation at the heart of the Irish Revolution. As Foster observes in relation to the predominance of this ethic in revivalist literature generally: 'the significant thing was that heroism and hero-worship permitted one to be other than what one was'.[83] Morash makes a similar point when he remarks that 'the secret kinship of good theatre and revolutionary politics' consists in the fact that they are both 'about sudden, magical transformations'.[84] Pearse's dramatic output can be distinguished from many other revivalists, however, in terms of how he conjoins the hero-ethic of the old Irish sagas with plot-lines that involve early Irish Christian culture.

The King is set in an 'ancient monastery' in Ireland during a period of transition from pagan to Christian culture. It focuses on how a Christian child – Giolla na Naomh (The Servant of the Saints) – destroys his people's enemies through his heroic and selfless deeds. In the opening scene of this short work we see the Giolla being appointed King in place of the incumbent, pagan monarch, who has been defeated in all of his many battles against his people's enemies. It is the Abbot of the monastery who has instigated this change in leadership. The people's wars against their enemies were just, he announces after the latest defeat, but their cause was doomed because they were led by a sinful king. 'Not by an unholy King should the noble wine of good heroes be spilt', he tells his monks. This monarch 'has shed the blood of the innocent [and] oppressed the poor', and consequently, '*the offering*' (my italics) of his soldiers' lives in battle 'will not be accepted' by God. (52) The King surrenders his throne and the Giolla elected in his place on account of his sinless and innocent character, and his willingness 'to

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[81] Wilson Foster, p. 3.

[82] Pearse originally wrote *The King* in Irish as *An Rí* in 1912. It was produced for the first time on the grounds of St. Enda's in June of that year. In 1913 it was performed, with some slight modifications, at the Abbey Theatre. The play was published in *An Macaomh* in 1913 accompanied by Pearse's own English translation. See Ó Buachalla, *Literary Writings*, p. 18. (Page references to Pearse's plays are included in the main text.)

[83] Wilson Foster, p. 4

[84] Morash, p. 161.

make the ultimate sacrifice': 'Welcome is death if it be appointed to me', he remarks when he is warned that the accepting the position may lead to his death.(59) The new child-king does make 'the ultimate sacrifice' when he leads his soldiers back into battle, but his army triumphs over their foe. He thus fulfils the Abbot's prediction that 'because [the Giolla] is obedient, God will do mighty things through him.' (61)

The King underlines the manner in which heroism and saintliness were conjoined in Pearse's understanding of Christianity, even when that heroism involved the use of violence. The people's wars are just in the eyes of God, and the Abbot represents the loss of soldiers' lives as an 'offering' and a 'sacrifice'. When one of his monks suggests that the young men of the community should be discouraged from going to war, he responds by likening the life of the battle to 'a heady ale which all young men should drink, for he who has not been made drunk with it has not lived. It is that ale that God makes drunk the hearts of the saints.' (54) Furthermore, the Giolla does not only destroy the enemy by means of his heroism, he also saves his people's souls: 'It is thy purity that hath redeemed my people', (67) the deposed King remarks when the Giolla's corpse is laid out on the monastery green in the final scene.

The Master is also set in the period when Christianity was being introduced to Ireland. Ciaran (the Master of the play's title) is a former warrior who was converted to Christianity during his travels abroad. He then returned to Ireland to propagate the new faith from a 'cloister' in a secluded part of a forest. When the play opens we learn that Daire, the ruling, pagan monarch, is approaching the cloister with the intention of closing it down. Ciaran's pupils urge their Master to flee from the building before Daire arrives, but he refuses to leave. 'You must not tempt me', he tells his pupils. 'He is a sorry champion who forsakes his place of battle. This is my place of battle. You would not have me do a coward thing?' (77) The pupils respond by emphasising the King's material advantages in the coming battle: 'the King has many horsemen', they point out. 'It is not cowardly to fly before a host.' Their Master is unmoved by this argument, however. 'Has not the high God got captains and legions?' he replies. 'What are the King's horsemen to the heavenly riders?' (77) As these remarks indicate, Ciaran believes that God will quite literally come to his defence when the pagans enter his cloister; or

rather, he *wants* to believe that this will occur, but he is unsure whether his faith is sufficiently strong to warrant such a miracle.

Shortly before Daire arrives at the cloister, we see his doubts being contrasted to the faith in God displayed by his most loyal pupil, Iollann Beag. This pupil is quite certain that God's 'great angels will fight' for his master (88). 'Will they not come if you ask for them?' he asks Ciaran. 'We are taught that if one calls them with faith they will come', his master replies, 'if it were necessary [...] in bodily presence'. (89) Cairan's courage fails him at the vital moment, however. In the play's climatic scene, when the pagan king demands that he call on his Christian God 'to send down an angel to stand between you and me', or else he will kill Iollann Beag, Ciaran merely replies, 'I dare not speak. My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' In contrast, Iollann Beag proves equal to the moment. It is he rather than the Master who has the courage to call down God's angels. 'Fear not,' he tells Ciaran, 'I remember the word you taught me... Young Micheal, stand by me!' (99) Saint Micheal immediately appears to save the boy's life, Daire is awestruck, while Ciaran, also overcome, falls forward and dies.

The linkage between Christianity and heroism is perhaps most apparent in Pearse's last play, *The Singer* (1916). MacDara, the central character in this work, is a rebel-poet who was forced into exile as a young man because his songs were 'setting the people's hearts on fire.'[85] When the play begins he has recently returned home, and under the pseudonym of the Singer has been rousing the people with his patriotic songs. Like Ciaran in *The Master*, we learn that McDara also underwent a severe crisis of faith. During his period of exile, he tells his old schoolteacher, it became clear to him 'that there was no God. Why pray after that?' MacDara does find God again and his faith comes to play a central role in his attitude towards rebellion. As in the other dramas, military action in this work is not just a matter of victory or defeat in the field but a question of redemption and salvation. In the play's final scene MacDara tells a small group of patriots that it is not in order to win the battle, but for their 'own souls' sakes'(43) that he is urging them to take a heroic stand against 'four thousand, or, maybe, forty thousand' enemy soldiers. And in the final lines of the play – as he determines to take on the

[85] Pearse, *Plays,Stories and Poems*, p. 21. (Further references to this work included in parenthesis in the main text.)

enemy single-handed – this character famously likens his actions to Christ on the cross: 'One man can free a people as one Man redeemed the world', he exclaims. 'I will take no pike, I will go into battle with bare hands. I will stand up before the Gall as Christ hung naked before men on a tree!' (44)

We have seen that much of Pearse's early creative literature is deeply introspective and self-questioning. The crises highlighted in poems such as 'Renunciation' and 'Why Do Ye Torture Me', and short-stories such as 'Iosagan' and 'The Mother', focus on crises of a personal nature, which often occur within the individual psyche itself; consequently, there is little reference to social or political matters in these works. The conflicts dramatised in Pearse's plays also deal with religious-based crises of the self, although in these plays it is a crisis that can occur at the level of the individual and/or the community. In *The Master*, for example, Ciaran's anxiety over the depth of his faith is such that he confesses he is more afraid of having that faith tested than he is of meeting the King.

The theme of religious doubt is also apparent in *The Singer*. Evidence of MacDara's crisis of faith first arises in relation to how he should view the existence of beauty in the natural world. On returning home to his mother's cabin, he finds himself attracted to Sighle, a young woman who has lived with his mother since she was made an orphan as a child. When Maoilsheachlainn and MacDara are left alone together, the schoolteacher quizzes his former pupil about his thoughts concerning this girl. 'Master, she is very beautiful', is MacDara's first reply. 'I did not know a woman could be so beautiful.' He then confides to Maoilsheachlainn that, prior to seeing Sighle again, he had 'thought that all beauty was in the heart, that beauty was a secret thing that could be seen only with the eyes of reverie, or in a dream of some unborn splendour. I had schooled myself to think physical beauty an unholy thing.' MacDara confesses that previously 'the sight of great beauty' used to make him wish that 'I could blind my eyes so that I might shut out the sight of everything that tempted me.' (26)

MacDara's deliberations here trace the movement of thought we saw in the poem 'Renunciation': an ascetic sensibility leads to an intense bout of soul-searching that ultimately results in a turning back towards the human and sensual world. Perhaps the most curious

aspect of these works is that both poem and play make one feel that it is the temptations of asceticism which have been renounced rather than those of human, or social, reality. As MacDara remarks to his old teacher, Maoilsheachlainn: 'they say that to be busy with the things of the spirit is better than to be busy with the things of the body. But I am not sure, master. Can the Vision Beautiful alone content a man? I think a true man is divine in this, that, like God, he must needs create, he must needs do.' (31)

This character's intensely questioning nature ('I have done nothing all my life but think' he remarks at one point) even extends to doubts concerning God's existence. He tells Maoilsheachlainn that after he had been fired from several jobs while he was in exile (once by a priest who found out that MacDara had been publishing rebel-poetry) he took to the roads as a penniless traveller. 'I was the poorest *shuiler* on the roads of Ireland,' he recalls, 'for I had no single illusion left to me.' (32) During this period of destitution he was incapable of praying, and finally came to deny God's existence out of hand: 'Once, as I knelt by the cross of Kilgobbin, it became clear to me, that there was no God. Why pray after that?' he asks the schoolteacher. Instead, 'riddled with light', he recalls how he 'burst into a fit of laughter at the folly of men in thinking that there is a God', and 'felt inclined to run through the villages and cry aloud, 'People, it is all a mistake; there is no God.' MacDara did find God again, but it was not to be the same God (or at least not the same understanding of God) that he had believed in before his crisis in faith: This time, God was not going to encountered through ecstatic vision or a 'cold and chaste' life; instead, he tells his former schoolteacher that he now sees God in 'the people [...] the dumb, suffering people: reviled and outcast, yet pure and splendid and faithful. In them I saw, or seemed to see again, the Face of God.' (34)

Notwithstanding the fact that in *The Singer*, *The King* and *The Master*, the enemy faced by the protagonists is literally an opposing army of men, the kind of conflict dramatized in these works is still, primarily, an internal one. As he awaits the arrival of Daire's army in *The Master*, Ciaran is more afraid of 'meeting' himself than he is the King's troops, and appeals to God to 'help my unbelief.' (88) *The King* and *The Singer* are also ostensibly about attempts to defeat external armies, but in neither work do those forces appear on stage, nor are they even presented as an important factor in the success or failure of the protagonists' battles. In *The*

King the 'home' nation defeats its enemy as soon as its corrupt leader is replaced by a child-king who is pure of heart and has complete faith in God. As the Abbot of the monastery in which the play is set prophesies, 'this child is obedient, and because he is obedient, God will do mighty things through him.' (61) A similar outcome occurs in *The Master* through the character of Iollann Beag. In the sense that *The Singer* ends with McDara's announcement that 'I will stand up before the Gall as Christ hung naked before men on the tree' (44) the play does seem to close by drawing our attention towards an external enemy; but this army is not present on-stage and, in any case, if McDara is to die a Christ-like death it is his *own* people - not the Gall - whom he will face on his 'tree', just as it was the Jews rather than the Romans that Christ faced upon the cross.

In *The King* and *The Singer* victory depends first and foremost on the redemption of the Self (in either its individual or communal senses) rather than on the destruction of the Other; the actual military defeat of the external enemy being presented as an almost inevitable consequence of the former act. In both plays also, redemption is secured by the death of a single hero: the child-king's death in *The King* and McDara's death in *The Singer* are sufficient to redeem their respective nations. Where *The King* differs from *The Singer* is that in the earlier play the single death is - in the theological sense - sacrificial (a 'making holy'): like Christ's himself, the child-king dies for all his people's sins. This death is made as a gesture towards God who then takes the side of the child-king's nation in their battles. In Pearse's final play, however, McDara's death is not made as a gesture towards God at all, but towards his own people. His death may be called sacrificial in conventional sense of the word, but unlike the earlier work, it is not presented as a 'making holy'. It has no supernatural consequences: there is no indication in the play that, on account of this act, God will take the side of the Gael. Certainly McDara dies *for* his people as did the child-king (and Jesus Christ) but his death redeems in a purely psychological sense: it functions as an 'adequate inspiration' which he hopes will empower his 'people'.

Notwithstanding the emphasis on internal crises throughout Pearse's work, there does appear to be a sense in which the dilemmas faced by characters seeking spiritual purity within themselves, but only finding greater complexity and more doubts, is resolved in the later works

when the protagonists turn outwards, rejecting the way of contemplation for more politically and socially-engaged roles. In early works such as 'Íosagán' and 'The Mother', and plays such as *The Master*, spiritual experiences involve visions of God. Pearse's poetry suggests that he knew he personally was incapable of such experiences, but this incapability is still treated as a *failure* of faith. In *The Singer*, however, it is visionary experience itself which fails to satisfy man's spiritual needs. Instead of visions, McDara turns towards the 'real world', where he believes he (re) discovers 'the Face of God' among 'the homeless and with the breadless.' (34) It is this new understanding of the nature of religious faith that draws him out of lethargy and provides his life with a new sense of purpose and resolve.

The shift to a social context in regard to the treatment of faith is also apparent in Pearse's late poetry. The speaker in 'The Fool' (1916) looks forward to a time when he 'Shall laugh in his lonely heart as the ripe/ ears fall to the reaping-hooks/ And the poor are filled that were empty,/ Tho' he go hungry.' (334) Rather than turning in on himself as in many of the earlier poems, we read that he has 'striven to give a life/ In the *world of time and space among the/ bulks of actual things*/ To a dream that was dreamed in the heart,' (335, my italics). In 'Why Do You Torture Me' (1914) the speaker's desires and sense of anguish was internal to his own psyche. In 'The Rebel' (1916), however, the speaker does not only identify with the suffering of the people, he gives expression to their suffering: 'And because I am of the people,' he claims, 'I understand/ the people,/ I am sorrowful with their sorrow, I am/ hungry with their desire'. (338) In these late works, therefore, religious belief is no longer a matter of personal belief and salvation but - as Terence Brown remarks in regard to Revival literature as a whole - a 'socially significant mode of thought and feeling.'[86]

In Pearse's later works religious faith is understood as a willingness to act (to 'create') *in spite* of one's spiritual doubts, and even in spite of how futile an action may appear to be from a purely secular-rationalist perspective. MacDara, for example, is convinced that his rebellion will lead to the defeat of a hugely-superior military power, but if his plans are judged according to a utilitarian logic, they appear to have no justification whatsoever. He recognises as much himself: when one of his fellow-revolutionaries points out that the reason the peasantry had not

[86] Brown, p. 518.

followed Colm (MacDara's brother) into battle was that 'we thought it a foolish thing for fourscore to go into battle against four thousand, or, maybe, forty thousand', MacDara replies that 'and so it is a foolish thing. Do you want us to be wise?' (43) This leader accepts that, in purely military terms, the chances of his plans actually succeeding are negligible. In order to fight, therefore, he needs an alternative perspective to the 'wise' or instrumentalist rationality of modern bourgeois society. It is his Christian faith that provides him with this perspective: McDara, we saw, legitimates his final act by likening his actions to those of Christ on the cross.

The kind of outlook displayed by McDara is also apparent in Pearse's late poetry. In 'The Fool', as in *The Singer*, faith consists in a willingness to reserve utilitarian-type calculations and act instead in accordance with the dictates of conscience, regardless of the personal consequences or how futile a particular action may appear. The speaker in this poem (a self-styled 'fool') prides himself on the fact that he has never done 'a prudent thing', and openly admits that 'I have squandered the splendid years that/ the Lord God gave to my youth/ In attempting impossible things'.[87] Furthermore, as in *The Singer*, Pearse gives this 'irrational' philosophy a religious sanction. Rather than being judged in terms of the results of his actions, he wants God to consider the fact that he took Christ 'at His word' and focused solely on 'the deed of to-day' rather than the likelihood or otherwise of that deed's success. Hence the speaker's appeal to God: 'Do/ not remember my failures,/ But remember this my faith.'

The emphasis on sacrifice is one of the most important ways in which religion impinges on Pearse's political and creative writing in the 1913-16 period. Many critics view this as a sign of a sectarian political vision. S.W. Gilley suggests that Pearse 'drew upon the sacrificial Christ of a prayerful Irish Catholicism.'[88] Richard Kearney claims that he conjoins 'Catholic and mythic idioms of sacrifice.'[89] Edna Longley, one of Pearse's severest critics, suggests that 'Pearse's appetite for martyrdom marks the point of elision between his Nationalism and his Catholicism', because 'in Protestant theology self-identification with Christ appears more obviously blasphemous'.[90]

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[87] Pearse, 'The Fool' (1916) in *Plays, Stories, Poems*, pp. 334-6.
[88] S.W. Gilley, 'Pearse's Sacrifice: Christ and Cuchulain Crucified and Risen in the Easter Rising, 1916' in S.W. Sykes (ed.) *Sacrifice and Redemption: Durham Essays in Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1991), p. 218.
[89] Kearney, p. 118.
[90] Longley, p. 73.

There are many important ways in which nationalism and religion overlap in Pearse's writings; however, there is no sense in which his views can be said to amount to a form of Catholic-nationalism; his educational writings underline this point. Furthermore, although martyrdom and sacrifice *are* recurring themes in Pearse's literature, as the above critics claim, it is not certain that this is evidence of a specifically *Catholic* mind-set. Pearse's 'sanctification' of the nationalist-martyr Wolfe Tone during his Bodenstown address (of which Shaw was so critical) suggests that he himself did not look upon martyrdom as a particular feature of Catholicism. In the course of his address at the grave of Wolfe Tone on 22nd June 1913, he famously remarked that this nationalist had 'no need of prayers'.[91] This phrase is a clear reference to a notorious line from W.B. Yeats's play, *The Countess Cathleen* (1899), which had outraged Catholic opinion in Ireland on account of the way it seemed to challenge Catholic doctrines such as the need for prayers for the dead. By appropriating this line, and using it in reference to a man who had been a severe critic of Catholicism in Ireland (and who, as a suicide, had damned his own soul according to that doctrine), Pearse was clearly indicating that Tone's holiness was of a very unorthodox kind indeed.

The emphasis on martyrdom and sacrifice in his writing needs to be understood in the context of contemporary social and political events, rather than Catholic theology. In his study on the role of the Church of England during the First World War, Alan Wilkinson observes 'that the war had brought national unity, and a new spirit of self-sacrifice'[92]. He notes that some Protestants found that Church of England doctrine (which we saw G.K. Chesterton claim had been deeply 'eroded' by liberal-rationalist culture, and an increasingly scientific world-view) was unable to cope with their emotional and spiritual needs during the war. 'The ministry of the Church of England to the dying and the bereaved was confused', Wilkinson remarks,

> Biblical criticism, emphasis on a social gospel, evolution, liberal views of the love of God, and a materialistic type of science had been steadily eroding the clear-cut doctrines about heaven and hell which up to the mid-nineteenth century had been broadly held in common by the majority of Christians for centuries.

This rationalist culture led clergymen such as R.J. Campbell to complain that Protestantism 'had little comfort to give to mourners, for it has been so silent regarding the fate of our

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[91] Pearse, 'Theobald Wolfe Tone' in *Political Speeches and Writings*, p. 62.
[92] Alan Wilkinson, *The Church of England and the First World War* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1978), p. 188. (Further references included in the main text.)

dead'.[93] The high-Anglican Bishop of London, Arthur Foley Winnington-Ingram, was another who 'frankly admitted' that Church of England regulations regarding access to the reserved Sacrament were breaking down in his diocese during the war: 'the tide of human grief and anxiety had been too great,' he remarked, 'the longing to get as near as possible to the Sacramental Presence of our Lord had been too urgent.'[94]

Wilkinson's study does not support Longley's claim that Protestant theology eschews practices such as martyrology and self-identification with Christ. Winnington-Ingram was, admittedly, a high-Anglican bishop, but he was also the most popular Protestant orator in England during the war. In his sermons and speeches Ingram enthusiastically promoted the notion that English soldiers who died were martyrs who could be likened to Christ. In Advent 1916 he remarked that 'the precious blood of their dearest boy mingles with the Precious Blood which flowed in Calvary; again the world is being redeemed by precious blood. 'CHRIST did what my boy did; my boy imitated what CHRIST did' they say.' (190); or again: 'over every one who dies in this war with his face towards the foe, if he dies in CHRIST, will be those words: 'This is My beloved son. This is My beloved son in whom I am well pleased.' (181) Wilkinson also comments upon the popularity of the picture 'The Great Sacrifice' in England during the war. This showed a dead soldier in the field lying with one hand on the feet of a spectral crucified Christ, with the inscription 'Greater love hath no man' written below it.[95] Such facts suggest that the language of redemption through bloodshed, martyrology and self-identification with Christ is not peculiar to the Catholic religion. The Church of England may have discouraged such practices in peace-time, but during the First World War – when bereavement and death became inescapable realities – the Protestant episcopacy acquiesced in such practices.

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[93] Wilkinson, p. 175 Campbell contrasted this situation to the experience of French Catholics whom he had seen during the war 'praying before the exposed Sacrament in a church on All Souls' Day.' In his 1916 work, *War and the Soul*, Campbell suggested that 'the devotional value, the practical helpfulness' of the Reservation of the Sacrament in Catholic churches, 'makes all the difference between a dead building and a place that is a sanctuary indeed, wherein worshipers feel that they are in immediate contact with the supernatural and divine.' Quoted in Wilkinson, p. 176.

[94] Ibid., p. 178. The shift towards Catholic practices was also evident in relation to issue of prayers for the dead. Wilkinson notes that 'in 1914 public prayer for the dead was uncommon in the Church of England; by the end of the war it had become widespread.' (176). He points out that only the Bishops of Liverpool and Manchester protested that 'such prayers [...] were contrary to Scripture and the teachings of the Church of England', and suggests that 'both of these were completely out of touch with popular sentiment; bereavement was sweeping away the latent Protestantism of the English people in this matter.' (178) Curiously, therefore, just as Pearse was publicly challenging Catholic doctrine with the claim that nationalist martyrs such as Tone 'had no need of prayers', English Protestants were beginning to revive the practice of praying for the souls of the dead.

[95] Wilkinson, p. 191.

A more genuine difference between Pearse and clergymen such as Winnington-Ingram is that the latter often encouraged the idea that it was the martyrs themselves who - through their sacrifice - were restored to immortal life. Wilkinson refers to 'a quasi-Islamic belief, encouraged explicitly or tacitly by many in the Churches, that soldiers dying nobly in a 'holy war' would immediately enter into everlasting life'.[96] Despite the prevalence of the themes of martyrdom and redemption through bloodshed in Pearse's work, there are very few occasions when he suggests that volunteers would be saving their own immortal souls by dying for Ireland.[97] Instead, it is the already-living people of the nation who are 'redeemed' by a martyr's death, in the sense that it 'awakens' them from the 'death-in-life' they had been living.[98] A second difference is that whereas orators such as Winnington-Ingram sought to inspire troops by instilling in them a sense of hatred of the German enemy, as we have seen, in Pearse's writings the enemy is generally an internal one such as lack of faith or the fear of death.

In *The Imagination of an Insurrection*, Irwin Thompson also focuses on the issue of Pearse's self-identification with Christ; but whereas Kearney and Longley see this as evidence of Pearse's Catholic mind-set, Irwin Thompson treats it as a sign of his irrationality. This critic claims that 'the self-image of Padraic Pearse was Jesus Christ,' (118) and that this dictated the whole course of his life: 'The mythical image of Pearse as saviour demanded the reality of crucifixion', he maintains. 'Christ without the cross is not Christ, and Pearse knew that the rebel-martyr without death was no hero at all. In his passionate objectivity, Pearse calculated, threw his life into the balance, calculated again, and decided that his death was not the cost but the reward of sacrifice.' (122)[99]

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[96] Ibid., p. 180.

[97] An exception occurs in *The Singer* when MacDara remarks that 'it is for your own souls' sakes' that the fourscore Irishmen should have gone into battle against the English; similarly, in 'The Fool' the speaker quotes the biblical line 'Ye shall venture your all, lest ye lose what/ is more than all'. In Pearse, *Plays, Stories, Poems*. pp. 43 and 336 respectively.

[98] 'Death-in-life' is a line from Douglas Hyde's poetry which Pearse frequently uses to describe the inert and passionless kind of existence engendered by modern liberal-utilitarian culture. See *The Murder Machine*, in Ó Buachalla, *Educational Writings*, p. 384.

[99] This indeed is Irwin Thompson's verdict on all the leaders of the Rising: like Pearse, when the poet-rebels MacDonagh and Plunkett 'are brought into the light and perceived with historical objectivity, they become incompetent, irrational, pretentious, and ridiculous.' Irwin Thompson, p. 75. Connolly's 'revolutionary passions were less exotic,' than Pearse's, Thompson concedes, 'but were equally irrational. Mystical or Marxist, they both were driven by an intense consciousness of failure'. Ibid., 87.

Thompson's analysis takes no account of the fact that Pearse used the Christ-model in a variety of contexts and not just in relation to his own life and death. As noted earlier, in his March 1913 Address in New York, he identifies Robert Emmet with Christ's death. In June the same year, he remarks that a 'When man like Synge [...] uses strange symbols which we do not understand, we cry out that he has blasphemed and we proceed to crucify him.[100] Indeed, Pearse's use of the Christ-image was not restricted to dead nationalists. In his short story, 'The Mother', it is a woman, who, trying to emulate Christ, '[sticks] thorns into her flesh in memory of the crown of thorns that went on the brow of the saviour.'[101] *The Coming Revolution* shows him anticipating the Irish people as a whole becoming their own Messiah: 'The people itself will perhaps be its own Messiah, the people labouring, scourged, crowned with thorns, agonising and dying, to rise again immortal and impassible.'[102] Not surprisingly, it is when he is discussing educational matters that the Christ-imagery in his work appears at its most positive and life-enhancing. In many of these texts Pearse likens the ideal relationship between a teacher and his or her pupils to that between Christ and his disciples.[103] The fact that Pearse uses the Christ-image in such a variety of non-personal contexts leads one to question whether the image did, in fact, arise out of his own narcissism or messianism, as Thompson maintains; one suspects that individuals with messianic delusions are not normally so generous in recognising alternative claimants to the title of Messiah.

Patrick O'Farrell's analysis of the role of religion in Irish society during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries suggests more plausible, socio-historical explanations for this feature of Pearse's writing. In 'Millenialism, Messianism and Utopianism in Irish History', O'Farrell observes that politically-unstable societies with strong religious traditions often give rise to millennial and messianic movements; however, despite the fact that 'Ireland's historical image is that of a primitive peasant society, with a vigorous Christian ideology, long subjected to oppression and exploitation', he notes that the country was largely 'innocent of apocalyptic

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[100] Pearse, *Political Writings and Speeches*, p. 145.
[101] Pearse, *Plays, Stories, Poems*, p. 132.
[102] Pearse, *Political Writings and Speeches*, p. 91. Pearse expresses a similar idea in *The Sovereign People* in which 'the faithful, common people - that dumb multitudinous throng which sorrowed during the penal night, which bled in '98, which starved in the famine' who are likened to Christ. Ibid., p. 345.
[103] In *The Murder Machine*, for example, he suggests 'One may think of our Lord and His friends as a sort of school; was He not the Master, and were not they His disciples?' Ibid., p. 376

fanaticisms' until the 1916 Rising.[104] This was the first rebellion in Ireland 'to be related to Christian concepts and imagery by its leaders', he claims.[105]

O'Farrell suggests a number of possible reasons for this absence. He notes that 'historically, millenarianism has been associated with sectarian deviations from the orthodox church', but Catholicism in Ireland was 'the major unifying ideology distinguishing the Irish from their English rulers' and therefore was 'highly resistant to the growth of internal deviations.' Furthermore, although the membership of groups such as the Whiteboys was exclusively Catholic, their objectives were 'limited, immediate, individual and practical - particular violence against a particular person to secure some particular object', and so were 'antithetical to the millenial and messianic approach' in the sense that they provided 'no room for fantasy, no impulse to think further than protection of subsistence.'[106]

The particular character of Irish religious beliefs also militated against millennial and messianic politics. There did exist a 'strong and general Irish belief that Providence governed the world', O'Farrell observes, but this did not, as one might expect, provide a basis for mystical political movements. 'In Catholic Ireland' there was a belief that 'God was acting constantly in the day to day affairs of men', which had 'reduced His presence to the natural, even the ordinary. This was an not an atmosphere in which predictions of His coming made much sense: He was already there.'[107]

The famine is another important reason for the lack of messianic and millennial trends in Irish religious beliefs. O'Farrell notes that 'millenialism is usually, if not invariably, related to periods of profound and rapid social and economic change, or the imminent threat of such change, which produces disorientation, insecurity and anxiety.' While the1840s period in Ireland undoubtedly fulfilled these requirements, he points out that the 'profound socio-

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[104] Patrick O'Farrell, 'Millenialism, Messianism and Utopianism in Irish History' in P.J. Drudy (ed.) *Anglo-Irish Studies*, Vol. II (Alpha Academic Books: Bucks, 1976), p. 46 (Further references are included in main text.)

[105] 'Previous insurrections', he comments, 'derived their major sanctions from and energy if not from the localised Whiteboys impetus, then from the heroic mythology of the Fianna.' Ibid., p. 57.

[106] Ibid., pp. 48-9. This critic concedes that it is possible to discern a 'millennial and messianic strand' in relation to events such as the 1798 rebellion, the agitation for Catholic emancipation in the 1820s, and repeal of the Union in the 30s and 40s; however, 'the vision of a new Ireland' in these movements, he suggests, 'was anchored firmly to some practical political proposal', and often aimed at constitutional rather than revolutionary change. Ibid., p. 51.

[107] Ibid., pp. 57-8. We have seen that Pearse's writings attest to this understanding of the presence of God as an ordinary part of 'everyday experience' in section II of this chapter.

economic convulsions' brought on by the famine, and the subsequent massive emigration, 'were socially and psychologically exhausting, rather than galvanic, at least in their immediate effect.' As a consequence, 'popular Irish Catholicism experienced a sense of sin and self-doubt which prevented the growth of that conviction of righteousness, of God's complete favour, which appears to underlie the millennial impulse.'[108]

O'Farrell suggests that 'Pearse appears to have been the first Irish rebel leader to have made explicit and substantial use of the messiah concept'.[109] Rather than the idiosyncrasies of personality, however, he offers socio-historical reasons as to why a messianic and millennial impulse do finally emerge in Pearse's writings and the 1916 Rising. 'Religious and prophetic functions developed quite separately in Irish society', he notes. Unlike many other cultures (such as the Jewish community), where prophecy is a function of the religious leadership, in Ireland, this 'was the preserve of poets (*fili*)'. Although these poets' often 'forecast[ed] the doom of the English and the triumph of the Irish', without the 'authority and hallowing influence of a religious setting', they lacked 'inspirational power'.[110] Consequently, 'the emotions and visions which religion could generate were kept distinct from those which operated in secular affairs.' Furthermore, the poets' 'damaging effects on social order were achieved perhaps less through prophecy - the claim to look forward - as through the reciting of ancient heroic tales - that is, through looking back.'[111]

This situation changed with the occurrence of the Irish Literary Revival towards the end of the nineteenth century. In effect, writers such as Pearse synthesised the religious and literary traditions in Irish culture. 'It remained for a messianic layman, Patrick Pearse,' O'Farrell remarks, to re-unite 'the pagan-Christian dualism of Irish life' (56) My analysis of Pearse's writings supports this reading. From the religious tradition Pearse takes elements such as the focus on future salvation, messianism, and, obviously the notion of sanctity. This provides poems such as 'Christmas 1915', 'The Fool' and 'The Rebel', and plays such as *The Master, The King* and *The Singer* with the 'hallowing influence' and 'inspirational power' which

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[108] O'Farrell, pp. 57-9. Indeed, referring to Roger J. McHugh's findings, O'Farrell observes that as late as 1956 'a great many of the old people believed and some still believe that the famine was a punishment for waste, a scourge sent by God because of the abuse of plenty.' In a similar fashion, many clerics in 1890 believed that 'the collapse of Irish politics brought about by the Parnell affair was a divine punishment for Ireland's sins.' Ibid., p. 54.

[109] Ibid., p. 57.

[110] Ibid., p. 55.

[111] Ibid., p. 56.

O'Farrell notes had been missing in the work of the *filí*; but Pearse also uses the poetic tradition to politicise Irish religious beliefs: whereas the official church hierarchy were concerned solely with individual salvation, to be gained in the 'next-world', Pearse's writings focus on communal salvation and make practically no reference to the after-life. It is 'the people itself' whom he imagines will become their own Messiah in both *The Coming Revolution* and *The Sovereign People* (sentiments which Francis Shaw suggests cannot be read 'without a shudder'[112]); the 'people', also, whom McDara hopes to inspire in *The Singer*, and whom Pearse addresses in his later poems such as 'The Rebel' and 'The Fool'.

O'Farrell's analysis suggests that the messianic and millennial impulses in Pearse's writings need to be understood in the context of important historical and political developments in Irish history. In particular, the peculiar division of religious and prophetic functions in Irish society during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the emergence of the Revival a generation after the famine, meant that a revolutionary such as Pearse, who was both a poet and a committed Christian, was in an obvious position to synthesise the poetic and religious traditions in Irish culture. In the final part of this chapter I examine the synthesis that O'Farrell refers to here: the manner in which literary and religious ideas impinged upon the revolutionary events that took place during Easter Week 1916 in Dublin.

[112] Shaw, p 125.

IV

Writing the Rising

> '*So much depends on what we only half know and on what we know not at all in ourselves and in those about us, that no man can be certain how his schemes* will eventuate.' (*An Macaomh*, Dec. 1910)

'Often depicted with hindsight as the culmination of a process of nationalist radicalisation stretching back to the fall of Parnell in 1890 and accelerated during the war, the Easter Rising', David Fitzpatrick observes, 'was in fact, as it seemed to most of its contemporaries, an unpredictable aberration.'[1] Only a very small section of the Irish population supported the actions of the rebels. Of the 180,000 thousand men who made up the National Volunteers prior to the outbreak of the First World War, only 10,000 men had remained in the army following the September 1914 split, and of these a mere 1,600 actually participated in the insurrection. The Rising was, as F.X. Martin noted, 'the revolt of a minority, of a minority, of a minority.'[2]

In empirical terms, it was an ill-conceived and insignificant failure. It enjoyed no popular support, was all over with in six days, and ended with the unconditional surrender of the rebel-forces to the British Army. Yet, it was the single most important event of the whole revolution; a seminal moment that catalysed the military and political developments of the subsequent years of the revolution. Initially reviled and ridiculed by many nationalists, the leaders of the Rising soon came to be viewed as heroes and their rebellion looked upon as the 'founding moment' of the Irish State. As much as anything that the rebels did, it was the manner in which the British authorities responded to their actions that determined the huge effect that the event had on the future course of the revolution. Rather than making them prisoners of war the British authorities chose to court-martial the rebel-leadership as traitors, a

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[1] Fitzpatrick, p. 58.
[2] F.X. Martin, '1916 – Myth, Fact, and Mystery' in *Studia Hibernica*, No. 7, 1967, p.108.

policy which led to the execution of 15 of the leaders between May 3 and 12.[3] It was this 'over-reaction' on the part of the British authorities, Kiberd suggests, 'which gave the insurgents the retrospective status of people's heroes.'[4]

Revivalists were themselves among the first to advance the notion of a causal connection between their writings and the events of Easter week 1916. Looking back upon the processes that led to this 'event', W. B. Yeats famously claimed that

> The modern literature of Ireland, and indeed all that stir of thought which prepared for the Anglo-Irish war, began when Parnell fell from power in 1891. A disillusioned and embittered Ireland turned from parliamentary politics; an event was conceived; and the race began, as I think, to be troubled by that event's long gestation.[5]

Yeats's remarks have been extremely influential. The impact that the revivalists had on the politics of the time has, if anything, been over-emphasized in Irish historiography. As Roy Foster points out, rather than literary-cultural activity, 'the scenario for 1916 was created almost entirely by another extraneous event: the First World War'.[6] Nevertheless, the Rising does reveal some fascinating inter-connections between literature and revolutionary politics; and my analysis will contend that the vital part that the First World War played in creating the scenario for this insurrection itself discloses some of these connections.

There are two main ways in which literature impinged on the 1916 insurrection. Firstly (following Yeats) the rebellion can be seen as the culmination of a cultural movement that had been instigated by the literary renaissance in the 1890s. Secondly, there is the extraordinarily theatrical nature of the events of Easter Week 1916 in Dublin. In relation to the former argument, the literary ideas that came to fruition in 1916 emerged predominantly from the Irish theatrical tradition.[7] *Cathleen ní Houlihan* (1902) is one of the most frequently-cited texts in terms of this influence. A play that represents Ireland as a withered old beggar-woman

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[3] George Bernard Shaw was one of those who voiced the view that under international law the rebels should have been treated as prisoners of war, arguing that 'An Irishman resorting to arms to achieve the independence of his country is only doing what Englishmen will do if it be their misfortune to be invaded and conquered by the Germans'. G.B. Shaw, *The Matter with Ireland.* Quoted in Kiberd, p. 199.

[4] Ibid.,p. 193.

[5] Quoted in Foster, p. 431. More impressive than Yeats's retrospective commentary was the 'prophecy' made by 'the father of the Revival', Standish James O'Grady who, in the early stages of that movement remarked: 'We have now a literary movement, it is not very important; it will be followed by a political movement, that will not be very important; then must come a military movement, that will be important indeed' Quoted in Kiberd, p. 196.

[6] Foster, p. 461.

[7] 'Over and over again one is struck by a sense of drama', Irwin Thompson remarks of the development of the nationalist movement in the early twentieth century. Irwin Thompson, p. x.

transformed into 'a young girl [with] the walk of a queen' through the deaths of Irish patriots, this work, it is often claimed, had a catalytic effect on the development of nationalist sentiment in Ireland at the start of the twentieth century.[8] Indeed, in 'The Man and the Echo', from the poetry collection, *Last Poems,* Yeats himself famously ponders whether 'that play of mine send out/ Certain men the English shot?'

There *was* a very close linkage between theatre and revolutionary politics in early twentieth century Ireland, but it was far more complex and pervasive than Yeats's self-questioning remark allows. Morash points out that theatre and revolutionary politics in Ireland were closely linked throughout the early part of the twentieth century. As well as *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, he notes that Augusta Gregory's plays *The Rising of the Moon* (1907) and *The Image* (first staged at the Abbey in November 1909) highlight what calls 'the secret kinship of good theatre and revolutionary politics.'[9] Furthermore, as noted earlier, although the quality of the plays being produced by the Abbey started to decline in the years following Synge's death, companies such as the Cork Dramatic Society, and the Theatre of Ireland were starting to produce aesthetically and politically challenging drama in this period.

A second way that literature related to the Rising concerns the theatrical quality of the Rising itself. Tom Garvin has suggested that 'the event had the air of an enactment on stage about it', and that 'its real effects were symbolic and psychological rather than military.'[10] Similarly, Kiberd remarks that it was consciously staged as 'street theatre' and, as such, was 'a continuation of what had begun in the national theatre'.[11] This latter critic identifies three areas in which the dramatic quality of the insurrection came to the fore: location, timing and costume. The choice of the G.P.O., as the military centre of the insurrection 'was an inspired choice,' he claims, 'since it cut across the main street of the capital city, paralysing communications and forcing everyone to take notice.' The decision to 'rise' on Easter Monday was 'another brilliant symbolization [...] Easter brought renewal, spring-time, new life to a

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[8] W.B. Yeats, *Cathleen ní Houlihan.* Harrington, *Modern Irish Drama*, p. 11. Irwin Thompson suggests that the play 'gave articulate form to Irish nationalism.', p. 116; the revivalist writer and critic, Stephen Gwynn, wrote that 'the effect of *Cathleen ní Houlihan* on me was that I went home asking myself if such plays should be produced unless one was prepared to go out and shoot and be shot.' (Cited in A. N. Jeffares, *A Commentary on the Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats* (London: Macmillan, 1968), p. 512.); and Constance Markievicz, an officer in the Citizen Army and Second-in-Command at Stephen's Green during the Rising, later recalled in prison that for her the play had been 'a kind of gospel'. Quoted in Harrington, p. 415.

[9] Morash, p. 161. Augusta Gregory also co-wrote *Cathleen ní Houlihan.*

[10] Garvin, p. 112.

[11] Kiberd, pp. 203-4.

dead landscape: and so it helped to justify and explain all previous abortive uprisings, for it wove them into a wider narrative, a myth of fall, death and glorious redemption.'[12] The theatricality of the Rising was also apparent in terms of the demeanour and outfits worn by some of the rebel leaders: the swordstick and cloak that Thomas McDonagh carried into the conflict; Eammon Ceannt's kilt and bagpipes (which he played in the lulls between fighting); Joseph Plunkett's Celtic rings and bracelets; and the ancient sword that Pearse wore through much of this urban guerrilla conflict, and which he insisted on handing over formally to the leader of the British forces at the moment of surrender.[13] These aspects lead Kiberd to the view that the Rising was – at least in part – a performance in which the rebel leaders were consciously 're-enacting the Cuchulain myth'.[14]

Kiberd views the evidence of a literary sensibility in the rebel leadership in a positive light. 'If there was an element of playacting involved in the Rising, that is best understood in existential terms', he suggests, and refers to Jean-Paul Satre's observation that 'as soon as a man conceives himself free, and determines to use that freedom then his work takes on the character of a play.'[15] Other critics have been less sympathetic. Irwin Thompson also recognizes that there is an intrinsic link between art and the psychology of liberation struggles. 'Art', he suggests, 'gives articulate form to the inchoate mass of experience' that make up revolutionary situations, and plays an essential part in the process of transformation that underpins revolutions'. He nevertheless takes a very negative view of the manner in which their artistic outlooks influenced the actions of the 1916 rebels: once they are 'perceived with historical objectivity,' he remarks, 'they become incompetent, irrational, pretentious, and ridiculous.'[16] The poet-rebels Pearse, MacDonagh and Plunkett all 'shared a common desire to live a myth', he contends, and Pearse, in particular, 'lived his life as if he were the hero in a tragedy.'[17] Rather than becoming free, for this critic, the Irish rebel-poets lived a kind of romantic

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[12] Ibid p. 207.
[13] Ibid, p. 224.
[14] The dramatic quality of the Rising was also evident (and further enhanced) by the attitudes and actions of many the civilian 'spectators' during the week of the Rising. Foy and Barton note that 'extraordinarily, many Dubliners regarded the Rising as almost a spectacle laid on for their enjoyment and competed for the best view', often putting their lives in imminent danger in the process. They refer to 1916 rebel, Dick Humphries's, recollection that many Dubliners behaved as if 'the whole thing was merely a sham battle got up for their amusement.' Michael Foy and Brian Barton, *The Easter Rising* (Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing Limited, 1999), pp. 283-4. One young woman, whose British officer boyfriend was arrested by the rebels, insisted that she would wait 'till the performance was over.' ibid., p. 252.
[15] Kiberd, p. 204
[16] Irwin Thompson, p. 75.
[17] Ibid., 138. and 89 respectively. 'Connolly's revolutionary passions were less exotic, but they were equally irrational. Mystical or Marxist [he and Pearse] they were both driven by an intense consciousness of failure.' Ibid., p. 87.

delusion, their actions motivated by a desire to compensate for their failure as artists, rather than genuinely political concerns.

Although these critics differ as to how they judge the role that art played in the Rising, they both maintain it is in terms of the idea of *sacrifice* that the most important connections between the rebels' literary outlooks and the actual revolutionary events of Easter Week arise. For Kiberd, 'the rebels, Wilde-like, opted to invest their genius in their life and only their talent in their work, for they offered their lives to the public as works of art. Seeing themselves as martyrs for beauty, they aestheticized their sacrifice.'[18] Similarly, Irwin Thompson claims that for Pearse, 'death was not the cost but the reward of sacrifice [...] He wanted to be a saviour to his people, and he moved remorselessly into myth'.[19] The vast majority of critical studies on the literature of the Rising also focus on the issue of sacrifice. For Deane, the major characteristic of Pearse's writing is that he 'transmuted [the] heroic aspiration' that characterised Revivalist literature as a whole into 'a call for blood sacrifice'. Cruise O'Brien maintains that, in their own minds, 'the sacrifice of the Irish patriots was analogous to the sacrifice of Christ'; and Kearney suggests that Pearse's actions need to be understood as forming part of 'mythico-religious tradition of *renewal-through-sacrifice*' in Irish nationalism.'[20]

There is no question but that there was an element of sacrifice involved in the rebels' approach to the Rising. Some of those most closely involved in the events of the period attest to this fact. In February 1916, Eoin MacNeill, Chief of Staff of the Irish Volunteers, wrote to his fellow-officers that he was aware of 'a feeling in some minds that action is necessary, that lives must be sacrificed in order to produce an ultimate effect on the national mind.'[21] In his memoirs of his father, Risteárd Mulcahy claims that for Richard Mulcahy (Second-in-Command at Ashbourne, the only military 'success' of Easter Week), the Rising 'was always designed to be a symbolic action and was never thought likely to lead to a successful military outcome.'[22]

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[18] Kiberd, p. 201

[19] Irwin Thompson, p. 118.

[20] Respectively: Deane, p. 63; Cruise O'Brien, *States of Ireland* (London: Panther, 1974), p. 287. Kearney, 'Myth and Terror', *The Crane Bag Book of Irish Studies (1977 -1981)* (Dublin: Blackwater Press, 1982), p. 285.

[21] F.X. Martin, 'Eoin MacNeill on the 1916 Rising'. Quoted in Irwin Thompson, p. 94.

[22] Risteárd Mulcahy, *Richard Mulcahy - A Family Memoir (1886-1971).* (Dublin: Aurelian Press, 1999), p. 29.

And as his column set out for the G.P.O. on Easter Monday, James Connolly is said to have remarked that the Rising had no chance and that they were all going out to be slaughtered.[23]

There is much to suggest that Pearse also viewed the events of Easter Week in this light. We have seen that the idea of sacrifice is a frequently recurring theme in his literary and political writings in the 1913-1916 period. A number of his comments during the Rising suggest that he approached this crisis in a similar frame of mind. The Proclamation he read out at the beginning of the insurrection states that the 'children' of the nation must be prepared to 'sacrifice themselves for the common good';[24] in his final communiqué from the G.P.O., he remarks that his exhausted troops appeared to have lost their battle, 'but win it they will, although they may win it in death'[25]; and in a letter he wrote to his mother following the surrender, Pearse urges her to think of his death 'as a sacrifice which God asked of me and of you.'[26] Notwithstanding such remarks, two important questions still remain in relation to the part that the idea of sacrifice played in the Rising: firstly, did Pearse and the other leaders view their insurrection solely in terms of a blood sacrifice?; and secondly, should the notion of a blood sacrifice, and the literary quality of the 1916 Rising generally, be interpreted in terms of the rebels' purported artistic sensibilities? We have seen this is how it is normally understood. I will argue, however, that this feature of the insurrection also needs to be interpreted in terms of the fact that *real life* revolutionary situations can themselves create the kind of tragic scenarios we commonly associate with works of literature.

Richard Kearney has been one of the foremost advocates of the blood-sacrifice theory of the Rising in recent years. His most detailed discussion of this issue is contained in his 1982 article 'Myth and Terror'. The 'guiding motivation' of the Rising, Kearney claims here, was 'an exigency of sacrifice to some mythological Ireland: an ancestral deity who would respond to the martyrdom of her sons by rising from her ancient slumber to pursue her destiny'.[27] Like so many of the Rising's critics, Kearney appears to be reading 1916 through the eyes of its primary mythologist, W.B. Yeats. The fact is that in none of Pearse's speeches, his educational or political writings does a belief in a 'mythological Ireland' or 'ancestral deity' act as a 'guiding motivation' to sacrifice, or any other act; and throughout the whole of his literary

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[23] Foy and Barton, p. 124.
[24] *The 1916 Proclamation*, ed. John O'Connor (Dublin: Anvil Books, 1986), p. 10.
[25] Quoted in Dudley Edwards, p. 299.
[26] Foy and Barton, p. 234.
[27] Richard Kearney, 'Myth and Terror', p. 275.

works, there is only one short poem that makes use of such a figure – the formulaic 'I am Ireland'.

Kearney makes much of the opening phrases of the 1916 Proclamation, in which Pearse suggests that, through the rebels, 'Ireland [...] summons her children to her flag'. This, he maintains, reveals that Pearse looked upon the insurrection as a sacrifice to 'a maternal and mythical personification of the Nation'[28]. However, abstractions of this kind are an inevitable feature of human discourse, and throughout history, patriarchal societies have tended to express such concepts in gendered terms. The fact that Pearse speaks of Ireland in maternal and mythical terms no more implies a belief in the actual existence of that abstraction than Kearney's book-title, *The Irish Mind*, Longley's references to a 'Catholic Ireland', or Irwin Thompson's to a 'Holy Ireland', imply that those critics believe in the existence of their abstractions.[29]

One of the central flaws in Kearney's analysis is that he fails to distinguish between a belief in the mythic and the spiritual. The disturbing emphasis on martyrdom and sacrifice in Pearse's writings is *never* motivated by a belief in mythological or ancestral deity. Instead, these deaths invariably operate within the Christian theological framework: Pearse's fictional protagonists and nationalist heroes are always presented as emulating the actions of Jesus Christ's death. Furthermore, in only one of these works, his morality play, *The King*, does God actually 'respond to the martyrdom of her sons' by intervening in history. This scenario does not reoccur in any of his other literary texts. In fact, we have seen that in his two best-known works, 'The Fool' and *The Singer*, it is not a slumbering deity at all - Christian or pagan - whom his protagonists hope to 'revive' by their actions, but the men and women of their own generation. In Pearse's political writings the deaths of patriots such as Robert Emmet and Wolfe Tone are treated in a similar manner. 'This man died for us', Pearse extolled in his

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[28] This is the *only* passage of text that Kearney cites in support of his claim that Pearse viewed the Rising as a sacrifice to such a figure.

[29] Kearney, *The Irish Mind* (Dublin: Wolfhound, 1985); Longley, p. 70; Irwin Thompson, p 72. In *The Spiritual Nation* (1916) Pearse explicitly disavows a belief in such abstractions: 'When I was a child', he writes here, 'I believed that there was actually a woman called Erin, and had Mr. Yeats' 'Kathleen Ni Houlihan' been then written and had I seen it, I should have taken it not as an allegory, but as a representation of a thing that might happen any day in any house. This I no longer believe as a physical possibility, nor can I convince myself that a friend of mine is right in thinking that there is actually a mystical entity which is the soul of Ireland, and which expresses itself through the mind of Ireland.' *Political Writings and Speeches*, p. 301. In *Ancestral Voices,* Cruise O'Brien also claims that Pearse believed in the existence of mythological figures such as Kathleen Ni Houlihan. O'Brien does refer to Pearse's comment in *The Spiritual Nation* in order to support this claim: he quotes the first of the above sentences and makes no reference whatsoever to the second, thus completely inverting the whole intention behind Pearse's remarks, which is of course to infantalize a belief in such figures.

oration at Wolfe Tone's graveside in 1913, but he makes no suggestion that God, or any 'ancestral deity', was going to awaken from his 'ancient slumbers' to avenge this Protestant's suicide.[30] Rather, it was his *audience* whom he was urging to rise.

We saw that in his educational literature Pearse maintains British imperialism in twentieth century Ireland operated less through physical violence than by a form of 'mind murder': on account, primarily, of the education system, the majority of the Irish population had come to view their cultural and political domination in a positive light. Pearse was not the only nationalist who thought in these terms. In their study of the Rising, Michael Foy and Brian Barton point out that by 1916, many 'militant separatists' viewed the manner in which large sections of the population supported the British war-effort as evidence that 'the Irish race was sleepwalking to extinction.' They refer to Garret FitzGerald's recollection of his father's views at this time. Desmond FitzGerald believed that 'For centuries England had held Ireland materially. But now it seemed she held her in a new and utterly complete way. Our national identity was obliterated not only politically but in our own minds. The Irish people had recognised themselves as part of England.'[31] Kearney describes the Rising as an irrational attempt to transcend politics and negate present history[32], but Pearse's educational texts, and FitzGerald's observations, suggest that far from trying to escape from political realities such as Irish support for the British war-effort, Pearse and the other rebels viewed the prospect of death at the hands of British authorities as a means of 'awakening' the Irish people to the brutal, underlying reality, of British imperialist rule; a final, drastic means, of bringing the Irish to a recognition of the true nature of the social and political conditions in which they lived.[33]

My analysis thus far has focused on the ways in which Pearse and the rebel-leadership viewed the Rising in terms of a blood sacrifice; however, it is not certain that the events of Easter Week should be understood solely in these terms. In the most comprehensive study of the Rising to-date, Michael Foy and Brian Barton claim that the plans for the Rising indicate that the Irish Republican Brotherhood's Military Council had 'a definite belief that, given the right

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[30] Pearse, *Political Writings and Speeches*, p. 53.
[31] Foy and Barton, p. 8.
[32] Quoted in Kearney, 'Myth and Terror', p. 276.
[33] As Ulick O'Connor has remarked, 'The executions after the Rebellion shocked so many, not because of their brutality (Connolly, as Monk Gibbon said, "was afforded the amenity of a chair so that he could be shot sitting up") but because they disclosed an aspect of English rule which had become blurred in the wake of Gladstone, Balfour and Asquith's conciliatory approach to the Irish problem. Now people saw England in its traditional relationship with those she governed - the ruler with the lash ready for the lesser breeds if they dared growl'. In Dermot Bolger (ed.) *Letters from the New Island* , p. 200.

circumstances, a quick victory over the British was both desirable and attainable.'[34] They note that 'The Ireland Report' (a document detailing these plans which the leadership submitted to the German government in the hope of securing their assistance) 'indisputably reveals the military Council's plans as optimistic, coherent in relation to land warfare and directed to achieving a military victory by overwhelming the British forces in Ireland.'[35] The authors maintain that it was the 'very practical and down-to-earth' rebels (Clarke, Connolly and MacDermott) who were responsible for the Rising's serious military objectives, whereas the Council's 'literary men' (MacDonagh, Pearse and Plunkett) may well have had in mind a blood sacrifice. The evidence of their own analysis makes this a very dubious distinction, however. Plunkett was, after all, co-author (with Roger Casement), of 'The Ireland Report' which contained such 'optimistic' and 'coherent' plans for military victory and, as the authors point out, this document 'goes far to explaining why the military knowledge of Plunkett was held in such high regard by the other members of the Military Council.' [36]

Neither is there any reason to suppose that Pearse did not take seriously the Military Council's plans for victory. Those plans depended for their success on German assistance, and Pearse's comments indicate this aid was very much in his mind at the time of the Rising. Foy and Barton note that during the Rising he frequently assured the G.P.O., garrison that German U-boats would soon arrive in the area. His last letter to his mother he remarks that he had been 'counting on' the arrival of a 'German expedition.'[37] And during his speech at his court-martial he denied that he 'sought to aid and abet England's enemy' (remarking that 'Germany is no more to me than England is') but he did acknowledge that 'I asked and accepted German aid in the shape of arms and an expeditionary force [...] My aim was to win Irish freedom', Pearse continued, 'we struck the first blow ourselves but should have been glad of an ally's

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[34] Foy and Barton, p. 19.

[35] Ibid., p. 18 The rebels' decision to base their command centre in the G.P.O., is often depicted as evidence that they conceived of the Rising as a siege in which they merely sought to hold out for as long as possible until their inevitable defeat. However, the authors claim that the Military Council's strategy 'was more imaginative, aggressive and optimistic' than this suggests: 'It was clearly hoped that the German navy [by means of U-boats] would be able to prevent troop reinforcements arriving from Britain [...] If the U-boat failed, then Volunteers would attack reinforcements when they disembarked, as de Valera's 3rd Battalion planned to do at the port of Kingstown. If the British garrison in Dublin could be isolated, then Volunteers in north County Dublin and surrounding counties might be able to exert pressure on it before being joined by mobile relief columns coming in from the Rising in the West. In this scenario, then, the inner city cordon can be seen as a trap, designed to lure the British on until they were squeezed between the rebel strongholds in the city centre and the large numbers of provincial Volunteers on the outskirts exerting increasing pressure as they pushed forward to relive the inner cordon.' Ibid., p. 27.

[36] Ibid., p. 19.

[37] Ibid.,pp. 27 and 231 respectively.

aid.'[38] These facts suggest that Foy and Barton are wrong to claim that Pearse viewed the Rising solely in terms of a blood sacrifice. The source of their mistake in this regard is that – like too many historians – they base their analysis of his character on the arguments presented in Dudley-Edwards's flawed biography.[39]

The undoubtedly important part that the prospect of death and failure played in Pearse's approach to the Rising needs to be considered in the context of his heroic understanding of the Christian faith. In the course of her discussion of the relationship between literature and religion in the Rising, Edna Longley describes Pearse as 'a narcissist performing before the mirror of history. The poet's consciously 'noble house of my thought' prepares for its own reception.' [40] Poems such as 'A Mother Speaks' (written the night before he died), reveal 'the rebel-leader arrang[ing] not only his own martyrdom but his own martyrology', she claims. 'Pearse organising his pietà resembles a suicide who thinks he will be able to watch everyone being sorry watching him.'[41] Many would question whether someone writing on the eve of his execution by British forces can be really described as resembling a suicide; but Longley's remark is noteworthy nonetheless, as the failure to distinguish between a martyr and a suicide, I believe, leads this critic (and the aforementioned commentators) to misunderstand Pearse's attitude towards the prospect of his death during the insurrection.

Once again, G.K. Chesterton's remarks in *Orthodoxy,* provide a useful way of illustrating Pearse's thinking in this regard. In *Orthodoxy,* Chesterton maintains that, according to Christian doctrine, 'a suicide is the opposite of a martyr [...] it was not merely that the suicide was carrying martyrdom too far', he writes. In Christian theology, 'these two things that looked so much alike were at opposite ends of heaven and hell.[42] Chesterton explains this

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[38] Dudley-Edwards, p. 318.

[39] See for example the authors' references to Dudley Edwards's analysis in page 12. The manner in which Foy and Barton defer to Duduley Edwards's biography is a disappointing, if unsurprising, feature in an otherwise excellent study - one of the few genuinely balanced and objective accounts of the Rising.

[40] Longley, p. 73. Longley is quite blatantly misinterpreting the line 'the noble house of my thought' from the poem, 'The Fool'. Once again, when we return Pearse's words to the context from which his critics have abstracted it, a quite different meaning becomes apparent. What Pearse actually writes is:

> What if the dream come true? And if
> millions unborn shall dwell
> In the house that I shaped in my heart, the
> noble house of my thought?

Therefore, it is not his own 'thought' / consciousness which he is narcissistically representing as a 'noble house', but the idea of an independent Irish nation which he is conjuring up *in* his thoughts.

[41] Ibid., p. 73.

[42] Chesterton, pp. 103-4.

paradox in terms of the virtue of courage. Using the example of 'a soldier surrounded by enemies,' to illustrate his point, he argues that if such a soldier is to survive
He needs to combine a strong desire for living with a strange carelessness about

> dying. He must not merely cling to life, for then he will be a coward, and he will not escape. He must not merely wait for death, for then he will be a suicide, and will not escape. He must seek his life in a spirit of furious indifference to it; he must desire life like water and yet drink death like wine.

For Chesterton, 'this paradox' helps to explain the central difference between the martyr and the suicide: unlike a suicide, a martyr has not actually sought death at all. On the contrary, he has 'a strong desire to live', but it is a desire which 'tak[es] the form of a readiness to die.'[43] The manner in which Christianity differentiates between these kinds of deaths is, therefore, a prime example of how Christian ethics function as a 'a high and strange *coup de théâtre* of morality'; one which 'combined seemingly opposed furious opposites, by keeping them both, and keeping them both furious.'[44]

The understanding of martyrdom outlined in *Orthodoxy* seems to characterize the attitude with which Pearse approached the Rising. His comments both during and following Easter Week (as well as Foy and Barton's analysis) suggests that he did view the Rising as a serious military enterprise. Despite such plans, however, he would have known that their chances of success were very slim indeed. Furthermore, as Commandant-General of the rebel-forces and President of the Provisional Republic proclaimed at the start of the insurrection, he was always going to be singled out for execution if he survived the conflict. His outlook, therefore, seems to parallel that of Chesterton's soldier: he must have known that the action he had decided to take on Easter Monday 1916 would probably result in his death, but rather than a *desire* to die, he was displaying a 'carelessness about dying [...] seek[ing]his life in a spirit of furious indifference to it.' According to this reading, Pearse's attitude towards the Rising can be said to have *combined* the seemingly opposed options of 'blood sacrifice theory' and the idea that the rebels planned to defeat the British forces.

If this reading is correct, it suggests that rather than a 'literary frame of mind', Pearse's attitude to the climactic episode of his life is better described as 'narrative-based'. 'All Christianity

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[43] Ibid., p. 134.
[44] Ibid., pp. 140 and 137 respectively.

concentrates on the man at the cross-roads', Chesterton claims. This is why Christian cultures have excelled in the genre of 'narrative romance'. Because their religion emphasizes the importance of free-will, 'existence', for Christians, is experienced as 'a *story*, which may end up in any way'.'[45] Like the hero of a novel, Christians do not know how events will transpire, *or* how they will respond at the crucial moments of their lives – whether they will live or die, become martyrs or suicides. 'Will a man take this road or that? [...] The instant is really awful', Chesterton writes, 'and it is because our religion has intensely felt the instant, that it has in literature dealt much with battle and in theology dealt much with hell. It is full of *danger*, like a boy's book: it is at an immortal crisis.'[46]

Like Chesterton, Pearse placed the utmost importance on those 'really awful' moments that decide the course of people's lives. This aspect of his faith again underlines the importance of his anti-utilitarianism. Irwin Thompson claims that he looked upon the crucifixion as the central element of Christ's life and teaching: Pearse knew 'Christ without the cross is not Christ', Irwin Thompson remarks, and so his self image 'demanded the reality of crucifixion'.[47] It is arguable, however, that rather than Christ's death it was *the way* he faced death which inspired Pearse: to imitate Christ meant to become powerless before the will of God. Like the speaker in 'The Fool' and the character of McDara in *The Singer*, as Pearse approached the cross-roads of his life in Easter 1916 emulating the actions of Jesus Christ meant placing one's complete faith in God and acting on the dictates of conscience, *regardless* of the personal consequences, or how futile 'the right action' appeared to be from a utilitarian perspective. As the speaker in 'The Fool' remarks

> For this I have heard in my heart, that a
> man shall scatter, not hoard,
> Shall do the deed of to-day, nor take thought
> of tomorrow's teen,
> Shall not bargain or huxter with God; or
> was it a jest of Christ's
> And this is my sin before men, to have
> taken Him at His word?[48]

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[45] Ibid., pp. 202-3. Elsewhere in *Orthodoxy*, he refers to God as 'an artist' who in creating the world 'set it free'. 'God had written, not so much a poem, but rather a play [...] a play he had planned as perfect, but which had necessarily been left to human actors and stage managers, who had since made a great mess of it.' Ibid , pp. 110-1.
[46] Ibid., p. 202.
[47] Irwin Thompson, p. 122.
[48] Pearse, 'The Fool' in *Plays, Stories Poems*, p. 335.

My discussion of the connections between literature and revolutionary politics during the Rising thus far has concentrated on the extent to which the rebel-leadership, particularly Pearse, can be said to have planned that event as a kind of blood sacrifice. Aside from this issue, however, literature can also be said to have impacted on the Rising in the sense that the *actual events of the time* disclosed what Paul Fussell has usefully described as 'the curious literariness of real life.' There are 'places and situations where literary tradition and real life notably transect', Fussell claims. What occurs at such times, he suggests, is not simply that individuals use literary ideas to help them rationalize a distressing social reality, but a 'simultaneous and reciprocal process whereby life feeds materials to literature while literature returns the favor by conferring forms upon life.'[49]

Fussell's study examines the intersections between life and literature during the First World War, but his observations are relevant to an analysis of the revolutionary situation in Ireland during these years nonetheless. There are two main senses in which this is the case. Firstly, as already noted, politically and historically these conflicts were 'part of essentially the same story' in the senses that so many Irishmen fought and died in the Great War, the men involved in both conflicts held similar political aims and ideals, and in the sense that the Great War was such an important factor in the rebels' decision to rise at all.[50]

The second way in which these conflicts bear comparison is in terms of the fact that there was a similar interaction between literature and reality in both conflicts. The First World War is not normally regarded as a revolution; however, Fussell's analysis illustrates that trench warfare often gave rise to the kind of experiences that are commonly associated with revolutionary situations. For many combatants, he notes, the feeling of surviving trench warfare was akin to 'being reborn', and involved a 'transmutation' of personality. This was 'a world of [...]

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[49] Fussell, p. ix.

[50] The similarity of the political ideals shared by some of the 1916 rebels and Irish nationalists who joined the British war-effort is illustrated by the case of the poet and soldier, Francis Ledwidge. One of the many National Volunteers who joined the British Army in 1914, Ledwidge enlisted, he explained, because he believed 'she (Britannia) stood between Ireland and an enemy common to our civilisation'. In Liam O'Meara, *A Lantern on the Wave. Francis Ledwidge – Poet, Activist, and Soldier* (Dublin: Riposte Books, 1999), p. 44. He is also alleged to have told a superior officer in the British forces that he had 'fought on two battle-fronts, believing he was also fighting for Ireland's freedom.' *Ibid.*,53. Following the Rising, Ledwidge wrote of the great sadness he felt at Pearse and MacDonagh's deaths, 'two of my best friends, and now they are dead, shot by England'. *Ibid.*, 50. His poem, 'The Irish in Gallipoli', illustrates his belief that the 1916 rebels and the National Volunteers serving in the British forces were engaged on a common enterprise: 'For am I not one of those who reared/ The banner of old Ireland high,/ From Dublin town to Turkey's shores,/ And where the Vardar loudly roars?' Ibid., p. 59. Ledwidge was killed at Ypres, 31 July 1917.

conversions, metamorphoses, and re-births.'[51] Very similar experiences occurred during the Rising. Foy and Barton note that the week of intense guerrilla warfare in Dublin was 'a revelatory experience' for civilians and combatants on both sides of the conflict. 'Dublin's transformation from normality of a kind to deadly urban warfare' on the Easter Monday took its citizens totally by surprise, they remark. 'For some hours the city existed in a limbo of unreality.' And although some the combatants 'revelled in the drama and excitement of the Rising from the very start,' they note that 'many others needed to go through a painful process of adaptation before accepting the reality of their involvement.'[52]

It is in terms of the concept of tragedy that the experience of the Great War most clearly exposed 'the literariness of real life'. In the everyday sense of this word, the war was simply an enormous human tragedy: 'a time of violence, dislocation and extended suffering.'[53] And with 210,000 men involved in the conflict, and an estimated 50,000 deaths, Ireland was deeply affected by this tragedy; the losses suffered during the disastrous campaigns at Sulva Bay in early 1915, and the following year at the Battle of the Somme, proving to be especially traumatic experiences from an Irish perspective. [54]

A second sense in which the Great War helped to create a tragic scenario in Ireland relates to the manner in which it impacted on the thinking of Irish revolutionaries. The period immediately preceding the outbreak of the war had been a time of great optimism for revolutionaries such as Pearse. In both military and political terms, the cause of Irish nationalism appeared to be at its strongest since the time of the 1798 Rebellion. The Liberal-sponsored Home Rule Bill was due to be passed through the British Parliament. There was strong Unionist opposition to this initiative, but once passed, British authorities would be unable to prevent its enactment without creating a constitutional crisis of the kind that would itself destabilize the Empire; a development which would also have been viewed as a positive development by Irish revolutionaries. Most encouraging of all was the fact that an estimated 180,000 Irishmen had enlisted in the Irish Volunteer Force to demonstrate their determination that the bill would become law. Thus, the 'mind manacles' that Pearse thought had destroyed

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[51] Fussell, p. 115.
[52] Ibid., pp. 255-6 See chapter 8 of Foy and Barton for a number of first-person accounts of such experiences.
[53] This is how Raymond Williams defines tragedy in non-literary contexts. Williams, p. 64.
[54] In *The Years of the Shadow*, the writer Katharine Tynan describes Dublin as being 'full of mourning' following the losses suffered by Irish units during the disastrous campaigns at Sulva Bay in early 1915. Quoted in Jeffery, p. 44. The Battle of the Somme had an even greater impact on Protestant culture in Ireland, especially in the north of the country.

all semblance of national pride and identity in the Irish people had not been as effective as he had feared prior to the formation of the Volunteers in November 1913.

This optimism was destroyed by the outbreak of war in August 1914. The implementation of the Home Rule Bill was postponed for the duration of the conflict, and a clause was inserted into the bill that allowed counties to 'opt out' of the new dispensation on an individual basis. Rather than creating a constitutional crisis, this development actually helped to heal the divisions within the British political system: Liberals, Unionists, Conservatives, and even the Irish Parliamentary Party agreed to present a united political front against the German threat. Even more distressing from a republican-nationalist perspective was the fact that so many of the Volunteers had responded to Redmond's call to help in the British war-effort. For revolutionaries such as Pearse, therefore, the First World War had a calamitous effect on the progress of the revolution. In the space of a few months following the outbreak of the conflict the Irish Volunteer Force had been reduced to a fraction of its previous size; the notion of a two-nation Ireland had gained legal recognition; and rather than taking up arms against Imperial forces, an unprecedented number of Irishmen were now fighting and dying in the ranks of the British Army.

These were extremely depressing developments for Irish revolutionaries, but the specifically *tragic* element in this new social and political scenario relates to the manner in which some of them – namely the 1916 rebels – *responded* to these developments, which was to treat their revolutionary movement as a part of the wider political upheaval that had actually done so much to rob it of its impetus. In August 1914 Pearse wrote that 'A European war has brought about a crisis which may contain, as yet hidden within it, the moment for which the generations have been waiting.'[55] In December 1915 he represented the Great War as a revolution in which the smaller nations of Europe were – like Ireland – heroically asserting their claim to independence: 'On whichever side the men who rule the peoples have marshalled them [...] the people themselves have gone into battle because to each the old voice that speaks out of the soil of a nation has spoken anew. Each fights for the fatherland. [...] Belgium defending her soil is heroic, and so is Turkey fighting with her back to Constantinople.'[56] James Connolly also represented the war a huge human tragedy which could nevertheless have very positive

[55] Pearse, 'An Addendum' to 'Robert Emmet and the Ireland of Today' (August 1914) in *Political Writings and Speeches*, p. 87.
[56] Pearse, *Political Writings and Speeches*, p. 216.

consequences for the Irish Revolution. 'Out of the grave of the first Irishman murdered for protesting against Ireland's participation in this thrice-accursed war there will arise anew the Spirit of Irish Revolution', he wrote in the final issue of the *Irish Worker*, before its suppression in 1914.[57]

To some extent this positive response to the outbreak of war can be explained in terms of the standard IRB axiom that 'England's difficulty was Ireland's opportunity'; however, aside from the fact that the English government was greatly preoccupied by the German threat, and that Irish revolutionaries could now solicit military assistance from its enemy's enemies, this adage did not fit the political reality in Ireland between 1914 and 1916. Firstly, it ignores the fact that both militarily and politically the revolutionaries had been in a far stronger position *prior* to the outbreak of the war. Even more significant was the fact that nine tenths of the Irish Volunteer army chose to enlist in the British force: the war had thus exposed (or created) a huge weakness in the revolutionary movement – its lack of popular support. Therefore, although the war did present Irish revolutionaries with some reasons for optimism, in reality it created far more difficulties for the movement than it did opportunities. At best, the new situation would have appeared as an anomalous mix of simultaneously positive and negative developments. The sense of ambivalence felt by Irish revolutionaries following the outbreak of the war is apparent in the comments of Desmond FitzGerald:

> Our first reaction of jubilation soon gave way to a condition very close to despair. There were reports of the success of recruiting, of Volunteer bands marching to the station to see off their comrades who had volunteered for service in the British army. The movement on which all our dreams had centred seemed merely to have canalized the martial spirit of the Irish people for the defence of England. Our dream castle toppled about us with a crash.[58]

Rather than a time of opportunity, the political scenario created by the war meant that Irish revolutionaries had to perform a kind of 'double-think' in which the very hopelessness of their situation was made to appear in a positive light.[59] This attitude of mind is very evident in

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[57] Quoted in Nevin, p. 126. Pearse and Connolly were not the only revolutionaries who attempted to link the Irish cause to the wider conflict. Jeffery remarks that many of 'the more internationalist republicans argued that the war could enhance freedom generally by destroying the British Empire and British imperial domination of the world.' He refers to Roger Casement's comment that the war had 'come sooner than was expected. The rest of the writer's task must be essayed not with the author's pen, but with the rifle of the Irish Volunteer.' Jeffery, p. 48.

[58] Quoted in Foy and Barton, p. 13.

[59] "'We are at the moment in an immensely stronger position than ever before', Pearse remarked following the break-up of the Irish Volunteers, and suggested that the "small, compact, perfectly disciplined *separatist* force is infinitely more valuable than the unwieldy, loosely-held-together mixum-gatherum force we had before the split".' Quoted in Jeffery p. 49.

regard to the treatment of violence and death in their writings during this period. It is apparent, for example, in Pearse's nauseating description of the Great War in December 1915 as 'the most glorious in the history of Europe', a time when a spirit of heroism and patriotic self-sacrifice had returned to the earth; [60] and in James Connolly's contention that 'no agency less potent than the red tide of war on Irish soil will ever be able to enable the Irish race to recover its self-respect [...] of us, as of mankind before Calvary, it may truly be said: 'Without the shedding of Blood there is no redemption.''[61]

What is striking about these remarks from a literary-critical perspective is that the kind of violence envisaged here is one that is suffered and endured rather than one inflicted upon an adversary. There is no reference at all to an external enemy in these remarks, the most warlike comments that Pearse or Connolly ever wrote. The reason for this is that these revolutionaries are primarily focused on the idea of the transformation the 'Irish Self' rather than destruction of an Other. This is not, of course, to deny that death and destruction were central to their insurrectionary plans. They were. It is to point out that their attitude to that destruction was unusual in that, firstly, it was their *own* suffering and destruction they were envisaging, and secondly, this destruction was being presented in *positive* as well as a negative light. It was being treated as a form of destruction which was also, simultaneously, a form of creation. This is apparent in the manner that Pearse – in his last political document – *The Sovereign People*, invokes John Mitchel's observations on revolutionary violence:

> In all nature, spiritual and physical, do you not see that some powers and agents have it for their function to abolish and demolish and derange other some [sic] to construct and set in order? But is not the destruction, then, as natural, as needful as the construction? – Rather tell me, I pray you, which is construction – which destruction? This destruction *is* creation'. [62]

It is this paradoxical outlook which constitutes the tragic element in the rebels' actions in 1916. Their actions were tragic in the 'everyday' sense that they involved suffering, bloodshed and death, but tragic also in the sense that they involved a recognition that it was only by means of suffering, bloodshed and death that the transformation that they hoped to bring about could be accomplished.

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[60] Pearse, *Peace and the Gael* (Dec. 1915) in *Political Writings and Speeches,* p. 216
[61] Quoted in Foster, p. 479.
[62] Pearse, *The Sovereign People* in *Political Writings and Speeches*, pp. 367-8.

If – as most critics claims – it is in terms of the theme of sacrifice that the connections between Revivalist writings and the events of Easter Week 1916 are most noteworthy, then *to the extent* that Pearse and the other rebel-leaders viewed the insurrection in this light, that attitude of mind should not be interpreted as emanating solely from their personal literary preoccupations, or the romanticism inherent in the Revivalist movement as a whole. It also came about as a response to the specific social and political circumstances prevailing in Ireland and Europe between August 1914 and April 1916. We have seen that revolutionaries such as Pearse and Connolly believed they were confronted with a scenario that admitted of only one, *tragic* solution: to respond to the hopelessness of the position in which they found themselves in a way that turned suffering and failure to their own advantage. Their actions would bring further bloodshed and suffering to Ireland, but they would also bring courageous and heroic action, self-respect and, ultimately, 'redemption'. The rebels may have been wrong in terms of how they read the contemporary political situation, and wrong in terms of the morality of their actions; but if we wish to use their literature in a way that helps us *understand* why they acted as they did, then we need to recognize that from their perspective it was primarily the Great War rather than the Irish Literary Revival that created a tragic scenario in Ireland.

There are two final ways in which their attempt to transform political life in Ireland bore the characteristics of a 'real-life' drama. Firstly, rather than Kearney's 'ancestral deities', Yeats's Cuchulainn, or even their actual British adversaries, it was their Dublin and Irish 'audience' that was foremost in the minds of the rebels during the Rising. It was for the benefit of these people that they 'performed'. Secondly, there is the manner in which the British authorities were themselves, unwittingly, scripted into the 'play'. As Tom Garvin has acutely observed, 'by executing the leaders,' the British added to 'the theatrical effect [...] they had done what Pearse knew they would do and wanted them to do: by acting as tyrants are supposed to act, they became actors in his play'[62] In a very literal sense of the word, therefore, the Rising conceived as tragic drama amounted to a form of political empowerment: it enabled a small outfit of revolutionary-volunteers to manipulate the world's most powerful imperial regime. Clearly, it is a very strange kind of military strategy that involves an unconditional surrender and the executions of practically the entire leadership, but this is the point – it *was* strange. Furthermore, their actions did not simply result in a 'moral victory', the kind of triumph in defeat that the Rising is sometimes presented as being. The political consequence of the

[62] Garvin, p. 112-3

execution policy was that the rebels *did* manage to transform the political landscape of Ireland; hence Pearse – having read the script – could assure the British officers presiding at his court-martial that although 'we seem to have lost. We have not lost [...]to fight is to win.'

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The 1916 Rising was the single most important event of the Irish Revolution; one which exerted a profound influence on political and military developments from 1917 through to the end of the revolutionary period, in 1923. The impact of the Rising is evident in the transformation that occurred in the political ethos and fortunes of Sinn Féin. A relatively small nationalist party founded by Arthur Griffith in 1905, this organisation played no part whatsoever in the events of Easter week. In 1917, Éamonn De Valera, the only surviving leader from the Rising, was elected President of the party. Delegates at the party's convention of this year also declared their primary objective was to have Ireland recognized as an independent Republic and to resist British authority in Ireland 'by any and every means'. The results of the 1918 national elections confirmed that a sea-change had occurred in Irish politics in the aftermath the Rising. John Redmond's Irish Parliamentary Party, which had orchestrated the Home Rule bill for Ireland in 1912 and urged Irishmen to join in the British war-effort, was reduced from 69 to 6 seats in the 1918 elections. Standing for an independent Republic, and promising to resist the introduction of conscription to Ireland, Sinn Féin won 73 seats. The Sinn Féin delegates then set up their own parliament in Dublin (Dáil Éireann) and declared their allegiance to the Republic proclaimed by the 1916 rebel leadership.

The Rising also had a direct impact on military developments of the subsequent years of the revolution. Kiberd notes that the internment camps to which the insurgents were sent quickly 'became schools' for the conflict that broke out in 1919.[63] Like De Valera (the unquestioned political leader of the nationalist movement between 1917 and 1922), its primary military leader and tactician, Michael Collins, had also fought in the Rising; and many of those who took up arms during the 1919-21 Anglo-Irish War, saw themselves as fighting for the Republic announced in the 1916 Proclamation. The divisions that emerged in the Irish nationalist movement following the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in December 1921 also underline the

[63] Kiberd, p. 193.

continuing importance that the Rising exerted on events in this period: the attitude that many pro- *and* anti-treaty nationalists took towards the Treaty was determined on the basis of whether they believed its acceptance was compatible with allegiance to the Irish Republic proclaimed by the rebel-leadership in 1916.

Notwithstanding the increase in military activity in Ireland between 1919 and 1923, the significance of political developments such as the establishment of Dáil Éireann, and the daring success of the alternative judicial system that was established in this period, the 1916 Rising marked the culmination of the most progressive phase of the Irish revolution. Certainly, there was some expectation that the radical political spirit that characterized the revolution between 1913 and 1916 would be carried forward into this period. Liam O'Flaherty, for example, recalled the Spring of 1919 as a time in which

> A new spirit had taken possession of the Irish people, and it seemed at last that the kingdom of heaven had descended upon the earth, naturally choosing the land of saints and scholars as its resting place. In their enthusiasm the Irish writers of pamphlets and propaganda sheets talked of a wonderful Paradise in Ireland when the Peace Conference in Paris should take away the superimposed British Empire and allow the Irish to rule themselves in peace. There was wild talk of a Gaelic Communist Society. There was to be no more poverty, no more social conflict, no more hatred, no more ugliness.[64]

Arthur Mitchell notes that in January 1919, J.J. Walsh, a Dail member for Cork declared that the 'Irish people were really revolutionary' and that there was a 'new born spirit' in the country towards the 'emancipated democracies of Russia'. Mitchell points out that conservative bodies in these years, such as the Catholic Church and organs such as the *Irish Times*, felt it necessary to warn the people of Ireland that 'the republicans might be moving towards a liaison with Bolshevism.'[65] The large number of strikes that took place throughout the country in the early months of 1919', he observes, also 'stirred the belief that a new day had dawned. Social change was in the air.'[66]

Nothing solid melted into this air, however. By the time of the start of the Anglo-Irish War, conservative elements were already taking control of the revolution. Joseph Lee notes that rather than following through on the radical social and economic revolution envisaged by 1916 rebels such as Pearse and Connolly, by 1919 the Sinn Féin leadership began to endorse 'the

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[64] Arthur Mitchell, *Revolutionary Government in Ireland: Dáil Éireann 1919-22* (Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1995), p.43.
[65] Ibid., p. 43.
[66] Ibid., p. 44.

social and economic status quo', and were seeking to reassure the 'established interests' in Ireland that that they should look upon Sinn Féin 'as the best guarantor of their inherited status.'[67] The increasingly conservative ethos of the political leadership was also evident when the socialist elements contained in a draft 'Democratic Programme' prepared by the leaders of the Labour Party were excised by the Republican leadership before that document was presented to the First Dáil in January 1919.

We have seen the centrality of pedagogical issues in Pearse's attitude towards the revolution, and the importance he placed upon a non-denominational educational system. D.W. Miller notes that in forming his first cabinet in April 1919, de Valera 'conspicuously failed to nominate a Minister for Education, in order to avoid potential tension with the Catholic church, whose benediction he sought.'[68] David Fitzpatrick observes that 'the fear of social revolution became widespread in Ireland' as widespread strike activity 'lurched towards the creation of "soviets" whereby discharged workers took over the management of creameries and other plants'. The socialist organisations that had emerged during in this period, such as the 'Red Guards and the Farmers' Freedom Force were quashed by the new leadership; and their attempted seizures of lands and division of estates were restrained by the Dáil.[69] The 'retreat from revolution' accelerated under the Free State government that took power following the national elections of 1922. Kevin O'Higgins, as Minister for Justice, described his colleagues as probably the most conservative revolutionaries in history.[70] As well as conservative economic programmes, the new regime suppressed the Dáil Courts and reconstituted the judicial system along the lines of the old British model. The failure of the revolution also extended into the area of culture. By the end of the 1920s many of the writers who had taken part in the revolution (Joseph Campbell, Michael Farrell, Peadar O'Donnell, Liam O'Flaherty, Francis Stuart, and Ernie O'Malley, among them) had, as Kiberd puts it, 'come to the bleak conclusion that Ireland was no longer an interesting place to live', and so they left.[71]

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[67] Lee, *Modern Ireland*, p. 38.
[68] Ibid., p. 42.
[69] Fitzpatrick, p. 43.
[70] Kiberd., p. 263.
[71] Ibid., p. 265.

CHAPTER II

Rafael Alberti and the Literature of the Spanish Revolution

Introduction

This chapter examines the relationship between literature and revolution in the writings of Rafael Alberti. It is divided into four sections. Part I focuses the author's output from 1929 until the establishment of the Second Spanish Republic in 1931. Part II considers his work between 1931 and 1936, a period which corresponds to the five-years when the new regime attempted to secure the transition from dictatorship to democracy. Part III examines his writings of the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39. And in the final section I discuss some of the important parallels between Pearse's and Alberti's work that my analysis has revealed.

One of the most significant differences between the Irish and Spanish revolutions is that the latter upheaval was not just a national affair, it was a conflict of European, and even global proportions. The importance of this international dimension is a central theme in Alberti's writings, particularly so after his conversion to communism in 1932. Nevertheless, as with Pearse, the 'enemy' in his work is primarily an internal one. In Alberti's view, Spanish Catholicism represented the most dangerous 'internal' threat to the success of the revolution. The loathing he felt towards what he called 'the Spanish Catholic spirit' is apparent throughout the 1929-39 period; a constant feature of his writings in a time when other aspects of his thinking, such as his attitude towards republicanism, communism and the effects of violence undergo profound changes. Notwithstanding his rejection of Catholicism, however, this religion plays a crucial and very complex role in his literature throughout the 1929-39 period. Alberti's writings, I argue, expose the underlying similarities between revolutionary politics and the Christian religion, similarities which – as we saw with Pearse – cohere around the notion of tragic reality.

I

Early Poetry and Drama

He carried a town within himself.
He lost it.
They lost him. ('The Uninhabited Body')[1]

Rafael Alberti was born in 1902 in Puerto de Santa María on the south coast of Spain. He came from a *déclassé* family of once-affluent wine-merchants. In his autobiography, *The Lost Grove* (which he began writing in 1939 as the civil-war was drawing to a close), he describes his grandfathers as 'great middle-class proprietors of vineyards and wine cellars,' who, along with 'a few other powerful families [...] were the true owners of the Puerto at the turn of the century.' The family had been unable to maintain the business in good order, however. Due to a combination of his grand-uncles' extravagant lifestyles, their incompetence, and indifference towards business matters, Alberti remarks, 'the inheritance dwindled away'.[2]

Religion pervaded practically every sphere of life in the Puerto de Santa María of Alberti's youth. In his autobiography he refers to the 'atmosphere of insane Catholicism and exaggerated bigotry' in which he grew up. 'I am compelled once more to put in writing the repugnance I feel for this Spanish Catholic spirit,' he remarks, and continues describing

> this reactionary and savage Catholicism that darkened the blueness of the sky from the days of our childhood, covering us with layers and layers of grey ashes which only served to muffle any real creative intelligence we might have had. How many arms and lungs have we seen struggling frantically and hopelessly to escape from these depths, without ever having grasped even a momentary fistful of sun? How many entire families drowned or buried alive? What a hideous inheritance of rubble and suffocation!'[3]

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[1] [Llevaba una ciudad dentro./ La perdió./ Le perdieron.' 'El cuerpo deshabitado'] Alberti, *Concerning the Angels* [*Sobre los angeles*] (1929) in Rafael Alberti, *Poesías completas*. (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1961), p. 253 (The references in this chapter to poems from *Concerning the Angels*, and Alberti's subsequent poetry collection, *Sermons and Dwelling Places* [*Sermones y moradas*] (1930), are taken from this edition of Alberti's *Complete Poems*. Page numbers will be included in the footnotes following the original Spanish quotations. Unless otherwise stated, the translations from Castilian into English in this chapter are my own.)

[2] Alberti, *The Lost Grove* [*La arboleada perdida* (1959)], trans. Gabriel Berns (Berkley: California U.P., 1976), pp. 20-1.

[3] Ibid., p. 35.

This is only one of many embittered attacks against the Catholic Church in the opening chapters of *The Lost Grove*. The first part of the book is filled with accounts of the huge psychological damage caused by the 'Spanish Catholic Spirit' to the author's own personality, his family, and the wider community of Puerto de Santa María where Alberti lived until the age of fifteen. As well as the 'extravagant madness and crushing tyranny' of his grandfathers' Catholicism, the 'obsessive religious hypocrisy' of his great-uncles, Alberti describes his mother as 'the daughter and sister of fanatic Catholics, maniacal religious bigots of Andalusia'; a woman who had sought refuge from her loneliness and misfortunes 'in the daily Masses at the Convent of the Holy Spirit and in the pious murmurings of the nuns that issued forth from behind the spiked gates of the cloister.'[4]

As noted above, these chapters were written in Madrid, as the civil war – and the revolutionary era as a whole in Spain – was drawing to a bitter and ignominious close. In this context, one might expect Alberti's anger to be directed against more 'obvious' targets, such as the Francoist army, right-wing politicians, Spanish capitalists, or the forces of international fascism. That he chose instead to write so forcefully about the 'repugnance' he felt towards the 'Spanish Catholic spirit', and 'the humiliations' he was forced to endure at the hands of his Jesuit teachers (experiences 'which still smart'), is highly significant. It is indicative of the extent to which Alberti viewed the Catholic Church in Spain as the primary enemy of the revolution he had so completely committed himself to during the previous ten years of his life.[5]

It was in the area of education that religion impacted most strongly on Alberti's own early experiences. 'What worried our family most,' he remarks in *The Lost Grove*, 'was our religious education'. Because his family had offered protection to a group of Jesuit priests during an uprising in the eighteenth-century, Alberti was allowed to attend secondary school at

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[4] Ibid., p. 20, 21, and 25-6 respectively.

[5] José Monleón also comments upon the fact that Alberti's educational experiences should so preoccupy the writer at this historical moment. 'That in the closing moments of a defeated Civil war campaign, with all the insecurity that entailed, an author writes about his school-days, of the bitter and humiliating experiences he underwent at that time, experiences "which still smart", indicates that his schooling contributed much to the formation of his personality.' [Que un autor, en las postrimerías de una Guerra Civil perdida, con la misma vida insegura, escriba, al evocar sus días de colegio, que 'aún le escuecen' las humillaciones y amarguras de entonces, significa que ellas contribuyeron a definir su personalidad.] José Monleón, *Tiempo y teatro de Rafael Alberti* (Madrid: Primer Acto / Fundación Rafael Alberti, 1990), p. 18.

the Jesuit College in Cadiz as a free day-pupil. 'I learned practically nothing in my four years there', he claims in his autobiography.

> A pupil would come out of those Andalusian schools, both on the elementary and secondary levels, with his head crammed with The Lord's Prayer, the memory of horrifying sermons, and such an accumulation of spelling mistakes and misinformation that even when I reached the age of twenty, having already spent five of those years in Madrid, I would blush with shame when I discovered the elementary knowledge possessed by any eleven-year-old kid who had attended the *Instituto* or some other respectable educational institution. Sad, pitiful generations of young Spaniards trained in such dens of corruption, incubated in these filthy and mediocre caves of learning.[6]

His time at this school was also important in that it was here that he learned his first lessons in social discrimination. The College of San Luis Gonzaga 'was organized along military lines', he recalls. Day-students like Alberti, who came from poorer families, were formed into separate 'divisions' from the boarders (whose fathers were generally aristocrats, political bosses or wealthy landowners), and 'the Jesuits always tried in one way or another to favour the people in the upper social strata.' This policy bred 'feelings of resentment' among the day-pupils, an attitude the poet describes as 'not unlike what workers today feel toward their employers - that is class hatred.'[7]

Alberti left the College of San Luis Gonzaga when, due to financial difficulties, his family moved from the Bay of Cadiz to Madrid in 1917. In the capital he completely neglected his studies to pursue his love of painting, spending most of his time in the Prado Museum copying masterpieces by artists such as El Greco, Goya and his favourite painter, Zurbarán.[8] Alberti was a promising young artist before he started to write poetry, but by 1922 he had lost interest in painting, and was instead totally committed to pursuing a career as a poet.[9] His poems were

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[6] Alberti, *The Lost Grove*, p. 35.
[7] Ibid., pp. 40 and 44.
[8] He exhibited his work twice in this period. The first showing was part of a joint-exhibition with a number of other young artists, in 1920; the second, in 1922, was a solo exhibition in the *Ateneo* [Cultural centre] in Madrid.
[9] In *The Lost Grove*, Alberti remarks that 'My poetic vocation [began] at the feet of death and in an atmosphere that was romantically lugubrious'. Sitting beside his father's bed the night he died, Alberti 'was filled with remorse' for the 'indifference' he had always shown him. In an effort to 'fill [the] deep silence' left by his death, he 'took out a pencil and began to write.' In the months that followed, he became 'completely dissatisfied' with painting as a means of expression. 'I couldn't find a way to include in a canvas everything that was seething in my imagination', Alberti recalls. 'On the other hand, I could put it down on paper.' *The Lost Grove*, p.138 and 145 respectively.

first published in the journal *Horizon* [*Horizonte*] in 1922.[10] His real breakthrough, however, came two years later when he won the National Prize for Literature in 1924.[11]

The poems that won Alberti this prize were subsequently published as *Landlocked Sailor* [*Marinero en tierra*] (1924). This work, (and his subsequent collections, *The Lover* [*La amante*] (1925), *The Dawn of the Wallflower* [*El alba del alhelí*] (1926) and *Limestone and Song* [*Cal y canto*] (1927), contain many simple rhyming ballads, but none of the political commitment or the surrealistic innovations that characterize his later writings. 'I was far removed from the ultraistic ingenuity or confusion', Alberti remarks of his work in this period in *The Lost Grove*, 'and was seeking extreme simplicity, a clear and precise melodic line similar to what Federico García Lorca had already achieved in his 'Baladilla de los tres ríos'.[12]

A more innovative style starts to emerge in his poetry towards the latter half of the 1920s. Robert Havard notes that from 1925 Alberti began to associate with the Vallecas group in Madrid, a band of avant-garde artists 'whose left-wing views complemented a materialist orientation in their work.'[13] From 1927 on, he was making 'regular front-page contributions' to Giménez Caballero's *The Literary Gazette* [*La Gaceta Literaria*], which was the Spanish equivalent of French avant-garde journals such as *La Révolution surréaliste*.[14] The effects of these associations are very apparent in the collections *Concerning the Angels* [*Sobre los ángeles*] (1929), and in *Sermons and Dwelling Places* [*Sermones y moradas*] (1930), both of which draw deeply from the surrealistic spirit which was influencing artists and writers across the genres of film, painting, poetry and prose in Spain at this time.

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[10] Ibid., p. 153. Alberti's poems also appeared in the journals *Alfar* and *La Verdad* in this period. *The Lost Grove,* pp. 153 and 201.

[11] Among the judges for this competition were two of Spain's greatest twentieth century poets, Antonio Machado and Juan Ramón Jiménez, both of whom, like Alberti, were from Andalusia.

[12] The term 'ultraistic', and the literary movement, 'ultraísmo' is a reference to the literary periodical, *Ultra*, which Alberti describes as 'a kind of underground literary broadside that the so called *Vanguardistas* were distributing in Madrid' in the early 1920s. *The Lost Grove*, p. 163. The similarity between Alberti's and Lorca's early poetry (as well as the fact that they both came from the province of Andulusia) led many critics to draw comparisons between their work, a tendency which resulted in the literary camps of 'Albertistas' and 'Lorquistas' developing in Spanish literary circles.

[13] Robert Havard, *The Crucified Mind - Rafael Alberti and the Surrealist Ethos in Spain* (London: Tamesis, 2001), p.13. (Vallecas was at this time a small rural community on the south of Madrid.)

[14] Havard, p. 1.

Many critics have observed that *Concerning the Angels* stands as a poetic testament to the deep personal crisis Alberti was suffering at this stage of his life. Brian Morris remarks that the poems 'form a coherent picture of a mental, emotional, and physical breakdown which only a great poet could have translated into great poetry'; and Solita Salinas de Marichal describes it as 'a book of bitter and anguished torment, of disturbed angels who argue amongst themselves in fog and darkness.'[15] Evidence of this crisis is apparent from the opening poem of the collection. In 'Paradise Lost' the poet addresses his own deceased, yet paradoxically still watchful, guardian angel.

> Behind me, imperceptible,
> without touching my shoulders,
> my dead angel, my watchman.[16]

The poet urges this figure to 'awaken' and help him find his way out of the darkness in which he languishes.

> - Dead angel, awaken,
> Where are you? Illuminate
> the way back with your light.[17]

The angel fails to respond to this request, however, and the poem ends with an increased sense of dejection and hopelessness.

> Silence. More silence.
> Motionless the pulses
> of the endless night.
>
> Lost paradise!
> Lost searching for you,
> I remain in darkness always.[18]

The theme of lost identity recurs throughout the collection. In 'The Unknown Angel', the poet

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[15] C. Brian Morris, *Rafael Alberti's Sobre los angles: Four Major Themes* (Hull: University of Hull, 1966), p. 16; ['un libro de tormento angustioso y agrio, de turbios ángeles que se debaten en nieblas y tinieblas.'] Solita Salinas de Marichal, *El mundo poético de Rafael Alberti* (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1968), p. 179. These assessments are corroborated by the author's own remarks. In his 'Autobiographical Index' to his *Collected Poetry*, Alberti summaries 1928 (the year in which most of the poems were written) as one of 'Love. Anger. Rage. Fury. Failure. Perplexity. *Concerning the Angels.*' [Amor. Ira. Cólera. Rabia. Fracaso. Desconcierto. *Sobre los ángeles.*] Alberti,
Poesías completas, p. 12.

[16] 'Paraíso perdido': 'Tras de mí, imperceptible,/ sin rozarme los hombros,/ mi ángel muerto, vigía.' (247)

[17] '- Ángel muerto, despierta,/ ¿Dónde estás? Ilumina/ con tu rayo el retorno.' (248)

[18] 'Silencio, más silencio/ Inmóviles los pulsos/ del sinfín de la noche./ ¡Paraíso perdido!/ Perdido por buscarte,/ yo, sin luz para siempre.' (248)

urges another unidentified 'presence' to 'Tell me who I am'[19]; in 'The War-like Angels' he likens himself to an 'un-manned watchtower [...] crammed with souls that saw me,/ that didn't see me.'[20] In many of the poems this sense of crisis appears to have been instigated by sinister angels who take the form of malevolent teachers. In 'Deception', for example, the angel appears behind the apostrophized figure of Alberti's own childhood self.

> Someone behind you, at your shoulder,
> covering your eyes with words
> [...]
> With words, false glass.[21]

In 'The Lying Angel' the poet complains that he 'was destroyed/ [...] without violence,/ with honey and words',[22] and in 'The Somnambulant Angels', he refers to his mouth as 'a well of nouns,/ of numbers and dead letters.' [23] This theme is perhaps most poignantly evoked in the fourth poem in the volume, 'The Uninhabited Body'.

> Who scatters on my pillow
> reigns of blood and bile,
> skies of brimstone,
> seas of vinegar?

The speaker then proceeds to answer his own question, identifying the culprits as 'angry and restless angels' who 'carbonized' his body and soul even as he slept. [24] 'He carried a town within himself', he observes ruefully of his own childhood self, 'He lost it./ They lost him.'[25]

The identity of the angels in these poems is always ambiguous. In some ways they appear as aspects of the poet's own personality, but at the same time they are always external or 'other' to his self in the sense that they occupy the role of failed guides. It is clear, however, that in

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[19] 'El ángel desconocido': 'Dime quién soy.' (250)

[20] 'Los ángeles bélicos': 'torre sin mando [...]/ lívida torre colgada/ de almas muertas que me vieron,/ que no me vieron.' (256-7)

[21] 'Engaño': 'Alguien detrás de ti, a tu espalda,/ tapándote los ojos con palabras [...] Con palabras, vidrios falsos.' (267)

[22] 'El ángel mentiroso': 'Y fui derrotada/ yo, sin violencia,/ con miel y palabras.' (258)

[23] 'Los ángeles sonámbulos': 'un pozo de nombres,/ de números y letras difuntas.' (277)

[24] 'El cuerpo deshabitado': '¿Quién sacude en mi almohada/ reinados de yel y sangre,/ cielos de azufre,/ mares de vinagre? [...] Te dormiste./ Y ángeles turbios, coléricos,/ carbonizaron tu alma,/ tu cuerpo.' (251-4) (Translation by Havard, p. 24.)

[25] 'Llevaba una ciudad dentro./ La perdió./ Le perdieron.' (253)

many instances they represent surreal versions of Alberti's Jesuit educators at the College of San Luis de Gonzaga. In an interview that the poet gave to fellow-writer Max Aub, in 1985, Alberti commented upon how the Catholic education that Spaniards of his generation had received continued to affect them well into adulthood. 'We understand these things', Alberti remarked to Aub,

> they're ingrained in us, and if we're honest with ourselves we'd say it's in our blood … It's in the marrow, at least in Spain … The effect of our schooling runs deep. It's not easily expunged … Our formation could not have been worse [...] As for Buñuel, I imagine he went to as religious a school as I did, run by Jesuits. And? Well, it leaves a deep mark. We reject it and fight against it, but in the end what we learnt stays with us - you know what I mean? - even if we say it doesn't. It keeps coming back.[26]

On account of the angels' association with religion, and their resemblance to malevolent teachers bent on the destruction of the speaker's childhood personality through 'words,/ false glass', it seems clear that – to at least some extent – the poems in this 1928 collection can be read as an example of how Alberti's own schooling kept 'coming back.'

In *The Crucified Mind* Robert Havard also emphasises the importance of Alberti's Jesuit education to a reading of *Concerning the Angels*. He notes that, in his autobiography, the poet speaks of 'being subjected to "horrifying sermons" and to "a fiery lecture on the torments of Hell"', while attending the Gonzaga College. Havard maintains that those sermons, and other of the practices outlined in Ignatius Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*, played a formative role in the development of the poet's surrealistic poetry. He claims, for instance, that 'exercises' such as 'the composition, seeing the place' [la composición, viendo el lugar], which refers to the practice of actualizing imaginative experience 'in all its circumstantial detail,' inspired the 'image-making power' in such agonized poems as: 'Eviction', in which the poet complains of 'Dampness. Chains. Screams./ Blasts of wind'; 'The Soul in Torment', where 'Seismic whiplashes flatten dreams,/ earthquakes demolish stars'; and 'Punishments', in which 'winds taste of brimstone/ and nocturnal mouths of bone, glass and wire'.[27] As Havard observes, the power of such images illustrates that Alberti's education under the Jesuits had very ambivalent

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[26] In Max Aub, *Conversaciones con Luis Buñuel* (Aguilar: Madrid, 1985), p. 293-4. (Translation by Havard, p. x.)

[27] 'Desahucio': 'Humedad. Cadenas. Gritos./ Ráfagas' (249); 'El alma en pena': 'Sísmicos latigazos tumban sueños,/ terremotos derriban las estrellas' (274); 'Castigos': 'Cuando saben a azufre los vientos/ y las bocas nocturnas a hueso, vidrio y alambre' (287). Translations by Havard, p. 24.

effects: they provide 'a curious example of a personality that appears to be abnegated but which is extremely fertile in terms of imagining torment and hallucinating generally.'[28]

The influence of the aforementioned Vallecas group of surrealist painters and sculptors is also very evident in this collection. It was 'the concrete revelation' of these artists' work, Alberti remarks, which particularly attracted his interest in the 1920s. This was art that 'sings out from the natural materials from which it is made.'[29] The emphasis on 'natural materials' as a source of 'concrete revelation' is apparent in many of the poems in *Concerning the Angels,* especially in the third and final section of the volume. In 'The False Angel' he suggests that it was

> So that I might walk among the knots of roots
> and the bony dwelling places of worms.
> So that I might hear the world's decomposition crackling
> and bite the petrified light of the stars,
> to the east of my dream you raised your tent, false angel.[30]

In 'The Dead Angels' he implores his readers to 'search' for these angels in sewers and rubbish-dumps.

> Search, search for them:
> in the insomnia of forgotten drains,
> in channels cut short by the silence of rubbish.
> Not far from the puddles incapable of containing a cloud,
> lost eyes,
> a broken ring
> or a trampled star.[31]

The materialist strain in Alberti's poetry of this period is also apparent in 'Elegies' from *Sermones and Dwelling Places*. This poem consists of a series of seven numbered sentences that describe various expired objects that occupy a waste-ground, presumably in Madrid.

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[28] Havard, p. 27.

[29] 'la concreta revelación [...] profundamente poética, no literaria, y cantan en ella las materias naturales con que están hechas.' Quoted in Havard, p. 13.

[30] 'El ángel falso' - Para que yo anduviera entre los nudos de las raíces/ y las viviendas óseas de los gusanos./ Para que yo escuchara los crujidos descompuestos del mundo/ y mordiera la luz petrificada de los astros,/ al oeste de mi sueño levantaste tu tienda, ángel falso. (288) (My translation of these lines draws on Havard, p. 147.)

[31] 'Los ángeles muertos': 'Buscad, buscadlos:/ en el insomnio de las cañerías olvidadas,/ en los cauces interrumpidos por el silencio de las basuras./ No lejos de los charcos incapaces de guardar una nube,/ unos ojos perdidos,/ una sortija rota/ o una estrella pisoteada.' (290) In his autobiography Alberti refers to the influence that the surrealist artist, Maruja Mallo, exerted on the materialist emphasis in his poetry at this time. 'My angels were not from heaven', he remarks here. 'They appeared to me on the ground or in the deepest subsoils of the earth. Just at that time when I was dragging my eyes over the quagmires, raised land, autumn landscapes with leaf-filled puddles. Maruja frequently led me through those subterranean galleries, those hitherto unseen places that she began to depict so brilliantly in her canvases. That poem of mine called "The Dead Angels" could well be a transcription of one of her paintings.' Quoted in Havard, p. 96.

1. - The suffering of the waterless pitchers fallen in the wilderness of
deceased objects.
2. - The evening crime report, abandoned among thistles,
broken springs and old brass.
3. - The bottle that didn't break on falling and lives with its neck
stuck in the oasis of the rubbish dump.
4. - The broken bandage from a wound, dragged by
the three o'clock ants.
5. - Those jets of coal water that uncover the open-
mouthed dream of the tunnels.
6. - The botfly that gets its head stuck on a thistle's thorn.
7. - The empty box of matches alongside the horse dung.[32]

'Elegies' is undoubtedly the most 'object-orientated' poem in these two collections. However, it is much more than a description of broken-down commodities. As the title itself suggests, rather than the objects themselves, Alberti is more interested in some quality or meaning they once possessed but have since lost. The repeated use of the definite as opposed to indefinite article is significant in this regard as it increases our sense that the descriptions are all of specific or 'concrete' artefacts which, it seems, are being discovered spontaneously by the speaker as he trawls through the wasteland. Rather than a completed list of materials that require no further 'explanation', therefore, 'the evening crime report [...] the broken bandage [...] the empty box of matches' and so forth, seem to gesture towards some meaning or significance that they *should* possess but have somehow lost. Both individually and cumulatively, the sentences seem to be on the verge of saying more, of going beyond mere description to reveal the elusive *significance* or 'truth' of the objects they specify.

The notion that material objects can contain mysterious (and potentially explosive) truths is apparent in many of the poems in the final, third section, of *Concerning the Angels*. As already noted, 'The Dead Angels' is presented as a 'search' for angels among the sewers and rubbish-dumps of Madrid. Similarly, in 'The False Angel' Alberti claims that 'There are [...] ivies which touched by a shoulder catch fire and rain blood', and assures his readers that

[32] 'Elegías': '1. - La pena de los jarros sin agua caídos en el destierro de los objetos/ difuntos./ 2. - La noticia del crimen de la noche, abandonada entre cardos,/ muelles rotos y latones viejos./ 3. - La botella que no se rompió al caer y vive con el gollete/ clavado en el oasis de las basuras./ 4. - La venda rota de una herida, arrastrada por las hormigas de/ las tres de la tarde./ 5. - Esos chorros de agua de carbón que desvelan el sueño bo-/ quiabierto de los túneles./ 6. - El moscón que se clava de cabeza en la espina de un cardo./ 7. - La caja vacía de cerillas junto al excremento de los caballos.' (312)

'whoever considers the living will see casts of clay/ inhabited by indefatigable, disloyal angels'; in 'The Surviving Angel' he refers to 'snow that carried drops of wax, of melted lead.'[33] The sense of insecurity and confusion so apparent in the earlier poems of *Concerning the Angels* remains, therefore, but in this part of the collection the poet appears to realize that it is not just him, but the world itself which is unstable and metamorphic. This recognition is particularly evident in 'Punishments', another of the closing poems from the volume. In this work, Alberti refers to 'unstable tombs that open through the sky's neglect and weariness'; to nights in which the hours turn to stone; to lightning that 'confuses tongues and unsettles words'; to 'shattered spheres'; to bodies that change location; to a moon that grows cold; and to deforming constellations.[34] Like the previously discussed poems, 'Punishments' also illustrates that – notwithstanding the materialist orientation of much of his work in this period – Alberti was primarily interested in the potential for sudden transformation in the things he describes, and in the capacity of ordinary (frequently scatological) objects to reveal hidden and transcendent meanings.

Robert Havard contends that this interest in the transcendent is characteristic of Spanish surrealism as a whole. Early twentieth-century Spanish artists and writers were 'acutely sensitive to the metaphysical implications of the *surreal*', he claims. This theme underpins *Sermons and Dwelling Places*, he suggests, a work in which 'materialist rigour combines with a fervent transcendentalism to create a manic form of materio-mysticism.[35] The 'materio-mystical' approach is apparent in 'The First Ascension of Maruja Mallo to the Subsoil'[36], one of Alberti's finest poems of this period. In this work he represents Mallo as a kind of personal messiah whom he knows can 'awaken' him to a new understanding of the physical world.

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[33] 'El ángel falso': 'Hay [...] yedras que al contacto de un hombro se incendian y llueven/ sangre. [...] Quienes piensen en los vivos verán moldes de arcilla/ habitados por ángeles infieles, infatigables'. (288-89); 'El ángel superviviente': 'La nieve traía gotas de lacre, de plomo derretido'. (292)

[34] 'esas tumbas que se abren por abandono y cansancio del cielo/ no son estables [...] Hay noches en que las horas se hacen de piedra [...] Un relámpago baraja las lenguas y trastorna las pablabras [...] las esferas derruidas [...] Se ve que los cuerpos no están en donde estaban [...] la luna se enfría [...] el llanto de un niño deforma las constelaciones.' (287-8)

[35] Havard, p. 2.

[36] Havard notes this poem first appeared in *La Gaceta Literaria*, on 1st July 1929, Havard, p. 14 *n.* In an interview with Geoffery Connell on 30 November 1979, Alberti explained that did not include this important work in *Sermons and Dwelling Places* because his relationship with Mallo had recently broken up and he was romantically involved with María Teresa Leon. Quoted in Havard, p. 97.

You,
you who delve into sewers where the most flowery flowers are but
sad goblets of disillusioned spittle
and who expire in drains that flow into empty celebrations only to be
reborn on the edge of a stone bitten by a stagnant mushroom,
tell me why the rain rots leaves and wood.
Settle this doubt I have about landscapes.
Awaken me.[37]

As these lines indicate, like 'Elegies' and 'The Dead Angels', 'The First Ascension' is very much concerned with un-poetic 'material': the contents of Madrid's sewers and drains; but the emphasis on 'base-matter' in this work is combined with quite explicit references to resurrection and transcendence. Mallo immerses herself in the dregs of the material world, 'delve[ing] into sewers [...] drains' in a quasi-sacrificial act that results in her being 'reborn on the edge of a stone'. In the following stanza the poet further commits himself to Mallo's gospel of materialism: 'I'll spend the rest of my life contemplating the ground seriously', he vows,

now that we are ever less interested in fairies ...
Always look downwards.
You have lost nothing in heaven.[38]

The poem ends with a marvellous image of Mallo as a Venus-like messiah, ascending a wave of excrement and refuse.

From the marshes
who cannot see you ascend on a steady wave of slag,
against a sheen of smooth planks and bull's dung,
towards a swallow's faecal dream?[39]

'The First Ascension' again illustrates that the materialist emphasis in Alberti's work of the late 1920s did not preclude a belief in spirituality and transcendence. Having rejected the

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[37] 'La primera ascención de Maruja Mallo al subsuelo' - Tú,/ tú que bajas a las cloacas donde las flores más flores son ya unos/ tristes salivazos sin sueños / y mueres por las alcantarillas que desembocan a las verbenas/ desiertas para resucitar al filo de una piedra mordida por un hongo/ estancado,/ dime por qué las lluvias pudren las hojas y las maderas./ Aclárame esta duda que tengo sobre las paisajes./ Despiértame.' (Tanslation by Havard.) In Havard, p. 108.

[38] 'Emplearé todo el resto de mi vida en contemplar el suelo seriamente/ ahora que ya nos importan cada vez menos las hadas .../ Mira siempre hacia abajo./ Nada se te ha perdido en el suelo.' Tanslation by Havard. pp.107-8.

[39] '¿ quién no te ve ascender sobre un fijo oleaje de escorias,/ contra un viso de tablones pelados y boñigas de toros,/ hacia un sueño fecal de golondrina?' (Tanslation by Havard. pp.107-8.)

tenets of orthodox religion (the belief in 'fairies' and 'heaven'), the poet replaces the figure of Christ with an artist-messiah who 'ascend[s]' not towards the heaven, but 'to the Subsoil.'

The notion of the artist as a prophet or even Christ-like-figure is a recurring feature of *Sermons and Dwelling Places*. In the first line of the opening poem of this collection ('Sermon of the Four Truths') Alberti promises his readers that he will disclose hidden truths to them: 'Coldly, I am going to reveal to you a cellar from the inside.'[40] Throughout this poem we are repeatedly exhorted to listen to what this speaker / prophet has to say: 'Pay attention. This is his voice [...] Listen to him. This is his voice', and again 'Listen to him. This is his voice'.[41] As in 'The First Ascension', the theme of metamorphosis is a central feature of this poem. In this work, however, it is the poet's own being which undergoes transformation: 'Help me dig a wave,' he appeals to an unnamed audience, 'until my hands change into roots/ and from my body there spout wings and leaves.'[42]

The figure of the poet as suffering-Christ recurs in many of the poems in *Sermons and Dwelling Places*. In 'Discoveries in the Snow' he again exhorts his readers to 'listen' before explaining to them that

> My death is necessary in order that the pines give air,
> in order that the furtive hunters don't suffer from the longing for their
> guns,
> in order that the crystals in your bedroom defrost in a crying of
> poplars.
>
> Kill me.[43]

Similar ideas also appear in 'Dwelling Place of the Soul that Hopes for Peace' where the poet appeals to his readers to 'Wound me, wound me because I am the only man capable of facing a battalion of angels [...] I am immortal: I have no one to wound me.' [44]

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[40] 'Sermón de las cuatro verdades': 'En frío, voy a revelaros lo que es un sótano por dentro.' (295)

[41] 'Atended. Ésta es su voz' (296) 'Escuchadle. Ésta es su voz:' (297); 'Escuchadle. Ésta es su voz'. (299)

[42] 'Ayudadme a cavar una ola, hasta que mis manos se conviertan/ en raíces y de mi cuerpo broten hojas y alas.' (296) (Translation by Havard, p. 150)

[43] 'Hallazgos en la nieve' - 'Escucha./ Mi muerte es necesaria para que los pinos den aire,/ para que los cazadores furtivos no sufran la nostalgia de sus/ escopetas,/ para que los cristales de tu alcoba se deshielan en un lloro de/ álamos./ Asesíname./ Hojas de otro hemisferio vendrán algún día a buscarme.' (308-9)

[44] 'Morada del alma que espera a la paz' - 'Heridme a mí, heridme porque soy el único hombre capaz de/ hacer frente a un batallón de ángeles [...] Soy inmortal: no tengo quien me hiera.' (313)

Notwithstanding the centrality of religion as a source of inspiration for many of the poems in *Concerning the Angels* and *Sermons and Dwelling Places*, these collections have very little to say regarding the Church as a socio-political institution. Instead, they focus almost exclusively on the power that Catholicism exerts on the poet's private consciousness.[45] As well as a time of personal crisis for Alberti, however, 1928 to 1930 was also a very turbulent period in Spanish social and political affairs. The movement to oust the military dictatorship that had ruled Spain since 1923 was becoming increasingly public and violent in these years. In *The Lost Grove* the poet recalls that 'severe storms appeared on the political horizon of Spain at about the same time' as *Concerning the Angels* was published in 1929. 'The first student uprising in opposition to the dictatorship under which we were suffering had begun to shatter the tranquility [sic] of the streets.' Until this time, Alberti had been completely absorbed with his poetry, and knew 'little or nothing about politics'. His attitude changed very quickly, however, in the highly charged atmosphere that now gripped the streets of Madrid.

> Suddenly my ears heard words that had never reached them before, or at least had not meant anything to me before: Republic, Fascism, liberty [...] Without anyone realizing it was happening, as if by magic, a climate of violence had been created, and I was fascinated by it all. The shouts and protests, which in some dim way had existed within me, eating away at my own defences, finally found an escape hatch and raced frantically into streets filled with fervent students. [46]

Although he felt common cause with the student-protesters, Alberti sensed that – as a poet – he had very little to offer their cause.[47] In 1929 there was no tradition of a *literatura comprometida* (a politically-engaged literature) in Spain from which he could draw inspiration. 'Nobody then even considered that poetry might have any other purpose than to be intimately enjoyed by each individual', he recalls. 'No one thought that it could have any other effect on people.'[48] It was at this, very early, stage in the Spanish Revolution, therefore, that Alberti began to consider how his poetry might be put at the service of a political movement.

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[45] As Cecil Bowra observes in relation to *Concerning the Angels* 'Alberti is concerned entirely with something that happens in himself, with what he thinks and feels in this crisis. The external world and its events hardly count in comparison with his inescapable private troubles. This is an extremely intimate, self-examining, self-revealing poetry.' Cecil Bowra, 'Rafael Alberti, *Sobre los ángeles*' in *The Creative Experiment* (London: Macmillan, 1967), p. 225.

[46] Alberti, *The Lost Grove*, p. 270-1.

[47] 'Not even the poems of my *Sermones y moradas*, even more desperate and harsh than those in *Sobre los ángeles*, could be of any use to them', he notes in *The Lost Grove*. Ibid., p. 272.

[48] Ibid.

Johannes Lechner's observations in *Commitment in Twentieth Century Spanish Poetry* corroborate Alberti's recollections: 'not withstanding a few isolated cases,' this critic remarks, 'Spanish poets only began to address their country's social problems in their work around the mid-1930s.'[49] He refers to Dámaso Alonso's contention that prior to 1927 Spanish poetry had been dominated by the culture of 'art for art's sake'.[50] A similar situation existed in relation to novel-writing in Spain in this period: 'generally speaking,' Lechner observes, 'one can say that, in regard to the novel, there are very few works in which the author bears witness to the times in which he lives and identifies with the destiny of his contemporaries.'[51] Apart from a few noteworthy exceptions such as the dramatists Ramón del Valle-Inclán, Benito Pérez Galdos, and work by the director, Cipriano de Rivas Cherif, mainstream theatre in Spain was still churning out 'pre-Ibsenite' domestic farces and melodramas.

It was the genre of film rather than the more established art-forms such as poetry, drama or novel-writing, that inspired Alberti's first attempts at politically-engaged art. Works such as Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927), Eisenstein's *The Battleship Potemkin* (1925), and, in particular, Luis Buñuel's *Un Chien andalou* (1928) (made in collaboration with Salvador Dalí), had a dramatic impact on the poet's understanding of the relationship between art and politics. Alberti was present at the first screening of Buñuel's film in Spain, at the Cine Club in Madrid on the 8th December 1929. In his autobiography he recalls the powerful effect it made on the audience that night. Madrid was already in 'a feverish state and on the eve of great political

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[49] 'No obstante algunos casos aislados [...] la toma de conciencia de los poetas frente a los problemas de la sociedad en que vivían y su consiguiente responsabilización en los terrenos artístico y cívico, se sitúan en la poco más de media década que va de los años 1930 a 1936 aproximadamente.' Lechner, p. 120.

[50] Alonso, a poet and contemporary of Alberti's, claimed that prior to this date the poets of his generation had sought to eliminate sentiment from their work, were preoccupied with form, and had a great enthusiasm for the image 'which interposed itself like a purifying filter between reality and ourselves'. [Teníamos, en general, entonces, un gran culto por la 'pureza literaria' (eliminación de elementos sentimentales, un gran cuidado de la forma, etc.) y además un gran entusiasmo por la imagen: la imagen interponía como un filtro depurador entre la realidad y nosotros.] Quoted in Lechner, p. 64. This critic maintains that Alberti was, in fact, among the very first politically-engaged poets in Spain. Alberti's collection '*The Street Poet*, he claims, 'is one of the first books of Spanish poetry in this century in which one finds a consistent political commitment throughout all its pages.' [*El poeta en la calle* (1931-1935) [...] es uno de los primeros libros de la poesía española de este siglo en que se encuentra un compromiso consecuente a todo lo largo de sus páginas.] ibid., p. 71.

[51] 'Esquematizando, puede decirse que en cuanto a la *novela*, muy pocas son las obras en que el autor da testimonio de los tiempos que vive y se solidariza con el destino de sus coetáneos.' Ibid., p. 30.

events' when the film appeared, he notes. 'In the middle of this activity and on this battlefield which was not literary but real, Luis Buñuel appeared like some kind of meteor.' The premiere

> caused a sensation, although many were disturbed by it; everyone in the theatre was horrified by the image of a moon being sliced in two by a cloud, followed immediately by that other terrifying scene of an eye slit by a razor. When the audience, in a state of near shock, then asked Buñuel to offer some words of explanation, I remember how he stood up for a moment and said from his box seat: 'It's merely a desperate and impassioned invitation to crime'.[52]

The influence of Buñuel's film on the poet's work was immediate. As Judith Nantell points out, Alberti's first explicitly political poem, 'With My Boots On I Must Die (Civic Elegy) [1st January 1930]',[53] was composed barely twenty-three days after he saw *Un Chien andalou*, and 'is, in many ways, a verbal extension of Buñuel and Dalí's vision of the same period.'[54] The poet's new-found interest in 'crime' and revolution is apparent from the opening lines of the work:

> It will be at that moment when blind horses
> scrape their knees against the pointed spears of indignant chairs,
> against the flagstones from the streets recently absorbed in the madness.
> I will return to shit one last time on all your dead
> at that same instant in which the coats of amour come crashing down
> in the house of the king,
> in which the most illustrious men search between their legs
> without finding there the solution to the desperate urgings of the blood.[55]

The references here to barricades and street-violence, to a collapsing monarchy and impotent aristocracy illustrate the importance of contemporary political events in Spain to a reading of the 'Civic Elegy'. While the confused and violent surrealistic imagery is to some extent reminiscent of *Concerning the Angels* and *Sermons and Dwelling Places*, the language of this

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[52] Alberti, *The Lost Grove*, p. 272.

[53] 'Con los zapatos puestos tengo que morir (Elegía Civica) [1° de enero de 1930]', first published in *Poesía*: 1924-30.

[54] Judieth Nantell, *Rafael Alberti's Poetry of the Thirties – The Poet's Public Voice* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), p. 20.

[55] Será en ese momento cuando los caballos sin ojos se desgarren/ las tibias contra los hierros en punta de una valla de sillas/ indignadas junto a los adoquines de cualquier calle recién ab-/ sorta en la locura./ Vuelvo a cagarme por última vez en todos vuestros muertos/ en este mismo instante en que las armaduras se desploman en/ la casa del rey,/ en que los hombres más ilustres se miran a las ingles sin encon-/ trar en ellas la solución a las desesperadas órdenes de la sangre. (333) (This stanza is a translation by Gabriel Berns, *The Lost Grove*, p. 277, with some alterations.)

poem is, if anything, even more shocking and violent than those collections. Furthermore, unlike his earlier poems, the violence here is directed outwards - towards a specific socio-historic locale: the streets and palaces of contemporary Madrid.

In the course of this lengthy work (the poem is over one hundred lines long), Alberti accuses three separate individuals of responsibility for the violence: firstly, an 'Antonio', then an 'Arturo' and finally an 'Aurelio'. These names find no obvious parallel in contemporary Spanish affairs, but it is clear, nevertheless, that they are representative of the ruling elite, and that the poet aligns himself politically with the people who have suffered under their regime: 'You are the one responsible for the iodine raising to heaven the cry/ of the mouths without teeth,' he accuses Antonio, 'of the mouths opened by the instantaneous hate of a revolver or/ a sable.'[56] Alberti then takes it upon himself to speak out for these voiceless mouths:

> I only counted on two gums with which to bless you,
> but now 27 have erupted in my body to vomit in your
> throat and make your death-throes more difficult.[57]

The contrast here to the poet's attitude in 'The Uninhabited Body', where he lamented the loss of the 'town' that 'he carried [...] within himself', is clear.[58] In appears that, in turning outwards, towards the people and city of Madrid, Alberti rediscovers the multitude he contains within himself, and in doing so becomes a kind of verbal conduit for a wide range of angry and marginalized voices. Although a confident poetic voice had already begun to emerge in the final section of *Concerning the Angels*, and in *Sermons and Dwelling Places*, the 'Civic Elegy' differs from the poems in those collections in that the poet's self-assurance is derived from contemporary socio-political events: the sudden and completely unexpected (at least to Alberti) political awakening of the Spanish people, as well as the artistic revolution embodied by Buñuel's film. These occurrences seem to have convinced the poet that he was witnessing the beginning of a profound change in Spanish society, and inspired the almost euphoric tone that his first political work adopts towards the prospect of destruction and political violence.

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[56] Tú eres el responsable de que el yodo haga llegar al cielo el grito/ de las bocas sin dientes,/ de las bocas abiertas por el odio instantáneo de un revólver o/ un sable. (333)

[57] Yo sólo contaba con dos encías para bendecirte,/ pero ahora en mi cuerpo han estallado 27 para vomitar en tu/ garganta y hacerte más difíciles los estertores. (333)

[58] 'El cuerpo deshabitado': 'Llevaba una ciudad dentro./ La perdió.' (253)

In an article for the newspaper *El Sol* on the 18th August 1931, Alberti expressed his belief that 'the poets of today' should be 'cruel, violent, demoniac, frightening.'[59] The 'Civic Elegy' undoubtedly fulfils these requirements: anger and violence are the predominant themes in this often quite chilling work. But these same qualities also detract from the poem's effectiveness as a political work. The violence in this poem does not appear to have any constructive objectives. The reader is simply 'assaulted' with unremitting series of grotesque and 'difficult' images that lack any sense of purpose or narrative continuity, a fact which again underlines the influence of Buñuel's film.

> Secret anger in the beak of the rook that unearths
> the world-less eyes of corpses.
> That hand rebels against the tender forehead of she
> who made him to understand the pleasure that a child feels
> on being circumcised by his cook with a shard of broken glass.
> Come closer and you'll know the recondite joy that the baton feels
> as it breaks against the bone that serves as a lid for your defunct ideas.
> Anger even in the most pathetic threads of a handkerchief torn apart
> by the rats.[60]

Even those sections of the poem that do seem to gesture towards a new dawn in Spanish society are characterized by a sobering emphasis on the violence of the struggle rather than its objectives: 'the dawn of the raised hands', Alberti assures us, will be 'the dawn of nauseas and of the spoilt milk,/ of the consumption of the progressive paralysis of the world and the/ arteriosclerosis of the sky.'[61] It is as though the poet knows that all he can be sure of is that the transition to a new society is going to be an extremely violent one. Like the date which is included in its title, therefore – the '1st January 1930' – there is a Janus-headed quality to the 'Civic Elegy'. On the one hand, this is the last of Alberti's surrealistic poems of the 1920s and, on the other, it is his first politically-engaged work of the 1930s. The 'Civic Elegy' is, in

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[59] Quoted in Nantell, p. 19.

[60] 'Ira secreta en el pico del grajo que desentierra las pupilas sin/ mundo de los cadáveres./ Aquella mano se rebela contra la frente tiernísima de la que le/ hizo comprender el agrado que siente un niño al ser circun-/ cidado por su cocinera con un vidrio roto./ Acércate y sabrás la alegría recóndita que siente el palo que se/ parte contra el hueso que sirve de tapa a tus ideas difuntas./ Ira hasta en los hilos más miserables de un pañuelo descuartizado/ por las ratas.' (333-4)

[61] 'Oíd el alba de las manos arriba,/ el alba de las náuseas y los lechos desbaratados,/ de la consunción de la parálisis progresiva del mundo y la arterioesclerosis del cielo.' (334)

effect, the work of a poet who is himself in a period of transition.[62]

By the time the 'Civic Elegy' was published Alberti was already thinking of himself as a 'street poet', and taking an active role in the movement to oust the existing government and replace it with a republican regime. In January of 1930 he was among the demonstrators who marched on the Royal Palace in Madrid to protest against the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. When that regime fell, the republican-led movement set about the overthrow of the Alphonsine monarchy. Significantly (given the apolitical character of much Spanish literature) writers were at the heart of this new political mood. 'For the first time during this period,' Alberti remarks, 'writers joined with each other because of political affinities rather than professional ones [...] Azaña, Ortega, Valle-Inclán, Pérez de Ayala, Marañón, Machado, Baeza, Bergamín, Espina, Díaz, Fernández, (to mention only a few) were now working furiously and openly 'in the service of the Republic.''[63]

Alberti's own work in this period was also contributing to the republican cause, as is illustrated by the events surrounding the production of his first full-length play, *The Uninhabited Man* [*El hombre deshabitado*] (1931). The play is written in the form of a quasi-Eucharistic play [*auto sacramental*], a traditional dramatic genre made popular in Spain by the early seventeenth century dramatist, Calderón de la Barca. There are four, highly allegorical, characters in Alberti's work: the central character, Man (representative of the human condition in general); his Maker (a night-watchman); and two women - the Wife of Man, and Temptation, the latter plotting the downfall of both Man and his wife in complicity with Man's Five Senses, each of which is represented on-stage by a separate actor.[64] The action of the play unfolds in three

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[62] Alberti's comments in *The Lost Grove* underline this point. The poem, he remarks, was 'written in anger and from within the bubbling cauldron that was Spain in that moment in its history. Exaggerated, obscure, sensing but not truly knowing what I wanted, with a taste of bile and gnashing of teeth, with an undefined sense of desperation that was pushing me to bite the ground itself, this poem [...] indicated that I had become an integral part of a new universe which I had entered blindly without thinking where it all might lead'. Alberti, *The Lost Grove*, p. 277.
[63] Ibid., pp. 287-8. Alberti recalls that in 1930, Don Miguel de Unamuno, the doyen of Spanish Letters, who had been exiled by the Primo de Rivera regime, was met by a huge crowd crying 'Long Live the Republic!' on his return to Madrid. Ibid, p. 279.
[64] Ibid., p. 289.

stages: the prologue, in which Man prepares to venture forth into the world; the central part of the play, during which he embarks upon his earthly journey, and the epilogue, which sees him return to his point of departure. [65]

In many ways *The Uninhabited Man* belongs to Alberti's pre-'Civic Elegy' period. Most of the work was written in the summer of 1929 while he was still working on *Sermons and Dwelling Places*, and the play's title is taken from one of his finest poems in *Concerning the Angels*. Furthermore, this work deals with quasi-theological and existential concerns, rather than directly political matters. Nevertheless, certain aspects of this play ensured that it did cause political controversy when it opened in Madrid, in February 1931. Popkin remarks that although based on the form of the *auto sacramental*, *The Uninhabited Man* is, in fact, 'a thoroughly modern work'. She notes that it avails of highly expressionistic stage-settings and costumes, such as the diver's outfit worn by the Man in the prologue. Even more significant is the fact that the Eucharist, which had been 'the sole theme' of the traditional seventeenth century *auto* 'has no reality' for the central character in Alberti's play, whose primary battle 'is an inner struggle, not against Temptation but against the necessity of contemplating his own victimized being'. Consequently, the work is devoid of any hopeful Christian message. 'At the play's conclusion,' Popkin observes, 'Alberti's protagonist stands at the edge of the unfathomable abyss that separates what he is from what he would like to be. Like modern man, he has glimpsed the existential absurd.'[66] In effect, Alberti is using a traditional Christian art-form against itself in *The Uninhabited Man*: this is a Spanish *auto* minus God; one that holds out no prospect of redemption. In a country as preoccupied with religion as Spain – and appearing at such a tense moment in its history – this was always going to cause offence.

In his autobiography Alberti recalls that the work caused a furore on its opening night. On being asked to speak to the audience at the end of the play, he recalls that 'I shouted to them with my most challenging smile: 'Long Live Extermination! Down with the putrefaction of the Spanish Theatre of today!' Immediately,

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[65] Louise B. Popkin, *The Theatre of Rafael Alberti* (London: Tamesis Books, 1975), p. 53.
[66] Ibid., pp. 56 and 59.

> the theatre from top to bottom split into two separate groups. The putrefied and non-putrefied members of the audience insulting each other threateningly. Students and young critics, standing on their seats, contributed to the great uproar. Benavente and the Quintero Brothers abandoned the hall to the accompaniment of loud, sustained cat-calls.[67]

Alberti refers to this row as a 'literary battle'. Terms such as 'putrefaction', and the fact that Benavente and the Quintero Brothers - stalwarts of the melodrama and farce in Spanish theatre of the day - were jeered out of the theatre, indicate that the controversy was, in part, an aesthetic one; but aesthetics and religion are not easily separated in regard to the play's reception. The 'students and young critics' may well have got excited purely on account of the play's formal qualities, but the more traditional, 'putrefied', half of the audience were hardly likely to get very upset over *purely* artistic considerations. It is more probable that they were upset by the manner in which Alberti had subverted a semi-religious, art-form with his own (at that time) nihilistic view of Man. The fact that the Catholic Press in Spain were outraged at the play, accusing its author of 'disrespect, impiety and blasphemy', further illustrates this point.[68]

The demonstration in the theatre after its final performance on the 5 March 1931 also reveals the extent to which contemporary political events impacted on the play's reception. Popkin remarks that 'at the end of the work, Alvarez del Vayo spoke to the audience about developments in Soviet theatre, which developed into a discussion on the national situation.'[69] José María Alfaro (at that time a republican, but later Franco's ambassador to Argentina) then read out the names of a number of imprisoned republican leaders. Alberti recalls the audience's reaction in his autobiography.

> Alcalá Zamora, Fernando de los Ríos, Largo Caballero … The spectators loudly acclaimed the reading of these names. The telegram which Unamuno had sent from Salamanca, which we had kept for the last, brought everyone in the hall to his feet. The audience, by now excited and inflamed, marched out as a body into the streets of Madrid. When the police arrived it was already too late. The theater was empty. The only thing left in the wings was the merry-go-round of the uninhabited men which in the play symbolized lifeless human beings, those empty suits of clothes with no one in them that stand on the street-corners of the world blocking the way and making it difficult for others to pass.[70]

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[67] Alberti, *The Lost Grove*, pp. 289-90.
[68] Ibid., p. 290.
[69] Popkin, p. 24. Among those present at this performance, Popkin states were Salinas, Lorca, Marañón, Pérez de Ayala, Salvador Bacarisse, Cipriano Rivas Cherif.
[70] Alberti, *The Lost Grove*, p. 290.

The Uninhabited Man is not a directly political work; however, the manner in which audiences reacted to Alberti's attempt to subvert the theological import of the *auto sacramental*, and way in which his fellow-writers used it to incite support for the republican movement, illustrate that – in terms of its reception – the play did have an important impact on contemporary political developments in Spain. Like the 'Civic Elegy', *The Uninhabited Man* is best considered as a transitional work. It is characteristic of the author's subsequent output in the sense that it adapts a traditional form of Spanish theatre in order to give expression to more modern experiences. However, Alberti's later, more directly political literature, is less esoteric in terms of form, and in terms of content, more focused on contemporary social and political reality. Furthermore, as we shall see, his 'conversion' to Marxism in 1932, provides his writings with a sense of optimism and purpose so obviously lacking in the purely destructive energies of the 'Civic Elegy' and the nihilism of *The Uninhabited Man*.

II

Literature and Revolution 1931-36

Republican is the moon,
republican is the sun,
republican is the air,
republican am I.
(Fermín Galán)[1]

Spain had been ruled as a constitutional monarchy since the collapse of the First Spanish Republic of 1873-4. Faced with increasing social and political unrest in the early 1920s, however, King Alfonso XIII assented to the establishment of a military dictatorship under General Primo de Rivera, a regime which lasted from 1923 to January 1930. This decision by the King helped to revive republicanism as a significant political force, turned formerly staunch monarchists against his regime, and alienated much of the military. As Eisenwein and Shubert remark, from being 'an incoherent and marginal political force in Spain', republicanism now coalesced into a dynamic organization composed of ex-monarchists, liberal and right-wing republicans, as well as socialist parties in the late 1920s.[2]

The movement to oust the Monarchy gained momentum towards the close of 1930. Initially, it planned to topple the government by means of a military coup, but when Primo de Rivera resigned, and his successor, General Berenguer, called for municipal elections for 12 April

[1] 'Republicana es la luna,/ republicano es el sol,/ republicano es el aire,/ republicano soy yo.' *Fermín Galán (romance de ciego)* in Rafael Alberti, *El poeta en la calle (obra civil) con un poema de Pablo Neruda*, ed., Aitana Alberti (Madrid: Aguilar, 1978), p. 637.

[2] G. Eisenwein and A. Shubert, *Spain at War: the Spanish Civil War in Context* (London: Longman, 1995), p. 7. Alberti also remarks that, at this point in its history, the republican movement was attracting support from across the social spectrum in Spain: the 'philosophers, illustrious professors, great poets and academics,' at the head of the campaign were all 'democratically involved with student and workers' organizations'. The proletariat 'fully supported this new movement, particularly with its vast number of Socialists'. Alberti, *The Lost Grove*, p. 291

1931, it focused instead on taking power by constitutional methods.[3] The April elections were widely viewed as a referendum on the political future of the country in which the people of Spain were presented with a choice between retaining the status quo represented by the Monarchy or voting for a new republican regime. They resulted in a landslide victory for the pro-republican parties. Alfonso XIII reluctantly abdicated his throne when the army and the grandees withdrew their support for his regime, and at 5 p.m. on the 14 April the republican flag was raised over Madrid city hall.

Notwithstanding the peaceful nature of the transition to democratic rule, the changes that were envisaged by the new regime to the cultural, economic and socio-political bases of Spanish society indicate that the coming to power of the Second Spanish Republic was an event of revolutionary significance in Spanish affairs. This is apparent in terms of the proposals contained in the new Constitution. This document declared Spain to be 'a democratic republic of workers of all classes, organized in a regime of liberty and justice; it renounced war as an instrument of national policy; made property 'the object of expropriation for social utility'; and granted women equal voting rights with men.[4] The new regime could, of course, have proposed even more drastic changes to the structures of Spanish society. As Hugh Thomas observes, while some of the clauses in the new constitution 'might be invoked to justify socialism; others could be regarded as giving safeguards against it'.[5] A more socialist constitution, however, would have proved unacceptable to a great number of Spaniards, and therefore incompatible with the self-proclaimed 'democratic spirit of the revolution'. More importantly, in the context of the *existing political structures*, there is no question but that the changes proposed by the new constitution were both extensive and far-reaching.

The social and political legislation introduced by the new government also attests to the radical nature of the new regime. In its first year of government, laws were enacted forbidding forced labor, setting minimum wages, and establishing arbitration boards composed of both workers and employers to settle wage disputes. The need to address the huge economic and social

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[3] In December 1930, while planning this *pronunciamiento* [military uprising], the republicans issued a statement justifying revolution: 'A passionate demand for Justice surges upwards from the bowels of the Nation. Placing their hopes in a Republic, the people are already in the streets. We would have wished to communicate the people's desire through the due process of Law. But this path has been barred to us [...] We do not covet the culminating drama of a revolution. But the misery of the people of Spain moves us greatly. Revolution will always be a crime or an act of insanity when Law and Justice exist. But it is always just when Tyranny prevails.' Quoted in Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, third edn (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), p. 30.

[4] Thomas, p. 74.

[5] Ibid.

injustices of Spanish society was particularly acute in the area of agriculture. [6] In an attempt to alleviate the often horrendous living conditions endured by the Spanish peasantry, the new regime issued a series of land-related decrees that outlawed the importation of cheap labour and ordered the obligatory cultivation of un-worked land and the expropriation of some estates.

In the context of contemporary Spanish affairs, the Republic's intention to grant self-government to the regions of Catalonia, Galicia and the Basque Country was an extremely controversial policy. David Garrioch notes that many Spanish generals and officers believed 'the army had an almost sacred mission to defend Spain, not only against external aggressors, but against the divisive elements within'. [7] From the military's perspective, the Catalan and Basque nationalist movements, along with communism, represented the greatest threat to Spanish unity, and much of the army's energies under the monarchy and the dictatorship had been expended in combating these movements. Furthermore (as in the Irish case), opposition among conservative elements to this proposal arose from fears that it would led to demands for greater freedom, and the eventual break-up of the Spanish nation. The 'Autonomy Statute' of 1931was, therefore, a highly controversial and politically dangerous proposal; one that risked provoking a *coup d'etat* while the Republic was still in its political infancy.

Aside from constitutional and legislative decrees, at a more abstract level, the loss of the Spanish Monarchy was itself a hugely traumatic event for many Spaniards. The impact – and the implications – of this loss were sensed by Alberti in an incident that he witnessed on the same day that the Republic was proclaimed. The poet was in Rota, in southern Spain, on the 14 April 1931. In his autobiography he recalls that he saw two members of the Civil Guard watching on dejectedly as the people celebrated the proclamation. 'I'll never get used to being without a king! Something will always seem to be missing', one guard remarked to the other. 'Once again and as always,' Alberti comments, 'I began to see clearly that there were two

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[6] Gerald Brenan notes that the agricultural problem was especially acute in the provinces such as Andalusia, where in 1930 the landless labourers [*braceros*] who made up three-quarters of the population were earning between 3 and 6 pesetas a day, and could expect to be unemployed for up for six months of the year. These men and their families 'lived in a state of chronic hunger and the deaths from malnutrition, which reach a high figure in almost every part of the peninsula, were here particularly numerous.' Ibid., p. 156. The horrific living conditions endured by the peasantry in the province of Extremadura where graphically portrayed in Luis Buñuel's 1933 social documentary, *Las Hurdes* [*Land Without Bread*]. This film inspired Alberti's poem, 'The children of Extremadura' [Los niños de Extremadura] from *The Street Poet – 1931-1935*. [*El poeta en la calle – 1931-1935*], p. 11.

[7] David Garrioch, 'The Historical Background' in Alun Kenwood (ed.), *The Spanish Civil War – A Cultural and Historical Reader*. (Providence: Berg Publishers, 1993), p. 4.

Spains: this was the same wall of incomprehension that continued to keep us apart, a wall that would one day collapse and leave behind a great river of blood.'[8]

The manner in which the Republic sought the complete and immediate separation of Church-State affairs had an equally traumatic effect on the nation. As Raymond Carr observes, the Catholic Church was 'a pillar of the *ancien régime*', and of 'enormous emotional significance' to many Spaniards. Notwithstanding the anger created by the Republic's economic and political legislation, he notes that its attacks on the privileged position of this institution in Spain provoked particular 'resentment' among conservative interests.[9] In the months of May and June 1931 alone the Republic issued decrees which declared the freedom of religion, ended compulsory religious education, required all elementary teachers to have a university education (a law which militated against many nuns working in Church schools), and banned the Corpus Christi processions. In October 1931, Article 3 of the new Constitution stated for the first time in the country's history that Spain had no official religion. The most controversial changes were contained in Article 26. This ended government financial support of the Church and prohibited religious orders from involvement in education, commerce or industry, or from owning 'more property than is necessary for their living needs or for the direct completion of their special goals.'[10] As Carr remarks, these laws were 'a godsend to those looking for a suitably decent stick with which to beat the Republic [...] The defence of a 'persecuted Church' quickly became the rallying cry of the right.'[11]

The coming of the Second Republic also marked the beginning of a new and exciting phase in the cultural affairs of the Spanish nation. Partly on account of the involvement of so many writers and intellectuals, the diffusion of the country's cultural heritage among the poorer classes (and particularly the peasantry) was viewed as a central element of the process of democratisation begun in 1931. The new regime placed particular emphasis on theatre in this regard. As Manuel Aznar Soler observes, the Republic recognised that 'theatre, social art par excellence, was the most suitable instrument to test the new historical rapprochement between

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[8] Rafael Alberti, *The Lost Grove*, p. 296-7.
[9] Raymond Carr, *The Spanish Tragedy – The Civil War in Perspective*. (London: Weidenfield, 1977), p. 37.
[10] Ibid., p. 45.
[11] Carr, *The Spanish Tragedy*, pp. 37 and 38.

culture and the Spanish people.'[12] The Pedagogical Missions [*Misiones Pedagógicas*] set up in May 1931 soon established touring companies such as the 'Theatre of the People' [*Teatro del Pueblo*] and 'The Puppet Theatre' [*Teatro* Guiñol] with the special purpose of bringing the country's cultural heritage to rural parts of Spain. It also helped to initiate a number of university companies, such as *La Barraca*, closely associated with Federico García Lorca, and *El Buho*, which presented work by Max Aub amongst others.

These theatrical initiatives represented a major development in the recent history of the Spanish stage, which, prior to the establishment of the Republic, was producing work that was both aesthetically and politically very conservative.[13] The initiatives were also a qualitative break from the small amount of experimental work produced on the fringes of the Spanish theatre in the 1920s by avant-garde dramatists such as Valle-Inclán and a young García Lorca. Gloria Rey Faraldos notes that 'the experimental theatres of the twenties looked for its audiences among a cultivated and intellectual public', but the companies set up by the *Misiones Pedagógicas* wanted to find new audiences for their work, among people who had no previous experience of theatre.[14] As Aznar Soler observes, this new audience was, in effect, the Spanish peasantry: 'for the intellectuals of the Republic, the usually illiterate Spanish peasantry, is the 'ideal public' [...] The peasant 'absorbs' the poetry of the theatre, he communes religiously with the tradition of a national-popular culture which our classical theatre represents to him.'[15]

Ciprano de Rivas Cherif was one of the most important figures in the Spanish theatre in this period. Arguably Spain's first theatrical director, his work was deeply influenced by modern trends in modern European theatre, and he endeavoured to introduce the ideas of figures such as Gordon Craig, Jacques Copeau, Max Reinhardt and George Bernard Shaw into Spain. The emergence of the Second Republic presented Rivas Cherif with the opportunity to put many of

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[12] 'El teatro, arte social por excelencia, era el instrumento más idóneo para ensayar una nueva aproximación histórica entre la cultura y el pueblo español.' Manuel Aznar Soler, ''El Buho': teatro de la F.U.E. de la universidad de Valencia'. In Dru Dougherty y Mª Francisca Vilches de Frutos (eds.), *El teatro en España – entre la tradición y la vanguardia: 1918-1939*. (Madrid: Tabapress, 1992), p. 415.

[13] Lorca claimed that his company had escaped 'from the theatre of the bourgeois, from the theatre of countesses and marquises, a theatre where men go to sleep, and the women ... to sleep also.' [del teatro de los burgueses, del teatro del los condeses y marqueses, un teatro donde los hombres van a dormirse, y las señoras ... a dormirse también.] Quoted in Gloria Rey Faraldos, 'El teatro de las misiones pedagógicas'. Ibid., p. 162.

[14] Ibid, p. 162.

[15] 'Porque, en efecto, el campesinado español, mayoritariamente analfabeto, es para la intelectualidad republicana el 'público ideal' [...] El campesino 'absorbe' la poesía teatral, comulga religiosamente con la tradición de una cultura nacional-popular como la representa nuestro teatro clásico.' Anzar Soler is quoting here from Sender's 1931 study, *Theatre of the Masses*. Manuel Aznar Soler, in Dougherty y Mª Francisca Vilches de Frutos (eds.), *El teatro en España*, p. 418.

his ideas into practice. In their study of the director, Aguilera Sastre and Aznar Soler note that he was at the forefront of the heated debates in the early 1930s concerning the need for a national theatre in Spain. He maintained that this had to be 'an eminently popular' theatre, one which 'includes itself in the social and political revolution that the Republic is proposing for the transformation of Spain.[16]

Rivas Cherif's finest work corresponded with the years of the Second Republic. Aguilera Sastre and Aznar Soler point out that as the director of the teatro Español in Madrid between 1930 and 1936, he was responsible for producing 'one of the most brilliant epochs in the history of the stage in our country.[17] Like the dramas produced by the companies set up by the *Misiones Pedagógicas*, classical plays from the Golden Age of seventeenth century Spanish drama were a core component of the repertoire of the Teatro Español in these years; but the theatre's programme also offered audiences experimental and popular work by contemporary Spanish and international writers. In the first season that Rivas Cherif was director at the theatre, it produced *La niña de Gómez Arias* and *La prudencia en la mujer* by the seventeenth-century Spanish dramatists Calderón de la Barca and Tirso de Molina respectively; *Fortunata y Jacinta* by Perez Galdós; a medieval Chinese play, a work by Eugene O'Neill, a dramatic poem by Rabindranath Tagore, and García Lorca's experimental drama, *La zapatera prodigiosa*. The most controversial work produced at the teatro Español during Rivas Cherif's first year in charge was the play which closed the 1930-1 season, a new play by Alberti which dealt with a failed political rebellion that had taken place a few months prior to the proclamation of the Republic, *Fermín Galán*.

The proclamation of the Second Republic was met with widespread celebrations; however, the fight for the new regime (and indeed the revolutionary era as a whole in Spain) was only beginning in April 1931. It still remained to be seen whether the country would be able to *function* as a democracy, and whether the Republic would be able to enforce its social and political policies. This was a very uncertain prospect. Notwithstanding the successes enjoyed by the movement in the municipal and national elections of 1931, it had a very insecure power-base. There were powerful forces aligned against it on both the left and the right of the

[16] 'Por ultimo, Rivas Cherif piensa que el Teatro Nacional ha de ser un teatro eminentemente popular [...] que se incardine en la revolución política y social que la República está suponiendo para el devenir de España'. Juan Aguilera Sastre y Manuel Aznar Soler, *Cipriano de Rivas Cherif y el teatro español de su época (1891-1967)*. (Madrid: Asociación de Directores de Escena de España, 1999), p. 304.

[17] 'Esos cinco intensos años marcaron, sin duda, una de las etapas más brillantes de la vida escénica de nuestro país.' Ibid., p. 173.

political spectrum in Spain. On the right, the Republic had enemies in the armed forces, among landowners and employers, and the Catholic hierarchy (as well as many thousands of ordinary practising Catholics from all walks of life in Spain, who were outraged by the regime's anti-religious legislation). On the left, it was viewed with opprobrium by anarcho-syndicalist federations and trade unions such as the CNT, the FAI, and the POUM, organisations which unlike the main socialist political party in Spain, the PSOE, and its trade union the UGT, had never lent their support to the new regime.[18]

In a country as divided as Spain was in 1931 such opposition was only to be expected. More surprising – and ultimately more damaging – was the manner in which the Republic was undermined by forces operating from *within*. As already noted, the government had come to power as a broad amalgam of political forces, some of which held contradictory political beliefs and felt little or no allegiance to republican forms of government. Many of the conservative Spaniards who had voted for the Republic in 1931, for example, had not done so on account of a new-found belief in democratic government, but because of the anger they felt at the failures of the Alphonsine monarchy and Primo's military dictatorship; or because they believed the new administration represented their best (or only) chance of averting a communist revolution. At the other end of the political spectrum, a great number of socialists had lent it their support because they saw it as a 'stepping stone', on the path to a full-blown workers' revolution in Spain.

The problems that the regime had keeping together its own querulous body of 'provisional republicans' crippled its ability to function effectively. Serious problems arose within the first months of government. The passing of religious legislation contained in Article 26 led to the resignation of both the Prime Minister of the Republic and its Minister for the Interior (Niceto Alcalá Zamora, and Miguel Maura respectively), as well as the withdrawal of the Basque and Agrarian deputies from the *Cortes*. Furthermore, some of the most intractable problems encountered by the Republic throughout this period resulted from the limitations imposed upon it by its *own* political ideology and institutional structures. The central political tenet upon which the Second Republic was founded was that of democratic rule (a truly revolutionary principle in the context of a country emerging from almost fifty years of authoritarian

[18] As Raymond Carr observes, for the membership of the FAI 'parliamentary democracy was a farce, the Cortes a 'brothel'. These forces wanted to instigate an immediate anarchist revolution, and believed that the new regime 'could be pushed by a determined strike.' Carr, *The Spanish* Tragedy, p. 40-1.

government, and which had never been a real democracy for any lengthy period of time). There were two respects in which its adherence to the rules of democratic government in the 1931-36 period seriously hindered the new regime's efforts to secure its own revolution. Firstly, it meant that the Republic could only enact change if and when its policies had a popular mandate.[19] Secondly, according to the lights of its own political doctrines, it was prohibited from attempting to silence its opponents (either literally or metaphorically). Quite the opposite, as a parliamentary democracy, it provided them with various arenas (the Cortes, a free press, free and open elections) in which they could openly and/or covertly agitate against the regime. The Republic was confronted with an anomaly therefore: democratic rule was the primary political objective of the revolution, but it quickly became apparent that the regime was being undermined by achieving its 'own goals'.[20]

This problem became particularly acute following the national elections of 1933, when the first government of the Republic fell from power and was replaced by a right-wing administration led by the conservative Radicals and supported by a newly formed 'Catholic political party', the CEDA.[21] As Carr observes, many on the right viewed this administration 'as a 'Trojan horse' tactic, a device to infiltrate Republican institutions in order to destroy them and replace them by an authoritarian, Catholic, corporate state.'[22] In the course of the two years that it remained in power (a period often referred to as the 'bienio negro' [the black two years]) this essentially *anti-republican* government used the regime's own democratic political machinery to reverse practically all of the social and political measures that had been passed into law since1931.[23]

Notwithstanding the fact that it had been achieved by 'legal' and democratic means, a large proportion of left-wing Spaniards looked upon the victory of the right in the 1933 elections as

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[19] Carr notes that the new regime insisted its 'fundamental reforms [...] must be the achievement of democratic parliamentarianism in the Constitutient Cortes to be elected in June. Once open to debate, reforms were watered down and obstructed and the splits in the government exposed.' Ibid., p. 32-3.

[20] Commenting on the problems encountered by the new regime, Raymond Carr suggests that: 'If it is not impossible to transform a static, traditional society by democratic processes it is, at the very least, a difficult task. The Provisional Republican Government of April 1931 was too heterogeneous in composition to agree on anything much beyond principles of good intent.' Ibid., p.31.

[21] Esenwein and Shubert, p. 16.

[22] Carr, *The Spanish Tragedy*, p. 44. Carr notes that the leader of the CEDA, Gil Robles, later confessed that the right "'had no other means of gaining power than by using the established régime (i.e. the Republic), introducing themselves into it and *making it their own*." Was this not to use democracy in order to modify it out of existence?' Carr asks. Ibid., p. 40.

[23] As Brenan remarks, by the end of its term there was 'hardly an act passed by the previous Government that was not either repealed outright or permitted to lapse.' Brenan, p. 269.

proof that the Republic had failed. When three members of the right-wing CEDA Party were included in the Cabinet in October 1934, they felt they were witnessing a fascist take-over of the State. Socialist leaders, who had participated in the Republic's political institutions since 1931, then set in motion pre-arranged plans for a nation-wide insurrection. This rising was a complete failure except in the coal-mining province of Asturias, where miners initiated a general strike that lasted for two weeks before it was brutally crushed by a force of 26,000 Spanish troops led by General Franco. The failure of their attempted insurrection encouraged socialists to reinvest their efforts in securing power through the democratic political structures established by the Second Republic. Two years later they reunited with left and right republicans as part of a Popular Front coalition that contested, and narrowly won, the national elections of February 1936.

This victory did very little to stabilize the regime, however; and once again, the threat to the Republic emanated from both within and without the republican fold. On the Right, many viewed the results as evidence that the legal and 'accidentalist' approach adopted by Robles' CEDA party had failed, and that the time had come for radical solutions advocated by the 'catastrophist' camp.[24] Preston notes that

> the CEDA's youth sections and many of the movement's wealthy backers were immediately convinced of the necessity of securing by violence what was unattainable by persuasion. The elections marked the culmination of the CEDA attempt to use democracy against itself [...] Military plotting began in earnest.[25]

Between February 1936 until the outbreak of the Civil War in July of that year, forces on the right set about sowing chaos in the country. Preston remarks that Falangist terror squads endeavoured 'to create an atmosphere of disorder which would justify the imposition of an authoritarian regime.' Their actions 'helped to ensure the escalation of a spiral of mindless violence which rendered rational discussion impossible.' Violence on the Left also contributed to the widespread sense that the country had reached a political impasse. As soon as the results became known 'exuberant workers had set about reaping revenge for the starvation and wage-cuts of the *bienio negro* and for the brutal repression that had followed the Asturian Rising.' In the south of the country, 'demonstrations in favour of amnesty for the prisoners of 1934

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[24] The term 'accidentalist' referred to conservatives who maintained that the Right should use the political framework provided by the Republic to help it achieve its (often anti-republican and anti-democratic) objectives. 'Catastrophists' were Rightists from the Carlist, Falangist, or Alfonsist factions who were committed to the violent destruction of the Republic.

[25] Preston, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil War*, p. 59-0.

frequently turned into acts of vandalism against churches and the property of the rich.'[26] Furthermore, encouraged by the Socialist land-workers union, the FNTT, many *braceros* decided to take it upon themselves to immediately enforce the Popular Front stated policy on land reform by seizing lands on the estates where they worked.[27]

The Republic proved unable to respond adequately to the rapidly deteriorating situation. Its difficulties were greatly increased on account of the fact that elements within the Popular Front government were also working to undermine the regime. Thomas points out that many republicans suspected that their own President, the ex-monarchist, Alcalá Zamora, would one day attempt to stage 'a virtual *coup d'état* by dissolving parliament and forming an extra-parliamentary government.' Indeed, Manuel Azaña regarded Zamora as 'a furious, inflamed enemy' who seemed to be 'a leader of the anti-republican opposition'. Socialists within the government were also plotting the downfall of the regime at this time. As Thomas notes, Largo Caballero, the leader of the PSOE – the largest socialist party in Spain and a vital part of the 'Popular Front' coalition – planned to remove Alcalá Zamora from the presidency, and fill the most important government posts with ineffectual politicians. This 'weak government [...] would be incapable of resisting either Left or Right. The way would then be open to 'revolution'.[28]

To some extent Caballero's plans were realized. In the early months of 1936 Alcalá Zamora was forced to resign from the presidency. He was replaced by Manuel Azaña, with the now vacant position of Prime Minister being filled by 'a feeble substitute', Santiago Casares Quiroga.[29] Under Quiroga's weak leadership, the government proved unable to prevent an already chaotic and violent situation from degenerating into outright war.[30] It was Calvo Sotelo's murder by Republican Guards on the 13th July 1936 which catalysed right wing insurrectionist schemes. The Republican Assault Guards who assassinated this monarchist

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[26] Ibid., p. 61-4.

[27] 'In general what most alarmed the landlords', Preston notes, 'was the assertiveness of labourers whom they expected to be servile but now found to be determined not to be cheated out of reform as they had been between 1931 and 1933. Many landowners withdrew to Seville or Madrid, or even to Biarritz or Paris, where they enthusiastically joined, financed or merely awaited news of ultra-rightist plots against the Republic.' Ibid., p. 63.

[28] Thomas, p. 171.

[29] Preston, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil War* , p. 66.

[30] As Preston remarks, aside from the rioting and murders taking place throughout the country, within the Cortes itself, the violence of speeches by deputies such as José Calvo Sotelo (leader of the anti-democratic party the Bloque Nacional), or by the fiery Communist Dolores Ibárruri (known as 'La Pasionaria') ' underlined the impossibility of any accord.' Ibid., p. 67.

were acting in reprisal for the killing the previous day of one of their own comrades by a Falange death-squad. Gil Robles had been their intended victim, but the CEDA leader was at that time holidaying in Biarritz. Sotelo's assassination played into the hands of the plotters by providing them with 'graphic justification for their contention that Spain needed military intervention to save her from anarchy.' It also helped to secure 'the commitment of many ditherers, including Franco, and obscured the extent to which the coup of 17-18 July had been long in the making.'[31]

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Alberti was in Cadiz in the days leading up to the Proclamation of the Republic, having being invited to give a reading of his poetry in the local Ateneo [cultural centre]. The city was in a state of high excitement, he recalls. 'The political folklore which had existed under the First Republic was reborn, and [...] in little out-of-the-way bars and taverns, its musical sounds could be heard.'[32] The majority of the audience at this reading were students who 'could not sit still in their seats' such was their excitement at current political events. The atmosphere became more charged when he recited the 'Civic Elegy', and the 'doors and walls of the room began to vibrate'; but this reading is more noteworthy for a poem he presented at the end of the gathering. Alberti had written 'The Ballad of Fermín Galán' in honour of an officer in the Spanish army who led a failed Republican coup the previous December.[33] The ballad went down extremely well in the Ateneo, and the students asked the poet to recite it again at a street demonstration they had organized. Alberti recalls that the following day he 'shouted' the ballad out 'at the top of my voice, standing on a table of a café where we had

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[31] Ibid.,pp. 71-2.

[32] Cadiz occupies a central place in the history of Spanish republicanism. It was here that the 1810-12 war against the French was co-ordinated, and the 1812 Constitution of the Liberal Revolution was composed. In his autobiography Alberti describes Cadiz as 'the city of freedom, of romantic conspiracies and the first Masonic lodges'. It was during this trip that he learned the street ballad which appears at the start of this section. Alberti, *The Lost Grove*, p. 294-5.

[33] Fermín Galán (1899-1930) was an officer in the Spanish army who wrote a radical utopian treatise on social problems called *New Creation* [*Nueva creación*]. Galán's rebellion in 1930 was a short-lived failure which was over in a matter of days. A court-martial imposed the death-penalty, but sensing the popular mood the government was divided as to whether this sentence should be carried out. The King, however, insisted that Galán and his fellow officer, Angel García Hernández be executed, and the sentence was carried out on Sunday, 14 December. Brenan notes that 'this hurried execution on a Sunday afternoon of two young officers did more to turn opinion against the Rey Caballero [the King] than anything else he could have done.' Brenan, p. 85*n*.

gathered while the authorities, represented by some poor uniformed guards [...] listened to me in a daze, not even considering that their sabres could have dispersed us all.'[34]

Although the text is no longer extant, it is clear that this ballad and the circumstances of its recitation in Cádiz mark a very significant moment Alberti's development as a political writer.[35] *The Uninhabited Man* is a difficult, expressionistic play, dealing with complex, theological matters - not the kind of populist drama likely to win people to a political cause. Similarly, the use of free verse and the often indecipherable imagery in his first attempt at political poetry – the 'Civic Elegy' – meant that that work, also, was only going to impress a poetry-reading, intellectual elite, rather than the often illiterate farm-hands and factory workers he wanted to reach with his poetry. The ballad [*el romance*] however, is arguably *the* most popular and 'Spanish' of art-forms.[36] Furthermore, rather than high-brow, existential themes, in this work Alberti was dealing with recent political events that everyone in Spain knew of and felt concerned their lives. Both in terms of its form and content, therefore, 'The Ballad of Fermín Galán' marks a qualitative break from the poet's earlier output. It was with this work, we can say, that Alberti became a street-poet.

When the Republic was declared on 14 April, he immediately set about converting his ballad into a play. *Fermín Galán* opened on 1 June 1931 at the Teatro Español in Madrid, barely six weeks later. This full-length work covers Galán's childhood years, his early military career as an officer in Spanish-Africa, his imprisonment by the Primo de Rivera regime, and the December 1930 rebellion. Like the original poetic version, the play is written in a 'popular' literary form – as *romance de ciego* (literally, 'a Blind Man's Ballad'). Recited by blind beggars ('ciegos') in streets and at country fairs, these ballads usually dealt with well-known historical subjects or recent public events. The most visible sense in which the format of the *romance de ciego* impinges on Alberti's play is that each of its scenes is prefaced by an 'interval' in which a Blind Beggar [El Ciego]and his Boy [El niño] stand in front of the curtain

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[34] Alberti, *The Lost Grove*, p. 295-6.

[35] Alberti re-wrote 'El romancero de Fermín Galán y los sublevados de Jaca' [The Ballad of Fermín Galán and the rebels of Jaca] in Buenos Aires in 1942. This later version is still extant. José Monleón, p. 98.

[36] The vast majority of Republican poetry during the Civil War was written in this form. As Francisco Caudet notes, Republican writers turned to the ballad because they recognized it was 'the popular Spanish metre par excellence'. [El consenso fue emplear el romance porque siendo el metro popular español por excelencia'. In Francisco Caudet (ed.) *Romancero de la guerra civil*, (Madrid: La Torre, 1978), p. 23.

and declaim the content of the forthcoming scene to the audience. Man and Boy then leave the stage, the curtain is raised and the scene commences.[37]

As an oral tradition, the *romance de ciego* was not noted for its historical accuracy. Alberti did not see this as a problem, however. In his autobiography, he remarks that he wanted his play to be 'a simple, popular work in which I would not stick so much to historical truth as to events that had already been somewhat deformed by the people and were beginning to spread in the form of a legend.'[38] Rather than merely creating the visual illusion of a *romance de ciego* on-stage through the use of a blind-beggar-narrator and his 'boy', he hoped to take advantage of the way this artistic tradition helped to transpose 'bare' historical facts into quasi-mythic narratives that became part of the Spanish folk-memory.

The most obvious way in which the work does this is through Alberti's highly romanticized treatment of the play's central character. Throughout the play Fermín Galán is cast in the mould of a veritable working-class hero. He is 'a son of the people ... the son of a poor family', the Blind Beggar informs us in the prologue; a dreamy adolescent who liked to spend his time singing at the sea-shore and talking to the sailors.[39] As a young officer, he is presented as the opposite of his drunken and war-like generals who, like their King, care nothing for even their own soldiers' lives. 'How distressing,' he laments to a Moroccan recruit while serving in Spanish Africa, 'to serve a king who deals/ our lives like playing cards!'[40] On his return to Spain Galán is sentenced to three years in prison for plotting against the Rivera dictatorship. He undergoes a kind of moral transformation during this period of incarceration

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[37] Popkin suggests that this is not a successful dramatic experiment. She remarks that 'the preponderance of narration over dialogue [in the play] results in a marked decline in dramaticity. By relegating the dramatic episodes to a position of secondary importance, the author divests them of any element of suspense.' Popkin, p. 68. This ignores the fact that Alberti's audience was *already familiar* with Galán's tale. When this point is taken into account, the 'commentaries' can be seen as a way of helping to focus the audience's attention on the political processes that led to Galán's execution rather than that outcome in itself. Thus, the device parallels similar theatrical innovations being developed in Germany in this period by playwrights such as Bertolt Brecht and Erwin Piscator, whose work Alberti would become familiar with during his trip to that country in 1932.

[38] Alberti, *The Lost Grove*, p. 298.

[39] 'Hijo del pueblo, Fermín,/ siempre por el pueblo iba./ Más le gustaba la mar/ que la escuela y que la amiga./ Habla con los marineros,/ canta solo por la orilla, [...] hijo de pobre familia. ¡Qué niño es Fermín Galán,/ niño serio, sin sonrisa,/ niño que mira a lo lejos,/ sin saber adónde mira!' Alberti, *Fermín Galán*, rprt. in Aitana Alberti (ed.), *El poeta en la calle (obra civil)*, p. 638-9. (Page numbers to this play are included parentetically in the footnotes following the Spanish quotations.)

[40] '¡Qué dolor, Abd-el-Malé,/ ser valiente para nada,/ sirviendo a un Rey que se juega/ nuestras vidas a las cartas!', p. 660.

('I would like to [...] kill death with a single bullet,' he exclaims to a fellow-prisoner[41]), and leaves prison vowing to dedicate himself to achieving social-justice in Spain: 'I will side with the workers,/ with those who work the land,/ with those who spend their days/ dripping bitter tears'.[42] The idealized representation of this character culminates in the extremely drawn-out execution-scene in Act Three. Sentenced to death by court-martial, Galán dies like a chivalrous Spanish knight from a medieval tale. He refuses a blindfold ('I always lived in the light [...] I don't want shadows at my death.'[43]), pardons his executioners, and even gives the order to fire himself, adding a cry of '¡Viva la República!' as the shots ring out.

Alberti knew that treating the life of Galán in this way was, in his own words, 'a rather dangerous enterprise'.[44] And indeed, the issue of the play's historical accuracy was one of the main reasons for the mixed reviews it received. The critics, Alberti notes,

were not as favourably disposed toward *Fermín Galán* as they had been with

> *El hombre deshabitado*. The Catholic newspapers practically demanded my head, and the Republicans, although praising certain passages of the work, also pointed out its evident failings, considering the main one to be *a lack of historical perspective* that was evident in the presentation of episodes that had just only recently occurred. (my italics)[45]

Although he concedes that these objections were, 'in part [...] valid', Alberti maintains that his biggest mistake had been to think he could bring a popular art-form, 'whose setting should have been some village square - before a bourgeois, aristocratic and in some ways sectarian audience'.[46] The problem, therefore, was one of form and context: because it was produced in a conventional theatre, the play's audience had presumed they were going to see a work with a standard fourth-wall aesthetic, presenting an accurate historical representation of recent events in Jaca. Alberti, however, was trying to create political art, not write history; and one of the most potent ways in which art could 'serve' political agendas, he had perceived, was by creating epic narratives which would become embedded folk-memory of the people.

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[41] 'quisiera [...] matar de un tiro a la muerte'. (665)
[42] 'Yo me iré con los obreros,/ con los que la tierra labran,/ con los que pasan los días/ sudando gotas amargas' (667-8)
[43] 'Yo siempre viví en la luz,/ la luz me alumbró todo./ Sombras no quiero en mi muerte.' (723)
[44] Alberti, *The Lost Grove*, p. 298.
[45] Ibid., p. 300.
[46] Ibid.

The treatment of religion in this play caused even more controversy than the issue of its historical inaccuracies. This theme first arises in the Prologue. As the Blind-Beggar introduces his *romance* to a small, pro-republican, on-stage audience, a Young Woman '*coming from Mass*' with her Mother, remarks that Galán had died without making a final confession; 'like a bad dog, daughter', the Mother replies. These women are immediately jeered off-stage by the Ciego's audience. A few moments later they give a passing Jesuit priest the same treatment: 'Death to the crow!' cries a Worker. 'Down with the Jesuits!' yells a Student. 'Pull off his soutane!' adds the Blind Beggar's Boy. The Jesuit escapes off-stage as quickly as he can, but in response to these anti-Catholic protests, two members of the Civil Guards [Guardia Civil] appear on-stage and disperse the band of republicans with their batons.[47]

The idea of Catholicism as the doctrine of reactionary political forces in Spain is one which recurs at several points in the play itself. In Act 1 Scene 3 (set in an Army camp in Morocco) we see Spanish generals marching drunkenly around their tent as they sing the Spanish Royal March:

> The Virgin Mary
> is our Protector,
> our benefactress!
> There is nothing to fear!
> War to the world,
> the devil and flesh,
> war, war, war
> against Lucifer![48]

In Act 3 Scene 8, Alberti deftly ridicules the notion of Alfono XIII's divine investiture. In a meeting called to discuss whether Galán and his García Hernández should be executed, the ministers of government begin by reaffirming their loyalty to the Crown. 'His Divine Majesty/ is greater than the Kings of Kings', asserts the Minister for Economics. The Minister for State claims to 'have seen him tremble/ on taking communion at Mass', as has the Minister for

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[47] The Spanish Civil Guard were formed in 1844 to keep down banditry in the rural regions of Spain, and were greatly loathed by the poorer-classes. Brenan likens this force to the R.I.C. in 19th and early 20 century Ireland: 'Carefully picked and highly disciplined, they lived scattered in small fortified posts among the towns and villages, forbidden to intermarry or to associate familiarly with the local inhabitants or to move about unarmed or alone [...] it goes without saying that in poverty-stricken districts – that is to say, throughout a large part of Spain – their relations with the working classes were of open hostility and suspicion.' In Brenan, p. 156.

[48] '¡La Virgen María/ es nuestra protectora,/ nuestra bienhechora!/ ¡No hay nada que temer!/ ¡Guerra al mundo,/ demonio y carne,/ guerra, guerra, guerra/ contra Lucifer!' (656)

Clemency and Justice while the *Miserere* was being sung. 'The King is installed by God', the President of the Government concludes. 'He proceeds from the Eternal Father./ Let nobody try to oust him,/ Let nothing be tried against him.'[49]

The theme of Church/State collusion is again underlined in the play's penultimate, and most controversial, scene. At a party attended by various members of the aristocracy following Galán's execution, Alberti represents Cardinal Segura as an obnoxious drunk, totally opposed to the emergence of the Republic.[50] As the author remarks in his autobiography, this scene caused a riot in the theatre on the night the play opened. The monarchist sections of the audience, Alberti recalls,

> could not take this 'blasphemy' sitting down. They moved forward in waves from everywhere in the theatre, advancing towards the stage with shouts and clubs. Fortunately someone in the wings ordered the metallic curtain, the one used only in the case of fire, to be lowered as soon as possible.[51]

Given the fact that *Fermín Galán* was conceived of as an openly pro-republican work of art, it was perhaps inevitable that the Church would come under attack in the play. The Catholic hierarchy had been in conflict with liberal/republican forces in Spain since the early nineteenth century, and as we have seen, it had already emerged an outspoken critic of the Second Spanish Republic by the time Alberti was writing this work in April and May of 1931. With the Monarchy out of the way, and the military behaving as though they might accept the legitimacy of the new government, the Church was the largest, and most influential, institution in Spain still openly expressing its opposition to the new regime.[52] Furthermore, Alberti's own experiences under the Jesuits ensured that he was always going to take full advantage of any opportunity to denigrate the 'Spanish Catholic Spirit' in his work. Of more interest than the anti-Church rhetoric of the above scenes, however, is the fact that in many ways the theme of

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[49] 'Su Divina Majestad/ es más que el Rey de los Reyes [...] lo he visto desvanecerse/ al comulgar en la misa. [...] Yo, al cantar el Miserere. [...] El Rey es puesto por Dios. Del Padre Eterno procede./ Nadie intente derribarlo,/ nada contra él se intente' (713)

[50] This Cardinal is not actually named as Segura in the play, but there is no doubt but that the audience would have recognized Segura (the then Primate of Spain and one of the Republic's most outspoken critics) as the object of the author's satire. In his autobiography Alberti confirms that this character was a caricature of this Cardinal.

[51] Alberti, *The Lost Grove*, p. 300.

[52] This is not to deny that there were many monarchists still seeking to reinstate Alfonso XIII, just as many in the military, the Press, and other sections of society who were deeply opposed to the republican regime. The Church differed from other dissenting bodies, however, in that it 'spoke with one voice', its influence extended to so many areas of Spanish life, and on account of the fact that it claimed a special role for itself as arbiter of the moral and spiritual well-being of the Spanish people.

Catholicism in the play seems to subvert the anti-republican role that the author earmarked for it.

The representation of the Virgin Mary is illustrative of how Catholicism manages to 'cross the ideological divide' between pro- and anti- republican forces. In Act One the Spanish generals claim the Virgin as their 'Protector' and 'benefactress'. In Act Two, however, this figure appears as, quite literally, the standard-bearer of the rebels of Jaca. As their rebellion begins to fail, five injured republicans take refuge in a religious sanctuary. The Virgin Mary appears to these men and starts tending to their wounds. 'I will wash your wounds/ with tears from my eyes. [...] The Virgin is a Republican/ and will come to your aid',[53] she tells the rebels as she tears her head-dress into shreds to make bandages. Not only does she act as a nurse to these men, Alberti's Virgin also expresses a desire to lead the republicans into battle against the Monarchy: 'Down with the Monarchy!' she exclaims to the wounded soldiers. 'Follow me into the fields. Give me a rifle or a revolver,/ a sword or a horse!/ I want to be the Colonel/ of all the rebels.'[54] When the monarchist soldiers surround the sanctuary before she has an opportunity to act on this desire, she responds by expressing her willingness to become a martyr to the republican cause: 'Kill me at the doors to my own house,' she dares the monarchists. 'This is where they killed her, my villages will say, because one day she wanted to raise the flag.'[55]

To some extent of, course, Alberti is simply being provocative in representing the Virgin in this way. In his autobiography, for example, he refers to his 'wild idea of having the Virgin appear with rifle and bayonet to defend the battered group of rebels and demanding the heads of the King and General Berenguer'. He also notes that on the opening night of the play, the monarchists in the audience 'were horrified to hear such criminal feelings expressed by the Mother of God whom I had invented.'[56] That Alberti describes his Virgin as a 'wild idea' and an 'invented' figure indicates that rather than attempting to claim her for the republican side, he was merely seeking to offend anti-republican Catholics with a deliberately controversial

[53] 'Republicana es la Virgen/ y acude en vuestro socorro.'(701)

[54] '¡Abajo la Monarquía!/ Salid conmigo a los campos./ ¡Dadme un fusil o un revólver,/ una espada o un caballo!/ Quiero ser la Coronela/ de todos los sublevados!' (702)

[55] 'Matadme a las puertas/ de mi misma casa, [...] Aquí la mataron,/ dirán mis aldeas,/ porque quiso un día/ poner la bandera.' (705)

[56] Alberti, *The Lost Grove*, p. 299.

image of one of their most sacred figures.[57] Certain aspects of the scene, however, suggest that there is more to Alberti's Virgin than this reading allows. Although her desire to lead the rebels into battle against the Spanish army may simply be a provocative gesture (the army, after all, claimed the Virgin as the protector in battle), in other respects she appears as a quite orthodox version of the Catholic idea of the Mother of God, and her republicanism is presented without any sense of irony.

In so far as Alberti's Virgin comes to the aid of those who are suffering, for example, her role in the play is quite orthodox. Her willingness to martyr herself is also highly significant. It was a matter of historical fact (one that Alberti's *romance* could not ignore) that the republicans lost out to the monarchists in Jaca. The play's Virgin does nothing to 'change this result'. All she brings to the republicans is compassion and a sense of the moral superiority of their cause. In her willingness to sacrifice herself, however, we see Alberti using a familiar Christian idea to 'manufacture' a sense of moral victory out of a military defeat. Furthermore, because the republican cause appeared to have triumphed in 1931, when the play was first produced, there may be a suggestion here that such sacrifices are a necessary and inevitable part of revolutionary movements if they are to succeed.

The notion of republicans dying Christ-like deaths is even more pronounced in relation to the character of Galán. In the prologue to the execution scene the Blind Beggar claims that Galán responded to the news of his death-sentence with the remark: 'This sacrifice of mine/ will bear its fruit tomorrow./ The flowers of the Republic/ will have my blood in their soul.'[58] In the Epilogue (set on the 14 April 1931, the day the Republic was declared) his mother reinforces this sense of her son's death being a Christ-like sacrifice: 'You had to die in order to liberate Spain', she tells his portrait. 'Spain has its Republic now because your blood was good [...] Isn't it true that you have not died?' she asks the picture.[59]

It is impossible to know to what extent Alberti is consciously manipulating the Christian beliefs in respect of this sacrifice motif; or to what extent it is a sign of how his Catholic

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[57] That he uses the word 'criminal' is also significant perhaps in that it brings to mind Buñuel's description of his scandalous film, *Un Chien andalou*, as being 'merely an invitation to crime'.

[58] 'Este sacrificio mío/ dará sus flores mañana./ Las flores de la República/ tendrán mi sangre en su alma.' Ibid., p. 719.

[59] 'Tuviste tú que morir/ para liberar a España. [...] Ya España tiene República/ porque tu sangre fue buena. [...] ¿Verdad que no has muerto?' Ibid., pp. 743, 745 and 746 respectively.

upbringing, in his own words, 'keeps coming back'. It may well be that the author would not have been sure of the answer to this question himself. What is clear, however, is that Catholicism plays a strangely bi-partisan role in this otherwise highly didactic and 'ideologically-correct' work. Whether he was conscious of it or not, Alberti was clearly unable to keep religion to one side of the ideological argument in *Fermín Galán.*

The reaction to the play on its opening night suggests that the issue of Catholicism occupied a similarly deep-rooted and ambivalent position in the psyche of the Spanish nation as a whole. In *The Lost Grove* Alberti recalls that both the monarchist and republican sections of the audience were offended by the treatment of religion in his play: 'the *entire* theatre protested violently' (my italics) when the Virgin appeared 'with rifle and bayonet to defend the battered group of rebels', he remarks: the monarchists because they saw this as blasphemy, and the republicans because they 'objected to the very appearance of the Virgin' in a play that was supposed to be celebrating Spain's emergence from centuries-old grip of Catholic superstitions. Regardless of how the subject was broached it appears that Catholicism would inevitably provoke disagreement among Spaniards.

After *Fermín Galán* finished its run at the teatro Español in Madrid, Alberti and María Teresa León received funding from the government to study developments in European theatre. The couple spent the next year and a half travelling in France, Germany, Holland, the Scandinavian countries, and the U.S.S.R. These trips abroad had a catalytic effect on Alberti's political thinking. José Monleón notes that it was in Germany that the writer first came to consider himself a communist.[60] It was also in Germany that he began to refine his understanding of the relationship between art and politics; discovering artists such as Piscator and Toller, for whom, Monleón remarks, 'theatre and politics were the same thing.'[61]

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[60] José Monleón, p. 122.

[61] 'Las experiencias teatrales - Piscator, Toller… - y las políticas eran una misma cosa.' José Monleón, p. 121. Popkin notes that 'at the time of his arrival on the European literary scene, such prominent figures as Louis Aragon, Paul Eluard, Stephen Spender and W.H. Auden were embarking on a similar journey to his own.' In Popkin, p. 22.

From Germany, Alberti and María Teresa travelled on to the U.S.S.R., which Alberti later described as being 'like a journey from the depth of night into the centre of the light.'[62] The two months they stayed in this country had an even more profound effect on Alberti than his experiences in Germany. Judith Nantell has noted that it was 'during his visit to the Soviet Union,' that Alberti

> began to comprehend what his vocation as a poet of politics meant. After being introduced to the works of the members of the *Unión Internacional de Escritores Revolucionarios* [the International Union of Revolutionary Writers][...] Alberti began to write poetry that was firmly implanted in and that took inspiration from contemporary reality and the socialist convictions and aspirations he shared with other like-minded leftists.[63]

The impact of his new 'socialist convictions and aspirations' is very apparent in Alberti's next poetic collections, *Watchwords* [*Consignas*] and *A Spectre Haunts Europe* [*Un fantasma recorre Europa*] both of which were published in 1933.[64] In 'Carriers', for example, he refers to the mistreated workers in Istanbul as being like 'slow mules with human eyes,' and 'sunken spines'. These 'beasts of burden' 'also carry dreams', he warns, and 'Once freed, they will emerge into a dawn, loaded with explosives.'[65] In 'S.O.S.', also from *A Spectre Haunts Europe*, he imagines a time when

> The unemployed of the world rise up,
> multiply,
> the unemployed rear up like the sea,
> crash down,
> rise up
> and multiply.[66]

Following his return to Spain in February 1932 Alberti immediately set about propagating the socialist ideas he had learned in Germany and Russia. It is at this point that he starts to

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[62] 'En ese momento viajo por primera vez a la Unión Soviética, que fue para mí entonces como un viaje del fondo de la noche al centro de la luz.' Alberti, *Crónicas* (1932-1938). In Rafael Alberti, *El poeta en la calle*, p. 453.

[63] Nantell, pp. 39-40.

[64] The title of the former volume is taken from the beginning of the *Communist Manifesto*, which reads: 'A spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of communism. All the powers of old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this spectre: Pope and Tsar, Metternich and Guizot, French Radicals and German police-spies.'Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848).

[65] 'Cargadores': 'Yo he visto mulos lentos con ojos de persona,/ hundidos espinazos de bueyes singladores [sic] [...] pero como cargan, también cargan sus sueños./ Libres, saldrán a un alba, cargados de explosiones.' Rafael Alberti, *Poesías completas* (Editorial Losada: Buenos Aires, 1961), p. 354. (Unless stated otherwise all the poems I refer to in this section are taken from this text. Pages numbers are included parentetically following the original quotations.)

[66] 'S.O.S.': 'Los parados del mundo se levantan,/ crecen,/ se empinan los parados como el mar,/ se derrumban,/ se levantan/ y crecen.' (353)

conceive of the Spanish Revolution as part of a broader, class-based struggle involving workers throughout the world. As well as breaking with the politics of the republican regime, his new-found radicalism leads him into conflict with many of the Spanish writers and intellectuals he had become acquainted with over the previous ten years.[67] This latter issue is a central theme in 'On Returning and Beginning (1932)', one of the first poems he wrote on his return to Spain in 1932. 'I returned', he complains here,

> and saw seated corpses
> cowards at the café and money tables,
> bodies rotting in chairs,
> friends prepared to receive free of charge that which
> cost others their lives.
> I came here
> and I spit you out.
>
> I've won another world.[68]

From 1932 on, Alberti's work is dominated by the theme of revolution. As well as the aforementioned *Watchwords* and *A Spectre Haunts Europe*, in this period he also publishes the equally seditious poetic collections, *13 Stripes and 48 Stars* [*13 banderas y 48 estrellas*], *Our Daily Word* [*Nuestra diaria palabra*] and *The Explosive Donkey* [*El burro explosivo*].[69] In 1933 he and María Teresa founded the journal *Octubre: Revolutionary Artists and Writers.*

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[67] Reflecting on his activities at this time in his *Complete Poems* the poet remarks that 'I write a multitude of satirical and political poems, which I recite at public functions, in workers' libraries and public squares. *Watchwords* appears, a little book which draws together my first revolutionary poems. Many of my friends begin to distance themselves from me. [Empiezo a ser un poeta en la calle. Escribo multitud de poemas satíricos y de agitación, que recito en los actos públicos, en las bibliotecas obreras y en las plazas públicas. Aparece *Consignas*, librito en que recojo mis primeros poemas revolucionarios. Muchos amigos se distancian de mí.] Alberti, *Poesías completas,* p. 13. Cano-Ballesta also observes that Alberti's new poetics did not go down well in his home country. He notes that many critics lamented the loss of a fine poet and protested that politics was not a suitable matter for poetry. [Rafael Alberti está convencido de consagrar su inspiración con una causa noble. El compromiso con la sociedad es llevado a cabo con todas sus consecuencias a pesar de las reacciónes que llega a provocar. Numerosos amigos se distancian de él, críticos lamentan la pérdida de un poeta protestando que no es ése el fin de la poesía.] In Juan Cano-Ballesta, *La poesía española entre pureza y revolución (1930-1936)* (Madrid: Gredos, 1972).

[68] 'Al volver y empezar (1932)': 'volví/ y vi los cadáveres sentados,/ cobardes en las mesas del café y del dinero,/ cuerpos podridos en las sillas,/ amigos preparados a recibir de balde el sueldo de la muerte/ de los otros./ Vine aquí/ y os escupo./ Otro mundo he ganado.' (350) Pieter Wesseling remarks that these are 'the sentiments of the convert, of the new member of the Communist Party.' Given the similarly harsh tone of many of Alberti's poems in this period, Wesseling suggests that 'it is not surprising that he made enemies, nor that his anger and conceit were remembered and resented by many for years to come. This is the attitude that branded Alberti and from which his reputation has suffered ever since.' Pieter Wesseling, *Revolution and Tradition: The Poetry of Rafael Alberti* (Valencia: Albatros Ediciones, 1981), p. 49

[69] *13 Stripes and 48 Stars* was published in 1935, *Our Daily Word* in 1936, and *The Explosive Donkey* sometime during the Civil War.

The following year he publishes his *Two Revolutionary Farces* [*Dos farsas revolucionarias*] which contains two short 'rabidly anti-clerical and pro-Marxist'[70] dramatic works, 'Providence Bazaar' [Bazar de la Providencia] and 'The Farce of the Three Wise Kings' [Farsa de los Reyes Magos].[71] In stark contrast to *Fermín Galán*, his writing now reveals a deep dissatisfaction with the republican politics. Instead, his literature reveals him trying to incite a second, *workers'* revolution that would lead to the overthrow of the regime that came into power in April 1931.

As Gerald Brenan observes, 'the success or failure of the Republic' depended in large part on 'its ability to carry into effect a serious measure of agrarian reform.' By the time Alberti returned to Spain from his first trip to Russia, in 1932, the government had been in power for approximately one year and was struggling to deliver on its promises to improve the lives of the Spanish peasantry.[72] The failure of the Republic to effect change in this area is a central theme of his poetry in these years. 'On Returning and Beginning (1932)' is headed with the epigraph '*They promised them the fields/ and in the fields they are going to kill them*', an ironic reference to the Republican Government's failure to fulfil their promise to provide peasants with expropriated land. The first half of this work focuses on an incident in which some peasants took the law into their own hands. 'I returned here', the poet writes,

> at the moment when a few miserable strips of land
> changed hands,
> they were taken violently by those who for centuries had
> spent their lives on them,
> doubled over,
> watering the wheat with their blood.
> [...]
> I returned when they were being ploughed by oxen and mules,
> taken by force by those who had cared for them since they were children,
> those who identified with their tameness to the point of being
> beasts of burden themselves.

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[70] Popkin, p. 25.

[71] Both works are re-published in Pere Gimferrerr, Eladio Mateos and Gonzalo Santonja (eds), *Rafael Alberti. Obras completas – teatro I* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 2003).

[72] There were several reasons for the government's failure in this area. Firstly, conservative politicians very effectively employed 'obstructionist' methods to delay the passage of the government's agrarian legislation through the *Cortes*. Secondly, when new laws were eventually passed, they were not always properly enforced. Many landowners simply disobeyed the new legislation and refused to work their uncultivated lands, or to pay wages owed to their already hard-pressed labourers (often advising these farm-hands to ¡Comed República! ['Eat the Republic!']). A third problem related to the fact that some of the Republic's middle-class, urban-based leaders (such as Manuel Azaña), were too absorbed in more symbolic issues such as church/state relations, and showed a lack of political will in regard to the more urgently needed laws in the area of agriculture.

In this poem the government responds to this action exactly as the previous regime would have done: 'in exchange' for the expropriated land and animals, the peasants 'receiv[ed] gunpowder and prison-cells from the same people who had/ placed the desire for the fields in their minds.'[73]

'The Ballad of the Peasants of Zorita' from *Watchwords* also deals with antagonistic relations between the peasantry and the government authorities. Alberti's poem focuses on the violent treatment of the peasantry by the Civil Guards in the townland of Zorita.

> The peasants of Zorita
> went to the woods
> to gather those acorns
> that not even the pigs want.[74]

In the woods the peasants were met by the landlord and three Civil Guards who promptly open fire on them. When the town of Zorita gathered in the town square to protest against the shooting, 'shouting [that]a worker is a nobody!', the 'the authorities' turned their guns on these protesters also, mortally wounding still more 'Children, women and men'. 'They were promised the earth, / and in the earth was where they left them', the poet remark ruefully, employing the same ironic epigraph he used in 'On Returning and Beginning'.[75] The poem ends with a direct appeal to the peasants of Zorita to think collectively and unite with other Spanish peasantry, only in this way can they overcome their oppression:

> Peasants of Extremadura,
> copy what others are already doing:
> a chain in the fight …
> and, united, onwards march!'[76]

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[73] 'Al volver y empezar': 'volví aquí en el instante en que unas pobres tierras cambiaban/ de dueño/ eran tomadas violentamente por aquellos que hacía siglos se/ partían la vida sobre ellas,/ doblados de cintura,/ salpicados los trigos con su sangre./ […] volví cuando eran roturadas por bueyes y por mulos arrancados,/ cogidos a la fuerza por aquellos que los cuidaron desde niños,/ que se identificaron con su mansedumbre hasta llegar a ser/ bestias de carga,/ recibiendo a cambio la pólvora y la cárcel de los mismos que/ habían puesto en sus ojos el ansia de los campos.' (349-50)

[74] 'Romance de los campesinos de Zorita': 'Campesinos de Zorita/ fueron a los encinares/ a coger esas bellotas/ que ni los cerdos ya pacen./ Los llevaba el hambre.' (340)

[75] 'Zorita entero en la plaza,/ gritando, protesta en balde./ - El que trabaja no es nadie. […] Sin aviso, rompen fuego,/ […] Niños, mujeres y hombres, heridos de muerte caen./ Cumplen las autoridades./ Se les prometen las tierras/ y en la tierra van a dejarles.' (340-1)

[76] '¡Campesinos extremeños,/ seguid lo que ya otros hacen:/ una cadena en la lucha …/ y, unidos, senda adelante!' (341) Alberti's introductory note to this poem in 1933 states that it commemorates 'the heroic battles sustained by the peasants of Extremadura against hunger and for possession of the land. Acts that the working-classes of Spain will never forget: [las luchas heroicas que los campesinos de Extremadura sostienen contra el hambre y por la posesión de las tierras. Sucesos que las clases trabajadores de España nunca olvidan.] Rprt. In Nantell, p. 70.

The call for a peasant revolution is also apparent in 'A Spectre Haunts Europe'.[77] The opening stanzas of this poem view the advancing 'spectre' of communism from the perspective of a wealthy landowner whose dreams are haunted by the vision of his crops going up in the flames created by such a revolt: 'and his dreams are filled with bonfires,' the speaker remarks,

> with burning herds,
> which instead of wheat wave flames,
> instead of grain, sparks,[78]

'Where are you, where are you?' the landowner cries out to an unnamed protector (the Civil Guard perhaps, or God) 'the peasants are trampling on our blood.'[79]

The part that Catholicism played in the subjugation of the peasantry is one of the central themes in Alberti's poetry of the 1932-36 period. Two related ideas frequently arise in these poems: firstly, that both socially and politically the Church has aligned itself with the country's elite against the peasantry; and secondly, that it used education as a means of continuing the oppression of the poorer classes.[80] The former theme is apparent in 'The Church is Walking a Tightrope', a poem which takes its title from a drawing by Goya in which a cleric is precariously balanced on a tightrope above a crowd of people.[81] In Alberti's work the Church forms part of a ruling trinity of conservative forces in Spanish life that also includes the banks and the military. Perched on his tightrope the cleric offers God's protection to these institutions: 'My prayers/ will add more fire to your cannons', he first assures a military-official.

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[77] 'Una fantasma recorre Europa' p. 348-9. In 1933 this poem also appeared in a special double-issue of *Octubre* celebrating the sixteenth anniversary of the Russian Revolution.

[78] 'y sueña por la noche con hogueras,/ con ganados ardiendo,/ que en vez de trigo tiene llamas,/ en vez de granos, chispas,' (348)

[79] '¿Dónde estás,/ dónde estás?/ los campesinos pasan pisando nuestra sangre.' (348)

[80] Martin Blinkhorn notes that 'grass-roots' anger at the Government's perceived anti-clericalism was made to also encompass the land issue in traditionally Catholic areas such as the province of Navarre. Blinkhorn, 'Politics and Society in Navarre, 1931 to 1936', in Paul Preston (ed.), *War and Revolution in Spain* (London: Routledge, 1984), pp. 73-4.

[81] 'La iglesia marcha sobre la cuerda floja' in *Octubre* No. 2 (July-August 1933), p. 33 -4. This poem is not included in Alberti's *Complete Poems.* It is reprinted in Nantell, pp. 170-71. Goya's drawing appears alongside the poem in this issue. Robert Havard notes that '*Octubre*'s aggressive anti-clericalism was much in the tradition of Goya whom Alberti greatly admired and regarded as a profound influence on the avant-garde [...] Most poignant for Alberti was Goya's drawing in which a skeletal man hands over his skin to three representatives of the State - a bishop, a government official, and a general - with the caption reading: 'El pueblo entrega lo último que le queda.' ['The people hand over all they have left to give.'] In Havard, p. 18

My holy water
will double your dynamite.
Our Lady
will be the sweet loader
of the rifles
of your Civil Guards
and God, the guide
of your secret police.[82]

In the following stanza he invites a wealthy banker onto the rope:

Come up, you, banker,
[...]
Eternal heaven
I promise to your government,
peace on earth
if it makes war on the peasant,
immortal life
if it takes it from the workers.

Banker, brother,
come up here to me, give me your hand,
for should the rope snap
for should the rope snap
we'll all land in the crap.[83]

The simple and direct political message contained in this poem is characteristic of much of the writing that appeared in *Octubre*. Lechner observes that the 'combative [and] often pamphlet-like poetry' in this journal contains none of the 'modish syntactical or lexical arrangements' that characterized avant-garde Spanish poetry. Instead, literature is treated as ''an instrument for transforming the world''; and, in keeping with the contemporary Marxist literary theory, 'everything is subordinated to the objective of making the rural and industrial proletariat conscious of their social position [...] and of provoking political unrest.'[84] While not always

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[82] 'Mis oraciones/ darán más fuego a sus cañones./ Mi agua bendita/ redoblará su dinamita./ Nuestra Señora/ será la dulce cargadora/ de los fusiles/ de sus guardias civiles/ y Dios, el guía/ de su secreta policía.' Nantell, p. 170.

[83] '-Ven tú, banquero, [...] El cielo eterno/ yo le prometo a tu Gobierno,/ paz en la tierra,/ si al campesino hace guerra,/ vida infinita,/ si a los obreros se la quita./ Banquero, hermano,/ sube hasta mí, dame la mano,/ que si la cuerda/ que si la cuerda/ se rompe iremos a la mierda.' Nantell, pp. 170-1.

[84] 'La literatura no era más que 'un instrumento para transformar el mundo' [...] El primer lugar lo ocupan los fines didácticos, pragmáticos: todo está supeditado al objetivo de hacer consciente de su situación social al proletariado rural e industrial [...] y de provocar la agitación política. [...] Poesía combativa, panfletaria, muchas veces, denunciatoria casi siempre. Los cultismos sintácticos o lexicológicos no asoman en ninguno de los poemas, la mayoría de los cuales están escritos en verso libre'. In Lechner, 96. ('The Church is Walking a Tightrope' is written is rhyming-couplets.)

the most accomplished in aesthetic terms, 'The Church is Walking a Tightrope' illustrates that Alberti's attacks on the Church were often quite humorous. We shall see that the poems he wrote in the aftermath of the Asturias rising are especially noteworthy for their cutting satire against the Catholic Church.

'Drought', from *Watchwords* (1933), is another highly didactic work. It deals with the manner in which the Church's religious teachings were preventing the peasantry from recognizing the real causes of their poverty. This poem focuses on an incident in which a priest - 'dressed in gold and silk' - tries to conjure up a miracle to attract rain to the parched fields of a peasant-village.

> The crow of a priest
> croaked in the church.
> - Let it rain, let it rain
> Virgin of the Cave!
>
> Women and men
> and children responded.
> - Let it rain, let it rain![85]

When their prayers fail to end the drought, the peasants begin to suspect they are being duped: 'Who deceives us?' they cry out angrily,

> The priest,
> the bosses.
> Knives out!
> Kill them, comrades![86]

Carnage is only prevented by the arrival of a member of the Communist party on the scene who orders the peasants to 'put away your knives'. Instead of anarchistic violence, he spreads the gospel of Communism among the peasants, urging them to think collectively:

> All men united.
> Side by side, the field and the factory,
> the soldiers, the marines.
> The Masses!
> Against anarchy,
> masses!
> against religion![87]

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[85] 'Sequía': 'El cuervo del cura/ graznaba en la iglesia./ - ¡Que llueva, que llueva,/ Virgen de la Cueva! Mujeres y hombres/ y niños contestan./ - ¡Que llueva, que llueva!' Rprt. in Nantell, p. 175.

[86] 'El cura,/ los dueños./ ¡Navajas!/ ¡Mueran, camaradas!', Ibid., p. 176.

[87] 'Cerrad las navajas. [...] Todos los hombres unidos./ Del brazo, el campo y la fábrica,/ los soldados, los marinos./ ¡Masas!/ Contra la anarquía,/ ¡masas!/ Contra la religión,' Ibid., p. 176.

In effect, the Party official urges the peasants to see themselves as a part of a broad new community of workers, all gathered together under the protection of 'the Communist Party,/ in front, unbending, guiding them.'[88] Alberti did not include 'Drought' in any of his later collected works, but although one of his weakest poems aesthetically, it illustrates the poet's belief that the Church played an important role in the oppression of the peasantry by preventing them from coming to an understanding of the causes of their impoverishment. Marxist doctrine, on the other hand, correctly identifies both the causes of poverty and its solutions.[89]

The theme of religious belief as a form of false consciousness recurs in the rather more impressive 'The Fight for the Earth', also from *Watchwords*.[90] 'We were directed towards God', the speaker, a Spanish peasant, complains in the opening line of this poem,

> we cried out our appeals to him
> because we supposed him higher than the rooftops and
> pigeon lofts,
> further away than the back of the last star.[91]

The priests only related this God to earthly matters for the peasants in order to assure them that everything in the world was ordered exactly as He had desired it.

> To the point of paralysis they had repeated to us that he was the one
> creator of everything,
> of the lice that feed and grow in the hair of the poor
> as well as the congestion that unsettles the siesta
> of the rich.[92]

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[88] 'Y el Partido Communista,/ rígido, al frente, guiándolas.' Ibid., p. 177.

[89] This point is underlined by Alberti in his remarks in his introductory note to the poem in 1933: 'Drought' treats of the disorientation which the lack of rain produces in a village. The priests, always opposed to scientific explanations, exploit the peasants' ignorance and add to their mental stupor by trying to attract rain with a miracle. Feeling themselves deceived, the peasants rebel in an anarchistic fashion against the priest and the Virgin. In the end a comrade from the Party appears who awakens and channels their class-consciousness.'
['Sequía: Trata del desconcierto que produce la falta de lluvia en una aldea. Los curas, alejándose siempre de toda concepción científica, contribuyendo al adormecimiento del cerebro de los campesinos, y aprovechándose de su ignorancia, pretenden atraer la lluvia con el milagro. Al sentirse engañados, los campesinos, de una manera anárquica, se rebelan contra el cura y la Virgen. Apareciendo, al final, una camarada del Partido que despierta y encauza su conciencia de clase.'] This poem is reprinted in Nantell, p. 174.

[90] 'La lucha por la tierra' (351-2).

[91] 'Nos dirigíamos a Dios,/ le suplicábamos a voces/ porque le suponíamos más arriba de los tejados y los palo-/ mares,/ más allá de la espalda de la última estrella.' (351)

[92] 'Nos habían repetido hasta paralizarnos que él era el único/ creador de todo,/ tanto del piojo que se alimenta y cría en la cabeza del pobre/ como del estómago pesado que hace congestionar la siesta de/ los ricos.' (352)

As a consequence of such teachings the peasants came to view God as just another of their oppressors. 'And like any other proprietor or exploiter of men,' the speaker remarks, 'it was also demanded that we called him Lord.'[93] In the latter half of the poem, the peasant directly apostrophises this exploiter-God, telling him that his reign is over.

> But now, Lord, a sickle has cut off your head
> and with a single strike a hammer has demolished your throne forever.
> It's a red star that inflames the rotting debris of
> your heaven.[94]

As in 'Drought', therefore, in the latter half of this work, Christianity is rejected in favour of a revolutionary Marxist doctrine. The peasants continue to 'fight every day', the speaker tells God, but

> not for that distant land,
> that invisible salary which is the promise of your heaven
> or those agonies with which you threaten us like any other
> landowner.[95]

Instead, their struggle is for the land they spend their lives working on; a land which remains 'distant' - not in an other-worldly sense - but on account of the fact that the peasants never actually possess it. As the speaker remarks in the poem's final lines.

> That distant land does not bury its foundations in the clouds,
> We walk upon it,
> our feet recognize it,
> it waits and cries beneath them:
> THE EARTH.[96]

'The Fight for the Earth' purports to represent a peasant's recollections of how the Spanish clergy influenced his childhood. In 'College (S.J.)', Alberti recalls his own education under the Jesuits in Cádiz. Interestingly, these are very similar poems. Just as the priests in 'The Fight for the Earth' had 'direct[ed] the peasants towards a God who was 'further away than the

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[93] 'como cualquier propietario o explotador de hombres,/ exigía además que le llamásemos Señor./ Esto nos enseñaron desde niño los curas,/ el arzobispo en su visita pastoral/ y los dueños del campo que labramos hasta que nos derriba.' (352)

[94] 'Pero ahora, Señor, una hoz te ha segado la cabeza/ y un martillo de un golpe ha derribado tu trono para siempre./ Es una estrella roja la que incendia los escombros podridos de/ tu cielo.' (352)

[95] 'combatimos diariamente no por esa patria lejana,/ ese salario invisible que es la promesa de tu gloria/ o esos tormentos con que nos amenazas como aliado de los/ terratenientes.'

[96] 'Esa patria lejana no entierra sus cimientos en las nubes,/ la pisamos,/ la reconocen nuestros pies,/ espera y grita baja ellos:/ LA TIERRA.' (352)

back of the last star', so too, the teachers in 'College (S.J.)', focused their pupils' minds on other-worldly matters:

> They told us that we weren't from here,
> that we were travellers,
> passers-by,
> guests of the earth,
> on the road to the clouds.
> [...]
> They taught only our souls.[97]

In 'The Fight for the Earth' the peasants' teachers had taught their pupils that the social injustices suffered by the lice-ridden poor must be accepted as a part of God's plan. Similarly, in 'College (S.J.)' the pupils were assured by their Jesuit educators that whoever obeyed

> The One who bestowed us with breakfast
> and in summer provided the ant with a house,
> whoever gave praise and love to the one
> who threw the poor to the mud
> and raised our fathers onto their horses,
> he will see the stars open a path for him[98]

In the final lines of 'The Fight for the Land' we see the peasant fixing his gaze on the ground beneath his feet - 'LA TIERRA' - rather than 'that distant land' of paradise. 'College (S.J.)' ends in a comparable manner, with the speaker observing that

> They taught us to wait
> with our gaze fixed at a point past the stars,
> just so,
> ecstatic.
>
> But as far as I'm concerned the heavens have fallen.[99]

The similarities between these two poems are highly significant. We have seen that in much of his writing of this period, Alberti attempts to align himself with the working classes of Spain.

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[97] 'Colegio (S.J.)' from *Nuestra diaria palabra* (1936). 'Nos dijeron que no éramos de aquí,/ que éramos viajeros,/ gente de paso,/ huéspedes de la tierra,/ camino de las nubes. [...] Nos educaron sólo para el alma.' (372)

[98] 'a Aquel que nos concede el desayuno/ y surte en el verano la casa de la hormiga,/ quien dé crédito y ame/ al que dejó a los pobres tirados en el barro/ y sentó en cambio a nuestros padres sobre los caballos,/ ése verá que le abren paso las estrellas,' (373)

[99] 'Nos enseñaron a esperar/ con la mirada puesta más allá de los astros,/ así, / extáticos./ Pero ya para mí se vino abajo el cielo.' (373)

In 'On Returning and Beginning (1932)' he states that he had returned from Russia in order to fight for the rights of the Spanish worker: 'I returned here to put myself on his side'. In 'A Spectre Haunts Europe' he refers to his poet-friends in the cafes of Madrid as 'cowards [...] rotting corpses', and sides instead with 'the impoverished peasant' in welcoming the coming revolution; in 'Slaves' he apostrophises the old servants that worked for his family, assuring them that 'from this day onwards [...] I call you comrades.'[100] In reality, of course, Alberti had very little in common with these people. He came from a respectable, Catholic family. He could read and write; and notwithstanding the fact that he did endure some hardships in Madrid, these were very insignificant in comparison to the impoverishment and social injustices suffered on a continual basis by large sections of the peasantry.

The situation was very different, however, in regard to the issue of education. For centuries, the Catholic clergy in Spain had controlled the country's educational structures, and this influence transcended class-boundaries in the sense that the clergy taught (or preached) the same socially-conservative ideas in the schools of Spanish peasantry as they did in Jesuit Colleges like the one Alberti attended.[101] Therefore, although Alberti was trying to disassociate himself from the 'Spanish Catholic spirit' in the 1932-36 period, that same religious 'spirit' provided him with a rare source of common experience with the peasantry. As such, it played a valuable role in helping him to overcome the class-boundaries that separated him from the people in whose name he was calling for revolution.

Alberti attacks on the 'Spanish Catholic spirit' become especially vitriolic in the aftermath of the October 1934 rising in Asturias. This insurrection was a hugely significant event in history of the Spanish revolution. Brenan describes it as 'the first battle of the Civil War', and Esenwein and Shubert refer to it as 'the most substantial revolutionary episode in twentieth-century Europe after the Russian revolution.'[102] 3000 people died, and a further 7000 were

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[100] 'Al volver y empezar': 'Volví aquí para ponerme de su lado,' (350).
'Una fantasma recorre Europa': 'cobardes en las mesas del café y del dinero, cuerpos podridos en las sillas,' (349).
'Siervos': 'desde este hoy en marcha hacia la hora de estrenar vuestro pie la/ nueva era del mundo,/ yo os envío un saludo/ y os llamo camaradas.' p. 375. See also 'You are Complicit' [Estáis de acuerdo] (376) and 'You're On Your Way', Old Parents...' [Os marcháis, viejos padres...] (377)

[101] Brenan notes that in the Church-run elementary schools in nineteenth-century Spain, 'the children were deliberately not taught to read, but only to sew and to recite the Catechism.' (Brenan, p. 49-50) In the twentieth century the majority of these schools were run by the government. However, the Catholic religion and catechism were still 'compulsorily taught' in both Church and State-run schools.

[102] Brenan, p. 284; Esenwein and Shubert, p. 82.

wounded during the hostilities. The vast majority of these casualties were miners. Furthermore, following their surrender, the Government troops engaged in a vicious campaign of violence against the insurrectionists, the barbarity of which stunned public opinion in Spain and abroad.[103]

The events in Asturias underline the centrality of Catholicism as an issue in the 1930-39 period. The violence by government troops had been preceded by fictitious claims in the right wing media that the miners had perpetrated horrendous acts of brutality against nuns and clergy during their insurrection.[104] Investigations by independent journalists, as well as some of the Government's own deputies, found that there was no substance to these horror-stories. The reports continued to be published for several months afterwards. This suggested to many on the left that the press campaign was being orchestrated by reactionary elements that, as Brenan remarks, 'wished to produce an atmosphere in which a terrible vengeance could be taken.'[105]

Alberti was in Moscow when the rising and subsequent atrocities took place, but these events made a deep impression on him nonetheless; as indeed they did on left-wing writers and intellectuals throughout the country.[106] Like many socialists, he believed that this violence was part of an orchestrated political campaign by the right. Furthermore, in the poems he wrote that were directly inspired by the rising and its repression, he lays the blame for the atrocities firmly at the door of the Catholic hierarchy in Spain.[107] In 'To the Nuncio of the S.S. in Spain', subtitled *(After the repression of Asturias)*, Alberti imagines Cardinal Segura reporting

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[103] Brenan comments that thousands of arrests were made and the prisoners (except for those killed on the way) were brought to the Police Barracks at Oviedo. Here they were taken out and shot without any trial at all in batches. In Brenan, p. 288.

[104] 'The most incredible tales were solemnly told and vouched for', Brenan observes. 'The nuns in the Convent of the Colegio de las Adoratrices at Oviedo were said to have been raped: the eyes of twenty children of the police at Trubia were said to have been put out: priests, monks and children had been burnt alive: whilst the priest of Sama de Langreo was declared to have been murdered and his body hung on a hook with the notice 'Pigs' meat sold here' suspended over it. Ibid., pp. 286-7.

[105] Ibid., p. 287.

[106] Johannes Lechner remarks of Alberti that 'the revolution in Asturias had the most profound and determining effect on his subsequent outlook, as it did the majority of Spanish artists and intellectuals of the day.' [La revolución de Asturias fue, sin duda, la experiencia más honda, más determinante en su actitud posterior, así como lo fue para la mayoría de los artistas e intelectuales españoles de aquellos días.] Lechner, p. 68.

[107] Alberti's poems on the Rising were later collected together under the title *The Explosive Donkey* [*El burro explosivo*], (published some time during the Civil War). In his introduction Alberti states that collection contains political-burlesque poetry on the history of Spain … poems loaded with dynamite' [poemas político-burlescos de la historia de España … poemas cargados de dinamita] Rprt. in Nantell p. 78

back to his superiors in Rome on the 'successful' events in Asturias: 'Now the bloody steps/ of the Vatican fief await you', the poet apostrophises the Cardinal. 'Catholic Apostolic Roman/ you have to climb them, Monsignor, to render your account.'[108] In the following stanzas he openly accuses the Church of complicity in the brutal repression of the rising, and represents the conservative politicians Gil Robles and Niceto Alcalá Zamora as pawns of the Vatican.

> Pull up those violent purples,
> and that bloody hand, that white hand
> Record it to the Holy Pius Anus the Eleventh,
> The anus you represent in Spain.
>
> Record it, Monsignor, that while Rome
> exalts you as the flower of ambassadors,
> and Gil as the wet-nurse to the divine,
>
> Niceto flies like a dove,
> excreting flowers and vines
> at the celestial slime from whence he came.[109]

Several of these poems focus on the figure of Gil Robles, leader of the conservative and avowedly Catholic political party the CEDA. In 'The Gil Gil' Robles 'dances the Vaticana' as 'the bloody heel/ of the Holy Father in Rome taps along'.

> Oh what a figure he cuts
> treading the blood of five thousand
> into the grave!
>
> Two Vatican angels
> come with a water jug
> to wash his hands.
> Oh how daintily dances Gil![110]

The issue of Robles' links with the Church recurs as a theme in Alberti's poetry throughout the next two years. One of his most caustic attacks appears in 'To Gil Crucified'. This poem is

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[108] 'Al nuncio de S.S. en España' (*Depués de la represión de Asturias*): 'Ya, Monseñor, te aguardan las sangrientas/ graderías del feudo vaticano./ Católico Apostólico Romano/ es que las montes para rendir cuentas.' Rprt. in Nantell, pp. 186-7.

[109] 'Remángate esas púrpuras violentas,/ y esa mano de sangre, esa alba mano/ grábala al Sacro Pío Onceno Ano,/ Ano que tú en España representas./ Grábala, Monseñor, que mientras Roma/ te exalta como flor de embajadores/ y Gil como nodriza a lo divino,/ vucla [sic]Niceto en forma de paloma,/ excrementando pámpanos y flores,/ al cieno celestial, de donde vino.' Ibid.

[110] 'El Gil Gil': 'GIL no baila a la asturiana/ que baila a la vaticana/ con sotana y con fusil. [...] Repica el tacón sangriento/ del Padre Santo de Roma, [...] ¡Qué figura/ pisando en la sepultura/ la sangre de cinco mil!/ Para lavarle las manos,/ dos ángeles vaticanos/ le dan un aguamanil/¡Oh qué bien que baila Gil!' Alberti, *Poesías completas* p. 346-7.

sub-titled '(After the Straperlo Scandal)', which refers to an incident in which several ministers in the CEDA-Radical coalition were proved to have taken bribes to set up gambling saloons. The political scandal from this affair led to the downfall of the Government in December 1935.[111] As the poem's title indicates, Alberti uses the occasion of CEDA's downfall to satirize Robles as a kind of crucified anti-Christ figure: Robles on the cross was pierced in the left breast, but 'instead of blood', the poet maintains, this wound drew 'pure shit' from his body. 'I'm thirsty!' he cried out

> and drank the pure blood
> of five thousand heroic Asturians
> to win the promised heaven.[112]

The poem closes with the CEDA leader turning to Alejandro Lerroux, (leader of the conservative Radical party), in the manner that the Gospel of Luke in the *New Testament* represents the crucified Christ turning towards the repentant thief. Instead of heaven, however, Robles can only promise his Prime Minister that 'Today you will be with me in the Modelo' (a prison in Madrid).[113]

The *bienio negro* came to an end in December 1935 when the rightwing government that had won the 1933 elections was forced to resign due to scandal caused by the revelation of corruption on the part of its ministers. The polling-date for the national elections was set for 16 February the following year. The CEDA's election campaign received the backing of Catholic Church and the the massive Catholic press.[114] Brenan notes that Robles's election speeches were 'of extraordinary violence and consisted mainly of insults to his opponents.' In 'Gil's Campaign (The Elections of 1936)' Alberti satirises the CEDA leader's quasi-religious election crusade/campaign, imagining an 'Hysterical, Gil pass[ing] through Spain/ Vomiting Escoriales of spite'.[115] The scatological insults increase in intensity in the poem's second stanza. Alberti likens Robles to a 'Black chasuble covered in cobwebs'. Like the farts from a

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[111] See Brenan, p. 293-4.

[112] 'A Gil crucificado (*Después del escándalo del Straperlo*)': 'Ya le dieron/ un lancetazo en la tetilla izquierda,/ brotando, en vez de sangre, pura mierda/ por el herido mortal que le infligieron. [...] 'Tengo sed' ... y bebió la sangre pura/ de cinco mil heroicos asturianos/ para ganarse el prometido cielo.' Rprt. in Nantell, p. 188.

[113] 'Hoy estarás conmigo en la Modelo.' Ibid., p. 188.

[114] Paul Preston remarks that 'the intensity and malevolence of the CEDA campaign were developed in both public and private meetings and the massive Catholic press network.' Preston, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil War*, p. 206.

[115] 'Gil en campaña (*Elecciones de 1936*)': 'Histérico anda Gil por las Españas,/ Vomitando Escoriales de despecho,' rprt. inNantell, p.187-8. 'Escorial' has a dual meaning: as a common noun it translates as 'slag-heap', but it is also the unfortunate title of Philip II's monastery. Alberti was no doubt making full use of the interplay between this word's religious and scatological significance.

bishop's 'unsatisfied arse groaning in high do', his 'voice [...] sows weeds with its breath.' In the final stanzas of this poem he suggests that

> At [Robles'] fart, at his voice, confession boxes,
> dandruff, convents, dirt, sacristies,
> herpes, decay, mucus, purgations,
>
> forming a united front of rosaries,
> surge forth in the sacrosanct confraternities
> to wrap up the elections.[116]

This poem is possibly the most scathing of all Alberti's attacks against conservative forces. It also indicates that he believed the forces representing 'Spanish Catholic spirit' were set to win the upcoming elections. In fact, the Popular Front coalition actually won a narrow victory in 1936. In the final section of this chapter I examine why – in the aftermath of the civil war that broke out following this triumph – Alberti decided to use his writing to support the republican regime he had criticized so severely since his conversion to communism in 1932.

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[116] 'Negra casulla envuelta en telarañas,/ culo de obispo aullando en do de pecho,/ do de pecho de culo insatisfecho
que siembra soplos para dar cizañas. [...] A su pedo, a su voz, confesionarios,/ caspas, conventos, mugres, sacristías,/ herpes, caries, esputos, purgaciones,/ formando un frente unido por las rosarios,/ surgen en sacrosantas cofradías/ para encajonar las elecciones.' Rprt. in Nantell, p.188.

III

Writings of the Spanish Civil War

I am whatever you do. I am your vow to be
Good, your humorous story.
I am your business voice. I am your marriage.

What's your proposal? To build the just city? I will.
I agree. Or is it the suicide pact, the romantic
Death? Very well, I accept, for
I am your choice, your decision. Yes, I am Spain.[1]

W. H. Auden's 'Spain' expresses one of the few incontestable truths of the Spanish Civil War: it meant different things to different people. Even among Spaniards, there was much confusion and disagreement about what was at stake in the conflict. Once again, the term 'republican' came to signify a range of political movements that supported the democratically-elected government of Spain. In reality, however, only some of the organisations aligned with the Republic (namely the communists, moderate-socialists, and republicans) were actually fighting to restore the Popular Front coalition of February 1936. Others (such as the anarchists and radical-socialists), looked upon the war as an opportunity to instigate a workers' revolution that would defeat the Francoist forces *and* lead to the overthrow of the Second Republic. Furthermore, many Catalan nationalists, although ostensibly affiliated to the pro-republican side, were primarily interested in securing their own national independence, and proved very reluctant to assist the Republican war-effort. Even the Francoist side, a more unified force, was composed of elements with divergent aims: Carlists who sought the restoration of the monarchy; the Falange who wanted to establish a fascist state[2]; and many ordinary conservative Spaniards (across all classes) who wished to install a regime that – whatever political form it took – would safeguard the traditional values of the 'true Spain': unity, religion and hierarchy.

[1] W.H. Auden, 'Spain' (1937). In Valentine Cunningham (ed.), *Spanish Front – Writers on the Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford U.P, 1986), pp. 2-3.

[2] Carlism was a right-wing Catholic movement with a particularly strong base in the province of Navarre; the Falange Española was the major fascist party in Spain. It was led by José Antonio Primo de Rivera (son of the dictator) until his execution by Republican forces in November 1936. Both of these movements, and monarchist parties, were fused together by Franco in April 1937 and brought under his control.

The terms of the conflict were further complicated by international factors. These impacted in two related ways. Firstly, at a military level, foreign involvement played a decisive role in the conflict. The rebellion of the 17 July would have been defeated in a matter of weeks were it not for the fact that the rebels could draw on the huge military resources of the fascist regimes in Germany and Italy, as well as thousands of Moroccan recruits in the African units of the Spanish army. On the Republican side, the government would have been unable to offer any effective resistance but for the arms that it purchased from the Soviet Union. The Republican forces were also boosted by the thousands of volunteers from all over the world who joined its International Brigades. Another very important international factor during the war was the refusal of the British and French authorities to come to the assistance of the legally elected government of Spain, or to allow the Republic the right to purchase arms from them.

The second way that international factors impacted on the conflict relates to ideology. To a greater extent than any major European conflict since the French Revolution, the Spanish conflict was a war of ideas; and most of the political philosophies that were being contested, such as Anarchism, Catholicism, Communism, Democracy, Fascism, Republicanism and Socialism were founded upon principles that transcended specifically *Spanish* circumstances. It was for this reason that the Republican side, in particular, attracted so many foreign volunteers. As Louis MacNeice wrote with regard to his generation of British and Irish writers: 'our blunt/ Ideals would find their whetstone, [...] our spirit/ Would find its frontier on the Spanish front'.[3]

Religion was of central importance throughout the war. The rising that began on the 17 July 1936 was instantly successful in the Catholic heartlands of Spain such as León and Old Castile. In Pamplona, the Carlist population turned the coup into a popular festival, thronging the streets and shouting ¡Viva Cristo Rey! (long live Christ the King). Gabriel Jackson points out that the sacking of churches and the murder of priests that occurred in the republican zones during the first weeks of the conflict 'had brought the Spanish priesthood to the side of the Insurgents in a simple reflex of self-defense.'[4] With the exception of the Basque clergy, Spanish priests

[3] Louis MacNeice: 'Autumn Journal', in Michael Longley (ed.), *Louis MacNeice – Selected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), p. 52.
[4] Gabriel Jackson, *A Concise History of the Spanish Civil War* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974), p. 154.

regularly denounced the 'reds' from their pulpits; blessed the flags of nationalist regiments; took up the fascist salute, and even fought in the ranks of the *Movimiento*.[5]

The Catholicism that underpinned the Francoist war-effort was a quintessentially Spanish ideology in the sense that national identity had been closely linked to this religion since the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Christianity, however, is founded upon ideas which its adherents claim transcends Spanish – and indeed all human – history. Throughout the conflict Francoists used this notion to add a sense of *gravitas* and nobility to their cause. Preston notes that the 'blanket repression of Republicans of all kinds' that soon got under way in regions such as León and Old Castile was orchestrated by 'those who claimed to be rising in defence of law and order and of *eternal Catholic values*'.[6] (my italics) In September 1936, Enrique Plá y Deniel, the Bishop of Salamanca, issued a pastoral letter that represented the conflict as one

> being waged between two conceptions of life, two forces preparing for universal conflict in every country of the earth … Communists and Anarchists are sons of Cain, fratricides, assassins of those who cultivate virtue … It [the war] takes the external form of a civil war, but in reality it is a crusade.[7]

Cardinal Gomá, the Catholic Primate in Spain, was one of Franco's most outspoken supporters in the Church. [8] Following the destruction of Guernica, when some Catholics began to question the sanctity of the Francoist cause, Gomá organized a collective letter, 'To the Bishops of the Whole World', which also described the conflict as a 'Crusade', and rejoiced that on their executions, Francoist enemies had become reconciled to the Church.[9]

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[5] Ibid., p. 162. 'Movimiento' [the Movement]: a general term for the Francoist war-effort, which refers specifically to the single party that emerged after Franco unified the Falange and Carlist-Monarchist forces in April 1937. As Preston observes 'those who did not share the values and aspirations of the 'Movement' and were unfortunate enough to find themselves on the in the nationalist zone, unity was imposed by means of a vicious terror.' Preston, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil* War, p. 145.

[6] Ibid, p. 75.

[7] Ibid., p. 158.

[8] 'A fanatical anti-Marxist', Jackson notes that Gomá 'had for several years been an open admirer of Fascism.' Jackson, p. 154.

[9] Issued on the 1st July 1937, this letter was signed by two Cardinals, six Archbishops, thirty-five bishops and five vicars-generals. Preston, p. 159. Preston points out that there were priests who objected to this ecclesiastical militancy. He notes that Gomá's Letter was not signed by Cardinal Francesc Vidal I Barraquer, Archbishop of Tarragona in Catalonia, nor by Monsignor Mateo Mugia, Bishop of Vitoria in the Basque Country. Múgia was especially distressed by the execution by Nationalist firing squad of fourteen Basque priests at the end of October 1936. This should, in canon Law, have led to the excommunication of those responsible. Neither the Vatican nor the Spanish hierarchy condemned the executions. Preston also observes that 'as a young priest, Vicente Enrique y Tarancón, who as a Cardinal forty years later was to put the Church's weight behind the democratization of Spain, was perplexed by the militancy of senior churchmen.' Preston, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil War*, pp. 158-9.

As Preston remarks, 'there was nothing in the Republican zone to compare with the ideological cohesion or clarity of purpose provided by the Catholic Church and the unified Movimiento.' Aside from the threat posed by the Francoist forces, this lack of unity represented the primary threat to the Republic's war-effort. The issue that caused the most disagreement was the question of whether their campaign should be prosecuted as a war or as a social-libertarian revolution. 'The view argued by the Communist Party, the right-wing of the Socialist Party and the bourgeois Republican politicians', Preston notes, 'was that the war must be won first in order to give the revolution any possibility of triumphing later'; however, 'the anarchosyndicalist CNT, the more or less Trotskyist POUM and the left-wing of the PSOE,' believed that 'proletarian revolution was itself the essential precondition for the defeat of fascism.'[10]

In the initial stages of the conflict, the 'revolutionists' on the Republican side enjoyed substantial successes. Preston notes that within days of the *alzamiento* [rising], local branches of the Socialist FNTT and of the CNT in the provinces of Andalusia and Extremadura went about collectivizing the big estates; and in both of Spain's major cities, Madrid and Barcelona, the elected authorities were sidelined as authority passed to the Anarchist and Socialist controlled workers' parties. These events went hand in hand with a 'break-down of law and order', particularly during the first two months of the conflict. Preston observes that the 'widespread terrorism' that occurred on the Republican side was 'mainly directed against the supporters of right-wing parties and the clergy'.

> It was impossible to keep the groundswell of long repressed anti-rightist feeling entirely in check once the restraints were off. Churches and convents in the Republican zone were sacked and burned [...] Figures cannot always be trusted but Fr. Antonio Montero estimated that 6,832 members of the clergy and religious orders were murdered or executed. Many others fled abroad. The popular hatred of the Church was the consequence of both its traditional association with the right and its open legitimization of the military rebellion.[11]

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[0] Ibid., p. 171. CNT (Confederación Nacional de Trabajo): a giant anarcho-syndicalist trade union. POUM Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista): a combination of anti-Stalinist Communist dissidents and Trotskyists who united in 1935 in an effort to create a bolshevik vanguard party. Ibid., p. 227.

[1] Ibid., p. 168.

Throughout the course of the first two years of the conflict the central government gradually re-imposed its control over Republican territory. Ironically, it was the Communist party that was primarily responsible for the defeat of revolutionary initiatives undertaken by socialists in Spain. Because he was seeking Western allies against Hitler in 1936, Stalin insisted that the main objective of the war-effort should be to restore to power the democratically elected government of Spain.[12] The Communists, therefore, deliberately obstructed attempts to turn the conflict into a workers' revolution, as this development would have antagonized the French and British governments.

Due to the fact that the Soviet Union provided the Republic with vital military aid, the Communists had been propelled from a position of relative obscurity to, in effect, 'the arbiter of Republican politics' (a major anomaly in a regime supposedly fighting for democratic principles). The manner in which the Spanish Communist party manipulated the government on account of its dependence on Soviet aid also 'exacerbated the Republic's greatest weakness, the interminable, and violent, polemics between its various factions as to how the war should be fought.'[13] The deeply contentious 'war or revolution' issue came to a head in the 'May events' in Barcelona in 1937. In what amounted to a small-scale civil war within the civil war, the CNT, the POUM, and the extreme anarchist group, the friends of Durruti, fought the Communists for several days. Recognizing that they could only win in Barcelona at the cost of the Republican war-effort against the Francoists, the CNT leadership ordered its militants to lay down their arms. This surrender effectively marked the end of the power struggle between the anarchists and the communists. 'From this point on, the revolutionary achievements of the initial stages of the struggle would be steadily dismantled, leaving the war to follow the direction dictated by the Republicans and moderate Socialists who had taken over the key ministries in the government.'[14]

The Spanish Civil War produced a huge volume of committed writing. Alun Kenwood remarks that the conflict 'inspired more literature than any other event in Spain's history'. The war crystallized the issue of commitment in literature. Every artistic form

[2] Preston notes that 'the Spanish Communists were' in any case 'convinced that Spain was obliged by an iron historical destiny to pass through a bourgeois democratic stage on its road to socialism.' Ibid., p. 178.
[3] Ibid., p. 144.
[4] Ibid., p. 185-6.

became, on each side, a weapon in the struggle and contributed powerfully to the politicization of European literature.[15]

As Kenwood indicates, literature was used as a 'weapon' by both sides in the conflict. Though not as well-known or documented as Republican writing, the *Movimiento* produced a substantial body of poetry and drama which appeared in publications such as *Hierarchy* [Jerarquía], *Vertex* [Vértex] and *The Poetic Anthology of the Rising. 1936-1939* (1939).[16]

Francoist and Republican literature differ from each other in two important respects, however: the attitude that writers in both camps display towards the theme of revolution, and the greater diversity of political and social ideas to which Republican literature gave expression.

The literature of the *Movimiento* was counter-revolutionary: it defined itself in opposition to the political and social initiatives that had been introduced by the Republic. Kenwood points out that

> Fascist writers were aggressively antidemocratic, anti-*pueblo*, anti-Marxist, anti-Semitic, and anti-intellectual [...] They dismissed their opponents as unpatriotic descendants of the Encyclopaedists, as enemies of Spain's traditions, as disciples of Marx and Engels, as creators of the detested vanguards movements in art and literature, and as founders of the Second Republic.[17]

As one would expect, the situation was viewed very differently by Republican writers. By and large, their literature treats the conflict as a continuation of the social revolution inaugurated by the Second Republic in 1931. Lechner observes that

> the poetry written in the Republican camp is essentially the expression of a society living, with the utmost dedication and commitment, its social revolution and spiritual emancipation; a poetry in which fighting the forces captained by General Franco was only the most immediate and urgent theme.[18]

Therefore, although only some of the writers who supported the government were themselves Republicans, the consensus was that this regime provided the political framework through which

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[5] Kenwood, p. 27.

[6] Pro-Francoist writers included Ernesto Giménez Caballero, José María Pemán, Manuel Machado, and José María Salazar.

[7] Kenwood, p. 37.

[8] 'Hay que tener en cuenta, además, que la poesía que se escribió en el campo republicano es esencialmente la expresión de una sociedad que estaba viviendo, con la máxima dedicación y entrega, su revolución social y emancipación espiritual y en la que combatir las fuerzas capitaneadas por el general Franco no era más que la faceta más inmediata y urgente.' Lechner, p. 152.

the revolution would be accomplished. As Kenwood remarks, for these writers, 'the Spanish Republic becomes a symbol of the future socialist society in the process of construction.'[19]

To some extent writers were able to avoid the contentious war/revolution issue that so undermined the Republic's military campaign. There were several reasons why this was the case. Firstly, their literature tended to focus on themes such as the heroism of the Spanish people, the justness of their cause, and the revolutionary *ends* of the struggle (rather than the military *means* by which it would be accomplished), issues upon which there was a great deal of unanimity among all those who opposed the Francoist forces. A second important reason for the great degree of support among artists, writers and intellectuals for the Republic was that in the areas of culture and education (the spheres of activity in which they were most closely involved), the revolution inaugurated by the Republican regime in 1931 continued unabated during the first two years of the conflict. Kenwood notes that the period of the Civil War

> marks the most extraordinary educational movement in Spanish history. Writers diligently advertised the Republic's extensive campaign to eradicate illiteracy and promote culture. 'Cultural militias' taught more than one hundred thousand Spaniards to read and write; mobile libraries distributed thousands of books, papers, and periodicals in the trenches and in the hospitals; sound systems brought theatre, music, and poetry readings into the trenches; a multitude of publications were available to the people, and sought their contributions.[20]

With these kind of policies in operation there was little sense in which writers were 'betraying the revolution' by supporting the Popular Front government.

Critics frequently claim that writers on both sides presented the war in terms of simplistic binary oppositions. Kenwood, for example, suggests that the literature of the period was 'characterized by a pronounced Manicheism.' For Francoist and Republican authors

> the war became a battleground between Democracy and Fascism, Communism and Catholicism, Innovation and Tradition, Civilisation and Chaos. Sometimes the conflict was presented more universally, as a struggle between East and West, Good and Evil, Light and Darkness, Life and Death.[21]

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[19] Kenwood, p.31.

[20] Ibid. Whiston notes that the Republic's Education Minister, Jesús Hernández, 'work[ed] to bring about an authentic cultural revolution in Civil-War Republican Spain, mainly through a sustained drive against illiteracy and the creation of thousands of new schools'. Whiston, *Antonio Machado's Writings and the Spanish Civil War*, p.55.

[21] Kenwood, pp.30-1.

There were writers who represented the conflict in such reductive terms; taken as a whole, however, the literature of the civil war is a very complex and thought-provoking body of work, particularly so on the Republican side. As noted earlier, the Francoist war-effort was characterized by unified and hierarchical order of command. This unity was also a core value of the literature produced by the Movimento. Kenwood notes that Falangist poets rejected

> the fragmentation of aesthetic unity espoused by such artists as Joyce and Picasso [...] along with artistic nihilism, liberal democratic institutions, and individual freedom, all of which were replaced with discipline, hierarchy, and paternalistic authority. [22]

Because this literature was self-consciously authoritarian and hierarchical it was inevitable that it would view the conflict in terms of simple binary oppositions. We have seen, however, that the Republican war-effort was characterized by a *lack* of ideological unity and singleness of purpose. A corollary of this lack of authoritarianism in the military and political field was the emergence of an intellectually-challenging and heterogeneous body of writing which reflected the diversity of ideological beliefs that had caused such a broad spectrum of Spanish society to come to the defence of the Republic.

The manifesto published by *The Alliance of Anti-Fascist Intellectuals* (an organisation run by Alberti) in July 1936, shortly after the rising, is illustrative of the complex nature of Republican writers attitudes' towards issues raised by the conflict.

> Against this monstrous outbreak of fascism which has now achieved such frightening presence in Spain, we writers, artists, scientists, in short, men of intellectual pursuits, come together to defend culture in all its national and universal, traditional and constantly evolving values. We declare our total union, *our full and active identification with the people*, who now fight gloriously on the side of the Popular Front Government. By defending the true values of the intellect, they defend our human dignity and liberty, as they always have. Their independence heroically opens a path for the true continuation of our culture - which has always been 'of the people' - and for all of Spain's creative possibilities in the future.[23]

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[22] Ibid., p.35.

[23] 'Contra este monstruoso estallido del fascismo que tan espantosa evidencia ha logrado ahora en España, nosotros, escritores, artistas, investigadores científicos, hombres de actividad intelectual, en suma, agrupados para defender la cultura en todas sus valores nacionales y universales de tradición y creación constante, declaramos nuestra unión total, *nuestra identificación plena y activa con el pueblo*, que ahora lucha gloriosamente al lado del gobierno del Frente Popular defendiendo los verdaderos valores de la inteligencia al defender nuestra libertad y dignidad humanas, como siempre hizo, abriendo heroicamente paso, con su independencia, a la verdadera continuidad de nuestra cultura, que fue popular siempre, y a todas sus posibilidades creadoras de España en el porvenir.' Quoted in Lechner, pp.146-7. (As secretary of *The Alliance* it is highly likely that Alberti scripted this manifesto.)

The dynamic and inclusivist ethos espoused in this manifesto indicates that Republican literature cannot be differentiated from that produced by the *Movimiento* in terms of nationalist/internationalist, traditional/modern or even, as we will see, religious/secular binary oppositions. The difference is rather between a single, authoritarian and hierarchical ideology which *only* valued the national and the traditional, and a literature which sought to 'defend culture in *all its national and universal, traditional and constantly evolving values*.'

* * *

Alberti is a very interesting figure to consider in relation to this literature precisely because his work expresses the complex, at times contradictory, political and social values which the Republican literary-political movement as a whole sought to defend. Alberti was a communist who had become disillusioned with the Republic by 1932. Yet during the war he both supported the cause of the Popular Front Government in his literature and, through his involvement in organisations such as *The Alliance of Anti-Fascist Intellectuals* and the theatre group *New Scene* [Nueva escena], and his editorship of the literary periodical *The Blue Overalls* [*El mono azul*], he played a central role in promoting its cultural initiatives. His Civil War writings frequently represent the conflict as a revolution, but *for the most part* these texts suggest that this revolution can be achieved in and through the political framework provided by the Republic. In my analysis of these writings, I first concentrate on the author's poetic works, and then turn to a consideration of his dramatic output between 1936 and 1939.

Alberti's Civil War poems were collected together under the title *Capital of Glory* [*Capital de la gloria*] (1936-1938). If some of his earlier attempts at committed writing amount to little more than rhyming propaganda, this volume redresses the aesthetic balance and contains some very impressive work indeed. Lechner remarks that *Capital of Glory* 'contains some of the best poems written during this tragic phase of Spanish letters; an impressive book, that represents an

example of what committed poetry can become in the hands of a great poet: true art.'[24] The volume is especially impressive in terms of how it combines a deeply-committed political vision with a sense of the complexity of the issues that were raised by the war. This is particularly apparent in regard to the different ways in which Alberti represents the conflict (as an internecine conflict, a national war of liberation, a battle to restore the Republican government, a workers' revolution involving the international proletariat); and in relation to his treatment of themes such as violence, suffering, and death.

Several poems in *Capital of Glory* represent the Spanish Civil War as a proletariat revolution that transcends national boundaries. Such works often focus on the involvement of foreign volunteers in the Republican war-effort. 'You come from afar', Alberti apostrophises these soldiers in the opening lines of 'To the International Brigades'.

> But this distance,
> what is it to your blood, which sings across borders?
> The needful death names you every day,
> no matter what town, field or roads.
>
> Of this country, of another, of the great or small,
> of that which barely appears as a washed out colour on the maps,
> with the same roots holding a single dream,
> anonymous, scarcely speaking, you have come.[25]

The same internationalist emphasis recurs in the poems 'To General Kleber' and 'To Hans Beimler, Defender of Madrid'.[26] The latter work focuses on how Beimler's death-cry of 'Red Front!' continues to resound after he is killed, inspiring communists throughout Europe in their battle against Fascism. 'Red Front! Cried the hero', Alberti exclaims at the beginning of this poem.

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[24] 'contiene algunos de los mejores poemas que se escribieron en esta trágica etapa de las letras españolas; libro impresionante, que constituye un ejemplo de lo que puede ser la poesía comprometida en manos de un gran poeta: arte auténtico.' Lechner, p. 163.

[25] 'A las Brigadas Internacionales': 'Venís desde muy lejos ... Mas esta lejanía,/ ¿qué es para vuestra sangre, que canta sin fronteras?/ La necesaria muerte os nombra cada día,/ no importa en qué ciudades, campos o carreteras./ De este país, del otro, del grande, del pequeño,/ del que apenas si al mapa da un color desvaído,/ con las mismas raíces que tiene un mismo sueño,/ sencillamente anónimos y hablando habéis venido.' (406)

[26] General Emilio Kléber (the name of one of the ablest of the French Revolutionary Generals) was the *nom de guerre* of Lazar or Manfred Stern, leader of the first International Brigade to arrive in Spain in 1936. Hans Beimler died in the defence of Madrid in 1936. It has been alleged that he was killed by his communist comrades because he had disagreed with authorities in Moscow, but this was never proven. Certainly Alberti's poem makes no suggestion of any foul play. Thomas, pp. 459 and 488 respectively.

And Hans Beimler fell to earth.
The Spanish heard it,
his Germans heard it,
the French and Italians.[27]

The Nazis had refused to allow Biemler's corpse to be buried in Germany on account of his communist affiliations. In his poem, Alberti imagines Biemler's body firing the revolutionary spirit of the workers of Spain, France and Germany as it is carried by train through Europe to its final resting place in Moscow: 'Red Front! That Germany of the prisons hears it [...] Paris, Paris! Your workers/ singing, carry him on their shoulders [...] Red Front! To Moscow,/ to the Red Square [...] Alongside Lenin,/ there let him rest at peace.'[28]

Other poems in the collection represent the conflict in highly nationalistic terms: as a war of liberation against an enemy that threatens the independence of the Spanish motherland. In 'The First of May 1938 in Loyal Spain', a female peasant asks a number of fellow Spaniards as to how they intend to spend May Day 1938. 'My country is at war', reply her respondents:

In its skies
the wings of strange, thieving birds.
I will decorate with glory the flight
of republican planes.
[...]
Stubbornly
I will make the rifle speak that language
which will impel Spain to bravely
conquer its countryside anew. [29]

The combination of international and nationalistic interpretations of the conflict is also apparent in Alberti's Civil War drama, *Radio Seville* (1937), a short work satirizing the notorious war-

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[27] 'Al general Kleber'; 'A Hans Beimler, defensor de Madrid': '¡Frente Rojo!, dijo el héroe./ Y cayó en tierra Hans Beimler./ Lo oyeron los españoles,/ lo oyeron sus alemanes,/ franceses e italianos,' (408)

[28] '¡Frente Rojo! Que lo escuche/ la Alemania de las cárceles [...] ¡París, París! Tus obreros,/ cantando, en hombros lo traen, [...]¡Frente Rojo! Moscú, / por la plaza Roja [...] Junto a Lenin,/ allí, tranquilo, descanse.' (408)

[29] 'Primero de Mayo en la España leal de 1938': '- Mi país esta en guerra. Por su cielo,/ alas de extraños, pájaros ladrones./ Yo condecoraré de gloria el vuelo/ de los republicanos aviones. [...] - Mi país está en guerra. Tercamente/ haré hablar al fusil ese lenguaje/ que empuje a España valerosamente/ a conquistar de nuevo su paisaje.' (419) The importance of this patriotic theme is also apparent in works such as 'Madrid-Autumn' [Madrid-Otoño], 'Far from the War' [Lejos de la Guerra], 'From River to River' [De río a río], and 'To the New Colonel Juan Modesto Guilloto' [Al nuevo Colonel Juan Modesto Guilloto], poems which reveal Alberti's great attachment to the cities of Cádiz and Madrid.

time broadcasts made by the Francoist General Queipo de Llano. In this play, the leaders of Franco's *Movimiento* are described as 'rich-kid rebels [...] monarchical prostitutes,/ all the great idiocy of that loathsome Spain.'[30] At the same time, however, Alberti suggests that they are merely puppets under the control of German and Italian fascist masters: the Francoists are 'flogging Spain off for next to nothing!' a Republican soldier complains. Queipo de Llano is 'Germany's fifth pimp,/ his country's first pimp,/ Italy's tenth pimp./ Look, look', exclaims the soldier, 'and you'll see/ if it's possible that such a plague of drunken black pests/ might save our country!'[31]

The *Cantata of Heroes and the Fraternity of Peoples* [*Cantata de los héroes y la fraternidad de los pueblos*] (1938) was written in celebration of the contribution made by the volunteers of the International Brigades to the Republican war-effort. Unsurprisingly, therefore, it represents the conflict as part of a revolution which transcends purely national considerations. The character of Fraternity - a symbolic embodiment of the international proletariat - highlights this aspect of the war. 'I am the human Fraternity of all peoples', s/he announces.

> I am the Soviet Union. I am the voice of its wheat.
> I am the heart of millions of men.
> [...]
> I am Spanish America: the green voice of Mexico,
> of its slow Indians and its workers.
> I am Cuba black and white; the ordinary hands,
> the oppressed hands of all nations.[32]

As well as this internationalist emphasis, however, the *Cantata* also treats the war as a struggle for national liberation, *and* as an internecine conflict. At an early stage in the work, a female peasant representing a personified Spain exhorts her 'children' to save the country from foreign invaders: to free her from 'the thieves who desire my immortal laurels': 'I am Spain', she

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[30] 'señoritos facciosos [...] prostitutas monárquicas,/ toda la gran pandereta/ de esa estropajosa España'. Alberti, *Radio Seville*, rprt. in *El poeta en la calle,* p. 769.

[31] '¡Vendedores de España a tan poco precio!' (767); 'vergüenza de España!' (768); 'quinto cabrón de Alemania,/ primer cabrón de su tierra,/ décimo cabrón de Italia./ ¡Mirad, mirad y veréis/ si es posible que tal plaga/ de negras chinches beodas/ puedan salvar nuestra patria!' (769)

[32] 'Yo soy la Fraternidad humana de los pueblos. Yo soy la Unión Soviética. Soy la voz de sus trigos./ Yo soy el corazón de millones de hombres [...] Soy la América Hispana: la verde voz de México,/ la de sus lentos indios y los trabajadores./ Soy Cuba negra y blanca; las manos populares,/ las oprimadas manos de todas las naciones.' Alberti, *The Cantata,* rprt. in *El poeta en la calle*, p. 817. (Further references to this play are included parentically in the footnotes following the Spanish quotations.)

exclaims, 'here you have my divided body: on one side, imprisoned; on the other, open to the air and to glory [...] Son that drank courage from my breasts,/ loyal son, my children, come to me! Help me!'[33] Two soldiers immediately appear onstage in response to this appeal for aid, and Alberti uses these characters to introduce the theme of the war as an internecine conflict. 'Two soldiers run to you', the play's first Narrator tells Spain,

> but they are not both loyal.
> The first is a son of the people,
> and the other also, but he doesn't know it.
> The first, a flower of the Republic,
> a carnation of its liberties;
> the other, although a flower of its earth
> does not understand whose battle he's fighting. [34]

The fact that Alberti describes the first soldier here as 'a son of the people [and] a flower of the Republic' illustrates that the *Cantata* expresses his support for the Popular Front government. This support is a feature of many of his works. It is particularly evident in regard to the contentious 'war over revolution' issue.

The Republic's war strategy was most clearly manifested in terms of its attempts to dissolve the revolutionary militias scattered throughout the territory it controlled, and to replace them with the newly created Popular Front Army. Unlike the militias, this army conformed to a centralized and hierarchical structure. Its purpose was to ensure that anti-fascist forces throughout the Republic were fighting as part of a single organization.[35] The short, two-stanza

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[33] 'Yo soy España. [...] Aquí tenéis mi cuerpo dividido:/ un lado, preso; el otro, libre al honor y al aire [...]¡Hijo que de mis pechos bebiste la bravura,/ hijo leal, mis hijos, venid a mí! ¡Ayúdame!' (796-7). A similar character appears in *Numancia* (1937), a version of a play by Cervantes in which Spain takes the form of a female peasant and appeals to her audience to free her from foreign armies: 'I am the one and oppressed Spain', she exclaims. 'Is it possible that from antiquity I may be enslaved to foreign nations and not for the shortest time see my flags flying freely?' ['que soy la sola y oprimida España./ ¿Será posible que de antiguo sea/ esclava de naciones extranjeras,/ y que un mínimo tiempo yo no vea/ de libertad, tendidas mis banderas?'] *Numancia* (Madrid: Ediciones Turner, 1975), p. 24.

[34] Recitante 1: 'Corren a ti dos soldados,/ mas los dos no son leales./ El uno es hijo del pueblo,/ y el otro, aunque no lo sabe./ Uno, flor de la República,/ clavel de sus libertades;/ otro, aunque flor de su suelo/ ignora por quién combate.' (p. 797)

[35] Preston maintains that, from a purely military perspective, this was a necessary development. He points out that 'the spontaneous revolutionary militia' had suffered 'uninterrupted defeats at the hands of the Army of Africa [Franco's Moorish troops] in the early months of the war [...] It is a romantic view to see the creation of the Popular Army as a negative step', he contends. 'The defects of the militia system were glaringly obvious. Their attempt to maintain full democracy in the field had led to costly inefficiency. Vital hours would often be lost in discussions and deliberations amongst committee members. Discipline was almost impossible to enforce. There had been cases of militia men going home at the week-end while on active service.' Preston, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil* War, pp. 181-2.

work, 'I am of the Fifth Regiment', gives a clear indication that Alberti fully supported this development. In the poem he has a Spanish peasant express great pride in his membership of the new army[36]:

> This morning I leave my house,
> I leave the cattle and the village.
> Good health! Where are you going, tell me?
> I am going to the Fifth Regiment.
>
> To travel without water, on foot.
> Up mountains and open fields.
> Voices of glory and of triumph.
> - I am of the Fifth Regiment![37]

The problem of co-ordinating Republican resistance to the Francoist forces and implementing the 'war over revolution' stratagem was most acute in regard to relations between Madrid and the Catalonia. As Gabriel Jackson notes, the social revolution that occurred in many regions of the country following the insurrection 'was proportionally strongest in Catalonia, where about 70 per cent of all industry was collectivized between late July and the end of October [1936]'. The membership of organisations such as the CNT and the POUM in this region were extremely proud of the way they had defeated the insurgents without any assistance from Madrid. Furthermore, many Catalans desired political independence from the rest of Spain. One of the main reasons they had supported the emergence of the Republic in 1931was that it offered them greater autonomy. For these reasons, there was strong resistance in Catalonia to the idea that their social revolution should be postponed in order to aid the Madrid government in its attempts to defeat the rebels.

'Defence of Madrid, Defence of Cataluña', urges them to do just that.[38] Alberti is careful in this work not to offend the sensibilities of the Catalan people with authoritarian-sounding

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[36] 'Modelled on the Red Army of the Russian Civil War,' the Fifth Regiment was set up by the Communist Party and was widely regarded as the most capable force in the new army. In contrast to the democratic and spontaneous ethos of the revolutionary militias, this force conformed to the structure of the standard army, as expressed in mottoes such as 'Discipline, Hierarchy and Organisation'. Ibid., p. 182.

[37] 'Soy del Quinto regimiento!': 'Mañana dejo mi casa,/ dejo los bueyes y el pueblo./ ¡Salud! ¿A dónde vas, dime?/ - Voy al Quinto Regimiento!/ Caminar sin agua, a pie./ Monte arriba, campo abierto./ Voces de gloria y de triunfo. - ¡Soy del Quinto Regimiento!' (403)

[38] 'Defensa de Madrid; defensa de Cataluña' (403-6) Originally two separate poems, the first half of this poem addresses a Madrid-based readership, urging the citizens of the capital city to steel themselves in their fight against the rebels. It is in the latter half of the poem that he addresses the people of Catalonia.

injunctions to obey the central government. He begins his address with a eulogy on the beauty of the Catalan countryside, and in the closing line he reaffirms his support for their independence with the cry: 'Long live your independence!'[39] In the body of the poem, however, he focuses on the stark consequences for Catalonia should Madrid fall. 'Catalan liberty,/ understand, is being played for in Madrid' he advises his audience.[40] 'Catalan blood courses/ through the whole of Spain,/ singing to the sound of its language', but, Alberti warns,

> to continue singing
> the melody of which you dream,
> never forget, Cataluña,
> that the gaze of the enemy
> who wants to destroy Madrid
> is nearby, lying in wait.[41]

Like the previously discussed poems, and the *Cantata*, 'Defence of Madrid, Defence of Cataluña', provides an insight into the changes that took place in Alberti's attitude towards revolution during the civil war. In contrast to his literature of the 1932-6 period, these texts illustrate that his writings are now supportive of the Republican regime. Indeed, the political stance that he adopts in these works is antithetical to that expressed in earlier poems such as 'The Ballad of the Peasants of Zorita' and 'The Fight for the Earth', where he urged the Spanish peasantry to rise up against their oppressors *in defiance of* the republican authorities. The complexity of his thinking on contemporary events is also apparent in the way that he treats the conflict as both a national, or internecine conflict, and one whose central, proletarian objective, 'sings across borders', as in the poem 'To the International Brigades'.

Lechner notes that the poetry of the Spanish Civil War tended to concentrate on central episodes in the conflict. The most outstanding chapter of the conflict from both a military and literary perspective was undoubtedly the heroic defence of Madrid by the Republican forces. Having advanced rapidly from the south of the country following the 17 July Rising, the Francoist forces began their attacks on Madrid with a heavy bombing campaign in late October

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[39] '¡Viva vuestra independencia!' (406)

[40] 'La libertad catalana,/ ¡sabedlo!, en Madrid se juega'. (405)

[41] 'por toda la España entera,/ va la sangre catalana/ sonando al son de su lengua./ Mas para seguir sonando/ el son de lo que tú sueñas,/ nunca olvides, Cataluña,/ que a Madrid, cerca, lo acechan/ miradas del enemigo/ que darle muerte quisieran.' (405)

1936. The rebels fully expected to win a quick victory, as did the vast majority of the world's media. Radio Lisbon even broadcast a description of the caudillo entering the city on a white horse.[42] Most Republicans also believed that the city would fall. Preston remarks that 'an atmosphere of gloom prevailed within the city walls'.[43] On the 6 November the government fled to the city of Valencia, leaving General José Miaja, in charge of the city's defence. Miaja was initially furious at his appointment, 'supposing he had been selected for the unenviable task of surrendering the city'; however, this previously undistinguished commander soon 'took the lead in transforming a fatalistic and confused city into an impregnable redoubt', becoming in the process a central figure in the defence of the city.[44]

The Republican forces offered much more effective resistance than was expected. In military terms, this was largely due to the timely arrival of the International Brigades and 4000 volunteer anarchists into the city in early November, as well as the fact that the regular army had been boosted by great numbers of volunteers. Also significant, of course, was the fact that these soldiers knew that certain death awaited them at the hands of Franco's Army of Africa if they lost the battle of Madrid. Franco had told journalists that that he would destroy Madrid rather than leave it to Marxists, and for ten days – from the 8-18 November – the battle for Madrid continued without pause. On the 16 and 17 of November, in a supreme effort to break the will of the city, the caudillo embarked upon the experiment of trying to bomb the civilian population into surrender.[45] '2000 projectiles an hour were landing in the centre of the city' on the afternoon of 17 November. Franco had previously announced that he would not shell the upper middle-class districts of the city, but on the night of the 17th German bombers, coming over twelve at a time, dropped cargo after cargo of both explosives and incendiaries on the working class and more modest residential areas of the city.[46]

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[42] General Mola announced to the world's press that he would celebrate the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution (7 November) in the capital; and Franco already had lists of names drawn up of those to be arrested once he took possession of the city. In Jackson, p. 91 and Preston, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil War*, pp. 481 and 471.

[43] Preston, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil War*, p. 475.

[44] Ibid., p. 91

[45] Preston notes that 'the German officers of the new Condor Legion were interested to see the reaction of a civilian population to a carefully planned attempt to set fire to the city, quarter by quarter.' Ibid., p. 486.

[46] Jackson, p. 96-7.

Against enormous odds, the citizens of Madrid and the Republican forces managed to withstand these assaults. Their defence of the capital was characterized by an ethic of heroism and self-sacrifice that not only inspired the Republican war-effort as a whole, it became a legendary episode for resistance movements throughout the world. The rebel forces' assault on Madrid lasted for over two weeks, but in the face of such unexpected resistance, on the 23 November 1936, Franco's generals decided to abandon the policy of direct attack and instead attempted to encircle the city. The bombings and attacks continued during the two and a half year 'siege of Madrid', causing enormous suffering; but the city did not fall until the very end of the war, on the 28 March 1939.

The manner in which the extremely hard-pressed citizenry of the capital combined with the volunteers of the International Brigades, Buenaventura Durriti's anarchists, and the government's own Popular Army, to defeat Franco's attempt to take the capital was of enormous military and symbolic importance for the Republican war-effort. It quickly became *the* most popular theme in the Republican poetry of the civil war. From a literary-critical perspective, however, this episode of the conflict is also noteworthy on account of the extent to which literature and social reality seemed to *transect* with each other, and life itself take on a curious literary quality, during the heroic defence of the city.

This reciprocation was especially evident in regard to the theatrical quality of the Republic's military campaign in the capital. In the period leading up to the Francoist attacks, the streets of Madrid were emblazoned with banners and huge posters, and loudspeakers proclaiming heroic slogans such as 'Madrid will become the tomb of Fascism!' On the radio-waves, the communist activist, Dolores Ibarruri (La Pasionaria) was issuing her famously rousing speeches that urged the citizenry Madrid to resistance with mottoes such as 'It is better to die on your feet than live on your knees!' The arrival of the first units of the International Brigades into Madrid on the 7 November, just in time to save the capital, was also a hugely dramatic moment as Ibarruri recalls it. With the city reeling from the first of the rebel-attacks, she relates how, 'in

the silence heavy with threats, dangers and bloody surprises,' the citizens hiding in their houses began to hear

> a monotonous, rhythmic sound, the pounding of firm steps which grows louder, comes nearer [...] There is a moment of uncertainty, of indecision. [...] We hear a command given in a strange tongue cutting the air like a whiplash. Then we hear the first stanzas of a beloved hymn, accompanied by the rhythmic movement of the unknown marchers. The air fills with vibrant sounds and words, sending a trill down the spines of the people of Madrid.
> 'Good God!' is this a dream?' ask the women, sobbing. The men marching through the streets of besieged Madrid sing the International in French and Italian, in German and Polish, in Hungarian and Rumanian!'[47]

Carr notes that despite the very severe hardships endured by the citizens of Madrid during the war, there was a theatrical revival in the city which lasted until 1938.[48] Many of the plays that were performed in this period were a Spanish form of *agit-prop* theatre called Theatre of Urgency [teatro de urgencia], designed to instil a spirit of heroism among the citizens and troops in the city.[49] Such was the proximity of the war, however, that at times the distinction between the war-like events represented on-stage, and those outside the theatres wore very thin.

An instance of this arose during a performance of Alberti's adaptation of *The Siege of Numancia* (a seventeenth century drama by Cervantes) in the Madrid's Zarzuela theatre in 1937. In his prologue to the published version of this work, Alberti notes that Zarzuela theatre was 'a little more than two thousand metres from the rebel artillery' and that the play was performed 'beneath the continuous threat of the German and Italian planes.'[50] The play's director, María Teresa León, recalls the extraordinary manner in which the boundaries between the stage and the auditorium, and between the narrative of the play itself and events unfolding

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[47] Ibarriru, p. 252.

[48] Carr, *The Spanish Tragedy*, p. 220. Carr notes that 'on the 8 November , a critical day in the defence of Madrid' the Monumental cinema in the city was showing Eisenstein's *The Battleship Potemkin.* Ibid., p. 109. In her autobiography, Ibarruri maintains that another Soviet movie being shown at this time taught the Republican troops an important military lesson. In one of the early attacks on the city 'Six Italian tanks' headed towards the Cerro Blanco section of the city 'which was defended by a company of sailors. Days before, in the capital, the sailors had seen a Soviet movie 'The Sailors of Kronstadt' and had learned how to attack the tanks.' Ibarruri, p. 250.

[49] James McCarthy notes that 'militiamen serving in units on the Madrid front were encouraged to attend these plays, and special Sunday and festival performances were arranged for trade unionists whose work prevented their attendance during the week.' In James McCarthy, 'The Republican Theatre during the Spanish Civil War: Rafael Alberti's *Numancia*' in J.F. Arnott and Claude Schumacher (eds.) Vol. 5, No. 3 *Theatre Research International* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., Autumn 1980), p. 196.

[50] 'a poco más de dos mil metros de los cañones facciosos y bajo la continua amenaza de los aviones italianos y alemanes.' In Rafael Alberti, *Numancia* (Madrid: Ediciones Turner, 1975), p. 7.

outside the theatre, seemed to dissolve during one of its performances.

> There was a heroism in the auditorium as intense as that of the characters on-stage. All that one could hear and see was one cry, one battle, one heroic reason for living. Never was there a greater correspondence between an audience and a stage [...] Then came the applause ... We, the living and the dead, saluted the people of Madrid before us. The doors to the Zarzuela theatre were opened wide and for a moment everyone listened to the artillery battles, the aviation bombers ... and we exited towards the streets of Madrid.[51]

The heroism displayed by the citizenry and armies defending Madrid to resist the Fascists at whatever cost, are all celebrated in many of the poems in Alberti's *Capital of Glory*. The poems in this collection are particularly interesting, however, in terms of how the poet responds to 'realities of war' such as the huge amount of suffering and death occurring in the city, the destruction and terror instigated by the continual bombing and, of course, the feeling that the Republic was losing the conflict. We have seen that Alberti's poetry between 1932 and 1936 was extremely revolutionary; however, it was not until July 1936, and the huge military operation organized against his adopted city of Madrid, that he had any personal experience of warfare. It quickly became apparent to him that it was not at all like he imagined it would be in his poems. *Capital of Glory* reveals him struggling to come to terms with the awful realities of the conflict, and trying to make sense of the chaos and suffering he is witnessing.

'Madrid-Autumn', the opening poem in this collection, is one of Alberti's most impressive works. It was written during the intense bombing of the capital city by Franco's forces in late 1936. The opening stanza of this poem reveals how the sobering realities of violence, and the prospect of defeat, caused Alberti to question his role as an enthusiastic poet of the revolution.

> City of the darkest and most deliberate atrocities,
> whose nightly suffering makes fear bury itself
> wide-eyed in livid cellars,/ I should wish, furiously, yet impassively,
> to tear out my voice by its roots, but I cannot,
> that I might tread upon you so silently/ the spilt blood
> would bite my grief and my footstep without protest.[52]

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[51] 'Había un heroísmo en la sala tan atenta que correspondía a los personajes. Era todo un grito, un combate, una razón de vida heroica lo que escuchaba, lo que se veía. Nunca hubo mayor correspondencia entre una sala y un escenario. [...] Luego, llegaban los aplausos ... Saludábamos los vivos y los muertos al pueblo de Madrid que teníamos delante. Se abrían de par en par las puertas del Teatro del Zarzuela y todos un instante escuchábamos los duelos de la artillería, el bombardeo de la aviación ... y salíamos hacia las calles de Madrid.' In Popkin, p. 28.

[52] 'Madrid-Otoño': 'Ciudad de los más turbios siniestros provocados/ de la angustia nocturna que ordena hundirse al miedo en los sótanos lívidos con ojos desvelados,/ yo quisiera furiosa, pero impasiblemente/ arrancarme de cuajo la voz, pero no puedo,/ para pisarte toda tan silenciosamente, Que la sangre tirada/ mordiera, sin protesta, mi llanto y mi pisada.' (401) Translation by Havard, p. 223.

A great deal of critical analysis has focused on Alberti's desire here 'to tear out my voice by its roots'. This line is often interpreted as expressing a sense of anger and frustration with poetry, due perhaps to a belief that to express the pain of the war in poems implies that one is removed from that suffering. Pieter Wesseling, for example, maintains that 'Madrid as a cause demands that the poet merge completely with it and efface whatever capacities he may have to celebrate its grandeur. His inability to do so ('pero no puedo' [but I can't]) means that his ability to praise supposes a kind of distancing, an ability to see the horrific details of war in a meaningful perspective.'[53] In a similar reading, Havard suggests that this desire can be traced to the anti-individualism inherent in Marxist ideology: 'as a communist,' Havard writes, Alberti 'knows that mass suffering is not to be appropriated by an individual [...] His vain hope is to merge with the city's blood-spattered streets. Only an impersonal treatment will allow the collective body to listen unoffended, 'sin protesta' [without protest].'[54]

This important line from the poem can also be read as revealing a conflict within the poet between his commitment to the revolution, and his anger at the awful suffering it was causing. It appears that at – an instinctive level – Alberti wants to use poetry to express his rage at the 'atrocities' and 'nightly suffering' occurring in Madrid at this time; however, the Marxist in him knows that violence is an intrinsic part of revolution and, as such, the 'spilt blood' must be accepted as a part of the struggle to emancipate the Spanish working classes. *This* is why he feels it should not be 'protest[ed]' against. Alberti overcomes this dilemma. By the end of the poem is able to re-affirm his intention to use poetry to further the cause of the revolution: 'City' he exclaims in the final line, 'I want to help you to give birth to your day.'[55] The eight stanzas of poetry that precede this confident assertion provide an insight into the process of thought that enabled him to overcome his doubts regarding his role as a poet of the revolution.

'Madrid-Autumn' is a loosely structured poem that intersperses alexandrine quatrains with unrhymed lines of irregular length. This arrangement complements the overall intention of the work, which is to create the impression that the poet's thoughts on the war are occurring to him

[53] Wesseling, p. 64.
[54] Havard, p. 223.
[55] 'Ciudad, quiero ayudarte a dar a luz tu día.' (403)

spontaneously as he walks through the war-torn suburbs of the capital. The sense that the poet is moving through the streets of Madrid is apparent from the second stanza.

> In your uneven terrain and suburbs,
> city, in your wet and frozen outskirts,
> I tread dead leaves in trenches, puddles and quagmires.
> Stripped trees lean their branches/ over walls and fences
> where little windows stare unblinking
> at a fearsome sky of flames and explosions.[56]

Like so many of the poems in *Concerning the Angels* and *Sermons and Dwelling Places*, 'Madrid-Autumn' takes the form of a journey through a wasteland-like terrain in which the poet meditates on the meaning of the landscape that surrounds him. Much of what he describes has the same ordinary-yet-surreal quality of the earlier poems; most memorably, perhaps, a house blown open on one side that reveals a ordinary family situation within: 'a supper scene and the beds all made,/ a mute drama of empty clothes,/ with no one present.'[57] It is as though reality has actually taken on the dreamlike aspect that Spanish surrealists saw in it during the late 1920s. Furthermore, the broken-down commodities that the poet encounters on his walk through the city are imbued with the same kind of materio-mysticism that we saw in poems such as 'Elegies' and 'The Dead Angels'. The 'rickety sofas', trampled upon 'family portraits', 'empty suits', 'paintings', and 'discarded books'[58] that litter the streets of the capital are all seen as parts of 'a greater whole' – physical aspects of the apostrophised figure of Madrid itself:

> this canvas, this book, this anger that now
> tears from me the elegy I feel for you
> are drops of blood in your terrible dawn.[59]

We saw Havard suggest that Loyolan practices outlined in the *Spiritual Exercises* influenced Alberti's surrealist work of the 1920s in the sense that his poems 'seek transcendence via the object world, that is, through the mind's imaginative working upon objects, their attempt 'to

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[56] 'Por tus desnivelados terrenos y arrabales,/ ciudad, por tus lluviosas y ateridas afueras/ voy los hojas difuntas pisando entre trincheras,/ charcos y barrizales./ Los árboles acodan, desprovistos, las ramas/ por bardas y tapiales/ donde con ojos fijos espían las troneras/ un cielo temeroso de explosiones y llamas.' (401). Translation by Havard, with some changes. See Havard, 223-4.

[57] 'la escena/ del mantel y los lechos todavía ordenados,/ el drama silencioso de los trajes vacíos,/ sin nadie,' (401-2) Translation by Havard, p. 224.

[58] 'Estos libros tirados/ que la yerba arrasada recibe y no comprende,/ estos descoloridos sofás desvencijados [...] estos inesperados/ retratos familiares' (402)

[59] 'este cuadro, este libro, este furor que ahora/ me arranca lo que tienes para mí de elegía/ son pedazos de sangre de tu terrible aurora. (402) Translation by Havard, p. 226.

found meaning on matter and not on concept'.'[60] This 'inductive methodology' is again employed in 'Madrid-Autumn': in this work also, the poet seeks, and finds, a source of transcendence *within* the physical terrain of the city as it actually exists in the Autumn of 1936. In the sixth stanza, Alberti appeals to the

> City, city here and now,
> in your bowels of catastrophe and glory
> protect/ the handsome seed of your future life.
> Beneath the creaking dynamite of your skies
> is heard the birth of the new child of victory.
> Screaming and pushing the earth inaugurates it.[61]

In these lines the figure of Madrid is not apostrophised as an *other-worldly* spiritual essence; rather, the poet appeals to the 'bowels' of the city. It is here that a process of transformation is evolving; a process which he confidently asserts will issue in a 'future life [...] the birth of the new child of victory.'

A second sense in which religious patterns of thought underpin the process of transformation that the poet believes is taking place in Madrid relates to the manner in which Alberti represents the city as undergoing a crucifixion. The image of a suffering Madrid dripping blood as it slouches towards its 'terrible dawn' is only one of many images in the poem that bring to mind the figure of Jesus Christ. In the second stanza the 'little windows' of the houses destroyed by the Fascists' bombs are represented as 'eyes' gazing heavenward – like Christ on the cross – towards a 'fearful sky of explosions and flames.' Again like Christ, Madrid has been attacked at will by its enemies, and is now merely 'wood for the bombers', its 'avenues' reduced to 'rubble' and its 'suburbs in ruins'.[62] And in the fifth stanza we learn that the city has suffered wounds to its head and side: 'the brow of your grazed front raises itself/ your wounded ribs of tress and plains'.[63]

The effect of the Christ analogy, as well as the materio-mysticism elements in the poem, is that they enable Alberti to suggest that the city is being transformed, rather than destroyed. It is

[60] Havard, p.30. Havard is quoting Roland Barthes, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola* (Seuil, Paris, 1971).
[61] 'Ciudad, ciudad presente,/ guardas en tus entrañas de catástrofe y gloria/ el germen más hermoso de tu vida futura./ Bajo la dinamita de tus cielos, crujiente,/ se oye el nacer del nuevo hijo de la victoria./ Gritando y a empujones la tierra lo inaugura.' (402)
[62] 'Capital ya madura para los bombardeos,/ avenidas de escombros y barrios en ruinas,' (401)
[63] 'la frente de tu frente se alza tiroteada, / tus costados de árboles y llanuras, heridos' (402)

noteworthy that, in the poet's view, this transformation will not change the identity or essence of Madrid, rather (as in the Christian concept of the resurrection after death) it will allow the city's true identity to finally emerge. Much of what Alberti focuses on during his walk through the city highlights the destruction of what are – from a Marxist perspective – typically bourgeois artefacts and commodities: suits, family portraits, rickety sofas etc. By focusing on such objects, rather than on human suffering, Alberti is able to create a scenario whereby he can even welcome the destruction being wrought on the city. As in Pearse's *The Sovereign People*, destruction is represented as a form of creation. In stanza six Alberti insists that Madrid is 'More visible than ever before'. As its bourgeois features were being annihilated, the proletarian 'heart' of the city was becoming increasingly exposed: 'but they will never seal your heart', the speaker insists, 'even though mountains of rubble stop its pulse.'[64]

In this way, Alberti manages to resolve the dilemma he raises in the poem's opening stanza: how to voice his horror of war and still remain true to the revolution. Alberti discovers that he can give full expression to the suffering caused by the revolution without raising doubts about his commitment to the Communist cause because – like Christ on the cross – that suffering is being viewed in the context of birth rather than death. Madrid is at one and the same time dying and being re-born into a more authentic mode of existence.

The notion that death, suffering and destruction are simultaneously evil, yet necessary, and even positive experiences, occurs in many of the poems in *Capital of Glory*. In 'To General Kleber' Alberti again represents the physical terrain of Madrid as a sentient being and laments the terrible effects of the war on its 'body', as well as its inhabitants:

> that which was a man, is now cold bone;
> that which was a field, a desolate wound,
> and a vertiginous tomb the river.[65]

These deathly images are not treated pessimistically by the poet. Rather, once again, the awful effects of the conflict are viewed the context of 'revolutionary' change: 'the earth', quite literally, 'wants *to turn* another way'; and as in 'Madrid-Autumn', Alberti represents this

[64] 'Más que nunca mirada [...] pero tu corazón no lo taparán nunca muerto,/ aunque montes de escombros le paren sus latidos.' (402)

[65] 'Al general Kleber': 'lo que era un hombre, ser hueco frío;/ lo que era un campo, una desierta herida,/ y una vertiginosa tumba el río.' (407).

transformation in terms of a process of birth:

> It is the moment in which everything changes,
> in which horrified and stunned
> the earth wants to turn another way.
>
> It pains us, this pushing, the superhuman
> pressure that our bones do not refuse
> in order to hasten in the morning.[66]

The theme of death being transcended by means of a fecund earth also arises in 'The Peasants' and 'Anniversary'. The former work celebrates the commitment of 'men from the countryside' who came to Madrid 'to kill death, in order to win life.'[67] With faces the 'colour of bark', their jackets smelling of 'wet lambs' and their boots of 'manure and bogs', Alberti likens these men to 'immense seeds/ to be sown in the deep furrows of the trenches.'[68] In 'Anniversary (To the Soldiers of the Red Army)' he maintains that he can feel the dead soldiers of the Red Army 'sprout forth from the broken terrain of the earth/ with the same simple purpose as the wheat.'[69]

The notion of the regenerative power of Madrid's terrain is perhaps most forcefully presented in the poem, 'You Did Not Fall'. In each of this poem's five stanzas the speaker reiterates his belief that the fallen Republican soldiers have overcome death. In the opening stanza it is their blood which revitalizes the parched land of the capital.

> Dead to the sun, to the cold, to the rain, to the ice,
> alongside the huge graves which the artillery opens,
> or on the grass which from pure exhaustion
> and at the sound of your blood turns to music![70]

In the second stanza he again employs the image of soldiers' 'young bodies' as the 'seed of the furrows' that the war has opened for them.[71] He then returns to the idea of their imminent rebirth:

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[66] 'Es el momento en que se cambia todo,/ en que conmocionada y conmovida/ quire girar la tierra de otro modo./ Nos duele su empujar, la sobrehumana/ presión que nuestros huesos no rehuyen/ para precipitarle la mañana'.(407)

[67] 'Los campesinos': 'los hombres del campo/ [...] de sol a sol trabajan en la nueva costumbre/ de matar a la muerte, para ganar la vida.' (410)

[68] 'Se ven marchando duros, color de la corteza/ [...] Huelen los capotones a corderos mojados/ [...] uncido a los estiércoles y fangales pegados/ en las cansinas botas más rígidas que patas/ [...] van los hombres del campo como inmensas simientes/ a sembrarse en los hondos surcos de las trincheras.' (410)

[69] 'Anniversario (*A los soldados del Ejército Rojo*)': 'soldados [...] que ahora siento en mi patria/ brotar de los terrones partidos de la tierra/ con la misma razón sencilla de los trigos.' (416)

[70] 'Vosotros no caísteis': '¡Muertos al sol, al frío, a la lluvia, a la helada,/ junto a los grandes hoyos que abre la artillería,/ o bien sobre la yerba que de puro delgada/ y al son de vuestra sangre se vuelve melodía!' (411)

Your birth can be heard, your slow toiling,
your renewed pushing beneath the hard cap
of the soil which giving you the form of a stalk
smells in the flower of the wheat its new youth.[72]

'Who said that you are dead?' the poet demands in the poem's final lines, 'You are not the dead, you are the new generation.'[73]

More than any other poem in *Capital of Glory*, '18 of July' represents the civil war as a highly ambivalent 'moment' in Spanish history: a time of horrifying carnage and destruction, but one which also contains the 'seed' of a new and more humane way of life. One of his most difficult and controversial works, the title-date probably refers to the day that the rising took place, but the poet may have had in mind the day *after* the rising occurred, a date which saw workers in many towns overpower the rebels.[74] In either case, the poem's sub-title '*(1937. First anniversary of the response of the Spanish people to Franco)*' indicates that, in this work, Alberti is primarily interested in the spontaneous and *revolutionary* manner in which the

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[71] 'Siembra de cuerpos jóvenes, [...] semilla de los surcos que la guerra os abriera.' (411)

[72] 'Se oye vuestro nacer, vuestra lenta fatiga,/ vuestro empujar de nuevo bajo la tapa dura/ de la tierra que al daros la forma de una espiga/ siente en la flor del trigo su juventud futura.' (411)

[73] '¿Quién dijo que estáis muertos? [...] No sois la muerte, sois las nuevas juventudes.' (411) The notion of soldiers surviving the experience of death is a motif in much Republican Civil War literature. In the final stanza of 'The Executed One'[El fusilado] (1936) by Vicente Aleixandre, the speaker exclaims that José Lorente Granero, the executed soldier of the poem's title 'did not die. Look at him!/ Returned to life; he has not died!/ He did not die; just as/ the people will never die!' [José no murió ¡Miradlo!/ ¡Resucitado; no ha muerto!/ ¡Que no murió; como no/ morirá jamás el pueblo!] Caudet, p. 76. In 'Mother Spain' [Madre España], Miguel Hernández, like Alberti, treats the physical terrain as capable of re-engendering life in dead soldiers: 'To say mother is to say land that has given birth to me;/ is to say to the dead: brothers, rise up;/ is to feel in one's mouth and to hear beneath the ground/ blood.' [Decir madre es decir tierra que me ha parido;/ es decir a los muertos: hermanos, levantarse;/ es sentir en la boca y escuchar bajo el suelo/ sangre.] Agustín Sánchez *et al* (eds.) *Miguel Hernández – Poesía I* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1992), p. 679. The idea of the Spanish earth as a mother-figure to Republicans also occurs in Max Aub's civil-war drama *Pedro López García.* In this work (a modern *auto-sacramental*), a figure called The Land [La Tierra] presents herself as 'Your mother' [tu madre] to the play's central character, a peasant who is afraid to join the Republican war-effort. 'Have no fear of death', she advises her 'son'. 'When you die, you only disappear to fuse yourself with my own being. To die is nothing, a return to what you were.' [No tengas miedo de morir. Cuando mueras no harás sino desaparecer para confundirte conmigo misma. Morir es nada, volver a ser lo que fuiste.] Max Aub, 'Pedro López García' in *Hora de España – revista mensual*, XIX (July 1938), in *Hora de España – revista mensual*, vol IV (Glashütten im Taunas: Verlag Detlev Auvermann KG, 1972), p.389-90.

[74] '18 de Julio (1937. Primer aniversario de la repuesta/ del pueblo español a Franco)' (414) The rising was scheduled to take place on the 18th July throughout Spain. In Morocco it was moved forward to the 17th because loyal troops were about to arrest plotters in the city of Melilla. Preston notes that 'the plotters had not foreseen that their rising would turn into a long civil war [but] they had not counted on the strength of working class resistance. The Government finally agreed to arm the workers on the 19 July. Preston notes that this decision was 'crucial in the defeat of the rebellion in many places.' Preston, pp. 74 and 81. By the 20th July, the workers in Spain's two major cities, Barcelona and Madrid, had defeated the rebels. It is to these events that Alberti is referring in his poem.

workers of Spain responded to the military coup. In the opening stanza, he describes the date of the coup as

> Daybreak and sunset, sunrise and twilight
> death-date and bright birth,
> this day, immense day.
> Convulsed, blind, fearfully,
> in horror, in turmoil,
> Spain gives birth to that which she always wanted.[75]

The suggestive final line of this stanza is the first indication that in this work Alberti views the threat posed to the Republic by the rising of the 18th of July in a positive light. The following stanza confirms our sense that he is indeed welcoming the insurrection as an opportunity to install a more left-wing administration. In this stanza the poet appears to liken the Republican regime to a tree which - despite the appearance of success - was doomed to fail from the outset.

> A tree, its roots already woodworm,
> imposes Spring, exciting in its branches
> the illusion of blossoms and new arms.
> The earth quakes as it crumbles;
> as it tries to enter its flames.
> Dying, from the top into a thousand pieces.[76]

If the image of the rootless 'tree' is indeed intended to represent the Republic, this makes '18 of July' only one of two texts in the entire oeuvre of Alberti's Civil War writings where he welcomes the fact that the rebellion has undermined the Popular Front government.[77] In the poem's remaining three stanzas he celebrates the fact that the tree's collapse has exposed 'the insects,/ the maggots, the embittered larva,/ the odious, the vile, and the degraded,/ the skins of venomous men,' that were nurtured and protected by the Republic even as they fed at its roots. These parasites (presumably right-wing politicians such as Gil Robles, Calvo Sotelo and Alejandro Lerroux) are now being consumed 'in a tumult of fire, pure/ blood y precious lives,' a 'tumult' which is 'sow[ing] the star of a future light.'[78] Once again, we see Alberti presenting

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[75] 'Alba y ocaso, aurora y sol poniente/ fecha mortal y claro alumbramiento,/ este día, inmenso día./ Convulsa, ciega, temerariamente,/ en un horror, en un sacudimiento,/ alumbra España lo que al fin quería.' (414)

[76] 'Un árbol, las raíces ya carcoma,/ que impone verdecer dando a sus ramas/ apariencia de flor y nuevos brazos,/ descuajando la tierra se desploma,/ agrietándola intenta entrar sus llamas,/ muriéndose de copa en mil pedazos.' (414)

[77] The other text is the 1938-9 drama, *Any Moment Now* [De un momento a otro], which is discussed at a later stage in this chapter.

[78] '¡Gran día, inmenso día! Los insectos,/ los gusanos, las larvas, rencorosas,/ los infames, los viles, los abyectos,/ las pieles de los hombres venenosas,/ en una confusión de fuego y pura/ sangre y vida preciosas,/ siembran la estrella de la luz futura.' (414)

the moment of revolution as one which contains elements of both catastrophe and glory. The death and destruction caused by the conflict will have a positive side, he insists, an idea which he re-emphasises in the final lines of the poem.

> [Spain's]entrails writhe in such a manner,
> that that which is going to be born is already visible:
> 18 of July: New Era.[79]

Taken in conjunction with the previously discussed poems, '18 of July' further illustrates the diverse and at times contradictory ways in which Alberti represented the Spanish Civil War. The fact that some of the political opinions that gain expression in his writing are incompatible with each other should not be seen as a negative feature of his literature. Poems such as '18 of July' are not evidence that his support for the Republic was merely a politically expediency, and that behind this position Alberti always remained a convinced communist. There is no question but that he was a communist rather than a republican by political conviction; but there was nothing unusual in this. As we have seen, republicans constituted a relatively small minority of the wide range of political forces that came to the defence of the regime in 1936. Unlike the *Movimiento*, however, the Republic did not seek to eradicate discussion and disagreement in favour of a homogenous culture that was constituted around 'incontestable' ideas such as Spain being synonymous with hierarchy, unity and Catholicism. In the Republician scheme, the interests of the nation could only be ascertained by means of a continual process of discussion and debate; one which - if it was working - would frequently give rise to contradictory political concepts and positions. If Alberti's writings sometimes express incompatible ideas, this attests to the fact, firstly, that his work expresses *a process of thought* rather than a rigid ideological position; and secondly, it represents in microcosm the dynamism and heterogeneity espoused by the Republican regime as a whole.

By the Spring of 1938, Alberti's ability to present suffering and death as part of a wider, optimistic revolutionary narrative began to falter. In 'April 1938' and 'Autumn and the Ebro' the theme of seasonal change and a fecund earth is no longer being used to reinforce the idea that Republican setbacks will eventually result in victory and a transfigured way of life. In the former work, the sight of the earth's regenerative power is greeted with undisguised incredulity: 'You again?' the poet exclaims to the aspostrophized figure of Spring in the poem's opening lines,

[79] 'Se retuerce su entraña en tal manera,/ que lo que va a parir ya está en la aurora:/ 18 de julio: Nueva Era.' (414)

but this coming
strikes me as quite impossible,
rising and renewing
during such terrible upheaval[80]

Whereas in his earlier works Alberti could conjure up the most outrageous images of the earth giving birth to human life, by the Spring of 1938 he greets the sight of a few flowers breaking through soil with disbelief.

You again, placing flowers
above the improvised tomb,
above the sod of the trench

and that appearance of colours
in this bloodied land?
You again, Spring?[81]

In 'Autumn and the Ebro'[82] the conflict is represented as opposed to the 'narrative' of the seasonal change. The suffering it brings are no longer viewed as necessary elements in a painful process of transformation. Instead, the war is literally 'insensible' to all forms of life.

Autumn, once. The war carries on, cold,
insensible to the periodic descent of the leaves.
Like the man on the Ebro beneath the artillery,
the desolate trunks alongside the red waters.[83]

No longer being welcomed as a revolution, therefore, the conflict is recognized for what it is: just another 'war' which holds out no promise of a transfigured existence to compensate for all the death and suffering it is causing. Earlier poems frequently ended by anticipating a glorious new 'dawn' or 'Era' in Spanish life. When Alberti tries to look forward in time at the end of this work, however, the most optimistic image he can offer is one of hibernation rather than re-birth. Nature (once again represented by her trees), the republican soldiers camped on the Ebro,

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[80] 'Abril, 1938': '¿Otra vez tú, si esta venida/ más que imposible me parece,/ puesto que sube y reverdece/ en tan tremenda sacudida?' (417)

[81] '¿Otra vez tú poniendo flores/ sobre la tumba improvisada,/ sobre el terrón de la trinchera/ y esa apariencia de colores/ en esta patria ensangrentada?/ ¿Otra vez tú, la Primavera?' (417-8)

[82] 'El otoño y el Ebro'. The assault across the river Ebro in July 1938 was the Republic's last major offensive of the war and involved some 80,000 troops. As in so many of their previous campaigns the Popular Army made initial advances but could not hold on to their territorial gains. Preston notes that Franco could have contained the Republican advance and moved against a near helpless Barcelona. Instead, he called up 40,000 fresh troops armed with new German equipment and turned Gandesa into 'the graveyard of the Republican army'. By mid-November, at horrendous cost in casualties, the Francoists had pushed the Republicans out of the territory captured in July. The Republic's 'last despairing effort had seen the Nationalists gain a decisive victory.' Preston, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil War,* pp. 207-9.

and the poet himself, all strip themselves down to the bare minimum they need to survive the 'winter'.

> I watch the leaves, I watch how the land
> is temporally denuded of its beloved forest
> and I see how the man of this Spain feels,
> like the trees, firm, whether dressed or naked.
>
> Autumn, again. Later, winter. So be it.
> Let the tree's clothes fall, and let the sun not remind us.
> Yet like their trunks, the man in battle,
> withered, yellow, cold, but underneath, green.[84]

The language of this poem parallels the sparse and desolate landscape Alberti is describing: like the bare trees that line the Ebro, his words are incapable of offering the Republican soldiers emotional protection and provide only the slimmest amount of hope for the future. It is as though the poet's belief in the power of words to materially effect the course of the Revolution is deserting him at the same moment as the military campaign is finally being lost.

The idea that poetry, and indeed language as a whole, have no useful role to play in the war is the central theme of one of Alberti's most impressive works, 'Nocturne'. 'When one suffers so much without sleep', the poet remarks in the opening stanza of this work,

> and blood only carries the sound of rage,
> and one trembles to the core with a wakening hate
> and the marrow burns for revenge,
> then words are no use: they're just words.
>
> Bullets. Bullets.[85]

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[83] 'El otoño, una vez. Sigue la guerra, fría,/ insensible al periódico descenso de las hojas./ Como el hombre del Ebro bajo la artillería,/ los despoblados troncos junto a las aguas rojas.' (421)

[84] 'Miro las hojas, miro cuán provisionalmente/ se desnuda la tierra del bosque más querido/ y de qué modo el hombre de esta España se siente,/ como los troncos, firme, ya desnudo o vestido./ El otoño, otra vez. Luego, el invierno. Sea./ Caiga el traje del árbol, el sol no nos recuerde./ Pero como los troncos, el hombre en la pelea,/ seco, amarillo, frío, mas por debajo, verde.' (421)

[85] 'Nocturno': 'Cuando tanto se sufre sin sueño y por la sangre/ se escucha que transita solamente la rabia,/ que en los tuétanos tiembla despabilado el odio/ y en las medulas arde continua la venganza,/ las palabras entonces no sirven: son palabras./ Balas. Balas.' (420)

This blunt refrain, 'Bullets. Bullets', closes each of the poem's three stanzas, reinforcing our sense that the war is drowning out all other sounds, and so words are futile.

> Manifestos, articles, commentaries, speeches,
> lost smoke, imprinted clouds,
> what a waste of paper the wind has to sweep away,
> what sad news the water has to erase!
>
> Bullets. Bullets.[86]

In the opening stanza of 'Madrid-Autumn' we saw Alberti express his desire to remain silent in the face of the havoc and carnage caused by the war: to 'tear out [his] voice by its roots' in order to 'tread upon' the city 'so silently/ the split blood would bite my grief and my footstep without protest.' In the final stanza of 'Nocturne' he expresses a contrary urge:

> Now I suffer the poverty, the meanness, the grief,
> the wretchedness and death of one who from
> the depths of his language would have
> cried out that which he cannot, and is silent.
>
> Bullets. Bullets.
>
> Tonight, I feel words are mortally wounded.[87]

It is not at all clear what it is that Alberti feels he should have 'cried out' in this work. The most obvious interpretation is that he believes he should have voiced his horror at the destruction caused by the war more vigorously than he did. If he now feels that the conflict made words redundant though, why does he think that it would have made any difference *what* he said at any time in the conflict? And why does the verb 'cannot' take the form of the present rather than the past tense here? Is there something that Alberti believes he *still* cannot express? Does he still feel bound to write as an enthusiastic 'poet of the revolution' perhaps? But the whole of 'Nocturne' conveys deeply pessimistic, anti-war sentiments; therefore this reading makes little sense of the poem either: on the one hand the poet thinks words are futile, 'mortally wounded'; on the other, he feels he has not said enough. This paradox is perhaps best understood as simply an honest and very moving expression of the conflicts and dilemmas that the experience of war has evoked in the poet himself. As in this poem's companion-piece,

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[86] 'Manifiestos, artículos, comentarios, discursos,/ humaredas perdidas, neblinas estampadas,/ ¡ qué dolor de papeles que ha de barrer el viento,/ qué tristeza de tinta que ha de borrar el agua!/ Balas. Balas.' (420)

[87] 'Ahora sufro lo pobre, lo mezquino, lo triste,/ lo desgraciado y muerto que tiene una garganta/ cuando desde el abismo de su idioma quisiera/ gritar lo que no puede por imposible, y calla./ Balas. Balas./ Siento esta noche heridas de muerte las palabras.' (420)

'Madrid-Autumn', we see that Alberti produces his finest work when, in a single poem he somehow manages to give expression to the great range of competing thoughts and conflicting emotions that assail him.

Alun Kenwood points out that, although 'less voluminous than poetry', drama was also an important element in Republican cultural and educational activities during the war. He notes that shortly after the July 1936 army rising the Government established

> the *Teatro de Arte y Propaganda* (Theatre of Art and Propaganda) to create a new proletarian theatre relevant to the times, which became known as the 'theatre of urgency.' Agitprop theatre groups, such as *Guerrillas teatrales* (Guerrillas of the Theater), flourished, and brought theater to a new, wider audience, including the soldiers at the front. Using small casts and simple scenery, these groups performed short, powerful, didactic, and often satirical plays, which communicated quickly and directly with the audience.[88]

Alberti's trips to Germany and Russia in the early 1930s had taught him much in regard to modern developments in agitprop theatre and he was a central figure in the Government's initiatives in this area during the war. It was Alberti, in fact, who coined the phrase theatre of urgency [*teatro de urgencia*] to describe the kind of productions put on by the Republic's newly-formed theatre companies.[89]

In September 1938 he helped to found *Nueva Escena* [New Scene], a theatre group set up by the *Alliance of Anti-Fascist Intellectuals* in conjunction with the Government Council for the Performing Arts to put on plays 'of contemporary significance or works that will produce a

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[88] Kenwood, pp.27-8. As well as several works by Alberti (discussed below), Kenwood cites Max Aub's *Pedro López García*; Herrera Petere's *El Rifle* (The Rifle); Miguel Hernández's *El refugiado* (The Refuge); and Germán Bleiberg's *Sombras de héroes* (Shadows of Heroes), as 'good examples of this kind of theater.'

[89] Such groups must never exceed fifteen members, he advised. They must perform their work wherever a suitable location and audience existed: 'in the open air, on make-shift stages, in small and large halls, always reducing their productions to the bare essentials [...] Scenery is unnecessary. A curtain or piece of furniture being sufficient to identify the scene. What is indispensable in *teatro de urgencia* is that the work is performed with belief, with confidence in the purpose and justness of our cause.' ['¿Cómo funciona un grupo de teatro de urgencia? El Consejo Nacional propone que estos grupos no pasen nunca de quince personas [...] Actuarán al aire libre, sobre tabladillos, en salas pequeñas o grandes, reduciendo siempre al mínimo sus necesidades [...] No son necesarias decoraciones. Basta con que una cortina, un bastidor o un mueble indiquen la escena. Lo que es indispensable para este teatro de urgencia es hacerlo con fe, con seguridad en la razón y justicia de nuestra causa.'] Alberti. 'Preface to Teatro de urgencia', in Monleón, pp. 184-5.

salutary influence on the people in the present circumstance.'[90] As secretary of the Alliance and editor of *El Mono Azul* Alberti was closely involved in the production and publication of plays by other authors, but he also wrote a number of his own plays in the 1936-39 period: *Radio Sevilla* and the *Cantata of the Heroes and the Fraternity of Peoples* (referred to earlier in this chapter), as well as two full-length dramatic works, *Numancia* (1937) and *Any Moment Now* [*De un momento a otro*] (1938-9). My analysis here will focus on the latter two plays.

Kenwood notes that the writers of the *Movimiento* 'also saw the need for a new theater to promote the communion of collective ideas'. He maintains that their work can be distinguished from that produced in the Republican camp in terms of its treatment of the past and religion: the dramatists of the *Movimento* 'looked to the past for inspiration', he claims. 'They wanted a theater based on tradition that would help maintain a sense of Spanish honour, and pride in Spain's theology and Catholicism.' Republicans, on the other hand, were concerned with the present and the future. They used 'religious imagery and dogma to ironic effect', to attack 'the power, exploitation, and hypocrisy of the Church.'[91]

We have seen that Alberti's poetry in the 1930-39 period does, as critics such as Kenwood suggest, focus on contemporary historical events: the fall of the Monarchy ('The Civic Elegy'), the coming of the Republic ('The Ballad of Fermín Galán'), the Revolution in Asturias (the poems in *The Explosive Donkey*), and, during the Civil War, the siege of Madrid (the poems in *Capital of Glory*). The same cannot be said of his drama, however. Spanish history is of central importance to his plays throughout the 1930-39 period. It is in terms primarily of *form* that this issue impacts on his work. Alberti's first full-length play, *The Uninhabited Man*, is a modern *auto sacramental*, a form of theatre which audiences would have associated with Spain's Golden-Age drama. His next play, *Fermín Galán* is also based on a traditional form of Spanish street-theatre: the *romance de ciego*. Both of these works have in common the theme of the transformation of the Self (at the individual and communal levels). Furthermore, they are highly

[90] This was how the group was described at its inception in *El Mono Azul*, on 15 September, 1936.
[91] Kenwood, p. 28 Kenwood qualifies these generalisations by pointing out that Republican literature 'exalt[s] the Christian values of love, equality, and brotherhood.' Ibid., p. 36.

didactic plays: they not only relate their *characters'* attempts to change, they show their author using drama to challenge the manner in which his audiences think of themselves and their nation. History (Spain's artistic and cultural heritage) is central to this intention: it represents 'the known', or familiar, through which the dramatist introduces 'new' and unfamiliar ideas. [92]

Because of the close association between the *auto sacramental* and the liturgy of the Catholic Church, *The Uninhabited Man* can be said to use the 'familiar' in a religious as well as an artistic sense. The main protagonist in this pessimistic work, Man, ultimately fails in his attempts at self-transformation. Nevertheless however, the fact that Alberti had turned to the form of the *auto sacramental* suggests that he still viewed religion as providing the 'psychological framework' through which radical change in the Self was to be achieved (if, indeed, it was possible at all): it is because *God* fails that Man fails in this play. In *The Uninhabited Man*, therefore, Alberti employs a traditional religious art-form to introduce new, existentialist, ideas to his native audience. A similar point applies in relation to the author's first 'social' play, *Fermín Galán*: despite the fact that this is in many ways an extremely anti-Catholic work, the transformation which its central character inspires in Spanish society occurs within a religious framework: it is by means of Galán's failed rebellion and his Christ-like death that Spain makes the change from a monarchy into a republic.

The theme of transformation is also a key theme in Alberti's Civil War drama.[93] As noted earlier, *Numancia*, his most popular Civil War drama, is an adaptation of a play by Cervantes. In

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[92] We have seen that 'the familiar' also takes the form of Spanish Catholicism in the poetic collections *Concerning the Angels* and *Sermons and Dwelling Places*. Religion was a major cause of the crisis that Alberti underwent in the late 1920s, but both of these volumes illustrate that it was also *the means* by which he overcame that crisis: the confident poetic voice that emerges in *Sermons and Dwelling Places* is at one and the same time based upon a rejection of religious beliefs and upon a prophetic and messiah-like understanding of the nature of the poet's self.

[93] Alberti was not impressed with the manner in which authors had tackled this theme in their work during the war. In the *Theatrical Review* of February 1938 he remarks that unlike 'the thousands of ballads and poems which in pamphlets, magazines and recitals make their way through the trenches, the streets, places of work and rest [...] the [theatrical] pieces that are performed by various theatrical groups, for brigades and associations, as well as being complicated and poorly written in general, reflect very little on the war, *the transformation, the new creative phase of our people*.' (my italics) in Monleón, p. 186.

turning to this work, Alberti was not only making use of Spain's artistic heritage, however. Cervantes's play was inspired by the ten-year siege of this town by the forces of the Roman Empire. The play was a great success with contemporary audiences, many of whom would have been familiar with the tale it recounts.[94] The siege had gained a place in the Spanish folk memory, firstly, on account of the length of time that the town had held out against the vastly superior forces of the Roman Empire, and secondly, on account of the way that it had ended: faced with the fact that they could no longer resist, the people of Numancia torched their town and committed mass suicide to avoid submitting to the enemy. Understandably, Alberti is keen to downplay both these aspects of the siege. In his prologue he remarks that

> the very grave military situation faced by that tiny Celtiberian town, its long and tenacious fight against the Roman forces that lasted over ten years, [and] the heroic and glorious end of all its inhabitants far from provides us with an exact parallel with our republican capital.[95]

He also expresses his confidence here that 'the soldiers of our Popular Army, the heroic townspeople and defenders of Madrid will be able to distinguish between the 'historical and transcendent dimensions' of the play.[96] For Alberti the 'historical' aspects of the siege of Numancia were the fact that it lasted over ten years and ended in a 'heroic and glorious' act of self-destruction. He intended to emphasize instead what he saw as its 'transcendent dimensions', namely, the heroic spirit of defiance that animated the citizenry of both towns. In the 'moral and spiritual resistance of today's Madrileños', he maintains, 'the same grandeur and pride of the Numancian soul is predominant.'[97]

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[94] McCarthy notes that 'the production was well received by both the press and the public and remained in the repertoire of the Teatro de Arte y Propaganda until March 1938.' McCarthy, p. 203.

[95] 'la gravísima situacíon militar de aquella diminuta ciudad celtíbera, su larga y tenaz lucha con las huestes romanas durante más de una decena de años, el heroísmo y glorioso final de todos sus habitantes disten mucho de podernos ofrecer un exacto paralelo con nuestra capital republicana'. Alberti, *Numancia*, p. 7.

[96] 'Los soldados de nuestro Ejército Popular, los heroicos ciudadanos y defensores de Madrid que la presencien, sabrán apreciar, estoy seguro, lo que esta representatión significa, lo que tiene de transcendente e histórica.' Ibid., p. 7.

[97] 'en el ejemplo de resistencia, moral y espíritu de los madrileños de hoy domina la misma grandeza y orgullo de alma numantinos.' Ibid.

Alberti makes a number of changes to Cervantes's play as he adapts it to suit his purposes in 1937. He creates a new opening scene for the drama, with two original characters, Macus and Buco. Set in the Roman camp outside Numancia, this comic scene represents the feared Roman army as being in reality a dissipated and unmotivated force; an idea which the author clearly hoped would influence his audience's attitude towards the forces besieging their own city. To further underline the parallels between the siege of Numancia and the situation in contemporary Madrid, Alberti frequently refers to these forces as Italians rather than Romans. He also shortens Cervantes's work from four to three acts, editing down or completely omitting some of the more lengthy passages of verse in the original play.[98]

McCarthy points out that one of the most important changes he makes is the 'omission of 324 lines of the second act [*jornada*] in which the Numantians attempt to discover their fate through offerings made to Jupiter and the prophesies of a spirit raised by the sorcerer, Marquino.' He suggests that this exclusion can be explained in terms of the fact that the appearance of priests on-stage in this scene was 'certain to be resented by a significant element of the audience which tended to dismiss religion as superstition and to identify it with reaction'. A related reason for this omission, he maintains, is that 'by removing the pagan rites, with their suggestion that the Numantians are in the hands of a preordained fate, Alberti also avoids any sense of defeatism in his version.'[99] Alberti's prologue appears to indicate that this was indeed his intention in excising these parts of the original text. He remarks here that his version only uses 'the military, realistic and heroic part' of Cervantes's tragedy. 'All those scenes involving public sacrifice and the apparitions of demons and the shrouded body [...] I have cut out.'[100] In spite of such claims,

[98] Alberti's version is 'just over half the length of Cervantes's play, 1632 lines as opposed to 2461.' McCarthy, p.197.
[99] Ibid.
[100] 'en la presente versión mía he dejado tan sólo la parte militar, realista, heroica de la tragedia. Todas aquellas escenas del sacrificio público y las apariciones del demonio y el cuerpo amortajado [...] las he suprimdo.' Alberti, *Numancia*, p. 8

however, fatalism and sacrifice continue to play a vital part in his version of this Golden Age drama.

Alberti's omission of the 324 line 'priestly' scene from Act two by no means rids the play of its sense of 'preordained fate [and] defeatism'. These aspects of the original work are not confined to this scene. They are, instead, a recurring feature of the play, expressed primarily through chorus-like characters such as Spain, the River Duero, War, Illness, Hunger and Fame. Indeed, it says much about Alberti's psychology that he considers the appearance of these figures in his version as being compatible with 'realistic' drama. In Act One of Cervantes's play the figure of Spain utters a highly nationalistic outburst against the Roman invaders.

> I am the one and oppressed Spain.
> Is it possible that from antiquity
> I may be enslaved to foreign nations
> and not for the shortest time see
> my flags flying freely?[101]

Following this speech, the River Duero then prophesies the downfall of Numancia:

> according to the disposition of the stars,
> the fateful, accursed and sad day
> approaches Numancia, and I certainly fear
> that there is no solution to her extreme pain.[102]

Neither of these speeches are altered in Alberti's version. He also keeps the River Duero's prophecy that Spain will be avenged in future years: that 'a time will come [...] in which the same Romans will be defeated by those whom they now hold down.'[103] At this point, in fact, Alberti *adds* twenty four new lines to the River Duero's speech which identify the present conflict as the prophesied time of revenge:

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[101] 'que soy la sola y oprimida España./ ¿Será posible que de antiguo sea/ esclava de naciones extranjeras,/ y que un mínimo tiempo yo no vea/ de libertad, tendidas mis banderas?' (24)

[102] 'El fatal, desdichado y triste día,/ según el disponer de las estrellas,/ se acerca de Numancia, y cierto temo/ que no hay remedio a su dolor extremo.' (26)

[103] 'tiempo vendrá [...] que esos mismos romanos sean vencidos/ por los que ahora tienen abatidos.' (26)

I foretell, beloved Spain, the day
in which, after many centuries, will come,
accomplices of terror and agony,
the evil Spaniards who will deliver you
to another Roman of dark ambition,
forcing your sons to rise up.
You will see your worker and peasant soldiers
on the road, mother [...]
What fury and fear, beloved Spain,
will your dark invaders have of you
when they see your sharp sword
among the victorious standards.[104]

The play then returns to Cervantes's script, and as Act One draws to a close Spain tells the River Duero that she draws consolation from his words.

Your thoughts have alleviated somewhat
my misfortunes, famous Duero,
because I believe that there is no artful
deception in these prophesies.'[105]

As these quotations illustrate, Alberti's version does not avoid the sense of fatalism that dominates the original text. On the contrary, he attempts to use this aspect of Cervantes's play to represent a Republican victory in the contemporary conflict as an historical inevitability.

Despite his attempt to present the Republican forces as the prophesied avenging army, the fact that Cervantes's play is about a Spanish city under siege by Roman/Italian forces meant it was inevitable that contemporary audiences in Madrid would - at least to some extent - identify themselves with the besieged townspeople of the city. This would appear to create a problem for Alberti: as noted earlier, the Numantians had ended up torching their town and committing mass-suicide when it became apparent that their city was going to fall. Alberti could not have avoided this aspect of the play even had he so wished, as it was this heroic act that had made the siege

[104] 'Advino, querida España, el día/ en que, pasados muchos siglos, lleguen,/ cómplices del terror y la agonía,/ los malos españoles que te entreguen/ a otro romano de ambición sombría,/ haciendo que tus hijos se subleven./ A tus obreros, madre, y campesinos/ de soldados verás por los caminos. [...] ¡Qué rabia y qué temor, España amada,/ te tendrán los oscuros invasores/ cuando vean brillar tu aguda espada/ entre los estandartes vencedores.' (27)

[105] 'Tus razones alivio han dado en parte,/ famoso Duero, a las desgracias mías,/ sólo porque imagino que no hay arte/ de engaño alguno en estas profecías.' (27)

such a famous incident in Spanish history. In any case, it is quite clear that he had no wish to evade this aspect of the earlier play. Despite his claims in the prologue, at several points Alberti's text appears to anticipate the siege of Madrid ending in the same self-destructive manner as Numancia.

In Act Two of Alberti's version the citizens of Numancia face up to their imminent defeat by the Roman forces. Teógenes, the town's greatest warrior, proposes that the townsmen break out of the town and die fighting the enemy in battle. 'Let us go out and die in the field, and not, like besieged cowards', he urges his fellow-citizens.[106] In the original play, this character goes on to remark that: 'I well know that this feat only serves to alter the manner of our death, for death will accompany it.'[107] Alberti makes a telling change to these lines. In his version, Teógenes comments: 'I well know that this feat will only serve to alter the manner of our death and ensure we may be avenged in a future Spain.'[108] There were two ways which contemporary audiences could have responded to this new line: clearly, they might well have seen themselves as the avenging army that Teógenes refers to; however, given the very bleak situation confronting the Republican war-effort in 1937, it is equally possible that they would have identified with this character's decision to look upon his own death as a way of inspiring a future revenge.

It is the women of Numancia in both versions of the play who dissuade the men from attacking the Romans. They point out that Teógenes's plan will leave them, their children, and wealth of Numancia at the mercy of the Romans. They propose instead the idea of a mass sacrifice/suicide. 'First offer our neck to your swords,' they insist to their men-folk, 'which is better split open than to see us dishonoured by the enemy.'[109] Teógenes quickly comes round to the women's point of view: 'never in life or death will we leave you', he promises them, and orders that a fire be built

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[106] 'Salgamos a morir a la campaña,/ y no, como cobardes, en estrecho.' (39)

[107] 'Bien sé que sólo sirve esta hazaña/ de que a nuestro morir se mude el modo,/ que con ella la muerte se acompaña.' Cervantes, *El cerco de Numancia*, p.44.

[108] 'Bien sé que sólo sirvirá esta hazaña para que nuestra muerte mude el modo/y que nos vengue en un futuro España.' (39)

[109] 'Nuestro cuello ofreced a las espadas/vuestras primero, que es mejor partido/que vernos de enemigos deshonradas.' (40)

in the middle of the town square into which all the town's wealth will be thrown.[110] It is understandable that Alberti would want to retain these scenes as there was a clear parallel here with contemporary events in Madrid. As in Cervantes's play, it was not just the armed forces, but the whole of the citizenry of Madrid who were taking part in the defence of the capital.[111] Furthermore, women were playing a very prominent and inspirational role in this regard. Jackson notes that elected representatives such as the communist, Dolores Ibarruri, Margareta Nelkin (a socialist deputy), and Federica Montseny (an anarchist libertarian and feminist leader) used the radio air-waves to inspire an ethic of heroism and self-sacrifice among the citizens of Madrid.[112] La Pasionaria's cries of 'They shall not pass' and 'it is better to die on your feet than to live on your knees', in particular, came to characterize the 'moral and spiritual resistance' put up by the Madrileños during the Francoist onslaughts on their city.

The manner in which Alberti closes Act Two also indicates that he saw the mass-sacrifice of Numantians as offering a parallel with the situation in Madrid. As Teógenes and his fellow citizen, Corabino, watch a mother carrying her son towards the fire in the town square, he adds the following exchange between the two men.

Teógenes: Can you not feel, Corabino, the beauty of this town, on the road to death?
Corabino: Amidst so much misfortune, I feel a strong and healthy happiness,
a new dawn, a future light, sprouting within me.
Teógenes: Let's go…
Corabino: The sons of that red inferno will give to Spain that which Spain expects.

(As they exit, the curtain falls.)[113]

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[110] 'jamás en vida o muerte os dejaremos'. (43)

[111] Jackson points out that 'under the direction of Colonel Vicente Rojo Lluch and Major Manuel Matallana Gómez, the civilian population (including the women and children) dug trenches, 'threw up barricades, organized soup-kitchens, first-aid stations and local message centres.' Jackson, p.?

[112] Jackson, p. 97.

[113] Teógenes: '¿No sientes, Corabino, la hermosura/ de este pueblo, camino de la muerte?'
Corabino: 'Siento entre tanta y tanta desventura/ nacerme una alegría sana y fuerte,/ que será aurora clara, luz futura.'
Teógenes: 'Vamos…'
Corabino: 'Los hijos de esa roja hoguera/ darán a España lo que España espera.'
(Mientras se alejan, cae el Telón.) (50)

Once again we see that in the space of a few lines Alberti allows his audience to identify with the story of *Numancia* in two distinct ways. On the one hand, Corabino's remark that the town's self-destruction will inspire 'a new dawn' and 'future light' would have encouraged many of the play's Republican audience to view their situation in an optimistic light: *they* were the play's prophesied avenging army. Corabino's next comment, however, with its description of the blaze at the centre of Numancia as a 'red inferno' is clearly suggestive of a communistic revolution.[114] With this line, Alberti appears to encourage his audience to think of the defence of the capital as a kind of a Numancian-like sacrifice which would inspire a later Republican victory.

This ambiguity is still apparent at the end of the play. Towards the close of the final scene, Fame enters on-stage carrying a book in which are recorded the events of Spanish history: 'Once again! Awaken', s/he appeals to the audience,

> the same invaders from the past have arrived.
> But as I am Fame, people of Spain,
> I promise to engrave you in my memory
> if the history of German and Italian Fascism
> finds its grave at your feet.[115]

These lines suggest that Alberti is ending his play on an optimistic military note. The character of Spain reinforces the feeling that the Republicans are going to avenge the 'shame' of Numancia when she joins Fame on-stage. 'I come with a pen made of tall wheat', she tells the audience,

> to write in the still white
> book of my history
> the beginning of the end of the enemy.[116]

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[114] We have seen that, since his conversion to Marxism in 1931, Alberti had represented a communist revolution in terms of an all-consuming fire in his poetry. In 'A Spectre Haunts Europe', for example, it takes the form of a 'blaze [of] burning harvests'; and in 'The Fight for the Earth', the speaker tells God that 'it is a red star that inflames the rotting debris of your heaven.'

[115] '¡Otra vez! Despertad, porque han llegado/ los mismos invasores del pasado./ Mas como soy la fama, pueblo hispano,/ yo prometo grabarte en mi memoria,/ si el fascismo alemán e italiano/ halla en tus pies la tumba de su historia' (71)

[116] España: 'Vengo con larga pluma de alto trigo/ a escribir en lo blanco y reservado/ del libro de mi historia,/ el principio del fin del enemigo' (72)

'Write', Fame replies, 'for the dawn of that day has begun.'[117] Curiously, however, the word that Spain chooses to write on the blank page of history is 'defeated'. 'Yes, defeated,' she explains to Fame,

> because I swear to you
> that if in this dark and turbulent year,
> I gave a start to this defeat,
> soon from your trumpet
> will resound the purest note
> of complete victory.'[118]

Given that the preceding three acts of drama have represented the story of Numancia as a 'glorious and heroic' defeat which would ultimately inspire a great Spanish victory; and that, in his version, Alberti has drawn parallels between the situation in Numancia and that confronting the citizens of Madrid in 1937, the word 'defeated' here is undoubtedly a highly ambivalent term. There can be little doubt that it carries at least some suggestion that the 'complete victory' Spain refers to here will come about through the heroic (self-) destruction of its besieged capital city.

Alberti's final Civil-War drama, *Any Moment Now*, written between 1938 and 1939, is a full-length work (a prologue and three acts) with a standard 'fourth-wall' aesthetic, and requires a number of quite complex stage-sets. The play does not fulfil the author's own stated requirements for a 'theatre of urgency', therefore, and given the difficulties of production, it is hardly surprising that it was not produced during the war. Written towards the end of the conflict, and set in an Andalusian town in the period leading up to the rebellion of July 1936, the play does, however, provide a fascinating insight into its author's view of the underlying religious causes of the Spanish Civil War.[119]

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[117] Fama: 'Escribe [...] porque ha empezado el alba de ese día.' (72)

[118] ''Derrotado'. Sí, derrotado, porque yo te juro/ que si ya di principio a esta derrota/ este mal año turbulento, oscuro,/ pronto de tu trompeta/ resonará purísima una nota/ de victoria completa.' (73)

[119] Alberti's directions indicate that 'the action takes places in a small town in the South [of Spain], prior to 18 July 1936, the date the drama ends.' [La acción, en una pequeña ciudad del Sur, antes del 18 de julio de 1936, fecha en que termina el drama.'] Alberti, *Any Moment Now*[*De un momento a otro*], in *El poeta en la calle*, p. 825. (Page references to this play are included in the footnotes following the Spanish quotations.)

Alberti described this play as a 'highly autobiographical work, and I believe the first in the Castilian language to dramatize – in a cruel and direct manner – the problem of the bourgeois intellectual who aligns himself with the proletarian revolution.' [120] The autobiographical aspect relates primarily to its central protagonist: Gabriel is a twenty-six year old student of a déclassé family from Andalusia who has become involved with left-wing politics while at university in Madrid. When the play opens this character has just returned home, having decided to abandon his studies and devote his energies to furthering the cause of a proletarian revolution in Spain. Gabriel's decision causes a great deal of friction within his highly conservative family who view his Marxism as the antithesis of Catholicism, and thus a betrayal of everything they stand for.

The idea that religion is at the heart of political divisions within Gabriel's family (and, by extension, the Spanish nation) recurs throughout the play. [121] It first appears in the middle of a heated family argument in scene one, when we see Gabriel accuse his right-wing brother, Ignacio, of being a 'coward' and a 'Jesuit'.[122] 'Beneath that last word', their Uncle Vicente intervenes, 'trembles all the spirit of the century; a corrupt epoch, full of propaganda against God. Let none who form part of this sacred family suffer its contamination!'[123] Ignacio then produces a Marxist pamphlet he found in Gabriel's clothing. 'Before you', he exclaims to his uncle, is a member of the family who 'not only suffers from it, but would have it that others in

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[120] 'Se trata de una obra casi autobiográfica y creo que la primera, en lengua castellana, que plantea de manera cruel, directa, el problema dramático del intelectual de origen burgués que se acerca a la revolución proletaria.' Quoted in Rafael Alberti, *El poeta en la calle*, p. 823.

[121] As Popkin notes, the theme of familial conflict in this work is intended to reflect the broader socio-politico tensions that existed in Spain in the mid-1930s. 'Alberti understood that the interests of drama could best be served by portraying his ideological and social conflict within a specific human setting', she remarks. 'Thus, he shifted the emphasis from a national context to an individual household, interweaving ideological and highly emotional factors.' Popkin, p. 95.

[122] 'Tú eres aquí el cobarde, el jesuita.' (831) Popkin points out that 'the names of the two brothers echo their opposing ideologies. Gabriel - the angel of the Annunciation - is the bearer of a new message to humanity. Ignacio - Ignatius of Loyola - is the new militant Jesuitic type who represents the forces of reaction.' Popkin, p. 95

[123] 'Debajo de esa última palabra dicha como reproche tiembla todo el espíritu del siglo. Epoca corrompida, llena de propaganda contra Dios. ¡Que ninguno de los que componen esta santa familia sufra su contagio!' (831-2) In Act Two, Scene Two, this character describes the Spanish Republic as the work of the devil: 'Terrible times! Dark forces are at work in all this; impious souls, sold to the devil. I see his sharp claw everywhere. The French Revolution opened the gates of hell.' [¡Tiempos terribles! Fuerzas ocultas mueven todo esto; almas impías, vendidas al diablo. Veo su garra clavada en todas partes. La Revolución Francesa abrió las puertas del infierno.] (868)

your house are contaminated.'[124] The family are shocked by this revelation: Uncle Vicente refers to the pamphlet as a 'barbarous calumny against religion'[125]; and Gabriel's mother tears it to shreds before leaving the room.

Towards the end of Act one we see Gabriel's mother warning her son to be careful of voicing anti-religious opinions, as 'the dead can hear what we say.'[126] This remark only prompts a further anti-religious outburst, however: 'How distressing, mother,' he exclaims, 'what an atmosphere of mourning in this house! How sad to see you within these darkened, oppressed walls, only focusing your beautiful imagination on the Virgin, the angels and the saints.'[127] Gabriel's deranged aunts Josefa, Angela, and Gertrudis reinforce the notion that a manic form of Catholicism had gained a stranglehold on the imaginations of the women of rural Spain. In Act Three, when the floor of Aunt Josefa's bedroom caves in, we see this aunt insist that the walls had only remained in place because she had placed the image of the Virgin on each of them: 'it's a miracle from the Virgin,' she tells her family. 'There's no doubt about it: Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, to whom I am very devoted.' Her sisters agree, and the three women, and Araceli, then take up the chant of: 'Miracle! Miracle! Miracle!'[128] Like Gabriel's mother, these women's view of everyday reality is suffused with a highly superstitious form of religious belief.

Aside from Gabriel's immediate family, Alberti makes use of several other character-groups to emphasise the idea that religion lay at the heart of social and cultural issues that divided Spain in the lead-up the Civil War. In Act Three, a number of Gabriel's old school-friends arrive at the family home, accompanied by one of his old Jesuit teachers, in an attempt to win him back from Marxism. 'You are idiots', he exclaims at them, 'worse than corpses [...] You're a crowd of

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[124] 'Pues ante ti está uno de sus miembros que no sólo lo sufre, sino que intenta que otros de tu casa se contaminen.' (832)

[125] 'Alguna bárbara calumnia contra la religion.' (834)

[126] 'Olvidas que los muertos oyen lo que se dice.' (848)

[127] '¡Qué angustia, madre, qué atmósfera de luto la de esta casa! ¡Qué tristeza da verte entre estos muros, oprimida, oscura, sólo puesto tu hermoso pensamiento en la Virgen, los ángeles y los santos!' (848)

[128] Josefa: 'Es un milagro de la Virgen, no hay duda: Nuestra señora del perpetuo Socorro, de quien soy muy devota.'

Las tres tías y Araceli: '¡Milagro! ¡Milagro! ¡Milagro!' (874)

Jesuits'[129] The character of Don Augusto, Gabriel's old teacher, reveals close links between the Church and the forces that rebelled against the Republican government in 1936: this Jesuit knows of the plans for the July rising, and makes very clear that the Church is totally supportive of the rebels. His list of the reactionary forces that back the insurrection includes: 'The Army with its finest officers, upright people, *the Church, God!, note it well! God!, are with us.*'[130] (my italics)

Undoubtedly, the most entertaining extra-familial characters in *Any Moment Now* are the local beggars patronized by Gabriel's family. The scenes in which these characters are involved are the most impressive and theatrical of the whole play and introduce a strong element of subversion and the carnivalesque to Alberti's treatment of the theme of religion. In Act One we learn that the family have invited this group to attend Mass with them and then to eat breakfast in the family home. However, when they arrive back at the house from Mass, the most prominent of their band – the ironically named 'El Beato'[131] – gets the beggars thrown out on account of some lewd verse he recites. Gabriel's family view the emphasis on 'the body' in this character's poetry as a sign as irreverence as well as an indecency. 'You're a low sort', aunt Josefa remarks, when one of these poems refers to her niece's 'raised nipples'.[132] 'You sing of the sins, and those that most please the devil: those of the flesh.'[133] 'A disgrace!' concurs Uncle Vicente. 'After receiving communion! Why do they call you El Beato? You don't deserve the name.'[134]

A few moments later, El Beato recites another improvised work, which he tells his audience he will perform in a 'chanting' style, 'imitating the high mass'.[135] 'Be quiet, El Beato!' orders aunt Josefa. 'Enough rudeness! You've forgotten that you have just received communion [...] You are an immoral crowd of beggars,' adds uncle Vicente, 'unworthy of the Christ you have received

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[129] 'Sois unos estúpidos [...] peores de cadáveres'. (888) 'Sois unos jesuitas.' (890)

[130] El Ejército con sus mejores jefes, las personas honradas, la Iglesía,¡Dios! fijese bien,¡Dios!, están con nosotros (886)

[131] This character's nickname literally translates as 'Blessed One', but the name is an ironic one, meaning something akin to 'Holy Joe'.

[132] 'Araceli, teticas en pico, / botones de plata, frente en abanico.' (835)

[133] 'Eres un indecente. Te encantan los pecados, y a los que más le gustan al demonio: los de la carne.' (835)

[134] '¡Una vergüenza! ¡Después de comulgar! ¿Por qué te llaman el Beato? No mereces el nombre.' (835)

[135] 'Ahore, imitando lo que hacen en la misa mayor, lo mismo que los frailes en el coro.' *(canturreando)* (837)

this morning. Out to the garden with you! Today you deserve a dog's breakfast.'[136] The anxiety with which aunt Josefa and uncle Vicente seek to silence El Beato (they demand he be quiet no less than five times in the course of the above exchanges) is indicative of how threatened they feel by his irreverent discourse. In this way, the lewd poetry, and the presence of the other beggars in the family home, is being used to delineate two opposing world-views: the beggars' irreverent and materialist outlook ('the important thing is the breakfast'[137] one of their number reminds his friends as he enters the house, and El Beato makes off with as much of the family silver as he can carry), and the family's asceticism and other-worldliness.

The manner in which religion dictates relations between Gabriel's family and the beggars is most effectively conveyed in the scenes involving aunt Josefa and El Beato, the play's two most interesting characters. In Act Two, Gabriel's half-crazy aunt remarks to her sisters that 'I never had a boyfriend. Until now my only love has been Jesus Christ, Sacred Jesus. With him I celebrate marriage every morning.'[138] When her sisters tease Josefa that her confessor wants to marry her, this spinster falls into a kind of ecstatic trance in which she imagines her erotic desires being fulfilled by God rather than the husband lying in bed beside her.

> In the night, his celestial rays would descend on me and my husband, embracing us. *(Exalted)* I see them! I feel them! Now is the time. Come! *(Touching herself all over her body.)* My flesh rises. My hair burns. Everywhere on fire, scarred with flames: on the shoulders, the legs, the sides…[139]

At this point Josefa leaves the room calling out 'Father! Father!' while the rest of the family calmly resume their prayers, well accustomed, apparently, to such behaviour from their sister. Josefa's repressed sexual desires re-emerge later that night. She roams around the house in a

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[136] '¡A callar, Beato! ¡Basta de groserías! Olvidaste que acabas de comulgar […] Sois unos malos pobres, indignos de haber recibido a Cristo esta mañana. ¡Marchaos al jardín! Mereceríais hoy el desayuno de los perros.' (838)

[137] 'lo importante es el desayuno.' (834)

[138] 'Yo nunca tuve novio. Hasta ahora mi único amor ha sido Jesucristo, Jesús Sacramentado. Con él celebro boda todas las mañanas.' (878)

[139] 'En la noche, sus rayos celestiales bajarían sobre mi esposo y sobre mí, abrasándonos. *(Exaltada.)* ¡Los veo! ¡Los siento! Ya es la hora. ¡Venid! *(Tocándose por todo el cuerpo.)* Se me agrieta la carne. Me arden los cabellos. Por todas partes, quemaduras, arañazos de llamas: por los hombros, las piernas, los costados …*(Inicia, loca, la salida, gritando.)* ¡Papá! ¡Papá!' (878)

somnambulant state, banging on the bedroom doors where she imagines Ignacio and Gabriel are sleeping.

> Men! Men! Pigs! Two men in the house! The two of them sleeping alone!
> You ought to be ashamed! What are you good for? What are you waiting for?
> Pigs! [...] Am I so old, pigs? Get out! Come here! Come here and look at me!
> *(Caressing her arms and breasts.)* My skin is still hard, smooth, white, soft...'[140]

The brothers do not emerge from their rooms, but El Beato, wandering drunkenly through the streets below (and carrying a red umbrella), overhears Josefa's pleas and responds with more sacro-sexual poetry: 'Sister Piety, sister Louise:/ your legs are visible,/ and the eternal life beneath your blouse./ Madame abbess, open your night-dress,/ for the saint that you revere is coming up!'[141] This lewd poetry wakens Josefa from her dream-like state: willing to contemplate incest in her somnambulant condition, the prospect of sex with a beggar quickly brings her back to her senses. 'Oh what a great sin, my God!' she exclaims, closing the door to the balcony. 'A mortal sin! Heart of Jesus! Heart of Jesus, Lord of the Mount of Olives, free me from these evil desires, from this viper that burns my blood and torments me by night!'[142] In these scenes, therefore, Alberti very adroitly interweaves issues of religion, sexuality and social class.

As already noted, the central theme of this play concerns Gabriel's attempts to cross the ideological and social divide that separates the Spanish bourgeoisie from the working classes, whom he represents as his new family. 'Did you not know', he asks his sister, Araceli, 'that you can change your family if it is opposed to you and has outlived its usefulness?'[143] Changing one's family/social class has proved very difficult, however. At the beginning of Act Two, we see a group of local workers employed by Gabriel's family questioning whether this disaffected

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[140] '¡Hombres! ¡Hombres! ¡Cochinos! ¡Dos hombres en la casa! ¡Los dos durmiendo solos! ¡Os debía dar vergüenza! ¿De qué servís? ¿A qué esperáis? ¡Cochinos! [...]¿Tan vieja estoy, cochinos? ¡Salid! ¡Venid! ¡Venid a verme! *(Tocándose los brazos y el pecho.)* Aún tengo la piel dura, lisa, blanca, suave...' (880)

[141] 'Sor Piedad, sor Luisa: se le ven las piernas/ y la vida eterna/ bajo la camisa. ¡Señora abadesa,/ abra el camisón,/ que ya sube el santo/ de su devoción!' (881)

[142] '¡Oh, qué gran pecado, Dios mío! [...] ¡Un pecado mortal! ¡Corazón de Jesús, Señor de las Olivas, libradme de estos malos deseos, de esta víbora que me quema la sangre y me atormenta por las noches!' (881-2)

[143] 'Estoy hablando de ellos, de mi nueva familia. *(Después de una breve pausa)* ¿Tú no sabes que uno puede cambiar de familia cuando la suya está ya en contra y no le sirve?' (841)

intellectual really belongs with them. 'Let him work and break his spine like the rest of us. Then we'll talk', one of these men observes sceptically.[144] 'The sons of the bosses have a long way to go yet, and much to suffer, before the sight of them no longer turns one's stomach', a second worker remarks.[145] On the one hand, therefore, Gabriel's political beliefs have left him ostracized from his family and the world of his childhood, and on the other, he has not been accepted by the working classes, who treat his attempts to side with them with mistrust and even outright derision.

Towards the end of Act One he breaks down under the strain of the crisis created by his attempt to 'change families'. Alone in his dimly lit bedroom, Gabriel is accosted by two hostile voices - disembodied projections of his troubled conscience. Voice No.1 begins by censuring his attempts to transform himself into someone other than he is. 'Shame on you, Gabriel', he exclaims. 'Tear off your face and throw it to the mud where the mules' shoes will transfigure it, and bury it.'[146] Both voices then focus their attack on his loss of religious faith, which they treat as tantamount to a loss of self. 'Where is that faith, that fear of God that gripped your blood during your black school-days?' enquires the first voice. 'There is a prize. Remember', adds the second, 'and a terrible punishment. Recall it. They taught you this since childhood. But you have forgotten it.'[147] Gabriel concurs with the voices' assessment of his fallen character. 'It's true', he replies. 'I hate myself. I spit on myself [...] Bring me closer to the depths. Drown me. It is time.'[148] Encouraged by the voices, he takes a revolver from his pocket with which to shot himself. Only at the very last moment does he manage to resist the urge to commit suicide. 'No! I am not a coward!' Gabriel cries out as he throws down the gun. 'It's a lie! [...] A falsehood! A falsehood!' With these words the room becomes illuminated and the voices disappear. 'I will

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[144] 'No es frecuente que los hijos de los señores estén junto con nosotros ...' (853) 'Que trabaje y se parte el espinazo como nosotros. Luego, hablaríamos.' (854)

[145] 'Tienen mucho que andar y que sufrir todavía los hijos de los señores para que a uno no se le retuerzan las hieles a verlos.' (858)

[146] 'Voz 1.: 'Avergüénzate, Gabriel. Arráncate la cara y tírala en un charco, donde las herraduras de los mulos la transfiguren, hundiéndola.' (843)

[147] Voz 1.: '¿Dónde está aquella fe, aquel temor de Dios que atenazaron en tu sangre los negros días del colegio?' Voz 2.: 'Hay un premio. Haz memoria. Y un castigo terrible. Acuérdate. Esto te enseñaron desde niño. Pero lo has olvidado.' (844)

[148] 'Es verdad. Me odio. Me escupo [...] Llevadme más al fondo. Sumergidme. Es la hora.' (844)

die standing, with my boots on, in the street, like the heroes' he declares, echoing the words the 'Civic Elegy', 'and not in this ruinous, undignified, poor and miserable manner. Once again I see clearly. Everything is illuminated.'[149]

Like much of the play, this is a rather clumsy scene with some very heavy-handed dialogue. Notwithstanding its aesthetic flaws, however, it does provide an insight into the psychological processes involved in Gabriel's (and possibly Alberti's) transition from a time of confusion and depression to a new mode of revolutionary consciousness.[150] As the above dialogue indicates, Gabriel's disembodied voices speak as his youthful, *Catholic* self. They demonstrate that although he has renounced religious belief at a conscious level, Catholicism continues to exert a powerful hold on his psyche. Since these voices speak as Gabriel's own self, they raise the question of how he manages to resist their exhortations to kill himself. After all, who is urging the option of suicide here, if it is not Gabriel? In answering this question we can note that it is not his Marxism that saves Gabriel from self-destruction: his political opinions are the same prior to and following the scene. Nor is it the desire to die like a hero, which is the consequence of his transformation. It is, instead, by coming to a new understanding of the nature of his selfhood that this character manages to reject the option of suicide.

In coming to this decision we saw Gabriel exclaim, 'I am not a coward. It's a lie!' Cowardice is not being associated with the option of suicide here, but with Catholicism. Gabriel is responding to the assumption made by his own disembodied voices that his selfhood consists in his religious faith. In effect, he is saying 'I am not a Catholic', this accusation is a lie.[151] It is *this* discovery – the discovery of a falsehood rather than a great new political 'Truth' (Marxism) – that enables

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[149] '¡No! ¡Yo no soy un corbarde! ¡Es mentira! *(El salón se ilumina de nuevo, desapareciendo las Voces 1. y 2.)* [...] ¡Es falso! ¡Es falso! Yo moriré de pie, con los zapatos puestos, en la calle, como los héroes, y no de esta manera ruin, indigna, pobre, miserable, Otra vez veo claro. Todo se me ilumina de pronto.' (846-7)

[150] Popkin has suggested that many of the weakest scenes in this autobiographical work appear 'at precisely those moments when [Alberti] draws on his most unpleasant memories.' Popkin, p. 102. In the above scene may well be due to the fact that the author is drawing on his memories of the personal crisis he underwent in the late 1920s.

[151] The term 'coward' has already been associated with religious belief in Act One when Gabriel accuses Ignacio of being 'the coward, the Jesuit.' [Tú eres aquí el cobarde, el jesuita.] (831) In the final scene of the play, Araceli also describes herself as a 'coward!' on account of her failure to take Gabriel's advice, break her ties with the Church, and join with him in his new life: 'I should have gone with you. But I wasn't brave, like you. I didn't dare. Coward!' [Debí de haberme ido contigo. Pero no fui valiente, como tú. No me atreví. ¡Cobarde!] (907)

Gabriel to reject the option of suicide. He has realized that he was lying to himself; that he is 'more' than the lapsed catholic his own conscience claims him to be. The lie, therefore, reveals the self as a dialogical entity; one that can argue and attempt to deceive *itself* as well as others. As Gabriel remarks when his mother enters the room to enquire whom he is talking to: 'I am speaking with you, *with myself*, with all those who wish to hear me. *I respond to myself* and to you all.'[152] (my italics) In this scene, therefore, the theme of civil war extends to the workings of the individual psyche, and Catholicism, we see, is at the heart of this conflict also.

The opposition between terms such as Catholicism and Marxism, materialism and spirituality in *Any Moment Now* is not as clear-cut as my analysis has suggested thus far. There are several ways in which the treatment of revolutionary politics in this play is characterized by patterns of thought often associated with religious belief. The language of salvation, for example, is a feature of Gabriel's as well as his family's discourse. 'Only in you can I find salvation', Gabriel tells Pablo, a working class revolutionary, in Act Two. 'In our faith', Pablo replies.[153] In the following act, Gabriel's mother insists to her family that between them all they 'have to save' her errant son[154]; but later on in the same scene Gabriel tells her that 'I will save you, not you me.'[155] And referring to the day of the revolution itself, he urges his sister, Araceli, to 'think of me, in the shock of the jubilant day [...] I want to save you, sister.'[156]

In Act Two, Araceli asks Gabriel to explain the meaning of the revolution to her. He responds by offering her the image of the two of them encountering each other in a ruined church on the day of the revolution. 'I want you to think', he tells her, 'to imagine that that day we meet each other, suddenly, in this way: the two of us face to face - you and I, just imagine! - in the middle of the nave or tabernacle of a destroyed church.'[157]

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[152] 'Hablo contigo, conmigo, con todos los que quieran oírme. Me respondo a mí mismo y a vosotros.' (847)

[153] Gabriel: 'sólo en vosotros está mi salvación.' Pablo: 'En nuestra fe.' (857)

[154] 'Entre todos tenemos que salvarlo.' (868)

[155] Gabriel is referring to his mother and Araceli - 'I am only worried about you and Araceli' he tells her. 'Sólo Araceli y tú me preocupáis. Os salvaría yo a vosotras, no vosotras a mí.' (872)

[156] 'Piensa en mí, en el espanto de ese día jubiloso [...] Quiero salvarte, hermana.' (863)

[157] 'lo que yo quiero es que tú pienses, hermana, que tú imagines que ese día nos encontramos, así, de pronto, frente a frente los dos - ¡tú y yo, fijate! - , en medio de la nave, o ante el sagrario de una iglesia asaltada. (862)

These lines can be read as reinforcing the opposition between Catholicism and Marxism that animates the play as a whole: the revolution, Gabriel is suggesting, will destroy the Catholic Church in Spain. The image seems more complex than this reading allows, however. Gabriel's meeting with Araceli is presented as a spiritual encounter, as an epiphanic moment in which the siblings come to see each other for the first time. Furthermore, it is the church that is destroyed in these lines, rather than the tabernacle, which holds the Eucharist. As such, the image seems to distinguish between the essence of Christianity, and the corrupt culture and practices of the Catholic Church (symbolized by the ruined building). With the destruction of the building the Eucharist is 'exposed'. In this sense, the image of Christianity here recalls the poem 'Madrid-Autumn' in which the bombing of the capital city allowed Madrid's real identity to emerge. In both cases, revolution enables a process of transformation in which things take on their 'true' identity.

As in 'Madrid-Autumn', the representation of revolution in *Any Moment Now* also reveals elements of the materio-mysticism that characterizes Alberti's surrealist poetry. This feature of the play is apparent in the poem that Gabriel recites to his sister early in Act Two. In the second stanza of this work, he asks Araceli to

> Imagine, sister,
> It's a light that increases,
> an earthly light, vivid, human,
> that aggrandizes everything it touches.
> It's the newly born Revolution
> that climbs the accelerating air to
> the palaces, the temples,
> where you find yourself, my sister,
> saddened, remote, hostile,
> facing me, blind, lost,
> at the feet of Sacramental Jesus [158]

Hermans points out that this is an altered version of Alberti's 1934 poem 'Sister' [Hermana]. He notes that Alberti has introduced a new element into this theatrical version: 'the earthly light. In

[158] Imagínate, hermana,/ Es un clamor que crece,/ una luz terrenal, vívida, humana,/ que toda lo que toca lo engrandece./ Es la Revolución recién nacida/ que remonta con aire acelerado/ los palacios, los templos, donde triste, lejana,/ contraria, frente a mí, ciega, perdida,/ a los pies de Jesús Sacramentado,/ te encuentras tú, mi hermana. (861)

contrast to Christ sacrificed, with his divine light,' Hermans remarks, 'we find the Saviour 'Gabriel', who [...] is not only the bearer of the earthly light, but also the representative of the recently born Revolution.'' [159]

Similarly, at several points in the play the workers' revolution is represented as emerging out of the ruins of the rapidly disintegrating house that Gabriel's family occupy. It is in the wine-cellars of this crumbling household that the scenes involving the workers are set. 'Within a few days the cellars will no longer be ours', Ignacio, Gabriel's right-wing brother, remarks mid-way through the play;[160] and when the floor to Josefa's bedroom caves in, he says he will tell the foreman about it, so that 'one day we don't all wake up buried in the cellar.'[161] As the play draws to a close Gabriel remarks to Araceli that 'If an old family disintegrates, agonizingly, a new and different one appears in the ground. I am moving towards it.'[162] And in the final scene – when the workers have responded to the July insurrection by taking up arms themselves – one of these revolutionaries describes Gabriel's family as 'pitiful Spanish debris'. His comrade agrees, but goes on to point out that 'the people are lynx-eyed, and know how to extract seams of gold from ruins.'[163] These images reinforce the idea that the revolution involves a process of transformation and not just destruction. Just as Gabriel has been changed by the revolution, so too his family will be reduced to rubble and then 'agonizingly' (and miraculously) re-made in the image of the revolution.

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[159] 'En la versión teatral se ha introducido un elemento nuevo, que según nuestra interpretación es fundamental: la luz terrenal. En contraposición al Cristo sacrificado, con su luz divina, encontramos al Salvador 'Gabriel', que, según decíamos arriba, no sólo es el portador de la luz terrenal, sino que también es el representante de la Revolución 'recién nacida''. Hub. Hermans, *El teatro político de Rafael Alberti* (Salamanca: Salamanca UP., 1989), p. 200.

[160] 'Dento de poco días no serán nuestras las bodegas.' (870-1)

[161] 'para evitar que un día amanezcamos todos enterrados en la bodega.' (874) 'What am I?' Araceli asks herself in Act Three, 'what can I be except another stone in this ruin? [¿qué soy, qué puedo ser sino una piedra más de esta ruina?] (896)

[162] 'Si una vieja familia se hunde, agoniza, otra nueva, distinta, aparece en la tierra. A ella me dirijo.' (898) In Act two Gabriel's mother describes her son as someone 'with his eyes fastened on the ground.' [con los ojos fijos, pegados en la tierra.] (850)

[163] Pescador: 'Lamentables escombros españoles.' Worker No.1: 'pero el pueblo, que tiene ojos de lince, sabe extraer de las ruinas los filones de oro.' (908)

There are virtually no references to foreign elements (Francoist or Republican) in this play. Instead, in his final Civil-War drama, Alberti represents the war (at least at its outbreak) as a purely internecine conflict. As is the case throughout his literature in the 1936-9 period, however, there is some degree of ambiguity in *Any Moment Now* regarding the 'war or revolution' issue. In its final scenes, the play faithfully 'records' that the conflict began as a rebellion against the Republican regime by reactionary forces, but it is not at all clear that the workers of Spain are fighting to restore the Popular Front government to power. *Prior* to the rising of the 18th July we see Gabriel insinuate that the Left was also ready to rebel against the government in July 1936. 'The fight has begun', he tells Ignacio, in Act Two. 'We are only waiting now to hear the signal for the great battle.'[164] Pablo, a revolutionary worker, makes a similar observation when, in the play's last scene, he remarks that *two* insurrections had taken place on the 18th July: the 'enemy' had rebelled, 'but at the same time, the people - who have not slept from ancient times, who suffer from wakefulness - also rose.'[165] As in the poem '18 July', therefore, Alberti seems to be representing the 1936-9 conflict as both a war against reactionary forces *and* a workers' revolution: the insurgents and the revolutionary workers in this play both treat the Republic as a political irrelevancy.

Given that the play was written between 1938 and 1939, Alberti's dismissive attitude towards the regime may have been due to a recognition that the war was already lost, and so he might as well focus on the *ultimate* objectives of the war-effort from a specifically communist perspective. If this were the case, however, one would expect him to place greater emphasis on international-proletarian nature of the conflict, as we saw he does in his poetry between 1932 and 1936. Instead, the play treats the war as a purely internecine affair; one which is symbolized in the conflict between two Spanish brothers, Ignacio and Gabriel. Furthermore, rather than international capitalism, or fascism, *Any Moment Now* represents the Spanish Catholic spirit as the primary cause of class-conflict in Spain. It is also significant that play does not 'celebrate' revolution in the manner one would expect of a pro-communist work. It is true that Gabriel

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[164] Gabriel: '...Pero la lucha ha comenzado. Ahora sólo falta que suene la señal para la gran batalla.'
Ignacio: (*Amenazador.*) 'Sonará, sonará.' (871)

[165] Pescador: 'El enemigo iba a levantarse.'
Pablo: 'Pero a la vez, el pueblo que de antiguo no duerme, que sufre de vigilias, se levantó también.' (902)

openly welcomes the July insurrection as an opportunity to replace the Republic with a more left-wing administration, and the play ends with Pablo saluting the fallen heroes of the revolution 'who will give new light to our country, any moment now';[166] but the previous three acts have focused on the intractable nature of the political differences that existed between the various strata of society in Spain on the eve of the war. As such, it is the theme of the *failure* of politics rather than revolutionary enthusiasm that characterizes this work. *Any Moment Now* does not leave one with the impression that Spain was rapidly moving towards a communist utopia in July 1936, but with the feeling that the country was still not ready for the Republican regime that came to power in 1931.

[166] 'A los héroes que darán otra luz a nuestra patria, de un momento a otro.' (910)

IV

Pearse and Alberti – An Assessment

The previous two chapters have revealed a number of striking parallels between the literature produced by Pearse and Alberti, and those of the Irish and Spanish revolutions as a whole. One of the most noteworthy points of comparison concerns the emphasis on the need for action in these writings. Irwin Thompson points out that 'The generation of Pearse, MacDonagh, and Plunkett had no patience with the older artists. They wanted action, engagement, and a total commitment to the revolution.'[1] A similar scenario unfolded in Spain. As Francisco Caudet observes, for the younger generation of writers to which Alberti belonged, the rebellion of the 18th July 1936 marked a culminating point of debates about the social function of art: 'Finally, the hour to take part and to act had arrived.'[2] Pearse's and Alberti's writings stand out from these general trends in both countries on account of how the call to action in their work frequently implies an end to literary and other forms of cultural activity.

In 1913, Pearse contrasted the Ulster unionist's willingness 'to fight in defence of what he believes' to nationalists' love of speechmaking and literary witticisms, remarking that 'the Orangeman who can fire a gun will certainly count for more in the end that the Nationalist who can do nothing cleverer than make a pun.'[3] In November of that year he suggested that the Gaelic League had brought nationalists 'a certain distance upon the way' of revolution, but that its activities had been surplanted by more directly political and military bodies such as the Volunteer army. 'It is not for the sake of *is* and *tá*' that nationalists joined its schools, he maintained, 'but to do something for Ireland';[4] and the Preface to *The Sovereign People* –

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[1] Irwin Thompson, p. 114.

[2] 'Las polémicas y debates en torno al arte y su función social [...] dejaron el estadio meramente especulativo y teórico para instalarse de lleno en el nivel práctica. Había llegado, en fin, la hora de tomar partido y de actuar'. Caudet, p.13.

[3] Pearse Ibid., 185. The punning quality of these comments, 'gun' rhyming with 'pun', as well as the word-play involved in the idea that revolutionaries with guns will 'count' for more in the end than those without them, highlights the irony involved in Pearse making literary appeals to nationalists to prioritise action over words.

[4] Pearse, *The Coming Revolution*, in *Political Writings and Speeches*, p.92-3.

completed a matter of weeks before the Rising – ends with the words 'For my part, I have no more to say.'[5]

The emphasis on action is also a recurring theme in his poetry of the post-1913 period. It arises with particular frequency in the final lines of his works, thus reinforcing the sense that the writing is ending as the fighting begins. 'Renunciation', for example, ends with the speaker turning his face 'To the deed that I see/ And the death I shall die.' 'The Mother' closes with the line 'My sons were faithful, and they fought'; and in the final lines of 'The Rebel' the speaker promises 'to try it out' with his country's 'tyrants,/ hypocrites, liars!' The prioritisation of action over literature is perhaps most pronounced in the author's last, dramatic work, *The Singer*, in which MacDara brings the literary and meditative phase of his life to an end with the observation that a man 'must needs create, he must needs do.' 'Is not a poet a maker?' his old teacher responds. 'No,' MacDara replies, 'he is only a voice that cries out, a sigh that trembles into rest.'[6]

A similar stress is apparent in Alberti's literary oeuvre of the 1930s. His earliest political poem, 'The Civic Elegy' simply 'breathes' violence, and contains no political reflections whatsoever. The hero of his first political drama, *Fermín Galán*, is, like Pearse's MacDara, a romanticised poet-rebel who forsakes his literary activities to commit himself to military action.[7] 'On Returning and Beginning (1932)', one of the first poems he wrote following his conversion to communism, highlights the suffering of the Spanish peasantry, but it is also a very strident attack upon Spanish artists and writers who continually talk and write about the need for change, but who never actually *do* anything about it; the poet's former 'friends' whom he now represents as 'seated corpses' and 'bodies rotting in chairs.'[8]

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[5] Ibid., 333.

[6] *Poems,Plays and Stories*, pp.325, 333, 339 and 31 respectively.

[7] This is one of several striking similarities between the central characters in these plays. MacDara and Fermín Galán both overcome a period of deep personal crisis before committing themselves to a life of action designed to relieve the suffering of their 'people'. They are both anti-establishment-figures, impatient with the leadership of their revolutionary movements. They act on their own initiatives, without waiting for their superiors to sanction their decisions to rebel. They are both bachelors who have especially close relationships to mothers who support their sons' political actions. And the hero's death in these plays is represented as a Christ-like sacrifice that will ensure the ultimate success of the revolutionary movement in which he is involved (a point I return to later in this conclusion).

[8] 'Al volver y empezar (1932)': 'los cadáveres sentados [...]/ cuerpos podridos en las sillas.' p.350.

The dichotomy between writing and revolutionary politics is also a recurring theme in his Civil War literature. The redundancy of poetry in the face of violence is (in different ways) an idea that animates two of his finest works, 'Madrid-Autumn' and 'Nocturne'. *Any Moment Now* is another drama that focuses on the efforts of a poet-intellectual to commit to revolutionary action; and *Numancia* is about a townspeople who resolve to *do something* rather than merely wait for death. The manner in which Spain arrives on-stage in this play's closing scenes to write a single word – 'defeated' – in the 'book of my history' reinforces a sense that the activity of writing is drawing to a close in order to make way for a period of climatic action.

The call to action in the literatures of both revolutions went hand in hand with an emphasis on the need for heroism. The writings of the Irish Revival, as Deane points, '[draw] heavily on the idea that the revival of heroism is necessary and practical ambition in Irish circumstances.'[9] The same idea characterizes the literature of the Spanish Revolution, particularly during the Civil War. Caudet observes that Republican writers sought 'to reflect the heroism of the people in arms and, as far as possible, foster and inflame this collective state of mind.'[10] Both Pearse's and Alberti's writings epitomise this trend. The notion of a heroic life-ethic underpinned the pedagogical ethos at Pearse's schools. In his creative literature it is often linked to the idea of a heroic faith, as in the plays *The King, The Master* and *The Singer*. The same idea animates his political writings: figures such as Cuchulainn, Emmet, and Tone are continually invoked as exemplars of fearless and noble action in Pearse's speeches and pamphlets; and the Rising itself was partly conceived as a gallant stand against a superior army that would inspire similar acts of bravery among Irish nationalists.

Even the Virgin Mary gets a heroic part in Alberti's play about the valiant Republican martyr, Fermín Galán. His literature from 1932 onwards is suffused with appeals to Spanish peasants and Republican soldiers to stand up to their oppressors. Much of Alberti's war poetry places great stress on the heroic character of the peasantry, the soldiers of the Popular Army and the International Brigades, and presents individual Republican/Communist leaders such as General Kleber, Hans Biemler, and Juan Modesto Guilloto, as embodying the fearlessness of

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[9] Deane, p.63.

[10] 'reflejar el heroísmo del pueblo en armas y, en la medida de lo possible, formentar y enardecer ese estado de ánimo colectivo' Caudet, p.20.

Republican war-effort.[11] As with Pearse, Alberti's attempt to 'foster and inflame this collective state of mind' among the people is particularly noteworthy in relation to his dramatic output during the war; as is borne out by María Teresa León's comments regarding the extraordinary manner in which a spirit of heroism filled the Zarzuela theatre during performances of his *Numancia.*

The writers of the Irish and Spanish revolutions both sought to (re-) create an 'art of the people'. This ambition drew them to popular and traditional literary forms that appeared to endorse the notion of a heroic national character and history. In Ireland, revivalists believed that the sagas of Gaelic antiquity provided a living connection with the peasantry. Pearse, we saw, wrote two plays based on the legends from the medieval work, *Táin Bó Cuailnge*; and *The King* and *The Master* both present an image of Ireland as a heroic, semi-pagan, culture in its pre-colonial past. Irish history is also of central importance to his political literature. It is apparent in terms of the emphasis that his articles and pamphlets place on iconic republican figures such as Emmet and Tone; and again in the 1916 Proclamation, the first sentence of which claims that 'the dead generations' provide Ireland with 'her old tradition of nationhood'.[12]

The stress that the writers involved in Spanish literary renaissance placed on their national literary heritage was accentuated during the period of the Second Republic. The theatre companies that were established as part of the regime's social initiatives brought masterpieces of Spanish Golden Age such as Lope de Vega's peasant-play, *Fuenteovejuna*, to the rural parts of the country. Rivas Cherif's work at the Teatro Español in Madrid during the 1930s paralleled that of the early Abbey Theatre in the sense that they both combined modern, experimental practices with a repertoire that drew heavily from the nation's literary past, and they occupied a very prominent place in the artistic and political revolutions occurring in those countries. Several of Alberti's major dramas draw inspiration from Spain's literary heritage. *An Uninhabited Man* is a modern version of an *auto sacramental*. *Fermín Galán*, which caused a riot in the Teatro Español in April 1931, takes the form of traditional *romance de ciego*; and *Numancia* is a version of a seventeenth century play that was itself inspired by

[11] See Alberti's poems 'Al General Kleber', 'A Hans Beimler, defensor de Madrid' and 'al Nuevo Coronel Juan Modesto Guilloto, lejano conpañero de colegio en la bahía de Cádiz', in his *Poesías completas* pp. 110, 113, 134 respectively.
[12] *The 1916 Proclamation*, John O'Connor ed., p.10.

events from Spain's past. The significance of historical elements in Pearse's and Alberti's drama (and the literatures of the revolutions as a whole) is essentially the same. In Pearse's terms, they functioned as a source of 'adequate inspiration': the plays offered audiences images of heroic action that they could aspire to, and thus helped to facilitate the process of transformation at the heart of the revolutionary movements in both countries.

There are also, of course, some very noteworthy differences between Pearse's and Alberti's writings. Alberti's creative literature tends to focus on contemporary social and political experience. Pearse only addresses topics of current interest in his political writings and speeches; his fiction, poems and plays make little direct reference to contemporary events. Violence is a central preoccupation for both writers. Alberti, however, lived and wrote through three years of bitter internecine conflict. This experience clearly affected his outlook, as is apparent in the different approach to this subject in early poems such as 'The Civic Elegy' and 'The Fight for the Land', and in later work such as 'Nocturne' and 'Autumn and the Ebro'. Despite the fact that the Great War had been raging since August 1914, affecting the lives of thousands of Irish men and their families, it was only towards the very end of his life that Pearse gained first-hand experience of war. Consequently, we can only speculate as to how his attitude towards bloodshed and suffering might have changed had he survived the Rising.

To some extent, the differences between Pearse's and Alberti's writings can be explained in terms of the dissimilar political ideologies which they espoused. As a republican, Pearse's writings generally represent the Irish conflict as a *national* revolution. Alberti, a communist for most of the 1930s, often treats the Spanish upheaval as part of a wider revolution of the international proletariat. Hence the greater stress that Alberti's writings place on the issue of class-conflict and the role that foreign nationals and governments had to play in the Spanish revolution. Furthermore, the revolutionary movements to which Pearse and Alberti belonged were opposed to different kinds of military and political threats: Irish nationalism defined itself in opposition to a centuries-old imperialist regime; Spanish communism to the new, and European-wide, phenomenon of fascism.

These ideological differences are extremely important, but their significance should not be *over*-emphasized. As noted in the introduction to this study, revolutionary situations are periods when ideologies come into conflict with each other; a confrontation that results in a great deal of political confusion and contradiction. A genuinely historical approach needs to

take full account of this fact. Only in this way can the critic disclose history 'in the process of being made'.[13] My analysis of the upheavals in Ireland and Spain has illustrated that these conflicts were alike in that they both exposed (or perhaps created) deep-seated anomalies and tensions in the ideologies at stake during those upheavals. In the Irish case, this was apparent in terms of the position of Unionists, who in 1913 were preparing to fight the British Government for their right to stay in the Empire; and the manner in which Unionists, and the bulk of the Irish Volunteers, both ended up in the ranks of the British Army during the Great War, fighting on the same side but for opposed causes.

The uneasy alliances that developed between nationalist, socialist and feminist organisations during the conflict is further evidence of the ideological tensions that emerged in this period. The unification of the I.C.A., and the Irish Volunteers led to the resignation of Sean O'Casey in 1914 because he believed the former group's association with Irish nationalism was incompatible with its socialist principles. Indeed, as James Connolly walked into the GPO in 1916, he is reputed to have warned his citizen army, 'If we should win, hold on to your rifles, because the Volunteers may have a different goal.'[14] Similarly, many Irish feminists looked upon the involvement of women's organisations with the Irish nationalist movement as inimical to their own political and social objectives; as is evidenced in the fractious debates over this issue between Constance Markievicz (an officer during the Rising, and one of the leaders of the pro-nationalist *Inghinidhe na h-Éireann* [Daughters of Éireann]), and Hanna Sheehy Skeffington (co-founder of the militant suffrage group, the Irish Women's Franchise League).

If anything, an even greater amount of political confusion emerged in Spain in the 1930s. We have seen that, as in Ireland, the revolutionary situation in Spain drew together a number of movements with very different objectives. The coalitions that contested the 1931 and 1936 elections contained, on the one hand, socialists (and occasionally anarchists) who supported the republican-led revolution because they believed it would lead to a workers' state; and on the other hand, conservative elements that felt the new regime was their only chance of *forestalling* the emergence of a communist state. The political anomalies created by the revolution became particularly acute during the civil war. The Republican regime fought the conflict on the basis that it was the democratically-elected government of Spain. At the same time, however, it

[13] Bhabha, p.3.
[14] Quoted in Foster, p.478.

allowed the Communist party – an organisation with practically no political mandate, and which was itself controlled by a foreign government – to become the most powerful political voice in its cabinets.

Ideological tensions were even more pronounced among socialists. This was a conflict that saw the Communist party ruthlessly crush workers' revolutionary initiatives in the name of a political regime which, from their perspective, represented the interests of the Spanish bourgeoisie. Thomas points out that the Anarchist movement in Spain was prefaced upon a 'theoretical contempt for governmental power.'[15] By the autumn of 1936, however, some of its leaders had come to the conclusion that they needed to compromise on this fundamental principle and take up ministerial posts in the Republic's war-cabinet. Federica Montseny, of the anarchist CNT, became the first female minister in Spanish history when she accepted the post of Minister for Health. In a speech in 1937, Montseny emphasized the extent to which this decision went against her most deeply-held political beliefs.

> How many reserves, doubts, internal anguishes had I to overcome personally in accepting this post! For others, a governmental post could be the goal and the satisfaction of measureless ambitions. For me, it was nothing less than a break with an entire life's work, which itself derived from the life's work of my parents.[16]

At an individual level, women such as Montseny and Ibarruri were well-known and influential figures. As in Ireland, however, the revolution posed very difficult questions regarding the relationship between women's organisations and the male-dominated groups in the conflict. Montseny was closely associated with the *Free Women* [*Mujeres Libres*] organisation. Founded in 1936, this movement had the 'triple objective' of liberating Spanish women from the slavery of ignorance; class-exploitation; and gender-related oppression. Martha Ackelsberg notes that 'these aspirations remained unfulfilled in practice', due to lack of cooperation and disinterest on the part of the anti-fascist groups to which they were affiliated, the anarchist C.N.T., and F.A.I.[17]

From a specifically literary-critical perspective, the histories of both revolutions also exposed a failure on the part of language to express the truth, or full complexity, of the moral and

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[15] Thomas, p.406.
[16] Translation by Thomas, p. 473.
[17] Dones Llibertaries de C.N.T. (antes C.N.T de Barcelona), 'Creación y desarrollo de la organización "Mujeres Libres" (1936-1939)', in [no ed.], *Las mujeres y la Guerra Civil Española: III Jornadas de estudios monográficos* (Slamanca: Ministerio de Asuntos Sociales, 1989), p. 32.

political issues at stake in the conflicts. 'There is no war without rhetoric,' the Republican poet, Antonio Machado, wrote in 1937.

> And the characteristic war-rhetoric is that it consists in being the same for the two belligerents, as if both shared the same ideas and had arrived at a previous agreement over the same truths. Hence [...] the irrationality of War, on the one hand, and of rhetoric, on the other.[18]

Much of the literature of the Irish and Spanish revolutions bears out Machado's point. The declaration issued by Franco on the day of the 17th July 1936 maintained that the Spanish generals were rising in the name of 'peace, fraternity and justice.'[19] Thomas points out that in the early weeks of the war, 'Left and Right had the same way cry: '*Long live Spain and long live the Republic!*' [*Viva España, y Viva la República!*][20] The manifesto published by *The Alliance of Anti-Fascist Intellectuals* following the outbreak of war, stated its side was going to defend Spanish culture 'in all it national and universal, traditional and constantly evolving values.'[21] A few weeks later, the monarchist poet and writer, José María Pemán, made a similar claim for his side: the Francoist forces, he claimed, were fighting 'for Veláquez, for the comedies of Lope de Vega, for Don Quixote [...] for Europe and the entire world.'[22] A similar situation occurred in relation to the Irish conflict. As we saw Fitzpatrick remark, loyalists, republicans, socialists, and women's groups, were all proclaiming 'the ideal of liberation' during the revolution. Pearse claimed to be fighting for political and moral concepts such as freedom, democracy and civilisation, but Jeffery points out, such 'Big words' were also a genuine source of motivation for many of the soldiers who enlisted in the British Army during the Great War. Francis Ledwidge, for example, joined up because he believed Britain 'stood between Ireland and an enemy common to our civilisation.'[23]

There were often huge political differences separating the forces that contested these wars. The similarity of some of the war-rhetoric is not a sign that there was nothing of real importance at stake in these conflicts. Rather, as Machado identified, the irrationality of war-

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[18] [Sin embargo, no hay Guerra sin retórica. Y lo característico de la retórica guerrera consiste en ser ella la misma para los dos beligerantes, comos si ambos comulgasen en las mismas razones y hubiesen llegado a un previo acuerdo sobre las mismas verdades. De aquí [...] la irracionalidad de la Guerra, por un lado, y de la retórica, por otro.] Antonio Machado, *Juan de Mairena II (1936-1938)* Edición de Antonio Fernández Ferrer. Tercera Ediciones Cátedra: Madrid, 1998), p. 15.

[19] 'The Manifesto by General Francisco Franco 17 July 1936' in Kenwood, p.57.

[20] Thomas also notes that the Republican flag remained the emblem of the Franciost armies until the 15 August 1936, when it was formally substituted for that of the monarchy. Thomas, p.414.

[21] See p.154.

[22] Quoted in Thomas, p.416.

[23] Quoted in O'Meara, p. 44.

rhetoric arises because it makes it appear '*as if* both [sides] shared the same ideas' (my italics). The problem, therefore, concerns the inability of language to communicate the full complexity of the issues involved in these unfolding revolutionary situations. This failure was not an unmitigated one, however. Literature, during the Irish and Spanish conflicts, was not *just* 'a weapon of war'.[24] The fact that Machado, a committed Republican, can register the partisan quality of the work produced by writers on both sides of the Spanish conflict serves to illustrate this point: his 'complaint' regarding the ideologically-biased nature of much of the writings is itself a part of the literature of the Spanish Civil War.

It would be difficult to imagine two more ideologically committed writers than Pearse and Alberti. Yet, one of the most interesting features of their writings is that they do not just advocate an ideological position (although they certainly do that), they also reveal their authors' own views in a process of change. The writer who attacked Yeats's theatre and Synge's plays as a young man, seems to have little in common with the figure who later had his work performed in the Abbey Theatre and wrote some of his finest literature in English. The increasingly important part that socialism played in Pearse's thinking in the post-1913 period also reveals how events such as the General Strike altered his political views. By his own admission, Alberti knew 'little or nothing about politics' at the outset of the Spanish Revolution.[25] Between 1930 and 1932, however, he was among the many writers and intellectuals who put their work 'at the service' of the Republic. His political beliefs underwent two further major changes in subsequent years. The first involved his conversion to Marxism during his journey to Russia in 1932 ('I returned from the Soviet Union [...] a different person', he remarks in the third volume of his autobiography[26]); and the second was precipitated by the Civil War, which forced him to once again reconsider his attitude to the Republican regime.

In the context of the changes that they experienced at a personal and a social level, it is not surprising that the work produced by both Pearse and Alberti amounts to a 'literature of crisis'; one which reveals a process of thought rather than a static (or at times even very stable) outlook. Pearse's confessional poetry, such as 'Renunication' and 'Why Do You Torture Me?', and the plays, *The Master* and *The Singer*, focus on individuals who are struggling to

[24] Hernández, p.11.
[25] *The Lost Grove*, p. 170.
[26] Quoted in Havard, p.214.

come to terms with a sense of inner complexity. This is also a central motif in Alberti's work. It is apparent in his early, angst-ridden, poetry collections *Concerning the Angels* and *Sermons and Dwelling Places*, in his more thoughtful civil-war poetry such as 'Madrid-Autumn' and 'Nocturne', and again his final civil war drama, *Any Moment Now*. Furthermore, we have seen that in the work of both authors this sense of crisis is not so much resolved as it is sublimated into a wider social conflict. MacDara and Gabriel, from the plays *The Singer* and *Any Moment Now*, both undergo spiritual crises which bring them to the point of suicide, and then overcome their depression through their involvement in revolutionary politics. Poems such as 'The Fool' and 'Renunciation' by Pearse, and Alberti's Civic Elegy' and 'Madrid-Autumn', reveal a similar process.

The theme of internal conflict in their work also occurs at the level of the national psyche. Notwithstanding Alberti's communism, and the manner in which Pearse at times conflates the Irish upheaval with the wider European war, both writers emphasise the internecine quality of their countries' revolutions. In chapter one we saw that Pearse's educational and political writings focus problems in Irish educational structures, the attitude of the Dublin capitalists during the General Strike, and the manner in which the Irish people had acquiesced before their political oppressors. The notion of the 'enemy within' is also a central theme in his creative literature, especially so in the plays *The Master* and *The Singer*. Aside from the poems that were inspired by his trips abroad between 1932 and 1936, we have seen that Alberti's writings also emphasize specifically Spanish issues such as conflict between the peasantry, the landowners, and the Republican regime; the brutal repression of the Asturias rising of 1934 by the Spanish army and right-wing politicians; and, in particular, the problem of the 'Spanish Catholic spirit'.

The emphasis on the internecine quality of the revolution in their work is particularly noteworthy in relation to the treatment of violence. Bloodshed, suffering and death in Pearse's and Alberti's literature is usually represented as being endured by the revolutionaries themselves, or by a section of the national population, rather than inflicted upon an external aggressor. This aspect of their writing is open to different interpretations. It can be read as a sign of 'revolutionary romanticism'[27]: an indication that – rather than political ideas – they were inspired by a kind of tragic outlook which is drawn to heroic action in the service of

[27] Williams, p. 77.

noble but doomed causes. It is noteworthy that Alberti's play, *Fermín Galán*, strikes the tragic note in 1931, the year the Republic achieved its great electoral success with remarkably little need for the heroic and sacrificial gestures that animates this drama. Practically all of Pearse's literature was written before he had any personal experience of suffering or defeat, which led Irwin Thompson to conclude that he 'lived his life as if he were a hero in a tragedy.' However, the tragic quality of both of these writers' works can also be read as emerging out of the historical and political conditions that prevailed during the conflicts. Like most revolutionary movements, those advocating radical change in Ireland and Spain were *always* confronted with the prospect – indeed the likelihood – of defeat. This was apparent even before the military stages of the conflicts got underway. Furthermore, during much of the time that Pearse and Alberti were writing, widespread suffering and violence *was* a part of the social reality in these countries.

My analysis has suggested that evidence of a literary sensibility in these writers' political outlooks also needs to take into account the extraordinary manner in which literary and social reality impinged upon each other during these revolutions. We have seen, for example, that Kiberd's description of the Easter 1916 rising as 'street theatre', and 'a continuation of what had begun in the national theatre', could be applied equally well to the city of Madrid in November 1937.[28] It is in terms of the concept of tragedy, in particular, that these revolutionary situations exposed what Fussell refers to as 'the curious literariness of real life.'[29] In the ordinary sense of the word both revolutions were tragic in the sense that they resulted in an enormous loss of human life. The fact the greatest number of casualties suffered during the Dublin Rising and the siege of Madrid were innocent civilians compounds this sense of a terrible and unjustified waste of human life. The revolutionary situations were also tragic in the sense outlined by Williams and Eagleton: they involved their participants in a kind 'tragic contradiction' in which they had to view adverse political and social realities in an oddly positive light if they wished to continue their struggle.[30] In the Irish case, this was apparent in the manner that Pearse and Connolly responded to the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. It was also evident in Alberti's attitude towards the eruption of civil war in Spain in 1936. In both cases we see these authors represent the experiences of death, suffering and

[28] Kiberd, p.203-4. See p.75.
[29] Fussell, p.ix.
[30] 'There are kinds of affliction in which loss and gain go curiously together', we saw Eagleton remark in the introduction to this study. 'It is around this aporetic point,' he suggests that 'a good deal of tragedy turns. So too does a good deal of revolutionary politics.' Eagleton, p. 36.

destruction as signs of a process of creation and transformation. Hence Pearse, in his last political testament, *The Sovereign People*, invokes John Mitchell's idea that 'This destruction *is* creation [...] Death is birth and 'The quick spring like weeds out of the dead''; and Alberti in the autumn of 1936 represents Madrid as a city of 'catastrophe and glory' in which 'is heard the birth of the child of victory./ Screaming and pushing the earth inaugurates it.'[31]

This paradoxical response to violence and suffering even extends to the experience of military defeat. 'No failure, judged as the world judges these things, was ever more complete, more pathetic than Emmet's',[32] Pearse remarked in 1914; and the character of MacDara in his last play, *The Singer*, clearly intends to emulate Emmet's defeat. By the criteria of judgement that Pearse was employing, however, such failures could be looked upon with great pride – because they provided Irish revolutionaries with a vital source of heroic inspiration. Much the same kind of outlook is apparent in Alberti's plays, *Fermín Galán* and, particularly, his version of *Numancia*, in which an actually historical military defeat of horrendous proportions is used *to inspire* Republican troops during the civil war.

A final important point of comparison between Pearse and Alberti concerns the treatment of religion in their work. Religion is significant in Pearse's writings in the sense that many of his social and political ideals were defined in opposition to the secularism he believed was inherent in British imperialism, and modern culture in general. Christianity also provided him the conceptual framework through which he articulated the fraught process of socio-political transformation essayed by the Irish revolution. In Pearse's creative and political writings, death, suffering, destruction are invariably set within a future-orientated narrative whose key terms are sacrifice, redemption and resurrection.

The loathing Alberti felt for the Spanish Catholic spirit is the single most recurring theme in his writings between 1929 and 1939. Nevertheless, the influence of Christian theology is apparent in his work also. The notion of the poet as a resurrected messiah-figure occurs in some of the finest poems in his early surrealist collections, *Concerning the Angels* and *Sermons and Dwelling Places*. In his first political drama, *Fermín Galán*, the Virgin Mary offers herself as a martyr to the republican cause, and through his sacrificial death, the play's central

[31] Pearse, *Political Speeches and Writings*, p. 367; Alberti, 'Madrid-Autumn' , p. 402.
[32] Ibid., p. 69.

character is presented as a saviour of the Spanish people. Christian concepts of sacrifice and transcendence are satirized in much of his poetry between 1932 and 1936. This tone is noticeably absent from the treatment of these themes in his Civil War literature, however, when death and suffering became an inescapable part of his experience of war. The concept of transcendence that occurs in poems such as 'Madrid-Autumn', 'Anniversary', and 'You Did Not Fall' is not located in the other-worldly sphere of orthodox Christian theology ('the celestial slime', as he refers to it caustically in one of his 1933 poems, 'To the Nuncio of the S.S. in Spain'); instead, it emerges out of the 'bowels' of the earth itself. In this sense, his civil war literature recalls the materio-mysticism of his earlier surrealist period.[33]

The manner in which the themes of sacrifice and transcendence predominate in Alberti's Civil War writings can be interpreted in various ways. It can be seen as a sign of the author's dormant religious sensibility re-emerging under the pressure of war; evidence, in Alberti's own words, of how his (and other Spaniards') Catholic education 'keeps coming back.' A more convincing reading draws attention to the similarities that revolutionary situations reveal in Christian and Marxist doctrine. 'It is the tragic which both Marxism and Christianity seek to redeem,' Eagleton remarks,

> but they can do so only by installing themselves at the heart of it. Marxism is an immanent critique of class society, not simply a utopian alternative to it; and resurrection for Christianity involves a crucifixion and descent into hell. Otherwise what is reclaimed in both cases would not be *this* condition, in all its deadlock and despair. Reclamation is necessary exactly where it seems least possible.[34]

The language of bloodshed, suffering and redemption was not a peculiarity of Alberti's writings. The same emphasis in apparent, for example, in James Connolly's assertion that 'without shedding of blood there is no redemption.' Dolores Ibarruri recalls that in the period leading up to the defence of Madrid Communist publications such as *Red Front* [*Frente Rojo*] and *Workers' World* [*Mundo obrero*], were advising their soldiers that they were 'duty-bound to be the first in every effort and sacrifice, in shedding our last drop of blood in defense of the cause of liberty'.[35] The prevalence of such language among Marxists in both conflicts suggests that Alberti's response to the violence engendered by Spanish conflict should be understood as

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[33] Many of the surreal images depicted in works such as 'Madrid-Autumn' were probably a quite a faithful representation of the city at the time, a point which again illustrates the manner in which social reality took on a literary quality during the revolution.

[34] Eagleton, p.40.

[35] Quoted in Ibarruri, p.247.

indicative of how revolutionary situations expose underlying similarities between Christian theology and Marxist politics.

The subjects of violence and religion are key themes in the literature of the two writers I examine in the final chapter of this study. As with Pearse and Alberti, we shall see that the literature produced by Æ and Manuel Azaña attests to the extraordinary manner in which literary and political activity impinged on each other during the Irish and Spanish revolutions; and notwithstanding its politically-committed nature, their work also gives expression to the deep-seated anomalies and contradictions that the conflicts generated in these authors' revolutionary ideologies. My analysis considers how they address some of the important issues already discussed in chapters one and two of this study, such as political violence, religion, and the tension between individual, national and universal rights in the Irish and Spanish revolutions. However, I also examine their response to one of the most problematic issues raised by the conflicts, one which is not addressed by either Pearse or Alberti, the question of the revolutions' democratic mandates.

CHAPTER III

Writer-intellectuals: Æ and Manuel Azaña, a Critical Comparison

Introduction

In the introduction to this study I referred to Craig Brinton's description of revolution as a form of 'internal or civil war'.[1] Notwithstanding the importance of international factors during the Irish and Spanish conflicts, such as the involvement of foreign governments and nationals, and the universal nature of some of the contested political ideals, my analysis has illustrated that both of these revolutions conform to Brinton's description. Their internecine quality is underlined in Pearse's and Alberti's writings. It is evident in terms of these authors' scathing criticisms of what they saw as the social and political failings of their respective societies; and the manner in which the theme of violence in their work is primarily directed against the self (at the level of the individual and the communal), rather than external foes. The extent to which the revolutionary movements in Ireland and Spain were directed against internal enemies exposes a serious anomaly at the heart of those movements: these revolutions were presented as *national* campaigns by their supporters, but the issue of how much support they actually enjoyed among the populace of those countries was always a matter of contention.

Curiously, neither Pearse nor Alberti really address this tension in their writings, despite the great emphasize that their work places on the need to transform public opinion. 'The people are to be master' of the Irish Volunteer movement, Pearse wrote in January 1914. 'The Volunteers themselves, the people themselves, must keep control of this movement.'[2] But as F.X. Martin remarked, the insurrection Pearse led two years later was made up 'of a minority, of a minority, of a minority' within the Volunteers, and was roundly condemned as unrepresentative of their views by the vast majority of the Irish people at the time. The manifesto that Alberti issued on

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[1] Brinton, p. 5.
[2] Pearse, *Political Writings and Speeches*, p. 209-10.

behalf of *The Alliance of Anti-Fascist Artists and Intellectuals* following the Francoist rebellion of 1936 announced that 'We declare our total union, *our full and active identification with the people*, who now fight gloriously on the side of the Popular Front Government'. The reality of the situation, however, was that a proportional number of the Spanish people sided with the Francoists as with the Republic during the war. Furthermore, as we have seen, many anti-fascists were actively opposed to the Popular Front regime. In this chapter I present a comparative analysis of the work of two writers who did address the tensions that arose in relation to the democratic basis of the Irish and Spanish revolutions.

Æ and Azaña were both deeply committed to the revolutions that occurred in their respective countries. However, neither of these authors took part in the military side of their respective conflicts. This may account for the fact that their work offers a more 'detached' analysis of the revolutionary situations in Ireland and Spain than sometimes appears in the writings produced by Pearse and Alberti. As we shall see, this is especially apparent in relation to the treatment of revolutionary violence in their work. My analysis of Æ's and Azaña's writings is divided into two sections. Part one examines the ways they responded to some of the key political issues raised by their conflicts, such as the role that religion played in the revolutions; the relationship between individual, national and universal ideals; and the use of violence. Part two presents a comparative analysis of two of their most important literary works: *The Interpreters* (1922) by Æ, and *Vigil in Benicarlo* (1939) by Azaña. Written during the civil wars that brought the revolutionary upheavals in Ireland and Spain to an embittered and highly divisive end, it is in these political fictions that the authors address the problem of disunity that emerged in the course of both revolutionary struggles.

I

Literature and Revolution in Æ and Manuel Azaña

I have always envied that statement by Pericles about the Athenians, 'We listen gladly to the opinions of others and do not turn sour faces on those who disagree with us'. I would like that as an illuminated text to be hung somewhere in every Irish home. (Æ)[3]

The touchstone of liberty is the respect that is given to the conscience of dissidents.
(Manuel Azaña)[4]

Æ is perhaps best known as one of the founding figures of the Irish Revival. His first collection of poetry, *Homeward: Songs by the Way*, was published in 1894. This was followed by *The Earth Breath and Other Poems* (1897), and *The Divine Vision and Other Poems* (1904). In 1902, his dramatic version of an Old Irish legend, *Deirdre*, appeared on the same bill as Yeats's *Cathleen ní Houlihan* at St. Teresa's Hall, in Dublin. He was also closely involved in many of the most significant social and political developments of his day. The *Irish Homestead* was the organ of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society (I.A.O.S.), a body which sought to organize Irish farmers into small, largely self-sufficient, co-operative communities. Æ became its coordinator in 1897. By 1912, the organisation was made up of 970 societies and had an annual turnover of two and three quarter million pounds.[5] Rather than a powerful agricultural union, Æ believed the I.O.A.S. contained the potential to radically transform the economic, social and political bases of Irish society. As his most recent biographer, Nicholas Allen, observes, he sought 'to place the *Irish Homestead* and the cooperative movement at the vanguard of Irish intellectual development', by linking it to other Revivalist initiatives such as the Gaelic League and the National Theatre.[6]

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[3]Quoted in Monk Gibbon (ed.), *The Living Torch A.E.* (London: Macmillan, 1937), p. 58.

[4] [La piedra de toque de la libertad es el respecto de que se tenga a la conciencia de los disidentes.] Azaña, 'New Parties, Old Liberties' [Nuevos Partidos, viejas libertades] (*España*, 15 March 1924), rprt. in Juan Marichal (ed.), *Complete Works of Manuel Azaña* [*Obras completas de Manuel Azaña*], 4vols., (Madrid: Ediciones Giner, 1990), i, p. 500. (Hereafter cited as *Obras completas*)

[5] Nicholas Allen, *George Russell (Æ) and the New Ireland 1905-30* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003), p. 56.

[6] Ibid., p. 31-2. Allen remarks that by this period the I.O.A.S., was reflecting Æ's 'growing respect for continental anarchism', and sought to 'instil the ideas of voluntary communism' among its members. Ibid., ,pp. 40 and 47 respectively

Æ was active in many of the social and political crises that racked Ireland during the 1913-23 period. He was vocal in his defence of Dublin workers during the 1913 Lockout, and involved in attempts to mediate an end to that strike. In 1917 he became a member of the Irish Home Rule Convention, an assembly set up by the British Government in the wake of the Rising to discuss the feasibility of Home Rule for Ireland.[7] He was again drawn into the political arena when the I.A.O.S., Co-ops were targeted by the British armed forces during the Anglo-Irish War of 1919-21. He frequently engages with these and other political developments in both his contemporary poetry and non-fictional writings. Much of his literature was first published in the British and Irish print media and played an important part in educating public opinion in regard to the situation in Ireland; thereby altering government policy towards the conflict.[8] Æ advocated acceptance of the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, arguing that despite its limitations it enabled nationalists to continue the work of the revolution in areas such as economic and educational structures. He became highly disillusioned by the autarkic regime that emerged in the post-revolutionary period, however, and retired to England in 1933. He died in Bournemouth two years later, in 1935.

Manuel Azaña began his political career as a member of the Spanish Reformist Party. It was military takeover by General Primo de Rivera in 1923 that precipitated his turn towards a more radical form of politics.[9] In 1924 he issued his manifesto *Appeal to the Republic* [Apelación a la República], and the following year he formed his own political party, Republican Action [Acción Republicana]. He became Minister of War in the first government of the Republic of 1931. In October of that year, he replaced Alcalá Zamora as Prime Minister when the latter resigned on account of the anti-Church clauses contained in Article 26 of the new Constitution. Azaña saw the Republic as a means to transform cultural and political life in Spain. In September 1931 he

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[7] The Convention met at Trinity College, Dublin, from July 1917 to April 1918. Æ outlined his hopes for the assembly in a series of three articles published in the *Irish Times* in May 1917 under the title 'Thoughts for a Convention'. In these articles he proposes that the British Empire should develop along the lines of 'a federal union of independent nations to protect national liberties'. Quoted in Allen, p. 79. He resigned from the Convention in 1 February 1918 due to his frustration with the lack of progress it had made and, in particular, his 'absolute disillusion with the lack of what he perceived to be any Ulster Unionist good faith in attempting a compromise that would avoid partition.' Allen, p. 83.

[8] See Allen, pp. 107-10.

[9] As Manuel Aragón comments, following the 1923 *coup d'état* Azaña came to believe that the reform of Spanish society was impossible 'without the prior transformation of the State.' [ya no es possible, piensa Azaña, la reforma de la sociedad sin la previa transformación del Estado.] Manuel Aragón, 'Azaña y su idea de la República', in Vicente Alberto Serrano and José María San Luciano (eds.), *Azaña*, 2nd edn. (Alcalá de Henares: Fundación Colegio del Rey, 1991), p. 244.

identified 'two phases of the revolution': the first involved the expulsion of the Alphonsine dynasty and the bringing of 'liberty' to Spain. These had been achieved the previous April. The objective of the second phase was 'to use the Republic, and republican power, as an instrument for the total transformation of the Spanish State and the channel for a new Spanish society.'[10] Following the government's defeat in the 1933 elections, Azaña set about uniting various republican groups into a new party, Republican Left [*Izquierda Republicana*]. He also helped to organise republicans and socialists into the Popular Front coalition that contested and won the February 1936 General Election. Azaña became Prime Minister for a second time in this government. In May 1936 he moved to the post of President in part of a failed attempt to strengthen the government in the face of increasing violence and political instability. The Civil War broke out two months after his appointment and, as President, he was confined to a constitutional role throughout the conflict. Azaña resigned from this position in February 1939, shortly before the end of the war, and died in exile, in Bordeaux the following year.

Like Æ, Azaña was a prolific writer. In the 1920s he edited two of Spain's most prestigious literary-politico journals, *La Pluma* and *España*. Prior to 1931 his literary output included translations of works by George Burrow, G.K. Chesterton, and Bertrand Russell. He won the National Prize for Literature in 1926 (two years after Alberti received the same award) for his *Life of Don Juan Valera*, a study of the nineteenth century Spanish author. He also published numerous political essays, short stories, and two novels, *The Garden of the Friars* [*El jardín de los frailes*], and (the unfinished) *Fresdeval*. During the life of the Republic itself he found time to write *The Crown* [*La corona*], which is his only dramatic work; *My Rebellion in Barcelona* [*Mi rebelión en Barcelona*], a best-selling account of his incarceration during the Workers' Rising in Asturias in 1934; and *Vigil en Benicarlo* [*La velada en Benicarló*], a semi-fictional study of the politics of the Civil War in 1937. He also found the time to keep a political diary and publish a range of essays on contemporary political affairs in Spain.

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[10] [la instauración de la república para expulsar la dinistía y establacer en España la libertad, y en segundo termino usar de la República y del poder republicano como un instrumento para la transformación total del Estado español y el encauzamiento de una nueva sociedad española.] Azaña, 'Phases of the Revolution. The Future of the Constituencies. The Creative Functions of Politics and the Government.' [Fases de la revolución. Porvenir de las Constituyentes. La política y el Gobierno, funciones creadoras.' (A Speech to Acción Republicana – se 1931), rprt., in *Obras completas,* ii, p.29.
Azaña refers to the ousted monarchy as 'eaten-up and corrupted from within; it was just old bark, like old tree trunks rotted with age', in this speech. [estaba corroído y carcomido por dentro; no tenía más que una vieja corteza, como los viejos troncos podridos por los años.] Ibid., p. 30. As we have seen, a few years later Alberti used very similar language to describe the Second Republic in his Civil War poem, '18 July'.

In some respects it would be difficult to imagine two more different individuals than Æ and Azaña. Like much of the literature produced by the Irish Revival, Æ's writings are characterized by an emphasis on legend and folklore, and the espousal of a heroic life-ethic. Standish O'Grady's imaginative histories of Ireland were a particularly important source of inspiration; his work often draws on O'Grady's notion that the Irish are descended from an ancient and noble race of warrior-kings.[11] As Padraic Colum noted, it was during the 1902 production of Æ's dramatic version of *Deirdre*, that 'the sacred name of Cuchulainn was pronounced upon a public stage for the first time, causing 'a thrill [to run] through the audience.'[12] Subjects such as heroism, mythology, and mysticism play little part in Azaña's creative literature.[13] Indeed, he actively distanced himself from 'Regenerationism' [Regenorismo], a comparable literary-political movement that emerged in late nineteenth century Spain.[14] In contrast to such writers, Azaña emphasized the need for Spaniards to break with the past; 'to emancipate ourselves from history'[15]. He was particularly resistant to the notion of the Spanish as a race of heroic warriors, as embodied in legends such as El Cid. 'It is essential to do away with the myth of the soldier-machine', he remarks in a 1923 article for *España*.[16] This kind of rhetoric, he believed had led to arrogance of imperialism and fostered intolerant attitudes towards Spaniards who did not conform to the country's Catholic-monarchist political culture.

There are also differences between these individuals' political ideologies. Azaña was a liberal-republican; a 'Rousseauian', Manuel Tuñón de Lara comments. The political model upon which he sought to reconstruct Spanish society was the Third French Republic between 1870 and

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[11] Following O'Grady's death Æ recalled that: 'When I read O'Grady I was as a man who suddenly feels ancient memories rushing at him, and knows he was born in a royal house [...] I felt exalted as one who learns he is among the children of kings.' G. Russell, 'A Tribute'. Quoted in Allen, p. 20.

[12] Padraic Colum, 'Foreword', Alan Denson (complier) *Printed Writings by George W. Russell (AE) A Bibliography with some notes on his Pictures and Portraits* (Illinois: Northwestern U.P., 1961), p. 13. Constance Markievicz played the title-role in this production.

[13] In June 1927, Azaña remarked in his diary that 'many times I have thought that I am better at politics than I am at literature. This is due, perhaps, to a certain *realistic* propensity that I have in me.' [Muchas veces he pensado que yo valgo más para la política que para la literature. Eso depende quizá de cierta propensión *realística* que hay en mí.] Quoted in José Carlos Mainer, 'Manuel Azaña o el uso confessional de la escritura', in José María Marco (ed.), *Azaña* (Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura, 1990), p. 193.

[14] In an 1923 article he contends that this movement had a conservative and defeatist attitude towards Spanish history, culture and politics. Its 'poets and writers' had represented 'the Spanish being as an excuse for impotence', he complains. [desde entonces corre por válida la especie de que el ser español es una excusa de la impotencia.] Azaña, 'Still 98!' [¡Todavia 98!] (*España*, 20 Oct.- 22 Dec., 1923) , rprt., in *Obras completas*, i, p. 557.

[15] 'En el estado presente de la sociedad española nada puede de hacerse de útil y valedero sin emanciparnos de la historia.' Azaña, 'Three generations of the Ateneo' [Tres generaciones de Ateneo] (Nov. 1930), rprt., in *Obras completas*, i, p. 634.

[16] 'Lo esencial es acabar con el mito del soldado-máquina'. Azaña, 'Memorial of War' [Memorial de guerra] ibid., 509.

1914.[17] Æ was a more eclectic political thinker, influenced by anarchism, communism, theosophy, as well as republican ideas. Notwithstanding his willingness to concede political autonomy to the Basque country and Catalonia, Azaña's political convictions were essentially those of a centralist. His notion of a Spanish democracy was one which closely paralleled the parliamentary systems of the modern British and French states. Æ, on the other hand, was a communitarian, who had little faith in parliaments and centralized forms of government. He believed that it was only through small and tightly-knit communities such as those envisaged by the Co-operative movement that concepts such as democracy and the 'general will' could have any real efficacy.[18]

It is in relation to the matter of religion that the differences between these thinkers are most striking. In 1884 Æ became a member of the Theosophical Society. Founded by a Russian *émigré*, Madame Blavatsky, this esoteric religion posits the existence of an Absolute Spirit, or Divine logos, aspects of which, it maintains, are revealed in the various mythologies and religions of the world.[19] The belief in a higher, spiritual realm of existence permeates his creative writings. As Iyer and Iyer remark, Æ saw the 'potency' of Absolute Spirit 'in the revival of interest in Gaelic mythology and the premonitory yearnings of the Irish people for a new political and social order.'[20] He also believed that the poetic imagination could, at least in principal, communicate profound spiritual truth. 'I am convinced that all poetry is, as Emerson said, first written in the heavens', he writes in *The Candle of Vision* (1918), 'that it is conceived by a self deeper than appears in normal life, and when it speaks to us or tells us its ancient story we taste of eternity and drink the Soma juice, the elixir of immortality.'[21] This belief exerted a huge influence on his understanding of the Irish Revolution. Like Pearse, Æ looked upon the human imagination as the locus-point where the process of transformation attempted by the revolution would either fail or succeed: 'What a man thinks, that he is: That is the old secret', he writes in 'The Renewal of Youth'. 'We have imagined ourselves into littleness, darkness and

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[17] Manuel Tuñón de Lara, 'Manuel Azaña: la razon y el poder' in José María Marco (ed.), *Azaña* (1990), p. 142.
[18] 'The smaller the nation the more possible does it become to have an intensive cultivation of human life', he wrote in September 1921. 'I am not sure that a finer humanity would not be evolved in Ireland if its thirty-two counties were thirty-two independent states than if the whole island became that independent unit that the vast majority of its people now desire it to be.'George W. Russell, (A.E.), 'Conditions of an Irish Settlement', *Pearson's Magazine* (New York edn), 47:3 (Sept. 1921), p. 102.
[19] Æ's poems were first published in the journal of this society. His close friend, W. B. Yeats, was also a member of the society in this period.
[20] Raghovan Iyer and Nandini Iyer (eds.) *The Descent of the Gods: Comprising the Mystical Writings of G.W. Russell (A.E.)* (Gerards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1988), p. 40.
[21] Ibid., p. 117.

feebleness. We must imagine ourselves into greatness.'[22] Theosophy also impacted on his politics in the sense that it led him to view the revolution as part of a broader historical process involving the whole of humankind. Æ conceived the Irish Renaissance 'in the light of universal history', Iyer and Iyer remark, 'as a vital creative impulse, engendering a new philosophy of man'.[23]

The extent to which Æ's religious views underpinned his attitude towards politics is very evident in *The National Being* (1916), his most important study on the subject of Irish politics. Revolution is described in this text as 'the building up of a civilisation' that will help humanity to 'reflect the divine order.' The divisions it had exacerbated in Ireland, he claims, are best understood as revealing limitations within human nature itself, which could only be resolved at the level of the Absolute Spirit.

> This dramatic sundering on earth of virtues in unison in the heavens explains the struggle between Protestantism and Catholicism, between nationalism and imperialism, between individualist and socialist, between dynamic and static in philosophy. Indeed in the last analysis all human conflicts are the balancing on earth of the manifestation of divine principles which are one in the unmanifest spirit.[24]

In marked contrast to Æ, Azaña was not a religiously-minded individual. Educated at an exclusive Augustinian College in the *Escorial*, the future leader of Second Republic not only came to reject the teachings of Catholicism, like Alberti, he developed a great antipathy toward this institution, and saw the revolution as an opportunity to eradicate its influence from Spanish society.[25] The depth of Azaña's feelings on the religious issue are illustrated by two incidents that occurred in the months following the Republican victory in 1931. The first relates to the

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[22] Æ 'The Renewal of Youth' (1895), ibid. p. 627-28. Iyer and Iyer note that Æ published a number of versions of this article in *The Irish Theosophist* between October 1895 and June 1897. Ibid., p. 765.

[23] Ibid., p. 40.

[24] Æ , *The National Being: Some Thoughts on an Irish Polity By A.E.* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1982), pp. 72-3.

[25] Serving as both a palace and a monastery, Robert Stradling observes that this building 'was originally designed as a power-centre of imperial administration and religious orthodoxy' in seventeenth century Spain. Robert Stradling, 'History and the Triumph of Art: Manuel Azaña's Vision of Spanish Democracy' in Robert Stradling, Scott Newton and David Bates (eds), *Conflict and Coexistence: Nationalism and Democracy in Modern Europe – Essays in Honour of Harry Hearder* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), p. 141.
In a speech to the Cortes in 1931 he suggested that the 'religious problem' (by which he meant 'the implantation of a secular State') was one of the three principle areas in which Republicans needed to focus on in their efforts to transform the State and Spanish society; the other two areas being 'the problem of local autonomies', and changes to property laws 'Estos problemas, a mi corto entender, son principalmente tres: el problema de las autonomís locales, el problema social en su forma más urgente y aguda, que es la reforma de la propiedad, y éste que llaman problema religioso, y que es, en rigor, la implantación del laicismo del Estado con todas sus inevitables y rigurosas consecuencias.' Azaña, 'Religious Politics: Article 26 of the Constitution' [Política religiosa: El artículo 26 de la Constitutión] (Speech to the Cortes, 13 Oct. 1931) , rprt. in *Obras completas*, ii, p. 50.

outbreak of church-burnings that took place in Madrid and other cities in May of that year. The new government did nothing to prevent these attacks. According to ex-monarchist minister Miguel Maura (the only member of the cabinet to argue that the Civic Guard be used to quell the attacks) Azaña was primarily responsible for this inaction, remarking to the cabinet that 'all the convents of Madrid are not worth the life of a single republican.'[26]

The second incident concerns his forthright support for Article 26 of the new constitution, which contained the Republic's controversial proposals to radically curtail the activities of the Catholic Church in Spain. Azaña intervened in the heated parliamentary debates on this issue to lend his unequivocal support to the new laws. It was in the course of his highly polemical speech in support of Article 26 that he notoriously claimed 'Spain is no longer Catholic', a statement that the right wing media subsequently invoked as proof of the Republic's anti-Catholic ethos.[27] Azaña's support for Article 26 was particularly uncompromising in relation to the issue of clerical involvement in education. 'In no moment, under no conditions, at no time,' he insisted to the Cortes, 'will my party or I, in its name, subscribe to a legislative clause in virtue of which educational matters will continue to be surrendered to the religious orders.' The hardline he took on this issue is especially noteworthy as it seems to contradict one of his own core political principles: freedom of conscience. Azaña recognized this anomaly himself, but insisted that his dogmatism was justified in this one case: 'don't let them tell me that this is contrary to freedom' he warned his fellow-deputies in the course of his speech, 'because this is a question of public health.'[28]

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[26] Quoted in Carr, p. 37.

[27] [España ha dejado de ser católica], Azaña, 'Religious Politics: Article 26 of the Constitution', rprt in *Obras completas*, ii, p. 50.

[28] [en ningún momento, bajo ningúna condición, en ningún tiempo, ni mi partido ni yo, en su nombre, subscribiremos una cláusula legislativa en virtud de la cual siga entregado a las órdenes religiosas el servicio de la enseñanza. Eso jamás [...] A mí que no me vengan a decir que esto es contrario a la libertad, porque esto es una cuestión de salud pública.] Ibid., p. 57. Azaña's speech also undermined the efforts at conciliation that the republican Minister for Justice had made by drawing attention to the charitable work done by many religious communities in Spain. In his speech, Azaña claimed that the nuns who worked in Spanish hospitals used this work 'as a vehicle to proselytise,' and added that it was common knowledge that they offered preferential treatment to the sick who profess the Catholic faith. [debajo de la aspiración caritativa, que doctrinalmente es irreproachable y admirable, hay, sobre todo, un vehículo de proselitismo que nosotros no podemos tolerar. (Muy bien) Pues qué, ¿no sabemos todos que el pobre enfermo hospitalizado se lo hace objecto de trato preferente según cumple o no los preceptos de la religión católica?] Ibid., p. 57

Azana's uncompromising stance during these crises had grave implications for the Republican regime as a whole, as they helped to convince many Spanish Catholics of the government's hostile intentions towards their religion. His involvement in these controversies was also important in that it distracted him, and the Republican party, from the more pressing agrarian crisis. As Brenan has observed, the survival of the new regime depended in large measure on its ability to bring about real improvements in the lives of the Spanish peasantry. Unlike Æ, however, Azaña displayed minimal interest in agriculture and labour issues. In contrast to his high-profile role in the debates over Article 26, for example, he took little part in the agrarian-related legislation introduced by the Republic.[29]

Notwithstanding the above differences, there also some striking parallels between Æ's and Azaña's literature and their political ideologies. Their writings bear comparison, firstly, in terms of how they engage with contemporary political and social issues. Æ's poems 'To the memory of some I knew who are dead and who loved Ireland', 'Michael', and 'Brixton prison: August 31, 1920' were inspired by the 1916 Rising, The Great War, and Terence McSwiney's hunger strike, respectively.[30] Under his editorship, the *Irish Homestead* not only published some of the finest new Irish writing, it dealt with issues of a directly political nature such as the 1913 Lockout, the Conscription crisis, Republicanism, Imperialism and contemporary military developments in the 1919-21 period.[31] As noted earlier, Æ's journalism and prose-fiction frequently deal with topics such as the attacks on the I.A.O.S. Co-ops by the British government forces, the feasibility of the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, and the objectives of the revolution itself.

Azaña also published a great number of articles on matters relating to military and political affairs in Spain. The two journals he edited, *La Pluma* and *España*, were similar to the *Irish Homestead* in that they combined material of a literary, philosophical and political nature, thus

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[29] Carr describes Azaña as 'a typical urban intellectual,' who showed no real interest in agrarian questions, and notes that 'they are hardly treated at all in his collected works.' Carr, p. 34*n*.

[30] The first of these poems is an extended version of an earlier work entitled 'Salutation, A Poem on the Irish Rebellion of 1916', the later version was first published in the *Irish Times* on 19 December 1917. 'Brixton prison: August 31, 1920', first appeared in the London *Times*, on the 2 September 1920. In the introduction we saw Brown observe that Revivalist writers felt their literature would help to 'generate a sense of national self-worth and organic unity, which would give the political struggle a dignity and purpose it would otherwise lack.' These poems illustrate that the reverse point is equally true: the political struggle in Ireland itself lent a dignity and purpose to Irish literature in this period.

[31] George Bernard Shaw remarked that the paper always contains 'from one to three first-rate political and social articles, followed by instructions on how to keep bees or conduct continuous cropping or what not.' Quoted in Allen, p. 10.

providing an outlet for a wide range of social and political opinion.[32] While his own creative writing is often of an auto- or semi-autobiographical nature, the same works address issues he believed were central to Spain's social and political ills. His bildungsroman, *The Garden of the Friars*, is clearly rooted in the author's experiences at the Augustine college *El Escorial*. In his prologue, however, Azaña refers to this work as 'confessions without a subject'. The narrator, he insists here, is a 'pure symbol', one that raises an issue of national importance, namely, the role of the Catholic clergy in Spanish educational structures.[33] Three of his later works, *The Crown*, *Fresdeval*, and *The Vigil in Benicarlo* deal directly with the themes of civil war and revolution.[34]

Of greater interest than the fact that they engage with contemporary social and political issues in their writings is the manner in which these authors' literary and political interests seem to replicate and feed into each other. In dedicating *The National Being* to Horace Plunkett, Æ describes his book as the 'consequence of a grafting operation' between poetry and economic theory; 'a hybrid' in which he was 'led to speculate' on how economics and poetry 'might be brought within hailing distance of each other.'[35] The centrality of his aesthetic vision to his political ideas is evident throughout this work. In chapter nine, for example, he remarks that 'It fills the soul with weariness to think of another nation following the old path, without thought or imagination of other roads leading to new and more beautiful life.'[36] Similar Wilde-like sentiments appear in 'Conditions of an Irish Settlement', where he suggests that 'Uncomely faces, meagre forms, homes without beauty are greater wrongs to the spirit than undemocratic forms of government and it is the greatest evil in our lives that we look every day upon civilisation without beauty and are not hurt by its absence.'[37]

Many critics have commented upon the extent to which Azaña's artistic sensibility influenced his political thinking. José Montero describes him as 'an intellectual who derives his politics, almost in their entirety, from his predominant aesthetic capability', and Ramos Olivera suggests that 'in

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[32] Carr remarks that 'the Republic of 1931 seemed born out of [the] protest' of the writers who contributed to journals such as *La Pluma* and *España*. Carr, p. 532.

[33] 'Quisiera tan sólo declarar a los amigos inclinados a otorgarme la merced de leerlas, el enigma de unas confesiones sin sujeto [...] No es persona con nombre y rostro. Es puro signo.' *The Garden of the Friars,* rprt in *Obras completas*, i, p. 665.

[34] In addressing these themes only *The Vigil in Benicarlo* refers directly to the circumstances of the 1931-9 period in Spain.

[35] *The National Being*, 'Dedication' *n.p.*

[36] Ibid., p. 72.

[37] 'Conditions of an Irish Settlement', p.102.

his heart, Azaña was an artist, that is, a man of aesthetic sensibilities'.[38] These assessments are confirmed by Azaña's own remarks. In the course of a speech to the Cortes in September 1932 he suggested that it was unrealistic 'to draw a distinction between my actions as a political man and my sentiments as a writer [...] because it is not possible to establish those kinds of divisions and compartments in a man's spirit'.[39] It was a creative factor common to both of these activities, Azaña maintained, which enabled a comparison between them. In 1931 he likened the satisfaction he and his fellow-Republicans received from their involvement in 'the immense task' [la obra inmensa] of the revolution to 'the pleasure' an artist feels while handling materials such as painting, language, or marble.[40] In 1931, he represents the revolution as an attempt to 'bring to life' the ideas that republican intellectuals had been writing about in literay-political journals such as *La Pluma* and *España*: 'politics, and above all government, is a creation;' he remarks, 'and what we must aspire to is to put into effect a creative will, anterior to written texts, which does not consist in abrogating articles into laws, but in making them "come alive"'.[41]

The confessional quality of much of their literature is another important characteristic that they share in common. As for Pearse and Alberti, the activity of writing for these authors involved a process of self-examination as well as self-expression. It was a means of moving beyond the propaganda and simplistic rhetoric that characterised much of the discourse of both revolutions to articulate (or perhaps discover) the complex truth of their own views on those conflicts. This ambition often manifested itself in the form of the 'internal dialogue'. Azaña's short story, 'At the Gates of the Other World', hinges on a heated discussion on the existence of God between a Catholic priest and an elderly Spanish intellectual whose, relaxed, secular humanism clearly echoes the author's own outlook. 'Think at least in the possibility, nothing more than in the possibility that you are mistaken. Examine the possibility that there is a God, and a heaven and a hell ... What then? Come on! Answer!' implores the priest. 'I will have made a bad deal',[42] the

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[38] 'Azaña es básicamente un intelectual que deriva su política, casi en su totalidad, de su predominante capacidad estética.' José Montero, *El drama de la verdad en Manuel Azaña* (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, 1979), p. 30.
[39] 'Su señoría se equivoca cuando [...] pretende establecer una diferencia entre mi acción como hombre politico y mis sentimientos como escritor. Es un error, señor Ossorio; proque no se puede establecer en el espíritu de un hombre esa clase de divisiones y compartimentos'. Azaña, *Obras completas*, ii, p. 410. Azaña made this comment in response to Angel Ossorio's praise for his novel, *The Garden of the Friars*.
[40] 'el placer que puede sentir el artista al manejar la materia artística, la pintura, el lenguage o el mármol'. Azaña, 'Phases of the Revolution' [Fases de la revolución], *Obras completas*, ii, p. 43.
[41] 'la política, y sobre todo el gobernar, es un creación; y a lo que nosotros debemos aspirar es a poner en ejercicio una voluntad creadora, anterior a los textos escritos, que no consiste en cifrar artículos en un código, sino en hacerlo vivir.' Ibid., p. 43.
[42] 'Reflexione usted siquiera en la posibilidad, nada más que en la posibilidad de equivocarse. Examine la posibilidad de que haya Dios, y un cielo y un infierno ... ¿Qué sería de usted? ¡Vamos! ¡Conteste!'
'Habría hecho un malísimo negocio.' Azaña, 'A las puertas del otro mundo' (1920). *Obras Completas*, i, p. 791.

rationalist concedes. 'An eternity of torments', he notes drily, 'is a greater burden than resignation and irony.'[43] Æ's fictional dialogue, *Ireland and the Empire at the Court of Conscience*, reveals a similar process of self-interrogation. This pamphlet was published in September 1921 during the truce period that preceded the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty of that year. The work takes the form of a fictional discussion between two voices in 'the House of reason' which present opposing views on the impending treaty.[44] Æ's 'court' fails to arrive at a verdict. By the end of the discussion the only advice that the framing narrator feels able to offer his readers is that since the war has been raised to the 'intellectual and spiritual' plane, no one should resume the conflict before the country has had a chance to respond to the British offer.[45]

Not just a way of airing personal doubts and insecurities, the confessional, or dialogic element in these texts, was important because it revealed their authors attempting to tease out the strengths and weaknesses of their views on a range of contentious social and political issues. Both Æ and Azaña placed the highest *political* priority on such critical thinking. 'I interrogate myself – as is incumbent on everyone – in order to puzzle out the being of Spain', Azaña writes in 'A Constitution in Search of an Author' (1924), before embarking on a discussion of Spanish attitudes towards freedom.[46] Prior to commencing his dialogue in *Ireland and the Empire at the Court of Conscience*, Æ complains that

> at this crisis in Ireland [...] hardly a questioning of national conduct is evident. An offer has been made by Great Britain to Ireland, and to all appearance speculation as to its meaning, the choice of peace or war and the fate of millions is left to a few score representatives.[47]

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[43] 'Una eternidad de tormentos es un peso superior a la resignación y a la ironía.' Ibid., 792.
[44] *Ireland and the Empire at the Court of Conscience*, (Dublin: The Talbot press, 1921)
[45] Æ, *Ireland and the Empire*, p. 16.
[46] 'Me interrogo – como incumbe a cada uno – para desentrañar el ser de España.' Azaña, 'A Constitution in Search of an Author' [Una constitution en busca de autor] (*España*, 12 January, 1924), rprt in *Obras Completas*, i, p. 485.
'Since birth,' the narrator in *The Garden of the Friars* complains, 'a character, who can't an angel, has accompanied me, grumbling continually, unhappy with me, as though I could have given him a better life, never quite telling me who he is nor what he wants.' [Desde el nacer, me acompaña un personaje, que no debe de ser un ángel, rezongando de continuo, descontento de mí, como si yo pudiese darle mejor vida, sin acabar de decirme quién es ni qué qué pretende. Estoy, al cabo, aburrido de él. Matarlo sería un placer y no puedo.] *Obras Completas*, i, p. 726.
[47] Æ, *Ireland and the Empire*, p.2. In *The National Being* he comments that 'We have been told, during my lifetime at least, not to criticize leaders, to trust leaders, and so intellectual discussion has ceased.' *The National Being*, p. 7. The Preface, and the inconclusive ending to Æ's dialogue, underline the fact that, rather than seeking to promote his own view, his primary intention in this pamphlet was to promote public discussion on the prospect of a Treaty with England – to encourage individuals to question the meaning and purpose of the revolution for themselves. In his responding pamphlet Captain George Harrison, M.C., criticizes Æ for being unduly critical of Dominion status, and for failing to provide 'any adjudication' in relation to this issue. See *Mr. George Russell ('AE.') and his Court of Conscience for Ireland and the Empire. An Intervener.* (Dublin: The Irish Dominion League, 1921), p. 3.

The two works examined in the latter half of this chapter – *The Interpreters* and *The Vigil in Benicarlo* – stand as the most important examples of texts in which these authors employ the form of the internal dialogue in order to explicate the full complexity of their attitudes towards issues their countries' revolutions.

There are also important similarities between Æ's and Azaña's political beliefs and objectives. The reservations that we saw Æ express about modern parliamentary democracies derived from his doubts concerning the representative quality of these forms of government. 'The history of democracies is not one to fill us with confidence,' he remarks in *The National Being*. 'The truth is that the world has yet to see the democratic State.'[48] The challenge facing emerging nations such as Ireland, he believed, was to put into practice the *as yet unrealised* ideal of popular sovereignty, to 'draw [...] submerged humanity into the light and make them real partners in the social order'.[49] In 'Conditions of an Irish Settlement' he explains that he has 'always been sympathetic with the desire of small nations for completest [*sic*] freedom to mould their own destiny', because 'the great State tends to become static, and because it is desirable to have governments human in character and easily malleable by the will of the people'.[50]

The ideal of democratic government was also a cornerstone of Azaña's political philosophy, although he had far more faith than Æ in the ability of centralised, national government to represent the interests of their people. The importance of this theme recurs throughout his political writings of the 1930s.[51] Not surprisingly, however, his advocacy of democratic government gained a particular urgency in the aftermath of the Generals' rising of July 1936. Time and again during the civil war Azaña referred to the Popular Front coalition as 'the legitimate government of Spain.'[52] The Francoist forces, he insisted, were to be fought solely on the basis that they had attacked 'the regime which the nation, had given itself, freely, through universal suffrage.'[53] In this way, he hoped to convey the notion that it was the Republic – and not the self-styled 'Nationalist' rebels – who represented the cause of Spain in the war. To this end he often represented the conflict as a war of national self-defence, even at times 'a war of

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[48] *The National Being*, p. 16.
[49] Ibid., p. 18
[50] 'Conditions of an Irish Settlement', p. 102.
[51] All Spaniards 'recognise the doctrine that founds the State in liberty of conscience, in equality before the law, in open discussion, and in the superiority of majority rule, freely expressed', he insisted a September 1930 speech, 'The Revolution in Progress'. [que todos admiten la doctrina que funda el Estado en la libertad de conciencia, en la igualidad ante la ley, en la discusíon libre, en el predominio de la voluntad de la mayoría, libremente expresada.]Azaña, 'La revolución en marcha' (Sept 1930), rprt. in *Obras completas*, i, p. 16.
[52] [el gobierno legítimo de España], rprt. in *Obras completas*, iii, p. 334.
[53] 'el régimen que la nación, libremente, por el sufragio universal, se había dado', ibid., p. 330.

independence' [una guerra de Independencia], rather than the less clear-cut notion of an internecine conflict.

The importance of individual freedom, particularly as it pertained to the issue of freedom of conscience, was another core value for both authors. 'The first, fundamental idea inspiring an Irish polity should be freedom in all spheres of thought', Æ writes in the opening pages of *The National Being*.[54] Azaña placed an equally high priority on this issue. The most important public right he remarks in 1924 is always 'freedom of opinion; in the end it is the bulwark of all the others.'[55] Notwithstanding the centrality of values such as individual liberty and freedom of conscience in their political outlooks, neither Æ nor Azaña endorsed the theory of individual autonomy that characterises much modern liberal thought. Indeed, both thinkers saw it as a primary aim of their revolutions to overcome the spirit of individualism and self-interest which they believed characterised their societies. In *The National Being* Æ maintains that the Co-operative movement would play a essential role in regard to this ambition because it led its members out of 'the isolation and individualism' of modern Irish life.[56] The I.O.A.S., connected the individual

> with the nation through membership of a national movement, not for the political purposes which call on him for a vote once every few years, but for economic purposes which affect him in the course of his daily occupations.[57]

The 'transformation of the social order' that the movement promised to effect, he continues, 'will make men truly citizens, thinking in terms of the nation, identifying national with personal interests.'[58]

'We Spaniards love our liberty with a fierce and indominable passion; our spirited individualism is famous, little short of being anti-social', Azaña remarks in a 1924 article, 'A Constitution in

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[54] *The National Being*, p. 75.

[55] [Lo primero que perece, siempre, es la libertad de opinión, al fin ella es el baluarte de todas las damás.] Azaña, 'New Parties, Old Liberties' [Nuevos Partidos, Libertades Viejas] (*España*, 15 March 1924), rprt. in *Obras completas*, i, p. 500.
The importance of this issue to Azaña helps to explain his intransigence towards the Catholic Church. In the course of his speech on Article 26 of the Republican constitution he maintained that the church's motives in monopolising educational structures 'has been very clear: instead of pouncing upon the wealth, they have pounced upon the consciences of its owners and making themselves owners of the consciences, they have both the wealth and its possessors.' [la táctica ha sido bien clara: en vez de precipitarse sobre los bienes se han precipitado sobre los consciencias de los dueños y haciéndose dueños de los consciencias tienen los bienes y a sus poseedores.] Ibid, p. 54

[56] *The National Being*, p. 24.

[57] Ibid., p. 27-8.

[58] Ibid., p. 28.

Search of an Author'. [59] In the same text, however, he stresses that 'no aspiration is more precarious, no spiritual appetite is so dependent on the assent of the other [...] In order to be free, society is necessary; nobody is, unless society consents to it.'[60] Writing the year after Primo de Rivera had usurped State authority with the collusion of the monarchy, he purports to be baffled as to why the Spanish people never accepted the Republican Constitution of 1812, a regime which had enshrined the core 'Spanish' value of personal liberty in its Constitution. 'Is it that Spaniards – while such jealous protectors of their own liberty – abhor that of their neighbour?' he asks. It is the desire to answer this question, he goes on to remark, which inspires his own involvement in politics: 'I want to know for once and for all if [...] we are natural enemies of liberty, if it disgusts us to organise a liberal society.'[61]

We have seen in the earlier chapters of this study that the Irish and Spanish revolutions were conceived as cultural and moral, as well as a political projects; movements that would usher in new epochs, new civilisations even, in their respective countries. This idea also animates Æ's and Azaña's writings.[62] As with Pearse and Alberti, their literature reveals that the desire to transform a national culture requires a complex appreciation of its existing identity. It is a feature of both writers work that they emphasize the multiplicity of ways in which national character and identity can manifest itself. 'The national being is manifold, rich, intricate and of many dimensions', writes Æ, in 'The One-Dimensional mind'. 'The first service anyone can render to his or her nation is to study and comprehend something of the infinite variety of its cultural, social and economic life, as well as its political consciousness.[63] Similarly, in *España*, Azaña comments that 'national character [...] is wider than the political arena, It manifests itself

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[59] 'los españoles amamos nuestra libertad con pasión fiera y indomable; es famoso nuestro arriscado individualismo, poco menos de antisocial'. Azaña, 'A Constitution in Search of an Author' [Una constitution en busca de autor] (*España*, 12 January, 1924), rprt in *Obras Completas*, i, p. 486.

[60] 'Con ser tan violenta y natural, ninguna aspiración es más precaria, ninguna apetencia del espíritu depende tanto del asentimento ajeno [...] Para ser libre, la sociedad es necesaria; nadie lo es si la sociedad no lo consciente.' Ibid., p. 486.

[61] 'Quisera yo saber de una vez para siempre si los españoles, por temperamento, somos naturalmente enemigos de la libertad, si nos repugna organizar una sociedad liberal.' Ibid.
The title of this article appears to have been inspired by Luigi Pirandello's 1923 drama, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. This play was produced in Spain during the 1924-5 theatrical season by the director Cipriano Rivas Cherif. Given Azaña's interest in drama, and his close friendship with Rivas Cherif, it is highly probable that he was familiar with the work. The basis of the analogy seems to be that just as the characters in Pirandello's play *think* they lack a script, but are in fact already performing the play that he wrote for them, so too Spaniards already possess the political document that they are searching for in the form the 1912 Constitution.

[62] 'We in Ireland are in quest of a civilisation.' Æ writes in *The National Being*, p. 42; 'If the republic didn't exist to advance civilisation in Spain, why did we want it?' Azaña writes in *The Vigil in Benicarlo* [Si la República no había venido a adelantar la civilización en España ¿para qué la queríamos?], rprt. in *Obras completas*, i, p. 435.

[63] Æ 'The One-Dimensional Mind', rprt. In Gibbon, p. 191.

in everything. We cannot seize full hold of it from a political perspective. The character evades us; it is incommunible, incomprehensible. Impossibly various in a man's life.'[64]

As with Pearse and Alberti, the complexity of their revolutionary ideologies is particular evident in regard to the treatment of the past and the manner in which they combine specifically national and universal political ideals. The importance of the past and Irish mythology as a source of national identity in Revivalist literature was highlighted in chapter one. Æ's work is no exception is this regard. This theme recurs in his political essays and his creative literature. 'There lived of old in Eri a heroic race whom the bards sang as fearless', he writes in 'Priest or Hero'. 'What, I wonder, would these antique heroes say coming back to a land which preserves indeed their memory but emulates their spirit no more?'[65] A somewhat more optimistic view of the continuity of Irish national identity appears in *The Inner and the Outer Ireland.* The use of English 'has but superficially modified Irish character', he contends in this 1921 pamphlet. 'Gaelic culture still inspires all that is best in Irish literature and Irish life.' Pearse is described here as 'the last great champion of the Gaelic tradition', the hero 'who led the astonishing enterprise of Easter Week, 1916.'[66]

Two points need to be borne in mind with regard to the stress on Irish history in Æ's writings. Firstly, it is counter-balanced by an equally strong emphasis on the revolution as a future-orientated enterprise. 'We would no Irish sign efface', he asserts in one of his finest poems, 'On Behalf of Some Irishmen Not/ Followers of Tradition',

> But yet our lips would gladlier hail
> The firstborn of the Coming Race
> Than the last splendour of the Gael.[67]

His political literature reinforces this sense of the revolution as a time of change and innovation. Allen notes that the image of Ireland presented in *Co-operation and Nationality* is that of a nation 'transported into a new era, its history baptized into a new tradition'.[68] The complexity of Æ's attitude towards the past is especially evident in *The National Being.* This study begins with

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[64] 'el carácter nacional [...] es más amplio que el área política. En toda se manifiesta. Desde la acción política, no podríamos hacer en él presa plena. El carácter nos disocia; es incommunicable, incomprensible. Difícilmente varía, en la vida de un hombre.' Azaña, 'Intellegence and Character in Political Action' [La inteligencia y el caracter en la accion politica] (*España*, 2 Nov., 1924), rprt. in *Obras* completas, i, p. 489.
[65] Æ, 'Priest or Hero', rprt. in Iyer and Iyer, p. 363.
[66] G. Russell, *The Inner and the Outer Ireland* (Dublin; Talbot Press, 1921), p. 5.
[67] Æ, 'On Behalf of Some Irishmen Not/ Followers of Tradition', rprt. In Terence Brown, ed.,'Cultural Nationalism 1880-1930', in *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, ii, pp. 544-5.
[68] Allen, p. 54.

a metaphor which imagines Ireland in terms of a new-born infant. 'In the year nineteen hundred and fourteen Anno Domini, amid a world conflict, the birth of the infant State of Ireland was announced', he writes, referring to the Government of Ireland Bill which was passed through the House of Commons in that year.'[69] The fact that he describes the Irish people as only commencing a process 'of nation-building' in 1914;[70] that they are 'at the beginning of [their] activity as a nation' and have 'yet to settle fundamentals',[71] suggests that he was not attempting to draw a distinction between the new State and the ancient nation of Ireland with this metaphor. In the same work, however, he also describes the new State as merely 'a physical body prepared for the incarnation of the soul of a race [...] There is still some incorruptible spiritual atom in the people,' Æ continues, 'we are still in some relation to the divine order', and so the new Irish polity must be in accord with this ancient, 'national character'.[72] These latter comments suggest that the Irish nation existed long before the 1914 Bill.

The emphasis on an ancient national identity in Æ's writing was, to a large extent, part of a rhetorical strategy designed to further his own vision as to how the infant-nation should develop. At several points in *The National Being* he draws attention to the tenuousness of the connection to the past. In chapter fifteen, for example, he remarks that 'we can no more deduce the political character of the Irish from the history of the past seven hundred years than we can estimate the quality of genius in an artist whom we have only seen when grappling with a burglar.'[73] Æ recognised that the concept of Irish nationality still required a leap of faith in 1916, the year he completed *The National Being*. Only after a period of self-government, he observes at the start of this work, will be established 'if there is anything in the theory of Irish nationality'.[74]

The second point to note in relation to the stress on history and mythology in Æ's writings is that it was not – in itself – the notion of an ancient and unique Irish identity which attracted his interest. Rather, it was for the sake of (what he believed were) the universally-good ideals and values embodied in that culture that he invoked the Irish past. Hence, as often as he looks back to an idealised Celtic history in *The National Being* he also cites the ancient civilisations of Attica, Egypt or Greece as representing the kind of cultural and social ideals that should inspire

[69] As noted in chapter one, this Bill was passed with two other laws which postponed its operation for the duration of the War, and to allow time for consideration of the Ulster question.
[70] *The National Being*, p. 5.
[71] Ibid., p. 9
[72] Ibid., p. 14.
[73] Ibid., p. 122.
[74] Ibid., p. 2.

the nascent Irish nation. The notion that Ireland could function as a kind of conduit for the realisation of human virtues that had a universal application recurs throughout his literature. In 'Thoughts for a Convention' (1917) he remarks that 'We not only have to be good Irishmen, but good citizens of the world'[75]; and in 'Irish Anticipations' he suggests the Irish fixation with the past will exhaust itself in a post-revolutionary society once the threat to national identity has been removed.

> The complete triumph of nationalism will generate its own anti-toxin, and great numbers of young men will begin to ransack world literature and science for truth, and bring the aged and new thought into Ireland, not to submerge the Gaelic culture but to enrich it and graft onto it those fundamental and universal ideas without which the intellectual life of a nation would be barren and its culture and literature provincial.[76]

Azaña's political literature reveals a similar fusion of the new and old, cultural nationalist and humanist ideals. José María Marco points out that 'the importance of French culture' to Azaña did 'not proceed from its specific character, but from its having assumed, as its own, a number of universal ideals', such as liberty, equality and fraternity.[77] It was one of Azaña's primary political objectives to apply those values to a Spanish context, and construct a republican-nation composed of 'equal, rights-bearing citizens, united in patriotic attachment to a shared set of political practices and values.'[78] In September 1931 he averred to 'a double quality' in the citizens of the Republic, 'their standing as men and their standing as Spaniards', and promised 'to protect, to foster and raise up those two radical qualities in the citizens.'[79] Two years later, in a speech entitled 'The New Republican Order', he described the regime's political ethos as being 'at once Spanish and universal, at once revolutionary and traditionalist'.[80]

Throughout the 1930s its opponents sought to represent the Second Republic as a foreign form of government, antagonistic to the Spanish character and way of life. It was partly in response to these attacks, no doubt, that Azaña frequently emphasized the deep connection he felt to the

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[75] G. Russell, 'Thoughts for an Irish Convention' *Irish Times*, 26 May 1917. Quoted in Allen, p. 80.
[76] 'Irish Anticipations,' p. 291.
[77] 'la importancia de la cultura francesa no procede de su carácter específico, sino de haber asumido, como propios, unos ideales universales.' José María Marco, *La inteligencia republicana: Manuel Azaña 1879-1930* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1988) p. 40.
[78] Definition of civic nationalism in Kearney 1997, p. 3.
[79] 'Pues yo consideraría en los cuidadanos de la República una doble cualidad: su cualidad de hombres y su cualidad de españoles. Y con una política inspirada a la vez en la ciencia, en la moral y en la historia, me dedicaría a proteger, fomentar y elevar esas dos cualidades radicales de los cuidadanos'. Azaña, 'Phases of the Revolution' [Fases de la revolución] (Sept 1931), rprt. in *Obras completas*, ii, p.39.
[80] Y este es mi concepto de la República, de donde yo saco la substancia de mi ser republicano: una República a la vez española y universal, a la vez revolucionaria y tradicionalista, fundada no sobre las arenas viciosas, deleznables, de una historia falsificada, sino sobre la pura roca de nuestro corazón de republicanos.' Azaña,'El orden nuevo republicano' (14 March, 1933), rprt. in *Obras completas*, ii, p. 639.

nation's culture and history. 'No one has such a deep, pure and ardent 'Spanishness' in their veins as I do', he insisted in a July 1931 speech,

> no one feels the echoes of the history of our country beating in their hearts with the same vehemence, depth, and personal passion with which I feel it every time that I glimpse the monuments and creations of our ancestors, before which I feel my spirit beating in communication with all those who have preceded us in this immense Spanish ancestral home, which has been mistreated, impoverished and dishonoured by its evil shepherds, this land beloved of our hearts, and the reserve of our blood.[81]

The cultural nationalist strain in his writings became particularly pronounced during the civil war, when the self-styled 'Nationalist' forces sought to legitimate their rebellion on the grounds that it was *they* who represented the political and moral values of traditional Spain, and present the Republic as an unworkable political structure dreamed up by unworldly writers and intellectuals.[82] Republicans 'are not fighting for abstractions', Azaña insisted during a speech in Valencia in July 1937, they were fighting for 'Spain, whose six resounding letters burst today in our soul like a war-cry and tomorrow with an exclamation of joy and peace.'[83] He returned to this theme in his November 1937 speech to the City Council of Madrid. In the section headed 'Permanent Values of the Spanish Genius' [Valores permanentes del genio español] he emphatically denied that Republicanism was in any sense anti-Spanish.

> We, the innovators of Spanish politics, who have established the Republic, the workers of the Republic; in order to convert her into an instrument of civilisation and progress in our country, we have disowned nothing that is noble and great in the history of Spain; absolutely nothing.[84]

This desire to affiliate the Republic with the Spanish past was complicated by the loathing that he felt for the dominant social and political trends in Spanish history over the previous four centuries. Azaña looked upon the revolution as an opportunity to 'emancipate' Spaniards from their own national history. Consequently, the cultural nationalist strain in his writing never

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[81] 'Nadie tiene en las venas un españolismo tan profundo, tan puro y ardiente como yo; nadie siente palpitar en su corazón los ecos de la historia de nuestro país con la vehemencia, con la profundidad, con la pasión personal que yo lo siento cada vez que me asomo a los monumentos y creaciones de nuestros antepasados, antes los cuales siento palpitar en mi espíritu en comunicación con todos los que nos han precedido en este inmenso solar español, maltratado, esquilmado y deshonrado por sus males pastores, dilecto a nuestro corazón y reserva de nuestra sangre.' Azaña, *Obras completas*, ii, p.25.

[82] 'Death to Intellectuals!' [¡Mueran los intelectuales!] cried the Francoist General Millán Astray in the course of a speech by the writer Miguel de Unamuno at the University of Salamanca in October 1936, when Unamuno criticised the Francoist tactics of exterminating opposition to its campaign. Quoted in Thomas, p. 487.

[83] 'no nos batimos por abstracciones [...] España, cuyas seis letras sonoras restallan hoy en nuestra alma como un grito de guerra y manaña con una exclamación de júbilo y de paz.' Azaña, rprt in *Obras completas*, iii, p. 355-6.

[84] Nosotros, innovadores de la política española, instauradores de la República, trabajadores de la República, para convertirla en un instrumento civilizador y de progreso en nuestro país, no hemos renegado de nada que sea noble y grande en la historia de España; absolutamente de nada.' Azaña, rprt in *Obras completas*, iii, p. 361.

involved an uncritical acceptance of Spain's past. The legacy he drew upon was not the orthodox or 'official' history of Spain disseminated in its churches, schools and military institutions. It was instead a 'liberal and humanitarian tradition' which – if not quite invented – had only ever existed on the margins of Spanish society. 'I am perhaps the most traditionalist Spaniard who exists in Spain', he told an audience in Bilbao in April 1933.

> But of what tradition do I speak? I speak of liberal and humanitarian Spanish tradition, because this tradition exists, although they have maliciously sought to hide it from you since childhood. Spain has not always been an inquisitorial country, or an intolerant country, or a fanatical country, or a country trained towards madness, madness which could sometimes seem the official history of Spain, throughout the whole history of imperial Spain [...] parallel to all this there has always been for centuries in Spain a small, murmuring stream of discontented people, from which we come and have converted into a wide river.[85]

It is in terms of the representation of violence that Æ's and Azaña's work differ most substantially from the writings examined in chapters one and two of this study. The themes of suffering, sacrifice and death dominate Pearse's and Alberti's literature. It was in large part by means of such experiences that the process of transformation at the heart of these revolutions was to be accomplished. In this sense violence epitomised the ambivalent, and often tragic, manner in which they conceived their conflicts. Notwithstanding a few exceptions, the writings produced by Æ and Azaña represent the militarisation of their countries' revolutions as a purely negative development, one which actually retarded the progress of those movements.

The occasions in which Æ represents violence in a positive light occur primarily in his poetry. The idea that the destruction caused by the Great War might result in a transfigured social existence is evident in several of the works from *The Gods of War*.[86] In 'Continuity', for example, the poet wonders if 'the ruins shall be made' into 'some yet more lovely masterpiece', and the title-poem from this collection represents the dove of Christ settling among a group of

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[85] 'soy quizá el español más tradicionalista que existe en España. Pero ¿de qué tradición hablo yo? Yo hablo de la tradición humanitaria y liberal española, porque esa tradición existe, aunque os la hayan querido ocultar desde niños maliciosamente. España no ha sido siempre un país inquisitorial, ni un país intolerante, ni un país fanatizado, ni un país atraillado a la locura, locura que algunas veces pudo parecer la historia de la España oficial, a lo largo de toda la historia de la España imperial [...] paralelo a todo eso ha habido siepre durante siglos en España un arroyuelo murmurante de gentes discontentas, del cual arroyuelo nosotros venimos y nos hemos convertido en ancho río.' *Obras completas*, ii, p. 693-4.

[86] This collection of poems was published privately in 1915. Allen suggests that 'the disturbed nature of this collection convinced Russell, as the editor of the *Irish Homestead*, not to submit it for general publication. His poetry allowed him to express his concerns in terms different from his journal articles.' Allen, p. 66.

rebel-workers who rise up against their capitalist oppressors.[87] A later work, 'To the Memory of Some I knew who are Dead and Who Loved Ireland' is the only major poem of the Revolution to 'celebrate' the sacrifices made by the 1916 rebels *and* those of Irish volunteers who died in the ranks of the British Army during the Great War[88]: 'Life cannot utter words more great/ Than life may meet by sacrifice,' the speaker in this poem remarks of the rebel-poet, Thomas McDonagh, before going on to apostrophise the deceased Thomas Kettle: 'You proved by death as true as they/ [...] Equal your sacrifice may weigh'. The valorisation of a willingly entered-into death for a political ideal recurs in one of his most memorable works, 'A Prisoner', which was inspired by Terence MacSwiney's hunger strike of that year. 'Burn on,' the poet exhorts the immortal 'flame' which he believes is enabling MacSwiney's body to 'Sustain itself against the torturers' desire':

> shine here, thou immortality, until
> We too have lit our lamps at the funereal pyre;
> Till we too can be noble, unshakeable, undismayed:
> Till we too can burn with the holy flame, and know
> There is that within us that can triumph over pain,
> And go to death alone, slowly and unafraid.[89]

In contrast to his poetry, Æ's political writings present a more theoretical approach to the subjects of sacrifice, and militarism generally. 'While we may all agree that war brings about an eruption of the arcane and elemental forces which lie normally in the pit of human life', he writes in *The National Being*, military outfits nonetheless serve an important function in that they provide 'the means by which the individual will forget his personal danger and sacrifice life itself for the general welfare.'[90] Consequently, he concedes that these organisations 'may strengthen the national being' by reinforcing the work of the nation's poets, writers and thinkers. 'National ideals', he remarks, 'assume an immeasurably greater dignity when the citizens organize themselves for the defence of their ideals, and are prepared to yield up life itself as a sacrifice if by this the national being may be preserved.'[91]

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[87] Ibid. Allen points out that 'Russell had already used the image of a bird to symbolise the expression of labour's discontent' during the 1913 Lockout. The bird 'who has just set Dublin in a blaze, has told us that he feels a divine mission to awaken discontent. To that we can have no objection.' G. Russell, 'The parable of Labour', *Irish Homestead*, (20 Sept 1913),. Ibid., p. 67.

[88] This poem is an extended version of an earlier work by Æ, 'Salutation' which was inspired by the 1916 Rising. 'To the Memory of Some I Knew' was first published in the Irish Times on the 19 Dec. 1917.

[89] Æ 'A Prisoner' in Terence Brown, 'Cultural Nationalism 1880-1930', p. 545.

[90] *The National Being*, p. 137.

[91] Ibid., p. 134-5.

As these comments indicate, Æ accepted that nations had the right – indeed a duty – to resort to violence if their cause was just and violence was the only course of action open to them. 'There are occasions when the manhood of a nation must be prepared to yield life rather than submit to oppression', he contends in *The National Being*.[92] In the same text, however, he voices deep reservations concerning the deployment of violence in revolutionary situations where the 'idea' of the nation was not yet firmly rooted in the consciousness of the people. Æ expresses 'sympath[y] with idealists in a hurry',[93] and concedes that militarism might help them win the political 'mechanism of nationality', but he maintains that, in itself, this approach could only ever create the *illusion* of national unity. 'To create national solidarity by war is to attain but a temporary and unreal unity', he writes,

> when the war is over [...] that spirit rapidly dies, and people begin their old antagonisms because the social order, in its normal working, does not consciously promote a consciousness of identity of interest.[94]

It was this utilitarian line of argument that he used to justify his opposition to the use of political violence during the 1922-3 Irish Civil War. Æ advocated acceptance of the Anglo-Irish treaty *not* because he felt it conceded a sufficient amount of political independence, but for similar reasons that led Pearse to support the 1907 Educational Bill, and the Home Rule Bill of 1912: because it offered nationalists the opportunity to accelerate the work of the revolution in vital areas such as culture, education and economics. He conceded that the anti-Treaty side had a strong case for continuing the Anglo-Irish War, however. 'It is difficult to argue without spiritual self-contempt against those who desire complete national liberty, or a complete reconstruction of society to bring it about that none shall be in want', he writes in *Ireland, Past and Future* two months after the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. 'The extremists as we know at heart, are right in their desires'.[95] The only way that pro-Treaty nationalists can argue with honour for their position, he maintains here, is by pointing out to their former comrades that the policy of a return to militarism will actually retard their own objectives. 'We can only retain self-respect', he comments, 'if we can conscientiously point out that the path they now take leads not to the Golden Age but to a morass.'[96] Similarly, in his 'Open Letter to Irish Republicans' of

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[92] Ibid., p. 136.
[93] Ibid., p. 99.
[94] Ibid., p. 132.
[95] Æ, 'Ireland, Past and Future', *Sociological Review* (London), Vol.14 No.2 (April, 1922), p. 93-110. Æ read this paper to the Sociological Society in England on the 21st February 1922. It was later issued as a pamphlet, and subsequently revised and adapted in *The Voice of Ireland: A Survey of the Race and Nation*, William G. FitzGerald (ed.) (Dublin and Manchester: John Heywood, June 1923), p.92-8.
[96] Ibid., p. 13-14.

December 1922, Æ remarks that 'I could not without self-contempt condemn those who desire full independence for their country [or] who would bring about a revolutionary change in the economic system'; however, he goes on to remark that 'there may be discussion over the means to those ends.' [97]

The 'idea' of national identity had, of course, long been since rooted in the Irish consciousness by the time of the Civil War. In this sense the anti-Treaty militant could hardly be described as 'idealists in a hurry.' In Æ's view, however, the *ideological content* of the revolution – the concept of nationhood proposed by figures such as Pearse and Connolly – had not. While he recognised that those who resorted to arms against the 1921 Treaty were motivated by noble ideals, he questioned whether their sacrifices were inspired by the vision of a radically new social order that had characterised political activism in the 1913-16 period. 'Before a nation surrenders itself to those who would lead it on to revolution or war it [...] asks what are their cultural ideals, their economic ideals, and the social order and civilisation they stand for', he remarks in his 'Open Letter to Irish Republicans'.[98] 'Padraic Pearse and James Connolly, before they were chosen as leaders, gave evidence of imagination or a power of constructive thought', he continues, but 'Most of you have come to prominence as militarists only during years [...] Which of you are architects, master-craftsmen in the art of nation-building? How do you expect your nation to answer to a horn blown by those who are unknown to it for aught but desperate courage and readiness for sacrifice?'[99] The militarism of the anti-treatyists is rejected, therefore, for the same reason that Æ rejects revolutionary violence in *The National Being*: it will fail because the political and social vision that motivates the revolutionaries has not yet been diffused among the people.

Æ's most damning assessment of the effects of revolutionary appears towards the end of the Civil War. In 'Lessons of Revolution', he complains bitterly that

> The champions of physical force have, I am sure without intent, poisoned the soul of Ireland. All that was exquisite and lovable is dying. They have squandered a spirit created by poets, scholars and patriots of a different order, spending the treasure lavishly, as militarists in all lands do, thinking little of what they squander save that it gives a transitory gilding to their propaganda.[100]

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[97] George W. Russell 'AE', 'Open Letter to Irish Republicans' *Irish Times* (27 Dec.1922) in Alan Denson (ed.), *Letters from AE.* (London: Abelard-Schuman, 1961), p. 161.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid.
[100] G. Russell, 'Lessons of Revolution' *Studies*, March 1923. p. 4.

The sense of bitterness and disillusionment in these comments do not only reflect his views on the Civil War, they refer to the deployment of revolutionary violence throughout the whole of the seven year period between 1916 and 1923: 'The Irish Revolution, which began in Easter Week, has [...] triumphed solely in externals', he maintains here. 'Our spiritual, cultural and intellectual life has not changed for the better. If anything, it has retrograded [...] The mass of people in the country *continue to think* as they did before the revolution.'[101] (my italics)

Militarism is a key topic in Azaña's writings and his political career. His most detailed study of the Third French Republic, *Military Politics* [*La política militar*] (1919), consists in an analysis of the role that its army played in that country's political affairs; and his first posting in the Republican Government of 1931 was as Minister for War. The antipathy that he felt towards the Spanish military almost equalled that which he felt for the Spanish Church.[102] 'The Spanish State is infected with militarism', he asserts in 'The Dictatorship in Spain' (1924). In his capacity as Minister for War he immediately set about reducing the strength and influence of this institution.[103] There were two closely related reasons for Azaña's hostility towards the Spanish military. Firstly, it posed a very real and immediate threat to the survival of the new regime. Since the Napoleonic wars Spanish officers had regularly intervened in political life and, as Thomas notes, it 'was inconceivable that the army should for long remain out of the limelight in the republic.'[104] The second reason was that – along with the Catholic Church – the military embodied the imperialist and intolerant spirit that we saw Azaña rail against in his 1933 speech in Bilbao. As a consequence, he viewed its reform as one of the most important tasks facing the

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[101] Ibid., p. 2.

[102] 'The two strongest political drives in his mind were hostility to the church and to the power of the army', Thomas remarks. 'With his usual fatal facility for creating a phrase which would be remembered,' the new Minister for War 'announced that he would 'triturate' the enemies of the republic.' Thomas pp. 37 and 89 respectively.

[103] [El estado español está infectado de militarismo] Azaña, 'La dictadura en España' (*Nosotros,* Jan-Apr., 1924), rprt. in *Obras completas*, i, p. 552.
Among the more important reforms that Azaña introduced were the abolishment of the Supreme Council of the army and the navy which brought the services under the jurisdiction of the ordinary courts. He also cancelled the vice-regal rank of captain general, and gave all officers a choice between swearing loyalty to the republic and retiring on full pay. Thomas notes that his interference in the 'ceremonial, or symbolic' life of the army through the 'abolition of the Oath to the flag' also caused great bitterness. Thomas, p. 89.

[104] Ibid., p. 89. 'There had been innumerable *pronunciamientos*, successful or unsuccessful, between 1814 and 1868. Between 1868 and 1875, the army [...] had deposed the monarchy, brought in as king another prince from Italy, established a republic, restored order, and, finally, restored the Bourbons. Generals had not intervened openly in politics between 1875 and 1923, but they had been consulted, and favoured by both Alfonso XII and XIII, who, as commanders-in-chief, had a special relation with the army [...] From 1923 to 1930 General Primo de Rivera had maintained a military dictatorship, and he only left office when he had received notice (from fellow generals) that the garrisons were against him.' Ibid., p. 88.

Republic. 'To abolish the prevailing military system is a question of life and death' he remarks in *Military Politics*. 'One could say that the suppression of the existing army would bring liberty to Spain.'[105]

The 1914-18 European conflict exerted a far-reaching influence on Azaña's attitude towards warfare. Although Spain remained neutral during the conflict, he gained first-hand experience of the war as a member of a Spanish delegation of artists and intellectuals who visited the French military front in October 1916. In his writings of this period he frequently emphasizes the human cost of the conflict. 'It is advantageous' to visit the ambulances, or the field-hospitals of the war, he writes in an article entitled 'Living Waste' [Los despojos vivos], 'or any other place where War presents itself as it really is: repulsive; filthy; it is advantageous above all for the frivolous on-looker, because it extinguishes all propensity towards warlike rhetoric.'[106] In *Military Politics*, he remarks that 'The most important factor in war is not money, but men, who as well as paying for it, suffer it in their bodies.'[107]

Like Æ, however, Azaña believed that – in principle – military organisations could play a vital role in helping to engender a spirit of national solidarity. Also like the Irish writer, he suggested that this spirit entailed a willingness on the part of individual citizens to sacrifice themselves for the common good. 'The military organisation of the State raises one of the most essential political problems', he writes in *Military Politics*,

> the difficulty of harmonising the autonomy of the individual conscience with the requirements of the national group, as an entity with its own life. In social morality, the question is of the first order because it raises the issue of the justification for sacrifice, the temporary sacrifice of liberty and possibly the sacrifice of life for the sake of the community.[108]

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[105] 'abolir el sistema militar vigente es un cuestión de vida o muerte.' Azaña, *La política militar*, rprt. in *Obras completas*, i, p. 260. 'Se puede decir que la supresión del ejército permanente traería para España la libertad.' Ibid., p. 263.

[106] Es provechosa la visita a una de estas ambulancias, o a los hospitals, o a cualquiera otro sitio donde la Guerra se ofrezca tal como es: repulsive, sucia; es provechosa la visita sobre todo para el espectador frívolo, porque todo propensión a la retórica belicosase extingue.' Azaña 'Los despojos vivos' (31 Dec., 1917), rept in *Obras completas*, i, p. 171.

[107] 'El factor más importante de la guerra no es el dinero, sino los hombres, que además de pagarla, la sufren en sus cuerpos.' Ibid., p. 265.

[108] 'La organización militar del Estado plantea la dificultad esencial del problema politico: la dificultad de armonizar la autonomía de la conciencia individual con las exigencies del grupo nacional, como entidad con vida propia. En la moral social, la cuestión es de primer orden porque se trata de hallar la razón justificativa de un sacrificio, del sacrificio temporal de la libertad y eventualmente del sacrificio de la vida en aras de la comunidad.' Ibid., p. 260

In Azaña's view, the Great War had demonstrated that the French citizenry were prepared to make this ultimate sacrifice. In this sense, he looked upon the conflict in a positive light: the war was 'the great test' of the Third French Republic, which had established its 'solidity'. What especially impressed him was that these citizens were not motivated by the desire for heroic action and glory that animated professional armies, such as the Spanish military. On the contrary, they viewed their participation in the conflict 'as an onerous duty, horrible, that had to be complied with austerely since the nation was in danger.' Such men can go to war 'with a clear conscience' Azaña's suggests in *Military Politics*.

> They do not fight to satiate a warsome appetite; their motive is clean of those rapacious impulses that make of the soldier a simple machine of destruction and executioner. No greater spiritual granduer could be imagined than that of those middle-class men, those workers, those farm labourers, those intellectuals of France who put on their uniform to resist the most powerful attack witnessed in History, and having overcome it, left off their arms with the same serene seriousness with which they took them up.[109]

This assessment of the experience of the French Republic during the Great War is echoed in *some* of his writings during the 1936-9 Spanish conflict. In his more optimistic (and public) moments Azaña attempted to represent popular resistance to the Francoist rebellion as evidence that the Republic was coming through *its* 'great test', just as its French counterpart had during the Great War. In his January 1937 speech in Valencia, for example, he contended that the manner in which the Spanish people had spontaneously come to the aid of their government was proof that the idea of the Republic had already taken root in the national imagination: 'The marvellous event occurred', he told his audience, 'in which the entire people, in close agreement with its government, with the representation of the State, took up arms to defend its liberty and its Republic.'[110] In July of that year he described this resistance as 'the Spanish miracle' [el milagro español],[111] and suggested that the discipline and sense of duty that the combatants were learning during the conflict would serve to further engender a sense of national solidarity among the citizenry. Even the language Azaña employs in these speeches recalls his writings of twenty

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[109] La guerra germánica ha sido la gran prueba en que [...] la república ha mostrado su solidez. [...] todos a considerar la guerra como un deber penoso, horrible, que debía cumplirse austeramente cuando la nación estuviese el peligro. Los hombres así preparados pueden hacer la guerra con tranquilidad de conciencia; no se baten por saciar un apetito belicoso; su intención está limpia de aquellos impulsos rapaces que hacen del soldado una simple máquina de devastación y de un verdugo. Es inconcebible un estado de ánimo de mayor grandeza que el de esos burgueses, esos obreros, esos campesinos, esos intelectuales de Francia que visitaron el uniforme para aguantar el choque más formidable que ha visto la Historia, y que habiéndolo vencido, se despojan de las armas con la misma serena gravedad con lo que las empuñaron.' Ibid., p. 331.

[110] 'ocurrió el hecho maravilloso de que el pueblo entero, en acuerdo estrecho con su Gobierno, con la representatción del Estado, tomó las armas para defender su libertad y su República.' *Obras completas*, iii, p. 330.

[111] Ibid., p. 352.

years previously. In his Valencia speech he refers to 'the tranquillity of the republican conscience' in going to war; its soldier-citizens were fighting *only* because they felt they had 'a duty to defend' their Republic.[112] And as he had in 1919, he emphasises that rather than professional soldiers, it was ordinary people *from all classes* of Spanish society who were taking up arms to resist the Francoist attack: 'All of us are fighting,' he claimed in his Valencia speech, 'the worker and the intellectual, the teacher and the bourgeois – the bourgeois also fight – and the unions, and the political parties, and all the Spanish that are grouped under the Republican flag.'[113]

The problem with these remarks is that they treat the conflict as a *national* war of independence. As noted earlier, much of Azaña's literature presents the war in this light. 'We are in the presence of a foreign invasion in Spain,' he claimed in July 1937, 'and what is at risk is not only the political regime, but the authentic independence of our country.'[114] The participation of Moroccan, German, and Italian forces in the Francoist war-effort lends much credence to this interpretation of the conflict; and as Azaña correctly observes in his July 1937 speech, the rebellion would have collapsed in a matter of weeks had the generals not received foreign aid.[115] Nevertheless, as has been argued throughout this study, the idea that the 1936-9 conflict was a war of independence is, at best, only partially true. In reality, the conflict was caused and sustained by a range of deep-rooted social, cultural and political divisions *within* Spanish society. As such, it did anything but demonstrate 'the solidity' of the regime in the manner that the Great War had for the French Republic. Azaña was too acute a political observer not to realise this. Although he was obliged, as President, to present as optimistic a view of the war as possible in his public writings and speeches, a more pessimistic, and accurate, interpretation emerges from his private diaries and his creative literature.

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[112] 'la tranquilidad para nuestra conciencia personal y para afrontar el juicio de la historia [...]'nosotros somos los agredidos; es decir, nosotros, la República, el Estado que nosotros tenemos la obligación de defender.' Ibid., p. 331.

[113] 'Nos batimos todos, el obrero y el intelectual, el profesor y el burgués - que también los burgueses se baten - y los sindicatos, y los partidos políticos, y todos los españoles que están agrupados bajo la bandera republicana'. Ibid., p. 337.

[114] 'estamos en presencia de una invasión extranjera en España, y lo que peligra no es solamente el régimen político, sino la independencia auténtica de nuestro país.' Ibid., p. 333.

[115] 'If the rebellion [...] had had no more than the elements, forces, and aims which it demonstrated on the first day, and in early days - many months ago already - shortly after its beginning, the rebellion would have already been exhausted.' [si la rebelión [...] no hubiera tenido más que los elementos y las fuerzas y los fines que demostró el primer día y en los días imediatos, hace ya muchos meses, a las pocas de su comienzo, que la rebelión se habría agotado.] ibid., 344-5. Azaña repeated this point in his final speech as president in Barcelona in July 1938, remarking that 'the war of Spain is solely and exclusively maintained by the foreign invasion.' [la guerra de España está única y exclusivamente mantenida por la invasión extranjera.] Ibid., p. 370.

All of the characters in *Vigil in Benicarlo*, for example, emphasise the internecine quality of the conflict.[116] Rather than a war of liberation, the conflict is treated as irrefutable evidence that the supposedly *national* revolution that began in April 1931 has failed. The character of Garcés (like Azaña, an ex-Minister in the Republican government) describes it as the result of a 'monstrous regression' or 'madness' within the Spanish psyche.[117] He refers to an actual episode of the conflict to reinforce this image of the war as an outbreak of madness in Spain. When Franco called off the Jarama offensive in early 1937, the town of Ciempozuelos – which housed two mental asylums – was caught between enemy lines. Azaña then uses the situation in Ciempozuelos as a metaphor for the Civil War. Garcés remarks that

> someone I know got into the town and found that all its inhabitants had fled. The place was empty – except for the inmates who had broken out of their asylums and were wondering around aimlessly. Nobody but the mad. It seems unnecessary to explain in detail how this sums up our Spanish problem.[118]

The Vigil will be examined in detail in the second part of this chapter. In the context of the present discussion, however, it needs to be noted that there are two points in this work where Azaña treats the idea of sacrifice in a positive light. Firstly, notwithstanding his view of the war as madness, he has the character of Garcés comment that he has the highest regard for 'the sacrifice' made by the Republican combatants 'who face up to death or suffer it unselfishly.'[119] The second point occurs when, towards the end of the dialogue, Morales (a writer) suggests that if those who survive the conflict learn from the 'sacrifice' of so many of their compatriots, then the conflict will represent 'a magnificent national redemption (many die to save everyone) [...] Spain will discover a New spirit and pass, impoverished, saddened, bloodied, but gloriously, through the very zenith of wisdom.'[120] Despite the similarity of the language here to passages in

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[116] 'By my count there are already no less than four Spains', Marón, a lawyer, remarks. [Por mi cuenta hay ya cuatro Españas. Nada menos.' *The Vigil in Benicarlo*, [*La velada en Benicarlo*], rprt. in *Obras completas*, iii, p. 389.

[117] '¿Qué padecen los españoles para lanzarse a esta locura? [...] ¿Qué regresión monstruosa padece nuestro país?' ibid., p. 411.

[118] 'Un conocido mío, destinado en las inmediaciones, acertó a introducirse solo en Ciempozuelos. Todo el vecindario había huido. El pueblo estaba desierto, salvo que los locos, quebrantadas las puertas de su encierro, campaban por sus respetos. Solomente los locos. Me parece innecesario explicarles a ustedes, rasgo por rasgo, la exactitud de este problema español.' Ibid., p. 420.
Robert Stradling notes that the battalion of Irish soldiers who fought for the Francoist cause under the command of Eoin O'Duffy were stationed at Ciempozuelos for much of the time they spent in Spain. See, *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War 1936-39 – Crusades in Conflict* (Manchester: Mandolin, 1999), p. 72.

[119] 'el sacrificio de los combatientes, que arrostran la muetre o la padecen abnegadamente.' *Obras completas,* iii, p. 420.

[120] 'si alguien acertase a inculcarles [los combatientes] que su sacrificio, lejos de limitarse a resolver el sucinto problema de organizar el poder politico, alcanza la grandiose magnitud de una rendención nacional (muchos mueren por salvar a todos), y se aplican fervorosamente a esa idea, España descubrirá un Nuevo espíritu y pasará, pobre, entristecida, ensangrantada, pero gloriosa, por el cenit de la sabiduría.' Ibid., p. 452.

Pearse's speech, *Peace and the Gael*, or Alberti's *Numancia*, the idea Morales is conveying here is *not* that that sacrificial death will lead to a transfigured existence. The transformation he looks forward to here is one that will occur through a process of *reflection* rather than action; a process that will bring Spaniards to recognize the 'madness' of always resorting to war to resolve their political differences. This 'national redemption', therefore, is not one that will occur *through* sacrifice, as in Pearse and Alberti. On the contrary, it will transpire when Spaniards – 'bloodied' and 'saddened' by this latest conflict – finally perceive the need to find alternative solutions to their difficulties. As Morales goes on to remark, the conflict will only prove beneficial if it is treated in the light of 'a great warning' [un gran escarmiento] regarding the consequences of political intolerance.

As the treatment of revolutionary violence in their writings illustrates, both Æ and Azaña conceded that – regardless of who won the conflicts – their countries' civil wars signalled the failure of their attempts at nation-building. Their sense of defeat must have been particularly acute since the concept of nationhood espoused by both of these writers not based on notions of racial identity, or a homogenous political culture, but upon respect for diversity. If it does nothing else, civil war demonstrates the failure of such an ideal. However, although Æ and Azaña accepted that the internecine conflicts marked the defeat of their revolutions, these wars also inspired works of literature in which they attempt to resolve the problem of disunity that came to the for in these periods. It is to a consideration of these texts – Æ's *The Interpreters* and Azaña's *The Vigil in Benicarlo* – that I turn to in the next section of this chapter.

II

Civil War and the Dialogical Text

The problem of disunity that came to the fore during the internecine conflicts in Ireland and Spain existed throughout the revolutionary periods of both countries. The opposing views that the Ulster and Irish volunteer armies formed in 1913 took on the issue of independence, and the split that emerged in the latter force in September 1914 underline this point. That the 1916 Rising in Dublin enjoyed little support among the populace is well known. Its leaders claimed that 'Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom.'[1] In reality, however, only a very small proportion of the people supported their actions. It is arguable that the 1919-21 War of Independence *was* promulgated with the support of the majority of the nationalist population. Sinn Féin, the political wing of the military movement, had, after all, won a landslide victory in the 1918 elections (though of course it had no support from Unionists). We have seen, however, that the political leadership had emasculated the movement of much of its radical content by this time. There was much ambiguity concerning the question of what exactly was being fought for in this period, therefore, a fact which casts the issue of the revolutionaries' democratic mandate into doubt; as Foster remarks, 'hedged bets and divided allegiances remained the order of the day.'[2]

The problem of the representative quality of the revolution became most acute during Irish Civil War. The signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in London in December 1921 split the leadership in two, with the Dáil voting by 64 votes to 57 in favour of acceptance. The elections of 1922 indicated that a majority of the population were also in favour of the settlement; but although they won the elections, it is doubtful whether the pro-treatyists could be said to represent 'the national will'. A very sizable minority voted to reject the British terms, after all, and Cosgrove's government had denied the right of nationalists living in the newly-constituted state-let of Northern Ireland to participate in the election. Furthermore, anti-

[1] Quoted in Neeson, *Birth of a Republic*, p. 336.
[2] Foster, p. 495.

treatyists often claimed that the results were invalid due to the fact that they had been conducted under the British threat of war if the Irish rejected the terms of the Anglo-Irish Treaty.

The representative quality of the Spanish Revolution was also a contentious political issue throughout the 1930-39. In September 1930, Manuel Azaña told a mass rally of republicans in Madrid that they represented 'the authentic manifestation of the national will; that they were 'a spontaneous Cortes of the popular revolution'.[3] This claim appeared to be vindicated seven months later when his republican-led coalition won a landslide victory in the municipal elections of April 1930. The following year, the Constitution of the Second Spanish Republic, confidently claimed that 'the powers of all its organs emanate from the people.'[4] There is no doubt that the revolution enjoyed widespread support; but it is not clear that *at any stage* in the 1930-39 period it represented the desires of the majority of the population, let alone the 'national will' of the Spanish people. The proclamation of the Republic on the 14 April was greeted with celebrations throughout the cities of Spain, but as Frank Sedwick has pointed out, it still remained to be seen whether those celebrations owed more to 'widespread republican conviction' on the part of the people, or were due to 'the weakness of the old regime.'[5] Alberti's comment that on the day that the Republic was founded he could see 'two Spains', separated by a 'wall of incomprehension [...] that would one day collapse and leave behind a great river of blood', attests to the fact that the new regime did not enjoy the support of all the Spanish people.

Alberti was underestimating the number of Spains in existence in April 1931. The Anarchist Socialist movements, the Basque and Catalan nationalist parties, all had their own, separate, social and political agendas. It is true that all of these political forces supported the republican-led revolution at some point or other in the 1930-39 period, but none of them would have considered that regime as representing their political goals. The results of the 1933 national elections underlined the fragility of the Republic's support-base among the

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[3] 'la auténtica manifestation de la voluntad nacional [...] estas cortes espontantáneas de la revolución popular'. Manuel Azaña, 'La revolución en marcha (Alocución en el mitin republicano de la plaza de toros, de Madrid, el 29 de septiembre de 1930) in Obras completas Vol. ii, p.13.

[4] Article 1 of the Constitution of the Second Spanish Republic. Quoted in Stanley G. Payne, *Spain's First Democracy: the Second Republic, 1931-1936* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), p. 60.

[5] Frank Sedwick, *The Tragedy of Manuel Azaña and the Fate of the Spanish Republic* (Ohio: Ohio State University Press; 1963), p.77.

Spanish population. The Popular Front coalition regained power in the February 1936 elections, but rather than re-affirming the government as the political embodiment of the national will, the extreme narrowness of their victory underlined the extent of opposition to the regime. The widespread support that the Francoist side enjoyed during the civil war, as well as the divisions that emerged within the Republican camp further reinforce this point.

The opposition encountered by these revolutionary movements was not peculiarly Irish and Spanish phenomenon. 'The history of all revolutions', McCabe claims, 'documents the extreme reluctance that all peoples have to be liberated [...] Man is historically a slave' he maintains, and has always preferred his enslavement to 'the painful business of being free.'[6] In the modern era, this problem has dogged nationalist ideology since at least the time of the French revolution. Both the Irish and Spanish revolutions were prosecuted as national movements, and the tensions that emerged in the democratic nature of these struggles need to be viewed in this socio-historical context. In *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* Liah Greenfield maintains that the concept of national sovereignty that emerged in sixteenth century England was individualistic: 'sovereignty of the people was the implication of the actual sovereignty of individuals.' However, a different interpretation emerged in eighteenth century Europe, she contends. This period witnessed a 'dissociation of the meaning of the "nation" as a "people" extolled as the bearer of sovereignty [...] and its fusion with geo-political and/or ethnic characteristics'.[7] Sovereignty now became 'an implication of the people's uniqueness'; it was intended to reflect 'the collective being.'[8] Richard Kearney notes that Rousseau was a central figure in regard to the changes that occurred in nationalist ideology during the eighteenth century. Citing key phrases from *The Social Contract*, the French Constitution of 1791 states that 'sovereignty is one, indivisible, inalienable and imprescriptable; it belongs to the nation; no group can attribute sovereignty to itself nor can an individual arrogate it to himself.' As a result of this development, Kearney remarks, 'the sovereign people now becomes identified with a sovereign nation embodied in an organized, centralized state.'[9]

It was the concept of the 'general will', as outlined in *The Social Contract*, which facilitated the shift from what Grenfield terms an 'individualistic-libertarian' idea of popular

[6] McCabe, p. 116.
[7] Ibid., p. 14.
[8] Ibid., p. 11.
[9] Kearney, p. 18.

sovereignty to a 'collectivistic-authoritarian' one.[10] Although Rousseau took liberal values such as the importance of individual freedom and personal autonomy as first principles, he also believed that sovereignty needed to be located in some unitary body, rather than existing as a multitude of individual wills. As Kearney notes, this philosopher agreed with advocates of absolutist sovereignty that 'the transmutation of multiplicity into unity could only be effected by the "irrevocable submission of every individual to a single, unitary person"'. This 'person' he identified as 'the collective personification of citizens as a whole.' In this way Rousseau 'reintegrated power back into the social order by situating sovereignty in the body of the people understood as a collective abstraction: the famous "general will."'[11]

Commentators who interpret the general will in a positive light argue that it only implies 'obedience to a law one prescribes to oneself', as Rousseau himself contended; or that it simply means the individual is only truly free 'when they participate directly and continuously in the shaping of the life of their nation.[12] However, although such interpretations may be feasible in periods of social harmony, in times of internal social strife (of which civil war is the most extreme instance) the tensions implicit in this concept once again re-emerge. If nothing else, internecine conflicts seem to instantiate the failure of the general will as a political idea, as there appears to be no 'indivisible collective interest'[13] which demonstrates the unity of the nation.

Where the conflict is linked to a dissatisfaction with election results – as was the case with both the Irish and Spanish civil wars – it can be argued that the will of the people *has* been expressed, as part of the 'social contract' involved agreeing to abide by majority-decisions. We have seen that this was how Azaña sought to legitimate the Republican position in his Civil War speeches. Similarly, when W. T. Cosgrove addressed the opening session of the Free State parliament in September 1922, he referred to his government as 'the custodians of the rights of the people.'[14] In reality, however, the elections in these countries did little to clarify the issue of who represented the national will. Because the election process was still in its infancy in these countries, dissident-elements could always reject the notion that their

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[10] Grenfield, p. 11.
[11] Ibid., p.21.
[12] Andrew Heywood, *Political Ideologies: An Introduction*, 2nd edn (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1998), p. 202.
[13] The general will as implies 'the belief that there is an indivisible collective interest in society.' Ibid., p. 202.
[14] Quoted in Arthur Mitchell and Pádraig Ó Snodaigh (eds.) *Irish Political Documents 1916-1949.* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1985) p.144.

nationhood was ever democratic in character. Aside from the aforementioned issue regarding the democratic validity of the 1922 elections, it was often pointed out in Ireland at this time that there would have been no Rising in 1916 if Pearse and Connolly had acted in accordance with the wishes of the majority of their countrymen; sometimes, anti-treatyists argued, the national will needs to be directed, rather than obeyed. Franco's army rebelled against the elected government, yet still represented itself as fighting for the 'true' Spain by defining the nation in religious and ethnic terms.

Of the two thinkers examined in this chapter only Azaña's political philosophy drew its primary inspiration from French republican theory. Nevertheless, there are many important parallels between his and Æ's political values. Both writers advocated government by and for the people. They placed a similar stress on 'universally-good' values such as individual liberty, equality, and justice, and attempted to link those ideals to the cultural and historical circumstances that prevailed in their own societies. Indeed, texts such as *The National Being* and 'A Constitution in Search of an Author' and *Military Politics* represent the authors' political ideologies as capable of reconciling the competing demands of individual, national and universal rights. Furthermore, we have seen that the concept of the general will is a key term in both of their political writings. One of most interesting features of the two texts examined in this section – *The Interpreters* and Azaña's *The Vigil in Benicarlo* – is that they reveal their authors' attempts to address the problem that the internecine conflicts in their countries' posed for their revolutionary ideologies; particularly so in regard to the lack of an 'indivisible collective interest', or general will, which came to the fore during the civil wars.

The Interpreters takes the form of a dialogue between a number of intellectual, military, and political figures who voice contrasting opinions on the subjects of nationalism and violent revolution. Their discussion is set during an insurrection in which a volunteer army is attempting to assert the sovereign rights of a small nation against an empire ruling over it. Most of the work takes place in a prison-cell where four captured leaders of the revolt are being held by the imperial forces. These rebels, we learn, are to be executed the following morning. Therefore, despite Æ's claim in his preface that he set *The Interpreters* in 'a future century so that ideals over which there is conflict to-day might be discussed divested of

passion and apart from transient circumstance', [15] the work itself clearly recalls the recently concluded Anglo-Irish conflict and, more particularly, the occasion of the 1916 Rising.

In addition to the above parallels, a number of the text's main characters represent an at times uneasy mix between Æ's own personality and individuals who were involved in the events of Easter 1916. The character of Lavelle is perhaps the most obvious in this regard: a poet and idealist, this rebel-leader blends Æ's mysticism with the militancy of Patrick Pearse. Lavelle's attempt to justify the use of violence by the independence movement provides an example of this fusion. 'Every idea which arises in the heaven world of consciousness must ally itself with an appropriate force if it is to be born in this world', he remarks to his comrades. 'How but by force can the nation free itself from a power which has taken the sceptre from it, which has killed its noblest children and broken up its laws?' (269)

Culain, the socialist of the group, combines Æ's socialist views with those of James Connolly. This character, we are told, is 'the man by whose influence the workers of the nation had been brought to take part in the revolt.'(260) The two remaining revolutionaries among the main characters, Leroy and Rian, are less easily identified. The former is a highly sceptical writer and anarchist who rejects all ideologies which threaten the free expression of the individual (including Lavelle's nationalism and Culain's socialism). Asked why he joined the movement to overthrow the empire, Leroy responds, 'I am an anarchist and I wish to be free, and also my dark angel told me there was nothing real in my character and I wished to test it.'(252) Rian, an architect, is the least ideological of the leaders. He tells the others that he joined the revolution because 'I believe I desired passionately to build the palaces and cities of dream here on earth, and I wanted the prophets of beauty like Lavelle to prepare the way in people's souls.'(263)

There are also two non-revolutionaries being held in the prison-cell, Brehon and Heyt. Brehon is described as an 'imaginative historian' (252) who 'fifty years before, when national sentiment appeared almost extinct [...] proposed to himself to write the history of his country'.(262) Although he has taken no part in the movement, his writings, we learn, have greatly influenced nationalists such as Lavelle, who refers to him as 'the father of us all.'(262) Brehon, most commentators agree, represents the figure of Standish James

[15] Æ, *The Interpreters*, in Iyer and Iyer, p.245. (Page references will be included parenthetically in the text.)

O'Grady; although, as John Wilson Foster points out, this character also 'changes shamelessly from O'Grady into the author.'[16] Finally, there is Heyt, an industrialist and president of the empire's Air Federation who has been bundled in with the revolutionaries by mistake. Patrica McFate suggests that this character 'could represent any industrialist who sided with Britain in the struggle for Irish independence', or might possibly be based on William Martin Murphy, 'the tram-system owner who led the lockout against the Dublin workers in the great strike of 1913.'[17] These are the six main characters in Æ's work: four revolutionaries, an historian, and a representative of the power which is being attacked. There are also a number of lesser-ranked revolutionaries in the prison-cell who take little interest in the discussion going on around them.

Notwithstanding the fact that its characters and setting clearly evoke the circumstances of Easter 1916 in Dublin, the Irish Civil War is also relevant to an interpretation of this work. There are two main respects in which this is the case. Firstly, *The Interpreters* was initially published in November 1922, while the Civil War was raging in Ireland; and letters by Æ indicate that he was still writing the text in that year.[18] Secondly, the fact that – rather than unity of purpose – the prison cell discussion reveals profound disagreement among the rebels regarding subjects such as national identity and the use of political violence, also underlines the importance of the 1922-3 conflict to a reading of the text.

Unlike Æ, Azaña made no attempt to disguise the fact that his dialogue was directly inspired by contemporary Spanish events. As a direct consequence, although he wrote *The Vigil in Benicarlo* in 1937, the work was too controversial to be published during the Spanish Civil War. Instead, it was first published in France, following the end of the conflict in 1939. Azaña relates in his prologue that he wrote *The Vigil* two weeks prior to the 'May riots' in Barcelona, and dictated the definitive text during the four days of that conflict. Like *The Interpreters*, this work takes the form of a dialogue between a number of intellectual, military

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[16] John Wilson Foster, '"*The Interpreters*": A Handbook to A.E. and the Irish Revival', *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature* 11. 3 (July, 1980), p. 81.

[17] Patrica McFate, '*The Interpreters*', *Éire-Ireland* 11 (1976), p. 86. Murphy was also the owner of the *Irish Independent*, a newspaper which came out strongly in favour of the British Government's policy of executing the 1916 rebel-leadership.

[18] In a letter to W.B. Yeats dated 1922 Æ wrote that the attempt 'to harmonise and exhibit' the protagonists' philosophies 'all as motions of the Earth Spirit [...] will be difficult and the success of the book will depend on this unwritten part. I am at present letting my philosophical anarchist speak and after him comes my philosopher'.
In *Some Passages from the Letters of A.E. to W.B. Yeats*, (Dublin: The Cuala Press, 1986), p.58.
The philosopher (Brehon) follows the anarchist in the fourteenth of the book's twenty chapters.

and political figures. Their discussion also focuses on the moral and political issues raised by the conflict in which their country is presently involved.

Azaña's dialogue contains a total of eleven interlocutors, all of whom are opposed to the Fascist Rebellion. Aldo Garosci points out that the opening speakers are mainly of interest in demonstrating the horrors, and conflict of authority, created by the Civil War.[19] Miguel Rivera, for example, a deputy in the Cortes, was caught in the Fascist-controlled zone of Logroño when the military rising occurred. He tells of the atrocities committed by the Fascists, and his own close scrapes with death as he struggled to make his way to Barcelona. Doctor Lluch, a lecturer at the University of Cataluña, recounts similar actions committed on the Republican side, including the murder of his own brother by an Anarchist who held a grudge against Lluch for leaving him a cripple in an operation. Blanchart, a major in the Infantry, exposes the bureaucracy and incompetence of the Republican army in Cataluña. The only female in the dialogue, Paquita Vargas, is a theatre-artist who complains about the drastic fall in her earnings due to the collectivisation of theatres in Barcelona.

Most of the dialogue revolves around the five remaining characters: Garcés, an ex-minister in the Republican government; Morales, a writer; Claudio Marón, a lawyer; and two socialists: Pastrana (a moderate socialist) and Barcala (a more left-wing figure). Azaña maintains in his prologue that these are all imaginary characters; however, as is the case with *The Interpreters*, a number of these speakers clearly reflect aspects, either of Azaña's own personality, or well-known political figures in contemporary Spanish affairs. Marco points out that some of Marón's remarks can be directly linked to comments by Ángel Ossorio y Gallardo, a well-known lawyer, conservative, and Catholic, who subscribed to the Republican cause. Pastrana expresses ideas characteristic of Indalecio Prieto, leader of the Socialist PSOE. Barcala, he suggests, might represent the more radical socialist leader, Largo Caballero.[20] Whether or not these three characters do, in fact, correspond to those particular personalities, the essential point – as Azaña remarks in his prologue – is that they reflect political perspectives which were prevalent during the conflict, namely: conservative and left wing republicanism, moderate and radical socialism.

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[19] Garosci, p. 92.

[20] José María Marco, *La creación de sí mismo – ensayo sobre la literatura autobiográfica de Manuel Azaña* (Biblioteca Nueva, Madrid, 1991), p. 51-53.

There is little doubt that the characters of Garcés and Morales in particular express many of Azaña's own views and beliefs. On a number of occasions they voice opinions on the war which repeat statements made by Azaña on an almost word-for-word basis. Morales, for example, echoes Azaña's belief that the Republicans were fighting for their enemies' liberty as well as their own, when he remarks that 'Once the war is over we will see if the combatants who defend their liberty understand that they have fought for the liberty for all, including their enemies, and if the civil authorities also understand this.'[21] Similarly, the purpose of the war for Garcés, as for Azaña, is to restore the rule of law. 'On summoning us for the resistance,' he tells the other character, 'a Republican government summoned us to defend the Republic, its laws, its legitimacy, etcetera. We all came under that call.'[22]

The above outline reveals several noteworthy parallels between these works. Firstly, both *The Vigil* and *The Interpreters* were completed during civil wars and take those conflicts as their primary historical referent (as noted, this is more obviously the case in relation to Azaña's work.) Both texts are written in the form of dialogues in which a number of intellectual, military, and political figures, voice contrasting opinions on the issues of nationalism and revolution. Furthermore, the views expressed by the central characters in the two texts can be linked to either their authors' opinions, or those of certain well-known contemporary figures. To these points can be added that the plots (such as they are) of *La velada* and *The Interpreters* unfold over the course of a single night, and end with the violent deaths of their speakers.[23] The texts are also alike in that they do not fit easily into any specific genre. Rather, they combine characteristics of a number of different literary forms, such as the novel, the autobiography, the *roman à clef*, and the Platonic dialogue.[24] Of all

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[21] 'Acabada la guerra, veremos si los combatientes que defienden su libertad comprenden que se han batido por la libertad de todos, incluso la de sus actuales enemigos, y si lo comprenen también los poderes de retaguardia.' *Obras completas*, iii, p. 451-2.

[22] 'al convocarnos para la resistencia, un Gobierno republicano nos convocaba a defender la República, sus leyes, su legitimidad, etcétera. Todos cabíamos en el llamamiento.' Ibid., p. 417.

[23] There is also a similar degree of ambiguity in relation to these deaths. In *The Interpreters* the reader is left with the impression that all the prisoners, bar Heyt, the imperial representative, are about to be blown up by the imperial forces; and *The Vigil* ends with an air-attack on the town of Benicarlo, but in neither instance do we actually 'witness' the deaths of the characters.

[24] *The Interpreters*, in particular, has provoked much discussion in this regard. In the course of his essay on this work, for example, John Wilson Foster refers to it variously as: 'a symposium' (which is how Æ himself understood the work); 'something very close to a novel'; 'not really a novel'; 'a *roman à clef*'; a 'philosophical autobiography'; and 'a voyage-tale'. In Wilson Foster, pp. 70; 70; 80; 71; 76; 81. For Patrica McFate, the work is a *roman à clef* which contains a symposium; a 'synthesis of philosophical discourse [and] political discussion.' In McFate, p. 92. In his biography of the author, Henry Summerfield takes the Joycean line, referring to it as, simply, 'a book'. Summerfield, *That Myriad-Minded Man* (Geralds Cross, Bucks.: Colin Smythe, 1975) , p. 212.

these similarities, it is the fact that the works take the form of dialogues that I focus on in my analysis. It is this feature of the texts, I argue, that enables the authors to develop a concept of national unity which is not predicated upon the idea of 'an indivisible collective interest in society'.

Critics of both *The Interpreters* and *The Vigil* have pointed out that these works do not present very objective discussions of the political issues they raise. In relation to *The Vigil*, for example, John H. Seekamp has noted that 'beside the exponents of the liberal democratic views of Manuel Azaña [Garcés and Morales], only three other political philosophies find expression: moderate Socialism (Pastrana), left-wing Socialism (Barcala), and radicalised republicanism (Marón).' On account of the manner in which Anarchist, Communist, Catalan and Basque Separatists perspectives are excluded from the 'talks', he concludes that rather than a dialogue, *The Vigil* 'might be better described as a disguised monologue'.[25] A similar problem arises in relation to *The Interpreters*. Æ described his work as a 'symposium' in which 'nationalists, imperialists, socialists, and anarchists' all exchanged views; but the four characters representing those outlooks (Lavelle, Heyt, Culain and Leroy respectively) are unlikely spokesmen for their respective ideologies; with the possible exception of Lavelle as a nationalist in the mould of Patrick Pearse. It is their underlying mysticism which is the problem here. Æ states quite plainly in his preface that 'those who take part in the symposium suppose of the universe that it is a spiritual being', but he does not seem to realize how much the speakers' spirituality undermines his claim to present a number of contrasting political ideologies. (245) However, the fact that the characters in these texts reflect aspects of their authors' own political personalities does not necessarily undermine their status as dialogues. These works can be described as *internal* dialogues in which the authors critique their *own* political views from a number of alternative perspectives.

Hannah Arendt's comments in 'Politics and Philosophy' suggest that this form of literature gives expression to a particular understanding of selfhood. Speaking with reference to Plato's dialogues, she points out that for Socrates 'living together with others begins with living together with oneself', a process which involves coming to a recognition, and acceptance, of the plurality contained within the 'I'. Internal dialogue is central in this regard because it is through this activity that the plurality of the self is uncovered: 'only in thought',

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[25] John H. Seekamp, '*La velada en Benicarló*: the Political and Personal Testement of Manuel Azaña', *Mid Hudson Language Studies*, VIII (1985), p. 90.

Arendt remarks, 'do I realize the dialogue of the two-in-one who I am.'[26] Hence, although there is no sense in which Æ's or Azaña's works can be compared to Plato's literature at a philosophical level, Arendt's comments illustrate that, in terms of form, there is an important similarity between them: by critiquing their own political beliefs in as full and open a manner as possible, these texts realize the dialogical nature of their authors' selves.[27]

The dialogical understanding of the 'I' revealed in these works is also relevant to the notion of a national identity. The idea of sovereignty advanced by nationalist ideology is often expressed in terms of the concept of selfhood. In *Five Roads to Modernity*, Liah Greenfield remarks that modern nationalism has frequently 'assume[d] the character of a collective individual possessed of a single will';[28] and as we saw Kearney remark, the concept of the general will was itself conceived as the 'irrevocable submission of every individual to a single, unitary person [...] the collective personification of citizens as a whole.'[29] The notion of a national self is relevant to *The Interpreters* and *The Vigil* in the following sense: both works present a number of intellectual, military and political figures attempting to articulate the basis of their countries' nationhood. These discussions are analogous to a nation's attempts to discover its own general will, the condition of national sovereignty. Neither text manages to arrive at any unanimity in this regard. Instead, they reveal a multiplicity of particular wills and partial interests. However, in these works, it is the activity of dialogue itself, which represents the unity of the national self, in the same way that Arendt argues it represents the unity of the individual self.

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[26] Hannah Arendt, 'Politics and Philosophy', *Social Research*, 57.1 (Spring, 1990) 89.

[27] Notwithstanding the fact that their work bears no comparison to Plato's texts in a philosophical sense, it is interesting to note that Æ and Azaña may have turned to this literary genre for similar socio-political reasons. In *Dialogue and Dialectic* Hans-Georg Gadamer points out that in Plato's own time Athens society was breaking down through internal divisions. Plato availed of the form of the dialogue, Gadamer suggests, because he believed that the only way to promote unity in a society in which 'the communal bond formed in the practices, customs, and patterns of life in the state is no longer felt' was to generate 'a *philosophical discussion*' which posed the question 'in what might such a society consist?' Plato, this is to say, perceived that dialogue was the only 'form of poetic play' suitable to states which were 'almost incurable'. See Hans-George Gadamer, 'Plato and the Poets' in *Dialogue and Dialectic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), p. 65-7.

[28] Liah Greenfield, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1992), p. 11.

[29] Kearney, p.21. The idea of a national self is a recurring motif in Æ's and Azaña's writings. The very title of Æ's *The National Being* is, of course, significant in this regard; as is the fact that this work begins with a metaphor of the nation-as-infant, which is then extended throughout the work as a whole. His September 1921 pamphlet, *Ireland and the Empire at the Court of Conscience*, presents the nation attempting to 'think through' the issue of Dominion-status. The concept of a national self is also a recurring feature of Azaña's creative and political writings, such as *The Garden of the Frairs*, and 'A Constitution in Search of an Author'. As Marco points out, the first-person narrator in his political essays such as *Almanzor*, *Los curas oprimidos* and *El descreído en Palacio*, is best described as 'an absorbent character' [un personaje absorbente] who represents 'individuality' itself rather than a specific person. Marco, *La creación de sí mismo*, p. 122.

That both texts reveal this dialogical understanding of selfhood is illustrated by the fact that where they give expression to their authors' known political opinions those views are subjected to a rigorous critique which exposes their weaknesses and limitations. In *The Interpreters* this is evident in regard to the character of Lavelle, whom has been linked to Æ by a number of critics.[30] The similarity between author and character is most significant in relation to their shared cultural nationalist outlook. We have seen that in *The National Being* Æ articulates a belief in the homogenous character of national cultures. 'So ancient Egypt, with its temples, sphinxes, pyramids, and symbolic decorations, seems to us as if it had been created by one grandiose imagination', he remarks in chapter two of that study.[31] Lavelle makes very similar remarks in *The Interpreters* when he argues that his own country exhibits 'that unity of character that existed in the civilisations of Egypt or Attica, where art, architecture, and literature were in such harmony that all that is best seems almost the creation of one myriad-minded artist.' (266)

It is Leroy, the anarchist, who raises the problem that diversity within cultures poses for the Æ/ Lavelle theory of national culture. Leroy points out that 'individuals in the same country [...] work in contrary directions'; how can Lavelle distinguish 'among varieties of national ideals those which have the divine signature from the rest?' he enquires. Lavelle concedes that evidence of diversity within the nation poses problems for his theory. He tries to argue that certain individuals like himself, who have 'read the history of our nation' and come to feel 'the continuity of national inspiration', have developed the ability to distinguish 'those inspirations which come from the national genius from ideas which are personal.' (266-7) However, the other characters are unimpressed by this line of argument. Rian points out that the very fact that Leroy is objecting to Lavelle's theory suggests more diversity exists than the poet is prepared to concede. Leroy's own objection is even more damning, hinting, as it does, at the totalitarian potential of Lavelle's theory of nationalism. 'I do not wish to be a slave to the inner Lavelle', he complains to the poet. 'I do not know why you delight to see everywhere the echo of a single mood. I take joy in [...] all free imagination, but you desire to impose your dream on others.' (268) Lavelle offers no response to Leroy's arguments at

[30] Iyer and Iyer point out that Lavelle's description of the occasion he was first visited by the 'Earth spirit' as a young boy, parallels Æ's autobiographical account of a similar experience in *The Candle of Vision* (1919). In Iyer and Iyer, p. 734. Like Æ, Lavelle also believes in the divine origins of nations: how else, he asks, 'but by the divine visitations, whisperings, and breathings from the dark were nations inspired? Every race, Greek, Egyptian, Hindu, or Judaean, whose culture moves us deeply, looked back to divine origins.'(*The Interpreters, p.* 264)

[31] *The National Being*, p. 11.

this point. Instead, the discussion simply moves on to another topic, leaving the issue of the totalitarian implications of the poet's cultural nationalism unresolved.

The situation is reversed when Leroy articulates his own vision of humanity in chapter twelve. This revolutionary has lent his conditional support to the nationalist movement, but he continues to see himself as reacting against all ideologies that restrict the full expression of the individual. 'The great spiritual clans, the great national clans, all try to cast humanity into a single mould', he complains. (289) He criticizes the other revolutionaries for being 'jealous in demanding adhesion to national dogma, imperial dogma, or social dogma,' which all 'imprison the soul in little cubicles of thought'. (288) However, just as Leroy had identified weaknesses in Lavelle's outlook, the poet now draws attention to problems in the anarchist's views. Lavelle argues that there is little hope of any society – just or otherwise – being built along anarchist lines. 'There must be identities of thought or culture among those who live in the same region,' he complains, 'or else chaos or mere anarchy [...] will follow.' (290) As was the case in the previous exchange, Leroy has no effective response to his opponent's arguments; the discussion simply moves along to the next topic.

This lack of closure is a recurring, and often frustrating, aspect of both Æ and Azaña's texts. At times the reader has the sense that the various political outlooks which the authors examine could be presented more effectively; or at least that they merit more discussion. However, if this reveals an aesthetic flaw in the texts, it is also one which underlines the fact that neither author attempts to 'fix' their discussion by providing characters who most closely represent their own views with a seemingly irrefutable line of argument. Rather, the texts reveal their authors attempting to 'think through' the strengths and weaknesses of *all* the political outlooks they discuss.

The dialogicism of Æ's text is also apparent in relation to Heyt, the totalitarian representative of the Empire who was mistakenly bundled into the prisoners' cell during the confusion created by the rebellion. This capitalist directly opposes the aims and ideology of the nationalist-revolutionaries. 'What place has nationality in the limitless sky', he remarks, after listening to Lavelle's theories, 'and yet the little nations, if permitted, would proclaim territorial rights in the aether up to the infinite.' (273) Heyt's character exhibits the anti-intellectualism of the totalitarian ideologue. He turns to the philosophy of 'might is right' in order to justify the empire's attempt to dominate over the nations of the world. You cry out

against the world state which Nature has made like the lion', he suggests to the nationalists, 'but the will of the world soul is seen in the organisms it endows with power. The might of an organism is a measure of its rightness'.(272) Despite his anti-nationalism (and anti-intellectualism), the interesting feature of Heyt's totalitarian outlook is that it seems to replicate nationalist ideology on a larger scale. Whereas Lavelle based his nationalism on the concept of a homogeneous national consciousness, Heyt looks instead to the idea of a cosmic consciousness which encompasses the whole of humanity. 'We attain our fullest life', he claims, 'by becoming [...] slaves' to the cosmic will. (278)

It is Leroy who draws attention to the similarity between the two outlooks. Addressing his comments to Heyt *and* Lavelle, he observes that 'you [both] justify the moulding of humanity to your will by imperialism in the Heavens. I believe in the intense cultivation of human life and think the cosmic purpose is seen in the will of myself and others to be individual and free.' He then repeats his earlier objection, raised in relation to Lavelle's nationalism, that 'you would make me the slave of a light I do not see, a law I do not know. How is cosmic consciousness to be recognised', he asks the totalitarian, 'when it can be so variously interpreted?' (274) Therefore, this exchange of views again reveals the author thinking through the possible totalitarian implications of his own cultural nationalism. Alternatively, if we identify Æ with the Heyt character rather than with the nationalist, we can see that the dialogue raises the same problem in relation to this outlook as it does in regard to cultural nationalism: namely, that it fails to take account of the full complexity, and diversity, of human experience.

In their studies of Æ, Desmond Fennell and Nicholas Allen claim that the author did come to espouse totalitarian views. The former critic provides no evidence to support this view, but Allen does defend his opinion that, around the time of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, Æ revised his thinking on nationalism and democracy.[32] 'Russell's mistrust of democratic society's ability to legislate safely for itself was pronounced during this period', Allen contends. He notes that in the 1st October 1921 issue of the *Irish Homestead* Æ comments that he would rather have 'one autocrat with good intentions than several millions who don't know what is wise and what is foolish'; and the following June, in the same paper, he remarked 'one can only pray that Heaven will send us a powerful autocrat with ability to govern and a real desire to

[32] Fennell makes his comments in his study *Heresy: The Battle of Ideas in Modern Ireland* (Belfast: The Blackstaff Press, 1993), p. 44.

lead and educate the people so that they will be able to govern themselves'.[33] In the context of what Allen believes is a shift towards a totalitarian outlook, this critic concludes that the character of Heyt in *The Interpreters* expresses Æ's own views. 'Heyt', he contends, 'is in essence representative of the deep aversion to popular democracy that Russell developed during the civil war.'[34]

There are two weaknesses in Allen's analysis. The first relates to the quotations he cites from the *Irish Homestead*, neither of which convince. The fact that someone would prefer to be ruled by a benevolent autocrat rather a multitude of fools is hardly evidence of a totalitarian outlook. (We have seen that in *The Vigil* Azaña suggests that the latter scenario would lead the released inmates of a mental asylum to return voluntarily to their cells.) And the June 1922 quotation still displays a commitment to government by and for the people. In any case, given the great stress that Æ placed on democracy throughout his political literature, the claim that he renounced this core belief in 1921 needs to be substantiated by reference to more than two sentences from the *Irish Homestead.* The second shortcoming relates to Allen's reading of *The Interpreters*, which takes no account of the fact that the text exposes serious flaws in Heyt's totalitarian ideology. It is possible that – at a time when the country was facing into a period of increased disorder and extended human suffering – Æ came to believe that a period of autocratic government was necessary; but *The Interpreters* does not establish this point. Instead, it reveals him *thinking through* the strengths and weaknesses of the totalitarian option. As such, this work stands as a further example of how the literatures of the Irish and Spanish revolutions do not only express their authors' ideological beliefs and biases, they also attest to the ambivalences and tensions that writers experienced in relation to subjects such as politics and violence during these turbulent periods.

As a theosophist, Brehon undoubtedly expresses many of Æ's own opinions. Towards the end of the dialogue, this character attempts to reveal the existence of a single, spiritual source, behind the symposium's conflicting political philosophies, which he refers to as 'Own-Being'. Whichever way we approach this source, he remarks, 'it answers us'. 'It entered into Lavelle as a boy upon his mountain, and it was with Culain in his dark streets, and with Heyt in his state laboratories and thought of a demiurgic power, and with Leroy in

[33] Allen, p. 124*n*.
[34] Ibid, p. 124.

his passion for freedom.' Once the individual comes to an understanding of 'Own-Being', he says, 'the old life should be over, and they should no longer be concerned in [*sic*] the politics of time, and should leave the life of conflict and passion and fit themselves for the politics of eternity' (305). In his preface, Æ states his intention in writing *The Interpreters* was to '[track] political moods back to spiritual origins'. (245) This comment suggests he believed that Brehon's theosophy provides a degree of closure to the dialogue. The dialogue itself, however, does not support this reading. Throughout *The Interpreters*, Rian, the architect, provides a strong counterpoint to the belief in spiritual reality. 'Here is a world in revolt,' he comments ruefully, after having listened to his comrades' spiritual philosophies, 'and three who have each a multitude of followers themselves follow phantoms that none other than themselves may see.' (293) Or again, in what is possibly the finest passage of prose in the text, he remarks that

> I am frightened to think how lightly this earth, so solid to my imagination, weighs with these comrades of mine, so that if the faintest breathing from another nature falls on the scales, this earth with all its state, cities, and history, tilts up as if the earth scale was freighted with nothing. (295)

Rian is also effective in challenging Brehon's attempt to convince the revolutionaries to reject the use of violence to achieve political ends in favour of a spiritually-based pacifism. 'It seems easy', he complains, in response to Brehon's views,

> to reshape the world simply by going on thinking and imagining and leaving to others the execution of what we devise. I do this in my own art, but the philosophy seems to have a kind of incompleteness when applied to the shaping of human destiny. (308)

Brehon's only response here is to agree that his pacifist outlook is a difficult one to maintain, and to suggest that they should look forward to the day when all men, perceiving their spiritual nature, will become just. Therefore, insofar as his remarks clearly fail to respond adequately to Rian's objections, it is clear that the ethical and political questions which have been posed throughout the work have not yet received a satisfactory answer.

That this is indeed the case is further underlined by the lesser-ranked prisoners' unenthusiastic response to Brehon's philosophy. When Leroy and Rian ask the volunteers for their opinions of what they have just heard, we read that Rudd (the only one of these characters who is individuated to any extent) 'long baffled in his attempts to understand things remote from his mentality [...] broke out that he had never heard so much folly.'

Rudd points out that he was fighting because 'he hated being bullied in the name of a law he had no share in the making. He hated being instructed how to live in the name of a science which was unintelligible, and most of all he hated being told in the name of God how to think.' (309) Rudd's reasons for fighting (particularly his last remark here, which recalls the emphasis that Æ placed on freedom of thought in *The National Being*) remind us of the important political and social issues which Brehon's outlook fails to resolve. Rian underlines this point, remarking that he has 'much sympathy' with Rudd's outlook, and suggesting that this character 'expresses emotions we have all shared, and which, I fancy, had as much to do with bringing us here as these fine imaginings of the Oversoul.' (309) Therefore, Rudd and Rian's comments both illustrate the inadequacy of the theosophical solution to the political issues which have been discussed in the dialogue. Given Æ's deep commitment to this religion, the treatment of this subject in *The Interpreters* is an especially strong indication that he attempts a genuine critique of his own views in this work.

The Vigil in Benicarlo displays a similar, dialogical conception of selfhood. Many critics have pointed out that it is the characters of Garcés and Morales in this text whom most closely represent Azaña's own republican outlook. As with Æ's work, the evidence of dialogue in *La velada* can be illustrated by the fact that, on a number of occasions, the other main speakers expose serious flaws in these characters' arguments. This is most apparent in regard to Garcés and Morales's pessimistic view of the Republican war-effort. 'Neither the monarchy nor the Republic, with all the intermediate zones and lands which you can imagine between those two poles of our politics, are worth what they cost,' Morales claims, 'not to the republicans, and not to the monarchists, but to Spain.'[35] His disillusionment is due largely to the fact that the conflict has resulted in so much destruction of the nation's cultural heritage. Referring to the bombing of the Museo del Prado by the Fascists, he remarks that 'I do not remember having received in my life such a strong or painful blow [...] That day, my war morale was broken and has not returned.'[36] Spaniards, he complains, are behaving as though 'the destruction of their spiritual patrimony – superior to all political struggles – does

[35] 'Ni la monarquía ni la República, con cuantas zonas y tierras intermedias pueda usted imaginar entre esos dos polos de nuestro obra política, valen lo que cuestan, no a los republicanos o a los monárquicos, sino a España.' *Obras completas*, iii, p. 441.

[36] 'No recuerdo haber recibido en la vida golpe tan fuerte ni padecimiento comparable [...] Ese día, mi moral de guerra se quebrantó y no se ha repuesto.', ibid., p. 442.

not matter to them.'[37] If he 'directed' the war, Morales contends, he would 'have proposed something … I don't know … call it the immunity of the beautiful and the historic.'[38]

Marón responds to Morales's comments by making the obvious, but effective, point that Morales's loss of morale in the face of fascist violence only serves to increase the threat of such behaviour. 'In this manner you smooth the way for bullies', he remarks. 'The threat by a strong group to unleash destruction, or the possibility of its being unleashed, would be enough to force us to renounce justice.' He also draws attention to a basic anomaly in the writer's thinking: Morales (like Azaña) accepts that the Republicans' had no choice but to resist the uprising, but as Marón points out, the Republican war-effort is only serving to prolong and raise the cost of a conflict which the writer claims neither the monarchy nor the Republic is worth. Morales's only response to this observation is to complain that Marón is hounding him, and to threaten to stop talking altogether.[39] Pastrana also responds effectively to the writer's arguments. Morales suggests that one of the reasons why the preservation of Spain's cultural heritage is more important than the outcome of its political struggles is because it belongs to all the Spanish people. However, Pastrana points out that this is a highly debatable suggestion. Responding to the claim from a socialist perspective, he remarks that although the workers create much of this wealth only a small percentage of it actually belongs to them.

Garcés also has a very negative view of the war-effort. He complains that the Spanish are behaving 'like people without reason, without brains',[40] and suggests that 'the heartbreaking thing about this drama without end is that when it will appear to have ended we will not have more justice, more liberty, or more bread than before.'[41] Barcala (the radical socialist) suggests that according to this outlook, they should simply have submitted to the Rebels. The ex-minister angrily denies that he is implying anything of the sort. Like Morales, he insists that the Republicans had law, right, and order on their side, and so had a moral duty to resist the military uprising. However this duty, it transpires, is merely 'an irreparable

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[37] 'no les importara arrasar su patrimonio espiritual, superior a todas las contiendas polítics'. Ibid., p. 444.
[38] 'De haber dirigido yo la guerra, habría propuesto algo … No sé… digamos inmunidad de lo bello y lo histórico.' Ibid., p. 442.
[39] 'De esa manera usted allana el camino a los matones. Le bastaría a un grupo fuerte la amenaza de desatar un estrago, o la posibilidad de dessatarlo, para forzarnos a rununciar a lo más justo.' Ibid.
[40] 'Nos conducimos como gente sin razón, sin caletre.' Ibid, 414.
[41] 'Pero lo angustioso de este drama sin desenlace consiste en que cuando parezca acabado no tendremos más justicia, más libertad ni más pan que antes.' Ibid., p. 416.

misfortune'; Garcés is convinced that the war will bring no benefit to the country no matter who wins. 'If the Rebels win, after the thousands they have shot will follow many more; almost none of the people present here would be exempt from death.' But on the other hand, if the government forces win, he prophesises that

> the ungovernable, popular destruction, will be tremendous; forming a Himalaya of corpses. When nothing remains to burn or kill, if we win, we will not have more liberty, nor more justice, nor more wealth than before, but instead have a little less, be a little worse off for all that.[42]

In these circumstances, he concludes, he has good reason to fell depressed about the situation. Therefore, Garcés's pessimitic view of the war-effort paralells Morales's attitude in that he also believes that the Republicans have a duty to fight an un-winnable war; and like Morales, he has no ideas as to how to resolve this situation. In effect, Garcés treats the Republicans as caught in the kind of tragic contradiction which, in the introduction to this study, we saw Williams suggest characterizes revolutionary situations generally.

Both of these characters do, at times, raise strong arguments for their views. Many readers would agree with Morales's observation that there must be a limit to what victory is worth to the Republican side. 'Would you kill, or order to be killed, twenty million compatriots, if a bloodthirsty god revealed to you that the victory of the Republic depended on it?' he asks Barcala. 'Me neither.'[43] However, the other speakers are also very conscious of the high cost the war is extolling. Pastrana angrily denies Morales's claim that Spaniards are not bothered about the destruction of their country's culture heritage. 'Yes, it pains us', he responds. 'But what can we do?' As Pastrana's remark here suggests, the most significance weakness which these exchanges reveal in Garcés and Morales outlook, is that neither of those characters offers any alternative to the course of action which the Republic is following. *All* the characters deeply regret the loss of life and destruction of art and property engendered by the war, but only Garcés and Morales seem to have given up hope of finding a *political* solution to the problem. As such, these exchanges suggest that the most Azaña-like characters in the dialogue are of very limited use to the Republic during the Civil War.

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[42] 'una desgracia irreparable [...] si triunfasen los rebeldes, a los miles que han fusilado añadirían otros tantos; casi ninguno de los aquí presentes se libraría de la muerte. [...] el estrago popular, ingobernable, será tremendo. Formado un Himalaya de cadáveres, cuando nada queda por quemar ni matar, si triunfamos nosotros, no tendremos más libertad ni mejor justicia, ni más riqueza, sino un poco peor y un poco menos de todo eso.' Ibid.

[43] '¿daría muerte u ordenaría que se la diesen a veinte millones de compatriotas, si un dios sanguinario le revelase que de ello depende el triunfo de la República? Tampoco.' Ibid., p. 443.

The evidence of internal dialogue in this work is also apparent in regard to the fact that Garcés and Morales disagree between themselves over the most fundamental issue raised in the work: the nature of Spanish nationalism itself. For Morales, Spain is an idealised, a-temporal 'being', which exists independently of the individuals and political regimes which are manifested within it.

> We can also conceive of a nation divided by conflicting value systems as something distinct from the individuals who compose it. A nation doesn't equal the arithmetic sum of so many nationals [...] The nation endures, flowing on endlessly. Individuals perish and the nation doesn't change.[44]

Garcés disagrees with this view. He argues that Morales's theory converts the concept of nationhood into an 'empty category. There is no being, Spain, different to the sum of Spaniards', he responds.[45] Rather than a metaphysical entity, for Garcés, Spanish nationality is a psychological phenomenon, 'a value, called, according to the stage it displays, the national spirit or the national interest.'[46] Consequently, he views the nation as inseparable from the citizenry of the country. 'The nation is living phenomenon', he contends, 'inseparable from the mass of inhabitants.'[47] Furthermore, in contrast to Morales's opinion that the individual's relationship to the nation is completely distinct to their dealings with other social groupings, Garcés asserts that is only through the cultural and political institutions of the state that a sense of national spirit can be engendered among the citizenry. 'National communion', he tells Morales, 'is established, not in spite of the other groups and situations which, according to you hinder it, but precisely through them: through the family, religion, profession, party, union.'[48]

Garcés describes his concept of national identity as a 'unity of conduct before certain subjects', an idea that is clearly derived from the concept of the general will.[49] In order to exist at all, he claims, the nation depends on 'the common consent, if not unanimous, at least

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[44] 'la nación que ha de sufrir el contraste de las jerarquías, es también para pensada como ser diferente de los individuos que la forman. No es la suma aritmética de tantos millones de nacionales [...] La nación permanence, fluye sin términio. Los individuos perecen de duración. La nación no varía.' Ibid., p. 445.
[45] 'La nación pensada por usted [...] : la convierte en una forma vacía [...] No hay un ser, España, diferente de la suma de los españoles.' Ibid., p. 446.
[46] 'Admito ¡ quién lo duda! un valor, llamado, según la fase que ostenta, el espíritu nacional o interés nacional.' Ibid., p. 447.
[47] 'La nación es un fenómeno vital, inseparable del de la masa de pobladores. Ibid., p. 446.
[48] 'La comunión nacional se establece, no a pesar, sino a través precisamente de otros grupos y situaciones que según usted, la embarazan: A través de la familia, la religión, la profesión, el partido, el sindicato.' Ibid., p. 447.
[49] 'Unidad de conducta delante de ciertos temas, no otra.' Ibid.

loud and strong enough so that any dissent is merely a useless oddity.'[50] Garcés accepts that the logical consequence of this theory is that Spain no longer exists as a nation. 'The national spirit loses its normative power to the degree that its counsels fail to receive unanimous support', he remarks. 'This is because the essential quality of that norm, deriving from its unique position as superior to the nationals' discordant preferences, lies precisely in producing cohesion and unity.'[51] As proof of the fact that Spain no longer exists as a nation, he points out that Spaniards had violated the most fundamental principle of nationhood in pursuing the conflict: the desire for independence. 'Opposing itself to the foreigner is the very act through which a nation affirms its existence', he remarks. 'Even the most alienated members must join together and take their places in the ranks facing the foreigner. Well, here we have a Spain cut through by foreign armies.'[52] In the light of such behaviour, he concludes that the concept of national spirit remains a 'utopian' ideal in Spain.[53]

Morales refuses to accept Garcés's arguments. 'The nation does not exist, is that it?' he responds. 'I don't agree.'[54] Echoing Azaña's criticisms of the Spanish character in texts such as 'A Constitution in Search of an Author', and his 1933 speech in Bilbao, he argues that the war has revealed that the national spirit is stronger than ever. The problem, he suggests, is rather that it is a very intolerant spirit.

> For many Spaniards it is not enough to believe and profess what they want; they are offended, scandalised, they revolt, if the same liberty is granted to someone who thinks in another manner. For them, the nation consists in those who profess the same orthodoxy. The nation thus conceived is purified by tremendous amputations.[55]

According to Morales, Garcés was mistaken to suppose that the national spirit consisted in a unity of conduct in regard to certain issues. Instead, it is the Rebels' present intolerant

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[50] 'Mas su existencia, su vigencia, dependendel asentimiento común, si no unánime, por lo menos tan amplio y fuerte que cualquiera disentimiento no pase de extravagancia fútil.' Ibid.

[51] 'La virtud normativa del espíritu nacional se pierde en cuanto todos no están de acuerdo sobre lo que aconseja [...] porque lo esencial de esa norma, deducida de un valor único más alto que las preferencias discordantes de los nacionales, es producir la cohesión, la unidad.' Ibid.

[52] 'El modo propio de afirmarse la nación es oponerse al extranjero: delante de él, los miembros más dislocadas parece que han de articularse de nuevo y volver a su sitio. Pero ahí tenemos a España surcada por ejércitos extraños.'

[53] 'eso me autoriza para decir, en contra de nuestro amigo [i.e. Morales], que la virtud normativa del espíritu nacional es utópica en España.' Ibid., p. 448.

[54] 'La nación no existe. ¿Es eso? No me conformo.' Ibid., p. 450.

[55] 'A muchos españoles no les basta con profesar y creer lo que quieren: se ofenden, se escandalizan, se sublevan, si la misma libertad se otorga a quien piensa de otra manera. Para ellos la nación consiste en los que profesan su misma ortodoxia. La nación así entendida se depura merced a tremendas amputaciones.' Ibid., p. 451.

attitude towards the democratically-elected government which represents the Spanish national character in its historically characteristic form.

The difference of opinion between these characters on this fundamental issue can be traced to the tension within republican ideology generally. 'There is 'a fundamental paradox at the heart of modern republicanism', Kearney observes. On the one hand, it promotes 'an *enlightened universalism* of world citizens.' On the other, it permits 'a *separatist nationalism* which subordinates the universal rights of the citizen to the rights of the nation-state.'[56] The character of Garcés represents the former outlook. He understands the nation in contractual terms: as a moral decision by citizens to unity in patriotic attachment to shared set of *universally-good* political practices and values.'[57] For Morales, on the other hand, the Spanish nation exists independently of its citizens. He sees national identity as being a pre-moral connection to the culture and history of one's homeland. Azaña does not manufacture a reconciliation between these characters, *both* of whom represent aspects of his political views. Their two perspectives 'meet' only in the sense that they come together in dialogue. Neither Garcés nor Morales can be said to represent the *essence* of Azaña's republicanism, therefore; rather, at the centre of his political thinking, we see, lies a dialogue.

Garosci maintains that Morales represents 'the secret metapolitic of the work.' [el secreto metapolítica de la obra.][58] There is a sense in which this is true, but only because – more than any other character – he embodies the dialogical principle which informs the work as a whole. Hence Whiston notes that towards the end of the work, this character admits he was hoping his hypotheses might have been knocked over by the others, so that he could 'draw strength from your contradictions'.[59] Rather than representing a threat to the unity of the nation, Morales looks upon the disagreements and contradictions that emerge in the course of the dialogue as reassuring evidence that the Republican-nation still exists.

The manner in which Azaña uses the character of Pastrana to criticize *both* Garcés's and Morales's opinions, further underlines this point. Paralleling Rudd's angry comments

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[56] Ibid., p.27.
[57] Definition of civic nationalism in Kearney, p.3.
[58] Garosci, p. 95.
[59] 'cobrar fuerzas en la contradicción de ustedes'. James Whiston, 'Obligación de opinar': The Limits of Pluralism in Manuel Azaña's *La velada en Benicarló.*' In Ann L. MacKenzie and Paul Preston (eds), *The Republic Besieged: Civil War in Spain 1936-39* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), p. 254.

regarding the lack of a sense of *realpolitik* to the political dialogue in *The Interpreters*, he complains that

> Both of you are involved in turning these concepts over and over: nation, national, nationality; you put them up to the light, take them out of their cover, determined to discover what they contain, and what they are for. Useless effort! You won't find anything useful for our present situation.[60]

The priority that Azaña places on dialogue in this work helps to explain why he chose to exclude certain perspectives from his text. As Marco points out, Fascists are not represented because they resorted to violence with the intention of destroying 'that space which makes dialogue and the expression of disagreement possible.'[61] Somewhat more controversial is the omission of the Anarchists, Communists, and Basque and Catalan separatist-nationalists. Marco suggests that Anarchists and Communists are excluded because their political philosophies were not compatible with Azaña's nationalism. The absence of Basque or Catalan separatists, he continues, can be explained in terms of the fact that neither of those two groups saw themselves as fighting for the survival of the Republic. He draws attention to Azaña's comments in 1937, when, as President of the Republic he complained that 'the (Basque and Catalan) nationalists do not fight for the cause of the Republic, or for the cause of Spain, which they abhor, but for their autonomy and semi-independence.'[62]

Marco's observations undoubtedly go some way to explaining the exclusion of these outlooks from the text. However, it is also important to note that, as a Republican, Azaña was confronted with two distinct problems in regard to the issue of national unity during the Civil War. The first was a theoretical issue: the divisions created by the conflict appeared to have undermined the very concept of Spanish nationhood. The second was that presented by the diverse aims of groups within the Republican regime. Clearly the two problems are closely related, but they are separate in the sense that, without resolving the former problem, Azaña had no basis from which to make any appeal for unity that might resolve the second. Hence, rather than an attempt to include all shades of political opinion involved in the 1936-

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[60] 'andan ustedes volviendo y revolviendo esos conceptos: nación, nacional, nacionalidad, los miran al trasluz, les sacan el forro, empeñados en averiguar qué contienen, para qué sirven. Vano esfuerzo. No extraerán ustedes nada útil para la situación actual.' Ibid., p. 454.

[61] 'ese espacio que hace possible el diálogo y la expresión del desacuerdo.' Marco *La creación de sí mismo*, p. 50.

[62] 'Los nacionalistas no se baten por la causa de la República, ni por la causa de España, a la que aborrecen, sino por su autonomía y semiindependencia.' Ibid., p. 51.

39 conflict, *The Vigil* is best viewed as a work in which the author attempts to establish *in his own mind* the unifying principle of Spanish nationalism.

We have seen that the political disagreements that are raised in the course of both *The Vigil* and *The Interpreters* rarely achieve any degree of closure. The significance of dialogical form in these works is not, therefore, that it enables the authors to come up with solutions to the problems that divided Ireland and Spain during their civil wars. Dialogue is not presented in these texts as a magical cure-all for what ails the body politic, as though the political differences which so racked both countries during the closing years of their revolutions could be overcome 'if people would just talk to each other'. Neither Æ nor Azaña was so naïve, or egotistical, that they thought they could solve those crises with a work of literature. These works are of interest, firstly, in the sense that – written in the midst of internecine conflicts – they represent their authors' attempts to imagine a concept of national identity which is not dependent upon 'an indivisible collective interest', but is instead identified with a process of dialogic interaction. In this way they reassert the emphasis on respect for diversity of opinion that appear in the quotations that head this chapter, and which recur throughout Æ's and Azaña's political literature. Secondly, the manner in which both authors interrogate their own political ideas in these works provides a further illustration of one of the key arguments raised in this study: that the literature of the Irish and Spanish conflicts cannot always be identified with a particular ideological perspective, these works also give expression to the anomalies and contradictions which so characterized the experience of revolution in modern Ireland and Spain.

Conclusion

Great revolutions are always metaphysical.
(Albert Camus)[1]

Always historicize!
(Fredric Jameson)[2]

The importance of reading the literature produced during the Irish and Spanish revolutions in terms of their original socio-historical contexts has been emphasized throughout the preceding pages of this study. We have seen, however, that all of the authors examined here sought to legitimate their revolutionary movements by reference to moral and political ideals which, they believed, transcended the circumstances of those conflicts: the concept of transcendence is itself a recurring theme in Patrick Pearse's and Rafael Alberti's writings, one which enabled them to represent the experiences of death, suffering and destruction as part of a process of change rather than one of defeat; Æ conceived the Irish Revolution in the light of universal history, as an event which ultimately involved the whole of mankind in a movement towards Absolute Spirit; and Manuel Azaña's humanist outlook was founded upon the universal precepts of modern French republicanism. These kinds of claims are very much out of favour in the present climate of literary criticism. Most literary theorists today employ resolutely anti-metaphysical methodologies. Richard Kearney defines his task in *Postnationalist Ireland* as 'the dismantling of nationalism' in order to expose the historical reality behind its myths of territory, language, history, religion, and ideology.[3] In their introduction to *Spanish Cultural Studies*, Helen Graham and Jo Labanyi warn their readers of the need to historicize the 'pseudo-universal rhetorics' that characterized discourses on the national question in Spain during the 1930s.[4]

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[1] Albert Camus, 'Hope and the Absurd in the Works of Franz Kafka' in Justin O' Brien trans., *The Myth of Sisyphus* (London: Penguin Books, 1995), p. 114*n*.
[2] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious – Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Routledge, 1983), p. ix.
[3] Kearney, p. 9.
[4] Helen Graham and Jo Labanyi, 'Culture and Modernity: The Case of Spain' in Graham and Labanyi (eds.), *Spanish Cultural Studies – An Introduction*, p. 11.

We do need to 'always historicize.'[5] However, rather than attempting to 'dismantle' ideas, this project has sought to present them in the process of construction. To historicize should not mean to deconstruct the metaphysical presuppositions revealed in a work of literature, but to *re*-construct the social and political context that gave that text its initial meaning, metaphysical beliefs and all. By treating such ideas as evidence of a false consciousness, irrationality, or sectarianism the critic closes off a vital part of the original context in which the work was produced. Critics who take a resolutely negative approach towards universalising discourses are, in any case, caught in a performative contradiction. As Terry Eagleton remarks, 'if it is indeed the case that human subjects are always historically constituted, then here at least is one vitally important non-historical truth.'[6]

The literatures of the Irish and Spanish revolutions clearly do raise issues that transcend those historical events, and that cannot be properly understood without recourse to those wider terms of reference. Herbert McCabe's analysis, we saw, suggests that the unrepresentative quality of these conflicts is a problem that affects 'the history of all revolutions'.[7] Similarly, Raymond Williams's study indicates that the 'tragic contradictions' which arose in Ireland and Spain are endemic to revolutionary situations in general. Seamus Deane has pointed out that 'The literature of the [Irish] revival is, in essence, a heroic literature.'[8] This emphasis is not peculiar to Revivalist literature, however, or to the culture in which the writers associated with that movement produced their work. The stress on heroism in the writings of the Spanish Revolution underlines this point. Deane contends that 'Pearse's evangelism against mean-spiritedness, cowardice, caution, commercial wisdom, is precisely the old Victorian-Romantic crusade against the spiritual atrophy of middle-class rule',[9] but very few cultures have viewed those qualities in a positive light. Indeed, Ernest Becker maintains that the urge to heroism is a universal characteristic of human society, one which modern Western culture has struggled to repress. 'This is what society is and has always been', Becker comments, 'a symbolic action system, a structure of statuses and roles, customs and rules of behaviour,

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[5] These are the opening words of Fredric Jameson's seminal study on the relation between literature and politics, *The Political Unconscious* (1978).
[6] Eagleton, p. xi.
[7] McCabe, p. 116.
[8] Deane, p. 65.
[9] Ibid.

designed to serve as a vehicle for earthly heroism.' While he accepts that the exact nature of these systems and structures will vary from one culture to the next, such 'cultural relativity', he claims, only amounts to 'the relativity of hero systems the world over.'[10]

The complex role that religion played in the Irish and Spanish conflicts is also indicative of how they raised issues that transcend those particular epochs. The significance of this subject has been either undervalued or viewed in a negative light by most of the critics referred to in this study. Richard Kearney, Edna Longley and William Irwin Thompson treat it as evidence of an irrational or sectarian political vision in Pearse's writings. Neither have Alberti's critics given due consideration to the part that religion plays in his literature. James McCarthy, we saw, overlooks the ways in which it informs the author's 1937 version of *Numancia*. Robert Havard's otherwise excellent study takes no account of how Alberti's civil war poetry reveals the religious patterns of thought which he identifies as central to the poet's earlier, surrealist collections such as *Concerning the Angels*.

The claims to transcendence that animate religions may or may not be true, but to dismiss evidence of such thinking in works of literature as a sign of irrationality or 'pseudo-universal rhetorics', is to take insufficient account of the extent to which these ideas have occurred throughout human history. Terry Eagleton notes that religion 'is far and away the most important symbolic form which humanity has ever known.'[11] Crane Brinton maintains that it has played a key role in most revolutionary situations, and suggests that the individual 'finds in his devoted service to the revolution most of the psychological satisfaction commonly supplied by what we call religion.'[12] The significance of religious patterns of thought in the writings examined in this study is not so easily dismissed when it is viewed in this wider historical context.

One of the most important ways in which the literatures of the Irish and Spanish revolutions transcend their original socio-historical contexts relates to the process of narrative

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[10] Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: The Free Press, 1973), p. 4-5.
[11] Eagleton, p. xvi-ii.
[12] Marxism conceived 'as a religion has already got a great deal done', he continues. 'Marxism as a "scientific theory" alone would hardly have got beyond the covers of *Das Kapital* and the learned journals.' Brinton, p. 183.

construction itself. The centrality of narrative to the formation of nation states has been noted by many critics, and the present study has taken up Bhabha's call to investigate the 'nation-space [...] in the act of "composing" its powerful image.'[13] However, although we can historicize the stories that nations tell of themselves, we cannot discover the origins of storytelling, or the key part that it has always played in the formation of identity at the individual and communal levels. 'Each society *is* its creation of the past; just as each person is his interpretation of his past', Herbert McCabe observes. Both answer the question "'who am I?" [...] by producing an autobiography.'[14] The stories by means of which we come to know ourselves are always 'provisional', McCabe notes, because our lines of development extend into the future as well as the past. The future, he remarks, acts as 'a constant call to novelty, to creative advance'; a call 'to transcend my present image of myself [...] It means a constant criticism of the identity that is offered to me by my present language and other media of communication.'[15]

We have seen that the narratives produced by Pearse, Alberti, Æ, and Azaña attest to their own 'provisional' status. Notwithstanding the politically-committed nature of much of their literature, these works reveal the authors' own views in a process of change and development, a process which gives full expression to the anomalies and ambivalences that arose in the course of the Irish and Spanish conflicts. Consequently, the critic achieves very little by 'dismantling' political and moral ideas that gain expression at particular points in these texts. If the work is examined in its entirety, it becomes apparent that the pressures exerted by the revolutionary situations in which these authors were involved have already exposed many of the weaknesses and contradictions that critics and historians claim to discover.

McCabe's arguments further underline the need for a dual critical-perspective, therefore: one which takes full account of the ways in which historical events impacted on the literature produced during these revolutions, but which also draws attention to the fact that the significance of some of the issues raised by those writings transcend the socio-political circumstances in which they found expression. There is a sense, indeed, in which a

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[13] Bhabha, p. 3.
[14] McCabe, p. 28.
[15] Ibid., p. 114.

genuinely historicist approach will always reveal the limitations of its own methodology. All human actions occur 'within a larger frame, history itself,' Hannah Arendt notes, but as she also remarks in the epigraph which heads this study, 'each event in human history reveals an unexpected landscape of human deeds, sufferings and new possibilities which together transcend the sum total of all willed intentions and the significance of all origins.'[16] Certainly, it is one of the most interesting, and poignant, features of the writings examined in this study that they give expression to their authors' attempts to reconcile their most deeply-held political convictions with the 'unexpected landscapes' that opened up before them during the revolutionary struggles in Ireland and Spain.

[16] Arendt, 'Understanding and Politics', p. 389.

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