

## Vallejo on Language and Politics

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*César Vallejo es una revolución en la poesía  
de la lengua española...*  
--Americo Ferrari

I begin with this quote from Ferrari because it captures in one succinct sentence what Vallejo was and continues to be for his readers—a revolution in the Spanish language; a revolutionary writer in literary and poetic terms, a revolutionary writer with respect to his Marxian politics; a poet that inter-married his art with his own liberationist sense of political and social justice, and above all, an individual who was equally loyal to both his poetic and political projects. A voice, unique and singular like no other in Hispanic letters, Vallejo left us with two books of poetry published in his life time, *Los heraldos negros* (1917) and *Trilce* (1922), and the posthumously published *Poemas en prosa* (1923-1924/29, *Poemas humanos*, and *España, aparta de mí este cáliz* (1938). He was also the author of numerous essays on art, culture, and politics, the political novella, *El tungsteno* (1931), six plays, and such short stories as “Paco Yunque” (1930).

The *prima facie* difference between one work and another, as for example between *Trilce* and *Poemas humanos*, only points to the Neo-Baroque quality of his thought and of his work. For the exclusive, disjunctive binary oppositions of surface (the linguistic, non-sense experiments of *Trilce*) and depth (the political engagement of the Marxian project in *Poemas humanos*, *España*, and *El tungsteno*) are kept unresolved viz. a dialectical poetics. This is achieved, as we will see in the pages that follow, through an understanding of the soul/body of literature/politics that simultaneously embraces the immanent and the transcendental dimension of man; which is why for Vallejo the revolution was as much a struggle for language (langue/parole) as it was a struggle for economic justice (Communist Society/Kingdom of God): a practical as much as it was a theoretical endeavor. “Suelo teórico y práctico,” he wrote in “Telúrica y magnética” (1987 90).<sup>1</sup>

### I. From *Los heraldos negros* to *Trilce*: The Bridge

*Los heraldos negros* is often cited as Vallejo’s connection to *modernismo*. And doubtlessly, there is some truth to this. Take for instance “Deshojación,” “Comunión” “Bajo los álamos,” “Deshora,” “Fresco” “Oración del camino,” and “Encaje de fiebre” where the word “azul” appears no less than eight times, and “Retablo” where “azul” and Darío, the author of *Azul*, is mentioned twice, and one can understand why it is that *HN* has been called Vallejo’s *modernista* book. But clearly, one solitary word is not enough to identify a text with an entire literary movement—other aspects of the *modernista* sensibility are traceable in *HN*, e.g., the *modernista* orientalism of “Nervazón de Angustia” and “Pagana” in the figures of Judith and Holofernes,” and the suffering, solitary individual of “Heces” and “Yeso.”

Having said this, then, one can also enumerate examples of poems from *HN* that have little, if anything, to do with modernism. The poem, “Setiembre,” for example, does to the stereotyped convention of LOVE=SPRING what Enrique González Martínez’s poem did to the neck of Darío’s “cisne.”<sup>2</sup> Here Vallejo substitutes the love and erotic encounter usually reserved for Spring and Summer with one which begins in September and has its fruition in “los charcos de esta noche de Diciembre”(1998 78). But there is nothing surprising about this, in a book that is singular and unlike almost everything else that was written at the time. That is why to see *Los heraldos negros* as either a departure from *modernismo*, or as one of the last examples of *modernista* poetics, is to do Vallejo a great disservice. Moreover, even if *HN* is conceived as a “bridge,” as many have interpreted it, it is only thus in the sense of the “bridge” itself and not with respect to any particular destination. Almost all of the concerns that will later occupy the pages of *Trilce*, *Poemas en prosa*, *Poemas humanos*, and *España, aparta de mí este cáliz*, not to mention the short stories, novels, and essays, are to be found latently in *HN*. Note for a moment the number of neologisms—(e.g., nouns turned into verbs, invented adjectives, etc)—in poems like “Nervazón de Angustia” with the made up “nervazón,” instead of “nerviosismo” (1998 57), the “enmuralla” of “Nostalgias imperiales” (91), the “mómico” of “Oración del camino” (97), the “bizantinado” of “Mayo” (99), the “istmarse” of “Los anillos fatigados” (126), the “noser”<sup>3</sup> of “Para el alma imposible de mi amada” and “Encaje de fiebre” (120, 135), and even if the language of *HN* has not yet reached the linguistic aporias of *Trilce*, it does anticipate a certain relation to language that will remain constant throughout his poetical works.

Vallejo’s concern for the indigenous peoples and peasants of Peru finds its first expressions in *HN* in such poems as “Terceto autóctono” (94-96), “Huaco”(98) “Mayo”(99-100) “Aldeana” (101-102) and “Idilio muerto” (103) before becoming one of the themes of *Poemas humanos*. And the (often silent) “God” of *Los heraldos negros* (“El pan nuestro,” “Absoluta,” “Espergesia” 112-113, 114, 141-142) that disappears in *Trilce* and *Poemas humanos* reappears once again in *España, aparta de mí este cáliz*. “Yo nací un día/ que Dios estuvo enfermo, / grave” writes Vallejo at the end of “Espergesia” (142). If God had not yet died on the day Vallejo was born, then he was gravely ill, and perhaps he even died, for it is not so much “God” whom Vallejo rediscovers in *España*, but rather the inherent socialist ethics and principles of Christianity that are already longed for in *HN*’s “La cena miserable”:

Hasta cuando estaremos esperando lo que  
No se nos debe...Y en qué recodo estiraremos  
Nuestra pobre rodilla para siempre! Hasta cuándo  
la cruz que nos alienta no detendrá sus remos.

Hasta cuándo la Duda nos brindará blasones  
por haber padecido...  
Ya nos hemos sentado  
mucho a la mesa, con la amargura de un niño  
que a media noche, llora de hambre, desvelado... (119)

The hunger of the poor, of children who cannot sleep because they have nothing in their bellies, this, more than any faith in a distant, inhuman God, is what gives rise to the proto-liberation theology of *España*. And it is liberation—albeit of a linguistic, poetic kind—that will result in the experiments of *Trilce* where the body of the text is first disarticulated only to be put back together again in *Poemas humanos* and *España, aparta de mí este cáliz*.

Liberation takes many forms, and for Vallejo freedom from the strictures of grammaticality—in its connection with social liberation, is one of them. Before Deleuze and Guattari would call attention to the despotic aspect of syntactical rules, Vallejo had already noted in the mid 1930s that grammar and politics often re-enforced each other.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps by way of offering some explanation, or perhaps not, to the poetics of *Trilce*, in his brief essay, “Nota gramatical” Vallejo wrote:

La gramática, como norma colectiva en poesía, carece de razón de ser. Cada poeta forja su gramática personal e intransferible, sus sintaxis, su ortografía, su analogía, su prosodia, su semántica. Le basta no salir de los fueros básicos del idioma.(Vallejo 1978a 73)

And here Vallejo enunciates the applied poetics of *Trilce*, wherein, as he told Antenor Orrego, he was painfully forced to sacrifice social communication to a certain kind of existential-artistic freedom.<sup>5</sup> But some time had elapse between the famous letter to Orrego and the writing of “Nota gramatical.” Thus, whereas Vallejo’s primary concern in the latter was with his own personal freedom, or what he called “[la] obligación sacratísima, de hombre y de artista; ¡la de ser libre” (Espejo 198), “Nota gramatical,” Vallejo now turned to the question of social, or more precisely, socialist liberation. Vallejo wrote:

El poeta puede hasta cambiar, en cierto modo, la estructura literal y fonética de una misma palabra, según los casos. Y esto, en vez de restringir el alcance socialista y universal de la poesía, como pudiera creerse, lo dilata al infinito. (1978a 73)

The poet, for the post-*Trilce* Vallejo, had become a representative and a promoter of social liberation. And the function of language was not to replicate, or communicate according to pre-established norms, but instead to invent, as necessary, new modes of expression in the Spanish language, beyond the political, social, and linguistic hegemony of Castilian Spanish. “Salí del español,” declares Vallejo in *Contra el secreto profesional* (1973 55), as though he had escaped Houdini-like out of a straightjacket. Neither French nor Spanish had served his poetic project.

Unfortunately, however, the experimentation with form, as important as it was, had led Vallejo into a semantic, and by extension, social dead-end. Americo Ferrari aptly writes:

Tres años transcurren entre *Los Heraldos Negros* y la aparición de

*Trilce*. Conato de ruptura total con la tradición literaria que ya en su primer libro el poeta sentía como un peso intolerable, *Trilce* es una vía de investigación pero también un callejón sin salida. Sediento de libertad, Vallejo rompe las cadenas del lenguaje ‘literario’ se niega a hacer concesiones a la estética formal. (Ferrari 1968 22)

Vallejo’s revolutionary impetus to bring down, to destroy, or in literary terms, as Julio Ortega, has so well qualified it “[de] desnombrar...y describir,” constituted for the poet, not only an investigation, as Ferrari states above, but more importantly, the search for something new, which resulted, of course, in Vallejo’s encounter with the most progressive, revolutionary political, social, and economic movement of his time--Marxism. From the very first inklings of a materialist poetics in *Los heraldos negros* to the full-fledged, materialistically immanent poetics of *Trilce* was but a small step. As we have already noted, some of the language games that are to be found all through *Trilce* are anticipated in *HN*. But now that language had been dismantled, and Vallejo had arrived at a degree zero of writing, the process needed to be reversed, even if with a whole new language, in order for Vallejo to escape, what Fredric Jameson in writing about Russian Formalism and structuralism, has called “the prison-house of language” (1972).<sup>6</sup> If *Trilce*, as some critics have suggested, was Vallejo’s response to his imprisonment in Trujillo, and thus exemplary of his consequent desire for freedom at any cost,<sup>7</sup> then having achieved the internal freedom of a prisoner who in the solitude of the night says to himself “I can still think whatever I want,” he had sadly found himself inside another prison—i.e., the prison of a linguistic “callejón sin salida.”

In the end, two factors contributed to the passage from *Trilce* to *Poemas humanos* and *España, aparte de mí esta cáliz*: 1) a materialist poetics that is to be found in every single one of Vallejo’s works, and 2) Vallejo’s “discovery,” as it were, of Marxian *scientific* thought, which coincided, with his materialist conception of the world. Through it Vallejo reconciled the synchronic with the diachronic, the syntactical, with the Historical in the pages of *Poemas humanos* and *España*; while having the body serve as the axis of both.

## II. The human animalism of *Poemas humanos*

The language of *Trilce* reaches a degree of materiality that will not be encountered again for a very long time in Hispanic letters. In fact, it will not be until Severo Sarduy--a writer whom like Vallejo has often be called an “experimental writer”--that language will be conceived in such material, and bodily terms. Note how Vallejo equates poetry with a biological organism in *El arte y la revolución*:

Un poema es una entidad vital mucho mas orgánica que un ser orgánico en la naturaleza. A un animal se le amputa un miembro y sigue viviendo...Pero si a un poema se le amputa un verso, una palabra, un letra, un signo ortográfico, muere. (1978 69)

In other words, the body of a text is such that to amputate any of its limbs (signs) can end in its destruction or death. The coherence of a text relies in the organic composition of the text itself. Is it any wonder, then, that the text of *Trilce* will yield a self-referential meta-language in bodily and often medical terms? Beginning with Tr I's "calabrina," "mantillo líquido," and "espalda," that is the backbone of the text<sup>8</sup>, Vallejo goes on to remind us in Tr XII that we are in a Newtonian world where, inevitably, to fall is to perish. The scientific term for neck, or "cervical coyuntura" (1991 81), serves to remind us of the frailty of life, of a present without transcendence like that of a fly who dies in mid-flight and falls to the ground: "Chasquido de moscón que muere / a mitad de vuelo y cae a la tierra. / ¿Qué dice ahora Newton?" (Ibid). Clearly a rhetorical question, for Newton, the mathematician/physicist of the laws of gravity cannot answer such a question. Life, before anything else, is a biological, self-regulating imperative. Tr XIII reads:

Pienso en tu sexo,  
Simplificado el corazón, pienso en tu sexo,  
ante el higar mudo del día.  
Palpo el botón de dicha, está en sazón.  
Y muere un sentimiento antiguo  
degenerado en seso.  
Pienso en tu sexo, surco más prolífico  
y armonioso que el vientre de la Sombra,  
aunque la Muerte concibe y pare  
de Dios mismo.  
Oh Conciencia,  
Pienso, sí, en el bruto libre  
que goza donde quiere, donde puede.  
Oh, escándalo de miel de los crepúsculos.  
Oh estruendo mudo.  
-¡Odumondneurtse! (Ibid 88)

Here the old Romantic conception of love is reduced to sex,<sup>9</sup> and constitutive of the sex drive is human freedom, "el bruto libre." In seeking our own satisfaction wherever and whenever, we acknowledge our material, immanent humanity—a humanity that is bracketed by life and death, the conjunction of the pleasure principle and *thanatos*--what the French call the *petit mort* of the sex act. "La vida y la muerte, lo concebido y lo procreado, lo vivido y lo imaginado revierte siempre el uno en el otro; ambos espejos donde los contrarios, al invertirse, se asimilan: 'Oh estruendo mudo. / Odumodneurtse!,'" writes Julio Ortega (1991 90). And yet, it is not simply life and death that are reversible, but also and isomorphically so, are the signs on the page that make up the body of the text. After all, material freedom means just that—the unfettered capacity to change, or even overturn the body politic (e.g. from interpretation (Hegel) to action (Marx); from an idealistic to a materialist dialectic), if that is what the historical moment calls for. Roberto Paoli explains how the materialist, political imperative finds expression in Vallejo's use of language:

En efecto la poesía de Vallejo, en su natural disposición  
expresionista, comunica emocionalmente, casi diría física-

mente, por medio de un lenguaje que sacude y trastorna y escalofría, la fricción o el choque con el mundo material, áspero y hostil, el contacto solidario entre los hombres, la comunión de nuestras penurias, de nuestras materias dolorosas, lo cual no es solo un lenitivo, sino también una perspectiva concreta de superación y liberación. (1981 52)

And in the poem, “En el momento en que el tenista...” that appears in the collection, *Poemas en prosa*, begun in 1923/24 and completed sometime around 1929, the intervening years between *Trilce* and *Poemas humanos* (1931-1937) Vallejo gave voice to his philosophical conception of the relation between the animal existence of humans and the liberating aspect of such a materialist perspective. The religious belief in the soul, suggests Vallejo in a tone reminiscent of Nietzsche, is perhaps an offshoot of biology--the result of a particular organ in the body. I cite the poem in its entirety:

En el momento en que el tenista lanza magistralmente  
su bala, le posee una inocencia totalmente animal;  
en el momento  
en que el filósofo sorprende una nueva verdad,  
es una bestia complete.  
Anatole France afirmaba  
que el sentimiento religioso  
es la función de un órgano especial del cuerpo humano,  
hasta ahora ignorado y se podría  
decir también, entonces,  
que, en el momento exacto en que un tal órgano  
funciona plenamente,  
tan puro de malicia está el creyente,  
que se diría casi un vegetal.  
¡Oh alma! ¡Oh pensamiento! ¡Oh Marx! ¡Oh Feüerbach!  
(Vallejo 1968 267)<sup>10</sup>

But something happens between the biological materialism of *Trilce* and *Poemas en prosa*, and the Marxian materialism of *PH*.<sup>11</sup> And that “something” says Hart, was a shift in the poet’s view of the connection between the scientific materialism of Darwin and that of Marx (1987 67).<sup>12</sup> Following Vallejo’s immersion in orthodox Marxist thought, consequent of his trips to the Soviet Union (1932-1936), Vallejo began to progressively dissociate himself from Darwinist biology;<sup>13</sup> to excise biological terminology from his poems; and to replace biological terms with neutral, natural language (Hart 1987 68). The game of tennis that captures the animalistic instinct of humans in “En el momento en que el tenista...” becomes the essay “Concurrencia capitalista y emulación socialista” re-published in *Contra el secreto profesional*<sup>14</sup> where Vallejo implicitly criticizes the Darwinist survival of the fittest<sup>15</sup> of the boxing match as an aspect of capitalist competition:

¡Quién hace más dinero! ¡Quién danza más! *Record* de ayuno,  
de canto, de risa, de matrimonios, de divorcios, de asesinatos, etc.



Este es el criterio capitalista de todo progreso. El espíritu de 'match' y de 'record' nos viene de taylorismo, por el deporte, y lógicamente, ofrece los mismos vicios y contradicciones del sistema capitalista de la concurrencia en general. Ya nadie hace nada sin mirar al rival. (1973 11)

Hence, what was once a genteel competition between tennis players becomes a violent struggle between two humans physically fighting each other, until one of them knocks the other one out. In the class struggle, then, where the rules of the "match" are determined by those who exercise economic power, the only way to "win" is by defeating the other, which is why as Vallejo says, "ya nadie hace nada sin mirar al rival." Everyone is someone's rival. Consider for a moment the first poem of *PH*, "Altura y pelos" where Vallejo establishes at the outset an anthropological definition of what it is to be *human* as one who possesses 1) body hair (*pelos*), like any other animal, 2) personal wants and physical needs, and 3) the distinguishing quality of a self-reflexive consciousness, or *cogito*, which in apprehending the world distinguishes itself from others: "¡Yo que tan sólo he nacido!...¡Yo que solamente he nacido!...¡Ay, yo que sólo he nacido solamente!" (Vallejo 1987 71).<sup>16</sup> Written in 1927, "Altura y pelos" is a poetic definition of *homo sapiens* with a sense of irony. To Vallejo's "bourgeois" questions ¿Quién no tiene su vestido azul? / ¿Quién no almuerza y no toma el tranvía..." (Ibid), it is easy answer: many are those who do not have a blue dress, who do not have anything to eat (for lunch), or money with which to take public transportation (a streetcar). And that is exactly Vallejo's point.<sup>17</sup> One can only escape the self-enclosed world of an insular *cogito*--"el insular corazón" of Tr I--through the acknowledgement of the Other. And for Vallejo, the other is not a rival--one of the terms in the Hegelian-Master dialectic--but a reversible mirror image as in the complimentary double articulation of "Yuntas" (Vallejo 1987 72) that in their constant turning paradoxically complete each other. In "Los nueve monstruos" Vallejo writes;

I, desgraciadamente,  
el dolor crece en el mundo a cada rato,  
crece a treinta minutos por segundo, paso a paso,  
y la naturaleza del dolor, es el *dolor dos veces*,  
y la condición del martirio, carnívora, voraz,  
es el dolor *dos veces*,  
y la función de la yerba purísima, el dolor  
*dos veces*,  
y el bien de sér, dolernos *doblemente*.  
(1987 113, my italics)

The pain of the world is double, what pains the other pains me, and vice versa. Even as far back as *Trilce* we find a Vallejo attempting to establish a connection with the outside, with the Other, as in Tr XX where he longs for the coming together of two selves (the Sartrean impossibility) when he writes "acerco el 1 al 1 para no caer" (1991 116). But here at last, in *PH*, Vallejo has found such a connection with his oppressed brethren of the world: "Crece la desdicha, hermanos hombres... / El dolor nos agarra, hermanos

hombres...” (Ibid.114, 115). Such pain calls for action. It is not enough that we recognize the pain of the oppressed; we must also take action, for history is not made through ideas but through action and events.<sup>18</sup> Dated November 6, 1937, only four months after his last trip to Spain, “Me viene, hay días, una gana ubérrima, política,” is a poem of great longing for a better world:

Me viene, hay días, una gana ubérrima, política,  
de querer, de besar al cariño en sus dos rostros,  
y me viene de lejos un querer  
demostrativo, otro querer amar, de grado o fuerza,  
al que me odia...(1987 117)<sup>19</sup>

Though Vallejo does not mention God or Christ here, as he does in other poems, the point is clear that part of his “gana ubérrima” is for the “political “(religious) possibility of being able to embrace and live by the kind of Christian ethics that are conducive to a united and just world. However, the Christian principle of turning the other cheek is constantly challenged, and the poet finds himself “al borde célebre de la violencia” (Ibid 117), wanting to assist in killing the killer; “cosa terrible,” he says, when what he longs for is to do good.

### III. From the “orfandad” of *Trilce* to the Utopian Christian Socialism of “fraternidad” in *España, aparta de mí este cáliz*

Starting with “Dios” from *Los heraldos negros* (1998 130), where the impersonal love of God fails to assuage the terrible loneliness of human beings, to poems XXXVI and LXXV of *Trilce* (1991 178, 346), one of the words that echoes throughout is “orfandad.” And if in *Poemas humanos*, the poet’s greatest fear is, as he confesses, that of being an animal (1987 193), in *Trilce* that fear becomes one of abandonment. “Madre me dijo que no demoraría,” says the child of Tr. III (1991 51), but as time goes by he begins to fear that his mother will not return. Vallejo writes:

Llamo, busco al tanteo en la oscuridad.  
No me vayan a haber dejado solo,  
y el único recluso sea yo. (Ibid 52)

However his fear goes far beyond that of being abandoned. What the child/poet dreads most of all is the possibility that he might just be the only recluse left, in which case there will be no one with which to communicate. And there is something of this fear in Vallejo’s letter to Orrego about *Trilce*. Perhaps he had gone too far, and isolated himself into the solitary “único” of 1. Ferrari writes:

El miedo cubre todo con su sombra. ¿Miedo del vacío? Miedo de ese abismo que se va ensanchando entre la prisión en que se debate el poeta y el mundo de los hombres; en el poema XXVII Vallejo se refiere, a propósito de ese oscuro sentimiento de miedo, a los ‘puentes volados’ [Ibid. 147], símbolo transparente



de aislamiento y falta de comunicación, como en el poema XLIX  
las púas de las rajas, la guardarrópia cerrada, y esos bastidores  
'donde no Hay nadie' [Ibid. 231] simbolizan la soledad, la  
ausencia, el vacío... (1968 28)

But as Ferrari points out, "Vallejo no podía quedarse ahí" (Ibid), in what he would later call in *El arte y la revolución* "masturbaciones abstractas" (Vallejo 1978a 13); and in effect, he did not. By the time he began to write the poems that would become part of *Poemas humanos*, Vallejo had found a way out of the reclusive, linguistic solipsism of *Trilce*, and made a connection with the outside, where the immanence of "orfandad" had given way first to the material fraternity, or "fraternidad" of *Poemas humanos*, and then to the transcendental Christian-Socialist utopia of *España, aparta de mí este cáliz*. Thus, in so doing, Vallejo anticipated what would become the liberation theology of the 1970s. "Buda, Jesús, Marx, Engels, Lenin, fueron, a un mismo tiempo, creadores y actores de la doctrina revolucionaria," declared Vallejo (Ibid. 14), as he placed Christ alongside Marx, Engels, and Lenin. "'Es Anaxágoras, desterrado—dice [Max] Eastman--; Protágoras, perseguido; Sócrates, ejecutado; Jesús, crucificado' y nosotros añadimos: es Marx vilipendiado y expulsado, Lenin, abaleado" (Ibid). Christians who have been inspired by the ethical teachings of the gospels, "have chosen the harder way, exposing themselves to defamation, persecution, and even martyrdom," write Leonardo and Clodovis Boff in *Introducing Liberation Theology* (1987 8),<sup>20</sup> as they make mention of the assassination of the Salvadorian liberation theologian, Archbishop Oscar Romero, who died as a martyr of the Christian political cause. "Commitment to the liberation of the millions of the oppressed of our world restores to the gospel the credulity that it had at the beginning and at the great periods of holiness and prophetic witness in history."<sup>21</sup> The God who pities the downtrodden and the Christ who came to set prisoners free proclaim themselves with a new face and in a new image today" wrote the Boff brothers half a century after Vallejo (Ibid). And according to the Peruvian poet, it was the responsibility of intellectuals to be engaged with political revolutionary movements in an effort to bring about a world of justice and economic equality, free of oppression. "El tipo perfecto del intelectual revolucionario, es el del hombre que lucha escribiendo y militando, simultáneamente," said Vallejo (1978a), and to be successful, he added, quoting Lenin, one had to be willing to become a link in "el caos teórico y práctico" (1987 224)<sup>22</sup> of the proletarian struggle. To that end, *España*, the most somber of all his books, but also the most hopeful, begins with an affirmation of action that celebrates the solidarity of the Spanish republican rebels. "Himno a los voluntarios de la república" reads:

Voluntario de España, miliciano  
de huesos fidedignos, cuando marcha a morir tu corazón  
cuando marcha a matar con su agonía  
mundial, no sé verdaderamente  
que hacer, dónde ponerme; corro, *escribo*, aplaudo,  
lloro, atisbo, destrozo, apagan, digo,  
a mi pecho que acabe, al bien, que venga...  
(1987 222-223, my italics)

The personal “yo no sé” of *HN*, who is unable to make existential sense of those blows in life that leave one devastated is now the “no sé” of how to respond to world events that call for violent action against the oppressors. If the individual of *HN* finds himself at a loss with respect to his own death, the revolutionary intellectual of *EAMC* finds himself equally lost with respect to the death of his brethren. For death is everywhere; and the fascists have even killed the spirit of the Book, of the word made flesh in the body of human beings. “Matan al libro, tiran a sus verbos auxiliares, / a su indefensa página primera,” reports Vallejo (*Ibid.* 227), as though telling us that even the very principle of the genesis of life is put to death before it has a chance to be born. And so he calls out:

¡Voluntarios,  
por la vida, por los buenos, matad  
a la muerte, matad a los malos! (*Ibid.*)<sup>23</sup>

Thus it is that the pages of *EAMC* are populated by bodies—not the biological bodies of *Trilce* and *Poemas en prosa*, to be certain, but worse: cadavers. We are reminded of Dámaso Alonso’s poem, “Insomnio” that begins with the words: “Madrid es una ciudad de más de un millón de cadáveres...” (1969 79).<sup>24</sup> With no less than fifteen occurrences, the word “cadáver(es)” is one of the most repeated words, after “muerto(s)” and “matado(s)” in *España*. The book, a veritable literary morgue, recalls the infernal visions of Goya’s *Los desastres de la guerra*. With so much carnage all around him, it is no wonder that Vallejo would—as Stephen Hart, has so masterfully demonstrated—erase some of his more technical, biological descriptions of the human body, and replace them with more “human” terms to refer to bodies destroyed by war. A writer who declared “voy a hablar de la esperanza,” even in the face of abject existence, Vallejo felt at the end of his life—and this explains the Marxist-Christian hope—that someday the meek and the oppressed would indeed inherit the earth; and that someday all their suffering would be redeemed. Consider the following verses of “Himno a los voluntarios de la república”:

Proletario que mueres de universo, ¡en que frenética armonía  
acabará tu grandeza...! (1987 224)  
¡Constructores,  
agrícolas, civiles y guerreros  
de la activa, hormigueante eternidad: estaba escrito  
que vosotros haríais la luz, entornando  
con la muerte vuestros ojos;  
que, a la caída cruel de vuestras boca,  
vendrá en siete bandejas la abundancia...! (*Ibid.* 225)

And lastly:

¡Unos mismos zapatos irán bien al que asciende  
sin vías a su cuerpo  
y al que baja hasta la forma de su alma!  
¡Entrelazándose hablarán los mudos, los tullidos andarán!

¡Verán, ya de regreso, los ciegos  
y palpitando escucharán los sordos!  
¡Sabrán los ignorantes, ignorarán los sabios!  
¡Serán dados los besos que pudisteis dar!  
¡Sólo la muerte morirá!... (Ibid. 225-226)

Clearly, the last nine verses cited above are all written in the future tense, with promises of a better world; and as such it is exemplary of a certain utopian optimism that is to be found even in the words of the “anti-utopian” Lenin, who was to write in *The State and Revolution*:

...only communism makes the state completely unnecessary, for there is *nobody* to be suppressed—“nobody” in the sense of a *class*, in the sense of a systematic struggle against a definite section of the population. We are not utopians, and do not in the least deny the possibility and inevitability of excesses by *individual* persons, or the need to suppress *such* excesses. But, in the first place no special machine, no special apparatus is needed for this; it will be done by the armed people itself, as simply and as readily as crowd of civilized people, even in modern society, interferes to put a stop to scuffle or to prevent a woman from being assaulted, And secondly, we know that the fundamental social cause of excesses, which consists in the violation of rules of community life, is the exploitation of the masses, their want and their poverty. With the removal of this chief cause, excesses will inevitably begin to ‘*wither away*.’ We do not know how quickly and in what succession, but we know that they will wither away. (1976 110)

It is interesting to note that despite Lenin’s qualification that he and his comrades are not utopians; the tone of the passage bears all the qualities of the messianic, utopianism of the Marxist idea of the withering away of the capitalist State and the birth the Communist Society where all class struggles are at last dissolved. “El intelectual revolucionario desplaza la formula mesiánica,” says in Vallejo in the first essay of *El arte y la revolución*: dedicated almost exclusively to an exposition of Lenin’s ideas.<sup>25</sup> And in terms of liberation theology, Leonardo and Clodovis Boff put this way: The eternal salvation offered by God and Christ, “is mediated by the historical liberations that dignify the children of God and render credible the coming utopia of the kingdom, of freedom, justice, love, and peace, the kingdom of God in the midst of humankind. From all this, it follows that if we are to understand the theology of liberation, we must first take an active part in the real historical process of liberating the oppressed” (1987 8-9). This sounds a lot like the kind of religious /political worldview first envisioned by Vallejo. “La dialéctica concibe cada forma en el flujo del movimiento, es decir, en su aspecto transitorio,” says Vallejo (1978a), reminding us that the poems of *España* are perfectly illustrative of a historical dialectic that is as much of heaven as it is of the earth. ““Mi reino es de este mundo, pero también del otro,”” writes Vallejo putting these words in Cervantes’ mouth. “The dialectical explanation: poverty as oppression. This sees poverty

as the product of the economic organization of society itself, which exploits some—the workers—and excludes others from the production process—the underemployed, and those marginalized in way or another,” argue Leonardo and Clodovis Boff (1987 26); and this, they say, is what liberation theology borrows from Marxism (Ibid. 27). But even, more importantly, this is exactly the way in which Vallejo articulated his theo-political poetics of liberation in November of 1937, having come full circle from the days of *Los heraldos negros*.

### Conclusion: Technique and Politics

*Trilce* is a book that moves slowly. Its readers are forced to read it within a space demarcated by its author, and according to a language game—to use the Wittgensteinian concept—of Vallejo’s idiosyncratic devise. It is a bit like finding oneself in a foreign land where suddenly one has to learn new ways of being and speaking. This is very different than the movement, at times frenetic, of *Poemas humanos*, and particularly of *España*. As Alberto Escobar has made it us aware, a poem like “La paz, la abispa, el taco, las vertientes” (Vallejo 1987 178-179) works cinematically on the reader by enumerating a series of a-referential nouns, adjectives, and gerunds in rapid fire succession<sup>26</sup>. This poem functions, argues Escobar, “como si una cámara cinematográfica filmara al compás de una caída, mientras se desplaza intempestivamente el lente de la maquina” (1973 223); and though “La paz, etc” does not represent the movement of all the poems in the collection, it is emblematic of the overall pace of *PH*, as can be noted in “Transido, salomónico, decente” (Ibid. 180) which combines adjectives and verbs (some in their infinitive forms, e.g., recordar, insistir, fenecer, etc) in a manner that brings poetry closer to quotidian speech. Hence, just as the cinematographic quality of these poems from *PH* recall the fast images of Dziga Vertov’s *Man With a Movie Camera* (1924), the succession of cadavers piled on top of each other throughout *EAMC* recall the killings in Sergei Eisenstein’s *Battleship Potemkin* (1925):<sup>27</sup>

Al fin de la batalla  
y muerto el combatiente, vino hacia él un hombre  
y le dijo: ‘No te mueras, te amo tanto!  
Pero el cadáver ¡ay! siguió muriendo. (“Masa” 1987 25)

Here the cadaver keeps on *dying* because language must describe the death of all men/soldiers in history: past, present, and to come. As a writer who was always in full control of his craft, as all great writers are, Vallejo never lost sight of the relation between language, technique, and meaning vis-à-vis his political Weltanschauung. “La técnica no se presta mucho, como a la simple vista podría creerse, a falsificaciones ni a simulaciones,” wrote Vallejo in a short essay interestingly entitled “Dime cómo escribes y te diré lo que escribes.” He continued:

La técnica, en política como en arte, denuncia mejor que todos los programas y manifiestos la verdadera sensibilidad de un hombre. No hay documento más fehaciente ni dato más autentico de nuestra sensibilidad, como nuestra propia técnica.

El cisma original de la social-democracia rusa en bolcheviques y mencheviques se produjo nada menos que por una discrepancia de técnica revolucionaria. “Si no discrepamos sino en la técnica,” le argumentaban los mencheviques a Lenin, en 1903, y éste les respondía: “Sí. Pero justamente, la técnica es todo.” (1978<sup>a</sup> 77)

I believe that it is this emphasis on technique, over and above theme, that allowed Vallejo to proclaim that Orrego had defined socialist art in the prologue to *Trilce*. Orrego who dedicated the first three pages of the prologue to the innovative style of *Trilce*, asserts nevertheless that Vallejo’s style and technique are part and parcel of his compromise with humanity. “El poeta asume entonces su máximo rol de humanidad, lo que equivale a su más alto rol de expresión, lo que equivale a su máximo rol estético” (Vallejo 1991 368). Orrego then says: “El poeta habla individualmente, particulariza el lenguaje pero piensa, siente y ama universalmente” (Ibid). Here again, Orrego’s implication that *Trilce* was not a windowless, monadic work, but instead a text with a dialectical connection to a life-world, would make it possible for Vallejo years later (in “carnet de 1936/37” or quite possibly of 1938) to hold that *Trilce* represented a dialectic between Self and Other. Vallejo:

Una visita al cementerio el domingo 7 de Noviembre 1937, con Georgette. Conversación empieza con el egoísmo de G.—dialéctica del egoísmo—. Pasamos a la dialéctica en general. Aludo a *Trilce* y su eje dialéctico de orden matemático  $-1 - 2 - 0$ —“Escalas”; o instrumento y conocimiento: el rigor dialéctico del mundo objetivo y subjetivo. Su grandeza y su miseria o impotencia. / Me refiero a Hegel y Marx, que no hicieron sino descubrir la ley dialéctica. (1973 99)

However, despite Vallejo’s self-interpretation, it was not *Trilce* that pointed to the dialectical relation between the world and I, but rather *España, aparta de mí este cáliz*. In the final poem (XV) that bears the title of the collection Vallejo wrote: “España cae—digo, es un decir-- / niños salid del mundo, id a buscarla” (1987165) In other words to say that Spain has fallen is a metaphor, says Vallejo, “es un decir,” from which we must we emerge, if we are to step out—as united children and workers—into a (new) world.<sup>28</sup> “Salid,” says Vallejo, reminiscent of the time when he wrote, “Salí del español”: looking for the right words with which to say what he wanted to say about a certain experience, only to realize that no one language--neither Spanish, nor French, “el francés, idioma que conozco mejor después del español” (1973 54)—would serve him. Instead, he recognizes that only by taking something from each language (e.g. Russian, Polish, English, Italian, and Rumanian) can he express what is most personal and most universal. Insofar as language is *sympathy* (the verbal sharing of one’s passion and longings), and communication with one’s fellow humans, language is at once art, ethics, and politics.

## Notes



<sup>1</sup> Stephen Hart traces Vallejo's conceptualization of theory and praxis back to Lenin, and particularly to Stalin's book, translated into French, *Le Leninisme théorique et pratique*, which our poet read in 1930 (1987 25).

<sup>2</sup> Though Enrique González Martínez dismissed the notion that his poem "Tuércele el cuello al cisne" was in any way an attack on Darío, he, on the other hand, admitted that the poem was directed at what he called "[el] oropel decorativo" of *modernismo* (Topete 1953 275).

<sup>3</sup> The collapsing of two words into one to create what Lewis Carroll called a "portmanteau" word begins in *Los heraldos negros* and continues with *Trilce*, e.g. the "es otro" that becomes the "esotro" of poem VIII of *Trilce* (199170).

<sup>4</sup> In writing on Chomsky's generative grammar, Deleuze and Guattari argue: "Chomsky's grammaticality, the categorical symbol S that dominates every sentence, is more fundamentally a marker of power than a syntactic marker: you will construct grammatically correct sentences, you will divide each statement into a noun phrase and a verb phrase (first dichotomy...). Our criticism of these linguistic models is not that they are too abstract but, on the contrary, that they are not abstract enough, that they do not reach the *abstract machine* that connects a language to the semantic and pragmatic contents of statements, to collective assemblages of enunciation, to a whole micropolitics of the social field" (1987) 7).

<sup>5</sup> "Hoy, y más que nunca quizás, siento gravitar sobre mí, una hasta ahora desconocida obligación sacratísima, de hombre y de artista; ¡la de ser libre! Si no he de ser hoy libre, no lo seré jamás. Siento que gana el arco de mi frente, su más imperativa fuerza de heroicidad. Me doy en la forma más libre que puedo y ésta es mi mayor cosecha artística. ¡Dios sabe hasta dónde es cierta y verdadera mi libertad! ¡Dios sabe cuanto he sufrido para que el ritmo no traspasara esa libertad y cayera en libertinaje!..." (Cited in Espejo 198).

<sup>6</sup> "*Trilce* representa un esfuerzo por liberar a la palabra de las cadenas de la lógica y de los cánones literarios aceptados; pero el mundo que nos presentan estos poemas es un mundo cerrado y sombrío, erizado de límites y de fronteras; domina la atmósfera del calabozo" (Ferrari 1968 22).

<sup>7</sup> "Dios sabe hasta qué bordes espeluznantes me he asomado, colmado de miedo, temeroso de que todo se vaya a morir a fondo para que mi pobre ánima viva..." (Cited in Espejo 198)

<sup>8</sup> A similar reference to the body of the text can be found in the poem, "Lomo de las sagradas escrituras" in *Poemas en prosa* wherein Vallejo writes "el verbo encarnado habita entre nosotros" (1968 271).

<sup>9</sup> Even in his 1915 thesis, *El romanticismo en la poesía castellana*, we see a materialist Vallejo who reads the romantic impulse in biological terms. "[L]a vida humana está determinada en sus distintas manifestaciones intelectuales por las funciones elementales biológicas," wrote Vallejo in *El romanticismo* (1978b 852). "Como muchos jóvenes con su formación intelectual, Vallejo en un principio quería ser médico. El 19 de abril de 1911, cuando tenía apenas 19 años, Vallejo se matriculó en un curso de ciencias en la Universidad de San Marcos, Lima," writes Stephen Hart. "Este curso incluía el estudio de la física, la botánica, la química, la astronomía, la fisiología y la antropología. Aunque su primer contacto con el mundo de ciencia iba a ser interrumpido a consecuencia de la escasez de fondos, la poesía que escribió más tarde revela el conocimiento que Vallejo tenía de las funciones fisiológicas del cuerpo humano" (1987 63). It may prove of some interest to note that Sarduy who shared a similar interest in the body/text relation with the Peruvian poet, also began his university education as a medical student.

<sup>10</sup> This text was first written as a brief prose piece before being integrated into the *Poemas en prosa*. It appears in *Contra el secreto profesional* with the opening sentence: "Cuando un órgano ejerce su función con plenitud, no hay malicia posible en el cuerpo" (1973 13) later crossed out when turned into verse, "pasado en verso" (Ibid. See Vallejo 1968 226)

<sup>11</sup> In "Apuntes para un estudio," written down in a notebook some time in the mid 1930s, and published as an appendix to *El arte y la revolución* by Georgette de Vallejo, Vallejo courageously and self-critically suggests that *Trilce* be put to the test of a Marxist analysis. He writes: "Análisis marxista de *Trilce* y de otras obras vanguardistas francesas, rusas, yanquis e hispanoamericanas" (1978a 163). This is followed by a political call to the death of avant-garde literature: "*Muerte* de la clowneria (circo y payasadas son invenciones y masturbaciones burguesas), Cocteau, Gómez de la Serna, etc." (Ibid). And then on the next page, he declares Marx and Lenin to be "mis mejores maestros de poesía" (Ibid. 164). But, actually it is the more practically minded, politically expedient Lenin that was his teacher.

<sup>12</sup> Marx himself noted interesting analogical connections between his economic theory and Darwin's formulation of evolution vis-à-vis competition, economic development, and the division of labor in English society. In a letter to Engels, Marx wrote: "It is noteworthy that among beasts and plants Darwin recognizes



his English society with its division of labor, competition, opening of new markets, 'inventions,' and the Malthusian 'struggle for existence.' It is Hobbes' *bellum omnium contra omnes*, and it reminds one of Hegel, in the *Phenomenology*, where bourgeois society is represented as a 'spiritual animal kingdom [*geistiges Tierreich*]', while in Darwin the animal kingdom is represented as a bourgeois society" (translated and cited in Joravsky 1961 13). In fact, as David Joravsky points out Marx "wanted to dedicate parts of *Capital* to Darwin" (12).

<sup>13</sup>And yet even before 1932 Vallejo had already noted reactionary uses of the Darwinist/Spenserian notion of "natural selection," to justify capitalist social inequalities and power, as is clear from the following exchange in *El tungsteno* between the liberal Leónidas Benites and the capitalist, José Marino. Benites says: "—¡Pobre soras!...Raza endeble, servil, humilde hasta lo increíble ¡Me dan pena y me dan rabia!" And Marino responds: "—Pero no crea usted. . . Los indios saben muy bien lo que hacen. Además, esa es la vida: una disputa y un conjunto combate entre los hombres. *La ley de selección. Uno sale perdiendo, para que otro salga ganando*" (Vallejo 2007 10, my italics). And now bear in mind *El arte y la revolución* with its numerous references to orthodox Soviet Marxists like Plekhanov (1969 46-47), Kautsky (1903 10-20). Bukharin (1925 62, 65), and Lenin (1927 283), who although did not completely reject the scientism of Darwin, found the ideas of gradual evolution and natural selection to be incompatible with that of the communist project

<sup>14</sup>A longer version of this article was first published in *Variedades* No. 1001, in Lima on May 7, 1927 under the title "La vida como match" (Vallejo 1994 79-82). As stated above Vallejo edited it for inclusion in *Contra el secreto profesional*, "luego de su primer viaje a la Unión Soviética (Oct 1928)..." (Vallejo 1973 7).

<sup>15</sup>The outrage expressed by many *modernistas* like Rodó, Lugones, and Darío against the incipient materialism of the time and the Darwinist "struggle for life," was not in any way directed at the abuses of capitalism (e.g. *El tungsteno*), but instead to a kind of democratic turn in capitalist society that "debased" their privileged roles as aristocrats of the spirit. "Vallejo, en contraste, no se ve a sí mismo como superior al resto de la humanidad ni autorizado a estar protegido, por medio de la comodidad, de los problemas de la existencia diaria. Como resultado, se ve forzado a rehusar la ideología implícita en la estética modernista..." (Jrade 1983 65). And Vallejo aptly framed the question as follows: ¿Puede hablarse de liberación espiritual mientras no se haya hecho la revolución social y material, y mientras se vive dentro de la atmósfera material y moral de la producción y de las relaciones burguesas de la economía?" (1978<sup>a</sup> 144).

<sup>16</sup>In connection with Vallejo's notion of the human, and specifically of his concept of personal consciousness and the body in "Altura y pelos," I quote Plekhanov, one of Vallejo's most cited Soviet thinker. In the already cited, *Fundamental Problems of Marxism*, Plekhanov wrote: "Idealistic philosophy's point of departure—the '*I*' as the fundamental philosophical principle—is totally erroneous. It is not the '*I*' that must be the starting point of a genuine philosophy, but the '*I*' and the 'you.' It is such a point of departure that makes it possible to arrive at a proper understanding of the relation between thinking and being, between the subject and the object, I am '*I*' to myself, and at the same time I am '*you*' to others. The '*I*' is the *subject* and at the same time the *object*. It must be noted at the same time that I am not the abstract being with which idealistic philosophy operates. I am an *actual* being; my body belongs to my *essence*; moreover, my body, as a whole is my *I*, my genuine essence. It is not an abstract being that thinks, but this actual being, this body. Thus, contrary to what idealists assert, an actual and material being proves to be the subject; and thinking, the predicate. Herein lies the only possible solution to the contradiction between being and thinking...None of the elements in the contradiction is removed; both are preserved revealing their real unity. 'That which to me, or subjectively, is a purely spiritual, non-material and non-sensuous act is in itself an objective, material, and sensuous'" (1969 29). Though we do not possess any evidence that Vallejo read this particular passage, through it one can understand why Vallejo would have been philosophically drawn to Plekhanov's thought.

<sup>17</sup>In *El tungsteno* Vallejo describes the spoiled, well-intentioned but cowardly, liberal petit bourgeois, Leónidas Benites who, we are told, is in the habit of washing his hands "con dos clases de jabón desinfectantes, que nunca le faltaba" (2007 14). This is the kind of economically comfortable individual who would ask the questions posed above. "Todo en su habitación estaba siempre en su lugar, y él mismo, estaba en su lugar trabajando, meditando, durmiendo, comiendo o leyendo..." (Ibid). How could anything be out of place, or missing within such a established order?

<sup>18</sup>"La idea es la historia del acto y, naturalmente, posterior a él. Primero se vive un acto y luego éste queda troquelado en una idea, la suya correspondiente," says Vallejo in *Contra el secreto profesional* (1973 41).

<sup>19</sup>Vallejo's theological-political sentiment was echoed exactly forty years later by the liberation theologian, Archbishop Oscar Romero (1917-1980) when he wrote of what he called "la violencia del amor". On November 27, 1977 Romero wrote: "Jamás hemos predicado violencia. Solamente la violencia del amor, la que dejó a Cristo clavado en una cruz, la que se hace cada uno para vencer egoísmos, y para que no haya desigualdades tan crueles entre nosotros. Esa violencia no es la de la espada, la del odio. Es la violencia del amor, de la fraternidad, la que quiere convertir las armas en hoces para el trabajo" (2004 iv).

<sup>20</sup>The English title does little justice to the original Portuguese, *Como fazer teologia da libertação* 1986, which has the tone of a manifesto, and not of an academic tract.

<sup>21</sup>Besides Vallejo's relation to liberation theology, there are also significant points of convergence between Vallejo and the French, Jewish philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas. Vallejo's political poetics was inextricably based on the idea of an ethics of the Other, and more importantly, on the idea that the State or the eventual Communist Society could at some point be reconciled with ethics. The crimes of the Stalinist regimes, Levinas has said, do not void the possibility of a "harmony between ethics and the State." Further, he has stated, "the just state will come from just men and women and saints rather than from propaganda and preaching" (1998). And in *Alterity and Transcendence*, Levinas declares: "I am not tempted by a philosophy of history and I am not certain of its finality... But I think a responsibility for the other man... constitutes a penetration of the crust, so to speak, of 'being' preserving in its 'being' and preoccupied with itself. Responsibility for the other, the 'dis-interested' for-the-other of saintliness. I'm not saying men are saints, or moving towards saintliness. I am only saying that the vocation of saintliness is recognized by all human beings as a value, and that this recognition defines the humans" (1999 171). And I believe that this is Vallejo's point as well—that is to say, that human beings have a responsibility to the Other, and that the closer we come to assuming such a responsibility the closer we come to achieving some state of saintliness. This is the juncture at which Vallejo, liberation theology, and the Talmudic philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas come together [C.f. Enrique Dussel's *Liberación latinoamericana y Emmanuel Levinas* 1975]. And thus it is that the republican rebel, Pedro Rojas of *España* (1987 238-240), killed by the fascists is "padre y hombre" (God/Christ), and "marido," (man/husband)—the incarnation of the saintly martyr who dies for the Other--en su cuerpo un gran cuerpo, para / el alma del mundo" (Ibid. 238)--in the name of infinity.

<sup>22</sup>See footnote 1.

<sup>23</sup>Vallejo's desire to be "good,"—his "movement towards saintliness"—is in no way contradictory with his call to violence in the name of justice for the Other, claims Levinas. All justice demands some violence. "[T]he exercise of justice demands... a certain violence that is implied in all justice. Violence is originally justified as the defense of the other, of the *neighbor* (be he a relation of mine, or my people!), but is violence for someone" (1999 172).

<sup>24</sup>A curious reader or critic may wish to explore the possible thematic connection between Vallejo's poem, "Los nueve monstruos" (1987 113-116) and Alonso's "Monstruos" (1969 103-104).

<sup>25</sup>Though Vallejo often cites Marx directly, it is evident from his writings that the Marxism to which he subscribed had the indelible stamp of Lenin, a fact logically attributable to his connection with Soviet intellectuals. "La filosofía marxista interpretada y aplicada por Lenin, tiende una mano alimenticia al escritor, mientras con la otra tarja y corrige, según las conveniencias políticas, toda la producción intelectual," wrote Vallejo in "Sobre el proletariado literario. "Al menos, este es el resultado práctico de Rusia" (1994 95)

<sup>26</sup>A poem such as "La paz, la abispa, el taco, las vertientes," demonstrates that Vallejo never ceased to be the revolutionary poet he originally was in 1922 with *Trilce*. "Vallejo no es referencial," writes Juan Fló. With a poem like "La paz," etc. "Vallejo se aventura... a explotar cierto poder de la palabra aislada" (2003 21). "En efecto podemos sugerir que, en este poema, Vallejo ha dado un paso aun más atrevido," adds Stephen M Hart. "Aquí ha ofrecido al lector nada más que el esqueleto del poema; no vemos, su 'carne,' es decir, el andamiaje retórico. El lector mismo tiene que ponerle los vestidos retóricos al esqueleto desnudo del poema (2003 105-106). It is this freedom which, Hart rightfully suggests, Vallejo leaves to his reader that makes for his radicalism, poetic and otherwise. That is to say, a (political) belief he shared with the Uruguayan-born Comte de Lautreamont: that poetry should be made by all.

<sup>27</sup>"Dziga Vertov" meaning "spinning top" in Russian was the nickname of filmmaker, David Abelevich Kaufman. Like Eisenstein, Vertov was a child of the (October 1917) Russian Revolution. Vallejo mentions both in *El arte y la revolución*. Of the new experimental Soviet cinema he writes: "El cinema embrionario trabajaba con escenas y episodios enteros, es decir con masas de imágenes. Hoy empieza a

trabajar con elementos más simples, con imágenes instantáneas y al millonésimo de segundo, combinadas y *découppées* según el sentido cinemático del realizador. Ejemplos: ...*El operador*, de Tziga Vertov, y gran parte del cinema ruso” (1978<sup>a</sup> 81).

<sup>28</sup>The last words of Marx’s and Engels’ *Communist Manifesto* are: WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!

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