

WRITERS IN THE SERVICE OF REVOLUTION :
RUSSIA'S IDEOLOGICAL AND LITERARY IMPACT ON
SPANISH POETRY AND PROSE, 1925-36

Rosemary Jean Fasey

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
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Rosemary Fasey

Summary

This thesis is a comparative literary study which is conducted by placing the reception of Russian literature in Spain during the period 1918-36 within the context of the interplay of literature and the social and political situations in which it is written. It first places the boom in the publication of Russian literature in the late 1920s and 1930s within the context of the history of the reception of Russian literature in Spain, providing a comprehensive survey of that history. Next, it describes the impact of the Russian Revolution and the formative years of the Soviet Socialist state on the political situation in pre-Civil War Spain, including the ideological links between the political situations of both countries. In pre-Civil War Spain, the revolutionary atmosphere changed the mood, subject matter and style of literature, and certain writers, recognizing their civic duty, began to produce literature that had a socially critical and didactic role. During that period, given the political context and the development of politically committed literature, Spanish intellectuals and artists of a Marxist persuasion derived incentive from their Russian counterparts. Russian literature has traditionally been the forum for social criticism, and has had a profoundly revolutionary dimension. Pre-revolutionary writers such as Dostoevsky and Andreev have been perceived by outsiders as revolutionary writers, and, in that capacity, have enjoyed great popularity abroad, including Spain. In the Soviet era, Mayakovsky was often considered to be the "Poet of the Revolution", and Gorky was the chief spokesman in the promotion of socialist ideals in literature in the twenty years following the Revolution. In Spanish pre-Civil War fiction, both the social novel and poetry were instrumental in conveying overtly Marxist messages. The thesis concludes with a comprehensive study about certain Spanish writers and their works, in the domains of poetry and the novel, specifically seeking evidence of the impact of the literature and ideology which was emanating from Russia in the first third of the twentieth century.

CONTENTS

	Page No.
Introduction	i
Part 1	
The Reception of Russian Literature in Spain (1880 – 1936)	1
1.1 Comparing the Literatures	33
1.2 The Historical Context: the Impact of the Russian Revolution in the Insurgent Atmosphere of Pre-Civil War Spain	52
1.3 Literary Contexts: Political Commitment in Soviet Russia and Pre-Civil War Spain	78
1.4 Literary Contexts: the Russian Legacy	114
Part 2	
The Impact of Russia on Spanish Poetry and Prose (1925-36)	157
2.1 Poets in the Service of Revolution: The Impact of Russia on the Pre-Civil War Poetry of Emilio Prados and Rafael Alberti	163
2.2 Novelists in the Service of Revolution: The Impact of Russia on the <i>novela social</i> In Pre-Civil War Spain	237
Part 3	
Conclusion	302
Works Cited	312
Appendix 1	321
Appendix 2	327
Appendix 3	330

Introduction

One of the most fascinating fields of comparative literary studies is the exploration of connections between literatures of different nations. If, in such a situation, the comparatist may be said to shop "in a literary department store", not having to be confined to the wares of a single nation (Aldridge 1), this thesis will be seen to do its trading in both Russia and Spain.

The fact is that in the ten years leading up to the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), Russian literature became one of the most translated and published foreign literatures in Spain – in some areas of writing, it took first place. The aim of this thesis is, first, to explain how and why Russian literature became so popular in Spain during that period, and, then, to examine ways in which it had achieved such an impact in that country. Since a major facet of the attraction Russian literature held for Spaniards was its references to the revolutionary process in Russia, it will be important to detail the impact on Spain's pre-Civil War writers of the achieved Russian Revolution.

The thesis is divided into two parts. Part 1 begins by presenting the history of the reception of Russian literature from its introduction (at the end of the nineteenth century) to the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War (1936), showing at which point it began to win popularity with the Spanish reading public, and with Spain's literary community in general. The reception of Russian literature in Spain in the nineteenth century has been the subject of a number of quite comprehensive studies, whereas its dissemination in the period 1928 to 1936 has been acknowledged and assessed in a

relatively cursory way.¹ This chapter will number among the most comprehensive studies to date of that somewhat neglected 1928-36 period.

Having established the fact that there was a boom period in the dissemination of Russian literature in Spain, the thesis then seeks to answer certain questions which arise regarding the contexts within which the increase of Russian publications in Spain occurred. First, Section 1.1 seeks a theoretical rationale for the approach taken by the thesis, showing the necessity of placing literary reception in both a socio-historical context and also a literary context, attempting to step into the shoes of those writers who may have been the beneficiaries of literary influence, thus recreating the world and atmosphere in which they worked. Hence, Section 1.2 focuses on the history of the period under examination. Significantly, it analyses the impact of the Russian Revolution in a country, Spain, where political unrest was becoming increasingly intense and which, in the 1930s, led to the outbreak of civil war. Sections 1.3 and 1.4, on the other hand, set literary contexts: first, by showing the literary environment in Spain within which Russian literature became popular and amidst which the Spanish authors – who are the concern of the later sections of this thesis – wrote the works on which we later focus; secondly, by providing information about the Russian authors

¹ Foremost among these are George Portnoff's *La literatura rusa en España (Russian Literature in Spain)* of 1932 and George O. Schamzer's bibliographical volume, *Russian Literature in the Hispanic World*. Vsevolod Evgen'evich Bagno's *Emilia Pardo Bazán i russkaia literatura v Ispanii (Emilia Pardo Bazán and Russian Literature in Spain)*, provides a useful survey of the reception of Russian literature in Spain. He points out the early study of a Russian Hispanist V. Lesevich's "Vzgliady ispanskoi kritiki na russkii roman i russkuiu zhizn'" ("Spanish Critical Viewpoints on the Russian Novel and Russian Life") (*Russkaia mysl'* 10 [1888]: 98-114). Also worthy of note is V.V. Rakhmanov's "Russkaia literatura v Ispanii" ("Russian Literature in Spain") (*Iazyk i literatura* 5 [1930]: 329-46). The relationship between Russian and Spanish literatures, usually concentrating on

and works which were apparently most widely published in Spain in the 1920s and 30s.

Part 2 of the thesis undertakes to examine Spanish texts written in the late 1920s and 1930s by certain writers who became politically committed and who looked to Soviet Russia for their inspiration. The aims of Sections 2.1 and 2.2 are to address poetry and the novel, respectively.² The fact that the turn to political themes of certain Spanish authors of the 1930s has at times given rise to adverse critical comment – for example, that Rafael Alberti's political poetry of the 1930s is “unfortunate” owing to its rejection of more aesthetic poetic concerns – does not disqualify such politically motivated poetry from academic scrutiny.³ On the other hand, the textual study comprising the final sections of this thesis does not claim to be ground-breaking in any other respect than that it examines the writing of the Spanish authors concerned solely within the context of their awareness of, and potential dependence on, the ideology and literature emerging from Russia in those years.

It is true that political writing may not contain the aesthetic beauty, especially in the realm of poetry, of “pure” literature. But this thesis attempts to provide an explanation, as opposed to an apologia, for the rise of literary works in Spain which

the nineteenth century, has been the focus of substantial studies by M. P. Alekseev and Ludmila Turkevich, with emphasis on the reception of Spanish literature in Russia.

² I am uncomfortably aware of having to exclude theatrical works from this study, owing solely to constraints of time and space, but should mention that I consider it a field worthy of independent study on a future occasion. Indeed, others have already written on it – note, for example, Derek Gagen's "Puppets and Politics: Rafael Alberti's 'Dos farsas revolucionarias'" and Jim McCarthy's *Political Theatre during the Spanish Civil War* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999).

³ C. B. Morris. “*Sobre los ángeles: A Poet's Apostasy.*” *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 37 (1960): 222-31. 223, 231.

deliberately concentrated on subject and message as opposed to form and style. At the end of the thesis, I hope it will be clear that there was little of the posturing and self-obsession often attached to art for art's sake, but, rather, that certain pre-Civil War Spanish writers had very real social and political concerns to address, as did the whole of Europe in the 1930s. In retrospect, it may be hard to imagine the atmosphere in which political commitment became a burning issue, but the undeniable acceleration of the social change of the times explains why so many leading writers forsook the self-indulgent concerns of the arts of the opening decades of the twentieth century in favour of deliberate change of style aimed at what they saw as an opportunity to protest against, even denounce what they considered to be wrong in their country. Such writers wanted to make a stand in behalf of what they considered to be the correct path. Lofty and challenging though that objective may have seemed, they felt driven to publicize what they saw as an urgent need to change society.

An understanding of the reception of Soviet ideology and Russian literature in Spain is essential to an understanding of that period, and, for that reason, it is instructive to recall the words of Alexander Gillies, who maintained that comparative literary study contributes “not only to the study of literature but above all to the study of *history*” (25; emphasis added).

It is important to note that much of the material I present in the accomplishment of the objectives of this thesis is archival in origin, retrieved by careful scrutiny of long unread newspaper and periodical holdings in Russia and in Spain. Of especial interest is information which has been obtained from Russian journals about Marxist writers in Spain of the 1930s: of this rich source of information, I present only that which is most relevant to support my argument. Of the vast holdings in Spanish archives concerning the relevant period I have been able to include only a tiny fraction.

It begs further patient enquiry. Nevertheless, the archival material presented herein gives some valuable insights for the purposes of this thesis. It establishes the close links between certain Spanish writers and the Soviet Union (which, in some cases, has some direct textual relevance), and it provides some biographical detail, admittedly of less academic value, but nonetheless enhancing the understanding of these writers and their work in a period of Spanish history (political and literary) which is only now starting to be studied in the depth which is called for.

This thesis generally follows guidelines of The Modern Language Association of America,⁴ with the following noteworthy exceptions:

- 1 Citations from Spanish, Russian or other foreign sources have been translated into English, with quotation in the original language given only in exceptional circumstances. The reason for this unusual practice is mainly owing to the fact that this thesis is officially in the field of comparative literature and should, therefore, accommodate the assumption that those reading it will not necessarily have a command of all the languages included. Regrettably, original-language texts have not been included simply owing to constraints of space. All translations into English of foreign-language texts are my own except where indicated to the contrary in footnotes.
- 2 Titles of books are given in the original language with English translation following in parenthesis at the first mention of the work. Titles of Russian works are given in transliteration, using the simplified US Library of Congress

⁴ *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (Fourth Edition, New York: MLA, 1995).

system. In the bibliography, transliterated original-language Russian titles are used.

- 3 The question of translating titles of articles and books in footnotes was difficult. Out of consideration for the reader I stopped short of translating every title since footnotes became too arduous to read. I have opted to translate all those titles which I deemed useful to the reader to understand.
- 4 Russian names are transliterated except for forms of names which, although not conforming to the Library of Congress system, have become accepted in English (e.g. Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Gorky, Mayakovsky, Babel). Variations on the transliterations of these names, as used by other authors in quotations, follow the original author's own usage.
- 5 Spelling: the form -ize is used in preference to -ise, except in certain cases (e.g. exercise, revise) where the suffix -ise is acceptable in British English. My main reference for spellings has been *Collins English Dictionary*. 3rd edn. (updated). Glasgow: HarperCollins, 1994.

Part 1 The Reception of Russian Literature in Spain 1880 – 1936

This thesis is prompted by the fact that in the Spain of the 1920s and 1930s there was a rapid increase in interest in literature originating in Russia, an interest which peaked in 1931. During that period, Russian works became the most popular of foreign political writings published in Spain, exceeding even the writings of Marx and Engels (Ribas 67).¹ One literary historian has estimated that between 1920 and 1936 a total of two hundred and twenty two titles and editions of the best-known Russian authors were published, and that in 1931 alone approximately thirty five new titles of Soviet literature appeared (Gil Casado 132-34). A commentary published in 1932 noted that "judging by the number of translations which have been appearing, Russian literature has been very successful in Spain" (Portnoff 51).

This increase in publications of translated Russian texts in Spain is universally acknowledged. George O. Schanzer's finding, after extensive bibliographical research, was that "there exists hardly a work of literary history, either general or scholarly, which does not at least mention readings of Russian authors" (xix). A more personalized view was offered by Rafael Alberti, a prominent Spanish poet of the 1920s and 30s, who suggested, with the benefit of hindsight, that "perhaps we Spaniards have still not acknowledged how much we owe to the surprise we had when the curtain was drawn back to reveal the Russian fiction of those years" (*La arboleda perdida I* 179).

¹ The Soviet press reported that generally Soviet books, magazines and newspapers were being distributed abroad in ever increasing numbers. *Literaturnaia gazeta* (10 July 1936) reported in "Sovetskie knigi za granitsej" ("Soviet Books Abroad") that there was an increase in spite of the power of the censor in certain countries (notably, Austria, Italy and Poland) and that the greater number of

The peak of popularity in the 1930s was not a sudden phenomenon: it represented the climax to a continuum of Russian works which were being translated and published in Spain. Part 1 of this thesis begins by showing how the increase in the publication of Russian works in the 1920s and 30s fits into the general history of the reception of Russian literature in Spain from its introduction until the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 and proffers an explanation for the affinity between Russians and Spaniards throughout that period. Part 1 then provides the theoretical foundation, rooted in contemporary comparative literary theory, on which an evaluation of the influence of Russia on Spanish writing of the 1920s and 30s may be based (Section 1.1). The thesis next contextualizes the peak of interest in Russian literature during the pre-Civil War period by exploring the social and political context which facilitated this acceleration of publications (Section 1.2), by attempting an explanation for the Russian authors and works which predominated in Spain during the 1920s and 30s, reviewing those authors and works which enjoyed the greatest popularity in Spain and describing the literary atmosphere in Spain which facilitated the increase of interest in Russia (Sections 1.3 and 1.4).

From the studies made of the reception of Russian literature in Spain in the 1920s and 1930s an interesting fact emerges. For reasons which will become more clear in subsequent chapters, there was a radical change in the profile of Russian authors whose works were published in Spain during that period. In the 1920s, the most popular Russian writers were pre-revolutionary – Lev Tolstoy, Leonid Andreev and Anton Chekhov, for example – whereas in the 1930s the

publications went to the United States and to France. They reported, too, the great popularity of technical books, as well as literary works.

Russian writers of most interest to Spaniards were newly emerging Soviet writers like Fedor Gladkov and Konstantin Fedin. However, the most-published Russian writer in Spain throughout both decades was Fedor Dostoevsky, a Russian novelist of worldwide acclaim who belonged categorically to the nineteenth century. His posthumous popularity in Spain matched a similar phenomenon throughout Europe and will be examined later in the thesis. Nevertheless, almost as a pointer to the impact his writing would have in the twentieth century, it was Dostoevsky's *Prestuplenie i nakazanie (Crime and Punishment)* (1866) which was instrumental in getting Russian literature extensively noticed in Spain at the end of the nineteenth century.

It was not due to Spain's tardiness that Russian literature was not received in Spain until that seemingly late date. Original Russian literature dates back several centuries, but often started as oral forms of art which were only put into writing much later with the growth of literacy, and which, therefore, would not attract non-Russian speakers. It was not until the appearance of Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837) that the Russian literary language was finally consolidated. Pushkin is also considered chiefly responsible for synthesizing the many and varied trends with which writers were experimenting by "absorbing all the elements affecting Russian literature of his time – influences from East and West, from antiquity, the Middle Ages and modern times" (Setchkarev 136), and integrating them into the Russian literary tradition.

With Pushkin began the so-called Golden Age of Russian literature. Throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century, Russian writing flourished in

the most remarkable way.² From the end of the century, literature became one of Russia's greatest cultural exports, a "major source of influence on the West, and indeed on the world" (Riasanovsky 440), even during periods when freedom of expression was restricted. Remarkable though the writers of the early nineteenth century and, indeed, those from previous centuries undoubtedly were, it was the work of the literary giants, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, which put Russian writing fairly and squarely on the map of world literature in the last two decades of that century. They championed the Russian novel. Matthew Arnold's opinion, in 1888, was that

[t]he famous English novelists have passed away, and have left no successors of like fame. It is not the English novel, therefore, which has inherited the vogue lost by the French novel. It is the novel of a country new to literature, or at any rate unregarded, till lately, by the general public of readers: it is the novel of Russia. The Russian novel has now the vogue, and deserves to have it. If fresh literary productions maintain this vogue and enhance it, we shall all be learning Russian. (524)

Among the first nations to become fascinated was France, where Tolstoy and Dostoevsky were the "spear-head of the invasion" of literature from Russia, "this uncharted wilderness" (Hemmings 2), and within a remarkably short period of time both writers became household names.

It was in France, during this period, that one of the first Spanish intellectuals to become a Russophile was introduced to Russian literature. In 1887 the Galician novelist Doña Emilia Pardo Bazán (1851-1921), a pillar of intellectual circles in late nineteenth-century Spain, published the first significant book in Spanish on the subject of Russia, incorporating substantial comment about its literature. It is true that another work, Emilio Castelar's *La Rusia contemporánea* (*Contemporary*

² The same might be said of the flowering of all the arts in Russia: for example, nineteenth-century Russian painting could boast the likes of Il'ia Repin; Russian music produced the world-acclaimed Petr Il'ich Tchaikovsky and others.

Russia), had been published in Spain in 1881, but it was limited to the role of the Russian empire in the current affairs of the day and, in contrast with Pardo Bazán's Russophilia, was severely critical of Russia and, therefore, would not do much to encourage interest in that land.³ For example, Castelar describes the strata of Russian society thus:

On top, a despotic power [...] an aristocracy educated *à la Europe* [...] [Then] a middle class, basically revolutionary and republican. [...] [I]n the country towns [there is] the most backward and blind sector, under the yoke of the bureaucratic and Byzantine clergy, while the most lively sector [is] in the bosom of nihilist extravagances. [E]verywhere there are vague aspirations, brilliant ideas, clashing of troubled consciences, the nervous tremors of a sick nation; in short, a state of revolution. (51-52)

Pardo Bazán's more approving study, *La Revolución y la novela en Rusia* (*Revolution and the Novel in Russia*) (1887),⁴ was based on a series of lectures given in the Ateneo, Madrid, in the 1880s.⁵ Before this, in the 1860s, K. L. Kustodiev, a Russian writer and historian living in Madrid, was reportedly the first to address the Ateneo on the subject of Russia.⁶ Pardo Bazán's interest in Russia and its literature had been sparked by Dostoevsky's *Prestuplenie i nakazanie*, which she read in

³ Castelar (1823-1899) was a prominent politician. During the First Republic in Spain, he was one of its leaders; he was also a noted orator, publisher and writer, and was acquainted with the nineteenth-century Russian thinkers Herzen, Belinsky and Chaadaev.

⁴ It is interesting to note that the English translation of *La Revolución y la literatura rusa* (Madrid: Tello, 1887), entitled *Russia, Its People and Its Literature* (Chicago: 1890), is said to have aroused American interest in Russian studies (Hilton 215).

⁵ The Ateneo científico y literario de Madrid played a very important role in the social and cultural life of Spain in the nineteenth century. It was a place for discussion of literary and scientific matters, a national university and a public library, very similar in essence to other Athenaeums in Western Europe.

⁶ The apparent lack of recognition for the pioneering work of Kustodiev in Spain is largely due to the absence of information about his lectures in the Ateneo, save for his own letters and notes. See M. P. Alekseev's "Russkii iazyk i literatura v madridskom Atenee v 60-e gg. XIX v." ("Russian Language

French translation in 1885. Her subsequently quite wide reading in Russian literature was also mainly in the form of French translations,⁷ because she could neither speak nor read Russian, nor had she been to Russia. Interestingly, M. P. Alekseev wrote that "lack of knowledge of the Russian language did not impede even the first acquaintanceship with Russian literature through the help of foreign translations, French or Italian, which appeared in abundance in those years, and in no small way this facilitated Russian literature's popularity in all Romance countries."⁸ Pardo Bazán's main sources of information about Russia and its literature were two French works: Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu's *L'Empire des Tsars et la Russie* (*The Empire of the Tsars and Russia*) (1881-89)⁹ and Eugène-Melchior de Vogüé's *Le Roman russe* (*The Russian Novel*), published in Paris in 1886.¹⁰

and Literature in the Madrid Ateneo in the 1860s") (*Russkaia kul'tura i romanskii mir*. Leningrad: Nauka, 1985. 206-13).

⁷ As will be seen, this was the usual situation, although translations of foreign literature sometimes came by way of German and English (Portnoff 33-43; Schanzer xiii, xvii-xviii). Even as late as 1932 it could still be said that "every Spanish intellectual who follows the progress of literature is generally in touch with what France produces and translates" (Portnoff 38). The heavy reliance in Spain on what the French chose to read accounts for certain apparent anomalies: for example, certain authors becoming unusually popular, and the "strange mixture of political, scientific, pseudoscientific and philosophical works offered by the publishers, Maucci" (Cobb 27).

⁸ "Russki iazyk i literatura v madridskom Atenee v 60-e gg. XIX v." *Russkaia kul'tura i romanskii mir*. Leningrad: Nauka, 1985. 206-13. 213. Alekseev, born in Kiev in 1896, is recognized for his studies into the reception of Russian literature in various European countries.

⁹ As an economist and student of political history, Leroy-Beaulieu's interest was mainly in the field of social studies. He started to publish articles on various aspects of Russian life from 1873 onwards, which were later published as *L'Empire des Tsars et des Russes*. Volume 3 (1888) dealt mainly with religion and incorporated material about literature. Specifically in the field of literature, other publications included Courrière's *Histoire de la littérature contemporaine en Russie* (*The History of Contemporary Literature in Russia*) (1875) and Alfred Rambaud's *La Russie épique* (*Epic Russia*) (1876). Rambaud also wrote *Histoire de la Russie* (*History of Russia*) (1878).

¹⁰ Eugène-Melchior de Vogüé was appointed secretary to the French Embassy in St Petersburg in 1876, learned the Russian language, married a Russian, and became acquainted with several prominent

In her work, Pardo Bazán took a pro-Russian stance which, in retrospect, was based on dubious lines of reasoning. First, she upheld the philosophy of Aryan racial superiority, which was a popular ideology at the time. Her use of the theory to fit her argument is somewhat tentative and not entirely logical (Hilton 216-18), but she seemed eager to prove the importance of the Slavs and their destiny in the modern world. She also claimed racial links between the Slavs and the Celts of Galicia, a theory which she did not, and possibly could not, substantiate. Further, she highlighted the historical similarities between Spain and Russia, based on the facts that both are situated on the periphery of Europe, both had been subjected to invasion and occupation, and both were internally divided into old and new factions.

Two years later she produced *Al pie de la Torre Eiffel* (*At the Foot of the Eiffel Tower*), in which her continued admiration for Russia was manifest: "I am especially enchanted by things pertaining to Russia. If Greece was the past of European civilization, Russia is perhaps the future" (255). What appealed to her were its customs, character, its practical communism,¹¹ the "mystical fervour

writers (he attended the funeral of Dostoevsky). Though himself considered the popularizer of Russian literature in France (Hemmings 15), he acknowledged Leroy-Beaulieu's work as the forerunner of such analyses of Russian literature. Commissioned by the editor of *Revue des deux mondes*, de Vogüé made several trips to Russia and accumulated an unprecedented store of knowledge about Russia, its politics and culture. What he accomplished was "a sober and reliable picture of the Russia of his day" and, therefore, he verified the Russia portrayed in fiction by the likes of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky (Hemmings 14-15). For a more detailed examination of Pardo Bazán's book, including a comparison of it with de Vogüé's, see chapter 5 of Robert E. Osborne's *Emilia Pardo Bazán. Su vida y sus obras* (*Emilia Pardo Bazán: Her Life and Works*) (Mexico: Ediciones de Andrea, 1964).

¹¹ By the term "communism", Pardo Bazán undoubtedly meant communal living, rather than the suggestion of the political movement. Better employed here, perhaps, would be the term "communalism".

surrounding its nihilism," and its literature, which she considered to be "at the present time in full flower" (256).¹²

Perhaps intentionally, Pardo Bazán's lectures and essays provoked a spirited reaction and debate in Spain. In the magazine *Revista de España* in Summer 1887, both Soledad Acosta de Samper and Juan Valera¹³ responded to Pardo Bazán's work about Russia. Acosta de Samper's contribution was a review of the book which praises Doña Emilia's ability to grasp what would interest the reading public, thereby confirming that Russian literature had already captured attention in Spain. Valera also acknowledged the influx of foreign literature into Spain and conceded that one more voice in the chorus of foreign literatures – Russian literature – was welcome. However, he expressed his doubt that Russian literature, brilliant though it seemed, would eclipse other European literatures in the short term. He put the blame for the rising interest in Russian literature on France (a country which he felt was always wanting to set trends) for promoting it too prematurely and for overlooking genuine talents from other countries.

His criticism of French Russophilia (and Pardo Bazán's ensnarement by it) appears on the surface to be a case of sour grapes: "in short, we have to admit that today in Paris – the trendsetter – neither the Spaniards nor the Portuguese are in fashion" (120). The reasons for his doubt concerning the French predilection for Russian writing seem no less churlish. He felt, first, that the French were flattered that Russia favoured everything French, especially Russian writers who inclined so eagerly towards France, in the manner of an adopted son. Secondly, he considered

¹² She added that she had warmed to Russia even more in the belief that there was a growing curiosity in Russia for Spanish writers and works in that country (256).

¹³ Valera (1824-1905), a leading writer of his day, spent some time in Russia in 1856-57 on a diplomatic assignment.

that the French were overly impressed by the grandeur and vastness of Imperial Russia. Finally, he believed that France was swayed by political considerations, hoping for the support of Russia in the event of future war in Europe.

Valera argued that "Pushkin, Lermontov, Gogol, Turgenev, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy are six geniuses; but will there not be found in any other less vast Western European land or a less populous nation six geniuses of the same calibre?" (121-22). He asked Pardo Bazán if she had looked towards North America, or to other Slavic nations. Though claiming in the article not to begrudge Russia a brilliant literary future, he feared it was simply the latest vogue emanating from Paris which, in order to prove French cosmopolitanism, looked to semi-barbaric nations like Italy and Spain for an experience of rusticity and animal instincts, and to a barbaric nation like Russia for ideas (131).

In point of fact, Pardo Bazán was not the only Spanish writer of her time to feel a fascination for Russian writers. Alekseev reports that novelist Pérez Galdós and poet Núñez de Arce had more than a passing interest in Russian writing and concludes that at the turn of the twentieth century "there had been established already close interrelations and firm bonds between Russian and Spanish literatures" (128). The first traceable Russian work of literature published in Spain, in Spanish, had appeared in 1838 – a poem by Gavriil Derzhavin (1743-1816)¹⁴ – followed in 1847 by a translation of the story "The Blizzard" ("Metel") by Pushkin.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the early dissemination of Russian literature in Spain, as in the rest of Europe, was a

¹⁴ Derzhavin, G. R. "Literatura rusa. Oda al Ser Supremo" ("Russian Literature. Ode to the Supreme Being") in *La Religión* (Barcelona) IV (1838): 182-86. It was published a few years later in *La Revista Católica* (Santiago) 208 (15 January 1844) with the note that the magnificent ode ("Bog" ["God"]) would give an idea of the sublime poetry of the Russians.

trickle compared with the flood resulting from the phenomena that were Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. From the late 1880s onwards, Russian literature was translated and accepted in Spain with enthusiasm. Spanish novelist Leopoldo Alas (also known as Clarín) wrote in 1887: "we've all read our Gogol and Tolstoy."¹⁶ In Russia, in 1895, it was reported that "for the past decade Russian literature has had a fairly wide distribution in Spain."¹⁷

At this time, but especially from the start of the twentieth century, "for the first time since the eighteenth century Spain opened up to all and sundry and, with its own unmistakable voice, joined in with contemporary European trends" (Buckley and Crispin 9).¹⁸ Thus, Russian was not the only foreign literature to be greeted enthusiastically in Spain.¹⁹ This influx caused literary figures such as critic Eduardo Gómez de Baquero to enter into the debate of the times regarding the benefits (or otherwise) of the flood of foreign literature which, as the century progressed, did not abate. On two occasions Gómez de Baquero wrote on the subject in the journal *La España Moderna*. In 1901 he reported that one of the recently most popular books on people's bookshelves had been Dmitrii Merezhkovskii's *Smert' bogov: Iulian*

¹⁵ Pushkin, A. S. "El turbión de nieve. (Novela rusa traducida de Pouschkin)" in *El Fénix* (25 July 1847): 431-32 and (1 August 1847): 433-36.

¹⁶ *Ilustración Ibérica* 213 (1887): 70.

¹⁷ "Khronika inostrannaia" ("Foreign Chronicle") in *Knizhnyi vestnik* 4 (1895): 18.

¹⁸ This is supported by Patricio Hernández who writes: "for the first time since the eighteenth century, Spain showed itself to be receptive to new European currents or thought" (8).

¹⁹ It is important to point out that it is not the intention of this thesis to suggest that Russian literature was the only foreign literature which had impact in Spain, nor that Russian literature had more impact than any other foreign literature. Indeed, the artistic atmosphere of the early twentieth century admitted not only foreign influences, but also those of past Spanish masters and trends. It was an artistic environment very hospitable to outside currents, whether they originated geographically outside Spain, or historically outside that time period.

Otstupnik (Death of the Gods: Julian the Apostate),²⁰ and that works by Tolstoy were always popular²¹ (Gómez de Baquero, "Traducciones" 168). Although he acknowledged that the demand for literature was a healthy sign, he was concerned that Spanish literature itself was being overlooked in the process.

By 1903 Gómez de Baquero was weighing up the influence of foreign authors on contemporary Spanish writing. He considered that because foreign literature was exercising more influence than Spanish literature itself, foreign writers were being read and their ideas were being assimilated more readily; it would be futile, therefore, to look for signs of the influence of Spanish dramatists and novelists ("Influencia de los escritores extranjeros" 147-49). He attributed this to a feeling of inferiority and a deficiency of intellectual activity or traditions in Spain: "What is bad is not that we read so many foreign books, but that there are no Spanish books being written to interest us even more, or at least as much, as they do" ("Influencia" 151-52). The remedy, therefore, he saw not so much in rejection of the influx of foreign literature – which, in his opinion, was an unavoidable contemporary phenomenon – but in re-discovering the value of Spanish literature. Later, in 1932, an article entitled "Carta española a un joven lector de novela rusa" ("Spanish Letter to a Young Reader of the Russian Novel") (written by Ramón Ledesma Miranda) also

²⁰ This work (in Spanish *La muerte de los dioses*) had been published in Spain in 1900 (Madrid: B. Rodríguez Serra, 1900), and in 1901 (Valencia: Sempere, 1901 and Barcelona: Maucci, 1901). It was serialized in 1904, 1905, 1910, and 1916. The book is the first of a trilogy called *Khristos i Antikhríst* (*Christ and Antichrist*) published between 1892 and 1904 in which the author attempts to synthesize Christianity and paganism through three characters: in the first novel, Julian the Apostate, in the second, Leonardo da Vinci, and thirdly, Peter the Great. In *Smert' bogov*, Julian unsuccessfully seeks one truth and one God.

²¹ According to Gómez de Baquero, Maupassant, Zola and D'Annunzio were among other popular authors. Owing to the fact that Spain was dependent on what France admired, English and German

addressed the controversy of foreign literature entering Spain and pointed out the predilection of Spain's young generation for Russian writing, expecting to find in it knowledge and wisdom, but, in so doing, failing to recognize talents elsewhere, especially closer to home.²²

The influx of Russian literature in the first decades of the twentieth century was only part of a foreign "invasion" of Spain – the Spaniards "were also reading foreign literature in languages other than Spanish" (Bosch 40) – just as Spain was not the only nation to welcome Russian writing. Undoubtedly, however, Russian literature had a significant audience in Spain. Literary critic Rafael Cansinos-Assens was reported as saying in an interview that "we live on what comes from Russia and France" (Camín 65).²³ In the world of fiction, the floodgates opened by the two great novelists, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, not only admitted in their wake neglected past writers, but also alerted the interest of the reading public in the rising generations of writers; the "success of Russian literature is not only due to the constellation of Tolstoi, Dostoevskii, Gorkii, and Turgenev; in the same sky Chekhov, Andreev, and Gogol also shine" (Schanzer xvi). In an atmosphere in which foreign literature was among the favourite sources of reading, and in which the Spanish intelligentsia relished discussing matters of import (notably in their *tertulias* and café societies), it is not surprising to find that certain Russian works were debated and pondered as

works were, in his opinion, less popular and Portuguese virtually non-existent. Furthermore, he considered the translations in need of improvement ("Traducciones" 168, 170-71).

²² Ledesma Miranda, Ramón. "Carta española a un joven lector de novela rusa." *Acción Española* I, 2 (I January 1932): 187-92.

²³ Cansinos-Assens (1883-1964) was a leading literary critic and writer of twentieth-century Spain. He wrote a large quantity of critical studies, essays, novels, short stories and verse, and he translated from various languages works by the greatest European writers – for example, Goethe, Schiller, Dostoevsky, Balzac, Pirandello – as well as oriental literature, such as a version of *A Thousand and One Nights*, the *Koran* and the *Talmud*.

they appeared. Andreev's *Rasskaz o semi poveshennikh* (*Story of the Seven Who Were Hanged*) (1908) is one such example. It is reported to have been the talk of the leading discussion groups of Madrid for some time in the 1920s (Portnoff 46).²⁴

Indeed, the 1920s saw a second phase in the dissemination of Russian literature in Spain, a phase in which publications of Russian works increased, and in which the quality of the translations improved owing to the appearance of Russian émigrés who, as a result of turbulent political conditions in Russia, took refuge in Spain. The publishing house Sempere of Valencia had been the main distributor of Russian works in the 1880s, succeeded by Maucci of Barcelona at the turn of the century.²⁵ In the 1920s most of the publications of Russian literature originated in Madrid, Barcelona and Valencia. The Spanish poet Alberti, in his more personalized opinion about the appeal of Russian literature in the 1920s, gives some interesting detail. In his autobiography, he makes the claim that Russian literature of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries was a significant part of his literary education in the 1920s, thanks to the thoughtfulness of a relative, Luis Alberti:

[Uncle] Luis was extremely affectionate towards me and would let me visit his office at Casa Calpe, the publishing house where he worked. It is to him I owe the growth of my literary education: he was always generous to me and I rarely went home without a pile of books under my arm. That "Colección Universal" with the yellowish covers introduced all of us to the great Russian authors who had been

²⁴ The work was first published in serialized form under the title "Los ahorcados" in *España Moderna* in September, October and November 1911, and subsequently in book form (Madrid: España Moderna, 1914). From 1919, several editions of the work appeared, starting with a translation direct from the Russian by Portnoff himself (*Los siete ahorcados*. Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1919), which itself had two more editions (in 1924 and 1931). The translations by Enrique Ruiz de la Serna and Alejo Marcoff, in 1922 and 1931 respectively, were also direct from Russian (*Los siete ahorcados*. Madrid: Libro Popular, 1922 and Barcelona: Maucci, 1931).

²⁵ It should be noted that the dissemination of Russian literature in Spanish almost certainly resulted from the overall increase in publishing activity in the early twentieth century.

virtually unknown before Calpe began publishing them. (*La arboleda perdida I* 178)

The product line Alberti refers to – the "Colección Universal" with its distinctive yellow paperback covers – published cheap versions of classic literature. The publishing house Aguilar, with Cansinos-Assens on its team, was equally interested in Russian works in the 1920s, and, furthermore, produced better quality books. At the turn of the 1930s the afore-mentioned publishers Calpe (later known as Espasa-Calpe) and Aguilar, as well as Biblioteca Nueva, Calleja, Estrella and Granada continued to increase their publications of Russian literature, with the addition of Oriente, Biblos, Revista de Occidente, España, Pueyo, Atenea, América, Cénit, Zeus, La Nave, Hoy, CIAP, all producing works translated directly from Russian, contributing to the number of Russian works in the bookshops (37-38).

In line with this increased productivity among the publishing houses with regard to Russian works, Fulgencio Castañar argues a case for a third period of dissemination of Russian literature in Spain from 1925 to 1933, a period of interest for the purposes of this thesis.²⁶ This period of accelerated dissemination included the works of many of the new, post-revolutionary Soviet writers. The first to be published in Spain were almost certainly Vsevolod Ivanov's *Bronepoezd No. 14-69* (*Armoured Train No. 14-69*) and Leonid Leonov's *Barsuki* (*The Badgers*) in 1926, closely followed by works such as Fedin's *Goroda i gody* (*Cities and Years*).²⁷ As works of literature, they were not well reviewed in Spain. They were often

²⁶ The first phase of dissemination having taken place from the latter half of the nineteenth century onwards, the second dating from around 1918, as detailed earlier, when some Russians emigrated to Spain.

²⁷ Vselvolod Ivanov. *El tren blindado No. 14-69*. Tr. Tatiana Enco de Valero. Madrid: n.n., 1926; Leonid Maksimovich Leonov. *Los tejones*. Tr. Tatiana Enco de Valero. Madrid: Hernández y Galo Sáez, 1926; Konstantin Fedin. *Las ciudades y los años*. Tr. N. Guterman, A. Pumarega. Madrid: Biblos, 1927.

considered to have stylistic defects, not meeting with the accepted notions of Western criticism.²⁸ In 1929, speaking of Gládkov's *Tsement (Cement)*, Gómez de Baquero declared that "proletarian art has failed in Russia" and that the first to reject it had been the proletariat.²⁹ It was "only certain writers of the young generation who were going to be able to discern the meaning of the revolutionary novel" (Cobb 32).

Literature from both Russia and Germany was popular in the 1920s, but knowledge of the languages was scant, the knowledge of Russian in particular being negligible. Translation, therefore, was vital. The first translations into Spanish were admittedly flawed: "Russian literature was propagated in an adulterated form, and the Hispanic reading public in many cases took a fancy to works which were a pale image of the original" (Schanzer xviii). In addition, the process of translation delayed the publication of Russian works in Spain, a situation which was not rectified until the 1930s when it became a relatively large-scale enterprise. In the second phase of dissemination of Russian literature certain of the Russian émigrés who took refuge in Spain set about translating Russian works into acceptable Spanish. Consequently, in the early 1920s the large publishing houses in Madrid, Barcelona and Valencia were beginning to produce a considerable number of works translated into Spanish directly from Russian. By the 1930s they were being produced in relatively large numbers. Even so, some critics felt hampered by the lack of knowledge of Russian. In 1929, Gómez de Baquero reasoned that "all the sincerity of literary expression remain veiled by the correspondences and

²⁸ See, for example, Juan Chabás' review of *Goroda i gody* in *La Libertad* (6 May 1927), Francisco Ayala's review of *Barsuki* in *La Gaceta Literaria* (15 September 1927), E. Gómez de Baquero's review of *Bronepoezd* in *El Sol* (28 May 1926) and Enrique Díez-Canedo's review of the same in *El Sol* (13 May 1926).

²⁹ See his article "La atracción de la novela rusa. *El cemento*" in *El Sol* (6 January 1929): 2.

modifications" translators, of necessity, must make. In his opinion, it was the mark of a good author who could sustain the interest of the reader in spite of the intrusions of the translation.³⁰

Until 1917 information in general about Russia had been scant because Russia had seemed too remote, not only geographically, but in all other respects. Alberti described his romanticized, but limited, childhood vision of wild Cossacks and Russia's snowy plains sprinkled with blood.³¹ The language barrier was perhaps the greatest hindrance. Another obstacle was the fact that Spanish newspapers and journals did not have correspondents in Soviet Russia and, therefore, relied on agencies and individuals who could reach an understanding of events and trends in that land and communicate them. *La Gaceta Literaria* employed a certain Tatiana de Valero in the 1920s, and, later, a Russian woman writing under the pseudonym "Valentina Jdanowa" whose links with contemporary Russia were evidently tenuous (Cobb 29). The writings of Julio Alvarez del Vayo were much more reliable.³² Then, "from the twenties this panorama changed somewhat thanks to the visits of workers' leaders, political representatives and writers to the Soviet Union" (Ribas 70). There was a "wave" of travel books, for example (Cobb 28).³³ The fact is that

³⁰ See his article "La atracción de la novela rusa" in *El Sol* (6 January 1929): 2.

³¹ See Appendix 1, p. 325.

³² His writings were produced in book form: notably, *La nueva Rusia (The New Russia)* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1926) and *Rusia a los 12 años (Russia at the Age of 12)* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1929).

³³ The results of such visits were works such as César Vallejo's *Rusia en 1931. Reflexiones al pie del Kremlin (Russia in 1932. Reflections at the Foot of the Kremlin)* (Madrid: Ulises, 1931); José Bergamín's "Visto y no visto. Rusia capital" ("Seen and not Seen. The Capital of Russia") (*La Gaceta Literaria* 46 [15 November 1928]: 1); Alberti's "Noticiario de un poeta en la URSS" ("News from a Poet in the USSR") (*Luz* [22 July – 23 August 1933]); Ramón J. Sender's *Madrid-Moscú. Notas de viaje (Madrid – Moscow. Travel Notes)* (Madrid: Juan Peyo, 1934), to mention but a few.

curiosity concerning all things Russian continued growing from 1919 until the Spanish Civil War from standpoints of both admiration and disparagement.³⁴

This growth in sales of Russian books in the 1920s and 30s coincided with the mushrooming of book sales in general throughout this period. At this juncture, owing to the increasingly reforming and revolutionary atmosphere of Spanish politics and society, the book became a "weapon in the transformation of society" (Fuentes, *Marcha* 29). This trend continued to grow until the outbreak of the Civil War. Given the increase in revolutionary activity in Spain, which is detailed in section 1.2 of this thesis, it is not surprising that during the 1920s, and especially in the 1930s – in the period leading up to Spain's Civil War – there was intense interest in the political writings of Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky and other Marxists. Pedro Ribas, in his survey of the introduction of Marxism in Spain, comments that Russian literature occupied first place in terms of the number of works published, outstripping even German works, including those by Marx and Engels (67).³⁵ The most popular political works were by Plekhanov and Trotsky.³⁶ The communists, initially in an effort to combat the progress of the socialist and anarchist parties, published many pamphlets containing the words of Lenin and Trotsky, via the publishers Biblioteca Internacional and La Batalla. Biblioteca Nueva, América and Veritas followed suit,

³⁴ Meanwhile, in the Soviet Union, 1930s' Spain, especially its political crises and literary life, was depicted in reasonable detail by F. V. Kel'in in the journal *Internatsional'naiia literatura*. As might be expected, his articles were strongly biased according to the prevailing political and artistic thought in the USSR.

³⁵ In a list of the top fifteen Marxist writers to be published between 1869 and 1939, seven are Russian. German and Russian works in total combine to represent approximately eighty percent of Marxist political writings.

³⁶ Georgii Plekhanov. *El arte y la vida social*. Tr. Jorge Korsunsky. Madrid: Cénit, 1929; Leon Trotsky. *Literatura y revolución*. Tr. Luis Roig de Lluis. Madrid: Aguilar, 1923.

recognizing the massive appeal of their writing for a public hoping for revolution in Spain. This effort continued in spite of censorship during the later 1920s.

Not only book sales increased during this period. Literary periodicals in Spain in the late 1920s and in the 1930s took on an increasingly significant role in commenting on the state of contemporary Spanish politics and society, and, as a result, certain journals developed a keen interest in the literature coming from Russia. In the early twenties, *La Pluma*, and, later in the decade, *La Gaceta Literaria* contributed to the commentary on the influx of Russian literature. The journal *España* was another example. After the February Revolution of 1917 in Russia, for example, the Spanish journalist Luis Araquistain wrote an article in *España* about Russia's history, and, in attempting to establish similarities in the histories of Spain and Russia, commented that the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05) was for Russia "what Cuba [1898] was for Spain".³⁷ In spite of E. Torralva's denigration, following the October Revolution, of "those clowns" Lenin and Trotsky – "they are constantly living a potentially tragic farce [...] holding out their hands to reality but at the same

³⁷ "La Revolución Rusa. Pan, guerra, libertad" ("The Russian Revolution. Bread, War, Liberty"). *España* 113 (22 March 1917): 4. The comparison is interesting. Both of these events triggered large-scale popular and intellectual debate in their respective countries. The war between Russia and Japan (1904-05) came at a time of growing political unrest in Russia – 1905 also saw an attempt at revolution – and its effect on the population was exacerbated by Russia's military defeats and losses. One of the most popular Russian writers of the time, Leonid Andreev, for example, wrote one of his most acclaimed short stories, "Krasnyi smekh" ("The Red Laugh") (1905) about the futility of war, and, although he does not refer directly to the Russo-Japanese War, the story is generally considered a response to it. In Spain, the defeat of the Spanish navy by the United States in Cuba in 1898 provoked a national identity crisis. In the same year, the Treaty of Paris signed away the last of Spain's colonial territories. Intellectuals were likewise shocked and started to look inward at Spain's essence and history and to blame what they saw as Spain's decadence.

time giving it a kick"³⁸ – *España* continued to show an active, though reserved, interest in the political situation, including contributions from N. Tasin, who was opposed to the Bolshevik government, and in 1918 it said of the recently adopted Soviet Constitution: "Given the enormous importance of the Russian Revolution, we believe it is of genuine interest to make known the Soviet Constitution, an historical document that marks a stage in the evolution of mankind and the law."³⁹ In this way, political interest went hand in glove with the growing curiosity for Russian literature and Russian authors past and present. Indeed, all fields of the Russian arts became popular: in 1920 it was written in *España* that "in the arts in Spain it has been the Russian season for some time; things Russian cannot lose."⁴⁰

In the post-1917 era, Spain continued to have both supporters and critics of the Russian Revolution, and of those Russian writers who ostensibly espoused it. *La Batalla*, from 1922 onwards, was keen to explain the new ideas emanating from Russia (Cobb 41), and *La Internacional*, from its first issue in November 1919, firmly supported Bolshevism, while maintaining that it would not desist from printing the words of its opponents. The First of May issue in 1920 unashamedly supported socialist victory in Russia, and demanded that Soviet Russia be recognised, by proudly reviewing the modern development of socialist thought – the internationals, the cooperatives, the three revolutions (Paris 1871, Russia 1917 and Hungary 1919) and by loudly proclaiming "Long live the Russian Republic! Long live universal socialism!"⁴¹ In its third issue, however, it printed a denunciation of

³⁸ "Lenin y Trotsky. De la convulsión rusa" ("Lenin and Trotsky. The Russian Upheaval"). *España* 136 (15 November 1917): 8.

³⁹ *España* 182 (3 October 1918): 13.

⁴⁰ "Pequeña antología rusa" ("Short Russian Anthology"). *España* 245 (15 January 1920): 13-14.

⁴¹ *La Internacional* II, 28 (1 May 1920): 1.

the Bolsheviks by Tassin who claimed the Revolution had already cost the disgraced Russian people dearly, and would continue to do so.⁴²

In 1920 *La Internacional* was making a case for the involvement of writers in the important social and political affairs of the day. In an article reviewing the succession of exiles and deaths experienced by writers persecuted for political reasons, it describes the "illustrious group" (*pléyade*) of Russian writers – Pushkin, Ivan Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Maxim Gorky – who had never failed in their social duty. It comments:

And it is today when writers are being encouraged to hide away in an ivory tower, far from the grieving of an injured and suffering humanity that does not know the solution to its troubles. "What will humanity do in this case, if its spiritual mentors abandon it yet again at the crucial hour?" "Oh, you who create thought! You, the only ones capable of inspiring the revolution of traditions, are you going to give in to the rhetoricians, the historians and the businessmen?"⁴³

As the politics of Spain gathered momentum and grew in intensity towards the end of the 1920s, new literary journals appeared with overtly political intent and content. Certain of these publications continued to insist on the affinity between Spain's literary community and their socialist counterparts in Russia.⁴⁴ The journal *Post-Guerra*, described by Rafael Osuna as a "premature, but landmark" venture in publishing in the late 1920s, aimed to attract intellectuals into the fight for the transformation of Spanish society, using Marxist-oriented art and literature as implements in this transformation (Osuna, *Las revistas españolas* 43). As a result, it

⁴² "El bolchevismo y el pueblo ruso" ("Bolshevism and the Russian People"). *La Internacional* I, 3 (1 November 1919): 3.

⁴³ A.N. "Hombre, letras, arte, ideas. Los escritores y las luchas sociales" ("Man, Writing, Art, Ideas. Writers and Social Struggles"). *La Internacional* II, 34 (14 June 1920): 4.

⁴⁴ The overtly Marxist journals included *Las Masas*, *Nuestra Palabra*, *El Bolchevique*, *El Proletario Rojo*, *La Bandera Roja*, *El Obrero Astur* and *Andalucía Roja* (all of which were running in the early

was not slow to draw on the example of the literary output of both pre- and post-revolutionary Russia. In the first issue Víctor Serge wrote that "in no country of recent years has there been so much young talent and so many new works" as in Russia.⁴⁵ Compared with writing emanating from France, contemporary Russian literature excels, he argued, because "its value lies in its being alive, and it is alive because it comes from a country on the move, where millions of men have embarked on the heroic endeavour of reconstructing the world".⁴⁵ This is endorsed by José Antonio Balbontín who added that all great historical movements had been preceded by a literary onslaught, and in Russia, which he cited as the prime example, the "propagator and promulgator of the social revolution of 1917" had been its literature.⁴⁶

Those who collaborated in the production of *Post-Guerra* were aware of playing a pioneering role in publishing. Their first editorial acknowledged the significance of the times – the maelstrom following the First World War, the continuing struggles in such countries as China, on the one hand, and the political and social *fait accompli* in Russia on the other, the decadence of capitalism throughout the world, and Spain's own confused and restless politics. *Post-Guerra's* aim, they maintained, was to make this dramatic hour in history comprehensible, and to take on two goals – "to reflect on the implications of current affairs" and "to stimulate all who are capable of thinking to do so".⁴⁷ The *Post-Guerra* team took advantage of a loophole in the otherwise frustrating censorship laws allowing

1930s) which originated in different regions of Spain, thus, conceivably, limiting the ideological debate they aspired to further (Cobb 39).

⁴⁵ "Los jóvenes escritores de la Revolución en el pasado y el presente" ("The Young Writers of the Revolution Past and Present"). *Post-Guerra* I, 1 (25 June 1927): 2-4.

⁴⁶ "Pensamiento y acción" ("Thought and Action"). *Post-Guerra* I, 1 (25 June 1927): 4, 5.

publications of over two hundred pages in length to be published uncensored, and, in consequence, aforementioned collections such as *Oriente*, *Historia Nueva*, *Cénit*, and *Zeus* were born. These new publishing houses kept alive the commitment and aims of *Post-Guerra*, and vigorously endeavoured to keep the market well supplied with publications suitable for encouraging the politicization of Spaniards of the time (Fuentes, "Post-Guerra" 4). Their collections included a very generous proportion of political and fictional writings by Russians – Gorky, Il'ia Ehrenburg, Ivanov, Fedin, Isaak Babel, Aleksandr Fadeev and Fedor Gladkov appeared in these lists – and the publisher *Jason* had a collection entitled "Novelists of Red Russia". In 1933 Alberti listed several new writers, such as Fadeev, Ivanov and Gladkov, as Soviet writers read in Spain.⁴⁸

Octubre (1933-34) was a journal in the same pioneering ideological cast as *Post-Guerra*, and more advantageously timed.⁴⁹ It was the direct result of the formation of the Asociación Española de Escritores y Artistas Revolucionarios (Spanish Association of Revolutionary Writers and Artists), which had close links with intellectuals belonging to the French Communist Party. *Octubre* was formed by the poet Alberti and his wife, María Teresa León, and its core members included prominent writers Joaquín Arderús, César Muñoz Arconada, and Emilio Prados, who were all Marxists and pro-Soviet. Political meetings and demonstrations held by the far-left intellectuals had become increasingly popular as the ineffectiveness of the Republic became more and more apparent. Not to be overlooked as another

⁴⁷ *Post-Guerra* I, 1 (25 June 1927): 1.

⁴⁸ Including the poets Aseev, Inber, Ognev, Kirshon, Pasternak, Kirsanov, Kamenskii, Bezymenskii, Brik and Iasenskii, all of whom are described in a later section. See p. 151 of Alberti's *Prosas encontradas*.

means of bringing together intellectual talent were the organizations, Socorro Obrero Español (Spanish Workers' Aid) and Socorro Rojo Internacional (International Red Aid).

The commitment of *Octubre* to the Marxist cause was shown in its advance issue, in which Xavier Abril claimed that the "only homeland of the world proletariat" was the Soviet Union, that the name which symbolized their revolutionary heritage was Lenin, and that the date around which all this revolved was October.⁵⁰ Also in the advance issue, *Octubre* declared its principles and aims, among which it stated categorically that it would be "an exponent of the development and appearance of the revolutionary literature of the world" while at the same time intending to "give special attention to literature and art in the USSR, as in that country where socialism has triumphed the problems and development of art follow a different route."⁵¹ Fascination for information about the Soviet Union and for writing emanating from that country was further demonstrated by the inclusion in the journal of Russian political writings and of descriptive reports of industry, agriculture and geography of the Soviet Union. The two final issues of *Octubre* featured a two-part report and analysis of the first fifteen years of Soviet literature since the Russian Revolution – described as embodying "the story of the fight for socialist literature"⁵² – throughout which the aim had been to "fight the last vestiges of capitalism in the consciences of men."⁵³ In August 1934, Alberti attended the First Congress of the

⁴⁹ *Post-Guerra's* hands were tied by censorship laws under the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera (from 1923 to 1930), and, therefore, was short-lived (June 1927 – September 1928).

⁵⁰ "Nuestro saludo al proletariado en el 1. de mayo" ("Our Greeting to the Proletariat on 1 May"). *Octubre* advance issue (1 May 1933): 1.

⁵¹ *Octubre* advance issue (1 May 1933): 1.

⁵² *Octubre* 4-5 (October-November 1933): 16.

⁵³ *Octubre* 6 (April 1934): 19.

Soviet Writers' Union and contributed a report about the aims and objectives of *Octubre*.⁵⁴

The socialist Spanish journal *Leviatán* operated between 1934 and 1936, and contained contributions by leading left-wing intellectuals, both foreign and Spanish. Its main aim was to challenge and oppose fascism. Its mainstay, Luis Araquistain, later wrote: "I think that we Spaniards have not contributed anything original to modern socialism. [...] Some of my colleagues and I flew the Marxist flag a little in *Leviatán*, but not very profoundly – rather, with the intention of popularizing it. In short, I repeat – there has been nothing original" (98-99). Strictly speaking, in the overall context of the evolution of Marxist thought and criticism, Araquistain is correct in his evaluation of the journal. But the statement does not do the journal justice, for, certainly in a Spanish context, *Leviatán* should not be overlooked, nor its importance understated.

Special mention should be made of the March 1936 issue of the journal, in which Araquistain echoed the hopes and aspirations of some Spanish intellectuals when he optimistically suggested that Spain was poised to become the second country in the world where socialism triumphed. He argued that at the very moment when other nations had lapsed into imperialism after the First World War, Russia and Spain had rejected it: "Russia and Spain are following the inverse process to that of the rest of Europe" (18).⁵⁵ To support his argument, he pointed out that in Russia and Spain capitalism had evolved more slowly: both, he claimed, were feudal, rural, and agrarian, and both had been backed by foreign capital. The proletariat in contemporary Russia, Spain, Spanish-speaking America and China, in his opinion,

⁵⁴ See *Commune* (September – October 1934): 80-82.

had no other way out but social revolution; and he considered the events of October 1917 in Russia and October 1934 in Spain (the Asturian Revolution) as progress in this direction. Considering the Spain of his day to be in a similar set of circumstances to Russia at the turn of the century – capitalism at the same stage of evolution, suffering an ineffectual State, and having acquired a proletariat eager for power – he felt that the nation was aware of its mission in history and had a capacity for revolution unequalled in the world outside Russia (32). For these reasons, Araquistain concluded that Spain would consolidate the proletarian revolution in spite of counterrevolutionary danger from the outside, and would succeed in fulfilling its role in history by following in the footsteps of the glorious victors of the Great October Socialist Revolution. His aspirations were lofty, but backing this revolution to the hilt would be those of Spain's writers who were using their pens as weapons in active and vociferous support of the Revolution.

In review, we should reiterate that literature was one of Russia's greatest cultural and spiritual exports to the West from the end of the nineteenth century onward and that Spain was among those European nations which was curious about it, a curiosity which gained momentum as the century and Spain's own troubled politics progressed. It is true that Valera cast doubt on the intentions of the French who were largely responsible for initially promoting Russian literature, but the success of Russian literature abroad proved to be far from transitory.

However, the objective of this thesis is to determine whether Spain's interest in Russian literature simply paralleled that of the rest of Europe, or whether there are additional factors which made the popularity of Russian writing in Spain unique. We

⁵⁵ "Paralelo histórico entre la revolución rusa y la española" ("Historical Parallel between the Russian and Spanish Revolutions"). *Leviatán* 22 (1 March 1936): 15-33.

might begin by asking whether it is possible to speak of an affinity between Spaniards, in particular, and Russia? If so, how might we define that affinity?

The Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, who considered Russia to be "amorphous" and "primitive", commented on this subject in his essay *España invertebrada (Invertebrate Spain)* (1920):

Russia and Spain, those two ends of the great European diagonal [...] very different in other qualities, [...] are alike in being the two "*pueblo*" races, races where the common people predominate – that is, races which suffer from an obvious and continuous lack of eminent individuals. (71)

The question of the attraction of Russia for Spain – and the notion of the sense of nationhood – was also a subject of interest for George Portnoff in his study *La literatura rusa en España (Russian Literature in Spain)* of 1932. He suggested that the affinity between Russians and Spaniards may be the result of their both having a keen sense of nationality (*pueblo, narod*), and that, although both belong geographically to Europe, neither, in his view, is European in ethnic essence (45). Alekseev also believed that there was an "indubitable and abundant influence" at work between the two nations, owing not only to their being European, but also, geographical and typological distance notwithstanding, having parallels and coincidences which cannot be attributed to "universal elements" and which, therefore, distinguish them from the rest of the continent; such parallels are, for Alekseev, "more than curious facts" but, rather, they "reveal definite ideological, historical and social tendencies" (Fernández Sánchez 8).

Like Pardo Bazán and, presumably, Alekseev, Portnoff saw similarities in the social and political histories of the two countries. For Portnoff, this similarity had produced a strong individualism in Russians and Spaniards alike. The histories of both peoples had been somewhat chaotic, with the consequence that "in Russia, as in Spain, those with profound sensibilities and spiritual preoccupations, being unable to

find support in a disorganized political and social life, sought it in their own existence" (44-45). Portnoff's views are debatable, as they frequently seem subjective and intuitive rather than measured and objective, yet it is true that both the Spanish and the Russian peoples have been hybridized by the conquests of Semitic Moors and Mongol Tatars respectively. In both cases, these conquerors did not simply overcome in purely military fashion: they integrated themselves with the native peoples and their cultures.⁵⁶ Salvador de Madariaga described Spain as being "like Russia, in which the spiritual waters of East and West have blended" (emphasis added).⁵⁷ The effect of these long periods of occupation by distinctly foreign invaders may well have increased the tendency of both Spaniards and Russians to feel that they were not wholly European, and, perhaps, to identify with each other as peripheral, or "fringe", Europeans, both geographically and spiritually.⁵⁸

Not all coverage of the import of Russian culture was positive and welcoming, as we have seen from Castelar's book of 1881. Written in the same year

⁵⁶ The more northerly, mainstream Europeans (Nordic, Frankish) had not been so violently subjected to these Eastern influences. Centuries of occupation by these invaders have had an enduring effect on Russia and Spain, not least in the evolution of their languages. See, for example, Anwar G. Chejne's *Muslim Spain: Its History and Culture* (Minneapolis: Uni. of Minnesota, 1974); Angus MacKay's *Spain in the Middle Ages: From Frontier to Empire. 100-1500* (London: Macmillan, 1977); Robert Auty's "The Russian Language" in *An Introduction to Russian Language and Literature* (Eds. Auty and Obolensky) (Cambridge: CUP, 1977): 1-40, page 30; Nikolay Andreyev's "Appanage and Muscovite Russia" in *An Introduction to Russian History* (Eds. Auty and Obolensky) (Cambridge: CUP, 1976): 78-120.

⁵⁷ *Semblanzas literarias contemporáneas (Contemporary Literary Resemblances)*. Barcelona: Cervantes, 1924.158-9.

⁵⁸ The critic Ricardo Baeza also addressed the theme of affinity between the Russians and the Spaniards in "Comprensión de Dostoyevsky" ("Understanding Dostoevsky"), which appeared first in the daily newspaper *El Sol* on 6 October 1926. In 1994 and 95, the subject of cultural affinity between Spain and Russia was again a topic of discussion. During a three-day conference in St Petersburg, the cultural boundaries of the East and West were considered with Spain and Russia as the case study. See *Russkaia literatura* 3 (1995): 3-20 & 73-80.

as Portnoff's study, the prologue to a collection of Russian prose stated that the Russian Revolution "not only produced thousands of victims, wiped out by atrocious and horrific ordeals, but also the subversion and destruction of freedom, individualism and culture"; furthermore, "editors, writers and thinkers were treated with the same cruelty by the hateful and loathsome mob of rebellious and omnipotent slaves".⁵⁹ Once again, the poet Alberti's personal experience and views cast additional light on the appeal of Russian literature to Spaniards in those years.

There was one novel in particular that profoundly influenced young Spanish intellectuals among whom there already existed strong and violent inclinations towards anarchism: *Sashka Zhegulev* by Andreev,^[60] an author who had recently died in Finland, far removed from Lenin's revolution, which he never really understood. I was among those youths who were whipped up by the heroic and adventurous Sasha. I read Dostoevsky's *The Devils*^[61] not so much with admiration as amazement. All that world of madmen which acted so naturally and in which the abnormal appeared to be quite acceptable left me perplexed and preoccupied. After reading it, I began to realise that Spain, especially in its small towns, above all those in the South, was full of the same kind of 'devils', into which category fell not a few of my own family. From the strange madness of those Dostoevskian characters I passed to the captivating melancholy and wit of Chekhov's.^[62] Along with my sister Pepita I read over and over again, to the point of tears, the stories of his poor coachmen, peasants, modest employees and teachers... (*La arboleda perdida* I 178)

Thinking of Alberti's reasons for enjoying Russian literature, rather than noting the specific works he read, as we will do later in the thesis, it is clear there was a highly

⁵⁹ See Edmundo González Blanco's Prologue to *Los grandes cuentistas de la antigua Rusia (The Great Storytellers of Old Russia)* (Madrid: Yagües, 1932).

⁶⁰ Andreev, L. N. *Sashka Yegulev*. Trans. N. Tasin. Colección Universal. Madrid: Calpe, 1919.

⁶¹ Dostoevsky, F. M. *Los endemoniados*. Trans. Jorge de Meyendorff. Colección Universal 868-69. 3 vols. (*sic*) Madrid: Calpe, 1924.

⁶² There were various titles of Chekhov's works in the period concerned: *Los campesinos (The Peasants)*. Trans. N. Tasin. Colección Universal 42. Madrid: Calpe, 1920; *Historia de mi vida (Story of My Life)*. Trans. N. Tasin. Colección Universal 203-4. Madrid: Calpe, 1920; *La sala número seis (Ward No. 6)*. Trans. N. Tasin. Colección Universal 81-2. Madrid: Calpe; *La señora del perro y otros cuentos (The Lady with Lapdog and Other Stories)*. Trans. Julia Héctor de Zaballa. Colección Universal 1071-3. Madrid: Calpe, 1928.

subjective correlation in his mind of the personalities he read in Dostoevsky, for example, with characters he knew in Southern Spain. Ambiguous though his comment undoubtedly is, and bearing in mind that such comparisons are sometimes too tempting to make to be reliable, it suggests, perhaps, an affinity between certain types in Spain and Russia. Chekhov's fictional characters were a source of emotion in the young man who was soon to be fighting for what he believed to be the good of the masses. However, one of the inspiring aspects of his reading was the incitement to revolution, as shown in his partiality for *Sashka Zhegulev*. Víctor Fuentes had an explanation for this:

the preference of the Spanish reader for [Soviet] novels reveals their sense of the similarity of their own needs, longings and aspirations to those which these Soviet writers, inspired by the heroic accomplishment of the Russian people in the first years of their Revolution, were able to express with their great narrative talent. (*Marcha* 38)

As far as Spain is concerned, Pablo Gil Casado's suggestion was that, for Spanish writers of the late 1920s and 1930s in particular, the attraction was the "romantic model" provided by the successful Russian Revolution and the representation of the revolutionary struggle provided by Russian writers in their writing (133). This will be explored later in the thesis. Castañar confirms, however, that "the fact that Spain was in a period of revolutionary gestation could have affected the interest of young intellectuals and the proletariat [in Russian works] because of the dissemination of prose fiction in which they could see a model which they could follow" (*Compromiso* 39).

Gómez de Baquero, who had expressed concern over the foreign literature flooding Spain, conceded in 1927 the love Spaniards had for Russian literature, and attributed it to the tradition of artistic realism that both Spain and Russia had in

common.⁶³ The frankness with which Russian writers had depicted the lives of their lower classes, especially in the bitter years leading up to the Russian Revolution, appealed, in his opinion, to those in Spain who saw a need for similar candour in their own country. He made a similar point in 1929, when he claimed that the strong attraction of the Russian novel was its profound humanity and its ability to reflect the "tragic meaning of life" with its characters stripped bare and as apparent as a mirror's reflection.⁶⁴ Antonio Espina, encouraging Spanish writers to involve themselves in the affairs of the people, deplored the fact that "nineteenth-century writers and artists – *except the Russians* – have been divorced from the people" (emphasis added).⁶⁵ The poet Alberti, looking back to the 1920s and 30s, acknowledged the indebtedness of his generation to the Russian writing that appeared in those years (*La arboleda perdida* I 179).

An ideological link must be acknowledged, however. The boom in Spain's interest in all things Russian in the 1920s and 30s was certainly boosted by the phenomenon of the Russian Revolution, the foundation of history's first Socialist state and its progress in subsequent years. From 1918 onwards, books and articles started to appear, not only about the newly-formed government and its constitution, but as commentary on the visits to the Soviet Union of those who could contain their curiosity no longer and had to see socialism in practice with their own eyes.⁶⁶ One such observer wrote:

⁶³ Gómez de Baquero, E. "Las ciudades y los años." *El Sol* 11 (16 June 1927): 5.

⁶⁴ "La atracción de la novela rusa. *El cemento*" in *El Sol* (6 January 1929): 2.

⁶⁵ "¿Incompatible? La cultura y el espíritu proletario." *El Sol* (18 July 1930): 1.

⁶⁶ Fernando de los Ríos, Isidoro Acevedo, Álvarez del Vayo, Ángel Pestaña, Diego Hidalgo, César Vallejo, Ramón Sender, Rafael Alberti, J. Zugazagoitia, José Bergamín and Rodolfo Llopis are among those who visited Russia and wrote about their experiences.

To create, educate, correlate, construct [...] this was the great attraction of the new faith. The world revolution was inevitable, a formality, that had to be carried out before the classless society could be built just as the final judgment would have to precede the establishment of the heavenly kingdom on earth. [...] It could not be achieved without a modicum of fighting and bloodshed, but I was quite indifferent to that part of the programme. The only thing that interested me was what would come afterwards: the construction of that communist society that would mean the ultimate realisation of man.⁶⁷

There was some scepticism in Spain about the flood of Russian works entering the country: it was considered to be "Moscow gold" – the machinations of the Communist Party to push sales in order to spread their propaganda. Given the determination of the Soviets initially to bring about world revolution, and, subsequently, to enlist the support of likeminded intellectuals abroad in the fight for the antifascist, pro-Soviet cause, this was not a wild assumption. One historian has written, however, that "it would be convenient, *though incorrect*, to explain [the boom in revolutionary writing] as the Machiavellian efforts of the leaders of the Party and the subsidies from Moscow as payment to the newspapers and writers. No, the collaboration was spontaneous and, for that reason, most proficient"⁶⁸ (emphasis added). One leading light in the promulgation of revolutionary literature at the time wrote that "we were publishing both Communist and anti-Communist books. It would be foolish to attribute this to the influence of Russia because there was not one collection that did not include books banned by the Soviets." From his pen came the explanation that "it is clear that this flood of revolutionary books occurred because of public demand. None of us had the capital to create the demand".⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Koestler, Arthur. *Autobiografía*. Madrid: Alianza, 1973. 119.

⁶⁸ Venero, García. *Historia de las internacionales en España*. Vol. 2. Madrid: Ediciones del Movimiento, 1957. 426.

⁶⁹ Venegas, José. *Andanzas y recuerdos de España*. Montevideo: Feria del Libro, 1943. 177-78.

It seems reasonable to conclude, therefore, that there existed an underlying affinity between the Spaniards and the Russians. This, coupled with the eagerness of Spain, at the turn of the twentieth century, to receive all the current European trends, including increasingly fashionable Russian literature, may account in large measure for the rapid introduction and subsequent popularity of Russian literature in Spain in the early decades of the twentieth century.

The increase in interest in Russia in the pre-Civil War period clearly warrants examination. It is the objective of this thesis to conduct such an examination. First, however, we must establish the theoretical framework within which such a comparative examination may take place. Section 1.1 discusses the issues involved in the comparative study of literature and, based on its findings, determines a theoretical course which will apply to this study of the impact of Russia on Spanish pre-Civil War writing.

It is true that cultural exchange, faced with the difficulty of direct contacts, has often been produced by means of intermediaries from yet another (third) culture, but, on the other hand, this has shown that the contacts were sought.

José Fernández Sánchez (8)

1.1 Comparing the Literatures

To address the impact of Russian literature and the Revolution on the writers of pre-Civil War Spain assumes that some form of influence has taken place, and, while this is not an unusual approach to literary study, it is true to say that, towards the end of the twentieth century, the field of influence studies became "the most hotly disputed area in the whole realm of comparative studies – a realm often transformed into a battle-field by opposing scholars", indeed, that it is "perhaps the most suspect and maligned area of comparative investigation" (Prawer 51, 60).

"Influence" may be an "outmoded notion" which has been replaced by more "vogueish" approaches to literature afforded by intertextuality, for example, (Clayton and Rothstein 3), but the study of literary relations, communications, international mediators and assimilation "cannot be divorced from the investigation of 'influences'" (Prawer 51). It is interesting to note that as recently as 1991, Claudio Guillén, while commenting that the "study of international influences is a task bristling with obstacles, pitfalls, and all possible misunderstandings", does not eliminate it entirely from his enquiry into the current state of comparative literature, and acknowledges there are those who have succeeded in this "difficult undertaking" (*Challenge* 241). In recent times the concern of theorists in the field of comparative literature is the question of "how to discriminate genuine influences from commonplace images,

techniques, or ideas that could be found in almost any writer of a given period" (Clayton and Rothstein 5).

While perhaps the most obvious of comparative studies is *intranational* – wherein the subjects of examination, as a general rule, have in common culture, language, and the circumstances surrounding their creation – the most fascinating and challenging comparison is *international*, in which the study crosses cultural boundaries in its search for affinities. Indeed, it may be argued that a study of literature is not complete until such transnational comparisons are made.

This is especially true in the case of the increase in popularity of Russian literature in 1920s and 30s Spain. The study of how the social and political situations in Spain during that period were reflected in the literary productions of its writers is a study fascinating enough; but examining the interplay of literature and politics in Spain during that period from the point of view of the impact of Russian and early Soviet literature on the reading public and on the writing produced in those years makes the study more satisfying, since the impact of Russian literature explains aspects of the writing of certain authors which otherwise might be either misunderstood or not understood at all.

In addition, comparative study of this type "has *relevance* of a kind that few other branches of study possess" since it contributes "not only to the study of literature but above all to the study of history" (Gillies 25). A consideration of the impact of the Russian Revolution, as well as of Russian literature, on the thinking of Spain's literary intelligentsia, can provide an understanding of the pre-Civil War years in Spain, not only from the literary perspective, but also from the historical one, since writers were actively involved in political affairs (Cobb 9).

The study of literary influence across cultural boundaries seeks "patterns of connection in literatures across both time and space" and "associations and connections, no longer reading within a single literature but within the great open space of Literature with capital L" (Bassnett-McGuire, *Comparative Literature* 1-2). The comparatist Alfred Owen Aldridge summed up well the nature of such comparative study, when he wrote that it

provides a method of broadening one's perspective in the approach to single works of literature – a way of looking beyond the narrow boundaries of national frontiers in order to discern trends and movements in various national cultures and to see the relations between literature and other spheres of human activity. [...] The comparatist, instead of being confined to the wares of a single nation, shops in a literary department store. Briefly defined, comparative literature can be considered the study of any literary phenomenon from the perspective of more than one national literature or in conjunction with another intellectual discipline or even several. (*Comparative Literature* 1)

Comparative literary studies thus seek to extend the scope of study, not only beyond the literature of one nation, but also beyond the study of literature in itself. Aldridge's view of comparative studies proposes the breaking down of frontiers in more senses than the obvious: his use of the image of a "literary department store" provides a fitting illustration of the wares available to the scholar of comparative literature. The shop windows and display cabinets in our department store exhibit for comparatists a fascinating selection of "spheres of human activity", "intellectual disciplines" and literatures crossing the boundaries between nations and cultures.¹

¹ This is not to be confused with the concept of *Weltliteratur*, an expression attributed to Goethe and defined as, first, the attempt to write literary history on a global (or at least a European) basis, by juxtaposing chapters and sections on the various national literatures, or by "describing various movements, currents or periods in as many countries as possible"; second, a term which has been used to indicate the "best" literature ("classics") that has been written; and, third, the awareness and

For a work of literature to be received into another culture's literature, that is, to be understood by the foreign reader, usually requires, as a primary step, the process of translation. In fact, it may be argued that translation shows most clearly, perhaps, the way in which a work of literature may be transposed by means of its assimilation into a new cultural environment. Henry Gifford states, on the negative side, that a translated work "can never be more than an oil painting reproduced in black and white" and that "[h]owever clearly he may have seen the original, a translator must yield to the pressures of his own language" (44-46). For example, with specific reference to the early translations of Russian literature into Spanish, we have already established the argument of George O. Schanzer, to the effect that "the spirit of the work has been left in the original" (40), and that he notes "mutilations" of the original texts, since Russian literature was, for the most part, "propagated in an adulterated form, and the Hispanic reading public in many cases took a fancy to works which were a pale image of the original" (xviii). However, on the positive side, the translation of foreign works, in turn, has facilitated the spread of new literary ideas: "[t]ranslators, whom Pushkin calls "the workhorses of our civilization", have played a crucial role in the diffusion of new thoughts and techniques" (Jost 36).

The piece to be translated inevitably changes in the process of translation. It becomes a new work of literature, one which may preserve a sense of the literal meaning of the original whilst sacrificing style in its insistence on staying close to the original, or, at the other extreme, it may excel in stylistic form but forego some of the cultural flavour of the original in an attempt to make it more palatable to its readers.

openness to works written in other countries and other languages, and the traffic and exchange between them (Praver 4).

While translation has "played a fundamental role in cultural exchange", nevertheless, "the process of translating texts from one cultural system into another is not a neutral, innocent, transparent activity" (Bassnett-McGuire, *Comparative Literature* 160). Translation is open to both error and deliberate mistranslation; it may be the innocent victim of inexperience or of outright prejudice. For the comparatist, a translated work presents problems in that "[s]tylistic aspects necessarily fall by the wayside if all the texts are translated, while thematic comparison (thematic in terms of plot and character study) comes to the forefront" (Bassnett-McGuire, *Comparative Literature* 45). The study of what happens to a text as it is transferred from one language to another is barely out of its infancy, but no comparative cross-cultural study can ignore the fact that translation has taken place and that this will certainly have affected what the reader has actually read.

Nevertheless, Gifford makes the further point that "[t]ranslation is an instrument, however fallible, without which vast areas of the world's literature would be lost to us" (55). The dissemination of Russian literature abroad, for example, had to involve translation, since the Russian language has not been commonly read and understood in other countries. This was particularly so in Spain, where Russian was not a popular subject for study and where, at times, the Russian works were read to working class people who were usually illiterate in their own language, and therefore could not be expected to read the original texts of the Russian works.² The fact that Russian works were not read in the original in Spain will be taken into consideration

² It is established in sections 1.2 and 1.4 of this thesis that as revolutionary activity intensified certain of those interested in works of Russian literature (from the words of Lenin to the novel *Chapaev*) were of the working classes. Especially among the anarchists movements, it was not uncommon for literate members to read aloud to groups of illiterate workers.

later in this thesis when the influence of Russian writing on Spanish writers is assessed.

Taken at face value, recommendations in favour of a study of literary influence across cultural borders make it seem not only engaging and challenging, but also valuable. Some have spoken of the benefits of such studies to the understanding of the history of a nation. In the present thesis, for example, we have previously claimed that the study of the impact of Russia's literature and ideology on certain Spanish writers for whom politics and literature, for a time at least, went hand-in-hand, enhances the understanding of the history of the 1930s in Spain. Yet, in the last decades of the twentieth century, influence studies became a highly problematical area. It would be useful at this point to examine why influence studies have been criticized in order to arrive at an appropriate method for this study.

The comments of comparatists cited earlier will be recalled, to the effect that influence studies may be "perhaps the most suspect and maligned area of comparative investigation" (Praver 60), an "outmoded notion" which has been replaced by the more "vogueish" approach to literature afforded by intertextuality (Clayton and Rothstein 3). Why have influence studies become such a problematical area for theorists and practitioners of comparative literature? The traditional concept of influence, some argue, "smacks of the system of earned rule that supplanted lineage, the capitalism of bold, oblivious robber barons" (Clayton and Rothstein 12). Indeed, influence study in its older, more traditional form is allegedly responsible for a "crude cultural imperialism" in which a work of literature, a literary movement, or an entire national literature could be "exalted to the degree that it was able to exert a hegemony over the literature of other countries" (Clayton and Rothstein 5).

This would suggest that what might have started with the objective of building bridges between different nations and cultures by focusing on literary links and exchanges, in time gave some nations and cultures the opportunity to assert their supremacy and, with it, the right to determine what was in vogue in the literary world, as in other spheres of life, and to determine which works might be included in the canon of world literature. René Wellek considers that comparatists themselves became engaged in a kind of "cultural bookkeeping" which he defines as

a desire to accumulate credits for one's nation by proving as many influences as possible on other nations or, more subtly, by proving that one's own nation has assimilated and 'understood' a foreign master more fully than any other [nation].
(*Concepts* 289)

The fact that an intermediary, from yet another culture, may seek to make connections between the literatures of two nations may well suggest that the connection is a viable one. At the head of this section we were reminded of the words

It is true that cultural exchange, faced with the difficulty of direct contacts, has often been produced by means of intermediaries from yet another (third) culture, but, on the other hand, this has shown that the contacts were sought. (Fernández Sánchez 8)

But it may also, arguably, diminish the risk of national bias.

In addition to the likelihood of influence study placing a question mark over the motivation of its practitioners, its basis has been challenged most severely by the modern concept in literary theory of the de-centring of the author. Writers, traditionally, were burdened with the need to be original in subject matter and style in order to be deemed worthy of critical acclaim and of acceptance into the prevalent canon of literature. As a result, literary scholars were preoccupied by a relentless search for literary sources and borrowings, "tracing motifs, themes, characters, situations, plots, etc., to some other chronologically preceding work", accumulating "an enormous mass of parallels, similarities, and sometimes identities", without asking

"what these relationships are supposed to show except possibly the fact of one writer's knowledge and reading of another writer" (Wellek, *Concepts* 285). The danger in such a preoccupation is that it can become a pedantic exercise which ultimately has no purpose, a preoccupation the usefulness of which it is pertinent to question, since such a search ultimately produces only a chronological and geographical network or map of sources and influences, or a family tree, in effect, of precursors and ephebes. Such an exercise may risk detracting from the nature and essence of a work of literature, in spite of the fact that it should provide a fuller understanding of the context in which the literatures involved were produced.

Twentieth-century literary criticism began to remove the spotlight from the author. One of the new focuses of criticism were the works of literature themselves, which Wellek describes as "not simply sums of sources and influences" but as "wholes in which raw materials derived from elsewhere cease to be inert matter and are assimilated into a new structure" (*Concepts* 285). Furthermore, with the turning of the spotlight away from the author, modern literary theory has transferred attention to the role of the reader and the implications that this has on the meaning of a text, so that "[u]nless the writer and reader are the same, a given book or idiom that has served to influence the writer can only appear to the reader as intertext, a section of a pattern in terms of which he or she makes sense of what is now read" (Clayton and Rothstein 16). This brings to mind the words of Miguel de Unamuno, in which he holds that every reader is "author of what he reads and is now reading" (*Obras completas* 10 911).

The comparatist now asks, for example, what it is about the original works or body of works that attracts certain readers; and whether readers find in the works they read what the authors intended, or whether, in the process of reading, they add their

own subtext. This thesis asks what facilitated the increase in publication of Russian literature in Spain of the 1920s and 30s, and what those who showed a special inclination towards Russian literature found in their reading. In fact, in view of twentieth-century re-evaluations, influence is "at once *asserted* and nullified" (Clayton and Rothstein 16; emphasis added).

Literary scholars still usually start with the basic assumption that the output of writers will have assimilated everything they have read and interpreted before, and that evidence of this will be found in their works, in the form of direct references and quotations and in a variety of allusions (Worton and Stills 1). Putting more emphasis on the work of literature itself, as Wellek suggests, means to view it as the product of the assimilation of "raw materials" accumulated from other sources (*Concepts* 285). Focusing more on the role of the reader requires a greater consideration of the reason for readers' attraction to the foreign literature, and to examine whether they have added to their reading their own subtext. In all these considerations, influence in some form or another is involved.

The study of influence, therefore, is still valid. So much so that the process of influence has been analysed and appraised from several perspectives in recent decades. The theorist Harold Bloom, for example, is concerned with the transmission of ideas: he calls it poetic "history", which he equates with poetic influence, in which there is a precursor and an ephebe. For him, this presents a catalogue of "misreading": he maintains that "strong poets" make poetic history by "misreading" one another, "so as to clear imaginative space for themselves". But in the process of so doing, they encounter "immense anxieties of indebtedness" (5), which he relates to an Oedipal struggle in which the ephebe's anxiety to produce a new interpretation is motivated by his need to deny the paternity of his precursor. The anxiety induced by influence

notwithstanding, Bloom states that the "transmission" of ideas from earlier to later poets is inevitable (71).

Where Bloom discusses the methodology of the poets themselves, Gérard Genette examines the role of the texts. Genette, in *Palimpsestes*, suggests that a text could not have been written without the existence of another (precursor) text, and calls this phenomenon *hypertextualité* (hypertextuality). For Genette, the parent text and successor text are *hypotexte* and *hypertexte*, respectively: "I understand by [hypertextuality] all relations which unite a text B (which I will call "hypertext") to an anterior text A (which I will call, of course, "hypotext"), on to which it is grafted" (11-12). Genette's reference to "grafting" suggests that texts, or aspects of literary texts,³ are attached or incorporated onto different "tissue" (text), thereby producing a new creation. Speaking of the text derived from a pre-existing text, Genette reasons that "it can be of another order, in that B does not refer to A at all, but will not be able to exist, however, without A, of which it is the result of an operation which I will call, provisionally again, a *transformation*, and which it evokes more or less clearly without necessarily referring to it or citing it" (12). Thus, according to this theory, the perceived or suggested influence does not necessarily have to be acknowledged or textually signalled, but is nevertheless part of the development of a literary tradition or trend.⁴

³ A text's theme, meaning or subject matter, its imagery and metaphors, its characterization, its linguistic codification, etc.

⁴ Genette warns that it is wise to be wary of contriving links between proposed hypotext and hypertext in the application of theories of intertextuality, and that alleged links must have a credible foundation: "The less [...] affirmed the hypertextuality of a work is, the more its analysis depends on a constitutive understanding, even an interpretative decision by the reader. [...] I see the relationship

A study of Spanish pre-Civil War writing could not be based on the assumption that Russian literature was the only influence involved. It goes without saying that every Spanish author featuring in this study will have assimilated a wide variety of anterior texts and authors, from their own literature and from foreign literatures, and that in their own writing there will almost certainly be a mosaic of quotations and allusions to previously admitted writing. Indeed, the process of evaluating the influence of the Russians on Spanish writers requires a consideration of the Spanish writers in the role of readers. Given the strongly biased nature of those authors who wrote with Marxist ideology and aspirations in mind, it would not be surprising to find that as readers they had perhaps added their own subtext to certain literature that they had read. In any event, it goes without saying that those writers, as readers, will certainly have gone through a continuous process, consciously or subconsciously, of absorption, assimilation, and transmission of ideas. When they then become the creators of literary works, it is reasonable to expect to find the results of the transmission of ideas, in which parent texts – hypotexts – have been grafted onto their own, successor texts. The result of this is the redistribution in their texts of the many and varied codes and social language which those authors have assimilated and transformed.

To what extent an author may assimilate the thoughts of another writer – of his having read, and having identified with what has been read – is dealt with by the Russian thinker and theorist Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin. He suggests that when an influence "is deep and productive, there is no external imitation, no simple act of reproduction, but rather a further creative development of another's (more precisely,

between the text and its reader as being of a more socialised, more overtly contractual manner arising

half-other) discourse in a new context and under new conditions", and he reasons that in these new forms "there can always be found the embryonic beginnings of what is required for an artistic representation of another's discourse" ("Slovo v romane" 159-60). Following this argument through, it should be possible to find literary influence even where there is no direct reference or quotation: it should be possible to seek the "embryonic beginnings" of a work in an earlier text or *œuvre*. It implies that, in a "new context and under new conditions", the original text may become part of his philosophy and outlook; of the other's "word" being subjected to "further creative development". In the words of Wellek, cited earlier, works of art are now seen as "wholes" in which "raw materials derived from elsewhere cease to be inert matter and are assimilated into a new structure" (*Concepts* 285).

Thus, the writing of Spanish pre-Civil War authors who have been readers of earlier texts may be described as "new structures" which are the product of the process of subjecting parent texts to a "further creative development" of "new contexts" and "new conditions". More specifically, if the comparatist's aim is to prove the influence of Russian writing, there must be found "embryonic" elements of the successor texts in the parent texts, and signs of the "raw materials" from the Russian texts in the Spanish works. What is sought is the evidence that the hypertext (Spanish works) would not have been able to exist without the hypotext (Russian works) (Genette 12); that there is substantially more involved in the process of influence than the sheer coincidence of "commonplace images and techniques" which could be found in any writer of that period (Clayton and Rothstein 5).

However, it is not necessary to prove that nothing that is written or uttered is entirely original,⁵ in order to concede that the assimilation of another's ideas is a natural and common occurrence. A writer "may consciously respond to or work on a precursor text", or "he may be unconsciously influenced as a result of long-term assimilation whose origins are long forgotten" (Jones 81). The process of assimilation may be conscious or unconscious, rapid or long-term. It may, as Jones rightly says, be "long forgotten". It becomes clear, therefore, that there does not have to be straight quotation in order to reason that assimilation has taken place: a work or a body of literature, or one facet of it, may have been subjected to new conditions and new contexts and in the process its exact meaning may have evolved. The comparatist, therefore, would be looking for elements of the precursive author or text, with or without textual signals, in a new context, be it of the same culture or language, or of another. If comparative literary study across cultural borders shops in a "literary

⁵ One of the problems that arise on the subject of appropriation of an earlier writer's work is the danger of plagiarism: "exactly where plagiarism ends and creative imitation begins is often doubtful" (Weisstein 32). In literary theory there is a move to "consider every text to be in the public domain once it is uttered in our common language" (Clayton and Rothstein 16-17). Unamuno acknowledged the assimilation of earlier writing on the reader and went so far as to say that what is read becomes, in effect, the possession of both the writer and the reader. Referring to the interplay between himself and his readership, he maintained that "if you translate it into your own thinking – if we succeed in understanding each other, in jointly taking each other's meaning – do I not thereby enter into your most intimate thought at the same time as you enter into mine, so that neither thought is really either yours or mine but common to us both?" (*Obras completas* 10 911-12). In a later work he attempted to persuade his reader that once made public, no thought is the sole property of anyone else – it becomes part of the memory and knowledge of anyone who hears it, and that, in theory, this even rules out plagiarism: "Why that irritation when we think that someone has stolen a sentence or a thought or an image we had believed was ours, when we think we have been plagiarized? Stealing? It is surely not ours once we have made it public?" (*Obras completas* 16 182).

department store" (Aldridge, *Comparative Literature* 1), this thesis does its trading in both Russia and Spain to find the effects described above.

There is another element in the study of the impact of one literature and culture on another which may be relevant. Homi K. Bhabha refers to the self-recognition a community or social group can experience on reading in the literature of another culture about the conflicts and issues of that culture, even of another time, which are essentially similar and which therefore justify comparison (5). Examining a work of literature through the prism of a different context and even of a different culture, therefore, can make the new situation better understood.

Indeed, one method comparatists have found of complementing influence studies has been an analysis of literary analogies, examining "parallel situations and developments", "literary similarities and identities in different ethnic and cultural settings": different peoples may, "under comparable social circumstances, develop comparable literary moods, types, or genres" because "[s]imilar social conditions can produce similar cultural effects", and the elements taken into account will include "the social climate of cultural groups, the direct contacts between men and books" (Jost 38-40).

The comparatist pursuing this line of reasoning seeks to examine the backgrounds to the authors under comparison, so as to provide a framework or context for assessing the reasons for the reception of one literature by another culture. Henry Gifford maintains that "in order to understand writers it is not enough that you study their own literature", but that a comparative study

should be animated by a sense of the imaginative world in which the living writers move; by a recognition of their problems, of the reasons that impel them to seek out this or that contemporary or predecessor in some other part of the world's literature; and by an eagerness to retrace the steps of their original journey. (13-14)

The act of "retracing the steps" of an author's journey, recreating "the imaginative world" in which the author lived and wrote, has long fascinated literary historians. Charles Bernheimer uses the term "contextualization": "[h]istory, culture, politics, location, gender, sexual orientation, class, race – a reading in the new mode has to try to take as many of these factors as possible into account" ("Introduction" 7-8; emphasis added). He continues:

One of the major tasks facing literary scholars today is a renewed articulation of the value of literature that respects both its individual, subjective aspects [...] and its social and political implications and imbrications. [...] Comparatists are best equipped to undertake this important task because of the breadth of their knowledge of literature's construction and function in different cultures. ("Introduction" 16)

The comparatist, therefore, may have to become acquainted, not only with the literary world – works, writers, genres, movements – associated with the nations under consideration, but also become familiar with cultural domains other than literature – painting, music, sociology, linguistics – in order to provide a thorough comparative study. In addition, the comparatist must be prepared, if necessary, to draw on other disciplines: Jost states that the comparatist's field "touches upon philosophy, religion, psychology, sociology, history, and political science, though his efforts are centred on literary works" (38). It is true to say that "[c]omparative literary studies are indeed a house with many mansions" (Praver 166).

We may recall Aldridge's reference to the literary "department store" with its selection of wares. Aldridge further comments that

[t]orn from their context, and looked at as separate entities existing by themselves, the different national portions of modern literature are inexplicable. Only in relation to each other can their tonality and definition be properly assessed. But the more carefully one regards the whole body of modern literature, the more that too appears a mere part of a larger whole. (*Comparative Literature* 12).

Regarding a nation's literature in the context of its relationship to other literatures and disciplines, being aware of its role in a "larger whole", provides a fuller understanding

of that literature: without the full picture, aspects of a national literature will remain "inexplicable". Thinking again of the literary department store, it is difficult to resist visiting a department which borders or connects with our special interest. In the context of this thesis, the special links between Russia and Spain in the 1930s – seeing them as part of a larger whole – have made their literary connections worth pursuing. In the course of the thesis, we will establish that an understanding of Spanish writing in the 1930s, for example, is incomplete without a serious consideration of the contribution and impact of Russia.

Prawer explains that, in comparing literatures, fundamental questions must be asked, such as "Which were the periods that saw especially intensive literary relations between two given countries?" and "What were the factors – cultural, social, political, economic – which facilitated relations of this kind?", as well as "What is it that the reading public, and the authors of a given country sought and found in the foreign literature they welcomed?" (27). In this thesis, therefore, it has been necessary to re-create the world in which the Spanish pre-Civil War writers who became committed Marxists worked. Prawer's questions are more specifically expressed in this way: given that the period that saw "especially intensive literary relations" between Russia and Spain was the pre-Civil War decade, what were the factors which facilitated this special, intense relationship? What did the Spanish pre-Civil War reading public, and the authors who had acquired a keen political and social conscience during that period, seek – and find – in the Russian literature they read? This thesis confines its study to the genres of poetry and novel, but it takes into consideration literary movements, works and authors. It also makes reference to political ideology and historical events, as well as to religious and philosophical issues. Further, it completes its re-creation of the Spanish writers' world by asking which

Russian works and authors they read, and, of these, from which they appeared to have derived enjoyment and enlightenment.

This study examines the similarity of social conditions which facilitated the reception of Russian literature and culture by Spain in the pre-Civil War years, a similarity which gave rise to comparable literary effects. It is, therefore, a study of analogy. Further, it takes into consideration that there may have been a process of self-recognition involved in the reception of Russian literature and culture in pre-Civil War Spain. As if to support the fact that the output of writers is certain to contain evidence of their own reading, some writers have acknowledged awareness of earlier writing and have made deliberate allusion to predecessors' works, using appropriation as a form of dialogue or communication with other writers and literatures. Such communication is not necessarily confined by geographical and linguistic boundaries.

Gifford considers that the most useful comparisons

are those that writers themselves have – those that spring from the 'shock of recognition' where one writer has become conscious that an affinity exists between another and himself. Henry James felt this about Turgenev, Pound felt it about Propertius, Pushkin about Byron. (73)

Such authors are ready "to make direct contact with another's work, and to allow it to affect his own literary creations" (Praver 31).⁶ This phenomenon may occur between groups of writers (commonly called "generations"), or between other groupings of literature, as well as between individuals. Consequently, in order to re-create the "imaginative world" of the writers with whom he is concerned, the comparatist is

⁶ Such connections may not always be based on a feeling of kinship, but, rather, on "fascinated hostility – feelings which also play their part in determining the reception of a given author's work in a country other than his own" (Praver 31): as Bloom would term it, the anxiety of influence.

compelled to "look abroad and to live in more than one culture" and "retrace the steps of [the authors'] original journey" in the processes of creation (Gifford 13,14).

Examining the Spanish works produced in the pre-Civil War period for evidence of the assimilation of Russian elements – that is, looking at Russian literature through the prism of a different context and culture – should, arguably, enhance the understanding of Russian literature. Further, finding in pre-Civil War Spanish literature significant evidence of the "transformation" of Russian and early Soviet literary and cultural elements should serve to enrich the perception of, and appreciation for, that period of literary history.

This thesis began with a survey of the introduction of Russian literature into Spain and of the period of greatest dissemination of Russian literature in that country, in the 1920s and 30s, from which certain questions are raised. The questions raised are contextual. The task of the remainder of Part 1 of this thesis, therefore, is to contextualize the comparative study which comprises Part 2 of the thesis.

During the 1920s and 30s there were specific factors which influenced the reception of Russian literature. It is clear that one of these factors was the social and political atmosphere in which Russia came to have an impact on Spain and its writers. This must include some consideration of ideological issues and connections between the two countries. The thesis first describes, therefore, the historical context within which Russia may be said to have had an impact on Spanish pre-Civil War writing. It asks what were the political and social conditions in Spain which encouraged such an increase of interest in Russia at that time. Without a doubt, the Russian Revolution accounts for the more accelerated influx of Russian literary works into Spain from 1919: both sympathetic fascination and sheer curiosity were at play in that country, as

they were throughout Europe. But what caused that influx to peak at the turn of the 1930s?

Bearing in mind the ultimate objective of this thesis – to show the impact of Russia's ideology and literature on the writing of certain Spanish writers of the 1920s and 30s – Part 1 of this thesis continues by describing the historical context which facilitated the reception of Russian literature in Spain in the pre-Civil War period. Next, it examines the literary atmosphere in Spain which gave rise to the writing of the authors under examination later in the thesis and, finally, determines which Russian authors and works, according to the publication statistics, were of particular interest in Spain throughout the 1920s and 30s. Sections 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4, which follow, address each of these questions in turn.

1.2 The Historical Context: the Impact of the Russian Revolution in the Insurgent Atmosphere of Pre-Civil War Spain

In October 1917 the first socialist government in man's history came into being. Bolshevik victory in the Great October Socialist Revolution¹ shattered the Russian *status quo* and resulted in the apparent satisfaction of the people's desperate demands for bread, land and peace. Outside Russia, the Revolution was seen by fellow Marxists and sympathizers as fulfilment of the promise of the end of the greed and exploitation, and the last nail in the coffin of the unjust empires and cruel wars which epitomized capitalism.

Russian Bolsheviks confidently expected that revolution would spread worldwide, starting with Europe. Socialists in Germany and Hungary soon attempted their own revolutions, but neither prevailed. It would be in Spain – albeit twenty years later – that the battle between political right and left next became most ardent and violent, and where socialists, communists and anarchists from all over the world would fight a most bitter civil war in pursuit of their beliefs and aspirations.² The victory of the Russian Revolution fanned the flames of interest that had been growing in the ideologies infiltrating Spain from the West for the previous fifty years. Throughout the period leading up to this Civil War (1936-1939), when left-

¹ Until February 1918 Russia adhered to the Julian calendar, which ran thirteen days behind the Western (Gregorian) calendar. The Soviet government adopted the Western calendar on 31 January 1918, and declared the next day to be 14 February. The "October" Revolution, therefore, took place on 6 – 7 November 1917, according to the Western calendar.

² This thesis does not intend to imply that the Spanish Civil War occurred as a direct consequence of events in Russia in the first decades of the twentieth century, but, as it simply states, that the struggles between political left and right, which had ignited earlier in other parts of Europe, next came to the fore and reached a bloody peak in Civil War in 1930s' Spain.

wing factions were at their most vigorous and vocal, Spain, therefore, was perhaps foremost among those nations keenly watching the progress of the revolution in Russia. Among those most fervently inspired and vocal were Spain's Marxist writers, who were encouraged, not only by the success of the Bolsheviks, but also by the example set by their Russian counterparts.

This chapter aims to examine the impact on Spain of the Russian Revolution, highlighting, in the process, those elements of the historical situation in Russia which bear comparison with what subsequently happened in Spain. Its purpose is to set the historical context within which Russian literature was received in Spain in the 1920s and 30s and its influence on Spanish pre-Civil War writing.

Few events have excited the use of superlatives more than the Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917. Indeed, it has been said that it "was, and is, a huge influence on world civilisation (*sic*)", that the "whole rhythm of life completely changed", and that "a whole new range of human experience began" (Ershov and Kuz'michev 7). It is also said to have been "one of the biggest events in the history of the world", not least because, before long, one third of the world's population would be living under regimes inspired by and modelled upon it (Figs xvii).

The pride the Soviets felt over the victory of 1917 and over their achievements in the course of the next two decades, was fitting because the Russian Revolution did, indeed, change the course of world history and brought about radical material and spiritual changes and improvements in Russia. It succeeded in dismantling an empire covering one-sixth of the earth's surface – and then reconstructing it (Figs xvii). With the Russian Revolution, the "whole edifice of the old regime, undermined by war, weakened by ramshackle organisation, sapped by rampant inflation and riddled with injustice, fell to the ground" (Brendon 9). In

Spain, it was considered that the Russian Revolution was "something great and surprising, the immediate consequences of which leave the most sceptical amazed and will change the way in which human society will run."³

Pre-revolutionary Russia is perceived by many as a land of emperors and serfs. Many have gained the impression that there was discontent and uprising among the "human ocean of destitute and desperate peasants" (Riasanovsky 405) because of their downtrodden lives. In fact, the Russian peasantry had a history of extreme tolerance: the lower classes adored their Tsars and trusted them. The last Tsar, Nicholas II, was the most powerful monarch in Europe with dominion over one hundred and seventy million people, and claimed to be answerable only to God.

Interestingly, discontent and uprising took place, first, among the educated, privileged classes – the *intelligentsia*. The term *intelligentsia*, coined in Russia in the nineteenth century and described as "the largest single Russian contribution to social change in the world" (Berlin 116), embraced the progressive and enlightened members of the educated classes who, as a result of relative wealth and education, were able to travel and thus to compare social conditions in Russia with the situation in other countries – and found Russia wanting. In 1825 the so-called Decembrist Revolt had signalled one of the earliest manifestations of the frustration of the Russian intelligentsia. During the nineteenth century Russian *intelligents* (members of the intelligentsia) were united in their belief that Russia was ripe for social change, even though their ideas for reform differed. Unquestionably, most would

³ A. Fabra Ribas. "La Revolución rusa. Un acontecimiento que puede transformar al mundo" ("The Russian Revolution. An Event which Can Transform the World"). *La Internacional* I, 1 (18 October 1919): 8. It is only fair to point out that the open support of the newspaper *La Internacional* for the Bolsheviks does not reflect the standpoint of all Spaniards, neither does it reflect the standpoint, at that time, of all liberals and leftists.

argue, Russian socialism grew out of the deep concerns of the intelligentsia, just as, in Spain, the mass of downtrodden working classes notwithstanding, the first to be attracted to revolutionary thought infiltrating Spain from the West were the educated classes.

It was in the claustrophobic atmosphere of the reign of Tsar Nicholas I that radical political theories developed in Russia.⁴ However, the censorship he imposed, and the restrictions he imposed on free thought, only made intellectuals more inclined to use the written media. It is interesting to note that writers were frequently at the forefront of the unrest and often suffered for their political activities, a situation which was repeated in pre-Civil War Spain, for example. The successor to Nicholas I, Alexander II, however, was a reforming tsar,⁵ but intellectuals recognized the superficial and often misleading nature of these reforms and their dissatisfaction continued to smoulder.⁶

The turn of the twentieth century saw no lessening in revolutionary activity in Russia. It intensified, and culminated in the Russian Revolution. How should the Russian Revolution be defined? Was it simply and solely the events of 24 – 25 October 1917? It is important to establish this before attempting an analysis of its impact since, first, rarely do revolutions or coups occur out-of-the-blue, and, second,

⁴ He came to power at the time of the Decembrist Revolt and in the course of his thirty-year reign revolutionary currents flowed throughout Europe. One of the measures he took to ward off revolution in his own country was to institute a special police organisation of secret agents and uniformed gendarmerie (The Third Section), which gave his rule the air of a quasi-military dictatorship.

⁵ Notably, the famed Emancipation of the Serfs (1861) took place in his reign. Reforms notwithstanding, Alexander II was assassinated in March 1881 by a group of zealots who preferred terrorists' methods of achieving change.

⁶ In 1874, hundreds of young socialists, Populists (*narodniki*), took their gospel to the people, but found that the peasantry was indifferent. The latter's love and fear of the Tsar was deep-seated, and, besides, the *status quo* was the devil they knew, and they were resigned to it.

the same phenomenon was to occur in Spain of the 1920s and 30s as in pre-1917 Russia – the activity and upheaval leading up to a climactic revolutionary event (be it the Russian Revolution or the coup of July 1936 in Spain) is frequently as revealing and enlightening as the event itself.

In fact, it was during the opening years of the twentieth century that the first blood of the "red" revolution was shed. On 4 March 1901 thousands of students, bourgeois liberals and future leaders of the revolutionary movement met in demonstration in front of the Kazan Cathedral, St Petersburg,⁷ among them the writer Maxim Gorky. The year 1904 saw general discontent in the country, with an air of "nervous suspense" prevailing among the intelligentsia and the middle class (Slonim 154). Discontent had been fuelled by involvement in a war with Japan (1904-05) which was disastrous for Russia. At home, the uprisings continued, reaching a new peak in 1905.

Matters came to a head with the Bloody Sunday debacle, on 9 January 1905, when 150,000 men, women and children marched to the Winter Palace in St Petersburg and were fired on by waiting police, resulting in hundreds being killed and many more injured. That night, Gorky wrote to his wife: "And so, my friend, the Russian Revolution has begun [...] People have died, but [...] only blood can change the colour of history."⁸ October 1905 brought a general strike and political chaos. The events of 1905, though abortive, were a landmark in Russian revolutionary history and were, in effect, a dress rehearsal for what happened in 1917. In the years following the 1905 massacre, demonstrations and uprisings became even more

⁷ On that occasion, the demonstrators waved red flags, sang the Marseillaise and listened to Gorky speak out against the conscription of students.

⁸ Gorky, M. "Pis'ma k E. P. Peshkovoï, 1895-1926" ("Letters to E. R. Peshkova"). *Arkhiv A. M. Gor'kogo* vol. 5 (Moscow: Moslit, 1955). 148.

furious: people of all kinds and from all groups – the masses – showed their indignation in strikes, and even the armed forces were moved to revolt. The involvement of Russia in the First World War became another enormous public issue. The nation suffered numerically greater losses and casualties than any other of the participating nations, and soldiers in droves were deserting, dispirited and exhausted. Suffering was not confined to the military: at home, food and fuel were in inadequate supply. The disillusionment of the people was aggravated by the inability, or seeming unwillingness, of the Tsar to understand his subjects' distress.

In February 1917 a "Provisional Government" was declared when Tsar Nicholas II renounced the throne on behalf of himself and his son.⁹ This February Revolution was relatively bloodless and produced a sense of euphoria. The poet Aleksandr Blok wrote that he felt a miracle had happened and that "we may expect more miracles [...] almost anything might happen."¹⁰ In spite of the relative ease with which the February Revolution was accomplished, the Provisional Government experienced considerable confusion for some months until Aleksandr Kerenskii, who became Minister of War in May, came to dominate it and in July became Prime Minister. Kerenskii brought a certain amount of cohesion, but other forces were at work which capitalized on the vulnerabilities of the Provisional Government. The Great October Socialist Revolution which followed occurred mainly through the machinations of Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, its architect. On returning to Russia in 1917 from exile in Europe, he quickly observed that although Kerenskii was the hero of

⁹ The Tsar and his immediate family would be executed on 16-17 July 1918 at Ekaterinburg.

¹⁰ Pyman, A. *The Life of Alexander Blok*. Vol. 2. Oxford: OUP, 1980. 243, 247.

the hour, the soviet (*soviet*) councils were the great hope.¹¹ Lenin declared himself the champion of the Russian people and the role model for revolutionaries abroad.

The seizing of power by the Bolsheviks in October 1917 is an event which has been much embellished with the passage of time, thanks largely to the film *Oktiabr'* (*October*) by Sergei Eisenstein,¹² which is a dramatic and rousing reconstruction of the critical period between the February and October Revolutions of 1917. In reality, the storming of the Winter Palace, so dramatically portrayed in the film, was a relatively civilized affair, and, in contrast to the hordes of revolutionaries seen in the film, only a handful participated in the action. What is regarded as one of the most significant single events, certainly of the twentieth century, if not of all history, was scarcely more than a small-scale military coup. The Great October Socialist Revolution was, in truth, a catalogue of ludicrous errors: the battleship *Avrora* (*Aurora*), famed for sounding the first shot of the Revolution, arrived late and, ominously perhaps, fired blanks; the Winter Palace in St Petersburg should have been bombarded by the field guns of the Peter and Paul Fortress, but these were found to be rusty museum pieces which could not be fired; and the uprising went unnoticed by the majority of inhabitants of the city, even in the workers' districts. What had occurred, however, was the inauguration of the world's first communist government.

¹¹ The first *soviet* (soviet) had been formed in the textile city of Ivanovo-Voznesensk, following a general strike there in May 1905. The system acted as both strike committee and temporary local government assembly and consisted of delegates from the individual textile mills who represented the workers in negotiations with both the employers and the government. The workers elected their delegates, and could recall and replace delegates if necessary, and anyone had the right to attend the soviet's debates. The pioneer soviet was so successful that similar soviets quickly sprang up all over Russia. The system fell out of general usage until the old régime ended in 1917, when the workers revived it. At that time, the dominant soviet was that based in Petrograd (St Petersburg).

¹² *Oktiabr'*. Dir. Sergei Eisenstein and Grigori Aleksandrov. Perf. Vasili Nikandrov. Sovkino, 1928.

Lenin's successor, Stalin,¹³ succeeded in consolidating the power of the Bolsheviks and undoubtedly brought benefits to the people. Literacy vastly increased, jobs were created and the people in general felt enthusiastic about the task of building a new society. But the successes of the Soviet regime came at great cost: the institution of collectivization resulted in the deaths of untold millions of people, and Stalin's paranoid purge on all alleged enemies, spies and saboteurs in the late 1930s led to the expulsion, and, in many cases, death of hundreds of thousands of Party members, many ending up in the *Gulag*.¹⁴ The poet Anna Akhmatova aptly described those years in this way: "Madness has already covered half of my soul with its wing, and gives to drink of a fiery wine and beckons into the dark valley".¹⁵

Abroad, the Soviet Union was seen by like-minded outsiders as representing the future, and did much to hearten those disillusioned by what they saw as the failures of previous generations, as typified by the First World War and the Great Depression.¹⁶ In spite of the fact that the success of the Russian Revolution did not lead to international revolution, and in this sense failed to live up to the aspirations of pure socialism, communism, nevertheless, would continue for some decades more, marked by popular hopes and painful realities. In the meantime, socialists and those with left-wing political tendencies throughout Europe had been inspired by the revolution and set out on their own paths to liberation.

¹³ Lenin died in 1924.

¹⁴ An acronym for Chief Administration of Corrective Labour Camps. Life in such camps was frankly described by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, a former inmate, in such works as *Odin den' Ivana Denisovicha* (*A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*).

¹⁵ Anna Akhmatova. *Stikhi i proza (Poetry and Prose)*. Vostochno-Sibirskoe knizhnoe izd., 1992. 188.

¹⁶ In 1929 the economic crash of Wall Street fractured the brittle gaiety of the post-war world. The subsequent Great (economic) Depression hit both North America and Europe in the 1930s.

The Revolution, to interested and sympathetic observers, incorporated the gradual progress toward revolution – including the uprisings of 1901, 1905 and February 1917 – followed by the ultimate securing and consolidation of power. Consolidation, in Russia, came in the form of a Civil War, shortly after the 1917 Revolution, and the period of economic, philosophical and cultural adjustment to the new regime. Thus, the Russian Revolution lasted from the earliest years of the twentieth century until the turn of the 1930s.

Once power had been secured by the Soviets, the USSR¹⁷ became a showcase for those who longed for the success of socialism. Fellow Marxists and sympathizers abroad had seen Bolshevik victory as a portent of the end of the capitalist system, with its attendant injustices and exploitation. Indeed, the Bolsheviks were initially convinced that their victory would lead to world revolution. George Bernard Shaw, the Irish playwright, famously visited Russia for one month in 1931 and returned waxing lyrical about the accomplishments of the communist government, accomplishments that were not being achieved in the Capitalist West.

What were the repercussions of the phenomenon of the Russian Revolution in Spain? In countries like Spain, where in the 1920s and 1930s the economy was visibly struggling and the political situation was gradually becoming more inflammatory,¹⁸ the notion of revolution became popular with those who were disillusioned with their own system and were excited about the things being

¹⁷ The new state became the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in December 1922, so called because it joined its autonomous regions into a single union.

¹⁸ As noted on page 20 of this thesis, the political situation was intensifying from the beginning of the 1920s onwards, due, amongst other factors, to the difficulties in the economic situation, the plight of the peasant and working classes, what was considered to be the futility of the military campaign in Morocco and the tough stance taken by Primo de Rivera.

accomplished in the USSR.¹⁹ Among the visitors to the newly-founded Soviet Union were admiring Spaniards. In the 1920s and 30s, several books and articles were published in Spain recording impressions the country had made on its observers.²⁰ Spaniards had their own valid and pressing reasons for wanting change,²¹ and those with politically left-wing inclinations were encouraged by the triumph of the Russian Revolution and the observed success of the Soviet state. The multitude of leftist papers and journals of that era reflected their hopes and expectations, as shown in an earlier section of this thesis. As cited in an earlier chapter, in March 1936, four months before the start of the Spanish Civil War, journalist Luis Araquistain suggested in his journal *Leviatán* that Spain was poised to become the second country in the world where socialism triumphed.²² The poet Rafael Alberti's journal *Octubre* (published between 1933 and 1934) was deeply committed to the Marxist cause, as shown in the advance issue, in which Xavier Abril claimed that the "only homeland of the world proletariat" was the Soviet Union, that the name which symbolized their revolutionary heritage was Lenin, and that the date around which all this revolved was October.²³

¹⁹ It should be noted that in 1930s' Spain there were options other than Marxist communism for those with radical aspirations, and, indeed, communism was not the most popular choice for a radical in Spain. The evolution of the left-wing alternatives in Spain are considered in due course.

²⁰ Among these were writers such as Ramón J. Sender and Rafael Alberti, who are featured in following chapters. See also p. 16, fn. 33 of this thesis.

²¹ See note 18.

²² "Paralelo histórico entre la revolución rusa y la española" ("Historical Parallel between the Russian and Spanish Revolutions"). *Leviatán* 22 (1 March 1936): 15-33.

²³ "Nuestro saludo al proletariado en el 1. de mayo" ("Our Greeting to the Proletariat on 1 May"). *Octubre* advance issue (1 May 1933): 1. In addition to these aspirations, those who visited the Soviet Union often returned to Spain with even higher expectations. F. V. Kel'in reports that as a result of his visit to the USSR in 1937, writer José Bergamín said: "I can only say that I want the same kind of

We should appreciate, however, that, whereas to sympathizers communism was "a genial ghost of hope", to others it was "a monstrous apparition of despair" (Brendon 12).²⁴ Anti-Bolshevik reaction spread throughout Europe and formed the basis for political conflagration in the 1930s, not least in Spain, where political left and right became polarized to the extent of fighting a bitter conflict in the Spanish Civil War. The years leading up to that war saw heated and sometimes violent antagonism between political left and right. Spanish journalist Antonio Espina commented that the thirtieth year in a century in the modern age often seems to be a watershed in the cultivation of ideas, citing as examples the dates 1530 (the Reformation), 1630 (French Neoclassicism), 1730 (Rationalism and the nurturing of the French Revolution), 1830 (Romanticism).²⁵ The 1930s in Spain appears to have fallen into this pattern.

The culmination of the conflict in Spain, the Civil War, furnished the more enthusiastic of the leftist revolutionaries of the world with an opportunity to join in the fight against the enemy since it was considered to be "the class war played out on an international scale" (Spender, *The Thirties* 82). The troubles in Spain seemed to epitomize the struggle against fascism: it was considered to be "history in the making" (Glicksberg 269). The English writer Stephen Spender explained that

within a few weeks Spain had become the symbol of hope for all anti-Fascists. It offered the twentieth century an 1848: that is to say, time and place where a cause representing a greater degree of freedom and justice than a reactionary opposing one, gained victories. It became possible to see the Fascist – anti-Fascist struggle as

constitution for Spain that you have here in the USSR. It is for just such a constitution that my people should fight" (*Internatsional'naiia literatura* 11 [1942]: 129).

²⁴ The fascist movement, in particular, grew largely out of opposition to communism. Fascism stood for the belief in the common bond of nationhood, a reassuring sense of unity for people alarmed by the communist threat, under the guardianship of a charismatic leader.

²⁵ See his article "Circular sobre *Nueva España*" in *El Sol* (January 1930).

a real conflict of ideas, and not just as the seizure of power by dictators from weak opponents. (*World within World* 187)

The "nightmarish" rise of fascism in Germany (Spender, *World within World* 188), gave that generation a feeling of impotence which was relieved, to a large extent, by the opportunity afforded by the conflict in Spain because it seemed that here, at last, was a way of standing up to be counted, with the real possibility of effecting change.²⁶

The Spanish Civil War, therefore, "seemed to crystallize the universal opposition between bosses and workers, between Church and State, between obscurantism and enlightenment" (Brendon 307). Jason Gurney, from Great Britain, said that in his case, and that of others like him in the International Brigades, the Spanish Civil War "became the great symbol of the struggle between Democracy and Fascism everywhere" (18).²⁷ Communist Lise London, wife of once-denounced Czech communist Arthur London, has said that it was in Spain "when, for the first time, we had the enemy right in front of us" and "that the battle in Spain was a battle for all Europe."²⁸

²⁶ As the 1930s progressed, organizations such as Liga Atea Revolucionaria and Asociación de Amigos de la Unión Soviética made an appearance in Spain. The Communist Party had its own daily newspaper in Spain, *Mundo Obrero*.

²⁷ The sense that Spain's cause was also Democracy's cause – the people's cause – roused volunteers from various classes and nations to rush to Spain's defence. Most of the Brigade members were ordinary working people from such places as the Bronx (USA), Glasgow, Liverpool and South Wales (Great Britain). One of them recalls: "Of the 40,000 men from all over the world who fought in the International Brigades, about one-third were killed and a great number were permanently injured. The vast majority of them went to Spain of their own free will to fight for what they believed to be a moral principle. They were offered no reward other than the satisfaction of their own principles, and they suffered horribly" (Gurney 13).

²⁸ Alameda, Sol. "Lise London. La comunista crítica" ("Lise London. The Critical Communist"). *El País Semanal* 1239 (Sunday 25 June 2000): 18.

Nevertheless, it would be misleading to place the Spanish Civil War solely in the context of either the Soviet Union's world revolution, or the antifascist movement. Spain had its own axe to grind and its own ghosts to exorcize, and, to a large extent, foreigners saw what they wanted to see in the Spanish conflict. In the opinion of one historian in 1937, "many a self-confident observer of the present civil war has come back full of horror about aimless cruelty and unconstructive slaughter, forgetting that our aims may not be their aims, our values not their values" (Borkenau, *Spanish Cockpit* 5).²⁹ Nevertheless, in a sense, the Spanish situation reflected the worldwide struggle against fascism, and those who took up arms, be it the sword or the pen, against the rise of fascism in Spain tended to see their own conflict mirrored in the context of the antifascist movement worldwide.

With regard to the impact of the Russian Revolution in particular, the passion of revolutionary activity in Spain in the 1930s cannot be attributed exclusively to the success of either Lenin's aspiration to convert the world or Stalin's boastful demonstrations of the Soviet Union's accomplishments.³⁰ However, it is true to say that the spirit of Marxism, as propagated by the Soviets abroad, seeped into the minds and hearts of certain members of the Spanish left.³¹ Among their number were those writers who are the subject of study later in this thesis. In that context, the evolution

²⁹ David Cattell comments that placing the Spanish situation in an international setting had advantages for some. He reasons that labelling the opposing Spanish sides as Reds or Fascists helped Spaniards to reconcile themselves to killing each other, believing that they were saving the human race from the menace of communism or fascism. Additionally, it attracted allies, as appropriate, from abroad. See page 1 of his book *Communism and the Spanish Civil War*.

³⁰ It is worth noting that, although uniquely Spanish issues provoked the struggles of the 1920s and 30s, Soviet backing certainly fuelled the ensuing conflagration in 1936.

³¹ It should be noted again that communism was not the most popular choice for a radical in Spain. The evolution of communism and the left-wing alternatives in Spain are considered in due course.

of the political unrest in Spain in the 1920s and 30s should now be considered and contrasted with the progress of the revolution in Russia two or three decades earlier.

Spain's history had been dominated for centuries by the interplay of the army, the church and the monarchy, all of which had lost face by the end of the nineteenth century. As in Russia, initially the most receptive of the Spanish people were the educated classes. Significantly, there was one class which, for some time, was relatively unmoved by political ideology. This was the mass of farmers, peasants and factory workers – equivalent to what we saw had been termed the "human ocean of destitute and desperate peasants" of Russia (Riasanovsky 405) - whose preoccupations were basic rather than political: the need for work and food. Whereas in Russia the working and peasant classes were accustomed to blind faith in their Tsar, in Spain, by the end of the nineteenth century, the people in general had learned to remain as detached from the murky world of politics as possible for a different reason since it was deemed better "to put up with wrongs and injustices of every kind than to risk worse things by protesting" (Brenan 8).

The same may be said for Spain as for Russia: those hoping to effect change through revolution needed to gain the support of the dormant masses. With the army, monarchy and, especially, the church devalued in the estimation of the people, Spain was effectively in search of a new ideology, a "new idea, an incitement to common action", which would activate Spain as a force in the modern world (Brenan 14-15). Republicanism, along with the socialist and anarchist movements, and even the ideology which led to fascism, were the expressions of that incitement. This calls to mind the words of R. N. Carew Hunt, who explains that communism has the value of a religion "in so far as it is felt to provide a complete explanation of reality and of man as part of reality, and at the same time to give to life, as does religion, a sense of purpose", and that it has, therefore, "filled the vacuum created by the breakdown of

organized religion" (29-30). It will be shown in later pages that, in fact, overall, anarchism excited Spaniards more than did communism (Brendon 309).³² This does not negate the effect that communism had on its recruits, albeit fewer in number, however.

In Spain, as in other nations with substantial leftist presence, the attraction to, and eager acceptance of, the revolutionary political ideologies began to develop and flourish in the late nineteenth century among certain sectors of society. Most significant of these were the socialist theories of the Germans Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, and of the Russian Mikhail Bakunin, the founding father of anarchism.³³ It is no exaggeration to say that the philosophical thought of Marx gave rise to "the largest mass movement since the rise of Christianity" and "the greatest subversive force in the modern world" (Carew Hunt 26), and won supporters on an increasing scale in Spain in the 1920s and 30s. According to Marxist theory, communism was the advanced stage, the ultimate goal, of socialism, and would only be achieved when government was decentralized, the market system was abolished, and boundaries (and, therefore, national governments) were eliminated (thus removing the cause of war). It was an impressive utopian vision and goal. What Marx more realistically envisaged for society, certainly in the short term, however, was socialism, which would re-educate people used to capitalist modes of thinking, so that they could understand how communism functioned. The transitional period

³² See page 69 onwards of this thesis where the impact of anarchism is clearly shown.

³³ Other significant contributions to late nineteenth-century social and political debate, and which found an audience in Spain, included Social Darwinism, the philosophy of Freud, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Bergson and Kierkegaard. *Krausismo* had almost unprecedented success in Spain. Based on the theories of Christian F. Krause, a German thinker, it entered Spain with the encouragement of Sanz del Río and Francisco Giner in the late 1800s. Krausists rejected the Catholic Church and promoted the beauty of life and social progress.

between the annihilation of capitalism and the establishment of a communist society would be called the dictatorship of the proletariat. During this period, under a socialist system, factories, farms, mines, transport systems, and other means of production would be privatized and brought under the control of the workers, since political equality could only be achieved through economic equality. Workers would receive wages, but health services, education and housing would be free. Marx did not see this process as instantly attainable: his argument was that socialism, and ultimately communism, could only be achieved in a developed nation, where capitalism, having had opportunity to reach its peak, would afford the revolution immediate access to maximum effect.

Marx did not live to see the execution of socialist revolution and institution of the first socialist state, yet the triumph of the Bolsheviks was seen as the triumph of Marxist socialism. In reality, the socialist revolution first succeeded in a nation generally considered to be backward compared with the rest of Europe, and Marx and Engels, revered as they were in Soviet Russia, would have been surprised at the paradox. No more impressive confirmation of an ideological theory could be asked for.

The Communist Party was initiated in Spain in 1921, but the Party during that decade was "so insignificant that Primo de Rivera did not bother to suppress the Communist [press]" (Cattell, *Communism* 20).³⁴ The Soviet state was not acknowledged officially by Spain until the Second Republic in 1931.³⁵ In the June elections of that year the Communist Party put up just eleven candidates; none were elected and the Party attracted only sixty thousand votes in all Spain. In 1933 one

³⁴ Its founder members included Andrés Nin and Joaquín Maurín.

³⁵ Eventually, ambassadors were appointed: Julio Álvarez del Vayo became Ambassador to Moscow, and Lunacharsky was appointed Soviet Ambassador to Madrid.

deputy was elected to the Cortes, the number voting being forty thousand. In late 1934 the Party had only twenty thousand members, and by February 1936 just thirty five thousand.³⁶ News of the 1930s' purges in Soviet Russia did not help matters. Nevertheless, as Víctor Fuentes points out, the fact that communism attracted significant members of the nucleus of the Spanish literary world of those times outweighs the fact that communism itself, overall, attracted few ("La novela social española" 4). Those who were attracted saw in the "unsettled conditions and extreme poverty and repression of the masses" a situation "similar to Russia in pre-Revolutionary days" (Cattell, *Communism* 23).

The anarchist movement progressed somewhat differently in Spain, having the benefit of considerable presence among the Spanish working classes from the end of the nineteenth century.³⁷ The motivational force of European Anarchism was the Russian, Bakunin. Bakunin's idea was that, as man is essentially a social creature, the most suitable human society was a small community of people, a free society, and his ideal was based on the peasant communities of Russia. Revolution could only occur, in his view, when the people became fully aware of the hateful conditions in which they live and work. When the people were persuaded there was

³⁶ Compared with a total of eight million voters, these numbers were few. See Guy Hermet's *Les Communistes en Espagne (The Communists in Spain)* (Paris: A. Colin, 1971) for the history of the Communist Party in Spain (Spanish version *Los comunistas en España*. Paris: Ruedo ibérico, 1972). Those who became Marxists often became politically enlightened during visits abroad, but they were few in number.

³⁷ The origins of anarchism lie in the thinking of William Godwin (1756-1836), Max Stirner and Pierre Joseph Proudhon (1809-65). Godwin's *Political Thought* (1795) had expounded the idea that if the State were abolished men would rely on the innate principles of right reason. Stirner, a precursor of Nietzsche, believed in the absolute sovereignty of the individual and argued that, once freed of the control of abstract ideas, man would find freedom within himself. Proudhon was opposed to any form of coercion; he believed that de-centralized communities of people that were free and self-governing should replace the State.

hope of change; and when the people had a clear vision of the society they needed in order to liberate them from their unfavourable conditions.³⁸ Bakunin's ideas were especially appropriate for dissemination in Spain.

Bakunin's theories relied on "the poor peasantry and town workers in countries such as Italy, Russia and Spain, where industrial development was still very primitive. They alone would have sufficient spirit for revolutionary action" (Brenan 136). He considered that Marxism, better suited to the great industrial countries of Northern Europe, would always leave a way for the infiltration of bourgeois attitudes and ways of life. His belief that revolution among the proletariat of the progressive nations "had withered down to a merely political principle" caused him to consider that true revolutionaries were to be found in those nations "where the people held freedom higher than wealth, where they were not yet imbued with the capitalist spirit", and he regarded "particularly his own people, the Russians, and, to a still higher degree, the Spaniards" as potentially the true revolutionaries (Borkenau, *Spanish Cockpit* 19). Cattell comments that the Spaniards' "quick Latin anger, which often led to bloodshed", their "revulsion against the excesses of the State and the landowners" and their religious zeal found realization "in the violence and utopianism of anarchism" (*Communism* 7).

Anarchism "spread through the country like pentecostal fire" (Brendon 309). It arrived in Spain in the 1860s and became a vital factor in political events until the 1930s. Bakunin saw Spain and its masses as ideal territory for the propagation of his ideas. He introduced his political theory into Spain when an Italian engineer,

³⁸ Being exploited and poor is of itself no guarantee of revolution, according to Bakunin, since the downtrodden can fall into resignation and even acceptance of their condition.

Giuseppi Fanelli, was sent to proselytize there.³⁹ Spain was virtually virgin territory for left-wing ideas,⁴⁰ and

[w]ithin the space of less than three months, without knowing a word of Spanish or meeting more than an occasional Spaniard who understood his French or Italian, [Fanelli] had launched a movement that was to endure, with wave-like advances and recessions, for the next seventy years and to affect profoundly the destinies of Spain. [...] Converts were made by the thousand. (Brenan 140)

According to Franz Borkenau's reasoning, the question is prompted: "How could the Spanish workers and peasants have refused to accept the teaching of a man who believed that the specific mentality of the Spanish lower classes ought to be the model of the labour movements of the whole world?" (*Spanish Cockpit* 20). The movement was fired by a strong evangelizing spirit, with its leaders travelling about the country enrolling labourers and workers by alerting them to the injustices they were suffering.⁴¹

Towards the end of the nineteenth century revolutionary activity reached a peak in Spain, when acts of anarchist terrorism became commonplace, principally by means of the bomb. There was a "desire to shake by some violent action the complacency of this huge, inert and stagnant mass of middle-class opinion", and to "shock, to infuriate, to register one's protest became the only thing that any decent or sensitive man could do" (Brenan 162-63). In 1909 another national crisis in Spain

³⁹ The formation of the Anarchist International Social Democratic Alliance in 1868 coincided with revolution in Spain at the ousting of Queen Isabella II, a scenario which provided fertile ground for the introduction of anarchist ideas.

⁴⁰ Except for a fairly strong federal movement, which relied on Proudhon for theory and Francisco Pi y Margall for its execution, and which was not of a revolutionary persuasion. Trade unions were largely ineffectual in spite of the discontent of the working classes and peasants.

⁴¹ In 1872, at a congress of the Anarchist International in Córdoba, the first purely anarchist organization in Spain was voted in, which would be the type of Spanish anarchist movements. The proselytizing work carried out was particularly necessary as those joining the anarchist movement initially were not of the proletariat, and the working classes had to be persuaded to join the cause.

caused the revolutionary movement to step up a gear: Spain's years-long territorial war in Morocco was beginning to flag, and when there was desperate need for new conscripts, Catalans were chosen and all Catalonia rose in protest. A bloodbath, dubbed "Semana Trágica" ("Tragic Week"), resulted.⁴² The creation of the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) (National Workers' Federation) was a consequence of this dramatic time. Around the turn of the century the fusion of anarchism and trade unionism – anarcho-syndicalism – became a force in Spain.⁴³

For Spanish anarchists the Russian Revolution of 1917 provided great incentive. In their own country, the anarcho-syndicalist movement was becoming ever stronger in Catalonia and the incidence of general strikes in smaller towns was increasing. Furthermore, Spanish anarchists who had been persuaded of the vital role they could play in history could not fail to be intensely interested in the events of this year in Russia, and so, indeed, they welcomed the Bolshevik Revolution.⁴⁴ The

⁴² The authorities had to step in to thwart the demonstrations. A scapegoat was subsequently found by the authorities in anarchist educationalist Francisco Ferrer, who was executed, and "the mass movement had found a martyr"; the "hero's legend and the martyr's crown bring recruits in Spain" (Brenan 29, 172).

⁴³ Syndicalism had originated in France with the aim of unifying workers into one body which would interfere in politics insofar as it affected the conditions and rights of the worker, using the strike, violent if necessary, to achieve their ends, but which otherwise was limited to industrial affairs. At the same time, syndicalism was seen as a prototype of a future collectivist society, where trade unions would exercise control. Anarcho-syndicalists considered parliamentary activity a waste of time, opposed centralized direction of the labour movement, and expected to achieve revolution by means of the general strike (a total stoppage of work which would demonstrate the power of the proletariat and paralyse the capitalist class and its government).

⁴⁴ It has been said that the "Soviet tradition itself is near the popular feeling of Spain" (Borkenau, *Spanish Cockpit* 37). Leading anarchists Andrés Nin and Joaquín Maurín, in particular, felt a bond with the Bolsheviks and for a few years stirred up support for them, until the suppression of the Kronstadt sailors in 1921 shook many into taking a more objective stance towards what was happening in Russia. The Bolsheviks were eager for Spanish anarchists to take more assertive action, and for their sympathizers to take control of the CNT, but this was resisted by many in the organisation.

year 1917, the year of the Russian Revolution, was significant in many respects in Spain, too. Spain had its first all-out general strike, initiated by the socialists and backed by anarchists, provoking army intervention and resulting in a bloodbath. The Socialist Party, until 1902, had been relatively diffident and passive, and did not start to take an actively revolutionary stance until the months leading up to the Civil War. In retrospect, it can be said that the 1917 strike in Spain had ignited a fuse of rebellion among the people, and it seemed inevitable to some that a new regime must come. It arrived on 14 April 1931 with the declaration of the Republic, the second in Spain's history.

The Second Republic was voted in almost by default and turned out to be an anticlimax: it experienced difficulties from the start and failed to tackle the issues of concern to the people, including the vexed agrarian question, and, by European standards, Spain in the 1930s continued to be a backward country.⁴⁵ The Second Republic had been hailed by its supporters as a great revolutionary moment but as early as the beginning of 1933 the left was protesting against the tardiness of the Republic in dealing with the important problems, and Spanish anarchists lost patience. In November 1933, the elections brought triumph, this time, to the right, but the new government failed to correct the perceived shortcomings of the Second Republic and this period became known as the *bienio negro* ("black two years").

It was during this period that the Asturian Revolution (October 1934) took place. It inspired and united the left-wing groups to hold out against the government,

⁴⁵ In the 1930s the majority of the population continued to live in rural areas – industrialisation was mainly confined to Cataluña – and, since most of the land was in the control of the minority – the landowners – the peasants which did not leave the villages to work in the factories traditionally worked as day labourers and sharecroppers. Unemployment figures were high and the industrial boom created by Spain's neutral position in the First World War had ended when normal trading gradually re-established itself after that war.

and, although it failed in the military sense, it signalled the revolutionary spirit which was smouldering among the lower classes. Indeed, it was true to say that although "the Asturias revolt had failed, it struck terror into the hearts of the Right and showed clearly the bitterness beneath the conflict between Right and Left" (Cattell, *Communism* 14).⁴⁶ The fact is that thirty thousand members of socialist, anarchist, communist and other left-wing groups had stood their ground, and, but for the intensity of the military reaction, they would have triumphed.⁴⁷

Arguably the high point in revolutionary fervour in that period was a mass meeting called by Manuel Azafía, a bookish and eloquent Republican statesman, though not a revolutionary leader. He spoke to upward of twenty thousand people from all over Spain in October 1935, reminding them of the historical significance of the times in Spain, rousing the crowds to action. Following this, the most positive outcome of the Asturian conflict was the formation, early in 1936, of the Popular Front (Frente Popular), in which even the communists, encouraged by the French

⁴⁶ One of the major objectives of the right-wing coalition government of 1933-36 had been to generally repair the damage resulting from the swing to the left, and this caused frustration among the leftists and a succession of attempted revolutions. The discontent came to a head in Asturias, the only one of these revolutions to approach success.

⁴⁷ Spain's Communist Party attracted dissidents from both the Socialist Party with the UGT, and the anarcho-syndicalist CNT. When the CNT broke off its support for the Bolsheviks in 1921, Maurín and Nin had continued their involvement with the communists until they were denounced as Trotskyites and formed a splinter group, the Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (POUM) (Worker's Party of Marxist Unification). Like the anarchists, it did not advocate parliamentary action, but maintained an isolated stance until 1934 when they were persuaded to take part in the Asturian Revolution. Their role in Asturias was not major, but out of it emerged their only popular leader, Dolores Ibarruri, nicknamed *La Pasionaria* ("The Passionflower"), a Basque woman, in the opinion of one historian, "astutely playing the revolutionary saint while actually one of the most despicable and self-seeking careerists of the communist movement" (Borkenau, *Spanish Cockpit* 164).

left, were participants.⁴⁸ An election was called in that year and brought in a victory for the Popular Front.⁴⁹

The Popular Front proved to be passive, because its activity was defensive – attempting to combat fascism – rather than assertive in pursuit of its ideological aims of opposing capitalism and the grip of the bourgeoisie. Frustration set in yet again among the people. In some areas, the peasants started to take the law into their own hands. In the months leading up to the beginning of the Civil War, there were hundreds of strikes and bomb explosions, a series of assassinations, including that of Calvo Sotelo, the new leader of the right-wing CEDA, and many died or were injured. The Army generals believed that a strong hand was needed to bring Spain into order and on July 17 they took action, but misjudged the degree of reaction of the sleeping giant of the masses.⁵⁰ The coup led to the Spanish Civil War.

⁴⁸ The Spanish Popular Front was based on the French version, but was less coherent. The term had been coined in 1934 by French communist paper *L'Humanité* and had been endorsed by Stalin, who, for various reasons, wanted French communists to desist from inciting revolution on home territory and start resisting aggression abroad and who, unusually, approved an alliance between the socialists and all forces hostile to fascism. The French Popular Front aimed, theoretically, to attract like-minded people as much as to threaten fascism; it was intended to be a "celebration of social communion, a consecration of human dignity and an apotheosis of fraternity" (Brendon 289). When the Popular Front in Spain was launched into civil war, their French colleagues failed to support them, giving Premier Leon Blum a bad conscience for the rest of his life. The Spanish Popular Front declared itself to be a coalition of the Republican Parties of the Left, the Republican Union and the Socialist Party, the UGT, the National Federation of Socialist Youth, the Communist Party and the Syndicalist Party, in support of all left-wing Republican parties and workers' groups.

⁴⁹ This was due in part to the anarchists abandoning their anti-parliamentary stance, believing that electoral victory for the left would bring about the release of their comrades in prison, thus ensuring the continued support of the Catalan, Valencian and Andalusian provinces. They did not wait for the new government to put the promised amnesty into effect. Many workers themselves opened the prisons and released the political prisoners.

⁵⁰ Bewildered by the lack of positive action on the part of the new government and the continuing hostility of the right, the people, by and large, had at first stood by and watched. The moment they saw their cause and their own kind under armed attack, they reacted with passion and violence.

However historians argue about the derivation of, and reasons for, the Spanish Civil War and the revolutionary activity leading up to it,⁵¹ it cannot be denied that, first, Spain's cataclysm did not occur without warning, just as the Russian Revolution did not occur in isolation; and, secondly, that just as the Russian Revolution added fuel to the fire of revolutionary zeal in the twentieth century throughout the world, the spirit of the Bolsheviks inspired the revolution in Spain. We speak not solely about the support Stalin gave to the Spanish Republicans,⁵² nor concerning the communist-inspired organizations which channelled willing young men and women into that service in order to ensure that the International Brigades were run by communists. The fact is that in Spain both "the Socialists and the Anarchists, thought they resisted the Communist encroachment on the home front, looked toward Russia as a big brother" to the extent that "symbols, terminology, and methods were copied from the Russian Revolution" without necessarily indicating a particular regard for the Party (Cattell, *Communism* 22).⁵³

The victory of the right in Spain's Civil War should not diminish the impact of the Russian Revolution in Spain. It was the complete process of the establishment of the first socialist society in Russia – the pre-1917 uprisings, the victories of 1917 and the resulting consolidation of power by the Soviets – which vindicated Marxism and provided a huge impetus to those hoping to revolutionize the government and

⁵¹ Since this thesis is not primarily concerned with historical theorizing, it is not intended to enter into speculation about this.

⁵² The Soviets provided most of the equipment for the Republicans. Soviet tanks and aircraft were in evidence at the key battles (Guadalajara, Madrid, Brunete), but these were not donations: all purchases had to be paid for. Largo Caballero, the Prime Minister between 1936 and 1937, constantly struggled to prevent the Soviets governing military strategy, and did not always prevail.

⁵³ Interestingly, Cattell also notes that it was not unusual for a village to revolt and establish a "soviet" according to the Russian pattern; and Spaniards would often raise the hammer and sickle and call themselves "Communist" without any reference to the Spanish Communist Party (*Communism* 22).

constitution of countries like Spain. Neither should the fact that, for the Soviets, world revolution seems to have been set aside in favour of the establishment and development of socialism in their own country: Marxism continued to gain popularity in other countries, especially with the increasing threat of fascism.

In Spain of the 1920s and 30s, which was, in the opinion of some, theoretically better suited to the precepts of anarchism, events in Russia placed Marxism firmly on the map. Furthermore, in those years, the writings of Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky and Plekhanov outstripped the works of Marx and Engels when it came to popularity. In time, the development of Stalinism in Russia, notably the highly controversial nature of Stalin's dictatorship, would cause many to re-think their faith in Bolshevism and Stalinism, if not in communism. In the meantime, however, it is true to say that "the possibility that certain dissatisfied yearnings at a collective level, certain apparently utopian human ideals, a human society in which mankind has become the most important and valued factor could actually be realised" are what validated the interest of many Spanish intellectuals in all things Russian (Castañar 36).

For the purposes of this thesis, it is important to remember that in its wake the success of the Russian Revolution drew interest in all aspects of Russian life, and chief among the facets of Russian culture to which Spaniards were attracted was its literature. Another point worth noting is that the strength of Russian communism lay in "its power to influence [...] large sections of the intelligentsia by whom it is relayed downwards" (Carew Hunt 28). To a certain extent, this was true also in Spain, and prominent among the Spanish intellectuals who participated in the fight for the Republic were Spain's writers, many of whom took a stand for the left and whose lives were changed in defeat, either by death or by exile. Their political commitment was reflected in their writing, and, for some, this meant ardent support

for the Soviet Socialist system and encouragement for and from their literary counterparts in Russia. This thesis will elaborate on this theme in later sections.

Finally, we should keep in mind that a study of the external influences on the changes in the Spanish arts towards the end of the 1920s is an important facet of a more complete understanding of that period of Spain's cultural history and, equally, of the events which followed at the end of the 1930s in the form of the Civil War. Of these external influences, the Russian Revolution and its ramifications rank very highly indeed: the "climate created by the Russian Revolution succeeded in instigating and giving shape to the cultural aspirations of the [Spanish] people" (Cobb 9, 13).

In the following section, however, the literary environment in which the increase of interest in Russian literature took place in Spain of the 1930s and the changes in the outlook of the Spanish arts which facilitated this increase are described and contrasted with the development of literary life in Soviet Russia under the impact of its new regime.

1.3 Literary Contexts: Political Commitment in Soviet Russia and Pre-Civil War Spain

In preceding sections of this thesis it has been established that during the years leading up to the Spanish Civil War there was an increase in the publication of Russian literature in Spain. It has further been determined that the Russian Revolution had an impact in Spain, and that, as a result, many outside Russia, including Spaniards, became fascinated by all things Russian, with literature as one of the foremost exports abroad. The Russian Revolution encouraged Spain's revolutionary groups, already alarmed by worsening social and political conditions in their country, to more intense activity. Chief among the instigators of revolution in Spain, as in Russia, were intellectuals, and, among these, writers were key figures.

The primary objective of the present section is to further contextualize the impact of Russian and early Soviet literature in Spain in the 1920s and 1930s – the "boom" period of publication – by examining the changes in the Spanish literary world concurrent with the social and political situation already described. This section shows the increasing interest in political matters at the turn of the 1930s among writers of the period, and examines the interplay between the Russian Revolution and the literature which was published in Spain at that time with the world-view of certain writers whose commitment led them to Marxism.¹ As a feature of this section, the changes in the Spanish literary world are compared and contrasted with changes in the Russian literary scene in the first third of the twentieth century.

¹ This thesis will show in greater detail that these included figures such as Rafael Alberti, Ramón J. Sender, César Arconada and Joaquín Arderius, among others.

It should not be surprising to find that the social and political revolutions throughout Europe in the first two decades of the twentieth century were mirrored by revolutions within the arts; indeed, the accepted notions of philosophy, religion and morality were also pushed beyond their traditional bounds. The twentieth century, from its inception, became an age of "vertiginous change and dramatic shocks" which caused a wide variety of reaction in its early decades: "Futurism, world wars, Dada, psychoanalysis, Surrealism, the October Revolution, Fascism, concentration camps, genocide, the triumph of technology" (Glicksberg 38, 43). In that century with its "crowded record of wars international and civil, of social revolutions and awakening continents, of vigorous and often vicious reappraisals of what man owes to himself", it would be unreasonable to expect thinking people to remain indifferent (Bowra, *Poetry and Politics* 1, 137). What occurred at certain points of the twentieth century was bound to provoke a reaction from even the most detached of the world's intellectuals and artists since the events of that period appear to have "shaken the very foundations of a rational view of the world" (Jackson, *Underground Man* 14).

Predictably, therefore, at the turn of the century European artists and writers were beginning seriously to question their prior relationship with the world about them. This troubled atmosphere in Europe as a whole was reflected in the changes within the Spanish arts towards the end of the 1920s which we will be discussing in this section. European society was "threatened by economic crisis", and, "owing to the chaotic history of the Weimar Republic, could discern the imminent collapse of an entire system of values", as well as witnessing "a growing interest in the new social structures which were becoming more and more firmly established in Soviet Russia" (Cobb 7).

As a result, a confusing array of artistic and literary movements emerged, to which were usually attached labels, many of which were difficult – sometimes impossible – to define with clarity. The opening decades of the twentieth century were marked by the emergence of myriad revolutionary schools of artistic thought, some so close in form and intent that they were barely distinguishable, others so disparate that there was bitter rivalry and a vying for predominance. These caveats – interfactional rivalries and narrow categorizations – notwithstanding, the rush of new schools almost always had as common denominators, first, the wish to break with, or, at the very least challenge, the accepted bounds of past art and literature, and, second, the move into areas which had never before been conceived or attempted. Neither Spain nor Russia was immune from such developments; both countries became more receptive than they had previously been to ideas from the West, notably from Paris and Berlin.

Among the confusing number of trends which emerged in Russia in the first decades of the twentieth century, one of the most dominant was symbolism.² Another prominent school, futurism, which originated in Italy,³ took on a quite different aspect in Russia, in a sense seeing its most productive literary manifestation there.⁴ In Spain, schools of literature emerged under the rubric of *vanguardismo*

² Members of the symbolist movement in Russia regarded art as communicating knowledge of the divine with the poets themselves, in effect, as priests whose responsibility it was to convey this knowledge to the people. Russian symbolism in the arts centred around groups such as *Mir iskusstva* (*The World of Art*) and *Golubaia roza* (*The Blue Rose*), and artists such as the poets Blok, Belyi and Briusov, the painters Vrubel' and Bakst, and the composer Scriabin.

³ Its main protagonist was Filippo Tomasso Marinetti and its first manifesto was published in 1909. Futurists were enamoured of the mechanical age, technology, the city, developing means of communication and exalted sensuality.

⁴ Russian Futurists rejected good taste, convention and common sense, and went so far as to reflect this rebellion in the manner of their dress and in their behaviour. The Russian Futurist Manifesto was

(avant-garde).⁵ As a general rule, literature, in Russia, Spain, and elsewhere in Europe, was inward-looking. That is not to say that artists were totally removed from the world around them, since certain groups emerged as a direct response to social and political conditions. Nevertheless, those which did so tended to be more concerned about the literary methods of expressing their political or social outrage.

If we may conclude from the foregoing that the advent of the Russian Revolution indirectly influenced even the role and content of literature in certain sectors of the literary world, it goes without saying that the most direct changes in literature occurred in Russia itself. Within ten years of the Revolution, the state had started to impose rigid control on the output of workers in all the arts. The dominance of Marxist politics on the arts was shown in a most remarkable way through socialist realism, an artistic movement which has become synonymous with the strict control placed on artistic pursuits by socialist ideology. In the course of time, the concept of socialist realism has moved away from its Soviet associations and is also defined more generally as a "Marxist aesthetic theory calling for the didactic use of literature"⁶ which is a more generalized definition with less emphasis

called, appropriately, *Poshchekhina obshchestvennomu vkusu* (*A Slap in the Face of Public Taste*). For them, literature must encapsulate and express the new. One of its leaders was Viktor Khlebnikov (1885-1922) and one of its most famous exponents was Vladimir Mayakovsky (1893-1930).

⁵ For example, *ultraísmo*, *creacionismo*, *superrealismo*.

⁶ See *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* at www.britannica.com/cgi-bin/dictionary. A more detailed definition of socialist realism is given in the following pages. It is the subject of some notable academic studies, e.g. Katerina Clark's *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000); Max Hayward's own contribution to *Dissonant Voices in Soviet Literature* (ed. Patricia Blake and Hayward; London: Allen and Unwin, 1964) – "Soviet Literature 1917-1962"; Irina Gutkin's *The Cultural Origins of the Socialist Realist Aesthetic 1890-1934* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1999); Herman Ermolaev's *Soviet Literary Theories 1917-1934. The Genesis of Socialist Realism* (New York: Octagon Books, 1977); C. Vaughn James' *Soviet Socialist Realism: Origins and Theory* (London: Macmillan, 1973).

on its Soviet beginnings. Nevertheless, the doctrine achieved its most overt expression in Soviet Russia. It has been described in reference works as an "artistic credo, developed in Russia to implement Marxist doctrine",⁷ a "Soviet artistic and literary doctrine."⁸ It was an "officially sanctioned theory and method of literary composition prevalent in the Soviet Union [...] the sole criterion for measuring literary works",⁹ based on the principle that art should directly serve the needs of the society in which it is produced. In the words of Nicholas Luker:

Not only [...] did the doctrine of Socialist Realism prescribe strict parameters for the Soviet artist to follow; it also stipulated the prime criterion by which the Soviet critic should evaluate a work of art: how far did [that work] contribute in the educative sense to the consolidation of socialism? (21-22)

In essence, socialist realism is "the product of Soviet Communist Party policy [...] based on Marxist political and economic theories as understood and practiced in the Soviet Union" (Ermolaev 1). Its function "above all" was to serve as an "instrument for the education of the masses in the spirit of socialism" thus constituting "an integral part of vast plans for creating a specifically proletarian culture" which was to be characterized by "the qualities believed to be inherent in the proletariat: spirit of collectivism, apotheosis of labor, hatred of exploitation, revolutionary ardor, struggle for communism on a global scale, and belief in the Communist millenium" (Ermolaev 2).

Spanish literary historian Francisco Álamo Felices has added that the establishment of socialist realism as a specific creative methodology emanating from Soviet Russia was "a little later to be exported to other socialist countries or to the

⁷ J. A. Cuddon. *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. 1977. London: Penguin, 1991.

⁸ *The Columbia Encyclopedia*. 6th edn. Columbia: Columbia UP, 2000.

⁹ See *Encyclopaedia Britannica* at www.britannica.com/bcom/eb/article/4/0,5716,70244+1+68467,00.html.

Communist Parties who were totally loyal to Moscow's directives (255). Soviet Socialist critics, however, "maintained that only authors with the Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist world-view could portray Soviet life correctly, and that only work written from this viewpoint could be considered real art" (Luker 32). The development of socialist realism, according to Álamo Felices, reveals how realism responded to a trio of conditions placed on it by the Soviets – "the party, the state and the people" (204). Socialist realism was the artistic response to the need to create an art which "reflected the new reality" (Alamo Felices 205). Indeed, part of the Soviet experience of socialist realism was its enforcement on writers after its official adoption, and it is true to say, by and large, that the doctrine always was "definable less in literary terms than in terms of the *political* demands made of writers and artists at various periods" (Hayward, "Literature in the Soviet Period" 197; emphasis added).

In the Soviet Union, representing Marxist reality became an increasingly topical problem as the 1930s approached. In the aftermath of the Russian Revolution, the course of Russian literary history had been highly complex. The immediate post-revolutionary reality had meant Civil War, starvation and epidemics. As literary historian Marc Slonim puts it:

The writers, confused, depressed, and utterly incapable of coping with the situation, compared themselves to the grains of sand whirled by a tornado. Their whole world of ideas and forms was engulfed in the vortex of the general cataclysm; most of the issues that had agitated or rocked generations of intellectuals suddenly lost all significance and turned into ashes. (5)

Political events had intruded into an artistic world which had had little to contemplate and dispute other than form, style and content of poetry. The aftermath of the Revolution, indeed, meant "cataclysm", not least among writers, who felt that they had been shaken by a "tornado", caught in the "vortex" of the upheaval. The reaction

of the Russians to the Revolution was to find resonance within the next two decades in Spain, as we will see. What happened as the dust settled in Russia?

Artists and writers in Russia lending their talent to the new socialist state had two main preoccupations: first, to divorce themselves from the tainted and redundant past; second, to aid in the construction of a new society, including the education of the people. In Russia, the tendency to negate the past literary traditions in all spheres had already begun in the first two decades of the twentieth century. For those who welcomed the Revolution the idea that history – socialist history – began on 24/25 October 1917 cemented that belief.

The arts were subsequently fragmented into scores of literary groups which met with varying degrees of success, but during the 1920s the Bolshevik government was too concerned with political affairs to spare attention to the control of the arts. In the case of literature, the only means of control was from Glavlit, the Chief Directorate for Literary Affairs, which censored works directly criticising the State, but which was otherwise relatively tolerant. Friction mainly arose between Party members, who wanted to create an exclusively proletarian culture, and the so-called fellow travellers (*poputchiki*) (a term created by Trotsky) who hesitated to give the Party unqualified support. Eventually, both Anatoly Lunacharsky (1875-1933), the lenient Soviet Commissar for Education,¹⁰ and the Party itself intervened to keep the peace between the two camps.

In 1925 an important resolution was passed affirming Party interference in art, but recommending that fellow travellers be treated with tolerance as potential

¹⁰ Interestingly, Lunacharsky died shortly before taking up the post of ambassador to Spain.

Party members.¹¹ Between 1928 and 1932 a proletarian writers' association, *Russkaia associatsiia proletarskikh pisatelei* (RAPP), under the direction of Leopold Averbakh (1903-38), wielded despotic control over literary policy.¹² When RAPP was dissolved, therefore, there was initial relief, and, since the Party seemed to blame the decline in literary standards on RAPP's intolerance and regimentation, its termination was seen as a gesture of reconciliation. The sinister connotations of this move, however, were not seen until April 1932 when it was announced that there was to be a single *Soiuz sovetskikh pisatelei* (Union of Soviet Writers)¹³ and that all writers would belong to it, thus ruling out the admission of fellow travellers. From that time onward, writers had to join the Union and conform to the State-prescribed tenets of socialist realism in order to make a living.

A policy adopted by the State at the same time proved to be significant for our study. Abroad, including Spain, many writers with far-left political views had been mesmerized by the phenomenon of socialism in action and were intensely curious about the progress of the Soviet Union. In turn, the Soviets' recognition of the power of literature had caused them not only to harness its power in their own domain, but also to stir up those foreign writers who were willing and able to use their art as a weapon of war both against fascism and in support of the Soviet socialist cause and the Communist Party. The message to proselytize was never clearer than at the First Congress of the recently-formed Union of Soviet Writers in August 1934. Having

¹¹ The Party evidently believed it could, and should, intervene in literary matters, but as yet made no hard and fast rules and appeared to encourage free competition. With the end of Lenin's New Economic Policy in 1928 came the end of private publishing ventures.

¹² RAPP insisted that Soviet writing should support the current five-year plan, in essence to serve as its propaganda. On the whole, writers acquiesced, but the atmosphere was claustrophobic.

stated the principal aims of the new Union,¹⁴ the Party stated its proposal to cast its nets wider. Karl Radek¹⁵ showed that an essential weapon in that world revolution would be a body of pro-Soviet revolutionary writers stationed and active in the capitalist countries:

We Soviet people must tell our friends, the revolutionary writers of the West, that we attach an high value to every fervent word spoken in support of the Soviet Union, to all support that they give us. [...] The writer who wants to help socialism, which is being built in our country, the writer who wants to fight against fascism, the writer who wants to fight against the war danger must find his way to these forces, must find his way to the proletariat, however small a minority the revolutionary proletariat may constitute as yet in his own country. (*Soviet Writers' Congress* 107-08)

The policy to recruit writers thus went hand-in-hand with the political move to find allies abroad, provoked by the threat of fascism.¹⁶ The Soviets urged their literary supporters and kindred spirits abroad to counter fascism by appealing directly to the proletariat. In confirmation of Radek's words, the Writer's Union, therefore, adopted the following resolution:

The Congress of Soviet Writers calls upon its brothers, the revolutionary writers of the whole world, to fight with all the force of the writer's pen against capitalist oppression, fascist barbarism, colonial slavery, against the preparations for new

¹³ The Central Committee also created a painters' union, a composers' union and an architects' union. In other words, all avant-garde artistic associations were suspended and all art forms were brought under the control of the Party.

¹⁴ These were, first, to ensure the homogeneity of Soviet literature within the principles and strictures of socialism and, above all, the Communist Party; second, to sustain and activate the masses; and, third, to recruit and educate Soviet writers in the methods of socialist realism.

¹⁵ Karl Radek (originally Sobelsohn) (1885-1939), Ukrainian by birth, was a Russian revolutionary who had been a key figure in the German Communist Party at the time of their revolution in 1918 and who, thereafter, became a leading member of the Communist International at home. In 1937 he was a victim of one of Stalin's show trials, accused of being an agent of Hitler and enemy of the Soviet Union.

¹⁶ Fascism, the great foe of communism, incited opposers to vigorous and sometimes violent resistance. Indeed, in order to encourage this resistance, the Soviet government took a more conciliatory view of the Socialist parties and Popular Fronts abroad, and the Soviet Union also became a member of the League of Nations.

imperialist wars, in defense of the U.S.S.R. – the fatherland of toiling humanity. From the time when a small group of writers, headed by Gorky, followed the Party of Lenin, down to the present period – when, as a result of the victory of socialism in the U.S.S.R., Soviet literature has turned into a tremendous cultural force, has become a literature of all peoples, a literature which expresses the great work of the toiling masses of the Soviet Union in creating a new, socialist system – our writers have traversed a glorious path. Their example is convincing the best representatives of literature abroad that literature and art cannot really flourish except where socialism is victorious. [...] The Congress is firmly convinced that the future belongs to international revolutionary literature, for it is linked up with the struggle of the working class for the liberation of all mankind. (*Soviet Writers' Congress 277-79*)

The zealous evangelizing spirit is unmistakable in these words. The writer's pen was to be the weapon in the war against a catalogue of enemies of the masses and of the Soviet Union; and the pioneers of this "glorious path" – Russian authors writing according to the socialist realist formula – were already setting an example in civic duty that was winning the support of the best writers abroad.¹⁷ As is clearly shown in this thesis, there were significant repercussions in Spain to this Soviet initiative.

At the Union Congress, Andrei Zhdanov¹⁸ declared that Soviet literature, at the same time as being "the youngest of all literature of all peoples and countries", was "ideologically the richest (*samaia ideinaia*), the most advanced and the most revolutionary literature." What was called the "detachment" of foreign revolutionary writers following in the footsteps of the Soviets, though small, was to represent "the

¹⁷ The resolution names the countries which are represented at the Congress (France, England, U.S.A, China, Germany, Turkey, Czechoslovakia, Spain, Norway, Denmark, Greece and Holland) and names individual foreign writers who had participated in the programme (including André Malraux, Theodor Plivier, Louis Aragon, Johannes Becher) and who merit greetings (Romain Rolland, André Gide, Henri Barbusse, G. B. Shaw, Theodore Dreiser and Upton Sinclair). Rafael Alberti represented Spain.

¹⁸ Andrei Alexandrovich Zhdanov (1896-1948) was a member of the Politburo, former Party secretary, and Party spokesman on several occasions on artistic matters. He replaced the denounced Kirov as head of the Communist Party in Leningrad and conducted many cultural purges.

nucleus, the core of a mighty army of proletarian writers which will be created by the world proletarian revolution in capitalist countries" (*Soviet Writers' Congress* 17, 20).

Spain was one of those countries which, throughout the 1930s, developed its own zealous detachment in this international army of revolutionary writers. The Second Congress of the Mezhdunarodnaia organizatsiia revoliutsionnykh pisatelei (International Organisation of Revolutionary Writers) (MORP) in 1937 took place principally in Spain – during the Civil War - starting in Valencia and moving on, via Barcelona, to Madrid before concluding in Paris. Aleksei Tolstoy, M. Koltsov, Vsevolod Vishnevskii, Il'ia Ehrenburg, and A. Barto were among those who took part in the conference, and who visited the troops and International Brigades at the Republican front. Victor Fink, one of the Soviet delegates, commented that "certain writers are being the most resolute by coming to an acceptance of proletarian humanism and they need the unity of the intelligentsia with the working classes" in the war against fascism (68). As we will see later, Fink's observation was not far from the truth with reference to the Marxist committed writers, such as Alberti and Sender, of 1930s' Spain.

Soviet policy with regard to literature was a two-edged sword. Strict control was to be enforced over the output of writers at home by means of the institution of socialist realism, while a body of foreign colleagues was to perpetuate the socialist battle abroad. The socialist realist doctrine was to be the measure against which not only Russian writers were judged by the state, but also the foreign writers would be evaluated. In this study, which is concerned with the progress of Spanish literature in the context of the influence of the ideology and literature emanating from Russia, it is important to establish, first, that any writers in Spain who espoused the Marxist, and specifically the Soviet Marxist cause, notably Alberti and Arconada, were to be encouraged by the Soviets, and, secondly, that the Soviets would expect them to

observe the tenets of socialist realism. What, then, were the requirements of socialist realism?

Socialist realism may be condensed into the following formula: complete conformity with the Communist Party (*partiinnost'*), possessing the outlook of one's nationality, patriotism and adherence to the common people (*narodnost'*), ideological maturity (*ideinnost'*) and the reflection of class ideology or character (*klassovost'*) (Luker 20-21).¹⁹ The formula was not devoid of potential quandaries. Adherence to the common people implied that writing should be in language easily understood, free of the stylistic devices of modernism, since it was for the edification of the common man: it was meant "to produce works answering to the requirements of the masses" (*Soviet Writers' Congress* 23). Complete conformity with the Party, on the other hand, demanded that art should unswervingly support the principles and decisions of the Party, which, in cases where Party decisions were not acceptable to the people, would put it at odds with its aspiration of adherence to the people. The imposing of Socialist Realism produced "the closed and vicious circle of declaring that only the reality of socialism is real and that therefore everything hostile to socialism is unreal" (Simmons, "Soviet Literature" 13). The truth was to the contrary: socialist realism gained a reputation for "imposing not so much a truthful, historically concrete depiction of reality as a fraudulent, historically inaccurate depiction of unreality" (Slonim 199-200).

¹⁹ *Narodnost'*, for example, included portraying the citizens of Soviet Russia in a favourable light. The Russian literary tradition of the "positive hero" was reincarnated in Soviet form: the hero had to be self-sacrificing, strong and healthy, living and working for the good of the cause (but devoid of self-pity), possessing unswerving faith in the Party. Foreigners and traitors, on the other hand, were easily identified as shifty, untrustworthy and self-seeking. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that Chernyshevsky's Rakhmetov, for example, was not one of a succession of like fictional heroes, but was, rather, unique in certain respects, notably his singlemindedness.

Harry Levin pointed out a basic flaw in the movement: that "socialism is a creed and realism an art" (*Grounds for Comparison* 254). He added that it is "impossible to imagine Tolstoy, Flaubert, Dickens, and the other great realists being convened by a political party and voting on how they should write thereafter" (*Grounds for Comparison* 255) and "those writers who conformed to Stalin's mandate colluded with him in glossing over the bitter truths since revealed" (*Grounds for Comparison* 261).

One of the basic principles of nineteenth-century Russian realism had been an exposure of the ills of society, whereas the basis of socialist realism in Soviet Russia was affirmation of, and unqualified support for, socialism as practised in the Soviet regime and its criticism was confined to the regimes of the past. Indeed, socialist realism would brook no criticism of the current regime. Nevertheless, use of the concept of realism was a convenient means of convincing both the reading public and the writers who had to join the Union and conform to the doctrine that what was being encouraged was verisimilitude. Although, to some degree, it is true to say that socialist realism "derived from the concept that art is a reflection of reality and therefore has to be realistic", it is, however, more accurate to say that, according to its tenets, the only realism that could bloom in the land of the Soviets was "that permeated by the spirit of Communism" (Slonim 164).

The demand for the representation of role models for Soviets to follow gave rise to the continuation of the trend for a "positive hero" in literature. Luker speaks of the "inspiring heroes" and "positive emblematic heroes" of socialist realist literature (22). This was not an entirely new concept in Russian literature. In the

1860s the literary critic N. G. Chernyshevskii²⁰ (1828-89) had written a novel called *Chto delat' (What is to be Done?)* (1862-64) which provided a prime example of the "new man" phenomenon – the revolutionary hero of the future dedicated to self-discipline and self-improvement, the self-sacrificing kind of man in whose hands socialist reality was sure to come about.²¹ Chernyshevskii's fictional hero, Rakhmetov, in all his character traits, is "a nearly perfect early model of the Bolshevik" – a dedicated man of steel, a "self-made superman who has shaped himself into a revolutionary instrument" (Mathewson 76), the "salt of the salt of the earth" (*Chto delat'?* 278). The similarities with socialist realism are evident, and, indeed, the novel and its hero became prototypes not only of the socialist realist method, but also of real-life heroes and events in the Russian revolutionary movement. Moreover, both *Chto delat'?* and its hero fuelled the political ambitions of one of history's great revolutionaries – Lenin himself.

For the Soviets, the object of the exercise in seizing control of artistic production was an expression of uniformity of thinking within the bounds of Marxist socialism. After 1934, broadly speaking, Russian writers either conformed to the tenets of socialist realism, or they ceased to be published in Russia. The latter option often meant exile abroad or, later, underground writing.²² The idealistic visions of

²⁰ Chernyshevskii was a supporter of the theory of rational egoism, which derives from English utilitarianism. It proposed that, because he is rational, man eventually learns that the most lasting utility is to identify his own self-interest with that of the majority. Chernyshevskii became a central figure in the radical literary tradition and considered art as inferior to life and primarily didactic in function. It is important to emphasise that Chernyshevskii was primarily known as a literary critic, rather than a novelist.

²¹ It also addressed subjects such as social utopianism, cooperative socialist labour principles and female emancipation.

²² Some simply stopped publishing, or even writing: Anna Akhmatova, for example, did not publish any works between 1924 and 1940.

many poets and artists in the first decades of the twentieth century in Russia had been shattered by the intrusion of reality in the form of revolution and socialism in action. Those who welcomed the Revolution frequently became disillusioned as the 1920s and 1930s progressed, and the careers of unspecified numbers ended in the prison camps or death as a result of Stalin's purges.

The example of Soviet Russia and its imposition of socialist realism is admittedly extreme. Nevertheless, elsewhere in Europe there was a growing trend among artists and writers towards greater political awareness. We may take Spain as a good example of this since the acquiring of political conscience of writers such as Alberti and Arderius in Spain caused a radical change in the Spanish literary world. As the twentieth century entered its third decade the friction between right- and left-wing political factions throughout Europe intensified, setting the scene for conflict.²³ English poet Stephen Spender, who took an active interest in the politics of 1930s' Spain, called it "the decade in which young writers became involved in politics" (*The Thirties* 13). Charles I. Glicksberg, in his study of the function and execution of political commitment in literature, wrote that in the 1930s "the writer found it impossible to cultivate his own garden, to keep aloof while the battle against Totalitarianism" was being fought (20); this was not just a Spanish but also a wider European trend. Spender added that the "politics of this generation [of committed writers] were almost exclusively those of the left" (*The Thirties* 13).²⁴ Revolutionary

²³ Both the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) and the Second World War (1939-45) were considered in their day to be essentially anti-fascist conflicts.

²⁴ This thesis by no means attempts to claim that all writers of the period became politically engaged; neither does it claim that all who became politically engaged inclined leftwards. Some, including Sartre, have argued that right-wing political views cannot generate a true work of art, but this generalization is unsubstantiated and ignores the work of writers such as Louis-Ferdinand Céline (1894-1961), who collaborated with the Vichy government in France during the Second World War

politics burgeoned in the 1930s: the "insistent clamor for commitment" among writers rose to a "crescendo of adjuration" (Glicksberg, 52).

As in Spain, the tendency of artists generally was to the political left at this time, and often meant commitment to Marxist Communism.²⁵ Reports of atrocities in Nazi Germany, and the threat of fascism in countries such as Spain, fuelled the fire of growing interest in political affairs, polarizing the opinions of intellectuals and artists and sending many into the arms of Communism.²⁶ Spender explains that to be modern in the 1930s meant "to interpret the poet's individual experience of lived history in the light of some kind of Marxist analysis" (*The Thirties* 24). The appeal of Marxism lay in it providing "a valid interpretation of all of man's interests and activities" and being "all-encompassing in its sweep", as all of culture was "subsumed under the rubric of politics" in its ideology (Glicksberg 19). Intellectuals who joined the Communist Party "were expected to function as ideologists who would arouse the revolutionary consciousness of the proletariat" (Glicksberg 13-14).

Furthermore, not to be overlooked is the inspiration of the *fait accompli* of the Russian Revolution. The theory of Marxism, in the eyes of some, had been validated by the success of the Bolsheviks and the consolidation of their power in the

and was a self-confessed anti-semitic; Knut Hamsun (1859-1952), a Nazi sympathizer; and Ezra Pound (1885-1972), who made pro-Fascist broadcasts from Italy during the Second World War.

²⁵ We should recall the point made earlier in this thesis to the effect that Marxism was not the only option for those acquiring a political conscience in 1930s' Spain. Indeed, not all who became politically committed were politically left-wing. In fact, relatively few Spanish artists became committed communists, and those who did become communists were usually converted during visits abroad. However, conversion to Marxism increased from the mid-1930s, with the failure of the Second Republic to realise expectations.

²⁶ Leftists reasoned that the barbarous acts of fascism would be impossible in the Soviet Union, the scene of the victory of the people. Initially, they would not entertain the reports emerging from the USSR about Stalin's tyranny, and, although gradually many became disillusioned, until the 1950s these reports were strenuously denied by diehard communists.

formation of the USSR. What was actually happening in the Soviet Union was tangible proof that the enemies of the people could be overcome, and this gave hope to those who aspired to the thwarting of fascism.

As we have seen in earlier sections of this thesis, in the 1930s, Spain was advancing from spectator of world events, to protagonist, and, with the gathering of the political storm clouds, came an unprecedented phenomenon: as part of the political commitment various Spanish writers adopted, which, in certain cases led to espousal of Marxism, there resulted in an attempt at the removal of the divide between people and writers. Indeed, for the first time, "the people took up the pen", a practice which had spread "without any form of coercion or official programme" and which "broke all the cultural preconceptions and originated, quite spontaneously, in an unprecedented cultural revolution" after the coup of July 1936 (Caudet 11-12).

In Spain, those who espoused Marxism took on all the responsibilities of commitment, with the addition of promoting a socialist reality, rather than a specifically Republican one; it meant that those artists would now serve their Party and ideology, and, needless to say, that Marxist doctrine would be incorporated into the content and themes of their writing.²⁷ The implements of their trade, thenceforward, were weapons to combat fascist thinking and, further, to educate and mobilize the public. Following the July 1936 coup in Spain, the Russian paper *Literaturnaia gazeta* proclaimed the heroism of the Spanish writers working in the defence of their country's culture:

²⁷ In Spain, too, issues facing creative writers arose. In 1935 André Malraux spoke at the Ateneo in Madrid about the need for the construction of a socialist society but warning writers and artists who sought a creative Marxism (and free expression within these bounds) against dogmatism and artificiality.

The writers of the Soviet Union send an ardent greeting to the writers of the heroic Spanish people, with a weapon in their hands fighting against the fascist rebels and murderers. Spanish revolutionary writers selflessly use the pen as a weapon against the *popovshchina*,²⁸ obscurantists of fascist barbarism. When the dark reactionary forces sought to enslave the people of Spain, writers turned their pens into rifles. They are showing an example of how to defend the people and its culture.²⁹

It goes without saying that writers such as Sender and Alberti found inspiration in the phenomenon of the creation of the USSR. It served to provide Spanish writers like these with evidence, which they could use in their texts, of the feasibility, the practicality, of the theory, which is the focus of the later sections of this thesis. In reality, the Russian Revolution was not necessarily the cornerstone of their belief in Marxism, although when disillusionment with the progress of Stalin's USSR from the late 1930s set in, it caused certain of them to distance themselves from Communism.³⁰ In the meantime, however, the Russian Revolution acted as a "pole which had an exceptional power of attraction on the young intellectuals" (Castañar, *Compromiso* 36). The apparent success of the masses in the Russian Revolution was "bound to have a powerful influence on young [Spanish] intellectuals" because

[t]he 1920s [...] was a decade in which many intellectuals entered into an inner crisis and distanced themselves from their own class, attracted by the charismatic events in Russia. [...] The magnetism [the Russian Revolution] had on European intellectuals, as much in the 20s as in the following decade, was immense. [Spain] was not unaware of this influence as proves the huge quantity of books about Marxism and the Soviet experience that were published at that time. (Castañar, *Compromiso* 34-35)

²⁸ A pejorative term for the clergy.

²⁹ See *Literaturnaia gazeta* (5 August 1936): 1.

³⁰ In common with Gide, cited earlier, Spanish novelists Sender and Arderius became disenchanted. Sender, for example, shared the goal of his fictional revolutionaries but obviously considered them doomed to failure (Lough, *Politics and Philosophy* 202).

The Russian Revolution as a literary theme in Spanish writing during that period left relatively few traces; as a source of inspiration, however, it justifies comment. The Revolution stirred both left- and right-wing writers:

For the writers of the political left it is an argument that proves that Utopia is possible, as it has been for the Russian people. For those of the right, rather than nurturing the revolutionary spirit, it serves to dampen it, as they use everything related to the USSR as a cornerstone in the argument that the workers' movement in Spain is manipulated by Soviet agents. (Castañar, *Compromiso* 289)

Along with interest in the social and political progress of the Soviet Union, Spaniards became more interested in the literature originating in that country. For left-wing writers of Spain in the 1920s and 30s, such as Arderús and Sender, the appeal lay, primarily, in the similarity they perceived in the social and political situations of the two countries. Pablo Gil Casado confirms that for certain Spaniards the Russian Revolution of 1917 itself was a "romantic model" (*modelo romántico*). He further suggests, however, that Russian novels also became a source of inspiration because they reflected not only the injustice and oppression of the pre-revolutionary period, but also the struggle and apparent victory of the masses in establishing a new order, and such subject matter was just what many Spanish writers of the time themselves wanted to express (133). In other words, the "new [anarchistic] spirit in 19th-century Russian literature, the ideology and the artistic integrity, were the features which influenced Spanish literature" (Portnoff 260). In addition, the writing of those authors of the newly-formed Socialist State which reflected the Revolution inspired those Spanish writers, although admittedly few in number, who looked to Marxist Communism for the solution to Spain's problems, writers such as Alberti and Arderús.

How did this turn in the evolution of Spanish literature come about? In addition to the ubiquitous *fin-de-siècle* feeling of transition and renewal in Europe, Spain had experienced a national crisis, the tentacles of which had reached into

cultural life. In 1898 Spain suffered a humiliating military defeat, losing Cuba to the United States.³¹ Thus, the last of the Spanish colonies was lost. "1898" was the final straw for the erstwhile empire, causing thinking people in Spain to question the nation's essence, its role in history, and the effectiveness of its *status quo*. In retrospect, the group of writers, thinkers, historians, and scientists who made especially vocal their protest at the apparent ebbing of Spanish culture and identity was named the "Generación del 98".³² The unease which certain writers of this period felt towards the political and social problems besetting Spain at the end of the nineteenth century pre-empted the concerns of future generations, but their work was as concerned with style and form, and with matters relating to the essence of the individual, as with political content and social disquiet.

Spanish modernism encouraged the poet to retreat from the mundane and to create works of beauty which were suffused with sensual and exotic qualities. Spanish prose throughout these initial years of the new century evolved in two interconnected directions: first, a growing sense of desolation concerning the meaning of life; second, a withdrawal of art from reality. What became most important was the way the author transformed reality into art, as opposed to the experience of reality itself. During the Spanish Civil War, Antonio Machado confessed that he regretted not having thought enough about politics: "I belong to a generation that called itself *apolitical*, that committed the grave error of seeing only a negative aspect of politics, of ignoring the fact that politics could one day be a really

³¹ Spain also lost control of the Philippines and Puerto Rico.

³² The writer Azorín suggested the term Generation of 1898 in articles written in 1913. Writer Pedro Salinas' lecture in 1934 concerning "El concepto de generación literaria aplicado a la del 98" ("The Concept of the Literary Generation as Applied to that of '98") marked the confirmation of the name.

fundamental activity, a life or death matter, for our country."³³ It is unlikely that Machado never gave a moment's thought to politics, but it was not a "life or death" matter for him and his generation.

The number and fervour of the numerous "isms" of the Spanish avant-garde reflect the creative exuberance of the times. Controversy arose, however, regarding the writing of one of the leading members of the older "generation", José Ortega y Gasset.³⁴ Ortega's essay *La deshumanización del arte* (*The Dehumanization of Art*) saw the light of day in 1925, during a period of intense creativity in literary circles. In retrospect, in the light of the politically informed sensitivities of the writers of the 1930s, his study was severely criticized for its separation of art from real life; it was seen as supporting the novel's alienation from reality, and the artist's removal from the cares of the world. In fact, he was attempting to explain the current state of the arts, and of the novel in particular. Some of his writing at that time actually became a totem around which those won over to political involvement rallied (Castañar, "La novela social" 64). Art, as Ortega saw it, was not concerned with the problems of human life and did not connect with people whose lives did not revolve around the arts.

To "dehumanize" means to keep the reader at a distance, keep him objective regarding the plot, for example, not to draw him into "living" the action of the novel, living alongside its heroes. Emotional sympathy with the characters, living and

The group looked, on the one hand, to the past – the traditions, culture, history and even the landscape of Spain – and, on the other, to Europe and modernization.

³³ See *Prosas y poesías olvidadas* (*Forgotten Prose and Poetry*). Paris, 1964. 130.

³⁴ Ortega (1883-1955) was a writer and philosopher. His articles, lectures, and essays on philosophical and political subjects made strong contributions to the intellectual renaissance of Spain in the first third of the twentieth century. Indeed, he and his colleagues inspired the Republican movement. He became a member of the Spanish Republican parliament (*Cortes*) between 1931 and 1933. A work that brought him international recognition was *La rebelión de las masas* (*The Revolt of the Masses*) (1930).

experiencing what happens to them, should have nothing to do with the aesthetic enjoyment of the work of art: it is a ploy on the part of the artist. The work should be enjoyed for its aesthetic worth, not for the feelings or the solidarity the heroes' cause provokes. (Cano Ballesta, 1930-1936 34)

Dehumanization implied the purification, de-romanticization and removal of human aspects from art. Modernism, in general, gave priority to form, rather than content, was not intrinsically related to the world outside art, and, in the execution of these ideals, used the metaphor as an aid, either to produce a new reality or to find truth in an existing one. Art, as Ortega saw it, had become the pursuit of an elite minority for the enjoyment of a select few. In distancing itself from the mass of people, such literature lost its power and influence on them; poets, in particular, believed their role to be to pursue perfection of form, and involvement in the world's affairs was considered to be unsuitable subject matter.

The Spanish avant-garde was indifferent, at times to the point of ignorance, of both left- and right-wing political movements. With reference to poetry, a leading writer of the day, Rafael Alberti (1902-99), commented: "it occurred to no-one at that time to consider that poetry could serve for anything other than personal indulgence" (*La arboleda perdida* I 306). Indeed, as literary historian Juan Cano Ballesta comments, summing up the 1920s in literature, politics was known as "that which is sullied, impure, public, the corruption of art", while art was "that which is clean, intimate, quintessentially beautiful" (1930-36 149).

During the second half of the decade there arose, however, a literature which directly addressed the harsh reality of everyday life for contemporary mankind. The changes in the priorities of the literary environment gained momentum at the turn of the 1930s. Broadly speaking, it can be described as a move from "dehumanized" to "rehumanized" literature. Cano Ballesta, placing himself in the atmosphere of those times and describing the effect of the literary revolution, wrote that during the

dictatorship of Primo de Rivera (1923-30) "the world around the poet [was] orderly and he [could] devote himself, untroubled, to artistic creation, creating his serene, enlightened poetic world, a mythical world of dreamy gypsies", but that, around the turn of the 1930s,

[i]t all collapses with *the thrust of reality* [...]. The unsteady ground begins to shake beneath their feet. The political situation changes, opening up a horizon of opportunities they had not anticipated and bringing with it great insecurity. [...] the writer is either swept along on the winds of politics, or is the object of the severest recrimination for social inactivity. (Cano Ballesta, *1920-1936* 123-24; emphasis added)

Not only did radical Marxism, socialism, and anarchism, along with myriad left-wing factions, become important factors in the ideology and politics of the 1920s and 30s, but there was upheaval in the world of literature, mirroring the political revolution to which many aspired. Cano Ballesta's "thrust of reality" was a similar effect to what Slonim had called "the tornado" or "the vortex" of the cataclysmic 1917 Revolution, which had caused Russia's writing community confusion and bewilderment on a grand scale (5). The Spaniard may just as well have been describing what had happened in the Russian literary world a decade earlier. The effect of the stark awakening to the social and political condition of Spain was, for writers like the poet Alberti and the novelist Joaquín Arderius, quite striking.

In the "re-humanization" of literature, Spanish writers became more aware of the world around them and became committed to incorporating issues from that world into their writing. Political commitment – termed *compromiso* – on the part of writers further meant that they aspired to change society by means of their writing, and was usually marked by the detachment of the "I" in writing in favour of the people and, certainly, of the message of the writing. Political commitment meant dedication to the advocacy of certain beliefs, be they political, ideological or in the furtherance of social reform. Politically, it could mean espousal of either right- or

left-wing stances, although the majority of those who became politically committed tended to the political left. Spanish literature at the turn of the 1930s, therefore, took on a much more political aspect owing to the voluntary immersion of writers into the affairs of the world in which they lived, that both matched, and responded to, the intensification of revolutionary activity in social and political matters. Cano Ballesta sums it up:

In a society in rapid political ferment, where social and economic events exercise growing pressure, and the rapid succession of events continue to erode old conceptions and create an atmosphere of instability; in a moment in which all the living forces of the nation are surging towards a material and spiritual rebirth, sooner or later, the question has to be asked: *what purpose does "pure poetry" serve?* What can society expect from it? What is the function of poets? Should they stay in their ivory towers or rush out onto the street, involve themselves in the fighting, encourage the masses in their regenerating or revolutionary vigour? [...] Writers and artists are becoming aware of having a mission to accomplish: the need to abandon their ivory towers and throw themselves into the great adventure of public life (Cano Ballesta, 1930-36:98).

The set of problems that arose specifically for poetry is discussed later; nevertheless, the principle of the situation for poets may be used for literature as a whole. Writers were asking themselves what was their role in the face of the "growing pressure" and "ferment" of public concerns: should they remain immured in their ivory towers, or "rush out onto the street" of Spanish affairs?

In 1931, one critic commented that "for some years the young avant-garde writers were disorientated, but already they are beginning to find their route – that of the people. They feel the need to go to the people, to understand them and put themselves in their service".³⁵ The poet Alberti took this to an extreme and wrote that "from 1931, my work and my life were in the service of the Spanish revolution

³⁵ See J. G. Gorkin's "Los escritores de la España Nueva: antiguos y modernos" ("Writers of New Spain: Ancient and Modern") *Monde* 4, 162 (11 July 1931).

and of the international proletariat".³⁶ It is worthy of note in this comment that both work and life were at the disposal of the revolution: the very life of the poet had become inextricably bound to both his work and his political cause. As early as 1920, C. Rivas Cherif had challenged writers with the question Tolstoy had famously posed – "What is Art?", and he found support in Tolstoy's views that

Art is the mirror of life. [...] I believe that my life, my reason, my light, were given to me exclusively to bring enlightenment to people. [...] The thinker, the artist, never belongs in total isolation, as is usually believed. [...] Art and the word are the two organs of human progress. One communicates hearts, the other, thoughts. If either one fails to live up to that, society falls ill.³⁷

Tolstoy unquestionably rejected art for art's sake in his thesis "What is Art?". For him, it lacked the humanity that unites the writer's conscious with the human experience. Furthermore, in his opinion it is unjust to say the best works of art should not be understood by any but a select few. The fact that Rivas Cherif, for one, drew on the philosophy of Tolstoy, therefore, was apt, since "pure", "dehumanized" art, for many Spanish writers, had to yield to the "thrust of reality" which reminded them of their civic duty, thus changing the face of Spanish literature in the pre-Civil War years quite radically.

Just as dehumanized art had Ortega, the movement towards committed literature (*literatura comprometida*) had José Díaz Fernández (1898-1939), whose *El nuevo romanticismo* (*The New Romanticism*) can provide a critique of 1920s' literature in Spain. It appeared in 1930.³⁸ While proclaiming the avant-garde, as it had been known during the 1920s, as dead, it did not entirely disapprove of an avant-

³⁶ Rafael Alberti's *Poesía 1924-1930*, p. 14.

³⁷ C. Rivas Cherif. "Hombres, letras, arte, ideas. Dos preguntas de Tolstoy" ("Man, Writing, Art, Ideas. Two Questions of Tolstoy") in *La Internacional* 2, 45 (27 August 1920): 4.

garde in itself: rather, avant-garde literature was to comprise those who used new forms of literary expression in the cause of social and political affairs. Díaz Fernández called it "New Romanticism", because, in his view, romanticism had not been so much of an exaltation of the individual that it had lost completely its humanity, and he proposed that from the old school should be retrieved its urge towards that which is human, although, in other respects, it was to bear little resemblance to its nineteenth-century manifestation.

It would be useful at this stage to show the distinction between what is known in Spain as "literatura de avanzada" and the Spanish "vanguardia", both of which terms may, on the face of it, be understood as the avant-garde. In fact, the former represents the bridge between the avant-garde in Spain and the rehumanized writing which was kindled towards the end of the 1920s and was in full flame in the 1930s. Díaz Fernández' "New Romanticism" of 1930 was the main exposition of this style of literature and his work "El blocao" ("The Blockade") (1928)³⁹ In essence, Díaz Fernández argued in favour of retaining the style of the avant-garde and turning these in a more socially responsible direction ("rehumanization"). In other words, style should not be sacrificed in the pursuit of social responsibility and political awareness.⁴⁰

In practice, the "rehumanized" literature which was produced in those years turned out to be less pioneering in the stylistic sense than Díaz Fernández had

³⁸ In fact, he had already written about the combination of avant-garde experimentation with "human" themes in "Acerca del arte Nuevo" ("Concerning the New Art") (in *Post-Guerra* I, 4 [25 September 1927]. 6-8) but *El nuevo romanticismo* is his definitive work on the subject.

³⁹ See page 236 of this thesis.

⁴⁰ Further details of the evolution of political commitment in Spanish literature may be gleaned from María Francisca Vilches de Frutos' article "El compromiso en la literatura: La narrativa de los

hoped.⁴¹ Nevertheless, the literary world had opened its eyes to its social and political surroundings. Interestingly, he exalts Russian Futurism and its "most outstanding representative" Mayakovsky as the most serious and fertile of contemporary movements because of its rejection of past forms, for its emphasis on the advent of technology and machinery, but, most of all, because it had produced an avant-garde literature which had a "human" or social basis (31-37, 47).

Political commitment on the part of Spanish writers, coupled with the increasing interest in revolutionary writing and ideas, were manifest in the radical change in published material in the late 1920s and 1930s.⁴² For example, more editions of the *Communist Manifesto* were printed in the period 1930 to 1938 than between its appearance in Spain, in the 1870s, and 1930. Of all the foreign political writings produced in Spain in the 1930s, those of Russian origin – the writings of Lenin, Stalin and Trotsky, for example – exceeded even the Germans Marx and Engels (Ribas 67).

The first of the publishers to foster politically revolutionary writing was Cénit, which operated between 1928 and 1936. Cénit had series entitled "Biblioteca Carlos Marx", "Crítica social", "La novela proletaria" and "Documentos de comunismo", among others, whose titles indicate their content. Indeed, these collections contained the writings of the Marxist theoreticians as well as those of the Russian revolutionary poets and novelists, of which more detail is given in later chapters. There were other foreign writers – French, Chinese, English, North

escritores de la generación del Nuevo Romanticismo" (*Anales de la Literatura Española Contemporánea* 7 [1982]: 31-58).

⁴¹ Few writers followed Díaz Fernández' example as shown in "El blocao". Arconada and Sender are among those few who did.

American and German – in their number. But, as more Spanish writers, both novelists and poets, responded to the call of their political conscience and started to produce works which might also be included under this rubric, these were also prominently featured. Significantly, during the "*bienio negro*" (1933-35), when revolutionary fervour had been intensified by the disappointing failure of the Second Republic leading to hostility towards the most recent rightist government, there was a noticeable increase in activist literature, as contrasted with that which bemoaned the state of contemporary Spain and sought a solution in the Republic. The literature produced now tended to incite to outright revolution.

Not only Cénit, but also the publishing houses Hoy, Ulises and Zeus, which all operated in the same period, arose to promote literature with radical revolutionary content and intent, and Historia Nueva produced a significant series entitled "La novela social". An early enterprise, publishing works for sale at kiosks and bookstores attracting a less erudite readership, was El Cuento Semanal. Begun in 1907, it was a landmark achievement in that it encouraged Spaniards to read, and it popularized its featured authors. In 1930 the series "La novela política" appeared – eleven thirty-one page volumes – as a step in the direction of revolutionary literature, followed in 1931 by a series of sixteen-page booklets called "La novela roja". Between 1932 and 1933 between twenty two and twenty six publications under the collection title "La novela proletaria" were produced, and in 1935 it re-emerged, now featuring some of the acclaimed committed and Communist writers from Spain itself. An organization called *Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones* (CIAP) operated for a short time, warranting mention because, although based in Madrid, it

⁴² It will become ever clearer, as this thesis progresses, who were the main players in the changes and increase in published material and which were the most significant publications.

ran a network across Spain of bookshops and offices which accounted for eighty percent of book distribution.

Between 1909 and 1919, only four thousand books per annum were sold. Taking into consideration that the population of Spain was around twenty million people, this was a shocking statistic, largely explained by the fact that nearly half the adult population was illiterate. It was with the growing political commitment of Spanish intellectuals and the increasing activity of revolutionary groups that the book came to be a major "weapon in the transformation of society" (Fuentes, *Marcha* 29). The rise in book distribution, mentioned in an earlier section of this thesis, which followed was a result of the urgent need to inform a public which otherwise would remain ignorant of motives and methods of social and political change, as well as of the need of individual parties and factions to proselytize on their own account. The "flame of revolution was lit in Andalusia" during the revolutionary period in Russia, between 1918 and 1920:

With their press, their leaflets, books and incessant propaganda walkabouts, anarchist intellectuals, as well as socialists, fanned the flame [of revolution]: the passion to read and learn as a means of fighting to transform society, eradicating inherited injustices, won the hearts of the Andalusians. (Fuentes, *Marcha* 30)

It was reported that "they were always reading: at night in their farmhouses, in the daytime in the workplace; during breaks you'd always see the same sight – a worker reading and the others listening very attentively."⁴³ In other words, political revolution went hand-in-hand with cultural revolution, a trend which continued to grow until the outbreak of the Civil War. The book boom of the 1930s was complemented by the institution of book fairs (especially from 1933) which brought titles to the streets – to the people – rather than leaving the impetus with the people to

visit the bookstores; it was also proof of the growing interest in reading (Mainer, "La corona" 128-99).

The need to get information rapidly into people's hands resulted in the emergence of literary journals with a strong political inclination.⁴⁴ The ideological intensity felt by committed writers was apparent in the journals in which they collaborated. In essence, this signalled a "Goodbye to 'pure' journals with ineffable verse and clever prose, launched into space like arrows perfectly aimed at a select minority!"⁴⁵ The journal *Post-Guerra*,⁴⁶ was not slow to draw on the example of the literary output of both pre- and post-revolutionary Russia. The *Post-Guerra* editors were aware of playing a pioneering role in publishing. Their first editorial acknowledged the significance of the times – the maelstrom following the First World War; the continuing struggles in such countries as China, on the one hand, and the political and social *fait accompli* in Russia on the other; the decadence of capitalism throughout the world; and Spain's own confused and restless politics. *Post-Guerra's* aim, they maintained, was to make this dramatic hour in history comprehensible, and to take on two goals – "to reflect on the implications of current affairs" and "to stimulate all who are capable of thinking to do so."⁴⁷ It was in this

⁴³ Juan Díaz del Moral. *Historia de las agitaciones campesinas andaluzas (The History of Andalusian Peasant Revolts)*. Madrid: Alianza, 1967. 285.

⁴⁴ The fact of an increase in journals has been noted earlier in this thesis. Here, however, we discuss the atmosphere which gave rise to the increase in book sales and journal publication. Spanish political life has traditionally relied on the publication of periodicals; the emergence of periodicals fusing political and literary interests is, therefore, no surprise. Alongside the left-wing periodicals of the late 1920s and 30s, there were also those of socialist, Christian Democrat and Fascist orientation.

⁴⁵ See Pedro Garfias' "Los escritores y el momento: literatura tendenciosa" ("Writers and the Moment: Tendentious Literature") in *Heraldo de Madrid* (22 June 1933).

⁴⁶ See page 20 of this thesis.

⁴⁷ *Post-Guerra* I, 1 (25 June 1927): 1.

journal that Díaz Fernández wrote about the "new art" and that M. González Fernández wrote about the need to return "*a lo humano*" (to that which is human).⁴⁸

In the years 1930 and 1931, the journal *Nueva España* appeared, cast in much the same mould as *Post-Guerra*. Its declared role in the revolutionary education of its time was "to bring art to the masses, to create an art for the masses, to incorporate the masses in literature is the ideological and aesthetic imperative repeated time and time again in the journal" (Fuentes, *Marcha*, 55). It was directed by some of the signatories⁴⁹ of a declaration of commitment following the "University problem" in 1929⁵⁰ and subsequently stated that

Every artist in control of his beliefs and expression knows that the literature he creates must serve the interests of his time using all the means his art offers him. The writer thus possesses the independence necessary to serve the ideals of justice and right to which new generations aspire. Tomorrow's society has to be served by that of today [...] What is required of the writer of the left is that he shape into artistic form all those conflicts which originate in the domination of modern man, with the object of achieving a new civilization.⁵¹

The power of literature is fully acknowledged in the text. The power of those with the ability to produce literary creations is likewise made clear.

⁴⁸ In issues I, 4 (1927) and II, 10 (1928) respectively.

⁴⁹ Notably Díaz Fernández and Antonio Espina. They were closely linked to the *Partido Republicano Radical Socialista* (Radical Socialist Republican Party). From issue 9, Joaquín Arderfus, a communist, joined the committee. Contributors to the journal included communist intellectuals such as Julián Gorkín, Juan Rejano, Isidoro Acevedo, and, later, César Arconada, Ramón J. Sender and Fernández Armesto.

⁵⁰ In Spring 1929, students and academics protested against new laws for the education system. Some universities closed and some academics resigned their posts. Subsequently, several intellectuals, mainly writers, signed a petition declaring that "Spanish intellectuals, especially the young ones, felt obliged to define their different political stances and leave behind that apoliticism, that detachment (at times reprehensible) which had caused them to divorce themselves from the most profound problems of life in Spain." (Ortega y Gasset, José. *Obras completas*. Vol. 11. Madrid: Alianza, 1983. 102.)

⁵¹ "Los escritores de izquierdas" ("Leftist Writers") in *Nueva España* I, 27 (December 1930): 1.

Octubre – a journal described in an earlier section of the thesis in a different context – was one of the pioneering, radically left-wing literary journals of those years.⁵² Enrique Montero places the appearance of the periodical in "a proletarian culture inspired, more or less directly, by the example and experiences of the Soviet Union, an area in which *Octubre* comes to stand out" (ix). The journal, which ran from 1933 to 1934, showed the commitment of its collaborators to the spread of a definite message to the proletariat: "its first objectives were didactic and planned; everything is secondary to making the rural and industrial proletariat aware of their social situation [...] and of political agitation" (Lechner 72). Its advance issue made clear that it was to be the expression of revolutionary writers and artists: it filled "the need for a common mouthpiece to unite the voices and forces of revolutionary literature"; its collaborators saw their enterprise as a job of work, a duty and a mission (1). It was not officially affiliated to any one political group – its main support was for the Unión de Escritores y Artistas Revolucionarios⁵³ (Union of Revolutionary Writers and Artists) – but its political stance was generally against the "imperialist" war and fascism, in defence of the USSR. It aspired to work together with the proletariat. In literary terms, its stance was to encourage the young generation of writers and artists to revolutionary commitment; to focus on representing the proletariat; to bring the revolutionary literature of the world to the reading public's attention, but to highlight, above all, Soviet writing and art "since it is in this country, where Socialism has triumphed, that the problems and development of the arts follow a quite distinct path" (1). In his front-page May-Day greeting, Xavier Abril established the importance of October, not only as a local anniversary,

⁵² It should be pointed out that there is the possibility that *Octubre* received funding from Moscow.

but as a world-wide phenomenon, of Lenin, and of the Soviet Union, the only country which was able to celebrate revolution as a *fait accompli*.

The new art had two aims: first, to explore the disquiet and concerns of contemporary Spain, and, second, to propose solutions. It was the reflection of the idealism, and even, in certain cases, the optimism many felt. As noted earlier, political commitment in itself had no specific partisan bias: individuals chose their own political stance, and, as a consequence, there were both left- and right-wing committed writers. Nevertheless, the majority of those who became politically committed chose to align themselves with leftist factions and ideologies, and some of these chose Marxism.⁵⁴

When it came to shaping political commitment, and, specifically, Marxist ideology, into creative works, what methods did Spanish writers use? Categorically opposed to the dehumanized writing of the 1920s, writers at the turn of the 1930s sought, in theory, an avant-garde art that served the realities of human life, as shown in Díaz Fernández' "New Romanticism" theory. Dehumanized art had been "a long way from the social and political life; a long way from being an instrument of propaganda and edification" (Cano Ballesta, *1930-1936* 37). From 1931 onwards, however, writing became more openly revolutionary and proletarian. The *novela social* (social novel) emerged, along with several subdivisions, such as the *novela proletaria* (proletarian novel) and the *novela revolucionaria* (revolutionary novel). The movement incorporating the social novel did not conform to the philosophy of a homogeneous group with a central figure, as have so many other movements;

⁵³ The Spanish branch of the Soviet RAPP (Russian Association of Proletarian Writers) formed in 1931.

⁵⁴ As has been inferred elsewhere in this chapter, such writers included Alberti, Arderfús, Sender and Arconada. These and other writers are discussed in more detail in Part Two of this thesis.

nevertheless, there was a solidarity among the exponents of the genre, based, as it was, on a cause transcending self-interest. In practice, individual novelists sought forms that would best accommodate the socially and politically motivated content:

Everything depended on the skill of the author – be it lesser or greater – and their capacity to adapt to the new method, assimilating in a creative way (without falling into the trap of being excessively simplistic and mimetic) the innovations and the very demands of the genre (prototypes of classes characters were representing, making the masses the protagonist, etc). That is how it happened, and, therefore, when we examine examples of the genre, we find a great variety of techniques and styles, accompanied by a quality that was generally quite acceptable. (Esteban and Santonja 11)

However, Spanish social novels of the 1930s had in common certain characteristics. They were realist and mimetic, frequently documentary or testimonial in form. Social novels were to be set in the countryside, the street, the mines, the factory and workshop, although this was not a sure indicator of the genre, since they must have as their objective the exposure of social and political situations, or demonstration of the struggle of the writer to fulfil his civic duty through his writing. Time had a future perspective as opposed to the previous anchorage of narrative time in the present. There was also a tendency to make the masses the central character, often doing away with a single protagonist, and, at the conclusion of the novel, to portray either the victory of the oppressors (a more realistic ending) or of the oppressed (a rather more optimistic outlook), and in some, exile was an option, based on the reality of the situation in Spain. Narrative was stripped of artificial devices that would only distract the reader unaccustomed to high literature. Symbolism, for example, was used in ways which were unchallenging – animalization of characters (good and bad) was a common method of illustrating dominant characteristics – and characters were frequently "black" or "white", good or bad, predictably polarized.

Novels often relied heavily on dialogue. There was a strong tendency to rhetoric and agitative dialogue, owing to the political basis of the novels, and popular

speech was generally preferred for both its ease of comprehension and its depiction of reality among the working classes. In descriptive prose passages, it was not unusual for writers to use the natural elements to support a mood or event. It was an appropriate method, since, by and large, the most dramatic atrocities they wished to represent were committed in rural Spain, the home of the majority of the population, and the audience they wished to attract⁵⁵ would be both familiar with, and drawn to, such features of life and nature.

The novel was not the only genre to be moulded by political affairs.

The novel is, of course, the contemporary genre in which is shown most intensively the demands of history on culture, the manner of writing where critical events of our epoch have their most direct impact; but the other literary forms respond in a similar way to the same material stimuli. (Bosch 41)

Poetry presented an arguably greater challenge when it came to incorporating political ideology. Traditionally, verse attracted more experimental aesthetic devices, and, when these were restricted, owing to a privileging of content, poetry was in greater danger of losing its attraction, and, as we will later see, under these circumstances, took on a different function. Nevertheless, poetry has been used as a vehicle for political thought throughout history, and, as the most lyrical expression of the feelings and emotions of humankind in verbal form, political poetry presents arguably the most satisfying challenge. The greatest challenge of all was not so much to make social criticism in poetry, or even to appeal for change, but to present Marxist reality in poetry.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ The audience, at that time, would comprise not only readers, but also listeners, since texts were at times read to those who were illiterate.

⁵⁶ In future chapters, this will be shown in greater detail. Vladimir Mayakovsky, perhaps, demonstrated the problem, notably in the lifelong struggle between his inherent lyricism and his ideological need to write propaganda.

Part 2 of this thesis will examine specific works of Spanish literature from the 1920s and 30s, written by politically committed writers such as Alberti, Arderius and Sender, mentioned in this chapter who were viewed by the Soviets as part of their foreign "army" and who, in turn, looked to the USSR, for a period of time at least, not only for encouragement regarding the successful fulfilment of their beliefs and aspirations in Spain, but also for the inspiration they could gain from their Soviet Russian colleagues.

In the meantime, however, there is one remaining question to answer. What was the Russian literature that Spaniards in the 1920s and 30s read? What did the most popular Russian writers stand for? The following section provides the answers to these questions.

1.4 Literary Contexts: the Russian Legacy

Having firmly established in earlier sections of this thesis that the 1920s and 30s saw an increase of published Russian works in Spain, and having examined the political, social and literary atmosphere in which this phenomenon took place, this section of the thesis focuses on Russian writers and works which were of greatest interest to Spain's reading public and to its men of letters in that pre-Civil War period.

Given the huge body of remarkable writing, both pre- and post-revolutionary, that has come out of Russia, even under the rubric of revolutionary writing alone, it goes without saying that constraints of time and space prevent anything but a survey of the most notable of its achievements, confined yet further to those which had special impact in Spain. This section takes into consideration, therefore, the authors and works which were of interest in the context of their dissemination in that country. As the chapter will show, some of those considered to have revolutionary appeal in Spain may not have had a revolutionary agenda in their writing;¹ others, especially in the Soviet period, were writing with the Revolution very much in mind.²

Earlier sections of the thesis have cited the data concerning the authors who enjoyed greatest popularity in Spain during the period under consideration. With

¹ It should be noted from this paragraph that this thesis is not attempting to make the generalization that all nineteenth-century Russian literature was revolutionary. However, it should be noted that regardless of this it is possible for any reader – in this case, Spanish readers – to arrive at the conclusion that a piece of Russian writing is revolutionary, in spite of the fact that technically it cannot be classed as such.

² It is very important to keep in mind that this chapter should not be understood as a comprehensive guide to Russian literature *per se*. It has been composed with the reception of Russian literature in Spain in mind and authors and works have been selected which are considered to have had an impact in Spain.

reference to specifically *pre-revolutionary* Russian writers who were in evidence in Spain in the period up to 1928, Pablo Gil Casado mentioned Fedor Dostoevsky as "the most popular novelist, judging by the number of books published (twenty seven titles), followed by Leonid Andreev (nine), Maxim Gorky (nine), Lev Tolstoy (seven) and Anton Chekhov (three)"³ (132-34). During this time, Soviet revolutionary writers, such as Leonid Leonov and Konstantin Fedin, represent but few publications. The profile of popular authors changed somewhat in the period 1928-1936, however, during which time there was a substantial increase in the number of translations of Soviet Russian works with authors such as Il'ia Ehrenburg, Vsevolod Ivanov, Boris Pil'niak, Fedor Gladkov, Leonov and Fedin becoming well known in Spanish (Gil Casado 132-34). These statistics raise certain questions.

For example, continuing into the 1930s, the number of Dostoevsky's works translated and published in Spain substantially exceeded that of any other Russian author. As we have seen in previous sections of this thesis, the "popularity of Tolstoi and Dostoevskii in the Hispanic World parallels their prestige elsewhere", but, whereas Tolstoy's popularity abroad began in the late 1880s, Dostoevsky's, "after a modest initial vogue, began after World War I" (Schanzer xvi). This was echoed by the reception of his works in Spain (Schanzer xiv). Dostoevsky's enduring status in the canon of world-acclaimed literature testifies to his genius and to his appeal. In Spain, indeed, he had abiding popularity. It is necessary for this section of the thesis, therefore, to start by asking why Dostoevsky's work enjoyed this enduring popularity in Spain and maintained its popularity even during a period when there was a change of profile in what was selected for translation and publication.

³ It should be noted that Gil Casado was in error in referring to Chekhov as a novelist.

It is also true to say, however, that the "success of Russian literature is not only due to the constellation of Tolstoi, Dostoevskii, Gorkii, and Turgenev" because "in the same sky Chekhov, Andreev, and Gogol also shine"; the popularity of Andreev is somewhat unexpected (Schanzer xvi). Andreev's work certainly attracted a great deal of attention in Spain in the 1920s: all the large publishing houses of the time printed translations of it. Between 1919 and 1925 the publishers Calpe alone had seven volumes, including more than thirty individual works, in their catalogue. In 1932 George Portnoff wrote that "Andreev has had, and continues to enjoy, great success in Spain. For a long time one of his best-known stories was one of the main subjects of discussion in the Ateneo and the intellectual *tertulias* in the cafés" (46). According to Gil Casado, in the period 1920 to 1928 Andreev was second only to Dostoevsky in terms of works published in Spain (132-34). Andreev, therefore, must be a subject of this discussion.

When the profile of authors popular in Spain changed somewhat in the period 1928-1936, however, during which time there was a substantial increase in the number of translations of Soviet Russian fictional works, the pre-revolutionary writers other than Dostoevsky were usurped by relatively new names from the Soviet Union. The diffusion of politically orientated Russian works in the 1920s and 30s, was not confined to the immensely popular propagandist and theoretical writings of Lenin, Stalin and Trotsky; the "bibliographical analysis of the 1920s, and above all, the 1930s, demands reference to the massive surge of Soviet [novels, poetry and drama] on the Spanish publishing scene" (Ribas 70).

One Spanish visitor to the Soviet Union in 1932, the poet Alberti, noticed that on Russian bookshelves were books by "Lenin, Stalin, Krilenko (*sic*),⁴ Gorky, Molotov, Marx and Engels, Leonov, Gorky, Gorky, Gorky..." and added: "Gorky! Gorky! [...] Gorky, fêted and read by the factory workers, peasants and the Red Army soldiers" (Alberti, *Prosas* 145). In Spain, too, Gorky was regarded as a figurehead in the promotion of political commitment in literature, despite claims that his contribution to the development of Soviet literature was, in reality, exaggerated. But a substantial number of the early Soviet writers found a willing readership in Spain, with works by the aforementioned Ehrenburg, Ivanov, Leonov, Pil'niak, Gladkov and Fedin becoming well known (Gil Casado 132-34). It has been recorded that the exploits of Furmanov's fictional hero Chapaev

inspired the heroic Spanish nation and the combatants of the International Brigade. The name of Chapaev was appropriated by one of the best battalions of the Brigade and its theme song ended with the words: "We're all sons of Chapaev! We're all fighting against Hitler and Franco. Forward, into the attack, storm troopers!" (Balashova 82-3)

Alberti wrote that Fadeev, Ivanov, Gladkov, Inber, Tret'iakov, Ogniev, Kirshon, Aseev, Pasternak, Kirsanov, Kamenskii and Bezymenskii were all read in Spain (*Prosas* 151). He also makes significant comment on the prestige of lyricist Mikhail Svetlov, a relatively lightweight writer who apparently impressed, even inspired some Spaniards, and whose poem "Grenada" (1926) was very popular in the Soviet Union in the aftermath of the Civil War between the Reds and Whites. Vladimir Mayakovsky, who called himself the Soldier Poet of the Revolution and who committed suicide in 1930, achieved legendary status in terms of the example he set in using the pen as an ideological weapon; if Alberti omitted his name from the list

⁴ Alberti probably meant Korolenko.

above, the reason may well have been that Mayakovsky's mastery of the Russian spoken on the street made his writing extremely difficult, if not at times impossible, to translate effectively. Nevertheless, his reputation was well known in Spain.

This section describes, therefore, not only the works of Dostoevsky and Andreev, but also those of Gorky, Mayakovsky and other Soviet writers, in order to attempt an explanation for their reception in Spain in the 1920s and 30s.

Of all the European literatures, it is arguably that of Russia that has the greatest reputation for its role as reporter and commentator on its time, and for its revolutionary dimension. Russian philosophical thought has frequently been reflected in its fiction, and Russian writers have often been numbered amongst the nation's thinkers and philosophers. In turn, a major factor in Russian thought was its preoccupation with social and political conditions, and, at times when intellectuals felt especially frustrated, even oppressed, this often led to talk of revolution. By the mid-nineteenth century "it had become literally true that the main purpose of Russian literature was to disclose the potential for revolution in Russian society" (Freeborn 3). Fedor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky (1821–1881) started his writing career during this period. He is, according to one Spanish scholar, "without doubt, the universally best known Russian author" and his great body of work is known equally well throughout the world for its "love of the downtrodden and disinherited", its "pathetic characters torn apart by internal contradictions, swinging between good and evil, tenderness and cruelty, repentance and sin", and, furthermore, "the Christian love which pardons all" (Sánchez Puig 60).

His career was remarkable for the fact that his popularity escalated quite dramatically some decades after his death. This pattern was echoed in Spain, where

he remained in first place, in terms of works published, throughout the twenties and thirties, in spite of a quite radical change in reading tastes at the beginning of the thirties. Why was he consistently the most popular Russian author in Spain throughout that period? Part of the answer must lie in discovering what was his appeal to Europeans generally in the first decades of the twentieth century.

There seems very little doubt that what attracted Europeans generally to Dostoevsky's writing, in the aftermath of the First World War, was its relevance to many of the issues of concern to the world of that time. He addressed universal themes. It has been said of him that his "steady concentration upon what is universally and basically human reveals an intellectual and spiritual complexity which is the essential characteristic of self-awareness"; he "introduces his reader to a deeper psychological understanding of man in general and reveals the fundamental principle of all-forgiving and all-embracing love", thus enabling the human race to be more fully understood (Pachmuss 34-35). Dostoevsky pre-dated Freud in his study of the subconscious and the significance of dreams, and he heralded Nietzsche's theory of man's will-to-power. He was precursor of the twentieth-century philosophy of existentialism (Pachmuss 22). Dostoevsky's treatment of this more universal theme – existentialism – in this and in subsequent writing, probably contributes to the popularity of his work in the twentieth century. As well as its acknowledged connection with existentialism, the term "Underground Man", based on the work *Zapiski iz podpol'ia (Notes from Underground)* (1864), has been adopted by various schools of twentieth-century literature and philosophy:

The themes and motifs of *Notes from Underground*, the personality and ideas of its protagonist, find echoes throughout the late 19th and 20th centuries in works centred on the problems of the alienated individual, desperately trying to formulate

a social and philosophical outlook that would buttress his position in a hostile world. (Jackson 17)

Dostoevsky's *Underground Man*, a character who was seminal to those in the later, mature works, is a "prototype for a modern existentialist hero" whose entire life is "one continuous attempt to make contact with the world and with himself", yet he is "isolated, unable to act", "a social zero" (Jackson 14).

Dostoevsky's contribution to philosophy, as a principal precursor of twentieth-century existentialist thought, is one aspect of his greatness; his understanding of what can bring humans to revolution is another. He was closely linked to the revolutionary movements of his day, although by no means always in support of them. He was, for example, violently opposed to radicalism, socialism, revolution, positivism, atheism and every other intellectual "ism" coming into Russia from Western Europe. What this exposition of Dostoevsky's works explores is how it came to be that Spanish readers could conceive this Russian writer as revolutionary.⁵

Dostoevsky had as dramatic a life as those of his fictional characters. A well-respected Spanish literary historian, Augusto Vidal, has commented that

Dostoevsky brought to his works what life served up for him. But his life is one of those human lives that was out of this world, always close to extremes, sometimes at the threshold of non-existence, as much for his physical makeup – he was an epileptic – as for the personal and social circumstances in which he became involved [...] In few writers are works and life so intimately bound as in him. It is not often that a writer's biography brings us closer to an understanding of his work as in this great Russian novelist. (9)

⁵ Constraints of time and space in this thesis do not allow a general discussion of the question of the theme of revolution in Dostoevsky's thought and writing. This thesis is confined solely to the concept of Dostoevsky in Spain of the 1920s and 30s.

The experiences of real life found their way into his fictional writing. Revolutionary activity on his part had caused a horrific mock execution (1849)⁶ and ten-year exile in Siberia (1849-59)⁷; and his rebellion, in writing and in real life, against the fashionable philosophies of his time with which he disagreed, was nothing short of audacious.⁸

Interestingly, after his exile, and in a period, the late nineteenth century, in which revolution in Russia was becoming more than talk, he was a supporter of neither Marxist socialism nor the radical factions, and, indeed, he took a firm stand against radical politics and violent revolution. His stance is shown most acutely in that section of *Brat'ia Karamazovy* (*The Brothers Karamazov*)⁹ which is called "Velikii inkvizitor" ("Grand Inquisitor"), a part of the novel which had unique appeal to Spaniards, and, probably for that reason, has frequently been published in that country as a separate, short work.

The novel, his last work, and arguably the finest of Dostoevsky's writing, is a multi-faceted study. A man is murdered and one of his three legitimate sons is wrongly sentenced for the crime. This son, Dmitrii, submits to the false accusation and sentence, as if they were punishment for previous undetected crimes, and, true to one of Dostoevsky's favourite themes, in his submission (to the punishment of penal servitude in Siberia) and humility he finds salvation and rapturous spiritual rebirth.

⁶ This is shown to best effect in *Idiot* (*The Idiot*) (1863).

⁷ For a good example of this, see *Zapiski iz mertvogo doma* (*Notes from the House of the Dead*) (1859).

⁸ His mature works tended to advance his argument with the utilitarians and social determinists of his day, for example. His chief adversary in this area was Nikolai Chernyshevskii, a journalist and novelist. A fundamental theme of *Prestuplenie i nakazanie* (*Crime and Punishment*) (1866) was to illustrate the foolhardiness, as Dostoevsky saw it, of these ideas.

⁹ *Brat'ia Karamazovy* was published in Spanish in 1918 by Maucci (Tr. Francisco Canadas) and and in 1925 by Sempere (Tr. F. Azzati), as well as other versions throughout the 1920s and 30s.

The "Velikii inkvizitor" story is born of the fascination Ivan, one of the three brothers, has for the ramifications of the existence, or otherwise, of God. It comprises what the author describes as a "poem" that Ivan had composed sometime in the past, and which he now relates to his spiritually-minded younger brother Alesha concerning the visit of Christ to Seville during the time of the Spanish Inquisition. In Ivan's poem, the Grand Inquisitor, seeing the miraculous work and compassion of Christ among the people, arrests Him; His return threatens the fear and obedience the Church has implanted in the people. In making this decision, the Inquisitor has been ruled by reason; later, because of the risk that Christ will threaten the control of the Church, the Inquisitor even considers making Christ, although the professed leader of his Church, a victim of the Inquisition. It may be that Dostoevsky's challenge to the authority of the Catholic Church, which he abhorred, held a certain fascination for a nation whose history had been dominated by that very authority.

In the novel, the focus of Ivan's poem is the Inquisitor's monologue to Christ, who maintains a deliberate watchful silence throughout. Christ's New Testament promises of freedom of faith and the reward of the Kingdom of God for the faithful have, in the Inquisitor's view, created chaos, enmity and social and moral disorder. It has been the role of the Church, in pursuit of the restoration of order, and in its role as successor to Christ, gradually to rescind the freedom Christ gave:

You wanted man's free love so that he should follow you freely, fascinated and captivated by you. Instead of the strict ancient law, man had in future to decide for himself with a free heart what was good and what was evil, having only your image before him as a guide. But did it really not occur to you that he would end by renouncing and questioning even your image and your truth, if he were oppressed by such a burden as freedom of choice? (book 5, chapter 5)

Christ had been tempted three times in the wilderness by the Devil. In the third temptation, Christ would not take rulership of all the kingdoms of the world, as

offered by Satan: instead, he preferred to let people use their freedom of choice. In his recounting of the third temptation, the Inquisitor confesses that the Church has gone over to the power of Satan and away from Christ: it has wrested from Satan what was offered to Christ in the wilderness – control over the kingdoms of the world. For Dostoevsky, there was little difference in essence between Catholicism and socialism, and Ivan, who gives the Inquisitor his words (and, by implication, his beliefs), is not advocating Catholicism: his aim is to achieve the social order which can only be attained by socialism. By virtue of fictional licence, therefore, the Catholic Inquisitor of the sixteenth century is able to cite the words of a British socialist of the nineteenth century quoted by Herzen, thus cementing the link between the two. "Velikii inkvizitor" exposes a fundamental concern of Dostoevsky: that socialist Utopia will inevitably lead to political tyranny.¹⁰ His vision became reality in the twentieth century.

In fact, it is partly because of Dostoevsky's uncanny predictions about the future that his writing has been valued so long after his death. In the 1870s he predicted that the world would go through a transition period marked by shocks, doubts and negations, scepticism and vacillations concerning fundamental convictions; that a "nightmare" and a general madness would beset the world; and that something monumental, elemental and awesome would change the face of the world, or, at least,

¹⁰ "Velikii inkvizitor", representing what its fictional author believed, but all that the novel's biographical author vehemently loathed, was so skilfully written that it became more persuasive of Ivan's point of view than Dostoevsky liked to think. The novel contains a refutation of "Velikii inkvizitor" (book 6, chapters 2, 3) in the form of extracts from the life and teachings of Alesha's Orthodox mentor, Father Zosima. It has sometimes been held as inferior, and consequently less persuasive than Dostoevsky intended. In Zosima were supposed to be found the Christian Orthodox ideals the author supported and admired.

of Old Europe.¹¹ It may be true to say that much that he hoped for, in all his writings, has not occurred, but his words are difficult to dismiss. It has been written that

Dostoevsky has borne witness to [...] a great number of questions which preoccupy us today, both individually and collectively. We have witnessed the evolution of the underground *man*; the growing climate of doubt and anxiety surrounding the human being in his attempt to know himself; the continued search today for values he initiated; the immersion into risky prophecies anticipating the consequences of applying certain ideologies which were at that time embryonic. (Serrano Poncela 9-10)¹²

Nevertheless, he wrote and spoke quite specifically about matters uniquely concerning Russia. His principal concern was the philosophical and political controversy of his day. In this respect, he was of the same mind as some of the revolutionaries who espoused Pan-Slavism; as such, he was more akin to the Slavophiles, and Orthodox mentality, passionately opposed to Europeanization and Catholicism. Nevertheless, the element of Dostoevsky's world-view which was not in line with revolutionaries of his day was his insistence on including God in the equation. He had been sent into exile as punishment for subversive activity against Nicholas I's regime; he returned from exile with a religious mission. For him, Holy Russia's mission was to be not simply the only God-fearing nation of Europe, but also the instrument of God in the fulfilment of his will on earth. He strongly believed that salvation came only through the complete moral transformation of human nature by means of love, suffering and Christ. In the 1860s he espoused the "cult of the soil" (*pochvennichestvo*) – the return to the land and, particularly, those who lived closest

¹¹ See *A Writer's Diary. Volume 1: 1873-1876*. Trans. by Kenneth Lantz. Illinois: Quartet, 1993.

¹² It is interesting to note that at the end of the twentieth century, Mario Vargas Llosa wrote: "Poor Mother Russia! To understand her, [...] it is necessary to continue reading Dostoevsky – *The Possessed* is a novel of absolute relevance to today." (*El País Digital* [26 December 1999]: 1-3. 3)

to it. With reference to the mock execution he experienced in 1849¹³ he wrote in 1876 that

During these final moments, some of us (I know this for certain) instinctively withdrew into ourselves and, in examining our whole, still so young lives, did repent of certain of our meaner actions. [...] [What changed our views, convictions and hearts, however,] was the direct contact with the People, the brotherly union with them in common misfortune.¹⁴

He considered the Russian peasant as the moral ideal to which Russian intellectuals should aspire, and held that their alienation from what the Russian peasantry stood for, along with the admittance of Western reason, civilization and political ideas, had been the downfall of Russian society.¹⁵

Robert Louis Jackson suggests that it is because Dostoevsky is so profoundly national and Russian that his appeal is so universal and international, and that "[h]ardly a writer or thinker of importance", as a consequence, "has escaped his influence – moral, spiritual, aesthetic or philosophical" ("Dostoevsky" 5). Paradoxically, for several decades Dostoevsky did not enjoy the same high level of respect at home as he attained abroad.¹⁶ In the Soviet era, his work became more and more taboo; even in

¹³ On 22 December 1849, having been tried and sentenced *in absentia*, and after months of imprisonment in the infamous Peter and Paul Fortress, he and twenty associates were led out on to Semenovskiy Square in St. Petersburg to face a firing-squad. They had been condemned to death for attending meetings of one of the more radical of the discussion groups strongly opposed to the existing regime. Standing before the execution squad, the prisoners believed they were about to die. At the very last moment, however, their sentences were commuted. Dostoevsky spent about ten years in imprisonment and exile in Siberia.

¹⁴ See *A Writer's Diary Volume 1*, page 289.

¹⁵ This was emphasised in his speech on the unveiling of the new Pushkin monument in Moscow in 1881. He regarded Pushkin as the embodiment of Russian national consciousness, and used the occasion not only to praise the poet, but also, by reference to his writing, to express disapproval for the spiritual bankruptcy of the intelligentsia, for the reasons given.

¹⁶ In post-Soviet Russia Dostoevsky has become much more popular.

the 1920s, when there was relative freedom to discuss the merits, or otherwise, of past masters, there was a dilemma. While Dostoevsky had delivered a clear indictment of Tsarist Russia and had called for social change, on the basis of human brotherhood and equality, his philosophy had little to do with Bolshevism or Marxist socialism and was unmistakably incompatible with militant atheism. As Stalin became increasingly restrictive, Dostoevsky studies were regarded with increasing hostility.

On the other hand, abroad, he had a mere handful of negative critics, and his reception in the West has been overwhelmingly positive (Jackson, "Dostoevsky" 7).¹⁷ It is interesting to note that Dostoevsky was severely critical of Western Europe, to the point of alleged xenophobia; despite his hatred of socialism, he was as scathing about the materialism, egoism and individualism of the West.¹⁸ "[h]ere Marx and Dostoevsky meet" (Jackson, "Dostoevsky" 7). His belief in the true value of the peasantry, those who, for him, embody the essence of a nation, had positive resonance among those who desperately longed for a return to these values in their own countries. *Brat'ia Karamazovy*, in particular, had special appeal: it is a portrait of human alienation and an exposé of the inadequacy of rationality; its representation of a divided and unstable world, and its attempt to explore a core of permanent values that would resolve the instability, were elements which perfectly reflected the endeavours and aspirations of investigative thinking in the early twentieth century. The dire warning embedded in the core of the novel – that promises of freedom, justice and equality by some institution will probably end in totalitarian order and control – have undoubtedly contributed to the appeal Dostoevsky has had in the twentieth century. The Grand Inquisitor's words to Christ –

¹⁷ Notable critics include Joseph Conrad and D. H. Lawrence.

In receiving loaves from us they will, of course, clearly see that we are taking these loaves, made by their own hands, from them in order to distribute them back to them with no miracle involved at all. They will see that we have not turned stones into loaves, but they will in truth be more pleased at receiving them from our hands than at getting the bread itself! (book 5, chapter 5)

- had rather shocking realisation in the twentieth century.

It is easy to see why Dostoevsky would appeal to uneasy Spanish intellectuals. The "willingness to 'represent terrible and questionable things' [as Nietzsche wrote about Dostoevsky], this philosophical realism, this fearlessness, this readiness to face reality – to avoid distorting it even when he wished to see it differently" is what had distinguished his art (Jackson, "Dostoevsky" 9). Dostoevsky provided no silver lining for the clouds he portrayed. He was unashamedly frank about the universal facts of life, as well as the state of contemporary Russia. Yet in his ability to face the reality of human existence, he was neither pessimistic nor resigned: his work betrays extraordinary passion, in spite of the harshness of the reality he describes, and it is his passion, coupled with integrity, that has cemented his appeal.

Tolstoy, Chekhov, Gogol, and Turgenev rank alongside Dostoevsky in the forefront of Russia's cultural exports. In Spain, however, the fame acquired by Leonid Nikolevich Andreev (1871-1919) ranked him second only to Dostoevsky in terms of works published and interest in his writing has been maintained until the present day. His work was valued for its psychological content and for its support of, even encouragement to, revolutionary activity. In 1919, Spanish poet Emilio Prados wrote of his readings of Andreev: "what's impressed me most has been *El médico loco* (*The Mad Doctor*). I've found in Kerzhentsev things I find in myself! [...] I feel more

¹⁸ The anti-West feeling is especially transparent in *Igrok* (*The Gambler*) (1866).

and more attracted to [the Russians] and their ideals" (*Diario íntimo* 17-18). We should remember from an earlier section of this thesis that the poet Alberti singled out Andreev as one of the Russian writers who had a great impact on him in his twenties: "Gogol, Goncharov, Korolenko, Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Andreev... they all disturbed my days and nights" and there was

one novel in particular that profoundly influenced young Spanish intellectuals among whom there already existed strong and violent inclinations towards anarchism: *Sashka Zhegulev* by Andreev, an author who had recently died [i.e. 1919] in Finland, far removed from Lenin's revolution, which he never really understood. I was among those youths who were whipped up by the heroic and adventurous Sasha. (*Arboleda perdida* 1 178)

Andreev's death gave two ideologically opposed Spanish newspapers reason to clash. In a front-page article in June 1920, *El Sol* revealed that the Bolsheviks had been afraid of the influence of Andreev, and that his death had relieved the police of a traitor and potential threat to the new state. The response of *La Internacional* was to print a photograph, allegedly brought out of Russia by an English journalist, purportedly proving that the Bolshevik State undoubtedly permitted the Russian people to mourn publicly the death of the then famous writer.¹⁹ The high esteem in which the Communist broadsheet held Andreev is demonstrated by the prominent front-page obituary granted him: "His genius as a writer avenged the miserable", they wrote, "and made the world gain in admiration for the martyrs and apostles of the great revolutionary ideologies."²⁰

Some literary critics have compared the work of Andreev with that of Dostoevsky, with varying results. Aspects of his writing do, indeed, bring to mind his

¹⁹ See "El fin trágico de Leónidas Andreyev" ("The Tragic End of Leonid Andreev") in *El Sol* III, 900 (22 June 1920): 1 and "A la muerte de Andreev" ("At the Death of Andreev") in *La Internacional* II, 37 (2 July 1920): 5.

illustrious precursor, and, in some respects, he may have walked in Dostoevsky's footsteps. In *Conversaciones literarias 1915-1920 (Literary Conversations 1915-1920)* Spanish critic Enrique Díez-Canedo pointed out that "the comparison with Dostoevsky is fair": both writers, in his view, put social issues in second place, after their preoccupation with the individual, since both were "incisive psychologists, with the same tendency to analyse the abnormal states of the soul", and he concluded that "Andreev is like a vigorous shoot from that great tree" (255-56). By contrast, Pedro Rocamora, writing some fifty years later, asserted that "no-one today admits the possible influence of Dostoevsky or Poe" in Andreev's works (56). If there is a similarity in themes, he argued, it is only due to the coincidence of time and circumstance – that all the Russian writers of the pre-revolutionary era addressed the theme of revolt, but each in his own unmistakable style. Among the many and diverse literary paths of pre-revolutionary Russia, he wrote, is found that of Andreev, whose work "is like a spattering of mud on the windows of the gold-domed palaces" (55). Yet Jackson has successfully demonstrated the links between Dostoevsky's Underground Man and Andreev's characters.

Andreev developed the realism of Dostoevsky. His stories and plays, like Dostoevsky's novels, were frequently founded on political events or social issues of the day. But the overwhelming lack of hope in the majority of Andreev's works, even those he wrote as a young man, betrays his own bleak outlook as opposed to Dostoevsky's tendency towards optimism. Kaun makes the point that "whereas Dostoyevsky surrounded disease, crime and suffering with the halo of love and compassion, Andreyev failed to soothe life's festering sores with the balsam of

²⁰ J.S. "Leonidas Andreief." *La Internacional* I, 1 (18 October 1919): 1.

sympathy and pity" (*Andreev* 190). It is doubtful, however, whether Dostoevsky would have felt the bond between himself and Andreev as much as Andreev did. Andreev did not achieve the greatness of either Dostoevsky or his friend and colleague Gorky; nevertheless, for the first ten or fifteen years of the twentieth century he was among the most popular Russian authors and he achieved considerable celebrity status during his boom years.

In common with Dostoevsky, Andreev represented the world of the alienated individual. In his early short stories, "the intellectual becomes prisoner in a cell of his own construction, behind the walls of his moral values, in detachment from life" (Woodward, *Leonid Andreyev* 43); their subjects are "lonely, miserable wretches" (Kaun, *Andreev* 190). The subject of the story "U okna" ("By the Window") (1899) sits day after day at the window of his room, watching other people living their lives, keeps real life at a safe distance, and as a result of his withdrawal has become introverted and egotistical. He is in control of his repetitious, undemanding work and of his time spent by the window, but is perturbed by the thoughts that invade his sheltered life.

Andreev's early stories reflect the writer's struggle with the problems of alienation and individuality, the prisons of the mind either inflicted on a person, or, more commonly, self-created. "Mysl'" ("Thought") (1902) is the story which affected the poet Prados' mood, as recorded in his diary. The main character of the story is Doctor Kerzhentsev who believes entirely and arrogantly in his own powers of intellect and reason – his "castle": "Like a Medieval baron, in an eagle's nest, my own impregnable castle, proudly, imperiously looking out over the valleys below – that's how unassailable and proud I was in my castle. [...] Master of myself, I was also Master of the world" (*Sobranie sochinenii* 1 418). The story takes up the theme of

Prestuplenie i nakazanie (Crime and Punishment) (1866), namely, the will-to-power of a man who believes he can coldly commit the perfect murder: "Remember Raskol'nikov who went to pieces so pitifully and ridiculously and the swarms of people like him", the doctor says (*Sobranie sochinenii* 1 387). Kerzhentsev commits a murder, and, without compunction, pleads insanity. In committing premeditated murder, like Dostoevsky's Raskol'nikov, he steps over the bounds of what is morally acceptable in society.²¹

Kerzhentsev's truly exalted opinion of himself alienates him, but the alienation is welcome to him as he believes his strength lies in his intellectual unassailability. A thought keeps coming back to him, that he is not simulating madness – he really is mad. It swirls in his head, wild and uncontrollable. Nevertheless, it is from the fortress of his intellect and power of reason that his demise – his real, as opposed to simulated, madness – originates: "My castle has become my prison. [...] In the unassailability of my castle, within its substantial walls lies my downfall. [...] My damned thought has betrayed me" (*Sobranie sochinenii* 1 418).

This condition at once terrifies and empowers him. On the one hand, the "great and awful solitude – while I, the one who lives, feels and thinks, who is so dear and unique, while I am so small, unutterably insignificant and weak, and every moment about to be extinguished" (*Sobranie sochinenii* 1 418); and, on the other hand, "[f]or me there is no judge, there are no laws, no prohibitions. Everything is possible. Can you imagine a world with no law of gravity, in which there's no height or depth, in

²¹ In *Prestuplenie i nakazanie* Raskol'nikov is preoccupied with the idea of stepping over the threshold of mediocrity and achieving the status of a Napoleon rather than remaining a mere "louse" like the rest of humankind, and killing an old money lender is intended as proof that he belongs to the "extraordinary" class of human beings who are permitted to cross the threshold.

which everything depends on whim and chance? I, Doctor Kerzhentsev, am that new world. Everything is possible" (*Sobranie sochinenii* I 419-20).

The novel *Sashka Zhegulev* (1911), singled out by the Spaniard Alberti as having influenced his generation in Spain in the 1920s, is the story of a man who, moved by the oppression suffered by the common Russian people, hides behind the mask of another identity and sacrifices his middle-class life in order to become leader of a band of outlaws. His ideals are shattered by the opportunism of his outlaw colleagues and he is as alienated in their society as he was in a more privileged environment. In Russia, young revolutionaries were roused by the work, a reception which was echoed in Spain: "[i]mpressionable individuals, particularly among young people, were stimulated to follow in the footsteps of the popular heroes" like Sashka Zhegulev, albeit fictional, and his real-life counterpart, Savitskii (Kaun, *Andreev* 245-46).²²

In spite of the way he has been perceived abroad – for example, his influence on young Spaniards with an inclination towards anarchism – Andreev has been accused of apoliticism, and of failing to involve himself in political affairs. His close friend, Gorky, who was so entrenched in revolutionary affairs, both before and after the Revolution, found him a disappointment. In literary terms, Andreev was something of an experimenter, even a revolutionary. He was as difficult to categorize in the literary sense, as he was politically. He was a writer without an "ism" in that he would not commit himself to any one school of thought, and his artistic diversity showed in his fascination for the visual arts; he was a painter and an accomplished

²² In 1934, a poem entitled "Sashka Yegulev" by R. Beltran Logroro was published in the journal *Eco* ("Estelas de tres libros." *Eco. Revista de España* 2, 7 [May 1934]: 4). It eulogizes the fictional hero, recognizing his purity, valour and self-sacrifice in behalf of the people of contemporary Russia.

amateur photographer (at a time when photography was barely in its adolescence).²³ Nevertheless, the bulk of his work reveals him to be socially, if not politically aware. The early stories, in particular, are sharply critical of Russian society. His negative portrayal of life in the city – the anonymity and superficiality²⁴ – and his array of characters leading alienated and monotonous lives²⁵ show his disapproval. He was sensitive to the marginalized lives of certain sectors of society.²⁶

In a society where revolutionary thought, let alone action, was suppressed, it was frequently the role of the men of letters to express the profoundest fears and concerns of the people. Andreev never shied away from that responsibility. It has been said that perhaps Andreev's "particular sensitivity to the atmosphere of a society riven by social and political strife and approaching collapse" explains why he was well received in certain foreign countries, including troubled Spain (Davies 18).

²³ See Richard Davies' book *Leonid Andreyev*.

²⁴ See, for example, the stories "Gorod" ("The City"), which charts the progress – or lack of it – of the relationship between two men; the story "Petka na dache" ("Pet'ka at the Dacha"), which contrasts country and city life, with negative results for the latter; and in "Molchanie" ("Silence"), the implication is that the fate that befalls the priest's daughter would not have happened if she had not gone to the city. The contrast of city versus country is a common one in literature, and Russian works are no exception. In Russia, there was not only a reaction against modern city life, but also a tradition of portraying St Petersburg in a negative, eerie and apocalyptic light (notably, the works of Dostoevsky and Gogol, and Pushkin's *Mednyi vsadnik* [*The Bronze Horseman*]).

²⁵ See, for example, the stories "Original'nyi chelovek" ("An Original Man"), which exposes the penchant of society to elevate the superficial in order to relieve monotony; the stories "Angelochek" ("The Little Angel") and "V podvale" ("In the Basement"), in which the tedious and sad lives of the characters are momentarily and temporarily relieved by something wonderful.

²⁶ See, for example, the stories "Smekh" ("Laughter"), in which the main character hides behind a mask which symbolizes his feeling of alienation in his own environment; and "Silence", in which the priest is mentally and psychologically imprisoned.

The hopes some Russians had of social and political change, even revolution, were realized within the first two decades of the new century. Russia became the scene of quite the most spectacular and unexpected of political events of the century. Bridging the two sides of the Great October Socialist Revolution, and, ultimately, a prominent figure in the promulgation of socialism in literature, was the phenomenon of Maxim Gorky (1868-1936).²⁷ In truth, in terms of form and style, his writing is not among the great classics of Russian literature; nevertheless, his works have sold in massive quantities throughout the world. For E. Gómez de Baquero, a leading Spanish critic in the 1920s, Gorky was the biggest attraction in Russian literature. In his view, revolution does not automatically create a new literature: literature may describe the events of a revolution and react to its evolution and its aftermath. It is in this regard that Gorky's writing, in the opinion of the Spaniard, shows the hallmarks of the revolutionary novel.²⁸

Working in Gorky's favour after the Revolution were, first, his very humble background – making his talent and his rise to fame heroic – and, second, his earthy Realist approach to writing, coupled with his long-term open support of the winning side. In subsequent years, his birthplace, Nizhnii Novgorod, was named after him, and many institutions came to bear his name. He achieved great success, both in Russia and abroad, even before the Revolution. His concern for the underdog and the "little man" (*malen'kii chelovek*) – a popular theme in Russian nineteenth-century writing –

²⁷ Born Aleksei Maksimovich Peshkov. Following exile in Italy for revolutionary activity, he engaged in revolutionary propaganda for the new regime and was first president of the Writer's Union and a supporter of Stalinism. After his death he was effectively canonized by the Soviets, although, in fact, he had suffered a period of disillusionment in the 1920s and there was a mystery surrounding the circumstances of his death in 1936.

²⁸ See Gómez de Baquero's article "El atractivo de la novela rusa" in *El Sol* (17 August 1929): 1.

along with his merciless exposé of their exploited lives, won him many advocates. The characters enlivening his earliest stories were the victims of capitalism, people from a variety of sectors of society alienated by an unconventional lifestyle. His romantic treatment of these characters lifted them from obscurity and he made them spokesmen on behalf of fellow victims. This earliest period of Gorky's writing, however, demonstrated fresh originality and a lively naturalism which did not need to rely on sentimentalism to gain sympathy. But, unlike others who had seen merit in portrayals of the lower classes, Gorky injected a vital element of rebellion into his characters. They "symbolized the revolt of the downtrodden individual against the political and social machine that continued to exploit and crush them" – an aspect which had some appeal in an atmosphere of "awakening masses and the increasing political activities of educated society" (Slonim, *Soviet Russian Literature* 134).

The short story "Mal'va" ("Malva") (1897) was mentioned specifically by the poet Alberti as having left its imprint on his own work.²⁹ It is "a quintessential work of Gorky's early period" (Barratt 101). It is ostensibly a story of sexual intrigue, with a low-born woman at the heart of the plot. The story contains one of Gorky's best female portraits in his early fiction. Mal'va is independent, strong-willed, amoral and capable of cruelty, but her kinship with nature, and, in particular, the sea, makes her fascinating. In the story, Mal'va plays off two men – father and son – against each other, provoking acts of jealousy and violence, but she finally chooses to depart with Serezhka, a drunken tramp. The story involves a battle of wills not only between

²⁹ The line is "Kto vzial moi nozh?" ("Who took my knife?") (Gorky, M. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*. 3: 392.). See "33" in *Marinero en tierra* : "Nací para ser marino / y no para estar clavado / en el tronco de este árbol. / Dadme un cuchillo. / ¡Por fin, me voy de viaje! / -- ¡Al mar, a la luna, al monte? / -- ¡Qué sé yo! ¡Nadie lo sabe! / Dadme un cuchillo." (*Poesías completas* 66).

classes (peasants and tramps) but also between the sexes. Mal'va – both female and a tramp, in the literal sense of the word – wins every contest.

In fact, the sea is the real hero of the story, transcending even the eponymous heroine herself. The first three words – "the sea laughed" – are purported to have had the most impact on readers of any by Gorky (Barratt 99), although, paradoxically perhaps, it is the final words of the story – "Who has taken my knife?" – which Alberti borrowed and, by his own admission, inserted into his own writing.

Gorky's novel *Mat' (The Mother)* (1907) was hailed, in retrospect, as a precursor of Soviet socialist realism, containing some embryonic elements of the doctrine: public commitments win out over private life, and the characters work with a positive future in mind, enduring hardship in the accomplishment of their labour. The mother of the title, Nilovna, represents those who are innocent, ignorant and misled, but who, with the right incentive, can contribute to the forward movement of socialism. Her son, Pavel Vlasov, is a true revolutionary hero, steadfast in the face of any obstacle; his aim in life is the edification of the people.

The novel presaged socialist realism and the move away from constructivist to more people-based themes. In the novel, revolution does not stem from the privileged and intellectual classes, as in previous revolutionary literary characters, but from the new class of awakening Russian people. In its day, *Mat'* was not acceptable to many of the Russian intelligentsia: its strongly Social Democrat, if not Marxist, bias, marginalized it. Lenin, predictably, welcomed it.

Gorky's own association with socialism and Bolshevism was chequered. The *Znanie* journals, of which he was editor from 1902, attracted many writers of proletarian and peasant origin, though not exclusively. He gave financial support to the Social Democrats and in 1906 attended a key conference in London. He had been

imprisoned after the Bloody Sunday demonstration, but was released following an outcry from his supporters throughout Europe, and was then forced to leave Russia for the USA and Europe. His newspaper of 1917, *Novaia zhizn'*, an independent socialist publication, criticized both Kerensky and the Bolsheviks, the latter for their violent approach to revolution. In 1918, *Pravda* accused him, in turn, of betrayal. Finally, he was won into apparent submission by recognizing that his talents lay best in preserving and nurturing the cultural life of the new state rather than in engaging in political arguments. He founded the publishing enterprise *Vsemirnaia literatura* (World Literature) – which enabled many writers and artists to continue to earn a living during the first unstable years of the Revolution – and the institutions *Dom iskusstv* (The House of the Arts) and *Dom uchenykh* (The House of Scholars). After several years abroad during the 1920s he returned home to unprecedented acclaim and gave unconditional support to the Soviet leaders. From that time onwards, he became a massively influential personage in all respects. In Spain, he was regarded as a figurehead for socialist writers. His comments on the implementation of utilitarian writing were alluded to in most debates, and the reputation he had for championing the lower classes – principally his gallery of ex-humans – and for showing that the solution to their exploitation lay in socialism, was unrivalled.³⁰

Representing the Revolution and its bloody aftermath was a real preoccupation for the majority of writers who remained working in Russia after 1917. It was

³⁰ In Spain, it was reported that celebrations over the February 1936 victory for the Popular Front at the elections were clouded by news of the death of Gorky. Julio Álvarez del Vayo, Dolores Ibarruri and Wenceslas Rosas were among the mourners at a special meeting to mark the event. See *Internatsional'naiia literatura* 11 (1942): 128.

an opportunity which presented challenges and problems:

The smell and colour of those years of revolution and civil war, the human dimensions of the horror, outrage, terror and blood-letting, the sheer complexity of the experiences involved, the paradoxes of choice and allegiance that changing political and military situations forced upon so many and the problems of daily survival in the face of unbelievable shortages, plagues and catastrophes – these are what the literature of the period reflects. [...] The events of the revolution and civil war were physically of such scale and consequence that no single individual experience could be expected to know more than a relatively small part of an infinitesimally small part of the total. The traumatic impact of the events, in which so many shared, made the assimilation of the events in literary terms both infinitely challenging and in some degree or another part of a common national experience. (Freeborn 65-6).

We saw in an earlier section of this thesis that the aftermath of the Revolution presented writers with the challenge of being caught in the "vortex of a great cataclysm" (Slonim 5), similar in effect to the "thrust of reality" experienced by certain Spanish writers as a new era of enhanced political awareness dawned (Cano Ballesta 132-134). In the aftermath of the Revolution, many well-known Russian writers emigrated for ideological reasons. Among these were Andreev, fellow prose writers Ivan Bunin, Alexandr Kuprin, Mikhail Artsybashev and Dmitrii Merezhkovskii. Not all stayed away. Some returned and rose to glory as pillars of Soviet literature; others returned and did not fare so well.³¹ Of those who stayed away, the Symbolist writer Viacheslav Ivanov left in 1924, settled in Italy where he died in 1949, having converted to Roman Catholicism.³²

³¹ The poet Ehrenburg, for example, returned in 1923 and was welcomed. Kuprin returned in the mid 1930s and died in 1938. The poet Marina Tsvetaeva also returned in the mid 1930s and committed suicide in 1941.

³² This makes an interesting contrast with those Spanish writers who emigrated to the Soviet Union after the Spanish Civil War. Acevedo, Falcon and Arconada, having espoused communism and the Soviet cause, are examples of this phenomenon.

We have also seen that the State intervened in Soviet Russian literary life to insist that the tenets of socialist realism were followed by all holding a Writers' Union card. How individual Soviet writers responded to the challenge of socialist reality and the growing enforcement of socialist realism is of great concern to us, therefore, in our study of the evolution of Marxist-inspired writing in Spain.

In the aftermath of the Revolution Russian writers chose to rise to the challenge in individual ways, and in the 1920s there was room for experimental forms which would accommodate individual representations and impressions. In Soviet Russia, one of the principal concerns of Russian literature was the artistic representation of the socialist hero. Variations of the socialist ideal, the "new man", appeared early in Soviet writing in the 1920s. In real life, Lenin had redefined man as the "conscious, responsible, and disciplined maker of his own history", as opposed to man who passively becomes victim of the historical process, good or bad (Mathewson 117). In a Marxist Utopia, man was whole, integrated and liberated. Lenin, it should be remembered, had derived inspiration from Chernyshevskii's Rakhmetov,³³ a professional revolutionary who was, in effect, the nineteenth-century prototype of the Soviet "positive hero". In Rakhmetov, the author was presenting the ideal – what should be represented in literature, rather than what could be represented – a "new man", having overcome romantic ennui, a self-sacrificing, dutiful, and strictly disciplined worker for the cause, a self-made superman, possessed of enormous will-to-power.³⁴ Gorky's *Mat'* was also regarded in retrospect as characterizing the precursors of positive heroes in Vlasov, and even Nilovna herself.

³³ See Section 1.2 of this thesis.

³⁴ In Chernyshevskii and Dostoevsky's time, the representation of the literary hero had reflected, to a large extent, intellectual controversies. Chernyshevskii's Rakhmetov was a "man of the (18)60s", a

In 1923 Dmitrii Andreevich Furmanov (1891-1926) published *Chapaev* (*Chapaev*), a documentary novel about the Civil War, evidently based on the author's own diaries. Chapaev was regarded as a role model for his time. We saw, in the introduction to this section, that Chapaev gave inspiration to the Spaniards in the midst of Civil War. The novel focuses on the relationship of Klychkov, a Party man and obviously the fictional representation of Furmanov himself, and Chapaev, a strong and heroic fighter, demonstrating the raw natural force of folk heroes, a real-life character who achieved legendary status for his feats. Chapaev's fame spread into Spain, encouraging men engaged in the Civil War to heroism.

On the other hand, *Razgrom* (*The Rout*) (1927), by Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Fadeev (1901-56), regarded as a classic of Soviet literature, employs more literary resources than the documentary-style *Chapaev* and portrays a different kind of hero, more in tune with the ideological basis on which the USSR was being consolidated. The author was hailed by a Spanish critic in a leading newspaper as "perhaps the foremost Russian novelist showing us the profound changes in Russian thinking".³⁵ The psychological realism of the novel results in a gallery of plausible characters, including Levinson, the leader of a detachment of guerrillas in the Civil War, who is alienated from both his family and from his men. Marxist doctrine is absent from the

"positive" hero; the Underground Man was an anti-hero (a "man of the (18)40s" whose principal *raison d'être* was to counter Rakhmetov); and Raskol'nikov was Dostoevsky's interpretation of the "man of the 60s".

³⁵ See the review of the novel in *El Sol* (18 October 1929): 2. For another reviewer in the same newspaper (3 December 1929), Fadeev continues the novelist tradition of Tolstoy, and Gorky in that he has the ability to realistically reproduce what he himself has lived through, and his novel also contains the element of psychological content, which, coupled with his powerful means of expression, place him at the head of contemporary Russian writers (2).

text, but what gave it appeal was its frank depiction of Russia's backwardness, which gives Levinson the incentive to help construct the "new man:"

Levinson was moved [...] because he was urged by an overpowering desire, stronger than any other of his desires, to help create a new, fine, vigorous man. But how could one talk of a new, fine man when numberless millions of people still lived such wretched, poverty-stricken, primitive lives? (194)

Levinson himself is not the ideal. It is clear, on the other hand, that the "new man" will issue from him in time. The drama involving him strips him down to a human being who can cry, but, more importantly, a man who can recognize that, in spite of everything, he can, and must, fulfil his duty.

The representation of the ideal was seen more clearly in Gladkov's *Tsement* (*Cement*) (1924), advertised in Spain in 1929 as "the best modern Russian novel".³⁶ The hero Chumalov returns from the Civil War to find his home town dilapidated and depressed. The novel tells the story of his fight, against all odds, to reconstruct the cement factory which is the town's life blood. The hero is the epitome of selfless dedication and civic duty, willing to tackle any assignment the Party gives him, but he is inept in personal matters. In the telling of the story, however, Gladkov's peripheral characters are more interesting and three-dimensional. Davydov, in Sholokhov's *Podniataia tselina* (*Virgin Soil Upturned*) (1932), is one of the thousands of Party members sent to impose collectivisation on farmers on the banks of the Don.³⁷ He has

³⁶ See *El Sol* (24 March 1929), page 2. The prologue to the novel, written by Julio Alvarez del Vayo, was advertised equally flatteringly: "in order to understand the new Russian literary trends, it is vital to read Alvarez del Vayo's prologue", the publishers, Cénit, claimed (2). According to Gómez de Baquero, Alvarez del Vayo "situates the author right among the new groups and new literary trends since the Revolution" (see *El Sol* [6 January 1929]: 2).

³⁷ The novel was advertised by its Spanish publisher Ediciones Europa-América as "a novel plot of intense interest", an "epic about the collectivization of the countryside" (see, for example, *Nueva*

to persuade the Cossack villagers to flout their own traditions, beliefs and native instincts in order to conform with Moscow's demands. He is governed by adherence to Party doctrine; his faith in the seemingly omnipotent power of the State is unswerving; he is capable of committing inhuman acts in the observance of his duty. However, he is passionately emotional: his rigid sense of duty is powered by a loathing for the past and a dread of Russia returning to that state. In all other respects, his personal feelings are secondary to his civic function: he is a true leader.

Kak zakalialas' stal' (*How the Steel was Tempered*) (1934) carries the "positive hero" of socialist realism to its most implausible limits, and, in this, resulted in a significant lowering of literary value – the novel is superficial and excessively moralistic. The *tour de force* of the novel is the central character, Pavel Korchagin, the fictional representation of the author Nikolai Ostrovsky (1904-36). No sacrifice is too great for Korchagin – he expends all his resources, and ultimately his health, in the service of the Party; all personal relationships are subservient to the Communist cause; for him, to serve the Party equates with true happiness. Even when paralysed and blind, he takes up writing in order to continue serving the Party. For this "extraordinarily naive and incomplete human image" it might be said that "[d]octrine has replaced life" (Mathewson 249). The Soviets believed that Korchagin was an essential role-model in the fight against Fascism in the 1930s: "In Korchagin readers found a noble example of selflessness and conviction in the defeat of reactionist forces. A Korchagin is needed wherever a nation is fighting for liberty and autonomy" (Balashova 79).

Cultura [March-April 1936]: 23). *Tikhii Don* (*The Quiet Don*), on the other hand, was billed as "the

Given the professed return to realism of the Soviets, the eventual revival of the novel was inevitable. However, response to the revolutionary period was just as strong and effective among poets. During the 1920s, before the socialist realist era and the dictates of the Union of Soviet Writers began, there was room to argue for different stances. Within the far-left movements, *Levyi front (Left Front) (LEF)* (and accompanying magazine) was most prominent. Inaugurated in 1923 mainly by Futurists, it was driven by revolutionary vigour, rather than the cut-and-dried dictates of a manifesto. In 1927, *LEF* became *Novyi LEF (New LEF)* but did not survive long. Along with Vladimir Mayakovsky, LEF counted among its supporters Osip Brik (1888-1945), who was one of the proclaimers of the death of fiction in favour of a more factual art (as a true expression of Marxist Leninism), and Nikolai Aseev (1889-1963), who always had difficulty suppressing his Romantic tendencies, and who produced not only industrial and propaganda poems, but also narrative poetry about the Revolution imbued with Romantic emotionalism. Also involved were Vasilii Kamenskii (1884-1961) and Sergei Tret'iakov (1892-1939), an ex-Futurist who, like Brik, argued for factual writing and who was liquidated in the late 1930s.

Vera Inber (1890-1974) was another strong supporter of revolutionary themes, briefly connected with constructivism. Semen Kirsanov (1906-1972), much in the style of Mayakovsky, was loudly in favour of the Revolution and socialist reconstruction. Aleksandr Bezymenskii (1898-1973), who supported the "back to the classics" call of 1924, considered himself a communist first, and a poet second. He helped to found the movement *Oktiabr' (October)* which later became known as *Napostovtsy (Onguardists)*, and which broadcast a policy of pure proletarian literature

and was part of the opposition to the admission of fellow travellers in Soviet literature.³⁸

Poetry, as it progressed into the 1930s, always had a social theme, but it would be unreasonable to say that the submission of poets to Socialism resulted in poor quality. Nikolai Zabolotskii, Boris Pasternak, Aleksandr Tvardovskii, Pavel Antokolskii, Vsevolod Rozhdestvenskii and Arsenii Tarkovskii produced works of talent and skill, in the realms of "high poetry". Mikhail Svetlov (1903-64), mentioned in the introduction to this section, wrote lyrics which reached a large audience in popular songs of the day. His poem "Grenada" was enormously popular in its time, and inspired Alberti.

When the Revolution came in 1917, by no means all of the intellectual and artistic community in Russia accepted it; some went into immediate exile, others actively opposed the Bolsheviks in the Civil War. There were, however, artists and writers who welcomed the Revolution with open arms, or who were willing to work with its aims because they did not wish to leave Russia or because they were open-minded and willing enough to wait and see what transpired. Few could match the enthusiasm with which Vladimir Mayakovsky (1893-1930) hailed the Revolution. He unreservedly developed a new method to accommodate the Socialist State and his Marxist beliefs; in his writing he happily "turned from his intimate, highly personal manner to public, political utterance" (Bowra, *Creative Experiment* 13). He gave the Revolution much-needed propaganda and publicity in its first decade. Some considered that he had sacrificed his poetic artistry for mere slogans (Blake 13), but he

³⁸ One of its publications, a monthly called *Oktiabr'*, should not be confused with the *Octubre*

had been an activist and his underground activities had led to arrests and a term of imprisonment at the age of fifteen. He was relatively unmoved by the brutalism that accompanied the establishment of the Bolsheviks. Gradually, however, the frustrations of endless bureaucracy disillusioned him, and some of his best work in the late 1920s – the plays *Klop (The Bedbug)* and *Bania (The Bathhouse)* – reflected his disgust at the philistinism and idiocy of Soviet bureaucracy. In 1930 he committed suicide. The reasons for his death are unclear and his farewell note open to interpretation. He had always been a figure of intense introspection and alienation, and there were signs of his disillusionment with the regime in the late 1920s. All the same, his death caused shock and disbelief: the self-confessed Soldier-Poet of the Revolution had been a dynamic power in artistic circles during a difficult transitional period.

His revolutionary orientation had shown itself as remarkably in the arts as in politics. Once he had discovered poetry as a vocation, he embraced it wholeheartedly; his approach was always innovative and rebellious. Before he was twenty he was a leading member of the avant-garde. In Spain, he was considered to be the kingpin of Russian Futurism, the anarchic spirit of which was a perfect outlet for his unruliness, his exhibitionism and his exuberance. When Spanish literature was undergoing radical changes in the late 1920s, José Díaz Fernández, the theoretician of a "new Romanticism", an approach to writing which incorporated attention to social and political subjects, considered Russian Futurism, whose "most distinguished representative is Mayakovsky", to be superior to the Italian original in that, according to his opinion, it gave attention to "the human element" ("*lo humano*") which, in its

Italian counterpart, was sidestepped (47). In the Russian interpretation of Futurism Mayakovsky found a vehicle for his insolence, his exhibitionism and his rejection of the past.

Mayakovsky's aim was to end useless versification and to fuse creative writing with the work of the Socialist Republic. He wrote stirring verse to uplift the people, and especially the Red soldiers and sailors. In "Prikaz po armii iskusstva" ("Order of the Day to the Army of the Arts") (1918) he wrote:

Comrades!
 To the barricades!
 The barricades of hearts and souls. [...]
 The streets are our brushes,
 The squares our palettes. [...]
 Onto the streets, Futurists,
 Drummers and poets! (lines 3-5, 38-39, 42-43)

In the same excited post-Revolutionary period he wrote "Levyi marsh (matrosam)" ("Left March [to the Sailors]") (1918), punctuated by the refrain "Left! / Left! / Left!" ("Levoj!"). It spurns history and the past, it disdains the threats of the Allied Powers, and it arrogantly proclaims the assured Socialist future:

Enough of living by the law
 Given by Adam and Eve
 Let's round up the old horse, history. [...]
 There,
 Beyond the mountains of woe is
 An untouched land of sun.
 Grasp
 the world by the throat,
 fingers of the proletariat!
 Gallant chests forward!
 Plaster the sky with flags! (lines 7-9, 26-30, 39-43)

In the extract can be seen the hallmarks of Mayakovsky's work. First, an unabashed expression of his loathing and total disrespect for the old order that had so

failed him, coupled with more than a touch of vulgarity with which to give expression to it. Added to that is the terseness of the lines and expressions, the ability to convey meaning succinctly. He continues to use the near-rhyme, toying with, and almost flouting, the convention. There is no subtlety: the imagery is bold and brutal, the metaphors simple and effective. Further, the change of pace in the form of refrains – "Left! / Left! / Left!" and, in the first example, "R. / Sh. / Shch." (lines 18-20) – which, certainly in "Levyi marsh", become almost a mantra. It is not surprising that verses such as these, which Mayakovsky performed publicly, had a rousing effect on their readers. They have the air of anthems.

Predominant in his verse is the role of the poet who can fight on the barricades as well as any soldier, who now sets the rhythm (as drummers) and rhyme (as poets) of the Revolution, and who works at street-level (using public places as brush and palette). In "Oda revoliutsii" ("Ode to the Revolution") (1918), the poet, Mayakovsky, is equipped with his art to bless the Revolution:

To you
 Whistled at,
 Jeered at by artillery [...]
 Above the cursing of the jostled ode
 I rapturously raise
 a solemn "O!" [...]
 To you, the philistine's word is
 'O, be thrice cursed!'
 And mine,
 the poet's word,
 'O, be four times praised, blessed one!' (lines 10-12, 28-30, 45-49)

The lines betray, perhaps, some arrogance on the poet's part in the bestowing of blessings, as from a superior status, on the Revolution. His endorsement of the Revolution notwithstanding, Mayakovsky has been criticized for his egocentrism:

Whether his revolutionary ardor had anything to do with a real sympathy with the 'toiling masses' is doubtful. [...] [The best poems] are all about himself. Mayakovsky's only real, live hero is Vladimir Vladimirovich Mayakovsky, a man of flesh and blood, with raw skin. His other characters are just puppets. And the Revolution, as we see it in his poetry, is, after all, a gigantic puppet show. (Struve 20)

Whatever the poet's motivation, his devotion to publicizing the Revolution is incontestable. He created, sometimes single-handedly, hundreds of posters for ROSTA (Russian Telegraphic News Agency), painted placards, wrote captions, verses, movie scripts and lampoons, drew cartoons – all to boost the progress of the Revolution. In this work he urged the citizens of the Soviet Union to drink boiled water or to join the Red Guards, and made famine appeals – all in the furtherance of the people's education and cooperation. Later, returning home from a period abroad, he wrote in "Domoi!" ("Homewards!") (1925), with specific reference to his time as an active Communist:

Proletarians
 come to Communism
 from below,
 from down in the mines,
 sickles,
 and pitchforks,
 But I,
 from the celestial heights of poetry,
 throw myself into Communism (lines 40-49)

Mayakovsky wanted the fact that poetry was his means of expressing his faith in the new regime to be acknowledged. The words again show an awareness of the superiority of poetic vocation – its celestial heights – but he had lowered himself from lofty aspiration in order to be a Communist. Furthermore, he wanted the use of his art in the service of the cause to be acknowledged:

I myself
 feel like a Soviet

factory,
 manufacturing joy.
 I don't want
 to be like a flower,
 torn up from the fields
 after arduous work
 [...]

I want
 the bayonet
 and the pen to be
 considered equal.
 and Stalin
 to deliver to the Politburo
 reports
 about verse in the making
 as he would about pig iron
 and steel smelting
 [...]

[saying] "In the Union
 of the Republics
 understanding poetry
 is higher
 than the pre-war norm..." (lines 68-75, 94-102, 108-12)

There is an intrinsic longing in these lines. At the eleventh hour, Mayakovsky substituted lines 108 to 112 for words which originally read: "I want to be understood by my country, / but if I fail to be understood -- / what then? / I shall pass through my native land / to one side, / like a shower / of slanting rain",³⁹ which betray feelings of vulnerability and disappointment. During the late 1920s Mayakovsky had begun to see elements in the new order that he could not accept. The play *Klop* (1928) depicts profiteers and Party fat cats; the protagonist, a Party man, infested by bedbugs and

³⁹ See notes by Max Hayward and George Reavey in *The Bedbug*, page 311.

soaked in vodka, ends his days condemned to a cage with an armed keeper, urging the audience directly to come and join him.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, the implication is that if not only he, but also his art, had been better valued by his country, it would have made a difference. In fact, the poet ran aground within himself: he could not fuse Mayakovsky the lyric poet with Mayakovsky the propagandist. In the event, his experimentalism created suspicion among the orthodox practitioners of art, *LEF* had to be abandoned, and two months before his suicide he joined RAPP, apparently reconciled with the status quo. After his death the poem "Vo ves' golos" ("At the Top of my Voice") was published. It comprises a last defence of his good intentions and his belief in the validity of what he had accomplished in the service of socialism. Typically, he expresses his frankness: "I'm not accustomed / to caress / the ear / with the word" ("Ia / ukho / slovom / ne privyk laskat') (lines 112-15) and adds:

The genre
 of my most beloved weapon,
 the cavalry of witticisms,
 pauses, ready
 to hurl itself whooping into the charge,
 the sharpened lances
 of its rhymes raised. (lines 132-39)

Poetry is still perceived as a potential weapon, to be used as in a cavalry charge and as pointed lances. In which battle?

We opened
 Marx --
 every volume --
 as in a house
 of our own
 we open shutters,

⁴⁰ Meyerhold, who produced an early version of the play, finished his days in a concentration camp.

but without reading
 we understood
 in which camp to go,
 in which to fight. (lines 157-66)

On behalf of Marxism, Mayakovsky claims he has sought no fame; but, rather

let our
 common monument be
 socialism
 built
 in battle (193-97)⁴¹

"My verse / has brought me / no money to spare", he wrote, and "[i]n all conscience, / I need nothing / but / a clean shirt" (228-31). The most poignant part of the poem's message, however, is expressed in the words

Agitprop
 sticks
 in my teeth, too
 and I'd rather
 compose
 romances for you:
 they'd be more profitable
 and alluring.
 But I
 subdued
 myself
 standing
 on the throat
 of my own song. (lines 54-57)⁴²

The words sum up the dilemma, not only of Mayakovsky, whose natural tendency and talent for lyric poetry was suppressed by the demands of his ideology, but also of many writers in Soviet Russia at the turn of the 1930s. He would have preferred to have written romances but the "throat of his own song" – his voice – was

⁴¹ Translation by Max Hayward and George Reavey in *The Bedbug* (231).

⁴² Translation by Max Hayward and George Reavey in *The Bedbug* (223-25).

constricted, at first voluntarily, by his eager espousal of Bolshevism and adherence to Marxist ethics. But gradually the pressure to stunt his natural ability came from outside himself.

Not all approved of his vulgarisation of the poetic language: it was considered to be a lowering of standards. His use of street slang and popular songs, including satirical jingles (*chastushki*),⁴³ and his wizardry with words – for example, verbal innovations often impossible to express in another language – helped to create the "cavalry of witticisms" ("*kavaleriia ostrot*") he wrote about. There was certainly a feel for the vulgar about his work, both pre- and post-revolutionary. "The Revolution", he wrote,

has thrown up on to the streets the unpolished speech of the masses, the slang of the suburbs has flowed along the downtown boulevards; the enfeebled sub-language of the intelligentsia, with its emasculated words 'ideal', 'principles of justice', 'divine origins', 'the transcendental visage of Christ and Antichrist' – all these expressions, pronounced in little whispers in restaurants, have been trampled underfoot. There is a new linguistic element. How can one make it poetic? (*How are Verses Made?* 46)

Mayakovsky attempted to answer this question in the work *How are Verses Made?* Although, indeed, he proceeded to discuss in greater detail how to approach the construction of verse, he made somewhat simplistic initial statements about it:

First thing. The presence of a problem in society, the solution of which is conceivable only in poetical terms. A social command. [...] Second thing. An exact knowledge, or rather sense, of the desires of your class (or the group you represent) on a given question. [...] Third thing. Materials. Words. Fill your storehouse constantly, fill the granaries of your skull with all kinds of words, necessary, expressive, rare, invented, renovated and manufactured. (49-50)

In essence, the formula for creating socially responsible poetry (as Marxism would demand) remained the same: the need for poetry to address a social problem,

⁴³ A couplet, jingle or urban ballad.

identification with the class you represent and words. He used day-to-day speech, new Soviet words, parodies of old poetic language, technical terms, and verbal inventions. Perhaps this is reprehensible in the eyes of some. On the other hand, his unusually keen ear for the language of the street, coupled with the artistic ability to transform it into an original, yet familiar, idiom, ensured that he reached a wider audience, which, surely, must have been his primary objective. The objective was not only to reach a wider audience, but for the poet to directly appeal to that audience, and it has been said that Mayakovsky's poetry "was made for public performance, for the mass reading or recitation which had become a major feature of Soviet literary life in the early revolutionary years and of which he was master [...]; in some ways, indeed his verse echoes the forms of old oral verse with its leisurely length and relatively open texture" (France 163-64). This is a quality which will be seen repeatedly in the political Spanish poetry of the 1930s.

Whatever the true motivation for making his writing so accessible to the man in the street, his schooling, from very early years, in the theory of Marxism, ensured that a large element of it was the belief that poetry – the word, the pen – could and should be used in the advancement of socialism, and this, of necessity, meant reaching the public. There is no reason to suppose that Mayakovsky was not sincere when he wrote that his business was "manufacturing happiness" ("*vyrabatyvaiushchii schast'e*"), like a factory: whether or not the allusion to a factory production line was an ironic or even derogatory implication, he certainly instilled zeal in others. In the final analysis, however, it seems that he could not reconcile his idea of the "celestial heights of poetry" ("*nebesa poezii*") with complete submission to Marxist ethics. In real life, he himself apparently fell somewhat short of – or, perhaps more kindly, could not sustain – the image of the Soviet new man, the "positive hero", in spite of the fact

that, in his poetry, he projected altruism. In Spain, his example spurred on one of the first poets to make political verse, Rafael Alberti, and, like Gorky, Mayakovsky's reputation for devotion to the socialist cause, and his ability to address the people with poetry they would understand and learn from, gave him legendary status. In its First of May issue, the Spanish journal *Nueva España* reported the suicide of Mayakovsky, the "great intellectual worker", who was "the prophet of a world which was yet to be constructed", and whose works, it claimed, the Russian bourgeoisie had failed to understand but which "had helped to create confidence in the new society". He had killed himself because of physical pain, rather than disillusionment: he had been a text-book communist, and no "puppet of pure art", and he had known how to demonstrate his humanity by placing his "impetuous spirit in the service of justice".⁴⁴

The fact that the continued success of Dostoevsky's works was maintained throughout the 1920s and 1930s, in spite of the author being long dead and in spite of the general trend in Spain at the turn of the 1930s away from the pre-revolutionary Russian writers to the early Soviet novelists, warrants some comment; in Spain, during the period under discussion, his works headed the list of publications. His works had both a psychological and a revolutionary appeal. His understanding of the essence of humanity and the love and respect he developed for the peasantry along with his fearlessness in fighting a cause, to the point of facing a firing squad or publicly opposing the popular theories of the day, carried a lot of weight. Andreev, too, was capable of exploring the human psyche as well as giving strong support to the revolutionary cause. Both writers apparently spoke in behalf of the alienated and

⁴⁴ See *Nueva España* 7 (1 May 1930):14, 15. The poem *150,000,000* in Spanish translation was

marginalized people of society. Neither of them championed the common man as well as Gorky, however, whose own background was the very stratum of society he famously represented in his works.

When it came to throwing all energies to the construction of the Socialist society, however, Mayakovsky took the lead with his propagandist writing, his bold and brutal imagery, "cavalry of witticisms", wizardry with words and command of popular speech. Mayakovsky lent his art to the cause, an objective certain Spanish writers were keen to have and were thought to emulate. He used the pen as a weapon, like a bayonet, and stood on the figurative barricades with his comrades.

Finally, there was the increasing call under the new regime to produce fictional versions of the "new man", the "positive hero", the ideal to which the real-life Soviet citizen should aspire. From Chapaev to Korchagin, such "new" men appeared from the pens of a variety of early Soviet novelists. They inspired people both at home, and in countries like Spain, where, in the 1936-39 war, they were regarded as role models.

The contexts within which the increase of publications of Russian works occurred in Spain in the 1920s and 30s have now been described. We have seen that Russian literature had a relatively strong history of dissemination in Spain prior to the "boom" period. We have also described the political and social climate within which this phenomenon occurred: the excitement caused by the Russian Revolution and the ever intensifying political situation in Spain which culminated in the coup of July 1936. Next, we set the literary contexts, describing the effect of the political and social upheavals on the literary life of both Russia and Spain, and the

published alongside the obituary.

espousal of political commitment on the part of certain Spanish writers important to this study, leading some of these to take inspiration from the Soviet Union. Finally, we have briefly reviewed the Russian authors and works which have a direct bearing on this study of the impact of Russian literature and ideology in pre-Civil War Spain. This is now the opportune moment to address the relevant Spanish authors and texts themselves.

Part 2 The Impact of Russia on Spanish Pre-Civil War Poetry and Prose

It is pertinent at this point to review what has been established in the course of the first part of this thesis. We started with an introduction to the reception of Russian literature in Spain from its beginnings, in the nineteenth century, until the outbreak of the Civil War in Spain following upon the coup d'état of July 1936. It is no exaggeration to say that an affinity existed between the Spaniards and the Russians. Pavel Tulaev, in his book *Rusia y España descubren una a otra (Russia and Spain Discover One Another)*, wrote that Spaniards' interest in Russia is the attraction of "the depths of a kindred spirit" (10). In 1926 it was already reported that "Russian literature has awoken interest in the readers of the world, and their novels have also invaded [Spain]."¹ Indeed, more recently it has been said that "throughout the [nineteenth], and more especially during [the twentieth] century, Russian authors have penetrated deeply into the soul of the Spanish reading public" (Sánchez Puig 3). At the peak of the period under discussion in this thesis, in 1931, Juan Pujol wrote that "in no other city in Europe can be seen in the bookshops so many Bolshevist books translated from Russian as in Madrid".²

The popularity of Russian literature towards the end of the nineteenth century had been aided, in no small measure, by the publication of the works of the literary

¹ C. Rivas Cherif. "La literatura rusa después de la Revolución" ("Russian Literature since the Revolution"). *La Libertad* (23 March 1926): 2.

² See his article "Literatura Bolchevique" in *ABC* 8809 (March 1931): 3. In the article he asks why such a "torrent" of "toxic" literature – a barrage of Quixotic giants – seems to by-pass France and

giants Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. It was the work of the latter which captured the attention of Pardo Bazán, who proceeded to deliver lectures about Russia and its literature to the Spanish intelligentsia in Madrid. Dostoevsky's works continued to be popular throughout the 1920s and 1930s in Spain, when the dissemination of Russian literature in that country moved up another gear and entered a phase of increased popularity which peaked in 1931. It is this phase of the dissemination of Russian literature in Spain – from the end of the 1920s to the July 1936 coup – which is the foundation of this study.

In an earlier section of the thesis we saw the need to contextualize this comparative study. Literature does not occur in isolation, but, rather, frequently works along with some or even several other aspects of a nation's life and evolution. It is often necessary to examine the historical context – the political and social situation – within which one nation's literature has been received by another nation. Furthermore, not only the politics but also the literature of two nations that feel a kinship with one another may interact. The feeling of self-recognition one nation's people may have with another may, thus, easily give rise to the need to re-create the imaginative world of certain authors, examining the historical environment within which their reception of another nation's literature took place. In this manner the influence which that nation's literature has had on them is contextualized, and Part 1 of this thesis, therefore, was chiefly concerned with contextualizing this study in that way.

Around the turn of the 1930s, then, the profile of Russian authors and works published and read in Spain changed quite dramatically. From that time onwards the

Britain and end up in Spain, "poisoning the spirit of our nation". It is nothing to do with literary

writings of pre-revolutionary Russian writers like Tolstoy, Andreev and Chekhov were superseded by newer works coming out of Soviet Russia. What had happened to create this change? As we established in Part 1 of the thesis, a phenomenon occurred in Spanish literary life which echoed the increasing concerns of the Spanish reading public about the political and social situation in Spain. We discovered that there were several contributory factors to the increase in awareness of Spaniards about the need for change in their country. First, there was widespread disillusionment among intellectuals with the traditional pillars of society – the church, the army and the monarchy – which, coupled with intense curiosity about the radical changes being attempted in other countries, helped to gradually create an atmosphere of urgency which was to reach a peak in the formation of the Second Republic in Spain in 1931.

One of the changes abroad which excited the curiosity of Spanish liberals and revolutionaries was the Russian Revolution of 1917. This should come as no surprise. The Russian Revolution caused shockwaves throughout the West since, for the first time in history, a socialist state came into being which ostensibly signalled the seizure of power by the people. What must not be understated is the impact which the Russian Revolution had on interested observers abroad, especially those who aspired to the achievement of the same success in their own country. Spain was a perfect example of this impact. Indeed, as we discovered, one of the more vocal of the Spanish intellectuals expressed in print his hope that Spain would become the second country in history to achieve the same triumph as the Soviet Union. He was not alone in his aspiration. The Communist Party itself was confident of imminent victory in

criticism, he claims, but, rather, is a political issue.

Spain. The journal *Communist International* commented in 1931 that "the prospects for the Spanish Revolution are good".³

Fascination for the Russian Revolution and the consolidation of Soviet power throughout the 1920s brought with it an increased interest in all things Russian, and, as literature has traditionally been both the platform and the showcase for what was happening socially and politically in Russia, its literature was one of the beneficiaries of this increased export of things Russian.

Russian movies and stories of revolutionary heroism appealed to the masses and, as a result, Russian novels and showings of Russian movies were widespread. It was an expression of the sympathy of one revolution for another but without in any way indicating that the people had become adherents to the policies of the Comintern.⁴ (Cattell, *Communism* 22)

As we have seen, this phenomenon created a significant increase in publications in Spain in the 1920s and 30s. In the final section of the first part of this thesis we examined the works and authors which enjoyed most success in Spain in the period under consideration and discussed what their appeal may have been, notably in the case of Dostoevsky, whose popularity was sustained throughout the entire period.

In Spain, the increase in political awareness among intellectuals translated into political commitment among Spanish writers such as Rafael Alberti and Joaquín Arderús. Commitment for writers like these meant sympathy with, and adherence to, far-left political tendencies and factions. Some, like César Arconada and Alberti, became committed to Marxism and joined the Communist Party. The Communist Party in Spain, it is true, did not attract large numbers of members: other forms of

³ "The Spanish Communist Party and the Revolutionary Situation." *Communist International* 8, 11-12 (July 1931): 324. Throughout the 1930s the journal featured similarly positive articles about the future success of the revolution in Spain, which was considered as likely to effect the revolution as India and China.

revolutionary movement were more popular in Spain, as has been shown earlier in this thesis. Nevertheless, as Víctor Fuentes points out, its small numerical significance notwithstanding, the Party "attracted to its ranks an important nucleus of artists and writers" including Alberti and his fellow contributors to the journal *Octubre*, Arconada, Arderfús and Sender ("La novela social española [1931-1936]" 4). For these, Soviet Russia provided great encouragement and inspiration; there, the cherished ideals had been put into practice and, as far as could be seen at that point, were having great success. This they saw as proof positive of the tenets of their new faith.

It is time now to examine in greater detail those Spanish authors who were not only bound to Russia ideologically but were prepared to show this commitment in their writing. As we discussed in Part 1, the search for the influence of one nation's literature on another nation's writers is not easily undertaken. What must we look for? First, there is the fundamental principle that writers will have assimilated everything they have read and interpreted before, and evidence of this may well be found in their works, in the form of direct references and quotations and in a variety of allusions. However, when considering the impact of one author, work or body of works on another, we should keep in mind not only Homi Bhabha's theory of self-recognition – in this case, a feeling of kinship between Spain and Russia which has been established in general terms but has yet to be explored in the case of individual writers – but also the textual theories of Genette and Bakhtin to the effect that an aspect of the work of the precursor may be grafted onto that of another, the ephebe. It has been said of Bakhtin's theory of dialogue, as discussed in Part 1, that it is the "process whereby an

⁴ An abbreviation for the Communist International.

individual temporarily adopts the viewpoint or IDEOLOGY (*sic*) of another person, or *assimilates* these to his or her own consciousness" (Hawthorn 10). This explanation is especially pertinent to the present study, since we will find that certain Spanish writers undoubtedly favourably received the ideology championed in Soviet Russia and that evidence of this assimilation is found in the writing they produced at that time. The process of the reception or assimilation of Russian writing may be defined, in the terms posited by both Bakhtin and Genette, as the further creative development, under a new context and new conditions, of that which begins in the hypotext and becomes a new structure, a hypertext.

Bearing in mind that, for example, it was "only certain writers of the young [Spanish] generation who were going to be able to discern the meaning" of the Russian literature being published in Spain during the 1920s and 30s (Cobb 32), it is most pertinent now to examine the writing of that younger generation of Spanish writers. Part 2 of this thesis explores both the prose and poetry of Spain of the 1920s and 30s in the light of its connections with both pre- and post-revolutionary Russia, with a view to arriving at a conclusion regarding the impact of Russia on the two genres. In each section the individual writers of greatest relevance are the focus of study.

2.1 Poets in the Service of Revolution. The Impact of Russia on the Pre-Civil War Poetry of Emilio Prados and Rafael Alberti

It has been firmly established that the acquiring of political awareness among Spanish writers brought about in their writing changes in outlook, subject matter and style. When political commitment led a writer, in turn, to Marxism, the change was quite dramatic, and presented poets with a particular problem.¹ This was partly due to the fact that, for the first two decades of the twentieth century, poetry in Spain as well as the rest of Europe, had largely been inward-looking. Poetry had been affected more than most art forms by turn-of-the-century artistic revolutions, resulting in an elaborate and colourful carnival of "isms" parading through the literary world. Many basked in a poetry-for-poetry's-sake atmosphere, and, although questions of social responsibility arose, they did not raise issues as fundamental as those which arose in the late 1920s and 1930s. The intrusion of an urgent political agenda at the turn of the 1930s in Spain, therefore, signalled an important shift.

Marxist-based commitment demanded a utilitarian poetry. The reading public, for Marxist poets, was the proletariat, and, in Spain at that time, the proletariat was overwhelmingly rural and uneducated, often to the point of illiteracy. Further complicating the matter was the fact that the poets who became both politically

¹ It is important to point out once again that this thesis does not intend to imply that all political commitment in Spain during this period was left-wing; nor does this thesis intend to imply that all left-wing commitment was communist. Those artists who became committed did so from a variety of political stances and were not necessarily attached to a particular faction or party.

committed and Marxist were mostly from the bourgeoisie,² and learning how to address an audience whose mentality they did not necessarily understand was bound to create problems. Converting Marxist conviction into poetic form, therefore, demanded, in practice, a simple vocabulary, stripped of complex imagery and metaphors, and, perhaps more problematically, given the traditional construction of verse, simple syntax that would not obscure the message.

Two poets of considerable standing in Spain rose to the challenge – Emilio Prados and Rafael Alberti. They were "the first to free themselves from the chains of pure aestheticism and cultivate a committed poetry, which, owing to its predominant tone" was revolutionary (Cano Ballesta 100-01). Although their addressing political matters is often considered to have had a damaging effect on their art, since both poets were rated very highly for their poetry in the 1920s when political concerns were generally not a priority, it must be pointed out that it did require skill, not to mention determination and courage, to make the changes they effected in the face of political exigency. This section of the thesis concentrates on their literary productions of the 1930s, but also shows the ways in which their work had changed in the preceding years. It is the relationship of Prados and Alberti to the Russian literature they read and appreciated and to the phenomenon of the Revolution in the Soviet Union which receives most attention in this chapter, but it also assesses their pre- and post-commitment writing specifically in the light of their attraction to the ideology and literature originating in Russia.

It is important to point out that in this section of the thesis there can be no implication that Prados and Alberti were the only poets to become politically

² In Spain the petite bourgeoisie, in particular, was traditionally the revolutionary class. Some

committed, or to take a far-left political stance. The poet considered to be the greatest of their generation, Federico García Lorca, also showed a considerable social conscience in his work of the 1930s. The example of Lorca demonstrates well that commitment in the sense of social awareness and disquiet was not always based on a partisan or even revolutionary outlook. His plays, for example, focused incisively on sectors of society which were exploited or overlooked.

There were other poets, belonging to the same generation, who addressed social and political issues of the day from a left-wing stance. César Arconada, a poet, novelist and journalist,³ became a committed Marxist at the turn of the 1930s; the change of his poetic output from aesthetic preoccupations to a poetry directed towards the proletariat is shown in *Vivimos en una noche oscura (We are Living Through a Dark Night)* (1936), in which the darkness of the night is descriptive of the bitter class war of city workers. Pascual Pla y Beltrán (1908-61), a Young Communist and assistant in the Unión de Escritores y Artistas Proletarias (Union of Proletarian Writers and Artists), was acknowledged by the Soviets for his socially critical and revolutionary poetry.⁴ Following a period of immersion into dehumanized avant-garde writing, he became politically committed, and his collection of poetry, *Narja* (1932), is one of the first manifestations of proletarian verse, with an underlying communist conviction, written in Spain. It also marked the beginning of a prolific output of poetry in the 1930s.

became involved in the political left, while others became fascists.

³ His novels are one of the subjects for discussion in the following chapter.

⁴ For example, "Pla-y-Bel'tran. 'Dva stikhotvorenii'" ('Pla y Beltrán. "Two Poems"') included his autobiography and an introduction to his role in contemporary Spanish literature (*Internatsional'naiia literatura* 1 [1934]: 26-29). The Soviet Hispanist Kel'in reports having seen Pla y Beltrán along with José Bergamín at the 20th anniversary of the Russian Revolution in October 1937 in Moscow.

This chapter focuses on the political commitment and works of Prados and Alberti. In it, we examine their writing in the late 1920s and 30s in the light of their political stance, always keeping in mind the extent to which Russia's ideology and literature had an impact on what they believed and what they wrote.

Emilio Prados (1899-1962) was probably the first poet in contemporary Spain to write political verse. He had made his name in the 1920s as the co-founder of the journal *Litoral*, published in Malaga between 1926 and 1929. When Rafael Alberti met him in 1925, he described him as a "darkly tormented" person who sometimes "comes up out of his deep mine; but not for long, as his world – a special mixture of heaven and hell – is there in those deep galleries which only he knows" (Alberti, *Arboleda I* 257). It is said that Prados attempted suicide while staying at the Residencia de Estudiantes in Madrid, leading José Morena Villa to call him a neurasthenic.⁵ In fact, the "predilection for neurosis, then called neurasthenia, [...] was one of the most fascinating characteristics of avant-garde literature" (Buckley and Crispin 325); in the 1920s, suffering from such neurosis resulted from "losing your existential security and your capacity to communicate, both with the world and with other people" (Bellver 81). Neurosis, therefore, was a symptom of the times, and poetry was a means of immersion into oneself and of externalising the peaks and troughs of human existence. García Lorca, for example, also suffered a spiritual crisis, leading to, and reflected in, the creation of *Poeta en Nueva York*.

Towards the end of the 1920s Prados began to practice religious seclusion, but then, from 1930, he set to work for the rights of the fishermen of his native Malaga,

⁵ Moreno Villa. *Vida en claro*. Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1944. 117.

teaching literacy and Marxism, and reading his poetry aloud to the local people. His apparent dedication, between 1929 and 1932, to teaching politics and revolution led him inevitably to commit his poetry accordingly (Cano Ballesta 101-02). The first of his political poems seems to have been written between those years, which would make him one of the first Spanish writers to produce writing of this kind.⁶

However, Prados had not been immune to the world around him prior to that time. In the 1920s he had travelled throughout Europe, with noteworthy stays in France, Switzerland and Germany, and had witnessed first-hand the stirrings of National Socialism in Germany and the reaction of the political left. During the 1920s, he took a militant stance, with Marx becoming one of his mentors. As evidence of his conviction, Prados was behind the strike action taken by his father's employees for more pay, to which his father yielded (Santos Silva 876). Conversely, although in the 1930s he became increasingly politically driven, as witnessed by his involvement with the overtly political *Octubre* group, he did not entirely abandon introspective writing and his interest in the evolution of surrealism. *La voz cautiva (The Captive Voice)* (1933-34), for example, although chiefly concerned with the crisis brought about by his political commitment, was a personally reflective work.

Nevertheless, during the 1930s, as we have established, Prados became increasingly involved in political affairs, using his art as a means of expression and the implementation of change. He was associated with both the *Octubre* and the *Sur* groups of committed literary figures and their journals. During the Civil War he was a member of the Alianza de Escritores Antifascistas (Alliance of Antifascist Writers) and took part in the Second Congress of the Writers' International, as well as in

⁶ José Manuel López de Abiada states that the starting point is towards the end of 1929, based on José

humanitarian missions. He continued to write, winning the Premio Nacional de Literatura in 1938. After the Civil War he lived in exile in Mexico until his death in 1962.

His periods of residence abroad, as a young man, seem to have opened his mind to many influences, not only to the political currents of the day, but also to the artistic moods and trends. An inclination towards the writing of Freud has been noted by most critics, and he cannot have missed the work of the German expressionists, traces of which are seen in his writing of the 1920s, combined with the more obvious elements of surrealism. Among the literary influences on his formative years, the pre-revolutionary Russian writers feature. In them, Prados "found a mine of humanity plagued by primordial and anarchic components which held a great attraction for him, and which would later re-appear in his work in Malaga at the end of the 20s, in a scenario very similar to the socially-charged reality which those novelists depicted" (Chica 20).

The attraction the Russian authors held for him was evidently the combination of social comment and explorations of the human psyche, which, as we have seen in earlier chapters, was a strong characteristic of pre-revolutionary authors such as Dostoevsky and Andreev.⁷ We know that Prados, as a young man, was profoundly affected by the writing of Andreev. In his diary (probably of the year 1919) he wrote:

Luis Cano's holdings of Prados' poetry (*Emilio Prados* 864).

⁷ Francisco Chica also mentions Prados' particular attraction to Mikhail Artsybashev's *Sanin* (1909). Artsybashev began publishing in 1901. In his earlier works, the influence of both Dostoevsky and Tolstoy are evident. Later, he came to concentrate more on sex and violence, and, as revolutionary fervour increased in Russia, he portrayed some of the more grim details of the persecution of terrorists. In *Sanin*, the protagonist considers himself free of moral and religious constraints, and advocates free love, for example. *Sanin* is one of the most significant in the fashion for anti-puritanical and erotic art. Nevertheless, it is a novel with a message: Sanin does what he does to

Today I find myself in a deplorable state. I've read some things by Andreev which have filled my heart with anxiety and despair, leaving me feeling exceedingly crushed. [...] What's impressed me most has been *El médico loco* (*The Mad Doctor*). I've found in Kerzhentsev things I find in myself! "It pleases me to know I'm alone and that no inquisitive eye has snooped into the depths of my soul, its caves and dark abysses, on the brink of which my head whirls"... It's true – there's no pleasure better than this solitude. Being alone with my spirit – torture though it is – can there be greater bliss? I've spent a day of great torment because of this dear book of mine. I know it's not doing me any good, but I'm so fascinated by it that I've not been able to resist it and have been reading feverishly and excitedly. Now I've finished it, I'm so tense that I'm half out-of-my-mind and terribly depressed. Can Russia really be like that? Will the Russians survive those tragic afflictions? I feel more and more attracted to them and their ideals.⁸ (*Diario íntimo* 17-18)

The story Prados had been reading was "Mysl" ("Thought") (1902).⁹ It is clear from the extract from Prados' diary concerning the story that he was "excited" by the fact that he identified with the character in the story. Evidently that facet of the doctor's personality which found pleasure in being alone and did not allow anyone to know him intimately attracted Prados. For the doctor in the story, this feeling is intensified by having committed murder; for Prados, it was a bittersweet experience to read Andreev's story at that time: it had made him feel anxious, despairing, crushed, tormented, and depressed. Francisco Chica notes that Prados, "having extracted the content of the books, was unable to distance himself from the imaginary world reflected in their pages" (21).

The experience speaks for the capacity of fiction to make connections between people of different cultures, and even of different generations or epochs, since Prados

prove his thesis, much as Raskol'nikov had done. Chica notes that José Enrique Rebolledo, Prados' colleague on the journal *Sur*, used the pseudonym "Sanin".

⁸ The Russian text he quotes reads: Я люблю то, что я одинок и ни один любопытный взгляд не проник в глубину моей души с ее темными провалами и безднами, на краю которых кружится голова.

⁹ The story is discussed in Section 1.4, pp. 127, 128.

was aware of the Russianness of the work; and, in 1919, Prados was a young man, whereas the story was rooted in turn-of-the-century Russia, written by an author already dead. This reminds us of Homi Bhabha's theory that an author may experience a feeling of "self-recognition" when reading the work of an author of a quite different culture and even age.¹⁰ The self-confessed sensation of self-recognition also argues for the state in which the poet found himself at that time. Indubitably, Prados experienced what Henry Gifford called the "shock of recognition" between authors, where one writer has "become conscious that an affinity exists between another and himself" (73) – the kind which Pushkin had when he read Byron, and which many have had on reading Dostoevsky. For Prados, the blend of social awareness and psychological penetration of the Russians appealed to his "anxious exploration of his inner man, desire to encounter models with which he can identify and a definite need to seek an escape from his agonized doubts" (Chica 21). According to Carlos Blanco Aguinaga, Prados, like his contemporaries, sought "the liberation of man and of the image (language and thought) in order to create a new universe", a search satisfied on discovering surrealism, but which indicates one of the appeals Russian literature may have had for him (*Emilio Prados* 21).

Prados' route to political writing in the 1930s was not the result of sudden enlightenment, as we have seen; neither did he leap headlong into political writing without a backward glance, as we have also established. Nevertheless, from the end of 1929, it is clear that the social and political environment in which he lived in Spain had begun to grieve him. His first reaction was to confine himself to Malaga and its own set of problems. After the Asturian Uprising of 1934, however, his involvement

¹⁰ See pages 46 and 301-2 of this thesis.

in politics became more intense. It was not necessarily a consistently positive reaction: there are strong indications of pessimism and nihilism in his writing, which may have been aggravated by the death of his father during that same period. Blanco Aguinaga paints a very pessimistic picture of the pre-Civil War writing of the poet:

neither in religion, nor in politics, nor in literature did the spiritual union of man with reality, nor of love among human beings, seem possible. At this stage in his life, Prados considered that he had lost all hope. Isolated again from the world around him, self-absorbed, he was not to find himself until 1936. (23)

It is certainly true to say, on the one hand, that Prados found no all-encompassing solution in any of these areas. On the other hand, we might suggest that such a solution was probably impossible in his case, since he was troubled by profound psychological issues. From a purely political point of view, optimism during the 1930s in Spain was a very difficult goal to achieve, given the severity and range of the problems faced by the majority of Spain's population.

It would be wrong to suggest that Prados resisted leaving the "ivory tower" of "pure" poetry, since he had not shown absolute devotion to it when such poetry reigned supreme in Spain. Indeed, in spite of the repeated blows delivered to the revolutionary movement in the 1930s, Prados shows a remarkable resilience in pursuing political ends. It goes without saying that the arrival of the Civil War concentrated his mind and gave him purpose; his outlook and attitude during the Civil War years will, therefore, have rapidly come alive.

In one of the earliest of his political poems, entitled "¡Alerta!",¹¹ he shows a sensitivity towards the disadvantaged sectors of society, summed up in his description

¹¹ This poem, plus "No podréis", "Existen en la Unión Soviética" and "Un día" were collected as *No podréis* (1930-32) by Blanco Aguinaga and Antonion Carreira (*Poesías completas*. 2 vols. Mexico: Aguilar, 1975). All quotations henceforward are taken from the first volume of this edition.

of children: "silent orphans / who never received either bread or embrace", "who never smiled", "walking around barefoot", and who "did not eat." The children are silent, they cannot sleep, and they walk around dirty and in a state of undress. Children are apt symbols of the oppressed in their defencelessness and innocence. The eyes of the children – the souls of the oppressed – are unshielded, having no eyelids, from the ravaging wind of oppression. They are like stray dogs which have been abandoned by their owners. But there is a solidarity among them – "they unite and walk together".

Prados uses language which makes the message of the poem easy to comprehend. The message is emphasised by the repetition of phrases such as "naked, half blind", bringing the listener's thoughts back to the deprivation the poet wishes to expose. Its style embraces the frequent use of anaphora, a technique which stands out in Prados' poetry: here, for example, the reiteration of "que... / que...", "los... / los..." and "Se les... / Se les... / Se les..." emphasizes the growing list of atrocities committed against the victims.

The first half of the poem laments; the second half of the poem mobilizes and calls for change. Children are now often referred to as "pioneers", "red pioneers" and "comrades" who are united, "elbow to elbow":

United, you will manage to smile
 you will cast out like mangy dogs
 those men who have deprived you of the taste of fish
 those others who have seen the hunger at the edge of their churches
 and have lifted their cloaks for fear of being stained by your blood
 Crows
 those who call you brothers. (445-46)

Now it is the turn of the oppressors to be cast out like mangy dogs. Finally, they are urged to "March with your fathers, with your brothers" in a collective show of

rebellion. The title of the poem is also used anaphorically in the text, creating a greater sense of urgency to action and hope:

March with your fathers, with your brothers,
 Rise up like flames
 for bread,
 Rest.
 Together, smiling.
 PIONEERS

ALERT (447)

In "No podréis" ("You Will Not Be Able"), Prados anticipates the fall of the *status quo* in Spain. Change will come, in the message of the poem, by means of solidarity and revolution. Addressing as "vosotros" ("you") the oppressors, he tells them to

Raise new symbols
 Seek new flags
 Call out, call out in vain
 while you are already savouring the bitter taste of your harvest
 Now that you are already seeing
 that a body is only free if it does not make fetters
 When you realize
 that you have scattered steel and you sprout daggers in your eyes
 That the sound of gunpowder grates in your bones. (449)

The oppressors will have no peace of mind and will "call out, call out in vain" – and what they are unable to do is to escape this fate ("you will not be able to hide yourselves"). The urge for them to call out and shout (in vain) is repeated persistently throughout the poem, emphasizing the fact that their persistent cries will achieve nothing and, in fact, revealing the extent to which the poet, the champion of the oppressed, desires them to suffer.

At the same time as he was expressing his concern for the plight of the oppressed in Spain and his desire for a radical change in conditions, Prados had certainly become more aware of the Soviet Union as a source of inspiration. In

"Existen en la Unión Soviética..." ("There Exist in the Soviet Union..."), he focuses attention on the accomplishments of the Russian Revolution. We should remember that the Association of Revolutionary Writers and Artists, co-founded by Prados, Alberti, María Terésa León and Arconada, stood not only against the Imperialist war and Fascism but in defence of the Soviet Union. The poem was first published in an issue of the politically activist journal *Octubre*.¹²

The poem marks Prados' stand on behalf of international proletarian solidarity: it looks forward to the day when "the earth will revolve without frontiers" and the happy people of the Soviet Union understand the strivings of their comrades abroad (452). In the poem, Prados also openly aligns himself with communism. Soviet Russia has become, for the poet, the standard by which all people should rightly measure themselves. There exist in the Soviet Union people who work, smile, sleep in peace, and have hope and trust. The poet's perception of the USSR is idealized. This time, anaphora, in the repetition of the title phrase, is used to concentrate the reader's focus on the Soviet Union. Whatever he is describing, he always returns to sentences beginning "There exist..." ("Existen...") which emphasise the facets of life in Soviet Russia which do not exist in contemporary Spain.

In the poem "Un día" ("One Day"), written in the same period, Prados projects the reader into the coming communist Utopia. The persecution of the oppressed will finally be at an end, and the peace will be worldwide, a "ring of arms united across the earth", with no enemy in sight (455). The poems of *Calendario incompleto del pan y del pescado* (*An Incomplete Calendar of Bread and of Fish*) (1933-34) describe the life of fishermen ("el pescado") and that of the countryside ("el pan"). As López de

¹² *Octubre* 4 / 5 (October / November 1933): 20-21.

Abiada has pointed out, this is among the first complete collections of committed poetry written in Spain (*Emilio Prados* 864).¹³ The poems are an expression of the poet's indignation. The audience's attention is held by the use of dramatic scenarios. The "Marzo en el mar" ("March on the Sea"), for example, is based on the conversation between a mother and son about the dangers of the father's occupation (fisherman). The reiteration throughout the poem of the couplet "Hunger kills more than water... / -- Mother, how hard it is to be poor!" emphasizes the social criticism of the poem, and the life of the poor is contrasted sharply with the security and comfort of the rich. Because of the poor conditions he portrays, the poet's tendency to become dejected continues to infiltrate poems like "Marzo en el mar", in spite of an underlying yearning for, indeed confident expectation of, something better to come, and the appeal to the people to embrace it.

The poetry contains references to communism and to the images of hammer and sickle, and the colour red features in association with certain images. In "Marzo en el mar" the reflection of the "red light of the dawn" is seen (465) and in "Los amos no duermen" ("The Landlords Do Not Sleep") the horizon burns with the "red light of twilight" (475). In "Enero en el mar" ("January by the Sea"):

The moon
 a sickle nailed above the arena
 Like a hammer in the breast
 appeals to the heart for vengeance [...]
 lighting up the earth
 a red star bleeds. (460)

¹³ In the same period as the writing of Prados collection, Alberti's *Consignas* and *Un fantasma* (1933), Balbontín's *Romancero del pueblo* (1933), Pla y Beltrán's *Narja* (1932) and José María Morón's *Minero de estrellas* (1933) were published.

The hammer, in particular, is connected with images of destruction and regeneration: it is used as an instrument of violence, but in the cause of vengeance. The red star, likewise, is associated with a duality – enlightenment and blood.

There is an agitative tone present in the poems: in "Huelga en el campo" ("Strike in the Country"), the workers are urged to get on their feet:

Quickly! Get on your feet, you workers!
 Children, on the alert! Women,
 get outside quickly, you women!
 Peasants! Get your sickles,
 your hoes! [...]
 The whole countryside is rising up
 like a spot of oil
 on the green landscape
 the red strike is extending. (481)

The advantageous circumstances of the rich and powerful are contrasted with the hunger of the oppressed. The poet supports the solidarity of the people:

I have a brother at the front
 Who you don't know, Mother
 and the brother I have now
 does not have the same blood as yours

I have a brother in Asturias
 another fights in Aragon (561)

Fighters in the same cause become "brothers". In Civil War, ideological brotherhood was thicker than blood.

There seems at times to be more of political rhetoric in some of this poetry than of poetry itself. However, if the poetry was written for reading aloud to and mobilizing the fishing community of Malaga, this would not be surprising. In the poetry there is frequent recourse to popular poetic forms which might facilitate appeal to people unused to, and possibly intolerant of, experimental forms. Many of the poems have the octosyllabic form of the lyric *romance*, while others have the long,

sixteen-syllable epic construction. The oral character of the *romance* lent itself well to the expression of social and political truths as a form aimed at an audience which may have found intricate poetic devices unpalatable and unnecessarily intricate.¹⁴ The poet thus becomes a *juglar* (minstrel), in the traditional Spanish manner, informing the people of a situation that is of interest to them, and, under certain circumstances, to rally the audience. For example, *Llanto de octubre (The Weeping of October)* (1934) was a reaction to the Asturian Uprising, although Prados does not directly refer to it except in the subtitle,¹⁵ and references to historical detail are veiled. It archly denounces the oppression of the people and their inevitable uprisings, and is at the same time a lament.

Prados' immersion into the real-life problems of his countrymen was clearly painful. In "El llanto subterráneo" ("The Weeping Below the Ground"), he wrote:

Today I cannot sing out as the other birds do
I cannot, no, I cannot sing out. I wander around the courtyards of humility
in my night clothes
[...]
under the wide bridges where life stings
and the men draw near to die in silence. (422)

There is little sign of histrionics in his expression of sorrow: the sentiment is simply stated. *La voz cautiva* enunciates more poignantly the quandary of the writer faced with the urgency of political engagement. It was the reflection of the weariness Prados felt after two years of an unsatisfactory Republic. The poet was asking himself

¹⁴ The traditional Spanish *romance* is a sung or recited composition, dating back several centuries and divided into assonating units of approximately sixteen syllables (often printed in eight-syllable lines). Ballads of this kind have been sung for centuries "in ordinary uneducated communities" (See Roger Wright's *Spanish Ballads* [London: Grant & Cutler, 1991], p. 9).

¹⁵ Its subtitle is "Durante la represión y bajo la censura posterior al levantamiento del año 1934" ("During the Repression and Under the Censorship prior to the Uprising of 1934").

where his duty lay in the social and political disarray in which Spain found itself; he further questions the wisdom of involving oneself in a fight which may not succeed, in which the forces of good and evil are engaged (Cano Ballesta 158). Prados is Jeremiah – feeling the urge to speak out, but feeling reluctant before the task; he is a man of flesh and blood, and a voice.

Cano Ballesta and Blanco Aguinaga have written of certain parallels between the writing of Prados and that of the Russian Vladimir Mayakovsky (154-55 and 62 respectively). Both Prados and Mayakovsky made it a feature of their work to read their poetry aloud to the people. Prados will almost certainly have encountered translations into French of Mayakovsky's work during his stays in Paris, and in the 1930s the Russian's work and legendary status spread widely in Spain. Prados' tendency to lyricism is akin to Mayakovsky, as is his disgust in the face of atrocities and the need he feels to address the common people. Poems such as "Huelga en el campo" show Prados' ability to stand on the figurative soapbox and rally the people to action. Considered as a whole, Prados' political poetry shows a greater sensitivity towards the plight of his fellow man: the poet appeared to suffer along with the people, and, often, this prevented him from being as militantly assertive as others were in his representation of the bright future beyond the revolution. Prados' use of the hammer-and-sickle and red-dawn symbols, and his admiration for the achievements of the Soviet Union, are evident and fulfil their purpose, but are used in moderation. Prados is obviously not on a campaign to create propaganda for the Soviets.

There was another poet writing political poetry at the same time as Prados who bears a perhaps stronger resemblance, in both style and outlook, to Mayakovsky. He was also one of the most high-profile Marxists and Soviet

sympathizers of the period. Rafael Alberti (1902-99) was a leading figure in that remarkable group of poets known conventionally as the Generation of 1927. In the artistic world of the 1920s and 30s, he was considered second in importance to García Lorca. He was "one of Spain's most outspoken and influential public voices in this century" (Nantell 162). He was physically a very striking man: the English poet Stephen Spender met him during the Civil War and described him as "a massive, leonine figure, dressed in blue dungarees, with flowing hair and Michelangelesque features", on that occasion "leaping on to a chair and shouting with passionate fury to everyone to be quiet" (76).

The evolution of Alberti's life and world-view echoed the rapidly changing times in which he lived. Significantly, this evolution was clearly expressed in his writing. He was nurtured artistically at a time when the arts in Spain had been enlivened by new, fresh talent. Centred, to a large extent, around the boarders and the activities of the Residencia de Estudiantes in Madrid, cultural life in the 1920s would lead to association with the likes of film maker Buñuel, painter Dalí, and García Lorca. Part of Alberti's literary education, meriting mention in his autobiography, was the reading of Russian literature. He specifically reported his avid reading of the works of Dostoevsky, Andreev, Chekhov and Gorky, but, given that his literary education was by means of the publications of Calpe's popular Colección Universal, he may well have read a variety of other Russian authors. He was moved to suggest, thirty years later, that "[p]erhaps we Spaniards have still not acknowledged how much we owe to that surprising revelation when the curtain was drawn back from the Russian fiction which appeared in those years. [...] Those pre-revolutionary Russian authors occupied a preferential place in my library" (*Arboleda I* 179). In 1933 he became a Communist

and considered himself a kindred spirit of the Soviets. He made visits to the Soviet Union and befriended Russian artists and revolutionaries. In a nutshell:

The October Revolution of 1917, the creation of the first Socialist society, his own encounter with such a society while visiting the USSR, his impressions of and admiration for the common people who fostered such a society, his bond with the writers and poets who depicted this new world, and his own conversion to Marxism all serve as the foundation for the poetry of *Consignas, Un fantasma recorre Europa*, and that published in his revolutionary magazine *Octubre*, founded in 1933. (Nantell 40)

The object of this study of his pre-Civil War writing is to underscore his sense of kinship with the Soviets, to the extent that he considered himself – and was considered by them – to be one of the "detachment" of writers¹⁶ outside the Soviet Union who was upholding what they stood for. Nevertheless, the fact that he was considered by the Soviets as one of the leaders of the campaign in Spain, does not necessarily and conclusively establish that he assimilated what he saw and read of Russian and early Soviet arts. It is, therefore, an aim of this study to investigate thoroughly Alberti's creative work for evidence of such assimilation, and discover the impact of Soviet Russia – both its politics and its literature – on his life and work.¹⁷

¹⁶ We may recall *Soviet Writers' Congress* pages 17 and 20 on this matter and terminology, as cited earlier in this thesis.

¹⁷ As has been noted in an earlier section, this thesis does not include within its parameters theatrical productions. However, Alberti's writings for the stage during the 1930s are worthy of study and have been addressed, for example, by Derek Gagen ("Puppets and Politics: Rafael Alberti's 'Dos farsas revolucionarias'") where he discusses directly the impact of Soviet thinking and drama on Alberti's works and gives a brief description of the poet's political evolution. In the article, Gagen not only shows the importance of the Soviet impact on the development of the puppet tradition in Spain, but also purports to enhance the understanding of the literature of commitment in contemporary Spain by means of his description of Alberti's politics. Jim McCarthy's *Political Theatre during the Spanish Civil War* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999) is also worth noting.

It is useful to keep in mind that his writing up until the Spanish Civil War can be loosely divided into three parts: first, his pre-engagement writing of the 1920s; second, the reflections of his political awakening during the years 1930 and 1931; third, his output as a committed Marxist and proletarian writer up to the commencement of the Civil War. Each of these reveals a different style which can be examined from the point of view of his political outlook (or lack of it) and, consequently, his motivations for writing.

Although in the 1920s he was oblivious to politics, like most of his contemporaries, his poetry was innovative, even revolutionary, in the literary sense, and contributed to the development of avant-garde poetry in Spain. A move from his home town, Cádiz, to Madrid, followed by periods of illness and recuperation from tuberculosis, had left him feeling isolated and disorientated. As compensation, the sudden confinement had yielded unforeseen benefits for his creative nature when a whole new world had opened for him – the world of literature. As he read, he also wrote, and, to his surprise, writing fulfilled him in a way painting could not:

More and more I found that painting as a means of *expression* left me completely dissatisfied as I failed to find a way of putting into a picture *all that blazed in my imagination*. But putting pen to paper was quite different. On paper it was easy to *unburden myself* to my heart's content – there was room to *express feelings* which really had little or nothing to do with the plastic arts. [...] I wanted only to be a poet – and this I wanted desperately, even though at barely twenty I considered myself almost too old to start out on this new and most difficult of paths. Then to my surprise I realised that I was not at a loss for words, and that I possessed them in great variety and richness. (*Arboleda 1* 162; emphasis added)

Once embarked on his new vocation, he immersed himself in the artistic atmosphere of the time: it was the start of a "tremendous, fierce and agonizing struggle to become a poet" (*Arboleda 1* 161). When, in 1928, he had a breakdown – a well-documented period usually referred to as his spiritual crisis – he was demonstrating the malady to

which Prados also fell victim, neurosis (Buckley and Crispin 325).¹⁸ While there may be an element of self-indulgence and Latin temperament in Alberti's writing of that time – that urge to "unburden himself" which was better facilitated by writing than by painting – such introspection was a "legacy of spiritual *malaise* and metaphysical bankruptcy that persisted into twentieth century Spain" (Cardwell "Persistence", 122-33).

The poetry collection *Sobre los ángeles* (*Concerning the Angels*) (1929), often considered his masterpiece, was conceived during this crisis, a harrowing testament to the nature of the breakdown. In it, Alberti is seen to be "immersed in himself", and its characters "exist[ed] only in order to represent his impulses or emotions" (Morris, *Rafael Alberti* 15); it originated in the crisis created by the "sensitive soul on discovering that all past values have been deprecated by the hollowness and deception of man, or have been forever lost in the passage from idealistic youth to disillusioned maturity" (Bellver 72). In *Sobre los ángeles*, he "attempted to free himself of despair by exteriorizing it, casting it out, naming it and converting it into an artistic object" (Popkin 13). Alberti's earlier works had been largely introspective, expressing the poet's own sensations and impulses. When plunged into a real spiritual crisis, the poet found release and remedy in writing *Sobre los ángeles*.

The "blazings of imagination" and urge to "express feelings", and the tendency to become self-obsessed, even neurotic, were not the only features of the literary environment of the time. Artists were generally seeking inspiration and moral support from past masters, both at home and abroad. In the works of poets of the 1920s and 30s is found a "rich compendium of poetic traditions, for concentrated in two decades

¹⁸ We recall that both Prados and García Lorca suffered spiritual crises at the end of the 1920s.

was a wide range of forms, metres, techniques, diction and imagery that owed their new life to Spain's poetic heritage" (Morris *Generation*, 17). This meant that poets freely and voluntarily experimented with the tools of their trade and were not afraid to look back into their literary past in order to produce writing that adequately expressed what they felt. Discovering an affinity with their precursors, they found in them methods and themes which could be adapted for twentieth-century purposes. With reference to the 1927 tricentennial tribute to Góngora – the event which earned for the poets involved the title "Generación del 27" – Alberti frankly admitted:

That aspects of the poetry of the hook-nosed and dangerous priest from Córdoba happened to coincide, after all these centuries, with some of ours, and that the date of the centenary was so advantageous, does not mean we were at all beholden to him. The fever for Góngora was not only deliberate, but passing; it did not last even a year after the homage to him. (*Arboleda* 1 278)

The search for kindred spirits took artists of this period not only into the past but also across geographical and cultural borders. In the early part of the twentieth century, "for the first time since the eighteenth century, Spain opened up to all and sundry and, with its own unmistakable voice, joined in with contemporary European trends" (Buckley and Crispin 9). This openness and willingness to look to other ages and cultures for kindred spirits and precursors was the key which unlocked the door through which works of Russian literature were admitted into Spain's literary world.¹⁹ That being so, we can expect to find, in the course of our investigation, that not only was Alberti exposed to Russian literature, as he himself admitted, but also that he had perhaps sought inspiration in Russian literature and that traces of Russian themes and styles will be found in his writing.

¹⁹ It is important to note, once again, that this thesis does not intend to imply that Russian literature was the only foreign literature to be embraced by Spain.

Does an examination of the text of *Sobre los ángeles*, the masterpiece of his body of work prior to becoming politically committed, confirm this? Supplementing the fictional, poetic representation of his spiritual crisis with the autobiographical description, we see that this period was marked by a sense of isolation, partly self-imposed, and by paranoia: "I was a wreck [...] I began to isolate myself from everything;" "I envied and hated the comfortable positions of all the rest [...] What had I done with my life?" (*Arboleda I* 292-93). In *Sobre los ángeles*, Alberti feels persecuted – "Against me, whole worlds directed, / against me, asleep, / hands bound, / unprotected" – and he complains that all his defences are being destroyed: "And down come crashing the bastions [...] that were my guardians" (*Poesías completas* 251). He is in a psychological underground, damp and alienated. This calls to mind that it was paranoia which beset the alienated characters of the Russian writers: the priest in Andreev's "Molchanie" ("Silence") is persecuted by the very silence in which he must live; Raskol'nikov is hypersensitive to any suggestion that he is suspected of murder, and finds himself irresistibly drawn to Porfirii, who does, indeed, suspect him; the Underground Man is convinced that everyone hates him. Ivan Karamazov, the mentor of his murdering half-brother, Smerdiakov, is always detached and seemingly uncaring, but he finally retreats into a state of total incoherence, bordering on insanity. Stavrogin can transcend the dictates of what conscience is left to him, and he is immune from any self-negation and guilt, thoughts or cares of what others think; nevertheless, he takes his own life.

Alberti's general spiritual and emotional anxiety was coupled with concerns for his physical health: "I couldn't sleep, the roots of my hair and my nails ached, I was drowning in yellow bile, biting the pillow owing to the throbbing pain" (*Arboleda I* 291). The condition was oddly similar to the suffering of Dostoevsky's "underground

men": the Underground Man himself, who opens his recorded ravings with self-pitying complaints of physical illness and Raskol'nikov, whose inability to coldly accept his crime is accompanied by fever. The sense of isolation and paranoia and hypochondria reveal signs of the malaise that affect not only Dostoevsky's underground characters, but also Andreev's gallery of alienated anti-heroes. For these fictional characters, as well as for the fictional Alberti in the poetry, the whole of their beings, physical and spiritual, are in a state of alarm and anxiety, but the chief of their symptoms is psychological. They immerse themselves in self-obsessed philosophising, in which they are the centre of the universe.

The psychological alienation they all have in common is monumental in their own minds. For Alberti, it is a feeling of emptiness. He feels as if he has been ousted from a Paradise and plunged into a Hell on earth. "To go to hell, no need to change one's place or attitude" (*Poesías completas* 284) confirms that Hell is "the mind and soul of every human, where mortal sins wage war" (Morris, *Rafael Alberti* 20). Dostoevsky had also experienced the Hell of imprisonment within one's own mind while in Siberian exile and had fictionalised it in *Zapiski iz mertvogo doma* (*Notes from the House of the Dead*), in which Gorianchikov's Hell-like literal prison mirrors the Hell of his own mind, produced by the enforced incarceration of a sensitive and intelligent man in a wholly alien environment from which there is no escape, and which he likens to being buried alive.

Like Dostoevsky, Alberti comes to the conclusion that suffering has a regenerative and healing power. A vital lesson is learned: "a rose is more of a rose when infested by grubs" (*Poesías completas* 292). The significance of this illustration should not be missed. A rose without caterpillars belonged to the idealised Arcadian world of the Golden Age poets. Real life is not like that. Alberti surely

acknowledged, finally, that real life must have its crises – sometimes almost intolerable – but that he could become a better man and a better poet for it. Pessimism was a problem in the work of Andreev, in whose estimation human life is not conducive to happy endings. For example, Sashka Zhegulev has given his life and identity to a worthy cause but dies a broken man; Pet'ka and a number of characters from the early short stories experience brief relief from the mundanity and vanity of their lives only to return irretrievably to that terrible state. Nevertheless, Andreev could be philosophical about the meaning of a person's existence on earth: Werner, for example, one of the seven revolutionaries about to be hanged, impressively rises above fears of his imminent fate. Dostoevsky brings no relief in the short-term; in his philosophy, this life will inevitably be accompanied by poverty, sickness and unhappiness. The woes of this life notwithstanding, a prostitute or a murderer may be spiritually renewed by confession, submission to godly humility and yielding to due punishment. That some form of rebirth or regeneration results from suffering is a core Dostoevskian idea.

Alberti described his crisis as a spiritual and emotional dispossession manifest in both his own feeling of emptiness and a recognition of the world in which he lived as being futile and superficial. In his alienated state, the fictional Alberti's five senses – the proof that he is alive – have been undermined, even extinguished. The poem "5" describes the gradual destruction of the protagonist. In his third poem of the collection, "El cuerpo deshabitado" ("The Uninhabited Body"), abound images denoting absence, emptiness, dispossession. The poet likens himself to an empty house – "unfurnished, with no bed alcove, / empty, desolate" (*Poesías completas* 250-54). He is alone; he has seen that a "suit of clothes went past, / uninhabited and hollow." Andreev's early stories are littered with characters who feel at odds with their own environment: the student who dons a mask to symbolize his own sense of

marginalization; the man who perpetually sits by his window watching the world because he is incapable of interacting in the real world; the young man whose venereal disease and chequered past have separated him from his home. They all live in a world of the ego. Dostoevsky's Underground Man, Raskol'nikov, Ivan Karamazov and Stavrogin are the centre of their own universes. Their thoughts – all have in common their copious self-obsessed philosophizing – revolve around their own impulses and emotions, just as Alberti wallows in his own self-pity.

In this sense of disorientation and emptiness in an alien environment, perhaps we see the first signs of Alberti's affinity with the poet Mayakovsky. The Soviet poet's final years were beset by a feeling of Paradise lost. We may recall the poignancy of his words in "Domoi!" ("Home!") – "I want to be understood by my country, / but if I fail to be understood -- / what then? / I shall pass through my native land / to one side, / like a shower / of slanting rain" – and in "Vo ves' golos" ("At the Top of My Voice") the words "But I / subdued / myself / standing / on the throat / of my own song." Alienated in pre-revolutionary Russia, Mayakovsky could not be ideologically and spiritually accommodated under the Tsarist regime. But happiness eluded him in the socialist state: the Revolution had been the realization of Paradise for him, but even under those conditions, he had come to experience a Hell, be it personal or ideological, from which he had to escape. Ironically, Mayakovsky's Hell was beginning at the same time as Alberti was experiencing his.

Perhaps the similarity between the morbid introspection of *Sobre los ángeles*, externalised in critically acclaimed poetry, and the inward-looking nature of Dostoevsky and Andreev's characters proves no more than that the general literary atmosphere in 1920s Spain – its penchant for neurosis and its hospitality towards kindred spirits in other ages and cultures – was perfect soil in which the seeds of the

works of these Russians were sown. Certainly, Alberti was not the only one to find something personal in the pages of Russian works to which he could personally relate. We have already discovered the attraction Prados felt for the writing of Andreev. Given the personal experience that lay behind the creation of *Sobre los ángeles*, it is not unreasonable to suppose that when Alberti read the works of writers like Dostoevsky and Andreev he, like Prados, experienced the "shock of recognition." The writings of certain of those pre-revolutionary writers were awash with self-obsessed and alienated individuals who struggled to find meaning in their lives, and those living in a subjective and neurotic literary age, who, at the same time, had valid reasons for introversion, would surely find such reading material irresistible food for consolation.

In spite of all this, the reasons Alberti gave, in retrospect, for his interest in Russian writing were not principally psychological. With regard to the work of Andreev, we will remember that he wrote that he was among those excited by the heroic adventures of Sashka Zhegulev (*Arboleda* 1 178). The appeal of Andreev's novel was its seeming glorification of fighting for a cause. It attracted those with anarchistic inclinations, and, according to Alberti's testimony, he himself was urged on by the example of Sashka. This is not surprising since Andreev had been the inspiration for Serbian revolutionaries in the early 1910s, and young Russians had greatly admired Zhegulev. The fact that Zhegulev has cause to regret his self-sacrifice seems not to have affected his admirers. Andreev, however, made him a legendary, almost mythical character, implying a strong resemblance to the common conception of the ultimate martyr, Jesus Christ. His tragic, alienated life and his death, therefore, held great appeal for impressionable minds.

Impressionable or not, within a short space of time following the publication of *Sobre los ángeles*, Alberti began to emerge from his ivory tower of self-obsessed rumination, and, along with certain other Spanish writers of his generation, started to notice what was happening around him in Spain. He was not able to remain detached from what he saw. During the course of the years 1930 and 1931 he went through a period of political awakening, externalised in his writing. Alberti's first political poem was "Con los zapatos puestos tengo que morir (Elegía cívica) (1^o de enero de 1930)" ("I have to die with my boots on [Civic elegy] [1 January 1930]") (1930), an appraisal of Spain at the start of a new decade in the form of a first-hand account of the growing unrest of the 1920s, when the ground was unsteady beneath the feet of thinking Spaniards, when the unpredictable and inconceivable seemed to be happening, and the stability of the past, as it was perceived, seemed to be in the process of turning upside down. The significance of the date in the title is to highlight not only the start of a new calendar year, not only to make an evaluation of life and country, as often happens at the turn of centuries, decades, or years, but also to point out the new stage in the poet's life. The poem ostensibly shows the first steps away from earlier subjective and self-absorbed styles of writing.²⁰ Alberti was now apparently viewing matters through the eyes of the people, from street level rather than from an ivory tower. In spite of his obvious repugnance at the sight that met him when the scales fell from his eyes, the poem describes him facing up to his responsibility, not only absorbing the disgusting sight, but foreseeing a victorious outcome for the people against the regime that threatens it.

²⁰ The analysis presented here is indebted to some of the ideas of Judith Nantell in her study *Alberti's Poetry of the Thirties*.

Written in free verse, the poem begins in a manner characteristic of the whole piece: "It will be in that moment when horses without eyes break their legs on the iron points of a stockade of enraged chairs alongside the paving stones of some street newly gripped by madness" (line 1). The over sixty syllables of the first line set a hurried pace, propelling the reader into the chaos and violence described in the following lines. The poem conveys aspects new in the author's poetry: his angry and ferocious reaction, and his sense of apocalypse. Alberti's own infuriated gut reaction to the scenario is revealed in the second line – "For the last time I'm going to shit again on all your dead." The crude expression is born of an exasperation very avant-garde in style: Buñuel and Dalí had used such graphic shock tactics in the film *Un chien andalou* (1928) with, for example, the horrifying slicing of an eyeball with a razor in an early scene as well as to the use of similar faecal imagery, and Alberti had considered the appearance of the film appropriate for the political turbulence of the present and of the times to come (*Arboleda* 1 307). Both the film and the poetry were conceived from "the anger and the passion boiling in Spain at that time" (Alberti, *Arboleda* 1 320), a time in which

[d]isillusioned, disenchanted, sceptical, horrified and incensed by World War I, the surrealists and dadaists often sought to reflect in their works the death of a civilization and the tragic anguish of the absurdity of man's fate. Alberti, motivated by different political events, reveals a kindred vision, extended in time, space, and focus, in the "Elegía cívica." (Nantell 27)

In his poem, the insults continue against the character "tú responsable" ("you the one bearing the responsibility"), one of a variety of characters in the poem and the perpetrator of the shocking atrocities. Halfway through the poem, the direction of the violence changes on a massive wave of life-force and the "tú responsable" of the poem becomes the victim of retribution: "We cry for you that star that will have to be released at exactly two o'clock in the afternoon without a sound so that a mass of

heels will make your blood flow in future avenues. [...] / But these abandoned shoes in the cold of the pools are the visible sign that the air still receives the corpses of the men on foot and without warning who turned from the side of death" (lines 43, 60). Evil is finally conquered by good, and the end of "tú" signals a new beginning for "vosotros" ("you", the collective victim). The "dawn of sickness" ("el alba de las náuseas") (line 29) of this day, January 1, 1930, will, at a specific time – "at exactly two in the afternoon" – radically change.

The poem appears to be disjointed, ambiguous and cryptic. Yet the juxtaposition of conflicting dualities is very similar to the cinematographic "montage", in which two or more factors or pieces are made to collide or conflict in one shot. Russian film-maker Sergei Eisenstein used "intellectual montage" in order to produce a synthesis of theme.²¹ In a sense, the chaotic nature of the writing reflects not only the disorder in which Spain found itself at the turn of the 1930s, but also the perplexity and disorientation in which the observer-narrator Alberti found himself. The author Alberti himself said:

Disproportionate, obscure, based on guesswork rather than knowledge of what I wanted to achieve, this poem subtitled "Civic elegy", conceived with passion and the gnashing of teeth, with a blurred hopelessness which made me chew the carpet, signaled my initiation into a new world which I entered blindly, without any thought for where it would lead me... It was subversive, personally shocking, but it was already announcing, albeit hazily, the road I was to take. (*Arboleda* 1 320-21).

At first sight it appears that Alberti has hauled himself out of his neurotic self-absorption of the 1920s and has noticed that other people in the world are also suffering – "I felt at that time I was consciously a poet of the street" (*Arboleda* 1 320). The writer Azorín declared that Alberti was returning to the people (*Arboleda* 1 321).

²¹ See Judith Nantell's study *Alberti's Poetry of the Thirties*, chapter 2.

The experience, however, results in a further immersion into his own reactions and sensations. It is portrayed as a Road-to-Damascus experience, and it hurt. It was "personally shocking." In both the poem and his autobiographical comments, the emphasis was on how the opening of his eyes to public themes would affect him: the very title is subjective and, arguably, somewhat vainglorious.

In the poem it is evident that he is, indeed, disgusted by what he observes around him, and his pity for the Spanish people is clear, but, nevertheless, he appears to be licking his own wounds. Azorín had also acknowledged in his review of the poem that Alberti needed, indeed, requested, the support of the people (*Arboleda I* 321). Surrealist elements which imbue the poem in the form of motifs – flesh being devoured by various creatures, mutilation, savage abuse – and graphic word images, and "the conflict and inversion of incongruent realities", emphasise the subjective aspect of the work: this is a representation of the reality that he himself has seen and that he himself is capable of interpreting (Nantell 17). Furthermore, he inserts into the text a passage listing the ways in which he himself has been victim, moving the focus entirely from the victimized "vosotros" to "yo" (lines 48-53). Nevertheless, the rage of "Elegía cívica" is more politically motivated, than the *Angst*-driven *Sobre los ángeles*.

The poem further indicates Alberti's growing recognition that poetry could be used to change social situations: he is en route to re-humanizing the content of his poetry. He was later to write that, until then, "it had occurred to no-one at that time to consider that poetry could serve for anything other than personal indulgence" (*Arboleda I* 306). For Alberti, it was integration into a new world. His bewilderment, in all senses, is apparent; the first-person textual speaker is visibly

shocked, and, in reality, the shock was due not simply to political awakening, but also to the discovery of a new and much more important theme for his poetry.

In 1930, the first of his political poems needed to incorporate his own traumatized response to growing political awareness. It features new perceptions of the common people, the *pueblo*, and acknowledges his acceptance of a new order originating in them, a theme which continued to engage him for many years. "Elegía cívica" was written in a time of tension and expectation. It was at the time when Primo's dictatorship came to an end (1930) and the Second Republic was declared (1931). In the meantime, however, there was a sense of expectation and attendant frustration while change hung in the balance. This tension finds expression in Alberti's poem.

As a parallel, it is worth noting that in the troubled period leading up to the Russian Revolution, Mayakovsky's poetry had contained similar elements. As we judged earlier, life under the Tsarist regime could only frustrate and enrage a revolutionary poet. On the other hand, while the longed-for Revolution was still awaiting realization, Mayakovsky could share his concentration and talents with aesthetic concerns; he could experiment with new methods and forms, make the most of his natural lyrical style, and explore the joys and anguish of love. He could at times be a poet for poetry's sake, if he chose. Then again, he was not a whole man or poet while he remained politically unsatisfied, and the frustration and rage this produced is evident in his often coarse, explosive style. Like Alberti in his "Elegía cívica", the pre-revolutionary Mayakovsky combined poetry showing attention to aesthetic issues underscored by the exasperation of living under a regime with a desperate need for social change and political rupture.

"Elegía cívica" was Alberti's "first attempt to write outwardly political poetry" but his "last undertaking with cryptic imagery portraying the human existential condition" (Nantell 31). Once he had become more outward-looking, more conscious of his audience, his approach changed. Much more akin to a true poet of the revolution, like Mayakovsky, who wrote innumerable slogans and designed and created propagandist posters, Alberti tried briefly to write poems to post on the walls (*Arboleda* 1 320). Leaving behind the surreal expressions of his bewilderment and infuriation, Alberti began to make his poetry accessible to the people he purported to represent with his poetic voice. Alberti's writing and world-view had undergone a volte-face, from the self-obsessed poetry typified by *Sobre los ángeles*, via the political consciousness of "Elegía cívica", to something altogether more positive and assertive: the need to implement Marxism, give support to the creation of a socialist society and to show himself a servant of Socialism and the people.

For him, the real turning point came on April 14 1931 – the day the Second Republic was declared in Spain. For Mayakovsky, the catalyst for a change to directly political poetry had been the Revolution itself; for Alberti, as well as in absolute historical terms, the declaration of the Second Republic was highly significant, although the reality of the Republic proved to be a disappointment. The new-found political awareness which had been increasing since 1928 was initially blurred, as he himself confessed, but came into sharp focus in the landmark year of 1931. Of his political awakening, he wrote in *El poeta en la España de 1931* (*The Poet in the Spain of 1931*):

Speaking from my own experience, from the date 14 April [1931] a profound adjustment of conscience was intensified in me, and in the other poets of my generation. I [...] experienced contact with real and harsh matters concerning Spain. The serene landscapes of the sierras, the rivers and the seas were no more.

Our tremendous terrain, with its communities, its problems, along with all that animates mankind, was fully awake to its battle for survival. (34)

It was, indeed, an enlightening experience, as a result of which he saw, for the first time, the real state of his country and the challenge it invoked. He had already become aware of the plight of his countrymen, but now, in 1931, that realization induced an "adjustment of conscience", and an awareness that the proclamation of the Republic gave him a concrete foundation for hope. Later, he was to say that "from 1931, my work and my life were in the service of the Spanish revolution and of the international proletariat" (*Poesía 1924-1930* 14). This, then, was the effect of his "adjustment of conscience": now he did not need to feel impotent in the face of the problems of Spain, and, thanks to the change in political scenery, he could envisage for himself a valid and useful role. It is clear from his statement that his allegiance was to both the Spanish and the international cause. Noteworthy, also, is that he spoke of both his work and his life being at the disposal of the revolution: in effect, literary creation had become part of his *raison d'être*. In 1931 he wrote a play called *Fermín Galán* which told the story of the hero of the Jaca Uprising of December 1930.²² Although not well acclaimed critically, it showed Alberti's political intent, and, perhaps more importantly, showed traces of the boldness with which he would approach the representation of social and political concerns in subsequent years.

In 1932 he set off with his wife, María Teresa León, to Europe. By November, they were in Moscow.²³ The first visit to the USSR was a landmark one:

²² We recall that the novelists Joaquín Arderius and José Díaz Fernández co-authored a biography of the same person. Alberti may be said to have been "jumping on a bandwagon" politically, and, indeed, the play is not held in high regard critically, but it is noteworthy for the fact that it employs a "popular" dramatic form for political purposes (Gagen 62).

²³ Alberti and his wife were granted funds by the Junta de Ampliación de Estudios de España to study European theatre. They stayed in Germany for some months, before departing for Moscow, where he

this "illuminating and revealing journey of discovery signaled the beginning not only of a revolutionary thematic matter in Alberti's poetry but also of a new mode of writing, a political mode of writing" (Nantell 34). Until that time, he had been only superficially aware of the ramifications of the dramatic events in the Soviet Union. In 1918 he had heard of Lenin and the Bolsheviks in the aftermath of the Revolution, but only "as synonyms for bandits or demons, enemies not only of religion but of the whole human race" (*Arboleda* 1 124).

The visit to the USSR in 1932 should be seen as a defining moment, an event about which Alberti himself wrote down his impression. However, the visit did not go unnoticed in the Soviet Union, and it would be appropriate, at this stage, to make reference to texts which give specific insight into the subject, both from Alberti's own writings and from material extracted from Soviet Russian journals of the period, a source of archival information which not only supplements what is already known about his relationship with the Soviet Union, but which contributes to an understanding of this period of Alberti's life and work.

Indeed, in the 1930s, Alberti was one of the favourite subjects of articles in Russia about what they regarded as the Spanish branch of proletarian writers, as is endorsed by the following extract:

Rafael Alberti (b. 1902) is the greatest poet in revolutionary Spain. Along with Federico García Lorca, who died at the hands of Fascist murderers, he led the revolutionary wing in Spanish poetry. A trip to Moscow in 1932, which Alberti took with his wife, the children's writer, María Terésa León, and his personal familiarization with the accomplishments of socialist construction did much to facilitate the development of a revolutionary world-view in the poet. After that, he was in Moscow in 1934 at the Congress of writers and in 1937.

cannot fail to have noted that communism and socialism could put up a fight against the fascist threat (contrary to the maximalist approach of the PCE in the early 1930s).

The significance of Alberti's work in the development of revolutionary poetry in Spain is very great. He was one of the organizers of the journal *Octubre*, which played a key role in the uniting and education of the young revolutionary forces of Spanish poetry. Victimized by the Lerroux-Robles government, Alberti was forced to emigrate and could only return to active revolutionary duties in Spain itself in 1935. In the fight of the Spanish people with the Fascist rebels, Alberti takes a most active part but his poetry arouses the heroism and determination of the masses.

In the book *Ispanskiie krest'iane* (*Spanish Peasants*) are published various of his works. The life and revolutionary disposition of the Spanish peasantry, the anti-religious and anti-clerical poems, the exposing of Fascism, the ardent appeal of the Spanish proletariat to fight in the ranks of the Communist Party, the poetry about the homeland of the workers of the whole world, the Soviet Union, and its true bulwark, the Red Army – the reader finds all this in the collection. Alberti's poetry is distinguished by great political pathos, intended for recitation before a large audience of people.²⁴

This text was written in 1937, when Alberti's political stance had become well known. In the text, it is apparent that Alberti's revolutionary activity, both in combat and in literature, had become the focus of the Soviets' interest, a factor which is reinforced in forthcoming texts as having grown during the course of some years. In addition, the contribution of the visit to the Soviet Union in 1932 was perceived by them as a crucial element in his revolutionary activity. Arising out of his Soviet orientation and socialist ideology, Alberti produced poetry, in the publication *Ispanskiie krest'iane*, which addressed several themes of importance.²⁵

The first visit to the Soviet Union, which was, indeed, crucial to Alberti's revolutionary development, is the subject of a long article by Fedor Viktorovich Kel'in, who was the leading Hispanist at Moscow University in the 1930s. It has been

²⁴ A. Pevzner. *Ispanskaia literatura. Bibliograficheskii ukazatel'* (*Spanish Literature. A Bibliographical Index*). Moscow: Nauchno-issledovatel'skii institut RSFSR, 1937. 61-63.

²⁵ *Ispanskiie krest'iane* (*Extremadura*). (*Spanish Peasants [Extremadura]*). Moscow: L. Gikhli, 1934. It contained a foreword by Kel'in.

selected for three reasons: first, it provides some interesting personal details about Alberti the man; second, it gives useful insight into the Soviets' view of Alberti, both before and after becoming acquainted with him; third, it explains what Alberti did while in the Soviet Union:²⁶

One day in August 1932 – a fine summer day, one of those days when the Moscow sun shines and gives out its warmth like it does in Madrid – I received a parcel of books from Berlin. The contents puzzled me. There were collections of mystical and love poetry by the Spanish poet Rafael Alberti and two books of fairy tales and legends, on the cover of which was printed the name María Terésa León. I tried to bring to mind my literary recollections of Alberti. I knew that he is considered to be the Sovereign of the young bourgeois poets of Spain, that he contributed much to the creation of new art forms, that together with Federico García Lorca he is the most outstanding representative of the post-war movement of young writers in Hispanic countries. I had also heard that Alberti had recently been suffering a breakdown, that he was opposed to Spanish government circles, and that because of this he had found it necessary to go abroad. But what this breakdown consisted of and how far it had got, I did not then know. [...] I opened one of Alberti's books on the cover of which was the strangest title: *Concerning the Angels*. Before me passed the "Unknown Angel", and the angels of good, war, numbers and lies. [...] This was technically first-rate poetry, but how different, how alien, from all that the Spanish press was saying about the heroic struggle of the Spanish proletariat and the revolutionary peasantry, the powder smoke enveloping Spain, about the blood which flows every day (if not every moment) on the streets of several of her towns and villages. I turned to María Terésa's book of fairy tales. [...] I wondered if someone were pulling my leg. Do they intend to send such peculiar books to the International Association of Revolutionary Writers? And, if so, what kind of strange people are we dealing with? But I did not need to worry about it. I took the books home, having decided to leave this psychological dilemma for life to take care of. (239)

The opening of Kel'in's article demonstrates how Alberti must have been initially viewed by the Soviets. The writer of "mystical and love poetry" and "new art forms"

²⁶ F. V. Kel'in's "Rafael Alberti i [and] María Terésa León" (*Internatsional'naiia literatura* 3-4 [1934]: 239-45) is the subject of the discussion of several pages of this thesis. For an abridged version of the text see Appendix 1.

seemed an unlikely candidate for giving ardent support to such a cause as the "heroic struggle of the Spanish proletariat". It was indeed an "alien" concept to imagine, as Kel'in did at first, that Alberti sought to contribute to the International Association of Revolutionary Writers works such as the ones for which he had become renowned. So alien was it that Kel'in suspected Alberti of being involved in some kind of joke. But the books sent in advance proved, rather, to be a letter of introduction to MORP (Mezhdunarodnaia organizatsiia revoliutsionnykh pisatelei) (International Union of Revolutionary Writers).

Kel'in's article continues with his first impressions of Alberti, including a physical description. The first meeting was a short one:

However, in spite of the brevity of the meeting, we managed to touch on quite a lot. María Terésa (who did most of the talking) told me about the enthusiasm within the left-wing radical intellectual groups for everything Soviet. "You can't imagine how great is the enthusiasm!" and then she told me that they had intended to come here in the Spring but they were prevented by their enemies ("Oh, Rafael and I have many enemies!") and that they had come now with Intourist but their one dream was to stay in Moscow a month or two. Then her attention leapt to paintings of the young Spaniard Benjamin Palencia that they had brought to Moscow. "They really must publish them in Moscow along with Rafael's poems. You know, he's written a few revolutionary poems about the peasants in Extremadura. He can read them to you now." I prepared myself to listen.

Rafael, with a swift, sure movement, got out of his chair. His face, which had been looking sympathetically towards me, took on an expression of concentration and lit up with some kind of inner glow. [...] As it happens, in all the years that I have worked with the Spaniards, I have never listened to any of them reading their own verse. I am used to their somewhat doleful manner, to the very timbre, if you will, of their recitation. But Rafael read his poem about the hunger suffered in an Extremadura village quite differently: not as a professional reciter, but as a poet, with inspiration. His fine low voice would invariably rise towards the end of each line, seeking the resolution of the poetic phrase, of its melody. The final weak syllable would be somewhat lengthened; the whole phrase was uttered with a kind of deliberate and tragic refrain [...] and he read with all his heart. [...]

Rafael fell silent: he had charmed us with his reading. It seemed as if his tragic voice had filled the room. [...] In one sense, Alberti's work turned out to be prophetic. The spiritual crisis he had experienced awoke in him parts of him no-one had ever seen before. Beneath the petty-bourgeois poet of earlier years there turned out to be the people's 'singer', or, to be more exact, a singer of the people's anger and sorrow. (240)

In Kel'in's view, the Alberti he came to know during the 1932 visit was the one who had responded to the people's plight, for whom spiritual crisis had stirred "parts of him no-one had ever seen before", and who was now equipped to become the mouthpiece for "the people's anger and sorrow."

Kel'in records that on a subsequent occasion Alberti explained his attraction to Russia and the Russians:

I have great affection for Russia and the Russian, in my blood. My family – wine-growers – had some business dealings in southern Russia; I've even got a whole stack of letters written in Russian. I can't read them, of course, but I've kept them. As a child in Cádiz, I dreamed of Russia while I was playing war games under the glass roof of our patio with rays of the hot southern sun pouring in. Russia seemed to me, then, as a never-ending plain of snow stained with blood. I could picture Cossacks at a wild gallop. Later, in 1917 (I'd moved to Madrid by that time), Russia lost its definition, became shrouded in mist, in my mind. And then in 1930 I again felt for her, when the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera fell and we had the chance to acquaint ourselves with the real Russia as represented by the greatness of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Don't be surprised, then, that here, among you people, every one of my steps across the Red Square gives birth to poetry. The song and the revolution in the consciousness of the Spanish workers are inextricably bound up one with the other. I felt this vividly as I came across the border. (241)

Here Alberti clearly shows a pattern which may be said to sum up the evolution of interest for Russia in Spain. From the end of the nineteenth century, with reports coming from that seemingly distant and exotic, not to mention barbaric land – if we acknowledge the early opinions of Castelar and Valera cited earlier in this thesis – coupled with the Russian literature and art which was being brought to the attention of the West with its portraits of Russian peasant life and social injustice, it is not

surprising that Russia captured the imagination of relatively civilized peoples in Western Europe. For Alberti, Russia was summed up in the images of wide expanses, blood and galloping Cossacks. Somewhat unusually, his own family of wine-growers had direct links with pre-revolutionary Russia. Those images dimmed gradually, and it was only with the advent of extreme social and political conditions at home in Spain that Alberti was made to think in more real terms about Russia, where, in the meantime, as we know, there had been radical changes through the success of the 1917 Revolution and the consolidation of Soviet power.

Kel'in's text underscores how political engagement affected Alberti's relationship with Russia. Undoubtedly, when troubles intensified on his own home territory at the turn of the 1930s, he experienced a feeling of affinity with the Russians. It was an example of Homi Bhabha's theory of the self-recognition – cited earlier in this thesis – which one may undergo when comparing a situation with an analogous one in a different culture, and even a different time (5). The effect this self-recognition was to produce on Alberti artistically will be examined later in this section. Meanwhile, Kel'in's article further described the ideological development experienced by the Spaniard.

Originally from a low-class environment ("my family in the past were peasants"), but having become petty bourgeois, Alberti, immersed in the revolutionary struggle that has stirred up the people, again returned to the lower social classes declaring the rage and grief of the people. He has brought to it, apart from a great talent, his own huge artistic culture, which has put him at the very centre where all the revolutionary poetic moods of the new epoch meet.

Our meeting ended amicably. "Well, and now explain to me", I asked them as we were saying our goodbyes, "why you sent us at MORP such strange books? You have far more revolutionary works, don't you?" and I was referring to his play about Fermín Galán, the performance of which had caused indignation in bourgeois circles and had lasted on the stage only a few days. "We wanted MORP to have a proper idea of us and about our past art", Rafael and María Terésa replied

almost at the same time. "We've come to you as friends. We're so interested in the Soviet Union that we feel we'd like to stay here a little longer." (242)

For Kel'in, the big change in Alberti had been brought about by his return to what he believed to be the poet's lower-class roots²⁷ and by turning his attention to the "rage and grief of the people." In turn, the great interest of the Albertis in Russia is manifest, and the visit turned out to establish for them not only ideological affinities but also personal friendships.

The wish of the Albertis was destined to be realised. They got the warmest of receptions at the secretariat of MORP, as they did generally from the whole family of Soviet writers. Instead of three or four days, they stayed in Moscow about two months, which gave me the opportunity of constantly meeting up with them, sometimes two or three times a day. I soon got used to their interests. In the morning we would set out around the city, visiting writers. Before long the Albertis had a circle of Soviet friends: the Iasenskiis, Aseev, Brik, Inber and Svetlov.²⁸ The Tretiakovs turned out to be a great support to him in that first difficult moment of assimilation into Soviet life by surrounding them with friendly attention and concern. (244)

Rewarding though these new connections may have been for Alberti the man, what is of greatest interest to us is the effect of his experiences in Soviet Russia on Alberti the poet. Kel'in continues:

But most of all, it was poetry that occupied Rafael. He didn't know Russian and he didn't trust French translations, and he asked me to translate poems by Aseev, Svetlov and others into Spanish, and I tried to do this to the best of my ability. So, together we worked on translations of Inber's poems about Lenin, Mayakovsky's "Levyi marsh" ("Left March"), Aseev's "Tri Anny" ("The Three Anns"), and an extract of Blok's "Dvenadtsat'" ("The Twelve"). Rafael set himself the goal of putting together a whole collection of Soviet poetry. He especially liked Svetlov's "Granada" (*sic*) which was one of the first we translated. "You see, this is a genuine Spanish *romance*", Rafael eagerly told me. "In Spain, this would definitely be sung by the people – just listen to how it sounds. I'd love to know how it came

²⁷ In fact, Alberti was from a petit-bourgeois background.

²⁸ We have referred to these writers earlier in this thesis.

into "Svietlov"'s mind (Alberti exaggerated the pronunciation of his name) to write this poem and how he managed to give it such a genuinely Spanish form."

The work we did together on the poetry collection convinced me yet again of Alberti's exceptional poetic talent. He took to translation like a great master. [...] He took the liberty of choosing poetic forms, but was uncompromising when it came to the question of harmonization and phrasing. His perfect ear for poetry caused him at times to get angry when I was wrong about the number of feet. "It's not ten, it's eleven", he would say to me on such occasions, and he always turned out to be right. Gradually, the idea of the collection of Soviet poetry so took over his thoughts, that he started to devote all his time in the mornings to translation, without neglecting his work on his own poems about the peasants of Extremadura. The list of poets he suggested including in the collection, compiled for him, if I am not mistaken, by Brik and expanded by Iasenskii, never left the table. (243)

The significance of this text should not be underestimated. We should note that the acquisition of poetry was uppermost in Alberti's mind – both the creation of his own poetic impressions of Soviet Russia and the close examination of the poetry being produced in Russia at the time. This latter interest led him to undertake, with Kell'in's help, the translation of Soviet poetry into Spanish, an activity which demanded his meticulous attention – allegedly to an extreme degree – to metre and rhythm. Kell'in described Alberti's poetic talent as excellent and marvelled at his mastery of translation. These factors will be recalled shortly, when comparing Kell'in's text with Alberti's own description of the 1932 visit to the USSR. Before leaving Kell'in's text, however, it is valuable to reproduce the Russian's description of the conclusion of the visit:

The Albertis left at the beginning of February, one frosty evening, leaving at MORP a reputation for great artistic mastery, honesty, sincerity and love of life, factors in the serious matter of revolution. As they left, they promised to do as much as they could to strengthen the revolutionary pioneers in Spanish literature. They did not get a friendly reception back in Spain. The bourgeois critics, so enamoured of the earlier work of Rafael Alberti – his "English Miss" and his "angels" – turned indignantly away from the bitter truths he told about the peasants of Extremadura. "The Fall of a Talent" was the judgment passed on him by Domenchina, the critic of the governmental newspaper *El Sol*, concerning Alberti's spiritual revolution.

So, the Albertis bought a hall with capacity for many thousands, where workers, peasants, revolutionary students and young poets would, with eager support, catch each word and each line. Alberti is developing into a revolutionary poet. In the most difficult moments he stands on the front line with the journal they have created, *Octubre*, with the Association of Spanish Revolutionary Writers and Artists, and with his work at the workers' halls and clubs. [...]

I do not know whether the lines of this sketch will get into the hands of my "Spanish family" (as the Albertis jokingly called themselves). But I would like them to know with what ardent compassion we in the Soviet Union follow their revolutionary activity. (245)

Kel'in thus endorsed Alberti's successful integration into the Soviet Russian literary world, and reveals the esteem in which the Spaniard was held as early as 1932. Kel'in noted that in a radio broadcast, Alberti made an appeal to the Spanish intelligentsia to lend respectful support to the Soviet Union, a gesture which cannot have failed to endear him to his Russian colleagues.

The activities of the Albertis while in the USSR provide essential detail. Alberti was evidently writing his own verse during his stay, based on his impressions of the country and its people. Kel'in noted on more than one occasion Alberti's natural flair for poetry and his inclination fully to immerse himself in it. He was able, apparently, to recite from memory whole portions of other authors' work with great sensitivity. Kel'in also reported that he was working on a collection of Soviet verse for publication in Spanish. Owing to Alberti's own lack of Russian and to his distrust of the translations at home, Kel'in himself evidently figured largely in the work of translation, but he regarded Alberti himself as having a gift for translation. Furthermore, Alberti was clearly regarded as a poet serving on the front line of the revolution in Spain – in reality, more so after he returned to Spain and demonstrated his mettle – and the fact that the bourgeois critics had launched a persecution campaign against him was proof positive of his dedication to the cause.

In Russia, every day for a period of two months, Alberti associated with fellow writers. This factor, and the work of translation, feature in Alberti's own description of his first visit to the USSR. The extract begins with a portrait of the author of the previous text, Fedor Kel'in.²⁹

[December 1932] We'd been waiting in Moscow three days when MORP invited us to call. Theodor Kel'in, a poet and teacher of Spanish at the University, called at the door of our room at the Novaia Moskovskaia hotel one morning at eight. From then onwards, all the time for two months, he accompanied us in the 25-30 below Moscow frost, dressed in his pointed astrakhan hat pulled down, his eyes, of the purest Slavic blue, made to look smaller behind spectacles, and the small, unobtrusive voice of an academic, speaking perfect Spanish. We went to the MORP offices with him. (149)

The literary relations between Russia and Spain in those days were reportedly reciprocal. Alberti wrote:

Kel'in would tell us how keenly interested the Soviet Union was in Spain. And we could see it for ourselves. [...] The Akademiia publishing house is going to start a series of translations of Spanish literature this year, starting with the *Poema del Mio Cid* and Arcipreste's *Libro de Buen Amor*. Quite recently, missed by no-one, were published Valle-Inclán's *Tirano Banderas*, which soon sold out, and books by Ramón Pérez de Ayala, Ramón J. Sender, Joaquín Arderius and others. [...] Fadeev, Ivanov, Gladkov, Vera Inber, Tretiakov, Ognev, Kirshon – all Soviet writers who are read in Spain. We know them. Likewise the poets Aseev, Pasternak, Kirsanov, Kamenskii and Bezymenskii. (150)

As we learned previously, Kel'in, not only a teacher of Spanish but also a poet, was Alberti's companion in translating poetry into both Russian and Spanish. Alberti describes the activity thus:

In the warmth of our room overlooking the Moscow River, we translated into Spanish, with Kel'in's help, poems by Blok, Mayakovsky, Inber, Svetlov and Aseev... and into Russian some poetry by Juan Ramón Jiménez, Federico García Lorca and, with a group of poets included in it, my latest book of poetry called

²⁹ This and subsequent quotations are from Alberti's "Los escritores" ("Writers") in *Prosas encontradas (1924-1942)* quoted in fuller detail in Appendix 2 of this thesis.

Peasants of Spain. Kel'in took us to see two of his protégés, also young Soviet writers, to share with them the task. These young men put into their language the articles that were daily being requested, with some urgency, by various journals and papers. And there was a moment, one day, when I reminded myself – sitting, as I was, surrounded by them – of a miniature at the Escorial in which Alfonso the Wise, wielding a long quill, is presiding over a chorus of bearded translators. (149-50)

For Alberti, the visit to the Soviet Union in 1932 was as much an exercise in literary relations as it was in an education in the way that socialism was ostensibly being put into practice in that country. The ideological benefits of the visit are one thing; the cultural rewards are another. That Alberti was accepted into the society of the Soviet writers is evident, and not unexpected after such regular and close contact. The conversations seem to have been based around poetry, be it discussion or translation.

Alberti's respect for the Soviet writers was shown in his reports:

[Fadeev, Ivanov, Gladkov, Vera Inber, Tretiakov, Ognev, Kirshon – all Soviet writers read in Spain. We know them. Likewise the poets Aseev, Pasternak, Kirsanov, Kamenskii and Bezymenskii.] We have been invited by them all to their homes. We know how they live, we know what their writing produces – the happiness the thousands and thousands of editions bring, knowing they are translated into countless dialects and read by thousands of people who are now, after so many centuries of being in the dark, beginning to have a right to culture. The Soviet writers can only tell us now, in today's world, of the joy this brings. They are proud. They are allowed to be. And they smile when we tell them that a book of poetry by the best Spanish poet does not even sell three thousand. (151)

Occupying apparently legendary status in the estimation of Alberti was Mayakovsky.

This had personal implications for Alberti, who was likened to the Russian. He wrote:

My homeland is Spain. I am from the town of Cádiz. I am 35. I am a poet by trade. Those who regard me well call me the Spanish Mayakovsky. But I do not deserve such praise.³⁰

³⁰ Rafael Alberti & María Terésa León. "Nasha bor'ba i rabota." ("Our Struggle and Work") *Kniga i proletarskaia revoliutsiia* 4 (1937): 46-49. 46.

In 1932 Mayakovsky was already dead. Nevertheless, he was very much present in Alberti's mind. Furthermore, his friends in Moscow included Osip Brik and Nikolai Aseev, both close friends of Mayakovsky and colleagues with him in the work of the extreme left literary group of the 1920s, *LEF* (*Levyi front* (Left Front)). The Albertis also became friendly with Vera Inber, Tretiakov, Bezymenskii and Kamenskii, among others, and deliberately sought association with Mikhail Svetlov, who is not generally considered to be a writer of "high" poetry, but who wrote the poem "Granada", which Alberti described as "so popular in the whole Soviet Union since the [Soviets'] Civil War and repeated constantly by his friend Mayakovsky."³¹ In his report of the 1932 visit, Alberti described a scene concerning Mayakovsky:

One night – Christmas night in other countries – we were invited to the home of Mayakovsky's wife.³² Various poets were there. Louis Aragon was also there – he is married to Elsa Triolet, the Soviet writer and sister-in-law³³ of Mayakovsky. [...] There, in that place, *his* place, is where is preserved the most abiding, most intimate memory of Mayakovsky. One of his dearest friends, Brik, recited the poem he wrote a few days before he committed suicide. We re-read the letter he left on the table moments before the shots were heard. He had asked, seriously, among other things, that "no stories be told about his death", begging that there would be no speculation about the romantic reasons for it. And the Soviet Union, the country where the problem of the sexes has been resolved, giving the greatest liberty to men and women, made no comment in the papers. They said nothing, except about the author of the *160,000* (*sic*).

Once we had finished reading the poem and the letter, [...] all of us, the guests, sat in silence feeling the presence of Vladimir Mayakovsky, the poet of the October Revolution. (151-52)

Among his other favourites was the lyricist Svetlov whose poem "Granada" had become an anthem in the aftermath of the Civil War in Russia.

³¹ These quotations and those of the next paragraph are extracted from Alberti's description of his visit, in *Prosas encontradas*, as quoted earlier in the chapter.

³² Alberti was evidently under the mistaken impression that Lili Brik was Mayakovsky's wife.

The House of Writers in Moscow, belonging to the workers' intelligentsia, is high and large, huge, with long corridors and numerous doors, with windows leading onto a patio and onto the street. There they live, nearly all of them, in a few private apartments: three or four rooms, kitchen, bathroom. If we drew back the partitions, like a box lid, we would see working there, at the same time, in their different flats, Vera Inber, Bruno Iasenskii, Nikolai Aseev, Leonid Leonov and Svetlov... But this particular night it was 35 below zero and ice forming in our eyes was preventing us from seeing in. We entered the house and went upstairs. In number 56, the poet Aseev entertained us with tea and the best sweetmeats from all over the Soviet Union.

- Has Svetlov come?

- No.

[...] It was striking two thirty, and we were getting up to go, when Svetlov appeared. He had been to a party and was a bit the worse for wear. Hair as black as a gypsy's, sort of backcombed, dripped around his eyes. His wife, laughing, held him up. She was a blonde girl, wholesome looking, one of the Communist Youth, wearing red socks and jersey.

- I've drunk too much. I'll be back in an hour. I'm sure our Spanish comrades understand.

He shook hands with us and went off for a sleep.

This was Svetlov, the one we had been waiting for since eleven so that we could hear his poem "Granada" (*sic*), so popular in the whole Soviet Union since the Civil War and repeated constantly by his friend Mayakovsky. Brik, another poet, had already recited it one afternoon at Aragon's house, translating it deftly into French, giving me an idea of its rhythm and its extraordinary likeness to the old Spanish *romancillos*. But I had wanted to hear it from Svetlov himself, see how he recited it, before translating it into Spanish (helped by Kel'in). But Svetlov had got really drunk that night and slept heavily afterwards. Nikolai Aseev, when he was seeing us off at the stairs, as it struck four in the morning, laughed. (153-55)

The text is interesting from a personal point of view. Alberti's admiration for the poet is clear. In the opinion of one historian, the poem, "Granada" (1926), had a rhythmic poetic feel, but did not justify the "inflated praise of some Soviet critics"³³; nevertheless, it was published in *Octubre* and eulogized by Alberti, on his return home to Spain.

³³ Viacheslav Zavalishin. *Early Soviet Writers*. New York: Praeger, 1958. 239.

This report by Alberti also reveals his approach to understanding contemporary Soviet poetry in the absence of a profound knowledge or understanding of the Russian language. He was keenly interested in the rhythm of Svetlov's writing and, to this end, had wanted to hear the poet himself read the ballad "Granada". Alberti's feel for poetry is revealed in his fascination for the way other Russian poets recited poetry.

While we were having caviar, tea and strange oriental sweetmeats, we were reciting poetry. Soviet poets have something of the minstrel about them: they don't just recite verse, they perform it – each one in his own way. They have an excessive predilection for onomatopoeia. Kirsanov, for example, in one of his poems, was more like a locomotive than a poet. He would whistle, throw himself onto the floor, sweating, puffing and blowing, as if going uphill, lacking only the smoke. Kamensky was telling us all about a bearhunt accompanied with sounds, wails and Persian songs very much like the *cante jondo*. Aseev was repeating in a monotone a long poem from Georgia that had a hint of Arabic *musiquilla*. I had to improvise a bullfight, making all the bullfighter's moves around a chair in the middle of the room. (151)

The onomatopoeia that appeared to him to be such a talent among the Russians, coupled with the noteworthy tendency of the Russians to perform their poetry as well as read it, is something which evidently impressed him. The fabric and spirit of Russian poetry was very much on his mind. Additionally, Alberti's mind was evidently constantly comparing the poetry he was hearing with the rhythms and metres of Spanish verse forms.

As we will see in closer examination of some of Alberti's poetry of the 1930s, using the USSR as proof positive of the feasibility of Marxism in practice was to be anticipated and is something which is revealed in his comments published in the Soviet press of the 1930s. Alberti addressed his personal indebtedness to Soviet Russia in the following extract:

Although my stance towards the proletariat was quite definite before my visit to the Soviet Union [1932-33], all the same my stay in Moscow gave me the opportunity to become convinced of my beliefs. No-one can stay on the fence when faced with the immense forces of the working masses of the USSR. When I returned to Spain, everything I wrote was to serve the interests of the workers.³⁴

Alberti's confirmation that, following his stay in Moscow in 1932, his writing thenceforward was to be in the service of the people, was subsequently proven to be true in practice. In 1934, addressing the First Congress of the Union of Soviet Writers, he elaborated on this theme.³⁵

My comrades in the Association of Revolutionary Writers and Artists have directed me to bring their brotherly greeting to the First Congress of Soviet Writers.

We, in our country, are working amidst the most violent oppression, while the prisons are full of revolutionary workers and peasants, rallies are banned, our press is persecuted, our forays into the outskirts of Madrid are disturbed by Fascist bullets, and our fiestas, when we get to arrange them, are surrounded by lorry-loads of police ready to intervene at any moment.

When we have escaped that life of perpetual anxiety and relentless danger, and come here, as now, to your quiet streets, the only ones we know that have no bayonets, then we truly feel that we are in the process of constructing a new life.

The tendency to compare Spain with Russia, with Russia always seeming to be superior, was irresistible for Alberti. As we saw in an earlier section of this thesis examining the historical situation in Soviet Russia, the truth of life in the Soviet Union was not as glossy as Alberti supposed. In time, as unsavoury truths about the methods Stalin, in particular, used to consolidate his power leaked out of the USSR, many of those previously impressed by the apparent accomplishments of the Soviets became disillusioned. This did not happen with Alberti as it did with the novelist Arderfús, for example, who turned away from communism when he heard negative

³⁴ Rafael Alberti. "Chto mne dala Moskva?" (What has Moscow Given to Me?) in *Internatsional'naiia literatura* 3-4 (1934): 10.

reports from Russia. Alberti continued his association with the Soviet Union, an association which included visits there in subsequent years. Returning to Alberti's address to Soviet writers in 1934, we find that he was quick to assure them that among Spanish writers were those who felt as ardently as he did.

We revolutionary writers and artists of Spain are rising up. Our journal, *Octubre*, is our means of fighting and expressing ourselves. It has both illustrations and literary works, all received with great enthusiasm by the working masses, without party distinction. It is abundantly illustrated with photographs of the Soviet Union, because some of our provinces are seventy per cent illiterate. [...]

I should add that several professional writers are involving themselves in the revolution: Joaquín Arderius, María Terésa León, César M. Arconada, Ramón J. Sender, Emilio Prados, Arturo Serrano Plaja, Luis Cernuda, as well as other novelists and poets, about whom one can say that they are the start of literature with a social character which has virtually no precedent in Spain. As Spain is a country with a great literary and artistic tradition, we should expect that the names emerging today will become as great as the masters of the seventeenth century – but having the advantage of being able to declare the moment in which justice is realized in the Spanish Revolution.

In this address, he was eager to show the popularity of Soviet writers in Spain.

You, Soviet writers, already live in the time of socialist construction – you are the example that writers in other countries admire. You are known in Spain. Among the poets, the name of Mayakovsky enjoys the greatest popularity, in spite of the fact that his poems are quite unknown. *Octubre* has published some poems by Svetlov and Aseev. On the other hand, the novels of Gorky, Ehrenburg, Ivanov, Leonov, Gladkov, Fedin, Fadeev and other authors are in our bookshops, but generally so badly translated that the theme of these works of literary beauty is scarcely preserved. We would like to ask you, you who are so easily able to study foreign languages, that you encourage the study of Spanish a little more.

Alberti affirmed the efforts of the Spanish literary world in defence of the Revolution, and named the writers involved. The tone of his address was highly, arguably naïvely, optimistic. The language of the text is conference rhetoric. But, in view of the dire

³⁵ This and subsequent quotations are taken from Alberti's "Speech to the First Congress of Soviet Writers (1934)" published in *Commune* 2, 13-14 (September-October 1934).

circumstances afflicting Spain, Alberti wished the Soviet writers to be assured of the confidence of their Spanish counterparts in the ultimate success of their political efforts. Alberti's wish to let it be known that Soviet writing was becoming known in Spain was not simply rhetoric but contained an element of truth, as we saw earlier in this thesis. Noteworthy is the comment that Mayakovsky's name is known in Spain, even though his writing is not.

A few years later, during the Spanish Civil War, Alberti was recorded in a Soviet literary journal as further endorsing the Spanish effort in behalf of the revolution.

What can be said about the revolutionary writers in Spain? Nowadays they are engaged more in battle than in writing. Arconada is at the front in Asturias. Sender is a Captain in the Fifth Regiment – he is finishing a new novel. The poets Emilio Prados, Manuel Altolaguirre and others are fighting and writing. Their works are all about the war with the Fascists. The journal "The Blue Blouse" (*sic*), the organ of revolutionary poets, is published regularly in Madrid. As far as the older generation of writers is concerned (Antonio Machado and others), they now live in Valencia. They publish a journal called *Contemporary Spain* (*sic*) in which, however, the younger writers also collaborate. I myself have published in it poems about the siege of Madrid. [...]

I am deeply moved by the massive attention with which the Soviets have surrounded us. So much warmth and brotherly love! I will take back to Spain so many greetings, friendly well-wishes, handshakes that I am convinced this will bring forth from our fighters, as one, the cry: "They will not pass! Long live the Soviet Union!"³⁶

The revolutionary effort in Spain is directly linked, in Alberti's consideration, to the support and inspiration provided by the Soviets. His words continued to sound naïve and idealistic, but his attachment to the Soviet Union obviously had not waned. He

³⁶ Rafael Alberti & María Terésa León. "Nasha bor'ba i rabota" in *Kniga i proletarskaia revoliutsiia* 4 (1937): 46-49.

implies that the feeling of respect between revolutionary Spaniards and the Soviets was mutual.

The respect with which Alberti himself was held in Soviet Russia in the 1930s is confirmed in an anonymous article of 1937 published in the USSR.³⁷ It shows the intimate relationship he had with the Soviets, their seal of approval for his writing in support of the Revolution, and what aspects of his writing they most admired.

These two names [María Terésa León and Alberti], always next to each other, together inextricably connected, have won the love of all Republican Spain. [...] They have entered firmly into the hearts of the citizens of the Soviet Union. With great excitement we read information about the talks of the leader of the people, our great Stalin, with the Spanish writers – a great and joyful event in their lives. We remember them as guests of the All Soviet Congress of Writers. Their faces smile welcomingly at us from the pages of our papers. We avidly catch every new poem from the great poet Alberti. To speak about the life and work of Alberti and his permanent friend and partner María Terésa León means, above all, to speak about the powerful and decisive influence that the Soviet Union has turned out to have on them. (176)

The article reviews Alberti's history and confirms how his first visit to the Soviet Union in 1932 affected him:

"Although my position in relation to literature was totally assured before my visit to the Soviet Union", Alberti wrote, "all the same, my stay in Moscow gave me the opportunity to strengthen my resolve. No-one can remain on the fence when faced with the massive forces of the workers of the USSR. Back in Spain, as I wrote, I was serving the interests of the workers." [...]

Alberti reads his poetry at workers' halls – and his audiences reward him with wild ovations, enjoying the success of *their own* poet. [...] The idea of Communism he has wrapped in the flesh and blood of artistic imagery and has shown us its triumphant procession through Europe: the "spectre of Communism" comes from the East to tell of the country where there is "peace and rejoicing." [...] What characterizes Alberti's poetry is its unfeigned sincerity. He really does

³⁷ "Anti-fashistskiie pisateli mira. Ispaniia. Rafael Alberti i María Terésa León." ("Antifascist Writers of the World. Spain. Rafael Alberti and María Terésa León.") in *Internatsional'naia literatura* 11 (1937): 176-77. See Appendix 3 for a fuller and uninterrupted version of the text.

sing from the heart, and his heart knows no bounds. That is why his poetry is precious to all who are sensitive to the problems of Spain as the problems of all forward-reaching and progressive humanity. (177)

Alberti is confirmed as a foremost socialist combatant in Spain. His "unfeigned sincerity" and feeling for the workers of Spain are the aspects which were evidently most impressive to scarcely unbiased colleagues in the Soviet Union.

Some critics, who have pointed out that during his visits to the Soviet Union, Alberti rubbed shoulders with the young writers of the Soviet Union, have failed to explain the ramifications of these associations. The Albertis were, indeed, fully exposed to the personalities and currents in Soviet poetry of the time. Here we should not confuse what he assimilated during his visits to the Soviet Union in a political sense with what he observed as a poet. The extent to which he was misled ideologically is a rather different matter from being exposed to the poetry being produced in the Soviet Union at that time. While, with the benefit of hindsight, it is entirely conceivable that the truth of life in the Soviet Union was concealed from him during his visits, this thesis is more concerned with what he assimilated in literary terms. There is no reason to suppose that there was anything to conceal from him with regard to the composition of poetry. True, he tended to mix with those who were at that time accepted by the literary establishment; but, even so, within the space of a few years, some of those he mentions as his new friends disappeared in as suspicious a way as so many more in the Soviet Union in the late 1930s.

We must keep in mind that poetry was as much a consideration for Alberti as sheer observation of life, from the point of view of political bias, in the Soviet Union. His apparent naivete with regard to the USSR contrasts with his rather more profound understanding of the fabric of Soviet poetry. Nevertheless, after the trip to the Soviet Union, Alberti became a Communist and his world-view and writing, henceforward,

were motivated by his new-found faith, Marxism.³⁸ Of the poetry that followed – the political poetry of the 1930s – Chilean poet Pablo Neruda³⁹ commented:

this poet of the purest breeding demonstrated the public worth of poetry at a critical moment in the world; in this he was very much like Mayakovsky. This utilitarian quality of poetry is based on its power, tenderness, joy and its real essence. Without this quality poetry makes a sound, but does not make itself heard. Alberti always makes himself heard. (194)

His political poetry has sometimes been overlooked. Morris dismisses it as "unfortunate", conceived in the "rosy glow of Zhdanovite-Stalinist optimism."⁴⁰ Alberti's own explanation of the period 1933 to 1934 is that "I began to be a poet in the street."⁴¹

Taken out of context, his political poetry of the 1930s may have no impetus, and may even seem ridiculous, just as the stirring verse Mayakovsky produced in praise of the Revolution loses much of its appeal when read in another age. In Alberti, the fresh excitement of Mayakovsky is sometimes missing, and this must be blamed, at least in part, on the dissimilarity of their situations. Alberti's agitative poetry is a call to the masses to put the revolution into effect; Mayakovsky's, on the other hand, is an expression of jubilation at the success of the revolution. The latter thus has a springboard, from which to launch support for the the consolidation of the victory and the construction of the new society, all of which Alberti lacks. The fact that Alberti

³⁸ Alberti's pre-Civil War revolutionary poems were collected in publications like *Nuestra diaria palabra* (1936), *13 bandas y 48 estrellas* (1936), *De un momento a otro* (1937), and *El burro explosivo* (1938).

³⁹ Pablo Neruda (1904-73), Chilean poet, considered one of the major poets of the twentieth century. He was a member of the Chilean Communist Party. In 1971 he won both the Nobel Prize for Literature and the Lenin Peace Prize.

⁴⁰ C. B. Morris. "Sobre los ángeles: A Poet's Apostasy." *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 37 (1960): 222-31. 223, 231.

⁴¹ See "Autobiographical Index" in *Poesías completas*.

has to rely on the example of the Soviets, and that he projects a new era in Spain as an extension of the Soviet Union, results in his poetry lacking the vigour and arrogance of Mayakovsky, as will be seen in our examination of this poetry.

In terms of poetic devices, a comparison with Mayakovsky's early Soviet verse is valid: we will find the same uncomplicated vocabulary, codified only by its reference to Marxist ethics. Simplicity of meaning and directness of message are given priority in both authors. Alberti seeks Mayakovsky's feel for rhythm in his verse – recalling Mayakovsky's self-confessed mission as "drummer" as well as poet – and the same fondness for metrical variety. Alberti's approach to writing political verse was at times reflective – probing his own personal vision of Socialism and showing his reasons for commitment to it – and at times agitative, in which he becomes militant, evangelistic, creating a style of writing which would be more appropriate on the political hustings. He frequently assumes, in those agitative poems, the voice of a Party spokesman, confrontational and brooking no argument.

Nevertheless, positive comparisons do not necessarily argue in favour of Alberti having been directly influenced by Mayakovsky. Given that content is the overriding concern of agitative Marxist verse, it leaves only a limited set of poetic devices which can be put to use. If it were not for the fact that Alberti is known to have paid great attention to the poetry written in Soviet Russia at the formative time of his own political verse, it would perhaps be more profitable to make a case for similar poetic needs – and limitations – creating similar poetic effects. In other words, given the motivation for his writing in the 1930s, Alberti would have arrived at the same conclusions.

We have firmly established that Alberti had a strong leaning towards the Soviets, not only ideologically, but also towards the poetry they were producing as a

result of socialist victory in their country. His interest in their poetry was limited as far as language was concerned, given the need for intermediaries owing to his lack of knowledge of the Russian language. But he was genuinely concerned with the metre and pace of contemporary Soviet poetry and used his instinctive "ear" for poetry as a principal means of understanding it. We have also established that he was among those Spanish writers regarded with favour by the Soviet critics and considered as one of their fellow-workers abroad.

But, is Alberti's poetry socialist realist? A comparison cannot be made with socialist realism as it developed in Soviet Russia, where it became dogma, a system of writing that was State-controlled. If, on the other hand, we take into consideration that socialist realism promotes a socialist society and implements Marxist doctrine into which it incorporates the promotion of the Party, progressive ideas, national character and awareness of the class struggle, and that it should provide an incarnation of the "new man" or "positive hero", we have a better framework within which to work. It is appropriate now to examine his political poetry of the 1930s to establish whether what he had assimilated from the Soviets had any impact on his writing.

As a rule, the post-1931 poems address similar subject matter to that of the "Elegía cívica" – the dilapidated state of contemporary Spain. However, the voice with which he speaks does not have its feet in a misty or surreal world but in the actual problems of survival in Spain. It has been pointed out that "the [committed] poets focused attention, not on the industrial, but on the agrarian world (without idealisation) where the majority of the country's population lived" and, because they addressed the uniqueness of the contemporary situation, this was a new theme in literature (Lechner 127-30). Alberti's poetry, too, starts to deal with the real problems of agrarian reform, poverty, unemployment and hunger. It is clear, however, that

Alberti intended not only to expose these social ills, but also to try to effect change. As Neruda wrote, it is in this "public worth" of poetry that Alberti is akin to Mayakovsky. Neither held back from publicizing their ideology in verse; both tackled the political themes with passion, even aggression. Significantly, both have been criticized for allowing their art to suffer for their beliefs.⁴²

A study of the political writing of the 1930s will emphasize the unmistakable kinship of Alberti with Mayakovsky and the Soviets. It is evident, first, in the Marxist base of the political poetry of the 1930s, which will be seen repeatedly to underpin the poems we examine. Two of the works which appeared in 1933 bear testimony to this. *Un fantasma recorre Europa (A Spectre is Haunting Europe)* brings to mind the opening words of the Communist Manifesto: "A spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of Communism. All the powers of the old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this spectre. [...] It is high time that Communists should openly, in the face of the whole world publish their views, their aims, their tendencies."⁴³ *Consignas* bears an epigraph attributed to Lenin: "Literature should be partisan." Closely allied to the doctrinal aspect of Alberti's beliefs is his faith in its Soviet manifestation. This, too, will be seen to occur with frequency throughout the political poetry. Russia becomes the affirmative evidence produced in support of the

⁴² It is important to point out that this criticism has been made of most of the politically committed Spanish writers of the 1930s, not just of Alberti. We might level this criticism at some of the Russian writers who, like Mayakovsky, apparently placed political considerations above aesthetic.

⁴³ Marx and Engels. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Moscow: Progress, 1952. 39. The evocative nature of the words caused the Spanish daily *ABC*, reporting on the supposed rise of fascism in France in 2002, to announce once again that "Un fantasma recorre Europa" (see the article of that title in *ABC* 31562 [28 April 2002]:28, 29).

persuasive dogma. A cursory look at some of his agitative poetry will confirm this aspect of his writing.

"Sequía" ("Drought") is unoriginal in most respects but serves, as a point of departure, as stark contrast with all that we have examined before in Alberti's work. A village is promised a miracle by its priests, but the villagers revolt, and the voice of a Party comrade appears to mobilize them:

Masses!
 Everybody united
 From the arm, the field and the factory,
 the soldiers, the marines.
 Masses!
 Against anarchy!
 Masses!
 Against religion!
 Masses!
 Against the black shirts
 in Italy,
 against the brown shirts
 in Germany,
 against the blue shirts
 in Spain
 Masses!
 And the Communist Party,
 unyielding, in the lead, guiding them.
 This way,
 comrades. (lines 75-93)

The poem is obviously agitative, as seen in the repeated calls to the "Masses!" and the final "This way, / comrades." The masses are being called into line. It is a propagandist and combative poem: it is an advertisement for the Party and sets itself against a list of foes. In the extract, it is the voice of the Party spokesman, calling from the rostrum, who denounces fascism, anarchy and religion and who points out the major attributes of the Party – that it fears no-one, it takes the lead, and it unites.

The poem is imbued with the same spirit as Mayakovsky's poetry of the first years of the Revolution, although Alberti's slogans sound hackneyed by comparison. We should, however, make special note of the uncomplicated vocabulary devoid of imaginative device and the staccato declamations.

"Mítin" ("Rally") is likewise agitative, but highlights the necessity of using the Soviet Union to buttress his argument. The poem is preceded by the epigraph "art is not intended exclusively for aesthetic enjoyment" ("el arte no está destinado exclusivamente para producir goce estético") – in other words, it has a solemn duty to perform. It calls for the workers, farmers and soldiers to use in the service of the revolution the implements of labour – the sickle, the scythe, the hammer, pickaxe, and rifles – along with the final encouragement:

The Kremlin clocks greet you,
singing the International
[...]
the radios of the USSR send
the applause of the Red Army
from Madrid to Lisbon a star
is rising, covering the whole sky
and there's the whistle of the first
train not knowing the old borders
Come on, comrades!
Long live the Union
of the Iberian Soviet Republics! (lines 14-35)

A sense of urgency characteristic of the collection is encouraged by the frequent repetition of a rallying cry "Come on!" ("¡Arriba!"), having the same effect as Mayakovsky's "Left!" refrain in "Levyi marsh". The poem is full of political clichés and oratory, and as such is easy to condemn "on the grounds that it is so highly codified within a strict ideological framework and so obviously explanatory and expressive of specified political value judgments that it leaves little or no room for the

reader to produce the meaning of the poem" (Nantell 50) and, indeed, the poetry is univocal, demanding an underlying knowledge of, or sympathy for, the ideological foundation of the work. "Mftin" encourages a united front of workers, a theme which arises again in "Juego" ("Gamble") in which the only recourse to victory over the enemy is a united front, using the hammer and sickle ("el martillo y la hoz"). Again, in "¡Abajo la Guerra imperialista!" ("Down with the Imperialist War!"), unity is centred around the meaning of the Russian Revolution:

Let our slogan,
comrades, be:
a united front
with the red star
and into a red October
turn the war. (lines 44-49)

In this poem, Alberti presents a fairly predictable message and the images he uses are unoriginal.

Classed among the agitative verse would be "S.O.S." which attacks the problem of unemployment: "there's no work / but there are hands" ("No hay trabajo / y hay manos") (lines 23, 24). Paradoxically, the simplicity some critics would denounce becomes one of the attractions of the poem. Alberti contrived to create poetry from a shameful set of statistics which had evidently inspired him to bring the alarming situation to the attention of his audience. The statistics mount, increasing the pressure, culminating in a final direct appeal to the reader: "Friends, / listen. / What? / They're calling us." (Amigos, / escuchad. / ¿Qué? / Nos llaman.") (lines 40-43). The poem is in free verse, with metrical variation, which maintains the interest of the reader. Furthermore, anaphora is used for rhythmic effect – for example, in lines 5 – 7: "and the sky [...] / and the smoke [...] / and the fire [...]" ("Y el cielo [...] / y el humo [...] / y el fuego [...]"). The sets of verbs in lines 10 to 14 and 31 to 34 serve

as a refrain, while contributing to the momentum of the poem: "they rise like the sea, the unemployed, / they overthrow, / they rise up / and grow" ("se empinan los parados como el mar, / se derrumban, / se levantan / y crecen"). The poem has an overall documentary effect, reporting the condition of the unemployed rather than using it as a springboard for excited propaganda. Thus, the final appeal to the reader to listen because the unemployed are calling is more compelling than any slogan.

This selection of agitative poetry has already emphasized some of the points we seek. Soviet Russia is the source of inspiration for its positive attitude to Socialism. The poems promote the interests of the Party and Communism, and the poet is certainly perceived as the servant of the cause and of the people. In this sense it can be placed fairly securely within the realm of socialist realism, and is confirmation that Alberti had taken seriously his mission to side with the Soviets. Strong similarities to the rallying poetry of Mayakovsky in the first years of the Revolution exist in the preponderance of imperatives, exclamations, the afore-mentioned anaphora and metrical variation. In these techniques is found something approaching the spirit of Mayakovsky. The language of this poetry is both codified and unchallenging, presenting no barrier to understanding.

Xavier Abril commented that in his poetry of this period Alberti "journeys through the villages of Spain with a new faith, with new 'social' eyes; he understands the extent of the peasants' struggles to take control of the land" and that he arrived at this situation by his renunciation of the personal, private and covert aspects of the bourgeois lyric (*Consignas* 4). In the agitative poetry, this is taken to the extreme so that the Party spokesman is the one who dominates. In his more reflective verse, Alberti rose to the more challenging task of giving his own personal vision of the future.

From its title, "Un fantasma recorre Europa" sounds as though it will follow the same pattern as "Mítin" and "¡Abajo...!": a poetic advertisement for Communism. Yet, in spite of its unsubtle reference to Marxism, it is not simply poetry for politics' sake, and begins to show that its author's poetic hands were not tied by ideological considerations alone. Certainly, ideology still underpins the whole purpose of the poem, but there is mention of neither hammer nor sickle, nor of any other cliché, though it combines conviction with vigour. The end result is the same – it promotes Communism as the antidote to the people's predicament – but it arrives at it by a route different from that of the overtly propagandist verse. Requiring no clichés or slogans, "Un fantasma" celebrates the coming phenomenon, glories in the fear and trembling of the hated exploiters, and rejoices in the impending victory of the poor peasant and the insignificant employee.

The poem is divided into three parts: the first presents the voice of the "old families" threatened by the spectre, the second is the reaction of the ruling classes to the imminence of the spectre, and, finally, the proletariat responds positively and welcomingly to the comrade spectre. The subject "we" of the poem changes in each part: from the privileged classes, to the authorities, and finally to the people. The first two sections end with the question "what is this?" ("¿qué es esto?") suggesting that the danger comes from an unexpected quarter, in a form that is out of character with history and which threatens all that they hold dear (financial security, the working classes under their control). The proletariat, however, has no cause for fear, as revealed in the final section.

Both the first and second sections (those spoken by the privileged classes and the authorities) follow a pattern. First, they declare the alarm of their persona: each line in which tension is growing begins with "and" ("y"), which creates a feeling of

suspense and panic. Next, they gather momentum by describing reactions or the measures taken to prepare for the onslaught of the enemy. Finally, each section builds to a climax of panic, with the sense of impending doom and comes to a complete halt with the question "What is this?" halting the tide of panic each time.⁴⁴ The third section (spoken by the people) starts with a significant "But" ("Pero") and, indeed, the mood is different: the feeling of suspense is still present but it is hopeful anticipation. The spectre is haunting Europe, indeed the world, and "[w]e call it comrade" ("Nosotros le llamamos camarada"); "comrade" and "we" (in both personal pronoun and the corresponding verb forms) emphasise the solidarity of the spectre with the peoples of the world. For Alberti, "the common man constitutes the essence of not only the Spanish nation but also the universal and ideologically unified nation of the world" (Nantell 4); the "we" of the poem incorporates the worldwide proletariat awaiting the spectre of Communism.

In "Al volver y empezar" ("On Returning to Begin Again"), the poet reinforces his own social and arguably political volte-face. Its title bears witness to his own new beginning, a return to reality and the start of his refined conscience. It also emphasizes the "change of hands" in ownership of the land ("unas pobres tierras cambiaban de dueño") (line 3). Comparing the form and style of this poem with his Modernist and even his early political verse, there is far more simplicity. The repetition of "I came" ("vine") and "I returned" ("volví") emphasizes both the meaning – that he has effectively returned to the concerns of the human race – and the minimalism of the poem, and, indeed, of his new style; they further give the poem some shape and form, a kind of verbal punctuation. The imagery is likewise

⁴⁴ Nantell makes an interesting case comparing the use of montage in film – dialectical conflict and

undemanding – the portrait of someone bent double, working on the land, to the point that blood is spilled; reference to the helpers of the farmers, their donkeys and mules, which double as symbols for the peasants themselves. The cowardly men who profit from the slavery of the workers, who deserve to be spat on, are seen as rotting corpses ("cuerpos podridos") (line 32). In the poem, the anger of the "Elegía cívica" is still demonstrated by the poet's wish to spit on the ones who allow the peasants to be exploited (line 35). He puts himself in the shoes of the peasants: contrasted with the exploiters, the poet gives his vote of solidarity to them – "I returned here to put myself at your side" (line 16). The final line, telling of another world to be found – "otro mundo he ganado" – is the intimation of hope to the victims of social ills, in that the speaker himself had found the vision of a better world in Marxist ideology, which had, in effect, redeemed the poet himself, and which he now offers to the people.

Marxism had become the replacement for religious faith and had filled the spiritual chasm left by acute disillusionment with the Church and all it stood for. Marxism promised that which religious faith could only offer in a far-distant era, or in an afterlife – control over the land by those whose lives depend upon it. This is shown to scathing effect in "La lucha por la tierra" ("The Fight for the Land"). In its introductory note, the poet states that "here is the expression, at the top of his voice, of a peasant made conscious after his anti-religious conversion", and he continues

But now, Lord, a sickle has severed your head
and a hammer with one blow has felled your throne forever
It is a red star that has ignited the corrupt ruins of your heaven.
(lines 17-19)

Abject disillusionment with the Church is one of the reasons Alberti welcomed Marxism and the Party. The "poema dramático" of 1934 entitled *La familia* made the

synthesis of opposites – and successfully links Eisenstein's theory with "Un fantasma" (56-64).

point yet again. In "Colegio (S.J.)" he recollects his schooldays. Repetitions of the expression "we were day pupils / outsiders" ("éramos los externos") emphasise both the fact of his having been a mere day pupil at a Jesuit school (a period of his youth which he hated) and the alienation he felt as such. The Jesuit masters, exploiters of the pupils, become symbolic of the corruptness of the social system. The narrator feels "so much anger, / so much hatred" ("Tanta ira, / tanto odio") towards the school / status quo. In other poems of the collection, he shows that the whole system is so bad that even the family unit has been corrupted, and he renounces those relatives who are not related to him in Marxist faith. In "Siervos", however, he greets those working-class people he once knew as his new comrades; they are "loyal dogs" ("perros fieles") and friends, like him, who now have the hope of seeing the change of ownership of the land.

La familia expresses nostalgia for a past that had its attractions but which must give way to a new future. The days of childhood can only be a memory, on which one can only look back, not return to. The poetry making this point often invoked past masters and styles. The basis for "El Gil Gil" (1935) is a *cancioncilla* by the popular seventeenth-century writer Lope de Vega – "Oh how well Gil dances!" ("¡Oh qué bien que baila Gil!"). Alberti's poem is a satire aimed at one of the most controversial leaders of the day bearing the name Gil (Robles). The title mocks him; repeating his name emphasizes that he is the most important, the one-and-only Gil. It also brings to mind a Spanish literary tradition in which the name Gil relates to an idiot. The title, therefore, sets a sarcastic tone to the poem. In the first line, Gil does not dance *a la asturiana* – that is to say, in the manner of the Asturians; this evokes the Asturian Uprising of 1934, which had a profound effect on Alberti. In the opening of the poem, therefore, the poet is declaring the inability, or refusal, of this political

figure to be able to relate to the people, to think in their terms, or to do things in their behalf – he "does not dance like them." Rather, he dances to the tune of the Vatican. In support of this Alberti juxtaposes cassock and rifle, biretta and police. "What a racket!" ("¡Qué jaleo!") (line 5) is reminiscent of a refrain from popular Andalusian verses, and, at the same time, condemns the situation that provoked the Asturian Uprising as confusion. Finally, Gil's culpability is sealed in the final verse:

To wash his hands
two Vatican angels
give him a jug.
Oh, how well Gil dances! (lines 35-38)

He has to wash his hands after so much bloodshed – "the blood of five thousand" ("la sangre de cinco mil") (line 34) - and his "angels" – his mentors, supporters of the Pope – aptly provide him with the means of washing away the guilt. The poem is a clever treatment of an emotive theme, and, with seeming simplicity and playfulness – backed by the use of popular poetic forms and expressions – Alberti makes a scathing comment about the repression of the Asturian uprising.

Finally, "Political Geography" ("Geografía política") recalls to the reader's mind the pastoral scenes of Garcilaso (stanza 2) and the metaphors and images of the (by now old) modernist days, while going back in time, once again, to schooldays. The poem is based on recollections of the school atlas with its colour codes for different countries and geographical features. The blend of memories of schooldays and of earlier literary trends and themes in the first three stanzas is a successful one. There is little denunciation of the old days, but, it is, rather, a nostalgic and poignant trip into the past. The allusion to Garcilaso is an apt one since his poetic world was an idealised one, as often are the days of childhood, imbued with hopes and dreams that do not always come to pass.

The second half of the poem changes tone. The narrator is back in the present and looking to the future. It is clear that the idealized "pastoral" world was only a dream. The poem now shows the poet's strong attachment to his beliefs, pivoting on the central line in which the pages of the old school atlas are gradually turning red ("se iba volviendo, sin saberlo, roja") (line 20). The narrator has been able to look back, but cannot go back, to the past because the revolution is gradually changing the look of the world. Any wistfulness for the past is superseded in the poem by the anticipation of a new order: "its first train is now coming along the track" ("su primer tren ya corre por la vía"). The recollections of past writing and writers – Lope, Garcilaso, and, elsewhere, Quevedo – constitute a clever use of the past to express the end of the old cultural tradition and order, now in its last stages.

Present throughout the poetry is the spectre, not only of communism, but of the Soviet Union, which is used as a contrast with other places. In "Los niños de Extremadura" ("The Children of Extremadura") (1935) the USSR is compared with contemporary Spain. In the first part of the poem, Spanish children are deprived of basic items – shoes, clothes, homes. The items have been stolen, snatched, demolished, or closed down – all aggressive expressions. The simple, child-like tone and language of this poem underscore the injustice implied. The neglect of the children is symbolic of the exploitation of the Spanish people. Unlike "S.O.S.", which makes statements of facts, "Los niños" asks pertinent questions and leaves them hanging in mid-air, unanswered. They are, indeed, rhetorical questions, and, as such, have a more denunciatory effect than outright accusations.

In its original form, "Los niños" was entitled "Aquí y allí" ("Here and There") and had a second section.⁴⁵ Less satisfactory than the first part of the poem, the second section allows no room for the reader to make the required deductions, but, rather, supplies the solution, and the comparison between the plight of the Spanish children and the more privileged children of the USSR becomes the forum for propaganda. During his first visit to the Soviet Union in 1932, Alberti had been particularly struck by the happiness of the children:

Even though unused to the Moscow winters and snow, the Albertis got a lot of pleasure from it. Arm in arm, they would run excitedly across a slippery road (María Terésa would invariably fall down). In the mornings they could be found at the window from which they had a good view of the Moscow River and the Kremlin. From there, they could watch the children tobogganing and skating. "Do you know, we've never seen such happy children anywhere in the world", they would repeatedly tell me.⁴⁶

"Over there", in the Soviet Union, the children can laugh and play, according to Alberti's poem, and to Lenin goes the glory. "The narrator's human concern and distress have been replaced by simplistic political pride and admiration, and his former sincerity and frankness are now overshadowed by affectation and exaggeration" (Nantell 69). The poem is an example of the negative effects of the interference of political bias in a creative work, and it may be for this reason that the second part of the poem was omitted in later publications.

⁴⁵ In its Russian translation, published in 1933, the entire poem was published as "Children of Extremadura".

⁴⁶ This is the opening of F. V. Kel'in's "Rafael Alberti i María Terésa León" (*Internatsional'naiia literatura* 3-4 [1934]: 239-45) which is the subject of the discussion of several pages of this thesis. Kel'in's article is produced in a fuller version in Appendix 1.

The comparison between Spain and Russia is further shown in *13 bandas y 48 estrellas*, in which are included Alberti's impressions of the United States.⁴⁷ In poems like "New-York", for example, North America is denounced for its capitalist exploitation of the workers. These poems contrast sharply with those in praise of the achievements of the USSR. In Soviet Russia, industrialization is not a sign of the exploitation of the people, but of the triumph of the workers. In "Bakú", who is in command of the hard labour of the workers but the people themselves? "Mar Negro" ("Black Sea") recalls 1917 and the uprising of the sailors of the Battleship Potemkin in 1905. It shows openly the dependency Alberti felt towards the example set by the Soviets ("voy sobre ti, pidiendo a tu pasado / clave en el mundo su poder presente") (line 20).

He has been called the "indisputable initiator of revolutionary poetry in Spain" and "the visible leader of this new orientation in writing" (Cano Ballesta *1930-36*, 195); in *Un fantasma* he is considered to have opened up "unfamiliar routes and a new thematics in lyrical creation", adopted a "combative, energetic and aggressive tone" by means of which he could raise his voice of protest (Cano Ballesta *1930-36*, 117); and *El poeta en la calle 1931-1935* (1935), which comprises some of the poetry we have been investigating, is "one of the first books of Spanish poetry of [the twentieth century] in which can be found political commitment throughout its pages" (Lechner 71).

In 1965, Alberti received the Lenin Peace Prize in Moscow. In his acceptance speech he declared that poets must be "poets of their time" and he confirmed that his own life was "committed to the history of his people" (*Poeta en la calle* 626). In his

⁴⁷ Between 1934 and 1935 Alberti visited Spanish-speaking America, including Cuba and Mexico, as

reaction to the problems his countrymen were experiencing, from unemployment and agrarian issues to atrocities like the repression of the Asturias Uprising, Alberti makes a poetic record of the events of his time. He was among those writers in Spain who not only became politically committed, but went one step further and allied themselves to the Communist Party and the tenets of Marxism. His output is, therefore, the product of "a feverish political climate, a politically inspired poet and an urgent and consuming political dream": it is the poetry of "social themes and public voices as he surveys, transcribes, and often critiques the everyday, concrete reality of the people he represents" (Nantell 85-86). The anger underpinning "Elegía Cívica" never really abated in the face of the "concrete reality" of Spain's problems. In the years following, the anger carried through to his belligerent, anti-religious feeling in poems like "La lucha por la tierra" and to the mocking contempt of "El Gil Gil". In "Elegía Cívica", his predictions for a happier future, when compared with his writing two years later, seem cautious and speculative; the later poetry somewhat defiantly declares that Communism is a foregone conclusion. It is obvious he himself had welcomed the socialist future with open arms and some urgency; the strident joy of "Sequía" and "Mítin" brook no uncertainty.

It is true of Alberti, as it is true of poets throughout Europe of the first two decades of the twentieth century who aspired to represent the Marxist world-view in their writing, that "the art in which most of them had been brought up was not well equipped for dealing with large emotions and wide horizons" (Bowra, *Poetry and Politics* 123-24). More importantly, it had little popular appeal, nor had it aspirations of making itself understood by the uninformed. When such a writer then sought to

well as New York giving talks and recitals in support of the victims of the Asturian Uprising.

"sink his personality in that of others, whose sufferings he shares or would like to share, and to speak both for them and with them", a new style was required (Bowra, *Poetry and Politics* 123-24).

To this end, he employed "popular poetic forms, uncomplicated vocabulary and frequent apostrophes, questions and incitement directed towards the reader, and a generally unsophisticated syntax" (Lechner 125). Alberti himself commented: "The people (*pueblo*), being isolated owing to class difference and finding it economically impossible to understand and assimilate the culture being developed in the cities by the ruling classes, has preserved its own forms" which had been recalled and recast (*Prosas encontradas* 87). The vocabulary and grammar of his poetry certainly became simpler, more recognizable to a public unused, and possibly intolerant, of the beauty and mystery of surrealism and its contemporaries. Nevertheless, it was Alberti's intention and aspiration to communicate with the mass of people who did not have the cultural education to appreciate aesthetically beautiful and intricate poetry. His former subjective, introspective style of writing was not so much cast off as rendered inappropriate by the demands of his new set of beliefs and the duty he felt attached to his new-found vocation. In the 1930s he had decided on "the poetry that can be understood, as opposed to the 'decadent' art which cannot"⁴⁸ and his primary concern was "to serve a cause, to find a response in the masses, to awaken the conscience and inject into it a spirited indignation at injustice" (Cano Ballesta, *1930-36* 200) rather than to externalise his own Existential *Angst*.

In his political poetry, he showed himself to be, at the very least, at the "fore of socialist-realist revolutionary poetry" of the 1930s; his socialist realism "draws upon

⁴⁸ Jerónimo Pablo González Martín. *Rafael Alberti (estudio)*. Madrid: Júcar, 1980. 105.

the poet's experience of his contemporary social reality, his observations of the world around him, his own position [...] and his own socialist convictions" (Nantell 39-40). Adherence to the Party and the promulgation of Marxist ideas is, as predicted, unmistakable and unavoidable. Indeed, it recurs *ad nauseam*.⁴⁹

In view of the radical change in Alberti's poetic outlook, it would be unreasonable to assess his socialist realist work according to the same criteria that one would use for earlier works such as *Sobre los ángeles*. Poems like "Sequía" and "Mifin" appear to have no other function than to motivate and mobilize, but, evaluated in the light of this purpose, the poems can be considered successful and effective. It would be hasty, too, to dismiss entirely the poetry of these years. In spite of the fact that making content the major factor of poetry may be considered limiting, Alberti managed to produce some pieces worthy of examination. His forays into the past and into his own personal vision of socialism make the most fertile grounds for investigation.

Having examined aspects of his poetry both before and after 1931, we can see a definite inclination towards what Russian writers have produced. The stage at which the introspective, spiritually troubled Alberti found kindred spirits in the works of the pre-revolutionary Russian writers was superseded by an immersion into the ways Soviet writers were converting into poetic form their own political convictions. His commitment to Marxism and his application of the ideology to his art required modification of the way in which he wrote verse. Simply expressed, it meant that content and meaning were higher priorities than form and style. The same can be said for all writers who acquired an anti-fascist, openly Marxist stance in the late 1920s

⁴⁹ Yet, Gagen argues that Alberti as a dramatist never followed the tenets of socialist realism;

and 1930s. Alberti himself considered it important to examine the poetry of the Soviet writers he met during his visits there. 1931 was the date of his becoming fully politically committed, but his journey into the ideological "light" in 1932 was just as impressive. That, and subsequent visits to the Soviet Union, fully exposed him to the fabric and composition of socialist poetry as the Soviet Russians created it.⁵⁰ In the 1960s he wrote: "I am Rafael Alberti, now in Moscow, capital of peace. The Lenin medal shines on my chest. I am a Lenin Peace Prize winner. [...] Let my verse, if possible, aspire to the lofty heights of that name" (*El poeta en la calle* 11). In the same period he wrote two poems under the title "Unión Soviética". In the first, entitled "Retorno", he wrote:

What would I bring
 you, if I could?
 All of Spain.
 All the love from the very blood
 of the entire Spanish nation. (*El poeta en la calle* 271)⁵¹

If it is true to say that the Russian Revolution was a stimulus to the evolution of the political scene in Spain in the 1920s and 30s – notably the increasing sense of urgency among the left-wing factions – and that the escalating passions of Spanish revolutionary groups in that period were central to the acquiring of political conscience on the part of the intellectual and artistic communities around the turn of the 1930s, then it is reasonable to claim that without Bolshevik victory in 1917 Alberti

furthermore, according to Gagen, Alberti himself was no puppet of the Soviets ("Puppets" 65).

⁵⁰ In 1934 he returned to the Soviet Union to attend the First Congress of Writers in Moscow, and travelled extensively, to such places as Kharkov, Baku, Tiflis, Yalta and Odessa. He reports having met Gorky, Sergei Eisenstein and Sergei Prokoviev during this visit. Yet again, he visited USSR during the Spanish Civil War years.

would not have become so involved in politics. It is certainly true to say that the bond with the Soviets, established by his visit to the USSR in 1932 and consolidated throughout his continued association with them in the 1930s, would not have been forged.

Impressionable and naïve though Alberti appears to have been, the affinity he felt with the Soviets by far surpassed the attraction he had felt for the Russia transmitted by its pre-revolutionary writers. His affection for the pre-revolutionary writers was the "shock of recognition": the feeling, as he read the works of Andreev and Dostoevsky, for example, that he identified with their characters, or recognized the situations in which they found themselves. To the extent that the "shock of recognition" provides incentive and inspiration, it is a form of influence. Moreover, the shock of recognition, in this case, was a powerful one. Evidence of it is found in the alienated and self-obsessed characters peopling Andreev's short stories, and in the paranoid, archly critical, and spiritually chaotic underground men of Dostoevsky's novels, strands of all of which are found in the poetry of *Sobre los ángeles*. Nevertheless, Alberti's affinity with the Russians at this time was not unique: the literary atmosphere in Spain encouraged the search for kindred spirits in other ages and cultures. Alberti himself confessed a reliance on French poets, and his regard for Spanish themes, forms and past masters is evident.

Where the link with Russia becomes more straightforward and open is in the political poetry of the 1930s. Alberti openly sought inspiration and knowledge while in USSR by means of his association with poets and his translating activity. He used

⁵¹ The second poem is entitled "En el 40 aniversario de la Revolución de Octubre (1917-1957)" ("On the Occasion of the 40th Anniversary of the October Revolution (1917-1957)"). The poem extols the Soviet Union and communism.

the USSR as proof of his ideology in his writing, and showed his strong sense of affinity with the Soviets. He was particularly aware of Mayakovsky, and perhaps enjoyed being termed the Spanish Mayakovsky, and of Svetlov, who, in spite of producing a lightweight work, in literary terms, in "Granada", achieved the kind of results Alberti sought in his writing.

In the next section we continue to examine Spanish pre-Civil War writing, now concentrating on the incorporation of Marxist ethics and inclination towards Russia in the political novels published in that period.

2.2 Novelists in the Service of Revolution. The Impact of Russia on the social novel in Pre-Civil War Spain

Since the novel has generally been considered the genre most easily adapted to the expression of realism, it was, inevitably perhaps, the first to respond to the growing need among writers in pre-Civil War Spain to communicate their political commitment. From approximately 1926 until the Spanish Civil War, social novels (*novelas sociales*) began to be published in increasing numbers.

Especially for those Spanish writers who became Marxists,¹ and who wanted to express reality from the Marxist point of view, the principles of the social novel were highly attractive. As was established in an earlier section of this thesis, the movement promoting the social novel was not a compact group of writers conforming to a specific manifesto, although in practice individual novelists were of the same mind in seeking forms which would best accommodate the socially and politically motivated content of their works:

Everything depended on the skill of the author – be it lesser or greater – and their capacity to adapt to the new method, assimilating in a creative way (without falling into the trap of being excessively simplistic and mimetic) the innovations and the very demands of the genre (prototypes of classes characters were representing, making the masses the protagonist, etc). (Esteban and Santonja 11)

Social novels, as we have seen, nevertheless had in common certain characteristics. We may recall that they were realist, frequently documentary or testimonial in form, and addressed issues of interest and concern to the people as a whole, rather than

¹ As has been shown earlier in this thesis, Marxism was not the most popular option for a radical in 1930s' Spain. People who were attracted to Marxism in 1930s' Spain were, by and large, those who became increasingly disenchanted with the Second Republic or those who became politically enlightened abroad, where Marxism was a more popular option.

representing isolated and atypical instances of social injustice. Social novels were set in places with which the people could identify: for example, the factory or the countryside. There was also a tendency to make the masses the central character, often doing away with a single protagonist. In terms of style, narrative was devoid of artificial devices which would only distract a reader unaccustomed to high literature. Symbols were easily intelligible and characters were polarized into good and bad. These novels often relied heavily on dialogue, accommodating rhetoric and agitative dialogue, along with colloquialisms and slang. In short, by means of these methods the authors aimed to accurately represent and specifically target the oppressed proletariat of Spain.

It was an ideological necessity for both left-wing politically committed writers, and those who were card-carrying communists, to use their art in the defence of the proletariat and as a weapon against all dissenters. Additionally, Marxists felt a strong inclination towards, and, in some cases, dependence on, the success of socialism in the Soviet Union. For certain writers, this meant they could use the *fait accompli* of the Russian Revolution as proof positive of the ideology they were expounding. Indeed, a common strand in the fabric of pre-Civil War social novels is the disposition of key characters towards Russia and its Revolution.

In addition, it was not uncommon for the novelists to express their preference for, or acknowledgement of, Russian writers, or to have their fictional characters do so. For example, Andrés Carranque de Ríos incorporates references to Dostoevsky and Chekhov in his novel *Uno (One)*, and, in *Una vida anónima (An Anonymous Life)* by Julián Zugazagoitia, one of the characters speaks of Gorky, Korolenko and Dostoevsky.

This section of the thesis centres on the work of certain Spanish social novelists who, inspired by the success of the Revolution in the Soviet Union, themselves embraced Marxism. It examines works by Ramón J. Sender, José Díaz Fernández, César Muñoz Arconada, Manuel D. Benavides and Joaquín Arderfús, who, in their individual ways, expressed their political commitment in writing. Furthermore, it studies the relationship of these writers with the Soviet Union. In its assessment of the connection of Spanish social novelists with Russia's ideology and literature, this section of the thesis will be punctuated by abridged versions of texts, extracted principally from Soviet journals of the 1930s, concerning the Marxist commitment and affiliation with the Soviet Union of Sender, Arconada, Benavides and Arderfús. The Soviets considered this younger generation of Spanish writers to carry the revolutionary torch.² This section further evaluates the impact of Russian literature on the writing of these novelists.

However, it is important to acknowledge, first, that there were novelists other than those studied in this section of the thesis who combined committed writing with a Marxist outlook. The more remarkable examples include Isidoro Acevedo (1876-1952), who was a member of the Communist Party, and, after the Civil War, moved to the Soviet Union, where he stayed until his death.³ Among his works is *Impresiones*

² In one Soviet article, those of the older ('98) generation were dismissed as "specialists" in "slandorous attacks against the Spanish revolutionary youth, the Soviet Union etc.", whereas the younger "greater" and "more talented" writers defend the working classes and the revolutionary peasantry, among their number the novelists Arconada, Arderfús and Sender (*Ispaniia v ogne* 20).

³ In turn, there was a notable emigration of Russian writers in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution (from 1918 until the early 1920s) for ideological reasons. Leonid Andreev was one such example (see Section 1.4 of this thesis) in that he found it difficult to understand, let alone comply with, Bolshevism. Viacheslav Ivanov, for example, left Russia in 1924, settled in Italy, converted to Roman Catholicism and died in Rome in 1949.

de un viaje a Rusia (Impressions of a Trip to Russia) (1923). César Falcón (1892-1970) was born in Peru but, on being deported in 1919, moved to Spain and stayed there until the end of the War. He became a member of the Communist Party in 1933. Others – the aforementioned Zugazagoitia and Carranque de Ríos, as well as Alicia Garcitorial and Manuel Ciges Aparicio – may not have been Communists, but they were mostly associated with other far-left factions, and certainly had passion and intent in their writing similar to those with openly Marxist beliefs.⁴

The fictional works of José Díaz Fernández (1898-1940) are an important consideration in the study of the social novel, since he was attempting to put into practice his "New Romantic" theory which is closely aligned to the acquiring of political conscience of some Spanish writers. Indeed, the author is generally credited with having initiated the turn in the direction of the avant-garde towards political commitment in his work *El bloqueo (The Blockade)* (1928), an anti-war story. *El bloqueo* is unashamedly critical of the circumstances forcing soldiers to suffer in their service of their country, but it does not attempt to persuade its readers in any direction more specific than away from the traditional mainstays of Spanish society and towards the Republican left, which was, in reality, a broad spectrum of factions. It is, in fact, a collection of short stories, each of which is a portrait of life in those years, written in a concise and intense style. It is important as a transitional work, which juxtaposes avant-garde with social thematic content, and appears to favour the latter.

⁴ It is important to point out once again that just as not all committed writers were of a politically left persuasion, not all left-wing writers were staunch communists. Writers approached commitment from various left-wing stances and from various stages and levels of involvement in their chosen party or faction. Furthermore, the adherence to communism on the part of Sender and Arderius, for example, was relatively short-lived owing to their subsequent disillusionment.

In the fourth of the stories, "Magdalena roja" ("Red Magdalena"), one of the main characters, "Gafitas", has the problem of being too intellectual and too petit-bourgeois to be considered a true revolutionary. He sees life through literary eyes, not as one who has genuinely experienced hardship and, therefore, understands the strivings of the people. He has been encouraged by the Russian Revolution: he has a bust of Lenin in his room, and he has joined a trade union as a direct result of the Russian influence. But he does not feel the necessary revulsion against the "bourgeoisie with the car and the fur coat" (73) and when the time comes to act for the Party, he cannot do so. In his writing, Díaz Fernández persisted in the suggestion that the fundamental problem of the petit-bourgeoisie to develop class consciousness resulted from their motivation by patriotism and religion, rather than economic reality. At the same time, they were unable to feel part of the capitalist world, which would have led them to want to change society.

Díaz Fernández' novel of the following year, 1929, *La venus mecánica* (*The Mechanical Venus*), employed the metaphorical and fragmented style typical of the Spanish avant-garde, since an important aspect of his "New Romanticism" was the quest for human themes expressed in avant-garde manner, but it was clearly also a novel of social criticism. The positive ending of the work recommends it as a social novel; although Díaz Fernández does not advocate a mass revolution, he is patently dissatisfied with the status quo and seeks the establishment of a new order. Nevertheless, by comparing *La venus mecánica* with other novels of the period, it becomes clear that it does not necessarily demonstrate the impact of the Russians. *La venus mecánica*, which synthesizes content and form more effectively, is a more successful experiment in the artistic representation of Spanish reality. Díaz Fernández' novels demonstrate many of the characteristics of the social novel genre, but show

little of the Marxist commitment seen in writers such as Sender, Arconada and, especially, Arderfus, the main focus of this section's study. Insofar as *El bloqueo* and *La venus mecánica* reflect, in parts, the inclination of revolutionaries towards "red" ideology and the accomplishments of the USSR, however, they provide useful observations of this very real aspect of that period.

Ramón J. Sender (1902-1982) is a writer who started his literary career as a journalist, became a professional novelist in 1930, and continued writing in exile after the Civil War, while working at UCLA in the United States. He became one of the most acclaimed Spanish novelists of the twentieth century. In the 1930s, however, he was connected with both communist and anarchist factions.⁵ Like many other novelists, he was from the rural petite bourgeoisie; his home was Aragon. On returning from active military duty in Morocco at the beginning of 1924, he started work on the newspaper *El Sol* and one of his first assignments was to write a review of Leonid Andreev's play *Zhizn' cheloveka* (*The Life of Man*).⁶ In the next few years, he built up a record of revolutionary activity, spending periods in prison, in protest against Primo's dictatorship. In 1930, he resigned from the newspaper in order to concentrate on his fictional writing. In 1933 he visited Russia as the guest of MORP (the International Association of Revolutionary Writers). The trip resulted in a book, *Madrid – Moscú. Notas de viaje (1933-1934)* (*Madrid to Moscow. Travel Notes*

⁵ For detailed information about his involvement with these groups, see Patrick Collard's *Ramón J. Sender en los años 1930-1936: sus ideas sobre la relación entre literatura y sociedad* (*Sender in the Years 1930-1936: His Ideas about the Relationship of Literature and Society*) (Gent: University of Gent, 1980) and Michiko Nonoyama's *El anarquismo en las obras de R. J. Sender* (*Anarchism in the Works of Sender*) (Madrid: Playor, 1979). His inclination was mostly towards the anarchists until he considered them incapable of mobilizing themselves for revolution, upon which he turned his attention to communism.

⁶ See *El Sol* (15 April 1924): 2.

[1933-1934]). In an open letter to the people of the USSR he wrote: "After what I have seen here [in the USSR], there is no more room for intelligent doubt. [...] When I came to you, I was an intellectual. Today, I leave you a soldier in the vanguard of the socialist battle and construction" (*Ispania v ogne* 183). It should be noted, however, that he distanced himself from communism at the start of the Civil War and later denounced it. Indeed, the Spanish Civil War and, subsequently, World War II crushed his former idealism. Decades later he said that he had "ceased writing a *literatura de combate* (combative literature) in order to write [literature] of enlightenment"⁷ and it would not be an understatement to say that the "combat" in which he had formerly been immersed, against bourgeois capitalism in 1930s' Spain, had been encouraged "in the wake of what was seen as a successful revolution in Russia in 1917" (Lough, *Politics and Philosophy* 202).

In the years leading up to the Civil War, he produced three major and four minor novels, and in the thirty years following it he became a prolific novelist. It has been tempting for some literary historians to emphasise the dissimilarity between his pre- and post-Civil War writing, encouraged by the fact that Sender himself later re-wrote some of his texts of the 1930s. As one critic points out, an "exaggerated concern" with Sender's early political views and activities has caused some to distort their interpretation of the writer and his novels.⁸ In fact, his novels of the 1930s have at times been dismissed as merely political literature, even as pamphlet novels. However, the fact that he did not simply dismiss those works, but, rather, returned to

⁷ See Marcelino C. Peñuelas' *Conversaciones con R. J. Sender (Conversations with Sender)* (Madrid: Editorial Magisterio Español, 1970), p. 91.

⁸ See Anthony Trippett's *Adjusting to Reality: Philosophical and Psychological Ideas in the Post-Civil War Novels of Ramón J. Sender* (London: Tamesis, 1986), p. 16, fn. 6.

them and re-worked them with the benefit of hindsight, discourages too rash an assumption about their worth (Lough, *Politics and Philosophy* 202).

One reason for his early fictional works (1930-36) being of interest is that they represent the writing of a novelist who was committed to radical revolutionary views and who had an explicit agenda for his works. They were worthy examples of the social novel genre, but the author did not resort to unadulterated, subjective propaganda for Marxism or any other specific ideology. Years later he confirmed that he had never considered that the novel should be a vehicle for political propaganda.⁹ Furthermore, he was archly critical of the organizations involved in revolution, as is shown in the novels.¹⁰

His fictional writing largely centred on his own experiences, both in military service in Morocco and in revolutionary activity in the pre-Civil War period. His first novel, *Imán (Magnet)* (1930), an auspicious start to his career and still counted among his best literary works, was, on the surface, an anti-war book, based on the Moroccan situation, but incorporates and establishes many of the hallmarks of Sender's writing: an unadorned, but compelling use of language, intrinsic social protest, details of the harsh realities of life (in this case, of the soldiers in Morocco), sparing the reader from little of the grimness of existence, and occasionally offsetting it with streaks of humour. Two years later, in *Siete domingos rojos (Seven Red Sundays)* (1932), Sender focused on the world of Spanish revolutionaries and examined the motivations of various groups of them. A Soviet reviewer described the novel as "a great canvas

⁹ See the Preface to *Obras completas* Vol. I (Barcelona: Destino, 1978), p. 5.

¹⁰ With the exception, perhaps, of *La noche de las cien cabezas*, which is noticeably more optimistic about the outcome of revolution. The novel is a "positive allegory of a desired future", although that future still remains an "impossible distant dream" (Lough, *Politics and Philosophy* 88).

on which is represented not only the development of events, but also explaining why they developed in the direction of the revolutionary movement in Spain" (*Ispania v ogne* 16). Its revolutionary theme notwithstanding, in the prologue to the novel the author commented that it would please none of the factions represented: anarchists, socialists, communists and syndicalists are not always portrayed in a favourable light. The dissension within, and bickering between, individual groups, as represented in the novel, seem to suggest that the revolution is unlikely to succeed with such disorganization:

The complexity of the argument of *Siete domingos rojos* stems from Sender's desire to paint a sympathetic portrait of the revolutionaries whose political aims he shared, while drawing attention to the moral failings which ultimately undermine their political activity. (Lough, *Politics and Philosophy* 44)

Nevertheless, Samar, the journalist who represents Sender himself, is an optimist, albeit idealistic, and through him the author succeeds in sustaining revolutionary values. The novel *O.P. (Orden público)* (1931), the first of a trilogy,¹¹ is based on Sender's own experience of a prison sentence and introduces the reader to a gallery of characters who are incarcerated with him. By introducing the wind almost as a character in the story, the author conveys the thought that even though an individual is imprisoned, his ideals, and those of his fellow men, never die – like the wind, they are still at liberty, ruffling the hair of a little girl or lifting the wing of a stork.

His objective, even critical, view of life in revolutionary factions notwithstanding, Sender did not conceal his belief in revolution and the hope of a

¹¹ Along with *Viaje a la aldea del crimen (Journey to the Village of the Crime)* and *La noche de las cien cabezas (The Night of One Hundred Heads)*, the trilogy is called *Términos del Presagio (Terms of the Presage)* and comprises a testament of the decade leading up to the Civil War.

future socialist society. For Sender, however, "man's ability to build a better society depends on a *moral transformation*" and his portrayal of revolutionaries, particularly the anarchists in *Siete domingos rojos*, places serious doubt on their ability to effect such a transformation (Lough, *Politics and Philosophy* 42; emphasis added). Those who would label the novels of the 1930s as merely vehicles for expounding political views do not take into consideration the philosophical content of the novels, or, rather, the way in which the author blends his political stance with philosophical evaluation.¹²

Most pertinently of all, in view of the theme of this thesis, his works do not project a socialist realist "positive hero" in the Soviet sense – the protagonists are usually collective, and the central individual characters do not dominate the plots with their heroism and self-sacrifice, but tend, rather, to be rounded, idealistic, thoughtful characters, much in the cast of Sender himself. Francis Lough points out that "one of the most important aspects of his pre-Civil War thinking, and one which is clearly reflected in the novels, is the manner in which he attempts to resolve the tension between his role as a middle-class intellectual and his advocacy of a socio-political revolution based on an instinctive regeneration of man's moral conduct" (*Politics and Philosophy* 89). Sender appeared unable to commit himself unreservedly to revolution as it was attempted by the factions operating in Spain in the 1930s.

¹² Interesting in this regard is Francis Lough's *Politics and Philosophy*. Remarking that Sender's early fiction needs to be "re-read in the context of the tense political climate in which it was written, but *without* allowing for the consequent polarization of opinions at the time", Lough recommends the need to avoid overlooking other considerations, such as the author's philosophical beliefs. He points out that if the earlier novels were devoid of any such content, then the appearance of Sender's "most philosophical novel of all" (*Proverbio de la muerte*, later re-titled *La esfera*) in 1939 would seem most incongruous (4; emphasis added).

Nevertheless, the novels, significantly, were praised by the Soviets of the time. With reference to *Imán*, F. V. Kel'in wrote in 1931 that although it was not a proletarian novel *per se*, it "sounds revolutionary in many parts, in that the author does not only describe the atrocities of war" but, also, "in a very scathing style, the culpability for war and its injustice."¹³ Sender himself wrote in a Russian journal of 1933, that *Siete domingos* was not so much proletarian, nor wholly Marxist: "it was necessary for me to eliminate in my own consciousness the remains of sentimentality and anarchistic idealism", and he added:

I thought that with this book I could assist burgeoning Spanish communism in its difficult battle to eliminate petite bourgeois anarchism which is still a major force among the Spanish workers and peasants. I thought that to achieve this, [...] and to exercise a positive influence on the anarchist workers, I needed to speak in their language, use their emotions as means of expression. Politically, the book is really an anarchist book against anarchism. As far as the style is concerned, [...] I wanted to convey the atmosphere of contemporary Madrid.¹⁴

In the pre-Civil War novels of Sender, we begin to see how Marxist-oriented writers found ways of conveying their beliefs.¹⁵ Sender clearly shows that it was necessary to speak in the language of the Spanish workers and peasants, in order to identify himself as their representative, and especially in order to reach them with his writing. This would be labelled *narodnost'* by adherents of socialist realism. Sender's wish to convey the atmosphere of the people, be it in Madrid or in the Moroccan campaign, is further evidence of his deliberate representation of the essence of his nation. It shows an awareness of Party politics, too: although *Siete domingos* exposes the in-fighting among the revolutionary factions, he makes the claim to the Soviets

¹³ See Kel'in's "Antivoennaia literatura na ispanskom iazike" ("Anti-War Literature in the Spanish Language") in *Knizhnoe obozrenie* 7 (1931): 102-05.

¹⁴ See "Fakty i dokumenty" ("Facts and Documents") in *Internatsional'naiia literatura* 4 (1933): 173.

that his intention was to highlight the inferiority of the anarchist groups, the rivals to communism.

In a 1936 issue of the journal *Leviatán*, Sender made an impassioned appeal for writers to keep taking their role towards society seriously:

We have endured a whole generation of novelists, short story writers and essayists who have dedicated the first twenty years of this century to tell us how important is metaphysical love with silk lingerie, to defuse the myth of death, to divulge the moral complexities of adultery, and to laud among the petite bourgeoisie a tenor of life concerned with trifles of form and, above all, attentive to servile imitation of aristocratic and grand bourgeois society. All this literature which has inundated bookshops and street kiosks during the first third of this century has been totally incongruous. They praise a life almost always lacking the vital principle.¹⁶

For him, the "vital principle" was "profoundly *social* in all its manifestations" (33; emphasis added). His main argument was for the contemporary novelist to assume his role before the people (35); to take a subjective and isolated stance accomplishes nothing, in his view – "to live is to coexist" (32). He attacked those who adhere to the school of thought that certain subjects cannot be broached in literature, that it is wrong to admit that boys masturbate and a man copulates with his wife. Such conformist writers become antisocial, because, ignoring and even fearing the realities of life, they cannot be social. The home of a poor man out of work, he insisted, was not impressive enough for a surrealist; the miserable life of the working classes was too vulgar; the conversation between two workers would be incomprehensible.

Sender, therefore, urged socially responsible writers to earn the trust of the masses, to become part of the masses, to plumb the depths of their essence, and then to translate this trust and understanding into words. "The masses", he wrote, "will be able to understand those words more than anyone – more than the academics, the

¹⁵ Sender's novels, for example, all have quite different forms.

cenacles and the bourgeois critics": the glory of tapping the consciousness of the masses – "the glory of solidarity and utility" – will belong to the social novelist (40-1). The intention of Sender's work was certainly in line with the ideals of Marxism, even if his fictional writing was not propaganda in literary form.

For a more open statement of Marxist conviction in narrative text we turn to the works of Joaquín Arderfús (1898-1969), who was strongly associated with the Radical Socialists and was a member of the Communist Party for three or four years from 1929, after which he became affiliated with the Republican Left. Given that he is a comparatively unknown author, some biographical information would be appropriate. Details of his life are found in the following autobiographical sketch, which he wrote for a Soviet journal in the 1930s:

I was born in Lorca, in the province of Murcia, in April 1890. At the age of eight I entered a religious school in Madrid. Later I was moved to another school (this time, Dominican), where I remained until I was fifteen. In 1905 I went to Liège (Belgium), with good intentions of training as an industrial engineer. However, none of my plans came off. It turned out that life itself interested me more than any studies. In Liège I got to know a number of Russian emigrants. After returning shortly to Spain, I was something of a vagrant for a few years, leading quite an adventurous life. In the process, I fell into company with gypsies who were trading in all sorts of junk, travelled about with them and took part in all their affairs. When that phase of my life ended, I finally settled in Madrid where my first publication came out, *Mis mendigos* (1916) (*sic*). But it was not long before literary life in Madrid bored me. Then I decided to leave Madrid and, with my wife and daughter, move to a village in the depths of the country, in the hills. From that time a period of extreme destitution began for me. I managed to survive a whole series of troubles. But it was just at that time that I succeeded in getting to know the psychology of the peasantry, understand their sufferings and value their high moral strength. This gave me, of course, a wealth of experience without equal. Tired of this life, I moved to Lyon (France), where I began to look for work. After

¹⁶ "El novelista y las masas." *Leviatán* 24 (May 1936) 31-41. 31.

a lot of effort I managed to get into a glass factory. In 1923 I returned to Madrid where my book *Así me fecundó Zaratustra* was published, and in subsequent years *Yo y tres mujeres*, *Ojo de brasa*, *La duquesa de Nit*, *La espuela*, *Los príncipes iguales* and *El baño de la muerte* also came out. Shortly after that I was thrown into prison for taking part in a conspiracy against the dictator Primo de Rivera. In prison I wrote my book *Justo el evangélico* which was published when I got out. After this I had published three more works, *Los amadores de Manqueses*, *El comedor de la pensión Venecia*, and *Vida de Fermín Galán*. After the overthrow of Alfonso XIII and the declaration of the Republic, I published my novels *Lumpenproletariado* and *Campesinos*.¹⁷

In a similar sketch written for the publication of *Campesinos* in Russian,¹⁸ he added that his new friends in Liège were Russian revolutionary émigrés, and that, thereafter, he was "gripped by a great revolutionary fervour." His work with gypsy friends was horse trading, through which he travelled extensively around Spain. In the years following his first publication, he felt "repulsed by the literary atmosphere of Madrid", but, once returned from France in 1923, dedicated "all my activity from that day until the day of the Republic" to "bitter fighting against the King and his dictators, and [...] working on a number of novels" and, when the Republic was proclaimed, he joined the Communist Party. In 1930 he took part in the uprising of Jaca, alongside Fermín Galán, which would lead him to co-author a biography of Galán with Díaz Fernández.¹⁹

¹⁷ Joaquín Arderius. "Avtobiografía." ("Autobiography.") *Internatsional'naiia literatura* 4 (1933): 172-73.

¹⁸ Joaquín Arderius. "Avtobiografía." ("Autobiography.") *Krest'iane (Campesinos)*. Trans. into Russian by D. Vygodskii. Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1935. 3, 4.

¹⁹ According to Antonio Espina, there were no two more suitable writers to produce this biography: they had known him well, had followed him into various campaigns and they appreciated what he stood for. Espina applauds them for the verisimilitude of their work. See his article "Vida de Fermín Galán" in *Crisol* (8 July 1931): 2.

For him, political commitment was not a "Road-to-Damascus" experience since he had already acquired a political conscience, and throughout Primo's dictatorship had actively fought for something better. He was something of an idealist and his fundamental motivation was a loathing for the establishment as embodied in the monarchy, the church and the armed forces. As can be seen from his autobiographical sketches, he was apparently happier in the company of more unassuming characters – peasants, gypsies, factory workers – than that of intellectuals. He was quite intolerant of hypocrisy; his membership in the Communist Party lasted until 1934, when he became disenchanted with communism as a result of the reports coming out of Russia concerning the controversial ways in which Stalin was consolidating his power in the 1930s. From 1936 Arderius was President of Socorro Rojo Internacional, however, and his Civil War activities took him to his home town, Lorca, in the south, and to Valencia and Barcelona. In 1939 he went into exile in Lyon, and when the Germans came to occupy France he went to Mexico, where he virtually stopped writing. There he worked, instead, in various capacities, latterly earning a modest living in the Ministry of National Education. He died in Mexico on 20 January 1969.

Throughout the most productive time of this literary career, he wrote not only novels, but also collaborated in the production of several literary journals and newspapers, including *Nueva España*, *El Sol*, *La Libertad*, *Post-Guerra*, *Octubre*, in Spain and *International'naiia literatura* in Russia. In 1927 he co-founded the *Oriente* publishing house along with Díaz Fernández, José Antonio Balbontín²⁰ and others. Throughout all this literary and political activity, he rubbed shoulders with other

noteworthy left-wing writers, among them Rafael Alberti, Julián Gorkin, César Arconada, Zugazagoitia and Sender.

Arderius attributed his writing career to his brother Tomás, who also wrote a novel. He started publishing fiction as early as 1915, in the form of a collection of stories called *Mis mendigos (My Beggars)*. In 1923 he published the novel *Así me fecundó Zaratustra (Thus Zarathustra Enriched Me)*, and from that time until 1934 he published on average one novel each year. After *Crimen (Crime)* in 1934 there was a gap of ten years before he wrote *Don Juan de Austria (Don Juan of Austria)* (published in Mexico). He is credited with fourteen novels and at least one biography (of Fermín Galán), plus the aforementioned journalistic contributions. Arderius' body of work has been described as one of the "richest and most complex of all Spanish narrative between the wars" (Fuentes 197) and the author himself has been considered one of the "most creative and original writers of the period", an "extraordinarily creative author whose preoccupations led him to become progressively interested in different literary approaches [which are] the origin of his artistic complexity and also of some of the negative criticisms" his works have received (Vilches de Frutos 141-42). Rafael Cansinos Assens, in a substantial critical survey of his work up to 1927, described him as a writer of "singular courage" (405).

This study will investigate the writing of Arderius with the objective of assessing the impact of Russia, in both ideological and literary terms. Like so many writers of the time, Arderius, from the appearance of his first work of literature and throughout most of the 1920s, gave as much attention to aesthetic literary concerns as to the message of his work. Throughout that period, for example, there was a strong

²⁰ Balbontín (1893-1977) was one of the founders of *Post-guerra* and founded the Social

expressionist element in his writing style. Political conscience, which had not been entirely absent during that decade, became pre-eminent at the turn of the 1930s.

Mis mendigos is said to have shown the "great potential of his imagination, the hybrid character of his mental philosophising and the complexity of his artistic world which originated in Nietzsche and Dostoevsky" (Esteban, *Campesinos* vii). The senselessness of life in the city, and the cruel inevitability of death are the themes of the first story "Los Superdioses y el abúlico" ("The Supergods and the Apathetic One"); the misery of society is exposed in the story of Amán's night with a prostitute in "El verdadero redentor" ("The True Redeemer"). Arderius evidently had a bleak view of the world around him, a view emphasized in "Los románticos de la muerte" ("The Romantics of Death"), in which a man, Pedro, weary of life, wishes to die. He declares: "my restless spirit floundered in the casing of flesh which was my body. Oh, how I was madly clawing at the walls of this prison to get out! Since then I've realized how terrible it is to have to return to life after being locked up in a prison cell" (171). There is also an expressionist father-son clash: "sons are a man's ruin", just as "the fathers who conceived them are the son's ruin" (189). The second of the stories, "El amor" ("Love"), is equally gloomy. It is set in a fictional representation of the Puerta del Sol in Madrid, and the city is depicted as "a pile of rubbish giving off a phosphorescent gas" (73) and where people hate each other (71), a place of alienation and apathy:

Trams go about in all directions, swallowing down and vomiting out creatures, discharging into space the sound of their loud bells. Motorcars race about bellowing like mad things, like giant ants which have lost their way home. Among them are coaches whose horses beat the asphalt, some skittish, others submissive, weary, wishing they were buried in all the pandemonium of light, movement and

clamour. Thousands of human beings walk about the whole square, moving like automatons. (65-66)

Chaos and confusion are associated with the city in which noise and relentless movement predominate. For humans, it is an unnatural environment; it is associated with darkness, the silence of alienation and death – it smells of death, whereas the countryside is a source of life.

The author himself, in the prologue to *Mis mendigos*, described the stories as "the visions that the obsessions of my life have produced" (xv). They reveal his scepticism for the principles and values of the society in which he lived. His vision is that of a "spectator attending a tragic-comic farce" (Vilches de Frutos 143). All the critics so far involved in evaluating Arderfius' early work acknowledge the expressionist elements in it: a sense of impending apocalypse, the antipathy to the modern city, relationships in crisis and the conflict of generations, and the need to exteriorize, to give expression to the impressions the writer receives of the world around him, just like Pedro's friend in "Los románticos", whose poems are "explosions of my poor heart" (191).

At this point, it would be valuable to identify correspondences between Arderfius' writing and that of the Russian authors which was becoming increasingly more widely read in Spain at that time. As a result of this apparent digression, it will be possible to make correlations between Arderfius' characters and the tone of his writing with those of Maxim Gorky's ex-humans, of Fedor Dostoevsky's "underground men", estranged by and from society (Vilches de Frutos 144; Cansinos Assens 407), and of Leonid Andreev's hopelessly alienated outsider characters.

In Arderfius' works, the world he represented was grotesque, chaotic, absurd, causing his characters to lunge into existential crisis, and, finding no reason in the world, he looked inward for a reason to exist. His characters, in *Mis mendigos* for

example, are either anonymous, from the lowest classes, or on the fringe of society. The fictional world in which they exist represents the "grotesque tragedy of man, of ex-men and ex-women" (Fuentes 201-2), a fictional world remarkably like that portrayed by Dostoevsky, Andreev and Gorky. Rarely does Arderius give a description of outward appearance, however, fixing attention more on the inner person, and, more significantly, indicating that they are representatives of a social class or group rather than individuals. Additionally, Arderius' early narratives are unmistakably imbued with a dark pessimism akin to that of certain Russian writers. His stories invariably end in hopelessness, with the implication that man cannot continue to exist under these conditions. Arderius' protagonists are almost always idealistic, seeking perfection, but are personally uncommunicative and wretched, and ultimately become entrenched in the bleak reality of human existence. Some of the characters are empty shells, de-humanized, like puppets. "Lacking both the incarnation and the redemption of man, [Arderius'] fictional world is plunged into gloominess and chaos;" it is a world of "sin without redemption, of guilt and remorse – absolute death, apocalyptic annihilation is the only way out" (Fuentes 202).

Like Andreev, Arderius at times hints at optimism, and like Dostoevsky, he believes that it is necessary to attain redemption. There is certainly the desire for a better humanity, but, lacking the foundation of Christian faith which underpins Dostoevsky's writing, Arderius' world-view could not be so confident as to the capacity of human beings to transcend the physical world. In Arderius' writing, hope is by far outweighed by negativity and a nihilist view of the world. In "Los románticos", two of the characters consider that they are "a mountain of human waste", and have aspired, "with the fire from the fermentation of our pain, to be

consumed by nothingness" (175). They commit suicide, a fate which befalls those who fail to attain spiritual renewal in the novels of Dostoevsky.

Paradoxically, perhaps, Arderius suggested in the stories that love should be the ambition of humans and that it would eventually be the solution. In "El Amor", brotherly love is proposed as the sole motivation for a writer (85). Echoes of the philosophy of Dostoevsky are present, also, in the notion that suffering is necessary: "you will suffer eternally. Man's mission is to suffer, just as fire burns. When bonfires freeze, that's when crying will cease" (85). Unlike Dostoevsky, suffering, for Arderius, does not lead to Godly salvation or Christian regeneration, but, rather, to a cosmic harmony and peace.

From the late 1920s Arderius, in his writing, began to connect the degradation of the individual with the degradation of the system in which people lived: his writing took on a socio-political dimension. The misery of the human condition – in contemporary Spain – was still present, but the pessimism and nihilism of earlier works now became supplanted by the hope of a better world to come. Already in *Mis mendigos*, a dichotomy had arisen concerning the vocation of writers and the literary elite of his day in particular. In "Los románticos" Pedro is a poet, with some small success; his girlfriend has left him for another man. During a conversation with a friend he puts up a defence of writing:

Don't profane our art! We work with the most superior material there is – that of thoughts. We, those who write, are the only ones who have such a noble profession. We teach. We castigate social ills with our criticism. We, with our intellect, create flashes of light, some of us to make known beauty, others to disclose the paths that lead to a sublime redemptive world. (180-81)

Arderius seems to suggest that the writing profession is one of the saving graces in an otherwise almost completely thankless and hopeless existence. In "El Amor", however, the voice of an unknown character denounces the intellectual class, "those

who believe and say that the way they keep body and soul together is the most dignified, the most superior, and the most meritorious" by condemning them, the "aristocracy of talent", as the "most repugnant plague the world today suffers", who say they are exposing human injustice but who are only trying to prove what talented writers they are (75-76). Of the change in his own literary style and content, he explained in a Soviet journal:

In my creative work I was a fierce individualist and advocate of Nietzsche. But the Russian Revolution and its accomplishments have changed me from being a pessimist, individualist and adherent of Nietzsche to being a collectivist writer, an enthusiast of life. My love of life has called me to fight with the weapon of Marxism in my hands. What else can be said about the influence the Russian Revolution has had on me and my work? I have been developing in myself a genuine class conscience. Soviet writing seems to me to be the foundation of literature, of real necessity for humankind, and the route to the liberation of the writer. As regards capitalist literature, I will tell you openly that it never influenced me to any degree.²¹

To the Soviets, Arderfús was defining his own metamorphosis as the influence of the Russian Revolution and the espousal of Marxism. This had produced in him class consciousness, and, more significantly from the point of view of his writing, the belief that his art could be used as a weapon in the ideological war.

His outlook seems to have been based, at root, on a genuine concern for the Spanish people, a feature of his writing he shared with Dostoevsky, for example, who not only exposed the dreadful conditions in which people lived in Russia, but who also had immense respect for the peasantry. It is the humanity of Arderfús that is eulogized by Marcelino Domingo in the following article.

During one of my forays into prison in Madrid I was generously compensated for my inconvenience and adversity [...] by close acquaintance and deep friendship

²¹ Joaquín Arderfús. "Iz Nitsshcheantsa ia stal kollektivisitom." ("From Nietzsche to Collectivism.") *Internatsional'naia literatura* 3-4 (1934).

with one person: Joaquín Arderfús. [...] There is a novelist in Joaquín Arderfús. A novelist of the people for the people. The world of purely literary figures, or of human beings absorbed in eroticism, or of individuals without personality, does not attract Arderfús. [...] There is another world on which he wants to base his immortal characters, and he has the ability to do so. This world exists, totally untouched, in Spain. It is the one that [...] belonged to Dostoevsky and Gorky in Russia. The world of the fallen, of those who have been unable to win, of those bowed, conquered by misery, those who, with chilled souls, have felt their wings have been clipped. It is the world of those who have longings they are not able to realize, who want to fight but lack hope of victory [...] of the pariahs, the ex-humans, those from homes dashed on the rocks, whose daughters have to become prostitutes and sons become opportunists. [...] But he is not only a novelist of great potential and aspirations: he is a human being. A man of his people and of his epoch, aware of his civic duty. He is not esconced in his tower with the grotesque expression of palpable intellectual superiority – he is a man gripped by the unrest and problems at street level. He does not belong to the young generation which believes that the avant-garde equates with literary eccentricity, aesthetic perversions, the superiority of form and the feminine, total reticence towards critical and demanding political responsibility. No, Joaquín Arderfús belongs to that other young generation that has gained recognition in Europe and for whom intellectual superiority is substituted by civic activity. A youth which is occupying the principal positions in literature and science, in academe and at the rostrum. [...] Arderfús' greatest love is writing; his most resolute enthusiasm, however, is to be able to convert his pen into a sword. The aspiration he most cherishes as a writer is to give the greatest human importance to his art. [...] Joaquín Arderfús is both a novelist and a human. In him the novelist does not choke the man, neither does the human separate the novelist from his literary creation. Both novelist and man are based on one of the richest and promising contemporary personalities.²²

Domingo is among those who noted a correspondence between Arderfús and the champions of the downtrodden sectors of Russian society – notably, in the critic's view, Dostoevsky and Gorky. This is not an uncommon connection: other writers, including Spaniards, have addressed the same subject matter. Domingo confirms, however, Arderfús' sense of civic responsibility as expressed in the need to incorporate

²² Marcelino Domingo. "Novelista y hombre." ("Novelist and Man.") *La Libertad* (17 July 1929).

political statement into art. More than this, Arderíus was very much aware of the human element in his art.

La espuela (The Spur) (1927) marks the period of transition in Arderíus' writing towards the novels which concentrated on political issues and to the adoption of literary techniques better suited to expressing them. In essence, *La espuela* is a love story, describing all the ebbs and flows of a relationship between a revolutionary poet, Luis, and Amalia. In the novel, Arderíus continued to incorporate both social and nihilistic messages into the plot, and the tendency to pessimism is still present. He was seemingly using the novel as a platform for positing some of his political ideas – on such issues as inequality, poverty, the class struggle, private ownership – but fell short of complete courage of his convictions. The ideological postulating is couched in vague or rather lofty terms, which have the effect of diluting its potentially revolutionary intent. Occasionally, such ambiguity of expression may have been a convenient way of avoiding the censor's disapproval. The novel is set against a revolutionary background. Arderíus seemed to be advocating the superiority of platonic over sexual love, and, ultimately, to be preaching his erstwhile message of the vanity of idealism, be it political, social or personal, which will always lead to disappointment: "The world is a cancer that has led to Nothing... Hate, Injustice and Suffering will hold sway forever" (236).

The love story notwithstanding, social and political comment lies at the root of the novel. The fluctuating relationship of Amalia and Luis becomes, in effect, a metaphor for the social environment and political situation of contemporary Spain. Amalia's situation becomes a symbol for totalitarianism: she has an owner (*propietario*) because in contemporary society, "everyone sells what he has" and women "have no other livelihood than to be the wife of a man; we can't be financially

free and manage without you" (87). Likewise, people of the non-ruling classes are subject to someone else's power. Luis himself longs for freedom, and sees Amalia as a whole human being only when she breaks free of her dependence on her "owner" and establishes her own identity. The situation confronting Amalia / contemporary Spain can only be remedied by a revolution which would work "like hammer blows to sculpt a perfect humanity", bringing the emergence of a new society and of a society of transformed, new persons (236).

The current political situation in Spain – the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera – became the night in this thinly disguised criticism of contemporary Spain:

The night is a corrupt tyrant, full of blemishes, of wine, luxury and crime, in which human dignity has never existed. [...]

The night is a roguish tyrant, in command of an army of lanterns and of a nation of thugs and whores. (86)

The way out of the "night" would be something like the Russian Revolution: "The East! Everything that's ideal!" (35), and "his soul yearned for the dawn that's arrived over in the East and that would bring equality" (100). The country is full of "cowardly politicians, numbed by materialism; mercenary artists; bureaucrats and workers, as long-suffering as mules at the wheel; labourers who rip their claws out in the sludge of this misery and of layabouts who die of hunger and of vile deeds in the corners!" (21). One of the characters declares that "tomorrow this will be Russia!" (91) but Luis can only shrug. Indeed, in the novel, revolution appears to be only a vague possibility, and revolutionary matters are at times pushed aside for more pressing personal matters, and Luis' lofty ideals are not realized.

Luis and Amalia serve as a duality in the novel, in which she is his alter ego – "You're the same as me, Amalia! Because I adore myself, I've come to love you" (210-11). They are as if two opposite magnetic poles, attracted by each others'

differences: "he, gaunt, devious, unbending, dressed in black [...] she, compliant, agile, pulsating with excitement" (59). Amalia is more positive than Luis, and, in a sense, becomes the "new man" that is vital for the guaranteed realization of the new perfect society. In the later work *El comedor de la pensión Venecia* (*The Dining Room of the Venice Hotel*) (1930), it became more clear that the change in human society would have to be a change of nature, not just the institution of a different system, and this would require "new men":

Russia destroys [...] bourgeois morality, its protocol, customs, trends, culture and foolishness – in the turbulent instincts of the 'old man!' [...] The first thing to do is to kill the human soul. The soul doesn't exist – man is only matter, and the friction of its molecules produces electricity – thought. Man is only thought – creative thought with a craving to control. (189-91)

In the case of *La espuela*, however, Amalia is better suited for the role of "new man". She begins life in the novel as a somewhat superficial character, interested only in her appearance. Finally, it is she, rather than Luis, who is regenerated, who can look to her spiritual nature and rise above the mundane. Luis, on the other hand, resembles Turgenev's inept Rudin, or, to some degree, Lermontov's "superfluous" Pechorin: eloquent, idealistic, but essentially impotent, incapable of realizing his dreams – indeed, perhaps deliberately falling short, in a cowardly way, of his lofty aspirations.

At root, the poet had always been a nihilist.

The revolution, like a hammer blow to sculpt a perfect humanity, had been an art he had embraced so that he could drift through life.

But deep inside he was a nihilist: the world is a cancer which has led him to Nothing, and the truth lies in removing it.

Upheavals, social upheavals will come and Hatred, Injustice and Suffering will continue to dominate eternally, although in different manifestations and modes. (236)

Arderius' descriptions of nature and the environments of the characters are finely drawn; the main characters develop, ebb and flow, albeit to extremes, and have

depth. Wildlife is frequently used to symbolize and highlight human characteristics – Amalia wears a fur coat that gives her the appearance of a beast but under which is concealed a turtledove – and inanimate objects are given human characteristics – watches cough, for example.

The nihilism of Arderíus in *La espuela* is, once again, reminiscent of Andreev's inability to see beyond the harsh reality of the present. In Andreev's "Smekh" ("Laughter") and "Original'nyi chelovek" ("An Original Man"), the protagonists live in the vanity of superficial society and hide themselves behind a mask or the persona they have been given by society; in "Gorod" ("The City") the characters never really know each other. The main character of "V podvale" ("In the Basement") knows "rapacious" death waits patiently at his bedside. In "Nabat" ("The Tocsin") a surreal scenario is made more menacing by an eerie sounding of a bell (the tocsin), and the story's prognosis is bleak: the bell is like the cry of a human who has lost all hope. Andreev suggests that the red laugh, in the story of that name, indicates the madness and horror of war and that this bestial side of man is destined to conquer the world.

Arderíus' literary style is characterized by variations in length of sentences and paragraphs, in which paragraphs frequently consist of a single concise sentence.

- And who's Raimundo?

- Well, he's my ... owner.

- Scoundrel!

And he pressed the back of his hand to his mouth.

They remained apart.

He, frowning, examined his fingernails.

Tears streamed down her face, silently.

He stopped the car.

They reluctantly got out.

They went down the tiled staircase staggering like drunks.

They went into the restaurant. (130)

In this moment of tension between the lovers, when the existence of Amalia's dependence on Raimundo is revealed, Arderius resists the temptation to embellish the description. Terse sentences emphasize the high emotion to great effect; the awkwardness between the pair is echoed in the sparse, stilted description. Subsequently, in the restaurant, everything and everyone seems empty, de-humanized – the orchestra is a "cemetery in which the corpses are revived by some miracle of art" and "everything was artificial, everything was unreal: the people, the surroundings, the music, the light, and even hearts" (131). The lovers' environment reflects their unhappiness and the feeling, in Luis at least, that everything is, after all, superficial and futile. Arderius' use of metaphor and of similes combines with an eye for colour and the theatrical, and especially for sarcasm; the pate of one of the actors is "like his political ideology – boundless" so that "beads of sweat made their way, like gelatine turtles, through a waxen desert" (67). The story's ending is trite and disappointing: the lovers' relationship settles down into a predictable happy ending.

The novel holds back on overt political comment, but it is impossible for the reader to overlook the backdrop of social unrest and the desire for a better system. Love must be spiritualized, according to the thesis of the story, and only then can it be effective: similarly, there is the suggestion that personal attachments, which in the novel are perceived as mainly transitory, would ideally have to be subjugated in order to yield fully to total revolutionary commitment and spiritual fulfilment. Luis is not capable of this; once the relationship with Amalia ends, his own reticence to commit his political beliefs to writing begins. It has been said that "in almost all [Arderius' novels prior to 1930] we find the nihilist and anarchist influenced by Nietzsche and

Dostoevsky."²³ We might add to that the favourable comparisons made with Andreev.

In the 1930s Arderius became much more emphatic in his treatment of proletarian issues: "no more petit-bourgeois literature. The revolutionary novel can be none other than proletarian, and it is already the time for writers with a conscience to begin to write in the form and in defence of the proletariat."²⁴ Between 1931 and 1934 three novels and a biography appeared which placed him firmly in the centre of revolutionary writing in Spain. Experimentation with form was abandoned in favour of revolutionary content and function. Above all, Arderius wanted to connect with the people, and towards that end all devices which he would formerly have implemented, but which would alienate readers uneducated in literary techniques, were rejected. Such metaphors, similes and images as remain in his writing are simple and effective, and he retained all those elements of his previous writing which aid in getting through to the people. Characters now, more than ever, represented a class, rather than the individual; their problems were collective, rather than personal. The proletariat now became the protagonist in his writing; their grim lives, their confrontation with other classes, and the need for the destruction of the established order became his major themes. Arderius' characters generally fell into two categories: those who are essentially good and courageous in the face of adverse conditions (rebellious, idealistic, self-sacrificing and adept) and their opposites, possessing all the defects the author identified with their privileged social class.

²³ See J. G. Gorkin's "Los escritores de la España Nueva: antiguos y modernos" ("Writers of New Spain: Old and New") in *Monde* 4, 162 (11 July 1931).

²⁴ "Interviú con Joaquín Arderius." ("Interview with Arderius.") *Nosotros* (1 August 1936). 8.

The projected solution for the political and social ills of contemporary Spain relied on the *fait accompli* of the Revolution in Russia. Indeed, the reality of socialist victory in Russia is understood throughout as the justification for the theorizing. This had already been evident in *La espuela*, for example, in Luis' revolutionary periods, when criticism of the bourgeois system generates a longing for Spain to achieve a society like that in Russia, which in turn means that "the Russian Revolution becomes the focus of attraction for those in Spain who are unhappy with the system" (Santonja 129).

For Arderfús the non-appearance of a true revolution in Spain had a significant bearing on the fabric of political writing. He wrote that "the real social novel has not yet started to be produced in Spain" because "in Spain there has still not been a revolution, either social or political."²⁵ The true social novel, in his opinion, could not be created while revolution is brewing, and, under these circumstances, could only be defiant, rebellious, and, frankly, defeatist. In his view, in the contemporary world, the true revolutionary novel could only be created in Russia.

Arderfús' novels are set in contemporary Spain, in well-defined locations or circumstances; the time and place of the plots are further defined by references to specific details – for example, wages, taxes, and prices. He used much more colloquial language than had been his custom in previous writing, and did not fight shy of inserting swearwords to draw attention to this, all of which had the effect of further aiding in the reader's identification with the characters and scenarios. The biography *Vida de Fermín Galán (The Life of Fermín Galán)* (1931), co-authored with Díaz Fernández, merits comment in that it used a real-life revolutionary hero as

²⁵ See José Montero Alonso's "Survey." *La Libertad* (12 July 1931).

encouragement to join in the struggle. Of interest from an historical point of view, the book also presents a character portrait of great value for that epoch. Díaz Fernández and Arderfús wrote of him, that he was a "product of our time, an exponent of the young revolutionaries who, in a transitional period when one culture is dying and a new social order is dawning, have the desire to act decisively and urgently" (8). For the same reasons that stories based on the real-life exploits of the heroes of the Civil War and Socialist re-construction in early Soviet literature, such as Chapaev, were popular in Soviet Russia and among sympathisers abroad, the example set by Fermín Galán in the Jaca Uprising of December 1930 made him a popular figure in Spain. Galán became a role model and symbol of the hopes of the revolutionary generation. He was a "positive hero": he had excellent presence (softly spoken and smart), was bright and talented, brave, intensely interested in the human beings he was fighting for, capable both in combat and in political debate, and he sacrificed himself for the proletariat. In the work, all fictitious elements were ostensibly removed.

Encouraging a positive outlook for revolutionary activity was also the concern of the three novels of Arderfús in the same period. In *Lumpenproletariado* (*The Lumpenproletariat*)²⁶ (1931), a short novel published in an extreme leftist weekly, the shocking plight of the unemployed of Madrid is portrayed. The characters are all hungry, sick, miserable and hopeless. Margarita, the "other woman" in a love triangle, has given up a wealthy life in order to be Antonio's mistress, but is forced to consider prostitution when she is unable to pay her rent and Antonio refuses to stay with her. The work is sharply critical of all strata of society which will allow human suffering and degradation, and, predictably, the bourgeoisie is the principal recipient of

Arderius' criticism. In the story it is contended, even from the lips of Margarita who has vested interests in her personal predicament, that human passions should be subservient to revolution: commenting on a man made violent by his wife's unfaithfulness, she says "I can't stand it – the coward, the imbecile! What you have to be is a worker rebelling against the exploiters" (381).

Lumpenproletariado is not high literature. Arderius used a directly realistic manner to convey the message of the story. The city, as in his previous writing, is portrayed in a negative light: in this symbol of capitalist evolution, human life cannot thrive. But, even in this potentially fertile literary ground, any temptation to use metaphors or similes is disregarded: the city is now simply, and scathingly, expressed as the place where snobbish gentlemen and scoundrels live, but where the workers die (4).

Campeños (Peasants) (1931) is a novel of improved quality, demonstrating many of the same characteristics as his earlier work. It abounds in social and political criticism, and is therefore considered a prime example of a social novel. Arderius' message is archly critical, however, not only of the authorities, the landowners and the church, who merit, in his estimation, the greatest wrath, but also of the passivity of the peasants, reminiscent of one of the subjects of Gorky's pre-revolutionary work, "Chelkash" ("Chelkash") (1895), in which the eponymous hero, a harbour thief, and his victim, Gavril, represent two faces of the Russian peasantry, the former attempting to become master of the latter. During a tense psychological battle of wills between the two, it becomes clear that Gorky's view of the human condition, and the

²⁶ Especially in Marxist theory, the lumpenproletariat consisted of an underworld of criminals, tramps, etc., who were, nevertheless, underprivileged, victims of oppression.

peasant classes in particular, was, at that time at least, negative and damning (Barratt 79).²⁷

With reference to *Campesinos*, however, Díaz Fernández wrote that for the first time in Spanish literature "a true peasant novel had been attempted, in which the suffering of the Spanish people appears stark and brutal, like a synthesis of the eternal sorrow of the world" and that it undoubtedly had the qualities necessary to head the social novel movement (2). Furthermore, it is one of the more interesting examples of a peasant novel. It received enthusiastic recognition in Russia when it was translated there. In Spain, the fact that it portrayed a situation with which millions of Spaniards could identify – the arduous lives of the Andalusian peasantry at the hands of the landowners – gave it a good reception in certain circles. Criticisms levelled against the work were based, first, on Arderfús' sometimes too obvious bias against the authorities: "the author is more interested in making them seem repulsive to us than in showing what they are like in reality" (Gil Casado 220); secondly, on its dogmatism: Díaz Fernández wrote that Spain was not a proletarian regime, and its writers, therefore, are not in a position to demand that people "fall into line", as is the case in Russia (2).

The novel revolves around an Andalusian peasant community which is struggling with the machinations of two tax collectors who do not hesitate to deprive the people of their possessions, stock and harvest. The community is, in fact, the collective protagonist, but it is in the person of Blas el Pintado, a humble and,

²⁷ Chelkash evidently tries to escape the traditional peasant values held by Gavriila by trying to dominate the latter in any way he can. He taunts Gavriila by telling him he is a narrow-minded peasant with no concept of freedom at all (Gorky. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*. Vol. 2. [Moscow: Nauka, 1969]. 14). Ironically, Chelkash himself is essentially simply a drunken tramp.

predictably, impoverished peasant, his experiences and feelings, that the community is embodied and exemplified. Blas is a simple man who works purely for the upkeep of his family, but he is gradually provoked to rage by the exploitation of the tax collectors. Not only does the community have local problems: they are also disillusioned by the disappointing performance of the Republic, which had promised so much. In the story, circumstances worsen for the peasants and workers: Blas is hauled before the Civil Guard for alleged revolutionary activism and is badly beaten by the vicious Sergeant. Finally, the peasants are driven to revolt. They march on the town, raise the red flag at the town hall and the novel ends with the ominous arrival of more armed forces.

The popular view of contemporary Spain is summed up most succinctly in the words of Blas' wife, Victoria: "Listen! Here in Spain it's not possible to live!" (61). Blas shows the disillusionment of the people in his tirade: "Everyone's to do with the government! The ministers, the deputies, the mayors, these districts of ours, the Civil Guard, the troops, the government employees, the landowners, the tax blokes, down to the police – everyone, Victoria, everyone's to do with the government!" and then adds: "The ones who aren't to do with the government are *us*!" (56). In the them-and-us opposition in the novel, the proletariat are the more honourable: "the most honourable there are on earth" (75).

- You, Blas, you're a good man.

- Yes, I am, but no more so than those of my class, my own people, the men who live from their labour and who are exploited. For the others, the queer bastards, those who live to exploit us, I'm a soldier who never stops fighting them day and night to snatch their power from them. (99)

The people are treated like animals, and half believe they are mere beasts of burden, but Blas believes that humans, who possess talents the animals do not have, deserve better. In this way, *Campesinos* demonstrates its *narodnost'* as well as any proletarian

novel. The language of the narrative, and particularly of the dialogues, support its *narodnost'* – it is the language of the people, not only in that it is comprehensible to relatively uneducated readers, but also in that it uses colloquial speech.

Clichéd and contrived though Arderius' dialogues between activist and peasants may seem, the novel shows the ideological battle being fought among the lower classes. The novel shows the real-life situation of the degraded lives of working men, their gathering rage, which, coupled with the ideological education they have been receiving from activists like the fictional Venancio, would lead them to violent reaction. As emotions build up, some notice that a tempest is brewing born of the fact that "the men are still being exploited and, at the same time, are learning a lot" (154). The unrelieved exploitation coupled with the revolutionary education of the people is a recipe for trouble. Ideology is therefore perceived as being progressive and leading to revolution, which conforms with what the Soviets termed *ideinost'*.²⁸

Moreover, the conversion of the masses is not a foregone conclusion, a fact which gave Arderius the opportunity to put to use dialectic argument. Therefore, for some, Russia is the place where "there are neither rich nor poor but only men who give of themselves and enjoy life"; by contrast, for others, it is a den of bandits (285-86). The channel for educating the peasants in the true way of thinking is in the person of Venancio, an emigrant in France who has returned home for a while but who preaches to them the Marxist message of the hope of a new order that is already established in other countries. For him, the proletariat is the group that has "no other assets to live from than their hands" (76); the bourgeoisie "the masters... those who have everything, those who drink our blood" (89). His protégé is Blas, who

represents the common man. Venancio teaches Blas that although "everything men do, whatever it is, to defend their lives in this villainous society, is justifiable" (75), the main thing is to gain the perfect, united human society "with the least effort possible", and, again, adds that Man should labour with justice, without resorting to animal behaviour (95-97). He asks, "Aren't you a worker on the land, Blas? Well, and so you should have the land that you and your folks cultivate, at the same time getting from the State all the help you need so that the land produces as much as it can produce" (94).

With the help of Venancio's education, Blas is transformed from pessimistic resignation to courageous action for the cause; even his tears, when he is beaten by the Civil Guard, are those of courage. Others gradually emerge, like Blas:

They had the seed of revolution...

But their blindness was great!

They had not one idea.

And they had not even the rudiments of revolutionary procedure! (273)

Their growing rage and frustration are channelled by Venancio. His ultimate proof is the *fait accompli* in Russia: "in other places the poor are already the masters of everything and also of the government" (76); there the workers of the land and in the factories are able to work without employers and he foresees a day when the poor of Spain will be in government (95). Noticeably, persuasion tactics do not rely on political theory which would not be likely to impress workers of the land and factories: the *fait accompli*, therefore, becomes a vital tool in the novel and not mere lip-service to the homeland of the Revolution. Nevertheless, the erstwhile pessimism

²⁸ See Section 1.3, p. 88, of this thesis. In simple terms, *ideinost'* may be defined as ideological maturity.

of Arderfus returns in the suggestion of one of the peasants that, regardless of the Republic, someone will rise up to govern Spain and continue to exploit the poor.

The novel's characters generally are somewhat one-dimensional portraits falling into two groups – one comprises the good, that is to say, the exploited, the other the bad, the exploiters. The author's descriptions of the latter are loaded with bias. He describes the Sergeant responsible for beating Blas as having a round face carrying several kilos of flesh, with a "bushy beard, limp and black, which vibrated like the wings of a raven fighting to keep its carrion", and he has eyes buried in the flesh of his face (193). The Civil Guards are like phantoms of death (191). From a critic's point of view, the polarization of good and bad characters makes the novel less than satisfying, but critical acclaim was probably not Arderfus' intention. Polarization of characters adds to the ease of understanding the novel and readers do not have to make any assessments for themselves since judgments have already been made by the author.

Simple, undemanding images complement the characterization and plot: the moon and stars are negative images, preventing the dawn (the new order); but the sun is in sympathy with the peasants. The colours of the Republican flag are invoked in a scene involving Luisa, a flagrant supporter: "the twilight air, violet, filled the bar. In the hearth burned olive branches and the dying flames were like the wings of yellow birds" (33). Furthermore, the natural environment is often made to coincide with the mood of the people. *Carnaval* arrives, but the peasants are not in the mood for fiestas:

The sun was about to set. Its orb was as if cutting the crest of a mountain. Big black storm clouds approached slowly from the north. [...] A white mountain, barren, barren without a cover, rose from one edge of the riverbed. [...] The sun had now disappeared behind the mountain. It could not have been more silent,

more lonely. Neither a voice, nor a human being, nor an animal. Neither could birds be seen in the sky. It seemed as if all the peasants of the area had fled. (139-40)

The sympathetic sun gradually wanes, symbolic storm clouds gather, and the area is completely silent and desolate. Signs of life have disappeared. It is clear from the simple imagery that there will be trouble.

The novel contains the major ingredients necessary to align it with socialist realism.²⁹ It is interesting to note how the novel was received in Soviet Russia. First, A Pevzner reviewed the novel in a book of 1937:

Arderius (b. 1893) (*sic*) is also among the front line of Spanish revolutionary literati. His bleak book tells the stark truth of the life of peasants in the first years after the overthrow of the monarchy. He wrote his book on the basis of his own experience of the fight, and the documentary character of the work increases its worth. Arderius does not seek to embellish his writing with literary effects. But the characteristic of this simply and artlessly written book is the power of its absolute realism. The author shows how arduous was the existence of the peasants during the Republic, and how even the backward and unrefined peasant Blas el Pintado, under the influence of the agitator Venancio, begins to penetrate the essence of class war. The book ends with the uprising of the peasants, who, together with the workers and unemployed, take on the town hall.³⁰

The book is assessed by Pevzner on the basis of its content. It is praised for its Realist approach – its representation of the harshness of the peasants' existence – and for its support of the class war, the solidarity of the peasants, workers and unemployed, and the heroism the people show. The review notes Arderius' simplicity of style. Similar characteristics were admired in a review by Mikhail Levidov in 1936.

If it happened that the Fascist bands in Spain seized power, if Spain became a satellite of Hitler's Germany, this book by Arderius, a Spanish communist writer, would be one of those burned. It would be one of the first to be thrown on the fire.

²⁹ Please see pages ***** of this thesis for details of the definition of socialist realism.

³⁰ A. Pevzner. "Joaquín Arderius. *Campesinos*." *Ispanskaia literatura. Bibliograficheskii ukazatel'*. Moscow: Nauchno-issledovatel'skii institut, 1937. 64.

This book explains a lot. It is a modest, laconic story, drawn in tones of bleak and pitiless realism, a story of the fate of Spanish peasants in the first years after the overthrow of the Republic. Its author – a writer of mixed background – was a worker: he worked on the land, and he fought for the Republic, he saw for himself what Lerrox and Gil Robles' Republic stood for, joined the Spanish Communist Party and published this book as a testament to the struggle. This is not the first of his literary works: he is an experienced and talented writer. But in *Campesinos* he does not strive for stylistic beauty, complex composition and literary devices. With gloomy tranquility he tells the truth. And the truth is strange.

Arderius tells the story of the life of the peasants around Bruesos. About their suffering. About their sickness. About their ignorance. About the hunger. About the monstrous unbelievable exploitation which is equal only to that of old Tsarist Russia. About their terrible existence and tragic fate. [...] With exceptional power Arderius tells about the peasants' incomprehension [of their life]. [...] He does not concern himself with creating a well-formed literary work with a consistently unfolding theme. His aim is to tell the truth. And he strips the narrative with a fierce stroke. [...] We know how the story continues. We know that in the hunger, torment and blood, a Peoples' Front was created of peasants, workers and intellectuals. We know how heroically it fights now on the approaches to Zaragoza and in the ravines of Guadarrama. We know that they will not succeed in wiping it from the face of the earth. And we know that the Fascists' bonfires will never claim Arderius' book – a testament to the fight.³¹

Both reviewers, noticeably, put an optimistic slant on the novel. Pevzner failed to comment on the ominous arrival of armed troops at the end of the novel; Levidov evades the issue by diverting attention to the real-life scenario in Spain and by drawing links between the heroism of Arderius' peasants and those in the mutinous villages of Spain. Neither of Levidov's prophecies was realized.

A less positive criticism was made of the novel by B. Minlos:

The novel *Campesinos* (published 1931) [...] reveals the leading role of both the town proletariat in the revolutionary movement of the rural peasants, and the influence of the Communist Party, albeit more ambiguous. Further, the novel shows the development of class consciousness not of one individual, [...] but of a

³¹ Mikhail Levidov. "Krest'iane Arderiusa." ("*Campesinos* by Arderius.") *Literaturnoe obozrenie* 16 (1936): 18-19.

whole village, even a whole district. Finally, it portrays tenants [...]. This has special significance: tenancy, frequently in the form of semi-feudal obligations, is exceptionally widespread in Spain and has now become one of the strongest factors in the rural revolutionary movement. Unfortunately, Arderius portrays, not *sередniaks* [peasants of average means], but, on the one hand *kulaks* [well-off peasants] and, on the other, *bedniaks* [poor peasants]. [...]

The conversation between the worker [Venancio] and the peasant [Blas] is the most interesting part of the book. In the novel Blas is politically completely naïve. [...] He does not know how to fight the government; he does not even believe it is possible. [...] The conversation ends with the worker convincing Blas. He becomes a fully conscious revolutionary and begins to mobilize the peasants, preparing them for the fight against the landowners. He unites them, agitates among them and arouses their class consciousness. [...] Arderius, through Blas, brings forth the other peasants; but they are all *bedniaks* – there is not one *sередniak* clearly identifiable.³² Judging by everything, Blas receives no organizational help, even though the workers in the nearby town are communists and there is a local Communist Party. But this organization establishes no links with the village and brings no work to the village. (The worker who persuades Blas comes to the village by chance [...]). Therefore, Blas does not form a definite organization of the peasants, and the communists and workers of the nearby town

³² Minlos' preoccupation with the categories of Soviet peasantry reflects the preoccupation of the Soviet government on that subject in the 1920s and 30s. Of vital importance to the success of the Soviet economy, the policy of "socialism in one country" and, in particular, the principal aim of the government to industrialize Russia, was the adequate production of grain (and other foodstuffs). The productivity of the land workers was, therefore, a major issue. As Minlos points out, there were at least three levels of peasant – poor peasants, middle peasants and the wealthier peasants termed *kulaks* – terms which both then and now have defied exact definition. *Kulaks* were those who were regarded as holding on to capitalist profit-making values and who stubbornly resisted the State's collectivization policy. Those who resisted collectivization were either killed or sent to prison camps (which was effectively a death sentence, as they either perished on what were called the death trains, or perished in the camps). It is not possible to calculate how many millions were thus liquidated. "Dekulakization" had implications for the middle peasants, who were often suspected of wanting to elevate themselves and were then regarded as *podkulachniki* (little *subkulaks*). Nevertheless, the middle peasants were by far the most populous sector of Soviet peasantry (in the mid 1920s, there were between 70 and 80 million middle peasants, compared with 22 million poor peasants and just 5 million *kulaks*) and, given the importance of agriculture, were therefore an important class in Soviet society.

are not primed for the day of St Michael, and the peasants' revolt flares up spontaneously and unprepared. [...] The value of the novel is in its demonstration that the spontaneous revolutionary outburst of the peasantry finds political leadership in the form of the proletariat and the Communist Party, and that the leadership immediately raises the peasant movement to a higher political level than that of the socialists and anarchists. But, contrary to the socialists and anarchists, the leadership of the Communist Party is not solid, organized, prepared. It has an episodic and casual quality. The Communist Party does not go itself to the village to lead the peasant movement, but, rather, waits to see when the peasants come to the town. [The peasant novels examined] clearly show what the socialist and anarchist revolutionary peasant movements, on the one hand, and the Communist Party, on the other, stand for and where they are heading.

In 1935 the Spanish countryside was now different from that of 1931-33. The peasantry has great experience in revolutionary fighting; the illusion of the Republic has basically been lost; the socialists and anarchists have become weaker, although far from fully undermined. The influence of the Communist Party is increasing. But at the same time the organizational influence of the Fascist – Catholic CEDA has grown. The Party's fight for the peasantry indicates not only the fight against the socialist and anarchist leaders, but also against the Church and fascist organizations.

These new developments in the countryside still await their own revolutionary novel, which should reveal and demonstrate that, assisted by lies and deceit, the violence and terrorism of the fascists and the Church will succeed in strengthening temporarily and that the Party will resist them. The central point of the novel should be the decisive figure of the country – the *seredniak*. This is a social necessity for the Spanish Revolution.³³

The review reveals as much about the criteria by which some Soviet critics assessed writing, as it does about Arderius' failure to live up to the standard in certain important respects. The practical value of a novel is very high on the list of criteria: it is clear that Minlos considered that the novel should directly contribute to the real-life struggle by showing its readers how to bring about Revolution and a socialist society. In retrospect, it seems pedantic to quibble about the lack of *seredniak* presence in the

³³ B. Minlos. "Krest'ianskii roman v Ispanii." ("The Peasant Novel in Spain."). *Internatsional'naiia literatura* 10 (1935): 153-182.

novel, but class consciousness (what is termed in socialist realism *klassovost'*) was taken very seriously by Minlos, and the categories of peasants, in his opinion, should be more clearly represented.³⁴ Also missing from the novel is a more active Party presence, and Minlos implies that if the Party had been allowed to prepare for and organize the fictional rebellion, it would have succeeded. The lack of a greater Party presence and a greater awareness of the *seredniak*, in the opinion of the Soviet critic, cause the novel – and the good intentions of Blas and his colleagues – to fall short of the mark.

There does, indeed, arise a question of the representation of the "positive" socialist hero and optimism about the success of the revolution in Arderius' writing. Díaz Fernández did not define the revolution beyond the institution of a Republic and the removal of all the deleterious elements in Spain; Sender was, however, more confident in the execution of revolution through the longings and strivings of the people, than through the organizations themselves, which, composed of humans, were prone to dissension. In Arderius' novels, the heroes mentally, ideologically, know the Marxist truth, but it is largely an intellectual conviction. For Luis, in *La espuela*, revolution is theory, with the suspicion that in practice it would be inept. Amalia approaches the ideal in her capacity to shelve the physical and sexual for a more spiritual goal. In *Campesinos*, Arderius appears to come closer to the ideal in this novel, but, then, ultimately, to fall short. Venancio knows the truth, but it is Blas who acts. However, Blas is destined not to succeed: first, he is physically beaten, and

³⁴ Minlos wrote other articles and books about the situation in Spain, including *Agrarnyi vopros v Ispanii (The Agrarian Question in Spain)* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyi agrarnyi institut, 1934) and *Ispanskaia revoliutsiia (The Spanish Revolution)* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyi agrarnyi institut, 1931) which deals with the events of 1931 and its ramifications on the history and economy of Spain.

finally doom approaches in the form of reinforcements. We might argue that, for Arderfús, the hero of the hour is collective: the Spanish worker and peasant forces, those who courageously endure exploitation and inhuman conditions.

However, we might also argue for a composite "positive" hero. The forces and resources of Venancio and Blas, together, form the ideal – the former whose intellectual conviction is unswerving, the latter whose physical courage in the face of danger is similarly commendable. Significantly, and consistent with Arderfús' views, the peasants whose will to revolt has gradually intensified either lack real opportunities to act, or their opportunities seem destined always to be thwarted. Both Venancio and Blas are representative of their class, and if Venancio's intellectual ideology and Blas' physical courage, born of rage and frustration, were to combine, revolution might be attempted.

Arderfús encounters obvious difficulties in producing a "positive hero." In spite of the optimism misleadingly attached to *Campesinos* by the Soviets, we know that Arderfús also had a problem in representing a rosy future for the Spanish peasantry. The question of a truly social novel was one which preoccupied some at the turn of the 1930s. Between May and July 1931, immediately after the declaration of the Second Republic, José Montero Alonso put to a number of writers the question of the failure of Spain, compared with other countries, to produce a novel which genuinely reflected the rapid changes in Spain and the strong revolutionary currents that abounded there.³⁵ The response of Joaquín Arderfús, on 12 July 1931,³⁶ was interesting:

³⁵ José Montero Alonso. "Survey." *La Libertad* (24 May – 26 July 1931).

³⁶ José Montero Alonso. "Survey." *La Libertad* (12 July 1931).

In effect, I think the real social novel has not yet started to be produced in Spain. But, for me, there is a sound reason for this: that in Spain there has still not been a revolution, either social or political. The true social novel is that which emerges from a revolution, not that which is created while revolution is in its gestation period. Novels written in a country in periods leading up to revolution are rebellious, defeatist, created in the atmosphere of an oppressive regime. Novels of social disquiet. These are the novels that the great Russian masters, from Dostoevsky to Gorky, wrote. [...]

Of this kind of novel, with the differences in sensibility and intellectual hierarchy which separate artists, in Spain, a few are written, but very few. With the fingers of one hand I can count the writers who do. I think that this is the most that a man in Spain can do today if he feels the social unrest that envelops us, if his trade is writing. But, the other, the true social novel, in my estimation, is impossible to produce here yet. I don't think it is possible in today's world anywhere but in Russia and, to a certain extent, in Germany.

When the Revolution is a reality in Spain, the novelists of social unease, from the twilight of the bourgeois regime, will have accomplished their mission – as it has been accomplished in Russia – and, suffused with bountiful optimism and productive energy, will emit creative flares like the sun. That will be the true social novel.

Let's see when we will be able to do this!

The text is an important one. It explains Arderfius' fundamental problem with producing a fully confident revolutionary novel. In fact, his theory explains the basic problem of some writers who had become both politically committed and Marxist: to be absolutely realistic, it was impossible to represent the revolution as a certainty in a Spanish setting. Those who did were not representing the truth of the situation, but, rather, a projection of how they, as Marxists, envisaged the outcome. In the Soviet Union, in the 1930s in particular, optimism became a facet of socialist realism, to the extent that it was obligatory to depict what will be as already occurring.³⁷ As it turned out, Arderfius' view of revolution and of Spain's chances of seeing it were more

³⁷ This led eventually to the falsification which characterizes socialist realist writing at the end of the 1930s and beyond (outside the time limits of this thesis).

realistic, and even prophetic. The armed forces continued to intervene and inhibit uprisings, as they do in *Campesinos* – famously in the Asturian Uprising, and, ultimately, when the military took the initiative, in the coup of July 1936, as a reaction to the relentless efforts of the revolutionary factions, especially when from the midst of these the Popular Front was formed.

The ending of *Campesinos* is not optimistic: the arrival of fresh troops indicates that either the peasants will capitulate or that there will be a bloodbath. Worse, the bearer of the red flag, significantly, stands paralysed. Emigration – to seek work elsewhere and to be educated in revolutionary ways – is presented as a not dishonourable alternative for the workers. In all other respects, the situation seems to be gloomy, and, as events turned out in the mid-1930s, the Republic did indeed fail the people who needed it and government again fell into the wrong hands. The last of his novels of the 1930s, *Crimen* (1934) is based on that very failure of the Republic, the gloomy atmosphere of the "*bienio negro*" ("black biennium") (1933-35), and particularly the effects of this on the people. It exposes the corruption and injustice of a capitalist society by means of the greed, avarice and lust of the priest and of Alí, who are bound by a love of money. Madrid is perceived as the place where the workers starve and the masters thrive. The villains are the rich, the powerful and the clergy. In the novel, Arderíus is seen to return to his previous inclination towards humans alienated by means of their circumstances. Arturo appears to be the personification of the author. He is a disillusioned revolutionary writer, who is frustrated by the environment in which he lives and works. Once again, as in *Mis mendigos* and *La espuela*, and reminiscent of the work of both Díaz Fernández and Sender, the problems besetting writers inclined to revolution are addressed. In Arderíus' case, life came to mimic art: he wrote no more revolutionary fiction after

Crimen, which, for the world of literature meant the loss of "one of the most original figures that had appeared in the period between the wars" (Fuentes 215).

Looking at Arderfius' output as a whole, we find that it was not that ideology became more prominent in the later novels, but, rather, that it became the solid foundation on which the novels were constructed. His world-view shaped the characterization and plot of the novels. His increasing reliance on dialogue provided Arderfius with a platform for the exposition of his new ideology; in *Campesinos*, especially, the evolution of the peasantry from resignation to action is as a result of the verbal persuasion of Venancio and his protégés. To channel the maximum attention to what is being taught in the novel, the text is stripped of all unnecessary or distracting technical device.

From an aesthetic point of view, the standard of writing declines with the espousing of political consciousness. In response to this allegation, it is only fair to point out that the intention and motivation of the author changed radically in the light of ideological concerns. Arderfius, once convinced of the need both to represent and to address the people, found it necessary to modify his literary style. From about 1930, therefore, he began to write according to a new set of criteria. It was no longer enough simply to express disgust at the social and political environment in which he lived: such is the substance of many works of literature, in many historical periods and cultures. Arderfius' political commitment was channelled into Marxism.

Would his literary output have developed the way it did without the Russians? That is to say, would he have developed his literary styles in the way he did if it had not been for the Russian Revolution, or for Russian literature? It stretches the imagination somewhat to believe that Arderfius somehow escaped reading some of the works of Andreev and Dostoevsky. Even if proof were to be found, as it will be

found with reference to other Spanish authors, it would not be proof of the work of the Russians having been assimilated into Arderius' own writing. Nevertheless, those who have suggested parallels with Dostoevsky have grounds for doing so, and there is a distinct kinship with Andreev which has not been acknowledged before. The correspondence speaks for the "shock of recognition" between Arderius and the Russians: the deriving of incentive and the sense of affinity.

With regard to Arderius' openly political writing, in patent support of Marxism and relying on the example of the Soviet Union as proof of the ideology, it is possible to draw a clear line of connection between the Russian Revolution and the motivation and subject matter of his committed writing. This was seen clearly from the biographical information presented in this study. That material also shows, however, that he found himself unable to meet all the requirements of staunchly revolutionary writing as it came to be understood in the Soviet Union. This is shown in his own remarks and also in the implication that he was unable to keep writing when his inner conviction, rightly or wrongly, had lost its ardour.

We have seen that, while at the height of his career, Arderius stripped his writing of all distracting devices, and relied on unchallenging imagery and unsophisticated language to convey his message. This characteristic will be seen in all the revolutionary writers, Spanish and Russian, chosen for the purposes of this thesis, showing the importance they put on clarity of message to the people (as opposed to the literary world) and a more appropriate representation of the society and events they were depicting. In terms of socialist realism, Arderius shows *ideinost'*, *narodnost'* and *klassovost'*, and seems to have no problem in doing so. These were shown most clearly in Venancio's Marxist rhetoric; in the environments he chose for his plots – the problems of the lower classes, both rural and urban; and in his

awareness of the class divide. On the other hand, he does not have a strong Party presence in his writing. Indeed, he only implies party connections, and these remain on the periphery of the plot. Whatever convictions the author himself possessed, they were not of such importance to him that he was able to introduce adherence to the Party, or any other faction, into his writing. This omission was noted by his Soviet readers. It appears to indicate that Arderius felt unequal to the challenge of representing in his writing those subjects of which he himself remained unconvinced. He would not have been able to falsify events and characters, as more optimistic and committed Party members did, by presenting as a foregone conclusion a vision of the future which remained doubtful to him.

This is shown most clearly in Arderius' inability to produce a positive hero in his writing. We find no evidence of Ostrovskii's Korchagin – arguably the epitome of the Soviet selfless hero – and the basis for this shortfall is the lack of optimism. While Arderius' heroes do not want for courage and for conviction that their fight is needed, they seem to be incapable of bringing about victory.

Bridging the gap between poetry and novel in Spanish writing of the 1920s and 30s was César M. Arconada (1898-1964), whose work has received more attention than most of the novelists of those years.³⁸ Once he had committed himself to the Communist Party, he took it seriously, and after the Civil War he settled in Moscow, where he directed the Spanish edition of *Internatsional'naiia literatura*, and

³⁸ Arconada is mentioned briefly in the preceding chapter with reference to his poetry.

wrote some fictional works.³⁹ He was a poet, novelist and journalist of some standing. He summed up his life history for a Soviet journal in 1933:

I am a native of Castille. All my genealogy would fit onto a postage stamp. [...] My ancestors were neither conquistadors in America, captains in Flanders, nobility in the times of the Moors, nor even dried-up, sinewy *hidalgos*, lovers of hunting and books. They were more than likely simple and unrefined people, plebeians, from the anonymous masses. [...] I do know, for example, that one of my forefathers was a worker, another was a *bedniak* [very poor peasant] who had the ability to break free and become a clerk. [...] My father went one stage further because of his elegant handwriting: he became a procurator and signed petitions and employment papers, compiled registers, and so forth. And in me the evolution of our family reached its conclusion – I became a writer [...] and I have retained a love of elegant script. [...]

My father played an active part in local politics. My childhood passed with the cries of litigious debates in my ears, amidst the quaint hustle and bustle of politics. And in this atmosphere, for reasons I cannot explain, the desire to write grew in me. My desire to write was probably like the shepherds wished to play the pipes – out of loneliness, out of longing, which broad expanses of fields blow on the wind. [...] I remember that I was seventeen when my play *The Tragedy of Poverty* was performed by a group of travelling actors. [...] [When] I was twenty, I was attracted to the [Futurist movement]. Sincere young people are always attracted to what breaks with the past and seeks renewal. [...] The literary horizon in those years – I'm thinking about the period between 1922 and 1925 – was shrouded in mist, and I began to seek my escape in music, which was, in my opinion, conducive to passionate contemplation. To that period belong my book about Debussy and a series of critical articles, but [...] I always had the strong urge for creative writing. [...]

The years passed, and with them our outlooks change; [...] in the mind of the writer arose the age-old question, which had become relevant in the contemporary world, of "art-for-art's-sake." The world was in crisis. The situation was serious. Ultimately, it was necessary to make a decision, to choose between heaven and earth, and, once you had chosen the earth, to decide on which side you stand. I am speaking of it here in only the most generalized terms. [...] Only

³⁹ Later, Kel'in commented that the Soviet Union had become a "second home" for "a whole group of great Spanish artists and writers", including the novelist Acevedo, the sculptor Alberto Sánchez and Arconada (*Internatsional'naia literatura* 11 [1942]: 129).

rarely in my life have I divorced myself from politics. As a youth, I was a Socialist sympathizer; later, I was convinced that the Democracy and Liberal system would survive the crisis. Now I am a Communist. It was the most natural conclusion. Leaving aside the beliefs of many writers in pure art-for-art's-sake, it is impossible to conclude other than that [...] there are only two kinds of writer in Spain today. First, the cultists who live in the past and consider themselves the guardians of human wisdom. [...] In all countries at the present time they are almost always Fascists. They hate us – writers of the second kind – and call us barbarians. [...] At this time, I can be no other than a man in the street. I am always ready to embrace my comrade workers, experience their feelings and their struggle for the common cause.⁴⁰

In the 1920s he had been deeply entrenched in the literary world. In 1928, when some writers were already expressing their political beliefs in fiction, he was still saying "No, No; absolutely not" in answer to the question, "Should politics intervene in literature?"⁴¹ In 1930, however, in answer to the question "What is the avant-garde?" he answered "With each day I have less interest in aestheticism", which he considered bourgeois.⁴² The content of his writing changed to the extent that it has been considered to be so devoid of aesthetic elements that it was a kind of "political poster work" (Varela 465). Arconada is highly quotable on the subject of political commitment and Marxist content in literature: as a journalist, he had numerous occasions on which to explain the phenomenon. In *Commune*, in April 1936, he wrote:

Then the time arrived in our country when the revolutionary process ruptured the poets' idyll of empty gestures. I was one of the first to feel the anxiety of the

⁴⁰ César M. Arconada. "Avtobiografía" ("Autobiography"). *Internatsional'naia literatura* 4 (1933): 174. This text was also published in *Commune* in April 1936 and, at the same time, in *Nueva Cultura*.

⁴¹ See "¿Debe intervenir la política en la literatura?" ("Should Politics Intervene in Literature?") in *La Gaceta Literaria* 25 (1 January 1928): 2.

⁴² See "¿Qué es la vanguardia?" ("What is the Avant-garde?") in *La Gaceta Literaria* 84 (15 June 1930): 3.

dilemma, our own fate and that of our epoch. Today [...] I understand that it has not been easy to descend from the Paradise of empty gestures to the living and real world of the peasantry. [...] We [young writers] had to set the march in motion, risking unpopularity and the loss of bourgeois advantages. [...] I understood, now that I was being guided by Marxism, what Spain was: backward and feudal, and so I began fighting against this feudalism in the countryside.

There are three novels by Arconada of interest to us: *La turbina* (*The Turbine*) (1930), *Los pobres contra los ricos* (*The Poor versus the Rich*) (1933), and *Reparto de tierras* (*Distribution of Land*) (1934). They are all classed as *novelas sociales*, although the third has been criticised for its "unfortunate leaning to didacticism."⁴³ They are archly critical of contemporary Spain, but focus on the set of problems which beset the peasantry. *La turbina* reveals the difficulties of bringing rural Spain into the twentieth century, and, while it shows the inevitability of progress, in the form of electric light, into the backward lives of the peasants, it shows a sympathy with the values by which the peasantry lived prior to the interference of technology. The author remains as neutral as possible in the dilemma. Cachán, representing the traditional peasantry, loathes the intrusion of progress. The proof of this, for him, lies in the introduction of electric light. Electricity has been instrumental in the closure of the mill which has provided local families with work, and, therefore, subsistence. Progress is perceived as the work of the Devil and his accomplices who scheme in the cities. In the lyrical descriptions of nature, Arconada complements his portrayal of the unbesmirched beauty of the countryside. But the river, symbolic of the inevitability of progress, "passes by with indifference, disdain, with no other aim than to continue moving onwards. [...] It does not see, it does not hear, it carries on regardless of beautiful girls, it is hostile, unsociable, with no other end than to continue moving

⁴³ Gonzálo Santonja. Prólogo. *La turbina*. By Arconada. Madrid: Turner, 1975. 12.

onwards" (77). *La turbina* sets the example for Arconada's style in later novels, with its lyricism and sensitivity towards the people of rural Spain, and, perhaps more than those later novels, contains examples of Arconada's use of poetic imagery and metaphor which are relics of his former style of writing.

Characters follow a similar pattern to those of Arderius', in that there is no middle ground between the oppressed and the oppressors. In *Los pobres contra los ricos*, Juan Ramos, representing the authorities, is characterized by his disgusting eating habits and he speaks of the revolutionaries as "Jew-boy Republican bastards" (13). Don Sebastián represents the privileged classes. He holds soirees for his friends – "the poor work while the rich enjoy themselves" (16), and he considers those who go to political rallies as thieves, relying on "Moscow gold". Don Sebastián prefers art to politics. Another character, Don Nazario, is rich, respectable and fat. He sees the suffering of the poor, but his solution is to petition the saints: the poor suffer because they are sinners – "the poor have nothing and the rich have everything. Well, the rich give to the poor – exactly – what they need! The world is perfect! Praise the Lord!" (27-28). Fidel, the civil guard, and his wife are leeches; Amancia has a torrid affair with Juan Ramos, in which their activities are described in bestial language by the author. On the other hand, there is Ayuca, a poor old peasant, who staunchly, loyally and naïvely supports the Republican government, in spite of its failings, and who dies as a result of a beating. His sons plan revenge, in the spirit of the times in which the Socialists are having to regroup and the Communists are becoming more militant.

Los pobres contra los ricos and *Reparto de tierras* are novels based on the dilemma of the Spanish countryside in those years: the landowners versus the dispossessed and starving peasants. The peasants' solution is the institution of a community which allows the land controlled by the masters (but which, paradoxically,

remains uncultivated) to provide their work and subsistence; the solution of the authorities is to send in the Civil Guard. The manifestations of control by the authorities are brutal and unbending. In *Los pobres*, Arconada portrays the horrific scene of a *guardia* murdering an old Republican peasant. It ends with the defeat of the peasants, but its final message is optimistic:

The night had fallen. Everything had been buried in the unfathomable darkness of its abysses. [...] The poor had been completely lost. [...]

But... [...] nights pass. [...] Be glad! The present pain and bitterness of these defeats digs an immense black ditch in which, one day, this rotten civilization of the rich is going to fall, like a pit of corpses. The nighttime will pass. And one day, above the victorious heads of the poor, there will dawn the new, triumphant and bright light of justice. It will come. Be glad, comrades! (285-86)

It is clear that the real solution projected by the author lies in the formation of a government of workers and peasants. Like Arderius' novels, *Los pobres* is bitterly critical of the Republican government which is shown, not only as repressive and exploiting, but as vindictive and cruel. Arconada writes from a communist perspective. His more firmly ideological crusade in *Reparto de tierras* was born of a strong Marxist conviction: in the novel, his aesthetic and political ideology has come of age. His Marxist conviction was endorsed by the accomplishments of the Soviet Union. In an article for the Soviets in 1934, however, entitled "Idei sotsializma okryliaiut nas" ("The Inspiration of Socialist Concepts on Us"),⁴⁴ he wrote:

Needless to say, the existence in this world of the Soviet Union, where socialism has been victorious, has had, and always will have great significance for me. But I cannot say that it was crucial. Even without visual proof of the fact that communism is possible, I would have remained, as I am now – a communist. To demand proof means you do not really believe.

For Arconada, therefore, Bolshevik victory was not the basis of his faith, but, rather, the demonstration that his convictions had foundation. Furthermore, in the same

article, he admitted to no special reliance on Soviet literature, since it was so poorly known in Spain, except in inferior translation.⁴⁵

We are so poorly acquainted with Soviet literature, and what makes it worse is that it is in a most haphazard way, depending on the biased and utilitarian criteria of our publishers. I think that Soviet literature is what it should be: part of a whole, part of a great complex of psychological, moral and material problems which all relate to the construction of socialism. [...] I personally believe that in the field of the novel you [Soviets] have produced writing as great in expression and perfect in composition as those of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy in their time. [...] In our discussions, we say that in Russia they probably accomplish the great work [of using Marxist methods], but that we know very little of it.

Nevertheless, his scant knowledge of Soviet literature, poor translations notwithstanding, did not deter him. In *Mundo obrero*, in May 1936, he reviewed Sholokhov's *Podniataia tselina* (*Virgin Soil Upturned*). By this time, Arconada could speak knowledgeably about Sholokhov and Gladkov, Pil'niak and Ehrenburg, Babel' and Shaginian. He sees in *Podniataia tselina* a novel "for Spain", a "magnificent lesson about agrarian collectivisation that many people should learn" and, therefore, "rather more than just great literature".⁴⁶

For Arconada, Marxist reality revolved around the Spanish situation, in which agrarian problems were a major aspect. In the novels, he is concerned with the role of the intellectual in the fight. In *Reperto de tierras*, the intellectual is a doctor, Pedro Alfar. The advantages enjoyed by the rich are contrasted sharply and obviously with

⁴⁴ *Internatsional'naia literatura* 3-4 (1934).

⁴⁵ Translation into Spanish of Soviet works was perceived as a problem for Soviet critics. In 1938, Kel'in looked back on the dissemination of Soviet literature in Spain in the 1920s, considering it hampered by the absence of sympathetic translators (he said that the émigrés were largely Whites, rather than Reds). Poor translations made reading difficult for intellectuals, let alone relatively uneducated, proletarian readers, whose interest in all Soviet writing was "obvious". See his article "Oktiabr' v ispanskoi literature" ("October in Spanish Literature") in *Novyi mir* 12 (1938): 218-37.

⁴⁶ See his review in *Mundo obrero* (19 June 1936).

the disadvantaged existence of the poor; in contrast with the rich, the illnesses suffered by the poor are social, the sickness associated with poverty. Alfar takes on the peasants' cause, not as a "professional activist, under the orders of a party", but as a "mission of justice, as an act of spontaneous rebellion" (79). Arconada demonstrates the relationship between the committed intellectuals and the uneducated people, in which the intellectual acquires a strongly revolutionary urge and becomes a useful factor in the peasants' fight. Alfar's revolutionary inclination is that of a thinker, intellectually sympathetic to the peasants' cause, but lacking any active involvement or determination. His subsequent change to physical, rather than cerebral, involvement is crucial to the organization of the insurgent peasants. He is the means of synthesizing the peasants' strivings with the objectives of the Communist Party. When he leaves the village, a young communist arrives to continue the mobilization of the peasants to revolution. Arconada's vision of the future — if the peasants' needs are to be fulfilled — is the total revolution of Spanish society.

The development of the social novel in the hands of the Marxist writers presents an interesting scenario. In Arconada's novels, reference to the Russian Revolution is minimal, although, in a sense, its success underpins the whole of his argument. It is interesting to note that Arconada does not use the Bolshevik Revolution as the mainstay of the ideological argument, as Arderfus does, neither is the new Spain which would result from the Revolution to become an extension of the Soviet Union, as Alberti was wont to propose. As Arconada himself said, the Russian Revolution, and the Soviet manifestation of Marxism, were fundamental in the sense that they were persuasive evidence of the truthfulness of his staunch conviction; these factors were not, however, the basis on which his beliefs were founded, without which his faith would crumble. For him, Marxism had a very Spanish manifestation. His

novels are set in rural Spain and, from his fictional introduction of intellectuals into their communities, it is clear that he saw the role of himself and his colleagues from the intellectual and literary community as guiding and educating the Spanish masses in the right ideological direction, fighting for their own liberty rather than on behalf of the Soviets.

The issue of the intellectual wishing to become integrated with workers' factions was one of the concerns of Manuel Domínguez Benavides (1895-1947), in his novel entitled *Un hombre de treinta años (A Man of Thirty)* (1933). Benavides, if not officially a member of the Communist Party until later in life, was affiliated with far-left factions throughout the pre-Civil War period, and became a favourite subject of Soviet articles about Marxist literature in Spain, as we will see.

"Who is Benavides?" asked a Soviet critic in 1936.⁴⁷ It is a question some Spaniards would ask, in spite of his contribution to the Spanish novel and to journalism in the 1930s.⁴⁸ Interestingly, it is possible to glean more information about this Spanish writer from Soviet journals than from Spanish sources. Regarding basic biographical details, he was born in Pontevedra, Galicia, to the family of a country doctor. His family expected him to become a lawyer, but it was not his wish. As a compromise, he went to university and qualified as a teacher, after which he moved to Madrid and lived a bohemian life, though not without cerebral occupations in the form of literary debates. During those years he and his wife lived in dire poverty. He was

⁴⁷ See A. Chakovskii's "Literatura revoliutsionnoi Ispanii" ("The Literature of Revolutionary Spain") in *Kniga i proletarskaia revoliutsiia* 12 (1936): 46-55. 51. The details of his life provided in this section are taken chiefly from Chakovskii's article and articles written by Benavides himself for the Soviet press.

dissatisfied with life and apparently attempted suicide.⁴⁹ His first novel, *Lamentación* (*Lamentation*), in 1922, however, brought him a measure of fame and recognition, and he followed it up with further novels.

On his return to Madrid, he became the editor of *El Liberal*, as well as contributing to other journals, and also wrote some works for theatre. He began to study Marxism and joined the Socialist Party. He spent a month in prison following the October 1934 uprising in Asturias which he described in some detail.⁵⁰ Escaping execution, he went into exile, first, in Paris where he determined to write the truth about the uprising. The result of this was the book *La revolución fue así* (*The Revolution was Like This*), a documentary-style work. When the Civil War broke out, he was working in Madrid on the journal *Estampa* and wrote reports to the Soviet Union about the progress of affairs in Spain. During the Civil War, he was a captain of the Republican fleet and wrote narrative reports about aspects of the war. After the Civil War, Benavides went into exile in Mexico where he published more novels and died in 1947.⁵¹

From 1930, his writing became politically orientated. "I have renounced all my former works", he told Margarita Nelken.⁵² He considered them to be "malicious, unashamedly locked within the confines of the world of the petty man living for his

⁴⁸ He also wrote a play called *El protagonista de la virtud* (*The Protagonist of Virtue*).

⁴⁹ Interestingly, in a manner very similar to that of the Russian writer Leonid Andreev, who, in real life, as a boy, lay on railway lines, as if tempting fate. Gorky claimed it was a common youthful prank. In literature, the adolescent Kolia in Dostoevsky's *Brat'ia Karamazovy*, committed the same act. Benavides was saved by a railway strike – the train never came.

⁵⁰ See Benavides' "Moi tvorchskii put'" ("My Creative Route") in *Internatsional'naia literatura* 12 [1935]: 136-37. 137).

⁵¹ The novels were *Los nuevos profetas* (1942) and *La escuadra la mandan los cabos* (1944).

personal pride".⁵³ In the 1920s his novels had revealed his preoccupation with sex, albeit not in a gratuitous fashion, but, rather, exploring its relationship to man's psyche. He sought an outlet in his writing, and it was only when he began to address the social and political issues of contemporary Spain that he really felt he was achieving something of value. Kel'in wrote about Benavides' works in retrospect:

Benavides' glowing talent, his wonderful grasp of Spain's political life and his extensive education have given him the opportunity to do something useful and necessary: to tear the mask from the face of Spanish reactionaries, plutocracy and the church; to show its treacherous role in Spain's recent history, and to represent it in his writing with terrifying candour. And Benavides has done this with great courage and ability.⁵⁴

Published in 1934, his novel *El último pirata del Mediterráneo* (*The Last Pirate of the Mediterranean*), written in a documentary style, was the thinly-disguised story of the real-life well-known Majorcan businessman, Juan March, who is represented in the fictional work as treacherous and amoral. It was highly acclaimed in Soviet Russia. It is important to point out that the endorsement of Soviet Russia was welcomed by Benavides and, having made some effort to make the historical context and characters comprehensible to Soviet readers, he wrote:

Comrade Soviet reader! The material presented in this book may not be easy for you to take in. To you, belonging to the new world, having contemplated with eyes wide open the magnificent future of old Russia, where you have achieved a victorious result, for which we are now fighting amidst streams of the outpoured blood of the workers of Spain – to you, I repeat, the existence of a Republic, the fate of which is governed by a bundle of rogues, must seem inconceivable.

⁵² See Margarita Nelken's Foreword in the Russian version of *El último pirata...* (*Poslednii pirat Sredizemnogo moria*. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1936. 3-11).

⁵³ See Benavides' "Moi tvorcheskii put'" in *Internatsional'naia literature* 12 (1935): 136-37. 137.

⁵⁴ See F. Kel'in's "Manuel' D. Benavides i ego kniga 'Prestuplenie Evropy'." ("Benavides and His Book *The Crime of Europe*") in *Literaturnyi Donbass* 2 (1939): 104-106. 105.

But imagine, comrade Soviet reader, a country with 20 million inhabitants. The majority of them are starving, illiterate and provide raw recruits.⁵⁵

Benavides further wrote that he anticipated and valued feedback from Soviet critics, and that although the Russian language was foreign to him, he was proud when he deciphered the title of his work and his own name published in Russian.⁵⁶

The success of *El último pirata*, both at home and in Soviet Russia, notwithstanding, *Un hombre de treinta años* is considered to be the best of his novels of the 1930s. The author himself described it as a "novelistic chronicle of the first two years of the Spanish [Second] Republic", in which he attempted to "dispel the doubts of people of my generation who had heard something of the Russian Revolution, still remembered the imperialist war and who had seen the rise of fascism in Italy".⁵⁷ It is the story of the intellectual protagonist trying to find his niche in revolutionary circles, almost certainly based on the life of Benavides himself. Ramón Arias, a journalist, begins as an observer of revolutionary action, with a messianic view of the Revolution in Spain: he asks himself "could Spain be the place destined to show the world the way to salvation?" (14). He becomes increasingly discontent with his life at home: his wife does not have proletarian sympathies (she calls the workers "rogues"), and his circumstances are privileged compared with the people with whom he is attempting to identify (for example, they can afford a maid). He leaves home for some days to observe revolutionary groups, leaving behind the words "And you, poet, what stops

⁵⁵ "K sovetskomy chitateliu" ("To the Soviet Reader") in *Internatsional'naia literatura* 5 (1935): 120-21. This introduction by the author himself preceded one of several excerpts of the book published in Russia. In it, he also explained the main characters and the historical context of the story.

⁵⁶ See *Internatsional'naia literatura* 9 (1935): 156.

⁵⁷ See Benavides' "Moi tvorcheskii put'" p. 137.

you abandoning your seclusion? This is the time to express the hopes and desires of the people!" (57).

Involvement in revolutionary activity, however, creates an impasse for Arias. Amidst revolutionaries, his appearance is a stumbling block: he looks like an *ateneísta inquieta* (an habitu  of the Ateneo with a social conscience) and even a policeman to them. Conversely, at home, his wife is both alarmed and disgusted by his action, and his father-in-law considers his betrayal of what is conventional, his involvement with syndicalists and revolutionaries, as demonstration of his being an enemy of the state, worse than being a Bolshevik (66). Arias himself now feels displaced in both camps. Disparaged by his conventional family, he finds that being perceived as an intellectual is no advantage among the workers.

He breaks with anarchosyndicalism because of its apolitical stance and its penchant for violence, and looks into Marxism. Finally, it is a group of Socialist Youth which gives him the motivation and facility to express his revolutionary tendency: they "shared generously with him what he had been lacking – confidence in his own power, the ability to have the courage of his convictions and not doubt, and the capacity to truly sense the future" (223).

In a scene appropriate to this study, Arias witnesses a young socialist, the student Emilio, wanting to burn a copy of Dostoevsky's *Prestuplenie i nakazanie* (*Crime and Punishment*). The young student wants to break with the past, meaning writers like Tolstoy and Andreev. Arias suggests that they all be burned except Dostoevsky. The old literature – especially the pre-revolutionary Russian literature – contaminates, according to the new avowal of the young Socialists. The old must be burned, but, when writers find themselves part of the new society, their work must be for the proletariat. One boy burns his hands trying to save the book *Sashka Zhegulev*.

Arias consoles him: "Poor Sasha loved fire. Leave him, leave him burning in the fire that he loved so much. He was an anarchist" (230-31). Along with the Russian works, onto the fire are thrown Spanish books: "what have they done for today's Spain?" (230). With each Spanish author's work about to be burned, there is a discussion of its value. In a moment of irony, the early works of Benavides, the author himself, are consigned to the fire. The chapter ends with the words: "That is how Arias was initiated into Marxism" (238).

In the closing stages of the book, Arias reviews exactly what it means to be a socialist, and measures himself against the criteria. He has an intellectual's approach by immersing himself in books, pamphlets and prose about socialism. Benavides ends the novel with the introduction of history into his fiction, including words of Largo Caballero to the Socialist Youth, and, by means of this juxtaposition of fact and fiction, draws the reader back from the artificial and contrived into the real world and the real matter of becoming politically committed.

In the opinion of Soviet criticism, the novel marked the beginning of Benavides' commitment to writing politically responsible literature. The novel signals his "parting with the past which no longer has a right to the future": it is the description of all the "fluctuation and advancement characteristic of the modern generation".⁵⁸ As we have already discovered, Benavides welcomed the recognition of the Soviet critics. His affinity with the Soviet Union was profound in those years. He won the admiration of Kell'in. In *Literaturnyi kritik*, Kell'in wrote about his first meeting with Benavides at the Second International Congress of Writers at Barcelona:

⁵⁸ A. Chakovskii. "Literatura revoliutsionnoi Ispanii." *Kniga i proletarskaia revoliutsiia* 12 (1936): 46-55. 51.

From among the tables in the restaurant, where Rafael Alberti and María Terésa León were sitting, a short, thin, dark-haired man with intelligent and lively eyes got up and came towards me.⁵⁹

Their acquaintance, of necessity, took the form of letters. In some of these letters to Kel'in, in 1935, Benavides wrote:

Your Russia is our Russia. Russia belongs to us all. It is the only country to which we can look. Her example has served to encourage the brave Asturians, the heroic miners. [...] The more I think about Spain, with what admiration and envy I look to you: I recently read a report about your last congress and the speeches of your commissars. What a brilliant address Molotov gave! But you should never forget that the whole capitalist world is against you. [...] We are all convinced of this, all those of us who follow your example.

I am passionately fond of Russia and am desperate to visit you.⁶⁰

Indeed, in the same article, Kel'in reports that, in the interests of research, Benavides had wanted to spend some time on a collective farm in the Caucasus. He had wanted to show in his writing the contrast between the happy peasants of Soviet Russia and the less fortunate plight of those in Spain. He was unable to carry out the plan.

Further showing the high regard in which Benavides was held by his Soviet readers, Kel'in wrote that he considered the Spaniard

belongs, along with Sender, Arconada and more recently Bergamín, to the company of leading writers of Spanish revolutionary literature. He occupies in it a wholly unshakable and respected position as they have struggled for some years against Spain's and even the world's reactionary forces. [...] His has been the journey of both a writer and a citizen, a journey that has brought him to the forefront of the writers of his heroic country.⁶¹

The work of Benavides is an appropriate place to end an investigation of the Russian and Soviet impact on the social novel in pre-Civil War Spain. *Un hombre* is a revealing portrait of the ideological journey intellectuals in that period had to

⁵⁹ See Kel'in's "Pisateli narodnoi Ispanii" in *Literaturnyi kritik* 3 (1938): 168-82. 168-69.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

negotiate. In the examples we have examined, the solution usually lies in communism. If Arderius lacked the necessary optimism to present a fully revolutionary novel, it was simply that he found it necessary to see the goal in sight before he could commit himself to a positive ending. However, the ideology is present in his writing, perhaps shown in sharper relief than in the other novelists. Venancio's dialogues are openly propagandist. Benavides and Sender, on the other hand, approach the incorporation of ideology into their own world-view in a more fictional manner – by means of the search of their protagonists for the truth and for the proper expression of their political stance. Nevertheless, the intellectual process by which Benavides' Arias arrives at his decision is provided in detail in the narrative.

We return, however, to the matter of Russian literature's impact. Arconada, Benavides and Arderius were writing fiction prior to making a firm decision to devote their writing to political affairs. It was clear in the case of Arderius that there was a strong "shock of recognition" with the pre-revolutionary Russian writers. However, as Benavides demonstrated, all the writing of the past became unacceptable in the light of Marxism, and it was time to dismiss it. Benavides' socialists do not advocate a rejection of literature *per se*; but literature must serve the interests of the proletariat, and insofar as past masters have failed to promote the revolution, they have had their day. Benavides implies, with some irony, that the likes of the fictional Zhegulev would hardly disagree with this.

The pre-revolutionary Russian writers became passé, in the light of new ideologies. The new writers of Russia were poorly known by the *novelistas sociales*,

⁶¹ Kell'in's "Pisateli narodnoi Ispanii: Manuel' D. Benavides" ("Writers of the Spanish People.

according to Arconada. It would seem to stretch the imagination too far to claim a direct literary influence. Nevertheless, there was a strong and palpable ideological link between the two sets of literatures in the 1920s and 1930s. Writers of both Spain and Soviet Russia felt a bond between themselves, as is shown by their communication and visits to each others' countries. There was a strong affinity created by the increasing troubles and uprisings in Spain and the *fait accompli* of the Russian Revolution. We have seen that the Soviet journals of the 1930s are useful sources of information concerning the Spanish novelists, showing that the Soviets considered the novelists to be fighting for the same end in Spain. Sender, Arderfús, Arconada and Benavides were frequently listed among the proletarian, anti-fascist writers of the world. The young Spanish novelists were considered by the Soviets to be heroic, sincere and righteously indignant, producing profoundly realistic and genuinely popular (*narodnyi*) literature.⁶²

What caused the Soviets to applaud the literary contributions of these Spanish writers was their open stance on the side of the proletariat, from Arconada's more lyrical portrayals of peasants and peasant life to Arderfús' descriptions of peasant concerns and doubts as revealed through conversational narrative. They were revolutionary novels. If Díaz Fernández stopped short of full-scale Marxist revolution, it was not out of vacillation, but because he more realistically visualized the Spanish revolution as leading to the removal of the present system and the institution of a Republican government which had at heart the interests of the people. In their works of the 1930s Arconada, Sender, Arderfús and Benavides all see outright

Benavides") in *Literturnyi kritik* 3 (1938). 168-82.

⁶² See N. Chetunova's "Ispaniia v revoliutsionnoi literature" ("Spain in Revolutionary Literature") in *Literaturnaia gazeta* (1 September 1936): 3.

revolution as the one true desirable goal. Arconada and Benavides, however, have more confidence in its implementation than either Sender or Arderius. Sender sees that some improvements have to be made in the organization of the factions involved and that, at best, the ideal is an "impossible distant dream". By 1935, it was clear that he believed radical change was not feasible owing to the incapacity of revolutionaries to transform their world and themselves, and, furthermore, his writing is more concerned with the philosophical foundation of potential revolution and, certainly, with his concerns about the tension between what he wished for and what he observed among the less-than-ideal Spanish revolutionary factions (Lough, *Politics and Philosophy* 88, 124, 205). Arderius would not disagree and, furthermore, seems to interpret the many aborted attempts at revolution as signs of its impossibility.

We find the definitive combination of *partiinost'*, *klassovost'*, *ideinost'* and *narodnost'* present in these works, with the exception of Díaz Fernández'. Perhaps the most admirable manifestation of the signs of socialist realism is their awareness of the Spanish lower classes and their various tribulations. All are aware of having to strip their narrative style of any distracting fictional device. This is seen clearly in the change that occurred in Arderius' writing: while many of the elements of his earlier writing make his novels of the 1930s instantly recognizable, there is a stark contrast in terms of language, which came to have no challenging embellishments.⁶³ All the writers, without exception, show immersion in the concerns of the people, be it the concerns of the intellectual faced with his civic duty, or those of the oppressed and exploited peasants and workers. It is this factor which gives essentially Marxist-orientated writing the Spanish ambience which could only be praised by the Soviets.

If the writers had their own problems to confront, as shown in Benavides' *Un hombre*, in addition to those of their fictional characters, it was the perilousness and urgency of the political situation which incited them to ever greater preoccupation with using their art as a weapon in the struggles, as so strongly advocated by their Soviet counterparts.

Having examined, in the preceding section, the work of two prominent Spanish poets of the 1920s and 30s, as well as the novelists in this chapter, and having comprehensively set in context the historical and literary period in which they became politically committed and became active Marxists, and in which they read certain Russian literary works (which we have also examined), it should be possible to draw some conclusions about the impact of Russia's ideology and literature in the pre-Civil War period in Spain – the subject of the final chapter.

⁶³ Although it has not been included in this study, the poetry of Arconada reveals the same phenomenon.

Part 3 Conclusion

We began this thesis by establishing that Russian literature had been received in Spain for almost as long as it had been received in the rest of Europe, but that its popularity increased considerably in the decade leading up to the Spanish Civil War (Part 1). The reasons for this increase in popularity were firmly determined in the contextualizing sections of the thesis. One of the major contextual considerations of the thesis was the historical context within which this increase in the popularity of Russian literature in Spain took place (Section 1.2); the other significant context was that of the literary atmosphere which facilitated that reception of Russian literature in 1930s' Spain (Section 1.3). Next, the “embryonic beginnings” in Russian literature were examined, with particular emphasis on those writers, works and trends which were of particular interest to Spaniards in the 1920s and 30s (Section 1.4). Finally, the writing of some of the most remarkable of the Marxist writers in pre-Civil War Spain – who, simultaneously, were among the most remarkable writers of the literary generation – was examined (Sections 2.1 and 2.2).

The question of greatest importance in this thesis is whether Spanish literature would have developed the way it did in the period leading up to the Civil War without the influence of the Russia's ideology and literature. One of the basic building blocks of the thesis has been the impact of the Russian Revolution, addressed in Section 1.2. In overturning a vast, autocratic empire, executing its monarch and ostensibly giving power to the people (consolidated in the years following 1917), it had achieved something momentous and by the 1930s Soviet power had been consolidated. In Spain, the Russian Revolution gave a boost to revolutionary ferment in the late 1920s and 1930s, which in turn facilitated the widespread swing to political commitment

during that same period. It has not been surprising to find that among certain Spaniards "a growing interest was developing in the progress of other societies whose troubles might correspond, albeit indirectly, with what was happening in contemporary Spain" – a fascination for situations like that dawning in Soviet Russia (Cobb 25). It is, as Bhabha described, the "self-recognition" one group experiences when learning of a seemingly parallel situation in another culture, or even in another historical period (5). Given the "brilliance of an exceptionally rich artistic environment" accompanying political events in Russia, the attraction of the Spanish writers for that land was quite natural (Cobb 25).

Since Bolshevik victory was a massive advertisement for Marxism, it follows that in a country like Spain, theoretically better suited to the implementation of anarchism, the Russian Revolution probably had much to do with the attraction to the Communist Party in certain circles which included noteworthy Spanish writers like Alberti, Sender, Arconada and Arderius. In its wake, the impact of the Russian Revolution drew an interest in all things Russian.

The increased curiosity the Russian Revolution generated in Russia involved, along with all the arts, the literature of that land. This thesis has shown that following a healthy, but not disproportionate, interest in Russian literature in Spain from the 1880s onwards, the boom in Spain's interest in the period under discussion (which peaked in 1930 and 1931) may be explained by the interplay of the worsening of the social and political situation in that country and the ensuing acquisition of political conscience among intellectuals and artists. The fact that Russian became the most popular foreign literature in Spain at that time does not necessarily mean that it influenced the output of Spanish writers of the period, but we have sought to determine whether we might justifiably draw the conclusion that Spanish literature

would have developed the way it did in the pre-Civil War years if Russian literature had not become so widely read.

At the outset, we should recall that the initial focus of the post-1917 curiosity in Russian literature was on the pre-revolutionary Russian writers. Certain Spanish writers made mention of their inclination towards those pre-revolutionary writers and, in the case of Alberti, confessed to a feeling of indebtedness; however, the pursuit of such references, instructive though they might be, would be a never-ending and thankless task, as well as a potentially misleading one. Nevertheless, a comparison of the subject matter and underlying mood in the works of Alberti, Prados and Arderius, in particular, with the Russian works which were popular at the time and for which they admit to having had a preference, shows, at the very least, that a "shock of recognition" had occurred.

The popularity of Andreev in Spain, for example, almost certainly derives from the author's ability to represent the deprived lower classes of society, to reach into the depths of the human psyche, and to ask questions about human existence, even though he frequently presented either no solution, or, worse, a pessimistic one. The psychological subject matter of both Andreev and his illustrious precursor Dostoevsky appealed to those Spanish writers affected by the mood of the times in the arts, a pre-commitment literary atmosphere which encouraged immersion into oneself and "neurasthenia", symptoms which were so often in evidence in Russian works. Alberti's *Sobre los ángeles* is typical of the introspective, neurotic writing of that era. Arderius' *Mis mendigos*, on the other hand, shows the juxtaposition of introspection with half an eye open to the events in the world surrounding the novelist, in particular, the stirrings of revolution. We must acknowledge, too, Alberti's comment about the effect the revolutionary Sashka Zhegulev, of Andreev's novel bearing that title, had on

the young, anarchistic generation of Spaniards in the 1920s, and the fact that, according to Benavides' text, for example, the eponymous hero of the novel had become well known in Spain. Andreev was perceived, it seems, as a revolutionary; the comments of the communist press in Spain, on his death, demonstrate this.

The sustained popularity of Dostoevsky even when other pre-revolutionary writers had gone out of vogue in Spain, during a period when the major preoccupation was political, is perhaps the most remarkable fact emerging from an examination of the impact of the pre-revolutionary Russian writers in Spain. His predictions of impending doom in Europe, so akin to the feeling of most of the early twentieth-century schools of thought in the arts, religion, politics and philosophy, and his pre-existentialist exploration of the human psyche in an age when humans were keen to understand their own essence in the face of an apocalypse, have ensured his writing a place in the canon of world literature and have earned him widespread respect, and Spain is no exception. One critic has written: "Who has not borrowed from Dostoevsky? Writers – Gide, Kafka, Proust, Sartre, Faulkner, Camus, just to name a few – have found in Dostoevsky new forms of the novel suitable to render the workings of the modern soul."¹

Even in an age of Marxist revolution, Dostoevsky, who passionately disagreed with socialism, was perceived to understand the desperate need for change, the stirrings of revolt, the value of finding the answers to seemingly eternal questions among the masses.

As Soviet power was consolidated and as the first Soviet fiction was translated and published in Spain, the pre-revolutionary Russian writers were largely superseded

¹ Gourfinkel, Nina. *Dostoïevski: notre contemporain*. Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1961. 7-9.

by the new Soviet writers. Sashka Zhegulev was supplanted, in effect, by the similarly fictional Chapaev, whose name and heroism heartened the Republican fighters in the Spanish Civil War. In spite of the fact that translations were poor and scarce, the early fictional representations of the revolutionary process and its heroes were read in Spain, and, judging by the encouragement the Chapaevs of early Soviet literature had on the people, they had some effect.

The appeal of Russian writing in the period when Spaniards were becoming increasingly revolutionary was its encouragement to socialist revolution. Its popularity in Spain coincided with the period in which certain Spanish writers began to express their newly acquired Marxist commitment in writing. Arderius rightly pointed out that the writing which emerged from the triumphant Soviet Russia could not have the same tone as the literature produced in countries where revolution was still pending. Even the more assertive of Alberti's political poetry may be described, at best, as agitative and optimistic, rather than exultant.

However, we have found that the demands of Marxism – the drawing away from art for art's sake and the ascendancy of content and meaning over aesthetic concerns – generated in the Spaniards effects similar to those produced by the Soviets. The principles of socialist realism were incorporated into the writing of all the Spanish Marxist writers whom we have examined, from the stark depiction of contemporary reality in Arderius' *Campesinos* to the unblushing propagandizing of Alberti's *Consignas*. Underpinning works such as these is a reliance on the *fait accompli* of the Russian Revolution as supporting evidence.

The names of Gorky and Mayakovsky are placed high in the list of those Russian revolutionary writers who inspired the Spaniards. In spite of the disquiet both Russians felt at some time or another towards the triumphant Bolsheviks, both

attained formidable reputations abroad for their pre-revolutionary activities and concerns – activities and concerns which were revealed both in their writing and in their literary outlook (Gorky in critical realism and Mayakovsky in flagrantly rebellious futurism). The socially critical Gorky, with his apparent sympathy for the world of oppressed "ex-humans", inspired not only through the example of his own writing, but also in his advocacy of the importance of social responsibility in writers. In the context of revolutionary writing in Russia alone, he was not the greatest theoretician, neither was he the greatest supporter of the new regime, but his ideas about literature coincided with the direction in which Spanish literature at the end of the 1920s was heading.

Recreating the world in which Alberti in particular wrote political poetry has brought to our attention texts concerning his initial visit to the Soviet Union and his subsequent close relationship with that country which until now have not been examined in a literary context. While shedding no startlingly new light on our knowledge of the poet, I believe the texts provide reasons to be more sympathetic towards the alleged decline in his poetic skills in the 1930s. While my survey of his writing has not been innovative in the purely critical sense, the placing of his writing in the context of his powerful ideological commitment and of the urgency of the times in which he lived has, I believe, provided an explanation for what, on the surface, appears to some to have been a degeneration in literary ability.² We must bear in mind that the criteria for judging written texts in the 1930s could not be the same as those used to judge writing of the 1920s or, indeed, the writing of any other decade or era. We might go so far as to say that evaluating Alberti's political writing as inferior is a

pointless exercise, for the very reason that the criteria are different. If Alberti decided that obeying the dictates of his conscience, newly stimulated by the opening of his eyes to the distress of his countrymen and the gathering political stormclouds, was more important than pursuing pure poetry, we can hardly criticize him.

There can be very little doubt that Alberti's affection for the Soviet Union and its accomplishments was, to put it most kindly, idealistic and naïve. There is little evidence to suggest that he was duped by the Soviets. The friendships he made while he visited that land have every appearance of being genuine and mutual. Should we be expected to believe that in calling the Alberti's his "Spanish family", Kellin was being duplicitous? What is remarkable is that his loyalty towards the Soviet Union persisted even when some of those new-found friends "disappeared" in the late 1930s.³

This thesis has made clear that the end of the 1920s and the 1930s was a period in which emotions ran high in Spain; the fabric of the country which had once been an empire seemed to a core of intellectuals to be disintegrating and to have reached a nadir in the stultifying atmosphere of Primo de Rivera's dictatorship. The emotions which this period induced were very real and should not be underestimated. Under these circumstances, erstwhile concerns about the form and style of literary creation seemed superficial and elitist. It had become imperative, on all fronts, for intellectuals who were in the vanguard of revolutionary activity to align themselves with the proletariat, and, when it came to representing these concerns in fictional writing, the search for new techniques was crucial. It would seem unfair, therefore, to

² A degeneration which, obviously perhaps, Marxist critics in Spain would not have been willing to acknowledge.

³ Of those named by Alberti, Tretiakov, who had so helped Alberti and his wife settle during their 1932 stay in Moscow, Kirshon, Iasenskii and Ogniev died during that period.

criticise adversely the political writing of any of those Spanish authors who abandoned refined artistic devices in favour of a style facilitating the public comprehension of the message of their works. The impact of Russia's Revolution and revolutionary literature, to a large extent, incited this swerve to political commitment, to Marxist commitment in particular, and an understanding of this fact is essential to a conception of, if not a sympathy for, the retrenchment from more literary preoccupations. The political works of Alberti, in whom the greatest contrast in pre- and post-commitment writing is seen, may appear to some to be naïve and misguided, but, seen in the context in which we have re-examined them, they should now be better understood.

Alberti's standpoint, when it came to representing Marxist reality in poetic form, is especially useful because, in him, the shift from modernism to political awareness was quite dramatic, and the texts included in this thesis give supporting evidence for the change in his writing. The transitional work *Elegía cívica* of 1930 had demonstrated his initial struggle to manage, in a literary sense, the emotions he felt on waking up to the plight of Spain. His visit to the Soviet Union in 1932 was significant in that he not only conversed daily, for a period of several weeks, with practitioners of his art in the USSR, but also studied Soviet verse as he translated it. We found that he was especially keen to study the rhythm and pace of Soviet verse, two poetic devices with which it is possible to experiment when other devices have ceased to be relevant, poetic devices which Alberti thereafter exploited. Svetlov's ballad "Granada" particularly appealed to him: although not high literature, it apparently captured the spirit of the times in which it was created, and Alberti admired its rhythm and pace. The strongest kinship, for Alberti, was probably with Mayakovsky. Alberti was aware of being regarded as the Spanish Mayakovsky, and, in fact, we have seen something of the spirit of the Soldier-Poet in the Spaniard's

writing, namely in his evangelizing, rallying tone and the methods associated with the poetry of Mayakovsky.

It is not just a matter of what the literary comparatist Jost described – that similar cultural effects may well be produced under similar socio-political situations (38-40) – because we have seen that Alberti deliberately sought to understand the fabric of the Soviet poetry he enjoyed and admired. However, we may justifiably conclude that Spanish writers with specific political (Marxist) agendas will have developed a style similar to that of their Russian counterparts, since subject matter and meaning of a text had far greater significance than aesthetic values, leaving writers very little recourse but to use devices which would make the message of their works crystal clear to a widely disparate audience. Where the Spaniards were most successful was in giving their writing an essentially Spanish feel, which may be termed *narodnost'*. Both Prados and Alberti made successful use of traditional Spanish forms. The *romancero* was an appropriate choice for its popular appeal, for its rhythmical quality, and, finally, for its association with community activities and collective experience.

That political affairs should influence the literary productions of writers under extreme circumstances, and that this should even create a seemingly detrimental effect on writing, of which Mayakovsky and Alberti have been accused, should not be surprising. From the time of the Greeks public themes have been common in literature, including poetry. During the time of Aristophanes, for example, poetry was a major source of education in Greece, to an extent comparable with the institution of

socialist realism in the USSR in the 1930s.⁴ When socialism became more than a theory in 1917, it is not surprising, therefore, that countries which identified with the plight of Tsarist Russia should find inspiration in what had occurred there, and especially, since Russian literature has a tradition of reflecting the throes of its people, that Russia's literature should be as influential an export abroad as its ideology. Fittingly, Gil Casado wrote that "Spanish novelists were genuinely fascinated by [Russian writers], *understandably so*" (132; emphasis added).

⁴ See Erich Heller's article "Literature and Political Responsibility" in *Commentary* 51 (1971): 47-54.

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Appendix 1

Kel'in, F. V. "Rafael Alberti and María Terésa Leon." *Internatsional'naia literatura* 3-4 (1934): 239-45.

One day in August 1932 – a fine summer day, one of those days when the Moscow sun shines and gives out its warmth like it does in Madrid – I received a parcel of books from Berlin. The contents puzzled me. There were collections of mystical and love poetry by the Spanish poet Rafael Alberti and two books of fairy tales and legends, on the cover of which was printed the name María Terésa Leon. I tried to bring to mind my literary recollections of Alberti. I knew that he is considered to be the Sovereign of the young bourgeois poets of Spain, that he contributed much to the creation of new art forms, that together with Federico García Lorca he is the most outstanding representative of the post-war movement of young writers in Hispanic countries. I had also heard that Alberti had recently been suffering a breakdown, that he was opposed to Spanish government circles, and that because of this he had found it necessary to go abroad. But what this breakdown consisted of and how far it had got, I did not then know. [...] I opened one of Alberti's books on the cover of which was the strangest title: *Concerning the Angels*. Before me passed the "Unknown Angel", and the angels of good, war, numbers and lies. [...] This was technically first-rate poetry, but how different, how alien, from all that the Spanish press was saying about the heroic struggle of the Spanish proletariat and the revolutionary peasantry, about the powder smoke enveloping Spain and the blood which flows every day (if not every moment) on the streets of several of her towns and villages. I turned to María Terésa's book of fairy tales. [...] I wondered if someone were pulling my leg. Do they intend to send such peculiar books to the International Association of Revolutionary Writers? And, if so, what kind of strange people are we dealing with? But I did not need to worry about it. I took the books home, having decided to leave this psychological dilemma for life to take care of.

And, as usual, life was not slow in bringing its solution. In November of that year Louis Aragon told me that Rafael and María Terésa intended to come to Moscow. [...] And so, the books turned out to be, not a leg-pull, but a letter of recommendation, for the Albertis to present to MORP.¹ Life had given me a quick and clear reply.

The Albertis arrived at the beginning of December on a weekend, and, as luck would have it, on the most unsuitable day for them, in our freezing Moscow weather. [...] I remember the circumstances of this first meeting very well and the impression I got of Alberti. We met up in the foyer of the hotel. A pale, oblong face, matt black eyes, black hair combed back, a thinly shaped straight nose, an obstinate protruding chin. His face looked young but around his mouth deep lines

¹ MORP stands for the *Mezhdunarodnaia organizatsiia revoliutsionnykh pisatelei* (International Organisation of Revolutionary Writers).

gave it character; he had neither moustache nor beard. Handsome in a passionate, southern sense. He was more like an Italian than a Spaniard, in my opinion. This head seems to have come straight from the canvas of an Italian Renaissance master. In other respects, he was well-made, quite broad-shouldered. He was wearing a sand-coloured coat, and on his head he wore a black Spanish hat. He had high boots with strong soles, walked with a long, firm stride and stood with his legs apart. When he was listening to you, he would tip his head to one side just like all the big brainboxes do. When he's thinking he plays with his hair. Next to his lively, talkative and pretty wife, who is the type of Spanish woman we would not have imagined, with grey eyes and hair the colour of ripe wheat, Alberti seemed reserved and morose. But this was only an initial impression: he was no less lively than she and had no fewer impressions of things that were new to him. [...]

The meeting, sadly, was a short one. "Come tomorrow but a little earlier", María Terésa said to me (Rafael endorsed the invitation with a silent nod of the head) "and we can talk about everything then." However, in spite of the brevity of the meeting, we managed to touch on quite a lot. María Terésa (who did most of the talking) told me about the enthusiasm within the left-wing radical intellectual groups for everything Soviet. "You can't imagine how great is the enthusiasm!" and then she told me that they had intended to come here in the Spring but they were prevented by their enemies ("Oh, Rafael and I have many enemies!") and that they had come now with Intourist but their one dream was to stay in Moscow a month or two. Then her attention leapt to paintings of the young Spaniard Benjamín Palencia that they had brought to Moscow. "They really must publish them in Moscow along with Rafael's poems. You know, he's written a few revolutionary poems about the peasants in Extremadura. He can read them to you now." I prepared myself to listen.

Rafael, with a swift, sure movement, got out of his chair. His face, which had been looking sympathetically towards me, took on an expression of concentration and lit up with some kind of inner glow. It reminded me involuntarily of Pushkin's improviser in "Nights in Egypt": "His face went very pale, he began to shake as if in a fever, his eyes began to gleam with a strange light, he made a slight gesture over his black hair, wiped his high brow, covered with beads of sweat, with a kerchief... and suddenly stepped forward, crossed himself... the musicians went quiet... and the improvisation commenced."

As it happens, in all the years that I have worked with the Spaniards, I have never listened to any of them reading their own verse. I am used to their somewhat doleful manner, to the very timbre, if you will, of their recitation. But Rafael read his poem about the hunger suffered in an Extremadura village quite differently: not as a professional reciter, but as a poet, with inspiration. His fine low voice would invariably rise towards the end of each verse, seeking the resolution of the poetic phrase, of its melody. The final weak syllable would be somewhat lengthened; the whole phrase was uttered with a kind of deliberate and tragic refrain [...] and he read with all his heart.

[...] Rafael fell silent: he had charmed us with his reading. It seemed as if his tragic voice had filled the room. [...] In one sense, Alberti's work turned out to be prophetic. The spiritual crisis he had experienced awoke in him parts of him no-one had ever seen before. Beneath the petty-

bourgeois poet of earlier years there turned out to be the people's 'singer', or, to be more exact, a singer of the people's anger and sorrow... [...]

Next day I arrived, "a little earlier", as agreed, that is, at ten in the morning. María Terésa, dressed in a checked dress, gaily told me where and how they had spent the previous evening and how everyone in Moscow is so good. Rafael, in a blue singlet, was lying on the bed. One uncovered arm was behind his head, and in the other he held a pencil. In front of him was a sheet of paper filled with uniform lines. He looked thoughtful: he was still, looking in front of him as if lacking the strength to tear himself away from a world visible to him alone. "You know, he's been working almost all night", María Terésa whispered to me. "Right", Rafael suddenly said out loud, very clearly, and got off the bed with the same youthful, agile movement of the day before. "We (he did not separate himself from María Terésa) had a very intense experience last night: as we were returning home yesterday we met some Red Army soldiers on Red Square. They were singing as they went along – you know, bayonets, snow, this gay song, while we've got gunshots and blood. What a startling contrast with Spain and with the whole of Europe in general! Listen to what I wrote..." and he read me the words he had written in the night, "A Greeting to the Red Army", which was praise indeed for us. "There's one more verse to write, but I'll do it today", he added and went off to dress.

"Don't be surprised", he said, re-appearing after a few minutes in a grey suit over a black shirt, "that we Spaniards turn every strong impulse into song so quickly. Our true genre as a nation has been poetry. Our people were deprived of opportunities to get to know and gain possession of the culture which the ruling classes created in the towns. It created its own poetic images, in which the traditions of past centuries were usually preserved, the traditions of those many and varied civilizations from history. That's why in our stanzas, *romances*, crafts, and folk stories you will often be able to find traces of these ancient strata and that's why the greatest Spanish poet of our time, Juan R. Jiménez, was right when he said that there is no folk art, but there is only the folk tradition in art. And it is our Spanish peasantry which is able to preserve this tradition better than anyone. I have great affection for Russia and the Russian, in my blood. My family – wine-growers – had some business dealings in southern Russia; I've even got a whole stack of letters written in Russian. I can't read them, of course, but I've kept them. As a child in Cádiz, I dreamed of Russia while I was playing war games under the glass roof of our patio with rays of the hot southern sun pouring in. Russia seemed to me, then, as a never-ending plain of snow stained with blood. I could picture Cossacks at a wild gallop. Later, in 1917 (I'd moved to Madrid by that time), Russia lost its definition, became shrouded in mist, in my mind. And then in 1930 I again felt for her, when the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera fell and we had the chance to acquaint ourselves with the real Russia as represented by the greatness of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Don't be surprised, then, that here, among you people, every one of my steps across the Red Square gives birth to poetry. The song and the revolution in the consciousness of the Spanish workers are inextricably bound up one with the other. I felt this vividly as I came across the border."

I remembered these words of Rafael, when, a few months later, I read in the paper *La Luz* his *Diary of a Spanish Poet in Russia*, and especially that part where he speaks about the Red Square

and Lenin's mausoleum. "And here I am standing on Red Square", he wrote in his diary. "Around me are bustling representatives of the most varied peoples living on the massive Russian territory. [...] On the faces of every one of them is written the magical word 'Lenin. Lenin.' And in my heart I am beginning to understand the meaning of this great 'Red' square. Yes, I'm finally standing on it. [...] Lenin, Lenin. And out of the blue I start thinking about the poem of Vera Inber that speaks of the Russian people who never slept for five nights 'because he had passed on.' Yes, this is that very Lenin to see whom the liberated peoples came after his death, in order to pay homage to his remains. But then they tell about Lenin in their own songs, interlacing his name with new themes, which give him life: about the tractor, electrification and the factory. Poems and legends about Lenin are both read and sung in the Far North – among the *ostiaks* and *lamuts* – in Middle Asia, where the *uzbeks*, *tadjiks* and *turkmen* live, in the mountains of the Caucasus, among the *ossetes* and *kalmyks*." [...]

On this particular morning Rafael alone was speaking – he had a lot to say and did so skilfully. He was telling us about his childhood, the illness which forced him to go and live in the mountains, and about how he first was an artist and then a poet. "You know, on the day I received the National Prize for Literature, shared with Gerardo Diego, I didn't have a penny, and I was literally half-starved", he said, laughing. "For me, that prize was absolute salvation, all the more so as I didn't expect it." He spoke about the hot southern towns, about Seville and Cádiz, about Spain's deep blue skies. "In our country", he remarked, "it can be as cold in the mountains as you have it [outside there was 15 degrees of frost], except our sky is quite different – very blue." He related much to us, very animatedly, about the Spanish peasantry, their courage and sincerity "Wait until you come to Spain! We'll set off on a trip around the whole country, on foot and on horseback." Then his thoughts again returned to Spanish literature. He began to read some poems [...] he seemed to have an absolutely enormous all-embracing poetic memory. Whatever name I mentioned, Rafael would quickly respond by reciting from memory whole pages, almost whole books. He read a lot that morning especially of the old popular *romances*. [...] "But the song of songs still remains, in the crowd someone still sings ... But not for you the final judgment, I will not close my lips to you" reminded me of parts of "Vozmezdie" ("Retribution") by Blok [...]. Originally from a low-class environment ("my family in the past were peasants"), but having become petty bourgeois, Alberti, immersed in the revolutionary struggle that has stirred up the people, again returned to the lower social classes declaring the rage and grief of the people. Apart from a great talent, he has brought to it his own huge artistic culture, which has put him at the very hub where all the revolutionary poetic moods of the new epoch meet.

We parted amicably. "Well, and now explain to me", I asked them as we were saying our goodbyes, "why you sent us at MORP such strange books? You have written far more revolutionary works, don't you?" and I was referring to his play about Fermín Galán, the performance of which had caused indignation in bourgeois circles and had lasted on the stage only a few days. "We wanted MORP to have a proper idea of us and about our past art", Rafael and María Terésa replied almost at the same time. "We've come to you as friends. We're so interested in the Soviet Union that we feel we'd like to stay here a little longer."

The wish of the Albertis was destined to be realised. They got the warmest of receptions at the secretariat of MORP, as they did generally by the whole family of Soviet writers. Instead of three or four days, they stayed in Moscow about two months, which gave me the opportunity to constantly meet up with them, sometimes two or three times a day. I soon got used to their interests. In the morning we would set out around the city, visiting writers. Before long the Albertis had a circle of Soviet friends: the Iasenskiis, Aseev, Brik, Inber and Svetlov.² The Tretiakovs turned out to be a great support to him in that first difficult moment of assimilation into Soviet life by surrounding them with friendly attention and concern. The Albertis, incidentally, became very interested in the biographical interview, and I remember them explaining to me with great passion that back in Spain they would introduce this method. But most of all, it was poetry that occupied Rafael. He didn't know Russian and he didn't trust French translations, so he asked me to translate poems by Aseev, Svetlov and others into Spanish, and I tried to do this to the best of my ability. So, together we worked on translations of Inber's poems about Lenin, Mayakovsky's "Levyi marsh" ("Left March"), Aseev's "Tri Anny" ("The Three Anns"), and an extract of Blok's "Dvenadtsat'" ("The Twelve"). Rafael set himself the goal of putting together a whole collection of Soviet poetry. He especially liked Svetlov's "Grenada" (*sic*) which was one of the first we translated. "You see, this is a genuine Spanish *romance*", Rafael eagerly told me. "In Spain, this would definitely be sung by the people – just listen to how it sounds. I'd love to know how it came into "Sveeyetlov"'s mind (that is just how Alberti pronounced the name) to write this poem and how he managed to give it such a genuinely Spanish form."

The work we did together on the poetry collection convinced me yet again of Alberti's exceptional poetic talent. He took to translation like a great master. [...] He took the liberty of choosing poetic forms, but was uncompromising when it came to the question of harmonization and phrasing. His perfect ear for poetry caused him at times to get angry when I was wrong about the number of feet. "It's not ten, it's eleven", he would say to me on such occasions, and he always turned out to be right. Gradually, the idea of the collection of Soviet poetry so took over his thoughts, that he started to devote all his time in the mornings to translation, without neglecting his work on his own poems about the peasants of Extremadura. The list of poets he suggested including in the collection, compiled for him, if I am not mistaken, by Brik and expanded by Iasenskii, never left the table. [...]

Even though unused to the Moscow winters and snow, the Albertis got a lot of pleasure from it. Arm-in-arm, they would run excitedly across a slippery road (María Terésa would invariably fall down). In the mornings they could be found at the window from which they had a good view of the Moscow River and the Kremlin. From there, they could watch the children tobogganing and skating. "Do you know, we've never seen such happy children anywhere in the world", they would repeatedly tell me.

² Writers described earlier in this thesis.

Along with great candour, sincerity and exuberance, the Albertis showed an unusual capacity to work. As soon as they had arrived, they seemed to settle straight into our routine, working relentlessly all day, collecting material and making cultural contacts, and so on. They were both amazed and fascinated by the activity of our factories. [...] In January 1933 Rafael had to give a lecture over the radio for Spain. I remember how he prepared for it with such remarkable solemnity, weighing up each sentence and every single word. In essence, this lecture was Alberti's appeal to the Spanish intelligentsia to see more clearly, and to engage in, a more respectful stance towards the Soviet Union.

The Albertis left at the beginning of February, one frosty evening, leaving at MORP a reputation for great artistic mastery, honesty, sincerity and love of life, factors worthy of note in the serious matter of revolution. As they left, they promised to do as much as they could to strengthen the revolutionary pioneers in Spanish literature. They did not get a friendly reception back in Spain. The bourgeois critics, so enamoured of the earlier work of Rafael Alberti – his "English Miss" and his "angels" – turned indignantly away from the bitter truths he told about the peasants of Extremadura. "The Fall of a Talent" was the judgment passed on him by Domenchina, the critic of the governmental newspaper *El Sol*, concerning Alberti's spiritual revolution. So, the Albertis bought a hall with capacity for many thousands, where workers, peasants, revolutionary students and young poets would, with eager support, catch each word and each verse. Alberti is developing into a revolutionary poet. In the most difficult moments he stands on the front line with the journal they have created, *Octubre*, with the Association of Spanish Revolutionary Writers and Artists, and with his work at the workers' halls and clubs.

At the moment a whole persecution campaign has been launched against the Albertis. None of the bourgeois papers or publishers will even listen to their poems and articles. Certain issues of *Octubre* have been banned and confiscated by the Lerroux-Gil Robles government which has thus created for them a highly arduous atmosphere. "If Fascism wins here, we'll definitely be off to Lanzarote (the islands where Spanish reactionaries get even with their revolutionary enemies)", Rafael wrote with bitter irony in one of his recent letters. "María Terésa is ill again." But, in spite of it all, the letter finished with an enthusiastic appeal for the fight to continue.

I do not know whether the lines of this sketch will get into the hands of my "Spanish family" (as the Albertis jokingly called themselves). But I would like them to know with what ardent compassion we in the Soviet Union follow their revolutionary activity.

Appendix 2

Alberti, Rafael. "Writers." *Prosas encontradas (1924-1942)*. Ed. Robert Marrast. Madrid: Ayuso, 1973. 149-55.

[December 1932] We'd been waiting in Moscow three days when MORP invited us to call. Theodor Kel'in, a poet and teacher of *castellano* at the University, called at the door of our room at the Novaia Moskovskaia hotel one morning at eight. From then onwards, all the time for two months, he accompanied us in the 25-30 degrees below Moscow frost, dressed in a pointed astrakhan hat pulled down. His eyes, of the purest Slavic blue, were made to look smaller behind spectacles, and he had the small, unobtrusive voice of an academic, speaking perfect Spanish. We went to the MORP offices with him. He introduced us that day to Bela Ilés, a refugee Hungarian writer who had been part of the government of the defeated Soviet Republic there. In the warmth of our room overlooking the Moscow River, we translated into Spanish, with Kel'in's help, poems by Blok, Mayakovsky, Inber, Svetlov and Aseev... and into Russian some poetry by Juan Ramón Jiménez, Federico García Lorca. We also translated my latest book of poetry called *Peasants of Spain* which included a group of poets. Kel'in took us to see two of his protégés, also young Soviet writers, to share with them the task. These young men put into their language the articles that were daily being requested, with some urgency, by various journals and papers. And there was a moment, one day, when I – sitting, as I was, surrounded – reminded myself of a miniature at the Escorial in which Alfonso the Wise, wielding a long quill, is presiding over a chorus of bearded translators. Kel'in would tell us how keenly interested the Soviet Union was in Spain. And we could see it for ourselves. [...] The Akademiia publishing house is going to start a series of translations of Spanish literature this year, starting with the *Poema del Mio Cid* and Arcipreste's *Libro de Buen Amor*. Quite recently Valle-Inclán's *Tirano Banderas* were published, and, missed by no-one, soon sold out; also, books by Ramón Pérez de Ayala, Ramón J. Sender, Joaquín Arderius and others have been published.

Kel'in was our best guide in Moscow and one of the greatest friends we have left there in the Soviet Union. "His Spanish family," as he calls us when he writes, never forgets him and greets him from here, from the other extreme of Europe, so far away.

Fadeev, Ivanov, Gladkov, Vera Inber, Tretiakov, Ognev, Kirshon – these are all Soviet writers read in Spain. We know them. Likewise the poets Aseev, Pasternak, Kirsanov, Kamenskii and Bezymenskii. We have been invited by them all to their homes. We know how they live, we know what their writing produces – the happiness that the thousands and thousands of editions bring, knowing they are translated into countless dialects and read by thousands of people who are now, after so many centuries of being in the dark, beginning to have a right to culture. The Soviet writers can only tell us now, in today's world, of the joy this brings. They are proud. They are allowed to be.

And they smile when we tell them that a book of poetry by the best Spanish poet does not even sell three thousand.

One night – Christmas night in other countries – we were invited to the home of Mayakovsky's wife.¹ Various poets were there. Louis Aragon was also there – he is married to Elsa Triolet, the Soviet writer and sister-in-law of Mayakovsky.¹ While we were having caviar, tea and oriental sweetmeats unknown to us, we were reciting poetry. Soviet poets have something of the minstrel about them: they don't just recite verse, they perform it – each one in his own way. They have an excessive predilection for onomatopoeia. Kirsanov, for example, in one of his poems, was more like a locomotive than a poet. He would whistle, throw himself onto the floor, sweating, puffing and blowing, as if going uphill, lacking only the smoke. Kamenskii was telling us all about a bearhunt accompanied with sounds, wails and Persian songs very much like the *cante jondo*. Aseev was repeating in a monotone a long poem from Georgia that had a hint of an Arabic *musiquilla*. I had to improvise a bullfight, making all the bullfighter's moves around a chair in the middle of the room. Aragon recited *The Taking of Power* in French, which we were able to understand, a poem from his latest book *The Communists are Right*.

There, in that place, *his* place, is where is preserved the most abiding, most intimate memory of Mayakovsky. One of his dearest friends, Brik, recited the poem he wrote a few days before he committed suicide. We re-read the letter he left on the table moments before the shots were heard. He had asked, seriously, among other things, that "no stories be told about his death," begging that there would be no speculation about the romantic reasons for it. And the Soviet Union, the country where the problem of the sexes has been resolved, giving the greatest liberty to men and women, made no comment in the papers. They said nothing, except about the author of the *160,000* (*sic*).

Once we had finished reading the poem and the letter, we all, including one of the chiefs of the GPU and his partner, a commandant of the Red Army and hero of the Asian campaigns, now married to the poet's wife, the Polish writer Bruno Iasenskii, and Dmitri Mirskii,² erstwhile prince and counterrevolutionary, a professor at Oxford and today a Party activist – all of us, the guests, sat in silence feeling the presence of Vladimir Mayakovsky, the poet of the October Revolution. [...]

¹ Alberti was evidently under the impression that Mayakovsky was married to Lili Brik.

² Prince Dmitriy Petrovich Sviatopolk-Mirskii was, from the 1920s and into the 1930s, the leading interpreter of Russian literature for English-speaking audiences. He was opposed to Bolshevism for most of the 1920s, but was converted to Marxist Leninism, having become acquainted with Gorky on Sorrento, and returned to the Soviet Union in 1932. He was arrested and sent to labour camp, where he died in 1939.

The House of Writers in Moscow, belonging to the workers' intelligentsia, is high and large, huge, with long corridors and numerous doors, with windows leading onto a patio and onto the street. There they live, nearly all of them, in a few private apartments: three or four rooms, kitchen, bathroom. If we drew back the partitions, like a box lid, we would see working there, at the same time, in their different flats, Vera Inber, Bruno Iasenskii, Nikolai Aseev, Leonid Leonov and Svetlov... But this particular night it was 35 degrees below zero and ice forming in our eyes was preventing us from seeing in. We entered the house and went upstairs. In number 56, the poet Aseev entertained us with tea and the best sweetmeats from all the Soviet Union.

-- Has Svetlov come?

-- No.

-- And Aragon and his wife?

-- They haven't either.

As we had no interpreter until Aragon arrived, we communicated in signs, speaking and shouting loudly, as if we were all deaf, getting almost to the point of tearing off each others' jacket buttons in an effort to communicate and show our enthusiasm for poetry. Eventually, Aragon and his partner arrived. It was gone 12.30. But where was Svetlov? Because Aseev had invited us to his place so that we could meet him, the Ukrainian poet.

It turned one. We were talking about Georgia, about a brigade of writers that was off to Tadjikistan for the month of April at the invitation of the country's soviet. [...]

It turned two o'clock. We talked about Mirskii. [...]

It was striking two thirty, and we were getting up to go, when Svetlov appeared. He had been to a party and was a bit the worse for wear. Hair as black as a gypsy's, sort of backcombed, drooped around his eyes. His wife, laughing, held him up. She was a blonde girl, wholesome looking, one of the Communist Youth, wearing red socks and jersey.

-- I've drunk too much. I'll be back in an hour. I'm sure our Spanish comrades understand.

He shook hands with us and went off for a sleep.

This was Svetlov, the one we had been waiting for since eleven so that we could hear his poem "Granada", so popular in the whole Soviet Union since the Civil War and repeated constantly by his friend Mayakovsky. Brik, another poet, had already recited it one afternoon at Aragon's house, translating it deftly into French, giving me an idea of its rhythm and its extraordinary likeness to the old Spanish *romancillos*. But I had wanted to hear it from Svetlov himself, see how he recited it, before translating it into Spanish (helped by Kel'in). But Svetlov had got really drunk that night and slept heavily afterwards. Nikolai Aseev, when he was seeing us off at the stairs, as it struck four in the morning, laughed.

Appendix 3

"Anti-fascist Writers of the World. Spain. Rafael Alberti and María Terésa León."
Internatsional'naiia literatura 11 (1937): 176-77.

These two names [María Terésa León and Alberti], always next to each other, together inextricably connected, have won the love of all Republican Spain. [...] They have entered firmly into the hearts of the citizens of the Soviet Union. With great excitement we read information about the talks of the leader of the people, our great Stalin, with the Spanish writers – a great and joyful event in their lives. We remember them as guests of the All Soviet Congress of Writers. Their faces smile welcomingly at us from the pages of our papers.

We avidly catch every new poem from the great poet Alberti. To speak about the life and work of Alberti and his permanent friend and partner María Terésa León means, above all, to speak about the powerful and decisive influence that the Soviet Union turned out to have on them.

As a child during the [First World] War, Alberti, playing under the southern sky of Cádiz, visualised Tsarist Russia as "an endless plain of snow stained with hot blood, flooded with hords of Cossacks at a frenzied gallop." The contours of Russia in 1917 also seemed unclear to him. In 1931, when the dictator Primo de Rivera was overthrown, the image of our country came to his mind. But now Alberti interpreted it "with its new and unmistakable name" – the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

In 1932 Alberti and León came to the USSR, and here the concept was underscored by a wealth of direct and inspiring impressions. [...] And the unrelenting attraction towards our country changed to love, the tried-and-tested love and friendship about which they sing at the top of their voices and which does not change.

"Although my position in relation to literature was totally assured before my visit to the Soviet Union," Alberti wrote, "all the same, my stay in Moscow gave me the opportunity to strengthen my resolve. No-one can remain on the fence when faced with the massive force of the workers of the USSR. Back in Spain, as I wrote, I was serving the interests of the workers." [...]

Working in publishing and editing, in pre-election campaigning, his poems and plays, articles about the problems of the revolutionary theatre, as well as María Terésa's sketches – in all these their ebullience tells how full of single-minded purposefulness they are. [...] Alberti reads his poetry at workers' halls – and his audiences reward him with wild ovations, enjoying the success of *their own* poet. [...] And there, wherever assistance and encouragement are awaited, there, in the sympathetic tenderness of the lyric, where heroic voice of the poet in combat is needed, where the rapid intervention of wounding satire is demanded – everywhere the voice of Alberti is heard. He whipped the well-fed body of the Fascist Gil Robles ("El Gil Gil"). [...] The idea of Communism he has wrapped in the flesh and blood of artistic imagery and has shown us its triumphant procession

through Europe: the "spectre of Communism" comes from the East to tell of the country where there is "peace and rejoicing."

At the Second International Congress of Writers in Madrid [1937] he said: "*Romances* are one of the veins in which the blood of the Spanish people pulses." In the *romances* he himself has written in recent years the blood of the people certainly pulses. His thematic variety and search for new forms are composed now with sincerity and a wealth of intonation, with the courage inherent in the poet and meticulous imagery. Alberti is from the people; the poetry of the people has nurtured by means of its very lifeblood a body of literature, and he has again turned his attention to it in full possession of poetic art, with flair, perception, and the musicality of a real master. [...] What characterizes Alberti's poetry is its unfeigned sincerity. He really does sing from the heart, and his heart knows no bounds. That is why his poetry is precious to all who are sensitive to the problems of Spain as to the problems of all forward-reaching and progressive humanity.