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Huidobro's Rose: The Environmental Dialectics of Creacionismo

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Si aceptáis las representaciones que un hombre hace de la Naturaleza, ello prueba que no amáis ni la Naturaleza ni el Arte.
—Vicente Huidobro, “Creacionismo” 739

(If you accept human representations of Nature,
that proves you love neither Nature nor Art.)¹

Ecopoetics reawakens the pre-scientific magic of naming
—Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth* 175

The twenty-first century has already witnessed the rapid yet conscientious growth of an evolved non-anthropocentric approach to literary theory that is sensitive to the role of the non-human world in the dialectics of contemporary literature. Studying the treatment of nature in poetry, as subject as well as object, environmental criticism (or ecocriticism) is quick to alert interested readers that it has moved far beyond a descriptive appreciation of nature as static, a limited metaphor for beauty, peace, or balance.

Certainly the universal scope of Vicente Huidobro's *creacionista* aesthetics includes a powerful poetic dialogue with the forces of nature, lending itself to a rigorous re-reading according to the principles of environmental criticism. His “Arte poética” of 1916, along with other poetry and manifestos marked a well studied departure from Latin American *modernismo* and the advent of the *vanguardia*, challenging the objectification of nature as aesthetic fetish and proposing a more active dialogue with the non-human world. “Por qué cantáis la rosa, ¡oh Poetas! / Hacedla florecer en el poema” (Huidobro 1981; 219) (Oh Poets, why sing of roses! / Let them flower in your poems).² In *Altazor* and other works from this self-proclaimed *creacionista*, the poetic process of search and aspiration, accompanied by the consciousness of failure, degeneration and regeneration presents a form of dialectical inquiry that actively acknowledges the forces

of nature. However, Huidobro also maintains famously that “El Poeta es un pequeño Dios” (219) (The poet is a little God).

This apparent apotheosis of the poet has preconditioned critical readings of the Chilean’s work to be purely anthropocentric and limited the reception of *creacionismo*.³ The claim might strike some as egotistical, blasphemous or delusional, with the subsequent failure in *Altazor* thus marking the end of an enterprise destined to fail. However, the modifier “un pequeño” (a little) reminds us that Huidobro’s desire to create is primarily concerned with the realm of poetry only, and the creative potential of innovative poetic expression. In his address to the Ateneo de Madrid in 1921 (“La Poesía”) he wishes to see poetry reach “más allá del último horizonte . . . allá del espíritu y la materia” (717) (Beyond the last horizon [. . .] beyond spirit and matter). But we must note that the poet can only contemplate this new poetic space from the branches of a planted tree: “Allí ha plantado el árbol de sus ojos y desde allí contempla el mundo, desde allí os habla y os descubre los secretos del mundo” (717) (There he has planted the tree of his eyes and from there he contemplates the world, from there he speaks to you and discovers for you the secrets of the world).

His poetry challenges the traditional hierarchy that places one supreme God as creator of man; that man is privileged to have been created in God’s image and thus reigns over nature, a static object of *modernista* contemplation. Huidobro refuses to serve as an apostle of nature (“Non Serviam”) but a close reading of his work reveals the essential role played by the non-human world in his dialectics of search for, loss of, and renewed search for meaning. We will base our analysis on a number of poems that mark the evolution of his work from an initial departure from *modernismo* to the most consciously and theoretically developed incarnations of his *creacionismo*. Written throughout the middle of Huidobro’s poetic production, his famous *Altazor* (1919–1931) will anchor our ecocritical reflections on the manner in which the non-human world serves as an essential, integrated component of his poetic project. This project, the epitome of the *vanguardia*, entails a ceaseless active engagement with the natural world in a dialectical process to challenge meaning, deconstructing the very forms of poetic expression and mocking mimetic representation in order to approximate the “creation,” in direct conjunction with his natural environment, of a new poetic world.

Environmental criticism gained early momentum through a dedicated journal, association and website that made numerous critical articles readily available, and was anchored by the *Ecocriticism Reader* (1996), edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. Glotfelty offered broad definitions and essential questions to inspire ecocritical readings, writing that “simply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment [. . .] ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to

literary studies" (xviii). Major tenets were that literary studies be reconnected to place, be earth-centered (ecocentric) and challenge traditional delineations of text according to genre, gender, or discipline. The interdisciplinary approach has thus embraced other approaches such as marxism, feminism, neo-indigenism, and even aspects of poststructuralism by subverting traditional social and textual hierarchies, calling into question the notion of "center," and rejecting an anthropocentric basis for human creative production. Even in the most incipient stages, critics urged that studies of meaning, the transmission of meaning, representation, language and literature be linked to the natural world.

Ecocriticism is also concerned with contemporary politics, the environmental crisis, racial, ethnic, and environmental justice, and how a more conscious approach to culture might alter the actions and vision of professors, students, artists, and critics. It is therefore perfectly suited to address the work of well known Latin American ecological writers such as Homero Aridjis, José Emilio Pacheco, Eduardo Galeano, Nicanor Parra, Pablo Antonio Cuadra, Elicura Chihuailaf, and many others. In their books and various articles, the leading scholars in these endeavors have been Steven White and Niall Binns, who—besides White's expert work in Nicaraguan poetry—have each taken a particular interest in Chile, studying not only the presence of the non-human world, but the environmentalist ethics of their poetic subjects. Their studies are keenly aware of international ecocritical currents while comprehending the autonomy and rich heritage of Latin American literature and criticism, that a critical apparatus not be "exported," let's say, and imposed upon a region, but rather applied as an additional inroad to appreciation and study.⁴ Because of this very sensitivity to the ethical and political dimension of what can be deemed an "ecological" text, however, these scholars and others may have overlooked Huidobro's ecological side, viewing his work as overly anthropocentric and futurist, a technophile's effort to dominate the world.⁵ Niall Binns does recognize the manner in which Huidobro's early poetry is able to "recrear la naturaleza, recrearse con ella en el hallazgo de combinaciones nuevas, ingeniosas y a veces geniales" (46) (recreate nature, discover, in recreation with nature, new, ingenious, and at time marvelous combinations). However, he is concerned about Huidobro's "mutilación" (mutilation) of nature, such as birds, concluding that *creacionismo* is nothing more than the vain efforts of a "criatura del desarraigo" (47) (creature of detachment or "uprootedness"). What Binns deems the mistreatment of the nightingale in *Altazor*, along with Huidobro's many apparently self-deifying manifestos, is offered as support for such a classification. However, this is the same nightingale tracked by Oscar Hahn as a necessary partner in the conscious dismantling of the natural world in order to provide it with new expressive life. The same occurs with murky stagnant pond water, crumbling mountains, and trees into

which the poet himself dissolves, various birds, animals, the sea to which the poet composes his famous *monumento*, and of course, the high flying, and rapidly tumbling hybrid altazor, “high” (flying) “goshawk,” whose very failure to transcend enables, dialectically, a new quest for meaning.

Does Huidobro’s poetry represent an ego-centric, luciferian anti-ecology, or does he position himself as a “pequeño” Dios specifically to work in conjunction with nature to give it new life, thus trying to share a piece of its creative power and subvert Judeo-Christian hierarchical divinity? Acknowledging various scholars’ effective work on the Chilean’s Emersonian challenge to divinity, we will undertake the study of representative texts and manifestos to suggest that such “integration with nature” is exactly what is at play and at stake in these poems.

As the ecocritical movement progresses, it has understandably come to historicize its own significant growth, and scholars such as Lawrence Buell, actively involved since the early stages, reflect on their own work as a snapshot of the evolution of the field. Buell looks to legitimize the ecocritical potential of any text according to the approach taken by the critic, and certainly any text where the non-human environment is actively involved in the significance of the contribution made by the literary work, the process, that is, or the struggle of that literature. He reflects:

Once I thought it helpful to try to specify a subspecies of “environmental text,” the first stipulation of which was that the nonhuman environment must be envisioned not merely as a framing device but as an active presence [. . .]. Now it seems to me more productive inclusively as the property of any text. (25)

He goes on to quote an essay by Robert Kern on the broad applicability of ecocriticism: “Ecocriticism becomes most interesting and useful when it aims to recover the environmental character or orientation of works whose conscious or foregrounded interests lie elsewhere” (Buell 26). Marxist ecocritic Lance Newman supports this “recovery” by maintaining that no cultural production is possible independent of the fundamental processes of life. The subject/object dynamic of Western Marxism, that meaning is affected by *and in turn affects* the social and material environment cannot exclude the natural world.⁶

Finally, Sueellen Campbell’s groundbreaking study “The Land and Language of Desire: Where Deep Ecology and Post-Structuralism Meet” makes the clear ecocritical connection to what poststructuralist theory values in metapoetics: poetry that considers the terms of its own existence. “We are part of nature, and when we study nature there is no way around the fact that nature is studying itself. We always affect any system we touch” (129). Outlining where ecology fits into the poststructuralist endeavor to find meaning by tearing down textual representation, she writes that “Theory is right, I think, that what we are depends on all kinds of influences outside

ourselves, that we are part of vast networks, texts written by larger and stronger forces. But surely one of the most important of these forces is the rest of the natural world" (134).⁷

Our discussion of Huidobro's reception must start with his most famous manifesto, *Non Serviam* (1914) and the early poem "arte poética" from *El espejo de agua* (1916). The language of the former appears to assert dominance over nature. The lines "No he de ser tu esclavo, madre Natura; seré tu amo. Te servirás de mí; está bien" (I will not be your slave, mother Nature; I will be your master. You will make use of me; that is very well) and then "Yo tendré mis árboles que no serán como los tuyos, tendré mis montañas, tendré mis ríos y mis mares, tendré mi cielo y mis estrellas" (I will have my trees and they will not be like yours, I will have my mountains, I will have my rivers and my seas, I will have my sky and my stars) are those cited by Binns to demonstrate Huidobro's disconnection from nature (Huidobro 715). But there is a section Binns neglects to cite between the two lines that makes the relationship truly reciprocal: "No quiero y no puedo evitarlo; pero yo también me serviré de ti" (715) (I do not wish to, nor can I avoid it; but I will also make use of you). The same document not only personifies nature but maintains her past *and present* creative power: "Hemos cantado a la Naturaleza (cosa que a ella bien poco le importa). Nunca hemos creado realidades propias, como ella lo hace o lo hizo en tiempos pasados, cuando era joven y llena de impulsos creadores" (715) (We have sung to Nature (something that matters little to her). Never have we created our own realities, as she does and did in times past, when she was young and filled with creative impulses). The implication, then is that nature somehow deserves to be reinvented, given new life and meaning. Cedomil Goic's seminal study of Huidobro continues to be, after 53 years, one of the most detailed and the most cited. Regarding *Non Serviam* he preempts the debate on his countryman's apparent "break" with nature:

Lo que interesa señalar en este momento de la génesis de la teoría creacionista de Huidobro, en primer término, es la violencia con que se pone de manifiesto la ruptura con la naturaleza, en un momento donde Huidobro no podía todavía vislumbrar sus posibilidades. Por otra parte, ninguno de los teóricos posteriores europeos que se plantearon idéntico problema lo hicieron en términos de Poesía y Naturaleza, sino en términos de poesía y realismo. (66)

(What is of interest to indicate at this moment of the genesis of Huidobro's *creacionista* theory, in the first place, is the violence with which the break with nature becomes manifest, at a moment when not even Huidobro could anticipate its possibilities. On the other hand, none of the later European theorists that would posit the very same question did so in terms of Poetry and Nature, but rather in terms of poetry and realism.)

Thus the poet's aggression, put in its developmental context by Goic, predates a later engagement with nature and already suggests a new theoretical dialogue.

Only a few years later, Huidobro expounds upon the earlier rebellions in his "Creación Pura" from *Saison Choisies* (1921). Clearly he sees that

El hombre sacude su esclavitud, se rebela contra la naturaleza como otrora Lucifer contra Dios: pero tal rebelión es sólo aparente: *pues nunca el hombre ha estado más cerca de la naturaleza que ahora, en que no trata ya de imitarla en sus apariencias, sino de proceder como ella, imitándola en el fondo de sus leyes constructivas*, en la realización de un todo, en su mecanismo de producción de formas nuevas. En seguida veremos cómo el hombre, producto de la naturaleza, sigue en sus producciones independientes el mismo orden y las mismas leyes que la naturaleza [. . .] ya que el hombre pertenece a la naturaleza y no puede evadirse de ella, él debe tomar de ella la esencia de sus creaciones. (Huidobro's italics) (718)

(Man shakes off his slavery, rebelling against nature like another Lucifer against God: But this rebellion is only apparent: *for never as man been closer to nature that he is now, trying not to imitate it in appearance, but to proceed like nature, imitating it in the depths of his constructive principles*, in realization of all that is, in the manner of the production of new forms. Presently we will see how man, a product of nature, follows his independent production the very same order and laws as nature [. . .] since man pertains to nature and cannot escape that, he must take from her the very essence of her creations.)

This creed, effectively repeated word-for-word by today's environmental critics, would go on to define the subsequent twenty years of Huidobro's production.

Stan Tag, in a position paper on the "Four Ways of Looking at Ecocriticism," quotes Walt Whitman: "There can be no theory of any account unless it corroborate the theory of the earth / No politics, song, religion, behavior, or what not, is of account, unless it / Compare with the amplitude of the earth / Unless it face the exactness, vitality, impartiality, rectitude of the earth" (Tag). Tag comments that "Language is not inherently separate from the natural world, as some theories may suggest, but is evolving out of the same evolutionary processes as the earth itself" (Tag).⁸ Ironically, Tag's comments of 1994 reflect the vestiges of a romantic idealism that Huidobro rejected when he moved beyond the nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century *modernismo*. He even rejects Whitman specifically in the preface to *Altazor*.⁹ Depending on what exactly Tag means by "face," Huidobro certainly did not express the same faith in poetry to measure, reflect, nor even comprehend the natural world as did someone like Walt Whitman, but that did not prevent him from linking his poetic *creacionismo* to the "evolutionary processes of the earth."

Such processes, taking us back to Sueellen Campbell and Lance Newman and the generative dialectics of Marxist and poststructuralist ecocriticism, can only be honestly thematized as the failure of language, the death, and consequent fertilization of a renewed signifying cycle—best modeled by the earth's own ecosystem. In "Creacionismo" Huidobro paraphrases his own comments from the famous talk given at the Ateneo de Madrid in 1921: "El Arte es una cosa y la Naturaleza otra. Yo amo mucho el Arte y mucho la Naturaleza. Y si aceptáis las representaciones que un hombre hace de la Naturaleza, ello prueba que no amáis ni la Naturaleza ni el Arte" (739) (Art is one thing and nature another. I greatly love Art and greatly love Nature. If you accept human representations of Nature, that proves you love neither Nature nor Art). At this juncture it would be necessary to carefully document Huidobro's move beyond *modernismo* as a static imitation and fetishization of nature to a more dynamic understanding of nature's vitality, if it were not for the many thorough studies that already exist. In his impassioned assessment of his friend's impact on young Chilean writers as early as 1918, Rafael Cansino-Assens focuses on the difference between static imitation of nature—"reproducir fielmente sus obras naturales" (faithfully reproduce her natural works)—and creative refraction: "el poeta hace de la naturaleza un símbolo, se la apropia, la desfigura, le infunde de dolor o de júbilo de su semblante, la suplanta, nos promete la naturaleza, pero nos da su alma" (122, 123) (The poet turns nature into a symbol, taking hold of it, desfiguring it, and imbuing it with all the pain and jubilation of its countenance, supplants it, promising us nature, he gives us his soul). Braulio Arenas adds that "El poema, pensaba Huidobro, debe ser una realidad en sí, no la copia de una realidad exterior. Debe oponer su realidad interna a la realidad circundante" (179) (The poem, Huidobro thought, should be a reality in itself, not the copy of an exterior reality. It should posit its interior reality against the surrounding world).

According to most critics, the early text *Adán* does not yet fully embody the major tenets of *creacionismo*.¹⁰ It does, however, clearly display the poet's clear recurrence to nature as a powerful creative force, associating the signifying fertility of the natural world with that of the poet on equal and collaborative terms. In the preface to the project, Huidobro posits an Emersonian sense of self-reliant transcendentalism that displaces the role of one almighty Creator, by paraphrasing the North American in translation: "El poema no lo hacen los ritmos, sino el pensamiento creador del ritmo: un pensamiento tan apasionado, tan vivo, que, como el espíritu de una planta o un animal, *tiene una arquitectura propia*, adorna la Naturaleza con una cosa nueva" (189) (The poem is not created by the rhythms, but by the creative thought of the rhythm: a thought so passionate, so alive, that, like the spirit of a plant or an animal, *has its own architecture*, adorning Nature with something new).

The invocation of Emerson was originally studied by Goic in reference to *Adán* and later works such as the famous declaration that the poet is a “pequeño Dios.” More recently the topic has been revisited by Mireya Camurati in a section of her book titled “Relación Hombre-Naturaleza” (The Man-Nature Relationship). Comparing the avant-garde to Victor Hugo’s romantic concept of art as a faithful copy of the natural world from a century earlier, Camurati addresses Huidobro’s rejection: “Rechaza el consejo [Hugo] de copiar la naturaleza y declara que esta doctrina es enemiga del arte” (131) (He rejects the advice to copy nature and declares such a doctrine to be the enemy of art). Her study recurs to his many manifestos and public statements, principally *Non Serviam*. Summarizing, Camurati directly connects the two free-thinkers:

podemos inferir las ideas básicas de Huidobro acerca del tema de la relación Hombre-Naturaleza. Establece un enfrentamiento del Hombre rebelde contra la Naturaleza. La rebelión consiste en negarse a imitar los elementos u objetos de la Naturaleza. Es decir, que está en contra de la regla tradicional de la mimesis. (134)

(Huidobro’s basic ideas regarding the Man-Nature relationship can be inferred. He establishes a confrontation between Man as rebel against Nature. The rebellion amounts to refusing to imitate the elements or objects of Nature. That is, he is against the traditional rule of mimesis.)

La doctrina trascendentalista propone una aproximación atenta a una Naturaleza que no es extraña al hombre y de la cual éste puede aprender las leyes de la creación orgánica y que le permitirán a su vez ser creador. No hay enfrentamiento sino comunión. (135)

(The transcendentalist doctrine proposes a careful approximation of a Nature that is not foreign to man and from which man can learn the laws of organic creation, permitting him to become, in turn, a creator. There is no confrontation but rather communion.)

However, she clearly distinguishes that Emerson’s proposal is “armonioso” (135) (harmonious) while Huidobro’s is more contentious. Similar concerns have been expressed regarding the Chilean’s aggressive assertion “yo seré tu amo” (175) (I will be your master) as mentioned earlier. However, the context of *Non Serviam* includes literary history—“Hasta ahora no hemos hecho otra cosa que imitar al mundo en sus aspectos, no hemos creado nada” (until now we have done nothing more than imitate the world in its aspects, we have not created anything), and idealism: “hemos aceptado, sin mayor reflexión, el hecho de que no puede haber otras realidades que las que nos rodean, y no hemos pensado que nosotros también podemos crear realidades en un mundo nuestro” (715) (we have accepted, with no further reflection,

the fact that there can be no other realities than those that surround us, and we have not thought that we can create realities in our own world). It concludes with a collaborative pledge: “Una nueva era comienza. Al abrir sus puertas de jaspe, hincó una rodilla en tierra y te saludo muy respetuosamente” (715) (A new era begins. Opening its jasper doors I go down on one knee upon this earth and salute you respectfully). Camurati thus connects “hombre-naturaleza” but does not explore Huidobro’s project of collaborative integration with nature over the subsequent twenty-five years.

Just as the biblical Adam initiates human contact with the natural world, Huidobro’s alternative version is enervated poetically by each and every aspect of the non-human. In “El himno del sol” the poet/Adán proclaims the attraction: “Si de todas las cosas de la tierra / Pudierais hallar la quintaesencia / Me hallaríais a mí en todas ellas” (191) (If among all things of this earth you could discover the quintessence, you would find me within each of them). In “Adán” he pursues direct incorporation of nature: “Entrad en mí, Naturaleza, / Entrad en mí ¡oh cosas de la tierra! / Dejad que yo os adquiera, / Dadme la suprema alegría / De haceros substancia mía / Todo esto que nace en el suelo / Quiero sentirlo adentro” (196) (Enter into me, Nature, / Enter into me, oh things of this earth! / Let me acquire you / Give me supreme happiness / of making you my own substance / All this born in the ground / I wish to feel it inside).

Once the poet has completely engaged with the natural world, he intends to harness its generative powers to, in turn, cultivate new life and expression for that very world. The critical concern over the desire to “dominate” must be replaced, ecocritically, with a recognition that for every ounce of creative potential the poet enjoys he pays tribute to the natural environment, looking to provide it with new life in the most respectful manner. It is in 1916 (*Espejo de agua*) when Huidobro famously cries “Por qué cantáis la rosa, ¡oh Poetas! / Hacedla florecer en el poema / [. . .] El Poeta es un pequeño Dios” (219) (Oh Poets, why sing of roses! / Let them flower in your poems . . . The poet is a little God). He is not looking to dominate nature, but allow it to flourish. The apparent apotheosis of the poet is not the pronounced anthropocentrism it may appear to be. He specifically writes “un pequeño” and not just “Dios” because, again according to Emersonian transcendentalism, the poet claims his place as *a creator*, not *the Creator*. Goic describes this significant distinction:

Acepta una diferencia de grado, en relación al Creador Absoluto, que crea de la nada, por eso nos habla de un “pequeño Dios.” No olvidemos que Tomás de Aquinas rechazaba el nombre de creador para el poeta porque la forma preexiste en la materia en potencia, en la creación humana. Pero en este “pequeño Dios,” o como diría Gerardo Diego, “niño Dios,” está el acento más significativo de toda la teoría huidobriana. (74)

(He accepts a degree of difference in relation to the Absolute Creator, he who creates from nothingness, and for that reason speaks to us of a “little God.” Let’s not forget that the Thomas of Aquinas rejected the term of creator for the poet because the form preexists in very potential of the material, in human creation. But with this “little God,” or as Gerardo Diego would say “child God,” we find the most distinctive expression of Huidobro’s theory.)¹¹

It is with this in mind that we continue our study of the integral role of nature in Huidobro’s search for meaning in poetic expression. We must remember, however, that the search, in its most sincere moments, thematizes the breakdown of poetry, a metapoetic reflection on failed transcendence, the rapid descent of *Altazor* that inevitably follows the loftiest aspirations. The poet looks to provide a refraction rather than a reflection of nature, and the disintegration of the non-human world parallels the disintegration of the human ability to capture and render its image. The conscious and careful procedure of destruction (often described as “cubist” fragmentation) leads to death (of natural beings as well as language) and from death, the fertile soil for rebirth. Scholars have studied this concept from various perspectives, and usually in reference to *Altazor*. Goic and de Costa comment structurally on the necessary loss of faith in poetry by the third *canto* of the poem, so that a new process of creation can begin in the fourth (Goic 233, de Costa 1989: 34). Federico Schopf reduces his thesis to the following: “para el sujeto (anti)poético de *Altazor*, la destrucción de la lengua—no sólo su desconstrucción, que es razonada—conduce a la nueva poesía: el acto de destrucción permite el surgimiento de los significantes de la poesía intentada en el poema” (5) (For the (anti)poetic subject of *Altazor*, the destruction of language—not just its reasoned deconstruction—leads to new poetry: the act of destruction permits the emergence of the signifiers of the kind of poetry intended in the poem). Schopf does not focus on nature, but rather the signifier itself and the “demolición intencional del lenguaje” (10) (intentional demolition of language), but the victims of this destruction are often the words representing the swallow, the nightingale, ponds, mountains, trees, rivers, the sea, and other flora or fauna.

Oscar Hahn and Cecil Wood study the ponds, whose black stagnant water ripples and refracts the world. Their deterioration is part of the poetic process in poems such as “Espejo de agua” (The Mirror of Water) or the earlier “Los estanques nocturnos” (Nocturnal Ponds) from *Las pagodas ocultas* (1914). For Wood, the ponds have “evocative powers” but also hidden potential to be awakened by the poet (43). Hahn warns against a misinterpretation of the “espejo”: “El espejo representa exactamente lo contrario de la estética creacionista y de ello Huidobro está muy consciente [. . .] pero no hay contradicción [. . .] no se trata de un espejo de agua de esos que adornan los parques de la realidad sino de un espejo en movimiento” (100) (the mirror represents the exact contrary of the *creacionista* aesthetic

and Huidobro is very conscious of that [. . .] but there is no contradiction [. . .] it is not about the type of reflective pools that adorn the parks of reality, but rather a mirror in movement). The poem reads:

Mi espejo, corriente por las noches,
Se hace arroyo y se aleja de mi cuarto.
Mi espejo, más profundo que el orbe
Donde todos los cisnes se ahogaron.
Es un estanque verde en la muralla
Y en medio duerme tu desnudez anclada.
Sobre sus olas, bajo cielos sonámbulos,
Mis ensueños se alejan como barcos.
De pie en la popa siempre me veréis cantando.
Una rosa secreta se hincha en mi pecho
Y un ruiseñor ebrio aletea en mi dedo. (1990: 219, 220)

(My mirror, a current in the nights,
Becomes a brook and leaves my room.
My mirror, deeper than the orb
Where all the swans have drowned.
It is a green pool in the rampart
Your fixed nakedness sleeps in its midst.
Over its waves, beneath somnambulant skies,
My dreams draw away as ships.
Standing astern you will always see me singing.
A secret rose is swelling in my breast
And a drunken nightingale flutters on my finger.)¹²

Hahn astutely comments on the dynamic nature of these waters, points out the inherent critique of the “cisne modernista” (modernist swan) that is now drowned in verdant pond, and then addresses the inebriated nightingale. An apparent disrespect for nature, it is, according to Hahn, more aptly understood as a classic bird of poetic inspiration in an altered mode. It does not represent the psychic automatism of surrealism, but rather “un estado de superconsciencia” (a state of superconsciousness) according to the various textual and intertextual proof Hahn offers (101). Alongside the drunken nightingale, deformed and deteriorated yet poised for new meaning, we find the rose. The absolute essence of *creacionismo*, this rose is personal, secret, and does not sprout or grow (“brotar,” “crecer”) nor get cultivated (“cultivarse”), but simply swells (“se hincha”). He does not sing to it nor romanticize it but conceives it poetically in a new form.

The rose appears again in “Marino” (Sailor), one of the most significant poems from *Poemas árticos* (1918) (Arctic Poems). While the poetic voice is that of an aging mariner, it is also that of the poet who imagines his poetic path already forged. Well traveled like the seafarer, the poet now wishes to stitch together the fragments of the horizon, split apart one year earlier with

the publication of the cubist book *Horizon carré* (1917) (Square Horizon). Having published more than ten books of poetry, Huidobro reflects intertextually on past works but also anticipates his role as a poetic mariner: “Yo inventé juegos de agua / en la cima de los árboles / [. . .] Hice correr ríos / que nunca han existido / de un grito elevé una montaña / [. . .] Corté todas las rosas / de las nubes del este / y enseñé a cantar un pájaro” (Huidobro 1981: 308) (I invented waterfalls / In the tops of trees / [. . .] I made rivers run / where none had been before / from a scream I raised mountains [. . .] I cut all the roses / from the clouds of the East / and I taught a snowbird how to sing).¹³ Again the harvested roses, like none that have ever existed, are charged with generative potential. They are controlled by the poet, and yet are also his source of imagined power.¹⁴

We must limit our description to “imagined” power because we are aware of the complex narrative of metaphysical and poetic aspiration ending in freefall defeat found in Huidobro’s master work, *Altazor* (1919–1931), where the rose never once plays a traditional literary role. As de Costa illustrates on numerous occasions, the work can be studied episodically as the story of various stages of deterioration of language and a failed effort to reconstruct: “entre las etapas de *Altazor* hay varios y variados comienzos con un final común: el fracaso” (*Altazor* 25) (Throughout the stages of *Altazor* there are many and varied beginnings with one common ending: the failure). The first *Canto* maintains a “fe redentor en la poesía” (redemptive faith in poetry) but “a partir del Canto III los versos de *Altazor* asumen una dirección clara de movimiento hacia una progresiva desarticulación que culmina en el grito prístino que cierra el Canto VII y el libro” (32) (from the Canto III on, the verses of *Altazor* assume a clear direction of movement towards a progressive dearticulation that culminates in the pristine shout that closes Canto VII and the book). The method described by de Costa is that of using and abusing every linguistic possibility until each morpheme becomes exhausted of previous meaning and primed for new significance. While de Costa refers to any possible signifier, the conscious breakdown of the natural world is of particular interest.

The rose, for example, first appears deceptively as a symbol of friendship between the poet and the divine, a source of divine poetic inspiration. The work adheres to the classic trope of the poet as privileged agent of a supernatural being (Alonso de Ercilla’s *La Araucana*, Virgil’s *Aeneid*, etc.) who has particular faith in him as a superior poet. In the preface to the poem the poet comes upon an apparition of the virgin, seated on a rose, who speaks to him, declaring herself “la capitana de las otras once mil” (the captain of the other eleven thousand) and inviting a declaration of mutual devotion: “Ámame, hijo mío, pues adoro tu poesía y te enseñaré proezas aéreas” (Huidobro 2003: 382) (Love me, my son, since I love your poetry and will teach you aerial prowess).¹⁵ This apparently blasphemous

union (subsequently lying down with the virgin) parodies Christian divinity and displaces “Dios” to make room for new creation. The preface is visionary and optimistic like Canto I and the rose begins as a symbol of poetry along with the parachute that Altazor takes with him on his journey. He depends on the parachute to ascend and to fall, as with poetry, comparing the two metaphorically among the last lines of the preface: “Ah mi paracaídas, la única rosa perfumada de la atmósfera, la rosa de la muerte, despeñada entre los astros de la muerte” (384) (Oh, my parachute, the only perfumed rose of the stratosphere, the rose of death, cascading through the stars of death).

In Canto I the voyage continues as the poet dialogues with Altazor, his own alter-ego (“Soy yo Altazor el doble de mí mismo” (387) (Altazor am I the double of my self)) and an obvious neologism, alto + azor, a goshawk who has already been tainted linguistically as signifier and will now experience an aspiration destined to fail. In his most empowered moment, the poet/Altazor displaces God (“Dios diluido en la nada y el todo [. . .] Dios pútrido” (God diluted in the nothing and the all [. . .] Putrid God)) and calls others to arms: “Cambiemos nuestra suerte” (387, 388) (We must change our luck). Canto I is a microcosm of the poem as a whole, and indeed Huidobro’s entire body of work. It forecasts Altazor’s entire trajectory as he disintegrates, confronts himself and his creator (“Vicente Huidobro”) directly and then gathers strength to rise again. The fall is collective and universal as we all become fodder for the growth of chaos, and Altazor correctly puts the blame on Huidobro:

Yo tú él nosotros vosotros ellos
 Ayer hoy mañana
 Pasto en las fauces del insaciable olvido
 Pasto para la rumia eterna del caos incansable
 Justicia ¿qué has hecho de mí Vicente Huidobro?
 Se me cae el dolor de la lengua y las alas marchitas
 Se me caen los dedos muertos uno a uno
 ¿Qué has hecho de mi voz cargada de pájaros en el atardecer
 La voz que me dolía como sangre? (389)

(I you he we they
 Yesterday today tomorrow
 A pasture for the gullets of insatiable oblivion
 A pasture for the perpetual rumination of tireless chaos
 Justice—what have you done to me Vicente Huidobro?
 Pain falls from my tongue and my clipped wings
 One by one my dead fingers fall off
 What have you done to my voice heavy with birds as evening falls
 The voice that once hurt like bleeding?)

Altazor and Huidobro then gather strength together by playing with words, dissecting them and reconnecting them to begin to forge new meaning. According to David Bary, this is the beginning of the poet's "Parodia Divina" (Divine Parody) and where, for de Costa, the poet begins to "redicularizar la inmensidad" (389) (ridicule immensity).

No acepto vuestras sillas de seguridades cómodas
 Soy el ángel salvaje que cayó una mañana
 En vuestras plantaciones de preceptor
 Poeta
 Antipoeta
 Culto
 Anticulto
 Animal metafísico cargado de congojas
 Animal espontáneo directo sangrando sus problemas
 Solitario como una paradoja
 Paradoja fatal
 Flor de contradicciones bailando un fox-trot
 Sobre el sepulcro de Dios. (393)

(I do not accept your armchairs of comfortable security
 I'm the savage angel who fell one morning
 Onto your plantations of precepts
 Poet
 Antipoet
 Cultured
 Anticultured
 A metaphysical animal burdened with dismay
 An open spontaneous animal bleeding his predicaments
 Lonely as a paradox
 Fatal paradox
 A flower of contradictions dancing a foxtrot
 On the crypt of God.)

Defined more by what he is not than by what he is (*not* human, *not* a real animal, an antipoet, a paradox, with and without voice, a flower of contradictions), Altazor undertakes his linguistic quest, and the reader is saturated with signifiers to the point where all meaning is lost. Altazor then appears to regain strength, fully displacing God and becoming the minister of nonsense, in balanced dialogue with nature.

Soy desmesurado cósmico
 Las piedras las plantas las montañas
 Me saludan Las abejas las ratas
 Los leones y las águilas
 Los astros los crepúsculos las albas

Los ríos y las selvas me preguntan
 ¿Qué tal cómo está usted?
 Y mientras los astros y las olas tengan algo que decir
 Será por mi boca que hablarán a los hombres
 Que Dios sea Dios
 [. . .] Señor Dios si tú existes es a mí a quien lo debes. (394)

(I am cosmically outrageous
 Stones plants mountains
 Greet me Bees rats
 Lions and Eagles
 Stars sunsets dawns
 Rivers and forests ask me
 What's new how are you?
 And as long as the stars and the waves have something to say
 It will be through my voice that they speak to man
 Let God be God
 [. . .] Lord God if you exist you owe it all to me.)

If the rose continues to represent poetry, it is a poetry that makes us sick, words borrowed from nature that no longer can be digested, yet we are commanded to take them, as holy communion, from our minister of *creacionismo*:

Las palabras con fiebre y vértigo interno
 Las palabras del poeta dan un mareo celeste
 Dan una enfermedad de nubes
 Contagioso infinito de planetas errantes
 Epidemia de rosas en la eternidad
 Abrid la boca para recibir la hostia de la palabra herida
 La hostia angustiada y ardiente que me nace no se sabe dónde. (397)

(Words with fever and internal whooziness
 The poet's words cause air-sickness
 They bring on cloud-sickness
 A contagious infinite of errant planets
 An epidemic of roses in eternity
 Open your mouth and receive the host of the wounded word
 The afflicted burning host that is born within me I don't know where.)

The poet can now convene with nature—"el mundo se me entra por los ojos" (The world enters through my eyes)—and repeats three times emphatically "Silencio la tierra va a dar a luz un árbol" (399) (Silence the earth will give birth to a tree). The relationship with birds, rivers, trees, flowers and the sea continues to develop as the poet depends on nature's collaboration to create anew (399–401).

We must remember that the poetic endeavor here is foremost an honest metapoetics on the very limits of poetry. Language and natural order alike are subverted methodically from the first lines of Canto III, as “la flor se comerá a la abeja,” “el arco-iris se hará pájaro,” “Las miradas serán ríos,” “Conducirá el rebaño a su pastor,” (The flower will suck the bee, The rainbow will become a bird, Glances will be rivers, The flock will guide its shepherd) and poetry is not immune to this breakdown:

Matemos al poeta que nos tiene saturados
 Poesía aún y poesía poesía
 Poética poesía poesía
 Poesía poética de poético poeta
 Poesía
 Demasiada poesía. (406)

(Let us kill the poet who gluts us
 Poetry still and poetry poetry
 Poetical poetry poetry
 Poetical poetry by poetical poets
 Poetry
 Too much poetry.)

What follows is a series of calculated misapplications of the modifier to the modified culminating in the burial of poetry itself and the conclusion: “todas las lenguas están muertas” (408) (All the languages are dead). While it marks the most dramatic moments of breakdown, this section has drawn critical attention as the most productive.¹⁶

It is not long after in Canto IV when the rose is included along with so many other components of the natural world in a section that drew the attention of Cedomil Goic (1955: 288). Urged on numerous times—“no hay tiempo que perder” (There’s no time to lose)—the poet scampers to rebuild a world as fast as he can tear one down: “No hay tiempo que perder” / [. . .] Rosa al revés rosa otra vez y rosa y rosa / Aunque no quiera el carcelero / Rio revuelto para la pesca milagrosa” (411) (There’s no time to lose / [. . .] Rose upturned and rose returned and rose and rose / Though the warden don’t want it / Muddy rivers make for clean fishing). Playing with the interior rhyme scheme, repetition, and even suggesting an unconventional splitting of the word “milag-rosa” by association (there is no effort to repeat the pun in the translation), the poet places the rose on the etymological and ontological chopping block along with everything else. Fifty-six lines later the poet has reached his well studied attack on the swallow (golondrina, golonfina, golontrina, golonchina, golonrisa, etc.) and the nightingale (ruiseñor, rodoñol, rorreñol, romiñol, etc.). (Again, a distinct approach must be taken in the translation: swooping swallow, whooping wallow, weeping wellow, and then nighdongale, nighrengale, nighmingale, nighfangale, etc.).

But it is not an attack on the birds themselves as much as the arbitrary words used to represent them. Employing the French word for nightingale (*rosignol*), Huidobro has inserted the six notes of the musical scale (do, re, mi fa, so, la) within each of the neologisms. Niall Binns has listed the many deformations of the nightingale as proof that Huidobro is detached from and disinterested in his natural environment, and seems to resent that the chosen bird is not even one that is traditionally found in the Americas. Calling Huidobro's interest in the bird is further proof of his "alienación galófila" (gallophiliac alienation), Binns generally accuses the Chilean of "ecocidio" (47) (*ecocide*). We would answer that there is no better representative of nature than this symbol of European aestheticism to suffer the *creacionista* reprogramming here applied. Many of these early poems were first written in French simply because the poet was in France working with Pierre Reverdy and the magazine *Nord-Sud* and it is well documented that *Altazor* builds on Huidobro's earlier work.¹⁷ Moreover, the grand plan fails, and *Altazor* falls to his grave alongside Vicente Huidobro, the birds, and everything else. The respect and acknowledgement of the natural world is that the poet becomes profoundly integrated with every aspect of the environment, failing to become a god, but participating as partner and accomplice with nature.

The non-human is inseparable from the human (integrated into the very names we call ourselves) and we all must fall in order to be reconstructed with renewed meaning. As seen in one of the epigraphs that opens this article, marking or naming the natural world—making a new personal register of nature—is seen as a fundamental essence of a human's creative life by critics concerned with the "ecopoetics" of writing.¹⁸ Along with the "rosa al revés" and the birds that have been plucked of their feathers and otherwise altered, humans and non-humans, *Altazor* and Vicente Huidobro himself, are laid to rest in Canto IV:

Aquí yace Marcelo mar y cielo en el mismo violonchelo
 Aquí yace Susana cansada de pelear contra el olvido
 Aquí yace Teresa ésa es la tierra que araron sus ojos hoy ocupada por su
 cuerpo
 Aquí yace Angélica anclada en el puerto de sus brazos
 Aquí yace Rosario río de rosas hasta el infinito
 Aquí yace Raimundo raíces del mundo son sus venas
 Aquí yace Clarisa clara risa enclaustrada en la luz
 Aquí yace Alejandro antro alejado ala adentro
 Aquí yace Gabriela rotos los diques sube en las savias hasta el sueño
 esperando la resurrección
 Aquí yace Altazor azor fulminado por la altura
 Aquí yace Vicente antipoeta y mago. (415)

(Here lies Marcello heaven and hello in the same violoncello)

Here lies Susannah drained from straining against the void
 Here lies Teresa placed in the terrain her eyes once plowed
 Here lies Angelica anchored in the inlet of her arms
 Here lies Rosemary rose carried to the infinite
 Here lies Raymond rays of mud his veins
 Here lies Clarissa clear is her smile enclastered in the light
 Here lies Alexander alas under all is yonder
 Here lies Gabriela breakwaters broken she rises in sap to the dream that
 awaits resurrection
 Here lies Altazor hawk exploded by the altitude
 Here lies Vicente antipoet and magician.)

Just as the invented signifier Altazor is a combination of multiple concepts, suggesting a destiny (to fly high as a hawk) that goes unfulfilled, so are names like “Rosario,” river of roses.

Having highlighted one more manner in which we are inevitably linked to the natural world, Huidobro commits Canto V to realizing this physical and linguistic reintegration. The first lines of the first two stanzas announce the final poetic gestures presented in Canto VI and VII to reach pure creation: “Aquí comienza el campo inexplorado [. . .] Hay un espacio despoblado / Que es preciso poblar” (417) (Here begins the unexplored territory [. . .] There is an unpopulated space / That must be populated). He then describes an elusive “rosa del mar” a mysterious rose of the sea that only the poet can find (418). It lures us in, the sea sinks the boats of our journey, all ties are broken, and finally the rose begins to bloom in the opposite (re-creative) direction: “La rosa rompe sus lazos y florece al reverso de la muerte” (419) (The rose breaks its chains and flowers on the other side of death). Words are literally ground up: “Molino del conocimiento / Molino del descendimiento / Molino del desollamiento / Molino del elevamiento” (424) (Mill of the education / Mill of the dilapidation / Mill of the flagellation / Mill of the elevation) and the poet becomes one with nature and one with the rose in its new and evolving forms. He is firefly, he is air, birds. And, he is rose, speaking the new language of the rose, without losing all else that he has become: “Ahora soy rosaral y hablo con lenguaje de rosaral / Y digo / Sal rosa rorosaría / Sal rosa al día / Salía al sol rosario / Fuego mía sonrodería rososoro oro” (429) (Now I’m a rosebush speaking rose language / and I say / Go rose rosarosaray / Grow rose this day / Go rosary rose that rows away / fireaway my rossible rositive rostrum strum).

As we know, the final two cantos culminate in the notion of a new language and new creation, products of this long epic poetic journey: “Lalalí / lo ia / i i i o / Ai a i ai a i i i o ia” (437) (Lalalee / Eeoh eeah / ee ee ee oh / Ahee ah ee ahee ah ee ee ee ee oh eeah). But we must recognize, as Huidobro did, that there is no final declaration of victory. This poem is a

new creation, embodying *creacionismo*, and its ultimate message is that Altazor's flight, as with all poetic aspirations, is destined to fail. While the process of such an impossible poetic undertaking has long been venerated, from Plato and Aristotle to Sor Juana's *Primero Sueño*, critics debate the merits of Huidobro's endeavor.¹⁹ But the meaning and reason for poetic *creacionismo* and indeed all poetry is to undertake the journey, and like the elements of nature, the life of the poem, as well as any suggested new signification, comes to an end, degenerates, and nourishes future growth.

Ten years later Huidobro would publish *Ver y Palpar* (1941) (To See and Feel), whose very title suggests a corporeal connection to his subject matter, which turns out to plainly be the natural world. *Últimos poemas* (1948) (Last Poems) was published the year of his death. Critics will continue to debate the role of Huidobro as the "first" significant poet of the *vanguardia* in Latin America and what was or was not achieved according to his many manifestos.²⁰ What we take, however, from his early work and from *Altazor* is that he clearly saw no reason to compromise the breadth and depth of his poetic aspirations, and yet clearly conveys that the process of "creation" is one of constant death and rebirth of meaning, in intimate conversation and dialectic conjunction with the natural world. The later poems demonstrate that the more mature Huidobro, facing the onset of the inevitable, and with greater reflective consciousness of what his earlier works may or may not have accomplished, communicates his poetic understanding of the world in a more sincere and conciliatory manner. The "Poema para hacer crecer los árboles" (Poem to Make Trees Grow) literally presents the piece-by-piece construction of trees, more than their cultivation: "Cinco ramas siete ramas doce ramas / Doce hojas veinte hojas y cien hojas / Sube y sube y sube / [. . .] Ama la rama ama" (501) (Five branches seven branches twelve branches / Twelve leaves twenty leaves and one hundred leaves / Rise and rise and rise / [. . .] Love the branch love). However, the poem also presents a somber undertone that plays on the phonetic associations of "rama" with "rema" (branch, row) evoking an allegorical journey upstream in the subterranean river of death: "Rema la rama / Rema la vida por sus dolientes / [. . .] y los remeros remando / [. . .] Remando vida arriba" (501) (Row the branch / Row life past its mourners / [. . .] and the rowers rowing / Rowing uplife). The tree partners with the poet to ward off death, rowing upstream with its branches and standing in the way of death: "Un árbol que se yergue y cierra el paso a la muerte" (501) (A tree that stands up and blocks the path to death). Also appearing in *Ver y Palpar* (1941), "Naturaleza Viva" (Lifescape) presents the theme of death as well.²¹ As the accordion signals the "fin del mundo" (end of the world) and a blue-mouthed wolf threatens to "devorar a la abuela naturaleza" (eat up grandma nature), voices come together as an enormous cedar tree is born, a tree that is greater than God's tree of creation: "Allí donde las voces se juntan nace un

enorme cedro / . . . Más grande que el árbol de la creación / Más hermoso que una corriente de aire entre los astros” (479) (Out where the voices gather a giant cedar is born / [. . .] Greater than the tree of creation / More beautiful than a flow of air between two stars). In this poem the poetic voice addresses a “Señor Cielo” (Mr. Sky) and a “Señora Nube” (Mrs. Cloud) rather than God, and recalls his early creation of a new swallow: “Una golondrina me dice papá” (480) (A swallow says papa to me). Once again the theories of Emerson are upheld, that the poet and nature are on equal standing, mutually nutritive, and more significant in their divine creations than a single divine “God.”

The poems published on the eve of the poet’s death continue the trajectory we have studied in this article, expressing, in the most sincere manner of all Huidobro’s poetry, a complete integration into the natural world. In “Monumento al mar” (Monument to the Sea) he speaks directly to the sea in conciliatory and almost apologetic terms, beckoning: “Olvida mis maldiciones y cantemos juntos esta noche / Hazte hombre como a veces me hago mar / Hagamos las paces te digo / Tú eres el más poderoso / Que yo estreche tus manos en las mías” (Huidobro 1981: 591) (Forget my curses and let’s sing together tonight / I say make yourself man like I sometimes make myself sea / I say let’s make peace / You’re the greater force / Let me squeeze your hands in mine).²² While the very act of making peace with the sea suggests an earlier antagonism, conflict necessarily accompanies peace and there is no union without division. The tension of the struggle that has been waged is real, but that is only because Huidobro chose to engage in dialectic interplay with nature, defining and being defined by it throughout his poetic life.

The punctuation mark on this concept and his poetry as a whole thus becomes the well known “Poesía es un atentado celeste” (Poetry is Heavenly Crime), a type of poetic memoir of his relationship, as poet and living being, with the natural world. Reflecting on his life as part of a regenerative cycle, the poet literally dissolves and erodes into his environment, giving his life to the rocks and trees: “Ando en viaje dando un poco de mi vida / A ciertos árboles y a ciertas piedras” (582) (I am away travelling giving a little of my life / To some trees and some stones). His own physical state becomes undefined and transient: “Yo no estoy y estoy /Estoy ausente y estoy presente” (Huidobro 1981: 582) (I’m not here and I’m here / I’m absent and I’m present).²³ As ever, this process cannot exist independent of the struggle with and for language, and the poem tells the same story we have told in our study: “Ellos querían mi lenguaje para expresarse / Y yo quería el de ellos para expresarlos” (582) (They wanted my language so they could express themselves / And I wanted theirs to express them). The relationship is and always has been mutual, that of codependent parts of an ecosystem: “Me voy adentrando en estas plantas / Voy dejando mis ropas / Se me van cayendo las

carnes / Y mi esqueleto se va revistiendo de cortezas / Me estoy haciendo árbol" (583) (I'm moving inward on these soles / I'm leaving my clothes behind / My flesh is falling away on all sides / And my skeleton's putting on bark / I am becoming tree). This, of course, brings us back to the recent sensitivity of ecocritics to the cycles of creation. All processes, be they poetic, human or non-human, are part of a cycle of creation, breakdown, integration into the generative environment, and regeneration. Perhaps it is time that contemporary readers and poets again become inspired by the nutritive powers of Huidobro's work.

Notes

1. Author's translations throughout unless otherwise indicated.
2. All translations cited from this poem are by David M. Guss.
3. In his introduction to *Vicente Huidobro y la motivación del lenguaje*, George Yúdice provides an excellent overview of the most significant bibliography on Huidobro available in 1978. He discusses approaches taken by various critics including Goic, de Costa, Concha, Carraciolo-Trejo, Wood, Pizarro, and Bary, among others, classifying the studies according to six categories: interpersonal relations; analysis of the theory of creacionismo; the relationship between creacionismo and the vanguardia; sociological approaches and interpretations; life and work of Vicente Huidobro; and finally, those which look primarily at prose. The work of Yúdice, Wood and, to some degree, Mireya Camurati is the only commentary that begins to address the role of nature and the non-human world.
David Bary, in studies such as "Vicente Huidobro: Agente Viajero de la Poesía (1957)," discusses Huidobro's social and interpersonal struggles, calling his approach to the literary world an "egoísmo infantil" (infantile egotism). Unfortunately, Bary's concern about Huidobro's ambition limits the merit he seems willing to afford to the poetic project itself, independent of the poet's personality.
4. Steven White confronts this, for example, from the very first pages of his 2003 ecocritical study of Pablo Antonio Cuadra *El mundo más que humano en la poesía de Pablo Antonio Cuadra: Un estudio ecocrítico*. He insists "que el aparato crítico no se considere aún como otro modelo teórico importado de la academia norteamericana y europea" (9) (that the critical apparatus not be considered yet another theoretical model imported from the North American and European academy).
5. Steven White, for example, in his very significant and consideration of the river in Chilean poetry, "Los ríos en la poesía chilena: nuevas definiciones ecocéntricas de la poesía épica y lírica," agrees with (and cites) Niall Binns's conclusions that the message of dominance over nature seems ever present and overpowering in Huidobro. His own remark is that: "Lo que predomina en la poesía huidobriana es una tecnofilia, tal como se aprecia en la poesía futurista de Marinetti [. . .] o sea un nuevo intento de conquistar y controlar la naturaleza" (129) (What is predominant in Huidobro's poetry is a technophilia, like what can be seen in the futurist poetry of Marinetti . . . that is, an intent once again to conquer and control nature).
6. Newman is primarily concerned that ecocriticism is a benefit from certain Marxist principles, but for those who may be reluctant to engage *ecocriticism* he provides the

reminder that Marxism has always valued first and foremost the notion of an integrated process: “The fundamental processes of life include not only material production and reproduction, but also language, thought, ideas, the full range of signifying practices we study under the rubric of culture. Culture is neither mere reflection nor a determining structure, but is inextricably part of—both constituted by and constituting—the whole material process.” “The most effective analogy for this process,” he goes on, “comes from ecology: ideas are determined, shaped by the material social process in much the same way that the forms of life in an ecosystem are determined by its inorganic base” (15).

7. Both poststructuralism and deep ecology take a critical stance, looking to question the concepts upon which hegemonic hierarchies are constructed and both resist the notion of any center whatsoever. Campbell writes: “[The] most important shared premise of post-structuralist and ecological theory [is that] both criticize the traditional sense of a separate, independent, authoritative *center* of value or meaning; both substitute the idea of *networks* [. . .] there is no such things as a self-enclosed, private piece of property, neither a deer, nor a person, nor a text, nor a piece of land... human beings are no longer the center of value or meaning” (131, 133). Additionally, Newman and Campbell have each contributed greatly to the potential for considering a wide variety of works within an expanding definition of ecocriticism. The clear connection to Marxism and post-structuralism might encourage critics of Latin American literature to recognize that ecocriticism suggests a compatible, but unique concept of consciousness. By the same token, when a clear connection with the non-human world serves as a significant factor in the function of a work, it must be recognized.
8. Tag’s remarks continue: “Arguments about whether language represents the world, or whether it distances us from the world, sidetrack us from the more important things we have to learn about how language already functions within our experiences of the world. When we study the relationships between language and landscape, text and terrain, or words and woods, we are not studying two separate things (as if we lived in some dualistic universe), but interdependencies, particular manifestations (even processes) of the thing we call life.”
9. Proclaiming (still optimistically) himself as the one engaging the world poetically, the poet/creature Altazor is “aquel que todo lo ha visto, que conoce todos los secretos sin ser Walt Whitman, / pues jamás he tenido una barba blanca como las bellas enfermeras y los / arroyos helados” (383) (that one who has seen it all, that knows all the secrets without being Walt Whitman / never have I had a white beard like the beautiful nurses or the frozen streams).
10. Critical to the understanding of Huidobro’s transition from the aesthetics of *modernismo* to the more dynamic innovation of the *vanguardia* are the seminal studies of Goic (1955), de Costa (1975, 1975, 1978, 1984, and Introducción de *Altazor*, 1989), Cecil Wood (1978), Braulio Arenas (1964), and Cansino-Assens (1919). In all cases, scholars have tracked an evolution rather than a dramatic break, defining characteristics of Huidobro’s earliest work that would later evolve into the devout and clearly articulated *creacionismo*. De Costa’s various studies are most insistent regarding this matter. For his part, Cansino-Assens commented as early as 1919 that “En nuestra lírica no hay nada que pueda compararseles [Huidobro’s first five books] ni siquiera las últimas modulaciones llanas de Juan Ramón Jiménez, ni las silvas diversiformes de los modernos versilibristas. Todas esas formas Vicente Huidobro las cultivó y superó ya en sus últimos libros anteriores □ *Canciones en la noche*, *La gruta del silencio*, *El espejo de agua* y *Adán*. En esos libros practicaba todas las variedades del verso, tal que se le modelaba hasta en las vísperas de su

evolución última" (121) (In our lyric there is nothing that compares to Huidobro, not the latest modulations of Juan Ramón Jiménez nor the multiform silvas of the modernist free verse poets. Vicente Huidobro cultivated all those forms and even surpassed them in his latest books—*Canciones en la noche*, *La gruta del silencio*, *El espejo de agua y Adán*. In those books he employed all varieties of verse, such that he was molded by them right up until the eve of his final evolution).

11. Like Huidobro, Gerardo Diego is not interested in the idea that the poet would depose and/or become God. His article "Poesía y creacionismo de Vicente Huidobro (1968)" first acknowledges his close working relationship with the Chilean, as a fellow *creacionista*: "Vicente Huidobro y su poesía es, continúa siendo, en mi vida y en mi pasión por la poesía, algo especial, algo que forma parte de mí mismo" (209) (Vicente Huidobro and his poetry are, continue to be, in my life and in my passion for poetry, something special, something that forms a very part of me). He then humbly insists upon the manner in which the creationist poem depends on Nature: "Una invención, un invento, no es nada más que un hallazgo. Este es el verdadero sentido de la palabra. Todo está ya en la Naturaleza y el hombre no hace más que descubrirlo, encontrarlo" (221) (An invention is nothing more than a discovery. This is the true meaning of the word. Everything is already present in Nature and man does nothing more than discover it, encounter it).
12. All translations cited from this poem are by Jorge García-Gómez.
13. All translations cited from this poem are by David M. Guss.
14. The theme of the disintegration of language in this poem is discussed by Gerardo Diego when relating the moment when Juan Ramón Jiménez encouraged the Spaniard to leave Huidobro out of a significant anthology. Diego highlights "Marino" and "Altazor" in his response, writing that "lo que sí pretendió la poesía creacionista fue y sigue siendo crear o inventar un sentido nuevo y una técnica nueva, aprendida en parte en la naturaleza misma" (221) (what *creacionista* poetry truly was and continues to be is the creation or invention of a new sense and a new technique, learned in part from nature itself).
15. All translations cited from *Altazor* are by Eliot Weinberger.
16. Within David Bary's analysis of the divine parody, the link established from one line to another creates a building creative intensity (288): "Plantar miradas como árboles / Enjaular árboles como pájaros / Regar pájaros como heliotropos / tocar un heliotropo como música" (406) (Plant glances like trees / Cage trees like birds / Water birds like heliotropes / Play a heliotrope like music). Goic's analysis of the section, and the idea of "demasiada poesía" (too much poetry) refers again to the difference between imitation and creation, a commentator and a magician: "Como se ve, el poeta condenado a muerte es el tradicionalmente llamado así, ese *comentador de las cosas*, como dirá despreciativamente Huidobro, quien proclamará, en su reemplazo, al *mago*" (1955: 232) (As can be seen, the poet condemned to death is the one traditionally called such, commentator of things, as Huidobro will say pejoratively, later proclaiming the *magician* as his replacement).
17. See de Costa (both from 1975 and also from 1978) as well as Schweitzer, Perdigó, and Goic.
18. Jonathan Bate's groundbreaking work of ecocriticism *The Song of the Earth* (2002) explores the magical and nourishing relationship between humans and the non-human world. While he focuses on Romanticism, his notion of ecopoiesis celebrates the poet's active and creative cohabitation with the world in place of a static pastoral imitation.
19. Two opposite approaches to the poetics of collapse, or the collapse of poetics, depending on our point of view, are found in the work of Federica Schopf and David

Bary, for example. As mentioned earlier in this article, Schopf's entire thesis hinges on the concept of intentional demolition of the language. He begins: "La tesis que sostengo es que, para el sujeto (anti)poético de *Altazor*, la destrucción del la lengua—no sólo su desconstrucción, que es razonada—conduce a la nueva poesía: el acto de destrucción permite el surgimiento de los significantes de la poesía intentada en el poema" (5) (The thesis I maintain is that, for the (anti)poetic subject of *Altazor*, the destruction of language—not just its reasoned deconstruction—leads to new poetry: the act of destruction permits the emergence of the signifiers of the kind of poetry intended in the poem). He later puts together a "recopilación de materiales para la Nueva Poesía" (compilation of materials for *Nueva Poesía*). Among four major elements of Huidobro's poetry he highlights "La utilización paródica (carnavalesca, sarcástica) de formas poéticas anteriores, incluidas algunas formas rupturistas del vanguardismo" (the parodic (carnavalesque, sarcastic) use earlier poetic forms, including some forms of rupture from the vanguard) and "La demolición intencional del lenguaje" (10) (intentional demolition of language).

David Bary, on the other hand, has undertaken many studies of Huidobro and his contributions concerning parody of the divine in Huidobro are excellent. In a separate study based more on Huidobro's public personality, Bary attacks Huidobro as demonstrating "egoismo infantil" (infantile egotism), as cited earlier. Bary cites Juan Larrea's letters to Huidobro and criticism of the Chilean's public presence, but then bases further accusations on a theory that Huidobro's supposed egotism somehow reflects an essence of being Hispanic. Commenting on everything from the Spanish mystics to Mexican busses, Bary implies that the manner in which Huidobro "anhela expresar directamente la realidad" (longs to express reality directly) demonstrates a lofty aspiration befitting of his cultural (if not racial) heritage. As we consider in this study, the metapoetry itself, constantly narrating its own demolition, clearly supports Schopf's thesis (and that of Yudice, Camurati, Diego, Concha and others).

20. Enrique Anderson-Imbert, for example, in his oft-cited *Historia de la Literatura Hispanoamericana*, mentions the question of Huidobro's own claim to being "Padre del creacionismo" (Father of *creacionismo*), conceding that Huidobro "fue uno de los primeros poetas de nuestra lengua que se puso en la vanguardia de la literatura europea" (54) (was one of the first poets of our language to be part of the European vanguard).
21. All translations cited from this poem are by David M. Guss.
22. All translations cited from this poem are by David M. Guss.
23. All translations cited from this poem are by W.S. Merwin.

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