

Staging the *Guerrilla* as Past/Present War from the Margins of Exile: *Cumbres de Extremadura* y *La niña guerrillera*

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Frederic Jameson classifies war among those collective realities that resist narrative representation, despite the ambitions of various experimental and popular genres—novel, film, etc.—to capture it. This is due to the tendency of situations of war to be represented as “scene,” defined by Kenneth Burke as a narratological mode in which anthropomorphic drama is constantly overshadowed by the category of the “relatable” (the very concept of war in this case) that precedes any action or agent (1534). Jameson notes that guerrilla warfare is the least occurring category among representations of war by nature of the fact that, on the surface, it constitutes an alteration of the symmetrical structure of opposing forces that make conflicts intelligible. In reality, rather than an undisciplined and marginal exception, the spontaneous or improvised armed actions of guerrillas may offer a more archetypal view of the true nature of war in broader terms, as well as in the context of the particular conflict in which it is described (1533).

In the enormous body of literature dealing with the Spanish Civil War, José Herrera Petere’s novel *Cumbres de Extremadura* and José Bergamín’s drama *La niña guerrillera* are rare examples of works that feature guerrillas. For this reason they merit analysis as texts that, with elements of documentary work, poetry and drama, attempt to present the conflict in the most basic terms that defined the War within a clear set of ideological coordinates. Evidencing exactly what Jameson suggests, both present the foundations of the Civil War, in all of its dimension and components, through concrete and distinctive scenarios of the guerrilla’s historical actions that can be read as microcosms of the nation in conflict. Bergamín and Herrera Petere belonged to a generation of writers whose careers were

initiated through avant-garde literary exploration and were interrupted by politics, war and exile in Mexico, where they created their works about guerrillas. The two pieces are inscribed within the temporal frame of the Spanish conflict: the official duration of the war in the case of the novel, and the period of World War II (when the fate of the nation could still be changed) in the case of the play. The illusions of the yet to be resolved conflict, and the contemporaneity of the reality with which these texts deal, locates them stylistically somewhere between the parameters of agit-prop literature and those of the reflexive mode inherent to the condition of exile. In their conclusions, they reflect an overarching concern with the neglect or the loss of a collective consciousness of the struggle that was costly in ideological and human terms. Alongside works of the same period that present the guerrilla within a very limited range of action, Bergamín and Herrera Petere propose a fascinating vision of hope in the assumed defeat that should not be overlooked in the context of recent efforts to recover the history of the armed resistance in Spain and its cultural representations.

Michael Ugarte recognizes that exile itself is not a literary field, and so to speak of a Spanish literature of exile is problematic given the fact that the phenomenon is an individual experience that corresponds to a set of shared or collective coordinates (3). The titles studied here nonetheless reflect a specific connection of the literary to the political that sheds light on the identification that, at any given moment, the core of exiled intellectuals felt with the armed resistance. This identification is explained in the analogy between the two groups in as much as both fought, from the margins of their respective hiding places, for the recovery of the political territory that corresponded to Spain under the Republic. The attention with which the guerrilla movement was followed by politicians and intellectuals in exile is reflected in the creation of literary works whose characters are members of the armed resistance.

From the end of the Civil War, armed groups began to consolidate their strength in strategic positions in mountainous areas like the Pyrenees. In December 1944, some three thousand men returned from France and occupied the Aran Valley, set among the peaks along the French border; the occupation caused the Franco government to mobilize a professional force to contain the potential rebellion. Survivors of the repression would come to form the core of what came to be commonly known as the maquis, disparate groups that would remain active in various points around Spain in following years until they were systematically eliminated. News of this activity resounded with impact in the various destinations of the overseas exodus, but most especially in Mexico City where the largest number of expatriates resided. In the Mexican capital, as the nerve center of the exile community, an organizational framework of agencies like the Junta Española de Liberación (Spanish Junta of Liberation), among others, was set up to assist refugees and other Republicans with the principal aim of restoring the

Republic. Until 1945, these organizations linked together the variety of political factions that represented the vanquished nation. In spite of their ideological differences, these groups shared the conviction that it was necessary to maintain a cohesive front in the hope that Franco's government would be overthrown following the victory of the Allies (Fernández 134). The guerrilla movement was likewise comprised of men and women from different political affiliations, linked together by the very condition of being fugitives and by the hope of restoring a political system that would be favorable to their social condition and ideology. Complementing structures of political resistance in exile in America, cultural institutions like the Junta de la Cultura Española in Mexico City, as well as publishing houses and journals, were created. In addition to an ideological mission, all sought to safeguard the continuity of Spanish intellectual capital and values outside of Spain's borders (Faber 129). The sense of cultural and political unity attained early in the process of exile, while it was still assumed by many not to be definitive, is an example of what Edward Said identifies as the state of "re-construction" that results from the circumstances in which the members of the displaced group become the basis of national formation and identification, "by choosing to see themselves as part of a restored triumphant ideology of people" (177). The unity of this formation contradicts the idea of Spanish exile overall as a situation of rupture and disintegration (Navarro-Calderón 351). The evanescence of the group's cohesion, and the timeliness of some of its cultural productions, such as those spawned by the identification with the guerrillas that will be examined here, also make evident how this cohesiveness was an isolated case presupposed by compromises made over a long period marked by insurmountable divisions (Caudet 243).

Treating *Cumbres de Extremadura* as a work written in exile is not strictly accurate: the version known today is that which Herrera Petere corrected for republication in Mexico in 1945 based on a first-edition published in 1938.¹ The publication details reveal the author's desire to extend the life of his text beyond the timeframe that might otherwise cause it to be classified as war literature; in doing so he makes it coincide in time with works by other authors in exile in Latin American that deal with the guerrillas. In addition to Bergamín's *La niña guerrillera*, also written between 1944 and 1945 are: Max Aub's play *Los guerrilleros*; Pablo de la Fuente's novel *Este tiempo amargo*; and Celso Amieva's collection of poems *Versos del maquis*.² Although the last three were not published in this period, that the composition of all of these works occurred in a timeframe of just two years is indicative of the convergence of interest in the topic and the figure of the guerrilla fighter.

The exile is a fundamentally retrospective and retroactive being, suggests John Brodsky (104). This condition leads the writer to reject or abandon the freedom gained through banishment, and the new prospect it

offers, in the interest of cultivating familiar materials from the past (104). Ugarte points out that hindsight, combined with the desire to recover, is an existential necessity of the condition of exile since, “the exile is by definition incomplete without the memory of former existence, the necessary yet deceptive proof of his being” (21). The circumstances of exile itself become a primary concern in literature by turning the exiled self (or some other whose experiences are analogous) into the subject of creative writing (Ugarte 20). Thus, it was not necessary for Spanish writers in exile in Latin America to take up arms, nor did they need to have contact with guerrilla groups in order to empathize and identify with them as subjects resisting surrender to the Nationalist victory. The guerrilla fighter comes to constitute a second self for the exiles, one that fulfills the desire to join the continued fight. Such a fight had been carried out during the War mostly in the field of culture, but sometimes also on the battlefield.

Direct experience of the War only occurs, in fact, in the case of the poet Amieva, whose collection of testimonial poems describes the guerrilla activity, including names of participants and sites of engagement. This poetry constitutes an epic vision while at the same time it is a tribute to the solidarity of the international members of the resistance in France who fought for an ideal of universal justice (Albornoz 72). Works by Aub and de la Fuente are more bitterly reflexive in tone; they focus on the experience of the guerrillas in the isolated confinement that fuels both their sense of political purpose and anxiety in the face of the impending danger of persecution, treachery and death. In both writers’s texts the unequal battle between the guerrillas and superior forces are played out for readers: *Este tiempo amargo* revisits, through conversations, the commonplaces of the past war and the possibilities of a future restoration of the people’s power, while Aub’s drama projects hope for justice in the international order. *Cumbres de Extremadura* and *La niña guerrillera* however go farther when they venture into the complex universe of the guerrilla. They take the current event as an opportunity to return to familiar materials related to the lost war, in an attempt to explain the dynamics and trajectory of defeat. From a somewhat broader perspective, the novel and play coalesce the literary modes that exemplified the other works: both juxtapose the humanism of the everyday, the epic hope that is characteristic of combat literature, and the sorrowful recapitulation of lived experience that is proper to exile writing.

Cumbres de Extremadura recounts the story of a prototypical peasant who becomes an armed fighter. Named Bohemundo, the character presents marks of both individual and collective identities. He could hail from almost any corner of the Peninsula: “Supongamos, sin embargo, que era de Torviscoso, lugar de la provincia de Cáceres; figurémosle sorprendido por la sublevación en Jarandilla y por los moros en Madrigal de la Vera, de donde tiene que tirarse a la tierra llana, por más detalles” (19) (Let’s suppose, however, that he was from Torviscoso, located in the province of Cáceres;

let's imagine him surprised by the uprising in Jarandilla and by the moors in Madrigal de la Vera, from where he has to go down to the plain to get more details). He represents the common people politicized by the circumstances of the Republic and the War that, when persecuted and forced to flee, escape into the rough terrain of the hills where they endure hardships until finally coming into contact with others who share their condition; at this point they are transformed into guerrillas. As part of a group as well as on his own, Bohemundo attacks infrastructures and individuals, enables escapes, and facilitates safe-passage to Republican held territory. The 1938 version of the novel victoriously concludes with a final section or "Apotheosis" that recounts the trial and conviction of landowners, and highlights the promise that the hitherto illiterate country folk might learn to read and write. The modified 1945 edition is expanded with an entire chapter in which Bohemundo returns to his village unable to resist the urge to visit his wife and children; the risk he takes proves to be disastrous when he is arrested, tortured and finally executed.³ Such an ending not only figures as an update on the status of the guerrillas, but also, on a symbolic level, stands as a commentary on the denouement of the War itself.⁴

The novel's first critics concur in associating it with the kind of agit-prop literature written during the War on both sides. These writings endorsed the struggle and resistance through emotional discourses that condemn the cruelty of the adversary and legitimate their own use of violence, while celebrating the bravery of their troops and ridiculing the leader or the enemy as a collective.⁵ In comparison with other forms of narrative, brevity and a documentary quality distinguish this literature. The novel aspires to the documentary function that propaganda narratives typically deploy as a means to certify their truthfulness. Herrera Petere's book offers a detailed description of geography, and cultural and linguistic context of rural Extremadura, where in August 1936 a particularly virulent repression occurred perceived to be, as Secundino Serrano notes, "a laboratory of the republican model its most revolutionary" (58). The novel could be considered a fictionalization of the chronicle *Los guerrilleros de Extremadura*, published in Barcelona one year before and signed with the pseudonym Lázaro, if it were not for geographical inaccuracies and instances of poetic license, like the bombing described in part four, that do not correspond to this historical account (Gálvez 111). There are, however, aspects of *Cumbres de Extremadura* that distance the text from pure propaganda. The work is not short, nor does it use the simple structure that is customary of the propaganda novel. It is divided into parts or "cumbres" (summits), which are in turn fragmented into short chapters punctuated by scenes that achieve descriptive immediacy through short paragraphs of a few lines or a single sentence. The functionally descriptive and narrative aspects of the text are marked by lyricism and drama that facilitate the emotional identification with the protagonist and his circumstances, and also expose

the type of genre hybridity associated with the literary experimentation of the writers of Herrera Petere's generation in the 1930s. These divergences from purely propagandistic narrative are what permit *Cumbres de Extremadura* to make the transition to the category of exile literature, and to maintain its relevancy without major modifications at a moment when the guerrillas captured the attention of the overseas exile community.

The narrative is infused with a reflective mode that alternates arbitrarily between the stream of consciousness of the protagonist and the voice of the author, which is sometimes in line with the thoughts of the character but at others is distanced through the insertion of learned references. These inconsistencies are indicative of the dilemma faced by the engaged intellectual who is of bourgeois origin but chooses to identify with the humble man as a representative of the people. Sebastiaan Faber explains that the mythicization of the people "as provider of cultural 'raw material,'" and nostalgically characterized as belonging to a rural pre-modern world, is not devoid of paternalism and became the principal ideological tendency of the intellectual exile in his quest to equip the nation with the refined culture it needs (5). This brand of populism was not invented in exile, but rather inherited from the cultural and ideological programs pursued by the Frente Popular (Popular Front) before and during the Civil War (Faber 29). In this context, the intellectual would take on a messianic role as savior of the nation, based on an equally mystical notion of essential identity and tradition (Faber 29). Therefore, the guerrilla incarnates the ideal man of action, like the writer armed with culture and politics, and/or the Spanish people who must be guided to a reorganization of state and society.

Nationalism also appears in *Cumbres de Extremadura* on another level: the glorification of a resilient Spain in the midst of its "tragedy" is symbolized by that of a specific regional location, in the same way that the guerrilla action carried out there comes to stand in for the war that is fought throughout the rest of the national territory. The summits of Extremadura serve a literary function beyond that of merely indicating a specific geographic setting. Indeed, they turn out to be the "skeleton" of the story, and are symbolically replicated across the country (Galvez 108). They also function as an emblem of the "cumbres de toda Iberia" (summits of all Iberia) and reproduce on a miniature scale the reality the nation is faced in the time of the War (Herrera Petere 250). As a replica of the map of the nation, the sierra is described as being divided by a political boundary that separates those loyal to the Republic from those followers of the Nationalist rebels; it is through this interstitial zone that the guerrilla must pass and also where the rest of the people find themselves trapped. Other fundamental descriptive elements of the Civil War are improvised, such as the description of airstrikes. Although the mention of the bombing of the Sierra de Caceres in autumn 1936 does not corroborate with historical facts, without it the existence and actions of the guerrillas as symbols of the wider conflict

would no doubt seem incomplete. Furthermore, it should be recalled that Herrera Petere wrote the novel in Madrid under siege and beset by bombs.

The figure of Bohemundo is made collective when his individual traits merge with those of other men who have escaped to the mountains; among them, the organizer of the group, nicknamed “Deleitoso” (Delightful) stands out. His comrades not only give Bohemundo the nickname “Trimotor” (Three-engined) but also confer on him the identity of guerrillero through the acceptance of a set of shared goals and common risks. The basic differences of character that separate the conscientious Deleitoso from the more human and visceral Trimotor cause them to be identified with the average Republican fighter who comprehends, both rationally and emotionally, the necessities of freedom and justice (Mana 353). The story includes an ample collection of characters that covers the full range of human and political factors that made up the society in conflict. All of this is always approached from an ideological perspective that defines the frame of the narrative, presenting a stereotyped view of the protagonist’s social enemies. Like Herrera Petere’s other wartime writings, such as the *Romances de “El mono azul”* or his agit-prop theater, these characters correspond to archetypes based on social- or national-political categories: the cruel landlord, the selfish bourgeois, the hysterical *Falangista*, the hitman, the effeminate Italian, the sadistic Moor and the arrogant German contemptuous of Spanish land and its people. All of them, when put together with the protagonist leading the glorified people, rounds out the novel’s fairly complete choral structure.

Violence intervenes in *Cumbres de Extremadura* as another major character, and this is still further proof of the superseding of the basic tenets of propaganda literature. In spite of moral grounds that justify violent acts along partisan lines, such instances are not presented devoid of nuance. The essential violence of war is recreated in the text through scenes in which cruelty itself becomes the central protagonist by outstripping the human qualities of the character. Brutality as an excessive factor in the everyday life of the main character might, on one level, correspond to a will to impact through an excess of passionate cruelty for the sake of documenting reality (Nora 37). This constitutes an attempt to represent in clear fashion the dialectic “represión-contrarrepresión” (repression-counter-repression) that in real life the fugitives and the army maintained using equal methods (Serrano 37). And in this way, the intentions behind narrativizing the most important and distinctive aspects of the War are also revealed.

The guerrillero is characterized as a product of a harsh environment; however, the author avoids the idealizations typical of leftist propaganda, even making use of a tactic that is more commonly detected on the right—the association between cruelty and ignorance, and between brutality and the lowest strata of society (Nora 37; Pérez Bowie 43). For example: the guerrilla blows up a train full of Italian soldiers that are previously described

as young, educated and friendly. Ideology and the context of war justify the brutal actions and the celebration of the killing: “Llevaban dentro una alegría enorme, que les brotaba risas en la garganta fatigosa. Habían trabajado por España, por su pueblo, por su libertad” (105) (They swelled inside with enormous happiness, which sprouted laughter in their tired throats. They had worked from Spain, for its people, for liberty). Bohemundo alone is capable of killing, in cold blood, a national army telegraph officer who prays in solitude: “Melancólico miró en la dirección que señalaba y no dio un grito. El navajón de Bohemundo hizo de las suyas. El mundo es de los hábiles” (28) (Melancholic, he looked in the direction indicated and did not let out a cry. Bohemundo’s knife did its job. The world belongs to the skillful). Later on, the viciousness of Moorish soldiers is described in a similarly schematic and straightforward manner, although without explanation or justification: “[A una mujer víctima del asalto] le clavaron una bayoneta por la entrepierna y la levantaron en alto. Por fin la arrojaron a un arrollo seco, donde se la comieron los perros y los animales salvajes” (170) (They stabbed [one of the female victims] in the inner-thigh with a bayonet and lifted her up. Finally, they threw her into a dry gully where she was eaten up by dogs and wild animals). The barbarous act is perpetrated by a group of faceless men whose brutality is redoubled by nature in the form of wild animals. This replication is yet another example of Jameson and Burke’s reference to the non-anthropomorphic that displaces human qualities and adds texture to a conception of war that does not obey a moral ideology.

Carmen Moreno-Nuño notes that the collective character of *Cumbres de Extremadura* acts as mechanism to narrate *intrahistoria* (254). Indeed, *intrahistoria* explains a state of war that remains unresolved, even though the novel, in its final version, locates readers in the interval between Bohemundo’s arrest and his execution as criminal in the public square among the neighbors who saw him grow up. Following the Nationalist victory, a final paragraph eloquently ponders the repression that the struggling people will endure, and the scars this violence might leave on the collective psyche: “Después desfiló la gente, huidiza y silenciosa. / Saludaban con la mano tendida. Unos iban a olvidar. Otros a recordar. Otros, la mayoría, a llorar en silencio y a morder el polvo de la tierra española (343) (Afterwards the people marched past, evasive and silent. / They waved with outstretched hands. Some were going to forget. Others, the majority, were going to cry in silence and swallow the dust of the Spanish earth).

Bohemundo’s execution fulfills the mission of providing a comprehensive account of the Civil War, but the defeat of the Republic is not cast as definitive: the seemingly defeatist ending is followed by an epilogue through which readers learn of a guerrilla that, in spite of casualties, manages to regroup and continue the fight. In this instance, the persecuted guerrilleros are likened to heroes of chivalric literature who take action in a Spain that, like Gaula, needed “sus Palmerines, Beltenebros,

Pentapolines, Amadises y Tirantes el blanco, de nueva estirpe y nobleza: de tierra campesina y corazón aldeano” (250) (their Palmerines, Beltenebros, Pentapolines, Amadises and Tirant Lo Blancs of new lineage and nobility from rural lands and with villager hearts). With this “colofón” (colophon) *Cumbres de Extremadura* assumes the characteristics of a narrative of exile in which the guerrilla typically takes on the attributes of a hero, often presented in legendary hues (Moreno-Nuño 253).⁶ At the same time, the ending also represents a strengthening of a populist brand of nationalism in which the pre-modern essence is coupled with references to Spain’s Medieval and Golden Age literature. The cultural value of the book of chivalry is bound to the values the knight represents, which are above the material and so are, in the same degree, a perfect example of the “culturalism” inherited from Republican ideology (Faber 29).

Theater critic José Monleón underscores the relationship between propaganda’s effectiveness (“urgencia”) and guerrilla warfare (“Bergamín: el Madrid” 60). *Teatro de urgencia* or *de circunstancia* is a term coined by Rafael Alberti in 1937 to describe an agit-prop theater that was characterized by rapid composition, schematic plot and type-characters. As an urgent response to the need to produce propaganda for an audience not accustomed to theater or other forms of high culture, the literary quality of many of these works was often sacrificed. As occurs with other similar genres, the pressing call to authors was answered mostly with mediocre pamphleteer skits and shoddy dramas, although others echo, to a greater or lesser degree, the aesthetic experimentation of contemporary avant-garde playwrights. Paralleling the reconciliation between stylistic and political purpose, these writers support the Republican cause without stripping their plots of nuances and abstractions that are indicative of more neutral (if not self-critical) stances (Cueto 17). The guerrilla was in fact not a theme of agit-prop theater created during the war years, but it became one in the literature of writers in exile who had supposedly abandoned the impulse and justification for writing propaganda. Aub lucidly notes how the first exiles shared the guerrilla’s miscalculation that the Allied liberation of Europe would extend to the Iberian Peninsula. As he writes, “ciertas quimeras y espacios imaginarios” (880) (certain illusions and imaginary spaces), led to the creation of what he refers to as a “teatro de circunstancias malas” (880) (theater of bad circumstances).

In 1945, Bergamín’s *La niña guerrillera* was published by fellow exile Manuel Altolaguirre’s press, in a volume with illustrations by Pablo Picasso, together with an earlier work entitled *La hija de Dios*.⁷ The drama’s action is set among the maquis in the Pyrenees, and tells the story of a girl, orphaned by war and charged with the care of her younger siblings, who takes up the arms, the horse and the attire of a young friend killed as a guerrilla fighter. She goes on to become a dreaded combatant with a price on her head; in the end she dies in an ambush.

Monleón identifies *La niña guerrillera* as a late example of war and propaganda theater, and as such has an uncharacteristic elegiac structure: “[Se permite] expresar los dolores y problemas de la propia zona” (“Bergamín” 67) (The pains and problems of the zone are allowed to be expressed). For his part, Ángel García Pintado notes that this theater is no longer one born out of urgency, but rather of reflection; he refers to it as a, “teatro de la rabia melancólica, de la indignación reflexiva” (9) (theater of melancholic rage, of reflexive indignation). These somewhat contradictory appreciations highlight the juxtaposition that occurs in the play of two approaches to writing: rage and indignation denotes a propagandistic mode while melancholy and reflection are proper to the mood of exile. Like Herrera Petere’s text, the piece does not conform to the formula of brevity, simplicity of storyline, and limited number of characters that define propaganda drama. It does maintain certain elements of agit-prop theater, like the Manichaeian scheme and archetypal characters, in spite of the fact these were supposedly abandoned upon exile. Indeed, once the writers left Spain, many tried to forget what they had written during the war—of those who went on to enjoy certain recognition, such as Aub, Alberti and Germán Bleiberg, many preferred to consider these texts as lost or simply did not include them in later collections of their works. Certainly, the real drama of the exile theater was the immediate loss of its primary audience, as Manuel Aznar insists. This situation, when combined with the limited audience constituted by the exile community itself, Cesar Oliva explains, also made it possible for authors to find refuge in a return to experimentation and to give themselves over to personal visions: “A caballo entre el recuerdo, el sueño y la realidad” (164) (Straddling memory, dream and reality).⁸

La niña guerrillera could not be a better example of Oliva’s idea. Bergamín is among those intellectuals who had, since the decade of the 1930s, advocated for a type of theater capable of reaching a mass audience without sacrificing aesthetic experimentation and that could be integrated into programs for the advancement of education (Monleón, “Introducción” 28).⁹ Once in exile, his obsession turned to legitimating Spanish literature as a reflection of its rich popular tradition (Faber 132). In *La niña guerrillera*, he tackles the contemporary political context with an avant garde edge that sought to recover traditional literary forms. The author acknowledges, in a preliminary note to the edition illustrated by Picasso, his debt to Maurice Maeterlinck’s poetic symbolism and to popular ballads; he cites the “Romance de la doncella que se fue a la guerra” compiled by Menéndez Pidal in Spain, and popular in Europe following the figuration of Joan of Arc (Bergamín 222). Like the novel of chivalry, the ballad as an early modern cultural form captured the imagination of exiled intellectuals once again in the pursuit of a populist form of nationalism.¹⁰

Bergamín presents his “tragedia de España” (tragedy of Spain) insisting on the use of the term *tragedy* just as Herrera Petere had done in his novel.

In the play, the two dramatic approaches through which exile theater addresses the issue of the Nation are superimposed: the commitment to reflect on and to explain recent history, and the mythicization of the remote past (Paulino 165). José Paulino points out that by joining popular poetry and history in a drama divided into three acts and nine scenes, Bergamín recurs to the form of Lope de Vega's theater and to contemporary Federico García Lorca's the technique of infusing reality with lyricism (169). True, the reality of history in this case corresponds to an elastic conceptualization since it carries into the present the dramatic exposition of a conflict whose unsatisfactory ending needs to be assimilated. The negotiation of temporal space in Bergamín's drama is different from that found in *Cumbres de Extremadura*, which extends the note of presentism that is already part of the thematic structure of the work conceived in 1937. The action of *La niña guerrillera* occurs in the present of its composition, in a setting that is concrete in historical terms: "La acción en España. Época actual. En el Alto Aragón, adentrado en el Pirineo: cerca de la frontera francesa, no lejos de Hecho ni de Ansó, bajando hasta Jaca. Es invierno de grandes nieves" (81) (The action, in Spain. Today. In Alto Aragón, deep in the Pyrenees, near the French border, not far from Hecho nor from Ansó, going down towards Jaca. It is a winter of heavy snowfall). The Pyrenean winter mentioned is none other than that of 1944 when armed fighters occupied the Aran Valley. At the same time, Bergamín plays with a literary aesthetic drawn from the past with a projection into the future: the ballad as a popular oral form of permanent memory. It can be said that this game reveals what Ugarte calls the effect of the "relativity of time" that results from the exile's sense of instability and tentativeness, if we take into consideration that this sentiment is identified with the real or legendary character in danger of disappearing into oblivion. Ugarte writes: "The constant shifts and the inability to observe one's own life in terms of a chronological whole based on the conventional triad, present, past and future" (23). Such a sense of instability and tentativeness, according to Edward Said, turns the task of writing into the true country of the exile, that is, a space in which this activity is used to cultivate "a scrupulous subjectivity" (184).

By representing the Civil War, Bergamín's lyrical drama documents the intrinsic nature of the struggle with no less accuracy than the narrative genre, the limitations of which Jameson highlights. In the theatrical space, scenes of the War are reproduced without the expectation that the scenarios, the actions or the characters correspond to reality on a mimetic level. Symbols or concepts are brought to life on the stage independent of whether the human actors represent or not the characters in strictly anthropomorphic terms. Spain as a site of conflict is represented interchangeably in the entire space of the work, as well as in the more easily localizable tavern that appears in Act 2, Scene 4. In this space, guerrilleros, *Flechas*, Falangistas, *Margaritas*, soldiers, and characters like "La rojilla" (Little Pinko) and "La

cobriza” (Copper-colored)—nicknamed so because of her neutrality—come together and confront one another. Bergamín, in accordance with his political position, takes advantage of the confines of the locale to represent the variety of ideological positions that intervened in the scenario of the Civil War. The writer found it especially difficult to reconcile his strong religiosity with the leftist Republic that he supported (Dennis 180). His notion of Christianity as a doctrine, assimilable to the precepts of social and political revolution, appear in the text by way of a parish priest who protects the guerrilla and a Jesuit who represents the interests of the Church that supported the military rebellion. Historians have documented the frequency of collaborations between rural pastors as mediators and as facilitators of hideout or eventual pardons for the guerrillas; such details corroborate the historical veracity of Bergamín’s presentation of the situation (Serrano 39). Through the mouths of these clergymen, he thus concisely puts into verse his vision of the unfinished war: “El pueblo tiene su guerra/ que todavía no acaba / España estará sin sueño / hasta que pueda ganarla” (135) (The people have their war / that does not finish yet / Spain will be without sleep / until she can win it).

Because of her gender, La Niña without a doubt constitutes an original fictional representation of the figure of the guerrillero. Notwithstanding the character’s uniqueness, it should not be interpreted that female guerrilleras did not exist in reality: their presence in the armed groups, however negligible, is recorded, and usually came about as a result of a decision to follow the fortunes of a lover, husband or brother, and the desire to escape the harassment of the Guardia Civil (Moreno 17). The latter generalization, while true, is perhaps unfair since it disregards the existence of genuine political motives that might have inspired some women to join the fight. In Bergamín’s search for a figuration of the common people reacting to repression and taking up arms, La Niña also makes sense in the way that she combines both feminine and masculine qualities. It corresponds to the reality that women fought on the Republican side in different capacities, and their participation stood in sharp contrast to the professional and wholly male ranks of the Nationalist army. The first time the girl appears in the play she is on the threshold of her home where she cares for and defends her younger siblings: “La Falange, loba parda / le arrebató, con sus vidas / padre madre, hermano, hermana” (194) (The Falange, dun wolf / snatched from her the lives of / her father, mother, brother, sister). Completely orphaned, she exercises the role of mother and father—older siblings of both sexes are also missing. The spontaneous act of adopting the young Martinico’s identity, yet another dead body lying at her feet, corresponds to a desperate and rebellious impulse and a thirst for justice that characterized the prototype of the guerrilla fighter born out of misery and persecution. At the same time, the fact that her male disguise does not completely strip her of her female identity imbues the character with a mythical and allegorical aura

reminiscent of Christian iconography: the image of the dead Martinico cradled in her arms recalls a Pietà. Yet, according to the ballad that is recounted in the drama, she also soon takes on the aura of a legendary hero: “Huye la niña a los campos / montada en bermeja jaca / el relincho de la sangre / resuena por las montañas” (135) (The girl flees to the countryside / seated on a red mare / the neigh of blood / is heard throughout the mountains).

Unlike Bohemundo, whose physical presence is almost constant throughout the novel as his acts of bravery, violence or sex occupy the narrative foreground, La Niña’s actions are not staged. Instead, admirers and enemies make them known through the legendary, quasi-magical quality they are instilled with when recounted. The ambiguous characterization of her gender parallels another duality: in the popular imagination she is seen at once as both demonic and saintly—in death she becomes a martyr. Here as well, the Manichean structure leaves room for reflection on violence as an inevitable recourse that brings together, as Monleón states, “la alianza entre los ideales de fraternidad y la estela sangrienta,” (“*Bergamín*” 63) (the alliance between the ideals of fraternity and the blood-letting), without hiding at any time the fact that La Niña acts equally on a desire for justice and on an impulse for vengeance. When defeated, the girl recovers her human and bodily fragility: “Pusieron su cuerpecito/ destrozado en unas andas/ y ya muerta la colgaron /de lo alto de una rama” (210) (They put her tiny body / destroyed on a portable platform / and already dead they hung her / from the high end of a branch). The drama’s denouement suggests that the story has either been exhausted—and thus concluded—or that it shall persist through the ballad, as a form of collective popular memory, and in consciousness of those who continue the struggle: “Cuando pasan las guerrillas / por estas nieves más altas / recogerán de la niña / tan solo una pizca, nada / El anhelo de su rostro / El suspiro de su alma / El sonido de su nombre / El eco de sus pisadas” (212) (When the guerrillas pass / through these high snows / they will collect of the girl / only bits, nothing / The yearning of her face / The sighs of her soul / The sound of her name / The echo of her footsteps).

In death, Bohemundo and La Niña, so different in their characterizations, most closely resemble each other. Both take on the dimensions of a Christ-figure, given that they are tortured and become the subject of public ridicule. Bohemundo, badly wounded and humiliated, is driven through the streets en route to the jail, and then on to the site of his execution, in agony (233). The character’s personal sacrifice appears to have been made in the pursuit of the future salvation of his people; Herrera Petere thus appeals to a familiar cultural icon without alluding to it directly. Bergamín, by contrast, makes the allusion explicit when the priest exclaims over the body of the girl, “¿No parece este cuerpo llagado, ensangrentado, el divino cuerpo de Nuestro Redentor?” (206) (Does not this wounded body,

bloodied, look like the divine body of Our Lord?). Making the guerrillero characters die in this way presupposes the exaltation of the exemplary sacrifice of a fight that was already assumed to be lost, and in this way instead of a handful of resistance fighters, they come to represent all of those who fought for the Republic, dead, imprisoned or persecuted. The surviving guerrilleros mentioned at the end of both texts represent most accurately the real resistance fighters of the moment of their writing.

Today, the failure of the 1944 raid in the Pyrenees is considered to have resulted not only from the inequality of military force, but also from a lack of effective political vision and the excessive optimism, “espejismos épicos e idealistas” (137) (epic and idealistic mirages), in the words of Secundino Serrano, that emanated from different points of the exile community following the euphoria of the defeat of Germany. Epic idealism indeed permeates Bergamín’s work, tragic ending and all. Arguably, as Herrera Petere creates a novel out of the chronicles that report the activities of the guerrilla that were key in the course of the war, Bergamín’s echoes the poetic imagination that emerged in the process of learning about the unfolding struggle from a distance.

Neither Bohemundo nor La Niña is captured in combat or in a raid, but rather as a consequence of caving into the impulse to be reunited with their families. Like the young man escaped from Extremadura, La Niña is ambushed when she returns to her village: “Vine por mis hermanitos/ que se quedaron sin guarda” (197) (I came for my little siblings / left behind without protection). Family ties (as much as the taking up of arms which required her to renounce her natural domestic rights) are what finally bring the fighter to her tragic end. Historians point out that visits to family and friends were a common circumstance that led to the arrest of guerrillas throughout the period of their activity (Moreno 9). Here again, history confirms the tragic reality that lies behind the dramatic tragedy, which turns out to be such an effective vehicle for transferring war to literature. And yet, the choice of ending in both works indicates still another metaphorical coincidence between the guerrilla and the exiled intellectuals living in Mexico in 1945—a year of frustrated hopes and acceptance of the permanence of exile: the consciousness of the risk of return and of the danger that defines the refugee condition. Enrique de Rivas defends this estimation when he states, “Fuimos ante todo ‘refugiados.’ A quien exilian o destierran le sacan de un contexto donde resulta incómodo o peligroso. Quien se refugia lo hace por salvar la piel” (23) (Above all we were ‘refugees.’ Those who are exiled or banished are expelled from a context where it is uncomfortable or dangerous to be. Those who take refuge do so to save their hides). Said observes that the word “refugee” becomes a political term, which begs a degree of solidarity, while “exile” carries a connotation of solitude and spirituality (184). In the end, it is the latter that

prevails in the Spanish exile community residing in Latin America once the initial cohesion is dissolved.

The armed resistance was suppressed militarily over time, and few guerrillas survived in the refuge of the mountains. The intellectual activity of exile, however, managed to continue on for decades. Unlike the few, including Aub, who chose to die in Mexico, both Herrera Petere and Bergamín were among those who returned to Europe and even Spain with time. They lived to witness the return of democracy to their country and the labors undertaken to recover their work. This was a privilege even if it also implied the double effort of overcoming, as Aznar notes, “el drama del lugar (reconquistar la tierra de los escenarios)” (the drama of place [reconquering the territory of the stage]) and “el drama del tiempo” (the drama of time), and running the risk that the long awaited recognition would either be a passing curiosity or mere homage (14). The immediate interest in the figure of Herrera Petere focused on his writings about the Civil War.¹¹ Like Aub, Bergamín was recognized for the originality of his formal explorations that preceded and went beyond the period and the subject of the War.¹² The recovery of literature written in exile is not exhausted, especially when studied in terms of themes and specific contexts, instead of the author’s biography and literary work, which has been the main critical focus up to now. The project of examining representations of the armed resistance created from the distance of exile offers a chance to glimpse into the present of a historical phenomenon transferred to fiction, and, as in the case of the works discussed here, an image of the civil conflict that, from the time and circumstances of their creation awaits to be looked upon as a repository of recoverable historical memory.

Notes

1. The author published two other novels the same year: *Acero de Madrid*, written earlier, and *Puentes de sangre: Narración a propósito del paso del Ebro*. See Herera and Yagüe.
2. *Este tiempo amargo* did not appear in Chile until 1956. In México, Amieva published his collection of poetry in 1960 and *Los guerrilleros* is included in *Teatro de la España de Franco* that Aub edited in 1966, even though it was staged in 1948. As an example of identification on another level, note that María Enciso dedicated the first part of her poetry collection *De mar a mar*, published by Altolaguirre in 1946, “A los guerrilleros, vigilantes en las veredas de España” (Albornoz 21) (To the guerrillas, guarding the pathways of Spain).
3. This is the version that the author considered to be definitive and that is reproduced in the third edition, the only one published in Spain. According the author’s initial plan, made prior to his death in Geneva in 1977, this 1986 edition was to be prologued by José Bergamín; instead it ended up being presented by another friend and fellow exile of 1939, María Zambrano (Gálvez 108).

4. The other changes between versions have to do with a purging of the language that makes the corrected text somewhat shorter, and a modification in the epilogue, where present perfect tense verbs are changed to the past tense.
5. Santos Sanz Villanueva categorizes Herrera Petere's work as, "novela naturalmente sectaria" (naturally sectarian novel) and "sin ningún tipo de análisis" (165) (without any kind of analysis); Carlos Blanco Aguinaga, calls it an "auténtica novela de guerra" (authentic war novel) without "el más mínimo distanciamiento estético entre obra literaria e ideología" (37) (any aesthetic distance between the literary work and ideology).
6. The back-cover text of the 1945 edition includes a quote by Benjamín Jarnés, exiled in Argentina, that describes Bohemundo as "el tipo más español de España, desde Viriato, desde siempre. El héroe pegado a la tierra" (the most Spanish-type, since Viriato, since always. A hero born of the land).
7. *La hija de Dios* recovers the myth of Hécuba in the rural Segovia of 1936: a mother's four sons die at the hands of the Nationalists and their followers.
8. *La niña guerrillera* premiered in Uruguay in 1953 at the Teatro Artigas in Montevideo, the city where Bergamín lived between 1947 and 1954; the producer was exile Margarita Xirgú.
9. The authors were the first to recognize the limited success of war theater as a weapon of propaganda and as a vehicle for cultural enrichment. In 1937, *El triunfo de las Germanías*, a poetic, Renaissance-inspired epic written by Bergamín and Altobelli, premiered unsuccessfully. Aub, more prolific during the war period, turns out to be the author that most successfully incorporated experimentation into agit-prop theater, which was better adapted to the brief and schematic structure of the genre.
10. The corpus of Republican poetry was collected under the title *Romancero de la Guerra Civil. Romance: Revista Popular Hispanoamericana* is the title of one of the many literary publications that appeared in Mexico between 1941 and 1942.
11. Hispamérica also published in 1977 Herrera Petere's *Teatro para combatientes* and some of his poems from the *Romancero de la Guerra Civil*. In 2009, the centenary of his birth was commemorated in his native Guadalajara, and a future edition of his complete works was announced.
12. *La Niña guerrillera* premiered in Madrid in 1983, the same year as the writer's death, as part of the Ciclo de Teatro Español en México, directed by José Luis Alonso de Santos. In 1980, *Melusina y el espejo* and *Medea la encantadora*, written in 1952 and 1954 respectively, premiered at the Teatro María Guerrero in Madrid. Aub's *Teatro Completo* was not published until 2001, even though in general his works have been frequently staged, including major productions like that of the 1944 *San Juan* at the Centro Dramático Nacional in 1998.

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