

IMAGERY AND STRUCTURE  
IN THE POETRY OF RAFAEL ALBERTI

by

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## INTRODUCTION

It is impossible to read modern Spanish literature without developing an appreciation for the outstanding qualities of Rafael Alberti's poetry. Even in comparison with the works of his contemporaries, Federico García Lorca, Jorge Guillén, and Pedro Salinas, Alberti's poetry is noticeable for its imagination and perception. In this dissertation, we will study the use of imagery throughout the poet's work, hoping to discover in that way how Alberti uses his materials to create the total effect of his poems.

Many critics have mentioned the importance of imagery, not only in Alberti's works, but in those of the entire generation of 1927 in Spain. This generation's much-publicized interest in the poetry of Góngora is an evident indication of the poets' taste for the image. Very little criticism, however, has offered a precise explanation of Alberti's techniques in using imagery. Rather, the critics have generally focused on the ideas in his work, on previous literary treatment of the themes, on the diverse moods and tones of the books, or on the verse patterns Alberti employs. Alberti's best poetry is difficult, and studies have stopped at a definition of the externals of his poems.

C. B. Morris does comment on imagery. He observes particularly the repetition of certain images by Alberti, some

of which are parallel to those employed by Quevedo.<sup>1</sup> Other images which he notes are those organized in thematic and emotional series. He does not, however, analyze the effect of images, nor does he relate them to the structure of the poems in which they occur. Morris has also discussed Alberti's work in A Generation of Spanish Poets, and has published an excellent monograph devoted to Sobre los ángeles. The generational study considers Alberti in relation to the poetic trends of his era. One chapter describes very generally irony, the shock tactics, and the flippant extravagant humor of Cal y canto and Sermones y moradas. A second chapter notes the emotional control in Sobre los ángeles and its efforts to express a spiritual crisis. The monograph is restricted to Sobre los ángeles, explaining it as an attempt to give poetic form to emotional chaos in four dominant motifs. Morris examines these themes in 29 different poems of the book, showing how they offer different views of the themes. Morris's book is the most complete and perceptive study of Sobre los ángeles; but it deals almost exclusively with the themes of this work, it does not consider how these themes are given new meanings through imagery, and it therefore underplays the poetic experience produced by Sobre los ángeles.

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<sup>1</sup>For more specific information on works of criticism here mentioned, the reader may refer to the bibliography.

Solita Salinas de Marichal has also studied the imagery in Alberti's early works from Marinero en tierra to Sobre los ángeles. Although she has established clearly the antecedents of certain motifs, images, and verse patterns in Alberti's poetry, she does not discuss the way in which images work to produce a poetic experience. She notes, for instance, uses of the figure of the sea siren, of paradise, of the sea itself, of certain colors in previous literature; and she compares their presentation in earlier literature and in Marinero en tierra. She also notes Alberti's ties with earlier literature in his use of rhythms and phrases. The book is useful, but it differs greatly from our study. We will examine the poems more as independent entities, rather than in terms of tradition; and we will focus on the experience produced by the poems for the reader. In addition to this book, Mrs. Marichal has written an article on the thematic trajectory of Alberti's poetry as a continual search for paradise. She sees Marinero en tierra as the paradise retrieved from youthful memory, Sobre los ángeles as the ruins of paradise lost, and the later exile poetry as the hope of paradise for the future.

Concha Zardoya has published a short study of metaphorical technique in Marinero en tierra. She explains the structure of the book, its fundamental themes and poetic meter. The bulk of the article describes the poetic transformation of objective reality through metaphors: for example,

the humanization of material, the dehumanization of persons who are characters, or the miniaturization of material. She also catalogues the colors and sounds of the book, including the connotation given each color and sound. But her study, being largely descriptive, again neglects to study the inter-relationships between different techniques, and to examine their effects on the reader.

Other useful insights to Alberti's work are offered by C. M. Bowra and Andrew Debicki. Bowra stresses the diversity of Alberti's work and relates this quality to conflicting elements in the poet's personality: the clash of emotion and intellect, and a superabundant wealth of artistic gifts. The study treats only Sobre los ángeles at length, devoting considerable space to the mythology connected with the "angel" images. It does not deal with imagery.

Debicki, in the ninth chapter of Estudios sobre poesía española contemporánea, points out the consistency of Alberti's work in its style and its themes. The principal unifying trait which he discovers is the poet's use of the "objective correlative" in poems from all the major periods of Alberti's work. This technique is a situation or action which is equivalent to the total meaning conveyed by the poem. This "objective correlative" elicits from the reader an entire gamut of sensorial, emotive, and intellectual significance.

Dealing with the trajectory of Alberti's work, Ricardo Gullón has published two articles that also attempt,

in brief lines, to characterize each of the poet's works. His comments are fragmentary and often rather impressionistic, but they are useful as an introduction to the complete production. Luis Monguió has written a similar article in which he includes a biographical sketch of Alberti and brief comments on all of his poetry. He stresses Alberti's fusion of purely Spanish forms, the popular lyric tradition, and gongoristic elements, with personal notes. Finally, G. W. Connell has published several articles which cut across different books of Alberti. His most important contribution, "A recurring theme in the poetry of Rafael Alberti," links the poet's works of the 20's with those of the 50's, stressing the clash between values in all of them. In the early poetry this clash is between the world of Alberti's "colegio" and the outside world; later it takes place between the past and the futuristic modern world; and finally it occurs between class distinctions and his social beliefs. As is evident from our description of all these articles, they too stress concepts, themes, and general effects; they never examine how particular poems produce unique, rich meanings through the use of original devices.

Of secondary interest, Ana Maria Winkelman and Angel Crespo have noted the taste for the figurative in two separate articles on A la pintura. It might also be mentioned that two translations of Alberti's poetry contain lengthy introductions. The French translation, by Claude Couffon, includes a complete biographical study of Alberti.



As this summary of the major criticism of Alberti's poetry indicates, very little precise work has been done on stylistic techniques. A tendency has developed to speak in very generalized terms and to treat broad thematic areas, rather than to discuss style in particular poems. In this study we will examine, as concretely as possible, the methods Alberti has employed to create poetic meaning. We will not only show the poems in the context of the entire work from which they are taken, but also explain how each poem creates meaning independently.

This study will focus primarily on the relationship of image to structure in particular poems. It is in this relationship, as observed throughout Alberti's major production, that we discover the key to the creative experience of his poetry. By the same token, the tensions and changes in this relationship explain those variations of tone and mood in the poems which other critics have noted, but never explained. The fluctuations in this relationship are a very important clue for the understanding of the meaning of Alberti's poems. We hope to show direct links between the action of the images and the structure, and the nature of the poetic experience.

Alberti's early work shows image and structure almost completely identified with each other. Poems in Marinero en tierra (1924) and La amante (1925), his first works, are brief scenes or dramatic moments in which the action has

suddenly been halted, and in which attention is focused on one aspect of the situation, on one image.<sup>2</sup> The poems open new lines of communication between the reader and nature by integrating various levels of experience within one perception; they force us to re-evaluate our stock responses to the stimuli of life.

Cal y canto (1926-27) shows a growing complexity of image and of structure. In this, Alberti's most experimental work, the first poems concentrate on the creation of luxurious and rich sensations by gongoristic exploitation of imagery. Here, the structure is sacrificed to let the poet exploit the most intricate and complicated possibilities of imagery. The later poems of the book, meanwhile, exploit the possibilities of form. Here external structural forms hold together the diverse extravagant and fanciful images, testing the limits of form to the fullest point. The poems use conventional structures such as a guidebook, a letter, or an elevator ride, to draw widely varying images into a whole. These works stress the movement, the contradictions, and lack of traditional order in the modern world. The introduction of more external forms in the later poems suggest Alberti's progressive lack of confidence in the accepted natural order of the universe.

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<sup>2</sup>Dates given here for Alberti's works refer to the years in which the books were composed.

Sobre los ángeles (1927-28), reveals another progressive step in the relationship of the image to the structure in Alberti's poems. As in Cal y canto, we find wildly disparate objects and levels of experience used as vehicles for various images. In this book, however, the independent experimentations with images and structural forms have converged. Instead of more artificial structuring devices such as a guidebook or an elevator ride, the frames now are made out of patterns of images themselves, through balances, repetitions, or contrasts. Alberti has now combined his techniques in using imagery and in using structure, and has created integral works, which produce unified and total experiences. This is evident only after one studies in detail several individual poems--which might explain why it has never been observed by critics taking a general approach to the book.

The most significant change in Alberti's production occurs after Sobre los ángeles. From a highly innovative structuring of imagery, the poet turns to the somewhat less successful forms of traditional logic. The subject of Chapter IV, De un momento a otro (1934-1939), shows the development of structure through persuasive argument and explanation, rather than through the creation of the poetic "presence" produced in earlier works. The coordination of image and structure disappears in this book. Instead, the images are vague emotional attacks which do not support the

logical frames. A la pintura (1945-1947), the last of Alberti's works studied, expands the use of logical development in the poetry and introduces a more conceptual imagery. In this book, images and structure are integrated into a successful poetic experience of a wholly different nature than that of the earlier works.

The books we have chosen to examine represent the major periods of Alberti's poetic production, both in terms of theme and of technique: the early nature poetry, the experimental "futuristic" poetry, Sobre los ángeles (the most successful of his works), the social poetry, and the later traditional poetry. Other works are not included because they tend to repeat the characteristics of poetic technique described in these books. Through a study of the techniques mentioned, the various integrations of individual image and structure into a whole, we hope to reveal the constants underlying all of Alberti's work and make clearer the exact nature of the experience of his poetry. We will see how Alberti's poetry organizes particular elements in a variety of ways, but always so as to create a unified poetic vision, which stimulates and releases insights and emotions for the reader. All of Alberti's books, diverse as they may seem, have a great deal in common: they create unique relationships between their imagery and their structures, and in this way offer us irreplaceable experiences.

## CHAPTER I

The poems of Marinero en tierra and La amante offer to their reader the possibility of placing himself in a new and immediate contact with the vital natural functions and forces of the universe. The themes of these poems focus on youthful innocent love, on the sea and the freedom of the sailor's life, and on the joy and beauty of small and seemingly insignificant objects and experiences of the universe. The two books share the same poetic world. The setting and characters of this world are natural and elemental: the sea, animals, flowers, villagers, and the earth itself. The poems achieve value by capturing strong clear emotion in forms to which the reader is able to spontaneously respond with renewed insight.

This poetry always depicts life in terms of nature. Even when treating other themes such as love or innocence, it presents them in the context of nature. A large group of the poems of both books expresses the speaker's desire for union with nature, usually represented by the sea. Very often this desire causes the sea to be identified as the original homeland of the speaker, as in this part of "El mar":

El mar. La mar.  
El mar. ¡Sólo la mar!

¿Por qué me trajiste, padre,  
a la ciudad?

¿Por qué me desenterraste  
del mar?<sup>1</sup>  
.....

The sea is also identified with happy childhood experience, with the rhythms of a mother who rocks and lulls her child to sleep:

Mar, aunque soy hijo tuyo,  
quiero decirte: ¡Hija mía!  
Y llamarte, al arrullarte:  
Marecita  
                  --madrecita--,  
¡marecita de mi sangre! (p. 53)

In the poems dealing with love, nature plays a major role: Alberti either compares nature and the speaker's love or loved one, as in "Mi corazón" (p. 31), or depicts love with a natural setting within the rhythms of nature, as in "Debajo del chopo, amante":

Debajo del chopo, amante,  
debajo del chopo, no.  
  
Al pie del álamo, sí,  
del álamo blanco y verde.  
  
Hoja blanca tú,  
esmeralda yo. (p. 91)

The majority of the poems of these two books are short, often consisting of about ten or fewer lines each.

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<sup>1</sup>Alberti, Poesías completas (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1961), p. 51. All subsequent quotes will refer to this edition and will be cited in the text.

There is a notable lack of abstract ideas or complicated logical development of perceptions in the works. Their effectiveness depends on confronting the reader with short intensified perceptions of experience through one central image or through some other device. This image on the one hand demands direct sensual response; on the other it offers the possibility of entrance into an entire attitude or perspective on life. By the presentation of these particular scenes or particular objects, the poems cause the reader to see them in the light of a much larger concern. Through a study of the images and techniques Alberti uses in these two books, we will see how the poet both evokes an immediate reaction in his reader and leads him to a wider perspective.

"A Rosa de Alberti que toca pensativa el harpa," appears to be simply a rather stylized portrait of a beautiful woman seated at the harp. There is a definite pictorial quality present in the poem; it accents the external appearance of the woman within the setting:

Rosa de Alberti allá en el rodapié  
del mirador del cielo se entreabría,  
pulsadora del aire y prima mía,  
al cuello un lazo blanco de moaré.

El barandal del arpa, desde el pie  
hasta el bucle en la nieve, la cubría.  
Enredando sus cuerdas, verdecía  
--alga en hilos--la mano que se fué.

Llena de suavidades y carmines,  
fanal de ensueño, vaga y voladora,  
voló hacia los más altos miradores.

¡Miradla querubín de querubines,  
 del vergel de los aires pulsadora,  
 Pensativa de Alberti entre las flores! (p. 29)

The appeal of the poem, however, arises from a fusion of its descriptive details with an elusive, celestial beauty within the imagery. Her identification with tangible physical reality is balanced by her ethereal, angel-like quality; this allows the poem both to sustain recognizable familiar aspects of a person, and yet also capture the fleetingly perfect quality of the woman's beauty. The tension which arises out of this duality within the imagery evokes a sense of wonder in us--that sense of wonder which we feel on seeing a perfect object in nature. It summons up the realization that this person or object is on the one hand a part of everyday reality, yet also on the other is something radically different. It captures the ideal qualities present in the everyday world which surrounds us.

The first stanza of the poem already creates this basic contrast by situating the girl in a position halfway between the two levels of earth and sky, "Allá en el rodapié / del mirador del cielo". The contrast continues in the juxtaposition between the rather colloquial "prima mía" and her delicately romantic attire of pure white airy fabric: "al cuello un lazo blanco de moaré."

The second stanza again focuses on the physical aspects of the girl, seated behind and covered by the harp,



with her hand entwined in its strings. The imagery here subtly transforms the scene, identifying and fusing the girl with nature. Her skin against the curl of her hair is snow and the motion of her hand the twining of a plant. This metaphorical description of the girl's body grounds her in a natural and physical world; but the particular elements of nature used also open the possibility for further dimensions in the scene. She is described in terms of nature, but in a particular manner which breaks the normal categories of both the girl's identity and that of nature, and thus directs us to a wider context. Alberti accomplishes an intermingling of nature and woman which causes us to redefine both.

In examining the metaphor, it is important to note the exact elements of nature employed, the snow and the vine. These lend a clear esthetic touch, the snow suggesting a pure untouched impression and the vine a kind of artistic pattern. This note is repeated as the eye follows the line of the harp against the girl, while she seems to twine herself through its cords. These images clearly encompass the essential duality of the whole poem, and leave one wavering between a sense of the girl as person, and as beautifully designed ornament.

The two final stanzas of the poem continue this duality between the two aspects of natural beauty. They close the work with a gesture by Rosa, her flight, which is

a final hint of the airy illusion of her appearance. Stanza three describes her as possessor of gentle qualities of dreamy vague illusion, all of these characteristics adding to her more elusive qualities. The mention of the color red in her physical description, on the other hand, stands in contrast to the earlier white which she wore, and accents her more concrete appeal. The flight of the last line implies a celestial being, and underlines the instability and vulnerability to change of such a lovely vision. It nevertheless also suggests the perfectly natural flight of a bird from branch to branch.

The last lines of the poem return the reader to the initial motifs of the celestial and to the title, "pensativa." The speaker then ends with an exclamation which underlines and summarizes the fragile beauty of this instant of perception, and the miraculous discovery of an elevated vision amidst a human reality. He enlists the attention of the angels ("querubín de querubines") to witness the picture he has seen and drawn, underlining twice the idea of Rosa in an earthly setting ("del vergel de los aires," "entre las flores") and also applying an epithet which accents the fact that she is human, a person, "Pensativa de Alberti." Her name here highlights her personality as an earthly being, a member of a society.

One final note in this poem is the recurrence in the last line of the adjective found in the title, "pensativa."

This repetition highlights the general lack of progressive logical development and growth of the perceptions within the poem, which is characteristic of the structure of most of the poetry of Marinero en tierra and La amante. Each of the short poems of these books focuses on a picture or a situation in which the meanings emerge from a description of the scene in which the development of the action has been halted or concentrated on one certain aspect of that scene. The reader is confronted with a static vision which implies action and meaning indefinitely beyond itself. In "A Rosa de Alberti," from beginning to end, the same dual vision of beauty is present without the addition of a logical argument. The vision is reaffirmed and brought into focus, but essentially it remains the presentation of a flash insight. The poem is the sudden recognition of the occurrence of beauty in ordinary life. The picture of the girl is the representation of the sudden sensation of beauty in its multiple aspects, rather than a narrative account which reaches this conclusion. The description we have of the girl that we have just examined is infused with a deeper insight of beauty in a universal sense. The reader is suddenly awakened to the infinite possibilities of a single scene frozen in time which causes him to reevaluate and "see again" the physical world around him.

Another poem which employs imagery in a manner very similar to "A Rosa de Alberti," and which also discovers

several contrasting meanings within a visual representation is "Rosa-fría, patinadora de la luna":

Ha nevado en la luna, Rosa-fría.  
 Los abetos patinan por el yelo;  
 tu bufanda rizada sube al cielo,  
 como un adiós que el aire claro estría.

¡Adios, patinadora, novia mía!  
 De vellorí tu falda, da un revuelo  
 de campana de lino, en el pañuelo  
 tirante y nieve de la nevería.

Un silencio escarchado te rodea,  
 destejido en la luz de sus fanales,  
 mientras vas el cristal resquebrajando . . .

¡Adiós, patinadora!  
 El sol albea  
 las heladas terrazas siderales,  
 tras de ti, Malva-luna, patinando. (p. 28)

The imagery of "Rosa-fría" juxtaposes and interweaves emotion and sensory perceptions in a complex, very much like the emotional and conceptual terms of the poem just discussed. Like "A Rosa de Alberti," this work is based in a pictorial situation: a speaker with certain undefined emotional ties to the situation describes a person within her physical setting. There is the inference of a personal association between the speaker and the protagonist which is not clearly defined but arouses the reader's interest. In both poems, the hint of these ties, which impinges on the attitude of the speaker, draws the reader into the work as he attempts to more clearly define this tone or relationship.

The central insight of "Rosa-fría" is the recreation through imagery of a moment of heightened awareness as the speaker parts from a loved one. The scene is encompassed by, and approached through its sensory and emotional facets. This moment is reproduced through a mixture of sensory and emotive qualities in the images, not unlike that employed in the synesthetic images of the French symbolists. There is the same suggestion of certain emotions corresponding to physical sensations. The sentimental and sensory impact of this scene is captured through the elements of cold, light, and a sense of the tactile, of the concrete texture and shape. These elements are intimately associated with, and represent, the speaker's interior experience.

The first stanza of the poem opens with the juxtaposition of cold and white light, in an image which conveys the brittle sharp sensation of a freezing moonlit winter night. The epithet, "Rosa-fría," incorporates the girl into the tone of the scene, as the shimmering silver reflection of the trees on the ice is added, and the wavy shaped flutter of the muffler in the air takes the form of a sign of farewell. The girl is mentioned here only in direct address, but the metaphoric gestures or stances of nature with which the figure is associated take on a nostalgic meaning. The entire mood of the speaker is established through the images, all of which are based in descriptive elements of nature surrounding the scene: "abetos patinan

por el yelo," "adiós que el aire claro estría," "pañuelo tirante," "nieve de la nevería."

In the second stanza, the meaning does not arise quite so directly out of the objects as in the first, but out of the opening line of direct farewell to the girl, and out of an immediate attempt in the following lines to capture the exact shape and texture of the girl's appearance in this fleeting instant. The speaker notes the fabric of the skirt, and its standing three-dimensional shape against the snow background. The image of the tautly stretched and frozen white handkerchief vividly comes to represent for him the emotion of the farewell scene. The integration of these elements by the voice of the poem tends to unite the two different levels of reality, the physical and the emotional, in one vision and a strained longing is forcefully suggested. The simple objects are given meaning through the integration of voice and situation.

The third stanza of the poem continues the imagery of cold and white light, but also adds the element of sound. We see a tangible texture of silence that weaves and unweaves against the delicate pattern of the skater as she splits the surface of the ice. As in the previous stanza, we find a sharp control of sentiment through an exterior description which suggests through mood and atmosphere rather than explaining personal feeling: the cut of skate blade on ice and a silence so tangible and cold it is

frosted, as well as the speaker's words left suspended in the air.

In this poem, as in "A Rosa de Alberti," the description of a scene takes on wider significance through the juxtaposition of particular elements within the images. The union of different areas of experience, such as the physical senses and the emotions, or objects and emotion, cause the reader to reevaluate objects and ideas within a new context and receive new experiences from the encounter. The speaker here views physical material not in its functional role and not as a hard opaque surface. He approaches physical reality open to a personal encounter, as a living responsive phenomenon. The speaker communicates actively with his surroundings. The experience which the reader receives encompasses this deeper appreciation of the material and opens new pathways for him.

A further example of fusion of differing levels in the imagery of descriptive poems can be seen in the sonnet "Santoral agreste." Here, Alberti employs a series of images based in the religious tradition of the lives of the saints to embody the speaker's sense of reverence before the aura of transcendence of a sunset. The contrasting levels within the imagery, in this case, result from the sharp difference between a heavy solemnity and a whimsical playful note undercutting any melodrama which could be associated with such a description. The sonnet thus

communicates a vigorous sense of joy in nature which keeps this poem from falling into the abstract or the philosophical as often happens in nature poetry. Instead, a radically new approach to the earth is created:

¿Quién rompió las doradas vidrieras  
del crepusculo? ¡Oh cielo descubierto,  
de montes, mares, vientos, parameras  
y un santoral de par en par abierto!

Tres arcángeles van por las praderas  
con la Virgen marina al blanco puerto  
del pescado; ayunando, entre las fieras,  
se disecan los Padres del desierto.

El Santo Labrador peina la tierra;  
Santa Cecilia pulsa los pinares,  
y el perro de San Roque, por el río,

corre tras la paloma de la sierra,  
para glorificarla en los altares,  
bajo la luz de este soneto mío. (pp. 26-27)

The opening stanza of the poem begins with three lines which offer an imposing view of nature, but the final line of the stanza breaks this tone entirely by giving a comparison with the lives of the saints. This comparison at first seems utterly incongruous.

The second and third stanzas of the poem draw parallels between the rustic, wild countryside and the lives of the hermits. Despite these parallels, the comparison seems amusingly whimsical. The unexpected images of wandering archangels and the desert church fathers among the wilds continue to shake up our view of the scene. The idea of angels strolling through the meadows or a chance encounter



with one of the hermits of the desert is a definite jolt to the reader's sense of reality, but one which is justified by the rustic countryside described by the speaker. A kind of harmony is revealed between the initial stanza of sweeping bleak desert landscape and the solemnly austere lives of the saints. This exact measure of appealing incongruence causes the reader to reevaluate his beliefs.

In all of the poems we have thus far examined, we have noted how the fusion of different levels of experience through the imagery brings about the poetic experience. In "A Rosa de Alberti" it was the contrast between the descriptive externals of a girl which identified her with a tangible familiar reality, and the intuitive perception that qualities of her beauty were too delicate and perfect to belong to this world. In the following poem, "Rosa-fría," the imagery reveals the relationship of physical sensation to the nostalgic inner emotion of the speaker, while "Santoral agreste," through its alternately reverent and capricious metaphors, awakens a new way of knowing nature. All three poems point out new relationships which expand the limits of the reality we functionally accept. "A Rosa de Alberti" allows its reader an insight into the essential contradiction which exists in every delicately beautiful thing, "Rosa-fría" permits a glimpse into a man's feelings and the unique way in which they are associated and aroused by a scene from nature, while "Santoral agreste" is a

totally unconventional integration of religious tradition and the earth.

In all of these poems, the images which work to form the tone and meaning are located within a descriptive scene (the picture of the girl playing the harp, the girl skating in the moonlight, and the setting sun). In all of them, it would be possible for the reader to ferret out what might be considered the "objective" situation in which the poem is based. The reader is aware that he is seeing a picture or situation he recognizes, through a particular mode or perspective which recreates the situation but does not erase all previous associations and identifications. Given the "objective" context, the reader tends to compare this with the vision given, in order to capture the precise feeling which the poem evokes.

Philip Wheelwright has discussed the quality and effect of images such as these, identifying very effectively the sense of transcendence given an ordinary scene:

The surface simplicity of a sense of presentness can be deceptive; for although the simplicity does exist in so far as an experience of it is had (by the nature of the case there cannot be any way of refuting that!), yet the peculiar character of this or that experienced simplicity has been made possible by an indeterminate network of psychic associations that is never the same in any two individuals. That is why simplicity cannot for the most part be conveyed simply.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Philip Wheelwright, Metaphor and Reality (Indiana University Press, 1968), p. 159.

In other poems of Marinero en tierra and La amante, however, the effect is achieved through slightly different devices than those we have pointed out in the earlier poems, although many of them seem to resemble the previous poems closely. The distinctive feature which marks these works are images which introduce elements of fantasy into the poem, and finally create a sphere subject to much more imaginative principles of operation than those we accept in our "normal" universe. Here, the use of fantasy causes a more immediate and intuitive response from the reader, a response which does not readily allow him to intellectually compare his experience with that given in the poem. It immediately transports the reader into a new imaginative universe in which his everyday experience does not directly apply.

"Pregón submarino" is a clear illustration of Alberti's use of fantasy in images. Like most of the poems of its kind, it is very brief, consisting of three short stanzas. It captures the longing of the speaker for an idyllic escape away from urban society and into nature:

¡Tan bien como yo estaría  
 en una huerta del mar,  
 contigo, hortelana mía!

En un carrito, tirado  
 por un salmón, ¡qué alegría  
 vender bajo el mar salado,  
 amor, tu mercadería!

-- ¡Algas frescas de la mar,  
 algas, algas!

In the first stanza the speaker longs only for withdrawal to a kind of private paradise within the sea. The second of the stanzas allows the force of the speaker's imagination to act on this desire. The image is entirely without reference to what we consider "realistic" experience and to society's usual conceptions of the ideal existence. This vision of the cart pulled by the salmon captures a sense of the unspoiled and uncorrupted, an entire universe of purity and simplicity of action to which the reader is forced to react in an utterly intuitive way. We can parallel our longing for simplicity and purity with this image, but it is outside normal categories of conscious thought. The final lines of the poem suggest the speaker's surrender to his vision, which reinforces an already coherent realm and implies that the salmon image is a normally accepted order of life.

Another one of these poems which employs fantasy in order to capture a radically fresh conception of the possibilities of life is "Branquias quisiera tener" from Marinero en tierra. Here, again, a desire is embodied in one central image. The speaker envisions his loved one in a realm apart from him; metaphorically he places her in the sea tending submarine gardens. He is separated from this ideal realm. From the first line of this work, an immediate and intuitive reaction is demanded which cannot be easily related to any previous conception:

Branquias quisiera tener,  
 porque me quiero casar.  
 Mi novia vive en el mar  
 y nunca la puedo ver.

Madruguera, plantadora,  
 allá en los valles salinos.  
 ¡Novia mía, labradora  
 de los huertos submarinos!

¡Yo nunca te podré ver  
 jardinera en tus jardines  
 albos del amanecer!

(pp. 52-53)

Not only are logical limits surpassed by this idea of growing fish gills, but the speaker also calmly offers as persuasive justification for this unusual desire, the fact that he wishes to be married. Clearly, it is not normally possible to live a commonplace life underwater, yet the tone of the speaker seems to justify this highly impractical idea with the most practical kind of logic. The stress between these two opposing schemes of reality keep the reader in a constant state of discovery as he attempts to reconcile the two ideas. The sense of the ordinary in this vision allows us to identify with the rhythm of the life but the fanciful notion of acquiring gills instead of perhaps a wedding outfit awakens a whimsically creative attitude.

Again in this poem, as in those previously studied, the two remaining stanzas serve to reiterate the one basic image already established: the vision of the girl tending submarine gardens, in a world outside the reach of the

speaker. It is important to note that no new element enters the image in these last two stanzas, except the certainty of never reaching the girl. Like the single visual picture of Rosa, the poem does not depend in any real sense on narrative progression, but only on the implications of the one central image. The structure common to all these short works is not developed in time. It captures one sensation or moment and expands it by probing its suggestive possibilities.

Other examples of poems in which the imagery employs fantastical elements are "Jardín de amores" (p. 43) and "Elegía" (p. 41), both of which also use the motif of the garden as the central figure for the creation of a purely imaginative domain. In a similar manner, "La aurora va resbalando" also achieves this same effect through personification that changes the imposing phenomenon of dawn to an intimate personal level. The red streaks of dawn become the scratched finger of a child:

La aurora va resbalando  
entre espárragos trigueros.

Se le ha clavado una espina  
en la yemita del dedo.

--¡Lávalo en el río, aurora,  
y sécalo luego al viento! (p. 35)

This sense of the concrete and immediate in nature is also produced in "Por el mar, la primavera," which is a

dramatic scene representing the arrival of spring on a boat. Spring is not descriptively personified; the reader simply seems to overhear the rising excitement of two speakers as they watch a feminine presence disembark:

Por el mar, la primavera!  
¡A bordo va!

--¿De qué barco, compañero?  
--Del Florinda, compañera.

¡A bordo va!  
Llega.

¡Pronto, a la escala real,  
por verla desembarbar!

¡Ya!

(p. 63)

There is again apparent a hint of whimsical irony in the exchange of the two speakers in that they find nothing unusual in the fact that spring should arrive on a boat, but on the other hand are concerned over the somewhat prosaic question of which boat she arrives on. This is the same contradictory quality characteristic of the two poems just studied in which the speaker finds the highly unusual notion of dawn's redness as a scratched finger perfectly normal, but then injects a note of our most prosaic reality to warn dawn to heal it properly in the stream and wind; or that creates a world in which a man longs to grow fish gills, then explains that they are necessary in order to marry. This alternation and juxtaposition of the lightly fantastic with the everyday creates a new vision of the potential of

everyday existence. Such a whimsical vision of life allows the reader entrance to a very original world created by these short poems, but prevents the images from ever seeming ridiculous to the reader.

Thus far, we have focused our attention on the role of the image in creating new relationships between the reader and the universe. We have also noted how the imagery works to define tone and meaning in the works. A significant number of the poems of Marinero en tierra and La amante do not depend precisely on imagery for their effect. The poetic function of the techniques is similar to the one we have been discussing, but affects the reader through different means. In both cases we find short concentrated visions and bits of experience which evoke the flavor and touch of the felt world, and at the same time imply total attitudes and perceptions of existence.

Alberti achieves this purpose not only through imagery; he also uses snatches of episodes which would seem to imply the progression and change of action common to narrative structure. They suggest action outside themselves to the responsive imagination. As used by Alberti, however, these truncated bits of narrative involve little or no development of action. They are taken from the climactic point of the narrative structure, and picture the same static but intense perception evident in the descriptive poems; these short narrative poems make use of the implications of the elements common to the narrative form.



In "Zarza florida" of La amante, for instance, one finds a speaker who narrates one incident, the discovery of his badly wounded lover beneath a bramblebush. The reader cannot escape the implication of a series of incidents preceding and resulting from this one moment. We might ask ourselves about the speaker's exact relationship to the woman, the character of the woman, or the reasons and results of the tragedy. But the incident is presented devoid of any answers to such questions:

Zarza florida.  
Rosal sin vida.

Salí de mi casa, amante,  
por ir al campo a buscarte.

Y en una zarza florida  
hallé la cinta prendida,  
de tu delantal, mi vida.

Hallé tu cinta prendida,  
y más allá, mi querida,  
te encontré muy mal herida  
bajo del rosal, mi vida.

Zarza florida.  
Rosal sin vida.  
Bajo del rosal sin vida.

(p. 90)

The isolation of the poem from any background material, however, lends it the force and intensity of a sensation which affects the reader in a manner closely parallel to the descriptive images studied earlier. The descriptive images of the earlier poems connect elements which we had seen as unrelated, and cause us to examine again the basic categories

in which we functionally divide life, thus expanding our vision. These narrative images, on the other hand, cause a readjustment of basic assumptions by exploiting the elements of narrative structure. By isolating and emphasizing a single intense moment of the narrative form, larger and more universal qualities are lent to the moment. The whole of the usual narrative form is implied rather than stated.

In this poem the three central stanzas obviously contain the entire skeletal action which the speaker remembers. The refrain which begins and ends the poem gives a sense of wholeness to the fragmentary action and stylizes it, removing it one step from the very realistic recounting of an incident. The two opening lines take on significance only after their role in the action. Thus, with their repetition and the addition of the final line of the poem, a kind of tragic-ironic significance is added to what, at first, was only a pleasant bucolic refrain.

In the central sections, the action is stripped of all but the essential lines. It is remembered in three concentrated stages, the only apparent sentiment in the scene being the four references to the lover ("amante," "mi vida," "mi querida," and "mi vida"). The entire affective force of the poem is dependent on its function as the precise climactic moment of the action and on the richness of context which is implicit from this moment.

In Marinero en tierra, we may find other examples of these anecdotal images. In "Mi corza," as in "Zarza florida," repetition is used as a kind of design by which the experience becomes poetic object. The clear divisions and development of "Zarza" are not present here and the action is even more spare and tersely described, but the appeal and effect of the poem is again dependent on its being, for the speaker, the climactic point of an implicitly larger narrative whole.

In "Mi corza, buen amigo," the speaker describes the killing of a deer by wolves at the edge of a river. The fact that the deer is white and is destroyed by a pack of wolves who flee seems to suggest a larger, perhaps archetypal, significance of the destruction of innocence and grace by force. More important than this, however, is the intensity of the moment as conveyed by the speaker in his repetitions of the few sparse details of the action: he mentions the deer twice and the wolves and the water three times in the course of only eight short lines:

Mi corza, buen amigo,  
mi corza blanca.

Los lobos la mataron  
al pie del agua.

Los lobos, buen amigo,  
que huyeron por el río.

Los lobos la mataron  
dentro del agua.

(p. 35)

There is, obviously, nothing quite so transcendent about the death of an animal in everyday life. The intensity and suggestiveness of the scene is due rather to the dramatic quality of isolating a single fragment of a larger whole, clearly attaching importance and value to the scene. The stark controlled emotion is implied but not stated.

In other instances, Alberti chooses vignettes which do not imply a further narrative structure, but are short dramatic scenes typical of a very particular way of life, and imply a certain regular order and arrangement of life. This is most obvious in selected brief scenes of rural or of maritime life. In these poems there is little or no figurative language nor other common poetic structural techniques. It is merely the representation of a moment of country life which allows the reader to see far outside its limits into a world of simplicity and natural order.

For example, in "¿Por qué me miras tan serio," the speaker confronts a cart driver, and in a few short lines sketches what is implicitly a whole outlook on life:

¿Por qué me miras tan serio,  
carretero?

Tienes cuatro mulas tordas,  
un caballo delantero,  
un carro de ruedas verdes  
y la carretera toda  
para ti,  
carretero.

¿Qué más quieres?

(p. 95)

The scene is dramatically represented for its own sake and not for pragmatic reasons. It touches on the freedom and order of completely fundamental concerns and allows a sudden view of a framework of existence which directs the reader back to elemental values. The reader envisions an entire world in which these are the only concerns.

An even more effective instance of this attempt to seize the elemental values of a particular way of life occurs in "Pregón del amanecer." The poem is an awakening cry to various villagers to begin the day's activities, a naming of the particular regular signs of morning activity:

Arriba, trabajadores  
madrugadores!

¡En una mulita parda,  
baja la aurora a la plaza  
el aura de los clamores,  
trabajadores!

¡Toquen el cuerno los cazadores,  
hinquen el hacha los leñadores;  
a los pinares el ganadico,  
pastores!

(p. 97)

Here, the depiction of this one moment of village life at dawn, giving one the sensation that he is concretely present as it occurs, indicates the daily rhythm of life which is incorporated and attuned to the natural cycle of the day. It allows the reader to share momentarily the pleasure of a way of life in harmony with an ideal of innocent order. It permits a direct entrance into elemental

unspoiled existence without any explicit message or instruction as to what reaction is asked of the reader.

The poems of Marinero en tierra and La amante which we have studied clearly reveal a desire to return to a primitive union with all of the natural world in which man reacts spontaneously to all that confronts him. These books recapture sensual impressions and associations within their images and demonstrate the relationship of these impressions to complete attitudes toward existence.

Structurally, the two books resemble one another in their preference for short scenes or memories of the speaker's past experience which limit themselves to one highly charged moment without the benefit of explanation or chronological development. The primary literary device used in these poems is the imagery which joins disparate elements, or which isolates moments which belong to larger wholes and carry the affective content of larger units.

The first three poems mentioned accomplished this transformation by fusing various levels of experience and emotion within descriptions of static physical scenes. The reader receives a richer experience of beauty through the contrasts in the imagery of "A Rosa de Alberti." Nature opens up to him as a living vital experience in "Rosa-fría," eliminating the sharp divisions between himself and physical reality. The later poems capture a sense of fantasy within scenes from everyday existence, while a series of narrative

images exploits the implications of narrative form to stimulate the reader's imagination beyond the confines of the simple scene described. The nature of these images, then, demonstrates the most radical function of all poetry, the renewal and expansion of life through language.

## CHAPTER II

Compared with the simplicity of technique and direct emotion of Marinero en tierra, the poems of Cal y canto challenge the reader with their complexity. The poetry of the book falls very naturally into two groups both by theme and by technique. The first group consists of those poems showing a definite influence of the works of Góngora. These works, such as "Araceli," "Amaranta," "El jinete de jaspe," or "Corrida de toros," are descriptive; they focus principally on scenes of the sea, on bullfights, of mythological characters such as sirens and dryads, and in at least one instance, on angels very similar to those which reoccur in Sobre los ángeles. The evident influence of Góngora is present in many of the themes, but more importantly in the highly complicated imagery and syntactical structures of the works; these, in order to be understood, must be disentangled with the same effort as is necessary with gongoristic verse. The manner in which objective reality is transformed and recreated is similar in the works of the two poets.

Andrew Debicki has illustrated the parallel use of imagery by the two in studying a section of the "Soledad tercera" written by Alberti in honor of Góngora.<sup>1</sup> Debicki

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<sup>1</sup>Andrew Debicki, Estudios sobre poesía española contemporánea (Madrid: Gredos, 1968) p. 245.



points out the similar use of hyperbaton, of mythological allusion, and of the extended clause in the work of Alberti and Góngora. He also notes Alberti's originality in drawing an intuitive response from the reader, through an objective correlative, even before the physical scene is apparent.

Another aspect of this same influence is treated by Solita Salinas de Marichal. She points out that Cal y Canto was written in the gongoristic tradition but was not an imitation of Góngora. She also insists that the positive nature of Alberti's contact with Góngora emerges in the new formal and thematic innovations present throughout the book, and mentions the creation of a mythological world for twentieth century man, comparable to, but not duplicating, that which Góngora fashioned for an earlier age.<sup>2</sup> Cal y canto certainly reveals a consciousness of this need that modern man has of myth; however, the possibilities which Alberti perceived in the modern world to equal these ancient myths are presented in a most ambiguous tone.

Marichal has also noted in Cal y canto the destruction of the marine world which was characteristic of Alberti's early writing. She points out the use of constant, dynamically violent images, in contrast to the serene world presented earlier.<sup>3</sup> A close study of "El jinete de jasper"

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<sup>2</sup>Solita Salinas de Marichal, El mundo poético de Rafael Alberti (Madrid: Gredos, 1968) pp. 149-150.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 155.

makes clear both this aspect of the book, and the manner in which images are constructed in it:

Cuatro vientos de pólvora y platino,  
la libre fiera fija encadenada  
al sol del dócil mar del sur latino,

por jinete de jaspe cabalgados,  
incendian y, de pórvido escamada,  
tromba múltiple empinan sus costados.

Castillos litorales, las melenas  
de yedra y sombra ardidadas, una a una,  
sangriento el mar, sacuden sus almenas.

Náyades segadores y tritones,  
con la guadaña de la media luna  
siegan las colas de los tiburones,

Las ánimas en pena de los muertos,  
robados a las auras por los mares,  
zarpan y emergen de los bajos puertos.

Caracolea el sol y entran los ríos,  
empapados de toros y pinares,  
embistiendo a las barcas y navíos.

Sus cuernos contra el aire la mar lima,  
enarca el monte de su lomo y, fiera,  
la onda más llana la convierte en cima.

Rompe, hirviendo, el Edén, hecha oceano,  
cae de espalda en sí misma toda entera . . .  
y Dios desciende al mar en hidropilano. (p. 205)

"El jinete de jaspe" exploits the full emotional and visual possibilities of a sea scene, in the same manner in which Góngora explored the poetic suggestions of the natural world. Here, the reader witnesses the effect of the wind rising over the ocean, its progressive effect of agitation, and the rich imaginative stimulus which the moving waves present.

The first two stanzas focus on the wind's apparent silvery dusty qualities, making it seem a stronger force, almost visible, and capable of arousing the chained quiet power of the water beneath the sunlight. The image extends into the second stanza where the rich jade figure of the ocean awakens from its chains to ride the force of the winds.

The predominant imagery of the third and fourth stanzas places the reader in a world of castles, battlements, sea nymphs, and Tritons. A sense of violent movement and conflict enters here. The sea becomes bloody as mythological characters shear away the tails of the sharks, and castle points tremble. The intensity of the action reaches its highest point in the sixth and seventh stanzas which picture the rocking of the waves as bulls charging the sailing vessels with backs arched and horns cutting the air.

The final stanza shows the resolution of action as the personified waves fall on their backs with the idyllic calm completely destroyed. Then, in the last line, the elevated and serious dramatic tone of the work suddenly shifts to a whimsical humorous note as God lands on the ocean in a seaplane. This particular line is a capsule representation of the effect of the modern world on previous traditions. Here, and repeatedly in Cal y canto, symbols of modern technology undercut the high seriousness of literary and institutional traditions.

It is important to notice in "El jinete de jaspe," the highly decorative nature of the images, which transform the rising movement of the ocean's waves into a drama of the most diverse and picturesque type. Another aspect which the poem demonstrates is the interlocking and repetition of particular images, the various references to luxurious and decorative elements in the first stanzas ("platino," "jaspe," "pórfido escamada"), medieval and mythological notes in the third and fourth stanzas ("castillos," "almenas," "náyades," "tritones"), and destructive and deadly elements of the entire work ("incendian," "sangriento," "siegan," "ánimas en pena," "embistiendo," "fiera," "cae de espalda"). Considering the close relationship of this poem to techniques of gongoristic tradition, the last line becomes more important as a contrast to this tradition.

"El jinete de jaspe" is, like most of the gongoristic poems of this book, a descriptive work. Its most interesting point is the complication and intricacy of the imagery and its relationship to the scene it serves to describe. All the possibilities of excitement, beauty, and drama of a simple scene are exploited through the images. A sense of richness is evoked in the colorful references to jewels and fine embroidery, while the mythological characters and castle battlements create a feeling of the exotic, and contribute to the luxury and refinement of the atmosphere. In

every case, the object to which the subject is compared is more valuable and precious than the original.

For example, in the description of the winds as platinum and fireworks, the wind shares few apparent visual characteristics with these objects. The comparison of the wind and the metal and powder accentuates certain qualities of each of the objects and causes the reader to see the wind filtered through the silvery preciousness and exciting color of the other objects. It lends greater worth to the wind. In another comparison the ocean rides the wind as a jade figure. The basis of the comparison here is the common rich green color, but in addition the beauty and precious qualities of the jewel also associate themselves with the ocean.

By comparing the terms of these images with those of earlier poems by Alberti, a striking development is apparent. The short works of Marinero en tierra and La amante lifted nature scenes out of their most common standardized definitions and renewed the reader's relationship with nature by alternating opposing schemes of reality within the images. Very often the earlier poems intermingle the lightly fantastic and the everyday, or the emotional and the visual. By isolating concentrated moments of life in the images of these works the reader is allowed a quick but highly significant glimpse of the undiscovered possibilities of nature. In addition, these bits of experience are most often a

stimulus to awareness rather than the presentation of an accomplished fact. Both their length and their frequently half-serious tone contribute to this effect.

Cal y canto, on the other hand, in its gongoristic poems, creates through imagery a significantly different experience. The reader no longer finds a solitary isolated comparison, but a great number of comparisons. The earlier poems only implied imaginative possibilities about nature. Cal y canto describes elaborately these suggestions. There exists an obvious desire in the wealth of imagery to create an entirely different picture of reality, to duplicate all the phenomena of nature on another scale richer, more colorful, and more exciting than the original. The sparse understatement of Alberti's earlier poetry changes to multiple full hyperbole. Bombarded by complicated and exotic imagery patterns, the reader feels as if every observable physical perception has been transformed to exploit its most imaginative potential.

If we examine other poems of the section we notice many similar experiences. A second example is "Araceli," a description of the night-time sky that employs imagery involving the color white. Like "Jinete de jaspe," the description of the scene is transformed by the repetition of rich and decorative comparisons that produce a peculiarly luxurious panoramic sensation for the reader:

No si de arcángel triste ya nevados  
 los copos, sobre ti, de sus dos velas.  
 Si de serios jazmines, por estelas  
 de ojos dulces, celestes, resbalados.

No si de cisnes sobre ti cuajados,  
 del cristal exprimidas carabelas.  
 Si de luna sin habla cuando vuelas,  
 si de mármoles mudos, deshelados.

Ara del cielo, dime de qué eres,  
 si de pluma de arcángel y jazmines,  
 si de líquido mármol de alba y pluma.

De marfil naces y de marfil mueres,  
 confinada y florida de jardines  
 lacustre de dorada y verde espuma. (p. 199)

Unlike "Jinete," "Araceli" presents no particular action; but repeated attempts are made to accentuate the beauty and purity of the constellations. In the same manner in which the rising waves served as imaginative stimulus in the previous poem, here the sparkling flashes of white light suggest an entire range of stylized possibilities to the speaker. In the first two stanzas the speaker compares the constellation to various objects, accepting some, rejecting others. Stress is placed upon the heavenly, almost divine, qualities of the stars, associating them with angels and candlelight. Again, there is a tendency to create a densely luxurious atmosphere by reference to heavy scents (the jasmine, for example) and by comparisons with marble, crystal, and the swan. The combination of these exquisite objects makes of nature an esthetic rather than an instinctive experience.

The last two stanzas continue comparisons with these same objects, mentioning again the archangel, the jasmine, and the marble. This highly stylized set of comparisons contains no philosophical statement, but the movement, abundance, and weight of the imagery draws the reader into reflexions on the nature of physical sensation and on the power of association to make the world both artistic object and experience. These poems function as an exploration of the esthetic possibilities of the physical world.

We discover the same poetic effect achieved in a different way in "Amaranta." The images become a very vivid means of recreating the contours and material qualities of physical form, evoking the sense of polished smoothness of a woman's breasts by describing them as lemons and as licked by a greyhound. If this same scene were described in simple prose, the result would be absurd. In the context of the poem, however, it produces an exotic effect:

Rubios, pulidos senos de Amaranta,  
 por una lengua de lebrej limados.  
 Pórticos de limones desviados  
 por el canal que asciende a tu garganta.

.....

(ll. 1-4, p. 200)

A similar effort to capture physical effect and transform it fundamentally through images of highly disparate terms occurs in "Corrida de toros." This poem



endeavors to reproduce the movement and the sound of the bullfight through a barrage of quick images that employ other objects with which sound is associated:

De sombra, sol y muerte, volandera  
grana zumbando, el ruedo gira herido  
por un clarín de sangre azul torera.

Abanicos de aplausos, en bandadas,  
descienden, giradores, del tendido,  
la ronda a coronar de las espadas.

Se hace añicos el aire, y violento,  
un mar por media luna gris mandado  
prende fuego a un farol que apaga el viento.

.....

(11. 1-9, pp. 208-9)

These three poems exemplify the most important methods of imagery of the poems of the first part of Cal y canto. Under the evident influence of Góngora, Alberti experimented with the emotional and sensorial effects that imagery could produce. The result is a series of poems in which color, sound, and emotion are intensified to create a jewel-box world.

The second large group of the poems in Cal y canto reveals an effort by the speaker to define himself more exclusively in relation to the emerging technological world. The speaker views the technological marvels as essentially incongruent with the world as it has existed up to this point.

The structure of the poems of this group deserves careful attention. It has been pointed out by C. B. Morris

that the rapid succession of images now used represents an effort by Alberti to imitate the effect of the cinema.<sup>4</sup>

There does exist a parallel between the quick cuts from scene to scene which the cinema employs, and the flashing of image after image with little apparent relationship between them. The resulting juxtaposition produces a shock effect on the audience of either medium, as they attempt to find similarities in successive images.

The movement from one individual image to another can be plausibly explained in this fashion, but this does not explain sufficiently the overall unity of the poems. The poems of Marinero en tierra limited themselves to one presiding image, so their internal unity was unquestioned. The images of Cal y canto turn away from the juxtaposition of a few simple elements to the interweaving of many factors, and the structure reaches even further into experimentation. The question of the relationship of each image to the organic whole of the poem is open in Cal y canto. At times the simple idea of a central coherent meaning in each work is doubtful, and the reader seems to experience only small bits and pieces of meaning, which shift and turn, rather than one unified form with organically structured parts.

The import of this idea is clearer when we examine a particular poem. "Carta abierta," for instance, demonstrates Alberti's exploration of the limits of structure

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<sup>4</sup>C.B. Morris, A Generation of Spanish Poets (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 108.

both within the poem and within the modern world. Through the juxtaposition of unrelated material the reader is led to question the necessity of a completely closed structure. Instead, the poem modifies the idea of form to include seemingly extraneous and contradictory material which ultimately has meaning in a much larger context, and corresponds to the nature of contemporary society. The innovative structure of the work points to the idea that experience is coalescent, and urges us to redefine our concepts of logic and our basic assumptions about the nature of the world.

"Carta abierta" is lengthy; it contains eighteen four-line stanzas. It does not rely on a narrative or mythical form to coordinate and direct its length, but seems to wander at random from object to idea to literary allusion. It opens with a statement obviously intended to contradict logic, in which the reader finds the world order reversed: fish swim on dry land and bicycle riders calmly glide over the ocean waves. The final two lines of the stanza then relate this idea to the speaker, personally suggesting a childhood of boat and bicycle rides and an elementary-school classroom near the sea.

In the two following stanzas of the poem, the theme of the emerging technological world enters with a reference to the ascension of the first balloon, and the idea of men reaching for the stars in seaplanes. This theme is opposed

to the speaker's childhood schooldays in which he is faced only with the past, which is dry and dead in comparison with the new exciting present-day world in which he lives. Instead of the freedom and power of the airplane and the balloon, he is faced with the study of the history of Rome and Carthage, with ancient Latin and with algebra.

Despite certain stray elements, such as the wandering sandals of the second stanza, there is a clear coherence in these early lines. The fourth and fifth stanzas, however, deviate wildly from the themes. Recurring marine objects have placed us in a sea setting. Now we suddenly find Anne Boleyn strolling along the seashore; meanwhile a movie is being shown out-of-doors. In addition to Anne Boleyn's utterly unexplained presence and the significance of that presence, we also discover that she is in danger of being dissolved by a policeman's lantern which resembles a flower (the incongruence of the gentle, delicate flower-lantern image, and the threatening image of a policeman ready to dissolve a woman is not the least of the reader's problems):

.....  
 Globo libre, el primer balón flotaba  
 sobre el grito espiral de los vapores.  
 Roma y Cartago frente a frente iban,  
 marineras fugaces sus sandalias.

Nadie bebe latín a los diez años.  
 El Álgebra, ¡quien sabe lo que era!  
 La Física y la Química, ¡Dios mío,  
 si ya el sol se cazaba en hidropiano!

. . . Y el cine al aire libre. Ana Bolena,  
 no sé por qué, de azul, va por la playa.  
 Si el mar no la descubre, un policía  
 la disuelve en la flor de su linterna.  
 .....

(11. 5-16, p. 241)

To further complicate the issue, a group of highwaymen in dinner jackets suddenly appears with pistols aimed. Then, just as suddenly, they are spirited away out of sight. It is possible that these robbers have some connection with the policeman of the previous stanza; perhaps the mention of all these characters refers to a movie plot being shown in the outdoor cinema. But even given this possibility, the meaning of the scene is still undetermined within the context of the whole poem.

After this isolated cops-and-robbers fragment, the sixth stanza returns to the theme of travel and modern swift movement. It emphasizes the ease with which men now can move from city to city and country to country. Again, as in the first stanza, the vehicle used to express this idea is an image which clearly contradicts logic, thus emphasizing the seeming impossible feats that modern inventions have now made possible. New York is not said to be nearer Cadiz, but is in Cadiz; China is no longer mythically distant and isolated, but a part of a world community; and the man who passes you in the street may be from any part of the world and therefore of any color imaginable, even green.

This alternating sequence of intelligible and incomprehensible fragments continues throughout the work. The constant which is often repeated is the protagonist who finds himself in a world so essentially changed that all previous knowledge and symbols are outdated and dead. At the same time, there are recurring images for which there are multiple possible readings, some suggesting perhaps a fear of the unknown in this new world, and others which parody any overly serious attitude:

.....  
 Exploradme los ojos y, perdidos,  
 os herirán las ansias de los naufragos,  
 la balumba de nortes ya difuntos,  
 el solo bamboleo de los mares.

.....  
 (11. 53-56, p. 242)

.....  
 Pero también, un sol en cada brazo,  
 el alba aviadora, pez de oro,  
 sobre la frente un número, una letra,  
 y en el pico una carta azul, sin sello.

.....  
 (11. 61-64, p. 243)

The lack of internal structure in "Carta abierta" is not necessarily purposeless. On the contrary, the most important aspect of the experience of the poem is its ability to challenge the reader's assumption that every creation must reveal one single acceptable unity of all its parts. The reader is invited to use the fragmented images of the poem as separate experiences to be felt on different levels; they do not necessarily contribute to the predominant

theme of the whole. We may enjoy the humor of an aviator sailing through the air with a blue envelope, bearing no stamp in his beak, or witness the numbness resulting from destruction that leaves blood and ashes in its wake, without a necessary connection between the two. The title of "Carta abierta," as well as the subtitle ("Falta el primer pliego") confirm the freedom which this fragmentary structure implies. The structure as well as the theme illustrate the challenge of constant change. There is no defined beginning or end.

Although many of the poems reveal little internal structure, an exterior structural form has been imposed upon them which limits and defines the experience. "Carta abierta" is an obvious example in which the title serves to alert the reader to the opening of possibilities. The elements mentioned in the poem may differ considerably from one another, but the form of a letter which the work adopts holds them together. Other poems use the form of a guidebook, of an elevator ride past several floors in which the occupants are described, or of a train ride through various cities in southern Spain.

In other words, in the experimental poems of Cal y canto, we find very often external formal structures, such as a letter, a guidebook, a myth, or a train ride guiding the development of the work. This external structural form acts as a skeleton shape that holds visions, bits of

experience, and flights of fancy in a loose state of cohesion. Not all parts of the poem relate specifically to this skeleton, and this in itself reflects the central insight of the book. Cal y canto in theme and in technique denies life as a closed experience. It transcends the static visions of reality of Marinero en tierra and La amante, and explores the diversities and contradictions of modern life. The highly experimental structural forms reflect a different vision of reality, a confrontation with the contemporary technological society, and an attempt to recreate the confusion and movement which is characteristic of it.

"Guía estival del paraíso" is a parody based on the form of a guidebook, another kind of external structuring device. It introduces the reader to paradise as a kind of summer resort, advertising the various possible recreational activities. The attractions are typical of a summer resort of the era, including tours of the local night spots, a beach, boating, bicycling, scenic rides, etc. The distinctive feature of this resort is that it is directed only by heavenly characters. The head is God, Saint Raphael is a tour guide, and the bar is owned by archangels with feathers of lemon and wine. The placing of religious characters in a totally incongruous setting is the central thread of the poem and offers a lightly humorous fanciful tone.

Like "Carta abierta," the interior unity of "Guía estival" is loose. Many of its diverse elements are a part



of the Christian religious tradition and thus are assimilated into the scene, but other elements bear no evident relationship to the main thread and are simply isolated visions. This is true of the fourth stanza of the poem, which describes a scene of metal stars and the movement of piano keys:

.....  
 Por una estrella de metal, las olas  
 satinan el marfil de las escalas  
 áureas de las veloces pianolas.

.....

(11. 10-12, p. 211)

Again the sixth and seventh stanzas depict frozen gymnasts throwing javelins and discuses, while the queen of game cards sails over the lakes of Venus:

.....  
 Y en el Estadio de la Luna, fieros,  
 gimnastas de las nieves, se revelan,  
 jabalinas y discos, los luceros.

¡Reina de las barajas! Por los lagos  
 de Venus, remadora, a los castillos  
 del Pim-Pám-Pum de los Reyes Magos.

.....

(11. 16-21, p. 211)

Here are instances again of whimsical characters in scenes which maintain the tone of the work but contribute little to the development of its primary thread of action. Neither Venus nor frozen gymnasts belong to the atmosphere and traditions of the predominant religious characters.

The poem does display a kind of unity, however, although not of the traditional definition. There is, first

of all, the guidebook frame which we mentioned earlier. The short clipped advertising-style phrases which name the various attractions of paradise contribute to the form that controls the development of the poem. No one expects a promotional guidebook to tell a story, or convince you of some moral principle of life. Guidebooks do list in fragmentary fashion the entertainment possibilities of a place. This is the sort of formal expectation created in the reader by using this pretext.

On the other hand, there is another sort of unity created by the fact that paradise is a place for which the Christian tradition has created a number of well known characters: angels, archangels, seraphim, etc. Again the reader is in familiar territory. He is dealing with subjects and an atmosphere that he recognizes and with which he makes associations. Finally, the juxtaposition and intermixture of the two forms creates a humorous contrast. It causes the reader to view both the advertising jargon and the heavenly characters with an irreverent light-hearted air. Like "Carta abierta," a tone and attitude are established which admit the surprise of unexpected images not related to the central theme to coexist without being arbitrary and superfluous. The poem itself is engaged in overturning previously inviolable limitations and preconceptions in both its theme and its structure.

"Venus en ascensor," another poem of this type, reveals yet a different preconceived external structural form, an elevator which travels past seven floors announcing the contents and residents as it passes each floor. Again in this work we find the ancient world juxtaposed and intermingled with elements of the contemporary world. The title, as well as the form, embodies this conflict. The result of this juxtaposition is to show the traditional symbols as distorted and somewhat ludicrous in a modern setting.

The development of "Venus" does not include as many extraneous elements as did the previously discussed poems. The reader passes by a Venus of wire and wood, an Eros who has become a small-time arbitrator of love affairs dressed in monocle and stiff biretta, and an Apollo who seems to be turning out poetry with all the inspiration of the daily newspaper:

Maniquí, Venus, niña, de madera  
 y de alambre. Ascensores.  
 --Buenos días, portera. (La portera,  
 con su escoba de flores.)

PRIMERO:

Abogado y notario de los males de amores.

Eros, toga, monóculo y birrete,  
 clava a sus señorías  
 en el arco voltaico de un billete  
 de cinco mil bujías.

SEGUNDO:

Agencia de tinteros. Despacho de poesías.

Apolo, en pantalones, sin corbata  
 --"Diga usted"--, aburrido,  
 su corona de pámpanos de lata  
 --"Repita"-- lustra, ido.  
 .....

(11. 1-16, p. 228)

This poem, too, is engaged in debunking tradition. Like the previous one it employs two different structures which the reader recognizes and for which he has pre-existing associations. The first of these is an elevator ride, seen as an identifiable series of actions which develop in time into a whole experience. The other is a series of characters from Greek mythology such as Venus, Eros, Apollo, Orpheus, or Narcissus. These elements picture the clash of the ancient and the modern by placing the mythological characters in a contemporary and horribly prosaic setting. The clash evokes delight and surprise from the reader who pictures each of the heroic characters in this ordinary and uninspiring set of circumstances. The structures are reinforced by first beginning each stanza in the typical style of an elevator operator who calls out the contents of a particular floor. Secondly, each of the characters, who are gods normally engaged in heroic activities, is seen in absurdly unpoetic attire and in positions not at all worthy of the talents of gods: Orpheus fishes his lyre out of a garbage pail, Narcissus wears green garters and rubber breasts, and Ganymedes urinates over Icarus.

A much smaller number of the poems of Cal y canto are short pictures which stress the disharmony and disintegration of contemporary life. Some shorter works of the book illustrate the almost total lack of order in poems when the external structuring devices are absent. A good example is "Telegrama." The lack of development or unity is so complete that much of the meaning is lost. Only a vague feeling of the harshness and sterility of the metropolis is apprehended:

Nueva York.  
Un triángulo escaleno  
asesina a un cobrador.

El cobrador, de hojalata.  
Y el triángulo, de prisa,  
otra vez a su pizarra.

Nick Carter no entiende nada.

¡Oh!

Nueva York.

(p. 232)

Reviewing the poems of this book, we may conclude that its primary characteristic is its experimentation with the most basic materials of poetry. Alberti, at this point in his production, has stretched beyond the controlled, precise images of Marinero en tierra and La amante. The early gongoristic poems of Cal y canto continue to be descriptive, but explore all the emotive and sensorial possibilities of poetic effect which imagery possesses. Alberti creates pictures of richness and excitement by drawing

together many exotic elements. The earlier poetry showed quick glimpses of nature which stimulated the reader to look beyond the bare descriptions to their implications. Cal y canto directs this impulse of the reader and produces an experience in which the implications have been overtly expressed.

The structure of poems in Marinero en tierra was static. A single image constituted the entire work without narrative or chronological development. The latter poems of Cal y canto, however, break radically with this unity. They integrate material from wildly different sources, which often has little relation to the dominating theme. This challenge to traditional unity reveals a loss of confidence in a naturally ordered universe, and accentuates the inconsistencies and contradictions of experience. On the levels of both imagery and structure, the book expands traditional limits.

### CHAPTER III

We have just seen how in Cal y canto Alberti uses structures to give unity to the works, but they do at times seem artificial. In "Guía estival," for example, the relationship of religious figures to the guidebook form was labored and tenuous. In Sobre los ángeles similar structures are again used, but this time they are better integrated with the images. The structures are now created from patterns of images. Before studying their nature and their effects, it might be useful to present a general view of the book; we will therefore quickly describe its themes, and take into account the principal critical studies it has received.

Sobre los ángeles represents, thematically, a significant departure from Alberti's earlier works. The book is dominated by a negative outlook. It portrays the collapse of that ordered, free, and joyous view of the natural world which had dominated the vignettes of Marinero en tierra and La amante. It lacks the fascination with the esthetic possibilities of the world which pervaded Cal y canto. Instead, Sobre los ángeles presents a chaotic universe of warring elements in the natural world and in the realm of human relationships; a sense of confusion, loss, and personal deception are the predominant notes.

The poem which serves as keynote of the book, "Paraíso perdido," mentions many of the themes which are developed later in the work. Here, the idea of loss of faith and a fall from happiness emerges clearly. This poem is typical of Sobre los ángeles because it embodies this theme by means of motifs which are repeated often throughout the book: an infinite silence in response to any search for meaning, the presence of shadows, and a constant chaotic movement which destroys the speaker's sense of orientation:

.....  
 ¿Adónde el Paraíso,  
 sombra, tú que has estado?  
 Pregunta con silencio.

Ciudades sin respuesta,  
 ríos sin habla, cumbres  
 sin ecos, mares mudos.

(11. 7-12)

.....

¡Oh boquete de sombras!  
 ¡Hervidero del mundo!  
 ¡Qué confusión de siglos! (11. 34-36; pp. 247-8)  
 .....

The poems which follow "Paraíso perdido" explore the nature of this vision of the universe in which even the most elemental order is absent. In "El ángel ceniciento" there prevail images of light cast headlong down blind paths, of the earth set against the wind, and the seas set against fire. This conflict and lack of order is often connected to images of constant dizzying movement, as in "Canción del ángel sin suerte," in which the speaker is engaged in a



futile search amidst the constant movement of water, wind, and earth. Again in "Los ángeles de la prisa," there is a desperate attempt by the speaker to halt the rush of these moving elements which surround, overwhelm, and threaten him:

.....  
 Acelerado aire era mi sueño  
 por las aparecidas esperanzas  
 de los rápidos giros de los cielos,  
 de los veloces, espirales pueblos,  
 rodadoras montañas,  
 raudos mares, riberas, ríos, yermos.

Me empujaban.

Enemiga era la tierra,  
 porque huía.  
 Enemigo el cielo,  
 porque no paraba.  
 Y tú, mar,  
 y tú, fuego,  
 y tú,  
 acelerado aire de mi sueño.

.....

(11. 5-19, p. 265)

Although this poem focuses on the negative nature of the universe, others investigate the personal experiences and the sense of individual loss within this world. Often there is depicted a loss of individual identity and purpose; in "El ángel desconocido" the speaker laments his fall from status and happiness:

.....  
 Vestido como en el mundo.  
 ya no se me ven las alas.  
 Nadie sabe cómo fuí.  
 No me conocen.

.....

(11. 4-7, p. 250)

A loss of identity is often coupled with a complete lack of hope in a world haunted by death and the hostile atmosphere earlier mentioned. "El alma en pena" shows a soul pursued by a dying flame and startled by cold, by fires, and by darkness. The world surrounding the soul is shaken by quakes and catastrophes which reduce all to rubble, even the stars. All hope of escape is cut off and the soul wanders on amidst bloody explosions and the battle of men against roses, and birds against ships.

Other aspects of the sense of loss on a personal level are apparent in poems which demonstrate a failing of confidence in human relationships and in all human trust. In such a chaotic sphere, man has lost all control of forces around him and finds himself at the mercy of unmotivated hate and deception. Such an attitude is evident in "Engaño" which reveals a speaker with a menacing unidentified presence constantly at his shoulder whispering deceiving words as he leads him down dark tunnels, in one of which death is waiting. Other poems which reveal acts of sudden unmotivated hate and violence are "Los ángeles crueles" in which we see helpless birds blinded by a red-hot wire and "El ángel rabioso" where the speaker plaintively appeals for a reason for the hate and anger suddenly shown against him:

Son puertas de sangre,  
milenios de odios,  
lluvias de rencores, mares.

¿Qué te hice, dime  
 para que los saltes?  
 ¿Para que con tu agrio aliento  
 me incendies todos mis ángeles?  
 .....

(11. 1-7, p. 261)

In the oppressively bleak world of Sobre los ángeles, some few moments of relief exist, although they play a minor role in the total work. There are, however, three different poems entitled "El ángel bueno," all of which describe a positive encounter or experience by a speaker. These poems, unlike the greater part of the book, employ images of promise, hope, satisfaction and union, in direct contrast to the predominant note of isolation and emptiness:

Dentro del pecho se abren  
 corredores anchos, largos,  
 que sorben todas las mares.

Vidrieras,  
 que alumbran todas las calles.

Miradores,  
 que acercan todas las torres.

Ciudades deshabitadas  
 se pueblan, de pronto. Trenes  
 descarrilados, unidos  
 marchan.

.....

(11. 1-11, p. 261)

The final poems of the work demonstrate an attitude midway between the oppressive despair of the poems earlier described and the positive encounters just mentioned. The speaker at last makes his fragile peace with existence as

it is, determined to salvage the bits of happiness which remain. The last poem of the book, for instance, speaks of the "surviving angel." He is wounded, his wings are broken and clipped but he continues to exist. For the speaker at this moment, if hope survives, it survives in the pure fact of life itself:

.....  
 Acordaos de aquel día, acordaos  
 y no olvidéis que la sorpresa paralizó el pulso y  
 el color de los astros.  
 En el frío, murieron dos fantasmas.  
 Por un ave, tres anillos de oro  
 fueron hallados y enterrados en la escarcha.  
 La última voz de un hombre ensangrentó el viento.  
 Todos los ángeles perdieron la vida.  
 Menos uno, herido, alicortado.

(11. 6-13, p. 292)

Most of the criticism of Sobre los ángeles has focused on the thematic aspect of the work. Few critics see beyond its themes to the techniques which embody them, and the precise effect of these techniques. By not studying imagery or structure, they limit severely the experience of the poetry. C. B. Morris, in his study, divides the poems into four dominant themes, "amor," "ira," "fracaso," and "desconcierto."<sup>1</sup> (These themes correspond to the divisions Alberti himself gives the book).

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<sup>1</sup>Rafael Alberti's "Sobre los ángeles," Four Major Themes, University of Hull Publications, Occasional Papers in Modern Languages No. 3 (Hull: University of Hull, 1966).

Morris defines carefully the development of these particular ideas in various poems. Love, in Sobre los ángeles, exists only to emphasize the speaker's emptiness and inability to forge a meaningful relationship. He finds anger demonstrated in poems showing the speaker's own experience of anger within himself and in examples of unmotivated hatred and cruelty in the world. Failure emerges in the poetry as the common condition of a man who is pursued by relentless time to the despair of death; and finally, disorder is portrayed in the poems as an unbridgeable gulf between the speaker and mankind. Through a detailed study of these themes, Morris has defined the principal ideas of the book.

Salinas de Marichal, treating the same material, has noted instead the literary and traditional antecedents of the poetry's principal images. She concludes, contrary to previous thought, that the angels can be directly related to those of poetic and religious tradition. She also underlines the repetition of certain concepts: space as unlimited and chaotic, time as an eternity, material as a solidified mass without heat or movement, and absence as the expression of total loss and nothingness in the universe. Her chapter ends with a summary of the critical opinion on Alberti's relationship to the surrealist movement, con-

cluding that he knew of the group but, by his own statement, was not influenced by it.<sup>2</sup>

C. M. Bowra presents a different perspective on Sobre los ángeles. He devotes a chapter of The Creative Experiment to its place in modern European poetry, drawing parallels between Alberti and García Lorca and Eliot. Bowra also makes a special effort to show themes in different sections of Sobre los ángeles. He contends that the early poems of the book concentrate on a crisis of spirit; that the second part reveals the growth of a sense of emptiness; and that the final poems are an attempt by the speaker to salvage all he can from the ruins of the catastrophe. Bowra also examines very generally the nature of the angels as images in these poems, concluding that they represent powers of the spirit connected with the secret springs of man's nature.<sup>3</sup>

By limiting themselves to the thematic aspects of Sobre los ángeles, these critics have missed its full significance. One of its most important traits is the complex relationship between its individual images and whole poems. Unlike the brief, highly unified poems of Marinero en tierra and La amante, those of Sobre los ángeles contain strikingly disparate images, very tenuously related

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<sup>2</sup>El mundo poético de Rafael Alberti (Madrid, Gredos, 1968).

<sup>3</sup>The Creative Experiment (London: Macmillan, 1949), pp. 220-253.

to the poem as a whole. In many cases, there seems to be an almost haphazard leap from image to image, which defies logic and rational development of thought. In other poems, references to various levels of experience, from the highly personal to the general, as well as the use of particular objects of the most dissimilar nature, suggest a tortured view of reality.

Curiously, however, these highly disparate images, objects, and experiences do unite to form complex but highly coherent wholes. The structure which binds these elements together, which forms the development apparent in the poems, is extraordinarily important. It consists of various patterning devices which draw the many planes of experience of the images into a single unity. They create wholeness in a potentially chaotic situation, superimposing an order on the rich stimulation of the imagination produced by the imagery. The patterns thus insure a satisfying completeness in each work. Often these patterns are already familiar to the reader. By uniting a familiar pattern with innovative images, the poem releases powerful reflections, ideas, and emotions in extremely concentrated form. The experience of the reader is enriched and broadened by the combination of these elements in the poetry.

These patterns, of course, may recall the structures of Cal y canto. But in Sobre los ángeles there is no separation between the larger patterns and the detailed

images; as we will see, the patterns are now created out of arrangements of images. (In Cal y canto images and larger patterns often conflict with each other).

A series of different structural patterns occurs in different works of Sobre los ángeles. Some contain a single motif or concept which creates relationships among dissimilar images. We see a complex arrangement of balances and parallels of ideas, or a mythical motif such as that of the search, or a motif with variations. Other poems establish relationships by developing within the framework of a dramatic situation or of an episode; while still others revolve around the characteristics of a particular human or fictional "type" such as the hero, the fool, or the miser. All of these differing patterns interact with imagery to form a richer, fuller experience; they are successful because they allow Alberti to include and combine various experiences and elements from the world around us which we seldom see in ordered form. The designs of Sobre los ángeles permit a compact, intense presentation of a complete universe.

The first kind of structural pattern is the arrangement of balances and parallels, exemplified in "El ángel bueno." Here a variety of concrete subjects creates a rich meaning but without a step-by-step development of logical thought. Rather, Alberti repeats different elements and balances opposites to develop and resolve tensions, and to unify the poem.



The work is an attempt by the speaker to define his encounter with a good force which has altered his life. The poem defines this elusive experience through a rambling series of images; the relationship among these images is objectively very tenuous. The meaning in the poem emerges very clearly, however, when we notice that the images fit together into a design, a structural framework. This frame revolves around the phrases "el que yo quería" and "No aquel que"; they set up a pattern of opposite extremes, and finally act to define the good force by contrasting what the angel is and what the angel is not. The poem opens with two lines in which the speaker announces the arrival of the angel, and shows his positive response. It then immediately swings to the opposite extreme to list the negative aspects which the angel does not possess:

Vino el que yo quería,  
el que yo llamaba.

No aquel que barre cielos sin defensas,  
luceros sin cabañas,  
lunas sin patria,  
nieves.  
Nieves de esas caídas de una mano,  
un nombre,  
un sueño,  
una frente.

No aquel que a sus cabellos  
ató la muerte.

El que yo quería.

Sin arañar los aires,  
sin herir hojas ni mover cristales.

Aquel que a sus cabellos  
at6 el silencio.

Para, sin lastimarme.  
cavar una ribera de luz dulce en mi pecho  
y hacerme el alma navegable. (p. 275)

The second stanza of the poem begins to define the mysterious presence for the reader. Lines 3-5 tell us the angel is not a threat to the defenseless or to the innocent. It does this by listing three heavenly figures which provide parallel examples of defensiveness, of openness, and of innocence. The sixth line introduces a new element, the snow. By modifying snow, in the following line, to also include the idea of innocence, it connects with the previous group. We are made to feel the relationship by the picture of the snow in an open candid gesture, falling freely from the hand. This particular image of the snow also relates a lack of protection and the state of human beings. The next three lines then develop human innocence with another parallel series: hand, name, dream, and countenance. The lack of defenses and the state of human beings are joined in the eleventh and twelfth lines by an image which mentions man's greatest vulnerability, death. This last image returns to the listing of negative qualities the angel does not possess.

Within the first half of this poem, we note the small degree of objective connection which exists among individual images. The range of figures extends from the idea of

sweeping the defenseless skies, to an image of snow falling from an open hand, to a picture of death tied in the hair. There is also an extremely subtle chain of logic which can be traced through to relate the negative aspects of the force. We find, first, unwarranted evil opposed to defenseless elements of nature; then an association established between these natural elements and human elements; and finally the association of unprovoked evil with man's victimization by death. We can find, therefore, a certain logical pattern in the presentation of the images. This logic, however, is certainly strained and probably contrived. It does not prove a clear line of development, although it suggests a certain vague area of meaning. Were it to base itself only on this logical development, the poem would be very weak. Its effectiveness depends on its design of balances and parallels.

The second half of the poem swings back to enumerate the positive qualities of the good angel. It reiterates the opening line of the poem, which again highlights the speaker's desire that this angel come. Then, in almost perfect balance, it repeats the idea that defenseless nature (air, leaves) is not violated by the angel, and introduces a note of quiet. This note leads into a more direct statement of quiet in the next line. The phrasing of these lines corresponds to that of the third stanza.

Here, however, it characterizes the good angel as a bearer of peace and calm. A clear balance of opposites between stanzas three and six is thus established by a similar phrasing of contrasting ideas.

The final stanza reverts to the personal call of the opening lines; here it sums up the qualities of the good angel by an image which shows its effect on the speaker. It synthesizes not only the lack of negative effects, but also the angel's positive, peaceful, life-sustaining effects.

Throughout "El ángel bueno" we have seen the wide variation of concrete subjects used to suggest particular emotions and ideas as well as the lack of conventional links to provide logical transitions between them. Wandering stars, snow falling from a hand, and death bound to the hair are used in succession to define what the good angel is not. A lack of disturbance of air, leaves, and glass then leads to the presence of silence bound to the hair and a shore of light in the speaker's heart in which his soul finds rest. The force of the experience is made meaningful for the reader, however, by a system of balancing parallels which were pointed out earlier, between the contrast of what evil could be done and what good was done rather than exactly what or who the "good angel" literally was. The unified meaning arises out of the balanced pattern of contrasting images linked through

repetition of certain phrases ("El que yo quería," "No aquel que," "Aquel que") rather than out of a calculated development of thought. The experience would have been lengthened and diluted by an explanation sufficient to show these complex relationships.

"Los ángeles muertos" provides another example of contrasting elements unified by a patterning form or motif. The theme of the poem is the destruction and loss of values or ideals. The theme is not explicitly stated, but is implied by the objects used in the description. The speaker urges us to search among the debris for various broken objects. He describes the world in which the search is to be carried on as a crumbling ruined universe. We are told to search in sewers, dumps, among dead leaves, dying embers, fragments of bottles, and old shoes. These circumstances again suggest, but do not state, the terrible condition of life.

The succession of objects follows no apparent plan of development; nor do these objects share any common characteristics other than their desolate ruined condition. The images of the poem, individually, convey an impression of loss and ruin, but there aren't any specific logical links among the objects:

Buscad, buscadlos;  
 en el insomnio de las cañerías olvidadas,  
 en los cauces interrumpidos por el silencio de las basuras.  
 No lejos de los charcos incapaces de guardar una nube,  
 unos ojos perdidos,  
 una sortija rota  
 o una estrella pisoteada.

Porque yo los he visto:  
 en esos escombros momentáneos que aparecen en las neblinas.  
 Porque yo los he tocado:  
 en el destierro de un ladrillo difunto,  
 venido a la nada desde una torre o un carro.  
 Nunca más allá de las chimeneas que se derrumban  
 ni de esas hojas tenaces que se estampan en los zapatos.  
 En todo esto.  
 Mas en esas astillas vagabundas que se consumen sin fuego,  
 en esas ausencias hundidas que sufren los muebles desvencijados,  
 no a mucha distancia de los nombres y signos que se enfrían en  
 las paredes.

Buscad, buscadlos:  
 debajo de la gota de cera que sepulta la palabra de un libro  
 o la firma de uno de esos rincones de cartas  
 que trae rodando el polvo.  
 Cerca del casco perdido de una botella,  
 de una suela extraviada en la nieve,  
 de una navaja de afeitar abandonada al borde de un precipicio.

(pp. 290-1)

The motif which links the widely diverse elements of this poem is the search. Both the poem as a whole and its second part begin with the words "Buscad, buscadlos." This first line is significant as a keynote of the poem; the ensuing lines grant it even greater importance. Each one of them clearly refers back to the opening commands. "Buscad, buscadlos" also gains prominence because no other verbs follow in the next six lines. We are only given a list of places where the undefined object may be found. The only other verbs of the poem are in the eighth and

tenth lines ("Porque yo los he visto," "Porque yo los he tocado"). These only serve to reinforce the idea and the necessity of the search: they make us feel the urgency of a speaker who has seen his goal and wants to recapture it.

We have characterized the structure of this poem as the repeated motif of the search which provides the link for an enumeration of ruined objects and places. This pattern draws the various images together and provides a unified attitude throughout the work. The individual images, on the other hand, give the poem the sense of a particular emotion occurring within our world. For instance, it is the particular brick, puddle, or razor blade of very uncommon traits, or the extremely personal experience such as the leaf that clings to the shoe which evoke a possible like experience from the reader's past, and relate the entire structure personally to him.

"Los ángeles mohosos" offers one more example of this particular relationship of images to structure. Here the pattern is a theme which is repeated with variations, and again gives a sense of completeness and unity to a series of seemingly disparate images. There is again a recurring formal element, which provides a base of reference which the reader may recall and to which he may come back; it allows widely separated elements to be joined.

In "Los ángeles mohosos," Alberti creates a pattern by repeatedly replacing human elements with inappropriate and unsuitable principles:

Hubo luz que trajo  
por hueso una almendra amarga.

Voz que por sonido,  
el fleco de la lluvia,  
cortado por un hacha.

Alma que por cuerpo,  
la funda de aire  
de una doble espada.

Venas que por sangre,  
yel de mirra y de retama.

Cuerpo que por alma,  
el vacío, nada.

(p. 260)

Here, all the elements replaced, except the light of the opening stanza, are human attributes displaced by an incongruous substitute which creates a disordered and unnatural effect. The phrase "que por" repeatedly connects the two exchanging elements and lends a motion of continuity. Like the world in ruins of "Los ángeles muertos," this replacement implies an entire vision of life gone awry, without meaning or natural direction. There is also here a sense of deception in finding the most intimate and significant parts of the person tragically missing.

The first of these replacements is the light in whose innermost center is a bitter almond, the relationship between the two being only their common whiteness. The bitterness suggests a sense of deception and loss within what is normally considered a positive element, the light.

The second stanza shows the essence of a voice, its sound, replaced by the edge of a falling rain cut by an axe.



In this instance the importance of parallel structure becomes more apparent, since the logical correspondence between the storm and the voice is very slight. It is largely the strength of the established pattern which allows the reader to accept the comparison. The violence of the image "el fleco de la lluvia / cortado por un hacha" conveys the sense of tragic misalignment of nature.

This same pattern continues in the following two stanzas replacing the body that houses the soul with the scabbard of air for a sword, and the blood in the veins by a bile of myrrh and broomstraw. The final climactic stanza sees the soul replaced by emptiness, chaos, the void, a total lack of meaning in a meaningless world.

The reality which emerges, then, from the five stanzas shows this dominating pattern of imagery as an identifiable and familiar perception that underlies the work and aids the reader in discovering previously unforeseen relationships in the world. Essentially, it eases the harshness of the comparisons. The elaborate justification for some of these elements illustrates that they are not totally incongruous. These justifications also illustrate, however, the unlikelihood of normally making these associations. They are not congruent in a normally logical sense.

The sense of design is enhanced by the first and last stanzas which serve as a frame. The images in these

are of a different order than those of the central section. Instead of the replacement of parts of the body, the figures of a light-bitter almond and a soul-chaos occur here. This change in imagery sets these stanzas apart from the main body of the poem and provides a sense of ending and beginning. Again, a formal design binds the poem together.

A second and different type of framework appears in many other poems of Sobre los ángeles. It again is a central unifying design, but instead of connecting the poem by balances and contrasts or by a repeating motif, it builds it within a dramatic situation or episode. The underlying structure exploits the forms of drama and narrative without their length and digressions. The meaning of the poem, in these cases, emerges from the dramatic representation of the episode on the one hand and the emotional shade often given it by its imagery on the other. This union casts new lights on both these elements.

"El ángel bueno" focuses on a moment in which the speaker discovers a happy new presence in his life:

Un año, ya dormido,  
alguien que no esperaba  
se paró en mi ventana.

--¡Levántate! Y mis ojos  
vieron plumas y espadas.

Atrás, montes y mares,  
nubes, picos y alas,  
los ocasos, las albas.

--¡Mírala ahí! Su sueño,  
pendiente de la nada.

--¡Oh anhelo, fijo mármol,  
fija luz, fijas aguas  
movibles de mi alma!

Alguien dijo: ¡Levántate!  
Y me encontré en tu estancia.

(p. 255)

In the structure of "El ángel bueno" there is a combination of narrative and dramatic elements. The beginning and ending stanzas, in a pattern similar to that of "Los ángeles mohosos," give a factual account of the episode in the past; the central stanzas switch to an immediate rendering of the scene in dialogue fashion which accentuates the present moment and its future implications. The reader's response is first elicited through the opening narrative statement which serves to awaken interest with the suspenseful arrival of an unidentified person. It serves as an introduction that alerts the reader to any indications of the nature of this surprise intruding force.

The central stanzas of the poem, after this prosaic narrative introduction, switch to the enactment of the scene. Here, at the point at which the "good angel" enters, there is an abrupt change from a literalistic factual description to a highly imaginative one. All references to the angel, and even to the background in which he stands, are given in terms of imagery. The angel first is mountains, seas, clouds, wind, dusks, and dawns. All of these natural

elements serve to define a positive and hopeful experience, rather than explain any literal characteristics of the angel or why an angel might stop by your window, a question which could very well be asked after the first stanza. The feathers and swords as well as wings, clouds, and mountains are objects which are often associated with our conception of angels, but here, more precisely, their common upward movement denotes a joyous exultant feeling.

The following two stanzas return the reader to the immediacy of a spoken exchange with another command to the speaker to awake and look at the angel. Then an answer by the speaker intervenes and demonstrates his response to the experience which the angel represents. Again in these stanzas we see a clear difference between the sharp, down-to-earth directness of the command statement, and the imaginative suggestion of the imagery which refers to the angel. After the vigorous command for attention, there follows an image of the angel with its dream suspended from nothingness, suggesting promise and miraculous hope. The next stanza continues in this vein with images which show the sense of promise with water and marble, a bright shining potential held fixed before the recently awakened speaker. In each of these images there is the suggestion of expectation and exultant hope. In all four of these central stanzas, then, this same expectant note which draws meaning into the scene is given through the imagery. Mean-

while, the commands force the reader to focus on a specific moment, lending a frame of reference for the key emotive passages of the poem, and relating them to more common ground of personal experience.

The final stanza completes the dramatic episode established, with a summary of the entire incident in the same more prosaic tone used initially, repeating the command which caused the incident and closing in a peaceful resolution with the protagonist in the company of the good angel.

There is little logical relationship between the parts. The entirely figurative depiction of the experience, the feathers, sword, and mountains are far removed from the commonplace details of the scene at the speaker's bedside. The dramatic impact of the scene, however, emerges clearly from a combination of the two parts that allows imaginative outreach of imagery which enriches the reader's familiar experiences. The figurative nature of the description injects a whole different level of meaning into a more commonplace structure.

"Los ángeles vengativos" illustrates the aggressively physical quality lent to these poems by the use of dramatic forms and techniques. The poem revolves around an incident in which an unfamiliar angel is killed when he enters a foreign realm. There are moral implications suggested in the brief outlines of this obscure episode. We are only told of the angel's alienation from the group, of his un-

certain origins, and of his death because of his strange qualities. This outline suggests the natural fear and threat that human beings feel toward people and things unfamiliar to them and the unfortunate human inclination to lash out against these traits in others.

We again notice a pattern very similar to that of "El ángel bueno." A short narrative summary opens and closes the poem. Its function is simple and requires little imagery. The dramatic sequence in the poem's central section makes us see the scene in a different time. The narrative section at the beginning and end considers the event in the past, as complete, while the central dramatic section brings us up close to the action as it is occurring:

No, no te conocieron  
 las almas conocidas.  
 Sí la mía.

¿Quién eres tú, dinos, que no te recordamos  
 ni de la tierra ni del cielo?

Tu sombra, dinos, ¿de qué espacio?  
 ¿Qué luz la prolongó, habla,  
 hasta nuestro reinado?

¿De dónde vienes, dinos,  
 sombra sin palabras,  
 que no te recordamos?  
 ¿Quién te manda?  
 Si relámpago fuiste en algún sueño,  
 relámpagos se olvidan, apagados.

Y por desconocida,  
 las almas conocidas te mataron.  
 No la mía.

(p. 270)

Here, we not only notice the same formal pattern of development of "El ángel bueno," but we also see the same general lack of imagery in the initial and closing narrative sections while the central dramatic stanzas depend to a much larger degree on imagery to define tone and meaning. In the first and last stanzas, only the concept of the known and unknown ("conocer-desconocer") is removed from the purely literal level. This is not primarily due to the usual methods of imagery in which two distinct qualities or objects are compared causing a new meaning to emerge, but to repetition: the concept of the known souls is repeated three times along with its opposite the unknown souls. The contrasting mine and not-mine phrases ("Sí la mía," "No la mía") are also repeated. The repetition and opposition of these phrases transforms their purely literal meaning and causes us to reconsider that meaning in a different light. With each repetition, it is less possible to dismiss the conflict and its significance.

Like "El ángel bueno," these two narrative stanzas also form a synthesis of the rest of the poem. The speaker in these stanzas gives the one didactic note of the poem by identifying himself as an uninvolved witness to the action, and asserting that he alone knew the angel. The speaker's role is enhanced in this poem by the note of moral judgment implied on those who killed the "unknown" angel, and also by his function as an integrating element

of the dramatic and narrative sequences. It is his moral judgment and summary of the action, and by implication he is the witness of the dramatic scene.

The conflict of the central dramatic stanzas, like the oppositions previously mentioned, is embodied in contrasting images of light and dark. The intruding angel is a dark silent shadow for the known angels, a shadow thrust into their midst without permission by a foreign light. The final image of the section compares the intruding angel to the lightning flash of a dream which can be extinguished, anticipating the resolution of death which is revealed in the last lines.

In all eleven lines of the three middle stanzas, the foreign angel never speaks to reveal or identify himself. The group repeatedly interrogates him about his origins, thus creating a monologue of questions which are never answered, and leading to the exasperation which precipitates his death. This air of total mystery surrounding the unknown angel causes the images referring to him to be brought vividly to our attention, since they provide the only clue to the character of the key figure of the episode.

Essentially, in "Los ángeles vengativos," the relationship of the imagery to the structure is more closely interdependent than in "El ángel bueno" or "Los ángeles muertos" where a structural pattern of balances and parallels gave coherence to widely diverse images. Here, various



basic questions are left unanswered in the development of the action of the poem; the imagery answers them for us. The character of the unknown angel is uncertain, the circumstances of the death are unsure and even the motives are suspicious. Yet the superior tone of the speaker in the initial and final stanzas indicates a moral judgment is being made.

The basic framework of the whole is supplied by the dramatic-narrative episode, and the emotive cast to the action, the implacable noncommunication of the two opposing forces, is effectively highlighted by the images. There is a direct opposition continually stressed in the "known and unknown souls," in the "mine and not mine" judgment of the speaker, and in the light and dark imagery of the central sections. This imagery thus leads the reader away from the usual questions which might be asked of an episode such as this one, which are not answered here. It points up instead the unalterable positions of the two forces and the inability of either to speak to the other's position.

A third type of relationship of image to structure is based on a character with the qualities of a particular social or personality type. The progressive delineation of this character, whose traits we recognize, often functions in these poems as a point of reference in much the same way that repetitions, balances and contrasts, and dramatic

episodes work in conjunction with the imagery to produce a coherent unified effect.

For instance, "El ángel avaro" skips from the portrayal of a thief of the heavens, to earthquakes shaking and wrinkling the character's face, to a heart that is made joyful at the explosion of dynamite. All of these particular visions loosely associate themselves to the frame of a particular known human type, the grasping miser whose ultimate happiness is focused on the possession of material wealth. The reader is engaged in a constant comparison of the sensations of the images with our experiences and knowledge of the greedy "type." The repeated convergence of our experience of the type and the new description form the experience of the poem.

"El ángel avaro" begins by describing the visions, objectives, and ideals of the miser. The avaricious angel clearly longs for infinite material wealth, an impossible ideal which creates a disordered and confused life for him. The attention of the poem is centered on the peculiar arrangement of his universe, created by these desires. There is a heavy note of irony throughout the poem, resulting from the constant state of tension between the corrupt world of the greedy angel and the suggested normal order of the world.

The description of the greedy angel is expressed in terms of how he is judged by people around him, who represent a more correctly ordered view of life:

Gentes de las esquinas  
de pueblos y naciones que no están en el mapa,  
comentaban.

Ese hombre está muerto  
y no lo sabe.  
Quiere asaltar la banca,  
robar nubes, estrellas, cometas de oro,  
comprar lo más difícil:  
el cielo.  
Y ese hombre está muerto.

Temblores subterráneos le sacuden la frente.  
Tumbos de tierra desprendida,  
ecos desvariados,  
soncos confusos de piquetas y azadas,  
los oídos.  
Los ojos,  
luces de acetileno,  
húmedas, áureas galerías.  
El corazón,  
explosiones de piedras, júbilos, dinamita.

Sueña con las minas.

(p. 276)

The second stanza shows the ideals of the angel. In a statement of a series of continually expanding desires, he wants not only to own, but to rob the bank, the clouds, the stars, then gold comets, and finally the infinite, the whole heavens. The opening and closing comments of the stanza, that the man is dead without realizing it, are an evident indication of a totally corrupt view of life that is antithetical to real life itself.

The third stanza shifts from the absurdity of the man's aspiration to the effect of these aspirations on his personality, the happiness they have brought him: his countenance is troubled, he hears mad jangling echoes, and the sharp jolt of shovels and pickaxes, he sees only the

light of welding gases through gilt tunnels, while his heart is filled with the inharmonious crash of stones and dynamite. Ironically all these images, which represent security for the greedy angel, represent negative sensations for most human beings, harshness, confusion, and threat.

The evident criticism implied in this poem could just as easily have launched into a diatribe on the evils of capitalism; but it escapes this fault in several ways. First, there is a constant ironic tone in the poem. It is never a sarcastic frontal attack on a personality, but an irony tinged with compassion. The repeated lines of the second stanza state that the man is dead, though he does not realize it. The closing lines of the poem ("sueña con las minas") demonstrate a sad note of pity for the blindly absurd condition of the man, rather than a condemnation of him personally.

In addition, the lines of the second stanza which demonstrate the angel's desires for infinite possessions draw a lightly fanciful, even appealing picture. After all, it could be very pleasant to have a personal collection of stars and comets. It is only the absurd impossibility of owning what is by nature free, and of possessing it on the same level as one owns a bank, that highlights the contradictions of the man's life.

Finally, the sharply imaginative imagery of the third stanza, which produces a string of sounds, sights,

and other physical sensations, adds up to a picture of a life of jolting, inharmonious forces. The reader can share these sensations and thus draw conclusions about the unhappiness produced by this man's desires, but the conclusion is not forced upon him.

Another instance of a "type" characterization used as a structural pattern occurs in "El ángel tonto." Here, a speaker characterizes an insipid, spineless, foolish person ("angel"). The contrasts and differences which are present in this poem result not so much from the variety of images as from changes of tone and focus.

The poem begins with two stanzas that employ images to explain the personality of the angel:

Ese ángel,  
ése que niega el limbo de su fotografía  
y hace pájaro muerto  
su mano.

Ese ángel que teme que le pidan las alas,  
que le besen el pico,  
seriamente,  
sin contrato.

.....

(11. 1-8, pp. 271-2)

The four stanzas which follow switch to a monologue of short sentences that do not create descriptive impressions of the angel's character, but are random musings concerning the speaker's experiences with the angel and his origin. The difference in tone and focus is considerable. The early lines are well developed conceptions which create

clear physical sensations of the angel's mind. Midway through the poem, however, the tone becomes very conversational, not at all like formal "poetry." The speaker wonders about the possibility of an angel so foolish as to be of purely earthly origins:

.....  
 Si es del cielo y tan tonto,  
 ¿por qué en la tierra? Dime,  
 Decidme.

No en las calles, en todo,  
 indiferente, necio,  
 me lo encuentro.

¡El ángel tonto!

¡Si será de la tierra!  
 --Sí, de la tierra sólo.

(11. 9-17, p. 272)

Another human type, the deceiving person, is portrayed in "El ángel mentiroso." Here, unlike the two previous poems mentioned, the particular qualities of the social type who serves as unifying focus are not specifically outlined, but still serve as point of reference for the reader:

Y fuí derrotada  
 yo, sin violencia,  
 con miel y palabras.

Y, sola, en provincias  
 de arena y de viento,  
 sin hombre, cautiva.

Y, sombra de alguien,  
 cien puertas de siglos  
 tapiaron mi sangre.

¡Ay luces! ¡Conmigo!

Que fuí derrotada  
yo, sin violencia,  
con miel y palabras.

(pp. 258-9)

Despite the more indirect use of a personality type, we still note the union of contrasting elements by this principle. In a now familiar pattern, the opening and closing stanzas refer to the specific experience of the speaker in which he is duped by the verbal maneuvers of the angel's lies. The central stanzas of the poem switch to another level of expression on which the effects of the lying angel's personality are evident purely in terms of images. They express the sense of desolation, loneliness, and isolation from other people that one feels after an extremely disillusioning experience with another. The speaker feels lost in a wilderness of blowing wind and sand, as if a nameless force had closed forever the entries to human communication. Again the abrupt change of focus is integrated by the predominance of the familiar human type who causes the experience and to which the reader can relate his similar personal experiences.

In summary, the techniques of structure and imagery which we have pointed out, when reduced to their simplest lines, work to widen the reader's world. By coordinating the use of highly disparate and innovative imagery within patterns of familiar experience, Alberti has created a full

and intense poetic moment. The underlying patterns draw on associations which would otherwise require long narrative expositions to evoke. With these patterns, however, the compactness of the poetic experience is maintained.

The formal patterns of the poems vary, as we have seen. The first poems studied employed systems of parallelism, of balance and contrast of forces or of variations on a theme. Narrative and dramatic forms reproduce a familiar structure for the reader in "El ángel bueno" and "Los ángeles vengativos," and a stock character or personality type emerges in the latter poems studied. These patterns differ clearly from the more independent and external forms such as a guidebook, an elevator ride, or a letter seen in Cal y canto.

At this point a useful comparison can also be made of the themes of Sobre los ángeles as seen at the first of the book in "Paraíso perdido" and as seen in particular poems during the course of the work. In comparison, the themes of loss or disillusion in "Paraíso" now seem fragmentary and thin. The patterns through which they emerge later create a fuller poem by relating the themes to experiences familiar to the senses of the reader, to a particular personality type, to artistic forms, or to the sense of balanced order commonly accepted in the thought of our society.



## CHAPTER IV

De un momento a otro, published in 1937, marks a significant turning point in Alberti's poetic production. It shares certain thematic ties with earlier works such as Sobre los ángeles; but the themes are now drawn in a much more particularized manner. The earlier volume portrayed a universe of violent conflict between men, between man and his surroundings, and within the personality of the speaker. The poems of Sobre los ángeles embodied themes within situations and characters, but without naming any certain geographical location or special individuals or events. De un momento a otro reveals the same troubled universe beset by the same loss of trust, of order, and of ideals; but it identifies this universe with a particular moment of Spain's history, immediately preceding the Civil War of 1936 and during this war. The effect of this change in distance from the subject creates an experience which often demands that the reader have lived and felt the emotions depicted.

In addition, important changes of technique contribute to weaken the book. Alberti introduces logical structures into the poems, supported by violent and rhetorical assertion in the imagery. The clash of logic and rhetoric tends to disconcert and confuse the reader.

The images of the poems are also less effective due to over-explanations and definitions which rob the reader of the opportunity to make personal associations and more subtle interrelations.

As a basis for our discussion of De un momento a otro, we will first establish a general classification of its poems. The book maintains a social and political orientation throughout, even though the particular circumstances that incite the poems are various. The first group of poems shows the sentiment felt by a particular speaker in the days immediately preceding the war and in its first moments. The second group offers a study of the speaker's impressions of various Latin American countries and their growing domination by the United States; two poems are specifically directed to the U.S. and question its role as well as propose new directions. Finally, the last group of poems refers to certain events and historical figures of the war and ends with several works which relate the war to the political positions taken by other European countries such as France and Russia.

The first poems of the book explain the conditions of confinement, oppression, and injustice that made the civil war a necessity. They expose the petty rigid concerns of the country's authorities and the antiquated concepts which still governed the Spanish culture. The persistent refrain of these early poems is the need for

reform and renovation of the cultural and economic structures of the country. "Colegio (S.J.)" bitterly criticizes these structures through a "persona" who remembers his days in a religious primary school where the training exemplified these antiquated principles:

Podías haber saltado,  
 haber entrado en clase una mañana,  
 una noche,  
 en la hora del olvido de los números,  
 cuando los atlas piensan que sólo son cartones de colores,  
 fijas láminas que no viajarán nunca.  
 Ahora,  
 cuando ya no hay remedio,  
 o si existe es tan sólo el de la bala que conspira en  
 la mano,  
 se me ocurre invitarte,  
 proponerte esta ingenua conquista o toma de poder de  
 las pizarras,  
 de los serios pupitres donde yacían de pronto,  
 empañados,  
 coléricos,  
 los ojos de las gafas que nos odiaban siempre.  
 .....

(11. 47-61, p. 371)

These passages clearly reveal the sense of stagnation and oppression which the book condemns, and also demonstrate the sense of intense personal involvement of the speaker. The critical tone of this section is maintained in most of the poems dealing with the war experience. Another element which reoccurs prominently in the pre-war poems is the peculiar situation of the speaker. He must oppose his own family and all of his background of bourgeois comfort in order to commit himself to the revolution. This explains poems such as "Siervos" (p. 375), where we see a speaker

who attempts to identify himself with the laboring class and is forced to resort to observations of his servants as his only direct contact with laboring people. In other works the separation and conflict within families is vividly illustrated in harsh accusations and sarcastic attacks against the ideals of those who support the old regime. Poems such as "Balada de los dos hermanos," "Estáis de acuerdo," and "Os marcháis, viejos padres" (p. 377) are obviously not limited to family conflicts but symbolize the emotionally charged problems of people at war against themselves. The sentiments of hate, of fear, and of terror generated by this situation are evident throughout. "Balada," for example, pictures the division between two brothers but concentrates on sarcastic accusations against the one's conservatism in phrases which impress their reader with the strength of the speaker's conviction:

.....  
 Que la Iglesia te premie,  
 que te premie tu Estado,  
 que el Papa  
 ponga su pie al alcance de tus labios;  
 que los obreros y los campesinos  
 te cuelguen de una estaca como un espantapájaros.  
 Así tu muerte hará crecer sus trigos.

Dos caminos,  
 hermano:  
 el derecho,  
 el izquierdo .....

Hacia a ti avanzo yo desde este lado.

The second group of poems which shares thematic ties concentrates, as we have noted earlier, on the American continent. Several poems describe countries of Latin America, mentioning native plants, animals, natural products, and especially the traditions and characteristics of the people. Very often the description is designed to instill a sense of pride within the various nations in their individual backgrounds and discredit the foreign stereotypes which degrade them. The poem directed to Mexico, "El indio," emphasizes the glory of the Indian heritage of the country in contrast to the humiliating concepts imposed on the Indian's image by Northamericans:

.....

Se sabe, se comprueba que no eres  
esa curva monótona y sin músculo  
que por los anchos muros oficiales  
cierto pintor ofrece a los turistas.

Contra el gringo que compra en tu retrato  
tu parada belleza ya en escombros,  
prepara tu fusil. No te resignes  
a ser postal de un álbum sin objeto.

Que no eres sólo el tema de una estrofa,  
ni el color complemento del paisaje,  
ni ese perro furioso que se tumba,  
dócil, después de herir, al pie del amo.

Eres México antiguo, horror de cumbres  
que se asombran batidas por pirámides,  
trueno oscuro de selvas observadas  
por cien mil ojos lentos de serpientes.

.....

Other aspects of the Latin-American countries which draw emphasis in this poetry are the many instances of foreign exploitation of natural resources and of the labors of the population. Many poems are little more than lists of ways in which foreigners dominate the continent. These lists are always interspersed with urgent pleas to the Latin Americans to unite and forcibly end their exploitation by whatever means are necessary. In the case of "Panamá," the principal problems that are developed are the economic disadvantage of the canal for Panamanians, and their psychological degradation by the U.S.:

.....  
 Hora es ya de que los vasos extranjeros apaguen en  
 los bosques su sonido,  
 de que al pie de las casas extranjeras las chozas  
 vagabundas se alcen y no mendiguen,  
 de que para las cajas extranjeras no se abran  
 lentamente las esclusas elevando y bajando los  
 niveles del agua,  
 de que para los hombres extranjeros no les suene  
 esta sangre a tierra encadenada y mar desposeído,  
 de que.....

Van a usarse por fin nuestros propios vasos azules.  
 (11. 10-15, pp. 393-4)

Of the last group of poems of De un momento a otro, the greatest number praise the spirit of heroism of certain units and individuals of the Republican forces. Stress is placed upon the sacrifice of home, comfort, and of life itself. The poem to the international brigades notes the selflessness of foreign soldiers and the ties being

established with Spanish land and people. Also for particular foreigners, such as "Hans Beimler" (p. 408), sacrifice leads to rejection by their compatriots. In others of the group treating fallen heroes, a strong sentiment of optimism prevails which suggests the positive contribution of those who have lost their lives, and promises the rebirth of their spirit in the men who continue to fight. In various poems the idea of this death sowing the seed of a new life is proposed:

¡Muertos al sol, al frío, a la lluvia, a la helada,  
 junto a los grandes hoyos que abre la artillería,  
 o bien sobre la yerba que de puro delgada  
 y al son de vuestra sangre se vuelve melodía

Siembra de cuerpos jóvenes, tan necesariamente  
 descuajados del triste terrón que los pariera,  
 otra vez y tan pronto y tan naturalmente,  
 semilla de los survos que la guerra os abricra.

Se oye vuestro nacer, vuestra lenta fatiga,  
 vuestro empujar de nuevo bajo la tapa dura  
 de la tierra que al daros la forma de una espiga  
 siente en la flor del trigo su juventud futura.

.....

(vv. 1-12, p. 411)

A variation of this theme in praise of heroism are the poems addressed to particular cities such as "Defensa de Madrid-Defensa de Cataluña." This poem speaks to the cities in an attempt to arouse enthusiasm and fervor in their defense. It first warns the city of Madrid, of the imminent danger surrounding it at the heart of Spain, and then emphasizes the strength and potential of determination of its people.

On a distinctly different note than all of these poems of urgency and high emotion, are several which depict the sense of personal loss and tragedy of the war. A highly personalized speaker in "Niebla" (p. 410) and "Nocturno" (p. 420), for example, mourns the death or the treason of close friends, the orphans and destruction the war has left in its wake, and the sense of personal impotence against this power. These works, of a much less exalted tone, present a theme of greater universality to the reader removed from the moment and circumstances of the poet.

We will now return to study the imagery and tone of De un momento a otro. This book differs from the earlier ones of Alberti less because of its themes than because of its use of structural devices. The latter are entirely different from those of all the earlier books. The poems of De un momento a otro display an exalted tone, often combined with heavy sarcasm and with accusations which contribute to the impression of a much more personalized and omnipresent speaker, narrating and interpreting specific circumstances. These poems also use symbols which convey meaning more conceptually than the imagery of Alberti's earlier works. The structure consists of a line of persuasive argumentation and explanation, rather than of a pattern of imagery or dramatic forms such as those in Sobre los ángeles, or the pictorial descriptions in Marinero en tierra and La amante. There is a good deal more overt



statement in this work than in any of the earlier poetry. As a result, it creates a very different effect on the reader.

With the characteristics of imagery and structural development that we have seen in earlier works in mind, we can examine a typical poem of De un momento a otro, "Estáis de acuerdo":

Es más,  
estáis de acuerdo con los asesinos,  
con los jueces,  
con los legajos turbios de los ministerios,  
con esa bala que de pronto puede hacernos morder el  
sabor de las piedras  
o esas celdas oscuras de humedad y de oprobio  
donde los cuerpos más útiles se refuerzan o mueren.  
Estáis,  
estáis de acuerdo,  
aunque a veces algunos de vosotros pretendáis ignorarlo.

¿Qué son esos silencios,  
esas caras de tempestad oculta,  
reprimida,  
cuando el mantel se abre ante nosotros lo mismo que  
un insulto,  
igual que una limosna que nos ata a vuestro pobre pensamiento,  
a vuestra bolsa despreciable siempre pendiente en  
vuestros ojos?

Estáis,  
estáis de acuerdo.  
No pretendáis negarlo.  
Es inútil.

Hay que huir,  
que desprenderse de ese tronco podrido,  
de esa raíz comida de gusanos  
y rodar a distancia de vosotros para poder haceros frente  
y exterminaros confundiendo con los que hicieron  
vuestras fábricas,  
labraron vuestras tierras,  
agonizaron en vuestros dominios.  
Porque es cierto que estáis,  
que estáis todos de acuerdo con la muerte. (pp. 376-77)

The poem is evidently addressed in familiar terms to that group of the speaker's contemporaries who remained silent or aligned with fascist forces during the Spanish Civil War. All of Alberti's previous works were directed at a generalized reader whose knowledge or experience could have been those of anybody who has felt himself a part of nature. In this poem it is no longer sufficient for a man to have simply considered his role in relation to the world which surrounds him. The ideal reader here is either the conservative of the moment who is bitterly reproved for his political position, or Alberti's comrades who would share most closely his sentiments and join in reproving the conservative. Repeatedly, there are partisan judgments and opinions of a situation which the reader must accept, such as the judgment of the conservatives as assassins, as a decaying force, and as death itself.

Turning our attention to the development of the theme in the poem, we notice three sections, each taking a singular focus towards the subject. The initial lines (1-2) of the first section state the theme to be developed while the following five lines present other concrete examples and characteristics of the enemy. The stanza closes with an argumentative repetition of the accusation. Its last lines reveal an immediate conversational situation in which the speaker responds to the denials of the accused persons.

The second stanza maintains the same argumentative attitude, here studying the assenting silence and the selfish materialistic ends which tie the accused person to the oppressive forces. Again an accusation ends the stanza, trailing off on a note which adds little to the argument, and instead reinforces the quarrelsome aspects mentioned earlier.

After the condemning accusations of the oppressors of the first section and the charges of selfishness in the reader addressed, the poem finishes by urging the silent assenting population to separate itself from evil forces and take up arms with those of the speaker's conviction. This laboring population has produced the real wealth of the country by working its land and building its factories, the poem reasons, and thus is the class with which the reader should feel comradeship.

If we sum up the development of the poem, we can see a pattern of argumentative persuasion. The first section states the accusation to be proven and describes the infamy of the ruling classes in society. The second section then derides the motives of the accused in aligning themselves with the evil forces, and the third contrasts the decadence of the evil forces with the productivity and strength of the workers of society. The poem gives the reader a series of reasons why he should follow a particular political course, by contrasting the negative elements of one segment

of society with the positive elements of another. The idea of a kind of debate in the poem is reinforced by the final phrases of each one of the sections, which seem to answer objections and denials of the person addressed.

The structure of an argument or debate clearly marks a change in Alberti's poems. We have seen a growing tendency throughout his earlier work to experiment and stretch the limits of poetic structure. The early poems of Marinero en tierra and La amante did not employ traditional narrative accounts or arguments which reached a conclusion. They were based on static pictorial situations which revealed one primary sensation in one isolated moment. Their structure was not developed in time, but on the contrary, stopped a moment of time for one central perception. For example, in "Branquias quisiera tener," one single image served as base for the whole poem. Throughout its length no new element was introduced to the poem, and the implications of this central image were simply explored.

Although Sobre los ángeles and Cal y canto differ from the first books of Alberti, they too avoid rational structures. De un momento a otro, therefore, marks as much of a change in style from these books as they did from Marinero en tierra and La amante. The theme of each poem of Sobre los ángeles was never explicitly stated or explained, and there was no chain of logical development of thought. Rather, a recurring formal element was used as a

base of reference for the reader in discovering previously unforeseen relationships among widely varying objects and experiences. The integration of the disparate images was achieved through patterning images rather than rational development of thought. A similar tendency had been apparent in Cal y canto, where the limits of structure were stretched in a different direction, to the point of finding poems in which there was, practically, no unified meaning which integrated all the aspects of the poem. In "Carta abierta," one of the poems studied in Chapter II, the reader found no single acceptable coherent unity of all parts of the work. For this reason, the traditional rational structure of "Estáis de acuerdo," and the role of the persuasive argumentative approach adopted toward the reader, mark a completely new direction in Alberti's production.

We have examined "Estáis de acuerdo" thus far in terms of its theme and the structural development of that theme. The images are an equally important part of the different effect of this poetry. The figurative language, the use of metaphors or similes, is sparse. It is much more literalistic poetry. The subjects are explicitly and plainly described. Individuality is lent to these subjects mainly through adjectives. For example, the domain of the enemy forces is described as darkened troubled places and their jail cells as moist and infamous. The only lines in the poem that can be picked out specifically as images

occur in the last stanza and refer to the enemy again: "ese tronco podrido, de esa raíz comida de gusanos" (11. 22-23). They exemplify Alberti's use of violent images of hatred, identifying the enemy with objects of decay and repugnant vermin.

When we consider these images in relationship to the structure of the entire poem, we notice a serious incongruence, which is repeated often in the other poems of this book. The structure which governs the individual poem is a rational form: a persuasive argument justifies one political group and villifies another. Yet the words chosen to characterize the evil men do not supply reasons why they must be considered evil. They are emotional judgments about the men, rationally unacceptable. The reader is not able to understand or accept these judgments because no adequate motivation for them is ever displayed. For this reason the poems are very limited as artistic self-contained works. The rational forms of the poems create an expectation in the reader which is never satisfied. It suggests a logical explanation of a situation; the poem, in the final analysis, only provides a vague emotional attack.

We can identify these same characteristics of structure and imagery in many of the poems of the book. "Defensa de Madrid - Defensa de Cataluña" (which appears in the last section) is one of them. The second section of the work is addressed to the Catalan people:

¡Catalanes! Cataluña,  
 vuestra hermosa madre tierra,  
 tan de vuestros corazones  
 como tan hermana nuestra, 5  
 con un costado en el mar  
 y entre montes la cabeza,  
 soñando en sus libertades  
 sus hijos manda a la guerra.  
 Camino de Zaragoza,  
 frente a los muros de Huesca, 10  
 por los llanos de Toledo,  
 por toda la España entera,  
 va la sangre catalana  
 sonando al son de su lengua.  
 Mas para seguir sonando 15  
 el son de lo que tú sueñas,  
 nunca olvides, Cataluña,  
 que a Madrid, cerca, lo acechan  
 miradas del enemigo  
 que darle muerte quisieran. 20  
 Muerto Madrid, catalanes,  
 ¡qué invasión, qué turba negra,  
 qué prostituída, oscura,  
 qué cruel, qué extraña leva  
 de gentes intentarían 25  
 forzar tus gallardas puertas!  
 Si ahora Madrid es el centro,  
 corazón de la pelea,  
 parados sus firmes pulsos,  
 tú serías la cabeza, 30  
 el cuello más codiciado,  
 la más codiciada prenda.  
 ¡Qué festín de generales  
 borrachos, ante una mesa  
 donde por blancos manteles 35  
 se usaran ropas sangrientas!  
 ¡Nunca, bravos catalanes!  
 Jamás vuestra independéncia  
 debe servirse en banquetes  
 a monstruos de tal ralea. 40  
 La libertad catalana,  
 ¡sabedlo!, en Madrid se juega;  
 fábricas, ciudades, campos,  
 montes, toda la riqueza  
 de vuestro país, y el mar 45  
 que lo ilumina y le entrega  
 barcos que al tocar las costas  
 se vuelven de plata nueva.  
 ¡Pueblo catalán, vigila!  
 ¡Pueblo catalán, alerta! 50  
 Con el corazón de España,

sólo corazón de tierra,  
catalanes, yo os saludo:  
¡Viva vuestra independencia!

(pp. 404-406)

This section addressed to Cataluña is again an explanation of a situation designed to persuade the reader. Its central point is a reminder to Catalan people to be alert to the oppressive forces threatening Madrid, and ultimately also threatening them. The first fourteen lines describe the physical circumstances of Cataluña and its ideal of freedom. They mention the geographic position of Cataluña at Spain's head, sending its men to all parts of the country to defend their beliefs.

Lines 15-48 remind the Catalonians of the perilous position of Spain's heart, Madrid, being attacked by the fascist forces. A very logical deduction is then made demonstrating the weakness of Catalanian independence should Madrid fall. Finally, like "Estáis de acuerdo," the poem ends with a direct plea for vigilance against the possibility which it has described.

This clear structure of description and application seems very rigorous in outline. But this outline form omits all the details of the poem which work against this rigorous structure. The details used to show the contrast between the Catalonians and the enemy forces are very imprecise. Therefore, the reader is unable to understand or participate in the emotions expressed. For example, lines



21-26 describe the enemy as rabble, as debased, and darkly cruel. In lines 33-36 the leaders of the opposite forces are drunkards eating off a table covered with bloody cloths. Although these descriptions are part of a rationally structured poem, the reader is given no indication as to what experiences generated these passionately desperate emotions and beliefs. There is no perceptual evidence to support the attacks or prevent them from appearing immoderate.

By the same token, the stereotyped praise of the Catalonians is also without any particular poetic evidence or detail to justify it. Cataluña is described as beautiful motherland, as the most desirable part of Spain, and as a firm believer in liberty, none of which concretizes the reader's perceptions. We receive only the vaguest stereotyped generalizations of goodness of one cause as opposed to the villainy of another. Although there is never any particular reason provided as to why the cause of the Catalonians is more just, what is demanded of the reader is an actual political course of action which should withstand a rigorous and thoughtful examination. The speaker is not merely asking his reader to momentarily share a perception of his circumstances. He requires a political commitment based on motives which have nothing to do with the political issue. In other words, outside of a particular audience from a particular moment of history, the poem is little more than political rhetoric. Its images are

not original and its argument is supported by wild self-righteous assertions.

Among the poems not based in incidents or personalities of the civil war, we discover the same characteristics of structure and imagery. Even when Alberti is treating a more abstract theme with wider human significance, the same failure is evident when he attempts to impose emotions of very obscure origin on a logically persuasive poetic structure, such as "La revolución y la guerra":

No son pasos confusos, claramente  
se ve que aprisa los está ordenando,  
distribuyendo a oscuras, calculando  
alguien que lo medita largamente.

Ya resuenan. Oidlos. Torvamente,  
¿qué máscara de hiel los va guiando,  
consintiendo, engañando, amortajando,  
donde la paz labraba libremente?

El aire es pus, los bosques son charcales  
de troncos y cabezas desunidos  
hoyos la mar y cólera la tierra.

Mas sola tú de entre los muertos sales,  
única y levantando a los caídos,  
¡Revolución!, para matar la guerra. (p. 381)

The theme here is a more generalized one. There is no necessary reference to the conditions of Spain of the 1930's. Instead, the poem is a justification of revolution as a political action to resolve the conflict and evil of war. The poem addresses itself to a general reader without urging any course of action other than the support of revolution. The reader is not accused as he was in "Estáis de

acuerdo," nor is his attention called to act to protect his country against aggressors as in the "Defensa de Cataluña." Despite the greater degree of abstraction in its theme, however, the same structure of argumentative persuasion and unmotivated vague detail confuses the reader.

The first two stanzas of the poem describe a diabolical intelligent force which is systematically threatening a people. In progressive steps, this force acts to snuff out, through guile and power, the peace of a nation. The third stanza abruptly changes tone and pictures in extreme terms the chaos produced by the destructive force, which has caused all of nature to be corrupted. The order by which the world has functioned is radically distorted. The conclusion to this situation, given in the final stanza, is that out of this state of chaos, revolution must come to restore equality among men and end all war.

Again we see, in bare structure, a persuasive argument for political and social action. A calculated force of evil destroys the order of peace and creates chaos. The peace can then only be restored by the coming of revolution to end the disruption of war. This is a rational statement, in logical steps, about a political reality. Let us now examine more closely the details of language and imagery that express the idea.

The characterization of the destructive force in the first two stanzas is again rather vague. It is a

darkly mysterious force in the third line, but an intelligent person who plans the exact steps of destruction in the fourth. The use of the term "someone" ("alguien") for a force which can create such universal havoc seems poorly chosen and much too insignificant for its powerful effect. This term becomes even more out of place in the light of its diabolical force presented through imagery of evil, deception, and death ("máscara de hiel," "engañando," "amortajando").

The third stanza obviously contains the most intense language of the entire poem. The reader's attention is suddenly forced away from the diabolical consciousness which destroys peace, and is focused on the corrupted world which results. There is an exaggerated grotesque quality about the physical images of the lines which have not been sufficiently prepared for earlier. The poem uses rankly material terms for a force which up to this point has only been identified as a hovering mysterious presence or person, a "someone." These images can communicate little since they describe effects of a subject which has never been defined on that level. Finally, the last stanza returns to the more abstract level to simply assert--not prove--revolution as the solution for this disordered world of death.

As we have seen, the details and language of the poem do not act to support its more logically persuasive

structure. The images function on a vague emotional level and fail to provide the definition and motivation for the responses they pretend to evoke. There is no precisely organized treatment of the subject in the language, although the structure of the whole proposes a rational statement. Whereas in Sobre los ángeles or Marinero en tierra there was a perfect correspondence of imagery and structure, here we find the two elements working against one another, in opposing direction, to confuse and frustrate the reader.

Throughout Alberti's political poetry we find instances of this same incongruence of language and structure. In one of the later poems, "Lejos de la guerra," an argument is presented against France's lack of involvement in the Spanish civil war, and, again as justification, the speaker uses only violent accusations:

.....  
 ¡Ah, Madrid de la luz, que se me va y enfría,  
 París, con tus tugurios de caspas y melenas,  
 pederastas, modistos, cabrones permanentes  
 y esta desamparada, sin alquiler, vacía  
 puta triste que apenas  
 pasa como el recuerdo de una historia sin dientes!

Viejo París, tu mano,  
 medio muerta en la mía,  
 tiene algo de gusano.  
 Al comprimirlo sangra, mordiéndome todavía.

Que a ti, París profundo, trabajador, risueño,  
 te mojen las glorias, mínimas, ejemplares  
 aguas del Manzanares,  
 de alegría, de aurora, de libertad y sueño.

These examples point up the most basic weakness of the book, and at the same time demonstrate a new direction in the poetic techniques of Alberti. At this point his use of rational structure is in the process of evolution and only in the later work it handled effectively.

Besides the change in the relationship of imagery and structure in Alberti's political poetry, a second important change of technique appears in his use of images. They are now of a more conceptual type than any of those in his earlier work. In previous poetry, objects or situations which implied more universal significance were merely presented, and not explicitly declared. The symbols of this book, on the other hand, declare and explain their meaning. As they are explained, their sense of life, of immediacy, diminishes. In "El otoño y el Ebro" we find an example of this tendency:

El otoño, otra vez. Sigue la guerra, fría,  
insensible al periódico descenso de las hojas.  
Como el hombre del Ebro bajo la artillería,  
los despoblados troncos junto a las aguas rojas.

Resistencia del árbol, tan dura, tan humana,  
como la del soldado que entre los vendavales  
de la muerte nocturna ve crecer la mañana,  
florida nuevamente de lauros inmortales.

Miro las hojas, miro cuán provisionalmente  
se desnuda la tierra del bosque más querido  
y de qué modo el hombre de esta España se siente,  
como los troncos, firme, ya desnudo o vestido.

El otoño, otra vez. Luego, el invierno. Sea.  
Caiga el traje del árbol, el sol no nos recuerde.  
Pero como los troncos, el hombre en la pelea,  
seco, amarillo, frío, mas por debajo, verde.

The presiding image of the poem is the tree at autumn as it loses its leaves, but underneath awaits the rebirth of spring. Alberti begins the poem with a description of the autumn leaves falling from the tree. Immediately, in the last two lines of the first stanza he explains overtly the comparison which he is making between the men of the army losing their lives and the apparent death of the trees. Nor is he content with only one clarification. The first lines of the second stanza draw parallels between the strength and endurance of the tree and those same qualities in the soldier, in case the reader had missed the point earlier.

The same explicit definitions and comparisons continue in the two final stanzas. Once again, as in the initial stanza, the first two lines describe qualities and actions of the trees, while the last lines demonstrate the comparable qualities and actions in men. The poem ends with the conclusion that renewal and hope will come for the soldiers just as the springtime will come again and bring green leaves back to the trees.

The greatest fault of the images of this poem is their anxious desire to explain relationships. They define the comparisons so fully that there is no possibility for variability or personal associations by the reader. In poems of earlier books, for example "Los ángeles muertos" of Sobre los ángeles, the objects and experiences used as

images were presented with no hint of explicit comparison. The dead leaves which cling to the speaker's shoe in this earlier poem, suggesting loss and disillusion, retain their vivid actuality. The leaves come to the reader without pat definitions, allowing him to picture them just as he has observed them.

"El otoño y el Ebro" is certainly not the only poem of the book which overexplains its symbols. "A Niebla, mi perro" (pp. 410-11) presents the dog as symbol of faithfulness to man when all else has betrayed him, a very stereotyped symbol. "Balada de los dos hermanos," mentioned earlier, uses the political conflict of two brothers as symbol of the larger conflict in Spain, an obvious opposition. Again, all the parallel characteristics of the terms of the images are defined and stipulated, robbing them of variability and more subtle association. The opposition is finally one which might easily be made independent of the poem.

In summary, we see that De un momento a otro is much less effective poetry than Alberti's earlier works. The thematic bases of the poems are closely related to previous works, the disillusion and conflict portrayed is very similar to the perspective of Sobre los ángeles. The problem exists in the structure and image relationship which Alberti introduces in this book. His poetic image



patterns are exchanged for logical persuasive arguments which are self-contradictory in their details and choice of language. The images are more conceptual. They explain and stipulate the larger meanings to be conveyed, and consequently their immediacy and life diminishes.

## CHAPTER V

The last of Alberti's books which we will treat, A la pintura, is characteristic of the poetry he has written since the Civil War and his exile from Spain. In tone, in approach, and in intensity it is removed from the spontaneous nature poems of his youth or the troubled world of intellectual and emotional crisis he depicted in the middle period of his life. A la pintura shows life from a more studied rational point of view, as did the structures of De un momento a otro. It is closer to an analysis of life than the less obviously filtered emotional reactions to life experiences which Alberti created so successfully in Marinero en tierra, La amante and Sobre los ángeles. The book appears reflective rather than instinctive in its assessment and presentation of experience.

The principal theme of the book is the esthetic experience created by painting, which is studied and explained by the different poems. The clear plan of the book, which is divided into three groups of poems that approach painting from three different directions, is the first indication of its reflective character. The three groups consist of poems dedicated to various colors, poems centered on different techniques, and poems dealing with particular painters. Works from all of these categories attempt to

organize direct impressions of art into a form which explains their appeal. Essentially, the impulse of A la pintura is didactic, though not in the aggressive argumentative way that characterized De un momento a otro. The emotions evoked are cooler and more removed from moment and circumstance. The difference in the two might be compared to that between living an exciting or challenging moment, and appreciating that same moment in a painting or a musical piece.

One of the three groups of poems Alberti employs to explain painting is a series of works dedicated to various colors of the painter's palette. The structure of the poems is fragmentary. Some thirty images, of one to four lines each, follow one another in these poems with almost no attempt at sequence. The only cohesion of the works emerges from the personification of the single color as a subject who describes himself to the reader. Often the color-speaker takes a specific tone and reveals a definite personality. Yellow says, for example: "Temo al azul porque me pone verde." (1. 51, p. 652). The play on words here makes the conceptual quality of the imagery very apparent. At other times the voice is much more impersonal. Earlier yellow is described and again defined conceptually: "El pálido amarillo de la muerte." (1. 32, p. 651). (Each one of these lines we have quoted constitutes a complete section of the enumerated series that make up the poem.)

Each of these brief perceptions could exist independently, since there is no sense of developing structure in the color poems. Every one of the short insights approaches the color and identifies it on a different level or from a different angle. The color is sometimes described or identified by its cultural associations: red is linked with excitement or green with hope and envy. At other times the images present striking occurrences of the color in nature: the red of a full ripe apple, the white of dashing sea foam, or the menace of a night so black it seems an endless abyss. Often, the images point out various examples of shades of the color created by certain painters. The poet praises the blues of Murillo, Tiépolo and Goya:

.....

19

Hay un azul Murillo Inmaculada,  
precursor del brillante de los cromos.

20

También dió azules Tiépolo a su siglo.

21

Soy una banda, una ligera cinta  
azul de Goya tenue, diluído.

.....

(11. 36-40, p. 626)

More technical aspects of the colors such as changing qualities under different lights and effects created by juxtaposition with other colors are also underlined.

In these poems the images come closest to the simple presentation of phenomena found in Marinero en tierra and La amante; nevertheless, here in A la pintura we feel the presence of a speaker filtering and intellectually interpreting the material. The imposition of idea on an object is still discernible in a manner that did not happen in Alberti's earliest poems. For instance, one description of red places it in nature: "Pensad que ando perdido en la más mínima, / humilde violeta." (ll. 62-63, p. 641). The exclaiming unbelieving attitude projected by the two qualifying adjectives removes the object from direct and immediate confrontation with the reader. This quality distinguishes these images from those of Marinero en tierra.

Let us recall, for example, the depiction of dawn which we mentioned in studying Marinero en tierra. There, the simple fact of dawn's occurrence was presented without any judgmental qualification: "La aurora va resbalando / entre espárragos trigueros." (p. 35). The immediate concrete description of the arrival of dawn caused the reader to confront its joy and simple beauty very spontaneously. The images describing color in A la pintura evoke an entirely different reaction. The image of yellow, "El azul me pone verde" (l. 51, p. 652), requires that we reflect on the fact that the combination of yellow and blue creates green, and at the same time plays on the idiomatic phrase, "me pone verde." Again in the description of red just mentioned,

the attitude of disbelief implies a discerning speaker and stresses the technical fact of the relationship between the colors red and violet. These images thus contribute to a much more reflective experience than did those in Marinero en tierra.

The second of the major groups of poems in A la pintura contains those directed to various materials and techniques of painting such as the brush, the palette, visual perspective, or light and shade. Unlike the poems to color they have a tightly controlled structure and follow regularly the same sonnet pattern.

In the color poems each of the personified shades spoke to describe itself; but in the technique poems, an impersonal speaker addresses each technique familiarly. The speaking voices of the color poems created varied personalities for themselves, but in these other poems the tone is uniform. The speaker consistently praises the technique he addresses and stresses its potential. The final line of every one of the poems creates an epithet for that technique which highlights its contribution to the art.

The poems, as already mentioned, uniformly praise the unique gift of each material and device of painting. They describe the artist's attitudes toward his materials, his assessment of its obedience to his will, or, as in "Al lienzo," the sense of challenge and promise that it represents:

.....  
 A ti, camino en éxtasis, portento  
 que surges de tu nada en esplendores;  
 terco dominio, imposición, rigores  
 y frontera encuadrada de un momento.

A ti, goce después; a ti, sumiso,  
 peligroso, resuelto compromiso  
 sobre una mar en calma que perdura.

Ya no eres lino, plano humilde, tela.  
 Ya eres barco celeste, brisa, vela.  
 A ti, ángel salvador de la Pintura. (p. 636)

Another theme common in these poems is the effect of the technique on the painting's viewer or the particular function which the device performs within a work of art. "A la perspectiva" (pp. 647-8) describes perspective as an ideal deceit which draws the viewer into the painting with a call to plunge himself into it, and causes him to see a distant ocean pictured as just behind a balcony close at hand. The poem which praises composition stresses the harmony and sense of solidity and wholeness which this element provides. The characteristic epithet which ends this poem notes the contrasting flexibility and immovability in composition: "A ti, soplo y razón de la Pintura." (p. 657).

Much more imagery is used in these poems than in De un momento a otro. Even the most prosaic sort of information that is included is transformed by imagery to lend it a sense of importance by its association with the aesthetic medium. Very often nothing more than the physical appearance of a painting tool sets off several images which

compare it to other objects, which share some of the same physical qualities. These images are very different than the ones found in Alberti's early poetry because they compare two objects, and very often base the comparison on a very conventional visual resemblance. The physical objects depicted in Marinero en tierra or Sobre los ángeles usually represented a quality. The sea, for instance, often symbolized freedom or love in Marinero, and the broken ruined objects of poems like "Los angeles muertos" in Sobre los ángeles, were compared with disillusion and loss. Here, however, the comparisons act to draw out the physical resemblance of two objects. The artist's brush is a music baton, a stiletto, a whisk broom, or a wheat stalk, all based on the rod-like shape. The palette is described as a well with a single eye set in it, as a fan, and as a wing, all showing the round palette's shape with the thumbhold. Comparisons drawn from this class of resemblances thus create a more literalistic and studied perspective for the reader.

The third group of poems is that which studies the work of various painters from Giotto to the contemporary era. These poems show more variety in structure than the other two groups. Traditional as well as experimental structures are used freely in order to recreate the artistic sensations of particular painters' works. The dual aim of the book, the recreation of sensation and the explanation of sensation, is clearest in these poems.



The first poems which we will note interpret the material resources and techniques used by artists to create sensorial perceptions; the latter ones we will study demonstrate Alberti's ability to recreate perceptions through the use of sound, rhythm, and visual images that do not rely on logical explanation.

"Cezanne," for example, simply develops two ideas concerning the creation of Cezanne's work. The poet presents a particular conception of Cezanne's approach to his work. Alberti offers a biographical sketch in which we see a driving, tortured artist obsessed with particular problems of painting such as the creation of an impression of weight and solidity. The remainder of the poem then presents the characteristics of Cezanne's work from which these biographical conclusions have been drawn. Alberti mentions the use of composition, the sense of compactness, and the forms of color which distinguish the paintings.

This work blends thesis ideas more often associated with textbooks of art history, along with language structured to create visual and sensorial effects. The tone, however, is most often that of a studied intellectual assessment and a detached scrutiny of Cezanne's paintings, rather than a pure poetic response to the work. Alberti suggests a particular thesis, then quite systematically reinforces and enlarges upon his idea. The experience of the poem thus has a uniquely intellectual quality. The reader is

invited to adopt the same detached and evaluative position which the poem exhibits.

The early stanzas of the poem show how Alberti transforms a studied evaluation of the painter's approach into a poetic form. The first of the stanzas depicts the character of Cezanne in an unpretentious laboring stance, meekly studying his art. The triple reference to his tedious study in the first line, as well as its reiteration in the image of the painter as suffering humble apprentice in the remaining lines reinforce, through their lack of movement and change, a sense of slow monotonous labor:

Tenaz, penoso, lento  
 aprendiz de pintor. Aprendizaje  
 en toda la extensión del sufrimiento.  
 Plantado humilde enfrente de un paisaje.  
 .....

(11. 1-4, p. 687)

The third stanza of the poem combines a more excited and impassioned language with a further development of the same biographical idea, in hopes of relating this idea to the experience of Cezanne's painting. The entire stanza is spoken in exclamatory phrases. Cezanne here is not oppressed by the wearisome study of his art, but must fight very actively to master the techniques which he envisions. The lines stress the emotions of the painter, but the point is that they are used to develop a very logical thesis, the dedication necessary to attain such mastery:

.....  
 ¡Oh combatiente,  
 dulce cruel, oh solitario,  
 agresivo prudente,  
 dios primario!  
 ¡Oh pobre, oh preso,  
 para quien la pintura es una pura  
 cárcel de un solo nombre: la Pintura,  
 la solidez, el peso!  
 .....

(11. 9-16, p. 687)

In these lines, there is again a repeated insistence on one concept, the sense of sacrifice and striving necessary to master the art. The alliteration of the "p" sound accents this repetition for the reader. In addition, Alberti blends the language of an intensely emotional situation, a love relationship, into his description of the painter's approach to his work. The painter battles to achieve his goal, his struggle is bitter-sweet, he is aggressive, and finally he is a prisoner of his passion. All of these expressions bear associations of love poetry and add a note of fervor and enthusiasm to the picture given of an artist dedicated to his craft.

The remaining lines of "Cezanne" turn their attention fully to the paintings themselves. Since they follow a two-part essayistic presentation of Cezanne's personal commitment, these stanzas give the impression of a logical statement or proof which verifies the preceding argument:

.....  
 Modulado, medido, que acompasa  
 la nube, el árbol masa,  
 la dispuesta

17

|                                  |    |
|----------------------------------|----|
| tonalidad graduada, yuxtapuesta; | 20 |
| el s3n, el denso exacto          |    |
| del mar, bloque compacto;        |    |
| la perseguida                    |    |
| pincelada                        |    |
| cortada,                         | 25 |
| dirigida.                        |    |

|                                      |    |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| Te conoce el azul, te reconoce       |    |
| el nuevo tema:                       |    |
| la forma, el pleno goce              |    |
| de la forma, color pleno en esquema. | 30 |
| .....                                |    |

(pp. 687-8)

These stanzas very systematically list the techniques created by Cezanne, the objects characteristic of his work, and his primary contribution to the art. This enumeration of artistic techniques is a good example of the methodical intellectual pattern so typical of this poem. Lines 17-27 list Cezanne's technique of modulation of color, his exacting reproduction of spatial relations, his use of brushstrokes of overlapping colors, and the sense of flat depth of many of his marine scenes. Along with the mention of innovations of form, the reader receives the sensation of a kind of catalogue of the painter's traits which judges the works; while the quick list of qualities enumerated in rapid succession with supporting sentence structure evokes an impression of urgency and intensity. We note that here, unlike in De un momento a otro, Alberti has discovered methods of supporting logical structure with effectively motivated images.

In other poems of A la pintura such as "Tiziano" we find the same unique combination of detached academic assessment and sensorial or emotive response to artistic creation. In "Tiziano" we are not given a biographical criticism of the painting nor a compendium of the painter's formal innovations. Here, the speaker concentrates on the primary themes of Titian's painting, on particular mythological and religious subjects such as Diana, Bacchus, Cupid and Jesus, on particular forms which frequently occur in Titian's work, and on individual architectural motifs and colors that he employed.

The poem dedicated to Cezanne was structured much like the pattern of a logical argument. A biographical thesis was presented in initial stanzas, which was then authenticated in later lines by observations of particular techniques evident in the paintings, all fitted together in one pattern. In "Tiziano," however, there is a clearer dichotomy established between the personal response of the viewer and the objective characteristics of Titian's painting. There is an alternation of critical comments and intuitive responses:

Fué Dánae, fué Calisto, fué Diana,  
 fué Adonis y fué Baco, fué Cupido;  
 la cortesana azul mar veneciana,  
 el ceñidor de Venus desceñido,  
 la bucólica plástica suprema,  
 Fué a toda luz, a toda voz el tema.

¡Oh, juventud! Tu nombre es el Tiziano.  
 Tu música, su fuente calurosa.  
 Tu belleza, el concierto de su mano.  
 Tu gracia, su sonrisa numerosa.  
 Lúdica edad, preámbulo sonoro,  
 divina y fiel desproporción de oro.

El alto vientre esférico, el agudo  
 pezón saltante, errático en la orgía,  
 las más secretas sombras al desnudo.  
 Bacanal del color: su mediodía.  
 Colorean los ríos los Amores,  
 surtiendo en arco de sus ingles flores.

.....

(11. 1-18, p. 636)

The first lines of the poem describe objectively the mythological figures and the setting of much of Titian's work: the gods and goddesses, the Venetian sea, and the bucolic settings. This material is presented largely without indication by the speaker of his response or of the atmosphere projected by these figures and scenes. Immediately afterwards, however, the second stanza turns its full attention to the individual's reaction. Here we note a shift from analytically descriptive language which only reproduces rather impersonal fact, to highly figurative language which attempts to convey the sense of musical grace elicited by Titian's painting. Images of warmth, of youth, and of music are used to create a sensation of harmony, abundance, and gracefulness which corresponds to the response evoked by the painting.

The third stanza of "Tiziano" reverts to a more objective reproduction of pictorial forms. The tone of the

stanza is again one of critical appraisal. Specific figures and physical forms, colors, and movements are described. This contrast of attitudes continues throughout the length of the poem. Again in this poem, the structural development has been coordinated with and supported by the images which conveyed emotive meanings. These images not only created feeling in the reader, but also justified for him the thesis of the poem, making the latter a unified experience.

Another example of this alternation of description and emotive response exists in "Piero Della Francesca," although here the dichotomy is not so pronounced. There is again a listing of characteristics of the painting. Alberti mentions their use of line, of austere columns, of clearly defined weight and volume, and of architectural forms. The latter lines of the poem then attempt to recreate the sense of graceful lightness within spare figures which at the same time convey a sense of weight. The contrast of tone in this work is contained within individual stanzas:

La línea reflexiva,  
gracia inmóvil, severa,  
de una columna austera  
que canta, pensativa.

Nada es indefinido  
cuerpo o disfundado.  
Sí solidificado  
volumen abstraído.

Arquitectura ilesa,  
 incólume armonía,  
 Pesa la geometría  
 y la luz también pesa.  
 .....

(11. 1-12, pp. 618-619)

Alberti's tribute to Giotto might appear to be one of the most clearly analytical of the poems. Each stanza of the poem explores a single technical element of Giotto's frescoes, for example the fresh lime, the human figure as design, or the color. This rather systematic plan of approach to an artist's work seems to reveal a cold and studied attitude. The geometric structure, however, is balanced by a series of techniques which particularize and transform these ideas. We find reproduced in the poem the sentiment generally evoked by much of Giotto's work-- a kind of sympathetic fusing of the viewer with the atmosphere suggested by the frescoes. Coupled with the structural analysis of Giotto's work, this atmosphere tempers the purely informative aspects of the poem and aids the reader in perceiving the sensations they stimulate:

Laude, Señor Dios mío,  
 al hermano pincel. Él se ha mojado  
 de tu divino rostro de rocío  
 y al fundirle la sangre, iluminado.

Laude, Señor Dios mío,  
 al sometido, abierto hermano muro,  
 a la cal fresca, hirviente, resistida  
 del aire, del calor, el agua, el frío;  
 la hermana cal, su puro  
 blanco y perenne sueño de la vida.



Laude, Señor Dios mío,  
 al lápiz, a la pluma  
 que al hermano diseño delinea,  
 Laude al esbozo erguido de la bruma,  
 laude a la hermana luz que lo recrea.

Laude, Señor Dios mío,  
 a la humana figura,  
 ardiente paralela, recta hermana  
 de la infinita hermana arquitectura.

Laude, Señor Dios mío,  
 al hermano color, a los colores:  
 al fraternal violeta,  
 al verde, al blanco, al rojo, al amarillo,  
 al negro, al oro, al rosa  
 y al que es lengua pintando tus loores  
 cuando se eleva airosa  
 a humilde, a pobrecillo  
 pájaro fiel mi mano:  
 el claro azul, el buen añil hermano.

Laude, Señor Dios mío,  
 al pausado, solemne movimiento,  
 al hierático mar y rígido paisaje.  
 Laude al ángel que boga sin el hermano viento,  
 al simétrico orden sin hastío  
 y al salmo rectilíneo del ropaje.

Laude, Señor Dios mío,  
 porque me armaste dulce, cariñoso,  
 y en una edad oscura  
 me concediste el hábito glorioso  
 del hermano mayor de la Pintura. (pp. 616-617)

As mentioned earlier, the analytic elements of the poem are the most obvious. Critical comments point out the most striking and successful features of the painter. The speaker mentions the luminous quality of the frescoes, the strength of the pure white wall, the use of line and haze, the sculptural figures, the principal colors and the solemn movement of the figures. The final stanza even places Giotto in historical perspective.

Counterbalancing this neat structure, the poem evokes sentiment, first of all, by addressing itself to God. Each stanza begins with the same invocation, which suggests the kind of emotive intention apparent in the subject matter of the works, and also reveals the painter's emotional attitude. The six repetitions of the phrase also create a rhythmic litany-like effect reminiscent of the medieval lauds, and evocative of the culture, the beliefs, and the atmosphere of the period.

The effect of the repeated invocation is reinforced by the repetition of the word "hermano" as an adjective, referring to each of the painting techniques mentioned. These references further the sense of humility of the artist and of the same sentiment in the painting's observers. They also recall the Franciscan acceptance of all elements of reality as "brothers," and bring to mind Giotto's frescoes depicting the life of St. Francis.

Another pattern of images creates the illusion of the poem as a prayer of thanks by Giotto. The prayer is immediately directed to God in gratitude for the tools granted to the painter. An attitude of self deprecation and humility is also present in the images used to describe these tools; the fresh lime, the brush, and the color are personified and made the poet's equal.

The combination of these techniques produces a logical pattern of critical judgments and principles evident

in Giotto's work, but presents this pattern in images which suggest a responsive vision of the work, and of the age to which it belongs. It gives information about the artist and his work and at the same time suggests the sensitive apprehension of the artist's work by a typical viewer. The characterization of the speaker of the poem, its images, and the patterned phrases all contribute to this effect. Alberti here has very evidently discovered a satisfying combination of the techniques of logical pattern and of sensorial effect which he initiated with De un momento a otro.

The poem to Botticelli is subtitled "arabesco," and demonstrates more clearly some of Alberti's techniques of non-logical suggestion. It does not develop any argument or idea; the structure is much less obvious, and relies heavily on elements of association. Various figures and motifs are mentioned which are related to Botticelli's "The Birth of Venus": the sea background, the west winds, several heavenly figures, and finally Venus herself. In addition to these figures, the shapes and the atmosphere suggested in the poem correspond closely to this picture. The curves, the dance-like lines, and the grace and lightness of the poem evoke those of the painting. Paradoxically, the poem is, however, independent of the picture:

La Gracia que se vuela,  
 que se escapa en sonrisa,  
 princetonada a la vela,  
 brisa en curva deprisa,  
 aire claro de tela 5  
 alisada,  
 concisa,  
 céfiros blandos en camisa,  
 por el mar, sobre el mar,  
 todo rizo huidizo, 10  
 torneado ondear,  
 rizado hechizo;  
 geometría  
 que el viento que no enfría  
 promueve 15  
 a contorno que llueve  
 pájaro y flor en geometría;  
 .....

(11. 1-17, pp. 620-21)

What the poem accomplishes is distinct from earlier poems discussed. It produces an effect similar to that created by the painting without literally describing the painting. This is done without reference to the realistic details of the picture, although Alberti employs the larger forms of Botticelli's painting. No narrative structures implicit in the picture, however, are mentioned. Rather, the effect is achieved through a series of images which describe the more abstract geometric forms such as curves, contours, lines, surfaces that the eye catches at random. The poem arranges these forms in a new creation employing the rhythmic resources of language to reproduce an experience like that of the painting. The result is a series of decorative forms which are related to the painting more by a correspondence to the viewer's emotional ordering and

response to it, than through a very literal descriptive relationship with the picture. The images of the tenth through twelfth lines catch the movement of the eye over the repeating waves of the ocean and the full-blown feeling of roundness; then they infuse this form with a fascinating hypnotic sensation. Here, the sound of the lines, the interior and exterior rhymes embody this enchanting design.

In later lines, the focus is on the movement and line which the eye catches, joined with a sensation of the youthful grace and vigor usually associated with spring-time: "contorno, línea en danza, / primavera bailable / en el espacio estable / para la bienaventuranza" (11. 18-21). The structure of the poem as it moves from line to line seems to be determined more by the caprices of rhythm and rhyme than by logical necessity. Lines 22-25 repeat the same rhythmic structure three times without actually advancing the explanation of the picture at all. Instead, they study the beauty of sound for itself, much as the picture creates beauty for its own sake: "del querubín en coro, / del serafín en ronda, de la mano / del arcángel canoro."

Many of these same techniques are used in the poem dedicated to Bosch. Like the poem to Botticelli, this one has no linear developing structure. There is no narrative explanation to relate it exactly to a specific picture or artist; no one line of verse refers to a given person in

the painting. (The work does, however, draw its inspiration from "The Garden of Earthly Delights!") As in the poem about Botticelli, the images here also have been abstracted from a realistic description of details, while evoking responses parallel to those created by the painting. This method is clearer in "El Bosco" since there is even less narrative description in this poem. This lack of description is accented by the use of unconventional words:

El diablo hocicudo  
 ojipelambrudo,  
 cornicapricudo,  
 perniculimbrudo  
 y rabudo,  
 zorrea,  
 pajarea,  
 mosquiconejea,  
 humea,  
 ventea,  
 peditrompetea  
 por un embudo.  
 Amar y danzar,  
 beber y saltar,  
 cantar y reír,  
 oler y tocar,  
 comer, fornicar,  
 dormir y dormir,  
 llorar y llorar.

Mandroque, mandroque,  
 diablo palitroque.

¡Pío, pío, pío!  
 Cabalgo y me río,  
 me monto en un gallo  
 y en un puercoespín,  
 en burro, en caballo,  
 en camello, en oso,  
 en rana, en raposo  
 y en un cornetín.

.....

(pp. 11. 1-29, p. 645)

The poem extends for 93 short, rapidly-moving lines, most consisting of only one or two words. Larger sections of the poem are descriptive only in the sense that they often mention figures and forms found in "Garden." They are long uninterrupted streams of verbs of bodily action: to drink, to smell, to touch. The subjects of the verbs are nonsense words, but nevertheless convey a meaning. The words are formed from significant syllables of more legitimately accepted words. Thus we see a series such as "ojipelambrudo, / cornicapricudo, / perniculimbrudo" (11. 2-4), all of which are the systematic juxtaposition and distortion of ordinary words. "Oji" is related to the word for eye, "lambrudo" to the word for hairy, "corni" suggests the word for horny, and "capricudo" suggests stubbornness. The words gain even more in effect and meaning by the fact that they occur in series with the same number of syllables and identical endings. This contributes even more to the sense of distortion of an ordinary concept of phrase and sentence structure, while still maintaining enough of the communicative qualities, in order that particular objects be brought to mind.

Alternating with these long rambling stanzas are short refrain stanzas that consist of two lines each. The words in these refrains are utter nonsense words of multiple syllables, and differ from the distorted words of the longer stanzas by not being directly related to any normal

vocabulary words. They are pure fantasy, much like some of the objects of pure fantasy in Bosch's pictures which have no clearly objective referent: "Verijo, verijo / diablo garavijo." (11. 30-31, p. 645).

In addition to the sense of chaos and irrationality implied by the seemingly aimless accumulation of nonsense words and syllables, the placement of the stanzas on the page also reinforces this effect because they are situated in various off-center positions to imply a contradiction of normal order.

All of these techniques, the strings of verbs, the distortion of word and sentence structure, the utter nonsense words, and the visual placement of stanzas, contribute to recreate the sense of chaos of Bosch's work. They reproduce in the reader an emotive state which corresponds to the impact of the painting. This broadens the experience of the painting because it allows the reader to see from a different perspective and through the medium of words and of sound a similar response to art.

In all of the poems of this book, the desire to elucidate and enrich the effects of art is apparent. Sometimes Alberti attempts to overtly explain the effects of painting tools, colors, or techniques; at other times he reproduces the effects of paintings as nearly as possible through poetic techniques. This constant desire to explain in A la pintura and to convince in De un momento a otro



causes the works to deviate from his earlier production. Even given the substantial variation among the first three books we have studied, all of them confronted the reader with the immediate concrete description of scenes of nature and of psychological states. There was no attempt to convince or teach the reader at any point. The two last books studied, however, reverse this tendency. De un momento a otro obviously labored to convince the reader of a certain political position, and A la pintura teaches its reader about the function of painting tools and the effect of paintings.

In both these cases, the techniques used were logical structure and imagery which recreated emotive effect. Only in some poems of A la pintura are these two elements successfully integrated. The latter book uses the outline forms of logic, and supports these forms with images that demonstrate the rational assumptions.

## CONCLUSION

When we study Alberti's poetry, we see that his use of structure and of imagery are the primary devices that create the effects of his poems. Not only do these techniques often determine the effectiveness of his works, but they also explain the variations of effect which we note throughout his production. It is only in an appreciation of his mastery of these elements that we become completely aware of the depth and perception of Alberti's work.

The images are perhaps less difficult to define than the complex patterning forms which Alberti has employed so successfully. The images bring together widely varying elements of experience which draw the reader into reflexions on the nature of emotion, of physical sensation, and on the power of verbal association. They stimulate response by drawing objects, ideas and experiences out of the compartmentalized definitions that modern civilization has imposed upon them. These images give the opportunity for new exchange between the reader and the circumstances which surround him.

The structures of Alberti's poetry are the forms that organize and develop the perceptions of the poems. They are the principles that selectively draw meaning out of a chaotic mass of material. At his finest moments, for

instance in Sobre los ángeles, the structures and images are so closely identified as to be indistinguishable. The structures of this book are patterns which are associated with our underlying assumptions about existence, our view of the world, and of people. These structures act not only as a force of discipline and order but also evoke responses in the reader himself, interfusing images and memories from the reader's past.

Marinero en tierra and La amante also closely identify image and structure. The short poems in these books do not contain complicated structural patterns. They do make effective use of structure, however. The strength of the images of these books resides in spontaneity, freshness, and simplicity. The appeal of the images, then, depends on the brevity of the works to create poetic "presence," a living tension between the elements of the poem. In this sense, the quick still pictures make effective use of structure. They reveal the implicit order among the elements of the universe in a microcosmic view.

These three of Alberti's most successful books show his imagery and structure effectively employed. In the poems of these works there is no possibility of separating the images from the structure which relates them to one another, or to see this structure as a mechanical pattern that merely serves as backdrop for the imagery. The imaginative contribution of both elements is equal.

It is precisely this relationship of imagery to structure that demonstrates the weaknesses of Alberti's later works which we have studied. In De un momento a otro, the exclamatory accusing images contradict and work against the logic of the structure of the poems. A la pintura, on the other hand, also employs logical structures. Although the images help to demonstrate the ideas of the logical structures, complete integration of the two elements is never fully achieved. They do not present the imaginative challenge of his earlier work.

By approaching Alberti's work from the point of view of its form, we have tried not to lose sight of the intensity and excitement of his poems. Instead we hope to have enhanced these qualities for the reader. Then, in an understanding of the most direct appeal of the poem, he may be able to see and feel further qualities in the work that contribute to a richer and more complete experience for him.

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