

Pablo Neruda's Contribution to Marxist Aesthetics

By

Tusar Talukder

Registration no. 02/2018-2019

**A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Kazal Krishna Banerjee



Department of English

University of Dhaka

October 2023

Declaration

This dissertation---submitted to the Department of English, University of Dhaka---is a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work except where otherwise stated. It has not been submitted previously anywhere for any award.

Signature:

(Tusar Talukder)

Date:

Certificate of Approval from the Supervisor

This is to certify that the above statement made by the candidate, Tusar Talukder (Registration No. 2/2018-2019), is correct to the best of my knowledge.

Supervisor

Signature:

Date:

(Professor Dr. Kazal Krishna Banerjee)

Department of English

University of Dhaka

Abstract

Pablo Neruda underwent a transformation from a love poet to a solitary and dejected one and then to a committed one during his formative years. Precisely after he had come in close contact with the key figures of the Spanish intelligentsia, he broke up with his previous interests in romance and romanticism and subsequently embraced communist ideology and politically committed poetry. He published a literary periodical called *Green Horse* wherein he espoused the concept of “Impure Poetry” in contrast to that of pure poetry that came to the forefront with the catchword of “art for art’s sake” in Europe in the latter half of the 19th century. In addition, his friend Federico Garcia Lorca’s assassination by the reactionary forces of Spain considerably changed his political and poetic visions. Alongside this, the onset of the 1937 Spanish Civil War impelled him to respond to the cause of the Spanish masses. His endorsement of the communist ideology helped him condemn the upsurge of international fascism at that time. Through interpreting the poetry of one of his most notable books, *Spain in Our Hearts*, this dissertation investigates the factors that, in multiple ways, have contributed to Neruda’s emergence as a poet of the people. Furthermore, the poetry of *Canto General* (1950) and *Odes to Common Things* (1954) contribute to his development of the Marxist concepts of art, literature, and history, widely known as Marxist aesthetics as a whole. In particular, he blends the philosophy of dialectical materialism with that of historical materialism in the aforementioned books to explore and explain social and political contradictions and tensions across the continent of South America. Firstly, in *Canto General* (1950), the poet attempts to identify and locate the exploitation and oppression of South American peoples by imperial powers and the capitalist system, on the one hand, and present the struggles of the workers and peasants as part of a more extensive historical process in which opposing forces clash and interact to produce social change, on the other hand. Secondly, in *Odes to Common Things*, Neruda, on a surface level, celebrates the value of everyday objects of daily life and, on a deeper level, intends to dignify the role of the commoners, whose efforts often go unnoticed in the class systems of society and state. Besides, he uses the Marxist triad of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis to show the upswing of oppressive political and economic structures, and emergence of social revolutions to overthrow the exploiter classes, and the possibility of building a socialist society. He highlights the deliberate omission of the workers’ and liberators’ contributions and sacrifices by bourgeois forces and regimes from the textbooks of history, with the aim of misleading future generations of readers and learners. Overall, this dissertation divulges the

falsification of historical facts that stand as a threat to historicity in a whole continent like South America. This thesis also illustrates how Whitman's idea of comradeship, Quevedo's satirical poetic style, and Mayakovsky's revolutionary ideas left a myriad of influences on Neruda and his poetry, which, afterwards, founded the basis of his Marxist philosophy. On the whole, it examines Neruda's contribution to Marxist aesthetics, broadly exposing, on the one hand, the conflicts between the bourgeois and the proletariat as reflected in his poetry and, on the other hand, the inevitability of the proletarian revolution for social and political change that he envisions. Lastly, it argues how Neruda's world outlook in his works widens and augments the enormous panorama of Marxist ideology and aesthetics.

Acknowledgements

My deep respect and gratitude first go to my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Kazal Krishna Banerjee, whose worthy guidance has helped me write this dissertation within the scheduled time-frame. Furthermore, his unwavering enthusiasm and personal generosity have made my journey of five years quite smooth, pleasant, and enjoyable. His original and extensive knowledge of Marxism and Latin American Literature has driven me to critically explore and analyse Karl Marx's and Pablo Neruda's world outlook. Alongside this, I would like to extend my gratitude to Mrs. Banerjee, who also has been an amicable support throughout my endeavour to complete this research.

I thankfully acknowledge the support and inspiration that I received from my teachers, especially from Prof. Dr. Shawkat Hossain, Prof. Dr. Syed Manzoorul Islam, Prof. Zerin Alam, Dr. Bijoy Lal Basu, and Prof. Dr. Golam Gaus Al-Quadri. I express my special gratitude to Prof. Abdus Selim and Prof. Shafi Ahmed for their insightful comments and suggestions to improve and sharpen my critical analysis in multiple ways. My thanks are due to Prof. Dr. Maleka Begum, who has shown her interest in my research area of Marxist aesthetics.

I am thankful to former Calcutta Communist Party member Subir Kumar Choudhury (Subirda), who sent me some excellent pieces of writing and books and photocopied materials on Marxist aesthetics from Kolkata. I am grateful to my Bangladesh-born British friend Rony Kumar Saha, who also sent me a good number of rare books on Pablo Neruda via Amazon. I am thankful also to all my colleagues in the English Department of Central Women's University, who extended all-out cooperation whenever necessary.

Let me extend my heartfelt thanks to Prof. Harashit Bala, Abul Bashar Firoz, Madhab Chandra Das, and some other writers, journalists, and publishers who handed over to me many books associated with my research on different occasions.

Let me remember my late father, Ranatush Talukder, who died three years back and knew I had started pursuing a Ph.D. programme. However, I will surely miss him when the university authority will possibly confer the degree on me. He had always been a support and encouragement for me. I truly feel indebted to my wife, Shyamoli, for her constant moral support and courage

throughout my journey of writing this doctoral thesis. She has shown genuine interest in all my attempts to pursue a programme of Ph.D. research.

Last but not least, I acknowledge my debt to all scholars and critics whose opinions I have made use of in my dissertation.

TusarTalukder

Contents

Abstract.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Introduction.....	01
Chapter One: Literature Review: Neruda and His Critics.....	12
Chapter Two: Marxist Aesthetics: A Progressive Worldview.....	35
i. Early Marxists: Plekhanov, Mehring and Zhdanov.....	45
ii. György Lukács and Bertolt Brecht.....	48
iii. Frankfurt School: Adorno and Benjamin.....	56
iv. Ideology and Hegemony: Althusser, Gramsci, and Macherey.....	57
v. New Left: Williams, Eagleton, and Jameson.....	62
vi. Contemporary Marxists: Slavoj Zizek and Aijaz Ahmed.....	64
vii. Neruda and Marxism.....	68
viii. Socialist Realism.....	78
ix. The Debate between Form and Content.....	87
x. The Embodiment of Truth and Beauty.....	90
xi. Values of Progressive Outlook.....	91
Chapter Three: History Creates a People's Poet.....	97
i. Neruda's Formative Years as a Poet.....	98
ii. Neruda's Sojourn Life.....	109

iii. Neruda's Proximity to the Spanish Intelligentsia.....	116
iv. Promulgation of the Concept of "Impure Poetry".....	121
v. Lorca's Assassination: A Setback in Neruda's Life.....	123
vi. The Onset of the Spanish Civil War.....	126
vii. Neruda in Defense of the Spanish Republican Government.....	130
viii. A People's Poet in the Making.....	152
ix. <i>Spain in Our Hearts</i> : Verses of Resistance.....	155
Chapter Four: Neruda's Contribution to Marxist Aesthetics.....	171
i. <i>Canto General</i> : Historical Context.....	171
ii. Neruda's Political Activism and Pan-American Consciousness.....	174
iii. The Creation of an Epic.....	199
iv. Structure of <i>Canto General</i> : Marxist Dialectical Approach.....	207
v. Anatomy of Poems: Neruda's Quest for Historicity.....	210
vi. Re-envisioning a Socialist Society.....	254
vii. <i>Odes to Common Things</i> : A Truly Liberal Worldview.....	262
Conclusion.....	273
Works Cited.....	278

Introduction

Pablo Neruda (1904-1973), one of the representative and pre-eminent Chile-born South American poet-activists of the twentieth century, enriched and supplemented the oeuvre of Latin American as well as global literature with his inspiring and transformative literary creations. Over the course of fifty years dedicated to literary endeavours, he authored more than thirty volumes of poetry and two works of prose. In particular, the significance of his influence on Latin American literature cannot be overstated. Above all other contemporary Latin American writers of his time, he introduced the literature of Latin America to the global stage during the early 1920s. His ability to establish a profound connection with the general public was evident in his enormous canvas of work. The persistence of this relationship endured throughout his lifetime and, in fact, grew more profound with time, transforming him into an advocate for those who were marginalised and unheard. Neruda asserted that he invariably wanted the hands of people to be visible in poetry (Stavans xxxiii). He has preferred a kind of poetry in which people from all walks of life can participate. However, his preoccupation with people's place in poetry led to some divided views. For instance, Spanish novelist and Nobel laureate Gabriel Garcia Marquez once regarded Neruda as "the greatest poet of the twentieth century in any language" (qtd. in Agosin 31). To fortify his comment, Marquez posited that Neruda addressed the people's cause in his poetry more predominantly than anything else. In contrast, Spanish poet Juan Ramon Jimenez expressed that Neruda was a "great bad poet" as he gave more attention to political issues than artistic expression in his poetry (qtd. in Teitelboim 19). However, most writers and critics have unanimously endorsed the way Marquez dignified Neruda, albeit a small literary group spoke in support of Jimenez. Against the backdrop of two opposite schools of thought, while bestowing the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1971 on Neruda, the Swedish Academy's formal declaration exhibited a

confrontational demeanour: The present accolade, as expressed, has been conferred upon a writer of “contentious nature,” whose work not only incites debate but also invites considerable disagreement among many individuals (20). The ongoing debate spanning four decades demonstrates that “his contribution is unquestionable,” which also serves as a testament to the undeniable strength of his work (qtd. in Stavans xxxiii).

Neruda, substantially noted for his poetry book *Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair* (1924), began his literary career as a love poet. His college-life love affair with two Santiago girls, Marisol and Marisombra, became the book's most prevalent subject matter. Within this literary work, a young chap engages in a conversation with a female, discussing the themes of sensuality and eroticism with such simplicity in linguistic expression that had not been observed before in Spanish poetry. Alongside, his love for the vast landscape of Southern Chile became another attraction manifested in many of his earlier compositions. At that time, he also came under the influence of the latest currents of European literary movements, especially French surrealism. However, such an impact evaporated fast as his involvement as a correspondent for a left-oriented Student Federation of Chile publication, the *Claridad*, provided him with a basic understanding of leftist politics. From an article in this magazine published sometime in 1920, he realised how the state apparatus had always supported the wealthy or the ruling class. In addition, Roberto Meza Fuentes, a poet and communist activist, edited *Juventud*, another Student Federation of Chile publication, which profoundly influenced Neruda's political and poetic visions. The journal was primarily devoted to publishing works of revolutionary literature. Altogether, these two publications significantly impacted Neruda's understanding of communist ideology at an early age.

At the age of twenty-three, Neruda emerged as a poet whose rhymes garnered widespread acclaim and appreciation among a diverse Spanish-American audience, particularly the youth.

However, as the city of Temuco and its forests became a familiar territory for him, and so did the capital, Santiago, he decided to travel and explore new lands. In 1927, he was designated as the consul of Chile to Burma, also known as Myanmar. Subsequently, he proceeded to Rangoon in order to undertake his official duties. However, his first job as a Chilean consul in Burma threw him into a life of utter dejection and desolation, which he has minutely portrayed in the first two books of *Third Residencia*. His use of language, formerly known for its meticulous precision and vivid clarity, grew more enigmatic and insular to convey his profound sense of a deteriorating world that he was fated to navigate alone. However, after his transfer to Madrid, Spain, from Myanmar, he underwent a radical change, firstly because of his close proximity to the Spanish intelligentsia and later because of his horrendous experiences during the Spanish Civil War. The poetic fraternity was torn apart by the onset of the Civil War in 1937. As Neruda saw the Falangists demolishing his house, he was filled with pain and foreboding. From this viewpoint, this thesis attempts to set forth how the wartime occurrences profoundly impacted his life and poetic innovation. When writing the third part of the *Residencia* series, he intended to encapsulate those horrible experiences more than the other issues. The third part later came out under the title of *Spain in Our Hearts*, mainly focusing on the fulmination of the Spanish proletariat against the onslaught of Francisco Franco that was negatively energised by the Falangists and the anarchists and subsequently backed by Hitler and Mussolini.

However, the assassination of his comrade Federico Garcia Lorca, one of the most influential Spanish communist poets and playwrights, by Franco's followers in Granada at the end of 1936 was a great setback in Neruda's life, which later compelled him to capture the Spanish wartime realities in poetry. In those poems, on the one hand, Neruda illustrates the untold sufferings of the innocent Spaniards and, on the other hand, brings to light the protest of the

proletariat against Franco's repercussions. He regarded the then-Spanish Republican government's pro-people stance during the war as a great step towards the human plight and, instead, lambasted Franco and his ruffians who, being succoured by the Nazis, led to the upsurge of fascism in Spain. Hence, the Spanish period served as a catalyst for the development of Neruda's political and social awareness. He involved himself with many activities of the leftist to extend his aid to the Spanish Republican government, including organising a writers' congress to seek support in safeguarding the Catalan Republican government, generally known as the Valencia congress, where a large number of writers, artists, and poets from all over the world joined and extended support to the Republicans, and subsequently, with the association of his French comrades Louis Aragon and Romain Rolland, Neruda persuaded the French government to allow the refugees, who became homeless and suffered casualties during the Civil War to cross the French frontiers. Furthermore, despite the then-Spanish foreign ministry's reluctance and forbiddance, he managed a ship called Winnipeg to transport at least two thousand Spanish refugees to Chile from France. All these political activities, including the holding of an International Writers' Conference, imply the end of the hermetic isolation of his Burmese days. Thus, Neruda became firmly committed to political action and would remain so throughout the rest of his life.

Neruda notably responded to many progressive movements that emerged throughout South America during the mid-20th century. He provided evidence to support the notion that artists from the bourgeoisie class made efforts to advance bourgeois art under the guise of pure artistic expression. Indeed, there was an attempt to separate people's needs from the realm of artistic expression. As a result, he advocated for the concept of the "impurity of poetry" by publishing a journal, *Green Horse*, in response to the prevailing Eurocentric belief in the purity of poetry, which was widely disseminated across Europe under the principle of "art for art's sake." Neruda

elucidated the concept of impure poetry, wherein he discerned the manifestation of people's everyday impurity. This is evident in various aspects of poetry, such as inclination towards collective experiences, utilisation and eventual obsolescence of materials, discernible imprints of human touch, and the enduring presence of humanity that permeates every poetic surface. His commitment to communism directed him to upbraid the surrealist perspectives held by the European poets at that time, thereby criticising the literary contributions of the European Surrealist writers and intellectuals. Instead, he expressed applause for the concept of fraternity, which was promoted by communism, and accentuated the paramountcy of communist poetry in effecting the transformation of bourgeois society into a more socialist and progressive one. He regarded art created by the proletariat as the sole emancipatory influence capable of enabling people to divulge the inherent drawbacks of capitalism, finally releasing them from the deceptive perception of reality propagated by artists of the bourgeois class.

While conducting activities during the Spanish Civil War, Neruda found the Communist Parties in different states as the most organised ones working relentlessly to alleviate people's plight and defend their rights. In this line of thought, this thesis argumentatively shows how Neruda's activism got a new pace because of his connection with many Communist activists, including Delia del Carril, who became his wife later on. Indeed, when he was transferred to Madrid from Argentina as a Chilean Consul, he came into contact with Delia, an Argentine communist working in Spain, among other intellectuals, poets, and politicians. Delia helped Neruda make connections with other Madrid-based Communist activists, who afterwards joined the latter to work together against the onslaughts of the Francos to consolidate the cause of the Spanish Republican government.

When Neruda arrived in Chile after the Spanish Civil War in 1938, he found Chile overshadowed by many political rivalries and vicissitudes. The Chilean political landscape split into two factions: one was the Chilean Communist Party working for the rights of the peasants, coal miners, and labourers, and the other was that of the rightist composed of the anarchists, Falangists, and anti-communists, serving the purpose of the ruling class. Under these circumstances, Neruda was nominated for senatorial election by the Communist Party, though he was still not a member of the Party. Eventually, he was elected as a Senator of Tarapacá and Antofagasta of Southern Chile, an area of the impoverished coal miners whose life made Neruda know about the wide gaps between the rich and the poor in Chile. Adam Feinstein (2004), a Neruda biographer, demonstrated that Neruda's philosophy of life and poetry underwent a massive change after he had witnessed the impoverished lives of the coal miners and nitrate labourers in the regions he had been representing (81). Such a change transformed his poetic vision, too. He again found the Chilean Communist Party as the only organisation working for the plight of the working class. He demonstrated that the Communist Party could annihilate the demonic and abysmal acts of the capitalists and the ruling class, and thus play a pivotal role in reinforcing the proletarian struggle for developing a socialist society.

However, the then-Chilean Communist Party experienced a setback through its decision to support Gonzalez Videla in the 1945 national election after the sudden death of the previous President, Juan Antonio Ríos. Being supported by the Party, Videla came to power and made an alliance with his American counterpart to run Chile, which, instead, increased the economic depression that made the life of the proletariat more painful than before. As the Communist Party ministers of Videla's cabinet planned massive reforms in agriculture, coal mining, and nitrate sectors, the latter sacked them instead of paying heed to their agenda. Videla was running Chile as

per the advice of his US counterpart, Harry S. Truman, who, as Mark Eisner, an influential Neruda-critic, noted, held the view that any triumph of the Chilean Communist Party would jeopardise the political stability of Chile. Videla's betrayal of the people and the Party that made the base of his political power shocked Neruda, who, afterwards, felt it paramount to write against the fascist nature of this government. Indeed, the backdrop of the extensive control of the press in Chile prompted him to seek an alternative mode of publication. As a means of resistance, he wrote a groundbreaking piece titled "The Crisis of Democracy in Chile is a Dramatic Warning for Our Continent," which was published in the Venezuelan newspaper *EL Nacional*. In the write-up, Neruda upbraided Videla's numerous agreements with the United States aimed at resolving Chile's internal problems, highlighting the President's alignment with the interests of North American monopolies. Alongside, he delivered a speech as a senator in the Parliament titled "I Accuse," in which he seriously attacked Videla's dubious acts against the people of Chile and the Chilean Communist Party. He called Videla a betrayer who annulled all the steps of the left cabinet members, which could bring change in the lives of the coal miners and the labourers. Consequently, the Chilean government ordered his arrest and dissolved the Communist Party, and the members of the Party were compelled to go underground. Neruda, too, had to go into hiding at last.

During the time Neruda was absconding, he was commissioned by the Chilean Communist Party to write about the history of Chile. The Party expected one portrayal of leftist ideology in his writing. Such a responsibility made Neruda think of Chile's politics and history anew. However, he transformed the task into something even more ambitious. Instead of focusing on the historical progress of his own country only, he planned to capture the history of total South America through an epic poem, *Canto General*, wherein he indirectly served the Communist Party as he dealt with

the views of dialectical and historical materialism. The cantos of the book, in multifarious ways, vindicate the Marxist viewpoints about art, literature, and history. In it, as a communist activist, Neruda illuminates the roles and rights of the workers, and as a Marxist, he sheds light on the ideas of historical materialism that help him expose the tension among different social classes placed in widespread and underlying economic areas and distortion of historical facts in many states of South America also. In addition, he applies the concepts of dialectical materialism to unveil the conflicts between the bourgeois and the proletariat in the given economic and political situations of the continent.

Neruda's layout for *Canto General* includes his interest in focusing on the topography of South America, its political history, and social problems. First, in capturing social and political history, his 1943 visit to the ruins of Machu Picchu in Peru came to his aid enormously, as it created an opportunity to know about the actual makers of the Inca civilization and their contributions. Second, he felt it essential to address the depredation caused by the Spanish colonisers across South America and the distress of the proletariat against the backdrop of the oppression and exploitation by the dictators and their foreign allies. Third, he aimed to unearth the Videla government's anti-communist steps and its oppressive policies against the Chilean peasants, labourers, and miners. Fourth, apart from the reasons mentioned above, the US intervention in Chilean politics and the intrusion of US-based corporations into numerous parts of South America impelled Neruda to put special emphasis on the pitfalls of capitalism. Consequently, in *Canto General*, he deciphers a compelling analysis of all facets of imperialism, encompassing the emergence of "Banana Republics" and the impact exerted by American corporations such as the United Fruit Company and Standard Oil Co. in the South American region. He brings to light the exploitation of natural resources, labour, and economies in South

American nations by multinational business ventures. The United Fruit Company, for instance, gained notoriety due to its exploitative activities, which included offering low wages, maintaining substandard working conditions, and exercising domination over extensive territories. Neruda offers a critical analysis of the considerable influence exerted by American corporations on the governments of the nations in which they conducted their operations. Consequently, there was a decline in the authority of the nation-state, and prioritisation of foreign business interests above those of local concerns, leading to the erosion of national sovereignty. The activities conducted by these corporations, particularly within sectors such as mining and agriculture, frequently resulted in substantial environmental deterioration. Neruda expresses profound concerns about the degradation of the natural landscapes and ecosystems in South America as a consequence of the relentless pursuit of financial gain. He addressed the issue of social inequality and injustice that often accompanied the existence of these organisations. The indigenous communities residing in the area were disadvantaged, experiencing impoverishment and enduring difficult working conditions, while the revenues generated from economic activities were predominantly channelled outside the nation's borders. In a word, the aforesaid epic acts as a monument to the unwavering tenacity and indomitable spirit exhibited by the South American populace. It implores people to actively regain their autonomy, cultural heritage, and natural resources that were inherently tied to their region.

Dominic Moran (2009), one of the biographers of Neruda, notes that Neruda has integrated “dialectical materialism with historical materialism” in *Canto General* (112). When the concept of dialectical materialism comes into focus, he portrays the class struggles by unfolding the bloody conflicts and ceaseless contradictions between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. For instance, in “The Heights of Machu Picchu,” he unearths the prime conflict by depicting the blitz of the

Spanish invaders and the bourgeois onslaughts in contrast to the manifold contributions of the proletariat in building the Inca civilization. Likewise, when the ideas of historical materialism are brought to light, side by side, showing the progression of history in terms of class struggle, Neruda demystifies issues like the falsification of historical events by the ruling class. In essence, he lays bare the ruling class's vicious ventures to diffuse deceptive bourgeois narratives via educational materials and distorted interpretations of historical events about the proletariat's struggles and their impact on creating the history of the continent. Thus, the poet tries to achieve his grand pursuit of historical accuracy. Besides adopting a Marxist perspective, he presents a critical stance towards the prevailing assertions of the Spanish colonisation in South America, refuting the notion of it being a civilising effort. He exalts the labourers and peasants, highlighting their arduous struggle instead.

In fashioning the cantos of the abovementioned epic poem, Neruda primarily owed to the early 17th-century Spanish poet Francisco de Quevedo's style of "Conceptismo" basically emerged to make political and social satires. The adoption of that style appeared to him as a medium to reprimand the South American political leadership's overreliance on the United States administration in addressing their regional political upheavals and oscillations. In addition, Walt Whitman served as a source of inspiration for Neruda in the creation of the epic poem. In writing *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman deviated from the conventional European epic poetry that mostly focused on the remarkable accomplishments of people from the highest echelons of society and, instead, devised a novel form of lyrical epic which he deemed distinctly American, highlighting the comprehensive essence of "the totality of a community's life" (Neruda 378). Likewise, in composing the poems of *Canto General*, Neruda drew inspiration from *Leaves of Grass* as a model that provided him with "a genuine literary expression of America" (Allegrezza 5). In other words,

both Whitman and Neruda made a deliberate selection of the epic form as a means of constructing a national narrative and fostering a collective identity among their respective audiences.

Neruda also explores Marxist ideology about art and literature in his collection of poems, *Odes to Common Things*. In this work, he examines the significance of everyday objects and tools, highlighting their social functions and relevance to collective human experience. His emphasis on commonplace items symbolises his recognition of the value of the tangible realm shaped by the working population. He utilises poetry to illustrate society's frequent disdain towards the importance of mundane and onerous work. Nevertheless, his rudimentary objective is to appreciate the labour of the peasants and workers, whose contributions sometimes remain completely unacknowledged within a capitalist framework that prioritises financial gain over both welfare of individuals and ethical principles.

So, based on Neruda's early-life attachment to the communist cause, his conscious break with issues like romanticism and romance, subsequent embracement of Communism to address the reality and constituents of the life and cause of the proletariat and the victims of the Spanish Civil War in 1937, his rejection of the European trend of "art for art's sake" to propagate his own concept of "Impure Poetry," and his objective to chronicle South American history in the light of historical materialism, this thesis presents how Neruda contributes to a vast corpus of Marxist art and aesthetics through his poetry and activism and argues how his contribution enriches the core ideas of the Marxist humanist and liberal world outlook.

Chapter I: Literature Review

Neruda and His Critics

In their works, Neruda-critics have rather placed their views, assumptions, arguments, appraisals, criticisms, and interpretations about Pablo Neruda's transformation as a poet and his development of the communist as well as the Marxist ideologies. Most of them have shed light upon the poet's evolution from a romantic, surrealist, and love poet to a committed one or a poet of the people. A few of them have begun by throwing light on Neruda's conviction in Marxist aesthetics, broadly the Marxist concepts of art, literature, culture, and history. On the basis of critics' views, this dissertation titled "Pablo Neruda's Contribution to Marxist Aesthetics" intends to explicate how the historical events and political vicissitudes Neruda encountered in Spain during the Spanish Civil War in 1937 helped him emerge as a people's poet, and engage in a critical discussion to explore his embracing of the Marxist progressive worldview in writing *Canto General*. On the whole, to inspect Neruda's emergence as a committed poet and identify and locate his contribution to the vast corpus of Marxist aesthetics, this thesis attempts to delve deep into numerous research papers and essays dealing with the issues mentioned above. Alongside exploring several articles and writings, I have pinpointed those Marxist premises of human emancipation and liberalism, which Neruda has consolidated in his odyssey as a poet-activist.

In "The Residence Cycle: Neruda and the Avant-Garde," Marjorie Agosin (1986), a professor of Latin American Literature at Wellesley College, Massachusetts, USA, and a noted Neruda-critic argues that while writing the poems of the first and second parts of *Residence on Earth* from 1925 to 1934, the poet had been in utter dejection living his life in the Orient. So, the poems written during that period embody the poet's frustration and loneliness. Also, the climatic difference impacted. In this regard, Agosin (1986) states that in the book of the Residence Cycle,

the depiction of decay aligns with the suffocating “heat and humidity” of Rangoon (39). Indeed, the senses of decay and solitude portrayed in Neruda’s poetry are the result of his feeling of alienation in a distant land. On the other hand, while analyzing the vital issues and themes of the *Residence* series in her essay, Agosin stresses Neruda’s gruesome experience of the Spanish Civil War, his contact with the Spanish intelligentsia and political activists based in Spain, and his objective to introduce new poetic techniques in writing the poems of *Spain in Our Hearts*. She also argues, particularly in the *Third Residence*, that Neruda’s role as a poet has evolved from profound introspection in his earlier works to that of an engaged participant and narrator of a significant historical occurrence, namely the Spanish Civil War (Agosin 40). She points out an indelible influence of the poets of Generation of ’27—Lorca, Guillen, and Alberti—on Neruda’s poetry and highlights how Federico Garcia Lorca’s assassination in late 1936 brought a massive change in Neruda’s poetry and philosophy. However, Agosin’s research does not mention Neruda’s activism, especially his initiatives to combat fascism through organizing a world congress of writers in Valencia, Spain, and to rescue the Spanish refugees stranded in the frontier of France just after the Spanish Civil War. So, my thesis minutely puts emphasis on Neruda’s activism during and after the Spanish Civil War.

On the other hand, Amado Alonso (1989), a Spanish linguist and a Neruda-critic, in “From Melancholy to Anguish,” states that Neruda maintained a melancholic tone from the beginning to the end of the *Residences*. He writes, “All of his [Neruda’s] verses are filled with images of deformity, dispossession and destruction” (Alonso 72). While Marjorie Agosin notes Neruda’s analysis reinforces the central thesis of a world in a state of disintegration where the individual survives amid permanent chaos (Alonso 73), Alonso (1989) shows that the incoherent tone and the unique rhythms of the *Residences* reflect the disorientation of Neruda’s own life at that time.

He mentions that the poet is engrossed with “so many broken things: broken rivers, broken ships, broken roses, broken cruets...” (Alonso 73), but he does not provide any explanation as to why the poet embraces so many broken objects and prioritizes the process of disintegration and decay over growth and development in the poems of *Residences I and II*. He provides a slice of Neruda’s anguishes but does not exemplify the facts—loneliness and abhorrence of British imperialism while staying in Rangoon, Burma—that led to such a state of mind of the poet. Regarding this matter, the majority of Neruda’s biographers concur that a sense of frustration generally marked his time spent in the colonial Far East. Such sentiment predominantly stemmed from his ongoing financial challenges and the sense of seclusion he encountered as a poet amidst unfamiliar culture and language. As Bleiker (1999) suggested, Neruda viewed the Orient as a blend of disorder, impoverishment, and captivating insights into ancient cultures juxtaposed against a deteriorating colonial present (131-132). On the basis of the aforementioned observation, this dissertation examines the reasons behind Neruda’s desolation, dejection, and angst.

In addition, in "Hermeticism: The Residence Cycle," Rene de Costa (1979), a professor Emeritus of Spanish and Spanish-American Literatures at the University of Chicago in the USA, stresses not the thematic continuity of Neruda's works but somewhat his dynamic need for change. His critical approach places Neruda in a universal historical and literary context. He mentions some events essential to grasping the core ideas of the Residence Cycle by Pablo Neruda and informs that Neruda initially planned to publish the poems of the Residence Cycle, written from 1924 to 1936, under the title of *Residence on Earth I and II*. However, his contact with the Spanish intelligentsia and the members of the Generation of '27, his involvement with communist politics, and his encounter with the war-torn days in Spain compelled him to write more poems incorporating all the experiences he experienced. So, the poems he wrote during those tumultuous

days of the Spanish Civil War were published under the title of *Spain in Our Hearts*, which, afterwards, was included in the Residence Cycle. In other words, Neruda decided to publish *Third Residence* only with those poems dealing with the cataclysmic events of the Spanish Civil War. Furthermore, Costa views Neruda's affinity with the Spain-based avant-gardist circle and his subsequent lean towards the principles of Communism as vital factors behind the composition of his wartime poetry. However, he did not consider Neruda's engagement with the magazine *Green Horse*, which subsequently helped Neruda decipher his idea of "Impure Poetry" that he used as a vehicle to disseminate his humanistic thoughts.

By the same token, in "Poetics of Neruda," Jaime Alazraki (1965), an influential Neruda-critic and a noted scholar of Latin American Studies, notes that Neruda's work from 1924 to 1936 is motivated by an aesthetic directly connected with literary developments both in Europe and Spanish America. He discusses the influence of French romanticism on Neruda's early works and also the European avant-garde influence on the *Residence on Earth*. He searches for the meeting points between Neruda and his literary antecedents, such as Ruben Dario, Carlos Sebat Ercasty, Rabindranath Tagore, and Walt Whitman. However, his scholarly work does not stress Neruda's transformation into a people's poet that my dissertation explores as a pivotal point to highlight the poet's core philosophy of life and poetry. On the other hand, in the book *Pablo Neruda: The Poetics of Prophecy*, Enrico Mario Santi (1982), a Cuban-American writer and a scholar of Spanish American Literature, places Neruda within a European and Western literary tradition. Santi draws special attention to the poetry of the Residences and *Canto general*, particularly to the theme and philosophy of the poem "The Heights of Macchu Picchu." His focus, however, is on what he refers to as the "poetics of prophecy," which is associated with the concept of the poet as a seer. He does not consider that the concept of prophecy contradicts Neruda's Marxist ideology. Instead, he

demonstrates that poetry embodies rhetoric where religion and politics merge "in the unified vision of the poet as seer and transformer of reality" (qtd. in Agosin 129). The concept of the poet as a prophet is synthesized in the chapter dedicated to the *Canto general*, where using examples from the Scriptures, Dante's *Inferno*, and other works, Santi analyzes Neruda's role as the poet-chronicler in constructing a new Latin American history. However, in this case, Jaime Alazraki opposes Enrico Maria Santi by enunciating that Neruda's matured poetry, such as *Canto general*, embodies the poet's conviction towards Marxist ideology by which he brings to light the issues of class struggle and economic deprivation of the proletariat. Thereupon, considering Alazraki's point a relevant one, my thesis criticizes Santi's attempt to merge politics with religion in discussing *Canto general*, especially the poem "The Heights of Macchu Picchu," rather it emphasizes how Neruda exhibits the exploitation of his forefathers—the working class, who, he asserts, are the actual makers of Inca civilization, by the bourgeois, who have erased and denied the contribution of the former.

On the contrary, in "Pablo Neruda and the Romantic-Symbolist Tradition," Manuel Duran (1989), Associate Professor at Austin Community College, brings to light Neruda's adherence to the Baroque tradition, pioneered by the early 17th-century Spanish poet Francisco de Quevedo. Indeed, such a tradition emerged to make a satire of social, political, and cultural emptiness and hollowness. Duran (1989) argues that by embracing the Baroque style, Neruda announced his break up with the tradition of European romanticism that partly left an influence on his earlier poetry, especially on the poems of *Twenty Love Poems and A Song of Despair*. He also asserts that Neruda's promulgation of the concept of "impure poetry" differed from his former attachment to the Romantic-Symbolist tradition. However, Manuel Duran's essay does not make it a point that Neruda's romantic bent of mind and his attachment to surrealism began to decline as he

encountered the atrocity of Franco and his alliances during the Spanish Civil War in 1937. It does not also illustrate how the destruction of the civil war impelled Neruda to write the poems of *Spain in Our Hearts*. Thereupon, my thesis argues how Neruda embarked on a new journey while composing the poems of *Spain in Our Hearts* by leaving behind all his previous attractions—romanticism, symbolism, and surrealism, and such, indeed, happened as he, during the Spanish Civil War, found the communist cause as the only way-out for the plight of the Spaniards and the whole human race.

As Neruda wrote *Spain in Our Hearts* against the backdrops of the discontent between the Falangists, the Anarchists, and the Leftists in the Spanish political landscape and the rise of fascism, many critics have felt it quite relevant to decipher their views and arguments regarding Neruda's endeavor to portray the political shift in the aforementioned book in the light of the Marxist concept of struggle between numerous social classes. In this case, in "The Politics of *Espana en el Corazon*," Robin Walker (1989), an African scholar and historian, demonstrates how the book primarily sheds light upon "freedom, patriotic duty and the dignity of man" (34). He also brings forth the importance of the communist movement against the rise of international fascism and exhibits Neruda's subscription to the idea of the Marxist proletarian revolution. Walker attempts to expose the way *Spain in Our Hearts* upholds liberal humanistic principles, highlighting the issue of class struggle. However, his essay does not portray how Neruda's involvement in numerous activities in defense of the progressive Republican government, Spanish refugees, and the proletariat during the Spanish Civil War directly influenced the making of the book *Spain in Our Hearts*. Likewise, "*Espana en el Corazon*: Genre and Historical Moment" by Alfred J. MacAdam (1989), a professor of Spanish Language at Columbia University, USA, too, highlights Neruda's pre-and post-Civil War experiences. MacAdam (1989) appreciates the poet's collective

"I" that urges all to protest against oppression. In relation to this matter, he expresses that "Neruda the poet" should be distinguished from the individual, similar to how "Walt the monumental American singer" is separate from Walt Whitman. Furthermore, comprehending "España en el Corazón" hinges on recognizing the poet's ambition to voice the sentiments of a community (MacAdam 292). His essay underscores Neruda's appeal to the proletariat to join the then-Spanish Republican government, marking his firm belief in the communist movement. However, he puts less emphasis on the events associated with the diabolical acts of Franco and the rise of fascism in Europe, which, on the other hand, appears as one of the major points of Neruda's poetry. So, my thesis broadly argues how the events of the Civil War and Neruda's activism led to his transformation as a poet of the people.

Additionally, my dissertation attempts to identify and explore how Neruda became interested in Whitman and his poetry and, therefore, finds Delphine Rumeau's article "Walt Whitman and Pablo Neruda, American Camerados" (2006) quite relevant to discuss. In his scholarly article, Delphine Rumeau, a professor of Latin American Studies, University of Paris, France, posits that Neruda liked Whitman's "endeavor to seize life, all forms of life without establishing hierarchies" (48). He postulates that Neruda expatiated upon Whitman's undaunted move for speaking truth all the time and considered the latter "the first totalizing poet" (Rumeau 48). He also unveils Neruda's irritation towards French poets Stephane Mallarme and Paul Valery, who mainly were engrossed with the concept of the purity of poetry, and exhibits how Neruda conformed to Whitmanian "spectrum of life...regardless of any hierarchy" (Rumeau 49). Rumeau (2006) writes, "Neruda's impulse was always to assert the dignity of all things and to welcome them in the poetical realm" (49). His aforesaid observation about Neruda gets evident when Whitman says, "I contain multitudes" (qtd. in Rumeau 49). Furthermore, this research brings forth

Neruda's endorsement of Whitman's thirst for space and shows how Neruda truly believed that Whitman represents the entire America because of his unbounded love for space (Rumeau 49). It argues that "Neruda's poetry is very spatial," and his endeavor to include all things in poetry came from his commitment to Whitman, and Neruda's book, *Odes to Common Things*, carries proof of his appetite for inclusiveness (Rumeau 49). However, the article does not examine how Neruda's poetic portrayal of everyday things, as Gabriel Mistral, one of the Nobel laureates of Chile, asserts, is an act of resistance against the capitalist system. It does not even mention how Neruda, following the footsteps of Walt Whitman, used free verse in writing the epic poem *Canto General*, which announced the poet's conscious break with the British model of poetry, founded on the tradition of rhyme and meter. In addition, the article does not demonstrate the fact that the way Walt Whitman, in *Leaves of Grass*, speaks of the progress of society through the end of slavery and the dawn of democracy in America is very similar to Neruda's envisioning of social change in Latin America through the accomplishment of Communist revolution. It just raises the issue of the difference between purity and impurity of poetry but does not critically discuss how the concept of pure poetry stood in contrast to that of impure poetry and how both Whitman and Neruda consciously broke up with the tradition of the metered and rhymed poetry. So, my thesis critically dwells on the issues unexplored in Delphine Rumeau's scholarly work.

Contrarily, in "Pablo Neruda: Obirotto Kabyokriti" (Pablo Neruda: Unremitting Poetic Excellence), Ranesh Dashgupta (2014), a noted Bangladeshi Marxist intellectual, Communist activist, and journalist, demonstrates Neruda's early-life attachment to leftist politics. The article informs us that the poet used to write for a Chilean leftist party's student-wing magazine, *The Claridad*, on the rights of coal miners and laborers. As a result, at an early age, he came to know about the communist party's objective to serve the proletariat. Dasgupta (2014) holds the view that

such an early-age orientation toward leftist politics subsequently exerted a profound influence on Neruda's life and poetry. Gradually, Neruda began to propagate his own thoughts about communist politics through writing for different Left-oriented magazines. Dashgupta's article also endeavors to show how the poet separated himself from the traditional Eurocentric idea of "Art for art's sake" and instead believed in art at the service of humanity in distress. Based on Neruda's belief as projected by Dashgupta, this thesis critically discusses the poet's postulation of the concept of "Impure Poetry" in contrast to the idea of "Art for art's sake." Furthermore, Dashgupta posits that Neruda's transformation as a people's poet became possible and evident because he complied with the principles of Marxism and Leninism. He also inspects the poet's connection with two Communist poets, Vladimir Mayakovski, and Bertolt Brecht, and deciphers how the communist ideology of the aforesaid poets sprang from the same source as Neruda. Dashgupta also attempts to connect Neruda's poetic vision with that of Walt Whitman, especially regarding their dealings with humanitarian causes in poetry. In this regard, this thesis further argues how Whitman's manifestation of the concept of containing multitudes in *Leaves of Grass* left some lasting marks on the development of Neruda's epic poem *Canto General*.

Again, in Neruda's "*Canto General* and the Great Song of America", Gordon Brotherston (1989), a professor in the department of Spanish and Portuguese at Stanford University, USA, highlights the way Neruda has lambasted the Spanish conquistadors who destroyed the originality of America, and instead, has lauded the role of the indigenous liberators who fought against the Spanish conquerors. Discussing the historical and ideological design reflected in *Canto General*, he brings to light Neruda's attempt to unearth the treachery of the dictators of many countries of South America. Brotherston shows how the poet identifies US companies—Standard Oil Co. and United Fruit Co.—as the main source of evil, reinforcing issues like class differences and

exploitation. His essay also reflects Neruda's unveiling of the deadly facets of the rise of capitalism. However, it does not discuss Neruda's endorsement of the Marxist concept of historical materialism that helped him unfold the deliberate misinterpretation of historical events by the dictators across the continent of South America.

Conversely, in her essay "Swapner Kobi O Kobir Swapna" (The Dream Poet and the Poet's Dream), Sudeshna Chakraborty (2004), an Indian Marxist intellectual and Neruda-critic, broadly illuminates Neruda's quest for historicity and aims to accentuate how the installation of the United Fruit Co. and the Standard Oil Co. in different parts of Latin America posed a threat to the progress of the continent and escalated the deprivation and the sorrows of the working class. Furthermore, Chakraborty's intent to compare Neruda with Whitman is noteworthy to understand how both poets limned a world of multitudes in their poetry. However, Chakraborty's essay does not mention how their pro-people activism made them people's poets. It addresses Neruda's manifold activism during the Spanish Civil War but does not pay attention to how Neruda, by publishing a magazine, "The Poets of the World Defend the Spanish People," disseminated Franco's onslaughts on the innocent people of Spain and Hitler-Mussolini's unholy alliance to save Franco across the world. In this regard, in my thesis, I emphasize that poets like W. H. Auden, Stephen Spender, John Cornford, Pablo Neruda, Cesar Vallejo, and Miguel Hernandez, among others, helped consolidate the international volunteer as heroes of the Resistance against international fascism, enlarging our view of these soldiers as encapsulated in the title of the English language magazine of the International Brigades, the "Volunteer for Liberty" ("Marco Antolin, Literary Matters").

Again, in analyzing Neruda's grasp of the Marxist literary and cultural approaches, I find some relevant and substantial issues in the essay "Pablo Neruda and the Construction of Past and Future Utopias in the *Canto General*," written by Mark J. Mascia (2002), an Associate Professor

and Coordinator in the Department of Languages and Literatures at Sacred Heart University, USA, states that Neruda's "vision is decidedly Marxist in nature, in accordance with his public stance as a leftist" (65). He posits that Neruda saw Marxism as the essential philosophical foundation for a future socialist society. He also exemplifies how the communist revolution, as Neruda demonstrates in *Canto General*, would contribute to bringing change in society. His essay discusses how Neruda put all his confidence in the Communist revolution to combat the rise of fascism worldwide and overthrow the exploiter class. Mascia (2002) also argues that Neruda invariably tried to show how "Stalin supposedly transformed society into a better place" (72). He sheds light on the poet's reliance on the Soviet leaders, who were instrumental in establishing global political, social, and economic equality. He illustrates how Neruda urged the United States and its inhabitants as unwitting participants in the struggle. He aligned the USA with both the USSR and Latin America, aiming to forge an enhanced and more all-encompassing society in collaboration (Mascia 72). However, Mascia's essay, as Sudeshna Chakraborty's research work does, does not throw light on Neruda's quest for historicity by which the poet reveals the attempts to distort the historical facts by the ruling class. He also stresses Neruda's endeavour to construct a future utopia by deciphering his idea of establishing a socialist or classless society. Consequently, with a view to reinforcing Mark J. Mascia's analysis and argumentation, in my dissertation, I intend to analyze those literary creations of Neruda encapsulating his dream of establishing a classless society through the continuation of the proletarian revolution.

In addition, the essay titled "Canto general: The Word and the Song of America" by Marjorie Agosin (1987) provides further insight into Neruda's dedication to addressing the social and political concerns pertaining to the historically marginalised and exploited working class in South America (59). In this essay, Agosin asserts that by subscribing to dialectical materialism,

Neruda brings forth issues like class struggle, the history of colonization of Latin America, the deadly nature of capitalism, and the Marxist interpretation of human development. He also mentions Neruda's negation of the existing official version of the history of the South American continent and "searches for its true identity," but he does not elaborate his statement further (64). This thesis attempts to interpret what Agosin has just mentioned but has yet to describe. Alongside, it throws light on Neruda's grand quest for historicity. In other words, analyzing relevant poems from *Canto General* exposes how Latin American dictators have falsified historical events and instead spread a concocted version of history among people. It brings to light how Neruda stresses the necessity of the continuation of the proletarian struggle to challenge and reject the falsified version of the history of South America by conforming to the Marxist social dialectics in developing the core ideas of *Canto General*;

While exploring Micah Buckner's thesis titled "Spain in Our Hearts: Pablo Neruda Poet of the People," for the degree of Bachelor of Arts, under the supervision of Dr. Gary Ettari, submitted in Fall 2007 at the University of North Carolina at Asheville, I have found the researcher very meticulous in analyzing the pivotal issues of the poet's pre-political and the committed poetry. At the start of his thesis, quoting Duran and Safir, Buckner states that Neruda's poetry is "a blend of political and lyrical poetry" and shows the poet's evolution from "a private poet to a public poet independent of any political and cultural ideology," which I disagree with (7-8). Undeniably, his transformation from a love poet to a committed one marks his involvement with communist activities. Moreover, his contact with the Spanish intelligentsia also indicates his affinity with Spanish culture. Buckner (2007) illustrates the factors that compelled Neruda to evolve as a committed poet but does not explain how Lorca's assassination impacted his poetic vision. In addition, his thesis overlooks the fact that in the case of Neruda's alignment with communist

politics, Delia del Carril's direct influence on the poet's personality and poetry was vivid and indelible. Even his observation does not include Neruda's wartime activism too; instead, the thesis throws more focus on textual analysis of *Spain in Our Hearts* than dwelling on the historical events that gave birth to the book. In the concluding remarks of his thesis, he posits that an analysis of *Spain in Our Hearts* from either a formalist or Marxist standpoint would result in an oversight of Neruda's profound artistic and societal bond with people (Buckner 11). In this case, I assert that Micah Buckner does not stress how the Communist ideology led him to respond to the cause of the Spanish Republican government and to stand by the suffering of humanity during the time. It will remain incomplete and fragmented if we analyze Neruda's Spanish Civil War-time poetry and epic work *Canto General* without focusing on his development as a Marxist poet and intellectual.

On the other hand, in "Epic Poetry: *Canto General*," Rene de Costa (1979) delves deep into Neruda's attachment to communist politics, which played a pivotal role in designing such a long narrative poem, *Canto General*. He has enunciated Neruda's search for the actuality of historical events. However, Rene de Costa's essay does not bring to light how the Marxist idea of historical materialism helps Neruda expose ahistoricity and does not project how Neruda not only subscribes to but also contributes to enriching the enormous canvas of the Marxist concepts of art, literature, and history by manifesting a wide range of issues including the class struggle between the ruling class and the proletariat in *Canto General*. The essay does not even explore the poet's visit to the heights of Macchu Picchu, which reminds him of the immense contribution of his predecessors in developing Inca civilization. The essay does not clarify how the dictators of many Latin American countries, with the association of the bourgeois, the capitalist, and their foreign counterparts, erased the footprints of the real makers of this civilization. It does not consider how

the rise of the Oligarchic era in numerous states of South America impeded the overall progress of the continent. This thesis addresses the untraversed issues in Rene de Costa's scholastic endeavor.

The essay titled "Realism, Surrealism, Socialist Realism and Neruda's 'Guided Spontaneity'" is highly pertinent to the central focus of this thesis, which is Neruda's adherence to Marxist aesthetics. In this essay, Greg Dawes (2003), a distinguished professor of Latin American Studies at North Carolina State University, USA, argues that Neruda broke up with the tradition of Eurocentric romanticism as he complied with communist politics and Marxist ideology. He enumerates that Neruda's previous areas of interest began to decline as soon as he started experiencing political vicissitudes in Madrid and the sanguinary conflict of the Civil War in Spain. Likewise, when he encountered the US interference with the political and business affairs of Chile and some other Latin American states, he felt, as Greg viewed, the need for Marxist dialectical philosophy to show the class struggle and the adverse effects of the capitalist process. Keeping view with the assumption of Greg Dawes, in the thesis, I have presented an in-depth analysis of the abovestated issues in the light of the Marxist progressive and humanist concepts of art, literature, and history.

Furthermore, in another essay titled "*Odes to Common Things: A Passionate Dialectic*," Dawes (2006) throws special light on Neruda's dealing with everyday ingredients of life. He argues that the book of Odes "shows both continuity and rupture with *Canto general*" (Dawes 11). He shows that while *Canto General* predominantly explores Latin America's historical and physical terrain, *Odas Elementales* engages in dialectical reflections on nature and the human condition (11). In *Canto general*, Neruda illustrates how "labor is exploited and disregarded..." On the contrary, in the book of Odes, he focuses on "valorizing the object congealed with the labourer's or nature's hours of work" (Dawes 12). Dawes also holds the view, "The great energies of the

totality pulsate in this miniscule and symbolic grains” (12). Agreeing with what Dawes states, I also try to justify and explicate the fact that in the odes, Neruda dignifies the work of the proletariat, whose efforts often go unnoticed in a capitalist system that prioritizes profit over human value.

Notably, in his essay “Communism by Way of the Poem,” Alain Badiou (2016), a French philosopher, endorses the points raised by Greg Dawes in his essay regarding Neruda’s involvement with communist politics. However, Badiou demonstrates that all the leftist poets, artists, and intellectuals responded to the cause of the Spanish Republican government during the Spanish Civil War, which emerged as “the strongest moment” in the history of the world to understand the urgency of “the great Marxist project...a truly internationalist revolutionary politics.” He also observes that the communist poets found the Spanish Civil War a significant cause to react to and share the sufferings the Spaniards had been undergoing at the time. He asserts that the Communist poets discovered significant personal motivations within the context of the Spanish War, leading to a revitalization of epic poetry in the vein of a poet connected with the masses (“Communism by Way...”). He applauds the way Neruda, among his contemporary poets, first expressed solidarity with the Spaniards at war. He views the poet’s publication of *Spain in Our Hearts* and his participation in manifold activities during the war as “a constructive value of communist confidence.” However, Badiou does not bring into focus those particular points of Communism and Marxism that led Neruda to emerge as a communist activist first and later as a Marxist poet. This thesis intends to divulge what Badiou does not throw light on. Furthermore, in explaining Neruda’s communist orientation, his essay has only considered *Spain in Our Hearts* but has not shed light upon *Canto General*, in which the poet primarily deals with the ideas of Marxist art and literature more than his other publications.

In the same way, Benjamin Kunkel (2019), a Marxist intellectual and a Neruda-critic, in his "Poet of the People," discusses Neruda's journey from a love poet to a poet-activist. He explicates the poet's engagement with communist activities during his consulship in Spain. Kunkel argues that Neruda came to a realization that the bitterness present in his earlier poetry needed to come to an end, and therefore, made a conscious decision to reject the introspective and melancholic themes found in his previous works, such as "Veinte poemas de amor" and "Residencia en la tierra." Afterwards, Neruda sought to shift his focus outward, directing his poetry toward humanity as a whole. He wanted to connect with and express the experiences of his fellow human beings. My thesis argues that such change marked a shift towards humanism, a focus on the aspirations and concerns of humankind, which Neruda believed was often neglected in contemporary literature. Kunkel also argues that some of Neruda's politically engaged work manages to evoke genuine emotion, particularly for this socialist critic. While Neruda affirms his adherence to Marxist principles, his disdain for capitalism, and his belief in socialism, his poetry does not heavily reflect Marxist theories of history or Leninist revolutionary politics. Instead, his Communism aligns more closely with what Badiou describes as "the communist hypothesis," a timeless proposition of universal liberation that emerges intermittently throughout history. This phenomenon is illustrated in the second-to-last poem in *Canto General*, a literary work composed in 1949. This poem is specifically addressed to the Chilean Communist Party, with which Neruda had been associated for four years beforehand. The poem serves as a manifestation of the poet's profound preoccupation with the affliction experienced by humankind, with a particular emphasis on the notion of solidarity in the face of divergent circumstances. Neruda celebrates the simple joys everyone can partake in, such as the sacred experiences found in nature, landscape, food, drink, sex, love, and friendship. In his commitment to addressing the universal suffering caused

by the enduring scandal of class society, which divided humanity into exploiter and exploited, conqueror and conquered, Neruda embodies a lowercase "communist" and thereby opposes the fractured human community shaped by class divisions and national boundaries, preserving the world's potential for happiness. However, this article does not focus on how the poet disintegrates himself from the traditional way of writing poetry, especially from those poets who used to follow the European concept of "Art for art's sake" in writing poetry, and, instead how he began the journey towards "Impure Poetry" through his involvement with the poetry magazine *Green Horse*. It also does not mention the influence of the avant-garde movement on the poet's philosophy and poetry. So, the thesis throws light on those issues, unaddressed in Benjamin Kunkel's article.

In addition, in "Pablo Neruda and the struggle for political memory," Roland Bleiker (1999), a professor of International Relations at the University of Queensland, USA, addresses the issues of fascism, imperialism, and class struggle as reflected in Neruda's committed poetry. The article comprises two sections: the first encapsulates Neruda's revolutionary mindset embracing "the diversities of human condition," and the second explicates the poet's replies to those critics who accused him of the excessive politicization of his engaged poetry (Bleiker 130). Bleiker asserts that the poet gives voice to the voiceless and empowers the powerless in his committed or engaged poetry, especially in the poems of *Spain in Our Hearts* (130). According to him, it became possible for Neruda to stand by the dispossessed and the underprivileged, who, the poet believed, became the worst sufferers of the Spanish war because of his active involvement in a literary circle that included Spain's leading avant-garde poets (Bleiker 130). Bleiker appreciates the poet's ability to fuse art and politics, using poetry as a medium to articulate and convey political ideas. He views Neruda as an important voice in the struggle for social transformation, capturing the emotions and experiences of those affected by political oppression and inequality. Furthermore, he emphasises

the role of Neruda's poetry in preserving political memory and inspiring collective action. The poet's words are viewed as a form of cultural memory, resonating with contemporary political struggles and offering a sense of connection to past movements for change.

Bleiker also observes the poet's rediscovery of the history of South America portrayed in *Canto General*. In mapping such a long poem like *Canto General*, Neruda, as the critic points out, conforms to the style of Walt Whitman, who experiments with the language of everyday life (Bleiker 136). Furthermore, the essayist opines that the poet wanted his "poetry to cling to the earth, / to the air, to the victory of abused mankind" (qtd. in Bleiker 136). To refute the objection to Neruda's tendency to politicize his engaged poetry, Bleiker expresses that as a poet, Neruda knew how to balance "between reality and utopia, between what is and what might be" (137). Neruda was completely aware of "the linkages between language and the representation of sociopolitical realities" (Bleiker 137). Indeed, he makes poetry a vehicle to fight fascism on the one hand and serve the proletariat and the suffering humanity on the other hand. To Neruda, "poetry is rebellion" (qtd. in Bleiker 137). Thus, Roland Bleiker's essay clarifies Neruda's position as a committed poet. However, though the essay meditates on the pitfalls of US imperial projects across the continent of South America, it does not bring into focus Neruda's quest for historicity or how he unraveled the falsification of the history of South America in *Canto General*.

In the same essay, Roland Bleiker (1999) demonstrates how Neruda challenges, questions, and finally discards the prevailing notion that poetry merely serves as a gateway to elitist high culture, a superficial diversion reserved for those who can indulge in poetic reveries due to their privileged education (132). Neruda's repudiation of the conventional notion of poetry became evident when he published the book *Odas Elementales (Odes to Common Things)*, in which "he had to deal with the verities of everyday life, with tomatoes and toothaches, with old shoes, haircuts

and artichokes” (Bleiker 132). In this case, Bleiker posits that Neruda followed the footsteps of Walt Whitman to capture the ordinariness of life by using the latter’s “language of everyday life” (132). However, his essay does not put emphasis on the fact that by celebrating everyday objects and emphasizing the laborers who create the everyday objects, portrayed in *Odes to Common Things*, Neruda highlights the exploitation of the working class under capitalism and challenges the devaluation of labor and calls for a society that recognizes and respects the contributions of all individuals.

However, in his essay “Pablo Neruda,” Ilya Ehrenburg (1962), a Soviet writer, revolutionary, journalist, historian, and a close friend of Neruda, brings forth how Neruda, being rejuvenated by the spirit of Soviet poet Mayakovsky, made poetry a medium of social change. He also mentions that following Whitman’s use of free verse, Neruda came out of the cocoon of the European tradition of writing poetry and rejected the concept of “pure poetry.” However, the essay does not discuss why the poet denounced the trend of pure poetry and, instead, introduced the idea of impure poetry. However, Ehrenburg’s essay concentrates on issues like the rise of fascism, the violence against the coal miners, Federico Garcia Lorca’s assassination, and so on. It throws light on Neruda’s conformation to the principles of Marxism and Leninism. Ehrenburg brings to light Neruda’s admonishment for Gonzalez Videla for launching attacks on the Chilean Labor Organization. He shows how Neruda put his complete confidence in the power of Communism and the Soviet Union’s anti-fascist stance to combat the rise of fascism worldwide. The essay portrays how Neruda deciphers his firm belief by saying that the proletarian revolution will be able to destroy all capitalist endeavors in the United States of America. As Ehrenburg asserts, Neruda put his complete faith in Stalingrad and its approaches. However, Ehrenburg’s essay partly mentions Neruda’s embracement of the dialectical reality of poetry, which, I believe, significantly

changed his poetic endeavor and philosophical outlook. Christopher Conway's article "The Revolutionary Poetics of Pablo Neruda" can be mentioned in this case. In the article, Conway (2008), a professor of Spanish in the Department of Modern Languages at the University of Texas at Arlington, notes that Neruda's dialectical poetry originated from the traumatic experiences of the Civil War of Spain. In discussing how the poet conformed to Marxist dialectics, he mentions Greg Dawes, who, as per the essayist, impartially expounded on Neruda's communist orientation. Conway supports when Greg Dawes suggests, "Neruda's committed poetry was not guided by cookie-cutter blind faith, optimism or misguided idealism" and approves his use of the phrase "guided spontaneity" to explicate Neruda's use of dialectical materialism, and eventually comes up with his own understanding of the concept (180). He demonstrates that the poet's "guided spontaneity" is his allegiance to "critical realism," which is a blend of "flashes of imagination and sustained elaboration of ideas based on the dialectical method" (Dawes 181). As a result, Neruda's "dialectical understanding of reality allowed him to represent the real as contradictory" (181). Conway endorses Greg Dawes's objective to portray Neruda as a committed and passionate Marxist without seeing him as a propagandist or pamphleteer. He concludes by saying that the poet never compromises with the conditions of art, though he blends between politics and poetry. However, Conway's research article does not elaborate on how the politics, poetry, life, and philosophy of Neruda arrive at the same meeting point. Henceforth, my thesis attempts to show how Neruda binds all the abovementioned issues in a single knot.

In his article "I Was Among Them: Pablo Neruda Turns 100," Vijay Prashad (2004), an American-Indian historian, author, journalist, and Marxist intellectual, recognizes Neruda's contributions as a poet and political activist who passionately engaged with the struggles of the working class and championed social justice. He appreciates the poet's ability to combine art and

politics in his poetry, using his words to express solidarity with the oppressed and advocate for revolutionary change. He also highlights Neruda's commitment to the socialist cause and his alignment with leftist ideologies. Neruda's poetry reflects themes of class struggle, revolution, and the plight of the marginalized. Prashad argues that Neruda's poetry not only serves as a means of personal expression but also as a tool for raising consciousness and inspiring social transformation. Lastly, he illustrates the poet's ability to capture the human experience and evoke emotions while addressing broader socio-political issues. Though the essay touches upon the major contribution of Neruda to bring social change, it does not elaborate on how Neruda's embracement of the Marxist idea of historical materialism helped him design the major issues of the epic poem like *Canto General*.

Similarly, Hernan Loyola, Jaime Concha, and Salvatore Bizarro have done considerable research on Neruda's social and political poetry. In his book *Neruda's Sins*, Hernan Loyola (2019), a professor Emeritus of Spanish and Latin American Literature at the University of Sassari, from a Marxist viewpoint, weaves biography with literary analysis and relates them to the political and cultural climate of the period. Likewise, Jaime Concha (2022), a Neruda-scholar, in his notable work, *Neruda 1904-1936*, examines the poet's working-class origins and, therefore, analyzes in detail the social conditions in Chile in the years 1904-36 and describes the saltpeter crisis in Temuco in 1918 and the mistreatment of the Mapuche Indians of the region (Agosin 132). This socio-historical information reinforces the central thesis that Neruda, from early youth, was drawn towards a Marxian concept of his surroundings. This perspective also explains his "lyrical materialism" (qtd. in Agosin 132). From a similar viewpoint, Salvatore Bizarro (1979), a professor emeritus of Spanish and Portuguese at Colorado College, the USA, in his book *Pablo Neruda: All Poets, the Poet*, studies the intrinsic Marxist ideology found in *Canto General* and the *Third*

Residence that are addressed to the proletarian reader. Though the book repeats many of the ideas expressed by other critics, it is a concise survey of the political poetry of Neruda.

Last but not least, to make a layout of my thesis, I have studied some biographies on Pablo Neruda, such as *Pablo Neruda: A Passion for Life* (2004) by Adam Feinstein, *Neruda: The Poet's Calling* (2018) by Mark Eisner, *A Companion to Pablo Neruda Evaluating Neruda's Poetry* (2008) by Jason Wilson, *Neruda: An Intimate Biography* (1985) by Volodia Teitelboim, *Pablo Neruda* (2009) by Dominic Moran, *Onubade Onubhabe Pablo Neruda* (Pablo Neruda in Translation and Senses) (2019) by Robin Paul, and *Pablo Neruda Preme O Songrame* (2001) by Ali Anwar. All the biographers mentioned above have attempted to cover Neruda's life, time, and work in detail. They unanimously have brought to light Neruda's early life love affairs, the agony of his personal life, loneliness and problems of adaptation in the Orient, involvement in and reactions to the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1937, life as a Communist party activist, commitment to people as a poet, rebellion against international fascism, experimentation and success with his epic poem, *Canto General*, emergence as a communist poet, and belief in the principles of Communism until his death. In particular, Dominick Moran, Mark Eisner, and Robin Paul have analyzed Neruda's activism and poetic transformation through their Marxist lens, encapsulating the poet's humanistic outlook, anti-fascist stance, and drive to bring sociopolitical change and build a socialist society. However, based on the aforesaid issues and the articles, I have attempted to argue, interpret and draw a logical conclusion of my thesis with the following points: a) Neruda's postulation of "Impure Poetry" in contrast to the much circulated Eurocentric idea, art for art's sake; b) his emergence as a poet-activist against the backdrop of a historical shift in Spain, and the influences of Quevedo and Whitman on shaping his poetic vision; c) Neruda's active participation in communist politics against the spread of fascism in Chile; his propagation of Communist

revolution, embodied as an antithesis, to counter the rise of bourgeois exploitation across South America and hereby dream of a better society where the rights of the proletariat are ensured; d) an examination of the poet's grand quest for historicity; humanist approach to art, literature and culture; and progressive worldview in line with the Marxist views of art, culture, literature and history through analyzing the literary creations, *Spain in Our Hearts*, *Canto General* and *Odes to Common Things*.

Chapter II

Marxist Aesthetics: A Progressive Worldview

Since its inception, Marxism remains one of the most influential intellectual frameworks in the domain of epistemology. Its birth can be attributed to the collaborative efforts of Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Frederick Engels (1820-1895), who formulated a comprehensive agenda for newly emerging communist parties that aimed to foster a global movement of the marginalised, and eradicate the system of wage labour, with the intention of substituting it with wealth socially produced and consumed. Furthermore, in order to ground their revolutionary aspirations in practical reality, both Marx and Engels provided a response by writing the book *Communist Manifesto* (1848) that served a dual purpose, functioning as both a sociopolitical analysis and a guide for action for the growing communist parties. Alongside, as Marxism has emerged as the conceptual underpinning for a large number of revolutionaries, scholars, intellectuals, and thinkers on a global scale, it has been serving as a source of inspiration for intellectual inquiry, cultural analysis, artistic expression, and political mobilization. The simultaneous impact of multifarious influences, such as political, theoretical, and aesthetic, may be observed, even when they contradict one another. Keeping in view the aforesaid line of thought, Marxist approaches to art and literature explore the complex and variable nature of the connection between literature and the world. David Anshen (2017), Assistant Professor at the Department of Literatures and Cultural Studies, University of Texas, Rio Grande Valley, says, "Those approaches historicize the object and methodology of analysis while necessarily retaining the conviction that cultural interpretation can be true, valid and reflective of reality . . ." (4).

Consequently, as an approach, Marxism strives for a constant movement between the social structure conceived as a totality or system in general and the particulars of cultural life. However,

there remain some common misconceptions regarding Marxist criticism. In this respect, Ramkrishna Bhattacharya (2003), one of India's legendary Marxist scholars and critics, claims, "To narrow Marxism down to politics alone is to reduce its scope and trivialize its content. The facile equation of Marxism with the programme/s of some political party/parties is an example of such misinterpretation" (2). He instead throws special light on what Vladimir Lenin says about Marxism that it is not "a hide bound, petrified doctrine" but an "integrated world outlook" (qtd. in Bhattacharya 2). Bhattacharya further says, "It is evident that a world-outlook demands a view on aesthetics as well" (2). In relation to this, Bhattacharya illustrates Marx's observation from *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (1844):

An animal produces only itself, whilst man reproduces the whole of nature. . . . An animal forms things in accordance with the standard and the need of the species to which it belongs, whilst man knows how to produce in accordance with the standard of every species and knows how to apply everywhere the inherent standard to the object. Man, therefore, also forms things in accordance with the laws of beauty. (qtd. in Bhattacharya 3)

Both Marx and Engels underscored the need to adhere to the principles of art that Marx specifically referred to as "the laws of beauty" (Bhattacharya 4). Though Engels did not comment extensively on literature, some of his perceptions, portrayed in numerous personal letters to some of his friends and acquaintances, have brought forth his critical insights on art and literature. Marx's and Engels's perceptions, as well as thoughts about art, culture, history, literature, and their manifold relations with society, are altogether considered to be Marxist aesthetics. The gradual and cohesive evolution of a unified viewpoint had yet to characterise the development of Marxist aesthetics. Instead, it developed as a collection of reactions to particular political exigencies. Although there have been instances where these reactions have intersected on different theoretical

levels, they established a vibrant and comprehensive coherence by virtue of a shared political impetus and the ongoing reinterpretation of fundamental inclinations towards art and literature rooted in the ideologies of Marx and Engels. Upon summarizing the predispositions, one can discern the fundamental Marxist concepts pertaining to art and literature. a) The existence of literature can be considered both independently and in relation to ideology, class, and economic substructure. b) To fully understand the material aspects of production, it is crucial to recognize art as a commodity that shares similarities with other commodities. c) It is significant to examine the interconnections between class struggle, which serves as the internal driving force of historical events, and literature, which acts as a site where class conflict is reflected through ideological lenses (Paul 5-6).

Before we present Marxist thoughts regarding art, literature, culture, and history with relevant arguments and viewpoints of numerous scholars, we need to focus on the emergence of Marxist materialist philosophy that subsequently led to the birth of Marxist aesthetics. Undeniably, Marxism is a philosophical framework grounded in materialism, aiming to elucidate the intricacies of our world by drawing insights from the tangible aspects of our natural environment and the social structures in which we live. This perspective is in opposition to idealist philosophy, which posits the existence of a separate spiritual realm that exerts influence and control over the material realm. From a certain perspective, it might be argued that this concept attempted to induce a reversal of individuals' cognitive processes, as it represented a complete departure from preceding philosophical ideologies. Marx himself has provided commentary on the revolutionary essence of Marxism: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it" (qtd. in Paul 5). Indeed, it can be acknowledged that while several philosophical perspectives sought to comprehend the intricacies of the world, Marxism emerged as a distinctive ideology that

aimed to actively transform it. Apart from the above-mentioned idea propagated by Marx and Engels, the following point is also tantamount to grasping of the basics of Marxism: "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary their social being that determines their consciousness" (qtd. in Paul 6).

To add, Marxism asserts that social progress occurs through the dialectical struggle between antagonistic forces, specifically the contrasting social classes, hence driving social transformation. The historical trajectory is inextricably intertwined with the narrative of class struggle, which emerged as a result of the historical exploitation of one social class by another. The aforementioned dynamic was apparent throughout the feudal era, wherein a palpable tension existed between the feudal lords and the peasant class. Similarly, the advent of the Industrial Age provided empirical support for the existence of conflict between the bourgeoisie, representing the privileged capitalist class, and the proletariat, encompassing the working class employed in industrial sectors. It is imperative to acknowledge that these social strata exhibit shared interests, albeit within a capitalist framework, wherein the proletariat consistently experiences conflict with the capitalist elite. From Marx's standpoint, the persistent conflict is anticipated to end in the eventual substitution of the existing system with socialism.

Marx used the idea of dialectics, which was first developed by the German philosopher Friedrich Hegel, who, widely known for his idealist perspective, utilized this concept to elucidate the emergence of new concepts resulting from the convergence of conflicting viewpoints. Hegel's belief system shows that cognition exercises control over the physical realm, wherein the actual world represents an elusive metaphysical essence. Nevertheless, Marx adeptly applied this notion to analyze the progression of the material domain. However, while Hegel placed emphasis on ideas, Marx aimed to reverse this hierarchical arrangement and, therefore, formulated his

interpretation as dialectical materialism in which he argued that all ideological systems originate from concrete social and economic facts. For instance, legal systems can be seen as reflecting the dominance of certain social strata throughout particular historical periods rather than being directly derived from divine reasoning.

Marxist dialectics can also be understood as an academic discipline that aims to systematically analyse the fundamental and abstract laws that govern the development of nature, society, and human cognition. The concept argues that the cosmos is perceived as a cohesive entity characterized by the coexistence and interaction of its constituent elements rather than a mere aggregation of distinct entities. Internal dialectical conflicts are inherent within every entity, serving as the major driving force behind movement, change, and advancement in the world. In general, dialectical materialism has developed as a significant analytical framework for Marxists, revealing the hidden forces that drive social processes and shape their future paths of development. Alongside this, the notion of historical materialism formulated by Marx elucidates the progression of societies through an examination of the interrelationship between economic structures, material conditions, and social institutions. Such depiction clarifies that historical transformation is predominantly influenced by shifts in the mode of production and the consequent dynamics of social classes.

Marxism comprises two basic concepts, namely the base and superstructure, which pertain to the relationship between the material means of production and the cultural realm of art and ideas. The concept might be understood as a symbolic construct that utilizes the architectural framework of a building to elucidate this particular relationship. The foundation, often referred to as the base, encompasses the socio-economic relations and mode of production within a given society. On the other hand, the superstructure contains various elements such as art, law, politics,

religion, and particularly ideology. However, it is important to note that both the base and superstructure are not stable or unchanging. Bhattacharya (2003) says, "It is not a one-way affair. The economic base is also modified by the world of consciousness which more often than not lags behind and retards the economic process" (5-6). He also deciphers that one basic thing must not be forgotten about the Marxist approach: "The art of any epoch, like the civil and criminal codes, will reflect the existing socio-economic relations, and its turn will also affect the relations themselves" (Bhattacharya 6). From this perspective, it may be argued that all cultural products are intrinsically linked to the underlying economic structure of a particular society. In this regard, the following remark is relevant:

It is the founding principle of historical materialism that the political, legal, and other structures of society and its ideology (metaphorically making up the superstructure of society) are partially determined by the forces and relations of production (the base of society). (qtd. in Hossain, 254)

The point mentioned above has been elaborated in *The German Ideology* (1846), in which Marx and Engels have also explored how ideas and human consciousness are interrelated with material life and forces of the production system. This interrelation makes up the overall economic structure of society. According to Terry Eagleton (2002), there exist specific manifestations of law and politics, as well as a particular type of state, whose primary purpose is to validate the authority of the socioeconomic class that possesses the means of economic production (5).

Following the same line of thought mentioned above, Marxist approaches to art and literature bring forth the fact that any literary or artistic creation is, somehow, subservient to any particular economic realism or social dialectics (Anshen 11). This dialectical process works as a

driving force in bringing about change in society. Indeed, the history of literature mirrors the history of the economy of human civilization. In this respect, Seldan (1997) comments:

What we call 'culture' is not an independent reality but is inseparable from the historical conditions in which human beings create their material lives. The relations of exploitation and domination which govern the social and economic order of a particular phase of human history will, in some sense, 'determine' the whole cultural life of the society. (qtd. in Hossain 254)

However, in relevance, in some of his letters, published in 1890, Fredrich Engels mentioned that both he and Marx held the view that though the economic aspects control all other sides of life, they believe that art, philosophy, and some other aspects of human consciousness are relatively independent, and these forces are able to bring change in human consciousness (Hossain 255). Engels further makes it clear by mentioning the following:

[...] to the materialist conception of history, the ultimately determining factor in history is the production and reproduction of real life. Neither Marx nor I have ever asserted more than this. Hence, if somebody twists this into saying the economic factor is the only determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, absurd phrase. [italics in orig.] (qtd. in Anshen 71)

Though an artwork or a literary creation is a reflection of the socio-economic and cultural condition of a particular age, these are even capable of giving us pleasure age after age. For example, why do the works of Shakespeare and ancient Greek literature still attract us after many years, even though the social structure and ideologies that created the base of those creations are obsolete from society? Marx answered this question following the principle of universality of art. He concluded his speculation with an essential claim about art's special role in society. Marx writes:

The charm of their art for us is not in contradiction to the undeveloped stage of society on which it grew. [It] is its result rather, and is inextricably bound up, rather, with the unripe social conditions under which it arose, and could alone arise, can never return. (qtd. in Anshen 70)

Marx further argues that art is "historical while also possessing general appeal and transhistorical forms of beauty and sensibility" (Anshen 70). In a word, he demonstrates that literature has to be evaluated in the light of the idea of historical materialism. To clarify what Marx has mentioned, Henri Matisse, an influential painter, once said that every artwork bears the footmark of history, but the footmark of history is deeply rooted in those artworks that become great (Selden 189).

In Marxist aesthetics, a debate on the interrelation between ideologies and literature continues. Marx and Engels contend that though literature generally recreates the ideologies of society, it has its own philosophy and set of disciplines. So, the evolution of the history of art and literature might not always reflect the history of social transformation. In this regard, Marx himself argues, "Each element of a society's superstructure . . . has its own tempo of development, its own internal evolution, which is not reducible to a mere expression of the class struggle or the state of the economy" (qtd. in Hossain 256). Similarly, Engels, in an 1890 letter written to Joseph Blokh, mentions that though the economic condition is the basis of art and literature, multiple aspects such as class struggle, legal system, political, philosophical, and religious ideas play a significant role. Marx also notes that one notable characteristic of art is its inherent autonomy in the process of its evolution. The proposition that artistic creations possess historical associations with certain social frameworks does not imply that their relevance diminishes upon the dissolution of those social frameworks. He refers to the art and epic poetry of the ancient Greeks as an example that continues

to provide aesthetic delight and is considered, in certain aspects, as a benchmark and unachievable ideal (Marx 84). Furthermore, he offers a comprehensive interpretation of this phenomenon: Greek art exemplified the simplistic yet robust understanding of reality that was prevalent among humans during the early stages of their cultural evolution. It embodied a pursuit of "authenticity in nature," which possessed a distinct allure and captivating appeal for all individuals (84). According to Marx and Engels, the discrepancy between the advancement of art and society as a whole can be attributed to the observation that the intellectual culture of a given era is influenced not solely by the progress of material production, which serves as the foundation of society, but also by the nature of the social interactions specific to that particular period. In essence, various elements, such as the specific type of social interactions, the intensity of class conflicts, and the presence of certain circumstances conducive to the advancement of human individuality, influence art, shaping its essence and progression.

Marx also argues that "certain significant forms within the realm of the arts are possible only at an undeveloped stage of artistic development" (qtd. in Williams, 51). He enunciated his statement by demonstrating that there was no division of labor in ancient Greek society, which prevailed in the modern capitalist production system. So, there was a unity between man and nature at that time, which helped the artists and the writers develop an idea of interconnectedness that ultimately was reflected in their epical works of art and literature. Indeed, the division of labor has destroyed the idea of unity and the perspective of totality, so it has become quite impossible for today's artists to portray the idea of totality in their creations (Hossain 257). However, in his imaginary socialist society, Marx notifies that it will be possible again to bring back the idea of unity to art and literature. And to do so, we need to understand the importance of the word 'praxis,' which refers to free, universal, and creative activity through which man creates and changes his

historical world and himself (257). Marx also used the term 'praxis' to refer to 'practical activity,' which, he strongly believed, would resolve all theoretical contradictions. In this regard, Marx says, "All social life is essentially practical. All the mysteries which lead theory towards mysticism find their rational solution in human praxis and in the comprehension of this praxis" (qtd. in Hossain 257).

On a similar note, the Marxist humanist approach to literature and art also includes an original view of the Renaissance. In particular, Engels gave a comprehensive interpretation of the fundamental historical significance of the Renaissance in Western Europe during the years 1875-76. In *Dialectics of Nature* (1925), he underscored the notion that, in contrast to the conventional perspective on bourgeois science, the Renaissance should not be regarded solely as an aberration in the ideological and spiritual landscape of its day. According to him, the genesis of this contemporary era can primarily be attributed to the economic and political transformations that facilitated the shift from the Middle Ages to the modern era. Engels delved deep into the fundamental nature of the phenomena that enabled the significant advancement in the culture, literature, and art of that epoch, with certain accomplishments that continued to surpass even those of the more developed bourgeois society. He demonstrated that the artistic movement of the Renaissance did not emerge during a time of established bourgeois society but rather in the midst of a broader revolution (Engels 21).

Last but not least, as Bhattacharya (2003) demonstrates, Marx's and Engels's 1859 letters to Ferdinand Lassalle also elucidate some basic perceptions of their approaches to art and literature. When Lassalle sought their comments about one of his recently written poetic dramas, both Marx and Engels provided a critical analysis of Lassalle's poetic play, examining its shortcomings in prosody, plot development, and characterization. Despite the criticism, Marx

identified the play's capacity to evoke emotions as inherent. Engels expressed his endorsement of Lassalle's work while simultaneously articulating his expectations for improvement. On the whole, while making comments on Lassalle's play, side by side, their notes of appreciation, both of them underscored the need to incorporate the historical context and aesthetic standards while writing a literary piece.

i. Early Marxists: Plekhanov, Mehring, and Zhdanov

Georgi Plekhanov (1856-1918), often regarded as the progenitor of Russian Marxism and a key figure in the establishment of the Social Democratic Party in Russia, offers valuable interpretations concerning the role of art. In his seminal work titled "Art and Social Life" (1912), he explores the intricate relationship between art and society, with a specific focus on the Marxist perspective. The book probes into the inherent conflict between the notion of "art for art's sake" and a utilitarian approach to art, which perceives it as a means to facilitate societal transformation. He does not exhibit a mere inclination towards favoring one perspective over another but instead engages in a thorough examination of the cultural circumstances that contribute to the emergence of various viewpoints. According to Plekhanov, the inclination towards "art for art's sake" sprang up as a result of artists experiencing a sense of alienation from their societal surroundings. This perspective denotes that the purpose of art should be solely focused on its aesthetic and creative merits, detached from any overt societal objectives. Conversely, the utilitarian perspective on art emerges and becomes more influential in instances where artists and a substantial portion of society share a mutual comprehension. This particular viewpoint makes it clear that art assumes a major role in both influencing and mirroring societal conflicts while also possessing the capacity to assess the tangible world critically. Plekhanov (1908) says, "In art, as in every other sphere of intellectual activity, the truth is achieved through struggle, . . . and it [Art] is a social phenomenon,

and its form is determined not only by the artist's predilections but also by the character of the public for whom it is intended" (qtd. Chattopadhyay 28). In essence, Plekhanov's analysis underscores the connection between art and its social context. He recognizes that art can be both a product of its environment and a catalyst for social change. Plekhanov's examination provides a nuanced understanding of how art interacts with society, aligning with Marxist principles that emphasize the interconnectedness of culture, economics, and class struggle.

Franz Mehring (1846-1919), a Prussian-born scholar, emerged as a notable figure in the realm of early Marxist theory. In collaboration with Rosa Luxemburg and other individuals, Mehring played a substantial role in the establishment of the German Communist Party in 1918. His works encompassed significant contributions to the field of Marxist literary analysis, particularly in relation to prominent German literary characters. Notably, he wrote *Karl Marx: The Story of His Life* (1918), an esteemed biography that established itself as a definitive account. Additionally, his work titled *The Lessing-Legend* (1892-1893) used Marxist frameworks to examine these literary personalities, effectively making their significance accessible to readers from working-class backgrounds. Mehring endeavored to establish a contextual framework for Marxist aesthetics and Marxist ideology as a whole by establishing an essential connection to the preceding German classical philosophy and aesthetics. The views expressed by Paul Reimann, F. P. Schiller, and György Lukács about Mehring's ideas were critical, with Lukács specifically characterizing Mehring as a regressive ideologue. There are several aspects within Mehring that could potentially provide a basis for such a reaction. One of the primary inquiries he encounters revolves around the issue of how it is feasible to provide objective aesthetic evaluations, considering the inherent subjectivity of personal preferences. Mehring asserts the necessity of a "scientific aesthetics" that, akin to Kant's perspective, establishes art as an inherent and distinctive

faculty of humanity. However, Lukács fails to fully acknowledge Mehring's critique of Kant's limitations. One such limitation is Kant's failure to acknowledge that his aesthetic principles were influenced by historical circumstances. Additionally, Kant did not understand the impossibility of making a purely aesthetic judgment that is detached from logical and moral factors. Furthermore, Mehring's examination of particular literary works substantiates his perspective that literary criticism, akin to any kind of ideology, is fundamentally shaped by the underlying economic structure.

Andrei Zhdanov (1896-1948) emerged as a prominent figure within the Soviet political landscape and exerted considerable influence as a cultural ideologue. His contributions were crucial in developing the cultural policies of the Soviet Union during the mid-20th century. He is primarily recognized for promoting and supporting the artistic movement known as Socialist Realism. Zhdanov espoused the viewpoint that art should serve the interests of the proletariat and promote the principles of Marxism-Leninism. He perceived art as a mechanism for molding and exerting influence on the collective awareness of the people in accordance with the principles and values of Communism. Zhdanov thinks that Marxist art ought to mirror the struggles, accomplishments, and aspirations of the proletariat. According to his viewpoint, the primary objective of art within our society is to produce artistic creations that serve as a source of inspiration for people, encouraging them to construct and strengthen the emerging socialist reality. Additionally, he held the belief that writing ought to portray the conflict between social classes and the eventual success of socialism, all the while being accessible and comprehensible to the masses. Furthermore, Zhdanov fervently championed the artistic expression as Socialist Realism, which originated in the Soviet Union and other nations adhering to communist ideologies. He asserted that this particular artistic style ought to be the sole permissible mode of artistic expression

within the Soviet Union. Furthermore, he criticised alternative artistic movements, namely, abstract art and formalism, deeming them bourgeois and lacking in connection to the preoccupations of the working class. Zhdanov demonstrates that the fundamental purpose of socialist realism is in its ability to portray reality in a manner that reflects its revolutionary progression. The artistic endeavor necessitates the replication of the complete range of existence, encompassing the manifestation of conflicting forces within both societal and natural realms. The Soviet government officially sanctioned Zhdanov's perspectives on Marxist art, literature, and Socialist Realism, which exerted a substantial influence on cultural output and aesthetic manifestation within the Soviet Union. The author's lectures and writings, notably his essay titled "On the Fronts of the Struggle for Peaceful Creativity" in 1934, offer valuable perspectives on the aforementioned topics. It is imperative to acknowledge that Zhdanov's perspectives were situated within a wider cultural and political milieu within the Soviet Union, wherein artistic and intellectual liberties were frequently curtailed due to state ideology and censorship.

ii. György Lukács and Bertolt Brecht

The philosopher who contributed, to a large extent, to the enormous corpus of Marxism as well as to the development of Marxist aesthetics was György Lukács (1885-1971), who, in *History and Class Consciousness*, argued that proletarian revolution must be a conscious transformation of the existing social order. Unlike the bourgeois revolutions, socialist revolutions cannot be accomplished only through the pursuit of immediate economic interests. He also demonstrated that the proletariat "has been entrusted with the task of transforming society consciously" (qtd. in Johnson 10). Lukács was, as Johnson noted, particularly "interested in discovering the mediations within the proletariat's immediate class situation for a revolutionary class consciousness" (11). In this respect, Johnson himself comments, "Marx's totalising methodology establishes a perspective

from which empirical consciousness and class position can be drawn into a unity to yield an account of appropriate or imputed consciousness” (11). Lukács’s elaboration of the idea of “imputed class consciousness” is as follows:

By relating consciousness to the whole of society, it becomes possible to infer the thoughts and feelings which men would have in a particular situation if they were able to assess both it and the interests arising from it in their impact on immediate action and the whole structure of society. (qtd. in Johnson 10)

Johnson asserted that “imputed class consciousness” did not exist in pre-capitalist society. In this regard, he also argued that in the societies of the past, where class interests were not fully expressed through the economy but instead intricately linked with political and religious elements, the presence of a consciousness focused on social standing hindered the development of a unified awareness based on class distinctions (Johnson 10-11). Contrarily, capitalist society “organises society along class lines” (Johnson 11).

Indeed, a dialectical relation, as Lukács argues, exists “between the bourgeoisie’s class interests and a class consciousness” (11). In fact, the bourgeoisie endeavors to organize the entire society according to its economic interests. Johnson says, “Since an understanding of society as a whole would involve a consciousness of the transitory nature of its existence as a class, bourgeois class interest and class consciousness are incompatible” (11). Lukács comments,

On the one hand, capitalism is the first system of production able to achieve a total economic penetration of society, and this implies that in theory the bourgeoisie should be able to progress from this central point to the possession of an (imputed) class consciousness of the whole system of production. On the other hand, the position held by

the capitalist class and the interests which determine its actions ensure that it will be unable to control its own system of production even in theory. (qtd. in Johnson 11)

Similarly, Lukács exposes the problems of overcoming reified bourgeoisie consciousness. His essay entitled “Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat” shows the implications of the treatment in German classical philosophy of the subject-object antinomy, which characterizes reified thinking. In this respect, Johnson adds that Lukács has provided an analysis highlighting the standpoint of the proletariat to establish the practical social conditions under which the proletariat is able to develop a totalising perspective on its empirical false consciousness and its objective class position and to arrive at an “imputed revolutionary consciousness” (Johnson 11). Again, largely based on the ideas of Marx and Engels, Lukács deciphers his viewpoints regarding the portrayal of socialist realism in literature through a book titled *The Theory of the Novel*, in which he mainly argues that a linear portrayal of society can never be realistic. To understand realism, one needs to develop critical insight regarding society. Lukács owes to Hegelian dialectics that project literature as an ever-expanding system in which different dialectical forces always interact. He posits that realist literary works must reflect the dialectical forces and tensions deep within our society (Hossain 260). In describing his standpoint, he criticizes both the naturalists who remain busy with the upper-structure reality of society and the modernists who excessively prioritize individualism over unity and discard the necessity of history. To Lukács, James Joyce’s novels and Samuel Beckett’s absurdist plays are reactionary. He contends that their works do not reflect the dialectics of social realism. He also states that only chronological descriptions of different incidents cannot portray realism. As said earlier, realism is a complex process through which a writer can bring to light conflicting forces of society by narrating discourses, and thus, the analysis of the society gives a hint of synthesis (Paul 33).

Lukács also underscores the issues of historical materialism and class struggle, which, he opines, the modern writers fail to address in their creations. Instead, modern writers have experimented with different techniques like stream of consciousness, interior monologue, etcetera that, in view of Lukács, are the features of Late Capitalism emerging from the idea of individualism. Avoiding the dialectical movement of history and the forces associated with social realism, they have addressed human angst and the agonized human soul that have made modern literature ahistorical. In this regard, Johnson mentions that Lukács “repudiates the modernist school of literature, which simply adopts the fetishised viewpoint of daily life...” (30). According to Lukács himself, “. . . fetishised perspective of modernist literature represents alienated subjectivity not as a specific outcome of a particular mode of social existence but as an inescapable fact of human life” (30). Lukács explicates how the contemporary writer may be released from the fetishised viewpoint of daily life. He urges the writer to adopt an “indirect method” to develop “a totalising perspective” (Johnson 31). He has asserted that the totalising perspective of Marxist theory “establishes the foundations for a genuine socialist literature” (31). To develop a totalizing outlook, Lukács shows the writers two possible ways: a writer needs essential alienation from the fetishised outlook of everyday life, and he/she requires focusing on the creation of “popular art.” In other words, side by side, shedding light on the “defetishising capacity of the realist work,” he appeals to writers to make “art accessible to everybody” (Johnson 32-33). He, too, has held the view that the way realism gets transpicuous in the creations of Balzac and Tolstoy is even missing in many ordinary leftist writers’ writings. The intermingling of man’s weal and woe and vicissitudes of life with the moments of history, reflected in the works of Tolstoy and Balzac and even in the creations of Homer and Sophocles, compels the reader to face an undeniable historical truth, which we do not get in modernist literature. He also puts emphasis on the fact that text should

not be separated from socialist realism; instead, by avoiding the political ideology of the writer, the class conflict and realism reflected in the text need to be addressed. In this regard, Lukács writes:

[. . .] Oedipus and Tom Jones, Antigone, and Anna Karenina: their individual existence...cannot be distinguished from their social and historical environment. Their human significance and their specific individuality cannot be separated from the context in which they were created. (qtd. in Lodge 476)

However, Lukács's views have not gone unchallenged. He alleges that modernist *littérateurs* are busy with subjective reality and psychological exploration of the characters. Their literary landscape is full of dreams rather than realities. In this regard, Khandakar Ashraf Hossain (2011), a former professor of English at the University of Dhaka and a poet, comments that Lukács has failed to understand that the modern writer, through portraying disintegration, loneliness, and agonies of modern people, has encapsulated the reality of modern life. Their creations are the consequences of the social reality of modern times (Hossain 262). His misunderstanding also includes the fact that the techniques used by the modern writer are commensurate with the contents of their works, which the 19th-century narrative style as a technique might not be able to exploit. On the whole, Lukács's Marxist ideas are, in some cases, opinionated and orthodox. Many of his successors in the same school did not comply with the position he held (262).

Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956), a prominent playwright of Germany and a Marxist intellectual, immensely contributed to the development of Marxist aesthetics. Most of his plays address the issue of socialist realism in multifarious ways. During the early 1930s, he started writing realist plays, which he named 'Lebrstücker' or didactic play. He majorly aimed at presenting plays as a tool for sharpening the sense of the working class, not as a mode of mere entertainment.

Brecht has opposed the principles of socialist realism propagated by Lukács and, instead, has demonstrated that a realist illusion has been created in the name of portraying social realism, which needs to be defunct. Rather, he has used the alienation effect in his plays so that the viewers cannot lose themselves in the majesty of the plot or scene. He urged his viewers not to immerse in the greatness of the storyline but rather to analyze the play with their intellect. To come out of the tradition of telling a story chronologically, he used different techniques such as letting someone enter to stage with a placard, or hanging a notice board to give people a message, or the appearance of the playwright himself, etcetera. He called this type of play ‘epic theatre’ (Hossain 263). With such an endeavour, he turned the two thousand years old traditions of Aristotelian drama upside down. Thereupon, all his plays go against the idea of the unity of the plot; instead, his creations throw light on fragments of stories. Brecht makes his standpoint clear by saying that a playwright must have the freedom to blend different forms, such as ancient, modern, urban, local, etc., even in one play. He always expected his viewers to use their intellect to discover the underlying motifs or themes of the play. As per Brecht, realism should not emerge from the plot spontaneously; rather, the spectator, applying their rationality, should find the reality out of the fragments of the plot (Hossain 264).

Brecht has also highlighted how the ruling class actively promotes beliefs and attitudes that foster its own class interests. He holds the opinion that the bourgeoisie “consolidates its political hegemony by promoting a false conception of the naturalness and unalterability of given social relations” (Johnson 69). He adopted a historical perspective on the question of the opacity of real social relations (Johnson 69-70). He argues, “Fascism erects powerful ideological defences which totally obscure the real social relations of capitalist society” (70). During the regime of Nazi Germany, Brecht stated, “The ruling strata are using lies more openly than before, and the lies are

bigger. Telling the truth seems increasingly urgent” (qtd. in Johnson 70). He puts special emphasis on the urgency of telling the truth. He urges the artists and writers to follow the path of truth by telling the following: “...in relatively [‘quiet’] periods artists may find it possible to merge wholly with their public and be a faithful ‘embodiment’ of the general conception, our profoundly unsettled time forces them to take special measures to penetrate to the truth” (qtd. in Johnson 70). An influential poet of Chile and a 1971 Nobel laureate, Pablo Neruda fully conformed to this idea of Brecht. How the tumultuous days during the Spanish Civil War in 1937 forced the poet to tell the truth, unveiling the ugly face of fascism, spread across the continents of South America and Europe.

Notably, both Brecht and Althusser, as Johnson (1984) points out, “ground their analyses of the falsity of immediate consciousness not in a classical Marxian account of commodity fetishism but, rather, in an analysis of ruling-class interests” (70). Althusser (1963) stated the following: “In a class society ideology is the relay whereby and the element in which the relation between men and their conditions of existence is settled to the profit of the ruling class” (qtd. in Johnson 70). He has opposed the relation between “ruling-class interests and everyday thinking” propagated by Brecht (Johnson 70). He has asserted that the connection between ideology and the existing productive relationships is of a structural nature. According to his perspective, practices related to ideology serve a role in reproduction. They generate a form of awareness that aligns with the preservation of established productive relationships.

As per Brecht, the ruling class tries to “promote modes of thinking appropriate to the maintenance of the productive relations of capitalism. Here the relation between ruling class interests and ruling ideas is an expressive rather than structural one” (Johnson 70). He also mentions, “Although the ruling class is at present adopting an intensively defensive stance, it can,

in principle at least, be caught off guard” (70). In this respect, Johnson clarifies Brecht’s aim by saying the following: “For Brecht, a knowledge of the essential social relations is inaccessible to immediate consciousness but for specific historical rather than structural reasons” (71). However, to understand the Brechtian conception of the character of appearance, we can quote the following from *The Messingkauf Dialogues*:

[. . .] we have met together in a dark period when men’s behavior to one another is...horrible and the deadly activities of certain groups of people are shrouded in almost impenetrable darkness...vast oppression and exploitation of one man by another, the war like slaughterings and peaceable degradations of every sort throughout our planet have come to seem pretty well natural to us. (qtd. in Johnson 71)

The situation stated above by Brecht indicates how people, at a given point in history, began to consider the onset of decay, degeneration, and exploitation as normal occurrences. His observation indirectly unfolds how “the ruling class rules through a conception of the naturalness and, hence, unalterability of an exploitative social order” (Johnson 71). So, the starting point of revolutionary consciousness, as Johnson (1984) demonstrates, “means the adoption of a critical, reflective attitude towards appearances” (71). As Brecht suggests, Marxist criticism, through its critical and skeptical outlook, is able to uncover the falseness of appearances practiced by the bourgeoisie and devised by the capitalist. Such a “weapon of secrecy” needs to be, as Brecht asserts, removed from society to establish a socialist society. He says, “Since we seem to have landed in a battle, let us fight! Have we not seen how disbelief can move mountains? Is it not enough that we should have found that something is being kept from us? Before one thing and another there hangs a curtain: Let us draw it up!” (qtd. in Johnson 71). Such a stance of Brecht clarifies how his account of the critical and practical status of Marxism is different from the Stalinist orthodoxy of the period. As

per Stalin, “the scientificity of dialectical materialism is derived from its ability to uncover the ‘natural and inevitable’ laws governing society” (qtd. in Johnson 72). On the other hand, Brecht thinks, “Marxism adopts the critical and sceptical attitude of the natural sciences” (72). In this regard, Johnson asserts that the emergence of a critical stance within scientific theory is a direct response to the need and potential for taking command over the natural world. A similar evaluative approach characterizes modern progressive art, which aligns with the proletariat's interests in gaining authority over the societal context (72).

However, orthodox Marxists at that time did not like Brecht’s above-stated approaches to realism. Brecht asserted that an artist must find new techniques to present his creations in the changing times or situations. He also viewed capitalism as a demon changing its shape all the time; it invariably takes newer forms, so an artist needs to have political integrity to uncover the demonic masks of capitalism (Hossain 265). Though Brecht’s ideas about art and literature are, in some cases, different from those of Marx and Engels, these have not opposed the basics of Marxist aesthetics, which has rather added a dimension.

iii. Frankfurt School: Adorno and Benjamin

Since the beginning, determining the relationship between literature and society has been an imperative issue of Marxist aesthetics. However, the theorists of the Frankfurt School have rejected the idea of realism and instead come up with a bunch of ideas under the banner of Critical Theory. Among them are Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and Herbert Marcuse. Theodor Adorno (1903-1969) invalidates Lukacs’s theory of art and demonstrates that reality has no direct connection to literature. Art is devoid of reality, and such separation bears special significance to art. Modernist literature keeps itself away from realism, and consequently, it has been possible for the premier to criticize the latter. Adorno asserts that experimentative modernist art makes the

commoners aware of their position in society by challenging their realization and intellect. Again, propagandist literature makes them dull and insipid and destroys their reasoning power. Even the mass people discard Avant-gardist art as it unsettles the foundation of their spontaneous consent to society's unseen controlling power. As per Adorno, the work of art serves to bring forth an increased awareness of the profound sadness experienced by marginalized individuals, thereby proclaiming a sense of liberation that incites intense emotional reactions (Selden et al. 100).

Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) is considered the most antipathetic Marxist of his generation. He secured a bad reputation for his use of obscure language. Though he had a good friendship with Brecht, he did not comply with the Marxist ideas of his friend. For him, the discovery of photography and cinema completely changed the status of art. Art has been replaced with media (Hossain 266). In his "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Benjamin (1928) has brought to light the fact that art is being reproduced mechanically, and such type of reproduction has destroyed the originality of art.

iv. Ideology and Hegemony: Althusser, Gramsci, and Macherey

'Ideology' as an idea exerts a deep impact on Marxist literary concepts. In this regard, Plekhanov argues that all artworks emerge from ideology. The way it has directly been reflected in politics or the legal system is very unlike in the case of literature. Literature develops an indirect and distant relationship with ideology. In Marxist ideas about art and literature, class relation is a part of the base of society, and ideology is a part of superstructure. Ideology primarily contains religion, law, political system, etcetera. The ruling class, through controlling superstructure, determines society's political, legal, and religious ideologies. They also direct all other classes of society to carry out or practice those ideologies. These ideologies, mostly serving the purposes of the capitalist, create delusion in the people of the middle class and working class. In focusing on

the function of ideology, Eagleton (2002) says, “Ideology is not in the first place a set of doctrines; it signifies the way men live out their role in class-society, the values, ideas, and images which tie them to their social functions and so prevent them from a true knowledge of society as a whole” (15).

In a capitalist society, totalitarian consumerism is considered an ideology that urges people to buy products more and more and to consume those as much as possible. Consequently, commodity fetishism emerges. The ruling class convinces all other classes that if the ruling class survives, all other classes will benefit. These ideologies get circulated through media, political organizations, curriculums, political speeches, etcetera. In view of Lukacs, a false consciousness develops among the ruled that the interest of both the ruling class and all other classes is the same. And the ruling class spread such among people in the name of ideology. Marxist theorists have assembled the following formulae to define ideology: a) Ideology includes a bunch of deceptions propagated by a particular group or class of people; b) It is a system of false consciousness or ideas contrary to real or scientific knowledge; c) It as an illusion falsifies true knowledge and social reality (Hossain 268). Both points are interrelated. In a society of different classes, all doctrines or faiths are founded on social class. Illusory faiths of all classes are, either partly or wholly, false. But the ideology of the proletarian class should be founded on scientific knowledge, which is considered “Socialist Ideology” by Lenin. In this respect, the following remark is relevant:

Socialism, in so far as it is the ideology of struggle of the proletarian class, undergoes the general conditions of birth, development and consolidation of any ideology, that is to say it is founded on all the material of human knowledge, it presupposes a high level of science, . . . (qtd. in Williams 69)

The third point presents ideology as an instrument of social reproduction. Karl Mannheim, Daniel Bell, and Jurgen Habermas largely used the aforesaid idea to elucidate the knowledge of socialism. In particular, Mannheim took the Marxist idea of ideology to a macro level from a general perception. He propounds that all ideologies, including Marxism, emerge out of social life. Afterwards, Pierre Bourdieu took the idea of Mannheim to a different height (Hossain 269).

However, Louis Althusser (1918-1990), a French Marxist intellectual, has used ideology as the keyword in defining the relations between culture, society, and literature. Althusser's concept of ideology becomes vivid through the following explanation: "Ideology is a system (possessing its logic and proper rigour) of representations (images, myths, ideas, or concepts according to the case) endowed with an existence and a historical role at the heart of a given society" (Goldstein 23). He demonstrates that ideology obfuscates the understanding of societal dynamics by naturalizing certain ideologies and endorsing corresponding principles that reinforce their existence. The dissemination of ideology through civil society is achieved through several means, including the enactment of laws, inclusion in educational textbooks, incorporation into religious rituals, and establishment of societal standards. These mechanisms effectively instill ideological values inside individuals, often occurring subtly and unconsciously. The State establishes ideology through two distinct mechanisms, namely the Repressive State Apparatuses (RSA) and the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA). The RSA encompasses various institutions such as legal courts, prisons, police forces, and the military, while the ISA comprises entities such as political parties, educational institutions, media outlets, religious institutions, familial structures, and artistic endeavors. Althusser introduced structuralism into the framework of Marxism. According to his perspective, society may be understood as a cohesive entity with distinct levels, namely the

legal, political, and cultural domains. The interconnections between these levels are primarily influenced by economic factors.

In a slightly different way, Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), founder of the Italian Communist Party, a linguist, and philosopher, considered the above-stated concept to be hegemony, highlighting the domination of a particular section of society by the powerful classes. In this respect, Samiran Kumar Paul (2020), a Marxist critic, says, “Most often it works through consent rather than by power. It is the moral and intellectual leadership of the upper class in a particular society” (26). To elaborate on the concept, Gramsci expounds that the State does not always force the citizens to accept its ideologies; rather, it activates its ideologies on consensus. Power and respect enjoyed by the largest part of any society played vital roles in making ideology acceptable to the masses. Gramsci provides an analysis whereby he elucidates the concept of spontaneous consent, which refers to the voluntary acceptance exhibited by the majority of the populace towards the overall governance and control exerted by the dominant ruling class, hence facilitating the mobilization of ideas (Hossain 277). He opines that governance and hegemony are two different subject matters. The state governs people through political power and controls people’s values and beliefs through the process of hegemony. Raymond Williams (1990) says, “Hegemony indicates the whole lived social process as practically organized by specific and dominant meanings, values, and beliefs of a kind which can be abstracted as a “world-view” or “class outlooks” (101). However, on the other hand, Gramsci deciphered his view of the need for an alternative hegemony to establish a better socialist state. According to Paul (2020), Gramsci placed significant importance on the notion that the effective transformation of a socialist state necessitates the active involvement of the proletariat’s organic intellectuals in constructing an alternative hegemonic structure (17). He interprets the concept of alternative hegemony and says,

The notion of hegemony is effectively a metonymic affirmation of the dialectical connection between economic and superstructural spheres, stressing the transformative role of human agency rather than relying on the “inevitability” of economic determinism. (qtd. in Paul 17)

However, Althusser contemplates that only economic force does not generate ideology; rather, many other forces contribute to form ideology. Amid those forces, culture plays a pivotal role. He adds that only the base does not control the superstructure. Apart from the relationship between base and superstructure, different components of ideology, like literature and culture, independently play pivotal roles. With such an observation, Althusser makes a difference from classical Marxist theorists of art and literature. Though he has freed himself from steadfast Marxist explanations by his predecessors, he remains faithful towards the basics of Marxist aesthetics. Peter Barry (2007) says, “These ‘Engelsian’ pronouncements do not cancel out the Marxist tendency to imprison art within economics, but they do release literature on bail, so to speak, and allow it a high degree of day-to-day freedom” (164).

Althusser demonstrates that art or literature, despite belonging to a particular ideology, does not serve that ideological layout blindly; rather, they, coming out of the cocoon of that diagram, bring into focus the reality of society (Hossain 271). Great artworks always separate themselves from the shackles of a particular ideological structure and try to view society impartially. Even timeless literary works make a critique of the ideological framework they belong to (Hossain 272). The critics must appreciate those works of literature that have impartially maintained a distance from its origin (ideology). In this regard, Eagleton (2002) writes:

A scientific criticism would seek to explain the literary work in terms of the ideological structure of which it is part, yet which it transforms in its art: it would search out the principle which both ties the work to ideology and distances it from it. (18)

Similarly, Pierre Macherey, a French philosopher, provides a reliable explanation of the relation between ideology and literature. In his opinion, illusion and ideology are two sides of the same coin. A writer creates something new by using ideological illusions as ingredients. He/she maintains a distance by separating art from ideological structure. In this regard, Macherey says, “By transforming itself into ideological structure, art gives us freedom from ideological illusion” (165).

v. New Left: Williams, Eagleton, and Jameson

The concept of "Cultural Materialism," originally introduced by Raymond Williams and later popularized by Jonathan Dollimore, places significant emphasis on the examination of historical context. This approach involves scrutinizing the historical elements that have been overlooked or suppressed in alternative historical accounts (Paul 46-47). Cultural materialists espouse the notion that history is inherently textual and that texts possess an inherent historical nature. Paul (2020) says, “They are consciously political, and aim at transforming the social order as they seek readings that focus on the marginalized and the exploited...” (47). If we take into consideration what cultural materialism focuses on and what its followers do, we find multifarious similarities between the beliefs of cultural materialists and those of Pablo Neruda, who unfolded ahistoricity spread by the dictatorial regimes across the continent of Latin America through his verses of *Canto General*. In addition, as a Communist party activist, he stood by Chile’s peasantry and coal miners who became the worst sufferers of the state’s exploitative policy. His poems throw light on how the dictators in Chile, over the years, deprived the coal miners of their rights and

instead launched attacks on the righteous protest of the working class (Paul 124). In this case, it can be said that what Neruda has done through his literary works and activism is, in many respects, similar to what Williams, through his concept of Cultural Materialism, propagates.

However, Eagleton (2002) criticises Williams and expresses that literary texts do not reflect the historical truth as described by Williams in his concept of Cultural Materialism, rather they build a particular relation with ideology. By saying such, Eagleton, indeed, conforms to Althusser's concept of Ideology. He mentions what Althusser says in this regard:

[. . .] art cannot be reduced to ideology: it has, rather, a particular relationship to it. Ideology signifies the imaginary ways in which men experience the real world, which is, of course, the kind of experience literature gives us too---what it feels like to live in particular conditions rather than a conceptual analysis of those conditions. . . .art does not enable us to know the truth which ideology conceals. (Eagleton 16-17)

In contrast, it is worth noting that Eagleton's perspective on the interplay between literature and ideology is not given significant attention in this discussion. However, it is important to highlight the contributions of Fredric Jameson, a prominent American Marxist, who formulated a dialectical theory of literary criticism rooted in the ideas of Hegelian dialectics. This critique recognises the necessity of situating the objects of examination within a comprehensive historical framework, demonstrates an awareness of its own historical and subjective underpinnings, and endeavours to uncover the profound intrinsic structure of a literary work. Paul (2020) says, "Jameson attempts to integrate his dialectical thinking with insights from structuralism and Freud, using the Freudian notion of repression to analyze the function of ideology, the status of literary texts, and the epistemological function of literary form" (42). Jameson's analysis places a major focus on the historical dimension in relation to the acts of reading (consumption) and writing

(creation) (Paul 26). Jameson's unwavering dedication to Hegelian-Marxist philosophy was clearly demonstrated in his work, *The Political Unconscious*. This book prominently features the motto "always historicize" at its outset, signifying his strong endorsement of historical contextualization (Paul 27).

vi. Contemporary Marxists: Slavoj Zizek and Aijaz Ahmed

Marxist criticism should not be limited to analyzing the explicit political content of a work, but should also examine how the work embodies the contradictions and conflicts of the historical moment in which it was created. (Source: "For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor," Zizek 20)

Slavoj Zizek (1949), a Slovenian philosopher and a prominent figure in current academic circles, is recognized for his contributions as a Marxist philosopher and cultural critic. His wide body of work delves deep into the intricate connections between Marxism, art, and literature. Zizek's viewpoint of Marxist concepts pertaining to art and literature can be succinctly encapsulated as follows:

Zizek (2005) posits that art and literature possess an active agency in the construction and perpetuation of social and political conditions rather than only serving as passive reflections thereof. Consequently, he reinforces the need to scrutinize the manner in which art and literature serve as contributors to the prevailing ideology and power dynamics within a given society. Furthermore, Zizek critically analyses specific Marxist viewpoints regarding art and literature, contending that they often overgeneralize these cultural expressions by reducing them to mere reflections of class struggle or utilizing them exclusively for political purposes. He posits that the current technique being discussed needs to include recognition of the distinct and contradictory attributes of cultural production and its capacity to challenge and subvert dominant power

structures. Furthermore, Žižek examines how art and literature can be focal points for ideological debate and resistance. He argues that by interrogating the dominant ideology and revealing its inherent contradictions, art, and literature can potentially foster the birth of transformative imagination and consequent political change. His scholarly contributions emphasise the importance of employing a dialectical framework in analysing art and literature. This framework recognises the complex interconnectedness between form and substance, the aesthetic experience, and the political implications inherent in these creative expressions. He demonstrates that a genuinely revolutionary culture cannot be reduced to a mere instrument for political strife but must possess its intrinsic creative value.

In brief, Žižek's interpretation of Marxist concepts pertaining to art and literature emphasises the intricate relationship between cultural creation, ideology, and political contention while stressing the necessity of adopting a dialectical framework that acknowledges the paradoxical and transformative capacities of art and literature. Lastly, it is imperative to acknowledge Žižek's noteworthy statement that Marxist criticism does not aim to diminish art and literature by reducing them to a mere reflection of economic reality. Instead, the focus lies in elucidating the manner in which art and literature can actively contribute to the endeavor for social and political transformation.

Aijaz Ahmad (1941-2022) was an Indian-born American Marxist philosopher whose ideas have had a significant impact on the scholarly discourse around the intricate relationship between Marxism and cultural production. His perspective on art and literature, situated within a Marxist philosophical framework, exhibits a multifaceted and sophisticated nature. He disapproves of certain elements within conventional Marxist literary criticism while also pushing for an approach

to understanding cultural products that is both more comprehensive and attuned to historical context.

In his scholarly work titled *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*, Ahmad (1992) asserts that cultural production, encompassing various forms of artistic expression and literary works, should not be regarded as a mere mirror image of economic frameworks. He contends that although economic conditions exert a substantial influence, the interconnection between the base (economic structure) and the superstructure (culture, ideology, etc.) is characterized by a greater level of complexity. So, he criticizes the inclination to oversimplify the interrelation between these entities, emphasizing the need for a thorough and comprehensive explanation.

Ahmad highlights the significance of cultural products within their distinct historical and social frameworks and makes a critique of the approach of employing a universal framework to the evaluation of art and literature, which fails to acknowledge the distinct circumstances prevalent in other societies. As a result, he examines the dialectical relationship between cultural products and dominant ideologies by following Althusser's theoretical framework of ideological interpellation. In doing so, he explores the dual capacity of cultural products to both question and perpetuate prevailing ideological structures. He argues that literature and art challenge prevailing power dynamics by presenting alternative viewpoints. Also, Ahmad elaborates on the concept of world literature via the lens of Marxist criticism and, therefore, engages in a critical analysis of Eurocentric interpretations of global literature, highlighting the essentiality of contextualizing non-European literatures within their respective historical and social frameworks.

Ahmad's scholarly pursuits also extend to the realm of postcolonial theory, wherein he criticizes the approaches to consolidate multifarious experiences inside the overarching framework of "postcolonial." In his book, "Postcolonialism: An Unfinished Project," he acknowledges the

distinct historical paths followed by various postcolonial societies and provides an insightful critique of the influential scholarly work of Edward Said's "Orientalism." While Ahmad accepts the significance of Said's discoveries regarding the historical construction of the East by Western academia, he also presents a number of critical observations in this regard. Ahmad claims that Said exhibits a tendency to homogenize Western thought while neglecting its inherent underlying variety. He argues that there are quite a good number of Western intellectuals who have criticized the imperialist projects and acknowledged the intrinsic worth of diverse civilizations. Ahmad makes a critique of Said's oversimplification of hegemonic power systems, contending that Said's depiction of power dynamics originating exclusively from the Western world has overlooked the intricacies present inside non-Western countries. He expresses a critical viewpoint regarding Said's perceived tendency to prioritize culture over political economy. Ahmad also argues that although culture bears significance, it is imperative to take into account the economic and material aspects of imperialism and hegemonic power.

Ahmad (1992) also brings to light the postmodern shift within academia, perceiving its adverse implications on political engagement and analysis. He makes a critique of postmodernism due to its tendency to decontextualize social and political issues. Alongside, he expresses his concern about the grave consequences of postmodernism's emphasis on language and representation, suggesting that it may result in a disconnection from tangible realities and social conflicts. He asserts that the prioritization of discourse may inadvertently detract from the significance of tackling economic and social disparities and also expresses apprehensions regarding the possible elitist nature of postmodernism, citing its utilization of complex language and intricate theoretical frameworks as factors that may contribute to the exclusion of broader

audiences. Such a phenomenon may impede the progress of the politically active and educated part of any populace.

It is imperative to consider Ahmad's critiques of Edward Said and postmodernism in light of his overarching philosophical dedication to Marxism and his understanding of culture, literature, and theory through the lens of historical materialism. His endeavours in the field of Marxist literary criticism entail a meticulous balancing act between the overarching tenets of Marxism and the need to acknowledge and analyze the intricacies of cultural production within distinct historical and social frameworks. On the whole, Aijaz Ahmad offers a scholarly approach to art and literature that emphasizes the importance of critically analyzing the complex interactions of economic, social, and cultural elements.

vii. Neruda and Marxism

"Marxism is the ideology of the working class, because it is the only theory that can lead the struggle for the emancipation of the oppressed masses." (Neruda's speech at the Third Congress of the Chilean Communist Party, 1950)

As the present thesis broadly attempts to show how Chilean poet Pablo Neruda (1904-1973), through his works and activism, contributes to the vast corpus of Marxist aesthetics, it particularly endeavours to shed light upon the meeting points of the poet, and some noted Marxist scholars in comprehending the Marxist concepts of art, culture, literature, and history, and discerning the poet's multiple thoughts and viewpoints that have added a dimension to the liberal Marxist-vision of the world. Primarily, Neruda's involvement with the communist party took him to the alley of Marxism. Thereupon, this research essentially showcases how Neruda, in his activism, was very similar to one of the greatest Italian Marxists, Antonio Gramsci. In the essay entitled "Gramsci, Marxism and Culture," Tanveer Mokammel (2017), a noted Bangladeshi

filmmaker and a Communist activist, highlights Gramsci's manifold activities as an intellectual. He highlights how Gramsci used to visit village people to introduce them to the necessity of socialism and try to make them aware of the pitfalls of the rise of capitalism. Gramsci used to provide the workers of the villages with progressive ideas and revolutionary thoughts from the novels of Romain Rolland and the plays of Pirandello and Ibsen (Mokammel 135). Gramsci's attempt to develop a revolutionary consciousness among the downtrodden and the underprivileged of Italy was very similar to the way Neruda disseminated his progressive thoughts among the impoverished of Southern Chile by visiting the regions of coalminers and reading poems of struggle, resistance, and optimism for them. Through activism and literary creations, both of them addressed the cause of the working class during the rise of capitalist society. They took responsibility for making the proletariat aware of the hegemonic weapons of the ruling classes. Mokammel (2017) brings forth how Gramsci put emphasis on the roles of revolutionary intellectuals in transforming society into a socialist one. The following words of Gramsci highlight how he was conscious of his society and time:

My whole intellectual formation was of polemical kind and to think disinterestedly, that is, to study for study's sake, is difficult for me, . . . normally I have to move from a dialectical standpoint; otherwise, I feel no intellectual stimulus. (qtd. in Mokammel 137-138)

Gramsci's aforesaid statement seems to be quite similar when Neruda says the following: ". . . I believe that my duties as a poet embraced brotherhood not only with the rose and symmetry, . . . but with thorny human responsibilities I have incorporated into my poetry" (Neruda 388). This statement embodies how the poet would be moved by a dialectical standpoint like Gramsci.

In addition, Neruda, along with writing poetry for alleviating the plight of the proletariat, actively participated in different socialist protests and revolutions of his time. Notably, both Marx

and Engels appreciated those artists and writers who actively participated in the progressive revolutions of their respective times. In *Dialectics of Nature* (1883), Engels demonstrates that the greatness of great artists and writers lies in the roles they play in promoting the culture and science of their times. For instance, he lauded the Renaissance artists as they actively took part in the Renaissance movement by writing and actively participating in revolutionary activities, which played a substantial role in promoting science and culture in Europe (21). He admonished those writers who attempted to alienate themselves from revolutionary activities by considering art as 'pure' and 'impartial' (Mokammel 138). On the other hand, we have found Neruda very responsive to any kind of progressive movement of his time in different parts of Latin America. The poet holds the opinion that the bourgeoisie artists attempted to promote bourgeois art in the name of pure art. In fact, they tried to segregate people's needs from art. Resultantly, he pioneered and promoted the idea of the "impurity of poetry" against the widespread notion of the purity of poetry in Europe. Through his idea of impure poetry, he deciphers the following: "Man's nebulous impurity can be perceived in them [poetry]: the affinity for groups, the use and obsolescence of materials, the mark of a hand or a foot, the constancy of the human presence that permeates every surface" (Neruda 128).

Again, Neruda conforms to Engels's idea of writers' responsibility when Hossain points out, as Engels demonstrates, the necessity of building relations of writers and artists with the proletariat (275). The poet speaks of how he felt the urgency of spreading his poetry among the peasants and the workers. He says, "I have always wanted the hands of the people to be seen in poetry. I have always preferred a poetry where the fingerprints show. A poetry of loam, where water can sing. A poetry of bread, everyone may eat" (Neruda 138).

In this respect, Khondakar Ashraf Hossain (2011), a former professor of English at the University of Dhaka, says that a writer, as the classical Marxists assert, needs to portray the realism of the proletariat. And Neruda seems to be a follower of the classical school of Marxism (275). However, as to Neruda's standpoint regarding realism in art, Bimalkumar Mukhopadhyay, in "Marxist Principles of Art," believes that Neruda expected a union between revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism. In favour of the statement, he mentions what Neruda has said about the above subject matter in an interview published in a Mexican newspaper (124):

I think that realism and the fanciful and the invention are two laws of artistic creativity. If the artist negates realism, he loses his view of reality, and his art turns into a spectre. If the artist negates the fanciful and dreams, his art becomes helpless and pedestrian (qtd. in Mukhopadhyay 124).

Furthermore, Neruda's communist conviction shows how he has negated the surrealist viewpoints of the then-European poets. He lambasts the roles of the European Surrealist poets and intellectuals and, instead, lauds the brotherhood communism propagates and throws light on the necessity of communist poetry to transform the bourgeois society into a socialist and progressive one (Mukhopadhyay 136). In this regard, the following observation of Christopher Caudwell regarding the role of communist poetry is relevant and apt to realize Neruda's alignment with communism:

. . . the consciousness of social necessity which is the condition of freedom, from the people as a whole in classless, communist society, will be realised in communist poetry because it can only be realised in its essence, not as a metaphysical formula but by living as men in a developing communist society, which includes living as poets and readers of poetry. (qtd. in Mukhopadhyay 137)

Thereupon, it becomes evident that Caudwell, as a Marxist intellectual, believed in the power of communist poetry, and so did Neruda. It is important to note that both of them came out of the most widespread idea of art of the 20th century--- "art for art's sake" (Mukhopadhyay 138). Instead, they were very close to what Ernest Fisher has identified about the role of art in "The Necessity of Art":

. . . as the class struggle flared up again, as the contradiction and injustices of this new situation created acute uneasiness, . . . the situation of the arts and of the artist became more difficult and more problematic...In a decaying society, art, if it is faithful, must also reflect decay. And unless it wants to break faith with social function, art must show the world as changeable. And help to change it. (qtd. in Chattopadhyay 22-23)

Marxist philosopher Plekhanov rightly says, "The belief in art for art's sake arises when artists and people keenly interested in art are hopelessly at odds with their social environment" (qtd. in Mukhopadhyay 122). To come out of the situation stated by Plekhanov, Bertolt Brecht urges to keep in mind some vital issues while creating artworks. The artists need to portray reality based on historical truth. They have to be conscious of the reasons behind the discrimination prevailing in society, and have to have a scientific outlook regarding the cultural status of people in a given society. They have to be able to explain social factors from the viewpoint of the proletariat. Last but not least, the writers and the artists must declare war against all the evil powers that impede human welfare (Mukhopadhyay 122). And Pablo Neruda, in his poetry and philosophy, tried to incorporate all the issues pointed out by Brecht. Furthermore, as Mukhopadhyay (2011) asserts, Neruda puts his confidence into the following statement in which Brecht unveils when and why art fails to serve greater humanity: "Art which adds nothing to the experience of the public which leaves it as it found it, which wants to do no more than flatter rude instincts and

confirm up-ripe and over-ripe opinion---such art is worth nothing. So-called pure entertainment just produces a hangover" (qtd. in Mukhopadhyay 112).

However, in many respects, both Caudwell and Neruda have expressed similar views regarding art and culture. Caudwell discusses the necessity of art in strengthening social cooperation in his essay "Illusion and Reality." He believes that the very nature of art is humanistic. He mentions two kinds of art: Proletarian art and Bourgeois art (Sypher 2004). According to Caudwell, the first one is progressive and revolutionary in nature and accelerates social evolution. The second is the reactionary art that promotes false consciousness. In a capitalist society, such type of art prioritizes individualism and alienation over social integration. Caudwell considers individualism, as Sypher points out, "as the bourgeois illusion." He states that proletarian art plays a pivotal role in bringing social change. Similarly, Neruda believes that bourgeois art represents a decaying culture and, instead, proletarian art speaks of human emancipation (Paul 59). According to Anshen (2017), Neruda views proletarian art as the only liberating force that can help people discover the pitfalls of capitalism and free people from the illusory reality promoted by the bourgeois artist (232).

Furthermore, some similarities are found between Marxist thinker Frantz Fanon and Neruda also. Indeed, Fanon's conformation to the Marxist idea of proletarian and bourgeois revolutions is quite similar to those of Neruda. This research has found Marx, Neruda, and Fanon standing on the same ground, holding tightly to the exact idea regarding how ultimate freedom lies in the long process of proletarian revolution (Gibson 2018). Relevantly, Fanon (1961) concludes his famous book *The Wretched of the Earth* by mentioning the following from Karl Marx and quite naturally, Neruda upholds the same idea in his book *Canto General*:

Bourgeois revolutions...storm more swiftly from success to success...but they are short-lived . . . proletarian revolutions . . . constantly criticize themselves, constantly interrupt themselves in their own course, return to the apparently accomplished, in order to begin anew . . . until a situation is created which makes all turning back impossible. (qtd. in Gibson 2018)

Like Karl Marx, Neruda and Fanon put full confidence into the inner strength of the proletarian revolution, which, they demonstrate, would finally bring a new order in society, stripping all prejudices of the past (Gibson 2018).

Additionally, while working as a Chilean Consul in Madrid, Spain, in the mid-1930s, Neruda came into close proximity with the left-leaning Spanish intelligentsia, a good number of communist poets, artists, and politicians, which subsequently created an opportunity for him to be introduced to multifarious activities of the Spanish Communist Party serving the cause of the proletariat. However, the important point was how Neruda, being inspired and invigorated by their activism, involved himself with many communist programmes to support the then Spanish Republican government that had been fighting against the sacked army chief Francisco Franco and his followers' onslaught on the innocent Spaniards. Not only this, he wrote in newspapers and magazines to inform the international community of how Madrid had turned into a land of the dead during the Spanish Civil War in 1937. He moved to Paris, France, and sought cooperation from his fellow poets Louis Aragon and Paul Eluard to organize a writers' congress in the city of Valencia, Spain, with two special purposes: to express solidarity with the Spanish Republican government and to protest against the rise of international fascism including the Spanish one. Neruda became the key figure in organizing such a massive programme in which poets, writers, artists, and activists from all over the world joined and expressed solidarity with the Spanish

government. Through such large-scale activism, Neruda turned into a revolutionary, alongside pursuing his poetic endeavor. His liberal and anti-fascist stance has undoubtedly contributed to the enormous canvas of the Marxist approaches to literature and art to a considerable extent. To add, Neruda has set a rare instance by publishing an entire book of poetry called *Spain in My Heart*, chronicling the atrocities, devastation, the rise of fascism and highlighting humanitarian issues of the 1937 Spanish Civil War. Such dedication, commitment, and responsibility towards a populace at stake truly made him a people's poet.

Furthermore, Neruda's mammoth undertaking to bring back at least 2000 Spanish refugees, stranded on the French frontier due to Franco's attacks during the Spanish Civil War, to Chile by a ship called Winnipeg, despite the serious unwillingness of the then Chilean foreign ministry, was a breathtaking one. Adam Feinstein (2004), a noteworthy Neruda-biographer, believes that the poet's uncompromising mindset, clear vision, and commitment to the cause of the dispossessed and the suffering humanity made the Winnipeg episode possible (112). Such a revolutionary activity on the part of Neruda will definitely remain one of the indispensable references to discussing the Marxist approach to the revolutionary nature of art and literature.

In 1945, another historic moment came to Neruda's life as he joined the Chilean Communist Party in that year. Upon joining the party, he declared he found the Communist Party as the only organized group that could work to alleviate people's plight and establish a socialist society. Afterwards, during the regime of Gonzalez Videla, Neruda was made senator of Antofagasta and Tarapaca, a region populated mainly by coal miners, situated in southern Chile. As part of his responsibilities, while visiting the regions, he saw the distressful life of the coal miners and became pledge-bound to improve their lives and, keeping such an objective, worked hard to minimize their sorrows. However, the Videla administration did not pay any heed to the programmes set for

ensuring the rights of the coal miners by the Communist ministers and senators of the cabinet. Consequently, tension arose between the left and the administration, and finally, being directed by the then-US government, the Videla government sacked the communist ministers and ordered the law-and-order force to suppress the miners' protest. In response to the situation, Neruda wrote a newspaper article against the fascist nature of the Videla government, and as a consequence, he had to lose his senatorship. However, on the last day before his termination, he delivered a speech in the senate titled "I Accuse," in which he accused Videla of the crackdown on the miners and exposed how the President had subdued the progressive and liberal steps of the Chilean Communist Party. He considered Videla's steps as a part of international fascism. In other words, his protest was motivated by his intense hostility to Videla's policies and actions, particularly the prosecution of communists and the suppression of civil freedom and coal miners' rights in Chile.

As Chile's political situation deteriorated and Neruda's objections to and protests against the then-Chilean government became more vocal, he received growing threats from the regime. After a failed assassination attempt on him in 1948, Neruda went into hiding and eventually fled the country. He stayed in exile for several years, during which time he continued to write and speak out against González Videla's dictatorship and other fascist governments worldwide. While in exile, he tried to draw the attention of the international community to Chile's condition and sought support for the cause of democracy and human rights in his homeland. The international attention Neruda gathered added to diplomatic pressure on González Videla's government. As more people became aware of the situation in Chile, pressure mounted on the government to modify its policies and halt its repressive actions. His protest against Videla was a turning point in his life, illustrating the power of art and literature as political tools of protest. While his efforts did not directly lead to the collapse of the González Videla's regime, they did play a significant role in exposing the

government's excesses and inciting resistance to persecution. Last but not least, the way Neruda, through his protests both by writing articles and poetry and taking part in multiple activities, stood against the Videla government to consolidate the proletarian cause and continued to work for the emancipation of the oppressed masses undoubtedly proved his determination to change the repressive order of society, and added a new feature to the existing knowledge of the Marxist approach to revolutionary literature and art.

Alongside the above-stated contribution of Neruda to the body of Marxist criticism through his poetry and activism, Feinstein (2004) posits that the poet has made a groundbreaking contribution by giving special focus on the upswing of oligarchic era along with the spread of US corporations across South America in many of his poems of *Canto General*. In particular, Neruda upbraided the emergence of the oligarchic period, which coincided with the proliferation of monopolistic enterprises throughout the South American continent. His poem titled "Standard Oil Co." depicts the expansion of Standard Oil over various regions of the continent. He has observed the manner in which the Americans subjugated the working-class populace of South America to enslavement through the aforementioned commercial enterprise. The affluent and the bourgeoisie, in conjunction with authoritarian leaders, capitalized on the numerous benefits provided by the corporation headquartered in the United States. This particular corporation had significant influence over law enforcement agencies, local government bodies, political figures, and authoritarian leaders, compelling them to yield to its considerable financial and physical resources. Similarly, his poem "United Fruit Co.," elucidates the adverse consequences of capitalism, which led to the exacerbation of economic exploitation throughout the region. Through his adept use of realistic sarcasm, he unveils the formidable destructive capabilities possessed by the prominent capitalists. He has illustrated the manner in which capitalists disseminated the benefits associated

with democracy and free-market principles. The region of Latin America was designated as 'Banana Republics,' and influential parties successfully encouraged the acquisition of the continent's abundant natural riches by oppressive and avaricious dictatorial regimes. The tyrants were persuaded by the companies regarding the advantages associated with the utilization of this territory. The fascist dictators, driven solely by self-interest and disregarding the well-being of their own populations, acquiesced to the proposals put forth by their American counterparts. Neruda has characterized this alliance among tyrants as an act of treachery. As a whole, he has demonstrated that the population of South America experienced dual colonization, initially by the Spanish and afterwards by the United States, facilitated by dictatorial regimes.

viii. Socialist Realism

"Art is the representation of reality, the reduplicated, or as it were newly created world."

---Belinsky, 1948 (qtd. in Chattopadhyay 60).

A good number of Marxist philosophers, thinkers, and intellectuals have expressed their opinions, comments, and thoughts regarding socialist realism. Those perceptions altogether have defined the nature of socialist realism in divergent ways. However, some common issues have been foregrounded from their views: a) socialist realism, like the 19th-century Critical realism, is a new literary discourse or stream of the 20th century; b) it can also be termed as modern socialist art, for instance, critics like Anton Fisher always would prefer to say Socialist art to Socialist realism; c) it underscores the dialectical progress of society and endorses the idea of historical materialism (Mukhopadhyay 70-71). However, Enver Hoxha (1961), a former Albanian politician, while speaking at a conference, defined the nature of socialist realism:

Socialist realism is the faithful reflection in all its aspects of the socialist life we are building, of the colossal material transformations which our country, our society, our

people, are undertaking at revolutionary speed on the basis of Marxist-Leninist theory and the measures and decisions elaborated by our Party. (qtd. in Mukhopadhyay 72-73)

Hoxha further argues that the literary outfit of socialist realism includes socialist content and form. Every nation has its own language, culture, and tradition. The socialist literature of any particular geography must advocate the region's age-old tradition and culture. By the socialist form, it denotes that literary works must be written in the national language of any particular country (Belinsky 424). However, much before Gorky discussed Socialist realism, Tolstoy and Belinsky, just before Socialist Soviet Union came into existence, talked about this issue. Their opinions were no different than those of Gorky. Belinsky (1948) says, "To deny art of the right of serving public interests means debasing it" (qtd. in Mukhopadhyay 71). By the same token, Tolstoy states, "Art unites people" (Mukhopadhyay 71). However, none of the above writers are considered socialist realists. Though they have pointed out the role of mass people in art and literature, they, unlike Gorky, have not spoken of the contribution of the proletarian movement to the development of socialist realism. Consequently, Maxim Gorky has always been credited with pioneering the concept of socialist realism (71).

Now the question comes in which context Gorky, for the first time, used the phrase "Socialist Realism." In the early 20th century, when the proletarian revolution, challenging the old order of capitalistic society, succeeded enormously in different parts of the world, the writers of those states embraced the technique of socialist realism in writing their literary creations. It denotes that Gorky used the aforesaid term in a changing world (Mukhopadhyay 71). So, a particular social ambiance reinforced the spread of socialist realism. More precisely, when in different states of the globe, the oppression of the proletariat by the capitalist was on the rise, people who were deprived, dispossessed, and exploited got united to move forward for their rights. These marginalized people

organized some working-class movements that, followed by their triumphs in numerous states, established socialist societies, dismantling the capitalist ones. In this regard, Bimalkumar Mukhopadhyay (2011) notes that at the outset of the 20th century, capitalism reached the highest phase of its development; the economic gaps between the rich and the poor widened much around the world; the capitalist countries of Europe imperialized most of the weaker countries of different continents. During those colonial times of violence, Marxist thoughts regarding the plight of the working class drew the attention of the wider populace throughout the world. The Marxist philosophy regarding the deprived and the dispossessed became the guiding spirit for the proletariat. The main motto of the proletarian struggle was to annihilate the capitalist system and establish a plural, classless, and socialist society worldwide.

For instance, in the Soviet Union, the proletariat, being influenced by the Marxist views regarding economy and politics, conducted three consecutive revolutions between 1905 and 1917. Though the first two failed to bring about expected changes in society, the last one, commonly known as the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, led by the Bolshevik Party, planned and led by Vladimir Lenin, became successful. That revolution brought forward the historic role of the working class. The life of the new class, their economic and political way of thinking, rejuvenated by Marxism, and the revolutionary movement they launched left a lasting influence on art and literature. As a result, the new literary works began to focus on the life and constructive role of the working class and started unveiling the pitfalls of the capitalist system (Johnson 131).

During that period of the 1917 revolution in the Soviet Union, the Marxist-Leninist ideas exerted a deep influence on a large number of writers whose literary creations reflected how the working class introduced a socialist society. The wave of that new kind of literary quest spread across many countries in Europe, North America, Latin America, Asia, and Africa. Jack London,

an influential American writer, portrayed the strength of the working class and its spirit during the social revolution in his work, *The Iron Heel* (Mukhopadhyay 59). Romain Rolland from France and Bertolt Brecht from Germany also embraced the principles of socialist realism. Similarly, later on, being rejuvenated by the same spirit, Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, through his poems and activism, inspired the Spanish Republicans to fight against the rise of fascism during the Spanish Civil War in 1937 and protested against the onslaught of the ruling class on the miners in Chile, which largely served the interests of the exploited and oppressed. Gradually, throughout the globe, the writers started displaying the contradictions between the working class and capitalism in their works. This way, the writers developed a dialectical view under the influence of the Marxist-Leninist philosophy of art and literature. They thought it was their responsibility to give literary thoughts a revolutionary shape. They considered individualistic and alienated modern literary ideas as dangerous for society's progress and human consciousness. The disintegrated life of man, reflected in modernist literature at that time, was regarded as quite opposite to the Marxist idea of socialist realism, which always put emphasis on integration and unity. For instance, in Russia, Maxim Gorky, for the first time, truthfully reflected on the historical role of the proletariat. Leaving behind the way his predecessors and contemporaries viewed literature, following the Marxist-Leninist philosophy of art, he brought into focus the class contradictions and portrayed the struggle of the working class in association with the peasantry, which could be triumphant over the bourgeois and the capitalist. His 1906 novel *The Mother* bears the proof of socialist realism (Mukhopadhyay 72).

After the 1917 October Revolution, the writers associated with the struggles of the workers and peasants felt the need to spread the concept of socialist realism among writers worldwide. Primarily, the job of spreading socialist realism, a pivotal idea of the Marxist-Leninist philosophy

of art and literature, was conducted by the Russian Marxist writers (Chattopadhyay 62). However, after WWII, the literary concept of socialist realism took a new turn. More and more social revolutions in Europe, Asia, and America took place. Some of them failed, and some saw success. The regions which witnessed the rise of socialist power embraced the Marxist-Leninist approaches to art and literature. As a result, the writers of those countries celebrated the features of socialist realism in their works (62).

Raymond Williams (1990), a Welsh socialist writer and an influential critic, identifies three fundamental principles that underpin Socialist Realism. These principles are as follows: Partinost, which denotes a devoted alignment with the working class and the party's cause; Narodnost, reflecting the art's embrace of populist simplicity; and Klassovost, signifying the writer's dedication to championing class interests. The concept of Partinost finds its roots in Vladimir Lenin's essay "Party Organization and Party Literature" (1905), which underscores a writer's allegiance to the party's mission of emancipating the working class from exploitation. Narodnost centers on the unpretentiousness of artwork, echoing Marx's observations in the Paris Manuscripts about the estrangement arising from the division between mental and manual labor in capitalist societies. In the past, under feudalism, artisans engaged in localized production, overseeing all aspects themselves. Conversely, capitalism led to a detachment of workers from their products and a loss of control, leaving only folk art as a representation of communal creativity. Narodnost encapsulates this characteristic of art accessible to the masses, aiming to restore their lost sense of unity. Klassovost, on the other hand, emphasizes the author's commitment to the working class's concerns. It transcends a mere outward allegiance to a specific class, delving into the writer's inherent capacity to depict societal evolution and transformation.

However, Samiran Kumar Paul (2020), an India-based journalist, poet, and critic, goes deeper into the issue of the role of art and literature propagated by Lenin. He says, "Lenin is well aware that art cannot be subject to mechanical adjustment or levelling, to the rule of the majority over the minority" (Paul 11). As per Paul, by highlighting the issue of "party literature", Lenin suggests, "The party reserves the right to circumscribe the ideological boundaries of writing conducted under its banner" (11). Paul also asserts that Lenin was critical of the rise of bourgeois literature, and one of his targets behind raising the issue of party literature was to challenge the rise of bourgeois literature. His following observation regarding the bourgeois writer makes it clear how much he disliked them: "The freedom of the bourgeois writer...is simply masked...dependence on the money-bag, on corruption, on prostitution" (qtd. in Paul 11). He contends that bourgeois writers perceive themselves as autonomous individuals, although they are actually reliant on a comprehensive network of business relationships and vested interests. In contrast, according to Paul, the literature that is freely available will be openly associated with the proletariat (12). Lenin held a firm conviction that literature, in contrast to the liberal-bourgeois notion of individuality, should not be regarded as an endeavour undertaken alone by individuals (Paul 12).

Indeed, socialist realism was heavily endowed with the Marxist-Leninist philosophy, the communist partisanship, and the dialectical reflection of socialist reality. These manifold characteristics gave socialist realism a special space in the international literary arena. However, the appearance of revisionist ideas soon after WWII in the then-communist party stood in contrast to the notions of socialist realism. The revisionists welcomed the deteriorative bourgeois culture and art to the Russian literary sphere. They discarded the principle of party spirit, demonstrated by Lenin, from literature. Their new thoughts excluded ideas like a revolutionary way of life and

humanism; rather, they promoted anti-socialist and bourgeois art ("Socialist Realism"). In their works, revisionists like Ehrenburg, Pasternak, and Yevtushenko appreciated abstract humanism and individualism, the leading features of critical realism. They also upheld the idea of peaceful co-existence between capitalism and socialism, which Lenin long before rejected. However, the revisionists could not check the rise of literature inspired by socialist realism because the poets and novelists from different parts of the world had already embraced the ethos of socialist realism ("Socialist Realism").

Furthermore, the founders of the Soviet Union appreciated some 19th-century bourgeois writers who, despite belonging to different classes, became able to portray an unbiased reality of society of that age through their creations. So, it can be said that Soviet socialist realism was an upgraded and refined version of 19th-century bourgeois realism (Hossain 259). However, the then Soviet government's progressive outlook towards the 19th-century realist writers like Balzac, Dickens, and George Eliot gradually evaporated later. The then-ruling party pressured the writers to create socialist literature by following the party line. Stalin urged the writers to be "engineers of human souls" (qtd. in Hossain 259). However, one of the old proponents of Marxist literature, Engels, was totally against such impositions on the artists and writers during his lifetime and never encouraged writers and artists to create literary works serving the purpose of the communist party and politics. Thereupon, the writers and artists of the Engelsian stream followed what Engels espoused. However, the rise of Stalinist authoritarianism brushed aside the Engelsian progressive stream. Consequently, at the end of 1934, the writers who followed the Engelsian school of thought were compelled to go into exile in Prague and became popular as Russian Formalists, who formed the Prague School of Linguistics. Among the notable ones were Roman Jakobson and Nicolai Trubetzkoy.

However, a recently published article titled "Socialist Realism," collaboratively written by Jakup Mato, Rinush Idrizi, Vangjush Ziko, and Anastas Kapurani (2015), answers how socialist realism differs from all other literary trends of that age. It has always been an issue of argumentation about what role socialist realism plays in literature. However, before we analyze its role in literature, we must know what, indeed, realism means, according to the Marxian philosophy of art and literature (Mato et al.). As Engels saw it, "Realism, to my mind, implies, besides the truth of detail, the truthful reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances" (qtd. in Eagleton 21). This statement argues that Marx and Engels have stressed how literary works of a particular age reflect the social, political, and cultural aspects and changes of that era and how truthful those reflections are. So, the portrayal of realism in literary works must be truthful. Suppose we browse the literary thoughts of both Marx and Engels. In that case, we view that they, with great zeal, appreciated the literary works of Shakespeare, Goethe, Cervantes, Balzac, Pushkin, and some of their contemporaries because they believed their creations portrayed truthfulness. They stated that even politicians and lawyers would not be able to produce such an amount of political and social truth that the aforesaid literary legends conveyed through their works. On a second note, both Marx and Engels have mentioned that a realist writer must have a clear idea about history and a dialectic perspective towards society. They have also demonstrated that the realistic contents of literary works will stem out of social dialectics.

Indeed, the objective of socialist realism, as Gorky assumed, was to struggle against the adverse effects of the ancient world with a view to wiping out those from society. His observation also denotes that shedding light upon different facets of socialist realism requires focusing on how bourgeois realism as a discourse stands in contrast to a socialist one (Mato et al.). The bourgeois realists, in their works, do not speak against the prevailing class discrimination of society

(Chattopadhyay 68). Conversely, the socialist realists relentlessly work, intending to establish a socialist society. Moreover, bourgeois realism gives birth to the concept of critical realism, which considers the progress of society and history as absurd. According to Lukacs, in numerous indirect ways, critical realism helped socialist realism take shape and be an independent technique. He speculates that critical realism will leave no impact as soon as socialist realism spreads its influence on people. Overall, Lukacs has considered critical realism as helping stuff for socialist realism. On the other hand, Gorky opines that critical realism's excessive priority to the past pushes it to the opposite pool to the socialist one. He argues that critical realism always remains preoccupied with the past, whereas socialist realism looks forward to knowing about the future. Most critical realists do not concentrate on the future progress of society; they keep themselves alienated from society. On the other hand, socialist realism regards life as a sum of creative activities that include the progress of society and the need for a social revolution to bring about change in society. It lambasts those writers who, based on bourgeois realism, focus on issues like alienation and individualism.

Socialist realism, as a concept of Marxist art and literature, doubts how modernist writers have embellished issues like disintegration in human life, the dejected state of human existence, and the individual progress of human beings (Mato et al.). The writers who endorsed the idea of socialist realism viewed that the issues mentioned above, in multifarious ways, serve the purposes of capitalism. Thereupon, opposing the idea of alienation is the primary goal of socialist realism. The Marxist writers and philosophers hold the opinion that the modernist poet T. S. Eliot, through "The Waste Land," draws a world devoid of hope and progress, creating impediments to the development of a socialist and plural society. In this regard, the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, too, rejected the hopelessness reflected in Eliot's poetry. On a serious note, Neruda mentions that

bringing social change in society is possible if we are able to raise hope among our people (Mukhopadhyay 69). Even a ray of hope can show us the right path during any mass revolution.

Socialist realism, unlike critical realism, views life objectively. It mirrors the truthfulness of life, promotes the revolutionary way of life, and helps people sharpen their historical consciousness. It backtracks the bourgeois way of life and instead approves the dialectical progress of life and negates any approach to individual development. It considers the proletariat the driving force of a society and takes up the responsibility for educating the workers to make them prepared for the remaking of a communist and socialist society.

The literary landscape of socialist realism projects the proletariat as an organized force that plays a decisive role in historical events. The landscape of this literature throws special light on those who believe in social change. The literary domain of socialist realism always prioritizes the issues of class struggle over the bourgeois attempts; it brings to light the progressive forces and elements in the advancement of history and focuses on the dialectical view of how history testifies to people's progressive movements. Such a literary venture like socialist realism invariably showcases positive features and perspectives committed to serving the proletariat's interests and, therefore, rejects the dominance of bourgeois and revisionist ideology.

ix. The Debate between Form and Content

In Marxist criticism, the relationship between form and content has always been a polemical issue. Some assert that form is more important than content; conversely, some say the opposite. Indeed, the correlation between form and content is dialectical or conflicting, which does not indicate that they are separated from each other. Marxist-Leninist philosophy comes up with the following convincing explanation:

Form and content are opposites, making up a unity; they are different poles of the same thing. Their inseparable unity manifests itself in the fact that a certain content is clothed in a specific form. Content is the primary aspect; the form of organization depends on what is organized...Between form and content, there exist internal contradictions (qtd. in Mukhopadhyay 35).

Thereupon, it becomes clear that form and content are the opposite sides of the same coin. They progress with some internal contradictions leading to synthesis.

How the same content is expressed in divergent ways through the pens of different writers and poets needs to be discussed. For instance, Pablo Neruda, a Chilean poet, criticizes the fascist regimes of the continent of South America through his poems of *Canto General*; conversely, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, a Colombian novelist, deals with the same issue in his novel *No One Writes to the Colonel*. However, both of them treated the same issue very differently. Such has happened because of their different viewpoints. As a result, the same subject matter appears before our eyes quite differently.

Before giving any external form to any content, the content remains in the domain of the thoughts of an artist in an internal form. The concealed existence gets a shape when the artist expresses the content with an external form. In this regard, Hegel says, "We must not forget that the content is not formless and that form is simultaneously contained in the content itself and is also external to it" (qtd. in Mukhopadhyay 34). On the other hand, in defining the relationship between form and content, Leon Trotsky argues, "The relationship between form and content is determined by the fact that the new form is discovered, proclaimed, and evolved under the pressure of an inner need, of a collective psychological demand which, like everything else...has its social roots" (qtd. in Eagleton 23). Eagleton adds to Trotsky's statement by mentioning: "Significant

developments in literary form, then, result from significant changes in ideology. They embody new ways of perceiving social reality and...new relations between artist and audience" (qtd. in Mukhopadhyay 23).

Despite the equal importance of both content and form in literary works, two different pools of critics and philosophers have invariably been in debate as to which one, among them, is more essential. Anatoly Lunacharsky (1875-1933), a Russian Marxist-Leninist who had developed an intimate friendship with Lenin and was closely connected to the Bolshevik Party, held the opinion that literature as a branch of art has been distinct from other forms of art because it prioritizes content over form (Chattopadhyay 38). Furthermore, he asserted that a litterateur must concentrate on constructing a suitable form to express his/her content. He also demonstrated that an artist must focus on comprehensibility in both constructing form and developing content. Lunacharsky restrained himself from discussing the importance of content and form. He concluded that great literary works, in terms of content and form, must be comprehensible to all. On the other hand, in recapitulating subject-matter or content of the works of literature, Lenin expressed, "...if we have before us a really great artist, he must have reflected in his work at least some of the essential aspects of the revolution" (Chattopadhyay 39). In deciphering his views regarding form, he has said that a litterateur must be conscious of an external form capable of delivering the content's inner messages. Lenin never urged the litterateurs to focus on the comprehensibility of their works all the time; instead, he told them not to demean the standard of their creations. In the same way, he never supported the idea that great literary works must be understandable to all and are, therefore, appreciated by a few in most cases.

However, Marxist aesthetics never puts much emphasis on the aforesaid thoughts regarding content and form. It is, more precisely, in line with the reasoning of Constantine Fedin, who, in

his 1953 essay titled "On Craftsmanship," mentioned that to present the richness of any creation demands the majesty of form, and to construct a majestic form requires true craftsmanship which ultimately brings into focus the truth of life (Mukhopadhyay 39). True craftsmanship always serves the opulence of content. In Fedin's words, "When craftsmanship is not at the service of great content, it is fraud. True craftsmanship does not cloud the essence of thought" (qtd. in Mukhopadhyay 39). If the form of any work fails to present its content properly before the reader, it clarifies that the form is incompatible with the content. Fedin urged the artists to "try to find fault with the content if the form is found deteriorative" (qtd. in Mukhopadhyay 40). He has contemplated that any artwork must be new in terms of content, and the new content will give birth to a new form; an artist's aim should be to express what has not been expressed before. Furthermore, it is quite natural that new content demands a new form. In this respect, Chattopadhyay (2009) asserts that ideas make the difference between content and form. The idea of a poem must not be expressed in the form of a novel. Likewise, the idea of an epic cannot be delivered through the form of a drama. The variation of ideas paves the way for creating new forms. A true craftsman or creator will never express his/her new ideas following an old form. On the whole, content and form are always in contradiction to adapt to the ever-changing world; they do not disown each other. So, their dialectical progress enriches the works of literature and art.

x. The Embodiment of Truth and Beauty

Karl Marx did not endorse the argument propelled by Immanuel Kant that beauty does not need any material needs; it has no purpose as such. Marx refuted the idea that since a thing is necessary and has a purpose, it has no beauty. Instead, Marxist aesthetics subscribes to the concept that the thing that is ugly in reality can be beautiful in art and literature (Mukhopadhyay 44-45). Aristotle and his followers also propagated such an idea. However, Mukhopadhyay asserts that

this concept can fuel the tendency to distance the world of art and literature from real life (Mukhopadhyay 45). What Marx has said about truth and beauty needs to be interpreted precisely. Marx comes out of the conventional Keats's concept that "Beauty is truth, truth beauty." He has argued that a beautiful thing does not necessarily unveil the truth all the time. He rather subscribed to the view that truthful art is always beautiful. Both Marx and Engels have agreed that something that is not truthful cannot be considered beauty in the name of art (45). They valued the social consciousness of an artist with respect to truth and beauty. To portray the humility of humanity and the helplessness of human existence is neither an expression of beauty nor an unveiling of truth (45). So, such issues ought not to be the subject matter of literature. In this regard, Anton Fisher argues that when art leaves the progressive thoughts or ideas behind it loses its most essential quality, beauty. And such digression may falsify the truth of life. Endorsing Fisher's argument, German sculptor Fritz Cromer says, "Beauty in art, in socialist art at least, is something that cannot be separated from truth. So-called fine art is not always truthful, but truthful art is always beautiful" (qtd. in Mukhopadhyay 45). It is noticeable that Cromer puts emphasis on the necessity of truthful art, which is entirely different from Keats's notion of truth and beauty. In this regard, the thing that portrays our life truthfully, as Nikolay Chernyshevsky has demonstrated, is beautiful (Mukhopadhyay 47). So, we expect a truthful portrayal of life from an artist, and such portrayal undoubtedly creates beauty. To conclude, Marxist aesthetics highlights the idea that truth always creates beauty, though beauty is not capable of generating truth all the time (Mukhopadhyay 48).

xi. Values of Progressive Outlook

How progressive ideas garnish socialist-realist art and literature requires shedding light on how revolution and revolutionary thoughts help generate progressiveness in different branches of

art. Let us start this part with a discussion of what revolution is and how it brings change in society. Lenin states that revolution means change, which brushes away society's old, repressive order to accommodate the new progressive way of life (Mukhopadhyay 47). The very nature of revolution depends on which social crisis it addresses to resolve. As an example, we can talk about the 1905 Russian Revolution, which was bourgeois in nature, though the proletariat led it from the forefront. The motto of that revolution was to dismantle feudal systems from society, but it ultimately gave birth to individualism, which, during the post-revolution time, helped the bourgeois to come to state power. Similarly, the revolutions that occurred in the 17th and 18th centuries in different states of Western Europe were mostly led by the bourgeois (47). On the other hand, the 1917 Russian Revolution was purely proletarian in nature; it was led and participated by the peasants and the proletariat. It was inevitable because the gaps between the ruling class and the ruled widened; the oppression of the working class by the ruling class reached its peak. Due to the excessive oppression, the proletariat got united and wanted emancipation. It became possible for the proletariat to organize a revolution because they realized that they had been deprived of their rights for a long time. In relevance, it must be mentioned that the spread of general education in Russia at that time helped the mass people be aware of the urgency of the socialist revolution. So, the revolution ultimately turned into a political and cultural one.

Now, the point is how literature and culture, in a broader sense, go hand in hand with revolution. In this regard, the following aspects can be taken into consideration: how revolutionary thoughts during the post-revolution era found a place in art and literature and how those influenced our aesthetic senses need to be discussed. Secondly, the life struggles of the working class that participated in different revolutions should be placed in progressive literary works. The works of art and literature need to reflect the achievements and expectations of the proletariat. Thirdly, the

role of an artist or a litterateur in revolution and his/her relationship with the revolutionaries have to be focused on. Fourthly, a litterateur should develop historical consciousness to understand how revolution shapes history. The aforesaid issues, as most of the Russian Marxists have agreed, determine the progressiveness of any work of literature (Mukhopadhyay 48-49).

To continue this research, we must rediscover the difference between the revolution in literature and revolutionary literature. In literature, those who establish a new order, both in content and form, are considered revolutionary litterateurs. In this sense, as Mukhopadhyay notes, Rabindranath Tagore, Bankim Chattopadhyay, and Madhusudan Dutta are, without doubt, revolutionary litterateurs. Tagore introduced a new genre, 'short-story,' to Bangla literature; likewise, Bankim Chattopadhyay invented a new style of writing Bangla novels, and Madhusudan was the first sonneteer of Bangla literature. All of them belong to the aforesaid category as they have introduced a new order, form, style, and ideas to literature. In the Marxist context, revolution bears a special significance. In Marxist literature, revolutionary literature prioritizes the consciousness of the working class or proletariat revolution and history over all kinds of bourgeois expressions (Mukhopadhyay 51). Alongside, a revolutionary litterateur, in many cases, turns out to be an activist who actively engages in activities to bring social change. For instance, Pablo Neruda, a Marxist poet and activist, became a revolutionary figure in Latin American literature through his poems and active participation in different proletarian movements. On the whole, the agenda prepared by leftist artists, poets, and novelists just after the 1905 October Revolution clarifies the nature of revolutionary literature and the democratization of art. At that time, the leftist litterateurs considered themselves to be the leaders of Russian futurism (Mukhopadhyay 51-52). They started their movement with the slogan, "let the streets be an artistic feast for all" (Mukhopadhyay 52). After the October Revolution, the futurists gave an aesthetic shape to the

socialist revolution and introduced a number of thoughts that they considered new and original. They have also enriched the arena of progressive literature by accumulating ideas, slogans, and themes that were generated centering on revolution. Some critics speculate that cultural activism ended with the closure of the political activism of the Russian Revolution, which is not true at all. The futurists, through addressing the needs of the masses, continued the cultural activism. They put emphasis on the issue of class struggle through some literary pieces that also urge people to be more humane and stand by those who are in distress. They dreamt of a classless, plural society (52). The revolutionary work spirit of the Russian futurists spread across the continents. Having been influenced by them, Mayakovski wrote:

Bring the piano to the street

Let the window play the drum

Let the symphony of drum and piano

Spread everywhere like a thunderstorm. (My trans.; qtd. in Mukhopadhyay 53)

However, all Russians did not pay equal attention to the call of Mayakovski and other futurists, but at that time, Russian poets became capable of spreading their humanistic messages all around the globe. Latin American poets like Pablo Neruda and Federico Garcia Lorca, being influenced by Russian poetry, rejuvenated their poetic endeavors. Neruda mentions that Russian poetry shook the freedom-loving people all over the world. Alongside, Russian theatre played a very crucial role in accelerating the revolutionary spirit (Mukhopadhyay 53). During the post-revolution times, theatre activism took a new turn in Russia. As a revolutionary form of literature, the intellectuals and writers appreciated theatre much. In a word, the theatre became able to provide people with some food for thought. For instance, Aizenstein's famous movie "The Battleship Potemkin" drew the attention of the people. As a filmmaker, Aizenstein did not see the revolution through the lens

of other people. He himself dwelt on the historical moments that inspired him to make a movie like *Potemkin* (Mukhopadhyay 54). He became an active part of revolutionary activism. In this regard, Lu Sun said that the entire process of any revolutionary creation depends on how an artist engages him/her in revolutionary activities (54). When revolutionary literature keeps producing revolutionary literary pieces, they start surfacing. The literary quest of Gorky and Mayakovski partly reflects Lu Sun's viewpoints. Gorky never differentiated between the causes of the cultural revolution and those of the political one. His timeless work, *The Mother*, shows how the issues of political revolution mingle with the cultural ones. His participation in the movement of the working class helped him appear as a revolutionary novelist (54). Similarly, Mayakovski's involvement with the Russian political struggle made him a revolutionary poet.

So, do only the writers' engagement with revolutionary activities and their consciousness about revolution determine the nature of revolutionary literature? Marxian philosophy regarding literature provides us with an answer that apart from the aforesaid issues, any work of art must be enriched with artistic quality (Mukhopadhyay 57). In this regard, Mao mentions, "Works of art which lack artistic quality have no force, however progressive they are politically" (qtd. in Mukhopadhyay 57). In view of Marxian art and literature, any artwork that has artistic quality will leave its marks not only on the readers of contemporary times but also on the same of upcoming generations. In favor of the above-mentioned perspective, Brecht says, "The public has a right to be entertained . . . the artists have a right to be allowed to entertain" (qtd. in Mukhopadhyay 58). The revolutionary works of art will be entertaining the people around the globe age after age. Thereupon, the revolutionary literature must contain artistic quality alongside the revolutionary spirit (58).

Marxism consistently demonstrates its commitment to emancipating mankind from the afflictions of economic disparity, societal estrangement, and divisions rooted in race, gender, ethnicity, or power imbalances resulting from economic stratification. The Marxist approach contributes to a more precise awareness of the world's characteristics, including its inconsistencies and shortcomings, as well as acknowledging humanity's genuine accomplishments, which are worthy of appreciation. Relevantly, Anshen (2017) says, "While pleasure and fun may justify literature, they do not explain it nor reflect an approach to understanding the world that produces literature in particular forms and conventions" (5). As a result, Marxism seeks to analyze the fundamental economic and social structures that underlie literature, culture, and all aspects of social existence. In this context, Marxist literary criticism attempts to connect lived experiences and the abstract realm of literature and cultural creation. Its objective is to develop a link between culture and political endeavours aimed at eradicating social oppression and exploitation. On the whole, the significance of the Marxist literary approach lies in its recognition of culture as both a reflection and an active participant in the class struggle within the material world of ideas.

Chapter III

History Creates a People's Poet

The poetic trajectory of Pablo Neruda (1904-1973) can be divided into two distinct phases. The initial phase is characterised by his deep affection for the natural scenery of Southern Chile and his passionate relationships with various women, including Albertina Roza, Maruca, Delia del Carril, and Matilde Urrutia. The subsequent phase marks a deliberate departure from his earlier preoccupations with romanticism and personal romantic entanglements. Notably, the final three of the women mentioned above entered into marital relationships with him. Both stages have had a lasting impact on his poetry. However, in addition to recounting his early experiences as a poet, the thesis delves into the reasons behind the poet's extended hiatus from his previous inclinations and his pursuit of a new direction. The poems composed by Neruda between 1920 and 1935 primarily explore his profound affection for expansive landscapes in Southern Chile, his romantic relationships, notably with Albertina Roza and Delia del Carril, as well as his feelings of desolation and isolation encountered during his tenure as a Chilean consul in Rangoon, Burma (Myanmar). Nevertheless, after 1935, the direction of his poetry underwent a progressive shift, which can be attributed to various discernible factors. Upon his relocation to Barcelona, Spain, as a consul, he was allowed to familiarise himself with prominent figures of the Spanish intelligentsia. During his time in Barcelona, he established friendships with several prominent figures in the literary and political spheres. Notable among these acquaintances were Federico Garcia Lorca, a highly influential Spanish poet and playwright, Rafael Alberti, a renowned Spanish poet and committed communist activist, Miguel Hernandez, a poet who actively engaged in political causes, and Delia del Carril, an Argentine political activist with communist affiliations who resided in Barcelona during that period. The aforementioned interaction with these prominent people from the realms

of literature and politics played a pivotal role in shaping his perspectives and attitudes towards life and the political sphere. Specifically, Neruda's association with Delia marked a significant advancement in his forthcoming trajectory as a poet-activist. She had a crucial role in guiding Neruda towards the communist ideology. Furthermore, during his tenure as an editor for the Spanish journal *Green Horse*, Neruda conceived the concept of "impure poetry." This notion served as a platform for his exploration of a novel kind of poetic expression that engaged with the multifaceted complexities of existence. In addition, the profound impact of his friend Federico Garcia Lorca's assassination in 1936 left him deeply disturbed, suspecting a significant shift in his approach to his personal life, poetry, and political engagement. Ultimately, the commencement of the Spanish Civil War in 1937 resulted in his exposure to the most profound manifestation of human suffering in the city of Madrid. The sad chapter of history compelled him to engage in poetic expression, delving into the suffering endured by individuals and the evil deeds perpetrated by fascist regimes in Spain and various regions across Europe. This chapter ultimately expounds on the circumstances that influenced Neruda's creation of the notable anthology *Spain in Our Hearts*. The book has provided a comprehensive analysis of how the poems that emerged during the Spanish Civil War were a source of optimism for individuals experiencing misery and displacement.

i. Neruda's Formative Years as a Poet

Neruda's early-age attachment with the *Claridad*, a newspaper of the left-wing Student Federation of Chile, as a correspondent initially gave him a rudimentary idea about leftist politics. Particularly, a report from this newspaper, published sometime in 1920, made Neruda understand how the state apparatus, from colonial times to the present, had always served the rich or the ruling class. It also brought to light the brutal attack of the 'golden youth,' an organisation of the youth

formed by the young of the upper class, on the activists of the Student Federation that was working for the rights of the underprivileged and the dispossessed (Neruda 36). But, the police arrested the attacked ones instead of the attackers. In addition, in connection with this incident, they arrested one of the aspiring rebellious poets of Chile, Domingo Gomez, who used to inspire the students and activists with his verses of hope and love. Later, he died in jail due to excessive torture. Neruda mentions in his *Memoirs* (1977), “Within this national context of a small country, the repercussions of this crime were as profound and far-reaching as those of Federico Garcia Loca’s assassination in Granada later” (37).

In addition, the Chilean poet Alberto Rojas Gimenez, who edited the magazine *Claridad* for years, left a lasting influence on Neruda’s life. Neruda never saw such a naive and modern person like him, who left some marks of his poetry, stories, love, and friendship wherever he visited. His poetic style fascinated Neruda, who believed Alberto pioneered a new kind of poetry that he called ‘Agu,’ delineating the “first cry” of the human being—“the newborn infant’s first poem” (Feinstein 23). Neruda noted that Alberto Rojas primarily helped him discard the melancholic tone from his early-age poetry. Rojas first taught Neruda that the most important thing in a poet’s life is to develop uniqueness in terms of expression and tone. However, his untimely death shocked Neruda, who later wrote an elegy called “Alberto Rojas Gimenez Comes Flying,” showcasing Roja’s uniqueness as a poet. Indeed, the poet loved the madness Rojas showed as a poet. Later, recollecting Rojas Gimenez, he wrote: “I’ll say that madness, a certain kind of madness, often goes hand in hand with poetry. It would be very difficult for predominantly rational people to be poets, and perhaps it is just as difficult for poets to be rational” (Neruda 41).

To add, another left-oriented magazine of the Student Federation of Chile titled *Juventud*, edited by Roberto Meza Fuentes, a poet and a communist activist, exerted an indelible impact on

Neruda's poetic vision. The magazine was mostly dedicated to publishing revolutionary literary pieces and was larger in size in comparison to the *Claridad*. Among the contributors to the magazine were Gonzalez Vera, Manuel Rojas, and many more. As Roberto Meza Fuentes published Neruda's poems, along with the writings of Manuel Rojas and Gonzalez Vera, the latter extended his heartfelt thanks to the former. In a word, Neruda's attachment to the *Juventud* introduced him to a new world of revolutionary literature during the formative years of his poetic endeavour.

Finally, Neruda's shift to Santiago, the capital of Chile, in 1923 gave him an opportunity to get close to numerous poets and the circle of the Student Federation. He regularly used to visit the head office of the Student Federation, where he met a number of communist student leaders. Among them were Alfredo Demaria, Daniel Schweitzer, Santiago Labarca, and Juan Gandolfo (Neruda 76). However, Neruda developed a good relationship with Gandolfo, who used to treat him as his boy. Gandolfo was, as Neruda saw, a very rebellious, outspoken, and uncompromising leftist activist. He, engraving in wood, made an impressive cover design for the first poetry book of Neruda titled *Crepusculario*. He also came up with some beautiful illustrations of the same, albeit he was not a professional artist. In brief, Gandolfo's aesthetic thoughts, his political insights, and his leftist orientation enriched the young Neruda in multiple ways (Neruda 37). Apart from the acquaintance mentioned here, Neruda became able to develop close friendships with a wide range of poets and writers in Santiago. He often used to spend time with the poets, which subsequently came to the aid of shaping his poetic vision.

Indeed, Neruda's friendship with the writers and the poets, his contribution to numerous leftist magazines and newspapers, and his unbounded love for the Chilean landscape became the key factors behind his growth as a poet. As a result, his first poetry book, titled *Crepusculario*,

published in 1923, carries influences of the aforementioned issues. To publish the book, he had to sell some pieces of furniture, along with his favourite wristwatch, gifted by his father. Lastly, when the book was in press, the publisher demanded more money. In that case, he had to borrow money from one of his acquaintances to meet the publisher's demands. And the book saw the light of day. It was surely a big event in his life. Carrying some copies of the book on his shoulder, with a few holes in his shoes, he wandered into the streets of Santiago. The event of publishing the first book in life gave him an inexplicable joy that he had never had before. The following words rightly capture his delightfulness:

My first book! I have always maintained that the writer's task has nothing to do with mystery or magic and that the poet's, at least, must be a personal effort for the benefit of all. The closest thing to poetry is a loaf of bread or a ceramic dish or a piece of wood lovingly carved, even if by clumsy hands. (Neruda 49)

Neruda adds that there will possibly be many editions of the book, or maybe the book will be translated into many languages. Still, that very moment is ecstatic when the first copy of the first book reaches the hands of a poet, and it only happens once in a poet's lifetime. In a few words, Neruda was truly enamoured with his first poetry collection.

With the delightfulness of the publication of the first book, Neruda took a break from city life and visited his birthplace, Temuco, sometime in July 1924 and again fell in love with Temuco's eye-soothing landscapes and mountains. The midnight sky with a multitude of stars led him to write more poems. He planned to prepare the second manuscript for publication. Days later, Neruda returned to Santiago and showed his newly composed poems to Aliro Oyarzun, a poet and critic, whom he considered one of his mentors in those days. Aliro found an influence of a great Uruguayan poet, Sabat Erasty, in those poems (Eisner 226). Considering Aliro's comment, he

sent his poems to Sabat Ercasty himself. In reply, Sabat highly appreciated Neruda's style but mentioned how the lines of the poems echoed his own poetry. Neruda tore apart the entire manuscript to hear such a comment. But that experience made him think anew. In expressing his thoughts and feelings, he searched for a unique style and engaged himself to discover a world completely his own. Neruda writes,

Sabar Ercasty's letter ended my recurrent ambition for expansive poetry. I locked the door on rhetoric that I could never go on with, and deliberately toned down my style and my expression. Looking for more unpretentious qualities, for the harmony of my own world, I began to write another book. (51).

And such an attempt gave birth to his most-read collection of poetry, *Twenty Love Poems and A Song of Despair*. The book deals with his "tormented adolescent passions" and the "devastating nature of the southern part" of Chile (Agosin 133). It sheds light on his joyfulness and, in the same way, carries a melancholic tone. It encapsulates a transition from his life in Temuco to the intricacies of city life in Santiago. It travels around Santiago streets crowded with students, the university where he studied, and "the honeysuckle fragrance of requited love" (qtd. in Chakraborty 348). It tells us how he fell in love with the Imperial River across Santiago. This book brought unmatched popularity to Neruda. In those days, he would read poems from this collection whenever he was invited as a poet to different programs.

With the publication of *Twenty Love Poems and A Song of Despair*, Neruda's sublimity as a young poet spread worldwide. The poet's endless love for two women predominates the book. The first one, Marisol, as Neruda asserts, symbolises both sea and sun; the latter, Marisombra, indicates sea and shadow. Marisol was his countryside lover with dark eyes like the wet sky of Temuco. She appears with all her lusciousness in the lines of Neruda's poetry, and her beauty

shines like the half-moon over the mountains of Temuco. Conversely, Marisombra appears with an image of those women in Santiago whom Neruda met in the city's hideaways in search of "physical peace" (Neruda 23). She represents those girl-students of the city who have lost their ways by spreading "honeysuckle fragrance." The poet writes the following for Marisol:

My words rained over you, stroking you.

A long time I have loved the sunned mother-of-pearl of your body.

I go so far as to think that you own the universe.

I will bring you happy flowers from the mountains, bluebells,

Dark hazels, and rustic baskets of kisses

I want

to do with you what spring does with the cherry trees. (Neruda 15)

Neruda's love for Marisol grapples with body and mind. Through the lines, he compares her with the unmatched beauty of nature. He also yearns for a physical love for her.

Neruda's love is a blend of happiness, sadness, envy, and doubtfulness. He expresses love both for his motherland and for the women he encountered. No way to deny the fact that his unadulterated love for women makes him one of the greatest love poets of all time. So, Octavio Paz once said, "Neruda is the greatest love poet of his age" (qtd. in Chakraborty 333). Neruda is a people's poet as much as a love poet. Both physical and platonic love engrossed him for the entire course of his life. Once Michael Angelo said, "Both platonic and physical love carry equal importance in human's life, Neruda too realises this substantiality. If Rimbaud is considered a god of poetry, Neruda can be particularly regarded as a god of love-poetry" (My trans.; Ahmad 402).

To add, Neruda's love travelled across different continents as he moved from one place to another as a diplomat. His love spread its seeds in different places around the globe. He never

remained in the absence of love in his life. He bathed in the love of one of his classmates, Albertina Roza Azoko. At one point in his life, he proposed to her to marry, but it did not become possible due to some indispositions from Albertina's family. One of Neruda's biographers, Dominick Moran (2009), states that Neruda was in deep physical love with Albertina. So, he felt dejected when he finally left for Burma, leaving her behind in Santiago (47). This dejection compelled him to write the following lines:

Oh flesh, my own flesh, woman whom I loved and lost,

I summon you in the moist hour, I raise my song to you.

[...]

Ah woman, I do not know how you could contain me

in the earth of your soul, in the cross of your arms! (Neruda 24-25)

Through the lines, it is evident that he suffered physically and mentally after breaking up with Albertina, whose love for Neruda, as Moran opined, came as a source of inspiration for writing poetry (79).

However, critics like Roland Bleiker, Gordon Brotherston, Mark Eisner and Marjorie Agosin are divided in their opinions regarding Neruda's dealing with the portrayals of physical love and nature in *Twenty Love Poems and A Song of Despair*. In this respect, a school of critics, led by Mark Eisner and Roland Bleiker, expressed that Neruda wrote his love poetry by being influenced by the English Romantics (Paul 48). Rejecting such a view, Robin Paul (2018), a former professor of Visva Bharati University, Kolkata, has asserted that while most of Neruda's European fellow poets used to regard literature as high art, Neruda considered it an inseparable part of life. The poet engaged in developing his own world of poetry and rejected any discourse that stemmed from Western theories. From such a purview, his romantic poetry embraces two ingredients—

nature and love for women. These elements have developed the layout of Neruda's romanticism that takes us to a different world where the beauty of nature and that of women merge into one. Unlike English Romantics, he does not get used to portraying only the physical beauty of nature. Rather, he highlights how nature profoundly impacts human beings and vice-versa (Paul 50).

Indeed, the book *Twenty Love Poems* delineates Neruda's naive confession about his love affairs; it explicates how he develops multiple love affairs in different phases of his life; his sense of dejection after his break up with Albertino doesn't make him alienated from society. On the other hand, nature comes as a reciprocal force to human beings in Neruda's poetry. His portrayal of nature and the geography of Chile are quite different from the 18th-century romantic poets who intensely appreciate only the physical beauty of nature; conversely, Neruda shows us how the evolution of nature leaves an important impact on the life of humans. Yes, this is an undeniable fact that Neruda, to some extent, was influenced by the waves of French symbolism and surrealism. However, if one goes through the poem of *Twenty Love Poems*, one must find a little trace of surrealistic expressions in those. But, his mature poems say a complete goodbye to surrealism.

Likewise, when another school of critics alleges Neruda for being obsessive towards women's physical beauty and surrealistic approaches, Ranesh Dashgupta (2014), a leftist intellectual of Bangladesh, deciphers a set of views that we can use as a counterbalance to the above-mentioned allegation. In one of his essays, he argues that Neruda's poems should be evaluated holistically, not partially. The poet's depiction of women's physical beauty emerges from his encounters with numerous women he loves, and those women also love him unconditionally. No doubt, surrealistic expressions are found in the beginning poetry of Neruda, and he did so being influenced by the French poet Arthur Rimbaud. Undeniably, his poems of *Twenty Love Poems* slightly deal with symbolism, which does not comply with the principles of the European

Symbolist Movement completely. Relevantly, it can be mentioned that in reply to the question of the use of symbolism in his poetry by one of the interviewers of the Paris Review, Neruda said the following: “The dove signifies the dove, the guitar signifies a musical instrument . . . [in my poetry] . . . When I see a dove, I call it a dove, whether it is present or not, has a form for me, either subjectively or objectively—but it doesn't go beyond being a dove” (Gilbert 1971). However, Dashgupta (2014) viewed that Neruda shunned all the aforesaid experimentations once he experienced the brutality of the Spanish Civil War; after that, he changed himself and put his complete confidence into the Marxist ideas of class struggle and proletarian revolution. So, his mature poems, or the committed ones, delineate how he, rejecting all his earlier views and stances, demystified himself (Dashgupta 321).

Again, some bourgeois artists, as Dashgupta (2014) has argued, in the name of beauty, aesthetics, and pure poetry, attempted to disseminate the concept of “art for art’s sake”, a mid-19th century philosophical belief pioneered by French critic Theophile Gautier in 1835, and popularised by the French Romantic poets first and then by some English critics and poets, especially during the Aesthetic movement in Britain. They have asserted that art should be valued solely for its aesthetic qualities rather than for any moral, political, or social messages it may convey; in other words, the purpose of art is to create beauty and to be appreciated for its own sake, rather than to serve any specific practical or utilitarian function, as the key principle to evaluate the works of art and literature (Dashgupta 323-24). They did not consider Neruda’s communist commitments, which began with his student life involvement with the leftist magazines *Claridad* and *Juventud* and became reinforced through his activities in support of the cause of the Republicans during the Spanish Civil War. Also, among those critics, some showed interest in some earlier poetry of Neruda and attempted to discuss poems of *Twenty Love Poems* in the light of “art for art’s sake.”

They considered those poems pure poetry or art, which Neruda himself never believed in. They viewed art from a totalitarian perspective, whereas Neruda considered art a means of love, protest, and freedom. They invariably tried to highlight the poet's illustration of women's physical beauty and sense of alienation in his poetry. In reply, Dashgupta (2014) demonstrates that such portrayals never indicate that Neruda approves of the views of bourgeois aesthetics (325). He also argues that Neruda, at an early age, experimented with numerous approaches to bourgeois aesthetics from the stance of a realist (Dashgupta 325). Chile's geographical beauty, landscapes, sea, and wilderness bewildered him with their sanctity. So, the poet attempted to celebrate his contact with the vastness of nature through poems. Furthermore, his dealing with women's physical beauty also stemmed from his real-life love for them; reality drove him to do so, and such portrayals were not imaginary. Dashgupta has also added that Neruda never adopted any false consciousness like bourgeois aestheticians, who promoted the idea of aesthetics of art and, thus, served the privileged and wealthy classes, who could afford to indulge in purely ornamental art. Neruda's contact with nature, love for women, and patriotism have appeared in his earlier poems with breadth and depth (Dashgupta 327). So, when he turned from a poet of love to a revolutionary one, he never repudiated the originality and freshness of his early-age perceptions.

In brief, the objective of those critics was to present Neruda as a subscriber to the views of European romantic and modernist literature. However, rejecting such an attempt by the critics, Robin Paul asserts that Neruda's romantic and modernist senses were quite different from those of his contemporary British and European poets, who mostly dealt with subjectivity, individualism, and nihilism in their literary works, while Neruda focused on the objective view of life, essentially comprised of socialism and communism, addressing the plight of the proletariat. Thereupon, he always strived to make poetry a vehicle of the commoners and favoured using simple language in

contrast to his contemporary European poets' experimentation with obscure language. Neruda's revulsion against modern European poetry came to the forefront through an unpleasant event while T. S. Eliot once began to read a poem from his book for the former. In the midst of Eliot's read-out, Neruda stopped him. The following excerpt denotes the experience:

One day he [Eliot] started to read me his own, [poem] and I ran off selfishly, protesting, "Don't read them to me . . . I locked myself in the bathroom, but Eliot read them to me through the shut door . . . I was depressed . . . Fraser, the Scottish poet, was there . . . He blasted me: "Why do you treat Eliot like that?" . . . I replied: I don't want to lose my reader . . . I have cultivated him [reader] carefully . . . Eliot has so much talent . . . He can draw . . . But I want to keep this reader, to preserve him [reader], to water him like an exotic plant . . . if this continues, poets will publish only for other poets . . . (259-260)

Through his observation, Neruda unhesitatingly states that T. S. Eliot, a 20th-century influential poet, critic, and playwright, wrote for his fellow poets and drew the attention of the well-educated and scholar-readers. Instead, he invariably made an effort to focus on the lives of the mass people, especially the readers from the proletariat, through his poetry. So, he expressed his strong disinclination to lose the readership he achieved through his creations. In other words, Neruda, on the whole, brought to light his detestation of those poets and writers who only aimed at readers from a particular class, predominantly the bourgeois.

To add, Neruda's unflagging love for Espaniol and the localness of Spanish culture also led him to disapprove of the European trend of writing poetry at that time. Though most of his contemporary South American poets followed the trend of European modernism, romanticism, and surrealism to fashion their poetry, Neruda did the opposite and put all his confidence in the Spanish language, culture, and tradition to develop the layout of his poetry. He believed that

expressing all the human expressions like love, laughter, sadness, hope, struggle, aspiration, revolution, etcetera is easier in a language one speaks of and lives in. Neruda writes, “You can’t live an entire lifetime with a language, stretching it lengthwise, exploring it, poking around in its hair and its belly, without having this intimacy become second nature to you. That’s what happened to me with Spanish” (261). He embraced the same spirit while developing a unique voice in the literary landscape of South America: “If my poetry has any meaning at all, it is this tendency to stretch out in space, without restrictions, and not be happy to stay in a room. I had to break out of my limited world by myself, not having traced it out within the framework of a distant culture. I had to be myself, . . . ” (Neruda 262).

The discussion stated above denotes that Neruda’s poetry decisively sought a break from his contemporaries after the publication of his second book, *Twenty Love Poems*. Since then, he has realised, as Ali Anwar states, the essentiality of dialectical approaches to life and society. So, he underwent a transformation, clearly reflected in the mature poems of the Residence cycle.

ii. Neruda’s Sojourn Life

Neruda’s poet identity played a decisive role in starting his career as a Chilean consul. After he published *Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair*, he earned repute among poets and writers, both known and unknown. He was quite satisfied with what he garnered as a poet then. Still, the other poets he would often visit suggested he should go to Paris permanently for more success and reputation because, in the early 20th century, Paris would be regarded as the centre of art and culture in the world. So, many European and American writers and poets migrated to Paris to expand their creative horizons. Several Chilean poets and artists known to Neruda used to live in Paris permanently in pursuit of success. Among them, Bitsent Widraba was the most influential; he even used to write poetry in French. Such a situation compelled Neruda to explore this harbinger

of life. He shared his inclination to go to Paris with one of his friends, who later went to the office of the Foreign Affairs Department of Chile to talk about the issue. He made an appointment for Neruda with one of the high officials of the Department. Neruda met that person, who gave him a glimmer of hope of sending him to a foreign country as a consul. So, whenever he met the officer, he imagined himself as a Chilean Consul to a foreign country. Neruda spent almost two years hankering after that officer, hoping to get his desired post of consul. Lastly, Bianchi, one of his upper-class friends, helped him meet the foreign minister. Bianchi expressed to the minister how much Neruda was desperate to be appointed as a consul. The minister readily accepted the proposal and called that officer, whom Neruda had met many times, to know about the vacancy status of the consul post to different countries. The officer gave him some options, and amid them, Neruda abruptly chose Rangoon, knowing nothing about the country; he didn't even know where it was situated. Neruda got the appointment letter that very day. When he joined his friends, coming out of the office of the minister, to celebrate the news of his new engagement, he forgot the name of the state where he was posted due to overexcitement; he only told his friends that he was going to a country, situated on the east on the map of the world (Feinstein 83-84).

Neruda took charge of the Rangoon (the capital of the then Burma) consulate as a Chilean consul to Burma in 1927. He had been there in Burma for two years. In brief, his Burmese days were a mixture of struggles, frustration, and alienation. The British imperialism across the Indian Subcontinent made him quite frustrated. As a foreign diplomat, he was warned not to mix with the local people of Burma. In particular, a British official forbade him not to visit a Persian Cafe adjacent to his residence because it was frequented by 'natives' (Feinstein 86). Such conservativeness and colonial attitudes of the British made Neruda extremely dispirited. Thereupon, he alienated himself and was confined in his residence. To remove boredom and

loneliness, he turned to books and devoted much of his time to reading French and Spanish poetry. He went through the poetry of Quevedo and Rimbaud and dwelt in the novels of Marcel Proust. Alongside, he resumed writing poetry after a slim break. Such involvement helped him forget that he had been in physical isolation. However, his intellectual solitude and mental alienation engulfed him to the core, deeply influencing the first two volumes of his third poetry collection, *Residence on Earth*. In this collection, the love, mysticism, and emotion of *Twenty Love Poems* have been replaced with alienation, dejection, and agonies (Agosin 134). However, as per Robin Paul, the poetry of Arthur Rimbaud profoundly influenced the beginning poetry of the Residence cycle, especially in tone and theme (69).

During his stay in Burma, the only Burmese woman Neruda found as his true companion in Rangoon was Josie Bliss, who gradually became his lover. Josie was not her original name; she willingly chose the English name and mostly wore English clothes. She deeply fell in love with him. Neruda initially found solace in this relationship, though he had to face the arrow of the colonial authorities because of his decision to carry on with this relationship. The local British administration objected to such a move when they found Neruda and Josie dating, sitting inside the English club. Such a narrow-minded approach made Neruda completely fed up. However, his infatuation with Josie didn't last long because of her excessive possessiveness. With time, she developed a fit of overwhelming jealousy, which ultimately became a threat. But, Neruda, at last, became able to get rid of Josie's maddening love when he received a letter from Santiago mentioning his transfer order from Rangoon to Ceylon. The letter of his transfer suddenly came to him with a sigh of relief (Ahmad 129).

Neruda was transferred to Ceylon (modern-day Sri Lanka) in 1929. While working here in Sri Lanka, he had to carry out the responsibilities of the Chilean business ambassador to both

Singapore and Java. This additional duty gave him an opportunity to stay in those countries, too. However, the days of Ceylon were undoubtedly better than the days Neruda passed in Burma. He leased a bungalow adjacent to the beach in Wellawatte, a suburb in the southern part of Colombo. His life near the seashore gave him the feeling of staying close to the wilderness in Chile's Antarctic south. The untouched nature here in Colombo, especially on the beach, gave him immeasurable pleasure, which he had been missing since the beginning of his mission as a diplomat in Asia regions. However, like Burma, he hated British imperialism most here in Ceylon too. Two reasons were dominantly apparent behind such hatred—first, he perceived that imperialism destroyed the peace of both the colonised and the coloniser, and the second reason stemmed from his student-life involvement with leftism in Chile, where he saw how the right-wingers always launched crackdown the leftist (Moran 78). In other words, in Chile, he experienced how the state apparatus always indulged in rightist politics and suppressed all kinds of activities of the Left, which had been more pro-people than the activities of the right-wingers. Such experiences were back in his mind when he witnessed the brutal activities of the British against the natives in Colonial India. In his *Memoirs*, he expressed his deprecation of the British Empire and the Europeans:

[. . .] the English lived away from the throbbing pulse of the country [Burma]. . . they also suggested that I should not frequent a lively Persian restaurant, where I drank the best tea in the world . . . this boycott couldn't have pleased me . . . Those intolerant Europeans were not really interesting, and after all, I had not come to the Orient to spend my life with transient colonizers but with the ancient spirit of that world, with that large hapless human family . . . this terrible gap between the British masters and the vast world of the Asians

were never closed. And it ensured an inhuman isolation, a total ignorance of the values and the life of the Asians. (Neruda 86, 92)

In this case, Paul (2018) states that Neruda's youth-time adherence to leftist activism decolonized his mind and hence developed a humanistic outlook in him. So, both in Ceylon and Burma, he never felt at ease whenever he encountered any British or Europeans (32).

On the whole, Neruda enjoyed much of his two years of employment in Colombo, where he developed a good friendship with a circle of Eurasian modernists, who found him a very like-minded fellow of them. The group, mainly composed of artists, musicians, and poets, commonly known as the Colombo '43 Group, led by Lionel Wendt, a pianist, and photographer, was progressive in many respects (Feinstein 98). Avant-gardism and Cubism exerted a magnetic influence on the members of the group. Though the group was not much known to the outer world except in Sri Lanka, it largely influenced the artistic and intellectual life of the country. Neruda gradually became an associate of the group. When Wendt planned to hold an art exhibition, Neruda emerged as a volunteer and wrote an article detailing the exhibition's motto for a Colombo-based newspaper. His appearance as an art critic on this occasion unveiled a different side of his scholarship. In this regard, Neruda writes: "I found out that critic and cinematographer Lionel Wendt was the central figure of a cultural life torn between the death rattles of the Empire and a human appraisal of the untapped values of Ceylon" (93).

Indeed, Neruda developed a close friendship with Wendt and would frequently visit the latter's house every weekend. Wendt had a collection of a large number of books. Every week, he used to send a housemaid to Neruda's bungalow with a pile of books for him. Thus, Neruda came in contact with modernist literature, notably Joyce, Conrad, Eliot, and D. H. Lawrence. Lawrence's portrayal of psychological realism and his frank treatment of love and sex in most of his novels

impressed him. Neruda mentioned that Lawrence's dealing with the sexuality of his characters emerged out of the spontaneity of life and love. He never found any obscenity in those works; instead, he considered them original and didactic. He went through almost all the major works by modernist writers at that time. In other words, his affinity with the Wendt circle helped him remove his boredom and solitariness to a large extent.

However, Neruda, in different writings, claimed that his solitary life in the regions of Asia had no visible influence on his poetry. This statement reminds us "how poets are rarely good judges of the influences on their work" (qtd. in Eisner 223). There is no doubt that his sojourn life in Rangoon has had a deep influence on the poems of *Residence on Earth I* and *II*. Neruda writes the following in "Ode with a Lament,"

There is much death, many funeral events
in my forsaken passions and desolate kisses
there is the water that falls upon my head,
while my hair grows,
a water like time, a black unchained water,
with a nocturnal voice, . . .

I hear someone who follows me, sobbing to me
with a sad voice rotted by time. (Neruda 68-69)

This poem from *Residence II* denotes how the poet is preoccupied with the thoughts of death and time. His lonely life in Burma, as Sudeshna Chakraborty (2004) notes, creates a sense of sadness in most of the poems of the Residence cycle (215). About these poems, Neruda himself writes in his *Memoirs*: "Distance and a deep silence separated me from my world, . . . things that happened

in my life, which was suspended in a vacuum, were brought together in my book [*Residence on Earth*] as if they were natural events” (Neruda 96-97).

While Neruda was in Ceylon, he finished writing the poems of the first part of *Residence on Earth*. However, he failed to publish the book after several attempts, as most of the publishers there rejected the manuscript. In other words, he faced enormous difficulty publishing *Residence on Earth* and felt quite frustrated by such rejections. Initially, he published some poems from this collection in *The Criterion*, a journal edited by T. S. Eliot. These publications initially introduced him to the readers of the European world as an emerging South American poet. Finally, he published the book in 1932. Meanwhile, he received another transfer letter. He was posted to Batavia (modern-day Jakarta). In Java, he spent almost two years; while staying there, he was given the additional duty of the business ambassador to Singapore. Because of such responsibilities, he used to visit Singapore on different occasions. The only incident that made Java’s life of Neruda memorable was his meeting with a Javanese woman named Maruca, whom he later married. He confessed that he married Maruca to overcome the Asian sojourn, which almost made him a resident of a different planet quite unknown to him (Feinstein 83).

Neruda’s comeback to Chile in 1932, at least, paved the way for living life anew. He felt as if he were banished to Asia. But, the Chilean government didn’t give him any long break he desperately sought. After a few months, he was sent to Buenos Aires as a business consul. Over there, he first met Federico Garcia Lorca, who was, at that time, on a visit to the city to see the stage performance of his play *Blood Wedding*. Most often, the Buenos Aires-based writers and intellectuals used to invite both of them to their rendezvouses in those days. Both Neruda and Lorca got an opportunity to delve deep into the literary world of each other during that time. The

duo earned popularity among friends and well-wishers, though some tried to make a cleavage in their friendship but failed (Feinstein 89).

Additionally, the Argentine PEN club invited them to a dinner party. On that day, they were asked to deliver lectures after dinner, though there was no arrangement as such. After dinner, they stood up and welcomed the ladies and gentlemen present at the party with their stunning voices. They gave a duo lecture on one of the greatest poets of the Spanish language, Ruben Dario. Everyone was amazed by their performance. The idea of giving such a lecture was a brainchild of Lorca, who, at the outset of the speech, mentioned that they would give a speech before the audience about the way two bullfighters, either two brothers or two men having blood connection, fight against an infuriated bull. Such type of bullfighting is, as Lorca asserted, called *Al Alimono*. In the lecture, as soon as Neruda finished mentioning the ingenuity of Ruben Dario through some lines, Lorca focused on another aspect of the poet's greatness. Again, Neruda read out some lines to portray how Dario became a people's poet, and after that, Lorca applauded the way Dario devised a reader-friendly diction for his readers (Feinstein 110). Thus, they carried on with the entire lecture. In short, their chorus-like speech brought into focus how Ruben Dario, a Nicaraguan poet, became a unified voice of the entire South America. The audience rediscovered Dario's literary genius through this lecture.

iii. Neruda's Proximity to the Spanish Intelligentsia

The aforesaid analysis exposes that as a Chilean consul, Pablo Neruda's Burmese days were unpleasant as he had been very uncomfortable with the Burmese language, culture, and British colonial rule over there. Furthermore, as Feinstein (2004) mentioned, an embargo by the British administration on developing friendships with the Burmese circle Neruda stayed with and his bitter-sweet love affair with Josie Bliss, a foreigner residing in Burma in those days, made his life

utterly unbearable (111). In a word, dejection and desolation overshadowed his life. So, he desperately sought an opportunity to move to any European or Latin American country and repeatedly wrote letters to his diplomat friends and acquaintances for his transfer. Consequently, he was transferred to Buenos Aires, Argentina, first for a few months and then to Barcelona, Spain, in 1934. When he moved to Barcelona, he met the then-Chilean Consul General Tulio Maquieira over there. Maquieira, a very gentle and friendly lady, found him more interested in literature rather than working as a consul. So, she gave him the freedom to move his office to Madrid from Barcelona as he had many acquaintances over there. In this regard, the following remark, as quoted in Mark Eisner's biography of Neruda, needs to be mentioned: "You are a poet. Thus, dedicate yourself to being a poet. You don't have to come to this consulate" (qtd. in Eisner 224). Surprised and overjoyed, Neruda immediately moved to Madrid, where he met a great circle of poets, writers, and political and cultural activists. Among them were Federico Garcia Lorca, whom he befriended beforehand while working as a Chilean Business consul in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Rafael Alberti—a poet and cultural activist, and Delia del Carril, who later became Neruda's life mate and political comrade. They used to meet on a regular basis and had long discussions on literary and political issues. Sometimes, Lorca used to arrange poetry reading sessions where Neruda would invariably participate and read his poems with great zeal. Neruda's memoirs capture the memory of the first reading session in which Lorca introduced Neruda to the audience in a grand manner:

You are about to hear an authentic poet . . . A poet close to death than to philosophy, closer to pain than to intellect, closer to blood than to ink . . . [This is] poetry that is not ashamed to break with tradition, that is not afraid of ridicule, and that can suddenly break out sobbing in the middle of the street . . . I would advise you to listen closely to this great poet and to let yourself be touched by him in your own way . . . (qtd. in Eisner 225).

After such an introduction, Neruda felt more committed and gave thought to his duty as a poet afresh. He thought of his greater responsibilities to society and people. In other words, in multiple ways, Lorca's introduction reshaped Neruda's vision and philosophy in the days ahead. He realised that his poetry should focus on social problems and people's sufferings and contribute to social change (Eisner 218). Such a realisation left a lasting impact on his subsequent publication, *Spain in Our Hearts*.

Just a few days after his arrival in Madrid, the then-Chilean ambassador Carlos Morla Lynch threw a party in honour of Neruda. That night, the ambassador's residence turned out to be a flamboyant get-together of star writers like Lorca, Rafael Alberti, Luis Cernuda, Manuel Altolaguirre, Juan Ramon Jimenez, and so on. At that party, Lorca danced, Carlos's wife played guitar, and Neruda read from his *Third Residence*. In this regard, Adam Feinstein (2004) narrates, "Neruda's reading held his audience transfixed with a poetry of profound truth within a modern colouring of naturalistic character. Talent of a unique, unmistakable personality" (109). Within the shortest period of time, Neruda became one of the well-liked figures in the Spanish intellectual circle. They also welcomed him with their greatness and openness. Neruda mentions, "The Spaniards of my generation were more brotherly, closer-knit and better-spirited than their counterparts in Latin America" (qtd. in Feinstein 109).

In Madrid, Neruda's dream of publishing his *Residencia* series came true. Cruz Y Raya printed the collection in two volumes. Miguel took the responsibility of publicising the book to let Spanish people know about the merits of the Chilean poet. Meanwhile, Neruda learned that Gabriel Mistral was transferred to Barcelona as a consul of Chile, so he was replaced with Mistral in Madrid. On the day of his appointment, Neruda's house was populated with Peruvians, Argentines, Cubans, and Mexicans, who celebrated the poet's new assignment. At that period, Neruda's daily

chit-chat with his friends mainly included the deteriorating political situation in Spain, Hitler's rise to power in Germany, and the upsurge of fascism worldwide. The issues made the Spanish intelligentsia tense. Out of such tension, some Spanish poets addressed the pitfalls of fascism in their poetry. In addition, poets like Miguel Hernandez and Rafael Alberti already experienced communist endeavours during their visits to Russia. They came to know how the communists had been working to check the rise of fascism around the world. However, Neruda was still unexposed to such experiences. So, the question comes about how the waves of communism influenced Neruda. In this regard, Rafael Alberti responds that Argentine communist poet Raul Gonzalez Tunon, one of the friends of Rafael-Miguel's circle, published a book of verse entitled *The Armour-plated Rose*, embodying the hopes and sufferings of the working class, which left an enduring impact on Neruda at that time. Furthermore, Neruda's friendship with Miguel Hernandez helped him discover the world of communism anew. For Neruda, Miguel was very close to Spanish soil. For Miguel, Neruda was a poet who became "capable of touching the world" (qtd. in Feinstein 111). He was "closer to a man's heart than to his wisdom" (Feinstein 111). However, Neruda spent more time with Garcia Lorca and Rafael Alberti than other friends. Both of them were regular visitors to Neruda's residence. Neruda used to enjoy Lorca's rehearsals and Alberti's poetry during his free time. They would drink and recite poems together. They often wandered through the Madrid markets in search of suitable props for Lorca's plays. In a word, they had a great time together.

Apart from Lorca, Alberti, and Hernandez, Neruda built camaraderie with Delia del Carril, an Argentine communist and political activist residing in Madrid at that time, who played a decisive role in directing Neruda towards the principle of Communism (Feinstein 126). In other words, she became Neruda's guide in reshaping his political ideology, and her activities for

improving the proletariat's plight inspired him to subscribe to the philosophy of communism (126). Gradually, he grasped the essentiality of Marxist ideology for building a society free from exploitation. He became conscious of the rights of the proletariat (Eisner 219). Indeed, Delia, who emerged as the key figure in Neruda's life in Spain, helped him come out as a full-fledged communist activist. Thus, on the one hand, Neruda's attachment to the Spanish intelligentsia, and on the other hand, his friendship with Delia del Carril contributed a lot to his formation as a leftist poet-activist in the years ahead.

To add, Delia del Carril, an Argentine militant communist residing in Madrid, "a mixture of beauty and wit," introduced Neruda to many committed Paris-based leftists (Eisner 220). She shared some common ideologies with Pablo Picasso, Rafael Alberti, and Maria Teresa Leon, as well as the French surrealist poets Louis Aragon and Paul Eluard. In Paris, she was introduced to Marxism and the Communist cause. Eisner (2018) says:

It was the time of rising fascism in Europe . . . art alone was not enough . . . A political commitment had to go along with it. This new scene and its passionate ideals of quality and justice completed Delia, filling the void in her by offering the identity she had been searching for. She joined the French Communist Party and the recently formed Association of Revolutionary Writers and Artists . . . With her fluency in Spanish, English, and French, Delia was indispensable as a translator for the international communists and other leftists arriving to join the creative ferment of the Republic. Neruda would receive much of his ideological training from her. (227)

Endorsing what Eisner mentioned in his comment, most of Neruda's biographers have asserted that Delia became the guiding figure in directing Neruda toward communism. Alongside this, the

terrible experiences of the Spanish Civil War also helped him realise the paramountcy of leftist politics. Feinstein (2004) added,

It was Delia's influence which finally convinced Neruda to become a Communist. I believe she was very important in Neruda's political shift, although the terrible experience in Spain, the annihilation of the Republic and of democracy, was a tragic prelude to what came next in Europe in the Second World War, and was also decisive. (116)

However, Neruda was never willing to give Delia "much credit for his growing alignment with Communist cause" (Feinstein 116). In an interview, he mentioned the following:

I began to become a Communist in Spain, during the civil war... That was where the most important period of my political life took place-as was the case for many writers throughout the world. We felt attracted by that enormous resistance to fascism which was the Spanish war . . . And the Republic, for me, was the rebirth of culture, literature, the arts, in Spain. (qtd. in Eisner 11)

So, his remarks elucidate that alongside Delia's contribution to his political transformation, the barbarity of the Spanish Civil War and the assassination of Lorca by the henchmen of Franco tended him to be a Communist.

iv. Promulgation of the Concept of "Impure Poetry"

Neruda gradually became an inseparable part of a Spanish literary group, the Generation of '27, that was interested much in experimenting with the forms of art and literature. The members of the circle considered them to be avant-gardists who believed in "aesthetic innovation, unconventionality, and radicalism" ("Avant-Garde"). Being an active member of the group, Spanish poet Manuel Altolaguirre planned to experiment with publishing a newer kind of poetry magazine that would feature poetry committed to challenging traditional forms. As he had a

printing press, he decided to bring out such a magazine at his own expense and desperately wanted Neruda to edit it. Neruda, too, accepted the offer of editorship. They named the magazine *Caballo Verde* (*Green Horse*). Altolaguirre and Neruda agreed that the magazine would feature poetry depicting "the blunt realities of life" (Feinstein 119). They felt that poetry should be impure. In the prologue to the first issue of the poetry review, Neruda wrote the following under the title of "On a Poetry without Purity":

This is the poetry we should be after, worn away, as if by acid, by the labour of hands, impregnated with sweat and smoke, smelling of lilies and of urine, splashed by the variety of what we do . . . A poetry as impure as old clothes, as a body, with its food and stains and its shame, with wrinkles, observations, . . . wakefulness, prophecies, declarations of love and hate, stupidities, . . . political beliefs, negations, doubts, . . . The confused impurity of human beings is displayed in them, the proliferation, materials used and discarded, footprints and fingerprints, the permanent mark of humanity inundating all objects from within and without. (qtd. in Feinstein 119-20)

Neruda's above-mentioned introduction crystallises the main objective of the magazine to capture the diversity of life. Because of his editorial acumen and the magazine's undaunted move with a fresh and newer kind of poetry, it became able to draw the attention of many literary circles in and out of Spain. Eisner (2018) demonstrates that this declaration denotes how Neruda sought to rehumanize poetry. His manifesto exerted grave impacts on many of his Spanish friends and beyond. He underscored the need for "turbulent poetry" as an expression of the increasingly cataclysmic circumstances in Spain (241). On the other hand, as Feinstein (2004) observed, some critics viewed such a step as violating the condition of being an art (120). However, Neruda and Altolaguirre did not pay heed to such comments; rather, they brought out five issues of the

magazine with utmost love, emotion, and dedication (120). Neruda described the elements of a new style of poetry grounded in human experience, “an insurgent response to injustice and violence” (Feinstein 121). In one of his poems called “Statute of Wine,” published in the magazine’s first issue, he declared his departure from the purity of poetry: “I speak of things that exist. God deliver me / From inventing things when I’m singing!” (qtd. in Eisner 242).

Under Neruda’s editorial acumen, *Green Horse* featured poems by Federico Garcia Lorca, Luis Cernuda, Vicenta Alexia, and Jorge Guillen. Unfortunately, the 6th issue of the magazine did not see the light of day as Franco and his followers started bombarding here and there in Madrid (120). In brief, the magazine brought forth Neruda’s quest for introducing a newer kind of poetry to the Spanish people through publishing poems by leftist poets till the day before Franco’s uprising.

v. Lorca’s Assassination: A Setback in Neruda’s Life

Neruda’s proximity to the Spanish intelligentsia, especially the company of Lorca and Delia, made him an active member of the avant-gardist circle based in Madrid. At that time, he underwent a drastic shift in shaping his vision of politics and society. However, the incident that completely changed his life and the way of his poetry was Federico Garcia Lorca’s assassination, which took place in Granada, his birthplace, on July 19, 1936 (Feinstein 121).

Furthermore, as 1936 began, the political situation of Spain started worsening. Madrid saw a number of assassinations. A left-wing lieutenant, Jose Castillo, was brutally murdered on 12 July 1936. On 13 July, a monarchist leader of Spain, Jose Carlo Sotelo, disappeared and subsequently was murdered. Such a situation made Neruda, Delia, and their circle tense. Since Delia was a hardcore Stalinist, she supported the Republican causes openly and gave numerous statements against Franco’s heinous acts. In the beginning, Neruda was hesitant with his stance, as he was

posted there as a consul of Chile. So, he remained neutral at the onset of the Civil War, though his communist friends began to pressurise him to extend his support to the causes of the Republicans (Feinstein 121). On the whole, the political situation was on the wane. At the beginning of July 1936, a group of Falangists took control of Radio Valencia and declared that the fascist uprising was looming large inside. While having dinner at Neruda's place, Neruda, Lorca, and a socialist member of the Spanish parliament listened to this news (Feinstein 122). At one point, Lorca said that he wanted to visit his village home in Granada. The parliament member and Neruda forbade him to leave Madrid then. However, Lorca, ignoring their advice, left for his home and was assassinated. Lorca's name was on the hit list. His support for the progressives and the liberals made the nationalists angry. He became an eyesore to all anti-progressive forces. However, Eisner (2018) argued that Lorca faced such a brutal death as he extended his all-out support to the progressive Republican government in effecting changes in labour rights and the education system in Spain (122). Just a few hours before Lorca's death, the following remark by one of the Francoists and right-wing politicians named Ruiz Alonso makes the motives clear behind such an assassination: "He's done more damage with a pen than others have with a pistol" (Shulman 21).

Indeed, the assassination of Lorca shocked Neruda more than anything else. After this incident, he immediately decided to support the Republican cause, and as a consequence of such a stance, he had to sacrifice his diplomatic position. Though Franco regarded Lorca's death as a "natural accident of war," Neruda perceived that Lorca was brutally killed because of his anti-fascist stance (Feinstein 121-122). For quite a few months, Neruda could not write anything after Lorca's assassination. He always used to say that Lorca "was the most loved, the most cherished, of all Spanish poets" (Eisner 228). In this regard, Luis Bunuel's following comment echoes the thoughts of Neruda and many of his comrades: "The truth is Lorca died because he was a poet"

(qtd. in Eisner 256). Eisner supplemented this by mentioning the following: “It felt as if the Fascists had just assassinated poetry itself” (256). Overall, Lorca’s murder left a lasting impression on Neruda’s mind. Neruda says, “The criminal act was the most painful in the course of a long struggle” (162).

Above all, Lorca’s killing gave birth to shock and anger in Neruda. He perceived that mere lamentation over the demise of his friend was not enough to capture the real political scenario of Spain. Hence, in his new compositions, he makes a collage depicting Franco’s brutishness and the indescribable sufferings of the masses. The poem’s language captures the poet’s lamentation, anger, and abomination. He writes the following in memory of Lorca:

If I could pluck out my eyes and eat them
I’d do it for your mourning orange-tree voice
and for your poetry that flies up shouting
... I could die for the sweetness you are, ... (Neruda 77)

The lines delineate his melancholic mind. Mentioning such lines was the starting point of his agony and angst. Over time, he appeared to be a chronicler of the Spanish Civil War. Gradually, he began to express his hatred towards the evil-doers, and his poems demonstrate the power of the Spanish people and their endeavours.

On the whole, both the brutal killing of Lorca and the political turmoil of Spain directed Neruda to reconstruct his poetry. These incidents compelled him to depart from writing poetry about love and nature. Such a giving up of the trend of his earlier poetry introduced us to a committed poet who concentrated more on the political vicissitudes of Spain than on his sojourn life in Asia (Agosin 41). His agonised heart drove him to take pen in hand to write some impassioned poems on the victims of the Spanish Civil War. With those compositions, he finally

published an anthology titled *Spain in Our Hearts*. The very first poem of the anthology expresses his commitment to social and political justice. One of his friend's descriptions expresses how the poem came into being. His friend Luis Enquire Delano informs us that sometime in September 1936, Neruda gave him a typewritten piece of paper, and he began to read from the paper with grief and anger. The poem is as follows:

They have not died! They're standing, in the gunpowder,
like burning wicks
Their shadows have joined
in the copper-cloured meadow
like a curtain of armour-plated wind . . . (qtd. in Feinstein 122)

Neruda told Delano that it was his first proletarian poem. So, without any doubt, the poem marks the beginning of Neruda's journey as a poet of the people. With the help of Delano, the poem was first published in the journal entitled *The Blue Monkey Suit*, edited by Rafael Alberti. Later, it was republished in the 5th issue of *El Mono Azul*. On 12 November 1936, Neruda read the poem at an event organised by some Latin American intellectuals to demonstrate their support for the cause of the Spanish Republic.

vi. The Onset of the Spanish Civil War

For me, Spain is a great wound and a great love. That period was fundamental in my life. Therefore, almost everything that I have done since (almost everything I have done in my poetry and in my life) has the gravity of my time in Spain—Barcelona, June 1970 (qtd. in Eisner 217)

Spain had to undergo many political vicissitudes before the forming of the progressive Republican government. It had been in many political clashes for years because of the action and

reactions of the Spanish Socialists, anarchists, labour leaders, and nationalists. It witnessed countless revolts throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries. For instance, in 1917, revolutionary labour strikes in Spain followed the overthrow of the Czar in Russia (Eisner 218). However, the labourers did not succeed then as the army came forward to save the throne and the Spanish king. But, corruption and misrule had been on the rise, and the country faced a severe economic depression that lasted till 1929. Consequently, a political shift became urgent. In this regard, Eisner (2018) writes,

In 1929, the worldwide economic depression made the situation even more tenuous in the already desperate country, especially for landless rural workers. When the municipal elections of April 1931 turned decidedly anti-monarchical, the king realized the army had given up on him. He quickly left the country...The Spanish Republic—with a government of, by, and for the people—was proclaimed in the streets of Madrid. (222)

Such a change in political paradigm created an opportunity for the "formerly exiled and imprisoned" Republican leaders to form a new cabinet (223). The newly formed cabinet announced full religious liberty and decreed a number of progressive acts, such as giving small farmers protection against mortgage foreclosures. In the first ten months, the Republic built seven thousand new schools (Eisner 222). In electing a new constitutional assembly, with suffrage extended to all those older than twenty-three, including women, a leftist coalition won a resounding majority of delegates. A new constitution, ratified five months later, declared Spain a "republic of workers of all categories" (Eisner 223). In this respect, Eisner (2018) has concluded: "The idealistic, progressive spirit of the New Republic sparked an exuberant golden age within the circle of writers and intellectuals Neruda soon joined" (223).

However, though the Republican government ran the country quite successfully till the end of 1935, at the start of 1936, it faced “internal factionalism” that largely “discredited the administration” (Eisner 248). The government dissolved the parliament in early February of the same year. Afterwards, the left-wing parties set aside their differences and ran as the Popular Front, and the right-wing contested as the National Front. In the elections, the Popular Front secured a very fragile victory. Feinstein (2004) mentioned, “The day following the elections, rumors of a possible military coup swept through Madrid as Francisco Franco and other generals conspired to overthrow the new government” (127). Moreover, Franco publicly appreciated Mussolini. Thereupon, assuming Spain’s new prime ministership, Manuel Azana removed Franco from “his post as chief of the general staff and ordered to the Las Palmas, as commandant general of the Canary Island” (Eisner 249). This banishment enraged him and subsequently fueled him to conspire to overthrow the Republican government.

On the other hand, the nationalists had invariably been active in deposing the progressive Republican government. “Death to the Intelligentsia” became their slogan during the war (Eisner 257). They had been proactive in creating political unrest all the time. However, at the end of 1936, the political situation of Spain took a drastic turn. The emerging clash between the nationalist, the anarchist, and the progressive made Spain's political climate unstable. “. . . the tension between the Left and the Right intensified, both in the government and on the streets . . . members of the Fascist group Falange started to ride . . . through Madrid . . . , wielding machine guns, sporadically firing at alleged reds in working-class neighborhoods” (Eisner 249). Furthermore, General Francisco Franco's ill ambition to come to state power and begin a dictatorship came to light (Paul 37). He united all the forces opposed to the then-progressive Republican government and called upon them to fight against it. They first launched multiple attacks on the followers of the

progressive government and subsequently on mass people. They destroyed many important government establishments and forced a large number of people to go into exile. The progressive cultural and political activists encountered threats to leave the country. Finally, a civil war broke out in 1937 across Spain (Eisner 251). At the beginning of the civil war, the Republican government launched many counter-attacks against Franco's men and succeeded. However, it faced enormous difficulty when German fascist Hitler began to provide troops and ammunition to Franco's force. Afterwards, the force led by Franco launched many attacks on the government and besieged Madrid (Feinstein 128).

The Spanish Civil War shook poets, writers, and intellectuals worldwide. In particular, the writers and poets associated with the Spanish literary circles experienced the war's fierceness the most. Since Neruda was an employee of the Chilean Consulate in Madrid in those years, he had first-hand experience of the beginning days of the Civil War. He saw how the left-leaning Popular Front Government, with the support of the communists, the socialists, and the anarchists, fought against the Nationalist group, an alliance of the fascists, conservatives, monarchists, and the Falangists, which opposed "the processes of democratisation, liberalisation, and secularisation of Spain" (Eisner 257). Indeed, a group of Generals, through a military coup, revolted against the Republican government, which wanted to run the country according to its 1932 constitution that predominantly recommended building a democratic and liberal republic instead of a conservative and orthodox one (258-59). Under Francisco Franco's leadership, the military men, with the support of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, started fighting to take control of all regions of the country. They intended to establish an absolute dictatorship in the country. As a result, thousands of Republicans became the victims of Franco's reign of terror.

Neruda saw how the attackers destroyed beautiful Madrid through bombardment. Seeing such an unexpected upsurge of fascism in Spain, Neruda got unsettled. He also witnessed how Franco's henchmen launched attacks on unarmed and innocent people. However, the mass people, though attacked and homeless, extended their all-out support to the Republican government. Neruda wrote in his *Memoirs* that people spontaneously joined the government force and took to the streets to fight against the Francos (132-33). He has exposed how a coalition of forces loyal to the Republic, led by the Workers' Union, fought the insurgents and defeated them. Seeing such an atrocity and devastation, he, for the first time, came to realise the need for a communist revolution, of which he developed a complete view after having participated in numerous activities with the militant communist Delia del Carril to curb the rise of fascism (Eisner 268).

Luis Bunuel, a Spanish filmmaker, recounted his experiences and asserted that Franco and his cohorts effectively seized control of significant territories across Spain in anticipation of forthcoming offensives. The European countries were cognizant of Hitler's and Mussolini's blatant defiance of the nonintervention agreement. The strategic decision of the Nationalist army to initiate an attack on the capital was predicated upon the assumption that the level of opposition encountered would be relatively low. However, it is important to note that workers in Madrid were undergoing intensive training, diligently supervised by numerous army officers who had shown their loyalty to the Republic; the vast majority of the city also remained loyal, and citizens prepared "to defend every one of Madrid's cobblestones to the death," as one mantra went . . . a large majority of the population believed in the essential need to defend the Republic from its enemies (qtd. in Eisner 257).

vii. Neruda in Defense of the Spanish Republic Government

General Franco's savage crackdown on Madrid's innocent people compelled thousands to leave their homes. People's sufferings knew no bounds. Neruda stated that Madrid turned into the land of the dead (127). Apart from this, as per Chakraborty (2004), the Chilean government decided to close down their consulate in Madrid for two reasons—firstly, because of a sudden outbreak of war and secondly, because of Neruda's pro-Republican stance (402). Resultantly, being jobless, Neruda became dependent on Delia's earnings. Under these circumstances, finding no other alternatives, Neruda moved to Barcelona from Madrid, and when the situation worsened there, he shifted to Valencia, first and then to Paris, France. After moving to Paris, though at the beginning Neruda and Rafael Alberti faced noncooperation from the French government as it decided not to intervene in the Spanish Civil War, they secretly engaged in various activities to help the Spanish Republican government in exile at their best. In their efforts, they also received assistance from two of his French friends, Paul Eluard and Luis Aragon.

Neruda, along with his communist friends, founded an "Alliance of the Anti-Fascist Intellectuals for the Defense of Culture," which decided to organise an International Congress of Writers in 1936. Pablo Neruda, Ernest Hemingway, George Orwell, Langston Hughes, Nicolas Guillen, Octavio Paz, and Louis Aragon became key figures behind the holding of the Congress. Langston Hughes recollected the time of the Civil War while he was staying in a Madrid hotel to join the Writers' Congress:

At night I could see the flesh of enemy fire when shells poured into the city. But once I'd moved in, I stayed. Another American and I were the only tenants on the top floor. The Spanish writers, thinking that all Americans were like Ernest Hemingway, anyhow, believed we loved to live facing guns. (qtd. in Eisner 252)

All writers and poets mentioned above came to the city to join the Congress amidst war. The organisers planned to bring out a series of leaflets that ultimately turned into a little magazine. All the great Spanish writers and the American ones loyal to the Spanish Republican government contributed to the magazine. This magazine, through its write-ups, appealed to the world community to extend help to the Spanish government. The writers urged the European governments to put an end to their nonintervention policy and support the Republican government. They appreciated the Soviet Union's decision to send the International Brigade to fight for the Republic against the Fascists (Eisner 253-254).

At that time, through the connection of Eluard, Neruda came into close contact with Nancy Cunard, a French translator and organiser. As she possessed a printing press on the outskirts of Paris, she planned to bring out a poetry review titled "The Poets of the World Defend the Spanish People" (127). She expected Neruda's involvement with such an endeavour. Neruda felt very passionate about having an opportunity to spread the righteous causes of the Spanish Republicans across the world through this magazine. Nancy, together with Neruda, published seven issues featuring poems by Luis Aragon, Rafael Alberti, Gonzalez Tunon, W. H. Auden, Spender etcetera. Relevantly, Neruda remembers how Auden's poem "Spain 1937", published in the magazine, shook the people who were working in favour of the Spanish Republicans. Some lines from the poem are as follows: "The stars are the dead. The animals will not look. / We are left alone with our day, and the time is short, and / History to the defeated / May say alas but cannot help or pardon" (qtd. in Feinstein 271). The lines illustrate how the Francos bombarded different cities in Spain. Auden saw such an act of devastation as a defeat of history and humanity. He also expressed his helplessness to see the mass killings during the Spanish Civil War.

Remarkably, within a few months, this poetry magazine, through its anti-Franco verses, became capable of spreading the disastrous effects of the Spanish Civil War across the globe. The copies of the journal were sold in Paris and London to raise money for the victims of the Spanish Civil War. Consequently, Nancy Cunard decided to publish the thoughts and perspectives of English-speaking writers and poets regarding the Spanish Civil War. Many influential English writers sent their reactions and comments in this regard. From the long list, about 126 stood for the cause of the Spanish Republic government; five supported Franco, and sixteen remained neutral. Among the notable neutrals were Adulous Huxley, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and H. G. Wells. Cunard informs us that Samuel Beckett sent a very short message writing “Up the Republic” (Feinstein 125). No doubt, her attempt to unveil the stances of the English-speaking writers by publishing their comments crystalizes how Franco felt strengthened and fueled to launch his attacks on innocent people. In other words, the joint endeavour of Neruda and Nancy, in multiple ways, helped the leftist comrades understand the views of the West regarding the political turmoil running in Spain at that time.

Additionally, the wave of the joint efforts of Neruda and Nancy spread worldwide. For instance, Indian critic and researcher Robin Paul (2018) has noted that Indian writers, intellectuals, poets, artists, and political activists at that time knew about the efforts of Neruda, Nancy, and some of their Paris-based friends, who had been working to disseminate information about the Spanish Civil War and the reactions of British and American writers and poets regarding the War through a magazine. Such activism influenced them much. Resultantly, a growing sense of resentment was visible in the Indian intelligentsia, especially among the communist writers, activists, and politicians who supported the cause of the Spanish Republican government. In this respect, Paul also mentions in his book *The Spanish Civil War and India* that Calcutta-based activities to support

the Republican government and protest against Franco's fascism were noteworthy. Indeed, with the efforts of the Calcutta-based intelligentsia, "The Indian Committee of the League Against Fascism and War" was formed, of which Rabindranath Tagore was made President (Paul 45). On behalf of this league, Saumyendranath Tagore published a booklet titled "Spain" (45). The booklet's cover design printed a picture of Romain Rolland and Rabindranath Tagore. It mainly published the humanitarian calls of Rabindranath Tagore, Romain Rolland, K. T. Shah, and Saumyendranth Tagore to save humanity, culture, and world civilization (45). What Tagore says in his "To the Conscience of Humanity" is as follows:

In Spain, the world civilization is being menaced and trampled underfoot. Against the democratic government of the Spanish people, Franco has raised the standard of revolt. International Fascism is pouring men and money in aid of the rebels. . . . The devastating tide of International Fascism must be checked . . . Civilization must be saved from its being swamped by barbarism. At this hour of the supreme trial and suffering of the Spanish people, I appeal to the conscience of humanity. Help the peoples' front in Spain, . . . Come in your millions to the aid of democracy, to the succour of civilization and culture. (qtd. in Paul 46)

In its continuation, when Neruda, with the help of the French intelligentsia, arranged Valencia Writers' Congress in defense of the Spanish Republic, Tagore, as the President of the Indian League against Fascism and War, sent Indian novelist Mulk Raj Anand, whose communist commitment led him to express solidarity with Spanish people, as a representative of India to join the Congress and convey the message of support and solidarity to the Republican government from Indian people. In this regard, Paul (2018) mentions that Mulk Raj Anand, as an Indian representative, met George Orwell and Neruda and conveyed the message of Tagore (47).

Apart from this, Chakraborty (2004) demonstrates that French Poet Romain Rolland's appeal to all people to come to the help of the victims of Spain became a source of inspiration for those who organised the Valencia Writers's Congress against fascism and Franco's attacks:

Humanity! The appeal is to you . . . men of Europe and America. Come to the help of Spain . . . it is all of us who are menaced . . . May a common impulse, above all divisions of race, party or religion, unite the peoples and rouse them to hasten to the aid of the victims. (qtd. in Paul 45-46).

Before holding the Writers' Congress, Neruda and his friends had to experience many adverse situations created by some writers and poets, propagating against the role of Russia in accelerating the proletarian revolution in many countries worldwide. For example, French novelist Andre Gide, after his travel to Soviet Unions, published a book entitled *Retour de l'URSS*, narrating how he felt dejected to witness that the Russian Revolution could not be able to bring changes in the lives of the working class (Paul 47). His anti-communist stance was seen as propaganda against the anti-fascist movement across Paris and other cities across the globe. Amid such political tensions and uproars, Neruda, Delia, and Raul Gonzalez planned to hold a massive conference of intellectuals against fascism in July 1937. Initially, it was decided to hold it in Madrid. As Franco's troops captured the capital of Spain, the conference was shifted to Valencia, from where the Republican government had been conducting its activities.

Neruda, together with their friends, with the financial help of the Spanish Republican government, formed a Spanish-American committee for the defense of the Spanish Republic. Peruvian poet Caesar Vallejo joined Neruda and his comrades to embolden their work spirit. It was later fixed that the conference's inaugural session would be held in Valencia, and the concluding segment would be in Madrid. Thousands of famous poets, writers, film directors, and

intellectuals from around the world arrived in Paris. Neruda wrote about the train leaving Paris for Valencia: “Never had a train left Paris packed with so many writers” (qtd. in Feinstein 128). The Valencia Congress, which started on 4 July 1937 and ended on 7 July 1937, was one of the most memorable gatherings of a large number of writers and poets in history. Feinstein writes, “Two hundred writers from thirty countries—from Algeria to Peru, from Iceland to China—attended the conference” (Feinstein 128). Most of the intellectuals, except a few French and Spanish writers who took, as Nancy Cunard demonstrated, the opposite side, extended their support for the Spanish Republic. Feinstein (2004) also pointed out, “Neruda was appalled when the Spaniards Gerardo Diego and Damaso Alonso backed the Franco forces” (128). Though Neruda and his inmates, viewing the overwhelming gathering as a great beginning of the Congress, considered it “a major moral victory for the Republican government, they were not much satisfied with the way it ended (Feinstein 128). The concluding parts were overshadowed by “squabbling and infightings” which ultimately diverted the prime purpose of the conference (128). However, Neruda conveyed his thankfulness to the writers, who focused on the writer's role in developing society and issues such as humanism, nationhood, and culture. They also brought forth the necessity of multiple initiatives to aid the Spanish writers. In particular, the issues he highlighted are as follows: “Fraternity this great has never, ever situated itself so close to justice and life; in fact, fraternity, justice, and life stand together on the same battle line. All that’s left for us to do now is spread out and fight criminal fascism in all corners of the world” (qtd. in Eisner 272).

Juan Negrin, the then-Spanish Prime Minister of the Republican government, was present at the concluding session of the Congress. He urged those who preferred not to intervene in the Spanish Civil War to take the side of the Republicans (Feinstein 129). After his speech, the pro-Stalinist writers instantly informed of their concern over the political upheavals of Spain. Indeed,

the Soviet writers who attended the congress represented Stalin's government. They propagated how much Stalin and his government were committed to helping the Republican side. They also brought into focus how Andre Gide, through his recently published book, betrayed the Soviet anti-fascist fighters. In this regard, Feinstein writes:

The Soviets had wanted to turn this Congress into a trial of Andre Gide, first because his *Retour de YURSS* was a coarse thorn in their flesh, and also because they had, at all costs, to divert attention as noisily as possible away from the international scandal provoked by the assassination of Andres Nin, the leader of the POUM [the Trotskyist faction among the anti-fascist fighters], . . . very little was said about Nin [at the Valencia Congress], and much about Gide, the other 'Hitlero-fascist.' (129)

The Valencia Congress concluded with some remarkable decisions made on consensus. One of them was "to create an international network of writers' organisations to combat the fascist uprising in Spain" (Feinstein 129). For instance, Neruda played a pivotal role in forming a committee of Chilean writers responsible for spreading the cause of the Spanish Republican government across Chile. He was elected president of the Chilean chapter of the Alliance of Intellectuals for the Defense of Culture. On the occasion of founding the Alliance, Neruda says, ". . . the Alliance of Intellectuals . . . will stand at the front of the battle for freedom and democracy, for the dignity of culture, with deeds and words, now that words are our arms, arms that can be and must be feared by the dark forces of reactionaries" (qtd. in Eisner 274).

Neruda and his Paris-based friends had been very serious throughout the Congress. Aragon became, as Neruda stated, one of the key figures in doing all the paperwork for holding the Congress. But it was pretty frustrating that Neruda lost his consulship because of his active involvement in various activities in safeguarding the Spanish Republic. However, penniless,

destitute Neruda with holes in his shoes never slipped away from his commitment (Eisner 151). He carried out his duties and made Congress a reality. The *Memoirs* mention that "Priceless replies poured in from all over" (Neruda 130). W. B. Yeats from Ireland and Selma Lagerlof from Sweden expressed solidarity with the organisers of the congress. Since they could not go to Madrid because of old age, they "rallied to the defense of the Spanish Republic" (130). The Spanish Republic government sent a cheque for a handsome amount of money to Neruda to meet all the expenses for the Congress.

To add, the 1937 Writers' Congress in defense of the Spanish Republic, shook the entire world to the core. This conference, in multifarious ways, invigorated the spirit of the leftist activists involved in the Civil War. And for the first time, Neruda emerged as a full-fledged communist activist. He writes, "I received my activist's card much later in Chile when I enrolled in the party officially, but I believe I had looked upon myself as a Communist during the war in Spain. Many things had contributed to my deep conviction" (Neruda 135). He has confessed that he never regretted the decision he made during that tragic period. On the contrary, he, without any hesitation, says that during the war, he found the Communists "the only organised group" in Spain, which deployed an army of people to face all the fascist groups and kept the anti-fascist movement moving (Neruda 136).

In the Congress, many important issues were discussed, and the organisers devised to seek support from the leftist governments across the globe for the Spanish government. Neruda played a pivotal role in making it a success. As Alain Badiou (2016), a noted French philosopher, asserted, such activism initially helped him become a poet-activist ("Communism by way"). Furthermore, Delia's guidance and support had thoroughly been with him when he had been working in full swing to hold the conference. In the conference, Neruda brought forward the issue of the need for

international cooperation for the Spanish Republican government to fight the onslaughts of the Francoists. All representatives swore to help the Spanish people in distress and extended their support to the Republican government. In addition, he urged the then-French government to provide shelter to the Spanish refugees who were forced to flee their homeland and were waiting at the border with France (Feinstein 128).

After the Congress, Neruda, along with Delia, decided to go back to Chile. On 12 October 1937, many of his friends welcomed them to Santiago. They were quite happy to get their friend back after a long period. Some of them developed good friendships with Delia. Afterwards, Neruda started working for the Chilean Alianza de Intellectuals, which was set up one month prior to his arrival in Chile. He was elected as the first president of the association. His prime duty now was to help the Spanish intellectuals and poets in distress. On 13 November 1937, Neruda came to know that a Chile-based publisher, Ercilla already printed the first edition of his book *Espana en el Corazon* (*Spain in Our Hearts*). He took great pleasure in publishing the book because he asserted that the book, at least, would be able to disseminate among the Chilean masses the experiences of the terrible days of war-torn Spain.

Neruda felt quite encouraged as a poet for the first time in Chile. Diego Munoz notes,

. . . the writer was no longer seen as a tramp, a madman, or a lazybores [in Chile]. Now, we were received everywhere with a great interest and respect because the people had discovered that we were useful [even] indispensable, at that moment in our history, when the clear aim was to raise the cultural level of the popular masses. (qtd. in Feinstein 132)

During his two-year stay in Chile, Neruda travelled across different parts of the country to make people aware of the disastrous effects of the Spanish Civil War. In many places, he gave poetry readings with a view to raising funds for the Spanish Republican cause. The poems he read

out from *Spain in Our Hearts* for a group of porters took them to a world of complete silence that arose out of shock and grief for the suffering humanity of Spain. The following lines need to be mentioned to understand how heavy the silence was:

Those who have never come into contact with our people cannot know what Chilean silence is like. It's total silence and you can't tell whether it's a silence of reverence or absolute disapproval. No face says anything. If you try to sniff out the slightest clue, you're lost. It's the heaviest silence in the world. (qtd. in Feinstein 133)

Indeed, people's love for and solidarity with those suffering souls have been expressed through the silence that, at the same time, deciphers how the porters felt traumatised after having heard of the brutishness of the fascists. Neruda encountered many such experiences while reading poems throughout his travels to numerous regions of Spain. The other day, after he had finished reading poems from *Spain in Our Hearts* on an occasion of the Porters' Union, he found some of the listeners applauding and some others lowering their heads. Most importantly, Neruda recollects how the union leader, in the end, wrapped up the programme by saying the following:

'Comrade Pablo, we are totally forgotten people. And I can tell you that we have never been so greatly moved. We would like to say to you . . .' And he broke down in tears, his body trembling with the sobs. Many of them around him were also crying. I felt a knot form in my throat . . . (qtd. in Feinstein 133)

The occasion has been considered a "formative experience" for Neruda (Feinstein 133). Now the workers, instead of the intellectuals, became his readers. In this respect, Feinstein (2004) mentions, "From now on, he wanted to reach out to ordinary people. Anything he wrote after that he wrote for them" (133).

Neruda's attempt at inspiring people through poetry reading was going on in full swing; his main goal was to raise funds and arrange other aid for the Spanish writers and poets. However, President Arturo Alessandri Palma's pro-Nazi stance stood as a threat to a pro-Republican like Neruda. But Neruda never paid much heed to any move of the government. Apart from the poetry readings and political rallies, he assumed the post of a new journal, *Aurora de Chile*, an organ of the Alianza de Intellectuals, which first appeared in August 1938. Feinstein (2004) informs, "Much of its content was devoted to attacks on the Nazis" that spread its activities at every nook and corner of Chile. Indeed, at the end of the 1930s, the Nazi groups spread across the South American continent. How the Nazis controlled the state machinery has been portrayed in the following recollection by Neruda:

In Latin America, there were no eminent writers, like Celine, Drieu la Rochelle or Ezra Pound, who turned traitor to serve fascism, but there was a strong fascist movement nurtured, with or without financial aid, by Hitlerism. Groups sprang up everywhere whose members dressed like storm troopers and raised their arms in the fascist salute . . . , The old feudal oligarchies of the continent sided, and still side, with anti-Communism of any kind.

(152)

Apart from the aforesaid account, Neruda also stated how Hitlerism grew in different Latin American states. In certain regions of Chile, Brazil, and Mexico, a significant portion of the population consists of individuals with German ancestry. These regions were readily enticed by Hitler's rapid ascent and the legendary vision of a thousand-year era of German superiority. On multiple occasions, during the periods of Hitler's triumphs, Neruda found himself traversing a thoroughfare within a modest village or town located in the southern region of Chile amidst an abundance of flags prominently displaying the symbol of a swastika. On a certain occasion, he

became compelled to pay an unwilling tribute to the leader of the nation in order to gain access to the telephone service. The proprietor of the shop, who was of German origin, skillfully positioned the instrument in such a way that in order to remove the receiver from its hook, one had to elevate their arm towards a photo of Hitler, whose arm was likewise elevated (Neruda 153).

In those days, Neruda received death threats several times from many fascist groups. In other words, he underwent a number of personal and political problems at that time. Endangering his life, he remained quite active in helping the Spanish Civil War victims who encountered the fascist onslaughts; at the same time, he, through his editorials of *Aurora de Spain*, brought to light how Hitlerism was gradually upswinging. When his spirit of work was at its peak, he received the death news of his father. He did not get much time to spend over the sudden demise of his father because his stepmother also died a couple of months later. Neruda had to go to his village, Temuco for an intervention of two months. In the same year, he learned that one of his closest friends, his Paris days companion and a great Peruvian poet, Cesar Vallejo had died in Paris. The gloomy days kept him away from activities for some months. However, he had to resume the work he was deeply committed to.

When Neruda resumed his activities afresh, Chile underwent some political changes. The presidential election was forthcoming. Neruda decided to work for the Popular Front candidate Pedro Aguirre Cerda in the upcoming elections. It became quite clear that because of the present President Alessandri Palma's anti-Spanish Republican stance, Neruda gave full support to Pedro instead of Palma. Before the elections, Jorge Gonzalez Von Maraes-led Nacista (Nazi party) attempted a coup d'état, but it went in vain. To deteriorate the situation, Jorge Gonzalez's henchmen shot a policeman on duty in front of the Presidential Palace. After such an incident, President Alessandri Palma ordered the troops to launch an operation against the supporters of

Jorge Gonzalez. During the operation, every Nacista was killed. And Gonzalez and his political ally Carlos Ibanez del Campo, who also wanted to compete in the upcoming presidential elections, were jailed. After the failed coup d'état, Alessandri Palma felt quite relaxed. However, Alessandri's repression of the Left's activities and strikes created discontent among the followers of the Popular Front, led by Pedro Aguirre. So, in the elections, the Alessandri-led right wing finally had to undergo tough competition (Moran 89). The coalition of Socialists and Communists, together with the powerful Radical Party, was formed to fight the Right's candidate Gustavo Ross whom Alessandri himself nominated for the elections.

Indeed, Neruda had many issues at the back of his mind behind his support for Pedro Aguirre. Firstly, Pedro's father was a rich farmer who, throughout his life, worked for the rights of the peasants of Chile. His father's connection "to the poor" and "to the soil" exerted an influence on Pedro's personality. Feinstein (2004) mentions, "By the 1920s Pedro was a president of the Chilean Wine Growers' Association—a position that certainly must have endeared him to Neruda" (137). Furthermore, both Pedro and Neruda had something in common. "Both had wives (or companions) who were, if anything, even more committedly left-wing than they were" (138). So, a common ground was obvious behind the holy alliance of Neruda and Pedro. However, many extreme leftists who used to regard him as a bourgeois would dislike him much. On the other hand, the followers of the Right criticised him as a Bolshevik. So, Pedro had to endure many unpleasant and attacking treatments throughout the period of the elections. However, in the elections, every citizen "predicted Ross a landslide" (139). For the first time, Chileans saw a very tight election race. At last, Pedro won the polls by just 4111 votes. The election results gave an impetus to the Left to go ahead. After Pedro assumed office on Christmas Eve, 1938, he called Neruda to the President's office and offered him the consulship in Paris. Neruda was appointed as a special

consul of Chile for Spanish emigration. Why Neruda was given this special duty finds an answer to what Feinstein points out: “There was considerable concern in Chile, and other parts of Latin America, over reports of the terrible plight facing more than half a million Spanish Republicans who had crossed the Pyrenees, mostly on foot, from Spain to France to escape the Franco onslaught” (137).

The Spanish refugees believed they were heading toward a safer place while awaiting the Spanish frontier with an eye to entering French territory. The then-French government requested Franco to fix a neutral region in Spanish territory so that the refugees could wait there for other nations to accept them (Feinstein 138). But Franco refused to do so. So, on 28 January 1939, the French Interior Minister Albert Serraut issued an order that only permitted children and women to enter the French territory among all the refugees; however, they did not allow the men to cross the border. Most of the men among the refugees were Spanish Republican soldiers whom the henchmen of Franco brutally attacked. So, the decision by the then-French government did not solve the refugee problem entirely. When the situation worsened, the then-French Prime Minister Edouard Baladier proposed that the Republican soldiers would be allowed to enter if they surrendered their arms on the frontier (138). The soldiers did what they were asked to do, but they did have little knowledge about the hygiene of the concentration camp in which they were going to take shelter. They were supplied with less bread and water than they needed. They seldom accessed medical facilities. No roof was made over their heads to protect them from rain and the harshness of winter. Similar camps were set up in some regions of Morocco and Algeria to accommodate a large number of refugees which were, at that time, under the French Colony. Neruda heard of the refugees' horrific life through press reports and articles. Since then, he had been thinking of the issue of the Spanish refugees. The next part will discuss how Neruda's

commitment to leftist politics directed him to work for the rescue of at least 2000 refugees from the French concentration camps.

In the meantime, some significant events enriched the literary career of Neruda. The French translation of *Spain in Our Hearts* was published in Paris in July 1938. Neruda's communist friend Louis Aragon wrote the prologue to the collection. What made Neruda surprised most was the news that the poetry book had also been published in Spain "in the midst of the raging Civil War" (Feinstein 79). However, the publication has a story; though some sources deny its truthfulness, a number of Neruda's biographers and friends consider the story quite authentic. In the context of the Spanish Civil War, the Catalan parliament made the decision to transfer the administrative responsibilities of the Montserrat monastery to Carles Gerhard, a Republican representative. Within the confines of the monastery, there existed a printing press that had been established over four and a half centuries ago. During that period, the organisation was managed by Manuel Altolaguirre, who was a close associate of Neruda. Under Altolaguirre's supervision, the printing press successfully generated three volumes of poetry. These included Neruda's "Espana en el corazón," Cesar Vallejo's "Espana," and Emilio Prados' "Cancionero menor para los combatientes," a work by the esteemed Spanish poet (Feinstein 138).

The very first Spanish edition of *Espana en el Corazon* was distributed among the soldiers, policemen, and the Republican authorities. So, this edition did not reach the masses. For wider circulation, the work of the second edition started in January 1939, but it never "reached the binding stage" (Feinstein 90). Franco's supporters entered the monastery at the outset of February and demolished the entire process of the publication. Even the henchmen took away other Republican books found over there with them. In Altolaguirre's words,

The paper for the second edition was manufactured by soldiers who worked at the mill. Not only did they use raw materials . . . supplied by the commissariat, but the soldiers added to the mixture clothes, bandages, war trophies, an enemy flag and the shirt of a Moorish prisoner. (qtd. in Feinstein 139)

However, Jordi Torra, a Barcelona-based researcher, rejects what Altolaguirre said. She says, “what Altolaguirre says about the way the paper was produced . . . seems to be something of a myth. We have searched the whole region, and there is no trace of any village with a mill which could have produced it” (qtd. in Eisner 279). Contrarily, Paul states that such dedication and labour of the soldiers in publishing the book makes it clear how much they felt inspired by the verses of it. In this respect, Neruda writes, “My book was the pride of these men who had worked hard to bring out my poetry in the face of death. I learned that many carried copies of the book in their sacks, instead of their own food and clothing” (Neruda 126). As Greg Dawes points out, such a spontaneous involvement of soldiers and masses with this book drove him to call himself a poet of the people (“Verses against Darkness”).

In a word, *Espana en el corazon* arose out of blood and sweat. The very first poem of the book, “I Explain a Few Things,” reveals how Neruda says goodbye to his youth-time knack for Romanticism and, instead, takes up the role of a poet-historian who unveils injustices and barbaric acts committed by Franco and his goons. It presents a changed Neruda, who is deeply committed to establishing truth over falsehood. Some critics believe the book intends to capture “Neruda’s shift from anguished self-obsession to social commitment” (Teitelboim 44). So, as a socially committed poet, he captures the reality of war-torn Spain. He expresses how humanity was at stake during the Spanish Civil War. In the midst of despair, his poems of *Spain in Our Hearts* gave the Republicans hope and inspiration to carry on with their struggle. As Feinstein (2004) mentions,

“Espana en el Corazon is clearly imbued with a passion for something other than himself” (139). So, the publication of the book, both in French and Spanish, readily spread how Neruda wholeheartedly supported the cause of the Republicans.

At the outset of 1939, Neruda was sent a letter from the Chilean government to join the Chilean consulate for Spanish emigration in Paris. Delia and Neruda reached Paris at the end of April. They were delighted to see their friends Rafael Alberti and his wife Maria Teresa Leon over there. This time, Neruda went there with a particular mission. The newly-elected President of Chile, Pedro Aguirre, told him, “Bring me thousands of Spaniards. Bring me fishermen, bring me Basques, and Castilians, people from Extremadura” (Neruda 146). Neruda made preparations by following the way his President directed him. However, mid-May 1939 brought a piece of bad news for him and his friends. They came to know that Franco had taken over the office of the Spanish government. Neruda communicated with Julian Negrin, the President of the Spanish government-in-exile, who played a vital role in transporting “2000 Spanish refugees across the ocean to Chile” (140). Meanwhile, it was spread all over France that Neruda came to Paris on a mission to rescue the Spaniards stranded here on the French frontier. But it became difficult for Neruda to work for the refugees as Chilean diplomats, along with other Right-wing politicians, created many obstructions in this regard. Neruda stated that the idea of sending Spaniards to Chile incited strong displeasure among our elegantly attired diplomats. He was assigned to an office adjacent to the kitchen area, where he experienced various forms of harassment from his colleagues. The influx of an absolute unwillingness was already encroaching upon the premises of the Embassy. This stranded group consisted of injured warriors, lawyers, writers, and professionals who had experienced a setback in their respective fields, as well as various skilled labourers. The personnel at our embassy devised a cunning plan whereby they intentionally disrupted the lift

service. A significant portion of the Spanish population had war-related injuries and had endured the hardships of African concentration camps. Such an inhuman condition filled Neruda's heart with profound sorrow (141).

However, Neruda had overcome all difficulties one by one. When all preparations regarding sending the Spanish refugees, marooned in the frontier of France, to Chile, were made, a piece of very shocking news arrived from Chile. President Pedro ordered Neruda not to send those refugees to Chile. The order came like a bolt from the blow for Neruda. So, he threatened to commit suicide if the ship loaded with the Spaniards was not allowed to set sail. But the question arose as to why Pedro, who once showed great interest in taking the refugees back to Chile, made such a decision. One of Neruda's friends found the fact valid behind the President's strange decision that the then Foreign minister Abraham Ortega of Pedro's cabinet threatened to resign from his post if the *Winnipeg* were permitted to enter Chile. Furthermore, Victor Pey, a Spanish Civil Engineer who was among the refugees "rescued on the *Winnipeg*," enunciated that upon the outbreak of the Second World War, Aguirre Cerda certainly issued an order to Ortega, instructing him to postpone the arrival of the *Winnipeg*. There existed numerous accounts detailing Neruda's reactions in this regard. It is evident that Ortega issued a threat to resign, which ultimately persuaded Aguirre Cerda to revoke the suspension of the operation. It is reasonable to assume that Neruda also exerted pressure on Ortega. However, Ortega's Radical Party had a significant role as a member of the Popular Front cabinet, exerting considerable influence over the President ("Testimonios sobre Delia del Carril," 33-37).

Despite Ortega's threat and pressure, Neruda was adamant about his decision to send the Spaniards to Chile anyhow and started persuading the other ministers of Pedro's cabinet in this regard. The Health Minister of the cabinet and the future President Salvador Allende supported

Neruda. Neruda immediately contacted Juan Negrin, Prime Minister of the Spanish Republican government for the Evacuation of Spanish Refugees (SERE). He encountered a fund shortage and asked for funds from Juan Negrin. Surprisingly, he received a large amount of money from a financial institution quite unknown to him. He writes:

The SERE was set up as a solidarity organisation. Help came, on the one hand, from the last funds available to the Republican government and, on the other hand, from an institution which remains a mystery to me: the Quakers. I admit that I am abominably ignorant as far as religions are concerned. The struggle against sin in which these religions specialize alienated me in my youth from all creeds, and this superficial attitude-one of indifference-has persisted all my life. But the fact is that, at the harbour, those magnificent sectarians turned up and paid for half of every Spanish [boat] ticket to freedom, without discriminating between atheists and believers, between ‘pecadores’ and ‘pescadores’ [sinners and fishermen.] From then on, whenever I read the word ‘Quaker’ anywhere, I mentally bow in reverence. (qtd. in Feinstein 143)

With all-out efforts from Negrin and SERE, the ship Winnipeg, a very old one mostly used to transport troops during WWI, was hired to take the refugees to Chile. The number of refugees was 2000, but the ship did not have the capacity to accommodate such a large number of people. So, workmen were assigned to make it viable to carry all two thousand refugees.

Indeed, Neruda, staying in thousand miles away in Paris, was well aware of the fact that Chile’s people became split into two groups: one group always wanted to take credit for allowing the Spaniards to their land, which, they believed, would “create a liberal democratic image of Chile to the outer world”; conversely, the other part held the opinion that such attempt would “fill the country with vagrants” (Feinstein 144). Paying no heed to the views stated, Neruda made all

preparations to transfer the concentration camp inmates from Bordeaux to Pauillac. A list of the refugees was made jointly by the Spanish Republican government in exile and the Service for the Evacuation of Spanish Refugees (SERE). Finally, on 4 August 1939, Winnipeg started its voyage from Pauillac, the port of Bordeaux. Both Neruda and Delia stood on the dock to wave the ship off. Newspaper reports mention that during the one-month voyage, there was a proper arrangement of food. The passengers used to play chess on their decks. Even a boy and a girl were born during the period. However, there are some opposite views too. A passenger among the refugees recalled the days, which, I think, needs to be mentioned: "...the fact is that we had just emerged from concentration camps where we had no food, no washing facilities, nothing, so Winnipeg seemed like a luxury! We had three good, healthy meals a day. And we had something priceless: our freedom" (qtd. in Eisner 281).

On the other hand, some passengers were not at all happy with the food and facilities provided by the shipping authority. Even a newspaper report mentions that some of the passengers had discussed the sudden unwillingness of the French Socialist government to provide the Spanish Republicans with arms to fight back the Franco forces. However, the former promised to extend its all-out assistance to the latter. In a word, the passengers were divided in their opinions of the ship. Overall, the refugees had, at least, an opportunity to exercise their freedom of speech after a long time.

The Winnipeg, overcoming all odds, happened at different times throughout the journey, and at last, arrived in Valparaiso on September 3, 1939. Nobody would forget the day because on that day, WWII broke out. Chileans were ready to greet the refugees. Among the greeters was the then Chilean Health Minister Salvador Allende. The refugees were split into two groups: one was sent to Santiago, and the other remained in Valparaiso. One thing was common among all refugees:

all of them acknowledged the love and warmth they received from the people of Chile. After the mission was accomplished, Neruda felt overjoyed. Neruda's autobiography captures his excitement: "Let the critics wipe out all my poetry. No one will wipe out the poem of Winnipeg" (232). He considered it the most important mission of his life. Indeed, the way Neruda, in the face of heated debate and the unsupportive attitude of the Aguirre government, sent 2000 refugees to Chile was really praiseworthy. On the day of the arrival of the refugees, the Chilean Committee for Aid to the Spanish Refugees distributed many copies of a card wherein Neruda wrote, "Chile . . . opens the doors to shelter these Spanish victims of European fascism in its territory. Add your material help to this generous gesture! Spaniards to Chile!" (qtd. in Moran 281). In a word, such a mammoth initiative of Neruda denotes how he wholeheartedly worked for the Spanish Republicans during the Civil War of Spain. And, of course, he was largely inspired by Delia to do so. The Winnipeg episode, in multiple ways, embellished Neruda's image among his friends and comrades. They applauded the determination he showed in those hard days. Some critics have regarded such activism of Neruda as a vital step towards his future engagement with communist politics.

In addition, while staying in Paris during the time of WWII, Neruda gave shelter to his communist friend Lois Aragon. When Miguel Hernandez and his wife were arrested by the then-French government, Neruda used to "send them a monthly pension via the attaché at the Chilean embassy in Madrid" (Eisner 311). Furthermore, Neruda wrote a letter to one of Franco's friends, Cardinal Baudillart for Miguel's release. Being delighted to read Miguel's poetry, Cardinal pleaded for his release. Finally, he was freed. Though he got an opportunity to leave Spain, he could not avail of it because his wife was pregnant. The Franco regime took this chance and put him in jail again. Afterward, he was killed in prison. In this respect, Feinstein (2004)

comments, “If Neruda considered Winnipeg among his finest achievements, he always viewed his inability to save Miguel Hernandez’s life as one of his greatest failures” (147).

On the whole, throughout his life, the way Neruda, endangering life many times, extended all-out support and help to his communist friends proves his strong endorsement of communist beliefs and ideologies.

viii. A People’s Poet in the Making

My poetry has the quality of an organism—infantile when I was a boy, juvenile when I was young, desolate when I suffered, combative when I had to enter the social struggle. (qtd. in Heine 288).

There lie diverse opinions and arguments regarding Neruda's conversion from a surrealist poet to a realist one, in other words, from a poet of love and dejection to a committed one or poet of the people. Dawes states that Neruda's subscription to the communist ideology, influenced by his communist friends Delia del Carril, Rafael Alberti, Miguel Hernandez, Paul Eluard, Nancy Cunard etcetera, needs to be taken into account to grasp his transformation ("Verses against Darkness"). Furthermore, it becomes evident that his support for the progressive Republican government of Spain during the Civil War, his solidarity with the suffering humanity, and his belief in the regenerative power of the Spanish masses essentially led him to subscribe to the communist cause. Greg Dawes (2006) adds that Neruda turned into a communist "without surrendering the quality of his poetry" (qtd. in "Verses against Darkness"). He came up with the issue of the 'quality of poetry' as many contemporaries of Neruda objected to his excessive involvement with political poetry. They accused him of mixing art with politics (Feinstein 153). Dawes answers to such an accusation by mentioning that Neruda has always been conscious of his duty as a poet, and he knew how to strike a balance "between art and politics" (qtd. in "Verses

against Darkness"). In this connection, Neruda's following remark, which he basically made in a speech after winning the Nobel Prize in literature, needs to be noted: "I saw that my human task was none other than to join the extensive forces of the organised masses of the people, to join life and soul with suffering and hope, because it is only from this great popular stream that the necessary changes can arise for the authors and for the nations" (351). The statement clarifies the poet's stance regarding his duty as a poet to stand by the people and address their problems in poetry. The remark also informs us how he, at one point in his life, began to think himself as a part of the "organised masses" (352). Relevantly, Dawes mentions, "It was during this time [Spanish Civil War] that he began to transform his poetry into new socio-political reality" (qtd. in "Verses Against Darkness"). In this regard, Paul states that Neruda came out of the conventional concept of "Art for art's sake" and instead focused on art at the service of humanity. The poet immediately responded to the humanitarian crisis when he saw humanity on the edge of a precipice during the Civil War in Spain (380). And, in describing Neruda's transformation as a people's poet, he also demonstrates,

The idea of the people's poet cannot be properly understood only as an intervention of politics in poetry, it is a distinctive role of a poet, it is a choice . . . His [Neruda's] target is . . . the readers belonging to the lower strata of the society or the oppressed at a given point of history. (qtd. in Paul 381)

In the same way, Badiou (2016) holds the opinion that the Spanish War emerged as "the strongest moment" in the history of the world to grasp the need for "the great Marxist project...a truly internationalist revolutionary politics" ("Communism by way"). He mentions that the support of people to the then-progressive Spanish government during the Spanish Civil War is an example of "international dedication" ("Communism by way"). Apart from people's solidarity with their

fellow people at war, the communist poets found it a significant cause to react to and share the sufferings the Spaniards were undergoing. He writes, "The communist poets had found major subjective reasons in the Spanish war of renewing epic poetry in the direction of a popular epic—one that was both that of the suffering of peoples and that of their internationalist heroism, organised and combative" ("Communism by way"). Among all the communist poets, one who immediately responded to and expressed solidarity with the Spaniards at war was Pablo Neruda. Such a response indicates "a kind of shared suffering with the horrible fate and hardship reserved for the Spanish people" (Moran 176). He has applauded the way Neruda, by publishing *Spain in Our Hearts*, became a chronicler of the events of the Spanish Civil War and has viewed such an endeavour of the poet as a "constructive value of communist confidence" ("Communism by way").

However, Dashgupta (2014) demonstrates that Neruda first subscribed to the communist ideology during student life when one of his uncles, Orlando Mason, a communist activist, told him to write for a communist party magazine, *La Manana*. His continuous involvement with youngsters who used to play vital roles in propagating communist thoughts among the students by publishing the periodical profoundly influenced his mind then. In addition, he used to write for the magazine on the rights of Chilean coal miners and labourers. Thus, he learned about some vital issues of the communist movement at such an early period of his life. Consequently, when he underwent the fierceness and brutality of the Spanish Civil War, he readily embraced the cause of the left-oriented Republican government and the proletariat (Neruda 309). On the other hand, Anwar (2012) asserts that Neruda's transformation as a public figure came to the forefront when he began to read poetry in different public meetings, associating himself with the Spanish intelligentsia. Since then, his poetry had begun to address the 'public theme' instead of the personal, and he had started thinking of the issue of the poet's commitment to society (Moran 81-82).

However, in this connection, Paul (2018) argues that when Neruda announced that the prime 'enemy of poetry is fascism', he decided to make poetry a medium to asseverate his anti-fascist stance, and no doubt, such a bold stance helped him emerge as a poet of the people (38-39).

In addition, what Neruda states in the prologue to the book of *Spain in Our Hearts* about his transformation as a poet needs to be quoted:

As the first bullets ripped into the guitars of Spain when blood instead of music gashed out of them, my poetry stopped dead like a ghost in the streets of human anguish...From then on, my road meets everyman's road. And suddenly I see that from the south of solitude I have moved to the north, which is the people, the people whose sword, whose handkerchief my humble poetry wants to be, to dry the sweat of its vast sorrows and give it a weapon in its struggle. (149)

The lines bring to light how the bloodshed of the Civil War made Neruda bear the same sufferings the Spanish masses underwent. Monguio notes,

Neruda suddenly saw himself no longer estranged, but "reunited"—not with accidents of matter, in blind processes of cosmic fatality, as before, but with men, in processes of will. . . . Moving out of the shadow of the past, Neruda offered to the world a changed heart, a new source of perception firmly aligned with suffering and embattled mankind. (5)

Undoubtedly, the Civil War changed Neruda's poetic vision, and so did his poetry. He says, "I among men bear the same wounded hand, / suffer the same reddened cup / and live an identical rage" (qtd. in Monguio 5).

ix. *Spain in Our Hearts*: Verses of Resistance

It requires a glimpse into the subject matters of *Spain in Our Hearts* to grasp how and why people have greatly been influenced by its verses. The book, as Benjamin Kunkel (2019) suggests,

has three purposes: to interpret the poet's experience of the massacre during the Spanish Civil War, to chronicle the sufferings and devastation people underwent in war-torn Spain, and to inspire people to turn their melancholy into strength ("Poet of the people"). The poems at the beginning of the book capture Spain's drastic transformation from a beautiful country to a land of blood, destruction, and ruins. Gradually, the book enunciates the suffering of the proletariat, who, according to the poet, became the worst victims of the war. Apart from this, the collection unfolds the poet's rebukes and abomination towards the army generals for their diabolical acts in association with the fascists—Hitler and Mussolini, ultimately leading to the rise of fascism in Spain. Finally, as the book progresses towards its end, it urges people to be united and not to lament over what they lost but to join the forces of the progressive Republican government and fight against the onslaughts of Franco's alliances.

Critics like Gordon Brotherston and Harold Bloom (1998) hold a misperception that Neruda's communist orientation left an indelible impact on him, which, indeed, drove him to stand by the Spanish Republicans during the Civil War, but the thing happened the other way round. The fact was that the stern reality of the Civil War and the upsurge of fascism at that time helped him subscribe to the principles of communism and the communist movement that played active roles in dismantling the rise of fascist power around the globe. During the Spanish Civil War, Neruda witnessed how armless and naïve Spanish citizens struggled to survive, and Franco's henchmen destroyed the city he loved. So, his book about Spain emerges with all the anguishes, agonies, and protests. His agonised soul speaks of the suffering humanity; his anguish denotes the hatred for Franco's evil deeds, and his protest says how the victims of the Civil War were committed to annihilating Franco's rise.

Spain in Our Hearts comprises twenty-three poems. In the very first poem, entitled "I Explain a Few Things," Neruda admonishes the fascist force that destroyed the beautiful city of Madrid by saying the following:

Treacherous
generals:
see my dead house
look at broken Spain:
from every house burning metal flows
instead of flowers
...and from every dead child a rifle with eyes
and from every crime bullets are born. (Neruda 110)

Just after writing the above lines, Neruda raises the following question: "And you'll ask: why doesn't his poetry / speak of dreams and leaves" (Neruda 111). At the same time, he gives an answer to the question: "Come and see the blood in the streets. / Come and see the blood / In the streets!" (111). He mentions the above lines thrice to show us the scale of bloodshed. Spain turned into a land of the dead after it had endured Franco's onslaughts. Neruda's anguish intensifies when he speaks of the atrocity of the fascist forces. In the same way, the poem "Madrid 1936" captures how Spain underwent many political turmoils and encountered changes during the Civil War. The poet gives an account of the vivacious natural beauty of Madrid, but that beauty turned ugly when the war broke out in Madrid at the end of 1936. The joy of the city turned into fear and frustration. Neruda writes,

. . . bright was your street, bright was your dream
A black vomit

of generals, a wave
 of rabid cassocks
 poured between your knees . . . (105)

Here, the poet says that the fanatical forces targeted Madrid as it was the cultural and intellectual hub of Spain. The generals, like “a wave of rabid cassocks,” jumped upon the progressive people. Likewise, the second poem of the anthology, “Bombardment,” begins with the poet’s deep anguish and hatred. He begins with an arrow of questions: “Who? by roads, who, / who, who? in shadows, in blood, who? / in a flash, who, who?” (Neruda 103). The recurrent use of the word “who” indicates how Franco’s goons spread everywhere in Madrid and launched a crackdown on the innocent. Neruda demonstrates that the forces appear like “shadows” and “flashes.” They bombed different places. The bombs fell on people like “iron” and “stone.” If we closely look at the poem, we see it starts with a sense of agony and frustration, but as the composition advances, it gets charged with words of inspiration and strength. The poet talks about the inner strength of the motherland Spain, which, he believes, one day will rise out of ashes. Thereupon, the poet says,

Furrowed motherland, I swear that in your ashes
 you will be born like a flower of eternal water,
 I swear that from your mouth of thirst will come to the air
 the petals of bread, the split
 inaugurated flower. Cursed,
 cursed, cursed be those who with axe and serpent (Neruda 103)

Initially, Neruda feels dejected to see the devastation, but afterwards, he expresses his anger towards the dictator’s devilish acts. This dialectical move is, more or less, present in all compositions delineating lamentation and sadness on the one hand, and a sense of protest on the

other. For example, “Song for the Mothers of Slain Militiamen” deciphers the agony and anger of the poet. The poet says,

And just as in your hearts, mothers,
 there is in my heart so much mourning and so much death
 that it is like a forest
 drenched by the blood that killed their smiles,
 and into it enter the valid mists of vigilance with the rending loneliness
 of the days” (trans. Schaff 107).

Neruda focuses on those mothers who have lost their sons in the Civil War. After he mourns, he attempts to re-energize them by composing the following verses of the poem:

Put aside your mantles of mourning
 Join all your tears until we make them metal
 For there we strike by day, by night,
 . . . until the doors of hatred fall! (Neruda 107)

Here, Neruda urges all mothers of the dead soldiers to forget all sorrows and, instead, carry on with the fight against fascism. In this regard, Dawes (2006) argues, “Neruda not only expresses the problem but devises a solution by prompting people towards the required action. He does not merely comfort people but wants to change the status quo. For this, he addresses warriors, sons, mothers, and sisters to fight the battle of justice” (159). The following verses mentioned below capture Dawes's observation properly:

There are no enemies, onward, Spain
 [...]

 your sharp star

sinks its raucous rays into death

and establishes the new eyes of hope. (Neruda 122-23)

The lines necessarily bring forth "the urgency of resistance" (Dawes 160). Here, the poet puts all his confidence into the Spanish people who, he firmly believes, will be able to reestablish peace and hope.

Neruda, especially in "Third Residence", chooses simple language that captures the pains and sorrows of the suffering humanity of Spain. He maintains simplicity in using language throughout the collection. Such simple diction is also evident in the poem "Spain Poor Through the Fault of the Rich." The poem starts as follows:

Cursed be those who one day
 did not look, Cursed, cursed blind,
 those who offered the solemn fatherland
 not bread but tears, . . . (Neruda 104)

Apart from using very simple language, the poet puts emphasis on the word, "curse." He repeatedly uses the word 'curse' only to heighten his hatred for those rich people who always think of themselves and become richer. Their greed and gains of wealth deprive many people of their basic needs. Their unholy alliance with their foreign capitalistic powers makes the poor poorer. This poem, alongside its linguistic simplicity and satirical tone, subscribes to the Marxist ideas of "haves (those who own means of production) and have-nots (those who do not)" (Agosin 79).

In some poems, Neruda tries to provide us with a complete image of a soldier who sacrificed his life in War. For instance, "Song About Some Ruins" presents some images reminding us of the life of a soldier. The poet says,

Wounded tools, nocturnal cloths

Dirty foam, urine just then split, cheeks, glass,
 Wool, camphor, circles, of thread and leather, all
 All through a wheel returned to dust, to the
 Disorganized dream of the metals. (Neruda 107)

‘Clothes,’ ‘foam,’ ‘cheeks,’ ‘glass,’ ‘wool,’ ‘camphor,’ ‘leather,’ etcetera reminds us of a soldier who took part in War. The words follow each other. The images become lifelike before our eyes. They reflect upon a devastated landscape. Indeed, Neruda’s use of imagery and metaphor changes when he starts composing the poems of the “Third Residence.” The first poem of *Spain in Our Hearts*, “Invocation,” appears with different kinds of images and metaphors. The opening lines of the poem are as follows:

Oh girl among the vases, oh crush of doves,
 Oh fortress of the fishes and rosebushes, your soul
 Is a bottle filled with thirsty salt and your skin,
 A bell filled with grapes. (143)
 To begin, pause over the pure and cleft
 Rose, pause over the source of sky and air
 And earth, the will of a song
 With explosions, the desire of an immense song, of a
 Metal that will gather varied naked blood. (Neruda 244)

Here, ‘rose’ appears with a different kind of meaning. This time, ‘rose’ is cleft or part, but still pure. On the other hand, in the earlier poems, the rose represents beauty. The poet imagines a girl among the roses. He compares the beauty of a girl with that of roses. However, in “Invocation,” the poet decides to say goodbye to roses because the political turmoil of Spain drives him to shed

light on the dark chapter of history—the Spanish Civil War. He plans to compose “An Immense Song,” which brings to light the fact of “War and naked blood.” In the same way, the dove appears as a consistent image in Neruda’s poetry of the Residences. In the poems of the Residence cycle, the dove represents the melancholic tone of the poet. The line, “The bloody dove that sits alone on my brow,” presents the dove as bloody. Again, he speaks of the following in “One Day Stands Out”: “To resonance the soul rolls falling from / Dreams, still surrounded by black doves.” Here, he mentions that the soul is “surrounded by black doves,” denoting a prolonged sadness, though the dove appears to be a very rejuvenating image in some of the poems of *Spain in Our Hearts*. In this collection, the dove largely symbolises hope. In this regard, let us mention the following from “Arrival in Madrid of the International Brigade”:

Brothers, from now on

Let your pureness and your strength . . .

Be known by children and by men, by woman . . .

Let it reach all men...

. . . you have revived with your sacrifice

Lost faith, absent heart trust in the earth

And through your abundance, through your nobility, through

Your dead,

As if through a valley of harsh bloody rocks

Flows an immense river with doves of steel and of hope. (qtd. in Buckner 17)

Neruda names doves as being of “steel and hope.” The doves in Residence I and II are very soulless and melancholic. Conversely, the dove we find in the *Third Residence* is very joyful and

regenerative. Furthermore, we find doves as the messengers of a new beginning after the devastation.

Neruda also informs us that the International Brigade comprises volunteers from countries like Britain and the USA. The comrades of the Brigade were committed to fighting back against the forces of Franco. They were determined to save “humanity” and “truth.” Leaving their own comforts and dreams, they headed toward Spain from a long distance to fight for the proletariat against the Fascists. The poet says,

Celestial thirst, doves
with a waist of wheat: epochs
of pollen and branch: see how
the wood is shattered
until it reaches mourning: there are no roots
for man: all scarcely rests upon a tremor of
rain (qtd. in Buckner 19-20)

The doves here sit beside a “waist of wheat.” Neruda witnesses how the landscape of Spain suffered a setback due to the Civil War. In the above lines, mentioning wheat can positively indicate that the land starts rising from the ashes. So, the doves sitting beside the wheat are the harbingers of hope and regeneration. The poem starts describing how the fascist army, like “African jackals,” appears with their weapons and begins to attack armless people. So, the poet gets hopeless at the outset, but such hopelessness vanishes in the scene when the International Brigade arrives to defend the Spanish Republic. Neruda writes,

Comrades,
then

I saw you,
 and my eyes are even now filled with pride
 . . . come from far,
 far away,
 . . . covered with burning gentleness and guns,
 to defend the Spanish city in which besieged liberty
 could fall and die bitten by the beasts. (Neruda 273)

Neruda was sure about his transformation from a solitary poet to a poet of greater responsibility. In the first poem of *Spain in Our Hearts*, he clarifies his position and duties as a poet of the people. In “Invocation,” he mentions that the changes that occurred in Spain took him to a new path that was full of horns. He knew that the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War made him an everyday companion of blood and bullets. He chose this difficult path because he thought it was his responsibility to speak of the suffering of the Spanish Republicans. For instance, “Solar Ode to The Army of The People” delineates a social revolution of the masses. The poet starts the stanza with “Army of the people” conveying that he urges people to be united and work like an army. He believed that the people would usher in an era of change. So, he looks at “the eyes of hope” (Neruda 121). It is paramount that for the first time, in this collection, Neruda uses an adjective before the word “Ode” which signifies that he has energised the title by adding “Solar” to the ode. “Solar Ode” means it is not a simple ode, rather, it is an ode that has flame or, it spreads light among us. To energise the verses of his poetry, he stops offering regular odes, which, we know, is a general song of appreciation. Rather, he writes a “Solar Ode,” which appears before the Spanish people as a source of inspiration and strength. In a word, in the course of writing the poems, Neruda himself goes through an evolution: at the start of the collection, we, in most cases,

have found a speaker in him who is, sometimes, mournful, and a mere narrator of the barbaric acts committed by Franco's henchmen; at the end of the book, we find a very spirited Neruda who raises hope and strengthens us with his robust verses. To understand how Neruda makes his verses forceful requires knowing about the repetitive use of the same word and sentence in a single stanza. In this regard, Jon Franco (2007) opines that "the 'ritualistic repetition which had already been a feature of the poetry of *Residencia* here attains the force of incantation . . . the 'incantation' pointing out the ritualistic call to arms or a methodic melody to inspire passion" (qtd. in Buckner 21).

In addition, in composing the poems of the collection, Neruda experiments with different types of stanzas. In some poems, he employs irregular stanzas; conversely, he uses measured stanzas in many poems of the *Third Residence*. For instance, he composes thirty-one lines in one complete stanza without any break or space to develop the idea of "Spain Poor Through the Fault of the Rich." But, in composing "Battle of the Jarma River," Neruda returns to the measured stanza. This poem consists of nine stanzas of four verses each. It is noticeable that he juxtaposes irregular stanzas with measured stanzas in some particular cases. Why Neruda did not follow the conventional style of writing poetry has an answer: He wanted to bring change to writing poetry. He believed that poetry must influence people's lives: it must contribute to accelerating social change. He never wanted to confine poetry to ordinary rules and styles. He demonstrated that the verses of the poems must reflect the reality of society. So, he never prioritised any particular form or style in composing his poems. Rather, he gave priority to the contents or subject matters of his poems over other issues; furthermore, he put emphasis on the truthful portrayal of the social and political issues of his compositions. In the "Battle of the Jarama River," the poet brings forth the power of resistance of the Republican fighters. The poet sheds light upon how the Republican

soldiers did their best to dismantle the attacks by the Francos. The Jarama fighters were committed to standing against all odds.

Jarama, pure dagger, you have resisted

The wave of the cruel

[. . .]

Jarama, you were between iron and smoke

like a branch of fallen crystal,

like a long line of medals

for the victorious (Neruda 113)

Even the best troops of Franco encountered heavy resistance during the Jarama war. Overall, Neruda pays homage to the resistance of the Republican fighters.

In the same way, when the heart of Stalingrad was attacked, he wrote the following verses on the heroes of Stalingrad:

City, Stalingrad, we cannot

Reach your walls, we are far away.

We are the Mexicans, we are the Araucanians,

we are the Patagonians, we are the Guaranis,

we are the Uruguayans, we are the Chileans,

we are millions of men.

[. . .]

City, city of fire, resist until one day

we come, shipwrecked Indians, to touch your walls

like a kiss from sons who were eager to arrive.

Stalingrad, there is not yet a Second Front

But you will not fall, even though iron and fire

Pierces you day and night

Even though you die, you do not die! (Neruda 127-128)

Neruda's propensity to relate the struggle and sacrifice of the people of Stalingrad with the spirit of the proletarian revolution delineates his sense of internationalism. The aforesaid poem demonstrates the poet's solidarity with the Russian Revolution against fascism.

Again, Neruda intends to disclose Franco's alliance with the Nationalists through the poem "Almeria." Almeria is an Andalusian city that was bombarded during the Civil War by the Nationalist army in association with their German allies. The poem discusses how Franco's goons occupied the city, killing at least 50 people and destroying more than forty establishments. The Church Bishop and other churchmen supported Franco's plan of besieging the city. So, Neruda starts the poems by reprimanding the churchmen. He says,

A bowl for the bishop, a crushed and bitter bowl,

a bowl with remnants of iron, with ashes, with tears,

a sunken bowl, with sobs and fallen walls,

a bowl for the bishop, a bowl of Almeria blood (Neruda 115)

The poet says that a bowl of "iron," "ashes," "tears," "fallen walls," "Almeria blood," are presented to those churchmen who extended their support and cooperation to the henchmen of Franco in their demonic acts. He concludes the poem by saying,

Yes, a bowl for all of you, richmen here and there,

monstrous ambassadors, ministers, . . .

ladies with cozy tea parties and chairs:

a bowl shattered, overflowing, dirty with the blood of the poor,
 for each morning, for each week, forever and ever . . . (Neruda 116)

The poet presents a bowl of blood before those colonels, ministers, and ambassadors who helped the Nationalist force destroy the city of Almeria. On the other hand, the poet pays a special tribute to those revolutionary men who dedicated their lives to defend their fatherland. Neruda considers them “the pure sons of the earth” (138).

In “General Franco in Hell”, Neruda imagines Franco suffering in hell because of his misdeeds, including the killing of thousands of innocent Spaniards during the Spanish Civil War. He presents hell as the proper destination for Franco, who compelled thousands of Spanish people to take shelter in the French frontier as refugees. He expresses his anger and contempt towards the dictator:

Alone, alone, for the tears
 all gathered, for an eternity of dead hands
 and rotted eyes, alone in a cave
 of your hell, eating silent pus and blood
 through a cursed and lonely eternity.

You do not deserve to sleep
 Even though it be with eyes fastened with pins:
 you have to be

awake, General, eternally awake . . . (Neruda 116-117)

Neruda draws a picture of hell wherein Franco will remain “alone” and “eternally awake.” As punishment, his eyes will be “fastened with pins,” and he will be suffering endlessly in a dark cave of hell.

Critics like Marjorie Agosin, Adam Feinstein, and Dominic Moran have appreciated Neruda's adeptness in capturing the moral outrage and indignation experienced by people who suffered Franco's reign of terror. The poem functions as a condemnation of the dictator's transgressions against the human race. According to Adam Feinstein, "General Franco in Hell," showcases Neruda's remarkable ability to express the emotional impact of political occurrences or a global catastrophe (211). The poem serves as evidence of the poet's dedication to employing his literary aptitude as a means of expressing social and political observations. Furthermore, it can be interpreted as an extension of Neruda's dedication to leftist ideologies and his endorsement of the Spanish Republic amidst the tumultuous Spanish Civil War. It reflects the poet's unwavering opposition to fascism and authoritarianism, effectively denouncing Franco and serving as a poignant reminder of the heinous acts perpetrated during his regime.

Conversely, critics like Enrico Maria Santi and Amado Alonso argue that the poem's robust political message has the potential to eclipse its inherent aesthetic characteristics. They object to Neruda's fervour for the subject matter potentially resulted in a certain level of didacticism, wherein the primacy of the poem's aesthetics is overshadowed by the message being conveyed, while some other critics assert that the poem stands as the poet's utter dedication to social justice and his ability to encapsulate the collective rage and sadness of an entire generation.

As a whole, the poems from the Residence cycle cover the lamentation of the poet. However, the compositions of the third part of the series stem from agony but eventually speak of action and change. They minutely focus on the changed scenario of Spain. How the spread of the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) changed Neruda's poetry finds an answer to his own statement: "The world has changed and my poetry has changed. A drop of blood fallen on these lines will remain living upon them, indelible as love" (qtd. in Agosin 69). Neruda had no other intention as a poet

but to reach the people of Spain through his poetry. The brutality of the Civil War had left a great impact on him. So, as a poet, he thought it was his responsibility to react to the injustice and violence he witnessed around him. In fact, *Spain in Our Hearts* appeared to be a guideline to the people who were on the battlefield. This book took him to the deepest core of the people's hearts. He emerged as “a poet of the people,” which became possible because of the vast outreach of the book. Neruda says: “My book was the pride of these men who had worked to bring out my poetry in the face of death. I learned that many carried copies of the book in their sacks, instead of their own food and clothing” (229). Overall, this book marks Neruda’s transition from a love-poet to a people’s one.

To sum up, the Spanish Intelligentsia Neruda met in Spain, and its manifold influences on his personality and poetry, his endorsement of the concept of "impure poetry," the sudden assassination of his comrade, fellow poet Federico Garcia Lorca, his active role in organising a congress of the writers and artists worldwide to support the then-progressive Spanish Republican government to face the onslaught of Franco's force, his endeavour to send at least 2000 Spanish refugees, who were forced to exile on the borders of France, to Chile and the birth of his book, *Spain in Our Hearts* from the ruins, loss, and agonies of war have altogether brought numerous remarkable changes in his poetry, political philosophy, and social outlook. This chapter minutely deals with all the changes Neruda underwent. It elucidates his break with the previous subject matters of writing poetry of mere love, nature, and solitariness and attempts to embark on a new one—the humanity at stake. It discusses all the possible ways of Neruda's solidarity with the suffering humanity during the Spanish Civil War. Thus, all the factors that led Neruda to evolve as a committed poet based on his understanding of the communist ideology have come under the spotlight.

Chapter IV

Neruda's Contribution to Marxist Aesthetics

i. *Canto General*: Historical Context

Pablo Neruda's groundbreaking work, *Canto General*, was initially published in 1950, although he began to work on it a decade earlier. The genesis of this significant epic poem emerged during the latter part of the 1940s, when the Communist Party of Chile, of which he became a member in 1945, entrusted him with the task of reinventing the historical narrative of his nation. However, his contentious relationship with the then-Chilean President Gonzalez Videla, with whom he clashed vehemently as a senator, led to an extensive pilgrimage that took him as far as the Andes mountains. Unable to complete the poem as originally planned, he transformed it into something even more ambitious. Brotherston contends that despite its imperfections, *Canto General* stands as the most profound expression of Neruda's unwavering belief in the Americas, as articulated by a Spanish-speaking citizen of the continent (117). Conversely, Saul Yurkievich asserts that this epic has two sides—one deciphering the poet's personal life exposed in an "irrational mythic language" inherited from the *Residencia* series, and the other illustrating time, history, and politics, stated through a "rational prose-like language," devoid of myth (Paul 56).

Neruda's perspective regarding history from a Marxist lens and "growing sense of Americanismo" have shaped his epic poem, *Canto General* (Moran 84). Apart from this, other factors led Neruda to compose the epic poem, including the necessity of materialist philosophy, historicity, and the interest in the issues like the rise of Spanish colonialism in South America, proletarian struggle against the backdrop of the bourgeois invasion, economic exploitation by the US, as realised and experienced by the poet. Firstly, imperialism, in various forms, had been in Chile for decades. It devoured most of the natural resources of all Latin American states throughout

the 19th and early 20th centuries (Paul 51). Indeed, Neo-colonialism emerged in Chile in the decade of 1880s. Once, Great Britain used to control the entire nitrate production of Chile. Gradually, the Germans and the Americans came on the scene to be the competitors of the British traders. At the start of the 20th century, the USA owed Chile a huge sum of money, and since then, the domination of the US companies has drastically increased in Chile. However, a group of anarchists attempted to wreak havoc on the American Business Consulate in Chile as a fulmination against the setting up of numerous American trading corporations in 1932. Afterwards, the then-US ambassador to Chile induced right-wing politicians to the necessity of the US companies running business across Chile. The rightists served the interests of the United States without thinking of how the labourers became victims of exploitation. Neruda saw how the US corporations exploited the working class of his country and endeavoured to portray the imperialistic attempts of those corporations in his epic poem, *Canto General*. In this regard, Eduardo Camacho Guizado (2010), a professor of Spanish Literature, writes, “Neruda integrates dialectical materialism with historical materialism” in *Canto General* (13). Such an observation becomes evident when the poet speaks of a society where men are “conscious of their connection with the land and the products of their labor” (qtd. in Agosin 60).

However, another historical event that led Neruda to write substantial parts of the *Canto General* was his involvement with the Chilean Communist Party (Paul 52). Indeed, the Chilean Communist Party came to the forefront of Chilean politics and played many pro-people roles, ultimately influencing Neruda to join the party and develop such a long narrative poem like *Canto General*, mainly arising from his communist ideals. In Chile, from 1922 to 1930, the Chilean Communist Party conducted many underground activities, and at the end of 1930, the party members formed the People’s Front, which subsequently played numerous roles in accelerating

leftist politics in Chile. In those days, political conflicts had been a common phenomenon throughout the continent of South America. As a consequence, Chile never witnessed any stability in its political arena from 1837 to 1970. On the surface, it seemed that people had no problems in their lives, but inwardly, they were victims of abject poverty, social disparity, injustice, violence, etcetera (Paul 53). On the one hand, the people were dispossessed, and on the other hand, a group of people, mostly constituted by the rich and the bourgeois, possessed one-third of the wealth of the country. The rich and the bourgeois used to exert influence on the parliamentary system. The leftist parties had been executing their activities amid oppression and obstruction. The ever-gradual discontent of the labourers and the peasants with the rightist politicians and the ruling class's exploitative nature escalated the leftist parties' popularity as they supported the causes of the former. However, there was enough supply of gold and silver, and the agrarian growth was satisfactory in Chile, but the money from the produced goods would directly go to the grip of the ruling class and the rich, who created ample opportunities for foreign businesspeople to trade in different parts of Chile. Thereupon, foreign domination began to gain control over the country's economy.

Against the backdrop of the situation stated above, in 1933, the Chilean Communist Party called upon a national assembly that brought forth the issue of the urgency of the Chilean Revolution to annihilate the foreign economic invasion and rebuild the country following socialist ideals. The party members reached a consensus that the first and foremost duty of the party was to free the country from the shackles of foreign imperialism, local oligarchies, and oppressive landowners. Secondly, they vowed to give ownership of the productive land back to the peasants. The newly formed Popular Front, consisting of the communists, the socialists, the radicals, the democrats, and the Chilean Labor Confederation, had been working to execute their plans. They

came up with three basic rights—fighting the onslaught of the fascists, protesting against the upswing of imperialism, and working to alleviate poverty, thus ensuring social justice and freedom of speech (Paul 53).

In 1938, people thought that socialist activities would be accelerated as the candidate from the Popular Front was elected as the President of Chile. However, on the Popular Front, the Communist Party had less influence than other representatives. But, forming the Front illuminated the image of the Chilean Communist Party not only in Chile but also in other states of South America. To gain strength, the Communist Party tried to influence the labour unions by propagating its demands that predominantly spoke of the rights of the labourers. Hence, keeping some specific agenda ahead, the Communist Party garnered substantial backing among the proletariat, driven by a distinct set of objectives. In the subsequent parts, we shall examine the progression of Neruda's involvement in Communist politics and his significant contributions towards the realisation of the rights advocated by the Communist Party of Chile. In addition, we will examine the poet's pan-American consciousness and eventual subscription to Marxist ideology as factors that influenced the creation of his epic poem, *Canto General*.

ii. Neruda's Political Activism and Pan-American Consciousness

From 1939 to 1943, Neruda had been writing poems on multifarious issues ranging from the onslaughts of the fascist powers to the revolutionary activities in different countries of the world. And to keep the spirit of writing unobstructed, he, along with Delia Del Carril, bought a house far away from the hustle and bustle of Santiago, situated at Isla Negra near the seashore south of Valparaiso and stayed there for a few months. Soon afterwards, Neruda was offered the post of Consul General in Mexico. The poet accepted the offer. He had quite a good friend circle of writers, poets, and painters over there in Mexico (Eisner 306). Though Neruda had been in

Mexico from 1938 to 1942 as a Chilean Consul, he kept a sharp eye on what was happening in Chile's political landscape. He knew that the Chilean Communist Party had been quite active in inhibiting the rise of fascism and the intrusion of foreign imperialism. So, he supported the cause of the Party, though he had not joined the Party until 1945. However, in Mexico, he carried on disseminating his revolutionary thoughts through poetry and public speeches that upset the Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the then-Mexican government. However, after assuming the consulship, he made his position clear by saying in a newspaper article:

As the consul general of Chile . . . my duty is to work for the strengthening of cultural and trade relations between Mexico and my country. But as a writer, my duty is to defend freedom as an absolute norm of the civil and human condition, and neither protests nor incidents of any kind will change my actions or my poetry. (qtd. in Eisner 307).

Such a straightforward remark elucidates the poet's firm position against fascism. In addition, a number of incidents in Mexico demonstrate his abovementioned determination and commitment. For instance, on July 24, 1941, he was invited to speak at a National University of Mexico seminar. In the event, he read his famous poem, "Song for Bolivar," and the audience remained silent until he reached the last lines:

I came upon Bolivar, one long morning,
in Madrid, at the entrance to the Fifth Regiment.
Father, I said to him, are you, or are you not, or who are you?
And, looking at the Mountain Barracks, he said:

"I awake every hundred years when the people awake." (qtd. in Eisner 293)

Neruda's recitation of the poem gave birth to mixed reactions. Mark Eisner (2018), one of the biographers of Neruda, writes, "Young Fascists began shouting "Death to the Spanish Republic,"

and on the other hand, the leftists hailed Neruda as a hero (293). After the program, the dean, Neruda, and other guests left the place immediately to avoid the unpleasant situation that might lead to a clash. Though the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Chile initially did not object to Neruda's move for his social and poetic duties, it criticised the poet's active involvement in publishing a magazine entitled "Araucania" (Eisner 294). Furthermore, in April 1941, when Neruda attempted to seek a Chilean visa for his Mexican friend David Alfaro Siqueiros, a famous muralist who was allegedly arrested in connection with his involvement with the killing mission of Trotsky, the Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs urged him to restrain from such kind of activity through a cable message. But he wrote back and sought an explanation from the Ministry. The Ministry suspended Neruda for a month without pay. He got his position back after two months.

However, as Neruda considered writing poetry a social responsibility, he carried on with it without thinking much of his professional bindings. Thereupon, when Hitler launched several blitzes on the industrial city of Stalingrad in 1942 during WWII, Neruda could not remain silent (Paul 55). He protested against the attacks of Nazis and wrote the following for the people of Stalingrad:

Russia, today you know loneliness and cold
 When thousands of howitzers shatter your heart,
 Stalingrad, when scorpions with crime and venom
 come to gnaw on your insides,
 New York dances, London meditates, and I say, "*merde*,"
 because my heart can't stand anymore and our
 hearts can't stand more, they can't
 in a world that lets heroes die alone. (qtd. in Eisner 302)

Neruda supported Russia in WWII and paid his tributes to the comrades who died in the war. He first read the poem at the electricians' union in Mexico City to raise awareness among the workers. The poem inspired activism "from the proletariat to the intellectual" (Eisner 302). It was readily disseminated across North America. Even some workers made posters of the poem in different cities in North America. However, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Chile expressed displeasure with Neruda's continued support of Russia as a consul. However, at the end of WWII, when Chile finally put an end to "its neutrality and broke off diplomatic relations with Germany, Japan, and Italy," the U.S. State Department invited Neruda to attend "Night of the Americas" (Eisner 304). While talking to the press at that event in the US, he asseverated Chile's initiative to renew relations with Russia. Such a remark escalated tension between Chile and the U.S.A. Once again, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed its anger and trepidation over Neruda's breach of conduct as a consul. But Neruda paid less heed to such reluctance and displeasure.

Alongside his duties as a consul general and his commitment to writing poetry for people, Neruda had been working actively to release revolutionary activities and communist leaders across South America from prisons. Even he wrote poems and newspaper articles demanding the release of the communists and revolutionaries imprisoned in different states (Feinstein 26). He had to face multiple obstructions to run such activities, holding the post of a consul. In 1943, during his tenure as the Chilean Consul to Mexico, he visited Brazil to advocate for the release of Luis Carlos Prestes, a prominent revolutionary leader, who was incarcerated at that time. This diplomatic effort aimed to persuade the Brazilian dictator, Getulio Vargas, to grant Prestes his freedom. Vargas turned down his proposal. In response to such a refusal, Neruda wrote a poem entitled "Harsh Elegy," wherein he admonished the dictator as "a bat and thriving rat" (Feinstein 195). He also argued that Carlos Prestes could have attended his mother's funeral if the government had released

him. As the authority denied such an appeal, Neruda himself attended the funeral and recited the poem “Harsh Elegy.” This incident enraged the dictator. The Brazilian government officially issued a statement of protest for breaching the diplomatic norms by the Chilean consul. Neruda said that he just carried out his responsibility as a poet, which he stated just after assuming the post of consul. Afterwards, Neruda applied for a six-month leave and left Mexico. At one point, Neruda found his diplomatic position an impediment to exercising his political freedom, sought resignation, and finally went back to Chile. Since then, he has not returned to the diplomatic service for over twenty years.

Just after landing in Chile, Neruda expressed his desire to participate in the country’s politics more directly than before and demonstrated his belief that a “unified Left presented the strongest hope for the future of Chile, and a strong Chile would help make all of South America stronger” (Eisner 317). In Santiago, the poet came into contact with a galaxy of Chilean intellectuals to combat the country's rapidly growing political and social problems. One of them was the rise of fascism. Some years back, he saw the ugly face of fascism in Madrid, Spain, during the Civil War in Spain. Upbraiding the upswing of the fascist power over there, he wrote some poems that later appeared as a collection entitled *Spain in Our Hearts*. As he experienced the monstrous nature of fascism upon returning to Chile, he always kept his vigilant eyes on the spread of fascism in his fatherland. In this respect, Eisner writes,

Neruda was developing a new Pan-American consciousness rooted in the struggles of the continent across the centuries, from the Incan slaves who built Machu Picchu to the injustices of his day. In Spain, he fought fascism, and in Latin America, the battle was for the rights of indigenous and working people and against imperialism. (288)

On 22 October 1943, Neruda and Delia visited Peru. His visit to the ancient Inca civilization radically changed his vision at that time. When he reached the peak of the remnant of Machu Picchu, he had a feeling that he was standing at the navel of South America. Neruda has enunciated his experience through the following lines:

I felt infinitely small in the centre of that navel of rocks, . . . to which I somehow belonged. I felt that my own hands had laboured there at some remote point in time, digging furrows, polishing the rocks. I felt Chilean, Peruvian, American. On those difficult heights, among those glorious, scattered ruins, I had found the principles of faith I needed to continue my poetry. (qtd. in Feinstein 169)

Neruda found a link between pre-Columbian civilization and his existence. After returning to Isla Negra, Chile, he began writing the poem “The Heights of Macchu Picchu.” Neruda says, “The nucleus of the work emerged in my country, but after visiting Mexico, Peru, and especially Machu Picchu, I felt personally tied to American soil, to the entire continent” (qtd. in Eisner 311). The poet felt an urgency to bring into focus the greatness of his ancestors. The same urgency, as Adam Feinstein (2005), a critic, translator and journalist, demonstrates, Neruda felt to expose the atrocities of Franco and his goons when he was in Spain during the Spanish Civil War. Feinstein also mentions that “*Alturas* marks a new synthesis of personal crusade and public chronicle” (4). Moreover, in writing this poem, Neruda incorporates an optimistic tone, discarding the anguish he has maintained throughout his *Residence on Earth*.

“The Heights of Macchu Picchu,” which he included in *Canto General*, paints a picture of Neruda’s “personal cosmology” as assumed by Robert Pring-Mill. The poems of the part regenerate “Neruda’s emotional links, too, with Quevedo, especially with that poet’s obsession with the transitoriness of the human condition seen against the vastness of time” (Feinstein 170).

Neruda's travel to the pre-Columbian fortress in the Peruvian Andes awakened his historical consciousness to a large extent. He realised how the contributions of the "real-makers of Andes civilization" were suppressed due to the Spanish invasion throughout the continent of Latin America on the one hand and the entrance of U.S. capitalism to different regions on the other hand (Feinstein 171). Consequently, Neruda expressed solidarity with those who waged their blood to build Machu Picchu and condemned those who exploited the natives of this land. In the poem, he creates an ambiance of conversation between himself and the makers of Machu Picchu:

Rise up and be born with me, brother.

From the deepest reaches of your

Disseminated sorrow, give me your hand.

[...]

Look at me from the depths of the earth,

Plowman, weaver, silent shepherd:

[...]

water-bearer of Andes tears:

goldsmith of crushed fingers:

farmer trembling on the seed:

potter poured out into your clay:

bring all your old buried sorrows

to the cup of this new life.

Show me your blood and your furrow,

say to me: Here I was punished

[...]

I come to speak through your dead mouth. (qtd. in Eisner 313-314)

Neruda chronicles the history of the Inca Civilization “from the point of view of the people themselves, not the history told by the conquerors” (Eisner 314). The concluding lines of “The Heights of Machu Picchu” are as follows:

Through the earth unite all
 the silent and split lips
 and from the depths speak to me all night long
 as if we were anchored together,
 tell me everything, chain by chain,
 link by link and step by step...
 [...]

Speak through my words and blood. (qtd. in Eisner 314)

Neruda “felt a closer affinity with the exploited workers, his pre-Columbian ancestors, who built the Inca fortress high in the Andes” (Feinstein 179). In this part of *Canto General*, he emerges as a chronicler who tells us the history of the Inca civilization and how the commoners have built the ancient city of the Inca. He brings into focus the history of the class struggle and the exploitative nature of the upper class and thus attempts to explicate the poems in the light of Marxist dialectics. In this respect, Greg Dawes (2006), a South American writer and professor of Religious Studies at the University of Otago, New Zealand, expounds that Neruda brings to light a conflict between the working class that significantly contributed to the construction of Machu Picchu and the nobility that subsequently denied the role of the previous and exploited them (68). Such contrariety shows us how the labourers were deprived of their produced goods. Similarly, Jason Wilson (2008), a Spain-based Marxist critic, interprets Neruda's visit to Machu Picchu from a materialistic

perspective. The analysis suggests that Neruda experienced a sense of personal involvement in constructing the stronghold, cultivating the terraces, or quarrying stones in that particular context. Wilson asserts that Machu Picchu served as a "resistance symbol" for an original South America that endured the conquest and subsequent colonisation by the Spanish. Neruda discovered an additional rationale for persisting as a poet, relinquishing his previous state of lonely introspection. His novel approach to politics involved the unification of South America by exploring and preserving its distinctive elements, such as its rivers, historical events, and revered personalities. In this respect, Wilson (2008) also argues, "In Marxist theory, there is no individual, no unique psychology. The self merges with the other suffering selves; the working class is one. The Communist Party has replaced the individual, and that is why he feels 'indestructible,' one of a crowd" (204). In addition, Neruda started seeing his continent as an exploited and suffering unity. The Marxist theory helped the working class in its struggle against class and imperialism across the many "false national frontiers" (Wilson 203). Wilson asserts that Neruda's clue to American unity derived from how 'nature' does not respect artificial national frontiers. He illustrates what the poet writes: "Our plants and our flowers must be counted and sung for the first time, . . . a new America would rise from its dependency" (Wilson 204).

In *The Heights of Macchu Picchu*, Neruda also unveils the fact that the commoners, whom he considered his ancestors, invested their labour in establishing this age-old civilization. Afterwards, the bourgeois brushed aside the history of the real heroes, the makers of the Inca civilization. With the help of the foreign powers, they created a new discourse that prioritised bourgeois contribution over the roles of the proletariat to the progress of civilization. Dawes (2006) says that Neruda, indeed, contrasts "the construction of the grandiose buildings on the mountain-tops" with "the exploitation and dehumanisation of the people responsible for its creation" (69).

Standing atop the mountain, Neruda closed his eyes to recollect how his brothers laboured immeasurably to build this wonder. The rocks on the mountain bear testimony to their labour and energy. He felt energised for a moment and remembered those dead and unknown ancestors:

Stone within stone, and man, where was he?

Air within air, and man, where was he?

Time within time, and man, where was he?

. . . Let me have back the slave you buried here!

Wrench from these lands the stale bread

of the poor...(qtd. in Feinstein 181)

In the poem, Neruda brings forth the theme of “life through death” (Feinstein 182). In this regard, the mediaeval Spanish poet Quevedo profoundly influenced this communist poet. The same influence is also evident in some of the poems of *Spain in Our Hearts*. However, Neruda clarifies his position by focusing on how he has developed a close bond with Quevedo in one of his 1939 lectures titled “Voyage to the Heart of Quevedo”:

Quevedo has given me a clear and biological lesson . . . If we have already died, if we come from a profound crisis, we lose our fear of death. If the greatest step from death is birth, the smallest step from life is dying. Which is why, life grows in Quevedo’s doctrine as I experienced it, because Quevedo was not a reading for me, but a lived experience. (qtd. in Feinstein 180)

Neruda postulates rebirth through death. He feels reborn when he reaches the peak of Machu Picchu. The idea of regeneration is vivid through the idea of death that he has taken from Quevedo. Conversely, Feinstein says, “The relationship that is most evident in *Alturas* is brotherhood” (15). Two years back, when he visited Machu Picchu, he saw the contributions of his ancestors and felt

their labour, pain, and energy. Now, he was a communist senator representing the underprivileged, the dispossessed, and the poor of the Chilean north. Feinstein (2004) also mentions, “This awareness of his current, pressing responsibilities extends to those ancient brothers who worked so hard to build Machu Picchu” (181).

On the whole, “The Heights of Machu Picchu” broadly explores “Pan-American history through the lens of Neruda’s own process of discovery” (Eisner 311). About the uniqueness of the poem, Eisner (2018) says, “One of the reasons “The Heights of Machu Picchu” is such an extraordinary poem is that Neruda had discovered how to be politically direct without applying strict dogmatic or social realist formulas to his verse” (311). The poem gives “a voice for generations past and present” (Eisner 312). In addition, Raul Zurita, a Chilean poet-revolutionary, has termed “The Heights of Machu Picchu” as “the single greatest poem in the history of the Spanish Language” as it expresses “the speech of a continent” (qtd. in Eisner 315). However, what Neruda says about the objective of the poem is noteworthy:

. . . I use a vision of ancient men to understand the men of today. From the Inca to the Indian, from the Aztec to the contemporary Mexican peasant, our homeland, America, has magnificent mountains, rivers, deserts, and mines rich in minerals. Yet the inhabitants of this generous land live in great poverty. What then should be the poet’s duty? (qtd. in Eisner 316)

Indeed, after he visited the Inca, Neruda could not separate himself from those constructions. So, he continues to say,

I could no longer separate myself from those constructions . . . our . . . cosmopolitanism had led us to revere the past of the most remote peoples and had blinded us to discovering our own treasures . . . I thought about ancient American man. I saw his ancient struggles

intermeshed with present-day struggles. That was where the seeds of my idea of an American Canto general began to generate, a kind of chronicle . . . (qtd. in Eisner 3-4)

It is pertinent to say that Delia played the role of an editor and commentator while Neruda was writing the part of “The Heights of Machu Picchu.” Like a literary critic, she helped Neruda develop and improve many of his poems and played a crucial role in Neruda’s life by backing him to join the Chilean Communist Party. Later on, we will see how Neruda’s emergence as a communist activist became a decisive factor in addressing a wide range of issues in *Canto General*. Neruda mentioned that Spain taught him Communism, which was the most effective way to fight fascism. Delia mainly pushed Neruda to join the Chilean Communist Party and extended her all-out support to move ahead. As Delia had been a militant communist for many years, she had introduced Neruda to many of her comrades (Feinstein 173).

However, after returning to Chile from Peru, the first challenge Neruda faced was knowing about Chile’s changing political map. Neruda had not been at home for several years because of his job as a consul. Meanwhile, a multi-party-political system was initiated, modelled after the Western European model. The conservative and liberal factions exhibited a greater degree of convergence. The Radicals had assumed power in place of the liberals. Under the leadership of the centrist Radical Party, President Pedro Aguirre Cerda's Popular Front government successfully integrated the Socialists and the Communists into the existing political framework. This strategic move transformed these potentially revolutionary factions into relatively moderate actors that actively participated within the confines of legal institutions. In a word, Chile had been undergoing a crucial time both politically and economically. On the one hand, the start of the Second World War compelled Chile to depend solely on its domestic production of consumer items, and on the

other hand, to keep the flow of domestic production up, the country had to depend on the US for economic help (Moran 85).

Furthermore, the Socialists and the Communists had been in dissension over the Communist Party's support for the 1939 Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact. In 1941, the Socialist Party did not agree with the Communist Party and withdrew from the Popular Front coalition. However, President Pedro did not get much time to settle such a dispute because he, all at once, died in his office in November 1941. To replace him, two Radicals, namely, Gabriel Gonzalez Videla and Juan Antonio Rios Morales stood as candidates for the presidential election; on the other hand, the Socialists nominated Oscar Schnake and Carloz Ibanez del Campo to represent the Right. Seeing Ibanez's popularity among the masses, the Socialists withdrew their candidate and supported Rios. Consequently, Rios emerged victorious in the election on 2 April 1942. His cabinet was endowed with leaders from Socialists to Liberals. The government strengthened its relations with the Soviet Union, which the Rightists disliked. Conversely, the new government had developed bitter relations with Axis Germany, Italy, and Japan. Out of such bitterness, Chile declared war on Japan on April 13, 1943 (Wilson 227).

Amid such tension and political vicissitudes, Neruda was offered by the Chilean Communist Party to take part in a senatorial election for the constituency of Tarapaca and Antofagasta, regions of northern provinces, though he was still not an official member of the Party. Neruda accepted the offer, but as he had no experience as a political speaker, the party told him just to read out his poems during the campaign instead of giving formal speeches. As per the party plan, reading poetry became an effective way for Neruda to deliver the desired political message to the people. Neruda had an awful experience while travelling the region as a political activist.

He came into contact with the poorest of the regions and listened to the miners of the regions. He came to know about their untold sufferings and was pledge-bound to improve their lives.

On 4 March 1945, Neruda was elected a Communist senator for Antofagasta and Tarapaca.

In his *Memoirs*, he says:

. . . thousands of people from Chile's most inhospitable region, the great mining region copper and nitrate, gave me their vote...their solitude and the neglect they are consigned to have been fixed in the dark intensity of their eyes...But my poetry opened the way for communication, making it possible for me to walk among them and be accepted as a lifelong brother by my countrymen . . . (qtd. in Feinstein 176)

Neruda devoted himself to serving the most deprived of Chile. As part of his senatorial duties, he worked relentlessly just to improve the lives of the miners. Meanwhile, the Second World War was about to end. He felt relieved at the defeat of the Nazis. The Red Army triumphantly entered Berlin. A few months later, Neruda was awarded Chile's National Prize for Literature in May 1945, and he was the first poet in Chile to receive the award. Meanwhile, his name was spread everywhere in Chile as a leftist politician. He saw the Allies' victory over the Nazis as a triumph of communism. He highly applauded the USSR for its courageous move to face the threat of the Nazis. He also saw this prize as a "triumph over prejudice and anti-communist action" and said, "with which they want to poison the world to take advantage of the leftover remnants of Nazism, is more than a personal triumph for me; it represents hope that my homeland will achieve a more prestigious status in the world as a democratic nation" (qtd. in Eisner 325). In Eisner's words,

Neruda demonstrated a duality in his character that many have remarked upon. Not only did he write great poetry, including political poetry, but he also proved to be an agile

politician. He was much more than just a renowned figure whom the party could deploy as a candidate to capture a seat. Instead, he galvanized the chamber on a variety of issues, from demanding women's suffrage . . . to labor rights. (325)

Mark Eisner's observation focuses on how Neruda, as a senator, became committed to addressing the vital issues of the proletariat and how he continued to propagate his progressive thought through his poetry.

In July 1945, Neruda officially joined the Chilean Communist Party. No description is enough to capture his feelings after joining the party, but he recollects how the Chilean Communist Party came into existence. In the poem "Recabarren (1921)", he expresses homage to Luis Emilio Recabarren, a prominent figure in Chile's socialist labour movement, recognised as the founder of the Chilean Communist Party. He writes,

. . . It was there that this captain of the people

Arrived with his pamphlets.

He took the solitary offended man,

Who, wrapping his broken blankets

Over his hungry children

Accepted the fierce

Injustices, and he told him:

“Join your voice to another voice,”

“Join your hand to another hand.”

[...]

He organized the loneliness

...he united a complaint with another complaint

and the slave without voice or mouth,

the extended suffering,

...it was called Proletariat, Union,

...and it was called Party.

Communist

Party (qtd. in Eisner 322-323)

The lines expose how Recabarren, despite having numerous obstructions, sufferings, and poverty, came forward to form a Party and moved forward hand in hand. In addition, Neruda's confidence in the Chilean Communist Party came into focus as he believed the communists "were able to put class struggle forward as a primary political focus for the country" (Eisner 331). And such belief gave birth to a poem entitled "Communism":

You have given me brotherhood towards the man I do not know.

You have given my country back to me, as though in a new birth.

You have given me the freedom that the lone man lacks.

.....

You gave me the straightness which a tree requires.

You taught me to see the unity and yet diversity of men.

You showed me how one person's pain could die in the victory of all.

You taught me to sleep in the hard bed of my brethren.

.....

You made me an enemy to the evil-doer, a rampant for the frenzied.

You have made me see the world's clarity and the possibility of joy.

You have made me indestructible, for I no longer end in myself. (qtd. in Feinstein 179)

The above-mentioned poem encapsulates how much Neruda put his confidence in the Chilean Communist Party, which he always believed was vital in bringing expected change in Chilean society and politics. He also believed:

Communists were the only organised group and had put together an army to confront Italsna, Germans, Moors, and Falangists. They were also the moral force that kept the resistance and the anti-Fascist struggle going on...I have never had reason to regret the choice I made between darkness and hope in that tragic time. (Neruda 136)

In early 1946, Neruda was conferred the Order of the Aztec Eagle by the then-Mexican government, which he highly appreciated as the government gave shelter to thousands of refugees who suffered the setback of European fascism. When Mexico opened its door to the refugees, other South American states closed theirs. However, Neruda's joyfulness in receiving the award did not last long as the police opened fire on some unarmed demonstrators who gathered in front of the Santiago President's Palace to express their solidarity with the ill-paid and ill-fed workers in the Humberstone and Mapocho nitrate fields. The firing killed five of the demonstrators, though the protest was a peaceful one. Quite shocked at this happening, Neruda took pen in hand and wrote a poem. He upbraided the devilish role of the police and the way the authorities tried to cover up the incident. "With the profound historical and social changes occurring in Chile and in the world at large during the 1940's, however, Neruda's growing commitment to the Marxist cause had led him to alter his approach to poetry writing" (Mascia 65).

After Chilean President Rios's sudden death in September 1946, the Radical Party presidential candidate Videla summoned Neruda and asked him to work for his party. Neruda was given the charge of the Information head of the party. At that time of political shift in Spain, Videla was the best option to many on the Left. He got full-fledged support from a left-wing coalition

consisting mainly of the members of the Radical and the Communist Party. As per Volodia Teitelboim, a Neruda biographer, “He [Videla] was the most left-wing politician we had” (286), though we know he ultimately deceived all of them. Finally, upon Videla’s win, members from the Liberal, Communist, and Radical parties constituted his cabinet. This unusual combination was proved wrong very soon when the Right accused the Communists of their pro-Moscow move. So, the ministries that were under Communist leaders called for strikes, and such initiative of the communist politicians led to a rise of anti-Communist action. Videla supported such an uprising mostly led by the Right-wingers, though he did not go for any direct action against the Communist party. However, the Communists rightly guessed Videla’s involvement in it. In this regard, Eisner (2018) writes:

Meanwhile, the economy was lagging, and Gonzalez Videla switched his legislative priorities away from the social reforms he had pledged to the Left and concentrated on promoting growth through industrialization, with no provisions that would allow workers to benefit from any increase in profits. He began to blame the communists for exacerbating the country’s economic troubles. (329)

Neruda felt quite frustrated and disillusioned to see Videla’s Anti-Communist steps. As a member of the Communist Party and a senator, he extended his all-out support for the party and the righteous moves of the activists. He could sense that Videla would soon go for hard actions against the Party that once helped him come to power. On 21 October 1946, the President met Volodia Teitelboim, the then Chilean Communist Party’s emissary to the chief executive’s office, and ordered the Communist government ministers to step down. When Volodia told the President that the Communist ministers would not agree to this decision, Videla angrily answered, “If they disagree I will sack them anyway” (Teitelboim 288). He did what he said. Teitelboim had guessed

the ill-motive of Videla since the latter's win in the election. He shared an experience of his meeting with Videla after the election:

. . . he couldn't accept [that] the Communists could become a grand party through the power of the ballot box. He used an expression that became popular later, asking us to "submerge" ourselves. "You need to submerge yourselves in the darkness. Be like fish, don't make noise, and stay somewhere where no one sees you. That is a condition for you to survive. Otherwise, you will succumb." (Teitelboim 288)

Thereupon the communists, now no longer a part of the government, reinforced their protest against the Right-wingers. Alongside the protest of the communists, the Videla government had to face another protest of the mineworkers in Lota that broke out sometime in October 1947. The Lota miners demanded an increase in their salaries. In this respect, Neruda writes the following in his *Memoirs*:

Some of the jobs they do could be classified as among the hardest work done on the planet. Yet their salaries are barely enough to cover their living expenses, and naturally, they are not enough to meet any needs for cultural enrichment . . . "how can we tolerate the fact that our fellow citizens are subject to this ignominious exploitation?!" (qtd. in Eisner 330)

However, the government paid no heed to such a situation, and consequently, an uprising broke out. Instead of finding out the real cause behind such a protest, Videla and his aides pointed fingers at the Chilean Communist Party that, they believed, being directed by Moscow's plan, backed and fueled the uprising of the miners (Moran 90). It was true that the Lota miners' union had been running under the leadership of a communist miner. The party found the strike of the miners legal and extended its support. However, the government's assumption regarding the direct involvement of the Communist Party with the strike was baseless. In addition, the connection the government

found between Moscow and the Chilean Communist Party had no ground. In fact, the government was trying to justify its acts by concocting all the aforesaid issues. Neruda guessed the Videla government's underlying ill motives, ultimately shocking him. He portrays a picture of Videla in his *Memoirs*:

The man was an equilibrist, an acrobat who played to all sides. He managed to work on his way into a spectacular left-wing role, and in this comedy of lies was the undisputed champion . . . when this conga dancer changed course in midstream, it was much too late: the prisons were crammed full of political victims, and concentration camps were even set up, such as the one at Pisagua. A police state was then established, as a national novelty. (Neruda 172)

Against the backdrop of the situation stated above by Neruda, the Left challenged the government and took to the streets. The government, too, fought back. The United States backed Videla, thinking of its economic interests in Chile. Being overly empowered by the U.S. government, the Videla government unleashed an anti-communist backlash across the country and ordered the imprisonment of communist leaders. But, the situation went beyond their control when they saw that the workers began to join the Communists to fight against them. The government urged the military to intervene, and Videla declared a state of emergency in Santiago. In this regard, the then U.S. ambassador to Chile, Claude Bowers, sent a message mentioning the following: "Gonzalez Videla declared war on Communism as a result of what he claims is a Communist plot to overthrow the government and obtain control of the production of strategic raw materials, namely copper and nitrates" (qtd. in Eisner 332).

In the case of commenting on Videla's diabolical acts, many critics hold the opinion that Videla did all these under pressure from the United States. He did so to develop a closer economic

and military affinity with the dominant superpower, the US (Moran 91). In this respect, Feinstein (2004) mentions, "The United States certainly encouraged a crackdown on Chilean Communists, and the two countries agreed to a military assistance pact while Gonzalez Videla was President" (184). However, what made Neruda, along with the members of the Chilean Communist Party, dumbfounded was Videla's permission to imprison the protesting miners in the military prisons on the islands of Santa Maria and Quinquina. The poet describes in his *Passions and Impressions* (1981) that the coal miners were subjected to brutal mistreatment when the army surrounded the mines two hours before the strike, treating them as enemies of the state. The arrest and detention of union leaders occurred, with their confinement on ships or isolated islands. Additionally, miners were subjected to forced eviction from their residences without even having the opportunity to dress appropriately. The female individuals were publicly displayed while restrained by handcuffs, and a subset of them underwent the removal of their hair. Families and workers were compelled to board trains and subjected to prolonged periods of confinement without access to sustenance or hydration, resulting in many fatalities. The incident led to deaths among individuals of various age groups, including children and adults. Additionally, the remains of miners were discovered in the elevated terrains. However, the opportunity to investigate was withheld from any interested parties (Neruda 274). Among the men assigned by Videla as in charge of the prisons was Augusto Pinochet Ugarte, who came to state power through a military coup some twenty years later. Most prisoners were later sent to a concentration camp in Pisagua. Pinochet was shifted to Pisagua as the chief of the camp, who was later empowered to launch an operation to deflect the protest of the remaining miners, who were subsequently arrested and sent to the concentration camp. Ultimately, all the steps of Videla established him as a dictator. To the utter surprise of the

Communist Party, the Socialists supported Videla's dictatorial regime that ultimately imposed martial law on those workers who had refused to work.

Neruda's sadness knew no bounds to see the radical transformation Chile's politics underwent. Meanwhile, Videla made all arrangements to outlaw the Chilean Communist Party. He secretly met Admiral William Leahy, the then-US President Truman's emissary, to execute such an obnoxious decision. For some days, Neruda felt utterly dejected and helpless. The political situation was growing desperate day by day. He knew that losing the senatorial post meant he could be arrested anytime. Many of his comrades suggested that he go into hiding. But initially, he refused to do so, for which he had to encounter suffering.

The only way Neruda found out to fight what Videla's government was doing was to take pen in hand and write an article in the newspaper. In this regard, Feinstein (2004) mentions, "the censorship of the press in Chile was so comprehensive, he looked abroad and published a bombshell article in Venezuelan daily *EI Nacional*, under the headline: 'The Crisis of Democracy in Chile is a Dramatic Warning for Our Continent.'" In his writing, he rebuked Videla's multiple pacts with the US to resolve the internal issues of Chile. He also brought to light Videla's assumption of the imminent war between the US and Russia. Meanwhile, Videla told a correspondent of the London-based newspaper *News Chronicle* that in the war, "Chile must cooperate with her powerful neighbour, the United States of America, and when the war begins, Chile will support the United States against Russia" (Neruda 265). He further mentioned he had no personal objections to the Chilean Communist Party, but keeping in view the policy of the US, he went ahead to take steps against the Communist Party. Indeed, he did not want to lose his presidency. He wanted to keep his position intact at any cost. So, he conformed to the policy of North American monopolies. Neruda mentions that representatives of all major North American

companies like Anaconda Copper, Anglo Chilean Nitrate, Braden Copper, and Bethlehem Steel isolated Videla from his objective to work for people (Neruda 264). Consequently, Videla's attitude toward his Communist ministers changed. He used his communist friends when necessary. But, after his alliance with the United States, he sacked the communist ministers from his cabinet.

Neruda also brings into focus that Videla used the Lota strike as a means of his betrayal of the Communist Party. He accused the communist leaders of their involvement in the outbreak of the protest. He made the allegation that the Communists ignited the protest against the government. Critics like Robin Paul, Marjorie Agosin, and Mark Eisner agree that "the strike is not due to the frightful conditions in the coal regions, but to an international plot, and on the basis of the falsehood, he has treated the strikers with a cruelty and savagery found only in Nazi systems of slavery and oppression . . ." (Feinstein 191).

Neruda gave a detailed account of the heinous acts of Videla in his *El Nacional* article. He demonstrated that the President expressed opposition to various initiatives advocated by the Left, such as the allocation of uncultivated land to landless peasants, the establishment of wage equality between males and females, the nationalisation of key industries, the implementation of a state bank similar to the Federal Reserve, and the initiation of a large-scale public housing project (Eisner 335). Eisner (2018) also writes that the United States made Chile a "puppet regime" that was ready to enact "torture, prison and exile" (335). At the end of the writing, he thanked the Communist Party for releasing him from all party activities while writing the article. After the publication of the article, Videla appealed for the revocation of Neruda's senatorial status to the court. The court accepted the appeal of the President, though Neruda appealed against the decision. On 6 January 1948, Neruda delivered the bravest and most bewildering speech in the Senate. He said that the way the President demanded his impeachment was one of the most notorious acts in

the history of Chile. He read the names of 628 men and women imprisoned and tortured at the Pisagua concentration camp. He began his speech by mentioning the following:

Roosevelt sent a message to the world of . . . freedom . . . freedom of speech and expression; . . . freedom from fear. . . . but Truman, along with Latin American dictators and the Gonzalez Videlas of the world, want [s] a different kind of world. . . . There is no freedom of speech in Chile . . . [Those] who fight to free our country from misery are persecuted, mistreated, injured, and condemned. (qtd. in Eisner 337)

The speech makes it clear that the Videla government had detained a large number of people without informing them of any particular charge. Neruda said that the Chilean government allied with the US government and launched a crackdown on innocent people. The President attempted to silence all political opponents and censor the press. His dictatorship censored people's freedom of speech.

Neruda's Senate Speech titled "I Accuse" left serious impacts on the Videla government. The very title of the speech indicates how he has accused the President of all political persecutions and diabolical acts that, indeed, went against the image of the state. He delivered the entire speech in two separate sessions. In the first session, he broadly accused the President of creating violence and destroying the unions, setting armed forces against the working people, removing thousands of experienced workers from industries, suppressing the freedom of opinion, creating artificial divisions among Chileans, and allowing foreign military bases with uniformed troops. (Neruda 302-303). One week after delivering the first part of the speech, he stood before the Senate to deliver the final one on 13 January 1948:

I am a persecuted man, and justly persecuted. An incipient tyranny must persecute those who defend freedom . . . But persecution will not lead anywhere, because the Communist

Party is making history at this very moment. We will be isolated, apparently, but from all sides, like invisible threads, come the brotherhood and solidarity of the people and free man. They will not be silenced . . . (qtd. in Feinstein 193)

He continues to say and brings forward the spirit of the Chilean Communist Party: “I am proud that this persecution has fallen on my shoulders. . . . To all the Communists of Chile, to the women and men who have been mistreated, harassed, and persecuted, I salute you . . .” (Neruda 305). Alongside this, Neruda raises hope among the persecuted by saying: “Our party is immortal. It was born from the suffering of the people, and these attacks only ennoble it and swell its ranks” (Neruda 306).

Neruda knew about the consequences of his bold move; nevertheless, he put all his confidence in the Communist Party. He also says the following for the nitrate workers: “I promised to defend you with my intellect and with my life...Tell me if I have fulfilled my promise, and either condemn me or grant me the only mandate I need in order to live with honour—that of your confidence, of your hope, of your love” (Neruda 306). Neruda also knew that the Videla administration could arrest him anytime for his speech, but such a step would not be able to separate him from the communist ideals. His speech encapsulated that the Chilean Communist party, following its previous footsteps, would be working for the rights of the dispossessed and the deprived, though the Videla government already planned to ban all its activities. Finally, Neruda believed “the struggle of the people can erase the ignominy of these bad days” (Neruda 307) and said:

Sweet land, hear the vows

Chile swore in your altar

Chile will be a tomb for free men

Or an asylum against oppression. (307)

iii. The Creation of an Epic

Numerous vital factors helped Neruda make a design and develop a distinct style for his epic poem, *Canto General*. Firstly, we can discuss how the Spanish Baroque tradition of poetry left an indelible mark on the development of his epic poem. The early 17th-century Spanish poets Luis de Gongora and Francisco de Quevedo, the precursors of the Spanish Baroque tradition of poetry, have introduced us to two different styles of the Baroque called “Culteranismo” and “Conceptismo” (Agosin 58). The first one, developed and practised by Gongora, emphasises the exterior value of any poem, and the second style, pioneered by Quevedo, speaks of the importance of the content and themes of any poem. However, both styles emerged to make a satire of social, political, and cultural emptiness and hollowness. But Culteranismo prefers to use ostentatious vocabulary to achieve its aim; conversely, the style of “conceptismo” uses simple diction to reach its goal.

Pablo Neruda, an ardent follower and admirer of Quevedo, developed his ideas in *Canto General* by endorsing the style of Quevedo’s “conceptismo.” He used simple language and rapid rhythm to propagate his thoughts or to maintain the satirical tone of his poems. In this regard, Eisner asserts that Neruda found a link between the objective of conceptismo and the Marxist concept of form and content and subsequently discovered that Quevedo’s conceptismo has the same purpose as the Marxist idea of form and content (Allegrezza 147). In other words, the way the Marxists, acknowledging the importance of form, give more value to the development of content than the form of any literary piece is similar to Quevedo’s approach to conceptismo which emphasises the significance of the interior idea of a poem. Eisner adds that no doubt, Neruda’s Marxist ideals directed him to subscribe to Quevedo’s style of conceptismo, and he applied that

style to develop the satirical tone of *Canto General*. As a result, through many of the cantos, he satirises South American political leadership for its excessive reliance on the U.S. administration to deal with political unrest and vicissitudes. Several poems condemn such reliance as the prime factor that led to the rise of cultural imperialism across the continent of South America.

Apart from Quevedo, American poet Walt Whitman profoundly influenced Neruda's endeavour of writing an epic. In his *Memoirs*, Neruda considers Whitman a truly American poet who addresses the causes of the people. He writes, "Give me your voice and the weight of your buried breast, Walt Whitman" (Neruda 266). Then he mentions how Whitman becomes a poet of multitudes and a unique voice of America:

[. . .] I learned more from Whitman than from Cervantes. In Whitman's poetry . . . the human condition is never derided . . . we are still living in a Whitmanesque epoch . . . The bard complained of the all-powerful European influence that continued to dominate the literature of his time. In fact, it was he, Walt Whitman, in the persona of a specific geography, who, for the first time in history, brought honor to an American name. He is the first absolute poet, and it was his intention not only to sing but to impart his vision of the relationships of men and of nations. (Neruda 377)

The observation mentioned above brings into focus how Whitman became an inspiration for Neruda. Indeed, while writing the lyric-epic *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman broke up with the tradition of European epic poetry, highlighting the "extraordinary deeds" of upper-class people of society (Allegrezza 4). Instead, he created a new lyric epic that he called purely American, speaking of "the totality of a community's life" (Neruda 378). As a result, Neruda drew inspiration from *Leaves of Grass* as a model when composing *Canto General*, perceiving it as a genuine literary expression of the American continent (Allegrezza 5). William Allegrezza (2017), a professor of Louisiana

State University, asserts that both Whitman and Neruda deliberately opted for the epic genre to construct a national narrative and establish cultural legends as they created a literary opus to resonate with the populace. In this regard, Earl Fitz (2015) aptly highlights the suitability of the newly emerged epic genre for examining the invasion and colonisation of the Americas, considering the recurrent endeavours in both Anglo and Latin America (Allegrezza 5). Conversely, Erenburg assumes that Whitman's break up with the European tradition of epic poetry, his embracement of both advanced and primitive societies, his emphasis on the human condition, and his critique of the colonial mindset of Europe gave Neruda enough courage to deal with a plethora of issues in *Canto General*. In this regard, the poet says, "I had to break out of my limited world by myself, . . . I had to be myself, striving to branch out like the very land where I was born. Another poet of this same hemisphere helped me along this road, Walt Whitman, my comrade from Manhattan" (Neruda 262).

Indeed, the theme of camaraderie is prominent in Neruda's *Canto General*, which aims to promote solidarity among Latin Americans. Unlike the social realist literature of the early Soviet Union, Neruda does not focus on what comrades can achieve but rather creates a narrative that inspires Latin Americans to transcend their sense of isolation and disconnection. He brings forth the experiences of the people and their individuality, believing that the capitalist economy exerts dominance over both the individual and nature. So, Neruda considers camaraderie the sole path to liberation, which will subsequently enable the people to strengthen democracy founded on human necessity and free themselves from authoritarian rulers and the "holy Western civilization" (Allegrezza 141). Furthermore, he stresses the importance of unity in the future of Latin America and believes that presenting camaraderie in his work will lead readers to embrace communism. He acknowledges that the Chilean Communist Party has taught him the value of fraternity towards

strangers and believes it can teach others the same. So, he urges people to unify and proceed as a cohesive force towards the ultimate objective of establishing a communist society. He views his work as a means to expose the suffering of the people and demonstrate the myth of unity. He intended his work for future poets, particularly for those who would shape the new era of American poetry (Allegrezza 186).

However, as per Peter Balakian (2016), a Pulitzer prize-winning writer, the meeting point of both Neruda's concept of politics and culture and those of Whitman was their commitment to people (18). And the way Whitman advocated the necessity of freedom and fraternity in *Leaves of Grass* is similar to Neruda's dealing with the same issues in *Canto General*. In this respect, the following view is important:

Whitman's stress on union and fraternity in *Leaves of Grass* is a reaction to the fractured politics of his period. The American poet exposes anyone who impedes the way of liberty and promotes anyone moving towards liberty . . . the attitude of both the great poets is to cheer slaves and horrify despots. This view is central in *Canto General* . . . (qtd. in Allegrezza 40-41).

Allegrezza believes that Whitman's stance for the dispossessed brings to light his proletarian view in which Neruda puts all his faith (41). She also argues that Neruda endeavours to shift Whitman's attention towards the Soviet Union, insinuating a congruence between Whitman's values and those of the Soviet Union. According to Neruda's assessment, the Soviet Union exemplifies a pristine manifestation of democracy, characterised by the peaceful collaboration of people in meeting each other's needs. He implores Whitman to collaborate in praising the grandeur of the people, as he believes that Whitman has already exalted the marvels of the working class. In addition, he aims to utilise the authority of the preeminent poet in the United States to scrutinise contemporary

Americans' behaviours. Therefore, he recalls Lincoln, whom he holds in high esteem as a prominent figure in American history. Neruda aims to foster a sense of unity among the Americas' "fraternal subsoil" (III, 206) by referencing two prominent American personalities who expressed support for the Soviet Union. He contends that there exists an interconnectedness among the Americas. By presenting "el leñador" as a combination of several personas, including those from North America, he aims to evoke a heroic presence that can have advantageous implications for all labourers (Allegrezza 187). Consequently, the following lines that Neruda writes in memory of Whitman in "Ode to Walt Whitman" are equally applicable to both Whitman and Abraham Lincoln:

Your voice, that's still singing
 in the suburban stations, on
 the unloading docks at night...
 Your word, that's still splashing...
 And your people, black, white,
 Poor & simple,...
 Still not forgetting
 the tolling of your bell . . . (Neruda 427)

Apart from Whitman, Nazim Hikmet's revolutionary verses, Mayakovsky's directness in poetry and his attempts to replace the old order of society with the new one, Baudlaire's attachment with the labour union, and Romain Rolland's Marxist views of violence and nonviolence revolutions influenced Neruda to a great extent in developing the major parts of his lyric-epic, *Canto General*.

When Neruda visited Moscow, Russia, to attend the 150th birth anniversary celebration of Russian poet Pushkin, he came into contact with numerous poets and writers from different parts of the world there. Among them was Nazim Hikmet, an influential Turkey poet and activist who was imprisoned for 18 years by order of the government that accused him of inciting Turkey's navy into rebellion. Neruda condemned the then-Turkey government for such an obnoxious step against a poet who always used to write and work for people's emancipation (Neruda 428). Indeed, the Turkish poet raised his voice for the rights of the peasants, who became the worst sufferers of oppression by the feudal lords in his country. He had to face severe consequences for his activism. He shared with Neruda the reign of terror of his country. So, Neruda found another poet working for humanity's plight. Moreover, Hikmet expressed his conviction toward the Russian government's faith in poetry, which contributed to uplifting people's lives and souls (Neruda 196). While staying there, Neruda and Hikmet found Russia's cultural ambiance favourable to the poets and writers. In this regard, Moran contends that the Russian days and his contact with Nazim Hikmet exerted an unwavering influence on Neruda's mind while composing different parts of *Canto General*.

Neruda expressed his disgust with the conventional European poetry that mostly used to follow the principle of art for art's sake and declared that poetry has become free and got a "fresh start" at the hands of two French poets, Charles Baudelaire and Arthur Rimbaud. Then came Walt Whitman, who "had sown all the leaves of grass" and showed us how to be distinct in dealing with American life and people (Neruda 169). After that, Mayakovsky came to the forefront and "built a house of poetry that echoed with toots and shots, sighs and sobs, the roar of trains and armored cars" (169). However, Gordon Brotherston (1976) asserts that Mayakovsky's clarity of thought, the directness in delivering historical facts without being unnecessarily symbolic, the tonal quality

of his poetry, and his commitment to human progress influenced Neruda to a great extent. Neruda applied those features to develop the part of *Canto General*, focusing on the distortion of historical facts by the oligarchies in different parts of South America (303). In this connection, Hayat Mahmud (2014), a former professor of Jahangirnagar University, Dhaka, differs from other critics. He states that Mayakovsky's determination to build a socialist society in the light of the communist principles and the Marxist ideology gave an impetus to Neruda to propagate his ideas of social change through the lyric epic (Mahmud 292).

Again, Charles Baudelaire and Arthur Rimbaud influenced Neruda to some extent. Mafidul Haq demonstrates that Baudelaire's support of the demonstration of the Labour Union in Paris directly impacted Neruda, who was, afterwards, found expressing solidarity with the Lota strikers and extending unconditional support, reflected in his epic. However, Arthur Rimbaud influenced the early poetry of Neruda, mostly dealing with love, nature, and men-women relations. In addition, Romain Rolland is another poet who has extensively impacted Neruda's *Canto General*. Vishwanath Tandon (2008) opines, Romain Rolland's revolutionary thoughts left a profound impact on Neruda. He states that as the South American poet was a great reader of world literature, he naturally browsed the poetry and ideas of Rolland ("Romain Rolland's Efforts"). Romain Rolland's belief in the necessity of both violent and nonviolent revolutions to replace the old order of society, as the critic asserts, directly impacted Neruda's poems of "The Liberators," broadly illustrating the urgency of the Marxist revolutions to create a new socialist society. Vishwanath avers that the following view of Romain Rolland reinforced Neruda to put his faith in the power of communist revolution capable of dismantling the onslaughts of the bourgeois and the capitalist powers: "What must be at the centre of our concern is the establishment of a more just and humane

social order, and to be established it must be imposed, for it must first strenuously defend all violence of the old order . . .” (“Romain Rolland’s Efforts”).

In addition, Rolland’s faith in Russia for its heroic deeds and preference of “Russian Marxism to American and European imperialism” is very similar when Neruda pays his respect to Russia for its contribution to the science, literature, and overall progress of human civilisation (Neruda 196-197). Other than the above-stated influences, Robin Paul (2018), the author of the book titled *Onubade Onubhobe Neruda (Neruda in Translation and Feelings)*, mentions the following factors that directed Neruda to write an epic poem like *Canto General*: First, Neruda felt it paramount to write about the topography of the entire of Latin America, and such feeling helped him compose the poems of the beginning sections of the book. Second, he earnestly desired to address the continent's political history and social problems. Third, his 1943 visit to the ruins of Machu Picchu in Peru left an indelible mark on his mind, especially about the actual makers of the Inca civilisation and their contributions denied by their predecessors later on. Fourth, he also asseverated the need to reveal the Spanish colonists’ reign of terror across the continent. Fifth, Neruda’s life as a Senator took him very close to the working-class people. To see the dispossessed, he had a realisation about their life, which subsequently helped him portray their lives and sufferings in the poems of *Canto General*. Sixth, his membership in the Chilean Communist Party made him believe in communist ideals, which also contributed to the development of the epic poem. Seventh, the Videla government’s anti-communist steps and its oppressive policies against the Chilean peasants, labourers, and miners propelled him to come up with some poems projecting the tyranny of the aforesaid administration. Apart from the reasons mentioned above, the US intervention in Chilean politics and the intrusion of US-based corporations into different parts of Latin America compelled him to take pen in hand to unveil the pitfalls of capitalism. Lastly, the

exploitative business policy of the rich natives in different states of the continent, their nefarious alliance with the capitalist foreign powers, and the subsequent rise of the ruling class were other predominant reasons why Neruda expressed his rebelliousness in many of the compositions of *Canto General* (38-39).

Indeed, in 1947, the Chilean Communist Party commissioned Neruda to write about the ill attempts at distorting the historical facts in Chile and issued him a vacation to concentrate on writing a book. The party expected the portrayal of leftist ideology in his poetry. Neruda indirectly served the communist party through his compositions because he dealt with the Marxist views of dialectical and historical materialism. The poems of the book, in multiple ways, reflect the Marxist views about art, culture, literature, and history. As a communist activist, the poet speaks of the rights of the dispossessed and the proletariat. Again, as a Marxist, he sheds light on the idea of historical materialism that helps him expose the distortion of the historical facts of Latin America. He applies the concept of dialectical materialism to bring to light how the rich, along with the bourgeoisie, exploit the proletariat.

iv. Structure of *Canto General*: Marxist Dialectical Approach

The structure and language of the epic poem denote Pablo Neruda's conscious break with the European tradition of writing poetry. To fashion the structure of the poem, he subscribed to Walt Whitman, who enormously experimented with free verse. Neruda has followed in the footsteps of Whitman. Furthermore, his language is "linked to his material, to the organic substances of the land he is describing" (Agosin 63). His diction varies from one section to the other depending on the tone, mood, content, and theme. His language of applause never merges with that of protest. We hardly find such a conscious use of language in poetry among his contemporaries in Spanish literature.

Canto General comprises fifteen sections denoting a “retrospective synopsis” of the entire experience of the poet through the voices of multiple persons (Anwar 103). Rene de Costa (1979) compares Neruda’s use of “multiple protagonists and sudden shift in the narrative voice” with the alienation effect devised by Bertolt Brecht to take “the audience to a new level of consciousness” (126). In this regard, Ali Anwar (2010), a former diplomat, essayist and a literary critic, views that Neruda uses 42 speakers in his epic to create a “polyphonic symphony” capturing the vastness of South America with its variety (103). The beginning sections shed light on the flora and fauna of America. Gradually, Neruda discovers man’s place in nature. Such discovery has been detailed, ranging from the fifth to the eighth sections. From the ninth one, he goes deeper to explore human history. He brings forth the history of the ancestors. He enunciates how his forefathers travailed a lot to make this ancient Inca civilisation. Here, he expresses his holistic view of the history of Latin America and imagines himself as a citizen of the entire South American continent. Reaching the top of Machu Picchu, he feels he is standing in the navel of the continent (Anwar 105). He tries to recollect the history of the ancient Inca civilisation. He believes that his ancestors, mostly the working class, contributed to the making of this civilisation. Alongside, he mentions how the bourgeois, in the present time, deny the contribution of the proletariat. So, he plays the role of a chronicler who chronicles the history of the continent. Such endeavour indicates his quest for historicity. Up to the twelfth section, Neruda devotes himself to revealing the historical facts that have been distorted first by the attempts of the invaders and subsequently by the acts of the foreign capitalist powers (Agosin 65). At the end of the book, especially in the concluding sections, the poet demonstrates the possibility of a proletarian revolution that might restore the lost social order. Such a revolution, as Neruda asserts, will annihilate all kinds of bourgeois onslaughts. He expounds that the proletariats are the real heroes of history.

However, how Neruda developed the idea of proletarianism or Marxist revolution and inserted the concept of historical materialism, a dominant Marxist thought, into his poems tend to describe the changes he embraced while writing *Canto General*. Just before writing “The Heights of Machu Picchu,” Neruda joined the Chilean Communist Party and subscribed to the Marxist-Lennist view of historical progress (Moran 98). So, as a communist activist and Marxist thinker, it was natural for Neruda to manifest issues like the Marxist revolution or historical materialism in his poetry. Furthermore, I assert that for him, thinking of holistic progress of the history of Latin America has been possible because of his commitment to communist ideals that always promote the idea of seeing things collectively rather than individually. Neruda utterly believes in it, as Dominic Moran (2009) points out, “When collective utopia is the prize, any number of individual lives are worth sacrificing for it; it matters little how many poor souls shivered and went hungry at Machu Picchu since they did so—albeit unwittingly—so that centuries later the rebellious masses could carry out the socialist revolution” (98-99).

As Moran demonstrated, Neruda abstained himself from describing the cruelty and barbarity of the pre-Hispanic era. The Inca empire was feudal and dictatorial. Slavery, fear, and lack of freedom and rights featured the society. The poet does not describe such issues in his poems. Instead, he considers that society “proto-communist” (Moran 84). He brings forward the dialectical progress of the society and, therefore, subscribes to the views of Jose Carlos Mariategui (1894-1930), a political philosopher and founder of the Peruvian Socialist Party, who claims that the primitive Inca society still bears some basic features of communism. In the poem, Neruda has manifested such thoughts to show how primitive communism resurfaced in the form of contemporary proletarianism to challenge the bourgeois regime.

v. Anatomy of Poems: Neruda's Quest for Historicity

Canto General appears with the theme of “man’s struggle for justice in the new world” (Costa 5). Costa (1979) believes the epic poem appeared “at a time when the Western Hemisphere nations seemed to hold out a last hope for justice and democracy” (119). He underscores the dialectical aspect of this “American poem, infused with optimism” (Costa 119). He finds the following thesis behind the development of the epic: “the New World triumphs over the Old, life over death” (Costa 119). However, in mentioning the lyrical elements of his epic poem, Neruda says,

It will have lyrical and descriptive elements as well, and will attempt to reveal the deep process of historic transformation through which Chile has passed. I want to counter-balance the effect of the great poetry of the classics, such as Ercilla and Pedro de Ona. But I feel very humble in this task. To write for the people is too great an ambition. (qtd. in Costa 114)

What importance *Canto General* bears in the overall oeuvre of Neruda has given birth to two factions. Amid them, the first criticises the poet as a propagandist and singles out his involvement with communist politics that helped him organise the epic poem, and the other appreciates his endeavour to write this long poem in the light of the Marxist ideas about art and literature. Costa (1979) says, “Both sides forgot that there is an art even to propaganda, especially, if it is to be effective. *Canto General*, like *Residencia*, was effective in that it both persuaded and provoked” (106).

The Argentine, Chilean, and Mexican dictatorial governments, as Neruda assumed, attempted to distort the respective histories of their countries. Furthermore, while visiting different states in South America as a diplomat, he saw how the governments developed a tendency to avoid

and unacknowledge the age-old history of their ancestors. The issues mentioned above made Neruda think anew. Resultantly, he addressed these in *Canto General* wherein we find him engaged in a journey to rediscover the distorted facts of history. He points out that though many of the South American states achieved independence from colonial power, they could not free themselves from cultural imperialism.

The first canto of this epic, “A Lamp on Earth,” broadly reveals that South America was free from corruption and exploitation before the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors. Indeed, Neruda imagines a utopian past in which he finds his roots as an American. His utopian thought informs us that during the pre-Columbian period, the indigenous people, with their little means of life, led a peaceful life. Neruda considers the pre-Columbian time as the “golden age” (Teitelboim 49). At that time, people believed in co-existence and did not engage in conflict. They used to live in a society free from inequality and exploitation. But the Spanish invasion posed a threat to the existence of the real inhabitants of this land. In the first poem of this canto, “Amor America”, Neruda writes,

Before the wig and the dress coat
there were rivers, arterial rivers:
there were cordilleras, jagged waves where
the candor and the snow seemed immutable:
 [...]
 Man was dust, earthen vase, an eyelid
of tremulous loam, the shape of clay—
 [...]
 Life was not lost, pastoral brothers.

*But like a wild rose
a red drop fell into the dense growth,
and a lamp of earth was extinguished.*

[...]

I am here to tell the story.

*From the peace of the buffalo
to the pummeled sands . . . (Neruda 139)*

By following the philosophy of dialectics, Neruda shows the two opposite sides of the continent. Firstly, he brings forward how this land, full of natural resources, turns into a devastated one. Then, he attempts to delve deep into the causes of why the people of South America had to undergo a reign of terror. Likewise, throughout the epic, he searches for the lost glory of the continent and exposes the massacre the colonists launched. In doing so, he uses the Marxist idea of historical materialism, bringing to light his quest for historicity.

The Conquistadors

In this part, Neruda admonishes those Spanish conquerors who occupied different parts of Latin America during the pre-Columbian age. The canto also brings forward the ways numerous Spanish invaders looted the wealth of the continent. It shows how the invaders killed thousands of unarmed people and how some occupiers exploited the kings of numerous regions of the continent and occupied their kingdoms. Neruda's portrayal of the aforesaid activities of the Spanish invaders helps us create an imaginary picture of that tumultuous time in our minds. He tags the invaders as "butchers" (Riess 123). Frank Riess (1972), a professor of Birkbeck University of London, demonstrates that all negative images like rape, cupidity, treason, division, corruption, silence, and

death dominate this section. “The continual movement between disintegration and integration is really the fundamental idea of all social references in the *Canto General*” (Riess 114-115).

The Conquistadors begins with “They Come through the Islands (1493)” providing us with a vivid image of the onset of the invaders’ attack on the masses:

The butchers razed the islands.
 ...The children of clay saw their smile
 shattered, beaten
 their fragile stature of deer,
 and even in death they did not understand.
 They were bound and tortured,
 burned and branded,
 bitten and buried. (Neruda 166)

The lines denote how the attackers, all at once, attacked the villagers. The people were in complete flux and did have the slightest clue about such an attack. The invaders emptied the vast field by killing people. The poet says that people were assassinated before they realised why they were being killed. After such a massacre, the poet writes the following in the second stanza: Nothing remained but bones / rigidly arranged / In the form of a cross, to the greater / glory of God and mankind. At last, nothing but people’s bones in cross-shape remain to be mourned. Then, Neruda brings to light the dubious act of another invader, Hernan Cortes, who conquered the Aztec empire in 1521 and claimed Mexico for Spain. Neruda projects Cortes as an ambitious and greedy man. His poem, “Cortes”, shows how the Spanish invaders plundered the lands for gold and riches. The following lines of the poem project how his ambition and greed know no bounds:

Cortes receives a dove,

receives a pheasant, a zither
from the king's musicians,
but he wants the roomful of gold,
wants one thing more, and everything falls
in the plunderers' chests. (Neruda 167)

The lines showcase Cortes's dissatisfaction with what he got as gifts from the king of Tlaxcala. He had a boundless desire to possess more and more gold. The poem's ending lines unveil that he was the first Spanish conqueror who, after his occupation of the Aztec empire, compelled millions of natives to be converted to catholicism from their respective religious beliefs. Neruda rightly points out that Cortes completed all missions one after the other, but the Tlaxalan king guessed very little of his underlying aims.

In "The Conquistadors," Neruda unfolds, on the one hand, how the Spanish invaders invaded land after land across South America in search of gold and riches, and on the other hand, how they mercilessly launched killing missions and even posed a threat to the natural abundance of the occupied regions. In this regard, the poem "Cholula" is a relevant example shedding light upon how the invaders, one fine day, conducted an attack across the land of Cholula, which not only took the lives of many young men who were celebrating a festival but also destroyed the serenity and beauty of the environment. The beginning lines shed light on it:

In Cholula, the youths wear
their finest cloth, gold, and plumes.
Adorned for their festival,
they question the invader.
Death has answered them. (Neruda 168)

The stanza denotes the barbarity of the invaders. The young men who were in the celebration were stabbed to death. Those who queried about the attack had to face brutal fate.

The next poem of the same canto, titled “Alvarado,” brings forward Spanish Conquistador Pedro de Alvarado’s obnoxious treatment of the native populations of Mexico. He committed mass murder in Cuba, Guatemala, and Honduras. The following stanza of the poem depicts his mission of mass killing in a village in Mexico:

Alvarado fell upon the huts
with claws and knives, he razed
the patrimony of the goldsmith,
ravished the nuptial rose of the tribe,
assaulted races, properties, religions— (Neruda 169)

Such was the crime Alvarado committed. The native tribes saw his cataclysmic devastation. He killed thousands of the natives. Those who survived the drive of his killing mission turned into slaves. W. George Lovell regarded him as an “insatiable despot” who completely disregarded any form of authority other than his own, perceiving Guatemala as nothing more than his personal domain (Agosin 98). Similarly, the poem of the canto entitled “Guatemala” brings forth how he led an attack on the nobles and priests of Guatemala solemnising a religious festival. He was behind such a massacre because he feared the plot by the priests against him. He concocted such a story to validate his onslaught on that group of natives.

Overall, “The Conquistadors” brings to light the land division during the conquest as a bloodbath, while “Valdivia” illustrates the earth’s reaction to the merciless slaughter of native tribes by the invaders. The people’s battle for liberation, which he characterises as a natural birth

process, will serve as an instrument to unite the populace and ultimately lead to communism (Brotherston 157).

The Liberators

“The Liberators” implies how the indigenous leaders of the Inca period resisted the massacre of the Spanish invaders. This canto explores the dedication and commitment of the heroes of South America. The men Neruda considered true liberators sacrificed their lives for the liberation of their fatherlands. In this section, the poet pays homage to all leaders who hailed from Mexico, Cuba, Honduras, Guatemala, Chile, Colombia, etcétera. The liberators attempted to liberate the natives from the colonisation of the Spanish conquistadors. At the outset, the poet pays his tribute to different rulers and native fighters of the Aztec empire who tried their best to protect the regions of South America from the invaders. Then, he hymns to the union of commoners who have felt committed to saving the South American territories from the Spanish invasion. The canto begins with “Cuauhtemoc (1520),” embodying the bravery of the Aztec ruler, Cuauhtemoc, who appeared to be a heroic defender of the Aztec empire against the Spanish conquistadors. The following lines denote how he gained popularity among his people: “. . . among your people / You’re bread and root, spear and star” (Neruda 332). The lines prove how he fortified his people against all kinds of evils. But, at last, he had to suffer a brutal fate at the hands of the invader, Cortes, and became a victim of the conspiracy by the associates of Cortes.

Neruda never hesitates to do homage to even a Spanish priest and bishop, namely, Bartolome de las Caras, who spent his entire life fighting against slavery and the colonial repression of indigenous people. He came to be known as the protector of the Indians. The poet regards him as his brother because of his steps and actions against the Spanish colonists. Though he was a Spanish citizen, he never feared speaking up against the injustice and colonial

repercussions of the Spaniards. The poet includes him in the long list of the liberators who worked for the liberation of the Native Americans. Though Bartolome never raised his voice to end colonialism in America, he demanded the end of slavery, which finally made him secure a space in the good book of Neruda. He protested against the Spanish labour policy and persuaded the Spanish court to formulate a more humane policy of colonisation. For him, Neruda's appreciation pours in:

Mankind's given few lives like yours,
 few shades in the tree like your shade---

 all the razed conditions, the wound
 of the mutilated, the exterminated
 villages, everything's reborn
 under your shade, . . .
 Father, it was fortunate for mankind
 that you arrived on the plantation, (Neruda 186)

It can easily be assumed that Neruda found in him a spirit that had been necessary for the people who had been under colonial rule at that time. Bartolome raised hope among the enslaved, deprived of all rights and justice. The poet mentions how the priest emerged as a heroic figure to the dispossessed. His solitary combat against the system of slavery inspired the Indians, as well as North American natives, to live with hope for better days. So, the poet writes:

You were reality amid bloodthirsty
 phantoms, you were
 the eternity of tenderness

over the tempest of punishment
 From combat to combat your hope
 was transformed into precise tools:
 solitary struggle branched,
 fruitless tears formed a party. (Neruda 187)

The lines convey Bartolome's appearance as a lighthouse amid the darkness of colonialism that overshadowed America. His rebellious steps helped people go forward. At the end of the poem, the poet urges Bartolome to go along with him to see how people suffered due to the setback of the Spanish colonists. Consequently, he says, "I'll show you the letters, the torment / of my people, of persecuted mankind. / I'll show you the ancient sorrows" (Neruda 188). The lines remind us of the Spanish conquistadors who launched a reign of terror across America. As a chronicler, Neruda takes the priest Bartolome with him to show how a group of Spanish hyenas excommunicated innocent people. Afterwards, Neruda, through the poem "Advancing in the Lands of Chile," unfolds how the bloodthirsty Spaniards entered the South American continent by crossing Chile's Bio Bio River. This section illustrates how all the ingredients of nature, including the flowers, the landscapes, and the birds, got jolted hearing their footsteps. The poet says:

Spain drove into the South of the World.
 Overwhelmed, the tall Spaniards explored the snow.
 . . . Towers of birds and feathers
 and a gale of sonorous solitude
 rose up from the ravines, (Neruda 188-189)

This expression informs us of how the Spaniards arrived south of the earth, breaking all silences of nature. Such was the start of the invasion across the continent. Now, Neruda goes back to his

fatherland, Chile, to unearth what happened there during the Spanish invasion and how the liberators of his country stood firm with all their bravery and guts to encounter the conquistadors. He mentions the name of a liberator, Lautaro, who was on the frontline during the indigenous resistance against the Spanish conquest. Lautaro, in his early youth, was imprisoned by Valdivia and served him for a long time. In the meantime, Chile was captured by Valdivia and his troops. Later, in 1552, he somehow managed to escape the dungeon of Valdivia. Neruda, in the poem, “Lautaro against the Centaur (1554),” provides a historical fact that Lautaro, along with the Mapuche warriors, led a battle in 1555, namely, the Battle of Tucapel, in which Valdivia was killed. Lautaro applied the strategy of guerrilla warfare during that battle. Neruda tells us the fact through the following lines:

Today guerilla warfare was sown
 beneath all the forest eaves,
 from stone to stone and ford to ford,

 Valdivia tried to retreat.
 It was too late.
 Lautaro arrived in a suit of lightning.
 He followed the anguished Conquistador.

 Lautaro arrived
 in a black gallop of horses. (Neruda 190)

The lines indicate how Lautaro followed the enemy, and as a strategy for his guerilla fight, he emerged from the woodland to attack the troops of Valdivia and killed many of the Spanish troops.

Valdivia knew about Lautaro's skills as a guerilla fighter and, therefore, advanced carefully. In one phase, some of his associates were killed, and the attack of the opposition heavily wounded some. But Lautaro did not leave hope. The poet writes,

Amid corpses and leaves Pedro de Valdivia
advanced, as in a tunnel.

.....

He recognized Lautaro's war cry.

.....

Intoxicated with blood, his captains
staggered homeward, through night and rain.

.....

Now they touched Lautaro's bosom.

Valdivia saw the light coming, the dawn,
perhaps life, the sea.

It was Lautaro. (Neruda 191)

Lautaro had been in a concealed position. When Valdivia and his troops approached, Lautaro appeared like a mighty fighter and fought his best, leaving Valdivia dead. Indeed, Lautaro led this battle with the intention of freeing Chile from Spanish rule. After that, he, with a group of Mapuche, launched more attacks on the Spanish invaders, but the successors of Valdivia killed Lautaro two years later in a different battle. However, Neruda considers Lautaro a true Chilean hero who sacrificed his life for the liberation of Chile. During the colonial period, he was among the first martyrs who fought for an independent Chile.

It is noteworthy that Neruda attempts to capture the heroic attempts and contributions of not only the trained soldiers who have struggled to liberate different states of the continent from Spanish rule but also of the commoners who became united against the oppressive acts of the coloniser and fought like guerrillas. The poem “Commoners From Socorro (1781)” deals with some unnamed common people who spoke of their rights and revolted against the injustices of the oppressors. The poet pens, “They united against the state commissaries, / Against stained privilege, / They raised petitions / Of the people’s rights” (Neruda 192). The lines reveal that the agitating people of New Granada, a town of Socorro, led by Manuela Beltran, a villager who first made all other people aware of their rights, marched toward Bogota, Colombia, to place their demands before the archbishop. The Archbishop took their matter into consideration and urged the commoners to surrender their arms. The latter did so, but the Archbishop denied them their rights. Here, Neruda composes the following lines:

The commoners surrendered
 their arms. In Bogota,
 They feted the Archbishop,
 Celebrated his betrayal,
 His perjury, in the perfidious mass,
 And they denied bread and rights.

.....

They executed the leaders. (Neruda 192)

The commoners did not tolerate the Archbishop’s injustice. They protested vehemently and took part in an armed revolution to dethrone the leaders in Bogota. Neruda hails the commoners as

heroes for their bravery and action in favour of justice. He applauds their revolutionary move and says,

O first, heavy seeds
 cast to the regions,
 you'll remain, blind statues,
 incubating the insurrection
 of spikes in the hostile night. (Neruda 193)

Neruda congratulates working-class men and women on their achievements and contributions. He puts his faith in those who will lead a mass revolution on a large scale for freedom in the days ahead. Thus, he pays tribute to almost all South American kings and monarchs who resisted Spanish rule. With that continuation, he, through the poem “Tupac Amaru (1781),” focuses on how Tupac Amaru, the last monarch of the Neo-Inca, raised an army to fight the colonial troops. He was the most loved administrator among others to the masses of the Inca, Peru. The poet projects Tupac as a great leader of Peru who, unlike his predecessors, did not stay under Spanish colonialism. The Spanish rulers tried several times to make a peaceful pact with him, but he refused to do so. He had his own plan to liberate the natives of the Inca from colonial oppression. He and his army launched several attacks on the Spanish colonists. At last, the Spanish ruler sent a large fleet of troops to capture him. He was captured and sentenced to death. The armed resistance and unity that had been built or regrouped were now broken up because of the defeat of Tupac. However, the people of the Inca could not forget the attempts he made to liberate them. So, the poet considers him a hero of Peru, who never agreed to make an ally with the Spanish ruler. He recollects this soldier of the deprived and dispossessed by saying the following lines:

The deep tribes of the clay,

. . . say in silence: "Tupac,"
 and Tupac is a seed,
 they say in silence: "Tupac,"
 and Tupac is preserved in the furrow,
 they say in silence: "Tupac,"
 and Tupac germinates in the ground. (Neruda 194)

After his execution, the villagers always felt Tupac's presence because he always stood by the people when alive. The poet also deciphers how the Peruvians still feel spirited to remember the path Tupac has shown for future generations. In the future, they will participate in a revolt against Spanish rule, following the path of Tupac. Frank Riess says that the unity and light of Tupac Amaru live on as an example to future liberators. "The poem as a whole exhibits an astonishing coming-together of parts into wholes...The body of Tupac is the body of "Pueblo" and the body of the continent raped and divided by the Spanish conquistador. So, the image of dividing and dismembering is continuing one in the *Canto General*" (Riess 114).

Neruda begins this canto with poems highlighting the contributions of native monarchs, kings, soldiers, and commoners to the movement of liberation of entire South America from Spanish colonial rule. As the canto progresses, it sheds light on the thoughts of revolution more and more. And the aforesaid description bears the proof of it. At the end of the canto, Neruda attempts to intensify the revolutionary tone of the poems. For instance, in the end, he urges the entire America to wake up with the poem, "Insurgent America (1800)," and it becomes evident that he expects a unity of people from all walks of life to fight the onslaught of Spanish colonialism. America itself plays the lead role in the poem. The poet gives all human strength to America and urges it to foster an insurgence at any cost. He says,

O homeland born of woodcutters,
 ...today you'll be born harshly,
 Whence the traitor and the jailer
 Believe you're submerged forever.
 . . . Today, as then, you'll be born of the people.
 Today you'll emerge from the coal and the dew.
 Today you'll come to shake the doors. (Neruda 195)

The poet argues that those who think America is dead should know an insurgent America will rise out of people and all substances of nature. He believes that America will rise out of the ashes and save its people from tyranny and oppression by colonial rulers. He also says the following in "America, I do not Invoke Your Name in Vain":

America, I do not invoke your name in vain
 . . . when your new day
 penetrates me through the windows
 . . . I'm in the light that produces me,
 . . . I sleep and rise in your essential dawn, (Neruda 244)

The stanza brings to light Neruda's love, confidence, and commitment to the continent of America. Despite many challenges, he celebrates the resilience and enduring spirit of America. In addition, throughout the poem, Neruda contrasts the natural beauty of the Americas with the violence and exploitation that have often characterised its history. He speaks of the "burning snow" of the Andes, the "tropical hurricane" of the Caribbean, and the "virgin forests" of the Amazon, all of which represent the raw, untamed beauty of the continent (Neruda 245). Lastly, he invokes the

great historical figures who fought for independence and pays homage to the indigenous peoples of the continent who have endured centuries of oppression and exploitation.

Neruda's objective to bring to light the heroic achievement of the liberators of South America, no doubt, helps us perceive how the indigenous warriors clamoured against the injustice of the Spanish colonists. He manifests that the poems on the heroism of native fighters show the right path for future leaders. In this regard, he again brings forth the heroic acts of the Argentine leader San Martin, who fights to safeguard his fatherland and, alongside Chile and Peru, from foreign invasion. He raised an army, arrived in Chile to fight the battle of Chacabuco in 1818, and liberated Chile from Spanish rule. Then he attacked the Spanish stronghold in Lima, Peru. The attack helped the Peruvians take partial control over Lima. Finally, another South American, Simon Bolivar, took the task in hand to fully liberate Peru from Spanish colonial rule. Neruda pays tribute to both San Martin and Simon Bolivar for their heroic deeds. In the poem "San Martin 1810," he lays bare San Martin's intrepidity as a leader and pays respect to the hero by the lines:

You're the land you gave us . . .
 You're vast among all the heroes
 . . . but there's none like you . . .
 we greet you in the agrarian manner
 Of flowery Tucuman, (Neruda 196)

The stanza indicates Neruda's heartfelt gratitude to San Martin, who helped the poet breathe in a free land through his commitment and valour. However, he ends the poem with the hope that we will not be able to establish peace until we hold the spirit of San Martin. In this regard, he says,

So, be it, and let there be
 no peace until we've entered

Your spirit, after combat,
 And you can sleep the measure we've found
 In your expanse of germinating peace. (Neruda 198)

In the same way, Neruda, in "Guayaquil 1822," brings into focus how Simon Bolivar emerged as a real successor of San Martin. Bolivar also dreamt of ending Spanish rule from South American soil. In this regard, the poet writes: "His dream was a gallop, / a mesh of leather straps and danger. / His freedom-a unanimous pampa. / A cereal order his victory" (Neruda 200). Like San Martin, Bolivar was determined to achieve victory at any cost.

Neruda wraps up the Canto "The Liberators" with the poem "The Day Will Come," discussing his vision for the independence of South America. The poem analyses how people of all professions will join a revolution in the future to combat the invaders, following the footsteps of their forefathers, the liberators of South America, who have sacrificed their lives in the struggle for independence. The poet points out that the only motto of the people of this continent should be to take part in the independence struggle to free the soil. Neruda explicitly summons the unidentified heroes of Latin American independence to actively shape a more promising future and denounce oppressive rule, including Marxist ideology, into his appeal (Mascia 67). He believes the martyred liberators will show the right path to future warriors. Neruda begins the poem by saying the following lines:

Liberators, in this twilight
 of America, in the morning's
 forsaken darkness,
 I give you my people's
 infinite leaf, the exultation

of every hour of struggle. (Neruda 206)

Here, the poet imagines a tree of people spreading its leaves here and there. The leaves are imagined as people who will help each other in the struggle. The poet declares that ‘we’re from the same land, / the same persecuted people, / the same struggle encircles the waist, /of our America” (Neruda 207). Such expression clarifies how the populations across the states of South America are bound to the same cause. Neruda informs the present liberators of their predecessors’ objectives and sacrifices. Indeed, Mascia contends that Neruda was driven by a strong sense of obligation to promote the idea of Marxism as the primary philosophical foundation for a prospective society (68). The following lines need to be quoted in this relevance:

the ancient voice calls us again.

Descend to the mineral roots,...

reach mankind’s struggle on earth,

Don’t renounce the day bestowed on you

By those who died struggling.

...like the wheat, the innumerable people

join roots, accumulate spikes,

and in the tempest unleashed

they rise up to the light of the universe. (Neruda 207)

Here the poet urges the people to fight unitedly and wholeheartedly so that the sacrifice and struggle of the martyred liberators cannot go in vain. The ancestors have made their struggle easier by fighting many breathtaking battles. So, the present liberators must take responsibility for finishing the unfinished tasks of the forefathers. Overall, the poet believes that the youth will certainly be able to achieve what is bestowed on them.

The Sand Betrayed

The fifth canto, “The Sand Betrayed,” brings forward how the Latin American dictators, with the support of conservative rightist leaders and the bourgeois, made pacts with the North American governments that allowed the foreign powers to interfere with the politics and trade in many states of the former in the early 20th century (Paul 53). This part especially unfolds the betrayal of the South American dictators, such as Dr. Francia, Garcia Moreno, Rosas, Martinez, etcétera, with the proletariat. The dictators, with the support of the rich and the bourgeois, made an alliance with US-based large corporations like United Fruit Company and Standard Oil Company. Such a pact allowed trading corporations to trade in different regions of South America. The companies ran an oligarchy across the continent. They used a vast area across the lowlands of the continent to produce their products. They used to export the products mostly to European countries. They would not share any percentage of export earnings with the host countries. The labourers of the host countries would be recruited with little payment. They were at health risk because of manifold pollution at the work sites. The presidents cum dictators of numerous South American states used to receive a share of the trade. Some middlemen, mainly from the rich and the bourgeois, would benefit from such monopoly business. Indeed, the businesses made the poor poorer and the rich richer.

Furthermore, such a foreign intrusion created obstacles to the development of home-grown businesses. This portion focuses on the neocolonial project of North America installed in different parts of South America at that time. Neruda brings to light, on the one hand, the exploitation of North American multinational corporations and, on the other hand, the betrayal of the dictators of South America. He shows how the entrance of US-based companies helped accelerate the rise of capitalism in Latin America. The rich and the bourgeois across the continent benefited from such

a rise. Through subscribing to the Marxist dialectic thoughts, Neruda explains the discourse (the rise of capitalism and the proletariat's reaction to it) that arose at that time. Through the aforementioned philosophical lens, he also shows how the dictators, with the help of their foreign counterparts, launched violence and oppression on the masses, especially the working class. And to describe all the issues mentioned above, he employs a language of angst and protest simultaneously in this part.

The section opens up with "Doctor Francia," delineating how Francia, after Paraguay's 1811 independence from the Spanish, came out as the first dictator of the country. He had been the sole dictator of Paraguay for nearly 23 years. As a ruler, he passed some obnoxious laws for his country, like banning higher education and sealing all borders. He raised a secret police force by which he became able to silence all kinds of anti-Francia moves. He launched a mass execution of about 200 leaders who played brave roles during the liberation movement against the Spaniards. Likewise, Neruda brings to light, through the poem "Rosas (1829-1849)," how an Argentine brigadier general, Juan Manuel de Rosas, turned into a brutal dictator. Assassination, disappearance, terrorism, and tyranny featured his regime. Argentina was transformed into a land of terror and fear. Rosas launched state terrorism across the country. Neruda's following description displays the political climate of Argentina during the mid-19th century: "Argentina plundered by rifle butt / in the misty dawn, beaten / and bled to madness, deserted, / ridden roughshod by savage overseers!" (Neruda 212). The lines delineate how the goons of Rosas plundered Argentina. The dictator's savagery took the nation to an age of darkness. Any anti-Rosas activity would lead to capital punishment. In the poem, Neruda captures a gruesome picture of Argentina.

The newly independent nations Cuba and El Salvador suffered the same upshot as Paraguay and Argentina did. Neruda's poems "Machado" and "Martinez (1932)" imprint such facts. In Cuba, Gerardo Machado, after ascending to state power as a President in 1925, showed his dictatorial attitude. He disagreed with announcing an election when his tenure came to an end. Then people saw his real face. His administration unleashed a series of violence against his opponents. He even suppressed some dissident students' uprisings by ordering his police force to kill them, though he unacknowledged the matter later. Neruda portrays a slice of the incident in the poem, Machado: "...the student with a flesh wound / was cast into the water where / the sharks finished / His Excellency's job" (Neruda 214). The poet presents this gruesome incident imbued with a sense of humour. Such brutal moves by the Machado henchmen turned Cuba into a land of blood and violence. Similarly, the poem "Martinez (1932)" discusses El Salvador's 30th President's anti-communist and fascist activities. It sheds light on how Martinez had been busy practising occultism while peasants of his country participated in an anti-government protest. Many protesters were killed by the firing of the military force. Martinez received a message of congratulation from the then-US ambassador in El Salvador on embracing Western Christianity as a life-changing philosophy. Besides, he received financial aid from the US government for giving permission to some US-based multinational corporations to trade in his country. His allegiance to the US government becomes evident when Neruda writes the following:

. . . he returns . . . and receives
 the American ambassador's
 swift congratulations.
 "Western culture
 Is safe," says he---

“western Christianity,
 and besides, good business,
 banana concessions
 and control of customs. (Neruda 215)

Martinez’s sycophancy attracted the then-US government. He never cared for the greater interests of his nation. To strengthen his political stranglehold, he allowed the United States to usher cultural imperialism across the region.

“The Sand Betrayed” also presents a poem titled “The Oligarchies,” exploring the oligarchies’ political role in the newly independent nations across South America during the mid-20th century. In this respect, Denis Gilbert, in his book entitled *The Oligarchy and the Old Regime in Latin America*, states that the oligarchy arose when some wealthy persons had been, from the beginning, attached to the “emerging export economy” during the period of democratisation and liberal modernization in most of the states of Latin America. These businessmen “shared a patrimonial culture and ran their businesses” (Agosin 61). They welcomed any kind of reform needed for their businesses. They extended their full-fledged support to suppress all kinds of movements and protests of the workers and labourers. Sometimes, some of them chose a political career to come to state power, which, in many ways, helped flourish their family businesses. Gradually, they turned out to be the elites of South America. Afterward, they started influencing the policy-making decisions of the states. As they took control over the economy of the respective countries, they established dominance over the people of lower status possessing little resources. The rise of the oligarchic era across the continent left about seventy-eight percent of the entire geographical area destitute (Paul 132). It widened the gap between the poor and the rich. It triggered many workers’ movements throughout the continent. Neruda enunciates the situation

from the perspective of class struggle. He shows how the proletariat suffered the most because of the rise of the oligarchy.

Neruda splits the poem “The Oligarchy” into four stanzas to explore the issues stated above in the light of his experiences. Firstly, he speaks of how a new system of oppression had already entered into society while the soldiers who fought in the liberation movement just came back from the battlefields and did not even get enough time to rest. Neruda says,

No, the flags had not yet dried,
 the soldiers had not yet slept
 when freedom changed clothes,
 and was turned into a hacienda:
 a caste emerged from
 the newly sown lands, a quadrille
 of nouveaux riches with coats of arms,
 with police and with prisons. (Neruda 215)

Neruda demonstrates how a new perpetrator, with the assistance of different state apparatuses, emerged just after the end of the colonial period over the regions. In the second part, he introduces us to a number of institutions and communities from almost all newly born states that went ahead hand in hand to congratulate and support the new system of economy. Furthermore, the neocolonial era, which gave birth to the oligarchy, permanently welcomed Christianity as its new religious philosophy in lieu of multiple religious beliefs. The privileged class’s unbounded happiness because of the changes in favour of them becomes evident through the following expression:

This law, at long last, establishes

the obligatory hierarchy
and above all the principles
of Christianity.

It was
necessary as water.

Only the communists, conceived
in hell,...could object to the Funnel
code, sagacious and severe.

But this Aisatic opposition,
proceeding from subman

is easy to suppress: to jail with them all . . . (Neruda 216)

So, the lines bring forth how the hegemonic class embraced all the changes with utmost joy. However, the poem's third stanza offers that when the communist leaders and activists objected to many of the laws passed by legislators, the premiers of different states made all necessary arrangements of severe punishment for them. Many of them were forcibly sent to concentration camps. The fourth part showcases how the aristocratic people applauded the government's initiatives. The concluding verse of the poem denotes how the government steps, mostly influenced by the oligarchy, gave birth to the rise of monopoly business throughout South America. When the senator, Rodriguez de la Crota delivered his senatorial speech by welcoming the newly passed laws, the privileged community, as Neruda wrote, conveyed their feeling and ecstasy in the following way:

There was a round of applause
from the aristocratic benches:

what eloquence, how spiritual...
 And everyone ran off to fill
 his pockets in his business,
 one monopolizing milk,
 another racketeering in wire,
 another stealing in sugar,
 and all boisterously proclaiming
 themselves patriots, with a monopoly
 of patriotism, . . . (Neruda 216)

The stanza sarcastically presents the overwhelming response of the aristocratic people after the emergence of the oligarchic regime and the universal principles of Christianity. It brings into focus how the monopolisers overnight turned into patriots. Such a rise of the oligarchy paved the way for the emergence of the bourgeois community across South America. This hegemonic class spread bourgeois consciousness all over the continent. They distorted the history of the region and spread it among the coming generations. The later parts of *Canto General* will offer how the proletariat will be united to dismantle the hegemonic class's attempt of ahistoricity.

Later, Neruda, in the poem "Election in Chimborongo (1947)," points out how the Latin American election system fell apart when the Christian patriots appeared in this geographical area. Similarly, in the poem "Diplomats (1948)," the poet states that the people who were born fools in Chile are appointed as ambassadors. He says that to be an ambassador in Chile, one needs no qualification; one requires keeping a 'well-trimmed beard' and "it's all that's required to enter into negotiations" (Neruda 218). He unfolds that Chilean diplomats are good for nothing. They play the role of a sycophant.

Indeed, Pablo Neruda reaches the height of the use of Marxist ideology in the poems titled “Standard Oil Co.” and “United Fruit Co.” exposing the real face of economic imperialism in the South American countries by the United States. And, the aforesaid companies played diabolical roles in this respect. Neruda brings to light these two corporations’ exploitation of the underprivileged and the dispossessed of the continent. In the poem “Standard Oil Co.”, the poet shows that Standard Oil reached the continent with its own administrative staff and weapons, which compelled people of the region to work in the company. First, the key company men persuaded the dictators of many states of the continent by providing them with money and a multitude of amenities. As a result, the dictators permitted them to establish their business stations over the region. In a word, Neruda brings forth how the Americans enslaved the working-class people of South America. He considers the ‘obese emperors from New York’ the assassins. In this regard, he writes, “Their obese emperors from New York are suave / smiling assassins / who buy silk, nylon, cigars, / petty tyrants and dictators” (Neruda 221). He unfolds how the wealthy businesspeople of the US made the tyrants and dictators of the region puppets at their hands. The homegrown traitors allowed them to run their trades of ‘silk, nylon, and cigars.’ Neruda stated that Standard Oil Co. sucked the entire Latin American continent. It enslaved all populations of the continent; it took control of its resources; it compelled the police forces, county councils, politicians, and autocratic rulers to bow down to its power of money and muscle.

To add, the rich and the bourgeois, along with the dictators, took the manifold advantages of the US-based companies. But the poor, whom the company people awakened and gave uniforms to wear, were exploited. At the outset, the poor thought that this might end their destitution. Finally, they came to perceive the company’s hegemony over them. They were ill-paid; they had to work in a filthy and intoxicating atmosphere. The workers who protested against the tyrannical acts of

the company would be forced to accept imprisonment. Neruda demonstrated that the Corporation's economic imperialism left most of the countries of South America on the verge of recession. The poet experienced the cataclysmic nature of US capitalism when the aforesaid companies embarked on the lands of the continent. To throw special focus on the issues mentioned above, Neruda writes,

They buy countries, people, seas,
 police, country councils,
 Distant regions where
 the poor hoard their corn
 like misers their gold:
 Standard Oil awakens them,
 clothes them in uniforms, designates
 which brother is the enemy.
 The Paraguayan fights its war,
 and the Bolivian wastes away
 in the jungle with its machine gun.
 . . . A President assassinated
 for a drop of petroleum, . . . (Neruda 221)

The lines portray how Standard Oil Co. controlled this region by spreading dominance over the state administration. These also show how the company occupied all the essential apparatuses of a state. The verse mentioned above illustrates that the company began a monopoly across the South American states. Overall, the poet's concluding lines of the poem make it clearer how the company people became able to colonise the people of South America with the power of money and muscle:

“You’ll see how Standard Oil’s letters / shine above the clouds, / above the seas, in your home, / illuminating their dominions” (Neruda 222).

The discussion stated above helps us realise that after the Spanish colonial era had ended, all the South American nations became the victims of North American economic imperialism and political interference. This neocolonial reality has also been minutely portrayed in Pablo Neruda’s poem, “United Fruit Co.” The poem brings to light how the then government of the United States planned to initiate commercial ventures over some states of South America. Here, from the purview of the Marxist idea of class struggle, the poet shows how the North American capitalists compelled many working-class people to work in the newly started companies. The capitalists used the labour of the working class for production, but the produced goods would be imported to Europe. The South American masses would not get any share of the profit. Even they were deprived of consuming the goods they produced. Only the dictators and the members of the ruling class, who were active behind the monopoly business, would be provided a large sum of money by the North American business giants. Such a situation created grave discontent among the people of the working class. Sometimes, they protested against such exploitation. However, all uprisings of the workers were heavily suppressed and silenced by the dictators after being supported by their US counterparts.

In “United Fruit Co.,” Neruda brings forth the pitfalls of capitalism that escalated economic exploitation across the region. With his naturalistic sarcasm, he unearths the big capitalists’ destructive power. The poem projects the capitalists propagating the advantages of democracy and free-market policy. They renamed the land of Latin America as ‘Banana Republics’ and persuaded the bloody and greedy dictators to use the continent’s natural resources. The dictators were convinced of the benefits of using this land by the corporations. By using such tactics, they

controlled this region. The fascist dictators who only thought of their profit and never cared for the welfare of the masses of their states complied with what their US counterparts offered. Neruda has termed this pact of dictators as a betrayal. He asserts that the masses of entire South America have become the victim of double colonisation—first by the Spaniards and later by the US with the help of the dictators. In this regard, he satirically writes based on what is mentioned above:

. . . it [United Fruit Co.] established the comic opera
 it alienated self-destiny,
 regaled Caesar's crowns,
 unsheathed envy, drew
 the dictatorship of flies:
 Trujillo flies, Tacho flies,
 . . . Martinez flies,
 . . . flies soaked in humble blood . . . (Neruda 224)

In the poem, Neruda unfolds the deceptive and devilish acts of the US Corporations. On the other hand, he brings into focus the sorrows, sufferings, and struggles of the proletariat of his continent. However, he contemplates that the proletariat will change the situation through a revolution someday in the future. And this thought ultimately helps him subscribe to the Marxist idea of the Proletarian Revolution. Though the above-discussed poem does not directly speak of the proletarian revolution, it captures the angst of the proletariat with the present exploitative situation, and how that angst turned into a revolution is described in the concluding poems of the book. Such a reality gets exposed before us when we advance towards the ending sections of *Canto General*.

Neruda sketches a picture of the US exploitation with the people of Latin America through his influential poem, *United Fruit Company*. Each and every line of the poem uncovers the

socioeconomic conditions while the US corporations were operating their trades across South America. The entire economy of the continent was on the verge of collapse. The dictators' fraudulence continued up to the late 20th century in different states of the continent. The aforementioned issues get revealed if we analyse the poem through the lens of critical realism. Besides, "United Fruit Co." mainly brings forward three particular issues—firstly, how the US corporations set up their ventures upon the corpses of the liberation war heroes; secondly, how the US capitalists took the dictators into their confidence; and lastly, how the bloodthirsty foreign traders devoured all resources of the land. At the outset, Neruda portrays the way the United Fruit Company, one fine morning, takes over the fertile lands of South America seems that Jehovah has distributed the lands among the ventures of the Fruit Company. Indeed, Neruda ridicules the sudden emergence of US corporations over the region. It was so sudden that nobody could understand why a number of strangers emerged in the newly independent territories. The poet's satirical tone becomes apparent when he says,

When the trumpet blared everything

On earth was prepared

And Jehovah distributed the world

To Coca-Cola Inc., Anaconda,

Ford Motors and other entities:

United Fruit Inc.

.....

It rebaptized its lands

the "Banana Republics,"

and upon the slumbering corpses,

upon the restless heroes
 who conquered renown,
 freedom, and flags, . . . (Neruda 223-224)

The stanzas make it clear that the US capitalist initiated their business on the land where the liberators of Latin America were buried. These freedom fighters conquered a flag for the people of the region. Now the tyrannical business project was set up on the bloodstained soil. As soon as they disembarked on the land, the dictators, as Neruda demonstrated, turned into ‘flies.’ He also demonstrates that the US businessmen established a close affinity with the “dictatorship of flies” (Neruda 224). Even the poet also considers the traders of the US flies, and since the beginning, they had been involved in the obnoxious activities of smuggling away the treasures of the fertile land. He comes up with the following lines that unfold how the US companies used the land to produce coffee and fruits that would be exported to Europe:

Among the bloodthirsty flies
 the Fruit Co. disembarks,
 ravaging coffee and fruits
 for its ships that spirit away
 our submerged lands’ treasures
 like serving trays. (Neruda 224)

The stanza intends to show how the corporations, in the name of contributing to the development of the South American economy, used the continent’s resources for their interests. Even the bloodsucker businessmen did not hesitate to silence the workers’ voices by killing them in the dark night. Most often, people would discover corpses in ditches or abandoned places. Sometimes, the dead bodies of the labourers would be thrown away in rivers so that people could not get any trace

of them. Such had been another reign of terror launched by the US administration in the name of mere development. So, at the end of the poem, Neruda maintains the following tragic tone: “. . . in the seaports / Indians collapsed, buried / a body rolls down, a nameless / a bunch of lifeless fruit dumped in the rubbish heap” (Neruda 224).

Alongside, another poem, “The Judges,” brings forth the fact that there was no justice for the poor and the dispossessed of South America. The underprivileged did not have any rights. Every provision of law, either this way or that way, was made to protect the bourgeois. In this respect, the poet writes,

In high Peru, in Nicaragua,
throughout Patagonia, in the cities,
you’ve had no rights, you’ve nothing:
cup of misery, America’s
abandoned child, there’s no
law, no judge to protect your land,
your little house with corn. (Neruda 229)

The beginning lines of the poem clarify how the impoverished throughout South America had been the victim of injustice. The governments, laws, rules, rights, and justice—all are made or ensured for the privileged. So, Neruda mentions, “the law came to depopulate your sky / to seize your revered fields, / . . . to steal the kingdom of trees” (Neruda 229). It denotes that the law was formulated in such a way so that it could disenfranchise the poor. The laws of the continent only favoured the privileged bourgeois. For the poor, there had been no justice. Neruda asserts that the liberation of different nations of South America could not ensure justice and rights for all people equally because of the dictators’ greed and demoniacal alliance with the foreign powers. Law was

formulated in such a way so that the poor could not come out of the endless circle of poverty. During the period of Spanish colonialism, such tyranny of the conquerors ran across the region. Now the dictators again launched tyranny on the poor. Neruda captures the helplessness of the poor through the following lines:

. . . when you awakened on the edge
 of the most precipitous calamity,
 dispossessed, solitary, vagrant,
 they gave you jail, bound you,
 shackled you so that swimming
 you couldn't escape the water of the poor,
 so that you'd drown kicking. (Neruda 229)

The above lines draw a vivid picture of how the rulers of the region became venomous towards the poor. The poverty-stricken ones had been the worst sufferers who did not have any other way to escape the absolutism of the oligarchy. At the end of the poem, Neruda dispenses some substantial questions that remain unanswered to the poor.

. . . how were the wealthy
 and the law interwoven? . . .
 How did the poor keep falling into the tribunals?
 How did the land become so bitter
 For poor children, harshly
 nourished on stone and grief? (Neruda 230)

Though Neruda finishes the poem with the questions, he has already given the answers to those throughout the beginning and middle parts of the poem. When he, at the outset of the poem, says

that the poor are devoid of rights, there is no law to protect their lands; even if no law is made thinking of them, it becomes transparent how the wealthy people become the controller of the law and how they have made all arrangements to make the poor trapped into their wicked circle of exploitation.

The next poem of the section, “The Sand Betrayed,” changes its tone from the voice of helplessness to that of condemnation. We can assume such change when we look at the poems “Paraguay” and “Cuba”, encapsulating the misdeeds of the dictators of the countries. Neruda, in these compositions, strongly condemns Morinigo, a dictator of Paraguay and a dictator of Cuba. The poem “Paraguay” offers how Neruda accuses Morinigo of the downfall of the country's agricultural sector. He discusses how Paraguay's agricultural and mining sectors suffered a setback because of his excessive dependence on foreign powers and enforcement of the anti-peasant policy. Neruda says,

. . . look down

with your eyes, don't be blinded

by the airplane's aluminum, . . . look at

your bread, your land, your torn masses,

your battered lineage!

Do you see that green

and ashen valley from the lofty sky?

pale agriculture, tattered

mining, silence and weeping

like wheat, falling

and rising

in a malevolent eternity. (Neruda 231)

It is noticeable that the lines are written in italics, which, as per Robin Paul, puts emphasis on words of condemnation. Neruda does so to bring to light the key concepts of the entire poem. The phrases, ‘torn masses,’ ‘pale agriculture,’ and ‘tattered mining’ remind us of how a country encountered a complete downfall or devastation just because of the mischief of a ruler. Similarly, the poem “Cuba” delineates how a native leader, a real friend of the masses, Jesus Menendez, was brutally killed by a military man, Joaquin Casillas. Such assassination dragged the country many years backward. Jesus Menendez stood by the people; he always thought of the poor and dispossessed of his country. Cuba got a leader of people, but the hyenas did not tolerate such a towering popularity of Jesus. He was a trade union leader who exerted an indelible influence on the Cuban labour movement. Neruda admonishes Joaquin through the following lines: “. . . the little/general shot him in the back / so that the cane fields’ / coarse voice would be silent” (Neruda 232).

As Jesus stood out as the key figure in the conquest of the ‘sugar differential,’ which had been considered one of the bravest movements of the working class, he became a leader of the proletariat of Cuba. The military plotted against him as they saw him rising as an influential socialist leader.

After that, the poem “The Traitor” showcases Neruda’s abomination towards Chile’s President Gonzalez Videla, who ascended to power with the help of the Communist Party. The poet brings to light his treachery in multiple ways. “The Traitor” is a record of his betrayal of the people of Chile. The following lines capture how Videla broke his promises:

Every nation has its sorrows,

But . . . This man betrayed trampling

his promises and smiles,
 his scepter was made of filth,
 he danced on the poor
 affronted people's grief. (Neruda 233)

The lines hint at Videla's betrayal of the people of Chile. The poet says, "a smiling tyrant spits on the betrayed miners' hopes" (Neruda 233). As Neruda points out, Chile has suffered the most because of Videla's misdeeds. After riding to power, he forgot about miners' life sufferings. During his election campaign, he promised to work to end the misery in their life. Instead of defending Chile's masses from tyranny and oppression, he engaged in jeopardising their life by making policies against them. Consequently, the poet questions,

*What did you do? Did your word ever come
 for your brother of the deep mines,
 for the grief of the betrayed,
 did your fiery syllable ever come
 to plead for your people and defend them?* (Neruda 233)

The questions thrown at Videla have no answer. Videla did nothing to defend the people of Chile. Instead, he sought help from the US government to strengthen his political position and to protect himself from miners' protests. Likewise, in "Gonzalez Videla, Chile's Traitor 1949", Neruda condemns Videla as a savage creature, whose character can be defined by the terms "beastility" and "perfidy." He portrays how the dictator, who initially gained power with the help of the masses, betrayed his political supporters and resorted to using force to maintain his position. In this poem, the poet also draws a parallel between González Videla's brutal suppression of the proletariat and the actions of two other South American dictators, Melgarejo of Bolivia and Lopez

of Venezuela. While he acknowledges the bravery of Melgarejo and Lopez in resisting foreign domination, he castigates González for his diabolical agenda. The poem ends with the poet's expression of outrage at the atrocities committed by González and his associates against the Chilean miners.

Neruda's accusation towards the Videla administration intensifies through the poem "I Accuse." The composition has three parts: the first one showcases the poet's allegation against those poets, writers, and artists who embraced the principle of "art for art's sake," leaving behind issues like human progress, emancipation, and humanity; the second dwells on a poet's commitment to communist ideology, and the last one shows Neruda's hatred towards Videla, which reveals how the Chilean President blew out all lights of hope for the Chileans through his misdeeds, including his step to sack the communist ministers from his cabinet, his oppressive acts to silence the miners' protest in Lota, and his decision to depose Neruda from his senatorial post. Neruda reveals that Videla did all at the advice of the then-US government, which finally assured the latter's presidency. The opening lines of the poem are as follows: "Then I accused the man / who had strangled hope, / I called out to America's corners / and put his name in the cave of dishonor" (Neruda 235). Indeed, these stem from his sheer hatred towards Videla. When Neruda gave his last speech as a senator during the Videla regime, he accused the President of strangling a nation's future. In a newspaper article, he wrote how Videla was blessed by the then-US government. Neruda informed the people worldwide of how Videla sent people to burn the former's house and how the betrayer punished him for revealing the truth by removing him from the post of senator. Videla banned the Communist Party in Chile, and his henchmen and police force launched an attack on the protest of the miners in Pisagua. He forced the communist activists to go into exile. According to Sudeshna Chakraborty, Videla's heinous act can only be compared

with the devellish ones of the dictator projected in *Autumn of the Patriarch* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez (308). Indeed, the atrocities of Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo helped Marquez develop the character of a dictator in his novel. Sudeshna Chakraborty (2004), a Kolkata-based Neruda critic, assumes that the portrayals of Videla and Trujillo, respectively, by Neruda and Marquez, bring forth the “unfathomable tyranny” they launched in their regimes (309). Marquez satires Trujillo by terming the latter as an “eternal tyrant” who never wanted to step down from the throne during his lifetime. On the other hand, Neruda abhorred Videla as a “smiling tyrant” who laughingly ruined Chile’s democracy. Both writers attempt to show how the concentration of power and wealth into a single man brings disastrous effects on a state and its people, which, in another way, as Chakraborty notes, unveils the conflict between haves and have-nots (310).

Neruda also writes, “. . . all the judges joined together / to condemn me, to summon me, / to crucify my words / punish these truths” (236). The lines exhibit how Videla and his associates planned to silence the voice of the poet. But Neruda did not remain silent and continued to reprimand Videla for his misdeeds. So, lastly, he questions Videla:

*How will it end, how will it end?
In Pisagua’s night, jail, chains,
silence, the country debased,
and this bleak year, year of blind rats,
this bleak year of rage and rancor,
you ask, you ask me how it will end? (Neruda 236)*

Through the lines from “Gonzalez Videla, Chile’s Traitor 1949,” Neruda throws light on the oppression Videla launched in Pisagua. Chile first witnessed such a large-scale aggression after its independence. Videla gifted the Chilean a “year of rage and rancor” (Feinstein 88). Neruda ends

the poem by posing, “how will it end?” (qtd. in Feinstein 89). It indicates that Neruda saw no possibility of ending the violence sometime soon. However, he does not want to be hopeless. He believes that the Chilean proletariat will overcome the darkness. He says, “. . . my word’s alive, / and my free heart accuses” (Neruda 236). The poet asserts that the Chilean Communist Party will appear to be a helping force in the movement of the proletariat. Videla will not be able to silence all people. Neruda sees a victory nearby. He strongly feels people will join together to be victorious. A proletarian struggle will put an end to all suffering and oppression. So, the poet says, “My people will overcome. / All the peoples / will overcome one by one. / . . . the victorious time’s nearby” (Neruda 236). The time for lamentation has ended. Now, people should take to the streets to foster a protest that the poet considers a proletarian revolution. This revolution will dismantle all forms of oppression and violence. Neruda places his confidence in the strength of the proletariat, who will soon be triumphant over all evil deeds. The aforesaid poem regarding Gonzalez Videla discloses the Marxist view of the Proletarian Struggle to which Neruda has fully subscribed. Here, the poet presents Videla and his US counterpart as a force of capitalism and the working-class movement or mass protest as a socialist or proletarian revolution. As a communist activist and Marxist poet, Neruda believed the Proletarian revolution would finally win over the capitalist invasion. Relevantly, with the poet’s note of optimism, Chile’s leftist musician and singer Victor Jara’s name can be mentioned. At gunpoint, Jara urged his comrades to sing the song of revolution with him, speaking of his desire to end all inequalities and fascism. He called forth all to join the revolution against the right-wing Pinochet regime in Chile. In this regard, Paul asserts that Neruda’s protest against the end of the Videla regime and Jara’s revolutionary songs against Pinochet's dictatorial regime stemmed from both artists’ common detestation towards the upswing and spread of fascism and capitalism (153). Neruda’s utterances of “My heart’s in the struggle”

and “let the people fill the empty streets with fresh and firm dimensions” reverberate Jara’s following composition: “Let Mexico, Cuba, and the World / cry out against this atrocity! / . . . What I have felt and what I feel / Will give birth to the moment” (“How Victor Jara Wrote”).

However, alongside Neruda’s accusation of Videla of the latter’s anti-people acts, he also accuses those European poets who preferred to keep themselves aloof from social and political issues by prioritising the “heavenly literature” dealing with the principle of the “art for art’s sake” over the humanitarian cause. In “The Celestial Poets,” he writes,

What did you do, you Gideans,
 intellectualizers, Rilkeans,
 mystifiers, surrealist,
 butterflies incandescent
 in the tomb, Europhile
 cadavers in fashion,
 pale worms in the capitalist

 You did nothing but take flight:
 sold a stack of debris,
 searched for celestial hair,
 cowardly plants, . . .
 “Pure Beauty,” . . . (Neruda 916)

After going through the lines mentioned above, the issue of “pure poetry” comes to our mind. We know Neruda’s reprimand towards those who only believe in surrealism, romanticism, and modernism by following the European model of poetry and are busy with their purely mental and

escapist “art.” They are “eating scraps thrown to them by their capitalistic masters” (qtd. in Wilson 203). So, Neruda urges poets to focus on the plight of the peasants, more broadly, on the cause of the working class, in lieu of only remaining busy with the romanticised view of life.

Then again, Neruda continues to focus on the lives of the disadvantaged and the impoverished. So, the next part of the epic, “Earth’s Name is Juan,” intends to showcase seventeen different incidents making up a whole event of history. Each poem is titled after a man or woman. Notably, Neruda dedicates the section mostly to the dispossessed. In this section, he underscores the need for change but aims to stimulate the audience's yearning for transformation. He recounts his interactions with different working-class individuals. He writes: “These are the lives of workers, as told by them, / It is written in the words of the people, with their faults and ways of saying things. / There are workers' personal accounts of their life” (qtd. in Allegrezza 184). The poet not only relays their conversations but also takes on their voices to breathe life into their narratives. Through their testimonies, he censures the despots and, more importantly, entrusts the workers with the responsibility of directing him as a poet, urging them to “comrade, tell them what the scoundrel’s doing to the people” (“Luis Cortés” 33).

In other words, most of the poems of this canto present a collage of many repressed voices. For example, the opening poem mentions Christopher Miranda, a soil digger, deciphering her indescribable sufferings. Again, a peasant, Hesas laments the demise of his father. Conversely, Luis Cartes informs us of how he underwent unspeakable torture by police during his prison days. Artora Carion, a sailor, writes a letter to his wife to send him a new shirt. Abraham Zasos Brito, a stern opponent to heavenly poetry, used to write poems for people’s entertainment though he led a very impoverished life (55). However, the last poem, “Catastrophe in Sewell” addresses some important issues. At the outset of the poem, Neruda writes, “Sanchez, Reyes, Ramirez, Nunez,

Alvarez. / These names are like Chile's foundations. / . . . If you let them die, the country keeps collapsing, . . . (262). The lines delineate the poet's belief in the commoners. In the following stanza, Neruda also emphasises the triumph of humankind. So, he says, "'Our best treasure is mankind,' / the foundations, the people" (Neruda 263). Here, the poet desires to be one of the masses. He does not want to be a representative of the masses; rather, he wants to be a part of them. He writes,

I'm related to all those who die, I'm people,
and I mourn for all the blood that falls.

Compatriots, dead brothers, from Sewell, Chile's
dead, workers, brothers and sisters, comrades,
as you're silent today, we're going to speak.

And may your martyrdom help us
to build a severe nation

that will know how to flower and punish. (Neruda 263)

Neruda desires to become part of the dead and the alive of Chile. He mourns the dead and expresses his willingness to fight with those comrades, still involved in freeing Chile from all kinds of tyranny. No doubt, such commitment of the poet brings forth his sense of solidarity with the proletariat. Also, it highlights his dedication to the emancipation of the working class across the continent of South America.

Furthermore, some poems of "Earth's Name is Juan" offer a description of the devastated state of Bolivia's silver and nitrate repositories. Through the poems, Neruda gives voice to the voiceless. He creates a unique character, namely Juan, representing all the dispossessed, the poor, the underprivileged, and the marginalised. Juan also represents all working-class people. Neruda

says that the aggressors attack Juan, kill and bury him in the land, but Juan never dies. In this respect, Neruda says,

Juan, the door and the road are yours.

The earth

is yours, people, truth was born

with you, with your blood.

They couldn't exterminate you.

Your roots,

tree of humanity,

tree of eternity,

are today defended with steel,

are today defended with your own grandeur. (Neruda 264)

Though the killers buried Juan, they were not able to diminish the indomitable spirit Juan disseminated among his followers. Thereupon, Neruda asserts that Juan is alive in each and every liberator and labourer of this continent. When a labourer works, the poet finds the presence of Juan in him. When a revolutionary fights, Juan follows and assists him. The poet finds Juan in all brave souls. Juan leads all nameless labourers to their struggles. The poet writes, "Juan followed upon the liberators / working, fishing, and fighting, / . . . His bones are everywhere. / . . . He returned from the earth. He was born." (Neruda 263). So, Juan appears to be a collective voice in the poems of the section. Feinstein (2004) demonstrates that Neruda's imaginary character, Juan, emerges as a representative of the proletariat (231).

Neruda incarnates Juan's indomitable work spirit into the millions who have been in the struggle for their rights. The poet's faith in Juan indicates his unhesitant reliability on the

proletariat. Lastly, Neruda imagines Juan carrying the flag of the triumphant proletariat. And he composes the following lines:

Your victorious flag was born of order
 Hoist it with all the hands that fell,
 defend it with all the hands that are joined:
 and let the unity of your invisible faces
 advance to the final struggle, to the star. (Neruda 264)

Here, Neruda urges all to follow Juan and fight for victory. He underscores the unity of the proletariat to make Juan's dream come true. In this respect, Paul mentions, "Neruda's faith in the power of the proletariat in the case of bringing changes in society is immense. Such confidence makes him a poet of the people, which he also found in Walt Whitman, Nazim Hikmet, and Mayakovsky" (71).

In brief, "The Sand Betrayed" exposes the treacherous actions of South American dictators during the 1950s, revealing how they hindered the nationalistic movement led by indigenous leaders. Neruda condemns these traitors for betraying their own countries. In contrast, "The Earth's Name is Juan" accentuates the individuals who have a deep connection to the land and are considered its genuine offspring, employing a dialectical approach. This particular canto serves the purpose of illuminating the relatively obscure figure of Juan, who has been deliberately excluded from the dominant historical narrative despite his significant role as an activist and soldier. Therefore, "The Sand Betrayed" and "The Earth's Name is Juan" might be interpreted as two divergent components inside a unified composition. The first example illustrates the betrayal exhibited by the tyrants towards the indigenous leaders, but the second example fosters optimism among the general population through the portrayal of Juan, who symbolises the proletariat's

pursuit of liberation. The poem posits the notion that despite the oppressive actions of the illegitimate authorities resulting in Juan's demise, they could not suppress his unwavering resilience. This spirit has been carried on by his successors, who have continued to fight for freedom.

They bound him, and he's now a determined
soldier.

They wounded him, and he's still hearty as an
apple.

They cut off his hands, and today he pounds with
them.

They buried him, and he sings along with us.

Juan, the door and the road are yours.

The earth
is yours, people, truth was born
with you, with your blood.

They couldn't exterminate you. (Neruda 52-53)

In Neruda's allegory, the pronoun "they" denotes the dictators characterised as "witches, tyrants, straps, wolves, vultures, hyenas," and other such entities. In his autobiography, Neruda mentions that the dictators inflicted considerable damage upon Chile, resulting in enduring wounds and a setback of several centuries for the nation (Neruda 172).

vi. Re-envisioning a Socialist Society

Neruda uses the Marxist concept of synthesis, signifying the inexorable nature of the Proletarian revolution in dismantling the exploitative culture of the bourgeoisie (Moran 23). He

posits the notion that political reforms may potentially occur as a result of a Communist revolution, wherein the demolition of oppressive systems by tyrannical forces would lead to the ultimate triumph of the proletariat. Consequently, the poet envisions a socio-political framework characterised by collective ownership of the means of production and the absence of exploitative worker practices. An example of this can be seen in the poem titled "The Day Will Come" from Canto IV, which centres on the eventual victory of the proletariat over the prevailing social order, marked by tyranny and brutality. Within the confines of the poetic composition, Neruda engages in a recollection of those who have devoted their existence to the noble cause of emancipating the enduring human populace. He advocates for the global working class to align themselves with individuals who have been deprived of resources and marginalised within society. The poem mentioned above highlights the poet's urge for unity among the oppressed populations across the continent, emphasising the need for persistent collective resistance until their objectives are achieved. Additionally, he provides reassurance to the populace on the forthcoming period wherein universal liberation will be achieved. In this respect, Neruda mentions:

Soon a day will come
when we shall set free
light and water,
the earth, man,
and everything will be
for everyone,
just as you are. (Neruda 243)

The lines mentioned above expose that new days are awaiting people, and a new beginning will eliminate all kinds of darkness. Endorsing this purview of the poet, Moran mentions, "He [Neruda]

begs the air to remain free and for the winds of change to blow” (132). Similarly, Neruda accentuates: “My people will win. All peoples / Will win, one by one. / The hour of victory is near (247).”

Despite numerous coercive measures directed towards the communist and progressive factions, Neruda maintained an optimistic outlook rooted in his adherence to Marxist ideology. In Canto XIII "You Shall Struggle," he conveys a steadfast belief in the unconquerable determination of the forward-thinking collective. The poet posits that the perpetual motion of people will ultimately triumph over the autocrat. Despite being targeted by the government, he and numerous fellow communists remained steadfast in their commitment to the revolutionary struggle. They refrained from yielding to any illicit acts of aggression and opposed the dictator's pursuit of implementing a capitalist framework instead of a pluralistic and progressive societal structure. The poet's words in the following stanza reflect his steadfast belief in the power of struggle to bring about meaningful change: “But you’ll struggle to change life / You’ll struggle to scratch the spot / Of manure from the map, you’ll doubtlessly / Struggle” (Neruda 335).

The ninth section, “Let the Woodcutter Awaken,” also deciphering Neruda’s vision of political regeneration, covers a wide range of issues such as the barbarity of WWII, belittling the contribution of the Negro revolutionaries by the bourgeois, post-war disillusionment, the atrocity of the Nazi, the emergence of the reactionary force, the peasants and the captives of Chile and so on. In particular, it stresses the unity of the oppressed and the disenfranchised. The poet titled the section by keeping in mind the beyond-dispute American leader Abraham Lincoln who played a valiant role in abolishing slavery in America. Now Neruda wants a leader like Lincoln to end the present tyranny that arose because of the rise of capitalism in American society. He views Lincoln as a symbol of democracy, tolerance, and acceptance, much like Whitman. Despite his contempt

for North America, Neruda believes Lincoln is a crucial figure for the region to reclaim its democracy and recognize the existence of South America (Allegrezza 179). Alongside making a new world, Neruda calls upon all to follow the ideology of Abraham Lincoln and also urges people to fight against those devils who introduced neo-slavery. He believes Lincoln's revolutionary path can lead us to fight against all policies against the people's welfare. In this poem, the poet also brings to light the imprisonment of millions of people in Chile, the rise of a vicious circle, constantly busy annihilating the peace of Paraguay, and the unexpected death of the Paraguayan President in exile. Lastly, side by side, focusing on these issues, Neruda vehemently objects to the silence of civil society in this regard.

However, Neruda puts emphasis on the triumph of the Soviet army in WWII through the poems of this part. He follows the style of Whitman to compose a song with the heroes of the winning force. He applauds Russia's numerous acts of reviving the world from the ruins of the war. He extends his heartfelt thanks to those who have presented the world with a new word, comrade. He urges the proletariat of America to march forward and contribute to establishing a new socialist and classless society. Neruda comments that if the North American states do not stop interfering with the political affairs of South America, the masses will rise to annihilate such moves. He questions the dubious roles of the USA industrialists, Wall Street, and cultural invasion. He warns the invaders not to enter any region of Latin America or Soviet Unions. If they violate it, they will face an unfathomable revolution by the proletariat. He appreciates the Russian political leadership's steps to fight against the "decadent capitalist west" (Mascia 71). He writes, "Soviet Union, if we joined/ All the blood split in your struggle, / All that you gave like a mother to the world / That moribund freedom might live..." (qtd. in Mascia 71).

Neruda acknowledged the Russian's heroic resistance against the Nazi's reign of terror, which inspired the proletariat in various struggles against the fascist powers. He urged the proletariat worldwide to curb the rise of fascism by following the way Russian soldiers did the same in Germany. In *Passions and Impressions*, Neruda writes the following about the heroism of Russian soldiers: "The world still thrills at the memory of its glorious defence of peace and liberty in crushing the threat of Hitler. Those were sombre and bloody days, and all humanity recognizes its immeasurable debt to the Soviets" (369-70). Alongside, the poet also speaks of the essentiality of Marxism and Communism to curb fascism and build a socialist society. Thereupon, he writes,

With Marxism, and especially Communism, the keyword is struggle, . . . the closer one got to socialism the sharper became the character of class struggle, even in a society ruled by socialists, . . . for the dream of a perfect society Communism substitutes the cult of the perfect Party [Communist Party]. (qtd. in Mascia 72).

Indeed, Neruda plays the role of a world citizen in this poem. His cosmopolitan sense comes to light in multifarious ways. He calls for establishing world peace through the poems of the section, and asserts that enough blood has been shed; now, all nations should concentrate on rebuilding peace and brotherhood among themselves. He underscores international solidarity, future peace, and patriotism. He brings forth the interests of the proletariat across the globe. In the end, he again stresses building a socialist society.

Another substantial poem of Canto IX, "Beyond your lands, America, I also wend my way," initially attempts to connect the people of the Soviet Union, South America, and the United States regarding their common struggles for establishing a socialist society. The poet writes,

Stalingrad, your steely voice surges,
floor by floor hope's reborn

like a collective house,
 and there's a new tremor on the march
 teaching,
 singing
 and building. (Neruda 267)

The poet informs us of the rebirth of new hope as Stalingrad rises. He puts his faith in the next move of Stalingrad, which will help build a new society. Indeed, the poem calls forth the people of the Soviet Union and South America to “fight together for the Marxist cause” (Mascia 70). Neruda invariably believed the proletarian struggle against capitalism has a common motto across the world: to establish a society free from capitalism. Such struggle rejects totalitarian dictatorship and bourgeois exploitation.

To add, this poem ends with substantial notes on the poet's ideas of interconnectedness and political rebirth. Neruda again presents Juan as a symbol of liberator to decipher his concept of interconnectedness. He intends to make a bridge between North and South Americas through the following lines: “My brother Juan sells shoes, / Like your brother John, / . . . and my blood's miner and mariner / Like your blood, Peter” (Neruda 270). These denote Neruda's objective to bridge the gaps of inequality between the continents of America. He imagines a unified America. Just afterwards, he alerts those who impede the project of unified America by saying that “we won't be hearing the hiss of a machine gun but rather a / song, and song after song” (Neruda 271). No doubt, the “song” Neruda wants to sing is one about new days that may introduce us to the politics of fraternity and unity.

The last poem of the section is “I am Among You,” starting with a description of the brutishness of the US aggression and ending with the poet's expression of solidarity with the

people. In this section, we do not find any difference between people and the poet. Both people and the poet had to face the same consequences in their struggles. Finally, this section delineates Neruda's chronicle, encompassing his formative years in the Chilean frontier region until his current existence. He presents us with a depiction of his paternal figure, his formative years as a scholar, and his experiences as a consular officer in the Eastern regions. According to his personal account, he experienced a profound connection with the natural environment of the Americas as he journeyed around the area.

It is noticeable that as *Canto General* advances towards its end, Neruda, as its creator, becomes an active part of it, which we can relate to Whitman's disposition to include him as a voice in *Leaves of Grass* alongside other speakers. For example, in book VI of *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman becomes an active part of the poem by including himself as a participant in the world he describes. He uses the first-person pronoun "I" throughout the poem and shares his own experiences of the world alongside those of other people and things. He also positions himself as an observer and participant in the many cities of the world, blending in with the crowds and becoming one with the urban landscape. He writes: "What do you hear Walt Whitman?" And he gives an answer: "I hear the workman singing.../ I hear French liberty songs" (Whitman 139). A couple of stanzas later, he questions, "What do you see Walt Whitman?" Again, he answers: "I see ranks, colors, barbarians, civilizations, I go among them, I mix indiscriminately" (Whitman 145). His observations bring forth his own experiences to illustrate the larger themes of unity, diversity, and interconnectedness. By positioning himself as a part of the world he describes, he invites readers to do the same and to see themselves as active participants in the ongoing story of the earth. Similarly, Neruda partly uses this Whimanian technique in a poem of his epic, *Canto General*. In "Brother Pablo," a poem from "The Flowers of Punitaqui," Neruda shares with us the sufferings

of the peasants by being one of them. He writes: "Brother Pablo, there's no water, it hasn't rained. / And the drought begins to kill children / Up above, many have nothing to eat. / Brother Pablo, speak to the Minister" (Trans. Schmitt 279). The lines expose how people suffered due to drought. People asked the poet to talk to the minister to arrange water for them. But in the last stanza, the poet mentions the following with utter sadness: "The Minister will lie, he'll wash his hands, / and the livestock of the poor commoner, / with his burro and his dog, will fall,..." (Neruda 279). It reveals that the minister gave false assurance to the people, which intensified their misery and hunger. In this regard, Paul states that Neruda sets up such an interconnectedness with the suffering humanity to make his portrayal of the dispossessed more truthful (89). On the whole, we find similarities between Neruda and Whitman as both of them intend to establish relations with people and readers by being parts of their creations.

To add, in Cantos X and XI, "The Fugitive" and "The Flowers of Punitaqui," Neruda conveys his support for the underprivileged individuals named Juans in Chile, who endure the oppressive governance of González's enforcers. Despite the dictator's apparent victory, Neruda believes it to be temporary and accuses González of securing his position through the aid of foreign money and weapons. The poet maintains that a leader who lacks the support of the masses will not remain in power for long. Ultimately, Cantos X and XI assert that the González regime will be overthrown through a mass revolution. The concluding lines of these cantos serve as a testament to this sentiment:

What can you do, scoundrel, against the air?
 What can you do scoundrel, against everything
 That flowers and surges and is silent and watches
 And awaits me and judges you. (Neruda 284)

Eventually, in describing the central objective of *Canto General*, Frank Riess demonstrates that pueblo (Native Americans) display two equally significant facets in their actions, not only collective opposition to dictators and oligarchies (16). In addition, work is a vital aspect of their endeavours, not just a means of shaping permanent structures but also a means of reconnecting with the land to attain the unity of “partia” (all disintegrated communities). When humans and the earth come together to achieve a shared goal, work becomes a tool to achieve this harmony. Neruda's reference to Marxism is evident in this societal context. Work is the physical modification of the natural environment to benefit the community. The minerals of the earth can be utilised by the people for their salvation, leading to a flawless unity akin to that of metals. In the epic, social activities such as work and the collective opposition to unjust societal forms are expressed in this manner (Neruda 124-125).

vii. *Odes to Common Things*: A Truly Liberal Worldview

The majority of critics feel that Neruda's *Odes to Common Things* (1954) introduced a new cycle of direct poems. The odes are definitely oral and must be heard to be understood. As Jason Wilson (2008), a Neruda-biographer and a Marxist critic, points out, Neruda, as a Communist, adopted some of Andrea Zhdanov's 1934 tenets of "Socialist realism," depicting the phenomenal world (a materialistic poetics) and revealing how Marxist-Leninism “led to happy souls, smiling peasants, and Neruda's brandishing of happiness during the Cold War” (qtd. in Wilson 232). Wilson, on the other hand, claims that in writing the poems of *Odas Elementales*, Neruda followed the simplicity of Baudelaire and Rimbaud (205).

The term ‘Ode’ derives from the Greek ‘to sing, to chant.’ It suggests a public utterance and develops from three poets---Horace, Pindar, and Anacreon. Yurkievich decided that Neruda ‘emulates rather Horace,’ with his mix of hendecasyllables and heptasyllables. He also pointed out

that the adjective in Neruda's title suggests two kinds of 'elementales': that of 'basic' and that of elementary elements. The beginning poems clarify Neruda's continuing diatribe against his earlier 'hermetic' poetry, what Yurkievich called his 'pure divorce' with *Residences on Earth*. Jaime Alazraki (1989) also wrote a lucid introduction to this ode cycle, stressing how Neruda chose to transform the lyric poet into a 'chronicler of his period,' insisting that his poems appeared on the news page of his friend Miguel Otero Silva's newspaper *El Nacional* in order to catch another kind of reader. He also pointed out that everything, including the rain, sea, ocean, and stars, was drafted into his new politics and forced to take sides; he also noticed a common structure based on thesis, antithesis, and synthesis in the form of a moral, a threat, a warning, and decided, contrary to Yurkievich, that this structure was closest to the Pindaric ode (Wilson 233).

However, in the preface to *Odes to Common Things*, Pablo Neruda writes, "My ambition is to write like one whistles while walking down the street. I think this should be the language of absolutely straightforward, untrembling poetry" (qtd. in Eisner 404). His prefatory comment clarifies how he, in the book of odes, has gone "from introvert to extrovert, with a language accessible to all, stripped down to the bare realities" (qtd. in Eisner 404). Furthermore, in the preface, Neruda also says, "On our earth, before writing was invented, . . . poetry flourished . . . we know that poetry is like bread; it should be shared by all, by scholars and by peasants, by all our vast, incredible, extraordinary family of humanity" (qtd. in Feinstein 44). And, Adam Feinstein has considered such comments of the poet the main objective behind his composition of the odes.

In his work titled *Odes to Common Things*, Neruda challenges the traditional notion of an ode by exalting commonplace items and imbuing them with deep artistic contemplation. Historically, odes have been mostly devoted to elevated and illustrious themes, encompassing nature, deities, opulent artifacts, or persons of great valour. Nevertheless, Neruda deviates from

this conventional approach and shifts his focus towards ordinary, mundane objects. Rather than exalting grandiose vistas or mythical entities, the individual in question discerns aesthetic appeal and meaning in ordinary items that encompass our immediate environment, such as a tomato, a pair of socks, a spoon, or a chair. Through the act of elevating commonplace objects to the realm of poetic topics, the poet challenges the prevailing belief that only remarkable subjects hold the capacity for deep reflection and poetic exaltation. The poet utilises his odes as a means of amplifying the voices of individuals who have been marginalised and oppressed, emphasising their importance within the social structure. In his works, Neruda directs focus towards the aesthetic and significance of mundane elements and facets of existence, fostering a revitalised sense of value for the commonly disregarded realm that surrounds us.

Neruda's intention, as evident in his odes, is to depict and document commonplace aspects and items that have a societal purpose. His primary interest lies in the representation of commonplace items, such socks, tomatoes, scissors, and artichokes, whereby he endeavours to infuse them with aesthetic appeal and symbolic significance. Neruda finds worth and importance in the uncomplicated and ordinary facets of existence. Through his meticulous and contemplative analysis of various subjects, he occasionally highlights socioeconomic inequalities. Nevertheless, inside each poetic composition, the poet conveys an inherent inclination towards optimism, derived from his portrayal of commonplace entities and phenomena, occasionally endowing them with vitality and personifying them. Overall, his emphasis on everyday items symbolises his admiration for the tangible realm constructed by the working class. For instance, in "Ode to My Socks," Neruda writes:

I have a crazy, crazy love of things. I like pliers,
and scissors. I love cups,

rings, and bowls – not to speak, of course,
of hats. I love all things,
not just the grandest, also the
infinite-
ly
small . . . (408)

These lines exemplify Neruda's exaltation of the commonplace and ordinary. Through the act of highlighting his affection for unadorned entities, he draws attention to the arduous efforts of the labour. According to Marjorie Agosin, a prominent critic of Neruda, the odes written by Neruda serve to elevate the labour of the proletariat, a social class whose contributions are frequently overlooked under a capitalist framework that places profit above the value of human effort, perspiration, and expertise.

Similarly, in "Ode to the Ironing Board," the poet writes:

O ironing board, green
dress of the worker,
you precede the shirt, the underwear,
the socks and the tie,
the trousers travel,
the jacket flies in the air,
and thus we go through the universe
covered with the texture
of the cloth . . . (Neruda 411)

Neruda personifies the ironing board and recognises its significance within the labour process. Through this action, he directs focus towards the laborious duties of the workers and the significance and excellence they contribute to societal existence. Neruda's emphasis on the instruments utilised by workers serves the purpose of humanising and exalting the working class, highlighting their essential contribution to the production of everyday commodities.

For Neruda, there is no space for a bourgeois critic; there should just be poets and readers. His original practice was to bypass rationality and rational critics, and his novel way of reading poems was to voice them and make them immediate. For instance, "Ode to Envy" recounts his journey as a poet from the South to the Far East with its fevers and crowds to become yet another poetic reworking of his own life (Wilson 235). Conversely, in "Ode to the Artichoke", the poet employs a baroque aesthetic to provide both verbal and material depictions, wherein the artichoke assumes the role of a valiant warrior, possessing a delicate disposition, and the pomegranate stands as a symbol of pride, ultimately finding itself within a market basket. The poet's description progresses through tangible lines until Maria acquires the artichoke. The poem ends with the lines: [leaf by leaf we undress the delight and we eat the peaceful paste of its green heart.] Similarly, Neruda's "Ode to Onion" (Jason Wilson terms it another enemy of the oligarchy) celebrates the onion growing underground with its 'dew belly' and is born like Aphrodite, like a magnolia, a planet, a round rose of water on the table of the poor. In a salad, onions are like 'granizo' [hail] and kill off the hunger of the 'day worker on the tough road.' Neruda's celebration extends beyond a conventional approach since he precisely exalts the objects and experiences associated with impoverished individuals. Based on this concept, the onion stimulates his analogical need. De Costa (2011) characterises this ode as "highly conceptual," emphasising the singularity and simplicity of its phrases (Wilson 236). Contrarily, Agosin (1986) argues that Neruda perceives an

average onion as remarkable and enchanting, not solely due to its natural origins but rather due to the human element of everyday utilisation, which bestows upon it a sense of grandeur and dignity:

so did the earth
create you
onion,
pellucid planet
destined to glow,
constant constellation,
spherical water rose,
upon
the table of the poor. (qtd. in Agosin 98)

This poem serves as a commendable illustration of how a tangible and commonplace item can undergo augmentation and metamorphosis while retaining its inherent essence. The unassuming onion assumes the role of an illuminating entity, with its physical structure being likened to that of a blossoming flower: “petal by petal / was your beauty fashioned” (qtd. in Agosin 99). According to Agosin, while commonly disregarded, the onion possesses a transcendent quality that may be considered virtually sublime. This is not only due to its inherent beauty but also because it serves as a vital source of sustenance for impoverished individuals (99).

However, Neruda’s materialist philosophy comes to the forefront when he writes the poem “Ode to the Earth ” in which he identifies the relations between human beings and Earth. He showcases how we are indebted to Earth as it shapes us; likewise, we add to the treasures of Earth through our labour and intellect. Neruda writes,

I sing to you [earth]

because man
will make you yield, will make you bear
he will expose your ovaries,
he will spill his special rays
into your secret cup,
desert land
[. . .]

Earth, I like you
as clay and sand,
I hold you and shape you
as you shaped me
you slip from my fingers
as I, freed, will return
to your encompassing womb. (396)

Neruda's materialist thoughts also get highlighted when he appears in the poem "Ode to Criticism" in which he satirises those who read his poetry meticulously, get benefitted, and finally, sit with dictionaries to find fault with the words he has used. However, Neruda says,

. . . men and women
came to live
with my poetry
. . . they lighted fires,
built houses,
broke bread,

they shared the light
and in love joined
the lighting flash and the ring. (Neruda 387)

It denotes that those who criticise Neruda's poems use his verses when necessary. Though they sometimes attempt to condemn his poems, they cannot do so ultimately because Neruda firmly believes that his creations always dwell on simple people and their life. Thereupon, he says,

I'm telling,
I am leaving to live
forever
with simple people. (Neruda 387)

In addition, a number of scholars have examined *Odes to Common Things* via a Marxist lens, drawing attention to the latent motifs of class conflict and the exploitation of labour. The scholarly analysis of literary expert José Quiroga highlights that Neruda's poetry within this compilation embodies a "populist rhetoric aimed at rectifying the power disparity between the oppressed and the oppressors" (qtd. in Costa 111). He claims that Neruda's admiration for commonplace items serves as an endeavour to enhance the significance of the working class's labour and shed light on their marginalised status. In contrast, Gabriela Mistral, a prominent Chilean poet and recipient of the Nobel Prize, contends that Neruda's poetic embodiment of mundane objects serves as a form of resistance against the capitalist framework. She posits that the emphasis placed by Neruda on the workers responsible for the creation of these items serves as an appeal to acknowledge their inherent worth and resist the dehumanising consequences of capitalist systems (Agosin 49).

By celebrating everyday goods and emphasising the labourers who produce them, Neruda unveils the systemic exploitation endured by the working class within the framework of capitalism. Furthermore, he makes a critique of the devaluation of labour and advocates for a societal framework that acknowledges and honours the contributions made by every individual. Nevertheless, it is worth noting the observation made by Mark Eisner regarding the distinction between the nature of this book and that of *Canto General*:

In *Canto General*, Neruda stressed how man was made from the earth. [In the Odes] He now stresses man's duty to cultivate what the earth provides. In both cases, he reminds us that we and the earth are a single indissoluble entity and that it is through a collective, cooperative effort that this essential oneness is created. (qtd. in Eisner 411)

However, according to Greg Dawes, an argument can be made that Neruda's *Odes to Common Things* exhibit elements of both continuity and rupture when compared to his earlier work, *Canto General*. The literary work called *Canto General* primarily centres its attention on Latin America's historical and physical landscape. In contrast, the Odes delve deep into dialectical contemplations regarding the interplay between nature and the human condition (127). At a superficial level, Neruda devotes his odes to subjects that, at initial observation, appear ordinary and inconsequential. Upon further examination, commonplace items such as onions or bread can serve as subjects for contemplation and critical comment. Dawes adds,

As a dialectical thinker, Neruda manages to unearth the object's social and natural properties and restore their vital importance. In *Canto general*, his intent was to point out that labor is exploited and disregarded as the object itself is reified . . . [conversely], in *Odes to Common Things*, he concentrates on valorizing the object congealed with the laborer's or nature's hours of work. (127)

Neruda effectively aligns the form of his work with the underlying message of appreciating simplicity. The poems exhibit the utilisation of blank verse and conversational language, while also upholding the conventional aspects of the ode as a means of civic expression. The integration of written imagery and spoken language synergistically contributes to the creation of a highly gratifying aural and visual rhythm. Fernando Alegria explains why Neruda finds in the ode the adequate form for his new concept of poetry: “Neruda uses a peculiarly short, irregular line, not out of mere whimsy but because he believes this type of line performs a definite functional purpose” (qtd. in Agosin 101). In this regard, Agosin notes,

The odes represent a process of reconstruction in which an object is examined almost microscopically, transformed into a luminous entity, and elevated to the extraordinary. Like Aphrodite born out of the sea, the onion is born of the earth. The odes reveal the universe to the reader and when recited, to the listeners, as if we were seeing it for the first time in its true meaning. A watch recalls the heartbeat of the beloved, . . . and at the same time the poetry of fishermen returning from the sea, the miners, the poor washerwomen. The odes as a totality are a celebration in song. (104)

Within the Odes, Neruda formulates the concept of poetry as a benevolent contribution intended to serve the practical welfare of a given society. The odes in Neruda's poetic growth signify a fresh commencement. The words of their songs deviate from the hermetic style that can only be understood by a select few, instead shifting their focus towards the inanimate realm of ordinary objects. His poetic compositions, characterised by their vivid imagery and beautiful language, emphasise the intrinsic worth of commonplace items and the tendency to disregard them. Through commemorating the ordinary, the poet gently questions the prevailing hierarchical structures of society and adopts a viewpoint congruent with Marxist principles. This viewpoint

promotes the acknowledging and valuing of labour and the importance inherent in everyday objects. In this literary piece, Neruda demonstrates not only his exceptional poetry skill but also reaffirms his dedication to illuminating the interdependence between humankind and the material world, resonating with the core principles of his Marxist ideology.

Overall, Neruda's political engagement with the Chilean Communist Party made him subscribe to the Marxist idea of dialectics. In the epic poem *Canto General*, he has blended the basic segments of South American history with the Marxist interpretation of human development. Neruda applied the concept of historical materialism to demystify the evolution of South American society and history. *Canto General*, as Agosin interprets, sheds light on the history of a population that is doubly colonised—first by the Spaniards and later by the capitalist modern powers that provided their aid to the dictators to run neocolonialism. All oppression is assumed to have emanated from capitalism. So, the poet seeks redemption in Marxism. The antagonism between Marxism and capitalism shapes the form of *Canto General*. The epic poem shows that the original inhabitants of the land are real heroes. On the other hand, the Spanish colonists are identified as antiheroes who have invaded the land and killed people.

Conclusion

The geographical environment of Southern Chile, which served as the backdrop of Neruda's formative years, is a recurring motif that permeates Neruda's literary oeuvre. The diverse routes of his journeys intersect inside the Chilean landscape, driven by a longing to rediscover his familial heritage. The act of exploring and searching all these becomes a crucial tool for the advancement of his imaginative and intuitive understanding of the world. His poetry exhibits a cohesive and interconnected vision, effectively integrating disparate aspects into a unified tapestry. The poetic symbolism experiences alterations with time. The vigour and freshness of poems arise from his immediate perception of the world in its original and untainted condition. Neruda acknowledges that his poetry serves as a means to escape from abstraction, aiming to transcend the barriers that separate humanity from nature and interpersonal connections. The initial phase of his work reflects a sense of alienation while gradually evolving into a versatile instrument that can be universally embraced. In other words, though he began his odyssey as a love poet, he gradually distanced himself from that axis and emerged as a people's poet. In his early life, he adhered to romanticism by being influenced by the French romantics and surrealists. His poems of that stage have dealt with nature, human love, solitariness, and similar emotions. However, his poetry changed after he had come into contact with the Spanish intelligentsia. Meeting with the Spanish poets, intellectuals, and politicians remarkably changed his world outlook. Their company and orientation helped him thoroughly explore Communist politics and activities dedicated to serving the marginalised and the proletariat.

However, the significant changes that occurred in the personality, poetry, political philosophy, and social outlook of Pablo Neruda due to the contemporaneous events and experiences he encountered are plenty in number. One such experience was his meeting and

interactions with the Avant-gardist circle in Spain, which significantly impacted his poetry, leading him to espouse the concept of "impure poetry." However, the assassination of his comrade Federico Garcia Lorca and the onset of the Spanish Civil War changed the course of his career as a poet more than anything else. Afterwards, his active role in organising a writers' congress to support the Spanish Republican government caused Neruda to develop a strong sense of solidarity with the suffering humanity during the Civil War in Spain. Neruda's efforts to send Spanish refugees to Chile and subsequent publication of the book, *Spain in Our Hearts*, also reflect his commitment to the communist ideology. He exposes the tragic and cruel pitfalls of the upsurge of fascism, oligarchy, and capitalism in Spain, Chile, and other states of South America. Furthermore, he showcases the attempts and activities of the Communist Parties all over this continent to bring about urgently important social changes, and thus, create a pluralistic society where freedom of speech and the rights of the proletariat will be given priority over all other issues. He proves his conviction in fostering the proletarian revolution which only, he asserts, can establish a socialist society. It can be safely claimed that Neruda's progressivism and anti-fascist crusading have significantly contributed to the extensive body of Marxist ideology regarding literature, art, and culture over the entire world. In other words, his unwavering dedication, steadfast commitment, and profound sense of responsibility towards the economic emancipation of the people developed him into a poet of the people.

On the other hand, *Canto General* provides a comprehensive portrayal of the expansive natural landscapes of South America and the pivotal role that Neruda plays in that. It offers valuable insights on themes of aggressiveness, colonisation, and oppression and evokes both discomfort and rejuvenation inside its readers through its compelling plea for transformation. Though numerous poets originating from South America have adeptly shown the geological

aspects and vitality of this landmass via their poetic works, Neruda's objective is in the rediscovery of the continent by means of exploring its historical growth. Consequently, he endeavours to establish a connection between historical events, contemporary circumstances, and forthcoming developments and advocates for a transformative vision to shape the future. Inspired by the Chilean Communist Party, Neruda actively pursued the agenda of societal transformation. In this epic, the poet makes an effort to amalgamate his own encounters with significant historical occurrences, elucidating the course of human history via the dual lens of a poet and historian, as well as assuming the roles of a political activist and an ordinary citizen.

To add, in line with the Marxist interpretation of historical materialism, Neruda portrays the trajectory of historical development while underscoring the notion that progress is not an automatic outcome but rather a result of onerous struggle. In contrast to the North American perspective that links progress with technological advancements, Neruda establishes a connection between progress and natural imagery, including seeds, flowers, trees, earth, sand, and stone. He holds the belief that the advancement in South America will primarily stem from organic development rather than relying heavily on technological advancements. Brotherston argues that seeds have a prominent position within Neruda's literary oeuvre, symbolically embodying the vital essence of the populace, from which the ideology of communism is poised to arise (191). The remnants of seeds sown via despotic actions can also serve as catalysts for the emergence of redemption. So, in *Canto General*, Neruda depicts seeds as being equivalent to people. He presents communism as an outcome that emerges from the collective efforts and aspirations of the populace. The detrimental impact of human actions on the environment is evident, necessitating a process of restoration, with the recollection of these actions serving as the initial step towards achieving such redemption.

By endorsing the concept of historical materialism in *Canto General*, Neruda reveals the acts of falsification of South American historical facts by different dictators and illustrates how his epic poem puts efforts to give voice to the unsung heroes of the continent who suffered immensely to establish the truth. So, his quest for historicity also brings to notice South American dictators' heinous acts of disregarding the contributions of native fighters of the soil through the distortion of real historical events. Consequently, he assumes the position of a cohesive representative of the entire continent in this epic narrative, meticulously documenting the integrity of past occurrences and the invaluable contributions made by the working class who selflessly laid down their lives in pursuit of social, political, and cultural shifts. Furthermore, his endorsement of Marxist dialectics led him to prioritise the proletarian struggle over bourgeois designs. He also underscored the value and essentiality of the various proletarian movements that took place during the mid-20th century in different parts of the continent in shaping its history. Overall, in *Canto General*, he exposes the betrayal of South American leaders following independence while stressing the notoriety of such lapses of the bourgeoisie and their leaders.

Neruda's objective in his epic poem was to explore, consolidate, and establish the concept of South America as a unified entity. Through the establishment of a distinct literary tradition in South America and the propagation of a narrative centred around communist advancement, Neruda sought to foster a collective consciousness among the reading populace, promoting a feeling of national identity and instigating resistance against authoritarian regimes. He regarded communism as the paramount societal paradigm, perceiving it as the sole politically tenable doctrine of the present era. He made the claim that there are only two ideological positions available: one can either be a proponent of communism or an opponent of communism. The remaining doctrines have been experiencing a decline and degradation. By drawing inspiration from the revolutionary and

anthropocentric poetic styles of Whitman, Rimbaud, and Baudelaire, the poet composed *Canto General*, exploring the geological and political history of the American continent. In a similar vein, Neruda exposes the humanist essence and the plight of the impoverished communities in South America.

Last but not least, Neruda's poetry presents visions and metaphors born of analogical conscientiousness. As a poet, he is equally capable of being either hermetic or transparent, but his voice is always authentic. Marjorie Agosin (1986), a Chilean-American writer and critic, notes, "He is always the poet who dares to be, who dares to give himself up to the unknown muse of poetry" (136). Above all, his poetry exhibits a dynamic quality that liberates the reader from constraints and transports them into a realm of mental ecstasy. The poetry he has left behind is a poignant reminder that humanity and its artistic endeavours endure in perpetuity. His life takes the form of a kaleidoscope revolving around a constant centre, as we have seen with the landscape of Temuco that is always with him. Agosin (1986) points out that the substance of his poetry is "terrestrial, material, and telluric" (136). His poetry forecasts the social and political future of the American continent. He maintains his role as a poet tenaciously and does not theorise as a critic. He is a keeper of his intimacy---he believes that one learns poetry at its primal sources, like an artisan "of bread, truth, wine, dreams" (Agosin 12).

Overall, this research has explored Pablo Neruda's contribution to Marxist aesthetics through both his literary works and activism. In particular, it has examined the intersections between Neruda and prominent Marxist scholars in their comprehension of Marxist concepts of art, culture, literature, and history. As a whole, this study has probed into Neruda's diverse perspectives and thoughts that have further expanded the scope of Marxist progressivism and humanist world outlook.

Works Cited

Anshen, David. *Marxist Literary and Cultural Theory*. Edited by Andrew Slade, Orient Blackswan Private Limited, 2017, pp. 34-145.

Agosin, Marjorie. *Pablo Neruda*, Chapter Three: "The Residence Cycle: Neruda and the Avant-Garde." 1st ed., Twayne Publishers, 1986, <https://doi.org/ISBN: 0-8057-6620-0>. pp. 36-57.

--- "*Canto general: The Word and the Song of America*." 1st ed., Twayne Publishers, 1986, <https://doi.org/ISBN: 0-8057-6620-0>. pp. 58-74.

Alazarki, Jaime. *Poetics of Neruda*. Las Americas Publishing Company, 1965, p. 69.

Alonso, Amado. "From Melancholy to Anguish." *Modern Critical Views Pablo Neruda*, Edited by Harold Bloom, no. 1, 1989, pp. 69-74, <https://doi.org/ISBN 1-555-46298-7>.

Avant-Garde Art. "The Art Story." <https://www.theartstory.org/definition/avant-garde/>

Anwar, Ali. *Pablo Neruda: Preme O Sangrame [Pablo Neruda: Love and Revolution]*. Shitya Prakash, 2012, pp. 72-76.

Bleiker, Roland. "Pablo Neruda and the Struggle for Political Memory." *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No. 6, pp. 1129-1142, 1999.

Brotherston, Gordon. "Neruda's Canto general and the Great Song of America." *Modern Critical Views Pablo Neruda*, Edited by Harold Bloom, no. 1, 1989, pp. 117-130, <https://doi.org/ISBN 1-555-46298-7>.

Bhattacharya, Ramkrishna. "Marxist Literary Criticism: What It Is Not." *Academia*, 2010, pp. 1-6.

Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory*. Manchester University Press, 2007, p. 39.

Belinsky, V. G. *Selected Philosophical Works*. FLPH, 1948, p. 76.

Badiou, Alain. "Communism by Way of the Poem." Culture Matters, April 26, 2016, www.culturematters.org.uk/index.php/arts/poetry/item/2279-poetry-and-communism.

Bizarro, Salvatore. *Pablo Neruda: All Poets, the Poet*. Scarecrow Publications, 1979, ISBN: 978-0810811898.

Costa, Rene de. *The Poetry of Pablo Neruda*, Chapter Five: "Epic Poetry: *Canto general*." Harvard University Press, 1979, ISBN: 978-0-674-67981-8. pp. 206-239.

Concha, Jaime. *Pablo Neruda 1904-1936*. Editorial Universitaria, S. A. (Santiago de Chile), 2022 (Reprint), ISBN: 978-1-4696-7090-4.

Chattopadhyay, Monoranjan. *Marxbader Aloke Shilposahitya [Art and Literature in Marxism]*. Priya Book House, 2009, pp. 22-25.

Chakraborty, Sudeshna. "Swapner Kobi, Kobir Swapno" ("The Dream Poet, The Poet's Dream"), *Pablo Neruda: Jibon, Somoy, Kobita* (Pablo Neruda: Life, Time, Poetry), edited by Soumitra Lahiri, National Book Agency Pvt. Ltd., 2004, pp. 290-309.

Conway, Christopher. "The Revolutionary Poetics of Pablo Neruda." Dialnet, 2008, <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=6315850>

Duran, Manuel. "Pablo Neruda and the Romantic-Symbolist Tradition." *Modern Critical Views Pablo Neruda*, Edited by Harold Bloom, no. 1, 1989, pp. 179-190, <https://doi.org/10.1555-46298-7>.

Dawes, Greg. *Verses Against Darkness*. Bucknell University Press, 2006, p. 188.

--- "Realism, Surrealism, Socialist Realism, and Neruda's "Guided Spontaneity." *Cultural Logic: A Journal of Marxist Theory & Practice*, Vol. 10 (2003), pp. 1-41, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14288/cllogic.v10i0.191794>.

Dasgupta, Ranesh. "Pablo Neruda: Obirotto Kabyokriti" ("Pablo Neruda: Unremitting Poetic Excellence"), *Sreshtho Pablo Neruda*, edited by Hayat Mahmud, Obosor Publications, 2014, pp. 305-316.

"Dialectical materialism." (n.d.). In Marxists Internet Archive. Retrieved from <http://www.marxists.org/glossary/terms/d/i.htm#dialectical-materialism>

Das, K. Shishir. "Mahakobi Pablo Neruda." *Pablo Neruda Onubade Onubhobe*, edited by Robin Paul, Dey's Publishing, 2018.

Eisner, Mark. *Neruda: The Poet's Calling*. Ecco, An Imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2018, pp. 265-339.

Ehrenburg, Ilya. "Pablo Neruda." *Selected Poems of Pablo Neruda*. 1st ed., Obosor Publications, 2014, p. 317-323.

Eagleton, Terry. *Marxism and literary criticism*. Routledge, 2002, pp. 5-68.

Engels, Fredrich. *Dialectics of Nature*. Wellred Publications, 2012, p. 518.

Feinstein, Adam. *Pablo Neruda: A Passion for Life*. Bloomsbury, 2004, pp. 15-261.

Fischer, Ernst. *The Necessity of Art*. Penguin Books, 1963, p. 355.

Gibson, Nigel C. "Fanon's renewal of the Marxist formula." *New Frame*, 18 Nov. 2018, www.newframe.com/fanons-renewal-marxist-formula.

Goldstein, Philip. *The Politics of Literary Theory: An Introduction to Marxist Criticism*. Florida University Press, 1990.

Hossain, Khondakar Ashraf. "Marxio Nandan O Sahityatatta" ["Marxist aesthetics and Literary Criticism"]. *Kabitar Anatarjami: Adhunik Uttaradhunik O Anyanyo Prosangya*, [Indwelling Poems: Modern, Postmodern and Others]. Nandonik, 2011, pp. 254-277.

"Historical materialism." (n.d.). In Marxists Internet Archive. Retrieved from <http://www.marxists.org/glossary/terms/h/i.htm#historical-materialism>

Johnson, Pauline. *Marxist aesthetics: The foundations within everyday life for an emancipated consciousness*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984, pp. 28-136.

Krylov, B. "Marx and Engels on Literature and Art." <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/subject/art/preface.htm>

Kunkel, Benjamin. "Poet of the People." *The New Republic*, 30 June 2019, [newrepublic.com/article/148907/poet-partisan-world-pablo-neruda](https://www.newrepublic.com/article/148907/poet-partisan-world-pablo-neruda).

Kerrigan, A. *Selected Poems*. (translation). Oxford University Press, 1992.

Loyola, Hernan. *Neruda's Sins*. Translated by Greg Dawes. Penguin Random House in Santiago, 2019, ISBN: ISBN: 978-1-4696-7200-7.

Lodge, David. *20th Century Criticism*. Longman, 1992, p. 368.

MacAdam, Alfred J. "Neruda's Espana en el corazon: Genre and Historical Moment." *Modern Critical Views Pablo Neruda*, Edited by Harold Bloom, no. 1, 1989, pp. 291-300, <https://doi.org/10.1215/00141801-1989-001>.

Mascia, Mark J. "Pablo Neruda and the Construction of Past and Future Utopias in the Canto general." *Utopian Studies*, 2002, pp. 65-81.

Mokammel, Tanvir. *Bangaleer Medha O Anyanyo Probandha [Bengalis' Intellect and Other Essays]*. Anarjo, 2017, pp. 135-138.

Morawski, Stefan, et. al. *Karl Marx and Fredrich Engels on Literature and Art*. Critical, Cultural and Communications Press, 2006.

Mukhopadhyay, Bimalkumar. *Marxio Sahityatatta [Marxist Literary Criticism]*. Dey's Publishing, 2011, pp. 18-141.

Matu, Jakup, et al. "Socialist Realism." *Scribd*, www.scribd.com/document/288844140/Socialist-Realism. Accessed 25 Nov. 2022.

Moran, Dominick. *Pablo Neruda*. Reaktion Books Ltd., 2009, pp. 64-117

Neruda, Pablo. *Passions and Impressions*. Translated by Margaret Sayers Peden, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1983, pp. 137-289.

Neruda, Pablo. *Memoirs*. Translated by Hardie St. Martin. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1977, p. 123-212.

—. *Residence on Earth*. Translated by Ilan Stavans. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003.

Neruda, Pablo. *The Poetry of Pablo Neruda*. Edited by Ilan Stavans. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003, pp. 102-316.

---*Pablo Neruda Selected Poems*. (translation). Vintage Books, 2012.

Prashad, Vijay. "I Was among Them: Pablo Neruda Turns 100" - Communist Party of India, *The Marxist*, Vol. 20, 2004, www.cpim.org/marxist/200402-Neruda-prashad.pdf.

Paul, Samiran Kumar. *Literary Theory and Marxist Criticism*. Notion Press, 2020, pp. 5-42.

Paul, Robin. *Pablo Neruda Onubade Onubhobe [Pablo Neruda in Translation and Realization]*. Dey's Publishing, 2018, pp. 21-89.

—. *Spanier Grihojuddho O Bharat [Spanish Civil War and India]*. Dey's Publishing, 2017, pp. 10-46.

Rumeau, Delphine. "Walt Whitman and Pablo Neruda, American Camerados." *Revue Française d Etudes Américaines*, vol. 108, no. 2, 2006, p. 47, doi:10.3917/rfea.108.0047.

Santi, Enrico M. *The Poetics of Prophecy*. 1st ed., Cornell University Press, 1982, <https://doi.org/SBN:9780801414725>.

Sypher, Ellen. "Christopher Caudwell by Ellen Sypher." *JCsplash*, 2004, www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/jc12-13folder/caudwell.html.

Selden, Remam, et al. *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*. Prentice Hall, 1997.

Shulman, Aaron. "Dictators Kill Poets: On Federico Garcia Lorca's Last Days." Literary Hub, 5 March 2019, <https://lithub.com/dictators-kill-poets-on-federico-garcia-lorcas-last-days/>

Schmitt, Jack. Pablo Neruda: *Canto general*. (translation). University of California Press Ltd., 1993.

Teitelboim, Volodia. *Neruda: An Intimate Biography*. University of Texas Press, 1991, pp. 44-46.

Warner, Robin. "The Politics of Pablo Neruda's Espana en el corazon." *Modern Critical Views Pablo Neruda*, Edited by Harold Bloom, no. 1, 1989, pp. 233-242, <https://doi.org/ISBN 1-555-46298-7>.

Wilson, Jason. *A Companion to Pablo Neruda Evaluating Neruda's Poetry*, Tamesis, 2008, pp. 203-209.

Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 51-110.