My poor friend, poor Consul Hertz! That mad agitator barely missed running the world. And the ingenuous Hertz, with all his culture and his noble romanticism, must have ended up in some monstrous, anonymous gas chamber.

5

Spain in My Heart

WHAT FEDERICO WAS LIKE

A LONG sea voyage of two months brought me back to Chile in 1932. There I published *El hondero entusiasta,* which had been mislaid among my papers, and *Residencia en la tierra,* which I had written in the Orient. In 1933 I was appointed consul of Chile in Buenos Aires, and there I arrived in the month of August.

Federico García Lorca arrived in that city almost at the same time, to direct his tragedy *Blood Wedding*, performed by Lola Membrives's troupe. We hadn't known each other, but we met in Buenos Aires and were often feted together by writers and friends. Of course, we had our share of incidents. Federico had his detractors. So did I, and I still have them. These detractors are driven by a desire to snuff out the lights, to keep us from being seen. That's what happened this time. Because there was a lot of interest in attending the banquet the P.E.N. club was holding for Federico and me at the Plaza Hotel, someone kept the phones busy all day long spreading the word that the dinner in our honor had been called off. They were so persistent that they even called the hotel manager, the telephone operators, and the chef to make sure no reservations were accepted and no dinner was prepared. But the maneuver fell through and in the end Federico García Lorca and I got together with a hundred Argentine writers.

We came up with a big surprise. We had prepared a talk *al alimón.* You probably don't know what that means, and neither

did I. Federico, who always had some invention or idea up his sleeve, explained: "Two bullfighters can fight the same bull at the same time, using only one cape between them. This is one of the most perilous feats in bullfighting. That's why it is so seldom seen. Not more than twice or three times in a century, and it can be done only by two bullfighters who are brothers, or at least blood relations. This is called fighting a bull *al alimón*. And that's the way we'll do our talk."

And that is what we did. But no one knew about it beforehand. When we got up to thank the president of the P.E.N. club for honoring us with the banquet, we did it together, like two bullfighters, to make our single speech. The diners sat at small, separate tables, and Federico was at one end of the room, I at the other. People on my side tugged at my jacket to make me sit down, believing there was a mix-up, and the same thing happened to Federico on the other side of the room. Well, we set out speaking together, with me saying "Ladies" and he continuing with "and gentlemen," twining our phrases throughout, so that they flowed like a single speech, right to the end. The oration was dedicated to Rubén Darío, because, though no one could accuse us of being modernists, both García Lorca and I regarded Rubén Darío as one of the most creative poets in the Spanish language.

Here is the text of the speech:

NERUDA: Ladies . . .

LORCA: . . . and gentlemen: In bullfighting there is what is known as "bullfighting *al alimón*," in which two toreros, holding one cape between them, outwit the bull together.

NERUDA: Linked as if by an electrical impulse, Federico and I will together thank you for this prestigious reception.

LORCA: At these gatherings it is customary for a poet to bring forth his living word, be it of silver or wood, and hail his companions and friends with his own voice.

NERUDA: We, however, are going to seat a dead man among you, to bring you a table companion who is widowed, obscured by the darkness of a death greater than other deaths, widowed of life, whose dazzling spouse he was, in his shining hour. We shall stand in his fiery shadow, we shall call out his name until his powers leap back from oblivion.

LORCA: First, a symbolic embrace, with our penguin-like tenderness, to that exquisite poet, Amado Villar. Then we offer a great name upon the festal board, in the knowledge that wineglasses will shatter, forks fly in search of the eye they hunger for, and a tidal wave stain the table linen. We give you the poet of America and Spain: Rubén . . .

NERUDA: Darío. Because, ladies . . .

LORCA: and gentlemen . . .

NERUDA: Where, in Bueno Aires, is there a Rubén Darío Plaza?

LORCA: Where is Rubén Darío's statue?

NERUDA: He loved parks. Where is Rubén Darío Park?

LORCA: What florist carries Rubén Darío roses?

NERUDA: Where are Rubén Darío apple trees? Rubén Darío apples?

LORCA: Where is the cast of Rubén Darío's hand?

NERUDA: Where?

LORCA: Rubén Darío sleeps in the Nicaragua of his birth under a ghastly lion made of plaster like those the rich set at their gates.

NERUDA: A mail-order lion for him who was a founder of lions, a lion without stars for him who dedicated the stars to others.

LORCA: In an adjective he gave us the sounds of the forest. Like Fray Luis de Granada, a master of words, he created constellations with the lemon, and the stag's foot, and mollusks filled with terror and infinity: he sent us to sea with frigates and shadows in the pupils of our eyes, and he built a limitless esplanade of gin across the grayest afternoon the sky has ever known, and he talked to the south wind in familiar terms, all heart, like the romantic poet he was, and his hand rested on the Corinthian capital, skeptical about all the ages, ironic and sorrowing.

NERUDA: His luminous name should be remembered in its every essence, with the terrible griefs of his heart, his incandescent incertitude; his descent into the deepest circles of hell, his rise to the castles of fame, his greatness as a poet, then and forever and unequaled.

LORCA: As a Spanish poet, he was teacher in Spain to the older masters as well as to the children, with a sense of universality and a generosity present-day poets do not possess. He was teacher to Valle-Inclán and Juan Ramón Jiménez and the Machado brothers, and his voice was water and nitrate in the

furrows of our time-honored language. From Rodrigo Caro to the Argensolas and Don Juan del Arguijo, the Spanish language had not had such a festival of words, such clashing of consonants, such fire and such form as in Rubén Darío. From Velázquez's landscape and Goya's campfire, from Quevedo's melancholy to the precious apple cheeks of Majorcan peasant girls, Darío traveled over the land of Spain as if it were his own land.

NERUDA: The tide brought him to Chile, the warm sea of the North, and the sea left him there, abandoned on the rugged, rock-toothed coast, and the ocean pounded him with foam and bells, and Valparaíso's black wind covered him with songs of salt. Tonight let us make him a statue of air and let smoke, voices, circumstances, and life flow through it, like his magnificent poetry with dreams and sounds flowing through it.

LORCA: But I want to give this statue of air blood like a coral branch stirred by the sea; nerves like a cluster of lightning in a photograph; the head of a minotaur with Góngora's snow painted on by a flight of hummingbirds; the wandering and absent eyes of a millionaire of tears; and also his failings. Shelving eaten away by hedge mustard, where the empty spaces are echoes of a flute; the cognac bottles of his spectacular drunken sprees; his charming lack of taste; and the barefaced verbal stunts that make the vast majority of his poems so human. The fertile substance of his great poetry stands outside norms, forms, or schools.

NERUDA: Federico García Lorca, a Spaniard, and I, a Chilean, turn over the honor of this evening among friends to that great shadow who sang more loftily than we and hailed with his unique voice the Argentine soil on which we stand.

LORCA: Pablo Neruda, a Chilean, and I, a Spaniard, linked by our language and by the person of the great Nicaraguan, Argentine, Chilean, and Spanish poet, Rubén Darío.

NERUDA AND LORCA: In whose honor and glory we raise our glasses!

I remember an evening when I received unexpected support from Federico in a colossal erotic escapade. We had been invited out by one of those millionaires that only Argentina or the United States can produce. He was a born rebel, a self-made man

who had amassed a fantastic fortune with a sensationalist newspaper. Girded by an immense park, his house was the dynamic nouveau riche's dream come true. Cages by the hundreds, with many-colored pheasants from all over the world, lined the driveway. His library consisted of antique books bought by cable at bookdealers' auctions throughout Europe, and what's more, it was quite comprehensive and filled to capacity. But the most spectacular thing about it was the floor of his enormous reading room, every inch of which was covered with panther skins sewed together into a single, gigantic carpet. I learned that the man had agents in Africa, Asia, and the Amazon, commissioned exclusively to collect the skins of leopards, ocelots, fabulous cats, whose spots now glistened beneath my feet in this ornate library.

That's what it was like in the home of Natalio Botana, a notorious, powerful capitalist, who dominated public opinion in Buenos Aires. At the table, Federico and I sat on either side of the host and across from a tall, ethereal lady poet who kept her green eyes on me more than on Federico during dinner. This consisted of a whole steer brought right to the hot coals and ashes in an enormous handbarrow on the shoulders of eight or ten gauchos. The evening sky was a fierce blue, and starry. The aroma of the beef roasted in its hide, sublime invention of the Argentines, mingled with the breath of the pampas, the scent of clover and mint, and the chatter of a thousand crickets and tadpoles.

The lady poet and I, along with Federico, who was delighted and moved to laughter by everything, rose from the table after dinner and went off toward the lighted swimming pool. García Lorca walked in the lead, chatting and laughing. He was happy. He was always like that. Happiness was as much a part of him as his skin.

A high tower soared above the shimmering swimming pool, dominating it. The whiteness of its lime was phosphorescent under the night lights.

We climbed slowly to the tower's highest lookout. Up there the three of us, poets of different styles, were far removed from the world. The pool's blue eye gleamed below. Farther off, we could hear guitars and singing from the party. Over us the night hung so close, swarming with such a multitude of stars, that it seemed to envelop our heads, submerging them in its depths.

I took the tall, golden girl in my arms, and when I kissed her, I

found her sensual, well fleshed, all woman. To Federico's surprise, we lay on the floor of the lookout, and I was starting to undress her, when I caught his enormous eyes staring down at us, not fully believing what was happening.

"Get out of here! Go see that nobody comes up the stairs!" I shouted at him.

As the sacrifice to the starry sky and the Aphrodite of the night was about to be consummated high in the tower, Federico hustled off cheerfully on his mission as aide and sentinel, with such ill fortune, however, that he rolled down the tower's darkened steps. The lady and I had to go help him up, with great difficulty. And he hobbled around for two weeks.

MIGUEL HERNÁNDEZ

I was not at the consulate in Buenos Aires very long. At the start of 1934, I was transferred to Barcelona in the same capacity. Don Tulio Maqueira, the Consul General of Chile in Spain, was my boss. He was, incidentally, the most dedicated official in the Chilean consular service I have come across. A severe man, with a reputation for reticence, he was extremely kind, understanding, and cordial to me.

Don Tulio Maqueira quickly learned that I was very bad at subtracting and multiplying, and that I didn't know how to divide (I have never been able to learn). So he said to me: "Pablo, you should go live in Madrid. That's where the poetry is. All we have here in Barcelona is that terrible multiplication and division that certainly doesn't need you around. I can handle it."

In Madrid, turned overnight, as if by magic, into a Chilean consul in the capital of Spain, I met García Lorca's and Alberti's friends. They were many. And within a few days I was one with the Spanish poets. Spaniards and Latin Americans are different, of course—a difference that is borne with pride, or in error, by either side.

The Spaniards of my generation were more brotherly, more close-knit and good-spirited than their counterparts in Latin America. I found that we were more cosmopolitan, had gone more into other languages and cultures. There were few among

them who spoke any other language than Spanish. When Desnos and Crevel came to Madrid, I had to act as interpreter, so that they and the Spaniards could communicate.

The young poet Miguel Hernández was one of Federico's and Alberti's friends. I met him when he came up, in espadrilles and the typical corduroy trousers peasants wear, from his native Orihuela, where he had been a goatherd. I published his poems in my review *Caballo Verde* (*Green Horse*), and I was enthusiastic about the radiance and vigor of his exuberant poetry.

Miguel was a peasant with an aura of earthiness about him. He had a face like a clod of earth or a potato that has just been pulled up from among the roots and still has its subterranean freshness. He was living and writing in my house. My American poetry, with other horizons and plains, had its impact and gradually made changes in him.

He told me earthy stories about animals and birds. He was the kind of writer who emerges from nature like an uncut stone, with the freshness of the forest and an irresistible vitality. He would tell me how exciting it was to put your ear against the belly of a sleeping she-goat. You could hear the milk coursing down to the udders, a secret sound no one but that poet of goats has been able to listen to.

At other times he would talk to me about the nightingale's song. Eastern Spain, where he came from, swarmed with blossoming orange trees and nightingales. Since that bird, that sublime singer, does not exist in my country, crazy Miguel liked to give me the most vivid imitation of what it could do. He would shinny up one of the trees in the street and from its highest branches would whistle or warble like his beloved native birds.

Since he had nothing to live on, I tried to get him a job. It was hard to find work for a poet in Spain. At last a viscount, a high official in the Ministry of Foreign Relations, took an interest in his case and replied that yes, he was all for it, he had read Miguel's poems, admired them, and Miguel just had to indicate what position he preferred and he would be given the appointment.

I was jubilant and said: "Miguel Hernández, your future is all set, at last. The viscount has a job for you. You'll be a high-ranking employee. Tell me what kind of work you want, and your appointment will go through."

Miguel gave it some thought. His face, with its deep, premature lines, clouded up with anxiety. Hours went by and it was not until late in the afternoon that he gave me his answer. With the radiant look of someone who has found the solution to his whole life, he said to me: "Could the viscount put me in charge of a flock of goats somewhere near Madrid?"

The memory of Miguel Hernández can never be rooted out of my heart. The song of the Levantine nightingales, their spires of sound soaring between the darkness and the orange blossoms, was an obsession with him. They were in his blood, in his earthy and wild poetry, where all the extravagances of color, of perfume, and of the voice of the Spanish Levant came together, with the exuberance and the fragrance of a powerful and virile youth.

His face was the face of Spain. Chiseled by the light, rutted like a planted field, it had some of the roundness of bread or of earth. Filled with fire, burning in that surface scorched and made leathery by the wind, his eyes were two beams of strength and tenderness.

I saw the very elements of poetry rise out of his words, altered now by a new greatness, by a savage light, by the miracle that converts old blood into an infant son. In all my years as poet, as wandering poet, I can say that life has not given me the privilege of setting eyes on anyone with a vocation and an electrical knowledge of words like his.

GREEN HORSE

Federico and Alberti, who lived near my house in an apartment overlooking an avenue of trees, his lost grove; the sculptor Alberto, a baker from Toledo who was master of abstract sculpture; Altolaguirre and Bergamín; the great poet Luis Cernuda; Vicente Aleixandre, poet of limitless dimension; Luis Lacasa, the architect —all of us, singly or in groups, would get together every day in someone's home or in a café.

From Castellana Avenue or from the Correos tavern we would go to my house, the "House of Flowers," in the Argüelles sector. Down from the upper deck of one of the double-decker buses that my countryman, the great Cotapos, called "bombardones" we would come in boisterous groups to eat, drink, and sing. Among

my young companions in poetry and merriment, I recall Arturo Serrano Plaja, poet; José Caballero, a painter of dazzling talent and a very amusing fellow; Antonio Aparicio, who came from Andalusia straight to my house; and so many others who are no longer near or no longer alive, but whose friendship I miss as keenly as some part of my body or the substance of my soul.

Ah, Madrid in those days! I would make the rounds of the working-class neighborhoods with Maruja Mallo, the Galician painter, looking for the places where esparto grass and mats were sold, looking for the streets of the barrelmakers, of the ropemakers, streets where they deal in all the dry-goods of Spain, goods that entangle and choke her heart. Spain is dry and rocky, and the high sun beats down on it hard, drawing sparks from the flatlands, building castles of light out of clouds of dust. The only true rivers of Spain are its poets: Quevedo, with his profound green waters and black foam; Calderón, with his syllables that sing; the crystalline Argensolas; Góngora, river of rubies.

I saw Valle-Inclán only once. Very thin, with an endless white beard and a complexion like a yellowing page, he seemed to have walked out of one of his own books, which had pressed him flat.

I met Ramón Gómez de la Serna in his crypt, the Pombo café, and later on I saw him at home. I can never forget Ramón's booming voice guiding, from his spot in the café, the conversation and the laughter, the trends of thought and the smoke. Ramón Gómez de la Serna is for me one of the finest writers in our language, and his genius has some of the variegated greatness of Quevedo and Picasso. Every page of Ramón Gómez de la Serna pries like a ferret into the physical and the metaphysical, into the truth and the spectrum, and what he knows and has written about Spain has been said by him and no one else. He has put together a secret universe. He has changed the syntax of the language with his own hands, leaving his fingerprints so embedded in it that no one can wipe them off.

I saw Don Antonio Machado several times, sitting in his favorite café dressed in his black notary's suit, silent and withdrawn, as sweet and austere as an old Spanish tree. Incidentally, mean-tongued Juan Ramón Jiménez, diabolical old brat of poetry, said

of him, of Don Antonio, that he went around covered in ashes and that cigarette butts were all he carried in his pockets.

It was Juan Ramón Jiménez, poet of great splendor, who took it upon himself to teach me all about that legendary Spanish envy. This poet who had no need to envy anyone, since his work is a resplendent beam flashing on the dark beginnings of the century, affected the life of a hermit, lashing out from his hideaway at anything he thought might overshadow him.

The younger generation—García Lorca and Alberti, as well as Jorge Guillén and Pedro Salinas—were doggedly needled by Juan Ramón, a bearded demon who dug his knife daily into one or another. He said unfavorable things about me every week in the elaborate critical commentaries he published Sunday after Sunday in the newspaper *El Sol*. But I made up my mind to live and let live. I never answered back. I never replied to literary attacks, and I still don't.

The poet Manuel Altolaguirre, who had a printing press and the vocation of printer, came by my house one day to tell me that he was going to bring out a handsome poetry review, in the finest format and with the best work in Spain.

"There's only one person who can edit it," he said to me, "and you're that person."

I had been a heroic founder of magazines who quickly dropped them or was dropped by them. In 1925 I started *Caballo de Bastos* (*Jack of Clubs*). In those days we wrote without punctuation and were discovering Dublin by way of the streets in Joyce. Humberto Díaz Casanueva sported a turtleneck sweater, a very daring thing for a poet at that time. His poetry was lovely and immaculate, as it has continued to be. Rosamel del Valle always dressed in black from head to toe, as poets should. I remember these two distinguished friends as my active collaborators. I have forgotten some of the others. At any rate, our galloping horse jolted the times.

"Yes, Manolito, I'll edit the review."

Manuel Altolaguirre was an excellent printer whose own hands arrayed the cases with magnificent Bodoni characters. Manolito honored poetry with his poems and with his hands, a hard-working archangel's hands. He also printed Pedro de Espinosa's *Fábula del Genil* (*Fable of the Genil River*). What brilliance

flashed from the lustrous golden verses of the poem in that majestic typography that made the words stand out as if they had been recast in the smelting furnace.

Five fine, handsome issues of my *Caballo Verde* appeared on the bookstands. I liked to watch Manolito, always full of laughter and smiles, pick out the type, set the characters in the cases, and then activate the small letterpress with his foot. Sometimes he would set off with the copies of the review in his daughter Paloma's baby carriage. People in the streets made much of this: "What a wonderful father! Going out even in this hellish traffic with his baby!"

The baby was Poetry, riding her Green Horse. The review published Miguel Hernández's first new poem and of course the poems of Federico, Cernuda, Aleixandre, Guillén (the good one, the Spaniard). Neurotic, turn-of-the-century Juan Ramón Jiménez went on aiming his Sunday darts at me. Rafael Alberti didn't like the title: "Why a green horse? 'Red Horse' is what it should be called."

I did not change its color. And Rafael and I didn't bicker over it. We never bickered over anything. There is plenty of room in the world for horses and poets of all the colors of the rainbow.

The sixth number of *Caballo Verde* was left on Viriato Street, the pages not yet collated and sewn. It was dedicated to Julio Herrera y Reissig—a second Lautréamont, produced by Montevideo—and the texts written in his honor by the poets of Spain were silenced in all their beauty, still-born, having nowhere to go. The magazine was to have come out on July 19, 1936, but on that day the streets were filled with shooting. In his African garrison an obscure general, Francisco Franco, had risen against the Republic.

THE CRIME WAS IN GRANADA

Right now, as I write these lines, Spain is officially celebrating many—so many—years of successful insurrection. In Madrid at this very moment, dressed in blue and gold, surrounded by his Moorish guards, and at his side the ambassadors of the United States, England, and several other countries, the Supreme Commander is reviewing his troops. Troops made up mostly of boys who did not see that war.

But I saw it. A million dead Spaniards. A million exiles. It seemed as if that thorn covered with blood would never be plucked from the conscience of mankind. And yet, perhaps the boys who are now passing in review before the Moorish guards don't know the truth about the terrible history of that war.

For me, it started on the evening of July 19, 1936. A resourceful and pleasant Chilean, Bobby Deglané, was wrestling promoter in Madrid's huge Circo Price arena. I had expressed my reservations about the seriousness of that "sport" and he convinced me to go to the arena that evening with García Lorca to see how authentic the show really was. I talked García Lorca into it and we agreed to meet there at a certain time. We were going to have great fun watching the truculence of the Masked Troglodyte, the Abyssinian Strangler, and the Sinister Orangutan.

Federico did not show up. He was at that hour already on his way to death. We never saw each other again: he had an appointment with another strangler. And so the Spanish war, which changed my poetry, began for me with a poet's disappearance.

What a poet! I have never seen grace and genius, a winged heart and a crystalline waterfall, come together in anyone else as they did in him. Federico García Lorca was the extravagant "duende," his was a magnetic joyfulness that generated a zest for life in his heart and radiated it like a planet. Openhearted and comical, worldly and provincial, an extraordinary musical talent, a splendid mime, easily alarmed and superstitious, radiant and noble, he was the epitome of Spain through the ages, of her popular tradition. Of Arabic-Andalusian roots, he brightened and perfumed like jasmine the stage set of a Spain that, alas, is gone forever.

García Lorca's monumental command of metaphor seduced me, and everything he wrote attracted me. For his part, he would sometimes ask me to read him my latest poems, and halfway through the reading he would break in, shouting: "Stop, stop, I'm letting myself be influenced by you!"

In the theater and in a silence, in a crowd and in a small group, he generated beauty. I have never known anyone else with such magical hands, I never had a brother who loved laughter more. He laughed, sang, played the piano, leaped, invented, he sparkled. Poor friend, he had all the natural gifts, and he was a goldsmith, a

drone in the hive of great poetry, but he also wasted his creative talent sometimes.

"Listen," he would say, taking hold of my arm, "do you see that window? Don't you think it's chorpatelic?"

"And what does 'chorpatelic' mean?"

"I don't know either, but one must know what is and what's not chorpatelic. Otherwise, you're lost. Look at that dog, he's really chorpatelic!"

Or he would tell me that he had been invited to a ceremony commemorating *Don Quixote* at a school for boys, and that when he walked into the classroom the children, led by the headmistress, sang:

> *This book, which was explicated*
> *by F. Rodríguez Marín (Ph.D.),*
> *will be everywhere celebrated*
> *forever and ever. Amen.*

Once I gave a talk on García Lorca, years after his death, and someone in the audience asked me: "In your 'Oda a Federico García Lorca,' why do you say that they paint hospitals blue for him?"

"Look, my friend," I replied, "asking a poet that kind of question is like asking a woman her age. Poetry is not static matter but a flowing current that quite often escapes from the hands of the creator himself. His raw material consists of elements that are and at the same time are not, of things that exist and do not exist. Anyway, I'll try to give you an honest answer. For me, blue is the most beautiful color. It suggests space as man sees it, like the dome of the sky, rising toward liberty and joy. Federico's presence, his personal magic, instilled a mood of joy around him. My line probably means that even hospitals, even the sadness of hospitals, could be transformed by the magic spell of his influence and suddenly changed into beautiful blue buildings."

Federico had a premonition of his death. Once, shortly after returning from a theatrical tour, he called me up to tell me about a strange incident. He had arrived with the La Barraca troupe at some out-of-the-way village in Castile and camped on the edge of town. Overtired because of the pressures of the trip, Federico

could not sleep. He got up at dawn and went out to wander around alone. It was cold, the knife-like cold that Castile reserves for the traveler, the outsider. The mist separated into white masses, giving everything a ghostly dimension.

A huge rusted iron grating. Broken statues and pillars fallen among decaying leaves. He had stopped at the gate of an old estate, the entrance to the immense park of a feudal manor. Its state of abandonment, the hour, and the cold made the solitude even more penetrating. Suddenly Federico felt oppressed as if by something about to come out of the dawn, something about to happen. He sat down on the broken-off capital of a pillar lying toppled there.

A tiny lamb came out to browse in the weeds among the ruins, appearing like an angel of mist, out of nowhere, to turn solitude into something human, dropping like a gentle petal on the solitude of the place. The poet no longer felt alone. Suddenly a herd of swine also came into the area. There were four or five dark animals, half-wild pigs with a savage hunger and hoofs like rocks. Then Federico witnessed a blood-curdling scene: the swine fell on the lamb and, to the great horror of the poet, tore it to pieces and devoured it.

This bloody scene in that lonely place made Federico take his touring company back on the road immediately. Three months before the civil war, when he told me this chilling story, Federico was still haunted by the horror of it. Later on I saw, more and more clearly, that the incident had been a vision of his own death, the premonition of his incredible tragedy.

Federico García Lorca was not merely shot; he was assassinated. It would never have crossed anyone's mind that they would kill him one day. He was the most loved, the most cherished, of all Spanish poets, and he was the closest to being a child, because of his marvelous happy temperament. Who could have believed there were monsters on this earth, in his own Granada, capable of such an inconceivable crime?

This criminal act was for me the most painful in the course of a long struggle. Spain was always a battleground of gladiators, a country where much blood has flowed. The bull ring, with its sacrifice and its cruel elegance, repeats—glamorized in a flamboyant spectacle—the age-old struggle to the death between darkness and light.

The Inquisition incarcerated Fray Luis de León; Quevedo suffered torments in a dungeon; Columbus hobbled with irons on his ankles. And the great showplace was the charnel house of El Escorial, just as the Monument to the Fallen is today, with its cross standing over a million dead and numberless dark memories.

MY BOOK ON SPAIN

Time passed. We were beginning to lose the war. The poets sided with the Spanish people: Federico had been murdered in Granada. Miguel Hernández had been transformed from a goatherd into a fighting word. In soldier's uniform, he read his poems on the front lines. Manuel Altolaguirre kept his printing presses going. He set one up on the eastern front, near Gerona, in an old monastery. My book *España en el corazón* was printed there in a unique way. I believe few books, in the extraordinary history of so many books, have had such a curious birth and fate.

The soldiers at the front learned to set type. But there was no paper. They found an old mill and decided to make it there. A strange mixture was concocted, between one falling bomb and the next, in the middle of the fighting. They threw everything they could get their hands on into the mill, from an enemy flag to a Moorish soldier's bloodstained tunic. And in spite of the unusual materials used and the total inexperience of its manufacturers, the paper turned out to be very beautiful. The few copies of that book still in existence produce astonishment at its typography and at its mysteriously manufactured pages. Years later I saw a copy in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., displayed in a showcase as one of the rarest books of our time.

My book had just been printed and bound when the Republic's defeat was suddenly upon us. Hundreds of thousands of refugees glutted the roads leading out of Spain. It was the exodus, the most painful event in the history of that country.

Among those lines of people going into exile were the survivors of the eastern front, and with them Manuel Altolaguirre and the soldiers who had made the paper and printed *España en el corazón*. 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. With those sacks over their shoulders, they set out on the long march to France.

The endless column walking to exile was bombed hundreds of times. Soldiers fell and the books were spilled on the highway. Others continued their interminable flight. On the other side of the border, the Spaniards who reached exile met with brutal treatment. The last copies of this impassioned book that was born and perished in the midst of fierce fighting were immolated in a bonfire.

Miguel Hernández sought refuge in the Chilean Embassy, which during the war had granted asylum to four thousand Franco followers. Carlos Morla Lynch, the ambassador, claimed to be his friend but denied the great poet his protection. A few days after, he was arrested and thrown into prison. He died of tuberculosis in jail three years later. The nightingale could not survive in captivity.

My consular duties had come to an end. Because I had taken part in the defense of the Spanish Republic, the Chilean government decided to remove me from my post.

THE WAR AND PARIS

We reached Paris. I took an apartment together with Rafael Alberti and his wife, María Teresa León, on the Quai de l'Horloge, a quiet, marvelous neighborhood. From our place I could see the Pont-Neuf, the statue of Henri IV, and the fishermen dangling over the banks of the Seine. Nerval's Place Dauphine, with its smell of leaves and restaurants, was behind us. The "French" writer Alejo Carpentier, one of the most uncommitted men I have known, lived there. He didn't dare voice an opinion on anything, not even on the Nazis, who were about to fall upon Paris like famished wolves.

From my balcony, to the right, I could make out the black towers of the Conciergerie. Its big gold clock was, for me, the neighborhood's final boundary.

In France then, and for many years after, I had the good fortune to count as dear friends the two foremost figures of her literature,

Paul Eluard and Aragon. They were and are extraordinary classic examples of naturalness, with a vital authenticity that gives them a place in the most resonant part of the forest of France. At the same time, they are unshakable and intrinsic adherents of historical morality. Few human beings were as different from each other as these two. I often enjoyed the poetic pleasure of wasting time with Paul Eluard. If poets answered public-opinion polls truthfully, they would give the secret away: there is nothing as beautiful as wasting time. Everyone has his own style for this pastime, as old as time itself. With Paul, I would lose all sense of the passing of day or night, and I never cared if what we were talking about was important or not. Aragon is an electronic machine of intelligence, learning, virulence, high-speed eloquence. I always left Eluard's home smiling without even knowing why. I come out of a few hours spent with Aragon completely worn out, because this demon of a man has forced me to think. Both men have been my stalwart friends, and perhaps what attracts me most about them is the tremendous difference in the nature of their great talents.

NANCY CUNARD

Nancy Cunard and I decided to put out a poetry review which I titled *Les Poétes du Monde Défendent le Peuple Espagnol* (*The Poets of the World Defend the Spanish People*).

Nancy had a small printing press in her country house, in the French provinces. I don't remember the name of the place, but it was far from Paris. When we got to her house, it was night and the moon was out. The snow and the moonlight fluttered like a curtain around the estate. I went for a walk, filled with excitement. On my way back, the snowflakes swirled around my head with chilly insistence. I lost my bearings completely and had to grope my way through the whiteness of the night for half an hour.

Nancy had printing experience. During her close relationship with Aragon, she had published the translation of "The Hunting of the Snark" done by Aragon and herself. This Lewis Carroll poem is really untranslatable and only in Góngora, I believe, can we find a parallel to its insane mosaic.

I started setting type for the first time and I am sure there has

never been a worse typesetter. I printed *p*'s upside down and they turned into *d*'s through my typographical clumsiness. A line in which the word *párpados* (eyelids) appeared twice ended up with two *dardapos*. For years after, Nancy punished me by calling me that. "My dear Dardapo . . ." she would begin her letters from London. But it turned out to be an attractive publication and we managed to print six or seven issues. Besides militant poets like González Tuñón or Alberti, and some French ones, we published impassioned poems by W. H. Auden, Spender, etc. These English gentlemen will never know how much my lazy fingers suffered setting their poems.

From time to time, poets would come over from England, friends of Nancy's, dandies with a white flower in their lapel, who also wrote anti-Franco verses. In the history of the intellect there has not been a subject as fertile for poets as the Spanish war. The blood spilled in Spain was a magnet that sent shudders through the poetry of a great period.

I don't know if the publication was a success or not, because the war in Spain came to its disastrous end at this time and a second world war had its disastrous beginning. In spite of its magnitude, its immeasurable cruelty, and all the heroic blood it spilled, that war did not manage to grip the collective heart of poetry as the one in Spain had.

A short time later I would have to leave Europe to return to my country. Nancy would also be going to Chile soon, with a bullfighter who then left her and the bulls in Santiago to set up a business in sausages and cold cuts. But my dear friend, who was a high-class snob, was not one to give up easily. In Chile she took a poet as her lover, a slovenly vagrant, a Chilean of Basque descent with some talent but no teeth. What's more, Nancy's new lover was a hopeless drunk and gave the aristocratic English woman nightly beatings that forced her to appear in public wearing enormous dark glasses.

Quixotic, unalterable, fearless, and pathetic, Nancy was one of the strangest persons I have ever known. The sole heir to the Cunard Line, Nancy, daughter of Lady Cunard, had scandalized London in 1930 by running away with a black man, a musician in one of the first jazz bands imported by the Savoy Hotel.

When Lady Cunard found her daughter's bed empty and a letter proudly informing her of her black future, the noblewoman

went to her lawyer and proceeded to cut her off without a cent. And that was how this young woman I met roaming the world had been disinherited from the British nobility. Her mother's salons were frequented by George Moore (who, gossip had it, was Nancy's real father), Sir Thomas Beecham, young Aldous Huxley, and the future Duke of Windsor, still Prince of Wales at the time.

Nancy Cunard struck back. In December of the year in which her mother excommunicated her, the English aristocracy received as a Christmas present a pamphlet bound in red, entitled "Negro Man and White Ladyship." I have never seen anything more vitriolic. It is as trenchant as Swift, in some passages.

Her arguments in defense of blacks came down like clubs on the heads of Lady Cunard and English society. I recall that she said—I am quoting from memory, and her words were more eloquent: "Suppose you, your white ladyship, or rather your people, had been kidnapped, beaten, and chained by a more powerful tribe and then shipped far from England to be sold as slaves, displayed as ludicrous specimens of human ugliness, forced to work under the whip and fed poorly. What would be left of your race? The blacks suffered all this violence and cruelty and much more besides. After centuries of suffering, however, they are still the best and most graceful athletes, and they have created a new music that is more universal than any other. Could you, and whites like you, have emerged victorious from so much iniquity? Who is better, then?"

And so on, for thirty pages.

Nancy was never able to live in England after that, and from then on, she embraced the cause of the persecuted black race. During the invasion of Ethiopia she went to Addis Ababa. Then she traveled to the United States to make common cause with the black boys of Scottsboro who were accused of infamous crimes they had not committed. The young blacks were sentenced by racist U.S. justice, and Nancy Cunard was deported by the democratic North American police.

My friend Nancy Cunard would die in 1969 in Paris. A sudden turn in her death agony made her go downstairs in the hotel elevator all but naked. There she collapsed on the floor and closed her lovely sky-blue eyes forever.

She weighed thirty-five kilos at the time of her death. She was a

mere skeleton. Her body had wasted away in a long battle against injustice in the world. Her reward was a life that became progressively lonelier, and a godforsaken death.

A CONGRESS IN MADRID

The war in Spain was going from bad to worse, but the Spanish people's spirit of resistance had captivated the whole world. International brigades were already fighting in Spain. I saw them arrive in Madrid, in 1936, in uniform. They were a magnificent group of people of different ages, coloring, hair.

Now it was 1937 and we were in Paris, and the main thing was to organize an anti-Fascist congress of writers from all over the world. The congress would be held in Madrid. That's when I began to know Aragon better. The first thing about him that surprised me was his incredible capacity for work and organization. He dictated all his letters, corrected and remembered them. Not even the slightest detail escaped him. He worked long, steady hours in our small office. Yet, as everyone knows, he writes thick volumes of prose, and his poetry is the most beautiful in the French language. I saw him correcting the galleys of translations he had done of Russian and English writers, and I saw him redo them right on the printer's proofs. He is really an extraordinary man, and that's when I began to appreciate that fact.

I had been left without a consulship and consequently without a penny. I went to work, for four hundred (old) francs, in an organization for the defense of culture, managed by Aragon. Delia del Carril, my wife then and for many years to come, was reputed to be a rich landowner, but she was actually poorer than I. We lived in a dubious, run-down hotel whose first floor was reserved for transient couples that came and went. For months we ate very little and badly. But the congress of anti-Fascist writers became a reality. Priceless replies poured in from all over. One was from Yeats, Ireland's national poet; another, from Selma Lagerlöf, the notable Swedish writer. They were both too old to travel to a beleaguered city like Madrid, which was being steadily pounded by bombs, but they rallied to the defense of the Spanish Republic.

I have always considered myself a man of few qualifications, especially in practical matters or for high-minded missions. I stared openmouthed, therefore, when I received a bank draft from the Spanish government, for a considerable sum, to cover expenses for the congress, including fares for delegates from other continents. Dozens of writers were flocking to Paris.

I was at a complete loss. What was I to do with the money? I decided to endorse the funds to the organization that was behind the congress. "I haven't laid eyes on the money, and I wouldn't know what to do with it, anyway," I told Rafael Alberti, who was passing through Paris.

"You're a big fool," Rafael said. "You've lost your consular post defending the Spanish cause, you're walking around with holes in your shoes, and you won't even set aside a few thousand francs for your work and your minimum needs."

I glanced at my shoes, and in fact they did have holes. Alberti made me a gift of a new pair.

We were leaving for Madrid in a few hours, with all the delegates. Delia and Amparo González Tuñón and I were swamped with paperwork to clear the way for the writers who were planning to attend. The French exit visas presented us with endless problems, so we practically took over the Paris police headquarters, where the formal acknowledgments jocularly referred to as *recipissé* were issued. Sometimes we ourselves stamped the passports with that supreme French contrivance called *tampon*.

Along with the Norwegians, the Italians, the Argentines, the poet Octavio Paz arrived from Mexico, after a thousand adventures and misadventures. I was proud of having brought him. He had published just one book, which I had received two months before and which seemed to contain genuine promise. No one knew him yet.

My old friend César Vallejo came to see me with a scowl on his face. He was angry because his wife, whom the rest of us found unbearable, had not been issued a ticket. I got one for her quickly. We gave it to Vallejo and he left, as surly as when he had come in. Something was bothering him and it took me several months to discover what it was.

At the bottom of it was this: my countryman Vicente Huidobro had come to Paris to attend the congress. Huidobro and I

had had a falling out and were not speaking. But he was a close friend of Vallejo's and used his few days in Paris to fill my trusting friend's head with stories about me. Everything was cleared up later in a heated conversation I had with Vallejo.

Never had a train left Paris packed with so many writers. We recognized or ignored one another in the corridors. Some slept. Others chain-smoked. For many, Spain was both the enigma and the key to that moment of history.

Vallejo and Huidobro were somewhere on the train. André Malraux stopped to talk to me for a moment, with his facial tics, his raincoat tossed over his shoulders. This time he was traveling alone. I had always seen him before with the flier Corniglion-Molinier, who was his right-hand man in his adventures through the skies of Spain: cities lost and discovered, or a vital delivery of planes to the Republic.

I remember that the train was held up a long time at the border. Apparently Huidobro had lost a suitcase. Everyone was occupied, or preoccupied, with the delay and no one was in a mood to listen to him. The Chilean poet picked the wrong moment to come looking for his bag out on the platform, where Malraux, the leader of the expedition, was. Nervous by nature, and with a lot of problems accumulating around him, Malraux was at the end of his tether. Maybe he didn't know Huidobro by sight or by name. When he came up to complain about losing his suitcase, Malraux lost the little patience he had left. I heard him shout: "Is this the time to be pestering anyone? Get away! *Je vous emmerde!*"

It's too bad that I had to be the one to witness this incident which deflated the Chilean's vanity. I wish I had been a thousand miles away at that moment. But life is fickle. I was the one person Huidobro detested on that train. And to make matters worse, I, his countryman, and not any of the hundred writers traveling with us, had to be the sole spectator of this incident.

When we got underway again, with the night far advanced and the train rolling through the Spanish countryside, I thought of Huidobro, his suitcase, the unpleasant moment he had been through. So I said to some young Central American writers who had come to my compartment: "Go see Huidobro too, he must be alone and depressed."

They were back in twenty minutes, their faces beaming. Huidobro had said to them: "Don't talk to me about the lost bag; that's not important. What really matters is that although the universities of Chicago, Berlin, Copenhagen, and Prague have conferred honorary titles on me, the small university in the small country you come from insists on ignoring me. I haven't even been asked to give a lecture on creationism."

My countryman the great poet was definitely a hopeless case.

We finally reached Madrid. While the visitors were being welcomed and assigned a place to stay, I decided to visit the home I had left almost a year before. My books and my things, everything had been left behind in it. It was an apartment in a building called the "House of Flowers," near the entrance to the university campus. Franco's advance lines had reached it and the block of apartments had changed hands several times.

Miguel Hernández, who was wearing his militia uniform and carrying his rifle, got a van to transport the books and the belongings I was most interested in taking with me.

We went up to the fifth floor and opened the apartment door expectantly. Flak had knocked in the windows and chunks of the walls. The books had toppled off the shelves. It was impossible to find one's way in the rubble. I searched for things haphazardly. Oddly enough, the most useless, superfluous things had vanished, carried off by invading or defending forces. The pots and pans, the sewing machine, the dishes were there: they were scattered all over, but they had survived, yet there was not a trace of my consul's tail coat, my Polynesian masks, my Oriental knives.

"War is as whimsical as dreams, Miguel."

Miguel found some manuscripts of mine somewhere among the strewn papers. That chaos was a final door closing on my life. I said to Miguel, "I don't want to take anything with me."

"Nothing? Not even one book?"

"Not even one book."

And we went back with the van empty.

THE MASKS AND THE WAR

. . . My house was caught between the two fronts . . . On one side, Moors and Italians advanced . . . On the other, Madrid's defenders advanced, fell back, or were halted . . . The artillery

had crashed through the walls . . . The windows were smashed to smithereens . . . On the floor, among my books, I found shrapnel . . . But my masks were gone . . . Masks collected in Siam, Bali, Sumatra, the Malay Archipelago, Bandung . . . Gilded, ashen, tomato-red, with silver eyebrows, blue, demonic eyebrows, lost in thought, my masks had been my sole keepsakes from the Orient I had gone to alone that first time, which had received me with its odor of tea, dung, opium, sweat, the intensest jasmine, frangipani, fruit rotting in the streets . . . Those masks, a reminder of the purest dances, of the dancing before the temple . . . Wooden drops colored by myth, the residue of a mythology of flowers that sketched dreams in the air, customs, demons, mysteries alien to my American nature . . . And then . . . Perhaps the militiamen had leaned out the windows of my house between shots with the masks on to strike terror into the Moors . . . Many masks had been left there smashed, spattered with blood . . . Others had rolled down from my fifth-floor apartment, wrenched off by a bullet . . . Franco's advance lines had taken up their positions in front of them . . . The horde of illiterate mercenaries had screeched past before them . . . Thirty masks of Asian gods rising from my house in their last dance, the dance of death . . . A moment of respite . . . The positions had reversed . . . I sat looking at the debris, the bloodstains on the mat . . . And through the new windows, the gaping holes left by the gunfire . . . I stared far off, beyond the campus, toward flatlands, toward ancient castles . . . Spain looked empty to me . . . It looked as if my last guests had gone off forever . . . With masks or without, in the middle of the shooting and the war chants, the mad rejoicing, the incredible defense, death or life, all that was over for me . . . It was the last silence after the feasting . . . After the last feasting . . . With the masks that had gone, with the masks that had fallen, with those soldiers I had not invited in, Spain had gone for me . . .

6

I Went Out to Look for the Fallen

I PICKED A ROAD

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.

My contradictory friend, the Nietzschean poet León Felipe, was a very likable man whose most attractive quality was his anarchist's proclivity to indiscipline and his mocking rebelliousness. At the height of the civil war he fell easily for the blustery propaganda of FAI (Iberian Anarchist Federation). He was often at the anarchist fronts, where he lectured on his theories and read his iconoclastic poems. These reflected an ideology that was vaguely libertarian, anti-clerical, capped with invocations and blasphemies. His words captivated the anarchist groups that blossomed like hothouse flowers in Madrid while the rest of the people were at the battlefront, which was coming closer and closer. These lawless groups had painted the trolleys and buses half red and half yellow. With their long hair and beards, wearing bullets strung into necklaces and bracelets, they played a leading role in Spain's carnival of death. I saw several of them in symbolic leather shoes, half red and half black, which must have put the shoemakers to a lot of trouble. And don't let anyone think it was all innocent show. They carried knives, revolvers, rifles, and carbines. Groups