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Precis

Pablo Neruda (1904-1973), and Nobel laureate poet (1971) from Chile, did not begin his literary career as a political writer. It was only after several years abroad and his experience during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) that he fully embraced the political theory of Communism. Engaging in political activism did not come without personal cost to Neruda, for at one point he had to flee Chile and live in exile for openly challenging the government, and he was considered a suspicious character by other nations. However, the message was always the most important element of his poetry. Neruda tried to embody the voice of the common man and give lyrical worth to the simple objects that surround us. Nevertheless, his political activism often overshadowed his actual poetry.

The main reason that Neruda is seen more as a symbol for Communist activism and revolution rather than a Nobel poet, as asserted by Cohen, Russell, and White, is the events surrounding his death. The fact that Neruda died on September 23, 1973 shortly after Augusto Pinochet’s military coup has been romanticized as Neruda dying of a broken heart for the loss of his dream of a Communist government. These dramatic events surrounding Neruda’s death often marked the reception and incomplete analysis of the works published just before his death and soon after his death.

Neruda inspired other writers both during and after his lifetime. He brought a voice to the people who had the most difficulty being heard. He read at two of the largest poetry gatherings in modern history; he could bring his listeners to tears. His strong conviction for socialism was highlighted by how much he influenced the political environment of his day. His writing has also inspired other writers, both within South America and the rest of the world.

Along with many other Americans, I knew Neruda as a symbol rather than a complete poet. I originally hypothesized that the works would become more political the closer to Neruda’s death
they were written; however, the result of my research was that the poems became more introspective; though Neruda’s political views were still part of his poetry. There were a few political poems present in the late and posthumous works that still demonstrated the beauty of Neruda’s mixing of poetry and politics.

Less critical attention is focused on the late and posthumous works of Neruda, for most of the critical attention is focused on his earlier works, so I’ve chosen to focus on them and in order to give the clearest demonstration of Neruda’s politics within his poetry, only a few poems were selected to showcase how politics, while not predominant, were still a present topic in Neruda’s last works. These are “Child of the Moon” and “This is Simple” from *The Hands of Day* (1968), “Little Devils” from *World’s End* (1969), “XII” from *Skystones* (1970), “Another” from *The Yellow Heart* (1974), and selected questions from *The Book of Questions* (1974). With any works published after a writer’s death, there are some issues that come into question. No major controversy surrounds the authenticity of the writing; however, the possibility does exist that the works may not have been exactly what Neruda would have eventually published had he been alive to see them through the editing process.

The politics in his late and posthumous works are present but not prevalent. Neruda takes a much more personal and introspective viewpoint in these last works. Despite his success and acclaim as a poet, his poetry remained humble and true to the common people.

Appendix A has the selected poems as translated by Ben Belitt. The purpose of including the analyzed poems in their entirety is to allow readers an English translation, in case they are not familiar with these works. Appendix B contains poems inspired by Neruda’s *The Book of Questions*. I wrote the poems because I felt compelled to respond in a creative manner to Neruda after reading so many of his poems. The poems provided a nice closure for the intersection of my degrees in Spanish and English, and my personal interests in creative writing.
Personal Introduction

As the plane descended, the city of Santiago expanded across the window view. The airport seemed a mass of people going in every direction. The chaos continued on the concourse. The biggest city I had ever been to before Santiago was Seattle. Nothing compared to the amount of activity and speed that Santiago seeped in, even on a Sunday. People swathed in scarves crammed together on buses. My first impression of the city remains the sight of people everywhere. People walked in every direction and the city seemed to never stop moving. The same was true on the Metro system, where I not only had to navigate the mass of people, but also mass transit in Spanish. Somehow after three or four visits, the routine of grabbing a ticket and getting on the train fell into place. The city still proved a maze with small restaurants and shops tucked away just off of the main streets. A constant buzz of voices, cars, and feet echoed across my eyes and ears.

After a month in Chile, I still had no idea what sort of research question I could address from my study abroad. My trip would end in two days, and I decided to explore a bit more of Santiago before leaving. On the way to the zoo and highest point in Santiago, a sign reading “La Casa de Pablo Neruda” piqued my interest. The sign was not impressive, in fact, it was fairly small. The trolley ride to the highest point in Santiago did not open for another hour, so I talked my companions into making a slight detour.

Following the signs, Pablo Neruda’s Santiago home came into view on a side street. Somehow, the morning seemed calmer than usual. The side streets appeared almost empty, with only a few folks in sight. The white fence surrounding Neruda’s house, La Chascona, was not impressive. I would have expected a Nobel laureate to have a much larger home. While we waited for our tour of La Chascona, I reminisced about what I knew of Neruda. Before arriving in Chile in June, I had wandered the second floor of Holland Library trying to have a vague idea of a topic to
research in Chile. Opening a palm-sized book revealed a beautiful, lyrical world where Neruda’s words echoed in my mind. I had found a copy of his first book of poetry, *Twenty Love Sonnets and One Desperate Song* (1924). The power of his words had made me want to learn more about who was Pablo Neruda, and now inside La Chascona, I found a snapshot of Pablo Neruda’s life. The museum contained a lifetime of collected objects—shells, mastheads, paintings, and books—all of which lay in ruins after General Augusto Pinochet’s ascension to power. Neruda’s love of the sea was famous; he spent most of his Nobel Prize money on seashells and mastheads. Architecturally, La Chascona was shaped like a boat. The library had a wooden floor that creaked like a boat rocking on the sea. In his own words, he usually “navigate[d] on land” rather than on the sea (*Memoirs* 217).

Neruda impacted both the poetic and political world during and after his lifetime. His outspoken belief in Communism made him the target of the military junta led by Pinochet during the coup d’etat of 1973. During the tour, the guide told us about how Pinochet’s soldiers threw so many of Neruda’s books into the small brook running through the house that the flow of water was completely obstructed. The soldiers did not leave “anything undamaged” and the entire house had been flooded so that Neruda’s widow, Matilde, and her friends had to “build a new bridge across the canal” to carry his body to the house (Bizzarro 158). The guide claimed that Neruda had died of a broken heart because of the military overthrow of the Socialist government. These stories have all become part of the myth of Neruda. However, even though he left a lifetime of collected objects behind, his poetry, his words, and his vision for the future were more important. Neruda’s poetry and politics were interrelated, resulting in a desire to represent Communist ideals in his poems and a strong conviction to help his fellow man. Even though he has been dead for over thirty years,
Neruda’s words and vision still rippled through the consciousness of the people in Chile and indeed in many countries. When I left La Chascona, I knew I had found the topic for my research. Neruda, like me, united a love for words with a thirst for justice and it inspired me to explore more about his life and works.

**Political events leading up to Neruda’s death**

The political activism of Neruda as a public figure often outweighs the political symbolism in the later works of poetry. For most of Neruda’s life, there was a great disparity in class in Chile. The disparity led itself to divergent views on the political environment of the country. As a result of such divergent views, the “party system was not only highly competitive but also highly polarized” (Valenzuela 4). The agricultural workers began to unionize in the 1960’s, indicating a “significant mobilization” towards a more socialist government under the leadership of Salvador Allende (30). The expansion of the government into many aspects of the lives of the people was not a new phenomenon. Many programs were initialized to expand the government’s support of agriculture and mining. During this time, the Cold War was in full swing, and the American government became concerned that Chile could have a socialist government. In 1964, the campaign of one of the presidential candidates, Frei, received “substantial sums of money from European and private business sources” along with a massive anti-Allende propaganda campaign mounted by the CIA (Valenzuela 35-6). The propaganda campaign depicting Allende’s candidacy as one that would “institute a repressive and bloody regime” contributed to the “sharp rise in conflict and mistrust in Chilean politics” (36). Frei won, but his government was ineffective and social conflicts arose. Even then, part of the country was willing to embrace a more socialist government, but the other part feared the consequences of electing a socialist president. Eventually, it did happen. The election of
Allende in November 1970 “marked the culmination of decades of expansion of the government’s role in the economy and society” (Drake 3).

The 1970 election revealed even more of the polarization among the Chileans as to who would next serve as president of the country. The three-way election split the votes, with no clear majority. Allende’s election was not without controversy. The Chilean constitution specified that if “no candidate received an absolute majority of the votes, the actual election of the president had to take place in the congress” (44). Even though Allende had received the most votes, it was a slim margin, and it was possible that the congress could have chosen Tomic, who trailed Allende by four percent of the vote. The overall result was the fact that Allende’s presidency from the “very outset… constituted a minority presidency” (41). This lack of a clear mandate was problematic because Allende wished to institute massive social changes. The election of Allende “drew international attention” because the new government promised to “institute its revolutionary transformations in accord with Chilean constitutional and legal precepts” (43). Allende wanted to “begin the construction of socialism legally and without violence, that is, through the existing constitutional system” (Oppenheim 4). The radical change of Chilean democracy through its own systems was an experiment in the limits the Chilean people were willing to go to support socialism. The change to a more socialist government was seen by the Communists, and to some extent Allende, as a transition that would “lead to the creation of new institutions and procedures” (Valenzuela 47). By doing such a radical change through the existing structure, Allende’s party hoped to show the positive outcomes of a socialist government. The new government sincerely believed it could bring about socioeconomic change through the systems already in place.
The reaction to Allende’s election was not isolated to just Chile. Allende’s election “sent a shock wave around the globe” (Drake 3). The Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union was still going strong. Having a democratically elected socialist government in South America caused great unease for the United States’ government. The shockwaves within Chile did not die down after the start of Allende’s term. In fact, the unrest and “turmoil of Chile in the early 1970s was a result of an idealistic experiment in socialism that had to be defined as well as defended” (White 123) that caused the Chilean people to be so uneasy about Allende’s proposed social changes that it took a “formal declaration from Allende that he would preserve the constitution”, revealing the “deterioration of confidence between political leaders” and the general distrust of the Chilean people towards the new socialist government (Valenzuela 49). The weak standing of Allende’s government began to crumble when the Supreme Court began to openly criticize Allende and the police were “no longer capable of controlling violence” because the courts were “no longer being obeyed” (91). The chaos and disorder on the streets eventually translated into more unrest.

On June 29, 1973, a “garrison of the Chilean military attempted a coup d’état” (Valenzuela 93). By then, Allende could not guarantee even half the support of his generals (93). The socialist government would continue on its downward spiral. The military ran a “parallel army” and “almost immediately after the attempted coup [of June], officers began to purge the ranks of elements viewed as sympathetic to the government” (102).

The military made raids to confiscate weapons, and it became clearer that Allende’s control of the government had no real force or effectiveness. By August, the military “broke into government factories and [Community] party headquarters” (102). The second coup of September
11, 1973 came as no surprise amidst the significant political and social unrest in Chile, and “unlike the coup attempt of June 29, this one appeared to have the support of all four branches of the armed forces” (Oppenheim 82). Even before the September 1973 coup, Allende faced blatant opposition from the armed forces. The deposition of the elected government occurred swiftly with the bombing of the presidential palace and Allende’s private home (106). The military took over communication centers, though “Allende managed to address the nation twice on the radio before it was silenced. His second speech, at approximately 9 A.M., was both an acknowledgement of his defeat by the military and a defiant statement of revolutionary zeal” (Oppenheim 82).

The coup was not necessarily seen as a bad or terrible occurrence. Many in Chile’s middle class were “euphoric” and believed that “life could now return to normal” (117). The military was seen as a way to “turn the government back to ‘responsible’ civilians now that the so-called Marxist scourge had been eliminated” (117). Allende’s death became a symbolic death of an “effort to apply a revolutionary socialist model for social change” (8). Nonetheless, along with Allende’s death came the death of Neruda’s dream of socioeconomic equality through democratically elected means, causing Neruda’s health to rapidly fail. The complete and utter collapse of the Chilean democratic government ushered in the last days of Neruda’s life.

The beauty of Neruda’s poetry is often overshadowed by his dramatic death just days after the military coup d’état of Salvador Allende’s democratically elected socialist government. Prior to those events which took place on September 11, 1973, Neruda had been diagnosed with cancer. According to his wife, Matilde, the doctor believed Neruda had “at least six more years to live” because of his “strong will and constitution” (Bizzarro 153). The military overthrow and subsequent stress of the situation caused Neruda’s health to deteriorate rapidly.
Tucked away on Isla Negra, Neruda could only listen helplessly to Allende’s radio addresses. Neruda’s doctor urged Matilde to prevent him from hearing these addresses, for the sake of his health (Bizzarro 154-5). Concerned with how far away they were from advanced medical facilities, Matilde tried to get Neruda to a hospital in Santiago. Due to the coup, “no one could be out on the streets, no car could fetch [Neruda and Matilde], and the roads to Santiago were cut off” (154). There was no way to get medical assistance to Neruda as his health deteriorated. As Neruda spiked a high fever, Matilde insisted that she could not properly care for him alone. Eight days after Allende’s death, an ambulance was finally sent to retrieve Neruda from Isla Negra and take him to Santiago (155). In Santiago, the doctors determined that Neruda’s health problems were caused by his heart. The president of Mexico, Luis Echeverría, offered to send a private plane to retrieve Neruda from Chile, and provide him sanctuary in Mexico (Bizzarro 155, Urrutia 11). Although he initially said he would never leave Chile again, the danger of the political situation for Neruda’s personal safety was illustrated by the vandalism at La Chascona. Upon hearing of the destruction, Neruda reconsidered his original position to remain in Chile, and told Matilde that they would go to Mexico for “two or three months until order might be restored in Chile, and then return” (155). The doctors cautioned Matilde that Neruda’s heart could not handle any more stressors from hearing news about the state of Chile. She left for a brief respite, and in her absence, his friends visited him and informed him of the reality of the situation, that “this person had been taken, and such-and-so had happened to that one” (156). Later that evening, Matilde recalled that he spoke of their honeymoon (Urrutia 23). He died in his sleep of heart failure on September 23, 1973.

Neruda’s poetic legacy was soon overshadowed by the protests against the Pinochet regime during his funeral. Pinochet refused Neruda a state funeral, one that should have been accorded to a
Nobel Laureate. Many people openly resisted and broke the curfew to see Neruda’s coffin. Voices called out “Comrade Neruda!” (Algarín 115). The funeral’s commentator observed “three thousand overwhelmingly defeated people... howling” as Neruda’s coffin passed by them (116). The loss of such a politically active man dedicated to equality and human rights really struck a nerve. One woman began to cry out one of Neruda’s poems, in defiance of any consequences the military regime might impose upon her (116). Neruda’s death came to be known as one of the first acts of resistance against the Pinochet regime.

The “historical circumstances encompassing Neruda’s death” had the “unfortunate effect of eclipsing Neruda’s last books of poems” (White 118). Losada, an Argentinean publishing company, released eight posthumous books of new poetry on the “poet’s seventieth birthday on July 12, 1974” (117). The poems ranged from humorous to serious. There was a strong focus on death, with an emphasis on the reconciliation between Neruda’s “life as a poet and public figure” (Russell 329). In the end, the public figure became a “symbol of political resistance” due to what was happening in Chile (White 118). The death of Neruda so close to the takeover became a rallying cry for the supporters of Allende’s government and Neruda’s politics in the midst of one of the bloodiest military repressions in the country. As the tour guide for La Chascona said, many believed Neruda died of a broken heart from seeing his dream of Communism and socioeconomic equality crumble under the military actions of General Augusto Pinochet’s soldiers.

The growth of Neruda as a political writer

Part of Neruda’s vision for the future included socioeconomic equality for all classes, a political belief linked to socialism. The change from youthful and amorous poet to the voice of the people was gradual. After embracing his role as a political writer, Neruda rejected the sensual
poems of *Twenty Love Sonnets and One Desperate Song* (1924), and went on to produce politically engaged works with a strong social dimension. He viewed his earlier poems as “irrational” and “negative”, and felt he had to “pause and find the road to humanism, outlawed from contemporary literature but deeply rooted in the aspirations of mankind” (Neruda *Memoirs* 139). The transformation from “apathy to Communism” turned him into the “spokesman for the enslaved” (Stavans 13). He gave “popular expression to worker and peasant struggles for social justice” (Hite 300). The message in his work aimed at acknowledging all people, regardless of class.

Politics had first entered Neruda’s life as a university student in Santiago (1921-1926) when he saw thousands of jobless nitrate and copper workers protesting their wages and working conditions. The workers were brutally oppressed by the government, leaving a “tragic stain on the life of the country. From that time on, with interruptions now and then, politics became part of [his] poetry and [his] life” and he felt that he could not “shut the door to the street, just as [he] could not shut the door to love, life, joy, or sadness in [his] young poet’s heart” (*Memoirs* 53). The plight of the common man resounded in Neruda’s conscience. The major turning point in Neruda’s political writing came during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). Since Neruda was in Spain during the war, the experience he lived “profoundly transformed” both “Neruda and his poetry” (Gutiérrez 9). His dear friend and fellow writer, Federico García Lorca, disappeared during the conflict. Later, it would be discovered that Lorca had been murdered by the Nationalists. It was after Lorca’s disappearance that Neruda felt the war had started for him personally. Neruda wrote *España en el corazón* (1938) at this time, and asserted that Republican soldiers carried this book instead of food and clothing (Neruda *Memoirs* 125). The message he wrote was so profound that it superseded the

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1 The Spanish Civil War was between the legally elected government (the Republicans) and the rebels (the Nationalists or the Francoists). Both Neruda and Lorca supported the Republicans, as did many other Communist sympathizers and organizations throughout the world.
need for basic necessities. In his own view, Neruda came from a “negatively generated century: betrayals, wars, crimes, lies” (Sicard 559) and so the world events during his lifetime would continue to influence Neruda’s activism. Neruda received his “activist’s card much later in Chile, when [he] enrolled in the party officially” but he looked upon himself as a “Communist during the war in Spain” (Memoirs 135). From España en el corazón until his death, “political involvement defined Neruda the poet as well as the public figure. His subsequent position as a senator for the Communist party was reflected in his increasingly politically outspoken verse, and his desire to be useful in the daily struggle of his compatriots” (Russell 333). Poetry became an extension of Neruda’s personal politics. To him, poetry was an “act of peace. Peace goes into the making of a poet as flour goes into the making of bread” (Neruda Memoirs 137). Poetry could bring about peaceful revolution.

His conviction for Communism did not come without personal cost. Neruda felt a responsibility to write about his political views, and use his writing as a platform to embody the voice of the people. After the Spanish Civil War, his “consular duties came to an end because [he] had taken part in the defense of the Spanish Republic” and the Chilean government decided to “remove [him] from [his] post” (Neruda Memoirs 135). Having to resign ‘voluntarily’ from his post was not the first time that Neruda crossed the Chilean government. Years later, Neruda served as Gabriel González Videla’s campaign manager (1946), and Videla was elected president (1946-1952). Neruda felt that President Videla “quickly changed his friends” once in office (172). The feeling that he and Communism had been betrayed by Videla was the cause for Neruda writing a scathing critique of Videla and publishing it in one of the national newspapers on November 27, 1947. He asserted the “democratic tradition” of Chile was being “crushed and destroyed by the
combined efforts of foreign pressures and the political treachery of a democratically elected President” (Passions 263). Even though Neruda blamed outside governments, such as the United States government, for influencing Chilean politics, he always separated the people of a country and their governing body. The essay further argued that the “Communists in [Videla’s] government were true crusaders, attempting to fulfill the promises made to the Chilean public” (264). The open letter did not fail to encompass Neruda’s passion for writing and expressing the voice of the people. He wrote that his “years as a public servant and itinerant writer have taught [him] to be acutely sensitive to the sorrowful plight of the people” (281). The sense of obligation to protect the people had only grown stronger over his travels and life. He felt his writing put him in the “front rank of the defenders of [Chile’s] threatened freedom” and that he confronted the responsibilities of “writer and patriot” daily (282). The letter did not sit well with the president, and despite Neruda’s role in the campaign, Videla called for his impeachment from the senate and issued a warrant for Neruda’s arrest. Neruda was forced to go into hiding and “moved from house to house, every day” (Memoirs 173). After several months in hiding, Neruda crossed the Andes into exile. In 1953, the order for his arrest was revoked, and he subsequently returned to Chile (359). He remained active in politics and political writing, where he strove to have his poetry reject “nothing it could carry along in its course; it accepted passion, unraveled mystery, and worked its way into the hearts of the people” (170). The political message had become part of Neruda’s voice.

As revealed by his outspoken views while serving as a senator, Neruda thought very little of the personal cost of his political activism. Neruda was successful with reaching people with his message, especially if one considers that not all political poems are well received. Neruda read to “capacity crowds with infinite pleasure” (211). People wanted to hear Neruda’s poems. Admittedly,
poets in Latin America receive more acclaim and respect than their American counterparts and many are noted for their political activism. Neruda's written work had a profound impact on his readers and fellow countrymen. He admitted that when he wrote his first "lonely books, it never entered [his] mind that, with the passing years, [he] would find [herself] in squares, streets, factories, lecture halls, theaters, and gardens, reading [his] poems" (253). In the beginning of his career as a poet, Neruda could not have fathomed the vast influence of his writing on the political process of Chile or writers throughout the world. The popularity of Neruda's work only augmented the "political commitment to seek justice for his fellow men" (Russell 330). Neruda's talent at executing political verse comes from his strong writing, especially from his ability to play with simple, common language and images. The prevalent political themes caused Neruda to chance "falling into journalism" but his "poetic successes well justified the risk" (Cohen 27).

Influence of Neruda

We must point out, though, that with the dramatic events surrounding Neruda's death, the events and influence of his life are often lost in the pro-Communist or anti-Pinochet rhetoric. Neruda's receipt of a Noble Prize for his poetry in 1970 only reflected a fraction of his influence. Nevertheless, a "good part of Neruda's poetry is political poetry" (Rosales 6). Part of the poet we call Neruda is political. He wrote and reinvented his image multiple times throughout his life, but for the most part had some political overtones in his work after the Spanish Civil War. Indeed, his poetry inspired people across many countries and continents, though the political ideology of many poems affected, and continues to affect, his reception everywhere, particularly in those countries that oppose his political views. Whereas in the Communism-friendly German Democratic Republic (GDR), many of Neruda's poems were "published with amazing speed"; the political content of
Neruda’s poems “worked, at times, to prevent the publication of Neruda’s works” in other countries (Beckett 117). Even in translation, Neruda’s politics overshadowed his literary message. Neruda’s pro-Stalin poetry of the 1940s and 1950s during the “years of the Cold War and New Criticism” made the “appearance of Neruda in English [do] little to establish his reputation as a great poet or to influence poets in the United States” (Cohen 25). After his death in 1973, Neruda had “far more impact on GDR poetry as a dead ‘martyr’ than he did as a producing poet” (Beckett 207). Despite the influence of Neruda as a martyr for the socialist cause in Communist countries, the works produced in his lifetime did inspire other writers. Many writers in the United States translated Neruda as “part of their own efforts to revitalize U.S. poetry. They were especially interested in Neruda’s… poems of social commitment” (Cohen 25). Neruda’s poetry, politics and all, did something much more dangerous than simply words on a page: it gave other writers ideas on how to enact socioeconomic equality. Unlike American poets, “Latin American poets were generally not regarded with the suspicion and tolerant indifference inhibiting [American] poets” (27). Neruda’s poetry inspired many Latino poets in the United States, such as “Julia Alvarez, Jimmy Santiago Baca, Julio Marzán, Frank Lima, David Unger, Sandra María Esteves, Marjorie Agosín, Aurora Levins Marales, and Martín Espada” (27).

Eventually, Neruda’s influence within American culture has increased at specific times and ebbed at others. For example, he has been linked to the beatniks, to college students’ protests in the 1970s, and to more recent events because of his portrayal in Il Postino (1994) (Stavans 13). Sectors of American society gravitated to his political message, and he “was—and continues to be—a torchbearer” (13). The strength of Neruda’s political poetry can be seen in how it was embraced by students in the 1970s and 1980s (13) and Neruda is even mentioned in a song “La Vie Boheme” in
the 1996 musical *Rent*. Many have “heard in Neruda a voice for the voiceless who denounces political and economic injustice, and still more have felt compelled to spread Neruda’s message that poetry can unite humanity” (Jaffe 13). It was the words and message within Neruda’s poetry that reverberated within the greater community of the world.

Neruda’s influence does not begin and end with his death. Within his own lifetime, Neruda worked tirelessly to further his belief in socialism and to help his fellow man. He raised the question, “Can poetry serve our fellow men?” and “Can it find a place in man’s struggles?” (*Memoirs* 139). For Neruda, poetry had to be relevant, and from 1936 onward, it was a “conscious and deliberate testimony of the historical time in which the poet lived” (Sola 80). As mentioned before, *España en el corazón* provided a lot of hope for the Republican soldiers. Neruda’s involvement did not stop at the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939. He arranged for the refugees to have safe passage and a place to go in Chile. Neruda’s poetry “in its struggle, had succeeded in finding them a country” (*Memoirs* 147). He did more than write about the struggle for freedom; he actively sought to bring about that freedom for others.

His work in politics did not stop him from spreading his message in a poetic manner. He read to large audiences, in sizes unheard of in the United States. Once, Neruda read to 10,000 miners at a meeting. When the miners heard Neruda’s name called and the title of the poem he was about to read, the “huge mass of people uncovered their heads. They bared their heads because, after all the categorical and political words that had been spouted, [his] poetry, poetry itself, was about to speak” and the “immense movement of hats and helmets: ten thousand hands went down in unison, in a ground swell impossible to describe, a huge soundless wave, a black foam of quiet reverence” (257). It had not mattered to these miners how many other speakers tried to speak to
these men, because it was Neruda and his words, his beautiful poetry, which moved them to uncover their heads. His poetry was scattered like “seed among the people of [his] country” (253). The ideas in the poems were the most important, for it was from the ideas that changes would come about in Chile.

One place that change could come from in Chile was through the everyday man. His poetry was not just aimed at and read by scholars. Neruda could use language in such a way that it spoke to the common man, the less educated man. He brought workers to tears with his words (254). Not only did Neruda speak to his fellow Communists, he spoke for them as well, and used his poetry as a medium to speak back to the press and public. The conflict with President Videla was not a unique occurrence of Neruda using the press to spread his message. It was not always in prose form, but he did use his position as a respected writer and outspoken Communist to protect his fellow compatriots. An Italian Communist, Tina Modotti, died an early death, but because of rumors that she had been involved in someone’s death, the Mexican newspapers ripped her memory apart. Neruda was deeply upset by the lack of respect for her, and wrote a poem to commemorate her life. After Neruda defended her, the Mexican newspapers stopped printing negative articles about her (256). Neruda led a fairly comfortable life, but that did not conflict with his views of Communism. He felt that “poets have the right to be happy, as long as [they] are close to the people of [their] country and in the thick of the fight for their happiness” (263). As mentioned earlier, Neruda felt that peace was as essential to a poet as flour to bread; however poetry was also “rebellion” and that he as a “poet was not offended when he was called subversive” (294). The act of writing could rebel against systems and governments. It is in this combative spirit of Neruda that many are drawn to him because he “sought fairness and didn’t shy away from resistance” (Stavans 13). Neruda brought
about such strong feelings because he himself was moved by his strong convictions. He said that
"a poet who reads his poems to 130,000 people is not the same man, and cannot keep on writing in
the same way, after such an experience" (Memoirs 313-4). Neruda moved the common man, and in
turn was moved by the common man. Bellini notes that "of all the Hispanic American poets of the
twentieth century, surely Neruda is the one who has the greatest impact on us" (5). The most
important thing to remember about Neruda is that his works still have the ability to impact and
influence people even more than thirty years after his death.

The late works of the man who became a symbol for political resistance are not often given
the same critical acclaim or review as his earlier works. The more introspective aspect of these
poems, when they do receive critical attention, are often seen as "unworthy" next to Neruda's
earlier works (Stavans 13). The sparse critical attention on Neruda's late and posthumous works
caught my interest and why these works became the focus of my research.

The approach to the analysis of Neruda's late and posthumous works

The sheer volume of late and posthumous works makes the selection of which poems to
analyze difficult. Indeed, when Neruda died on September 23, 1973, he was "working on eight
book-length poetry manuscripts" (White 117) and these were the ones that Losada brought out in
1974. These late and posthumous works are not without criticism. Stavans, for example, calls
Neruda's late works "passable at best and disheveled at worst" (13). On the other hand, other critics,
like Cañas, claim that his "most perfect and refined form" is in "the best of the posthumous poetry"
(193), so the two sides of the criticism of Neruda's late and posthumous work seem contradictory.
In the later works, there seems to be a return to himself, which "has been seen as a self-centeredness
of negative value, morally wrong, artistically incompetent, or politically irresponsible" (Perriam
19

47). Obviously, part of the caveats that Neruda’s last books are “unsmoothed” stem from the fact
that Neruda died before he was able to fully edit and revise his work (Stavans 13). Neruda’s failing
health and rapid demise after the coup caused many to suspect that Neruda had not completed
editing his works prior to his death. Indeed, posthumous publications of a writer’s work are often
questioned on their authenticity. Some critics feel merely “one or two” books of his late poems were
“unable to [be] complete[d]” (White 117) or that as many as all eight of the last volumes were
“unedited” (Cañás 191) when he died. Contrary to these critics’ opinions, his widow, Matilde, has
stated that the “day before he lost consciousness he was working all morning... finishing off his
books of poems” because they were “going away to Mexico” and “he wanted to leave everything
with his editor” (Bizzarro 160). Matilde asserted that “all his books published posthumously were in
fact arranged and structured by him” (160). Other evidence to the validity that Neruda had
completed all of his final books of poems is that all his “poetry books, the originals, were all
handwritten, so that no one could say he had not written them. All his poems were scribbled by
hand” (163). The late and posthumous works are important to study, especially his posthumous
poetry because it is the “last piece we have to know him” (Cañás 191). The works were analyzed
under the premise that the work was indeed Neruda’s own writing and arrangement.

Although originally hypothesized that the works would become more political the closer to
the end of Neruda’s life, the research revealed that the poems became less political and more
introspective. Nevertheless, the political poems are still present, although there is a “pessimism in
the posthumous books”, and the pessimism is “deeper than anything found in Neruda’s previous
work” (Russell 337). The poems do tend to focus more on Neruda’s impending death and old age,
but the “politicized, combative Neruda is present throughout the posthumous works, though not
It is not that Neruda has become selfish or turned away from his strong commitment for social justice, rather he is “no less committed to political change, but the individual cost is what he focuses on, and a certain weariness creeps into these ‘political’ poems” (Russell 335). In general, the “posthumous work of Neruda is immediately unified with a personal death” (Ortiz 4). The focus of Neruda in these works is not on an outward political message, but more on what it takes for an individual to be political.

The research was conducted in both English and Spanish, creating a unique problem of how to present the Spanish research. In order to facilitate the information for the non-Spanish readers, the original information in Spanish was either paraphrased or given a literal translation to English. The translations by Belitt and O’Daly were utilized, because should non-Spanish readers wish to look into the poems for themselves, an individual line, or a line-by-line translation would not be sufficient to further their own understandings of the poems. In order to give the clearest demonstration of Neruda’s politics within his poetry, only a few poems were selected to showcase how politics, while not predominant, were still a present topic in Neruda’s last works. These are “Child of the Moon” and “This is Simple” from The Hands of Day (1968), “Little Devils” from World’s End (1969), “XII” from Skystones (1970), “Another” from The Yellow Heart (1974), and selected questions from The Book of Questions (1974).

Politics and Poetics

Within literary theory, many critics “celebrate, with a fervor a bit excessive, the marriage of Poetry with Politics”, but lately, the view of political poetry has undergone a revision, one encompassing “multiple factors—historical, ideological, sociological, scientific” to better analyze the poems (Sicard 553). From that, it is clear that though not all of Neruda’s poems were political,
his political poems do not exclude Neruda’s “personal character” nor do they become “hegemonic” (561). The introspective tone of the late and posthumous works maintains his personal character and avoid the hegemony of socialist doctrine. The tone of “discouragement and stubborn optimism” that is “present in all of the Chilean poet’s books” will be found as well in the “posthumous collections of his poetry” where Neruda has been leaving us with the “document of a man who participates intimately in the destiny of man, not a simple chronicler of the century” (Bellini 11). The late and posthumous poems are “poetry of circumstance, they do not represent our way of seeing”, but rather show the “most profound stratus of the relationship between Poetry and Politics in the work of the Chilean poet” (Sicard 557). But, as noted earlier, Russell observes that the political poems in the late works focus on the “individual cost” of political change (335). Neruda’s early works look at how politics affect society overall, while the late and posthumous works focus on the personal cost to Neruda. The political poems of Neruda’s late and posthumous works call upon the readers to engage in the same self-examination as Neruda through the text of the poems.

“Child of the Moon”

The poem, “Child of the Moon”, illustrates Neruda’s self-examination with respect to his political ideology. The speaker in the poem most likely is Neruda himself. He references the start of Communism with “when the track was laid down a hundred years ago”. The hundred years ago roughly marks the start of the Marxist form of socialism with the publication of Karl Marx’s theories in 1848. It is almost as if to say his ideology existed before he did, and will continue to exist after he is gone. A guilt lingers over the lines “My heart.../ never ventured/ so much as a gesture/ to help/ open the way”. He appears disappointed that he could not assist with the beginning
of the political change. The speaker equals the struggle for socioeconomic equality with the exploration of the universe. He regrets that he “never lifted/ a finger” to help with the expansion of the ideals of socialism. The “public domain” is a “cosmos that [his] friends/ thrust toward sumptuous Aldebaran”. The theory is expanding out to the nearest and brightest star to the solar system. In the Southern Hemisphere, finding Aldebaran requires looking far left in the horizon. Neruda was not a radical as some of his political contemporaries; in fact, he often stayed closer to the center, where the moon might be found in the night sky. The experience of having his friends do more as far as promoting the party makes him compare himself to “self-serving organisms/ that do nothing but ogle and eavesdrop/ and potter”. By only observing the actions of other revolutionaries, he was only paying lip service to his political philosophy. The examination of his lack of full commitment to the ideology makes him turn to his verse. He acknowledges that his verse turns “grief/ into energy” and that he can “lavish [his] power on a page”. Writing held a lot of power for Neruda, but he also questions why he did not fully throw himself into Communism. He never picked up a gun and physically fought for the cause; instead, he took what many hardliners might consider a more passive role. Without having gone and built houses or worked on a farm to help his fellow man, he feels the “world never belonged to [him]”. Not participating in work of the lowest social classes, he feels even more removed from their plight. He was not among the “hewers and hammerers/ who raised up the roofbeams”. Imagining the plight of his fellow man was not sufficient. Using the labor of others and never having his hands “black with the mud and the blood of the world”, he can “no longer have the right to assert/ [his] existence”. It is as though Neruda never existed. He did not give his life for the revolution, in fact, he owned three homes. He had more than many of the people he tried to speak to in his poetry. The line talking about how he has
learned to "lavish [his] power on a page" does speak to the influence and power of his verse. As Neruda examines his life in retrospect, he fixates on how even though he did not participate in the revolution in a physical way, he did participate in the strongest way that he had: his writing. The tense shift from past to present indicates a new hopefulness, perhaps caused by Allende’s election and his own appointment as ambassador to France. Despite the fact that he did not go as far left as "Aldebaran", he still was able to leave the confines of the earth, and become a "child of the moon". He did not go as far as he could have with his politics, but he went further than most.

"This is Simple"

The short poem "This is Simple" uses natural objects to illustrate the absurdity of politics. The abstract nouns of “power”, “profundity”, and “purity” are described as “mute”. The words have no meaning without action or context. The trees, roots, and grain inform the speaker that these words are without speech. The natural objects are not as petty or absurd as people. Trees don’t argue about who is “the tallest”. Height often times relates to social stature. It does not matter how high up someone is in the social structure; the height of the tree does not change the fact that is still a tree. The same is true for the root, it does not matter if the root came “from deeper down”, because all roots are underground. The same is true of family lines. The ‘roots’ of a family do not matter, because it is the actions of the individual person that should be the basis for judging his character. The absurdity of class is explored with the lines "And bread never said:/ "What is better than bread!'". The argument itself is subjective, but if inanimate objects do not question their value in a larger system, then it follows that neither should people. It would be absurd for the trees, roots, and bread to make statements about their greatness, because in the end to the reader, they are only simple objects. These words could easily be replaced with party names or social classes, and it
would follow that their boasts would be just a risible. The essence and the essential do not change. The absurdity of politics and class is skillfully illustrated using everyday objects.

“Little Devils”

In “Little Devils”, Neruda criticizes the bourgeoisie and defends his verse. He sets himself apart from those “poets drawing their boundaries” and claims he “played with clean paper/ in the open light of the day”. The assertion is that he did not hide his political beliefs from his readers, or code it in his writing. He distinguishes himself from “the fixers” and “rich cheapskates spreading their nests”, because he did not use the system to take advantage of other people. The second stanza of the poem attempts to connect Neruda to the common man. He refers to himself as a “journeyman fisherman”, one who is not fully taught in the ways of fishing, but one who is still learning the trade. His catch is “living wet verses/ that break through the veins;/ it’s all I was good for”. Again, there is a tone of regret that Neruda did not fully commit his life to the Communist cause. He recognizes that his poetry hit the heart of people, for the “break through the veins”. The words become part of the circulatory system; they go to the heart. He defends his artistic purpose that his “songs” are “more than benign propaganda”. He is aware that his poetry is borderline propaganda, but the words and messages are far from “benign”. This line hints that Neruda was fully cognizant of the impact of his poetry. He tells the reader he “did it all clumsily”, perhaps apologizing for some of his poetry that was very politicized and meant as pure propaganda. It is a self reflection on his earlier works, and perhaps the tone of regret stems from his feeling that people dismissed some of his earlier works as purely churned out for propaganda rather than poetic purposes. Neruda is an old man, almost seventy, and so he tells the reader to leave him “alone with my ocean:/ I was born for a handful of fishes”. He has an ocean of words to pull from, so he is going to keep gathering the fish
of his words. He wants to keep writing poetry; however, perhaps he also wants to write the poetry outside of the purely political scene. The late works and early works are completely different, and perhaps it is because Neruda entered into a new period in his writing. Had he lived longer, perhaps these works, including this poem, would have been seen as a new phase in his writing, not as lesser works.

"XII"

The play of words in "XII" adds to the political meaning of the poem. Here light represents awareness and knowledge. At first, the light is "jailed". The freedom of knowledge and self awareness does not come without help, which is in the form of a "mineral flower". It takes a common and simple object to appreciate one’s complacency. This parallels the middle class often not realizing how the common man is affected by oppression. Seeing someone else struggle, here represented by a mineral flower, causes the speaker’s eyelids to open. The eyelids are the "curtain of time’s long opacity" and when the speaker is finally able to see, he is aware that his eyes "lay buried". Now, the eyes "come to life again" and become aware of their blindness. The eyes could see some things, but an opaque barrier makes it difficult to distinguish shapes and lines, making the perception blurred. With the help of the mineral flower, the speaker’s eyes are aware of their previous inability to see. Neruda questions how clearly he understood his position as a politician and writer. As shown in the poem, he recognized that he did not always see the plight of the common man, and that even when he did see that plight, it was not entirely clear or transparent.

"Another"

The sense of political regret continues in the poem "Another" published posthumously. The poem speaks specifically to published and unpublished works. He talks about being in a "region/
unrecorded in books”. The “harsher terrain” represents Neruda’s self reflection. The personal cost of his politics is that “nobody wanted to know/ if I preferred lettuces/ to the mint of/ the elephant fodder”. No one cared about other themes that Neruda wanted to write about. While it is ambivalent on which the speaker would prefer, lettuces or mint elephant fodder, the result is that the speaker is seen only as the poet, not the person. Similarly, the poet does not engage in a conversation with the unnamed people who do not care about his personal preferences. He gives “no answers”. The poet does not engage in a dialogue about the man, the person. He calls himself cowardly, and that by not clarifying is personal preferences, he has “kept [his] heart yellow”. Neruda looks at the personal cost of his political involvement. He could have made it clear what his personal opinions were, as the man, rather than the poet, but instead he took the silent, cowardly route.

The Book of Questions

Of all the late and posthumous works, *The Book of Questions* (1974) appears the most political. It is part of Neruda’s “quest to know himself” (O’Daly ix). The self-questioning and introspection continue throughout the questions in this book. Here, Neruda “achieves a deeper vulnerability and vision than in his earlier work” (ix). The questions range from silly, “Which yellow bird/ fills its nest with lemons?” to serious, “How many churches are there in heaven?” (Neruda *Book 1*, 4). As with many of the late and posthumous works, Neruda focuses on the personal cost to politics. However, he also poses questions in a way that has readers engage themselves with the same questions. Neruda asks, “How did the grapes come to know/ the cluster’s party line?” (18). By comparing people to the simple object of grapes, Neruda calls upon the reader to question where his or her political beliefs started. The focus is not on how politics affects a wider range of people, as was predominant in Neruda’s earlier works; rather, this question requires the
reader to reexamine how he or she as an individual came to believe in a certain political ideology. Many of the other questions hint at Neruda’s political ideology. He asks “Is 4 the same 4 for everybody?/ Are all sevens equal?” (24). The problem with the current world for Neruda is that not everything is equal. Mathematically, numbers should be the same. Through questioning the validity of those numbers, Neruda demonstrates the inequalities between the social classes. The poorer people work longer hours for less pay. The four hours of work for a poor person, in monetary terms, does not equal the four hours of work for a rich person.

The questions also encompass Neruda’s dislike of fascism. In a series of five stanzas, he writes:

    What forced labor
does Hitler do in hell?

    Does he paint walls or cadavers?
Does he sniff the fumes of the dead?

    Do they feed him the ashes
of so many burnt children?

    Or, since his death, have they given him
blood to drink from a funnel?

    Or do they hammer into his mouth
the pulled gold teeth? (70)

The graphic imagery recounts the atrocities committed in Hitler’s name during World War II (1939-1945). Neruda questions if there is any punishment fitting of such evil. He imagines Hitler being forced to engage in all the brutalities committed at the concentration camps. It makes the reader wonder if there is any punishment fitting for Hitler. Even the violent image of having the “pulled gold teeth” “hammered” into Hitler’s mouth does not seem enough for a man who caused such violence and despair. In the same moment, the reader is reminded of Hitler’s actions, while
realizing that no amount of punishment will atone for what he caused. The reader leaves this
series of questions with a chilling realization that no amount of punishment meted out to Hitler in
hell will ever equate to the loss of human life. The political message is one that denounces fascism,
the political ideology that is directly in opposition with socialism, but it also focuses on the human
cost of fascism more than the political consequences of that ideology.

Conclusions

Taking into account the political message of the late and posthumous poems, it is clear that
Neruda intended to continue spreading his political ideology of Communism. He wanted to inspire
and motivate people from every strata of society to work for the betterment of mankind. The
dramatic events surrounding his death only illustrate his commitment to Chilean people. He knew
that his words and actions could influence others and bring about real change. Despite receiving
critical acclaim, high praise, and many awards as a writer during his lifetime, Neruda remained
humble. The focus for much of his poetry was common, simple objects and how they related to the
everyday person. The analyzed late and posthumous works reveal Neruda's self-doubt, modest
spirit, and self-questioning, rather than the arrogance one might expect from a celebrated poet. His
recommitment to humanity and the common man shines through in these last works. Many writers
today are still inspired by his writings and his hope for the future of humanity. The idea of poetry as
an act of peace and at the same time an act of resistance is evident in how Neruda argues in favor of
his political ideology in his last works. By understanding how Neruda arrived at his political
ideology and how it affected his life, we can better appreciate the beauty of what we have left to
understand him as both a poet and political activist. After reading Neruda, we should all see poetry
as an act of peace, and that poetry is as essential to human existence as bread.
Works Cited


Appendix A

The selected works from Belitt’s *Late and Posthumous Poems: 1968-1874*

*The Hands of Day*

Child of the Moon (p. 3-4)

Everything here is alive,
working at something,
fulfilling itself
without thought of my patience; yet
when the track was laid down a hundred years ago
I never winced for the cold;
My heart, soaking in rain
under the skies of Cautín
never ventured
so much as a gesture
to help
open the way
to all that was hurling itself into existence.

I never lifted
a finger in the public domain
of the cosmos that my friends
thrust toward sumptuous Aldebaran.

Among self-serving organisms
that do nothing but ogle and eavesdrop
and potter,
I was humbled in ways I dare not describe
Lest someone cheapen my verse
to a snivel,
now I have learned to turn grief
into energy, lavish my power on a page,
on the dust, on a stone in the road.

Having managed so long without splitting
a rock or cutting a plank to its size,
I feel the world never belonged to me; it is part
of the hewers and hammerers
who raised up the roofbeams: and
if the mortar that launched a endured the design’s continuity
was poured by other hands than my own,
hands black with the mud and the blood of the world,
I no longer have the right to assert
my existence: I was a child of the moon.
Power is mute (the trees tell me)
and so is profundity (say the roots)
and purity too (says the grain).

No tree ever said:
"I'm the tallest!"

No root ever said:
"I come from deeper down!"

And bread never said:
"What is better than bread!"

I've seen them: the fixers
setting up their advantages,
the arriviste's alibis,
rich cheapskates spreading their nests,
poets drawing their boundaries;
but I've played with clean paper
in the open light of the day.

I'm a journeyman fisherman
of living wet verses
that break through the veins;
it's all I was good for.
I never contrived opportunities
out of mere vainglory
or a schemer's perversity;
whatever I say in my songs
is more than benign propaganda.
True, I did it all clumsily
and for that I beg pardon:
now leave me alone with my ocean:
I was born for a handful of fishes.
Skystones

XII (p.87)

I want the jailed
light to awaken: I want
the mineral flower
to assist my behavior:
now eyelids are lifting the curtain
of time’s long opacity
and the eyes that lay buried
come to life again, and see their transparency.

The Yellow Heart

Another (p. 161)

After ranging at large in a region
unrecorded in books
I got used to that harsher terrain
where nobody wanted to know
if I preferred lettuces
to the mint of
the elephant fodder.
And by giving no answers
I have kept my heart yellow.
Appendix B

Poems Inspired by Neruda's *The Book of Questions*

**In France, where does spring get so many leaves?**

The red-roofed corner shop
has the best fromage, but Spring passes
on the gouda for olive leaves,
although she occasionally pines
for imported maple holding hints
of syrup and her former lover, Fall.

**Tell me, is the rose naked or is that her only dress?**

Even though you mock her,
it's best to know that the rose only wears
this red dress (so sheer and smooth)
because other fabrics like leather and suede
were made by shooting
nails into the skulls
of cows or by some unknown woman
sewing until her fingers bled
to save the American consumer
five dollars on a t-shirt.

**Why do trees conceal the splendor of their roots?**

The trees conceal their roots
so that no one will find out
that the boy trees secretly
love to paint the tips
in shades of pink like the lips
of frozen hummingbirds.
Is there anything in the world sadder than a train standing in the rain?
I can only think of one thing sadder: knowing that once it held bodies wearing stripes and yellow stars who were locked inside and rotting, dying, until the only guilty party was the Germans and not the World who stood by and pretended that she stopped evil the day those rusted doors were opened.

Why do leaves commit suicide when they feel yellow?
Leaves commit suicide when they feel yellow for the same reason that men dye their hair black when it turns gray (it is better to feel the impact of the cement than to wait for the slow crumble of life to waft across the snowy cement sidewalk in October).

How old is November anyway?
Between sips of cider, I inquired about the age of graying November across the maroon carpet of the nursing home, but my grandmother set down her knitting needles, sighed, and said Good girls shouldn’t ask old people about these things, and I asked Why not? to no avail (besides, I don’t think she would have told me anyways, even if I asked in my best church-quiet voice).
How is the translation of their languages arranged with the birds?

Several traveling seagulls know Greek,
a few lonely pigeons sing French love songs
(Just one knows how it sounds like when he speaks).

The sparrows all kiss once on the left cheek
and figure out who knows what with a gong.
(Several traveling seagulls know Greek,
but upon hearing the street talk they shriek
out in confusion. Within the throng,
just one knows how it sounds like when he speaks.)

The woodpeckers know Spanish from the meek workers’ voices, and (even though they are wrong)
several traveling seagulls know Greek.

At last some consensus is within reach
dictionaries that someone brought along:
Several traveling seagulls know Greek,
just one knows how it sounds like when he speaks.
Why do my faded clothes
flutter like a flag?

Purple autumn followed violet summer where days existed
as crayon scribbles, paint splatters, and lightning bug signals.
A wooden sword scar above my scapula, Bubble Yum forgotten
in the left back pocket when a twisted tree branch lanced my leg,
ripped my shirt, and birthed the fear of ladders.

I wore my favorite jeans until they faded and morphed into a velvet rabbit;
their tattered ears of denim flopped at my knees, testaments
to the tomboy who never wore dresses to church.
Each tormented thread thrashed in the tempest of teenhood,
a glimmer of gooey gooseberry goodness, grass stains, and grease.

Holding them close, the memories escape from the brass rivets straining
to clasp the denim. Cannon Beach sand and saltwater spots surface,
remind me of sprinting at the sunset, sea swell beneath my sandals, signaling
my revolution to the seagulls.

The wind salsas with the threads, mambos with the cotton,
tangos with polyester, and cha-chas with silk. But Aeolus only foxtrots
with the flag, for she takes so much space he must tickle the red and white
to convince her to dance, wave the shy blue-backed stars. The rabbit ears twitch,
signal the coming wall of black clouds, electric in the Kansas summer heat.
We dart off together, these rabbit-eared jeans and I, the coyote storm gnashes
its teeth.

We know the smell of sulfur howls.
Ears and legs, (soon parted by a washing machine,
monkey bars,
and a mother)

race to

1437 Oakdale Drive (first house on the left, red brick, white door).