Avant-Garde Poetry in Latin America and Spain: Aspects and Historical Background
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The cultural phenomenon known in the arts by the generic name of Avant Garde or "vanguardismo" cannot be reduced to a definition, since its main constitutive element, the constant aesthetic renewal, exceeds any conceptual and temporal limitation. The "obsoltizacion" or the decadence and the eagerness of renovation are aspects that traditionally manifest themselves through human history as well as art history. Thus the Avant Garde in the arts, as an intellectual attitude of aesthetic renewal is not definable, but rather describable. Its essence is in artist's search for a change in the way artists should express themselves, as well as the way readers should receive the artistically and physically created object. I will use the term avant-garde poetry in a restrictive sense, above all to refer to a series of European discursive techniques used in the poetic texts written in Spanish America and Spain between the World Wars (1914-1936).

The purpose of this essay is not then to study the Avant Garde per se¹, but to show how some of its constituting currents, such as Futurism, Dadaism and Surrealism, contributed to the formation of the literary tendencies called Creationism and Ultraism in the Spanish Literature of both sides of the Atlantic. Given the variety of the extensive and complex considerations - textual, historical, cultural, and bio-bibliographic- that make up the Avant Garde movement in Spanish and Latin America, I will focus my discussion on the analysis of the following specific elements and movements that are at the crux of the Avant Garde: a) The socio-cultural context of the avant-garde movements; b) Creationism; c) Ultraism in Spain; d) Ultraism in America. This organizational method is purely functional and does not represent in any sense an evolutionary or linear conception of poetry, and much less it will mean the adoption, without a previous questioning, of the conventional conceptualization of the Avant Garde that has commonly been used to signify an aesthetics characterized precisely by its plurality.

Socio-cultural Context of the Avant Garde

In this century, the appearance or reappearance of any artistic tendency has been determined, to a greater or lesser degree, by the historical and cultural events of the times, such as the prevailing modes and discursive fashions, the confluence of ethic and aesthetic opinions shared by writers, readers, editorial and other institutions that are in charge of articulating and disseminating the cultural events within a given society. The period between World I and World War II (1914 to 1936), where the flourishing of the literary tendencies from the beginning of the century are framed, known as "isms" (Futurism, Surrealism, Expressionism, Ultraism . . .) characterizes itself by being one of the most dynamic in the history of the Western World in the twentieth century.²

The outbreak of World War I concluded the undermining of the basis of the European economy and the ideological and artistic homogeneity that ruled in Europe in nineteenth
The European individual then lost his faith in the social and moral institutions as well as in the traditional values. He suddenly found himself entangled in a conflicting society that was already being dominated by the great financial consortiums that produced the numerous innovations of the twentieth century, such as the factory, machine, film, automobile, the radio, telephone, and the airplane to name a few. This world of speed and modernity became the world of the so-called the Futurist individual. This meant that it became the world of the youth, adventure, heroism—and that of the so-called happy and prosperous twenties. This became the same world that would witness catastrophic events of destruction, such as World War I (1914-18), the Bolshevik Revolution (1917), the beginning of Fascism (1922-23), the great economical crises (1929), the advent of the Second Spanish Republic (1931), the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), and World War II.

It is not strange, then, that in a world so divided ideologically, such as the one at the beginning of this century, the arts would also fragment themselves, giving way to the artistic individualism that gave birth to the multiple isms of the European Avant Garde, which coincided with an essential point: the revival of the traditional means of expression. The aesthetics of the Avant Garde, as it is expressed in the manifestos of its most outstanding representatives, such as Marinetti, Tristan Tzara, and André Breton, implied the search for absolute freedom for new artistic styles and means of expression, an urge to destroy or transform that conventionality that was then the norm in the West, and the creation of an aesthetic cosmos completely new where the rational would be substituted with the intuitive, and the conventional concept of reality would also be substituted for a world where the incoherent, the illogical and arbitrary would nile. However, one should not forget that the European literary movements, especially that of the Avant Garde came to Spain and Latin America already acquiring their own styles and means of expression. Over all, one can argue that Futurism, Dadaism, and Surrealism had been perhaps the Avant Garde currents that contributed the most to the reception of Ultraism in Latin America and Spain.

Creationism

In Spanish American literature, the European Avant Garde unfolded itself in two tendencies: Creationism and Ultraism. For some critics the founder of Creationism was the Chilean poet Vicente Huidobro; for others was the French poet Pierre Reverdy. Indeed, I know that at the beginning of the World War I, Huidobro had read his manifesto, Non Serviamj (1914) in chile, at the Ateneo of Santiago de Chile, In it he expressed his wish for the creation of a kind of poetry that should be different from that of Aristotle's, and by that Huidobro meant one in which the poet would liberate himself from the servile imitation of nature. With this manifesto, Huidobro became a critic of his own poetry:

I will tell you what I understand by a created poem. It is a poem in which each constituting part, as well as the whole, represents something new, independent from the external world, without any links to any other reality but itself. The Creationist poem is made up of created images, created situations, created concepts, [...] nothing anecdotic nor descriptive. The emotion has to be born from the creative virtue. Making a poem, as nature creates it own, could be seeing as the equivalent of making a tree.

Two years later after presenting his manifesto on poetics, Huidobro published the book El espejo de agua (Mirrors of Water) in which he includes the well known poem "Arte poética" (Poetic Art), which has been considered by many the poetic version of the famous manifesto of
Creationism—first read at the Ateneo of Buenos Aires that same year. In this poem the poet becomes a demiurge; a maker of worlds who practices here his creation gift:

He invents new worlds and takes care of his word:
The adjective, when it doesn't give life, it kills . . .
Why do you sing to the rose, oh poets! Make the rose flourish in the poem. . . .
the poet is a small God.

One should notice that in the poem as well as in the manifesto, Huidobro established the tenets of his poetic art. This new kind of poetry—if we believe the Chilean poet and not Reverdy—was started before Huidobro's first trip to France. In 1916, Huidobro arrives in Paris and collaborates, with Apollinaire, Tristan Tzara and Reverdy in the leftist journal, Nord Sud. The following year he publishes his book of poems in French, Horizon carré and in 1918 he publishes Hallali, Ecuatorial, Tour Eiffel and Arctic Poems. A quick glance at the poems that make up these books would reveal that in these texts Huidobro sketches but does not fully elaborate on the poetic principles of Creationism.

Where Huidobro comes close to obtaining his poetic ideal is, perhaps, in his book Altazor o El viaje en paracaídas, (written in 1919, but published in 1931). Altazor is made up of seven cantos. The first two songs are still "anecdotic" and "descriptive"; their makeup is still close to the traditional ways of expression in poetry, even though Huidobro takes its form to the highest of all kinds of tension. Yet, in canto three, I believe, the poet establishes the definite breaking away from the traditional ways of poetry writing, and it is here where he shows himself as poet of the Creationism movement. The demiurge poet, tired of the function of the poet as "manicure of the language and of hearing "the lady harp of beautiful images" (Altazor lines 49 and 50) screams: "Basta " or "Enough"; enough of the Modernist ornamentation stylistics. By the use of the term "Basta" Huidobro makes good use of the Creationist techniques because of the nuances he gives to language, the images and the metaphors, and his extraction of their maximum semantic power. He accomplishes this by the accurate use of linking or "encabalgamiento" of unequal and even absurd comparisons as analogies, as the following lines of Altazor suggest.

[…] Basta señora arpa de las bellas imágenes
De los furtivos como iluminados
De los furtivos como arboles
Enjaular árboles como pájaros
Regar pájaros como heliotropos
Imprison trees as if they were bird
Sprinkle birds as we sprinkle Heliotropes
Tocar un heliotropo como una música
Vaciar una música como un saco […]  (page 50).
Here Huldobro uses Dadaist and Surrealist poetic techniques. As such, it is fitting to analyze these lines using the syntactic Chomskian method of analysis as developed by Richard Ohmann in his book Linguistics and Literary Style (New York, 1970). In lines 4 and 9 the rule of transformation, called "reduction by conjunction" can be applied-specifically when two sentences have the same nominal or verbal phrase in common. The line "posar un beso como una mirada" will constitute, according to Chomsky and Ohmann, the superficial structure from which the deepest structure would derive, as in "posar un beso" and "posar una mirada" Syntactically; these lines have a parallel structure. Lines 4 and 9 are linked through the conjunction "como," that is, two phrases or "sintagmas": a verbal II sintagma" made up by a verb in the infinitive and a noun (SVI) with another nominal "sintagma" made up only by a noun (SN2). This results in a bimembre sentence (OB) in which the nouns of (SVI) and (SN2) share the same subject (verb in the infinitive). The sintagmatic parallel structure that takes place in each one of the verbs (4-9) could be illustrated as follows: SVI (verb+noun) = > SN2 (implicit verb + noun).

In line 4 the SVI displaces itself sintagmatically to SN2 of the same line, and this process repeats itself sequentially in the lines that follow (5-9), forming this way a syntactic interlocking in which the same noun links with the verb or separates itself from it, without losing by its denotative and connotative function.

Semantically, the verbal and nominal phrases (sintagmas) from lines 4 to 9 could be broken down into two basic groups: one that can be called denotative, because it is made up of phrases whose meaning is literal, coherent and logical, and another that can be called connotative, because it does not have phrases with a literal meaning but which are apparently incoherent and illogical, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connotative Phrases</th>
<th>Sintagmas</th>
<th>Denotative Phrases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(4) posar un beso</td>
<td>(SV 1 = &gt; SN2)</td>
<td>un pájaro (se posa) posar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to place a kiss</td>
<td></td>
<td>abird (places himself)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) plantar miradas</td>
<td>(SV 1 = &gt; SN2)</td>
<td>plantar arboles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to plant glances</td>
<td></td>
<td>to plant trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) enjaular Arboles</td>
<td>(SV 1 = &gt; SN2)</td>
<td>enjaular pajaros</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to imprison trees</td>
<td></td>
<td>to imprison birds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) regar pájaros</td>
<td>(SV 1 = &gt; SN2)</td>
<td>regar irboles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to sprinkle birds</td>
<td></td>
<td>to sprinkle trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) tocar un heliotropo</td>
<td>(SV 1 = &gt; SN2)</td>
<td>tocar heliotropes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to play a heliotrope</td>
<td></td>
<td>to sprinkle heliotropes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) vaciar una música</td>
<td>(SV 1 = &gt; SN2)</td>
<td>vaciar una música</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to empty a musical note</td>
<td></td>
<td>to empty a musical note</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as if it were a sack</td>
<td></td>
<td>to empty a saco</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The breaking up of the lines (as in the previous page) in these connotative and denotative verbal phrases exposes the two Dadaist basic techniques known as expressive freedom, which result from the union of opposites and the apparent playing of the spontaneous and uncontrollable associations that are alluded at the same time, to the absurd and the strange. It is as if the poet had aimed at engaging in word play, with the language that would consist of writing each word on a piece of paper and then placing them on a bag, shaking the bag, and
then taking them out by pure chance-word by word-to compose the lines. In effect, the poetics of Dadaism advocates as much the lúdica expression as the linguistic chance.

As we know it, Dadaism precedes Surrealism and they both adhere to a writing without punctuation and logical structure, but executed by chance through the use of associations by chance. Yet, Surrealism goes much further than Dadaism in its formal experimentation, since it uses dreams and psychic automatism to penetrate what it considers to be the true essence of the human being, the unconscious world of the individual-his true self. The Surrealists propose the practice of automatic writing to create a poetic cosmos where the irrational and the rational would simultaneously harmonize. In the same way one should notice that the majority of the Avant Garde movements advocated the writing practice of the so-called 11 theory of the image," which consists of capturing -if it could be captured- the last substance of reality in images and metaphors and not in concepts.

It is worth noting that the critic Antonio Undurraga (Torrel 117-120) observes that Huidobro rejects the conception of a poetry created directly from the unconscious of the poet. He claims that in the poetry of Huidobro the image emerges from the poetic "super conscience," guided by imaginative reasoning and therefore not by logic. Indeed, this critical judgment sounds unchallenging since the reading of Huidobro's poetry reveals more a process of conscientious elaboration than a psychic fluency in its poetic discourse.

Through Altazor Huidobro not only disintegrates or dismantles images and metaphors, to 'recreate' them later, but he also ends successfully disintegrating the words themselves to then reconstruct them through new associations while using their divided parts. This poetic process is evident in canto IV of Altazor in the following lines: "Al horitaña de la montazonte / la violoncina y el goloncelo" (60). The poet here seems to disintegrate the words "Horizonte," "montaña," "violoncelo." and "golondrina," and he then reconstruct them as follows: "horitaña," "montazonte," "violoncina," and "goloncelo." In the same way, in the lines that follow the poetic techniques of Creationism -of "de-formation-re-formation"- as evident specifically in the following words which derive from "golondrina": "golonfina," "golontrina," "goloncima," "golonchina," "golonclima." The basic elements of Creationism are also found in Huidobro's adaptation of the spatial wordplay, which is characteristic of Futurism; in the incorporation of the formal antithetic wordplay, which is typical of Dadaism (as in Altazor); and in his use of other techniques commonly used in Avant Garde writing. It is worth noting here that Creationism in Spain is known as Ultraism.

Creationism or Ultraism in Spain

Some of the characteristics associated with the European "isms" are: a) the "confusion" that presents in its historical development (and as a result the complexity of its analysis); b) the use of theoretical manifestos to propagate its poetics; and c) the narrow international relation that was kept among these literary movements that are characterized by their "isms." As for the origin of the aesthetics of the Avant Garde, it is widely accepted that it branched out of Romanticism, which among other things disdained the old poetic precepts and introduced formal freedom of expression, as found in the French poetry of the 19th century.

Certainly, poets like Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Verlaine, Rimbaud, Apolinaire, among others, with their poems Les Chats, Le Petit déjeuner, Un Coup de dés, Les Voyales, Les Correspondances, Les Caligrames, had already established, in the previous century the basis of the European Avant Garde movement of the 20th century. Thus, it is not possible to establish with certainty
the aesthetic origins of the *Avant Garde*, and much less the origins of Creationism and Ultraism, which as we know it branched it out of it. This theoretical "confusion" is found in the diversity of names that critics from Spain and Spanish America use to refer to the poetic aesthetics that Huidobro first disseminated in Madrid in 1918. This is why some of these critics would speak of *Avant Garde* (Vanguardismo) while others of Creationism, and then there are those who do not acknowledge any difference between these artistic labels.  

At the present, over a long period of evolution, it is really difficult to establish the difference between the poetic aesthetics of Creationism and Ultraism. The hypothesis that I have sketched in this essay could be explained this way: Creationism, even though it branches out of the French *Avant Garde*, possesses its particular characteristics. But at the outset what is certain is that it was Huidobro who established the theoretical basis of Creationism in Latin America (Chile and Argentina 1914-1916), that then he went to France with it (1916), which he then took to Spain (1918) where Creationism "fused" with the Ultraism that in 1920 Jorge Luis Borges would take to the Peninsula. Indeed, "Creationism-Ultraism" remained in Spain until 1923 or 1924. At the beginning of the twenties, as I will discuss later, Borges brought Ultraism to Argentina.

But going back to the topic of the introduction of Creationism in Spain, we should remember that in 1918 Huidobro had arrived in Madrid with his books *El espejo de agua* (published in Buenos Aires in 1916) and *Horizon Carré* (published in Paris in 1917). With the publishing of his books *Hallali*, *Ecuatorial*, *Tour Eiffel* and *Poemas Articos* the same year, Huidobro integrated himself in the intellectual life of Madrid, disseminating there his poetry among the young writers, such as Guillermo de la Torre, Gerardo Diego, Cansinos, and others. These poets and theorists together with Jorge Luis Borges would be the founders of the movement known as Ultraism that following year (1919). Referring to the influence that the young poets of Spain between 1918 and 1924 received, Gloria Videla in her book *El Ultraismo: estudios sobre movimientos poéticos de vanguardia en España* (Ultraism: Studies of the Poetic Movements of *Avant Garde* in Spain), comments on the poetry of the Spanish poet Gerardo Diego: "The Spanish Ultraism -or to be more exact Creationism- owes him its two best books: *Imagen* (1922) and *Manual de espumas*" (1924). This critical assertion corroborates not only the "confusion" in the terminology commonly used in Creationism and Ultraism, but alludes to the relation of the Spanish poet with Huidobro's Creationism.  

Salto del trampolín

De la rima en la rama
brincar hasta el confín
de un nuevo panorama.
Partir del humorismo
funámbulo y acróstico,
y cabalgar el istmo
del que pende lo agnóstico.
La garganta estridente:
el corazón maduro
y desnuda la frente
ávida de futuro...[...]
Y así ved mis diversos versos
de algarabía.
Versos
más versos
como canté algún día.

(Videla 127)

(Jump from the trampoline
From the consonance to the branch
Jumping till the end
of a new panorama.
Departing from humor
funambulist and acrostic,
and cabalgating the isthmus
from which hangs agnosticism
Strident throat;
mature heart
and naked forehead avid of future. [...]
Avid so see my diverse
verses of clamor.
Verses

Here Diego alludes in general to the existence of the "isms" in his poetry, and particularly to Stridentism and Futurism. There are images of Creationism, as the ones in the first two lines and the accurate combination of uneven elements ("cabalgar el istmo" [line 71]). As in Creationism proper, elements that apparently do not have any similarities -but once they are linked they evoke an unexpected meaning to the reader- in almost each line are linked through an image. Undoubtedly, in this phase of his poetry, Gerardo Diego follows the techniques of Creationism spread by Huidobro. If there were any doubts about it, the declarations made by Diego himself, who in his article entitled "Poetry and Creationism of Vicente Huidobro" speaks of "the friendship ties and discipleship that link me to the Chilean poet (De Costa 209), would be enough to dismiss the claim.

In his poem "Creationism," Diego at the height of his phase of Creationism adopts the attitude and aptitude of the demiurge poet in his act of creation: "Let's make our Genesis / . . . . The page is blank: / 'At the beginning there was'" ("Hagamos nuestro Genesis / [...] La página está en blanco: / 'En el principio era'. . . " [Videla, El ultraísmo 128]). In these lines we could perceive echoes of Mallarmé and his metaphoric conception of the "space" that expresses the silence; the nothingness that precedes the creation of the universe as well as the poetic creation. Diego -as Alberti and Aleixandre in one of the phases of their poetic trajectory- "flirted" with Creationism. Yet, Diego lately dissociated himself from the teachings of his "maestro" Huidobro and embarked on the production of a "poesía pura" or pure poetry. However, Avant Garde and its branches, Surrealism and Ultraism, hardly flourished in Spain, in terms of poetry. But it took on earnestly in Spanish America, especially in the poetry of Neruda, Vallejo, Paz, Ernesto Cardenal, and in the poetic prose of Asturias and Lezama Lima, among others.
Ultraism in Spanish America

At the outbreak of World War I, the young, 15-year-old Jorge Luis Borges finds himself in Geneva, where he attended secondary school from 1914 to 1918. Here he writes poems in French and English, and become familiar with French Symbolism and German Expressionism. Years later, when referring to this part of his life during which he participated in the dissemination of "isms," Borges stated in an interview that "I became, however, very interested in German Expressionism and still think of it as beyond other contemporary schools, such as Imagism, Cubism, Futurism, Surrealism, and so forth" (Chelseka, *The Poetry and the Poetics of Jorge Luis Borges* 33). If this biographic data is not known in any research on our topic of discussion, it is almost impossible to understand two fundamental elements in Borges's aesthetics: (1) why does Borges get to Ultraism through Expressionism? and (2) why, being one of the main theorists and exponents of Ultraism in Spain and Argentina, does he not take the movement seriously, and with the years of struggles then abandons it? The mentioning of other bio-bibliographic data will help explain the attitude of the poet: at the end of World War I, Borges and his family spend a year (1919-1920) in Spain before returning to Argentina. In the Spanish Ultraist magazines -*Grecia, Cervantes, Ultra, Tableros* and *Horizonte* - Borges expounds on his poetry and the poetics of the Ultraist movement, synthesizing his poetic principles this way:

1) Reducing poetry to its primordial element: the metaphor.
2) The elimination of mediating phrases and useless links and adjectives.
3) The abolition of ornamental tools, conventionalism, circunstanciación, sermons, and unnatural obscurity.
4) Synthesis of two or more images in one to amplify this way its suggestive faculty (Videla 107).

In addition to this manifesto, Borges publishes poems where he uses more Expressionist techniques than Creationist ones, such as the famous "Trincheras" or "Trenches," in which under the pretext of protesting against the War, he pleases himself with metaphoric findings: "Affliction […] / The bayonets dream about the nuptial confusion / The world got lost and the eyes of the dead are looking for it / The silence howls in the sunken Horizons" ("Angustias [...] / Las bayonetas sueñan con los entreveros nupciales / El mundo se ha perdido y los ojos de los muertos lo buscan / El silencio aúlla en los Horizontes hundidos [Videla, *El ultraísmo* 100-101]).

Within the line of Ultraism proper, it is worth mentioning the poems "Mañana" and "Cathedral" (published in Madrid in the literary magazine *Ultra*, numbers 1 and 19), which Borges himself excluded later from his poetic works. In "Cathedral" and "Mañana" there are images typical of Futurist leitmotifs, such as the one where the cathedral is seen as a "stone-airplane," and the one about a man- “drunk as a propeller.”11 Borges really disowned the Ultraism poems that he wrote in Spain; he went as far as repenting himself from having written them-" arid poems from the mistaken sect of Ultraism" (Videla 144). Borges adds that: “All that [referring to Ultraism] was so ingenuous, and one besides so foolish, that idea of reducing all poetry to only one device: the metaphor" (Chelseka 42).

In 1921, the young Borges returns to Argentina with a well- established knowledge of the poetics of the *Avant Garde* movement, and become the main representative of Ultraism in that country. In association with writers such as Macedonio Fernández, Ricardo Güiralde,
others not so well known, he becomes the founder of and collaborator of the literary journals *Prisma* (1921-22); *Nosotros* (1921); *Proa* (1922-25); *Martin Fierro* (1924) and *Síntesis* (1927) (Gómez-Gil, *Historia de la literatura hispanoamericana* 519). In these journals he expounds his Ultraist poetry, which is now enriched with the American or Creole element and which opens itself to syncretism and constant formal experimentation. At that time he publishes his first book of poems, *Fervor de Buenos Aires* (1923), from which he excludes the majority of the poems with Ultraist tendency that he had written in Spain. The few poems he includes in the book are deliberately changed and revised by him. It is as if the poet would have wanted "to clean them" from all the Ultraist tinting and from the "social" or "realist" themes they contained. Paul Chelseak proves, with convincing examples, the way in which Borges re-elaborates, revises, and even omits extensively in *Fervor de Buenos Aires*, his poems written in Spain, for the sole purpose of cleansing the poetic techniques he embedded in his poetry that would associate it with Ultraism.

Paradoxically, in the decade between 1920 and 1930, in the Argentinean literary journals that I have quoted, Borges carries out an extensive job of almost propagandistic nature in favor of Ultraism. This evident contradiction that we see in Borges as poet and theorist has caused some critics to re-examine Borges' theories and totally disavow the studies of his poetic creation. However, while doing this, they have ignored the first poetry Borges wrote in Buenos Aires that represents a transition in the lyrics of the poet and not an ascription to "pure Ultraism," as it has been argued in some texts of literary criticism. In the initial and final stanzas of "Las calles" or "The streets" (the first poem of *Fervor de Buenos Aires*) one could notice the "transition" that is taking place in the first lyrics of Borges:

Las calles de Buenos Aires
ya son la entraña de mi alma
No las calles enérgicas
molestadas de prisas y ajetreos,
sino la dulce calle de arrabal
enternecida de árboles y ocaso […]

Hacia los cuatro puntos cardinales
se han desplegado como banderas las calles;
ojalá en mis versos inhiestos
vuelen esas banderas.

(The streets of Buenos Aires
are already the entrails of my soul.
Not the energetic streets
bothered by speed and bustling,
but the sweet street of the suburbs 
moved by trees and sunsets […]
Towards the tour cardinal points
the streets have unfolded as flags;
God grant that in my erect verses
those flags will fly).

Different from what it is expected to be characteristic of the poetry of Ultraism, in this first poem of *Fervor de Buenos Aires* the reader will notice Borges's use of punctuation, the
semantic congruence of terms, the coherence of expression, the absence of violent images, the absence of typographic games.

Does this poem represent, then, Borges's return to traditional poetry—and thus the contrary to what was expected, poetic innovation? I think the latter is a fair answer—an innovation in form and expression in poetics, especially as found in the last stanza, where the poet seems to plead for a sort of a "poetic flight" that will separate him from the tenets of Ultraism. The reader can find support to my assertion by carefully applying here Gloria Videla's claim about this poem in her book *Altruism*:

> The poet returns to Buenos Aires, not to the cosmopolitan and dynamic area of the city, but to 'the sweet street of the suburbs. moved by trees and sunsets' ('The streets'), from where the Pampa can be is felt. He also expresses, by departing from the common, his metaphysical worries. Even though he proclaims himself an Ultraist and frequently uses techniques from the literary movement, his is far from the typical of Ultraist poetry: pure display of ingenuity and chinking without any unity of melody. (107)

Gloria Videla not only observes the inevitable dialectics existing between theory and poetic practice in the novice Borges, but she also notices the change in the orientation of lyric. Likewise, Paul Chelseka in the book previously quoted comments on the difference between Borges the poet and the theorist (even of his own lyric). On the other hand, Silvia Molloy analyzes the symbiotic thematology revealed in Borges's writings as in the case of his philosophical essays and short stories (*Las Letras de Borges*, 1979). And indeed Borges the creator of poetic worlds in verse and in prose returned to the genre of poetry and poetics in *La cifra* (1981) and in *Los conjurados* (1984), toward the end of his life.

The lyric and poetic texts analyzed here in light of the historical and cultural events of the period between the two World Wars show the dialectics of transformation (thesis + antithesis = synthesis) that takes place when the poets discussed here tried to put into practice the theories they wrote in their manifestos. In effect, the poetry and poetics of Huidobro, Gerardo Diego, and Borges examined in this essay will reveal that Diego, in his search for new and broader poetic horizons, disdained the practice of the techniques of Ultraism, and that Borges on his own later abandoned Ultraism and embarked himself on a poetry that is thematically Creole, urban, and metaphysical in tone.

In this view I must concur with the critics who maintain that only Huidobro put into practice almost all the poetic theories of Creationism, a movement he himself founded. Even though the creation of Huidobro presents the artistic limitations characteristic of a lyric that has been written to transpose into text the theoretical postulations of a specific type of poetics, that of Creationism, his work should be considered of utmost importance in the historical development of Spanish American poetry—because it surely introduces different expressive forms of artistic experimentation in the poetics of the Spanish language. This essay has only sketched some of the multifaceted and rich aspects of a theme that would have to be further developed with much greater detail by others. My essay indeed does not touch on the high quality that Latin American lyrics reached in the second half of the twentieth century, the result of formal innovations that through the aesthetics of the European *Avant Garde* introduced the Creationism of Huidobro and Ultraism of Borges. The incorporation of Mallarmé conceptualization of space and the blank page in the form of leitmotifs, as constitutive elements of the poetic text, immediately comes to mind. It suffices Vallejo's use of the theme of space as an image for silence, for nothingness, for the annihilation and the perceptive presence of death.
Furthermore, Octavio Paz’s use of space can be interpreted as a metaphor for the poet’s creative potential and poetic indeterminacy. The so-called good Latin American poets and novelists, such as Neruda, Vallejo, Asturias, Carpentier, Paz, Lezama Lima, Cardenal and, finally, Borges, carried however their expressive forms and stylistic devices beyond the techniques of Creationism and Ultraism. As such, they managed to stay within the perimeters of a dynamic *Avant Garde* and syncretic openness to that constant artistic experimentations that the future would soon bring. At the outset, one point is clear here: twentieth century Latin American poetry and prose has transformed the poetic forms of European *Avant Garde*, endowing them at the same time with Latin American, U.S., and universal themes with their own cultural settings, and this process at the same time has contributed to forging in Latin America a poetic discourse of the highest quality, which must be judged for its esthetic axiology.

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**Works Cited**


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**Notes**

1 To have a notion of European *Avant Garde* (vanguardismo), see *The Theory of the A Avant Garde* by Renato Poggioli, and the essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” in *Illuminations* (217-251). In relation to Spanish *Avant Garde* see *Literaturas europeas de vanguardia* by Guillermo de Torre.


3 The ideological splintering of this times could be seen in the fact that the ideologists and the members of the movements of *Avant Garde* fluctuate in a political spectrum that goes from the radical left, promulgated by Paul Eluard and André Breton, and to the extreme right of fascism, as in the case of Marinetti. Of course, there were also some divisions within the European left. The ideological debate that took place in the years between
the two wars, by Lukacs, who adopted an orthodox position, and Brecht and Benjamin, who promulgated a more liberal line of thought that would give room to Expressionism, is well known.

4 Many of the Latin American intellectuals of the era of development of the Avant Garde came to Spain looking for a more liberal environment for their new expressiveness. It must be pointed out here that there had never been at that time in Latin American a similar event in which a group of writers would set forth - significantly in Europe (in Paris and Madrid) - so forcefully to a change for artistic renewal. The staying in Europe of Ricardo Güiraldes, Vicente Huidobro, Jorge Luis Borges, Pablo Neruda, Raúl González Tuñón, César Vallejo, Alejo Carpentier, Miguel Angel Asturias, and others, suggested, however, at that time, a 'new sensibility' and a 'new comprehension' . . .” (Marco, *Literatura hispanoamericana* 23-24).

5 For a comprehensive analysis and well-grounded discussion of this dilemma and its deep literary implications, see *Vicente Huidobro y el creacionismo*, ed. R. de Costa.

6 The manifesto "Non Servian" and the poem I am quoting here is from Flores and Anderson (239, 238-239).

7 In her book *Altruismo*, Gloria Videla quotes and comments on selections of poems from these five Books. She concludes that "In these five works are incorporated, although without insistence, elements of the modern world (technology, factories, machines) which are mixed with the traditional poetic motifs” (119). Since I do not know these texts well, I have mostly relied her critical judgment for my assertion.

8 G. Videla not only comments on the link among the members of the poetic Avant Garde movement, but also on the relationship between Ultraism and the visual arts (114-116). It is also important to remember, however, that a portrait of Huidobro painted by the Spaniard Pablo Picasso appears in the first edition of Huidobro’s *Altazor* 1931).

9 Blanco Aguinaga in his essay "Avant Garde,” in his *Historia social de la literatura española* comments on the poetry of Ramon de la Serna, Pedro Garfias and Jarnes. Although he mentions the Ultraist journals circulating then in Spain, he avoids using the term Ultraism. Gloria Videla, however, adopts a completely opposite position to that of Blanco Aguinaga, specifically by assigning her book the tittle *Ultraism: Studies about Spanish Poetic Movements*. Even in the section "Ultraism and Creationism" (101-106), she neither distinguishes individually nor establishes the association between the two movements, and she then concludes with an inevitable contradiction. Likewise, J. J. Barjalia in his book *El vanguardismo poético en America y España* associates the Modernism of Rubén Dario with the lyric poetry of Juan R. Jimenez and that of Huidobro - and he also analyzes the poetry of J. R. Jimenez and relates it to the Creationism of Huidobro.

10 Gerardo Diegi in his article "Poetry and Creationism of Vicente Huidobro” (1968) acknowledges his personal and poetic relationship with Huidobro by corroborating those "... ties of friendship and discipleship that unite me with the Chilean poet" (De Costa 209).

11 On page 44 of the book cited by Chelseka we find more examples of Borges’s Futurist poetry.