

December 2020

Dissident Poetry in Post-Crisis Spain: A Challenge to Fluidity

Olga Bezhanova

Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville, obezhan@siue.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://newprairiepress.org/sttcl>



Part of the [Modern Literature Commons](#), and the [Spanish Literature Commons](#)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License](#).

Recommended Citation

Bezhanova, Olga (2021) "Dissident Poetry in Post-Crisis Spain: A Challenge to Fluidity," *Studies in 20th & 21st Century Literature*: Vol. 45: Iss. 1, Article 6. <https://doi.org/10.4148/2334-4415.2128>

This Special Focus is brought to you for free and open access by New Prairie Press. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Studies in 20th & 21st Century Literature* by an authorized administrator of New Prairie Press. For more information, please contact cads@k-state.edu.

Dissident Poetry in Post-Crisis Spain: A Challenge to Fluidity

Abstract

The global economic crisis of 2008-9 had an especially severe impact on Spain and resulted in the publication of many works of literature that address the effects and the causes of the crisis. Daniel Macías Díaz and Antonio Rómar, two contemporary Spanish poets, belong to different artistic generations, yet their response to the devastation caused by the economic collapse centers on a rejection of the neoliberal worldview that inspired the creation of the current economic system. The poets question the rhetoric of fluidity and mobility that accompanies the implantation of the neoliberal world order and call for the creation of artistic spaces where this order can be contested.

Keywords

poetry, Spain, transnationalism, neoliberalism, Spanish literature

Cover Page Footnote

I am deeply grateful to Dr. Enrique Alvarez of Florida State University for his friendship and his tireless work of bringing this special focus section to fruition.

Dissident Poetry in Post-Crisis Spain: A Challenge to Fluidity

Olga Bezhanova

Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville

The collection of poetry *Disidentes. Antología de poetas críticos españoles (1990-2014)* ('Dissidents. Anthology of Critical Spanish Poetry') edited by Alberto García Teresa features poems by more than eighty Spanish authors who consider themselves the intellectual and artistic heirs of *poesía de la conciencia crítica* 'poetry of critical consciousness.'¹ The poetics of critical consciousness constitutes an aesthetic movement that expanded over twenty years in Spain at the turn of the twenty-first century and that sought to place political and social conflicts at the center of creative processes (García Teresa, *Poesía* 10). In the prologue to *Disidentes*, García-Teresa states that the volume represents "una expresión de disidencia y de antagonismo; una crítica a la estructura socioeconómica actual, a su ideología y a los valores que la sustentan" (9) 'an expression of dissidence and antagonism; a criticism of the existing socio-economic structure, of its ideology and the values that sustain it.' The poems included in *Disidentes* were written since the collapse of the USSR as a political, economic, and, most importantly, a symbolic alternative to capitalism. The publication of the volume coincided with the widespread realization that the global financial collapse of 2008-9 was not an accidental mishap of short duration that could be overcome by austerity measures but, rather, a manifestation of a new global economic order constituted in the preceding three decades.

Free-market capitalism welcomes the erosion of welfare protections by flows of global capital and bases its success on the absence of links of solidarity between those who are impacted by these developments. The profound transformation of the entire way of being of advanced capitalist societies that Polish philosopher Zygmunt Bauman refers to as the transition from "the solid" to the "fluid stage of modernity" (*Liquid* 13) necessitates an abandonment of stability and rootedness. The rhetoric of neoliberalism calls on individuals to develop an infinitely malleable and mobile sense of self to suit the needs of capital. As I have argued in *Literature of Crisis: Spain's Engagement with Liquid Capital*:

An emotional attachment to a particular territory . . . that individuals might see as crucial to their sense of self is giving way to capital's need to have access to a rootless labor force that is ready to sever all attachments and move anywhere at a short notice in search of increasingly precarious employment. The need to mimic the fluidity of capital geographically,

¹ All translations in this article are mine.

professionally, psychologically, and in every other way comes at a high cost. All that one can expect to gain in return for abandoning any kind of rootedness is a promise of an even greater fluidity in the future. (xxiii)

The affective power of *Disidentes* lies in legitimizing the discontent felt by those who find it hard to embrace constant change. Either by naming or performing different emotions, the poems in this collection appeal to feelings not as “interior psychological states, but as social and cultural practices” (Ahmed 9) and point a way towards transforming the outrage experienced by isolated individuals into a shared affective response capable of informing collective action.

Disidentes creates a space for an artistic elaboration of structures of meaning that contest the legitimacy of the discourses that privilege capitalist accumulation. Several of the poets who contributed to the collection question the normalization of the neoliberal rhetoric that extolls constant movement and demands openness to change in response to the ever-shifting needs of capital reproduction. The imagery of fluidity appears often in their poetry to draw the readers’ attention to the nature of neoliberal capital. José Ignacio Besga Zuazola, a Basque poet from Vitoria-Gasteiz, begins his 2008 poem titled “El sueño equivocado de las dunas” ‘The Mistaken Dream of the Dunes,’ with a reflection on how the fluctuations of the market have become akin to natural phenomena in their incommensurate impact on our lives: “Las dunas de esta costa desheredada / se mueven al ritmo / de los índices bursátiles” (33) ‘the dunes of this disinherited coast / move to the rhythm / of stock indexes.’ A 2006 poem titled “Círculo perfecto” ‘Perfect Circle’ by Sevillian author Bernardo Santos imagines capital as a liquid that is expressed from the exploited in order to pay for the lifestyles of the rich (145). In an untitled poem published 2011, Santos addresses the easy mobility of the global elite that does not recognize borders: “Son mentira los mapas . . . Los cachorritos de la alta burguesía / se desplazan por el planeta con sus jeans y su raqueta de tenis” (144) ‘Maps are a lie . . . The cubs of the rich bourgeoisie / move around the planet with their jeans and tennis rackets.’ The poet connects the carefree cosmopolitanism of the privileged classes to the economic and social devastation of the neoliberal world order.

The volume includes “Agora,” a poem written in 2014 by Gsús Bonilla, a poet from Badajoz. “Agora” speaks to the ways in which fluidity erodes the political and the public engagements of our lives. The prosodic course of the poem is not interrupted by periods, echoing its emphasis on the imagery of flowing water that is inundating communal spaces: “No te voy a mentir Hay agua sobre las aceras / En los manicomios y en las casas de acogida / En los centros de internamiento para inmigrantes” (298) ‘I will not lie There is water on the pavement / In the madhouses and shelters / In the internment centers for immigrants.’ It is only after he finds a way to protect himself from the gushing water that the speaker discovers

that the community—“la asamblea” ‘the assembly’— can still speak through poetry (298). The imagery of a resistance to fluidity is especially strong in the 2013 poem titled “Verano azul” ‘Blue Summer’ by David Benedicte, a poet and novelist from Madrid. At the beginning of the text, Benedicte lists the names of thinkers associated with anti-capitalist struggles. Friedrich Engels, Palmiro Togliatti, Rosa Luxemburg, Victoria Kent, Antonio Gramsci, Karl Marx, Dolores Ibárruri, and Federica Montseny form a bulwark that refuses to move under the assault from the forces of capital that are attempting to liquefy them: “No los moverán . . . No los disolverán. No los suprimirán” (248) ‘They shall not be moved . . . They shall not be dissolved. They shall not be suppressed.’ This verse, which is repeated throughout the composition, is a play on the famous Civil War slogan of the Spanish Republicans, “they shall not pass,” that the poet is applying to the present moment, equating today’s struggle against the advances of global capitalism with the Republican cause in 1936-9.

Attempts to question the language of fluidity—and the reality that it aims to normalize—have been central not only to poetry but also to novels and essays published during the 2008-9 economic crisis in Spain: “Spain’s crisis literature strives to make sense of the increasing fluidity of existence. The high frequency of references to fluidity or liquidity is mirrored, in these works of art, by the writers’ exploration of fluid narrative forms or their experimentation with fluid genres” (Bezhanova xxiii). At the height of the crisis, bestselling novelists Antonio Muñoz Molina and Lucía Etxebarria, for instance, wrote book-length essays titled, respectively, *Todo lo que era sólido* (‘Everything That Was Solid’) and *Liquidación por derribo* (‘Demolition Sale’). The Spanish titles of these essays evoke the imagery of liquefaction and melting that has been central to the discussions of the crisis in Spain. In 2012, novelist Rafael Chirbes published *En la orilla* (‘On the Shore’), a novel that makes a similar use of metaphors of fluidity and echoes many of the concerns about the unconstrained movement of liquid capital that Muñoz Molina and Etxebarria were expressing in an essay format.

Unlike crisis essays by Muñoz Molina and Etxebarria, the poems included in *Disidentes* do not aim to offer a prescriptive, consolidated political course of action to contest the shortcomings of the capitalist system. Instead, the anthology seems to be grounded in the belief that “art does not illustrate or embody a proposition, but it embodies sensations or affects that stimulate thought. It is the affective encounter through which thought proceeds and moves toward deeper truth” (Van Alphen 22). *Disidentes* integrates a multitude of voices whose power resides in their capacity to articulate a wide range of approaches to the problems generated by neoliberalism (Molina Gil 88). Daniel Macías Díaz and Antonio Rómar, two of the authors who contribute to the anthology, belong to different generations, yet both poets resist the normalization of the language of fluidity that accompanies the implementation of an uncontested neoliberal world order. The

poets' personal comfort with the global forces that erode local attachments does not blind them to the devastating effects of global capitalism on those who are more precariously situated in the world of unstoppable transnational flows.

As art critic Jim McGuigan pointed out, today "neoliberalism represents normality. Neoliberalism has become common sense" (11). This kind of ideological normalization cannot be achieved solely by introducing a set of economic measures, wide-reaching as they might be. The triumph of the neoliberal system of economic relations is predicated on the creation of a new kind of subjectivity that thrives in the hyper-competitive world of neoliberal domination: "Neo-liberalism is not merely destructive of rules, institutions and rights. It is also *productive* of certain kinds of social relations, certain ways of living, certain subjectivities . . . Neo-liberalism defines a certain existential norm in western societies" (Dardot and Laval 3). At the same time, alternative subjectivities exist that are conditioned less by an acceptance of neoliberalism as a norm than by experiencing its implantation as deeply traumatic (Martínez Fernández 386). The poems contributed to *Disidentes* by Macías Díaz and Rómar address the trauma of the neoliberal revolution and question the key components of neoliberal subjectivity.

Macías Díaz and Rómar use their poetic oeuvre to create an affective, textual environment where alternative subjectivities can mature. As Jonathan Flatley observes, literary texts "function as affective maps to the extent that they work as machines of self-estrangement . . . making one's emotional life—one's range of moods, set of structures of feeling, and collection of affective attachments—appear weird, surprising, unusual, and thus capable of a new kind of recognition, interest and analysis" (80). In neoliberal societies, however, literature is often prevented from playing this role: "[Flatley's] model of how literature works both politically and affectively . . . comes under stress in the context of neoliberalism, where subjects are encouraged to act as rational agents in all spheres of life" (Smith 78). Entrepreneurs of their own selves, as Michel Foucault defined neoliberal subjects (226), have to renounce the capacity to experience this kind of self-estrangement and adopt the extreme rationality of neoliberalism. Poetry appeals to the readers' need to lay aside, at least momentarily, the heavy burden of seeing themselves as free agents of market exchange, and explore the transformational ability of their own affective responses unhindered by market considerations.

Irrespective of whether poetic discourse originates with poets whose work is clearly political in nature or authors who distance themselves from obvious political engagements, it inevitably confronts the challenge of being unable to compete with the power and the reach of the narrative that legitimizes global capitalism. In the words of Miguel Casado:

Hay uno solo de esos *géneros* que es capaz de imponer sus reglas a los otros, obligarles a aceptar su sanción última; el del capital . . . Esta dictadura de un discurso que expropia toda habla disidente se incorpora al debate actual con nombres como *pensamiento único* o *globalización*. (113)

‘There is a single kind of discourse that is capable of imposing its rules on other discourses, obligating them to accept its ultimate verdict; that of capital . . . This dictatorship of a discourse that confiscates all dissident expression incorporates itself into the current debate under the names of a *mandatory way of thinking* or *globalization*.’

Casado believes that the poetic discourse that aims to produce a rupture with the inescapably violent nature of the totalizing discourse of capitalism’s incontestability has to obviate the danger of fossilizing into an intractably ideological position. He proposes, instead, a poetics “que no cristaliza en *temas*, siempre móvil” (114) ‘that doesn’t solidify into themes and remains mobile.’

Casado’s proposal seems to invite poets to mimic the incessant mobility of capital in the way in which they understand their own artistic work. It is futile, however, to expect that human beings, whether collectively or individually, could accomplish this task because anybody who does not belong to the freely moving global elites cannot completely sever the spatially circumscribed roots of human existence. In his foundational study on the liquid stage of capitalism, Bauman has noted that today “power can move with the speed of the electronic signal—and so the time required for the movement of its essential ingredients has been reduced to instantaneity. For all practical purposes, power has become truly *exterritorial*, no longer bound, not even slowed down, by the resistance of space” (*Liquid* 10-11). A challenge to the lightning-speed movement of capital and the coercive power that travels with it cannot arise from a *Weltanschauung*—that is, a way of conceptualizing one’s relationship to the self and the world—imbued with the desire to imitate this movement.

Daniel Macías Díaz, a poet from Huelva, contributed to *Disidentes* a poem titled “La rebelión bio-lenta” ‘A bio-slow rebellion’ that was originally part of his collection *Manual de neuroguerrilla* (‘Manual of Neuroguerrilla’), released in Spain in 2012 at the height of the economic crisis. Macías Díaz’s life trajectory is that of an individual who is comfortable in the world of unconstrained global flows of capital and the human displacement that accompanies them. For many years, he crossed borders between countries as a matter of course in his work as a commercial pilot. A promotional blurb that appears on the website of the poet’s publishers makes it clear that professional fluidity and physical mobility are integral parts of his public persona: “Ha sido pintor en Sevilla, instructor de vuelo en Dublín, profesor de inglés en Caracas, aprendiz de brujo en el Orinoco, y más cosas que no

recuerda o no quiere recordar . . . Es budista mahayana, anarquista y pacifista hasta la médula, y a la vez no sabe lo que es” (“Macías” n. p.) ‘He has been a painter in Seville, a flight instructor in Dublin, an English teacher in Caracas, a sorcerer’s apprentice in the Orinoco, and many more things he cannot or does not want to remember . . . He is a Mahayana Buddhist, anarchist and pacifist to the core, and at the same time he does not know who he is.’

Still, in spite of Macías Díaz’s apparent comfort with the demands of the neoliberal economic order that exalts an individual’s willingness to be malleable and emulate the mobility of global capital, his poem “La rebelión bio-lenta” attempts to create a space of reflection where true opposition to neoliberal globalization can mature: “Clandestina cabeza que en la insurgencia planea, / oculta en la guarida abisal del Mare Tranquilitatis, / diminuto espacio germen de los sin-ley” (180) ‘clandestine head that glides in insurgence, / hidden in the deep-sea lair of Mare Tranquilitatis / minuscule space that produces the law-less.’ Transnational migration has accompanied the rise of the neoliberal model of capitalism and has contributed to the evisceration of workers’ rights on a global scale (Gordon 3, 12). An unconditional embrace of transnational mentality is predicated on dispensing with the nation-state as a meaningful unit of the world order (Habermas 69, 79). While the phenomenon described by Habermas might prove liberating to people who possess the intellectual, professional, cultural, and financial resources to feel, at least for the moment, comfortable in the world of fluid capital, those who depend on national governments to provide welfare protections and a sense of a situated belonging might be more reluctant to shed their attachment to the nation-state model of governmentality. In “La rebelión bio-lenta,” Macías Díaz speaks to the experiences of those who have been turned into the “superfluous, unnecessary, unneeded and unwanted” detritus of liquid modernity (Bauman, *Wasted* 40).

The title of Macías Díaz’s poem also points to the necessity of creating a structure of resistance to the demands of the neoliberal society. This resistance relies on the idea of a “rebelión bio-lenta” ‘a bio-slow rebellion,’ which, unlike the capitalist emphasis on a constantly increasing speed of production and an incessant crossing of physical, geographical, psychological and identity boundaries, should be attuned to the natural rhythms of the human body.² García-Teresa points out that Macías Díaz’s poetic oeuvre is characterized by the poet’s emotional attachment to the natural world (*Poesía* 437). This is why the writer is particularly sensitive to the devastation wrought upon human bodies and the environment by the capitalist despoilment of nature in search of increasing profits. He opposes the

² The title of Macías Díaz’s poem represents a play on words that is not easily translatable into English. The word ‘bio-lenta’ that can be translated as ‘bio-slow’ phonetically sounds like the word *violenta* or ‘violent.’ The poem’s title reflects the poet’s belief that the rebellion against the violent nature of the neoliberal capitalism has to negate that violence by adapting itself to the biological rhythms of the human body.

anthropocentric worldview that positions human beings as existing in a constant state of warfare against the natural world. This position is central to the capitalist mentality of an unsustainable profit extraction at the expense of the environment.

In order to rebel against capitalism in its capacity of “a way of organizing nature” (Moore 30), humans must embrace their place in the natural order instead of conceptualizing the environment as an entity to be dominated and transformed according to the needs of capital. The poet makes this point through the use of the imagery of the Nagas, the semidivine creatures central to Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain religious traditions. The Nagas are hybrid entities, half-human and half-reptile, that can exist in water, underground and on Earth (Jones and Ryan 300). The poet contrasts the fluidity of the Nagas with that of global capital and points to the unbreakable link between the well-being of humans and that of their natural environment: “Somos los Nagas de todas las aguas como nautilus áureo / que . . . en el fondo, en el fondo ni se someten ni se humillan, / y con austeridad siembran la práctica del justo vivir que no daña” (181) ‘we are the Nagas of all the waters like a golden nautilus / that . . . deep inside, deep inside don’t submit or bow down / and austerely sow the practice of just living that does no harm.’ The austerity practiced by the Nagas is fundamentally different from the punishing measures imposed by the European governments in the wake of the 2008-9 recession. They are austere in their relationship with the environment and inflict no harm on it.

As philosopher Brian Elliott pointed out in his analysis of neoliberalism’s impact on climate change, the weakening of the nation-state model of governance within the neoliberal paradigm prevents national governments from agreeing to an “internationally enforced policy that would mitigate and eventually reverse climate change” (50). “Austerity,” the retraction in budgetary spending implemented by western national governments under the assault of neoliberalism, is deeply harmful to human lives and the natural world. Macías Díaz is aware of how humans damage the natural environment. It can be said that his poetry stems from a rejection of “capitalism as a *world-ecology*, joining the accumulation of capital, the pursuit of power, and the co-production of nature in dialectical unity” (Moore 3). Only a departure from an instrumentalized approach to nature can stave off an ecological catastrophe that will be experienced all the more poignantly by those who lack resources to effectuate a flight from inhospitable natural conditions.

The rebellion that Macías Díaz proposes in the poem is, first and foremost, aimed at freeing human beings from the relentless demands imposed on them by the concept of neoliberal productivity. As German philosopher Byung-Chul Han, whose books achieved best-seller status in post-crisis Spain (Barranco 39), observes, one of the most notable transformations introduced by neoliberalism to the disciplinarian measures employed by the state is the displacement of the perennially castigating authority from the outside forces towards the individual psyche of the neoliberal subject. In this regard, he claims that “in this society of

compulsion, everyone carries a work camp inside. This labor camp is defined by the fact that one is simultaneously prisoner and guard, victim and perpetrator. One exploits oneself” (*The Burnout Society* 18). The compulsion constantly to increase one’s productivity does not have to be imposed by the government or the management. Instead, it can arise from an individual’s fear of becoming superfluous in a continuously shifting market. Macías Díaz speaks precisely to this transformation when he calls on the harried “atentos, bio-lentos, a crecer en la vida dulce y lentamente” (181) ‘the attentive bio-slow people to grow in life sweetly and slowly.’

The invitation to participate in the slow maturation of one’s political consciousness, however, should not imply an isolating immersion in individual grievances against the castigating market forces. Placing oneself at a remove from the “mercado y sus monedas” (180) ‘market and its currency’ offers an opportunity to find a measure of freedom from the “inmenso legado de podredumbre heredada a la fuerza [que] dividía confundiéndonos, y confundía dividiéndonos” (180) ‘immense legacy of putrefaction we inherited unwillingly [that] divided by confusing us and confused by dividing us.’ The poet issues a call for solidarity among the exploited and reminds his readers that the forces of neoliberalism are destroying feelings of unity among the oppressed.

Neoliberal subjectivity positions an individual as a fundamentally lonely subject tasked with constantly optimizing his or her self as a product on offer on the market. As Patricia Ventura has argued, “while neoliberalism operates at the level of the population, it aims to make the members of the population feel divorced from the larger group. This sense of separation is part of the larger death-of-society rhetoric, and it is an inescapable aspect of any analysis of neoliberalism or neoliberal culture” (29). The incapacity of the neoliberal subject to establish meaningful connections with others forecloses any possibility of solidarity because a subjectivity that is imbued with the spirit of competitiveness leads to a profound alienation. Political action has no place in a world where individuals strive to enhance their personal productivity in order to prove their worth to capital and where developing profound and long-lasting links with others is precluded by the need to embrace repeated geographical displacement in search of better employment opportunities.

At the same time, the utilitarian demands of the neoliberal mentality often empty of all substance the relationships that do manage to come into existence under the conditions of fluidity. As Byung-Chul Han observes in his analysis of the psycho-political consequences of the neo-liberalization of human relationships, “as the entrepreneur of its own self, the neoliberal subject has no capacity for relationships with others that might be *free of purpose* . . . A real feeling of freedom occurs only in a fruitful relationship . . . But today’s neoliberal regime leads to utter isolation” (*Psychopolitics* 2-3). There are political consequences to conceptualizing

the self in entrepreneurial terms because doing so undermines the concept of class struggle. Han speaks to this issue when he addresses the ways in which the neoliberal way of understanding the self erodes the familiar categories of class analysis: “No proletariat exists under the neoliberal regime at all. There is no working class being exploited by those who own means of production. When production is immaterial, everyone already owns the means of production him—or herself. The neoliberal system is no longer a class system in the proper sense” (*Psychopolitics* 5-6). If everybody’s sense of self is infinitely malleable and rootedness of any kind is to be avoided in order to maximize one’s worth on the market, the possibility of genuine political action is greatly diminished.

Macías Díaz’s poem positions the need to rebuild links of solidarity among the exploited by withdrawing from the neoliberal ethos of individual productivity. The “simios bio-lentos” ‘bio-slow simians’ who can participate in the rebellion are “los que se levantan muy tarde señoreando un largo día que dura casi dos, / los que no responden a las llamadas” (180) ‘those who get up very late, taking possession of a long day that lasts for almost two days, / those who don’t answer phone calls.’ The poet wants to rescue the human capacity to establish a relationship with time that will not be fully occupied by individual efforts to fashion a response to the demands of the market. An awareness of the extradiegetic circumstances of the poem’s creation is crucial for the understanding of these verses. The Spain of 2012 was experiencing an unemployment rate of 24.6%, which represented a dramatic increase from the 8.3% unemployment rates of 2006 (Guillén 46). Macías Díaz’s text points to the unemployed when he talks about those who have no reason to wake up early or keep track of work days. One of the foundational beliefs that undergird neoliberal subjectivity is that the incapacity to be useful to capital is cause for shame. As Han points out in *Psychopolitics*, “people who fail in the neoliberal achievement-society see themselves as responsible for their lot and feel shame instead of questioning the society or the system. Herein lies the particular intelligence defining the neoliberal regime: no resistance to the system can emerge in the first place” (6). Macías Díaz questions the belief that being ejected from the flow of capital reproduction stems from being in some way defective. By rejecting the inherited structures of power that “dividía confundiéndonos, y confundía dividiéndonos” (180) ‘that divided us by confusing us and confused by dividing us,’ the poet makes it clear that an effective rebellion is only possible when the unemployed emerge from the isolation created by feelings of individual responsibility for their situation and recognize that their expulsion from the job market is a result of the forces that they cannot harness on their own.

In his discusión of Macías Díaz’s 2007 collection of poetry *Las aventuras de Imperio Sevilla* (‘The Adventures of Empire Seville’), García-Teresa states that the poet “insiste en el cinismo de la política occidental, en la mentira sobre la cual se sostiene la opulenta sociedad de los países enriquecidos, que enarbola

cínicamente discursos humanistas cuando en realidad no pretende atajar las raíces de la desigualdad social y desprecia a los pobres” (*Poesía* 439-40) ‘points out the cynicism of Western politics and the dishonesty that undergirds the opulent societies of rich countries which cynically brandish humanist discourses without attempting to combat the sources of social inequality and while despising the poor.’ This set of concerns is also present in “La rebelión bio-lenta,” yet the poem focuses specifically on the ways in which those who have been ejected from the global economy have interiorized feelings of contempt for themselves as a consequence of proving incapable of succeeding within the neoliberal economic model. The poet recognizes that the very nature of neoliberal capitalism places great numbers of people on the margins of productive life and makes it clear that a non-violent, biologically justified rebellion against capital that will avert ecological catastrophe and preserve life can only originate from the “diminuto espacio germen de los sinley” (180) ‘minuscule space that produces the law-less.’ This verse echoes Giorgio Agamben’s concept of “bare life,” a life that exists in “the state of exception [that] comes more and more to the foreground as the fundamental political structure and ultimately begins to become the rule” (20). The poem suggests that the growing ranks of “*superfluous* (displaced) *humanity*” (Dussel 20) have to come together to resist the push of neoliberal globalization.

Macías-Díaz presents the beginning of the “rebelión bio-lenta” as a *fait accompli* through the use of the preterit in the description of its beginning: “Algo dijo no, y comenzó la rebellion” (180) ‘Something said no, and the rebellion began.’ This poem opens his *Manual de neuroguerrilla* (‘Neurogerrilla Manual’), a collection which, significantly, was released right after the first mass protests of Spain’s *indignados* ‘outraged’ on May 15th 2011, cradle of the 15-M movement and Spain’s left-wing political party *Podemos* ‘We Can.’ The participants in the rebellion against neoliberal austerity engaged in peaceful demonstrations that brought indignation to light as a new structure of feeling, a concept defined by Raymond Williams as “a particular quality of social experience and relationship, historically distinct from other particular qualities, which gives sense of a generation or a period” (23). As García Teresa indicates, in his poetry Macías Díaz often employs aggressive language yet the message of his writing points invariably towards the need to control rage and channel it into productive venues (*Poesía* 438). The tension between indignation and a desire to channel unrestrained affect into reasonable and peaceful action lies at the core of “La rebelión bio-lenta.” In the words of the poet, “se trata de sorber sin colmillos todo lo que sea flujo y fluya” (181) ‘the objective would be to absorb with no fangs everything that might be a flow and flows.’ The growing fluidity of global capital needs to be devoured non-violently—“sin colmillos” ‘with no fangs’—so it will disappear as a type of aggression or violence that would dissolve into oblivion, as it is the case with the more natural, hybrid fluidity of the Nagas.

Antonio Rómar, a younger poet from Madrid also included in García Teresa's anthology, belongs to a different artistic generation than Macías Díaz. Yet the poem "Ah, progreso económico del mundo" ('Ah, the economic progress of the world') that he contributed to *Disidentes* is saturated with a similar sense of disillusionment over the cooptation of the rhetoric of progress and change for the advancement of neoliberal goals. As part of the generation of Spanish poets who were born in the closing years of Spain's transition to democracy, and who finally gained access to the country's literary market between 2002 and 2006 (Molina Gil 78), Rómar has developed a significant portion of his artistic career under the conditions of economic austerity, so he seems to be particularly sensitive to its effects. It is in this sense that "Ah, progreso" offers a deeply sarcastic response to the belief system that positions the freedom of the markets as the highest good that human beings should pursue. The lack of punctuation and the poet's insistent use of enjambments throughout the poetic narrative introduce into the formal structure of the text the fluid nature of existence in the world of neoliberal flows.

In the opening lines of "Ah, progreso," Rómar uses enjambment as a formal device that directs the readers' attention to the words *libre* 'free' and *libremente* 'freely.' This permits the poet to question the rhetoric of market freedom that creates opportunities for the almost limitless enrichment of the few at the expense of anything that could be meaningfully referred to as freedom for everybody else:

ah progreso económico del mundo
 libre sus nuevos ricos en envase
 original de libre acceso al código
 fuente serif de todas las new wave
 de todas las nouvelle vague que circulan
 libremente por el espacio schengen. (410)

ah, the economic progress of the free
 world its nouveau riche in the original
 packaging of the free access to the code of
 the serif font of all the new wave
 of all the nouvelle vague that circulate
 freely through the Schengen zone.

The words *libre*, *libremente*, and the verb *liberar* 'to free' appear sixteen times throughout the poem's forty-five lines, making it clear that the conflict between the liberalization of the economy and the constraints that it places on human freedom lies at the very core of the discursive thrust of the poem.

Variations on the semantic field of the word 'progress' (*progreso*, *impuestos progresivos*, *work in progress*, *progresan*, *progresión*, *progresivo*, *progresistas*

‘progress, progressive taxes, they progress, progression, progressive, progressives’) appear eight times. Rómar integrates words in English (such as, for example, “work in progress” or “new age”) and in French (“nouvelle vague” ‘new wave’) into the text of the poem, echoing the image of financial and informational flows that “circulan / libremente por el espacio schengen” (410) ‘circulate / freely through the schengen zone.’ The author’s use of the words “windows” and “log in” remind the readers of the ways in which the digital revolution that originated in the US facilitates the increased mobility of the global capital (411). Coupled with the uninterrupted flow of the poem, unbroken by any punctuation other than two sets of parentheses, this language contributes to creating, within the spatial form of the poem, an affective environment characterized by rapid movement. The lack of capitalization ensures that the prosodic rhythm of the poem encounters no obstacles, mirroring the poet’s concern with the costs that the heightened mobility of deterritorialized elites places on those whose capacity to follow the flight of capital is limited.

This way of writing permeates “Ah progreso” with the sensation of an unbroken flow that gains speed with each verse. As García-Teresa, the critic who has engaged with Rómar’s poetic output more than anybody else, observes, this is a strategy that is present in much of the poet’s work: “Antonio Rómar utiliza constante y acertadamente la asociación libre, agramatical, de sintagmas y de conceptos, con cierto impulso irracionalista. Del mismo modo, el empleo persistente de asíndeton incrementa esa atmósfera alucinatoria, y sirve para acrecentar el dinamismo de los versos, que se aceleran por ello” (*Poesía* 474) ‘Antonio Rómar constantly and meaningfully uses the free, ungrammatical association of syntagma and concepts, with a certain anti-rationalist impulse. In the same way, the persistent use of asyndeton increases this hallucinatory atmosphere and serves to increase the dynamism of the verses, which gain speed as a result.’ The idea of unconstrained market freedom that Rómar questions in the poem is central to the normalization of globalizing impulses. This normalization occurs through the implantation of the belief that the fluidity of capital, consumer choice, and the increasing speed of economic and societal change are constitutive of genuine freedom. Likewise, Javier Mohedano Ruano points out that the only way to effectuate a departure from the beliefs that structure the worldview of the neoliberal subject is to lay bare the mechanisms that position them as commonsensical and therefore in need of no questioning: “Lo común lingüístico tampoco ha escapado a la mirada medusea del capitalismo, de modo que el poema ha de ser, en primer lugar, espacio de denuncia y desenmascaramiento de falsos ídolos del sentido común” (163) ‘Linguistic commonalities have not escaped from the Medusa-like stare of capitalism. As a result, a poem has to constitute, first and foremost, a space of denunciation and unmasking of the false idols of common sense.’

The last verse of “Ah progreso” consists of a single word, ‘no,’ followed by the only period in the poem. There are no other one-word verses in the poem, which makes the closing negation all the more powerful: “Decido libremente que lo nuevo / y todo lo que es libre y lo que es falso / en el nombre de todo lo que avanza / no” (411) ‘I decide freely that the new / and everything that is free and that is false / in the name of everything that advances / no.’ The poet’s final ‘no’ puts a brusque, unambiguous stop to the avalanche of references to freedom and advancement that intensifies in the closing verses. Rómar’s “decido libremente” ‘I decide freely’ is an ironic reference to the idea that true freedom consists of having access to a limitless number of consumer choices. Bauman refers to the denizen of the liquid modern world as *homo eligens* who suffers from “a disturbance resulting from the fatal encounter between the obligation and compulsion to choose / the addiction to choosing, and the inability to choose” (*Consuming* 42). Any attempt to gain a critical distance from the neoliberal mentality needs to be grounded in questioning the definition of human freedom as stemming from one’s capacity to access an unlimited range of consumer choices.

The use of the word ‘no’ at the end of Rómar’s poem mirrors the beginning of Macías Díaz’s “La rebelión bio-lenta,” which is also a one-word verse containing the same interjection. This is less of a coincidence than an indication of the poets’ awareness of the need to put a stop to an accelerated and accelerating fluidity of a social experience imposed by and from the logic of the market. Rómar’s seeming acceptance of the discourse that glorifies market freedom throughout the poem is subverted by a resounding, decisive negation at the end of the text. According to García Teresa, this structure is present in much of this poet’s artistic output and allows him to question the ideological underpinnings of neoliberalism that have come to seem commonsensical as a result of frequent repetition (*Poesía* 474). One example of this questioning is the poet’s use of the word *nuevo* ‘new’ (and its variants ‘new,’ ‘nouvelle,’ ‘neo,’ and ‘novísimos’), which appears twenty-one times in the poem. The privileging of newness as a market strategy is a commonplace of late capitalism, one that particularly undergirds the happiness supposedly produced by uninhibited consumerism as the structure of feeling that defines our time. Global capitalism obviates, to a degree, the problem of overproduction by introducing the idea that a new version of a commodity is always better than the old one. A stream of new commodities available for purchase carries the promise of happiness, allowing us to feel that one is grounded as a subject—and indeed *subjected*—in the idea of boundless joy and renewal through purchasing, consuming, and discarding (Kristensen 65).

The word “novísimos” ‘very new’ brings to mind the generation of Spanish poets of the late Francoist era whose work was consolidated as a coherent artistic movement in José María Castellet’s famous 1970 anthology *Nueve novísimos poetas españoles* (*Nine Very New Spanish Poets*). By the early 1980s, the ‘very

new Spanish poets' became "a recognized literary generation belonging to the canonical elite" (Marr 21). As a result of the "practical installation of the *novísimos* as a most esteemed cultural product of the recent Spanish poetic scene" (Marr 21), they have become a continuous frame of reference for many of the poets who contributed to *Disidentes*. Authors of social poetry often define themselves in opposition to the poetic ethos of these 'very new poets.' For instance, Jorge Riechmann, whose *Cántico de la erosión* (1987) inspired many of the writers belonging to the post-Transition generation of poetry of political consciousness, summarized as follows the differences between his vision of an artist's work and the one that inspired the *novísimos*: "Oí alguna vez a alguno de los poetas 'novísimos'. . . que su opción, en los años sesenta había sido vivir y crear como si el franquismo no existiese. Creo que mi opción, a partir de los años ochenta, fue vivir y escribir como si el capitalismo existiese" (110) 'I once heard one of the poets belonging to the 'novísimos' group . . . that his choice, in the 1960s, was to live and create as if the dictatorship of Franco did not exist. I believe that my choice, beginning in the 1980s, was to live and write as if capitalism did exist.'

In their approach to writing poetry, Macías Díaz and Rómar share Riechmann's focus on unmasking the workings of capitalism. The devastating consequences of the global economic crisis inspire them to write in a way that addresses the suffering they see and, in Rómar's case, his use of the word 'novísimos' with clearly negative overtones highlights his outright rejection of the kind of poetry this artistic generation produced. In the 1970s, the poetry written by *novísimos* constituted a radical break with the emphasis on social poetry that was dominant in the post-Civil War Spain. As Jonathan Mayhew points out, "the young poets of 1970 are the first since the war to privilege the distance between literary conventions and social reality in an explicit way" (108). The revolutionary nature of the *novísimos*' work attracts the interest of the socially conscious poets of the post-crisis era, who reject the apolitical stance of their precursors.

Like Macías Díaz, Rómar makes a reference to the feelings of indignation that motivated the protesters of the 15-M movement to occupy the squares and the streets of Spanish cities to signal their rejection of austerity measures as a response to the crisis. The poet's mention of "nuestro santo derecho a reiniciar / todos los windows de esta pseudocracia" (410) 'our sacred right to restart / all of the windows of this pseudocracy' echoes the feelings of many of the protesters. One of the central claims advanced during the protests was that the severity of the economic crisis in Spain reflected a fundamental flaw in the country's democratic system as constituted during Spain's transition to democracy in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Martín García 97). The opening years of the twenty-first century in Spain were characterized by the increased questioning of the "fe en el progreso, del consumismo extrovertido y de una euro-euforia sin precedentes" (Bernecker 76) 'belief in progress, exuberant consumerism and unprecedented euro-euphoria'

that accompanied the transition to a shared European currency. The global economic crisis intensified, for the younger generation of Spaniards, the disillusionment with the results of the transition and Spain's integration into the EU. "Ah, progreso" echoes the frustration expressed by the participants in the 15-M movement, aligning the poet with the social and political objectives of the outraged protesters.

The question of whether social poetry departs too much from the lyrical in order to engage with the social has long been at the heart of the debates about poetry of social conscience. Tomás Albaladejo, for instance, has pointed out that whenever a poet effectuates a move away from an immersion in his or her own subjectivity and towards an engagement with "lo que hay fuera del poeta" 'that which lies outside of the poet,' the poetic self "pierde intensidad como sujeto lírico" (38) 'loses intensity as a lyrical subject.' Miguel Ángel García makes a similar point when he argues that social poetry tends towards the prosaic because of its dedication to leaving a testament to the problems of the present times in order to suggest possible solutions (185). However, fears that individual subjectivity will be thwarted by the encroaching demands of societal concerns can also be critically apprehended as a residue of earlier times. Modernity was preoccupied with the possibility that social forces would engulf and stamp out the kind of lyrical individuality that, in our times, gives birth to a variety of poetic discourses.

Postmodernity, however, has witnessed a movement in the opposite direction. In the words of Bauman, "it is no more true that the 'public' is set on colonizing the 'private.' The opposite is the case: it is the private that colonizes the public space, squeezing out and chasing away everything which cannot be fully, without residue, expressed in the vernacular of private concerns, worries and pursuits" (Bauman, *Liquid* 39).

Poems that Macías Díaz and Rómar contributed to *Disidentes* contest the "specific structure of feeling that distinguishes neoliberal culture" (McGuigan 4). They are aware of the impossibility of separating the economic and the political structures of neoliberalism from the transformations in the affective sphere that accompany the implantation of neoliberalism: "As a structure of feeling, neoliberalism combines the *structural*—that is, the elements making up the larger economic, historical, political, and social sphere—with the world of *feeling*—that is, the way we as subjects and as individuals experience ourselves in the world" (Ventura 44). What is currently at stake is the very existence of subjectivities that have not been conquered by the neoliberal structures of feeling. Social poetry can no longer limit itself to speaking on behalf of the oppressed and denouncing the exploitation of labor by capital. Daniel Macías Díaz and Antonio Rómar question the ways in which neoliberal mentality implants itself, conquering minds and creating a perception that there is no alternative to the free market ideology. The poets subvert the language of fluidity and progress that masks the transnational

goals of global capital and write poetry that rescues language from the advances of neoliberal economic colonization.

Works Cited

- Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford UP, 1998. [1995].
- Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Routledge, 2004.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203700372>
- Albaladejo, Tomás. “Conciencia y compromiso poéticos.” *Leer y entender la poesía: conciencia y compromiso poéticos*. Coord. Martín Muelas Herraiz and Juan José Gómez Brihuega. Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 2002, pp. 27-46.
- Barranco, Justo. “Narcisistas y autoexplotados.” *La Vanguardia* 7 February 2018: 39.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. *Consuming Life*. Polity, 2007.
- . *Liquid Modernity*. Polity, 2000.
- . *Wasted Lives*. Polity, 2004.
- Bernecker, Walther L. “El debate sobre las memorias históricas en la vida política española.” *Escribir después de la dictadura: La producción literaria y cultural en las posdictaduras de Europa e Hispanoamérica*, edited by Janett Reinstädler, Iberoamericana / Vervuert, 2011, pp. 64-96.
- Bezhanova, Olga. *Literature of Crisis: Spain’s Engagement with Liquid Capital*. Bucknell UP, 2017.
- Casado, Miguel. “Hablar contra las palabras. (Notas sobre poesía y política.)” *Leer y entender la poesía: conciencia y compromiso poéticos*, edited by Martín Muelas Herraiz and Juan José Gómez Brihuega, Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 2002, pp.109-27.
- Dardot, Pierre and Christian Laval. *The New Way of the World: On Neo-Liberal Society*. Trans. Gregory Elliott. Verso, 2013. [2009]
- Dussel, Enrique. “Beyond Eurocentrism: The World-System and the Limits of Modernity.” Translated by Eduardo Mendieta. *The Cultures of Globalization*, edited by Fredric Jameson and Masao Miyoshi. Duke UP, 1998, pp. 3-31. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1215/9780822378426-001>
- Elliott, Brian. *Natural Catastrophe: Climate Change and Neoliberal Governance*. Edinburgh UP, 2016.
- Flatley, Jonathan. *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism*. Harvard UP, 2009. <https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674036963>

- Foucault, Michel. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-79*, edited by Michel Senellart, François Ewald, Alessandro Fontana, translated by G. Burchell, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
<https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230594180>
- García, Miguel Ángel. *La literatura y sus demonios. Leer la poesía social*. Castalia Ediciones, 2012.
- García-Teresa, Alberto. *Poesía de la conciencia crítica (1987-2011)*. Tierradenadie ediciones, 2013.
- García-Teresa, Alberto, editor. *Disidentes. Antología de poetas críticos españoles (1990-2014)*. La Oveja Roja, 2015.
- Gordon, Todd. “Capitalism, Neoliberalism, and Unfree Labour.” *Critical Sociology*, 2018, pp.1-19. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0896920518763936>
- Guillén, Arturo. “Europe: The Crisis Within a Crisis.” *International Journal of Political Economy* vol. 41, no.3, Fall 2012, pp. 41–68.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.2753/IJP0891-1916410303>
- Habermas, Jürgen. *The Postnational Constellation: Political Essays*, edited and translated by Max Pensky, MIT Press, 2001.
- Han, Byung-Chul. *The Burnout Society*, translated by Erik Butler, Stanford UP, 2015. [2010].
- - -. *Psychopolitics: Neoliberalism and New Technologies of Power*, translated by Erik Butler, Verso Books, 2017.
- Jones, Constance A. and James D. Ryan. *Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, Facts on File, 2006.
- Kristensen, Morten Bech. “Pilgrimage and Imagination: You Can’t Have One Without the Other.” *The Method of Imagination*, edited by Sheldon Brown and Luca Tateo, Information Age Publishing, 2019, pp. 55-81.
- Macías Díaz, Daniel. “La rebelión bio-lenta.” *Disidentes. Antología de poetas críticos españoles (1990-2014)*, edited by Alberto García-Teresa, La Oveja Roja, 2015, pp. 180-1.
- “Macías Díaz, Daniel.” *Baile del Sol*. Ediciones Baile del Sol.
https://bailedelsol.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=322&Itemid=426
- Marr, Matthew J. *Postmodern Metapoetry and the Replenishment of the Spanish Lyrical Genre, 1980-2000*. La Sirena, 2007.
- Martínez Fernández, Ángela. “La escritura del shock: crisis y poesía en España.” *Kamchatka: Revista de análisis cultural* no. 4, 2014, pp. 383-434.
www.ojs.uv.es/index.php/kamchatka/article/view/4294/4409
<http://dx.doi.org/10.7203/KAM.4.4294>
- Martín García, Óscar J. “A Country on a Tightrope: The Economic Crisis and the End of an Era in Spanish Politics.” *Insight Turkey* vol. 15 no.3, Summer 2013, pp. 95-105.

- Mayhew, Jonathan. *The Poetics of Self-Consciousness: Twentieth-Century Spanish Poetry*, Bucknell UP, 1994.
- McGuigan, Jim. *Neoliberal Culture*, Palgrave MacMillan, 2016.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/9781137466464>
- Mohedano Ruano, Javier. "Escrituras del acervo. Retóricas de lo común en la última poesía española," *Impossibilia* 12 (October 2016): 158-73.
- Molina Gil, Raúl. "Antologuemos: tendencia, inercias y derivas de las últimas antologías poéticas en la España contemporánea," *Kamchatka: Revista de análisis cultural*, Julio 2018, pp. 57-109. www.ojs.uv.es/index.php/kamchatka/article/view/12481/12066
- Moore, Jason W. *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital*, Verso, 2015.
- Riechmann, Jorge. *Resistencia de materiales. Ensayos sobre el mundo y la poesía y el mundo (1998-2004)*, Montesinos, 2006.
- Rómar, Antonio. "Ah progreso económico del mundo." *Disidentes. Antología de poetas críticos españoles (1990-2014)*, edited by Alberto García-Teresa, La Oveja Roja, 2015, pp.410-11.
- Smith, Rachel Greenwald. *Affect and American Literature in the Age of Neoliberalism*. Cambridge UP, 2015.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781316155035>
- Van Alphen, Ernst. "Affective Operations of Art and Literature." *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics* no. 53/54, 2008, pp. 20-30.
<https://doi.org/10.1086/resvn1ms25608806>
- Ventura, Patricia. *Neoliberal Culture: Living with American Neoliberalism*. Ashgate, 2012. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9781315597751>
- Williams, Raymond. "Structures of Feeling." *Structures of Feeling: Affectivity and the Study of Culture*, edited by Devika Sharma and Frederik Tygstrup, Walter de Gruyter, 2015, pp. 20-5.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110365481.20>