

Pablo neruda's poetry and poetic styles

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Throughout his poetry, Pablo Neruda utilizes a variety of poetic styles in order to portray a message. It is widely accepted that, at the start of his career, Neruda's poetry embraced romanticism, followed by a deeper form of tangled romanticism. Contrasting with his romantic phase, Pablo Neruda took on an increasingly political approach in his poetry. Poems by Neruda such as *Dead Gallop* are often held in high contrast with poems like *the United Fruit Co.* This contrast is present because the latter of these poems is so clearly politically motivated that it approaches the line of being propagandistic. This tangle of the exploration of art through the utilization of aesthetics and the exploration of art involving a charged political agenda gives rise to the debate of when art ceases to be art due to excess political motivation. On the other hand, an art piece such as a poem by Neruda may cease to be art in the absence of a certain degree of political stance to give it meaning. While poems written later in Neruda's poetic career are largely viewed as deeply political in their intentions, it would be unwise to deem his earlier developments of poetry as void of political motive in that this notion would call to question the significance of these earlier pieces of poetry. Keeping this idea in mind, it is more sensible to argue that all of Neruda's poetry is politically involved to a certain degree.

First, in order to assess Pablo Neruda's poetry more precisely in relation to aesthetic and political qualities, it is essential to recognize each of his poems as fitting onto a spectrum. On one end of the spectrum lies a polarized aesthetic quality, while the other end of the spectrum represents a polarized political value. Poems such as *Dead Gallop* fall on the aesthetic end of this spectrum, while *the United Fruit Co.* is characterized as being more

politically involved. While certain pieces of Neruda's poetry are arguably greatly polarized on either end of the spectrum, each poem draws from both ends of the scale to some extent. If a poem, or anything that claims to be art for that matter, is deemed as being too polarized on either end of the artistic spectrum, its artistic claim is weakened. From this, art can be defined as representing a healthy balance between both aesthetic and political qualities in order to create an artwork that presentably delivers a meaningful message. In search of political meaning in Neruda's seemingly more aesthetic poetry, this essay begins its assessment on the political end of the spectrum, shifting in a sort of regression to the analysis of the more romanticized, aesthetic works.

Perhaps one of Pablo Neruda's most clearly defined political poems, the United Fruit Co. serves as harsh critique of the multinational fruit company, and on a larger scale opposes capitalism as a whole. The central message of this the United Fruit Co. is obvious, as is the nature of any politically charged art piece. Neruda draws on Marxist theories in order to critically assess the effect of the foreign entities taking advantage of Latin American nations. This poem is largely a political argument against the neocolonialism forced upon these Latin American nations by more powerful, capitalistic countries. In order to more effectively relay his message, Neruda litters the United Fruit Co. with clear, political elements such as the critique of "the dictatorship of flies" (20) in Latin America and the United States through the naming of companies such as "...Coca Cola Inc., Anaconda, / Ford Motors, and other entities" (4-5). Due to how indisputably obvious this argument against the foreign exploitation of Latin American nations by Neruda is and the

seemingly sparse traditional aesthetics, this poem approaches the line of being propagandistic rather than artistic in value.

Pablo Neruda's *The United Fruit Co.* certainly contains propagandistic elements, yet underneath this surface of political gallery lays Neruda's ever-prevalent aesthetic expression. Neruda primarily uses religious symbols, specifically Christian references, in the first stanza of the poem as a metaphorical expression of the imposed capitalism by the United States on Latin America. This biblical language is juxtaposed with consumerist icons imposed by the United States in his aesthetic style; however, Neruda adopts these aesthetic qualities in order to support the central political message of the poem. Neruda incorporates this religious language through irony in the *United Fruit Co.* by stating "When the trumpet sounded, everything / on earth was prepared / and Jehovah distributed the world" (1-3) in that he discredits the United States as the godly figure of Latin America. In Neruda's opinion, a god should treat his followers fairly, yet Neruda criticizes the United States and other foreign entities because they merely exploit the nations of Latin America to fulfill selfish desires. Furthermore, Neruda uses imagery of fruit as an extended metaphorical representation of Latin America in its entirety. By describing Latin America in this way as "the central coast of my land, / the sweet waist of America," (8-9) Neruda presents the nations as woman victimized by entities such as the United States and the dictators that are "...soppy / with humble blood and marmalade," (23-24). In identifying these elements, it becomes apparent that the *United Fruit Co.*, one of Neruda's most politically polarized poems, is not in fact void of the aesthetic qualities. While aesthetics and political

tendencies are certainly not balanced in the United Fruit Co., the inclusion of both elements provides validity for Neruda's artistic claim for this poem.

In contrast to Neruda's political poems, *Dead Gallop* represents a sort of mediation between aesthetics and politics, yet it leans towards the aesthetic end of the spectrum. On a surface level *Dead Gallop* is a just jumble of aesthetics, and it's only after prying deeper into the poem that meaning can be derived. Neruda utilizes this confusing jumble of aesthetics, and therefore the confusion of his readers, to his advantage in that he spins this style to relay his overall message. Neruda's failure to articulate the core meaning of *Dead Gallop*, therefore making a large portion of the poem intelligible, ultimately is the meaning. This impossibility of articulation represents the turmoil of the early twentieth century, and ultimately the necessity for the development of both a new style of articulation and living in this shifting world.

Furthermore, while *Dead Gallop* serves as a contrasting poem by Neruda in that its message is far from being as concise as poems such as the United Fruit Co., the poem utilizes its abundance of aesthetics in order to critique the political stances of the time. Neruda utilizes the disparity between life and death as an extended metaphorical basis for the poem in that it represents the poet's existence between the two due to his lack of ability to come to terms with the political situation of the world in his time.

Immediately upon introducing *Dead Gallop*, Neruda implements irony within the title; the poet presents the peculiar unity between life and death by telling readers that each individual is galloping to death. Lines such as "the cross-echo of church bells" (4) represent the close relationship between life

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and death, specifically in this line because church bells represent weddings, the start of new life, or funerals, the end of a life. Neruda utilizes images of circular objects to represent the imprisonment that we all exist in: the inescapable notion that all life comes to an end. Even when it seems as though the poet is beginning to reach a conclusion in the third stanza of Dead Gallop, Neruda loses grasp of this, and instead leaves it to readers to derive their own meaning.

By analyzing both Dead Gallop and the United Fruit Co., it becomes apparent that each of Pablo Neruda's poems fall on the aesthetic versus political spectrum, and that while they are certainly not balanced, each poem shares elements of both ends of the spectrum. This incorporation of both aesthetics and political motivation provides validity to Neruda's claim that his poems are artistic; the absence of either of these elements would discard this claim. In assessing Neruda's poetry, readers can get a sense of which poetic style they prefer: one that gives readers answers or one that asks readers to find their own answers. Without an individual's participation in the dictating of what art is, the boundaries of art become blurred. We as individuals have a responsibility to deem what art is in our society, and to differentiate it from pure aesthetics or propaganda.