

Twentieth Century Nicaraguan Protest Poetry: The Struggle for Cultural Hegemony

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M.A., University of Kansas, 1994

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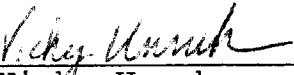
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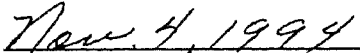
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Abstract

The 1979 Nicaraguan revolution spawned many democratic reforms. These included agrarian, political, economic and cultural changes that were implemented in order to increase participation in all aspects of Nicaraguan life. Of the changes, one would have to consider those effecting culture and poetry to be the most unique. In fact, post-revolution Nicaragua became one of only a handful of nations to have its own Ministry of Culture. Yet, this phenomena is only half of the story.

Poetry in Nicaragua has a long history. It has existed since time immemorial and, thus, has become part of the Nicaraguan national identity. This thesis analyzes the relationship between Nicaragua and poetry for the period of the twentieth century. Using the turn of the twentieth century as a starting point, climaxing with the overthrow of the Somoza regime and concluding with the FSLN loss and UNO victory in 1990, this paper chronicles the modern history of poetry in Nicaragua and its relationship to political change.

It is the purpose of this project, not only to analyze the recent history of poetry in Nicaragua, but to do so through the lens of cultural hegemony. Using the writings of Antonio Gramsci to establish a theoretical base, this paper contends that the FSLN victory in 1979 was the result of a war that was waged with verse, as well as with arms.

The period following the fall of the Somoza regime and the emergence of the FSLN saw the implementation of cultural policies designed specifically to "democratize culture" and to develop a nation of poets. Again, Gramsci's understanding of "organic intellectuals" is called upon to facilitate an understanding of this process.

Finally, as a result of the Contra War and changes within the FSLN government--changes that altered the ideological compass of FSLN cultural policies by 180 degrees--the Sandinistas' claim to cultural hegemony weakened. There, ready to stake their claim to cultural hegemony, were a collection of anti-Sandinista poets, led by Pablo Antonio Cuadra.

To my wife, Sonia

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While in Nicaragua in 1992, I was fortunate enough to meet a number of poets and their families. I learned much from them and although their names do not appear here, their assistance and kindness make up the spirit presence of this book. I am especially indebted to Ciro Molina for his hospitality, insight and verse.

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Finally, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Shelly Miller, former head of the Spanish Portuguese and Latin America (SPLAT) collection in Watson library at the University of Kansas. This project, like countless others that relied on the publications ordered, gathered and made available by Shelly, owes its existence to her. We will miss her.

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INTRODUCTION

The topic of revolution has received considerable attention throughout the course of the twentieth century. The Mexican and Bolshevik revolutions in the 1910s and the national liberation movements in Africa, Latin America and Asia during the 1950s, '60s and '70s have prompted historians, political scientists, philosophers and other scholars of revolution to develop their own theories (or validate those of others) on how profound social, economic and political change actually takes place within a given population.

One approach to understanding the revolutionary process is to analyze specific political events. The notion behind this idea is that revolution, such as England's Glorious Revolution of 1688, is the result of machinations by a country's most powerful dissidents and their allies. A second approach is the examination of the revolution as an extension of the hero-revolutionary, whose leadership qualities and messianic vision propel the movement toward victory. Illustrating this philosophy are the works equating the "great men", such as V. I. Lenin and Fidel Castro, with revolution. Perhaps the most popular analysis, though, comes from Karl Marx and

Frederick Engels. Classical Marxian theory interprets revolution through a nation's concrete economic conditions and the class struggle that these economic realities elaborate.

Cast aside, though, in these explanations is the fundamental importance of popular motivation. The idea that popular mobilization does not automatically result from concrete factors, but from perceptions, influenced by culture and concrete factors, has yet to gain a significant audience in the intellectual community.

In The Anatomy of Revolution Crane Brinton asserts that "ideas are always a part of the prerevolutionary situation" (Brinton 1965:49) and that these ideas manifest themselves in a myriad of ways, particularly through culture. Brinton credits popular slogans with "exciting. . . [people in the American colonies] to action" against England (Brinton 1965:29) and eighteenth century France's 'sociétés de pensée'--societies of Enlightenment culture and thought--with helping transform "mere talk and speculation into revolutionary political work" (Brinton 1965:40). Finally, Brinton asserts that "the years just preceding the actual outbreak of revolution witness a crescendo of protests against the tyranny of the government, a hail of pamphlets, plays, addresses, an outburst of activity on the part of interested pressure groups"

(Brinton 1965:68). Indeed, Brinton emphasizes the coincidental nature of ideas, culture and revolution; however, he also avoids the deeper issue of causality.

Brinton ultimately moderates his position by asserting that the correlation between ideas and revolution "does not mean that ideas cause revolutions" (Brinton 1965:49).

This paper contends that a more comprehensive (if not complete) understanding of revolution, particularly the Nicaraguan revolution, can only be achieved by analyzing the relationship between popular culture (poetry in the case of Nicaragua), revolutionary consciousness and political hegemony.

Thus far, this task has been largely neglected. Prior to 1979, the combination of revolution and poetry in Nicaragua only found voice in anthologies, such as the 1962 work by Ernesto Cardenal and Ernesto Mejía Sánchez, Poesía revolucionaria nicaragüense, and their respective introductions.

The first independent analysis of the role of poetry in the Sandinista revolution came from the pen of Claire Pailler in her 1981 article "La poesía nicaragüense contemporánea y la toma de conciencia". That same year Pablo Antonio Cuadra also reflected on the importance of poetry to the 1979 revolution with his work, "En el umbral de una nueva época". Drawing from writings by

FSLN cultural and political luminaries, Nicaragua's newly created Ministry of Culture clarified the national cultural platform with Hacia una política cultural. The introduction of Francisco de Asís Fernández's 1986 collection of poetry, Poesía política, although without a solid theoretical base, proposed that the 1979 revolution was the inevitable consequence of an ever-expanding base of revolutionary poetry.

Two bilingual works directed by Marc Zimmerman and the Nicaragua Solidarity Committee of Minnesota, Nicaragua in Revolution: The Poets Speak (1980) and Nicaragua in Reconstruction & at War: The People Speak (1985), recount the history of Nicaragua through excerpts of verse and illustrate how Nicaraguans used poetry to spread revolutionary ideas.

Steven White's collection of interviews and testimonies, Culture and Politics in Nicaragua (1986), provides the best primary source material for understanding the philosophies espoused by many of Nicaragua's more prominent poets.

Specific facets of Nicaraguan poetry have also been explored in recent years. Jorge Eduardo Arellano's 1992 work, Entre la tradición y la modernidad, provides a good analysis of the Vanguardia Movement.

The growth and development of Nicaragua's poetry workshops have received a considerable amount of attention. Mayra Jiménez's introductions to her collections of workshop poetry: Poesía campesina de Solentiname (1980), Poesía de la nueva Nicaragua: talleres populares de poesía (1983), Fogata en la oscurana: Los talleres de poesía en la alfabetización (1985) shed light on the methodology of the cultural democratization projects, as does Karyn Hollis's work, Poesía del pueblo para el pueblo (1991). A Nation of Poets, edited by Kent Johnson, includes an excellent interview with Ernesto Cardenal, the Minister of Culture and the biggest proponent of the poetry workshops. David Gullette's collection of workshop poetry, Nicaraguan Peasant Poetry from Solentiname (1988), although not breaking new ground in the field of workshop poetry, provides a better historical sketch of Solentiname than Jiménez's work.

Finally, recent works have attempted to analyze the failure of the FSLN cultural programs. John Beverley and Marc Zimmerman's 1990 work, Literature and Politics in the Central American Revolution, examines the use of poetry in the struggle for cultural hegemony within Nicaraguan society. Published immediately after the 1990 election, Beverley and Zimmerman's book hastily attempts to interpret the FSLN's electoral loss also as a conse-

quence of the struggle for cultural preeminence. David Craven's article, "The State of Cultural Democracy in Cuba and Nicaragua During the 1980s", also published in 1990, hypothesizes that the decline of the FSLN cultural democratization projects prompted a decline of popular support for the Sandinistas in the 1990 elections. The most thorough analysis of the demise of FSLN cultural hegemony, thus far, comes from Greg Dawes's published doctoral dissertation, Aesthetics and Revolution (1993). In this work Dawes examines cultural hegemony through the rise and fall of the cultural and political democratization programs in Nicaragua.

Overview of Nicaraguan History

In 1821, after over two centuries of colonial rule, Nicaragua declared its independence from Spain. The post-colonial period did not bring lasting peace or security, though. With the emergence of the two rival political tendencies, the Conservatives and the Liberals, almost immediately after independence, Nicaragua found itself in the throes of civil war. This period also witnessed the growth of international interest in Nicaragua as the possible site of a trans-isthmus canal. The two powers primarily interested in the canal, Great Britain and the United States, often involved themselves

in Nicaragua's civil wars, with Britain offering support to the Conservatives and the United States to the Liberals. Emerging from this alliance between the Liberals and the United States was the filibuster, William Walker, whom the Liberals had hired to attack their enemies, the Conservatives. In 1856, following his military successes, William Walker declared himself president of Nicaragua and proceeded to declare English as the country's official language and to reinstate slavery. Fearing Walker's expansionist ideology and perceiving him as a threat to regional security, the Central American republics formed an army in 1857 and expelled him from Nicaragua.

The thirty-six years following the removal of William Walker witnessed the ascension to power and dominance of Nicaraguan politics by the Conservatives. In 1893 Conservative rule ended, though, and the Liberals, under the leadership of José Santos Zelaya, assumed political control of the country. Zelaya's government, emphasizing nationalism and regional development, inaugurated many projects oriented toward social reform. Moreover, Zelaya encouraged foreign investment, economic modernization, educational reform and social infrastructural development (Booth 1985:22).

Zelaya's anti-U. S. sentiments, his reincorporation of the Miskito Reserve into Nicaragua and his strict regulatory controls on foreign investment deeply concerned the United States. In 1909 U. S. President Howard Taft, perceiving Zelaya's nationalist policies as a threat to regional stability and investment opportunities, provided anti-Zelaya Conservatives with troops as they forcibly removed the dictator from office.

For the next twenty-one years a series of puppet governments, with the backing of the U. S. policymakers, ruled Nicaragua. Many Nicaraguans, though, did not passively accept this deference of political autonomy. Challenging the legitimacy of these governments were opposition movements such as the one directed by Benjamin Zeledon in 1912. Ostensibly to protect U.S. lives and property, Marines landed on the shores of Corinto in 1912. For the next thirteen years, until 1925, U. S. Marines occupied Nicaraguan territory.

In 1926 Liberals initiated civil war in Nicaragua. The United States responded to this by re-dispatching marines to Nicaragua. This conflict was short-lived, though, and within one year the Liberals agreed to a ceasefire. However, one of the Liberal generals, Augusto Cesar Sandino, rejected the political settlement. Declaring that he would surrender his arms only with the

removal of the last marine, Sandino patched together an army of campesinos and others alienated by Nicaraguan politics and the U. S. presence. With his army sheltered in the mountains of Nueva Segovia, Sandino initiated a six-year campaign of guerrilla warfare against the U.S. Marines.

After six years of unsuccessfully attempting to defeat Sandino's troops and responding to mounting unrest on the homefront, President Herbert Hoover decided that the U. S. Marines should withdraw from Nicaragua following that country's presidential election in 1932. Although, the preferred candidate, the Conservative Adolfo Díaz, lost, the United States honored its commitment and removed its troops from Nicaragua. Before the marines' departure, though, ostensibly to promote political stability (while subsequently maintaining an indirect presence in Nicaragua), the U.S. Marines created and trained Nicaragua's National Guard. Anastasio Somoza García, the nephew of newly elected president Juan Bautista Sacasa, became the chief of the Guard. With the removal of the U.S. Marines and the establishment of a national security force within Nicaragua, Sandino accepted the cease-fire. Sandino's faith in his Nicaraguan countrymen proved to be his fatal flaw, though, as Somoza's Guard assassinated Sandino in February, 1934.

Anastasio Somoza García used his position of authority in the National Guard to accumulate an abundance of domestic power and foreign support. With the might of the Guard at his disposal, Somoza García co-opted domestic power contenders, concentrated the nation's wealth into the hands of his family, increased his credibility with the United States, repressed all challenges to his authority and thus, transformed Nicaragua into his own "private hacienda" (Bermann 1986:241). Nevertheless, Anastasio Somoza Garcia's stint as dictator of Nicaragua came to an abrupt end on September 21, 1956, when a young poet, Rigoberto López Pérez, took it upon himself to rid Nicaragua of its tyrannical ruler by shooting him four times. Despite the efforts by a task force of U. S. doctors, including U. S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower's personal physician, to save Somoza's life, he died on September 28, 1956.

Succeeding Anastasio Somoza García was his oldest son, Luis Somoza Debayle. Although, Luis Somoza brought a different personality to the dictatorship--he insisted that he be referred to as "Luis 'the Courteous'"--representation within Nicaragua continued (Booth 1985:73).¹ The

¹For an interesting analysis of the differences and similarities between Anastasio Somoza García and his sons, Luis Somoza Debayle and Anastasio Somoza Debayle, see Booth, John A. The End and the Beginning: The Nicaraguan Revolution.

assassination of Somoza García prompted the National Guard, the command of which the elder Somoza had given to his second son, Anastasio Somoza Debayle, upon the latter's graduation from West Point military academy, to arrest, detain and imprison thousands of people. Many of those incarcerated were victims of the Guard's unspeakable tortures, including "electrical shocks with an airplane magneto, repeated near-drowning, lifting or dragging by a cord tied around the genitals, imprisonment in a coffin-sized cell, or time in the Somoza family's private zoo" (Booth 1985:72).

Despite these initial repressive measures, scholars consider Luis Somoza to be the least tyrannical of the three Somoza dictators. By distancing the presidency from the activities of the National Guard, Luis Somoza attempted to present the image to the rest of the world that Nicaraguan was under civilian rule. Furthermore, he tried to improve his country's image by liberalizing Nicaragua's economic base and modernizing Nicaragua's social infrastructure through international development programs. As an incentive to continue the liberalization of Nicaragua, the Kennedy Administration made project funds amply available to Luis Somoza through the Alliance for Progress. Perhaps the biggest step he made toward the process of liberalizing his country, though, (and

perhaps the Somoza dynasty's biggest mistake) was to grant autonomy to the nation's universities. This move gave Nicaragua's universities a greater degree of intellectual freedom than they previously held. It also provided Somoza dissidents with a fertile space, unencumbered by state forces, to sew revolutionary seeds.

Organized resistance to the Somoza dynasty first found expression in the 1950s. Conservatives in Granada, incensed by relocation of their university to León, angrily renounced Somoza's decision. Somoza's concentration of wealth and his landholding policy also infuriated Conservatives, who saw his economic interests as a threat to their own.

In 1961, inspired by the success of the Cuban revolution and the legacy of Sandino, university students under the leadership of Carlos Fonseca and Tomás Borge organized with the objective of fomenting revolution in Nicaragua. Calling themselves the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN) they identified themselves as
a

politico-military organization, whose strategic objective [was] to take political power by destroying the military and bureaucratic apparatus of the dictatorship and to establish a revolutionary government based on the worker-peasant alliance and the convergence of all the patriotic anti-imperialist and anti-oligarchic forces in the country. (In Borge 1986:13)

They denounced the Somoza regime, the concentration of wealth in the hands of a minority and U. S. support of Nicaragua's oppressive state of affairs. The FSLN called for the popular overthrow of the regime, a redistribution of land and wealth, and a reclamation of Nicaragua's identity, which it felt had been neglected during the Somoza years.

Despite its egalitarian platform, the FSLN enjoyed very little popular support in the first fifteen years of its campaign. Forced to operate clandestinely throughout much of its pre-revolution existence, the FSLN struggled to deliver its message to the masses. When it did, the masses were not particularly open to the idea of military campaigns against the much larger and much more powerful National Guard. Nevertheless, the FSLN did engage the National Guard in a number of skirmishes throughout the 1960s.

In 1967 as the result of a heart attack Luis Somoza Debayle died. Replacing Luis was his younger brother and commander of the National Guard, Anastasio ("Tachito") Somoza Debayle. The pretense of civilian government ended as Tachito openly relied on the military power of the National Guard to maintain order. The FSLN and Conservative opposition to the Somoza regime prompted Tachito to strike out against the general popular, send-

ing out waves of repression with each perceived threat.

In December 1972 a major earthquake destroyed central Managua, killing thousands and dislocating another 250,000 (Vilas 1986:101-102). International relief agencies responded to this disaster by donating millions of dollars for relief and reconstruction. Anastasio Somoza Debayle turned this assistance into his own advantage first by siphoning from the funds that were forthcoming, and second by hiring his own companies to redevelop Managua's downtown area. Tachito's greed began to alienate the sector of Nicaraguan society from whom the Somozas had traditionally received support, the middle class. Thus, middle class elements began organizing against Somoza's tyranny. This early mobilization also included unions and Christian-based communities. In 1974 the editor of the opposition newspaper La Prensa, Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, joined opposition political parties together in forming the Democratic Union of Liberation (UDEL). Furthermore, a group of prominent citizens - professional, businesspeople, and clergy who later become known as "The Twelve" - denounced the Somoza dictatorship and called for a national solution which would include the FSLN in any post-Somoza government.

The FSLN continued to struggle in its efforts to gain mass support. It also struggled in its attempt to

maintain unity within its forces. In 1976 the FSLN fractured into three tendencies. The Proletarian Tendency, behind the leadership of Jaime Wheelock, contended the revolution had to emerge from the urban workers. The Prolonged People's War Tendency, headed by Fonseca and Borge, believed that a long-term war with the backing of the peasantry was the only means for revolution in Nicaragua. Finally, the Third Tendency, led by Daniel and Humberto Ortega, advocated the most moderate position and believed that the revolution should come from a broad-based coalition of anti-somocista forces. Despite their differences, each tendency still considered itself an element of the FSLN; they simply worked and organized independently of the other tendencies. Moreover, their differences did not preclude their continued attacks against the National Guard, such as in October, 1977, when FSLN guerrillas attacked National Guard outposts in several towns.

On January 10, 1978, an assassin's bullet struck and killed Pedro Joaquín Chamorro. This event sparked a nation-wide outbreak of strikes, boycotts, demonstrations, and other peaceful protests. In July the Broad Opposition Front (FAO) emerged as an umbrella group for all anti-Somoza forces. The alliance included the Catholic hierarchy together with the political arm of the

FSLN. Furthermore, early in 1979, the three FSLN tendencies announced that they had resolved their ideological differences and would stand together as one.

As it became obvious that Tachito was not going to yield to public opinion and remove himself from office, nonviolence as a solution to removing the dictator lost its appeal for most of Nicaragua's rank and file. The increased violence and public alarm fostered a change in anti-Somoza leadership and the nucleus of opposition soon shifted away from business and political elites and to the FSLN. With that and the FSLN's declaration of unity, the final offensive campaign in the spring of 1979 enjoyed a wide range of support and was able to recruit followers who had previously rejected Sandinista guerrilla tactics. On July 17, 1979, as the death toll from the civil war neared fifty thousand, Anastasio Somoza Debayle abdicated the presidency and fled the country. The FSLN marched into Managua on July 19, 1979, and implemented the Government of National Reconstruction.

The new government immediately took steps to alleviate the conditions of Nicaragua's poor. First, the FSLN sponsored a basic education program that significantly

reduced the rate of illiteracy², a primary health crusade that prompted international recognition, and an agrarian reform program that distributed land to the landless. By 1981 Nicaragua's GNP had risen eight percent over the previous year and exports had increased by \$50 million.

Concerned about the FSLN's leftist orientation and fearful that the Sandinistas would align Nicaragua with communist bloc nations, the United States adopted a foreign policy aimed at weakening the Sandinista government. The U. S. responded to Nicaragua's new government in a number of ways. It implemented an economic embargo, it also embarked on a full scale diplomatic campaign against the FSLN. Through the C. I. A. it mined Nicaragua's harbors. The most severe blow to the FSLN's attempt to construct a new Nicaragua came from the organization by the United States of a counter-revolutionary force of Nicaraguans, operating from base camps in Honduras and Costa Rica. These counter-revolutionaries, or

²There are many conflicting reports regarding the precise impact that the literacy crusades had on the Nicaraguan population. Sheryl Hirshon and Judy Butler, in And Also Teach Them to Read (1983), subscribe to the official reports that indicate that the percentage of illiteracy dropped from fifty percent to twelve. Charles Stansifer's work, The Nicaraguan National Literacy Crusade (1981), identifies major discrepancies with the numbers that the official records report and the methodology used to arrive at these statistics, and thus proposes that the illiteracy rate had not fallen as significantly as had been suggested.

"contras," soon began infiltrating Nicaraguan rural areas to kill and kidnap civilians, destroy farm cooperatives, schools and health clinics. The FSLN responded to the flood of contras crossing the border by increasing the defense budget, instituting a compulsory draft, and imposing state-of-emergency restrictions.

In November 1984 elections were held for president and national assembly. Ninety-four percent of the adult population registered for the election and seventy-five percent went to the polls. Seven out of ten political parties participated in the election including the FSLN. Daniel Ortega, the FSLN candidate, won in an overwhelming fashion, claiming sixty-three percent of the vote. Moreover, the FSLN gained sixty-one of the ninety-six assembly seats (Walker 1987:11). The U.S. response to the results was to claim election fraud. However, international observers from North America and Europe acknowledged that the elections were free and that the U.S. claims were unfounded.

Nicaragua's National Assembly established a new body of laws and drew up a Constitution which it ratified in January of 1987. Following the election the United States increased aid to the Contras and imposed an economic embargo in an effort to destroy the FSLN government.

Several Latin American nations attempted to persuade the United States and Nicaragua to adopt a political solution, but they failed. Then the presidents of the five Central American republics took matters into their own hands by conducting a series of peace summit meetings. In Nicaragua these talks resulted in a cease-fire between the Sandinistas and the Contras. Their talks soon broke off, but President Daniel Ortega continued the cease-fire unilaterally and promised early elections (February 1990 rather than November 1990) in exchange for demobilization of contra troops under international supervision by December 1989. The Contras shunned demobilization after receiving a new shipment of "humanitarian" aid from the United States. The United States also provided campaign funds to the fourteen party UNO coalition and indicated that the civil war would not end unless the UNO coalition won. On February 25, 1990, with thousands of international observers on hand, the UNO coalition's candidate, Violeta Chamorro, soundly defeated the FSLN's candidate, the incumbent Daniel Ortega, fifty-five percent to forty-one percent. The peaceful transition of power officially took place on April 25, 1990.

For the FSLN, having emerged from the anti-somocista bloc as Nicaragua's principal political force, post-Somoza Nicaragua presented a challenge. Only with the

assassination of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro and the subsequent united front of the many anti-somocista tendencies did the Sandinistas begin to garner large scale popular support. The FSLN, wishing to consolidate the revolution, and understanding that its popular base of support was at best unreliable, set out on a course of popular cultural mobilization that would eventually model the guidelines for attaining cultural hegemony that Antonio Gramsci outlined for the Italian Communist Party in the 1930s.

The FSLN relied on a broad base of support to counteract the National Guard's military superiority. Yet, according to many scholars the Sandinistas were initially unable to get the masses to transform their dissatisfaction into political action. According to Donald Hodges, in the Intellectual Foundations of the Nicaraguan Revolution, only when government agents assassinated the leader of the bourgeois opposition, Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, "did the masses occupy the streets of the capital, in protest, thus manifesting for the first time their determination to do something concrete" (Hodges 1986:247). For many this event transformed revolutionary potential into revolutionary consciousness. Yet, given the different experiences and expectations of the various classes, how were the Sandinistas able to channel the grievances of

almost all sectors of the Nicaraguan society (peasant, proletariat and middle class) unilaterally into a proactive, anti-Somoza stance? Secondly, how were the Sandinistas and other radical opponents of the Somoza regime able to convince the Nicaraguan people that revolution was in their best interest?

Obviously, the anti-Somoza coalition emerged out of opposition to the Somoza dictatorship. Nevertheless, because of the varying political and economic interests that were represented in the anti-Somoza coalition, its cohesiveness was, at best, tenuous.

One of the forces which served to unite Nicaragua's disparate elements was poetry. It was poetry's ability to unify divergent political and economic interests under the banner of national identity that provided the most stable bond for the anti-Somoza forces. According to John Beverley and Marc Zimmerman, "poetry. . . served as a nexus between anti-Somocista sectors of the bourgeoisie, radicalized middle sectors, and the popular masses" (Beverley and Zimmerman 1990:94). Furthermore, it was poetry's capacity to effect a new consciousness, and hence, a new society that the Sandinistas explored, realized and utilized in gaining popular support, destroying the Somoza regime, inserting themselves in power and maintaining it for eleven years. Poetry's disappear-

ance as a weapon for revolution and as the mode for popular cultural production, together with the government's new emphasis on cultural professionalism in the late 1980s helped to destabilize the Sandinistas' popular base. Furthermore, the emergence of anti-Sandinista poetry in 1989 and 1990 provided the Sandinista opposition with the means of regaining cultural hegemony. This was a factor in the dissipation of Sandinista popular support and their subsequent presidential electoral loss in 1990.

"AN ARMY OF BOOKS"

. . . [T]he triumph of 1979 was the result of a revolution 'made with guitars and poems, and with bullets'.

--Tómas Borge, FSLN commandant,
commenting on the Nicaraguan
revolution. (Borge quoted in
White 1986:5)

Cultural history has yet to make its mark in the humanities or the social sciences and the dearth of material coming out of this field reflects its second class status as an area of study. Nevertheless, despite the lack of scholarship in this field, the student wishing to analyze revolution through the lens of cultural hegemony is not without a theoretical framework from which to draw. The post-revolutionary task of consolidating the new hegemonic relations by way of creating the "new human" has received at least cursory attention from most major proponents of fundamental social change. Although usually overlooked in favor of their analyses on economic determinism, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels's writings also suggest that ideology and culture are essential to the creation of a revolutionary consciousness. Marx and Engels asserted that the appropriate

material and economic conditions would not be enough to effect completely the transformation of power, arguing that ideological conditions must be considered as well. In A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, Marx and Engels write:

In considering such transformations a distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic--in short, ideological forms in which [women and] men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. (Marx and Engels 1972: 183)

V. I. Lenin also recognized the importance of the struggle for ideological superiority. He maintained that overcoming the military and political resistance of the bourgeoisie must coincide with a struggle against their "ideological resistance", which, for Lenin, was the "most deep-seated and the strongest" (Lenin 1969: 628). Lenin added that the success of the Soviet Union's politico-economic revolution depended on the success of the cultural revolution:

Two main tasks confront us, which constitute the epoch--to reorganize our machinery of state, which is utterly useless, and which we took over in its entirety from the preceding epoch. . . . Our second task is educational work among the peasants. And the economic object of this educational work among the peasants is to organize the latter in cooperative societies. If the whole of the peasantry had been organized in cooperatives, we would by now have been standing with both feet on the soil

of socialism. But the organization of the entire peasantry in cooperative societies presupposes a standard of culture among the peasants that cannot, in fact, be achieved without a cultural revolution. (Lenin 1969: 695)

In both passages the achievement of ideological and cultural hegemony presupposes the economic and political transformation. Furthermore, for Lenin, tied into the success of the revolution was the success of popular organizations. Only when the Soviet Union's peasantry organized itself into cooperative societies could the appropriate cultural transformation take place. Nevertheless, though they acknowledged the significance of culture in effecting change, Marx, Engels and Lenin focused most of their attention on the concrete conditions that would spawn change. The formation of an ideology that would incorporate cultural theory with revolutionary change remained largely unborn until Antonio Gramsci's writings on cultural hegemony.

Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist, writing in the 1920s, rejected the classical marxist approach of examining revolution solely through the lens of economic exploitation and proposed that culture and ideology also be examined when studying social movements. According to Gramsci, for a revolutionary movement to obtain the support of the masses, it must appeal to them at a basic,

popular level, while making the impression that action is more advantageous than inaction. Thus, because culture has the ability to make profound impressions on people's perceptions, it also has the ability to indicate to the populace that certain events should bring them to action. Thus, for Gramsci, culture resonates with revolutionary potential.

To demonstrate the revolutionary power that culture possesses Gramsci looks to French Enlightenment literature and the essential role that it played in raising the revolutionary consciousness of the masses and ultimately leading them to rebel. Indeed, for Gramsci the Enlightenment was the necessary antecedent to the French Revolution as it "helped to create a state of mental preparedness for those [revolutionary] explosions in the name of what was seen as a common cause" (Gramsci 1988:58-59).

Gramsci adds:

Each new comedy by Voltaire, each new pamphlet moved like a spark along the lines that were already stretched between state and state, between region and region, and found the same supporters and the same opponent everywhere and every time. The bayonets of Napoleon's armies found their road already smoothed by an invisible army of books and pamphlets that had swarmed out of Paris from the first half of the eighteenth century and had prepared both men and institutions for the necessary renewal. Later, after the French events had welded a unified consciousness, a demonstration in Paris was enough to provoke similar disturbances in Milan, Vienna and the smaller centre. All this

seems natural and spontaneous to superficial observers, yet it would be incomprehensible if we were not aware of the cultural factors that helped to create a state of mental preparedness . . . (ibid).

Gramsci's declaration that an "invisible army of books and pamphlets" paved the way for Napoleon is a remarkable assertion regarding the revolutionary potential of popular culture. For classical marxist theorists, what Gramsci wrote was blasphemous. Nevertheless, for those tired of waiting for the masses to rise up suddenly and simultaneously in rebellion, Gramsci's analysis was a welcome alternative. Viewing literature and culture as tools able to help forge a "unified consciousness" among the people and to synchronize mass responses to certain events, provided marxists with a new scope for analyzing the class struggle and revolutionaries with a new foundation for promoting class consciousness.

National Identity and National Popular

Antonio Gramsci's understanding of culture and political hegemony grew from his observations of Italian popular culture. Extrapolating his specific findings to society in general, Gramsci concluded that popular culture is not simply recreational activity but that it is also the means by which people elaborate their concrete

social, economic and political realities. Gramsci defined those values, ideals and aspirations, inherent in popular culture and specific to a people's identity, as the "national-popular." For Gramsci, this element is deeply national in that it includes a nation's language, folklore, literature, songs, myths, landscapes, geography, people, etc. It is also profoundly popular in that it emerges from the sub-altern class--from the people. More specifically, as posited by the renowned Gramscian scholar David Forgacs, the "national-popular" is the "hegemonic alliance of the proletariat with the peasantry and petty-bourgeois intellectuals," cemented to forge the collective will needed to advance the national movement (Forgacs in Gramsci 1985:196). As it relates to culture, Forgacs points out that the national-popular "designates forms of art and literature which help secure the hegemonic alliance: neither 'intellectualistic' nor 'cosmopolitan' but engaging with popular reality and drawing in popular audiences" (Forgacs in Gramsci 1988:426-427). Given its impact on human self-perception, Gramsci concluded that this element, the "national-

popular," gave popular culture a dimension that was acutely revolutionary.³

Organic Intellectuals

Unified consciousness, though, cannot and does not emerge independent of intellectual leadership. Gramsci writes:

. . . there exists a world of vast dimensions within the mind of the proletariat [that] still needs to be given a guiding hand, if it is to acquire the necessary competence to distinguish values from non-values and to understand in what quarters there exists an effort to create original work. . . (Gramsci 1985: 44).

For Gramsci, it is imperative to the revolution that there exist individuals and groups that are able to articulate the demands of the oppressed classes, to express the national popular culture, and to incorporate these two with a revolutionary ideology.

Unfortunately for Gramsci and the political party for whom he was writing, Italy's national culture was not

³Gramsci's understanding of national popular has lent itself to contemporary efforts to define those national elements which bond a nation's populace and which create a nation's identity. For example, the Uruguayan essayist, Eduardo Galeano, has termed this cultural phenomenon, national identity. He argues that national identity consists of those cultural, social or historical elements that are specific to a given people. This all-inclusive definition suggests that national identity is not limited to a certain racial group, rather, it emerges from the their common experiences, common ideas, common goals, etc. Indeed, for Galeano, national identity exists in history and culture, not in biology and race (Galeano 1981:64).

popular; rather, it remained the domain of a class of intellectual elites, who were ideologically indifferent to Italy's masses. In many of his writings, Gramsci criticizes Italy's intellectuals for failing in their "historical task as educators and elaborators of the intellect and the moral awareness of the people-nation" (Gramsci 1985:211). He maintained that they

have been incapable of satisfying the intellectual needs of the people precisely because they have failed to represent a lay culture, because they have not known how to elaborate a modern 'humanism' able to reach right to the simplest and most uneducated classes" (Gramsci 1985:211).

Not only did these intellectuals fail to represent the uneducated classes, but Gramsci contended that they, by virtue of their class and their unfamiliarity with the masses lacked the ability to represent popular culture:

The intellectuals do not come from the people, even if by accident some of them have origins among the people. They do not feel tied to them. . . ., they do not know and sense and their needs, aspirations and feelings. In relation to the people, they are sometimes detached, without foundation, a caste and not an articulation with organic functions of the people themselves. (Gramsci 1985:209)

Therefore, for Gramsci:

neither a popular artistic literature nor a local production of 'popular literature exists because 'writers' and people do not have the same conception of the world. In other words the feelings of the people are not lived by the writers as their own. . . they have not and do

not set themselves the problem of elaborating popular feelings. . . (Gramsci 1985:207).

In order to compensate for the intellectuals' inability culturally and artistically to represent the people, Gramsci called for the emergence of a new cadre of intellectuals capable of voicing the experiences, attitudes and desires of their own social class, while also educating, preparing and organizing their people for social betterment. Unlike the intellectual elites whose origins and lack of popular consciousness preclude them from creating a popular revolutionary culture, Gramsci's intellectuals, native to the community, versed in the local idiom, imbued with the regional customs and familiar with the popular lore, are able to produce an authentic, popular culture, reflecting the identity of the people.

[E]very social group. . . creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but in the social and political fields. (Gramsci 1988: 300)

For Gramsci the term intellectual is not dependent on ". . . the intrinsic nature of intellectual activities" of the individual, rather it is dependent on the individual's relationship with the rest of his/her social class (Gramsci 1988:304). The "organic intellectuals" differentiate themselves from the rest of the masses only

through their ability to articulate the concerns, aspirations, fears and values of the social class from which they emerge.

Not all social groups are able to cultivate a class of organic intellectuals, though. Gramsci contends that "the mass of the peasantry. . . does not elaborate its own organic intellectuals" (Gramsci 1988:302). He argued that their geographic decentralization and their primitive mode of production (pre-capitalist), which keeps them from effecting any class consciousness, are the primary factors in their failure to spawn organic intellectuals (Gramsci 1988:308).

Since the peasantry is unable to present itself as anything other than a potpourri of subsistence farmers, each with separate interests, it is impossible for a peasant intellectual to represent or articulate the concerns of his/her social class. For this reason, according to Gramsci, it is imperative that the political party assist in providing ideological direction for the peasantry.

Gramsci's assertion is not to suggest that the peasantry cannot produce intellectuals. In fact, according to Gramsci, "it is from the peasantry that other social groups draw many of their intellectuals" (Gramsci 1988:302). What Gramsci alludes to is this: because the

rural intellectuals enjoy their status from a pre-capitalist arrangement of social relations, they are, thus, "traditional" and have a greater inclination toward a reactionary ideology than toward a revolutionary one.

In order to combat this reactionary tendency from a group that yields such a considerable amount of influence over the peasant masses, Gramsci insists that a unity between the traditional intellectuals and the organic intellectuals be forged. Indeed, for Gramsci "every organic movement of the peasant masses. . . is linked to and depends on movements among [these] intellectuals" (Gramsci 1988: 308).

To bring traditional intellectuals into the revolutionary fold, Gramsci holds that the political party contending for power must assist them in adopting a class consciousness. He writes:

One of the most important characteristics of any group that is developing towards dominance is its struggle to assimilate and to conquer "ideologically" the traditional intellectuals, but this assimilation and conquest is made quicker and more efficacious the more the group in question succeeds in simultaneously elaborating its own organic intellectuals. (Gramsci 1988:305)

For Gramsci, the welding together of organic intellectuals and traditional intellectuals is merely one of the tasks confronting the political party. The second challenge is to create organizational structures that

allow for the propagation of "organic intellectuals"
(Gramsci 1988: 310).

Gramsci found that the solution to these challenges exists in the creation and maintenance of popular organizations. According to Gramsci:

[S]ince. . . culture. . . is a basic concept of socialism, because it integrates and makes concrete the vague concept of freedom of thought, I would like it to be enlivened by the other concept, that of the organization. Let us organize culture in the same way that we seek to organize any practical activity.
(Gramsci 1988:25)

Gramsci asserts that everyone, by virtue of being able to acquire general ideas and to think critically, can contribute to a nation's culture. Thus, the creation of popular organizations, constituted of, and represented by the people would spawn an authentic "national-popular" culture.

The structure of these cultural organizations should also be profoundly democratic. Gramsci explains:

"[i]t is not the lecture that should interest us, but the detailed work of discussing and investigating problems, work in which everybody participates, to which everybody contributes, in which everybody is both master and disciple"
(Gramsci 1985:25).

For Gramsci, the participation of the masses in the creation of the national culture is paramount to revolu-

tionary change. With respect to creating a democratic organization, he maintains:

What matters is that a bond is being sought with the people, the nation, and that one considers necessary not a servile unity resulting from passive obedience, but an active unity, a life-unity. . . (Gramsci 1985: 206).

Gramsci's understanding of society, politics and culture revolved around the concept of cultural hegemony. That class which is able to obtain and maintain ideological power in the cultural arena also establishes itself hegemonically with respect to politics and economics. In order for the revolutionary political party to usurp power, Gramsci argues that it must organize and ally itself closely with the organic intellectuals. From there, the revolutionary party must work with the organic intellectuals in the creation of a self-sustaining revolutionary culture. For Gramsci, the purpose of this task is to facilitate the continued development of cadres of organic intellectuals and to raise the intellectual level of an ever-growing strata of the populace. Gramsci insisted that through the creation of participatorily democratic popular organizations a society's cultural base will expand, thus producing more "organic intellectuals," and ultimately paving the way for the establishment of popular cultural hegemony.

PRE-REVOLUTION NICARAGUAN POETRY

In reality, all people are born more or less poets and Nicaraguans are almost all natural poets, who stop being poets to the degree that life deforms them and separates them from poetry. This means that . . . the system, or if you wish the regime, is in itself a war against poets and the poetry of Nicaraguan life or of human life itself. It is, in any event, a struggle against the poets, and all those who fight the system which in Nicaragua has taken the worst form imaginable, are poets. At least this is one way one could describe. . . the Nicaraguan struggle against imperialism.

--José Coronel Urtecho
(1979:9-10)

Poetry served the Nicaraguan revolution on two interrelated fronts. First, poetry voiced, promoted and created a revolutionary consciousness. A substantial mass of twentieth century Nicaraguan poetry has addressed social and political themes.⁴ From the poetry of Rubén Darío, through that of the Vanguardia movement, to the verse of the Sandinista poet-combatants, criticism of U.S. imperialism and/or the Somoza dictatorship has been a constant theme. According to Ernesto Cardenal, the

⁴In 1962 Ernesto Cardenal and Ernesto Mejía Sánchez anonymously compiled and edited a collection of Nicaraguan protest poems, Poesía revolucionaria nicaragüense. For a more comprehensive anthology of Nicaraguan political poetry, see Poesía política nicaragüense (1986), compiled and edited by Francisco de Asís Fernández.

tyranny of the Somoza regime had been so pervasive that "most poets had a hard time excluding [it] from their work" (Cardenal in Johnson 1985:14).

Second, poetry in and of itself is an element of Nicaragua's national identity⁵ and, therefore, in a nationalist revolution, has revolutionary potential. For Pablo Antonio Cuadra, poetry's impact on the revolution was not dependent on revolutionary text; rather, the creative process which goes into poetry-writing forces the poet to search for Nicaragua's national identity, while revealing to the lyricist that he/she is being exploited.

Cuadra explains,

. . . literature in Nicaragua has been one of the principal factors in the taking of consciousness of the nationality, not because it has developed at the service of nationalism, or from patriotism, rather since it emerged from the creative process. . . [U]pon looking at and affirming his/her own artistic originality, [the poet] discovered and expressed characteristics and roots of the communal identity of the Nicaraguan and created or made visible the poetic reality from one's nature, from one's land and one's besieged history" (Cuadra 1981:19).⁶

⁵According to Steven White, "poetry is so important in Nicaragua that it transcends the realm of the arts to become a fundamental basis for national identity" (White 1986:2).

⁶This and all subsequent translations from the Spanish are the author's.

Pablo Antonio Cuadra's understanding of poetry's relationship to national identity and revolution revolves around the search for identity that the creative process evokes. Ernesto Cardenal provides an alternative vantage of poetry's link to revolutionary consciousness and national identity. Since the beginning of the twentieth century the populace has consistently chosen poetry as the literary means of commemorating important events, expressing discontent and espousing revolution: "In Nicaragua," according to poet-priest Ernesto Cardenal, "almost all literary production has been poetic" (Cardenal in Johnson 1985:14).⁷ Cardenal explains that there is no absolute reason why Nicaragua enjoys such a rich poetic heritage, but identifies two elements which have aided its development. First, the style of verse which has predominated in Nicaraguan poetry is suitable when dealing with matters of national identity as well as with matters of national liberation. Second, Nicaragua's continuous poetic regeneration has made poetry a constant facet of Nicaraguan life. As a result of this constan-

⁷The poetry written by Sandino and his troops during their war against the U. S. Marines--see Eduardo Arellano, Jorge ed. Corridos y poemas del ejército defensor de la soberanía nacional de Nicaragua (1980)--provides an excellent example of Nicaragua's unique relationship with poetry, particularly in the context of social change. That the majority of the poetry is not overtly political is secondary to the fact that Sandino and his men chose to articulate their feelings through verse.

cy, like Nicaragua's volcanos and lakes, poetry emerged as a national feature.

In the opening passage, José Coronel Urtecho suggested that by virtue of being Nicaraguan, Nicaraguans consider themselves poets. That poetry is so interwoven with the fabric of Nicaraguan national identity connotes its potency as a means for affecting popular consciousness. In sum, by using poetry to promote the revolutionary cause poets were able to reinforce the Nicaraguan national identity and by using poetry to express Nicaraguan national identity, poetry helped spawn revolutionary consciousness.

In order to set the stage for an analysis of poetry as a cornerstone of revolutionary change it is necessary to take a brief look at the history of Nicaraguan poetry.

History of Nicaraguan Poetry ⁸

The task of post-Independence Nicaraguan intellectuals prior to Rubén Darío was to "guide 'National Thought' and the idea of the 'Nation,'" and generally to serve as Nicaragua's historians (Asís 1986:7). Rubén Darío, through his poetic success and the international acclaim

⁸Perhaps the best detailed, chronological account of the history of Nicaraguan poetry can be found in Jorge Eduardo Arellano's work Panorama de la literatura nicaragüense (1986).

awarded to him, changed that; he brought respectability to poetry.

Darío (1867-1916) is widely recognized as the "virtual founder of Latin American poetry" (Beverley and Zimmerman 1990:37). According to Ernesto Cardenal, Rubén Darío was "the greatest geographical event in Nicaragua" (Cardenal in White 1986:2).

Rubén Darío has probably received more critical, biographical and literary attention than any other Latin American poet. With the voluminous studies analyzing his life and work it is impossible to assess accurately Darío's impact on Latin American literature, or on Nicaraguan literature for that matter. Nevertheless, a few observations should put his influence into perspective.

Rubén Darío's impact on Latin American literature transcends his verse. First, Darío insisted that he be recognized as a national poet and requested financial backing from the Nicaraguan government. At the age of seventeen he received his first government post, in the National Archives. Throughout his life he was the recipient of diplomatic and consular posts, both within Nicaragua and other Latin American countries. Second, Darío spawned a new poetic movement, steeped in the aestheticism of French intellectuals and labelled it *modernismo*. For Darío, *modernismo* was the movement

oriented toward utilizing romanticism, ancient verse, novel themes and classic literature in poetic production (Ellis 1974:47): the ultimate objective being to establish "Hispanic America's literary independence from Spain" (White 1986:2). John Beverley and Marc Zimmerman define the movement as

cosmopolitan, franco-phile, bohemian, pan-American (in the sense that the modernistas sought to write for a general rather than a national or regional Latin American reading public); it stressed the separation of art from the worlds of politics and commerce, the power of fantasy and the imagination, sensuality, the idealization of the past, above all the careful cultivation and enrichment of poetic language and form itself (Beverley and Zimmerman 1990:54).

While the subject matter of Darío's poetry was often ethereal, his poetry also addressed concrete social and political issues. Unfortunately, for the critic looking for a single ideological line, Darío's poetry is politically ambiguous.⁹ In his poem "A Roosevelt" Darío opened

⁹David Whisnant's article, "Rubén Darío as a Focal Cultural Figure in Nicaragua: The Ideological Uses of Cultural Capital," provides an excellent analysis of how Somocistas and Sandinistas manipulated the poetry of Rubén Darío to align their respective ideologies with the poet's. Somoza luminaries, in presenting Darío's verse during state functions, would often omit lines critical of authoritarianism or of the United States. The FSLN, on the other hand, presented Darío as an anti-imperialist, neglecting poems such as "Salutación a la águila," and "God Save the Queen," a poem which neglected Great Britain's imperialist tendencies, while praising the "great and sovereign Britain" (Whisnant 1992:34). The FSLN asserted that Darío's reputation as an apolitical modernist was due to the Somoza regime's ideological manipulation of his poetry.

(continued...)

the door for political themes and criticisms of U.S. imperialism.

It is with the voice of the Bible, or verse of Walt Whitman,
that he would arrive for you, Hunter,
primitive and modern, simple and complicated,
with one part Washington and four parts nimrod.

You are the United States,
you are the future invader
of the naive America that has native blood
that even prays to Jesus Christ and even speaks Spanish. (Darío 1969:146)

From these lines it is apparent that Darío viewed U.S. encroachment on Nicaragua's soil as a serious threat. Nevertheless, two years later in his poem "Salutación a la águila" Darío projects a time in Nicaragua's future when the United States, symbolized by the northern eagle, helps bring a lasting peace to Nicaragua.

Welcome, magical Eagle with enormous and powerful wings
extending your great continental shadow over the South,
carrying in your talons, rings of brilliant red,
a palm of glory, of the color of immense hope,
and in your beak the olive branch of a vast and fecund peace. (Darío 1991:420)

Moreover, this poem contradicts his earlier criticism of Roosevelt and the United States, by asserting that the

⁹(...continued)

Whisnant concludes that ideological substantiation in Rubén Darío's verse is "available to any camp willing to edit him selectively and whose ideology is untroubled by the reductionism that inevitably results" (Whisnant 1992:42).

United States engaged in a "necessary war" with Nicaragua. Furthermore, according to David Whisnant, this poem "reduced the cultural achievements of Mayan Palenque to no more than illustrious moments on the way to the 'happy victory of the future' symbolized by the eagle" and concludes with the expression of "hope that Latin America may receive the 'magical influence' of the United States" (Whisnant 1992:19).

Despite these textual ambiguities, Darío's poetic success laid the foundations for subsequent generations of Nicaraguan poets. "Darío's prestige," according to Beverley and Zimmerman, "established poetry as the hegemonic form of literature and as the major vehicle of intellectual expression in the Central American area" (Beverley and Zimmerman 1990:54). Furthermore, his persistent efforts to get government acknowledgement and financial support paved the way for future generations of Nicaraguan poets: ". . . he asserted his right to live as a writer, to make a living from and win social recognition and prestige through his writing" (Ellis 1974:17).

Darío's Contemporaries

The success of Darío and *modernismo* had an immediate impact on Nicaraguan poetry. Responding to his movement, Nicaraguan poets forged three *modernista* tendencies: the traditional, the popular, and the novel. Each group

incorporated what they considered to be tenets of *modernismo* into their respective doctrines (Arellano 1986:37). This generation of *modernista* poets gave birth to another group of *modernistas* who also emulated his style. Circles of poets, adapting elements of Darío's writing style and themes, congregated in León, Managua and Masaya. Perhaps the best and most popular figure from these groups was José T. Olivares, whose verse sometimes combined descriptions of Nicaraguan natural characteristics with a subtle commentary on the presence of U.S. Marines in Nicaragua.

In "The Suffocating Heat of the Sun" (1913) Olivares writes:

Countryside afflicted with dust and sun:
through them my disillusion mounts.
Parched prairies that wait for the rain,
ruins, cemetery of the spring.
Hills burned from March; they will come
many years from the world, and always they must
quiet their enigma. . . I am a foreigner
on my train of Yankee marines.
Before the flag that smothered my flag.
A bath of fire saddens the harvest.
Yellow flowers of the withered countryside
With which the villains take to their lovers. . .
(Olivares in Asís 1986:32-33)

Despite *modernismo's* initial popularity with Nicaraguan poets, by the 1910s many lyricists had begun rejecting Darío's poetic conventions. By 1920 two major poetic tendencies had developed in Nicaragua. The Generation of 1920, based in Managua, assumed a "neo-romantic"

outlook with respect to poetry and considered Nicaragua's pastoral landscape an excellent resource for verse-making (Linares 1969:6).¹⁰ In León another tendency emerged, also moving away from some of *modernismo's* conventions. These poets, the post-*modernistas*, were intent on creating their own type of poetry, independent of foreign influences. Some of the post-*modernistas* included: Alfonso Cortés, Salomón de la Selva, Azarías Pallais and Rafael Montiel. As a group they rejected Darío's visions of "essential splendor" and "ethereal elegance."¹¹

The post-*modernistas'* poetry signalled a shift away from the concept, espoused by the *modernistas*, that politics and art should remain mutually exclusive. Many of the post-*modernista* poets used their verse to express their opposition to capitalism, imperialism and authoritarianism (particularly during the 1910s and 1920s in response to the occupation of Nicaragua by the U.S.

¹⁰For a brief introduction to the Generation of 1920 and a collection of the poets' works, see Julio Linares's Generación de 1920: Antología (1969).

¹¹Alfonso Cortés's poetry sets him apart from almost all of Nicaraguan poets. His verse was so unique that critics would often refer to his poems as *alfonsinos*. Ernesto Cardenal characterized Cortés's poems as "mysterious and rare, paradoxical and enigmatic, frequently metaphysical and many times preoccupied by problems such as space and time" (Cardenal 1974:25). Cardenal considered Cortés's verse to be so powerful that he suggested that Cortés to be "the most important Nicaraguan poet since Darío" (Cardenal 1974:26)

marines, and during the late 1930s upon observing some of the atrocities Anastasio Somoza García perpetrated) and their advocacy of socialism in Central America (Cardenal 1974:14). Furthermore, these poets, in the same vein as Olivares, also incorporated concrete local and national symbols and themes into their verse.

One such symbol of Nicaraguan independence is the national flag. Azarias Pallais's verse repeatedly makes reference to Nicaragua's colors, blue and white. In "La fiesta de los pintores" Pallais credits the colors of the flag with making the narrator's heart race (Pallais in Cardenal 1974:23). In "La leyenda dorada va por los siete planos del verde silencio," Pallais writes:

The Golden Legend: Vincent of Paul:
Give me some white wings; give me a blue stone!
Blue and white: My homeland, your flag tells me;
the abominable, she-wolf, filibuster will die!
(Pallais in Cardenal 1986:8)

These lines provide an excellent example of the dual nature of Nicaraguan political poetry. On one hand this poem responds to Nicaraguans' search for identity (the Nicaraguan flag), on the other hand it looks at the overtly political issues at hand (the legacy of U.S. intervention that the filibuster--i.e. William Walker--symbolizes).

Through their willingness to diverge from *modernismo* and their ability to incorporate national themes in their

verse, the post-modernistas, particularly Azarías Pallais, laid the foundations for the following generation of protest poets, the Vanguardia movement.¹²

The next decade saw more changes in the genre of Nicaraguan protest poetry. In the late 1920s and 1930s, a nationalist literature movement emerged from the economic elite of Granada. This group, the Vanguardia movement, had a dual impact: politics and poetry. Whereas its political impression was short-lived the poetry that it generated made a major contribution to the development of Nicaraguan poetry as a whole.

The Vanguardia Movement¹³

Luis Alberto Cabrales and José Coronel Urtecho, after exposure to extreme nationalist views while traveling abroad, founded the anti-imperialist Vanguardia literary movement in 1927.¹⁴ Arguing that Nicaraguan

¹²According to Ernesto Cardenal, the Vanguardistas openly acknowledged Pallais as a precursor to their movement (Cardenal 1974:14).

¹³For a recent comprehensive study of the Vanguardia Movement see Jorge Eduardo Arellano's Entre la tradición y la modernidad: El movimiento nicaragüense de vanguardia (1992). For a short history of the Vanguardia Movement by Ernesto Cardenal and an abridged collection of its manifestos and the Vanguardistas' works, see 50 años del movimiento de vanguardia de Nicaragua, special nos. 22-23 of El Pez y la Serpiente (Winter 1978-Summer 1979).

¹⁴Vehemently opposed to all of imperialism's manifestations (politics, culture, poetry, etc.), the Vanguardia nevertheless
(continued...)

culture, society and politics were in a state of decay, this group recruited young national writers to revitalize Nicaraguan literature. Responding to the call for a cultural renaissance were a number of poets, including Cabrales, Coronel Urtecho, Joaquín Pasos, Octavio Rocha, Alberto Ordóñez Argüello and Pablo Antonio Cuadra. Cuadra, the youngest member of the circle and the one who would ultimately become the most identifiable with the movement, explained that the Vanguardia was driven by two forces. First, the Vanguardia poets stressed nationalism. "We want to preserve intellectually what is ours. . . To preserve our tradition, our original customs. Our language. To preserve our nationality; creating it every day," explained Cuadra. Second, the Vanguardia made a concerted effort to reject nineteenth century conventions. According to Cuadra the previous century reflected "old literature, old politics of stupid ideas, daily deterioration of everything that is truly art; above all an outdated literature" (El Pez y la Serpiente 1978-79:27).

In another 1931 manifesto the Vanguardia summarized its literary philosophy:

¹⁴(...continued)

drew their political inspiration from abroad. They openly referred to themselves as "reaccionarios" and in the same vein that Nazi Germany's S.S. and S.A. referred to themselves as "black shirts" and "brown shirts", respectively, the Vanguardia called themselves "blue shirts."

We reject: imitation; rhetoric; rules; the academicism; linguistic purism; dark circles under the eyes and twilight; the themes that the dead write. (Arellano 1992:116).

We encourage: originality; creation; the new work that dictates its own laws; linguistic invention; the bad word; youthful and happy poetry; the dawn of a national literature. (Arellano 1992:117).

The Vanguardia struck out against many of Nicaragua's traditional, political institutions. A 1931 manifesto issued by the poets reveals some of their political orientations:

We condemn. . .the Conservative and Liberal parties because they divide Nicaragua.

We condemn that they call liberalism and conservatism historical parties because they are anti-historical.

We reproach democracy, a misleading word used by the bourgeois exploiters in order to design a social and political system where the people believe that they govern or decide, when in reality it is those exploiter classes that govern and lead.

We reproach "layism" and "the irreligion" in the education, that will carry Nicaragua to atheism and communism.

We reproach the daily patricides "La Prensa" and "La Noticia" and their directors Pedro Joaquín Chamorro and Juan Ramón Avilés, siamese brothers." (Arellano 1992:114)

As nationalists these writers often identified with Sandino in his struggle against U.S. imperialism. Poems by Joaquín Pasos (1914-1946), "Kick Them Out With Vio-

lence, If Need Be," and Manolo Cuadra (1907-1957), "Simplistic Elegy," illustrate the Vanguardia's anti-imperialist views.

Yankees, get out,
out, out, Yankees.
Get out, get out, get out,
out, out, Yankees.
This perfumed land is ours.
Mangos, chocomicos, guavas and plums,
and many more mountain fruits that grow wild in
Mombacho.

This land is ours with all its lovely flowering of
customs
and its language, a Spanish which says: "Gringo,
man, take a walk."

Out, out, out,
GET OUT!
The air stirs with a people's spirit
whose beauty you can't toss out
like some tawdry tourist souvenir.
(Pasos in Zimmerman 1980:87)

They fought against a whole regiment, better armed,
against machine guns and rapid-fire rifles, against
prodigious beast of earth and air
driven by perfectly cold-blooded men.

They floated in the light of the new consciousness.
Milk still white on their lips,
so happy, radiant and strong
they kissed their cousins and girlfriends goodbye.
(Cuadra in Zimmerman 1980:49)

Despite these lyrical anti-United States manifestations many of the Vanguardia poets did not differentiate between Sandino and Somoza. As a matter of fact, their anti-democracy leanings and their pro-fascism orientation had many of the Vanguardia looking to Somoza for leader-

ship in the 1930s. Feeling that Nicaragua needed a "healthy dictatorship" (White 1986:3) and hoping that Somoza would prioritize national cultural interests over partisan interests, members of the Vanguardia signed a manifesto supporting the efforts by the young head of the National Guard, Anastasio Somoza García, to assume control of the country (José Coronel Urtecho in White 1986:20).¹⁵

Despite being vehemently pro-Nicaraguan, the Vanguardia was not blindly nationalistic. Pablo Antonio Cuadra explained that the Vanguardia's nationalism was not about singing praises to the home country, rather it was about discovering the true nature of it. For Pablo Antonio Cuadra, Nicaragua grew up without an identity and U.S. intervention magnified this void: ". . .we inherited a wordless country that asked us for names, and an invaded country that needed to affirm itself by pronouncing

¹⁵Anastasio Somoza García's oppressive tactics and his unwillingness to patronize Nicaraguan national culture ultimately disillusioned many members of the Vanguardia. By 1946, all members of the movement who had previously given him "theoretical support" had withdrawn it.

It was from Vanguardia that many poets began to feel the wrath of Somoza García. Manolo Cuadra, like Coronel Urtecho, initially supported Somoza. As a matter of fact, Cuadra joined the National Guard and fought against Sandino. As Somoza's dictatorship became more oppressive though, Cuadra became more critical of him, until Somoza García had him imprisoned (Cardenal 1974:75). Pablo Antonio Cuadra's anti-Somoza stance also eventually led to his imprisonment (White 1986:21).

its nationality" (Cuadra in Pailler 1981:4). It was the obligation of the poet to search for an appropriate expression for examining Nicaragua's roots, while undertaking the same task of giving the land an identity that Adam accepted in "Genesis" of the Hebrew Bible (Cuadra 1974:13).

According to Cuadra, the project of reclaiming Nicaragua's national identity presented the Vanguardia with two principal duties. First, poets had to "give free reign to the emotion of being Nicaraguan and being in Nicaragua." It was the responsibility of the artist to report not only what was happening in Nicaragua, but what it meant to be Nicaraguan as well. Second, once discovering the essence of the Nicaraguan the poet assumes the task of making this "spirit amiable, sensible, tangible, concrete, [and] assimilable for everyone" (Pailler 1981:4).

Cuadra believed that the most effective way of achieving the forementioned objective was through the utilization of national symbols and popular culture. Rather than making references to objects in distant lands (e.g. Europe and North America) the Vanguardia poets looked to Nicaragua for their material. They used national folklore and "songs, theater, speeches, Christmas

carols and romances" from traditional and popular sources (Cardenal 1948:17).

An excerpt from Pablo Antonio Cuadra's poem, "Ars Poetica", illustrates the Vanguardia's approach to popular culture in the context of poetry.

To return is necessary
to the source of the song:
to find poetry from current things,
to sing for whatever
with ordinary tone
that one uses in love
We shall sing
like the sparrow sings to the lemon flower:
to find poetry of common things
poetry of the day, poetry of Tuesday and of Monday,
poetry of the jug, the hammock and the tortoise,
the pipían, the chayote,
the draught of liquor and the daily wages;
the name and the place that have the stars,
the diverse signs that paint the horizon,
the herbs and the flowers that grow in the mountain
and that we hear if we want to hear.
Say what we want.
Want what we say.
We sing
that we live! (Cuadra in Pailler 1981:4)

For Cuadra, though, simple recognition of Nicaragua's national identity as it is rooted in Nicaraguan history and traditional lore was insufficient. For Cuadra, what was important was how this ancient past affected contemporary Nicaragua. He set out to create "a poetry capable of uniting the fragmented reality of Nicaragua" (White 1982:45). In doing so, Cuadra turned poet-historian by providing a revisionist view of the Nicaraguan past. Rather than relating history from the

perspective of the conquerors, Cuadra's poetry relates it from the history of the vanquished.

Cuadra found his answer to the question, "What is Nicaraguan?" in the everyday lives of the working people. He saw in the peasantry a dignity that had heretofore been overlooked; he saw in the sailors of Lake Nicaragua a certain power, a certain knowledge and a way of looking at life that was authentically Nicaraguan. By looking at popular forms and folklore and extracting what was Nicaraguan from the language of the people, Cuadra asserted that he would be able to uncover Nicaraguan national identity.

Cuadra's quest for Nicaraguan national identity came to a pre-revolutionary head with the publication of These Faces that Stick Out in the Multitude (1976). Steven White, in his introduction to this work, points out that "[t]he faces in the crowd in this book are portraits of dozens of anonymous Nicaraguans searching for a country where they can live in freedom" (Cuadra 1988:vi).

To many the Vanguardia's work "signified an authentic national renaissance" (White 1986:8). Its main contribution to Nicaraguan poetry was in its departure from *modernismo*. In sum the Vanguardia poets' experimentation and their desire to uncover their true Nicara-

guan roots became a model for subsequent generations of poets.

Although all members of the Vanguardia made some type of impression on the development of Nicaraguan poetry, it was José Coronel Urtecho who made the biggest contribution to Nicaraguan post-1979 revolutionary poetry. By rejecting the previous poetic form, with its emphasis on abstract notions, in favor of a writing style that incorporated concrete images, Coronel created a mode of cultural production that would ultimately lend itself to the 1979 revolution. This style, "exteriorism," would later be popularized by Ernesto Cardenal and would be adopted by the national-popular as the means to create poetry.

Generation of the 1940s

The next generation of poets, the "Generation of 1940s", immediately dissociated themselves from Somoza and the values of the Vanguardia. Whereas the Vanguardia had invested some hope in Anastasio Somoza García (after he had promised to patronize Nicaraguan culture) before realizing that he was insincere, the "Generation of 1940s" immediately recognized Somoza as a puppet of United States foreign policy, economic imperialism and cultural imperialism.

Ernesto Mejía Sánchez, Carlos Martínez Rivas and Ernesto Cardenal made up the core of the Generation of the 1940s. Other members included Francisco Pérez Estrada, Enrique Fernández Morales, Guillermo Rothschuh, Fernando Silva, María Teresa Sánchez, Mario Cajina Vega and Mariana Sansón. Their poetry drew from a multitude of different themes including African and Native American culture, the oppressive nature of Nicaraguan society in the Somoza dynasty, martyred guerrillas, U. S. neo-imperialism, Sandino, social outcasts, religion, the role of poets in the revolutionary process and the hope for a day without the Somozas.

In "Cradle Song Without Music" Carlos Martínez Rivas explores some of the nuances of Nicaraguan identity. In the same vein that Octavio Paz equates the conquest of Mexico with the term, "la chingada", Martínez Rivas associates the situation of Nicaragua under the Somoza dictatorship with an obscene hand gesture (as perceived by Nicaraguans) and suggests that future generations will also come to know this silent form of protest.

Sleep, future citizens of Nicaragua.
Hushabye, my child, hushabye.

 . . .
Soon enough you'll grow up. And you'll catch
on the wing the way things go
in this lovely land of Darío. You'll learn to close
your fist, leaving the thumb between middle
and index fingers: the heraldic salute of your
country.

It's not visible in the triangle of the shield
but it's there, under the Phrygian cap;
since you'll have to wear it, hidden in your pocket
(Martínez in Zimmerman 1980:97)

In Ernesto Mejía Sánchez's poem, "Caesar and the
Flesh," Nicaragua's social conditions provide the context
from which Mejía Sánchez draws.

Caesar levied one more tax
for the happiness of his people.
The butchers raise the price of meat
to pay him; the cattlemen raise
the price of cattle to pay him;
only the people have to kneel down
to pay him, because all of the meat
and the cattle, the cattlemen and
the butchers belong to Caesar, everything
but the people.
(Mejía Sánchez in Zimmerman 1980:101)

Finally, in "Placard" Mario Cajina Vega equates
elements of Nicaragua's national identity with revolu-
tion.

The Revolution is the land,
is the plow preparing the cornfields
and a family of hoes cultivating gardens.
The Revolution is the worker
(The revolution is the worker with a
flower).
The Revolution is the man
it is the friend that does not think the
same and votes contrary and continues
being the same friend.
The Revolution is the Indian.
The Revolution is a book and a free man.
(Cajina Vega in Zimmerman 1980: 149-155)

Perhaps the two most important elements to come from
this generation were the revolutionary fervor and
exteriorist poetry of Ernesto Cardenal. Not only did his

poetry encompass almost all aspects of Nicaraguan national identity, but his poetry verse was also appealing and imitable. Utilizing the convention made popular by José Coronel Urtecho, "exteriorism", Cardenal's poems were "narrative and anecdotal, made with the elements of real life and with concrete things, with proper names and precise details and exact dates. . ." (Cardenal 1974:9).

This fragment from "The Peasant Women of Cuá" characterizes Cardenal's writing style.

Now I'll tell you about the cries of Cuá
cries of women like pangs of birth
María Venancia, 90 years old, deaf, half dead
shouts at the soldiers, I haven't seen any
boys.
Amanda Aguilar, 50 years old
with her daughter Petrone and Erliinda
I haven't seen any boys
like pangs of birth
-Imprisoned three months straight in a mountain
barrack-
Angela García, 25 years old and seven children
Cándida, 16 years old, suckles a baby girl
very tiny and underfed
Many have heard these cries of Cuá
wails of the native land like pangs of birth. .
(Cardenal in Zimmerman 1980:159).

In "Zero Hour" Cardenal utilizes a typical Nicaraguan setting in creating the context for the growth of the narrator's revolutionary consciousness.

In April Nicaraguan fields are dry.
It is the month when fires burn in the fields,
the hottest month, the pastures covered with hot
cinders,
and the hills the color of coal;
when the winds are hot and the air smell of smoke

. . .
In May the first rains begin to fall.
The young grass is reborn from the ashes.
Muddy tractors plow through fields.
Butterflies and puddles litter the paths,
the nights fresh and filled with insects,
and it rains all night. In May
the jacarandas bloom in Managua streets.
But April is the month of death in Nicaragua.

They murdered them in April.
I was with them in the April rebellion
and I learned how to handle a Rising machine gun.
(Cardenal in Zimmerman 1980:107)

Cardenal's importance to the revolution transcended his poetic and spiritual presence. The poetry workshops directed by Cardenal and the Costa Rican poet Mayra Jiménez in the 1960s and '70s would ultimately help shape national identity, by allowing non-intellectuals (i.e. campesinos, workers, soldiers, etc.) to participate in the creation of national culture, and raise revolutionary consciousness, by giving the oppressed the means to articulate their reality. Cardenal's workshops also laid the groundwork for the cultural democratization projects established during the FSLN rule (1979-1990).

In "National Song" Ernesto Cardenal provides a glimpse of the philosophy which he would develop into a national program of cultural democratization.

The struggle continues. . .
there are so many Rubén Darío's in the mountains
swinging machetes, living in shacks in perpetual
night.
The philosopher who remained a shoeshine boy. . .

the marvelous painter among the goats. Not only
doesn't he know how to read and write:
he doesn't know how to think, wish, dream.

(Cardenal in Zimmerman 1980:71)

Generation of 1950

The next group of poets came to be known as the "Generation of 1950." Ernesto Gutiérrez and Rigoberto López Pérez were the two most prominent figures who emerged from this movement. Like poets from the preceding generations, they sought to utilize elements of Nicaragua's national identity into their verse while also discussing Nicaragua's political situation and offering insight into the disillusionment and anxiety that Nicaraguans felt, inside and outside of their homeland.

Ernesto Gutiérrez offers a subtle criticism of Somoza García and commentary on the state of affairs in Nicaragua with "My Country is so Tiny".

My country is so tiny
that just 2,000 guardsmen keep the Government in
power.

My country is so tiny
that private life
has to be for
or against the government.

My country is so tiny
that the President
himself even settles
street fights personally.

My country is so tiny
that with the rifles of the guard
any imbecile can govern it.

(Gutiérrez in Zimmerman 1980:81).

Retaliation for the betrayal and murder of Sandino and the repression suffered by the people of Nicaragua at the hands of Anastasio Somoza García is a theme that Rigoberto López Pérez explores. In his poem "Anxiety" López Pérez writes:

The seed of Sandino's blood
lashes the murderous rooftops
multiplied, in torrents
it will cover exposed rooftops
and in sure, inevitable apocalypse
will exterminate all the murderers,
and each and every one
of the murderer's seed.
Their treacherous embrace of Sandino
is pregnant with biblical premonitions:
like the crime of Cain
like the kiss of Judas.

And then peace will reign. . .
and Nicaragua will fill with olive branches and
voices
that loft to the heavens
an everlasting psalm of love.
(López Pérez in Zimmerman 1980:111)

The 1956 assassination of Anastasio Somoza García by López Pérez resulted in a massive crack-down on intellectuals and others suspected of conspiring to kill the dictator. Luis Somoza Debayle, succeeding his father, and his brother Anastasio, the commander of the National Guard, responded to the perceived threat from the intellectuals by censoring, jailing, torturing and executing many poet-suspects. Victims of this repression included Pablo Antonio Cuadra, Edwin Castro and Ricardo Morales

Avilés. Despite their imprisonment many of the jailed poets continued to create. Edwin Castro, before his execution composed many poems while in prison (Asís 1986:13), as did Ricardo Morales Avilés, whose entire collection of poetry grew out of his prison experience.

The poetry that Castro wrote while in prison represents another strand of Nicaraguan poetry. His poems, in the forms of letters to his family, incorporate personal topics with national, political and revolutionary themes.

In his poem "And if I Don't Return?" Edwin Castro writes:

If someday I return
we'll go back to the countryside
and we'll walk together
along the same road
that we once walked
hand in hand,
in the last April
of our happy time.

Perhaps it will be another April
hot and florid.
Our footsteps will join
in the carpet of dust.
I'll climb over the fences
of the neighboring town
to cut clusters
of yellow flowers
that I'll place in your hands.
From the jacaranda I'll steal
lovely red flowers
that I'll place on your breast.
We'll go down to the river
and wet our hands
in tranquil waters. . .

And if I don't return?
If I never come back?

No matter. Go to the countryside
and take our son
along the old road
where once we walked
make him cut the jacaranda's
lovely red flowers
to adorn your breast
and climb over the fences
of the nearby pasture
to bring you bouquets
of yellow flowers.
Go down with him to the river
and wet your hands.
In the tranquil waters,
you'll feel my presence
that will fill the channels
opened by my absence!
(Castro in Zimmerman 1980:131).

In "Tomorrow, My Son, All Will Be Different" Edwin
Castro offers hope to his family and to the people of
Nicaragua.

Tomorrow, my son, all will be different.
Anguish will go out the back door
which hands of new men will then shut for good.

Peasants will rejoice over their land
(small, but theirs)
flowering with the touch of their happy work.
Daughters of factory and farmworkers will not be
whores;
There'll be bread and dress and honest work,
an end to tears in proletarian homes.

Content, you'll laugh with the laughter that comes
from paved roads, water in the rivers, rural high-
ways. . .

Tomorrow, my son, all will be different;
without whips or jails, or rifle bullets
that repress ideals.
You'll walk down the streets of all the cities,
in your hands the hands of your children,
as I can't walk with you.

Jails won't lock up your young years

as they locked up mine,
nor will you die as my father died
in exile, with tremulous eyes
craving the sight of your country.
Tomorrow, my son, all will be different.
(Castro in Zimmerman 1980:127-129)

Despite the efforts taken by the Somoza regime to restrict revolutionary verse, poets still found ways to disseminate their material. La Prensa Literaria, the literary supplement of La Prensa, pamphlets and anthologies provided a formal outlet for verse. Mimeographed sheets of paper, graffiti and bits of paper surreptitiously passed through prison bars were the means of distributing that poets utilized when the social conditions for free speech were not favorable.

In 1962 Ernesto Cardenal and Ernesto Mejía Sánchez anonymously compiled the first substantial anthology of Nicaraguan protest poetry. Cardenal and Mejía Sánchez dedicated this work, Poesía revolucionaria nicaragüense, to the memory of Anastasio Somoza García's assassin, Rigoberto López Pérez. As a result of this dedication and the collection's overtly anti-Somocista verse, the anthology's editors had to look to Mexico's Ediciones Patria y Libertad for publication.

Poesía revolucionaria nicaragüense reflected an acutely revolutionary consciousness on the part of its contributors. The poetry dealt with themes such as U.S.

military interventionism, U.S. companies in Nicaragua, exiled Nicaraguans, the Somozas, the future of Nicaragua without the Somozas, national unity, national pride and civil war. Fearful of reprisals by Luis Somoza Debayle or his brother Anastasio Somoza Debayle, the editors decided to confer anonymity to all of the authors who were still alive. Out of sixty-seven poems in the collection forty-seven were authorless. This reveals another characteristic of revolutionary poetry: "poetry of Nicaraguan social protest is also a poetry of waiting" (Cardenal and Mejía Sánchez 1962:14).

Nevertheless, as demonstrated in the poem, "To the Poets in Exile," presented anonymously in Poesía revolucionaria nicaragüense, "poetry of waiting" does not imply a poetry of passivity.

We do not envy your comfort
nor your insults to the dictator
nor your epic poems to Sandino;
that can be easily made beyond the borders.
We prefer to be here, until
the dictator converts our
cowardice into heroism, each word
that we have not said, into a well-guided missile;
we want Sandino to resurrect among us.
(Anonymous in Cardenal and Mejía Sánchez 1962:81).

The 1960s Generation

The assassination of Anastasio Somoza García, the mounting political opposition to his sons, a series of unsuccessful coups, the massacre of the guerrilla column

of El Chaparral, the killing of four National University (UNAN) students in León in 1959 by the National Guard and the revolutionary fervor that the Cuban revolution incited provided the context for the next generation of poets.

Indeed, the forementioned events provided the impetus for a plethora of new cultural activity. The early 1960s saw the creation of several cultural journals including, El Pez y la Serpiente, Revista Conservadora and La Prensa Literaria. Several literary groups emerged during this period including Praxis, a coalition of politicized artists and writers; the Bandoleros from Granada¹⁶; Grupo "M" from Managua¹⁷; Grupo Presencia from Diriamba¹⁸; the Betrayed Generation, who looked to the Beat poets in the United States for inspiration; and Frente Ventana, created in 1960 in response to the UNAN demonstrations. It was these final two groups, the Betrayed Generation and Frente Ventana, that would ultimately have the most influence on the development of poetry and the advance of the 1979 revolution.

¹⁶Members in the "Bandoleros" included Francisco de Asís Fernández, Jorge Eduardo Arellano and Raul Javier García.

¹⁷Grupo M consisted of Felix Navarrete, Luis Vega, Ciro Molina and Jacobo Marcos among others.

¹⁸"Presencia" in Diriamba included José Esteban González, Alvaro Gutiérrez and Leonel Calderón

Founded by Managuan poets Edwin Yllescas and Roberto Cuadra, and claiming Beltrán Morales and Iván Uriarte as members, the Betrayed Generation adopted an existentialist approach to life and literature, while intentionally modeling itself after the U.S. Beat Generation. Furthermore, it contended that literature and politics should remain separate and attacked Frente Ventana for its overtly political partisan verse.

For the Betrayed Generation, verse did not have to have a specific point, the fact that it existed justified its existence. Iván Uriarte's poem "The Dock" offers a good example of the Betrayed Generation's existentialist approach.

Standing on the small Bluefields dock
tottering with rotten wood
I make out the colors of fishing and trading boats.

I breakfast on fruits
while Atlantic waves rock
barges of grain, pigs and cattle.

The old and dirty coal-filled stoker
draws near blowing smoke
obscuring the island of Venado
(and I recall the funeral marches at Somoza's burial
and Edwin Castro awaiting death on another Venado
island). (Uriarte in Zimmerman 1980:127).

Despite their anti-political persuasion, members of the Betrayed Generation often did weave political themes into their verse. In Beltrán Morales's poem "Breakfast," he recognizes U.S. cultural imperialism in Nicaragua.

Like Kellogg's Corn Flakes
the Peace Corps
is imperialist penetration
in its tastiest form.
(Morales in Zimmerman 1980:151)

Conceived by Fernando Gordillo and Sergio Ramírez, Frente Ventana "aspired to be the vanguard of a new ideological and cultural movement among the nation's young people in tandem with the specifically political organizations directly tied to the FSLN" (Beverley and Zimmerman 1990:72-73). It openly acknowledged its political stand and rejected the perspective that art exists for art's sake.¹⁹ Moreover, in adopting this line, the Frente Ventana rejected the "elite literary culture represented by the legacy of the Vanguardists" (Ramírez in White 1986: 80,82). Finally, responding to criticism levied by the Betrayed Generation, the Frente Ventana declared "We are not the betrayed generation, we are the generation that will not betray Nicaragua" (White 1986:88).

Fernando Gordillo's verse illustrates some aspects of the Frente Ventana's philosophy. In "Adivinanza" Gordillo addresses the people's different responses to

¹⁹In fact, Carlos Fonseca, the founder of the FSLN, acknowledged the importance of poetry to Nicaragua, and the potential for using it to gain popular support by versifying the will of Rigoberto López Pérez.

the deaths of Anastasio Somoza García and Rigoberto López Pérez.

Two deaths:
one, in view of everyone
in the heart of no one.
The other, in view of no one
in the heart of everyone.
(Gordillo in Asís 1986:196)

Poet-combatants

It was during the 1950s and the 1960s that the line between poet-intellectual and guerrilla-activist became more obscure. Following in the footsteps of Sandino and his soldiers who wrote poetry while waging guerrilla warfare against the U. S. Marines were poet-combatants such as Ricardo Morales Avilés and Leonel Rugama, who died in combat against the National Guard. Although, the poet-combatants did not follow a unifying form, their poetry usually was similar in its degree of intensity.

Morales Avilés's commitment to the revolutionary cause is evident in this fragment from "Pancasán."

It is the decision made by the people
who will not be satisfied by words alone.
It is the decision and the word Enough!
spoken in unison, with strident fury, as
if striking out against authority.
City and country marching toward the sun,
toward the achievement of necessity;
a way of walking with curses, violent gestures,
needles in the eyes, in the body, in the stomach.
Not any single word, perhaps the definitive
fire in our hands,
hesitation is overcome at midday
when we stand facing the truth,
facing the blond beast weighed down with money,

facing the creole mule in the street shouting the
news,
and we go forward shedding the skin
that just a moment ago was ours,
as if death were alien to us
and someone told us that at the end is the beginning
of everything. . .
(Morales Avilés in Zimmerman 1980:255)

Leonel Rugama, according to Francisco de Asís
Fernández, played a particularly important part in tran-
scending the role of the poet to that of the activist.
He represented "the culmination of a process and the
beginning of another, the culmination of the process
through which intellectuals of Nicaragua began to take on
the inescapable responsibility of binding themselves
structurally to a revolutionary organization, ending
forever the way of the thinkers who proposed an art
disorganized and elitist. He also represented the new
creative possibilities of a people that has no other
alternative than to struggle for a free country or die"
(Asís 1986:20).

Rugama's poetry was not only political; it was also
satirical, humorous and at times irreverent. In "The
Earth is a Satellite of the Moon" he mocks the United
States for spending lavish sums of money on space travel
when there are many people on Earth dying of hunger.

Apollo 2 cost more than Apollo 1
Apollo 1 cost quite a bit.

Apollo 3 cost more than Apollo 2
Apollo 2 cost more than Apollo 1
Apollo 1 cost quite a bit.

Apollo 4 cost more than Apollo 3
Apollo 3 cost more than Apollo 2
Apollo 2 cost more than Apollo 1
Apollo 1 cost quite a bit.

Apollo 8 cost a bundle, but no one minded
because the astronauts were Protestant
and read the Bible from the moon,
inspiring awe, infusing joy in every Christian
and on their return Pope Paul VI gave them his
benediction.

Apollo 9 cost more than all of them together,
including Apollo 1 which cost quite a bit.

The great-grandparents of the people of Acahualinca
were less hungry than their grandparents.
The great-grandparents died of hunger.
The grandparents of the people of Acahualinca were
less hungry than their parents.
The grandparents died of hunger.
The parents of the people of Acahualinca were less
hungry than the children of the people of that
place.
The parents died of hunger.
The people of Acahualinca are less hungry than the
children of the people of that place.
The children of the people of Acahualinca are not
born because of hunger,
and hunger to be born, to die of hunger.
Blessed are the poor for they shall inherit the
moon. (Rugama in Zimmerman 1980:181)

Solentiname

Ernesto Cardenal founded the Solentiname commune in
1965 on the isle of Mancarron in Lake Nicaragua. Most of
the members of the commune were campesinos. For the most
part, Solentiname served as a spiritual retreat where
Cardenal incorporated religious doctrines into the polit-

ical struggle of the day. It was here that Cardenal began experimenting with poetry workshops.²⁰

The concerted effort by the revolutionaries to democratize poetry for the people can be traced to 1976. Mayra Jiménez, a Costa Rican poet, accepted Ernesto Cardenal's request that she go to his commune at Solentiname and create the first popular poetry workshop. These workshops were accessible to all sectors of the society and advanced the theme of revolution and Nicaraguan self-identity. According to Mayra Jiménez, the first obstacle to hurdle in these poetry workshops was in proving that "poetry isn't an art that belongs to a small minority, to an elite, but that art is the people's" (Cardenal in White 1986:109). These poetry workshops became a constant feature of Solentiname life. The success of these workshops was immediate and it spawned the growth of similar workshops. It also began to spawn revolutionary attitudes.²¹

Poetry by Solentiname participants, Bosco Centeno and Elvis Chavarría, illustrate the type of verse that

²⁰For Ernesto Cardenal's own account of his experiences in Solentiname, see The Gospel in Solentiname (1976).

²¹For a good account of the poetry project in Solentiname see Gullette, David. Nicaraguan Peasant Poetry from Solentiname (1988).

the workshop produced. In "Tyrant Fear the Poets"

Centeno's verse takes on a revolutionary tone:

Tyrant fear the poets
because neither with your Sherman tanks
nor with your fighter planes
nor with your combat battalions
nor with your security forces
nor with your Nicolasa
nor with your 40 thousand marines
nor with your super-trained rangers
nor even with your God
will you avoid being shot as this story unfolds.
(Centeno in Gullette 1988:70)

Elvis Chavarría's poetry, on the other hand, appears more reflective, more rooted in the events of the day.

In "Late Afternoon in Solentiname" Chavarría writes:

A dark shadow over an island.
In the sky a clarity of reds,
oranges, lilacs, violets.
A world of color alone.
And I alone in the world.
(Chavarría in Gullette 1988:56)

In October, 1977 the Solentiname campesino poets (all twenty-three of them) participated in an assault on the Cuartel of San Carlos. The National Guard responded by destroying the Solentiname commune.

Female Poets

The 1960s and 1970s saw the base of popular poetry expand to include women. Doris María Tijerino, Daisy Zamora and Michele Najlis, from the 1960s generation, and Christian Santos, Judith Reyes, Rosario Murillo and Gioconda Belli, from the generation of the 1970s, gained

national prominence. Their fusion of the women's struggle with that of the struggle against the Somoza dictatorship provided the anti-Somoza front with an even greater base of popular support.²²

Michele Najlis's poem, "Now as you walk along the roads of your country," provides a typical example of pro-combatant verse.

Now as you walk along the roads of your country,
heart bursting out of your body.
Now,
with your legs in the mud
and your rifle - someday a plow -
borne on your strong back.
Now,
perhaps by day
perhaps by night
remember that the people are your victory
and your fight is theirs.
(Najlis in Zimmerman 1980:195)

Unlike the direct approach employed by Najlis, many female poets supported the rebellion through verse that tied the revolutionary cause with those facets of life that are distinctly feminine.

Christian Santos, in her poem "I Love You Son," provides a mother's perspective as she longs for the return of her son from the front.

I love you son in the midst of this cruel struggle
in that we defend the sovereignty of our land.
I love you son, and with the force of a female

²²For a short essay on the historical development of Nicaraguan women's poetry see Daisy Zamora's new anthology, La mujer nicaragüense en la poesía (1992).

jaguar who recently gave birth
I miss you and I search for you in the bright faces
of the combatants that descend from the trucks
returning from the border.
(Santos in Zamora 1992:182)

Much of Gioconda Belli's poetic voice portrays
Nicaragua as a woman giving birth. In "What are You
Nicaragua?" Belli writes:

What are you
but aches and dust and cries in the evening
-"cries of women, like pangs of birth"-?
What are you
but clenched fist and a bullet in the mouth?
What are you to make me ache so much?

In "We'll Be New," Belli looks hopefully to the
future of Nicaragua, taking care to include details and
references to the mundane as only a mother or woman would
appreciate.

We'll be new, love,
we'll wash away what is old and depraved
the putrid petty bourgeois tendencies and vices
with blood.

We'll be new
with clear eyes and shiny mouths
with simple words like the people's bread
like hard rolls from Jinotepe
or Paz Centro's creamy cheese.

Sturdy and plain
our children will rise up
born on straw mats and pallets
in the midst of a fiesta of guitars.

New, love, do you understand?
 bright, shiny new.
Like the moons and the suns of newly born stars,
with our hair washed and our blood cleansed
and our silence bathed.

We'll be new, love,
with that clean fresh smell of clothes on the line
and the enormous challenge of liberty hurled in the
air
like a flight of birds.
(Belli in Zimmerman 1980:275)

By the time of the FSLN's final offensive in 1979 Nicaragua was bubbling over with poetic activity. Not only were poets from the forementioned generations producing verse, but teachers, students, combatants, proletarians and campesinos also were writing poetry. Some versified the day to day events of the war; others, like soldier Ricardo Su, wrote poem-letters revealing to friends and family their personal feelings as molded by combat (Nicaráuac April-June 1981:36).

The ubiquity of poetry at the time of the Sandinista victory is also evident in La Prensa, as poetry made its way onto the pages usually reserved for editorials. The literary supplement, La Prensa Literaria, is generally the means by which poetry appears in the newspaper, but the period between January 22, 1979 and May 31, 1979 saw a noticeable increase of poetry being published in the main body of La Prensa. During that period forty-six poems appeared in the paper. These poems came from all sectors of the society: children, campesinos, workers, teachers, members of the FSLN, etc. Humberto Ortega,

FSLN commandant, frequently submitted poems to La Prensa²³, as did his brother and FSLN commandant, Daniel Ortega.²⁴

It is evident that the period prior to the final assault by the Sandinistas saw the flowering of poetry all over Nicaragua. Its popularity seemed to grow exponentially. Each group of poets reached new ears, raised new consciousness regarding national identity and begot a new generation of poets. Steven White points out that "culture in Nicaragua is transmitted from one generation to the next--not in the context of universities or academic settings--but in direct conversations" (White 1986:9). With each interaction, with each transmittance of this important element of the national identity, the revolutionary consciousness of the masses became more acute.

As previously mentioned, Gramsci argued that the cultural awakening of Europe during the Enlightenment helped spawn revolutionary consciousness and helped prepare the masses for the French Revolution. He insist-

²³In a four month period, Humberto Ortega sent at least three poems to La Prensa.

²⁴La Prensa. Jan. 22, 1979 to May 31, 1979. The author scanned the issues of the newspaper issue by issue looking for poetry. Unfortunately many of the issues during this period were missing. Nevertheless, the results were conclusive.

ed that every pamphlet and play radicalized the people a little more, such that when the appropriate potentially revolutionary event came to pass the people knew to act. This idea can be easily adapted to the role that poetry played in creating revolutionary consciousness. With each poem celebrating Nicaraguan national identity the Nicaraguan masses and middle class became more radicalized. As a result of this conscious-raising the assassination of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro announced to the whole of Nicaragua that the time to act was at hand.

The recognition of the importance of culture was instrumental to the success of the Sandinistas. By drawing from poetry's rich past and its pursuit of a Nicaraguan national identity, the Sandinistas garnered popular support. They understood that "until they were able to do so with arms, the Nicaraguan people fought with poetry." By paying heed to Ernesto Cardenal's belief, that poetry has the ability "to construct a country, and to create a new man, to change the society, to make the future of Nicaragua", the Sandinistas could utilize the Nicaraguan cultural awakening to their advantage (Cardenal 1974:11).

That the Somoza dictators continuously aligned themselves with U. S. cultural values was an important factor in Somocismo's downfall. By rejecting Nicaraguan

folklore and culture in favor of U. S. marching bands and Reader's Digests, the alienation felt by the people became more acute. According to Sergio Ramírez, Somoza's misunderstanding of his own people "was fortunate for the country since it would have been difficult to destroy a firmly entrenched Somocist cultural apparatus". (Ramírez interview in White 1986:82)

According to John Beverley and Marc Zimmerman, in Literature and Politics in the Central American Revolutions:

"[w]hat transformed a potentially revolutionary situation into actual revolutionary movements, however, was the ability of the opposition to forge the broadest possible organizational and ideological consensus against the regimes they faced. This is where the role of cultural practices was to prove decisive" (Beverley and Zimmerman 1990:22).

The creation of an anti-Somocista, cultural popular front suggests that the revolutionary forces, by uniting the different sectors of society through poetry into one strong anti-Somoza body, were able to defeat the dictator. The Sandinistas were able to use poetry, even if it was not revolutionary, to their advantage.

Poetry served as a medium for conveying information and for expressing identity. In fact, poetry promoted a reality that Somocismo and U. S. cultural imperialism were denying the Nicaraguan people. It called for the

people to rise up, remember Sandino, create and celebrate their national identity and revolt. In essence, poetry promoted revolutionary consciousness. As a result of its pervasiveness and its role in bringing about revolutionary consciousness poetry, in fact, became part of Nicaragua's national identity.

CONCLUSION

The Sandinista Revolution was the product of an expanding revolutionary consciousness of the people, and the revolutionary consciousness of the people emerged from the evolution of poetry. Beginning with Rubén Darío and ending with the poetry of the people, poetry became an integral element of the Nicaraguan national identity, raised the revolutionary consciousness of the people, and enabled the people of León in the wake of their victory to declare: "The Triumph of the Revolution is the Triumph of Poetry." (Asís Fernández 1986:25)

DEMOCRATIZING CULTURE

[S]ince. . . culture. . . is a basic concept of socialism, because it integrates and makes concrete the vague concept of freedom of thought, I would like it to be enlivened by the other concept, that of the organization. Let us organize culture in the same way that we seek to organize any practical activity (Gramsci 1988: 25).

Sandinista Cultural Hegemony

The fall of Anastasio Somoza Debayle and the assumption of power by the FSLN precipitated a flood of cultural activity throughout Nicaragua. Most certainly, the days following Somoza's departure saw the Nicaraguan people celebrate the removal of the dictatorship through poetry, song and dance. The release of built-up repression also took the form of murals and graffiti. Indeed, spray cans often served as pens and walls as paper as Nicaraguans, for the first time, freely and without fear of reprisal, took their poetry of liberation into the public arena.²⁵

²⁵The days immediately following the fall of Somoza, according to Julio Cortázar, saw the emergence of the word, culture, as a part of everyday street language: "Scarcely had July 19 arrived, when the word, culture begins to pique the ears . . . they have pulled the word, culture, to the street as if it was a
(continued...)

The Sandinistas understood that the true success of the revolution lay not in the overthrow of the tyrant, but rather the continued transition of the political process from dictatorship to democracy. In order to create a full participatory democracy, though, Nicaraguans would have to continue the process of self-realization, the same process, rooted in national identity and popular participation, and taking the form of poetry, that the Sandinistas utilized in raising the peoples' revolutionary consciousness. Thus, realizing its manifest importance to the revolution, on July 20, 1979 the Sandinista Governmental Junta of the National Reconstruction by Decree No. 6 created the Ministry of Culture, making Nicaragua only the second Latin American country to have such a ministerial position.²⁶

²⁵(...continued)

cart of ice cream or fruit, they have placed it in the hand and the mouth of the people with the simple and cordial gesture of offering a banana" (Hollis, 12-13).

²⁶Daisy Zamora, in her introduction to Hacia una política cultural, offers an insightful account of the Nicaraguan people's reaction to the creation of the Ministry of Culture. According to the poet, the announcement regarding the new ministry had an immediate impact on the people of Nicaragua. According to Daisy Zamora, Cardenal's vice-Minister of Culture, "in all of the plazas, atriums, parks, the immediate response of the people was to convert the mansions of the Somoza functionaries, of the members of the National Guard and the exclusive clubs of the bourgeoisie, into Cultural Centers, Casas de Cultura" (Hacia una política cultural, Daisy Zamora, p. 10).

The main objectives set before the Ministry of Culture were

. . . to neutralize the prevalent influences and the heritage of the past through the rescue and the preservation of the natural values that bring into harmony the Nicaraguan national identity . . . and to develop, based on our own values, a democratic and anti-imperialist culture, by means of which, the people become the creator of culture and the protagonist, and cease being a simple receptor and consumer, as they were in the past of foreign, cultural values. (In Zamora 1982: 277)

In order to achieve the forementioned objectives the Ministry of Culture determined that it would have to assume a dominant role in Nicaragua's cultural policies. Thus, placing itself at the front of the nation's cultural affairs, the Ministry adopted an expansive agenda for the cultural transformation.

Functions that the Ministry shouldered included: the creation of an administrative body that would plan cultural activities on a national level; the organization and administration of activities and resources that would promote active popular participation on an ever-expanding scale; the creation of the means of recovering Nicaragua's lost cultural heritage; the promotion of the production of cultural goods in order to respond to the needs that the society will experience in the process of reconstruction and the promotion of Nicaraguan culture on an international level; the preparation of the necessary

human resources for the direction, planning, administration and fostering of the culture. (In Zamora 1979: 278)

In order to make the democratization of culture a nationwide project, the Ministry of Culture deemed that it would have to establish a network that would allow it to reach Nicaragua's remotest sector. The creation and the implementation of popular organizations, the Popular Centers of Culture, throughout the country were the Ministry's response to this challenge. Their stated purpose, according to Ernesto Cardenal, was to "tend to the Cultural Houses" and to "centralize the activities of the Ministry of Culture, making them the representation of the Ministry in the different parts of the country" (Cardenal 1980b: 171). The ideological purpose of the Popular Centers, Cardenal explained, was to "conjugate forces in the different organisms of the state with the mass organizations, in everything relating to culture and to activate the work of the masses in the area of culture" and to "activate all the patriotic activities that contribute to the political and ideological formation of [the Nicaraguan] people" (ibid: 171).

The goal of these projects, according to Nicaragua's first Minister of Culture, was to establish a new culture, based on Nicaragua's reclaimed national identity, and rooted in the concept of the "new human". The Minis-

try envisioned these two concepts forming a symbiotic relationship where each continuously reinforced the other. The "new culture" would create the "new human" and, in turn, the "new human" would create the "new culture". The philosophical consensus of the Government Junta was that if the Ministry of Culture achieved its goals, the cultural and political revolution would ultimately succeed.

Within the first two years of the triumph, many members of the Government Junta expounded on the importance of creating a new culture that was distinctly Nicaraguan. Sandinista luminaries such as Daniel Ortega, Tomás Borge, Carlos Nuñez and Luis Carrión and others either presented papers or speeches on the topic.²⁷ An example of the FSLN's understanding of, and commitment to, the cultural revolution is apparent in the February 25, 1980 addresses given to the First Assembly of Cultural Workers by two of the Sandinistas' most articulate spokespeople, Bayardo Arce and Sergio Ramírez Mercado.

In Arce's speech to the cultural workers at the Palace of the Heroes of the Revolution in Managua, seven

²⁷For a collection of essays on revolution and culture by Sandinista officials see Zamora, Daisy, ed. 1982. Hacia una política cultural de la revolución popular sandinista. Managua: Ministerio de Cultura.

months after the triumph, he offered the following observations regarding the cultural situation in Nicaragua.

First, since cultural activity recovers, reproduces, develops and transmits the values, ideas and customs of a society, it is political activity. Therefore, Arce insisted, it is imperative that cultural workers acknowledge culture's importance to the preservation of the revolution and not dissociate themselves and their work from the revolutionary process (Arce 1980: 17).

Since "all. . . [pre-triumph]. . . cultural activity of the system was. . . used to justify. . . economic injustices" it is necessary for the people to create a culture that can counteract the previous society's negative influences (Arce 1980:18).²⁸ This, according to Arce, would be the Sandinistas' biggest challenge, for the bourgeois ideology that thrived under the Somoza

²⁸Arce explains, "We knew that the principal and first form of oppression that we had to destroy was economic. At the same time we knew that over and above this economic oppression rose a whole ensemble of socio-cultural justifications. A whole ensemble of ideological values arose that through the educational system, through the means of communication, through the culture resulted in the development, the maintenance and the reproduction of criteria that separated themselves from the unjust economy" (Arce 1980: 18).

Cultural imperialism existed in many forms in pre-revolutionary Nicaragua. Many cultural activities reflected U.S. values, as the Somoza government presented Reader's Digest, rock music and Miami art as acceptable forms of recreation (Hollis 1990: 13). Author's interview with UCA student in Managua, Nicaragua, Jan. 1993).

regime had penetrated Nicaraguan popular consciousness (Arce 1980:19). The struggle against the ideological effects of Somocismo also included a struggle against U.S. cultural imperialism in all of its manifestations. Arce explained:

. . . [W]e are going to have to struggle against an investment of millions and millions of dollars in better technology for the transmissions of an ideology that keeps the people subjugated. . . . We are going to have to struggle against the techniques of cinema, of television, of music; against all of the modern techniques that have made possible for a series of ideological values alien to our reality, alien to our interests, alien to our idiosyncrasies, to have inserted themselves [into our subconscious] such that they appear normal today in our country, in our society. (Arce 1980: 20).

In order to resist the overwhelming cultural forces lingering from the Somoza regime and the current foreign, ideological forces that would still attempt to penetrate Nicaraguan society, Arce asserted that it was necessary to develop an "ideological front" (Arce 1980: 18). The Ministry of Culture was to serve as a buttress for this "ideological front," providing government support and guidance for the different cultural organizations in their attempts to "outline a political culture coherent with the revolution. . .[and]. . .with the demands of our people in this revolutionary process" (Arce 1980: 17).

For Arce, though, the Ministry would constitute only one part of the "cultural front". Since the Ministry was concentrating its resources primarily on the culturalization of the masses, Arce suggested that a second part of the "cultural front" derive from Nicaragua's intellectuals and cultural professionals. Although these elites had benefitted from the Somocista, bourgeois culture, which had provided educational and cultural opportunities to Nicaragua's more fortunate and ignored the cultural and educational aspirations of the masses, Arce emphasized that they would also play an instrumental role in the formulation of a new Nicaraguan society.

Whereas the mobilization of the intellectuals in previous revolutionary processes had resulted in the continued stratification of society with the articulate and cultured intellectuals, doing their part for the revolution by simply representing the inarticulate and uncultured masses, the mobilization of Nicaragua's intellectuals was to have more culturally democratic results. Arce asserted that the intellectuals' primary responsibility would be to help destroy the barriers that separated them from the people. They would do this by assisting in the Ministry's cultural projects and by making available to the masses the knowledge and means of pro-

duction for their own artistic, cultural and intellectual development. For Arce, this step, the creation and maintenance of a culture to which everyone would have access, "not only to understand; but to produce," was essential to resolving Nicaragua's cultural dilemma (Arce 1980: 21).

A democratized culture, Arce explained, would offset the non-Nicaraguan tendencies that the previous culture had spawned and would beget a new revolutionary, anti-imperialist culture--one that reflected Nicaraguan values, identity and history (Arce 1980: 21). By surrounding Nicaraguans with a culture they could call their own, Arce alleged, the previous artificial culture and negative self-perception would cease to exist and a "new Nicaraguan, forged in the image of Sandino," who "thinks of others before himself," who rejects egoism and individualism, and who views himself as part of the collective would emerge (Arce 1980: 20).

Following Arce's speech, then vice-president Sergio Ramírez addressed the assembly. Repeating Arce's criticism, Ramírez charged that the cultural process in pre-revolutionary Nicaragua was a failure, since only the intellectual elites had access to it and since it mainly reflected non-Nicaraguan cultural values. Culture under Somoza did carry some distinctively Nicaraguan charac-

teristics, but these qualities did not emerge naturally from Nicaraguan popular roots. Rather, Ramírez explained, they were the result of a dialectical cultural struggle between the traditional intellectuals and those radical intellectuals who were emphasizing popular culture. (Ramírez 1983:167)

In order for Nicaraguans to create a new popular culture that derived from a new non-elitist, non-imperialist national identity, Ramírez offered the following five guidelines.

First, it is not necessary for Nicaragua's new culture to completely dismiss everything from its predecessor. Although much of the past culture was imperialist, an examination and reinterpretation of it can provide a solid foundation for future cultural development.

Second, the new culture should be profoundly popular. Nicaraguan artists must reject elitist tendencies. Furthermore, cultural themes should derive from the everyday lives of the people of Nicaragua.

Third, related to the second, popular culture should not be an individual effort. Its contents should not neglect politics nor society, instead it should advocate the creation of a revolutionary culture. Ramírez called for the artists to participate in the national transfor-

mation, which, he argued, should be a collective effort.

Fourth, revolutionary culture should reflect quality and authenticity. Art should not be only an expression of political slogans, nor should it simply reflect and adorn Nicaragua's cultural heritage. Popular artists must be creative, to find Nicaragua's hidden culture, to experiment and to explore new options.

Fifth, although Nicaraguan artists should look to local themes in developing revolutionary culture, this requirement does not preclude utilizing foreign culture in developing a new Nicaraguan culture. (Ramírez 1983:173)

Taken together the pronouncements by Bayardo Arce and Sergio Ramírez presented a clear indication of the direction, with respect to ideology and methodology, that the Ministry of Culture's policies would assume over the next five years.

Ernesto Cardenal

The person chosen to steer Nicaragua's cultural affairs was the poet-priest Ernesto Cardenal. Cardenal's cultural and ideological convictions, similar to those previously expressed by Arce and Ramírez, made him the appropriate choice for the Ministry post. Like Arce, Cardenal insisted that Nicaragua's new culture be democ-

ratized. According to Cardenal, "the culture of a society depends on the capacity that its members have of developing it. If they do not have that capacity, then they cannot have cultural democratization. No culture, no democracy" (Cardenal 1982:17).

Cardenal's experience in nurturing campesinos' self-realization by making them creators and consumers of culture through the Solentiname poetry workshops also made him ideally qualified to preside over the cultural democratization projects. To effect the social transformation that the Sandinistas deemed necessary for the preservation of the revolution, profound changes in popular consciousness would have to take place. The FSLN was well aware of the impact that Cardenal's literacy, poetry and primitive art projects had on raising the consciousness of the Solentiname campesinos. Indeed, many of the campesinos shed their apolitical inclinations following their participation in the poetry workshop and joined the Sandinistas in the 1977 attack on the National Guard at San Carlos. In the same manner that Cardenal's literacy and poetry projects had democratized the mode of cultural production and elevated the awareness of the Solentiname campesinos, the Government Junta envisioned a nationwide cultural democratization project, under

Cardenal's banner, that would elevate the rest of the nation's consciousness.

Finally, Cardenal qualified the cultural democratization projects by providing them with an historical and nationalist foundation. In his 1984 interview with Ken Johnson, he emphasized that culture, particularly poetry, had been instrumental in dictating the course of Nicaraguan history. In fact, Cardenal argued that the success of the Sandinista revolution resided in the cumulative power that poetry had over, and in, the people. Poetry, he asserted, influenced the revolutionary process in three ways. First, poets often politicized their works, using as a recurrent theme Somoza's tyranny. Second, exteriorism, the predominant poetic style in Nicaragua throughout most of the twentieth century, allowed the poet to deal with social themes much more concretely and much more naturally than other styles. Third, Nicaragua's deep-seated poetic tradition provided Sandinista poets with an avenue to utilizing an element of the national identity to promote FSLN ideology. That each decade of Nicaragua's history responded to the social, political and economic conditions by elaborating a new generation of poets, provided Nicaraguans with a solid basis for a cultural identity. According to Cardenal, though, the emergence of new generations of

poets was more than a response to the changing realities. Rather, he argued, beginning with Darío and continuing until the revolution, each generation of poets shared their knowledge with, and imparted their skills to, a subsequent generation of poets. This, according to Cardenal, is what separates Nicaragua's poetic tradition from that of other countries: it is, in essence, what makes poetry part of Nicaragua's national identity (Johnson 1985: 14-15).

It was this poetic tradition which offered Cardenal and other members of the FSLN Junta the philosophical and methodological basis for democratizing culture. Cardenal asserted that the historical continuum of Nicaraguan poetry grew from the concept of the workshop, the act of transferring knowledge from one entity to another. According to Cardenal, this transference, which occurs in the poetry workshops, is the same act which has always occurred in Nicaragua, with each generation of Nicaraguan poets bequeathing its knowledge to the following generation. Cardenal declared: "from Darío until today, there has been one giant poetry workshop. And there has not been a lapse between generations" (Cardenal 1981:227).

Thus, the fall of Anastasio Somoza, followed by the ascension of the Sandinistas as Nicaragua's new dominant political power and their adoption of a Gramscian cultur-

al policy set the stage for history's first state-sponsored, nation-wide poetry project.

SOCIALIZING THE MEANS OF POETIC PRODUCTION

We can say that with the Sandinista Revolution, for the first time, they have socialized the means of poetic production. . . . The people have begun to make themselves the owners of the poetry in Nicaragua: not because they read more and in cheap editions, rather because they produce it.

Joaquín Marta Sosa²⁹

Ernesto Cardenal's first act as Minister of Culture was to ask Mayra Jiménez, the Costa Rican poet who had assisted him in creating the workshop at Solentiname, if she would be willing to try to organize poetry workshops on a nation-wide level (Jiménez, 12). She agreed to the project and within eight days of the triumph, she and Cardenal were activating poetry workshops throughout Nicaragua (Pailler 1981:5).

The Ministry of Culture implemented the first poetry workshop in Monimbó.³⁰ The meeting drew thirty-two participants from the mixed indigenous-mestizo population--

²⁹In Cardenal 1982: 22.

³⁰Cardenal admitted that the reason he gave Monimbó, an indigenous barrio in Masaya, the honor of being home to the first poetry workshop was as a reward for its catalytic role in the final offensive--namely its attack on the local National Guard Headquarters on February 23, 1978.

some of whom were illiterate. Subtiava, an indigenous barrio in León, was the site of the second workshop. Again the population in this barrio was mixed and predominantly illiterate.

In those first days when the Ministry of Culture was activating the poetry workshops it became evident to Nicaragua's new cultural and educational directorate that standing in the way of a popular cultural revolution loomed the boding shadow of Somocismo's cultural legacy. To be sure, when the Sandinistas assumed control of the functions of the state over fifty percent of the population was illiterate (Hirshon 1983:xi). In order to counter Somocismo's neglect of the masses, with respect to education, the Ministry of Education, directed by Carlos Tunnerman, and Fernando Cardenal, the director of the literacy crusade, embarked on an ambitious nationwide campaign to eradicate illiteracy.

On March 23, 1980, this campaign, better known as the Nicaraguan Literacy Crusade, officially commenced. Sixty thousand high school and university students and their teachers set out for Nicaragua's rural communities with the mission of teaching the country's illiterate to read and write. Their task was as follows: "[a]ll those who were at least twelve years old and had received at least a full primary education would be trained to teach

all those over ten who had received none" (Hirshon 1983:6). The Ministry of Education calculated that within five months previously illiterate Nicaraguans would be reading.

The National Literacy Crusade was also an attempt to forge a unity between the nation's two historically disparate elements: Nicaragua's urban elite and its campesinos. Not only did the "brigadistas" impart their knowledge on Nicaragua's rural sectors, but they also lived and worked with them during the period of the campaign, thus helping to eradicate the barrier that has traditionally stood between the intellectuals and the masses. Furthermore, since many of these traditional intellectuals had come from somewhat privileged backgrounds, the Sandinista leadership considered it essential that these people go to the less developed places and see for themselves the impact of Somocismo on the Nicaraguan populace.

The Frente recognized and acknowledged the ideological purpose of the Nicaraguan Literacy Crusade. According to the Vice Minister of Adult Education, Roberto Saenz:

It is a political project with pedagogical implications. . . not a pedagogical project with political implications. There are no neutral projects, not in Nicaragua, not in the United States, not anywhere. Every social

project carries with it an ideology--in order to maintain a system, to reproduce a system, or to sustain a process of profound change. (In Hirshon 1983:7)

From a pedagogical standpoint, the literacy crusade was indeed successful. Five months after its inception, the literacy crusade had helped significantly to reduce the illiteracy rate in Nicaragua. Whether the literacy crusade was successful as a political project is difficult to determine, though. (There are no statistics that demonstrate a causal relationship between the literacy campaign and an increase in Sandinista popularity among the alphabetized.) Nevertheless, that such a large percentage of the population participated and achieved some level of competency in this project indicates a certain degree of popular satisfaction and indoctrination that would translate into a certain degree of political success. If the Sandinistas' pedagogy, with its overtly political themes, were not welcome, certainly the number of participants who completed the program would have been considerably smaller.

Nevertheless, regardless of whether the literacy campaign was more pedagogically successful, or more politically successful, what can be said is that it provided an excellent foundation for the Ministry of Culture's poetry workshops.

The popular response to the poetry workshops was enormous. Poetry workshops sprang up in neighborhoods, in factories, in military barracks and in police departments throughout Nicaragua. People from all walks of life participated in these projects, including bakers, construction workers, fishermen, campesinos, domestic workers, soldiers and police.

The immediate impact of the workshops is evident in the 1980 Saturday editions of Barricada, the official newspaper of the FSLN. Within weeks after the creation of the Ministry of Culture and its Poetry Workshops, "Página Literaria de Barricada" was publishing workshop poetry. Barricada's escalated commitment to the poetry workshops became evident on January 26, 1980 with the replacement of "Página Literaria" by "Poesía Libre". This switch signalled the beginning of a short era when Barricada published workshop poetry almost every weekend.

Through "Poesía Libre" readers were able to keep tabs on the workshop development throughout the country. From January 26 until June 29, "Poesía Libre" alternated verse from the various poetry workshops. For example, one week a collection of poetry from Monimbó would be showcased, the next week workshop verse from Subtiava would appear, and the following week workshop material from Juigalpa, Condega or Bluefields would emerge.

These early days of the poetry workshops also saw the creation of the first workshop journals and collections. Within eight months of the launching of the poetry democratization campaign, the first collection of workshop poetry, De la trinchera al arte (from the Poetry Workshop at Juigalpa), had been published. This coincided with the appearance of the first poetry workshop review, Poesía Subtiava.

Popular Culture Centers and Poet-Organizers

It soon became apparent to Cardenal and Jiménez that the Ministry of Culture would not be able to attend directly to the cultural needs of the poetry workshops. In order to give the workshops their required direction, Cardenal and Jiménez selected six individuals from the Popular Culture Centers and the poetry workshops to serve as poet-organizers and popular representatives in different sectors in Nicaragua. That these people were not intellectuals in the traditional sense, but had risen from the masses as talented poets and qualified articulators of the people's reality was instrumental in their appointments. In Karyn Hollis's excellent publication of her doctoral dissertation, Poesía del pueblo para el pueblo, she explains that these six "were selected because of their ability as poets, their dedication and

spirit of service to the revolution and the popular roots" (Hollis 1991:20).

These six poet-organizers included:

Carlos Calero, the principal organizer, who finished his degree in Letras at the National University (UNAN); Juan Ramón Falcón, a campesino-poet, who studied engineering at night; Gerardo Gadea, a member of the armed forces; Gonzalo Martínez, a member of the militia; Cony Pacheco, the only female organizer, and Marvin Ríos.

Each member was responsible for organizing workshops in a specific geographic area. Due to the vastness of these areas, it was imperative to the success of this project that the poet-organizers create smaller grass-roots structures, where local poet-intellectuals would learn from them and implement their teachings in local poetry workshops.

With the exception of the announcements printed by the Popular Culture Centers, the workshop organizers and the materials they presented, organization of the poetry workshops usually assumed a local flavor. Oftentimes individuals would use radios and speakers atop cars to announce the time, date and location of a workshop. Also, local bulletins and newsletters from other popular organizations would usually furnish print space to the poetry workshops. Moreover, local poets and other mem-

Although unchampioned, the poet-organizers played an important role in the success of the poetry workshops. Emerging from popular bases, they identified with the people. Indeed, their tasks did not stop at the poetry workshops. In order to prevent the resurrection of class lines between the "professional" poet-organizers and the workshop poets, the Ministry of Culture insisted that the workshop poets adopt as part of their daily routine the same tasks and responsibilities as the people they were teaching (e.g. coffee picking, civil service). According to Cardenal, "The democratization of the Nicaraguan culture has also stimulated the poet-organizers who are equally "of the people" and not "professional" poets held in universities" (in Hollis 1991:35). For Cardenal, that these poets are "organic" is an important attribute in that they are able to meet and express the needs of the people.

"Exteriorism"

Stylistically, the poetry workshops emphasized "exteriorism." This writing style, championed by Ernesto Cardenal and José Coronel Urtecho, as well as the North American poet, Ezra Pound, stresses the use of one's reality as poetic context and "concrete" terms as poetic form.

In order to assist the poet-organizers and the workshop participants, Ernesto Cardenal made available the following rules for writing exteriorist poetry:

- 1) Verse does not have to rhyme nor have a regular rhythm
- 2) Verse should be concrete not vague
- 3) Verse should incorporate proper names
- 4) Verse should derive from sensory perception, not intellectual perception
- 5) One should write as one speaks
- 6) Avoid common sayings, phrases, or cliches
- 7) Try to condense the language as much as possible
(Cardenal 1980c:5)

José Domingo Moreno, a campesino who learned to read and write in the literacy campaign of 1980, writing at the Poetry Workshop of Jinotega, provides an excellent example of exteriorist writing with his poem "For José Ramón Cordero":

José Ramón,
winter has greened
the high Chontalanan mountains
and the dove coos sadly
as if missing your presence.
The heliotropes and honeysuckle
perfume the paths
you once travelled
and the guardabarranco,
flying overhead, lets fall
precious feathers
onto the place where you fell asleep.
(Moreno in Johnson 1985:110)

María Pineda, a factory worker, writing from the Poetry Workshop of Condega, reveals another aspect of workshop verse.

TO THE U.S.A.

bers of the community would frequently provide a place to hold a workshop (Hollis 1991:20).

The workshops usually attracted between ten to fifteen people at a time. The participants usually came from the poorest sectors of society. The workshops would meet once every week, or every other week and would usually last from three to five hours. After the initial orientation meeting most of the workshops would convene without the assistance of the poet-organizers. Replacing the poet-organizers as the catalyzing force behind subsequent workshops would be local workshop participants.

The poet-organizers would attempt to interact with the workshops as much as possible, with two or three weeks being the maximum time elapsed between meetings. During the gatherings they would attempt to impress upon the workshop participants the importance of reading other contemporary poets. Oftentimes, the poet-organizers would provide copies of the poetry workshop journal, Poesía Libre, for analysis of other workshop poets as well as other more accomplished poets (Nicaraguan, Latin American, North American and European). The purpose of exposing the participants to the work of other poets was to help them develop their own writing skills, through analysis, criticism and emulation of others.

I visited the tomb of Carlos Fonseca
and saw the burning torch
and the flame that rose from that torch
shall never be extinguished by Northern
winds.
It shall never be extinguished.
(Pineda in Johnson 1985:34).

Exteriorist poetry also included many romance
themes. Juana María Huerte, a domestic employee and a
volunteer in the literacy campaign, and a participant at
the Poetry Workshop of Subtiava, in her poem, "At the
River", writes:

At the Tamarindo River I found him.
While I bathed his eyes
fell upon me.
He invited me to his home
and I went barefoot on a narrow path
of stones.
The startled chickens scattered
and the hummingbirds darted from branch to
branch
filling their mouths with honey.
(Huerte in Johnson 1985:76)

A combination of romantic passion and revolutionary
fervor also found exteriorism as an appropriate means of
expression. Writing at the Poetry Workshop of El Bluff
in Bluefields, Nidia Taylor Ellis of the People's
Sandinista Army versified her amorous feelings for her
comrade.

TO THE COMBATANT JUAN BUSTAMANTE OF THE
SOUTHERN FRONT

It was six in the morning, on the 17th of
February, 1980
when I fell in love with you, Juan.

You were wearing your camouflage uniform,
a rifle on the desk,
carrying out your twenty four hours of
sentry duty.
I went up to you
and touched your dark brown skin.
(Ellis in Johnson 1985:80)

Exteriorism also lent itself to detailing everyday issues. Ana Leonor Cruz, a textile worker who also learned to read and write in the 1980 literacy campaign, composed the following poem at the Poetry Workshop of the Sandinista Workers Federation:

THE CORTES TREE

In Santa Teresa of Carazo
nature created a beautiful cortes tree.
Its wide shade was a delight to everyone's
eyes.
But life was a fleeting thing;
with hatchets and machetes they took the
tree.
They deprived us of her presence;
for money they took from us
the shadows of her yellow flowers.
(Cruz in Johnson 1985:88)

Cardenal's rules gave many Nicaraguans who had very little contact with formal education the tools by which they could write poetry. Whereas many of Nicaragua's more established poets would ultimately take issue with the proponents of exteriorism, arguing that it tended to vulgarize Nicaraguan artistic production, Mayra Jiménez maintained that "exteriorism" was simply a writing style that had been utilized by such poets as José Coronel

Urtecho, Ernesto Cardenal, Fernando Gordillo, Manolo Cuadra, Leonel Rugama, and Alfonso Cortés and that it was being used to teach campesinos how to write poetry. She argued that this poetry was no different than other types of poetry, except in style and in the fact that this style has been democratized (Jiménez 1983:35). In Claire Pailler's December 26, 1981 article, "La poesía nicaragüense contemporánea y la toma de conciencia," in La Prensa Literaria, she explains that Cardenal's rules for writing poetry grew from Nicaragua's cultural history. According to Pailler, the workshop poetry rules are important in that they follow the same pattern of consciousness development and national identity formation that Nicaraguan poets have traditionally used.

In the simple rules for writing poetry . . . we find the same principles of attachment to the concrete, of simplicity of language, of reference to that which is specific of the landscape and of Nicaraguan life. (Pailler 1981:4)

With the popularity and success of the workshops the Ministry of Culture had to create forums for the workshop participants to present their poetry. In the workshop's initial stages, poetry usually circulated through communities on mimeographed sheets of paper, leaflets, flyers and pamphlets. Sometimes a Saturday copy of Barricada would also make its rounds. The local Popular Culture Center also helped put together collections of poetry.

Print was not the only means by which the Sandinistas were able to appropriate poetry to the public. A less expensive and more personal way was through the radio. In Managua, Radio Sandino and Radio Güegüense aired the poetry from the workshops; in León, Radio Venceremos did the same.

Poets also frequently banded together to take their poetry directly to the public. These groups presented programs called, "Poetry in the Neighborhoods", with the goal of increasing the appreciation and participation of and in poetry. Working primarily on Saturdays these people would take their poetry to the military, to street corners, to markets, and to plazas (Hollis 1991:22).

Another way that workshop poets were able to present their work was through the poetry marathons in Ciudad Darío. Poets from all over Nicaragua, with verse in hand, would convene in Ciudad Darío to take part in this unique event. The Ministry of Culture also subsidized local and national poetry competitions throughout Nicaragua, giving popular poets opportunities to present their work to larger audiences. Moreover, the Ministry supported, encouraged and in some instances helped finance national poets to participate in international poetry contests.

To facilitate publication of the stream of material that was overflowing in its offices, the Ministry of Culture also created a publishing house, Editorial Nueva Nicaragua. Compilations and anthologies from the poetry workshops soon began appearing in monograph form, providing Nicaraguan rank and file with new forums for consuming and presenting their own culture.

Poesía Libre

The Ministry of Culture soon realized that the workshops needed a larger and more unifying outlet. In 1981 it created the national poetry workshop journal, Poesía Libre. With the journal's distribution ranging from three to six thousand, the Ministry hoped that Poesía Libre would be a journal to which many people would have access.

The Minister of Culture, Ernesto Cardenal, named Julio Valle-Castillo to be the editor of the poetry workshop journal, Poesía Libre. Valle-Castillo, in turn, assembled an editorial staff consisting of the six poet-organizers who Cardenal and Jiménez had selected to direct the workshops.

Poesía Libre had a very specific purpose. According to the editor, Valle-Castillo, this journal was to be a "review exclusively of poetry" and would "publish poetry.

. . so that the Nicaraguan people could meet and confront each other through poetry."³¹ The editors hoped to create a forum (monthly or as needed) that would allow Nicaraguans to interact with each other via poetry, while continuously reaffirming their cultural tradition.

The appearance of the brown, unbleached journal, bound by string, was to reflect a simplicity, strength and dignity with which the Nicaraguan people would identify.

The creation of Poesía Libre served two purposes. First, as previously mentioned, it introduced workshop participants to the verse of other poets. The journal published material from other workshops, from more established poets and from international poets. The purpose of exposing the participants to the work of others was to help them develop their own skills, by analyzing the writing of others. Second, the journal also gave poetry workshop participants the opportunity to have their work published. By putting workshop poetry in print, the Ministry of Culture hoped that they could move closer towards the dissolution of boundaries between the professional poet and amateur. It was another step in the Sandinistas' quest to eradicate the barriers separating

³¹Poesía Libre, July 1981, cover page.

the cultural elites and the people; it was another step toward the democratization of culture.

The first issue of Poesía Libre presented themes that would consistently reappear throughout the journal's existence. Ancient poems celebrating Nicaragua's indigenous heritage, poems by the martyred poet, Leonel Rugama, revolutionary poems by people in other liberation struggles and scores of poems from various poetry workshops constituted the body of the journal.

Following the monthly schedule it had regimented for itself, Poesía Libre appeared again in August. The poetry workshops were the first topic addressed in this issue. Explaining the importance of the workshops to Nicaragua, the editors asserted that poetry for many Nicaraguans was the means by which they related to the world, and that the workshops, since they allowed poets to hone their skills, were, in fact, allowing Nicaraguans to develop more fully their identity. Although, this issue was twice as large as had been the first one, it actually gave less space to the poetry workshops. Instead, occupying its pages were poems by the Minister of Culture, Ernesto Cardenal, U. S. poet, William Carlos Williams, El Salvadoran poets and others. The inclusion of these other poets was, according to Valle-Castillo, to

show that, stylistically, Nicaraguan workshop poetry does not differ much from other poetry in the world.

The third issue of Poesía Libre did not find the public until December, 1981. This three month lapse between issues signalled the beginning of the journal's irregular production.³² The lack of human and economic resources were the primary factors keeping the journal from regular publication. Stylistically the third issue of Poesía Libre did not differ much from the previous two issues.

These first three issues of Poesía Libre reveal some recurrent tendencies that surface throughout the history of this journal. An analysis of them can shed some light on the philosophies of the Ministry of Culture and the editors of this journal, with respect to poetry in their country. First, the editors are committed to a journal exclusively of poetry. Second, the poetry does not necessarily have to be derived from the poetry workshops. Third, the poetry does not have to be Nicaraguan poetry, nor does it have to be revolutionary poetry. Fourth, the journal does not have to appear regularly.

³²The next issue of Poesía Libre was published in March 1982, followed by issue five in April 1982 and issue six in June 1982. Four months later saw the publication of issue seven.

In both the first and the second issues the editors emphasize the relationship between Nicaraguan history, Nicaraguan identity and poetry. Their commitment to poetry reflects their commitment to an exploration of the Nicaraguan identity. The inclusion of works by established Nicaraguan poets, Ernesto Cardenal and Fernando Silva, furnish the reader with examples of exteriorist poetry and provide an air of legitimacy to this unorthodox journal. The inclusion of other poets from other countries also reaffirms these points. Their inclusion attempts to put Nicaraguan poets in a world context.

By the November 1984 election, the poetry workshops and Poesía Libre had established themselves as fundamental facets of Nicaraguan life. Within a year prior to the election, four different issues appeared. Although, the average number of participants presented in the journal had steadily decreased since 1982, the number of participants in the workshops was still significant.

The June 1984 issue of Poesía Libre offers an apt representation of the relationship between the "organic" poets and the "traditional" poets within the cultural journal. This issue presented the works of poets Daisy Zamora, Ernesto Cardenal and Julio Valle-Castillo, who received their literary training under the previous regime, and who had, therefore, assumed their intellectu-

al status through traditional and bourgeois means. Despite their "traditional" intellectual training, though, the works of these poets offered the reader revolutionary context in the popularized "exteriorist" form.

Also included in this issue were works from lesser known poets whose poetic training had ensued after the triumph of the revolution. Captain Ivan Guevara from the Sandinista popular army and Luz Marina Acosta gave Poesía Libre a popular representation. Unlike Zamora, Cardenal and Castillo whose professions were mainly as poets and intellectuals, Guevara and Acosta had nonintellectual occupations. Nevertheless, because of their willingness and ability to articulate the realities of members of their respective communities and social classes, they were "organic" intellectuals.

This journal also included works from the "organic" intellectuals of the poetry workshops. Poetry from seventeen workshop participants filled the pages of this issue. Many of the poets had been taught to read and write after the Revolution in the Sandinista literacy campaign. Their works varied thematically from love to gratitude, from the liberation struggle to the "new society", from commemorations of fallen loved ones to

generations of leaders such as Sandino and Carlos Fonseca.

This journal brought the works of "traditional" intellectuals and "organic" intellectuals together. It gave the reader an opportunity to analyze the two styles in order to synthesize a unique writing style.

There were other outlets for workshop poetry. The Centros de Cultura Popular published a monthly cultural journal, La Chachalaca. Nicaráuac, published by the Ministry of Culture, presented scholarly articles on the state of culture in Nicaragua, as well as poetry from renowned Nicaraguan poets and from the poetry workshops. Ventana, the literary supplement of Barricada, the official organ of the FSLN, also published the work from poetry workshops. Finally, of the periodicals, workshop poetry also found a conduit to the public through the independent newspaper, Nuevo Diario.

Nicaráuac

In May 1980 the Ministry of Culture presented Nicaragua's first cultural journal, Nicaráuac. This journal was to be a revolutionary forum for all Nicaraguan writers, as well as other Latin American writers. It would present documentaries, book reviews, art and photo

exhibits, testimonials and poems depicting revolution and life in Nicaragua.

The first issue of Nicaráuac gave particular attention to poetry. Emphasizing the break with Nicaragua's traditional culture, the importance of verse in raising popular consciousness, its popularity with the FSLN poet-combatants and its import in creating the new society, via poetry workshops, the collection of poems in this issue donned the title, "The New Poetry of Nicaragua".

This collection epitomized the Ministry's goal of eradicating the barrier between professional poets and popular poets. Nicaráuac's editors positioned works by campesinos, workers and combatants so that they stood alongside works by such internationally acclaimed poets as Ernesto Cardenal, Pablo Antonio Cuadra and José Coronel Urtecho. This made it possible for participants of the poetry workshops like Cony Pacheco to see for themselves that the Ministry of Culture was truly sincere about "democratizing the culture."

Throughout Nicaráuac's history the journal frequently presented workshop poetry either by itself or in conjunction with poetry from the "traditional" intellectuals.³³ Although Nicaráuac provided some space to the

³³See Nicaráuac No. 1,3,5,13.

workshop poets, for the most part the editorship of Nicaráuac designed the journal for consumption by Nicaraguan intellectuals. Many of the articles dealt analytically and critically with literature, culture, religion, etc. Others would deal with topics, such as the philosophical foundations of the Nicaraguan revolution and Sandino's thought. Essays by prominent Sandinistas, Sergio Ramírez, Bayardo Arce, Omar Cabezas and Tomás Borge often overwhelmed Nicaráuac's pages, as did works from Sandinista heroes, Sandino and Fonseca. The poetry that appeared usually stemmed from collections of poetry by prominent Nicaraguan writers and poets such as Francisco de Asís Fernández, Ernesto Mejía Sánchez, Ernesto Gutiérrez, Ernesto Cardenal, Daisy Zamora, Fanor Téllez and Rosario Murillo.

By presenting a scholarly journal, the editors of Nicaráuac were able to present a forum for intellectual debate, using a form that was familiar to most of its readers. On the other hand, by presenting workshop poetry and essays that emphasized the importance of appropriating the mode of cultural production, the edi-

torship attempted to impress on its readership the importance of revolutionizing culture.³⁴

La Chachalaca

In 1982, Nicaragua's Ministry of Culture began publication of La Chachalaca, a journal from the popular culture centers. The purpose of this journal was to give the cultural centers in the communities a forum or a voice to creatively articulate their concerns. The editorial staff reflected the Ministry of Culture's commitment to popular art, in that despite being well respected artists they did not command the attention that the names of poets such as Ernesto Cardenal, Fernando Silva, Daisy Zamora or Ernesto Gutiérrez did.

The journal certainly gave an excellent representation of the power of popular organizations. The journal's editorship consisted of popular culture center directors, e.g. Emilia Torres, Flavio César Tijerino and Conny Alvarez Ríos. Without the assistance of Sandinista

³⁴For articles emphasizing the importance of democratizing culture to sustaining the revolution see Arce, Bayardo. "El difícil terreno de la lucha: el ideológico." Nicaráuac, No. 1, pp. 152-157. Ramírez, Sergio. "Los intelectuales en el futuro." Nicaráuac, No. 1, pp. 158-162. Cardenal, Ernesto. "Cultura revolucionaria, popular, nacional." Nicaráuac, No. 1, pp. 163-168. Borge, Tomás. "El arte como herejía." Nicaráuac, No. 4, pp. 111-120. Díaz Castillo, Roberto. "La cultura popular como base de la cultura revolucionaria." Nicaráuac, No. 9, pp. 109-116. García Marruz, Fina. "Una nueva poesía popular en Nicaragua." Nicaráuac, No. 11, pp. 195-221.

cultural elites, the journal presented essays, play scripts, drawings, reviews, literary analyses, testimonials, short stories and, of course, poetry, free-lance and from the workshops.

Poetry from the workshops appeared frequently but not as voluminously as it appeared in Poesía Libre. Replacing the workshop poetry were works from such unheralded poets as: Jesús Espinoza, Mariana Yousng Blanco, Juan Centeno and Juan Carlos Campos Sagaseta. Unlike Poesía Libre whose editorship made a conscious effort to align poetry from the workshops with poetry from the established writers, Chachalaca's editorship virtually excluded the traditional intellectuals. In their places usually were pieces from writers whose foremost occupation was not intellectually based.

Nevertheless, like all of the Sandinista cultural projects, Chachalaca also ran into serious financial troubles. After the 1985 issue (only the ninth) the Ministry had to cease publication of the journal. Only with foreign economic assistance was the journal able to appear again in 1988. After the publication of five thousand copies of this issue the journal ceased permanently.

Decline of the Workshops

In 1982 there were over seventy workshops throughout Nicaragua. By 1984 that number had decreased to thirty.³⁵ The reasons for this decline are many: the Contra War forced the Sandinistas to redirect resources from the cultural programs to the armed forces; poetry workshop participants and organizers volunteered for military service, etc. Ernesto Cardenal explained:

. . . the war has hurt the Workshop program greatly. Many of our best writing instructors have volunteered for the front as have large numbers of participants. This has brought the number of workshops down to around half the number we usually had in the three years of relative peace following the triumph. In the past year, a number of the Workshop poets have lost their lives defending the Revolution. . . . (in Johnson 1985:3).

Despite the enormous difficulties that confronted the workshops Cardenal also emphasized the importance in sustaining the workshop movement:

To defend the revolution is to defend poetry as well. . . . Without the Revolution, there would be no possibility of a real grassroots literary movement in this country. . . . (in Johnson 1985:3).

Although the number of workshops in the countryside diminished, the number of workshops within the military grew. Cardenal asserted that this was due to the true democratic nature of the workshops:

³⁵Hollis contends that there were sixty-six poetry workshops in 1982, and thirty-three in 1984 (Hollis 1991:20).

The economic and military difficulties that the country is facing. . . have damaged the workshop movement, but at the same time it has confirmed their democratic roots. The workshops have increased in number in areas where one finds a greater number of people. For example, in the army. . . (in Hollis 1991:35).

This last point that Cardenal makes is extremely important to the Gramscian analysis. That the poetry workshops continued to thrive in the military is indeed a testament to their democratic nature. It is also a validation of the importance of the "organic" poetry organizers with respect to the success of the workshops. As is evident below, the loss of these "organic" intellectuals, in part, signalled the decline of the poetry workshops.

Conclusion

The impact that the workshops and the journals had in providing the Sandinistas with a broad base of popular support is difficult to determine. Suffice it to say that the Sandinistas did draw up blueprints for the creation of cultural hegemony, using a model very similar to the one Antonio Gramsci suggested for the Italian Communist Party, and were following it. At the time of the November 1984 presidential election, despite the economic effects of the Contra War, Ministry of Culture sponsored poetry workshops and cultural journals were

still operational. The poetry workshops had given Nicaragua's "organic" intellectuals the means by which they could assist in the creation of Nicaragua's new culture and they empowered Nicaragua's rank and file. Furthermore, the incorporation of popular poetry and the poetry of Nicaragua's intellectual elites in the same journals helped destroy the cultural barriers that had traditionally separated the masses from the intellectuals. Certainly the versified campaign slogans that seemingly permeated the whole of Nicaraguan society were more emblematic of the Sandinista cultural campaigns over the five years since the triumph of the revolution than effective means of garnering last minute pre-election popular support.

The poetry workshops contributed to the "democratization of culture" process in two major ways. First, the poetry workshops emphasized the creation of an ever-expanding base of "organic intellectuals." It was the task of the poetry-organizers to transfer their knowledge, much like Cardenal's understanding of the generational poetry workshop, and organizational skills for the development of another group of poetry-organizers. The concept of sharing knowledge was also evident in the cultural journals that the Ministry of Culture subsidized. The journals brought together works from the

"traditional" poets and from the "organic" poets. The inclusion of both in the same journal was to serve two purposes. First, the Ministry of Culture saw it as means of eradicating the barriers between the more established poets and the popular poets. Second, the Ministry of Culture hoped to create a new culture--through a synthesis of the works by the "traditional" poets and the "organic" poets, and thus create a unified popular culture.

The poetry workshops' second major contribution to the "democratization of culture" was through the appropriation of the style of writing known as "exteriorism". It was this style that was taught to the poet-organizers and it was this style that the poet-organizers taught in the poetry workshops. "Exteriorism" gave those Nicaraguans, whose history did not include a formal education, a tool for writing poetry. In creating context, it emphasizes the concrete realities one might experience in one's daily life. In articulating this context, it emphasizes everyday language. For many of Nicaragua's rank and file this style offered them the opportunity to produce their own poetry, their own culture. For the Sandinistas the success of the poetry workshops allowed them to make great strides in the difficult task of

destroying the previous imperialist culture and establishing popular cultural hegemony.

DISSENSION IN THE RANKS

. . . [T]he most difficult obstacle that we had to overcome in this great struggle for a new Nicaragua and for a new human, was the bourgeois ideology that has penetrated our people. (Arce 1980:19)

The philosophical foundations for "exteriorism" and cultural democratization were at odds with Nicaragua's traditional cultural foundations. The notion that the masses could articulate their own concerns and produce their own culture had very little precedent in Nicaragua. In fact, the concept of an intellectual elite representing the values, aspirations and interests of the people through literature (i.e. "vanguardism") has traditionally been given preeminence in Nicaragua over the concept of a democratized culture.

Thus, almost immediately following the triumph of the Nicaraguan revolution and the genesis of the cultural democratization projects, there developed a conflict between some of the traditional intellectuals and the Ministry of Culture. The traditional intellectuals, whose ideas of culture and the role that the government should play in a nation's cultural development deviated

from those held by the Ministry of Culture, asserting that artistic freedom and creativity were being compromised by a state sanctioned cultural policy. They feared that the Ministry, particularly through the poetry workshops, was forcing a specific ideology, methodological and political, upon the Nicaraguan people. Furthermore, drawing from Nicaragua's cultural past, many of the intellectuals asserted that their status as cultural representatives of the people (as opposed to cultural democratizers for the people) was consistent with Nicaragua's poetic heritage and its national identity. They often pointed to Rubén Darío and the Vanguardia poets as examples of Nicaraguan intellectuals whose views on art and literature did not lend themselves to the principles of cultural egalitarianism. That many of these traditional intellectuals were dyed-in-the-wool Sandinistas did not preclude their inability to accept that the masses could produce a viable culture. In fact, some of the Sandinistas with ties to the upper echelons of the government were the most vocal dissidents of the cultural democratization projects.

Sandinista Cultural Workers Association (ASTC)

Bayardo Arce's February 25, 1980, speech to the First Assembly of Cultural Workers was significant for

two reasons. First, it outlined the Government Junta's position with respect to culture and the necessity of democratizing it. Second, it provided the impetus for the cultural workers, who were present, to create their own organization.

Recognizing the potential that culture has for transforming society and creating the "New Human" and the need to organize the different cultural committees in order to effect these changes, representatives from the varying strands of Nicaraguan cultural workers, responded to Arce's speech by creating the Sandinista Cultural Workers Association (ASTC).

The ASTC served as an umbrella organization for the different cultural committees (writers, musicians, painters, thespians, etc.) that had sprung up after the overthrow of the Somoza regime and as a link between the various popular organizations and the FSLN government.

The ASTC functioned at two levels. First, it organized the different cultural groups so that they would "perform more efficiently the tasks that the revolutionary process demands." Second, it "contribute[d] to the achievement of better living conditions" for some of the cultural aficionados, allowing "for the maximum development of their artistic vocations. . . ." (in Zamora 1982:286).

The ASTC recognized the "possibilities of constructing an authentic national culture" and of "making everyone participants in the creation of culture. . . ." (in Zamora 1982:325). It encouraged "the participation of the masses in the cultural activity through the incorporation of workers, campesinos and students" in cultural movements. Despite its popular declarations, the ASTC was far from popular-based. Drawing from the pre-triumph caste of artists and cultural figures, the ASTC attempted to unify the various strands of cultural professionals by "integrat[ing] those standouts of the distinct areas of cultural work and. . . build[ing] a wide movement that guarantees their systematic inclusion, as an organized force, in the great tasks that the revolution poses" (in Zamora 1982:326).

The person chosen to direct the ASTC was the editor of Ventana, Rosario Murillo. In the 1970s she helped organize the group Gradas, "which was the first experience in Nicaragua of cultural work for the masses." According to Murillo, their purpose was to "change the concept of cultural work so that the people were not merely receivers but creators of culture" (Murillo in White 1986:127). Nevertheless, by 1981 her views had changed. Lacking the cultural egalitarianism that char-

acterized her 1970s views, the Murillo of the 1980s justified cultural segregation. According to Murillo:

There are amateurs or beginners, associated with the organizations of the masses and Popular Culture Centers. The Ministry of Culture gives these people the necessary technical and organization skills. The artists who belong to the ASTC have more experience and are more well known in a professional capacity. (Murillo in White 1986:124)

The problem for the ASTC was in determining who was qualified for the cultural organization and who was not. Murillo admitted that the selection process that determined which cultural producers qualified for entrance into the ASTC was flawed:

We still haven't perfected the mechanism by which these compañeros are selected. . . . Artists aspire to join, since belonging to the association signifies a certain level of recognition. (Murillo in White 1986:124).

The ASTC deflected criticisms of its non-popular constituency by maintaining that cultural professionals could still defend the revolution by helping "recover and give value to [Nicaragua's] authentic popular roots", "by diffusing these proper values that in the past system was denied the people" and "by changing the [cultural] bases, upon analysis of [Nicaragua's] true history, to [its] national identity (in Zamora 1982:325).

Due in large part to its professional orientation, the ASTC often found itself in conflict with the Ministry of Culture. According to Beverley and Zimmerman, many of the members of ASTC were simply "urban-based professional cultural workers who participated in the struggle against Somoza" without deep roots in the FSLN (Beverley and Zimmerman 1990:102). Whereas, the Ministry actively pursued a course of action that viewed the non-elite as a possible producers of culture, the ASTC saw itself as the cultural producer with the obligation of taking its product to the masses for their consumption.

Perhaps the best indication of the divergent philosophies of Cardenal and Murillo rests in their views regarding the historical role of the Nicaraguan intellectual. As previously mentioned, Cardenal contended that Nicaraguan cultural history reflected the principles of the poetry workshops--the transference of knowledge and skill from one entity to another. The result of this interaction would be the never-ending propagation of new generations or communities of poets. Whereas Cardenal's philosophy lent itself to grass-roots organization and production of verse, Murillo's did not.

According to Murillo:

There's a tradition here of the artist and intellectual participating in the struggle of the people. While it's true that the artist

can train in the militia or get involved in productive work such as the harvest of coffee or cotton, the artist's main contribution to the defense of the Revolution lies in the field of culture itself. This is something we deeply value. We see it as a continuation of the participation of the artists in the struggle waged by Sandino and the Frente Sandinista. (Murillo in White 1986:125-126)

Ventana

June 29, 1980, was the last day that Barricada presented its Saturday edition literary page, "Poesía Libre". For the next six months Barricada hardly published any poetry or literature. On December 20, 1980, though, Barricada first published the literary supplement, Ventana.

Featuring an editorial staff that consisted of Rosario Murillo, Gioconda Belli, Ignacio Briones Torres, Guillermo Rothschuh Villaneuva, Francisco de Asís Fernández and Guillermo Rothschuh Tablada, Ventana presented a striking contrast to the simpler "Poesía Libre".

Adding to the marked change of personnel was its form. Whereas, "Poesía Libre" consisted of a single page attached to the rest of the body of Barricada, Ventana presented itself as a multi-page insert.

The composition of the new supplement also varied markedly from that of "Poesía Libre". Whereas, the former literary page provided a considerable amount of

space to the poetry workshop poets as well as to the more established poets, Ventana reserved almost all of its pages for works by cultural professionals.

It did not take long for Ventana to make its mark in Nicaragua's cultural affairs. Within three months after its creation, the editorship of Ventana and other Latin American intellectuals began levying criticisms of the poetry workshops. The crux of their complaints was that the workshop's methodology hindered poetic development.

The editorial council of Ventana and foreign poets (Claribel Alegría, Eduardo Galeano and Juan Gelman) contended that exteriorism kept people from achieving their full creative potential. Furthermore, they argued that the work coming from the workshops was overly political--overly revolutionary. (Hollis 1991:60)

Another criticism of the workshop poetry by the established poets was that the workshop poetry reflected a romanticized view of Nicaragua and that it did not reflect the pains and sufferings of Nicaraguans. According to Rosario Murillo, "we praise and glorify [the revolution]," but "no one talks about how hard it is to pick cotton". Furthermore, she cited the pervasiveness of the "presentation of paradises" in workshop poetry as a misrepresentation of Nicaragua's post-revolutionary reality. For Murillo, the workshop poet would be better

off writing about the struggles inherent in the revolutionary process. (Murillo in White 1986:105)

Sixty-six of the workshop poets composed a joint response to Ventana. First, they criticized the established poets for not interviewing any workshop poets before publishing their assessments; second, they emphasized that their work related revolutionary themes because their reality was so intricately tied into the revolution; third, since the poetry workshop was only a mechanism for improving a finished poem, they argued that it was impossible for the poet-organizers to coerce them thematically. (Hollis 1991:61)

Undaunted, the editorship in the name of cultural creativity kept hammering away at the workshops. They continued to criticize the workshops for producing poetry that was "uniform, exteriorist and over-political". They also began blasting the director of the poetry workshops, Mayra Jiménez. Gioconda Belli, a member of Ventana's editorial staff, complained about Jiménez's enthusiastic support for poetry that rejected abstract concepts and metaphysical images; Vidaluz Meneses, another noted poet, criticized Jiménez's rigid methodology, calling it "obtrusive and overbearing" (in Hollis 1991:43).

Most of the critics justified their attacks by arguing that the Ministry was impeding the workshop

poets' natural creativity and that in revolutionary times it is the duty and obligation of the intellectual to criticize the status quo.

The final article of this series was a defense of the workshops by José Coronel Urtecho. Coronel Urtecho asserted that much of the poetry that the workshops produced was, in fact, quality poetry. Nevertheless, he maintained, what was important was not the issue of quality, rather, it was the issue of cultural democratization. Coronel Urtecho explained:

What is unique about the workshops. . . is that for the first time a government is putting its resources toward the operation of poetic production, making possible for everyone the ability to exercise their talent in the countryside. (Coronel 1981:8)

To answer the cultural purists who insisted that poetry maintain certain standards, Coronel Urtecho added that the project is "only a beginning that eventually would help create a greater number of first class poets and poetry readers in Nicaragua" as well as "other benefits that [were] not even imaginable at [that] moment." (ibid)

A Critical Response to Ventana

Karyn Hollis, in her excellent study of the poetry workshops, Poesía del pueblo para el pueblo, answers many of Ventana's charges. For example, Hollis analyzed all

two hundred eighty four workshop poems that appeared in Poesía Libre from 1981 to 1984 (encompassing the period that Ventana was levying its attacks). Her work includes an analysis of the workshop poetry with respect to Ventana's two primary criticisms: form and content.

Regarding content, Ventana argued that the workshop instructors were forcing the participants to include revolutionary themes in their writings. In the workshops' defense, Hollis pointed out that workshop poetry can actually be divided into five thematic categories. She asserted that less than half of the poetry coming from the workshops incorporated revolutionary themes. (Hollis 1991: 44). She also revealed that most of the non-revolutionary poetry included romantic themes. Another tendency of the workshop poets was to write about Nicaragua's flora and fauna.

Furthermore, Hollis asserts that critics of the workshops are mistaken when they categorize all revolutionary poetry as being the same. According to Hollis, the revolutionary poetry coming from the workshops also has uniquely different characteristics. Hollis identified three of these in her analysis: "revolution as principal theme", "revolution as subtext" and "revolution as scenario". (Hollis 1991: 46-50).

Other Criticisms

The complaints levied by Ventana's editorial board at the workshops paved the way for other criticisms of the Ministry of Culture. Francisco de Asís Fernández took issue with the tendency of Sandinista cultural figures to denigrate Nicaragua's cultural heritage as 'bourgeois'. According to Asís Fernández:

We should also take into account that we must not value only what has emerged recently, but make room for what was written before--the people who produced art before. . . . In Nicaragua, generally speaking, what was created before is absent. There's only one current, one definite voice--Cardenal's. But in the same generation, there are three different firm voices: Ernesto Cardenal, Ernesto Mejía Sánchez, and Carlos Martínez Rivas. If we just stick with Cardenal, that's only one option. What's lacking is a proliferation of options--and that's something that is necessary.

For Asís Fernández the solution to the problem of the workshops is to "provide them with different options, other voices". (Asís Fernández in White 1986:104)

Another critic, Juan Gelman, asserted that the workshop poets needed to be taught that poetry is a craft that requires training, including the instruction of how to write sonnets and romances. Gelman added: "Not everyone should have to be an exteriorist poet. There might be a marvelous surrealist" (Gelman in White 1986:104).

Contents and Form

For Antonio Gramsci, content and form are inseparable. Form effects the perception of content and vice versa. Thus, in the struggle for cultural hegemony, it is imperative to adopt forms that are popular, that are accessible to the general public either to comprehend or to emulate.

The criticisms of the workshops made a profound impact on the democratization projects. In 1983 amidst increasing controversy about her teaching techniques, Mayra Jiménez resigned her post as Director of the Poetry Workshops and returned to Costa Rica. Replacing her was Julio Valle-Castillo. Like Jiménez, he too became the target of criticism by Nicaragua's cultural elites.

In order to sway criticism away from the workshops the Ministry of Culture completely removed itself from workshop operations. The thirty or so workshops that were in existence in 1984 found themselves under the auspices of the ministry's twenty-four regional popular culture centers (Beverley and Zimmerman 1990:101).

Condensing the Government

The Contra War had a devastating effect on Nicaraguan society. It completely drained Nicaragua's resources--human and economic. An example of its economic impact can be gathered from an analysis of the FSLN

defense budget in 1981 and 1984. In 1981 the FSLN targeted only seven percent of the national budget to defense. By 1984, with the Contra War raging, this number had risen to forty-five percent. In order to compensate for the loss of resources and the need for more defense spending, the FSLN government made large budgetary cuts that strongly affected the Ministry of Culture.

In April 1988 due to the FSLN-led government's desire to make the government more efficient and compact, the Ministry of Culture "was disbanded, with many of its resources and functions passing over to the Ministry of Education and the ASTC (Beverley and Zimmerman 1990:103).³⁶

In February 1989 owing to the immense economic destruction of Nicaragua brought on by the Contra war, "funding for all programs in the arts was cut by fifty percent" (Craven 1990:116). Thus, many of Nicaragua's cultural programs were left to perish through attrition.

Conclusion

Although the debate regarding the poetry workshops in the pages of Ventana had subsided by 1983, the contro-

³⁶For a detailed account of the Ministry of Culture's dissolution see Barricada April 13, 1988. ". . . the process of compactation of the State in the Educational System" p. 1, p. 2-B.

versy had revealed a serious division in the Sandinistas' cultural community, which became more pronounced with each passing year. Whereas Ernesto Cardenal and Julio Valle-Castillo continued to support the poetry workshops and their means of appropriating the mode of cultural production, another cultural tendency, led by Rosario Murillo, took issue with the workshops for prescribing a specific writing style and for emphasizing poetry with a political message.

Although Barricada had initially designated a large section of the literary page of its Saturday edition to the poetry workshops, by 1981 this had changed. In fact, with the creation of Barricada's literary supplement, Ventana, as a separate entity, distinct from the main body of the newspaper and the naming of Rosario Murillo as its editor-in-chief, Ventana's format shifted from popular-oriented to vanguard-oriented, and stylistically from "exteriorist" to "modernist".

Ventana differed from the other Sandinista cultural journals in that its space was given primarily to Sandinista cultural elites. Seldom was work from the workshops given space. This format varied markedly from those of Chachalaca, Poesía Libre and even the more scholarly Nicaráuac.

The basis of Ventana's criticism does not reflect egalitarian ideals. The Ventana's primary criticism centers around the concern that "exteriorism" prevents an individual from becoming a great poet. (White 1986: 104). This contrasts markedly from the perspective of the Ministry of Culture which saw the purpose of the poetry workshops as the making accessible to everyone on an equal basis a mode of cultural production.

POETRY FROM THE OPPOSITION

Despite its popularity with the Sandinistas during most of the 1980s, poetry also found an audience with the Sandinista opposition. Pablo Antonio Cuadra, Nicaragua's esteemed cultural representative of national identity, although initially supporting the revolution, eventually lost enthusiasm for many of the FSLN reforms and became an outspoken dissident. Because of the emphasis that the Sandinistas gave to the cultural revolution, most poets and artists identified with the FSLN. Therefore, during most of the 1980s, Pablo Antonio Cuadra singularly represented the voice of opposition in the cultural arena.

Pablo Antonio Cuadra's disillusionment with the Sandinistas began in early 1980 when the Sandinistas rearranged the Consejo de Estado. Although originally sympathetic to the FSLN, the Sandinistas' emergence from the unified anti-Somocista front as the dominant political force alienated Cuadra whose view of the new Nicaragua included a popular front of bourgeois, middle class, worker and campesino elements. For Cuadra, his perceptions of the FSLN's economic policy as being marxist-leninist and its social policies as being absolutist

spelled the permanent rupture between the Sandinistas and himself.

Sandinista culture also irked Pablo Antonio Cuadra. He considered the Sandinistas' cultural policies to be symptomatic of a totalitarian regime. He asserted that what appeared to be Nicaragua's new culture was in fact the Sandinistas' manipulation of popular culture to reinforce their socialist ideology. For Cuadra, the cultural programs suffered from the "overpowering imposition or cultural *dirigismo*--where the state directs everything--demanding that arts and letters place themselves at the service of the revolution" (Cuadra in White 1986:29).

In 1986 the closing by the government of the daily, La Prensa, prompted Pablo Antonio Cuadra to leave Nicaragua for Costa Rica. For two years he stayed in this neighboring country, until his return in 1988.

The cultural opposition presented most of their attacks in one of the following journals: Revista del Pensamiento Centroamericano, El Pez y La Serpiente and La Prensa Literaria. Although none of these reviews consisted solely of poetry (like the Ministry of Culture's Poesía Libre) all of them incorporated poetry in their contents to some degree. Not surprisingly, Pablo Anto-

nio Cuadra had a hand in the organization of all of these journals.

Revista Conservadora del Pensamiento Centroamericano

Before the Sandinista revolution, the Revista Conservadora del Pensamiento Centroamericano³⁷ published poetry from a myriad of sources, drawing from many different themes. The journal presented collections and analyses of poetry by such pro-Sandinista luminaries as Daisy Zamora, Gioconda Belli and Ernesto Cardenal. Furthermore, much of the poetry drew from revolutionary themes, such as Augusto Sandino's struggle against the U.S. Marines.³⁸

The post-1979 years saw Revista alter its position with respect to the revolutionary tendencies in Nicaragua. With the emergence of the Sandinistas as the nation's political force, the Revista assumed a more critical, anti-Sandinista tone. Gone from the pages of the journal were the occasional articles, stories or poems by Sergio Ramírez Mercado, Ernesto Gutiérrez, Daisy

³⁷In 1972 the editor, Joaquín Zavala, of the Revista Conservadora del Pensamiento Centroamericano opted to rename this journal Revista del Pensamiento Centroamericano.

³⁸See Arellano, Jorge. "Sandino en la poesía: 50 poemas sobre el general de hombres libres." Revista del Pensamiento Centroamericano 29,143 (Aug. 1972): 3-25.

Zamora, Gioconda Belli or Ernesto Cardenal. Writings with a conservative or a Catholic emphasis began flooding the pages of the journal. Finally, after 1979 the journal's poetry and cultural analyses derived from one source, Pablo Antonio Cuadra.

The tone of the journal was set by the conservative editor, Xavier Zavala. The Revista, despite its conservative orientations made a strong push to gain popular support. Every issue began with a series of reprints from photos, depicting various facets of Nicaragua life (e.g. domestic chores, scenic beauty, etc.).

Part of its effort to gain popular support was through popular culture. The Revista sporadically printed poetry, short stories and folklore. It also printed essays dealing with different facets of Catholicism.

Pablo Antonio Cuadra used this journal to voice his outrage at what the Sandinistas were doing to Nicaraguan culture. He did this through poetry and critical analyses.

El Pez y La Serpiente³⁹

³⁹Cuadra explained that the title of the cultural journal El Pez y la Serpiente symbolized Nicaragua's national identity for it represented Nicaragua's two histories--indigenous and Spanish--whose confluence, fusing cultures and mixing races, formed the history of the Nicaraguan people.

The cultural journal, El Pez y La Serpiente, made its first appearance in Nicaragua in 1961. Pablo Antonio Cuadra was its editor; José Coronel Urtecho, Ernesto Cardenal, Fernando Silva and Ernesto Gutiérrez constituted its editorial council.

The journal's main purpose was as a cultural outlet for Nicaragua's artists. The title, Cuadra explained, represents, among other things, the "struggle between good and evil and the agony of the contemporary artist in his/her difficult and dramatic testimony" (Cuadra 1961:7). To express their concerns as they relate to this struggle is the reason why Nicaraguan poets, artists and thinkers joined forces in creating this journal.

In the summer of 1979 the editorship of El Pez y la Serpiente published an anniversary issue celebrating fifty years of the Vanguardia movement. This issue marked the last time that Ernesto Cardenal, Ernesto Gutiérrez, Luis Rocha, José Coronel Urtecho and Fernando Silva would work together with Pablo Antonio Cuadra.

El Pez y la Serpiente reappeared in the Summer of 1981. Cuadra was still the editor-in-chief, but the editorial advisory council reflected profound changes. The new staff represented a distinct Pan-Hispanicism, as Spanish-speaking poets and writers from all over the world participated in this journal's transformation.

Included in this potpourri of predominantly Latin American literature were notables such as: Octavio Paz (Mexico), Guillermo Yepes Boscán (Venezuela), Mario Vargas Llosa (Peru), Ida Vitale (Uruguay), Ernesto Sábato (Argentina), Gloria Guardia (Panama), Alvaro Mutis (Colombia), Luis Rosales (Spain) and Ledo Ivo (Brazil). The only other Nicaraguan on the editorial staff was Mario Cajina Vega.

Whereas, the literary emphasis in the previous issues of El Pez y la Serpiente was essentially parochial, the new literature, which came from a variety of Spanish-speaking countries, offered the journal's reader an eclectic flavor.

Pablo Antonio Cuadra was aware of the possible implications of losing such popular poets as Cardenal, Coronel Urtecho, Gutiérrez and Silva and of selecting an editorial team that was not representative of Nicaragua. To allay any concerns regarding the journal's commitment to Nicaraguan literature, Cuadra emphasized that this new journal was to be a cultural review of "Hispanic arts and letters *in Nicaragua*." He also introduced this first issue with an essay addressing the importance of poetry to the Nicaraguan revolution and to Nicaraguan identity. It was a theme that had penetrated almost all Sandinista literature.

Cuadra's Influence

Pablo Antonio Cuadra's importance to the creation of an anti-Sandinista cultural bloc did not confine itself to the organization of opposition journals. Cuadra impacted the anti-Sandinista cultural front in four major ways.

First, virtually all Nicaraguan artists, Sandinista and non-Sandinista, agree that Pablo Antonio Cuadra represents the voice of Nicaraguan national identity.⁴⁰

In the Summer 1981 issue of El Pez y la Serpiente, Cuadra detailed the development of Nicaragua's national identity. In this article he recounted the dual impact that the Spanish-Native American encounter had on each other's culture. Each culture adopted elements of the other in forming a distinct culture. He contends that the brilliance of Darío stemmed from his ability to singularize these two cultural streams. Identifying Nahuatl linguistic characteristics in Darío's writings, Cuadra asserts that Darío intentionally incorporated it with his universalist themes and writing style. Furthermore, he contended that Darío's ability to synthesize "native interiorism" with "universal exteriorism" spawned the creation of Nicaraguan national culture. According

8. ⁴⁰Revista del Pensamiento Centroamericano. Jan-Mar. 1985, p.

to Cuadra each generation subsequent to Darío, in searching for its national identity, drew from Darío and like Darío attempted to synthesize "native interiorism" with "universal exteriorism," both thematically and stylistically.⁴¹

It was this belief that Nicaraguan identity derives from a combination of Nicaragua's traditional and indigenous elements and its contemporary facets that gave Pablo Antonio Cuadra's poetry such a national prominence. Even while in exile in Costa Rica, Nicaraguans recognized Cuadra's importance to Nicaraguan national identity. While the Sandinistas vigorously opposed Cuadra's political views, they could not deny his artistic preeminence nor fail to acknowledge his status as the "poet of national identity." This status presented Pablo Antonio Cuadra with opportunities to influence the character of Nicaraguan thought and culture that the Sandinista culture programs could not thwart.

Second, Cuadra's literary roots as a member of Nicaragua's Vanguardia Movement (see Chapter Three) gave him a commonality with the Sandinista intellectual elites. Whereas the Ministry of Culture's declared task was to eradicate the barriers that separated Nicaraguan

⁴¹Cuadra, Pablo Antonio. "En el umbral de una nueva época." pp. 14.

amateur artists from Nicaragua's professional artists, many elements within the Sandinista cultural community rejected the Ministry of Culture's projects and professed a conviction that the obligation of Nicaragua's cultural vanguard was not to assist in the development of a "democratized" culture; rather, they argued that their duty was to create the nation's art and to take it to the people (see Chapter Five). In the writings of cultural elitists like Rosario Murillo, there exists the acute distinction between the cultural movement of the people and the cultural work of Nicaragua's professional artists. In the same vein, the 1930s saw the Vanguardia Movement present itself as the culturally representative body of Nicaragua.

Third, Cuadra's condemnations of the Sandinista cultural policy found an outlet in the conservative journal Revista del Pensamiento Centroamericano. In a 1984 analysis, Cuadra made the follow criticisms:

A) The Ministry of Culture's poetry workshops, by emphasizing political poetry, were preventing its participants from fully developing their literary skills.

According to Cuadra:

In the . . . Ministry of Culture's workshops one is taught to sing but one is also taught what message the song should carry. (Cuadra 1984: 97)

To validate his claim, Cuadra referred to an advertisement on Sandinista Television, depicting a youth grateful to the workshops for teaching him that his romance poetry was poor because it lacked a message.

B) Exteriorism and the Ministry's philosophy behind "cultural democratization" were problematic. Cuadra asserted that the lowering of cultural standards to allow the masses to participate had profound historical and literary implications. For example, Cuadra asked rhetorically, "Would we ask Rubén Darío to return to the mentality of a campesino when it will affect his great revolution in language and Hispanic literature?" (Cuadra 1984: 95). For Cuadra the solution to "cultural democratization" was not in the creation of a mode of cultural production that was accessible to everyone (since, according to Cuadra, it lowered cultural standards); rather, it was in the "education of the people so that they understand art" (Cuadra 1984: 95).

C) The Sandinistas' continued criticism of Nicaragua's cultural heritage was, in fact, a criticism of their own "new culture". Cuadra argued that since many of the Sandinistas' cultural programs derived, in some way, from previous Nicaraguan culture a complete renunciation of the past is also a criticism of many of the Ministry of Culture's projects. In fact, Cuadra

maintained, the Sandinistas' implication that all of Nicaragua's cultural heritage was a "failed" project, suggests that the poetic tradition that produced such important Nicaraguan cultural figures as: Rubén Darío, Alfonso Cortés, Azarías Pallais, José Coronel Urtecho, Joaquín Pasos, Carlos Martínez Rivas and Ernesto Cardenal was also a "failed" project. (Cuadra 1984: 95).

D) Although Cuadra criticized poetry with political messages in his essays, he was not beyond incorporating it into his own work. In his poem, "1984", Cuadra laments the ways that the Sandinistas' were utilizing poetry for their own ideological purposes.

My Country of peasants
inhabited by soldiers! My country
that overflowed with poems,
repeating slogans! (Cuadra 1985:7)

In order to present a cultural journal that appeared to have a broad poetic base and to compensate for the loss of Nicaraguan poetry suited for El Pez's apolitical format, Pablo Antonio Cuadra included verse from many of Nicaragua's different generations of poets, living and deceased. He also incorporated verse from non-Nicaraguan sources. Works from Nicaraguans: Cuadra, Carlos Martínez Rivas, Mario Cajina Vega, Octavio Robleto and ex-National Literacy Campaign brigadista, Pedro Xavier Solis, appeared in the early post-revolution journals.

Verse from early twentieth century Nicaraguan poets also emerged (e.g. Rubén Darío, Salomón de la Selva). Moreover, Cuadra also began incorporating into El Pez poetry from artists who had heretofore been neglected by the journal (e.g. the Winter 1983 issue featured thirty-five pages of poetry by Salvador Murillo, a member of the "generation of the 30s").

For reasons that have yet to be explained adequately El Pez y La Serpiente ceased publication after the Winter 1983 issuance. According to Pablo Antonio Cuadra, in 1983 the Office of the Ministry of the Interior "wanted to subject our review to censorship. We preferred to suspend publication." (El Pez y La Serpiente 1989: 6)

Cuadra added:

We lament that for many years [now] a revolution, in which everyone participated for Nicaraguan liberation, has mounted a new dictatorship, thus, closing the means to independent communication and subjecting everyone to barbarous censorship, while forcing many writers and poets to join the lines of the Nicaraguan exodus. . . . (El Pez y La Serpiente 1989: 6).

In 1989, after a six year absence, El Pez y La Serpiente resurfaced in Nicaragua. The journal's return prompted Pablo Antonio Cuadra partially to restructure the organization of the journal. Although retaining the previously established pan-Hispanic advisory council, Cuadra opted for a nationally based editorship. He

selected Pedro Xavier Solis to be the editor-in-chief and Jorge Eduardo Arellano, Mario Cajina Vega, Jaime Incer, Horacio Peña and Nicasio Urbina to constitute the editorial board. The reorganization of El Pez y La Serpiente was not its only new feature. Although keeping in line with its previous devotion to traditional artists and intellectuals, the journal also professed a newfound commitment to a larger cultural base.

Our review renews its works . . . opening its pages to EVERYONE: to the messengers of time, to the ancestors, to the builders, to the dreamers of the myths, to the stars and to those that give testimony of the reality of the life, to the poets, to the artists. And recovering what Nicaragua has produced, during these dark years, in silence or in exile. And in the struggle for liberty. (El Pez y La Serpiente 1989:7)

Realization of El Pez's commitment to a new cultural base was immediately evident. Christening the new phase in the journal's existence, "la época nueva", Pablo Antonio Cuadra introduced the works of several Nicaraguan poets who were in exile, external and internal. For the journal, which after the departures of Cardenal, Silva, Gutiérrez and Coronel Urtecho had showcased only four Nicaraguan poets, the inclusion of the new poets marked a significant breakthrough.

Included in this collection of poets-in-exile were: Cuadra, Mario Cajina Vega, Horacio Peña, Fanor Téllez,

Carlos Pérezalonso, Guillermo Menocal, Ligia Guillén, Pedro Xavier Solís, Yolanda Blanco, and Juan Velázquez.

This issue not only featured the works of the eight Nicaraguan poets in exile, but it also included the works of foreign poets: Juan Gustavo Cobo Borda and Stephen White (U.S.). Furthermore, the journal included a lengthy comparison of the poetic styles of Rubén Darío and Walt Whitman.

In February 1990 the FSLN lost the presidential election to Violeta Chamorro and the UNO coalition. In the same vein that the editorship of Nicaráuac celebrated the triumph over Somocismo and the beginning of the new society with an issue dedicated to "new Nicaraguan poetry", the first issue after the election of El Pez y la Serpiente celebrated Nicaragua's transition of power with an issue also exalting "new Nicaraguan poetry" (El Pez y la Serpiente Fall 1990).

Conclusion

The criticisms that the Sandinista intellectual elites had of the poetry workshops reappeared, in a much more generalized way, in the writings of Pablo Antonio Cuadra.

Certainly El Pez's newfound commitment to a broader base of Nicaraguan culture was in response to the stag-

nancy of the previous anti-Sandinista culture. Virtually all of the poetry that this bloc produced stemmed from Cuadra's pen. In fact, El Pez's declaration of cultural plurality suggests a policy that was similar to that held by the newly created Institute of Culture.

Although emphasizing a new resolution to a more inclusive cultural journal, Pablo Antonio Cuadra did not totally dismiss his previous format. As it did prior to the closing, El Pez y La Serpiente provided ample space for literary analyses and criticisms.

The significance that this issue had cannot be underestimated. Other than the literary supplements it was the first cultural journal (Sandinista or anti-Sandinista) to appear in Nicaragua since 1988. If the Government Junta and the Ministry of Culture were correct in their premise--that popular poetry (as it was consumed and produced) raised revolutionary consciousness sufficiently to assist in advancing the revolution--then the lack thereof, particularly at the popular level, would have devastating repercussions for the maintenance of the revolution. Furthermore, the social consequences that this void would cause could be even more pronounced if poetry from the opposition to the Sandinistas emerged as the lone cultural voice.

CONCLUSION

Antonio Gramsci maintained that for cultural hegemony to shift from the bourgeoisie to the people, the political party representing the people must create an organization for the interaction between "organic" intellectuals and "traditional" intellectuals. Gramsci asserted that the integration of "traditional" intellectuals into the cultural front, because of their influence and knowledge, was essential to the prompt transfer of cultural hegemony. Without this alliance, Gramsci suggested that the transition of power would be retarded.

In Nicaragua, the FSLN after assuming power made a deliberate attempt to democratize culture, particularly poetry. Immediately after its creation, the Ministry of Culture began implementing poetry workshops throughout the country. These workshops brought "traditional" and "organic" intellectuals together in the hope of creating a "new society" and a new "organic" intellectual. Initially this project had spectacular results as thousands of Nicaraguans participated in the workshops in the first five years.

Not all of Nicaragua's cultural community assisted in the cultural democratization projects. Although the ASTC had noble intentions and gave many Nicaraguans the opportunities to view cultural programs, it never really applied its members' abilities or its resources to the process of popular cultural production. Furthermore, despite the success of the poetry workshops among Nicaragua's rank and file, many of Nicaragua's cultural elites criticized them for their propensity for producing exteriorist revolutionary poetry.

The philosophical difference between the two cultural fronts became increasingly pronounced throughout the 1980s until the dissolution of the Ministry of Culture and the poetry workshops in 1988 and 1989. Replacing the Ministry was the Institute of Culture, headed by Rosario Murillo. The organizational change was not simply nomenclatorial. Emphasizing self-sufficiency among the cultural organizations, the Institute severed the poetry workshops from government agencies and resources. The impact of these austerity measures was enormous and by 1989 the poetry workshop in Nicaragua had become a thing of the past.

Furthermore, the impact of the Contra War and Nicaragua's economic hard times forced the FSLN government to stop subsidizing many Nicaraguan cultural jour-

nals. No longer available were journals such as Poesía Libre, Chachalaca and Nicaráuac to publish revolutionary popular poetry. The only cultural journal that remained was Ventana and its editorship, headed by Rosario Murillo, had previously led attacks against the poetry workshops. Indeed, Ventana was so partisan to the professional cultural tendencies that by 1988 it had altogether ceased publishing workshop poetry or other works from "organic" intellectuals in favor of writings from the established sector.

Replacing the poetry workshop and the poetry of revolution was the poetry of Pablo Antonio Cuadra and Nicaragua's "Miami poets". After a six-year hiatus, Pablo Antonio Cuadra and the cultural journal, El Pez y la Serpiente, returned to Nicaragua in 1989 to mount a cultural attack against the Sandinistas. The first issue after the return of the journal featured a collection of poetry from Nicaraguans in exile. Though their numbers were small, because of the virtual disappearance of Sandinista popular poetry, their words were resonant.

That Pablo Antonio Cuadra and El Pez y La Serpiente returned in time for the 1990 election is significant, for he and the journal nearly represented the only cultural voices in Nicaragua at the time. The electoral rejection of the Sandinistas signalled a new beginning

for Cuadra. With the UNO victory, Cuadra (as Cardenal had done when the FSLN assumed power) published a collection of poetry from opponents of the previous regime and titled it, "Poesía nueva de Nicaragua".

Recent Scholarship

Responding to the FSLN's unexpected loss in the 1990 presidential election, most recent scholarship dealing with Nicaraguan cultural history has incorporated a reevaluation of the Sandinistas' efforts to democratize culture. In fact, the three main works dealing with Sandinista culture conclude with different theories explaining how the FSLN's attempts to achieve cultural hegemony went awry. David Craven's Summer, 1990, article in Latin American Perspectives, "The State of Cultural Democracy in Cuba and Nicaragua During the 1980s," suggests that the main reason that the FSLN's cultural democratization projects failed was because of cultural reprioritization in the Sandinista upper echelons. For Craven, the abolition of the cultural democracy-oriented Ministry of Culture in 1988 and the creation of the professionally-based Institute of Culture in 1989 reflected an ideological shift from cultural democratization to cultural privatization that would anticipate the shift in popular support from the socialist-based Frente to the capitalist-based UNO coalition in 1990.

That same year John Beverley and Marc Zimmerman published Literature and Politics in Central American Revolutions. This work provides an excellent analysis of the impact that literature, especially poetry, has had on effecting revolution change in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. The victory by the UNO coalition in 1990, though, prior to this text's release forced Beverley and Zimmerman to reevaluate hastily their conclusions.

The 1990 electoral surprise, according to Beverley and Zimmerman, can be attributed to the destabilization of popular support owing to the dissolution of the Ministry of Culture and the FSLN's new cultural policies that led to a death by attrition of the Popular Culture Centers and the Poetry Workshops. For Beverley and Zimmerman, the new cultural policies were the logical consequences of the emergence of professionalism-minded Rosario Murillo as the nation's director of cultural affairs and the deterioration of support for Ernesto Cardenal from within the FSLN party ranks.

Greg Dawes's doctoral dissertation, Aesthetics and Revolution, is the most recent publication addressing the failure of the FSLN's cultural policies. Dawes basically attributes the decline of the workshops and other cultural projects to "internal political and ideological dis-

crepancies between the FSLN leadership and its membership" (Dawes 1993:195).

The failure of the Sandinistas to complete the process of the democratization of culture kept the FSLN from assuming complete cultural hegemony. The unwillingness of many pro-Sandinista cultural and intellectual figures to assist in the democratization of culture projects precluded the Sandinistas from creating the desired unity between the "organic" intellectuals and the "traditional" intellectuals.

FSLN inability to present a culture of unity--a culture of the people--at the time of the 1990 election gave the Sandinista opposition a gap by which they could exploit the FSLN deficiencies to their greatest advantage using the same mechanism that the FSLN themselves had utilized to assume power. Unable to complete the process of "organic" intellectualization of the people, the FSLN's attempts to maintain cultural hegemony died.

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