Memorials, Shrines and Umbrellas in the Rain: Poetry and 11-M

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On Thursday, March 11, 2004, between 7:37 and 7:40 in the morning, a cell of Moroccan terrorists carried out a massive bombing on Madrid's largely working-class commuter trains. The attacks left 192 people dead and more than 1,500 others wounded. This violent political act was originally attributed by the conservative Partido Popular (PP) government to the Basque terrorist organization, ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna). The PP had made Spain a U.S. ally in the war in Iraq and in the war on terror, which had been useful to the party in justifying more repressive tactics at home in dealing with ETA (Webb). The March 11 (11-M) attacks seemed to offer an opportunity, nearly on the eve of national elections, to vindicate those policies.

The television stations that first covered the attacks had no video coverage until well after the bombings until almost an hour after the first explosion. This meant that the commentators and the viewing public necessarily limited themselves to listening to reporters calling in the information live, with no theories yet proffered about the culprits. Soon, however, the news media were saturated with images of the wreckage and then with the government's official story about the authors of the attack, both of which supplied means for interpreting the event. That is, it became clear at that point that "violence does not present itself unmediated to observers or participants, but is named, recognized, and experienced in terms of authorizing concepts and relations of power" (Skurski and Coronil 4).

The PP's efforts to control the narrative in the media exemplify the "predominance of a given communication model," one that is in line with

> the dominant political paradigm (managerial model of state/citizen interaction), which prioritizes efficiency of internal organizational activities and linear provision of information to citizens, in contrast to models that prioritize consultation or participation. (Sey and Castells 367-68)

These tactics might recall the manipulation of information in authoritarian regimes, but Araba Sey and Manuel Castells contend that it dominates neoliberal democracies as well, meaning that "widespread acceptance of the Internet as a tool for political campaigns and programs has not translated into a more open and participatory political process" (367) because politicians fear the impact that alternate readings, additional information, and misinformation might have on their campaigns. Complete control of the message was certainly paramount for the PP on 11-M, three days before national elections.

Instead of sustaining the government's narrative about ETA's culpability, however, the media, in particular the Internet and cable television, quickly unraveled it, thereby exemplifying Castells's claim that the "architecture of the network is, and will remain, technologically open, enabling widespread public access and seriously limiting governmental or commercial restrictions" (*Network* 384). Informed simultaneously by network news, non-state posts on the Internet, and international cable news, the citizenry did not reach the same conclusion about the authors of the crimes. On March 12 (12-M), a massive protest clogged the public spaces of the city, as the populace demonstrated against the variety of ills that could have led to the violence: globalized capital, Spain's alliance with the U.S. in the war on terror, and Basque terrorism. The protest itself was a political flash mob, organized through e-mails and texting (López García 231), media that are not subject to government control. The visual image of this sea of protesters in the international press and on the web also dislodged the government's neat narrative, which could never again be monolithically reconstructed, despite the party's insistence on it throughout the three days after the attacks. The loss of message was a significant factor leading to the defeat of the PP in the elections on March 14 to the leader of the Socialist Party (PSOE), José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero (Celso, López García).

Thus one could argue that, with the help of communication

technology, these citizens overcame the attempts of the government to maintain a one-way, centrally controlled message, and brought about instead an abrupt, interactive, participatory act of communication. The 12-M protests demonstrated the existence of a politicized populace with a sophisticated sense of the workings of language, technology and the media image, resistant to political commonplaces, and suspicious of the government's motives. Their sensibility was not created overnight, but rather evolved along with the mechanisms of what Castells calls "the network society" in his seminal book on the topic, one characterized by ever-increasing flows of information, communication, money, people, and jobs across global networks.

This kind of networking mentality was also instrumental in the articulation of a support group for those affected by the bombings, called the *Red ciudadana tras el 11-M* 'Citizens' Network Following 11-M.' The *Red* represents a loose yet dynamic web of connections among survivors, families and friends of the dead, social and health workers, political organizers, victims of other acts of political violence, etc., who informally elaborate responses to the catastrophe, including, but not limited to, political action and emotional support. The network began with a group of social workers and activists who hoped to organize a response to 11-M, but it grew through word of mouth and through Internet posts, and eventually the professionals dropped out, leaving only those affected by the tragedy (Desdedentro 26-28). The structure, as the organizers describe it, was intentionally informal, non-ideological and horizontal, as well as outside the formal mechanisms of politics and journalism (Desdedentro 28), so that it could allow for "un proceso interno de apertura a otras posibilidades de elaboración de lo sucedido no codificadas ni ya instituidas" (Desdedentro 21) 'an internal process of opening up to other possibilities, not yet codified or institutionalized, for understanding the events.'[1] The "Red Ciudadana" thus sought to exemplify the model of interactive, networked politics imagined by Sey and Castells, who write, "an active citizenry may find in the Internet a medium of communication to bypass the filters of mass media and party machines, and to network itself, asserting its collective autonomy" (363-64).

A strictly utopian reading of the network as a means for citizens'

empowerment in the face of governments dedicated to the principles and processes of globalization, however, is not entirely tenable. Some of the citizens' groups, for example, have been coopted by political parties and used for propaganda purposes. What is more, it could be argued that the same conditions that empowered the Spanish citizenry made the attacks themselves possible. The Internet, for example, has allowed for the organization of and communication between terrorist cells, as well as the dissemination of inflammatory images and information on the construction of explosive devices. The globalized economy brought the Islamist terrorists to Spain in the first place as immigrants. On 11-M, the bomb detonators themselves were cell phones. And, thanks to blogs, anonymous Internet posts, YouTube, and the like, the battle to give meaning to the bombings and their aftermath continues to rage today.

These competing interpretations are not entirely based on facts and reason. Rather, competing factions deploy recognizable rhetorical representations to engage affective reactions from readers, viewers, or Internet surfers. The 11-M bombings thus have come to recall for many spectators, and particularly for many writers, prior attacks on Madrid, as well as historical violent rebellions or attacks against the State and/or capitalism, events that had been previously recorded in photographs, paintings, songs, films, and literary texts. It was not surprising, then, that on 12-M, the Rafael Alberti bookstore in Madrid asked writers to send poems about the attacks to be hung in its front window. Months later, two of the poets compiled an anthology of the poems, in the national languages of Spain (Castilian, Basque, Galician, and Catalan) with the title, *Madrid, once de marzo: Poemas para el recuerdo* 'Madrid, March 11: Poems for Remembering.' Later in the same year, another anthology appeared, titled *11-M: Poemas contra el olvido* 'March 11: Poems Against Forgetting,' with exclusively Spanish language poetry by Latin American and Spanish authors, capped off with an epilogue by a Moroccan exile living in France but writing in Spanish. To date, nearly every major living Spanish poet has written about this violent event. Poems also figured prominently in the spontaneous shrines to the dead erected in the Atocha train station, as well as in the smaller train stations of the working class neighborhoods impacted by the attacks. Messages to the dead were later inscribed on the inner walls

of the stunning memorial to the 11-M victims—a crystal cylinder that pierces the roof of the station, channeling light to the interior space below.

The style, structure, imagery, and rhetorical devices of the 11-M poems date from the 1920s and continue through the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), the Franco dictatorship (1939-75), the transition to democracy (1975-78), the *movida madrileña* 'the Madrid scene' (1980-89), and the years of neoliberalism and globalization (1990-present). Although leftist sentiments predominate, they are not hegemonic. Thus, there is no single overarching ideology, philosophy, nationality, religion or aesthetics that unites these texts, nothing beyond the event and the impulse to respond with poetry. The anthologies therefore seem to represent a slice of time taken at the moment of this tragic event. They display a constellation of contemporaneous poetic impulses, and, taken together, they suggest that poetry in Spain today is simultaneously haunted by voices from the past and populated by innumerable contemporary voices speaking in several languages and emanating from bodies marked by a variety of genders, races, ethnicities, classes, ages, and religions that coexist in an imagined poetic community that this event made strikingly visible.

The majority of the 11-M poems directly or indirectly reference the media images of the devastation wrought by the attacks, and they share what Susan Sontag calls in her seminal book, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, a recognizable "iconography of suffering" (40) as well as a rhetoric of solidarity dating from the beginning of the twentieth century. Carole Blair, Greg Dickinson and Brian L. Ott define rhetoric as "the study of discourses, events, objects and practices that attends to their character as meaningful, legible, partisan, and consequential" (2). Sontag claims, "photographs of the victims of war are themselves a species of rhetoric. They reiterate. They simplify. They agitate. They create the illusion of consensus" (6). Photographs appeal in part to the viewers' emotions, eliciting a visceral, affective reaction. Nonetheless, scholars have argued that images, particularly surprising ones, also encourage deep ethical thinking, which manifests itself "as involvement or attention—a focused sensory and cognitive effort with limited attention to other things" (Coleman 836). They encourage meditation, and, as Sontag

puts it, "There's nothing wrong with standing back and thinking" (118).

The photographs of and poems about the victims of March 11 and the protest marches of March 12 produce just such complex effects. The best-known image from the attacks portrays a number of victims being tended by their fellow travelers and emergency workers next to one of the devastated trains, emphasizing the compassionate, care-taking function of citizens in crisis. On the ground in the photo published in the Spanish papers was a blood-red limb, a shocking detail that was photo-shopped gray, or out of the picture altogether, in many foreign papers. The photo suggests many readings: the despair of innocent victims; the dehumanizing effect of violence, which turns people and their effects into debris; the arbitrary way in which death visits some and not others; the appeal to a compassionate but outraged citizenry. The amputated limb sublimely reveals the devastating effect of the attack on the human body, the way it has severed human connections in a most literal sense. Its impact is apparent in the number of poems that reference it: "Hay una pierna sola en un andén / y un chaval llora sangre con un ojo en la mano" (Sevilla 158) 'There is a leg alone on the platform / and a young boy cries blood with his eye in his hand'; "y hay dedos de un cadáver ya sin brazos / y una pierna infantil sin ningún nombre" (Pérez Montalbán 135) 'and there are fingers of a cadaver without arms / and a child's leg without a name'; or "ese brazo cercenado en la vía, / como un despojo de lo que fue noble / y tuvo dignidad, y ahora es un símbolo / de la más encendida sinrazón, del odio inacabable" (Lamillar 86) 'that amputated arm on the tracks / like the remains of what was noble / and had dignity and is now a symbol / of the most inflamed injustice, of unending hatred.' The poems rhetorically portray the remains as fragmented bodies destroyed by political violence, innocent victims of a savage act of war, desacralized bits of humanity.

Sontag argues that the first precedent for the iconography of human suffering from modern warfare comes from Goya's *Desastres,* and there is clearly a visual link between the human wreckage there, in the news photo, and in these poems. The photo also strongly recalls the intended effect of the photographic images of the Guernica bombings circulated in protest of fascist abuses in

the Spanish Civil War, images which, Sontag claims, do not just show war but "a particular way of waging war, a way at that time routinely described as 'barbaric,' in which civilians are the target" (9). Picasso's artistic rendering of the intertwined human and animal suffering occasioned by the Guernica bombing, of course, has come to dominate the visual imagination of attacks on civilians as a barbaric horror that defies the traditional boundaries of landscape and portraiture. This is the same iconography, ironically, that defines portrayals of ETA violence in the Spanish media, and the ubiquity of that kind of representation might explain why the PP government thought that its initial attempts to link the bombing to Basque terrorism might be successful.[2]

The rhetoric of Picasso's *Guernica* appears as well in the second most recognizable photo of the 11-M attacks, which shows a derailed train with a gaping hole in the side, lying like an injured creature with its entrails exposed, a personification of the violence of the explosion and the absence produced by the dead. This rhetoric is repeated in several poems as "los trenes heridos" (Lamillar 86) 'the wounded trains,' "los trenes desgarrados" (Barnatán) 'torn trains,' "lloran trenes al alba" (Nogueras) 'trains cry at dawn,' or "trenes que se clavan / en el azul de un cielo mordido por el fuego / que aúlla y se retuerce por el odio" (Sevilla 158) 'trains spiked / into the blue of a sky bitten by a fire / that howls and twists with hatred.' These wounded, howling machines are thus rhetorically linked to the ruined human bodies scattered like debris on the platform, much as the agonized animals and humans blend together in *Guernica*.

In addition to reproducing the wreckage of 11-M photographs, the poems allude very clearly to a Spanish-language poetic tradition about social inequity. The 11-M poems are replete with allusions to Federico García Lorca, Pablo Neruda, César Vallejo, Ángela Figuera, Jaime Gil de Biedma, and Gloria Fuertes. Thus, the poem "Atocha" by Francisco Díaz de Castro begins with a chaotic enumeration reminiscent of Neruda's "Walking Around"—"Mariposas de sangre en los cristales, / miembros, humo, cascotes y lamentos" 'Butterflies of blood on the windows, / limbs, smoke, rubble, and moans'—before continuing to a class critique that recalls the events, language, and verses of the Spanish Civil War: "trabajadores y estudiantes muertos / en nombre de algún dios de algún orden" 'workers and students

killed / in the name of some god of some order.' There are echoes of Lorca's "Sorpresa" 'Surprise' in the poem "Pocas palabras" 'Few Words' by Jesús Munárriz, which ends with an image of the blind, open eyes of the dead. The lists of personal belongings in the poems "Las cosas que llevaban" 'The Things They Were Carrying,' by Pablo García Casado and "Identificación de cadáveres" 'Identification of Corpses,' by Isabel Pérez Montalbán, echo Fuertes's "De los periódicos" 'In the Papers' and Ángela Figuera's "Mujeres del mercado" 'Women in the Marketplace.' These allusions invoke not only the aesthetic proclivities of a poetic tradition, but also the leftist ideology of the authors cited, and they therefore offer a specific socio-political reading of the bombings as further manifestations of an unjust economic system and the perilous existence of the poor.

Another relevant media image, this one from 12-M, seeks to suggest the collective reaction of the Spanish public to the attacks, the fusing of the victims and the protestors, the living and the dead. It is a photo of the protest marches, a sea of umbrellas held against the rain as the individual citizens gather to form a common voice. The iconography of this visual image of solidarity and mass protest has a long history as well, dating at least from the May Day Haymarket Riots in Chicago in 1886 and the Tragic Week in Barcelona in 1909. It is important to note that those were protests by the working class, brutally repressed by the policing power of the state, and the images seek to create a sense of solidarity with that working class and to protest state violence, either by portraying it graphically, in the case of the Chicago riots, or by representing the protest as peaceful in nature, in the case of the Barcelona photo. Peaceful resistance to war and violence is also the message of later images of the Vietnam protests, and the Civil Rights March. Photos of the *pueblo unido* 'people united' of Allende's Chile emphasize the role of solidarity in achieving socio-economic justice. Ironically, two very similar images of peaceful protest have been used to show both support for and displeasure with ETA's activities in the Spanish press. Many of the 11-M poems draw clearly on these concepts of solidarity with the working class and protest against violence, whether sponsored by Basque nationalists or by the state, in the form of police repression and Spain's complicity with globalization, neoliberalism, and the Bush Doctrine.

The most common metaphor in the 11-M poems for representing the creation of a community in solidarity with the victims following the attacks is rain, which suggests simultaneously the debris falling from the air after the explosion, the splintered glass of the train windows, the blood flowing along the tracks, the tears shed by witnesses to those images, and the literal March showers under which protestors stood. Antonio Colinas envisions a rain of hands from the sky, transforming the literal image of broken bodies into a wave of music, itself an emblem of inclusion. Luis García Montero's sonnet links the train, the rain, tears and solidarity in the course of just two verses: "La lluvia en el cristal de la ventana, / el aire de la plaza compartida" 'The rain on the train window / the air in the plaza we shared' ('Wounded Sonnet'). José Ignacio Foronda claims in his poem, "En el café de las viudas" 'In the Widows' Café,' that "A todos nos colgaba / una lágrima idéntica, / hecha de rabia y dolor" (*Madrid, once de marzo* 66) 'An identical tear / made of fury and pain / clung to all our eyes.' All three poems forge a collective body, a *nosotros* 'we.' This rhetorical gesture suggests that the suffering of the dead was not in vain, that it brought people together. This form of solidarity between poet and victim harks back to the poetics of the 1930's and the 1950's, and even to the more culturalist expression of the concept in social poems, like Biedma's "Piazza del popolo" 'The People's Plaza.'

These gestures of unification are linked to the impulse to memorialize the victims of political violence. Blair, Dickinson and Ott explain in their "Introduction" to *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*, that "public memory is typically understood as relying on material and/or symbolic support—language, ritual performance, communication technologies, objects, places—that work in various ways to consummate individuals' attachment to the group" (10). Julia Barella's poem, "Luz blanca" 'White Light,' offers one of the best examples of the creation of a monument to solidarity with 11-M victims. Barella turns the literal image of rain and splintered glass into falling stars, which simultaneously represent the multiplicity of fragments, of individuals, and the merging of first-person speaker with those others across the borders of bodies, space, and time, until they become a "we" that exists in the moment and transcends it.

The image comprises the city and the countryside, the colors of the hills and the flowers, and then transparency, *luz blanca*, when the conversion of horror into beauty is complete. It is a spiritual, but not a religious, representation. There is no mention of the perpetrators, no assignment of culpability; only the speaker, the victims, and the intended readers are brought together in the collective, harmonious "us."

The memorial to 11-M victims at the Atocha station offers a nearly identical, secular reflection, as the architects explain on their website (http://www.estudiofam.com). The monument can be seen on the street, a shimmering transparent tower of clear glass blocks jutting out of the station at an angle, visually recalling the explosions. Inside the glass blocks is a clear membrane or skin on which messages to the victims in numerous languages are inscribed in a continuous, spiral text. The architects describe the rhetoric of this linguistic presentation in relation to concepts of transparency, light, absence, and structure. The absolute transparency of the structure was of tantamount importance to the architects, who write that, "Tan solo brillos, reflejos y luz formarán materialmente el monumento" 'the monument will consist materially of only glimmers, reflections and light.' The monument penetrates out to the city and its inhabitants, and down into a meditation room with blue walls, separated from the rest of the station by a soundproof glass wall, creating "un espacio vacío, en silencio, con la luz como protagonista" 'an empty space, silent, with light as the protagonist.'

The site marks a vacuum, a place where many died, but none are buried. The bodies are gone, but their trace is preserved on the wall of the meditation room in a list of the victims' names, a typical gesture in monuments to the dead.[3] Carole Blair notes that in contemporary memorials, the inscriptions "name individuals whose lives and/or deaths have been rendered outside the cultural mainstream" ("Reflections" 282). She is thinking of the AIDS Memorial Quilt, the monument to Civil Rights Activists, soldiers of the Vietnam War. The names on the 11-M memorial are of the economically and legally marginalized: working class citizens and undocumented foreign workers, living on the outskirts of the capital. Their names specifically mark the multiculturalism of contemporary Spain as a result of its triumphant participation in global capitalism and

the uneven benefits of the free market. Guillermo López Gallego's "Elegía" 'Elegy' performs a similar naming, "visibilizing" function. The poem is simply a list of the names of the dead, with "Guillermo," "López" and "Gallego" in bold as they crop up in others' names. Again, it is striking how many of the names are foreign.

Another significant image of the 11-M attacks comes from a surveillance camera in the Atocha station, which shows commuters calmly ascending the escalator just before, and then as, their lives are abruptly and forever interrupted by the explosions. They are individuals going about their routine, and their faces are clearly recognizable in the moment before they are gone. Miguel d'Ors writes that "Uno se muere así, cuando tenía / un cigarro en la mano (que aparece / humeando, después, sobre el asfalto") 'You die just like that, when you had / a cigarette in your hand (which appears later, / smoking, on the asphalt).' The camera image also reveals the elusiveness of security, which is in itself the justification for ever-increasing state-sponsored surveillance. This technology converts public spaces into a kind of panopticon, subjecting ordinary citizens to vigilance and discipline. It could be interpreted as a visible manifestation of other surveillance technologies that reach into the private spaces as well, monitoring conversations on cell phones and landlines, observing suspects of ETA or Islamist terrorism (but also innocent citizens) at home and work through telephoto lenses. This concept appears only tangentially in the 11-M poems. "Txorien aberria / La patria de los pájaros" 'The Homeland of the Birds,' by Felipe Juaristi, for example, links the attacks to the disciplinary structures of statehood—weapons, military camps, insane asylums, and cages—designed to control some forms of nationalist violence and to legitimize others.

In addition to the many elaborations on visual images of the attacks and the protests, the 11-M poems insistently reference another element of communication technology: the cell phone. After the attacks, the phones rang incessantly, as friends and family members called desperately in an attempt to learn the fate of their loved ones. The sound of the phones in the wreckage—called "las llamadas de la muerte" 'death calls'—highlighted the rupture in the communication network, occasioned, not by technical difficulties, but by death. This insistent image appears in several poems. In

"Atocha" by Díaz de Castro, there are "teléfonos sonando entre las vías" 'telephones ringing between the tracks.' In "Madrid, once de marzo" by Pedro Sevilla, "Hay móviles que suenan sin saber que ya suenan / donde no existe el tiempo" (158) 'There are cell phones that ring without knowing that they're ringing / where time no longer exists.' In "Pocas palabras" 'Few Words,' Munárriz writes that, "Nadie responde. / En el suelo, los móviles / suenan y suenan" (119) 'No one answers. / On the ground, the cell phones / ring and ring.' Among "Las cosas que llevaban" 'The Things They Were Carrying' by Pablo García Casado is "Un teléfono móvil que suena una y otra vez dentro de una bolsa de plástica negra, *deje su mensaje cuando suene la señal*" (69) 'A cell phone that rings over and over in a black plastic bag, *leave your message when you hear the beep.*' Pérez Montalbán extends her metaphor of lost children to these objects: "la orfandad de los móviles que ya nadie contesta" (136) 'the orphanhood of the cell phones that no one will ever answer now.'

These are all legitimate strategies for addressing the tragedy. They draw on rhetoric recognizable to the majority of the Spanish public. They mirror the shock and grief of the public who watched the events unfold on television and the Internet; they offer words of comfort; they create a sense of community; they create a solid memorial to the victims. Several 11-M poems, however, do not reproduce the media images or simply mention cellphones but engage and reproduce the communication technology that broadcast the news, and the web of technologies that arguably led to and permitted both the attacks and the protests, the violent and non-violent overthrow of the PP government and the Bush doctrine. They leave us not with an inherited rhetoric of violence, solidarity, or the sacred, or with the images drawn from the media, or even these ringing cellphones but with silences, unanswered questions, inexplicable but repeated acts, mathematical equations, images that we poorly perceive, flickers of light or recognition.

Agustín Fernández Mallo has claimed that postmodernism calls for this kind of desacralized, dystopian neutrality, which characterizes what he calls postpoetry (*Postpoesía* 48). His own untitled 11-M poem invokes the pixel as the fragment that links the injured, the dead, the photo, and the video clip to the living viewers and their incomplete comprehension of the events: "Amanece en el

televisor / … / un *software* desconocido arrasa / una ciudad a trozos pixelada" (62) 'Dawn rises on television / … / an unknown software razes / a city pixilated into pieces.' The fractal and the pixel appear in his text as fragments that produce the illusion of the whole picture, a singular image of the event, yet both of them also divide up and multiply it. The fractal, after all, is an irregular geometric shape that can be split into parts that are reduced-sized copies of the whole, and the pixel, in addition to contributing to the illusion of a big picture, is a self-contained element of itself. The media image, finally, is not reality, but a simulation, understood in the scientific sense of the word, as: "la nueva forma de representación de los fenómenos por ordenador de la que se vale la investigación científica, y que según los filósofos de la ciencia ni es experiencia . . . ni es teoría . . . sino otra cosa más poderosa que ambas y entre las cuales flota simulada" (*Postpoesía* 31). 'the new form of computer-generated representation of phenomena used by scientists, which according to philosophers of science is neither experience . . . nor theory . . . but something else more powerful than both and which floats between them as a simulation.' The poem, divided into three sections, does not offer a sustained meditation on the image itself, but it is also more than the sum of its parts, or as Mallo writes, citing Ilya Prigogine: "$f_1(x) + f_2(x) + f_3(x) + \ldots f_n(x) < F(x)$" (62).[4]

Other 11-M texts by young poets correspond to the norms of videoclip culture that Christine Henseler has identified in Spanish GenX novels. They mix media; incorporate the editing norms of the video; juxtapose divergent times, images and places; and represent an interconnectedness between the subject and the media. Javier Rodríguez Marcos's poem, "Solo en casa" 'Home Alone,' provides a fine example. It never describes the attacks, but links them implicitly to globalized capital in the form of advertising for Visa and Citroën (not capitalized in the poem) on the television set as the speaker eats. The juxtaposition of these elements appears random, even meaningless, perhaps, but it represents structurally the ways in which the contemporary, networked subject processes the excess of information provided simultaneously by the television, the Internet, memories, interactions with others, and so forth, in a way that makes time and space relatively irrelevant. The structure of the poem and the punctuation, meanwhile, disrupt order rather than

imposing it, much as the attacks disrupted the orderly life of the city. The attacks are associated only by suggestion with the forces of global capital when, later in the poem, the television ads become confused in the speaker's mind with "anuncios de paz, discursos, guerra" (156) 'peace posters, speeches, war.' The poem, then, does not treat the 11-M bombings as a singular event or as one that can be explained in traditional terms, but as a manifestation of the latent violence of the free market in the network society.[5]

Josep M. Rodríguez's "Frente al televisor" 'In Front of the Television Set' most powerfully portrays the interaction between the viewer and media images. The poem speaks of television images that haunt us, like the images that linger after we turn off the set or the computer screen, because they merge with our reality, and we, with theirs. In the poem, the speaker has just turned off the TV and tries to flee from the images and the silence that have invaded his home like a river of blood, toward images of love (the mountain's kiss of snow) and a simulation of natural beauty in the flowerpot on the balcony outside his window. The wind has become entangled with the glass of the window and the television screen, and, in a similar manner, his eyes become entangled with the butterfly hovering over the plant, and his eyelids become its wings. That image gives way as he literally holds his cold heart in his hands, an image that simultaneously literalizes an idiomatic expression, recalls the body parts he might have seen on the screen, and offers a vividly sensorial and grotesque figure of death. This rhetoric of identification with the dead victims is markedly different from the poems about solidarity. The vision is not utopic or ideological: the victims do not become stars; we are not joined in a cosmic embrace; there is no political message, no solution.

The poems collected in the anthologies, *Madrid, once de marzo* and *11-M*, were a first response to a shocking and devastating event, and, as such, they offer us a unique opportunity to observe the competing concepts of poetic composition and political engagement at that moment in time. They do not represent the only take or the last word on these issues, however. Indeed, one of the paradoxical effects of the event is that it has encouraged us to reconsider entirely what we mean by "poetry," particularly in relation to science, mathematics, and architecture.[6] The Atocha memorial—no less than

the designs and discoveries of the Equipo 57 or digital, interactive creations—can certainly be considered a poetic text, one that depends on other media and is supported by scientific knowledge. These texts may also help us to rethink what we mean by political violence, and how we conceive of political action in response to all its variations, as well as the roles that art plays in that process.

Notes

1 All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

2 Other images of Civil War and ETA bombings have emphasized the savagery of terrorism by highlighting the benevolent intervention of the state, which seeks to protect and rescue innocent victims of indiscriminate terrorist violence. The 11-M photo offers a similar message, since it shows uniformed emergency workers attending wounded civilians. The contrast between the gentle, care-taking state and the devastating destruction wrought by terrorists rhetorically renders this instance of immediate political violence an anomaly, "a brute physical force that ruptures the flow of everyday life" (Skurski and Coronil 2), rather than a response to the slow or distant violence perpetrated by economic forces or colonialism.

3 The meditation room itself is a non-denominational, non-ideological space for reflection. In this sense, the Atocha monument stands in stark contrast to Madrid's other major memorial to the victims of political violence, the Valle de los Caídos, constructed at the end of the Civil War using defeated Republicans as slave labor.

4 Several poems in the anthologies turn to mathematical concepts and equations, as well as scientific theorems, to represent the events in relation to chaos theory, indeterminacy, thermodynamics, the butterfly effect, and so forth. Prigogine himself argued that the concept of determinism was flawed because it derived from utopian concepts regarding the reversibility of events—some are clearly not reversible—and the simplicity of the relationships among elements in a system.

5 The 11-M poems are a response to just such an extreme manifestation of political violence, so it is not surprising that most of them focus on the event's singularity and specificity. Some, like this one, however, stress the ubiquity of violence in even the most trivial bits of cultural activity.

6 From Basarab Nicolescu's transdisciplinarity to Ilya Prigogine's complex systems, to the butterfly effect and fractal geometry, contemporary science has emphasized the poetic nature of reality, as I explain throughout my article on

Clara Janés's poetry.

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