

***Post-Nerudaism: Some examples of cinematic, operatic, and other
musical adaptations of Neruda's life and oeuvre***

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This essay traces the transnational development of certain cinematic, operatic or other musical works which feature or are derived from aspects of Pablo Neruda's life and historical *oeuvre*. These newer forms of cultural expression can also be regarded as elements of Neruda's literary/cultural "afterlife" or "post-Nerudaism," as I outlined in earlier essays (Campbell, 2012: 181-188 and 2017: 240-264). I contend that the posthumous events and phenomena pertaining in some way to the Neruda life and *oeuvre* deserve scholarly attention *per se*. I also suggest that such posthumous phenomena often now act as a kind of refractory mirror for current generations in so far as the historical Neruda life and *oeuvre* is concerned. They function as prisms through which new generations "experience" Neruda or may come to approach his works. Integrally linked here are the processes of memorializing Neruda, whether they be physical memorials or more ephemeral forms such as festivals, exhibitions, or performances, or, as shall be outlined now, cinematic or musical representations that portray the Neruda life, whether solely based on historical events, or with a strong fictional base, or a combination of both. Relevant here now also are musical adaptations of aspects of the Neruda *oeuvre* in which certain aspects of the Neruda literary output are "privileged" and new emphases and contexts are given to specific extracts of the total Neruda *oeuvre*.¹

¹ The concepts of the literary/cultural afterlife of a prominent writer, including his/her *oeuvre*, and of "post-Nerudaism," have been adopted in a previous essay "Tracing

The first part of this essay will therefore examine the development of what might be described as the *Ardiente paciencia/Il Postino* genre of post-Nerudian cinema and opera, which is derived from or builds on the various literary, theatrical and cinematic Neruda-themed works of Chilean writer Antonio Skármeta in the early-mid 1980s.² The remaining, longer section of this essay will examine how various parts of Neruda's poetical *oeuvre*, the epic *Canto General*, have been adapted into musical forms.

The Ardiente paciencia/Il Postino phenomenon

When *Ardiente paciencia* was first published in Buenos Aires in 1985, in the form of a short novel, Skármeta described his work as being a kind of homage, to both the poet and to democracy. On the back cover of the first edition, he writes that in conceiving of the character of the young postman and his relationship with Neruda, as well as the role of poetry in winning hearts, as an author he was drawing upon reflections about his own adolescence (Skármeta, 1985). Whilst perhaps the best-known format in which Skármeta relates the tale of the young postman and Neruda is the short novel, it is less acknowledged, particularly outside Chile, that a film version (1983) of *Ardiente paciencia* predates the novel.³

In the 1983 film version of *Ardiente paciencia*, scripted and directed by Skármeta, the role of Pablo Neruda was played by the then-exiled Chilean actor Roberto Parada, the role of Mario Jiménez as Neruda's postman by Oscar Castro and Beatriz, his love interest, by Marcela Osorio. The film version, shot in Portugal, portrays Neruda as living at Isla Negra, Chile, in flash-back sequence, four years before the Pinochet coup of 1973. The film opens with Neruda in his house at Isla Negra; Neruda's mail is always overloaded with letters from all over the world and so he comes to know his postman very well. As is now so well-known from all versions of the now-classic story line, when the postman falls in love with Beatriz, Mario turns to the Neruda character for help in expressing his feelings. The poet mentions some verses from his own poetry that might help him win over Beatriz. In the film version, when Neruda heads to France to take up the role of Ambassador, he leaves copies of his literary works to Mario. From France, Mario receives a package of a tape recorder which Neruda has sent him to record the

and Memorializing Neruda: The Uruguay Connections," *A Contracorriente*, Vol 15, No. 1 (Fall 2017): 240-264.

² Antonio Skármeta, born 1940, left Chile in 1973 and returned from exile in 1989. He won the National Prize for Literature in 2014.

³ The first appearance of the *Ardiente Paciencia* story line seems to be as a radio play. As a theatrical piece it debuted in Caracas, Venezuela in 1983 and was performed in Santiago in 1986, whilst its author was still in exile.

sounds of his homeland. At film's end, Chile and indeed the fate of both Neruda and the postman are enveloped in the historical events of 1973. This film version, *Ardiente paciencia*, is characterized by the central grounding of both the love story and the role of Neruda in his interactions with the postman character within the historical context of the downfall of Chilean democracy in 1973 with the Pinochet coup.⁴ Skármeta here, as director, never loses sight of the Chilean political allusions, as if for him, as an exiled author, they demanded a key presence in any film made, especially outside Chile during the Pinochet period. Indeed, the decision to set the film and novel in Chile and make very specific allusions to the political situation, including the death of democracy, is thus at the heart of both the cinematic and novel form of the work.⁵ Yet in all versions of the storyline, it was perhaps a stroke of genius on Skármeta's part to portray the relationship between the Neruda character and the young postman as not just a kind of father-son type of relationship, but also as having elements of that greatest of all of Cervantes' creations—Don Quixote and Sancho Panza.

In 2014 there was something of a revival of greater interest in Chile in the 1983 *Ardiente paciencia* film directed by Skármeta, as evidenced by the screenings of the film as part of the 2014 Feria Internacional del Libro de Santiago (FILSA) held from 23 October to 9 November 2014, and given Skármeta's being awarded the National Prize for Literature in the same year. In part, it is the author's view that some of the reasons for this level of new interest in the film he directed had to do with the continuing level of popular recognition of the presence of many of the essential themes of Skármeta's Neruda-linked works—also found in the 1994 Italian language film, *Il Postino*—and also due to the staging, in Chile (2012), of a Spanish language opera version of *Il Postino*, with Plácido Domingo starring in the Neruda role.

The 1994 Italian language film *Il Postino* was directed by English director Michael Radford and Massimo Troisi, with screenplay by Radford in conjunction with other collaborators of Italian backgrounds, including Troisi. An Italian-French co-production, set in the early 1950s and shot in various locations around Sicily, the film featured Troisi as the postman, and French actor Philippe Noiret as Pablo Neruda. From his Director's comments about the making of the film we learn that Noiret's lines, as Neruda, were spoken by him in French, but later dubbed into

⁴ This summary takes into account the outline, for example, in *The New York Times* (11 December 2014).

⁵ The writer has not been able to establish whether censorship was a factor when the 1986 theatrical version of *Ardiente paciencia* was staged in Santiago even though we should note that Skármeta was still in exile at that time.

Italian for the final film release.⁶ In his book *Neruda por Skármeta*, published in the Neruda centenary year of 2004, Skármeta describes the adaptation of his 1983 film—and its associated novella *Ardiente paciencia*—into the Italian language film version known as *Il Postino* in the following terms: the fact that Neruda had lived in exile on Capri, and with Matilde Urrutia, was a stroke of luck, one might say, in lending a sense of realism to the adaptation of his novella. In the original short novel, all the action took place in Chile between 1969 and 1973 and ended with the death of Neruda and the end of democracy in Chile. However, both actor Massimo Troisi and English director Michael Radford were keen to set the story in Italy. In the first place, there was their familiarity with the cinematic medium in that country, and the film producer Cecchi Gori could be counted on to take on the project. There was also the belief that Troisi, with his artistry, would be able to carry off the role of the postman.

Skármeta admits that there was a great deal of curiosity as to how the very Chilean-ness of his story would be converted into an Italian film that would eventually establish its place in the imaginary of world art. However, he had been thoroughly persuaded by the key intervention of Troisi in wanting to take up the role of Neruda's postman. Indeed, no sooner had Troisi read the Italian translation of the *Ardiente paciencia* novella than the producer made contact to seek the rights to adapt it to film. Skármeta suggests that Troisi interpreted the postman character marvelously, and yet, as he points out, there was the saddest of ironies that Troisi's heart problems overcame him—he died the very day shooting stopped. Skármeta also alludes to the comments by director Radford concerning the portrayal of the Neruda character, that “a film does not validate a life;” rather, it augments and adds to it (Skármeta, 2004: 31-32).

An important framing of Neruda's own poetry within the film was the decision by the filmmakers to conclude the *Il Postino* film narrative by using the Spanish language original of Neruda's poem “La Poesía”. The first line of that poem, in English translation (Neruda, 1995: 12-15), reads:

And it was at that age ... Poetry arrived
in search of me. I don't know, I don't know where
it came from, from winter or a river.
I don't know how or when,
no, they were not voices, they were not
words, nor silences ...

⁶ It may also be noted that Troisi was so gravely ill during the film's production that all distant shots of his character in the film were, in fact, played by a double; only close-up frontal shots were of the actor himself.

This poem and its setting within the film sequence has today become something of a poetic credo for young poets the world over, accentuated by its positioning at the end of the film and its incorporation in a small book of selected Neruda verse published in 1995 to coincide with the film's world-wide release in English language translation. The book released in conjunction with the film was titled *Pablo Neruda—Love: Poems from the film Il Postino* and features parallel Spanish text and English translations of ten Neruda poems selected by Francesca Gonslow in the Miramax edition first published in the United States in 1995, and then published in Great Britain by The Harvill Press and featuring translations by some of the best-known North American and British translators of Neruda's poetry (Neruda, 1995: 9-47).⁷ When these poems are brought together, the combined effect has been to present a collage of Neruda's poetic references about love and the imaginings of love, about the perceptions of self and about the wanderings of the young and not-so-young, culminating in the famous "Oda al mar", which brings the reader back to the film's own setting by the sea.

From the Italian language cinematic version of the *Il Postino* theme, we move now to a Spanish language operatic version of *Il Postino*. In 2010 it premiered at the Los Angeles Opera House under the authority of its General Director, Plácido Domingo, with Domingo himself in the starring role as Pablo Neruda. The performances ran from 23 September to 16 October 2010, rendered in Spanish with English subtitles, with the composing credits given to US-domiciled, Mexico-born composer and librettist, the now-late Daniel Catán (who was born in Mexico in 1949 and died in 2011). Production information noted that the new opera was "based on the popular 1994 Italian film, *Il Postino*" but there was initially no mention of the origins of the opera in the Skármeta film and novel, *Ardiente paciencia*. Charles Castronuovo played the role of Mario, the shy postman who meets Neruda as part of his duties in delivering postal items to the poet at his house (Los Angeles Opera Company, 2010). North American critics were generally very favorably disposed to the production. Mark Swed, for the *Los Angeles Times*, suggested:

The composer...follows the 1994 film closely if not slavishly. Unlike the novel, which takes place in Chile in the early 1970s at the end of Neruda's life, the movie moves the story to a fictitious Italian island 20 years earlier, during the Chilean poet's exile. Catán, however, restores a small taste of

⁷ It is indeed a slim volume of Neruda's own Spanish language poems with English language translations—some from Neruda's *Veinte poemas de amor y una canción desesperada* (1924) and in W.S. Merwin's 1969 translation, together with translations of other Neruda poems by Merwin, Alastair Reid, Nathaniel Tarn, Donald D. Walsh, Stephen Krabbenhoft and Anthony Kerrigan. The poems selected for the volume are: "Mañana", "Me gustas cuando callas", "La poesía", "Walking around", "Inclinado en las tardes ...", "Angela Adonica", "Fábula de la sirena y los borrachos", "Oda a la bella desnuda", "Puedo escribir los versos..." and "Oda al mar".

the politics, sex and Skármeta's wonderful dry humor, as well as Neruda's poetry, that the banal film left out. (Swed, 2010: 2)

There was also a comment from the *Washington Post's* Anne Midgette in her column of 24 September 2010 (in "The Classical Beat") headed "*Il Postino* delivers in LA":

The music of Catán's lovely score speaks in an eminently recognizable idiom: International Opera. It has lyrical vocal writing, lush orchestral interludes, hints of Verdi and Puccini. There's love. There's death. Add the plot of a popular (and Oscar-winning) film and throw Plácido Domingo into the mix for good measure, and you've got something with considerable crowd appeal, which brought the opening night audience to its feet. (Midgette, 2010:1)

However, perhaps the most favorable comments came from the Chilean government itself in the person of Luciano Cruz-Coke, then-Minister for Culture in the first Piñera government, who, along with Chilean Ministers of Energy, Economy and Agriculture reportedly also attended the Los Angeles premiere of the work on 23 September 2010. Cruz-Coke was reported to say, *inter alia*, as follows: "We are on a business mission but have taken the opportunity to make sure the visit can coincide with our presence at the presentation of a work that is part of who we are since it is part of the history of our country" (Emol.com, 2010). After the Los Angeles premiere performance, Cruz-Coke presented the Orden al Mérito Artístico y Cultural Pablo Neruda (The Pablo Neruda Order of Artistic Merit) to Plácido Domingo, to the composer, Daniel Catán, to Antonio Skármeta and to Chilean soprano, Cristina Gallardo-Domás, who played the role of Matilde Neruda. Skármeta reportedly acknowledged that it was an exhilarating experience and one of the most deeply moving experiences of his life. He was reported to have said that the opera showed great faithfulness to his own film and novella in its depiction of the characters and the tragic tone, as well as its comic aspects, especially in the early scenes. His measured reflections were in contrast to the tone of the Minister who was able to use the occasion to "appropriate" the Neruda memorialization in the service of the contemporary Chilean state. Yet perhaps the last word remained with Skármeta. As if recognizing the immensity flowing from his own film and literary creations, moving as they did through these various phases of the lived experience of the historical Neruda, through to his development of the film and the novella *Ardiente paciencia* and then into the film version in its *Il Postino* guise, and finally now back into a Spanish language operatic format, he was quoted saying:

Given that I was the person who actually wrote so much on and about Neruda and who invented a Neruda for the world it is indeed a special honor, and moreover, this is heightened by the fact that I am experiencing this in this production of the *Il Postino* opera, which is capturing the

attention of the world and in the company of artists who I really admire. (Emol.com, 2010; author's translation)

Others associated with the opera version also sought to draw attention to the ways in which the opera version might be differentiated from the film of the same name. Ron Daniels, who directed the opera production, suggested that Catán's opera was not a recreation of either the film or the original novel:

The Europeans essentially hijacked the story to make the 1994 movie ... They moved the time frame back to 1950 and moved the locale to a fictional island set off Italy. The film is very beautiful, sentimental and nostalgic but it lacked the epic contrast of the struggle of Neruda's exile from Chile. The opera expands the story from an intimate, personal tale to an almost Shakespearean epic. Thus, it's really a new version of the story. (Thomas, 2010)

Domingo, in an interview with *El País* Julieta Rudich, referred to the point of tragedy in the opera version when a letter arrives from Chile referring to the many dead and wounded in the 1973 coup. However, Domingo added, some humor was also introduced, such as in the marriage scene, in which a tango can be heard. The opera version also integrated far more directly than the *Il Postino* film version various elements directly from Neruda's poetry, and there was greater attention to the Chilean political context, as exemplified by the projections of actual events onto scenery at various stages in the opera (Rudich, 2010). After its premiere in Los Angeles, the opera production moved to Europe, with performances in Vienna in December 2010, and then in Paris in June 2011.

The production finally moved to Santiago in Chile, being performed at El Teatro Municipal de Santiago over five days from 9 July to 14 July 2012, with Domingo once again in the title role. The opening night saw the presence of then-President of Chile, Sebastian Piñera and his wife, together with a host of business, political and cultural representatives, leading one academic commentator to muse upon the paradox of its derivations as a story by Skármeta, written in exile from Pinochet's regime, and with its associations with the bombing of the nearby La Moneda building in on September 11, 1973 (Ortega, 2013: 90). However, press reviews in the larger circulation print and web-based news media were almost all overwhelmingly positive. *La Tercera* made mention of the "thunderous ovation" from the audience, which included Piñera and his wife. *El Mercurio* also commented that the staging at the Municipal Theatre of the production, Plácido Domingo's involvement, and his return to Santiago for the performances would be part of the "collective unconscious" of the city's cultural life for years to come (Boehm, 2010). Following Catán's death in 2011 and as a kind of memorial to his own life and works, including the operatic version of *Il Postino*, the website of the Friends of

Daniel Catán offers some background, in English, about the process of creation of the *Il Postino* opera version and also clips of the original production in Spanish.

*Musical adaptations of Canto General: Aparcoa, Mikis Theodorakis and Los Jaivas*⁸

We shall now consider the history of development of various musical compositions and adaptations that have become new artistic creations in their own right, but also and at the same time served to broaden the ways in which new generations (post-1973) have come to interpret, perceive and frame some of Neruda's lifelong creation of poetic works. As is well-known, a key part of the Neruda historical *oeuvre* is *Canto General*—that mammoth work primarily written during 1945-50, with its 15 discrete sections, 231 individual poems, and more than 15,000 lines. However, as far as the author is aware, there is little evidence that Neruda conceived of his works of poetry being adapted musically, at least in Chile itself, until the adaptations of aspects of *Canto General* with Neruda's apparent consent and support by Aparcoa, a Chilean musical group that formed in the 1960s. Indeed, towards the end of 1969 Neruda was present when that musical group presented a work based on and derived from the poetry and music of María Asunción Requena, a Chilean dramatist and researcher of traditional Chilean cultural traditions within a framework of broader leftist societal and political developmental theories. He was apparently greatly influenced by seeing the Aparcoa production and took up the idea that his own poetic work *Canto General* might likewise form the basis of a musical work. Together with musical composers Sergio Ortega and Gustavo Becerra, the Aparcoa group members developed melodies to accompany their selections from Neruda's poem sequences in *Canto General*. The melodies they used drew heavily upon Andean folkloric and other traditional Chilean musical forms, such as the *cueca* dance.

The new musical work—known as *Canto General: obra poetica musical*—was first presented on 5 December 1970 at the Teatro Municipal de Santiago in the presence of Pablo Neruda and his wife, Maltilde Urrutía, and under the auspices of the Central Unica de Trabajadores (CUT) in recognition of the then-new government of Salvador Allende, which had assumed power after the 1970 elections. Members of the group involved in the original LP disc recording in Chile in 1971 included Julio Alegría, Felipe Canales, Miguel Córdoba and Jaime

⁸ In this essay the edition of *Canto General* used is *Pablo Neruda: Canto General*. Edición de Enrico Mario Santí. Second edition (Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 1992). Translations from Spanish, where applicable, are from *Pablo Neruda: Canto General*, translated by Jack Schmitt (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993).

Miqueles.⁹ However, after performing in exile in Europe after the Pinochet coup, by 1978 the group disbanded.

The musical adaptations of *Canto General* by Aparcoa adopt the format of giving prominence to the narration of a poetic text extract or a series of extracts (“texto poetico”) from the Neruda work, with the musical interlude (“aire” or “melodia”) usually, although not exclusively, having the function of either introducing the narration segment and/or being played by way of conclusion—as if to reflect back musically upon the theme verbally delivered by the narrator, who, in the case of the premiere performance in December 1970, was Mario Lorca. Neruda appears to have given Aparcoa and the associated composers a free hand in deciding how to musically feature his epic work: the nomenclature adopted by Neruda himself in giving a title to each poem segment in his *Canto General* was not automatically followed in the adaptations by Aparcoa, who reduced the Neruda epic into a musical creative work comprising four broad segments: “America Precolombina”; “Conquista Española”; “La Colonia” and “Capitalismo”. These segments by no means reflect all the themes and content in Neruda’s own *Canto General*, least of all those Neruda poems where he refers to his own experiences in historical terms. In the poem and musical segments in the Aparcoa adaptations there are some references to the Incan civilization and Macchu Picchu, but no sustained single focus¹⁰—as we shall see in the “Alturas de Macchu Picchu” adaptations by Los Jaivas in the 1980s.

In historical terms, the *Canto General Oratorio*, an oratorio in Spanish for mezzo-soprano, bass-baritone and mixed choirs, has its origins in the period when Mikis Theodorakis left Greece after the coup by Greek generals and was visiting Chile from his base in Paris. When in Valparaíso, Chile in 1971 he listened to a performance of the Aparcoa musical adaptations of *Canto General*. Afterwards he met Neruda in his quarters. The poetry fascinated him even though he admitted he could hardly understand a word of Spanish (although he apparently had available to him a person who could assist him with all matters involved in understanding Neruda’s Spanish language text).¹¹ This was the source of his initial inspiration for the composition of his *Oratorio* based on Neruda’s poetry and he proceeded to

⁹ After performing in exile in Europe after the Pinochet coup, by 1978 the group had disbanded even if their musical adaptation *Canto General: obra poetica musical* lives on through CD and internet-based formats.

¹⁰ For example, the Aparcoa segments “Culturas Andinas” and “Muerte de Atahualpa” refer to the Incan Emperor killed by Pizarro and his men in 1533 in Cajamarca, Peru.

¹¹ It is possible that this was Danai Statigopoulos (born Athens, 1913-died 2009), a Greek language translator of poetry from Spanish to Greek who for a time was based at University of Santiago de Chile and was who knew Neruda personally.

announce to his musician colleagues that he had decided to compose his own version of *Canto General*. President Allende later presented him with two volumes of Neruda's *Canto General* to assist with this task.

Theodorakis took the view that his grand project was to stage the completed work in Chile as homage to the Chilean revolution and as an expression of solidarity with his own country, Greece, and the oppressed peoples of the world. In writing the *Oratorio* he believed that such music for the Canto would entail something that was close to the kind of rhythms that would appeal to the youth. He also said that he was trying to compose a work that was responding in musical form to the complexities of the rhythms of Neruda's poetry. Back in Paris, small-scale studio presentations of the proposed new *Oratorio* took place later in 1972 with the participation of Greek singer Petros Pandis at the Paris recording studio Theodorakis normally used while he was living in Paris. Neruda, by now installed as Chilean Ambassador to France, also attended one of these presentations and later made some suggestions after listening to the initial adaptations. Indeed, in his customary habit of using his green ink pen, Neruda wrote down some notes, asking Theodorakis to include some figures of the Latin American patriotic and revolutionary struggle: Sandino and Zapata, for example. Given the possible European-audience potential Neruda, seems to have advised Theodorakis to consider using some of his "Capitalismo" poems from *Canto General* rather than any poems from the "Alturas de Macchu Picchu" sequence. He also made available to Theodorakis an essay on the work that one assumes is likely to have been in French, given that both men were well-versed in this language (Reyes, 1982: 190-191).

Theodorakis continued developing full orchestrations of the seven poem adaptations from the Neruda originals that he had written to that point. By 1973 he was preparing to tour his *Canto General Oratorio* across Latin America and he wanted to include Neruda, in person, at certain stages of the tour. The tour commenced in Buenos Aires, in a theatre with a capacity for 15,000 persons. Each performance took on the character of a political demonstration. Theodorakis telephoned Neruda who was at Isla Negra and begged him to come to Buenos Aires. Neruda replied that it was not possible as his health was not good. He promised that when Theodorakis came to Chile to perform the *Oratorio*, he would be there. That was the last time Theodorakis spoke with Neruda. Subsequently he was advised from Chile by the tour promoters that because of some "minor problems" the show was postponed. So Theodorakis altered his itinerary and went instead to Venezuela.

When in Caracas he heard of the fall of democracy in Chile and of the death of Salvador Allende in September 1973. In Mexico he was told of Neruda's

death. A huge demonstration took place in which hundreds of thousands of persons participated, then a march for four hours took place, concluding just outside the Opera Mexico theatre where that very night he and his musical entourage presented the *Oratorio*. It was Theodorakis's first concert in solidarity with Chile. Theodorakis is quoted as saying:

It was one of the most emotional evenings of performances I can recall. Everyone was in tears ... Some days later we were in the US and staged the *Canto General Oratorio* at the Kennedy Centre in Washington. I not only did music but also talks. Chile was discussed. The CIA was denounced. (Reyes, 1982: 190-91; author's translation)

The musician made a new version, on a broader canvas, of the work. Then came the liberation of his homeland and his return to Greece. Theodorakis is quoted as saying:

I had wanted to do the *Canto General* in Santiago for the liberation of Greece. I did it in Greece for the liberation of Chile. When it was staged in a stadium there were 70,000 people present. It was like being in a church, given that it was being sung in Spanish and the public could only follow the words by reading the text. In this way, Neruda's *Canto General* was converted into a weapon against all tyrannies and a powerful instrument for the liberation of Chile. (Reyes, 1982: 190-91; author's translation)

It was also staged in Paris during the Fête de l'Humanité (1975), in front of 300,000 people. In 1980 Theodorakis added five more musical segments—mainly those requested by Neruda back in 1972 when they had both lived in Paris—and also the short “Requiem eternam” for Neruda, the words for which Theodorakis had written shortly after Neruda's death, even if its accompanying melody was derived from one he had originally composed in Vrachati, Greece in 1975 after his return from exile. The first concert of the *Oratorio* in its final form was held in 1981 in the Palast der Republik, (East) Berlin, with Theodorakis conducting the Rundfunkchor Berlin, and Maria Farantouri in the mezzo-soprano role. In 1993 Theodorakis finally returned to Chile and conducted his *Canto General Oratorio* in Santiago and later visited Neruda's gravesite at Isla Negra.

The structure and composition dates of the Theodorakis *Oratorio*, in its 1980-81 version, and considered against the background of Neruda's *Canto General*, can be set out as follows:

Book 1: “La lámpara en la tierra”

“Amor América (1400)”: composed in Paris and Athens in 1980.

“Vegetaciones”: musical adaptation composed in Paris in 1972-74.

“Algunas Bestias”: composed in Paris in 1972-74.

“Vienen los pájaros”: composed in Paris in 1972-74.

Book 4: “Los libertadores”

“Los libertadores”: composed in Paris in 1972-74.

“Lautaro (1550)”: composed in Paris and Athens in 1980.

“América insurrecta (1800)”: composed in Paris in 1972-74.

“A Emiliano Zapata con música de Tata Nacho”: composed in Paris and Athens in 1980.

“Sandino (1926)”: composed in Paris and Athens in 1980.

Book 5: “La arena traicionada”

“La United Fruit Co.”: composed in Paris in 1972-74.

Book 15: “Yo soy”

“Voy a vivir (1949)”: composed in Paris in 1972-74.

“A mi partido (1949)”: composed in Paris and Athens in 1980.

The 1980/81 version, however, ends with the “Requiem eternam,” written and orchestrated by Theodorakis himself.

The adaptation of sections of Neruda’s *Canto General* has been part of the Theodorakis *oeuvre* in Greece, and in Europe in general since the historic concert in 1975. Yet perhaps no performance has been as full of new contextual elements as the performance on 17 July 2012 (during the general financial crisis affecting Greece), when it was performed in the Theatre of Herodicus Atticus in Athens in front of an audience of 5000 persons and with Mikis Theodorakis and his daughter in attendance. The principal singers were again Maria Farantouri and Petros Pandis—the very same people who had performed the *Oratorio* at the Stadium Karaskaki 37 years prior—and the piece had as its themes the freeing of Greece from rule by the junta, and was itself dedicated to the memory of Salvador Allende, Pablo Neruda, and the Chilean people. On this occasion the choir was now under the baton of Luke Karitinos and received an introduction from Manos Katrakis, who reminded the audience of the historic 1975 concert. During the concert some sections of *Canto General* were read by actor Tasos Nousias from Greek language translations by Danae Stigopoulos, whilst the actual words, sung in Spanish, were from the Theodorakis adaptations of 1972-74 rather than from the musical composer’s additional works derived from those adaptations made in 1980/81.¹²

The 2012 Athens performance can be interpreted as a defiant cultural expression by those who saw the European financial crisis as a struggle against similar economic forces as those Neruda had denounced in his *Canto General* poems of seventy years before, when he saw a Latin America in the grip of “Yankee

¹² In 2012 these concerts were accessible to viewers world-wide but are no longer available.

imperialism.” In this performance we see Theodorakis, Petros Pandis and Maria Farantouri, as if it is 1975 once more, and even if all have, of course, aged over the passage of time. There is a certain defiance in this evocation of the past, and in Neruda’s words about the timelessness of the struggle against perceived oppression. Indeed, in 2012, performances of the Spanish language *Oratorio* probably accounted for about half of the total of all the Theodorakis works being performed in major European cities.

As was mentioned previously, Theodorakis went back to Chile in 1993. He visited Neruda’s gravesite at Isla Negra since by that time Neruda’s remains had been transferred to that site from the General Cemetery, after President Aylwin and his coalition came to power and restored the Isla Negra property following the dictatorship. Theodorakis performed his *Canto General Oratorio* in Santiago with local Chilean choristers and orchestra, although the soloists included Petros Pandis, the longtime interpreter of this work. A highlight was the performance of Theodorakis’ musical movement “América Insurrecta”. Then-President Aylwin and his wife were present amongst the Santiago audience to watch this historic performance.

In our third, and final example of musical adaptations of sections of *Canto General*, we will focus on adaptations by the Chilean group Los Jaivas. Neruda had already died seven years before Los Jaivas began to consider their own project relating solely to the segment of *Canto General* known as “Alturas de Macchu Picchu”. However, to put this adaptation in historical context, it is helpful to review some of the historical background to the visit Neruda made to Macchu Picchu in 1943. In his posthumously published memoirs, *Confieso que he vivido*, Neruda recalls his return to Chile after being Consul in Mexico from 1940 to 1943:

Before getting back to Chile, I made another discovery that was to add new a layer to my poetry. I stopped in Peru and made a trip to the ruins of Macchu Picchu. There was no highway then and we rode up on horseback. At the top I saw the ancient stone structures hedged in by the tall peaks of the verdant Andes. Torrents hurtled down from the citadel eaten away and weathered by the passage of centuries. White fog drifted up in masses from the Wilkamayu River. I felt infinitely small in the center of that navel of rocks, the navel of a deserted world, proud, towering high to which I somehow belonged. I felt that my own hands had laboured there at some remote point in time, digging furrows, polishing the rocks. I felt Chilean, Peruvian, American. On those difficult heights, among those glorious, scattered ruins, I had found the principles of faith I needed to continue my poetry. My poem *Alturas de Macchu Picchu* was born there. (Neruda, 1987: 165)

Neruda’s Peruvian hosts in Cuzco in 1943 provided him with insights into ways in which the position of the Incas and their building of architectural sites could be viewed within the prism of Peruvian socialism, as it was being formulated by

Peruvian intellectuals such as José Carlos Mariátegui (1895-1930). Indeed, it was Mariátegui who put forward the idea that the “real Peru” was in the sierra and that Spanish Conquest had retarded its development. It was only by returning to the primitive socialism that had characterised Incan society that the country could be salvaged. As Santí mentions in his annotated Spanish language edition of *Canto General*, from Lima Neruda journeyed to Cuzco where he was feted by various local dignitaries, including the Mayor, chief of the Provincial Council, representatives of the local university and other citizens of Cuzco. Neruda’s host for the Cuzco visit was José Uriel García, then a socialist senator for Cuzco who had just completed the second edition of a book on “the new Indian,” where he traced out the ideas of Mariátegui. It was García who had accompanied Neruda to Macchu Picchu, presumably all the while laying out the ideas influenced by Mariátegui. These ideas would enable Neruda to fashion his own appreciation for the phenomena he was witnessing for the first time, within a frame of references that could marry the inventiveness of the hierarchical Incan civilisation with the 20th century prescriptions of a socialist agenda. Moreover, the ideas were endorsed by influential Peruvian socialists of the day. To add to his sense of mission it did not hurt Neruda’s conception of his own role when he learned that he was being honored by Luis Nieto, who had edited a 1943 anthology in his honour—a collection of essays edited and published in Cuzco, under the title *Pablo Neruda: Miliciano corazón de América* (Santí, 1992: 42-43).

Upon his return to Chile Neruda was interviewed in December 1943 about his visit to Macchu Picchu, but it was not until between August and October 1945—at his new house by the Pacific Ocean at Isla Negra—that he wrote the series of twelve poems known as *Alturas de Macchu Picchu*.¹³ Whilst it is a matter of record from Neruda’s own statements about his visit to Macchu Picchu in 1943 that he says he was convinced his planned “Canto for Chile” should no longer be just about that country but be a “Canto” for the Americas more broadly, it is unlikely he would ever have conceived that a Chilean musical group, Los Jaivas, would take his creation into new directions, musically and by way of performance settings.

The group Los Jaivas emerged in 1963 around the coastal area of Viña del Mar in Chile as a classic 60s rock combination when the three Parra brothers, Eduardo, Claudio and Gabriel, came together with Mario Mutis and Eduardo “Gato” Alquinta to form a band with the English-sounding name “High Bass.” In

¹³ These poems were first published in *Revista Nacional de Cultura* Nos. 57 and 58 in Caracas, Venezuela in July-August 1946 (Santí. op. cit., p. 125).

1970 they switched to calling themselves “Los Jaivas”, a name that mimics the English-sounding “High Bass” somewhat, but also has more direct Chilean references.¹⁴ This band name also aligned the group somewhat more with the mood of the times in Chile—the election of Salvador Allende as Socialist President in Chile, although unlike other high-profile groups more closely identified with the Chilean “New Song” movement, such as Inti-Illimani or Quilapayún, it was not a name with direct Mapuche or Quechua-Chilean derived names. It also implied that the band’s members were from the coastal region near Santiago—the city of Viña del Mar and not from Santiago itself, which is situated in a valley adjacent to the Andes.

The group’s top selling disc in 1972-73 was “Todos Juntos” but in 1973 the Pinochet coup led to the group’s leaving Chile. They first headed to Argentina and became a very popular band in the mainstream music scene. But the Argentine military coup of 1976 then led to their uprooting and the band members and their families left for Paris.

In December 1980 Los Jaivas had just finalised recording an LP of music originally written by Violeta Parra. They were visited in Paris by Peruvian music producer Daniel Camino, who had first corresponded with them during 1980. He had sent to Los Jaivas a copy of the “Alturas de Macchu Picchu” section of *Canto General* with the suggestion that they consider it as a basis for a *cantata* that they might themselves compose. Camino then visited Los Jaivas in their recording location near Paris to convince them to take up the project of setting parts of Neruda’s “Alturas de Macchu Picchu” to music. It appears that he also raised for the first time the idea that once the group had completed their musical adaptations, they might consider staging a performance at the site of the ancient Inca citadel in Macchu Picchu itself. Recordings of such a performance could then be incorporated along with studio clips for later television broadcasts, initially in Chile and Peru, but later to other outlets in South America and beyond.

Over the next few months band members selected extracts from the twelve-poem “Alturas” sequence—wrestling with different views amongst themselves as to how to approach this task. These included making decisions about whether to compose instrumental sections without the incorporation of segments of Neruda’s verse *per se* and studying how to align the rhythm and sound patterns of the Neruda poems with musical possibilities, as well as considering the

¹⁴ There was also the Bolivian group, “Los Jairas” from the late 1960s. The term “Jaivas” means “crabs” in Chilean Spanish and is apparently derived from a word of Arahuaico (Colombian Indian) origin. Another influence may have been the fact that there is a Chilean dish, “Chupe de Jaivas”, which derived from crabmeat (jaivas).

limitations that inevitably arise in terms of the number of words that can be accommodated in a musical, and not a full verse format. In their words, it became a “work of music based on the poem of Pablo Neruda.” In July 1980 the group set out to record the musical sequences. The initial recording by Los Jaivas was made at the group’s base at Les Glycines, Chatenay Malabry, outside Paris. This included the instrumental segment known as “Del aire al aire” which was in musical instrument format only and written by Alberto Leda. It later became the introductory segment to the work in its entirety. Next came the recording in June 1981 in Cologne, Germany of the adaptation of segments from the beginning of Poem 12 of the Neruda sequence “Sube a nacer conmigo hermano”, although this later was moved to the end sections of the completed musical work. Finally, the bulk of the recording and all remixes were completed in the Pathé-Marconi studios in Paris in July-August 1981.

By 1980/81, when the Los Jaivas project was getting underway, Neruda had been dead for seven years and we may presume that in some way his widow Matilde Urrutia permitted Los Jaivas to alter aspects of the ordering of the Neruda poem segments musically, and in choosing the specific segments for musicalization. But none of the band members had at this stage ever visited Macchu Picchu before. In the wording inside the LP disc cover of “Alturas de Machu Picchu” (CBS Records Chile Ltda 1981), the group set out their ideas as to how they approached their task:

Before arriving at Macchu Picchu we ascended the heights of the language of our poet and lived with him the experience of the life and death, of the great vastness of the immensity of our destiny, that sense of the completeness of humanity with which he presented us in his cosmic drama. What is here now is our most humble interpretation that it might nevertheless be regarded as amounting to but a verse of that so unfathomable and ever dazzling consciousness of what are the human centuries of our poetic eternity. With the utmost respect we offer up this tiny sylvan flower born from the torrential poetry of Pablo Neruda. (author’s translation from the French and Spanish).

Just how this “sylvan flower born from the torrential poetry of Pablo Neruda” translated into a musical composition both adapted from and inspired directly by Neruda’s poetry can be seen in the complexity of the transition from the words in the “Alturas” segment of Neruda’s long epic poem to the musical work that now would be known henceforth under the joint authorship of Pablo Neruda-Los Jaivas:

1. “Del Aire al Aire” (Alberto Leda—Instrumental only). The title is from the first line of poem No 1 in the “Alturas” sequence.

2. “La Poderosa Muerte” (Neruda-Jaivas). The title comes from the first line in poem No 4 in the “Alturas” sequence, but the musical adaptations draw on sections of the Nos 2, 3, 6, 7 in the Neruda poetic sequence.¹⁵
3. “Amor Americano” (Neruda-Jaivas). The title is taken from the opening line in poem No 8, “Rise up with me, American love”), in the Neruda sequence.
4. “Aguila Sideral” (Neruda-Jaivas). The title is taken from the opening line in poem No 9 in the Neruda sequence.¹⁶
5. “Antigua America” (Neruda-Jaivas). The title is taken from the beginning of a line midway through poem No 10 in the Neruda sequence.
6. “Sube a Nacer conmigo hermano” (Neruda-Jaivas). The title comes from the beginning of the first line of poem No 12 in the Neruda sequence.
7. Final (Neruda-Jaivas).

Los Jaivas were now ready to head back to South America, premiering the disc in Argentina in concerts, then to Chile in 1981 as the first rock band to return to Chile, even if the Pinochet era still had seven more years remaining. A huge concert in Santiago took place before the group headed to Peru, and to Macchu Picchu in particular, for the on-site shooting of the scenes as envisioned originally by Daniel Camino. Over ten days they recorded on site between dawn and eleven AM, before the tourists arrived and after they left the site. There was major Peruvian investment—Peruvian Air force helicopters were required to lift the piano and other equipment up the gorge to the landing site at the citadel proper. Mario Vargas Llosa, who would later be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in his own right, took the role of literary link-person in the on-site recording and visual shooting phase by explaining to the Latin American television audiences Neruda’s role and his poetry, as well illuminating the Macchu Picchu references in Neruda’s *Canto General*. It was a key stage in Peruvian history wherein by 1980 Peru was returning

¹⁵ A good example of how Los Jaivas selected only portions of separate Neruda poems is the Los Jaivas “La Poderosa Muerte” segment, which is the second sequence in their *Alturas de Macchu Picchu* musical work. Although the Los Jaivas sequence is titled “La Poderosa Muerte” and the idea of powerful death links the Neruda poem segments, there is no incorporation of words from Neruda’s poem IV beginning “La poderosa muerte ...” other than as the title of the Los Jaivas musicalization.

¹⁶ The staccato-like poem IX of Neruda’s “Alturas” sequence beginning “Águila sideral, viña de bruma. / Bastión perdido, cimitarra ciega...” seems to have suggested itself as an ideal sequence for musical adaptation. However, the musical adaptation process had the effect that the musical sequence would incorporate only a few more phrases of the Neruda poem before reverting to a repetition of the two words, “Águila sideral”. This phrase is repeated five times, either together or with other short sequences from the poem, and the musical adaptation also ends with the words “Aguila sideral”, again repeated twice.

to parliamentary democracy after military rule, and yet at that very time Sendero Luminoso was starting its guerrilla campaign, which would last for about twelve years more.

The actual production was a massive collaborative effort—the recording involved both the Peruvian TV and Radio Corporation and later the Catholic University of Chile’s TV station in the broadcast phase. This is noteworthy in that it probably conferred a degree of legitimacy for the project in allowing the Los Jaivas adaptations of the Neruda work to proceed in performance during the Pinochet period, even if other aspects of Neruda’s literary and political role were still banned from entering the public domain. The audio-visual takes were aired in Chile and Peru and France and other European countries in 1981.

Much has happened in the years since the epic 1981 recordings on site at Macchu Picchu. The 2004 Neruda birth centenary presented Los Jaivas with the opportunity to digitalise and remaster the original 1981 visual material shot in Macchu Picchu and the associated studio recordings. By 2012 only two of the original members were still involved in the group. Gabriel Parra had died in 1988 in Peru, and his daughter, Juanita, took over on the drums. “Gato” Alquinta died in 2003, and his sons joined the band. Of the original members of the “High Bass” band that became the better-known Los Jaivas, only Mario Mutis and Claudio Parra are still performing (as of 2018).¹⁷ Yet the group known as Los Jaivas still is performing today—after more than fifty-five years. Many events were held in 2013 in Chile to mark its then-half century of achievement as a creative force in the world of Chilean music.

Indeed, much of the group’s history was set out in 2013 in a publication by René Olivares, who had been associated with the group over at least the last forty years as the illustrator for the group, including the images used by Los Jaivas for the covers of their recordings. His book marking the fifty years or half century of Los Jaivas—*Cultura Alter-Nativa*—included significant visual material and other ephemera relating to the history of Los Jaivas’ production of the original “Alturas de Machu Picchu” disc (1980-81), the performances at Macchu Picchu in 1981, and subsequent press and broadcasting reactions, as well as the production of the DVD format of “Alturas” (2004) and the concert, again, at Macchu Picchu in 2011, to mark the centenary of the Hiram Bingham discovery in 1911.¹⁸

¹⁷ <http://www.losjaivas.net> and <http://www.theclinic.cl/2012/07/12/los-jaivas-cuentan-la-historia-de-alturas-de-machu-picchu-de-pablo-neruda> Accessed on 25 August 2012.

¹⁸ René Olivares, *Cultura Alter-Nativa*, (Santiago: OchoLibros, 2013), 94-105. A copy of Daniel Camino’s 1980 note to the group is at (unnumbered) page 95. It reads: “A mis queridos Jaivas—la base de una Cantata que ha de ser genial (signed) Daniel.”

Of course, what we see when we consider the musical adaptations of Neruda's 1943-50 text of "Alturas" is a layered series of viewpoints or refractions. There is the question of how anyone can fully interpret "Macchu Picchu"; many mysteries remain about the Incas and will probably never be known. Yet it has become universalised and "possessed" in ways even Hiram Bingham and the Yale/National Geographic team in 1911 might never have imagined. It is also part of the projected representation by the current nation-state of Peru of its background. Los Jaivas have also created images and music that continue to have a place in the mainstream of Chilean musical history of the last fifty-five years or so, both "renewing" the Neruda *oeuvre* and inviting us to look at their own interpretations of the poet's works—and those of this author himself—through their own musical creative prism, even if there is no sense in which local indigenous inhabitants of the regions in the vicinity of Macchu Picchu were fully drawn into the creative processes surrounding the Neruda-based musical adaptations of the sequence that bears its name.

Conclusions

In concluding this survey of some of the ways in which I contend that the Neruda literary/cultural afterlife or post-Nerudaism has developed, one obvious characteristic thread stands out: that none of the kinds of cultural processes outlined in this essay now would have eventuated in quite the same way and with quite such specific references to the Neruda persona or his works but for the historical fact of the poet's own life. This is the uniqueness of the prism through which current generations in all parts of the globe can perceive the poet's life and works, in new formats, wherein the posthumous phenomena often now act as a kind of refractory mirror that can also privilege aspects of the Neruda literary output as certain works or extracts of the total Neruda *oeuvre* are re-fashioned or re-contextualised in the posthumous era.

In this essay I have set out to analyze how some of these transnational re-creations of the Neruda life story have developed, through powerful cinematic depictions of the Neruda character as we traced the evolution of *Ardiente paciencia*, written and directed in a Spanish language film version by Antonio Skármeta himself but then better-known world-wide in the adaptation from Skármeta's creation in the 1994 Italian language movie *Il Postino*. Indeed, we can conclude that through their use of a complex interplay between historical allusions and fictional creations, these films and the operatic work serve to modify and enlarge the Neruda mythology beyond that which was established during Neruda's own lifetime.

These and other musical creations derived from elements of the Neruda *oeuvre* or life story continue to draw attention to Neruda's poetics in ways he almost certainly would never have conceived. They can take their place alongside other manifestations of post-Nerudaism, such as the historiography related to Neruda, post-1973, and the development of his own houses as house-museums. We have also seen from the examples of the adaptations of sections of Neruda's *Canto General* that there are myriad factors that contribute to a composer's decisions as to which poems, or series of poems, from *Canto General* lend themselves to the process of selection. Musical adaptation, by its very nature, will generally lead to a very slender choice of poems for adaptation in the final versions, simply because of the constraints of the different genres. Musical adaptations usually require a far greater emphasis on repetition of words as chorus items. Then there is the question of balance between strictly instrumental portions of musical composition and the vocal sections of poems of Neruda *per se*. Often new rhythms are, in fact, created so that they may not strictly mirror the rhythm of the Neruda poem when read alone. But this is a matter for interpretation. The very existence of multiple versions of sections of Neruda's epic work *Canto General* suggests that different adaptors have seen the need to stress certain themes and not others, certain rhythms and not others.

Whether we are concerned with cinematic adaptations and creations, musical compositions or adaptations of Neruda poems, or indeed operatic works that employ music and words to convey a new creative form with links to the idea of "posthumous Neruda," some common threads run through these depictions of Neruda and of his historical literary *oeuvre*. The first is the extent to which the new creations serve to reinforce a mythology of Neruda as the poet of love, or whether they are better linked to the image of Neruda as the chronicler of historical injustices at home and abroad. The second thread is the question of how these works interweave the historical accounts of Neruda's own life and Neruda's own biographical writings in this respect. Other questions are, of course, whether the new works or adaptations and compositions linked to the Neruda life story or his works *per se* have artistic merit and just how they may interact with the contemporary societal context in which these works may be performed, post-1973.

The idea here is that the literary/cultural afterlife of a writer—often well-known in his or her lifetime, such as Neruda was—has a role in fashioning the ways in which such a writer and the *oeuvre* is perceived, evaluated and "experienced" by the generations that follow, and in differing societal contexts. The writer's works also may be regarded as also having an afterlife—they continue to be re-

contextualized in new ways after Neruda's death. The posthumous era for any writer of merit is, to a greater or lesser extent, one in which the processes of memorializing the writer and the associated works can take on a momentum of their own, somewhat unfettered by the author's own precise considerations of how they might wish to project their image into the wider society, posthumously.

Much more can be done in terms of research into the literary/cultural afterlife of Pablo Neruda in a variety of societal and cultural contexts. The Neruda literary *oeuvre* will be presented in new ways, so that the life of these works continues long after the death of their author. Thus, if we consider the posthumous developments and phenomena since Neruda's death and the adaptations and compositions with Nerudian themes, we can say that these add a new layer of interpretation to the core literary works of the poet and the ways in which his life and times has been presented.

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