CONTRAATAQUE AND RÉQUIEM POR UN CAMPESINO ESPAÑOL:

TWO SPANISH CIVIL WAR NOVELS BY RAMÓN J. SENDER

by

DOROTHY KELLY WHEATLEY

(Under the Direction of Stacey Dolgin Casado)

ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of two Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) novels, Contraataque (1938) and Réquiem por un campesino español (1960), written by Ramón Sender in two distinct periods of his life. Although both novels share the objective of awakening the reader's social awareness to the injustices committed by the conservative political Right prior to, and during civil conflict, Sender employs a distinct narrative style in each. While Contraataque is written in an unmistakably journalistic style, in Réquiem por un campesino español Sender makes use of aesthetic techniques belonging to the literary practices of objectivistic, socio-critical realism characteristic of the Spanish social novels of the Generation of 1954. The unique narrative style of the novel is described and contextualized within the literary history of the Spanish novel. The study

also analyzes the effectiveness of each narrative style as the instrument of social awareness and change that the author intended each to be.

INDEX WORDS: Contraataque, Réquiem por un campesino español, Spanish Civil War, Ramon Sender, Sender, Social novel, Sender’s novelistic style, Sender’s autobiography, Sender’s narrative

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DEDICATION

To those responsible for sparking my interest in Spanish...

Shorty and Coty Williams.

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CHAPTER ONE

RAMÓN J. SENDER

One of the greatest Spanish novelists of the twentieth century lived geographically close to the people of the United States for many years by way of his exile from Spain during the Spanish Civil War. More than a novelist passionate about the Spanish Civil War, Ramón José Sender was also a participant in the bloodshed. Learning about the Spanish Civil War and how it affected Sender enables his readers to better understand his literary works.

Sender was born in the Spanish town of Huesca, located in the picturesque region of Aragón, on February 2, 1901. His literary talent became evident at a young age. Before receiving his academic degree, at the age of 13, Sender dedicated himself to writing for *"Crónica,"* Zaragoza's local newspaper. Of his unbelievable talent and dedication Castillo-Puche says that, "[Sender] presta gran relieve al hecho de su afición y dedicación periodísta en sus años de formación autodidacta pero regurosa y tenaz" (34). Of course his publications were anonymous, not just because of his youthful age, but more importantly because of his

liberal ideology and support for a change in the current government.

"*Crónica*" is where Sender started his literary career. By the age of sixteen, before beginning his university studies, Sender had written for "*Heraldo de Aragón*," "*Lecturas*" of Barcelona, and had written the story "*Una hoguera en la noche.*" His style was journalistic and, according to Castillo-Puche, "sus reportajes iniciales van a ir constituyendo el instrumento expresivo, directo, rápido, eficaz" (32).

Between 1911 and 1918, while publishing columns in local newspapers, Sender studied at various educational institutions before receiving his Bachelor's degree in 1918 from the Instituto Nacional de Enseñanza Media de Teruel. By 1919, Sender moved to Madrid where he began an academic degree which he never completed. There he lived on what he could earn as a poor, young writer, and made do with the little that he had by writing anonymous articles and short stories for various newspapers throughout the country: "*El Imparical*," "*La Tribuna*," "*España Nueva*," "*El País*," "*La Lucha*," "*Leviatán*," and "*Tensor.*" These newspaper columns, often based on social and political conflicts within Spanish society, formed the foundation for Sender's literary career that would become apparent in his later

works. Of Sender's literary foundation Castillo-Puche writes:

> Nos interesa destacar cómo un periodismo inicial y combativo, aquel periodismo de situaciones a menudo socialmente conflictivas, constituye la base de su formación literaria y la introducción insoslayable para su posterior y copiosa obra de imaginación… (10)

However, Castillo-Puche believes that more than just Sender's journalistic experience contributed to his literary style. He writes:

> El germen sustancial de la obra narrativa de Sender –[…] que es abrumadoramente importante- está en el periodismo inicial, unido en su raíz a la gran proximidad al pueblo, a sus problemas, a la crítica social, al sentimiento de las injusticias, incluso a su activismo político. (31-32)

Castillo-Puche continues: "Su propósito permanente es el de aprovechar el material periodístico en sus obras de creación como si nacieran prácticamente de su imaginación inventora" (40). Journalism provided the start of Sender's literary career. Being a journalist provided Sender with

the writing experience and literary foundation he needed to later produce award-winning literature.

In 1920, only a year after moving to Madrid, Sender returned to his hometown where he founded and wrote for *"La tierra,"* the local paper of Huesca. It was this investment that taught him to manage business. His brother and father were included, even more so in the legal sense; however, it was Sender who successfully managed it: "[…] puede decirse que prácticamente él lo hacía todo en este periódico, editoriales, artículos, crónicas, casi todo lo escribe él, aunque utilizando seudónimos" (Castillo-Puche 35). Managing the newspaper taught him the responsibility and business-sense that goes along with owning a company.

By 1922, Sender served his mandatory time in the Spanish military, as was required by all young Spaniards. This hindered his ability to manage the paper in Huesca; however, the experience he endured as a soldier turned out to be critical in his later writings.

Although not published until years later, Sender's first novel, Imán (1930), and later novel, Cabrerizas altas (1965), stemmed from his militant experience in 1923, at which time he served the standard fourteen-month term in Morocco during the Colonial War. Once his mandatory military service ended, Sender began to write for *"El Sol,"*

which was one of Madrid's most liberal and prestigious newspapers. Although Sender published anonymously, he was unquestionably a well-known writer. Soon Sender published in more politically radical newspapers: *"La Libertad"* and *"El Socialista"* (Barcelona), the latter being a publication of the anarchist organization, Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (C.N.T.). The C.N.T. focused on the labor movement as a force for promoting social change.

Sender's most important years in regard to his career were the 1930s. While Sender wrote for *"La Libertad,"* he published numerous novels: Imán (1930), O.P. [*Orden Público,* (1931)], El Verbo se hizo sexo [*Teresa de Jesús*, (1931)], Siete domingos rojos (1932), La noche de las cien cabezas (1934), El secreto (1935), Mister Witt en el Cantón (1936), and Contraataque (1938).[1]

Shortly after writing Contraataque, Sender went into exile. He first moved to México and then to the United States (New York, New Mexico, and then California). According to Compitello, there is a correlation between exiled authors and their literary works: "The exiled writer is stuck in a present where the possibility for the kind of future desired is severely diminished by political realities that also cause the present to be overtaken by the past" (99). Sender's present was his constant reminder

of what the future would (or would not) hold. This present, while the author was in exile, reminded him of why he was unable to live in Spain. It fueled his vision of justice and equality for all Spaniards.

However, mental agony and frustration were not the only result of a profound distance and time between the author and his native country. On the contrary, the absence of Sender from his homeland resulted in the production of a more acute memory and vision. Those in the constant presence of their passion tend to overlook some of its qualities. Sender affirms this in his interview with Peñuelas. Sender says:

> Con la distancia y el tiempo la memoria trabaja mejor al reconstruir las líneas y los matices, y las tintas toman calidad. Este espejo de la distancia es lo mismo que el espejo que usaba Velázquez para ver al final un cuadro, cosa que hacen también otros pintores. En el fondo del espejo es donde uno consigue ver mejor la obra acabada. Para mí, ese espejo, pues es la distancia y el tiempo. Los colores, las esencialidades, los caracteres, los tipos, los hechos, hasta las cosas físicas, toman ese espejo calidad final. (278)

Filled with passion, Sender produced award-winning literary works in his years of exile. (Sender won the National Prize in Literature in 1936, the Critics Prize in 1967, the Planeta Prize in 1969 and was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1970.) Although forbidden to return to his country for decades, Sender's heart belonged in Spain.[2] Compitello states that, "from their exile authors lamented and despised the institutionalization of a regime that had forced their exit. At the same time they were incapable of cutting the ties that bound them to Spain" (91). For these reasons, Sender was unable to forget about the situation in Spain that caused his exile and broken heart, as well as the death of his family; however, the profound memories triggered the production of his literature. With his literature, Sender was able to open his readers' eyes to the social injustices in Spain.

Sender's readers feel his passion by way of his literary style. The passion comes from the author's longing for political and social change in his native country. Compitello affirms:

> This dilemma doomed them [exiled writers] to live in a present overflowing with recollections of what Spain could have been and what it became. It also kept fresh in their memory a clear vision

> of the historical causality responsible for their position. (91)

As the Spanish exiles knew, Spain had no future. This became evident to the Republicans by the end of the Civil War: "Their Spain was a futureless projection of the past, and they were destined to produce literarily simulacra of the past's tragic impact on their present-time situation" (Compitello 91). Those in exile wanted to make a difference in the lives of their fellow Spaniards, but could only do so from afar. Compitello writes:

> The act of writing became the only avenue available to supersede the triumphalist version of recent history offered by their former enemies and to justify their own situations intellectually, psychologically, and morally. (91)

Sender wrote from abroad (Mexico and the United States). Whether or not he reaped satisfaction is uncertain. However, his geographical position offered him more options with regard to his publications. Benardete confirms: "Si así fuere, Sender podría iniciar una nueva serie de novelas, las que, además de la distancia estética, desarrollarían ese algo de caridad tan necesario para quien quiera penetrar el alma de una España en lucha por la luz"

(11). The fact is that neither Sender's literary works, nor his life, can be separated from the war experience that he endured in Spain between the years of 1936 and 1938. The war affected him in many ways. Not only did he witness death on the battlefield brought about by both the Nationalists and the Popular Front, but his wife and brother were murdered. His preoccupation with Spain arose from the "social, economical, and religious values of a corrupt, unjust and decadent system" (Trippett 18). His involvement in the war and in the events that led to it resulted in his longing for political change and social equality.

Sender's personal experiences in fighting in the Spanish Civil War had a profound influence on his literary works. The themes (especially those of societal injustice) of his post-war novels enable his readers to see that he was deeply impacted by the massive destruction of the war; however, this bloody war was responsible for Sender's passionate writings which were translated into numerous different languages.

Contraataque and **Réquiem por un campesino español**

Numerous critics have published studies concerning Sender's literary works.[3] Of Sender's many works, it is

difficult to deem only two worthy of evaluation and critique. However, an evaluation of Contraataque (1938) and Réquiem por un campesino español (1960) would be a worthy and unique study of two of Sender's war novels.

The purpose of this study is to describe the journalistic style utilized by Sender in Contraataque, written during the Spanish Civil War as Sender fought alongside the Popular Front, in contrast to the compact objectivistic realism that characterizes Réquiem por un campesino español, written in the United States following the author's forced exile from his homeland. Although similar in their sociocritical objective, this study seeks to examine the unique narrative style of each within the context of the historical development of the Spanish social novel, in an attempt to compare and contrast each one's effectiveness at awakening the reader's awareness of the need for social change.

In writing Contraataque, Sender logged his war experiences into his journal. With little review he later published his journal, comprising the book. His first-hand battle experiences in Contraataque then served as his personal fight against the Nationalists and all they represented. Contraataque is a combined fictional and autobiographical work.

Requiém por un campesino español is a social novel written after the war. It reveals life in Spain between 1910 and 1937, including the events that led to the Spanish Civil War. It refers to the social and political situation from which Spain was suffering.

Although written by the same author, Contraataque and Requiém por un campesino español are different in structure and style. Their content is comparable in that they both aim at condemning the brutality of the Nationalists. Sender uses a different style in each novel; however, he ultimately employs the same underlying theme, justice and equality.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORICAL EVENTS PRECEEDING THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

Spain often has been referred to as separate nations within itself. Its distinct topographical features, such as high plateaus, mountains, and rivers, have created natural divisions within the nation since its early origins. Shneidman writes that these features divide Spain into "five general topographic regions" (3).

Galicia, Asturias, and the Basque country form the mountainous, coastal region in the north of Spain, fortressed by the Cantabrian Mountains in the south. Spain's largest port city, Barcelona, located in the industrialized region of Cataluña, along with the Ebro Valley to its south, form a northeastern region. In the southeast, Alicante and Valencia form part of the Levante, a coastal belt with few ports. In the mountainous south, Andalucía, Almería, and Sevilla form part of yet another region, which is home to the Sierra Nevada Mountains, isolating the southern coast from the rest of the country. Dominating central Spain is the Meseta, or central plateau. This region is partitioned from the north by the Cantabrian Mountains and from the south by the Sierra Morena

Mountains, completely isolating the region from both directions.

Because of the rugged terrain, it is no surprise that the people of these regions are so radically different, particulary where the matter of ideology is concerned. Modernization would eventually override the topographical obstacles of Spain; however, even with the help of transportation and telecommunication, the people remained widely divided by their political mindset. The most profound division involved national political status, and was disputed by the people of the liberal political Left and conservative political Right.

After the Napoleonic Wars (1808-1814), the Spanish Inquisition was re-established by the conservative Spanish Monarchy to provide support against the liberals of Spain; thus, the conflict amongst these groups started long before the 20th century. In opposition, the liberals aimed to reduce clerical power by numerous means: loosening Church ties on education, limiting activities of religious order, and confiscating Church lands. Spain was divided not just because of differing religious perspectives, but also because of overall political differences which soon surfaced in the Cortes.

The people of Spain were aware of the growing conflict within the Cortes. The first occurrence of corruption was not during the reign of Alfonso XII (1857-1885), however, it was during his reign that it became blatantly obvious. To ensure a shift of government every two years, "leading parties agreed that all elections would be rigged" (Shneidman 11). Upon the death of Alfonso XII in 1885, his widow, Maria Cristina of Asturias was entrusted to the regency for a short time and the corruption continued.

When Alfonso XIII became king (1902-1931), he wanted more power and it was he who finally objected publicly to the corruption. Unable to rid the government of corruption by way of discussion with the Cortes, Alfonso XIII approached the army's general staff. Having already been discontent with the government because of the low wages they received while fighting the war in Morocco (that ended in defeat in 1921), the army too, began to turn against the Cortes.

For years Spain remained in political turmoil. The king and the Cortes continued ordering contradictory campaigns. Various coups organized in different regions of Spain in support of either the Spanish Monarchy or the Republic. Top officials resigned; some fled the country; others feared for their lives. In particular, in

Barcelona, coups were forming, one being under the control of General Miguel Primo de Rivera, the military governor of the city. By mid-September, 1923, battles in Barcelona left Primo de Rivera military dictator of Spain. He began his rule on September 20, 1923; his dictatorship ended on December 3, 1925. However, the end of his dictatorship did not signify the end of his regency.

During Primo de Rivera's dictatorship industry expanded. Coal, iron, and textile industries grew as they were important exports. The organization of labor unions became apparent: the Socialist UGT (Unión General de Trabajadores), the Anarchist C.N.T. (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo), and the Catholic Consejo Nacional de las Corporaciones Católicas Obreras. According to Simkin,

> [Miguel Primo de Rivera] tried to reduce unemployment by spending money on public works. To pay for this Primo de Rivera introduced higher taxes on the rich. When they complained he changed his policies and attempted to raise money by public loans. This caused rapid inflation… Much of his regency was the same; once a complaint arose, he changed his policies to satisfy the malcontents. The result was constant change, also interpreted as instability.

Under pressure from the people and in hope of restoring order in the Cortes, Primo de Rivera attempted to write a constitution in 1926; however, too few politicians attended the meeting to write a new constitution. With the country still in turmoil, Primo de Rivera lost support of the army. According to Shneidman, upon realization of the people's discontentment "Alfonso XIII suggested that Primo de Rivera resign" (14). He did so on January 28, 1930, and died less than two months later.

Alfonso XIII conferred with various conservative politicians in an attempt to have a new government formed. All refused with the exception of a few who agreed only under unobtainable specifications. According to Simkin,

> In 1931 Alfonso XIII agreed to democratic elections. It was the first time for nearly sixty years that free elections had been allowed in Spain. When the Spanish people voted overwhelmingly for a republic, Alfonso was advised that the only way to avoid large-scale violence was to go into exile. Alfonso agreed and left the country on 14th April, 1931.

In June, a general election took place, resulting in a victory for the political left. Niceto Alcalá Zamora, a Socialist, was named prime minister. To compose a diverse

cabinet, Alcalá Zamora chose individuals such as Manuel Azaña, Francisco Largo Caballero, and Indalecio Prieto.

Having little in common with Manuel Azaña, President Alcalá Zamora was removed from office by the Cortes once he disapproved of Azaña's plan to limit Church and elite power and property by way of the Agrarian Reform Bill and Catalan Statute. Much of Spain's land was owned by the Church; "it has been estimated that in the early twentieth century the Church owned about one third of the total wealth of the country" (Kenwood 5). It was during this plan to limit power that, according to Shneidman, "Communists and Socialists then began to take command of important army posts and refused to use troops to stop rioters from burning churches" (Shneidman 14-15). Needless to say, this resulted in violence between the Conservatives and Liberals.

In elections held in November 1933, the Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas (CEDA) won the majority. They opposed all reforms introduced by Azaña, resulting in a shift of power within the Cortes once again. This political shift led to strikes and uprisings against the Republicans in support of Azaña’s government.

In spite of the riots, Azaña was still at work. According to Simkin,

> On 15th January 1936, Manuel Azaña helped to establish a coalition of parties on the political left to fight the national elections due to take place the following month. This included the Socialist Party (PSOE), Communist Party (PCE), Esquerra Party and the Republican Union Party.

The Anarchists later supported the coalition. Azaña entrusted these diverse parties to unite and fight against the Nationalists for "restoration of Catalan autonomy, amnesty for political prisoners, agrarian reform, an end to political blacklists and the payment of damages for property owners who suffered during the revolt of 1934" (Simkin). The coalition of parties became known as the Popular Front and were to fight against the political Right of Spain who became known as the Nationalists. The Nationalists were supported by CEDA, the Carlists, and the Falange Española.

The Falange Española was founded by José Antonio Primo de Rivera. Although skeptical of the Nationalists, he agreed to support them through secret negotiations. They were to cooperate with the Carlists as well. According to Shneidman, "[José Antonio] ordered the Falange June 29 to cooperate with the military and the Carlists in an insurrection but to maintain its separate identity" (19).

José Antonio ordered the Falangists to participate in the revolt; however, they were strictly ordered not to be confused for another party. They were to maintain their own separate identity.

The uprisings continued and politicians were frequent victims of assassination. The army had obeyed the Republic after Alfonso XIII approached them expressing interest in a new governmental system some years ago. However, by the elections in February, 1936, many military officials had doubts regarding the Republic. The Popular Front won the election by a mere one percent and immediately followed through with their reforms, which outraged the Nationalists. As one last attempt to reconcile their differences and avoid a full fledge war, Azaña asked then prime minister Diego Martínez Barrio to organize a compromise. According to Simkin,

> [Diego Martínez Barrio] contacted Emilio Mola and offered him the post of Minister of War in his government. He refused and when Azaña realized that the Nationalists were unwilling to compromise, he sacked Martinez Barrio and replaced him with José Giral. To protect the Popular Front government, Giral gave orders for

arms to be distributed to left-wing organizations that opposed the military uprising.

At this point, the civil war was inevitable. It began in July with the revolt of the Junta of National Defense.

It is accurate to describe the Spanish Civil War as the bloodiest war that Spain had ever seen. Little did the people know that the war would last three years. Kenwood writes, "The outbreak of civil war in Spain in July 1936 unleashed a whirlwind of destruction, persecution, and horror that over three years shattered the nation and claimed the lives of more than a half-a-million Spaniards" (vii).

Through the determination of socialist premiers such as Francisco Largo Caballero, Juan Negrín, and Manuel Azaña various uprisings which led to the Civil War were grounded in nearly all regions of Spain with the exception of the northwest and southwest regions, where General Francisco Franco y Bahamonde was named head of state by the Nationalists.

Francisco Franco y Bahamonde

Both the Franco and Bahamonde families had a long tradition in the military, specifically in the Navy. However, Francisco Franco y Bahamonde[4] was unable to enter

the Naval Academy due to the country's economic crisis at that time. For this reason "[Franco] went to the Military Academy at Toledo August 29, 1907. Graduating July 13, 1910, Franco joined the regular army, and was sent to Morocco February 24, 1912" (Shneidman 15). He fought in the Moroccan War and it was there that he made himself well known and respected: "By 1922, he was the youngest lieutenant colonel in the Spanish army, in 1925 the youngest colonel, in 1926 the youngest general" (Shneidman 15). He was an ideal militant: determined and capable.

After becoming general, Franco returned to Spain, remaining largely reserved and politically inactive. However, during this time of minimal political activity, Shneidman states that "[Franco] began a private study of communism and Marxism" (15). By May 1935, Franco was appointed chief of the Central General Staff; by February 1936, he became commander of the Canary Islands.

Within a few months of being appointed commander of the Canary Islands, Franco met with Emilio Mola Vidal, José Sanjurjo, Manuel Goded Llopis, Miguel Cabanellas y Ferrer, Alfredo Kindelán, and Gonzálo Queipo de Llano. They conspired to plot against the Republic. The group decided that José Sanjurjo would be head of state and Emilio Mola Vidal would form a cabinet. Sanjurjo, however, died in an

airplane crash on July 20, only days after the start of the revolt which initiated the outbreak of the war. Goded was killed after attempting to occupy Barcelona. In July, the Nationalist leaders reorganized to reevaluate their plan. Cabanellas was chosen as president and Mola as leader. Soon after this conference, Franco officially joined the Junta of National Defense and began to fight against the Republic.

Franco believed he was defending his country from undesirable change that the Republic would bring. Kenwood affirms:

> [To Franco] the army had an almost sacred mission to defend Spain; not only against external aggressors but against the divisive elements within: against the Catalans and the Basques who wanted greater independence from the central government and against the Socialists and Anarchists, who, in their eyes, represented foreign interests. (4)

The changes from which Franco wanted to protect Spain were exactly the reforms that the Republicans wanted to implement.

CHAPTER THREE

AFTER THE OUTBREAK OF THE WAR

After the start of the war in July 1936, the Nationalists still had not entirely united within their own forces. Although it would have been unappealing to José Antonio, Franco forced the untrained Falangists to become part of the regular army in December, in an effort to unify the forces. The militia could not maintain its independence because the Nationalists refused to train them for war. However, José Antonio never knew of this; he was executed in November after being found guilty of treason.

The Carlists were participating in the revolt as well. According to Shneidman, they participated "in the outspoken hope of restoring the Carlist branch of the royal family" (19). However, their last hope, Alfonso Carlos, who they had already declared as their king, was killed on September 28, 1936 while in Vienna before being crowned by the Carlists and Nationalists in Navarra.

Other than Mola and Cabanellas, the members of the Junta were confident in making the decision to appoint "Franco 'generalissimo of the national land, sea and air forces,' and 'head of the government of the Spanish state'"

in October, 1936 (Shneidman 19). Mola and Cabanellas did not want to accept Franco as chief of state. However, for better or for worse, the Nationalist military was under one man's control, even more so with the death of Mola in a plane crash in June 1937.

Similar to divisive Spain, the Nationalist military was still ideologically fragmented, even after forcing the Falange and militia to join. Members of the Falange and the Carlists opposed Franco's ideas and in April 1937, they were indeed betrayed. In need of their support, Franco demanded the end of their independence by uniting them under one political organization, the Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista (FET), proclaiming himself as its head. This organization was ordered to be the only legal party in the country. Those not loyal to the new leader were immediately arrested, some even sentenced to death.

Now having complete military control over a somewhat unified force, Franco's primary objective was to win the war. He and the rebel Nationalists almost immediately turned abroad to Nazi Germany and Italy in search of aid by way of foreign troops, tanks, and planes. Shneidman writes:

> It has been estimated that Germany supplied Franco with $200 million in aid; Italy gave Franco $400 million. Beside the money, Germany supplied 16,000 troops and considerable war material; Italy supplied 50,000 troops, 763 planes and 91 ships and submarines. (23)

Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini wanted the war to end quickly with a Nationalist victory. They needed their soldiers and equipment on other European fronts. Hitler had expansionist interests in other countries as well. In response to the pressure, Franco made sure that Madrid saw its first bombs by November 1936, four months after the start of the war.

Germany and Italy were not the only foreign countries with interest in the war: "The USSR and various Communist organizations gave the Republic $41 million, supplied 2,000 troops, 240 planes and 740 tanks" (Shneidman 23). However, this was not enough. Within less than two years, the Nationalists had succeeded in dividing Spain from east to west. Within another year, over 250,000 Republicans had fled to other countries, the majority to neighboring France, in search of their own safety as well as the safety of their families and loved ones. Shortly after, on March 28 of 1939, Spain's capital and largest city, Madrid, fell

to the Nationalists. General Francisco Franco established himself dictator of Spain.

By the end of the civil conflict, it is estimated that the Nationalists had spent 2.25 billion dollars.[5] Additionally, according to Shneidman, "the loss of life was high. 320,000 people died in battle and another 300,000 in air attacks and because of lack of medical supplies; a million people were wounded" (23-24).

Through all of the mortality, Spain, as a nation, was still unsuccessful.[6] To other Eurpean countries, Spain was a reminder of Fascism, consequently, they were unwilling to export goods there. Franco created an autarky, a closed economy, which prevented the entrance of foreign influence; It was nearly isolated from more developed countries. "The institutionalization of the Francoist regime thus perpetuated a system that effectively strangled the country by providing only surface prosperity and apparent freedom" (Compitello 92). Having closed all of Spain's borders, the Franco regime only worsened the situation in Spain as it allowed no industry, tourism, or economical benefit within the country. "In essence, it served to fix post-war Spain's fate in such a way as to lead it on a one-directional downhill path toward decadence and disintegration" (Compitello 92). It would be decades

before Spain would be able to change its downward spiraling.

Though an astounding 620,000 people lost their lives in the Spanish Civil War, many more were wounded physically and emotionally. The war cost Spain many lives, but the Franco regime robbed many of those remaining of their heart and soul. Among those was the novelist, Ramón José Sender.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONTRAATAQUE

Introduction

First published in France (in French) in 1937, the harsh reality of the Spanish Civil War is fictionalized in Ramon Sender's novel Contraataque (1938). Sender's first war novel was intended to serve as propaganda supporting the Republicans of Spain while at the same time being one of the clearest examples of autobiographical fiction to be found in Spanish literature.

In Contraataque, Sender, a militant soldier whose primary profession is that of being a writer, describes in minute detail many facets of the Spanish Civil War. The novel is divided into four parts, which in turn are subdivided. The sections coincide with the places that Sender visited before and during wartime. He begins with his life in Madrid and then proceeds to inform the reader of Spain's recent political history which led to the outbreak of the war.

Two sides were being formed in view of their political ideology. The Nationalists consisted of the majority of the feudal landowners, the bourgeoisie, and the long-time

power hold of the Roman Catholic Church. Having often considered themselves above the law, these groups chose to form an alliance with the Fascists led by Francisco Franco.

In opposition to the Nationalists were the Republicans. The Republicans sought liberty and democracy and were satisfied to be represented by Spain's democratically-elected politicians of the Second Republic. However, they soon found themselves forced to fight against the rebels who initiated attacks against the newly-elected government. Contrarily, the Nationalists were the rebels who ignited the war. It was they who opposed the ruling government.

As Sender illustrates to his readers, the Republicans, or Loyalists, consisted of diverse groups: Communists, Socialists, and Anarchists. Although diverse in their political ideology, these groups of people united as one in an attempt to defeat the threatening Nationalists. These were the people of the Spanish working-class that, despite their differing political ideologies, united against the opposing forces.

As Sender anticipated a military explosion in Madrid by the Nationalists, he left for his country home in San Rafael. Feeling unsafe because of his political affiliations with the Republicans, Sender refrained from

using his real name when having mail forwarded to the address in San Rafael. Fortunately for Sender, he remained undiscovered.

Sender, along with others, felt it necessary to form local resistance against the Nationalists. He reached the decision to hike by foot to Alto de León and to join the battle lines in Guadarrama. Sender's wife, Amparo, stayed in their home in San Rafael with their two children until finally retreating to her hometown of Zamora in the months to come.

Although Sender was disappointed with the lack of organization of the Popular Front, he continued to support their cause. From Sender's writing, the reader learns that he was as much bothered by the lack of motivation of the Loyalist troops as by the lack of organization, although it was often difficult to distinguish one from the other. Sender thought both to be unsurmountable obstacles for the Popular Front. As Sender writes in Contraataque, at a camp outside Peguerinos, orders were simply "No tire. No abra fuego sin órdenes expresas" (Sender 184). As testimony of Sender's frustration with the orders finally given, he writes: "Propuse abrir el fuego, diciendo luego al mando que habíamos sido atacados, pero P. nos dijo que en la Guerra no se podía sino obedecer" (185). After this

incident, Sender began doubting the integrity of his superiors; however, the mention of such speculation was short-lived.

Sender captures in minute detail many events that he describes. He portrays thoroughly the lines of the Popular Front at Guadarrama, from the chaos due to disorganized authority, to the images and personal emotions when watching a friend receive a deadly bullet while striving to hitch a ride with him in a jeep to the battle lines. In his literature, Sender captures a medley of events, emotions, thoughts, sentiments, and even speculations.

From Guadarrama, Sender traveled with members of the Popular Front to other cities. To Madrid he went seeking organized leaders and leadership; however, he was dismayed by hopelessness. He journeyed from there with little more than a few hours of sleep. The city in which he once lived and worked had changed little. The Republicans occupied the city in an attempt to protect it and its citizens from chaos and destruction which the Nationalists would surely attempt.

When returning to Guadarrama, Sender accompanied the First Company of Steel from the Fifth Regiment. The author once again details the events that he was able to document. He informs the reader of events not directly under his

observation, but those that occur in other provinces and regions of Spain. In his continual updates, Sender attempts to justify why he has affiliated himself with the Popular Front forces, leaving the reader to visualize only the cruelty of the opposing Nationalists.

While Sender portrays the war scenes in which he actively participates, he also adds factual statistics, personal memories, and even humor throughout the text. While in Madrid, after leaving the first time from the lines at Guadarrama, Sender describes the street. He specifically names streets as he casually walks toward his house; he informs the reader of the features of the streets, buildings, and other surroundings, so as to make the reader feel as if he, too, is walking alongside of Sender. Later, after arriving once again at the lines of battle, Sender writes almost poetically in reminiscence of the olive orchards, rich in beauty and part of the Spain he knows and understands so well. His description is again so profound that the reader feels as if he, too, is walking among the orchards. Nevertheless, there was time for only a few memories before coming back to reality…the bloody reality of the ensuing war.

Throughout the novel, Sender affirms his statistical findings on the death toll achieved by the Fascist

Nationalists. Sender writes: "Y si pensamos todavía que pasan de 700.000 las ejecuciones en el campo rebelde, y que hay el *virtuosismo* horrendo de exterminar familias enteras por haber en ellas uno que ha sido concejal republicano" (137). Sender declines to inform the reader of the death toll achieved by the Popular Front forces, because to him it was not necessary "explicar las ejecuciones en nuestro campo, infinitamente menores en número, rodeadas siempre de respetos humanos y comprensibles por la pasión de quienes han sido violentamente agredidos en sus casas" (137-138). This is Sender's justification; thus, in the reader's mind, as well as in Sender's, the Popular Front forces maintained a more positive image than that of the opposing forces.

Near the Córdoba fronts, Sender portrays his experience of delivering products of and for the *Cultura Popular*, a group organized for the forces of the Popular Front to keep them informed and up-to-date on the ongoing activities in the country. To create a balance within their political perspectives, each political party fighting alongside the Loyalists was represented by a delegate who then formed the leaders of *Cultura Popular*. It was the dust of the two jeeps delivering propaganda and news coverage, Sender's and another, that deterred the rebels from attacking the town peasants once again.

Near Villafranca, Sender learns of the six-year old Spaniard whose mother was raped and killed in the child's presence. Not only did the boy witness such evil, but the Moorish assassin later returned to physically tear out the innocent child's eyes. As Sender put it, "el moro llevaría aquellos ojos dentro de su alma hasta el último instante de su vida. De otro modo, no hubiera sentido la necesidad de volver para arrancárselos" (158). This nearly implies that the Moor has a conscience, only for it to have been overcome by his apparent and natural beastiality.

Throughout Contraataque Sender writes about his experiences in and during the war. He describes the bombing of the Loyalist camp outside Peguerinos while the Loyalists were ordered to do absolutely nothing. The lieutenant, after phoning superiors, replied: "Ya veis que estamos descubiertos, que estamos indefensos contra aviones, y, a pesar de todo…¡no podemos disparar! (Sender 188). This was not the first time, nor would it be the last, that internal disorganization resulted in orders not being given properly. A few weeks later this battalion finally opened fire on the enemy, again without orders. Over and over Sender questions 'why,' and yet still he does not know why the Loyalists lack the necessary structure to function properly as an army; however, he continues to give

examples to the reader, perhaps hoping that the reader himself will arrive at an answer.

Sender remained actively involved alongside the Loyalists until hearing the news of the assassination of his wife, Amparo, and brother, Manuel, which he details on the last page of the novel. Although both executions took place two months prior, he did not receive the information until he was in Madrid (December, 1936) while still fighting for the cause. Sender's entanglement with family affairs involving his two children (who were cared for by the International Red Cross after Amparo's assassination) enabled him to piece together the novel, Contraataque. From the beginning of this fictional work to its end, Sender infuses the narrative with his political perspective by means of subtle novelistic strategies, to be described in the next section.

Novelistic Style of Contraataque

Sender begins the second paragraph of Contraataque in earnest:

> Para aquellos que vivían al margen de las ilusiones idealistas, la realidad de España era muy diferente de la realidad oficial. Por eso los informes de ese capitán de verbo desordenado

> me parecían muy dignos de consideración, aunque no se limitaban a señalar un peligro, sino a anunciar con seguridad profética un cataclismo. Su visita no era la primera. Yo le había dicho, después de verle y oírle la primera vez:
> -'No van a hacerle ningún caso.' (25)

There are two possible interpretations of this passage, both worthy of note, and both overflowing with evidence of Sender's novelistic style. The first is the more corporeal. Sender dismisses idealism instantly; he poses reality as an antithesis, and sides firmly with reality. The captain, drowned in idealism, "tiene ilusiones" (25) and is found to be dreaming, whereas Sender himself is, by extrapolation, grounded and straight-thinking. Here, without saying that his way is the correct one, Sender convinces readers that his character is much more believable than the idealist captain who is nothing more than confused and dreaming.

As a result, Sender's utopia is, with a subtle touch, portrayed as realistic, grounded and much more desirable than its opposing views. The author creates the "other" in painting all other world views as "those" whereas his world view is his own, and therefore the correct one to be adopted by the reader even though the reader does not

expect, or even notice, this subtle manipulation by the author.

The other possible interpretation is one that would garner John Milton's attention.[7] Here, Sender is addressing none other than Satan. Milton's Satan, the ultimate idealist, the one who actually believes he may challenge God, has visited Sender before. Genuinely, this captain is deserving of attention, as Sender observes: He is deserving of attention as is the most noticed and colorful character in Milton's poem.

Here too, the captain is the character who makes a larger impression in the beginning of Contraataque than does Sender himself. Although it is not the captain himself who "prophesies a cataclysm", it is the knowledge that he holds that, like Satan, delivers disaster and even death.

In essence, Sender is preparing the reader. He convinces the reader of his anti-capitalist utopia by introducing this idealist who comes with ideas that deliver disaster. Sender proceeds to indirectly diminish his opposition. Not only are those who do not espouse his political beliefs incorrect, they deserve to be ignored.

Interestingly, Sender plays on this alternative interpretation a few passages later when he writes:

"Desgraciadamente, los hechos me dieron la razón. El subsecretario y el coronel escucharon a mi amigo con frialdad muy castellana y lo enviaron a los secretarias, que era como enviarlo al diablo" (26).

Sender notes that Satan himself has no reason to be sent to the Devil. But still, the captain, like Milton's Satan, refuses to give up: "Si me devuelven mi Compañía respondo de toda la Cuarta Bandera" (26). Here, the captain seeks his lost position. Once returned to his earlier glory, he would re-assume his duties; however, he cannot even inspire the secretaries to listen to him.

Sender invokes a slightly different pattern a few paragraphs later:

> Sin embargo, nada más fácil que ver el peligro, porque nos salía al paso en todas partes: en la calle, en los círculos, en los sindicatos, en nuestra propia casa. En el piso de encima del mío vivían unos alemanes *nazis*. Celebraban verdaderas asambleas políticas sin el menor recato. Tuvieron que intervener para hacerles callar por procedimientos tan ingenuos como recordarles las Ordenanzas municipales. Otros vecinos trataban de molestarles dando a sus aparatos de radio la mayor sonoridad cuando

transmitían discursos políticos de izquierdas. (27)

Even in the mere depictions of facts and as a backdrop to the novel, Sender manages to editorialize with subtle strokes. There is no mention of Nazis in the first few pages of the novel before this passage, although there is ample opportunity for Sender to refer to them. The reader observes that "danger" is afoot; coincidentally, the next sentence introduces the Nazis. Sender is not like Pynchon or the latter day generation of post-modern novelists who believe that what a reader discovers for himself is most valuable; rather, Sender's novelistic style is much more Nabokovian[8] – he seeks to trick the reader into assumptions that are in line with his own, and seeks to achieve this trickery without arousing the reader's suspicions.

Before the reader has a chance to even know what it is these Nazis are meeting about or plotting, the reader feels that they are dangerous and, from their flat above Sender (as opposed to below him), they are portrayed as having power and control. There is no proof that the Nazis are connected to the violent "incidents" alluded to in the next paragraph; but via Sender's guile, the reader assumes that the Nazis are responsible for these incidents, when in reality their own crime may have been to talk about their

politics too loudly, which disturbed those of other political beliefs.

Also, Sender literally gangs up against the Nazis: "Tuvimos que intervener para hacerles callar por procedimientos tan ingenuos como recordarles las Ordenanzas municipales" (27). Sender is part of a group that performs the "civic duty" of silencing another group's political discourse. Without at all committing any acts that may impugn themselves, the Nazis have immediately earned the animosity of the reader, thanks to a novelistic style that Sender employs that convinces without either factual or circumstantial evidence, only absolute and aesthetically pure interference.

After receiving an indirect view of Sender's political mindset, the reader finally gets a direct perspective into Sender's political ideology:

> Reconozco que no habíamos pensado que podían comprar un ejército con su dinero (moros y Tercio extranjero) o dando en prenda trozos de la soberanía nacional (alemanes e italianos). Puede explicarse esta inadvertencia porque no creía nadie que el plazo de nuestro triunfo se prolongaría el tiempo preciso para dar lugar a que se formara una atmósfera internacional

> propicia a las intervenciones. Y porque nunca pudimos esperar que las potencias democráticas de Europa permitieran actos de vandalismo político como ésos. Las virtudes medias de la Sociedad de naciones, la mediocre prudencia burocrática de Ginebra, ha ido mucho más lejos que la imaginación de los liberales españoles. (30-31)

Sender and his colleagues simply had no way to predict or foresee the treachery and betrayal of virtually the rest of the world. The Spanish Civil War, actually, is the perfect backdrop for such accusatory prose; as history evinces, there were literally dozens of political and military groups, each with its own agenda. It was not that any particular group believed that another had much merit; however, they were forced to cooperate with one another in an attempt to defeat a common enemy.

This sort of friendship via negativity is evident. Sender expects his reader to believe that his group was innocently fooled all along by the rest of the world that had managed to conspire against it. The amazing revelation is that the reader is partially convinced, at least in some parts of the novel, all by way of Sender's novelistic techniques.

According to Sender, much of Europe, even Switzerland, through its Geneva accords, and the Society of Nations, had assembled against the poor Spanish Liberals. Sender would have his readers believe that the Spanish Liberals were innocent throughout the entire war and played no part in any of the violence or bloodshed; rather, they were extremely surprised by it all. Again, this is evident in Sender's narrative. The author continues:

> Nuestro optimismo estaba condicionado, naturalmente. Demasiado sabíamos que a la buena fe, a la limpieza moral y al respeto a la ley de los republicanos correspondía la despreocupación, la insolencia, el cinismo, el *gangsterismo* de nuestros enemigos. (31)

Sender intends the reader to perceive the political, moral, and practical innocence of his group. His readers trust and therefore believe him. He so successfully paints the guilt of any oppositional parties or individuals that the reader has no choice but to be convinced of the utopian nature of his political schema.

Several chapters later, Sender's utopia is revisited in a different form. During battle, Sender writes:

> Los viejos campesinos, esperando; la infancia, hambrienta; la imaginación sin poder pasar de los

> presentimientos, sin sentirse con derecho al sol y la lluvia que les quemaba o les mojaba, pero que caían para otros.
>
> Angustia imprecisa de sentir que apenas era suyo el impulso de coger la hoz y que, en cuanto ese impulso llegaba a la hoja de acero, ya le pertenecía a otro. Y, sin embargo, el mundo era hermoso. (94)

Sender's readers observe themselves as part of Sender's utopia. He urges his readers to see the beauty among the madness of the war and terror inflicted upon his innocent Spanish Liberals by the rest of the world: capitalism, fascism, and even, as noted in the passage above, bad manners. Here, Sender breaks from his novelistic tendencies. Sender provides his readers with a scene of calm amidst the chaos, and convinces his readers that only they and his world view belong in this oasis of aesthetic bliss.

Only those whom he considers to be monsters lie on the opposite side of the spectrum. His colleagues, party, and, by acceptance and association, the privileged reader, lie within his spectrum. The reader is privileged in that Sender allows him/her, via his witty techniques, to see through the madness of war.

Without knowing much about the political ideology of Sender's opponents, we already know that their role in the Spanish Civil War is to take the "sunbeams" from innocent, hungry children. The reader will, as a result, gladly ally with Sender's moral superiority. For Sender, it is a convenient and intended byproduct that his readers accept his politics as well.

Sender also steals the reader's acceptance of his politics by taking him or her along on a tour:

> Volvimos y nos internamos en los Olivares. En noches de luna, andar por aquellos Olivares producía una emoción rara. El silencio destilaba pequeños ruidos nocturnos. Los olivos eran de gran semejanza, con sus troncos negros, sus copas podadas, sus pequeños cercos alrededor de la base y su emplazamiento a distancias exactas y en largas filas paralelas. El suelo, limpio de hierba, tenía una dureza tal que parecía que andábamos sobre losas de piedra. Todo ofrecía una atmósfera interior de vivienda. Las voces también tenían eco, como en las casas deshabitadas. A veces, el pavimento presentaba irregularidades durísimas, como paisajes lunares trazados en relieve. En la oscuridad se

destrozaba uno los pies. Los tiros aislados de las avanzadillas sonaban bajo los olivos, rebotando el eco como una pelota. (243)

Here, Sender takes a pause from the imaging of the battle sequences in order to re-recruit, in a manner of speaking, his readers. The reader is lost in the previous several paragraphs, not lost in the sense that he does not understand what is happening, but rather, the reader is immersed in the actual battle. As a result, Sender risks the danger posed by depicting battle. The enemy is also depicted as courageous, committed and driven, by virtue of the fact that he is fighting with force and ferocity against Sender's men. Thus far, Sender's men are described as the only morally sound fighters in the war. Sender wishes not to jeopardize the loss of that among the reader's thoughts.

Sender again cleverly maintains the reader as his unknowing ally. He invites the reader to march with him, to face the same foes as he does. And in doing so, he takes the opportunity to communicate to the reader the reason that they are still fighting, a reason that the innumerable opponents, including Germans, Italians, the League of Nations, the European Powers, etc., have never

understood and appreciated, or at the very least, and perhaps even more shocking, have forgotten.

Only Sender's men understand the beauties and the physical natural utopia that constitutes Spain, and the reader is invited to make that same observation through Sender's descriptions. As a result, the reader falls in line with Sender's men's sensory perceptions, and places himself within their ideological vantage point. After the march with Sender and the Popular Front, the reader marches with the men who know for what they are fighting, and marches against the opponents who, just a moment ago were just as courageous as Sender and just as motivated and rational, but now are uncaring, unobservant and, worse of all, are out of touch with what is surely a utopic world view that the reader has adopted, all by way of Sender's novelistic style.

Of course, there are moments when Sender absolutely abandons his subtle mannerisms for heavy-handed political positioning:

> Los niños muertos pautaban los caminos de la muerte de sombras blancas, de sueños de agua y de luz rotos, de risas quebradas. La alegría de las auroras se había deshecho entre los rizos de centenares de niños muertos, se había diluido en

> sangre y en charcos rosa y azul de masa encefálica. Esta era la gloria de Franco. La cantaban centenares de mujeres con sus alaridos, los viejos con el brazo entablillado, los viejos que, después de trabajar sesenta años para *los inspiradores y aduladores de Franco,* y de haber puesto en las manos de éste y otros generales unas espadas, compradas con una parte de su propio jornal – recibían, al final de su vida, cuando no podían ni siquiera correr para guarecerse, los golpes de esas mismas espadas, a través de la metralla de los cañones y de los trimotores. Las glorias de Franco solo podrán escribirse en los cementerios. Sus cantores serán *valientes* asesinos de hombres maniatados, de mujeres llevadas a rastras contra el muro, los creadores de masas de niños mendicantes. Las glorias de Franco florecerán en las fosas comunes y en los estercoleros. (348)

It is blatantly obvious that he was dismayed by his finding. His style changes from subtle to straight-forward and direct. Here Sender makes it evident that there is no cheating death, perhaps better known as Francisco Franco. The images are of death, blood, and brains; there is

nothing positive to be concluded. Franco has successfully destroyed the utopia that Sender believes the Spanish Liberals have righteously earned.

Sender has used everything in his arsenal to persuade the reader that his world view is utopic: humor, satanic references, clever assumptive reasoning with regard to his enemies, even a writing style that links the reader to details that only Sender and his men encounter. Sender cheats death throughout the novel, and invites the reader to cheat death with him. In the end, however, the evils of Franco conquer all, and Sender's utopia is defeated.

However, the utopia is not defeated before the reader is fully immersed in it and convinced by it. From believing that the Nazis are evil simply because they live above Sender and gather "dangerously," Sender presents surprisingly little evidence in favor of his cause, but manages to convince the reader that his is the correct path and that his world view is the utopic one.

Just as the reader questions Sender's logic and belief system, he senses our doubt and surprises the reader with more indirect persuasion. Sender never hits the reader over the head with his politics; rather, through clever novelistic style, he lures and convinces the reader that

his is the innocent, the clean, the moral, the logical, and the correct point of view.

However, even Sender refuses to allow his mission to depend on aesthetics and technique. In the end, he bludgeons his readers with this anti-Franco paragraph which, if nothing else, will guarantee that his readers will see the evil that is Franco. Sender attempts to write "en las menos palabras posibles. Dejaré aquí, en esquema, el hecho" (386). He portrays the death of his family: his wife, Amparo, and his brother, Manuel. Interestingly enough, even there, he does not openly discuss politics. Sender truly is the one who is above, and his readers concur entirely with his politics, without ever really knowing them.

Ramón Sender succeeds, where many other writers fail, at convincing their readers to side with his personal beliefs. He is able to weave his fiction with literary techniques in such a manner that the reader is subconsciously and unwittingly swayed towards Sender's belief structure. Sender's objective was to inform the reader of societal injustices. His use of clever writing techniques enables him to not only inform the reader of societal struggles but also to convince him/her to ally with his aspirations of what change and progress would

bring. Although Sender uses few adjectives in his writings, he is descriptive in a way that enables the reader to realistically visualize the plot and trust the author. Sender first wins the reader's trust and then presents his perspectives. After all, the reader must feel comfortable with the author before classifiying him as credible and feeling confident in him. Once interwoven into the plot and confident in the author, much to Sender's content, the reader begins to believe the story.

It has often been argued that Contraataque is a book of nothing more than Sender's experiences during the war. Other critics think it is mere propaganda for the Loyalist's cause. However, Contraataque may include a dose of them both, in addition to primarily being a fictional work. Can an autobiography be fictionalized? Is it possible for an experienced writer such as Ramón Sender to write an autobiography without a single literary theory overtaking the pen? Sender himself states:

> Aunque no soy sino un intelectual, he tratado de olvidar lecturas e influencias cultas y he logrado, a veces, ese punto de perfección que para mí representa el que en mi pensamiento no influya nunca, nunca, sino mis hechos institivos, naturales y simples; pero los esquemas intelectuales me buscan a menudo y, en cuanto

me cogen desprevenido, tratan de imponerse sobre la realidad material y de contrahacerla. (182)

Having written this in Contraataque, Sender must have consciously attempted to write non-theoretically and without any outside influence; however, this struggle was present enough within his mind that he felt it necessary to inform the reader of the ongoing mental battle. In Contraataque, Sender intended to write only about the war experience, however, he was too much of an intellectual to write without acknowledging his passionate feelings and thoughts for the cause.

Just as children's fantasy books sweep them from reality, Sender casts his readers on a journey through war-torn Spain. Both are fictional, one being a fantasy for children while Contraataque is an envisioning dream for the Loyalists of Spain. Sender intended Contraataque to be taken by the average reader as a testimony of his war experience; after all, it is based on historic reality. However, critical readers know that Contraataque is much more complex than an autobiography. Writing the book as an autobiography represents Sender's attempt to earn the reader's trust; thus, the reader believes Sender to be a faithful narrator.

Felix Morrow's analysis of Sender's writing style and motivations is complimentary and accurate. Morrow compliments Sender by stating that he is a novelist first and a political thinker second.

> Ramon Sender is a novelist who has written some distinguished prose, a conscious craftsman who knows how to get his effects... Sender employs the novelist's right to assert what he believes without recourse to logic or proof... It is pointless to cite the falsities, the errors, the downright lies... Any informed or critical reader will immediately perceive that he is reading a story which may or may not be true, but certainly is not accompanied by any serious evidence. More gullible readers, of course, will be carried along by the stream of the story.

It was Sender's intention in writing Contraataque for the "gullible readers to be carried along by the stream of the story" as Morrow puts it. In this way, Contraataque served as propaganda for the Popular Front, and more subtly, for the Communist Party. Rather than being overtly straightforward with his readers, Sender consistently uses delicate, subtle writing to win his readers over to his

ideology. Consequently, the reader believes in him and his writing, which is Sender's ultimate goal in Contraataque.

Sender, persuaded by members of the Communist Party, subtly infuses his work with characters who embrace the Communist ideology. In the introduction of Contraataque (1978), Sender confesses that the content of the original edition was subject to some Communist control and interference. However, he does not portray Communism as the perfect society and Capitalism as an evil.

Not only is the book fictionalized, but it is also written in a biased fashion. Is it not possible that Sender is perhaps telling monstrous stories while selectively forgetting opposite monstrous stories committed by the anti-fascist side? The reader who takes it as complete autobiography is sorely mistaken and will miss much of the novel's appeal. Sender seeks to convey a point and does so through this fictional work. He seeks to make his point through what he knows best: aesthetics in literature, not through lecture or political rhetoric.

CHAPTER FIVE

RÉQUIEM POR UN CAMPESINO ESPAÑOL

AND THE SPANISH SOCIAL NOVEL

Introduction

Although often overlooked as nothing more than a novel dealing with society, a social novel is much more complex than that. If that were the case, the social sub-genre of the novel would include many more works, perhaps nearly every novel whose aesthetics are Realist. Pablo Gil Casado characterizes a novel as social:

> únicamente cuando *señala* la injusticia, la desigualdad o el anquilosamiento que existen en la sociedad, y, con propósito de *crítica,* muestra cómo se manifiestan en *la realidad,* en un sector o en la totalidad de la vida nacional. (19)

In classifying a novel, the entire work is of importance, not mere chapters or sections. It is impossible to classify a novel as social, unless the entire novel is shaped by a non-conformist ideology that addresses the need for social change and a clear, profound vision of how it could be remedied; thus, the author must completely

understand the reality in which he/she seeks to depict artistically.

In the years after the Spanish Civil War, many individuals were deeply concerned about the future of Spain. The Nationalists had won the war and the Republicans felt trapped, even doomed. Their perspective on society prompted literature encircling the war and its outcome, either as an underlying problem in society or as a central theme.

The social novel and realism are often erroneously used interchangeably. Although the social novel is realistic, a realist novel is not necessarily social, as can be inferred by re-examining carefully its definition. As mentioned by Pablo Gil Casado en La novela social española, George Lukacs spent many years studying Critical Realism. In portraying George Lukacs' perspective on the subject, Casado writes:

> [Lukacs] entiende que el objeto principal de la novela es "la sociedad, la vida social del hombre en su continua reciprocidad con la naturaleza que la rodea y que forma la base de su actividad social, con las diversas instituciones y costumbres sociales por las que se efectúan las

> relaciones mutuas de los miembros de una sociedad. (40-41)

As Realism may include man's relationship to his society, the social novel invariably depicts man seeking change in an unjust society. However, in both types of novels, the author educates the reader on the societal situation; it is, however, only in the social novel that the author regards his mission as a writer to awaken the need for social change in the consciousness of the reader.

In as little as a week, Ramón J. Sender wrote one of the greatest Spanish social novels of the 20th century. Of Réquiem por un campesino español, Castillo-Puche writes: "Es la obra más vendida y más leída de Sender en todo el mundo. En España lleva diecinueve ediciones desde el año 1974, en Destino de Barcelona" (18). Of Ramón Sender's opinion, McDermott adds that, "[it is] his own best-loved book" (17). Acknowledging that nineteen editions have been published since 1974, Sender is far from the only person who is enamored of the novel.

In first reading Réquiem por un campesino español, it appears to be nothing more than a non-biased depiction of day-to-day life of a typical Spanish rural town. Although never directly indicated in the novel, the plot is strategically aligned with Spanish life during the years

immediately preceeding the Spanish Civil War. In this novel consisting of less than one hundred pages, the reader can sense Sender's passion for literature and his concern with Spanish life. Castillo-Puche writes:

> En el Réquiem vemos la representación colosal de un cuadro de la vida rural española elevado a categoría estética por virtud de una traslación poética sencillamente genial. Por eso, Gonzalo Sobejano nos dirá que en el Réquiem supo componer Sender una 'obra perfecta.' Fernando Savater, 'forman dos de las rarísimas piezas perfectas de la narración española moderna.' (75)

"Sender's minor masterpiece" (17), as McDermott describes the short novel, portrays the life of a peasant boy, Paco el del Molino, through the memory of the town priest, Mosén Millán. As Mosén Millán awaits Paco's family and friends to enter the church for mass on the one year anniversary of Paco's death, he temporally progresses in reminiscing over Paco's life from birth to death, a life which summarizes the events that led to the Spanish Civil War, and one in which Mosén Millán was a key participant. Although the reader is informed of Paco's twenty-six years of life by way of Mosén Millán's memory, Sender allows an omniscient narrator to take over, thus allowing the reader

to gain more information that the priest could have known. Mosén Millán occasionally pauses in reminiscing to question the acolyte: "¿Hay gente en la iglesia?" (6). As the acolyte sings a ballad about Paco's death, he, too, pauses to answer the priest. More often than not he answers by telling Mosén Millán that no one has yet entered the church.

Eventually, one by one, three well-to-do men enter the church: don Valeriano, don Gumersindo, and Señor Cástulo. Mosén Millán does not move from his chair; he rarely opens his eyes or speaks to the men. He is consumed by his thoughts of Paco el del Molino. As each man offers to pay for the mass, Mosén Millán refuses, stating that he does not want to accept money for Paco's mass. After all, the three wealthy men played a part in Paco's death, as they supported the political opposition (the Nationalists). Having reared Paco in the church, Mosén Millán feels responsible for Paco's death, as he was the one to betray him to the enemy at the end of the novel.

Mosén Millán and Paco el del Molino are the two protagonists of the novel; however, the priest's character is of special interest for various reasons. To the reader, he seems to be a good man; after all, he is the town priest. Nevertheless, Mosén Millán is of an old age and

has become routine and stale in his religious practices. This enables him to fulfill his job duties without hesitation, perhaps without thought. According to Benardete: "Exigencies of history and the prophetic preaching which God wants more than ritual, that only goodness and justice count in His eyes, have never had any place in the head or heart of this village priest" (XXVI). While it may be difficult to say that Mosén Millán is a bad man, it would be far more difficult to describe him as a good Christian for reasons that became apparent at the end of the novel.

By way of Mosén Millán's memory, the reader visualizes the priest's visit to a dying man in a cave outside of town. Paco accompanied him to give extreme unction to the poor dying man, in yet another occasion during which Mosén Millán demonstrates habitual routine without sentiment. It was more than an eye-opening event for Paco; it was a life-altering experience. The dying man lived with his wife in an open cave, with no light, water, or fire. They were poor and Paco had not previously been exposed to such agony. Ramón Sender details the scene as the young boy experienced it:

> En un rincón había un camastro de tables, y en él estaba el enfermo. El cura no dijo nada, la

> mujer tampoco. Sólo se oía un ronquido regular, bronco y persistente, que salía del pecho del enfermo...
>
> Descubrió el sacerdote los pies del enfermo. Eran grandes, secos, resquebrajados. Pies de labrador. Después fué a la cabecera. Se veía que el agonizante ponía toda la energía que le quedaba en aquella horrible tarea de respirar…. Paco veía dos o tres moscas que revoloteaban sobre la cara del enfermo. (34-36)

Paco said nothing while in the cave with the dying man. Upon hurriedly leaving the cave, after the priest routinely gave the dying man extreme unction, Paco questioned the priest repeatedly: "¿Esa gente es pobre, Mosén Millán? [….] ¿Muy pobre? [….] ¿La más pobre del pueblo? [….] ¿Por qué?" (36). The priest attempts to answer Paco indirectly, hoping he could provide enough justification to satisfy Paco and prevent him from asking more questions. But the justification was more for himself than for Paco; Mosén Millán did not want to feel the sorrow that the poor man provoked in him. He answers: "Pero hay cosas peores que la pobreza. Son desgraciados por otras razones" (36). Paco was too young and inexperienced to understand what the priest meant; he was only seven years old.

Habitual routine, as exhibited by the priest, triggers destruction. It was not only the routine habits of the priest, but also the chronological happening of events from one year to another, that so negatively affected — and some would say even destroyed — the euphoria in Spain. From Sender's perspective, this destructive habitual routine was prevalent in the Spanish Catholic Church. Change must occur to spark progress, and during the early 1900s and the Civil War, progress was needed to bring about equality and justice for all.

As a typical Spanish priest of the early 1900s, Mosén Millán thought that only the soul was important and that the human body was a separate entity. He yearned to understand Paco and wanted to care for him because he had been reared in the Church; however, he felt guilty in doing so, as if he were betraying the ministry. He wanted only to routinely administer the sacraments that he was required of him to save the soul; he wanted to fulfill the duties of his calling. He did not love as we think a priest should. The dogma and the ritual, the customs of which he was part, were of utmost and exclusive importance to him. His professionalism in the church tightly bound him to the destruction of humanity. Ironically, in routinely saving others' souls, Mosén Millán became insensible and soulless.

Mosén Millán lacked sentiment in his life; however, upon accepting partial responsibility for the death of Paco, he linked himself to humanity. This is evidenced by his willingness to have mass for the death of Paco on the one year anniversary and his refusal to accept money for it. Also showing their guilt are the three wealthy men that offer to pay for the mass, the same three men that played such a large role in Paco's death.

The priest resides and works in a small, unnamed town and is representative of a larger, more powerful group. Mosén Millán, as well as other priests, is indeed only an individual; however, priests represent the Church in which they dedicate their life. In Spanish history, the Spanish Catholic Church had a plethora of financial and political power and support. Thus, Mosén Millán was a relatively powerful individual within the town and was intricately linked to and dependent upon the political Right. Perhaps it was the Spanish Catholic Church that played a more fundamental part in Paco's death than did the priest who was its mere representative.

Nevertheless, Mosén Millán was comfortable in his position as a man of the church. Although he swayed from religious passion, he refused any opportunity for change. Just as the group he represents, he opted for security of

the status quo. Change would be apt to tear them from what they deemed secure and comfortable.

As an acolyte and active boy in the church, Paco was profoundly influenced by Mosén Millán. The priest was present at Paco's birth, confirmation, marriage, and death. As Paco grew older, he began to distance himself from the church. He engaged in activities in which Mosén Millán did not approve, such as swimming nude in the public washing pool, which resulted in his drawing female attention toward himself. Furthermore, and to the dismay of Mosén Millán, Paco began to question the importance of rent paid on farmland:

> Un día tuvieron una conversación sobre materia tan importante como los arrendamientos de pastos en el monte y lo que esos arrendamientos les costaban. Pagaban cada año una suma regular a un viejo duque que nunca había estado en la aldea, y que percibía aquellas rentas de los compesinos de cinco pueblos vecinos. Paco creía que aquello no era cabal. (46)

This was the start of the mature Paco's utopic vision of a life based on equality and justice for all members of society, irrespective of socioeconomic class.

Paco evolved into an outspoken, trustworthy young man, eventually becoming a leader in the town. He was later elected as a member of the town council. He wanted to use his position as a politician to aid the poor people such as those living in the caves, which resulted in his public opposition of the rents paid to the duke for farmland. He was not afraid to fight for change that he felt was fundamental for the creation of a fair society for all diverse social classes. He yearned for social equality, which ultimately was to bring about his tragic demise.

Mosén Millán recalls when Paco went into hiding once the raging soldiers entered the city. The reader gathers that the soldiers wished to maintain the conservative government. They tortured and killed those that supported change. Paco had just been elected as a member of the town council; consequently, the soldiers pursued him. Mosén Millán approached Paco's father in hope that he would reveal Paco's secret location. Paco's father gave the information to the priest, although he may not have done so if Mosén Millán had not falsely led him to believe that he already knew of it. Consequently, Mosén Millán led the soldiers to Paco after they had promised that they would not execute Paco but, rather, would give him a fair trial. Just as Mosén Millán had tricked Paco's father into

revealing Paco's secret location, the soldiers had tricked Mosén Millán into betraying Paco. Ultimately, it was this betrayal that led to Paco's death. In her article "Realismo y esencias en Ramón J. Sender" Julia Uceda writes of Mosén Millán:

> Los amaba en Dios, lo que no es decir nada porque este amor no movía su voluntad. Los amaba muertos. O todavía más lejos: cuando ya no eran ni siguiera muertos, sino memoria. Por eso la esencialidad de Mosén Millán está esterilizada por el ritual, y la muerte de Paco se debe, también, a una falta de amor. (120)

Novelistic Style of <u>Réquiem por un campesino español</u>

As Mosén Millán sits in his chair in church reminiscing over Paco's life, two temporal planes became evident within the novel. The first temporal plane is the present in which Mosén Millán sits in his chair waiting for mass to begin while thinking of Paco el del Molino:

> Con los codos en los brazos del sillón y las manos cruzadas sobre la casulla negra bordada de oro, seguía rezando... Y su imaginación vagaba por el pueblo. Esperaba que los parientes del difunto acudirían. Estaba seguro de que irían --

> no podían menos -- tratándose de una misa de *réquiem,* aunque la decía sin que nadie se la hubiera encargado. (2)

As Mosén Millán sits in his chair, his mind wonders and takes him to the past in remembrance of Paco, the one for whom he is about to give mass. The story of Paco's life, and what his life represents, results in the second temporal plane of the novel. The memories within Mosén Millán's mind begin as follows:

> Recordaba Mosén Millán el día que bautizó a Paco en aquella misma iglesia. La mañana del bautizo se presentó fría y dorada, una de esas mañanitas en que la graza del río que habían puesto en la plaza durante el Corpus, crujía de frío bajo los pies. Iba el niño en brazos de la madrina, envuelto en ricas mantillas, y cubierto por un manto de raso blanco, bordado en sedas blancas, también. (6-8)

As the narrative cues the reader of the change in temporal plane by the word "recordaba," the author proceeds to subtly add the details of Paco's life by way of Mosén Millán's memory, which eventually is overtaken by an omniscient narrator. It is impossible for Mosén Millán to have known some parts of Paco's life, as, for example, his

conversations with other individuals. He and don Valeriano speak to one another in regard to the rent paid to the absent duke for farmland. No one else was present in don Valeriano's house.

> -La duquesa puede ser buena persona, y en eso no me meto. Del duque he oído cosas de más y de menos. Pero nada tiene que ver con nuestro asunto.
>
> Don Valeriano dijo:
>
> -Eso es verdad. Pues bien, yendo al asunto, parece que el señor duque está dispuesto a negociar con usted. (82)

The omniscient narrator allows a deeper insight into Paco's life than the priest alone could have offered the reader.

To bind together a novel of two distinct temporal planes, Sender inserts a ballad sung by the acolyte present in the church with Mosén Millán. The acolyte knew only parts of the ballad: "El chico salío otra vez al presbiterio pensando en Paco el del Molino. ¿No había de recordarlo? Lo vío morir, y después de su muerte la gente sacó un romance. El monaguillo sabía algunos trozos" (4). As the priest sat, he would hear the acolyte and again remember Paco. His thoughts would return to Paco and the

narrative would once again change from the present to the past.

As the temporal planes are tightly and smoothly bound by way of the ballad, the author continues to add other narrative techniques. In Réquiem por un campesino español the reader is never directly informed of the time in which the plot occurs. It can, however, be inferred by the voice of the shoemaker. He references the political situation in Madrid, allowing the reader to associate a time with the struggle that he mentions. The shoemaker says to Mosén Millán: "Le dijo que sabía de buena tinta que en Madrid el rey se tambaleaba, y que si caía, muchas cosas iban a caer con él" (60). Not wanting to believe the shoemaker, the priest gave little attention to his words, almost as though it was beyond his level of comprehension. Moments later, the information that had startled him was confirmed by an individual who Mosén Millán considered more sophisticated and trustworthy: Señor Cástulo. The author provides this insert through the shoemaker to allow the reader to infer a date (1931) in which the plot occurs: the time immediately before the flight of Alfonso XIII. This is Sender's subtle technique in inserting a voice of reason, or voice of the real people, into the text.

The shoemaker and Jerónima play an important role in having a voice of reason. Sender instills in them a trait that the other characters lack. Aside from the main characters of the story, the shoemaker and Jerónima have the ability to see society from a distance, as in the following example:

> - Ya veo que eres muy amigo de Mosén Millán.
> - ¿Y usted no? – preguntaba el chico.
> - ¡Oh! – decía el zapatero, evasivo - . Los curas son la gente que se toma más trabajo en el mundo para no trabajar. Pero Mosén Millán es un santo. (20)

This conversation illustrates the shoemaker's perspective on priests, specifically, Mosén Millán. Gathered from the conversation, it is undeniable that the shoemaker believes priests do little work. In metaphorically comparing Mosén Millán to a saint, Sender goes a step farther to avoid the reader's misinterpretation of the previous statement. To leave no doubt, in the following paragraph, Sender proceeds: "Esto último lo decía con una veneración exagerada para que nadie pudiera pensar que hablaba en serio" (20). To admit that the shoemaker had to speak with an altered linguistic style to avoid being taken seriously demonstrates the irony in his words.

Sender universalizes the message of social equality in the novel by leaving the characters and places nameless. The poor, agricultural town in which the plot occurs has no name, although the omniscient narrator once says that the town is near the Lérida border: "La aldea estaba cerca de la raya de Lérida, y los campesinos usaban a veces palabras catalanas" (8). It is implied that it is located near a larger, industrial city because of the presence of the soldiers and the wealthy men. Other than Paco el del Molino, Mosén Millán, the three wealthy men (Don Valeriano, don Gumersindo, Señor Cástulo), and Jéronima, the other characters in the novel remain nameless. This technique permits the reader to extend the plot to all places affected by the political turmoil, as Sender obviously did not intend for the plot to be bound to a specific location in Spain. Contrarily, he intended it to represent the entire country.

The structure of the novel is reinforced by Jerónima and the constant presence of the *carasol*. The *carasol* becomes a collective character in the novel. It is the place in the community where the rural people go to interact and socialize with one another; thus, it competes with the church. Sender describes the *carasol* in Réquiem por un campesino español:

> Como en todas las aldeas, había un lugar en las afueras que los campesinos llamaban *el carasol*, en la base de una cortina de rocas que daban al mediodía. Era caliente en invierno y fresco en verano. Allí iban las mujeres más pobres -- generalmente ya viejas -- y cosían, hilaban, charlaban de lo que sucedía en el mundo. (40)

Jerónima, along with the shoemaker, gives the town updated news, almost as a newspaper would give a biased review of events, not biased in a negative sense, but biased as it stems from one person's views. This contributes to the novel's dimension of quotidian and verisimilar qualities, and constitutes the Realism of the work. Further contributing to this verisimilar is the use of regional dialect that the author instills in Jerónima and the shoemaker. This ensures that their characters are clear representations of the people; however, they have suffered and been suppressed simply because of their social status. Of the *carasol* of which Jerónima is a leader, Castillo-Puche writes:

> Viene a actuar, con su incesante chismorreo y reparto expansivo de noticias locales, como una redacción periodística popular, puesto que todos los rumores de lo que pasa y sucede se propagan

> desde el Carasol, habilidad de un autor que conoce la psicología de las aldeas pero también la técnica propagadora de rumores y comentarios desde un foco popular de noticias clandestinas (76).

The collective *carasol*, not just Jerónima and the shoemaker, represents the third and final dimension within the novel.

After reading the novel, the reader understands the importance of Sender's foreshadowing, yet another novelistic technique used by the author. The two scenes in which foreshadowing are most important take place in Paco's house and in the cave outside of town.

As a child, Paco was burdened with the relationship between a cat and a dog. The dog would not allow the cat to live peacefully and Paco was compelled to convince the dog that the cat, too, should live in peace: "El perro no lo entendía así, y el pobre gato tuvo que escapar al campo" (Sender 22). Symbolically, on a larger scale, this is exactly what Paco attempted at a later date in his hometown. He struggled to convince the higher social class that the poorer people had as much of a right to strive for prosperity as anyone else. Ironically, he, too, fled to hide in the fields: "[Jerónima] preguntaba por Paco, y

nadie sabía darle razón. Había desaparecido, y lo buscaban, eso era todo" (Sender 92).

In the cave, at seven years of age, Paco went with Mosén Millan to give extreme unction to a poor, dying man. Sender himself had realistically experienced this situation when he was seven years old. According to Julia Uceda in her introduction to Réquiem para un campesino español:

> Este hecho, como otros muchos de la obra Sender, es real. El mismo vivió esta experiencia a la misma edad y reconoce que fue el punto de partida de su preocupación social posterior y de sus reacciones ante los problemas de España. (6-8)

In a conversation with Peñuelas, Sender admits the profound significance that this experience had on him:

> Que moría en su cueva, después de cuarenta años de trabajo diario, honrado, sin protesta, sin una sola objeción. Despreciado por la población moría en un camastro de tablas en compañía de su mujer, envejecida prematuramente y en un lugar donde no había ni aire, ni fuego, ni agua, es decir, los tres elementos básicos... Creo que condicionó toda mi vida. Yo tenía entonces siete años y no lo he podido olvidar... Por lo menos fui desde entonces un ciudadano discrepante y una

> especie de escritor a contrapelo... No necesitaba como base para la protesta ningún libro de Bakunín, ni de Marx, o de Engels, aunque los leyera más tarde. Estaba convencido desde niño. (199-200)

Coincidentally, in Réquiem por un campesino español, as in Sender's personal experience in visiting the cave, there were none of the four elements of life: fire, light, water, and air. The only land was infertile.

The visit to the cave was a turning point both in Paco's life and in the novel. Up to this point in the text, the reader has been exposed to only Mosén Millán (representing the Catholic Church) and Paco el del Molino (a peasant). The third and final social class needed to complete the social hierarchy is the marginalized poor, such as those who lived in the caves. The three main characters in the cave give the reader a clear representation of the three distinct social classes within the typical Spanish society of the early 1900s: the poor (dying man), the working-class (Paco), and Mosén Millán (associated with the Spanish Catholic Church). In La obra narrativa de Ramón J. Sender, Peñuelas writes:

> Los tres niveles de la difícil convivencia española: arriba, los propietarios de las

> tierras; abajo, los campesinos, sumidos en la miseria. Y en medio, el tercer factor, la iglesia, que con su influencia moral viene orientada podría servir de enlace suavizador de tensiones (posibilidad diáfanamente sugerida en el relato), pero que, por la inercia de la historia, por su tradicional actitud de preocuparse demasiado por intereses seculares, se alía con el dinero y el poder. (139)

Greatly absorbed by his experience in the cave, Paco questions Mosén Millán. Neither the priest, nor Paco's parents, could justify the man's poverty or death. This experience was the first to unleash Paco's concern with the distinct social classes.

As Paco el del Molino provided the liberal morale for the town in which he lived, he supported and represented social and moral equality. After the elections, Paco was betrayed by Mosén Millán. In the little time between his arrival at the execution grounds (the cemetery) and the realization that his death was soon to occur, Paco began to apprehend that God, as well as the priest, had permitted this to happen. Paco's death signified the end of the town morale and its fight for liberty and justice. Along with

the death of the shoemaker and other peasants, it represented the death of the Republican struggle.

In "Realismo y esencias en Ramón J. Sender," of Paco's execution for having struggled to better the society in which he lived, Uceda writes:

> Paco el del Molino es, entre los personajes senderianos, el mejor equilibrado. No actúa ni piensa en demasía y no podemos decir que su muerte sea una derrota, porque el *Réquiem*… es una tragedia en la que un campesino se enfrenta con fuerzas superiores a él, que no es sino un hombre actuando según su concepto de justicia. (115)

By the end of the novel, "the text bends back upon itself in such a way that it ends, temporally, spatially, and structurally, in virtually the same spot it began" (Compitello 98). As in the widely read Lazarillo de Tormes (1554), the circular structure of Réquiem por un campesino español impedes any future projection within the novel, or within Spanish society. Compitello sums up this element of the novel when he says: "So all emcompassing are the recollections of cause and effect, that the ultimate effect of the civil war is to occupy the minds of all involved to the point that there is no possibility of a future" (98).

The tragedy of the events leading to the Spanish Civil War is more than a simple theme of the novel; it is also a reflection of Spanish society. Uceda, in her introduction to Réquiem para un campesino español, confirms this fact:

> El tema de esta narración no es un producto de la fantasía de Sender, sino una parábola que resume una tragedia nacional española comenzada en la Baja Edad Media y mantenida, por inercia histórica, en planos materiales inmóviles. (24)

Through ingenious writing techniques, Sender wrote a novel about Spanish life leading to the Civil War without ever mentioning the war itself. Sender achieved his universal message by use of witty literary techniques within the complex narrative of a socio-critical novel.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

As can be seen by the analysis of Contraataque and Réquiem por un campesino español, Sender uses a unique style and technique in each to conclusively arrive at the same theme: the social injustices brought about by the political Right (including the Catholic Church) of Spain.

In Contraataque Sender is subtle in persuading the reader to trust him in that the Nationalists are evil. In this fictionalized and autobiographical novel presented in the first person, the author manipulates the reader into sharing his beliefs. He poses a realistic novel to capture the reader; however, he does not directly inform the reader of right and wrong. That is where his ingenious style plays a part. It is left to the reader to conclude his/her own perspective; however, Sender has delicately manipulated the reader's mind in such a way that there is no doubt that he/she will deem Sender's perspective to be the correct one.

In Réquiem por un campesino español Sender is subtle in many aspects. He never directly informs the reader of the time in which the plot occurs, nor does he inform the

reader that the novel is representative of the tragedy of the entire Spanish society. He leaves this for the reader to grasp as a result of his narrative techniques. The story line is realistic. Verosimilitude contributes to its realism. Sender inserts into the novel a character with a voice of reason which indirectly situates the plot within temporal and spatical coordinates. Having a complex narrative (two temporal planes bound by the acolyte's ballad), Sender displays more writing techniques in Réquiem por un campesino español than he does in Contraataque. The author holds the interest of his readers with the simplicity of the language and the story line. He uses foreshadowing to lure the reader's interest. Symbolism is abundant. Sender universalizes the messages through nameless people and places. It is through these numerous techniques that the reader ultimately understands the novel to be a socio-critical novel whose theme is social injustice.

END NOTES

[1] See Conversaciones con Ramón J. Sender by Marcelino Peñuelas for a complete list of works by Ramón Sender.

[2] Sender returned to Spain in 1974 and again in 1976.

[3] See Ramón J. Sender by Charles L. King for a more comprehensive study of Sender. The book includes a biography and devotes special attention to The Sphere and The King and the Queen.

[4] See Franco: Soldier, Commander, Dictator by Geoffrey Jensen. See also Spain & Franco 1949-59 edited by Jerome Lee Shneidman.

[5] See The Spanish Civil War by Hugh Thomas for a thorough history of the Spanish Civil War.

[6] Spain was divided and economically ruined as a result of the Civil War. The new Spain had no political plans, and represented the interests of the clergy, the oligarchs, and the military. The following years [after Franco became leader of Spain] were marked by international isolation, repression, and poverty caused by the failed economic policies. In 1957, the State faced bankruptcy, due to a heavy trade deficit in imports and exports, and external debt. However, in the end of the 50s, the economy started recovering thanks to the opening of the economy to foreign investment, and the breaking of international isolation. Franco died in 1975.

[7] John Milton, an idealist, wrote Paradise Lost (1667) in which Satan is the complex main character. The author subtly reels in the reader to sway towards the devil at the beginning of the story. This was done to demonstrate the power of devilish seduction.

[8] Vladimir Nabokov includes word play and rhetoric to subtly manipulate the reader in Lolita (1955).

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