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Building Bridges: Joan Salvat-Papasseit's Contribution to the Avant-Garde in Madrid

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BUILDING BRIDGES: JOAN SALVAT-PAPASSEIT'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE AVANT-GARDE IN MADRID

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ABSTRACT

In the summer of 1920 Joan Salvat-Papasseit (1894–1924), arguably the best-known poet of the Catalan avant-garde, published a series of five poems in Castilian in one of Spain's most influential literary magazines of that time: *Grecia* (Sevilla–Madrid, 1918–1920). Interestingly, these poems which comprise his only verse in Castilian do not appear in any of the anthologies of Salvat's completed poetic works. The purpose of this essay, then, is threefold: (1) To present and reproduce the five poems; (2) To contextualize the circumstances under which they appeared in addition to analyzing their content; and (3) To suggest that Salvat-Papasseit's role as a bridge between Barcelona and Madrid so as to offer at least a glimpse of an alternative, more unified version of the history of the Spanish avant-garde. Since the poets in Madrid never fully developed a Castilian version of Futurism but rather by 1919 fused some of its ideals into the *mélange* that was *Ultraísmo*, these five Castilian poems by Salvat may be seen as emblematic of what could have been a Castilian Futurist movement. Catalan Futurism was not Italian Futurism, but it shared many of its principles, and poets like Salvat tried to put those principles into practice. The publication of these poems in Madrid at this particular point in time proves that Salvat-Papasseit's contribution to *Ultraísmo* and, more generally, to the spirit of the avant-garde in Madrid, was considerably more important than literary histories have so far led us to believe.

Traditionally, scholars have studied the historical avant-garde in Spain from one of two central vantage points: Madrid or Barcelona. Existing literary history leads students of the Spanish avant-garde to understand that there was one movement in Madrid and another in Barcelona. This history treats both movements as entirely separate phenomena without questioning whether there was any relationship between the two coetaneous movements. Critics like José María Barrera López, José Luis Bernal, Francisco Fuentes Florido, Gloria Videla, and others tend to consider the Spanish avant-garde in the context of the literary world of Madrid and its forbearers in Italy and France.¹ In these studies, the

1. Other studies that focus their treatment of the historical Spanish avant-garde

Catalan avant-garde movement –already in full swing in Barcelona by the time the first *ultraista* manifesto was published in 1919– is entirely ignored or barely mentioned. In a similar fashion, scholars of the Catalan avant-garde such as Joan Fuster, Daniel Giralt-Miracle, Joaquim Molas, Joan Resina, and others, focus on the Catalan avant-garde and its relationship to the larger European context without mentioning developments in Madrid. Stephen Hart is the only critic to include both the Catalan and Castilian poetic movements in a single study of the Spanish avant-garde. Even then, however, Hart discusses the two movements separately, and does not consider the possibility of mutual acknowledgement or influence. One exception to this exclusionary treatment of the avant-garde in Barcelona and Madrid is David George's intriguing *Theatre in Madrid and Barcelona, 1892–1936*. In this landmark study, he examines theatrical practice in both cities and the relationship between them as he attempts to answer the question of whether, at least as far as the theater is concerned, Madrid and Barcelona could be more accurately described as rivals or collaborators.

In this essay I explore a possible relationship between the Castilian and Catalan poetic avant-garde through the work of arguably the best-known poet of the Catalan avant-garde: Joan Salvat-Papasseit (1894–1924). The fact that Salvat published five poems in Castilian in one of the most prominent literary magazines of the period proves that indeed there was a relationship between the two movements even though literary history has led us to believe otherwise. In *Repensar el 98* Vicente Cacho Viu proposes a triangular model for the intellectual history of Barcelona and Madrid at the turn of the century. One leg of the triangle connects Barcelona to Paris, while another links Madrid to Paris. Cacho Viu then posits a possible third leg between Barcelona and Madrid, thus completing the triangle, but stresses the difficulty of proving a Catalan-Castilian connection. This essay is a first step towards that proof.

After consulting over fifty literary magazines from 1910–1930, I have endeavored to determine whether Catalan poets were published in Madrid and whether the Castilian poets were published in Barcelona. My initial research has led to the discovery of five largely overlooked poems by Salvat-Papasseit.² Written in Castilian, these poems were not

from the vantage point of Madrid include those by Pérez Bazo, Díez de Revenga, Gullón, Harris, Morelli, and de Torre.

2. There are three editions of Salvat-Papasseit's completed works: *Poesies* (1962); *Poesia completa* (1977); and *Poesies* (1978) which, after the second edition, becomes *Poesies completes* (1983). The five Castilian poems printed in *Grecia* do not appear in any of these compilations nor in Enric Bou's *Joan Salvat-Papasseit. Antologia de poemes* (2003). Nonetheless, Bonet, Busquets i Grabulosa, Díaz-Plaja, Fuentes Florido, Garcés,

only published in one of Madrid's most influential magazines, *Grecia* (Sevilla-Madrid, 1918-1920), but they were also published during a critical moment of that city's avant-garde period and the poet's career. The purpose of this essay, then, is threefold: (1) To present the five poems, which do not appear in any of the anthologies of Salvat-Papasseit's completed poetic works; (2) to contextualize the circumstances under which they appeared in addition to analyzing their content; and (3) to suggest that Salvat-Papasseit's role as a bridge between Barcelona and Madrid offers at least a glimpse of an alternative, more unified version of the history of the Spanish avant-garde.

Salvat-Papasseit founded three avant-garde magazines (*Un Enemic del Poble*, 1917; *Arc-Voltaic*, 1918; *Proa*, 1921); produced six books of poetry (*Poemes en ondes hertzianes* (1919), *L'irradiador del port i les gavines* (1921), *Les conspiracions* (1922), *La gesta dels estels* (1922), *El poema de la rosa als llavis* (1923), *Óssa Menor* (posthumous, 1925)); published numerous poems and articles in many Catalan magazines; and figures in the list of contributors to Guillermo de Torre's Castilian literary magazine *Reflector* (1920).³ His poetry also appeared in three Castilian avant-garde magazines: *Grecia* (1920), *Ultra* (1922), and *Tableros* (1922). While the poems Salvat-Papasseit published in *Ultra* and *Tableros* were in Catalan, those that appeared in *Grecia*—the five poems presented in this essay—are his only published verses in Castilian. All five poems are reproduced at the end of this study.

The first Castilian poem, "A Tomàs Garcés," appeared on July 1, 1920 (number 45).⁴ This number of *Grecia* was the third to appear after the magazine's strategic move from its headquarters in Seville to Madrid. This poem is the only one of the five that has been entirely overlooked by critics.⁵ The next two poems, "Canción de gesta," dedicated to Joan Malagarriga, and "Madrigal" both appeared on August 1, 1920 (number 47).⁶ The fourth poem, "Autobiografía," dedicated to

Gavaldà, Molas, Soberanas i Lleó, and Vallcorba Plana have acknowledged the existence of these poems. In 1981, three of the five poems were reproduced in *Quaderns Crema*. For more information on this reproduction, please see note five.

3. Considered an ultraísta magazine, *Reflector: Revista internacional de arte, literatura y crítica* was founded in 1920 in Madrid. Co-directed by José Ciria y Escalanate and Guillermo de Torre, only one number was published in which no texts by Salvat-Papasseit appeared. While de Torre recognized the Catalan poet in *Reflector* he makes no mention of him in his 1925 *Literaturas europeas de vanguardia*.

4. Tomàs Garcés (Barcelona, 1901-1993) poet and childhood friend of Salvat-Papasseit. Founder of the literary magazine *Mar Vella* (1919).

5. In 1981 Jaume Vallcorba Plana reproduced three of the five poems in his article "4 poemes desconeeguts de J. Salvat-Papasseit". These included: "Canción de gesta," "Madrigal," "Rapsodia marinera" and a haiku in Catalan. In 1989 Francisco Fuentes Florido reproduced four of the five poems to include all but "A Tomás Garcés".

6. Joan Malagarriga was a lesser Catalan poet known for his collection of verse *Al*

Isaac del Vando-Villar, the editor of *Grecia*, was published on September 1, 1920 (number 48). The final poem, "Rapsodia marinera," dedicated to Apel·les Llargués, appeared on September 15, 1920 (number 49) in the penultimate number of *Grecia*.⁷

In a lengthy letter to his lifelong friend Joaquín Torres-García (1874-1949), the Uruguayan artist born of a Catalan father, Salvat-Papasseit referred directly to the publication of these poems. The letter is dated Barcelona, July 18, 1920, only a few days after the first poem appeared in *Grecia*:

Jo he escrit alguns poemes en llengua castellana. N'estic força content, i ara es van publicant a "Grecia", de Madrid. Els d'aquí no me'ls prenen ni en llengua catalana. Es veu que cal que torni a fer alguna cosa de combat [...] Si faig 5 poemes més en castellà, vui publicar un tomo igual als meus *Poemes en ondes Hertzianes*. No farà sensació, però podré enviar-lo a tot el món. Ai pobre Catalunya, la pàtria del meu cor. En bones mans està la Catalunya... Que és com dir: "en buenas manos está el panderero".⁸ Res més i fins a un'altra. (Soberanas i Lleó 68)

This epistolary evidence raises several crucial points and some interesting questions. First, the letter confirms that these five poems were not translations of pre-existing Catalan texts but Castilian originals. The fact that all of Salvat's previous work was published and written in Catalan leads us to question why Salvat suddenly decided to switch languages. The declaratory tone of the statement: "Jo he escrit alguns poemes en llengua castellana" also strongly suggests that these five poems were probably the only verse Salvat had written in Castilian. Second, the letter clearly implies that the poet knew that all five poems were to be published in *Grecia*. This knowledge suggests a pre-existing agreement between the editor and poet at some point before July 1, 1920, when the first poem of the set was published. Yet, I have not uncovered any documentation to prove such an editorial accord. Third, Salvat charmingly states that he is very pleased with the quality of these poems and raises the issue that while these poems are to be published in Madrid, Barcelona will not publish them. Salvat suggests that it is easier for him to publish in Castilian in Madrid than

vent de la ciutat: Poemes 1913-1920 published in 1921 by the Llibreria Nacional Catalana of Barcelona run by Salvat.

7. Apel·les Llargués i Vila (Barcelona, 1893-Madrid, 1980) was the secretary-administrator of the González del Valle family in Madrid, after which he was the manager of the Catalan import-export company "Valle y Cía." At one point he was also the secretary of José Ortega y Gasset. Salvat-Papasseit dedicates three poems to him and also corresponds with him.

8. The Castilian phrase is a portion of the complete saying, "En buenas manos está el panderero, que lo sabrá bien tañer," used when a situation is left to be judged by an expert; see Bergua 232-33.

in Catalan in Barcelona. Or, perhaps what he is hinting at is that the Barcelona magazines will not publish these poems because these poems are written in Castilian. Fourth, success in Madrid has clearly encouraged him to consider writing five more poems in Castilian and to envision a volume, comparable to his first book of poetry *Poemes en ondes bertzianes* (1919), that would include those new poems in addition to the existing *Grecia* texts. According to Salvat, though, this volume of Castilian poems “No farà sensació.” Such a gesture begs the question: Excitement for whom? Castilians? Catalans? Madrid? Barcelona? And why not? Despite this prediction, Salvat claims that one of the benefits of publishing such a book in Castilian is that “everyone” would be able to read it. Who does he mean by “tot el món”? Castilians? Catalans? Both? Others? Is he referring to the democratic Everybody or the elitist Those Who Matter? This declaration, together with his sorrowful sigh, “Ai pobre Catalunya,” strongly implies that the poet believed that publication in Castilian would provide a larger audience for his work. This audience would include not only all of Spain but perhaps even the wider world of the European avant-garde. Because Salvat apparently never wrote the five additional Castilian poems, and the book project never came to fruition, we cannot test any of his hypotheses.

Apparently the editor of *Grecia* was just as pleased with the quality of Salvat's poems as the poet himself. After the first poem appeared in issue 45, Isaac del Vando-Villar dedicated a short story to the Catalan poet in issue 47, the number in which Salvat-Papasseit's second set of poems appeared. This dialogue of sorts between Vando-Villar and Salvat within the pages of *Grecia* implies that they at least shared an intellectual relationship. While we do not know how the two men met, or the extent of their friendship, we do have a letter from Salvat-Papasseit to Vando-Villar, dated February 6, 1924, four years after the publication of Salvat's first *Grecia* poem. Notably, this letter is the only one in Salvat-Papasseit's published correspondence written in Castilian. In this unique letter the poet laments that “desgraciadamente es siempre mi salud que no me permite el cultivo de la amistad” excusing himself for not responding sooner (Soberanas i Lleó 200).⁹ Unfortunately, we do not have a copy of Vando-Villar's original letter to which Salvat is responding. Salvat also apologizes to Vando-Villar for not having immediately acknowledged receipt of a copy of Vando-Villar's only collection of poetry, *La sombrilla japonesa* (1924). The warmth of Salvat's letter is suggestive of friendship rather than a purely intellectual relationship. The letter also proves that Salvat

9. Salvat was to die of tuberculosis six months later, on August 7, 1924.

not only knew about his collection of *ultraísta* poems but that he also owned a copy and read at least two poems from this collection ("Vuelos" dedicated to Antonio Machado and "El viento en Albaida del Aljarafe" dedicated to Federico García Lorca) both of which he praises. This detail is significant because it proves that Salvat was aware and interested in the experimental poetry published in Madrid. Nevertheless, this interest and awareness is rarely mentioned in Salvat monographs.

In addition to offering more information about the relationship between the editor and poet, the letter's postscript offers another bit of evidence about contacts between the Barcelona and Madrid avant-gardes. Salvat asks Vando-Villar for the address of the Castilian poet Juan Chabás, whom he wants to thank for sending him a copy of his 1920 book of *ultraísta* poems, *Espejos*.¹⁰ An earlier letter, dated April 3, 1923, sheds light on this 1924 exchange (Soberanas i Lleó 191). In a letter to his close friend and frequent correspondent, Josep Maria López-Picó,¹¹ we learn that it was in fact Àngel Samblancat who passed-on Chabás's *Espejos* to Salvat so that he might share it with the Catalan poet and literary critic Josep Maria López-Picó. As such, this letter informs us that Samblancat, a Catalan politician and journalist who collaborated with Salvat on numerous publications, served as a bridge between the Castilian poet Chabás and the Catalan poet Salvat. While Salvat's letters shed some light on the contacts between himself and the Castilians they do not provide us with enough information to determine with precision the origin, extent, and nature of these relationships.

If we accept Joaquim Molas's thesis that between December of 1919 and July of 1921 Salvat resolved all of the poetic, philosophical, and political vacillations evident in his earlier poetry (*Gesta* 23), then the composition and publication of the five *Grecia* poems falls almost at the middle of a particularly important moment in Salvat's career. As Molas has noted, a certain professional stability and a high level of activity mark this period for the poet. In particular, this twenty-month period includes his role as librarian at the Laietana Gallery bookstore (later to become the Llibreria Nacional de Catalunya in 1920 due in large measure to Salvat's efforts) (Molas *Gesta* 88) as well

10. Juan Chabás (1900–1954) was a poet and is considered one of the most influential writers of prose representative of the Generation of 27. He published his only collection of poetry, *Espejos*, in 1920.

11. According to a note in Soberanas i Lleó's edition, Àngel Samblancat i Salanova (Graulles, 1885–Mexico, 1963) founded *Los Miserables*, a magazine in which Salvat-Papasseit collaborated, in Barcelona in 1914. In 1915 Samblancat signed a manifesto of the "Bloc Republicà Autonomista" and in 1917 became a member of the Republican party of Catalonia. Samblancat, in 1918, also wrote the prologue to Salvat-Papasseit's *Humo de fábrica* (18–19).

as his first book publication, *Poemes en ondes hertzianes*. Above all, according to Molas, these months mark Salvat's attempts to define the profession of poet and the moral implications of poetry, a goal that is especially evident in his final manifesto *Contra els poetes amb minúscula* written and issued as a pamphlet in July of 1920. Subtitled the first Catalan Futurist manifesto (the first Futurist manifesto written by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti was published in Italy in 1909) this was the last of three written by Salvat.

For the purposes of this essay, the importance of this manifesto is its publication date. This Futurist manifesto appeared in Barcelona at the same time the first of the *Grecia* poems was published in Madrid. To date, critics have considered this document important because it serves as a summation and synthesis of Salvat's previous manifestos; one in which he explicitly aligns himself with Italian Futurism: "Amb una iniciativa ja presa als textos anteriors, i ara explicitada i definida, Salvat dóna una aproximació al 'concepte de poeta' que ho serà amb majúscules, un terme que descriu tot fent-se ressò del joc de tipografies diverses emprades pels futuristes" (Gadea i Gambús 25). I would like to suggest that it is also important if understood in conjunction with the five Castilian poems and its relationship to the Spanish avant-garde.

Organized into five "points," the manifesto begins by acclaiming the greatness of Catalan poets, in Salvat's opinion the best in Spain: "separats com estem amb la resta d'Espanya per la nostra cultura superior." Salvat claims that the Catalan culture is superior to the rest of Spain. As a result, this superiority has resulted in a separation between the Catalans and other Spaniards. Yet, at the very same moment Salvat is making this assertion, he is publishing Castilian poems in Madrid rather than Catalan poems in Barcelona. Salvat then makes a disclaimer: there has not been a real poet in Catalonia since Joan Maragall (*Mots-propis* 81). As Gadea i Gambús has already noted, Salvat considers Maragall full of faith and romanticism (25). Given Salvat's ideology of "regeneracionisme, nacionalisme, individualisme anarquitzant i una dosi de voluntarisme nietzscheà important," the reference to Joan Maragall should not surprise us (Gadea i Gambús 25). Furthermore, the Maragall filter permits Salvat to exclude poets publishing after Maragall, including Clementina Arderiu (*Cançons i elegeies*, 1916), Joaquim Folguera (*El poema espars*, 1917), Guerau de Liost (*La ciutat d'ivori*, 1918), Marià Manent (*La branca*, 1918), Josep M. de Sagarra (*Cançons d'abril i de novembre*, 1918), Carles Riba (*Estances*, 1919), Josep-Sebastià Pons (*El bon pedrís*, 1919), and many others (Gadea i Gambús 26). In Salvat's eyes, all these poets, as representative of *Noucentisme* under the influence of Josep Carner, are of lesser value. They also lack the combative spirit Salvat saw in

what he described as heroic poets, including Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Walt Whitman, Gabriele D'Annunzio, Homer, and Maragall. While the proposals Salvat makes in his manifesto were less iconoclastic than those of Marinetti, it was nevertheless reprinted and commented on by several Italian magazines (Anderson 165). However, it is important to note that this first Catalan Futurist manifesto was not reproduced in any of the Madrid magazines. Given the already discussed direct contact and collaboration between Salvat and Vando-Villar and de Torre, it is probable that these two important figures of the Castilian avant-garde were at least aware of Salvat's initiatives.

In order to better contextualize Salvat's five Castilian poems and the significance of their publication in a distinct moment in time, it is important to emphasize the vital distinction Salvat makes in his Futurist manifesto between those he calls "poets" and "Poets." He claims that "Poets" are poets of today, not have yesterday, and calls for them to sing today as if it were today. Today's "Poets" no longer have to measure verses or count syllables, although they can rhyme if they please as long as they are valiant, heroic, and sincere:

Jo us invito, poetes, a que sigueu futurs, és a dir, immortals. A que canteu avui com el dia d'avui. Que no mideu els versos, ni els compteu amb els dits, ni els cobreu amb diners. Vivim sempre de nou. El demà és més bell sempre que el passat. I si voleu rimar, podeu rimar: però sigueu Poetes, Poetes amb Majúscula: altius, valents, heroics i sobretot sincers. (*Mots-propis* 82)

This Futurist manifesto differs greatly from Marinetti's technically explicit manifesto. Salvat's version is more charged with morality while more diluted in terms of specifics. The first Catalan Futurist manifesto, however, does call for a poetry which is more experimental than that offered by the *Noucentistes*, and which is also experiential, based on the lived, day-to-day experiences and observations of the poet. Salvat places emphasis on the future rather than on the past. Is the future for Salvat in Madrid? According to his own guidelines, can we consider him a poet of today and tomorrow? The next question then becomes whether the five *Grecia* poems uphold the values Salvat defined in his contemporaneous Futurist manifesto.

At first glance, each of these texts share several characteristics; some of those traits are Futurist but others are not. Futurist qualities (although not uniquely Futurist) include the use of free verse, the lack of rhyme, and the minimization or elimination of punctuation. All of these poems adopt the Futurist practice of "parole in libertà," or, words-in-freedom: series of unconnected words without connecting strings. Three of the poems include entire lines in upper-case type but are a far cry from the typographical experimentation explicit in some of

Salvat's other more visual poems. These texts do not use boldface or fonts of different sizes, nor do they angle words and phrases. Some of these poems utilize typical Futurist images, like the hydroplane or the transatlantic steamer, however this trait is also found in other types of poetry not exclusively Futurist. Most of these poems use nautical or military imagery rather than imagery of the speeding machine age, and many invoke struggle, will and victory. Central to each of these poems is that they find their inspiration in contemporary life rather than in memories, past images, anecdote or description. Yet, no Futurist onomatopoeia is used, adjectives are abundant and verbs are conjugated. Finally, as his manifesto proclaims, all of the *Grecia* poems share an enthusiastic and celebratory tone similar to that elicited in Marinetti's manifestos.

The first of the Castilian poems, "A Tomás Garcés," separated into four sections divided by dashes, uses nautical imagery and vocabulary to emphasize what makes Barcelona, in contrast to Madrid, both maritime and modern: fishing barges, transatlantic steamers, fuel ships. This poem celebrates the urban port which is the poet's theater of war. The possessive adjective in "Mi puerto es mi teatro de guerra" leads the reader to believe that this port could be Barcelona. From its onset, by situating the reader in a port that serves as a "theater," both the poet and reader function as observers of the spectacle that is the poem itself. But this "theater" is one of war, perhaps in the sense that this is a place where notable events worthy of being watched and recorded in history take place (RAE). The adoption of a bellic attitude, typical of the language explicit in manifestos as well as in Salvat's previous writings, coincides with the inflammatory rhetoric of Italian Futurism an attitude that Willard Bohn has also identified in Salvat's visual poetry (123). In this theater-port-battlefield, the poet's pennants wave in victorious spasms. Victory then must be associated to a conquest of the war mentioned in the first verse. Alongside the vibrating pennants erect nets, full of fish, must symbolize the war's spoils or trophies. The military victory can also be read as one of a sexual conquest as the pennants and nets both refer implicitly to a shuddering and erect penis. Along the same lines, while the celebrated urban port is presumably that of Barcelona it also functions as a figurative port insofar as a place of refuge, a haven for these ships returning from their victories. The war is defined at one level in terms of military victory but also as a highly suggestive sexual victory.

In the following section of the poem the poet announces that he is now going to tell his reader a story. Thus, the spectacle begins. By using the present perfect tense, the poet conveys a sense that the action portrayed is completed and no longer in progress. Accordingly, the

story is told from the point of view of the present so as to suggest that this is a tale of a bygone time. He sings of a past when steamships were decorated with bunting and the lights on the petroleum ships appeared to set the night skies on fire. The next two indented verses that describe those "stars of fire" are a probable reference to the lights on the petroleum ships flickering in the dark port. These "stars" once sung in dance and it was a time when the ships' yellow and red flag, thus not particularly Spanish or Catalan ships, flew in drunken happiness from one side of the ship to the other. However, times have changed.

The adverb that begins the third stanza, and the continued use of the perfect tense, implies that the story continues. Indeed, it is the conclusion. While the second stanza focused on a past, victorious era, the third stanza presents another image. It is now daybreak and the sun rises out of a now artificial and polluted port. The reflection of the sun rays appear like wavy hair reflected in the sea as if curled by the bitumen-like water of the dirty port and the tone of the poem becomes less celebratory.

In the final stanza, the frame of the poem returns to that of the first stanza as the verb tense changes back to the present indicative. The poet has finished telling his story and now finds himself not in the port but aboard a ship at high sea. He has apparently abandoned his theater-port-battlefield and his only companion and guide while navigating the ocean are the five lonely dots or the five points of a star.¹² The poet's departure from the port at the poem's end suggests that he is alone in his quest for victory. His departure may also be interpreted metaphorically in terms of the poet's "heroic" decision to momentarily abandon the Catalan language, write in Castilian, and transport his poetry to a place from which he will one day return victorious to his safe haven that is Barcelona.

The second poem, "*Canción de gesta*," appears to refer directly to the on-going and bloody Spanish effort to subdue Moroccan resistance, the Rif War (or the War of Melilla), an enduring battle that began in the nineteenth century and continued on and off until 1927, yet was particularly intense in the summer of 1920. The poem is composed of three sentences in which a chain of images build on one another, free of connecting strings, defining a conflict in a series of impressionistic snippets of scenes. While these images at first seem disconnected, order and meaning do exist. The poet's attitude towards

12. The reference to this white star may remind us of the transatlantic shipping line "White Star" whose insignia was a five-pointed white star. Established in 1845, the company is famous for their role as builders of the "Titanic." According to archival records, though, these ships did use the port of Barcelona from 1845-1920.

the Rif campaign seems to imply dissatisfaction towards the unsuccessful colonialist adventure in North Africa as he refers to a gigantic French flag ("dos metros de locura tricolor") that flies above a military blockhouse on the burning sands of Morocco.

Undoubtedly, the title of the poem suggests that Salvat is framing the war as a struggle between civilizations that harks back to the Christian-Moorish conflicts of the middle Ages. A term used to describe an epic poem; "Canción de gesta" is surely ironic given that the poem is a critique of Spanish military occupation in Morocco. Given the title, this song clearly evokes the "Chanson de Roland" or the "Poem of the Cid." In the case of the Cid where the Moors are defeated, here the Spanish soldiers are portrayed in a negative light. In other words, the contemporary war in Morocco is not the *Reconquista*. While the Moors were once the oppressors in Spain, now the Spanish are the oppressors in Morocco. This opposition is evident in the structure of the poem as images of the occupying Europeans (tricolor; blocao; salacot; jazz-band; kaki; tropas) are juxtaposed and superimposed with those of the Moors and their landscape (arenas; curva palmera; hembra raída; zoco; gummies; babuchas; moros). This poem is about occupation and repression as well as the artificial superimposition of the European military on the Moors who are infinitely better suited to their environment. Read another way, these feelings of occupation and repression were similar to those felt by many Catalans at the time in relation to the rest of Spain, particularly Madrid. Perhaps the state of the Moors is analogous to that of the Catalans.

Albeit unclear, the two meters of tricolor in the first verse seem to make reference to the French who were also involved in the war alongside, and at times in opposition to, the Spanish. Yet such a reference becomes problematic considering that all of the other images in the poem seem to describe either the Moroccans or the Spaniards. For example, in the second verse, the wooden fort that is depicted is presumably a reference to protective structures that pertained to the Spanish military. In fact, we can confirm the use of blockhouses specifically by the Spanish military during the War of Melilla as referenced in the Espasa-Calpe *Enciclopedia universal ilustrada*.¹³

13. The citation in the encyclopedia reads: "El blocao Velarde, construido por nuestros ingenieros en la reciente campaña de Melilla, ofrece ciertas particularidades que le hacen merecedor de una mención especial: su planta es de forma Z y tiene un desarrollo de magistral de 116 m., con dos órdenes de fuegos. Sus paredes, de table, están revestidas en el piso alto por planchas de acero de 14 mm. de espesor, y en el bajo por un parapeto formado con piedras y sacos terreros. Una alambrada, a corta distancia del blocao, oculta el acceso a éste, favoreciendo el efecto de sus fuegos, que se ejecutan en el piso alto por encima del parapeto, y en el bajo a través de una aspiller horizontal corrida" (1172).

Similarly, in the following verse, the “salacot,” a traditional Filipino hat resembling a pith helmet, was adopted into the uniform of the Spanish military precisely during the Melilla War, thus confirming its direct reference to the Spanish military. This hat that trembles suggests a fearful Spanish army hiding behind the curve of the Moroccan palm trees. This image of fear is juxtaposed with the following image: that of an Arabic woman screeching out in fearful song.

Omitting the use of conjunctions, this image of the screaming woman leads us to a related image: the Arabic market, that when it opens for business it too shrieks in song similar to the sounds of an explosive jazz-band. The following image of Arabic swords so tall that they seem to hang from the sky, calls for multiple interpretations. Given the curved shape of this particular sword, the poem states that they hang from the sky like the crescent shaped moon—one of the two symbols for the nation of Islam, the other being the star. This image of the crescent moon could also be in reference to the sight of these swords hanging for sale in the Arab market. Or perhaps this image refers to that of the Moroccans holding their upraised daggers thus producing the effect of a crescent moon hanging in the sky. In the last two lines, the khaki-colored uniform of the Spanish troops has the color of dust that the Moors step upon with their slippers. The color khaki recalls the function of the uniforms to serve as camouflage; however, the tone of the poem suggests that these Spanish soldiers do not blend into the Moroccan landscape at all. Khaki is also the color of the dust on the uniforms from the surrounding dry environment that stains the uniforms of the Spanish soldiers. The poem concludes as the two sides, the Spaniards and the Moroccans, dissolve into the same dust, that which stains both the soldiers’ uniforms and the slippers of the Moors. If this “canción de gesta” follows the model of the genre there must be a hero in this poem. While the poem ends making reference to the Moors the tone of the poem suggests that neither the Spanish nor the Moors are victorious.

Despite its title, “Madrigal,” published alongside “Canción de gesta” in the same issue of *Grecia*, may not have been meant to be taken seriously. This poem is distinct from the other four in that its primary subject is a woman. But this is a Futurist, mechanized woman, with polychrome breasts and wire-like hair.

The poem opens with three localized images: a drop of breast milk (like a gem), a (multicolored) mammaliferous breast, and a nipple. The presence of milk on the breast, suggestive of lactation, lies in contrast to its referred “sleeping” state. Dormancy here must refer to the sleeping woman who is slumbering while the poet observes her. The use of the word “polychrome,” a term usually used to describe sculptural or decorative objects that are finished or decorated with

paints or glazes, evokes iconographical representations of Biblical figures such as the Virgin Mary. Such a reference suggests that this image could even be a description of a painting or a sculpture of the Virgin Mary. However, by comparing the woman's nipple to a cherry covered in sweet syrup he sexualizes the holy figure while simultaneously converting her into a machine as her tresses remind the poet of red (electrical) wire.

After physically describing this woman's breasts and hair we now see her act. Incorporating a more modern element, she crosses over an iron bridge naked. As she makes her way across, the "roblados" jump like burning "miembros". "Roblados", a word not found in dictionary seems to derive from the verb "roblar" which means to bend a metal to make it more sturdy as in "roblar un clavo"; the neologism most likely makes reference to the nails, or fortifying struts, that explode out of the bridge as she crosses over it. Interestingly, Salvat neologizes a trope for connectedness in Castilian. Her naked passage across the bridge appears to release the sexuality of the poet thus reiterating the image of poet as bridge. Thus, at the most superficial level, the poet serves as the link between female virginity and full sexuality. So powerful is this new male sexuality, the poet tells us in capital letters, that now all the virgins want to cross the bridge. It also might be argued that in this Castilian poem Salvat was presenting himself as a potential bridge between Barcelona and Madrid. The crossing of the bridge, however, could also represent not only the poet but also a right of passage from virgin to womanhood. The woman, however, cannot become pregnant without crossing the bridge thus making the bridge necessary for the transition from virgin to motherhood thus making the man, or the bridge, necessary.

Her naked passage across an iron bridge appears to release the sexuality of the poet, here once again presented through images of industrialized modernity, as the bridge's rivets pop out "como miembros quemantes." So powerful is this new male sexuality, the poet emphatically tells us that "AHORA TODAS LAS VÍRGENES QUIEREN / PASAR EL PUENTE." Perhaps the most significant image is that of the poet as bridge. At the most superficial level he serves as the link between female virginity and full sexuality; beyond this, it might be argued that in this Castilian poem Salvat was presenting himself as a potential bridge not only between the old and the new (the madrigal and Futurist versification) but also between the avant-garde worlds of Barcelona and Madrid.

"Autobiografía," the fourth of the series, is perhaps the most Futurist in nature while also the most straightforward of the *Grecia* poems. Written in free verse, without punctuation or rhyme, it defines the poet in terms of modern machinery: the rotor used in

electrical machines, the chronograph, the dynograph tabulator, the photographer, the propeller, and the "hélice-turgente-hidro-avión." Saturated in a self-celebratory tone the involvement of the poet turned machine in this mechanical world claims that as a result of this mechanization "1[2 000000 [sic] de hombres conocerán mi nombre."¹⁴ This broad transmission of his poetry recalls Salvat's words in the aforementioned letter to Torres-García where he communicates his desire for "everyone" to read his poetry thereby choosing to write in Castilian instead of Catalan. The chronograph will count his heartbeats and the photographer will portray his face like that of a rainbow-colored compass rose suggesting the idea of the poet as one that guides and directs as he broadcasts his message to the four corners of the Earth. Finally, the propeller that motorizes his life will result in the poet carrying his conquests draped across his back, like the hide of a royal tiger. The final line of the poem implies that these conquests are amorous considering that, as the poet is ready to depart on his journey at the poem's end, he concludes by requesting a hydroplane as his lover to quicken or facilitate his journey.

The final, and most hermetic, poem in the group "Rapsodia marinera" written in free verse without punctuation or rhyme includes typographical elements such as italicized and capitalized lines as well as the use of parenthesis. The rhapsody is divided into eight stanzas and appears to consist of a series of disconnected images; once again, however, the poem holds more meaning –and a more traditional one at that– than the fragmented appearance may initially communicate. Four of the stanzas, three in italics and one in capital letters, deal with the moon; the other stanzas take place on a whaling ship. The fusion of Futurist imagery and typography with folkloric and mythic elements is not so different from the poetry of Federico García Lorca and Rafael Alberti.

The four stanzas relating to the moon could represent the four phases of the moon as each of these stanzas describes a distinct state of the moon. The waxing and waning of the moon calls to mind the same development a woman undergoes while pregnant (lunar month). First the moon is pregnant; she then progresses to the point of nearly giving birth; subsequently she gives birth; and finally she returns to a non-pregnant state. The first moon stanza tells us that the moon was pregnant and that the speaker has seen her give birth. She is about to give birth in the second moon stanza, and birth has occurred by the third. The fourth moon stanza, in capitalized celebration, announces

14. This curious numerical figure can be interpreted either as 112,000,000; 12,000,000; or, most probably, half a million. Either way the figure quantifies a large number of men.

that the moon is so full because she is bursting with love for her newborn offspring.

The first ship stanza introduces the whaler that has arrived on the horizon. Set between the heavens and the sea, this coming together of the two possibly recalls the birth of Aphrodite from the foam produced when the testicles of Uranus were thrown into the sea. The use of parentheses only in the ship stanzas suggests a pause in the rhapsody where the speed of the poem slows down. The first use of the parentheses is seen in this first ship stanza where the whaler is described as twenty dancing candles. These candles are suggestive of the blubber brought by the ships that will be used to make candles; it suggests a celebratory tone such as the candles on a birthday cake, as the poem indeed describes a birth; and it also evokes the image of the lights of the ship arriving at the port either at dusk or dawn. Furthermore, the reference to the number twenty (candles) then in the next stanza twenty-one (whale teeth) can be an allusion to a certain coming of age suggestive of achieving maturity.

The second whaler stanza describes the gift the fishermen have brought for the birth, a salted sperm whale whose twenty-one teeth can serve the newborn as a halo. During the 1920s sperm whale were very valuable precisely because these are the only types of whales that have teeth. At that time it was thought that the sperm whale had 20 to 27 teeth in their inferior mandible while now it is known that these whales can have up to 70 teeth in their lower jaw. These teeth were thick, cone-like in shape measuring approximately seven inches and considered a collector's item. The image of these thorn-like teeth serving as a crown for the new born child evokes that of Christ crowned by thorns while the use of the word halo also evokes a saintly figure. Furthermore, one of the insignias of the Virgin Mary, particularly evident in portraits of the Immaculate Conception, is that of her standing on a crescent moon. The combination of the virgin birth, the gift giving and the saintly halo suggests that this poem functions as a reinvention of the Christ birth in maritime terms. The candles at the beginning of the poem evoke the idea of Christ as the light of the world. In the third whaler stanza the image of the silvery, newborn, moonfish blends with the reflection of the silvery moon merging together in the green dampness of the water. The "*dos caras de plata*" then could be a reference to the face of the moon and its reflection in the water. Finally, in the last whaler stanza, the moon-child cries but provides miraculous light like its mother; hung from the bowsprit of the ship, it shines all the way back to the mizzen mast. The last stanza becomes more transcendent in a celebratory apotheosis of love. Once the moon has given birth her fullness is no longer due to her pregnancy but rather due to complete love and joy she feels after having giving birth to this light of the world.

Since the poets in Madrid never fully developed a Castilian version of Futurism but rather by 1919 fused some of its ideals into the *mélange* that was *Ultraísmo*, these five Castilian poems by Salvat may be seen as emblematic of what could have been a Castilian Futurist movement. Catalan Futurism was not Italian Futurism, but it shared many of its principles, and poets like Salvat tried to put those principles into practice. Furthermore, since the *ultraísta* movement was autochthonous to Madrid and spanned the period from approximately 1919 to 1923, it does not seem that *Ultraísmo* significantly influenced writers and artists in Barcelona; this is a subject, however, which remains to be studied. Nonetheless, the publication of these poems in Madrid in this point in time prove Salvat-Papasseit's contribution to *Ultraísmo* and, more generally, to the spirit of the avant-garde in Madrid, was considerably more important than literary histories have so far indicated.

The most convincing evidence of such a contribution is another poem Salvat published in Madrid two years after the publication of the *Grecia* poems. Salvat's "Poema inédito," written in Catalan despite its Castilian title, appeared on January 15, 1922, in one of the last issues of *Ultra*. The poem, which does not appear in any collection of Salvat's poetry, can be found at the end of this essay. The Catalan poet describes himself as a traveler seeking to escape capitalism and materialism—qualities more typical, perhaps, of Barcelona than of Madrid at the time—but more importantly components of literary modernism in any Western country. If Futurism is by definition an industrial formation, modernism must be a capitalist one. Wandering through the world in search of love and cool water to quench his thirst, the implication may be that Salvat has found them amongst his friends in Madrid. As the traveler departs, climbing upwards ("ultra") on the new pathway, he tosses a flower as a token of his love; perhaps that token, of friendship if not of love, is the poem itself, a present to the *ultraístas* he has met, but this time, in his language: Catalan.

At least as interesting as the poem itself is the introduction to it, an essay by Humberto Rivas entitled "Kaleidoscopio":¹⁵

J. Salvat-Papasseit, el noble poeta catalán, ha estado unas horas entre nosotros. De regreso de la sierra castellana, nos ha hablado cordialmente de nuestras inquietudes y de nuestros nuevos valores espirituales. Salvat-Papasseit se lleva a su tierra de Cataluña una visión optimista y alentadora de

15. Relatively little is known about Humberto Rivas (Madrid?–Mexico?), a poet and prose writer who frequented *Pombo* and directed, in Bonet's words, "la poca interesante" Barcelona magazine *Arte y Literatura*, after which he became a regular contributor to *Ultra* (Bonet 54). Rivas founded three magazines and published two books of prose.

los que aquí han enarbolado una bandera de resurrección artística. Madrid no le ha parecido a nuestro amigo tan incomprensivo y tan hosco como esperaba. Castilla, vista de cerca, es más fraternal y más interesante que vista de lejos. Las emocionadas y fervorosas palabras de Papasseit son la realidad que se abre paso a través de las claridades del pensamiento, a pesar de las fronteras que los profesionales de la política han pretendido interponer entre los pueblos ibéricos. El día que transformemos en un sentido más íntimo y fecundo la geografía española, la unidad dejará de ser un dogal para convertirse en un vínculo profundo, fuerte y duradero. Damos a continuación unos versos del admirable lírico, mientras él vuelve a soñar bajo la sonrisa de su cielo mediterráneo

(*Ultra*, no. 22)

Rivas's text confirms that Salvat was indeed in Madrid late in 1921 and that he met with some of the *ultraístas*, including Rivas.¹⁶ And although Salvat's letters of the period expressed his appreciation and admiration for Madrid, emotions that I believe appear in the "Poema inédito" as well, Rivas makes it clear that Salvat communicated those feelings to the Castilian writers he met during his visit. Rivas shows great respect for Salvat, especially for the lucidity of his ideas and his fervent passion, and describes the Catalan poet as a healing force, capable of building bridges between Barcelona and Madrid, of breaking through the artificial boundaries that politicians impose amongst various regions in Spain. Most importantly, Salvat-Papasseit was clearly someone that Rivas –and perhaps others in the *Ultra* group in Madrid– admired as a model in the cultural and artistic struggle that was the avant-garde.¹⁷

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16. Based on information found in his letters, Salvat-Papasseit was in Madrid on December 9, 1921, before his admission to the sanitarium in Cercedilla (Madrid). Through his letters, we can date Salvat-Papasseit's return to Barcelona to sometime before March 2, 1922.

17. Many thanks to Professors Andrew A. Anderson and David Haberly who were kind enough to read and comment on draft versions of this essay.

APPENDIX I

Grecia number 45

July 1, 1920

A Tomàs Garcés

mi puerto es mi teatro de la guerra
todos mis gallardetes espasmos de victoria
y los erectos gánguiles mis consignas audaces

ahora os contaré un cuento
de cuando los vapores pintaban de banderas sus costados:
el barco petrolero toda la santa noche ha llameado al aire
de babor a estribor

las estrellas de fuego han cantado
sus danzas
y la bandera gualda y encarnada
ha ondeado borracha de alegría

cuando el sol ha nacido en la mullida plana se ha
rizado el cabello con el betún del agua artificial

sobre el cobalto-mar yo tengo por grumete las
5 puntas blancas
solitarias

J. SALVAT-PAPASSEIT

APPENDIX 2

Grecia, number 47

August 1, 1920

Canción de gesta

A Joan Malagarriga

Dos metros de locura tricolor
 y un blocao en la fiebre de la arena
 un salacot que tiembla tras la curva palmera
 y una hembra raida que gruñe una canción.
 Cuando el zoco despierta chilla un "jazz-band" de incendio
 las gumías son tan altas que ya penden del cielo.
 El kaki de las tropas tiene el color del polvo
 que pisan las babuchas de los moros.

Madrigal

Gema de leche sobre la ubre policroma
 de tu seno dormido
 y cereza en almíbar tu pezón.
 Tu cabellera al sol
 alambre-rojo
 Sobre el puente de hierro que pasaste desnuda
 los roblados saltaron
 como miembros quemantes.
 AHORA TODAS LAS VÍRGENES QUIEREN
 PASAR EL PUENTE

J. SALVAT-PAPASSEIT

APPENDIX 3

Grecia, number 48
September 1, 1920

Autobiografía

A Isaac del Vando-Villar

todo el poema hirsuto de mi vida
en la bobina loca rotativa

1[2 000000 de hombres
conocerán mi nombre

(el cronógrafo cuenta mis latidos:
los roldes del dinógrafo intrigan para mí)

el fotógrafo ha dicho mi retrato que es la rosa
iriscente de los vientos

y el propulsor insiste:
llevarás tus conquistas
como a un tigre real sobre tu espalda

—YO PIDO PARA AMANTE LA HÉLICE—TURGENTE—HIDRO—
AVIÓN

J. SALVAT-PAPASSEIT
(23-7-1920)

APPENDIX 4

Grecia, Number 49
September 15, 1920

Rapsodia marinera

al Apeles Llargués

*La luna estaba encinta
yo la he visto parir
oíd:*

El barco ballenero (20 velas en danza)
ha llegado al confín—entre el cielo y el mar

La luna va a parir

Buen presente ha traído (cachalote salado
contando 21 dientes—para halo a presumir
después del buen parir)

Las olas ahora mecen (pez—luna va a nacer)
en la húmeda verdor—las 2 caras de plata

*Ya no está en el parir
oíd:*

Recién nacido llora (colgado en el bauprés)
buen fanal adquirido—que alumbra hasta artimon

JAMÁS LA LUNA LLENA ANDUVO
POR EL MUNDO TAN RELLENA
DE AMOR

J. SALVAT-PAPASSEIT

APPENDIX 5

Ultra, number 22

January 15, 1922

Poema inédito

“Sense el ressò del dring i el brill de l’or malvat
voldria anar pel món
com el món no en té cura:
que trobés pel camí la noia jova i bruna
i la pogués besar

—l’altre després de l’una—
abans una tonada y després un bell cant
que en arribar al lloc on m’abrusés la set
trobés el canti fresc
i amb el canti l’abraç de la més joguina
i que en pujar trescant per la nova dressera
encara em fés adéu:

I jo li llensaria un llessamí per festa
per si no ens véiem més
—que encara que besés a un altre caminant,
pogués jo anar pel mon
sense el ressò del dring i el brill malvat de l’or.”

J. SALVAT-PAPASSEIT

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