

MAOS DADAS: AN EXPRESSION OF A POETICS

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The promulgation of a poetics is generally accomplished by the publishing of a single poem that serves as a statement of purpose or manifesto. To be fully aware of the multifaceted directions of South American poetry in this century as expressed by specific "ars poetica", one need only consider Rubén Darío's "Blasón", Vicente Huidorbro's "Arte poética" and González Martínez's "Tuércele el cuello al cisne". All of these works express a supposed revolutionary orientation. However, all of these manifestos are diametrically opposed to the simple but profoundly human intent of Carlos Drummond de Andrade's poetics. The aforementioned poets, while innovators, in their need for novelty somehow achieved a petrification and perversion of the basic idea of poetry, converting it into a vacuous state of dehumanization. The title of Drummond's "ars poetica", "Mãos dadas", eloquently emphasizes the human element. His title seems to summarize beautifully and simply the idea of communication between men. According to Lawrence K. Frank in his essay "Tactile Communication", the sense of touch is the most primal and basic of all the human senses. Drummond specifically utilizes the tactile sense to convey his message of communication and social awareness. The ágape of brotherly love which he expresses is deceptively simple.

The poem is constructed on an "intention-rejection" polarity. The poet's statements of non-intention almost acquire the force of an outright condemnation. "Não serei o poeta de um mundo caduco... o mundo futuro... uma mulher... a paisa-

(1) I am utilizing the term "agape" in the manner of César Vallejo, the Peruvian poet, whose poem by that same title has, while retaining traces of the original religious meaning, transcend this meaning to connote a more universal love of mankind.

gem vista da janela.” One need not search to discover the object of this tacit indictment since there has always existed a myriad of artists who solely employ poetry for its linguistic, technical, or sensual value and completely avoid the concept of the human and idea of the present. For this reason Drummond’s brief statement “Estou preso à vida” is pregnant with implications. The image of being imprisoned in life is a frequent one in his poetry. “Preso à minha classe e a algumas roupas”.² The imprisonment image is highly existential in its conception. Drummond portrays modern man who is condemned to life and must not only live out his sentence, but also must as Martin Buber states reach out for the “other”. Drummond must as Martin Buber states reach out for the “other”. Drummond seems to share Buber’s belief that the meaning of life is discovered between person and person in a situation of human contact.

The poet states that he has no intention of anesthetizing his public “Não distribuirei entorpecentes” nor will he lend credence to any attitude of “ennui”. To Drummond the present offers man a challenge and this present can only be confronted by an awareness of “others”. He is well aware of the tragic vision of 20th century man “Estão taciturnos” but at the same time he is able to look outside of himself “Olho meus companheiros” finding a sense of hope in the brotherhood of all men, “Mas nutrem grandes esperanças”. He links his poetic mission to a personal self-awareness which in turn nourishes a sense of social consciousness. Man is the measure of all things in the poetry of Drummond and only through a linking of the “I” of the poet with the “thou” of humanity can there be found any sense of transcendence. The poet appears inspired by the seriousness of his mission, in his burning desire to give of himself to others, and by his desire to interpret life and poetry in terms on contemporary man and in terms of the ideals, values, and problems of this very real present in which we are all imprisoned.

In resumé, in his “ars poetica” he is an activist; he is not the passive poet of the ivory tower, nor the sensualistic poet of brilliant metaphors. Within Carlos Drummond de Andrade’s own personal eschatology, as expressed in this poem, one finds no optimistic envisagement of a salvation in the other world. This idea is not important to Drummond since he envisages a contemporary world of hope, the present world. His hope is

(2) Drummond de Andrade, Carlos, “A flor e a náusea”.

born from the men who surround him, his "companheiros", to whom he extends his hand. To Drummond, the poet's role is to enter into the present and utilize it for inspiration and to be alert to the poetic content of contemporary man and his moment.