

Cultural Significance of the Poetry of Pablo Neruda in the Age of Corporate Globalization

Mazhar Hayat¹

Muhammad Safeer Awan²

Abstract

This research article investigates cultural significance of poetry of Pablo Neruda in the age of corporate globalization with its destructive effect on indigenous cultural and economic patterns of behavior and thought. Globalization literally refers to the process of integration of different nations and societies into a global village through fastest means of communication across the globe but in reality it strives for the creation of an international culture of consumers by manipulating the same system of exchange all over the world based on the parameters of capitalistic economy. Pablo Neruda, a Latin American poet, is considered cultural bard of the continent. Present study focuses on *Canto General*, the greatest poetic work of Pablo Neruda. The poem is widely acknowledged as one of the greatest poetic works of the twentieth century. Epic in structure, the poem is a cultural chant in celebration of precolonial Latin American continent, its environment, its Juan, and its culture of social collectivity. It presents native perspective on culture, geography, and history of the continent in the wake of text-book histories which suppress the voice of natives and endorse universal capitalism. The poet uses counterhegemonic literary devices such as disarticulation, rearticulation, and counter-culture in *Canto General* to decolonize linguistic, historical, and cultural heritage of the land. Neruda affirms that social justice cannot be maintained without return to the origins (indigenous heritage). This call for return to the roots and bio-regional ways of life in his poetry corresponds with the conceptualization of a planetary culture based on solidarity with diverse cultural heritages envisaged by the philosophers since antiquity. It invokes literary accounts of “planetary” by the writers such as Gayatri Spivak and Paul Gilroy.

Keywords: *corporate globalization, bio-regionalism, counter-culture, planetarity, native cultural heritages*

Introduction

Pablo Neruda belongs to the socially-committed literary tradition of Latin America that abandoned colonial legacy of conservative content and wrote for cultural autonomy of the continent. He refuses to entertain those currents in poetry which do not include everyday life works of the illiterate and the marginalised and the flora and fauna of the continent. In words of the poet, “There are in our Countries Rivers which have no name, trees nobody knows, and birds which nobody has discovered. Our duty, then, as

we understand it, is to express what is unheard of. Everything has been painted in Europe” (as cited in Nolan, 1994, p. 77). Neruda’s *Canto General*, which is a cultural reaction to the bourgeois manipulated reproduction of mass culture, presents cultural account of the Amer-Indians which has been distorted and suppressed in the canonical versions of history and culture under the Spanish colonizers and their indigenous bourgeois descendants and global agents of corporate imperialism in post-independence era.

Neruda’s *Canto General* gains more prominence in the wake of neo-imperialism and its economic agenda. In its capitalistic drive for boundless extension of human power and unlimited utilization of environment and nature, corporate imperialism is posing a serious threat to regional cultures as well as to ecological balance. Competition for monopoly over lands and resources is also dangerous to the world peace. In the words of Ellen Meiksins Wood:

It seems to me axiomatic that the expansionary, competitive and exploitative logic of capitalistic accumulation in the context of nation-state system, must, in the longer or shorter term, be destabilizing, and that capitalism . . . is and will for the foreseeable future remain the greatest threat to the world peace. (As cited in Eagleton, 2011, p. 236)

In this predatory culture of materialistic aggrandizement, Neruda’s call for bio-regionalism like Whitman and Walcott urges a shift from globalization to cultural resistance, a shift from individualism to the culture of collectivity and harmony between man and environment. As it implies an international economic, cultural, and political system based on respect for regional cultures, Neruda can rightly be positioned in relation to the arguments on planetarity in the literary accounts of Spivak and Gilroy. While Spivak emphasizes politics of friendship and solidarity with subaltern cultures rather than the politics of dominance appropriated by a dominant global uniformity; Gilroy in his literary accounts on “planetary humanism” pleads for post-anthropological and non-racial cosmopolitan culture rather than planetarization of profit. This utopian project of Spivak and Gilroy, which aspires for a substitution of global agents by the planetary subjects, reconstructs a vision of a world in which “Race will no longer be a meaningful device for categorization of human beings, where work will no longer be servitude and law will be dissociated from domination” (Gilroy, 1987, p. 218).

Literature Review

Canto General – a cultural song of native Latin America, takes history of Spanish colonization of its land and the continuation of imperial

predatory culture in post-independence era as a legacy of plunder, massacre bloodshed and perfidy. The poem exposes the mercenary nature and role of the colonial enterprise under the façade of theory of “White Man’s Burden” and affirms formation of a fairer socio-political and economic order through return to roots. This cultural chant of the epic has been received so by the critics of Neruda.

Gordon Brotherston (1975) argues that Neruda with his creed of “liberation, betrayal and solidarity” (p. 124) regarding the history of his land, resolved the dilemma of independence which had kept his predecessors divided. The poet disagrees with standard histories which espouse 19th century bourgeois settler’s struggle against the imperialists as independence movement. For Neruda, liberation movement dates back to Cuauhtemoc’s resistance against Cortes and continues under Recabarren – the founder of the Chilean Communist party.

Instead of military prowess and sundry lists of creole generals, and instead of the patriarchal, part-Hispanic part-Indian, tradition espoused as an alternative by Dario and Chocano, we are given mass virtue: the persistent and sometimes unconscious struggle for an America of the people. (p. 119)

The poet establishes Spanish discoverers as invaders and the Amer-Indians as their victims and maintains a bond between the colonizers and the colonized in “human want.” He registers fame and glory as the motivation of few of the conquerors. However, Brotherston who shares Neruda’s perspective on colonial history takes exception to the latter’s silence over oppression and exploitation in pre-imperial Inca civilization and his lack of gratitude towards Spanish linguistic heritage in which the poet interprets his native America.

Roberto Gonzalez Echevarria (1989), another prominent critic of Neruda, also shares the poet’s repudiation of standard histories in *Canto General*. He takes into account the atmosphere of mistrust and betrayal arising out of Chilean President Gonzalez’s violation of promises made with the Chilean Communist party in the elections. “Hence history can be ‘Gonalized’ and all of the betrayals visited on Latin America become incarnate in this mere ‘lizard’” (p. 11). It was in this atmosphere of treachery and deceit that the poem was published in 1950. The critic further argues that the poem highlights similar betrayals throughout the history of the continent. It exposes the betrayal of natives of Latin America at the hands of the European invaders who promised culture, glory, and progress to the former but indulged in exploitation. Similar betrayals occurred during freedom movements from Spanish rule and at the time of political

independence of the continent from the imperial hegemony. The indigenous rulers practiced and perpetuated ideological and repressive state apparatuses of the colonial regime and deprived people of the much-coveted freedom, rule of law, socio-economic equality and democratic values. Echevarria further points out that the existing mood of betrayal and distrust is not without hope about future. The poet reassures restoration of promises through struggle and victory of the natives against the evil doers and enemies of mankind. Echevarria's critique of the historical and the immediate socio-political context of the epic helps contextualize theme of betrayal and restoration of promises in the long standing ideological and political struggle between the oppressors and the redeemers.

Canto General allocates sufficient space for the indictment of economic imperialism of the North in the section "Sand Betrayed" of the epic. This diatribe of corporate imperialism has been received affirmatively by critics like Jeffrey Gray. Gray (2010) argues that *Canto General* which encompasses Latin American history from anti-colonial perspective also offers a critique of neo-imperialism of the North. The poems such as "United Fruit Company", "Standard Oil Co." and "Anaconda Copper Mining Co." are famous for their anti-neo-imperialist appeal. Similarly, the section "Sand Betrayed" castigates the anti-national role of various Latin American dictators who worked for multinational corporations in return for money. Certain poems of this section also name the oppressive rulers such as Jorge Ubico of Guatemala, Martinez of El Salvador and Trujillo of Dominican Republic etc. for acting as mercenaries of the North. In contrast to the textbook history, Neruda censures these local and foreign exploiters as "vultures," "flies," "rodents," etc., to highlight their greed for the resources, treasures and wealth of Latin America. "With the collusion of the dictators – the homegrown "blood-thirsty flies" – the UFC is able to ravage the coffee and fruits of entire nations, spiriting away their "submerged land's treasures" (p. 205). In United Fruit Co., the poet expresses his anger, sense of loss and lamentation over the way Latin American produce was exported to the North. He is equally dismayed over indifference of the heartless capitalist system towards exhaustion of the native work force and the collapse of Latin American culture. Jeffrey Gray argues that the poet's detailed account of various indigenous groups such as Aztecs, Mayas, Guaranies and Mapuches, etc., is an attempt to reach to the roots of Latin American Cultures which have been subdued under the claim of European ancestry.

Furthermore, the critic also evaluates Neruda's vision of the poets, writers and artists in the Industrial world. The critic says that Neruda rejects for himself the classification of "the political poet." He asserts that political poets are those poets who keep silent over the sufferings of the oppressed.

Those who do not address the feelings of the people, do not contact with the pressing realities of life, are, in reality the political poets. “In Neruda’s view, the role of the romantic poets – Keats, Goethe, or Hugo – had been lost with the emergence of the industrial bourgeoisie” (Gray, 2010, p. 210). Hence, the poet rejects Eurocentric view of “pure art” and affirms that in oppressive cultures aesthetics and politics cannot be separated.

Neruda’s glorification of pre-imperial Latin American harmony between natural and human world in *Canto General* reflects the poet’s bio-regional vision of cultural and political identity. This vision of the poet has been attested by George B. Handley (2007) in *New World Poetics*. The work which is a comparative study of the bardic poetry of Whitman, Neruda and Walcott glorifies the ancestral soul of the new world which has retained its natural beauty and cultural and humanistic values despite the disastrous influence of colonial experience. The author argues that the admiration and concern of the three poets for the preservation of the physical and natural world is related to their struggle for social justice because they believe in the power of poetry to hold back the destruction of the world by emphasizing upon ecological balance. In the words of B. Handley, “Bioregionalism must be the foundation of just human communities, since the roots of human fate are literally in the soil” (2007, p. 6).

This review of literature establishes that Neruda’s vision of cultural and political history of his continent and his ambition to recover past cultural heritage which has been buried under conquest and colonialism, has been affirmed by the literary critics. As under neo-liberalism, the planetarization of profit is threatening indigenous cultural heritages and ecological balance, the cultural poetics of Neruda becomes more relevant today to mount a critique of neo-imperialist world order in the guise of corporate globalisation.

Text Analysis

The main focus of text analysis and discussion is the study of the poet’s cultural accounts from the native perspective in the wake of its distortion in bourgeois text-books and to interpret its contemporary relevance in terms of its anti-globalisation appeal. As a cultural bard of Latin America, Pablo Neruda uses the counter-hegemonic literary strategy of counter-culture to decolonize pre-imperial indigenous cultural heritage.

Glorification of Pre-Columbian Culture

Neruda glorifies pre-Columbian America as a utopia in which men were benevolent. They lived in harmony with environment and worked in groups. This pre-Columbian era acts as a foil to the subsequent history of European conquest and exploitation of the land. “His [Neruda] poetry does not only aim at representing social relations as they are [through the

mediation of language] but also those social relations that are distorted and alienated under capitalism” (Dawes, 2003, p. 11). In “A Lamp on Earth” – the first section of *Canto General* – the poet sets the entire plot of the narrative on the principle of the opposition:

Before the wig and the dress code
There were rivers, anterior rivers:
There were cordilleras, jagged waves where
The candor and the snow seemed immutable:

(trans. Schmitt, 1993, p. 13)

The word “before” implies a division of the continent between pre-Columbian era of harmony and collectivity and the Spanish colonizers’ dystopia of injustice and oppression. The Native American who is the descendant of this earth and its legitimate owner is described as made up of the composing elements of nature in the poem “Man”:

The mineral grace was
Like a cup of clay,
Man made of stone and atmosphere,
Clean as earthen jugs, sonorous.

(trans. Schmitt, 1993, p. 24)

Harmony between man and his natural surroundings is consistently worked out through the man-earth equation. The poet also compares man and his parts with the continent and its constituent parts. Similarly, the collectivity of Juans is emphasized through the equation between manner of Juans and manner of sea, metals, and light. Commenting on the significance of these comparisons, Frank Riess says, “He [man] is able by the connections outlined to become infinitely large or infinitely small, to identify himself systematically with anything and everything, to be a part and a whole, to be all men, or a man among many” (1972, p. 27).

This harmony between man and nature serves to establish a bond between natural and human worlds. It also brings forth the sense of integration between man and nature which has been denied to him under bourgeois culture of materialistic self-centeredness. “In Neruda’s poetry neither humans nor objects nor phenomena of nature can be understood as separate individual units but only in their relation and inter-connection” (Salmon & Lesage, 1977, p. 226).

This glorification of pre-Columbian culture of collectivity and harmony invokes literary account of Frantz Fanon on “cultural resistance” against colonial discourse, and gains more prominence in this era of individualism and materialistic aggrandizement under economic imperialism.

Spanish Conquest as an Intrusion upon Primeval Harmony of the Continent

Neruda takes Spanish conquest as an intrusion upon primeval harmony of the continent. The “wig” and the “dress code” (c. f. 3.1) stands for the Hispanic conquerors who are assigned artificial appearance through false hair and man-made dressing which is in conflict with pre-lapsarian (primeval) glory and innocence of the land. This clash between Spanish invaders and pre-imperial society is worked out in the third, fourth and fifth sections of *Canto General*. The poet disarticulates the colonial discourse in which the imperialists are projected as explorers and the harbingers of civilization. Instead, he presents them as rapists who spoiled the virginal state of nature. The opening lines of the third section “Conquistadors” (Conquerors) establish Spanish invasion of Latin America as a narrative of violence, bloodshed, destruction and plunder:

The butchers raised the islands.
Guanahani was the first
In this story of martyrdom.
The children of clay ...
They were bound and tortured

(trans. Schmitt, 1993, p. 43)

Fourth section “The Liberators” deals with the struggle and sacrifices of the indigenous heroes who resisted Spanish invasion of Latin America. The Amer-Indian leaders also resisted the indigenous dictators who established their kingdoms after overthrowing central governments of the pioneers of Spanish rule. Indigenous heroes of post-Columbian era are equated with pre-Hispanic men of Nature. The liberators are portrayed as peaceful, generous and reliable. The poet says:

Today the sun and the moon, the great wind
Mature your stock, your simple
Composition: your truth was
An earthen truth, a gritty mixture

(trans. Schmitt, 1993, p. 98)

The native people are compared with the “tree” which symbolizes continuity and inter-relatedness of the units of time. “Each leaf is one man, and the foliage as a whole makes up the collective voice or story which is carried back into the ground to flower again and be communicated to the poet in the present” (Riess, 1972, p. 137). In this section, the poet also pays tribute to the struggle, sacrifice, and sufferings of the indigenous warriors who fought against Spanish invasion.

In section V “The Sand Betrayed,” the diatribe is mainly directed against oligarchic regimes of South America. The poet discards text-book

histories in which Latin American dictators have been eulogized as symbols of national integration, saviors of Christian culture and defenders of ideological frontiers of their nations. Instead the poet denounces them as America's witches, tyrants, wolves, hyenas, and vultures – denoting their greedy and rapacious nature. In his *Memoirs*, Neruda says “In the fauna of our America, the great dictators have been giant saurian, survivors of a colossal feudalism in pre-historical lands” (2008, p. 172).

The last of this series of Latin American dictators is Chilean Gonzalez Videla. The poet depicts him as the personification of villainy and betrayal. In the last poem “Gonzalez Videla, Chile's Traitor (Epilogue) 1949” of the section V, the poet alludes to his political somersaults because he came to power through electoral support of leftist forces and afterwards abandoned his political friends.

He twitches his rodent tail
Telling landowners and foreigners, the owners
Of Chile's sub-soil: “Drink all this
Nation's blood. I'm the overseer
Of anguish”

(trans. Schmitt, 1993, p. 155)

This critique of colonial history and its predatory culture retains its relevance in this unipolar world of universal capitalism because the global agents are the cultural and economic descendants of Western colonialists.

Indictment of Ethnocentric Role of Catholic Church

History of imperialism reveals that dogma has always supported the colonizers. Catholic Church which came to Latin America with Iberian conquest supported the imperialistic enterprise of Catholic monarchy of Spain due to the latter's claim of converting pagan societies into Christianity.

While the Spanish settlers and their descendant exploited the bodies of the Indians, the clergy sought to take hold of their minds, promising eternal salvation in return for acceptance of catholic doctrine and recognition of the Spanish crown as god's servant on earth. (McFarlane, 2004, p. 16)

This ethnocentric policy of the church strengthened ethnic-divide between the Europeans and the natives because European invaders and settlers considered non-Christian natives as social and cultural inferiors.

Neruda exposes ethnocentric role of the clergy on all important moments in the history of colonial and post-colonial Latin America. In section IV of *Canto General* “Commoners from Socorro,” the poet narrates that the people of Socorro and Bogota revolted against vicerealty; state

controlled food centers and privileges of the upper class. They marched on Bogota and it's high-born. Taking undue advantage of the people's respect for religion, the arch-bishop intervened on behalf of the rulers. He convinced the people to surrender and promised to fulfill their demands. But after surrender of the people, the ruling elites massacred the liberators, violated the pledge and celebrated arch-bishop's betrayal of the people. The poet says:

The commoners surrendered
Their arms. In Bogota
They feted the archbishop,
Celebrated his betrayal,
His perjury, in the perfidious mass

(trans. Schmitt, 1993, p. 91)

Neruda's indictment of ethnocentric political role of church invokes Gilroy's literary accounts on racial politics in which he argues for non-ethnic political culture rather than an anthropological one. "Our challenge should now be to bring even more powerful visions of planetary humanity from the future into the present and to reconnect them with democratic and cosmopolitan traditions that have been all but expunged from today's black political imaginary" (2000, p. 356).

Furthermore, this diatribe of church maintains its relevance because religion is the most powerful ideological apparatus to influence the minds of the people. Religious class does enjoy tremendous influence on people in subaltern cultures and societies which are the main hunting grounds for global agents of corporate imperialism.

Indictment of North American Corporate Imperialism

The most poignant diatribe of the *Canto General* is reserved for North American corporate imperialism in Latin American continent through the nexus of the multinational corporations and political dynasties. Business corporations, i.e., 'Standard Oil Co.', 'Anaconda Copper Mining Co.' and 'United Fruit Company', which are sponsored by USA, represent North America's political and economic interests in Latin America. These multinational corporations work in connivance with Latin American oligarchies. These global agents purchase loyalties of bourgeois intellectuals, lawyers, bureaucrats, judges, and merchants. In this way, they not only deprive the natives of their resources but also utilize and exploit them as units of production. Referring to the dehumanized conditions of the workers under these business corporations, the poet in the poem "United Fruit Co." section V says:

A body roles down, a nameless
Thing, a fallen number,

A bunch of lifeless fruit
Dumped in the rubbish heap

(trans. Schmitt, 1993, p. 179)

Political and economic manipulation and influence of these multinational companies in Latin America can be gauged by the fact that United Fruit Company was so powerful till 1970 that it was exempted from all types of taxes in Latin American states wherever it was operational. The company had complete monopoly over the production, marketing, and exportation of the fruits and crops, particularly sugar cane, banana and cocoa. "The US controlled 80 percent of Peru's oil production through the International Petroleum Corporation, and close to 100 percent of Peru's mineral output" (Feinstein, 2004, p. 175). The company had established its own railway service, telecommunication system, and shipping equipment. It had well-fortified headquarters, enclaves and military bases in Latin America. Actively assisted by the CIA, the company destabilized and even toppled Latin American governments which did not work for business interests of the company. In the words of Jeffrey Gray, "the UFC even used local armies to depose governments it considered hostile to its interests (as happened, with the aid of the CIA, in Guatemala in 1954)" (2010, p. 203).

This indictment of the exploitative role of North American multinationals becomes more relevant in the face of more formidable political and economic influence of Western and American multinational corporations in recent times.

Solidarity with the Forces of Cultural and Intellectual Resistance

As a cultural bard of the land, Neruda expresses solidarity with the common people, forces of resistance and socially-committed writers who are the repositories of popular culture and humanistic values.

In section VIII "The Land is Called Juan," the poet expresses solidarity with the common populace of the continent. He calls forth the Pueblo (common people) – the heroes of the epic. Juan represents every man, every worker of the land who never appears on the pages of the bourgeois text. In this section of *Canto General*, the poet arranges a series of biographies of Juans representing various professions. They are given individual names as well as are named after their professions which are deeply entrenched in the soil, the geography, and the environment. These are the shoveler, the farmer, the shoemaker, the seaman, the people's poet, the fisherman, the mine worker, and the banana worker. They are Bolivians, Chileans, Columbians, and Costa Ricans. They transcend national boundaries and are part of the brotherhood based on common blood, culture and loyalty towards the land. These Juans narrate the stories of their

miseries and sufferings under tyrants because they believe that sufferings bring order and victory. The poet says:

And may your martyrdom help us
To build a severe nation
That will know how to flower and punish

(trans. Schmitt, 1993, p. 253)

Neruda's concern for the oppressed and his faith in return to roots and cultural heritage is so pervasive and universal that he does not remain focused only on the Juan of his own continent. He also turns towards the Juan of North America and the comrades of the progressive societies. Quite contrary to the imperialistic role of United States in current scenario, the poet seeks recuperation of Whitman's America which believed in prosperity through hard work. In the Canto "Let the Woodcutter Awaken," the poet calls upon US citizens to call forth the spirit of their forefathers who pioneered the struggle for prosperity, social justice, and love for the land. He glorifies the heroic struggle of Lincoln against slavery in his land and depicts it as a foil to the hegemonic designs of the modern capitalistic America. The poet uses strings of images of the earth, woods, stones, and roots to recover North's past heritage in contrast to the modern technological advancement which is used to promote culture of exploitation and merchandise.

The poet exalts socially-committed poets and cultural bards of his continent and the world. In section XII "The Rivers of Song," the poet pays rich tributes to the culturally/politically committed writers and their emancipatory literature. He goes on to affirm that the progressive writers have always stood for the cause of the oppressed in the perpetual conflict between the enemies of the people and the redeemers of the mankind. They have even received martyrdom for the sake of truth. The poet considers progressive writers as social bards whose social and historical accounts are more authentic than the official versions of history.

Neruda uses the analogies of river, honeycomb, and the tree for the progressive art. Progressive poetry is like the river that murmurs in the silence of the night. Night over here stands for oppression. It is like honeycomb which preserves the best creation against the transitoriness of objects, things, and individuals. It is like a tree that continues to grow. Glorifying bardic poet Silvestere Revueltas of Mexico, the poet says:

Brother, you're the longest river on earth
Behind the Orb your solemn river voice resounds,

(trans. Schmitt, 1993, p. 313)

The longest river stands for the oldest tradition of Bardic poetry. Furthermore, Neruda is critical of bourgeois poets and the journalists who endorsed social injustice, perfidy and oppression either by ignoring social realities in their art or by distorting truth under official patronage. Neruda, like Whitman, rejects Euro-centric literary tradition which promotes the theory of “art for art sake” to keep the reader ignorant of the socio-historical conditions around him. By separating aesthetics from politics, bourgeois writers create false consciousness about the inevitability of the existing system. Commenting on the negative influence of colonial literary perspective on the creative mind of the new world, Neruda says, “colonialism of the most brilliant nations created centuries of silence; colonialism seems to stultify creativity” (as cited in Nolan, 1994, p. 33).

In the poem “Celestial Poets” section V, the poet questions the validity of the intellectual pursuits of the existentialists, surrealists and the advocates of the pure art amidst the reigns of anguish, agony and obscurity. The poet says:

You did nothing but flee:
You sold heaped detritus
Pursued celestial hair
Cowardly plants, broken finger nail
“Pure beauty”, “sortilege”,

(trans. Schmitt, 1993, p. 167)

The poet’s act of solidarity with the progressive forces and his indictment of bourgeois intellectuals gain more prominence in the aftermath of extinction of left-wing politics in this unipolar world of universal capitalism. It affirms that the writers must play their intellectual role in representing the voice of subalterns.

Reassurance of Cultural Resurgence

Canto General’s narration of colonial perfidy, manipulation and cultural suppression is not without hope and reassurance. Neruda believes that resurgence of native culture of harmony, inter-connectedness and simplicity will bring glory, autonomy and self-reliance to his land. The poet believes in inevitability of the cultural and political resurgence through people’s struggle, comradeship and vast brotherhood.

In the poem “The Day Will Come” section IV, the poet reassures the final victory of the people against the existing cultural and political oppression. He calls upon the Juans of his country, his continent and the world to return to their roots, to their native cultural heritage of resistance and sacrifice against socio-political injustice. The poet eulogises every hour of struggle of the redeemers against the enemies of the people. “The Day

Will Come” represents the poet’s reassurance of the day bestowed upon the cultural inferiors and the marginalised of his land and the world:

Descent to the mineral roots,
And in the desolate mettle’s veins
Reach mankind’s struggle on earth,
Beyond the martyrdom that mauls
The hands destined for the light.
Don’t renounce the day bestowed on you
By those who died struggling

(trans. Schmitt, 1993, p. 148)

This reassurance about the resurgence of subaltern cultures retains popular appeal in the wake of neo-liberalists’ manipulation for the hegemony of capitalistic economic parameters. It invokes literary accounts of Spivak on ‘subalternity’ in which she challenges the notion that “the world can be divided into knowable, self-contained areas” (2003, p. 3). Spivak affirms the need for the depoliticization of the politics of exclusion in favour of the politics of friendship towards marginalized cultures and societies.

Conclusion

The review of literature on Canto General and the discussion and analysis of the text establish that Pablo Neruda being a cultural bard of Latin America rejects colonial discourse that constructs pre-Hispanic America as a pre-civilized place and that history, culture and progress began with European arrival. Instead, the poet idealizes pre-Columbian culture of collectivity and harmony where men worked in groups to produce goods for their human and social needs, not for their capital value. Moreover, the poet repudiates western claims that colonialism was a civilizing mission. He depicts Spanish conquest as a narrative of violence, plunder and exploitation which distorted and suppressed the humanistic values of native culture in order to advance its economic agenda. The poet is equally critical of the ethnocentric role of the cultural apparatuses i.e. church and intellectuals under bourgeois hegemony. He castigates continuation of this predatory culture in post-independence era under the monopoly of the multinationals. However, the poet affirms that socio-economic justice can be maintained through return to the origins.

Bardic poetry of Neruda gains more significance in the wake of neo-liberalistic drive for trade liberalization in this unipolar world of universal capitalism. Under the guise of globalisation, corporate imperialism of the North is posing a serious challenge to the ecological balance, workers’ rights, sovereignty of nation-states and the world peace. So, Neruda’s call for bio-regionalism and cultural resurgence retains more appeal in the face of planetarization of profit as it implies substitution of cultural and

economic dominance of a particular ethnic group by cultural pluralism, a shift from globalization to planetarity based on cultural and economic diversity.

To conclude the discussion, it is affirmed that cultural poetry of Neruda retains its anti-globalisation appeal in the wake of neo-liberalists agenda of economic and cultural homogenization of the whole world without recognizing regional cultural and economic diversities.

References

- Bloom, H. (1989). *Modern critical views: Pablo Neruda*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers.
- Brotherston, G. (1975). Canto General and the great song of America. In Harold Bloom (Ed.), *Modern critical views: Pablo Neruda* (pp. 117-130, 1989). New York: Chelsea House Publishers.
- Dawes, G. (2003). *Realism, Surrealism, Socialistic Realism and Neruda's "Guided Spontaneity"*. Retrieved on 15-10-2010 from <http://clogic.eserver.org/2003/dawes.html>.
- Eagleton, T. (2011). *Why Marx was Right?* New Haven & London: Yale University Press.
- Echevarria, R. G. (1989). *Neruda's Canto General: The poetics of betrayal*. (Jack, S., Trans.). London: University of California Press Ltd. (Original work published in 1976/1981)
- Fanon, F. (2004). *The wretched of the earth*. New York: Grove Press.
- Feinstein, A. (2004). *Pablo Neruda: A passion for life*. New York and London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Gilroy, P. (1987). *There Ain't no Black in the Union Jack: The cultural politics of race and nation*. London: Century Hutchinson Ltd.
- Gilroy, P. (2000). *Between camps: Nations, cultures and the allure of race*. England: Penguin Groups.
- Gray, J. (2010). United Fruit Co.: Canto General and Neruda's critique of Capitalism. In Harold Bloom (Ed.), *Bloom's literary themes: Exploration and colonization* (pp. 201-212). New York: Infobased Publishing.
- Hardie, St. M. (Trans.). *Memoirs*. New Delhi: Rupa – Co. (Origin work published in 1978/2008)
- McFarlane, A. (2004). Pre-Columbian and colonial Latin America. In John King (Ed.), *The Cambridge companion to modern Latin American culture* (pp. 9-27). UK: Cambridge University Press.

- Neruda, P. (1978/2008). *Memoirs*. Hardie St. Martin (Trans.). New Delhi: Rupa – Co.
- Handley, G. (2007). *The new world poetics: Nature and the Adamic imagination of Whitman, Neruda and Walcott*. US: University of Georgia Press.
- Nolan, J. (1994). *Poet-Chief: The Native American poetics of Walt Whitman and Pablo Neruda*. US: University of New Mexico Press.
- Riess, F. (1972). The poet and the collectivity. In Harold Bloom (Ed.), *Modern critical views: Pablo Neruda* (pp. 23-60). New York: Chelsea House Publishers.
- Riess, F. (1972). *The word and the stone: Language and imagery in Neruda's Canto General*. London & New York: Oxford University Press.
- Salmon, R., & Lesage, J. (1977). Stones and birds: Consistency and change in the poetry of Pablo Neruda. *Hispania*, 60 (2), 224-241. Retrieved on 20-9-2010 from www.jstor.org/stable/340448
- Schmitt, J. (1993). *Pablo Neruda: Canto General*. (Trans.). London: University of California Press Ltd.
- Spivak, G. (2003). *Death of a discipline*. New York: Columbia University Press.