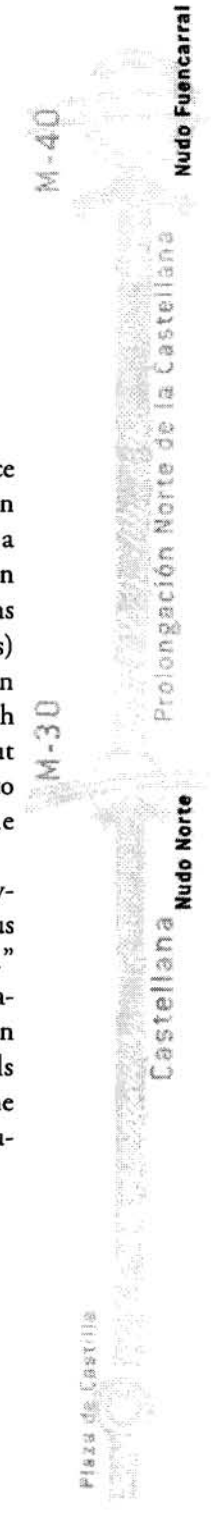
BAROJA'S MADRID IN THE POEMS OF "WINTER IN CASTILE" BY JOHN DOS PASSOS

Nancy Bredendick has taught in the English Department of the Universidad Autonoma de Madrid since 1991. Before that she was Professor of Spanish at Mankato State University in Minnesota. Interested in the connections between Spanish and North American writing, she is the author of articles on the poetry of Lorca in the songs of George Henry Crumb, and on the meaning of Toros célebres *in Hemingway's* Death in the Afternoon.

Images of turn-of-the-century Madrid are scarce in North American letters. One place they can be found is in *A Pushcart at the Curb* (1922), a little known book of poems by the North American novelist John Dos Passos (1896-1970). The poems about Madrid (thirteen cityscapes or street scenes) belong to a section of the book called "Winter in Castile." They were written during a four month period in 1916-1917 when Dos Passos, a year out of Harvard and just turning twenty-one, came to the city to study architecture and lived in the "Pensión Boston" near the Puerta del Sol.[1]

One of the literary versions of Madrid discovered that winter by Dos Passos, who was a voracious reader, was Baroja's trilogy "La lucha por la vida." Several years later, on the occasion of the publication of the English translation of *Mala hierba*, an older Dos Passos recalls carrying Baroja's novels around with him as he explored the streets of the city in 1916, finding Baroja's trilogy a true and authentic guide:

> [R]oaming through the clattering streets of Madrid with "Weeds" in one pocket and M.Garnier's dictionary in another, you seemed to have the keys to every alley and wineshop, to the iron-bound doors that opened on the breakneck stairs, with their invariable smell of scorched olive-oil, of all the tenement houses, to every courtyard and rag market. These books led you through all the back lots and



> bad lands and cabbage patches that filled the valleys round the city.... They were the true Baedeker to that seething mass of rebellious, unkempt, louse-bitten, soaring life that was Madrid... ("Building Lots" 73)

Alerted to a connection between the two writers by a number of statements like this one,[2] scholars have written articles pointing out half a dozen resemblances between Baroja and Dos Passos as novelists and social critics. Among the resemblances found: their penchant for the picaresque (Fichtelberg), their hatred of authority, their pessimism, their hard-to-classify radical views, their sensitivity to pain, their contradictory romantic/realist sensibilities, their sense of alienation from society (Borenstein; Vázquez-Bigi; Golson). With so many resemblances identified, it stands to reason that as writers on the subject of Madrid there are similarities as well.

And there are. As far as I know no one has examined them in detail, but one can find a number of similarities dealing with how Baroja's and Dos Passos's images of Madrid are made: both use natural-sounding language and concrete images; both use simple rhythms of repetition and refrain; both choose poverty, death, and loneliness as prominent themes; both focus on unfashionable quarters of the city and on its least respectable inhabitants; and finally, both choose an observer's stance—with the difference that Dos Passos's presence is generally less noticeable than Baroja's.

Drawing on some of the similarities just mentioned, I will examine three elements of Baroja's Madrid that are found in Dos Passos's Madrid—three ways Madrid is seen in early works by Baroja and in the poems of "Winter in Castile": 1) Madrid is a city of "tono menor," a city to be sung about in low key; 2) Madrid is a city of disturbing contrasts between the privileged and the unfortunate; 3) Madrid is a city for the solitary romantic, a city seen from the perspective of sexual longing and frustration.

The work of Baroja that lends itself most readily to comparison with the poems of "Winter in Castile" is his earliest one, *Vidas sombrías* (1900), a collection of sketches and prose poems, five or six of which are street scenes of Madrid. This work, along with the novels of "La lucha por la vida": *La busca, Mala hierba, Aurora roja* (1904) will provide illustrations of the points mentioned above. Baroja's only book of poetry, *Canciones del suburbio* (1944), is not included in this study. Although it contains a number of poems set in Madrid, they, being ballads, are more narrative than lyric, and, written when Baroja was nearing seventy, are a product of old age, not youth. As such, the poems about Madrid in *Canciones del suburbio* offer few useful parallels with the poems of "Winter in Castile."[3]

Before I begin discussing the three elements of Baroja's Madrid found in the poems of "Winter in Castile," let me describe Dos Passos's poems and the book of which they are a part. *A Pushcart at the Curb*, Dos Passos's only book of poetry, is one of his earliest works. Containing 77 poems in all, divided chronologically and thematically into six sections, it deals with the full range of Dos Passos's war experience and travel between 1916 and 1920.[4] "Winter in Castile," the opening section of *Pushcart*, contains 28 poems. Thirteen of them are set in Madrid, six more in the Sierra de Guadarrama, where Dos Passos hiked most weekends, and the rest in towns he visited on the plains south of the city and on the Mediterranean coast. Two are set in the port of Bordeaux, Dos Passos's point of departure and arrival in Europe. Only one poem, the last one, a literary allusion to Beatrice and Dante, is unfixed in place.

The thirteen poems set in Madrid are, for the most part, street scenes full of the sights and smells and sounds of every day life in the city at the beginning of the century. The specific place or occasion that inspired each poem is indicated at its end. We have: "Calle de Toledo," "Calle Espoz y Mina," "Calle del Gato," "Plaza Santa Ana," "Puerta del Sol," "Calle Atocha," Plaza de Cibeles" and "Paseo de la Castellana"; there is a poem about "Nochebuena" in Madrid and another about "Día de Difuntos." Only one of the poems is set in the interior of a building, and that one evokes a musical evening at the Ritz. Another, set in Cuatro Caminos, is not, strictly speaking, a street scene. It evokes the wind over the plains at the outskirts of Madrid in a feverish protest against World War I then being waged in cities far to the north, beyond the Pyrenees, in Ypres, Lille, Liege and Verdun.[5]

Street Scenes

The first element of Baroja's Madrid one finds in Dos Passos's poems of "Winter in Castile" is a quality of tone. For Baroja, Madrid is a city of "tono menor." Baroja offers his views on poetic diction and Madrid at the beginning to Part II of *La busca*, when he associates Madrid with the realm of the everyday, the expected, the familiar. Madrid can have no pretensions to the mystery of Paris, (nor, one supposes, to the mellowness of Rome or to the seriousness of London). And the language used to write about Madrid must be correspondingly modest and unpretentious, even "chabacano." Forswearing high-flown evocations of Madrid and all attempts to create for it an air of fascinating mystery (because friends told him they do not belong), Baroja promises to avoid slipping into elevated style in the future and to continue his novel in a more appropriately informal way:

> Yo, resignado, he suprimido esos párrafos, por los cuales esperaba llegar algún día a la Academia Española, y sigo con mi cuento en un lenguaje más chabacano. (1: 277)

If by *chabacano* we mean "awkward," "plebeian," "racy," "colloquial," then *chabacano* describes the kind of language Dos Passos promises to use in his poems as well. All the connotations of *pushcart*, the central metaphor of the title of his book, point to qualities like "rough," "popular," "spontaneous," "unsophisticated" and "small scale." In his introductory poem to the book, he tells us his verse is "no upholstered chariot," no "swift and shining modern limousine," but:

> A crazy creaking pushcart, hard to push
> Round corners, slung on shaky patch-
> work wheels,]
> That jolts and jumbles over the cobble-
> stones]
> Its very various lading...

With some notable exceptions, Dos Passos keeps his promise to maintain a casual and unliterary tone in the poems of "Winter in Castile." Common words, short lines, the natural rhythms of free verse, all give a strong impression of the reality of the streets of Madrid. So does his concentration on the concrete image. Dos Passos has captured the spirit of life on the city's streets says Concha Zardoya, poet, professor of literature, and one of the first to have written about Madrid in the poetry of Dos Passos. His ability to create life-like sketches with rapid strokes but with a sharp eye to factual detail suggests to her an affinity with the characteristic style of Pío Baroja:

> El más puro realismo impresionista da vigor y fuerza a estos bocetos poemáticos.... Ni un solo lugar común, sino visión directa y, por serlo, original y única. Diríase que Dos Passos se ha asimilado un estilo típicamente barojiano, aunque siempre más abierto a las sensaciones de color. (116-17)

The poem by Dos Passos that best illustrates Zardoya's point is so short, it can be quoted in its entirety. It is Poem XV, "Calle Atocha," about a chestnut vendor. Made up of one sentence, broken into four short lines, peppered with sibilants and glides, and capped off with a simile that manages to multiply and extend the meaning of the strategically placed adverb "invitingly," it is nonetheless long enough to make us see the chestnut vendor, feel the wind, smell the chestnuts, and appreciate an effective entrepreneurial style:

> The weazened old woman without teeth
> who shivers on the windy street corner
> displays her roasted chestnuts invitingly
> like marriageable daughters. (43)

Later on, when we turn to poems that have a message of protest (Poem XIV, "Cuatro Caminos" and Poem VII, "Beggars") we will see Dos Passos shift into an elevated style and use formal words, longer lines, and references to figures from Greek and Roman myth. But the poems that capture life in the street, like the one above, are rendered in language and images that are natural-sounding, highly musical, and cordially colloquial.[6]

Poem I, "Calle de Toledo," is a good example of a longer Dos Passos street scene. It shows everyday life on this very typical street, and it contains a lot of pushcart-style poetic diction. In stanza one, we are looking up from the long grey street to the balconies above, where we see "pink geraniums," "a striped mattress hang[ing] from a window," and a "little wooden cage of a gold finch." In stanza two, at street level, four blind musicians "wabble [sic] down the street,"[7] with violin and flute "scraping" out a tune. The first thing we notice is how natural-sounding the language is. At times, the language is so close to everyday English that only the images and rhythms created by the line divisions distinguish it from prose (Wagner 8). In stanza three, for example, with each line of verse we see another detail added to bring the image of shoppers into sharper focus. Apart from some assonance (g*a*ther, bl*a*nkets; p*eo*ple, gr*ee*n) and parallel construction ("with market-baskets," "with green vegetables," "with blankets") that take nothing away from its naturalness, line division is the only indication that the language has been worked:

> People gather:
> women with market-baskets
> stuffed with green vegetables,
> men with blankets on their shoulders
> and brown sun-wrinkled faces. (14)

The second thing we notice is that the language is highly musical (Wagner 6), but it is not the smooth harmonious tones of chamber music we hear. Instead it is the scrape and pipe of the four blind musicians on their flute and violin ("Pipe the flutes, squeak the violins / four blind men in a row / at the interment of a tune...") and the chirps and twitters of the gold finch ("And overhead / the sympathetic finch / chirps and trills / approval"). *Pipe, squeak, chirp, trill*—words for sounds as humble as the objects that produce them. Besides onomatopeia, we have alliteration and assonance (*c*oppers *c*link; there is *m*erry *m*usic; *p*eanuts, and hot roast *p*otatoes; and r*ou*nd br*ow*n pennies). In stanzas four and five, these sound effects, by way of the action and movement they suggest, give a strong impression of immediacy to the scene:

> But on the plate
> coppers clink
> round brown pennies
> a merry music at the funeral,
> penny swigs of wine
> penny gulps of gin
> peanuts and hot roast potatoes
> red disks of sausage
> tripe steaming in the corner shop... (15)

Finally, we notice that the language is, for the most part, colloquial. It is taken from the realm of spoken English: "wabble down the street," "swigs of wine," "gulps of gin." With one exception, there are no outstandingly formal or poetic words. The exception is found in the phrase "the interment of a tune" repeated in stanza two and stanza four. Interment is a formal word for burial. To inter is to bury, but even this use is a backhanded celebration of a colloquial expression in English: "to murder" a tune. To murder a tune is to emphasize how bad or off-key someone's performance is. What is being buried here is the tune the blind musicians are playing, and the colloquial expression is all the more prominent for being suggested indirectly and ironically by way of its formal counterpart than it would be to put it immediately up to the understanding. In stanza five, the last stanza, our attention is directed once more to the balconies above where the goldfinch, chirping and trilling approval of the spectacle below, is given the role of expressing the poet's delight at the merriment, music, humor and vitality that can be found on a winter morning on Toledo Street.

In contrast to Baroja's Madrid, which encompasses the whole city but whose most characteristic parts are the outskirts and whose most memorable types are the more marginal of its inhabitants, Dos Passos's Madrid is concentrated around the Puerta del Sol in the center of the city and is populated by the people a passerby sees on the streets: flower vendors, delivery boys, newsboys, marching soldiers, scissors grinders, beggars, blind musicians and chestnut vendors. In spite of these differences of scale and focus, one feels a sense of similarity in tone. Both authors' attitude toward Madrid can be cordial and affectionate—its streets an ideal place to observe the human comedy.

The Perspective of Privilege

Another element of Baroja's Madrid in the poems of "Winter in Castile" is the treatment of the theme of poverty. Madrid is a city of contrasts between the comfortable and the unfortunate, and Baroja's strongest writing in "La lucha por la vida" comes in his shocking images of the poor. Deformed by poverty to the point of being unrecognizable as human, the poor embody an indictment of the society that has abandoned them. Read the following evocation of the people of Injurias, from

Mala hierba, made with metaphors for disease:

> Era gente astrosa; algunos, traperos; otros, mendigos; otros muertos de hambre; casi todos, de facha repulsiva. Peor aspecto que los hombres tenían aún las mujeres, sucias, desgreñadas, haraposas. Era una basura humana, envuelta en guiñapos, entumecida por el frío y la humedad, la que vomitaba aquel barrio infecto. Era la herpe, la lacra, el color amarillo de la terciana, el párpado retraído, todos los estigmas de la enfermedad y de la miseria. (1: 453)

The poor of Madrid are *not* portrayed this way in "Winter in Castile." There is nothing like the power of the images of the poor one finds on the pages of *La busca* and *Mala hierba*. Three of Dos Passos's poems do have prominent images of poverty, however. They are: Poem XVI "Nochebuena," Poem VI "Beggars," and Poem II set in calle Espoz y Mina. (Montes 133-34). But in these poems from "Winter in Castile" Madrid is not the dismal and bitterly ironic town of "La lucha por la vida." It is not a place beyond the philosophical pale in which compassion is ruled out as surrender, and self interest is ruled out as criminal aggression. It is not even an ordinary place of evil (as it is in "Caídos" and "Patología del golfo" in *Vidas sombrías*) in which people are marginalized because of a corrupt and venal social system which turns normal human beings into "golfos" by promising and then denying them a place in society (6: 1026-27, 5: 55-59).

In the poems of "Winter in Castile," there *is* evil, but evil is located outside Madrid. It lies in the hearts and minds of international financiers, speculators, capitalists, and industrialists—the dark forces that Dos Passos blames for the outbreak of war in Europe. In Poem XIV, "Cuatro Caminos," their god, a god of grinning brass, appears. Blood-stained and ravenous, he consumes soldiers and civilians, men, women and children in an orgy of human sacrifice to the questionable benefits of industrialization and mechanization. This huge god "gapes with smudged expectant gums" above the Northern European plain. Into the fire of his "wide maw" disappear:

> rigid square bodies of men
> opulence of childbearing women
> slimness of young men, and girls
> with small curved breasts.
> (Loud as musketry rattles the sudden laughter of]
> the dead.)
> Thicker hotter the blood drips
> from the cold brass lips. (41)

This nightmare vision of Europe being destroyed is framed in a nocturnal landscape set in the northernmost outskirts of Madrid. In it, dark clouds are racing over the moon, pushed by a menacing wind out of the north, crossing the long still plains, rattling the leaves of the liveoaks, and bringing with it the sound of the macabre laughter of the far away dead:

> Night of clouds
> terror of their flight across the moon.
> Over the long still plains
> blows a wind out of the north;
> a laden wind out of the north
> rattles the leaves of the liveoaks
> menacingly and loud. (40)

For Dos Passos, the benefits of the industrial revolution, the material progress brought by capitalism were having such harmful effects on modern society—plunging it into World War I and into revolution—, and on the human spirit—coarsening and debasing it (Rosen 6-12) that he could look with approval on the attitude of Madrid's beggars. He could look with approval on them because they escaped enslavement to factories, commerce, and "the turmoil of modern industrialized society" (Montes 133; Borenstein 71). Dos Passos does not idealize the beggars or their situation. Dirty, slovenly, bleary-eyed, scratching skinny thighs, the beggars in Poem VI lounge and doze in the pale winter sun "against the greystone basin" of the fountain of the Plaza de Cibeles. They are not pretty. But he gives them names like Pan, Faunus, and Eros and pictures them nursing at the (albeit exhausted) breast of Cybele, goddess of the grain, whose figure, seated in a chariot drawn by lions, tops the fountain. He draws Cybele's (and our) attention to them for resisting the mechanizing tide:

> They are still thine Cybele
> nursed at thy breast;
> .....
> They have not scorned thy dubious
> bounty]
> for stridence of grinding iron
> and pale caged lives
> made blind by the dust of toil
> to coin the very sun to gold. (24)

Read by itself, "Beggars" may seem to offer nothing more than a passing feeling of nostalgia for Arcadia, involving its readers in no serious doubts about their world. But read in company with the nightmare vision of Europe sacrificing itself to the hungry brass god of the modern age, it seems instead to involve them in a serious questioning of "the value of industrial progress itself" (Rosen 6). It is in the spirit of an indignant outburst by Jesús, one of the characters of *Mala hierba,* who in conversation with don Alonso says: "No debía haber fábricas." And when don Alonso challenges him, "¿Y la civilización? ¿Y la luz eléctrica? ¿y los vapores? ¿y el telégrafo?," Jesús answers that progress benefits only the rich and what is worse, destroys society by insulating the rich, behind a wall of cotton, from the poor:

> [A]ntes, el rico tenía que vivir entre los pobres; hoy vive aparte, se ha hecho una muralla de algodón y no oye nada. Que los pobres chillan, él no oye; que se mueren de hambre, él no se entera.... (1: 459)

This section begins with a discussion about Baroja's shocking, dehumanizing images of the poor in "La lucha por la vida." There is, however, in Baroja's earliest writing, a different kind of image of the poor. Here the poor, instead of being dehumanized by association with images of brutality and disease, are de-objectified by association with images of pleasure. I am thinking of "La trapera" in *Vidas sombrías* in which a little wrinkled old lady without teeth who lives in a shack in a vacant lot supports herself and a little girl with what she finds in the trash. After making their rounds through the bleak Madrid morning of the Calle de Toledo, La Ronda, and la calle de la Ruda, they return home. Entering their shack, they encounter the appetizing smell of the contents of a cookpot steaming on their makeshift hearth. The narrator, who has assured us repeatedly of the appetizing nature of the smell, characterizes them as:

> quizá felices, quizá satisfechas por tener un hogar pobre y miserable, y un puchero en la hornilla que hervía con

> un glu-glu suave, dejando un vaho
> apetitoso en el cuarto. (6: 1021)

It is an unsettling, even irksome image because the pleasure of the rag woman and the girl are seen from the perspective of privilege.[8] The unidentified first person narrator has a proper house to live in and the leisure to follow the poor old woman around and spy on her. The ending to the story seems patronizing or sentimental or even fatuous unless we look for a meaning in this paradoxically connecting juxtaposition of privilege and poverty. Instead of criticizing society for abandoning the poor, the story goes off on a different, prior track and carries a call to the rich and privileged to acknowledge their connection to the poor, and to recognize them, in spite of their poverty, as kindred rather than alien souls.

A breath of this kind of feeling is evoked in Poem II, "Calle Espoz y Mina," in which the contact between the comfortable and the unfortunate, between the privileged and the poor, is also made by an appetizing smell. This time, of coffee. In Dos Passos's poem, a boy is grinding coffee in a cafe in the street below the poet's bedroom window. As the black sphere whirls above the fire, grinding and toasting, the thick moka-scented smoke reaches the poet in bed. At the same time, it reaches the nostrils of a beggar sleeping on the street, who experiences a moment of pure pleasure:

> A poor devil
> whose dirty ashen white body shows
> through his rags]
> sniffs sensually
> with dilated nostrils
> the heavy coffee-fragrant smoke
> and turns to sleep again
> in the feeble sunlight of the grey-
> stone steps.] (17)

One explanation for these images of contentment in the early works of Baroja and of Dos Passos is that they are a purely *aesthetic* treatment of the poor. (Bretz 26; Montes 134). While there is no denying the supreme importance of art and aesthetics to both of these writers in the early stages of their careers, there is also no denying the fervor of their anti-industrial sentiment and genuine concern for the victims of industrialization—something which, I think, lends more than a purely aesthetic dimension to their images. In Dos Passos's poem, the beggar is not idealized: "dirty," "white," "ashen," "rags" are the words used in connection with him. Poverty is not made pretty: "greystone steps" are what he is sleeping on. And even if we were to find a kind of macabre beauty in the image, the focus of the poem is not the beggar but the coffee-scented smoke which connects him to the poet:

> Thicker comes the blue curling smoke,
> the moka-scented smoke
> heavy with early morning
> and the awakening city
> with the click-clack click-clack on the
> cobblestones]
> and the young winter sunshine
> advancing inquisitively
> across the black and white tiles of my
> bedroomfloor.] (16)

Because of the connection with pleasure (exactly the same pleasing sensation experienced simultaneously by the observer and the observed), I think these images are put there to force us to identify with a privileged perspective and to penetrate, however briefly, however futilely, the wall of cotton that protects us from the poor.

Curiously, these images of the humanized poor in Baroja and in Dos Passos are more unsettling than images of the dehumanized poor. I think they are so because they suggest criticisms directed not at society and its system of justice, but at each reader and his or her individual conscience.

The Solitary Romantic

Finally, a third element of Baroja's Madrid one finds in the poetry of John Dos Passos, is the element of the erotic. Throughout "Winter in Castile," a recurring note of youthful, awkward sensuality, reminds us that in Baroja's Madrid, especially in *Vidas sombrías*, the city is often seen through the eyes of someone who is lonely and looking for love.

Typically Baroja's hero or heroine is in the grips of great longing but too timid in the presence of the opposite sex to appease it. Sometimes he or she is held back from satisfaction because of fear of rejection. I am thinking of the protagonist of "Agueda," malformed and lonely, staring out at the street under her balcony:

> A veces, una esperanza loca le hacía creer que allá, en aquella plaza triste estaba el hombre a quien esperaba... un hombre que iba a contarle en voz baja y suave los misterios inefables del amor. (6: 996)

Or the poet, "amigo de la soledad y de la tristeza" who frequents a bench in the Parque del Retiro in "La Mujer de luto" and whose fear of women, or of his own inadequacy, keeps him at an anguished distance from love:

> Y la busca, siempre; a la única amada.... Con la mirada extraviada y loca, la busca siempre y no la ve nunca; no la ve nunca, porque quizá no es más que un reflejo de su espíritu. (6: 1033)

Not as melancholy or anguished, but just as full of unfulfilled longing is Poem XII of "Winter in Castile." Here we have someone at an elegant concert at the Hotel Ritz. He is dreaming of kissing a young, giggling girl he calls Juliet, who is attending the concert as well. In an orgy of synesthesia, onomatopeia, simile, and synecdoche that at the same time manage to sound like language simple enough for a nursery rhyme, Dos Passos captures the noise and the movement of the high society audience:

> Genteel noise of Paris hats
> and beards that tilt this way and that.
> Mirrors create on either side
> infinities of chandeliers. (35)

After the orchestra tunes up ("twanging of the strings of violins / groans from cellos / toodling of flutes"), the beards and hats sink back in their seats to listen to the concert. A little girl giggles and, as "[c]rystals of infinities of chandeliers / tremble in the first long honey-savored chord," the poet, hearing once again the girl's "profane giggling," succumbs to an erotic reverie. The scene is a moonlit garden in Granada. The girl, "... in a dress of crimson brocade / dark as blood under the white moon" stands as he approaches and is swept into his arms: "... with full lips / head tilted back... O her small breasts / against my panting breast" (37). This reverie is interrupted by the sound of the audience clapping and an awakening with a sense of emptiness: "Clapping. Genteel noise of Paris hats / and beards that tilt this way and that. / Her face lost in infinities of glittering chandeliers" (37).

Another poem that poeticizes the margins of erotic satisfaction is number VII, "Calle del Gato." The object of desire, this time an anonymous girl in the street, is standing in the rain beside a lamppost wearing a shawl. It is dinner time, there is a smell of frying fish in the air. Footsteps are heard. Three people pass her by; first a delivery boy "with a trough of meat on his shoulder," then a man "with a twirl of moustaches," and then a woman with an umbrella. None of them look at her, and in the green light of the lamp, her eyes remain in shadow:

> Footsteps
> and the leisurely patter of rain.
> Beside the lamppost in the alley
> stands a girl in a long sleek shawl
> that moulds vaguely to the curves
> of breast and arms.
> Her eyes are in shadow. (25)

Reminding me of "Mari Belcha" (6: 984-85), a story set in the rural Basque country in which, infinitely more lyrically, Baroja projects on to an older man—a rural doctor—a desire for a young girl, in this poem a fourth passerby, an old man, meets the girl's eyes and brings them out of the shadow, before continuing on his way:

> An old man stares without fear
> into the eyes of the girl
> through the stripes of the rain.
> His steps beat faster and he sniffs hard
> suddenly]
> the smell of dinner and frying fish.
> (26)

In Dos Passos's poem, we have lust: "Was it a flame of old days / expanding in his cold blood / or a shiver of rigid graves, / chill clay choking congealing?" In Baroja's story we have delicate emotion: "Cuando voy por delante de tu casa, en mi caballo, te escondes al ver me.... Pero yo también te miro ocultándome entre los árboles..." (984-85), and a tender, "casi infantil pudor ante el sexo opuesto" (Galbis 56). What Baroja's story and Dos Passos's poem have in common, however, is the theme of isolation and a perspective of sexual longing and frustration.

Linda Wagner, in her study *Dos Passos: Artist as American*, noting that several poems in *A Pushcart at the Curb* picture the young poet as unfulfilled, searching, and that at times the focus for his anguish is a woman (slender, dark, shadowy) rejects the notion that Dos Passos may be simply adopting a traditional romantic pose because, she says, these images are too much of the fabric of his work: "An isolato for many reasons, he continually tried to overcome his hesitancy about personal relationships" (9).

However much this description of Dos Passos might remind one of descriptions of young Baroja, it is clear the feelings Dos Passos gave to his poetry were not Baroja's but his own. As we know from Dos Passos's letters (*Fourteenth Chronicle* 50-66) and from his autobiography, (*Best Times* 30-40), much in his street scenes of Madrid are drawn from real life experiences. Furthermore, to whatever degree the poems of "Winter in Castile" may be a product of reading rather than experience, Dos Passos's debt would not necessarily be to Baroja alone. The same winter he was reading and admiring the novels of "La lucha por la vida," he was reading and admiring the poems of *Campos de Castilla* by Antonio Machado and "Coplas por la muerte de su padre don Rodrigo" by Jorge Manrique (*Dream* xiii-xiv; *Best Times* 33). For these reasons, I am not suggesting that Dos Passos borrowed from

Baroja the elements that I have identified, nor that he was influenced by Baroja. I am simply suggesting that there are intriguing affinities in their images of Madrid and confirming that these two great individualists are alike in many ways.

One last thing about Madrid. You have to include the sky. In Baroja's Madrid the sky is where the beauty is—the sky and the sierra. The beauty lies in the play of light, of colors, and in the moods evoked. Sometimes it is in concert sometimes in contrast with the (usually) grim or dreary human phenomena below. For example, in a famous scene from *Aurora roja*, we follow, over the course of a dozen paragraphs, a sun rise; the sky, pale and grey at first: "La luz fina y velada de la mañana iba filtrándose entre las nubes de un gris de estaño;" then pink: "algún tinte de rosa brotaba en el cielo; el Guadarrama iba apareciendo por nieblas alargardas y blancas...;" and finally, flame red:

> Salió el sol por encima de Madrid. La luz se derramó de un modo mágico por la tierra; las piedras, los árboles, los tejados del pueblo, las torres, todo enrojeció y fue fuego dorándose poco a poco.
>
> El cielo azul se limpió de nubes, el Guadarrama se despejó de nieblas; un pálido rubor tiñó sus cimas blancas, nevadas, de un color de rosa ideal. En los desmontes, algún rayo de sol vivo y fuerte, al caer sobre la arena parecía derretirla e incendiarla. (1: 605-6)

Similarly, it is the sky where the beauty is in Dos Passos's Poem VIII, "Paseo de la Castellana." The scene is a winter sunset; the wine red of the sun is changing to purple and then to a shadowy smoked rose. As dusk deepens, "Lamps bloom out one by one / like jessamine, yellow and small. / At the far end a church's dome / flat deep purple cuts the sky" (28).

In the foreground, "in and out among the silver tree-trunks / out of the smoked rose shadows," schoolboys are playing in the square. "Socks slip down / fingermarks smudge white collars." Continuing to focus on the boys at play, Dos Passos finishes up with a strikingly apt image of drunken banqueters that manages to convey precisely the taste and feel of (what used to be and still sometimes is) Madrid's other great treasure, the air:

> they run and tussle in the shadows
> kicking the gravel with muddied boots
> with cheeks flushed hotter than the sky
> eyes brighter than the street-lamps
> with fingers tingling and breath fast:
> banqueters early drunken
> on the fierce cold wine of the dead year.
> (29)

Notes

[1] For the most comprehensive treatment of Dos Passos and Spain, see Montes, Catalina. *La visión de España en la obra de John Dos Passos.*

[2] Dos Passos wrote about Baroja in "Young Spain" (44); in "A Novelist of Disintegration," which reappears as "A Novelist of Revolution" in *Rosinante to the Road Again* (80-100); in "Baroja Muzzled" (69-70); in "Building Lots" (73-74); and in *The Best Times* (32).

[3] *Canciones del suburbio* is found in Baroja's *Obras completas* (8: 979-1060). All quotations from *Vidas sombrías* (vol. 6) and from the novels of "La lucha por la vida" (vol.1) will be taken from the version published in his complete works.

[4] Because *A Pushcart at the Curb* is long out of print and may not be easily accessible, here is a list of its contents: 1. "Winter in Castile" (Madrid 1916-1917): 13-62. 2. "Nights at Bassano" (France and Italy, World War I, 1918-1919): 65-106; 3. "Vagones de Tercera" (second stay in Spain 1919-1920): 109-35; 4. "Quai de la Tournelle"

(Paris 1919): 139-59; 5. "On Foreign Travel:" 163-82; "Phases of the Moon:" 185-216. The poem beginning "My verse is no upholstered chariot" is on an unnumbered page at the very beginning of the book.

[5] In addition to the thirteen Madrid poems found in "Winter in Castile," there are four Madrid poems in other sections of *A Pushcart at the Curb*: Poem VI, "To R.J.," in "Vagones de Tercera," and Poems II, V, and VI in "Phases of the Moon." Apparently written at a later date than those in "Winter in Castile, " these poems are not discussed here.

[6] For a discussion of how Dos Passos's use of language may reflect his interest in the imagist poets and their approach to poetry, see Wagner 4-8.

[7] According to *Webster's New International Dictionary* (2nd ed. 1943), "wabble" is an accepted spelling of the word "wobble." It rhymes with "cobble."

[8] "Perspective of privilege" is a concept basic to Rosen's interpretation of young Dos Passos's politics and I have borrowed the phrase from him (7). Among those who have written about Baroja's politics and the poor of Madrid, I find myself most in sympathy with Puértolas (33-34, 58-59). Both Rosen and Puértolas emphasize the contradictory forces at work in the minds of their subjects in relation to the oppressed.

Works Cited

Baroja, Pío. *Obras completas*. 8 vols. Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1946-1952.

Borenstein, Walter. "The Failure of Nerve. The Impact of Pío Baroja's Spain on John Dos Passos." *Nine Essays in Modern Literature*. Ed. Donald E. Stanford. Baton Rouge: Lousiana State UP, 1965. 63-87.

Bretz, Mary Lee. *La evolución novelística de Pío Baroja*. Madrid: José Porrúa Turanzas, 1979.

Dos Passos, John. "Baroja Muzzled." Rev. of *The Quest* by Pío Baroja. *Dial.* Feb 1923: 199-200. Pizer 69-70.

———. *The Best Times: An Informal Memoir.* New York: New American Library, 1966.

———. "Building Lots." Rev. of *Weeds* by Pío Baroja. *Nation.* 9 Jan 1924: 36-37. Pizer 73-74.

———. Introduction. *The Dream Below the Sun.* by Antonio Machado. Trans. Willis Barnstone. Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1981.

———. *The Fourteenth Chronicle: Letters and Diaries of John Dos Passos.* Ed. Townsend Ludington. Boston: Gambit, 1973.

———. "A Novelist of Disintegration" *Freeman* 2 20 Oct. 1920: 132-34. Rpt. as "A Novelist of Revolution." *Rosinante to the Road Again*. New York: Doran, 1922. 80-100.

———. "Winter in Castile." *A Pushcart at the Curb*. New York: Doran, 1922. 13-62.

———. "Young Spain." *Seven Arts* 2 Aug. 1917: 473-88. Pizer 39-47

Fichtelberg, Joseph. "The Picaros of John Dos Passos." *Twentieth Century Literature*. 34.4 (1988) 434-52.

Galbis, Ignacio. "El lirismo en el cuento." *Baroja, el lirismo de tono menor*. New York: Torres, 1976. 53-75.

Golson, Emily Becker. "Pío Baroja and John Dos Passos: The Evolution of Two Political Novelists." Diss. Brandeis U, 1982.

Montes, Catalina. "La visión poética de lo español." *La visión de España en la obra de John Dos Passos*. Salamanca: Almar, 1980. 109-37.

Pizer, Donald. ed. *John Dos Passos: The major Nonfictional Prose*. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1988.

Puértolas, Soledad. *El Madrid de La lucha por la vida*. Madrid: Editorial Helios, 1971.

Rosen, Robert C. "Individualist Rebel: 1896-1925." *John Dos Passos: Politics and the Writer.* Lincoln, Nebraska: U of Nebraska P, 1981. 3-49.

Vázquez-Bigi, A. M. "Introducción al estudio de la influencia barojiana en Hemingway y Dos Passos." *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*. 89.265-267. (1972): 169-203.

Wagner, Linda W. "Reaching Past Poetry." *Dos Passos. Artist as American*. Austin: U of Texas P, 1979. 3-17.

Zardoya, Concha. "La imagen de España en dos poetas norteamericanos." *Verdad, belleza y expresión: Letras anglo-americanas*. Barcelona: E.D.H.A.S.A, 1967. 103-22.