

Rafael Alberti in the Centenary of His Birth

Scripta Mediterranea could not remain on the sidelines of the celebrations that are taking place in numerous parts of the world to commemorate the birth of the great Spanish poet Rafael Alberti, a symbol of both classical and avantgarde values, a poet belonging to a clear-sighted and exuberant generation, recalling the groups of writers of the Spanish Golden Age in its overwhelming influence on later poetic groups and particularly in its respect for literary tradition and in the break with bombastic forms of writing.

But two poets of this Generation, the so-called Generation of 27, or of this Group, which would be the most appropriate term and of which nobody has yet made up the final roll call, succeeded in making their mark in other cultural and artistic milieux. This is the case of Federico García Lorca and Rafael Alberti, poets, dramatists, painters, essayists..., true creators in a difficult period for both, with the test of the Spanish Cainism of the "Incivil" War about to befall them, one destined to lose his life and the other to accompany the Spanish diaspora. They called each other cousins; and Juan Ramón Jiménez said they were the two great poets of the group, although, in his opinion, Rafael was the more universal.

This is not the place to consider Juan Ramón's valuation but we venture to offer a broad image of Alberti's work: it is not possible to treat lightly a body of poetry that has its centre of gravity in the depiction of Spain, in the poetic tradition that starts with popular poetry (the song and ballad books) and Gil Vicente and extends to the the ultraists and the surrealists, taking in Góngora, Garcilaso, and in a highly creative poetry that deals memorably with the social dimension of experience.

Rafael Alberti represents a century of poetry, a work of splendid ambition and exceptional creative force. His poetry is pictorial, ludic, nostalgic and disturbing; it takes up a position between the carnation and the sword, between memory and invention, centring on love, on chromatic values, and on the portrayal of the deepest states of the human soul. His highly complex poetic personality draws on a broad spectrum of poetic sounds, tones and styles, techniques and metrical forms.

The pages of this issue are testimony of Alberti's poetic vitality and his international appeal. From Cuba the poet's daughter Aitana has sent a searching autobiographical poem and an essay evoking Rafael Alberti

and María Teresa León in their cultural milieu. Cuban writer Angel Augier's brief memoir recounts his meetings with Alberti in Cuba and Spain. Brian Morris of the University of California at Los Angeles revisits and revises his earlier interpretations of *Sobre los Angeles*, a work he had first engaged with forty years before. Nigel Dennis, based at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland argues for the need to give greater weight to *Vida bilingüe de un refugiado español en Francia/Bilingual life of a Spanish Refugee in France* as a portrayal of Alberti's "sensations of displacement". María Guasch, a resident of Ibiza, examines *13 bandas y 48 estrellas* as a new chronicle of America. Norberto Gimelfarb, a Swiss-Argentinean scholar, takes a close look at Rafael Alberti and María Teresa León's translation of Paul Eluard's poetry. Two articles deal with Alberti's deep and abiding interest in painters and painting: Italian scholar Elide Pittarello focusses on Alberti's poetic meditation on Van Gogh and the editors, scholars from Spain and Canada, respectively, combine forces to study the hyperbolic nature of Alberti's ekphrastic approach to Picasso.

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