# INSIGHT INTO THE STYLE OF PABLO NERUDA'S EARLY POETRY: TWENTY LOVE POEMS AND A SONG OF DESPAIR

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**Key Words**: metaphor, simile, poetic universe

**Abstract**: The present paper aims at giving an insight into the work of a nascent poet (twenty-year-old Neruda), that is into the collection *Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair*. It focuses on the most important figures of speech, namely on metaphors and similes, in view of revealing the characteristics of Neruda's poetic universe.

When the first edition of *Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair* was published, it was rather badly received by literary critics, who generally labeled it as being odd, difficult to be understood (Olivares 2000). Apparently, they failed to understand this new kind of poetry. The poet answered the hostile critics by revealing his source of inspiration, saying that the poems ''freely freed themselves'' (Neruda 2005). A second edition of this collection was published in 1932 and, from this year on, it has been continuously on print. It became the bestselling book of poems in Spanish in the past millennium, establishing Neruda as the favourite erotic poet around the globe.

Indeed, love is the theme of the collection. Neruda himself said once: "I've only put a song to my life and to the love of several women I've known" (*Exégesis y soledad* in the newspaper *La Nación*, August 20, 1924). It is the love of an adolescent who pendulates between longing and requested love: "It is a book of love because, in spite of its acute melancholy, the joyfulness of being alive is present in it" (Neruda 2001). The poetic self continuously oscillates between melancholy and enthusiasm, pessimism and optimism, proving a remarkable talent by bringing them together in the alloy of an exacerbated sensibility[1]. Neruda strongly believes that ''love burning, without consuming itself, like an immortal bush" (Neruda 2001) existed and continued always to exist in his poetry. He confesses that "he could not shut the door to love" (Neruda 2001).

The beloved woman is, in turn, the entire world (Body of a woman (…) /you look like a world-*Body of a Woman*[2]; toy doll/earth-shell, in whom the earth sings-*Ah Vastness of Pines*), the poet's own creation in order to give a meaning to the emptiness of his life (To survive myself I forged you like a weapon- *Body of a Woman*), his aim in life (My thirst, my boundless desire, my shifting road! - *Body of a Woman*), his hope (Aim my road on your bow of hope- *Ah Vastness of Pines*), his point of stability (my kisses anchor, and my moist desire nests - *Ah Vastness of Pines*), his entire life (You fill everything, you fill everything.- *So that You Will Hear Me*; You were made of everything- *Almost out of the Sky*) or a mystery (Who are you, who are you?- *Thinking, Tangling Shadows*).

[1] Talking about the women in *Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair*, Neruda said: ''The two women who weave in and out of these melancholy and passionate poems correspond, let's say, to Marisol and Marisombra: Sea and Sun, Sea and Shadow. Marisol is love in the enchanted countryside, with stars in bold relief at night, and dark eyes like the wet sky of Temuco. She appears with all her joyfulness and her lively beauty on almost every page, surrounded by the waves of the port and by a half-moon over the mountains. Marisombra is the student in the city. Gray beret, very gentle eyes, the ever-present honeysuckle fragrance of my foot-loose and fancy-free student days, the physical peace of the passionate meetings in the city's hideaways''. (Pablo Neruda, *Memoirs*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2001, p. 52)

[2] All quotations are from Pablo Neruda, *Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair*, Penguin Classics, New York, 2004.

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If love is the main theme of the collection, nature is a tool used to better render the former. Neruda is a telluric poet, being closely connected to natural world. George Edwards (Estudios Públicos, Otoño, 2004) said that nature is the „essential trigger” of his work. Neruda's verses are just like a rainbow, full of vivid colours, similar to the pure beauty of nature that he loved so much. The poet borrows something from the soil, the rain, the woods and the luxurious vegetation he lived with when he was a child on the boards of the rain forests in Southern Chile. Here is how Neruda himself characterizes this collection of poetry: „*Veinte poemas de amor y una canción desesperada* make a painful book of pastoral poems filled with my most tormented adolescent passions, mingled with the devastating nature of the southern part of my country” (Neruda 2001)

Neruda started to write when the modernist literary movement was in its glory but he was against abstract, evasive poetry. His poetic discourse lies in the frame of anti-intellectualism. In the case of Neruda, we could speak about a poetry of the senses, subjective and cultivating personal experiences. Atemporality and normality are also labels that can be attached to this collection of poetry.

We shall preceed by analysing the metaphors in Neruda's *Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair:*

**a) semantical analysis of metaphors[3]:**

- **metaphors belonging to every-day/daily universe (concrete/palpable domain):**

You were the grey beret and the still heart. (*I Remember You As You Were*)
(the poet's lover is) Field from the hills:/ Your memory is made of light, of smoke of a still pond! (*I Remember You As You Were*)
(the poet's lover)Last hawser, in you creaks my last longing. (*White Bee*)
The sky is a net crammed with shadowy fish. (*Every Day You Play*)
(the world in its diversity)immense fan (*Thinking, Tangling Shadows*)
(tears) (…) it leaves two dark pools in your eyes. (*Girl Lithe and Tawny*)
Body of a woman, white hills, white tights (*Body of a Woman*)
(…) toy doll,/ earth-shell, in whom the earth sings! (*Ah Vastness of Pines*)
Body of my woman (…) my shifting road!/ Dark river-beds where the eternal thirst flows and weariness follows, and the infinite ache. (*Body of a Woman*)
my words (…)/ Necklace, drunken bell (*So that You Will Hear Me*)
Ah your body, a frightened statue, naked. (*White Bee*)
Forge of blue metals, nights of still combats,/ my heart revolves like a crazy wheel. (*Almost out of the Sky*)
Body of skin, (…) of eager and firm milk. (*Body of a Woman*)
Oh the goblets of the breasts! (*Body of a Woman*)
The old propellers of the twilight (*The Light Wraps You*)
The great roots of night/ grow suddenly from your soul. (*The Light Wraps You*)
bow of hope (*Ah Vastness of Pines*)
flock of arrows (*Ah Vastness of Pines*)
the heart of summer (*The Morning Is Full*)

mouth of the wind (*Ah Vastness of Pines*)
heart of the wind (*The Morning Is Full*)
the pulsing arrows of the birds (*The Morning Is Full*)
the door of the summer's wind (*The Morning Is Full*)
(…) I steer the fast sail of the roses (*Drunk with Pines*)

[3] The semantic and grammatical analysis of metaphors is based on the structure suggested by Mihaela Mancaş in the chapter *Semantica metaforei* (*The Semantics of the Metaphor*) în *Limbajul artistic românesc modern. Schiţă de evoluţie* (*Modern Romanian Artistic Language. Evolution Outline*), Bucharest, University Publishing House, 2005, pp. 318-351.

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still dressed in gray and bitter sounds/ and a sad crest of abandoned spray. (*Drunk with Pines*)

the throat of the fortunate isles (*Drunk with Pines*)

In the moist night my garment of kisses trembles. (*Drunk with Pines*)

Turning, wandering night, the digger of eyes. (*Almost out of the Sky*)

white lily of conflagration (*Almost out of the Sky*)

rustic baskets of kisses (*Every Day You Play*)

The lamp of my soul dyes your feet (*In My Sky at Twilight*)

(the poet's lover) reaper of my evening song (*In My Sky at Twilight*)

(the poet's lover) huntress of the depths of my eyes (*In My Sky at Twilight*)

My soul is born on the shore of your eyes of mournig. (*In My Sky at Twilight*)

belfry of fogs (*Thinking, Tangling Shadows*)

(the mast) the black cross of a ship (*Here I Love You*)

A black yearning sun is braided into the strannds/ of your black mane (*Girl Lithe and Tawny*)

(the poet's heart) Cold flower heads are raining over my heart./ Oh pit of debris, fierce cave of the shipwrecked. (*The Song of Despair*)

Ah woman, I do not know how you could contain me/ (…) in the cross of your arms. (*The Song of Despair*)

Cemetery of kisses, there is still fire in your tombs,/ still the fruited boughs burn, pecked at by birds. (*The Song of Despair*)

The rustling belt of the sea girdles the shore. (*The Song of Despair*)

- **metaphors belonging to the abstract domain:**

I am the one without hope, the word without echoes (*White Bee*)

You are the frenzied youth of the bee,/ the drunkenness of the wave, the power of the wheat-ear. (*Girl Lithe and Tawny*)

There were grief and the ruins, and you were the miracle. (*The Song of Despair*)

Body of my woman (…)/ My thirst, my boundless desire, (…)and the infinite ache. (*Body of a Woman*)

girl, question of smoke, corn tassel. (*Almost out of the Sky*)

Oh the eyes of absence! (*Body of a Woman*)

The wind of anguish (*So that You Will Hear Me*)

wave of anguish (*So that You Will Hear Me*)

hurricanes of dreams (*So that You Will Hear Me*)

blood of old supplications (*So that You Will Hear Me*)

And the leaves fell in the water of your soul. (*I Remember You As You Were*)

Bonfire of awe in which my thirst was burning. (*I Remember You As You Were*)

from your regard sometimes the coast of dread emerges (*Leaning into the Afternoons*)

cyclone of fury (*Almost out of the Sky*)

muddy swirl of torments (*Almost out of the Sky*)

In your eyes of mourning the land of dreams begins. (*In My Sky at Twilight*)

(…) your mouth that has the smile of the water (*Girl Lithe and Tawny*)

In the childhood of mist my soul, winged and wounded. (*The Song of Despair*)-inceputurile iubirii

This was my destiny and in it was the voyage of my longing. (*The Song of Despair*)

- **metaphors implying cosmic-human transpositions:**

(the poet's lover is) Sky from a ship. (*I Remember You As You Were*)

(the storm) Stifling laments, milling shadowy hopes,/ taciturn miller (*Thinking, Tangling Shadows*)

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- **metaphors implying transpositions between terms belonging to the four kingdoms of nature (mineral-vegetable-animal-human):**

(the feeling of love) White bee, you buzz in my soul (*White Bee*)
In my barren land you are the final rose. (*White Bee*)
You are like my soul, butterfly of dream. (*I Like You to Be Still*)
(the lover's body) Dark butterfly, sweet and definitive (*Girl Lithe and Tawny)*
There were thirst and hunger, and you were the fruit. (*The Song of Despair*)
girl, question of smoke, corn tassel. (*Almost out of the Sky*)
My mouth went across: a spider, trying to hide. (*I Have Gone Making*)
Body of moss (*Body of a Woman*)
the ears of wheat tolling (*Ah Vastness of Pines*)
(the poet's lover) Cool arms of flowers and a lap of rose. (*White Bee*)
the atlas of your body (*I Have Gone Making*)
the plum of your mouth (*Every Day You Play*)
the sunned mother-of-pearl of your body. (*Every Day You Play*)
leaves of wire (*Here I Love You*)
Ah woman, I do not know how you could contain me/ in the earth of your soul,
(*The Song of Despair*)

- **metaphors of light:**

The fiesta of sunset (*We Have Lost Even*)
tree of light (*Thinking, Tangling Shadows*)

- **metaphors of burning:**

In your eyes the flames of the twilight fought on. (*I Remember You As You Were*)
And my soul dances, seared with curls of fire. (*Thinking, Tangling Shadows*)

- **metaphors of time: -**

- **metaphors of death:**

The death of the thin day (*Drunk with Pines*)

- **metaphors of night:**

A butterfly of shadow has come to sleep on your belly. (*White Bee*)
on the shore of evening (*I Have Gone Making)*
I made the wall of shadow draw back. (*The Song of Despair*)

**b) grammatical analysis of metaphors:**

**Verbal metaphors:**

The clouds travel like white handkerchiefs of good-bye/ The wind, traveling, waving them in its hands. (*The Morning Is Full*)
(words) are fleeing from my dark lair. (*So that You Will Hear Me*)
In your eyes the flames of the twilight fought on. (*I Remember You As You Were*)
the leaves garnered your voice (*I Remember You As You Were*)
Bonfire of awe in which my thirst was burning. (*I Remember You As You Were*)
Sweet blue hyacinth twisted over my soul. (*I Remember You As You Were*)
I feel your eyes traveling (*I Remember You As You Were*)
my deep longings migrated (*I Remember You As You Were*)
The evenings were blazing. (*I Remember You As You Were*)

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There in the highest blaze my solitude lengthens/ and flames (*Leaning into the Afternoons*)
from your regard sometimes the coast of dread emerges (*Leaning into the Afternoons*)
The birds of night peck at the first stars (*Leaning into the Afternoons*)
The night gallops on its shadowy mare/ shedding blue tassels over the land. (*Leaning into the Afternoons*)
(…) There the night flutters. (*White Bee*)
You have deep eyes in which the night flails. (*White Bee*)
(…) The sea wind is hunting stray gulls. (*White Bee*)
The water walks barefoot in the wet streets. (*White Bee*)
From that tree the leaves complain as though they were sick. (*White Bee*)
Last hawser, in you creaks my last longing. (*White Bee*)
(…) I steer the fast sail of the roses (*Drunk with Pines*)
In the moist night my garment of kisses trembles. (*Drunk with Pines*)
(…) the blue night dropped on the world. (*We Have Lost Even*)
(…) the twilight goes erasing statues. (*We Have Lost Even*)
Almost out of the sky, half of the moon/ anchors between two mountains. (*Almost out of the Sky*)
Let's see how many stars are smashed in the pool. (*Almost out of the Sky*)
(half of the moon) … makes a cross of mourning between my eyes, and runs away. (*Almost out of the Sky*)
Forge of blue metals, nights of still combats,/ my heart revolves like a crazy wheel. (*Almost out of the Sky*)
Sometimes your glance flashes out under the sky. (*Almost out of the Sky*)
Longing that sliced my breast into pieces. (*Almost out of the Sky*)
You are peopled with echoes and nostalgic voices. (*Your Breast Is Enough*)
I have gone making the atlas of your body/ with crosses of fire. (*I Have Gone Making*)
My mouth went across: a spider, trying to hide. (*I Have Gone Making*)
The rain takes off her clothes. (*Every Day You Play*)
The storm (…) turns loose all the boats that were moored last night to the sky. (*Every Day You Play*)
While the sad wind goes slaughtering butterflies. (*Every Day You Play*)
So many times we have seen the morning star burn, kissing/ our eyes (*Every Day You Play*)
(…) the gray light unwind in turning fans (*Every Day You Play*)
My words rained over you, stroking you. (*Every Day You Play*)
It seems as though your eyes had flown away. (*I Like You to Be Still*)
The lamp of my soul dyes your feet (*In My Sky at Twilight*)
And my soul dances, seared with curls of fire. (*Thinking, Tangling Shadows*)
What silence peopled by echoes? (*Thinking, Tangling Shadows*)
Hunting horn through which the wind passes singing. (*Thinking, Tangling Shadows*)-?
In the dark pines the wind disentangles itself. (*Here I Love You*)
Days, all one kind, go chasing each other. (*Here I Love You*)
The snow unfurls in dancing figures. (*Here I Love You*)
A silver gull slips down from the west. (*Here I Love You*)
Sometimes my kisses go on those heavy vessels. (*Here I Love You*)
The afternoon moors there. (*Here I Love You*)
My life goes tired, hungry to no purpose. (*Here I Love You*)
My loathing wrestles with the slow twilights. (*Here I Love You*)
night (…) starts to sing to me. (*Here I Love You*)
The moon turns its clockwork dream. (*Here I Love You*)
The biggest stars look at me with your eyes. (*Here I Love You*)
(…) the pines in the wind/ want to sing your name with their leaves of wire. (*Here I Love You*)

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(…) the sun (…) that curls seaweeds (*Girl Lithe and Tawny*)

A black yearning sun is braided into the strannds/ of your black mane (*Girl Lithe and Tawny*)

(…) the stars are blue and shiver in the distance. (*Tonight I Can Write*)

The night wind revolves in the sky and sings. (*Tonight I Can Write*)

The same night whitening the same trees. (*Tonight I Can Write*)

My voice tried to find the wind to touch her hearing. (*Tonight I Can Write*)

The memory of you emerges from the night around me. (*The Song of Despair*)

The river mingles its stubborn lament with the sea. (*The Song of Despair*)

Cold flower heads are raining over my heart./ Oh pit of debris, fierce cave of the shipwrecked. (*The Song of Despair*)

You still flowered in songs, you still broke in currents. (*The Song of Despair*)

Only the tremulous shadow twists in my hands. (*The Song of Despair*)

**Nominal metaphors**:

A [is (not)] B – equivalence metaphor:

You were the grey beret and the still heart. (*I Remember You As You Were*)

(the poet's lover is) Sky from a ship. Field from the hills:/ Your memory is made of light, of smoke of a still pond! (*I Remember You As You Were*)

(the feeling of love) White bee, you buzz in my soul (*White Bee*)

I am the one without hope, the word without echoes (*White Bee*)

(the poet's lover)Last hawser, in you creaks my last longing. (*White Bee*)

In my barren land you are the final rose. (*White Bee*)

The sky is a net crammed with shadowy fish. (*Every Day You Play*)

You are like my soul, butterfly of dream. (*I Like You to Be Still*)

(the storm) Stifling laments, milling shadowy hopes,/ taciturn miller (*Thinking, Tangling Shadows*)

(the world in its diversity)immense fan (*Thinking, Tangling Shadows*)

(tears) (…) it leaves two dark pools in your eyes. (*Girl Lithe and Tawny*)

You are the frenzied youth of the bee,/ the drunkenness of the wave, the power of the wheat-ear. (*Girl Lithe and Tawny*)

(the lover's body) Dark butterfly, sweet and definitive (*Girl Lithe and Tawny)*

There were thirst and hunger, and you were the fruit. (*The Song of Despair*)

There were grief and the ruins, and you were the miracle. (*The Song of Despair*)

AB – apposition:

Body of a woman, white hills, white tights (*Body of a Woman*)

(…) toy doll,/ earth-shell, in whom the earth sings! (*Ah Vastness of Pines*)

Body of my woman (…)/ My thirst, my boundless desire, my shifting road!/Dark river-beds where the eternal thirst flows and weariness follows, and the infinite ache. (*Body of a Woman*)

my words (…)/ Necklace, drunken bell (*So that You Will Hear Me*)

Ah your body, a frightened statue, naked. (*White Bee*)

Forge of blue metals, nights of still combats,/ my heart revolves like a crazy wheel. (*Almost out of the Sky*)

girl, question of smoke, corn tassel. (*Almost out of the Sky*)

My mouth went across: a spider, trying to hide. (*I Have Gone Making*)

B of A – prepositional metaphor:

Body of skin, of moss, of eager and firm milk. (*Body of a Woman*)

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Oh the goblets of the breasts! (*Body of a Woman*)
Oh the eyes of absence! (*Body of a Woman*)
The old propellers of the twilight (*The Light Wraps You*)
The great roots of night/ grow suddenly from your soul. (*The Light Wraps You*)
bow of hope (*Ah Vastness of Pines*)
flock of arrows (*Ah Vastness of Pines*)
the ears of wheat tolling in the mouth of the wind. (*Ah Vastness of Pines*)
the heart of summer (*The Morning Is Full*)
heart of the wind (*The Morning Is Full*)
the pulsing arrows of the birds (*The Morning Is Full*)
the door of the summer's wind (*The Morning Is Full*)
The wind of anguish (*So that You Will Hear Me*)
hurricanes of dreams (*So that You Will Hear Me*)
blood of old supplications (*So that You Will Hear Me*)
wave of anguish (*So that You Will Hear Me*)
In your eyes the flames of the twilight fought on. (*I Remember You As You Were*)
And the leaves fell in the water of your soul. (*I Remember You As You Were*)
Bonfire of awe in which my thirst was burning. (*I Remember You As You Were*)
from your regard sometimes the coast of dread emerges (*Leaning into the Afternoons*)
Cool arms of flowers and a lap of rose. (*White Bee*)
A butterfly of shadow has come to sleep on your belly. (*White Bee*)
(…) I steer the fast sail of the roses (*Drunk with Pines*)
The death of the thin day (*Drunk with Pines*)
still dressed in gray and bitter sounds/ and a sad crest of abandoned spray. (*Drunk with Pines*)
the throat of the fortunate isles (*Drunk with Pines*)
In the moist night my garment of kisses trembles. (*Drunk with Pines*)
The fiesta of sunset (*We Have Lost Even*)
Turning, wandering night, the digger of eyes. (*Almost out of the Sky*)
cyclone of fury (*Almost out of the Sky*)
white lily of conflagration (*Almost out of the Sky*)
muddy swirl of torments (*Almost out of the Sky*)
the atlas of your body (*I Have Gone Making*)
on the shore of evening (*I Have Gone Making*)
the plum of your mouth (*Every Day You Play*)
the sunned mother-of-pearl of your body. (*Every Day You Play*)
rustic baskets of kisses (*Every Day You Play*)
The lamp of my soul dyes your feet (*In My Sky at Twilight*)
(the poet's lover) reaper of my evening song (*In My Sky at Twilight*)
(the poet's lover) huntress of the depths of my eyes (*In My Sky at Twilight*)
My soul is born on the shore of your eyes of mournig. (*In My Sky at Twilight*)
In your eyes of mourning the land of dreams begins. (*In My Sky at Twilight*)
belfry of fogs (*Thinking, Tangling Shadows*)
tree of light (*Thinking, Tangling Shadows*)
And my soul dances, seared with curls of fire. (*Thinking, Tangling Shadows*)
(the mast) the black cross of a ship (*Here I Love You*)
leaves of wire (*Here I Love You*)
(…) your mouth that has the smile of the water (*Girl Lithe and Tawny*)
A black yearning sun is braided into the strannds/ of your black mane (*Girl Lithe and Tawny*)

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(the poet's heart) Cold flower heads are raining over my heart./ Oh pit of debris, fierce cave of the shipwrecked. (*The Song of Despair*)

In the childhood of mist my soul, winged and wounded. (*The Song of Despair*)-inceputurile iubirii

I made the wall of shadow draw back. (*The Song of Despair*)

Ah woman, I do not know how you could contain me/ in the earth of your soul, in the cross of your arms. (*The Song of Despair*)

Cemetery of kisses, there is still fire in your tombs,/ still the fruited boughs burn, pecked at by birds. (*The Song of Despair*)

This was my destiny and in it was the voyage of my longing. (*The Song of Despair*)

The rustling belt of the sea girdles the shore. (*The Song of Despair*)

Taken into account the above classifications, we can draw some conclusions about the metaphors in Neruda's early poetry. Out of a total of 85 identified metaphors, only 19 belong to the abstract domain. This shows Neruda's tendency to create a very concrete and normal poetic universe. The same idea is supported by the very large number of metaphors belonging to every-day/daily universe (41), by the large number of metaphors implying transpositions between terms belonging to the four kingdoms of nature (15) and by the metaphors implying cosmic-human transpositions (2).

Neruda's love for nature can be seen in the masteful use of the metaphors implying transpositions between terms belonging to the four kingdoms of nature. The beloved woman and her body appear in association with elements of the natural world such as flowers (rose*, flower, leaves*), plants (*moss*), cereals (*corn, wheat*), fruits (*plum, fruit*), and insects (*spider, butterfly, bee*).

In point of grammar, there are more nominal metaphors (79) than verbal metaphors (66). Out of 79 nominal metaphors, 56 are prepositional metaphors, 15 equivalence metaphors and 8 appositions.

Alongside metaphors, **similes** play an essential part in rendering the uniqueness of Neruda's poetic universe.

From the semantic point of view, similes can be analysed in point of the association of the categories to which the terms of the comparison belong, namely [Abstract] and [Concret]:

[A]→[C] So that you will hear me/ my words/ sometimes grow thin/ as the tracks of the gulls on the beaches. (*So that You Will Hear Me*)

my words/ They climb on my old suffering like ivy. (*So that You Will Hear Me*)

(…) heart like a house (*I Remember You As You Were*)

my kisses fell, happy as embers. (*I Remember You As You Were*)

There in the highest blaze my solitude lengthens/ and flames,/ its arms turning like a drowning man's (*Leaning into the Afternoons*)

my heart revolves like a crazy wheel. (*Almost out of the Sky*)

my heart closes like a nocturnal flower. (*I Have Gone Making*)

And let me talk to you with your silence/ that is bright as a lamp, simple as a ring. (*I Like You to Be Still*)

Your silence is that of a star, as remote and candid. (*I Like You to Be Still*)

Your plunder/ stills your nocturnal regard as though it were water. (*In My Sky at Twilight*)

my nets of music are wide as the sky (*In My Sky at Twilight*)

Your presence is foreign, as strange to me as a thing. (*Thinking, Tangling Shadows*)

(…) the verse falls to the soul like dew to the pasture

The hour of the spell that blazed like a lighthouse. (*The Song of Despair*)

and the infinite oblivion shattered you like a jar. (*The Song of Despair*)

And the tenderness, light as water and as flour. (*The Song of Despair*)

[C]→[A] Body of a woman (…) you look like a world, lying in surrender. (*Body of a Woman*)

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The birds of night peck at the first stars/ that flash like my soul when I love you (*Leaning into the Afternoons*)
and you are sad, all at once, like a voyage. (*Your Breast Is Enough*)
and you are like the word Melancholy. (*I Like You to Be Still*)
You are like the night, with its stillness and constellations. (*I Like You to Be Still*)
You swallowed everything, like distance./ (…) like time. (*The Song of Despair*)

[C]→[C] I was alone like a tunnel. (*Body of a Woman*)
The clouds travel like white handkerchiefs of good-bye (*The Morning Is Full*)
your hands smooth as grapes (*So that You Will Hear Me*)
for your white hands, smooth as grapes (*So that You Will Hear Me*)
Clasping my arms like a climbing plant (*I Remember You As You Were*)
I send out red signals across your absent eyes/ that move like the sea near a lighthouse (*Leaning into the Afternoons*)
Your breasts seem like white snails. (*White Bee*)
the throat of the fortunate isles/ that are white and sweet as cool hips. (*Drunk with Pines*)
your parallel body yields to my arms/ like a fish infinitely fastened to my soul. (*Drunk with Pines*)
Sometimes a piece of sun/ burned like a coin between my hands. (*We Have Lost Even*)
(…) my cape rolled like a hurt dog at my feet. (*We Have Lost Even*)
You arrive like the dew to the cupped flowers (*Your Breast Is Enough*)
You (…)/ Eternally in flight like the wave. (*Your Breast Is Enough*)
I have said that you sang in the wind/ like the pines and like the masts/ Like them you are tall and taciturn. (*Your Breast Is Enough*)
(I) Sing, burn, flee, like a belfry at the hands of a madman. (*I Have Gone Making*)
You are more than this white head that I hold tightly/ as a cluster of fruit, every day, between my hands. (*Every Day You Play*)
a butterfly cooing/ like a dove. (*I Like You to Be Still*)
In my sky at twilight you are like a cloud (*In My Sky at Twilight*)
I see myself forgotten like those old anchors. (*Here I Love You*)
You play with the sun as with a little brook (*Girl Lithe and Tawny*)
Dark butterfly, sweet and definitive/ like the wheat-field and the sun, the poppy and the water (*Girl Lithe and Tawny*)
(I) Deserted like the wharves at dawn. (*The Song of Despair*)
You swallowed everything (…)/ Like the sea.. (*The Song of Despair*)
Like a jar you housed the infinite tenderness. (*The Song of Despair*)
From billow to billow you still called and sang./ Standing like a sailor in the prow of a vessel. (*The Song of Despair*)
(I) Deserted like the wharves at dawn. (*The Song of Despair*)

[A]→[A] The numberless heart of the wind (…) resounding among the trees/ like a language full of wars and songs. (*The Morning Is Full*)

From the synthactic point of view, similes can be lexical (A is X like B, where B can be either a word or a sentence) or syntactical: simple (only one B term) or multiple (several B terms). In its turn, the syntactical multiple simile can be: linear (A is (X) like B1, like B2, …) or ramified (A is (x) like B1, (y) like B2, (z) like B3…). Thus, the similes in *Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair* can be classified as follows:

I) Simple similes:

Body of a woman (…) you look like a world, lying in surrender. (*Body of a Woman*)

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I was alone like a tunnel. (*Body of a Woman*)
The clouds travel like white handkerchiefs of good-bye (*The Morning Is Full*)
The numberless heart of the wind (…) resounding among the trees/ like a language full of wars and songs. (*The Morning Is Full*)
So that you will hear me/ my words/ sometimes grow thin/ as the tracks of the gulls on the beaches. (*So that You Will Hear Me*)
your hands smooth as grapes (*So that You Will Hear Me*)
my words/ They climb on my old suffering like ivy. (*So that You Will Hear Me*)
for your white hands, smooth as grapes (*So that You Will Hear Me*)
Clasping my arms like a climbing plant (*I Remember You As You Were*)
(…) heart like a house (*I Remember You As You Were*)
my kisses fell, happy as embers. (*I Remember You As You Were*)
There in the highest blaze my solitude lengthens/ and flames,/ its arms turning like a drowning man's (*Leaning into the Afternoons*)
I send out red signals across your absent eyes/ that move like the sea near a lighthouse (*Leaning into the Afternoons*)
The birds of night peck at the first stars/ that flash like my soul when I love you (*Leaning into the Afternoons*)
Your breasts seem like white snails. (*White Bee*)
the throat of the fortunate isles/ that are white and sweet as cool hips. (*Drunk with Pines*)
your parallel body yields to my arms/ like a fish infinitely fastened to my soul. (*Drunk with Pines*)
Sometimes a piece of sun/ burned like a coin between my hands. (*We Have Lost Even*)
(…) my cape rolled like a hurt dog at my feet. (*We Have Lost Even*)
my heart revolves like a crazy wheel. (*Almost out of the Sky*)
You arrive like the dew to the cupped flowers (*Your Breast Is Enough*)
You (…)/ Eternally in flight like the wave. (*Your Breast Is Enough*)
and you are sad, all at once, like a voyage. (*Your Breast Is Enough*)
You gather things to you like an old road. (*Your Breast Is Enough*)
(I) Sing, burn, flee, like a belfry at the hands of a madman. (*I Have Gone Making*)
my heart closes like a nocturnal flower. (*I Have Gone Making*)
You are more than this white head that I hold tightly/ as a cluster of fruit, every day, between my hands. (*Every Day You Play*)
and you are like the word Melancholy. (*I Like You to Be Still*)
a butterfly cooing/ like a dove. (*I Like You to Be Still*)
You are like the night, with its stillness and constellations. (*I Like You to Be Still*)
Your silence is that of a star, as remote and candid. (*I Like You to Be Still*)
In my sky at twilight you are like a cloud (*In My Sky at Twilight*)
Your plunder/ stills your nocturnal regard as though it were water. (*In My Sky at Twilight*)
my nets of music are wide as the sky (*In My Sky at Twilight*)
Your presence is foreign, as strange to me as a thing. (*Thinking, Tangling Shadows*)
I see myself forgotten like those old anchors. (*Here I Love You*)
You play with the sun as with a little brook (*Girl Lithe and Tawny*)
(…) the verse falls to the soul like dew to the pasture (*Tonight I Can Write*)
(I) Deserted like the wharves at dawn. (*The Song of Despair*)
The hour of the spell that blazed like a lighthouse. (*The Song of Despair*)
Like a jar you housed the infinite tenderness,/ and the infinite oblivion shattered you like a jar. (*The Song of Despair*)
From billow to billow you still called and sang./ Standing like a sailor in the prow of a vessel. (*The Song of Despair*)

II) a) Multiple linear similes:

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I have said that you sang in the wind/ like the pines and like the masts.(*Your Breast Is Enough*)

Dark butterfly, sweet and definitive/ like the wheat-field and the sun, the poppy and the water (*Girl Lithe and Tawny*)

You swallowed everything, like distance./ Like the sea, like time. (*The Song of Despair*)

And the tenderness, light as water and as flour. (*The Song of Despair*)

b) Multiple ramified similes:

And let me talk to you with your silence/ that is bright as a lamp, simple as a ring. (*I Like You to Be Still*)

At the same time, similes can be explicit or implicit (metaphorical). The explicit simile requires the presence of a common characteristic in the text (X), which can be a word or a sentence, whereas in the case of the implicit one, the common characteristic (X) is missing from the text and the receiver of the message has to decipher it[4].

Mention should be made of the fact that, apart from the explicit and implicit similes, we have identified some special categories of similes, which we have considered sub-categories of explicit similes, because their structure contributes to clarifying the meaning of the respective comparison.

One of these special categories is that in which the common characteristic is neither a word (x), nor a sentence, but a construction, a structure that helps the reader understand the basis on which the comparison was made. Here is such an example:

Body of a woman (…) you look like a world, lying in surrender. (*Body of a Woman*)

Term A is *body of a woman*, term B is *a world*, the corelative strucuture is *look like*. If the simile were only made up of the above mentioned terms, it would be implicit, the reader finding it difficult to imagine the basis on which the figure of speech is constructed. By adding the structure *lying in surrender*, the author turns the implicit metaphor into a more explicit one. Thus, the reader can infer that the body can be compared to a world, a new world that waits to be discovered for the first time. We refer to this category of similes as to explicit similes with a clue-structure.

The clue-structure can be made up of different parts of speech, verbs or nouns. In the below example, the clue-structure is made up of a preposition and a noun- *at twilight*:

In my sky at twilight you are like a cloud (*In My Sky at Twilight*)

Another category of similes can be illustrated by the below example:

The numberless heart of the wind (…) resounding among the trees/ like a language full of wars and songs. (*The Morning Is Full*).

The term A is *heart of the wind*, the term B is *language*, the correlative term is *like*. The structure *resounding among the trees* makes the simile more explicit, as it gives us a hint about the reason why Neruda chose to compare *the wind* with *a language*, that is because of the sound.

From the above mentioned example we realize that the correlative structure is made up of an *-ing* verb (*resounding*) and other terms that bring even more clarity to the respective similes. We refer to this category of similes as to explicit similes with other verbs than the verb *to be/to look/to seem* in a non-predicative mood.

A different category of similes is that in which the correlative verb is other than *to be, to look or to seem* and is predicative. It is a well-known fact that, apart from the verb *to be* plus various correlative terms, a simile can be made up of other verbs that are in a predicative mood, such as the verb *to grow* (*to grow thin*) in the below example:

So that you will hear me/ my words/ sometimes grow thin/ as the tracks of the gulls on the beaches. (*So that You Will Hear Me*)

The term A is *my words*, the term B is *the tracks of the gulls*, the correlative is *as*. If the author had chosen the verb *to be*, the simile would have been implicit and the reader would have

[4] The semantic and grammatical analysis of comparisons is based on the structure suggested in *Dictionary of Language Sciences*. Bucharest: Nemira Publishing House, 2005, pp. 118-120.

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found it very diffilut to understand the basis of such a comparison. But Neruda used the nominal predicate *to grow thin* and the meaning of the simile became clearer.

Thus, we consider the above mentioned special category of similes as being closer to the class of explicit similes. We refer to this category of similes as to explicit similes with other verbs than the verb to be/to look/to seem in a predicative mood

Thus, we suggest the below simile classification:

I) a) Explicit similes with a common characteristic (a word or a sentence):

I was alone like a tunnel. (*Body of a Woman*)
for your white hands, smooth as grapes (*So that You Will Hear Me*)
the throat of the fortunate isles/ that are white and sweet as cool hips. (*Drunk with Pines*)
And let me talk to you with your silence/ that is bright as a lamp, simple as a ring. (*I Like You to Be Still*)
You are like the night, with its stillness and constellations. (*I Like You to Be Still*)
my nets of music are wide as the sky (*In My Sky at Twilight*)
Your presence is foreign, as strange to me as a thing. (*Thinking, Tangling Shadows*)
Dark butterfly, sweet and definitive/ like the wheat-field and the sun, the poppy and the water (*Girl Lithe and Tawny*)
And the tenderness, light as water and as flour. (*The Song of Despair*)
(I) Deserted like the wharves at dawn. (*The Song of Despair*)

b) Explicit similes with a clue-structure:

Body of a woman (…) you look like a world, lying in surrender. (*Body of a Woman*)- the clue-structure is *lying in surrender*.
In my sky at twilight you are like a cloud (*In My Sky at Twilight*)- the clue-structure is *at twilight*.
You (…)/ Eternally in flight like the wave. (*Your Breast Is Enough*)- the clue-structure is *in flight*.

c) Explicit similes with other verbs than the verb *to be/to look/to seem* in the predicative mood:

your parallel body yields to my arms/ like a fish infinitely fastened to my soul. (*Drunk with Pines*)
Like a jar you housed the infinite tenderness,/ and the infinite oblivion shattered you like a jar. (*The Song of Despair*)
The clouds travel like white handkerchiefs of good-bye (*The Morning Is Full*)
So that you will hear me/ my words/ sometimes grow thin/ as the tracks of the gulls on the beaches. (*So that You Will Hear Me*)
my words/ They climb on my old suffering like ivy. (*So that You Will Hear Me*)
Clasping my arms like a climbing plant (*I Remember You As You Were*)
my kisses fell, happy as embers. (*I Remember You As You Were*)
There in the highest blaze my solitude lengthens/ and flames,/ its arms turning like a drowning man’s (*Leaning into the Afternoons*)
I send out red signals across your absent eyes/ that move like the sea near a lighthouse (*Leaning into the Afternoons*)
The birds of night peck at the first stars/ that flash like my soul when I love you (*Leaning into the Afternoons*)
Sometimes a piece of sun/ burned like a coin between my hands. (*We Have Lost Even*)
(…) my cape rolled like a hurt dog at my feet. (*We Have Lost Even*)
my heart revolves like a crazy wheel. (*Almost out of the Sky*)
You arrive like the dew to the cupped flowers (*Your Breast Is Enough*)

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I have said that you sang in the wind/ like the pines and like the masts/ Like them you are tall and taciturn,/ and you are sad, all at once, like a voyage. (*Your Breast Is Enough*)

You gather things to you like an old road. (*Your Breast Is Enough*)

(I) Sing, burn, flee, like a belfry at the hands of a madman. (*I Have Gone Making*)

my heart closes like a nocturnal flower. (*I Have Gone Making*)

You are more than this white head that I hold tightly/ as a cluster of fruit, every day, between my hands. (*Every Day You Play*)

a butterfly cooing/ like a dove. (*I Like You to Be Still*)

I see myself forgotten like those old anchors. (*Here I Love You*)

(…) the verse falls to the soul like dew to the pasture (*Tonight I Can Write*)

You swallowed everything, like distance./ Like the sea, like time. (*The Song of Despair*)

The hour of the spell that blazed like a lighthouse. (*The Song of Despair*)

d) Explicit similes with other verbs than the verb *to be/to look/to seem* in a non-predicative mood:

The numberless heart of the wind (…) resounding among the trees/ like a language full of wars and songs. (*The Morning Is Full*)

From billow to billow you still called and sang./ Standing like a sailor in the prow of a vessel. (*The Song of Despair*)

II. Implicit metaphors:

(…) heart like a house (*I Remember You As You Were*)

Your breasts seem like white snails. (*White Bee*)

and you are like the word Melancholy. (*I Like You to Be Still*)

Taken into account the above classifications, we can infer some particular traits of the similes in Neruda's early poetry.

Thus, out of a total of 49 identified similes, the very large number of comparisons with terms belonging to the category [C]→[C] (26) and to the category [A] → [C] (16) stands for Neruda's tendency to create a poetic universe as normal and natural as possible. The same conclusion can be drawn if we take into account the fact that there is only one comparison belonging to the category [A] →[A] and only 6 belonging to the category [C] →[A].

The poet does not want to create an abstract, fantastical universe or ambiguous meanings, difficult to be deciphered. That is why the majority of similes are explicit, that is 39 (out of a total of 42 similes), only 3 similes being implicit (metaphorical). In the case of the implicit ones, there is no difficulty for the reader to grasp the common characteristic for the two terms forming the respective simile. Thus, in the simile *Your breasts seem like white snails*. (*White Bee*), the common characteristic is the form; in *you are like the word Melancholy (I Like You to Be Still)*, the common trait is sadness, whereas in the simile *heart like a house (I Remember You As You Were)*, the common characteristic is intimacy, cosiness, safeness.

Neruda creates a universe characterized by simplicity, with no adornments. That is most of the similes are simple. There are only 5 multiple similes out of which only one is ramified.

What is striking about Neruda's similes is, just like in the case of metaphors, the extraordinary, striking association of the terms forming a simile. Suffice it to mention *You swallowed everything, like distance./ Like the sea, like time.* (*The Song of Despair*) or *I was alone like a tunnel.* (*Body of a Woman*), figures of speech with a maximum degree of lyrical expresiveness and emotional tension.

Mention should be made of the fact that we have identified only five examples of similes with the verb missing. Four examples are explicit similes with a common characteristic:

Dark butterfly, sweet and definitive/ like the wheat-field and the sun, the poppy and the water (*Girl Lithe and Tawny*).

(I)Deserted like the wharves at dawn. (*The Song of Despair*)

And the tenderness, light as water and as flour. (*The Song of Despair*)

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for your white hands, smooth as grapes (*So that You Will Hear Me*)

The fifth example is an explicit simile with a clue-structure:

You (…)/ Eternally in flight like the wave. (*Your Breast Is Enough*).

At the same time, we have identified an example of explicit simile with more than one predicative verb: (I) Sing, burn, flee, like a belfry at the hands of a madman. (*I Have Gone Making*).

The verbs used by Neruda in the predicative mood (others than *to be/to look/to seem*) in order to form similes are: *to yield, to house, to travel, to grow thin, to climb, to clasp, to feel, to turn, to move, to flash, to burn, to roll, to revolve, to arrive, to sing, to gather, to sing, to burn, to flee, to close, to hold, to coo, to see, to fall, to swallow, to blaze*.

What is striking about Neruda's poetry is that, at first sight, it seems very simple -it is only an appearance, the respective simplicity arising from the masterful use of metaphors and similes and from their striking choice. However, the simpler it seems to be, the deeper it touches the depth of the reader's soul! It has a profound cosmic feeling and the idea of love is seen by means of nature. Nature and love are intertwined- just like they were at the beginning of time- in order to obtain the idea of universality. The poet becomes the center of the universe, love is a cosmic event, the love moments become sacred and the two lovers form an eternal couple.

In point of style, his early poetry may be characterized by simplicity and sincerity: "I locked the door on a rhetoric that I could never go on with, and deliberately toned down my style and my expression, looking for more unpretentious qualities, for the harmony of my own world" (Neruda 2001). The poetry can also be considered a "self-exploration through metaphor and sound" (Wilson 2008). Neruda's unmistakable stylistic signature consists in a true explosion of metaphors and similes giving birth to thrilling love poems.

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