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THE SURREALIST POETIC IMAGINATION AND THE TRUJILLO DICTATORSHIP IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, 1943-1947

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La Poesía Sorprendida was a literary movement and journal that flourished in the Dominican Republic between 1943 and 1947. The editors of the journal, Alberto Baeza Flores, Franklin Mises Burgos, Mariano Lebrón Saviñón, Freddy Gatón Arce, and Eugenio Granell, defined the movement in primarily Surrealist terms and published many of the major modernists of the period. It also featured the drawings of Granell, a notable Spanish Surrealist. La poesía sorprendida published a total of 21 numbers (at 500 copies per edition), as well as 14 books of poetry. In its time, writers from Latin American, Europe, and the United States recognized La Poesía Sorprendida as an important literary movement. André Breton, the notorious founder of French Surrealism, hailed the literary movement's journal as the best produced in Latin America.

The movement's winning of support and praise from so many notable

international writers who contributed to its magazine, as well as its ability to flourish for several years under the Trujillo dictatorship, attests to a level of the movement's success in itself worth studying. Yet the movement's greatest significance lies in its fusion of surrealist aesthetics and radical politics in its attempt to rescue the political imagination from the ideological confines of Trujillo's neo-colonial dictatorship subject to U.S. political and economic interests. La Poesía Sorprendida did not attempt such a rescue by engaging in a frontal attack on the regime. To criticize openly Trujillo's rule was tantamount to committing political suicide. Rather, like other discontented organizations and individuals in the Dominican Republic, the sorprendistas' project was essentially clandestine, relying, as it did, on employing surrealist languages and literary forms whose meaning escaped the cultural censors for a time. La Poesía Sorprendida took the revolutionary techniques, themes, and implications of surrealism and shaped them into a scathing rejection of the political, social, and cultural life of the Dominican Republic under U.S. neo-colonial rule.