

Between Dissidence and Good Neighbor Diplomacy: Reading Julia de Burgos with the FBI

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ABSTRACT

Little is known about Julia de Burgos's six months as an audit clerk at the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs in Washington, D.C. (1944-1945). This article recounts this interlude in Burgos's career by focusing on her FBI file and the Hatch Act investigation that led to her termination as a federal employee. Reading the FBI file in the vein of literary criticism, the article shows how bureau ghosttranslators characterized Burgos's political poems as works of dissident Nationalism. In so far as Burgos's poems navigate the competing ideologies of Puerto Rican Nationalism and Good Neighbor diplomacy, the article links them to a hemispheric matrix of writing—by Elizabeth Bishop, Pablo Neruda, Luis Palés Matos, Samuel Putnam and William Carlos Williams, among others—in which Puerto Rican decolonial politics intersect international communism and anticommunism. [Keywords: Julia de Burgos; Pablo Neruda; Elizabeth Bishop; Federal Bureau of Investigations; Good Neighbor Policy; Puerto Rican Nationalism]

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Biographical portraits of Julia de Burgos often record two details of her spotty employment history in quick, seemingly innocuous succession (Rodríguez Pagán 1985: 166). First, from summer 1943 to September 1944, she worked as a contributor and later as the editor of the Cultural Page for *Pueblos Hispánicos*, a Spanish-language weekly edited by Puerto Rican writers Juan Antonio Corretjer and Consuelo Lee Tapia in New York City. Second, she relocated to Washington D.C. along with her new husband, the musician Armando Marín, where she worked from September 14, 1944 until May 18, 1945 as a clerk in the Audit Section of the Budget and Finance Division of Nelson Rockefeller's federal agency, the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (CIAA). The first of these interludes has been studied in some detail, while the second has not (Pérez-Rosario 2013). This essay fills in several missing particulars, and in so doing seeks to answer a simple question: under what circumstances could Burgos have worked successively for *Pueblos Hispánicos* and CIAA, given that the two organizations were devoted to largely incompatible ideologies, with oppositional views on the status of Puerto Rico in hemispheric political thought?

The incompatibility and outright antagonism between *Pueblos Hispánicos* and CIAA requires some emphasis. At CIAA, policy toward Puerto Rico was an aggravating admixture of colonial administration and general neglect, a policy it occasionally sought to ameliorate with the cultural diplomacy initiatives it sponsored—most notably, the contentious 1941 First Inter-American Writer's Conference, headlined by Archibald MacLeish and William Carlos Williams (Putnam 1941b: 7). By contrast, *Pueblos Hispánicos*, edited by Corretjer, the Secretary General of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party, openly agitated against the rhetorical gestures of hemispheric solidarity and mutual understanding that comprised CIAA protocol. The newspaper's mission statement promoted solidarity among the *colonias* of minority Hispanics in the U.S., immediate independence for Puerto Rico and the liberation of the Philippines, the end of racial and religious discrimination, organized labor throughout the hemisphere, and the antifascist legacy of Spanish Republicanism (Corretjer and Lee Tapia 1943–1944). Allied with Earl Browder, Secretary General of the Communist

Party of the United States of America (CPUSA), who Corretjer and Pedro Albizu Campos befriended while cellmates in the federal penitentiary in Atlanta, *Pueblos Hispanos* was the CPUSA's most significant venue in the Latino community. Accordingly, at its founding, *Pueblos Hispanos* was greeted with approbation almost nowhere besides Samuel Putnam's regular "Good Neighbor" column in *The Daily Worker* (1943b: 7). There, Putnam advertised it in contrast to what he often derisively called "The Rockefeller Committee" (1941e: 3–5). In all, *Pueblos Hispanos* militated, deeply and continually, on behalf of a laborite, interethnic, Nationalist counter-imaginary to what Browder called CIAA's "diplomatic fiction" of hemispheric solidarity (Browder 1942: 219). Although the June 1941 Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union turned coalitional antifascism into a proxy for anticolonialism in many quarters of international Communism and Good Neighbor diplomacy alike, Puerto Rican Nationalists associated with *Pueblos Hispanos* often chose not to defer their independence claims to CIAA's liberal antifascism.

That Burgos worked for both *Pueblos Hispanos* and CIAA thus raises unresolved biographical questions, which remain open due to the sparse record of Burgos's time in Washington, the city she famously described in a forlorn letter to her sister Consuelo as "la capital del silencio" (Burgos 1945). Possibly, her application to CIAA owed only to the modest necessity of finding work. Her low-level position as one of approximately 825 CIAA employees in Washington (among a total of 1,285 full-time employees across the hemisphere) lends credence to this thesis, but it should not disallow us from inquiring into her ideological agency within the government bureaucracy.¹ Did Burgos imagine continuities between the feminist, laborite hemispheric cultural identity she crafted in the dissenting poems and cultural profiles she submitted to *Pueblos Hispanos*, and the clerical work on behalf of state-sponsored inter-Americanism she performed at CIAA? Or did she recognize them as irreconcilable? If the latter, did she use her position at CIAA to covertly work on behalf of Puerto Rican Nationalism, or did Washington allow her to distance herself from her radical associations in New York's Puerto Rican colony in a shrewd display of ideological flexibility? And how does Burgos's work at CIAA compare to other poets who were conscripted by—or else critiqued—inter-American cultural diplomacy?

The best place to begin investigating [these questions] is Burgos's extensive FBI file, which was likely opened in the course of the bureau's mundane scraping of the Pueblos Hispanos contributor list, and which ultimately certifies radical affiliations Burgos may have been in the process of disavowing.

These questions ought to be asked even if many prove unanswerable. The best place to begin investigating them is Burgos's extensive FBI file, which was likely opened in the course of the bureau's mundane scraping of the *Pueblos Hispanos* contributor list, and which ultimately certifies radical affiliations Burgos may have been in the process of disavowing.² Despite the file's propensity for rumors and insinuation, it is a crucial document of her wartime political affiliations, a revealing portrait of her most skeptical readers' understanding of the political poetry she wrote for *La Acción* and *Pueblos Hispanos*, and an account of a previously unknown—but determining—fact of her career: the Hatch Act investigation that led to her termination at CIAA under suspicion of subversive political activity. At nearly 100 pages, it also may be the longest work of criticism on Burgos conducted during her life, although to acknowledge the file as a literary-critical artifact requires a discussion of its peculiarly decontextualizing protocols of reading and translation, especially as they relate to concurrent practices such as New Criticism.

Burgos was not alone in navigating between radical Nationalism and Good Neighbor diplomacy. Given the partiality of her FBI file, this article also compares her to a network of leftist poets and poetry critics who participated in corporate liberal institutions such as CIAA, but who laced their participation with other agendas. These include Pablo Neruda and Luis Palés Matos, who knew and admired Burgos, and Elizabeth Bishop, Samuel Putnam, Muriel Rukeyser, and William Carlos Williams, who in all likelihood did not.³ Collectively, this network of writers present a complex of wartime positions on hemispheric cultural diplomacy and Puerto Rico—positions crafted by writers who were sometimes conscripted as cultural diplomats by institutions of good neighborliness, and who elsewhere functioned as dissidents who used Good Neighbor diplomacy to stress Puerto Rican sovereignty at the junctures of ethnonationalism, aesthetic modernism, and international socialism. The network of Good Neighbor poets deinsularizes—though it does not unmake—the Latino and diasporic frameworks in which critics conventionally emplace Burgos's work. Despite her disenfranchisement as a colonial subject, Burgos makes serious claims on the stories of US and Latin American poetry

in the early 1940s. For at precisely this moment, Puerto Rico offered new prospects of reciprocity, as well as new terms of conflict, for these two long-opposed literary categories. Burgos joins a canonical company of poets who attempted, from partial perspectives and with variable degrees of state sanction, to invigorate the imagination of a singular poetry of the Americas.

Burgos's FBI Ghosttranslator

Burgos's first English-language translator was neither poet nor scholar, but the anonymous agent in the New York office of the Federal Bureau of Investigations who opened her file on July 6, 1944. Subsequently, the first Anglophone readers of her work were the agents in the field offices of New York, San Juan and Washington D.C., who expanded her security index card into a substantial dossier over the following decade. In *F.B. Eyes: How J. Edgar Hoover's Ghostreaders Framed African American Literature*, William J. Maxwell elaborates the bureau's pervasive practice of ghostreading, which he defines as "a duplicitous interpretive enterprise [...] grasped through its effects if not always caught in the act" (2015: 5). He argues that the FBI ought to be regarded as "perhaps the most dedicated and influential forgotten critic" of African-American writing (2015: 127). Retooling Maxwell's concept of ghostreading, I propose that the Burgos file adds ghosttranslating to the range of bureau practices that deserve new scholarly attention. The bureau exhibits a prime example of the wartime intelligence gathering that Emily Apter defines as a "translation zone" (2006: 6). Furthermore, voluminous files on key Puerto Rican figures such as Luis Muñoz Marín, Juan Antonio Corretjer, Pedro Albizu Campos, Clemente Soto Vélez, and Burgos suggest that Maxwell's theses on the FBI's readerly dedication to African-American literature also bears significantly on literary expressions of Puerto Rican Nationalism, as well as wider orbits of Latin American writing.

Burgos's file remained open until March 1955, nearly two years after her death. In the first of the file's four major sections, Burgos's ghostreaders and translators inspected her poems and articles for *Pueblos Hispanos*, seeking proof of Nationalist and Communist associations. After briefly losing sight of her in fall 1944, they transferred her file to Washington, where the second part of the file includes an investigation initiated by J. Edgar Hoover under section 9A of the 1939 Hatch Act, prohibiting partisan political activity among government employees in the Executive Branch (Stone 2004: 251). This act was used, in consort with the 1940 Smith Act, to suppress political extremism and shore

up government security against fifth column and Communist infiltrations. By the time they concluded the Hatch Act investigation by interviewing Burgos in person, the bureau had amassed at least fourteen confidential informants, including Burgos's neighbors, her postman, former employers, coworkers, and friends. The file was reopened in 1949 on the eve of McCarthyism, and again in 1955 to document the circumstances of her 1953 death (including interviews with her physician on the details of her ailments, and an account of the exhumation and repatriation of her remains).

A memo to J. Edgar Hoover from Special Agent in Charge E.E. Conroy discloses, via an informant, that Burgos intended to break with Pueblos Hispanos upon arrival in Washington D.C.

The FBI classified Puerto Rican subjects as native-born citizens, and Burgos's official threat status for the bureau therefore bears mention, for it was not among the standard "alien" wartime checkboxes (Communist, German, Fascist [Italian] and Japanese) on the security index. Instead, Burgos's profilers created the write-in category "Nationalist" under "Miscellaneous," and appended the following synopsis:

Subject born 2/17/14 Carolina, Puerto Rico. Active writer with PUEBLOS HISPANOS; presently edits Cultural Page. Reported to have definite Communist and Nationalist sympathies and to have joined the NATIONALIST PARTY in Puerto Rico, and to have known [REDACTED] [Juan Antonio Corretjer] since childhood; works side by side with him because of the identity of their principals. (U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation 6 July 1946)

True, Burgos had been associated with the Nationalist Party in Puerto Rico in 1936. And the matter of her "sympathies" for Nationalists and Communists as of 1943 seems clear enough, but by 1944 it is trickier. A memo to J. Edgar Hoover from Special Agent in Charge E.E. Conroy discloses, via an informant, that Burgos intended to break with *Pueblos Hispanos* upon arrival in Washington D.C.: "She has recently complained to various persons that she is not satisfied with her employers at *Pueblos Hispanos* as they are too Communistic and have lost sight of their original purpose, i.e. Independence for Puerto Rico" (U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation 20 July 1944). Overriding such stray rumors,

the agents compiled a compendious anthology of her writings in order to evidence her radical affinities. It includes a biography, complete employment history, translations of all or part of five poems (“Es nuestra la hora,” “Canto a Aguadilla,” “Campo,” “Una canción a Albizu Campos,” and “Canción a los Pueblos Hispanos de América y del mundo”), reports on several public recitations, a selection from her article “Cultura en función social,” the Hatch interview, and a growing miscellany of insinuations about her health, intellectual biography, and personal habits (“although she is considered an excellent poet and very intelligent she is known to have loose morals and sometimes become intoxicated”) (U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation 20 July 1944).

These reports render visible several tendencies frequently noted by recent scholars of FBI surveillance on expressive culture, such as the indiscriminate scooping actions that Claire Culleton and Karen Leick call “the bureau’s undiscerning shrimp net” (Culleton and Leick 2008: 2).⁴ They also display what Maxwell defines as the file’s generic identity: a group-authored, modernist montage, consisting of one part anthology, one part memorandum, and one part Foucauldian “police text,” full of “uncorroborated attitudes, possibilities and suspicions,” which jostle alongside other verifiable biographical elements (Maxwell 2015: 65). Yet forms of literary discernment in Burgos’s file, including translation and generic criticism, underscore Maxwell’s complementary proposal that “the FBI’s reading-intensive files qualify as works of literary commentary, state-subsidized explications debating informal curricula and obliquely bidding for interpretive dominance” (2015: 130).⁵ No matter that the FBI file was a jumble of half-baked insinuation and indictment: it now seems second only to the red press among Anglophone U.S. institutions of the 1940s that cultivated interpretive seriousness toward Puerto Rican letters.

The form of wrongheaded literary-translational criticism practiced by the FBI on Burgos’s poetry verifies some of the oft-dismissed, radical potentialities of Burgos’s “poesía comprometida” (committed poetry), which critics usually relegate to a second tier of her lyric achievement (Jiménez de Báez 1966: 124). This relegation only confirms broader dismissals of committed poetry in the sea of Cold War literary-critical orthodoxy, as when Octavio Paz, reflecting on “the poetry of social and political propaganda” as a dominant genre of the early 1940s, suggested in 1972: “The verbal search and the poetic adventure were sacrificed on the altars of clarity and political efficacy. A large part of those poems have disappeared as the columns and editorials of newspapers disappeared. They sought to bear witness to history,

and history has obliterated them” (Paz 1974: 158–9). To read Burgos’s “obliterated” newspaper poems now, returned to circulation by her editors and the digitization of *Pueblos Hispanos*, is not to observe the self-sacrifice of verbal inquiry and poetic adventure, for these qualities are often in evidence. Rather, it was her bureau readership that blithely mischaracterized and sacrificed her poetry’s adventurous lexical landscapes and generic initiatives.

Here, for example, is Burgos’s poem “Campo” (Countryside), first as it appeared in *Pueblos Hispanos* on July 3, 1943, followed by the bureau’s revelatory July 1944 translation:

¡Ese camino real abandonado!
 ¡Esa niña que va descalza tumbando mariposas!
 ¡Esa mañana amarga que se lava la cara en el arroyo!

Campo...

Jíbara atolondrada igual que la inocencia que te llena los párpados...
 Semilla taciturna que quieres no nacer en desvelada tierra de preguntas...
 Potro que ensillas manso horizonte armado de llanto campesino...

¡La tradición está ardiendo en el campo!
 ¡La esperanza está ardiendo en el campo!
 ¡El hombre está ardiendo en el campo!

Es la tierra que se abre, quemada de injusticias.
 No la apagan los ríos;
 no la apagan los charcos;
 ni el apetito de las nubes;
 ni el apetito de los pájaros.

La brasa está en el pecho robusto de raíces,
 pecho de tierra adulta madura para el salto,
 y para que desemboquen en sus ojos las estrellas ignoradas,
 y para recibir a Dios en sus barrios,
 y para secarse las tormentas del cuerpo entumecido,
 y para ponerle guardarraya a los amos.

Tiene pasos de luz la tierra blanca.
 Tiene brazos de fe la tierra negra.
 Tiene pulmón de viento la tierra enrojecida.

Hay mucho monte erguido desalojando cerros para la gran fogata,
 para el desquite de los surcos,
 para el sepulcro de las zafras.

¡Madura...
 recogerá la tierra su cosecha de hombres libertados!

¡La tiniebla hay que echarla del campo!
 ¡Con los riscos, si falta los brazos! (Burgos 1943: 10)

That abandoned main road,
 that barefoot boy chasing butterflies,
 that bitter morning which washes its face in the stream.

Countryside...
 Native as stupefied as the innocence which fills your eyes...
 Taciturn seed which does not wish to develop in the wakeful land filled with
 [questions...]
 colt, which you ride under the horizon filled with the cries of the countryside...

Treason is burning in the countryside,
 Hope is burning in the countryside,
 Man is burning in the countryside.

It is the land which is opened up, enflamed by injustices.
 The rivers do not extinguish it.
 The lakes do not extinguish it.
 Nor the appetite of the clouds,
 nor the thirst of the birds.

The ember glows in the strong breast filled with roots,
 breast of the adult earth, all ready for the plunder,

ready to have unknown stars fill its eyes,
 ready to receive God in its districts,
 ready to shake pain from its swollen body,
 ready to put a check on its masters.

The white soil has feet of light,
 the black soil has arms of faith,
 the red soil has the breath of the wind.

There are many steep mountains which thrust aside hills to receive the big light,
 to retrieve furrows,
 to bury the saffre.

Ripe...
 The soil will gather its harvest of freed men.

Darkness must be chased from the countryside.
 With rocks, if we lack arms! (US Federal Bureau of Invertigations 6 July 1944)

I quote at such length because there are several notable imputations here, choices odd enough to suggest that FBI ghosttranslation could be a selectively paranoid enterprise. In the most egregious imputations, the translator (who was almost certainly male to judge by bureau employment demographics) translates *tradición* as *treason* rather than *tradition*, and *salto* as *plunder* rather than *leap*. Simultaneously, he misses charged social lexicons of race and class, reducing *jibara* to *native*, and he mistakenly re-genders the poem's surprising revolutionary subject, a *niña*, as a young boy. The hits keep coming: *zafra*, or *sugar harvest*, is ascribed the false cognate *saffre* (an obsolete spelling of *sapphire*), suggesting the translator's insensitivity to the poem's specific socioagrarian topography. Moreover, he mutes other instances of proletarian dissent, rendering *desalojando* as *thrust aside*, instead, of say, *evicting*, and "Para el desquite de los surcos" as "to retrieve furrows," rather than something like "for the furrows' retribution" or "for the ruts' revenge."

Cumulatively, the translation's jumble of errata reveal a pattern: the translator unsystematically but insistently overrides the poem's central conceit, which locates a blazing language of revolt in a pantheon of social and natural agencies (female peasants, their traditions, the natural landscape that surrounds

them, and the agricultural wounds they inflict on the earth). Meanwhile, the translator imputes an alternative lexicon of seditions and crimes of property (treason, plunder) that is nowhere in evidence. The ghosttranslator exhibits a variety of reading that is deaf to regionalism, ideologically motivated, and selectively paranoid—a variety of reading that does not accept the basic premises of a poem that is openly revolutionary, but one that imputes revolutionary crimes to it in precisely the instances of its most harmless phrasings.

Burgos's public recitations were likewise held against her—in fact, one recitation may have been the most definitive evidence of her subversive activity. Agents took aim at a brief notice in the Saturday, September 18, 1943 edition of *Pueblos Hispanos*, announcing an upcoming commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the 1868 Grito de Lares—Puerto Rico's first significant armed revolt against Spain on behalf of independence. The event took place the following Saturday in the ground floor salon of the Park Palace (above the popular nightclub the Golden Casino at West 110th Street and Fifth Avenue). Marquee speakers included Vito Marcantonio, the American Labor Party congressman representing multiethnic East Harlem, as well as Browder and Corretjer, whose respective affiliations with the CPUSA and the PRPN the investigator duly noted. The article billed Burgos as a “gran poetisa puertorriqueña de fama continental,” whose speaking credential was literary merit rather than party membership. The bureau nonetheless implicated her by association.

Worse, she was slated to recite an occasional poem entitled “De Betances a Albizu Campos” (later published with the alternate title “23 de septiembre”), which traces a genealogy of the independence movement from the Lares uprising to Albizu Campos. Of course, Albizu Campos's name was another bureau red flag, and “Una canción a Albizu Campos” (A Song to Albizu Campos), published in *Pueblos Hispanos* the previous month, drew the attention of the ghosttranslator, who tired of translating after the first two stanzas:

From heart to lip
 From North to South and to the stars,
 the mountains, the children, the air greet you.

Prince of the Empire of the stars,
 where the soul is born and the mind,

**discoverer of the true heaven, and the present wherever
the world looks at the Puerto Rican land.**

(The poem continues in this vein, an extravagant
eulogy of the merits of ALBIZU CAMPOS) (US Federal Bureau of Investigations 6 July 1944)

In his abrupt summation, the translator suggests these excerpts are a sufficient synecdoche for the poem's total meaning, which he locates not in line, stanza or verse, but in its generic identity as an "extravagant" praise poem for a jailed subversive. That is, the ghosttranslator does not produce literary meaning through formalist interpretation, but rather along the lines of what Lytle Shaw, in his study of Frank O'Hara, calls "the poetics of coterie," whereby poetics are located in an associational nomenclature (Shaw 2006).

Furthermore, the agent's canny, generic identification of "Una canción a Albizu Campos" as a "eulogy" merits discussion. The poem can be regarded as a eulogy in the sense of 'praise,' but in what sense can its commendation be linked to the occasions that distinguish eulogy as a speech genre from encomium or panegyric—that is, occasions such as funerals and retirement celebrations? If the poem is a eulogy, the institution that stands in for mortality is the Atlanta penitentiary where Albizu was held on conviction for sedition. The bureau notes its power to transform failed sedition into a new occasion for eulogy through the Department of Justice's prosecutorial agenda. However, this ignores how Burgos's poem stages its claims. It calls itself a song, not a eulogy, and rather than dedicate itself to the memory of Albizu Campos, it speaks to him in a repetitive apostrophic address. Instead of commemorating his carceral absence, it insists, through the sonorous compilation of epithets, on the presence he registers withal. The refrain "Todo en ti se adelanta [...] desde Atlanta" (Everything in you advances [...] from Atlanta) substantiates such effects of presence. In the near-homophonic coupling of *se adelanta* and *desde Atlanta*, the poem's eulogistic "extravagance" entails a faith in the reparative prospects of poetic sonority. Even imprisonment (*Atlanta*) can be made harmonious with political progress (*se adelanta*) (Burgos 1997: 378).

Bureau investigations track empirical signs of ideological influence while discarding the workings of poetic inference.

This all suggests that the FBI's implicit theory of reading derives not from the literary text's figural or schematic properties, but from how the text empirically indexes social and political affiliations that the agency confirms through rumor and espionage. The bureau takes special note of connection to Russia, cataloguing a March 4, 1944, recitation of "three of her poems, one of which was entitled 'Himno de Amor a Russia'" (U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation 2 April 1945). Despite an informant's claim that Burgos protested *Pueblos Hispánicos's* Communist affiliation, the agent details the contents of her bookshelf, especially "a book 'The Secret of Soviet Strength' by the Dean of Canterbury, a booklet 'Shall the Communist Party Change its Name,' a booklet 'Marxism and the Woman Question,' and other material on Russia" (U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation 2 April 1945). Bureau investigations track empirical signs of ideological influence while discarding the workings of poetic inference. They locate the scene of historical agency in the recitation hall, the party meeting, or the bedroom bookshelf, reading the poem as an index of potentially seditious social praxis. In some respects, this reading strategy paradoxically follows an embryonic New Critical tendency to regard the poem's complex literary properties as autonomous from politics, even as it mines the poem's simple references for indicators of political affiliation.

I suggest we locate Burgos's historico-political agencies elsewhere—namely, in figural and schematic poetic features—because her poems so clearly speak through these features to wider, comparative circuits of poetic and political discourse associated with an emerging hemispheric poetics. For example, reconsider Burgos's central trope, in "Campo," of Puerto Rico as an island aflame, a land *scorched* by injustice where a people is unquenchably *ardoring* or *burning* (in a protracted gerundial present) between tradition and political futurity:

¡La tradición está ardiendo en el campo!

¡La esperanza está ardiendo en el campo!

¡El hombre está ardiendo en el campo!

The conceit of the "ardoring island" falls in line, knowingly or not, behind Luis Palés Matos's use of the same trope in his 1937 "Preludio en Boricua," one of the most famous Puerto Rican poems of the day, in which the voices of Puerto Rican literary aspirants are devastatingly likened to bleating goats stewing in a cauldron of unrest:

¿Y Puerto Rico? Mi isla ardiente,
 Para ti todo ha terminado.
 En el yermo de un continente,
 Puerto Rico, lúgubrememente,
 bala como cabro estofado. (Palés Matos 1937: 27)

William Carlos Williams, impressed by Palés Matos when he attended the CIAA-sponsored First Inter-American Writers' Conference in Río Piedras in 1941, fares little better than Burgos's ghosttranslator when he translates Palés Matos's stanza: "And Puerto Rico? My burning island / for thee all has indeed ended. / Among the shambles of a continent / Puerto Rico, lugubriously / you bleat like a roast goat" (1988: 45). In Williams's translation, the sonorous echo of "roast goat" outweighs the fact that a roast *crackles*, while only stew *bleats* (cabro estofado). Samuel Putnam critiqued the Writers' Conference in *The Daily Worker* and *New Masses* by arguing that Archibald MacLeish's potted, neocolonial inter-Americanism, handmaiden to Rockefeller interests, turned off most of the major writers invited to attend, such as Carl Sandburg and Ciro Alegría, and ignored the voices of younger Puerto Rican literary hopefuls (Putnam 1941a: 7). One young Puerto Rican writer, Carlos Carrera Benítez, scandalized the audience at the lone "manuscript session" by speaking impassioned about U.S. colonial language policies that neglected Castilian and vernacular Spanish, thereby producing "a nation of stammerers"—that is, restlessly ardoring bleaters (Putnam 1941c: 21–4).

Against this background, Williams's volume *The Wedge* (1944) picks up the theme of poetic ardor: "The war is the first and only thing in the world today. The arts generally are not, nor is this writing a diversion from that for relief, a turning away. It *is* the war or part of it, merely a different sector of the field" (1988: 53). To Williams, the perceiving mind of the poet who "ardors" that his perceptions "may constitute a revelation in the speech that he uses" is the agency that likens poetic composition to war (1988: 53). Encouraged by the State Department, Williams premises a theory of wartime, New World modernism on the crabbed language he borrows from the ardor of Puerto Rico. (Williams's much vaunted, bicultural Puerto Rican identity, which furnished him with a sentimental justification for attending MacLeish's conference, should come with the disclaimer that Williams belonged to a Puerto Rican intellectual tradition of annexationists, and this disposition colored his work as a cultural diplomat).⁶ Burgos did not see, in the ardor of

Puerto Rico, the presemantic sound and syntax of local cuisine, as did Palés Matos, nor “a nation of stammerers,” as did Carrera Benítez, nor a metaphor for modernist innovation, as did Williams. Rather, she saw a popular, furious linguistic image of revolutionary justice. For Williams as poet-translator, “ardor” was the hinge on which modernist innovation could turn as an expression of wartime cultural diplomacy. To Burgos’s ghosttranslators, poetic ardor was mere evidence of her subversive Nationalism.

The Hatch Act Investigation

Looking over the reports produced on Burgos in December 1944, J. Edgar Hoover wrote to Attorney General Francis Biddle, enclosing all information collected to date. In view of Burgos’s appearance on programs “with Earl Browder and other Communists in the United States,” and in view of the Attorney General’s “request that all cases concerning members of the Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico be decided personally by [Biddle],” Hoover sought advice as to whether a Hatch Act investigation should be opened (US Federal Bureau of Investigation 24 November 1944). Although Biddle had significant pro-labor and civil libertarian credentials, and determined as Attorney General not to repeat the World War I-era witch hunts pursuant to the Sedition Act of 1918, he succumbed to pressure from Hoover and Franklin Delano Roosevelt to prosecute subversives. He leveraged his office against radical publications on the far right (most famously quashing William Dudley Powell and Father Coughlin), and began the “Biddle List,” the seed of the more notorious Cold War document known as the Attorney General’s List of Subversive Organizations.⁷ Biddle’s office approved an immediate Hatch Act investigation into Burgos (U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation 24 November 1944).

The interview, conducted in English, focused mechanically on determining the extent and nature of Burgos’s affiliation with the Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico, its principal leadership, and especially Pueblos Hispanos and La Acción as Nationalist outlets.

The Washington field office asked Burgos to sit for an interview on February 28, 1945, where they first informed her of the investigation: “As you may be aware, the Federal Bureau of Investigation is required by Presidential directive to investigate matters coming within the purview of

Public Law 1232, 76th Congress. This law prohibits membership on the part of any Federal employee in a political party or organization which advocates the overthrow of our Constitutional form of Government in the United States” (U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation 28 February 1945). The interview, conducted in English, focused mechanically on determining the extent and nature of Burgos’s affiliation with the Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico, its principal leadership, and especially *Pueblos Hispánicos* and *La Acción* as Nationalist outlets. It subsequently inquired into her relation with several other organizations on Biddle’s list of subversive organizations, such as the Communist Party, the Young Communist League and American Youth for Democracy. Disappointingly, the interview exposes little about her routines, or the reasons she sought work at CIAA, although a coworker informed the bureau that Burgos was a “very capable employee.” There was “no evidence to her knowledge of any disloyal sympathy or activity,” nor did Burgos seem to spend her evenings politicking. Rather she “wrote poetry and was studying Portuguese in her spare time” (U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation 28 February 1945). Notably, these statements were excluded from the Hatch Investigation summary report.

Under questioning, Burgos’s answers with few exceptions were succinct and circumspect. Appealing to notions of aesthetic autonomy, she defined the nature of her employment for *Pueblos Hispánicos* as “literary editor of the paper. I made interviews with artists, writers, painters, etc., because I am a writer, and I also commented on literary works.” Asked which organization sponsored *Pueblos Hispánicos*, Burgos insisted she was not privy to the paper’s “business administration,” excepting the possibility that Club Obrero Español contributed, and that subscriptions and sales financed the rest (in reality the wealthy Consuelo Lee Tapia was the primary financier). She further denied that the paper received direct sponsorship from the Nationalist Party, claiming awareness only of Corretjer’s personal party membership. Asked to attest to her relationships with Corretjer and a series of prominent Nationalists (whose names are expurgated from the files), she admitted no more than casual acquaintanceships. When asked if she had written poems about or dedicated to Pedro Albizu Campos or Juan Antonio Corretjer, she confessed: “In the anniversary of the newspaper *Pueblos Hispánicos*, I dedicated a poem about Spanish America to Mr. Corretjer,” but she stressed that this dedication was strictly in his role “as editor of the paper.” She denied official membership in the Nationalist Party but admitted attending several public meetings, though

never any sponsored by the CPUSA. Given that the bureau had collected “Una canción a Albizu Campos” and notices of Burgos’s appearances alongside Browder, the agents must have justly concluded that she was habitually minimizing the extent of her knowledge and participation.

Under duress, Burgos admits that a few youthful poems amount to her sum “contribution to the Nationalist Party,” although her emphatic tone and sudden prolixity suggests an agitated wish to diminish the importance of such poems.

Only one question prompted a lengthier statement: “have you ever contributed any money or services to the Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico?” I reproduce the initial transcription of Burgos’s verbal reply, followed by the written revision she was given the opportunity to make the following day:

I do not think that I have contributed any money. When the Nationalist Party started in Puerto Rico, I want to say that I was in the University. I was just a kid. They started with the proclamation of the independence of Puerto Rico, a thing that I felt and feel now but not in the way the Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico does. A group of boys and girls at school thought that it was a movement to bring on more liberties to Puerto Rico and we had enthusiasm for the moral liberties of Puerto Rico and followed the movement, thinking that it was going to look out for more benefits for Puerto Rico—something that I cannot explain in English—and naturally I was related to all these things. They were writers, the same as me, and I wrote some poems relating to the independence of Puerto Rico, and that is my contribution to the Nationalist Party.

I have not contributed any money. My relations with the Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico are as follows: When the movement started peacefully in Puerto Rico about 10 years ago the Puerto Rican youths were moved to sympathy for the ideals of liberty and nationality that the movement proclaimed. I was a Universitarian and I too was taken by that interest but never became a member of the party. When the Party took other views we disassociated completely from the group of leaders. I wrote patriotic poems and they may have made use of them. At present I have absolutely no connection with the Party or any of its members. (U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation 28 February 1945)

Under duress, Burgos admits that a few youthful poems amount to her sum

“contribution to the Nationalist Party,” although her emphatic tone and sudden prolixity suggests an agitated wish to diminish the importance of such poems. Burgos had good reason to fear these poems in this context, for her nationalistic juvenilia openly and non-metaphorically—if idealistically and somewhat vaguely—advocated for armed overthrow of a colonial administration. She must also have had a flash of intuition as she spoke that the FBI was aware of these writings, though she could not have known precisely how carefully the San Juan office had combed through her early poems for incriminating lines, such as their translation of this selection from “Canto a Aguadilla” (Song to Aguadilla), a paean to nineteenth-century nationalist poet José de Diego, published in *La Acción* on April 24, 1937:

Aguadilla!

It is time to hear and feel the liberating spirit,

Which is agitating again among your palms and shores

It is time to comply with the mandate of your sword

And give the first cry which will flame into true revolution:

Borinquens; to arms!

It is the hour of Jose de Diego

Firm!

And to the fight until surrender is obtained. (U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation 20 July 1944)

Burgos’s amended statement the day after her Hatch Act interview suggests her realization that the poems might be self-incriminating. Where she had dismissively, impetuously remarked of the early poetry “that is my contribution to the Nationalist Party,” she now revised her statement with a circumspect proviso: “I wrote patriotic poems and they may have made use of them.” In turn, the bureau established the fact that poems were “services”—not unlike monetary contributions—supporting subversive activity, and warranting dismissal under the Hatch Act. The bureau filed their investigation without any further commentary on these discrepancies, but the final impression is that Burgos’s interview compelled her to explain away information she increasingly understood the FBI to have about her. She was held exasperatingly accountable for juvenilia she now regarded as hasty on both aesthetic and political grounds.

The inquiry was remanded to the Interdepartmental Committee on Employee Investigations (ICEI), established in 1943 to apply consistency to

a growing caseload of federal employee inquires, and to adjudicate between employee rights and the federal government's tightening security interests. According to historian Richard Fried, if the ICEI did not prove that an employee formerly affiliated with a subversive group "had broken from their dangerous liaison," they would recommend dismissal (1990: 55). Burgos was fired May 18, 1945. She was among only 24 out of a total 394 investigations the ICEI, in its first thirty months, recommended be "separated" from employment, to borrow the agency's preferred euphemism.

The uncommonness of such "separations" is underscored by comparison to the file the FBI opened on Muriel Rukeyser in 1943, when she applied to work at the Office of War Information (OWI). Jeanne Perreault's otherwise comprehensive discussion does not recognize this explicitly as a Hatch Act investigation, although the file evinces the same protocol as the Burgos investigation by noting Rukeyser's previous associations with The John Reed Clubs, *The New Masses*, her poems in support of Spanish Republicanism, and her affiliation with the League of American Writers (another Biddle list organization), and by culminating with an interview. Despite her former affiliations, Rukeyser, unlike Burgos, was not fired from federal employment, although she soon resigned in frustration over her ability to effectuate her democratic idealism among the influx of advertisers in the agency (Perreault 2008: 146–54). OWI seems to have been more permissive than CIAA in its recruitment of leftist culture workers, but an exception such as Rukeyser's nonetheless highlights the oddness of Burgos's dismissal. It also suggests how easily the federal government ran roughshod over civil liberties where the threat of Puerto Rican Nationalism was concerned. Deborah Cohn has shown how the anticommunist McCarran-Walter act of 1952 stanching the transnational flow of Latin American writers into the U.S. even as their Boom-era works influenced US literary taste. The Hatch and Smith Acts are their wartime precursors, with particularly keen-edged effects on those citizen subjects regarded as "foreign in a domestic sense" (Duffy Burnett and Marshall 2001).

Wartime Poems between Dissidence and Diplomacy: Burgos, Bishop, and Neruda

Ironically, the radical, Latin Americanist solidarity Burgos was dismissed from CIAA for expressing in her poetry would have served the agency's cultural diplomacy initiatives far better than her skill as an audit clerk. Consider, as a nominee for cultural ambassadorship, a stanza from her anniversary poem

“Canción a los Pueblos Hispanos de América y del mundo” (Song to the Hispanic People of America and the World), the same poem that landed her in hot water with the FBI because she had dedicated it to Corretjer:

**Pueblos Hispanos, pueblos que lívidos contemplan
desde el sueño hecho sangre de la bondad martiana,
en Puerto Rico, un amo golpeando libertades. (Burgos 1944: 9)**

A literal prose translation might read: “Hispanic People, people who, in Puerto Rico, furiously contemplate—from the dream made blood by the goodness of Martí—a possessor striking down freedoms.” Contra CIAA, Burgos offers a vision of hemispheric solidarity that acknowledges colonial and imperial mechanisms of injustice, and the popular unrest they engender. Here she also suggests that a contemplative legacy of Latin Americanist political thought (“bondad martiana”) might establish terms of restorative justice. When Langston Hughes spoke in similar idioms during state-sponsored goodwill broadcasts, he gained credibility with Caribbean audiences far more than the culture industry mavens and bureaucrats who otherwise flooded Rockefeller’s agency.

During World War II, Martí’s identity, to say nothing of his thought, was so alien to the majority of Anglophone readers that the errant ghosttranslator literalizes his status as extraterrestrial, further mistaking furious revolutionary dreams for fallow sleepiness.

Now here is how Burgos’s ghosttranslator renders these lines:

**Hispanic Peoples, who with their pale faces
contemplate from their sleep made bloody with Martian kindness,
a master fighting liberties in Puerto Rico.**

Pale faces, not angry ones. Sleep, not dream. Martian, not pertaining to José Martí. During World War II, Martí’s identity, to say nothing of his thought, was so alien to the majority of Anglophone readers that the errant ghosttranslator literalizes his status as extraterrestrial, further mistaking furious revolutionary dreams for fallow sleepiness.

Wartime poems of hemispheric scope checked their references to “Nuestra América” at the gates of Anglophony.

Surely, this can be explained away as a humorous mistake, but it can also be held up as endemic of an Anglophone regime of remarkable naiveté towards traditions and idioms of Latin American anticolonialism. Compare Elizabeth Bishop’s 1942 “Jeronymo’s House,” a picturesque persona poem in which a Cuban emigré on the island of Key West (where Bishop spent a great deal of time in the late 1930s and the early 1940s) describes the contents of his neat but fragile vernacular house in fastidious, two-beat lines:

Also I have

hung on a hook

an old French horn

re-painted with

aluminum paint.

I play each year

in the parade

for José Martí [sic].* (Bishop 1941: 382–3)

The asterisk leads to a footnote explaining that José Martí is “A Cuban patriot,” a didactic expedient for Bishop’s Anglophone readership in the avowedly Trotskyite *Partisan Review*, which today strikes us as surely unnecessary. In fact, recent editions of Bishop’s poem do not preserve the paratext. Both “Jeronymo’s House” and “Canción a los Pueblos Hispanos de América y del mundo” are written in the voice of diasporic Caribbean subjects marooned in the United States, but this commonality should not obscure their crucial differences. Bishop’s persona individualizes and ventriloquizes the “Pueblos Hispanos” through Jeronymo’s tidy observations. She confines his social consciousness to the walls of a feminized, domestic interior, and gives him a bit part tooting in a patriotic parade. By contrast, Burgos assumes the bardic posture often reserved for the male political poem of the 1930s, openly inciting a collective to the fever pitch of revolt. Yet, at the moment they pass before the eyes of Anglophone readers, the two poems converge again, through their circumscription of the anticolonial, hemispheric function that

goes by the name “Martí.” To Bishop, Martí is a figure of didactic exposition, the very gloss that Burgos’s translator, fumblingly mistaking Martí for an alien being, so dreadfully needs. Wartime poems of hemispheric scope checked their references to “Nuestra América” at the gates of Anglophony.

Bishop and Burgos have at least one other ephemeral commonality: both had impactful meetings with Pablo Neruda in 1942, about which most of the details are lost. Burgos met Neruda briefly in Havana, Cuba, on March 12, 1942, where he promised to write an introduction for her next book of poems. Bishop met Neruda by chance in Mérida, Mexico, just a few weeks later, while seeking refuge from the wartime naval mobilization sweeping through Key West. I recount these relationships elsewhere in greater detail, for Burgos and Bishop are facets of Neruda’s surprising pattern of sponsorship and support for emerging female poets. Here I wish to conclude by turning to Neruda’s 1943 visit to the US, in order to stress the ironies and particularities of Burgos’s dismissal from CIAA. Poets and writers in a position to do the most for the official cause of hemispheric democracy found their works caught in a bind between dissidence, whether real or imagined by the intelligence services, and their own imaginations of cultural diplomacy. For example, when asked to contribute poems to Dudley Fitts’s massive, CIAA-funded *Anthology of Contemporary Latin American Poetry*, Neruda unsuccessfully attempted to substitute a pro-Communist political poem for his earlier love poems.⁸ Far more than Williams, Bishop, or Rukeyser, Neruda offers the best counterpoint to Burgos, for there is much evidence that Neruda, too, shifted between official Good Neighbor diplomacy and unsanctioned, radical agitation for Puerto Rican Nationalism. However, their divergent standing as citizen-subjects in relation to the U.S. inflected the disparate results of their activities.

On July 20 1973, less than two months before his death, Neruda published a *New York Times* op-ed, in which he lampooned naive American surprise over “the Watergate revelations” by pointing out a longer history of Latin American writers “finding intelligence services and their agents provocateurs, visible and invisible, even in the very soup on our dinner tables”:

During World War II, when I was Consul General for my country in Mexico, [...] I asked your great poet Archibald MacLeish to find some work for a very talented young Spanish poet who had a wife and kids to feed. His name was Petere and he lived in Mexico.

MacLeish agreed and found him a job teaching Spanish. Young Petere got to the American Consulate in Mexico City, with his job in his pocket, thinking that a visa would be a mere

formality. In fact he got the third degree. While he sweated it out, various inquisitors, taking turns, asked such questions as these:

What were you up to at the railway station on April 23, at 11 A.M.?

Answer: I was saying good-by to a friend.

Inquisitor: Name?

Answer: Pablo Neruda.

Inquisitor: Where was he going?

Answer: I think it was Acapulco.

Inquisitor: What was the meaning of those hand gestures you made when the train was leaving?

Answer: It's the Spanish way of saying good-by.

Naturally, he didn't get the visa—in spite of the kind efforts of the Librarian of Congress. The US authorities said no and no it was.

So in this way it was known that I'd made a trip to Acapulco. They had magnetic tapes or video tapes, and kilometric tapes that spied on us from all sides, from the railway station right into our underwear. (Neruda 1973)

In old age, Neruda offers a bemused, technologically anachronistic remembrance of FBI surveillance (which, it is not often remembered, had more than a domestic mandate during World War II) checking Spanish Loyalist refugees at U.S. borders, and accruing the dossiers of innuendo that make up the files of Burgos and others. At the time, Neruda also routinely overstepped his consular mandate, in order to advocate for open diplomatic borders for refugees, and once to travel to the U.S. on the premise that Good Neighbor diplomacy might be an effective catalyst for international Communism.

Neruda's February 1943 visit to New York City was one of the war's most finely modulated performances of double-voiced cultural diplomacy. When his biographers occasionally report this visit, they mistake it as a straightforward, Rockefeller- or Voice of America-sponsored cultural ambassadorship to "debut" at the "Night of the Americas" gala at the Martin Beck Theater on Broadway (Schidrowski 2008: 545–9).⁹ In reality, Neruda traveled at his own expense without CIAA sponsorship or input, most likely at the invitation of the Council for Pan-American Democracy (a Communist-led organization utilizing CIAA rhetoric), whose secretary later noted that Good Neighbor policymakers underestimated Neruda's utility given his "amplias vinculaciones continentales" (extensive hemispheric linkages).¹⁰

Night of the Americas promised a rapprochement between two unaligned

groups. First, CIAA's favored culture industry stars and starlets, including Carmen Miranda, the band leader Xavier Cugat, and Walt Disney, who attended in the capacity of an FBI informant, having been conscripted by the bureau as a Latin American affairs expert after his Rockefeller-sponsored goodwill mission (Eliot 1993). Second, a group of radical Latin American diplomats, intellectuals, and labor leaders, including Peru's indigenista Marxist senator José Uriel García, Haitian poet-diplomat Jacques Roumain, Puerto Rican politician (and former bohemian poet) Luis Muñoz Marín, and the other guest of honor, Mexican labor leader Vicente Lombardo Toledano, who in these years trumpeted Philip Murray's clever notion that the Good Neighbor Policy deserved a "Good Labor Policy" (Murray and Lombardo Toledano ca.1943: 9). Writing in the *New Masses*, Putnam declared the conjunction of Neruda and Lombardo Toledano to be "perhaps the most important single event to take place in connection with our inter-American cultural relations program" (Putnam 1943c: 23–5). His "our" was not the Rockefeller committee, but rather CPAD, which imagined intersectional hemispheric alliances of inter-American labor and culture on behalf of a twinned antifascist and anti-imperialist platform.

Putnam's pronouncement of the event's epochal importance reflects the twin voices of his own inter-American cultural work. His "Good Neighbors" column in the *Daily Worker* towed the line carefully between CPUSA commitments and liberal inter-American affiliations. When the Library of Congress Hispanic Foundation's Lewis Hanke landed him a CIAA-funded job translating Euclides de Cunha's novel *Os Sertões* (*Rebellion in the Backlands*) for the University of Chicago Press, Putnam wrote to comrade Juan Antonio Corretjer to clarify whether CPUSA Latinos would smile on the project (Putnam 1943d). Corretjer was another important contact for Neruda in New York. In fact, in Harlem, Neruda attended the inauguration of *Pueblos Hispánicos*, which published Neruda's "Canto de amor a Stalingrado" as a broadside in the paper. Perhaps Neruda met Corretjer through his previous friendship with Burgos, but Burgos was not yet writing for *Pueblos Hispánicos*, and it is equally possible that she did not see Neruda again in New York. However, a week after the *Pueblos Hispánicos* fête, Neruda recited poems for New York's Pan-American Women's Association, a vibrant feminist organization founded by Frances R. Grant.¹¹ From there, he spent time in Washington in the company of the Puerto Rican writer and editor Angel Flores, director of the Committee on Intellectual Affairs at the Pan-American Union, and soon to be Neruda's

principal U.S. translator for the next fifteen years.¹²

The predominance of Puerto Rican hosts on Neruda's trip is telling, for few matters were more pressing to left critics of Good Neighbor diplomacy. Browder, the ex-cellmate of Corretjer's, published a political platform entitled *Victory—and After* (1942), translated into Spanish by Corretjer, that identified Puerto Rico as a lacuna in the civic education of U.S. citizens, and a festering hypocrisy in the practice of wartime hemispheric solidarity. According to Browder, the "United States public and most of its leading circles" remained "blissfully unaware that our government since 1898 has been holding in imperialistic subjection a Latin American nation, one of the most developed culturally [...]": "This blank in the public and official mind so far as Puerto Rico is concerned is interpreted by Latin Americans generally as meaning that we do not really consider them human beings, and that our official pronouncements of human brotherhood are but diplomatic fictions" (Browder 1942: 219). Browder's proof included the failure of the U.S. to provide for civilian defense on Puerto Rico (viewed as a military outpost and not as a "nation of close to two million men, women and children"). In Neruda's aforementioned 1973 editorial, he reminisces about the same "blank" in the "diplomatic fiction" of the Good Neighbor:

I happened once to be sitting next to a leading socialite at a New York dinner table. Picking a topic that might interest us both, I got onto Puerto Rico. She didn't know what it was all about. She didn't know they spoke Spanish. She didn't know that Puerto Rico was an American colony. And still less of course, did she know that the Puerto Ricans want to be, and could be, an independent republic like the other nations of Latin America. This lady of good faith cried out aloud and declared then and there to all the other guests that she had just discovered an embarrassing fact. 'We should liberate that country immediately,' she said, 'it's unthinkable that the United States should have colonies!' What a very nice lady!

Such recollections suggest the strength of Neruda's bonds with the New York circle of Puerto Rican Nationalists during World War II, and how he modulated inter-American rhetoric among several distinct communities. In this way, Puerto Ricans harnessed Good Neighbor rhetoric to valorize an anticolonial image of Neruda for U.S. readers long before the 1960s translation boom so often credited with establishing his U.S. reputation.

The famous “silencio” of Burgos’s Washington period should not be remembered only as a negative token of her diasporic alienation.

For Neruda, the Good Neighbor rhetoric of CIAA was an effective screen for the support of radical Puerto Rican Nationalism. For Burgos, whose trajectory took her in the reverse direction the following year, Puerto Rican nationalism was the tripwire on which her exercise of Good Neighbor diplomacy foundered. By reevaluating Burgos’s “poesía comprometida” in relation to Neruda’s wartime defense of Puerto Rican Nationalism, we stand to underscore the damage that the practice of anticolonial political poetry—regardless of its aesthetic merits or political efficacy—could do to literary and professional careers. The famous “silencio” of Burgos’s Washington period should not be remembered only as a negative token of her diasporic alienation. It should also be regarded as a silence enforced by a state bureaucracy that took special care to misread and to de-authorize poetry committed to an independent Puerto Rico. The bureau shortsightedly interpreted that poetry as an amorphous Communist threat, rather than as multi-pronged call—visible in works by Burgos and Neruda alike—to rebase Good Neighbor diplomacy’s trumpeting of hemispheric democracy on an end to the colonial subjection of Puerto Rico.

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NOTES

¹ These figures refer to a census taken on June 30, 1944. Burgos was hired on September (United States and Office of Inter-American Affairs 1947: 163). Possibly, further answers reside in CIAA's institutional archive: the enormous Record Group 229 at the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, Maryland. However, researchers are unlikely to find more than some unrevealing financial reports she anonymously authored or audited (Cramer and Prutsch 2006: 785).

² Jack Agüeros acquired the file in September 1997, thirty months after his FOIA request.

³ The network of poets and belle-lettrists conscripted by state institutions of Good Neighbor diplomacy far exceeds this partial list, which I here limit to those who I find particularly instructive by comparison to Burgos or by their associations with her.

⁴ Culleton and Leick (2008) draw on an earlier wave of studies of FBI surveillance of U.S. literature led by Mitgang and Robins, which in turn follow on the heels of the Freedom of Information Act and the literary artists who, since the late 1970s, acquired their own files.

⁵ Throughout *F.B. Eyes*, Maxwell helpfully situates FBI reading practices in relation to the divergent reading practices of other state agencies such as the CIA, as well as nascent and later academic reading practices, from New Critical close reading to recent calls for “surface” and “distant” reading.

⁶ Williams's first employer, the physician Julio Henna, whom Williams commemorates in several chapters of his *Autobiography*, was the self-appointed delegation to William McKinley on behalf of annexation in 1898. Thus viewed in terms of cultural diplomacy instead of identity, Williams's relation to Puerto Rico differs significantly from accounts by Cohen and Marzán.

⁷ The Biddle list has not previously been associated with activities suppressing Puerto Rican Nationalism.

⁸ Pablo Neruda to Dudley Fitts, n.d., 1942, Dudley Fitts Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale University.

⁹ Schidlowsky gives the most comprehensive account, but he mentions little past the Night of the Americas event (mistakenly regarding Voice of America as its sponsor) and Neruda's malacology-fueled visit to the Museum of Natural History.

¹⁰ Marian Bachrach to Pablo Neruda, November 16, 1945. Correspondence Archive, Fundación Pablo Neruda, Santiago de Chile.

¹¹ Grant, Frances. Scrapbook. Box 22, Frances R. Grant Papers, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ.

¹² Edwin Honig to Angel Flores. April 1943. Angel Flores Papers. Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas, Austin.

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