



Miguel Hernández

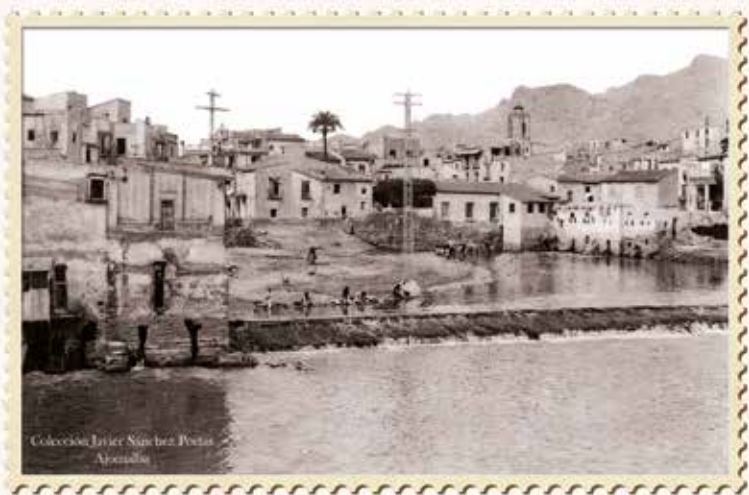
Poet



Eric Peck 1997

*No puedo olvidar
que no tengo alas,
que no tengo mar,
vereda ni nada
con que irte a besar.*

Miguel Hernández



Colectión Javier Sánchez Postas
Alicante

View of Orihuela from the *Puente Nuevo* bridge.



The house where Miguel Hernández was born.

Miguel Hernández was born in the *San Juan street* in Orihuela on October 30th, 1910. Hearing his first cry was an emotional experience for his mother, Concepción Gilabert Giner, or 'Aunt Concheta' as she was known, and brought immense happiness to his father, Miguel Hernández Sánchez, also known as 'Uncle Visenterre', a breeder and goat dealer.

Miguel's older brother and sister, Vicente and Elvira had been waiting for him to arrive, and after his birth, along came another three sisters: Concepción, Josefina and Monserrate. Out of the three, Concepción would be the only one to survive. Three days after his birth, Miguel was christened Miguel Domingo in the cathedral.



Miguel Hernández with his siblings.

When Miguel was four years old, the family moved to the *Calle Arriba street*, where labourers and unassuming traders used to live. His childhood was not a poor one, but it was humble, one in which his father instilled values of austerity and sacrifice in his children. Any show of affection came from the mother, a very dark lady, who Miguel would affectionately call ‘the dark, dear gypsy’.



The Miguel Hernández Museum.

In the street, *Calle Arriba*, Miguel grows up just like any other boy, playing games and swimming in the Segura River, which will be later named *El Lobón*, or the Big Wolf. Among his friends were *Meno, Carlujo, El Mella, Gavira, El Rosendo* and *Paná...*



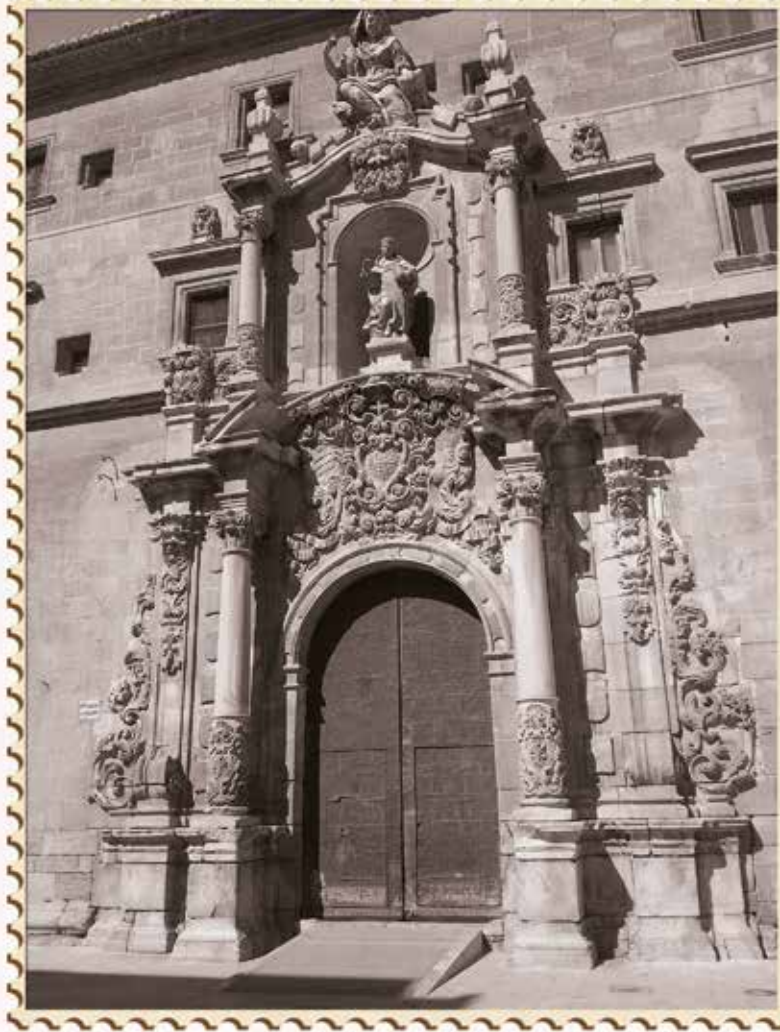
Ave Maria Schools.

After having attended a private preschool, Miguel is sent to the *Ave Maria school*. He catches the attention of the Jesuit priests and they help him out so that he could be sent to the school of *Santo Domingo*, where he gets high marks in his studies.



Miguel Hernández with his schoolmates at the school of *Santo Domingo*.

When he is about fifteen, Miguel's father's trade starts to go downhill and he is taken out of school to help out with the goats and milk delivery. While he is looking after the herd, he always has a book with him in his leather pouch. A book taken out on loan from the library or from the priest Luis Almarcha. When he realises that he likes poetry so much, he begins writing his own poems in a little notebook, he also carries with him in his pouch. It was the year 1925.



Diocesan school of *Santo Domingo*. Literary University Door (*Puerta de la Universidad Literaria*).



Shed at the Miguel Hernández museum.

By taking his goats out to pasture, Miguel becomes an expert on nature and its many changes, and he begins to write about it in his poems. That is why he sometimes forgets about the goats and they are up to their old tricks, as he describes it in one of his first poems:

*¡Ay! Perdonadme un momento.
Voy a echarle una pedrada
a la "Luná", que se ha ido
artera a un bancal de habas,
y el huertano dueño de ellas
me está gritando desgracias.*

Soon after, he meets Carlos Fenoll, Jesús Poveda, Efrén Fenoll, Ramón Sijé, Gabriel Sijé... who would meet in Carlos Fenoll's bakery, a man who Miguel would call 'the oven oarsman'.

Ramón Sijé played an essential part in the thoughts and works of Miguel; so much so that he even dedicated his famous *Elegía* (Elegy) to him, when his young friend and soul mate died before his time.

Encouraged by his friends, Miguel decides to move to Madrid in 1931 in search of glory. He is unsuccessful on this first visit and returns to Orihuela. However, the visit does help him to change his way of writing and in 1933 he publishes his first book in Murcia, *Perito en Lunas* (Lunar expert), Gongoristic in style.

In 1934 he publishes his first religious play *Quién te ha visto y quién te ve y sombra de lo que eras* (who sees you and who has seen you and the shadow of what you were) as well as religious poems in the Catholic magazine *El Gallo Crisis*, which had been created by his friend Sijé.



Carlos Fenoll in 1947.



Lunch in honour of Vicente Aleixandre.

In November of that same year, 1934, he goes back to Madrid. From this moment on, he begins to spend time with famous writers such as Pablo Neruda, Vicente Aleixandre, Cossío, Alberti, Lorca, Cernuda, Dámaso Alonso and he is also in contact with the artists who are part of the so called *Escuela de Vallecas* (Vallecas school) group.

He publishes his eucharistic play *Quién te ha visto y quién te ve y sombra de lo que eras*, in the magazine *Cruz y Raya*. In 1935 he collaborates with 'Pedagogical Missions' (Misiones Pedagógicas). He works on the encyclopaedia *Los Toros* with Cossío. He writes the drama *Los hijos de la piedra* (The children of the stone). In 1936 he publishes *El rayo que no cesa* (Unceasing lightning).

This environment he moves and the people he spends time with lead him to a change on his way of thinking and, in line with his new way of thinking, with the breakout of the civil war, he enlists in the republican army. He is given the post of Commissioner of Culture. The Minister of Public Instruction invites him to attend the V Festival of Soviet theatre and in 1937 he publishes *Viento del Pueblo* (Wind of the village), *Teatro en la Guerra* (The theatre in war) and *El Labrador de más aire* (The most presumptuous labourer).

In Orihuela, Miguel falls passionately in love with the daughter of a civil guard, Josefina Manresa. They get married and have two children, but the first one dies when he is a baby. He dedicates his '*Nanas de la Cebolla*' (Lullabies of the onion) to his second child when he is in prison and his wife writes to him, telling him they have nothing else to eat apart from bread and onions.



Josefina with their son Manuel Miguel 1943.

When the war ends, he tries to flee to Portugal but he is arrested at the border and sent back to Spain. Prison awaits him in Torrijos, Madrid, but he is released, unexpectedly, soon after.

He returns to Orihuela but he is arrested again and once again sent to prison in Conde Toreno, Madrid. However, his captive voice yearns to be free and he does it the only way he knows through his poetry.

*No, there is no jail for man.
They can't shackle me, no.
(...)
Who locks up a smile?
Who walls in a voice?
(...)
I am free. Tell me free.
Because of love.*



Miguel Hernández drawing of a cock, around 1933.

In the end he dies in the adult reform centre of Alicante on March 28, 1942. Death came upon him too soon - he was only 31 years old.

The wounds and events in Miguel's life, 'life, death and love' were reflected in his behaviour and work throughout his life.



Miguel Hernández' tomb.

*Sad wars
if love is not the aim.
Sad, sad.*

*Sad weapons
if they are not words.
Sad, sad.*

*Sad men
if they do not die for love.
Sad, sad.*

He is held in high esteem in his native town of Orihuela, where the quality of his literary work, and the relevance of his message to humanity, always in search of justice, education and culture, is truly valued.

Elegy

*Like lightening death struck my close friend
Ramón Sijé in our home town of Orihuela.*

*Ramón, right now I want to be
the mournful friend who tends the ground
you fertilize and lie in, gave too soon.*

*Since this useless grief of mine
likes the taste of rain, snail shells, the organs of the body,
I'll go ahead and feed your heart*

*to the disheartened poppies.
Grief bunches up between my ribs,
each breath I take is painful.*

*The hard slap of a hand, an icy fist,
that violent, that fatal, unseen
blow of an ax has cut you down.*



*The Hernandiana
(from Hernández) route
'Orihuela, his village and mine'*

This route commemorates the 75th anniversary of the death of Miguel Hernández (1910-1942), whose work has crossed frontiers, taking the name of Orihuela with it.


This consists of four different routes that follow the poet's footsteps through out the streets of the town, and there are recitals of his poetry at different stops. Participants get to know the artistic patrimony of the town, its traditions and important people, and how life has changed in Orihuela, as well as the nature that surrounds the town.

1st Route

'I call myself clay though Miguel is my name'

On this route we take a trip through his childhood and teenage years, where, in a home that was not poor, but was unassuming, his father instils values such as the importance of a job well done, and sacrifice in the children brought up there. From playing in the street with his friends Meno, Carlujo, El Mella, Gavir and El Rosendo, to his schooling, which, despite having been cut short at the age of 14, had a great influence on awakening Miguel's desire to progress in his studies, especially where literature was concerned. His adolescence was the one of a herdsman who went about his work with poetry books by Gabriel Miró, Garcilaso, Ruben Darío and San Juan de la Cruz in his pouch... sometimes even forgetting about his goats as a result of this poetry '*...Voy a echarle una pedrada / a la 'Luná', que se ha ido / artera a un bancal de habas...*'

On this route there is a visit to the Miguel Hernández Museum, the School of *Santo Domingo* and *El Palmeral* (palm grove). Poems by Miguel are read at each of these places.



*I call myself clay though Miguel is my name.
Clay is my profession and my destiny
whose tongue stains as long as it licks at time.*

*I am a sad instrument of the road's way.
I am but an infamous tongue sweetly warm
laid out a feet I idolize and adore.*

Mural in the neighbourhood of San Isidro.

2nd Route

'Chasing a dream'

The subject of this route is Miguel's determination to become a poet despite all the difficulties he faced. 'I never had shoes, or suits, or words, I always had creeks, always had troubles and goats'. The route deals with the group who would meet in the bakery, *La Tahona* which included his friends Carlos Fenoll (who Miguel would call the oarsman of the oven), Efrén, Ramón Sijé, (to whom he dedicated the emotional 'Elegy' on his untimely death), Jesús Poveda, Jesús Murcia and Antonio Gilabert (Miguel's cousin). There is also a mention of Miguel's trips to Madrid, so full of hope and the search for glory, always encouraged and helped by his friends. The circles he moved in the capital city, the people he met, such as Neruda, Vicente Aleixandre, Cossío, García Lorca and Alberti... the women who left their mark on Miguel's life, especially Josefina Manresa, daughter of a civil guard, who would become his wife, to whom he would dedicate the majority of his poems published in *The unceasing lightening*. Josefina would go on to conserve the writer's legacy.

The poetry readings throughout the route give us more than an insight into the life of the poet, who 'Arrived with three wounds, that of love, that of death and that of life'.

*En cuclillas, ordeno
Una cabrita y un sueño.*

*Gli, gli, gli
hace la leche al caer
en el cubo. En el tisú
celestes va a amanecer.*

*Gli, gli, gli.
Se infla la espuma,
que exhala
Una finísima bruma.*

Fabiola Andrea
Antonio Ruiz
Concha G. de Páblas
Amparo Alonso
Gonzalo

2013

Mural in the neighbourhood of San Isidro.

3rd Route

‘Winds of the people’

This route shows us how the breakout of the civil war transforms Miguel Hernández and how his creativity progresses. In his writings he encourages the republican soldiers (he himself was one), to go on defending justice and liberty. *Viento del pueblo* (Wind of the people) and *El hombre acecha* (The man who lurks), written during this time of war, make him the most representative poet of the Civil War. The end of the war brings its defeat, and Miguel is detained and imprisoned. He falls ill and eventually dies in the adult reform centre in Alicante on March 28th, 1942.

With the end of the Francoist regime comes his acknowledgement and he is honoured in 1976 with the *‘Homenaje de los Pueblos de España a Miguel Hernández’* (Tribute to Miguel Hernández from the villages of Spain). The murals in San Isidro in Orihuela were painted for this tribute (which is an authentic outdoor museum, the only one of its kind dedicated to ‘the poet of the village’). Along the route there is a visit to the air-raid shelter of Santas Justa and Rufina, as well as the murals in San Isidro. Poems are recited in each of these places.

*Winds of the people carry me,
winds of the people drag me,
scattering my heart
and closing my throat.*

Juan Miguel Rodríguez
Casta
Matilejanero



Mural in the neighbourhood of San Isidro.

4th Route

‘Lunar expert’

His time as a herdsman not only allows Miguel to become an expert on the paths through the mountains, the surrounding farmland and the countryside, but it also allows him to observe the moon and become an expert on all its phases. This, along with the fact that he used to write at night, especially when there was full moon, is the reason of the name of his first book of poetry, *Perito en Lunas* (Lunar Expert)). After its publishing he begins to be considered as a true poet.

On this night time route, there is a general overlook of the life of Miguel, from his childhood to his death in prison and the work he does by the light of the full moon. The poems read are the most representative of his different poetic stages.

*Thinking of freedom I bleed, struggle, manage to live on.
Thinking of freedom, like a tree of blood
that is generous and imprisoned, I give my eyes and hands
to the surgeons.*



Mural in the neighbourhood of San Isidro.

The Path of the Poet.

In recent years, the Valencian Youth Institute (*Institut Valencià de la Juventut*), together with the councils of the towns through which the path runs, the Miguel Hernández Cultural Foundation and the local council of Alicante have been working on the development of this international path GR 125, with the most emblematic places which formed part of the life of the poet. The path has three stages, and there is a stop in each village along the way. It is a walking activity, of cultural, tourist and environmental nature, which promotes values such as participation and inter generational relationships, aimed especially at young people in the Valencian Community.

First Stage



ORIHUELA - REDOVÁN
CALLOSA DE SEGURA - COX
GRANJA DE ROCAMORA - ALBATERA

Second Stage



ALBATERA - SAN ISIDRO - CREVILLENTE - ELCHE

Third Stage



ELCHE - REBOLLEDO - ALICANTE

The letter

*The pigeon-house of letters
begins its impossible flight
from the trembling tables
where memory learns,
the weight of absence,
the heart, the silence.*

*I hear the wingbeat of letters
sailing toward their fate.*

*Wherever I go, I meet
women, men
badly wounded by absence,
withered by time.*

*Letters, stories, letters:
postcards, dreams,
fragments of tenderness
hurled into the sky,
sent from blood to blood,
from longing to longing.*



Lullabies of the onion

*The onion is Frost
shut in and poor.
Frost of your days
and of my nights.
Hunger and onion,
black ice and frost
large and round.*

*My little boy was
in hunger's cradle.
He suckled on
onion blood.
But your blood is
frosted with sugar,
onion and hunger.*

*A dark woman dissolved
into moonlight
spills, thread by thread,
over the cradle.
Laugh, child,
you can drink moonlight
if you have to.*



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- *Tourist council of Orihuela*
- *Javier Sánchez Portas collection*
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- *Antonio M. Moreno García*
- *Miguel Abad Miró*



EXCMO. AYUNTAMIENTO DE ORIHUELA
CONCEJALÍAS DE TURISMO Y CULTURA.



Fundación Cultural
Miguel Hernández



**Costa
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