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## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Das Rohe Faktum des Todes</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Brutal Fact of Death</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Truth of Poetry</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocalony</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Survivor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To the Top of the Tower</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Suicide</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canciones: Del Valle del Aniene</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valley of Aniene</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight Lithographs</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four Thousand Days and Nights</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De Uitvaart</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obsequies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verona</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verona</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mesure</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Introduction to “New Spanish Poetry”</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FOUR CONTEMPORARY SPANISH POETS
tr. WILLIS BARNSTONE

ANGEL GONZÁLEZ
Alocución a las Veintitrés ..........72
Short Discourse at the
Twenty-Third Hour

JOSÉ ANGEL VALENTE
La Adolescente .....................76
The Adolescent
La Apuesta
The Bet
Prohibición del Incesto
Prohibition of Incest

JAIME GIL DE BIEDMA
No Volveré a Ser Joven ..........78
I Won’t Be Young Again

MANUEL VÁZQUEZ MONTALBÁN
Twist ...............................80
I Won’t Be Young Again

GEORG BRITTING
Kain ................................82

tr. PETER PAUL FERSCH

BOOK REVIEWS

The Complete Poems of Marianne Moore; and
tell Me, Tell Me. Granite, Steel, and Other Topics by
Marianne Moore; reviewed by Kurt Opitz ......................86

Critics of Consciousness: The Existential Structures of
Literature by Sarah Lawall; reviewed by R. E. Fitch ........91

The Form of Victorian Fiction by J. Hillis Miller; reviewed
by Earl A. Knies ................................92

Limits of the Novel: Evolutions of a Form from Chaucer
to Robbe-Grillet by David I. Grossvogel; reviewed by Dale Kramer .94

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS ....................96
Horst Bienek

DAS ROHE FAKTUM DES TODES

I

Niemand weint, wenn der Tag
Mit hartem Gelächter zerbricht,
Wenn die Angst furchtlos
Durch elektrisch geladene
Stacheldrahtwälder reitet,
Wenn verweste Fische
Mit stumpfschwertigen Rücken
Die Irrlichter-Carmagnole tanzen.

Niemand weint,
Wenn in den törichten Strassen
Und Linien der Untergrundbahnen
Sich die Blutgewitter entzünden,
Wenn Gomorrha und Dresden
Gefesselt über verwitwete Städte taumeln,
Wenn toxische Winde
Sich in den leeren Stuben versammeln.

Niemand weint,
Wenn Soldaten die letzten
Verschwiegenen Türen aus Rauch zerstören,
Wenn wir ausgeliefert sind
Den liebkosenden Messern,
Die von Irrsinn genährte Ratten
Nach unsern entsetzten Blicken werfen.
Und nirgendwo regnet es. —
Horst Bienek

THE BRUTAL FACT OF DEATH

tr. Ruth and Matthew Mead

I

No one weeps when the day
Shatters with harsh laughter,
When dread rides fearlessly
Through electrically charged
Barbed wire forests,
When rotten fish
With blunt-spined backs
Dance the will-o-the-wisp carmagnole.

No one weeps
When storms of blood ignite
In the foolish streets
And the subways.
When Gomorrha and Dresden
Lurch in chains above their widowed cities,
When toxic winds
Collect in the empty rooms.

No one weeps
When soldiers destroy
The last secret doors of smoke,
When we are delivered to the mercy
Of caressing knives
Thrown at our horrified faces
By rats nourished on madness.
And it is not raining anywhere.—
Niemand weiß, dass Tränen
Die Träume der Toten
In erhabene Abenteuer verwandeln.
Niemand weint schmerzverschwistert.

II

In den steinernen Wäldern
(Vergilbt sind die Kehlen der Vögel)
Hallen nicht mehr die Schritte
Liebender.

Die Sterne, verwundet vom Klaggesang
Aus der Tiefe,
Schwimmen in gepanzerte Himmelsschächte.
Atomsicher.

III

Jeder Bruder ist ein Kain.

IV

Überall
Das rohe
Faktum
Des Todes.
No one knows that tears
Change the dreams of the dead
Into high adventure.
No one weeps at one with pain.

II

In the stony forests
(Yellowed are the throats of birds)
The steps of lovers no longer
Echo.

The stars, wounded by the lament
From the depth,
Swim into armoured shafts of sky.
Atomproof.

III

Each brother is a Cain.

IV

Everywhere
The brutal
Fact
Of death.
Horst Bienek

FLUCHT

Flucht vor Steinen
   vor Regen
   vor Schüssen

im Fluss
versteint die Sekunde
   wer köpft den Himmel?
abwärts fällt er
   ein Schrei ritzt
die Erde
   sie blutet

Steine Regen Schüsse
im Windbogen
   im Schlafgehäuse
   in der Silbenkammer
und die Schüsse tödlich unsichtbar
   augenlos
Horst Bienek

FLIGHT

tr. Ruth and Matthew Mead

Flight from stones
    from rain
    from shots

the moment
petrifies in the river
    who beheads the sky?
the sky falls
    a cry scratches
the earth
    earth bleeds

Rain stones shots
in the arch of wind
    in the shell of sleep
    in the chamber of syllables
and the shots deadly invisible
    eyeless
Fedkin woke up during the night because he felt that he was a fool. He lay and stared at the ceiling. The ceiling was as white as a sheet of paper; he, himself, painted it twice a month. Fedkin loved to paint ceilings more than anything in his life—to stand on something high and move the brush from one side to another.

Outside daybreak began.

Fedkin washed up and sat down at the table and his wife served him breakfast. Everyone eats breakfast, and everyone also has a wife. Fedkin’s wife was not a very clever one, but, at the same time, she was not a fool. She walked in the kitchen with a face shining from cream, and her hair done in a tail with a rubber band from a drug store package.

“Zina,” said Fedkin, “You shouldn’t have married me. I am a fool.”

“It’s O.K.,” said Zina.

“What is O.K.?” said Fedkin puzzled.

“The most important thing in this life is to find your place in it; to find equilibrium between desires and capabilities.”

When Fedkin went out on the streets that day, he knew everything about himself. He walked slowly, breathed, and looked around. If he were more clever, he probably would have recited poetry, something like: “October came, the trees discarded last leaves from their naked branches. . . .” But Fedkin didn’t know Pushkin, and he was just thinking, “God, it is so good . . .”
In the waiting room of the office building people were sitting, smoking, and nonchalantly moving their arms. They always came here to chat and pass the time. At first all were worried and even suffered from nerves. But after a year they relaxed and even found pleasure in their indefinite state.

Fedkin had no secretary and therefore people entered his office directly from the hall. He sent everyone to his supervisor, and the supervisor sent them to the next one, a higher supervisor, who had two doors and a secretary. There the client was detained and sent back to Fedkin. This was like a water cycle in nature: water evaporates, rises to the sky, falls from sky to earth, etc.

Fedkin entered his office. The door momentarily opened slightly, and a skinny and nervous young man looked in. He always nibbled matches and his fingers were brown from them.

“Hello,” said the young man. “Do you remember me?”

“Of course,” said Fedkin, “What is your name?”

“Lesin.”

“Can you interpret dreams?” Fedkin asked suddenly.

“My grandmother used to say, that if you had a bad dream, you should say ‘Where went the night, there went the dream’.”

“Where went the night, there went the dream,” repeated Fedkin.

“No, not now. Too late now.”

“Have a seat,” said Fedkin. He tore off a page from the calendar and began to paint it evenly with ink. It seemed to him that he was painting a ceiling.

Lesin looked on and waited until it would be possible to present his problem, but Fedkin had heard a lot about this problem and was not interested.

“You have parents?” he asked.

“Of course,” said Lesin slightly surprised.

“Very good,” praised Fedkin. “Aren’t you ashamed you haven’t worked for the last two years?”

“But you don’t give me…”

“I?”

“Of course. In order for me to start to work, a paper must be signed and you’ve refused to sign for the last two years.”

“I cannot help you at all,” confessed Fedkin.

“Why?”

“Because I am a fool.”

“In what sense?” Lesin was lost.
“Intellectually.”
“I understand.” Lesin’s instant credence offended Fedkin.
“But it is you who is a fool.”
“And what do I have to do with it?”
“Take up something else.”
“Why do I have to take up something else?”
“All my life I have been occupied with things I do not like,” said Fedkin.
“And how do you feel?”
“Bored.”
“And what did you want to be?”
“A painter.”
“I think it is a mechanical job,” Lesin said cautiously.
“You try it,” Fedkin was offended, “try to paint the ceiling white and I am sure it will come out patchy. I also want you to know my paint brushes are from France.” Fedkin began to talk about his paint brushes; it was very interesting. Lesin was listening and nodding, then he advised, “Then drop everything and be a painter.”
“Drop whom?” clarified Fedkin.
“Everybody.”
“I can’t drop everybody. I can’t drop my wife. In her youth she had many proposals, but she married me. How would she feel in her old age to be a painter’s wife? What would her friends think . . . ”
“If she loves you, she will understand.” Lesin’s face became solemn, and his voice was breaking. Apparently, someone didn’t understand Lesin.
“She would understand, but friends . . . they will see right away that I am a fool. From an executive down to a painter. . . .”
“But you can arrange it so they will fire you . . . ”
“They won’t fire me,” said Fedkin thoughtfully, “I am not a thief, not an alcoholic . . . .”
“A fool, this is very serious. You just underestimate . . . ”
“All the same,” Fedkin was upset, “they won’t fire me for that . . . ”
Fedkin’s supervisor was a woman. Women, as Fedkin saw it, were created for love and family, and not for a job. Since the supervisor was created for both, she therefore helped her grandson with his homework over the phone. She called this caring for him from a distance.
The door to the office was left open a bit. You could hear the supervisor screaming, “Equals mass times speed squared, divided in two. Why do you call me at work rather than looking in your textbook? What will happen when I die?”
“Hello,” said Fedkin politely.
“What a madhouse.” The supervisor got disgusted and threw down the receiver.
Fedkin moved his eyebrows understandingly. For fifteen years she had screamed at her children in the same fashion, called her home a madhouse, and asked what would happen when she died. Nothing changed during all that time. And in general, Fedkin noticed, people don’t change with age.
“What’s with you?” asked the supervisor, thinking about taking care of her grandson from a distance.
“I would like to leave the job.”
“You got offended?”
“No.”
“Then what happened?”
“Simply I am not on a par intellectually.”
“Who said?” The supervisor was edgy.
“No one. I discovered it myself.”
“Did you discover it a long time ago?”
“Today. Since this morning . . .”
“And I knew about it all the fifteen years that you worked for me. And I beg you not to tell this to anyone. Otherwise, I will be a fool, not you.”
“You think about yourself?” Fedkin got offended. “You’re thinking about yourself when the matter is definitely official business.”
“One fool cannot hurt official business.”
Fedkin went to another supervisor. This boss was gray and handsome, but short. He resembled Napoleon Bonaparte and behind his back he was called not Mikhail Ivanych, but Michel.
Michel was constantly in a hurry and constantly fell behind in everything. When he had visitors he rose from his chair and smiled. In Stanislavsky’s system there are approaches, lower and upper. Michel took the one in between so that the visitors sometimes became confused as to who really was the boss.
“Hello, Michel Ivanych,” Fedkin started.
Michel smiled. “In two words, please,” he asked, “I have only a minute and a half.”
And Fedkin counted two fingers on his hand and said, “Me fool.”
Exactly two words.
“Continue,” demanded Michel.
“That’s all.”
“If you understand that you are a fool, that already proves that
you are not a fool.”
Fedkin wanted to contradict, but Michel had no more time. “That’s all,” he said, “I must fly to India.”
Fedkin walked slowly along the corridor, and thought how repulsively the walls had been painted, how sloppily the ceilings had been done. And if this had been done as it should have been, then the bosses and all who came by would probably have been in a better mood—beauty changes a mood. And during the fifteen years—spent on who knows what—he could have painted many ceilings. But that time is now gone.

In the corridor behind low tables on small red wicker chairs, people were sitting, smoking and talking, nonchalantly waving their arms. Some of them he had seen here for a year or more.
Fedkin wanted to go in his office, but somehow he didn’t, instead sat down on the red wicker chair.
“You told them?” quickly asked Lesin, now addressing him in a familiar thou form.
“Yes.”
“So?” The others asked with curiosity.
Fedkin made a disappointed sound with his tongue. He looked really upset.
“Nothing comes easy at first,” they warned Fedkin.
“Nothing comes easy at first,” confirmed Lesin.
“Don’t give up!”
THE TRUTH OF POETRY

MICHAEL HAMBURGER

1.

That poetry embodies or enacts truth of one kind or another has hardly ever been denied by poets themselves, even by poets who have gone much further than Baudelaire in the search for a syntax liberated from prose usage, for an imagery not subservient to argument, or for a diction determined more by acoustic values than by semantic exigencies. It is an error to assert that poetry since Baudelaire’s time has developed only in one of those directions. Different poets have explored different possibilities of development; and quite a number of considerable poets no less modern than those who would trace their descent from Mallarmé have taken none of those directions, but aspired to a bareness and directness of statement that far exceeds anything demanded by the strictest classical canons. To Dryden the words that make up a poem were “the image and ornament” of the thought which it was the primary function of that poem to “convey to our apprehension,” though Dryden was writing about verse translation, and even his practice as a poet and translator of poetry does not always accord with so rigid a definition. The modern poets in question differ from Dryden in having no use for ornament, and no use for images or metaphors that are ornamental in the sense of merely adding grandeur or dignity to their thoughts. The important thing for the readers and critics of modern poems is not to expect too simple or constant an approach to the many kinds of truth which different kinds of poems are able to convey.

Reviewing Bonamy Dobrée’s *The Broken Cistern* in 1954, Donald
Davie quoted this well-known passage from A. E. Housman’s 1933 lecture *The Name and Nature of Poetry*:

Poems very seldom consist of poetry and nothing else; and pleasure can be derived also from their other ingredients. I am convinced that most readers, when they think they are admiring poetry, are deceived by inability to analyse their sensations, and that they are really admiring, not the poetry of the passage before them, but something else in it, which they like better than poetry.

Davie went on to comment:

I. A. Richards, in *Practical Criticism*, proved that this was so. Now Bonamy Dobrée argues that poetry nowadays has few readers of this sort; and this, too, though it cannot be proved, seems very likely. The surprising thing is that he thinks this is a pity. One would think that if the poet no longer has many readers of this sort he is well rid of them. But Professor Dobrée believes that poetry can be a civilizing influence even on people who read poems for something other than their poetry. This is, to say the least, highly questionable, for *Practical Criticism* seemed to prove also that if poetry was read in this wrong-headed way it was a debilitating influence, not civilizing at all.

It would be pleasant to be able to agree with Davie that “poetry nowadays has few readers of this sort;” but quite a number of them are still to be met at public poetry readings, in university seminars and in other unlikely places. “Poetry,” Housman said in the same lecture, “is not the thing said, but a way of saying it. Can it then be isolated and studied by itself? For the combination of language with its intellectual content, its meaning, is a union as close as can well be imagined.” If critics as expert as Professor Dobrée insist on separating “the thing said” from “the way of saying it,” or insist that poetry after all is “the thing said,” as Professor Heller has done, readers of that sort will most probably be met for a long time to come; and not only in those countries where any other sort of reader is considered ideologically suspect. Even after Symbolism, Imagism, Futurism, Expressionism, Surrealism, and the new Concrete poetry, not only critics and readers, but poets too, remain divided on those questions to which Baudelaire could not give an unequivocal answer; and the division, in many cases, remains an inner division, one of those quarrels with himself out of which a poet, as Yeats said, makes poetry.

Donald Davie himself once wrote an eloquent appeal for a kind of poetry that “must reek of the human” and show no “loss of faith in
conceptual thought;" and, as he argued at the time, in *Articulate Energy*, such a poetry would have to return to a syntax more logical than dynamic. Though his own position has probably changed since that time, his analysis of modern poetic syntax, and of the philosophical and psychological changes that led to its adoption, is still valid. Above all, he was right to stress the importance of poetic syntax.

In the same study Donald Davie quoted a comparison by Paul Valéry between Mallarmé's poetic syntax—a syntax, incidentally, which Mallarmé also succeeded in carrying over into prose—and the "attitudes of men who in algebra have examined the science of forms and the symbolical part of the art of mathematics. This type of attention makes the structure of expressions more felt and more interesting than their significance or value." Davie's conclusion was that "the syntax of Mallarmé appeals to nothing but itself, to nothing outside the world of the poem."

Yet Mallarmé has also been seen as the representative of a tradition as old as poetry itself. Elizabeth Sewell, from whose book *The Structure of Poetry* Davie quoted the remark by Valéry, has made just that connection in her later book, *The Orphic Voice*. There she cites Mallarmé's own reference to the Orphic tradition: "l'explication orphique de la terre, qui est le seul devoir du poète et le jeu littéraire par excellence," and her book has the singular merit of relating the "postlogic" of modern poetry—as exemplified in the syntactic developments analysed by Donald Davie—with developments in science and thought. She has no doubts at all about the capacity even of modern poetry to embody truth: "Poetry puts language to full use as a means of thought, exploration and discovery, and we have so far just about made a beginning and no more on its potential usefulness." The operative words are "exploration" and "discovery," since the crucial distinction between an expository syntax, and the syntax of post-symbolist poetry has to do with the later poets' readiness to explore truths rather than to assert them. Elizabeth Sewell shows that there is a precedent for the exploratory procedure not only in the poetry of all periods but also in philosophy and speculative science. Poetry, she suggests, has the same aim as religion, myth and science; and "that is truth, taken in its most simple everyday sense." This function of poetry has been summed up once and for all in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*: "Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge, carrying sensation into the midst of the objects of science itself."
The poetry of Mallarmé and his successors carried sensation—image, music and gesture—into realms that were once considered accessible only to abstract thought and logical argument. Not many poets before them were as consistent or deliberate in working out a syntax close to “the logic of consciousness itself,” as Susanne K. Langer has put it in *Problems of Art*, though Hölderlin’s syntactical contractions, ellipses and suspensions are as daring as anything in Mallarmé; and Hölderlin, too, quite consciously worked for a poetry as “alive” as possible, in which the very processes of thinking and feeling and imagining are enacted.

Nevertheless, the quarrel is not over. What Susanne Langer calls the “artistic interest” of poetry continues to clash with what she calls the “propositional”—sometimes, indeed, within the work of a single poet or even within the structure of a single poem. One may accept the view of an aesthetician like Susanne Langer that all art is “abstract”—in a special sense which she defines—and symbolic; that “the relation of poetry to the world of facts is the same as that of painting to the world of objects; actual events, if they enter its orbit at all, are motifs of poetry, as actual objects are motifs of painting. Poetry, like all art, is abstract and meaningful.” Yet at the same time one may find oneself responding primitively to the “propositional interest” of a line like Mallarmé’s “La chair est triste, hélas! et j’ai lu tous les livres” or Yeats’s “Man has created death,” though both are excellent examples of pseudo-factual assertions whose meaningfulness is not detachable from their contexts. In the early, still somewhat Baudelairean poem by Mallarmé (*Brise marine*), as in the Yeats poem, the single line, because it is a syntactical unit, still makes a kind of appeal more characteristic of classical verse than of Mallarmé’s later, more subtly organized poetry, in which every image and cadence is intricately related to every other, and even punctuation is discarded. Another way of putting it is that the Romantic convention of confessional poetry still dominates Mallarmé’s early poems, as it did the poems of Baudelaire, to a degree that invites a “propositional interest” rather than an artistic one. The proposition, in Mallarmé’s poem *L’Azur*, that “Heaven is dead” (“Le ciel est mort”) can hardly fail to arouse a response akin to our response to Nietzsche’s claim, made in prose, that “God is dead.” Mallarmé’s proposition does not fill a whole line; but the apostrophizing of “matter” in the same line— (“Vers toi, j’ accours! donne, ô matière . . .” —makes a link so important in the history both of thought and of art, so essential also to an understanding of Mallarmé’s development as an artist, that it is difficult to resist an interpretation
that would leave the context out of account. It was the realization that poets do not need to provide that kind of evidence—in this case, a variation of Nietzsche’s discovery that the death of God makes “art the last metaphysical activity within European nihilism,” with the corollary that this modern art may have to be ultimately materialistic, however spiritual and quasi-religious the impulses behind it—which led Mallarmé and his successors to evolve a poetry no longer conducive to the literal interpretation of isolated lines or parts of lines.

This realization does not necessarily imply a “loss of nerve” on the part of modern poets, as Donald Davie suggested in Articulate Energy, or an impoverishment of poetry, as Bonamy Dobrée regretted in The Broken Cistern. The ontological or psychological truths conveyed in statements like “Man has created death” and “Le ciel est mort” have not been taken out of poetry, even where poets have come to resist the temptation to formulate them directly. Poets still think, as well as feel and imagine; but the thinking and the feeling and the imagining have tended more and more to be rendered as the indivisible process which, intrinsically, they have always been. “Imagination,” said the French poet Saint-Pol Roux, in 1923, “is a reaping before the sowing. Reason is imagination that has gone stale.”

What is hardly questionable is that the understanding of poems as poems has been hindered by nothing so much as by the direct assertions that could be detached from them—that is, by those passages in them that seem most immediately understandable. Some assertions of that order, like this notorious one glossed by W. H. Auden, have seemed to cry out to be detached because they are so quotable:

If asked who said Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty! a great many readers would answer “Keats.” But Keats said nothing of the sort. It is what he said the Grecian Urn said, his description and criticism of a certain kind of work of art, the kind from which the evils and problems of this life, the “heart high sorrowful and cloyed,” are deliberately excluded. The Urn, for example, depicts, among other beautiful sights, the citadel of the hill town; it does not depict warfare, the evil which makes the citadel necessary.

Art arises out of our desire for both beauty and truth, and our knowledge that they are not identical.

Critics more inclined to Platonism or to Elizabeth Sewell’s Orphic tradition would probably disagree with Auden’s interpretation; and that precisely is the trouble with general assertions of that order. Auden is certainly right to point to the strictly poetic function of those words within that particular poem. But when he goes on to state that poets
write out of the knowledge that beauty and truth are not identical, he is telling us something about poets like Auden, and not necessarily about poets like Keats, whose assertion or proposition remains controversial, a debating point for critics and aestheticians; and that, at best, is an incidental function of poetry.

3.

W. H. Auden himself received only incidental mention in Hugo Friedrich's widely read study of the development of modern poetry, *Die Struktur der modernen Lyrik*; and once again we are reminded that there is no such thing as a single modern movement in poetry, wholly international, and progressing in a straight line from Baudelaire to the middle of this century (the period covered by Hugo Friedrich's book). Friedrich does tend to concentrate on a single line of development—that towards "pure," "absolute" or hermetic poetry—and his academic specialization is in the Romance languages, in which that line of development has been much stronger than in the Anglo-Saxon, Slavic or Scandinavian language areas. In English poetry especially, every step forward in the direction of pure or hermetic verse has been followed by at least two paces backwards, or by what used to be called a period of "consolidation." The history of Imagism—the most promising of the Anglo-Saxon varieties of modernism—is a case in point. Yet Baudelaire, as I have tried to show, was a moralist as well as an aesthete; and it is the moral concerns of the non-hermeticists that have brought them back again and again to modes of poetic utterance that diverge from the line of development traced by Hugo Friedrich. Characteristically, the mere passing reference to Auden is matched by a similar one to Bertolt Brecht, a poet not affected by Friedrich's linguistic specialization. If Baudelaire is to be taken as a starting-point—and Friedrich does begin with Baudelaire—the dilemma inherent in modern poetry has to be taken into account. Baudelaire, after all, was one of the first poets to grapple with some of the realities of the modern megalopolitan scene; and the English-language poets from T. S. Eliot to Auden, from William Carlos Williams to Philip Larkin and Charles Tomlinson, have excelled at kinds of poetry that respond much more faithfully than Baudelaire's to specific localities and ways of life. The assimilation of experienced and observed realities into poetry, that is, into the diction, imagery and rhythmic structure of verse, is a process seemingly at odds with the trend towards abstraction, as understood by Susanne Langer, or towards the essential autonomy of art. Yet wherever
major poetry has been written in the past century, or in any other, the
two opposing impulses have met, imagination (or “inwardness”) has
fused in some new way with outer experience.

Hugo Friedrich puts all the stress on what he calls the “destruction
of reality” in modern poetry, beginning with Baudelaire’s “depersonaliza-
tion of poetry, at least in as much as the lyrical word no longer
proceeds from the unity of poetry with the empirical self.” Yet he
grants that this unity was characteristic only of the confessional poetry
of the Romantic period, so that Baudelaire’s “depersonalization” can be
seen as a return to classical premises. (That was how Eliot’s advocacy
of impersonality in literature linked up both with his modernism and
with his preference for classicism.) With Rimbaud the thrust of im-
agination does assume a vehemence that warrants Friedrich’s notion
of a “destruction of reality” by certain modern poets. He is also right
to remark on the “empty transcendentalism” of much modern poetry,
citing Rimbaud’s recourse to “angels without God and without a
message.” (A whole genealogy of such angels could be traced from
Rimbaud to Stefan George, Rilke, Wallace Stevens and Rafael Alberti,
and Friedrich does make the connection between Alberti’s angels and
those of Rimbaud.) In Rimbaud, too, Friedrich finds evidence of “a
process of dehumanization” characteristic of the development of modern
poetry—but again, one must object, only of that line of development
which Friedrich chooses to pursue. He quotes this line from Mallar-
mé’s Hérodiade: “Du reste, je ne veux rien d’humain” and claims that
“it could serve as a motto for Mallarmé’s entire work.” But this is a
poem in dialogue form, and it is Herodias who speaks, in a work by a
poet who had severed “the unity of poetry with the empirical self” much
more thoroughly than Baudelaire. Friedrich himself quotes Mallarmé’s
famous remark to Degas that “poems are made not of ideas but of
words.” True, Friedrich also quotes this personal confession by Mal-
larmé in a letter to Cazalis of 1866: “After I had found nothingness I
found beauty;” and there is no denying that a profound nihilism under-
lies the extreme aestheticism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth
centuries.

It is the one-sidedness of Friedrich’s view of what constitutes mod-
ern poetry that allows him to make generalizations like the following:
“‘To call a thing by name means to spoil three quarters of one’s pleas-
ure in a poem. . . .’ This applies to Mallarmé, as to almost all the lyrical
poetry after him;” or: “The modern poem avoids acknowledging the ob-
jective existence of the objective world (including the inner one) by
descriptive or narrative elements.” Yet elsewhere he admits that “there
is also a poetry crowded with things,” though “this abundance of things is subject to a new way of seeing and combining, to new stylistic devices; it is material for the lyrical subject’s power to arrange it as he pleases;” and he speaks of Francis Ponge as a writer of “a poetry that has no other content than things. . . . The subjects of his free verse poems are called bread, door, shell, pebble, candle, cigarettes. They are captured so factually that one critic (Sartre) has spoken of a ‘lyrical phenomenology.’ The ego that captures them is fictitious, a mere carrier of language. This language, however, is anything but realistic. It does not so much deform things as make them so inert, or impart so strange a vitality to things inert by nature, that a spooky unreality is created. But man is excluded.”

I have already suggested that man can never be excluded from poetry written by human beings, however impersonal or abstract; and of Francis Ponge’s poems in particular one could equally well say that they render not things, but a way of looking at things and experiencing things. Ponge, it is true, has expressed severe misgivings about the anthropocentric view of a universe that has become “nothing more than man’s field of action, a stage on which to exercise his power;” but this, too, is a view of man. Elsewhere, in his book Liasse (1948), Ponge has written: “People say that art exists for its own sake. This means nothing to me. Everything in art exists for men.” As for his approach to things—an attempt to put men back into the natural universe, and relate them to its phenomena—he has commented: “My method most certainly is not one of contemplation in the strict sense of the word, but rather of one so active that the naming follows immediately; it is an operation with pen in hand, so that I see closer analogies in alchemy . . . and quite generally in action, too (including political action), than in some sort of ecstasy that originates only in the individual and rather makes me laugh.”

As Werner Vortriede has shown, in his book Novalis und die französischen Symbolisten, Symbolist practice rests on the assumption of a magical correspondence between the inner and outer worlds, an assumption which he traces back to Novalis and other theorists of German Romanticism. “Psychologically speaking,” he remarks, Mallarmé’s use of symbols and Symbolist practice generally is a “secularized mysticism;” psychologically speaking, because the Symbolists were perpetually producing analogies of the poetic process itself. Yet at least in his earlier years, Mallarmé still spoke of “understanding” poems, saying that our pleasure in a poem consists in our gradual understanding. The reader, therefore, is invited to participate in a process of exploration.
Francis Ponge’s reference to alchemy brings us up once more against the peculiar interchangeability of subject and object in so much modern poetry. Rilke’s so-called “thing poetry” in his Neue Gedichte is another striking instance. This has usually been seen as a highly subjective poet’s attempt to emulate the practice of painters and sculptors in their concern with the visual and tactile qualities of the physical world. Rilke’s Der Panther, one seeming triumph of poetic objectivity in that collection, is as much a poem about the poetic process as a poem about a panther: the caged animal’s gaze, which encounters only images unrelated to the panther’s true nature, images that enter the panther’s eyes but “cease to be” when they reach his heart, like the bars of the first stanzas, with no “world” behind them—all these are analogies of the poet’s alienated “inwardness.” But that, too, is “psychologically speaking,” and there is no need for us to inquire into the psychological machinery. What makes the poem successful is that the poet has found a correspondence that works—Eliot’s “objective correlative”—and rendered it in such a way as not to distract us with allusions to his state of mind. Baudelaire’s poem L’Albatros, psychologically speaking, is a similar poem, but Baudelaire still felt obliged to explain and resolve his analogy between the animal and the poet “whose giant’s wings prevent him from walking,” much as Rilke’s panther is a “great will” paralysed by the lack of anything on which to exercise itself. Baudelaire’s explanation turns his albatross into a metaphorical bird, less interesting in itself than Rilke’s panther; and it allows the unsympathetic or literal-minded reader to object that poets, not being birds or angels, don’t have wings, let alone giant’s wings. The comparison detracts from both the bird and the poet, because even the most rigorously sustained simile always implies that the two things compared are not, in fact, identical. Whatever its psychological and philosophical premises, therefore, Mallarmé’s recourse to freely floating, unanchored and unexplained images enriched the resources of poetry; artistically speaking—that is, in terms of effects rather than causes—it absolved later poets from the stale dichotomy of mind and things.

4.

Language itself guarantees that no poetry will be totally “dehumanized,” regardless of whether a poet attempts to project pure inwardness outwards—as Rilke often did—or to lose and find himself in animals, plants and inanimate things. The exact balance between the expression of feeling and penetration of the world outside may be
a problem for poets when they are not writing poetry, as well as for those of their critics whose main interests are psychological and philosophical. If the poem succeeds, the problem is resolved in that poem: within its bounds a magical correspondence does indeed prevail. Something of this interchangeability seems to attach even to the latest experiments in a kind of poetry that neither expresses nor records anything at all, but makes words and their interrelationships its only material; significantly enough, this kind of poetry has been described both as “abstract” and as “concrete” poetry.

William Carlos Williams is another poet whose work is crowded with people, places and things. As in Ponge’s work, this involvement was an active one, based on the reciprocity of imagination and external reality. It is usual to label Williams with the prescription “no ideas but in things,” a parenthesis that occurs in his poem *A Sort of Song*:

Let the snake wait under  
his weed  
and the writing  
be of words, slow and quick, sharp  
to strike, quiet to wait  
sleepless.

—through metaphor to reconcile  
the people and the stones.  
Compose. (No ideas  
but in things) Invent!  
Saxifrage is my flower that splits  
the rocks.

To begin with, this is a dynamic poem of discovery; and the words in brackets are not a prescription, but part of an experience—a part of the experience, incidentally, which could not be rendered in terms of the two “images” or things dominant in the poem, the snake and the saxifrage. In later poems Williams evolved a meditative style that no more excludes direct statement of ideas than does that of Eliot’s *Four Quartets*; and even here he has to resort to the language of ideas in order to convey his purpose—akin to Ponge’s opposition to the anthropocentric exploitation of the universe—“through metaphor to reconcile the people and the stones.” A later poem, *The Desert Music*, adds a reflection on the character of Williams’s involvement with the outside world:

to imitate, not to copy nature, not  
to copy nature

26
NOT prostrate to copy nature
but a dance . . .

The line that follows carries us right back into the physical world, so that once more the lines quoted lose their prescriptive character and become part of an experience that is also a discovery. In both cases it is impossible, and irrelevant, to say whether Williams has written a poem about the poetic process or about people and things.

Nor is there any real inconsistency between the procedure in the earlier poem, A Sort of Song, and Williams’s words in another, later poem, The Host—words that have also been detached from their context and treated as a kind of manifesto:

it is all
according to the imagination!
Only the imagination
is real! They have imagined it
therefore it is so

Here Williams is not even speaking primarily about poetry or art, but about religious belief—which to him, a non-believer, is imagination—and as always the general observation proceeds from his encounter with people, places and things, from a specific occasion which he does not so much narrate as dynamically re-enact in words that render both an inner and an outer experience.

Read out of context, “Only the imagination is real” becomes a statement which one would be inclined to attribute not to Williams, but to his American contemporary who seems to represent the opposite pole of modern poetry, Wallace Stevens—a poet as self-contained as Williams was open to everything around him. Yet the diction and, above all, the syntax and metre of the immediate context—with that word “they” which switches without transition from the general statement to the people of the poem, the “tall negro evangelist,” the “two Irish nuns” and the “white-haired Anglican”—brings us back at once to Williams and the urgency of immediate experience. Philosophically, Williams and Stevens meet in that passage, as extremes are apt to meet in modern poetry, since the possibilities of poetic expression are always being pushed to the limits. When such a limit has been reached, a poet may swing back to the other side. Yet the principle of imagination was no less present in the words on either side of the parenthesis in A Sort of Song, the words “compose” and “invent.” If there is a seeming con-
tradiction between “no ideas but in things” and “Only the imagination is real” it has to do with language itself.

One thing that Williams had in common with Wallace Stevens, as with Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot and almost every significant poet of his time, was a constant concern with the possibilities and limits of language, including the contradiction inherent in it as the material of poetry. In his profound and perceptive essay *The Poet as Fool and Priest* the late Sigurd Burckhardt showed why language itself forbids total abstraction in poetry or prose:

There can be no non-representational poetry; the very medium forbids. MacLeish’s “A poem should not mean but be” points to an important truth, but as it stands it is nonsense, because the medium of poetry is unlike any other. Words must mean; if they don’t they are gibberish. The painter’s tree is an image; but if the poet writes “tree,” he does not create an image. He uses one; the poetic image is one only in a metaphorical sense. . . . Words already have what the artist first wants to give them—meaning—and fatally lack what he needs in order to shape them—body.

This fundamental, but easily overlooked, characteristic of language points to one of the limits that Williams came up against, as all the one-time Imagists did. Incidentally, it also disposes of Erich Heller’s fears about the arrogance of those—like Mallarmé, Rilke or Stevens—who set themselves up as “creator poets,” and it modifies all definitions of the functions of poetry which—like Susanne Langer’s—are based on a consideration of all the arts. Burckhardt goes on to explain why poets—and not only modern poets—have often gone out of their way to make their language “difficult” (just as other poets, or the same poets at other times, have cultivated a simplicity of diction equally far removed from the literary or non-literary styles of discourse prevalent in their time).

Poetic language, then, resorts to what Brecht, in a very different connection, called “alienation effects.” Burckhardt shows that metre and rhyme are such effects, until they become a “binding convention of poetry” and lose their “dissociative force.” Commenting on the song from *The Tempest, Full Fathom five . . . ,* he shows that in order to be rich the word in poetry “must first become strange.” Dislocations of normal syntax, as in Mallarmé, are another device of that kind. “A word that can function simultaneously as two or more different parts of speech, a phrase which can be parsed in two or more ways—to the despair
of all grammar teachers—simply extends the pervasive incertitude of poetry from words to their connections into statements.”

Yet as soon as such things as rhyme, metre and inversion have become poetic conventions, poets may have to reverse the whole process in order to produce the necessary alienation. They may even try to do without metaphorical language of any kind, since non-poetic discourse, too, is full of metaphors. If poetic or discursive conventions tend towards formality and intricacy, they will explore the possibilities of simple colloquial language, as Blake and Wordsworth did in the eighteenth century, or as Williams did in ours.

In this context Burckhardt takes up William Empson’s analysis of ambiguity and shifts “the emphasis a little,” as he puts it—a modest understatement on his part:

He [Empson] made us aware that one word can—and in great poetry commonly does—have many meanings; I would rather insist on the converse, that many meanings have one word. For the poet, the ambiguous word is the crux of the problem of creating a medium for him to work in. If meanings are primary and words only their signs, then ambiguous words are false; each meaning should have its word, as each sound should have its letter. But if the reverse is true and words are primary—if, that is, they are the corporeal entities the poet requires—then ambiguity is something quite different: it is the fracturing of a pristine unity by the analytic conceptualizations of prose.

This distinction leads Burckhardt to his main contention that the nature of language itself forces poets into the dual roles of fool and priest, since “the poet’s purpose is to tell truths—truths which escape the confines of discursive speech. And to do so he is committed to the word, even the negative, as in some sense physically present. How, then, can he express negations?” Burckhardt finds the answer in Shakespeare’s 116th sonnet, though the function of negatives and negation in more recent poetry is a special one that will concern me in another chapter. For the present, Burckhardt’s conclusion that “the poet must always be half fool, the corrupter of words,” is worth bearing in mind, just because it is his analysis of passages from Shakespeare that lead to it. The contradictions inherent in language itself are not confined to poetry after Baudelaire, though modern poets have experienced them most acutely.
The purpose of poets, then, is “to tell truths,” but in ways necessarily complicated by the “paradox of the human word.” From Baudelaire onwards (and long before Baudelaire) poets have grappled endlessly with that basic paradox; and since the writing of poetry is a “deed”—a process of exploration and discovery—the truths told are of a special kind. Certainly there have been times when, even in verse, the emphasis fell on the elegant and decorous exposition of truths that were already the common property of writer and reader; but those were periods of a cultural homogeneity—or of a cultural exclusiveness—unknown to any of the poets with whom I am concerned. “One of the most difficult things in writing poetry,” Wallace Stevens remarked with a matter-of-fact dryness not really surprising in a poet active long after Mallarmé, “is to know what one’s subject is. Most people know what it is and do not write poetry, because they are so conscious of that one thing. One’s subject is always poetry, or should be. But sometimes it becomes a little more definite and fluid, and the thing goes ahead rapidly.” In other words, it is the poem that tells the poet what he thinks, not vice versa; and Stevens remarks on just that peculiarity of poets—an aspect of what Keats called their “negative capability”—in a later letter: “Some people always know exactly what they think. I am afraid that I am not one of those people. The same thing keeps active in my mind and rarely becomes fixed. This is true about politics as about poetry.” Yet the thinking does crystallize—in poems; and Wallace Stevens could also write: “It made me happy the other day to find that Carnap said flatly that poetry and philosophy are one. The philosophy of the sciences is not opposed to poetry any more than the philosophy of mathematics is opposed.”

Mallarmé, Valéry, Stevens and Jorge Guillén are some of the poets who have tried to think in purely poetic terms much as a mathematician thinks in purely mathematical terms—without direct reference, that is, to concerns that may well have been theirs when they were doing other things. As Mallarmé wrote in 1867, he created his work “only by elimination.” This elimination, active also in the work of later poets, is certainly akin both to the abstractions of mathematics and to the trend towards abstract forms in the visual arts that began with the post-Impressionists; but since words have meanings independent of the special functions that poetry lends to them, such analogies should never be taken too literally. Even Wallace Stevens combined elements of verbal clowning with his philosophical seriousness, which was priestly in the precise sense that Burckhardt defined. Stevens began with a belief
in poetry for poetry’s sake: “What I am after in all this is poetry, and I don’t think that I have ever written anything with any other objective than to write poetry.” It was only when he tried to explain this belief to himself and to others that he came to relate it to preoccupations that were by no means purely aesthetic.

It is the paradox inherent in language itself that makes the theories and occasional pronouncements of poets more confusing, more obscure and often more self-contradictory than their practice. Pierre Reverdy, for instance, wrote in 1948 that “the poet has no subject at all. ... His work is valuable just because it adduces no reason for its discontinuity and its process of fusing with incompatible things.” In a radio discussion with Francis Ponge and Jean Cocteau the same poet said that “form is only the visible part of content—the skin.” The two statements seem to contradict each other, though both make sense when applied to Reverdy’s poetry, or to that of many other poets of his time. In the first instance Reverdy was thinking of a subject that could be paraphrased in prose, translated or abstracted from its medium into that of logical discourse. In the second instance he was thinking not of that kind of subject, but of the peculiarly poetic thinking and feeling and imagining that do indeed determine the form of a poem, especially where that form is “organic” or “free.” Both statements, therefore, say something about the indivisibility of form and content in poetry, and both imply a distinction between content and subject.

Genuine differences between poets do arise over the value that each attributes to the public functions and implications of poetry—functions and implications that are very far from having been eliminated once and for all by Mallarmé’s dictum that “poems are made not of ideas but of words,” or by MacLeish’s “a poem should not mean but be.” These, in any case, are half-truths, as Burckhardt argued, since words can never be totally severed from the connection with ideas and meaning. Nor does one need to be a Marxist to recognize that all poetry has political, social and moral implications, regardless of whether the intention behind it is didactic and “activist” or not. Contrary to what Hugo Friedrich has asserted, a very good case could be made out for the special humanity of much modern poetry, a concern with human-kind as a whole all the more intense for being “depersonalized” as much Romantic poetry was not, because the more confessional of the Romantic poets were primarily interested in their own individuality and in those things that made them different from other people.

Quite apart from moral or political commitments as such—and I shall have more to say of these, as of the persistence of Romantic-Symbolist attitudes in poets otherwise modern—the mere practice of
poetry as an art whose medium is language has social implications which have been given special prominence in this century, as by the Austrian critic and aphorist Karl Kraus, all of whose copious writings on society and literature are based on the analysis of the many uses and abuses of language. If poets are writers whose use of language is necessarily critical, because whatever else a poem may be it cannot be a good poem unless every word in it has been weighed, they have an inescapable function that has been stressed even by a writer as much at odds with his own society and its values as Ezra Pound: “Has literature a function in the state, in the aggregation of humans, in the republic? It has . . . . It has to do with the clarity and vigor of ‘any and every’ thought and opinion . . . . When this work goes rotten—by that I do not mean when they express indecorous thoughts—but when the very medium, the very essence of their work, the application of word to thing goes rotten, i.e. becomes slushy and inexact, or excessive or bloated, the whole machinery of social and individual thought and order goes to pot.” That was also the view of Karl Kraus, who was far from sharing Ezra Pound’s political enthusiasms at this time. These political enthusiasms have a great deal to do with the extent to which Pound remained rooted in the Romantic-Symbolist aesthetic; but, however limited his view of social realities, Pound was passionately concerned with them in a way that Mallarmé, for instance, was not: “In proportion as his work is exact, i.e. true to human consciousness and to the nature of man, as it is exact in formulation of desire, so it is durable and so it is useful; I mean it maintains the precision, and clarity of thought not merely for the benefit of a few dilettantes and ‘lovers of literature,’ but maintains the health of thought outside literary circles and in non-literary existence, in general individual and communal life.” Nor is there any confusion about ideas and words, the meaning and the being of poetry, in Pound’s definition of great literature, in the same work, as “merely language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree.”

“Human consciousness” and “the nature of man”—these two concepts alone indicate why poetry can never exclude man, as long as it is written by human beings rather than machines (and even machines are designed and made by men). What poetry can exclude, especially where words are picked up at random, split up into their components or left to form visual or sonic patterns on the page, is individuality; but where those exercises are meaningful, they reveal something about language, and language brings us back to “human consciousness” and “the nature of man.”

Octavio Paz has explained why “poetry is a food which the bour-
geoisie—as a class—has proved incapable of digesting.” Poetry, he argues, has tried in different ways to abolish “the distance between the word and the thing,” and this distance is due to the self-consciousness of civilized men and their separation from nature. “The word is not identical with the reality which it names because between men and things—and, on a deeper level, between men and their being—self-consciousness interposes.” Modern poetry, according to Paz, moves between two poles, which he calls the magical and the revolutionary. The magical consists in a desire to return to nature by dissolving the self-consciousness that separates us from it, “to lose oneself for ever in animal innocence, or liberate oneself from history.” The revolutionary aspiration, on the other hand, demands a “conquest of the historical world and of nature.” Both are ways of bridging the same gap and reconciling the “alienated consciousness” to the world outside.

Yet both tendencies may be at work within the same poet, and even within the same poem, just as a poet may combine the function of priest and fool, hater and lover of words. Octavio Paz, too, has written: “What characterizes a poem is its necessary dependence on words as much as its struggle to transcend them.” The dependence has to do with the poet’s involvement in history and society, the transcendence with the magical shortcut back to nature and to the primitive unity of word and thing. Both correspond to general human concerns, though many people may be unaware of the tensions and complexities inherent in their relationship with words or with things. An extraordinary degree of alienation from language, even as a medium of simple communication, has become more and more widespread in “advanced” societies, as one can see in television interviews with young people incapable of uttering a simple short sentence not helped out by “sort of” and “you know.” The causes of this non-articulation may well be closely connected with the “word-scepticism” which underlies many of the practices of modern poets (and which Hofmannsthal attributed to a basic split between the conventions of language and the reality of particular things). The truth of poetry, and of modern poetry especially, is to be found not only in its direct statements but in its peculiar difficulties, shortcuts, silences, hiatuses and fusions.
Tadeusz Rozewicz

OCALONY

Mam dwadzieścia cztery lata
ocalałem
prowadzony na rzeź.

To są nazwy puste i jednoznaczne
człowiek i zwierze
miłość i nienawiść
wróg i przyjaciel
ciemność i światło.

Człowieka tak się zabija jak zwierze
widziałem:
furgony porabanych ludzi
którzy nie zostaną zbawieni.

Pojęcia są tylko wyrazami:
cnota i występek
prawda i kłamstwo
piękno i brzydota
mestwo i tchórzostwo.

Jednak wazy cnota i występek
widziałem:
człowieka który był jeden
występny i cnotliwy.

Szukam nauczyciela i mistrza
niech przywróci mi wzrok słuch i mówę
niech jeszcze raz nazwie rzeczy i pojęcia
niech oddzieli światło od ciemności.

Mam dwadzieścia cztery lata
ocalałem
prowadzony na rzeź.
I am a twenty-four year old survivor from slaughter.

These are synonyms:
man and beast
love and hate
enemy and friend
darkness and light.

Man’s death is an animal’s death;
I saw fourgons laden with butchered bodies that shall never be blessed.

Values are sounds:
virtue and crime
truth and falsehood
beauty and horror
courage and cowardice.

Crime and virtue are analogous;
I knew a man who was both virtuous and vicious.

I am searching for a teacher
let him restore my speech and hearing
let him give words their due again divide anew darkness from light.

I am a twenty-four year old survivor from slaughter.
TO THE TOP OF THE TOWER

MICHAEL BULLOCK

Sitting in the topmost branches of a tree overlooking the Ganges, I was waiting for the vulture of morning to descend and tell me in which direction to go, now that the wheels of the bullock carts had criss-crossed the sandy road, crossing out the instructions left there for me by the monkeys of Hanuman on their way from the nearby temple to the distant Himalayas.

The vulture descended, settled beside me on the bough and after asking my name—a question to which I replied with some hesitation—instructed me to proceed towards the point at which the sun was about to rise, releasing as it did so a swarm of golden bees that would alight among the blue lotuses fringing the Ganges and setting them on fire.

As they burn, the vulture told me, leave. Be gone before their fire dies down.

The sun rose. The bees swarmed. The lotuses burned. I went, walking along a jungle track on either side of which tall grasses writhed convulsively, as though wishing to pull up their roots and go.

A tiger lay across the path. At my approach the striped hair on his back sprouted up to a height of several feet, forming a black and yellow screen that totally blotted out my view of the way ahead. At the same time the weight of this screen of hair so burdened the tiger as to render him harmless.

Parting the screen, I stepped through, over the tiger and along the
path. A bird dropped a message on the path in front of me, but it was written in a language I could not read and only a drawing of a dagger was recognizable to me—though I had no idea what it was supposed to convey to me—a threat, a warning to turn back?

As I walked on I observed that my feet had turned black from the ankles down, though I had no feeling of discomfort, no sense that anything was wrong with them, and no impediment to walking.

Since I was passing a small lake I sat down on the bank and tried to wash my feet. As soon as I put them in the water a black fluid flowed off them endlessly, until the whole lake was black; but my feet remained as black as when I put them in.

A red fish rose to the surface and requested me kindly to refrain from further polluting the water. Abashed, I quickly withdrew my feet and continued on my way, not daring to look back in case the fish was still watching me with disapproval.

A vast cloud appeared in the sky overhead and a voice boomed: “Rape and murder. Beware of leaves that flutter as they fall and have veins that swell as they lie on the ground.”

The cloud disappeared and in its place a kite was floating at the end of a long cord. On the kite was painted a face. The face opened its mouth and stuck out its tongue, which grew longer and longer until it touched the path in front of me. Climbing up it I came finally to a window in the topmost tower of a palace, within which a girl in a black sari was sitting at a table eating.

I observed through the window that she was not using her hands to eat, but bending down towards a plate from which sprouted two hands which daintily placed the food in her mouth. Where the food came from it was impossible to tell—it simply appeared between the fingers of the hands as though materializing out of the air.

The girl in black glanced round at the window and nodded to me, indicating with a movement of the head that I was to come in. With another movement of the head she motioned me to sit down on a couch. I was struck by her repeated use of her head to indicate what she wanted and then I realized why she did not use her hands either to gesture or to eat with—she had none. Flowers were growing out of the ends of her arms and she kept them still, no doubt for fear the petals might fall.

I sat down on the couch and waited. The girl in black came over and sat beside me. As she walked there was a rustling of leaves and as she sat down a sound like leaves fluttering to the ground.

Then she spoke for the first time and said: “My name is Maya, I have been waiting for you.”
I took out my heart, put it on the plate from which she had been eating and held it out to her. The hands in the plate had gone.

“Yes,” she said, “but you must put it in my mouth. You see I have no hands.”

As she gnawed my heart the colour of her sari slowly changed from black to red. I looked at my feet: they were slowly turning white. The flowers at the ends of her arms grew and grew, till they became huge birds, detached themselves and flew out of the window. In their place fresh flowers blossomed, grew in their turn, became birds in their turn and flew out of the window like the first pair.

This happened over and over again and each time the birds detached themselves and flew away, the girl dwindled in size, till finally there was nothing on the couch beside me but a little figure of clay.

I put the figure in my pocket and turned to the window, but there was no window and the room had no door. The only light was a red glow from the plate on which my heart had rested.

I knew my time had come. I wrote down this account of my last day sitting at the table, then lay down on the couch to await the end.
ON SUICIDE

tr. from the Japanese by Edith Shiffert and Yuki Sawa

My memory is
redder than meat at a meat-market and
my past is
like flower patterns on porcelain
accurate and at the same time minute in the extreme.
But still this condition of debility,
come from what kind of reason?

Quietly putting the muzzle at my temple
I try to pull the trigger.
Sour candy goes through my insides and then
from the shelf behind one
ornament tumbles down.
That is all,
just that is all —
from a world’s tiny broken hole
yellow smoke is coming up.

Is life after all
a remote remote lyrical hardening, is it?
But almost the same are
odds and ends of broken toys
wrapped in a big bundle in a cloth
and like this as abruptly tumbled over.

No one comes like a perpetual undertaker.
After time elapses the lock is opened
and another cloth-wrapped bundle comes to just look in.
Rafael Alberti

CANCIONES

DEL VALLE DEL ANIENE

LA montaña ¿quién la sube?
Si hubiera nacido olivo,
la subiría.
Pero hoy,
sin moverme, desde el valle,
me veo subir, me veo
olivo, montaña arriba.
¿Quién es aquél, me pregunto,
sin moverme desde el valle,
que da olivas,
que está derramando olivas
con el aire,
cada vez que pasa el aire?

AIRE de la montaña
pasado por el valle.
Las higueras, las viñas, los olivos,
los castaños, los pinos, los nogales,
qué felices por ti, qué estremecidas,
WHO climbs the mountain?
If I were an olive tree
I'd climb it.
Today
without stirring a limb from the valley
I see myself climbing, an olive tree
climbing the mountain.
Who is that other, I ask,
without stirring a limb from the valley,
bringing olives,
spilling olives
into the air,
each time the air passes?

AIRS from the mountain,
airs out of the valley.
Fig tree and olive and vine,
pine, chestnut, walnut,
how easily all is given you,
qué dichosas palabras musicales,
quē susurro infinito en la mañana,
aire azul de las cumbres libres, aire,
sin saber que la muerte
anda por otros montes y otros valles.

SE va la gente. Estos pueblos
¿ un día estarán vacíos?
Ya no hay señor ni vasallos,
sólo viejos campesinos
que arañan en las laderas
de los montes, mientras ven
irse lejos a los hijos.

PROCESIONES. Va la Virgen
de la plaza al barrio alto.
Otra tarde,
entre cohetes y músicas,
baja al valle.
Luego, le toca a San Roque
bajar
del barrio alto a la plaza.
Subir, luego,
de la plaza al barrio alto,
entre músicas, latines
y petardos.
Luego, le toca otra vez
a la Virgen.
Después, a un Cristo pintado.
Luego, a San Juan. Luego, luego ...

Aquí sólo manda el párroco,
entre una hoz y un martillo,
ciriales, cruz en alto,
San Juan, San Roque, la Virgen,
Cristo, músicas, latines
y petardos.
all that flutter of lucky and musical words,
that infinite sigh in the morning,
blue air from the freedom of peaks, air
knowing nothing of death
that walks other mountains, other valleys.

THE people moved off. Will these villages
one day be empty?
Today, neither vassal nor lord,
today only farmers, the old ones
scraping the mountain
slopes, seeing their sons
moving off in the distance.

PROCESSIONS. The Virgin comes
up from the plaza, to the high places.
Another evening
in rockets and roundelays
she goes down to the valley again.
Later Saint Rocco takes a turn
downward,
out of the high places into the plaza.
He climbs back
from the plaza again to the high places,
in roundelays, Latin,
and firecrackers.
Then the Virgin
comes round again.
And a painted Christ afterward.
After that, a Saint John. After that, after that ...

Here, between sickle and hammer,
only the parson commands, with processional
candlesticks, the cross lifted up,
Saint John, Saint Rocco, the Virgin,
Latin, roundelays, Christ
and His firecrackers.
ABRO el diario. ¡Qué infinita angustia!
¡Qué dolor de mirar tranquilamente el campo,
el cielo inocentísimo de angélicos azules,
el valle solo con el río oculto,
montes de higueras y de olivos que abren
al viento en paz los brazos...
¡Oh, cuánta angustia, qué remordimiento
vivir sólo un minuto
sin hacer nada por parar la muerte,
la muerte inmune, libre
para matar, las armas en la mano!

For Federico García Lorca

FEDERICO.
Voy por la calle del Pinar
para verte en la Residencia.
Llamo a la puerta de tu cuarto.
Tú no estás.

Federico.
Tú te reías como nadie.
Decías tú todas tus cosas
como ya nadie las dirá.
Voy a verte a la Residencia.
Tú no estás.

Federico.
Por estos montes del Aniene,
tus olivos trepando van.
Llamo a sus ramas con el aire.
Tú sí estás.

ES una grieta en la piedra.
Todas las calles son grietas.

Grietas profundas con rotos
o mordidos escalones
que van a dar a otras grietas.
I OPEN the papers. No end to this anguish!
How hard to see these fields tranquilly,
an utterly innocent sky with angelical blues,
the valley hiding only its river,
mountains of fig trees and olives open-armed
to the breeze's serenity . . .
O the weight of that anguish, the remorse
of living this way, if only for a moment,
doing nothing to stop all that dying,
that unconscionable dying, free
to kill as it pleases, with a gun in its fist!

For Federico Garcia Lorca

FEDERICO.
I go up Calle del Pinar
to look for you there in the Residence.
I call out at the door of your room.
Nobody there.

Federico.
Your laughter: like nothing else in the world!
You said all that you needed to say
as no one will say it again.
I look for you there in the Residence.
Nobody there.

Federico.
Here on the slopes of Aniene
your olives keep climbing the mountains.
I call through their boughs in mid-air.
Yes: you are there.

THERE'S a crack in the stone.
Each street is a fissure.

Deep fissures, bitten
or broken in laddering stone
leading on to more crevices.
Mas de pronto,
de las resquebrajaduras
aparecen unos ojos
y tras ellos
la sombra de algún soldado
de otro tiempo.

SE quedó el pueblo vacío.
Le entró el otoño.

Subió de pronto los montes
y se presentó en la plaza.

Soy el otoño.

Los viejos lo contemplaron
con tristeza y los más jóvenes,
bajando al valle, se fueron.
Till suddenly
out of the fissures
eyes look at us,
and behind them,
the shadows of soldiers
from times not our own.

THE village kept empty.
Autumn came on.

It was suddenly there in the mountains,
it showed itself in the plaza.

I am that autumn.

The aging saw it come on
sadly. The younger
came down from the mountain, and left.
Rafael Alberti

EIGHT ORIGINAL
LITHOGRAPHS
ROMA, PELIGRO PARA CAMINANTES — 1964
LOS OJOS DE PICASSO IV — 1967
MASTROIANNI IV — 1967
QUE HACER — 1964
In order for a single poem to come into existence,
you and I have to kill,
have to kill many things,
many loveable things, kill by shooting, kill by assassination,
    kill by poisoning.

Look!
Out of the sky of four thousand days and nights,
just because we wanted the trembling tongue of one small bird,
four thousand nights of silence and four thousand days of counterlight
you and I killed by shooting.

Listen!
Out of all the cities of falling rain, smelting furnaces,
midsummer harbors, and coal mines,
just because we needed the tears of a single hungry child
four thousand days of love and four thousand nights of compassion
you and I killed by assassination.

Remember!
Just because we wanted the fear of one vagrant dog,
who could see the things you and I couldn’t see with our eyes
and could hear the things you and I couldn’t hear with our ears,
four thousand nights of imagination and four thousand days of
    chilling recollection
you and I killed by poison.

In order for a single poem to come
you and I have to kill the beloved things.
This is the only way to bring back the dead to life.
You and I have to follow that way.
DE UITVAART

PAUL VAN OSTALJEN

Wanneer, midden Augustus, het niet heet is, maar mild, zonder koel te zijn, zo gelukt het ons niet meer, zoals in Juni, deze temperatuur to houden voor een waarschijnlijk korte tussenpoze waarvan, naar de weinige ervaringen die wij op dit gebied hebben, de oorzaken velerlei en verscheiden kunnen zijn, maar wel voorvoelen wij in deze mildheid, door de herinnering, de Septemberdag, wanneer zich de zomer werkelijk onttint, wanneer het voor onze ogen en in onze organen gebeurt dat de elementen van de zomer van elkaar gaan. Niet dus dat wij van deze milde Augustusdag zouden kunnen zeggen dat in hem de herfst reeds zichtbaar zich tekent, neen, maar wel zijn wij als dieren die, lang vóór de dood, de ontbinding reeds ruiken. Rond elf uur in de voormiddag heeft de zon veel van de straat genomen en wij gaan, bijna gemakkelijker en zeker losser, aan de zonzijde, dan op de plekken waar hier en daar de schaduw nog is.

En wij voelen thans dat er niets tegensprekelijks is, zonder echter het gevol juist te kunnen omlijken, tussen deze milde Augustusdag en de uitvaart, waarop men geroepen wordt aanwezig te zijn in gindse kerk.

De langelijke kerk ligt voluit in gene ongezeefde klaarte. Zulke klaarte zou men geneigd zijn in een kerk voor uitzonderlijk te houden, doch men doet het niet: men vindt het vanzelfsprekend dat het overal zeer licht is, afgezien van enkele magere slagschaduwen in de zijbeuken. Wat men deze morgen reeds met zich meedroeg, hier in de kerk komt het tot een duidelijke ervaring: het begrip van de dood als bittere
When, mid-August, it is not hot, but mild, without being cool, we are not able any longer, as in June, to regard this temperature as a probably short intermediary stage of which, according to the few experiences we have on this subject, the causes can be many and varied, but we do sense in this mildness, by means of our memory, the September day, when summer really decomposes, when it happens in front of our eyes and in our organs that the elements of summer separate. Hence we can not say of this mild day in August that autumn is already visibly present in it, no, but we are like animals which, long before death, already smell decomposition. Around eleven in the morning the sun has taken much away from the street and we walk, almost more easily and certainly more loosely, on the sunny side, rather than in the spots where and there the shadow still is.

And we feel now that there is nothing contradictory, without however, being able to outline the feeling precisely, between this mild August day and the obsequies, which one is called upon to attend in yonder church.

The rural church lies stretched out in yon unsieved clarity. Such clarity one would be inclined to hold unusual in a church, but one does not: one finds it quite normal that it is very bright everywhere, save a few slanted shadows in the aisles. What one already brought along this morning, becomes in this church a clear experience: the notion of death as bitter finality, set over against this experience of
uiteindelijkheid, tegenover deze ervaring van het gelijkmatige licht geplaatst, beschikt niet meer over deze synthetische kracht, die, in ons, vroeger vermocht de fenomenen naar dit meegebrachte begrip te ordenen. Het is geheel anders. Haast zichtbaar, stoot dit begrip van de dood aan de klaarte van de kerk, gelijk een kurk aan de waterspiegel stoot. Twee waarden staan abrupt naast elkaar: de dood en het licht en het gelukt ons niet, zoals vroeger, de fenomenen van dit begrip naar de orde van het andere te denken. Wel integendeel spoelt de vloed van het licht de kurk voortdurend naar het strand.

Plots staat men met het meegebrachte waardeoordeel des doods als met een verrekijker in een kamer.
equable light, commands no longer this synthetic power, which, in us, could formerly order the phenomena according to this accompanying notion. It is totally different. Almost visibly, hits this notion of death against the clarity of the church, as a cork hits against the water's surface. Two values stand suddenly next to each other: death and light and we no longer succeed, as before, to think the phenomena of this notion according to the order of the other one. But instead the flood of light washes the cork constantly to the beach.

Suddenly one stands with the value-judgment of death we brought along as with a telescope in a room.
**Peter Huchel**

**VERONA**

Zwischen uns fiel der Regen des Vergessens.
Im Brunnen verdämmern die Münzen.
Auf der Mauer die Katze,
Sie dreht ihr Haupt ins Schweigen,
Erkennt uns nicht mehr.
Das schwache Licht der Liebe
Sinkt auf ihre Augensterne.

Es rasselt das Räderwerk im Turm
Und schlägt zu spät die Stunde an.
Die Erde schenkt uns keine Zeit
Über den Tod hinaus.
Ins Gewebe der Nacht genäht
Versinken die Stimmen
Unauffindbar.

Zwei Tauben fliegen vom Fenstersims.
Die Brücke behütet den Schwur.
Dieser Stein,
Im Wasser der Etsch,
Lebt gross in seiner Stille.
Und in der Mitte der Dinge
Die Trauer.
Between us fell the rain of forgetting.
In the well twilight wears away coins.
A cat on the wall,
She turns her head into the silence,
Recognizes us no longer.
The faint light of love
Falls on the stars of her pupils.

Clockwork clatters in the tower
And strikes the hour too late.
The earth gives us no time
Beyond death.
Sewn into the web of night
Voices sink away
Undiscoverably.

Two pigeons fly from the window ledge.
The bridge guards our vows.
This stone
In the water of the Etsch
Lives big in his stillness.
And at the hub of things
Grief.
Jean Chatard

MESURE

Juste assez de cris pour ne pas
s'ouvrir les veines juste assez
exactement ce qu'il convient de pire

Oh je pourrais rouvrir la plaie
rien n'est plus facile qu'une trouée
dans le linceul je pourrais
jeter des ponts entre nos bras ouverts
contre nos mains levées
je pourrais tu le sais bien suivre
à la trace l'innocent chemin de cette
vie de paille et d'or

Je pourrais te rompre

Mais quelle voile reste-t-il à hisser
quelles amarres dois-je couper
quel oiseau anonyme me faut-il capturer

Juste assez de cris
exactement ce qu'il convient de pire
pour ne pas s'ouvrir le ventre
Jean Chatard

MEASURE

tr. Derk Wynand

Just enough cries not to
open your veins, just enough
exactly to the breaking point

I could reopen the wound
nothing’s easier than a breach
in the shroud. I could
throw bridges between our open arms
against our lifted hands
I could, you know well,
trace the innocent course of this
life of straw and of gold

I could break you

But what sail remains to be hoisted
what hawser do I have to cut
what anonymous bird must I capture

Just enough cries
exactly to the breaking point
not enough to open your stomach
AN INTRODUCTION TO “NEW SPANISH POETRY”

José Battló

The “social poetry” movement developed in Spain during the mid 1950’s. Certain writings by Blas de Otero (Pido la paz y la palabra, 1955), Gabriel Celaya (Cantos iberos, 1956) and other young poets who published their first works at that time, provided the impetus and energy necessary to interest a select readership in this new poetic development. They also encouraged criticism, responsible or not, concerned with the poetry of specialized journals, newspapers, and weekly reviews. After an undisputed reign of ten years, this movement still intrigues today’s youth interested in poetry as readers or writers. The political situation in Spain during those years favored this reign (fully understandable from an historical perspective), but actually limited the possibilities of expression and theme in the best poetry. Such poetry either submitted to the impositions of the social theory or was scorned and ignored. Although based on faulty premises, the theory was quite coherent. José María Castellet succeeded in explaining, defending, and supporting the theory by a series of writings, and especially by the 1960 publication of his anthology Veinte años de poesía española, 1939-1959. This work went through several editions before Castellet published a sequel, Un cuarto de siglo de poesía española, 1939-1964. This second edition was similar to the first except for a more perceptive and appealing introduction which supplanted the problematic forward to the first edition. This anthology had such an impact on recent Spanish poetry that, following its appearance, several critics discontinued their constant and impassioned attacks.
From 1955 to 1960 more young poets appeared who were grouped immediately with the “social poets”: José Angel Valente (A modo de esperanza, 1955; Poemas a Lázaro, 1960), José Agustín Goytisolo (Salmos al viento, 1958; Claridad, 1961), Jaime Gil de Biedma (Compañeros de viaje, 1959), Gloria Fuertes (Antología y poemas del suburbio, 1954; Aconsejo beber hilo, 1964; Todo asusta, 1958), Carlos Barral (Metropolitan, 1957; Diecinueve figuras de mi historia civil, 1961), Jesús López Pacheco (Desde crecer este silencio, 1953; Canciones del amor prohibido, 1961), Ángel González (Sin esperanza, con convencimiento, 1961), Carlos Barral (Las horas muertas, 1957; El papel del coro, 1959), and María Bebeyto (Poemas de la ciudad, 1956).

Although linked with the social poetry movement, a thorough analysis of their work reveals that in accurately representing certain social questions of current interest, they did not repudiate problems of artistic expression inherent in the practice of their poetry. Such freedom of expression evoked the strongest criticism from their opposition (in addition to the accusation that they were political pamphleteers and “Communists”). Other significant poets appeared during those years who escaped such strict classification: Claudio Rodríguez (Don de la ebriedad, 1954; Conjuros, 1958), Carlos Sahagún (Profecías del agua, 1958; Como si hubiera muerto un niño, 1960), and Eladio Caballero (Una señal de amor, 1958; Recordatorio, 1961). However, the development of their later work would presumably subject them to the same persistent opposition directed at some of their contemporaries. The insufficient basis for this criticism is most apparent in the anthology and its introduction by Manuel Mantero (Poesía Española Contemporánea, 1966), and in an article by Julia Uceda (“La traición de los poetas sociales”) published in Insula in 1966.

Despite a limited historical perspective several important points can be clarified. The works of almost all the poets mentioned reflect a desire to overcome firmly established conventional thought and practice. Always aware of the immediately preceding tradition (permeated by the intimidating figure of Antonio Machado), this spirit finds its spokesmen in Miguel Hernández, Rafael Alberti, Vicente Aleixandre, Luis Cernuda (fortunately revived in recent years) and in the Latin Americans, Vallejo, Neruda, Nicolás Guillén, Celaya, Otero, Hierro, and others of lesser influence. The works of this group and the other poets mentioned bear an originality and unique personality, and the label “New Spanish Poetry” was applied to them for the time being.

Three of the four poets I have chosen to exemplify the New Spanish Poetry—Ángel González, Jaime Gil de Biedma, and José Angel
Valente—belong to the “first phase” of this poetic development, while Manuel Vázquez Montalbán represents the “second phase.” The designation “second phase” is a provisional term referring to writers who have published their books since 1963. More significance can be attached to the term, “first phase.” These four poets adequately represent this new movement, and offer the reader limited, but relevant criteria for judging Spanish poetry of the last fifteen years.

Angel González published his first book, *Aspero mundo*, in 1956 when he was thirty-one years old. Thus, the mature tone of his early poems is not surprising. *Aspero mundo* only anticipates the pattern and theme which González has most effectively developed in his latest book, *Tratado de urbanismo* (1967). *Aspero mundo* reflects a certain influence of Juan Ramón Jiménez, and at times is reminiscent of the intimate, circumspect poetry that engendered the poetic tradition extending from Machado to the first generation of the post-war period, including influential figures of the ‘27’ Generation. These established traditions were hardly superseded by the first poem of *Aspero mundo* that begins, “Because my name is Angel Gonzalez.” Actually the iconoclastic themes of *Aspero mundo* became confused with the so-called social poetry then at the height of its popularity.

Already in *Aspero mundo* González found it necessary to break with established practice. The book displays a lyric intensity that is unmistakably humanistic. González expresses a half ironic, half skeptical view of reality by using a seemingly prosaic and colloquial language with great expressive force. This technique is even more clearly demonstrated in his second book, *Sin esperanza, con convencimiento* (1961). In this volume there are several poems such as “Ayer” and “Narracion breve” whose utter simplicity requires profound reflection on the intended theme. In several other poems of the same collection, González employs a subtle irony with many variations, and reveals for the first time his singular poetic sensibility. For González a poem is indivisible; a synthesis of elements whose disintegration means the destruction of the poem itself. González has explored the creative possibilities within the limitations of form by employing the sonnet form in some of his later works. The freedom he experiences within restrictions enables him to give adequate form to the idea, emotion, thought, and purpose he desires to express.

In the short, yet important volume, *Grado elemental* (1962), González attains a complete thematic coherence and ideological unity. The work only lacks the dramatic progression found in *Tratado de Urbanismo*. Both books do exhibit an eminently narrative character: they
"recount" history, "elucidate" circumstances, and "describe" a situation. The language used is ironically objective, historically distanced, and lightly pessimistic.

*Palabra sobre palabra* (1965) consists of five love poems. Analysis of the two most successful, "La palabra," and "Me basta asi," reveals the essential features of González's work and clarifies frequent esthetic and emotional patterns in his poetry. The poems relate the origin of the word 'love', and affirm man's creative power.

For various reasons the poetry of *Jaime Gil de Biedma* has not received the exposure it merits, and its impact on Spanish poetry has been slight. His first poems were published in 1952 in the occult review *Laye* under the title "Según sentencia del tiempo." His first book, *Compañeros de viaje* (1959), appeared in a limited edition. *En favor de Venus* (1965) comprises all the poems written by Gil de Biedma on the theme of eroticism. On the market a short time, the edition was withdrawn at the author's request. Because *Moralidades* (1966) was published in Mexico, few copies were circulated in Spain where censorship negated their influence.

The author of only seventy poems, Gil de Biedma believes that "poetry is communication because the poem creates in the author a communication with himself." This statement is the key to the double personality of Gil de Biedma. This idea was first suggested by Juan Ferraté in an essay that remains unpublished.

Gil de Biedma is well-read in Anglo-Saxon authors, particularly English poets. This unusual poetic background for Spanish writers is shared with Luis Cernuda. Cernuda is the most important poet of the '27' Generation, and Gil de Biedma is greatly influenced by him.

*Compañeros de viaje* is one of the most significant books published in post-war Spain. It represents a unique and inimitable point of view for Spanish poetry of that period, and it utilizes a personal language, not artificially adapted to the poem, but drawn from the poet's immediate experience. When Gil de Biedma says, "Forgive me, I was born in the age of penthouses and tennis," he directs the reader's attention to a specific, distinguishable world whose language is explicit and distinctive. Although Gil de Biedma published *Cuatro poemas morales* (1961) in a limited private edition, he incorporated those four poems into *Moralidades* which established him as one of the most promising poets of his generation. The fact that Spain has been a cultural graveyard for more than thirty years explains why a poet of Biedma's stature has received very little recognition in contemporary Spanish society.
According to Ferraté, "Jaime Gil de Biedma" and Jaime Gil de Biedma are two distinct personalities whose complex coexistence can be detected in the poet's work. Both of these personalities are not present in every Gil de Biedma poem. The ironic manipulation of the dual persona enables him to depict a cruel reality: the personal and collective awareness of a dissipation whose origins are in the age and society the poet himself inhabits. The social breakdown he describes transcends national and personal concerns. The dominant theme of this work, growing old and dying, indicates the seriousness of Gil de Biedma's artistic purpose.

Since *A modo de esperanza* (1955), José Angel Valente has undergone a consistent process of purification. His latest poems are presented with strict adherence to what Valente feels are essential poetic elements. His progress toward this ideal has been constant. *Poemas a Lázaro* (1960) are verses to someone who has died and whose resurrection embodies man's hope for rebirth. However, upon reviving, Lazarus does not speak; he does not reveal the mystery he alone knows. In this work Valente becomes with suspicious ease the "cerebral" or "cold" poet. Through Lazarus he expresses a self-conscious objectivity. He resists deceit and compliant sentiment which create an ephemeral and imposed cohesion. His technique is contrary to lachrymose and ostentatious romanticism.

*Sobre el lugar del canto* (1963) is a personal anthology of Valente's poems on Spain. Since the subject matter is limited to Spain, critics and readers falsely interpreted the scope of Valente's work. The appearance of *La memoria y los signos* (1966) and *Siete representaciones* (1967) ended the confusion and established Valente's reputation. Valente affirms that "a poet should be more useful than any member of his society . . . . Poetry must possess ultimately a practical truth." Implicit in these remarks is Valente's belief in the difficult, unique, and exclusive role of the poet.

Manuel Vázquez Montalbán has published only one book of poetry, *Una educación sentimental* (1967). Montalbán says of his own work:

> It is the expression of a duality fostered by the interaction of proletariat culture and my university training with the salons of progressive intellectuals. My disillusionment stems from the idea of a ruling middle class. Any moral position is based on the language, references, and materials that are influenced by confinement within a system. My duality sustains me. I test, correct, accuse, defend, forget, discover, and read new poems by careless
poets. I would like to produce a poem as perfect and economical as “Chopin” by Gottfried Benn. I was reading the poem when I discovered the rhythm I had been seeking for years. Every poem is a concealed unit that has no validity or fulfillment until the final pause. Each word has on emotive speed of visual and oral dimensions. Each reader brings to the poem his own moral, emotional, and cultural predisposition. Everything that happens in life is the poet’s legitimate province.

The personality of Montalbán is multifaceted. Raised in middle-class Barcelona society, he was shocked by the contradictions in that world. He chose to express himself in Castilian, a language closer to the common man. However, his poetry is not pedestrian. As a clever, knowledgeable journalist, he is preoccupied with European neocapitalism and its cultural implications. Montalbán is a political chronicler of clear vision who utilizes his early experiences and intellectual training in a field that lacks integrity and perspective. His varied interests have made him influential in several fields of study.

*Una educación sentimental* is a definitive biography of the mental, social, cultural, and emotional education of the author’s generation. The myths, mental and physical impositions, and sordid oppression, are portrayed in the poems of the first section. Montalbán critically views his own life and work in the second section. He consciously pictures himself as the ludicrous product of a myopic, egoistic, wretched society, and in so doing focuses the tragic, irremediable plight of society’s victims. Montalbán describes poetry as a means, not an end.

As a cultural phenomenon New Spanish Poetry bears the stamp of unquestioned originality and vitality. It embodies and interprets a concrete situation that is currently an important source of poetry.
Ciudadanos perfectos a estas horas,
honorables cabezas de familia
que lleváis a los labios vuestra servilleta
antes de pronunciar las palabras rituales
en acción de gracias por la abundante cena:

vuestra responsabilidad de sólidos pilares
de la civilización y de Occidente,
del consumo de bicarbonato sódico
y del paternalismo hacia la servidumbre,
exige de vuestra parte
cierta ignorancia de hechos también ciertos,
un esfuerzo final en bien de todos,
la tozuda incomprensión de algunas realidades,
la fe más meritoria, en resumen,
que consiste
en no creer en lo evidente.

Yo podría jurar que la tierra está fija
-ya lo juré otras veces-
y que el sol gira en torno a ella;
yo podría negar que la sangre circula
-lo seguiré negando, si hace falta-
por las venas del hombre; yo podría
quemar vivo a quien diga lo contrario
-lo estoy quemando ahora-.

No es que sean importantes los asuntos
objeto de polémica:
lo importante es la rígida
firmeza en el error.
Perfect citizens at this time of night,
honorable heads of family
who lift your napkin to your lips
before the ritual blessing,
saying grace for the sumptuous supper.

your responsibility as solid pillars
of civilization and of the West,
as consumers of sodium bicarbonate
and as paternalism to servitude,
demands a certain
ignorance on your part to facts also certain,
a final effort for the good of all,
a stubborn incomprehension of some realities,
a most worthy faith, in short,
which consists
of not believing what is perfectly clear.

I could swear the earth is a fixed planet
— I swore it in the past—
and that the sun turns about it;
I could deny that the blood circulates
— I’ll go on denying it, if needed—
through the veins of man; I could
burn alive whoever says no
— I’m burning him now.

It’s not that these matters are important
material for a polemic:
what’s important is the strict
firmness in the error,
pues las mentiras viejas se convierten
en materia de fe,
y de esa forma
quien ose discutirnos
debe afrontar la acusación de impío.
Con esto,
y una buena cosecha de limones,
y la ayuda impagable de nuestros coaligados,
podemos esperar algunos lustros
de paz como ésta de hoy,
en una noche
semejante a ésta de hoy,
tras una cena
lo mismo que ésta de hoy.

Tal como siempre, pues, pedid conmigo:
Más fe, mucha más fe.

Que en cierto modo,
creer con fuerza tal lo que no vimos
nos invita a negar lo que miramos.
for old lies are transformed
into the material of faith,
and so in this way
whoever might dare dispute us
will face the accusation of impiety.
So
with a good crop of lemons
and the unpayable help of us who stick together
we can expect a few 5-year-cycles
of peace like today’s,
in a single night
like our’s today,
after a supper
the same as today’s.

So just as always, ask with me
for more faith, much more faith.

For up to a point
our strong belief in what we didn’t see
invites us to deny what we are looking at.
Jose Angel Valente

LA ADOLESCENTE

Ya baja mucha luz por tus orillas,
nadie recuerda la invasión del frío.

Ya los sueños no bastan para darle
razón de ser a todos los suspiros.

Tú cantas por el aire.

Ya se ponen de verde los vestidos.
Ya nadie sabe nada.
    Nadie sabe
ni cómo ni por qué ni cuándo ha sido.

LA APUESTA

A ti a quien nada debo
sino la brusca interposición de la muerte,

a ti de quien nada tengo
sino la lámina delgada del amor no entregado,

a ti que no anduviste en la noche conmigo,

una puerta te entregó, no un umbral,
dos rostros, cuatro caminos ciegos,
una apuesta perdida.

PROHIBICION DEL INCESTO

Piedra cuadrangular.
        El buho reposa
en la lubricidad del pensamiento.

Igual en el secreto envoltorio del vientre.
José Angel Valente

tr. Willis Barnstone

THE ADOLESCENT

Great light already slips by your shores,
no one remembers the invasion of frost.

Her dreams no longer are enough to make
her right in being sighs to everyone.

You sing through the air.

Now her dresses turn green.
Now no one knows anything.

No one knows
how or why or when she was.

THE BET

To you whom I don’t owe a thing
but the rude meddling of death,

to you from whom I have nothing
but a thin foil of undelivered love,

to you who did not walk with me in the night,

I give you a door not a threshold,
two faces, four blind alleys,
one lost bet.

PROHIBITION OF INCEST

Quadrangular stone.
The owl rests
in the lubricity of his thought.

Same as the secret bundle in the stomach.
El cuerpo de la mujer se quiebra así en dos formas sangrientas. 
Recuerdo el parto al amanecer como lleno de aire salino y la fatiga de haber corrido mucho por los arenales.

Piedra cuadrangular.

El tiempo roto en cuerpos que eran antes y que serán después, mientras el amante recién engendrado entra en el cuerpo de la mujer madre con el alarido de la posesión.

Y el mismo rito. Y el mismo cuerpo.

Y la prohibición solar de amar lo que hemos engendrado.

Jaime Gil de Biedma

NO VOLVERÉ A SER JOVEN

Que la vida iba en serio uno lo empieza a comprender más tarde: como todos los jóvenes, yo vine a llevarme la vida por delante.

Dejar huella quería y marcharse entre aplausos -envejecer, morir, eran tan sólo las dimensiones del teatro.

Pero ha pasado el tiempo y la verdad desagradable asoma: envejecer, morir, es el único argumento de la obra.
So a woman’s body splits apart
in two bloody forms.
Memory of childbirth at dawn
as if filled with saline air
and fatigue of having run far through the sandpits.

Quadrangular stone.

Broken time
in bodies that were before
and will be later,
while the lover who was recently engendered
enters the body of the woman mother
with the scream of possession.

And the same rite.
And the same body.
And the solar prohibition
of loving what we have engendered.

Jaime Gil de Biedma

I WON’T BE YOUNG AGAIN

tr. Willis Barnstone

That life was going for good
we start to understand later on;
like all young men I ended up
by putting my life ahead of me.

I wanted to make a big splash
and wade in applause.
Getting old and dying were just
the business of the theatre.

But time has gone by
and the awkward truth looms:
aging, dying,
is the only plot in the play.
TWIST

A Vicente Aleixandre y “el vals”

Esta orquesta que destruye
la geometría del ataúd, lo amargo
de un hongo de ceniza

no
no canta para lentos modernistas
con serrín en los ojos, en el pelo
canta para incómodas muchachas
con sostenes de esparto y vello
en un pubis punzante
muchachos
con cabellos teñidos y la bandera
de su camisa a media asta

ya
a la playa llegaron restos
de todos los naufragios, cadenas
del no faltaba más, con Dios,
siempre a sus pies
de valsos como goma
de gomosos y faldas como colas
de cocodrilos exiliados
nada inocente
nada sorprende oh difunta sabiduría
del sorprenderse

canta un melenudo asceta
la noche complica la soledad, young
alone by by

y sin embargo añoramos
al uomo in frac con chistera y suicidio
que combatía a la muerte con un Yo os amo.
Manuel Vázquez Montalbán

TWIST

tr. WILLIS BARNSTONE

To Vicente Aleixandre and "the waltz"

This band is tearing apart
the coffin's geometry, the bitterness
of a mushroom of ashes

no
it doesn't sing slow passé types
with sawdust in their eyes, it sings
\in the hair for uneasy girls
wearing bras of weed and down
on a stabbing pubis
boys
with dyed hair and the flag
of their shirts at half mast

now
the bodies of all the shipwrecked
washed up on the beach, chains
of that's all we need, with God,
always at their feet
of waltzes like
rubbery erasers and skirts like tails
of exiled crocodiles
nothing innocent
nothing startles O deceased wisdom
of surprising

a hairy ascetic sings
the night entangles solitude, young
alone adieu

and still we miss
the caballero in tails and high hat and suicide
who fought death with an I love you.
CAIN

GEORG BRITTING

tr. PETER PAUL FERSCH

Abel was a sweet and tender boy with blond hair and milk-white skin. His bulging eyes were dripping with goodness as he eyed his brother sheepishly. He stretched his little fat hands out in supplication, pleaded with him, and tried to rub his cheek against his brother’s shoulder as he always used to do; his rose-colored cheek that felt like the damp muzzle of a little kitten. But Cain was flooded with hatred from a thousand boyhood days—the disgust collected from hundreds of meals taken together—and he struck, struck him down with a limb he had broken off a tree to fashion himself a bow—and he saw his brother’s light-blue calf-eyes turn to glass, and felt no pity. Then the sky roared black. Clouds cleaved open—darkening abysses ringing with the icy echo of the green moon. Cain sped forward. He arched his chest and shot toward the forest. The bolt of lightning that the Lord threw at him creased his heels. He bounded through the underbrush like a stag. For days he holed up in a cave and starved. He strangled Abel through many dreams. And when he kicked the corpse with his feet, he stretched his broad shoulders in freedom. Abel had never wronged him. Yet he hated him. He trembled whenever Abel said a kind word to him. He rebelled against being the target of his brother’s love. He smelled him like slime sleeping next to him. He felt antagonism in the blood that should have pulsed in unison. During long and sleepless nights, behind half-closed eyelids, he rehearsed the game of slaying his brother for the thousandth time. He rushed at him with clenched fists and faltered into emptiness. Fingers did not touch living flesh but sank into a sticky, shapeless mass. His manliness splashed against mud; his


Als er sich alt fühlte und bereit zu sterben, rief er sie alle in die Höhle. Vor den Eingang rollte er mit letzter Kraft einen grossen Stein. Sie zündeten ihm Opferfeuer und lagen um ihn in Gebeten. Sie erstickten im weissen Dampf. Als er Starre in den zu ihm erhobenen Blicken sah, lief ein ungeheures Zucken durch seinen Körper. Er brach tot zusammen und verlöschte mit dem Gesicht die schmale Flamme, die noch für ihn leuchtete.
broad forehead encountered no resistance. That sweet mouth irritated him. He slew the one whom God loved best. He hated God. God, who loved to smell the swirling smoke rising from Abel’s offerings. He struck the little virgin Abel hoping to strike God, who had created that effeminate boy in his own likeness. His image. His friend. His brother. His son. His own white-skinned ego. Cain slew Abel in the revolt of the eternal other devoured in gigantic flame.

Cain lived in the forest. From the hard wood of the ash-tree he carved arrows. He hunted the stag, caught fish with his bare hands, and took eggs from swaying nests. He carried moss and dried leaves into his cavern and made a bed. One humid night he climbed over the mountain range and from a strange valley he abducted a child. The little girl grew up without memory of her human ancestors. She cooked his birds, made his bed, and slept with him. Whenever he furrowed his high brows, she cringed with humble solicitude. She washed his feet and drowned in the sea of his eyes. He taught her to make him sacrifice of animals and rare fruits. When the sacrificial smoke whirlled about him, she bowed her head to her hands and worshipped him. He took revenge on God. He killed God in her heart; he trampled Him to death; he rooted Him out at the core; and he put himself in His place. She bore him sons and daughters. They spoke his name with godlike veneration. They exulted when the green lightning bolt from Heaven cut close over the tree tops, and they laughed at the black thunder rumbling over the forest. But the lightning from Cain’s eyes brought them to their knees and the thunder of his voice made them tremble with fear.

When he was old and ready to die, he ordered them to come to the cave. With his last strength he sealed the entrance with a huge boulder. They lighted sacrificial fires and surrounded him with prayers. White smoke asphyxiated them. Rigid, he gazed into their imploring eyes; then his whole body convulsed and shook violently. Death seized him. He collapsed and with his face extinguished the last small fire that burned for him.
BOOK REVIEWS


Is it Marianne Moore’s “difficulty” of which scholars have been complaining that has produced the curious result that she is much admired yet apparently little read? Frequently quoted, her famous lines, “‘literalists of/the imagination’—above/insolence and triviality and can present/for inspection, imaginary gardens with real toads in them,” seem to have enchanted rather than stimulated criticism in any effective way. There has been no more than a trickle of scholarly publications dealing with her poetry in recent years. Is Hugh Kenner right in suspecting that she has remained “approvingly uninvestigated” because modern criticism “lacks the apparatus to say anything about poets who do not fit into their categories?” There is surely some truth in this complaint which actually suggests that in our days the poets have outstripped their critics. Do the two groups no longer speak the same language? If this is so, the blame seems to fall on the critics rather than on the writers, and most certainly not on Miss Moore.

Marianne Moore may be difficult to read, but she is not intentionally obscure; there has in fact been no other poet in recent years who has combined similar honesty with perspicuity and a strict economy of means. Preferring modesty to impressiveness, she has never set store by sheer bulk, or made a claim for profundity. Refined, tested, polished and revised, her poems emerge as rare individuals making uneasy and slim collections when they are—not too frequently—harvested from the modish periodicals in which they miraculously make their first appearance: Harper’s Bazaar, The Ladies’ Home Journal, The New Yorker, Seventeen, Vogue and a good many other, equally unlikely, unexpected sources.

When her first poems were published by friends in 1921, she was labeled an imagist. Their seemingly visual character and, more specifically, the concrete stance which her imagination adopted even then, were reason enough for this superficial identification; yet if imagism is taken in its historical meaning of simple sensuous—and, perhaps, exotic—glances, then Marianne Moore outgrew it almost instantly.
Whatever is preserved of her earliest poetry in the *Selected Poems* of 1935 and in later collections attests rather to a highly conscious manipulation of images on behalf of complex processes of the imagination; they are made to form sequences in which their individual appeal is submerged and transformed into undulations of *motif*, as we can easily see in “A Talisman” from *Observations* (1924) or in “The Fish” and “England” from *Selected Poems* (1935). Louis Untermeyer expressed the symptomatic lack of understanding on the part of the public by his own statement in *Modern American Poetry*, that “her more characteristic lines seem to erect a barrier of jagged clauses, barbed quotations and suspicious structures between herself and her audience.” Could it be that her audience was all the time soundly asleep to what was going on in the world?

After the *nouveau roman* introduced another literary vogue, Miss Moore’s poetry has come to be dubbed, particularly by Bernard Engel, “objectivist”—presumably still in reference to her use of images and in the mistaken belief that they enjoy an autonomous existence within the poems: why else should there be any reason to talk of ethical strategy in her poetry? In fact she is less committed to philosophy than to all forms of life around her, and it is the interrelatedness of things, but not the things themselves, that attracts her particular attention. Why should this not fit into the conventions of propriety designed by the tradition of poetry? There has always been a lot of room in her poems for a wide choice of matters: literary theory and electricity, steam rollers, twentieth-century commerce and the American String Quartet—none of which is likely to inspire many poets of the old humanist brand. The only ethics Marianne Moore might be said to have shared during most of her life is the ethics of pure phenomenalism as developed by Wallace Stevens: “. . . the immovable critic twitching his skin like a horse that feels a flea, the base/ball fan, the statistician—/nor is it valid/to discriminate against ‘business documents and/schoolbooks’; all these phenomena are important.” This is indeed not far removed from Stevens’ “Anything is beautiful/.../And the window’s lemon light/the very will of the nerves/the crack across the pane/the dirt along the sill.”

I do not believe that the publication of *Tell Me, Tell Me* and *Complete Poems* has produced reasons to see Marianne Moore in a different light now. There is, incidently, comparatively little new material to consider. *Tell Me, Tell Me* contains some twenty-two pieces of varying length including four prose items. Let us for a moment look
at these. They are pieces of straight literary confession. "A Burning Desire to Be Explicit" reveals Marianne Moore's rather simple strategy in a few anecdotal remarks, always coming back to the observation that her own poems are little more than short expository essays built of fragments of personal significance. This observation is spun out a little further in "Profit Is a Dead Weight" which is suspended on the image of the well-balanced kite: it rises only when catching the right current of air, so it must not be overcharged. Meant as a small moral exhortation for the benefit of the readers of Seventeen, the article can just as easily be read as a metaphor of the poetic process: "feed imagination food that invigorates," and "talent, knowledge, humility, reverence, magnanimity involve the inconvenience of responsibility or they die." "My Crow Pluto" on the other hand is a lucid introduction to the poem "To Victor Hugo of My Crow Pluto" which occasioned the preceding essay and tells of a talking crow that had been for years Miss Moore's companion, ending with the appeal, "If what you have been reading savors of mythology, could I make it up? and if I could, would I impose on you? Remember, life is stranger than fiction."

However, the remarkable thing about Marianne Moore's poems is not their topics—although they may indeed strike many a reader as an odd lot, ranging as they do from a talking crow to reflections on where to find refuge from egocentricity. What is still more interesting is, I believe, her use of language. Claiming that her poems are in essence short expository essays may have created the impression that their message is of a simple and straightforward kind, which of course it is not. It appears rather as skillful rhetoric achieved by blending several modes of verbal expression in meticulously worked stanzas suggesting all the lightness of free verse, with traces of rhyme producing a startling contrast with the intellectual beauty of thought and diction:

It appeared: gem, burnished rarity
and peak of delicacy—
in contrast with grievance touched off on
any ground—the absorbing
geometry of a fantasy:
a James, Miss Potter, Chinese
"passion for the particular," of a
tired man who yet, at dusk,
cut a masterpiece of cerise—

Novelty in Miss Moore's poetry is a reflection of life's changing innovations. Each new facet in her civilization is likely to be called upon by her in its turn to render service to her art. It is an art of
association, of bringing everything into a pattern of mutual explication and enlightenment, but not of definition. There are no limits in her poetry. Defying definition through its exercise of precision, a poem like “An Octopus” grafts elements of reality onto imagination by quoting the genuine, leaving it to the syntactical scheme to blend the seemingly disparate fragments into a persuasive concept:

dots of cyclamen-red and maroon on its clearly defined pseudopodia/made of glass that will bend—a much needed invention—/comprising twenty-eight ice fields from fifty to five hundred feet thick,/of unimagined delicacy.

Readers who may feel confused and irritated by Marianne Moore’s consistent practice of “documenting” her poems by credit notes may be inclined to think that these notes are the author’s device of vindicating her elusiveness to the reader in a manner vaguely similar to Ezra Pound’s and T. S. Eliot’s learned comments on their own verse. This is undoubtedly true to some extent, for Marianne Moore has become increasingly doubtful about, and disgusted with, the abstract artificiality of poetry, as the frequent revisions of her famous poem “Poetry” indicate, which has now been reduced to the brief statement, “I, too, dislike it./Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers in/it, after all, a place for the genuine.” We may therefore be justified in interpreting her credit notes as an attempt to vindicate her practice to herself by insisting on the “genuine” and offering its source as a sort of proof: the toads are left, while the rhetoric and the philosophy, which are by some critics considered paramount to poetic achievement, are muted as in an afterthought.

Yet I wonder whether this is really a technique of understatement, as some of those critics will claim, and whether it is not equally much indicative of a more explicit attitude towards experience. It is pure accident that the poem “Then the ermine:”, first collected in Like a Bulwark (1956), ends this way:

Foiled explosiveness is yet
a kind of prophet,

a perfecter, and so a concealer—
    with the power of implosion;
like violets by Dürer;
even darker.

We quickly realize that the concept of implosion, set forth here at roughly the same time when Marshall McLuhan developed his own theory of cultural change using precisely the same criteria, is relevant
inside the poem as well as outside. As a poetic principle, implosion perhaps reiterates the demand for "skill in obscurity," serving as a new way of describing the growth of a central metaphor in a poem. Yet if understood as a rule of a macroscopic order, the concept of implosion helps to set the poet right as though by ulterior design: there is after all no higher aim after which he can strive than that of snatching a glimpse of the world's pattern. It is a strict artistic necessity: the condition for transforming life into a language of symbols. Considered in these terms, implosion is a formal motive as well, and of a quite different order than the technique of understatement suggesting either vanity or fear.

Through her poems, Marianne Moore seems to protest, "This is what the world is like—I can’t help it! So what else can my poems be like?" Each one of them can be read as a statement on the art of explaining the world in its own terms. For her, poetry holds no magic. Her poems are verbal collages, constructs not unlike other species of contemporary art utilizing haphazard everyday matter, made of "the real thing" culled from one or the other of the information media around us: newspapers, radio, books, even personal correspondence. The media, too, determine the substance, virtually carrying into our lives "granite, steel, and other topics," with baseball, Carnegie Hall, and Yul Brynner thrown in for good measure. So it should astonish neither Miss Moore nor her readers that her mind, being driven to catch up with those phenomena, proves to be "an intractable thing" that would ever so often prefer to grind its own axe, and must be called back to the genuine at every turn. Such is the danger of knowing too much, which is the fate of all modern poets.

The aesthetic element in art seems to be on its way out—not just in the poetry of Marianne Moore. The reprieve it may surreptitiously enjoy in some little detail of reflection or style can but confirm the obvious swing in the opposite direction. Marianne Moore felt that swing coming, and has early made use of its momentum. But she has imposed on it her own creative taste. To resort once more to one of McLuhan's categories: hers is a verbal, and not a visual, art. In full circles of feed-back, her images are instantly transformed into fragments of imagination generating fresh images; and everything is language used to its utmost capacity.

Kurt Opitz
“In every work of art,” Coleridge observed, “there is a reconcilement of the external with the internal.” Living art can occur, he thought, only when the artist communes with “that which is within the thing, that which is active through form and figure, and discourses to us by symbols,” not the passive finish of things. Imitation without penetration produces an art as lifeless as waxwork. This Romantic doctrine of art as “coalescence” or interpenetration of mind and object illustrates, by analogy, a crux of critical theory. Does the critic encounter an object or an impulse? Does he describe the features of a thing essentially fixed and dead, or, like the Romantic mind, penetrate the work to commune with its “active principle?” Such questions are the pith of Mrs. Lawall’s cautious and systematic—hence sometimes redundant—survey of the criticism of consciousness. Her book is essential for the reader who is confined to English yet anxious to share an important critical perspective largely ignored by our own literary criticism. *Critics of Consciousness* surveys the work of a significant group of critics, centered in Geneva, who see the literary work not as an object (as our critics generally do) but as an act of awareness, and the task of the critic as the recovery of that “perceptive experience” by deep empathy. Such empathic criticism is likely to be rendered inert by paraphrase, but Mrs. Lawall wisely allows her subjects their own voices as often as possible.

She begins by sifting from the movement proper those related critics of awareness—men like Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Levi-Strauss, Barthes, Bachelard, Malraux and Maritain—“who use literature merely as part of a larger frame of reference” (e.g. for “structural” analysis of cultures). The sorting word “merely” may trouble those who believe that criticism is always part of some larger frame of reference even if it is only implicit, or that criticism with an avowed extra-literary frame may yet be pure when it is criticism. But having made this perhaps expedient separation, Mrs. Lawall is able to deal neatly with seven critics of the Geneva School as the analysts of instress. She
appraises them in two historical segments. Marcel Raymond and Albert Beguin define the approach. In their efforts to trace the continuity of the Romantic soul in modern literature they are more concerned with the “core of being” in a body of writing than with its enclosing form. They become critics by submission, by what Keats called “Negative Capability.” Georges Poulet refines the approach into a method by proposing coordinates—human time, interior distance, point of departure—for the central identity in the work. Of the four “later” Geneva critics, all personal friends of Poulet, two men, Jean Pierre Richard and Jean Starobinski, continue Poulet’s strategy of attempting to describe the implicit being of “incarnate author” (as opposed to the actual or historical author) immanent in the work. The other two members, Jean Rousset and the School’s American connection, J. Hillis Miller, are more nearly textual in their treatments and hence more discomfited by the gap between formal and existential structures. Their work suggests that existential criticism is as yet uncertain just where a literary work is—how it is bounded—or whether an author’s works disclose one being or a string of beings.

The last critic Mrs. Lawall includes is Maurice Blanchot. Although he is not strictly a Geneva critic, she justifies a lengthy and rather tedious summary of this enigmatic critic as a kind of direct anti-type, and possibly antidote, to their vision. Although Blanchot concurs with the others in seeing the work as an act not an object, he sees within the text not a presence but an “absence.” For Blanchot, it appears, there is no seeing into the life of words, save by some mode of ventriloquism.

R. E. Fitch


Although this book is called The Form of Victorian Fiction, an appropriate subtitle would be The Death of God in the Victorian Novel. This Death is assumed, not argued; and the development of Victorian
fiction is seen as “a movement from the assumption that society and the self are founded on some superhuman power outside them, to a putting in question of this assumption, to the discovery that society now appears to be self-creating and self-supporting, resting on nothing outside itself.” Professor Miller admits that there is little open confrontation of these issues in the novels and that “The metaphysical implications of these factors only gradually become clear in the work of the Victorian novelists,” but he feels that “some version of them” is present in the work of all the major ones. On this “Ontological Basis of Form” he constructs new explanations of the Victorian novel.

The ubiquity of omniscient narration, for example, is related to the Death of God. Meredith, Thackeray, Eliot, Dickens, Trollope, and Hardy, isolated from society in one way or another by personal circumstances, each chose to play “the role of a narrator who coincides not with a god and not with any individual person, but with the general mind of the community.” Writing a novel thus becomes a means of escaping from isolation, of joining the community which provides the only standards to be found in a God-less world. The discussions of individual narrative voices which follow are some of the best anywhere, but the fiction-as-therapy theory seems a dubious explanation for the dominant narrative form of a whole age of fiction.

The most common protagonists, according to Miller, are those who echo “the novelist’s initial situation of detachment” and who try to develop a satisfactory relationship with the community. One way is through love; in fact, “Victorian fiction may be said to have as its fundamental theme an exploration of the various ways in which a man may seek to make a god of another person in a world without God, or at any rate in a world where the traditional ways in which the self may be related to God no longer seem open.” It is almost as if love as a theme were discovered by the Victorian novelists, that in an age of faith such idolatry never occurred.

Few regret that the old idea of stuffy, complacent Victorianism has been thoroughly exploded in recent years and replaced with a picture of writers vitally concerned with social and philosophical problems that are ours as well. Yet one can stress their modernity too much and thereby rob them of their essential qualities. When Professor Miller discusses individual authors and works, his points are almost always impressive and informative; but the implied argument of the book as a whole is questionable, requiring many qualifications. A longer book with more extensive illustration might have been more
convincing; this short book constantly asserts more than it demonstrates, and if the reader cannot accept its premises largely on faith, he can hardly supply the rest of the evidence for himself.

EARL A. KNIES


This is a stimulating study based on the idea that the increase in sophistication on the part of readers over the last few centuries has erected a barrier to reader empathy. That is, instead of seeing the artifact as a quasi-magical "thing" to which he can give instinctual basal acceptance ("belief") and even lose his self during the experience of reading, the reader sees the artifact as a "sign" and attempts to intellectually comprehend it. The novelist, on the other hand, attempts to counteract this tendency by subverting it, in some cases by developing techniques more advanced than the reader's critical skills, in other cases by deliberately playing to the reader's sense of technique. A development inevitably concomitant with this increase in sophistication is that the novel has steadily become more of a phenomenon itself rather than merely a recorder of phenomena. The individual novel is more and more an object in its own peculiar distinctness, the projection of a "world" that wrenches the reader's expectation in order to free his capacity for "belief" that is held in check by his inclination to analyze.

Grossvogel applies his theory to a number of increasingly complex literary works in which an intellectual construct (such as courtly love in Troilus and Criseyde and literary theory in Sartre's Nausea and Proust's Remembrance of Things Past) or the author's self (as in Tristram Shandy) or a deliberate distancing of the novel's action (as in the literariness of Don Quixote and the immanence of alienation in Kafka's The Trial) becomes a major part of the novel's strategic artistry. Grossvogel explains how these features of artistry contribute
to drawing the reader into accepting, paradoxically, the “parafictional” or “extrafictional” presence of the construct or the author or the distancing technique as a part of the “believable” world in the novel. At its simplest, the theory posits that the construct of courtly love in Troilus and Criseyde is made palatable by ironies and realistic dialogue and detail. The most complicated and rewarding essay is that on The Trial, a novel that fuses the two developments in fiction that Grossvogel is sketching. There is obviously a sophisticated dislocation of reality-perception, and its purpose is to make the novel a separable phenomenon within the reader’s existence precisely because the evidence of his own senses and normal critical logic must be discarded.

The theory is evaluative as well as descriptive. The art of Robbe-Grillet, which attempts to do away with the narrator altogether by eschewing any subjectivism, leaves as material for the novel only unstructured phenomenological experiences which may have emotional significance for the author but which to the reader are totally parafictional signs. (Essentially the same observation is made about James Joyce, whose initial “inner representation of character through analysis of consciousness” in The Dubliners and the early part of Ulysses gives way to an increasing delight in words themselves. But Joyce’s delight remains, attractively, that of a poet, while Robbe-Grillet’s attitude resembles that of a scientist.) The result of complete objectivism like Robbe-Grillet’s is that the novel becomes bankrupt, “increasingly the poor and partial art of an impoverished age, of an impoverished artist bereft of lyricism, allegorical density, human commitment.”

Grossvogel’s theory and his applications of it are tellingly coherent. The theory has an obvious limitation, which Grossvogel allows for: it works fruitfully only with self-conscious authors who recognize and attempt to break down the barrier between themselves and their readers. As a “corrective” to possible misunderstanding of the range of application of his theory, Grossvogel points to Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe and Dostoyevski’s The Idiot, in which the authors simply ignore the barrier and assume—successfully—that the reader will accept their quite personalized fictional worlds as validly “real.” But the thesis invigorates one’s appreciation of techniques in fiction and forces him to reconsider the authorial strategy of every novel he had thought he had under control.

DALE KRAMER
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

RAFAEL ALBERTI is a Spanish poet and painter who left Spain in 1939 with the collapse of the Republic. Since 1964 he has been living in Italy. Alberti’s first volume of poems, Marinero in tierra, published in 1925, won him the national prize for poetry in 1924-1925. One of his most important collections of poetry, Sobre los Angeles, appeared in 1929. His Poesias completas were published by Losada in 1961 to mark his sixtieth year. An English bi-lingual version of his selected poems was published by the University of California Press in 1966. Valley of Aniene is an unpublished poem. Alberti’s lithographs were printed with the kind permission of the Grafica Romero in Rome.

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BEN BELITT is an American poet and translator who was awarded prizes in the Brandeis Creative Arts Award competition in 1962, and the National Institute of Arts and Letters contest in 1965. He has translated Neruda, Alberti, Lorca, Machado, and Guillén.

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HORST BIENEK has published a collection of poetry and prose, *Traumbuch eines Gefangenen*, a volume of poetry for which he was awarded the Swiss Hugo-Jacobi Prize, *was war was ist*, and a novel, *Die Zelle*. His novel, published in 1968, won the Rudolf Alexander Schröder Foundation prize.

GEORG BRITTING (1891-1964) is a German poet, playwright, and short story writer who is best known for his expressionistic novel *Der Lebenslauf* published in 1932.

MICHAEL BULLOCK is a British poet, playwright, short-story writer and translator. He is the author of four books of poetry, the most recent, *Zwei Stimmen in meinem Mund*, a bilingual volume published in Germany. He has a collection of surreal fictions, *Sixteen Stories as they Happened*, to be published by Sono Nis Press, Vancouver. He is the author of over a hundred translations from the German, French and Italian, including the complete works of Max Frisch and two volumes of poems by Karl Krolow. Mr. Bullock is at present McGuffey Visiting Professor at Ohio University where he works with the Translation Workshop.


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RUTH MEAD and MATTHEW MEAD have jointly published translations of Johannes Bobrowski, Heinz Winfried Sabais, and Nelly Sachs. Their translations of selected poems by Horst Bienek, Elisabeth Borchers, and Wolfgang Bächler will all be published this year in separate volumes in the Unicorn Press German Series.

MANUEL VAZQUEZ MONTALBÁN was editor of the occult monthly *Siglo 20*. He has published one volume of poetry, *Una educación sentimental*.

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TADEUSZ ROZEWICZ was born in Poland in 1921, and has published many volumes of poetry, stories, and plays. His selected poetry, *Poezje zebrane*, appeared in 1957 and his most recent publication (1966) is *Wycieczka do муzeum* (A Visit to the Museum). His plays have been produced all over the world.


EDITH SHIFFERT has published translations and her own poems in many journals. Two recent volumes of her poetry are *For a Return to Kona*, and *In Open Woods*. She is currently teaching at Kyoto University in Japan.
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JOSÉ ANGEL VALENTE has earned two awards for his poetry, the “Adonais” prize (1954), and the “Critica” award (1960). Several volumes of his critical writings will be published in the near future.

PAUL VAN OSTAIJEN was a Flemish poet who died in Belgium in 1928. His published works include five volumes of poetry, three volumes of prose tales, which he called “grotesques,” and two volumes of critical and polemical writings. His *Collected Works* has been published in four volumes in the Netherlands.

DERK WYNAND is a translator and poet currently studying at the University of British Columbia. His translations from the German and French have appeared in *Malahat Review, Extensions, Prism International*, and *Trace*. He is an editorial assistant for the journal *Contemporary Literature in Translation*.

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