Painting by David Whitehill
MUNDUS ARTIUM

A Journal of International Literature and the Arts
Spring 1970, Volume III, Number 2

Cover Photography by William G. Larson
MUNDUS ARTIUM

STAFF
Editor-in-Chief, Rainer Schulte
Associate Editor, Roma A. King, Jr.
Assistant Editor, Thomas J. Hoeksema
Assistant to the Editor, Lois Siegel

ADVISORY BOARD

*Mundus Artium* is a journal of international literature and the arts, published three times a year by the department of English, Ohio University. Annual subscription $4.00; single copies $1.50 for United States, Canada, and Mexico. All other countries: $4.50 a year, and $1.75 for single copies, obtainable by writing to The Editors, *Mundus Artium*, Department of English, Ellis Hall, Box 89, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, U.S.A. 45701. Checks drawn on European accounts should be made payable to Kreissparkasse Simmern, 654 Simmern/Hunsrück, Germany, Konto Nr. 6047. Distributor for England: B.F. Stevens & Brown Ltd., Ardon House, Mill Lane, Godalming, Surrey, England.

Manuscripts should be sent to the editors and should be accompanied by a self-addressed envelope with the appropriate return postage. *Mundus Artium* will consider for publication poetry, fiction, short drama, essays on literature and the arts, photography, and photographic reproductions of paintings and sculpture. It will include a limited number of book reviews.


Design by Don F. Stout
*Director*, Office of Ohio University Publications.

Richardson Printing Corp.—Marietta, Ohio
CONTENTS

MIRENE GHOSSEIN

Introduction: Adonis
(Ali Ahmed Said) ............ 6

ADONIS (ALI AHMED SAID)
tr. SAMUEL HAZO

Elegy for the Time at Hand ... 8
Mount Suneen
A Woman and a Man
A Dream For Any Man
A King, Mihyar
His Voice

WILLIAM G. LARSON

Photographic Reality ............ 18

PABLO NERUDA
tr. BEN BELITT

Yo no sé nada .................. 24
I Know Nothing At All
Semen
Semen
El Golpe
The Blow
Otros Dioses
Other Gods

J. MICHAEL YATES

In Memoriam: Peter Paul Fersch
Gelegenheitsgedicht ............ 30

3
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/Translator</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PETER PAUL FERSCH</td>
<td>Abendwinterliche Landschaft</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tr. DERR WYNAND</td>
<td>Winterscape</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEORG BRITTING</td>
<td>Hinter den Blumen versteckt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tr. PETER PAUL FERSCH</td>
<td>Hidden Behind Flowers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TODD WALKER</td>
<td>An der Küste</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MANUEL DURAN</td>
<td>On the Shore</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WACLAW NOWAK</td>
<td>Die Gefrorene Zeit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TYMOTEUSZ KARPOWICZ</td>
<td>Frozen Time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tr. ANDRZEJ BUSZA AND MICHAEL BULLOCK</td>
<td>Elegie für einen Jazzmusiker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUSAN MUSGRAVE</td>
<td>Die Irren</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KENNETH BERNARD</td>
<td>Madness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIUSEPPE UNGARETTI</td>
<td>Two Photographs</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tr. DORA PETTINELLA</td>
<td>Jaime Sabines and Marco Antonio Montes de Oca: A Study in Contrast</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Two Photographs</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zwyciestwo</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Victory</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pozar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Conflagration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>After the Battle</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Way Out</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Man With the Beast in Him</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nostalgia</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nostalgia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Veglia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vigil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Silenzio in Liguria
Silence in Liguria

Le Stagioni
The Seasons

Distacco
Break

D'Agosto
In August

EIKOH HOSOE

Two Photographs .......... 74

CARLOS DRUMMOND
DE ANDRADE
tr. JACK E. TOMLINS

Tristeza no céu .......... 76
Sadness in Heaven

Ser
To Be

BOOK REVIEWS

The Role of Mind in Hugo, Faulkner, Beckett and Grass
by Martha O'Nan; reviewed by Elizabeth Ann Richardson ...... 80

Love in the Environs of Voronezh by Alan Sillitoe; reviewed by David M. Heaton ......................... 81

translated by Ben Belitt and Alastair Reid, edited and introduced by Ben Belitt; reviewed by Philip Cooper ...... 82

The Ozone Minotaur by Andreas Schroeder; reviewed by James Tipton .......................... 84

Niagara: A Stereophonic Novel by Michel Butor; reviewed by Dean McWilliams ....................... 85

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS ............................................. 86
INTRODUCTION:
ADONIS (ALI AHMED SAID)

MIRENE GHOSSein

Adonis is the pen name of Ali Ahmed Said. Born in 1930 in a Syrian village near Tartus on the Mediterranean shore, Said went to school in Tartus and later studied Arabic philosophy at the University of Damascus. In 1956 he left Syria for political reasons and has been living in Lebanon ever since.

Little is known of Said's early poetry except that it was written between 1950 and 1954 and was politically inspired. Shortly after his arrival in Beirut in 1956, he joined a group of young Lebanese poets who were publishing a journal called Shiir ("shiir" is the Arabic word for poetry). Through the facilities of Shiir, Said published First Poems in 1957, Leaves in the Wind in 1958 and Songs of Mihyar the Damascene in 1961. In 1964 he issued his Anthology of Arabic Poetry in two volumes. This in turn was followed by the publication of his two most recent books, The Book of Changes and Immigrations into the Regions of Day and Night in 1965 and The Stage and the Mirrors in 1968.

After editing a newspaper for a time in Beirut, Said left journalism to publish his own journal, Mawakef. In the introduction to the first issue he stated not only his own credo but that of the other contributing poets when he wrote that the magazine "is our expression, a living part of us, our complement; therefore, it is simultaneously a truth and a symbol; it represents the shattering of an Arabic genera-
tion which experienced only what was broken; in this journal we will search and start building anew.”

The most significant poems of Said are contained in *Songs of Mihyar the Damascene* and *The Book of Changes and Immigrations into the Regions of Day and Night*. The figure of Mihyar personifies the poet’s ideas, hopes and dreams. Mihyar comes as a pagan sword to shake a society which, shaped by religion, has become passive toward its own destiny. Mihyar is a “revolutionary refusing the Imam,” tearing down the social structure, damning what is obsolete and unjust. Mihyar is a king who lives in “fire and pestilence” but also “in the darkness of things, in their inner secrets.” He is a magician who knows the “secret of walking on the roof of a spiderweb,” of guessing what is unsaid, of hearing what crosses the mind. But Mihyar lives ultimately in the book of “secrets and failures” which are for him forever inseparable. Confronted by gods and devils, Mihyar chooses the earth, for devils and gods come and go, but earth remains. He wishes to transform the earth into a heaven confident enough in its own values that it need not be dependent upon a heaven to be. So he travels the world, singing in a “mute and strangled voice” his faith in man’s ability to guide his own destiny. And he travels beyond the world, for his dreams transcend and exceed the planet.

While Mihyar travels the “space without,” the poet in *The Book of Changes and Immigrations into the Regions of Day and Night* dwells in the “space within.” He fluctuates between the dark-region of the body and the light-region of the spirit. His is a world of hunger and suffering, of love and, above all, of change. This is a world where “doors hear but do not open,” where “tears become laughter” and the sun is black, where “innocence is a tomb,” where love is death, and death, birth. To live in such a world one needs the “patience of stones.” Nevertheless, the temptation is always strong to “fall back into one’s soul.” This is where the journey begins and where it ends. Here the poet wants a more peaceful and rewarding life than Mihyar’s, but in the last poem of the book he is forced to admit:

“O if I could dream the earth
not as a boundary of my world
but as the wind...”

Beyond the earth and beyond his soul, Said is after the infinite and the absolute even though he knows that they will always remain too far to reach. Thus, he is moved to conclude, “O, had I remained a dream...”
Adonis (Ali Ahmed Said)

tr. Samuel Hazo

ELEGY FOR THE TIME AT HAND

I

Chanting of banishment,
exhaling flame,
the carriages of exile
breach the walls.

Or are these carriages
the battering sighs of my verses?

Cyclones have crushed us.
Sprawled in the ashes of our days,
we glimpse our souls
passing
on the sword’s glint
or at the peaks of helmets.

An autumn of salt spray
settles on our wounds.
No tree can bud.
No spring . . .

Now in the final act
disaster tows our history
toward us on its face.
What is our past
but memories pierced like deserts
prickled with cactus?
What streams can wash it?
It reeks with the musk
of spinsters and widows
back from pilgrimage.
The sweat of dervishes
begrimes it as they twirl
their burning trousers into miracles.
Now blooms the spring of the locust.
Over the dead nightingales
the night itself weighs and weighs.
The day inches to birth
while the shut and bolted door
of the sea
rejects us.

We scream.
We dream of weeping,
but the tears refuse our eyes.
We twist our necks
in zero hurricanes.

O my land,
I see you as a woman in heat,
a bridge of lust.

The pharaohs take you where they choose,
and the very sand applauds them.
Through the clay of my eyeshells,
I see what any man can see:
libations at the graves of children,
incense for holy men,
tombstones of black marble,
fields scattered with skeletons,
vultures,
mushy corpses with the names of heroes.

Thus we advance,
chests to the sea,
grieving for yesterday.
Our words inherit nothing,
beget nothing.
We are islands.
From the abyss we smell the ravens.
Our ships send out their pleas
to nothing but the moon’s crescent
of despair that broods
a devil’s spawn.
At riverfall, at the dead sea,  
midnight dreams its festivals,  
but sand and foam and locusts  
are the only brides.

Thus we advance,  
harvesting our caravans  
in filth and tears,  
bleeding the earth  
with our own blood  
until the green dam of the sea  
alone  
stops us.

II

What god shall resurrect us  
in his flesh?  
After all, the iron cage is shrinking.  
The hangman will not wait  
though we wail from birth  
in the name of these happy ruins.

What narrow yesterdays,  
what stale and shriveled years. . .  
Even storms come begging  
when the sky matches the gray  
of the sand,  
leaving us stalled between seasons,  
barricaded by what we see,  
marching under clouds that move  
like mules and cannon.  
The dust of graveyards blinds us  
until our eyes rhyme  
with the earth.  
No lashes fringe the sun.  
No brows can shade the day,  
and life comes moment by moment  
as it comes to the poor only.  
Shadowed by ice and sand,  
we live.
And so live all men.

All men . . . mere scraps from everywhere,
fresh baits of arsenic.
Under their sky what green can sprout?

All men . . . choked by ashes,
crushed by the rocks of silence,
mounted by empire builders,
paraded in arenas for their sport,
so many footstools,
so many banners . . .
No one whispers in Barada or the Euphrates.
Nothing breeds or stirs.
O my dry and silent land,
who left you like a fossil?
On the map you're virile,
rich with wheat, oil, ports,
countercolored by migrations.
Shall a new race grow in the poppy fields?
Shall fresh winds rearrange the sand?

Let the rain come.
Let rain wash us in our ruins,
wash the corpses, wash our history.
Let the poems strangled on our lips
be swept away like rocks in the street.
Let us attend to cow, doves, flowers, gods.
Let sounds return
to this land of starving frogs.
Let bread be brought by locusts
and the banished ants . . .

My words become a spear in flight.
Unopposable at truth,
the spear returns to strike me
dead.
Braid your hair, my boys, with greener leaves.
We still have verse among us.
We have the sea.
We have our dreams.

“To the steppes of China
we bequeath our neighing horses,
and to Georgia, our spears.
We’ll build a house of gold
from here to the Himalayas.
We’ll sail our flags in Samarkand.
We’ll tread the treasured mosses
of the earth.
We’ll bless our blood with roses.
We’ll wash the day of stains
and walk on stones as we would walk on silk.

“This is the only way.
For this we’ll lie with lightning
and anoint the mildewed earth
until the cries of birth
resound, resound, resound.

“Oh nothing can stop us.
Remember,
we are greener than the sea,
younger than time.
The sun and the day are dice
between our fingers.”

Under the exile’s moon
tremble the first wings.
Boats begin to drift
on a dead sea, and siroccos
rustle the gates of the city.
Tomorrow the gates shall open.
We’ll burn the locusts in the desert,
span the abyss
and stand on the porch
of a world to be.
“Darkness,
darkness of the sea,
be filled with the leopard’s joy.
Help us to sacrifice,
name us anew.
The eagle of the future waits,
and there are answers in its eyes.

“Darkness,
darkness of the sea,
ignore this feast of corpses.
Bring the earth to blossom
with your winds.
Banish plague and teach the very rocks
to dance and love.”

The goddess of the sand prostrates herself.
Under brichthorn
the spring rises like clocynth from the lips
or life from the sea.
We leave the captive city
where every lantern is a church
and every bee more sacred than a nun.

IV

“Where is your home?
Which country?
Which camp without a name?”

“My country is abandoned.
My soul has left me.
I have no home.”

When pharaohs ruled and men were cannibals,
the words of poets died.
While pharaohs rule,
I take my books and go,
living in the shade of my heart,
weaving from my verse’s silk
a new heaven.
The sea cleanses our wounds
and makes of wounds the salt's kin.

The white sea,
the daily Euphrates,
the Orontes in its cradle,
the Barada—
I have tasted them all,
and none could slake me.
Yet I learned their love,
and my despair deserved their waters.

Though desperate, I still hate death.
Though lost, I seek my way
through all the lies and doubts
that are the crust and quicksand
of the earth.

Give me the exile's sail,
the pilgrim's face.
I turn my back on jails and holocausts.
I leave the dead to death.

And I go,
keeping my endless sorrows,
my distance from the stars,
my pilgrimage,
my girl
and my verses.
I go with the sweat
of exile on my forehead
and with a lost poem
sleeping in my eyes.
I go,
dreaming of those buried
in orchards and vineyards,
and I remember those I love,
those few.
When the sea rages my blood
and the wind kisses my love's hair,
I remember my mother,
and I weave in memory for her
a mat of straw
where she can sit and weep.

Amen to the age of flies.

Because the earth survives beneath my feet,
the pale god of my despair rejoices.
A new voice speaks my words.
My poems bloom naked as roses.

Find me some paper,
some ink.
Despair is still my star,
and evil is always being born.
Silence rises on the sand.
There are hearts to touch.
Some ink... Some paper...

"Where is your home?
What camp without a name?"

"My country is abandoned.
My soul has left me.
I have no home."
Adonis (Ali Ahmed Said)

MOUNT SUNEEN

From his room in the sky
my mountain
reads
to the night,
to the trees,
to all who cannot sleep—
his high sorrows.

A WOMAN AND A MAN

"Who are you?"

"Say I'm a clown in exile,
a son from the tribe of time and the devil."

"Was it you who solved my body?"

"Only in passing."

"What did you find?"

"My death."

"Is that why you hurried to bathe and dress?
While you lay nude, I read my face in yours.
I was the sun and shadow in your eyes,
the shadow and the sun. I let
you memorize me like a man from hiding."

"You knew I watched?"

"But what did you learn about me?
Do you understand me now?"

"No."

"Did I please you, leave you less afraid?"

"Yes."

"Don't you know me then?"

"No. Do you?"
Adonis (Ali Ahmed Said)

A DREAM FOR ANY MAN

I live in the face of a woman
who lives in a wave—
a surging wave
that finds a shore
lost like a harbor under shells.

I live in the face of a woman
who loses me
so she can be
the lighthouse waiting
in my mad and navigating blood.

A KING, MIHYAR

Mihyar, the king...
...alive in a dream of castles, gardens
and days in service to his words.

A voice, buried...
Mihyar’s, the king’s...
He rules the kingdoms of the wind
and keeps his secrets.

HIS VOICE

Mihyar, betrayed by friends,
you are an unrung bell,
two syllables on lips,
a song recalled
on the white roads of exile,
a gong sounding
for the fallen of the earth.
PHOTOGRAPHIC REALITY

WILLIAM G. LARSON

It often becomes easy to confuse visual reality with camera or photographic reality. The photographer working in a medium which has rather clearly-defined technical limitations generally deals with the objective existence of events. Reality as we perceive it is quite different from that which the camera records on film. There exist levels of reality which are beyond the ability of our minds to record; these are the areas which I find most interesting to explore in the photographic medium.

In photography, as in any art form, the artist reveals the unknown through his own creative capacity to express himself within the context of the medium. The photograph is the manifestation of that creative process. Technical ability and skill should not be mistaken for creative ability, as these things can be learned. The mechanics of the medium must be used to transcend merely recording the scene as it exists to the eye. It is at this point that we begin to deal with other levels of photographic reality. For instance, we know that beyond the red end of the visible spectrum, another type of light—infra-red—exists, which our eyes are not capable of seeing. However, through the use of infra-red film, we are able to photographically record an image on another level of reality—since it does exist and will manifest itself on this special film.

Possibly the greatest means of dealing with various levels of reality are in those areas which deal directly with process. Those areas which least relate are those which relate to objects. To see things as
Photography by William G. Larson
objects is to see things in a rather limiting way, since that is the way things are most easily perceived. The idea of relating objects in time and space becomes far more complex and less superficial. A process-oriented idea should always exceed the subject, which is a means just as the camera, film, chemicals and paper are means to the end. By thoroughly understanding the process and limitations of that process, an artist will formulate ideas which reveal the unknown and make visible the invisible.

One must begin with an idea and relate that idea to the process. In photography it is possible to relate events in time, through the ability of the film to record the process of change. A primary example of this is the use of a slow shutter speed which allows an event to be recorded on film as it happens during an interval of time. The result is a photographic reality much different from that which the eye observes yet the film records the actual process of the change during that time.

When we photograph an event we locate or isolate that event in time and space. By combining photographic elements we can extend the content of that idea by relating it to other levels of reality. If a subject is recorded at a given point in time and combined with another subject recorded at a different point in time these two subjects have been related on a new level of reality. The photographic process will allow these two elements to be combined into a new single image or, perhaps, as two or more images in sequence but the artist has now revealed the formerly unknown. By extending the number of elements combined one can relate subjects symbolically on various levels of reality in order to expand the content of the statement. Careful regard must be given to the manner in which these elements relate to one another. The same intuitive ability a painter uses when working with color must be exercised by the photographer in relating elements in a photograph.

One of the most fascinating levels of photographic reality which I have found the camera capable of dealing with is that of extended time exposures recorded through a very narrow visual perspective. Our eyes will observe approximately 150-180 degrees of vision; however, the camera may be masked to record less than 1 degree of our normal vision, and it is through that fine slit that certain images of mine are exposed. The film continually moves while the exposure is being made rather than frame by frame as it normally does. The result is an image which compiles itself on film in much the same manner that a television image does, line by line. The photograph of the human figure in motion, was created in this manner; it becomes an image
Photography by William G. Larson
unique to the medium of photography and is a new level of reality which manifests itself through a rather technical process. The exposures represent from five to seven minutes of time during which the figure revolves in front of the slit masked inside the camera. The image becomes a document of exactly what is happening during that interval of time, but in a totally new dimension of reality than we know through our eyes and mind.

The photograph will always be a symbol of the objective existence of events. Any medium will permit a person who is creative to express his message; and photography enables him to express this message through perhaps more levels of reality because of the variables within the system itself. Just as the computer has become an extension of our mind, photography has become an extension of our eyes. By feeding the systems certain information, we reveal things beyond what we are able to comprehend with the eyes and mind. We are just beginning to realize the potential of photography as a means of expressing ideas, since the impact of the image will always be prefaced by the realization that what we are looking at is directly based upon a real event or events.

The directions are limited only to the imagination of the artist and his resources related to technical data of the medium. There has been new cooperation between the scientist and the artist in the past few years which has led to more process-oriented statements in all areas of art. Ideas oriented in this manner have a more universal quality since they relate on more levels than perhaps those which are only object-oriented.

Technology has imposed upon us certain systems and processes which extend the normal capabilities of our senses, since certain objectives may be better achieved through mechanical equivalents of the mind and the body. One should never be restricted by the process in which he is working but rather use it as a base from which to begin. Photography has the capacity to record things exactly as we see them, but its greatest potential lies in its ability to reveal events on levels which exceed a purely objective record.
Photography by William G. Larson
Pablo Neruda

YO NO SÉ NADA

En el perimetro y la exactitud
de ciencias inexactas, aquí estoy, compañeros,
sin saber explicar estos vocablos
que se trasladan poco a poco al cielo
y que prueban robustas existencias.

De nada nos valió
hundir el avestruz en la cabeza,
o hacernos agujeros en la tierra,
“No hay nada que saber, se sabe todo”.
“No nos molesten con la geometría”.

Lo cierto es que una abstracta incertidumbre
sale de cada caos que regresa
cada vez a ser orden,
y qué curioso, todo
comienza con palabras,
nuevas palabras que se sientan solas
da la mesa, sin previa invitación,
palabras detestables que tragamos
y que se meten en nuestros armarios,
en nuestras camas, en nuestros amores,
hasta que son: hasta que comienza
otra vez el comienzo por el verbo.
Pablo Neruda

tr. Ben Belitt

I KNOW NOTHING AT ALL

In the perimeter and exactitude
of the inexact sciences, there you have me, my friends,
not knowing how to explain all those vocables
that move toward the sky, little by little,
to robust existence.

We get nothing
by knocking the ostrich’s head
and making our hole in the ground.
“Everyone knows that there’s nothing to know.”
“Don’t rattle my brains with geometry.”

This much is sure: an abstract uncertainty
comes and goes with each chaos, to turn
into order again;
and oddly enough, all
starts with a word,
new words that sit themselves down
at the table, alone, uninvited,
detestable words we toss off,
that rummage our clothes-closets,
get into our beds and our loves,
and stay on for good: till
the beginning begins once again with a word.
Pablo Neruda

SEMEN

Porque ese grito no tiene palabra
es sólo sílaba color de sangre.

Y circula en el giro de un deseo
como un espeso manantial caliente:
sulfato de cal roja, sol secreto
que abre cierra las puertas genitales.

EL GOLPE

Tinta que me entretienes
gota a gota
y vas guardando el rastro
de mi razón y de mi sinrazón
como una larga cicatriz que apenas
se verá, cuando el cuerpo esté dormido
en el discurso de sus destrucciones.

Tal vez mejor hubiera
volcado en una copa
toda tu esencia, y haberla arrojado
en una sola página, manchándola
con una sola estrella verde
y que sólo esa mancha
hubiera sido todo
lo que escribí a lo largo de mi vida,
sin alfabeto ni interpretaciones:
un solo golpe oscuro
sin palabras.
Pablo Neruda

SEmen

Because no words suffice for this cry
it lives as a blood-colored syllable.

And circle a ring of desire
like a cloudburst, sultry and dense:
red sulphate of quicklime, a secret sun
opening and closing the genital doors.

The Blow

Ink that enchants me,
drop after drop,
guarding the path
of my reason and unreason
like a hardly visible
scar on a wound that shows while the body sleeps
on in the discourse of its destructions.

Better still
if the whole of your essence erupted
in a drop, to
vent itself on a page, staining it now
with a single green star;
better, perhaps, if the blot
gathered
my whole scribbling lifetime
without glosses or alphabets:
a single dark blow
without words.
Pablo Neruda

OTROS DIOSES

Los dioses blancos duermen
en los libros:
se les ha roto el almidón, el frío
les devoró los ojos,
subsisten sin la claridad de entonces
y apenas queda una memoria
de amor entre los muslos.

La estatua quebrada
no guardó en la cintura
los relámpagos.

Se apagó la blancura.

Sin embargo, sabed, héroes cansados,
de rodillas de mármol,
que el dios intransigente
de las islas marinas
o la hirsuta, emplumada,
sangrienta
divinidad del África,
ceñuda en su envoltorio
o desnuda en la fiesta de la especie,
fiera tribal o corazón totémico,
tambor, escudo, lanza que vivió en la espesura
o junto a negros ríos que lloraban,
siguen ardiendo, vivos,
actuales, ancestrales,
llenos de sangre y sueños y sonidos:
aún no se sentaron en el trono
como espectros de mármol
nacidos de la espuma,
sino que continúan en la sombra
su sombría batalla.

28
OTHER GODS

The white gods sleep
in the books:
time broke their starches, cold
gnawed at their eyes,
they outlived the old clarities
with hardly a passion
their thighs can remember.

Their waists of wrecked plaster
no longer keep
the old rage.

The white has blown out.

Tired heroes,
brought to your knees in white marble, know
once and for all, the intransigent god
of the watery islands,
the African godhead,
hairy, bloody,
and plumed,
encumbered like bundles
or nude in the feasts of the species,
the beasts of the tribe, the totemical heart,
drum, shield, lance that thrives on the grossness of things
or by mourning black rivers,
go on living and burning,
alive and ancestral,
full of visions and noises and blood,
not throned
like those figments of marble
struck out of spray,
but unwearied still in the dark
and the battles of darkness.
IN MEMORIAM: PETER PAUL FERSCH

Gelegenheitsgedicht

I

The black tree at the end of the road
Exclaims the last syllable of the last sentence.

The black tree at the terminus
Is the only part of my horizon
That doesn’t retreat as I near.

My hands and head and legs
Magnetize toward it like compass needles
And my skin takes on the
Look and feel of wood, darkly-grained.

Now my parts belong to no whole;
My limbs only resemble parts of other things,
And the axe I’ve carried always
Has always been rusting.

The moon is a dark side
And a light side
And all the same moon:
A small circle of fraudulent light
In the long fraudulent dark.

II

Like a faraway locomotive, a wind
Begins through the high needles of the trees,
And in my listening the bold print
Of the landscape goes italic.
The hair on my unbarbered neck rises a little.
Somewhere the fur of a sunflower-grizzly
Is blowing. Between these two animals
Moves a message neither thought nor sent.

I was and I no longer am.
The history of one man is a history of the world.

III

And if I had noticed them
Building the walls, what are
The whining objections of one in the face
Of huge machinery and many million hands
Directed toward a single end?
I peer in—one could say “out”—at the construction.
Not even when I blink most violently
Does anyone notice my eye.

Death like:
the sound of an insect suffocating in a jar.
the last pin-prick of light when the television is over.
the end or beginning of a long rain.
an erasure, filaments part paper and part eraser
scattered in the shape of a man, then blown away.

IV

I believe in gasoline.
But whether touch off
The gallon with a match
Or burn on drop by drop
In the forms of a fine machine.
It only matters now.

It was a matter of driving down
From the mountains where the clear streams began
Into the wide clean of the plain
And into the sepia skies of the city.
Darkness was always falling. And filthy rain.
V

The fist of living unclenches.
Souls of the suicides fill
The spaces among a V of geese
Going toward the poisoning grounds.

There was no time to remember to be my murderer.

Botulism in the entrails of the weather
Twists the clouds and color of sky
In the motions of a fish strangling in air.

I'd always been gathering breath for the last thing to say.

Spring, then—a mote in the ray of dying.

Dust. Surprisingly, we were all made of almost all water.
Except for the dust. Beauty was water, brain was water,

But something was always dust clinging to the shine
Of a piano-top and cataracting the windows.

VI

The voice the other side of the glass
Is the soft mouth of a scavenger fish
Moving behind the aquarium-wall,
The no-voice, the silence after sound,
The silence forever thereafter.

I could dream wars more terrible
Than history shall ever deliver.

The dream and the real wars are over.
I have won or lost or neither.

General Patton and Johann Bach
Are dancing among the children.

VII

In the black tree at the end of the road,
A golden pheasant and a crow are mating.
Their ugly voices merge into a sound
Which is not unpleasant,
But the sun cannot pierce the branches
And the tree gives no shadow at any time of day.
ABENDWINTERLICHE LANDSCHAFT

Am Horizont leuchtet das Auge einer Landschaft unterm blauen Lid aus Eis.

Die Luft hängt wie ein gefrorener Schrei am Milchhimmel und schweigsamer Schnee häuft sich zur Stimme der Wildernis.

In der tiefkalten Stille zerbricht der Atem wie Glas an den Steinen der Luft.

Im Nacken der braunen Dämmerung glüht einen Augenblick lang das geronnene Blut der weisshaarigen Sonne.

Die grauen Fische des Abends schweben vor den Augen der Nacht und die Arme und Schenkel der Schatten sind steif gefroren.

Der Nachtfischer zieht seine stillen Kreise um den Mond der am Horizont nächtlich verblutet.

HINTER DEN BLUMEN VERSTECKT

Hinter den Blumen versteckt, erwarte ich den Überfall des Lichts.

Visuelles Ereignis: Die Sonne blüht mit tropischer Ästhetik über der bewusstlosen Landschaft.

In der Hitze fremder Augen verbrennen grüne Metaphern.
Peter Paul Fersch

tr. Derk Wynand

WINTERSCAPE

Beneath the blue lid of ice
the eye of a landscape shines on the horizon.

Air hangs in the sky like a frozen scream
and taciturn snow heaps up the voice of wilderness.

Breath shatters
on stones of air
like glass in deep-frozen silence.

For a moment
spilled blood of the white-haired sun
glows on the neck of brown twilight.

Grey fish of evening swim in the eye of night
and arms and thighs of the shadows freeze solid.

The nighthawk quietly circles the moon
which bleeds nightly on the horizon.

HIDDEN BEHIND FLOWERS

Hidden behind flowers,
I await the ambush of light.

Visual event:
with tropical aesthetics, the sun blooms
above the unconscious landscape.

Green metaphors burn out
in the heat of strange eyes.
Peter Paul Fersch

AN DER KÜSTE

An der Küste wartet
ein vergessener Herzschlag
auf das Segel der Nacht.

Das salzige Haar des Kapitäns
knistert im Wind.

Aus der Luft winken
die blauen Hände der Matrosen.

Haifischsuppe für die vergessenen Rosen.

An der Küste rauscht
das Herz des Kapitäns
im Nachtwind alter Gefühle.

DIE GEFRORENEN ZEIT

Durchsichtig, wie das Glas meiner Hände,
steigt ein kaltes Auge in den Horizont.

Die weissen Monde der Angst schießen
aus der Kehle der Nacht,
wie fallende Sterne.

Geheimnisvoll, wie die Stille der toten Buchstaben,
nachtet das Schweigen im Mund der Lust.

Die gefrorene Zeit zerfällt wie Mineral
zwischen den geschlossenen Händen.

Schattenlos, wie helle Körper aus Luft,
blühen die fünf Monde einer Hand
in dem Glas der Minuten.

Eine andere Zeit wird das Eis meiner Zunge lösen.
ON THE SHORE

On the shore
an abandoned heartbeat
awaits the sail of night.

The salty hair of the captain
crackles with wind.

Blue hands of the sailors
beckon in air.

Shark soup for abandoned roses.

In the night wind of old sensations,
the captain’s heart
storms on the shore.

FROZEN TIME

Transparent, like the glass of my hands,
a cold eye rises on the horizon.
The white moons of fear shoot
from the throat of night
like falling stars.

Secretive, like the quiet of dead letters,
silence spends nights in the mouth of desire.
Frozen time shatters
like a mineral in locked hands.

Without shadow, like bright bodies of air,
the five moons of my hand blossom
in the glass of the minutes.
In a different time, the ice of my tongue will melt.
ELEGIE FÜR EINEN JAZZMUSIKER

Die Träume des Schweigens umschlingend,
die schwarzen Flügel deiner Flöte im Winde spielend,
kehrst du heimwärts unter dem Achselzucken des Mittages,
zurück ins Gewebe der Nacht, wie Orpheus ein Schatten.
Mit einer leiseren Stimme wird dich die Erde noch einmal erraten.

Vor Zeiten starbst du, unter einem Regenhimmel,
mit einer handvoll Schweigen zwischen gestrandeten Noten,
doch deine Stimme hallt noch silbern im knietiefen Schlaf dieser Welt.
Nun krümmen sich die Finger der kohlfarbenen Stimmen,
die im Umriss deines Herzens bedenklich, traurig klagen.

Lautlos verlässt die schwarze Stimme deiner Flöte
den geschlossenen Mund mit Windgefühl auf der schweren Zunge.
Männer mit Trommeln und Hörnern beschwören die Zeit
mit melancholischer Metaphysik in gemeinsamer Luft
und nehmen Abschied vom verlegenen Schweigen deiner Abwesenheit.
ELEGY FOR A JAZZ MUSICIAN

You embrace the dream of silence.  
The black wings of your flute play in wind  
as you turn homeward under the shrugging shoulders of noon,  
back into the web of night, a shadow like Orpheus.  
With a softer voice the earth will find you out again.

Long ago you died under a blanket of rain,  
with a handful of silence between stranded notes,  
but your voice still echoes, silver in the knee-high  
sleep of this world,  
while charcoal tongues curl up in your heart’s circumference.

Soundless, the black voice of your flute abandons  
the closed mouth with feeling for wind on its tongue.  
Men with drums and horns conjure time  
and, with melancholy metaphysics in communal air,  
take leave from the confused silence of your absence.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Georg Britting's "Die Irren" originally appeared in German in his Gesamtausgabe in Einzelbanden, Erzählungen 1920-1936, Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung GmbH, Munich.

40
Peter looked at Innocenz mistrustfully. Innocenz lay in the rocking-chair, moved his arm as if steering, and sailed over the troubled waters. Now and then he shouted into the foghorn. As the waves became more violent, he clutched the mast fearfully. Then the storm calmed. Innocenz stepped off the ship. There were cliffs and palms. A path led to the interior. He saw Peter coming on it. He called out to him. Peter stood by the window and did not move. He let Innocenz yell. But Innocenz had already forgotten about Peter and was kneeling on the floor where he had discovered something glittering: light, the sunlight thrown on wooden boards. Innocenz bathed his fingernails in the glittering pool. He rinsed his hand in it—smiled—and lifting it up he saw light dripping from it. He caressed this burning whiteness with his cheek and felt the warmth. Peter watched him. Worried, he crept closer. Jealous! He knelt beside Innocenz, so that he too could wash his hand in shiny whiteness, so that he too could bathe his fingernails in a glittering pool of light. Their two hands touched and pressed against each other. Peter’s hand, large and angry, pushed the smaller hand of Innocenz into the shade. Innocenz seized Peter’s hand by scruff of the neck, like an impudent animal, and flung it aside. Peter narrowed his eyes. He lifted his hands like two pincers and slowly put them around the neck of Innocenz, who looked back at him smiling and curious, twirling his fingers in a glitter of light that now was his alone. Peter tightened his grip and dug his thumbs into the flesh. Innocenz’s face became red and swollen. But he was not angry. He tried to laugh. The corners of his mouth twitched, his eyes flickered, and his nose wrinkled comically. But not a sound escaped through the tight grip around his throat. When Peter relaxed his claws a little, Innocenz burst into loud, happy, violent laughter—a laughter that came from deep down in his heart.

Photography by Todd Walker
Peter’s fingers tightened their grip immediately. Even though Innocenz was dead, his eyes continued to laugh. Peter pulled the corpse to the window and hid it in the folds of the curtain. Then he bent over this liquid brilliance and put his fingers in it. He was happy that now it belonged only to him.
Voltaire, dealing with an outstanding poet and making use of his most flippant style, wrote in his *Dictionnaire Philosophique*: “The Italians call him [Dante] divine; but we are dealing with a hidden god, for those who understand his oracles are but very few. He has managed to inspire the comments of a few critics, which is perhaps one more reason why he is not clearly understood. His reputation will go on growing, for almost no one reads him.” Practically the same words could be used to describe the impact of the great Spanish American poets of our century. “Lands of poets and generals,” Rubén Darío, himself a prince among poets, defines the countries “South of the Border.” Not without reason: the great tradition in the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking countries of the American continent gives the highest rank in its system of values to poets and soldiers. (If at all possible, the poet should also be a soldier and fight for freedom, hence the enthusiasm for the Cuban, José Martí, one of the few men to fit this definition.) Yet nowadays Spanish American poets have trouble finding their audience. Some of them turn to bureaucracy or to diplomacy (a sophisticated version of bureaucracy) in order to make a living and, if at all possible, in order to travel in search of broader horizons and more receptive audiences. This is the case, among others, of the Mexicans José Gorostiza and Octavio Paz. It had been so with Darío himself, with Alfonso Reyes, with Pablo Neruda, to mention only a few outstanding names. Yet even in the most favorable of cases a poet’s public remains today somewhat limited. This phenomenon could be studied in other
continents—and the conclusions might well be, alas, the same. Since the end of the Romantic wave the social impact of poetry has been shrinking. While statistics on publications and book sales were scanty and novelists seemed to be only first-rank journalists, the phenomenon could be glossed over, but these factors have long vanished. No Mexican poet can boast today the following of a Carlos Fuentes or a Juan Rulfo. The novelists have won the battle, poetry is fighting a rear-guard action—which does not mean poetry has ceased to attract writers of great talent or, in a few cases, writers of genius. We are thinking primarily, in the framework of contemporary Mexico, of two such writers, Sabines and Montes de Oca. Both of them develop as poets after 1940.

The year 1940 is significant. Europe is suddenly engulfed by the Nazi onslaught. Spain lies prostrate under Franco. The U.S. is increasingly preoccupied by the gathering storm clouds. Suddenly all of Spanish America feels acutely alone, vulnerable, roofless. Left to their own resources, the societies south of the Rio Grande turn inwards, their search for identity and meaning becomes ever more insistent, bordering on anguish. It is a “pressure-cooker effect” which seems to ripen talent everywhere. By then the elder of our two poets is fifteen years old, the younger, Montes de Oca, a mere lad of eight. No matter. The future beckons, if only one can find a few friends, a few books, the sketchy outline of a formal education. Spanish America is booming, its cities glitter, new publishing houses pour out books and magazines. Loneliness is a mixed curse, also a mixed blessing. The tempo of life—economic, social, cultural life—seems to accelerate everywhere in Latin America from 1940 on. In a few places (and Mexico City is one of them) the Spanish refugees play the role of catalysts between Europe and the American lands, bringing sophistication and enthusiasm. Some French writers, such as Breton and Péret, reach the Western shores. Suddenly a synthesis encompassing the ancient cultures, Aztec and Maya, and the last discoveries of European Surrealism, does not seem out of reach. Homegrown masters, such as the subtle Gilberto Owen, the wise socratic Alfonso Reyes, the aristocratic Xavier Villaurrutia, are available to guide the young—or to irritate them, to serve as a foil to their ambition and their need for fresher styles. The Mexican Revolution is slowly freezing into a cumbersome bureaucratic structure. No matter. The embers may be banked by ashes but their core glows.

2. Under the Volcano

Even if we know that contemporary Mexican poetry offers us a vast storehouse of literary treasures, the problem of sharing it remains
unsolved. The few thousands of intelligent Mexican readers of poetry do not have to be convinced: they are fully aware of what these authors have to offer. For an American, i.e. "gringo" reading public, the primary barrier is the language. Among today's Mexican poets only Octavio Paz, perhaps, has been translated satisfactorily, if partially, in editions generally available to the average reader. From time to time a few anthologies try to do justice to a rich and crowded cornucopia. We may, somewhat naively, hope that the specialist will be more alert. This hope turns out to be a vain one. Hispanists at work today in the United States are a difficult and diffident tribe; those interested in Peninsular literature, for instance, know very little about recent developments in Latin America, and even the Latin American specialists often miss the forest because of the trees—and the individual trees attracting their attention seldom are those of contemporary poetry in Mexico, the novel being more widely-known and ever more popular (we do not even mention the fact that a contemporary novel may, if judiciously treated, become a successful textbook, and this possibility is remote when dealing with poetry.) Be it as it may, the number of Hispanists who can recognize the names of Sabines and Montes de Oca is very small. Yet they deserve recognition and analysis. They are not the only first-rank young Mexican poets: one could think of other names, such as José Emilio Pacheco, Tomás Segovia, Homero Aridjis, Juan Bañuelos. A few years ago the names of the promising young Mexican writers were Carlos Fuentes, Juan Rulfo, Juan José Arreola. They deserved the attention and the glory that finally came their way. Should the turn of the poets come now?

3. Two Unparallel Lives

Sabines and Montes de Oca cannot be more dissimilar. The poetry of Sabines reminds us of a huge volcanic rock, dense and rough, hard and dark, indestructible and ominous. Montes de Oca writes as a jungle vine grows, profusely, fast, never without elegance. Something airy and delicate lifts his lines, turns them into smoke volutes, into subtle trails of vapor. Sabines is clumsy, in a way which reminds us of German Expressionism. Montes de Oca is closer to French Surrealism and also to the poetry of Octavio Paz, who is for him, as for so many other young Mexican writers, both a literary mentor and a personal friend. The main subject for Sabines is death, the horror and ineluctability of death. Montes de Oca sings of life, life chaotic and triumphant, the nostalgia of lost paradises and the hope of finding new marvels at the turn of each second. Sabines writes in short, pithy sentences. Montes
de Oca likes sentences that flow on and on, sentences that give birth to new sentences much like amoebas that suddenly develop a narrow waist and then break into two new beings. Sabines uses colloquial language, curses, “bad” words as part of his normal poetic resources; Montes de Oca makes use of a vocabulary which is large but correct, almost neutral in its eclecticism. The few rare words he uses do not surprise us, for we know he has decided to explore the whole of a language in order to write his poems. The pianist who uses the whole keyboard from one end to the other may achieve special effects which would be impossible if he had decided to restrict his hands to a couple of octaves in the center of the keyboard. A language is there, available, for the poet to use to the full. If he doesn’t, who will?

4. The Serpent and its Plumes

Contemporary Mexican literature is perhaps much more conscious of its Pre-Columbian roots than the literature of any other country in the American Continent. Hence it is possible to relate the poetry of Sabines and Montes de Oca to what we may call two great styles of Pre-Columbian art. One style, to be found in certain great stone sculptures, such as the huge Tlaloc in front of the Chapultepec Museum, or the Coatlicue, is stark, dramatic, intense: clearly the mass and the main features have the upper hand over the details and the decoration. The other style, to be found mainly in Mayan funerary reliefs, is exuberant, delicate, elegant, over-refined. This subtler style can be found also in architecture: the delicate geometric patterns of Mitla, for instance, so complex yet serene (a Greek architect of the 5th century B.C. would have understood) are to be opposed to the stark masses of neighboring Monte Albán—or for that matter of the Teotihuacán Pyramids. Only occasionally, in the Teotihuacán friezes of Plumed Serpents, is a synthesis between these two styles approached. Coatlicue awes us because of the associations of the goddess with death and destruction. Yet a more beneficent god, such as Tlaloc, seems to convey a similar artistic message. Being, naked being, the sacred being of a god, is necessarily the source of a strong emotional experience. The presence of a sacred being inspires awe. Whoever sees God’s face—so the ancient Hebrews believed—must die. That is why the idea of an unconditioned Being and the idea of death are so often associated in our mind. Man needs a mediator when he wants to approach the gods without fear. The style of the Mayan steles is one in which language becomes often a decorative element and therefore a barrier between the gods and man. Mayan hieroglyphs envelop the sacred figures, billow
around them like a sumptuous drapery, like smoke curling on a breeze, like a melody without beginning and without end. If we want to understand properly the styles of Sabines and of Montes de Oca, we must remember that both of them have inherited these ancient traditions, these stylistic options, and each has found the one that suited him best. On the whole the Spanish Baroque art and rhetoric made better use of the Mayan style than of the Aztec art. The Baroque decorations of the Sagrario beside the Cathedral in Mexico City, for instance, owe much to the native decorative instinct (which was as alive in the central high plains as in the Yucatán Mayan jungles) and little to the great Aztec monoliths. It is true that probably both Montes de Oca and Sabines have read Neruda, Paz, Aleixandre, Lorca, Eluard and Whitman, and may be less familiar with the Pre-Columbian literary texts. What we are trying to say is that their readings of modern poetry were somehow conditioned by some ancient styles, some deep roots which we would like to compare to Jungian archetypes, ever present in us even when we are not aware of them. Sabines and Montes de Oca are as “up to date,” as au courant, as any other young writer in New York, London or Paris. Yet they are also aware of the sounds of a distant drummer, the sounds that come from the faraway Pre-Columbian past. Having stated this point we have to hasten to underline that the Spanish tradition is also a powerful one in both Sabines and Montes de Oca. Sabines, for example, has written one of his best poems, “Algo sobre la muerte del mayor Sabines,” in the elegiac mood. Spanish literature is especially rich in powerful elegies. We may think of the laments of the Archpriest of Hita to the death of Trotaconventos, his faithful go-between, and of course of the poignant Coplas de Jorge Manrique. Sabines has managed to write a poem which has all the flavor of modernity and all the power of the 15th century elegy by Jorge Manrique—a feat almost without parallel in Spanish modern poetry. Almost, but not quite, since Lorca’s “Lament for the Death of Ignacio Sánchez Mejías” is also a modern elegy of sustained force and beauty.

5. The Ox and the Bird

I have never met Sabines—which is curious, to say the least, since I lived in Mexico City from 1942 to 1952 and have returned there time and time again, attempting to meet the poet on several occasions, only to find out that he was “on the road.” Sabines is a loner, he does not contribute to literary magazines, has few friends among the literati. Yet I have a mental image of him, gathered through the reading of his poetry. If Sabines were an animal I would describe him as a wounded
ox. Montes de Oca, on the other hand, reminds me of a gay squirrel or a singing bird. Two poems will make clear these different personalities and styles. The first one by Sabines:

Slow bitter animal

Slow, bitter animal
that I am, that I have been,
bitter since a knot of dust, water and wind
in the first creation of man clamored for God.

Bitter as those bitter minerals
which in nights of precise solitude
—cursed and wasted solitude
without even oneself—
climb up to one’s throat
and scars of silence choke, kill, revive.

Bitter like that bitter voice
before birth, before being, which said
our word, which walked our path,
which died our death,
and which we discover in every moment.

Bitter from inside,
from out of what I am not,
—my skin as my tongue—,
from out of the first living being,
the first omen and prophecy.

Slow with the slowness of centuries,
far away—there is nothing behind me—,
distant, far away, unknown.

Slow bitter animal
that I am, that I have been.¹

¹From Recuento de poemas, Translated by Gloria and Manuel Durán. All other translations in this essay by G. and M. Durán unless otherwise stated.
Let us compare this self-portrait with Montes de Oca’s self-definition, which carries the title, “Advice to a Shy Girl, Or, In Defence of a Style.” It is a prose poem, one that should be read out loud in a fast breathless voice:

I like to climb on thin branches. There is no better way to get to the top of a tree. And if this is not enough, the straight line disgusts me. I prefer the pinwheel with its feverish zigzag and its garland of lights. And when I dream, I see gables crowded with jewels where flowers of lightning last until I thread into their stems iridescent shells with the purest of pleasure. The devil take the restricted ornamentation and the stingy rules with which the Academies prune the splendors of the world.

The straight line disgusts him—also the empty space, the long silent pause. His instinctive reaction is to keep flying, to keep soaring, to zigzag around the empty spaces until every inch has been profusely decorated in a neo-Baroque style which owes much to free association and Surrealism. Sabines moves deliberately around the fundamental mysteries of birth and death: between these two poles meaning, or meaninglessness, shine for a while, then disappear. Everything that happens in a poem by Sabines is important and noble, even when the language that describes it is colloquial, familiar, street language, even when the poet cannot, or will not, finish a sentence:

The sea is measured by waves,
the sky by wings
and we by tears.

The air rests on the leaves,
the water on eyes
and we on nothing.

It seems that salt and suns
and we and nothingness. . .

---

2From Las fuentes legendarias. The first sentence, “Me gusta andarme por las ramas,” contains an untranslatable pun. Its equivalent would be, “I like to beat around the bush,” but then the rest of the paragraph would not make much sense.

3From Horal.
Parallelism, simple short stanzas, deliberate progressions: Sabines’ poetry is not, in principle, hard to read or to understand. He may have learned in the poetry of T. S. Eliot, more specifically *The Waste Land*, to juxtapose trivia and drama. But even were this so his poems do not remind us of *The Waste Land*: no literary allusions, no obscure sentences in other languages, no learned footnotes. They can be read by anyone with a minimum of culture—provided of course he is sensitive to poetic values. Montes de Oca, on the other hand, does occasionally make use of allusions. As Rolf Hennequel, who has translated some of his poems into English, points out, “Teiresias the Seer accompanies the poet—as Virgil was Dante’s guide—when they look over the Kingdom of Man from the hill of the vast ruins of ‘Infamous Babylon.’” Montes de Oca’s lines plunge us in a never-never land, a strange planet created by a half-mad science fiction writer: we go on reading, mesmerized, hoping to find Barbarella at the next crater:

I live in shrouds
from which ever so often a violet escapes.
Cruelty only prevents it from rooting
in the noiseless death house,
without increasing the weight of the tombs.
Wine encasks lightning, the climax of intuition,
and we believe for a moment
that the profound departed ones are of gold...

Verily, Teiresias, we are not part of the mold—
even if of the same world,—
our winnowing fork rakes small heaps of miracles
attempting to harass with its fangs the globe,
the gory ball, which after many revolutions
between the sticky feet of the scarab
shows to us its heart,
a maddening grainlet,
not taking time to forge itself an edge,
useless lava, knotted into ashes,
fired by the ages to an abhorrent blaze.
Between all that we form a perfect corpse,
the Master pretends to be alive.
It is true, Teiresias, old chum of the dead,
that our blood, like stone oil, buried under ashes,
has now excessive weight, and penetrates

51
into the grooves of this fully-blown hotbed
where blossom incessant births, existences resplendent.4

There is much that is visual in Montes de Oca, little that appeals
directly to the reader’s emotions: people, things, circumstances, change
continually into each other in a sort of cosmic transfusion, the viewpoint
changes with them: we may feel at one given moment floating or free
falling in fiery space, the next moment our planet has shrunk to the
modest proportions of a “gory ball . . . between the sticky feet of the
scarab.” This constant flux allows for a minimum of identification and
empathy. Nobody falls in love with anybody during a roller-coaster ride.
The main thing, then, is to keep moving, to keep riding the cosmic
bicycle: stopping the ride would make us fall. And what a ride it is!
Anything can happen and usually does, the huge kaleidoscope goes on
spinning forever—providing we do not run out of our share of “suspen­
sion of disbelief,” headlong into the future. For Sabines the reverse is
true: the future “is not what it used to be,” only the present and its bitter
truths matter:

Since nine o’clock at night
watching television and—talking,
I have been waiting for the death of my father.
For three months I have been waiting.
Working and drunk,
in my bed with no one and in the children’s room
in his grief so full it spills over,
his sleeplessness, his complaint and his protest.
In the oxygen tank and the teeth
of the day that dawns, waiting and looking for hope.

Looking at his body in the bones
that are now my father,
and injecting needles into his fleeting veins,
trying to put life into him, to breathe
air into his lungs . . .
(I am ashamed down to the roots of my hair
for trying to write about these things.
Cursed the one who thinks that this is a poem!)

4Translated by Rolf Hennequel, from On the Ruins of Babylon with
What I mean is that I am not a nurse,  
a pimp to death,  
a speaker in funeral parlors, a go-between,  
a scullery maid of God, a priest of sadness.  
What I want to say is that I have more air than I need.

I

We buried you yesterday.  
Yesterday we buried you.  
We threw earth on you yesterday.  
You stayed in the earth yesterday.  
You are surrounded by earth  
since yesterday.  
Above and below and on all sides  
around your feet and over your head  
is the earth since yesterday.  
We put you in the earth,  
we covered you with earth yesterday.  
You belong to the earth  
since yesterday.  
Yesterday we buried you  
in the earth, yesterday.

II

Generous mother  
of all the dead,  
mother earth, mother,  
vagina of the cold,  
arms of the storm,  
lap of the wind,  
nest of the night,  
mother of death,  
gather him in, shelter him,  
undress him, take him,  
keep him, finish him.¹

This is only a fragment, and a short one at that, of a long and impressive poem. A poem which could best be described as a cross be-

¹From “Algo sobre la muerte del mayor Sabines,” Recuento de poemas.
tween a curse and a prayer. (The litanies to “mother earth” remind us of the litanies to the Virgin Mary.) Like Unamuno, Sabines thrives on contradictions and paradoxes: “keep him, finish him,” he asks the earth. He manages to say “yes” and “no” to death, all at the same time, both accepting and rejecting the idea of his father’s melting into the surrounding earth.

6. Do Not Disturb: Adjectives at Play

We are slowly coming to our main thesis: the poetry of Sabines is mainly concerned with Being, that of Montes de Oca with Becoming, process, change. If this is so, the way each poet makes use of nouns, adjectives, verbs, images, is bound to be related to this specific goal. We cannot carry out a detailed study of comparative stylistic analysis, but a few examples will show the way to a provisional conclusion.

Adjectives are often a style’s touchstone. They are the tools with which a poet slices through the core of an object, showing us how it is made inside, what is its main quality. They can define a man or an atmosphere, a building or a sky. They are the insight added by the poet to “raw” presence. Modern poetry is often aware of the importance and the power of adjectives—hence it uses them sparingly. What we often most dislike in 19th century poetry, especially the poetry of the so-called Victorian era, is its indiscriminate yet fussy use of adjectives. Some poems written in this period are as overstuffed with adjectives as Victorian furniture is overstuffed with horsehair and feathers. The lines are busy and crowded with adjectives just as end tables and shelves of the period were crowded with knicknacks of dubious merit. Mexican poets of this century have often placed their adjectives in the most honored and difficult place, the place with greatest visibility. Thus López Velarde, one of the undisputed masters of modern Mexican poetry, whose use of adjectives places him among the forerunners of the contemporary movement, uses adjectives that are often unexpected yet precise and effective: describing the mood of the province after the Revolution he speaks of “una íntima tristeza reaccionaria,” and the adjective comes at the end of the poem, illuminating everything that precedes it. Sabines is also a master in the use of the adjective. He knows also when not to use it. Statistically his poems contain far fewer adjectives than the poems of both López Velarde and Montes de Oca. What he is trying to convey can often be better expressed by other means. The poem to his father’s death contains a good share of unexpected adjectives. The dying man’s veins are said to be “escasas” (scarce, which we have translated by “fleeting”), thus expressing in concen-
trated and dramatic fashion all the difficulty and the anguish of trying to apply intravenous injections to a dying man. Sabines is able to do without too many adjectives because his is a poetry of situations—existential situations, with the poet at the center and the cosmos as the circumference. And his anti-sentimental attitude prevents him from elaborating on his feelings: he hints at them, most of the time, and lets us guess their depth and intensity. Montes de Oca is mesmerized by the world and its changes, its metamorphoses (a key word, in more than one sense: the poet’s sensuality is as “natural” and guileless as Ovid’s). If the world of Sabines is closer to the changeless sphere of Parmenides, Montes de Oca’s universe is a transcription of Heraclitus’ flow. Hence the importance for Montes de Oca of adjectives like “fiery,” “incandescent,” “glowing,” “dazzling.” His world is on fire, just as Heraclitus’ world is essentially one of fire, of liquid fire or ethereal fire, fire and struggle, fire and change, flowing fire. Sabines’ God is as clumsy as a human being—and suffers the same anguish. Montes de Oca’s heroes are as agile and insensitive as shooting stars, their long hair glows like a comet’s—hence also a solidarity between man and cosmos, one made out of the fact that everything is interchangeable, beautiful, fleeting. “Man becomes a dream; a dream becomes man,” Novalis had said. In Montes de Oca the Romantic program is fully realized. White magic pervades the starry spaces. Tragedy is obliterated: there is no time for pain or regret, only for wonder. In Sabines tragedy is at the core of the human experience, but it is transcended, for both objects and God advance towards man, willing to share his anguish.

7. The Past is Prologue

It is a melancholy fact that Sabines is the same age as Carlos Fuentes—and in the opinion of this critic Sabines is at least as great an artist as Fuentes; yet he is still waiting to be discovered outside of his native country, while dozens of essays and theses have been published about Fuentes in the U.S. and Europe. Montes de Oca, a few years younger, is also unknown outside Mexican literary circles. Our only aim in these notes has been to introduce the names of two outstanding Mexican poets to the American reader. Two poets standing at the opposite ends of the poetic spectrum. An ultraviolet poet, an infrared poet. In the middle, in bright technicolor, other names, equally great, stand out: Rosario Castellanos, Rubén Bonifaz Nuño, José Emilio Pacheco. The whole spectrum glows and becomes more dazzling with each passing year—only, alas, for those who know where to look.
Photography by Waclaw Nowak
Photography by Waclaw Nowak
Tymoteusz Karpowicz

ZWYCIESTWO

Udało mi się zamknąć ją w mym wnętrzu
wchodząc do rzeki — aż po złotą szyję
nurzam jej ciało w niecierpliwym wodzie
kiedy uderzam nogą w ostry kamień
ślyszę jak ona kurczy się i cofa stopy
jej ciepłe włosy splatane we śnie
próżno szukają ujścia z moich włosów

pokorna — leży we mnie lecz co noc
zapala się tuż pod moim sercem
ptedy przypada do mnie kamień oszałaly
i rzeka ogniem wpływa do moich oczu
mały kwiat polny kasa mnie tak wściekle
że wyję cicho choć jestem zwycięzcą

POZAR

Jak płaty ognia
spadały na mnie
lzy zasłyszane

W deszczu ognistym
siedziałem przykryty
kartką papieru

A gdy mnie nagle
ogień owinął
myślalem — świat się zapalił

A to zapłonął —
papier nad głową
Tymoteusz Karpowicz

tr. ANDRZEJ BUSZA AND MICHAEL BULLOCK

THE VICTORY

Entering the river
I managed to shut her inside me
I immerse her body in the impatient water
up to her golden neck
when I strike a sharp stone with my leg
I hear her start and draw back her foot
her warm hair entangled in sleep
seeks in vain to escape my hair
meekly she lies in me
but every night
she lights up just under my heart
then a frenzied stone leaps upon me
and the river flows fiery into my eyes
a small wild flower bites me so fiercely
that I scream softly although I am the victor

A CONFLAGRATION

Tears I had heard of
were falling on me
like leaves of fire
In the fiery rain
I sat covered
by a sheet of paper
And when suddenly the flames
enveloped me
I thought that the world had caught fire
But all that was burning
was the paper
over my head
AFTER THE BATTLE

Unaware that anything was wrong
I crawled out from under you
after the battle
and stood
remote and changed
in the place beside you
that should have been your own.

Yours was the only corpse, I noticed.
Some small animal
circled cautiously behind your eyes.
Your mouth had no edges,
no place for hanging on.
It was, instead, a place for lizards.

Your body is the sanctuary
for all the wildlife
that isn’t me. A remnant of your hand
encloses all.
I am some bad flower
sent deliberately to spoil your grave.
I grow best in blood.

Lying here,
you accuse me in the darkness
without even turning
certain beauty to design.
You want everything to reappear
out of a past I can’t explain.

I am not at fault
because you fell in a place of stone.
The blood will dry,
the stone will still be cold.
Your body will be
the singular thing
containing all.
That is—
nothing to remain,
nothing to destroy.
Susan Musgrave

THE WAY OUT

What extinguished us
has faced me before—
only a madman’s revenge, this—
historical rage.

Everything begins here
or nothing—there is no cause.
For too long my veins have been filled
with unaccomplished people,
my body is an exquisite lair
for middle-aged defeat.

So constant
now, this regret of yours,
neatly constructed
where anything else might fail.
Like a swamp you breed illegibly
and everywhere your ambitions are full of flaws.

This, after all, my lover
is disenchantment.
Expect it as no wizardry endures for long.
Are you fully dead or barely
half-contained inside me?
Your bones remain
symmetrical with pride
in a gift shop not even picked
for souvenirs.
I once knew a man with a wild beast in him. He knew about it, and sometimes with close friends joked about his "wild bull of the pampas." He did not fool us with his relative demonstration of the beast. In his own thoughts what raged in him was far more dangerous than a bull. His beast was phantasmagoric. And very occasionally its eyes and his looked out at us simultaneously. His problem was twofold. On the one hand, he feared the beast and was constantly pacifying himself to prevent any eruption. For this reason he bored most people, including his wife, whom he loved dearly. On the other hand, he recognized that he and the beast were, after all, one and that he could not in any real sense live unless he liberated him. All his creative energies were bound up in his beast. But although he feared the unbidden manifestation of his beast, he had found no way to make him appear at his command to work miracles for him. So both he and his beast paced restlessly through life, on intimate terms, but neither one a help to the other. His life was decorous and urbane, he was successful enough, he passed through life's essential functions. But underneath it all he smouldered. His beast, growing older and thinner, stormed at all the outposts demanding entry. Only once did it succeed. His wife had understandably been less than satisfied with him. She had early in their marriage sensed an aloofness, a remoteness, an estrangement. She knew, as people who share a bed usually do, that some vital confidence was missing, some commitment or surrender. But being well taken care of and treated with the utmost civility she never broached the subject directly. Instead, in many
small ways, she needled him. He was not unaware of the source of her prickliness, but chose to ride it out as being safest for all. Which was a mistake, for she then got no satisfaction at all and became gradually worse. The inevitable result was that one night, weak from a recent illness and lack of sleep, he let the beast out. The beast suited its actions to the occasion. Moaning almost as if it were being slaughtered, the beast feasted in pristine hunger on her body. The love he made to her, his wife, was gross and painful, a love that corresponded only to her dreams and fantasies. It is true that she was responsive, but in being so she became as unfamiliar to herself as was he, and it seemed, when it was over, an indignity she was too old and too unsettled to bear. The next day, without a word, she left him. He appeared more amused by the whole thing than distraught. His beast, firmly enclosed again, had worked a terrible wreck on his life. How clever of it, he thought, how infernally clever. But if he laughed, however quietly, it would not be wrong to take his laughter as something very different. For he had loved the woman with all his consciousness and hated his inability to be close to her as a lover should. He had tried to compensate with infinite grace, but had failed. He pieced together his life reasonably well after that, dining with his children occasionally, seeing to it that his wife was well provided for. Once, not long after their separation, she wrote him a letter, vague and rambling, but the thrust of it was clear enough: could some way be found for them to forget that night and to live together once again, perhaps with more understanding? He never answered. Instead, over a period of ten years, he died. I was privileged to be present at his final moments. He said very little, but he looked happy. He was going to emancipate his beast at last. He would crack himself open and let it burst free. I believe he felt on the verge of a new life, and he was actually laughing softly when he died. I would never have noticed but for the cracking sound that interrupted his laughter. Suddenly his eyes were glazed and still. The breath went out of him—or the wind from his emaciated, bleeding bull as it rushed pathetically to gorge and probably choke on ripe fields of green. For just a moment I saw it, I thought, disfiguring him as it squeezed out. And then I was alone with the dead, feeling loss and, inexplicably, fear. I turned, I looked down at my friend of thirty years, and I saw the beast grinning up at me. He had come from all the old paintings of nightmare, and his eyes burned into mine with a knowledge I could not face. I turned and went to the nearby window. And there, gazing out at a landscape that yet held back the frost, I wept the first true tears in my life since I was a child.
Giuseppe Ungaretti (1888 — 1970)

NOSTALGIA
Quando
la notte è a svanire
poco prima di primavera
e di rado
qualcuno passa
Su Parigi s’addensa
un oscuro colore
di pianto
In un canto
di ponte
contemplo
l’illimitato silenzio
di una ragazza
tenue
Le nostre
malattie
si fondono
E come portati via
si rimane

VEGLIA
Un’intera nottata
buttato vicino
a un compagno
massacrato
con la sua bocca
digrignata
volta al plenilunio

64
Giuseppe Ungaretti
tr. Dora Pettinella

NOSTALGIA

When
night is about to vanish
just before spring
and rarely
anyone passes
A dark color
of tears
settles over Paris
At the corner
of a bridge
I contemplate
on the limitless silence
of a frail
girl
Our
afflictions
blend
And as if carried away
we remain

VIGIL

All night
I have lain beside
my slain
companion
his mouth
a grinning wound
under a full moon
con la congestione
delle sue mani
penetrata
nel mio silenzio
ho scritto
lettere piene d’amore
Non sono mai stato
tanto
attaccato alla vita

SILENZIO IN LIGURIA

Scade flessuosa la pianura d’acqua.
Nelle sue urne il sole
Ancora segreto si bagna.
Una carnagione lieve trascorre.
Ed ella apre improvvisa ai seni
La grande mitezza degli occhi.
L’ombra sommersa delle rocce muore.
Dolce sbocciata dalle anche ilari,
Il vero amore è una quiete accesa,
E la godo diffusa
Dall’ala alabastrina
D’una mattina immobile.
the congestion
of his hands
penetrating
my silence
I have been writing
long letters of love
I have never been
so
attached to life

SILENCE IN LIGURIA

The watery plain sinks in folds

Secretly the sun
bathes in its urns.

A gentle complexion flows.

Suddenly to her breast
she opens compassionate eyes.

Submerged in rocks the shadow dies.

Sweet blooming of gay haunches,
True love is a passionate quiet,

And I enjoy it fused
in the alabaster wing
of a dense morning.
Giuseppe Ungaretti

LE STAGIONI

1

O leggiadri e giulivi coloriti
Che la struggente calma alleva,
E addolcirà,
Dall’astro desioso adorni,
Torniti da soavità,
O seni appena germogliati,
Già sospirosi,
Colmi e trepidi alle furtive mire,
V’ho
Adocchiati.

Iridi libere
Sulla tua strada alata
L’arcano dialogo scandivano.

È mutevole il vento,
Illusa adolescenza.

2

Eccoti domita e turbata.

È già oscura e fonda
L’ora d’estate che disanima.

Già verso un’alta, lucida
Sepoltura, si salpa.

Dal notturno meriggio,
Ormai soli, oscillando stanchi,
Invocano i ricordi:
Giuseppe Ungaretti

THE SEASONS

1

O gay light colorings
Rising in consuming calm
Softening
The eager brilliance of a gentle
Carved star.

O newly budded breasts,
Already sighing
Full and trembling to furtive glances,
Often I
have spied on you,

Flowering rainbows
Over your winged road
Scanned the mystic dialogue.

Wind is transient
Deluded adolescence.

2

Now you are tamed and disturbed.

This exhausting summer hour
Is already dark and deep.

Already toward a luminous high
burial, we leap.

From the nocturnal meridian,
Alone now, weakly wavering,
Remembrances invoke:
Non ordirò le tue malinconie,
Ma sul fosso lunare sull'altura
L'ombra si desterà.

E in sul declivio dell'aurora
La suprema veemenza
Dell'ardore coronerà
Più calmo, memorando e tenero,
La chioma docile e sonora
E di freschezza dorerà
La terra tormentata.

Indi passò sulla fronte dell'anno
Un ultimo rossore.

E lontanissimo un giovane coro
S'udì:

Nell'acqua garrula
Vidi riflesso uno stormo di tortore
Allo stellato grigiore s'unirono.

Quella fu l'ora più demente.

Ora anche il sogno tace.

È nuda anche la quercia,
Ma abbarbicata sempre al suo macigno.
I shall not plan your sorrows,
But on the high moonlit ditch
The shadow will waken.

And in declining dawn
The supernal violence
with its passion will crown
In calmness, reminiscent and tender,
The gentle rustling foliage
And in freshness gild
The tormented earth.

3

Then an ultimate blush
Crossed the brow of day.

A chorus faraway
Was heard.

In garrulous water
I saw reflections of a flock of doves
Blending to starry grayness.

That was the wildest hour.

4

Now even the dream is silent.

Naked is the ancient oak,
Though forever rooted to its boulder.
Giuseppe Ungaretti

D’AGOSTO

Avido lutto ronzante nei vivi,

Monotono altomare,
Ma senza solitudine,

Repressi squilli da prostrate messi,

Estate,

Sino ad orbite ombrate spolpi selci,

Risvegli ceneri nei colossei . . .

Quale Erebo t’urlò?

DISTACCO

Eccovi un uomo
uniforme

Eccovi un’anima
deserta
uno specchio impassibile

M’avviene di svegliarmi
e di congiungermi
e di possedere

Il raro bene che mi nasce
così piano mi nasce

E quando ha durato
così insensibilmente s’è spento

72
GIUSEPPE UNGARETTI

IN AUGUST

Cruel mourning latent in the living.

Monotonous open sea,
But without loneliness,

Quelled shrieks of dispirited harvests,

Summer,

Stripped stone in shadowy orbits,

Ashen wakenings in colosseums . . .

What Jew yelled at you?

BREAK

Here is a man
an average man

Here is a soul
a lonely soul
an impassive mirror

I suddenly waken
conjoin
and possess

The rare good born in me
born ever so slowly

enduring until
painless spent
Photographs by Eikoh Hosoe
Carlos Drummond de Andrade

TRISTEZA NO CEU

No céu também há uma hora melancólica,
Hora difícil, em que a dúvida penetra as almas.
Por que fiz o mundo? Deus se pergunta
e se responde: Não sei.

Os anjos olham-no com reprovação,
e plumas caem.

Todas as hipóteses: a graça, a eternidade, o amor
caem, são plumas.

Outra pluma, o céu se desfaz.
Tão manso, nenhum fragor denuncia
o momento entre tudo e nada,
ou seja, a tristeza de Deus.

SER

O filho que não fiz
hoje seria homem.
Ele corre na brisa
sem carne, sem nome.

As vezes o encontro
num encontro de nuvem.
Apóia em meu ombro
seu ombro nenhum.

Interrogo meu filho,
objeto de ar:
em que gruta ou concha
quedas abstrato?
Carlos Drummond de Andrade

tr. Jack E. Tomlins

SADNESS IN HEAVEN

In heaven there is also a melancholy hour,
A difficult hour when doubt pervades all souls.
Why did I create the world? God wonders
and answers himself: I do not know.

The angels look at him with disapproval,
and feathers fall.

All the hypotheses: grace, eternity, love
fall, they are feathers.

Another feather, heaven is undone.
So gently, no roar betrays
the moment between all and nothing,
or rather, the sadness of God.

TO BE

The son I did not create
would be a man today.
He runs on the wind,
fleshless and nameless.

Sometimes I find him
as I find a cloud.
On my shoulder he rests
his never-never shoulder.

I ask my son,
object of the air:
in what grotto, what conch
do you rest abstracted?
Lá onde eu jazia,  
responde-me o hálito,  
não me percebeste,  
contudo chamava-te  
como ainda te chamo  
(além, além do amor)  
onde nada, tudo  
aspira a criar-se.  

O filho que não fiz  
faz-se por si mesmo.
There where I lay
his breath answers me,
you did not hear me,
though I called to you

as still I call
(beyond, beyond all love)
where nothing, everything
longs for creation.

The son I did not create
creates himself quite by himself.
The role of mind is the unifying theme in this study. Martha O'Nan presents a thought-provoking analysis of four well-known fictional characters: Hugo’s Quasimodo, Faulkner’s Benjy, Beckett’s Lucky, and Günter Grass’s Oskar. She examines each character from the point of view of different philosophical theories.

Quasimodo, from Hugo’s Notre-Dame de Paris, is evaluated according to the philosophical theories of Locke and Maine de Biran. For Quasimodo it is a question of “the senses.” “... he [Hugo] imagined that Quasimodo’s mental mechanism, severed from sensations, was withering away in impenetrable darkness.”

Faulkner’s Benjy from The Sound and the Fury fits the ideas of Freud, Briquet, and Janet. “Hysteria” is the theme in considering the idiot, Benjy, whose behavior has its basis in a hysterical reaction to memories. “His story is found in his moaning and playing ‘graveyard’.”

Lucky from Beckett’s Waiting for Godot is explained by the philosophy of Bergson and by history. Lucky is “damned.” “The tragedy of the human condition ... comes from Time aided by Memory and Habit.”

Oskar is “the rogue.” “Oskar enjoys alienation from the world and strives to be free from all the debris of memory which his tin drum gathers for him.” In Grass’s The Tim Drum he exists in both essential and existential worlds.

The real value of Martha O’Nan’s book perhaps lies in her conclusion: “The unknown of the mind remains.” Here is a stimulating, in-depth study presenting innovative approaches to four major literary works.

Elizabeth Ann Richardson

We are accustomed in Alan Sillitoe's fiction to those smeary British working class habitats where a character of apparently negligible freedom is driven first to insight and then to the brink of moral evaluation and choice. But in this volume of poetry, Sillitoe's milieu is the post atom-bomb psyche. Each of us, he conjectures, carries about the image of a gutted habitation, a Voronezh. Unable to return to the "heart" of an old home, what happens to the character of our affections in the grave "environs" of this graveyard?

The collection suggests a considerable virtuosity, especially in Sillitoe's ability to adapt recurrent and rather commonplace poetic terms to the concretion and imagistic precision of many of the poems. Moreover, the environment he investigates might easily have dictated the cliché of nuclear Armageddon which, we are so often told, overhangs our futile enterprises:

I'm praying with one button finger free while you God
Drunken queer old autocratic bastard rave above it
Strapped in your art-nouveau chair to watch
The final boiling spew-cock of the world
On its uprush towards home and heaven.

Sillitoe's control of that problem is equalled by his grasp of the precariousness of our affections, although the voice is too often discursive. We love with a sense of arbitrariness and the certitude that we are damned if we do and damned if we don't:

He who can love
Will die in pain
The one who revels in intelligence
Will not wake up from sleep.

Dead men circumambulating the heart of our lost possibilities, we love peripherally and anxiously. With perhaps fatal evidence in against not only our purity but our aspiration to the integrity of sympathy, Sillitoe struggles to redeem our inability and unwillingness to kill the impetus to love:

To burn out love is to burn a star from the sky . . .
Such love can never be put out
If I've no power or wish to break
My brain and fist against that star.
When he is at his best Sillitoe’s surveillance of modern love, like Meredith’s, issues in a subtly ambiguous voice:

Love in the environs of Voronezh . . .
There’s no returning to the heart:
The dead to the environs go
Away from resurrected stone.

Some may see his ironic perception as a sign of distance from the affectional situations he explores; there is indeed a tinge of abstraction to these poems, with the certain exception of the one entitled “The Poet.” (At its worst, this tendency fosters the mediocrity of the poem “Survival.”) But this quality often complements his retrospective consideration of subjects and is a vice or virtue pretty much according to taste. I admire the collection a good deal but miss the presence of at least one piece on amorous dealings which, like Alvarez’ “Lost” or Betjemen’s “Late Flowering Lust,” recreates the immediate realization of love’s tenuity.

DAVID M. HEATON


The politics of Neruda, like the politics of Pound at the opposite extreme, may be disturbing but his poetry is the better for it. At least that is what Robert Lowell maintained, at an international conference on poetry and politics, in 1967: “I want to pay homage to the two poets whose shadows are with us but whose presence isn’t: Pound and Neruda. They are as great poets as we have alive probably and both to my mind followed bad causes. Indeed, both superficially and profoundly. And they were better poets for it . . .”

This new collection of translations, with the original Spanish poems on facing pages, ranges from 1958 to 1967 in the work of the Chilean master, and provides a splendid introductory essay by Ben Belitt. Mr. Belitt’s earlier edition of the Selected Poems of Pablo Neruda (1961), to which this is a companion volume, covers the years 1925-1958. In the new collection, most of the translations are Ben Belitt’s own but about a third are by Alastair Reid, offering a pleasing contrast of styles, plain and ornate. Neither is exactly Neruda: both make successful, original poems in their own language, as good translators of
poetry have to do. Each, in his very different way, regenerates in English some of the animistic energy that is Neruda's charm.

Here is a sample of Alastair Reid's translation from *Testamento de Otoño* (1958):

> And now I am going behind this leaf, but not disappearing. I shall leap in the clear air like a swimmer in the sky, and then, come back to growing until one day I become so small that the wind will lift me off and I will not know my name, and will not exist when I wake.

Then I shall sing in the silence.

And here is Ben Belitt's translation of the conclusion to *La barcarola* (1967):

> For you, all the furors and joys of a seaport that grapples the breakers' successions, drenched in the freeze of mid-ocean, acquainted with peril: comely, that vessel's sobriety, comely the months of the vesperal light of Antarctica, the ship roofed with amaranth, the hand's strength in our sails and our houses and lives, each arrayed in the cloths of its status, pennants displayed, intact in the pull of the vortices, earthquakes that open and shut their infernos, hand clasping hand in the harbors; walls, people, and artifacts joined in one body, atremble on a rattletrap planet.

Neruda's is not a merely political communism, but a poet's elemental communion of all people and all things. The over three hundred pages of this volume provide a substantial selection of his recent work, at a time when his international stature is only beginning to be adequately known.

PHILIP COOPER

J. Michael Yates writes in his introduction: “The Minotaur ... mythic beast” and “Ozone ... a form of oxygen produced by lightning ... in its liquid form, highly explosive ... [also produced by] electrical machines such as dynamos in dams.” The Ozone Minotaur, Andreas Schroeder’s first book, is indeed a strange and often exciting coupling of the material of myth with the material of the modern world. Energy is the vital concept here. The energy of non-rational or mythic responses to the world and the energy of the world itself (the world of nature—lightning; and the world of man—dynamos).

In his own “introduction” Schroeder writes:

the

man on the other bank is sifting debris
into a notebook;

i. e. the man on the other bank—one part of the poet’s personality, the seeing part—is, with a “hammer in my fist,” pounding through the times (and time itself), sifting through cables, phones, “discs of smoke,” rails, trumpeters, foghorns, “a rock and water universe,” “broken teeth among the crosses,” sulphur pools, “the bones of butterflies,” letter slots, beautiful women on steel beds—trying to find the essential energies in these things.

These poems do not beg, but boldly seek “immediate passage” into these things “sifted through,” into the world, and into the knowledge of the “space between two things”—and the poet would thereby somehow be released out of his own tight energy. It is not things but “things hidden” that contain the energy—“What it is/doesn’t interest me;/ Names I forget.” The poet is released out of his own tight energy by allowing other things (including people) to exist—in opening this possibility, part of the energies of his own overcharged mind release themselves and settle in other things, effecting a healing.

But finally, the energies are settled upon or decided upon “only by accident.” There are finally only silhouettes, outlines, things caught in an “idiot net”; and always “the space between two things”—the poet’s energy finally never flows into the world; and he finds himself alone, watching, “waiting for a sudden friend,” and “constantly laughing quietly to himself.”

James Tipton
Since abandoning the novel in 1960, Michel Butor has been increasingly involved in exploring and expanding the visual and auditory potential of the literary experience. His *6.810.000 litres d'eau par seconde*, here translated as *Niagara*, which appeared in 1965 is one of the most interesting products of these experiments. This book, subtitled "Etude stéréophonique" is the text for a stereophonic presentation and has been performed in a specially prepared theater in Grenoble in 1968.

This script organizes the voices of seventeen visitors to Niagara Falls, old couples and lonely bachelors as well as newly-weds, in a complex counterpoint of simultaneous conversations. Butor creates a background for the characters' voices from the noises of the falls and its tourists, the voices of an announcer describing the scene and of a reader reading a description of the falls written by Chateaubriand at the end of the eighteenth century.

In production the characters' voices are to be divided between left and right channels and the listener equipped with controls which would permit him to raise or lower either channel according to his interests. Butor gives the reader a similar freedom, offering him the choice of ten different tracks that he can follow in reading the book. Blank space, three kinds of type and four different margins are used to suggest visually the relationship between the voices that would be apparent aurally in performance.

From the voices of the gigolos, newly-weds and negroes that mingle during this year at Niagara are woven such themes as the search for youth, love and social justice. The juxtaposition of the portrait of modern Niagara against the description of the savage wilderness that Chateaubriand found in the eighteenth century not only creates a stylistic contrast, but also produces a poignant tension between the promise of what was and the emptiness of what is. The portrait is not just of the falls but of the society which mythologizes them as a honeymooner's paradise and at the same time cynically exploits that dream with neon, motels and curio shops.

DEAN McWILLIAMS
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

CARLOS DRUMMOND DE ANDRADE belongs to the second generation of modernists in Brazilian poetry. His volumes of poetry include Alguma Poesia (1930), Brejo das Almos (1934), Sentimento do Mundo (1940), and Líção de Coisas (1962).

BEN BELITT is an American poet and translator who is a professor in the Department of Literature and Language at Bennington College. He is the author of School of a Soldier, a prose work, and four volumes of poetry: The Five-Fold Mesh, Wilderness Stair, The Enemy Joy, and Nowhere but Light. He has translated Rimbaud, Lorca, Alberti, Machado, Guillén, and Neruda. Mr. Belitt has won many prizes and has been a candidate for the National Book Award in both poetry and translation.

KENNETH BERNARD has published fiction in Minnesota Review and Paris Review; poetry in Western Humanities, Prairie Schooner, Antioch Review and others; plays in Trace, Massachusetts Review and Drama and Theater, and criticism in College English, Conradiana, Studies in Short Fiction and other journals. He is a member of the English faculty at Long Island University.

GEORG BRITTING is a German poet, short story writer and novelist who won international recognition in 1932 with his novel, Der Lebenslauf eines dicken Mannes, der Hamlet hiess. Translations of his stories have appeared in various journals in the United States and Canada. Although his stories figure among the best written in the twentieth century, his work is relatively unknown in the English-speaking world.

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 meinen Mund, a bilingual volume published in Germany. He has a collection of surreal fictions, Sixteen Stories as they Happened. He is the translator of two volumes of poems by Karl Krolow.

ANDRZEJ BUSZA was born in 1938 in Cracow, Poland, and educated in England. His poems have appeared in Polish periodicals and abroad since 1958, and are included in three anthologies of Polish poetry. A volume of his poems, Znaki wodne, was recently published by the Institut Littéraire in Paris. He teaches at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver.

MANUEL DURÁN was born in Spain in 1925, left Spain in 1939, and has lived for many years in Mexico. He is now Professor of Spanish at Yale University. His new book on Luis de León will appear soon in English. Mr. Durán has published five books of poetry and numerous articles and anthologies. He is currently at work on a new book of poems and a collection of critical essays on contemporary Spanish literature.
PETER PAUL FERSCH had just completed a volume of translations of Georg Britting's short stories when he died unexpectedly in the Spring of 1970 at the age of 30. He was teaching English and creative writing at Loyola University, New Orleans. His own poems and translations have appeared in many journals both in the United States and Canada. The editors of Mundus Artium would like to express their deep grief over the sudden death of Peter Paul Fersch.

MIRENE GHOSSEIN is the associate editor of Les Cahiers de l'Oronte in Beirut, Lebanon. Her translations and critical articles have appeared in several journals.

SAMUEL J. HAZO is currently director of the International Poetry Forum, and president of the Pittsburgh Council for the Arts. He has published five volumes of his own poetry in addition to his translation work. In 1965 Mr. Hazo made a lecture and reading tour through the Middle East and Greece, and in 1966 he represented the United States during Lecture Week at Jamaica. He is presently Professor of English at Duquesne University.

EIKOH HOSOE was born in Tokyo in 1933. In 1963 he was awarded the “Best Photographer of the Year” prize by the Japanese Photo Critics Association. He is the author of six books. The photographs included in this issue are taken from his Man and Woman series which contains thirty-two prints.

TYMOTHEUSZ KARPOWICZ is a Polish poet, playwright, and critic who has published six volumes of poetry and a collection of plays. He is editor of the Wroclaw literary monthly Odra. His poetry and plays have been translated into several European languages.

WILLIAM G. LARSON is currently teaching photography at Temple University. His work has appeared in Art in America, Modern Photography Annual and Popular Photography Annual. Born in 1942, his photographs are in the permanent collection of The Museum of Modern Art.

SUSAN MUSGRAVE was born in British Columbia in 1951. Her poems have appeared in The Malahat Review, West Coast Review, Wascana Review, Poetry Review, Prism International and many other journals. Her first volume of poetry, Songs of the Sea-Witch, will be published soon by the Sono Nis Press.

PABLO NERUDA published his first volume of poetry, La canción y la fiesta, in 1921. In addition to his most famous book, Residencia en la tierra (1931), the Chilean poet has published Veinte poemas de amor y una canción desesperada (1924), Segunda residencia (1935), Tercera residencia (1947), Canto general (where Alturas de Macchu Picchu was included) 1950, Odas elementales (1954), and Navegaciones y regresas (1959). The translations of Neruda's poems by Ben Belitt in this issue are taken from Neruda's latest book, Las manos del día, 1968.
WACLAW NOWAK is a Polish photographer whose work has appeared in Fotografia Poland, Czechoslovak Fotografie, Sovietskoye Photo, International Aktfotografie and other journals in East Germany. His work has been displayed in many national and international exhibitions.

DORA PETTINELLA is an American poet and translator whose work has appeared in many English and Italian publications including Chicago Review, Hudson Review, Nation, Malahat Review, Cenobio, Fiera Letteraria, Ponte and others. She has translated numerous works from the Spanish, Portuguese, Italian and French.

JACK E. TOMLINS is Associate Professor of Modern Languages at the University of New Mexico. In 1968 he published Hallucinated City (Vanderbilt University Press), a bilingual edition of Mário de Andrade’s Pauliceia Desvairada. He is currently translating Wilson Martin’s history of Brazilian modernism.

GIUSEPPE UNGARETTI is the most important and influential figure of modern Italian poetry. He died at the age of 82 shortly after he had received the first $10,000 University of Oklahoma Books Abroad International Prize for Literature on March 14th for his complete poems, Vita d’un Uomo, published by Mondadori in 1969. The 1970 Autumn issue of Books Abroad will feature articles and homages to Ungaretti. His major volumes of poems include L’Allegria, Sentimento del Tempo, Il Dolore and La Terra Promessa.

TODD WALKER has had exhibitions of his photography in the Venice Biennale in Italy, World of Color in The Netherlands, and Contemporary Photographers at the University of California, Los Angeles. His work is also included in the collections of the George Eastman House, The Museum of Modern Art, and The Pasadena Art Museum.

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.

J. MICHAEL YATES has published several volumes of poetry: Spiral of Mirrors, Hunt in an Unmapped Interior, Canticles for Electronic Music. His book of fiction Man in the Glass Octopus appeared in 1968. He is the poetry editor of Prism international and the co-editor of Contemporary Literature in Translation. His most recent book is an anthology of Contemporary Poetry of British Columbia published by The Sono Nis Press. Mr. Yates teaches in the Creative Writing Department at the University of British Columbia.
ACTUELLES — Formes et Langages

announces a new poetry series

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roland Man</td>
<td>PLUVIOTALES</td>
<td>11 F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michel Passelergue</td>
<td>NYX</td>
<td>13 F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claude Grynblat-Baltzer</td>
<td>LES CHARMES VIERGES</td>
<td>12 F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michel Stavaux</td>
<td>LA PROMENADE RUE VOLIERE</td>
<td>11 F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julien Harb</td>
<td>LE DIT DE L’ESPACE</td>
<td>15 F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire Laffay</td>
<td>CHANT POUR CYBELE</td>
<td>13 F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierre-Marie Michel</td>
<td>L’ECORCE, LA FEUILLE</td>
<td>12 F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Actuelles
Mas des Poiriers
Uzès
France
SUMAC
a triquarterly magazine of
the best in
contemporary poetry

1 year subscription $4.00

SUMAC's latest double issue includes work by the following:
Adrienne Rich
W. S. Merwin
John Woods
Anselm Hollo
James DenBoer
Eric Barker
John Ingwersen
David Antin
James Tate
Louis Simpson
Diane Wakoski
Jim Harrison
Richard Tillinghast
Rebecca Newth
Eugene Ruggles
Jack Anderson
Wendell Berry
Hugh Kenner
Robert Kelly
Clayton Eshelman
George Hitchcock
J. D. Reed
Stanley Cooperman
Dan Gerber
and many others

BOOKS FROM THE SUMAC PRESS


THE HOUSE OF IBUKI by Clayton Eshelman. A book length poem of Japan by the author of INDIANA and HUMAN POEMS, the definitive translation of César Vallejo's POEMAS HUMANOS.

FIVE BLIND MEN new poems by Dan Gerber, Jim Harrison, George Quasha, Charles Simic and J. D. Reed.

LACKAWANNA ELEGY by Yvan Goll. Translated by Galway Kinnell with accompanying French texts.

All of the above books are available in paperback at $1.95 and in a signed limited hardcover edition at $7.50.

THE SUMAC PRESS
P. O. Box 29
Fremont, Michigan 49412
you
your course
your library

PRISM international 1959
a journal of contemporary writing
fiction
essays
poems
plays

"... among the best of the literary magazines."
Joyce Carol Oates, Speaking of Books, CBC, March 22, 1970

"The format is as pleasing as the content."
Library Journal, Feb. 15, 1969

Editor: Jacob Zilber
Associate Editors: Douglas Bankson, Robert Harlow, J. Michael Yates

Since 1959, Prism international has published outstanding work by scores of both new and well-known authors from all parts of the world. A partial list of contributors includes:

Microfilm editions of Prism international are available from University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan, and reprints (vols. 1-5) from the Kraus Reprint Corporation, NYC. Prism international is also on display annually at the Combined Book Exhibit, Briarcliff Manor, New York.

One-year subscription (three issues): $5.00

Prism international press
The Price of Morning
selected poems by Walter Bauer $4.75
Summer of the Black Sun
novel by Bill T. O'Brien $4.95
Tillie's Punctured Romance
sketches, fiction, drama by Charlie Leeds $5.95

Available from: The Creative Writing Department, University of British Columbia, Vancouver 8, British Columbia, Canada.
AUSTIN CLARKE—DAVID GASCOYNE—EDMUND RUBBRA
JAMES DICKEY—STANLEY KUNITZ—HERBERT READ
HENRY MOORE—DANIEL COSIO VILLEGAS—JOHN WAIN
G. WILSON KNIGHT—OCTAVIO PAZ—FRANK KERMODE
UGO BETTI—GÜNTER EICH—BONAMY DOBREE
JOHN PIPER—WILLIAM STAFFORD—THOMAS KINSELLA
SONG PYONG-SU—JOHN MONTAGUE—MEL RAMOS
J. I. M. STEWART—MARIO SOLDATI—ANNE SEXTON
ALLAN KAPROW—JAMES K. BAXTER—GUNNAR EKELOFF
HANS MAGNUS ENZENSBERGER—PAUL WEST—MAY SARTON
CHRISTOPHER RICKS—GEORGE WOODCOCK—D. J. ENRIGHT
IRVING LAYTON—KINGSLEY AMIS—JOHN LOGAN
D. H. LAWRENCE—CHARLES TOMLINSON—“AE”
HAYDEN CARRUTH—GIUSEPPE UNGARETTI

are all contributors to

The Malahat Review

Subscription rates $5.00 for one year or $12.00 for three years.

The Malahat Review,
University of Victoria,
Victoria, B. C., Canada.
Summer Issue

ESSAYS
Arthur Mizener on Ford Maddox Ford
Bernard Benstock, The Mother-Madonna-Matriarch in Sean O'Casey
Frederic Jameson, On Raymond Chandler
John Fraser, Violence and Thought in Art
Wallace Stegner, Re-Discoveries: Wescott's Goodbye Wisconsin
Herbert Howarth, The Meaning of Conrad's The Rover
Leonard Unger, Yeats and Hamlet
Marion Montgomery, Emotion Recollected in Tranquillity...

POETRY
Joyce Carol Oates, Morning on our Beach; Breaking Apart;
Where the Shadow is Darkest; Mysterious Motions Subside; You/Your
John Williams, The Seasons, Accessions to Autumn
Robert L. Jones, Her Face; I Ascend; Our Last Visit; Annie; My Eyes
John Creighton, Angles; Notes on a Panda Panacea; Persimmons
Robert Cooper, Versicle and Response: Precision Bombing
Carl Bode, The Expanse of Spirit
Douglas J. Livingston, The Dustbowls
Stanley Cooperman, Cappelbaum and the Serious Woman
Gottfried Benn, translated by W. S. Merwin, Look: the stars, the fangs...
Charlotte Garrett, Elegy for the Unborn; For All the Aunts;
At 68th and Lexington
Vern Rutsala, Party; Rooms, How We Spend Our Time

FICTION
Philip O'Connor, The Gift Bearer

REVIEWS
George Core, A Mortal Teasing After Immortal Spoils

Subscription Form

Business Manager
The Southern Review
Drawer D, University Station
USA, Mexico, Canada
Batson Rouge, La. 70803
Overseas

1 year 2 years 3 years

USA, Mexico, Canada $4.00 $7.00 $10.00
Overseas $5.00 $9.00 $13.00

I wish to enter my subscription to The Southern Review for:

☐ 1 year ☐ 2 years ☐ 3 years

Name:________________________________________

Address:______________________________________
NEW TITLES

THE SUICIDE AT THE PIANO
poems by rainer schulte $5.00

THE OZONE MINOTAUR
poems by andreas schroeder $5.00

MOTIONS, DREAMS & ABERRATIONS
poems by elizabeth gourlay $3.25

THE STATE OF THE UNION
poems by e. curmie price $5.00

SIXTEEN STORIES AS THEY HAPPENED
fiction by michael bullock $5.95

MAN IN THE GLASS OCTOPUS
fiction by j. michael yates $5.00

CONTEMPORARY POETRY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
robin skelton stanley cooperman
george amabile earle birney
j. michael yates p. k. page
phyllis webb dorothy livesay
andreas schroeder john newlove

et al $7.95
Jorge Luis Borges—

Dreamtigers (El hacedor)  Other Inquisitions
Translated by Mildred Boyer (Otras inquisiciones)
and Harold Morland Translated by
Illustrated $4.00 Ruth L. C. Simms $4.75

THE MYTHMAKER: A Study of Motif and Symbol in the Short
Stories of Jorge Luis Borges

By Carter Wheelock $6.00

"My Dear Friend:

I think I can call you this, after listening to the reading (you probably know
that I became blind some years ago) of that beautiful book which I am surprised
and honored to have inspired, and in which you have penetrated so deeply into
my mind. You have enriched and enlarged it; I have no words with which to
thank you for the time and for the just and telling observations you have
dedicated to me."

—Jorge Luis Borges, in a letter to Carter Wheelock

(BOX 7819, AUSTIN 78712)

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS PRESS AUSTIN AND LONDON

---

SUBSCRIPTION FORM

I wish to enter my subscription to

MUNDUS ARTIUM
Department of English
Ohio University
Athens, Ohio 45701
U.S.A.

$4.00 for one year

Name ____________________________________________

Address __________________________________________

City ______________________ State ____________ Zip ______
English Department  Ohio University

*Emphasis on 19th and 20th Century Literature and the most recent literary developments.*

Undergraduate and graduate courses

Interdisciplinary seminars

**Translation Workshop:** Translations of modern poets and writers into English. (Volumes of translations accepted for Ph. D. theses.)

For Information:
Director, Comparative Literature Program
English Department
Ohio University
Athens, Ohio 45701
A SPECIAL INVITATION

People interested in helping to promote the objectives of *Mundus Artium* are invited to become patrons. A patron subscription is $50.00 for one year or $100.00 for three years. The list of patrons will be published in future issues.

PATRONS

Martha O’Nan
Norman Siegel
Meno Lovenstein
A SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

MUNDUS ARTIUM will dedicate its summer issue 1970 to Latin American Fiction and the Arts.