Sculptor: William King
Title of piece: "Jimmy"
Medium: Direct plaster for aluminum
Height: 6 feet
Photography by Max Waldman
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MUNDUS ARTIUM

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LA TERRE ECRIT LA TERRE
(Poèmes pour un peintre)

I
La terre écrit la terre.
La terre chante,
et c’est pour la lune,
et c’est pour le vent qui ne sait où il va.
La terre est une main
qui crée la terre.
La terre est une voix
qui dit la fleur, le caillou, le sillon.
La terre écrit l’homme
et chante le poids du temps,
et pleure la saison oubliée.
La terre est le monument à la mémoire.

II
Sous les étoiles fermente le grain.
Sous le grain dorment les étoiles.
Il faut confondre fruit et soleil.
Il faut donner la nuit au jour
et le jour à la nuit.
Pourquoi les branches
n’ont-elles pas leurs racines
dans les nuages qui boudent?
Ecrire le mystère,
c’est le remplacer pour un autre mystère.
Peindre la nature,
c’est en changer le corps.
La pluie emporte l’homme
comme le pinceau emporte le peintre.
Les étoiles germeront.
EARTH WRITES THE EARTH
(Poems for a painter)

tr. WALLACE FOWLIE

I
Earth writes the earth.
The earth sings,
and it is for the moon,
and it is for the wind who does not know its course.
The earth is a hand
creating the earth.
The earth is a voice
speaking of the flower, the pebble, the furrow.
Earth writes man
and sings of the weight of time
and weeps over the forgotten season.
Earth is memory’s memorial.

II
Under the stars the grain rises.
Under the grain the stars sleep.
Fruit and sun must be joined.
Night must be given to day
and day to night.
Why don’t branches
have their roots
in sulking clouds?
To write of mystery
is to replace it with another mystery.
To paint nature
is to change its body.
Rain carries man away
as the brush carries the painter away.
The stars will spring up.
III
Quelle main a jeté ce paysage?
Quelle gorge de femme va prendre ce ciel?
La colline est humaine.
L’horizon vit au fond de l’œil.
La mer voudrait être un genou.
Un dieu a ramassé la terre
comme on ramasse les raisins.
Le soleil bâille de bonheur.
La main du peintre s’énervé:
il faut une autre planète,
il faut tant de nouveaux soupirs.

IV
Un esprit malicieux a découpé
le royaume en lanières
comme on découpe un cerf dans les bois.
Il est vrai que chaque province
est un gibier,
que chaque village est un insecte pâle.
Recommençons:
un esprit malicieux a découpé
la montagne pour le peintre.
Il est vrai que chaque province
est une toile
à l’honneur du peintre qui la dessine.

V
Chaque fois qu’un ver luisant
devient une île,
quelqu’un pleure:
c’est pour que l’arbre
consente à rester arbre;
c’est pour que la pierre
veuille bien demeurer pierre.
Il ne faut pas que la seule loi
soit celle de la métamorphose.
III
What hand cast out this landscape?
What woman’s breast will take this sky?
The hill is human.
The horizon lives in the depths of the eye.
The sea would wish to be a knee.
A god has picked up the earth
as you pick grapes.
The sun gapes with joy.
The painter’s hand itches:
he needs another planet,
he needs so many new sighs.

IV
A malicious spirit has carved
the kingdom into strips
as you butcher a deer in the woods.
It is true that each province
is game,
that each village is a pale insect.
Let us begin over:
a malicious spirit carved
the mountain for the painter.
It is true that each province
is a canvas
in honor of the painter who draws it.

V
Each time a firefly
becomes an island,
someone cries:
so that the tree
will agree to remain a tree;
so that the stone
will be willing to remain a stone.
It is not right that the one law
be that of metamorphosis.
Le réel respire,
le vrai est doux.
Mais il faut rêver,
pour que le vrai réel
devienne enfin le réel.

VI

Inachevé,
comme du sang qui n'ose pas se mettre en route.
Inaccompli,
comme le corps perdu au fond des transparences.
Indicible,
comme le mot qui a des plumes bleues.
Inconnu,
comme ce qui bouge entre l'aurore et l'aurore.
Imprévu,
comme le soleil caché derrière le soleil.
Inimaginable,
comme le visage au fond du visage.
Incréé,
afin qu'on le crée dans la douleur
et dans la joie.
Infini, infini, infini.

VII

La plaine est une erreur.
Le ciel s'en veut d'être ciel.
Parfois, l'espace songe au suicide.
Ah! si l'univers pouvait s'effacer,
ou devenir un néant plus adulte!
L'avenir comme un lait tourne,
et tourne, et tourne
jusqu'à se vomir.
Respirer devient une torture.
Entre la dérision et la grimace
qui nous dira
combien d'étoiles dorment en paix?
What is real breathes,  
what is true is sweet.  
But one must dream  
so that the true real  
will at last become real.

VI

Unfinished,  
like blood not daring to start on its course.  
Unaccomplished,  
like the body lost in the well of transparency.  
Unspeakable,  
like the word with blue feathers.  
Unknown,  
like that which moves between dawn and dawn.  
Unlooked for,  
like the sun hidden behind the sun.  
Unimaginable,  
like the face deep within the face.  
Uncreated,  
so that it will be created in pain  
and in joy.  
Endless, endless, endless.

VII

The plain is a mistake.  
The sky is mad at being sky.  
At times, space dreamed of suicide.  
Ah! if the universe could be blotted out,  
or become a more grown-up void!  
The future like milk, turns sour,  
and keeps on turning  
until it begins vomiting.  
Breathing becomes a torture.  
Between ridicule and grinning  
who can tell us  
how many stars sleep in peace?
VIII
Pour couronner.
Pour être multiples
au bord de la joie.
Pour enseigner au vertige
un vertige meilleur.
Pour provoquer
ceux qu'on ne provoque plus.
Pour être en accord
dans la plus folle déchirure.
Pour célébrer
en libérant,
pour libérer
en célébrant.

IX
Ma nébuleuse danse.
Je lui offre un horizon très jeune.
Je lui demande une forme.
Il se peut qu'elle veuille dormir.
Pourquoi refuse-t-elle de boire?
Les ciels sont inquiets.
Les terres sont lasses de courir.
Je ne songe pas à l'abattre.
J'accepte qu'elle gifle toutes mes îles.
Elle préfère l'exode,
pauvre nébuleuse.
Demain elle aura son premier visage.
VIII

To place a crown.
To be many
at the edge of joy.
To teach madness
a better madness.
To provoke
those who are no longer provoked.
To be in agreement
within the maddest heartbreak.
To celebrate
when one sets free,
in order to set free
at the time of celebrating.

IX

My galaxy is dancing.
I offer it a youthful horizon.
I ask it to show a form.
It may prefer to sleep.
Why does it refuse a drink?
The skies are restless.
The lands are weary of racing.
I do not dream of bringing it down.
I allow it to slap all my islands.
It, poor galaxy,
prefers an exodus.
Tomorrow it will have its first face.
Loi de la tache.
Besoin de la ligne.
Nécessité de l'alphabet.
Désir de la plume.
Rouge, noir, violet.
Mot, mot, mot qui déteste le mot.
Verbe à paupières.
Débris de la conscience.
Fragments de la raison.
Le monde est beau
si je consens à le définir,
mais j'en mourrai.
Law of the blemish.
Need of the line.
Necessity for the alphabet.
Desire for the pen.
Red, black, purple.
Word, word, word detesting the word.
Verb with eyelids.
Particles of conscience.
Shreds of reason.
The world is beautiful
if I agree to define it,
but I will die from doing that.
WHAT IS POETRY?

MARC ALYN

tr. from the French by R. Nybakken

1. An Art which Defies Definition

To write about poetry is an attempt to define with the vocabulary of criticism, or rather, of experience, a spiritual activity whose goal is precisely to denote the undefinable. One of the most irritating paradoxes of the poetic phenomenon is its irreducibility to a set, unchangeable definition which would be acceptable to everyone at all times. In fact, the poets of each generation modify the concept of poetry through the realization of their own particular vision. Poetry is a living art using living material: language. Poetry constantly recreates the whole body of tissues and cells which it uses. Contrary to the view of literary historians, the order of creation is not chronological: poetry begins with the last poem written, or rather with the one being written somewhere at this very moment. Poetry proceeds from creation to the created object, from the act of creation to its structural realization in a fixed form. The resonance of a poem reflects back to the whole mass of language, from the daily, humble word to the great rhythmic monuments halfway between library shelves and memory. It therefore becomes clear that if the new poem modifies poetry’s whole past (and gives it life), we must certainly become acquainted with the new vision which we have created since we are living at the same time as the poet.

At first glance, the nature of poetry appears rather simple: the poet is someone who uses words in a special way, making them sing or shout, in texts whose units (lines, stanzas, poems) seem to exist independently, isolated by the artifice of margins and the use of capital letters at the beginning of each line. But the odd thing about a poem is that the reader, if he reacts favorably, cannot keep from wondering
about its origins, that is, about the whole poetic process. This then gives rise to an infinite stream of questions concerning the object under consideration (the poem) whose dimensions are admittedly narrow, and the vastness of the mechanism necessary to bring it forth. For poetry is one of those problems which is not clarified by intellectual analysis, but which, on the contrary, becomes more complex the more one thinks about it. Just as the study of the “infinitely small” quickly reveals strange relationships between the microcosm and the macrocosm, between the infinitesimal and the cosmic, the slow revelation of the secrets of a particular poem brings the reader into contact with the totality of language, the real and symbolic meaning, the visible and invisible realms. The words of a great poem open the door to primordial language, to the Word of the Beginning, or at least to what remains of it in our contemporary hordes of languages devaluated by daily usage, indifferent between gratuitousness and grandeur. The dizziness inspired by such an outlook explains both the difficulty of defining poetry and the amazing fascination which it has always held for philosophers.

Here, indeed, is a verbal creation existing on various levels. It belongs to literature because of its building material—words: at the same time, the poem pursues different goals since it can easily do without the rational element required for the form of an essay or a novel. It is also an objet d'art which, like a statue or building, describes a certain form in space; it is a music born from the arrangement (or distortion) of the melodic resources of language in which silence, rests, duration count as much as, if not more than, sound, and a finished product which cannot endure the slightest addition or alteration without risking total destruction; however, the final work remains in permanent contact with the original creative act. Only a dialectic, in which the opposites are no longer viewed as enemies but rather as indispensable complements, can give an idea of the real nature of poetry which partakes of both sides of any possible definition. Imagination and reality, darkness and light, sensibility and intelligence, inception and completion merge inextricably within it, comparable to a symbolic carpet (in which, according to Henry James, every creator conceals the “image” of his own enigma), whose pattern can only be perceived by an eye capable of following simultaneously all the threads on both sides.

2. A Privileged Contact with Language

Because it is impossible to give the complex and yet obvious conception of poetry a comprehensive definition, we can approach it through a study of the material that makes it transparent (for poetic
energy can conceivably assume other forms): language. A poem is always the result and visible mark of a privileged contact between a mortal being—the poet—and language which lives from one century to the next. This fact is necessary for the understanding of the nature of poetic inspiration and the sense of fate of those men who maintain poetic creation in glory or exile. Everything takes place, in fact, as if the poet—the authentic poet—had been mysteriously chosen by language to become this work of art, this poem, this single line of verse in which there quivers an inexplicable tension. For language is not in itself poetic: if it were, hard work and patience would suffice to extract valuable nuggets from its flowing stream, at least occasionally. Language becomes poetic only for a few individuals at certain moments. It would seem that poetic potential distributed throughout language suddenly decides to coalesce and to take form in poetry through the intermediary of a living conductor. How else can we explain that uncontrollable rage which drives so many poets to struggle with the language which lives within them and from which they try, sometimes in vain, to free themselves, only to suffer even more intensely, if they are stricken by sterility or the incapacity to express themselves. The picture of these convulsive lives, so common in the history of poetry, is that of human beings grappling with the implacable angel of the Word, and this struggle is an embrace whose stakes are both ecstasy and horror, the desire to plunge ahead and a constantly thwarted attempt at flight. Almost like a physical prolongation of language, the poet reacts to any pulsation that in turn stimulates the creative process; hence his usual indifference to everything that does not pertain to his battle with words or the creation of an image, a creation that by its very intensity prevents him literally from seeing.

Thus for the poet, language is a living organism from which, in a sense, his own life is derived. We are familiar with Sartre’s statement, “The poet is beyond language, he sees words from the outside, as if he were not a part of the human condition and as if, in his attempt to approach men, he came up against language as a barrier.” If we replace the expression “beyond language” by “in language” (for how can words whose meaning is directed towards men be seen from the “outside,” if not from within?), the definition becomes rather revealing. The poet, immersed in language, is as separated from other men as a man asleep. Cut off from others by the whole impenetrable mass of signs, he strives to make his way toward the human through the wall which imprisons him. “Poets are men who refuse to use language,” says Sartre. And in fact, what differentiates the poet from the prose writer or even from the simple “speaker” is that he is manipulated by language.
which uses him as much as he uses it. The poet’s words, according to Gottfried Benn, are pure existence, lived language turned into action, life’s breath and not mere external extensions of man’s senses.

3. A Language Within Language

For the poet, language is thus a physical reality whose relations are as natural to him as those which unite individuals. But we are dealing with passionate relations which, like love, are not reducible to measurement or reason. Every poem is, in this sense, a love affair between the poet and language, a relationship in which the emotional and the physical, love and hate, ecstasy and disappointment merge or enter into a sharp polarity which does not stop with the “first blood” shed.

But there is more than one kind of language, and it is difficult to see the relationship between conversation and poetry, between the dialectic of the philosopher or professor and purified language which Rimbaud or Paul Eluard has taken back to its “first youth.” “With a caress I make you shine in all your brilliance,” whispers Eluard in all simplicity, and we immediately grasp that, although this line is addressed to a specific woman, it also contains a theory of poetry. Is it not, in fact, the whole flesh of language which, being caressed, begins to gleam in the course of its metamorphosis into poetry? “Poet, washer of words,” writes Robert Sabatier, emphasizing this same mysterious concept of rebuilding, of cleaning through beauty the words of our old human language, which the poet, as if by a miracle, brings back to its original innocence, to a state of happy Beginning. Poets, working outside of the rules of logic, create and put together verbal combinations which have the ability to rejuvenate language, to give it more beauty, while at the same time revealing a different state of things which until then was hidden. The moralist Joubert recognized in the result of the poetic process, which he called the sudden “phosphorescence” of words, one of its major properties: “suddenly ordinary words become beautiful, worn-out words recover their original freshness, dark words become illuminated,” he wrote, marveling that an unlimited meaning could be attached to a brief sound. And long before Joubert, the troubadour, Raimbaut d’Orange, spoke of his art in terms borrowed from the vocabulary of metal workers, referring to the “filing down” of words in order to rid them of the “rust” of everyday usage. Washing, filing down, scraping words, are different ways of expressing the fact that the effort of the poet is contrary to ordinary practice. The finished and successful work of art has enriched and transformed language.
Considered as a whole in relationship to the totality of non-poetic uses of language (which are by far the most numerous, starting with language-as-means-of-communication to the written language which is often only a postponed dialogue) poetry presents two contradictory aspects: it uses everyday language, but forms a completely different word field, distinct in form as well as in meaning, a kind of language within language. Poets speak differently from other men (also from other writers) and they speak about other things ("I am a man who thinks of other things," admitted Victor Hugo, as if terrified before the vast extent of the inexpressible regions of the mind). Through rhythm, image, tone, alternation of sound and silence, punctuation marks, and the width of the margin, poetic writing sets words in a new strange relationship. All of a sudden, a familiar word explodes with unexpected power in a new and naked context. In Apollinaire, a simple shift from masculine to feminine gender is enough to conjure up the sonority, color and smells of a whole season:

\[ \text{J'ai cueilli ce brin de bruyère} \\
\text{L'automne est morte souviens t'en} \\
\text{Nous ne nous verrons plus sur terre...} \]

Mallarmé's use of the word "massive" to describe night (as André Pieyre de Mandiargues points out in his *Deuxième belvédère*) suggests an essential feature of darkness—its uninterrupted thickness—which seems to have always existed but which, in fact, has become perceptible to us only because of the poet's choice of this adjective. Thus, the usual associations of words as they appear in poetry change our sensibility as well as the exterior world.

It was Baudelaire who, in a letter written in 1869, in which he takes up the defense of the sonnet, remarked, "Have you ever noticed that the part of the sky seen through a basement window, or between two chimneys, two rocks or through an arcade, gives a more profound idea of infinity than a great panorama seen from a mountain top?" In the same way, the world discovered through memory provoked by a poem (and it is the essence of poetry in certain moments of contemplation, to make us remember) takes on a new value. There are words which help us see, others which prevent us from seeing.

Giving new life to things by naming them is one of the primordial tasks of the poet who, according to Claudel, should be the "bookkeeper of creation," that is to say, the person who has been entrusted with preserving the world in which he lives and thinks in a state of order, and who is responsible for the fate of all things around him: beings, plants, animals, minerals, ideas, words. Philippe Jacottet expressed this aspect of the poet's effort very well in his collection of poems entitled
L’Ignorant (the title is symbolic: it is the poet who turns ignorance and poverty of the mind into a means of knowledge): 

The proper work of eyes growing weaker by the hour 
is not to dream nor to form tears
but to keep watch like a shepherd and to call out to
everything which runs the risk of being lost if he dozes off... 

Because things are always looked at with an unfailing vigilance and total gratuitousness (the poet will always refuse to see a forest as a supply of firewood), they acquire in the poem a different nature, both simpler and more complex. Along the same lines, language—which can be considered an invisible duplication of the universe—undergoes the same transformation as the object it describes. The chosen word, shaped and filtered before being put down, also begins to exist more forcefully, revealing all its meanings in the single, closed unit of a verse. Minds which are hostile or indifferent to poetry become indignant or surprised when confronted with language which appears to deny the commonly accepted meanings and, consequently, leaves all logical reasoning defenseless; they try either escape or insult according to their individual temperament. Ordinary language, in fact, offers a reassuring image of the world, an exact reflection of solid everyday reality without monsters, angels, drama or magic. It presents a rather peaceful conglomeration of men and cities, customs and comfortable objects revolving around the “ego” at the center of the universe: the sun king, household gods. On the other hand, poetic language does not refer back to the conventional, it does not rely on logical material: it baffles, distorts words as it does the mind, requires that the reader surrender to silence and tone. Born from the encounter between a man who, like everyone else, is menaced by time, and the eternal values of creation, the poem (a kind of bridge, thanks to language, which has a foot in both realms, connecting the temporal with the permanent) does not address itself to man’s social side, but to the profound and naked part in ourselves which harbors a yearning for the absolute. Is it then surprising that the word put to work should produce a strange, baffling sound?

4. “The Only Spiritual Task”

“Poetry,” writes Mallarmé, “expresses through language—reduced to its essential rhythm—the multiple, mysterious aspects of our existence.” It constitutes, he added, “the only spiritual task.” Such an importance attached to an art which, in the eyes of many of our con-
temporaries, is hardly more than a game (the poet playing with words the way a kitten plays with a cork) is somewhat surprising. The term poetry has always included contradictory notions, since verse lends itself to incongruous language uses resulting from conceptual qualities of different poets. Between a witty, worldly, superficial, elegant "madrigal" by one of Marot’s disciples and a poem of Maurice Scève, there is truly a vast difference. The former limits himself to the embellishment of the most fleeting exterior reality, having an immediate, selfish goal in mind: to seduce a woman or attract the attention of a rich, influential person; the latter bears witness to the wandering of a mind through a forest of symbols toward a constantly-renewed absolute, which is probably never reached, but is ever-present in the language of desire and the peril of the quest. In our comparison, it is obvious that of the two, Scève alone is a poet, not because of his personal genius, but, more importantly, because he does not use verse for purposes foreign to poetry. Poetry is no more than one literary form among many (only shorter, more harmonious and impressive) if, like prose, it only describes instead of striving for the expression of the ineffable. Such a distinction between poetry-as-spiritual-adventure and versification—prose put into rhythmic verse sequences—deserves to be emphasized even though it has become an obvious fact over the past century; too many people today still confuse the two sides of the coin which are separated by the impenetrability of language. If poetry were only a nice reformulation of sentiments accepted by all as poetic (moonlight, springtime and other joyeuses épiceries), using elevated language which scans according to the laws of a prosody familiar to all since childhood, it would, in fact, be only an antiquated, charming, harmless and completely trivial game. However, we are talking about something entirely different. Language, which we use every day for ordinary contact and routine communication, is, at its height, the movement of the word: parts of the spirit, or perhaps the Spirit itself, which becomes embodied in written signs. He is a poet who, both by vocation and by effort, grapples with language at its highest point and thus penetrates into this infinite kingdom of the mind which Hegel defined as the place and aim of poetry. Both visible and invisible, the Word is the only path giving man access to everything which is not himself, and which he cannot apprehend directly nor even imagine with his mere intelligence and for which, nevertheless, he experiences a terrible, unappeasable hunger:

If I have a desire, it is only
For the earth and stones.
Din! Dinn! Dinn! Dinn! Let’s eat air
Rock, coal, iron... (Rimbaud)
Therefore, we can pick out the motives of those poets, philosophers or readers who place poetry high above all other human activities: we are dealing with the very functioning of the human mind created through language in its direct relationship with the absolute. This is probably close to the mystical ecstasy whose various stages great religious minds have attempted to depict—very unsatisfactorily, it must be said. But in such an area, we must not give in to the "demon of analogy." For the mystic, the absolute has a meaning and a Name; while the supernatural, obscurely perceived by the poet, most often remains formless and rather frightening. The mystic falls silent precisely at that point where the poet begins to speak, turned in the direction of men. Rimbaud’s "Seer," we must admit, has something of the naughty boy who prefers to force his way into the beyond in order to steal a little of what is given to those who knock politely at the door. It is nonetheless true that the poet, outside of all dogma, is engaged in a great spiritual struggle which leaves its imprint on his work and for which he knows he will have to pay the price in his personal destiny, risking madness (Hölderlin, Nerval) and death. This is why Paul Valéry is quite justified in writing: "I believe that the essence of Poetry is, according to different outlooks of human beings, either completely useless or extremely important: that brings it closer to God."

5. "Crystallized Enthusiasm"

Thus the poet, both spiritual adventurer and artist, is someone for whom language and the invisible spirit of things exist and count more than the so-called real world. A man of extremes, of contrasts, he aspires to unify what logical thought disperses. For him, creation is like a shattered mirror, a myriad of fragments which he must bring together through language, image and song. He alone refuses to choose between black and white, true and false, yes and no, for he looks upon choice as a true mutilation of the thing, and of existence. In the same motion he wishes to express the two sides, outer and inner, the black hidden at the center of the white, the praise beginning to take form in the very heart of rebellion, the god imprisoned within the flesh. His art consists of the transformation of an act into an object (a complex structure of sounds and meaning) capable of restoring at all times the resonance of the initial creative act.

Vigny has offered a definition of poetry which is still partially valid. "Poetry," he tells us, "is crystallized enthusiasm." The concept of crystallization of a mental state is, in fact, one of the essential processes of poetic creation viewed as the transformation of the living act into something hard, translucent, definitive. The poetry of Racine,
Vigny himself, and Valéry have this mineral quality whose polish makes one forget the cold which the reader’s mind quickly warms to human temperature. Made to endure, the poem thus takes on a protective outside shell against time: a rock, harmonious in shape and weight which would contain a concentration of existence, emotion and personal inspiration. What limits Vigny’s definition is the term “enthusiasm,” an inappropriate word, which is simply the Romantic translation of the expression “sacred frenzy,” dear to our most ancient poets. Today, the idea of enthusiasm seems to contain the quality of excessive exaltation, since the spiritual élan which animates the poet can easily lose the ordinary dynamism connected with it. But what name can we give to that strange vacuum of the soul which infinity fills, to that call which also rejects, that negation which ends in gratitude? The greatest poems seem to be traps in which something eternal was caught and which, in turn, captures the reader’s mind.

6. The Poem in Space

If we examine the form of a poem chosen at random from a collection of poetry, we are struck most of all by its closed visual appearance: a finite structure solidly fortified against the exterior. Whereas in a prose work (essay or novel) a page is only the continuation of the preceding one and a clue to the following, the page on which poetry is written appears isolated, containing within itself its source and end. The printed text covers only one part of the available paper. Surrounded on all sides by margins like an island in the sea, often furrowed by canals which are the intervals between stanzas, the poem demands attention by its manner of incompletely occupying the page while at the same time adorning it more harmoniously. A certain plastic balance between the words and the margin is noticeable at first glance, like an illuminated object in a dark room. If the poem has a fixed or regular form, the fairly equal length of each line creates a still more perfect relationship between the right and left margins. In the case of free verse, more common today, the poet, conscious of problems of visual design, is careful to obtain an analogous visual result: the use of typographic layout for the visual imitation of something (for example the calligrammes of Apollinaire or Tristan Tzara), or else the attempts which could be called cosmic, to make the words of the poem follow one another in a rhythm related to the meaning (Mallarmé, Michel Butor). The absence of punctuation, paradoxically, plays the same role as that formerly assigned to rhyme: the line of verse which does not end with a comma or period simply extends unexpectedly into the white of the margin as is the case with repeated rhyme sonorities.
Printed poetry has another peculiar feature: all the lines generally begin with a capital letter which makes each line a beginning and a unit, the vertical alignment of the whole forming on the left-hand side of the text a sharp, impressive line which increases the power of the margins:

Nous marcherons ainsi, ne laissant que notre ombre
Sur cette terre ingrate où les morts ont passé;
Nous nous parlerons d’eux à l’heure où tout est sombre,
Où tu te plais à suivre un chemin effacé,
A rêver, appuyée aux branches incertaines,
Pleurant comme Diane au bord de ses fontaines,
Ton amour taciturne et toujours menacé. (Vigny)

In the rigid “mineral” poem, the capital letter is like a ship’s bow cutting through a white surface; elsewhere, in free verse or “verset,” the capital letter sets the whole sequence of words in motion, like a locomotive (in Cendras’ Prose du Transsibérien) pulling boxcars overloaded with life, meaning, drama:

“Froissis de femmes
Et le sifflement de la vapeur
Et le bruit éternel des roues en folie dans les ornières du ciel
Les vitres sont givrées
Pas de nature!
Et derrière, les plaines sibériennes le ciel bas et les grandes ombres des Taciturnes qui montent et qui descendent...”

With respect to the layout of the poem on the page, we may speak of a music for the eye (similar in a sense to Paul Claudel’s lovely title, “The Eye is Listening”), resulting from the union of typographical and spatial elements, the latter being no less important than the words. This prefiguration of the contents by the vehicle is characteristic of poetry. It is necessary to read at least several lines of a prose work in order to identify the genre (except in the case of a play where the list of characters is immediately noticed—but plays are not primarily intended to be read). The poem, on the other hand, stands forth as a poem solely by its exterior presentation.

7. Inside the Poem

Let us now make our way into the poem, for here, as in all important things, the spectacle is within, according to that mysterious expression of travelers. Just as the exterior features of poetry clearly distinguish it from prose, the inner unfolding of the poem does not resemble the movement of literary writing. In the case of a novelist, for
example, the word does not exist for itself nor by itself: it is a tiny block in the cemented chain of commas and indicators in the sentence, it is one component of a meaning which is gradually revealed in the work. Prose shows, describes, suggests, explains: it tells; poetry bursts forth with all the force of an experienced enigma: it simply is. The former presents, in an orderly way, information designed to persuade or perhaps to move the reader; the latter creates a new zone of existence for the sensibility with the aid of a limited number of words, each of which gives it new meaning.

Through incantation, all the words in a line of poetry, taken together, form a new word: “The verse, composed of several words, makes a complete, new word, strange to the language and so to speak, spell-binding.” (Mallarmé). The word “complete” contains within itself all the meanings and the tone qualities of the terms used, with the sound and sense of the original verbal unit recreated in the verse. Hence, poetry is expressive on all levels of its form: word by word, line by line, stanza by stanza, creating a general meaning which does not invalidate the individual meanings of the smaller units. And so the poem, viewed in all its complexity, contains several layers of expression: emotion, ideas, timeless words and the poet’s personal vibrations. Even if the poet’s personality tries to withdraw from his work, something of himself will always slip into his words. The poem is a closely-meshed net of meanings in which reason and dreams, effort and talent, culture and instinct, will and innocence are set in motion simultaneously for the purpose of reaching, through words, a kind of reduction of the universe, or at least a whole, non-mutilated fragment of it, in all its contrasts. It is thus by an excess of meaning and not by mental confusion that the poetic object eludes the grasp of so many minds accustomed to deciphering a developing thought vertically rather than embracing, as in the case of poetry, different directions at the same time.

In general, the prose writer is concerned with the immediate properties of words: they need only carry meaning, fit correctly into the construction of the sentence and, if we are dealing with a stylist, meet certain criteria of harmony. The poet, on the other hand (except in automatic writing), lingers over each word in order to press out all the essence. In a novel the word “rock,” for instance, would be an indication of matter, an element in a more important whole—a landscape, a house; in a poem, however, the same word seems to isolate itself and contain the whole mineral kingdom, its texture, its weight, its feeling of cold or warmth: it is the rock which suddenly takes form in the middle of the line, worn smooth by the rubbing of time but still preserving its original connotations. This important difference reflects two
opposing viewpoints. The novelist's time is historical and his space imitates that of the concrete world in which we live. The poet is naturally interested in primary truths, fundamental notions and thus he escapes, partially, from time. His stone does not have a useful purpose, if not to appear at this or that point of the poem he is writing. His memory gathers into the word all the stones encountered, trampled upon, or collected throughout the years; but the mineral concentration obtained is not just the result of real experience: a man of words, the poet is also aware of the use which other poets before him have made of the stone, and this image living in books has no less of an existence for him than the stone he holds in his hand. Simultaneously, it is stone and word: the stone is the gravel which the waves deposit on the beach and the pebble with which the Greek orator sharpened his eloquence; it is also the basic mineral that is responsible for established formulations: a poem, a proverb have for the poet the same characteristics—worn or polished, smooth or rough—as a fragment of an actual rock. Then, words associated in complex games of analogies create insecurity and fear. This rock I see everywhere in nature and language, I feel its presence within me, at the center of my flesh, through the bones which are like the palpable image of death paralleling life. How strange to discover that we contain within us our end and that it represents the most durable part of us. Thus, the whole mineral realm becomes the symbol of an eternal death captured in the very movement of existence. Going even farther, the poet's mind takes a census of things which enclose a hard and lasting substance, like bones in creatures of flesh. The pit of a fruit can germinate and recreate the whole tree; one needs only to bury it in the earth. From then on, the idea of eternal death is joined by that of life eternally recreated proceeding from the solid element which seemed the height of sterility.

In this way, by an impassioned questioning of all the possibilities of language (from the nearest to the most distant), the poem throws bridges between the possible and the marvelous. Up to the edge of nothingness, poetry finds its reason for being; the darkest of poems—if it is great—bears witness, in the end, to beauty which, for an artist, remains the highest good. Such, perhaps, is the meaning of Achim von Arnim's admirable comparison: "Like the jubilation of spring, poems..."
Robert Creeley

from PIECES

How that fact of
seeing someone you love away
from you in time will
disappear in time, too.

Here is all there is,
but there seems so
insistently across the way.

Heal it, be
patient with
it — be quiet.

Across the
table,
years.

HERE
Past time — those
memories opened
places and minds,
things of such reassurance —

now the twist,
and what was a road
turns to a circle
with nothing behind.
I didn’t know what I could do.
I have never known it
but in doing found it
as best I could.

Here I am still,
waiting for the discovery.
What morning, what way now,
will be its token.

They all walk by
on the beach,
large, or little,
crippled, on the face
of the earth.

The wind holds
my leg like
a warm hand.
Paulo Bonfim

A TERRE

Da semente noturna a terra cresce.
Cresce, para depois dormir o sono dos cristais
E delirar pássaros pousados
Na canção de seus bracos de argila.
Brota de um riso vermelho,
Sulcada de nuvens suicidas,
Pisada pelo passo
Dos que ofereceram seus olhos
Para que as violetas pudessem nascer.
Da semente da noite a terra cresce.
Vem da alma do tempo,
Molhada de estrelas,
Com vento nos cabelos
E essências verdes que habitará"o
A infância do dia.
Surge do longe,
Sonhada antes do sonho.
Noturna com sua coroa de luas,
Fecunda com sua túnica de primaveras,
Solitária como a água que veio da montanha
Trazendo a semente dos dias remotos.
A terra é a carne.

Renasceremos.
From nocturnal seed earth grows
Grows only to fall into crystal sleep
And dream of birds perching
In the song of its arms of clay.
It breaks into crimson laughter,
Furrowed by stifling clouds,
Trodden over by footsteps
Of those who offer eyes
That violets may bloom.
From nocturnal seed earth grows.
It comes from the soul of time.
Star-damp,
Wind in its hair,
Green effluvia filling
The break of dawn.
It rises from a distance
As primordial dream.
Nocturnal in its crown of moons,
Fertile in its spring tunic,
Lonely as water from the mountain
Carrying the seed of remote days.
Earth is flesh.
We shall be reborn.
DEZ

Junto á fonte,
O infinito.
Na palma da estrêla
Acende-se outra estrêla.
Em nossos bracos, dez pontas se iluminam;
Caminhamos e nosso tacto nos transmite
O formato de outros rostos,
Tocamos outras côres,
Sentimos outros perfumes
E percebemos na treva a existência
De harmonias desconhecidas.
Na fonte mergulhamos nossas mãos.
Somos tocados pela murmurio.
Amanhecemos.
Near the fountain, 
The infinite. 
In the radius of a star 
Another star comes to life, 
In our arms ten points light up; 
Walking our senses transmit 
Profiles of other faces, 
We touch other colors, 
Smell other scents 
In darkness perceive existing 
Unknown harmonies. 
We dip our hands in the fountain. 
We are touched by the murmur. 
As dawn we waken.
EIN HUMANES EXPERIMENT

ODER DIE SCHMERZEN SIND ZUMUTBAR

SIEGFRIED LENZ

Wir sind noch nicht einmal mit der Stubenreinigung fertig, wir beiden von der Vernehmung, da erscheint sein Adjutant. Der Adjutant lässt sich von Erich Meldung machen, hört genau zu, viel genauer und sorgenvoller als sonst, mustert uns mit skeptischer Neugierde, auch mit Misstrauen, gibt sich mit unserer Vorderansicht nicht zufrieden und umrundet uns, sehr langsam umrundet er uns und prüft uns auch von hinten, so dass Erich und mir bald klar ist: Das wird kein gewöhnlicher Tag. Solange hat sich sein Adjutant noch nie mit uns beschäftigt.

Die langsamen Bewegungen, die Aufmerksamkeit, das spickende Misstrauen sagen uns gleich: Der hat was auf dem Herzen, und dass wir uns nicht täuschen, beweist er uns durch die Art, wie er unser Werkzeug durchmustert, auf das wir mitunter zurückgreifen müssen: Schweigend, mit gesenktem Gesicht geht er zum Streckbrett hinüber, betrachtet nachdenklich Wippe und Nagelbank, begrüsst stumm Schläuche, Stricke und elektrische Kabel, schenkt auch den Klemmen und Ledergürteln sein Interesse, die sich in einwandfreier Disziplin anbieten. Der Adjutant sagt kein einziges Wort, er nickt nicht einmal. Steif bewegt er sich, zögernd, er ist bedrückt. Wir erwarten etwas von ihm, erwarten sogar etwas Bestimmtes: Nennen wir es ruhig Anerkennung; die hat Erich durchaus verdient für den erfolgreichen Bügeltisch, den er selbst entwickelt hat. Aber sein Adjutant mustert und prüft nur alles, wobei er sich augenscheinlich vor Berührungen hütet, und dann geht er wieder stumm hinaus.
We have not even finished cleaning the room—we two from the interrogation—when his adjutant walks in. The adjutant allows Erich to introduce him. He listens intently to the introduction, much more sharply and meticulously than usual; he examines us with skeptical curiosity—also with mistrust—he seems dissatisfied with the view from the front and begins to circle us. He does this very slowly and scrutinizes us from behind so that Erich and I are very soon aware: this is not going to be any ordinary day. Until today his adjutant has scarcely even looked at us.

The slowness of his movements, his attentiveness, his immaculate mistrust let us know immediately: there is something on his mind, and just so that we are not taken in, he corroborates our feelings by the way he inspects our tools—(we are forced to have recourse to them periodically)—: without saying a word and with bowed head, he walks over to the rack, casually looks at both whip and bed of nails, silently greets the hoses, binding cords and electric cable and also glances at the clamps and leather belts which lie there in incontestable perfection. The adjutant says nothing; he does not even nod. He moves stiffly, hesitantly,—there is something wrong. We stand there expecting him to do something; in fact we are expecting something specific: let us call it recognition; Erich has certainly earned it for single-handedly developing the successful ironing-table. But his adjutant just inspects and tests everything, apparently trying to avoid contact, and then, without a word, he leaves.
Wir blicken uns an, lösen uns aus der Spannung und wollen gerade mit der Deutung des Besuchs beginnen, als sein Stabschef erscheint. Auch der Stabschef lässt sich von Erich Meldung machen; auch der Stabschef betrachtet uns genauer und sorgenvoller als sonst, geht um uns herum, lässt sich hinten erklären, was wir ihm vorne schuldig bleiben; zuletzt befehlt er uns, die Hände zu heben. Der Stabschef dreht die Innenflächen nach oben, er beginnt zu lesen. Die Lektüre gibt die nötigen Auskünfte, er lächelt vorsichtig, sein Misstrauen scheint teilweise widerlegt. Der Stabschef hat unsere Hände mit Gewinn gelesen. Er drückt sie sacht nach unten und sieht sich um, vielleicht wird er ein anerkennendes Wort für den Bügeltisch übrig haben, den Erich entwickelt hat. Der Stabschef wendet sich unentschlossen unserem Werkzeug zu, als der Bursche des Oberbefehlshabers mit zwei Wolledecken, einer Flasche Kognak und Zigaretten erscheint. Der Bursche zwinkert uns zu, für sein Zwinkern ist er bekannt. Achtsam legt er die Wolledecken auf das Streckbrett, stellt den Kognak auf die Wippe, legt die Zigaretten gut sichtbar daneben. Erich sieht ihn verwirrt an, und man weiß, was er fragen möchte, aber nicht zu fragen wagt. Der Bursche ordnet seine Uniform und stellt sich so neben der Tür auf, dass man vor lauter Erwartung auch nur noch die Tür anstarrt, es bleibt einem nichts anderes übrig.

Wir blicken auf die Tür. Der Stabschef hat, im Gegensatz zum Adjutanten, unser Werkzeug flüchtig, vielleicht gedankenlos betastet; jetzt kommt er näher und blickt ebenfalls auf die Tür. Uns braucht keiner mehr zu sagen, mit wessen Besuch wir zu rechnen haben. Auf einmal seufzt der Stabschef; auch wenn es unwahrscheinlich klingt: er seufzt und zuckt die Achseln und gibt Erich durch eine Geste zu verstehen, dass er etwas bedrückt. Es ist ihm anzusehen, dass er Erich mit seiner Sorge bekannt machen möchte, aber einstweilen noch nach dem Ton sucht, indem das geschehen könnte. Der Stabschef sucht nach einer angemessenen Form des Anvertrauens. Er spürt Widerstände. Dann sagt er, was wir schon wissen; nach einem Seitenblick auf den Burschen des Oberbefehlshabers sagt er, dass der Oberbefehlshaber selbst hier gleich erscheinen wird, wir möchten uns darauf vorbereiten. Wir starren auf die Tür: der Oberbefehlshaber ist noch nie bei uns im Vernehmungszimmer gewesen, er ist uns nur aus Zeitungen und Wochenschauen bekannt, allerdings so gut, dass wir ihn mühelos wiedererkennen können. Sein Stabschef nickt bedenklich. Er gibt uns bekannt, dass der Oberbefehlshaber in besonderer Angelegenheit erscheinen werde: zu Hause, also ziemlich weit weg, sagt der Stabschef, habe man sich erregt über die Mittel, die bei der Vernehmung von Gefangenen angewendet werden. Es herrscht dort hinten sogar Empörung, sagt der
We look at each other, let the tension relax, and are just about to interpret the visit when his chief of staff walks in. The chief of staff lets Erich introduce him too; and he too looks at us more exactly and conscientiously than usual. He walks round us, and then from behind he explains to us what we are guilty of from the front according to his inspection. Lastly he orders us to show him our hands. The chief of staff turns our hands palm up and begins to read. His reading provides the information necessary. He smiles carefully. His mistrust seems partially repudiated. Reading our hands has been profitable for the chief of staff. He flicks them down again and looks around. Perhaps he will have a kind word for the ironing-table that Erich has developed. The chief of staff is just turning towards our tools, when the commander-in-chief’s orderly appears with two woolen blankets, a bottle of cognac and some cigarettes. The orderly winks at us—he is famous for his winking. With extreme caution he places the blankets on the rack, puts the bottle of cognac on the strappado and lays the cigarettes, within good seeing distance, next to it. Erich looks at him confused, and you know what he would like to ask but dares not. The orderly smooths his uniform and stands at attention next to the door. You are so tense with anticipation that the only thing you can do is stare at the door—there is no choice.

We are looking at the door. In contrast to the adjutant, the chief of staff has been fingering our tools here and there, perhaps without thinking. Now he approaches us and watches the door as well. No one has to tell us anymore whose visit we have to reckon with.

Suddenly, the chief of staff sighs—even though it sounds unlikely—he sighs and shrugs his shoulders—letting Erich know that he is worried about something. You can tell that he wants to tell Erich about what is troubling him but that he still is looking for a way to do it. The chief of staff is looking for a suitable way of becoming confiding. He senses obstacles. Then he says what we all know already: after a quick glance at the commander-in-chief’s orderly he says that the commander-in-chief himself is going to appear here any moment and adds that we should prepare ourselves. We all stare at the door: the commander-in-chief has never been inside the interrogation room before. We know him only from the papers and television—although we know him so well that we would recognize him immediately. His chief of staff nods. He is thinking. He informs us that the commander-in-chief is coming on special business: at home, quite far away from here, it is being said that people are concerned about the tactics employed in the interrogation of prisoners. People are even expressing
Stabschef. Es werden, sagt der Stabschef, Unterschriften gesammelt, mit denen gegen die Methoden der Gefangenenvernehmung demnächst protestiert werden wird. Der Stabschef schweigt einen Augenblick, sein Schweigen enthält keinen Vorwurf, er betrachtet von nahe seinen Handrücken. Dann spricht er leise auf seinen Handrücken hinab. Er sagt: der Oberbefehlshaber will alle Kritiker zu Hause selbst widerlegen, er will sie persönlich ins Unrecht setzen: Zum Beweis, dass die Mittel, die bei der Gefangenenvernehmung angewandt werden, erträglich und zumutbar sind, wird er hier erscheinen und, so sagt der Stabschef, diese Mittel an sich selbst ausprobieren lassen. Der Oberbefehlshaber will sich zur Probe unter normalen Bedingungen vernehmen lassen und damit allen beweisen dass die Vernehmungen erforderlich und zu erdulden sind. Es soll so etwas wie ein Beispiel werden, sagt der Stabschef, ein humanes Experiment.


Plötzlich reisst der Bursche die Tür auf, er muss den Schritt seines Herrn früher hören können als andere. Starr steht er da und hält die Tür auf; auch wir stehen starr da, der Stabschef salutiert. Der Oberbefehlshaber geht, wie man ihn in der Wochenschau hat gehen sehen, er gleicht den Fotografien, die die Zeitungen taglich von ihm veröffentlichen. Müde kommt er herein, lustlos, ein kleiner, ausgezehrter Mann. Sein Gesicht ist fleckig, die dunklen Augen liegen tie£. Mit seinen Niederlagen hat er sich die Sympathien der Opposition erworben, durch seine Siege hat er schon zu Lebzeiten das Lesebuch erreicht. Wie eng sein Brustkasten ist! Die Schultern sind schmal, der Hals sehig, unter dem Uniformhemd kann man die Nackenwirbel erkennen. Zerstreut hebt er eine kleine, trockene Hand grüssend an die Mütze. Er geht quer durch das Vernehmungszimmer, wendet sich ruckhaft um, blickt gleichgültig auf seinen Adjutanten und einen Mann in Zivil, die ihm gefolgt sind. Der Oberbefehlshaber ist nur mit Khakhem und Tuchhose bekleidet, er trägt leichte Stoffschuhe und einen einzigen, ins Gelbliche spie-
indignation about it, the chief of staff says. The chief of staff says that even signatures are being collected to be used as a protest against the methods of interrogating prisoners. The chief of staff is silent for a moment. His silence contains no reproach. He carefully observes the back of his hand. Then he starts to talk softly as if to his hands. He says: the commander-in-chief wishes to confute these critics at home; he wishes to show all of them that their comments are not true. As proof that the methods employed in the interrogation of prisoners are permissible and may be presumed to be acceptable and bearable he will come here and, so the chief of staff says, allow these same methods to be used on himself. The commander-in-chief wishes to let himself be interrogated under conditions which are perfectly normal to prove that the interrogations are both necessary and can be withstood. It is to be, so to speak, an example, the chief of staff says,—a humane experiment.

He slowly wanders over to the strappado, lifts up the bottle of cognac, reads the label, and he can’t complain about the brand. He gives Erich orders to remove shovels and brooms. He strokes the blankets that the orderly has brought in. It is of no interest to him whether we might have something to say about the commander-in-chief’s plan. While Erich is locking the brooms and shovels in a locker, you can see black beads of sweat below his shoulders and I notice that his hands are trembling. Erich is continually licking his thumb and, as always when he is excited, polishing it against his hip, and his heavy, cube-shaped head is beginning slowly and rhythmically to nod.

Suddenly, the orderly whips open the door; he must be able to hear his master’s steps sooner than anyone else. He stands there motionless holding the door open; we stand there rigid as well, and the chief of staff salutes. The commander-in-chief walks exactly like you see him walk on television. He is perfectly the same as his likeness in the pictures that we see daily in the papers. He comes in; weary, a wasted little man. His face is spotted and his dark eyes deep set. With his defeats he has won the sympathy of the opposition, and his victories have earned him, while still alive, a place in history books. How hollow his chest is! His shoulders are narrow, his neck sinewy. You can see his spinal column through his uniform shirt. Absent-mindedly he lifts a small dry hand to his cap in greeting. He walks straight across the interrogation room, stops suddenly, and turns round to look at his adjutant and a man in plain clothes who have followed him. The commander-in-chief is wearing only a khaki shirt and a pair of lightweight trousers. He is wearing lightweight fabric
lenden Orden. Er nimmt die Mütze ab. Er schliesst die Augen; dann wendet er sich an Erich und möchte von ihm wissen, ob er unterrichtet und bereit ist.

Erich lächelt gequält, er weiss etwas und weiss nichts, er hat da etwas gehört, was er nicht glauben kann, denn das, was man von ihm verlangt, könnte man vielleicht von andern verlangen und so weiter. Erich erklärt, dass er der Aufgabe nicht gewachsen ist. Erich gibt sich Mühe, hilflos zu erscheinen, überfordert, ungeeignet. Erich bekennt, dass er nicht der Mann sei, um eine Probe-Vernehmung durchzuführen, noch dazu bei seinem eigenen Oberbefehlshaber. Er sehe den Grund ein, sagt Erich, das schon, aber in diesem Fall bringe er auch nicht mehr fertig.


Der Oberbefehlshaber nickt, er kann diese erhebliche Verlegenheit einsehen, und er entscheidet: die Vernehmung soll der Umgruppierung der Streitkräfte im westlichen Bergland gelten. Erich tritt einen Schritt zurück, einen Schritt, der Ratlosigkeit und Weigerung ausdrücken soll, worauf der Stabschef die Worte des Oberbefehlshabers langsam wiederholt. Fangt endlich an, sagt der Adjutant; der Zivilist sagt nichts.

Auf einmal blickt Erich den Oberbefehlshaber an, lange, viel zu lange, wie mir scheint, sie prüfen, sie erkunden einander mit Blicken, und dann gibt Erich mir einen Wink, und ich weiss, was der Wink bedeutet: ich biete dem Oberbefehlshaber eine Zigarette an und gebe ihm Feuer. Der Oberbefehlshaber lächelt nicht, er raucht hastig, als ob er Zigaretten lange entbehrt hätte. Erich bittet den Oberbefehlshaber gehorsamst, sich auf einen ganz gewöhnlichen Stuhl setzen zu wollen. Dieser Aufforderung wird nicht entsprochen, weil sie nicht glaubhaft klingt, und Erich muss die Aufforderung wiederholen, schlichter, nachdrücklicher. Er sagt einfach: Setzen Sie sich hier hin. Der
shoes and a medal which glints slightly of yellow. He takes off his
cap. He closes his eyes; then he turns to Erich and asks if he has been
told and is prepared.

Erich smiles as if he is in pain. He knows a little from here and
there,—from what he has been told—; he does not know a thing;—
what he has heard he cannot believe, because what he has been asked
to do should perhaps be done by someone else, etc., etc. Erich says
that he is not capable of doing the job,—Erich takes care to seem help­
less, inadequate, unsuitable. Erich confesses that he is not the man to
conduct an experimental interrogation—and on top of that on his own
commander-in-chief. He could see the reason, Erich says, he might
be able to see the reason, but in this case he cannot even do that.

The commander-in-chief has his orderly pour him a glass of
cognac, drinks it, opens his shirt across his chest, and stands there in
silence and anticipation. Erich polishes his thumb on his hip. The
adjutant, the chief of staff and the civilian stroll over to the window,
lean against it, and become the audience. I have the impression that
all the experience Erich has had over me has suddenly been ren­
dered useless. The commander-in-chief stands there without a word,
no, that is not true, he does say something—to himself: I need proof,
so let us begin. Erich looks around not knowing what to do. He is
met from all sides with quiet, challenging looks. His embarrassment
makes him start to move, he keeps walking around, moving his head
back and forth, and gesticulating. It’s no good, Erich says, completely
destroyed, I can’t do it; what should I find out from you?

The commander-in-chief nods. He can understand this not in­
considerable embarrassment, and he decides: the interrogation shall
concern the regrouping of our fighting forces in the western moun­
tains. Erich takes a step back, a step that is intended
perplexity and refusal, at which the chief of staff slowly repeats the
words of the commander-in-chief. Let’s start, the adjutant says. The
civilian says nothing.

All at once, Erich looks at the commander-in-chief; he looks at
him for a long time, too long. It seems to me that they are checking
each other out, testing each other by the way they are looking, and
then Erich gives me a signal and I know what the signal means: I offer
the commander-in-chief a cigarette and light it. The commander-in­
chief does not smile, he smokes quickly, as if he has had to do without
cigarettes for a long time. Erich, with consummate politeness, asks if
the commander-in-chief would be good enough to take a seat on a
quite ordinary chair. This request meets with no response because it

Da erhebt sich der Oberbefehlshaber von dem Stuhl, den Erich ihm angewiesen hat, sagt nichts, fordert und befiehlt nichts, sondern steht nur, der Oberbefehlshaber, klein und ausgezehrt da und zwingt Erich stumm in den Blick seiner tiefliegenden Augen, und auf einmal ruft Erich, vermutlich zu seiner eigenen Überraschung: setzen, setz dich hin! Der Oberbefehlshaber setzt sich. Er schlägt die kurzen Beine übereinander. Er weist ein Kognakglas zurück, das ihm von der Seite seines Burschen her zuschwebt und sieht gefasst Erich entgegen, der ihm geduckt, vielleicht sogar bedeutungsvoll nähert. Also wollen wir uns mal unterhalten, sagt Erich und tritt hinter den Oberbefehlshaber mit verschränkten Armen.

Der Zivilist zieht ein Notizbuch aus der Tasche, hebt einen Bleistift und rückt ein wenig vom Adjutanten ab, der sich noch immer belustigt zeigt, der hier wohl erleben möchte, was Chaplin mit seinem Spazierstock vollbringt. Ich sehe nur auf Erich, der mir jetzt zunicht, der mir durch sein Nicken befiehlt, dicht vor den Oberbefehlshaber hinzutreten: das ist mein Platz. Ich und der Oberbefehlshaber schweigen uns an. Erich stellt von hinten die Fragen. Doch zuerst äussert er sich allgemein, er stellt fest: Für Sie ist jetzt alles vorbei, mein Junge, der Kampf, die Angst, der ganze Mist: alles vorbei. Sie leben, sagt Erich, und dafür sollte man dankbar sein. Uns, mein Junge, kannst du diese Dankbarkeit beweisen, indem du uns sagst, was du weisst.

Ich beobachte forschend den Oberbefehlshaber, er hält die Augen geschlossen, er ist eingeschlafen, nein, er lauscht nur mit geschlossenen Augen, während Erich, tief über ihn gebeugt, kameradschaftlich rät: erleichtern Sie sich, erzähll uns, was du von den Umgruppierungen weisst, mein Junge, dort im Westen, im Bergland, wo wir dich erwischen. Sie selbst wurden doch einem neuen Regiment zugeteilt: Welche Nummer hatte dieses Regiment? Der Oberbefehlshaber schweigt. So geht es allen, sagt Erich, vor lauter Freude verlieren sie am Anfang
does not sound sincere, and Erich has to repeat his request—this time more straightforwardly, and with emphasis. He just says: sit here. The commander-in-chief asks whether during interrogations Erich speaks intimately or formally to the prisoners. He says, intimately, obviously. When you get so close, he says, you can't avoid getting intimate. Then do it like you always do, the chief of staff says, but Erich shakes his head and looks worried. He gives me a second signal on which I, precisely as usual, take away the half-smoked cigarette from the commander-in-chief. The adjutant likes that. He is really tickled and nudges the civilian on the forearm. He thinks for a second, then he laughs very loud, throws up his arms, his face contorted, and lets them fall again; Erich—pure helplessness.

Suddenly, the commander-in-chief stands up from the chair which Erich had offered him, says nothing; he just stands there, the commander-in-chief, tiny and emaciated and silently forces Erich to look him in his deep set eyes. And suddenly Erich shouts, apparently to his own entire amazement; sit down, sit! The commander-in-chief sits down. He crosses his short legs. He brushes aside a glass of cognac which is hovering towards him from where his orderly stands, and looks straight at Erich who approaches him crouched and perhaps with some significance. O.K., so let's have a chat, shall we, Erich says, and walks behind the commander-in-chief, his arms folded.

The civilian pulls a notebook from his pocket, raises his pencil, and moves away from the adjutant who is still hysterical and expects something like out of a Chaplin movie. I am looking only at Erich who now gives me a nod, who orders me by doing this to stand close in front of the commander-in-chief: that is my place. The commander-in-chief and I look at each other in silence. Erich will ask the questions from the rear. But before he does that he makes a few general observations, he establishes that for you everything is over, kid, the war, the fear, the whole crap: everything’s finished. You’re alive and should be grateful. And now, kid, you’d better show us your thanks by telling us just what you know.

I observe the commander-in-chief searchingly, his eyes are closed, no, he is listening while keeping his eyes shut to Erich who is leaning right over him and giving him some friendly advice: relax, tell us what you know about the troop distributions, kid, over in the West there, in the hills where we got you; you yourself were assigned to a new regiment: what number regiment was it? The commander-in-chief is silent. It’s always the same, says Erich, at first they’re all so damned happy they lose their memory, but we’ll find it
immer das Gedächtnis, aber wir werden es wiederfinden, wir haben es oft wiedergefunden: Man muss sich nur konzentrieren.

Erich gibt mir einen Wink, ich bitte den Oberbefehlshaber, sich zu erheben. Ich geleite ihn zur Wippe hinüber. Ich bitte ihn, in der Wippe Platz zu nehmen, was er wortlos tut. Im Hintergrund, am Fenster, seufzt einer, das ist der Stabschef. Ich binde den Oberbefehlshaber höflich, zu seiner eigenen Sicherheit, an der Wippe fest und auf ein Zeichen von Erich mache ich ihn darauf aufmerksam, dass er den rechten Zeigefinger heben soll, wenn es ihm zu ungemütlich wird. Die nun folgende Übung, sagt Erich zum Zivilisten, dient der Konzentration und der Erinnerung, und danach packt er den Oberbefehlshaber an den schmächtigen Schultern, drückt ihn nach hinten, hält ihn so in gewagter Rücklage, bittet tatsächlich hörbar um Verzeihung und lässt den an der Wippe gefesselten Oberbefehlshaber los, die Wippe schlägt nach vorn, sie fällt der Wand zu, der Oberbefehlshaber sieht die Wand auf sich zufallen und reisst das Gesicht zur Seite, erprobt auch ruckartig den Spielraum der Glieder in den Fesseln, doch er schlägt nicht gegen die Wand, denn zehn Zentimeter vorher endet der Schwung der Wippe. Und jetzt geht es hin und her, vor und zurück, in berechnetem Rhythmus, in kalkuliertem Schwung: wer auf der Wippe gefesselt ist, hat unwillkürlich das Gefühl, dass er der Wand immer näher kommt, dass er, wenn nicht jetzt, so doch das nächste Mal mit dem Gesicht gegen die Wand geschlagen wird. Der Oberbefehlshaber reisst jedesmal das Gesicht zur Seite. Er protestiert nicht. Sein rechter Zeigefinger hebt sich nicht.


Er taumelt, der leichte, schmächtige Mann ist nicht ganz da, will ich mal sagen, sein Körper zittert, er stöhnt leise. Sein Bursche segelt schon wieder mit einem Kognakglas heran. Der Adjutant hält ihn zurück. Der Adjutant kippt den Kognak selbst runter, zerstreut allerdings, das muss betont werden. Erich selbst verhindert, dass der Ober-
again, we've found it again lots of times: all you have to do is con­
centrate.

Erich nods and I ask the commander-in-chief to rise. I lead him
to the strappado. I ask him to take a seat in the strappado, which he
does without a word. In the background, near the window, someone
heaves a sigh; it is the chief of staff. I politely bind the commander-in­
chief—for his own safety—firmly to the strappado, and at a sign from
Erich direct his attention to the fact that he must raise his right fore­
finger, should he become uncomfortable. The following exercise, says
Erich to the civilian, is designed to facilitate concentration and memory,
at which point he grabs the commander-in-chief by his puny shoulders,
holds him precariously down, quite audibly apologizes for what he is
doing, and lets go of the commander-in-chief who is now firmly bound
to the strappado. The strappado hurtles forward towards the wall, the
commander-in-chief sees the wall rushing at him and jerks his face
to one side, he spasmodically tests how much play his body has in its
bonds but he does not hit the wall as the strappado’s arc stops ten
centimeters before he can. And now it goes on back and forth, forwards
and backwards in a measured rhythm, in a calculated swing: who­
ever is strapped to the strappado has automatically the sensation that
with every swing the wall comes closer, that, if not this time, next
time, his face will be smashed against it. The commander-in-chief
jerks his face to one side every time. He does nothing to protest. His
right index finger does not move.

Erich places his foot on the strappado, halting the strappado in
its flight. He asks: remember now? Remember your regiment’s number
now? No? Not yet? But perhaps you know some other numbers, eh?
I’m sorry, Erich says, shocked, and turns towards the window, but be­
fore he gets there he is told to continue in the manner begun; only the
civilian, as expected, has a question: the civilian wants to know
whether the prisoner who is brought in for interrogation has the pos­
sibility of interrupting the questioning by raising his index finger.
Erich allows me to answer, and I say quite clearly: yes; and then, at a
signal, I untie the commander-in-chief from the strappado.

He reels, the tiny, puny man is not quite himself, so to speak, his
body quivers, he groans softly. His orderly is already on his way over
with a glass of cognac. The adjutant holds him back. The adjutant
downs the cognac himself—although, in all fairness, absent-mindedly.
Erich himself prevents the commander-in-chief from receiving a ciga­
rette. Erich has been holding the clamps in his hand for quite a while.


Ich weiss, dass Erich gleich schreien wird, und tatsächlich: er schreit, er schreit den Oberbefehlshaber an, schüttelt ihn, dass ich schon anfange, mir Sorgen zu machen, und vom Fenster höre ich den Stabschef auch schon rufen: na, na, na; da lenkt Erich zum Glück wieder ein, lächelt und weist triumphierend auf den rechten Zeigefinger des Oberbefehlshabers, der sich nicht erhoben hat, nicht um Beendigung bittet. Los, sagt Erich, komm raus: Nenn mir die Nummer des Regiments, warum willst du sie für dich behalten, du schadest dir nur.

Ich weiss, dass jetzt die Sache mit der Zigarette und dem Schlauch kommen wird, doch als ich die Zigarette anstecke, gibt Erich mir ein energisches Zeichen, er schüttelt mitleidig den Kopf über mich und befreit den Oberbefehlshaber aus den Klemmen.


Erich dreht das Rad, die hölzernen Blöcke gleiten in die Lagerungen. Der kleine Körper in dem nassen Zeug strafft sich. Die Lippen
He works now as he usually does, breathing hard. The clamps snap round the commander-in-chief's thin wrists and hold him firmly on his feet under the shower; it is the memory shower. Which regiments, asks Erich, and thoughtfully jabs the commander-in-chief in the back. Which forces are being rearranged? For what purpose? The commander-in-chief can remember nothing, he has forgotten everything and so I turn on the shower because Erich will give me the signal in a second.

The commander-in-chief is wet. His uniform starts to blacken, it sticks to his body. The skinny body twists and turns. The commander-in-chief looks like a pathetic little bird in the rain. As expected, the civilian inquires as to the temperature of the water, is satisfied with the information given, and undertakes a lengthy entry into his notebook. In order to help the commander-in-chief's memory, I allow the water to pour down on him again; to no avail: although Erich is scanning the questions with the flat of a ruler, he receives no answer.

I know that Erich is going to start screaming, and he does: he screams at the commander-in-chief, shakes him, and I start getting worried, and from the window I hear the chief of staff begin to call across: ah ah ah; then luckily Erich stops again, smiles, and points triumphantly to the commander-in-chief's right forefinger which has not been raised, which does not ask for this to stop. Come on, says Erich, come on talk; name the regiment's number, why keep it to yourself, you're not doing yourself any good.

I know now that the thing with the cigarettes and hose is coming up, but just as I light the cigarette Erich signals me energetically to stop, he shakes his head as if I am pathetic, and he frees the commander-in-chief from the clamps.

Erich pushes the commander-in-chief across to the rack. I push the skinny, drenched little man down. I tie him down tightly to the rack with electric cable—he is certainly small enough, all kinds of things can be stretched on him. His face is a mask, his lips are trembling. He lies there without protest. I listen to his breathing and have no doubts that Erich will succeed in getting everything out of him: we will know precisely about the re-distribution of forces in the western mountains before even their officers themselves know anything about it.

Erich turns the wheel, the wooden cogs slip into their positions. The little body in its wet clothes tightens. The commander-in-chief's lips snap open. This too, Erich says, turning towards the window, only


Erich duckt sich. Erich schreit auf einmal los, dass ich selbst erschrecke. Die Nummer, schreit er, ich will die Nummer deines Regiments
serves to speed up the memory. Fascinated, we watch how the tied-down body stretches, how it arches itself and falls again and finally responds to the steady pull only with a dumb groaning. We need not look at the right forefinger—the chief of staff at the window takes care of that—we can concentrate on the interrogation. I am about to hand Erich the leather belt, but with one look he tells me to hang it up again. I bend down low over the commander-in-chief. He is quite conscious. Erich begins with his whispered interrogation, turns the wheel some more, questions, turns again and questions—until the commander-in-chief screams and bites down on his lip; he does not raise his forefinger. Only your regiment’s number, says Erich, then it’s all over, just one tiny, modest number. Tell us what you know, says Erich, and begins to turn the wheel again; lots of people would have started talking with all this turning. The commander-in-chief is silent. He contains his pain, and he is silent.

We can understand the stirrings going on over by the window, we can also appreciate the orderly’s desire to constantly approach his commander-in-chief with a glass of cognac, but because this is supposed to be standard procedure, we cannot permit any regular refreshment of cognac. The civilian is now writing furiously, he tries to hide it by seeming indifferent. The adjutant is smoking, only the chief of staff appears to be suffering. I look at Erich with admiration and ask myself: how can he stay so calm with all this lack of success. I ask myself: is he setting all his hopes solely on his ironing table where everybody suddenly starts talking? Until now no one has been able to stay silent on the ironing table. I mean, that’s where they all recover their memories. Will Erich go as far as the ironing table?

Erich gives me a signal, I untie the commander-in-chief, set him on his feet and have to catch him and hold him, I have to carry him on my arm, astonished at how light he is, across to the ironing table, which Erich has developed with his very own hands. Once again I bind the commander-in-chief securely and draw to his attention the fact that, like the others before him, he has the possibility, by raising his right forefinger, of ending the interrogation instantly. I reassure myself that he has understood. He has understood, because he nods weakly. He lies with his eyes closed and shivers with the cold of a pain he has not known before.

Erich crouches. Suddenly, Erich screams so that even I jump. The number, he screams, I want to hear the number of your regiment.

Dann bemerke ich, wie er die Augen öffnet und Erich ansieht, nicht befehlend oder auffordernd, sondern eher skeptisch und auch mit Geringschätzung, und Erich zögert, Erich erscheint hilflos und übervordert: Er stellt das Bügeleisen in die Halterung zurück. Er schüttelt entmutigt den Kopf. Er kann nicht verstehen, was passiert ist, und müde befehlt er mir, den Oberbefehlshaber aus seiner Lage zu befreien.


Jetzt allerdings könnte der Sani etwas weniger erstaunt dastehen.
The commander-in-chief remains silent. Erich takes the pre-warmed iron out of its pocket, lifts it high over the puny body, and forces the commander-in-chief to look at the flat-iron. Erich tests its warmth by lightly touching its surface with two moistened fingertips and allows a slight hiss to assure him that it is ready. Then he slowly lowers the flat-iron, lightly brushes a thigh, lets steam rise, and says: Dry, we'll iron you till you're all dry because we can't let you leave in a wet uniform. Erich continues to work. The commander-in-chief drums his heels on the table, his shoulders twitch. He holds his breath. He wants to say something, no, he only swallows, flexes his neck muscles, he scratches wildly with his hands along the table, but the index finger, the index finger does not move.

Then I notice that he opens his eyes and looks at Erich, not commandingly or challengingly, but rather with an expression that is skeptical and belittling, and Erich hesitates, Erich appears helpless and outdone: he puts the flat-iron back in its pocket. He shakes his head in discouragement. He cannot understand what has happened, and he wearily orders me to release the commander-in-chief from his position.

I untie him, set him on his feet, and leave it to him to recover his balance while the adjutant and the chief of staff most politely take this opportunity to congratulate the commander-in-chief on his having passed the test: they do in fact congratulate him. The orderly approaches with a glass of cognac and cigarettes and places a woolen blanket around the commander-in-chief's shivering shoulders. Erich sits mesmerized on a chair and polishes his thumb on his hip. Yes, the commander-in-chief says to the civilian, yes, the pain is permissible: that is something I hope to have shown.

As is usual, I knock on the first-aid office door, knock only out of habit, and as always the red-haired medic appears with finger-splints and bandages. All he has with him are splints and bandages, he stops in the middle of entering, wants to leave again, but I motion towards the commander-in-chief and the medic walks over to him and tries, without a word, to splint his right forefinger. You already know that the civilian will ask in amazement: what are you doing with that? And you cannot blame the medic when he explains, purely out of habit: splinting his right forefinger. Everything's all right, says the commander-in-chief, there is nothing wrong: our critics have received their answer.

Now, of course, the medic might have stood there a little less astonished.
THE ART OF FRANCIS BACON

MICHAEL PEPPIAT

Nietzsche could have called him "an arrow of longing for the other shore," for Francis Bacon's whole instinct reaches out beyond normality. His despair with man's condition has turned full circle, leaving him with a slender but extreme kind of hope: that his own experience can find a constantly renewed and more acute form in art.

This is Bacon's only reason for painting. Whatever he paints he distorts in an attempt to make his own perception come back off the canvas with a ferocity and concentration it never had before. His pictures are based on despair, yet they transcend it if only because they have come so very powerfully into existence. This duality is essential to all of Bacon's pictures. They are about nothing more specific than the complex struggle he has had to achieve them: their purpose is to retain the marks of that struggle and keep them strikingly alive.

In Bacon's eyes, the only art of importance is man's capacity for changing himself and his awareness of the world. In painting, he insists that figurative images alone can respond fully to a fresh intuition about human experience, and he himself has concentrated almost exclusively on figure painting. Nothing else, he believes, can be made to transmit the emotional shock necessary to a profound change in one's view of life.

By specializing in the human figure, Bacon has created his own, utterly unmistakable race—a race of haunting images whose effect, he has argued, could never even be approximated in abstract art. "Man
is haunted by the mystery of his existence and is therefore much more obsessed,” he once said, “with the remaking and recording of his own image on his world than with the beautiful fun of even the best abstract art.” And yet, by his vigorous opposition to abstract art, he has developed the possibilities of figurative painting in a way that would have been perhaps unimaginable without it. Whereas abstract artists tend to distort or recreate appearance beyond recognition, Bacon amplifies the crucial area where distortion can render it more deeply and vividly recognizable. Time and again, in an attempt to give an image more than one possible identity, he arrests it just this side of abstraction.

And yet, if figure painting is still the most direct way of painting life, it is also the most difficult. Its scope has shrunk to a fraction of its former size, principally because photography has eliminated its traditional function as a means of recording—often to the extent of defining what areas are left for it to develop. Whether figurative painters accept it or not, their art is in a constant and subtle competition with photographs.

No painter realizes this competition more keenly than Bacon. All his work, one might say, has been done in spite of photography. But, by restricting the potential range of his art, it has also forced him to deepen his insight into its unique, inimitable capacities and so create forms the camera could never dream of: the lens which conceives them is the quick of human perception. Rather than ignore the degree to which photography has altered our vision and given us a tremendous appetite for rapid visual sensation, Bacon has incorporated some of its essential effects—the blur of movement, for instance—and given them an existence in paint that maintains the mystery of their emergence.

The camera is supposed never to lie, yet it has produced some of the most improbable reflections of mankind in image history. Even the most widely distorted photograph commands respect as a kind of fact; yet when a painting attempts a similar statement about appearance, belief is much harder to solicit. And this is one reason why really original figurative painting has to make far deeper distortions: to create then within the special nature of its own substance. In a portrait, for instance, the paint might break up the surface in a way that real flesh could neither manifest nor endure: yet, while never losing its equation with flesh, it must engender an organic mystery of its own; otherwise, it can be unbuttoned by the eye (the eventual fate of all photographs) and reduced to a system of visual effects.

The paint in Bacon’s pictures keeps the images breathing, and that is the ultimate enigma of their emergence. However mutilated they be-
come, his figures live on—in a time and space which, one instinctively feels, obey the same intangible laws of destruction as they. Victims of some terrible but unspecified accident, they command a presence that the paint has taken to its maximum point of intensity.

Over the last few years, Bacon has concentrated more and more on portraits of a few close friends. His subjects—usually painted from memory, with the occasional aid of photographs—are recorded with an irreversible accuracy at the moment when their own gestures lay them most open. But this is only the starting point of his process of recreation. When they finally appear in paint, their very existence has changed: they are held in an anguished balance, as though between another life and another death. How Bacon sets out to achieve this goes to the heart of his power to excite.

A hairsbreadth can decide to what degree the painter imposes his own preconception on the canvas and how much the paint—with its innate capacity for suggesting form—is allowed to take over and (it is hoped) disclose an unforeseen imagery. The tension between the two impulses causes acute uncertainty, for if one dominates, the image might lapse either into misshapen anecdote or mounds of unmotivated pigment.

Ultimately, Bacon believes that only chance can bring about that scarcely perceptible balance between the two which characterizes his finest paintings: “... Painting is a mysterious and continuous struggle with chance—mysterious because the very substance of the paint, when used in this way, can make such a direct assault on the nervous system; continuous because the medium is so fluid and subtle that every change made loses what is already there in the hope of a fresh gain.” Yet (though this indicates why Bacon feels he has to destroy a certain number of his works in progress) it is the painter who promotes and selects what surprise turns the paint takes. And Bacon has become a great expert in making paint function for him in a way which falls outside the expected area of his control yet just within the foresight of his intuition.

Situations of extremity are the only grist to Bacon’s mill. The nature of his technique demands and supplies them, even if, as so often, he starts off with a physically normal human being placed in an ordinary interior. His brush whips its figures to the edge of dissolution, recording their flesh before it has time to settle. With agony or despair, the extremes of any strong emotion, it outrages them into a new, almost unbearable awareness, as though the painter’s own feelings ran riot through their flesh. Their crisis is presented sheerly, and never explained; but the shadow of their own mortality is deeply marked on
their tortured frames. At times their bodies rear back as if in protest at an absolute threat; at others, battered and bruised, they lie in a kind of sullen pride, prepared for the end.

The space which surrounds his figures is there only to isolate them and intensify the formal expression of their vulnerability. Such objects as it contains bend under his brush and, though they can never be made to carry the same force of feeling, they follow that rhythm of distress. In the curiously ordered chaos of his more recent pictures, they take on the nameless dimensions of sinister normality. There is a bed for despair and a sofa for suffering. Their sharp-edged banality encloses and underlines the injuries their occupants bear.

The furious clarity with which Bacon faces death in his art inevitably presupposes a tragic view of life. It is as though his paint had absorbed that view, recreating mortality within its own metaphoric substance. Stripped of all personal history and abandoned to the sudden shock of their own impermanence, his figures have the grandeur of survivors against eventually impossible odds. There is no wilfulness or bravura in their apparent disintegration; on the contrary, one feels that a great deal of tenderness and regret went into the violence with which they are painted.

Even so, only by brutalizing appearance can Bacon make his report on the life he sees around and within him. His vision of its underlying horror and his ruthlessness in recording it have been constant, but his technique has grown in mastery and resource. Bacon’s development has followed a process of elimination, a continuous cutting away at what he once called the “padding.” Obsession has found its way out in increasingly direct form, so that now there is less than ever to protect the spectator from the rawness of sensation his pictures convey.

Left in a roomful of Bacons, one’s imported vision of life relents and gives way before their moving yet curiously factual presentation of despair. Their only criterion is the lucid recording of what Bacon has experienced: that the momentary space between life and death is tragically meaningless. Most people have felt it; a few have pursued it; but, in our time, perhaps only Bacon has painted it this clearly.

This essay is a revised version of the article originally written as an introduction to Francis Bacon’s 1966 exhibition at the Galerie Maeght in Paris.
Francis Bacon
Triptych: Two Figures lying on a bed with attendants (left panel) 1968, oil and pastel on canvas, 78 x 58 inches
Francis Bacon

Triptych: Two Figures lying on a bed with attendants (center panel)
1968, oil on canvas, 78 x 58 inches
Francis Bacon

Triptych: Two Figures lying on a bed with attendants (right panel)  
1968, oil and pastel on canvas, 78 x 58 inches
Francis Bacon

Triptych 1967 (left panel)
1967, oil on canvas, 78 x 58 inches
Francis Bacon

Triptych 1967 (center panel)
1967, oil on canvas, 78 x 58 inches
Francis Bacon

Triptych 1967 (right panel)
1967, oil on canvas, 78 x 58 inches
Francis Bacon

Version no. 2 of lying figure with hypodermic syringe

1968, oil on canvas, 78 x 58 inches
Francis Bacon

3 studies from the human body
1967, oil on canvas, 78 x 58 inches
Francis Bacon

*Portrait of George Dyer in a mirror*

1968, oil on canvas, 78 x 58 inches
Francis Bacon

2 Figures on a couch
1967, oil on canvas. 61 x 55 inches
CALVINO AND BORGES:
SOME IMPLICATIONS OF FANTASY

DONALD HEINEY

There is no doubt that a “reaction to realism” has occurred and is still occurring in modern literature, but the matter is a little more complicated than it appears in the ordinary textbooks. In the first place antirealism is not really a movement or a school; it is a tendency, a disparate set of phenomena having in common only the rejection of certain limitations of formal realism. Furthermore there is a tendency on the part of critics to regard antirealism as some kind of rejection of reality or of “things as they are” and a retreat into an unreal world of the imagination: escapism, littérature d’évasion. The implication is that the author personally feels affronted by the real world or is unable to come to grips with it. He thus falls back on purely verbal reveries that console him for this disappointment in quotidian experience. So Sartre comments on the fiction of Giraudoux: “Upon opening one of his novels we feel as though we are entering the private universe of one of those waking dreamers known medically as ‘schizophrenics,’ who are characterized, as we know, by the inability to adjust to reality” (Nouvelle revue française, March 1940). The fantasy of romantic escapists like Maeterlinck and James Branch Cabell is quite possibly of this kind. But there is another vein of antirealism (metarealism is perhaps a better term), represented by Vittorini, Borges, and Calvino, among others, in which the impulse is a good deal less personal than this, and more technical. It arises, I mean to say, not out of dissatisfaction with the real world but with the way conventional fiction as an apparatus deals with this world.
One difficulty with this view of disposing of fantasy as escapism lies in the assumption that the opposite tendency, literary realism, is simply the objective portrait of a real world as it really is. No doubt it is this, to a degree, but the explanation is incomplete. Presumably everybody knows what the real world really is, since everybody lives in it. But "What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed" is classicism, not realism. Realism is not "what everybody knows." Instead it reveals or exposes something that is not generally known, or at least not generally admitted or publicly recognized: that the respectable surface of bourgeois society conceals a foundation of vice (Nana) or that life in small towns is culturally sterile and morally hypocritical (Main Street). Thus the quarrel between the realist and his critic: the realist claims to be "objective" in portraying the seamy side of things, whereas the critic accuses him of being "negative." In any case it is clear that once the seamy side has been identified and portrayed in literature it becomes familiar and is no longer a fitting subject for exposure. Main Street was necessary after Madame Bovary, perhaps, to point out that American marriage can be dull as well as the French. But everybody knows this now, or at least the realist has made his point. Our dissatisfaction with third-generation realists like O'Hara and Herman Wouk lies in the fact that we are familiar with the conversations they record and that if we turn to books it is precisely in search of verbal artifacts more interesting than the banality of our daily lives. If "objective" description of the real world is required, this can be left to sociologists of the type of Oscar Lewis, who can do it more completely and efficiently because they are freed from the necessity of invention. Books like Lewis' Life in a Mexican Village and Five Families are almost precisely the "scientific novel" called for by naturalistic theory. Lewis, in fact, borrows the immediate texture of his method from the technique of naturalistic fiction. Thus realism comes full circle and arrives at its logical end, an end prophesied by Zola: the abandonment of literature as an art in favor of the objectivity of pure science.

Confronted with this development the genuine innovators in modern fiction, from Joyce and Proust to the present, have turned to the search for a technique that while relating in some way to the real world is not bound to a literal or reportorial transcription of its phenomena. Vittorini in his diary distinguishes between two kinds of writers: those who make you think, "Yes, that's the way it is," and those who make you think, "I never supposed it could be like that." This "could be" is more than a temporary acceptance, during the process of reading, of an imaginary world; it is the realization in the reader's mind that such worlds, or modes of viewing reality, in fact exist and can be inhabited
as soon as we are convinced of their existence and accommodate our
own framework of thinking to their structures. After reading Proust we
are capable of regarding experience in a Proustian way; *Finnegan's
Wake* offers to us the possibility of adding an Earwicker-element to our
own consciousness.

Naturally the worlds of Joyce and Proust are not totally unreal;
you are constructed at least in part from elements of an authentic Dublin,
Paris, or Illiers. This is true as well of some of the fiction of Jorge Luis
Borges. But in his more experimental work, particularly in certain tales
of *Ficciones* (1944), the rejection of realism is extended to the point
where the elements of construction themselves are synthetic. This tech­
nique, which comes to a focus above all in a single story, is the product
in Borges of a long process of development guided in its course by read­
ing of foreign authors. His erudition is extensive and almost Byzantine
in its complexity, but his interest centers on a certain vein of imagina­
tive literature extending from the nineteenth century to the present:
De Quincey, Stevenson, Melville, Poe, Chesterton, Virginia Woolf, Léon
Bloy. His extensive work as a scholar includes an *Anthology of Fantas­
tic Literature* edited in collaboration with Bioy Casares. Taken super­
ficially his work might be regarded as “literary” in the pejorative sense;
he writes books about books. His detective stories are imitations of Ches­
terton written by an author who is also a Spinozist and an amateur of
occultism. He himself refers to three of the most remarkable stories of
*Ficciones* as “notes on imaginary books.” Two of these, “An Examina­
tion of the Work of Herbert Quain” and “The Approach to Al-Mu­
’tasim,” are critical articles on non-existent authors. The third, “Tlon,
Uqbar, Orbis Tertius,” is only nominally about an imaginary book; the
central scheme of the story is an extraordinary mirror-game of succes­
sive levels of the unreal.

The narrator begins by relating his discovery, a few years back, of
an encyclopedia article on the obscure Near Eastern country of Uqbar.
The encyclopedia is a hoax and Uqbar does not exist, but through as­
siduous research other references to it are brought to light. This imagina­
ry land appears to have been invented by an eccentric society of éru­
dits in the seventeenth century. The work of the society continued to
modern times, and a considerable body of information about Uqbar has
been fabricated and inserted surreptitiously in reference books. Uqbar,
then, is a fictitious land resembling the El Dorados of the classic conte
philosophique. But the narrator tells us almost nothing about Uqbar it­
self. Instead most of his discussion is devoted to its literature, and this
literature in turn deals very largely with an imaginary planet called
Tlön. The word “imaginary” in this sense, it should be kept in mind,
implies a double level of fictiveness; Uqbar is a non-existent land, and—assuming for the moment that this land may be taken as real—its literature is about a region that even at this level of reality is imaginary. The language of Tlön, or rather the two languages of its northern and southern hemispheres, are described in some detail. Its mathematics is duodecimal and its metaphysics is frankly spurious. "The fact that any philosophical system is bound in advance to be a dialectical game, a Philosophie des Als Ob, means that systems abound, unbelievable systems, beautifully constructed or else sensational in effect. The metaphysicians of Tlön are not looking for truth, nor even for an approximation of it; they are after a kind of amazement. They consider metaphysics a branch of fantastic literature."

Here the third level of the fictive has been reached: this "fantastic" metaphysics has been invented by philosophers of an imaginary planet, which in itself is the fantasy of the inhabitants of the non-existent Uqbar. The passage is dense in cross-reference, not only to the levels of the fictive within the story but to the story itself taken externally as a creation of the author. The opinion of the Tlön philosophers on metaphysics may be turned around on their inventor; Borges himself regards fantastic literature as a form of metaphysics, in that it is capable of producing autonomous apparitions beyond the limitations of the physical world. And the passage suggests a nomenclature for Borges' own fiction: a Literatur des Als Ob. The inhabitants of Tlön are capable of bringing physical objects into existence through sheer expectation. By postulating the as if of certain objects, and concentrating on the hope of their discovery, they eventually will them into concretion. One such artifact literally materializes within the pages of the story.

From Poitiers, the Princess of Faucigny Lucinge has received her silver table service. Out of the recesses of a crate, stamped all over with international markings, fine immobile pieces were emerging—silver plate from Utrecht and Paris, with hard heraldic fauna, a samovar. Amongst them, trembling faintly, just perceptibly, like a sleeping bird, was a magnetic compass. It shivered mysteriously. The princess did not recognize it. The blue needle longed for magnetic north. The metal case was concave. The letters on the dial corresponded to those of one of the alphabets of Tlön. Such was the first intrusion of the fantastic world into the real one.

Thus the mirror-game of levels of reality reverses its course; the momentum of the artifact is such that, breaking through the artificial lev-
els of Tlön and Uqbar, it appears in palpable form in the real world. The fantasy invented by a cabal of scholars has succeeded in creating matter out of abstract thought. To believe in the story, in the sense that that we necessarily suspend our disbelief to participate in any story, is to believe in the compass. Naturally we are not obliged to believe in the story; yet as a technical achievement of narrative the passage has a curious power. The princess is less real than the compass. We hardly see her at all. Even though she resides in the first level of the fictive, in the “real” world, she is pure fantasy. Even the silverware is “immobile.” But the compass from a non-existent land has motion and life; it “trembles” and “shivers.” The color of its needle is given us and even the shape of its case: useless details, since they serve no functional purpose and are without significance. They belong to the class of those petits faits typical of realistic fiction, details that amass a sense of verisimilitude because they resemble the randomness of life itself. Similar detailed constructions are found in other tales of Ficciones, particularly in “The Library of Babel,” where the description of a fantastic architecture might serve as building specifications for a contractor. Borges is one of those “literalists of the imagination” called for by Marianne Moore, and his landscapes are her imaginary gardens with real toads in them. What appears outwardly to be fantasy is inwardly, in method and style, a variety of realism. It differs from the realism of Zola or O’Hara simply in that the world it describes so concretely is a fantastic one. It begins with a synthetic premise, an “as if” totally fanciful in nature. But once the machinery of the story is set in motion the implications of the premise are traced out in detail, in their full profusion and palpability. His fiction turns like a complicated mechanism around concrete objects: a mirror, a watch-chain, the mutilated statue of a king. If the objection is made that Uqbar is “nothing but words” and “all in the mind,” the proper answer is that Nana is nothing but words too. To just the extent that Zola’s novel is a novel and not a sociological case history, its heroine is the product of the author’s fancy and the Paris she lives in is a fictive city, as artificial as the “Buenos Aires” in which certain apparitions of Borges are set.

Like that of Borges, the fiction of Italo Calvino is essentially intellectual in its ordering structure, even though a good deal of it is realistic or documentary on the surface. His first novel The Path to the Nest of Spiders, written in 1946 only a short while after the events of the Resistance it depicts, is a curious mixture of reportage and imagination. In many respects it is the most “realistic” of several dozen Italian novels about the Resistance, in that it is totally unsentimental about the character and motives of the partisans and avoids the conventional rhetoric
of most of the others. But the framework in which the book is composed, the strategy of narrative, is literary rather than sociological or documentary. Calvino has admitted his debt to Stevenson, and the immediate structural model is *Treasure Island*: violent adult incidents are transcribed through the consciousness of a boy who, as a semi-involved spectator, can participate psychologically in these incidents only within the framework of his immature mentality. It is not that the boy Pin fails to see the events around him "realistically," as they really are, but that he imposes on them a structure of fabulous artificiality like the structures encountered by ordinary children in books; he makes a "story" out of what for the adult is only an immediate problem or danger. In structure the novel has all the devices of a well-made romance, an imitation of Stevenson. The pivot of the plot is the pistol which Pin steals from a German sailor and hides in a place known only to him, the "nest of spiders." The spider's nest is the sanctum of his boyhood, his innocence. Because he has no friends and must live in an adult world the secret is an unshared one. "Perhaps one day Pin would find a friend, a real friend, who would understand . . . and then to him, only to him, he would show the place where the spiders had their lair." In the meantime he has the pistol, the Freudian significance of which is apparent. (He is not quite sure how to work it, but connects it in some way with the manhood of those who refuse for some mysterious reason to accept him as an equal.) Hidden in the place of spiders, he flourishes it with the gesture of a boy playing pirates, yet at the same time is pervaded by other intuitions: "One who had a real pistol could play marvelous games, games that no child had ever played . . . ." The pistol is his unawakened virility, and it is hidden in the place of his innocence, the innocence he has never possessed because of the squalor and vice of his upbringing. It is only at the end of the novel that these impulses are brought together into resolution, that Pin, finding a kind of "chastity" in his friendship with the partisan Cugino, is also in a position to approach the world of genuine manhood.

This short novel thus transcends both realism and romanticism: it goes beyond realism in the highly complex literary structure it imposes on the documentary materials, and it surpasses romanticism in the subtlety of its psychological development. It is "romantic" only in form; it is not really or authentically Stevensonian because everything is diffused and estranged in the light of awareness of form, of parody. It resembles the fiction of Borges in that it deals with a hypothetical or synthetic world, in this case the world of the conventional adventure novel. But this structure is filled out with concretions of an unmistakable authenticity: the real town of San Remo, the hardness and technical de-
sign of the pistol, the authentic obscenity of the partisans. This concreteness depends, for its success, on a genuine realistic grasp of real life on the part of the author. Pavese has compared Pin not only to Jim Hawkins but to “the Nick in certain stories of Hemingway.” The common trait that links Stevenson, Hemingway, and Calvino is precisely this incorporation of realistic detail into a romantic or sentimental structure.

There is nothing in the rest of Calvino’s fiction that seems to derive directly from this first novel. A good deal of his later work, including Building Speculation (1957), The Cloud of Smog (1958), The Argentine Ant (1958), and A Day in the Life of an Election Observer (1962), is more or less conventional realism. Frequently there is a suggestion of a kind of dislocation of reality on the part of the narrating consciousness, but the orientation is fundamentally documentary and contemporary. But three novels interspersed with these and dating from 1952 to 1958, The Cloven Viscount, The Baron in the Trees, and The Non-Existent Knight, are in a quite different vein of pseudo-historic romance. In two of these the Stevensonian element is present again in the narrating apparatus: the stories are seen through the eyes of boys, very similar to Jim Hawkins or Pin, who regard the fantastic events of the plot with a kind of juvenile and elastic naivete. Each of these stories starts with a fanciful premise: that the hero of The Cloven Viscount is blown in two by a cannon-ball, that the Cosimo of The Baron in the Trees takes to the trees as a boy and refuses to come down, that the hero of The Non-Existent Knight is a set of armor with nothing inside it. The narrative then develops out of this donnée in an absolutely matter-of-fact style, with the pleasing ingenuity of a child’s riddle or a game of words; everything that happens is what must happen because the viscount is cloven in two, because the baron lives in the trees, because the knight is non-existent. The sense of wonder and strangeness, the effect sought after by traditional fantasists, is lacking. Instead the tone is something like that of the fable for children. (Like Borges, Calvino is an anthologist of the fantastic, the editor of a collection of Italian fables published in 1956.) Children are not astonished that bears live in houses and eat porridge, or that giants are found in beanstalks. They understand the principle of the donnée and accept its consequences quite gravely, not so much with a sense of wonder but with a natural acceptance of frames of reference other than the realistic. The fundamental principle of the narration is: suppose there were a thing, however improbable—what would happen then? And this “what happens” is related in totally unextraordinary language, in understatement, as though the narrator were anxious to convince us of the reality of the events through his factual and almost
apologetic way of reporting them. Such a tone reduces the element of the marvelous by relating it in as flat a manner as possible, and at the same time it enhances the verisimilitude, and along with it our acceptance of the marvelous, through its very flatness and air of understatement. This quality is fundamental to all the fantastic writing of Borges and Calvino.

Beginning with *Cosmicomics* in 1965 Calvino embarked on another style, satirical science fiction, or in the more precise Italian term, *fantascienza*. The tales of this book and of its sequel, *T Sub-Zero* (1967) are recounted by a character named Qfwfq, who is of uncertain species and whose memory goes back to the beginning of time. Each tale begins from an authentic fact or hypothesis borrowed from modern science: for example in “The Distance of the Moon” the theory of Sir George H. Darwin that in remote geological time the Moon was much closer to the Earth than it is now. If we are to believe Qfwfq, in fact, it was so near that, going out in a boat near the Cliffs of Zinc, it was possible to elevate a ladder and climb up to it. From this starting-point the tale embarks into a complicated intrigue involving Qfwfq, his deaf cousin, and the fascinating Signora Vhd Vhd, a yarn that gradually solidifies into a retelling of the Endymion myth. Everything is described in painstaking detail. Returning from the Moon to the Earth “consisted in jumping, as high as we could, our arms upraised (seen from the Moon, that is, because seen from the Earth it looked more like a dive, or like swimming downwards, arms at our sides), like jumping up from the Earth in other words, only now we were without the ladder, because there was nothing to prop it against on the Moon.” The microscopic, almost obsessive scanning of minutiae, the hovering over unessentials, the parenthetical modifications are revisions, approach the mode of Robbe-Grillet and the *nouveau roman*. As Qfwfq describes the lactic substances which he and his friends went to collect on the Moon, he loses himself in the profusion of ingredients.

Moon-milk was very thick, like a kind of ricotta. It formed in the crevices between one scale and another, through the fermentation of various bodies and substances of terrestrial origin which had flown up from the prairies and forests and lakes, as the Moon sailed over them. It was composed chiefly of vegetal juices, tadpoles, bitumen, lentils, honey, starch crystals, sturgeon eggs, molds, pollens, gelatinous matter, worms, resins, pepper, mineral salts, combustion residue. You had only to dip the spoon under the scales that covered the Moon’s scabby terrain, and you brought it out filled with that
precious muck. Not in the pure state, obviously; there was a lot of refuse. In the fermentation (which took place as the Moon passed over the expanses of hot air above the deserts) not all the bodies melted; some remained stuck in it: fingernails and cartilage, bolts, sea horses, nuts and peduncles, shards of crockery, fishhooks, at times even a comb.

Catalogs of physical objects (as opposed to those of proper names, armies, or genealogies) are invariably the work of a mind that delights in the sensation of experience, in the texture and feel of things, and seeks to communicate this delight to the reader. The effect of Calvino’s list is a kind of cumulative construction of a substance in the apprehending consciousness: tadpoles, pepper, gelatine, honey, and fishhooks impinge on the mind until an elaborate nexus of connotation has been built up. The result is something approaching an immediate experience of the odor, taste, and tactile qualities of Moon-milk; we know it, not only with the intellect but with the senses. It is true that what we know is something that never was and never will be, but this objection is simply a definition of Calvino’s particular brand of fantasy. Borges calls such patterns “enumerations” and there are a number in his own work.

A man sets himself the task of drawing the world. Through the years he populates a space with images of provinces, kingdoms, mountains, bays, ships, islands, fish, rooms, instruments, heavens, horses, and persons. Shortly before dying, he discovers that the patient labyrinth of lines traces the image of his own face.

Realistic literature too is full of objects. But where realism begins with the concrete and works toward the image and the symbol, the method of Borges and Calvino starts at the other end. The unreal planet, the fantastic astronomy, are a kind of tenuous fabric on which objects of a hard precision suddenly appear, startling the reader into acceptance of himself and of the fantastic fabric as well. This is a kind of “documentation,” but its function is to persuade us of the existence of the unreal, not the real. It is fundamentally different too from Robbe-Grillet and from the method of conventional science fiction from Wells to Isaac Asimov. The details of the banana plantation in Robbe-Grillet’s Jealousy, as obsessively magnified as they may be, are essentially the minutiae of a real and verifiable world. This is only slightly less true of the details of The Time Machine or Asimov’s I, Robot. The documentation of science fiction is only an extrapolation of known scientific data, and
the amount of projection is often relatively slight, considering the pace of modern scientific advance. It is a commonplace, in fact, that science is always catching up with science fiction, so that the Wells novel of one generation becomes the reality of the next. But the settings of Borges are not prophecies and have no pretensions to be; Tlön is a purely hypothetical construction, not a world of might be but a world of as if. The “fantascience” of Calvino is built on scientific premises, but it is not likely that technology in any near or distant future will catch up with *Cosmicomics*. This is not only because Calvino projects into the past instead of into the future. It is because his tales are independent structures standing quite apart from reality and balancing on the needle-like point of the *donnée*. Suppose the moon were so near you could climb up to it: what then? In Calvino, as in children, process of fantastication is hermetic and self-sufficient. The child may ask, “Suppose my arms were where my legs are and my legs were where my arms are: what then?” The adult objects, “But they aren’t.” “But suppose they were: what then?” And, rejected by adult reason, he may go on in his private thoughts to construct an elaborate and self-contained reverie based on this impossible premise. It is through recourse to something like this algebra of fancy that the fiction of Calvino frees itself from the limitations of “logic” and “the facts.”

There is another sense in which the fantasy of Borges and Calvino is “real,” and this is the unmistakable element of autobiography or personal reference in both authors. Under the parodistic surface *The Cloven Viscount* is really about the metaphysical predicament of being “cloven in two,” the sensation of being unwillingly divided into a Good and Evil half shared to a degree by every participant in Judeo-Christian culture. If we accept the assumption that this is a more or less universal sensation, at least in the author’s culture, then it can be taken as a personal sensation on the part of the author himself: a whimsical and totally spurious fantasy is revealed as autobiography. In a like manner each of the fantascience tales is “about” several things at once, down to a primal level of suggestion at which they are about quite familiar experiences or phenomena shared in common between author and reader. Qfwfq remembers a time when he was a Dinosaur, and has only praise for the sensation of this particular mode of existence. But the praise has an ironic or faintly sinister ring to it: “... if you were a Dinosaur in those days, you were sure you were in the right, and you made everyone look up to you.” But then the situation changed, “treacheries” and “pestilences” arrived, and a new population appeared on Earth hostile to the Dinosaurs. “Now there are those who say the pleasure of decadence, the desire to be destroyed were part of the spirit of us Dinosaurs even be-
fore then. I don’t know: I never felt like that; if some of the others did, it was because they sensed they were already finished.” This is the voice of Qfwfq, but it is also the voice of a reader of Spengler, a mind at home in Marx and Freud and familiar, perhaps, with books like Menninger’s *Man Against Himself*: in short the voice of a modern intellectual consciousness. The implications—about bourgeois capitalism, about the efforts of certain super-states who are “sure they are right” to “make everyone look up to them” — are as obvious as they are in Calvino’s “realistic” fiction like *The Cloud of Smog*, which is ostensibly “objective” and “about other things” but constantly supported by an invisible Marxist understructure. This element in his writing is drawn from reading and thinking rather than from physical experience, but it is nevertheless an immediate personal sensation he hopes to communicate to the reader; it is “real” in the sense that the essays of Montaigne are real. The fantasies of Borges are full of such personal reference, even of autocriticism. The elaborate bibliographies, the philological and mathematical pedantries, the satires on scholarship, are the manifests of a life devoted to books; they are the physical equivalents of a virtually physical sensation on the part of the author.

Ultimately all fiction is based on experience; an experience sometimes concrete and sensory, at other times intellectual or political, but relating finally, in some way, to the data of daily reality. Where realism is content to rearrange this data into significant or thematic patterns, the fiction of Borges and Calvino recreates from its elements a new mode of reality containing hypothetical but genuine artifacts. The narrator of *The Baron in the Trees*, visiting Voltaire in Paris, is asked why Cosimo refuses to set foot on the ground. “My brother considers,” Biagio tells him, “that anyone who wants to see the earth properly must keep himself at a necessary distance from it.” The philosopher is pleased with the answer, but his comment has a twentieth-century ring to it, recalling the mysterious but solid compass that materializes in the pages of Borges’ story. “Once it was Nature which produced living phenomena,” he concludes. “Now it is Reason.” Cosimo lives in a fabulous simulacrum, created by himself, of the world he loves. If he does not descend from the trees it is because he is an artist who prefers simulacra to the boredom of having both feet on the ground.
WITNESS

What hour of what afternoon was that? —
when proof of ticking-backward time was caught? —
in shadow-split green pane of face display?
   Shop clock's black hand crept rightward
     where the sulphur sun had struck
     into the barrier
     of glass
reflecting imaged watch upon the wrist
     of one
who breathed an awning heat of dubious flux . . .
whose eye then marked a smaller hand that turned
     against the clock's
     to contradict its forward passage.

Undeniable — the two-way break
     of cognizance,
     montage of flick upon the retina—
     enlightening vision of the fact
     of retrogressing mea's
     ure's cancellation of
     each second's pass-
     ing harmony of guarded meet-
       ings.       Each to each:
     the one, a jeweler's mantel offering;
     the other strapped upon the feather pulse
     that skipped and throbbed at flashes of
     the split of time.

A bird dove off the canopy;
an auto horn vibrated glass;
the canvas flapped . . . the wrist stopped still
     without the shadow in . . .
     what afternoon?
Enrique Molina Campos

“NO ES LO PEOR DE UN MUERTO…”

No es lo peor de un muerto que se hiele,
ni que no se remueva, ni que calle,
ni que huela a materia al triste cabo
de unas horas de paz, ni que abandone

los trajes y las sillas donde había
puesto su forma de hombre. Ni siquiera
es lo peor su voz, que sobreviene,
desasida, absoluta, cuando menos

se la espera. No es eso. Ni la estela
de los llantos, ni el hueco en la memoria,
ni el inútil tamaño de sus sueños.

Lo peor de esa cosa que era humana
es que no se la entienda, que se paren
los vivos a mirarla, sorprendidos.
Enrique Molina Campos

"THAT A DEAD ONE GROWS ICY COLD . . ."

t. Ned Davison

That a dead one grows icy cold is not the worst of it,
nor that he does not move again, nor that he is silent,
nor that he smells of matter at the sad conclusion
of a few hours of peace, nor that he abandons

the suits and chairs where he
put his man's form. Nor even
is the worst of it his voice, heard again,
detached, absolute, when you least

expect it. No, it isn't that. Nor the wake
of tears, nor emptiness in the memory,
nor the futile size of his dreams.

The worst of this once human thing
is that it's not understood, and that the living
stop to look at it, surprised.
Peter Huchel

NOVEMBER

November
Schläft in der öde
Gerodeten Bodens,
Sumpfiges Licht und
Fäulnis eines Rohrgewässers,
In dem die Sichel
Nicht mehr blinkt.

Es reisst kein Himmel auf
Über den Gefangenen
Am Wasser Chebar.

Die kleinen grauen
Esel tragen
Den Nebel in die Stadt.
Die Pinien
Säen Finsternis.
Peter Huchel

NOVEMBER

tr. HENRY BEISSEL

November
Sleeps in the desolation
Of grubbed ground,
Boggy light and
Decay of reedy waters
Where the sickle flashes no more.

No sky rips open
Above the prisoners
On the river Chebar.

Small grey
Donkeys carry
The fog into town.
The stone-pines
Are sewing darkness.
Eugène Guillevic

LES ROCS

I
Ils ne le sauront pas les rocs,
Qu'on parle d'eux.
Et toujours ils n'auront pour tenir
Que grandeur.
Et que l'oubli de la marée,
Des soleils rouges.

II
Ils n'ont pas le besoin du rire
Ou de l'ivresse.
Ils ne font pas brûler
Du soufre dans le noir.
Car jamais
Ils n'ont craint la mort.
De la peur
Ils ont fait un hôte.
Et leur folie
Est clairvoyante.

III
Et puis la joie
De savoir la menace
Et de durer.
Pendant que sur les bords,
De la pierre les quitte
Que la vague et le vent grattaient
Pendant leur sieste.
Eugène Guillevic

ROCKS

tr. Teo Savory

I
They would not know
if we spoke of them
And they never have anything to keep
except size.
Except forgetfulness of the tides
and of red suns.

II
They have no need of laughter
or drunkenness.
They do not burn sulphur
in the darkness
Because they have never
feared death.
They have made a guest
of fear.
And their madness
is clear-sighted.

III
And then the joy
Of knowing the menace
and enduring it.
While on their margins
a pebble, scratched
By wave and wind,
leaves them, during their siesta.
IV
Ils n'ont pas à porter leur face
Comme un supplice.
Ils n'ont pas à porter de face
Où tout se lit.

V
La danse est en eux,
La flamme est en eux,
Quand bon leur semble.
Ce n'est pas un spectacle devant eux,
C'est en eux.
C'est la danse de leur intime
Et lucide folie.
C'est la flamme en eux
Du noyau de braise.

VI
Ils n'ont pas voulu être en tempe
Où se complaire.
Mais la menace est toujours là
Dans le dehors.
Et la joie
Leur vient d'eux seuls,
Que la mer soit grise
Ou pourrie de bleue.

VII
Ils sentent le dehors,
Ils savent le dehors.
Peut-être parfois l'auront-ils bénis
De les limiter :
La toute puissance
N'est pas leur faible.
IV
They do not have to carry their face like a punishment.
They do not have to wear their face where all may be read.

V
Dance is in them,
flame is in them,
whenever they feel like it.
It is not a spectacle in front of them:
it is in them.
It is the dance of their intimate and lucid madness.
It is the flame in them of the ember’s core.

VI
They have no desire to be a temple of delight.
But the menace is always there on the outside.
And the joy is always there from within them,
Joy whether the sea is grey or a decayed blue.

VII
They feel the outside, they know the outside,
At times perhaps they might feel blessed by the limitations of it:
Total power is not their weakness.
VIII
Parfois dans leur nuit
C'est un grondement
Qui longtemps résonne.
Et leur grain se noie
Dans un vaste effroi :
Ils ne savaient plus
Qu'ils avaient une voix.

IX
Il arrive qu'un bloc
Se détache et tombe,
Tombe à perdre haleine
Dans la mer liquide.
Ils n'étaient donc bien
Que des blocs de pierre,
Un lieu de la danse
Que la danse épuise.

X
Mais le pire est toujours
D'être en dehors de soi
Quand la folie
N'est plus lucide.
D'être le souvenir d'un roc et l'étendue
Vers le dehors et vers le vague.
VIII
Sometimes in their night
there is a groaning
long resounding,
And their grain is drowned
in an overwhelming fright:
Then they no longer knew
that they had a voice.

IX
The time comes when a block
pulls away and falls,
Falls and loses breath
in the liquid sea below.
Then they were no more
than lumps of pebbles,
A place for the dance,
worn out by the dance.

X
But the worst is always to be
outside of the self
when the madness
is no longer lucid:
To be the memory of a rock, thrown
outside towards wave and sea.
Richard Eberhart

CUTTING BACK

To cut the act of vegetation back from the summer house
Is an act of life to control the sprawl of nature.
One would get a better view of things farther off.
It depends upon the energy of the intellect.

If not cut back the sprawling nature of nature
Will occlude the view. It will drive us inward
Where nature is a memory of an outer adventure.
We will then have to have our own reality.

I cut back the small trees and let in the light.
I gave the older, tall exemplars more chance to breathe.
I consider this a commentary of existence,
It gives a closer look into a deeper mystery.

The deeper mystery is that of seeing clearer.
But if we have cut back nature to our own order
What is it that we see in the haze over the horizon?
It is ourselves we see, always ourselves that we see.

HALF WAY MEASURE

Friend, we meet on the street, you with the loss of one eye.
This word I write is the weapon of defense I have
Against destructive time. Poems aspire to super sight.
I touch your shoulder, feel thoughtful, do not know what to say.

You have had one eye taken away, science took it,
Prolonging your life. You speak with cheer in faith.
To malignant tumor you have a benign Christian faith.
I leave you like a savage in a wilderness.

Among the younger German prose writers of the avant-garde groups, thirty-six-year-old Jürgen Becker, from Cologne, at the moment has the flattering reputation of being the most progressive. He has turned up with a rigorously revolutionary theory, and has produced "texts" whose difficulties are not exactly boring to decipher by a process of exact reading so that sophisticated critics have something to worry and chew on. His first book was called Fields (Felder) (1964), his second, just published, Margins (Ränder). They are attempts to dispose of the traditional kind of story-telling and to replace it by an "open, indefinite, free writing," to quote the publisher's blurb.

Becker is, as you may have guessed, a decided opponent of the novel—although he seems to be referring only to the "classical" novel in the sense of the 19th century: "Hardly an important novel appears any more," he says, "without being blemished by a partial or even basic failure." Further: "Only beyond the novel does writing find the sense of the authentic; only the destruction of its categories releases the utopian text which is written into every novel." However, doubt about the favorite genre of the modern reader, or rather the contemporary version of this doubt, is, as is well known, already more than half a century old. It inspired the young Joyce to an artistic revolution of epoch-making importance, it re-occupied the old Thomas Mann around 1950; and already in 1920, it was put in its place, with really not bad reasons, by the Russian critic Leo Lunc. Thus Becker, with his attacks against the novel, seems to carry on a tradition that could almost be called venerable. He will not finish off the novel form, which has proven itself a tremendously flexible and vital form of representation ever since Cervantes. Even the great Joyce did not finish it off, but rather renewed it, by opening for it previously unheard-of thematic and formal dimensions.

The value of Becker's anti-novel theory is thus not to be found in any kind of critical or scientific universal truth, but rather in its usefulness as a working hypothesis for the practice of one's own writing. Every author who theorizes at all will construct that theory which corresponds best to his own productive intentions, but no productive practice will agree completely with the theory; the discrepancy or even conflict between practice and theory is often particularly instructive for the critic. Brecht would be a famous example. As for
Jürgen Becker, he attaches great importance to leaving all possible conventions of traditional novel writing far behind him by his “open, indefinite, free writing;” problematically, he also considers as one of these conventions the principal of the “story,” the related tale. On the other hand, to avoid the danger of an associative anything-you-please style, he must organize his material. Joyce, in his *Ulysses*, solved the problem ingeniously by backing up the adventures of Leopold Bloom with the corresponding stations of Homer’s Odyssey as mythical patterns. Becker contended himself in *Ränder* with a very external, purely schematic technique. He arranged the eleven textual units of his book so that they are mirror images of each other. Text 1 corresponds in range and language structure to Text 11, Text 2 to Text 10, etc. (Text 6 consists of two empty pages, whatever that is supposed to mean. An extraordinarily artificial procedure!) Here, in the name of liberation from conventional novelistic restraint, a formal straitjacket is tailored which is incomparably more restrictive than the related story.

The text Becker has included in his book hardly differs at first glance from the production of countless other experimental writers, word engineers and phrase-mongers who have been spooking around for years in certain magazines here and there. He also uses the well-known techniques of these writers: enigmatic word-fields, word-amalgamations, syntactical slurs, punctuationless sequences of verbal emanations. However, with a little effort one understands why this Becker, among a hundred others, stands out as an independent author, even as a “name”: it is the human intensity which appeals to the reader; it is, as one critic expressed himself, a “suffering earnestness.” Becker’s shortest text goes: “You. And who is that?” The passage is characteristic of his “method.” Its meaning is the intense and persistent questioning of prescribed systems of communication. The human being, as Gottfried Benn once said—decades ago—is completely alienated from his language structure, and ahead of his syntax. It seems to be a specifically modern pathos that wants to demolish the old sentence structure everywhere. But is it really so exclusively “modern?” Isn’t it in a certain sense an orientation of the poet as such? The poet as the man who has to ask the question “You—and who is that?” again and again at all times.

What Becker is writing can be understood as a series of attempts to define ab negativo a present-day sensibility, i.e., by description of processes of decay within the traditional systems of communication. To be sure, there are identifiable, generally known events which go through the author’s head, e.g. Berlin commune, Greek military putsch, outbreak of war 1939 and Ilse Werner, a film star famous at the time, with an exceedingly idiotic chanson on the radio; there are landscapes
and localities, a lot of Italian things, the view of the Sixth Fleet, the Wahn airport, the lower Rhein homeland—"in the high land the hooves clattered in the early morning"—and the cemeteries of Queens, New York. But all this appears only in traces, not as narration, not as memory conjured up. "No more memory," he says once, "we become more and more isolated." In place of memory, which after all was regarded by the ancients as actually the "mother of all muses," we have oblivion with Becker: "Now time has passed again, and we have again forgotten much. It's often worst in the morning; it takes a while until we know again where we are now, what we're doing, how we go on. Uncertain of what we are saying..." Where once objective "reality" existed based on the optimistic demand to be recognized and admitted by the perceptive faculties of the human being, there are now only margins left.

Becker's goal is what he calls the authentic expression: the distance between reality and language should be "retracted." Benn formerly had spoken—with very similar intentions—of "absolute prose." It could materialize when "the individual disappeared and a primordial layer arose, intoxicated, pictorial and Panic." Its prerequisites were "inner concentration" and "destruction of coherence." Becker too wants the "destruction of coherence" as a means to achieve an absolute verbal accomplishment beyond all logical, psychological and ideological rites of communication. He also wants, quoting Benn again, "words that are brought into a fascinating relation." What distinguishes him from Benn is the dryness and soberness of expression, his preference for gray tones, rain atmosphere. Where Benn still stages his nihilism festively with bacchanal evo-cries—"Nihilism is a feeling of happiness!"—in Becker there is "forgetting," "indifference," "uncertainty of conditions."

In this spiritual condition, more reminiscent of Beckett than Benn, lyrical lustre like the clattering horsehooves in early morning is only seldom admitted. The actual tone-setter and identification is destruction, doubt, the reductio ad nihilum. That can be articulated as deep weariness: "and only the face of indifference will be fascinating and sleep will never lose its future." Or also as ironic gaiety: "no one wants to be called Heinrich any more and we have to speed up a little and Nina is not alive any more and no sun today and let's drink another one to that." With such rhythmic and thematically carefully articulated word montages Becker tries not only to strike the basic condition of a generation of this age, but ultimately also man's mortal nature in general. The authentic expression that he wants is only then authentic if it is valid "in general," for once and now and always. Thus, without
any logical sequence, there is on page 56 the word “until” that expresses directly the pure intentionality of existence-in-time. Or in an almost rhapsodic passage like this: “... the change, due every few years, of location, climatic zone, of eating and drinking habits, of furniture and telephone number, the departure and return, staying and leaving again, abandonment of hiding-places...” Or finally, human temporality as a mere hollow form of hope, as a purely passive continuation with an extreme caution in questions of finding meaning: “as aging progresses, and that also means how indifference grows as opposed to acute pain...” Here too a (negative) echo of the old Christian idea of being-on-the-way, still very clearly defined in Brecht, even though it shimmered ambivalently between a sad recognition of the world’s transitory character and the need for revolutionary expectation.

As further orientation aids—besides Benn and Beckett—could be mentioned: the Italian Monica Vitti in Antonioni’s films (“the trees just flash by, or is she being chased again herself?”) and the American film maker, Andy Warhol. One last, very obscurely applicable secret tip is Felix Hartlaub, that historian and corporal who disappeared in Berlin in 1945, whose posthumous war diaries created a furor around 1950, unfortunately to be forgotten again only too quickly. Becker quotes, without naming the author, the end of the Hartlaub sketches: the breath-taking vision from the special train of the Führer’s headquarters, that races at a suicidal speed into a tunnel, while a Wurlitzer organ intones the German national anthem. Becker takes over the picture, separates it from its historical context and transforms it into a metaphor for an inner process. If one compares the original and the paraphrase, the limits of Becker’s achievement strike the eye very sharply. His extreme subjectivity, which must be valued as his strength, is paid for by a painful lack of “world.” Something “etude-ish” clings to even his most rigorous achievements of expression, when one measures them against Hartlaub. I imagine that he might some day rediscover the principle of the narrated story, perhaps even the novel. For the narrated story is not a historically limited convention, but rather an irrevocable natural right of the human imagination.

HANS EGN HOLTHUSEN

tr. Sandra Smith
There is something right in the growth of a poet from lyricism in youth to philosophical poetry in age. Sometimes the growth is vital and fortunate, as with Yeats; and sometimes, as with Wordsworth, it is not.

One cannot speak of Conrad Aiken's fine accomplishment in this volume as Yeatsian, for there are too many important differences. Yeats' genius shows itself in the imposition of a private vision upon the public world; Aiken's vision is—if not a public one—very much in the tradition of western mysticism, and its lucid power of realization arises from the hard commonness of the words, and their closeness to what they mean.

This is not to say that the charm of those early lyrics has gone:

How explain the morning that we wake to
the opening of the eye
the toothbrush
the toilet
the basket for soiled clothes
the fly's wing so designed
that it might be
a cathedral window
meant
for THEE?
Unkind THEE
did THEE have the fly in mind
and in THY warp and woof enwind
him and all his kind
to live his glorious dunghill day
then swept like snot away?

Here are echoes of Senlin and Lord Zero (not to mention a Blakean persona), but the poetry remains solidly itself.

The THEE of the title refers to the deep pulse of reality that we sense behind the things of our lives and try to name and understand. It is that which is behind the word "God" and all those other names. It is, too, ourselves ("O could this be/ that we/ be/ THEE?"). The manifold mystery is presented by the poem, not solved by it. The short lines and the relentless rhymes are graced by the hard close control of a man whose hearing into words has been justly celebrated for half a century. But it would be wrong to emphasize Mr. Aiken's great craftsmanship unduly; the value of this book lies in the clarity and conviction of the vision that the words demand.

JACK MATTHEWS

Critics are unaccustomed to thinking of Byron’s poetry in metaphor-size units or even, with the exception of George M. Ridemour, in image clusters. They have often noted certain of the more obvious groupings (e.g. clay-spirit, sink-soar), but in general it has been the cumulative impact of larger units that has interested them: the entire narrative movement of the tales, the sweep of the cantos in Childe Harold or Don Juan. The very least that one can say of Byron and the Dynamics of Metaphor, however, is that it convinces one that Byron’s use of imagery is neither unimportant nor accidental. Elledge’s main and well illustrated assumptions are that Byron deliberately manipulates imagery as a thematic vehicle and that this manipulation becomes more sophisticated as Byron’s career progresses.

Elledge examines the development through nine works (The Corsair, Lara Parisina, The Prisoner of Chillon, Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage, Canto III, Manfred, Marino Faliero, Sardanapalus and Cain) of a “quartet of preferred imagistic motifs:” “fire and clay,” “light and darkness,” “organic growth and mechanical stasis,” and the “image of the counterpart or the Doppelgänger motif.” In addition, he discusses minor figurative patterns that reinforce these major concerns. Elledge sees Byron employing these motifs to explore and illustrate his enduring preoccupation with man’s dual nature and inability to finally reconcile the warring elements in that duality. The “dynamics” of the book’s title refers to the “dialectical structure” of Byron’s metaphors created to do full justice to that theme.

Unlike William Marshall’s The Structure of Byron’s Major Poems (1962) which does less than it promises, or Robert Gleckner’s Byron and the Ruins of Paradise (1967) which does perhaps more than it should, Elledge’s study accomplishes precisely enough. One may, of course, question some of his readings. (I object, for example, to his insistence that Childe Harold, III can or should be read by totally ignoring any distinction whatsoever between the narrator and Harold.) One may also note that of the three final works treated, only in Cain and there only partially, exists a parallel between what Elledge sees as Byron’s growth in imagistic craftsmanship and general aesthetic success. But the merit of this study lies in its illumination of the complex figurative patterns of Byron’s poetry rather than in definitive readings; its value is directional rather than terminal.

JAMES R. THOMPSON

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For some, the most interesting aspect of Wallace Fowlie's brisk, incisive survey of French criticism since du Bellay will be its plot. There are, to be sure, deft assessments of the major figures in the action. Those of Sartre, Mauron, Blanchot, Barthes and Bachelard are exemplary. And there are trenchant reconstructions of the settings of the critical action against developments in other modes of discourse, especially literature proper, philosophy, and science. The critic appears as classicist, as creator, as scholar, as scholastic, as New Critic, existentialist or structural anthropologist. If anything is wanted it is their dialogue: Fowlie hardly ever allows the critics their own voices. Yet if we accept one of his own premises—that criticism is, or has become, an art—then it follows that there must be times when the critic’s full meaning is partly his style and cannot be fully conveyed in any language but his own. But, within all this, what makes Wallace Fowlie’s history a dynamic book, a book to be read and not merely consulted, is the plot he finds in his material. This is the motion in the cavalcade and the communion of relevance which keeps the reader in its company.

The historian of criticism, like the social historian, cannot help but see the stuff he surveys as having some shape or tendency, perhaps circular or cyclical, progressive or retrogressive. There must be some moment of entelechy in which his material becomes active knowledge for him or totalizes into meaning. At this point his history of criticism becomes what it really wants to be: metacriticism in historical perspective. Fowlie seems to see French criticism as essentially a dialectical quest for the meaning of criticism itself, a tendency which has been abetted by the Gallic love of dispute for its own sake. Thus the highpoints of his survey are the crucial methodological controversies—Ancients with Moderns, rationalists with impressionists, psychocritics with contextualists, existentialists with structuralists. This systole-diastole of dogma and heresy appears to have pumped more life into criticism than have developments in the literary art itself. At any rate, Fowlie seems to discern two rather ominous results of this self-consciousness of criticism. First, in its eagerness to mate with other disciplines, especially psychology, linguistics, and structural anthropology, criticism has tended to divorce itself from works—perhaps even from literature—and has given itself away to such pre-literary matters as the phenomenology of communication or the “structures” of mythic systems. Symbolic of this is the recent accession of Lévi-Strauss to the sceptre of Sartre. Second, and correlatively, the concepts of critic and creator have been becoming less and less distinct since Sainte-Beuve. In-
deed criticism may, it appears, entirely ingest the life of its host. These two effects, the aggrandizement of criticism into a quasi-science and apparent growth at the expense of creative literature, have brought on what Fowlie believes may be a "crisis" in contemporary literature. Perhaps, as he suggests at one point, "The future belongs to non-literary literature." This prospect is reminiscent of Carlyle's warning in 1831 that the end of literature would be as "one boundless self-devouring Review."

R. E. Fitch
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

MARC ALYN is a young French poet, essayist and novelist who serves as poetry critic for the weekly French newspaper *Le Figaro Littéraire*. He edits the modern poetry series for the publisher Flammarion in Paris. The major collections of his poetry are *Le Temps des Autres*, *Cruels Divertissements* and *Délétères*. Mr. Alyn’s critical essays include studies on François Mauriac, Dylan Thomas, and Gérard de Nerval.

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ALAIN BOSQUET has published over sixty volumes. His novel, *La Confession Mexicaine*, received the Prix Interallié in 1965. His collected poetry has been published by Gallimard in 1967 under the title *Quatre Testaments et autres poèmes*. Volumes of his selected poems have appeared in various translations in Germany, Rumania, Yugoslavia, Spain, Ecuador. Mr. Bosquet has been appointed Knapp Professor at the University of Wisconsin for 1969.

GEOFFREY BROGAN is Visiting Professor of Comparative Literature at Ohio University for the academic year 1968-1969. He previously taught in the Department of Philosophy at New York University, Stony Brook.

ENRIQUE MOLINA CAMPOS was born in 1930 in Madrid. He has published four books of poetry, three of which have won national prizes; *En verdad os digo*, (1956), *La puerta*, (1959), *Siete cartas de juventud y una elegia*, (1965), and his latest work, *Poemas del hilo*, (1967).

ROBERT CREELEY is an American poet whose poetry publications include: *Words*, *The Gold Diggers*, *For Love*, and a recent volume of early and uncollected poems, *The Charm*. His forthcoming books include *A Quick Graph*, a series of selected critical notes, and a new book of poems, *Pieces*.

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RICHARD EBERHART won the Pulitzer Prize in 1966 for his Selected Poems 1930-1965. Some of his most recent publications are Shifts of Being from Oxford University Press and Richard Eberhart Reading His Poetry from Caedmon Records, Inc. Mr. Eberhart is presently a member of the English Department at Dartmouth College. His poems have appeared in a variety of magazines, and in eight volumes from 1944-1957.

WALLACE FOWLIE is a critic and translator who is currently professor of Romance Languages at Duke University. He has written critical studies on Rimbaud, Mallarmé, modern French theater, and Cocteau, in addition to translating Baudelaire.

EUGENE GUILLÉVIC is a contemporary French poet. Over twenty of his books have been published in French; his latest, Euclidiens, was published in Paris by Gallimard in 1967. A bi-lingual selection of his poetry, brought out in 1968 as part of the Unicorn Press French Series, was his first publication in English.

DONALD HEINEY is professor of Comparative Literature at the University of California at Irvine. His book publications include: Three Italian Novelists, Thomas Mann, Ernest Hemingway, and Recent American Literature. He has translated Vittorini, Pavese, and Rilke, and his criticism and fiction have appeared in major American literary publications.

PETER HUCHEL was chief editor of the literary journal Sinn und Form from 1948-1962. He has received numerous awards for his poetry, which has been published in Czech, Hungarian, Polish, English, and Italian. His two most recent books of poetry are: Chauseen Chauseen (1963), and Die Sternenreuse: Gedichte 1925-47 (1967).

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SIEGFRIED LENZ is a contemporary German novelist, short story writer and playwright. Some of his major works include the novels: Der Mann im Strom, Das Feuerschiff, and the play Zeit der Schuldlosen for which he received the Gerhart-Hauptmann Prize and the Rudolf-Alexander-Schröder Prize.

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MAX WALDMAN has done photographic studies of major literary and theatrical figures including André Malraux, Edward Albee, and Jason Robards, Jr. Mr. Waldman’s work has been widely published in major journals in America and abroad.
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