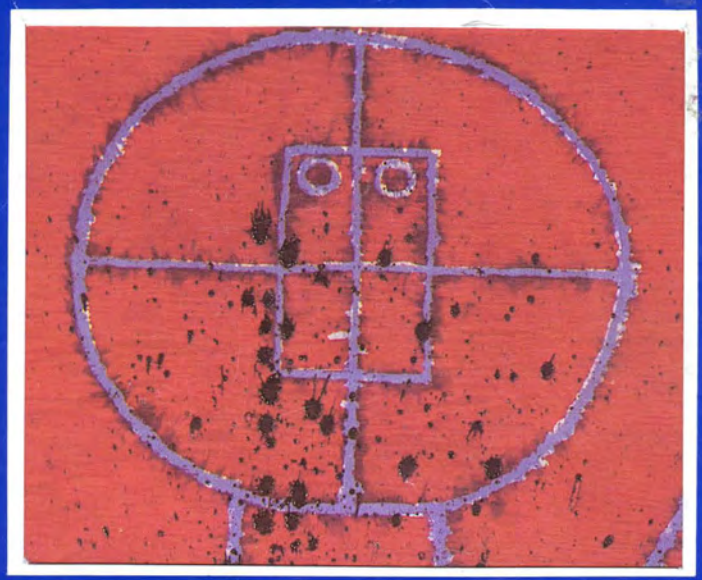
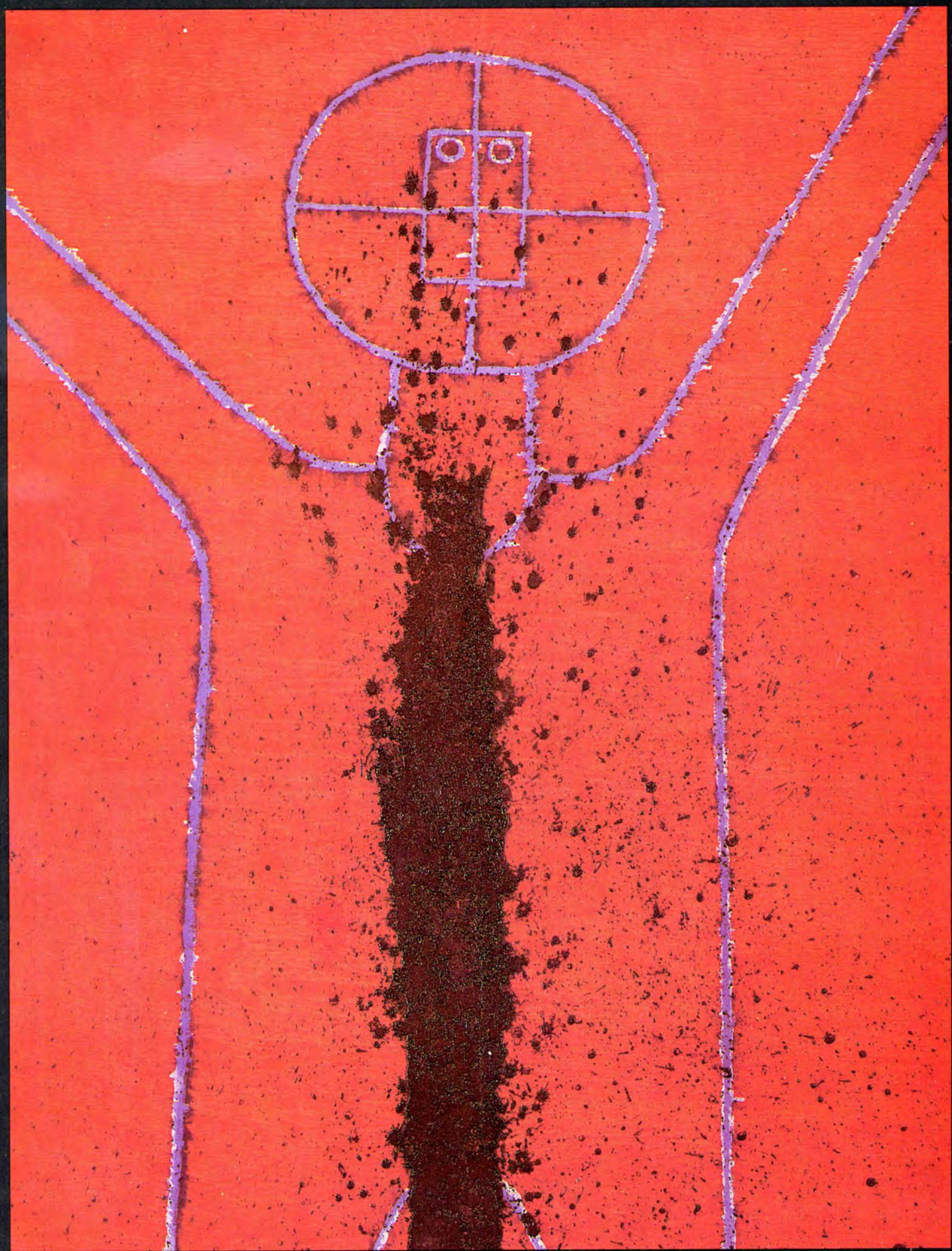
Special Latin American Issue



New Orleans Review

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY

VOLUME 7, NUMBER 3 / $2.50



This issue on Latin America is a highly selective sampler designed to remind readers of the substantial achievement of Latin American writers and to introduce them to some of the equally exciting work done in other areas in the arts. There has been no attempt to produce a series of systematic overviews nor an encyclopedia. While omissions in certain areas may prevent the reader from getting the total view of the creative continent that he might want, we feel that it is inarguable that he will come away with an idea not only of the tremendous talent but also of the diversity of the region.

This special issue was published by the New Orleans Review of Loyola University with the technical assistance of the Center for Latin American Studies of Tulane University.

New Orleans Review

Fall 1980

LATIN AMERICAN ISSUE

Layout and design by Leisa Reinecke Flynn.
Cover concept by Dennis Trombatore

A Journal of Literature and Culture Published by Loyola University of the South, New Orleans.

The New Orleans Review is published three times yearly by Loyola University, New Orleans (70118). Subscription rates: $2.50 per copy; $7.00/one year; $13.00/two years; $19.00/three years.
Correspondence should be addressed to The New Orleans Review, Box 195, Loyola Univesity, New Orleans, LA 70118. The editors invite submissions; however, no manuscript will be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope. All care will be taken to prevent loss of manuscripts, but no responsibility can be assumed for unsolicited material. Loyola University is an equal education opportunity/affirmative action employer. Printed by Harvey Press, New Orleans, Louisiana. Contents listed in the *Index of American Periodical Verse*. US ISSN 0028-6400.

CONTENTS

NON-FICTION

FICTION

PORTFOLIO

POETRY

The photographs scattered in the body of the magazine are the work of the Peruvian, Martin Chambi. These prints were produced by Chambi in Cuzco during the 1920s and 30s. Much of his work is studio portraiture but his greatest commitment was to recording the culture of the highland indians. He ventured to the peaks of the Andes in search of images of elusive Quechua ways.

This collection is provided by the Tulane University Latin American Photographic Archive with the permission of Edward Ranney.

Rainer Schulte

LATIN AMERICA: A NEW PERSPECTIVE IN NARRATION

Twenty years ago, Latin American literature was known only to specialists in the English-speaking world. Today, Latin American authors have imprinted their influence on the international literary scene with incredible imaginative power and inner vitality. They have been compared to Faulkner and Joyce, they have found imitators and followers among the young writers in Europe and North America, and their books are climbing the ladder to the best seller lists. Latin American fiction exploded in the 1960's. A rapid sequence of events put the literature of South America on the international map during that decade.

A few facts will confirm this development. Julio Cortázar's novel *Hopscotch,* published in Buenos Aires in 1963, appeared in English in 1966. Miguel Angel Asturias received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1967, the same year Mario Llosa was given the Romulo Gallegos Award for his novel *The Green House*. Also in 1967, García Márquez finished *One Hundred Years of Solitude,* Carlos Fuentes published *A Change of Skin* and Cortázar's collection of short stories, *End of the Game and Other Stories,* was translated into English. Cortázar's short stories inspired Michelangelo Antonioni's film *Blow-up*. And finally, at the end of that decade, José Donoso received wide critical acclaim with his novel *The Obscene Bird of Night* in 1969.

How a poet or writer becomes known from one country to another depends on many unpredictable factors: the quality of the translation of his works, the subject matter of those works, and above all the particular aesthetic and intellectual need of the receiving culture. Often, authors who are well received in one country meet with strong negative reactions in another country. The reception of Latin American authors is a good example. For the last decade they have found a favorable climate in the United States. García Márquez, Julio Cortázar, Octavio Paz, Lezama Lima, Alejo Carpentier, to name only a few, are writers who have acquired a relatively large audience in North America. Manuel Puig's first novel *Betrayed by Rita Hayworth* was hailed by the French newspaper *Le Monde* as the best translation for the year 1969. And yet, these same writers, translated into German and published by well established publishing houses a few years ago, received very little attention from the German reading public, and most critics rejected the aesthetic and intellectual climate of their novels. The difference in reception is staggering. So far the scholarly and critical world has paid very little attention to these phenomena, and certainly has not provided us with any insights that might explain the disparity in the reception of literary works in different countries.

The explosion of Latin American literature, often referred to as the "boom," can be seen by the list of novels and short stories published in English translation during the 60's and 70's. Commercial publishing houses as well as small presses did their share to present Latin American poets and writers to an English-speaking audience. Journals like *Tri-Quarterly*

and *Mundus Artium* dedicated entire issues to the Latin American literary scene, and many journals began to publish Latin American poets and writers on a regular basis.

At the end of the 70's, novelists like Julio Cortázar, Gabriel García Márquez, and Carlos Fuentes still dominate the literary scene of South America. The voices of younger writers have been less violent and convincing, although the number of short story writers, novelists and poets continues to climb at a rapid rate. After talking with editors of major publishing companies in New York, I am inclined to think that the market has been over-saturated with literature from Latin American countries, to the extent that several of these publishers are now looking to other national literatures for possible inclusions in their lists of books to be published in the future.

On the whole, Latin American fiction has found some excellent English translators, which certainly has contributed to its impact and importance in the English-speaking world. Yet a good translation of a work of literature is not enough to make it successful in another country. The question must be raised: what particular stylistic and aesthetic features of Latin American literature attracted the attention of critics, readers and writers in the United States? Carlos Fuentes in *Terra Nostra* has one of his characters say: ". . . every human being has the right to take a secret to the grave with him; every storyteller reserves the right not to clear up mysteries, in order that they may remain mysteries; and anyone whom this displeases may ask for his money back." What Fuentes says through his character applies to an important and fascinating aspect of contemporary Latin American fiction and poetry. The relationship between reality and imagination undergoes extensive changes in the writer's vision. The borderline between what is real and not real no longer matters. Julio Cortázar calls his own novels and short stories "supernatural" and "fantastic," and he professes a great affinity to the world of fantasy created in "Ligeia" and "The Fall of the House of Usher" by Edgar Allen Poe. The fantastic constitutes the dominant feature in many Latin American short stories and novels. The writer of the fantastic turns his back on a reality universally accepted as normal and begins to explore other realms of the world that surrounds man. The fantastic is a rupture with the logical and also the presentation of unthinkable events in the lives of characters that assume a reality as convincing as the reasonable sequences of everyday life. The dimension of the fantastic erupts in the works of Jorge Luis Borges. The reader is never sure whether he invents historical data or whether the accumulation of misunderstandings and false information might be responsible for the intricate labyrinthine world of his characters and geographical locations as seen in stories such as "The Library of Babel," "The Circular Ruins," and "The Garden of Forking Paths." The reader never loses the feeling of experiencing strange forces that have an irresistible power over his imagination. What fascinates these writers is the recovery of "mystery" in life. The imagination feeds on the possibilities of ambiguity, which builds new levels of association and does not reduce reality to a series of logical statements. Often the unexpected becomes the guiding principle, the unexpected when it is least expected or the unexpected when it no longer appears to be unusual. When García Márquez, in *One Hundred Years of Solitude,* has one of his characters disappear into the air on a beautiful afternoon, it is perfectly natural within the context of the novel. When the reader puts this incident into the context of his own experiential reality, however, he becomes aware of the incongruity between what happens in the novel and what he experiences in his daily life.

The unexpected always lurks behind the fictional situations created in stories and novels. Borges lets us believe throughout his story "Funes the Memorious" that Funes is indeed one of the most remarkable human beings ever to inhabit this earth. He has firmly convinced the reader of this opinion to the very last paragraph when we find out that this man with all these marvelous qualities of memory is totally incompetent, since he can never establish any kind of thought association among all the facts he has stored in his memory. The young Argentinian writer Vlady Kociancich ends her story "False Limits" in a similar way. The author presents the story from the point of view of the husband who finds himself in the great dilemma of wanting to leave his wife but not finding the inner strength to do so. When the reader has been thoroughly drawn into the husband's perspective and sympathizes with his plight, the story takes an unexpected turn: Elisa, his wife, enters his room and factually addresses her husband: "I am sorry, Raúl, but I'm leaving. I'm in love with another man." Since the story ends with these words, the reader is forced to rethink his own perception of the story. The end of the

story is for the reader only a new beginning to put the pieces of the story back together in a different way. Beginning and ending are fixed realities only on the printed page, but not in the imagination of writer and reader.

For the Latin American writer, surreality or irreality is as much the norm as the pragmatism and banality of life. The fantastic enriches the imagination and quenches the thirst for the unusual which we love to imagine in the fictional realm, almost as an escape, but dread when confronted with it on a practical plane. The reality these writers give fictional form to is totally Rabelaisian. In García Márquez' novel *The Autumn of the Patriarch,* published in English in 1976, the patriarch, the unnamed General of an unnamed Caribbean nation, lives between 107 and 232 years, and produces several thousand children. He is conceived in a storm of flies and born in a convent doorway with deformed feet and an enlarged testicle the size of a fig, which whistles a tune of pain to him every moment of his incredibly drawn-out life.

Exaggeration versus the normal, the fantastic in confrontation with the practical, and distortions of chronological time underlie the fictional universe of these writers. They are rethinking the relationship of time and space in their novelistic excursions, and succeed in building a fictional reality which seems so much richer and more intense than the banality and pragmatism of daily life. However grotesque the structures of their imagination might be, they always stand on a foundation of humor and irony which takes the reader from one episode to the next.

Latin American fiction cannot be separated from the geography where it originates. Features of a landscape — landscape formed by high peaks, rough terrain, rain forests, deserts, and immense space — are intricately interwoven with those people who often struggle to survive in a hostile environment. The fight against the unpredictable forces of nature has generated both the physical and mental violence in Latin American fiction, unmatched in other literatures of the West. If in novels like Camus' *The Stranger* or Sartre's *The Words,* readers find it difficult to understand why the characters described in these novels do not react against the boredom of their everyday lives, many Latin American short story writers and novelists make mental and physical violence a natural part of their works. Violence is an integral part of how people interact among themselves and how they cope with the particular shapes of the land they inhabit. Here again it is the naturalness with which violence is depicted and accepted that adds a peculiar dimension to Latin American writing. One need only think of stories like "The Corpse in the Parlor" by Dalton Trevisan.

The ways in which the fictional characters interact with time and space had to affect the means of expression itself: language. New perceptions of reality require new forms of linguistic expression. In *The Autumn of the Patriarch,* sentences run on for three or four pages without punctuation or paragraphs; the action leaps forward and backward in time, and the narrative points of view change constantly. Questioning the chronological sequence of a novel has been established by Julio Cortázar's *Hopscotch.* The author informs the reader that there are several ways of reading the novel. One does not necessarily have to start reading the novel at the beginning of the first chapter. Fuentes, in *Terra Nostra,* continuously shifts the narrative perspective, splits the personality and changes the identity of the "persons telling the story." And Guillermo Cabrera Infante and Severo Sarduy have made experimentation with language the very core of their novels.

At the end of the 70's, Latin American fiction plays a leading role in contemporary international writing. If a history of Western literature covering the last two decades were to be written, it would have to focus on a great number of South American poets and fiction writers, since they have given new impulses and vitality to the literary imagination of the twentieth century. The keenness of their perception, their total commitment to the act of writing, the mythological power of their tradition and the courage to experiment have created and shaped a literature which discovers and invents a mysterious and fascinating world behind the banality of everyday appearance. Their literature is mythical in the sense that personal, geographical, historical and cosmic forces begin to interact. The reader is overwhelmed by the constant stream of fantastic, grotesque, ritualistic events, but never feels lost in the atmosphere of that mysterious ambiguity. He discovers affinities between the real and the unreal levels of reality which coincide effortlessly on the plane of fictional invention. That heritage seems to be most conspicuously present in the works of young writers like Juan Tovar, Vlady Kociancich, Fernando Sorrentino, Humberto Costantini, and Juan Calzadilla, to name only a few.

Edilberto Coutinho

THE FIGHT GOES ON

1.

She served the coffee with a tiny, delicate hand. I'm very nervous, she said to the man, because she had been told: Be ready for the worst.

During the last few weeks, just one worry: her son's disappearance.

They're just taking everybody, for any old reason, aren't they?

No, ma'am. You shouldn't worry so much.

The slender man in the orange shirt and plaid pants said softly:

Tomorrow will be sunny and warm.

Oh, she said, thank you. But aren't you afraid?

We only die once, the man said. The coffee was excellent, he said next.

Another one?

No, thanks.

Now, she believed in him:

Has he been arrested? Tell me if he was. Did something wrong happen?

Everything's fine, don't worry. It's hard on you. He asked me to let you know, that's all. He's out of town. At the moment he can't communicate with you. He wants me to send him some of his things. He told me exactly which drawers they're in. If you could go with me.

The mother took the stranger to her son's room and he began to rummage. First one drawer, then another, and still another. He looked through some papers. He found it.

Leaving, the man said:

Thanks, ma'am.

God bless you. When will I see him again?

What's that?

My son.

I hope it'll be soon.

2.

But, son, I only took him to your room after he said the words we had agreed on.

I know, Mom. Don't worry. The fight goes on. Don't worry, it's hard on you.

I'm terrified. Aren't you?

We only die once, the son said.

Will they at least let you have the banana pudding?

They'll let me.

Are they treating you well?

Yes, mother.

They stood while they talked. His legs were hurting him. He sat down and, with a distracted gesture, rolled up his trousers to cool himself off.

Hot?

Suffocating.

Then she noticed:

Those marks? All over your body, too?

Don't worry, Mom.

He assured her: They really were good people. No doubt about it. They were going to let him have the banana pudding.

It was such a pleasure to make it, she said.

Enrique Lihn

Translated by Dave Oliphant

FIGURES OF SPEECH

Insomnia's constellation compels me to persevere
in a sleepless fatigue
like an astronomer faced with disappearance of a star
but without the consolation of these metaphors
I charge to old poetry's account.
Nor is New York another of the numerous poems
that carry its name nor is it loaned for lighting the paper
(written so often for no reason and with no results)
with a feeling like a mask
I would hide behind:
an old common place where all the words — except
for a very few — appear.
This city where all converge
doesn't look it's clear at all like a person
It's something inert like the creation
of a continent in a glacial age
and is only in this sense alive
Grandeur yes but not dreams of greatness, advancing
from above
our lazy means for evading its description
with exclamations and more figures of speech.

Carlos Cortinez
Translated by Frank Crothers

LATIN AMERICAN POETRY IN THE SEVENTIES

I don't think it is possible to give a thorough idea of Latin American poetry during a period as recent as the last decade. Poetry, being written to be read slowly, usually circulates in like fashion, especially in Latin America. Poetic production in almost any Latin American country, though massive, seldom leaves its own borders. And who today, among the din of mass society, has an ear sharp enough to capture the distant, incipient, fluctuating, almost clandestine voices?

Notwithstanding my reservation about such an undertaking, I dared in Budapest (at the congress of the European Association of Spanish Professors, July, 1978) to outline some tendencies in the present-day lyric of Latin America. Instead of generalizing, using data necessarily incomplete, I preferred to concentrate on specific works published after 1970. I limit myself to ten, selecting more according to my own reading than some exhaustive evaluation whose rigidity and dogmatism would, in any case, work against the handling of poetic material. I will synthesize here some opinions already expressed in Budapest, bringing out different tendencies, generations, and geographical regions.

Without doubt the greatest living Latin American poet is **Jorge Luis Borges.** For many years his poetry went unrecognized by the critics on account of his works of fiction and his essays. With his advancing blindness, Borges has returned to poetry, adding to it the best of his rich literary experience. His poetic production has gained with the years, if not variety, a depth and technical mastery. Considering the inconveniences of age, blindness, and fame, his production is admirable. Borges has achieved for his poetry that which Coleridge knew well: every new writer must create the taste with which to enjoy his work.

The most recent poetic works of Borges, *La Moneda de Hierro* and *Historia de la Noche*, offer a characteristic show of his later poetry. They seem somewhat miscellaneous with an excessive variety of themes. Over and above such an impression, the poet imposes, nevertheless, an indisputable tonal unity and a constant attitude toward the search for a past—personal, familial, national, racial—in which to gain a foothold and from which to try to understand the present. Though he creates a predominantly nostalgic tone, the poet does not yield to it and, affirming himself in his habitual supports—literature, philosophy, remembrance of his elders—he obtains the necessary forces to continue living actively.

The poetry of these books tends, as in all Borges, to formal clarity, a certain symmetry or specular structure that finds its paradigm in the sonnet. The insistence of a poet like Borges on a mold that seemed to have been discarded forever by vanguardist iconoclasm, has revived in many young poets an interest in the classical

forms. But these are isolated cases, since the trademark of the period seems to be the predominance of prosaic expression and of narrative language in the Latin American lyric—the exact counterpart of what occurs in the novel, which has allowed itself to be won over, in general, by poetic language.

But it is certainly not in the resurrection of old forms where the influence of Borges is most forceful. Although the cohesion, clarity, and reach of Borges' philosophical convictions may be questionable, his sustained intellectual vigilance is not. If his example has not managed to banish entirely the passionate overflowings, the political exuberance, or the self-indulgent exaggeration of amorous adventures and misadventures of the Latin American lyric, it at least constitutes a visible restraint. His ethic, no less than his aesthetic, is always offering to the young poet an amicable call to correctness and sanity, an invitation not to distrust completely an already scorned reason.

How has Borges managed, with his scruples and modesty, to evolve such an intensely personal poetic work? In my judgment he achieves it by means of overcoming the distinction between the "objective" and the "subjective" poet that Wellek and Warren consider basic. The literary genius of Borges and his privileged sensibility have permitted him to maintain in admirable equilibrium the proportion between the exterior world and his own interiorness. There are well-known examples in such poems as "*Una Rosa y Milton*," which permits Borges to boast—modestly—of a literary merit: to name a rose, crumpled for centuries, the last that Milton brought near to his blind eyes. This confessed glee permits him to hush an implicit lamentation: that of being himself, as blind as Milton, and incapable like him of enjoying the perceptible beauty of the universe. This double voice in Borges, the visible, or better, the audible, in the sonnet and the other, silent, intimate, secret, that the reader does not receive from the printed letter but from his own interior is that which has permitted Borges to overcome the alluded-to dichotomy. His visible gesture, his perceptible voice, are directed toward the exterior world (no less exterior for being a world made literature) while his secret gesture is to open to us the door of his intimacy.

The poetry of Borges is neither political nor, in the strict sense, philosophic. It is indeed intellectual poetry but not that of a cold man. Of a sentimental man, yes, if it is fitting to qualify him as one who recognizes no other passion that that of the intellect.

On the other poetic summit of Latin America stands **Octavio Paz** (Mexico, b. 1914). Among the great poets of the continent, only these two, Borges and Paz, have been prominent in other genres—Borges in the short story and the essay and Paz in literary criticism and the essay (sociological, anthropological, and historical). Both contribute with their texts to an opening toward literary and ideological contexts more vast than those of their own language. They are examples of the poet who expands with mastery the limits of the language. One regains for the words etymological connotations, and the other creates suggestive neologisms by means of free combinations. In *Vuelta*, his last poetic work, Paz continues directions begun in previous writings, among them a vision of his land of birth. His return to Mexico permits him to see his country with a new objectivity. The look is critical and the result even more bitter than that found in his previous writings. The reflection on Mexico—and by extension on Latin America—merges with autobiography (which was already present in "*Piedra de Sol*", *El Mono Gramático* and *Pasado en Claro*). As is characteristic of Paz, woman occupies an important place in *Vuelta*. She is the final clarity in which the poet encounters a certainty that neither history, nor ideas, nor even poetry can offer him. The book ends significantly with these words, "*Mujer: fuente en la noche. Yo me fío a su fluir sosegado.*"

Vuelta is an important book in the production of Paz, not because it inaugurates a new period for him or because it reveals to us new insights. It is important since it permits him to express once again his habitual visions and convictions, though in a manner perhaps more purified and, at times, transparent. The severe elegance with which Paz handles the language is one of his most notable qualities and will remain perhaps as his greatest legacy.

Upon descending from the uppermost reaches, in a region nearby, still high above the constant debate of poets who clamor for editors, readers, and prizes, there is a large number of established poets whose renown exceeds the limits of their country. Among these are the Chileans Nicanor Parra (b. 1914) and Gonzalo Rojas (b. 1918), the Peruvian Carlos G. Belli (b. 1927), the Cuban Nicolás Guillén (b. 1902), and the Nicaraguan Ernesto Cardenal (b. 1925).

Nicanor Parra's most often used weapon in his

"anti-poetic" venture is humor. In *Sermones y Prédicas del Cristo de Elqui,* he is freely inspired by a popular but eccentric character who traveled Chile in the 30's preaching and calling himself "The Christ of Elqui." His ambiguous personality—charlatan, madman, visionary—fascinated Parra and permitted him to overcome the poetic crisis in which a previous work, "*Artefactos,*" had left him. These pseudo-poems were according to their author the logical continuation of the "anti-poems," the fragments into which the former had burst. After the "Artefactos" (each a sort of post card of doubtful poetic quality) many readers feared that what would come would be an absolute silence. Not one pregnant with meaning, as in "*Blanco*" by Paz, but one of a mere expressive muteness. The legendary roving Chilean preacher achieves in Parra, if not a miracle, an admirable feat: the resurrection of the poet/anti-poet.

Changing course, Parra exhibits here a synthesis of the virtues that made famous his previous works (*Poemas y Antipoemas, Versos de Salón*). This book combines the religious obsession of Parra—no less authentic for being satiric or ironic—folklore, the popular sense of a sullen *chilenidad,* the incorporation of colloquial turns and sayings, that is, all the arsenal of anti-poetry put at the service of an essentially humorous work but which transcends humor to move in a plurality of directions. The basic success of Parra consists in having found the proper mask. The contradictions of the figure in the *Antipoemas* are now manifested totally in this roving "Cristo" who, with his life, left a wake of rich folklore.

Octavio Paz affirms in his *Hijos del Limo* that the history of modern poetry is the history of oscillations between two extremes: revolutionary temptation and religious temptation. In **Gonzalo Rojas** and **Ernesto Cardenal** one notices this duality, the religious and political, and such coincidence permits the difference between the two to come off in a livelier fashion. Cardenal creates a poetry he qualifies as *exteriorista,* that is to say, tilted toward the exterior. That of Rojas, although it is not indifferent to external events, generally takes place within the poet. It is there where the visions, dreams, readings, and passions revolve, at times dramatically; and the final product, without being properly confessional, delivers parts of both worlds, and especially the conflict that they initiate. Another difference between the two is in the poetic language utilized. Cardenal best represents the narrative tendency in Latin America. Although Rojas, like Cardenal, admires Pound, his admiration has not brought him to erase the frontiers between the two genres. Rojas conserves an admirable sense of poetic rhythm: a respiratory, personal rhythm that does not base itself immediately in the dictates of meter. Each poem seems to impose the rhythm that corresponds to it. There is a confluence of so many voices, the author recognizes so many influences, that finally some annul others and what remains (very clearly in his book *Oscuro* which recollects poems from throughout his life) is the hesitant language of the author. His voice is personal, his tone is profound.

Compared with that of Parra, this poetry stands out for its seriousness, although it does not fall into any sort of smug or pedantic gravity. The exultant health and the ardent love for life do not lose sight of the brevity and mystery of human destiny. His religious undercurrent does not contradict his political position, as neither show any dogmatism. His work is marked from beginning to end with an air of genuine liberty, a lofty dignity and, definitely, a radical humility before the mystery and latent desire to contribute to human solidarity.

Only with the publication of *Oh, Hada Cibernética,* which includes poems collected from various short works of scant circulation, does one obtain a complete impression of the development of the poetry of **Carlos Germán Belli.** In his poetry Belli tries to reconcile "a bit of tradition and a bit of revolution." His rhetorical devices and motifs are recurrent and easily discernible. He suffers the degraded condition of a man punished excessively by his obligation to work. The poet does not deliberately accuse the capitalist forces. His attitude is less protest than utopian yearning: to achieve for man someday a complete liberation which will allow him mastery of his time and energies and free him for the noble occupations: love, art, and contemplation. Naturally this proposition becomes ironic in his work. Distance is achieved, on the one hand, by the syntax and archaic vocabulary and, on the other, by the humor. It is a less strident humor than Parra's, indeed more subtle. The feeling of oppression is particularized at times, and contemporary man is summed up by the concrete *peruanito,* the bureaucrat, the amanuensis who gives his blood to a job without grandeur or expectations in exchange for "the low

salaries of Peru." His denunciation stops here. He urges no concrete actions: he lacks the prescriptions or the belligerent fervor. He seems more bland than Cardenal and less dramtic than Rojas because his art is more elaborate, less immediate.

Choosing among the less-known poets is surely more arduous. The number rises steadily and the decision becomes the personal preference of the anthologizer. Perhaps one of the consequences of the primacy of Borges and Paz is the appearance of young poets who try to assume the poetic tradition, however immense the task. Effusions of spirit are not enough. The models have imposed a reflective attitude of lucidity towards the poetic undertaking, and the young poets traverse, without shame, that path, narrow but already cleared.

Of course there is also the poetry that contents itself with the repetition of slogans and which in undisguised manner tries to convince, denounce, and incite action. It is a poetry of transitory intention and is resigned to an ephemeral life. Political poetry offers a mask of deceitful facility, but in its snare many poets have fallen and only the great, like Neruda or Guillén, or the very pure, like Heraud, have managed to survive the experience. The time does not seem apt for ingenuous poetry or for the partisan. With the exception of the Chilean Arteche, neither does it seem the time for religious poetry—now that, in fact, one cannot classify as such either Cardenal or Rojas.

If I must keep this brief note within reasonable limits and still choose among poets who border forty years of age, I would mention here the Mexican poet, José Emilio Pacheco (b. 1939) and the Chilean, Oscar Hahn (b. 1938).

Although **Oscar Hahn** is a poet of a single theme—death—and of a very limited work—all contained in the thirty-eight poems of his book *Arte de Morir*—he reveals, in the brief corpus of his poetry, a technical mastery, an originality in the multiple treatment of the classical theme, a control of the language that goes from the Baroque to the anti-poetic, from the cultured to the popular, and which at times are intermingled in the same poem.

José Emilio Pacheco, a tireless worker, has placed his life at the service of his passions: reading and writing. Prose or verse, criticism or creation, anthologies, translations, articles, are all composed with a demanding professional attitude that refuses journalistic facility. This "young master"—as Paz has called him—is the clearest heir to the elder masters, Paz and Borges. But also in him is revived the Mexican poetic tradition and, certainly, the Spanish heritage.

There is a certain intellectual avidity detectible in Pacheco when considering not only his vast production but also the diverse genres that he attempts. *Islas a La Deriva*, his last book of poetry, reveals the multiplicity of interests of the author. Half the poems are translations from diverse languages and constitute a sort of anthology of contemporary poetry. The rest are poems related to the Mexican past, to Canadian landscapes, to classical antiquity, and to beasts, both real and imaginary.

It is evident that Pacheco and Hahn prefer objective poetry. The author denies himself the right to intervene. He only contributes his eye and his ear and offers simple images, at times in succession, at times in opposition. Notwithstanding the modest self-imposed limitations, their poetry reveals a metaphysical edge that makes it significant. Although the poetry of Pacheco seldom speaks of death, it is, in comparison, a good deal more somber. He captures man at his worst: destructive, hungry for power, ungrateful, possessive, without antennae for beauty. All this is in rather strong contrast to the majesty of the elements of nature, for which Pacheco has a ready-made sensibility and a reverent attitude.

And among the even less known poets? Those who after vacillations have published one or two slender volumes? To the desk of the critic or of the professor these timorous, pallid volumes arrive, in search of a review or perhaps a greeting, a fleeting friendship. From that reading, which is not always done with the profundity or calm that may be deserved, some small books continue resounding, for one reason or another, in the sensibility of the hurried reader.

As I recall my own readings, the images and impressions of three short books of poetry come first to my mind.

The Venezuelan **Francisco Pérez Perdomo** (b. 1930) shows in *Ceremonias* a great coherence with his former work (collected in *Huéspedes Nocturnos*) but demonstrating a greater mastery in the treatment of proposed themes. This book is remarkable in its compact unity of tone, placed at the service of a strange thematic in which the poet mixes reminiscences of the past with the presence of the legendary and the phan-

tasmal.

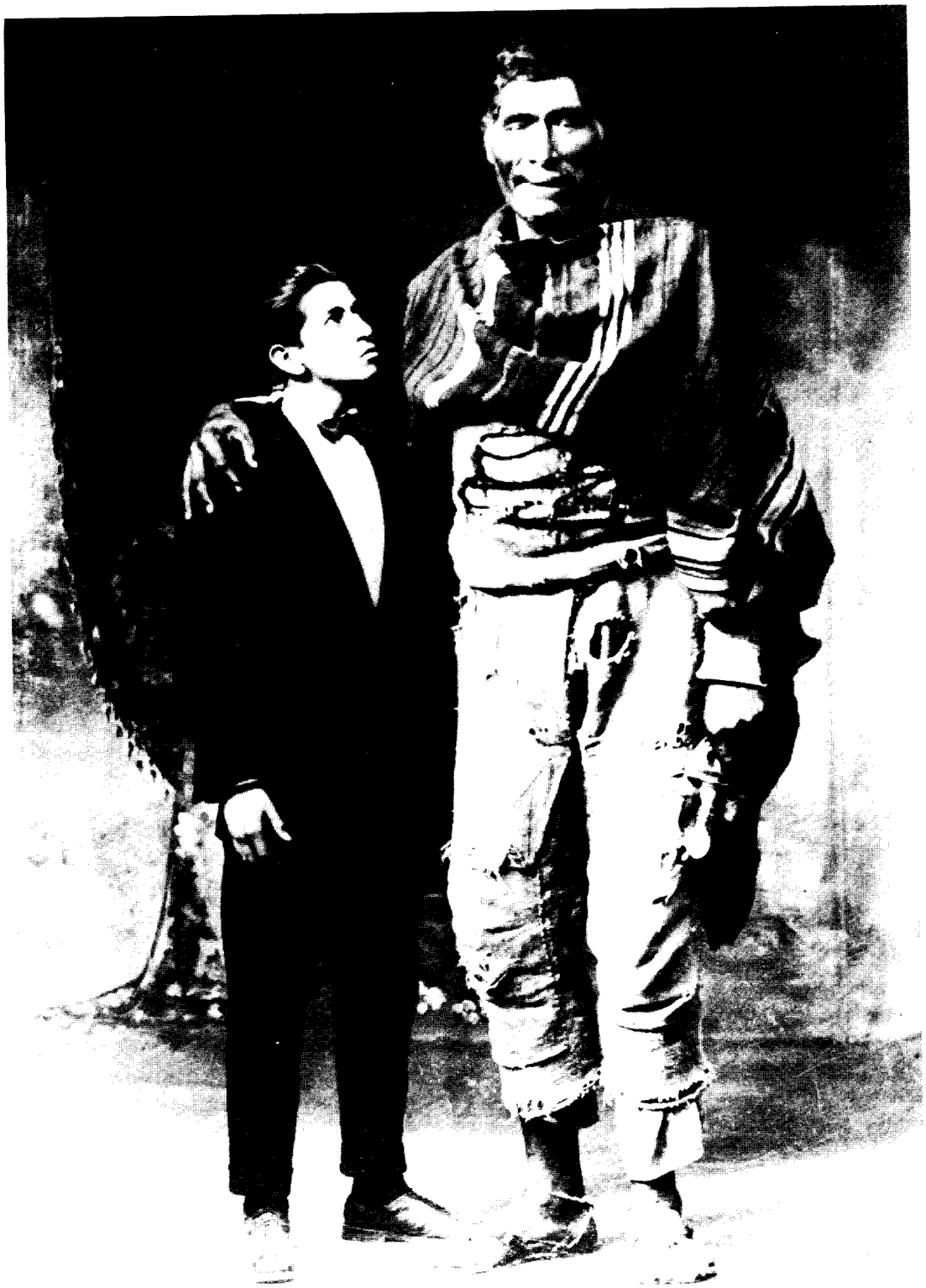
Although somewhat forced, the atmosphere is disquieting, haloed with intemporality and an imprecise geography. In the shadows one distinguishes malignant spirits, birds of augur, beings pursued by a sort of terror of the unknown. All this is intended to reflect the adolescent fears of the rural youth of the Continent.

In the second book of the Cuban poetess **Eliana Rivero** (b. 1942), *Cuerpos Breves*, the poems are charged with an intense eroticism but, at the same time, severely moderated in expression. The author reveals herself a possessor of an exuberant sensibility, capable of loving with intensity and joy but also, as a poetess, capable of imposing measure on her verse, controlling the possible excesses that go along with her emotions. The book, of merit for its legitimate poetical values, is revealing of the changes that the woman of the 70's has undergone. The uninhibited frankness in dealing with the sexual denotes a new attitude, because these poems do not show an eagerness to provoke or scandalize, as in poetesses of the past who had to overcome their insecurity in order to poetize what was held as indecent. The lyric voice has surpassed the defiant attitude and presents itself, paradoxically, helpless, though without waverings, before the magnitude of the erotic.

The political situation on the Continent does not favor cultural life, and writers suffer in a more or less systematic manner from persecution or hostilities that move them to exile as a lesser evil. **Hugo Achugar** (b. 1944) is one of them, and in his book *Textos para decir María*, following the example of Martí, he identifies his loved one with the lost land of his birth. In his brief texts, from his exile in Venezuela, he gradually builds a record of a personalized love for his companions in poetry and politics, his kin, and small memories in which suddenly appear *la patria*. Achugar achieves an equilibrium similar to that praised in Eliana Rivero. Just as it is easy to be dragged down by excess erotic frenzy, so it is to fall into a simplistic stance moved by indignation or political passion. Without denying it, Achugar has preferred to deliver his testimony in fragmentary texts, fragile and of great sobriety, which result, by their own nakedness, that much more effective.

Let us say then, in order to conclude, that there is no lack in present-day Latin America of a confessional poetry, though its cultivators prefer to mask its nakedness (Borges, Paz, Belli). There is poetry of return (Paz) and exile (Achugar). Poetry of the "big" death (Hahn) and of the "small" (Rivero). Of unbridled humor that ends in a roar (Parra) to the almost imperceptible that culminates with a smile (Belli). There are poets who face the mystery of existence and combat it with the arms of philosophy and literature (Borges) and those who do it with poetry and the body (Paz, Rojas). Objective poets (Pacheco, Hahn) and subjective (Pérez Perdomo).

This panoramic sweep, although it implies a selection—need I repeat it?—does not pretend to be exhaustive or definitive. The books mentioned seem to me to offer a positive vision of the poetic craft in Latin America. I find incomprehensible the statement of Cardenal (made to Benedetti in 1970) that there are no great living Latin American poets. My present impression, notwithstanding the irreparable absences of Neruda and Lezama Lima, both dead after Cardenal's statement, is that the lyric genre in Latin America continues to flourish.



Daniel Moyano

Translated by H. E. Francis

THE JOY OF THE HUNTER

We no longer mention the possibility of entering the house and finding a big strange animal there. In the old days, though, such a thing would have seemed a dream or a remote possibility. Now each time you open the door, especially at night, you also open up the chance of hearing the creature's breathing in the dark and seeing its particular form after putting the light on.

Rumor has it that many strong people did succeed in overcoming these presences, domesticating, killing, or tolerating them. Others, the weakest, could not survive the terror, and still others abandoned home and city at the very thought. Finally, a few unbelievers even now deny the facts because nothing has ever happened to them.

These animals had their golden age when their existence went unperceived by men. They could live together with the house owner, fittingly hidden, and as long as they did not abuse him by devouring one of his babies, they went unnoticed. They enjoyed such a comfortable classification as dreams or fables in those well-bound volumes of the ancient science of augury.

The gradual discovery of these beasts, which cost many a wise man persecution and prison, later helped to explain human conduct, passion, crime, and frustration.

When I enter the house, the animal is there. I know that because the creature has produced effects among us which otherwise have no explanation. Despite my fear, which I haven't been able to overcome in a good many years of search, I don't put the light on at once. My eyes have become accustomed to the dark and I manage to go through every inch of the house without fumbling, raising trunk lids, opening closets, searching under beds. The animal is also used to my ways and no doubt shifts places during my probings. I put the light on only when I feel a more or less certain conviction that the animal will appear in full form, surprised in the middle of the room or behind the door. Usually I have my revolver or knife ready to attack before it can react. At times — unfortunately, because of the burden of routine — you forget the weapon but think you carry it and put the light on, completely defenseless. This has often happened to me. No matter how sure you are of a thing, there are moments when you lose all the attributes of security and confidence — I mean, you no sooner uselessly acquire them than they disappear. (I must ponder this. It is one of the urgent tasks I set for myself sometime back — I jotted the thought down on a stack of papers long since lost, but the papers assure me of the certainty of my proposal to make a thorough investigation into this careless-

ness.)

Not long ago these animals realized our previous awareness of them, realized man's reason, which drew them out of the shadows. That's why they hide, seek little frequented corners — trying, if they are big, to hide feet and tusks — and even restrain their breathing to avoid being discovered inside furniture, behind objects, or in dark corners of the house.

I've studied a good bit of zoology, acquiring through my knowledge of all the known forms the idea of those which are not known, vital details not covered by evolutionary lines. My sketchbooks contain thousands of such forms. One of them, I'm sure, fits the form of the animal we've had lodged in the house for such a long time.

Mine is not a problem of perception, but purely one of mechanics. Every time I come home, I try a new geometric displacement, misleading chafings, planned delayed speeds, in search of its stance. Its condition as scarcely existent gives it many advantages in this game, and it always succeeds in eluding me. But there are signs that the species is not immortal. So I do have time on my side. I can detect concealed odors. It won't be able to hide its foul smell when it dies.

My family shared my fears for some time, especially when the children were little. Grown, they're capable of shouting or defending themselves. Now nobody worries here: they've forgotten the old fears; they sleep trustful of the friendly night. I always keep the doors closed, but it happens they're always unlocked or ajar because my family gives no importance to the matter. They are not even afraid the animal may come in from outside, that it may live outside and come in only at night in search of food. I don't believe it lives outside because it is in the house, though I don't negate the possibility that it comes and goes according to its needs.

A few nights ago I was on the verge of finding it. The animal was in the bathroom. It was useless for it to open the door very slowly because my ear hears noises which go unnoticed by others. I walked slowly toward the spot, without putting the light on. Not far from the bathroom door, its odor was noticeable — the odor of a mountain beast. Taking the odor as a reference point, I deduced and learned that it had thick, dirty bristles like the wild boar, although its possible aspect was more like a monstrous deformed goat's. The hooves which it surely had, allowed me to suppose its immediate habits; but its face was hard to imagine because of all the tangled hairs which must have covered it. The thing was breathing — *that* the beast couldn't avoid. By the weight which I supposed rested on the floor, it was not in the normal position of a quadruped. It stood, whatever its sex, erect, leaning two feet against the wall to adapt itself to the narrow space behind the door.

All this I deduced from its odor. Although once again I was without a weapon, I shoved the door violently, at the same time giving a cry to confuse with the cry the animal might make. He was not there, but his odor was. No doubt he had leaped almost the height of the wall to reach the window near the ceiling. Another urgent task I must do soon is put bars on that window. With the magnifying glass I looked for remains of hair or marks on the walls and floor, but I found nothing. There's no limit to the monster's shrewdness.

What is it seeking in the house? Why does it pursue me? Do I have some trait in common with it? It's not food the cursed thing is looking for. We've made tests. Nothing's ever missing. The leftovers are carefully examined before we throw them into the garbage and the next day they're untouched. But I am sure of one thing: it seeks human warmth, the heat of our very being. Surely when we're all sleeping it comes as near as it can to gather some of our heat — not physical heat (its hide is much more protective than ours): it wants contact, nearness. My frequent meditations on its psychology (diverging at times from its possible form, at times its odor) allow me to suppose all this. But for that desire, it would not have lived with us for so many years. It would have left. There is something in me which particularly attracts it. I myself have begun to study my own form to discover what trait attracts it.

It's very possible that I do have some trait in common with it. At times, when I chew something, I bite the inside of my mouth as if I had too many teeth. My cheeks are sore inside. And every time I gnaw at myself, I feel like a monster who wants to devour himself from sheer stupidity, from confusing the historic act of eating with ancient traditions.

When I shave, especially if I pretend to shave, without any razor, making all the movements which the real act of shaving demands, I discover in myself attitudes which are not part of my personality. As if that were not enough, I abandon that practice and stand still, looking at myself scrupulously, my face

motionless before the mirror, and I notice attitudes that are not part of my nature, scarcely disguised by my chin, brows, the distance between my eyes, the set of my nose. It's as if the creature were staring at me. This fact, far from discouraging me, far from losing me in involved interpretations, gives me more strength to continue my search. It means we are not so strange to one another; it means we have something in common, a very remote bond which justifies the search.

Going back to the motives for its presence in the house, I don't believe such creatures thrive on aggression as an end, although there are reasons for being sure that eventually the beast may use aggression as a means. The assumption that it comes and goes periodically would allow you to think that one factor of this reality is habit, although before falling into habit it may have had concrete reasons for electing my house as a lair. Besides, what do we know of the nature of monsters? Too much time has been lost in a frivolous approximation of this facet of reality, neglecting its true identity. And if in reality these animals seek only human warmth, a closeness not necessarily physical, and besides do it from habit, it means then that they have intelligence, an intelligence which, stimulated by their situation as intruders, can turn against us at any moment.

That's what makes such a risk of my search, my action, which does not pass unperceived by its very sharp sense of smell. The monster is aware of every move I make, and as long as it can avoid my moves with a simple displacement, it will not attack me. But if my movements can become dangerous for it, on the strength of perfectability, then it's certain that at any moment it will crush me.

For that reason there are intervals when I don't look for it, times when I let it rest to lessen its possible violence. That's when the family become content and think I've given up my methods, when they think there's no longer any danger. I do it simply to calm their accumulated anxiety, to give the beast a breathing spell — and at the same time to give me one too. But these periods coincide with its greatest activity; that's when, at night, it approaches the places nearest us, when, for the creature, full communication takes place.

One of the great difficulties is my ignorance of its form: because no matter how many sketches I've made or keep making, no matter how I try to know what it's like, the form (I don't mean to describe *myself*) is still a blank. I tell myself it's a quadruped, but how do I know that? Why a quadruped? It must be because years ago I discredited the possibility of its being an insect owing to its evident odor, its intelligence, the bulk I know it has. It has a considerable bulk: somewhere between a goat and a puma. It has even grown over the years. The proof of its size is that when it's in the house and I come home, my hair bristles — an insect doesn't provoke that reaction. A big animal, yes. Besides, once I found a few hairs. I said they came from the animal, and at home nobody could prove they did not despite the violence with which they opposed my affirmation. On the floors now and then appear scratches, which, if they certainly may come from different sources, include the monster among them. Every time we've cleaned the house thoroughly, a sign appeared: odors, marks on the walls and floor, rugs piled up as if for sleeping, vermin. Despite these surprise cleanings, there's always enough time for it to hide on the neighboring roofs.

Some years ago, I believe it was, after such a cleaning, my wife (although she never mentions this because she's ashamed to) asked me if I really believed in the monster's existence. I didn't hesitate to answer because I never do when it concerns such matters; at once I said it was not a question of believing or not — I didn't believe *anything*, the animal simply was *there*, and its condition as something that *is* was independent of any belief one could have about its real existence. She said we could not live this way and went to another room — to cry, I think — and didn't wait for my answer, an answer which otherwise might never have come because it was not *in* me, because I simply did not understand her words. Of course I know that you can't live this way, but at least I do what I can.

Lately there has been almost no communication among the members of the family we've come to be. They elude me, avoid me, shun me. At times they are talking together tranquilly and when I come in, they change the subject—not because they're talking ill of me, but they change the subject because they don't consider me up to their conversation. Although this can upset me somewhat, I can't give them all the attention they deserve, nor can I react the way I feel because I'm always very caught up in my own affairs, rather, in the animal's affairs, which one day I'll settle for the good of all of us.

They ask me for facts. It is precisely this foolish attitude of asking for facts which prevents their per-

ceiving the thing's existence. I can't give them facts. In this sense I'm as helpless as the animal. That's why I confine myself to one action, to a definite attitude. To top it all off, the rare times I refer to the matter they all grow quiet, they don't answer, they don't even look at me — they lower their eyes as if ashamed or saddened or suspicious. Not even knowing my struggle is for their welfare arouses in them a feeling of understanding. They are indifferent, they go to parties, they leave the house empty, they plan vacations, they talk about stupid everyday things, the trivia in the daily paper. About the creature, nothing. Never.

I know that when you come right down to it they love me and that the thing hasn't really substantially harmed my relations with my wife and children. During the periods when I'm silent and remain calm to lessen the possible anger of our guest, they talk to me — tell me what they're doing, how school is, how things are in town. And this would be enough to convert me into an ordinary contented man if it weren't for the presence hidden among us.

At times I feel worn out. The years are going by and this matter goes on without change. But there is one hope: the animal is growing old and becomes slower everyday. Its movements no longer coincide with its intentions. This inevitable physical change can turn out to be definitively useful to me. One of these nights it will not be able to shift with its usual rapidity when it hears me open the front door. Then it will remain standing in the middle of the room, defenseless, awaiting sacrifice or pity, when I turn the light on. It will close its eyes so as not to see me and await whatever may come, tired of it all. If it is horrible, it will try to disguise its face somehow. Trembling will relax its ferocity a bit. If it is not horrible, in vain it will open its bloody mouth full of worn and now useless teeth which couldn't scare a soul. It will close its eyes and stretch its neck toward the edge of the knife.

But I don't know if I'll kill it. But then, never was that my intention. When I see it, I shall have discovered the most important part of its nature or, rather, I shall have the absolute proof of its existence. I will extend my hands as if to touch it, to be sure of its warmth and its breathing. Little by little, I will extend my fingers toward the round of its head; little by little I will reach out to touch it; and then, it seems to me, I shall cry with joy, bursting from utter happiness.

John Mosier

LATIN AMERICAN CINEMA IN THE SEVENTIES

The last ten years have been important ones for the development of cinema in Latin America. In fact, there is probably no period in this century that has been as important as the past decade has been for film makers. In order to understand why this could be the case, it is necessary to consider a broad overview of the development of cinema in the region, even at the risk of distorting the situation slightly. Broadly speaking, Latin American Cinema did not exist for the outside world until the beginning of the 1960's. Strictly speaking, of course, this statement is far from true: Latin Americans began making films at the same time that everyone else did at about the end of the last century, and considerable industry as well as some first rate artists were in the region since that time. However, for the outside world, particularly for the outside world of film critics and moviegoers, Latin American Cinema is a phenomenon whose rise to notice dates from two roughly synchronous events: the foundation of ICAIC (the Cuban Film Institute) in 1959-60, and the emergence of the *Cinema Novo* in Brasil. These events are only roughly synchronous, and it is perhaps misleading to single them out as being decisive. However, a mass of evidence suggests that in the explicitly communist cinema of ICAIC and in the sophisticated Brasilian amalgam of Marxism and nationalism Latin American Cinema begins to make substantial inroads on global cinema.

During the decade Latin American film makers won an impressive array of prizes in international festivals; their films were for the first time widely seen abroad; and, more importantly, what has come retrospectively to be seen — at least by ICAIC — as a *nuevo cine latinoamericano* began to be perceived by foreigners as a movement in global cinema which paralleled the *Nouvelle Vague* in France and the New Waves of Czechoslovakia and Poland, frequently surpassing them in what was widely perceived as a sort of exotic excitement and tropical savagery. Humberto Solas' *Lucia*, produced in Cuba in 1969 might stand as the epitome of this sort of film making, with an initial sequence done in a grainy black and white in which the camera seems to be consistently disconcerted and discomfited by the savage melodrama that unfolds. In fact, from *Lucia* to the works of Glauber Rocha and Rui Guerra in Brasil Latin American Cinema emerged as a surprisingly decisive intellectual force. Its leaders seemed as remarkably aware of global cinema as they were frequently disdainful of it. Their originality fascinated — and frequently appalled — foreigners, just

as the artists themselves would first stimulate and then reject lengthy studies of their works which attempted to fit them into Marxist and semiological patterns.

This New Latin American Cinema, like the "new" cinemas of Europe, was political. Solas' Lucia of the 1890's believes that the worst thing that can happen to her is to fall in love with and have sexual relations with a married man who cannot marry her. But she soon realizes that her lover was not after her virginity, but after the location of her brother's insurgents. Any belief that one can have a private life is rudely shattered. The most impactive films of the New Brasilian Cinema of this period were if anything more political: at the very end of the decade a film like Rui Guerra's *Os deuses e os mortos* would take the frequently comic and always humanistic world of Jorge Amado's Bahia and transform it into a savage economic and political world where the characters would not even be given names, but would only represent forces.

Consequently, Latin American film makers suffered in the general global tightening that marked the end of the decade: the end of the Prague Spring in 1968 heralded a worldwide reaction. Governments, whether their flags were red or green, began to clamp down on what was being shown on the screens. In the view of many writers, particularly those who had been closely involved with the excitement of these new cinemas, little of value would come out of the aftermath of a worldwide avalanche of institutional acts and exiled artists. The "new" cinemas of Latin America, like those of Poland and Czechoslovakia, were mourned and buried.

This point of view — particularly when it is coupled with the misleading idea that a few people in a few places had created a "new" cinema out of whole cloth in 1960 — unfortunately emerged as a surprisingly rigid critical posture. From 1970 on one can run down the titles of articles on film in mass circulation film periodicals and see it all: "rigor mortis," "a long time dying," "they shoot film makers, don't they." Such tags were of course sustained by two key events of the seventies in film that need brief discussion.

The first, and perhaps the most widely known, concerns the brief rise and rapid collapse of the Allende government in Chile. One of the first acts of the coalition government was to institute a film organization in some ways analogous to ICAIC. Film makers flocked to Chile, and an ambitious start was made at film production. In actual fact, film making in Chile only got off the ground immediately before the successful coup. Paradoxically, even the films that were made under Allende are curiously pessimistic, thus indirectly setting the tone for what will follow. Costa Gavras' *State of Siege*, loosely based on events in Uruguay, was of course shot in Chile, as were the more authentic works of Miguel Littin, *El chacal del Nahueltoro* and *La tierra prometida*, as well as the surprisingly perceptive efforts of Peter Lilienthal and Antonio Skarmeta. None of these films, to be blunt, are particularly optimistic: the protagonist of *El chacal* is executed, as is the folk hero of *La Tierra*.

And of course the best films to come out of Chile were to come just later. Even during the last chaotic year, Patricio Guzman had realized—correctly as it was to turn out—that the events of 1973 were simply waiting for a documentarist, and he began to shoot his *Battle of Chile*, which would, by 1979, have established itself as probably the best single documentary work to emerge from Latin America. Helio Soto's *It's Raining in Santiago* and Lilienthal's *Calm Prevails Over the Country* would recount the end of the regime: Soto in documentary fashion and Lilienthal through means of a loosely constructed parable about the triumph of forces of repression in the state.

Events in Chile, coupled with such highly publicized events as the exile of Glauber Rocha and the virtual collapse of film in Argentina, buttressed the contentions of the intellectuals that serious cinema had been turned off. Unfortunately, the seventies were not a decade in which global opinions of what has happened in Latin America have changed. If anything, there has been a further fragmentation. I have already mentioned the views of some of the more orthodox film writers—that all that was good was destroyed at the end of the decade and only lives on in relative splendor in Cuba. Whether or not one accepts this view depends on what one makes of events in Cuba. There was a quietly rising tide during the seventies of healthy skepticism regarding the more ingenuous claims of the left regarding Cuban cinema.

At the same time any sober investigation of what has really been happening in Latin American Cinema is still in its earliest stages, so what follows should be considered more as an attempt to initiate further study rather than as a definitive statement.

First, I would point out that both ICAIC and Cinema Novo had a similar aim: (a) to produce a serious and aesthetically significant cinema of some originality

Lillian Lemmertz heats up the electric needles in *Alleluia Gretchen* by Sylvio Back.

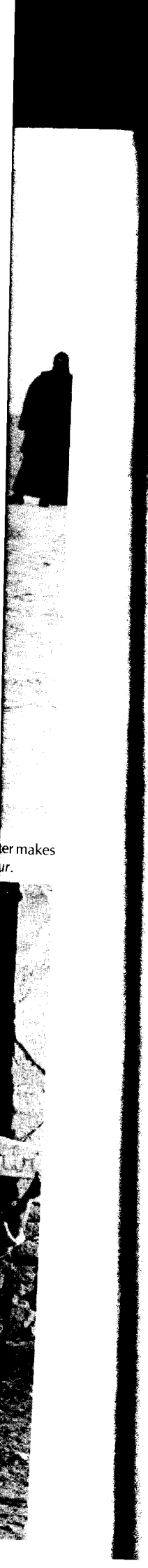
and national authenticity that (b) would serve as the cutting edge of an attempt to woo audiences away from foreign films which were (c) weakening or perverting any real sense of aesthetics or cultural appreciation. This is of course nothing more nor less than cinematic nationalism and, once one realizes that it is, certain otherwise anomalous events begin to fall together and a picture of cinema in the region emerges that is rather different from the one I have been sketching.

Now, although the more internationally famous works of the *Nuevo cine latinoamericano* are both justifiably excellent and have won the awards to prove it, they were little more than two things. First, they were works that accrued international prestige and thus gave their authors some much needed national leverage in dealing with their own governments. Second, they were vehicles for learning about cinema. Even Rocha would admit at the end of the decade that one of the best things that had happened in Brasil was that the filmmakers were improving.

But such films, particularly in Brasil, but elsewhere as well, were notably unsuccessful with audiences. One of the aims of the new cineastes was to get national audiences to see their films rather than the films of foreigners. This problem is not quite as simple as it seems. It is not, as I believe at least a few people have discovered even in Cuba, a simple matter of shutting off the imported films. There are several reasons why this is scarcely an answer. In the first place, a real cinema-going population has a voracious appetite for films, and there is no place in Latin America (or in eastern Europe) where local production can fill that demand. In the second place, audiences can stay away entirely. During a recent visit to Cuba I was struck forcibly by just how much this was the case.

Rafael Corkidi's *Pafnucio Santo*. ↑

↓ Paul Leduc's *John Reed: Mexico Insurgente*. The clutter makes it just as much an exercise in the surreal as *Belle de Jour*.



Theatres which should have been full were virtually empty. Third, there is, at least in countries where there is some sort of market economy in effect, the fact that foreigners have managed to buy a sizeable piece of the film distribution and exhibition action, and thus cannot simply be ejected or shut off.

The Cubans have been most successful at producing films which conform to an explicit ideological standard and therefore can be said to promote strictly Cuban communist values. Some recent examples give one an idea of what these values are. In *Maluala* (1979), the fall of black escaped slaves in 19th century Cuba is chronicled. The obvious purpose: to promote ideals of racial harmony and pride, as well as to provide Cubans with a sense of pride in their ancestors. In *Retrato de Teresa* (1979), as in the earlier *Una mujer, un hombre, una ciudad* (1977), the emphasis is on the corrosive force of machismo; the government, by attacking it and endorsing the rights of women to have full equality, is obviously pursuing something not merely moral, but also advantageous to the system. These films aim specifically at raising the consciousness of the audience. Although they are films of mediocore aesthetic value they are far from being simple propaganda exercises—if one wants to draw a neat line between art and propaganda, these films are art, although not great art.

Despite the more widely reported attempts of the Cubans, the real developmental model for the film making I have mentioned has occurred in Brasil during the seventies, where the anarchic creativity of the New Brasilian Cinema has mellowed into an artform that while carrying out the aims of the original group, has made much more satisfactory inroads at the box office. By 1979 for the first time in recent history Brasilian films were beginning to account for a significant share of the national box office, a feature somewhat more surprising when one considers the films and the film makers.

Certainly foremost among these commercial successes was Barreto's *Dona Flor e suas dois maridos*, based on the novel of the same name by Jorge Amado. The success of *Dona Flor*, if not the actual model, had been suggested as early as 1976 by Carlos Diegues with his *Xica da Silva*. Although the more cerebral and revolutionary film makers in Brasil (notably Rocha and Guerra) were back making films by the end of the decade, the real thrust of the group was represented by people like Carlos Diegues, Walter Lima, Jr., and of course Nelson Pereira dos Santos, all of whom were attempting to make films that were worthwhile films and yet had some sort of audience appeal. These men were joined by a host of newcomers, ranging from men like Geraldo Sarno, whose *Colonel Delmiro Gouveia* was widely shown abroad, to Heitor Babenco, whose *Lucio Flavio* was the first popular film—and perhaps the first film—to deal openly with the problems of the police. The work of these directors precedes the lifting of censorship, the effect of which was greatly exaggerated. Film historians tend to forget that historically art has florished in somewhat problematic human rights situations, Shakespeare's England and Cervantes' Spain being two cases that come readily to mind.

I believe, then, that the first thing of importance that has happened in this past decade has been the demonstration by Latin Americans that they were, at least in Brasil and Cuba, able to construct a cinema that is aesthetically and commercially competitive. I would point out that the situation is somewhat less felicitous elsewhere, where cinema is either stagnating or wasting away. This situation is unfortunately most exemplified in Mexico and Argentina, countries which entered the decade with reasonably high expectations. Indeed, for at least the first part of the seventies it was possible to talk about a New Mexican Cinema that seemed quite capable of surpassing Cuba and Brasil. By the end of the decade, however, things had come very close to collapse in a welter of interlocking scandals and general failures to get off the old track, while in Argentina the train seemed completely derailed.

However, I do not propose to repeat the errors which I began this essay by criticizing in others, and therefore if anything I think that the situation, particularly in Mexico, will be turned around in short order. The impressive thing about Mexican cinema in the seventies was that a reasonably talented generation of young directors had sprung up—Marcela Fernandez Violante, Jaime Hermosillo, Federico Weingartshofer, and Rafael Corkidi, naming only those that come quickly to mind. Although the industry is temporarily in disorder, it will probably stabilize, if not at the level of Brasil, certainly at the level of smaller European countries such as Belgium. In the cases of Argentina I am somewhat less sanguine. To me it is significant that there has been virtually no exhibition abroad of Argentine films in the past few years. However, if there does not appear to be much going on, it should at least be

pointed out that the country certainly has the infrastructure to produce films, and the most recent film from Argentina, *Desde el abysmo*, made in 1980, was technically quite proficient.

Continuing on a note of caution, it seems to me that the recent explosion of film in Venezuela also has to be spoken of very carefully. In the last five years there have been some interesting films emerging from Venezuela, of which I suppose the earliest international notice came in 1979 when Mauricio Walerstein's *La empresa perdona un momento de locura* was shown in the Directors Fortnight at Cannes. Walerstein is far from the only—or even the best—director working in Venezuela. I found Rebolledo and Urgelles' (*alias*) *el rey del Joropo*, Cerda's *Compañeros de viaje*, and Anzola's *Manuel* all stimulating films, although the prospects for their being shown abroad—or receiving the sort of critical recognition they should—seem dim. On the positive side, despite a great deal of carping and an unusually inept organizational structure, serious Venezuelan films seem to be doing reasonably well in their home market.

If the emergence of Venezuelan film has been a significant new phenomenon of the decade, so has the proliferation of literally thousands of budding cinematographers, the majority of them working in smaller gauge format. Historically the young film makers of Latin America have "begun" in sixteen and thirty-five, learning as they went along. That there are legions of them committing the same atrocities cinematically in super-eight that there are in Europe and North America is certainly a sign of progress. Their work, although by and large execrable, is no worse than their foreign colleagues and fellow cineastes. Cinema, like poetry in the last century, seems destined to survive an enormous amount of trash.

Leaving aside the countries that I have touched on briefly, I can mention only in passing what has happened in many of the others. Unfortunately, once one takes a continental point of view, the answer is not a great deal. There are film makers working in virtually every country in the world, and this includes Latin America. However, the fact that there are people making films does not in itself suggest anything significant for film or anything new. There is a somewhat staggering lack of records on the subject, but it appears that there have always been film makers in the majority of the Latin American countries. It does not seem that there has been any important change in that regard. Even Chile, a country where the film industry was supposedly wiped out in the aftermath of 1973, was able to field a respectable film on the international circuit. This was Silvio Caiozzi's *Julio comienza en julio*, shown at the Directors Fortnight in 1979. At the risk of offending a great many people for whom art and politics are inseparable, I must say that it struck me as the best film I had seen from that country.

There is now of course—and I suppose this too is an event of this past decade—a surprisingly large and vociferous international audience for Latin American films. I suppose the best way of describing it would be to say that it is primarily an audience for whom Glauber Rocha's *Deus e diablo na terra do sol* and Solanas and Getino's *La hora des hornos* are the finest films ever made, and which wants more of them. Latin American films should be totally committed to the idea of revolution, totally political, and totally revolutionary. Mass audiences, even intellectual audiences, do not necessarily watch this sort of film, and not even when it might do them some small measure of good. As I have tried to indicate briefly, however, it seems to me that the decisive events in cinema during this decade have all meant a moving away from this sort of cinema towards one that is gentler, more genuinely cinematic—although perhaps in the traditional sense of the word only—and, above all, that appeals to people. Having said this I might conclude by saying that it seems to me that the seventies also saw a sort of shaking out of talent, so that by now we have some idea of who the more permanent members of the pantheon are for Latin America.

Pre-eminent are Nelson Pereira dos Santos and Tomas Gutierrez Alea, who are by now well into early middle age. Both of them began serious work in the fifties, and in each case initiated an important era of film for their respective countries. In the sixties each one produced a film justly regarded as a masterpiece: for Gutierrez Alea this was *Memorias del subdesarrollo*, for Pereira dos Santos, it was *Vidas secas*. There were during the sixties a great many film makers of great promise—too many in fact to name. However, it seems to me that these directors either were unable to continue their work on the scale that they had begun (Rocha and Guerra, for instance), or made very very few films, as is the case with Walter Lima, Jr. There of course are many reasons why these things happened. Making films takes more than talent and work; it also takes luck. That makes the continued work of these

Othon Bastos in a moment from Leon Hirszman's *Sao Bernardo*.

two directors in the past decade all the more interesting and significant. The seventies appeared to be Pereira dos Santos' most prolific and profitable period. At the beginning of it he finished *Como gastoso era o meu Frances*, and completed two difficult and imaginative films: *O amuleto do Ogum* about 1976, and *O tendra dos milagres* in 1978. Gutierrez Alea made *La ultima cena*, and, in 1979, *Los sobrevivientes*. By the end of the decade each director was hard at work on a new film.

It does not seem to me that any other film makers in the region are in the same class as these two; nonetheless, there have certainly been some excellent film makers whose careers were strengthened and whose work matured in this past decade. Listing them in no particular order, the first two that come to mind are the Chilean Miguel Littin and the Brasilian Arnaldo Jabor. Littin has made—in addition to his earlier work in Chile and in Mexico—two interesting films of late: *El recurso*, whose title has now been changed to *Viva el president*, and *La viuda Montiel*. The first film is based loosely on Carpentier's novel, while the second is inspired by the short fiction of García Márquez. I do not personally feel that Littin's films are ever as good as their titles or subjects suggest, but he has definitely established himself as an important film maker. Jabor, on the other hand, I find a first-rate artist, but one who has made few films. His work in the seventies was *Toda nudez sera castigado*, *O casamento*, and *Tudo bem*; the first of these would be my choice for best Latin American film of the decade.

Most of the men who generated all the excitement in the sixties are still at work, and space does not permit doing anything other than naming them. Both Rocha and Guerra returned to Brasil in the seventies and made films, although not films of marked success, as was the case of the less well known Orlando Senna. Of the men who stayed, Walter Lima, Jr. made one feature film, and an excellent one, and Carlos Diegues made several. Diegues' most recent film, *Bye Bye Brasil*, was shown in competition at Cannes in May of 1980. Unfortunately, although there was a remarkable group of newcomers in the decade—many of whom I have mentioned already—many promising film makers of the sixties stopped making films, or went into a sort of retreat. This has meant in many instances that foreigners, even those interested in Latin American cinema particularly, have felt a sort of fizzling out of creativity. As I have tried to suggest, this has been very far from the case. It seems to be the case chiefly because in the seventies the film makers learned the lessons of the sixties quite well, and aimed at establishing an internal market for their films. One or two prestige international successes do not, perhaps unfortunately, enable one to continue making films—or eating. The most encouraging thing that I can think of about Latin American film is that the eighties are going to be incredibly interesting because there will be an enormous number of good directors who will be able to continue making films.

Photo credits: Embrafilme; Banco Cinematografico S.A.

Antonio Cisneros

Translated by David Tipton

RETURN VISIT TO LONDON
(Ars Poetica 2)

London's burning
London's burning

Damn it, something made me come back to look for those dead the
others had already buried.
8 Gloucester Road, 10 Redcliffe Gardens, Earls Court, Nevern
Square, Sloane Square tube-station.
Coliseums after the Christians, eggshells shattered and put back
together during my exile.
"Cities are the people you leave behind." And I'd left nothing
but bills in Kensington and unpaid rent.
My friends were bored with my way of life and I of reading poetry
to impress them. And finally
the iguanas could no longer blame their gills for being useless,
nor bemoan their fins which were full of claws:
there was no other solution but to take to the land (end of the
Tertiary Era).
But it's tough knowing how and when to cross from BC to AD,
if you go out on day one (of the first century) believing it's
Friday 24
(this sounds like Vallejo) and find a Daily Mirror in the tube
and realize it's Thursday.
That's how Bernini lost his patrons — the wealthy, up to date
with the news —
making expansive and detailed plans in terms of the early Renaissance
when the world had entered the corral of the Baroque.
Now we know it.
Elsham Road. There's the little house where we were going to be/
happy as pigs.

And the Greek on the corner who still doesn't recognize me. How
can I tell him "I've returned after almost a year,"
when he still doesn't understand me when I ask for flour,
lettuce, parsley (ah those Greeks are hard of hearing).
My first wife used to fall asleep too early, my friends had
similar customs,
so I ended up boozing with other exiles, some black South Africans
and a white South African (in sympathy with the blacks) and a
gate
creaks in the night and you get carried away remembering old
visitors:
the girl who promised to follow you through the seven provinces,
an English playwright with marijuana in his pocket, and a
fat girl who comes home tired, climbs to her room, belches —
but no longer says "hello."
Because of these things it's never worth returning to cities
(or living in them again).
And here on the frontier with Italy, another gate creaks. It's
the Mistral, the fat foreign girl who burps.
And at times you almost believe that if it were Death it would
also please you (and that sounds like Heraud).
In Lima those gates used to creak, it was always the same gates,
the plump phoney girl who burps: ashtrays overflowing,
smoke like a mussel in its shell (beneath the old silence of the
first cigarette) and in the street
it's the same damn thing, jumping into a taxi that's going to
the North or jumping into a taxi going to the South
("an old laurel-leaf from the hands of Virgil himself and a broken
medal from the hands of Erasmus").
It seems like a lie that you never learn.
And people are going to say — if they say anything at all — that
you're stuck between tones and themes of some Romanticism.
Let that be the Art of Poetry. The book of my books is done.

KING LEAR

I want my son to have those things
I never had

Come off it: you take a wife and have a couple of sons and spend
your life doing work that's neither clean nor particularly dirty,
hoarding up a 100 piles of copper coins beneath the bed
and later on — you're basically an honest guy except that your
honesty etcetera —
you keep 2,000 more piles in the wardrobe and 60 in the bathroom
roof and then
you're the old king who's going to build a castle in the lands
near the frontier
before your death and before the death of your oldest son,
"with the bathroom upstairs and a little toilet downstairs"
and between the sands and the West Tower you'll plant some apple-
trees and a plantation of oaks
which will be a link between your sons and theirs and the others
who bear your name,
but you're also aware a man can entangle himself in such branches
and Absalom — your son "the oldest who's going to be an
engineer" —
will split your head in two like an avocado.
Now you dodge the branches and exchange the forest for the cliffs:
your horse is supple and frisky on the damp sand, the enemy ships
never brave the sea,
only the wind brings the cold air of Norman helmets — "and there
was the general manager in his flashy car, but I pretended
not to see him" —
but none of your sons are interested in your war against the Normans,
they've not even learnt to use a crossbow,
and you go from office to home avoiding the branches and towards
the west tower
— between the kitchen and the lounge: the bathroom's always
occupied and in the other rooms there's not even a spider/
at night
when the air's clean: the light from the other windows, the big
luminous signs,
you take advantage of the low tide, adjust your deerskin sandals
and cloak and ride by the sea,
and Absalom — the younger boy "who'll be a great lawyer one day"
— opens his net on the soft sand and raises his harpoon of bone
— you don't like it —, I know that, so do your accounts again,
come off it:

you take a wife and have a couple of sons and work etcetera until
you've got 100 piles of etcetera under the mattress
and the dollar costs 50% more and the Normans land on the beaches
after blowing up those towers you never built
and your copper coins are eggshells that disintegrate in the wind.
All right then, your sons haven't turned out any better than you,
but just the same they're waiting for you in the oak forest at the
edge of the water,
so make an effort, go and look for them: there won't be another
winter and this wheel has stuck.

Translated by Maureen Ahern and David Tipton

FOR ROBERT LOWELL

> *"Lowell was returning to New York*
> *from Kennedy airport in a taxi. When*
> *they arrived the driver realized that*
> *his passenger wasn't breathing and*
> *found that he was dead."*

From the plane to the taxi, from the taxi to cold sweat, from the
sweat to the collapsed diaphragm.
90,000 kilometers of blood adrift in the back of the taxi.
Red horses descending the hills, avoiding the tall grasses,
running, being, laughing,
plunging into the waters like the sun into the Pacific.
Freer than a blue corpse adrift.
Only white crests and the cry of a dolphin.
No mourning on the cliff-tops. In the back of a taxi.

(No one takes your hand to comfort you and wipe away the sweat
or remembers you — in 14 seconds — the Atlantic Ocean against
a wood of pines
and the routine of the earth perfect as an old aunt).

Drifting blue.
No mourning in the traffic-lights that line the road.
Nor yet a yew tree in your doorway.

Translated by David Tipton

THE HOUSE AT PUNTA NERA (THAT EMPIRE)

First
they marked out the boundary
with stakes and lime
and on the levelled ground
killed off the old tribes
— snakes and lizards
that inhabited the land:
only salt stains
and rotting gulls
as inheritance
and at the end
of summer
the lorries came
with bricks
and builders' sand:
so I watched them erecting
before my very eyes
Thebes,
Jerusalem,
Nineveh,
Rome,
Athens,
Babylon,
and scarcely had the house
been roofed
than we had a big party:
the plasterer
made a wooden cross
and I hung up
geraniums,
mimosa,
golden rain,
we had roast meat
and bread,
herbs and onions
— a forest of beer-bottles
and the sea
swollen with dead algae
mingled with the mist:
and the old pelicans
celebrated my song
before becoming food
for the spiders
and the hairy rock-crabs.

The house was set
on firm sand
80 meters from the sea
facing west
— and that sun —
behind the walls to the east
lorries and fast cars
burning on the tarmac
like straw towers,
in the background
endless clay hills,
the red air
and wild dogs
that was all
and that sea
in which we cannot wash
ourselves again
— though I shone
through seven summers
(golden,
quick,
joyful)
and sometimes I look for
those round flat stones
to skim across the water
which is turbulent
87 miles south
of this old cave
built
on a wind-blown island
where people carry
their dead
slung over
their backs
and the weak sun
shines
colder than a crab
between the lips:
St. James park
strewn with boys
and girls
entangled together
like soft snakes
in the open air
(and I disentangled
and entangled myself
upon all those beaches
of salt
and damp sand
before the fall
of that Empire).

Frank Dauster

LATIN AMERICAN THEATRE IN THE SEVENTIES

More than any other genre, the theater reflects the intense passions and the inner tensions of the political and social fabric of Latin America. The production of a play is a social and communal event, words which vex tyrants and frighten censors. In most Latin American nations, prior censorship and external controls have made of the commercial theater an insipid reflection of the worst of Braodway, while university groups, amateur companies and communal experiments have been at the forefront of what is most vital and interesting. It is hardly unexpected that their orientation should be so strongly political and their intentions so politicized. This is not really a new phenomenon; the best established dramatists have been, for over twenty years, markedly social in their orientation. Their works have reflected the poverty and the oppression of the lives of the vast numbers of poor. Their technical orientation may range from the absurdist works of Jorge Díaz through the Brecht-inspired Enrique Buenaventura to the eclectic Osvaldo Dragún or Emilio Carballido, but their works have usually, if not invariably, focussed on the abuses of a mass society disinterested in the problems of the poor, the underprivileged and the marginal.

This has continued to be valid for the 1970s, but there have been drastic changes in the lives of the dramatists, in the circumstances in which they attempt to live and work, and in the whole structure of the world of the theater. Of the four dramatists mentioned above, only Carballido continues to be fully active in his homeland; for many of Latin America's most famous dramatists the 1970s have meant exile, and in some cases voluntary or involuntary abandonment of the theater. The repressive governments of many nations have no interest in seeing their own inanities and cruelties reflected on the stage.

None of the above comments should be taken to indicate that these playwrights are hack scribblers at the service of party whims or that their plays bear even the slightest resemblance to socialist realism. Very much to the contrary, Latin American playwrights by and large are versatile creative artists at home with the best of world theater; their works are presented regularly—usually without prior notice, permission or royalties—throughout Europe and on the campuses of American universities. Their works reflect their awareness of international theater currents, at the same time they draw heavily on the history, the folklore and the

regional speech of their own lands. They are deeply committed to working out technical problems; Díaz, among others, has evolved an original personal blend of the absurd with a deep commitment, and some of the best work of Dragún or Carballido is the result of a conscious effort to work out problems of technique and construction. There are often regional or national variants which are original; in Argentina a whole group of younger playwrights, led by Eduardo Pavlovsky, is working out the implications of psychodrama and psychoanalysis for critical committed theater. But this versatility and technical awareness does not hide the fact that they are artists whose vision of the world is, in general terms, deeply colored by the stark social realities which surround them, and who are committed to the expression of this vision in viable dramatic terms.

The most characteristic and in some ways the most startling phenomenon of the Latin American theater of the 1970s is the movement of collective creation. Although it would be unjust and inaccurate to lump *together* all the collective groups, they have in *common* an intense degree of politization. They all spring *from* the tumult of the late 1960s, with roots in the Living Theatre and in the Paris student revolts, but also in the massacres of Tlatelolco and Córdoba, in the brutal repression of dissent in their own nations, where freedom of speech is often met by armed soldiers. Such groups put into theatrical practice their philosophical belief in the equality of all and their rejection of elitism in any form. Jointly they select a theme—invariably political, research it in teams and jointly create a working script. It is often all too easy to perceive the amateur hand or the clear editorial touch of the experienced dramatist in the group. The products of such collective efforts vary wildly in their interest as theater. At one extreme are such groups as La Candelaria or the Experimental Theater of Cali, both of Colombia, which have created vivid dramatic spectacles in which political drive and artistic expertise work together. The Cali group is really an outgrowth of the work of Enrique Buenaventura over more than two decades, and a good deal of their work seems to represent at the very least some editorial work by Buenaventura, long one of Latin America's most able playwirghts. But whoever actually does the writing of the texts, their productions have a savage bite which stands alone among such groups. Other collective enterprises are simply disinterested in any notion of theater as art form; they are political militants and regard their creations as a means of politicizing the innocent and the naive. Some such groups have been very active in urban slums and peasant poverty, and have had some impact; most are more likely to convert the already converted, since the simplicity, lack of sophistication, and general amateurishness of their efforts all but destroy any interest as drama. Frequently, they seem to be more interested in various branches of Oriental soul-saving or in drumming up loud public interest than in any serious work in the theater.

But it would be unfair to lump all the collective groups under such a rubric; they range from political action movements to earnest amateurs, but some are thoroughly professional and able to integrate their political concerns into dramtic spectacles of considerable power. Potentially more interesting, perhaps, are several attempts at collaboration by experienced dramtists, such as *El avión negro*, a series of sketches aimed at capturing the atmosphere of expectation prior to Peron's return. It is early, but there are indications that this may become an important part of the theater scene in the future.

Although there are serious restrictions on the theater in most nations, there is no clear pattern of censorship. Uruguay and Argentina, some of whose best dramatists have been all but exiled from the theater, seem to permit satirical works in the sketch form. These plays make no effort at creating recognizable characters or anything resembling an orthodox dramatic structure; they consist of short sequences, usually bitterly ironical and markedly political. One favorite, which was a commercial smash hit in Argentina a few years ago, presented the nation as a brothel, and the play consisted largely of a series of scenes within this framework. The moral is obvious. This kind of structure is often highly effective, but it also frequently degenerates into low comedy.

It is really false to speak of Latin America; there is an undeniable community of artists, and now more than ever before, there is a vigorous interchange, helped by the considerable number of drama festivals, many of them celebrated on the campuses of American universities. Yet, each geographical area, if not each nation, retains certain characteristics based more on regional social, political, and ethnic factors than on any artistic purpose. In Puerto Rico, for example, the political status of the island is a constant theme. The death of

René Marqués eliminated the best known critic of the American role in the island, but Luis Rafael Sánchez has emerged as a worthy successor, and there are numbers of lesser dramatists equally dedicated to the theme. The drama in Cuba, after boasting one of the most vigorous and most interesting groups of dramatists in Latin America throughout the 1960s, is now all but moribund. The playwrights who gave it such stature have apparently done little or nothing since; José Triana, author of the international hit *La noche de los asesinos*, has dropped from sight, and the few Cuban plays available recently deal, with varying degrees of artistic objectivity, with such problems as the artist's debt to society or the threat of unorthodox religious groups. Venezuela, on the other hand, is enjoying a theatrical boom virtually unparalleled in the history of this or any other Latin American nation. There are a number of dramatists active more or less regularly, and several have formed a cooperative group which has its own theater and is that rarest of phenomena in Latin America, a commercially successful and artistically creative established company. It numbers among its founders Isaac Chocrón, one of the finest dramatists in Spanish today.

It is risky to make predictions, and he who would predict the Latin American theater is foolhardy indeed. The field is subject to instantaneous change: the overnight dismantling of the Cuban movement, the drastic shift in the Chilean theater which was caused by Allende's political victory, which politicized the drama and all but did away with the flourishing university and private companies, many of the first order. The overthrow of Allende was far more traumatic in every sense; Chilean dramatists, in the main, are silent or in exile. This kind of political uncertainty, totally aside from its catastrophic effects on people's lives, creates serious problems for a genre which requires a cadre of people willing to devote themselves to an enterprise which, however rewarding esthetically, almost never provides them with a means of living. Even less can they do without an audience, which is in markedly short supply in many nations.

The theater, then, is subject to immediate and drastic curtailment for political reasons. Yet the future is not really pessimistic. There are signs of loosening up in some, if not all, the dictatorial regimes; a few playwrights who have not been permitted to stage their works for some time now have plays in production, and some exiles have put down personal and professional roots in other nations and are taking an active role once again. Almost every country has street groups, travelling companies and others which are carrying theater to remote villages and urban slums. Although much of this activity is socially oriented, it also has the advantage of taking the theater to people who have never had any awareness of it. And whatever may happen, there is a core of professional, experienced and devoted dramatists whose works exist and are available, in spite of temporary curtailments. Better still, in the last ten years there has appeared a group of younger dramatists who are as committed to the theater as any of the established figures. What the 1980s may bring is unpredictable, but it hardly seems likely that the theater in Latin America will lose any of the fervor and commitment which have characterized it through the 1970s.

Jorge Eduardo Eielson

Translated by Gerd and Miriam Joel

SPRING IN THE VILLA ADRIANA

this april morning
the green leaves cover
the heart of paolo
who cannot walk
nor says a word
because life weighs
this april morning
like a paper temple
in pure oxygen
and if he would say a word
only one word
the whole world would burst
into flames.

Rufino Tamayo was born of Zatopec parents in Oaxaca, Mexico, in August, 1899. An aunt, who adopted him in 1911, four years after his parents died, brought him to Mexico City to assist her in a fuel and fruit business. It would be difficult to believe that young Tamayo did not absorb, in that environment of the Mexican *mercado,* every physical-sensory experience needed for his growth as an artist — the shape, taste, color, the size, weight, texture, temperature, the smell of things (imagine a Mexican market without the odor of meat, dried peppers, and tiny fish, dried and fresh herbs, of flowers, *guayabas,* of things cooking over wood or charcoal). Possibly all that demanded that he take art lessons — against his aunt's wishes.

Perhaps the first thing one notices, on crossing the border into Mexico, is a different way with color: warm and cool colors in wild juxtaposition everywhere. Light tints of blues and greens exist cheek-to-jowl with full-strength reds, oranges, and crimsons. The colors of much early twentieth century expressionism, especially of Germany, are seen in paint-jobs on buildings and walls and in items of dress, revealing a very special, open delight in color. All societies *choose,* intuitively, their own *color schemes,* as do individuals. And what do these color schemes *tell*? What do national flags and banners tell? Some societies, some very advanced old cultures, opt for subdued or natural colors and place much importance on subtleties of form and texture, on understatement — the Japanese do. The Mexicans would have both color and texture.

The years 1979 and 1980 have brought special attention to the work of Tamayo: I refer to the large exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum in New York City, which also included splendid examples of pre-Columbian and Mexican popular arts of the sort that have charged Tamayo's imagination over the years. And last spring the Nahan Gallery of New Orleans presented a number of Tamayo's recent prints, along with a most instructive display of graphic materials and processes the old artist has been using lately, reminding one of the way Toulouse-Lautrec and, later, Picasso pushed lithography along unimaginable paths. Tamayo's technique is called mixography — as good a name as any, I suppose, to designate a method that combines almost every graphic device in the interest of expressive color and texture.

Some writers on art like to cite instances of the way artists in old age — Titian or Rembrandt, Degas, Matisse, Picasso, or Braque — tend to broaden and loosen their methods, become more painterly in approach, more summary in formal and spatial invention. If this is true of the eighty-year-old Tamayo, it must be seen to go along with surprising ingenuity in these new prints. His forms and images are *not* very new — his shelves of sliced watermelon ("the cold, red guffaw of the summer," as José Juan Tablada, the Mexican poet, says), his sentinel or semaphore figures in rigid profile, his machine-like frontal couples, his sculpture-people, his animals are there again —, but more abbreviated, pared down, and embossed or debossed into the thick, handmade paper, texturized by the molds and several over-paintings of color. Here is the definitive coming-together, under the weight of the large presses, of color and texture. The colors are those of toasted clays, dried and smoked *chiles* — purpley-black and red —, *moles,* edible roots, fruits, and the untamed hues of shop fronts and signs. And they seem to smell darkly and give off warmth, like stones baking in the straight-overhead sun.

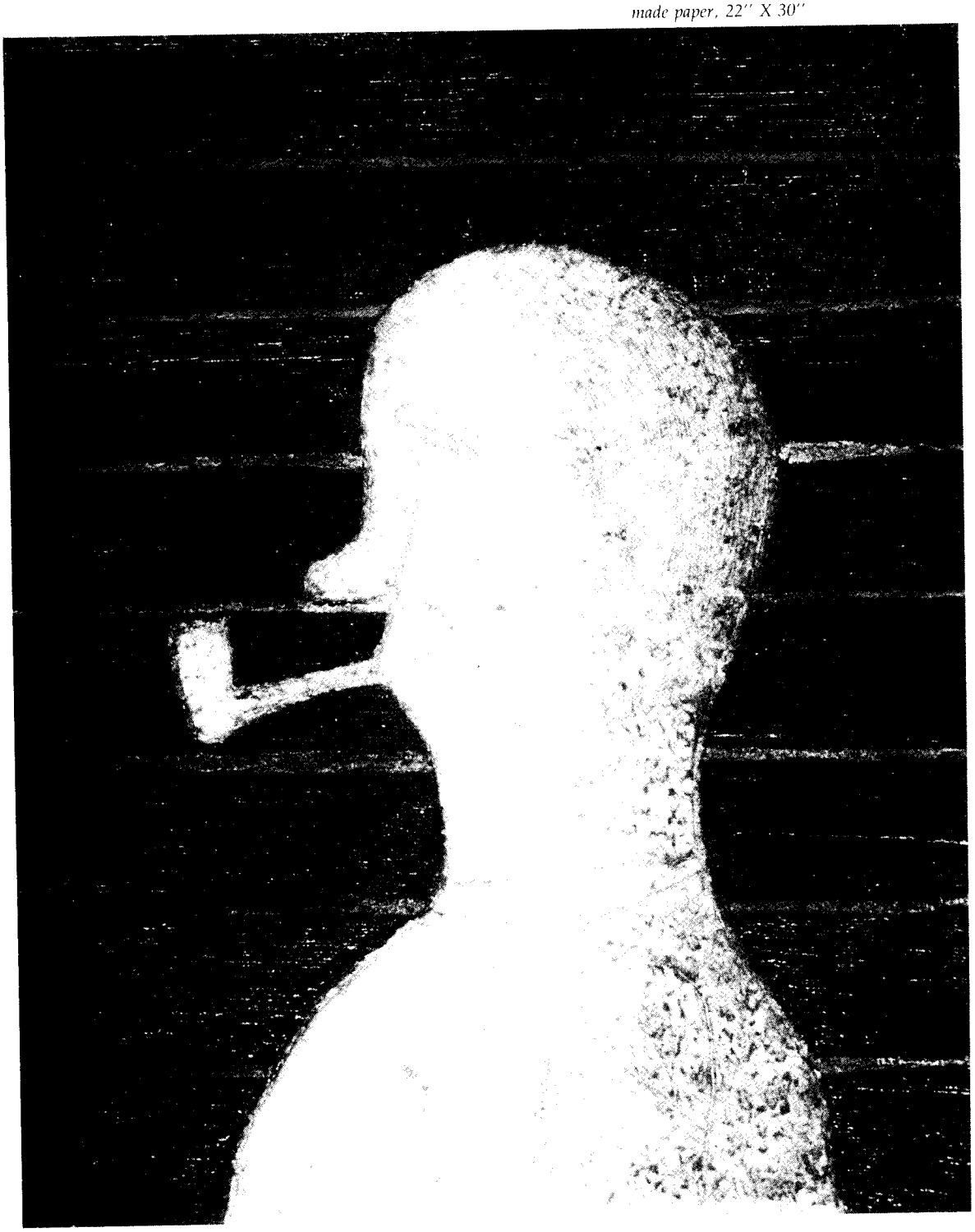
It is in all these colors and textures that I find *my* Tamayo. I look less and less often to his reductive figures of men and women, to his *primitivisms,* and to similar qualities in the art of other famous artists of his generation (more or less): Miró, Lipchitz, Klee, Dubuffet, even Picasso, especially after the *Guernica* (1937). They shared a desire "to return to the origins"; that being their vital link to early Rousseauian Romanticism, to the symbolism of Gauguin — a hankering for the sources of deep psychical energies as found in poetry, ritual, and myth. But most have come too close to a stick-figure, cartoon parody of human complexity for my present satisfaction. The media are doing enough every day to trivialize and flatten human life. But I would want to forgive these artists in recognition of their persistent (if rough!) poetic vision and their erotics: their poetics of the body and of things in the world, our cohabitants.

CALVIN HARLAN

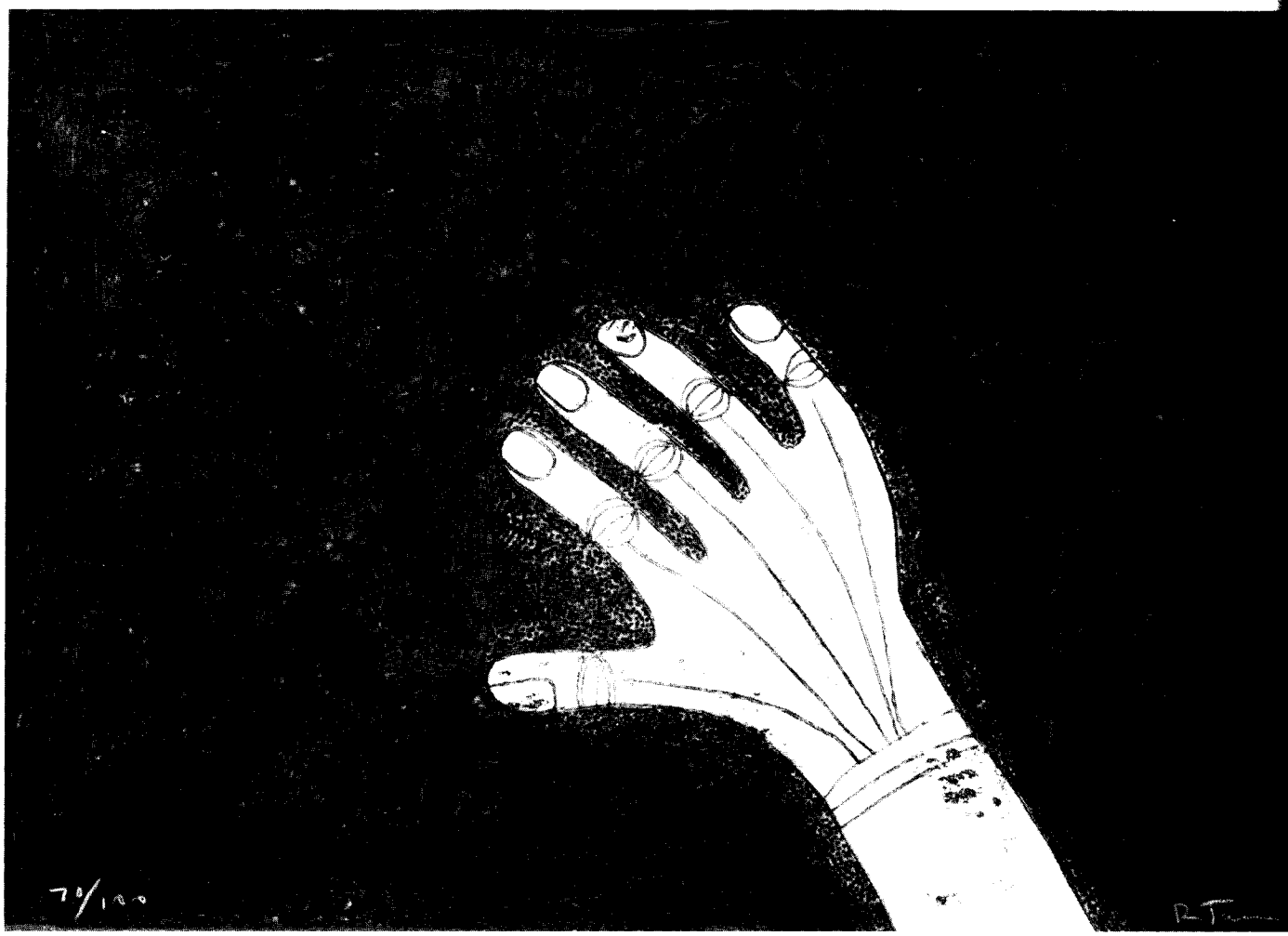
Rufino Tamayo
portfolio

Late Prints

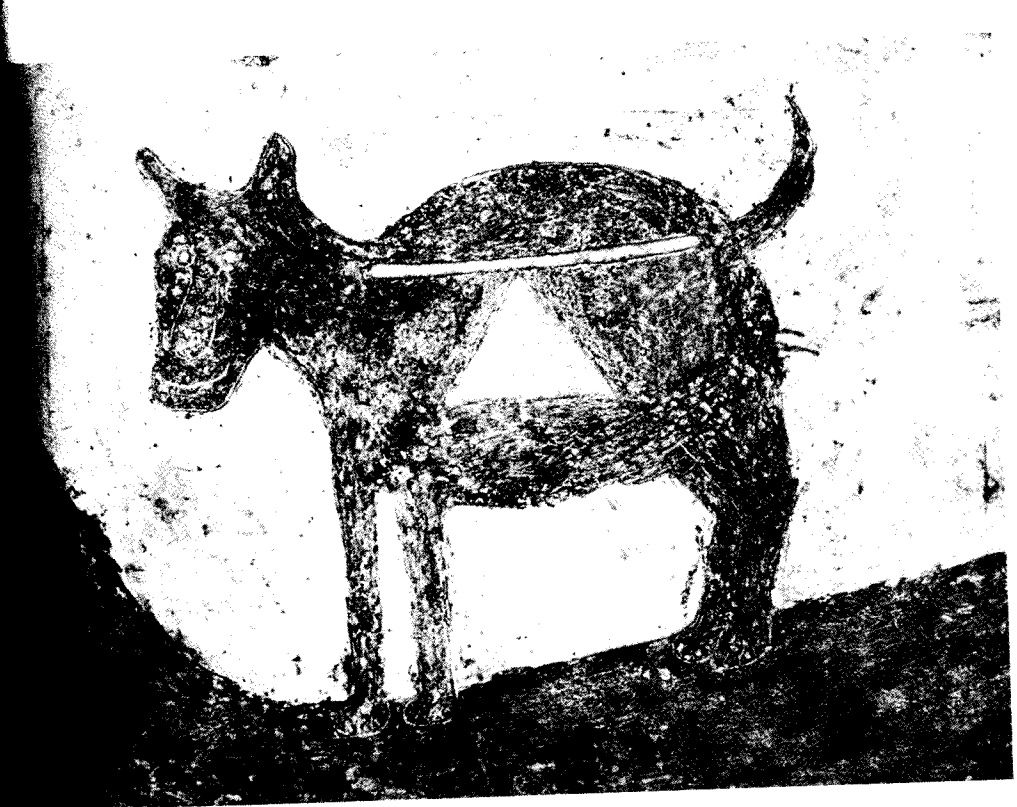
"Hombre con Pipa," mixograph on hand made paper, 22" X 30"



Rufino Tamayo is represented by the Nahan Gallery in New Orleans through whose kindness these reproductions appear.



"Mano Blanca," mixograph on Arche
30" X 23"

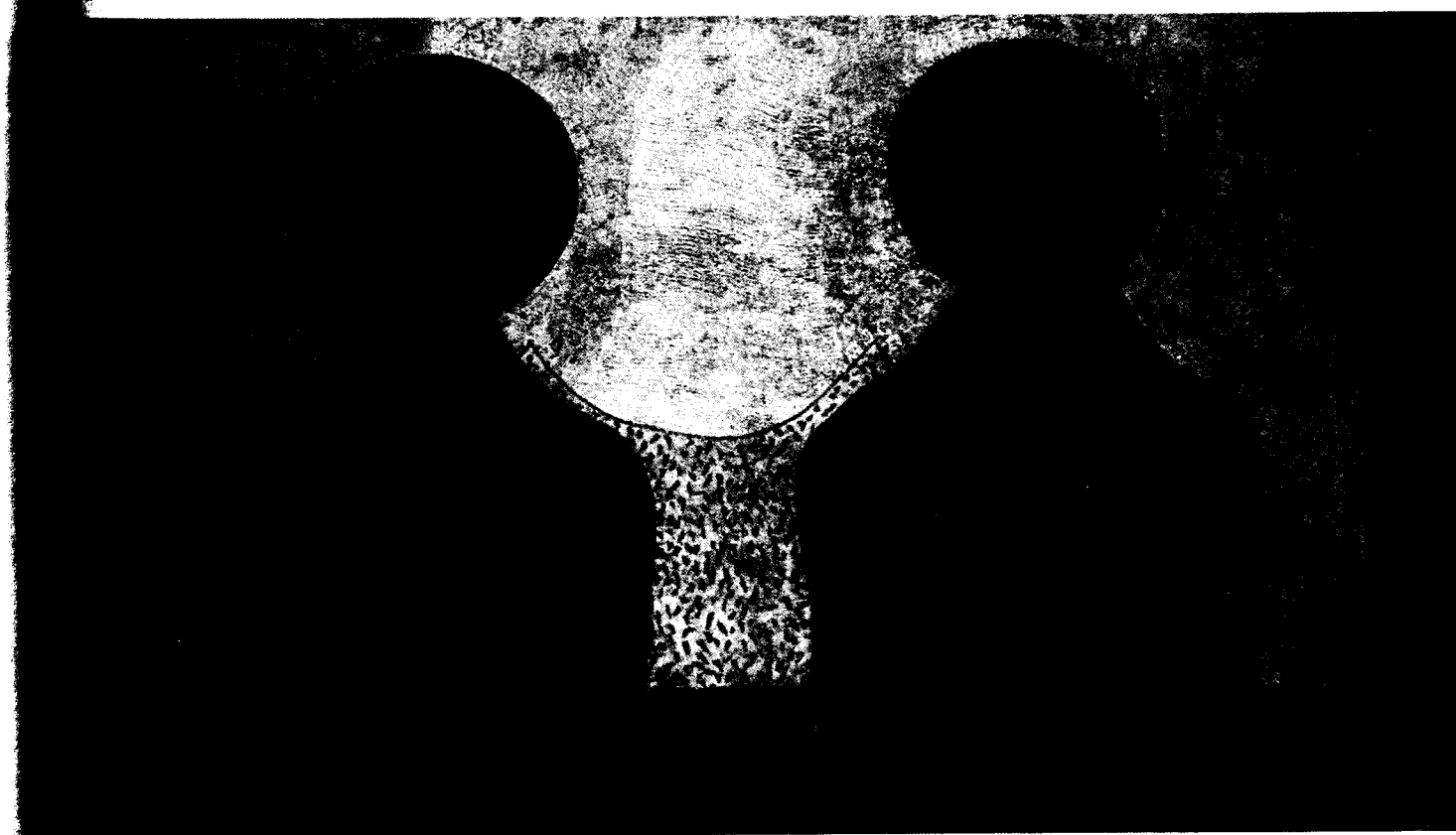


"Meuve la Cola," mixograph on paper, 30" X 22"

"Torso en Negro," mixograph on Arches paper, 22" X 30"

"Perfile," mixograph on Arches paper

Personajes," mixograph on hand made



paper

"Quetzacoatl," mixograph on h
paper, 47" X 24"

Mario Montalbetti

Translated by Maureen Ahern

MY (LOVE POEM)

I sold all my artichokes
for a ticket to the place where you live.
No mishaps.
The train left on time
sun and fat cows all the way.
But your town never appeared.

Rosario Castellanos

Translated by Maureen Ahern

PASSPORT

A woman of ideas? No, I've never had a single one.

I've never repeated other people's ideas either (out of
modesty or just bad memory).
A woman of action? Not that either.
Just look at the size of my hands and feet.

A woman of word, then. No, my word no.
But yes, indeed of words,
a lot of contradictory, insignificant ones,
pure sound, a sifted vacuum of arabesques,
parlor games, gossip, froth, forgetting.

If you need a definition
for the i.d. card, just write down
that I'm a woman of good intentions
who's paved a straight and easy road to hell.

ART, FILM, AND REALITY

An Interview with Antonio Skarmeta

Conducted by John Mosier

INTRODUCTION

onio Skarmeta was born in Antofagasta, Chile, 40. He studied arts and philosophy in Chile, ed a graduate degree from Columbia University, eturned to Chile where he embarked on an in- ly varied career: directing plays, writing drama ction, and lecturing on Latin American literature University in Santiago. In 1973 he teamed up he German director Peter Lilienthal and made the best films to come out of Allende's Chile, *La ia* and *Calm Prevails Over the Country*, the latter inning the Bundesfilmpreis in West Germany in Following this, Skarmeta went on to continue areer in Germany, writing, lecturing and teaching. He returned to fiction with a vengeance, publishing two novels: *I Dreamt the Snow Was Burning* and *Everyone in Love Except Me*. He was interviewed in New Orleans where he was participating in a seminar on Chilean film organized by Tulane University's Center for Latin American Studies and Loyola's Film Buffs Institute. Elsewhere in this issue there is an essay on Latin American Cinema during the period that Skarmeta discusses, and that essay clarifies some of his remarks. But Skarmeta manages to touch on almost every aspect of the arts in Latin America, and his experiences are a vivid supplement to any picture of what went on in Latin America during the seventies.

R: What was it like to work in Chile during the le years?

RMETA: At that time the intellectuals in Chile trying to develop a plan to improve cultural es. We tried very hard to think over cultural ms, and we presented many plans but without s, because the political situation was so tense body though that culture was really important to take care of. And so all of the people who orking in the cultural field began to work inde- tly. It was chaotic, spontaneous. So there were expressions, but disorganized ones. You saw ny things were happening, but without any without a man who was able to think it over. ppened especially with films.

The big institution in films was called Chile Film, and during the Unidad Popular time they tried several different ways to approach the production of films, and each one of them was not successful for one reason or another. The first approach was when Miguel Littin took over as president of Chile Film. He was very enthusiastic and full of energy, and he decided to make out of Chile Film a big workshop, so he invited writers, cameramen, film students, to work in Chile Film, and they gave them some grants to keep them working. The projects were great, the studios were full of people, but there were some problems: no film, no materials to work with, no cameras, no equipment. There was no basis for a market for Chilean films. Audiences saw Chilean films, but only as a

curiosity. So the plan was a failure, because there was no infrastructure. So things changed: there was no real production, only a series of newsreels—but very well done. Then came the second period. The idea there was to make long spectacular films about great characters of Latin American history.

NOR: The period of Littin's *La tierra prometida*?

SKARMETA: Yes . . . and no. Littin left Chile Film after a big discussion and they began to produce two big films to be shown in Chile to recover the money. Two films on two historical characters: Balmaceda, the Chilean president who committed suicide in 1891 and ended the Liberal regime, and Manuel Rodriguez, a popular guerilla hero during the Wars of Independence. The film on Balmaceda was going to be shot by a relative, while Manuel Rodriguez would be shot by Patricio Guzman, who as you know later went on to do *The Battle of Chile*.

But now the problem was that the films were so expensive, that they were preparing the films for only one month and there was no more money. The projects were much more artistic than realistic—both projects were unrealistic. So what happened was that Littin already had the idea of making *La tierra prometida*, and as he was president of Chile Film, he took care of all of the problems and didn't do any work as a director. And as soon as he left Chile Film he began to shoot immediately as a private person with private money. So that was the situation. Now when Patricio Guzman saw that they were all trying to reconstruct historical figures with all that was happening in Chile at that time, he thought it was crazy. There was no possibility because there was no money. He left Chile Film also, and started a very active small team, and they began to shoot what was happening in Chile every day, every hour, every minute, everywhere. That was the birth of *The Battle of Chile*. Guzman realized that reality was out there in front of him, and so the secret was just to shoot.

With Chile Film, however, there was a third period, and a much more realistic one. They decided to coproduce films with people. A good director would get a project together and Chile Film would act as codirector, and they would both go to the banks to get the money for the film. They selected ten scripts, and they were going to make them, and then the coup came. That is more or less the story. In general, no production at all. I must add that it was not all a failure. There were some successes: they made some sixteen millimeter documentaries and they showed them in a circuit, which worked. But for feature films there was no production at all.

NOR: So how did Guzman succeed?

SKARMETA: In 1972 he wrote to Chris Marker describing the situation in Chile, and telling him that because of the blockade they were getting no material to shoot, and he explained what they were doing and asked Marker to send material, because there was no chance to get it from any other place. Guzman said that at that time and in that place thinking about constructing a story would be something stupid, because the facts were so quickly upon you that they overwhelmed any idea for a fiction film. So Marker sent the materials, some months later they got them, and with this material they made the film.

The team was very small: a man for the camera, a man for the sound, a producer, and Patricio, and that was all. They moved around, went to different places. Sometimes Patricio himself was with the camera and the cameraman was in a different place, because there were two interesting things the same day.

What was going on was really a drama. Sometimes there are documentaries that try to make a drama out of a reality that is not really dramatic. But in this case, as Patricio himself said, the drama was written in reality. It was enough just to look at it. Of course nobody had the talent and the patience to be clear, and to shoot exactly the things that were important. They were not only shooting, they were thinking politically all of the time, and they were making an interpretation of the facts at the same time that the facts were happening. They knew how it had to be because they were working in a political direction. The sensational material that we applaud in *The Battle of Chile* was already in the heads of the makers.

NOR: It seems as though there were two points of view: Guzman chronicles the fall of a regime that believes in law, while Littin gives us the rhetoric of arming the people, of ignoring the legalities. Was that a real debate?

SKARMETA: The problem of how you go towards socialism, of how to go deeply to democracy was a big problem much discussed by the left—and the right also. But Allende's government from the beginning made it clear through his programs and through the agreements he made that the way to go towards a socialist country would be without arms, through legal ways. He persisted in that way until the very end, even

when he was killed. He addressed his last words to the people saying that at least this could be a moral victory, at least on those terms. That was the line of the government.

NOR: What about the other groups?

SKARMETA: The others, chiefly MIR—I belonged to the Unidad Popular—and so I always saw MIR from the outside. They had no representatives, no leadership. They were, as we described them, a party of the radical petite bourgeoisie who organized certain areas of the subproletariat with some success. I mean to say that they organized the people who were not in the unions, who were loose. Sometimes they provoked people to act, and this was in contradiction to the style and method of Popular Unity, who wanted to do things at all times in a legal framework, while MIR was pushing to get out from that framework. Although they were not many people, they initiated many actions, and these actions of course were the focus of the rightist press, which terrified many of the people who were originally to be our allies. I think that this sort of thing from the left was a big problem. But not the biggest. I shouldn't say our government failed because of that, because there were twenty reasons before that one, but it was important.

NOR: And what about you? You started out as a dramatist who was directing Ionesco and Albee and lecturing in literature at the University. How did you get involved in this sort of film making?

SKARMETA: I have a big interest in everything. I play the guitar, I write scripts. If I were not so fat I would dance. I began writing scripts for films because Peter Lilienthal came to Chile in 1972 and he wanted to make a film about what was happening. Not a documentary, but a fiction film based on reality. So I wrote one, two, three versions of the script, and he came in 1973, and we made the film in Chile. It is called *La victoria*. It has been shown in many countries, and awarded some prizes, but in Latin America it is impossible to show it, because we do not have an original version—it was lost during the coup. So it's incredible to show all these poor people of the slums of Chile talking in German. We have to do a version in Spanish, but so far the only version of the film is in German.

Immediately after the coup Lilienthal told me we should make immediately a new film reflecting the new situation, so I concentrated on writing a new script during 1974, and out of this work came *Calm Prevails Over the Country*, a film which we made in Portugal, since you can't make an anti-fascist film in a fascist country. We had to move to a country where we were allowed to use the army. It was very interesting, since the last day of shooting was the day that General Spinola attempted the counter-coup, at the same jail in Setubal where we had been working!

NOR: The film has been critically very successful in Europe. How has it been as a popular film?

SKARMETA: Well it is very curious but you know that no German film, even the films by Fassbender and Wenders or Herzog, has public appeal in Germany. But our film was not just directed to our friends. It was directed to all of the people who don't know anything about, who don't give a damn about, politics, but who are very influential, very important, the masses who are always ignoring everything. So our film is about people who are like the people we wanted to reach. No special heroes, just the middle classes.

Of course we had some criticism from the left, and from students. I had about thirty or forty discussions with students and all the time they were trying to make another film of the film that we had made. I had some very funny experiences, because in Germany they write so many books, they love theory, they take it so seriously. When you express to them your experiences in Latin America they give you the solutions. They reconstruct, they dismiss the contradictions, and they give you the cake already eaten. They don't realize what Latin America is about. They live sometimes one day there and they think they have an idea of what poverty is. But if they could go see a poor house, a poor family, that would change their ideas.

NOR: And you've done other scripts since *Calm Prevails*.

SKARMETA: Yes, the third one is about a family of exiles in Germany, their relations with the old world. There is a contrast between the parents who want to maintain their relations with the past—with their country, their music—and the children, who want to be accepted into society. The fourth one is about a taxi driver in Chile who is searching for his son who has been taken by the police after the coup. And so he drives all through the land searching for his son. He's apolitical, a Catholic, and as soon as he struggles he realizes what sort of country he's living in.

So that makes five films, and I would like to do one more script and no more, because I do like to write fiction. Really sometimes the relations between the

director and the scriptwriter are not always the best. The film belongs finally to the director. It is important what the scriptwriter has to say. It is important, it is significant, and the film is presented his way. But at the end it's another person's product.

The problem is always to survive. Writing for films you get money, you get to be free, to write other things. And writing novels you don't get that. As you know there are many translations of my novels, and I tell you: the money from all of my translations is about half of what I got for one script.

Jorge Eduardo Eielson

Translated by Gerd and Miriam Joel

FORUM ROMANO

each morning when i wake up
the sun burns secure in the sky
the milk coffee steams in the kitchen
i ask whoever is with me
how many hours have i slept?
but nobody answers me

i open my eyes and my arms seeking support
i touch my table of wood and night falls violently
a lightening extinguishes the light of the sun
like the light of a candle
i ask again
does milk coffee from centuries ago
still steam in the kitchen dust?
but nobody answers me

in the darkness i get up and drink it
but i find that the milk is frozen
and the burning coffee lies like petrol
several kilometers under the earth:
a silent column collapses between my arms
changed into ashes
suddenly the sun rises again
and sets quickly
in a storm of leaves and red birds
in my room twilight glitters a moment
with its four chairs of gold in the corners
i try to remember my childhood with my hands
i paint trees and birds in the air like an idiot
i whistle thousand-year-old songs
but another column of ashes collapses between my arms
and my hands fall down covered suddenly with wrinkles

now clearly the water of the washbowl
reminds me of my first baths in the river
vague murmurs nude bodies perfumes wind
mudcovered pigs in the shade of the orange trees
is my memory perhaps as immortal as your body
when you undress in front of me
you who are just a piece of marble
a mountain of powder
column
clock of ashes
bone after bone which time hurls into my eyes?
really, don't i remember the last hours of the night
when i kissed you wildly
on my iron cot
as if i would kiss a cadaver?
i ask whoever is with me
my very fast love
how much time has passed since then
how many hours
how many centuries did i sleep without contemplating you
but nobody answers me

Peter G. Earle

THE LATIN AMERICAN ESSAY IN THE SEVENTIES

The essay has not flourished in Spanish America since 1970. Generally speaking, it has yielded to other forms. Young writers have preferred the poem, fiction, and the theater. Old writers haven't chosen, like Henry Adams, Joseph Wood Krutch, or E.B. White, to take the pulse of nature and civilization in sensitive prose testimonies. Rather, if they were novelists, they've continued as novelists; if they were poets, they're still poets. And virtually everybody writes criticism, but that's not the same thing as the essay, as much as the essay and criticism are fused and confused in the Spanish-speaking countries. Those who devoted themselves mainly to the essay (Alfonso Reyes, Jose Vasconcelos, Ezequiel Marinez Estrada, Mariano Picon-Salas, Julio Torri, Victoria Ocampo) have all died, and only Victoria Ocampo lived past 1970.

Quite a few prestigious writers over the past half-century have divided their efforts between the essay and poetry or the essay and fiction: Eduardo Mallea, Jorge Luis Borges, Jorge Carrera Andrade, Ernesto Sábato, Octavio Paz, Carlos Fuentes, Roberto Fernández Retamar. But more often creators have chosen to complement their poetry, novels, or stories with criticism or theory, and many have been more interested in elucidating the creative process than in communicating ideas for the ideas' sake.

Literary genres, like communications media, tend to devour each other. It's the Vulcan myth reversed. Television the son consumes radio its father, leaving the latter a detritus of songs and commercials. Fiction engulfs discursive prose. The cinema, unlimited in techniques and technological resources, outdistances theater. In poetry, order submits to precariousness.

But every genre has its underlying persistence. Like any other form of life, literature is continuous readjustment. Writers can't discard tradition; they are preordained to use it—if only as a reference point—and to alter it; and they can't alter it without taking it into account. There could not have been a new novel, an anti-novel or a shuffle novel without the pre-existence of a traditional novel. Poetry, which Octavio Paz calls "the other voice" (lyrical, mused, born of mystery), compares itself not only to one's habitual voice, but to a variety of established forms. Drama, within or beyond the confines of the stage, remains drama.

The modern essay differs from other genres in the sense that directly or indirectly it emanates from philosophical preoccupation. (Its founding fathers, Montaigne and Bacon, are included in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*). It manifests itself as a bifurcation from objective analysis into subjective experience. Montaigne and Bacon set a heritage of ethical interpreta-

tion which in the best cases has displayed literary sensitivity and power: Swift, Emerson, Thoreau, Marti, Unamuno, Reyes, Sartre.

Spanish American essays have usually conveyed a feeling of historical, cultural or social urgency. They reveal a collective self-awareness; a peculiar remorse over historical original sin, combined with utopian longing. To be born a Latin American has often been consideed a cultural handicap, and often essayists tried to turn that handicap into a new cultural beginning: Jose Marti in "Our America," Jose Enrique Rodo in *Ariel*, José Vasconselosin *The Cosmic Race*, German Arciniegas in *A Student at the Round Table*. These were followed from the 1930's to the 1960's, as the rumblings and flashes of possible catastrophe gathered on the horizon, by Ezequiel Martínez Estrada's *X-Ray of the Pampa*, Octavio Paz's *Labyrinth of Solitude* (and its gloomier *Postscript*), Ernesto Sábato's *Men and Machinery*, and H.A. Murena's *Homo Atomicus*.

In an article on the Argentine essay published last spring I wrote that since the death of Martínez Estrada in 1964 the essay has deteriorated not only in Argentina but throughout Spanish America. One can attribute the displacement of the Spanish American essay partly to the semiotic enthusiasm with which latter-day structuralists emphasize"signifiers" at the expense of the "signified"; partly to some contemporary writers' obsession with theory as the basic element of the creative process; partly to a diminution of the individual human being as the main concern of literature. Spanish America has not been unique in following these trends. Like their counterparts in the rest of the Western World, several leading writers have been busier producing images of themselves and their particular impressions than developing ideas. Narcissus is gazing again at the reflecting pool. These factors could work only to the detriment of the essay.

Understanding the essay of the past decade is made easier by recognizing the new wave of *agenericism* in Spanish America. "New," that is, in the sense of repeated, because ever since the 16th century journals and chronicles, made to order forms of writing had characterized much New World literature. In a study unpublished to date Roberto González Echevarría of Yale University refers to a new flexibility of form, citing Severo Sarduy's *Baroque*, Julio Cortázar's *The Kings*, and other texts in which a "deconstructive" analysis takes place and which, for him, are proof of a revitalization of the essay. I disagree. For me, the deliberate and repeated use of the text as a mirror is part of a pilgrimage to sterility. Like the true novelist or poet, the true essayist is the subject, more than the object, of his work, however much he loads that work with confessions or self-allusions. The essayist's fundamental obligation is a wealth of reference points, a discovery of the ways in which he can transfigure—with flourishing *personality* yet with restrained *self*—the objects of his attention. García Márquez, for example, does this in narrative prose, but few have recently achieved it in the essay. Those few, to be sure, are worthy of note.

Octavio Paz, who had not written prose of much importance since *Postscript* (1970), a condemnation of historical repressions culminating in the massacre of Tlatelolco, has publisheed *The Philanthropic Ogre* (1979). Since the sharp social criticism of *Mexican Time* (1971), Carlos Fuentes has written some literary criticism and a lot of fiction. The Guatemalan Augusto Monterroso is the author of *Perpetual Motion* (1972), in which the symbolism, wit, and whimsy are remindful of Julio Cortázar's appealing *Cronopios and Famas* and also Cortázar's *Around the Day in Eighty Worlds*, both of the 1960's. Unlike Cortázar, who at heart and in practice is a narrator, Monterroso uses the essay in its classic form. In Cuba Roberto Fernández Retamar published *Calibán: Notes on Culture in Our America* (1971), which, in addition to being a revision of Rodó's *Ariel* (1900) that shifts emphasis from the latter's elitist altruism to his own socialist idealism, follows Fernández Retamar's spiritual grandfather, José Martí, in attempting to reaffirm the concept of an autonomous Latin American culture. So do subsequent essays by the Cuban like "Our America and the West" (1976) and "Some Concepts of Civilization and Barbarism" (1977). Fernández Retamar tries to renew the Spanish American process of collective self-definition that began with Sarmiento's *Facundo* in 1845 and culminated in Octavio Paz's *Labyrinth of Solitude* in 1950. In a 1978 interview Fernaández Retamar offers a formula for essay writing which he took from the title of a Gauguin painting: "Where do we come from, what are we, where are we going?"

In *Postscript* Paz uses the pyramid as a symbol of historical determinism. He says that Mexico is destined to repeat the ritual of sacrifice, and the killings at Tlatelolco in 1968 are seen as an aberration of the religiously inspired sacrifices of the Aztecs. In *Mexican Time* Fuentes follows a more political and econo-

mic direction to criticize basically the same things Paz criticizes in *Postscript*. The most imaginative piece in this book is "From Quetzalcoatl to Pepsicoatl." Quetzalcoatl, the Toltec deity, represents the impossible past; Pepsicoatl, the troublesome, imperialist-burdened present. Mexico and the rest of Latin America must reject bad foreign influences, as well as compartmentalized folklore, and redefine itself. "Quetzalcoatl is impossible; Pepsicoatl, an abomination: we Mexicans have the obligation and opportunity to create our own way of life, a great new synthesis of the eras that have left their mark and that can take root in our memory, our aspirations and our sense of justice."

It may well be that Tlatelolco (1968), the overthrow and death of Salvador Allende in Chile (1973), and the slaughterous maneuvers of Anatasio Somoza in Nicaragua (1978 and 1979), together with a steady increase in political abductions, torture, and murder in several other Latin American countries, have created an atmosphere too precarious for the essay to thrive in. If such is the case, however, that same phenomenon of repression and violence offers itself as a topic for future essays. One senses a connection between Latin American destructiveness, together with the destructiveness throughout the rest of the world in the 1970's, and the uneasy cosmovision of most Spanish American writers. John Barth sensed this when writing in 1967 about the "literature of exhaustion" exemplified by Jorge Luis Borges. Barth was concerned as well as attracted by the elaborate ways in which Borges and other prominent literary figures have been able to write about *nothing*, about how all roads seem to lead to a spiritual dead end. And Paz, in *Children of the Mire* (1974) dealt with the history of poetry from the Romantics to the Modernists and spoke of the removal of the future from literary and artistic consideration.

> The end of the modern era, the fall of the future, can be seen in art and in poetry as an acceleration which dissolves the notion of future as well as that of change. The future instantly becomes the past; changes are so swift that they produce the sensation of immobility.

Seeds of a kind of intellectual death had been sown by the Romantics, and the 20th century *avant gardes* were the culmination of a "tradition against itself." The modern essay, of course, formed an integral part of this self-destroying tradition insofar as the essay has always been a critical instrument. And with this instrument the writer's and the reader's minds moved from expectation to discovery, and from discovery to disillusionment.

In conclusion it can be said that displacement of the Spanish American essay in recent years is the possible result of several other displacements. A mental displacement of the future; a spiritual displacement of the unifying God (H.A. Murena in the 1960's spoke of a contemporary "loss of the center"; he meant basically the same thing); a scientific displacement (linguistic, semiotic, anthropological) of the lyric, unscientific mission which is at the heart of the essayist's existence: expectation, discovery, disillusionment. While it's too bad that more young writers have not undertaken the essay, a select few of the established ones (Paz, Sabato, Fuentes, Fernández Retamar, Monterroso) have kept it alive. Meanwhile, the literary world awaits the return of the future.

Jorge Ibargüengoitia

Translated by Richard Kurjan

CONVERSATIONS WITH BLOOMSBURY

"Who was Bloomsbury?" the painter asked a man that according to rumor was a CIA agent. "What was Bloomsbury doing in Mexico? Is it true that he was an agent for the CIA?"

"Why do you ask me that?"

"Because you are a CIA agent and should know about these things."

"Look," he said with a certain ease about him," I suppose that the CIA selects agents that are discreet enough to hide the fact that they're CIA agents. Which is to say, that if I were a CIA agent, I would never tell you that I was one. Now then since I'm not an agent, I'll tell you exactly the same. I'm not an agent. If I were to tell you that Bloomsbury was a CIA agent or that he wasn't, it would expose me as a CIA agent, which would betray the trust which a CIA agent must maintain. On the other hand, since I'm not a CIA agent, I don't know if Bloomsbury is a CIA agent or not."

'It's as plain as day!" the painter told me when we left the presumed CIA agent. "Bloomsbury was a CIA agent."

"Why?"

"Because this man gave himself away when he said that the CIA agents are discreet people. Everyone knows that they are a bunch of idiots. On the other hand, if he is a CIA agent and Bloomsbury were not, he would have said that he was indeed, because that's what all of Mexico says about Bloomsbury. But they are partners and he has to keep the secret for him; that's why he stuck in that line about 'If I were . . . but since I'm not.' "

This happened a year ago. I've known Bloomsbury for almost three years and, even then, I was already suspicious. A month ago I received a letter from him that ended with, "I'm not an agent of the CIA," a phrase that, as we have already seen, is typical of CIA agents. Obviously, the problem is an old one and has not been resolved. But since the verbal gymnastics are not going to get us anywhere, I'm going to try to remember and describe my conversations with Bloomsbury, and let everyone draw his own conclusions.

One night, in the spring of 1963, Pepe Romanoff arrived at my house, with the news that Herminio Rendón, the renowned theater critic and philatelist, wanted to introduce me to (with much feeling) an *English editor* who had read my works and was eager to meet me. I disregarded the unusual fact that anyone would want to meet me, and we planned a dinner of *rizzotto* and truffles with flan for dessert.

The idea of a version of T.S. Eliot eating *rizzotto* in the dining room of my house flashed through my mind.

However, these thoughts quickly dissipated,

since Herminio Rendón had a very important dining engagement on the day in question and preferred arriving here with the English editor at five in the afternoon. I substituted a hundred grams of Roquefort cheese and a tin of *paté de foi gras* for the *rizzotto* and flan and bought a couple of bottles of wine. I knew that the interview was going to be a failure.

At exactly five on the designated afternoon, Herminio Rendón and the young Cudurié dressed like an Englishman and each with a bottle of Bacardi in hand, Joan Telefunken, the young scriptwriter, and Bloomsbury, who certainly bore no resemblance to T.S. Eliot at all, arrived at my door. He was too young to be an editor and too good-looking to inspire confidence; he was ruddy, with clear eyes which looked straight ahead with an equivocal enough expression which — at that moment — seemed to me to want to say: "Go ahead, baby!" Instead of the gray, Oxford suit and derby which I expected, he was wearing a well-worn chamois jacket, a sport shirt which I think was flowered, and wrinkled trousers and tennis shoes. He was holding a pipe in his mouth and books in his hand.

Herminio, making the introduction, said:

"I'd like to introduce Mr. . . ."— but he didn't say the name — "whom Joan and I have initiated in the reading of your works." The idea of Herminio Rendón and Joan Telefunken "initiating" that man in the reading of my works passed through my mind.

"He's very interested in getting to know you."

"Enchanted," said Bloomsbury between his teeth, since he was biting his pipe, and he extended his hand to me.

Act two. Herminio, Joan Telefunken, the young Cudurié and I went into the kitchen to fix drinks. Bloomsbury remained in the living room watching the furniture.

"Who is this guy?" I asked Herminio Rendón.

"A theater director."

"Isn't he an editor?"

But he didn't answer me because he went to greet my aunt who had just entered.

I approached Joan Telefunken.

"Who is this guy?"

"I have no idea."

"What's he do?"

"I don't know that either."

"Why do you hang around with him then?"

"Because I'm his secretary. I knew he was looking for a house because I own a real estate agency. He suggested that I be his secretary, and I accepted."

I went over to where Bloomsbury was standing.

"What do you drink?" I asked him.

"I don't drink," he answered me.

I froze on the spot. And he really didn't drink. That was one of his worst defects.

We sat down in the garden and had a grotesque conversation. Herminio Rendón spoke ill of two or three people that no one knew, and my mother and aunt spoke with Joan Telefunken about the "Telefunkens," who were great aunts of the latter and who had been friends of the former, during the reign of don Porfirio. I asked Bloomsbury which of my works he had read, and he told me:

"None."

At this point my aunt interrupted and spoke of the Rue de la Paix and the trip to Europe that the family made in 1907. The young Cudurié fortunately never opened his mouth.

I tried to clear up the confusion, and it took little time to discover that Bloomsbury was neither an editor nor a theater director nor English for that matter, but he was a writer and an American. How did I find this out? It was easy. He told me. He did it so proudly as if to say he had never said anything other than this. On the other hand, he gave me the impression that he wanted to back out because he made two *non sequiturs* which seemed most eloquent to me. When I told him:

"I thought you were English."

He answered:

"Well . . . my wife is English."

And when my mother said to him:

"You remind me a lot of a friend of ours who is Venetian."

He answered:

"My oldest son was born in Venice."

"He's an impostor," I said to myself.

In the middle of it all, Pepe Romanoff who had just been to an auction, arrived; in fact his only reason for living was to attend auctions. Bloomsbury was very interested in auctions and wrote down the time and place where they were held. While he was writing in his address book, I thought to myself: "If you don't have enough money to buy shoes, how are you going to get money to go to auctions?" I asked him this, not because I had anything against his tennis shoes, but precisely for the opposite reason:

I wear guaraches and still don't have money to go to auctions.

"I need furniture," Bloomsbury said, "because all of mine is still in Brazil."

"Who do you think you're fooling?" I thought to myself and decided not to serve the *paté de fois gras* nor the Roquefort cheese.

To torpedo the party I maintained that special silence which in the host's mouth desperately wants to say:

"Get out of here already!"

Herminio Rendón extended his foot and crossed his leg. He spoke to me like the owner of the local whorehouse:

"Well, show the man your works, which he hasn't read."

Bloomsbury and I went up to my room. I continued thinking: "Why would this impostor like my works? But what can I lose by showing them to him."

While I was getting out my manuscripts, Bloomsbury cast a glance around the room and asked me in excellent Spanish:

"Are you familiar with the journal *Encounter*?"

While I was answering him, "yes," without raising my eyes, I was thinking that the question was ridiculous, since there was a stack of *Encounters* in my room.

"I'm a correspondent for *Encounter*," he told me.

I didn't believe him. I didn't believe him just as I didn't believe that he had the money to go to auctions, or that he had furniture in Brazil. He was speaking Spanish so well that I began to doubt that he was an American, and I was almost sure that he wasn't a writer. He took out a piece of paper and wrote: "Bloomsbury, Camelia Street #9. San Angel." I did not believe him nor that that was his name nor that he lived at that address.

Before leaving my room, I asked him, stupidly enough, I admit, if he wanted to go to the bathroom. But I asked him in French. Well, it turned out that he spoke much better French than I, and he responded to me with something that evidently was very comical because he burst out laughing, but I didn't understand. Since I didn't dare say I didn't understand, I was forced to laugh at something that I didn't understand which could have been an insult or an "indiscreet proposition" which I was tacitly accepting with my smile. This threw me into a foul mood.

When Herminio Rendón and the young Cudurié left in a Mustang and Bloomsbury and Joan Telefunken in a Citroën, Pepe Romanoff remained for a while and questioned me about Bloomsbury:

"Are you thinking what I'm thinking?"

He was thinking what everyone was thinking: that Bloomsbury was a homosexual . . . .

"I don't know," I said to him.

Just as I had anticipated, the interview had been a failure.

Two or three days later, Bloomsbury brought me a copy of the magazine, *Cuadernos*, in which he had an article. Or perhaps it would be better to say there was an article attributed to someone who went by the same name as that which Bloomsbury wrote down when he noted his address, that is, Bloomsbury. With that kind of proof he was pretending to demonstrate that he was a writer.

But the most important part of the exchange is that between the pages of the magazine there was a stub from a cashier's check, that said "Pay to the order of N. Bloomsbury. By order of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. For the amount of two thousand, two hundred dollars."

Instead of saying, "Here is an honorable man in as much as they pay him very well," I said to myself, "This is a trap. Why did he leave a stub here, pretending it was forgotten? And how do I know he's really associated with that Congress?"

On the other hand, I must confess that I've never heard of nor heard anyone speak of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. The check stub had a Paris address, and like everything that has any connection with the word, "freedom," it immediately gives one the impression that it is an organization "against" something. Could it be a capitalist organization to combat communist oppression or a communist organization to combat capitalist oppression?

That is, with all due respect to the bank stub and to the journal, *Cuadernos*, which I've never read, that it has a decidedly anti-communist air to it; but after careful study, I began to suspect that it was attempting to do quite the contrary; I mean to be a magazine with an anti-communist viewpoint, made by communists to discredit anti-communists.

Bloomsbury's article was about Edmund Wilson. But wasn't Wilson a leftist? And moreover, wasn't Bloomsbury an impostor?

The next day Pepe Romanoff came over to my house. His composure was somewhat altered.

"Listen, is that friend of yours a man to be trusted? Because he shorted me at the auction and walked

away with things valued at more than three thousand pesos. He told me he'd pay me next week, but you know I can't operate on credit.

"Talk to Herminio Rendón. Let Bloomsbury write you a bill of exchange, let Herminio countersign it and you discount it," I advised Pepe.

His response took me by surprise. Herminio Rendón had only seen Bloomsbury for the first time when they met on the doorstep of my house. The contact had been made by Joan Telefunken, who, as we have already seen, knew neither who Bloomsbury was, nor to what he was loyal, nor why he wanted a secretary.

I consoled Pepe with the knowledge of the check stub for the twenty-two hundred dollars, and when he left, I decided to make my own investigation. I opened the *Roji Guide to Mexico City* and located Camelia Street, which is parallel to Insurgentes. I was there in a flash and a half. It was a quiet, pretty little street, with big trees and large houses.

"These foreigners always get the best houses," I thought to myself.

I stopped in front of the first one. It was number seven hundred and something; in order to get down to number nine I had to drive to the end of the street.

As I drove down the street, my opinion began to change as the street began to deteriorate. Upon arriving at number thirteen, I stopped in amazement. I couldn't believe my eyes; in the next block there was only one house, which in its time was yellow, but now was all but fallen down. In the exterior patio were a dismantled '36 Ford, two underfed dogs, some children playing and two women hanging out laundry. Several scenes passed through my mind of Bloomsbury "going native."

"English wife, my foot!" I said to myself. To the older of the two women, who I assumed was the mother-in-law of the man being investigated I said out loud:

"Does a Mr. Bloomsbury live here?"

"A Mr. Who?"

I immediately understood that she had never heard the name of her son-in-law.

"He's a big, blond, red-faced American that has a car that's big and red, too."

"No, sir. No American lives here."

"When is he going to return to my house?" I thought; "I've said it already, he's an impostor."

This was the nadir of our relationship, because several days after my investigation down Camelia Street, the suspect came to my house and took me to his, which was big, beautiful and unfurnished. It was located on a street called Camelias not Camelia. When we got there, he introduced me to his wife who really was English, his four children, who were of flesh and blood; and he showed me a novel he was writing. He said he had received a grant from the Congress for Cultural Freedom and that his purpose consisted in meeting intellectuals from around here and to see how to help them.

"I think the only thing that I can do for you is to give you money," Bloomsbury said.

We became fast friends.

Bloomsbury had given the world a spin, or at least, gave me that impression. He spoke five languages fluently, or at least, that's what he believed, and he was acting with the combined self-assurance of a renaissance prince and a twentieth century American millionaire. Unfortunately he was neither of the two, and the only thing we held in common was a certain stupidity for dealing with the Mexican intellectual community, and our friendship, which was somewhat questionable because in reality it consisted of a long series of fiascos. For it was a fiasco when I was at his dinner table and found a clove of garlic inside an artichoke heart — a place I've never found garlic before — and took a big bite of it; it was a miracle I didn't throw up. It was a fiasco when he needed someone to translate his novel into Spanish, and I recommended Frank Klug, who didn't speak Spanish, to him. It was a disaster when he asked me for the name of a good, Mexican wine, and I suggested to him a brand it would be best not to mention. I bought him a bottle of the wine which we opened and tasted, the result of which left an extraordinarily sour aftertaste.

Bloomsbury was a consummate linguist and as such preferred to be left in the dark rather than to accept the fact that he didn't understand the meaning of a word. At times, for example, I would ask him: "Do you know what *'pendejo'* means?" and he would answer, "yes"; but his face would indicate that he had not understood. This amused me to no end. The disasterous translation of his novel owes itself to this peculiar trait of Bloomsbury. Although all of us said that the translation was terrible, he insisted that it was excellent, until the end, when he threw it in the trash. On the other hand, since I was not a consummate linguist, it provoked another series of minor disasters like, for example, the day that we were briefly discus-

sing the fact that "one of the girls" was sick. I understood that one of Bloomsbury's daughters was sick and that the family of one of the maids had taken such a liking to the child that they had come all the way from Texcoco to see her, and that they even wanted to take her back with them because they did not agree with the treatment that the doctor had prescribed.

"But that's absurd!" I added.

Then, it was clarified that it was one of the maids, who was sick, and that her family had the right to take her, whenever they wanted.

When I explained to the Bloomsburys that I had understood "one of the girls" to mean one of their daughters, Bloomsbury's wife exclaimed to me quite offended:

"But we have only one daughter!"

To which I responded:

"And how was I supposed to know that, if I've never seen your youngest child without any clothes on?"

"You're drunk," said Bloomsbury.

I was greatly offended, but I didn't say anything.

But these were minor disasters, because there were some big fat ones, too. Like, for example, the one concerning the *Revista Mexicana de Literatura*, which happened like this. Bloomsbury had said to me that he was very interested in that publication, and since I was one of the editors and a Latin American intellectual to boot, I went to tell the staff that "there was a very important American who was going to give us money for the *Revista*." We created a monster together, assisted by all the editors both living and dead and a wide assortment of persons that never had anything to do with the *Revista*. They read the material on hand, which consisted of two stories by a fourth class literary hack and three or four blood-curdling poems, all of which were approved without so much as a "but," nor did anyone dare to say "this stinks." After the session, we went down to the SEP on Sonora for a drink, and there Bloomsbury disagreed extensively with everyone, so that they were left thinking, "this gringo, who knows what he wants?" The truth is that several months later he called me up and told me that the Congress for Cultural Freedom was going to support the *Revista* by means of an advertisement for the journal, *Cuadernos*. They were going to pay six months in advance — 1500 pesos. I understood it to mean 1500 pesos a month, and he meant 1500 for the six months. The fact is that I went to the magazine and told them that they were going to give us 9000 pesos. We were overflowing with euphoria, since that solved all our financial problems for the *Revista*, both present and future. When everything was cleared up, it seemed to us that *Cuadernos* was unworthy of being advertised in a magazine as good as the *Revista Mexicana de Literatura*, and we told Bloomsbury how we felt, who really was hurt by it. Meanwhile, our executives had received an advance for 500 pesos from *Cuadernos* and had already spent them. Even now, I don't know if the 500 pesos were ever returned, if the advertisement appeared, or if the *Revista Mexicana de Literatura* robbed *Cuadernos* of 500 pesos. What I do know is that Bloomsbury never returned to stick his nose in the Mexican magazine business again.

This fiasco generated another, which was worse because it lasted longer, and we had to suffer through it until it was over. It's called the Jalapa Disaster and happened this way . . . .

The night we went to the SEP on Sonora, someone said that a theater group from the University of Jalapa was going to present Machiavelli's *The Mandrake*, and since some of us were invited to the premiere and the date was inconvenient for all of us, we decided to exchange the tickets, to attend a performance the following week, and to take Bloomsbury to meet some of the intellectuals from Veracruz. When we were seated at the table, we were speaking of a trip for eighteen people; nevertheless, only Bloomsbury, his wife, Frank Klug, and I arrived in Jalapa. Why didn't the rest go? Because they were neither interested in going to Jalapa nor seeing *The Mandrake*, but this could have been said prior to the event. The disaster began exactly when Bloomsbury and his wife did not like the coffee they drank in Puebla. From there on, everything went downhill. Bloomsbury became impatient, when I could not find the Rosario Chapel fast enough, and infuriated because the Citroën did not fit in the parking space at the Hotel Salmones. He lost total control when the intellectuals who were supposed to meet us there disappeared because they were communists and didn't want to have anything to do with a representative of Yankee imperialism.

Then, while we were eating canned shrimp in the hotel dining room, Bloomsbury couldn't take any more and erupted with:

"Where are the intellectuals who were going to meet us?"

I watched him swearing in silence and because of

that I made him suffer a half hour of shame for his insolence, then I started calling people on the telephone, saying:

"I'm at the Hotel Salmones with a provocative American writer who would like to meet you . . . etc."

All NO's!

It's just that nobody wanted to meet Americans. Of course, they didn't say that; they said they had guests.

Since the Bloomsburys didn't drink they went to sleep their siesta; Frank Klug and I went to a cantina, and there we spoke ill of those not present. Afterwards we played a dirty trick on them, which they endured in the true spirit of sportsmanship. It consisted of making them eat tamales without plates or forks, while riding in the dark interior of the Citroën. That was my revenge. We returned to Mexico City reconciled, but only after suffering two days of hell.

Another disaster occurred when David Rousset came to write about the Department of Agrarian Reform and PRI, the Institutionalized Revolutionary Party. Bloomsbury had a dinner party to which he invited various "informants," so that Rousset could become acquainted with the state of affairs. Unfortunately, the most important "informant" did what I did and went searching for Bloomsbury's house on Camelia Street instead of Camelias Street. They gave them until eight-thirty and then began to make telephone calls:

"The mister and misses already left over an hour ago," the maid of the "informant" assured us. Bloomsbury began flinging insults:

"What ignoramuses. They'll never return to my house."

When the soufflé was ready, we sat down to eat in the living room. When the "informant" and his wife finally arrived, they found us with our stomachs full and our plates empty. The hosts felt guilty and the guests, like imbeciles. So we went into the dining room, where it was only with great difficulty that a conversation even began. I had to play the part of the "straight man" and ask the "informant" such questions as:

"What is an 'ejido'?"

In addition to all these failures, Bloomsbury was a friend of every famous personality whose name is dropped in a conversation: Saul Bellow, Robert Lowell, Roger Shattuck, Jorge Luis Borges, Jack Thompson, etc. It is good that friends like one another, but even better if they write each other notes which say things like: "My dear Saul, I'm sending you a very interesting Mexican writer." If he doesn't send a letter, that person becomes suspect of not knowing Saul or of snubbing the interesting writer — because he's Mexican. On the other hand, Bloomsbury did have excellent connections with the Congress for Cultural Freedom, the Farfield Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, etc, that is to say, his connections were auspicious enough for him to be considered Santa Claus. Bloomsbury never said he wasn't. Nevertheless, when we went with Rousset to the Restaurant Taquito, Rousset paid the tab and Bloomsbury said to me:

"You pay for the mariachis, and I'll pay you back later; it's not good for foreigners to go paying mariachis because they charge them more."

And I paid the mariachis twenty pesos out of my own pocket, which I never saw again.

Bloomsbury also had rather unorthodox manners. He used to take his shoes off and put his feet — dirty socks and all — on the table in the living room. But when he went into the dining room, he behaved like Lord Fountleroy. However, once when we were sitting around that dining room table and with ladies present, he asked me:

"Do you scratch your testicles?"

But these details, which do illuminate characteristics of one individual's personality, are useless, when one tries to determine his mission.

What was Bloombury's mission in Mexico? Why did he come?

One day he told me:

"Fulano de Tal is going around saying that I came here to buy off Latin American intellectuals."

I went to Fulano de Tal and told him:

"Man, don't say that!"

But neither Fulano de Tal nor I ever figured out whether he had to deny that because it was a lie and Bloomsbury had not come to buy Latin American intellectuals, or if he had to deny it, precisely because Bloomsbury's mission consisted of buying Latin American intellectuals and he had to do it quietly. Someone told me that no one was ever bought and paid off by Bloomsbury, but this allows for two explanations: that Bloomsbury had no intention of buying intellectuals, or rather that he had such intentions, but he didn't find anyone worthy of being bought in Mexico.

Bloomsbury's masterpiece of disasters occurred on the day he invited a group of us over to eat at his house. The group consisted of, among others: Erwin

Rodríguez Monegal, Paco Giner, Joaquín Díez-Canedo, Max Aub, Carlos Fuentes, Jaime Garcia Terrés, Norman Podhoretz, Jason Epstein, et cetera.

When we were drinking the apertífe, he dropped the bomb:

"The United States is going to invade Cuba in June," he said.

We all sat there dumbfounded. We were having drinks in the house of a man that had information that was tantamount to iniquity.

Now then, that was in '64. Which is to say that the iniquity, the invasion of Cuba, never took place. Bloomsbury's prediction was false. But, why did he make it? Because he didn't know that there wasn't going to be an invasion and he was talking for nothing more than for the sake of talking? Or because he knew that there wasn't going to be an invasion, and he told us that so all of us there would look at him quizically, and we would think that he was uninformed, and consequently, that Bloomsbury was not an agent for the CIA.

Almir Bruneti

Translated by Patricia Donahue

ONE DESIRE

I want to die in my homeland
where death is more dignified and more serene,
comfortably lodged in the tears and analgesic sorrow
of my friends and relatives.

I want nothing to do with imposing funeral parlors
upholding themselves in a plastic baroque
of false panels and false Greek columns,
where ex-I, lying inside a plush coffin
with painted lips and perfectly made-up face, will look
much better than I ever was, another I, not I,
a ridiculous impersonation that I never dared presume.

I want to lie on the dinner table in the middle of the living room,
with a lace veil over my face to prevent the ever-present flies
from using my eyes as skating rinks;
there I'll be, very important and oh so conscious,
the center of attention for a few moments,
before the warm cup of coffee, fragrant with life,
is consumed and they chew those delicious, scrumptious
baloney sandwiches.

During the night, the wake,
between the bouts of sobbing close relatives
and the self-conscious investigation of recent guests,
I will hear, one last time, the latest anecdotes

of the endless family saga;
and, on the following day, before the cortege begins,
I will hear the carefree cries of children playing
in the dusty yard, hear the indifferent cackling of the chickens,
hear the buzzing of the bees;
the blinding pulse of nature reassuring me
that I am going, but that life will go on.

—Yes, I know! What does it matter? After the
dive into dark, what difference does it make? Coca Cola
and hamburgers run in the veins and one can just as well
remain a sentinel under stone, such and such a number,
no one in particular, a plot of grass,
anonymous beneath anonymous feet.

Well, listen: it does make a lot of difference!
Gosh! To die, only in that way,
the only way by which one also remains,
joyously,
in the mind and the emotions of others,
in the recollection of that last big production;
then, carried to the cemetery
upon the sweating loving shoulders
of family and friends,
even—if one is so lucky—
carried along by the elation of an enemy.

Such is the way to die, a great going.

Hugo Lindo

Translated by Elizabeth G. Miller

from ONLY THE VOICE

Today you fall as a stone to water.
As a vivid phrase
falls to memory,
as a prolonged gasp
falls among agonies of a bedroom.

You come accompanied by all you were.
Your shadow
firm to your figure,
sad from joining you,
your harvest of spasms,
your vanity,
your deepened
custom of long waiting at the window
of time, for some rose.

Your gestures also accompany you,
caressing your anxiety,
shepherding voices
that are gathered about your mouth.

From where into where do you fall?
To what atmosphere,
who is scattering
all that formed and filled your image
with its elusive history?

Fallen clay,
lowered banner,
dead projectile,
after today who will you be?

Who other than your memory,
diffused dimension of oblivion,
word forbidden at dawn,
and sound of your shadow
slipping away
along the path of other shadows?

Jose Neistein

NOTES ON CONTEMPORARY ART IN BRASIL

Printmaking techniques were first introduced in Brasil by religious missionaries. Of those, the woodcut technique soon became widespread, for it was easy to master and the materials it required were readily available. At the beginning it served a proselitist purpose, when prayers, scapulars, and images of saints were printed. By the nineteenth century, however, woodcuts had already become secularized. This artform spread throughout the hinterland, where a great many artists, particularly in the northeast, started illustrating chapbooks in verse, of which they themselves were often the authors. These chapbooks were sold in the market places and on the streets, and the authors themselves gave public readings of them. It was customary to display these chapbooks by hanging them on strings from a pole and from this derived the expression string literature, or *cordel*, by which the genre is known.

Their authors were true chroniclers who tackled everything from the legends of Charlemagne and his Twelve Peers to modern events, and in between, the fables, anecdotes, crimes of passion of history and life, as well as the miracles of Padre Cicero, the most famous thaumaturge in Brasilian history. It was in this way that cycles of poems and illustrations made their appearance. Scholars divide these cycles into several major categories: the mystical, religious, and moralistic cycle; the heroic cycle; the love cycle; the wonder cycle; the topic cycle; and the satirical cycle. From the literary point of view all of these cycles stem from the medieval songbooks of the Iberian peninsula, while the pictures hark back to both the erudite and popular pictorial traditions from the same era in Portugal.

The same individual was poet, illustrator, reciter, hawker, all wrapped into one. It is appropriate to begin any discussion of contemporary Brasilian art with a discussion of *cordel* because these individuals are still at work, the modern counterpart of the medieval troubadors. In the society of northeastern Brasil he is known, respected, and admired, as Hermilo Borba Filho suggests: "throughout the region blacksmiths, truckmen, mule drivers, drovers, water carriers, hard liquor sellers, field hands, railroad workers, open-air market vendors, one and all read—or listen as the pamphlet sellers sing them—the stories of love and death, of bandits and heroes." The industry of the handprinted pamphlets is structured along the lines of ancient crafts, with their masters and apprentices, and the modern press poses a grave threat to the survival of this string literature. Yet despite this threat, the chapbook tradition still flourishes and retains its capacity to astonish.

This makes Brasil one of the few countries to have a living, creative popular tradition of printmaking practised by renowned artists as well as by anonymous artists. Some of these printmakers have been encouraged by major Brasilian universities, as well as by private collectors, to produce prints, singly or in cycles, independent from texts or pamphlets. Such prints are larger than the traditional ones, and, from an artistic view, are extremely ambitious. As with any commissioned work, the results are unpredictable: some are rigid and stilted, while others are spontaneous and ingenuous. Whatever the results, they now represent another rich lode in this field, so much so that it is now the situation that the chapbooks have become not only a subject of scholarship, but, among experienced artists, a stimulus for the renewal of poetry, music, the narrative and visual arts in Brasil. Thus *cordel*, which came into being as a popular interpretation of tradition and scholarship, has by the seventies come around the full circle.

A rich interaction between the old and the new has also been seen in the case of the Tucuna Indians, who live where the Amazon and Solimoes rivers meet. The Tucunas have played no significant role in the history of the area, although they were mentioned for the first time in 1641 by Cristobal d'Acuna and were later studied by Martius, Rivet, Brinton, Tessman, and Nimuendaju. The Tucuna did, however, excell at sculpting in the past, as is attested particularly by their dance staffs, stools, and necklaces with figures sculpted in Tucuma nuts. Painting, similarly to other Indian cultures, was traditionally limited to masks, pottery decoration, and bark items, some over four feet long and featuring mythological animals as well as the jabiru stork and the jaguar. Recently, however, possibly at the encouragment of the missionaries, the Tucuna have been painting on assymetrical and irregular pieces of tururi-bark cloth of various sizes, for purely recreational or decorative purposes, and with no apparent pragmatic end in view, a rare exception in similar cultures.

Although dissociated from any utilitarian or ceremonial purpose, these paintings, executed with predominantly yellow, blue, and brown natural colors, with the figures outlined in black, reflect the vegetation and the animals of the Tucuna environment. Magical, symbolical, and mythological implications may or may not be present. Some of the paintings are purely geometrical. In some cases the figures are painted in one solid color, in another the figures, mostly of animals, are filled in with geometric patterns simulating leather or scale, which makes the works richer and more dynamic. Quite often, in the midst of the delightful naivete of the paintings, one is struck by a grace and an elegance of great simplicity. The joy often projected onto the mammals betrays a certain humor and points to a life in harmony with nature.

The clusters of fish, mammals, birds, and insects side by side do not suggest any concern for natural proportions. The opposite is often the case, with the size of the motif bearing a direct relationship to its symbolic or psychological importance, which gives the figure an artistic reality quite different from its everyday reality.

I now turn to a discussion of a few of the many interesting artists working in Brasil, restricting myself chiefly to those whose work has been exhibited in North America. There are of course many talented men and women working in Latin America, and any attempt at selectivity might seem presumptuous, and I hope the reader will proceed with the understanding that those artists that for a variety of reasons I have not

Flavio L. Motta, *Stuffed King*

Giselda Leirner

mentioned are equally as interesting as those that I have discussed. However, the artists mentioned below are certainly an interesting and highly stimulating group.

I begin with Nelson Leirner, born in Sao Paulo in 1932, and a textile engineer. Federico Morais has observed this about him: "his anti-art reformulation is precisely this: to require of the spectator an active participation in his work. To participate, and in a certain sense to create, because the meaning only emerges, as in his *Puzzle*, in proportion as the spectator—creator progressively sets up situations—almost always unusual ones full of profound sarcasm and irony, . . . in a succession of color impacts."

Leirner's *The Rebellion of the Animals*, however, consists of drawings of uniform size executed in black and white with a simple traditional pencil, except in a few instances where color, together with the use of felt tip pens, is introduced to underline the drama or importance of certain details. Depending on one's point of view the series can be seen as open or closed. Closed, because it has an introduction, a development, a climax, and an apparent denouement. Open, because intrinsic possibilities remain for the introduction of new, parallel themes, related characters, episodes not foreseen in the beginning, as well as a

drastic reduction to essentials.

A gloomy character, of phallic configuration, aggressive by nature, but anonymous and impersonal, is gradually threatened by still more aggressive and radical forces that are represented by coathangers, skewers, and winged scissors. The protagonist multiplies himself, but so does the enemy. The rival camps organize themselves and galloping or even flying they head on to a ruthless and bloody battle in choreographic patterns akin to the macabre Nordic iconography of the Middle Ages or to Bosch's gnomes and elves.

But the outer garment which envelopes this romanesque action—in itself quite literary along the Kafkaesque and antidiscoursive lines of the absurd—is perhaps even more fascinating than the action itself. The series constitutes the stages of a nightmare of which the artist rids himself in the act of creation, passing it on for other individuals to experience. Its symbolism oscillates between the obvious and the hermetic. The enemies of the phallic protagonist, the swift cutting objects, represent castration; arising from this, threat and cruelty assume new masks. At the crucial moment of anxiety, as if to overcome an identity crisis, the artist fills the space by writing his first name, a hundred times over and over, in search of his shattered ego.

An enormous wealth and variety are evident in Leirner's work, ranging from the simplicity of a linear structure to the complexity of vast assemblages, which are sometimes lit by the theatrical lighting of invisible spotlights. All of this, plus a chiaroscuro worthy of the old masters, gives evidence of the timelessness and inexhaustibility of the pencil as an artistic medium when handled by genuine talent. With all of its implications, its possible inferences, and its over-all visual wealth, Leirner's work, particularly *The Rebellion of the Animals*, is perhaps the greatest Brasilian contribution to the medium of drawing in recent years.

Marcello Nitsche, born in 1942, has done substantial work in a wide variety of the arts, photography as well as drawing and painting. He combines two substantial factors in his work: his multifaceted experience and his persistent preoccupation with the relationship between man and landscape. In the last decade his activities have encompased, besides drawing and painting, avant garde experiments using a great variety of materials, sculpture, the making of short experimental films, and collaboration with architects. The main streams of preoccupation underlying such versatility are, nevertheless, but a few, which alternate with each other, or, which is often the case, occur alongside each other in the complexity of the artist's propositions.

Some cement cows that Nitsche made and planted in a meadow, by a stream, or in the midst of a pasture, signaled a longing for permanence and for identification with the landscape, a desire just to be and let be. These cows were caught in their ease and there they remained, suspended in an intangible, paradisiacal moment, hinting at eternity.

In making a giant inflatable and inflating it until it took up a whole acrylic environment, he was evidencing his secret desire to breathe soul into a being, as did the Creator. Except that this time the creator was the artist, a secularized demiurge, while the creation was the fascinating, disorderly, and amorphous world of technology in search of a soul.

When he painted landscapes on pieces of canvas and stitched together land, sea, and sky with black thread, this signified yet another desire, namely to rediscover painting's spatial unity by re-establishing the primordial unity of nature. Although man was absent from all of these essays, they were conceived with man in mind. The rethinking and reorganizing of the landscape was done so that man could inhabit it on a new basis.

In a flash of ironic inspiration, Nitsche shows us a photograph of a drawing by Van Gogh, under which an inscription has been added: *hand made*. And *hand made* becomes a synthetic ode to man's hands, which make things that make up the universe which we transform, and which, through art, record the transformations that we make. Nitsche's drawings are thus exercises of extraordinary formal and chromatic refinement in search of a longed for rearticulation of man and nature in humanistic terms, in quest of a utopia of the possible, and in an attempt at a deliberate and carefully orchestrated rediscovery of a kind of paradise lost.

Evandro Carlos Jardim, born in 1935, has his feet squarely planted in the great tradition of printmaking. His values and the characteristics of his work are basically the same ones that were definitively laid down by Dürer and Rembrandt, then given a new garb by the expressionists and Picasso, namely discipline and strictness of line, accuracy of observation and freedom of imagination, and a final severity in the

Nelson Leirner, *Sky at Night*

concretion of the final image. Although Jardim also draws, paints, and invents objects, it is in metal etching—drypoint and doing aquafortis—and in the meticulousness of the ritual of printing that he fully realizes himself.

His themes come to him from the surrounding world and from poetic flights that tempt him from afar. Like every true artist he can start from the simple and then achieve richness, variety, and complexity of expression. It is sufficient only for him to look to rediscover life even as it undergoes an aesthetic transmutation and is rediscovered for us.

Jardim's work, which is exhibited in the Museum of Modern Art as well as in Brasil, contrasts strongly with the work of Mira Schendel, a self-taught artist now in her third decade of activity, but whose works were first shown in North America in the seventies. She first pursued figurative painting, passed through an abstract phase, reached her own form of conceptual expression, and has always seemed impelled by an inner necessity rather than by the dictates of a career, with a maturity earned through searching and reflection rather than by any adherence to the latest fashions of the international scene. When her graphic reductions were shown in Europe her work—an art made up of empty spaces, signs, scribbles, words, and fragments of words—was hailed as a unique synthesis of the various intellectual tendencies of drawing in the sixties. Her refinement is evident in her choice of materials, which has included the use of plexiglass for its transparency, and stresses even more the quality in her work of a sober, cold, intangible and immaterial beauty. It is the same kind of beauty that characterizes a worked-out idea, a perfect equation.

Mira Schendel's pages of drawings, her notebooks in which letters and vectors question concepts of space and time, her plexi glass sheets on which letters from a Letra set are scattered, apparently at random, seem to be the physical expression of a spiritual and intellectual research and formulation, discreetly nourished by and delighting in the sensual delicacy of its component elements. Perhaps, like Plato's ideas, Mira Schendel's artistic concepts have an ideal beauty that surpasses the beauty of their corporeal existence. In any event, if one of her finished notebooks were to be reproduced, the difference between the meticulously made original and one of the myriad printed copies would be hard to detect and indeed, would cease to matter at all. It is the idea of the book that is of chief importance.

On the contrary, Giselda Leirner's drawings thrive on contrasts. In one of her works, in which Aquarius is apparently the theme, a fragile hook fishes out a huge body, heavy and coarse. In another, a butterfly—lyrical but already decaying—offers a new interpretation of nostalgia and kitsch at once witty, sarcastic, and poignant. Pencil, crayon, India ink, sepia, collage—all sorts of materials are used—supplemented by band-aids, scotch tape, and colored adhesive tape frequently used in a way that has nothing to do with tradition but serve to define and limit space. With these, together with traditional drawing techniques, the artist develops fanciful textures and suggestive lines of great subtlety, not as an attempt at beauty, pure and simple, which nevertheless bursts onto the paper. Rather her aim is to fix forever those things that are essential but forever shrouded in mystery—germination, the rites of passage, a sad life and a beautiful death—the whole dictated by impulse and at the same time filtered through reflection.

As Giselda Leirner has noted, "I endeavor to shake off the spell exerted over me by the schools and the avant garde, these ever-new trends, as well as to forego the feeling of a security an artist derives from belonging to a movement. I recognize their values, if they have such, but I do not own up to these values. . . . I have chosen the road of growing within myself through the expression of something intangible and untouchable."

Like Mira Schendel, Renina Katz has had an impressive career, since her first group show in 1948. Lately, however, she has been leaving behind her seriagraphs characterized by large areas of flat color and geometrical composition and is now creating lithographs, which are distinguished by a harmonious and well balanced albeit assymetrical composition. In the process of changing from seriagraphs to lithographs her prints have gained in fluidity and looseness. Some of them exhibit a new monumental quality and are hiddenly figurative, while ostensibly adhering to a free form. It is a figuratism encompassed by broad abstraction.

This change of medium determined the need for another equally specific language, which implied years of work and search that led Renina Katz to find her own lithographic language. On the stone surface there dwell together the same qualities and textures associated with crayon, superimposed chromatic layers, opacity and transparence, and a certain parallelism of language with aquafortis. In both color and structure her current work betrays a certain kinship with the watercolors she has never ceased to produce all along her different stages of development, while her awareness of paper and its demands is keener than ever.

Katz' fascination with great spaces and her delight in the discovery of color have given rise to entirely novel compositions along the way. The interaction of monochromatic expanses with contrasting and complementing colors in interplay, coupled with the strict discipline of the printing process, characterizes her new achievements, which indicate great self-assurance. In the lithographs one detects the results of the interaction between meticulous planning and randomness. Underneath her informality one senses a great discipline.

The work's structure is dictated by the chosen themes. These in turn are expanded by and made subordinate to the structures. It is in the very process of execution that these take shape. Monumentality and lyricism, for instance, acquire a thematic expression only because they are tangible in every detail of the image themselves, as well as in individual solutions and in the pervasive aesthetics of the images.

Cliffs and steep slopes, wide horizons and inquisitive cosmogony, estuaries and territories—every component is imbued with monumentality—for, over and beyond mere planning, each one has elicited a perfect solution, a solution thoroughly germane to lithography, because conceived specifically for lithography.

I can only conclude by a brief mention of Flavio Motta, who was born in 1923 and has served as a professor of art history and aesthetics at the architecture school at the University of Sao Paulo. As is the case with all witty drawings, Motta's work is serious but never circumspect, for like every higher manifestation of humor in its highest sense his witticism knows how to maintain a critical distance. His city characters, suffocated by the big conglomerates, are but machines, simplified and sardonic. In them, as in the drawings of Paul Klee—one of his hidden sources—an ostensibly childish element reveals wisdom and benevolence.

From cubism Motta borrows the prismatic unfolding of the object to show us how he sees, hears, and smells, all at once. He also invents a new alphabet, with squiggles a la Kandinsky, as well as new animal species. When he does not invent them, he reinterprets them through dazzling semantics, as in the case of his "translated cat." His felicities are seen now in verbal invention, now in a paradoxical invention, or, in the best instances, in the perfect match between the two: an aquarium seller whose head is an Aquarius, a purebred dog irked by racism, an animal taken by surprise in its own environment. His intellect pokes fun at intellectual exertions, as in the case of the dog who is studying semiotics or the bee who is alienated from his beehive. Through his fantastic animals we laugh at consumerism, as when a spotted jaguar discusses the availability of new patterns with a zebra. A Brasilian proverb has it that God writes straight through crooked lines. Flavio Motta also makes his lines crooked to help us see straight.

Cecilia Bustamente

Translated by Maureen Ahern and the Author

BOARDING SCHOOL

Pieces of dried fruit and bread a round
of cards with a Spanish deck
such nostalgia
Delia was born the same day that I was
and the shuffling cards dealt us
an ancient silence.

A piece of bread a round
of cards with a Spanish deck
midpoint the sky
sensual clover leaves
tiny taunt delicious flowers
in the opaque greenhouse
such fear
the boys one by one
the girls two by two
toward the long table
to eat what father sent us.
Beyond nostalgia
the boys forever
the girls forever
one by one
nevermore
two by two.

From their throne
the decks
begin to deal another round
in shadow.

Alfred C. Lemmon

CONCERT LIFE: MEXICO CITY, 1970-1979

For the chroniclers of the 1980 European summer music festivals, pianists deserve particular attention. Not only did the legendary Rubenstein appear, but a vast array of virtuoso pianists assembled. Two of the more famous were Claudio Arrau and Martha Argerich. In both instances, tremendously successful international careers obscure national origins. Arrau, a long-hailed master, is from Chile. Argerich, a frequent comparison to Horowitz and rivaling Spain's Alicia de Larrocha as the greatest woman pianist alive, is from Argentina. A hurried, incomplete listing of Latin American artists of world renown would include pianists Jorge Bolet (Cuba), Bruno-Leonardo Gelber (Argentina), Horacio Gutiérrez (Cuba), Angélica Morales (Mexico), violinist Jaime Laredo (Bolivia), harpsichordist Rafael Puyana (Colombia) and opera star Domingo Placido (Mexico).

Many a foreign artist has come to call a Latin American country home as Henryk Szeryng did Mexico and Eric Landerer Venezuela. Concert halls have traditionally hosted the immortals. When the legendary Andrés Segovia arrived in Buenos Aires to perform during the summer of 1979, thousands crowded to cheer his return. Fernando Bujones, the young Miami-born star of American Ballet Theater, has gratefully acknowledged the importance of Brazilian sojourn for his career. Positions of prominence for Heitor Villa Lobos (Brazil), Alberto Ginastera (Argentina) and Carlos Chávez (Mexico) have long been secured in the annals of twentieth-century music. Two young Argentine composers, Mauricio Kagel and Mario Davidovsky, have become leading exponents of experimental music.

Though music is flourishing in Latin America, there is a more sobering note. The concept of the average foreigner is that the musical life is one of *mariachis* and *ballet folklóricos*. The composers and performers with international recognition have achieved it—to a large degree—in foreign conservatories and concert halls. Yet, the 1970's showed signs of new trends and developments. First, investigators—European, Latin American, and North American—have now sufficiently uncovered the basic data so that the development of classical music in Latin America can now be outlined in textbooks. Recordings dedicated to the works of Latin American composers have increased in number, often resulting from government patronage.

In the world of popular music, the success of Robert Carlos of Brazil in breaking the Spanish-Portuguese barrier indicates the activity in that field. The publication of another monumental volume by ethnomusicologist Isabel Aretz of Venezuela illustrates the wealth of native music. Evermore aware of effects of a changing world upon the native dance-drama, scholars have

struggled to chronicle events. Popular music, the reality of music for the majority rather than an Indian dance from a remote village or a Haydn quartet, has gained the attention of scholars despite difficulties in studying it. Presently, there exists an increasingly strong awareness of the diverse musical traditions. The attempts to define those traditions is a major step toward changing the image of Latin American music.

For present purposes, the musical activity of only one country—Mexico, and only one genre—the classical is examined. The choice of Mexico is not an indication that musical activity in other countries is lesser. Indeed, Brazil has led the way in establishing multiple centers of music throughout the country. The *Mozarteum Argentino* of Buenos Aires since its founding in 1952 has striven to provide the finest in music listening to an increasingly varied public. Bringing faculty from the Chigiana Academy of Siena to Argentina, it has provided excellent opportunities in music instruction. Chile has contributed a most important scholarly journal—*Revista Musical Chilena*. Venezuela's International Ballet of Caracas has won applause from many a critic. Peru's musical activity, both past and present, is attested to by the luxurious edition of *La Púpura de la Rosa*, the first New World opera (1701) with the text of Pedro Calderón de la Barca and music of Tomás de Torrejón y Velasco. The publication of the catalogue of the Bogota cathedral music archive is important for understanding the baroque period in the Americas.

The present choice of Mexico has a certain historical background for a review centered in New Orleans. Though Gottschalk's visits to South America have been well documented, in 1811 *Le Moniteur de la Louisiane* reported that M. Jean Goez, *maître de chapelle du Royaume de Mexique* was visiting in New Orleans. The Montplaisir family of dancers, popular in New Orleans in the mid-nineteenth-century, also performed in Mexico. The Mexican Eighth Calvary Band was something of a sensation at the *World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition* of 1884-1885. More recently, the *Ballet Folkórico de México* has captured many an audience on visits to the Crescent City. Finally, one should remember that the Dean of Loyola University's College of Music from 1954 to his death in 1956 was Miguel Bernal Jiménez of Mexico.

There is no better place to begin an overview of Mexican musical activity during the past decade than in the Mexican musical magazine *Heterofonia*. Thumbing through its pages, a distinguished list of visiting symphony orchestras appears—the London Symphony Orchestra, the New London Philharmonia, the Concertgebouw of Amsterdam and the symphonies of Baltimore, Bamberg, Belgrade, Cleveland, Montreal, Sofia, and Tokyo, to mention only a few. Conductors visited as well, including Sarah Caldwell, Sergiu Comissiona, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, Lukas Foss, Bernard Haitnik, Eric Leinsdorf, Lorin Maazel, Zuben Mehta, John Pritchard, and Julius Rudel. Composers such as John Cage, Aaron Copland, Mauricio Kagel, and Gyorgy Ligetti led performances and seminars. Among the leading pianists performing were Joaquín Achúcarro, Claudio Arrau, Martha Argerich, Gina Bachauer, Stephen Bishop, Jorge Bolet, Phillipe Entremont, Christoph Eschenbach, Malcolm Frager, Horacio Gutiérrez, Walter Klein, John Ogden, Alicia de Larrocha, Tomas Vásary, and Alexis Weissenberg. Singers such as Victoria de los Angeles, Maureen Forrester, Nicolai Gedda, Marilyn Horne, Anna Moffo, and Renato Scotto graced the stages of Mexico City. Still other popular visitors included the John Biggs Consort, Julian Bream, Eugene Fodor, Pierre Fournier, the Guarneri Quartet, Itzhak Perlman, Ruggiero Ricci, Nicanor Zabaleta, and Narciso Yépes. A festival was held in honor of Pablo Casals and the master himself attended. Ballet companies of international rank such as the Alvin Ailey, Maurice Béjart, *Ballet Nacional de Cuba* (with Alicia Alonso), Bolshoi, Louis Falco, Elliot Feld, Joffrey, New London Ballet (with Margot Fonteyn and David Wall), Nikolais Dance Theater, Royal Ballet of Covent Garden, and Paul Taylor (with Rudolf Nureyev) performed in sold-out houses.

Most performances were held in Mexico City's famed *Palacio de Bellas Artes*. Designed by the Italian architect Adamo Boari, the *Art Nouveau* building was intended to rival Garnier's Opera House in Paris. Though ground was broken in 1904, construction was halted in 1913 as a result of the Mexican revolution and did not resume until 1932. Finally inaugarated in 1934, spacious lobbies serve as exhibition space for the great Mexican muralists. While inside the main concert hall, the crystal curtain is a mosaic of more than one million pieces of opaline crystal. Using a landscape painting of Gerardo Murillo, better known as Dr. Atl, it took Tiffany's of New York more than two years to complete. Tucked away on the mezzanine is a smaller concert hall, named in honor of Mexican composer Manuel M. Ponce. The murals, jaguars,

coyotes, and eagle warriors decorating this *Art Nouveau* building remind one that it is Mexico's National Theater.

In the 1970's two other concert halls made their debut. The first, the *Teatro de la Ciudad* is not a new construction, but a magnificent restoration of the *Gran Teatro Esperanza Iris*. Designed to welcome home Esperanza Iris' *Compañía de Opereta y Zarzuela* from a triumphant European tour, it was opened in 1918. Before falling into decline, it hosted such notables as Ana Pavlova and Enrique Caruso. Now equipped with the most modern theatrical equipment, it has resumed a prominent role in concert life.

If the *Teatro de la Ciudad* is a magnificent restoration of the last of the nineteenth-century style theaters and the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* Mexico's monument to *Art Nouveau*, then the *Sala Nezahualcóyotl*, inaugarated in 1976 stands as testimony to the creativity of twentieth-century Mexican architects. Rising out of the black lava within the University City, it forms part of a cultural complex including a theater and the national library. With a seating capacity of 2,311, it has quickly become a favored concert hall because of its acoustics, spacious foyers, seating plan, and location in the southern part of the city. In daily use, often with two or three programs scheduled on Saturdays and Sundays, it stands as testimony to the musical activity in Mexico during the 1970's and truly honors Nezhualcóyotl, the Aztec poet-prince.

A large portion of Mexican concert life is devoted to symphonic music. The *Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional* came into existence as presently known by presidential decree in 1947, though an orchestra had existed under that name since 1916. The driving force behind the decree and the orchestra was Carlos Chávez, the grand old man of Mexican music. It is funded by the *Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes*. In 1979 the orchestra took on new life with the appointment of Sergio Cárdenas as artistic director. Born in 1951 in Ciudad Victoria in the state of Tamaulipas, he studied at the Salzburg Mozarteum winning the coveted Lilli Lehmann and Dr. Joachim Winkler awards. However, his greatest prize was being named director of the Mozarteum orchestra upon graduation and later leading it in the prestigious Salzburg Festival.

On September 14, 1979, the *Orquesta Filarmónica de la Ciudad de México* presented its first anniversary concert. At the close of one year, it had celebrated a total of 130 concerts. Among its conductors was Leonard Bernstein, who found it to be one of the best young orchestras in existence. With funding from *El Fondo Nacional para Actividades Sociales*, headed by Carmen Romano de López Portillo, it is part of the music education system *Vida y Movimiento* with orchestra members giving regular classes in the system's *Escuela de Perfeccionamiento*. Fernando Lozano, after an international career as an opera conductor, returned to Mexico in 1978 to serve as musical director.

Another young orchestra is the *Filarmónica de las Américas*. Founded in 1976 and funded by the *Consejo Nacional de Turismo* and the *Associatión Filarmónica de las Américas*, it draws musicians each summer from North America to Argentina with Herrera de la Fuente serving as musical director. In addition to the two weekly concerts in the *Palacio de Bellas Artes*, which are consistently sold-out, it presents free concerts in a different part of Mexico City on Sundays. During the summer 1979 season, more than one hundred thousand people attended concerts.

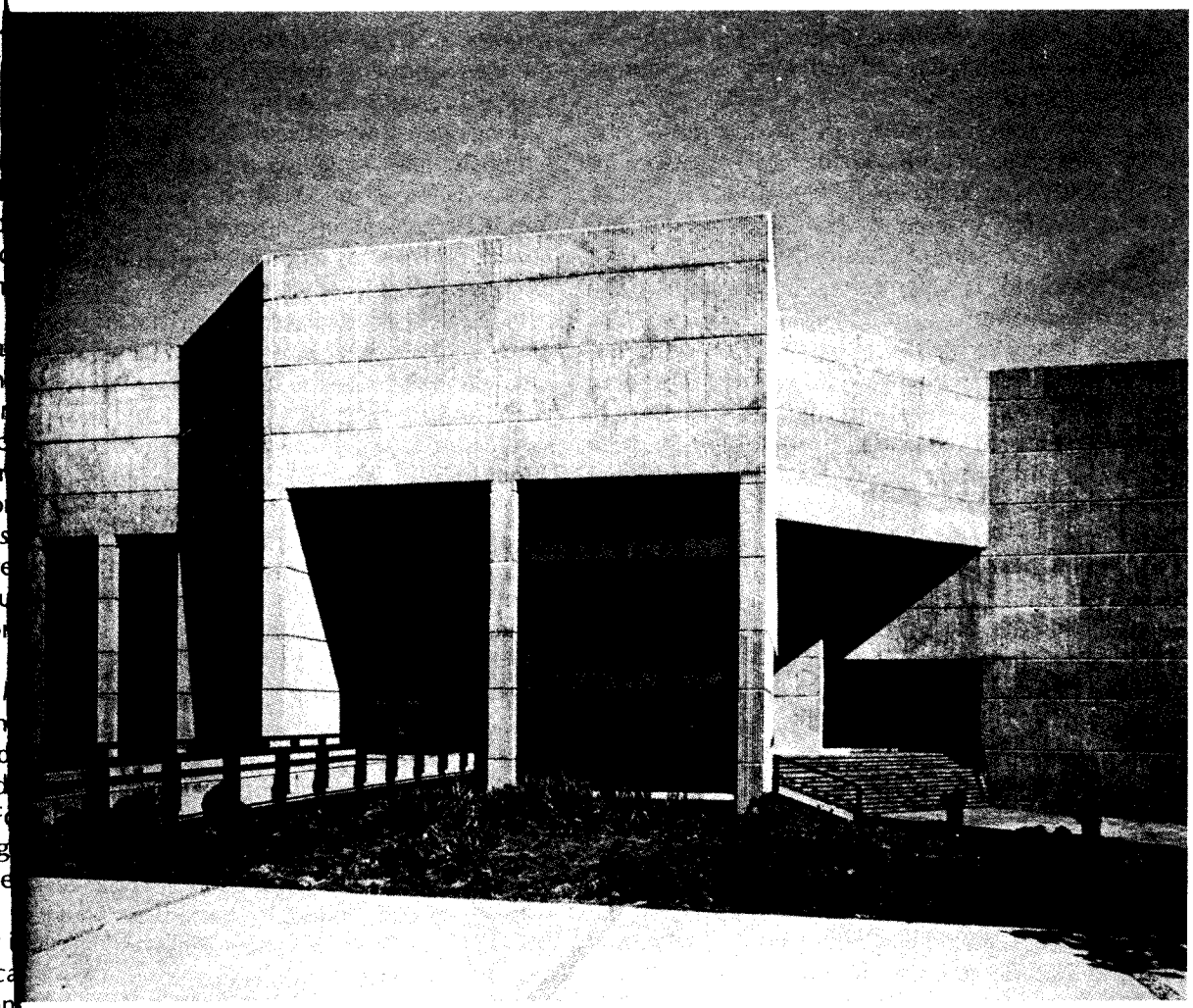
The *Academia de Música del Palacio de Mineria* also performs during the summer months under the direction of Jorge Velaco. With studies in London, the *Accademia Chigiana* of Siena, New York, and Berlin, Velazco counts among his teachers Lukas Foss and Herbert von Karajan. Performing under the aegis of the Faculty of Engineering of the National University, it presents works rarely heard in Mexico.

Still other orchestras performing frequently in Mexico City include the *Orquesta Filarmónica de la U.N.A.M.* Under the patronage of the National University, it continues to enjoy a high level of distinction under the present director Héctor Quintanar. The same is true of the *Orchesta Sinfónica* of the state of Mexico under Enríque Bátiz. A characteristic of these symphonies is the use of the media, both radio and television, to reach a larger segment of the public.

The field of dance in Mexico is perhaps most closely associated with the *Ballet Folklórico* of Amalia Hernández. However, the *Ballet Nacional de México* is a respectable organization, which celebrated thirty years of existence in September, 1979. Under the guidance of Guillermina Bravo, the techniques of Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham, Doris Humphrey, and Louis Falco have been selectively integrated for the Mexican troupe. The group has successfully convinced critics at home and abroad of its validity.

who found it to be one of th
existence. With funding f
a *Actividades Sociales*, hea
e López Portillo, it is part
ystem *Vida y Movimient*
giving regular classes in t
rfeccionamiento. Fernand
tional career as an opera c
xico in 1978 to serve as

rchestra is the *Filarmónica*
l in 1976 and funded by th
urismo and the *Associatió*
icas, it draws musicians ea
erica to Argentina with He
musical director. In additio
rts in the *Palacio de Bellas*
ntly sold-out, it presents fr
part of Mexico City on Su
r 1979 season, more than o
ple attended concerts.
de Música del Palacio de
ng the summer months un
Velaco. With studies in Lond
na of Siena, New York, and
mong his teachers Lukas F
n. Performing under the aeg
ering of the National Unive
ely heard in Mexico.
stras performing frequently
the *Orquesta Filarmónica*
the patronage of the Nation
s to enjoy a high level of dis
t director Héctor Quintan
e *Orchesta Sinfónica* of the
ique Bátiz. A characteristic
e use of the media, both ra
h a larger segment of the p
ce in Mexico is perhaps most
he *Ballet Folklórico* of Ama
, the *Ballet Nacional de Mé*
nization, which celebrate
e in September, 1979. Un
llermina Bravo, the techni
Merce Cunningham, Dori
s Falco have been selective
xican troupe. The group has
ritics at home and abroad of i



ezahualcoytl

e month of June is reserved for the *Temporada acional de Danza Contemporánea*. Striving to ate different styles, companies ranging from ce Béjart's *Ballet of the Twentieth Century* to Ailey have been presented. The important con- on of Mexico's José Limón in the field of modern must also be remembered. A master choreog- , his "Moor's Pavane" is part of the stable reper- f many a company. Furthermore, his New York troup is the second-oldest modern dance group United States (Martha Graham's is the oldest) e first to survive the death of its founder (Limón 1972). To chronicle the dance world in Mex- e magazine *Danza* was founded by Elizabeth Liechti in 1977.

If foreign musicians have come to settle in Mexico, so have dancers. Nina Shestakova, a prima ballarina in the *Opéra Privée de Paris* when it visited Mexico in 1929 under Coronel de Basil (the succesor of Diaghilev), is one such case. Her fiftieth anniversary in Mexico as a teacher was celebrated with great festivity in the summer of 1979. During the fall of 1979, Vladimir Petrin, Ballet Master and choreographer from the Bolshoi, led the National University's seminar on choreography.

1973 saw Marcos Paredes raised to the rank of principal dancer with the *American Ballet Theater*. Born in Aguascalientes, Mexico, he received training at Mexico's *Academia de la Danza* and later performed with the *Ballet Contemporáneo* and the *Ballet*

Clásico de México. Entering *American Ballet Theater* in 1965, he has both danced and designed costumes for its repertory.

Any presentation of music in Mexico during the 1970's must concern itself with the role of the woman. One has only to look to Amalia Hernández to realize the importance of women in Mexican music. Specifically within the realm of classical music, the role of Angélica Morales is paramount. At the age of 9 she received a government grant to study in Europe. Studies with Egon Petri (a disciple of Busoni) in Berlin, Isador Philipp in Paris, and Emil von Sauer (a student of Liszt) in Vienna alone indicate her importance. Eventually she married and succeeded von Sauer in Vienna, establishing an important career as performer and teacher on both sides of the Atlantic. Esperanza Pulido—pianist, teacher, critic, and editor—enjoys a unique place in Mexican musical life. After studies in New York, Paris, and other European cities she returned to Mexico to become a beloved teacher. Her concerts have included a vast repertoire; but it is her work as a critic and editor that is of particular importance. With musical magazines in Latin America appearing and lasting only a few numbers, she founded *Heterofonía*, which celebrated its tenth anniversary in 1979.

María Teresa Rodríquez made a triumphant New York debut in 1940. Though her small hands are the master of a vast repertoire, her importance is that she was the person selected by Carlos Chávez to interpret his piano works. Alicia Urreta has distinguished herself as a composer, pianist and organizer. Her studies have taken her to the European masters including the electroacoustic laboratory of Pierre Schaeffer in Paris. The premier of innumerable contemporary works in Mexico are traceable to her indefatigable efforts.

One must not be led into thinking that the musical activity is limited to Mexico City. Important music festivals are held in Monterrey and Puebla. Every spring Morelia hosts an international organ festival. Yet, perhaps the gold medal must be struck in honor of Guanajuato's International Cervantes Festival. From the first festival in 1972, it was destined to become a major musical event. As 1979 closed, the artist roster for 1980 was announced. The New York City Opera with Beverly Sills, Royal Flemish Opera, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, the Tokyo and Tel Aviv Quartets, the National Ballets of Canada and Cuba, the International Ballet of Caracas, and the Nikolais Dance Theatre indicate the magnitude of the festival. Among pianists were Claudio Arrau, Martha Argerich, Lazar Berman, Angélica Morales Peter Serkin, and Alexis Weissenberg. When the other twenty-two performing organizations and numerous soloists are considered, the festivals place in Mexican and international concert circuits is clear.

In the field of music education, Xalapa, the capitol of the state of Veracruz, is a prime example that music instruction need not be limited to the nation's capital city. The University of Xalapa has lured an impressive faculty, including Alfonso Moreno, one of the world's foremost guitarists. The University sponsored symphony, boasting an international roster of guest artists and orchestra members, is one of the most important in the history of Mexico. Celebrating its fiftieth anniversary in 1979, it is not an innovation but a tradition.

As the 1970's closed, several trends were apparent—the importance of symphony orchestras (all with Mexican conductors), the ability to attract performers of international acclaim, the importance of women in music, and the development of musical centers throughout the country. Opera remained the weakest of the musical arts, but even there several bright spots appeared. The 1979 production of *Tristan und Isolde* was highly commendable, there were broadcasts of the National Opera on television as well as the New York Metropolitan. Various nations continue to work closely with Mexico to prepare culture exchange programs. Obviously in the field of opera, the announcement of the 1980 visit of the Vienna State Opera was enthusiastically received.

Though the death of Carlos Chávez—Mexico's musical giant as composer, conductor, and teacher—in 1978 was admittedly a great loss, his legacy remains. Eduardo Mata enjoys a distinguished career as a conductor on both sides of the Atlantic, and Jorge Mester serves as musical director of the Aspen Music Festival and Louisville Orchestra. Manuel Enríquez and a host of young Mexicans enjoy growing reputations as composers. Numerous other examples might be cited of outstanding composers, conductors, performers and teachers. However, the key to understanding the musical activity of Mexico is the broad base of support which it enjoys.

Blanca Varela

Translated by Maureen Ahern

STORY

you can tell me anything
believing is not important
what matters is that wind move your lips
that your lips move the wind
that your body fabricate your story
constantly ceaselessly
like a flame that is like nothing
but a flame.

Octavio Armand

Translated by Naomi Lindstrom

YOU CALL

You call when it rains and the streets arise singing. You call. You know my name. You cover it with snail s, you shake it. You repeat it with your open mirror . Because you love me, you carry me about in your mo uth and with the same mouth search for me. Calling t o me, you touch me. You dissolve me. For you I am a magnet, imaginable, for I let words interrupt me and grow until they obliterate me, till they cancel me ou t. The person you know lives in front of me. See? B ut you call. I am the friend or the enemy, the lover who reasons with his skin like a little sun. You cal l. You draw back your lips from my flesh. For you I will always be that 18th of June from back then. His tory is a single date, and at last we understand the task set. We are the heroes, we confess. And amid d rops of rain we've prepared this getaway, hiding our lips, crushing against one another.

THE WORD IS STILL LIP

1

The word is still lip. Desire. Interrupted flesh or weeping. Between two mouths fire i s water. The word is water. What I say to you moistens you. Between two mouths only the tongue exists insists licking bitching l ike sand repeated in wings or a long beach w ithin the also-empty seashell.

2

Only the tongue exists and opens up the worl d. Tasting it testing it. You move across my tongue. You begin on the tip of this nam e that I say and you are salt or honey and y ou burn. Here where I flare out toward you and you're flame. Where I announce my exist ence and only you respond to the leper's app eal.

3

Only my tongue, love. Only us upon your to ngue. With the knee opened up in the mouth , running, seashells or sea or sand in the wind loving.

Julio Ortega

LATIN AMERICAN LITERATURE FACING THE EIGHTIES

The socio-literary phenomenon known in Latin America as the *boom* (which, incidentally, created a wider audience for several major novels such as *Pedro Páramo, Hopscotch, Paradiso, One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Three Trapped Tigers,* along with the critical discourse related to them) can be perceived now as a movement that anticipated both the social modernization *and* the political socialization of Latin America. These novels brought the genre up to date through a process of experimentation—which was brilliant, innovative, symmetrical and methodical. This technical process at least parallels the signs of social modernization in a number of Latin American countries where the emergent middle classes established the norm. At the same time, this literary movement and its attendent intellectual discourse was intended to be a polemical anticipation of the political socialization—and a demand for radical change. *Literature,* some of these novelists often said, *is born of dissidence, and its role is to criticize.* Latin American literature, inspired by the Cuban Revolution, rebelliously sought to lead the way to the inevitable liberation of our countries.

However, several contradictions have revealed a situation not so clear-cut. Some of these writers, with their faith in the "enlightened" role of literature, have failed to perceive that the literary movement that made them known inevitably included the complex production mechanism that represented a modernization of the communication process. The birth and growth of the *boom* was bound by the expansion of the publishing and communications networks. These, in turn, created a highly valued object of consumption, reinforced by literary prizes, and by the authority on public issues usually granted to writers.

A narrow Marxist view might assume that this phenomenon shows a deliberate manipulation of the market. But a more careful observer would note instead that the economic, cultural and ideological mechanisms—so clearly visible in this literary case—reveal the contemporary trivialization of the work of art into a mere commodity. There is a good reason why the readership of these novels has been recruited increasingly from the urban, neocapitalistic, expanding middle class. These mechanisms of production and consumption have led to the writer's conversion—

from independent critic to spokesman: a qualified specialist on "public opinion"—which is the social pact controlled by the bourgeoisie. This shift in stance suggests the neutralization of social roles in the communications industry—which, in our countries, is controlled by the modernizing sector. Moreover, this conversion of the writer from critic to spokesman leads to a more serious consequence: the loss of connection between writing and craft; the loss of a genuine relationship with the language. Now, the writer has come to have a merely functional relationship with his work, which gradually has become impoverished. It is not suprising that, as a result of this process, the writer who represents relative modernization has finally given in to a public which has assimilated and diffused this demanding and critical message. This public has eventually shaped the true typology of the *boom* novel: reducing its components of violence, injustice and extreme passion to drama, intrigue and banal emotionalism. Having surrendered to the demands for an uncontroversial novel—this writer has also changed radically from the voice of dissent to that of the *status quo,* and he has been awarded new recognition in the process. History repeats itself: the bourgeoisie always seeks to assimilate the artist, and to appropriate his message.

This shift provides good material for the sociology of literature (these days even the incomes of Dumas' père and Balzac are public knowledge). But, it is also a political issue, since some writers who have converted to the right have become involved in unfortunate, self-destructive situations. Their real political options have deteriorated into mere polemical violence. In the case of Latin America this is a wasteful situation because now—more than ever—the criticism of traditional patterns of political change *and* the thorough revision of alternative paths to emancipation have become essential. This process clearly reveals the contradictions and setbacks within our intellectual life. The last 20 years, between the triumphs of the Cuban and Sandinista revolutions, have proved that the modernization process is at odds with the alternatives of social and political justice. The model that was intended to effect political and social change through modernization and development discovers serious self-contradictions.

The optimism and liberal ideology of the writer in the sixties is held in check by the limitations of capitalistic development, but also by the annihilation of the projects for change. And this presents a more serious problem. The successive destruction of the movements toward independence in South America—the Popular Unity of 1973 in Chile and the national revolution of 1975 in Peru (as well as the undeclared civil wars in Uruguay and Argentina)—constitute the new political and social horizon in which that ideological and literary movement has lost its meaning. During these crises in the seventies, the creative and intellectual writer could only return to his more natural role as critic. Persecution, exile and political demoralization characterize the difficult social experience of the writer now again branded the enemy of the newly restructured regressive order.

Once more literature has redefined the body, once again the source of poetic language—a language based on the enunciation of its primary needs because, threatened by annihilation for the sake of an opposing ideology, the *body itself* comes to be a clear political act.

The search for new form, typically found in modernist art, yielded to a basic concern for articulating an endangered existence. The writer found the new images of the body. First, the *annihilated body* (incarcerated, tortured, obliterated); then, the *surviving body,* whose short life-expectancy is at the mercy of structural violence; and also, the *repressed body,* victim of institutionalized violence (that operates through the socialization process and the state's ideological machinery). These images point to a space in which an all-encompassing violence has become the natural order. Under these conditions, how could a writer create a space contradicting this, and in which the body is a free entity? Its existence in society appears in the shape of domination and distortion—and its plans for political change are crushed by repression. To that violence which confronted it, writing opposed its own materials and practices—based on the vulnerable presence of the body as recovered center.

This is the backdrop for the contemporary drama of Latin American literature. Its development will probably respond to the political evolution of these nations which have experienced a state of crisis—in a decade which has begun to reevaluate its proven and fixed models, and must create a new political discourse for transition and change on the basis of the exhausted possibilities. Literary discourse is reemerging, returning to its basic components, to its circuits of communication—where the reader waits surrounded by

new questions—calling once again for a social and critical awareness, and for resolutions for renewed resistance and intransigent demands. In this way, the critical tradition of this discourse—which in the first part of the sixties had achieved clear goals of persuasion—is renewed from a position of dissent.

In a world dominated by bureaucracy and repression of every kind, this type of writing, which has reshaped the language of meaning from the experience of defeat, has set for itself a more radical goal—the new discourse of a critical and political sensitivity which denounced every repression. Abandonment, malaise, pain and anguish remain. But at the same time, a fully sensorial nature, lucidity, popular speech, and festive humor are all evident. The basic word will return, as will the body as a center, love as renewal, death as historical experience, and the text as the original space made free by genuine communication. Thus, this discourse seeks to restore the full participation of the speakers in its dialogue. In the emerging decade, that dialogue will decide the role of the text and its reading—as well as the extent of its new meaning.

trans. Stella Clark and Julie Jones, revised by Robert Bonazzi.

Enrique Verástegui

Translated by Maureen Ahern

IF YOU STAY IN MY COUNTRY

In my country poetry barks
sweats pees has dirty armpits.
Poetry hangs around the brothels
    writes songs whistles dances while it lazily
admires itself in the bathroom
            and has tasted the sweetish flavor of love
in the little crepe paper parks
        under the moon
        in the shop cases.
But in my country there are people who talk to their bottle of wine
    on a blueish wall.
Poetry rolls along taking you by the hand
        through these same places that are noplaces
to film a broken down song.
And because of poetry in my country
        if you didn't speak like this
                they make you leave
in my country
    there's no place to go
        but you have to keep coming out
like acne on a pink scab.
And this urges you more than any perfect word.
In my country poetry speaks to you
        like a restless lip to your ear
it yanks you out of your homey cradle
    films your Herod scene
and a breeze stirs your dreams
            — the icy breeze of a fan.
Because another tongue will speak for your tongue.
And another hand will guide your hand
if you stay in my country.

Elena Suarez

Translated by Harry Haskell

HER

You've been waiting three hours for her from behind the cafe window which overlooks the boulevard, hoping she will appear like she has all the other afternoons for five weeks, since that time you saw her pass by across the street, her body slender and her face sad, lit up by the yellow headlights of the cars turning down the avenue, her blouse open, her pants torn and stained, walking as if her insides ached, you felt a sudden wave of fear, because it couldn't be her, it had to be someone else, someone who looked like her, even though if they asked you to swear by it you'd bet your life it was her, the way she moved, her red hair brushing against her pink cheeks, that girl you had met the evening before on the beach, sitting down, frightened by your presence, even though you told her there was no reason to be alarmed, you only wanted some company for a few hours, to endure the solitude of another autumn evening, you didn't want to sit any longer at the cafe, you preferred to walk along the beach and discreetly observe the fishermen repair their nets so they could go out before dawn with the hope that the new day and the slow solitary hours over the blue green waves would bring them luck, because it had been months since they had caught enough fish to feed themselves much less their families, and you took her hand, squeezing it tighter as you felt her resistance, and later you walked towards the boulevard so you sit by the rocks, near that curious structure that reminded her of home, and you said that it must have served as a lighthouse for the fishermen, and you remained there looking out, mesmerized, as the waves intensely rose up the beach, sadder each moment, feeling the overwhelming power of that light and the waves pressed against the shore, and she told you she was Irish, and that this was her first time in your country and how much she liked it, and you listened, fascinated by the magic of her voice that sang softly in the darkness with a slight European accent, and you tried to explain your country to her and why you felt so strong and decided to stay even though many people had left, and your closest friend was leaving for Caracas soon, it wasn't his decision but he apparently had no choice, and

you were going to miss him, as you had been working together twelve years and you didn't know how you were going to survive the daily routine without him, his reassuring presence, and you hadn't been to the office so you could avoid having any contact with him, because it was impossible to say good-bye, and her, if you hadn't someone to talk to, and you, who were married but it was over now, like all your friends' marriages the last few years, and how you would never consider marrying again, because, and you without the strength to explain the futility of forming personal relationships, and she without the power to understand your lethargy, and you remained silent, listening to the roaring of the sea, louder than ever this evening, and then you felt like crying and you left her, so she wouldn't see you so unhappy, and you went to the statue of Zorilla de San Martín, so you could compose yourself, staying there a good while, crying over the absence of a friend who was leaving and a wife who had already left, and later you returned but you couldn't find her, and you began to search in the darkness of that night, by the angry sea without moon or stars, and at last you saw her, on the ground like a fish, face up, near a huge rock at the shore of the sea, her blouse ripped open, her breasts exposed, her pants torn and stained where the knife had first entered to tear through the material of her black pants, and the whiteness of her belly that shined even in the black of that night, and the dark stain which covered her thigh, and you stared in disbelief, asking yourself why you didn't hear her scream, her cry of fear and pain, unimaginable in its helplessness, and you left even more alone, you left so someone else would discover her in the morning light, some fishermen who arose early to seek their fortune at sea only to discover a motionless body, caressed now by the pacified sea, and you returned to the boulevard, taking refuge in any dark cafe, searching for a place to forget this nightmare which haunts you, and later in the afternoon, sitting behind the cafe window which overlooks the boulevard, she suddenly appears, as she has all the following afternoons, as she is now, coming closer from across the street, her body slender and her face sad.

Pablo Neruda

Translated by Margaret Sayers Peden

SHAKESPEARE, THE PRINCE OF LIGHT

Goneril, Regan, Hamlet, Angus, Duncan, Glansdale, Mortimer, Ariel, Leontes . . . .

These names from Shakespeare were present in our childhood; they crystallized and became the substance of our dreams. Even when we could scarcely read, we knew that behind the names lay a continent with rivers and kings, clans and castles and archipelagos, that some day we would explore. The names of these somber, or radiant, protagonists revealed to us the skin of poetry, the first peal of a great bell. Later, much later, come the days and years when we dicover the lines and lives of these names. We discover suffering and remorse, martyrdom and cruelty, beings of blood, creatures of air, voices illuminated for a magic feast, banquets attended by bloody ghosts. All that action, all those souls, all those passions . . . all that life.

In every epoch one bard assumes the responsibility of the dreams and the wisdom of the age: he expresses the growth, the expansion, of that world. Once he was named Alighiere, or Victor Hugo, Lope de Vega, or Walt Whitman.

Above all, he is named Shakespeare.

These bards amass leaves, and among the leaves one hears birdcalls; beneath these leaves roots grow. They are the leaves of great trees.

They are leaves, and eyes. They multiply and gaze down on us, insignificant men through all the passing ages, they gaze on us and help us discover ourselves: they reveal to us our labyrinths.

But in the case of Shakespeare, there is a third revelation, as there will be others: that of the sorcery of his distilled poetry. Few poets so compact and secret, so secure in the heart of their diamond.

The sonnets were carved from the opal of tears, from the ruby of love, from the emerald of jealousy, from the amethyst of mourning.

They were carved from fire, made from air, sculpted from crystal.

The sonnets were uprooted from nature so whole that from the first to the last one hears how water flows, how the wind dances, and, golden or flowering, how the cycle of the seasons and fruits follow one after the other.

The sonnets hold an infinity of keys, of magic formulas: static majesty, speeding arrows.

The sonnets are banners that one by one rise to flutter from the castle tower. And though they are exposed to weather and time, they conserve the magenta of their stars, the turquoise of their half moons, the splendor of their blazing hearts.

I have read Shakespeare's poetry for many years; the poems, unlike the plays, do not tell of lives, of battles, and derring-do.

An empty page is lonely; the road of poetry is sure. Along that road glide endless rows of images, like tiny ships laden with honey.

Amid this excess of riches in which the driving power of creativity moves in time to intelligence, we see, we can almost feel, an unwavering and flourishing Shakespeare, and note that the most striking aspect of his poems is not their abundant power, but their exacting form.

My name is written in my copy of the *Sonnets,* along with the day and the month in 1930 when I bought the book on the Island of Java.

It has been with me, then, for thirty-four years.

There on the far-away island, it was my model, the purest of fountains, deep forests, a fabulous multitude of hitherto unknown myths; it was crystalline law. Because Shakespeare's poetry, like that of Góngora and Mallarmé, plays with the light of reason, imposes a strict, if secret, code. In a word, during those lost years of my life, Shakespeare's poetry kept open my communication with Western culture. By Western, naturally, I mean Pushkin and Karl Marx, Bach and Hölderlin, Lord Tennyson and Mayakovsky.

Of course, poetry recurs throughout the plays as well, in the towers of Elsinor, in the castle of Macbeth, on Prospero's ship, among the perfume of pomegranates in Verona.

A phantasmagorical wind blows through the tunnel of each play. The oldest sound in the world, the sound of the human heart, is the matter from which these unforgettable words are formed. Fantasy and humanity appear in all the plays, along with the parlance of the common man, the signs of the marketplace, the vulgar voices of parasites and buffoons, all accompanied by the steely ring of suits of armour locked in crazed combat.

But what I like best is to follow the extravagant flow of Shakespeare's poetry, a harmony painted on the wall of time in blue, enamel, and magic seafoam, an amalgam imprinted on our eternity.

As an example, the pastoral idyll of *Venus and Adonis,* published on 1593, flickering in the cool shadows of flowing water, the insinuating green of singing groves, the cascades of rippling poetry, and myth fleeing into the greenery.

But suddenly a steed appears, dissipating fantasy with its pounding hooves, as "His eye, which scornfully glisters like fire, shows hot courage and high desire."

Yes, because one sees that if a painter were to paint that horse, "His art with nature's excellence at strife, as if the living should exceed." There is no description that can equal that of this amorous and furious horse galloping with real hooves through marvelous sextets.

And I mention that Shakespeare's bestiary contained traces of many beasts, and his herbarium retains the color and odor of many flowers, because that pawing steed is the theme of his ode, the generative force of nature captured by a great synthesizer of dreams.

This autumn I was given the task of translating *Romeo and Juliet.*

I accepted the request with humility. With humility, and with a sense of duty, because in fact I did not feel capable of decanting that passionate love story into Spanish. But I had to do it, since this is the fourth centenary of Shakespeare's birth, the year of universal veneration of the poet who opened new universes to man.

Translating with pleasure, and with honor, the tragedy of those star-crossed lovers, I made a discovery.

I realized that beneath the plot of undying love and unforeseen death, there was a second drama, a second subject, a second principal theme.

Romeo and Juliet is a great plea for peace among men. It is the condemnation of pointless hatred, the enunciation of barbarous war, and the solemn elevation of peace.

When Prince Escalus, in moving and exemplary language, reproaches the feudal clans who are staining the streets of Verona with blood, we realize that the Prince is the incarnation of enlightenment, of dignity, and of peace.

When Benvolio reproaches Tybalt for his warlike temperament, saying: "Tybalt, I do but keep the peace, put up thy sword," the fierce swordsman replies: "What, drawn and talk of peace, I hate the word . . . ."

So peace was despised by some in Elizabethan Europe. Centuries later, Gabriela Mistral, persecuted and insulted for her defense of peace, dismissed from the Chilean newspaper that had published her articles for thirty years, wrote her famous phrase: "Peace, that accursed word." One sees that the world and the press continued to be governed by Tybalts, by swordsmen.

One reason more, then, to love William Shakespeare, the greatest of all human beings. There

will always be time and space to expore in Shakespeare, we can lose ourselves, or begin the long journey around his statue, like the Lilliputians around Gulliver. And though we may go a long way without reaching the end, we always return with hands filled with fragrance and blood, with flowers and sorrow, with mortal treasures.

On this solemn occasion it is my pleasure to open the door of tributes, raising the curtain so the dazzling, pensive figure of the Bard may appear. And across four centuries, I would say to him:

"Greeting, Prince of Light! Good health, sir itinerant actor! We are the heirs to your great dreams; we dream them still. Your words do honor to the entire world."

And, more quietly, I would whisper into his ear:

"My friend, I thank you."

Salvador Elizondo

Translated by Bruce P. Rogers

THE GRAPHOGRAPHER
to Octavio Paz

I write. I write that I write. Mentally, I visualize myself writing that I write and I can also see myself see that I write. And I see myself remembering that I see myself write and I remember seeing myself remember that I wrote and I write, seeing myself write that I remember having seen myself write that I saw myself write that I remembered having seen myself write that I wrote and that I wrote that I write that I wrote. I can also imagine myself writing that I've already written that I imagined myself writing that I had written that I imagined myself writing that I see myself write that I write.

CONTRIBUTORS

Maureen Ahern's translations of Peruvian poetry are well known. She is presently an Associate Professor of Spanish at Arizona State University.

Octavio Armand is the editor of *escandalar* and has published five books of poetry.

Cecilia Bustamente is the only woman to have been awarded the National Prize of Poetry of Peru and is president of the Center for Peruvian Women Writers.

Rosario Castellanos, who died accidentally in 1974, was considered Latin America's foremost contemporary woman writer.

Carlos Cortinez, an authority on Latin American poetry, is a member of the Spanish faculty at Tulane University.

Edilberto Coutinho is a Brazilian journalist and author who has published four collections of short stories.

Jorge Eduardo Eielson is a Peruvian who now resides in Milan, Italy where he paints and writes.

Frank Dauster, who has written widely on drama, is chairman of the Department of Spanish and Portugese at Rutgers University.

Peter Earle, in addition to his other fine work on Latin America, is an editor of the *Hispanic Review* at the University of Pennsylvania, where he is a member of the faculty.

Salvador Elizondo has published two novels, three collections of short stories, and a collection of *textos*. His work has been translated into French, German, and Italian as well as English.

H.E. Francis is a winner of the University of Iowa Short Fiction Award and other prestigious prizes for his short stories.

Harry Haskell is a self-employed film producer.

Miriam C. Joel, a native of Germany, has lived all over the world including the past twenty years in Peru.

Alfred Lemmon is a specialist in Latin American music and recently received his doctorate from Tulane University.

Enrique Lihn, a Chilean, has published ten books of poetry, two of which have been translated into English.

Hugo Lindo of El Salvador is a major figure in Central American literature. He is known internationally for his poetry, short stories, and novels.

Naomi Lindstrom teaches Spanish at the University of Texas in Austin and has published a number of articles on Latin American literature as well as translations.

Elizabeth G. Miller is a professor of Spanish Language and Literature at Southern Methodist University.

Mario Montalbetti, a Peruvian, teaches linguistics and literature in Lima where he is also the editor of *Nubetona*, a small magazine.

John Mosier, who has written widely on Latin American film, teaches at Loyola University, where he is also associate director of the film institute.

Daniel Moyano, a novelist and short story writer, was born in Argentina and now lives in Spain. His work has been translated into English, French, German, and Polish.

Jose Neistein earned his Ph.D. in aesthetics from the University of Vienna and has pioneered translations of Brazilian poetry into English. He is executive director of the Brazilian-American Cultural Institute in Washington, D.C.

Pablo Neruda, the Nobel Laureate, died in Chile in 1973.

Dave Oliphant is the managing editor of Humanities Research Center publications and has published two collections of his poetry.

Margaret Sayers Peden is the distinguished translator of works by Carlos Feuntes, Octavio Paz, Horacio Quiroga, and many other major Latin American writers.

Bruce P. Rogers translates and writes both fiction and poetry.

Rainer Schulte directs the Translation Center at the University of Texas at Dallas where he edits *Mundus Artium*. His most recent book of poetry is *The Other Side of the Word*.

David Tipton has published poems, translations, articles, and fiction in many magazines including *Poetry*.

Enrique Verástegui has published in many Peruvian poetry magazines and was an active member of the *Hora* zero movement.

Blanca Varela is one of the few Peruvian women poets who is internationally known. She has lived in Mexico and Europe and now resides in Lima.