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Poetry Wars

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Abstract

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Keywords

poetry in Spain, poetry, modern poetry, contemporary poetry, 21st century Spanish poetry, twentyfirst century Spanish poetry, poetry from Spain, dispute, criticism

Poetry Wars

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The status of poetry in Spain over the last several decades has provided fodder for a surprisingly contentious dispute, perhaps particularly remarkable for devotees and critics on these shores, where poetry has a limited readership. Even a brief look at the Spanish literary landscape from the post-Civil War years forward reveals the position of poetic hegemony alternating between two principal currents, summarized in simplified fashion as follows: there is, on the one hand, an esthetic that prizes humanistic values over purely artistic ones, follows in the footprints primarily of Antonio Machado and Jaime Gil de Biedma, and explores the quotidian preoccupations of human existence and the intimate emotions surrounding them. This poetry hearkens back to Spanish poetic traditions and forms, includes realistic language and colloquial turns of phrase such as are presumably employed by the Spanish popular majority, and manifests a belief in poetry as an instrument of communication and a transformative tool. On the other hand, the countercurrent espouses elitist values, is open to innovations and thus is aligned with modernity and the avant-gardes. Poets of this tendency turn away from tradition, are of a comparatively more intellectual bent, conspicuously attentive to artistic imperatives, and driven more by a ludic spirit than by any notions of a utilitarian poetry. Deploying a wide array of expressive devices, these poets subordinate messages to their own self-conscious use of language.¹

These conflicting currents are exemplified in the various post-Civil War waves of poetry, even when the margins supposedly separating groups become blurred, or the characteristics and patterns habitually associated with one group or another crisscross, overlap, fuse, or otherwise migrate or permute. Poets who began to write during the 1940s, immediately after the Spanish Civil War (Blas de Otero, Gabriel Celaya, José Hierro, José Luis Hidalgo) were

living under a repressively authoritarian regime; their memories of Civil War horrors were still painfully fresh. Not surprisingly, they were compelled less by artistic principles than by the urgency of bearing witness to human suffering, protesting the ills of society, and proclaiming their solidarity with *el pueblo* ‘the people,’ at the very least by their use of commonplace popular language.² Those who refused exile were subjected to the vigilance of Franco’s official censors, whom they could nevertheless sidestep either by publishing outside of Spanish borders or by couching their ideological propensities amid carefully honed ambiguities and figurative language. While by no means indifferent to formal concerns or lacking in artistry, today their message-laden verses have lost much of their currency.

Emerging at mid-century, the second wave of postwar poets (Francisco Brines, José Ángel Valente, Biedma, Claudio Rodríguez, among others) eschewed what they viewed as a lack of subtlety and an overly direct use of language in the work of their predecessors. Although they often shared the same social and political attitudes and values, and tended to use the same realistic language of everyday life, these second generation poets preferred to camouflage their ideological and social sympathies with artfully layered language. Indeed, their awareness of language’s expressive potential, as well as its possibilities for failure, and their keen understanding of language not as an instrument of communication but as a tool for discovering reality and a manner of knowing, are among the attributes that distinguish them from their poetic elders. From the preceding group’s narrow focus on the specific circumstances of Spain’s time and place, they adopted a larger, more universal point of view. Conversely, they chose to speak not with the collective voice of what Blas de Otero called *la inmensa mayoría* ‘the immense majority,’ but rather with an individualized voice and singular viewpoint. According to poet-critic Guillermo Carnero, theirs is a “a sort of ethical intimism ... that often serves to transform the quotidian into something much more metaphysical and existential” (654-55).

The publication in 1970 of José María Castellet’s influential and polemical anthology, *Nueve novísimos poetas españoles* (1970) ‘Nine Very New Spanish Poets,’ announced the arrival of a new lyric mode, a style of poetry that represented a radical departure from the now-familiar realistic style favored by poets of the early postwar

years. The nine *novísimos*—Carnero, Pedro Gimferrer, Leopoldo María Panero, Ana María Moix, Félix de Azúa, Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, Vicente Molina Foix, José María Álvarez, Antonio Martínez Sarrión—were heirs of the Classical Age, Hispanic Modernism, the avant-garde, and a wealth of other influences. Yet they also turned away from Spain's literary tradition, rejected poetry with political or social content, and therefore were particularly disinclined toward the work of the immediate postwar generation. Explaining the highly formalistic nature of the *novísimos*' poetic production, Castellet pronounced: "La forma del mensaje es su verdadero mensaje" (34) 'the form of the message is its true message.'³ This McLuhanesque tautology left little room for doubt about the viability of social poetry, and at the same time drew attention to one of the most salient aspects of the *novísimos*' art: the preeminence of the very act and processes of poetic creation, the foregrounding of the poem itself as text, as form and style, as language. Hence the *novísimos*' repudiation of the ordinary language preferred by their antecedents. On the contrary, the language typical of the *novísimos*' work was inarguably poetic: the lexicon was characteristically elevated, highbrow, at times arcane. *Novísimo* poetry was replete with esoteric intertextual references, to high art and classical literature, mythology and history, but also to popular culture and the mass media. The *novísimos* intended their verses for a sophisticated urban audience with a broad cultural foundation and an attitude of receptivity toward areas of knowledge and experience (e.g., overtly erotic themes, heterosexual and homosexual alike, by both male and female poets) available in Spain only with the gradual softening of Francoist strictures and the subsequent transition to democracy. What is more, the mobilization of the Spanish economy also produced a growing acceptance of foreign influences that ultimately affected all levels of society. In the literary sphere, the new climate of openness provided more fertile ground for the thematic exploration and formal experimentation in which younger writers indulged. Arguing against the principle of poetic functionality, they regarded poetry as a value in and of itself, although not without purpose, for *novísimo* poetry embodied the subversive attitude and revisionary impulse that came with postmodern conceptualizations. To be sure, much of their lyric production, inflected either by playful irony or

a more biting irreverence, constituted a challenge to the icons and ideologies persistently sustained within Western philosophy, art, knowledge, and belief systems: the triumph of logic and reason; the coherence of truth, reality, and identity; the constancy of positions of power, to name only a few. Detractors, however, branded these young poets as elitist and their work as hollow, solipsistic, and excessively *culturalista* ‘culturalist.’

Since the late 1970s, after the death of Francisco Franco and the beginning of Spain’s transition to a constitutional monarchy, a seemingly endless parade of contesting factions has entered the poetic fray. The *postnovísimos* surfaced toward the end of that decade but began to be accorded serious critical attention only with the publication of Blanca Andreu’s *De una niña de provincias que se vino a vivir en un Chagall* (1981) ‘About a Girl from the Provinces Who Came to Live in a Chagall.’ Written in a surrealist style evocative of Lorca, Alberti, and Neruda, and inspired in part by the *poète maudit* Arthur Rimbaud, Andreu’s slim volume provoked a stir in literary circles thanks to the dramatically irrational imagery and fragmented syntax, and to the abundant allusions to youth culture, drug-induced states, hallucinatory experiences, and transgressive sexuality. The twenty-one-year-old Andreu, whose notoriety at first threatened to overshadow her genuine creative gifts, was one of several poets (Julio Llamazares, Luis García Montero, Felipe Benítez Reyes, Jorge Reichmann, Ana Rossetti et al.), included in Luis Antonio de Villena’s 1986 anthology *Postnovísimos*. Despite the title, a term he coined to designate the young cohorts, Villena himself allowed that they did not form a cohesive group. While to one degree or another they had all deflected from the *novísimo* path, they nevertheless lacked a common esthetic; indeed, in the introduction to his anthology, Villena characterized the *postnovísimos* as an “[o]pen, plural generation” (17).

These qualities account at least in part for the numerous poetic modes encompassed by the label *postnovísimo*. As mentioned at the beginning of this introduction, the various contingents formed around two basic drives: one that rehumanizes poetry, and the other that foregrounds and intensifies esthetic values. The first is a reaction to the cold elitism, distancing tone and exaggerated decorative effects of the *novísimos*’ culturally fraught work. The renewed desire

for humanization, in concordance with Spanish literary tradition, was brought to light in a poetic manifesto “La otra sentimentalidad” (*El País* 8 Jan. 1983) ‘The Other Sentimentality’ by Luis García Montero, Álvaro Salvador and Javier Egea. This declaration of poetic principles advocated the frank expression of deeply felt emotions, a renewal of realism and social commitment, and the “expresión literal de las esencias más ocultas del sujeto” (Cano Ballesta 698) ‘literal expression of the most hidden essences of the subject.’ “La otra sentimentalidad” soon devolved into what came to be known as *poesía de la experiencia* ‘poetry of experience,’ the most visible and resilient of the many lyric strands taking root during the eighties and nineties.⁴ Poets of experience, whose primary exponent was García Montero, replaced what they considered the exclusionary methods of *novísimo* culturalist excesses with a confessional style and intimate tones articulated not by an individualized voice but by a collective subject. They are particularly drawn to both Luis Cernuda and Biedma, both admirers of the English Romantics and therefore inspirational to the younger poets for the preeminence of emotions in their work. Poets of experience, ideologically rooted in Marxism, aspire to connect with the average reader alienated by the aggressive erudition of the *novísimos* or disaffected and lost amid the labyrinthine problematics of modern urban society and the complexities of the new globalization. Poetry of experience thus centers on anecdotal events and common experiences of daily life. By the same token, it recycles familiar tendencies, restoring significance to linguistic verisimilitude. Meditative in nature, it deals with age-old themes such as love and death, the elusiveness of time, and the fragility of human existence.

Poetry of experience held sway over other lyric modalities and maintained its dominance during the decades of the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries. Moreover, it generated any number of variations. One of these was *poesía del silencio* ‘poetry of silence.’ Minimalist and cerebral in the manner of the pure poetry of the 1920s, poetry of silence reflected the writers’ desire to strip the poem to its most precise and elemental core. Juxtaposed against the *novísimo* flaunting of ostentatious, exotic language, this strain afforded the possibility of defining and exercising creativity in new ways and, at the same time, of discovering deeper levels of

philosophical, metaphysical, and existential meanings. While poetry of silence flourished in the eighties, it had already been anticipated by some established writers as they evolved: *novísimo* poets Carnero and Gimferrer, and *postnovísimos* like Jaime Siles and Amparo Amorós. Poets of silence felt a renewed confidence in the writers of the fifties and regarded them as their masters. In fact, midcentury poet José Ángel Valente, whose later writings strikingly exhibited the discipline and austerity emblematic of the esthetics of silence, proffered the following insight: “Poetry not only is not communication, it is, before anything else or long before it can aspire to be communication, rather the lack of it” (Perriam, “Poetry and Culture” 203). Valente’s formulation essentially defined poetry of silence as a metaphysical and abstract poetry whose purpose diverged sharply from that of poetry of experience; it was a kind of poetry whose meaning derived from words but, just as vitally, from the empty spaces—the silences—surrounding words.

Although it dominated the poetic field—or, to be more exact, because it did so—poetry of experience ignited a backlash. One reaction appeared in the form of *poesía de la diferencia* ‘poetry of difference,’ which originated precisely due to dissatisfaction with the hegemonic status enjoyed by poetry of experience. The dissenting voices deemed García Montero and his like-minded colleagues “clónicos’ y estéticamente intercambiables” (Prieto de Paula) ‘like clones and esthetically interchangeable.’ More to the point, those poets were judged to be too closely allied with the power elites and official institutions, thereby monopolizing prizes and awards, not to mention greater access to publication and the favor of critics. Consequently, rendering the Spanish cultural landscape monochromatic and virtually homogeneous (Prieto de Paula). While the poets of difference (Jorge Riechmann, Olvido García Valdés, Juan Carlos Suñén, Concha García and others) share no fixed agenda or common esthetic, Spain and the Civil War (perennially current themes) number among their shared concerns, as do globalization, consumer society, urban development, and the environment. Such themes signal the adoption by some writers of what is known as *realismo sucio* ‘dirty realism,’ a minimalist mode that de-emphasizes rhetorical flourishes in favor of simple language, anguished tonalities and unabashedly raw depictions of humanity.⁵

Their stance of social and political commitment and responsibility also marks a return to the engaged writing of the earliest postwar poets as well as the midcentury poets that succeeded them. The poets of difference coincide especially in their resistance to the dogma of experience esthetics. It is no wonder that the roll call of nonconformist writers includes gender, ethnic and racial minorities, language minorities, followers of the avant-garde—in short, all those for whom the tag “*radicales, marginales y heterodoxos*” ‘radicals, marginals and heterodox’ is a suitable fit.⁶

Some critics have likewise taken the poets of experience to task. Chris G. Perriam, for example, observes that “the ordinary people and ordinary experiences invoked by García Montero look very much like men and men’s experiences only ... feeling, if not elitist, at least not open to everybody” (“Poetry and Culture” 206). Raquel Medina notes that in Spain’s present-day cultural environment, with the preponderance of awards, prizes and government subsidies seemingly dominated by the experience group, poetry has become “*un artículo de consumo para la clase política y la burguesa*” (603) ‘an object of consumption for the political class and the middle class.’ Meanwhile, Jonathan Mayhew mounts his argument against these poets on the basis of their fundamental conservatism vis-à-vis avant-garde poetics. Their intrinsic “lack of ambition” (24) effectively obliterates any innovative or experimental impulse, especially compared with “[t]he great modern poets, from Rimbaud to Celan ... who stretch language to its limits in order to give voice to the experience of extremity” (17). Their conservatism is an especially egregious position, in Mayhew’s judgment, because it springs from the “subordination of both aesthetic and political concerns to the norm of social decorum” (23). According to Mayhew, the ideal poet as defined by García Montero and Benítez Reyes, the two foremost representatives of the experience tendency, hews closely to a very narrow, circumscribed paradigm of normality, a condition that automatically excludes any socially marginal individual or anyone who strays from already codified social and aesthetic standards of discourse. This exclusionary ideal of orthodoxy is by definition political and implicitly analogous, Mayhew suggests, to the “normalization of Spanish society in the transition to democracy after the death of Franco” (35).

The previous paragraphs follow the trajectory of Spanish poetry over the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. This summary serves to introduce the volume at hand by tracing the course of what one critic has called “uno de los contextos más plurales de la historia” (Cullel) ‘one of the most diverse contexts in history.’ The title of this volume, “Defining Differences,” is meant to suggest that the defining sign of the poetry addressed in the essays is, at least from today’s perspective, precisely the differences between one poetic style or school and another.⁷ Certainly this very eclecticism has yet to be captured by any single theme, style, or ideology. The national lyric tradition is the point of departure for all the poets represented, but their attitudes toward that tradition—viewed either as a cultural imposition and a debt to be rejected, or as a source of enrichment and a vehicle for deepening and intensifying the processes and products of poetic creation—swerve sharply away from each other. Significantly, many of the writers studied here have been affected poetically, philosophically, and ideologically by influences that have expanded their personal perspectives and marked their work with a more universal stamp. As a consequence, their works as a whole evince a broader understanding of, and conscious engagement with, traditions within the larger European context. Similarly, the range of critical approaches employed by the authors reflect distinct interpretations of the changing literary terrain, and varied dispositions toward the multiplicity of present-day poetic theories and practices.

Fittingly, the volume opens with three studies of poets who antedate the others represented here, the first two having begun their poetic careers in the company of the so-called generation of ’27; the long career of the third author spans almost the entirety of the twentieth century. The first piece, Salvador J. Fajardo’s “Cernuda in Current Spanish Poetry,” confirms the powerful and enduring impact of Cernuda’s work on poets of the second half of the twentieth century, and also his continuing imprint on subsequent poetic generations. Fajardo traces the numerous points of contact between latter-day poetic practices and Cernuda’s conscious use of simple, nonpoetic language, his objective approach to reality and the presence in his verses of intimate themes such as homosexuality

and a personal concept of ethics. The second essay, Catherine Bellver's "Mysticism, Meditation, and Monologue in *Poemas del ser y del estar*," reminds us that Ernestina de Champourcín commanded the same artistic recognition and respect as her male cohorts of 1927, but after thirty years of post-Civil War exile in Mexico, her poetry receiving scant attention, Champourcín was at worst largely forgotten, and at best relegated to the literary margins. Only in the last several years has her work once more begun to receive due critical regard. Bellver's essay argues that the religious writings of Champourcín's last two decades, while clearly the product of the poet's deep longing and search for God, also reveal her knowledge of the literature of mysticism, and familiarity with a long roster of literary masters. Douglas Benson, in "No es mi madre la tierra': Ecology in Gloria Fuertes's Last Poetry," asserts that the last collection by this often critically derided yet popularly embraced poet is perhaps her most provocative work. According to Benson, *Mujer de verso en pecho* (1995) 'Woman with Verse on Her Chest' foregrounds Fuertes's growing concerns about global ecological issues, along with other lifelong preoccupations, such as the plight of the marginalized, war, and political tyranny. Fuertes employs her subversive humor and unparalleled linguistic dexterity to question ecological pieties and to focus environmental concerns within an ethical framework. For Benson, this writer represents the convergence of several poetic currents: poetry of experience and the related *otra sentimentalidad*, metaphysical poetry, poetry of difference, and poetry of commitment.

The next works to be considered are by three women linked not only by their gender but also by a distinct philosophical disposition. A spiritual, contemplative quality common to all three writers suggests their affinity for the metaphysical current of contemporary Spanish poetry. As Martha LaFollette Miller shows in "In the Heideggerian Tradition: *Acontecimiento* by Concha García," this poet employs an enigmatic, fractured language and nonlinear narration to relate quotidian, almost mundane events to exemplify in turn the notion that any attempt to use logic to explain the world succeeds only in uncovering its fundamental absurdity. Miller sees in this thinking the indirect but significant influence of Heidegger, who reasoned that life cannot be reduced to essences; meaning resides

in the authenticity of experience. The philosophical formulations of Wittgenstein undergird the poetry studied by Sharon Keefe Ugalde in her essay, “The Incertitude of Language and Life in the Poetry of Olvido García Valdés.” Wittgenstein’s concept of language-games in particular can be found in the deliberately ambiguous language, strange word usage, and disconnected sentences favored by García Valdés to illustrate how language empowers men but limits women, and how meaning, both in language and in life, is always indeterminate and contingent. García Valdés shares Wittgenstein’s distrust of the unity and fixity of language, a distrust that exempts language from predetermined social and cultural constraints and meanings. She also, like Wittgenstein, believes in language’s mystical exteriority, that is, the notion that ineffable truths and the very meaning of the world are to be found in a transcendent vision, beyond what the human eye perceives in the physical world. In “Reading Sara Pujol Russell’s Poetry of Contemplation and Connection,” Anita Hart affirms that as a Catalán woman and thus part of two minority groups, Pujol logically comes under the rubric of difference. Yet metaphysical might be a more suitable tag for this very introspective poetry that follows the tradition of Spanish meditative verse. That Pujol is also familiar with the German Romanticist Novalis is clear from her allusions to a dynamic relationship between humankind and nature and to the relevance of the senses and multiple ways of thinking. Pujol has also learned from the Upanishads, especially regarding the mystery of enlightenment, and from Plotinus’s assertion that contemplation is the origin of everything. Contemporary Spanish philosopher María Zambrano is a crucial presence in Pujol as well: known for her understanding of contemplation, intuition and *el conocimiento poético* ‘poetic knowledge,’ Zambrano cited these as sources of human knowledge—ideas not traditionally valued in Western thinking.

The next two essays are paired because each takes as the subject of discussion a writer of decidedly inventive ambition whose work presents a unique challenge to his contemporaries. As W. Michael Mudrovic explains in “Beyond the Pale: ‘Poesía Postpoética’ in Agustín Fernández Mallo’s *Joan Fontaine Odisea*,” this writer has criticized his fellow poets for what he considers dated techniques, in contrast with his more experimental approach. Fernández

Mallo's postpoetic aesthetic, as he shows in the poetic sequence *Joan Fontaine Odisea*, validates the integration into his poetry of mathematical and scientific concepts and images, references to high and low culture, different types of discourse, paratextual elements, and framing strategies, in order to transcend the conventional limits of genre and predictable features such as a unified poetic voice. Fernández Mallo proposes to expand his readers' views about poetry, in keeping with a continually changing technological, global society. Judith Nantell's study, "Syntactically Silent Subjects: Luis Muñoz and Poetry of Ellipsis," offers an intriguing glimpse of another very innovative writer. Muñoz's most recent collection, the aptly titled *Querido silencio* 'Dear Silence,' shows the poet in a variation on the mode known as poetry of silence. One poem in particular, "Dejar la poesía" 'Leave Poetry,' is emblematic of Muñoz's disciplined, minimalist esthetic, thanks to a striking economy of expressive resources—reduced lexicon, conceptual conciseness, play of presence and absence, parallel structural patterns, and especially a strategy of syntactic omission or ellipsis. Together these strategies embody a paradoxical definition of poetry as language that wrests expressiveness from silence.

The final essays employ a cultural studies approach to confront tragic events in Spain's history and in the country's most recent past, the troublesome aftermath of those events, and the increasingly complex nature of Spanish society, culture, even national identity. Daniel Aguirre-Oteiza's "The Song of Disappearance: Memory, History, and Testimony in the Poetry of Antonio Gamoneda" serves as a bridge between the silences and omissions alluded to in the previous piece and those that figure in the concluding essays in the volume. Aguirre-Oteiza also shares with the authors of the closing essays the objectives and methods characteristic of cultural studies. Gamoneda's *Descripción de la mentira* 'Description of the Lie' demonstrates how the act of witnessing history was buried during the Franco years, as the regime effectively stifled memory, history, reality. *Descripción de la mentira* realizes Gamoneda's intention of retrieving the lost memories and silenced voices of Spain's dark history. In a similar vein, "Poetic Vision and (In)Visible Pain in Antonio Méndez Rubio's *Trasluz*," by Paul Cahill, deals with the problematics of the gaze, the visible, and the invisible, what we see

and how we see it, and how these are linguistically represented to us, particularly in poetic texts. According to Cahill, Méndez Rubio departs from many commonly held poetic and political assumptions regarding images of social reality, both those within our range of vision and those that are withheld from us. Debra Faszer-McMahon likewise examines the decidedly topical issues of immigration and representations of otherness. In “Migration and the Foreign in Contemporary Spanish Poetry,” the author attends specifically to Manuel Moya’s pseudonymously written *El sueño de Dakhla* (*Poemas de Umar Abass*) (2008) “The Dream of Dakhla (Poems by Umar Abass).” Assuming the voice of a Western Saharan immigrant, Moya gives irrefutable evidence of the silencing of immigrant voices and the supplanting of these voices by native producers of Spanish culture. In the context of poetry, appropriating the voice of the other is commonplace, so that Moya’s text, grounded both in the Spanish lyric tradition and the long tradition of Islamic poetry, makes for an especially vivid example of the tensions surrounding the changing migration patterns affecting any of the cultures within today’s European societies. The final essay, “Memorials, Shrines and Umbrellas in the Rain: Poetry and 11-M” by Jill Robbins, examines the themes of violence, solidarity, and memory as represented in poetic texts written in response to the bombing of Madrid commuter trains on March 11, 2004. Continuing the discussion initiated in the previous essays of the volume’s final cluster, Robbins analyzes the colliding cultural forces underlying ideas about Spanish national identity, economic change, the role of the media, and popular demonstrations against Spain’s alliance with the U.S. in Iraq and in the war on terror, not to mention evolving definitions of poetry and art as cultural memorials participating in the processes of political engagement.

Poets of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries conceive of their art in undeniably diverse ways; the pragmatic exercise of their art is also dissimilar. Although all share the legacy of the Spanish lyric tradition, and while it is necessarily their point of departure, what divides them is their response, whether of acceptance or rejection, with respect to that legacy. Perhaps the zigzag pattern of alternation between the desire for continuation and the opposite spirit of rupture parallels on a smaller scale the massive historical

transformations occurring during four decades of the Franco dictatorship and the ensuing roiling years of transition to democracy. Perhaps the space occupied by Spanish poetry is thus a microcosm of the larger cultural zeitgeist.

In any case, for all their differences, among the poets of recent decades there are commonalities. They are joined, for example, by a common goal: to establish, by means of the poetic text, a dialogue with the reader regarding society and reality, memory and imagination. A smaller, very particular instance involves the work of Ernestina de Champourcín. Generally speaking, it is likely that writers in today's Spain do not tend to share her religious bent, yet the profound spirituality of her verses and her desire for transcendence are perhaps not so far afield from their own journeys in search of some surpassing experience or meaning. Ultimately, in one way or another all the poets discussed here assume an ethical stance, from philosophical probing to a sense of intellectual responsibility, from an affective involvement to a more active commitment, with varying colorations in between, about the meaning and value of human existence, about the role of the individual in society, about attitudes toward the planet—in short, about ethical ways of being in the world.

Notes

1 With this brief characterization of contemporary Spanish poetry, I do not pretend to give the reader a complete picture of a complex topic. For more comprehensive accounts I refer the reader to Mayhew, Debicki, Perriam, and others included in the list of Works Cited.

2 The concept of literary generations—similar birthdates and educational backgrounds, shared ideology, common influences and esthetic goals, etc.—is widely disputed. I use the word only to suggest a loose grouping of individuals who come to prominence during approximately the same period of time and who have some common artistic preferences and practices.

3 All translations are my own.

4 The phrase “poetry of experience” originated with Robert Langbaum's *The Poetry of Experience* (1957 New York: Random House), a study of the dramatic monologue in English poetry of the nineteenth century. See Mayhew 34, 49. Jaime Gil de Biedma, who admired Luis Cernuda's use of the dramatic

monologue, read the original English version of Langbaum's book during the fifties. The Spanish translation, *La poesía de la experiencia: El monólogo dramático en la tradición literaria moderna* (Ed. Julián Jeménez Heffernan. Granada: Comares) was published in 1996. I thank W. Michael Mudrovic for reminding me about Langbaum's book.

5 "Realismo sucio" was adapted from "dirty realism," a movement that originated in the United States during the seventies. The best-known American writers were Raymond Carver and Charles Bukowski. According to López Aguilar, "... igual que en el minimalismo, el 'realismo sucio' se complace en la sobriedad, en la precisión, en la parquedad para todo lo que se refiera a las descripciones (verbales, en literatura; sonoras, en música; visuales, en pintura); así, objetos, personajes y situaciones anecdóticas se trazan de la manera más concisa y superficial posible; y el uso del adverbio y la adjetivación se reducen al máximo (si se tolera el oxímoron), pues se supone que es del contexto del que debe surgir el sentido profundo de la obra" (López Aguilar) 'just as in minimalism, "dirty realism" prefers restraint, precision, moderation in everything related to descriptions (verbal, in literature; sounds, in music; visual, in painting; so that objects, characters and anecdotal situations are drawn in the most concise and superficial way possible; and the use of adverbs and adjectives is reduced to the utmost (if the oxymoron can be permitted), since the deep meaning of the work ought to come out of the context.'

6 The full title of poet Isla Correyero's 1998 volume is *Feroces: Antología de la poesía radical, marginal y heterodoxa* 'The Fierce Ones: Anthology of Radical, Marginal and Heterodox Poetry.' It contains writings by many of the "poets of difference."

7 My thanks to Professor Cecile West-Settle of Washington and Lee University for suggesting this title.

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