

# STUDIES IN TWENTIETH CENTURY LITERATURE

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Special Issue On  
Contemporary Spanish Poetry: 1939–1990  
Guest Editor  
Andrew P. Debicki

- Introduction: Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Spanish Poetry  
Andrew P. Debicki 5
- Fifty Years of Contemporary Spanish Poetry (1939–1989)  
José Olivio Jiménez 15
- The Quest(ioning) of Epistemological Ground: The Spanish Generation of 1956  
Judith Nantell 43

*Abstract.* Much of the critical literature written about the poetry of the Generation of 1956 asserts that for Claudio Rodríguez, José Angel Valente and Francisco Brines, among other members of this group, writing poetry is a means to knowledge. Knowledge, however, exists in tension with its apparent opposite, ignorance. Because the supplement ruptures the tidy arrangement of the knowledge/ignorance polarity, it is no longer possible to focus on either entity in isolation. If knowledge and ignorance continually imply one another, then Valente's famous dictum, "todo poema es un conocimiento haciéndose" ('every poem is knowledge becoming') which has long served as the foundation both of this generation and the critical literature written about this generation, itself is reconstituted in terms of ignorance. In scrutinizing selected poems of these poets, the critic discerns that poetry is *not* a process of knowing but rather a method for questioning epistemological ground. As this essay demonstrates, both the poetic text and the interpretive text investigate knowledge and ignorance, forever "becoming" their own *différance*. (JN)

- A Reconsideration of Two Spanish Women Poets: Angela Figuera and Francisca Aguirre  
John C. Wilcox 65

*Abstract.* In the last decade, poetry written by women in Spain experienced a "boom," as one close observer of the scene has noted, with the result that young women poets on the Peninsula have begun to receive the attention they merit. It is therefore an opportune moment to turn our critical attention toward the poetry

written by women earlier in the twentieth century.

Angela Figuera (1902–1984) and Francisca Aguirre (b. 1930), two “uncanonized” mid-twentieth century Spanish poets, are presented here as challenging the androcentric culture of their time. Figuera critiques the male-dominated poetic canon as she develops a gynocentric poetics; poems for which she is recognized as criticizing Spanish politics and society are read as also manifesting the vision of a marginalized woman poet who for lack of full recognition loses confidence in herself; and the positive image previous critics have found in her vision of motherhood is demystified. Aguirre—*avant* Gilbert & Gubar—presents the female persona in her work as reduced to near “madness” by the barren space in which she is forced to live; her minimalist philosophy deflates the grand (patriarchal) illusions of her Occident; her work demystifies androcentric Western esthetics as it inscribes within Spanish poetry a gynocentric vision (with metaphors found in other recent women poets). It is hoped that in future reassessments of the canon, the work of these poets will be given more careful perusal. (JCW)

Culturalism and the “New” Poetry. A Poem by Pedro Gimferrer:  
“Cascabeles” from *Arde el mar* (1966)

Guillermo Carnero

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*Abstract.* The study deals with the group of Spanish poets commonly called the “novisimos” or “promoción de 1970,” using as a base a poem by Pedro Gimferrer published in 1966. It studies the aesthetic break-through achieved by this generation, highlighting the concept of “culturalism” that critics used to define it twenty years ago. It examines the equivocal uses to which this concept can be put, and describes its correct meaning in the light of the aesthetic to which it refers. It then studies the mechanisms implicit in the writing of this non-confessional lyric poetry, centering it on two complementary procedures: the use of a historical *persona* that serves as an analogue (“personaje histórico analógico”), and that of another work of art that functions as an objectifying device (“obra de arte ajena objetivadora”). It considers these in the light of two perspectives: the overcoming of neo-romantic rhetoric, and the participation of the reader. (GC)

Snares: Pere Gimferrer’s *Los espejos/ Els miralls*

Margaret Persin

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*Abstract.* With the publication of *Els miralls*, Pere Gimferrer effected a major shift in philosophical and linguistic perspective. It is the first collection to be

published in Catalan, and thus represents for the well-known writer a change in direction for him as a poet and spokesperson of his culture and his generation. But the change is more than one of mere language coding. For in this collection, the Catalan poet confronts all the snares of language which he views as limiting of creativity and originality. He adopts a variety of poetic strategies and voices in an attempt to come to terms with a view of language that will acknowledge its wiles, deceptions and imperfect reflections. Ironically, the power of this collection derives from the decentering of authorial voice, the breaking of limits and the questioning stance that is communicated in regard to language as a closed system of signification. (MP)

### Language and Consciousness in the poetry of the "Novisimos": Guillermo Carnero's Latest Poetry

Ignacio-Javier López

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*Abstract.* Guillermo Carnero's latest book of poetry, *Divisibilidad indefinida*, has recently appeared in Spain. In it, the reader witnesses, on the one hand, the reaffirmation of the poetic of the "novisimos": a self-conscious use of language, the presence of "culturalism," a distancing of language, a doubling of the poetic persona. On the other hand, the book reveals an effort to encompass a more complete perspective of poetic reality. The combative attitude of the first decade of the "novisimos" having been left behind, Carnero now develops his poetry in *Divisibilidad indefinida* by bringing it nearer to human life, although without renouncing the aesthetic imperatives indicated by his earlier work of *Ensayo de una teoría de la visión*. (AD)

### Recent Poetry and the Essential Word

Birutė Ciplijauskaitė

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*Abstract.* Postmodern poetry resists classification in tight compartments. After the last artificially-named group of the *novisimos* in the 60s, the evolution of poetry in Spain has followed different and at times divergent paths. The *novisimos* had reacted against "social" poetry, denouncing its lack of attention to artistry, almost prosaic quality, subservience to theme, and produced elaborate creations with an emphasis on form and the exquisite and more hermetic word and subject. Obeying the law of *corsi e ricorsi*, there was a certain return in the 80s to simpler expression which, however, does not pretend to be that of the "man on the street" reflecting the historical circumstance, but rather a search for essences, for eternal values. Each poet—M.V. Atencia, Jesus Munárriz, and Luis Suñén can serve as examples of the "essential" inclination—traces his own

way and creates a personal poetics. Faith in the word is their common denominator. This turn to simplicity can also be observed in the last works of such poets as Carvajal, Gimferrer and Siles, who admit, however, greater ambiguity of word and intention. (BC)

## The Feminization of Female Figures in Spanish Women's Poetry of the 1980s

Sharon Keefe Ugalde

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*Abstract.* The paper examines how women poets appropriate and transform man-made biblical and literary figures—Eve, Lot's wife, and Ophelia—in order to express female meaning. Poetry by women published since the democratization of Spain in the late 1970s serves as the basis of the study. Three strategies of feminization stand out. *Enhancement* reflects the predicament of poets living roles imposed by male denomination, but sensing the presence of a silenced, imprisoned self. *Subversion* is aimed at dismantling patriarchally defined reality, and *revision* corresponds to the constructive task of self-discovery. Poets, for example, embrace Ophelia, recognizing that their desperation (like hers) is rooted in patriarchal order, and subvert the image of Lot's wife into a demand for autonomy. Eve is revised to communicate the awareness that female subjectivity is closely bound to female eroticism, and perhaps most astonishingly, poor, helpless Ophelia comes to symbolize woman's new freedom and power to inscribe herself. (SKU)

## Review Essay

Theory, Totality, Critique: The Limits of the Frankfurt School  
*Critical Theory, Marxism and Modernity* by Douglas Kellner.

Philip Goldstein

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