

European Sources of Subjectivist Theory and Practice

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This movement started in the late 50's around a magazine called 'The Fifties', a title whose chronological logic has fortunately been pursued through 'The Sixties' to 'The Seventies'. The four major voices of this movement both theoretically & creatively are Bly, Wright, Kelly, & Rothenberg but the magazine acts as a platform for many poets who share common interest in the use & source of the image & of particular interest among these are Merwin, Snyder, & Simpson.

This magazine has played a significant role in introducing major European & Latin American poets to the States —Trakl, Ungaretti, Ekelof, Char, Neruda, Lorca, Jiménez Vallejo— choices which of themselves have had a profound impact on Subjectivist writing. I intend in this article to examine the theory of Subjectivism & its affinity to these European & Latin American poets.

Characteristics of Subjectivist Poem: The Image

What then is a Subjectivist poem & what typifies it? It is an attempt to find universal subjectives, correspondances at depth rather than equivalents for the objective life of shared experience & knowledge. Central to such a revelation is the image since, according to these poets, this is the code we use for communication at depth. These images seek to locate instinct & feeling, & communicate them at depth, understanding is only weakened if the image is converted into abstractions. It is the poet's organisation

of the tensions, reverberations, & associations of these images that lead to the discovery of the universal subjective. The image searches for spontaneity & entails a continuous inward movement from perception to perception. Sound thus is of particular importance in extending the effect of the image by echoes & reverberations, it helps underline mood or create depth. The iconography can be partially defined in terms of depth, purity, darkness, & silence but there is no attempt to avoid reality since subjectivist verse also offers strikingly new political images where reality is seized & metamorphosed into feeling. The typical subjectivist poem would be bare of rhetoric, minimal in statement, startling in its imagery, & with space & freedom for its sounds, associations, & feelings to develop.

My contention is that these European & Latin American poets have contributed significantly to the definition of the subjective image. This contribution essentially took the form of a development of the surreal image & an interest in a mythic or animalistic centre to the image. It is also revealing to place the subjective image within the American tradition & to see how it attempts to deal with the problems set by the Imagist & Objectivist image. Imagism flounders in overconfident appropriation, it tends towards objective equations such as 'moon on hedge = red-faced farmer' & even when at its most successful in short poems it still retains an almost inevitable static quality (1). Similarly the Objectivist image appears an oversimplification, its camera coldness has too much surface, & an image such as William's overexposed 'red wheelbarrow glazed with rain' depend too much on attracting meaning. The Subjectivists share William's concern to capture the intensity of perception but consider him wrong in his assumption that this can be rendered by simple direct language. The linear

(1) It was the static nature of this image that caused Pound to break with Imagism in search of a more dynamic image which he found momentarily in the Vorticist group & the influence of Futurism.

nature of language slows down the immediacy of the perceptual process; sight is quicker than thought. Language cannot simply narrate the immediacy of what it sees, it falls flat in general statement. What is needed is a mimesis of simplicity & directness & that this mimesis should not be of objective reality but of inner feelings. It is the use of the image in this sense that the subjectivist poets have found in the above-mentioned poets.

Some Introductory Examples

Let me now turn to some texts to illustrate what I mean:

carpet

each colour expands and stretches out
into the other colours (2).

To be more alone if you look at it:

eternal

Tra un fiore colto e l'altro donato
L'inesprimibile nulla (3).

Both are from Ungaretti's *Allegria* published in 1919, I quote the second in Italian because the sound quality is of major importance. Initially the impressionistic correctness is less significant than the associative power. This is first suggested by the introduction of the animate verbs 'stretch & expand' & then established by the juxtaposition of alone/you. The poem deals thus with the need for contact & the invariable pain of such communication leading to further isolation. Yet at the same time it suggests a beauty in this condition, containing both the sensuality & the frustration of contact. The image here

(2) Giuseppe Ungaretti: *Selected Poems*. Penguin, 1917.

(3) *Vita d'un uomo* — Ungaretti. Oscar Mondador. Italy, 1970.

hesitates in associations before surrendering its feeling. The poem has the flat muted tones of the oriental carpet & the same suggestion of rich depth. The sounds surface & lingers. The separation of the third line increases both the tension of revelation & its reverberating effects. Feeling has been condensed into sensation, no violence is done to syntax the thought develops but the words are unencumbered & one is made more aware of their emergence. The second poem has the same suggestive atmosphere for its feeling backing & extending this by the melodic control of the sounds — in themselves patent examples of the inexpressible. The poem is caught between the swirl of 'traun' & the final reversal of 'nulla'. A reversal that in itself acts as explanation. The more substantial 'o' & 'a' sounds conveying the fact, float under the 'i' & 'e' sounds that convey feeling.

How similar in tone to this Bly poem!

Watering the Horse

How strange to think of giving up all ambition!

Suddenly I saw with such clear eyes

The white flake of snow

That has just fallen in the horse's mane! (4).

Surely this is Ungaretti's technique working in reverse, in this case from the thought to the image. As Bly leads us to the image the thought remains swirling around within its slow growth. A backcloth of winter where thought forms slowly, as clear & cold as a snowflake. A time for introspection, hard sharp outlines for a truth. A rational descent to understanding, the meaning solidifying as soon as it touches flesh. The beauty of a concept understood. A thought, pared, crystallised but not finished, — the implications continue to settle flake by flake in the silence round the poem. Bly like Ungaretti roots his thinking in the landscape he knows.

(4) Silence in the Snowy Fields. Robert Bly. Wesleyan University Press, 1953.

This same identification of feeling, thought, & landscape is seen again & again in Lorca.

en la verde olivar de la colina
hay una torre mora
del color de tu carne campesina
que sabe a miel y aurora (5).

A sensuality rich in colour & taste, height & depth. The woman here submits to the erect masculinity of the tower, her own body is the curving passivity of the hill with the darkened sex of the olive grove. The images are of the freshness, richness, & stickiness of love. A golden transparency & a welter of feelings. Here we have the cycle & peace of the act of love.

Let me place this against Wright's 'Spring Images' I am not trying to make a direct comparison between the two poems that would be both groundless & futile but I am trying to show the weight of one poet's sensibility on the other.

Two athletes
Are dancing in the cathedral
Of the wind
A butterfly lights on the branch
Of your green voice
Small antelopes
Fall asleep in the ashes
Of the moon (6).

The sensuality is less precise but just as present. The images are separate, less tangible. They merge as they penetrate our subconscious. They are highly physical images & become explicit only under the connotations of contact. They have delicacy, excitement & a suggestion of completion. 'Cathedral', 'branch' & 'ashes' pause before disclosing,

(5) Madrigal de Verano. Lorca. Obras Completas. Aguilar, 1966.

(6) The Branch Will not Break. James Wright. Wesleyan, 1959.

& this technique reinforces the echoes. The sensuality is found in the movement from the plural forms to the identification of the presumably female voice & finally back to the plural forms with the underlying suggestion of completion. Wright locates the expression of these feelings in an area of natural imagery. This identification of the deep image within nature is a constant in Subjectivist Poetry, its tone stretches from the purity of Jiménez to the lichen covered blood filled forests of Neruda.

The 'Deep Image', Image as Prima Materia

The Subjectivists see the image as the essence of the poem. Kelly writes (7) 'When the image, the prima materia, is lacking, the verbal gesture is quickly emptied: the poem elapses instead of happening. The fundamental rhythm of the poem is the rhythm of the images; their texture, their contents, offer supplementary rhythms'.

an understanding of a process,
by which the images are stretched
taut, trued
to the perceived, so strung
as to give sound
hold the note & allow
the mind to handle it
tone upon tone (8).

Here is Kelly making exactly the same point within the poem & understanding that process with a precision that creates tension in a hard precise texture.

Kelly goes on to define in this essay the nature of the 'deep image' (the term is Rothenberg's), it refers to a concrete particular that has attracted & operates in a

(7) Notes on the deep image. Kelly. *Trobar*, 2, 1961 — the major essay on the deep image.

(8) *Kali Yuya*. Kelly. Cape, 1970.

context of powerful feelings & associations in the unconscious of the poet & evokes a similar context in the unconscious of the reader when it appears in an imaginatively conceived & ordered poem. The deep image carries its original effective power in a series of surprising verbal patterns.

Such an organisation of imagery is frequently found in the work of Lorca, Neruda & Vallejo:

Lavaza de máxima ablución
calderas viajeras
que se chocan y salpican de fresca sombra
unánime, el color, la fracción, la dura vida
la dura vida eterna.
No temamos. La muerte es así.

Vallejo establishes the rhythm here both by his use of the images & by an underlying assonantal rhythm. A gripping opening image, a change of direction, a hint of violence, the hurry of associations, & finally the hard resolution. Vallejo mixes life & death, flesh & matter, religious apprehension & blunt reality — the half line is both a violent echo & an extension, the sounds repeating & accumulating to finish in the word 'eterna'. The compact strength of this line bolstered by 'vida' & 'sombra' in the two previous lines is now prepared to carry both fear & death. The images concrete particulars carry their associations to the unconscious in the true Subjectivist sense, as indeed do these lines from Neruda:

entre los surcos tu cuerpo moreno
en un racimo que a la tierra llega.
Torna los ojos, mírate los senos,
son dos semillas ácidas y ciegas (10).

Here again we have rhythmic assonance & the beautifully modulated move from singular to plural form.

(9) Trilce XXX. Vallejo. Losada, 1961 — (written in 1922).

(10) Neruda. Pág. 60. Obras Completas. Losada.

Neruda here is recognising earth as a generating force & identifying himself with its readiness for fruition. Again the images are sexual & cumulative —surcos, racimo, semillas— all pervaded by an acid odour of willingness. This is the growth of blind necessity, the moment before recognition. Isn't this the same area explored by Kelly in this song?

song in the crack of he lips
around these darkness
let a will be weft
& be shuttle fond upon itself
for all the celebrations of the Hidden Face (11).

The same prelude to the act of love, on this occasion a kiss that admits all. But the union here is also with forces, that of woman & that of creation. The poem itself emerges through the crack & from the darkness.

Control of the Image

How are these images to be controlled & ordered successfully? I quote Kelly again from 'Notes on the Deep Image':

'Basically the fullest force is possible only by means of the successful employment of one images position in a context of other images; after its first appearance as a dark sound still lingers as a resonance. This resonance must be controlled, & the effective means of control are the acoustics of space intervening between one image & the next. The subsequent image is conditioned, made to work, by the image that precedes it, & conditions, as it is finally conditioned by, the image that follows it: through the whole poem' (12). Kelly specifically mentions the

(11) Kali Yuga. Kelly. Cape, 1970.

(12) Kelly 'Notes on the Deep Image'. Trobar, 2, 1961.

influence of Breton & his practice of making the first image dominate the poem:

Je vois les aretes du soleil
A travers l'aubepine de la pluie (13).

Here the 'bones of the sun' linger as a flashing shape & as a dying sound. Both the shape & sound are picked up & extended in the next line with 'the hawthorn of the rain'. But Kelly would also have recognised the same process in Neruda's 'El fantasma del buque':

Bodegas interiores, túneles crepusculares
que el día intermitente de los puertos visita;
sacos, sacos, que un dios sombrío ha acumulado
como animales grisis, redondos, y sin ojos,
con dulces orejas grises
y vientres estimables llenos de trigo o copra,
sensitivas barrigas de mejeres encinta,
pobremente vestidas de gris, pacientemente
esperando en la sombra de un doloroso cine (14).

Amado Alonso (15) quotes this poem but his analysis while correct possibly overinterprets the image within a single meaning. Of course 'túneles' & 'mujeres' are poetic interpretations of 'bodegas' & 'sacos', Neruda makes this clear by simple juxtaposition, but of greater significance I feel is that these images are inward novements from the concrete particular to the association. In a sense they introduce the poet & his imaginaion into the hold. Alonso notes the appropriateness of Neruda's comparisons of the sacks & the grey animals but Neruda knows it's appropriate. The poem to muy minds is about the process of becoming, the growth of associations. Alonso correctly

(13) *Vigilance*. Andre Breton. Poèmes. Gallimard.

(14) *El Fantasma del Buque*. Neruda. Poesías Completas.

(15) Amado Alonso. «Poesía y Estilo de Pablo Neruda». (Páginas 70-73). Editorial Sudamericana, 1968.

establishes the connetions between rich cargoes '& rich stomachs; battered women, passive animals, & dirty looking sack; dubious women & doubtful cinema porches. This is indeed the firm causeway between the concrete image & associative feeling But surely Neruda is establishing as his prime analogy the buque/the imagination. It is the pregnant cargo & round it are some of its early pickings. What I am trying to suggest is that the penetration of the poem comes not from rationalising out its meanings but from a more subjective process of allowing these images to reverberate on & their associations to filter down. Also by compartmentalising the surface analogies misses the essential mythological source of Neruda's imagery. The technique here is that of deep imagery & I consider that the 'doloroso cine' collects much more meaning to itself than simply that of a dubious cinema outside the dock gates.

Typographical Presentation

The Subjectivists have developed techniques to allow for these extensions of the image. Typographically on the page they surround the image with more space for associations to grow, or they hold up part of the image at the end of one verse before concluding it in the following, or they present apparently separate entities & force association by proximity. Rothenberg in the following poem sets up a Soutine image of rich rotting meat besieged by the filth & menace of the fly with its piercing surreal overtones that settle momentarily while our imagination continues to run on with apprehension & loathing. Rothenberg uses separate images which become related by a growing intensity:

The meat hooks are black, covered
with flies licking
the blood, these black meat hooks

in the air a late fly
hovers: it will find a window
and rest there

and I will find noone
noone will find us
como closer sit with me here
the windows are burning (16).

What is the window here? A slit in the carcass looking in on the entrails or a more frightening prison for the two people locked behind it? The late fly is a precursor for the sensation of the late arrival, the tense is significantly the future. In the first verse the repetition of 'black meat hooks' suggests both an unfinished thought & a closing in. The 'I' appears in league with the process, both deteriorating & corrupting. The move back to the present suggests both the immediate need for & the impossibility of solution. The reader also is drawn in & knows that he also of his because fascination, will be lost. The tension is maintained by a series of repetitive undercurrents but also by the increasing anxiety caused by the inconclusiveness of each section. Rothenberg's poem shows clearly the technique for allowing the reverberations of the image & the central subjectivist concern that the fundamental rhythm of the poem should be that of its images.

Sound & Tension

It was the quality of sound that the Subjectivists learnt from these poets rather than any metrical organisation. They see it as contributive to meaning in that it prepares & extends the reverberations of the image. Sound becomes a vehicle of sensation, communicating the lingering effects of the image at depth. Projectivist Verse (17) had already

(16) Between Rothenberg. Fulcrum, 1967.

(17) Olson's key essay to Projectivist verse — Poetry N. Y no 3, 1950 — reprinted in Allens New American Poetry. Grove, 1960.

proved that traditional metrics were unsuitable for the modern experience. The traditional metric speaks with confidence from a central position, it is a closed form belonging to a wider meaning. It is part of a social order whose structure is not being questioned. The modern metric is allusive & self defensive. It resists interpretation or allocation within order. We no longer have a central form of verse, everything is defined on the fringe. Subjective verse sought a new organisation of sounds in Free Forms. We no longer have a central form but at the same time it sought to avoid the barren excessively intellectual quality that characterises much Projective Verse (18). Yet Kelly admits his debt to Projectivism in what would seem their essential modification:

'to substitute the centrality of the image for the centrality of the syllable & line as a way of access to the poem' (19).

So the qualities that distinguish American verse in the 50's aren't so much technical concerns as the emphasis & reliance placed on the image. It is this same central function of the image & its amplification through sound values that the Subjectivists found in European & Latin American poetry. Here is Lorca's love momentarily sour & mocking itself in echoes, an image containing the bitterness of the moment & the sweeter hopes of the future:

'Corazón de almendra amarga' (20).

I have already indicated that the images are kept in a state of tension it is indeed a supporting principle to the image particularly necessary in free form verse:

'the need for urgency, for tension in the work itself

(18) Olson wants one perception to lead directly & immediately to a further perception—but the governing force is syllable & line not 'image'.

(19) Kelly. *Trobar 2. Notes on Deep Image*. 1961.

(20) Lorca *Diálogo—Obras Completas*. Losada.

cannot be exaggerated. The language of the deep image restores the poetry of desperation' (21).

The conditions that produce the need for an underlying tension & the nature of this tension are both social & psychological - from the destructive ferment & pressures of life in the human anthill, the almost pathological inclination to war on all levels, social, religious, political, or economic, to the loss of identity in consumer society.

Reverberation of the Deep Image.

I have already referred several times to the reverberations of the Subjectivist image but what do these reverberations consist of & how are we made aware of them? Ideally these reverberations occur at the moment when the image passes from the unconscious of the poet to that of the reader. Yet it is more than a moment of recognition, it is the key to the understanding of the poem through the rhythm of its images. Their source is a common particular but one whose associations carry both reader & poet into the depths of his unconscious. Thus the particular & man know of a common source, man here is not identifying with nature but is of nature. This short obsessive poem by Merwin helps make my point:

Looking East at Night

Death
White hand
The moths fly at in the darkness
I took you for the moon rising
Whose light then
Do you reflect

(21) Kelly. Trobar 2. Notes on Deep Image. 1961.

As though it came out of the roots of things
This harvest pallor in which
I have no shadow but myself (22).

If I understand correctly the intention here is to merge not to unravel, the self is left month by month absorbing isolation, loneliness, & death. Man knows that permanent cold light of nature & the ominous icy whiteness of its purpose but remains bound to flitter irresistibly around it. This is obvious, yet it is not the comparison between man/moon that is frightening but the identification of common lifelessness in the suggestion of borrowed light & borrowed self, & the same fatal rushing to death. Here we have then concrete particular, a powerful feeling, & the attraction of associations. The reader captures the sensation in his unconscious & then follows its reverberations through the rhythm of images that form the poem.

This type of sensation the Subjectivists readily identified in the poetry of Neruda & Lorca. They believe that this inward look towards what Bly terms 'the mammal brain' can vitalise the poet, Bly accuses Pound & Eliot of puritanism & an unwillingness to face the unconscious. They wrote in pictures he said rather than images from the unconscious:

'without these true images, the water from the unconscious, the language continues to dry up' (23).

To counteract this trend Bly calls for an immersion in the exoticism of French 19th century imagery of voyages, decay, voluptuousness, debauchery, & coloured violence. A call that is in fact answered more clearly by Lorca & Neruda than by the Subjectivists themselves. However Subjectivist verse certainly makes a wild turn inwards without fear. There is as a result a dominating sense of isolation, a withdrawal in readiness for discovery. Thema-

(22) *The Lice*. Merwin. Rupert Hart-Davis, 1967.

(23) Bly 'Some thoughts on Lorca & Char'. *The Fifties*. No 3, 1959.

tically this sense of isolation & silence ,of reduction to essence, of identification with nature is common to Ungaretti, Ekelof, Jiménez, & the majority of the Subjectivists. These poets speak of hard won feelings, often no more than momentary certainties:

Mattina

m'illumino
d'immenso (24).

Ungaretti uses the sound values to reinforce his meaning. The mystery of the poem lies in the fact that the melody under the words has the same taste as the words themselves. This poem surfaced from the War & contains an admission of pain & a confession of new faith. The tighter 'i' modifies itself in its movement to the deep 'o'.

Here is Ekelof writing more specifically of the pain of living. I am using a translation by Auden which captures the images but fails to reinforce them with sound:

I speak to you
I speak of you
From deep within myself
I know that you do not answer
How could you answer
When so many are crying out to you!
All I ask is permission
To stand here waiting
And that you will give me a sign
From within myself for yourself (25).

This is the naked pain & fear of natural existence

(24) *Vida d'un uomo*. Ungaretti. Oscar Mondadori. Italy, 1970.

(25) Ekelof. *Selected poems*. Penguin, 1971. Auden I feel transfers some of his own brittleness poems. He is more used to making his own clever surface through metrical effects. It would of course be much more interesting to make the comparison with Bly & Wrights own translations but I have been unable to acquire a copy.

that is characteristic of Wright. Ekelof senses a dead end of introspection but keeps on pushing, aware & frustrated that he is up against one of his own truths.

Wright knows these same feelings & in this poem he lingers in them with momentarily greater satisfaction:

The Jewel

There is this cave
In the air behind my body
That nobody is going to touch:
A cloister, a silence
Closing around a blossom of fire.
When I stand upright in the wind,
My bones turn to dark emeralds (26).

This is the inner sanctuary of self where at certain contacts everything is of value. The penetration of these images comes from the fact that sound/meaning are working concurrently; the wind carries through the body, the cave, the cloister, silence, to the fire - the sound reverberations of this movement are carried by the diphthongs built up cave, cloister, silence, & finally fire. The movement is slowed down by the gerund before exploding through the prepositional phrase into the first dominant image 'blossom of fire', followed immediately by a deeper echo & a more intense qualification in 'dark emeralds'. Thus the reading & hearing of these poems is closely bound up with any real understanding (27).

The Subjectivist Mystique

The inwardness of Subjectivism leads inevitably to the erection of a facile mystique & although I don't wish to make the ground even more soft underfoot it seems

(26) *The Branch Will Not Break*. Wright Wesleyan, 1959.

(27) Bly, Wright, & Merwin communicate a sense of revelation

essential to mention that this inner direction was already present in the poetics of Char & Jiménez & that it was also part of the creative atmosphere in the States during the fifties in the theories of Cage & Suzuki. Mystery & darkness seem promises of purity & depth. The Subjectivist concern with depth has I feel a moral objective, it gives the image a fresh purity so that the words emerge pristine & mysterious from an inner darkness, or as Cage says:

'If there were a part of life dark enough to keep out of it a light from art, I would want to be in that darkness, fumbling around if necessary, but alive' (28).

Suzuki argued that in European thinking things are seen as causing one another & having effects, whereas in oriental thinking this seeing of cause & effect is not emphasised but instead one makes an identification with what is here & now. The Subjectivists also search for this sense of presence & identification so that they see the poem itself as a moralising force. One thinks of Williams remark that the reconstruction of the poem is the prime task or of Char's:

'poesie la vie future á l'interieur de l'homme requalifié' (29).

Char again like the Subjectivists sees the poet as the imposer of order:

'Dans le tissu du poeme doit se retrouver un nombre egal de tunels derobes, de chambres d'harmonie, en meme temps que d'elements futurs, de havres au soleil, de pistes captieuses et d'existants s'entr'appelant. Le poete est le passeur de tout cela qui forme un ordre. Et un ordre insurge' (30).

(28) Silence. Cage. Wesleyan Univ Press. 1961.

(29) Char Seuls demeurent. Gallimard.

(30) Char. A una serenite crispee. Gallimard.

This inevitably throws the poet back on an essential isolation,

Canción

Los árboles deslumbrantes
del otoño por la tarde
en estos parajes limpios
del campo, cuando se han ido
todos y no queda más
que uno con la soledad (31).

Jiménez uses paired assonance, rich & penetrating, two sounds close to each other in tone, each echoing the solitude of the other. Where a rhyming scheme might produce either monotony or harmony contradicting the content, the assonance & repetition bring us close to the depth of the pain. Jiménez saw the need for an open form. There is an austerity, a conviction, & a communion in these lines. Guillermo de Torre in summing up Jiménez's intentions could easily be referring to the Subjectivists themselves:

'sobrepasar o al menor rehuir lo específicamente sentimental, alumbrar nuevos temas o motivos que expresarán cierto ímpetu vital y afirmativo; y en lo formal abandono de los cauces predeterminados, con el deseo de buscar nuevas estructuras' (32).

Jiménez moved from the magical lyrical world to a barer sparser language, inwardly contemplative & less spontaneous. The Subjectivists wish to blend the two. Vivanco notes that in *Eternidades* Jiménez is looking for this essential poetry:

'una palabra que se convierte en esencia consciente de sí misma y se toma a sí misma como fuente o motivo de inspiración' (33).

(31) Jiménez *Canción*. *Obras Completas*.

(32) *Historia de Literaturas de Vanguardia*. Guillermo de Torre. Guadarrama, 1971.

(33) Vivanco. *Introducción a la poesía española contemporánea*. Guadarrama, 1971.

In a sense Jiménez is looking for a beauty that is older than the poem, both to capture it & leave it undisturbed. The Subjectivists follow him much of the way. Inevitably the images are planted against a sparse backcloth, they speak of deep tremours that hardly disturb the surface. They maintain the lyrical image whereas Jiménez when he abandons it is able to depend much more on the inherent sound richness of Spanish. The consonantal clusters of English act as an impediment to a strong basic melodic movement where Spanish with its dominance of pure vowel sounds is ideally suited to such play. Thus the sound structure of the language itself becomes a determining force on the possibilities of expresión. Feeling in Spanish gains accompaniment from sound to a higher extent than in English. Possibly the sound play is subtler in English but Spanish contains a greater suggestion of eternal presence, of proximity to origin.

I feel that Bly is in this example using Jimenez's later tone but all the work has to be done by the images rather than the sounds:

My last walk in the trees has come. At dawn
I must return to the trapped fields
To the obedient earth.
The trees shall be reaching all the winter (34).

'Dawn', 'last', 'trapped', 'obedient', all pave the way for the suggestion that Bly is here concerned with inevitability of Death, that his acceptance comes from placing himself within Nature's cycle. Implicit in this problem is the essential problem of the striking power of the image & its sensation in the social context. Can Bly & Wright in measuring themselves against the natural world expect their images to carry over with the same force as Jiménez's who was writing in a less urban & technological society & within a European tradition always abundantly aware of

(34) Solitude late at Night in the Woods. Bly. Silence in the Snowy Fields, 1955.

man's relation to nature & fully embracing it whereas the Americans have traditionally been more suspicious of space, seeing Nature as something to civilise rather than civilising.

Technique V: Social Context

Are the Subjectivists taking an easy escape route by using a measuring value that has already been proved inadequate? Bly is certainly looking for a primal force in his images but the danger remains that the impact on an urban culture educationally sugared with dead literary concepts will be 'anemically poetic'. The Subjectivists are obviously attempting to bypass the code & get to the truth but infact in an atmosphere of poetic pluralism Subjectivism may simply have introduced a new technique.

Simpson takes this point up in his Review article (35). He charges the Subjectivists with lack of familiarity with the texture of the materials used, pointing out that policeman & horse dont have the same connotations in the different social contexts & indeed they dont but the examples are unfortunate - policeman reverberates violently in both languages & although horse in a general context might appear more extravagant in American Bly anchors his just as firmly to Minnesota as Lorca does to Andalucía. Simpson's remark on texture I also consider unfair. Bly's Silence in the Snowy Fields is frozen in regionalism & he lives its texture. The real problem is the centrality of this experience whereas Lorca's was socially central, Bly's is wishfully so. But Lorca was writing within a static & crystallised society.

Bly & Wright, I feel, were aware that this inward movement towards a timeless mythic centre was also a form of social escapism, an excessive self-protection & with 'Light Around the Body' & 'We shall gather at the River' (36) they

(35) Simpson. The Review. No 25, 1971.

(36) Bly: Light around the Body. Wesleyan, 1959. Wright We shall gather at the River. 1960. Wesleyan Press.

take the poem back towards the centre of society. These poems lose any suggestion of finickiness underlying the earlier verse. The tone is more prophetic, more strident.

This relationship of society/poem needs a much more detailed analysis than I can give it here but it would seem clear that Subjectivism is more concerned with finding the social centre & working within the framework for change rather than demarcating the alternative society as to a large extent the Beats & the San Francisco Renaissance poets try to do. Subjectivist criticism is based in moral values, there are signs of respect for the institutions but violent opposition to their practice. The Beats however tried to bypass the whole political apparatus with a contempt born of suspicion & with all the frustration of partial involvement. The Beats' attack on syntax only succeeded in disrupting it, it was an impotent revolt, a stance that was reduced to peripheral parasitism & howling obscenity (37). Projectivism also moves towards the social centre & possibly its greater boldness & confidence result from greater accommodation. Olson tends more to make his commitment at the comfortable remove of abstraction. He believes more in the truth of form where the Subjectivists search for a truth of content. Olson moves towards the apolitical.

This change towards a more 'socially committed' image seems to me to be an acknowledgement by the Subjectivists that the transference of the image from one social context to another is not possible & that as a value it would be unapplicable. Where the Subjectivist image falters in its tension in the earlier poems it is to a large extent because it smacks precisely of a borrowed sensibility. The reality of the American situation is overpowering & the image

(37) My tone appears excessively critical. I am referring to their effectiveness it could be argued that at the time this the only form of realistic confrontation. Beat poetry in Barthes' sense is a linguistic code, quickly dividing those who share it from those who don't. Socially the Beats are precursors of the leisure society. But they also draw the lines for the alternative society.

needs to struggle that much harder to create its tension. Bly & Wright would argue that they therefore have to get deeper down to find the generating source of such tension—in a poem making political reference the polar image needs, immense power if it is ever to juxtapose itself with any real effect against Richard Nixon or Vietnam. Abstractions fall to my mind because they belong to a language already appropriated by the power structure so the poets task is to find an image that can stir enough inner energy to confront without appearing merely another democratic voter's complaint.

Bly admits a frustration. He feels that American poetry had been restricted to certain areas of the psyche & that it should now turn to 'the secret paths of the imagination' as Trakl & Blake had done. But the 'Electronic Society' & the communications systems have textured his imagination with political reality. The emergence of the image, its manner of growth, then, remain the same but the tone is more prophetic, & angry, the voice committed. The influences here I feel are quite clearly those of Neruda & Trakl (38). Trakl referred to his inner life as a chaos of rhythms & images, these become the floating rhythms & serial images representative of the spiritual crisis in Europe.

Der Abend
Mit toten Heldengestalten
Erfüllst du Mond
Die schweigenden Walder,
Schelmond —

So blaulich erstrahlt es
Gegen die Stast hin,
Wo kalt und bose
Ein verwesend Geschlecht wohnt
Der weissen Enkel
Dunkle Zufunft bereitet.

(38) Bly & Wright cooperated on translations of both these poets.

Evening

With dead figures of heroes
The moon is filling
The silent forests
O sickle-moon!

This blue light shines
Towards the city
Where a decaying race
Lives coldly & evilly
Preparing the dark future
Of their white descendants (39).

This poem has all the qualities of an expressionist engraving, heavily cut lines, rich colour juxtapositions which in themselves form part of the emotional confrontation, tense oppositions, a journey within the surprise of the image — the psychological resonance of the image is here twisted to an extreme. This seems to me the essential lesson that the Subjectivists learnt from Trakl & even more so from the surrealist image: a more forcibly associated imaginative image at a higher emotional pitch. This is Bly's reaction on listening to Kennedy lie about the Cuban invasion.

There is another darkness,
A darkness in the fences of the body
& in moles running, & telephone wires,
& the frail ankles of horses;
Darkness of dying grass, & yellow willow trees;
There is a death of broken buttonholes,
Of brutality in high places,
Of lying reporters,
There is a bitter fatigue, adult & sad (40).

(39) Trakl Selected Poems Cape Editions. Translation by David Luke. 1969

(40) Bly Light Around the Body. Wesleyan, 1959.

Bly disturbs the characteristic landscape of his images by the committal of his tone. The direction of the associations remains inward but at the same time he has selected a weak point in the social body & pushes down into it. The darkness & silence move in & there is a frantic scurrying as the imagination twists discordantly away from reality — there is a sort of counterpoint set up here between the weight of the prosaic reality & the wild dancing images. The last line stretches out slowly & wearily with its three adjectives. The surreal images are I suggest functional & again the influences are from Neruda & Lorca rather than the French Surrealists.

The Irrational & The Surreal

The deep image with its roots in the unconscious certainly embraces the irrational not however with the inventive indulgence of the Surrealist but rather in the functional sense of a deep reverberation of awareness. The image is not a gratuitous offering of the unconscious but a contributing force to a larger content. The Subjectivists use the image to discover & they would probably agree with Stevens who said 'the surreal image can only invent never discover'. Their modification of the surreal image is then essentially functional as was Neruda's & Lorca's (41). The subjective image guides the rhythm of the poem, the depth relationship is implicit, the surreal image to a large extent makes its confrontation on the surface in the sense that it obliges a relationship. Simpson writes 'There is nothing more sinister than pure surrealism, the series of unrelated images' (42).

The influence of Surreal as Political/Moral Image

The concern for the irrational was prevalent in the

(41) Lorca has said the surrealists didn't understand their own discovery.

(42) London Magazine. September, 1967.

States on much wider basis than I've so far suggested — Bly's interest in Zen for example & Cage's general influence — but I would maintain that the essential echo is found in the Spanish speaking poets, especially in a phrase of Hernández (himself highly influenced by Neruda). 'El poeta crea en trance, en los momentos de crisis del hombre'. Surely Hernández's remark would be applicable to Vallejos isolation during the writing of *Trilce*, or Lorca's stay in New York, Neruda's or Bly's political passions, or this sense of irremediable loneliness in Bly's *Snowfall in the Afternoon*:

This Barn is full of corn, & moving towards
[us now,
Like a hulk blown towards us in a storm at sea:
All the sailors on deck have been blind for many
[years (43).

In this poem 'snow', 'grass', & 'dark' become signs of subjective inner equivalents beyond the syntactical logic, just as Lorca was able to load 'puñal' & 'cuchillo' with additional meaning. Bly uses these words to suggest emergence from vast & overpowering space. The barn becomes Coleridge's phantom ship & the surreal tone of the last line develops in what I've called a functional sense both the age & the menace of the optical illusion. The Subjectivis, Neruda, & Lorca explore the unconscious with the same sense of surprise as the Surrealists but unlike them they are looking for archaic, primitive images that have the quality of being eternally present:

'in me scarlet jacked armies march into the rain' (44).

Wright's immediate context is the Vietnam War but blood, pain, false pride & glossy potitics all strike together. Neruda's lines show the same insistence in exploring the unconscious to locate in mythological identification an unbearable state:

(43) Bly. *Silence in the Snowy Fields*. 1953. Wesleyan Press.

(44) Bly. *The Sixties No 8. Across Dark Fields*.

ha quedado un olor entre los cañaverales
una mezcla de sangre y cuerpo, un penetrante
pétalo nauseabundo (45).

The Subjectivists have also made use of several other techniques of Surrealism in their attempt to make the 'deep image' contain the overwhelming tension of the reality. In this poem 'At a march against the Vietnam War' Bly makes use of juxtaposition of polarities:

we make war
like a man anointing himself (46).

or here where the associatitve force of the juxtaposition discloses violent reality merging the static & the mobile into a relationship of money & war:

Accountants hover the earth like helicopters (47).

The Subjectivists find the surreal technique of obsessive image as particularly appropriate for the exploration of moral guilt. Wright knows the steel industry of Ohio, the hovels, the immigrant workers, the beer, the dirt, the small dreams of the women in their nightmare lives. The images coalesce here into a terrifyingly permanent dream/nightmare where the looming shapes & depths of the mine become the very structure of the dream palace:

Many American women mount long stairs
In the shafts of houses
Fall asleep, & emerge suddenly into tottering
[palaces (48).

Her life in turn becomes the microcosm of all our small possibilities. These are political images, sensibility applied

(45) Neruda. Canto General. Obras Completas.

(46) At a march against the Vietnam War. Light around the Body. Bly, 1959.

(47) A dream of Suffocation. Light around the Body. Bly, 1959.

(48) Miners. The Branch will not Break. Wright, 1959.

to social & moral concern. Inevitably the effect of the image is shocking. Simpson has pointed out the opposition of technique & experience in his political poetry, the metaphor has to be brutal & direct (49). At a conscious level the image would remain fractal & prosaic with the emotional content of a daily event, the surreal brings to the surface the tremours of the effects. The Subjectivists realise that abstractions have been undermined, the language of emotion cut at its root, so they let the image speak at its unconscious sources. This process is true, I feel, of both the Spanish & the American poets but a poet such as Neruda shows a greater confidence since the American poet appears rootless & suspicious of a language which through its social use in a security ridden middle class society has imposed consensus social values in the very meanings of words. Simpson, for example, just doesn't get the penetration of the Spanish poet, the capacity to attract additional meaning & the sense of eruption. He is painfully cornered by his predicament 'I'm born to this middle class life':

Do Americans always have to be second rate
sons as smooth as a V-8 engine — inner part (50).

Rothenberg, Wright, & Bly under the influence of the Spanish poet sought this deeper penetration by turning to a more surreal & archaic image:

'sparks of black light that fit the holes in the
generals eyes' (51).

Bly manages to root the modern language of 'generals' & 'sparks' in a deeper history, — 'sparks' maintains the

(49) In 30s & 40s social poetry failed partially because the poets tried to make decription carry moral reaction in a direct language that the society had milked of force, & because the radical intent of content met a timidity of form.

(50) End of the Road. Simpson. Selected Poems. Harcourt & Brace. 1965.

(51) Bly. In Hatred of Black Men. Light Around the Body. 1959.

ambiguous force both of primitive fire & flickering light & shadow & the deadly empty viciousness of modern warfare. The image holds both as a description & as a heinous natural process.

The impact of French Surrealism

This inward movement by the Subjectivist poets to a confrontation of the self without fear also has an obvious connection with Surreal 'automatic writing'. Here is Breton's key phrase from the Manifesto:

'Ecrivez vite sans sujet preconcu, assez vite pour ne pas retenir et ne pas etre tenté de vous relire. La première phrase viendra toute seule, tant il est vrai qu'à chaque seconde il est une phrase étrangère a notre pensée consciente qui ne demande qu'à s'extérioriser' (52).

Breton was in fact discovering a new kingdom befitting of & of immense importance to a society engaged in discovering the values of psychoanalysis. This is not undirected thought but otherwise directed thought. I would argue that the process of automatism has been a significant contribution to all these poets for the conception of their imagery. Breton indeed defines Surrealism as Automatism:

'Surrealisme, n. m. Automatisme psychique pur par lequel on se propose d'exprimer, soit verbalement soit par écrit soit de toute manière, le fonctionnement réel de la pensée, dictée de la pensée, en l'absence de tout contrôle exercé par la raison, en dehors de toute préoccupation esthétique ou morale' (53).

But the Subjectivists were concerned with more than the inventive power of the unconscious, they weren't seeking purely to reveal the functioning of thought but to establish direct communication at this level. They want more the language of the unconscious whereas Surrealism often made to with the products. Breton's argument reduces the poet

(52) Les Manifestes du Surrealism. Breton. Gallimard. Ideas.

(53) Les Manifestes du Surrealism. Breton. Gallimard. Ideas.

in part to spectator, taking himself on trust. It is the element of superficiality, of verbal surface, brilliance of indulgent Freudian play that the Spanish poets & the Subjectivists reject. A statement by Ekelof written in Paris in the 1920s seems to me to be particularly revealing in the way it show how the poet's relationship to the word & the image modifies the use of automatic techniques:

'I placed one word beside another & finally with a great deal of effort managed to construct a whole sentence — naturally not one that meant something but one that was composed of word nuances. It was the hidden meanings that I was seeking — a kind of Alchimie du Verbe. One word has its meanings & another word has its own, but when they are brought together something strange happens to them: they have an in-between connotation at the same time as they retain their original individual meanings — poetry is this very tension filled relationship between the words & the lines, between the meanings' (54).

Ekelof found their techniques too arid for him, he was already aware that there was a paradox in automatic writing, — that once converted into tenet it becomes rational & mechanical. Yet he clearly embraces the surreal concept of spontaneity & the centrality of dreams:

I let the barber
cut away what was left of my eyes (55).

The surreal sought the surprise, these poets I am concerned with sought to maintain the surprise but to apply it as the seed for the revelation of something bigger than itself, one that acted as a vehicle for communication rather than as object in itself.

The surrealist who had a direct influence, as Ekelof acknowledges, was Desnos. He tried to wed ordinary language 'to an indescribable atmosphere, to an acute

(54) Ekelof. Introduction to his Selected Poems. Penguin, 1971.

(55) Pengu Selected Poem. Ekelof. 1971.

image' (56). He saw the need for sharp images against the fuzzy outlines of bourgeois life, a commitment to the moment that was genuinely pressing even though it might be aimed at merely temporary concerns (57). In his *Reflexions sur la Poesie* he writes of the need to go beyond Breton's point sublime:

'It seems to me that beyond Surrealism there is something very mysterious to be reckoned with, that beyond automatism there is the intentional, that beyond poetry there is the poem, that beyond poetry received there is poetry imposed, that beyond free poetry there is the free poet (58).

Desnos here like the Subjectivists wishes to channel the unconscious into the effort to make the fullest moral expression of being. His suggestion of 'something beyond' is likewise echoed to the full by the Subjectivists. Finally Desnos continually accentuates the principle of polarities, especially that between dream & matter:

'j'ai tant reve de toi que tu perds ta realite' (59)
an interest that is fully shared by Kelly in his Trobar statement:

'Poetry like dream reality, is the juncture of the experienced with the never (60) experienced. Like waking reality it is the fulfilment of the imagined & unimagined'.

Desnos is referring to the image more as a mode of vision than as a technique & it is this that makes him important to the Subjectivists. Kelly in his interview with Ossman describes this process of image as vehicle for vision in these terms:

The poetic image is not a thing. It is a process & a discovered identity. It discovers its being in its function' (61).

Kelly's attitude of suspicion to the techniques practised

(56) (57) (58) *Reflexions sur la Poesie*. Desnos, Domane Public. Gallimard, 1953.

(59) *Dernier poeme a Youki*. Desnos, Poesie. Gallimard.

(60) Kelly. *Trobar 2*. «Notes on the Deep Image». 1961.

(61) Bly interview. Ossman, *The Sullen Art*. Corinth, 1963.

by the Surrealists while at the same time acknowledging their importance is typical of the Subjectivists. Bly considers that both French & Spanish have remained fresh & strong in language because these languages went through a period of surrealism. This he defines as a period of heavy use of imagery from the unconscious, giving both depth & flexibility to their poetry.

Bly's Negative Surrealism

Bly criticises American poetry for clinging to the surface, for drying up the language. He makes this revealing but excessively loaded distinction. He refers to what he calls a negative, false surrealism where the conscious mind cannot understand what is being said & cites O'Hara, Ashbery, & Lamantia:

a lot of sophistication gone down the drain
to become the mesh of a mythical fish (62).

This seems to me to involve a colossal stretching for the reader to bring the two lines together, this would be completely acceptable if one felt that the poet had himself resolved the relationship:

the arctic honey blabbed over the report causing
darkness (63).

This reads more like a Tristan Tzara poem of pure chance, using cut-up technique but Bly would be incorrect in suggesting that the poet is asking us to resolve the lines consciously. This comes from a poem called 'Leaving the Atocha Station' & possibly Ashbery is trying to capture the mixture of train movement, rush or impressions, the jerky flow of the mind — so that these become tone images

(62) O'Hara. *Luch Poems*. City Lights, 1964.

(63) Ashbery. *Selected Poems* Cape, 1971.

for pain, separation, cold rather than the dreamy surreal association of polarities like honey/arctic (64):

I shall watch speckled jewel grow on the back of
[warspilt
horses (65).

Lamantia's effect is, I feel, genuinely surreal but Bly's point would be that it results too easily from the application of a technique.

Bly compares this 'false' surrealism to another kind which:

'Simply disregards the conscious & the intellectual structure of the mind entirely & by the use of images tries to bring forward another reality from inward experience' (66).

Bly shares Lorca's view that French poetry did not on the whole break through rationality & that the initial spontaneity of automatic writing dulled to technique (67).

The Subconscious & The Surreal

Simpson likewise admits that only in Surrealism, creating images & therefore realities, is there any joy. But he makes the inevitable qualification:

'The surrealist poets have often failed to see that mere images, however new, are not enough. Their images are drawn from a deeper level, the subconscious. But they are merely projected on a screen, where they remain motionless. The deepest image, if it does not move, is only an

(64) Lamantia. *Selected Poems*. Penguin, 1969.

(65) Ashbery's poem as a simultaneous structure, impersonal, autonomous, released from the charge of expression. Consequently he sees the poem as an arbitrary construct, absurd & self destroying. An attitude that would suggest more a parallel with Dada than Surrealism.

(66) Ossman P. 41. Bly Interview. *Corinth*, 1963.

(67) Tzara or Desnos tell how Breton used to sit pouring over his automatic writing.

object, & it's no use multiplying images... nothing happens' (68).

Simpson's point is, I think, true the 'deep image' has a psychological resonance, an earthiness, a reverberation & rhythm that exceed these criticisms of the surreal image:

Nothing was left of me
But my right foot
& my left shoulder.
They lay white as the skein of spider floating
In a field of snow toward a dark building
Tilted & stained by wind.
Inside the dream, I dreamed on.

A parade of old women
Sand softly above me,
Faint mosquitoes near still water.

So I waited in my corridor.
I listened for the sea
To call me.
I knew that somewhere outside, the horse
Stood saddled, browsing in grass,
Waiting for me (69).

Here is the surreal world of associations, a chain of images spinning through a dream, vague threats of spiders & mosquitoes, violent physical decay & calm oblivion. All the suggestive haze of apprehension & completion. The images are isolated & allowed to diffuse, their psychological overtones are evident & as the sound pattern settles they push the poem down & in.

Lorca's 'Canción primaveral' follows the same pattern of developing images in a different tone:

Salen los niños alegres
de la escuela,

(68) P. 247. Richard Howard. *Alone in America*. Atheneum, 1971.

(69) *Burial*. Wright, *Branch Will not Break*. Wesleyan, 1959.

poniendo en el aire tibio
de abril canciones tiernas.

Qué alegría tiene el hondo
silencio de la calleja.
Un silencio hecho pedazos
por risas de plata nueva (70).

Lorca uses the line stops to set his tone —alegre, tibio, tierna—, then disturbs this superficial gaiety with 'hondo', reassures with the affectionate 'calleja', & finally gives full imagistic scope to his thought bringing silence, youth, laughter, age together in cyclic form.

The Subjectivist & The Surreal Image

Yet Simpson's criticism seems to me to miss the point. Certainly automatic writing led to the calculating mind & this impeded unconsciousness from making genuine revelations but Freud has adequately proved that the random appearance of juxtaposed images in dreams is open to profound interpretation. The danger lies not so much in the surreal process but in its abuse as formula i. e. when impenetrability becomes a facade for depth & a pretext for facile & pointless puzzles (71). To my mind the distinction between the surreal & the subjectivist use of the unconscious image lies essentially in the fact that the surrealists were interested in the unconscious per se, the processes & revelations in themselves, & fascinated by the willful play of their imaginations without making any judgement on their value, whereas the subjectivists seek to root the unconscious in a deeper mythology. The subjectivists & the Spanish poets use their explorations of the unconsciousness as a means of submergence in emotional depth & for a

(70) Lorca. Canción Primavera. Obras Completas.

(71) This surface posture is seen in Beat surrealism & in the authentic surrealism of Lamantia but in a semiological sense this is part of acode, demanding not adherence as Breton himself did.

growing identification with Nature. The surrealists used the image for provocation, they retained large elements of Dada negation, juxtaposing images for shock effect. The subjectivists refuse indulgence in novelty for its own sake, their images must reveal & they acknowledge moral concerns. They are shamans without secure central positions where the French surrealists were happy & often vicious outsiders.

Both the surreal & the deep image surface with their reverberations already incorporated. But the subjectivists turned to the surreal image because it was a pure image direct from the original source. Yet it remains obvious that at the same time the surreal image opened up an inner landscape of images without having to confront the natural associations of his image, he is suggesting that one doesn't have to justify the image by testing it outside oneself but that this image should be communicable at depth inside oneself from poet to reader. I understand what Bly wants but how can this process operate since the image surfaces in word form & must inevitably be measured against outside reality. Bly is apparently arguing that the process is not that the image moves from depth to surface in the poet & then from surface to depth in the reader but that there is a direct transference from depth to depth. Bly writes in *Lettres Nouvelles* about this union of deep image & natural mythology:

'We haven't yet reconquered the rapid movement through the psyche from the conscious to the unconscious, from a table made of fir, to repressed wild desires, such as the ancient poets were possessed by, as Lorca & others have rediscovered in Spanish poetry' (72).

The Spanish Influence on the Subjectivist use of the Surreal Image

We have seen how again & again the subjectivist poets affirm their preference for Lorca's use of the surreal image

(72) *Lettres Nouvelles*. December/January, 1970/71.

to that of the French poets themselves so let me consider briefly Lorca's most surreal poem 'El poeta en Nueva York'. It is obvious that in this poem Lorca is confronting the American poet's problem & like them he finds it difficult to affirm when faced by a mechanical situation. Lorca's earlier symbols get twisted into a more violent surrealism in an effort to preserve his *visión*, as Correa correctly notes:

'El apagamiento de la existencia humana se encuentra exaltado en acontecimientos de un mitológico devenir' (73).

The surreal image helps Lorca as it does Bly to adopt a more prophetic stance. Lorca's poem is covered by an invisible sky que 'asesina' & this hangs over his brooding until he finally escapes to a more sensual & tropical atmosphere in Cuba. He comes as a sleepwalker in a city open to fantasy & pulls forth his symbols from this nightmare but the tension is 'deeper' than in the surreal since his images are not confronting each other but rather his obsessive new set of images is trying to find the shape of the earlier ones. Reality in the city is denying the essential contact man/nature & the poet rushes against his imagination. Bly & Wright had to find answers that weren't purely flight but they know the same all powerful reality, Ginsberg's Moloch, Thus Lorca's:

'Mariposa ahogada en el tintero' (74).

Stiffens its critical wings in Bly's 'Dream of Suffocation':

The honeycomb at night has strange dreams:
Small black trains going round & round
Old warships drowning in a raindrop (75).

Lorca juxtaposes positive & negative images & creates the obvious tension between 'mariposa' & 'tintero' conclusively resolving the tension by reinforcing the negative

(73) Correa. *La Poesía Mítica de Lorca*. Gredos.

(74) Lorca. *El poeta en Nueva York*. *Obras Completas*.

(75) Bly. *Light around the Body*. Wesleyan Press, 1959.

element by the action 'ahogada'. All of Lorca's icon words—dawn, bull, child—, suffer defeat against the consuming reality dominated by Kafkaesque crocodiles, serpents, & iguanas:

'Vendrán los iguanas a morder a los hombres que no sueñan' (76).

The inner peace of man, his whole sense of balance, & the very structuring of his life are upset:

'Toda la luz del mundo cabe dentro de un ojo' (77).

This struggle to establish the order of his vision by means of the image is the key to the relationship between Lorca & the American poets.

The prophetic & visionary style of Lorca's attack in this poem results from his conception of American Civilisation, especially its mechanical nature, as being the triumph of Death. The individual is taken over by a collectivity that will only brutalise him further. Bodini notes:

'Hasta ahora había trabajado con lo lleno. A partir de entonces iba a trabajar con los vacíos de las cosas y de los seres. Con su silencio como ausencia de participación' (78).

His new world is full of silence of crabs, abandoned & wind blown newspapers, plastic, rust, oxydised pins, lost dogs. The atmosphere is pervaded by dryness & decomposition, a low toned & decaying yellowness, sucked dry of life & strength. A metropolis reduced to a cringing grinning uniformity of colour & dominated by emptiness. Lorca saw New York as a Hiroshima.

'Lo que importa es esto: el vacío' (79).

In this city where nobody sleeps only the jew & the negroes retain any sense of life, & they are preserved by

(76) Lorca. Poeta en Nueva York. Obras Completas. Losada.

(77) Lorca. Poeta en Nueva York. Obras Completas. Losada.

(78) Vittorio Bodini. Los Poetas Surrealistas Españolas. Tusquets, 1971.

(79) Lorca. Poeta en Nueva York. Obras Completas. Losada.

their mythic quality; the king of Harlem tarted up in his doorman's uniform dreams of crocodiles & his beard that reaches to the sea. Lorca's Granada gypsy now becomes a New York negro; his Guardia Civil the city itself:

'Quería... subrayar el dolor que sienten los negros por ser negros en un mundo contrario; esclavos de todas las invenciones del hombre blanco y de todas sus máquinas' (80).

Lorca is surreal imagery is here derived not from techniques but from the reality of New York, although he indulges in surreal iconoclasm when he attacks the papacy & the stock exchange, & on these occasions his images dance viciously.

Rothenberg, Bly, & Wright share this conception of the dehumanising effects of the city & convert it through a surrealist vision:

Wright (81): 'Did he shudder with hatred in the cold shadow of grease?', *Youth*.

Bly (82): 'And the hotel keeper shuffles the cards of insanity', *The Great Society*.

These poets also share an interest in simplicity. Bly's statement:

'I am interested in the intersection of poetry & simplicity' (83)

is clearly applicable to Lorca. Bly uses the simple image to generate a whole series, of complex feelings, from a sense of marvel to insecurity & despair:

(80) From a conference given by Lorca on his return to Spain. Quoted by Bodini who then adds this comment on Lorca's use of the negro. «Esa Materia —el negro, los sonidos negros— que hasta entonces habían utilizado solamente como adornos mediante los cuales hacen estallar con mayor energía la arrebatadora vitalidad de sus objetos y personas, ahora la afronta directamente convirtiéndola en el centro árido y horrendo de esa poesía suya, tan nueva». Bodini, *Los Poetas Surrealistas Españoles*, Tusquets, 1971.

(81) Wright. *The Branch Will Not Break*. Wesleyan, 1959.

(82) Bly. *Light Around the Body*. Wesleyan, 1959.

(83) Fauchereau. *La poesie americaine*. Editions de Minuit, 1968.

'Inside me there is a confusion of swallows
Birds flying through the smoke
& horses galloping excitedly on fields of short
[grass' (34).

These are images which talk of seeing but of not seeing enough — they carry beauty blind. Here is Vallejo using nouns to give looming edge to his abstraction, i. e. the relation of 'puertas' & 'rostro' to 'algo ajeno':

'Porque en todas las tardes de esta vida
Y no sé con qué puertas dan a un rostro
Y algo ajeno se toma en el alma mía' (85).

But it is Lorca who again provides the richest source, Bodini points out that Lorca's earlier period of Surrealism 1925 - 28 was essentially a generic surrealism influenced particularly by his friendships with Dali & Buñuel. Their influence was transformed by Lorca's 'capacidad de verificación inmediata del sentimiento poético en sentimiento popular, en las raíces de la tierra y de sangre' (86). This identification of soil & body has also been fully explored by the Subjectivists.

Lorca talks of the influence of the 'nana' on his writing:

'La nana perfecta sería la repetición de dos notas, con un alargamiento de la duración de los efectos' (87).

Lorca catches the underlying lament of a repetitive sadness ;that this was a song of the poor for whom children were often the heaviest of crosses.

'Verde que te quiero verde.
verde viento. Verdes ramas' (88).

(84) Bly. Summer in Minnesota. Silence in the Snowy Fields. Wesleyan Press, 1953.

(85) Vallejo. Obras Completas.

(86) Bodini. Los Poetas Surrealistas, Tusquets, 1971.

(87) Lorca. Conferencia in Habana 1930 quoted by Bodini.

Rothenberg produces a nightmare state of unresolved tension by a similar repetition:

The women dream
in blue shadows.

The women dream of
houses & thieves (89).

The Spanish poets have thus been of considerable importance helping to define an attitude & a method for the invention of new realities by an image with a capacity to fuse at depth. The Subjectivists share their dominant concern for a poetic language — both the Spanish & the American poets avoid on the whole the pamphleteering characteristics of French Surrealism, although like Breton both Bly & Wright seek to cleanse political lies & establish a new morality.

The Subjectivists use a number of surreal techniques; the lateral insertion of actions into the main drama:

'El jinete se acercaba
tocando el tambor de llano.' (Romance de la luna,
[luna.] (90)

'A great harvest of convicts has shaken loose
& hurries across the wall of your eyes'. In the
[face of hatred (91).

The mixture of vigil & sleep, dream & awakening state:

"Then its Sunday,
Thieves

(88) Lorca. Romance Sonámbulo. Obras Completas, Losada.

(89) Rothenberg. Between. Fulcrum, 1967.

(90) Lorca. Obras Completas. Losada.

(91) Wright. Branch Will not Break. Wesleyan, 1959.

search your walls
with red gloves.

This is the terror
of sleep (92).

The selecting & ordering of the subconscious without
any further disturbance or concern for strict coherence:

'Subí a tocar las campanas, pero las frutas tenían
[gusanos
y las cerillas apagadas
se comían los trigos de la primavera.' (Iglesia
[abandonada) (93).

Small antelopes
Fall asleep in the ashes
Of the moon. Spring Images (94).

An unpredictable new ness balanced on an inner logic:
'The lamplight falls on all fours in the grass' (95).

It is this latter area that the Subjectivists have in
particular extended by seeking perpetual reverberations &
by linking the image in part to a mythopoetic origin. These
images make demands on the poet to be discovered:

'Suddenly I realise
That if I stepped out of my body I would break
Into blossom' A blessing. (96).

The Primitive & The Mythological

I should like now to consider in more detail this interest
of the Subjectivists in what they saw as a primitive &

(92) Rathenberg. *Between. Fulcrum*, 1967.

(93) Lorca. *Obras Completas*. Losada.

(94) (95) (96) Wright. *Branch Will Not Break*. Wesleyan, 1959.

mythic centre of Spanish poetry. Wright says in his notes to the Vallejo poems (97):

'Current poets in the United States seem to be perishing on either side of a grey division between century old British formalism & vandalism & antipoetry on the other.'

Wright is suggesting that the introduction of the European & Latin American poets is a way out of this dilemma. He is turning towards a poetry largely rooted in the soil from relatively stratified societies with long traditions of folklore & with a rich cultural heritage. This is of course a social experience totally alien to the U.S.A. & it is highly indicative that these poets have been engaged in investigations into their own mythic territory of Indian verse or in primitive verse in general (98).

Rothenberg, like Lorca, considers that most important lesson from surrealism was that of unconscious talking to unconscious. He is looking for objects that have real meanings at the deepest level that he can reach:

'Not simply facts but real meanings as assigned values, states of being to be re-experienced or created in the poem' (99).

Rothenberg sees the modern poet as having a role similar to shaman or priest & hence the essential relationship with primitive poetry. The poem becomes an incantation, a surging up from depth. To underline the closeness of this relationship between the American & the Spanish poet let me quote a translation by Wright of a Lorca poem:

In the darkness the song contains
Threads of phosphorous & moon.
The light does not know what it wants.
On its boundaries of opal

(97) Bly & Wright. Vallejo Poems. Madison Minnesota, 1962.

(98) Rothenberg. Technicians of the Sacred. Doubleday, 1962—a superbly important book with a whole series of tentative bridges between archaic & modern verse. Snyder, Bly, Kelly, Merwin, Wright, Rothenberg, McClure have all showed interest in primitive poetry.

(99) Ossman. The Sullen Art. Rothenberg Interview. Corinth, 1963.

It meets itself face to face
& returns (100).

Wright captures Lorca's sensitivity to the shifting polarities of light & dark & how they become cognition or a sense of tragedy, but the translation fits smoothly into the subjectivist tone. The use of polarity as a vital source of imagery was a surrealist technique but one that was embraced both by the Spanish poets & by the subjectivists.

The shaman is thus at the centre of the collective dream rather than the individual dream of the surrealists. In 'Alberto Rojas Jiménez viene volando' Neruda is using a night chant refrain common to Indian poetry. I quote Eshleman's translation as yet further evidence of this shared interest:

Amid frightening feathers, nights
amid magnolias, amid telegrams,
with the south & west sea winds
you come flying (101).

'Vienes volando' — come flying — refers of course to the spirit journey. As Rothenberg notes the poet here like the shaman is not only 'making' but 'seeing' & then adds this fascinating comment that craft making came later when the poet was separated from his community, that is from the total experience of his community. Rothenberg like Neruda & the primitive poets use the process of juxtaposing things that would have been refuted by the conscious mind, he has thus an enforced duality but one whose origin lies close to the nature of experience:

The white eye watches
through the window

(100) Rothenberg. *Technicians of the Sacred*. The Song wants to be light. Wright translation. Doubleday, 1967.

(101) Rothenberg. *Technicians of the Sacred*. Doubleday. Eshleman Trans. 1969.

Where we live is where
we always lived
the sea of death (102).

Kelly in the same way stresses this relationship to Neruda & Lorca, explaining it in these terms:

'It is based very largely on the enormous dark sentiment of Lorca ,that darkness that surrounds us in things, & in Neruda's celebrations of love, of things, of the earth. In their work image becomes th emotive force of the poem: their voice is in the images as much as in the music' (103).

Kelly's Kali Yuga is in one sense an illustration of this direct influence:

It was where I lost
& found you last night
my morning crumpled
mouth knew nothing of it,

the one sea gull
above our house
spoke it, spoke
from the middle of his slow

wheeling, creaming
the tahini
white with water
I remembered,

the spoons round
understanding
remembered
you beneath me (104).

Kelly recreates the slow motion ,the liquid softness of love. The bird besides being symbol is enactor. Kelly seeks

(102) Rathenberg. *Between*. Fulcrum. 1967.

(103) Ossman. *The Sullen Art*. Kelly Interview. Corinth, 1963.

(104) *Kali Yuga*. Kelly. Cape Golliard, 1970.

not only the intimacy of this experience but also its ritual nature — the wheeling achieves its full sexual satisfaction in its momentary association with 'creaming'. The memory coalesces into a kind of security around the familiarity of the spoons. The central rhythm of the poem is built up around the images but it is reinforced by a series of underlying repetitions both of sounds, the liquid 'l' & 'w' in the second & third verse, & of words — 'spoke' & 'remembered'. Kelly here also insists upon the intertranslatability of all things, a belief characteristic of 'primitive' verse.

Correa, drawing on Cassirer's work, shows the centrality of Mother Earth in primitive poetry is similar to the life giving force in Lorca's myth. New York is an active denial of this life giving principle & uprooted Lorca confronts it with the excesses of his imagination, a torrent of images both surreal & hysteric searching again to find the deep mythic centre of a known harmony. He feels shipwrecked, the centre of a 'dance of death' wighed down by a preponderance of life denying symbols. In the New York dawn, 'ola de fango y luciérnaga', he sees this dance take place:

Y un huracán de negras palomas
que chapotean las aguas podridas (105).

Under the pressure of Lorca's imagination the primitive dance turns into a 'Vall Street Twist', a vast ruined landscape crawling with portents:

Son los otros los que bailan con el mascarón y su
[vihuela;
son los otros, los borrachos de plata, los hombres
[fríos,
los que crecen en el cruce de los muslos y llamas
[duras
los que buscan la lombriz en el paisaje de las
[escaleras,

(105) Lorca. Poeta en Nueva York. Antología Poética. Losada.

los que beben en el banco lágrimas de niña
[muerta
o los que comen por las esquinas diminutas pi-
[rámides de alma (106).

Lorca finally succeeds in making his identification with primitive chaos when the stock exchange becomes a pyramid of moss, & the guns hang impenetrably & threateningly as creepers.

Neduda's poetry is also a search for mythological roots (107). He looks for the contact with vegetable matter, the dampness of birth; he knows catastrophic winds, mountains & the sea. He writes in 'Infancia y poesía':

'Tengo que empezar así esta historia de agua, plantas, bosques, pueblos, pájaros, porque es eso la poesía, por lo menos mi poesía.'

Wright also pushes back towards a primordial source of words, he wants them covered with ritual:

'Among the innumerable privacies of our lives it would be hard to imagine any secret more painfully & joyfully shattered than the lullabies which we sing to children; & yet many of the most effective of these songs were anonymously composed long before contemporary parents were born.' (108).

These poets want an irrational immersion in the flux, in this spontaneous act of identification they expect to find meaning:

De dónde vengo, sino de estas primerizas, azules
materias que se enredan o se encrespan o se des-
[tituyen (109).

(106). Lorca. Poeta en Nueva York. Danza de la Muerte. Antología Poética. Losada.

(107) Yurkievich. Fundadores de la Poesía Latinoamericana. Barral, 1970.

(108) Richard Howard. Alone in America: 1971 — the best collection of critical studies on contemporary modern American poets.

(109) Neruda. Canto General de Chile. Obras Completas.

This grandiose identification is more difficult for the american poet whose landscapes become themselves simply fresh objects to be exploited for tourism & where the bourgeois ethic has already absorbed such identification as 'escapism'. This, I think, explains the tentativeness of tone in Wright, delicacy instead of Neruda's fullbloodedness:

Suddenly I realise
That if I stepped out of my body I would break
into blossom (110).

The subjectivists are therefore particularly attracted by the Spanish poets capacity to live within & create from a mythic centre (111). In these lines by Lorca Antofito is both telling & creating his own myth:

Cortó limones redondos
y los fue tirando al agua,
hasta que la puso de oro. (112).

The power of these lines lies in their sense of primitive miracle, in the centricity of the symbols to his society, & in the dominating sensation that this is precisely the power of the poet. The Spanish poets in fact dialogue with Nature, their languages become merged, interchangeable, & it is this intoxicating state of identification that the American poets seek. As Neruda says:

'Naturaliza sus manifestaciones personales y antropomorfiza la naturaleza, como si entre creador y creatura existiese la total identidad.' (113).

(110) Wright. *The Branch Will not Break*. Wesleyan, 1959.

(111) I should add that the whole role of myth is complex & contradictory. Barthes argues that it is a luxury, the product of an exploiting moribund society. Its language he says is passive, its intention to preserve status quo. Cf *Mythologies* Seuil. (Compare for example Styron's language in *Nat Turner* where he is making myyth & Cleaver's language in *Soul on Ice* where he is demanding change).

(112) Lorca. *El Prendimiento de Antofito Cambrorio en el camino de Sevilla*. *Obras Completas*.

(113) Neruda. Quoted by Yurkievich in *Fundadores de la Nueva Poesía*. Barral, 1971.

The distrust that these poets show for abstraction is also related to their interest in myth. The process of rationalisation, of classification, of separation threatened the essential interrelationship of all things. Neruda writes:

'Cada vez menos ideas en torno a mí, y más cuerpos, sol, y sudor.' (114).

Their attachment to the concrete particular becomes thus a way of defeating the rationalising mind, so often little more than understanding through compromise. This materialisation of the imagination common to the Spanish & the subjectivist poets is an attempt to penetrate at depth what 'is' & through this immersion find the centre of all creation. The imaginative process attaches itself to natural raw materials & then within the unconscious of the poet discovers its essential reality, a reality that of necessity reveals the intertranslatability of the two.

Neruda, like Breton & Bly, looks for the *prima materia* in language, manifested most completely in the image. The deep image is thus an attempt to identify the cosmogonical myth through its presence in the unconscious. The images *create* or *are* the myth of their source. This is close to Fry's argument in 'Anatomy of Criticism' where he suggests that Literature has permanent structures, being essentially constructed from preliterate sources, especially ritual & myth. Neruda & the Subjectivists accumulate fragments from primordial chaos — the myth is this process of the verbal crystallisation of fragments of understanding in an organic form (115).

'Mis venas continúan el rumor de los ríos' (116).

(114) Letter to González Vera.

(115) Both Schwerner & Pound use fragments in their poems i. e. uncompleted thoughts that appear to have been copied from a rock, defeating the rounding process of syntax & suggesting something older. Schwerner's Tablets shows a longing for a global order in nature paralleled by one in language. There is a hint of desperation here in the fact that this must be under the social language.

(116) Neruda. P. 49. Obras Completas.

Neruda's poems throw up volcanically a series of images loaded with matter & the very violence of their rhythmic pattern gives this sense of chaotic primitive discovery. 'Residencia en la Tierra' is indeed this world of ritual began again & again. In a letter to Eandi, Neruda writes of this poem:

'El poeta no debe ejercitarse, hay un mandato para él y es penetrar la vida y hacerla profética: el poeta debe ser una superstición, un ser mítico... la poesía debe cargarse de sustancia universal, de pasiones y de cosas.' (117).

This is precisely the role that Bly is attempting to fulfil in his later poems.

It is however much easier for Neruda to make contact with the concrete particular, the humdrum object, than for Bly. Neruda knows that they talk of human contact as does Dubuffet in his 'art brut' but Bly knows an object saturated world where simple things come consumer wrapped & talk not of contact but of profit, artificial need, & glut. It is difficult for him to establish the familiarity that Neruda talks of in his manifesto 'Towards an Impure Poetry':

'The used surface of things, the wear that hands give to things, the air, tragic at times, pathetic at others, of such things — all lend a curious attractiveness to the reality of a world that should not be underprized' (118).

But Bly would certainly endorse it. The Subjectivists turn to these poets for this humanity & experience for the element of surprise — images such as these:

la calle está ojerosa de puertas (119).

a shadow / cradled / & gradually / crushed (120).

The Americans have to create this surprise against the

(117) Quoted by Yurkievich. P. 179.

(118) Neruda. Toward an Impure Poetry. P. 39. Grove Press. Edition, 1961.

(119) Vallejo. Trilce. Losada, 1961.

(120) Ungaretti. Selected Poems. Penguin, 1971.

difficult backcloth of social sameness, legislated democracy, parallel ambitions, linguistic exploitations, & saleable meanings. They seek thus in *langue* 'an original utterance surging through with strength its freshness & creation' (121). I would suggest that '*langue*' here is located in the unconscious region of *parole* & that it becomes its mythic centre.

This manifesto also reveals the nostalgic distance now separating the Subjectivists from the Spanish poets:

'In them one sees the confused impurity of the human condition, the massing of things, the use & disuse of substances, footprints, & fingerprints, the abiding presence of the human engulfing all artifacts, inside & out.' (122).

But Bly knows that in a society where 'untouched by human hand' is a positive value that it is precisely this sensation that is being lost. Neruda has the primitive poet's power to identify his world by listing its constituents:

'A poetry impure as the clothing we wear, or our bodies, soup stained, soiled with shameful behaviour, our wrinkles & our vigils & our dreams, observations & prophecies, declarations of loathing & love, idyls & beasts, the shocks of encounter, political loyalties, denials & doubts, affirmations & taxes.' (123).

Whereas Bly hasn't yet established exactly what he's left holding onto. Neruda's cosmogonical vision, his sense of archaic origin, & the surging images of his myth can be seen here in *Galope muerto*:

Como cenizas, como mares poblándose,
en la sumergida lentitud, en lo informe,
o como se oyen desde el alto de los caminos
cruzar las campanadas en cruz,
'teniendo ese sonido ya aparte del metal,
confuso, pesando, haciéndose polvo

(121) Bly. *Surprise in Neruda. The Sixties*. Winter, 64.

(122) Neruda, *Toward an Impure Poetry*. Grove, 1961.

(123) Neruda, *Toward an Impure Poetry*. Grove Press, 1961.

en el mismo molino de las formas demasiado le-
[Jos,
o recordadas o no vistas,
y el perfume de las ciruelas que rodando a tierra
se pudren en el tiempo, infinitamente verdes.
[(124).

*The Source of 'Collective Imagery':
a Neurological approach*

I should like finally to examine a little more closely the sources & nature of this 'collective imagery' — McLure, Snyder, Bly all share concerns with the origin & function of language (125). Their poetics take us into the realm of neurophysiology. Bly is seeking distinctions between mind & body, — a highly problematic & unresolved area since one neuron incorporates the mind & body as inexorably as the whole neuron system does & as yet we have no satisfactory means of moving from a context where one is talking about matter to one in which one is talking about mind. So Bly has to express with somewhat crude definiteness a series of delicate concepts for which there is no terminology & which are extremely difficult to reinterpret in their original nuance.

Bly's attraction to Lorca comes from Lorca's investigation of his interior animal life. Bly believes that this inner life cannot be expressed in images of 'broken bottles' or 'wheelbarrow' as Williams sought to (126), nor by fragments from other cultures as Pound tried to, nor by abstractions

(124) Neruda. Galope Muerto. Obras Completas.

(125) Cf. McLure's statement on Allen's New American Poetry. Evergreen. Grove Press Snyder's Earth Household. New Directions. Duncan's Open Letter. New American Poetry. 1961.

(126) Bly has called Williams technique «subjective photography» & argues that his deep images aren't conversions. However Bly if not interpreting outer reality is interpreting inner reality, thus if not a conversion is he suggesting that his images rise as «ready mades» in language.

as the Blackt Mt, poets tried to, but only by animal images which he defines as:

'Images that come from the animal — animal, muscle, blood part of the animal, & of the brain.' (127).

Lorca, says Bly, refuses the small small steps of the rational mind:

Aquí me tienes
con tres clavos de alegría.
Tu fugor abre jazmines
sobre mi cara encendida (128).

& that his use iguanas & ants is not a technique of imagery but an effort 'to penetrate down into the evolutionary part of the mind' — a return to a biological source.

Bly acknowledges that it was Snyder who first led him to mediate on the breath; which has:

'The deepest evolutionary links virtually of any other thing in our body' (129). This form of eastern mediation thus leads back to the whole animal race. He claims this as a significant advance, something that we've come to realise (130). Bly then makes the contention that Surrealism is linked:

'Not so much to the inward but to the biological evolutionary part of the mind.' (131).

One is left here sensing Bly's distinction rather than knowing it. He now cites Lamantia to support his case although he'd earlier accused him of 'false surrealism'.

The crash of your heart

(127) Bly. San Francisco Book Review. N.º 19. 1971.

(128) Lorca. Romancero Gitano. Obras Completas.

(129) Bly. San Francisco Book Review. N.º 19. 1971.

(130) Is this an advance or is Bly asking for a return to stasis, to mythological circularity over forward motion since verbally transmitted all embracing truths my represent part of the force of adverse ecological or genetic circumstance. Yet it remains true that the forward motion is now out of control & we now risk being morally guilty of fouling the pitch for future generations.

(131) Bly. San Francisco Review. 1971.

beating its way through a fever of fish
is heard in every crowd of that thirsty tomorrow
& your trip ends in the mask of my candle lit
[hair (132).

It would seem to me gratuitous to destroy Bly's argument, it is a question of trying to understand what he's after — I think he may be making the distinction between the individual unconscious & the Jungian collective unconscious that provides archetypal images. Bly considers that only Snyder, perhaps as a result of his meditation, has understood that:

'the unconscious & the conscious should swirl together with perfect ease' (133).

Grooving clam shell,
streakt through marble,
sweeping down ponderosa pine bark-scale
rip-cut tree grain
sand-dunes, lava
flow
Wave wife (134).

Snyder is looking for the intersections of energy, woman, & song & in this movement from conscious to unconscious he is able to hold the three together. Poetry, he feels, comes from this 'inner space', meditation can only increase the sense of flying within this inner space (135). I would suggest that Bly himself occupies that space in the following poem:

Conversation brings us so close! Opening
the surfs of the body,

(132) Lamatia. There are many pathways to the garden. Penguin 1969.

(133) Bly. San Francisco Review. N.º 19. 1971.

(134) Snyder. Regarding Wawe. New Directions, 1967.

(135) Bly quotes Jimenez as being aware of ecstatic quality of this space.

(136) Bly, Light around the Body. Wesleyan, 1959.

bringing fish up near the sun,
& stiffening the back-bones of the sea! (136).

Bly possibly under the influence of Lorca refers to the need for a Mother Consciousness in the States, he defines this as involving 'passion, tenderness, love of nature, love of animals, ecstasy... music' & opposes it to a Father Consciousness characterised by logical rational thought, movement in straight lines, discipline. Obviously Bly is here creating his own terms but at the same time there is little doubt that there is an imbalance of this type in American society.

I am incapable of arguing at any depth the merits of Bly's neurology but let me at least try & clarify it (137). His essential point is that we have three rather than one brain & that we move from one to the other depending on outer or inner stimuli:

'In evolution when we changed from fish to mammal we changed the body... but in the brain that did not happen. What happened was addition. The reptile brain is absolutely intact at the base of the skull. Its been known... as the limbic node. Then when we became mammal the huge mammal brain was folded around the reptile brain... the cortex. Now these two brains have separate nervous organs. They have separate functions. In late mammal times, the third brain was added. The neo-cortex.' (138).

Bly supports his case by stating that McLean has shown that these brains have their own systems & that there is no central organisation of the brain. He then proceeds towards some highly extravagant areas, aligning cold war militarists with the reptile brain & delightfully illustrates his point with Nixon & Billy Graham. He argues that entry to the mammal brain is governed by meditation & solitude. Chanting offers one possibility of movement from the

(137) Bly is using MacLeans arguments also noted by Koestler in *'The Ghost & the Machine'*.

(138) Bly. *San Francisco Review*. N.º 19. 1971.

rational part of the head into the mammal (139). This rational brain is a consortium entered into by all three brains. Leaving aside the more fanciful elements what seems of tremendous interest to me here is the question of imagery produced from different neurological centres.

To return again to the role of the surreal image in Subjectivism & their preference for the Spanish extension of this image:

'Surrealism... is flipping from one brain to the other, Lorca is taking the image from the memory banks of the reptile brain, then an image from the memory banks of the new brain. He is constructing a model of the human brain in surrealist forms.' (140).

el aullido
es una larga lengua morada que deja
hormigas de espanto y licor de lirios.
Ya viene hacia la roca. ¡No alargues tus raíces!
[(141).

Lorca here is intensifying the death images by a whole series of imaginative movements although I would make no attempt to allocate these images to specific brains in Bly's terms it remains quite evident that the images themselves leave an impression of depth, age & confidence & Bly is arguing that this is much more than subjective received interpretations. What I would suggest as being beyond dispute is that neurology can itself contribute much to the defining of the sources of images.

All of this may sound like myth-making on Bly's part so let me ground it in a few more facts which I feel underline the importance of research into this area. We now know that the highest neural centres of the brain can

(139) Role of Chant as mediating factor between conscious & unconscious also perhaps indicated in Gregorian Chant, Mass, Ginsberg, & Lennon's chanted slogan.

(140) Bly. San Francisco Review. N.º 19. 1971.

(141) Lorca. Poeta en Nueva York. Obras Completas.

produce sharp changes in somatic behaviour although we don't know precisely how these occur. The effects of hypnosis & placebos are two such specific cases. The most likely explanations of these phenomenon at the moment are in terms of 'suggestion' or as the influence of the cerebral cortex. But such explanations fail completely when confronted by a yogui who changes pulse rate & blood pressure through meditation — a clear indication of psychophysical interrelationships, but no explanation. Bly's I presume is that these are movements from one brain to another. Neurology offers little to the understanding of Huxley's statement that mescaline led to a feeling of complete harmony with the universe apart from the fact that it effects specific enzymes that control specific processes, in mescaline's case the discharge of adrenalin. The Subjectivists want their images to communicate at this level & indeed they are affirming that they proceed from this state (142). There are however already some indications on the part of the neurologists of another brain area (143), Cannon talks about 'the sympathetic division of the autonomic system, which goes about its work independent of voluntary thought, since every change in the outer world, in fact every considerable move in relation to the outer world, demands undelayed processes in our inner world'. This in itself must be either the definition of instinctual chemical & physiological reactions or that of a deeper instinctual brain area. All of the poets that I've considered know this instinctual older hunting ground of the mind & their images form part of this knowledge, part of the elaboration of our permanent myth, — Bly is seeking to determine the precise location of the deep image so that it can be communicated all the more effectively & all the techniques of Subjectivism are directed towards this end,

(142) Cf. Burnshaw *Seamless Web*. Bly is suggesting here that creative process is physical in the sense that accompanied by physical changes in make up of brain. Allen Lane. Penguin, 1970.

(143) Cannon. *The Wisdom of the Body*. Norton & Co. 1963. Quoted by Burnshaw. P. 26.

the space around the image as an echo chamber, silence itself as a contributive force, the units (Bly, Wright, Kelly, Rothenberg all use numbered strophes) as separate measures of intensity the rhythm of the imagery etc. These are techniques which look towards the life of man:

— I —

I love to see the boards lying on the ground in
[early spring
The ground beneath them is wet & muddy —
Perhaps covered with chicken tracks —
& they are dry & eternal

— II —

This is the wood one sees on the decks of ocean
[ships,
Wood that carries us far from land
Kith a dryness of something used for simple
[tasks,
Like a horses tail (144).

I feel that it is perhaps Creeley who has best summed up the influence of these poets, especially the Spanish ones, on the Subjectivists Movement when he talks of the poem as a primary quality & the movement within this of a curiously moving fabric of images. The Subjectivists like the Spaniards have adapted surrealism to a more functional al purpose & overcome the danger of an isolated sensibility in their latest poems by creating or recreating their myth against the hindering reality:

There are men in the city
who labour dawn after dawn
to sell me death (145).

(144) Bly, *Old Boards Silence in the Snowy Fields*. Wesleyan, 1953.

(145) Wright *the Branch Will Not Break*. Wesleyan, 1959.

They are fighting the appropriation of a language by a dominant middle class culture who inevitably fuse their values on its meanings. They are carrying on at a deeper unconscious level the same battle that Ponge is waging on the surface where he tries to create the poetic spark by ordering the relationships between the consciousness & some point in the external word by making words ring until they sound true the Subjectivists seek to reveal images whose reverberation will be the real language in which we communicate feeling at depth (146).

Thus the affinities between these poets run at numerous levels from the use of the natural image, the extension of the surreal, the avoidance of abstraction, the probing into a deeper part of the mind, the interest in archetype, myth & ritual the search for surprise, the use of sound as echoing depth, to a new political poetry rooted in animalism & the paradox of depth established through a continuous process of subtraction & simplification. Subjectivists poetics are as much life style as aesthetics.

(146) Ponge defines: Mais une raison qui ne lacherait / pas en route le sensible / ne serait ce pas cela, la poesie. A conclusion the Subjectivists would not accept but a form of expression they would certainly embrace.