

Seven Poems
by Valerio Magrelli
Translated by Dana Gioia

1.
Especially in weeping
the soul reveals
its presence
and through secret pressure
changes sorrow into water.
The first budding of the spirit
is in the tear,
this slow and transparent word.
Then following this elemental alchemy
thought turns itself into substance
as real as a stone or an arm.
And there is nothing uneasy in the liquid
except the mineral
anguish of matter.

2.
I have finally learned
how to read the living
constellation of women
and men, to trace the lines
which connect them into figures.
And now I recognize the hints
which bind the disorder of the heavens.
Across this vault designed for thought
I discern the revolution of the light
and the wavering of the signs.
So the day draws to a close
while I walk
in the silent garden of glances.

3.
In the evening when the light is dim,
I hide in bed and collect
the silhouettes of reasoning
which silently run across my limbs.
It is here I must weave
the tapestry of thought
and arranging the threads of my self
design my own figure.
This is not work
but a kind of workmanship.
First out of paper, then from the body.
To provoke thought into form,
moulded according to a measure.
I think of a tailor
who is his own fabric.

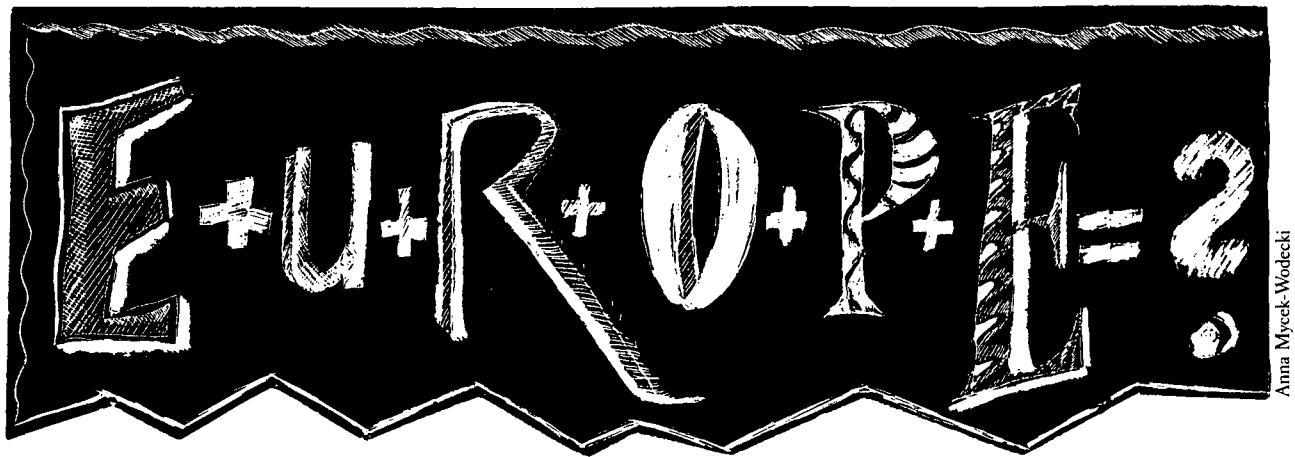
4.
Every evening, bent over the bright
garden of pages,
I gather the fruits of the day
and assemble them. Lined up,
the thoughts run in parallel rows,
the trails of shrewd grafting.

My life is bound
to this frugal harvest,
these humble, everyday commodities.
There is no logic in taking
the dry fruits or flowers. The only reason,
which may suffice, is in this spontaneous
and plant-like secretion of an idea.
The slow stirrings of the troubled earth
which conceives it. The kitchen
with its plain companions.

5.
He slides the pen
across the groin of the page,
and silently the writing assembles itself.
This sheet has the geometric borders
of an African state in which
parallel lines set the dunes in order.
I am drawing now
while telling this
which in the telling takes its shape.
It is as if a cloud
arrived to take
the form of a cloud.

6.
Ten poems written in one month
is not much even if this one
will become the eleventh.
Not even the subjects differ greatly
rather there is a single subject
whose subject is the subject, just like now.
This is to say how much
remains here of these pages —
and knocks but cannot enter
nor even has to. Writing
is not a mirror, rather
the rough-surfaced glass of a shower
on which the body falls to pieces
and only its shadow shows through
indistinct but real.
And the one who washes reveals nothing
but his own gestures.
Therefore what purpose is there
in looking beyond the watermark
in case I am a counterfeiter
and the watermark alone is my work.

7.
In summer, like the theaters, I close up.
Thought flies away from me and gets lost,
the billboard goes blank,
the air is warm,
the table stacked with fruit.



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Europe Is Not What It Seems

by Thomas Molnar

It would be logical for me to say that, returning to the United States after another four months this summer and fall in various countries of Europe, east and west, I found a great many misconceptions about the continent in American media and public opinion. Yet it would not be fair to limit myself to such a remark, because in Europe too such misconceptions are staggering; at least those which are engendered in the east about the west and in the west about the east. This is the more astonishing as these two halves are scheduled to be gradually working out their rapprochement, in order finally to unite. The truth is, however, that such a "unity" is nothing more than a slogan, a magic word that carries two different meanings: the east of Europe regards unity as a method of receiving vast sums from the west, in the form of gifts, investments, joint ventures, and tourism (myriad hotels are being built to receive visitors); the west of Europe regards unity as a means of flooding the east with needed and unneeded merchandise, as a means of making instant and huge profits through investment (there are already guidebooks to this effect).

The negative aspect of these sharp ambitions on both sides is the fear of the other's Machiavellianism, or, more plainly, its tricks. The west, including even Austria, is worried about the new migrants from the impoverished lands: Gypsies from Rumania, black-marketeering Poles, masses of Russians; the east is even more worried that the respective national resources and patrimonies will be bought up by foreign capital under the pretext of "privatization,"

and that "western culture" will invade minds and tastes that have successfully resisted forty years of communism and brainwashing.

This is, then, the rather desolate truth in place of the illusion that East and West Europe wish nothing better than to cooperate and unite. Underneath the politicians' official embraces, old and new fears surface, national jealousies thrive, and among western investors themselves a kind of shark-morality prevails: who can cut a larger slice from the soon-to-be neocolonized east? About 40 percent of Hungary's newspapers are already in the hands of western presslords: Maxwell, Murdoch and the French Hersant. With only 30 percent of the take, the German *Springer Verlag* (Hamburg) is already in the position of vetoing the arrival of French newspapers — or at least delaying them for days (and who wants yesterday's papers?).

These are more than just glimpses of the supposedly happy east/west relations. In Western Europe proper the idea of unity is regressing, although the cause has become so sacred that all lips pay service to the wonderful prospects coming in 1993. Yet the Germans want none of the "union," none of the common currency, and if you look at France or Spain, you readily understand why the Germans are so reluctant and why they will end up dictating the future. France is full of striking workers, students, public employees — and every month a huge foreign trade deficit. Spain is increasingly desolate, its industry retrogressing, its (socialist) government supported by only 29 percent of the population. The Germans, with their skill and know-how, penetrate Spanish economic life like a knife into butter, and they are also mightily present in Eastern Europe (and

Thomas Molnar's most recent book is The Church, Pilgrim of Centuries, reviewed in this issue.