

general Italian public.

Gioia's introduction is especially valuable for its discussion of the difference between the Anglo-Saxon and Italian conceptions of poetry. English and Italian are two distinct languages, and the dictionary translations of the words are not sufficient to make the one intelligible to the other. The American (not to say the Briton) feels one way, the Italian quite differently. If the words correspond in the dictionary, this tells us little. Either you feel what they feel, or you don't. The words can come later; what is important is a prelinguistic experience.

Mr. Gioia lays great emphasis on "modernism" and is at pains to point out that in Italy, from 1908 and Marinetti until the Second World War, modernism held up as a vital movement. Where I would perhaps part company with Gioia is in feeling that modernism continued to be a dynamic enterprise after the war. Italians today still seem to be rehashing the earlier poetry of T. S. Eliot. But perhaps it is in the eschewing of genre, above all, that modernism manifests its essential weakness. "Genre," however old-fashioned a concept it may be, establishes a context. In many of the poems in this book it is exceedingly difficult to find a context, and the poems (and the readers) suffer as a consequence.

That these poems are precise and honest reactions to the conditions of modern life I do not dispute, but that they are effective as poems I altogether doubt. The poets of today seem to be puppets acted on by the adverse and negative conditions of a technological society and the heavy demands it makes on the individual. They all seem conscious of a hostile destiny, even of ruin. Their poetry seems limited to what Aristotle called *phantasia* and Pliny and Tacitus *imaginatio*, that is, merely the perception and reproduction of images, whether of things real or of mere fancies. There is nothing "creative" about the microcosms they present. Many of them are like short nondramatic sequences from some slightly pretentious film, rather than attempts to project an alternative macrocosm. The generations after 1963, when Italy entered the prosperity race, seem to be dedicated to denigration of the world their fathers (and mothers) have left them, without the smallest attempt to contribute anything positive to contemporary life. *Mi*

illudo / d'immenso . . . In poetry I look for vision, creativity, myth, not little black boxes with cameras attached.

Certainly in the work of Maria Luisa Spaziani (born 1924) and in that of Umberto Piersanti (born 1941) there is a rich linguistic and metrical texture that is "poetic" in the traditional sense, but Spaziani often spoils the effect by a sort of verbal grinding of gears, and Piersanti, for all the fine flow of his diction, which is closer to D'Annunzio's or Swinburne's than to any living poet's, pays tribute to fashion by omitting all punctuation, so that it is impossible to construe the syntax of his long periods or even to distinguish one period from another. As for the other poets in this anthology, to quote Fabio Doplicher, "verse-builders / orient their radar in the bog of the ordinary." The language is ordinary and discursive, closer to prose than verse, referential rather than evocative. But then, that is what goes over today, whether in Italy, France, England, or the United States. Poetry has been semiotized and in the process has been virtually emptied of symbolism. But what I find most symptomatic not only in these ten very respectable poets, but

in almost all contemporary poetry, is the deliberate shrinking of the context. One poem takes place entirely inside the shower bath, nothing outside the plastic curtain is even referred to. This is a praxis of exclusion. Poetry is an art of inclusion. There is (for me) neither pain nor joy in these not-so-new poets.

The translations are by a team of ten American Italianists. They are adequate and generally verbally close to the original texts, and so should be useful for students who already know some, but not enough, Italian. The diction, and the rhythm especially, are rarely of any distinction, and after all, it is rhythm more than anything else that communicates poetry and its inherent emotions. However, in one poem alone there are two howlers: in Spaziani's "White on White," "*le mie remote nebulose*" is translated "my remote nebulosities." This simply is wrong. It should be "my remote nebulas." The translator had no business attributing "remote nebulosities" to a distinguished intellectual such as Signora Spaziani. Equally reprehensible is "and you leave footprints on my heart lighter than a doe's," where "doe" is used for the Italian "*faina*," which un-

BRIEF MENTIONS

RESURRECTING MARX: THE ANALYTICAL MARXIST ON EXPLOITATION, FREEDOM, AND JUSTICE

by David Gordon

New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books; 160 pp., \$29.95

If anyone thought the demise of the Soviet empire meant the death of Marxism, it is time to think again. To anyone with half a brain, the Soviet failures were manifest in Lenin's time, and any lingering doubts would have been dispelled by the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. Of course, there was always Trotsky, the more ruthless alternative to Stalin, to appeal to the New York intellectuals who now lead the conservative movement, and when Stalin finally caught up with Trotsky in Mexico, there was always a new revolution or a new twist on the old formula, because Marxism's appeal never lay in its antiquated economics or its potted history, but in resentment: the resentment that outsiders always feel against insiders, immigrants against natives, intellectuals against the rich and successful.

If these truisms have any weight, then one key to Marxism's popularity must be its theory of exploitation. Predictably, it is exploitation that forms the nucleus for much of the "resurrected Marxism" that David Gordon reburies in his sober and trenchant analysis of G. A. Cohen, John Roemer, and Jon Elster, three contemporary writers who have attempted to translate Marxian clichés into the language of analytic philosophy.

One cannot do justice in a summary to Gordon's painstaking analysis, but in general the analytical Marxists regard the fact of one man selling his labor to another as exploitation, even if both buyer and seller are better off. As alternatives to capitalism, they offer various forms of market socialism of the type that are currently being repudiated in Scandinavia. But nothing succeeds like failure, and if the analytical Marxists cannot bring their fantasies to life in the real world, they will continue to work in the academy as building contractors specializing in castles in Spain.

—Thomas Fleming

equivocally means a tree-martin. I often watch the seemingly weightless bounding of the *faina* from my bedroom window, but I would not like my heart to be trampled by a doe! Milo de Angelis's "*il riso in bianco*" (which as every Italian child knows means plain "boiled rice") becomes Lawrence Venuti's "laughter in white." I wonder how this translator would render Dante's "*Il dolce riso della mia donna*"? "My Lady's sweet risotto," perhaps? There are other dubious interpretations of the Italian, and the reader, unlike the translator in this case, should arm himself with a large dictionary.

As for the quality of the individual poets and their poems, to make brief judgments on them in a short review would be quite unfair and misleading. Readers may well judge them more favorably than I do.

Peter Russell is an English poet living in Italy and author of Teorie e Altre Liriche.

Of Men and Beasts

by Gregory McNamee

The Last Serious Thing: A Season at the Bullfights

by Bruce Schoenfeld

New York: Simon & Schuster;
238 pp., \$22.00



The old man has done a bit of everything that a journalist can do. He has been an opera critic, a war correspondent, a sportswriter. He prides himself most on the years he spent covering the bullfights of his native Sevilla. For some time now he has been mumbling to his American visitor, Bruce Schoenfeld, who recalls the old man "speaking Spanish with such a harsh and peculiar accent that I can't understand a word." He remains incomprehensible

until he stands before a group of fellow enthusiasts of the ancient sport of tauromachy. Then, in a voice as clear as day, he declares, "There have been too many words written about bullfighting already. . . . The last thing we aficionados need is another [book]."

That may be true in Spain, where the shelves brim with titles on the *corrida*. But because the sport is not practiced in the United States, American writers have spent a little ink writing about bullfighting, and there is plenty of room for new books on the subject. At the apex of our small literature stands Ernest Hemingway's *Death in the Afternoon*, an indispensable consideration of the matador's art; then there yawns a great gap between it and a mound of lesser works, including the same writer's *Dangerous Summer* and the worshipful *Or I'll Dress You in Mourning*, by the team of Larry Collins and Dominique LaPierre. Bruce Schoenfeld's *The Last Serious Thing* occupies that hitherto empty middle ground.

Schoenfeld writes without pretense, fully aware that he will not equal Hemingway's great treatise. Instead, he gives us plain-vanilla reportage on the people involved in bullfighting, from spectators to breeders to picadors. Unlike Hemingway, he seems to take little interest in technique; on the face of it, Schoenfeld wouldn't know a *paso doble* from a *veronica*, although he surely does. What he has is a keen eye for everyday detail, and his book is as much about post-Franco Spain as it is about the ritualistic dispatch of infuriated beef.

Schoenfeld recounts a year's sojourn in Sevilla, "the city of the bull." (It is also a city where, as any visitor will remember, no local ever seems to work or sleep, where the *resaca*, the hangover, is a paid holiday. Rio de Janeiro seems dour by comparison.) In the ancient city Schoenfeld finds no end of memorable characters with which to populate his book. Among them are Juan Antonio Ruiz, "the only true *máxima figura*

currently active in bullfighting today," who goes by the nickname *Espartaco*, or Spartacus; a slew of British and American expatriates, who have collectively developed an encyclopedic knowledge of tauromachy past and present, to the consternation of turf-guarding Spaniards; and a retired *banderillero* called Navarrito, given even under the sternest years of Fascist rule to proclaiming his communist beliefs to the nearest policeman. Their stories, skillfully woven into the narrative, give real life to Schoenfeld's book.

Schoenfeld is equally good on what might be called the politics of bullfighting. He notes that in Spain, democratic only since 1975, many identify the sport with the bloody pomp of the Franco regime and so shun it; only when a few leading officials of the Socialist Party began showing up at ringside in the mid-1980's did the sport regain something of its former popularity. Like their grandparents, Spanish teenagers now accord matadors the same adulation as they do movie stars, pop musicians, and soccer pros, a nice bit of cultural continuity. Schoenfeld also notes the class-conditioned aspects of the *corrida*, where the poor entertain the rich, where "for every El Cordobés who gains financial security there are tens of thousands of aspirants who never see the inside of a bullring."

Animal-rights activists, who are presumably politically correct enough to allow for multicultural relativity, have long decried bullfighting, one of the planet's oldest sports. Schoenfeld seems to be neutral on the subject; he admits to neither a queasiness at the sight of spilled blood nor a sub-rosa thrill at the spectacle of sequined suits and flashing swords. Indeed, throughout the narrative he is curiously detached, and only the characters who wander in and out of his pages give them any sparkle. He reserves the final paragraph of his yeomanlike study to reveal any passion for the essence of the sport: "A human psyche laid bare, and the courage you need, in a plaza filled with thousands of people, to stand alone with yourself and the truest reality of all, the ubiquitous presence of death." Would that the rest of *The Last Serious Thing* had attained such poetry.

Freelance writer Gregory McNamee admits in certain company to enjoying a good bullfight.

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