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OF POETRY
AND POETICS

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BARZELLETTA

pleat Gentleman (1622) or Henry Reynold's *Mythomystes* (1633?) arouse more than antiquarian interest.

In Italy there is some rapprochement between contemporary practice and theory. From the letters and some poetic passages of Marino (see MARINISM) one can derive a few traits of a primitive theory of poetry. Its purpose is hardly to instruct at all: it tries to please, to play upon the senses, to be an end in itself. The goal of the good poet is to astonish or dazzle his readers by the brilliance and opulence of his descriptions and turns of phrase. The only important treatise is Emanuele Tesauro's *Cannocchiale aristotelico* (1654), which is more a handbook of rhet. than a p. It can be seen as representing the old rhetorical trad., yet its emphasis on wit and the conceit (q.v.) is relatively novel. Of similar interest is Matteo Pellegrini's *Delle acutezze* (1639).

In Spain the situation is generally the same as elsewhere: liberals and conservatives manipulate the same counters. There is some novelty and interest in Gracián's treatise *Agudeza y arte de ingenio* (1642, 1648), which can be set in the same trad. as Tesauro's. Essentially it is an elaborate and not always consistent classification of kinds of wit (*ingenio*). With great patience and perseverance it attempts to categorize and exemplify the "ingenious" effects achieved by poets since antiquity, with special pride of place for such contemporaries as the Argensolas and Góngora. In the main, however, its theory is traditional: there is a sort of poetic substance on which the poet attaches his "ornament" (q.v.), and the "ornament" is a local achievement which is almost seen as independent of the total poem. Gracián's work is mostly a commented anthology of "ingenious" poems and passages.

It could not be gainsaid that there are points of particular interest in b. p., such as the devel. of some important concepts (taste, wit, the *je ne sais quoi*) and a new penetration of p. and rhet. (e.g. Tesauro and Gracián, and the somewhat exaggerated influence of Ramus). But we must conclude that it was unsuccessful in elaborating an original theory of poetry, that it fails to account for the poetic practice of the age, and that its main importance is to transmit the canons of neoclassical crit. from the Ren. to the full flowering of the age of neoclassicism.

See also CLASSICISM; CONCEIT; GONGORISM; JE NE SAIS QUOI; MARINISM; METAPHYSICAL POETRY; NEOCLASSICAL POETICS; PRECIOUSITE; QUERELLE DES ANCIENS ET DES MODERNES; RENAISSANCE POETICS; RULES; TASTE; WIT.

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BARZELLETTA. See FROTTOLA AND BARZELLETTA.

BASQUE POETRY. There is a widespread idea that the B. lang. has no lit., but the facts prove otherwise. In the last 25 years, a number of histories have been devoted to the subject; one of them, when completed, will comprise seven volumes.

B. oral lit. is extremely ancient and, moreover, very original. Within it two separate genres may be noted: the *pastorales*, a remnant of what must have been the old drama, and *bertsolarism*, B. troubadour poetry, an improvised form sung before an audience. Written lit., which began considerably later, was essentially religious until the 20th c.; praise of the B. lang. is another main theme. These texts were composed in four dialects spoken in the B. areas of France and Spain.

Linguae vasconum primitiae, the earliest book of B. p., was written in 1545 by the priest B. Detxepare. Consisting of 16 poems on religious and amorous themes, together with praise of the B. lang., it reveals the influence of the Counterreformation. Notable is its realistic diction, esp. in the dialogues between lovers. The dominant metrical form is the medieval *cuaderna vía* (q.v.), although the work was written in the Ren.

Oihenart (1592-1667), the first B. poet from the laity, was the outstanding poet of the 17th c. His *Atsotitzak eta Neurutzak* (Proverbs and Refrains, 1657) includes love poems as well as proverbs and refrains. The 18th c. produced no signifi-

BATHOS

cant figure in written poetry, although oral poetry continued to be vigorous, esp. in the northern B. provinces.

The legendary poet and *bertsolari* P. Topet, "Etzahun" (1786-1862), flourished in the province of Zuberoa. One of the most original popular poets in B. lit., he wrote poems laden with highly emotional romantic emphases, in addition to violent personal satires. In the Sp. provinces of the B. country, the loss of the second Carlist War (1872-76) and the consequent loss of the old liberties were a cause of distress. This distress, however, served as a stimulus to the literary revival of the earlier 20th c., a revival anticipated in the work of F. Arrese y Beitia (1841-1906).

The earlier 20th c. saw the creation of the Academy of the B. Lang. (1918), the *Lorejaiak* (Floral Games) and poetry competitions, and the *txapelketak* or championship competitions for troubadours. N. Ormaetxea, "Orixe" (1888-1961), J. M. Aguirre, "Lizardi" (1896-1933), and E. Urkiaga, "Lauaxeta" (1905-37) were the leading poets of the time. Orixe wrote lyrical-mystical poems as well as an epic *Euskaldunak* (*The Basques*); Lizardi is considered by some to be the greatest B. lyric poet; Lauaxeta, the most modern of the group, shows in his work the influence of Fr. symbolism.

The B. lit. Ren. was cut short by the Sp. Civil War (1936-39). Lauaxeta was shot by Franco's troops, and other B. writers were imprisoned or forced into exile. For ten years after the war, publication in the B. lang. was prohibited in the Sp. area of the B. country. Among exile publications may be mentioned *Urrundik* (*From Far Away*, 1945) and *Gudarien Eginak* (*The Deeds of Basque Soldiers*, 1947), both by T. Monzon (1904-81).

S. Mitxelena (1918-65), in *Arantzazu* (You on the Thorn, 1949) and other works, proved to be the best interpreter of the anguish of the post-Civil War years. Other significant poets were N. Etzaniz (1899-1982) and J. I. Goikoetxea, "Gatzelu" (1908-83), who introduced modern elements into B. poetry. X. Diharce, "Iratzeder" (b. 1920) is an outstanding religious poet.

After 1950, in the B. country as elsewhere in the West, a total break from tradition manifested itself. E. T. A., the B. independence movement, appeared, and, in addition, existentialist, Marxist, and Freudian ideas began to make themselves felt. The "rupturist" poets, chief among them J. Mirande (1925-72) and G. Aresti (1933-75), broke conspicuously with the past. Mirande—antidemocratic, anti-Marxist, anti-Semitic, hostile to B. moderate nationalism—advocated violence and paganism. Against God and Church, he caused sensation by treating such themes as agnosticism, pederasty, Lesbianism, and masturbation. Aresti carried on in the southern B. area the revolution that Mirande had initiated in the northern area.

From the 1960s on, a variety of tendencies became apparent in the work of J. A. Arce,

"Harzabal" (b. 1939, "spatial poetry"), M. Lasa (b. 1938), J. Azurmendi (b. 1941), and L. M. Muxika (b. 1939). B. Gandiaga (b. 1928) moved from religious to nationalistic themes, and J. M. Lekuona (b. 1927) exhibited surrealist techniques, while X. Lete (b. 1944) denounced social and political injustice.

After the death of Franco, aesthetic rather than social elements reasserted themselves, particularly in the work of José Irazu, "B. Atxaga" (b. 1951) and J. Sarrionandia (b. 1958). Three significant women poets—A. Urretavizcaya (b. 1947), A. Lasa (b. 1948), and T. Irastorza (b. 1961)—have addressed themselves to feminist themes.

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BATHOS (Gr. "depth"). An evaluative term, usually equivalent to the purely descriptive term "anticlimax" (q.v.). (1) Though Longinus made b. a synonym of *hypsos* (the sublime) in *On the Sublime* 2.1, Pope, who can hardly be supposed ignorant of Longinus' meaning, took a new departure and made it an antonym in his parody of Longinus' treatise, *Peri Bathous; or, Martinus Scriblerus His Treatise of the Art of Sinking in Poetry* (1727). The most common meaning of the word ever since has been that of Pope, namely, an attempt at elevated expression which misfires and so has the (unintentional) effect of sudden transport from the sublime to the ridiculous. In the 18th c., what was intended was an expression of pathos (q.v.) in its wide Aristotelian sense, i.e. passion, the emotions; later, of pathos in its more modern, narrower sense of the sad or pitiable. The semantic shift is obviously accountable in no small measure to the accidental similarity of the two Gr. words *pathos* and *b.* Pope illustrates b. with "Ye Gods! annihilate both Space and Time, / And make two Lovers happy." Elizabeth Barrett Browning ardently recalls "Our Euripides, the human— / With his droppings of warm tears" ("Wine of Cyprus" 89-90); and Tennyson misfires with "He suddenly dropt dead of heart-disease" ("Sea Dreams" 64). B. is thus very often the stuff of parody (q.v.). (2) Also common, though less so, is the use of the word for a deliberately contrived effect of pathos *manqué* or any kind of deliberate anticlimax, whether ironic, gay, or serious. This usage is now