

THE POETRY OF MARCO ANTONIO MONTES DE OCA

by

Celia Elaine Richmond Weller
B.A., Drury College, 1965
M.A., University of Kansas, 1967

Submitted to the Department of Spanish
and Portuguese and the Faculty of the
Graduate School of the University of
Kansas in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy

~~Dissertation Committee~~

PREFACE

The present study deals with the work of the contemporary Mexican poet, Marco Antonio Montes de Oca, from its beginnings in the decade of the 1950's through his book of poetry, Poesía reunida, published in 1971. It introduces the poet to readers who may not know his work and sheds some light on his general themes and his use of imagery and symbolism to express them. The study also explores Montes de Oca's belief in "la palabra" and more specifically, it investigates his belief in his own poetic word as a universal expression of modern man's experiences with reality.

Since no one has attempted an over-all study of Montes de Oca's poetry to this date, secondary sources for this study consist of various articles, essays and reviews scattered in periodicals and anthologies from the United States and Latin America. Their generally superficial focus is only too well summarized by Homero Aridjis in his review in Diálogos of Montes de Oca's La vendimia del juglar: "Por lo que atañe a Montes de Oca, puede decirse que su obra todavía no encuentra un cri-

terio justo que la valorice, y los aciertos de su poesía permanecen desconocidos, mientras sus libros se desdeñan o se aceptan sin leerse, o apenas leídos superficialmente." Enrique Anderson Imbert, in his Historia de la literatura hispanoamericana, for example, praises Montes de Oca's self-discipline, constructiveness, and self-domination, but never relates his comments to specific works or poems, since Imbert's work consists of an overview of Spanish American literature.

J. M. Cohen, in his article "The Eagle and the Serpent" from The Southern Review, states that (in 1965) Montes de Oca's poetry "is still advancing" but that his is a talent "too anarchic by nature." In his "Aproximación a la poesía mexicana del siglo XX" in Hispania, José Emilio Pacheco asks other critics why they have not judged Montes de Oca on his own basis and not by their own standards of writing and thinking; yet he makes no real attempt to go beyond praise of "calidad poética" and "belleza verbal."

J. G. Brotherston recognizes the need for a complete study of Montes de Oca's work, but he chooses only to deal with the poet's revisions of the Pliego de testimonios in his article in the Bulletin of Hispanic Studies: "The subject of this article, the alterations made to Pliego de testimonios, is directly relevant to an assessment

of the evolution of Montes de Oca's style; however, no attempt can be made to enter the debate about it on a comprehensive scale since no published studies exist and his total production is large, contradictory and difficult. It is regrettable that so little attention has been paid to the poems themselves." To date, then, there have been no real attempts to consider or judge Montes de Oca's work in detail nor as a whole.

Even though the secondary sources do not offer much information, Montes de Oca's autobiography has been of great help in the research for this study. With much assistance from this little volume, the dissertation begins with an introduction of the poet himself, followed by a brief description of his work. Montes de Oca's poetry and his life are not correlated although some events and influences are notable.

Following this general survey of his life and work, the study then deals with the poet's ideas about poetry itself. He alludes to his beliefs about poetry in his autobiography and evidences these ideas in his work. Montes de Oca believes in what he calls the "magic word." This "magic word" is the basis for his work and Montes de Oca's mission is man's realization of a new reality and his self-enlightenment by experiencing this reality through the poetic word.

With this background of the poet's ideas about poetry and his motivation for writing established, the study then focuses on his principal themes and their appearance in Montes de Oca's work. Nine published volumes of poetry and/or prose poetry, ending with Pedir el fuego, published in 1968, form the basis for this study of themes. All themes are explored in this third chapter and, although that of poetry itself will have been covered chiefly in Chapter II, it is of necessity touched on again.

The stylistic study which follows in Chapter IV stems directly from an interest in the method the poet uses to express his major themes. This chapter discusses Montes de Oca's use of structure, symbol and imagery in his work. This imagery is extremely varied and the study points out some important and recurring relationships between these seemingly diverse images which lead to Montes de Oca's symbolism and areas of symbolism. The basic structural plan for this dissertation is to move from the general to the specific. For example, a portion of Chapter IV is devoted to the extremely important use of light and light imagery as an especially dominant symbolic force in uniting the poet's ideas, themes and images.

Chapter V presents Montes de Oca's Poesía reunida. This volume, published in 1971 and containing some new items plus versions of all his previously published works,

is not included in the earlier discussions as its inclusion would require involved comparisons of all poems--a procedure which might obscure the focus of this dissertation. The Poesía reunida cannot be considered merely a re-publishing of Montes de Oca's earlier volumes for it contains many changes of the poet's basic materials--his words--and the combinations of them to form images and metaphors. The study lists the new items not published before in his earlier volumes but included in the Poesía reunida and describes briefly some of these new poems. The ideas and themes remain the same as those discussed in Chapter III, though many of the building blocks have been rearranged. This review of Montes de Oca's Poesía reunida is followed by the conclusions about his work as a whole in Chapter VI.

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| Preface | ii |
| Chapter I. Marco Antonio Montes de Oca and his Poetic Work from 1953 to 1968 . . . | 1 |
| Chapter II. Marco Antonio Montes de Oca's Concept of Poetry and the "Magic Word" . . | 32 |
| Chapter III. Themes in the Poetry of Marco Antonio Montes de Oca | 59 |
| Chapter IV. Metaphor, Symbol, and Structural Devices in the Poetry of Montes de Oca: Their Way of Embodying his Themes . | 79 |
| Chapter V. The <u>Poesía Reunida</u> | 139 |
| Chapter VI. Conclusions | 155 |
| Appendix listing the poems appearing in the <u>Poesía reunida</u> which do not occur in earlier published volumes | 159 |
| Bibliography | 163 |
| I. Works by Marco Antonio Montes de Oca . . | 163 |
| II. Critical References to Montes de Oca . . | 166 |
| III. General Studies | 170 |

CHAPTER I

Marco Antonio Montes de Oca and His Poetic Work from 1953 to 1968

The poet was born on the third of August in 1932 in Mexico City. His first experiences were a mixture of urban and rural life, because he spent summers in the fields near his summer home and the rest of the year going to school in Mexico City.¹ Marco Antonio Montes de Oca gradually collected impressions which later coalesced to form an invaluable dual vision not only of his native country, but of life as a whole. He later characterizes this dual vision in his poetry as a kind of counterpoint relationship between nature and/or naturalness on the one hand and "civilization" on the other.

The most important--and oppressive--influence of "civilization" on the poet as a youth was school. Montes de Oca describes the teaching methods as not slapping the hands, but as stifling the initiative of each student.²

¹Marco Antonio Montes de Oca, Marco Antonio Montes de Oca (México, 1967), pp. 17-20. (This is Montes de Oca's autobiography and will henceforth be designated in footnotes only by "Montes de Oca" and the page number.)

²Montes de Oca, p. 22.

The poet was not entirely quashed by what we would now call the "system," however. Montes de Oca's first poems, which he describes as "torpes hasta la ignominia, espontáneos como un castillo de hongos buscando la luz,"³ date from his secondary school years.

During this time, he came under the influence of some pedantic friends who spent most of their time reading Juan Ramón Jiménez and Valéry and discussing classicism and perfection, accusing Montes de Oca of being "primitivo y cursi" because he preferred the lyricism of Bécquer.⁴ Although he strayed away from Bécquer with later readings, Montes de Oca never accepted what he calls the "narcicismo" of Juan Ramón nor the "pretensiosas arquitecturas"⁵ of Paul Valéry. His own ideas of what poetry should be, however, did begin forming during this early clash among friends.

Montes de Oca's irreverent opinion of formal education was furthered by his experiences at the University of Mexico where he took a few courses in philosophy and letters. He then embarked upon medical studies, but, repulsed by what he characterizes as his fellow students'

³Montes de Oca, p. 24.

⁴Montes de Oca, p. 25.

⁵Montes de Oca, p. 25.

desire only for making money in their profession, he left medical school after one year for odd jobs in Acapulco.⁶ When Montes de Oca returned to Mexico City--"ombligo de mis círculos nerviosos"--⁷ his uncle offered him employment as a metal worker and a new era in his life began. It was an era which, strangely enough, was very closely related to and influential in the development of his concept of poetry and its place in life.

Even though he took great delight in the fellowship with his fellow workers, Montes de Oca soon realized that his greatest obstacle to acceptance was his bourgeois language. He had to learn an entirely new set of four-letter words and to say "ingeniero" instead of "ingeniero,"⁸ for example. He describes his lack of artistry in their verbal games as comparable to the lack of "swing" in jazz: "Yo siempre salía derrotado en esos duelos donde la palabra improvisada se asesta como un golpe, en esos duelos donde una mágica puntería nacida en el corazón de las palabras, cumple la función del espadazo certero y del relámpago que anonada. La precisión y viveza de tales malabarismos, fracasan cuando no se

⁶Montes de Oca, p. 28.

⁷Montes de Oca, p. 29.

⁸Montes de Oca, p. 30.

mantiene dentro de la mayor cohesión y agresividad."⁹

Montes de Oca never quite attained the verbal knack of his fellow workers but he learned a basic lesson in the spiritual (which he would probably call "magic") and even physical power of words and in the verbal proficiency and inventiveness of the man-in-the-street. The common man's lightening-like spontaneity of retort is most certainly reflected in Montes de Oca's impromptu and extemporaneous images. Also, the poet's use of short summary sentences which seem to brook no argument after a series of flowing images reflects the same lack of strategy which he notes as bringing instant disaster in his word duels with his fellow workers. An example of this abrupt change and breaking of mood can be seen in this series of lines from his first published poem, "Ruina de la infame Babilonia" found republished later in Delante de la luz cantan los pájaros:

Delicadas creaturas, más delicadas que gacelas,
se ahorcan con la mondadura de los frutos;
madura la férrea granada
en la mano fresca y rencorosa del soldado.
El tiempo es absoluto.
Unánime la germinación de los relojes. (p. 15)

The statement "Time is absolute" adds virtually nothing to the previous building images and, in fact, by its force, practically stamps out their rhythmic effect.

⁹Montes de Oca, p. 31.

After seven months, Montes de Oca left the factory, returned to his parents, and began his studies to become a lawyer. It was during his studies in the Faculty of Law that several of Montes de Oca's friends, among them Carlos Fuentes and Arturo González Cosío, published his long, involved and rather chaotic poem, "Ruina de la infame Babilonia" in the magazine Medio Siglo in 1953. The poem is dedicated to his parents.

The poet himself describes this, his first published work, as: "concebido en tono apocalíptico, cruzado por visiones atávicas, mi poema pretendía suscitar un viaje admonitorio a través de la historia espiritual del hombre."¹⁰ The poem is as close to being cryptic as is his description of it. It is as though a myriad of ideas, themes, and images which were building and taking form within him suddenly and prematurely overflowed. As seen in the above quotation from "Ruina de la infame Babilonia," this spontaneous deluge often leads to a flurry of images which the poet then puts in check or explains periodically with matter-of-fact statements.

We must assume, for example, that these "delicadas creaturas" are mankind, or at the very least that they are Montes de Oca and some others, for we find previous references in first person plural such as "somos girasoles"

¹⁰Montes de Oca, p. 36.

and "seríamos fantasmas." ("Ruina de la infame Babilonia" in Delante de la luz cantan los pajaros, pp. 13 and 14.)

But what is intended by these "delicadas creaturas" hanging themselves with hitherto unmentioned fruit peelings is never really developed. The image leads, of course, to a minimally clever play on words involving fruit and granada/pomegranate/grenade and seems to have something to do with man's conflict with nature and with himself. (The use of "soldado" at least hints at this conflict.) Why not develop this imagery? Hundreds of images, in themselves vital and full of potential, lead only to confusion when they spill over onto each other or come to dead ends in prosaisms such as "El tiempo es absoluto." At best the reader feels a sense of loss for so much waste of images; at worst, he becomes lost in the deluge.

It is obvious that at this point Montes de Oca has not developed a consistent imagery, a coherent system of imagery, nor his ideas of what poetry is to a degree that makes him confident and comfortable with his expression. If, as he says, his vision is apocalyptic, then the disintegration of communication and cohesion would be an effective technique. But, in attempting to encompass a totality of man's spiritual experiences, the poem becomes, at times, (as the Biblical reference to Babylon might suggest another Biblical connotation),

almost a Babel of images and themes. His technique here is effective in communicating confusion, but confusion does not seem to be what he wants the reader to experience if, as he says, this is to be an "instructive tour" through man's spiritual history. He could have used his imagery successfully to guide the reader, but all too often, as in the "Time is absolute" quotation, he destroys the flow of the journey.

Nature and man, man hopeful and man debased, the natural and the artificial in man's nature and in his physical surroundings--all of these--sometimes in conflict and sometimes in harmony, are expressed in "Ruina de la infame Babilonia." They represent the beginnings of the antithetical tendency which will later become one of the very important structural and thematic bases of Montes de Oca's poetry. The poet is neither an optimist nor a pessimist--he is both. "Ruina de la infame Babilonia" contains virtually all of the ideas which Montes de Oca later expresses, but perhaps they are offered too soon and too haphazardly.

It was during this time of experimentation and first real artistic production for public consumption that Montes de Oca affiliated himself with the movement called "poeticismo" which was founded by Enrique González Rojo and Eduardo Lizalde. This group based itself on the

interesting assumption that images and metaphors obey fixed laws that govern and produce them; all the poet had to do was discover these laws and then use them to his best advantage. This assumption, of course, which denies or minimizes the existence of inspiration, was but a short-lived and largely quixotic attempt by a few of these "poeticistas" to jolt their fellow poets: "El esfuerzo poeticista, frustrado en su base, contrastaba sin embargo con la mojigatería que caracterizaba a aquellos años. Los poetas de entonces, pájaros sumamente tímidos, cantaban en silencio. Su voz sonaba a lo que suena el viento cuando no encuentra nada que embestir."¹¹

Montes de Oca, then, was consciously interested in breaking with what Octavio Paz would call "los autores que cultivan el 'decoro'"¹² and in cultivating a more open and participatory art. The art of the "poeticistas" was at least participatory. The main activity of this group of poet "duendes," which also included Rosa María Phillips and Arturo González Cosío, consisted of scandalizing the public by speaking Latin, reciting poetry in chorus, and conducting obscene and bizarre interviews mostly on public buses and with one foot on the exit step. Their parties

¹¹Montes de Oca, p. 37.

¹²Octavio Paz, prólogo al Poesía en movimiento (México, 1966), p. 8.

were not mad orgies nor extravaganzas but consisted of wild flights of imagination. One of the most amusing of their activities occurred when Lizalde and González Rojo danced their celebrated "Crow Lake." They also created elaborate pantomimes such as the very imaginative pantomime of the violin: "Al principio el inmenso violín exigía al ejecutante su mayor esfuerzo, cuando éste, cruzando la sala a toda velocidad, apenas conseguía que el arco, pesado como un mástil, entrara en movimiento. Al ir decreciendo el violín variaban las maneras de tocarlo. Y cuando ya no cabía entre las uñas, los últimos campases de la pieza interpretada se tocaban con una pestaña partida en dos."¹³

Finding the fixed laws for the production of metaphors came to be less the main goal of the "poeticistas" than the cultivation of unbridled imagination and the shocking of the public. The public as a whole and not just the "timid birds," the poets, were their targets and Montes de Oca felt akin to the "poeticistas" in that he saw and sees society and the poet as being in a state of perpetual warfare.¹⁴ Society continually rejects poetry and the poet continually rejects the dictates of society. "Poeticism" was but one of the more flamboyant battles in this war.

¹³Montes de Oca, p. 39.

¹⁴Montes de Oca, p. 40.

During his affiliation with the proponents of "poeticismo" and with inspiration from these imaginative and free-thinking friends, Montes de Oca wrote and published in 1955 in the collection "Los Presentes," his second book of poetry, Contrapunto de la fe. José Enrique Moreno wrote an introduction to this volume.

This work also consists (as did his first work, "Ruina de la infame Babilonia") of one long poem, broken into smaller parts which are designated by Roman numerals. Although similar in structure, the most striking difference between the first and second works is Montes de Oca's shift to a more ordered imagery. In Contrapunto de la fe there is a central image, "Cristo-colibrí," which gives cohesion and continuity to the poem. The themes, still all-encompassing in their attempts at a representation of man's internal reality are now, as the title suggests, expressed by the use of a slightly clearer juxtaposition of images. Even though the poet himself still recognizes touches of rhetoric in this book, he has begun to evidence a control of his imagery and to build ideas with images instead of letting the images run wild, then having to explain or stifle them as he did in "Ruina de la infame Babilonia." With typical understatement, the poet says of Contrapunto de la fe: "Algunos fragmentos me parecen sinceros."¹⁵

¹⁵Montes de Oca, p. 40.

By using the word "sinceros" to describe Contrapunto de la fe he is emphasizing that (perhaps as opposed to the rather grandiose "spiritual history of man" of "Ruina de la infame Babilonia"), he is now writing of the more specific interior reality of the waxing and waning of his own youthful faith. He is also beginning to express his ideas about poetry and his belief in the relation of poetry to life when he says to life:

En tus manos encomiendo al silencioso
a pesar de sus palabras,
al poeta, que rasga sus vestiduras hasta el hueso
y trabaja y desespera
sobre la rebeldía luminosa de sueños improbables.
(Contrapunto de la fe; the 1st edition has
unnumbered pages, my numbering, p. 16.)

Life, Christ and faith (which Montes de Oca calls "absoluto amor,"¹⁶) and poetry begin to interrelate for the first time in his work with much more clarity and consistency than are apparent in "Ruina de la infame Babilonia."

Shortly after Contrapunto de la fe appeared in print, Montes de Oca, who classifies himself as an introvert, first met Octavio Paz, his "maestro y hermano mayor."¹⁷ Paz became one of his most admired and admiring friends, recommended him for a scholarship at the Centro Mexicano de Escritores and later used his prestige to get Montes de Oca published by the Fondo de Cultura Económica.

¹⁶Montes de Oca, p. 40.

¹⁷Montes de Oca, p. 48.

Paz devotes an article to Montes de Oca in his Puertas al campo and pays the poet a great compliment by giving him credit for "una conciencia muy clara de los poderes y limitaciones de la palabra."¹⁸ Also, in the introduction to the collection Poesía en movimiento, Paz designates Montes de Oca as "el iniciador de la nueva poesía"¹⁹ and situates Montes de Oca's work in relation to some of his fellow Mexican poets. Paz describes this "nueva poesía" as having four directions of movement: "el Trueno"--vertical and ascending movement, "el agua"--vertical and descending movement as exemplified in Gabriel Zaid's intense inner search, "el Fuego"--for example, the horizontal and extended movement of Homero Aridjis always toward love and woman, and "el Lago"-- the horizontal and concentrated movement found in José Emilio Pacheco's self-containment and criticism. For Paz, Montes de Oca characterizes the first movement mentioned, the "Trueno" movement. Paz puts him in this category because he feels that his poetry rises up boldly with new structures and ideas and begins new impulses from old inheritances.²⁰ Paz does not elaborate at all on these new structures and ideas in Montes de Oca's poetry.

¹⁸Octavio Paz, Puertas al campo (México, 1967), p. 125.

¹⁹Paz, prologue to Poesía en movimiento, p. 26.

²⁰Paz, Poesía en movimiento, p. 27.

One of the most important things inherited by Montes de Oca is the influence of Paz himself on Montes de Oca's philosophy and work. This influence is unmistakable and readily and proudly admitted by Montes de Oca: "De hecho esa amistad fue sellada en cuanto a mí se refiere, cuando sus versos espléndidos, [de Paz] años atrás, me enseñaron a leer flechas camineras que conducen al centro de la propia vocación."²¹

It seems, however, that Montes de Oca was not always so sure of his "propia vocación" nor of his abilities, for he has very little good to report about his third book, Pliego de testimonios, published in 1956 in "Colección Metáfora:" "De Pliego prefiero no hablar. A veces me parece que si reescribiera algunos versos, o mejor, si amputara del libro algunos poemas, ese cuerpo enfermo podría salvarse. Tal como fue publicado me parece mediocre."²²

His critics also seem to be of much the same opinion. Carlos Monsiváis in his La poesía mexicana del siglo XX warns that the Pliego de testimonios indicates a danger: "la línea divisoria entre la fecundidad y la repetición."²³ Elías Nandino, reviewing the Pliego for the magazine Estaciones, is more critical and after

²¹Montes de Oca, p. 48.

²²Montes de Oca, p. 40.

²³Carlos Monsiváis, La poesía mexicana del siglo XX, (México, 1966), p. 69.

faint praise for originality accuses Montes de Oca of a total lack of communication at times: "Entre sus poemas hay luminosos hallazgos, descubrimientos auténticos, mas el lorismo, veda la emoci3n trasmitida al lector y se cae irremisiblemente, en el laberinto de palabrería sin sentido."²⁴

The book as it was first published, consists of four long poems: "El jardín que los dioses frecuentaron," "A la custodia del reino natural," "El viaje del moribundo," and "En vísperas de un acontecimiento improbable." Again, loosely held together thematically, the poems do seem to be a reversion to the wordiness of "Ruina de la infame Babilonia," though the imagery does not appear so disjointed or flimsy as it did in that first work nor so completely senseless as Nandino would have us believe.

A sample from "A la custodia del reino natural" illustrates at least that Montes de Oca's imagery is becoming more ordered, this time around the concept of "palabra":

Todo esto es cosa del diablo de la palabra.
 Del omním3do diablo que en las infinitas recámaras
 (de arena se recuesta
 a urdir cepos llameantes,
 trampas de poderosas sílabas y cerrojos.
 (Pliego de testimonios, p. 29.)

The poet is now tending toward a more obvious selection

²⁴Eliás Nandino, review of Pliego de testimonios, Estaciones, Vol. II, No. v (Primavera, 1955), p. 95.

of individual themes, in this case "palabra." His images arrange themselves around the themes while earlier the themes were virtually smothered by imagery.

Perhaps discouraged by his critics and temporarily drained himself, Montes de Oca ceased writing for a time when in 1957 he took over a metal-works shop to better support his wife and four daughters. Not only did he fail to write anything presentable during this time, but he very nearly went blind from the soldering. It seems that all of his attempts at odd jobs merely made him appreciate poetry more: "La miseria me rodeaba con amorosa persistencia. Mi espíritu no consentía ninguna enajenación ni tampoco el empleo de mis pequeñas dotes en algo que no fuera la poesía. Cuando me casé, creí obligatorio traicionar mi punto de vista y me puse a corregir novelas para la radio. Me sentí mal adobando inmundicias para auditorios analfabetos. Ocioso es decir que nunca he intentado otra experiencia similar."²⁵ Needless to say, his experience of returning to his own creative writing was a much more successful one than his temporary capitulation to conformity.

The poet had recommended to himself that he "amputate" the Pliego de testimonios of some of the poems. What had

²⁵Montes de Oca, p. 50.

actually happened when the book reappeared in Delante de la luz cantan los pájaros, was that he had re-worked the four existing poems (resulting in more clarity of imagery in most cases), shortening them as he had thought to. Then he added two more new poems which he called "En el umbral de la plegaría" and "La vieja alianza." J. G. Brotherston, in his article "Montes de Oca in the Light of the Revised Versions of Pliego de testimonios" designates two types of revision made to the four poems. Brotherston believes that Montes de Oca makes minor alterations in the interests of clarity and intelligibility. He believes that the poet is anticipating his reader's confusion and guiding the reader through passages of more solidly constructed poetry with these changes. Brotherston also notes that many of these minor changes are little more than formal grammatical adjustments.²⁶

Brotherston does not note the lines previously cited from "A la custodia del reino natural" (see p. 14) but they will serve to give an example of this re-working. In this particular case not a deletion of imagery, but an amplification of it occurs with the "húmedas mazmorras" and the "helados rascacielos" adding to the image of the

²⁶J. G. Brotherston, "Montes de Oca in the Light of the Revised Versions of Pliego de testimonios," Bulletin of Hispanic Studies, XLIV (1967), p. 30.

last version. But to talk of this is to be on the threshold of a world beyond demonstration."²⁷

It is true, as Brotherston says, that a side by side reading of the versions of Montes de Oca's poems can be very enlightening and that a written study of the poet's revisions of his poems would be virtually impossible because of the vast number of changes. Image and theme patterns certainly are changed, but the basic themes and images remain the same in the revisions which appear in Delante de la luz cantan los pájaros and also in those that occur in the Poesía reunida.

To summarize, Brotherston sees the revisions of Pliego de testimonios as expressing a poetic universe rising out of and beyond the customary tensions between order and disorder. He believes that the reader's subconscious comparison of Montes de Oca's various versions of the poems not only adds to the reader's aesthetic enjoyment but actually reflects this poetic universe.

Also contained in Delante de la luz cantan los pájaros, which was published as No. 50 of the collection "Letras Mexicanas" by the Fondo de Cultura Económica, are "Ruina de la infame Babilonia" and "Contrapunto de la fe," both slightly re-worked. In both cases the re-

²⁷Brotherston, pp. 31 and 40.

visions serve to clarify imagery, with no basic changes in either structure or themes.

The previously unpublished work that is also included in this collection is entitled "Ofrendas y epitafios" and contains three groups of short poems (most of them with a length of only one page). These are Montes de Oca's first short poems and his first in which a theme other than a very all-encompassing internal-spiritual one appears. This new theme is a celebration of woman and carnal love. These poems also indicate Montes de Oca's ability and willingness to extend his work thematically and structurally and to expand his use of imagery to enhance his ideas rather than to sabotage them.

Perhaps remembering the criticism that he received for "lorismo" and hypertrophy of imagination²⁸ in Pliego de testimonios, the poet describes the "Ofrendas y epitafios" in this manner: "Las imágenes casi siempre jubilosas pretendan escapar de otro peligro: el canto del canario, cuya voz atolondrada no sabe siquiera que festeja."²⁹ He was awarded the "Premio Villaurrutia" in 1959 for this escape from giddiness.

But his next book, Cantos al sol que no se alcanza, published in 1961 in the "Tezontle" collection of the

²⁸Nandino, review of Pliego de testimonios, Estaciones, pp. 94-95.

²⁹Montes de Oca, p. 41.

Fondo de Cultura Económica, falls back into the old weaknesses of "Ruina de la infame Babilonia" and Pliego de testimonios. This time, Montes de Oca thinks, the defects come not because of any mere extemporaneous outpouring of imagery, but because of a chaotic personal catharsis expressed in this work: "Cantos al sol que no se alcanza es otro capítulo de la misma historia. . ."³⁰ Escribí ese libro hundido en el caos psíquico y en esa nutrida gama de lindezas que acompañan al subdesarrollo integral. Amo estos poemas porque los escribí contra viento y marea; porque la cohesión de mi mundo interior no cedió un palmo ante presiones que me rodeaban por todas partes."³¹ The poems, then, are an attempt to express his "mundo interior" and not a rather random effort to represent the interior reactions of man as a whole. They may be tumultuous, but at least this time the poet is able to give reason for their being so.

The fact is that the book is not as haphazard as the poet would like us to think. However, J. M. Cohen in his article "The Eagle and the Serpent" recognizes that while accomplishing much toward the clarification of his poetry, Montes de Oca still sometimes lapses into her-

³⁰That "historia" referring to the turmoil of "Ruina de la infame Babilonia."

³¹Montes de Oca, p. 42.

meticism: "A young man of abundant inspiration in whom imagery wells up rich and uncontrolled, he has striven in his successive books for form, discipline and exactness of statement, which he sometimes seems nearly to be achieving. In this small book Cantos al sol que no se alcanza the violence of imagery is less than in his earlier collections, though sometimes, like Pasternak in his early work, Montes de Oca will permit himself a metaphor, such as that of the "pack of cantharides" in poem "E" which steadfastly refuses to come clear."³² This example of puzzling imagery at first seems quite similar to those illusive "delicadas creaturas" which were pointed out earlier in "Ruina de la infame Babilonia," but an examination of the lines shows that it is not really so hermetic as Cohen believes. The poet is speaking of las palabras when he says:

Hay que apilarlas como pesos de fuego
 Pagar con ellas por el milagro que conceden,
 O echarlas a volar como una baraja de cantáridas
 Bajo la piel de ciertos ciegos
 (Cantos al sol que no se alcanza, p. 20.)

His image referring to words combines the two meanings of "cantáridas." That is, the actual beetles flying up and fluttering down are suggested by using the word "baraja" usually associated with a pack or deck of cards. The flying

³²J. M. Cohen, "The Eagle and the Serpent," The Southern Review, Vol. III, No. ii (Spring, 1965), p. 372.

under the skins of certain "blind ones" can refer to the plaster or balm made from the crushed dried bodies of these beetles. The image takes on even more meaning when one recognizes that the balm of cantharides can be used either as a counter-irritant or as an aphrodisiac. This idea of the "flinging out to fly" of words is also interesting in its suggestion of the methods of Paz's "el Trueno" movement already mentioned in connection with Montes de Oca. The poet seems not to be deliberately obtuse as Cohen suggests, but involved in the vital process of discovery of his relationship to poetry and to the word itself.

Cohen admits that the poet seems to be becoming more disciplined in his writing. The strengths of Cantos al sol que no se alcanza lie, not only as Cohen suggests, in its discipline, but in its great diversity of themes within the main theme of pessimism and futility expressed by the title. This pessimistic tone is found throughout the "cantos" which are twenty-eight rather short poems. It is notable that the poet alternately gives titles, numbers, and letters in groups of four to designate the poems. His other works have not evidenced such discipline of structuring nor the intimacy of themes that this one does. The preoccupation with a work's external structure does not really occur again in Montes de Oca's poetry, but at this point his themes are tending toward what could

more nearly be called the personal anecdote rather than the earlier sweeping generalizations of man's spiritual experiences.

The most obvious example of this change of focus which presents itself would be the long and sometimes violent love poem, "Bajo la tórrida ceremonia sin eclipse," dedicated to his wife and contained in his next book, Fundación del entusiasmo.³³ Another work which also appears in Fundación del entusiasmo is "Atrás de la memoria," probably Montes de Oca's most anthologized poem with its anecdotal scene being set with the poet as an unborn child in his mother's womb:

Era el impredecible amanecer de mí mismo
 Y en aquellas vísperas de gala y de miseria
 Pude oír el eco de granizo
 Tras la nerviosa ventana carnal;
 Arrodillado estuve muchos meses,
 Velando mis armas
 Contando los instantes, los rítmicos suspiros
 Que me separaban de la noche polar.
 (Fundación del entusiasmo, p. 45.)

Here the poet is speaking in the first person. He is trying to recapture his own situation before birth and at the moment of birth. His point of view may be personal, yet the images that he uses have meaning for and can be visualized readily by any reader. Montes de Oca sees himself in the fetal position as if on his knees praying and keeping vigil over his arms, perhaps like a minute

³³Montes de Oca, Fundación del entusiasmo, U. N. A. M., Colección Poemas y Ensayos, 1963.

Don Quixote. Often one of the first things that intrigues and interests an adult on seeing a baby is the smallness of his hands and feet and how they are continually grasping. Montes de Oca also uses this image:

Pronto empuñé la vida,
 Con manos tan pequeñas
 Que apenas rodeaban un huevo de paloma;
 (Fundación del entusiasmo, p. 45.)

His tiny hand is grasping at life and what we are seeing in this poem and in others in Fundación del entusiasmo is the beginning of the poet's real grasp of the expression of universal experiences, an undertaking that he had been attempting all along but not always achieving. The difference is that now he is no longer dealing in generalities but in personal specifics regarding life, birth, death and love with which a reader can not only empathize but identify without the poet having to generalize for him. Montes de Oca is expressing what he knows best--or at least what he has learned about himself--and the reader is given more responsibility.

His book Vendimia del juglar continues in this anecdotal vein which Montes de Oca calls: "mayor sentido de la circunstancia humana."³⁴ Vendimia del juglar, which was published in 1965, seems to skip a year of production but contains the long poem "La parcela en el

³⁴Montes de Oca, p. 43.

Edén." That poem had been written in 1964 and was published in pamphlet form in that year by Pájaro Cascabel. As the title might suggest, the poems of this new book, Vendimia del juglar, demonstrate a lyricism new to Montes de Oca and a greater expansion of themes. The poet is breaking down, separating and elaborating more specific themes from his earlier general ones. The poems often deal with the poet himself, his task and his substance. As he did while a part of the "Poeticista" movement, he again affirms what he believes to be the poet's important role in awakening his fellow man:

Voz mía
 No te desampares creyendo que el canto
 Es asunto exclusivo de los dioses
 No cantes si tu loa sólo enciende
 Lumbraredas habituales
 Sirve a las lluvias
 A los henchidos recados de los hombres
 Y que el fuego graneado no tenga piedad de ti
 Y que tu poder ayude al niño
 Cuando inutilmente se ajusta a un seno seco.

Voz mía
 Punza aquí desgarrá allá
 Recuerda que el hombre dormido es hombre muerto. . .
 ("Alfa y Omega," Vendimia del juglar,
 p. 24.)

In the poem "Mediodía del poeta" the poet is seen as an extraordinarily perceptive captive and captor of nature and the senses and a clever confounder of fortune:

Cuando sus manos son esposadas
 Con las cintas del humo
 Y las respiraciones de la albahaca;
 Un hombre llega con las cien banderas de su grito,

A decidir qué brazo de la lluvia es el más pesado
 Y qué júbilo gorjeante
 Le ha de cubrir para siempre la carne y la persona
 Solo ese hombre confundir puede libremente,
 Ruedas de la fortuna
 Con giratorios macetones de niños
 Sólo él reconoce la pista labrada entre la niebla
 Por los cometas apagados.
 Él es quien abre discos de claridad
 Entre una y otra catacumba,
 Al asumir los poderes sentimentales
 Que alguien vierte a la orilla del mar y de su oído.
 ("Mediodía del poeta," Vendimia del juglar, p. 43.)

He also sees himself as the rescuer of truth which has been held crystalized for so long in the fists of generations of men:

Aquí abajo, doy respiración artificial a su cadáver.
 [de la verdad]
 Pido que aliente y encarne y germine,
 Cual un manto de latidos
 En la caldeada sien
 Del que nada más se alimenta de preguntas.
 ("Primera llamada," Vendimia del juglar, p. 41.)

It is the poet who is nurtured by and must nurture this questioning of truth.

A continuation of this exploration into and expansion of poetic themes and form is seen in the poet's Las fuentes legendarias, published in 1966. In this book of "prosas poéticas,"³⁵ Montes de Oca explores that fine line of the idiom which unites prose and poetry, leading Ramón Xirau to call him a "creador de mitologías."³⁶ Ranging from what seem to be personal anecdotes to portraits, short stories,

³⁵Montes de Oca, p. 49.

³⁶Ramón Xirau, review of Las fuentes legendarias, Diálogos, Vol. III, No. ii, (marzo-abril, 1967), p. 28.

and to essays on poetry itself, the book combines and crosses genres with great success and sensitivity and with no loss of the poet's newly ordered lyricism and precision of metaphor. For example, in the prose poem, "Notas desde un infierno en marcha" he describes with quite vivid and clear imagery his impression of the tempo of ordinary life:

Pasan los postes del telégrafo con su complicada cabeza y su follaje de alambres. La hierba alta como un brazo; las pequeñas pirámides de paja, también quedan atrás. Se juntan las casas en un solo muro encalado que bordea la carretera. Voy tan aprisa que el poder de lo visible se apaga como si una goma lo fuera esfumando. Pierde paso la realidad; pierde la cabeza, la brújula, el boleto de vuelta a su propio centro; deslavándose en un friso en que ya no es posible reconocer el sombreado rupestre, la taquigrafía arbitraria de los signos que han llovido sobre el tiempo. La velocidad ahúma la visión.

("Notas desde un infierno en marcha," Las fuentes legendarias, p. 105.)

In the escape from this constant velocity the poet sees a test of faith:

Quien quiera apoyar la cabeza en una ceiba, platicar a solas con la brisa o sentir el denso terciopelo de unos frutos, tendrá que bajar del infierno en marcha, sin redes protectoras, sin esperanza alguna de que aun exista el suelo.

("Notas desde un infierno en marcha," Las fuentes legendarias, p. 106.)

It is the poet, of course, who dares have the faith to alight from the infernal vehicle.

Montes de Oca's Pedir el fuego was published in 1968. As so many of his earlier works, Pedir el fuego consists of two parts. The first part, "El corazón de la

flauta" contains one long poem, "En animal de amor la magia me convierte." The second part, "Hay que abrir las ventanas," does open the windows on a variety of themes with seventeen short and diverse poems, even including one on the death of Che Guevara which manages to be surprisingly apolitical. In the poem "Notas al pie de un bailarín" in the second part of the book, his imagery and themes of movement, sensitivity and sensibility are subtly fused:

Bailarín: tus dedos, antenas mutiladas,
 Escuchan rumores de abanicos aleteando en un vapor
 (que te envuelve
 Como jardín tiernamente carnívoro,
 Como una vitrina de invenciones pálidas en que
 (ejecutas un pas de deux,
 Con esposas en las manos, convencido de que tus
 (huesos costillares
 Son tu única y verdadera cárcel.

Bailarín: la materia es sorda de nacimiento,
 Ignora que el ancla es una golondrina a revés
 Y no sabe transformar la zarza muerta de sus ataduras,
 Ni vadear la marea que se origina en el vaivén de
 los gladiolos.
 ("Notas al pie de un bailarín," Pedir el
 fuego, pp. 72-73.)

In the interpretation of the dancer, as in the words of the poet, there exists the capacity for giving new dimensions to matter. Matter can be freed of its visual and ordinary connotations and an anchor truly can become a "swallow in reverse" flying freely.

After Pedir el fuego, Montes de Oca enjoyed an increased acceptance by critics, who finally seemed to be recognizing and appreciating his place in the vanguard

(Paz's "el Trueno") of the new and free flow of Mexican poetry. This critical acceptance was most clearly exemplified by Raúl Leiva's exuberant praise of Pedir el fuego: "En esta poesía, esplende, flor y pájaro, grito de sol amurallado, la imagen poética. Ella posee la virtud esencial de ensanchar el lenguaje, sirviendo, así a su destino inmortal: La comunicación entre los hombres."³⁷

The critics were still somewhat reticent about giving all-out praise, however. J. M. Cohen, who situated Montes de Oca in the line of descent from Blake to Rimbaud, lamented somewhat the influence of surrealism on his talent "Already too anarchic by nature"³⁸ and even Octavio Paz believed that Montes de Oca's "Trueno"--"debería conocer un límite."³⁹ Ramón Xirau, in his 1968 article "Poetas recientes de México," explained what he believed to be the reasons for Montes de Ocas's (as well as other young Mexican poets') exuberance and individuality:

Poetas de la postguerra, vivían un mundo inestable, de paz apenas y de acaso guerra, un mundo por otra parte, que siguen viviendo los más jóvenes hoy en día. [1968] Vivían, además, en una circunstancia específicamente mexicana que se encuentra en la raíz de no pocas de sus obras: el vertiginoso crecimiento urbano en todo el país. Esta doble situación objetiva les llevaba a ver que

³⁷Raúl Leiva, "La poesía de Montes de Oca," México en la Cultura, (16 de marzo, 1969), p. 3.

³⁸Cohen, "The Eagle and the Serpent," p. 373.

³⁹Paz, prologue to Poesía en movimiento, p. 27.

el poeta no puede concebirse como ser aparte y que la poesía es labor más de artesano que de artista. Claro está que estos rasgos comunes no determinan una coincidencia de estilos o de conceptos poéticos. De hecho cada poeta muestra su autenticidad en una serie de acentos y matices personales que constituyen su diferencia individual.⁴⁰

It seems, however, that Montes de Oca is in no way bound by the milieu of "una circunstancia específicamente mexicana" or by what is depicted by Paz as an era (1935-1950) of more or less socialist nationalism and realism in Mexican literature,⁴¹ (characterized by the writings of Efrain Huerta in his middle period of "poemas políticos.")⁴² And, while poets these days are often rather indefinitely and inadequately identified chronologically by "generations," (Xirau places Montes de Oca in the "generation of the 40's"⁴³ and Cohen places him with the poets of the 50's,⁴⁴ for example), it seems most logical to classify Montes de Oca neither by temporality nor through thematic or formal affinities, but by a measure of his own individual ability to communicate to all generations of this

⁴⁰Ramón Xirau, "Poetas recientes de México," Mundo Nuevo, No. 3a (diciembre, 1968), p. 67.

⁴¹Paz, Puertas al campo, p. 123.

⁴²Paz, Poesía en movimiento, p. 20.

⁴³Xirau, p. 70.

⁴⁴Cohen, p. 372.

century. This measure can only be made by his individual readers, ultimately, and this only by careful study and knowledge of the changes through which his poetry has gone and may go.

Pedir el fuego, which moves from the poet's jubilation of loving everything in "En animal de amor la magia me convierte" to his despair of losing the "pura explosión de la verdad,"⁴⁵ is not the culmination of Marco Antonio Montes de Oca's work but is followed by the Poesía reunida which will be discussed in Chapter V. The Poesía reunida is part of the poet's whole production which, hopefully, will continue to mature in its exploration of the word. It is this vital aspect of the poet's quest for the word and its power through poetry which will be introduced in Chapter II.

⁴⁵Montes de Oca, Pedir el fuego, México, 1968, p. 82. (The "pura explosión de la verdad" refers to Che Guevara.)

CHAPTER II

Marco Antonio Montes de Oca's Concept of Poetry and the "Magic Word"

Whether or not a poet occupies himself with creating or defining a formal theory or concept of poetry, his work is very often either the end product of his belief in some concept of communication, or the work itself is the steady process of creation of that belief. For Marco Antonio Montes de Oca both processes seem to be functioning. He has certain definite ideas about what poetry is and does and his works serve to illustrate his beliefs and to put them into practice. This chapter will present Montes de Oca's concept of why and what poetry is, of what it is made and how it is made.

In general, Montes de Oca's attitude toward poetry and poetic communication is illustrated by his expression of a positive belief in the power of the word to lead to man's ultimate triumph. That triumph is man's understanding of himself and the universe. The word, the power of the word exists, but the poet gives it life. Furthermore,

according to Montes de Oca, it is not only his desire but his responsibility to do this:

La poesía es destino de muy pocos; asumirlo es un acto de anonadante gravedad y casi seguro fracaso. Ciertas responsabilidades curvan la espalda con sólo nombrarlas. El poeta es la conciencia del canto. . . . Él es la destreza del agua. La acción que transforma las palabras en acción. . . . Como se ve, todos usan la toga aunque a muchos no les sienta a la medida. ¿Inventamos la posibilidad de ser? ¿La posibilidad de ser nos inventa? Ante la disyuntiva una consigna segura nos define y defiende: el deber de trazar un camino lo más amplio posible a nuestra exaltación humana.¹

The word is precursory but only when the poet puts his hand to the pen can the word be given action and meaning.

Montes de Oca sees the poetic process itself as completely free and open. At any given moment it is possible for the poet to grasp the key to the universe through his own consciousness and understanding of the word: "Un poema puede ser remontado como un río. Después del papel está la tinta. Sobre la tinta se posa la pluma. Al cabo de la pluma hay una mano. Tras la mano la conciencia del canto no tiene ya un orden posterior al cual remitirse y es, por tanto, un eje posible del universo. Aspirar a esa conciencia ya es tener un poco de ella. 'Merece lo que sueñas,' frase con que Octavio Paz cierra su "Águila o sol," no pierde vigencia. Habrá que repetirla siempre con viva humildad."²

¹Montes de Oca, Marco Antonio Montes de Oca, pp. 43-44.

²Montes de Oca, p. 44.

Though Montes de Oca may owe much to the surrealist tradition of complete freedom of expression, it is obvious that he is not a proponent of the subconscious expressing itself on paper in automatic writing. It may be the surrealist influence which is present in his imaginative and, at times, unexpected metaphors, but Montes de Oca is actually more in the tradition of Vicente Huidobro and his Creacionismo when he speaks of the hand bringing a new order to the universe. He, like the "pequeño dios," Huidobro, creates his own realities as he puts hand to pen and releases the realities locked with words: "En mi concepto la palabra se encuentra como embarazada de aquella realidad que nombra."³

Montes de Oca calls his reality "nuestra exaltación humana." Raúl Leiva, in his 1969 article "La poesía de Marco Antonio Montes de Oca," characterizes Montes de Oca's reality as being an expression of a clever extraction of the dialectics of dreams and action, reality and ideals: "Por eso mismo, su deslumbradora poesía es una embestida solar en contra de la rutina y del lugar común. Sus imágenes son correspondencias con una realidad total en donde los objetos y los seres vuelven a hallar la armonía perdida, el abolido amor, la embriaguez esen-

³Montes de Oca, p. 41.

cial. . . .Es un verdadero furor sagrado el que estremece su canto; en su obra sujeto y el objeto recobran su antigua esencialidad desnuda; la palabra vuelve a nombrar, a recrear lo cotidiano, transformándolo en chorro de luz que corre y borra la mugre del mundo."⁴

The techniques of Montes de Oca's poetry and his themes, then, are virtually inseparable. His images come from reality to express what he believes to be the ultimate reality of order, harmony and man's ennoblement. It is the poet who expresses this reality and it is Montes de Oca as himself, the poet, who speaks in and through his poetry.

It is his belief in the realities contained within the word, for example, that leads Montes de Oca to express a negative attitude toward what Octavio Paz calls "los autores que cultivan el 'decoro'"⁵ and in what he himself calls "purismo." Paz's "decoro" and Montes de Oca's "purismo" are both terms referring to that poetry, however successful or popular, which may have intricate and decorative imagery and systems of metaphors and which may be quite polished and formally perfect. Aside from this formalistic aspect of the art, however, it has nothing more to com-

⁴Raúl Leiva, "La poesía de Marco Antonio Montes de Oca," Cuadernos Americanos, Num. xxviii (junio, 1969), p. 175.

⁵Octavio Paz, prologue to Poesía en movimiento, (México, 1966), p. 8.

municate to the reader. Montes de Oca would say that it is lacking in reality. It is his denial of the word as being limited to the mere function of decoration which prompts Montes de Oca to classify himself as a mole: "Yo no tenía larga vista. Mi símbolo vital no es el lince sino el topo; el animal que ve con su cuerpo y construye y cava y organiza. Como un topo buscaba alguna posibilidad de expresión fuera del purismo que tanto ha dañado a la poesía escrita en México."⁶

The poet's affinity with the blind but feeling animal, "que ve con su cuerpo," appears even in his first work, "Ruina de la infame Babilonia":

Y me duele la vida,
 me duelen esos topos inflados de cascajo
 que llevan túneles al pedernal,
 y con ojos rojos como lámparas
 atraviesan las densas fumarolas
 y aún soportan sobre el tibio pelaje
 todas las estrellas y los ríos.
 ¡Oh mineros abrumados
 templorosos tamemes del planeta!
 contemplad, contemplad conmigo el aire negro,
 el agua vacía de la que bebe el hombre ahito
 las tristes piedras que alguna vez fueron un incendio
 y casi una mirada.⁷

These lines are a very important clue to an understanding of what Montes de Oca's poetry is all about and to the

⁶Montes de Oca, p. 27.

⁷Marco Antonio Montes de Oca, "Ruina de la infame Babilonia," published in Delante de la luz cantan los pájaros (México, 1959), p. 10. (This is the only work of Montes de Oca of which I was unable to see the first edition.)

"whys" of some of his methods which some of the kindest criticism has called "almost wilful indiscipline"⁸ and the sharpest criticism has called "exagerado anhelo snobista."⁹

Man, for Montes de Oca, is satiated ("ahito"). He has seen all and done all trying to quench his thirst for understanding with "agua vacía"--meaningless and empty solaces. It is the feeling poet-mole who must--it is his duty as "porter of the planet"--re-awaken man to an understanding and appreciation of the most basic experiences and sensations, exemplified by the "sad rocks which were once a conflagration." Man must not just see a rock, recognize it as such and appreciate it as a rock, but he must be aware of what it was before ("incendio") and what it might be in the future. "Rock" is not a concrete dead object, but part of a process of being. In later poetry Montes de Oca decides that if there is a divine level to existence it is recognizable in this process:

Y es que la vida abraza nuestro divino nivel
 cuando reside en el desarrollo y no en el fruto,
 cuando está en el movimiento y no en la flecha,
 en el rastro que deja la rodante naranja y no
 (en el árbol,
 en el memorable, alucinado viaje que sólo un niño
 (emprende a veces.¹⁰

It is the evolution, change, and movement of all

⁸J. M. Cohen, "The Eagle and the Serpent," The Southern Review, Vol. III, No. ii (Spring, 1965), p. 373.

⁹Elías Nandino, review of Pliego de testimonios, Es-taciones, Vol. II, Num. v (primavera, 1956), p. 95.

¹⁰Montes de Oca, "En el umbral de la plegaría,"

aspects of life which must be understood and here again, the "mole" constructs, digs and organizes what might seem to be a chaos of metaphors and processes for man to contemplate. Montes de Oca does not consciously set out to create chaos with his "imaginación privilegiada,"¹¹ for his great preoccupation with communication would contradict any tendency toward deliberate hermeticism on his part: "De cuantos principios sostenía el poeticismo,¹² falsos en su mayoría, uno de ellos, el de la claridad, todavía me parece irrenunciable. El poema es algo que requiere ser entendido. El misterio mismo precisa de una semántica."¹³ In his poetry itself he points out the alternative to this clarity:

De nada sirvió el gran prodigio
 si cada hombre habla en el desierto, come de su voz,
 rasga el aire murado de la palabra,
 tortura a solas los sangrantes flancos de la sílaba
 y pierde entre sus labios el esfumado mendrugo
 (de la claridad.¹⁴)

Even in "Ruina de la infame Babilonia," then, his first and probably most criticized work, we see the first

Delante de la luz cantan los pájaros (México, 1959), p. 78.

¹¹Nandino, review of Pliego de testimonios, p. 94.

¹²See Chapter I of this study for references to "poeticismo" and the "poeticistas."

¹³Montes de Oca, p. 56.

¹⁴Montes de Oca, "Ruina de la infame Babilonia," Delante de la luz cantan los pájaros, p. 12.

clear indications of his attitude that the word can deceive man ("el aire murado de la palabra") if he "speaks alone in the desert," and "loses the crumbs of clarity." Man isolated from life and alone with only his own word will not find the truth of the whole of life and reality.

After this early negative tone of "Ruina de la infame Babilonia" where man is isolated from and in conflict with all his surroundings and where the word of man in this situation is seen as basically ineffective and often only adding to man's confusion, Montes de Oca changes his focus to one of involvement in Contrapunto de la fe. Man is dying from a lack of freedom: "Sin libertad muere el halcón."¹⁵ While he lives he avoids the truth: "Vivo el halcón,/ huyen de la palabra que asesina siempre;"¹⁶ but there is still the possibility of the renewal of the word: "pues escuchando y cantando/ el hombre renueva su palabra."¹⁷

It is in Contrapunto de la fe that we see quite

¹⁵Montes de Oca, Contrapunto de la fe (México, 1955), p. 7. (No page numbers are given in the "Los Presentes" edition. For my convenience I have numbered the pages beginning with No. 1 for the title page. This line does not appear in the version of Contrapunto de la fe published in Delante de la luz cantan los pájaros, but the same sense still survives in the first lines of the poem in that volume, p. 19.)

¹⁶Montes de Oca, Contrapunto de la fe, p. 9; p. 20 of Delante de la luz cantan los pájaros.

¹⁷Montes de Oca, Contrapunto de la fe, p. 11; p. 31 of Delante de la luz cantan los pájaros.

clearly that all the beliefs of Montes de Oca have their center in the confidence that "in the beginning was the Word" and in faith in the word of Christ, his "colibrí":

Yo siento el tranquilo desorden de tus alas, colibrí.
 Cuando así lo quieres,
 el aerolito se descarna y se envuelve de tu gloria.
 Revestida con estupor y lágrimas
 el alma sale por los flancos esponjados de su niebla
 a blindarse con la túnica de tu palabra, . . .¹⁸

Refuge is found in the tunic of Christ's word and while this word is not always heeded nor understood, the poet continues to write because his faith is in the word, the colibrí.

In Contrapunto de la fe, when the colibrí hides itself, the world crumbles. When the colibrí reappears the world becomes springlike and clear. Montes de Oca sees these situations as mutually dependent: "Sombra y luz se deben mutuamente. Su contraposición engendra movimiento, dispone bienaventurados espacios donde el colibrí--símbolo de Jesucristo--entroniza el aleteo de su fugitiva eternidad. . . .Es la fe, con sus altibajos, lo que imanta o destierra los trofeos volubles del absoluto amor."¹⁹ He writes out of his belief in the possibility of expressing this Word which is God, which is absolute Love: "Para el poeta, cada palabra es su amada única, Dulcinea

¹⁸Montes de Oca, Contrapunto de la fe, p. 12; p. 21 of Delante de la luz cantan los pájaros. (Not containing the exact words.)

¹⁹Montes de Oca, p. 40.

del Toboso que es invento y realidad a la vez."²⁰ His own invention, inventiveness and the reality of sensual experience--from these come the words with which the poet can express the only true word, which expresses the poet's "eje del universo."

Pursuing this matter of invention in relation to Montes de Oca's work, Mauricio de la Selva writes: "Toda la obra de Marco Antonio Montes de Oca a excepción de Pliego de testimonios está concebida dentro de un juego de imágenes puramente creacionistas, huidobrianas."²¹ Raúl Leiva would tend to agree with him: "Hoy lo [Montes de Oca] sentimos más cerca del creacionismo auténtica de Huidobro y más alejado de aquellos náufragos (Bretón y compañía) del barco surrealista."²² But Leiva also recognizes that Montes de Oca's intention is more linked with reality than Huidobro's--that is, it builds on reality, it does not attempt always to create a new reality--and that Montes de Oca's poetry is based on the concept of the word as absolute communion and love mentioned above:

²⁰Montes de Oca, p. 41.

²¹Mauricio de la Selva, review of Delante de la luz cantan los pájaros, Revista Iberoamericana, Vol. XXV, Num. 1, (jul.-dic., 1960), p. 366.

²²Raúl Leiva, "La poesía de Marco Antonio Montes de Oca," Cuadernos: Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura, Num. lxxii (junio, 1963), p. 47.

"Montes de Oca opone [a los surrealistas] hoy una poesía que es como una 'columna de pajaros' que ampara a una realidad original, a un mundo de inocencia por donde el poeta transita gozoso, descubriendo y nombrando las cosas. Si a veces el aire parece ser de piedra, a él lo salvan las fuerzas elementales del amor, las que le revelan que sólo apoyándose en la tierra puede sentir que vuela."²³

Octavio Paz's idea of Montes de Oca's poetry as vertical and ascending movement²⁴ is again brought to mind with Leiva's allusion to the "columna de pajaros"²⁵ image. The image begins with, then builds upon what he calls "original reality" or the concrete reality of sensorial experiences by giving it unexpected qualities or connections. Another good example of this technique in that particular stanza would be "las paralelas que se anudan"--the parallels that tie themselves together--by definition an impossibility, but like the "géiser de soles," visually quite possible to imagine.

Montes de Oca would call these procedures two aspects

²³Leiva, "La poesía de Marco Antonio Montes de Oca," p. 47.

²⁴Octavio Paz, prologue to Poesía en movimiento, p. 26.

²⁵See Montes de Oca's "Cancion para celebrar lo que no muere," Cantos al sol que no se alcanza (México, 1961), p. 7:

Hijo único de la noche
que bordas con la mayor impaciencia
un buque rojo en el bastidor lunar;
vuelve desde tu castillo crestado con el festón
(de mis halagos

of a single phenomenon: "Los objetos poseen una cara leal y otra fantástica; son monedas con un anverso que podemos tocar y con un reverso que debemos imaginar. El vuelo de esa moneda es el poema. Sus virajes en el espacio merecen larguísima atención."²⁶ Using this example to deny that his is an inflationary art or one of propaganda, he states that it is enough for him "to be in tune with" ("estar al tanto") the twistings of the coin: "No estoy de acuerdo con la literatura inflacionaria. Cada semana, los columnistas, mueven el corazón del público hacia un foco atencional que se funde a la semana siguiente. Estos servidores del 'up to date' no advierten las obvias diferencias que hay entre creación y propaganda editorial. No me gustan las posiciones de extrema vanguardia. . . . 'Estar al tanto' ¡Vaya tarea costosa e inútil! Yo no quiero estar al tanto de nada. Es el pulso de la vida lo que necesita auscultación permanente. . . . Y no conozco otra cosa de la que sea necesario estar

y brota en mí como una columna de palomas entre
 como un géiser de soles bajo (el mosaico roto,
 pues sin ti el dulce absurdo no sucede jamás
 y no se trenzan los cuernos del buey,
 ni se anudan las paralelas,
 ni vuelve la carne al muñón
 con una estrella entre los dedos.

²⁶Montes de Oca, p. 55.

al tanto."²⁷ It is this dual view of reality and his concentration on expressing both sides of the coin which can lead to a misunderstanding of the intent of Montes de Oca's imagery. It is not meant to confuse but to communicate.

Linking the concept of love of all the world for all the world and faith in the palabra (which we have seen Montes de Oca call "su amada única"), Montes de Oca's poetry acquires great potential power to express what he believes to be the true pulse of life. This force is identified as "la magia" in his long poem which forms the first part, "El corazón de la flauta," of his book Pedir el fuego.

The poem opens with Montes de Oca himself as protagonist. When touched by this yet unexplained "magic," he becomes an ingenuous being capable of loving and appreciating everything that surrounds him:

En animal de amor la magia me convierte
Y ya no conozco otro amo que el amor

Amo lo que está abajo
Amo hacia arriba y en todas direcciones
Animal de amor así hay que llamarme
Y cada línea de esta encrespada letanía
Ha sido escrita para decir lo mismo. . . .
(Pedir el fuego, p. 11.)

His poem, then, "esta encrespada letanía," is a celebration of his state of being the simple "animal de amor" whose condition of loving is the one he attributes in his auto-

²⁷Montes de Oca, p. 55.

biography to poetry itself: "La poesía es una historia de una vela de armas. En ella se hace patente el amor de todo el mundo hacia todo el mundo."²⁸

The poet, through love, is as one with all the world and his poetry is a waiting and a guarding ("una vela de armas") to express this oneness. It involves that process of becoming mentioned earlier in this chapter. Time is not chopped up into arbitrary segments which follow in sequence, but it is a kind of continuously flowing present ("Hoy es mañana/ Mañana quizá sea tarde o tal vez nunca"²⁹), very reminiscent, of course, of Octavio Paz's "todo es presente."³⁰

It is this power that the word has which enables it to step outside the chronological movement of time that Montes de Oca suggests here:

Amo esto amo aquello
 No una vez ni varias sino siempre
 La palabra-hastamañana
 La palabra-manoplaquedetienealmeteoromaságil.
 (Pedir el fuego, p. 12.)

The word contains the power as of a gauntlet ("manopla"--an iron glove or even a baseball glove) to grasp and stop even the most agile meteor in its flight. It is itself

²⁸Montes de Oca, p. 41.

²⁹Montes de Oca, Pedir el fuego, p. 12.

³⁰Octavio Paz, "Fuente," Libertad bajo palabra (La Edición, México, 1960), p. 273.

an invention like that of the "true" inventor which Montes de Oca discusses in Las fuentes legendarias: "Por eso amo tanto al inventor que da a sus palabras un refulgente baño de eternidad. El inventor verdadero desprecia a los pequeños fabricantes de comodidades. Su reino es de este mundo pero pocos saben dónde está. Para dar con él, basta localizar en el mapa del corazón la llaga azul que lo canta y lo denuncia. El verdadero inventor mira en el futuro un presente no instalado, vivo de sí mismo, tranquilamente sentado entre canciones cuyo auge cegador está a punto de irrumpir."³¹

In the lines from Pedir el fuego we see the poet-inventor envisioning just this unfixed present in the future with "La palabra-hastamañana." The word is not just "tomorrow" but contains the meanings (and many more possibilities) of "until," "as far as," "even," and "also tomorrow." The poet is not only an inventor, but something of a magician (in Spanish the word "inventor" also carries the meaning of "contriver,") who manipulates these various tones and meanings of the word.

Thus it seems natural that later in the poem "En animal de amor la magia me convierte" Montes de Oca begins to associate the power of the word with the magic which

³¹Montes de Oca, "El inventor," Las fuentes legendarias (México, 1966), pp. 15-16.

he has mentioned in the first and title line of the poem:

Mi magia no es blanca negra o incolora
 Toma el color de aquello que transforma
 Cultiva prodigios aleatorios
 Maravillas asomándose entre terrones de brasas
 Penachos sembrados en nubes de piedra
 Cuando con entera libertad mi magia
 Me permite su arco y yo disparo
 Agudos huesos que silban como flautas. . . .
 (Pedir el fuego, p. 28.)

The word as magic, then, is again emphasized as being based on reality--it "takes the color of that which it transforms"--while it creates marvels using reality. Montes de Oca sees the word as something participating in free and continual change and it permits him, as poet, to launch his expression freely, as an arrow, away from himself.

The "palabra-manoplaquetienealmeteoromaságil" is itself, as we have seen, a kind of magic object with virtually the rhythmic and sonoric effect of incantation. The invention here renews the concept of palabra by combining words usually considered to have rather set definitions (manopla, detener, meteoro, ágil). Written together without the usual typographical spacing they become one word--a new word redefining "The Word." The invention captures a new concept for palabra which in turn is attempting to grasp the freedom and movement pictured by the invention.

The freedom from definitive limitations of the word

which the poet hopes for is positively gained by the act of poetic creation--or invention--itself. This act of invention is somehow linked to the poet's own thoughts. Although he does not fully understand himself, the poet feels drawn toward self-liberation by the expressive power of words: "Hoy quiero decir los pensamientos que me piensan."³² He feels that there is some kind of basic force behind the words which he uses. He does not attempt to define this mystery, only to describe its effect.

He describes this force of influence as "Gracia" throughout the poem "En animal de amor la magia me convierte." It is this "Gracia" which makes what he feels to be his own valid expression or communication different from the often deliberately confusing and meaningless formulas and incantations usually thought of as or associated with the expression of magic:

Elfos Hadas y Merlines
 Hacen aquí
 Un papel escaso y sordomudo
 Sólo tú magnificas en la penumbra soterrada
 El lujo de tu propio ser
 Sólo tú magnífica alcahueta
 Matas lo que nunca se consume
 Y sorprendes al fondo de una catacumba
 El oro en flor de mi linaje atropellado.
 (Pedir el fuego, p. 35.)

"La Gracia" (the "tú" here), then, acts as an intermediary ("alcahueta") between the spiritual depths of the

³²Montes de Oca, Pedir el fuego, p. 18.

poet and the unending continuity of natural and spiritual flux which surrounds him ("lo que nunca se consume"). Within the concept of time as a continuing present, this elusive "Gracia," which is described as "a leaning wall" and a "bridge," (also as "water suspended between the glass and the mouth"), gives the poet a dependable glimpse into the basic unity of all things:

La Gracia es lejana y es apenas entrevista
 Oh muro inclinado
 Agua suspendida entre el vaso y la boca
 Mientras que cien años pasan y no pasan
 Y la misma historia se repite
 La misma historia pasa con sus botas feroces
 Implacables ruidosas
 Mas el puente no cede. . . .
 (Pedir el fuego, p. 15.)

"La Gracia" is not merely a strong force in the spiritual realm but it also allows the poet to put the world and its rules, daily life, and his physical reality in perspective:

Gracia para yacer en el cuerpo de uno mismo
 Como en un tostado sarcófago
 Que ya precisa ser abandonado
 Y Gracia para esto y Gracia para todo
 Y Gracia para soportar que la vida maestra
 Nos peque con su regla
 Sobre la carne siempre lastimada.
 (Pedir el fuego, p. 14.)

Basically, then, the poet does not try to escape from the laws or rules ("reglas") of life into some kind of spiritual meditation. His "Gracia" does not merely imply some mystical "other-worldliness"; it is more a state of total

awareness of all the spiritual and physical aspects of life. It is from this total awareness that the poet draws the words--his tools for creation--with which he communicates this same awareness. The creative process, then, a self-perpetuating process, is not one of desertion of life but necessitates and feeds upon full immersion in all aspects of existence. "La Gracia" is this true communion of the poet with all things and the "magic word" is the expression of this communion.

Neither is this "magic word" something which rains down like manna. It requires real and often painful work and struggle on the part of the poet to coax and forge just the right meanings from words:

Esa misma palabra que tanto he torturado
 Y que no dejare' ir
 Hasta que diga todo cuanto sabe.
 (Pedir el fuego, p. 42.)

Thus, as we have seen, the word is not just an adornment nor an escape, but it carries a multitude of significances which must be wrung out and examined. The poet laments just these multitudinous significances in the short poem "Ambos lados" of Pedir el fuego, while himself using two of the most multi-significant and controversial words being bantered about in recent years ("izquierdo" and "derecho"):

He abierto el diccionario,
 Sin encontrar, maldita sea, una palabra que no
 (este' provista de su lado izquierdo
 Y de su igualmente famoso lado derecho.
 (Pedir el fuego, p. 52.)

However, it is because of--not in spite of--the variety of meaning that the all-important word may have the possibility of pricking or awakening the poet's fellow man to new ways of looking at the universe:

Lo que importa es la palabra
 La palabra gentil obesa de significados
 La lenta palabra que se obstina contra un muro
 Y cae como un cuerpo incendiado cae
 En la deseada zona que pretende herir o despertar.
 (Pedir el fuego, p. 27.)

In summary, then, Montes de Oca believes that poetry is the expression of the poet's state of "Gracia," his communion with all things, physical and spiritual. This expression is not always spontaneous or automatic. It is the poet's responsibility to his fellow men to try to communicate his total vision of reality and the universe which has come through this communion. The word is his tool for expression and the word becomes "magic" when it gives new meanings to physical reality through new combinations and correspondences of words with each other. The most obvious way that the word can become "magic" is best illustrated by the example of one of Montes de Oca's poems. The following poem, quoted in its entirety, is titled "A nivel del mar." It is one of the shorter poems from the second section of Pedir el fuego and in it the poet speaks to and with his fellow men in an attempt to increase their awareness of the miracles of life around them:

Claridades, milagros,
 Animaciones súbitas en las oficinas del aire,
 Campanas que se ablandan hasta mudarse en cabezas
 (de pulpo
 En este universo donde nada cambia
 5 Y al que le da lo mismo si tú lloras o yo canto,
 Le da lo mismo romper o no romper manteles de
 (hojas que el acebo ha llorado
 Y que la calma extiende sobre arrugas de la frente
 Ocultando el nadir de la fábula plena
 El nadir de todo cuanto canta o hace guiños
 10 Entre visiones aplacadas y rocas negras que se
 (desprenden
 Dispersando racimos de oráculos, álbumes de niebla
 (donde tosen fotografías que nunca debieron
 (perderse.
 ¡Perdámonos ahora con ellas! Perdámonos a seme-
 (janza del que busca órbita propia
 En la torrencial basura de los astros
 15 Y solo encuentra ventrículos llenos de alas
 Y aurículas que alojan otras alas de mayor poder.
 El himno entresonado requiere nuevas transfusiones,
 (más clorofila sagrada
 Para que el hombre vuelva a ser un planeta mínimo
 (y sumamente aventajado,
 Un instante con los días contados, gusano con luz
 (propia,
 20 Arma insultada por la quietud de las panoplias
 Y cuya descendencia no dobla sus hombros bajo el
 (Niágara.
 ¡Oh espíritus que no aceptan vivir a nivel del mar!
 Tenemos el gozo y la erupción y la nostalgia,
 Tenemos, sólo tenemos.
 25 Tenemos la rueda que captura su propio movimiento
 Y un cóndor bajo cada brazo,
 Horrorizados ambos porque nada satisface nuestro
 (deseo de altura.
 Perdámonos entonces como un amuleto de ozono
 Entre profundas bolsas nocturnas,
 Entre respiraderos por donde una gota de agua
 30 Asoma la irisada testa.
 Perdámonos para acaso resurgir
 Cuando el verde fruto joven y virgen se nos suba
 (a la cabeza,
 Cuando el rostro feroz de la hermosura
 Al fin nos dé la cara
 35 Y los remados años, los insomnios ejemplares,
 Apacienten visiones azotadas por flores de cuero
 Y manos sucias de tanto acariciar estatuas.
 ("A nivel del mar," Pedir el fuego, pp. 50-51.)

The poem is basically a celebration of that spark in men, those "espíritus que no aceptan vivir a nivel del mar," which enables them to rise above their mere physical existence. "Sea level" becomes Montes de Oca's expression for a basic if not actually base existence in which nothing changes and the universe does not care if "you cry or I sing." The poet wants us to experience just the opposite--the counterpoint--of this unmoving and unfeeling state of things. The exhilarating movements of: "animaciones súbitas en las oficinas del aire" and the unsuspected changes of "campanas que se ablandan hasta mudarse en cabezas de pulpo" and "rocas negras que se desprenden/ Dispersando racimos de oráculos" are directly contrasted with "este universo donde nada cambia" and which "le da lo mismo si tú lloras o yo canto." Throughout the poem great potential movement and change is portrayed against the background of this often stagnant and indifferent "universe" untouched by imagination.

For Montes de Oca, man's salvation from this non-sympathetic and self-composed universe, from this living at "sea level," is to lose himself in the miracles and movements both within and outside himself in order to find himself and his purpose. The universe will then no longer be the same for him because he will have found a new way of looking at it and at his place in it: "Perdámonos

a semejanza del que busca órbita propia/ En la torrencial
 basura de los astros/ Y sólo encuentra ventrículos llenos
 de alas/ Y aurículas que alojan otras alas de mayor poder."
 He may begin by looking for his own individual place in
 the universe, but the searcher will find much more than
 this. He will find a greater power in communion. As
 might be expected, the poet always uses positive move-
 ments upward and outward to stress this possible communion
 and change in man's outlook. "Oficinas del aire, órbita,
 astros, alas, planeta, gusano con luz propia" (the latter
 suggesting no longer the mere crawling worm but a brilliant
 and flying creature--the firefly,) "erupción, cóndor, al-
 tura," etc. are the most obvious examples of imagery in-
 dicating upward and outward movement.

Again, as in the beginning of the poem, this spirit
 of upward movement, this half-dreamed hymn of oneself
 creeping upward like a plant which needs more light ("El
 himno entresoñado requiere nuevas transfusiones, más
 clorofila sagrada"), this weapon which is frustrated by
 lack of conflict, and "cuya descendencia no dobla sus
 hombros bajo el Niágara," is set in contrast to forces
 exterior to himself. For neither the invented movements
 of mechanics ("la rueda que captura su propio movimiento")
 nor the movements of nature ("un cóndor bajo cada brazo")
 can satisfy man's spiritual desire to soar. That move-

ment must come from within--hence the lines stressing "tenemos" and "sólo tenemos" in the poem. Man is already the possessor of this liberty, if he only knew it.

There must first be the mole-like inward movement through the "bolsas nocturnas" and the "respiraderos" of our own personal mines--our individual sources of value and things most valuable. Having found this awesome and "ferocious face of beauty," we then can emerge ("gusano con luz propia") with our new knowledge, able to take our place in the universe, if only as a "planeta mínimo." This final upward and optimistic surge of the poem again has a counterpoint set to it in the final lines describing the wasted and spoiled years of looking for these "claridades," this "verde fruto joven y virgen," in misunderstood and artificially manufactured passions and objects: "visiones azotadas por flores de cuero/ Y manos sucias de tanto acariciar estatuas." The final counterpoint gives the effect of a minor tone to the poem and quite effectively brings the reader back to "sea level" after an exhilarating glimpse into his own possibilities of liberation.

The poet's "magic word" is in evidence here, then, as he has introduced new concepts to the reader. He has caused the reader to think thoughts and see things that he has never thought or seen before, by combining real and "normal" objects (that is, "normal" in the sense of how

they are usually perceived by the senses) with new and unexpected movements and changes. This is the word becoming "magic." Bells that change themselves into octopus heads, rocks that sprout oracles and albums of fog where photographs cough are not new inventions by Montes de Oca, they are new interplays which give old and familiar things new and more dimensions. Perhaps they are truly "magic" dimensions, since the words do broaden the reader's spheres of existence and the more involved, the more willing the reader is to accept and grasp these new dimensions, the more powerful, real and truly magic that word becomes.

Octavio Paz, in the chapter "Arte mágico" of his collection Las peras del olmo, describes just such a magic object which allows the user to broaden his spheres of existence: "El objeto mágico abre ante nosotros su abismo relampagueante: nos invita a cambiar y a ser otros sin dejar de ser nosotros mismos."³³ Montes de Oca's reader has seen that he can soar higher than the condor and he has been brought abruptly back to sea level which should be no longer quite the same nor enough for him. He is still himself, but now he is more, because he has added new concepts to his reality. For such a reader the poet needs not sermonize nor compromise himself, for the words themselves and their interactions--the medium--truly be-

³³Octavio Paz, "Arte mágico," Las peras del olmo (México, 1966), p. 187.

come his message. The words may speak for themselves, but it is the poet who is responsible for choosing which ones will speak and how they will relate to each other.

In the last poem of the book Pedir el fuego, "Oda por la muerte del Che Guevara," Montes de Oca comes closer to being socially "comprometido" than in any other of his works. This aspect is certainly not stressed in this book because, for him, Che Guevara as "pura explosión de la verdad"³⁴ is just one more aspect of the poet's feeling (he calls it "love") for the unity of all experience represented by his lines:

Como ayer hoy es cierto que te amo ["te"--palabra]
Y que nunca te me olvidas
Mundo mujer carne cielo.
("En animal de amor la magia me convierte,"
Pedir el fuego, p. 13.)

The line "Mundo mujer carne cielo" illustrates Montes de Oca's major themes and also indicates their development. "Mundo" is usually seen as "things" (zapatos, jarras, cama, etc.). La "mujer" is "la gemela terrestre"³⁵ of "la Gracia" but this relationship and a clarification of what might be physical woman's relationship to the poetic process are never fully developed in the poem--or in Montes de Oca's work up to the present. Finally, then, the "carne"--the poet's relation with nature

³⁴Montes de Oca, "Oda por la muerte de Che Guevara," Pedir el fuego, p. 82.

³⁵Montes de Oca, "En animal de amor la magia me convierte," Pedir el fuego, p. 21.

and his own physical desires and limitations--and the "cielo"--his desire for spiritual freedom--complete his experiences with the word. The progression indicated here is from the general "mundo" of all things to the less general "mujer" as one of the specifics of "mundo." From "mujer" the poet moves to the even more specific "carne" of his own physical needs and then quickly shifts from the physical and specific to the general and ideal with "cielo."

It is through "la Gracia," his total awareness of the interrelations of all these things and conditions-- "mundo mujer carne cielo"--that the poet can experience the freedom and joy and also the very real work of poetic creation. He describes his work with the magic word as "mi placer maravilloso"³⁶ and affirms his relationship with poetry:

Yo canto y nada más
Esa es mi luz
Ese es mi gozo.³⁷

³⁶Montes de Oca, "En animal de amor la magia me convierte," Pedir el fuego, p. 44.

³⁷Montes de Oca, "En animal de amor la magia me convierte," Pedir el fuego, p. 43.

CHAPTER III

Themes in the Poetry of Marco Antonio Montes de Oca

Poetry and the word are the most important themes with which Montes de Oca concerns himself. They are important because only they make it possible for the poet to express the myriad interrelations and possibilities for interrelation of all of his experiences, both spiritual and physical.

Montes de Oca summarizes his total awareness of this spiritual and physical universe and his relationship to it in his poetry. His readers know that his poetic creation happens and what he does with words to make it happen can be seen, but the ways that he achieves the total communion which makes this creation possible is locked within the poetry itself. As we have seen, Montes de Oca calls this communion "la Gracia," a term which represents for him the mystery of the source of the poetic process--the "causa de que no haya efectos."¹ His poetic themes all seem to point toward an attempt to discover

¹Montes de Oca, "En animal de amor la magia me convierte," Pedir el fuego, p. 15.

and explain how the communion of "la Gracia" occurs and what happens when it does.

Throughout this chapter quotations from many of Montes de Oca's poems will clarify the poet's most important and recurring themes. Actual thematic development toward a consistency of ideas does not occur chronologically in Montes de Oca's work. The reader, instead, must read all the works noting recurrences of themes and then piece together the thematic relationships that stand out.

For Montes de Oca, the "cause of which there may be no effects," "la Gracia," is the source from which words gain their power of communication. As seen in the poem "A nivel del mar," part of this communication involves giving objects unexpected associations, changes and movements so that a word takes on a new reality for the reader. Another method is that of using a contrapuntal effect--the negative is stressed in order to call attention to the positive. But, Montes de Oca's premise is that words are valuable to communication because of all their many possible meanings. Without "la Gracia," without an insight on the part of the poet into the changing moods of words and into the possible effects that their changing and changeable meanings can have on the reader, then, there is little real communication and words can become worthless:

Las palabras palidecían hasta morir
 Pero no importaba demasiado
 Podían podrirse las palabras
 Bellas o terribles
 O imposibles como un grumo de fuego al fondo del
 (osario
 Para nada servían en aquellas horas de mala muerte
 Con palabras o sin ellas
 De todos modos en el lodo proseguíamos tiritando. . .
 ("En animal de amor la magia me con-
 vierte," Pedir el fuego, pp. 20-21.)

Based on the assumption that the poet's words are not dead nor rotting, but that they are given validity, vitality and power through the mysterious union of "la Gracia," there are several messages communicated by the use of these powerful words.

Montes de Oca's messages fall into four categories. He outlines these general areas of interest in his lines expressing love for "la palabra" when he describes the word as "Mundo mujer carne cielo."² The poet's own definition of the word, then, provides a useful outline of the four areas of experience which he explores in his poetry. These areas are mutually dependent and they do not occur in any kind of order or orderly progression in the poetry. Also, we may not infer that Montes de Oca sees his work as consistently dealing with these four areas. They are, however, a useful way to organize Montes de Oca's ideas about poetry.

²Montes de Oca, "En animal de amor la magia me convierte," Pedir el fuego, p. 13.

"Mundo," for Montes de Oca, can be generally described as those experiences which can be verified and measured by the senses of touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing. "Mundo" is "things"-- ("alas, cabelleras, colinas, cristales, cartas, flores, estrellas, caballos, almohadas," etc.)³--the sensual perception of which the poet attempts to convey to his reader. These individual "things," then, are but a point of departure for the poet in the course of his striving to communicate more basic processes. His purpose is not like that of Neruda in his Odas elementales where stressing the sensual minutiae of basic things (bread, onions, artichokes)⁴ elicits elementary and basic sensations, for example.

Generally "things" are not stationary for Montes de Oca. Their essence is in movement and change and the communication of the sensual perception of "mundo" involves an awareness of this movement and change. It is the inexplicability and abruptness of this force of change which we see in the prose-poem "El camaleón" from Las fuentes legendarias. When the boy Jorge presses the "doorbell" ("timbre") located in the tail of the chameleon which he

³Montes de Oca, "En el umbral de la plegaría," Delante de la luz cantan los pájaros, p. 72.

⁴Pablo Neruda, Odas elementales (Buenos Aires, 1967). ("Alcachofa," p. 17, "Cebolla," p. 41, "Pan," p. 151.)

has just found, a surprising transformation begins to take place:

Jorge oprimió el timbre. El camaleón comenzó a crecer convirtiéndose en un dinosaurio. En poco tiempo reconoció el terreno mientras engullía de un mismo bocado a la madre y al hijo. Después cruzó la reja devorando cuanto le vino en gana. Transcurrieron años antes de que un azar feliz arrojara una piedra contra el timbre de su cola. Otro azar, menos piadoso, la simple presión de algún objeto cercano, recreará algún día la pesadilla infame.

("El camaleón," Las fuentes legendarias, p. 18.)

The essence of change is its certainty. Change may be good or bad. It may be fascinating, as the chameleon is to the boy, or frightening, as when the chameleon later becomes a monster. The change may be planned or aided voluntarily (Jorge intends to press the "timbre" the first time) or it may be accidental as when the monster may be stopped by a chance rock. The change does not stop with the rock pressing the "timbre," however, but the potential for change remains and someday the nightmare will be recreated. Even though in Spanish the future tense may express probability, the poet effectively stresses this certainty of recurrence through the use of the future tense ("recreará") instead of the conditional or subjunctive which he might easily have chosen to indicate the mere probability of re-creation.

It is this certainty of change which the poet is trying to grasp, even to the modification of his own work

and experience when he states in his autobiography: "Admito la necesidad de cambio porque la existencia es evolución, búsqueda, ignición que devora la vida ya vivida y nos adelanta lo venidero."⁵ And he affirms in his poetry: "No deseo pan, agua, tálamo;/ Sino los poderes,/ Las alas del cambio, . . ."6

Change is that force which leads us to "that which is to come" ("lo venidero") and a part of this concept of change is what we call "time." Because of the link which time has with change, it is another of the poet's frequent themes.

Time, for Montes de Oca, is not merely the twelve segments measuring the daily revolutions of the earth in relation with the sun. Time is a way to express man's relation to the process of change and involves present, past, and future not as chronology or measurement, but as a different concept of revolution. It is revolution certainly not limited to the political and/or social sense, but in the sense of a complete and continuously evolving cycle.

Time is always flowing and changing, but like a river it remains essentially the same even though its

⁵Montes de Oca, p. 58.

⁶Montes de Oca, "Las maquinaciones del insomne," Vendimia del juglar, p. 29.

water is continually different. In this sense the essence of time is a constant present: "siento como fluye el tiempo hacia la inmovilidad."⁷ It is a feeling of this perpetuity that the poet strives for in his poetry:

Es por todo esto que yo sueño en derrumbar el
 (senorio del tiempo
 Y que no me concedo reposo
 Y que los muertos respiran
 Por entre la verde chimenea de las encinas
 Y que el poema se repliega en sí mismo
 Para convertirse en un río perpetuo
 Embalsamado y salmodiante.
 ("Trabajos del amor nunca perdido," Vendimia
 del juglar, p. 75.)

While man may seem to be limited in his relations with the "things" of the world to the perceptions of his five senses and a preconceived or pre-learned concept of physical reality, what Montes de Oca hopes to do is to add new dimensions to that concept by stressing the past and future changes to which that reality is subject. It is part of the poet's duty, then, to capture with words the feeling and concept of this constancy of change, for it is one of the essential aspects of existence. His experiences with change let him see the world and all its facets--good and bad--and the power that the word has to communicate this change inspires him to reject the idea that the world holds man somehow imprisoned:

Tocado por el ardor que funde la palabra
 Mi espíritu patria sin alhajas

⁷Montes de Oca, "El circo marino," Las fuentes legendarias, p. 41.

Es tan infeliz como la nube bajo las alfombras
 La leche nocturna no brilla ni alimenta
 Suena el muslo contra el llavero enloquecido
 En este mundo roto desde antes de estrenado
 En este mundo que el amor hace girar con las yemas

(de los dedos

En este mundo sin presente pero sin mañana

En este mundo

En este mundo donde aprendimos a llorar

Cuando nos dijeron que teníamos por cárcel

La ciudad del universo.

("Vía rápida," Fundación del entusiasmo, p. 15.)

Another one of the basic experiences of existence is love--"which makes the world turn with the tips of its fingers." We have seen love as a part of the communion of "la Gracia" which enables the poet at least to appreciate the potential power of the word to communicate the meaning of existence and at most to possibly come to an understanding of the significance of that existence. It is his love for the word that enables him to express himself at all.

The love of and for woman in the poetry of Montes de Oca cannot really be separated from this concept of love as the liberator of the word. We have seen woman called "la gemela terrestre"⁸ of "la Gracia," which leaves little doubt that love for woman can lead to this state of communion engendered by the abstract and undefined "Gracia."

In Montes de Oca's long love poem dedicated to his wife, we find his feeling for woman expressed. She, like poetry, is a continuous outflowing, another "río perpetuo"--a fountain whose drops do not return:

⁸ Montes de Oca, "En animal de amor la magia me convierte," Pedir el fuego, p. 21.

O dueña total de mi lado izquierdo
 Querida ausente que estás entre mis brazos
 Querido surtidor cuyas gotas no regresan.
 ("Bajo la tórrida ceremonia sin eclipse,"
Fundación del entusiasmo, p. 21.)

Like the river and like time, she gives of herself completely while always remaining complete. She is "siempre intacta siempre repartiéndose."⁹ In her presence, also, the traditional concept of time as a specific measurement vanishes: "Tiéndete ya sobre el diván/ Son las siete en punto de no sé qué día."¹⁰ Furthermore, without her presence there is no time at all:

Los instantes que no habitan tu nombre
 Simplemente no suceden
 Y porque nunca con tu aliento los tocaste
 Vacíos regresan a su fuente. . . .
 ("Bajo la tórrida ceremonia sin eclipse,"
Fundación del entusiasmo, p. 40.)

Because she has not made these instants a part of her self--"her name"--there is not even a present. It simply does not happen. With her presence, however, and through her love and his love for her, the poet is given a meaningful present and the power to make him create and communicate these instants of communion:

Abrázame te digo
 Y me levanté a velar mis dulces armas

⁹Montes de Oca, "Bajo la tórrida ceremonia sin eclipse," Fundación del entusiasmo, p. 25.

¹⁰Montes de Oca, "Bajo la tórrida ceremonia sin eclipse," Fundación del entusiasmo, p. 22.

Hasta que un día por culpa tuya
 Aprenda yo a cantar como hace falta.
 ("Bajo la tórrida ceremonia sin eclipse,"
Fundación del entusiasmo, pp. 25-26.)

Thus, woman's presence does contribute to the creative process and hers is, as is poetry's, another reality:

Tu misión era secreta
 Consistía en aclarar las superficies
 Y barrer con tu aliento
 La nata perfumada de los asfodelos
 Era otra realidad. . . .
 ("Bajo la tórrida ceremonia sin eclipse,"
Fundación del entusiasmo, pp. 30-31.)

She has the power, so admired and imitated by Montes de Oca, to make things clear and to sweep away the unnecessary in order to uncover this other more complete reality. It is through the sexual act, when the poet feels true communion with his beloved, that the circle of woman-love-word is made complete:

Oh amiga tan cegadoramente bella
 Comienza la noche
 Nuestro amor tiene la palabra.
 ("Bajo la tórrida ceremonia sin eclipse,"
Fundación del entusiasmo, p. 22.)

He shares love with his beloved and thus his love, above all else, has the privilege of speaking, of expressing itself. It has the word and the word is the dynamic force which expresses this communion of the poet and his love. Woman, for Montes de Oca, then, is another way for man, and the poet in particular, to come into contact with

his creative possibilities: "Eres mi manera de volar; eres el deseo a secas, un deseo más concreto que el sueño, más hermoso que la realidad."¹¹ Montes de Oca has written very little love poetry. Nevertheless, physical and spiritual love for woman is an important way for the poet to touch and attune himself with all things--a prerequisite to communicating these things and experiences through the word.

The third area of the poet's experience is "carne"--the flesh. From the beginnings of Montes de Oca's poetic work, (with the exception of the physical love for woman as a possibility for spiritual liberation), the body is portrayed as merely the keeper of the spiritual, emotional and thinking part of man:

y ni con todos los huesos juntos en la mano
podemos tener certeza de lo cierto,
ni siquiera en la hora en que el cuerpo
es un mero ataúd del corazón, . . .
("Ruina de la infame Babilonia," Delante de
la luz cantan los pájaros, p. 9.)

Our physical body is the "coffin of the heart" which makes us part of and limited by the natural world:

Vimos cabezas y brazos triturados
penosamente reflejados en las entretelas del río,
y piernas llenas de municiones
que se arrastraban en el polvo como pájaros de
(plomo.
Tenías razón, Tiresias

¹¹Montes de Oca, "Dama esencial," Las fuentes legendarias, p. 43. (See also "Fusión de sombras," p. 62 of this same volume, which is reminiscent of Octavio Paz's "Dos cuerpos," p. 71 of his Libertad bajo palabra.)

no somos parte del mundo, sino el mundo mismo;
 Formamos entre todos un cadáver perfecto,
 dueño por ciertas convulsiones de fingirse vivo,
 y golpeamos con ralos penachos y árboles desen-
 (ramados,
 las rocas del desierto
 y el agua misma que provocamos en sus grietas.
 ("Ruina de la infame Babilonia," Delante
de la luz cantan los pájaros, p. 11.)

"We are not part of the world, but the world itself."

Man cannot separate himself from the natural world. We, as flesh, are short-lived ("as one cadaver we imagine ourselves living for a certain few convulsions,") and we are of little consequence in comparison with water and the stones of the desert, which seem to be timeless in their existence. (The water and stones are somehow above the need for an arbitrary measurement of their presence on earth.)

Man, too, could be above the need for measure if he could reach the "cielo." "Cielo" for Montes de Oca is not limited by traditional religious connotations of "Heaven" or reward nor does it imply an opposite or "Hell." "Cielo" is man's spiritual possibilities and aspirations. It is the conflict between the "carne"--the limited physical nature of man--and the "cielo"--which forms the background for most of Montes de Oca's poetry.

Así el hombre, huésped momentáneo
 En la tierra que lo acepta sin paciencia,
 Celebra su gimnasia irremediable:
 Se levanta y cae,

Cae para luego levantarse,
 Siempre enfermo de suelo
 En su marcha enrosariada de tropiezos.
 ("Caer y levantarse," Fundación del entu-
siasmo, p. 86.)

Man, who has a brief and difficult visit on earth, is "always sick of the ground" and is continually trying to escape it.

Thus, the ruins that we see in "Ruina de la infame Babilonia," for example, represent the state in which the ground and flesh seem to take precedent. Men as "things" are impotent when they lose their faith and aspirations because of being limited by the "failed and broken wing" of flesh:

odiaré todas las cosas;
 la impotencia de los mortales que muestran en
 (su axila
 las negras hebras de un ala fracasada;
 los acribillados cuerpos
 que con una sola herida más
 se volverían una zanja infinita.
 ("Ruina de la infame Babilonia," Delante de
la luz cantan los pájaros, p. 14.)

Even the "counterpoint" in "Contrapunto de la fe" demonstrates the battle between "carne" and "cielo" as a partial stand-off. Man as material flesh may enjoy brief sensual pleasure but he is condemned to solitude and death. Meanwhile, the final victory and the duty of giving meaning to the blind journey on which he is thrust belong to the spiritual realm of "cielo:"

Así ha de ser,
 a eso estamos condenados,

hasta que en las postrimerías de la temporada de
 (la muerte,
 manos mil veces prometidas acaricien nuestras
 (sienes
 y despierten, rediman, salven
 la ciega jornada en que fuimos precipitados.
 ("Contrapunto de la fe," Delante de la luz
cantan los pájaros, p. 40.)

Physical death, a minor theme, is an innate part of the natural and inevitable process of change which man experiences. It is but one more revolution--not necessarily an end nor a beginning--but an introduction to change, as is birth. Montes de Oca sees this change following death as a spiritual awakening--a situation to strive for even in life.

The Pliego de testimonios is a testimony to this spiritual awakening, to this "promised land": "que es la de antes,/ la nunca abandonada, . . ."12 This idea of the spiritual realm as being "the one from before" is reflected in and becomes part of two more minor themes of Montes de Oca in reference to reaching or capturing this state of communion before actual physical death. We have already seen that physical love is one way to reach out toward this state. Another way to this truth is through memories and remembrances, the strongest of these being the searching for a memory of that which was before birth, seen so poignantly in "Atrás de la memoria":

12Montes de Oca, "Pliego de testimonios," Delante de la luz cantan los pájaros, p. 57.

De hinojos en el vientre de mi madre
Yo no hacía otra cosa que rezar,

No estaba yo al corriente de la realidad. . . .
("Atrás de la memoria," Fundación del entu-
siasmo, p. 45.)

It is this state of not being in physical reality, of being "before" reality, so to speak, that is part of the communion of "la Gracia." "La Gracia" is also a link with childhood, the state of a constant newness in which the child grows spiritually as his dreams expand:

En tus manos encomiendo al niño marinero
que crece cuando le falta piel
para tatuarse el perfil de lo que sueña.
Los ojos del niño
que se abren todos los días por primera vez,
a ti los encomiendo colibrí; . . .
("Contrapunto de la fe," Delante de la luz
cantan los pájaros, p. 25.)

The memories of childhood simplicity, innocence and inventiveness, then, if regressed, could bring the poet closer to "la Gracia." In a very real sense the poet seeks to become a child again and to see things with the awe and surprise of a child experiencing each new day as if it were his first.

A third method of reaching toward the truth of the communion of "la Gracia" is through the images evoked in dreams and their related states. His exclamation, "¡Oh imperio mío de sueños que me sobreviven/ y me condecoran con alas de verdad!"¹³ echoes Octavio Paz's con-

¹³Montes de Oca, "Callejón con salida al sueño," Cantos al sol que no se alcanza, p. 19.

cept of sleep and dreams as "una muerte que es vida más viva que la vida."¹⁴ Through dreams also, the poet comes closer to "la Gracia" and is able to envision the new relationships so important to his valid poetic communication of all experience, for the dream state: "Incorpora al mundo imperceptibles novedades."¹⁵ Through their expression in words, dreams and faith (the spiritual realm or "cielo") become identical:

Basta ya de podrir lo que nunca ha de madurar
 Cuando el espeso pétalo de la lengua
 Suda su perfume de palabras,
 Y prueba que la fe
 Es idéntica al sueño que la hace real.
 ("El mapa de unos sueños," Pedir el fuego,
 p. 70).

The individual as a part of humanity finds himself beginning to emerge into an awareness of the possibilities of existence:

Humanidad de hoy por la mañana
 Pan del sueño
 Caliente todavía. . . .
 ("Vía rápida," Fundación del entusiasmo, p. 17.)

Montes de Oca sees the understanding of faith, birth, death, and life (past, present, and future), for humanity and for each individual as being only a hair's breadth away when he nears his grasp of "la Gracia."

Another course which Montes de Oca recognizes as

¹⁴Octavio Paz, "Al sueño," Libertad bajo palabra, p. 236.

¹⁵Montes de Oca, "El sueño y su homenaje," Fundación del entusiasmo, p. 70.

possibly leading to the completion of the communion of "la Gracia" is "duermevela." "Duermevela" is that state between waking and sleeping in which man's subconscious is considered by psychologists to be emergent and a state in which imagery is very rich, vivid and free:

Related to the dream is the hypnagogic state which just precedes falling asleep. This transitional state is notorious for the richness of its imagery. . . . Such images are often extremely vivid and compelling, and may be bizarre as well. . . . These are not dreams, because the subject still knows who and where he is, and consequently knows that what he sees is imaginary.¹⁶

This state can be further identified by mentioning that it is seen over and over again in the work of Octavio Paz.¹⁷ And though not always named, it is perceived as a period of free association in which the senses are completely liberated: "Cierre los ojos y abra mis sentidos."¹⁸

Montes de Oca himself describes the "duermevela" as being "sangriento"¹⁹ and a kind of vivid but negative

¹⁶Ulric Neisser, Cognitive Psychology (New York, 1967, p. 152.

¹⁷See "Cuarto de hotel," pp. 146-148; "El muro," pp. 131-132; and "Insomnio," pp. 116-117 in Paz's Libertad bajo palabra, for example.

¹⁸Octavio Paz, "Cuarto de hotel," Libertad bajo palabra, p. 147.

¹⁹Montes de Oca, "Bajo la tórrida ceremonia sin eclipse," Fundación del entusiasmo, p. 28.

delirium of images ("pirotecnias sonámbulas"²⁰) when he momentarily loses his love. As "entresueño," it is seen as an almost painful duty that the poet must undergo to free himself:

habrá que precipitarse a intramuros de la ruinosa vocación, distenderse entre surtidores de gas como si el alma fuera un plumaje liberado en los páramos donde la gravedad acaba de morir.

("Tareas del entresueño," Las fuentes legendarias, p. 87.)

The problem with relying on dreams for images and revelations, of course, comes in recapturing them later. The fact is that Montes de Oca in his more pessimistic moments considers the potential power of dreams lessened because of just this difficulty in grasping the elusive experiences in the state of complete wakefulness. He notes that for him there is no sound in dreams, for example, and:

Para oír hay que despertar. Y ya despiertos, pisamos con indiferencia la hojarasca ruidosa que brilla cargada de imágenes muertas. El sueño nos deja sordos. La vigilia, ciegos.

("Inconciliable," Las fuentes legendarias, p. 97.)

He forgives nature for its inventive incapacity but: "Lo que en verdad resulta imposible de sobrellevar es la congénita debilidad del sueño; su condición pusilánime cuando intenta levantar la voz."²¹ He is less negative

²⁰Montes de Oca, "Bajo la tórrida ceremonia sin eclipse," Fundación del entusiasmo, p. 28.

²¹Montes de Oca, "Inconciliable," Las fuentes legendarias, p. 97.

("inconciliable") about the place of dreams in creativity in his later works. Nevertheless, though dreams and "duermevela" as experiences may aid to intensify and modify reality to a new and more "real" (spiritually speaking) awareness, the practice of free association from a subconscious or semiconscious state is not a technique that Montes de Oca uses frequently. Furthermore, the "dream" is not a theme in itself but a means to the major motif of "la Gracia."

In fact, it should now be evident that all the minor themes implied by the focal line of this chapter-- "Mundo mujer carne cielo"--are but steps which the poet uses in his progression toward the:

. . . todo que es parte de otro todo
 El todo universal
 Que no aspira a nada que no sea la consumación
(de todo. . . .)
 ("En animal de amor la magia me convierte,"
Pedir el fuego, p. 31.)

The mysteries of the continuous flux and change of the material world, the freeing of our senses, spiritual and physical love, poetry, our faith, hopes, dreams, and memories all focus on and are evolving toward this "universal all." This totality of experiences is represented by what Montes de Oca calls "la Gracia," which is part of and contains them all. As mentioned earlier, this concept is obviously very close to Octavio Paz's "otra orilla," with the main differences being less emphasis by Montes de

Oca on the sexual and dream states and more emphasis on man's spiritual aspirations. (This is seen especially and primarily, of course, in "Contrapunto de la fe.") "La Gracia" for Montes de Oca can probably be best summarized (if, indeed, it can be summarized at all without actually experiencing it) as the reunion of all things material and spiritual in one movement. That movement for Montes de Oca is poetry.

CHAPTER IV

Metaphor, Symbol, and Structural Devices in the Poetry of Montes de Oca: Their Way of Embodying his Themes

The fact that Montes de Oca's poetic ideas and ideals and thematic concepts were discussed first in this study does not mean that the formalistic aspect of his poetry is of secondary importance. Montes de Oca's use of structure and especially his building of imagery are an extension of, a vehicle for, and an important part of his thematic concerns.

Since we have seen the word itself forming the basis of Montes de Oca's ideas about poetry, the importance of the poetic image naturally follows. Defining poetic imagery as consisting of the use of word suggestions to produce sensorial effects is most useful to a discussion of the poetry of Marco Antonio Montes de Oca. An image tends to produce individual sensorial effects while a metaphor places these individual images or sensations in relation to each other in order to effect more complex sensorial correspondences and events. Usually these sensorial events are visual, but they may involve

all the senses. For example, in the line "las espigas púrpuras de los fuegos de artificio"¹ the visual image of the purple ear of grain is placed by the poet in relation to fireworks. Because of its connection to the fireworks, it is no longer the mere mental image of a purple ear of grain, but of purple blossom-like clusters of light which burst and fall to earth like the seeds from a spike of grain. The "espiga" form is still "espiga" but the mental image through the metaphorical relationship of "espiga" and "fuegos de artificio" has changed and the "espiga" now has the form of light, not of seeds or grain. The form of the image has not been changed by its metaphorical relationship but its content and the sensorial effect in the reader's mind is different. The poet intends that both spikes of grain and fireworks now have new meanings and associations in the reader's mind. He has seen them as never before in new relationships.

It is through the careful use of metaphors and images, then, that the poet produces new experiences and sensations for the reader. Through these sensations, the skilled poet can lead the reader to a recognition of his symbols and finally to a conscious cognizance of his thematic ideas and ideals. The successful structuring

¹Montes de Oca, "El jardín que los dioses frecuentaron," Delante de la luz cantan los pájaros, p. 43. The complete poetic sentence is: "Ella y él, en impaciente simulacro, / siegan con el tajo de la vista/ las espigas púrpuras de los fuegos de artificio."

of this imagery in accord with Montes de Oca's desire for clarity would necessarily complete the circle of "word, movement, message."

The word itself can be a metaphor in Montes de Oca's poetry because every word is potentially "magic." Each word has a life and many meanings of its own which the reader can picture if he is attuned to the power ("la Gracia") of the word. The "word" and the "message" have been discussed in Chapters II and III. This chapter will explore how the poet moves the reader of his word through imagery, structure and symbol toward the experience of his message or themes.

Montes de Oca's basic method in all of his poetry is to use images as building blocks. This process of building or accumulation of imagery leads to the effect of an upward aesthetic movement in Montes de Oca's poems. Octavio Paz typifies this movement as the "Trueno" movement of vertical ascent. Paz explains the ascending movement within the "Trueno" poetry as being the result of the poet's use of an imagery of conventional and historical reality and form which he amplifies and renovates. That is, the poet begins with images which are readily identifiable with the reality which can be experienced by the five senses. He then takes these images and rearranges them to add new connotations by providing the reader with different and unexpected sensory relation-

ships. The blocks are based in sensory reality and reach toward new experiences and movements within that reality.

In Montes de Oca's poetry, the ascending artistic dynamics or building effect can result from two processes. The first and most obvious process is the piling of images one upon the other to create a new and larger whole. In the poem "Fundación del entusiasmo" Montes de Oca uses this technique as he attempts to communicate the strength of the poet's song:

Tu fuerza es el amanecer que flaquea sobre la
 el firmamento que descarga sus moradas cestas en
 y el follaje de campanas que prendes en la selva
 ("Fundación del entusiasmo," Delante de la luz cantan los pájaros, p. 109.)

The three bases from which the poet works are "dawn," "firmament" and "foliage". These three are all set equal to the strength of the poet's song and they are readily identifiable with what we can actually experience with the five senses. Other imagery, however, is added to these experiences which have been identified with the poet's song. The addition of the ideas that dawn sways over the hills and that the firmament unloads its purple hills over the hungry precipice intensifies the feeling of movement and strength. With the use of "hungry precipice" the poet also injects a note of danger or foreboding present when the poet dares to express himself. But he ends with

the more pleasant connection of the musicality of the song which floats out like leaves over the enchanted forest.

In three lines of poetry the poet's own song has been given a myriad of movements, significances and connotations.

The second technique which the poet uses to move the reader to his message is indirect. The poet takes a general sensory experience and separates individual images. An example of this technique can be seen in "El sermón de las cero en punto":

Adoren el azar, la quietud encantada,
La copa del fresno
Llena de trinos hasta el borde,
El fondo de la copa
Donde se refleja algún remoto bosque del corazón;
Los bordes de la copa
Donde el sol se clava
Como una encendida rodaja de limón.
("El sermón de las cero en punto," Fundación del entusiasmo, p. 63.)

The poem begins with the poet bidding his readers (or the listeners to the sermon) to adore chance and tranquility--two basically mental concepts. From these, though, he switches his focus to the treetop of the ashtree, an actual material and living being. Then he begins to add more images to the one of the treetop and we begin to see its individual parts. It is full to the brim with the song of the birds and we should adore its core which reflects the remote forest. Finally the poet directs his attention and that of the readers to the edges of the treetop where the sun is clinging and we find that the

treetop is not merely physical treetop, it is more. Its dark and deep center reflects the recesses of our own hearts and its foliage reflects the light. Because of the images which separate the original image of the top of the ash-tree into its various parts, the tree is no longer seen simply as a physical tree which can be experienced by the senses. It also becomes another way for the reader to look at himself and at his being which can also reflect the light of self-understanding. The separation of the parts leads to a more meaningful whole.

When the first technique is used the reader builds along with the poet until he arrives at the message through the build-up of imagery. In the second process the reader begins with a message which is probably little understood and unravels it with the poet image by image. The reader then puts the images back together to better understand the whole message. Even though the poet's second technique could be said to be disintegrating or descending, then, the reader of necessity reverses it and again mentally builds back up to the original message. The second process requires much more work and concentration from his reader and Montes de Oca uses it more often.

The key to this building up or amplification and renovation of reality by Montes de Oca is his use of new correspondences to express the reverse of reality. His is

not a poetry of invention or creation of a new reality, but, as expressed by Raúl Leiva, it is one of re-creation and often dissection of reality into these new correspondences not usually noticed by others:

Es verdaderamente sorprendente la habilidad--casi diríamos el sistema--con que Montes de Oca descubre nuevas correspondencias con la realidad: es un sagaz y contumaz cazador de imágenes, un lobo de mar siempre dispuesto a apresar lo inesperado, el hinchido y resplandeciente fruto de lo concreto y de lo que no lo es, pero que la poesía, con su poder recreador, transformador, hace posible. . . .Enfréntase a lo real y lo corroe, lo desgarrar mostrándonos sus huesos.²

The power of this transformation of reality in most of Montes de Oca's poetry (even in the very long poems and prose poems), lies not merely in the general build-up of images toward a specific narration, theme or message, but in the individual images themselves. This fact is the basis for most of the adverse and often hasty criticism directed toward the poet and commented on by José Emilio Pacheco:

Como todo poeta destacado, Montes de Oca encontró enemigos que en vez de admirarlo y disfrutar con la belleza de sus poemas, se dieron a encontrarle defectos: la oscuridad, el exceso de fantasía (¿puede esto ser motivo de acusación?); sobre todo, no lo consideraron capaz de escribir un poema que no fuese mera acumulación de imagen tras imagen.³

The problem with criticism of the type that Pacheco

²Raúl Leiva, "La poesía de Marco Antonio Montes de Oca," Cuadernos, Num. lxxiii (junio, 1963), pp. 45-46.

³José Emilio Pacheco, "Aproximación a la poesía mexicana del siglo XX," Hispania, Vol. XLVIII, Num. ii (May, 1965), p. 216.

is describing is that it does not take into account the reader's responsibility as he reads Montes de Oca's poetry. It is true that if there is a building or cohesion of imagery, many times it takes place within the reader; this will not happen if the latter sees or treats Montes de Oca's imagery as mere lists of unrelated things or experiences. The intent of Montes de Oca's poetry, however, is communication not confusion. Because he has sincere and definite goals and themes in mind for his poetry, he rarely resorts to superfluous catalogues of images. He does not intend to confuse his reader but to involve him in the poet's creation, and the fact remains that with or without criticism for being "un extremoso preocupado por la imagen,"⁴ Montes de Oca remains steadfast in his use of what he calls "la yuxtaposición de imágenes":

No he sabido jamás si este modo de hacer marchar un poema es un defecto o un acierto. Nunca he tenido paciencia para demorarme en el desarrollo de una sola impresión poemática. Además, mi idea sobre la unidad de un poema atiende menos a su secuencia anecdótica que a la complejidad de enfoques y estímulos que la suscitan.⁵

It is the correspondences--the juxtapositions--of things with each other which make up the new complex of stimuli and foci with which the poet bombards the reader,

⁴Eliás Nandino, reseña a Pliego de testimonios, Estaciones, Vol. II, Num. v (primavera, 1955), p. 95.

⁵Montes de Oca, Marco Antonio Montes de Oca, p. 43.

offering him the challenge of sorting them out as an observer sorts out the order of ancient ruins by viewing them from different levels:

. . . ciertos poemas que en su conjunto nos ofrecen esa misma apariencia incomprensible, vistos al trasluz de sus partes sueltas, permiten que la sensibilidad organice con mayor eficacia los elementos que desfilan frente a sus antenas. El poeta de larga extensión, cuajado de presencias que se mutilan unas a otras en su penosa disputa por obtener un mínimo del espacio comunizado que las envuelve, no es fruto que rinda su almendra secreta al primer asalto. En este caso, la función del lector consiste en unificar impresiones parciales y en deducir en ellas su significación global.⁶

Just what clue and hints can be given the interested reader to help him unify these "partial impressions?"

The most important key to understanding Montes de Oca's images is offered by the poet himself when he states:

"Me inclino más por imágenes que rebosan sentido lógico.

. . . Estas imágenes me gustan porque aislan su posible vigor de otros contenidos meramente irracionales."⁷

Montes de Oca, like many other lyric poets, bases his imagery on reality which can be perceived by the senses. The reader is not asked to separate himself completely from his senses or from rational thought--only to expand upon rationality by accepting the poet's view of the world.

There are countless examples of images that transform reality. In fact, virtually all of Montes de Oca's

⁶Montes de Oca, pp. 56-57.

⁷Montes de Oca, p. 56.

imagery fits within this context of expanded reality or of new correspondences within reality. The task is to begin to explore the ways in which the poet uses his imagery and symbols to manipulate and expand the reader's reality.

One such method of exposing a new reality is the reduction or augmentation of size suggestive of the happenings in an Alice-in-Wonderland type of fantasy. This technique is also very reminiscent of the "Poeticista" pantomime of the violin, when objects are made to have different uses to correspond to a miniature or magnified reality:

Los duendes más pequeños
abandonan su país en escafandras de rocío,
las brujas más pequeñas montan espigas
la princesa más pequeña se mira el rostro en una
(lentejuela.

Crecen como nunca las sortijas del estanque
un alquimista de gorro largo y estrellado
trabaja en su primer diente de leche
hasta volverlo un cuerno de marfil.

La espiga se fortalece sosteniendo un águila
asoma la noche, que es nuestra sombra inflamada
(al infinito, . . .

("En vísperas de un acontecimiento improbable,"
Delante de la luz cantan los pájaros, p. 64.)

The spike of grain is not usually capable of holding up an eagle, much less of being a broom for a witch; a single sequin is not generally thought of as mirror material, etc. The images become quite real and acceptable however, because we are prepared by the poet to accept these new correspondences. He cleverly mixes statements

and situations generally acceptable to the reader with more fantastic images. He gives us the smallest duendes,⁸ witches and princess who would logically use tiny diving suits, mirrors and brooms. From that basically logical presentation of small beings with tiny tools, then, we are lead to imagine the changes and movements that occur in small things, making them larger and more significant. The small tooth becomes a marble horn, the rings in the pond grow and grow, and the night becomes an extension of our own shadow. After the rather surprising diminutive images of out-of-the-ordinary characters in the first lines, the natural and expanding images of rings of water and night and shadow seem even more possible and acceptable.

Here the counterpoint of the smallness and largeness of the imagery, then, actually creates a pulsating effect within the poem. First, the reader is drawn to a concentrated focus on the tiny beings and events. Then the focus gradually expands to include the larger movements of the "alquimista," the rings of water and the eagle's flight; finally it pulls the reader with "our shadow" to infinity. In a few lines the reader thoroughly exercises his imagination in all directions. The magician-poet, like the "alquimista" who changes his tiny baby tooth into

⁸Since "duende" in Spanish indicates a creature which includes the English connotations of elf, goblin, ghost, fairy and familiar or attendant spirit, I do not attempt to translate it here.

an ivory horn, uses the "magic" word to lead the reader to expand his reality.

Looking at the poem again, we see that a new world has not been created by this imagery; it has merely been adjusted: "Este es el mismo mundo de antes/ pero ajustado como un guante a la mirada. . . ."9 The poet and the reader are given a new liberty to experience the world in ways never seen before. The "message" of "En vísperas de un acontecimiento improbable" is the new and more vital reality seen through the experience of the expansiveness of love.

The vast majority of Montes de Oca's images are dynamic in that they have to do with movement. They often create the sensation of some form of flight, a leaving of the earth, and a "taking off" from reality as usually perceived by the senses toward a new expanded reality. This choice of imagery may lead his reader to an inward look at himself and his own personal changing realities or it may lead him to an overall view of both interior and exterior reality and a vision of how they relate to each other. The poet hopes that both experiences will occur. At any rate, his imagery is always designed to set the reader free from his old and usual reactions to the reality that he has learned to expect from stimuli to his five senses.

⁹Montes de Oca, "En vísperas de un acontecimiento improbable," Delante de la luz cantan los pájaros, p. 69.

Several types of imagery reflect this "flight" or leaving of old sensory patterns and ways of experiencing physical reality. There are literally thousands of references to birdlife in Montes de Oca's poetry. The "Cristo-colibrí," "Halcón-hombre" combinations from "Contrapunto de la fe" stand out especially, but others are in obvious profusion:

La golondrina sangra
Por no medir el agujero en la ventana. . . .10

Un mirlo baja hasta el pebetero de rosas pod-
(ridas. . . .11

Y no termino de encender mi elogio
Para los verdes pájaros que hacen el color de la
(selva. . . .12

Interceptó palomas ya lanzadas
Porque era necesario acompañarlas en su
(vuelo. . . .13

Recuerdos vuelven, como el cucú
A penetrar lo ya cicatrizado. . . .14

Todo es libre porque mi amada viene
desde el país de los cuervos blancos e ino-
(centes. . . .15

¹⁰Montes de Oca, "Vía rápida," Fundación del entusiasmo, p. 9.

¹¹Montes de Oca, "Canción para celebrar lo que no muere," Cantos al sol que no se alcanza, p. 8.

¹²Montes de Oca, "En animalde amor la magia me convierte," Pedir el fuego, p. 43.

¹³Montes de Oca, "La confesión del mago," Pedir el fuego, p. 68.

¹⁴Montes de Oca, "Letanía imposible," Vendimia del juglar, p. 15.

¹⁵Montes de Oca, "En vísperas de un acontecimiento improbable," Delante de la luz cantan los pájaros, p. 68.

Birds, wings, airplanes, zeppelins, plumage, angels--all are related to the poet's desire to change the reader's usual perception of reality. When he is feeling pessimistic, as in the first two quotations above, the birds are seen as suffering and falling. But usually the references to birds are linked to his positive feelings about the value of recognizing and experiencing expanding reality, liberty, love, and the circularity of time and remembrances.

Other forms of animal life (and plant life also, for that matter), "gusanos,"¹⁶ "alacranes,"¹⁷ "tigres,"¹⁸

¹⁶Y esa denodada luz subsiste
cuando no haya podredumbre para formar gusanos. . .
("Canción para celebrar lo que no muere,"
Cantos al sol que no se alcanza, p. 9.)

¹⁷Este idioma brutalmente virgen
este aire tan ancho como el aire
es mi tropa de esquiroles, mi batallón de choque,
mi tanque guerreró para cruzar las avenidas de
alacranes.
("Este idioma. . . ," Cantos al sol que no se alcanza, p. 37. Notice that the reference to the squirrels is more positive--they are not limited to the ground.)

¹⁸Grandes peligros has pasado
Una vitrina de tigres se te vino encima. . . .
("Bajo la tórrida ceremonia sin eclipse,"
Fundación del entusiasmo, p. 35.)

"tapires,"¹⁹ "linces,"²⁰ etc., also appear quite often in Montes de Oca's poetry but like man, they are sadly limited to the earth. The animals are also capable of a natural goodness and are a part of the great harmonious "todo" of reality:

Pisoteo mis insignias,
 humillo mi persona desvalida y hueca,
 para oír cómo las bestias hablan a su modo
 de una amistad entre creaturas.
 Lo mismo oigo a las carpas que expelen burbujas
 (y efímeros sistemas planetarios
 que a otros animales más poderosos, cuando en un
 (momento de éxtasis
 se restriegan contentos contra las fachadas en-
 (jalbegadas de luz lunar.
 ("Un gran día igual a todos," Delante de la
 luz cantan los pájaros, p. 108.)

Birds, angels and airplanes are not the only objects referred to which the reader may expect to find in the general context of the poet's reaching toward a new reality. The importance of light (which the animals rub up against in their moment of ecstasy in the preceding poem) as the pervading image in Montes de Oca's poetry is also related to this expanding movement with its references to the sun,

¹⁹Sabes que el amanecer cubre con su harina ermitaña
 (manadas de momias,
 Manadas de tapires con hocico de penes en re-
 (poso,
 ("Medidas radicales," Pedir el fuego, p. 47.)

²⁰Alzándome oh con cuanta fatiga alzándome
 Hasta encontrar la senda que ya no vieron lince
 (aguerridos. . . .
 ("En animal de amor la magia me convierte,"
Pedir el fuego, p. 38.)

stars, lightning, plant life growth, volcanos, and sky-rockets. Woman, also, as the coordinator of both physical and spiritual ecstasy is the "oasis vertical vaso palpitante"²¹--the vertical oasis and the palpitating vessel. She, too, reflects the poet's expanding and moving reality. The words themselves are "rascacielos,"²² ever reaching upward.

Another interesting reference used by Montes de Oca to reflect his expanding and changing reality is the rather surprising but intriguing boomerang. The boomerang occurs rather often in Montes de Oca's poetry and is used to designate the constant return and repetition of all things:

Y menos aún te asombra deidad exasperada la pisada
 (de hierro que al hundirte hasta el otro lado
 (de la tierra
 Te conduce a exilios de donde regresas como bumerang
 (en llamas. . . .
 ("A una deidad exasperada," Pedir el fuego,"
 p. 62.)

Si me tendiera a dormir
 sobre las partes mullidas del erizo,
 vigilaría el nido de todos los retornos,
 esperaría al eco de la llanura
 al bumerang en el puño que lo avienta
 y al salmón en lo alto de la cascada. . . .
 ("Contrapunto de la fe," Delante de la luz
cantan los pájaros, p. 33.)

²¹Montes de Oca, "Bajo la tórrida ceremonia sin eclipse," Fundación del entusiasmo, p. 23.

²²Montes de Oca, "A la custodia del reino natural," Delante de la luz cantan los pájaros, p. 53.

No volverás ahora
 Volverás cuando la sangre inocente remueva los
 Cuando las tanagras que hoy entierro hasta la (tatuajes
 Sean estatuas fogosas y elocuentes (cintura
 Hasta entonces volverás a mi mano
 Bumerang florido
 Azor maravilloso.
 ("Bajo la tórrida ceremonia sin eclipse,"
Fundación del entusiasmo, p. 37.)

The boomerang, which man lets fly but which always returns to him, is to man as the word is to the poet. Montes de Oca flings the word out from himself and in its flight outward it takes on new meanings by both taking life apart bit by bit and by analyzing its intricacies. Then, after adding new correspondences to these bits and pieces as they are put back together to build a new and more vibrant reality, the boomerang (and the word) returns. It is by this same technique of stressing moving and returning reality that the poet illustrates the circularity of existence and the interdependence of all things:

El fuego que burlan las salamandras,
 es el fuego que consume al fenix
 El fuego que sortea el fenix redimido
 es el fuego que termina con la salamandra.
 ("Contrapunto de la fe," Delante de la luz
cantan los pájaros, p. 39.)

Another important but special and somewhat isolated type of image which Montes de Oca uses to express reality relates to the concept of the poet as inventor. That is the use of run-on words or hyphenated words which take on multitudes of possible meanings from the various combinations

and correspondences of their individual parts when they are separated and analyzed. The two most obvious examples were discussed in Chapter II and are "la palabra-hastamañana" and "la palabra-manoplaquedetienealmeteoro-maságil."²³ Another is "la palabra-nave,"²⁴ which begins the "magic" series of these three in three successive lines of the poem.

There are several ways that Montes de Oca's imagery reflects his belief in the constant newness and movement of reality. He uses the counterpoint effect to set his imagery in contrast to and in comparison with itself. He uses imagery that in itself is always associated with movement and change (birds, boomerang, light, fire). He invents new run-on words which are really metaphors with the various images written together without typographical spacing. This same sort of building of object upon object, idea upon idea or idea contrasted with idea and constant movement is also achieved by Montes de Oca through the use of a noticeable change in structure in his poems. Reality is changed not only through the acceptance and experience of individual images, then, but by their actual changing relations to each other in the poems.

The term "the word in movement" can be used to describe all of Montes de Oca's poetry. His imagery

²³Montes de Oca, "En animal de amor la magia me convierte," Pedir el fuego, p. 12.

²⁴Montes de Oca, "En animal de amor la magia me convierte," Pedir el fuego, p. 12.

begins with sensorial reality and reflects what Montes de Oca believes to be a constant and creative movement of that reality. Therefore, the mental pictures suggested by Montes de Oca's word-images or word-metaphors are not photographs, they are moving pictures. The imagery is never static but, like reality, it constantly flows into, under, around and over itself. The poet uses structural changes in his poems to enhance the effect of his imagery.

These structural changes, which include both rhythmic and syntactic devices not only add new rhythms to the reader's reality but often oblige him to combine and connect images in ways that are constantly changing--non-static. The reader is forced to move with the structural reality of the poem as he experiences the new reality evoked by the imagery. The movement of the reader's imagination as he experiences the imagery reflects the movements of reality.

Montes de Oca's poetry is often of syntactically linear construction. That is, in many of Montes de Oca's poems the structure is relatively conventional in respect to the position of subject and verb and adjectival and adverbial position in respect to what they modify. Again, the poet's wish for clarity must be stressed. Exterior rhyme is rarely evident but the length of line is obviously varied for rhythm, effect and stress as in:

El árbol planchado de la puerta
 será enrollado y devuelto a su raíz.
 Maltrechos alacranes perderán su lanceta
 al picar el agua.
 Con júbilo de amatista
 cuando es elegida para piedra del crepúsculo
 palmotean las flores de la estación gloriosa
 se cumplirán todas las semillas en esta quietud,
 se cumplirán todas las pomas de encerada lozanía
 y también el cuarto pétalo de tréboles comunes.
 No puede más el día,
 va a estallar como un dragón
 entre doradas escamas de confeti.
 ("Contrapunto de la fe," Delante de la luz
cantan los pájaros, pp. 31-32.)

In this basically quiet description of the end of day, beginning with the rolling up of a tree, there are three breaks in the rhythm marked by shorter and more abrupt lines. The battered scorpions will lose their stingers--on stinging the water. A touch of violence abruptly jars the scene. But the violence leads to a neutralization of the scorpions' power to inflict pain and the line "with an amethyst's jubilation the flowers applaud . . ." introduces the basically slow and relaxed rhythm again. This slower rhythm is characterized by long lines and the repetition of the verb, "se cumplirán." Then, just as the reader is lulled by the seeds, fruit and petals completing themselves--"no puede más el día." The day abruptly gives up with a flash. Appropriate because it comes in the poem "Contrapunto de la fe," but present in the rest of Montes de Oca's poetry as well, is this counterpointing of slowness and speed, calmness

and violence, expressed largely through variations in the structuring of the imagery.

In the preceding poem, slowness and calmness was evoked through the long lines and single repetition of "se cumplirán, se cumplirán." Thus, this repetition can create an almost hypnotic effect on the reader. Or, the repetition of phrases and words can create tension in the reader when he is bombarded with many different repetitions and varying lengths of lines which he must deal with rapidly. The poet often uses anaphora, repetition of articles, conjunctions, and prepositions such as "y," "sí," "como," "en," and "de." He may even repeat verbs and place them first in a line to stress their movement and the movement of the images within the poem. Here the object is often not to make the reader comfortable and calm but to keep him on his toes and alert for additional images to come:

Estalla la central imagen de las cosas,
 estalla sobre la caverna donde ya no caben la
 (soledad ni el desolado,
 en el pájaro fofó que recuesta la cabeza
 en la sombra de sus trinos,
 en el mar,

Manos terribles se apoderan
 de los hilos de la tarántula y el telégrafo,
 de la marioneta y del invierno

Y sobre la tinta fumosa de los calamares
 y en el ácido que carcome los trastabillantes
 (cimientos del planeta;
 sobre nómadas palabras desterradas de sus vainas
 (de aire

y en la pólvora que acentúa la noche de los túneles;
 sobre inexplicables cementos que se ablandan con
 (las horas
 y en movedizos mosaicos de caleidoscopio;
 el pie--rasgado en encrucijadas
 mucho antes de sus pasos--
 afirma su cariño a la certeza.
 ("Contrapunto de la fe," Delante de la luz
cantan los pájaros, pp. 36-37.)

It is also through repetition that Montes de Oca creates an effect close to that of the "magic" run-on word. The poet picks a subject and in succeeding lines heaps adjectives and adjective phrases upon it until it is completely filled out and fairly bursting with correspondences and meanings:

Eres la estrella de mar sembrada en el cielo raso
 El astro lapislázuli
 El astro verde veronés
 El astro amarillo iluminado
 El astro que al encenderse pierde los colores. . . .
 ("Bajo la tórrida ceremonia sin eclipse,"
Fundación del entusiasmo, p. 21.)

and:

En el agua
 En el agua cruzada por nautilus de papel
 En el agua como enagua que almidona la quietud
 En el agua ataviada de collares concéntricos
 En el agua murmurante
 Y siempre la primera en el oído de la parturienta
 Mi corazón dolido halle la puerta falsa
 Para salir de todo falso amor.
 ("Una canción transparente," Fundación del
entusiasmo, p. 83.)

In both cases, the "astro" and the "agua," (in themselves pointing toward his message of spiritual and sexual love), are made to stand out--they indeed become

magic objects--by the use of repetition which becomes almost an incantation by the poet. Montes de Oca also adds snatches of alliteration and interior rhyme here and there ("verde veronés," "collares concéntricos,") to keep up the almost hypnotic rhythm.

A closer look at two complete short poems from two different volumes of his poetry will further illustrate how structure in Montes de Oca's poetry is linked to his message of a new and dynamic reality. The first poem is from Vendimia del juglar and is entitled "A medianoche":

Momias, duendes, espectros,
 Lémures que hallasteis ranura
 Para huir del tiempo
 Y un camino hacia el feudo fragante de la anémona:
 5 Vuestra deserción tan repentina
 No fue muerte sino un salto,
 Con zapatos más grandes
 Que el hambre de los despañaderos.
 10 Abandonasteis multitudes raspadas del hueso,
 La cal inerte,
 El polvo oscuro que ya ningún esqueleto reclama.
 Nada os importa la agonía de quienes se ajustan
 (su monóculo de piedra
 Y regresan como un hato adormecido
 A su bestial ceguera.
 15 Dejasteis apariencias, costras, barnices;
 Esfuerzos vanos que insuflan fuelles
 Hasta que los fuelles pierden todas sus estrías
 Entre tanta especie de silencio,
 Nada más la medianoche
 20 Timbra en vuestro oído.
 Y no os levantáis con el incontenible bostezo
 Que casi rasga las comisuras labiales;
 Con agilidad maravillosa
 Os deslizáis fuera de vuestras tumbas diamantadas
 25 Y entonces tremolan follajes
 Como verdes escobas que se elevan demasiado.
 Entonces, el vendaval se hace visible

30 Embadurnándose la cara con polvo de zafiros;
 Las puertas se tornan imágenes
 Y puertas en potencia los solemnes muros.
 ("A medianoche," Vendimia del juglar, pp.
 59-60.)

A quick glance at the poem shows that, superficially, at least, it is rather regular in form. There is no evidence of rhyme (at least not at the ends of lines) but there are punctuation marks and what appear to be sentences with subjects, verbs, and objects. Some lines are shorter than others but there does not seem to be a pattern to the number of syllables per line.

Since Montes de Oca's focus is on movement, what are the words in the poem that create a sensation of motion? A quick paraphrase in prose will point out the major movements of the subjects of Montes de Oca's sentences in the poem. The mummies, "duendes," ghosts, and lemurs (whose faces are ghostlike and who are nocturnal in their habits) found a way to flee from time. Their desertion was a jump with shoes larger than the precipice's hunger. They abandoned everything dead and motionless. They are not bothered by the temporary adjustments and return to blindness of others. They left behind vain attempts to grasp at youth. Only midnight rings in their ears. They do not get up with a yawn but with agility they slide out of their tombs and fronds wave like green brooms that are raised

too high. Then the violent sea wind becomes visible smearing its face with sapphire powder; the doors become images and solemn walls become thick doors.

There are few active verbs and words which contain implicit action in this poem. What is it in the poem, then, that leads to a feeling of movement? Part of this movement within the poem itself is achieved through varying the length of the lines. The short line, "Para huir del tiempo," (line 3) for example, not only rushes the reader in his reading, but, because of this shortness accentuates the fact of flight. The poet's naming of his subjects is abruptly closed when he tells them that they found a place to go to flee from time and a road to go on to flee. (The poet is talking to his subjects throughout the poem using the "vosotros" form of the verb. By telling them what they already know, that is, what they did and are doing, he informs the reader of their actions.) In counterposition to the rapid and short line, the poet then adds a longer and slower line describing their destination. The alliteration of "feudo fragante" (line 4) slows this line considerably. The next four rather short lines again encourage rapidity of reading. The movement contained in these lines does not come from the verbs but from the adjective "repentina" (line 5) used to describe his sub-

jects' desertion and from the noun "salto" (line 6) used as a metaphor for the desertion. The jumping context is further continued in the references to the jump being made with shoes greater than the hunger of the precipices. The jump was so rapid and so huge that there was no danger of not completing it. The precipice becomes a giant mouth waiting to swallow up the subjects but they escape because of their great leap over it. That ends the first sentence of the poem and after the giant leap the reader stops and pauses for breath--as the subjects probably had to do after the leap itself. The tension produced by the fear of the precipice is eased.

The poet then addresses himself to the mummies, "duendes," ghosts and lemurs telling them that they abandoned the scraped bones and "la cal inerte" (line 10). The fact that "la cal inerte" is an extremely short line accentuates it considerably in the poem. It stands out at a superficial glance. Why, then, is lack of movement stressed so much? Here we have a prime example of Montes de Oca's counterpoint effect. The subjects have abandoned the inertia of bones, lime and dust. Therefore, they are no longer inert themselves. By mentioning dead and inert things the poet stresses the life and movement of his subjects.

The third sentence of the poem continues stressing the subjects' rejection of stagnation. The verb is now

in the present tense--a movement in time. There is a brief and feeble movement of some unknown subjects (those left behind after the jump) to adjust their stone monocles, but then they sleepily return to their blindness. The first line here is longer (it is the longest line in the poem--line 12) and slower with stresses (written accents) on "agonía" and "monóculo" which further slow down the reading. They do not move; they adjust and their stone monocles add to the heaviness and languor of the movement as does comparing them to a sleepy flock. Actual physical structure of the poem, word choice, and sound patterns, then, are used to slow the movement down to a complete stop at the end of the sentence (line 14).

To start the movement again, the subject must be changed. The poet again talks directly to his subjects and again uses the past tense. This time the subjects left behind vain strivings. They have abandoned useless motions--again implying by contrast that their movements are not useless. These three lines (lines 15, 16, and 17) are all of more or less equal value, merely adding more examples of what the subjects have escaped.

Again, in the fourth sentence, the poet changes subjects. The lines here are short with no movement. The emphasis is on "la medianoche" (line 19) as being the only sound that the subjects hear in the silence. We have

moved in time again to the present tense. This is the quiet time (both in reference to sound and movement) before the subjects slide out of their tombs in the next sentence. Here again, the subjects do not rise sleepily with a yawn from their tombs, but they slide out with agility. Their movements are positive, skillful and quick. They are eager to move and their movement is accompanied by the waving fronds cheering them on.

After this very positive movement out of the tombs in the last sentence (lines 21-26), everything begins to move. The violent sea wind comes up and is personified as smearing itself with foam and spray ("un polvo de zafiros," line 28). The doors (whose purpose is to allow movement in and out) become images; that is, they become even more open. And what were solemn (implying heaviness, staidness) walls become doors. To this point in the poem (except for the "medianoche" line, line 19), the movements have been readily identifiable with physical reality. Now suddenly the unmoving wall becomes a door. Becoming a door involves an action in itself--and that action takes place in the reader's mind. A splitting of the wall perhaps, or a sudden crack that appears, and the door that the wall becomes can permit movement where there was none permitted before. What causes this movement? It seems to be brought on by the mummies, "duendes," and ghosts moving

from their tombs at midnight. The main action in the poem, then, is the leaving of the tombs. All the rest that we as readers experience is description of this movement (fleeing, abandoning, "deserción repentina," leaving behind) except for the last lines which are resultant from all the preceding movement. The message of the poem, then, is movement away from stagnation and death. The poet uses both interior imagery and exterior and structural movements in the poem to illustrate his message. The subjects move, the words move, and the reader's imagination moves toward the poet's message.

Another poem which illustrates Montes de Oca's adjustment and movement of reality is "El bien plantado pie del paraíso":

Donación y transparencia: he aquí nuevos elementos
 Para mi carne infestada de sortilegios,
 Golpeada por las puertas de la luna
 Y rociada desde temprano por ubres cargadas de
 5 ¡Oh lujo, proeza de flotar entre añicos de dioses
 Y apariciones devoradas por boas de luz!
 También yo fui devorado, reconstruido pieza por
 Lanzado más allá de las miradas del astrónomo
 10 Tecleado por los dedos de la flor y del árbol,
 Filtrado entre pétreos alambiques
 Para un día resurgir con la sangre levantada en
 A lo largo y lo ancho de todo lo posible,
 Cercando en los callejones del éxtasis al viento
 Al viento que ya no despeina girasoles, mas recuerda
 15 Amores espantados del tamaño de sus alas,
 La llama negra de un juramento, el mes inmóvil
 En que crecían los ojos azules del verano,

Cuando toda una fortuna era derrochada en lágrimas
 (de júbilo;
 20 Pues el hombre todavía jugaba a enloquecer más despacio
 Y el eje del cielo giraba en la plenitud de los
 (ritmos que hierven
 Y desbordan el estanque de su forma y se derraman
 Sobre cortejos de estrellas en carne viva,
 Sobre deshabitadas iglesias
 25 Donde los buzos cortan ramos de oxígeno
 Y los ofrecen a niños eternals que arrastran sus
 (tumbas,
 Conduciéndolas entre edades que sollozan al decir
 (su propio nombre
 Y alaban el azar y su doble carácter
 De caverna y fuente nueva,
 De rayo que lleva un clavel a la horca
 30 Y cuerno de caza que enreda en su más largo murmullo
 El bien plantado pie del paraíso.
 ("El bien plantado pie del paraíso," Pedir
el fuego, pp. 60-61.)

It is obvious that the physical structure of this poem is quite different from the previous one discussed. Again there is no rhyme scheme visible but the lines in this poem all look rather long. The poem is made up of two sentences with an exclamatory phrase between them. From the title, one might think that there would be no movement in the poem at all--a firmly planted foot certainly does not allow for much movement. There is, however, much interior dynamism in the poem which can be shown in a rapid paraphrase: "Giving and transparency: I have here new elements for my sorcery-infested flesh which is beaten by the doors of the moon and sprinkled early by udders filled with liquid sapphires. Oh luxury, the bravery to float among small pieces of gods and apparitions devoured by

boas of light! I too, was devoured, reconstructed piece by piece, thrown out farther than the astronomer can see, drummed on by the fingers of flowers and trees, filtered through rocky stills in order to rise and reappear one day with my blood raised up like weapons, along the length and breadth of everything possible, getting close to the most ancient wind on the narrow lanes of ecstasy, to the wind that now no longer tangles the hair of sunflowers but remembers frightened loves the size of his wings, the black flame of an oath, the unmoving month when the blue eyes of summer grow, when all of a fortune was wasted in tears of jubilation; then man still played at going crazy slowly and the axis of the sky twirled in the fullness of the rhythms that boil and overflow the reservoir of their form and spread over corteges of stars of living flesh, over uninhabited churches where the divers cut branches of oxygen and offer them to eternal children that drag their tombs, leading them among ages that sob on mentioning their own names and praise chance and its double character of cavern and new spring, of a ray of light that brings a carnation to the gallows and a hunting horn that involves the firmly planted foot of paradise in its longest murmur."

The theme here is one of movement to a newness of character. The poet has been renewed. His is the firmly planted foot in a paradise of light and pieces of gods.

This paradisiacal state of giving and transparency that he describes in the first line is reached by going through the movements that he describes in the last long sentence beginning on line seven. The sentence itself is a run-on one, stressing the building of actions toward the arrival in paradise. Punctuation (particularly the use of commas) and the repetition of words ("sobre," "y," "al viento," "de") add to the feeling of continuous movement. The movement within the poem is both up and down, in and out. The poet was devoured (inward movement), reconstructed, and launched again (outward movement). He was drummed upon and filtered.

Notice that until he reappears the poet is acted upon. He does not make his own movement as did the mummies and ghosts of "A medianoche." But, after he is reconstructed (acted upon) he reappears and his blood is raised (line 11). He nears the ancient wind. Now he can move under his own power. The rest of the poem, then, recounts what the wind (like a giant bird, line 15) remembers. And because the poet has grown close to the wind (through his change), he also remembers. He remembers the oaths of love, summer, a wasted fortune. He remembers a primal time of continual movements and rhythms that flowed everywhere. The repetitions of "y" and "sobre" here reinforce the water-like flowing of the

rhythms. The reference to water and flowing is continued with the divers and their oxygen offered to aid the children who are dragging their tombs through time. The poet affirms that in comparison to the paradoxical and unexpected movements of chance, our concept of time as a smooth-flowing linear progression is not valid. The ages ("edades"), one of our ways of neatly measuring the passage of time, give way to chance and the new possibilities for insight that it can bring to man. It is the unexpected movements of reality, which the poet imitates and creates with the images of the poem, that lead to paradise. The poem begins with change (the "nuevos elementos" of the first line) and ends with chance. Chance is movement toward change. The poem, then, is really circular in that its message, like the boomerang, returns to the place where it was launched.

This circular and returning movement of imagery, the changes in rhythm and stress brought on by careful structuring and the individual outstanding "magic" or key words always point toward Montes de Oca's most important themes, especially that of "adjusted" reality. He provides the reader with new ways of looking at this reality and new vantage points for vision. We have seen that Montes de Oca's poetry and imagery depend on a process of accumulation or building:

Una pluma y otra pluma hasta completar un águila
 Rombo tras rombo hasta vertir un arlequín
 Sueño tras sueño hasta inventar la vida. . . .
 ("Bajo la tórrida ceremonia sin eclipse,"
Fundación del entusiasmo, p. 36.)

He uses images not as ends in themselves but only because when arranged properly they can recreate what Montes de Oca believes to be the ultimate reality of the interaction and communion of all things spiritual and material. This reality of change is most aptly expressed by his images and metaphors that elicit sensorial reactions in the reader which are based in reality but which are in continual movement and interaction because the images and metaphors are constantly moving. Through the added evocation of emotion in the reader, the metaphors and images then, link conceptually to form what we call a "symbol."

The process of symbolism in Montes de Oca's poetry corresponds closely to the one which Carlos Bousoño sets forth in his Teoría de la expresión poética. Bousoño, for example, would disagree with Wellek and Warren when they state that: "An 'image' may be invoked once as a metaphor, but if it persistently recurs, both as presentation and representation, it becomes a symbol, may even become part of a symbolic system."²⁵ Mere repetition

²⁵ René Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature (New York, 1956), p. 189.

does not make a symbol and for Bousoño, the definition or attempt at definition of a symbol cannot base itself on the continuity of an image or metaphor but on the creation by suggestions of an emotion which leads through intuition to meaning:

El símbolo puede, sin duda, ocupar la totalidad del poema o una parte considerable de él (varios versos, varias estrofas); pero puede también (y es lo más frecuente) privarse de tal extensión. Para nosotros no es, pues, ese hecho (la continuidad) la característica esencial de las figuraciones simbólicas, sino otro más entrañablemente ligado a la naturaleza del símbolo. . . : que su plano real no aparece en la intuición, . . . sino en el análisis extraestético de la intuición. Ante un símbolo B nos conmovemos, sin más, de un modo Z, y sólo si indagamos Z' (cosa sobrante desde la perspectiva puramente poética o lectora: hallaremos el conglomerado significativo $a_1 a_2 a_3$ (al que en el símbolo podemos llamar plano real "A"), que antes no se manifestaba en nuestra conciencia por estar implicado y cubierto por la emoción Z de que hablamos. Por eso precisamente he puesto la letra A entre comillas. En suma: la emoción Z que el símbolo B nos causa es envolvente e implicadora del plano real "A", esto es, del complejo $a_1 a_2 a_3$. Este complejo, una vez des-cubierto en el acto crítico de sajar el núcleo emotivo Z, no lo percibimos tampoco de un modo claro, sino esencialmente confuso.²⁶

In his analysis of the process toward symbolic meaning, Bousoño echoes the second process mentioned earlier regarding the dissection of Montes de Oca's metaphors into their various parts to arrive at a new whole. Here, the emotions provoked by symbols are analyzed. Their

²⁶Carlos Bousoño, Teoría de la expresión poética (Madrid, 1966), pp. 134-135.

various parts ($a_1 a_2 a_3$) are extracted and become the new reality ("A") created by the symbol.

A quote from the poem "Vía rápida" by Montes de Oca will illustrate this process of symbol pointing to a new reality:

Tú no lo sabes
 Pero entre los templos desnudos y la chatarra impía
 Camina un perfume nunca usado por el viento ni
 (las damas
 Tú no lo sabes
 Pero el barril sin aros aún resiste la presión
 (del vino
 Y las estrellas pasan de un vaso a otro
 Hasta que se enfría su fulgor más vivo
 No lo sabes
 Pero encima de la flecha que la hirió
 El ave cruza el horizonte ya tocado.
 ("Vía rápida," Fundación del entusiasmo,
 pp. 14-15.)

"El ave" here is obviously symbolic (Bousoño's "B"). The reader probably experiences the basic emotion (Bousoño's "Z") of happiness as he realizes that even though the bird is wounded he can still fly. The symbolic meaning of "ave" (Bousoño's "A") can be understood when the happiness of the reader is analyzed. As is so often evident in Montes de Oca's poetry, the negative leads to the counterpoint of positive for this happiness probably comes first from fear (a_1) at the wounding of the bird, relief (a_2) at the realization that the bird is not dying, triumph (a_3) in the bird's victory over the arrow and glory (a_4) in the bird's flight and escape over the horizon. We can say then, that the bird here symbolizes

the triumph and glory of a free thing over restrictions and pain.

But the bird here is also a real bird. It is what Bousoño would call a symbol of the "especie bisémica."²⁷ That is, the poet's use of the bird alludes not only to the symbolic significance of freedom, triumph and glory but to the real and living bird. Virtually all of Montes de Oca's symbols contain this double significance. His symbols, then, as well as his imagery are based in and on sensory reality. An outline of his imagery and symbols cannot be made, for example, stating that rocks equal "_____" or birds equal "_____". In general, for Montes de Oca rocks are really rocks and birds are really birds. They may also point to symbolic generalities such as concrete materiality or flight, or potential movement which elicit many different emotional reactions from the reader, but at the same time they are still rocks and birds.

Montes de Oca, then, does not have a symbolic system as such in his poetry. There are, however, three basic areas where his symbolism seems to be in effect. The first area of symbolism is the evocation of unhappiness, stagnation and pessimism. Montes de Oca elicits these emotions in the reader by the use of dead things,

²⁷Bousoño, Teoría de la expresión poética, p. 149.

hard and unfeeling things, unmoving and restricted things:

Aquí en la tierra los obeliscos de harina y los
 (sueños se derrumban,
 con un parpadeo de la primavera se hiela el mundo,
 todo es eventual, los sembradíos más cuidados
 parecen un material de guerra torcido por las
 (explosiones.
 ("Horas redimidas," Delante de la luz cantan
los pájaros, p. 117.)

The imagery here leads to sensory reactions which elicit negative emotional feelings in the reader. The flour, usually soft and life-giving is in hard and pointed shapes ("obeliscos") which are falling down with the dreams. Spring does not warm the world but freezes it and the seed-sowing seems like the flak and shrapnel of war. All of these images are identified by the poet as being "aquí en la tierra." The earth, the land, then, becomes the symbol. It is really the physical land where spring occurs and seeds are sown. But because of the images which elicit negative emotions (namely, fear and dread of all good things falling, blowing up, freezing), "tierra" also becomes symbolic of a place where even good and potentially fertile things ("primavera" and "sembradíos") can become twisted to bad and sterile.

Another example of this area of symbolism illustrates that this negativeness is linked to being earth-bound, within the earth:

Enseñame un abismo que perfore de lado a lado el
 (planeta;
 Dime qué cirujano, ante la víctima abierta,
 No hace bailar hasta el desmayo

Un ciempiés de guantes.
 Dame por fin la carbonizada estela
 Por la cual he de ir al subsuelo de mis tribu-
 (laciones
 Con la vista y el corazón vendados.
 ("Letanía imposible," Vendimia del juglar,
 pp. 15-16.)

In this poem the abyss of the first line begins as an actual crack in the earth. Again, this evokes the negative emotions (Bousoño's "Z") of fear and dread which may be based on fear of falling (a_1), fear of earthquake (a_2), or fear of heights (a_3). This negative feeling in the reader is further reinforced by the image of the surgeon bending over the open victim (another "abyss"--fear of the knife [a_4]).

The second sentence in the stanza continues to focus on an inward movement. This time the slice that the ship makes through the water is petrified. It becomes hard as charcoal or it is seared like a burn scar ("carbonizado" in Spanish contains at least these two meanings). It becomes fixed and non-moving. Finally, then, we come to the message of the symbolism and of the poem itself. The emotions evoked by the abyss, the surgeon's incision, the fixed ship's wake, and the fact that his vision and heart are blindfolded, then, are symbolic of the poet's fear and dread of penetrating his own self. Once more the poet wishes us to visualize the actual abyss, incision, and the ship's wake as a stairway going down.

The emotions evoked in us by these individual images are transferred to the experience of looking within.

One more piece of poetry illustrates the negative symbolism of hard and unmoving things:

Piedra imán, piedra falsa,
 Piedra cerrada a piedra y lodo:
 En mi mortero cede tu cohesión,
 Ahí te ablandas, te vuelves río de harina,
 Denso vapor que fumo en la mañana.
 ("Triunfo de la carne derrota de la piedra," Vendimia del juglar, p. 17.)

The rock is hard, closed in. It is a charm, but a false one, not a good charm bringing or presaging good fortune. The reader is distrustful, perhaps a little afraid of this possibly deceitful rock. But the poet can crush it in his mortar and as he does the hard, unyielding and deceitful rock becomes a river of flour. It becomes soft, moving, and even nourishing. The rock, then, symbolizes something that is hard and non-moving. It is that stagnation which Montes de Oca believes to be the exact opposite of reality which is moving and ever-changing. The poet's mortar is symbolic of his rearranging and re-evaluating ordinary sensory reality. The mortar becomes a positive symbol because of the emotions evoked by the reader's visualization of its grinding the rock into a softness of flour. The reader feels a sense of well-being in relation to this change.

This sense of well-being relates to the second

area of Montes de Oca's symbolism, which consists of the evocation of positive emotions often placed in contrast to the negative emotions of the first area just discussed. Instead of the negative emotions which he associates with being on or in the ground, hard and unmoving, Montes de Oca elicits positive emotions from the reader with respect to leaving the earth, flying, and any taking off from ordinary reality as perceived by the five senses. Much of the imagery which becomes symbolic in this area has to do with birds and things that fly.

Montes de Oca's two most obvious symbols pertain to this area of symbolism. They are his "Cristo-colibrí" and the "Halcón-hombre" from "Contrapunto de la fe:"

El hombre es tan libre como un halcón.

Muerto el halcón nace la vida
 con su rocío de ojos de caballo,
 con sus tristes y enormes peñeces
 que no esperábamos los mortales.

("Contrapunto de la fe," Delante de la luz
cantan los pájaros, p. 19.)

and:

Adiestraría mi fe en el colibrí
 que vive posado en los anadamos de la brisa
 y se asienta en el vacío
 como el alma de volanderas plumadas que la grave-
 (dad perdona;

como la bailarina,
 prendida con zapatillas de lapa
 en la cumbre momentánea del albatros.
 ("Contrapunto de la fe," Delante de la luz
cantan los pájaros, p. 33.)

The poet himself explains his symbols and the fact that their flight and the absence of it symbolizes his faith. This is not only his faith in Christ, however; they are also symbolic of his belief in movement and change:

Cuando el colibrí se oculta, el mundo padece el hedor de los vivos cimientos que le sirven de trípode. Cuando reaparece, el vuelo de la primavera aérea y clarifica la sangre. Esta alternancia, en mi poema, no corresponde a ninguna realidad externa. Es la fe, con sus altibajos, lo que imanta o destierra los trofeos volubles del absoluto amor.²⁸

In the first quotation from "Contrapunto de la fe" above, man is set equal to the falcon, free and flying (evoking positive emotions of elation, glory, happiness). Even his dying is not totally negative for when he dies new life is born. It may be a sad and tender new life (evoked by the dewy eyes of the horse) but it is also intriguing and full of unexpected details.

In the second quotation, the "colibrí" is all movement. It reposes on the breeze, it is the heart of the plumb not affected by gravity (not fixed--the complete opposite of what a plumb usually does--determines true vertical) and it is like a ballerina with little barnacle shoes clinging to the albatross in his upward flight. Movement, flight, freedom from gravity all elicit positive emotions in the reader which point him to Montes de Oca's positive message of the ultimate glorious reality of con-

²⁸Montes de Oca, Marco Antonio Montes de Oca, p. 40.

stant change and movement. This movement does not always have to be symbolized by birds, of course:

Y yo tarareo mientras me visto
 Las noticias de una voz
 Que sólo estará madura de aquí a mil años:
 5 Será el canto de los privilegios que abolir
 El canto de la ventana que bate sus alas de vidrio
 Y eleva la casa como un cometa de cemento;
 El canto tensado en el arco del espíritu
 Y que un día podrá reír
 Del avaro que añade a su tesoro
 10 La corteza amarilla de una almendra.
 ("Movimiento perpetuo," Fundación del entusiasmo, p. 47.)

In this poem it is the windows which provide the glorious surprise of sprouting wings and making the house float up like a cement kite. The song is the symbol here. In line 7, it is the spirit made arch or rainbow ("arco" in Spanish can mean either or both). It is positive and evocative of joyful emotions. It is the window's movement (lines 5 and 6), a surprising, humorous and even shocking movement when it causes the cement house to fly like a kite. The contrast of the hard, heavy and unyielding cement flying like a kite is delightful and adds a strange sense of power to the "canto." If the song can do this, that is, make a house fly like a kite, the poet must be talking about a very strong and powerful force indeed. He is talking about the movement of reality itself.

In the poem "Movimiento perpetuo" just quoted, we saw an example of the poet's use of the counterpointing of imagery (cement house and kite) to give power to the

symbol ("canto"). The following is an example of the poet's use of the counterpoint of the positive and negative symbols themselves:

Es bueno que el mundo asuma nombres cambiantes
 Y que de pronto se llame nido, sauz, pino danzando
 Argentada piedra con que el sol pule brillos de
 (a mediodía,
 Piedra partida por un sollozo, loca piedra sin
 (su frente,
 5 Que ya no recuerda desde cuándo no aterrizas,
 (memoria
 Ni el nombre de la honda que la enseñó a volar
 Leguas arriba de donde fornican águilas ladronas
 (de zafiros,
 Águilas que se dejan imantar por el sangriento
 (color de casi toda aventura
 10 Y en cuyo espíritu de recintos y cámaras boreales
 La orden de que cese el íntimo fuego nunca es
 (acatada.
 ("Nueva guerra florida," Pedir el fuego,
 p. 78.)

The symbols here are "piedra" and "águila," rock and eagle. They are representative of the two areas of symbolism just discussed. As they appear in this poem, however, they bring new meaning to each other. The rock is hard; in fact it is used to polish the face of the sun (line 3). But, this is no ordinary rock that is hard and fixed. A sob breaks it (line 4) and it flies forth as if from a sling. It cannot remember when it was not flying (line 5). It flies so far and so high that it is higher even than the eagles. The eagles themselves are raucous, adventurous thieves of untrammelled spirit. They are the original movers but now they are not the only ones to move. The rock moves also and moves positively. How? Through the magic of the poet's words--the "nombres cam-

biantes" that the world assumes in line 1. The words are the movement, they capture the movement and the movement is positive:

Bajo esa magia donde todavía engendramos
 Todo el amor que hace falta.
 ("Nueva guerra florida," Pedir el fuego,
 p. 79.)

Through the magic of his word the poet captures the love which is the heart of all reality. Through this love-- the inspired realization of the movements within reality-- even the rock can become a positive and changing force.

This synthesis of movement, word and love points to the third area of Montes de Oca's symbolism. The first area evokes basically negative emotions in the reader based on imagery which is static and impermeable. The second area evokes basically positive emotions in the reader based on moving and liberated imagery. We have just seen that the two areas are not necessarily separate, but usually interact with each other to emphasize the poet's belief in the reality of perpetual movement. The third area of Montes de Oca's symbolism deals with the direction and purpose of the movement of the symbols of the second area and is centered in his use of light imagery.

The word is the movement in the second area of Montes de Oca's symbolism just as the "canto" is all-moving in the poem "Movimiento perpetuo." The word expresses the contradictions and new correspondences possible when

the poet is able to view the world and life in its totality of movement and change. Through his grasp of this universal movement and change the poet has momentary glimpses of the meaning of existence. The poet, who sees himself as a mole, is the special person capable of rooting in and through the underground disorder, darkness and stagnation and he is able to bring this darkness and disorder to the surface: "La gloria en el orden y en el desorden existe."²⁹

Through the poetic word he transforms the darkness and disorder of conventional reality, often in flights away from the mole's tunnel toward the light--to a new order of a newly perceived and transformed reality. Death and destruction become love, salvation and growth; disorder and darkness lead to order and light when the poet is most successful in his communication of the communion that he feels with all things.

Virtually all of Montes de Oca's poetry is dominated by this juxtaposition of light and darkness, with light being involved with practically all of the positive themes of the poet. It is the target for all the positive movements of reality. Montes de Oca's light imagery always refers to the poet's expression of some positive aspect of man's experience and in its many guises becomes symbolic

²⁹Montes de Oca, "El jardín que los dioses frecuentaron," Delante de la luz cantan los pájaros, p. 48.

of all positive experience as presented by the poet. Light in the form of the sun for example, is "la mujer absoluta;"³⁰ his love is "el astro amarillo iluminado;"³¹ and her name is like "una columna de espejos/ Dando la cara al sol."³² If his love is not the sun itself, then she is a direct reflection of it. They mirror each other in an infinity of reflections.

Besides mirrors which reflect the light, many other images are used by the poet to represent this reflection of glory. Water, in the form of the sea, rain, fountains, clouds, lakes, waves, and frozen in the form of snow and ice,³³ for example, combines the power of reflection with the sense of remembrance,³⁴ of continuing and constant change: "El agua plural y antepasada."³⁵ The reflection

³⁰"El sol que no se alcanza," Cantos al sol que no se alcanza, p. 10.

³¹"Bajo la tórrida ceremonia sin eclipse," Fundación del entusiasmo, p. 21.

³²Montes de Oca, "Bajo la tórrida ceremonia sin eclipse," Fundación del entusiasmo, p. 41.

³³"Como su bello uniforme, bugambilia/ Eres el casquete polar manchado de rosales rojos," Montes de Oca, "Bajo la tórrida ceremonia sin eclipse," Fundación del entusiasmo, p. 21.

³⁴"La memoria llama a los círculos del remolino por su nombre," Montes de Oca, "El jardín que los dioses frecuentaron," Delante de la luz cantan los pájaros, p. 44.

³⁵Montes de Oca, "Bajo la tórrida ceremonia sin eclipse," Fundación del entusiasmo, p. 21.

remains the same, while the reflector is continually new and different.

Nature, then, the greatest example of order within constant change, is not only a source of light (the sun, moon, stars, volcanos, fire, lightning, sparks, comets, meteors), but, in addition to the water just mentioned, animal, vegetable and mineral nature are also reflectors of the light:

se querellaron entre sí las joyas, para avivarse
y suplir a las antorchas;
y de las perlas salió la gota de bruma
infundida por la tarde.

("Contrapunto de la fe," Delante de la luz
cantan los pájaros, p. 28.)

una frazada de ser mutuo [dos amantes] en la que
(entibian sus manos
como en fogata de setos de amapolas.

("El jardín que los dioses frecuentaron,"
Delante de la luz cantan los pájaros, p. 43.)³⁶

and:

Sabio es el vuelo que no se encumbra sino hasta la
(madurez;

cuando el ave, ya fortalecida, estréna el plumaje
(de la luz.

("El jardín que los dioses frecuentaron,"
Delante de la luz cantan los pájaros, p. 48.)

to give three of the hundreds of possible examples.

The sun, earth's greatest and strongest source of light, is logically the image most often employed by the poet to symbolically represent the way glory, life, salvation and growth reveal themselves to him:

³⁶See also the poem "A la custodia del reino natural," Delante de la luz cantan los pájaros, p. 49.

Alguien apila en mi raíz incandescentes larvas
 Es la vida vivida a pulso y a destajo
 Por un cuerno de sol me llega su llamada.³⁷

The very title of Cantos al sol que no se alcanza tells of the exalted status the sun has in relation to the poet. The first two poems set the tone for the book. "Canción para celebrar lo que no muere," which does not mention the sun at all, dwells on the moon which is the "hijo único de la noche," and the "negreante espejismo" of the light--the reflection of the sun's light, of course--which will never die:

Y esa denodada luz subsiste
 cuando no haya podredumbre para formar gusanos,
 ni palas para remover la tumba,
 ni cedro para construir la caja fúnebre.
 ("Canción para celebrar lo que no muere,"
Cantos al sol que no se alcanza, p. 9.)

The light will outlast all things material. It is not subject to destruction, but its absence can destroy. Again, Montes de Oca is stressing the positive effects of light by contrasting them with the negative--death, decay and the restriction of the tomb.

Montes de Oca also employs this counterpoint of light and its absence in his poem "Propagación de la luz." The poet denies the value of light in and by itself: "En sí misma la luz es casi nada;"³⁸ but he realizes that he is nothing without it:

³⁷Montes de Oca, "En animal de amor la magia me con-vierte," Pedir el fuego, p. 24. (Reminiscent of the "Cuerno de marfil" of the alchemist in "En vísperas de un acontecimiento improbable," Delante de la luz cantan los pájaros, p. 64.)

³⁸Montes de Oca, "Propagación de la luz," Pedir el fuego, p. 74.

Detenido yo, crucificado yo, desmayado para
 Porque la luz me abandona como a ^{(siempre} una hembra ya
 Como a una calavera que aulla cuando su carne la ^{(cabalgada}
^{(abandona. . . .}
 ("Propagación de la luz," Pedir el fuego,
 p. 75.)

The poet without light is like the skull without its skin. The negative images of fainting, exhaustion and death become symbolic of the absence of light. Montes de Oca indicates in this poem that light also needs the world to reflect it and to give it purpose and it needs the poet to express and capture its essence, to "bottle it":

La luz, fragilidad que nunca se adensa, es nuestra
^{(primer mortaja}
 Y es vino alado que las manos embotellan y tú con-
^{(sumes como un vapor de lágrimas. . . .}
 ("Propagación de la luz," Pedir el fuego,
 p. 74.)

The second poem in the book Cantos al sol que no se alcanza is entitled "El sol que no se alcanza" and really marks the beginning of the poet's attempts to express that powerful communion which we see later in Pedir el fuego as "la Gracia." "La Gracia" seems to be inextricably tied to the poet's light symbolism. In speaking to the sun he notes especially its universality, intensity (with both literal and figurative sense intended in both cases) and its timelessness:

Estuviste en Roma todas las veces que el poder
^{(cambió de manos,}
 detrás de tu espejito roto

una lágrima contestaba señales de otros mundos;
 eras lo inolvidable en sí
 dilatándose en una hora de sesenta siglos;
 la intensidad en sí
 sembrando su llamarada en galaxias de magnesio.
 ("El sol que no se alcanza," Cantos al sol
 que no se alcanza, p. 10.)

But most important of all, the sun is the "imbatible promesa del espíritu" capable of giving us ". . . el espeso y amargo brebaje de la realidad."³⁹ It is a force capable of opening up new and more important aspects of reality:

Tras el biombo de los párpados se desnuda la crea-
 (ción entera,
 ahí se ganan las batallas
 y surgen cosas más importantes que aprender a
 (morir o no morir,
 cosas que juzgadas en sí mismas
 harían llorar a un ojo de cristal.
 ("El sol que no se alcanza," Cantos al sol
 que no se alcanza, p. 11.)

Later, when we see the development of the description of this force toward "la Gracia," it is still very much linked with the presence of light as propagator and illuminator:

Como la luz
 No tienes peso pero abrumas
 Como la luz
 Te vistes de cuerpos desnudos
 Como la luz
 Te arrodillas y te yergues
 Y cardas la bruma como una lana sutil
 Y dejas que en el dintel se abra la espera
 Y que en la espera las flores de pólvora
 Aguarden su estallido.
 ("En animal de amor la magia me convierte,"
Pedir el fuego, p. 43.)

³⁹Montes de Oca, "El sol que no se alcanza," Cantos al sol que no se alcanza, p. 11.

The light of "la Gracia" not only parts the fog, but it is the initiator of all "bursting forth" of life and light. Even with all the positive aspects attributed to the light and the sun, however, "la Gracia" is more. All positive movement in Montes de Oca's poetry is toward the light and light illuminates the movements of reality. Together this movement and its illumination become a new whole-- this is ultimate reality or enlightenment for Montes de Oca--through "la Gracia." Thus, "la Gracia" is capable of brightening even "pale suns":

Gracia para seguir dormido junto al fragor de las
 Y para elogiar los soles pálidos (granadas
 Los soles en decúbito dorsal
 Los soles que ya no insolan.
 ("En animal de amor la magia me convierte,"
Pedir el fuego, p. 13.)

The natural light of the sun, moon and stars is not all, but as in Isaiah's prophecy, it is outshined:

The sun shall no longer be your light by day,
 nor the moon shine on you when evening falls;
 the Lord shall be your everlasting light,
 your God shall be your glory.
 Never again shall your sun set
 nor your moon withdraw her light;
 but the Lord shall be your everlasting light
 and the days of your mourning shall be ended.⁴⁰

The previous avoidance of dwelling on the religious aspect of Montes de Oca's poetry has been deliberate.

This study, however, does not seek to hide nor to minimize

⁴⁰"The Book of the Prophet Isaiah," Chapter 60, verses 19-20, The New English Bible with the Apocrypha. The Old Testament, New York (1971), p. 895.

the poet's debt to Christianity. The fact is, that though his symbolism and imagery very often have Biblical parallels (light being probably the most obvious), they are not limited solely to their reference to specific religion. Unless the reader or critic insists on reading with a religious, and specifically Christian bent, all imagery may be taken to have universal scope and intent. Just as "la Gracia" is light but refers to a totality which is more than light, it is then not just Christ or Christianity but everything--every possible aspect of existence--that is seen and expressed by the poet. Montes de Oca does not confine himself to Christian motifs, then. His message of the ultimate reality of perpetual movement is not limited by any specific doctrine or dogma.

An entire poem from Pedir el fuego will serve to illustrate how Montes de Oca's three areas of symbolism combined with the structure of his poem leads to his message. The poem is entitled "El pan nuestro de cada día" and is found on pages 76 and 77:

Bajo la comba encapotada apenas hay uno que otro
 (centelleo,
 Un hedor de crisantemos desahuciados,
 Una parte de mí mismo que nunca me acompaña
 Y torres de nieve con azoteas metálicas
 5 Y el gotear de unos pétalos que arrancan al
 (salterio
 Una póstuma queja de sus cuerdas.
 Y entonces llega la visión
 Al saco sin fondo de los recuerdos previos,
 Al páramo donde la hoja es un delgado labio
 10 Que para gemir de verdad necesita una pareja;

Entonces llega el día en que la esperanza zigzaguea;
 En seguimiento de no sé qué pistas de colores
 Y llegan las ganas de invocarte, espuma de piedra,
 15 Esplendor sumergido, mortaja de águilas blancas
 Girando en el centro de una lujuria que no tiene
 (donde pasar la noche
 Y que se hunde en témpanos de sombra movediza,
 Cuando toda forma del presente es tiempo encarnado
 Y la lengua se torna roja manecilla
 20 Que relame números hasta dejar en blanco su carátula.
 Y no sé que otras cosas llegan
 Pero de pronto nace una sandalia con plantilla
 (de alas,
 Aparecen el agua tibia, los soles blancos, las
 (estrellas vivas,
 El picotazo en la arena que crea un árbol de petróleo
 Y muchedumbres sentadas en andamios de papel y
 (viento
 25 Y colinas plateadas yéndose a pique en el crepúsculo,
 En el mediodía de cualquier instante maduro para
 (cantar
 O inundarse de espuelas hasta la cintura,
 Entre brisas navales y tierra evaporada y momentos
 (en que se puede ser herido
 30 Por una esquirra de palabra humana,
 Por semáforos glaciales que prenden todos sus ojos
 (de consuno,
 Por braseros donde brincan grandes sapos de fuego
 (verde,
 Por relámpagos de piel que ya han resonado en anchos
 (omos planetarios,
 Por la tierra firme que no es tierra firme para
 (los pies
 35 Sino para los ojos,
 Por el hacha de las inminencias yendo y viniendo
 (como un péndulo,
 Por miles de metros de cielo que se gastan en uni-
 (formar un ejército de icebergs,
 Por el alba que explora la garganta de los recién
 (llegados,
 Por otras cosas arrancadas suavemente
 Al árbol del pan de cada día.

The first six lines of the poem are a sentence
 which sets the scene. There is scarcely any light ("apenas
 hay uno que otro centelleo," line 1) and there is decay

(line 2), and metallic coldness (line 4). There is sound, music from the psalter, but it is a complaint ("queja," line 6). The scene is negative. The poet enters in line 3 and he is confused. A part of himself that he does not know accompanies him.

Line seven is short, makes the reader pause with the poet, and announces the arrival of a vision. The vision arrives to the depth of remembrances and to the heights where a leaf is waiting for another leaf to complete the leaf-lips which will moan the truth. Movement begins in line 11. Hope zigzags, following some colors about which the poet is uncertain. Along with the vision and the day of hope, the desire to invoke the foam of rock arrives. The rock is not hard and still, it is light and airy, it is splendor and a winding sheet of white eagles. It whirls in luxury and sinks in moving shadows when all time is the present. The tongue turns into a little red hand that licks numbers until they are unmasked--and the second sentence ends. It begins with short lines with the coming of the vision. Its movement is a frenzy of flying, colors, hope, foam, and splendor. The lines become longer with the building of the movement to the whirling in line 15 and shorter with the falling movement and the evocation of time (lines 16 and 17).

The third sentence of the poem, as did the second,

begins with a short line (line 20). The poet himself enters again and still seems to be confused and uncertain. He is still being bombarded with things. They are almost all positive or neutral and all are moving. The images here start with the winged sandals and build rapidly as the poet adds tepid water, white suns, lively stars, a geiser of oil that is like a tree sprouting from the sand, crowds floating on platforms of paper and wind, and hills foundering in the sunset. Here the reader pauses to catch his breath (after the comma ending line 25) and finds that all of this movement happens at the zenith of the instant ripe for song and for painful inward movement ("O inundarse de espuelas hasta la cintura," line 27). It all happens among breezes and evaporated (not solid) land and in moments which may be wounded. Line 28 is the longest line in the poem and the rest of the poem completes this line as the poet adds how and by what the poet's moment may be wounded. It may be wounded by human words (line 29), by traffic lights (line 30), by fire (line 31), by lightning bolts of skin and by "tierra firme" that is only firm to the eyes, not to the touch of the feet. Here the reader pauses briefly with the short line "Sino por los ojos" (line 34), as the poet stresses that even the hard land may not be as it seems to man's senses. The poetic moment may also be wounded by the swinging hatchet of inmediacities, by the

sky reflected in icebergs, by dawn and by many other fruits picked from the tree of the bread of every day. The last line is short and sums up the poem.

The poet's message is that the poetic moment is made up of everyday occurrences. It is fire and light (the second area of positive symbolism) but also shadows and winding sheets (the first area of more negative imagery and symbolism). They are all in constant movement (dripping, flashing, flying, jumping, falling, gushing, swinging) but all are tied together just as the poet ties his images together with anaphora, the repetition of conjunctions, prepositions and articles ("y," "por," "un," "al"). "El pan nuestro de cada día" is all of these experiences which the poet can capture with the poetic word. Just as the long lines converge into one another to form the whole of the poem, so do the poet's images converge to evoke a new and total reality.

Light and dark, movement, Christ, flight, nature, eternity, faith and love are all interrelated in his poetic word which the poet describes as alternating "terror and hope" when he discusses his Contrapunto de la fe:

Sombra y luz se deben la vida mutuamente. Su contraposición engendra movimiento, dispone bien-aventurados espacios donde el colibrí--símbolo de Jesucristo--entroniza el aleteo de su fugitiva eternidad. Cuando el colibrí se oculta, el mundo padece el hedor de los vivos cimientos que le sirven como trípode. Cuando reaparece, el vuelo de la

primavera airea y clarifica la sangre. Esta alter-
nancia, en mi poema, no corresponde a ninguna
realidad externa. Es la fe, con sus altibajos,
lo que imanta o destierra los trofeos volubles del
absoluto amor.⁴¹

Just as the warm morning sunlight hitting the cool
land sets the winds in motion, it is the contrast of faith
and non-faith, the light and shadow, order and disorder
of existence which sets everything in movement in Montes
de Oca's poetry toward an absolute love for all things
and an understanding of their relationships with each
other. By expressing himself through such contrasts of
imagery and metaphor, the poet re-creates this basic
movement and his poetry moves toward an absolute communi-
cation of it. It does not arrive at the absolute, it is
the movement toward it which is important:

Si la pluma pierde al pájaro,
alivia su nostalgia de vuelo montando en la cola
(de la flecha;
si las praderas, por alguna súbita anemia del
(verano,
pierden su verdor y amanecen en blanco;
entrarán en busca de reparación a los talleres de
la luz. . . .
("Contrapunto de la fe," Delante de la luz
cantan los pájaros, p. 27.)

As the feather separated from the bird seeks a similar
flight on the shaft of an arrow and as the suddenly white
meadows search for light to restore their greenness, so
Montes de Oca, through imagery and metaphor seeks to imi-

⁴¹Montes de Oca, Marco Antonio Montes de Oca, p. 40.

tate the vital and absolute movement which he feels permeates reality. Meanwhile, he is striving toward a light (the communion of "la Gracia") which illuminates new possibilities and correspondences of experience within that reality.

Montes de Oca's striving toward this communion and the communication of it is evidenced in his choice of imagery and metaphors based in and on reality which can be experienced by the five senses. Employing one area of symbolism (the area presented second in this chapter), the poet sets these images and metaphors in motion. He contrasts them with other images and metaphors which are non-moving. Non-movement reflects a limited, static and stagnant reality and is expressed by the first area of symbolism introduced in this chapter. All movement is finally positive whether it is movement in or out, up or down and it reflects what the poet believes to be the constant interactions and change which make up the realization of ultimate reality. This positive movement is expressed by the poet's third area of symbolism.

The poet's structuring of his poems is also in accord with his ideas regarding the movements in and of reality. His syntax is basically linear and his poetic lines tend to be long and flowing, reinforcing the merging and interaction of his imagery. He uses anaphora

quite often to tie the lines together even more. Short lines are used for emphasis, to give the reader both literal and figurative pause, and often they sum up messages or whole poems. Thus, Montes de Oca's poetic metaphors, symbols, and the structure of his poems are all interdependent. He makes them work together to express his basic message of a new and ultimate reality of movement and change.

CHAPTER V

The Poesía Reunida

In general, Montes de Oca's poems and volumes of poetry tend to move chronologically from lengthy poems dealing with sweeping generalizations of man's experiences with reality ("Ruina de la infame Babilonia," Contrapunto de la fe, and Pliego de testimonios, for example) to volumes of shorter poems that tend to focus more closely on the poet's individual themes (as in Cantos al sol que no se alcanza, Fundación del entusiasmo, Vendimia del juglar, Las fuentes legendarias and Pedir el fuego). Delante de la luz cantan los pájaros seems to be the axis, for it contains not only revisions of the first three volumes but also the short new poems of the "Ofrendas y epitafios."

The Poesía reunida, published in 1971, contains all of Montes de Oca's previously published poems and volumes of poetry. There are several poems in this volume that could not be found published elsewhere (though they are attributed to existing volumes) and they will be briefly

described later. Montes de Oca himself describes the poems in the Poesía reunida in his foreword to the volume:

Esta obra reunida desconoce otras versiones de mis poemas publicados con anterioridad. Numerosas enmiendas, perspectivas diferentes y una gran fidelidad a las posibilidades de cambio, me dictan esta aclaración del mismo modo que antes me obligaron, aun en contra del cerrado consenso general que hay sobre este punto, a no tratar a cada poema como un intocable tabú. Hay textos modificados desde la raíz e introduje cambios siempre que lo consideré conveniente.¹

Because of their many changes, a written study of the revisions of Montes de Oca's poems would be an almost endless process. The changes in structure and imagery, while they never alter the poet's message, are often so intricate that only mental comparisons can and should be attempted. Sometimes, for example, only a word is changed here and there, but sometimes whole sections of poems are rearranged (the "textos modificados desde la raíz"). For this reason, this chapter does not deal with the Poesía reunida on a basis of textual comparison. It will briefly describe the volume structurally and point out some of the results of this structuring. It will also briefly describe some of the poems which were not found to be published elsewhere and comment on their structures and content.

The most striking aspect of the Poesía reunida is the arrangement of the poems included in it. It is very different from Delante de la luz cantan los pájaros, which

¹Marco Antonio Montes de Oca, forward to the Poesía reunida, Poesía reunida (México, 1971), p. 7.

republished "Ruina de la infame Babilonia," Contrapunto de la fe and Pliego de testimonios in chronological order, for example. Montes de Oca explains how and why he has arranged the Poesía reunida differently:

El orden cronológico de mis publicaciones deja sitio, en la presente recopilación, a otro meramente alfabético. Una tabla de equivalencias indica, mediante un signo de zodiaco, el libro original del que procede cada poema. Semejante procedimiento rehace el orden cronológico sacrificado a favor de una presentación más fluida que las que usualmente acompañan a compilaciones poemáticas de esta misma naturaleza.²

The book, then, really has two indexes. The first, which Montes de Oca calls the "Tabla de equivalencias," lists his published works in chronological order beginning with "Ruina de la infame Babilonia" (1953) and ending with Pedir el fuego (1968). The poet assigns an astrological sign to each volume beginning with "Aries," the first sign of the zodiac, assigned to "Ruina de la infame Babilonia." He follows the chronological order throughout and ends by assigning "Pisces," the twelfth sign of the zodiac, to Pedir el fuego, his twelfth published work.

In the Index, then, all the poems are listed in alphabetical order as they appear in the volume. In this listing the title of each poem is followed by the name of the astrological sign which was assigned to the original volume that contained the poem. After the "Prólogo autobiográfico," which follows the Autobiografía of 1967 very

²Montes de Oca, forward to the Poesía reunida, Poesía reunida, p. 7.

closely, the first entry, for example, is "A bayoneta calada" (Escorpión). This notation indicates that "A bayoneta calada" was originally published in Vendimia del juglar (1965). In the text of the book itself a graphic representation of the astrological sign appears, not the name of the sign.

Montes de Oca apparently thinks that this exterior structuring creates a more "fluid" presentation of his poems. In the light of the importance of movement in his poetry, the poet's choice of "fluid" to describe this arrangement of poems is interesting, though not very meaningful. If by fluidity he means the smooth and convenient movement from "a" to "b" to "c" and on through the alphabet, then he is certainly correct.

With this structuring, he does successfully emphasize that he wants us to believe that these versions of his poems make them new and different. Because they are less tied to the old volumes, the poems do seem to be more entities unto themselves. This is good in that the poems can stand alone and do not really need volume titles to give them meaning.

As stressed earlier, however, Montes de Oca's poetry does exhibit a change of pattern from his attempt to capture a totality of man's experiences in the earlier works to his more personal and specific focusing on themes and experiences in his later works. This change of focus is

entirely lost in the structure of the Poesía reunida. It is true that this may force the reader to look at the poems in a new light and individually, but it is at best rather confusing to the reader attempting to formulate a total picture of Montes de Oca's poetry when he finds one of the prose poems from Las fuentes legendarias ("Consejos a una niña tímida o en defensa de un estilo"), followed by one of the short poems from Cantos al sol que no se alcanza ("Consumación y vigilia"), which in turn is followed by the very long "Contrapunto de la fe." All three poems belong to very different volumes originally and exhibit very different stylistic tendencies. "Contrapunto de la fe" is long, rambling, and has obviously religious-oriented imagery pointing to a spiritual journey. "Consumación y vigilia" is a very compact poem and the poet seems relatively detached as he praises poetry which is "más grande que el espacio."³ In the prose poem, the poet is talking directly to the "niña tímida" (poetry) using the first person. He is closer to poetry here, of course, and is literally coaxing it to come forth: "Atrévete a venir vestida de exultación y de verano."⁴ Typographically, this piece looks like prose. Three very different focuses are used by the poet in these three poems which have been idly thrown together alphabetically.

³Montes de Oca, "Consumación y vigilia," Poesía reunida, p. 120.

⁴Montes de Oca, "Consejos a una niña tímida o en defensa de un estilo," Poesía reunida, p. 119.

The poet has not really chosen the best arrangement of his poems in this volume, then. The volume is certainly not handy for a student or a reader of his poetry as a whole, though it may be useful. Unfortunately, it is possible that Montes de Oca has chosen this alphabetic structuring to better convince us that these are "new" poems. They may be "different" poems, but the majority are not new. In his forward to this volume, Montes de Oca says that this work "does not recognize" or forgets ("desconoce") other versions of his poems and yet he uses these other versions almost exclusively for his revisions. In fact, many times nothing at all has been changed in the poems. Four examples of the many poems that have not been changed at all are: "Hay que abrir las ventanas" from Fundación del entusiasmo,⁵ "La escena propicia" and "A medianoche" from Vendimia del juglar⁶ and "El bien plantado pie del paraíso" from Pedir el fuego.⁷

Other poems, however, simply have a few words or the word order changed. A good example of a change in word order occurs in the beginning of poem "F" from Cantos al sol que no se alcanza. In the Poesía reunida it is en-

⁵See page 260 in the Poesía reunida, page 75 in Fundación del entusiasmo.

⁶See pages 275 and 49, respectively, in the Poesía reunida, pages 64 and 59, respectively, in Vendimia del juglar.

⁷See page 161 in the Poesía reunida, page 60 in Pedir el fuego.

titled "Lince y azulejo." These are the two beginning stanzas as they appear in Cantos al sol que no se alcanza:

Apenas se toma el aire necesario
a través de un largo carrizo de cristal.

Helachos carbonizados duermen
bajo traslúcidos cobertores de hielo.

("F," Cantos al sol que no se alcanza, p. 22.)

The same lines in the Poesía reunida read:

Bajo el agua
Apenas se toma el aire necesario
a través de un largo carrizo de cristal

Bajo traslúcidos cobertores de hielo
helachos carbonizados duermen.

("Lince y azulejo," Poesía reunida, p. 292.)

In the Poesía reunida, "Bajo el agua" has been added and the lines of the second stanza have simply been transposed. The two stanzas become more parallel with this order and the repetition of "bajo." There are many changes of this type evident in the Poesía reunida. The first poem in the volume Vendimia del juglar is another obvious example of this happening. It is entitled "Elegía del retorno." In it the poet is speaking to "Canción" (poetry) and in the poem he expresses a feeling that through poetry he can be within and understanding himself while in tune with everything outside himself:

Yo me estoy otro poco tiempo en estos lares.
Me interno en el sud cariñoso,
En la amistad de extrañas plantas que me soportan
(sin esfuerzo
En su dorado tallo.
Deseo estar otro siglo en mi laberinto azul,
Contemplar el corro de los incendiados celebrantes,

Como la conspiración más dulce
 Nunca antes inventada contra los desvíos de mi
 (cabeza.

("Elegía del retorno," Vendimia del juglar,
 p.9.)

The poems in both Vendimia del juglar and the Poesía reunida are exactly the same except for one line in the fifth stanza (there are seven). The poet is still talking to "canción." This is how the stanza appears in Vendimia del juglar:

Himno del señor para el esclavo,
 Alto río de palomas sonámbulas,
 No me llesves más a la deriva
 Mira que mi raíz me extraña
 5 Y sólo tienes que hacerme volar
 Y dejarme caer en ella.
 ("Elegía del retorno," Vendimia del juglar,
 p. 10.)

The same stanza in the Poesía reunida is written:

Himno del señor para el esclavo,
 Alto río de palomas sonámbulas,
 No me llesves más a la deriva:
 Mira que mi raíz me extraña
 5 Y sólo tienes que interrumpir mi vuelo
 Y dejarme caer en ella.
 ("Elegía del retorno," Poesía reunida, p. 222.)

The changes here include the addition of a colon after "deriva" which gives an effective and necessary pause between the negative and the affirmative commands, "no me llesves" and "mira." The second change, of course, is in the wording of the fifth line. In Vendimia del juglar the poet is telling "canción" that it has to make him fly and let him fall back into his roots, his inner self, his beginnings. In the Poesía reunida he is

telling "canción" not to make him fly but to interrupt his flight so that he may fall back into his roots. What seems to have happened, then, between Vendimia del juglar and the Poesía reunida is that Montes de Oca has come to feel that he is flying. He has arrived at a certain enlightenment about reality. He is no longer asking poetry to make him fly. He does seem to have a closer and more personal relationship to and a better idea of what his poetry is doing by the time he is writing the revisions of his poems in the Poesía reunida. It is obvious from these few examples of his revisions that he is interested in improving his communication and that he now feels more comfortable with his poetic expression.

There are seventy-seven poems in the Poesía reunida that did not appear in the original volumes to which they are assigned in the astrological sign system of the Poesía reunida⁸. Twenty-nine are additional prose-poems to those originally published in Las fuentes legendarias. Twenty-four are short poems attributed to Pedir el fuego but they do not occur in that volume as it was originally published in 1968. There is one poem added to the Ofrendas y epitafios, which were originally published in

⁸There is one mistaken assignment in the Poesía reunida. "El árbol bajo el río" is given as coming from "Leo" (Cantos al sol que no se alcanza) but it was published earlier in Fundación del entusiasmo, not in Cantos al sol que no se alcanza.

Delante de la luz cantan los pájaros. Four poems have been added to the Fundación del entusiasmo and three to the Cantos al sol que no se alcanza. Finally, sixteen poems have been added to the Vendimia del juglar.⁹

The poems tend to follow the stylistic tendencies of the volume into which they have been inserted. Many are dedicated to Montes de Oca's friends and family members. There is external poetic structure present in several of these poems added to Pedir el fuego which does not occur earlier in that volume, however. There are several poems, for example, that have three or four stanzas, each of which are numbered and titled.¹⁰ As in "El aire y la moneda" which follows, the numbers and titles serve to organize the poems externally and to make obvious their separate but interdependent experiences:

1

Disponibilidad

Ya no tengo raíces
Si me necesitas viento
Silbame nada mas.

⁹For the reader's convenience, a list and the page numbers in Poesía reunida of these poems that do not appear in Montes de Oca's earlier published volumes are included in an Appendix to this study. This Appendix is found after Chapter VI.

¹⁰"El aire y la moneda," p. 154; "Estados Unidos," p. 243; "Tanagras," p. 374; "Tres vueltas de tuerca," p. 386; and "Unidad de mando," p. 394. "Identidad" (p. 264) has two numbered stanzas but they have no titles.

2

Flash

En tu mirada de acuario
 Capturado pero libre
 Habito al instante.

3

Taller

El espacio me da forma
 El espacio te moldea
 Pero le ha salido mejor
 Aquella gaviota.

4

Mi deseo

Que me condene la vida
 A la cadena perpetua
 De sólo tres eslabones
 Cerrados entre sí:
 Tú el fuego y tú.

("El aire y la moneda," Poesía reunida, pp.
 154-155.)

The poet is still using imagery which is familiar in this poem even though the external structure of the poem may be different. The poem begins with the poet describing himself as being without roots. He is ready to be summoned by the wind--he is free. In the second stanza, the poet continues speaking to the wind and describing himself. He is captured but free in the wind's glance and he dwells in the present moment. He and the wind are given form and molded by space in the third stanza but the seagull

is better off. In stanza four he expresses the wish that he may be condemned to the eternal chain consisting of only three links. The links are the wind, the fire, and the wind. Movement, flying, freedom, the counterpoint of freedom and capture, form and the formless are all customary in Montes de Oca's imagery and symbolism.

And, as he did in earlier poems, Montes de Oca is still using the external structure of his poem to reflect his message. For, like the links on a chain, the four stanzas above can stand alone and be read and make sense in any order. They are four complete sentences with subjects and verbs and no one of them is really the beginning or the end of the poem. They are all virtually equal in their impact on the reader, but they are all necessary to the whole impression or message that the poet's reality consists of time, space, and movement. The movement is most important here and it is as never-ending as the chain. The poem does not repeat lines but otherwise it has the feeling of a rondel in both message and structure.

One of the new poems attributed to Pedir el fuego in the Poesía reunida includes a use of typography to illustrate and convey Montes de Oca's message. This does not occur elsewhere in Montes de Oca's poetry, but it is effective in "Ceniza de nieve." In this poem the imagery is again structured very much like the closely piled images

of "Ruina de la infame Babilonia" and "Contrapunto de la fe." The images (especially those centering around the "ashes of snow") evoke a nostalgia for past times and places and a sense of history as being evoked through and because of language: "Lenguaje de soles bruñido letra a letra, / Memoria de lo que seremos. . . ."¹¹ The poem ends with Montes de Oca describing how it snowed ashes (which he describes earlier as being not gray but golden) and that the effects of this golden illumination are finally positive movement, splendor and birth:

Sí, nevó ceniza antaño sobre la bestia de soleado
 Como
 Y trasero esculpido de una sola andanada;
 Anda, nada, graba en él la fállica inicial
 Del dueño primero y absoluto;
 5 El sello de propiedad, el pacto,
 La cifra que nos muerde la frente como un tatuaje
 (vivo
 Como un gusano incrustado en la llaga y que en la
 (noche se retuerce,
 Sílabas con hambre, abecedario cojo, ayuntándose
 (con el poema
 en
 10 su
 zig
 zag
 de
 borracho moribundo,
 15 haciendo
 eses
 y
 heces
 de cuanto fue
 20 per
 pe
 tua

¹¹ Montes de Oca, "Ceniza de nieve," Poesía reunida, p. 111.

primera vez
y
es
plen
dor
y nacimiento.

("Geniza de nieve," Poesía reunida, pp. 111-112.)

The poet's imagery is still familiar. He uses the counterpoint effect from the very beginning with the basic contrast of snow and ashes, seemingly opposing imagery. The ashes become positive, though, when they are described as being golden. In the part of the poem quoted above, he continues the counterpointing of imagery with his beast (which elicits negative emotions from the reader) with the sunny back. The poet does not let the reader dwell on the negative aspects of the beast but immediately adds positive connotations to it (the sunlight). It is so large that its back could be a whole arena. Movement begins in the third line with the walking, swimming, and the engraving of the initial of the original owner. The next five lines describe the beast's brand. It is a seal of ownership, a pact. It is also seen negatively as a wound incrustated with a worm that twists in the night, a hungry syllable and a lame alphabet. But, as it joins with the poem the beast's brand moves from the dying drunkard to a perpetual first time, splendor, and birth. The brand here is the word--the names that everything is branded with. It is positive and negative. In the poem it is both and it leads to the

splendor of movement which Montes de Oca sees as a new reality, a new birth.

The typography itself of "Ceniza de nieve" reflects the halting attempts, the failure and the final progress made by language as the poetic word. The use of this technique, of course, is not new by any means to modern poetry. It is, however, new to the poetry of Marco Antonio Montes de Oca.

This rare occurrence of experimentation only emphasizes the fact that there are really very few new poems in this volume. As stated earlier, the organization of the Poesía reunida is at best confusing for the reader attempting to formulate a general idea of the structural and thematic movements of Montes de Oca's poetic career. The poet's stance that these poems "do not recognize" ("desconoce") earlier versions is questionable because many of them are word-for-word reproductions and many others have very few and simple changes. It is true that a poem with only one word changed or with the word order changed can be a new and different poem, but it cannot be divorced completely from its original version. New meanings can also come from their comparisons and contrasts. The poet seems not to allow for these comparisons in his stated intent for this volume.

Finally, the strongest criticism of the Poesía reunida may be based on the very fact that the poet chose to revise instead of publishing a volume of entirely new poetic experiences. Some of the poems in the Poesía reunida which do not appear in earlier volumes do illustrate new techniques and experiences. Many of them, however, are merely stylistic and thematic imitations of earlier tendencies and what newness exists is lost in the alphabetical arrangement of the poems.

In the Poesía reunida, the poet is certainly a "topo,"¹² but in a rather negative sense this time. He may be digging around in his earlier poems and organizing his poetic communication a bit better, but he does very little new creating. It is unfortunate that he has not brought much to light in the Poesía reunida. Considering that there are a few new poems and structures in this volume and remembering Montes de Oca's faith in the power of poetry and the word, this volume may not represent an end of his work. Perhaps it can even represent a completion of his past efforts and therefore make possible a departure from them which will enable Montes de Oca to move toward new explorations of reality and new experiences with the word.

¹²"Mi símbolo vital no es el lince sino el topo; el animal que ve con su cuerpo y construye y cava y organiza." Montes de Oca, "Autobiografía," Poesía reunida, p. 17.

CHAPTER VI

Conclusions

Marco Antonio Montes de Oca's uniqueness as a poet lies not in his themes, imagery, or even in his imagination. His greatest success comes with the combination of all these three aspects of the poetic experience into the expression of a new reality based on the concrete reality we all experience through our senses every day. Because of the basic clarity of his expression and imagery, his new reality is not necessarily a subjective or hermetic one; it can be appreciated by all readers if they read carefully and with an open mind.

As the first chapter of this study and the criticism of the Poesía reunida implied, it is helpful to read all of Montes de Oca's poetry, in chronological order if possible, to experience the changes in the poet's tone and attitude. Even the first versions of poems later revised and re-published are valuable to an understanding of their later versions. Only a careful side-by-side reading of two versions of a poem such as "Contrapunto de la fe,"

can expose the often minute, but illuminating changes which the poet has chosen to make. In many cases, as J. G. Brotherston has noted, the poet actually seems to assume, or at least hope, that the reader has read and can compare the earlier version when he reads the revised one or ones.¹ The poet wishes the reader to experience with him the possible movements of his poetic reality.

Montes de Oca leads the reader to an experience of this movement and of the power of the word to communicate this movement through his use of imagery, symbol, and structure. His imagery and metaphors are based in and on the reality which can be experienced by the five senses. The poet tends to create new sensory impressions with imagery by using two basic techniques. In the first, he builds images one upon the other to arrive at a new experience or message. In the second, he presents the experience or message then dissects it into its individual parts or images. He also uses the counterpoint effect of contrasting positive and negative imagery. He tends to mention the negative in order to stress the positive, for example. When these images converge in the reader's mind and evoke emotions, they can become symbolic.

¹J. G. Brotherston, "Montes de Oca in the Light of Revised Versions of *Pliego de testimonios*," Bulletin of Hispanic Studies, XL (1967), p. 40.

Three areas of symbolism point to Montes de Oca's basic message of a new ultimate reality. The first area makes use of imagery dealing with non-moving, hard, and static things or forces. It evokes basically negative emotions in the reader. It usually evokes various levels of fear, dread, and pessimism. He also makes use of the counterpoint effect in his symbolism, for in the second area of his symbolism Montes de Oca makes use of imagery of moving, flying, and vibrant things and forces. This imagery evokes basically positive emotions in the reader. These emotions are varying degrees of happiness, pleasure, and optimism. Many times the first two areas of symbolism merge, of course. They cannot always be separated from each other. Often, for example, the poet will even make the initially static images from the first area of symbolism move with those of the second area toward the third area.

The third area of symbolism is that which makes use of light imagery and imagery which includes things that reflect the light (water, rivers, mirrors, ice). This area of symbolism points to the target of the movement of the second area. All movement is toward the light--toward man's self-enlightenment and toward a new perception of the reality of perpetual movement.

The constant contrasts within reality, then (light/

shadow, growth/destruction, faith/doubt, Christ-love/Man-searching for love), give Montes de Oca's poetry its natural and inescapable movement toward the absolutes of love for and communion with all things. The careful and interested reader can also become a part of this movement toward love and communion ("la Gracia") as he participates in Montes de Oca's poetry and as it becomes a part of him. This can happen to the reader because poetry, for Montes de Oca, cannot be destroyed, wasted on, or lost to the truly faithful participant:

Palmo a palmo, sílaba tras sílaba,
 la ilusión gana terreno;
 la poesía te buscará cuando creas que la encontraste;
 su corazón protege los escudos,
 no temas que algún día se vuele y te abandone:
 la poesía es una lanza de diamante
 y no puede ser arrojada porque es más grande que
 (el espacio.²

²Montes de Oca, "Consumación y vigilia," Cantos al sol que no se alcanza, p. 54.

APPENDIX

listing poems appearing in the Poesía reunida
which do not occur in earlier published volumes:

| <u>Volume attributed to:</u> | <u>Poem</u> | <u>Page number in Poesía reunida</u> |
|---|-------------------------------|--|
| <u>Cantos al sol que no se alcanza</u> ("Leo") | Buenas tardes | 98 |
| | Diluvio claro | 149 |
| | Entrada por salida | 237 |
| <u>Fundación del entusiasmo</u> ("Virgo") | Desayuno en el campo | 147 |
| | Dos estrofas para una mujer . | 152 |
| | El ave desertora | 161 |
| | Handle with care | 260 |
| <u>Las fuentes legendarias</u> ("Sagitario") | Alta fidelidad | 66 |
| | Atenta súplica | 73 |
| | Aun diría más | 75 |
| | Borrón y cuenta nueva | 96 |
| | Brujo equivocado | 97 |
| | Caprichos infantiles | 108 |
| | Ceremonia canicular | 112 |
| | El hecho es que tú cambias | 196 |
| | El muerto y su pecera | 204 |
| El nombre propio | 206 | |

| <u>Volume attributed to:</u> | <u>Poem</u> | <u>Page number</u> <u>in Poesía</u> <u>reunida</u> |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| <u>Las fuentes legendarias</u> continued | El perdón no existe | 209 |
| | El reposo mata al centelleo . | 211 |
| | Exhortación maternal | 246 |
| | Fuego y danza | 249 |
| | Ganar mi libertad | 252 |
| | Gastar la pólvora en infier- nitos | 253 |
| | Hoy te veo mañana no | 264 |
| | Imágenes de caza y escultura | 265 |
| | Interpolaciones | 267 |
| | La gran presencia | 278 |
| | La zorra y su vigilia | 286 |
| | Laurel de la India | 288 |
| | Lirón empedernido | 293 |
| | Mucho cuidado | 312 |
| | No es miedo es precaución . . | 315 |
| | Posibilidades siniestras | 342 |
| | Rueda de la fortuna | 354 |
| | ¿Te has fijado? | 375 |
| | Viernes Santo | 407 |
| <u>Ofrendas y epitafios</u> ("Cáncer") | Es preciso que me mires . . . | 240 |
| <u>Pedir el fuego</u> ("Piscis") | A ras de cielo | 52 |
| | Antes de comer y dormir . . . | 69 |

| <u>Volume attributed to:</u> | <u>Poem</u> | <u>Page number</u> <u>in Poesia</u> <u>reunida</u> |
|---|--|--|
| <u>Pedir el fuego</u> continued | Aprovechando el espacio . . . | 71 |
| | Cambio permanente | 104 |
| | Ceniza de nieve | 110 |
| | Circumvalación insomne | 115 |
| | Crisantemos | 144 |
| | El aire y la moneda | 154 |
| | Escribo en ti | 241 |
| | Estados Unidos | 243 |
| | Hablo contigo | 256 |
| | Identidad | 264 |
| | Ira santa | 268 |
| | Octavio Paz en el Royal Festi- val Hall . | 323 |
| | Pedir el fuego | 331 |
| | Saber una cosa | 362 |
| | Ser | 366 |
| | Sí y no | 371 |
| | Tanagras | 374 |
| Tener conciencia | 377 | |
| <u>Vendimia del juglar</u> ("Escorpión") | Baby-sitters | 76 |
| | Bienvenido | 94 |
| | Calamidades infecciosas . . . | 100 |
| | El altar de los muertos . . . | 155 |

| <u>Volume attributed to:</u> | <u>Poem</u> | <u>Page number in Poesía reunida</u> |
|---|--------------------------------|--|
| <u>Vendimia del juglar</u> continued | El alto muro humano | 156 |
| | José Revueltas | 268 |
| | Mar de fondo | 299 |
| | Muerte por partida doble | 313 |
| | Niña de tres años | 313 |
| | No sé como se llama | 316 |
| | Otro campo de la geometría | 328 |
| | Pequeña oda al agua permanente | 334 |
| | Poema en otoño | 341 |
| | Recibirte cantando | 349 |
| | Retrato al carbón | 352 |
| | San Cristóbal | 363 |

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. Works by Marco Antonio Montes de Oca

Montes de Oca, Marco Antonio. "Canto D," Cuadernos de Bellas Artes, II, vi (junio, 1961), 5-7. (Published later in Cantos al sol que no se alcanza as "Cal-lejón con salida al sueño," pp. 17-19.)

_____. Cantos al sol que no se alcanza. Colección Tezontle, Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, 1961.

_____. Contrapunto de la fe. Colección Los Presentes, Núm. xxv, México, 1955. (Introduction by José Enrique Moreno.)

_____. Delante de la luz cantan los pájaros. Colección Letras Mexicanas, Núm. 50, Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, 1959. (Contains the first revised versions of "Ruina de la infame Babilonia," "Contrapunto de la fe," and "Pliego de testimonios." I was not able to see the original version of "Ruina de la infame Babilonia.")

_____. "Dos poemas," Diálogos, II, iii (marzo-abril, 1966), 14. (Contains "Auge y destrucción

de un hechizo" and "Variaciones sin tema," later published in Las fuentes legendarias on pages 35-36 and 61, respectively.)

_____. Las fuentes legendarias. Serie del Volador, Joaquín Mortiz, México, 1966. (Dedicated to Arthur and Inge Miller.)

_____. Fundación del entusiasmo. Colección Poemas y Ensayos, Universidad Nacional Autónoma, México, 1963.

_____. "El mapa de unos sueños," Revista de la Universidad de México, XXI, x (junio, 1967), 12. (Published later in Pedir el fuego, pages 69-71.)

_____. Marco Antonio Montes de Oca. Nuevos Escritores Mexicanos del Siglo XX Presentados por Sí Mismos, Empresas Editoriales, S. A., México, 1967. (Prologue by Emmanuel Carballo. Republished later in the Poesía reunida.)

_____. "Movimiento perpetuo" y "La parcela en el Eden," Cuadernos de Bellas Artes, V, v (mayo, 1964), 4-7. ("Movimiento perpetuo" is also found published in Fundación del entusiasmo, pp. 47-48. "La parcela en el Eden" is found published separately by Pájaro Cascabel and also republished in Vendimia del juglar, pp. 47-54.)

_____. "A nivel del mar," Diálogos, III, vi (nov.-dic., 1967), 3. (Republished in Pedir el fuego, p. 50.)

- _____. "Papel del escritor en América Latina," Mundo Nuevo, v (noviembre, 1966), 32.
- _____. La parcela en el Edén. Pájaro Cascabel, México, 1964. (Also published in Cuadernos de Bellas Artes, V, v, 4-7, and in Vendimia del juglar, pp. 47-54.)
- _____. Pedir el fuego. Colección Las Dos Orillas, Joaquín Mortiz, México, 1968. (Written with the patronage of the Guggenheim Foundation.)
- _____. Pliego de Testimonios. Colección Metáfora, Núm. iii, México, 1956.
- _____. Poesía reunida, (1953-1970). Colección Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, 1971. (Contains his autobiography and poems from all previously published works. The poems are listed in alphabetical order with their original volumes indicated by signs of the zodiac preceding each poem. There are several items included which have not appeared in their ascribed earlier published works, however. See Appendix to this study.)
- _____. "Ser claro," Revista de la Universidad de México, XXII, viii (abril, 1968), 11. (Also published in Pedir el fuego, p. 65.)
- _____. Vendimia del juglar. Colección Las Dos Orillas, Joaquín Mortiz, México, 1965. (Dedicated to Francisco Galindo Ochoa.)

II. Critical References to Montes de Oca

- Alba, Pedro de. "Tono y ruta de la poesía mexicana,"
Cuadernos Americanos, Año II, II, v (sep.-oct., 1943),
245-251.
- Anderson Imbert, Enrique. Historia de la literatura hispano-
americana. Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, 1957.
- Aridjis, Homero. Review of Vendimia del juglar, Diálogos,
I, vi (sep.-oct., 1965), 41.
- Brotherston, J. G. "Montes de Oca in the Light of the
Revised Versions of Pliego de testimonios," Bulletin
of Hispanic Studies, XLIV (1967), 28-40.
- Cohen, J. M. "The Eagle and the Serpent," Southern Review,
I, ii (Spring, 1965), 361-374.
- Dauster, Frank. Breve historia de la poesía mexicana.
Ediciones de Andrea, México, 1956.
- Fernández Retamar, Roberto. "Situación actual de la poesía
hispanoamericana," Revista Hispánica Moderna, XXIV,
iv (oct., 1958), 321-330.
- González Salas, Carlos. "La poesía mexicana actual,"
Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos, XXXV, civ (1958), 222-
234.

- _____. "Poesía religiosa mexicana del siglo veinte," Ábside, XX (1956), 125-138.
- Gringoire, Pedro. "Apuntes sobre la nota mística en la poesía hispanoamericana," Cuadernos Americanos, XV, iii (1956), 234-249.
- Leiva, Raúl. "La poesía de Marco Antonio Montes de Oca," Cuadernos, Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura, París, lxxiii (junio, 1963), 45-47.
- _____. "La poesía de Montes de Oca," México en la Cultura, (16 marzo, 1969), p. 3. (Consists of a review of Pedir el fuego.)
- _____. "La poesía de Marco Antonio Montes de Oca," Cuadernos Americanos, México, XXVII, clxvii, vi (1969), 174-193.
- Lyon, Thomas E. Review of Pedir el fuego, Books Abroad, XLIV (Winter, 1970), 85.
- Monguió, Luis. "El concepto de poesía en algunos poetas hispanoamericanos representativos," Revista Hispánica Moderna, XXIII (1957), 109-132.
- _____. "Poetas postmodernistas mexicanos," Revista Hispánica Moderna, XII, iii-iv (jul-oct., 1946), 239-266.

- Monsiváis, Carlos. La poesía mexicana del siglo XX.
Empresas Editoriales, S. A., México, 1966.
- Nandino, Elías. Review of Pliego de testimonios, Estaciones,
II, v (primavera, 1955), 94-95.
- Pacheco, José Emilio. "Aproximación a la poesía mexicana
del siglo XX," Hispania, XLVIII, ii (May, 1965),
209-219.
- Paz, Octavio. Puertas al campo. Colección Poemas y Ensayos,
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, México,
1966.
- Paz, Octavio, Ali Chumacero, José Emilio Pacheco and Homero
Aridjis. Poesía en movimiento. Siglo veintiuno
editora, s. a., México, 1966. (Prologue by Octavio
Paz.)
- Selva, Mauricio de la. Review of Delante de la luz cantan
los pájaros, Revista Iberoamericana, XXV, 1 (jul.-
dic., 1960), 364-368.
- Stafford, William and Paul Luenon. "The Unreachable Sun"
and "The Clown's Farewell," Kenyon Review, XXVII,
ii (Spring, 1965), 233-238. (English translations
of "El sol que no se alcanza" and "La despedida del
bufón," pages 10 and 35, respectively, in Montes de
Oca's Cantos al sol que no se alcanza.)

Upton, John. "With fixed Bayonet," "Assumption of the Triple Image," and "Nameless," Tri-Quarterly, Northwestern, xiii/xiv (Fall/Winter, 1968/69), pages not numbered. (English translations of "A bayoneta calada," "Asunción de la triple imagen," and "Sin nombre," pages 57, 55, and 37, respectively, in Montes de Oca's Vendimia del juglar.)

Xirau, Ramón. "Poetas recientes de México," Mundo Nuevo, París, iii (dic., 1968), 67-73.

_____. Review of Las fuentes legendarias, Diálogos, III, ii (marzo-abril, 1967), 28.

III. General Studies

- Alquié, Ferdinand. The Philosophy of Surrealism. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1965. (Translated by Bernard Waldrop.)
- "Bibliografía Hispanoamericana," Revista Hispánica Moderna, New York, 1934--.
- Bousoño, Carlos. Teoría de la expresión poética. Editorial Gredos, S. A., Madrid, 1966.
- Carter, Boyd G. Las revistas literarias de hispanoamérica. Ediciones de Andrea, México, 1959.
- Forster, Merlin. Los contemporáneos 1920-1932: Perfil de un experimento vanguardista mexicano. Ediciones de Andrea, México, 1964.
- Grossman, Jorge, ed. Índice general de publicaciones periódicas latinoamericanas: Humanidades y ciencias sociales. G. K. Hall, Boston, 1962.
- Hanke, Lewis, ed. Handbook of Latin American Studies. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1936.
- Icaza, Xavier, "Perspectives of Mexican Literature." Books Abroad, II (1937), 155-158.

- Martinez, Jose Luis. Literatura mexicana, siglo XX, 1910-1949. Primera Parte. Antigua Librería Robredo, Colección Clásicos y Modernos, Creación y Crítica Literaria, 3, México, 1950.
- Nadeau, Maurice. The History of Surrealism. The Macmillan Company, New York, 1965. (Translated by Richard Howard. Introduction by Roger Shattruck.)
- Neruda, Pablo. Odas elementales. Segunda edición. Editorial Losada, Buenos Aires, 1967.
- Nicholson, Irene. A Guide to Mexican Poetry, Ancient and Modern. Minitiae Mexicana, México, 1968.
- Ocampo de Gomez, Aurora Maura. Diccionario de escritores mexicanos. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Centro de Estudios Literarios, México, 1967. (Prologue, "Panorama de la literatura mexicana," by María del Carmen Millán.)
- _____. Literatura mexicana contemporánea, Bibliografía crítica. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, México, 1965.
- O'Connor, William Van. Sense and Sensibility in Modern Poetry. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Illinois, 1948.

- Ortega, Julio. "Una antología discutible," Mundo Nuevo, x (abril, 1967), 85-86. (A criticism of Antología de la poesía viva latinoamericana, Seix Barral, Barcelona, 1966. Prepared by Aldo Pelligrini.)
- Paz, Octavio. El arco y la lira. Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, 1956.
- _____. Claude Lévi-Strauss o el nuevo festín del Esopo. Joaquín Mortiz, México, 1967.
- _____. Corriente alterna. Siglo xxi editores, s. a., México, 1967.
- _____. Cuadrivio. Joaquín Mortiz, México, 1965.
- _____. El laberinto de la soledad. Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, 1959.
- _____. Libertad bajo palabra. Colección Letras Mexicanas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, 1960.
- _____. Las peras del olmo. Imprenta Universitaria, México, 1957.
- _____. Los signos en rotación. Editorial Sur, Buenos Aires, 1965.
- Richards, I. A. Practical Criticism. A Study of Literary Judgement. Harcourt Brace and Company, New York, 1946.
- Torres Rioseco, Arturo and Ralph E. Warner. Bibliografía de la poesía mexicana, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1934.

Wellek, René and Austin Warren. Theory of Literature.

Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., New York, 1956.

Wheelwright, Phillip Ellis. The Burning Fountain, A Study
in the Language of Symbolism. Indiana University

Press, Bloomington, Indiana, 1954.