

THE POETRY OF ANGEL CRESPO

by

Linda Diane Metzler
B.A., University of Kansas, 1969
M.A., University of Kansas, 1971

Submitted to the Department of Spanish and
Portuguese and the Faculty of the Graduate
School of the University of Kansas in par-
tial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Dissertation Committee:

Redacted Signature

Chairman

Redacted Signature

Redacted Signature

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER	
I.	26
II.	55
III.	83
IV.	129
V.	168
AFTERWORD	199
NOTES	205
BIBLIOGRAPHY	213

INTRODUCTION

In 1971, Angel Crespo, a Spanish poet born in the Manchegan town of Ciudad Real in 1926, published En medio del camino,¹ an aptly titled anthology comprising, with a few deletions and modifications, the entirety of his poetic writing between 1949 and 1970. Publication of this book has provided the student of Spanish literature with a unique opportunity to take stock of a rich and varied poetic production whose importance, both as an individual creative accomplishment and within the panorama of contemporary Spanish poetry, has never been fully defined. Between 1949 and 1970, Crespo published not only thirteen volumes of poetry, but translations of Portuguese and Italian poetry and a considerable number of critical studies focusing on other literatures and on the visual arts as well. From the first, Crespo's poetic as well as his critical writings reveal an artist profoundly committed to deciphering the mystery and the complexity of the world and the self through an unstinting examination of the creative act in its multiple dimensions. Among other Spanish poets of his generation, for many of whom concern with language had become secondary to expression of certain themes, Crespo stands out for the tenacity of his conviction that

the form of a work of art is inseparable from its content. The parallel growth throughout his work of these complementary facets of the creative process is nurtured by the poet's turning both inward to his own intuition and imagination, and outward to a consideration of the diverse literatures and arts featured in his critical studies.

While Crespo's poetry has been widely anthologized and reviewed, critical attention has generally focused on a single aspect of his work--his rural or "realistic" poems.² With the exception of Pilar Gómez Bedate's perceptive article,³ no in-depth studies of a more representative selection of Crespo's poems have been undertaken. I will clarify, through a detailed study of the techniques which form the diverse and original experiences of the poems of En medio del camino, the uniqueness and fundamental unity of Crespo's work, and suggest how preoccupation with one facet of this work has led critics to overlook an opportunity to point out an underlying continuity in Spanish poetry of the last thirty years.

The generational schemes devised by critics to categorize post-War poetry in Spain, if valid in their generalizations about the poetic themes and techniques cultivated by different groups of poets, tend to convey the impression that lines were more rigidly drawn than was in fact the case. The most widely accepted of these schemes divides post-War poetry into two periods, the first extending from 1936 to 1955, the second from 1955 to 1970.⁴ That reality

presents a much more cluttered panorama is a fact acknowledged by Carlos Bousoño in his essay "Poesía contemporánea y poscontemporánea."⁵ Bousoño opts for a more eclectic focusing of the study of post-War Spanish poetry, pointing out the inadequacy of a generational approach in reference to a period which finds authors of many different ages and poetic backgrounds pursuing their crafts and assimilating diverse influences. The wisdom of Bousoño's approach is apparent if one considers that--among others--Juan Ramón Jiménez, Vicente Aleixandre and Dámaso Alonso, of the Generation of 1927, members of the so-called Generation of 1936, the "social realist" Gabriel Celaya, and such chronological misfits as José Hierro and Carlos Bousoño were all writing and publishing poetry in Spain during the two decades following the end of the Civil War.

Despite a differing vision of the poem among members of the two groups, much of what is unique and successful in the poetic expression of the generation of poets achieving prominence in the Fifties and Sixties--to which Crespo belongs--may be linked to the rich and varied poetic legacy of the Generation of 1927. It is a legacy which reaches the later poets by a very circuitous route--one which at times in the interim years appears to lead in precisely the opposite direction. The members of the Generation of 1927, despite the diversity of their individual poetic idioms, shared a vision of the poem as a vehicle for creating timeless, transcendent structures. Although prosaic reality

frequently serves as a point of departure in this poetry, poetic language inevitably effects a transformation that leads the reader to a transcendent realm. Not communication of a theme but rather the capturing of an elusive emotion is the thrust of this poetry which, as a result, has been widely considered to be "dehumanized."⁶

Significantly, however, toward the end of the Twenties and in the first years of the Thirties, several key members of this Generation, most notably Federico García Lorca, Rafael Alberti, and Vicente Aleixandre, published books of poetry in which techniques related to surrealism were used to embody themes more intimately connected to the human dilemma.⁷ Another key poet of this Generation, Jorge Guillén, followed up his book Cántico, whose balanced and measured poems exulted in the harmony of the universe, with poems which would be published much later under the title Clamor, eloquent of the newly dissonant, anguished vision underlying them.⁸

Tragically, the outbreak of the Civil War in 1936 cut short the development of this gifted generation of poets; what might have been the trajectory of contemporary Spanish poetry had their unsurpassed technical excellence and their increasingly acute human awareness been allowed to culminate in the powerful poetry they seemed to promise, one can only speculate. What is certain is that in 1939, at the end of the War, with a majority of the poets of the Generation of 1927 in exile or dead, the panorama of Spanish poetry had been drastically altered. Initially, many poets,

in an attempt to escape or deny the ghastly realities of the War and its aftermath--and perhaps, too, out of fear of expressing their deeper anxieties and fears--turned to a formalistic poetry stressing musicality of phrase and beauty of image, a poetry devoid of human commitment or transcendence. These poets clustered around the magazine Garcilaso, founded by García Nieto in 1943. Italian critic Mario Di Pinto points out the anti-historical twist these poets gave to the legacy of the Generation of 1927:

Esauendosi in un'ansia formale, la poesia dell'immediato dopoguerra, dal '39 al '45, continuava a suo modo la lezione della "generazione del '27," . . . Ma la continuava in modo antistorico perché, travalicandone l'esperienza surrealista, che aveva rappresentato una rottura degli schemi formalistici e una prima apertura tematica verso una solidarietà sociale, . . . si riallacciava a un momento di enfasi classicista. . . .⁹

Opposition to the vacuity of this poetry was not long in springing up. The last half of the decade of the Forties saw important efforts to restore to poetry its lost human transcendence, to make of it a vehicle for reflecting the anguish and suffering of the War years. Two poets of the so-called "dehumanized" Generation of 1927 provided an important impetus in this direction. In 1944, Dámaso Alonso published Hijos de la Ira, a book considered pivotal in the re-humanization of Spanish poetry during the post-War years. Its anguished vision and its use of a personal speaker, blank verse, colloquial or even vulgar language, dramatic techniques, and irony--antithetical to the poetic

vision and techniques of the Generation of 1927--opened a world of expressive possibilities to post-War Spanish poets. Although its cosmic vision and symbolist and surrealistic techniques differ radically from Alonso's poetry, Vicente Aleixandre's Sombras del paraíso, published in the same year, also revealed a profound concern with man's existence. Also in 1944, Eugenio de Nora and Victoriano Cremer founded the magazine Espadaña, devoted to furthering a re-humanized, socially aware poetry. The anguished abrasiveness of much of this work led some to term it tremendista.

In general, the "realistic" poets who emerged after the Civil War renounced the poetic conventions associated with hermetic or "pure" poetry and turned to a colloquial and narrative language which they deemed more in keeping with the socially relevant themes they sought to embody. Their works do not incorporate the timeless perspective of poems of the Generation of 1927, but rather address the condition of man insofar as he is the product of definite historical, cultural, and political circumstances. The communication of relevant themes to a wide audience, rather than the forging of transcendent visions apprehensible only by an elite was the task these poets set for themselves. While many of the poets of the early years of this "re-humanization" movement succumbed to the dangers of sentimentality, denunciatory overstatement, and didacticism inherent in a poetry that values communication of a certain

theme above all else, others began to work with techniques which enabled them to circumvent these pitfalls. In their early books, José Hierro and Blas de Otero used a testimonial speaker engaged in meditating on an inner or outer reality, and through this speaker's mediation the reader was eased into--rather than rhetorically overwhelmed by--the poet's vision.

The effort to find more effective means of expression for the Forties' newly anguished vision of existence accelerated and intensified among the poets of the Fifties and Sixties. Man's anguish, linked in much of the poetry of the Forties to social and political circumstances, took on more existential overtones. The passage of time supplemented or even replaced adverse social surroundings as a source of the poet's discontent. As the poet looked more to himself, frequently retreating into memory in search of meaning and illumination, the emphasis on poetry as communication underwent an important alteration. Poetry became first an act of discovery and only secondarily an act of communication; many of these poets shared an awareness that only in the measure that they discovered their personal reality through the act of writing the poem could they hope to contribute to or communicate with mankind at large. Typical of this emerging vision of the poem is this statement of José Angel Valente in Ribes' 1963 anthology Poesía última, "El poeta no opera sobre un conocimiento previo del material de la experiencia, sino que este conocimiento se

produce en el mismo proceso creador."¹⁰ And Carlos Sahagún, in the same anthology, observes, "No creo que al poeta, como tal, se le pueda exigir ninguna clase de compromiso, si no es el de su autenticidad."¹¹

This is not to suggest that poetry addressing itself to the collective national reality ceased to be written. José Luis Cano's anthology El tema de España en la poesía española contemporánea¹² attests the extent to which pre-occupation with questions of national identity continued to shape much of the poetic expression of these years. And yet even in these poems--many of whose speakers struggle not to define some impersonal or abstract concept of nationhood but to illuminate an essence intimately bound up with their own identity--the idea of the poem as a vehicle for discovery is very much in evidence.

It is in the context of this emerging vision of the poem as a process of self-definition that the reworking by poets of the Fifties and Sixties of many of the techniques of the Forties, as well as their rediscovery of others dating back to the Generation of 1927 and beyond, may best be appreciated and understood. Among the former are the open form, dramatic techniques, colloquial language, plays of perspective, use of irony and of an unreliable speaker also in wide use among novelists of the period (such as Juan Goytisolo, Jesús Fernández Santos, Camilo José Cela). Some of the poems of Francisco Brines, José Angel Valente, Gloria Fuertes, and José Hierro show how effectively these

devices can be wielded to convey a vision of man adrift, metaphysically and socially, in a hostile world.

While these techniques remain an important resource of these poets, perhaps it is in their choice of "new" techniques that the changed thrust of their poetry can best be gauged. Most notable among these is allegory. From the late Fifties, Spanish poetry gives evidence of a new-found affinity for this form, as can be seen in poems from Crespo's 1956 volume Todo está vivo, Hierro's Libro de las alucinaciones (1964), Claudio Rodríguez' Conjuros (1958) and Alianza y condena (1965), and Carlos Bousoño's Oda en la ceniza (1967) and Las monedas contra la losa (1973). That four important writers of such different ages and poetic backgrounds should, within a relatively brief time, introduce allegorical processes into their poems can hardly be dismissed as coincidence. A brief comparison of the poetic processes of these poems with those of the Generation of 1927 may help to suggest the spiritual common denominator leading these poets to choice of this form. Italian critic Mario Di Pinto, in comparing the process of creative transformation in Crespo's poetry with that characteristic of the poets of the Generation of 1927, makes an observation which applies as well to other poets of the Fifties and Sixties:

Perché se per Lorca, e per la sua generazione, il processo andava dal reale all'astratto, cristallizzando un mondo di segni o metafore autarchiche nel dominio dell'intelligenza, per Crespo é un

cammino opposto; si tratta cioè di ridurre anche l'astratto e il metafisico in una dimensione materiale, alla misura dell'uomo. . . .¹³

The reversal among many poets of the Fifties and Sixties of the concrete-to-abstract direction of the process of poetic transformation characteristic of the poetry of the Generation of 1927 corresponds to the changed spiritual priorities of the later group. It is natural that the poetry of the Generation of 1927, in its concern to redeem the reader from the everyday through creation of a transcendent reality, should move from the concrete to the abstract. Likewise, it is perfectly consistent with the desire of the later poets to discover meaning and to give form to the void surrounding them that their poetry should move from intangible intuition to concrete embodiment. A study of the poems makes clear the extent to which these poets made use of allegory as a tool of discovery, as a means of furthering the search for meaning their poems carried forth. Whereas in traditional allegory, the author determines the narrative embodiments of the abstract level prior to the act of writing, the trajectory of the concrete narrative level in these poems often appears not to have been ordained from the beginning but to take shape simultaneously with the poet's understanding of the abstract intuition which inspired the poem. Thus, in the measure that the concrete level crystallizes effectively and suggestively in the writing of the poem, the intangible becomes accessible,

first to the poet and later to the reader. Carlos Bousoño's discussion of allegory in the poetry of Claudio Rodríguez shows clearly how one of the foremost Spanish poets of the Fifties and Sixties turned to such expressive purposes this traditional literary device.¹⁴ Discussing Rodríguez' highly idiosyncratic use of allegory in Alianza y condena, Bousoño observes that the poet begins with a general, abstract awareness and then, through the process of the poem, carries out a "búsqueda intuitiva" for its concrete embodiment.

Allegory was a logical choice for this group of poets esthetically as well as spiritually, providing them with an opportunity to re-elaborate and redirect the narrative and dramatic techniques which had formed the backbone of most post-War poetry. Not only did it enable these poets to infuse their writing with a subtle lyricism reminiscent of the poetry of the Generation of 1927, thereby transcending the limited literalism of some of the previous writing, but it lent itself to the moralizing intention which permeated much of this work. In a very real sense, allegory would seem to be the expressive device which allowed Spanish poets of the late Fifties and the Sixties to bring together the metaphorical legacy of pre-War poetry and the narrative thrust of post-War poetry.

Angel Crespo, José Angel Valente, Claudio Rodríguez, Francisco Brines, Angel González, and Gloria Fuertes are among the poets of the late Fifties and Sixties who most

energetically undertook a stylistic renovation of Spanish poetry. Underlying their markedly different poetic idioms was a desire to couple the post-War thematic thrust toward a more human poetry with an increasing sensitivity to form and an ever greater receptivity to the possibilities of language. They professed loyalty to the act of artistic creation rather than to any extraneous social or esthetic posture, and, highly individualistic, resisted grouping by generation. Typical of their feelings in this regard is this statement of Crespo's:

Más que con los poetas de mi generación en especial, me siento muy vinculado con los poetas españoles cuya obra considero positiva. Mi vida literaria antes de venirme a Puerto Rico se desarrolló en un ambiente muy dividido (más que polémico), en el que todos los que creíamos en una renovación de la poesía española nos sentíamos unidos independientemente de los motivos generacionales.¹⁵

Crespo's statements are echoed unanimously by the other poets in this group in their remarks in José Batlló's anthology.¹⁶

Attention to language was a key ingredient in the search for individual meaning and authenticity without which, these poets felt, the poem could not hope to illuminate larger social realities. Crespo and Valente have voiced this concern most clearly. Says Crespo,

¿Cómo puede facilitarse un cambio de las circunstancias sociales con una técnica conformista? En nuestra poesía "social", hay mucho "98", no hay investigaciones formales serias y actualizadas

sistemáticas. Con ello, se ha empobrecido el lenguaje, y, así, se ha producido esa crisis de expresión que ha conducido a la no menos triste de valores, que también padecemos. . . .17

And Valente says, "La poesía, cuando es tal, restituye al lenguaje su verdad. He ahí una función radicalmente social del arte. Y otra forma de 'dar un sentido más puro a las palabras de la tribu.'"18

Félix Grande, speaking of the Generation of 1927, remarks that the rigorous professional discipline of its members generated rather than impeded their artistic freedom.¹⁹ This intimate relationship between "freedom" and "discipline" is an essential characteristic of the work of the group of poets which emerged in the late Fifties and Sixties as well. While these poets disdained limitations and formulas of all kinds in the search their poems undertook for the truths that lay beneath the surface of things, they remained, in the best sense, remarkably non-self-indulgent, subordinating the self to attentiveness to the possibilities of language. That this poetry reveals a new emphasis on the value of the imagination and of humor suggests the liberating effect of this disciplined approach upon its practitioners.

Although the members of this group of poets cultivated a more integral vision of poetry, overcoming the limitations of both the formalist and the tremendista poets of the immediate post-War era, Angel Crespo stands out in the panorama of Spanish poetry of the last thirty years for his

steadfastness in defending, from 1945, both the esthetic integrity of the poem and its potential for illuminating the world's mysteries. From his beginnings as a poet, Crespo has viewed language not as a secondary facet of the creative process but as the key to the search for human relevancy his poetry carries forward. During the years following the Civil War, Crespo recognized the debilitating partiality of both the formalist and the tremendista approaches to poetry, and he held out for his own more integral vision of the poetic act, a vision prefiguring the expressive priorities of poets of the late Fifties and Sixties.

While critics universally acknowledge 1944 as a key year in the emergence of a newly human, anti-garcilasista poetry, they rarely mention an ephemeral vanguardist movement called postismo which, at the same time, was proposing an assault on garcilasismo from a different direction. Crespo came into contact with its three principal proponents, Edmundo d'Ory, Eduardo Chicharro, and Silvano Sernesi, shortly after coming to Madrid to study law in 1943. While he never formed part of the hard-core postista group, he gained from it an orientation which, pursued in his later poetry and redirected in the magazines he edited in the 1950's and 1960's, would help provide--to a greater degree than has been generally recognized--a basis for the esthetic revisioning which much recent Spanish poetry incorporates.

Meaning, clearly, "después de los ismos" or "después de las vanguardias," postismo opted for, to quote Crespo himself,

. . . nada de cubismo poético, ni de futurismo, ni de "lorquismo", pero sí un surrealismo que trate de recuperar la tradición por el expediente de la selectividad y la imaginación más que el subconsciente. Es decir, un surrealismo sincero que confiesa seleccionar los materiales que dicta el instinto . . . lo que permite someter a estos materiales a una elaboración estilística y estructural; un surrealismo que niega lo informe y lo gratuito.²⁰

In the same letter, Crespo observes that while the so-called "tremendista" poets Cremer, Nora, Celaya, and Otero opposed the reigning garcilasistas through a cliché-ridden, neo-romantic language which failed to take into sufficient account the esthetic aspect of the poetic act, the postistas proposed not just an ideological but a stylistic dissent:

A pesar de mi juventud, me daba cuenta de que una actitud de vanguardia era combativa, y positiva en consecuencia; en aquel ambiente cultural del que estaban ausentes los mejores poetas de la Generación del '27, o por lo menos la mayoría de ellos. Creía que merecía la pena alzar una bandera de protesta frente a la protección oficial del "garcilasismo", pero una protesta tanto estilística como ideológica. . . .²¹

Such a movement could not prosper in the Spain of iron-clad censorship of the post-Civil War years, and shortly after the appearance of the first issue of Postismo, the government prohibited its publication. About the follow-up publication, La cerbatana, of which Crespo was "secretario de

redacción," Crespo simply says, ". . . los obstáculos fueron tantos que hubo que desistir de su publicación."²²

It is ironic that, in an era when the poets themselves were either denying the social transcendence of the word (garcilasistas) or largely disregarding it as they cultivated the "more important" social themes (realistas or tremendistas), it should be the government who, through its very act of censorship, indirectly acknowledged its unique potential as a force of social insubordination.

While the postista movement itself is generally considered by critics who discuss it at all to have been a failure, most agree with J. M. Caballero Bonald's judgment that at least it "sirvió para remover las anquilosadas articulaciones de la poesía de los años 40."²³ As for postismo's importance regarding Crespo's subsequent career, critical consensus seems to agree with Crespo's own moderate assessment that it influenced him primarily in the sense that it led him "al estudio y difusión de la vanguardia con la esperanza de que los poetas españoles dispusiésemos de un lenguaje y de un estilo capaces de confundir a la reacción protegida."²⁴ Certainly the desire expressed by Crespo in connection with his postista involvement to further both an ideological and a stylistic revisioning of current poetry has remained a constant in his career. Twenty years later, his remarks in Leopoldo de Luis' Antología de la poesía social regarding social poetry's lack of an adequate esthetic attest to the continued vitality of the convictions

nurtured by his ties with postismo.

Although Crespo published his first book, Una lengua emerge, in 1950, his inclusion by some critics in the Generation of 1951²⁵ is based chiefly on his involvement in publication of the two magazines generally credited with having given rise to this generation. Crespo served as co-director of the first, El pájaro de paja (1950-1954), which he founded with Federico Muelas and Gabino-Alejandro Carriedo, and was founder and director of the second, Deucalión (1951-1953). He also wrote regularly during this time for two other poetry publications, Doña Endrina and Trilce.

In an article entitled "Vanguardia en los años cincuenta (Desde el ismo a la generación)," Carlos de la Rica notes that the contribution to contemporary Spanish poetry of the Generation of 1951 has been unjustly passed over by critics, and sets out to define and defend its importance.²⁶ His characterization of El pájaro de paja²⁷ suggests pajarerismo's debt to postismo; he calls it "una dulce e irónica escoba que intentó barrer la ganga del ambiente . . . las flores de papel o de plástico de los jarrones más o menos oficiales . . . para que (éstos) aparecieran tal y como eran y no de otra manera."²⁸ He writes,

Con El Pájaro de Paja se inaugura una nueva poesía de mensaje cálido y humos de trascendencia, una poesía de pretensiones paradisíacas de mundos vulgares, la exultación [sic] de lo cotidiano . . . al plano de lo poético, una poesía emocional que parte de la carcajada y del ridículo, al trampolín de lo intuicional e inefable. . . .

Frente a un neo-clasicismo empalagoso y desvirtuado había que oponer el desgarró, la ironía. Frente a una poesía deshumanizada y pura, el humanismo vulgar y corriente del hombre que se rasca porque le pica. Frente al preciosismo y la palabra detonante, el disparate gracioso y los temas con honda y sentida raíz humana. Frente a la pirotécnia de la imagen, lo cotidiano y sugerente.²⁹

While the poets of the Generation of 1951 clearly proposed a technical and thematic revitalization of Spanish poetry, it was the refusal of the most important among them to submit to any dogmatic approach to poetry and their subsequent development of highly personal poetic idioms that enabled them to make a significant contribution to Spanish poetry. De la Rica says of Crespo in this regard, "El fue irrevocable en su frontera y es el más genuíno representante de esta generación; su casi creador que hizo dar su do de pecho al ismo y que lo superó librándolo, al fin del mismo pajarerismo."³⁰

Summing up the two paths along which this poetry develops, De la Rica says,

Dos corrientes principalmente se dibujan con amplitud en los poetas de esta generación. Unos apuntan lo humano; los otros, lo mágico y la sorpresa. La corriente primera parará en la poesía social de hoy. La segunda se perderá en una especie de surrealismo, buscará acuciantes novedades o saltará rápida a otras cimas más trascendentes y seguras.³¹

José Albi echoes this appraisal when he says of the members of this generation,

. . . no es fácil hallar el hilo que los une.

Tal vez partan de un aprovechamiento de la realidad y de una deformación radical de la misma. En el fondo, acaso pretendan descifrarla: descifrar lo vivo, lo real; el misterio último de los hombres y de las cosas. Este rasgo sí que les es común: un misterio en superficie y en profundidad; ambiental y de contenido. Y de aquí arrancan dos direcciones: una, más anclada en la realidad; otra, más desconectada de ella. La primera bucea en el dolor cotidiano del hombre; en su dimensión más angustiosa. La segunda desemboca en un sorprendente juego de magia, de inquietud y de sueño.³²

Although critics seem fond of saying that Crespo develops along the "realistic" line while Gabino-Alejandro Carriedo pursues the "surrealist" mode, even a superficial look at Crespo's poetic production during the decade from 1950 to 1960 reveals the extent to which these two impulses commingle in his work.

If in general it is true that the contribution of the Generation of 1951 to contemporary Spanish poetry has gone unrecognized by critics, José Batlló is an important exception. In his Antología de la nueva poesía española, he credits two of its members with being unjustly overlooked precursors of contemporary Spanish poetry:

Carriedo y Labordeta se nos aparecen como los dos precursores de la poesía que había de alcanzar la plenitud casi quince años más tarde, en la que están presentes y desarrollados la mayor parte de los hallazgos expresivos, de la renovación temática y de la superación de esquemas preestablecidos que puede advertirse en la obra de estos dos poetas.³³

The quality and consistency of Crespo's poetic production entitle him to a place alongside the two poets mentioned

by Batlló.

In 1960, with Gabino-Alejandro Carriedo, Crespo founded the last of the three magazines whose trajectory illuminates the continuity and breadth of his poetic commitment. Poesía de España--founded, as were El pájaro de paja and Deucalión, in opposition to "las revistas oficiales y oficiosas"³⁴--proposed a new poetic realism. Martínez Ruiz credits it (together with Deucalión) with "un replanteo más a fondo de los métodos expresivos que en España y aun en la poesía de Juan de Leceta (Gabriel Celaya) se realiza,"³⁵ and says that it avoided the partisanism which hampered the diffusion of pajarerismo's ideas.

This profile of the poetry magazines which Crespo helped to found and edit makes clear that division of post-War Spanish poetry into a garcilasista faction on the one hand and a realista faction on the other is an oversimplification. Although Crespo and others associated with him mounted an assault on the garcilasistas, the scope of their proposed revitalization of Spanish poetry was much broader than that of the realistas, whose main concern was a thematic one. From 1945, Crespo has shown an unflagging commitment to a stylistic as well as a thematic revisioning of Spanish poetry, embracing consciously-elaborated surrealistic techniques, surprising images, irony, humor, and irreverence as essential ingredients in his search for a more human poetry. Mistrustful of rigid poetic doctrines, he has maintained a more open and integral approach to the

act of poetic creation than either the formalist or tremendista poets. Between these two extremes, he has struck a middle stance, maintaining that attention to form is central to creation of a humanly meaningful poetic experience.

If, in general, concentration of most critics and anthologists on Crespo's more "realistic" poetic production has led to misrepresentation both of his work and of post-War poetry, two critics must be credited for their more comprehensive vision of his work--a vision based on an appreciation of Crespo's dual esthetic and human commitment. In a 1960 review of Crespo's Junio feliz (1959), Rafael Soto Vergés characterizes the volume as "el libro de la actitud realista y el estilo idóneo," speculating that Crespo's use of rural scenes, his creation of a meditative mood through certain semantic and rhythmic usages, and his incorporation of techniques linked to surrealism may point the way out of the stylistic impoverishment characteristic of most of the current realistic poetry.³⁶ Four years later, in a review of Crespo's Suma y sigue (1962), the same critic says,

No podemos dejar de señalar la función mediadora --técnica y temática--de su poesía entre el prosaísmo neoilustrativo de ciertas tendencias actuales justificado por ideas ético-sociales, y el rigor expresivo y estilístico, abandonado por muchos poetas a tenor de una mayor eficacia ideológica.³⁷

But the critic who has most forcefully and intelligently illuminated Crespo's esthetic and human commitment--and the very real sense in which these two commitments are

one--is Pilar Gómez Bedate, whose 1969 article underscores "la estrecha vinculación con la humanidad y la cultura de una poesía que, ni 'comprometida' ni 'enajenada', se sitúa en otro terreno de horizontes más amplios."³⁸ She says,

. . . precisamente en la lucha contra la vulgaridad y a favor de la inquietud intelectual está comprometida la poesía que estudiamos, que gira indefectiblemente en torno al hombre y su obra y, siempre dentro del mayor rigor formal, se alimenta de una extensa (e intensa) serie de experiencias culturales en continua incorporación y evolución. . . .³⁹

The purpose of this study is to illuminate, through a detailed study of individual poems, the parallel evolution throughout Crespo's work of the author's poetic techniques and the human vision which they enable him to discover and impart. I will show how Crespo's unique contribution to contemporary Spanish poetry stems from his unfaltering and ever broader pursuit over a period of nearly thirty years of a poetry at once esthetically aware and humanly significant. Refusing to allow his poetry to echo the stridently anti-this or pro-that voices of much of Spanish post-War poetry, Crespo has remained singularly faithful to his vision of language itself, carefully and imaginatively wielded, as the key to illumination of man's inner and outer world. This study will make clear that Crespo's poetic production, building upon an esthetic revisioning parallel to that undertaken by the poets of the Generation of 1927 and incorporating the thrust toward greater social

relevancy characteristic of most post-War poetry, bridges the gap between pre-War and post-War Spanish poetry in a way unique among contemporary poets.

I have chosen to organize my study around the poems included in En medio del camino, which, as was mentioned earlier, represents, with a few deletions and modifications, the entirety of Crespo's poetic production between 1949 and 1970. In an attempt to create for the reader an organic reading experience,⁴⁰ Crespo has divided the volume into five books representing "las principales etapas que ahora, al considerarla en conjunto, creo descubrir en ella."⁴¹ While the progression from book to book is chronological, neither the individual books nor their respective subdivisions correspond exactly to the particular volumes in which the poetry was originally published.⁴² The decision to base my study on En medio del camino was reached partly because I was unable to obtain copies of all of Crespo's published books. More importantly, though, after reading ten of the original thirteen volumes, I concluded that Crespo's division of his work into the different expressive stages of En medio del camino was valid and that the deletions and modifications did not significantly detract from the representativity of the selection. On the other hand, I have not hesitated to refer to poems not chosen for inclusion when such references have seemed appropriate.

The poems of Book One of En medio del camino, written between 1949 and 1955, introduce the reader, on the one

hand, to the poet's intense concern with the creative process and, on the other, to his vision of its connection with man's ordinary, time-bound reality. The increasingly sophisticated techniques of the poems of Book Two, spanning the years from 1954 to 1959, enable the reader to experience the poet's view of the interlocking concerns of time and the creative process. Books Three and Four each comprise poems written between 1958 and 1964 and, while the material focused in each is different, the processes of poetic probing they carry forth are complementary. The poems of Book Three, written to or about different artists and writers, embody Crespo's search to expand the possibilities of his own art through scrutiny of the work of other creators. To a greater extent than in any of his previous poems, social man and artist are represented as merging. The technical experimentation of the poems of Book Four suggests the influence of Crespo's fascination with the visual arts; throughout these poems, the author carries forth an increasingly agitated search to encompass wider social realities. Finally, the poems of Book Five, written during the years 1965-1970, represent the latest stage in Crespo's search to illuminate complex reality through a careful and original wielding of language. Their frequently baffling superimpositions of time, space, and reality challenge the reader--to a greater extent than does any of Crespo's previous poetry--to participate in creation of the poem's experience through cultivation of an ever

greater sensitivity to language's power of suggestion. While the vision of language as a medium charged with potential for illuminating the otherwise unfathomable mysteries of the world and the self has been a constant in Crespo's work from the beginning, what is perhaps most impressive throughout the poems of En medio del camino is the ever broadening scope of the critical and creative intelligence the poet brings to his ongoing search for a precise and suggestive poetic idiom.

CHAPTER I

The poems of the first book of En medio del camino,⁴³ all but one taken from the three volumes Una lengua emerge (1950), Quedan señales (1952), and La pintura (1955), introduce the reader to the poet's vivid concern with the process of artistic creation and its relationship with man's time-bound existence, themes which permeate Crespo's entire poetic production. Not only in a thematic but also in a technical sense, this earliest work anticipates the direction which much of Crespo's subsequent poetic effort will take. The wide range of expressive devices upon which he draws in forging the experiences of these poems suggests the technical restlessness which will be a constant throughout Crespo's struggle to illuminate reality through poetry.

Taken from Crespo's postismo-influenced first volume, Una lengua emerge, the poems which lead off this first book of En medio del camino unfold around a consideration of the creative act and convey a sense of the poet's unrestrained joy in the process of creation. Their most prominent stylistic devices are a non-anecdotal, first-person singular or plural speaking voice, lyrical, imaginative images turned occasionally to a symbolic effect, plays of word-meaning and sound, and a deceptively conversational language

tinged with playfulness. The increasing pervasiveness in subsequent poems of the theme of time and of the poet's desire to overcome its limitations through the creative act dictates certain technical changes. Later poems in this first book, many taken from the volume Quedan señales, are grounded in a more easily recognizable, anecdotal reality, and feature a personal speaker and narrative, colloquial language. What is most notable about these poems, however, is the skill with which the poet--through manipulation of the speaker/image relationship, use of words suggestive beyond their literal meanings, and transformation of the poem's narrative impulse through illogical, lyrical images --manages to suggest the mysterious transcendence of everyday experience. This vision of the poem as a means for thwarting the devastation of time's passage through disclosure of reality's latent extraordinariness underlies and unifies the technically diverse poems of this first book.

The introductory poems, from Crespo's suggestively entitled first book, Una lengua emerge, simultaneously celebrate and attempt to define the poetic process. The imaginative, light-hearted metaphors of the first poem, "La voz," draw us into a vivid experience of the irrepressible creative urge as it rises within the poet:

En todas partes una lengua emerge
 que entre los árboles canta, canta.
 Sube una voz. Ignoro cuántos pájaros
 tiene mi voz que en los árboles vive.
 Ignoro cuánta voz tiene mi voz.
 Canta debajo de las ramas verdes.

Con las aves que nacen de mi boca,
canta de prisa encima de mis labios.

Una voz es un hilo que se rompe
cuando un pájaro viene con el vuelo torcido,
cuando un ave no tiene voz humana
y se hunde el viento en que un vilano vuela.

Yo no sé cuánto hilo tiene mi voz,
ni si algún halo tiene acaso
el ala de mi voz
que como el ave asciende.
Pero a las ramas sube
y de tal modo puéblalas
que se rompen de pronto y llueve savia cálida
sobre mis propios labios,
que son como mis fauces.

(p. 15)

The suggestive image of the first two lines of the poem establishes the figurative nature of the experience and keys us to the theme of creation, of "singing." The sensual quality of the image of the tongue and its subsequent evocation as encompassing nature ("entre los árboles") imbue the act of singing with an extraordinary transcendence. In line 3, the depiction of the voice's rising contributes to the sensation of lightness conveyed by the initial image of the emergence of the tongue among the trees. Prompted by the tree/singing association, we almost involuntarily envision birds. This implicit association is borne out in the imagery of the third and fourth lines, where a personal speaker emerges for the first time. The use here (and the repetition in line 5) of the verb "Ignoro" heightens our sense of the strangely autonomous quality of the image of the voice. The poet conveys a whimsical delight in the portrayal of this indomitable, unpredictable

"voz" and its attendant birds as existing in a realm far removed from the will of the speaker. The whimsy intensifies in line 6, as the voice, independently of the speaker, is evoked singing among the green branches, and in the last two lines of the stanza, where words are portrayed in the guise of unruly birds, singing unceremoniously "encima de mis labios." In this first stanza, the physical attributes of "lengua," "voz," "boca," and "labios," used in a clearly metaphorical sense, focus our attention upon the phenomenon of human singing, while the imagery of birds and trees infuses the potentially ponderous theme with concrete vigor and playfulness.

In the second stanza of the poem, lines 9 and 10 playfully transform the voice image while maintaining its link to the imagery of birds and words of the previous stanza. The voice now becomes a delicate thread that breaks when a bird "viene con el vuelo torcido." Each line features a bird or wind-borne object ("pájaro," "ave," "vilano") prey to some sort of inadequacy or misfortune ("el vuelo torcido," "no tiene voz humana," "se hunde el viento") which metaphorically dramatizes the failure of words struggling toward expression, yet does so in a light-hearted, imaginatively captivating way. The playfulness of the process is accentuated by the alliterative abundance of words beginning with the letter "v," culminating in the stanza's last line with "el viento en que un vilano vuela." The personal speaker is completely absent from this stanza,

giving the metaphorical process an even greater appearance of autonomy.

The playfulness of image and language intensifies in the first four lines of the last stanza. In lines 13-16, whose initial "yo no sé" echoes the twice-repeated "Ignoro" of stanza one, rhythm, alliterative sound, and concept all combine to illuminate the speaker's "powerlessness" over the irrepressible energy of his own imagination, which encompasses in quick succession such disparate realities as "hilo," "halo," "ave," and "ala." The diverse parts of this unfolding metaphor, however, somehow fail to jar; it is a measure of the poet's art that both conceptually ("hilo," "halo," "ave," and "ala" all share a quality of buoyancy and fragility) and phonetically ("hilo," "halo," "acaso," "ala," "ave," "asciende") they mesh harmoniously to elaborate the joyous and irresistible rising of the creative voice within the speaker. The underlying kinship of the diverse parts of the metaphor delights us, as does also the spectacle of the speaker being pulled along behind, bemused yet unprotesting, by his own runaway imagination.

In the last five lines of the poem, the multiple threads of its central metaphor ("lengua"- "voz"- "pájaro") come together in the final evocation of the miracle of the poet's breaking into song. We see the voice rising, as at the poem's beginning, to the branches, whereupon the laden branches suddenly "break," raining warm sap upon the speaker's lips "que son como mis fauces." The breaking of the

branches and the raining of the sap signify fruition and fulfillment rather than destruction. The highly sensual image of the warm sap falling upon the speaker's lips as well as the word "fauces," which suggest the speaker's conversion into an animal nourished by nature, lend an expressive concreteness to the more figurative "labios" and "lengua" images previously featured. It seems fitting that the "palabras"/"pájaros" which initially took flight, seeming to leave the poet behind, should return ultimately to nurture him. Although the poem possesses a simultaneous gaiety and reverence that defy analysis, its expressive thrust derives in large part from the apparent submission of the speaker to the imaginative central images, from the poem's lilting rhythm, and from the use of whimsy-inflected language.

Some of the same techniques may be seen in these fragments from the next poem in the book, entitled "La palabra" and also taken from Una lengua emerge. The poem's lilting rhythm, the personification of "su palabra" which the speaker gently queries throughout, and the lyrical, imaginative imagery imbue with an understated vitality the theme of the poet's profound concern with his word and its transcendence:

¿A dónde irás cuando te deje suelta?
 ¿A dónde irás, irás?
 No es cierto que te apagues
 y ya no queden restos
 de algo que me ha nacido en el pozo del alma.

Pero tú, ¿a dónde irás o volverás?
 ¿O volverás al sitio en el que no existías,
 tenue bestezuela de sonido,
 musarañita esbelta y ágil
 que al salir de la boca en la lengua me arañas?

 ¿Toda tu fuerza acaba
 en esa vibración que hace que el aire
 se conmueva, una pizca
 de polvo haga caer en una hoja?

 No te puedes perder, no nos podemos
 perder, palabra mía.
 ¿A dónde irás, iremos?

(pp. 16-17)

The understated wistfulness and whimsy of the tone throughout the poem lend a peculiar transcendence to this affirmation of the inextricably bound identities of the poet and his word, a theme which in less artful hands might easily have resulted in sentimentality or sententious overstatement.

The theme of words and creation is embodied in a more hermetic, conceptual, and mysterious manner in the poem "Nieve." The relationship between the speaker and the central image, that of snow, is at once suggestive and elusive:

Es el momento de que Dios nos hable
 apartando los copos lo mismo que cortinas.
 Voz sin facciones, dejaría
 un hueco entre nosotros y la nieve,
 una gran pausa blanca
 entre nuestras miradas y su voz.

Es la hora de que salgan de sus éxtasis
 las diminutas almas de la hierba
 que estaban ignorando la palabra.
 Hora es de que saquemos
 el miedo del armario
 y aprovechemos bien estos instantes
 para contar secretos.
 Es la nieve otra vez

y todos los paisajes son hermanos:
 todos de blanco con su luz auestas.

Abrimos la ventana
 y una cortina cae, para dejar
 paso a la voz que se añoraba en vano.
 Es la nieve otra voz. Tras su blancura
 nuestras propias palabras nos responden.
 (p. 21)

The first-person plural speaker's opening statement seems to introduce a philosophical-religious concern. This abstract statement, however, is undercut in the following line by a highly concrete image which both establishes the scene (a snowfall) and equates God's projected "speaking" with an action as ordinary and everyday as the opening of curtains. Somehow the comparison does not seem inappropriate, since snow's erasure of the usual configurations of nature and the stillness we associate with its falling would seem to form a likely backdrop for the disclosure of an extraordinary event.

If line 2 rendered the "God" of the first line more tangible, the imagery of lines 3-6 dematerializes Him ("voz sin facciones," "un hueco," "una gran pausa blanca"), suspending us in a speculative world blanketed in white and animated solely by a voice. The whiteness of the scene and the speaker's insistence upon God as a voice call to mind the Biblical evocation of the word as God in Genesis.

The continued use of the subjunctive in the second stanza reiterates the speculative nature of the experience, yet a certain urgency is bestowed upon the imagery by the

initial "Es la hora" and the subsequent "Hora es de que. . . ." Though the imagery of this section becomes somewhat more concrete, the word remains the central concern. The speaker affirms the necessity that nature yield to its enlightenment in lines 7-9, and, in the following four lines, we are exhorted to "sacar el miedo del armario" and "aprovechar bien estos instantes / para contar secretos." The phrase "estos instantes" heightens our sense of the fragility of the occasion. Lines 14-16 return us to a contemplation of the concrete scene ("es la nieve otra vez") and the imagery, curiously humanizing ("todos los paisajes son hermanos: / todos de blanco con su luz auestas" [emphasis mine]), affirms it as a source of illumination. For a fleeting moment, we halfway believe that the snow which has made all landscapes "hermanos" could similarly transform the human world.

The present-tense verb which opens the last stanza of the poem, as well as the commonplace action evoked, seem to return us to the world of ordinary reality. Nevertheless, the word "cortina" of line 18 shifts us subtly back to the evocation in the first stanza of God's parting the snow-like curtains, recalling to us His mysterious presence. The third line of this stanza reveals that the longed-for voice has failed to materialize and, with the repetition in line 20 of "Es la nieve otra vez," reality comes flooding back into the speaker's reverie. The poem's final image seems at first a haunting evocation of the Godless void

within which the speaker sees us entrapped. And yet, considered from a different vantage point, the ending may be seen as an affirmation rather than a negation. The placement of the poem within En medio del camino after several others which directly concern themselves with the creative process, as well as clues within the poem itself, support this latter interpretation. An undeniable parallel has been drawn throughout the poem between words, the act of speaking ("hablar," "contar," "voz," and "palabras"), and revelation or creation. The whiteness which at first yielded for the speaker intimations of a God about to "speak" ultimately reveals to him the truth that it is his own words which must resound, create, and fill the void (of the blank page, of the world) or be absorbed by it.

Without resolving the tensions, the equivocal final sentence of the poem leaves us balancing precariously between affirmation and negation, alluring us on the one hand with the beauty of the challenge of creation and, on the other, repelling us with a suggestion of the nothingness behind a refusal to embrace it. The implicit suggestion that man must rise to the challenge, become his own God through the poetic process, is echoed in the long poem La pintura (included as part three of this first book), where the author affirms that the creative process "habla del hombre que con Dios se habla" (emphasis mine).

"Nieve" may be seen as the poetic elaboration of a belief central to Crespo's entire creative effort, namely

that a filling with words of the void which surrounds him, a listening to his own words, is man's only hope for countering time's deadening passage. The following fragments from La pintura, throughout which the poet probes the implications of the creative process, attest to the constancy of this theme throughout Crespo's work:

Escribir un caballo en una sombra,
 esconder una rosa en un armario,
 reducir a debidas dimensiones
 formas desmesuradas,
 poder llevar el sol en una cesta,
 tocar con nuestros labios
 la carne que trasciende.

Reducir a sistemas materiales
 todo lo que del hombre se apodera,
 lo que la hace soñar por la mañana
 que ha dormido la noche estando muerto,
 y le hace desear segundo tacto
 para palpar la nada,
 segundos ojos para ver lo oscuro,
 segundo olfato para oler su aroma,
 décima lengua para hablar su lengua.

(Section 1, p. 37)

Encima todo habla,
 todo se explica entre sus cuatro límites:
 la materia emergiendo,
 el pálido color temblando al lado
 de la caliente huella, el unicornio
 transformando la tierra con sus cascos.

Mas debajo está el caos:

.....

Todo lo que es del mundo,
 arrancado del caos, con fuerza, con tirones,
 fue puesto a navegar entre alaridos.
 Todo lo que sustentan cuatro líneas hiriéndose,
 arrancado del mar de la materia,
 habla del hombre que con Dios se habla.

(Section 4, pp. 41-42)

Es difícil, preciso,
 cuando todos han dicho su palabra,
 cuando se muere un hombre en cada esquina,
 cuando el atrio se llena de gusanos;
 es preciso, difícil,
 ir con mano y martillos,
 con herramientas múltiples,
 con camiones cargados de corderos,
 y golpear las telas,
 atravesando el hueco
 que al sentir una mano
 pondrá en pie la palabra
 que duerme desde siempre en la pintura.

(Section 7, pp. 44-45)

The theme of time and of its relation to the act of creation permeates Crespo's poetic production from Una lengua emerge onward. Among the poems included in the first book of En medio del camino, this concern with time frequently--though certainly not exclusively--finds expression in a symbolic mode. The poem "La mano" (from Una lengua emerge) reveals the unfolding of a symbolic process:

Hay una mano que lo toca todo.
 Cuando me acuesto, siento por las sábanas
 una mano furtiva que les roba sus hilos.
 Siento, luego, crujir las puertas y los muebles.
 Hay una mano que lo toca todo.
 Entre la cal, detrás de los dibujos,
 bajo los vasos, dentro de las cómodas,
 va matando segundos,
 va estrangulando brillos,
 en todo se detiene.
 Esa mano le arranca las plumas a los cánticos,
 esa mano le quita su luz a las palabras.
 Todo lo que no toca infinitud adquiere,
 pero ¿cómo escapar de sus viscosos dedos?
 ¿Cómo hacer que la lluvia no caiga en los poemas
 si esa mano es el viento que amontona las nubes?
 ¿Cómo hacer que esta hierba,
 que este pedazo de tierra viva,
 que todo esto no se muera,
 si esa mano lo está tocando todo?

¿Cómo hacer que estos versos,
 además de palabras,
 además de este aroma que veo y que repito,
 sean versos, versos, versos?

(p. 18)

The opening line of the poem features an all-engulfing sensual image reminiscent of that of the first line of "La voz." The hand is clearly a symbol, though we do not yet suspect of what, since the verb "tocar" elicits neither negative nor positive associations. In line 2, a personal speaker emerges, envisioning the hand in the process of unraveling his sheets as he sleeps. The adjective "furtiva" and the identification of the hand with a process of slow, unrelenting disintegration suggest for the first time the meaning of the symbol. In line 5, the speaker fades from prominence--not to reemerge until the next-to-last line of the poem--and all our attention is focused on the symbolic presence of the hand.

The rhythm of the poem accelerates in the short prepositional phrases of lines 6 and 7. The association of the hand with diverse objects of everyday reality ("cal," "dibujos," "vasos," "cómodas") and the rapid succession of different prepositions convey an increasingly ominous sense of its omnipresence. Lines 8-10 confirm its identification with time: "Va matando segundos, / va estrangulando brillos, / en todo se detiene."

The imagery of lines 11 and 12 shifts us from the world of concrete, human reality to the realm of poetry.

"Las palabras" and "los cánticos," envisioned as radiant ("luz") and palpitating with life ("plumas") succumb just as readily as ordinary reality to the victimizing hand. The tenuous hopefulness of the affirmation of line 13 is undercut by our memory of the first line of the poem, in which the hand was depicted as touching everything, as well as by the impersonally-phrased question of line 14 ("¿Cómo escapar de sus viscosos dedos?").

The rest of the poem is given over to three similarly impersonal queries which, in combination with the imagery they enclose, set before us with ever greater clarity the dilemma of the creator. The imagery of lines 15-20 closely identifies poetry and the natural world. In lines 15 and 16, poetry is seen as a vulnerable landscape threatened by a hand-caused deluge, while in lines 17 and 18 the images of "hierba" and "tierra viva" seem to suggest the poem as well as specific natural realities. Only the poet, it is suggested, can rescue reality from the devastation of time through language, and--if any doubt remains as to the importance of his mission--we are reminded in line 19 that at stake is life itself ("que todo esto no se muera").

In the last four lines of the poem, set apart from the preceding section, the symbolic hand is significantly absent. The poet's attention has shifted in the course of the poem from a consideration of the material devastation wrought by time to a single-minded preoccupation with the creative act as a mode of thwarting its ravages. The final,

poignant repetition of "versos" communicates to the reader the poet's intense desire that his poetry be ongoing and emerge triumphantly from the shadow time casts, while simultaneously suggesting his frustration at the fragility of the means at his command.

In "La orla" (from Quedan señales), as in "La mano," Crespo turns to a symbolic mode to embody an ever more pressing vision of time. Yet, the central symbol is much less rigidly defined, less specifically identified with a particular abstract value than was the hand in the poem just studied. The meaning of the key image in "La orla" seems to fluctuate and expand as the poem takes shape, rather than to have been determined beforehand. Its fuller, more enigmatic significance coheres slowly, in conjunction with a series of linked images and the gradual fade-out of the personal speaker. The decorative border of the title comes to embody, by the poem's end, not an abstract meaning but rather the speaker's attitude toward a certain realm of his own experience, an attitude which we also come to embrace:

Cuando mi abuelo hacía versos
y contaba las sílabas --y a veces se perdía--,
los escribía, luego, en papeles con orlas
y se los regalaba a sus hermanas.

Deshace el mundo la carnal cuaderna
que apunta, paso a paso, los caminos;
quedan señales,
versos,
quedan abuelos idos,
recuerdos de sus manos sobre las piernas suaves
que tuvimos --teníamos

entonces pocos años--
y un tintineo dulce de monedas de plata.

Queda su gesto, mas su voz no queda,
especie de recuerdo de cómo fue su porte,
pero dudamos si sus ojos eran
infantiles o claros
o de vieja prosapia.

Quedan sus versos en papel con orla,
con una flor pegada en una esquina,
con tinta sepia,
huelen a membrillos
de armarios viejos, a madera antigua.

Se recuerdan las cartas del abuelo,
vasos de leche grandes que rebosan,
confiterías cuyos dependientes
ya no recuerdan al que nieto iba.
Hablan los padres, cuentan sucedidos,
palabras, escrituras, se manejan
y un recuerdo, de paso, se emociona.

La orla de versos, entre nuestras manos,
sobre la mesa cae, tan amarilla.
La flor no huele, como si el aroma
se emancipase con el muerto abuelo
que escribía un soneto a sus hermanas.
(pp. 27-28)

The unpretentious, down-to-earth language of the first stanza of the poem presents an anecdotal first-person speaker, in vivid contrast to the almost featureless speakers of the poems previously studied. Using verbs in the imperfect tense, this speaker evokes the memory of a grandfather who wrote poems on bordered paper and made gifts of them to his sisters. The confessional focus of these first lines and the unhurried familiarity with which the speaker intones them lull us into accepting the notepaper as everyday and unremarkable.

By contrast, the significance of the paper swells in

the second stanza, where the verbs become suddenly present-tense and the speaker engages in a more generalized meditation. The figurative language of the stanza's first line reveals the transformation within the speaker's vision of the "papeles con orlas" into a "carnal cuaderna" which the world "dismantles." The collection of poems becomes a repository of all human experience ("apunta, paso a paso, los caminos"), and the somewhat jarring adjective "carnal" prompts us to identify the disintegrating notebook with the fragility of human existence. Lines 7-13 give further resonance to this developing symbol, evoking "lo que queda," that which lingers despite time's passage. All are things of great delicacy, vague and insubstantial: "señales," "versos," "abuelos idos," "recuerdos," "un tintineo dulce." Despite what appear to be very subjective, selective images, the effect of these lines, curiously enough, is to draw the reader closer to the speaker's experience rather than to distance him from it. This is due in part to the almost unnoticed transition from a first-person singular to a first-person plural speaker. More importantly, though, the sensorial images of touching, of the smooth-skinned knees (as opposed to the age-roughened ones the verb "tuvimos" and the clarification "teníamos entonces pocos años" call to mind) and of the clinking of a coin are strangely universal in their appeal. They trigger memories of similar experiences we have all had, and kindle a flicker of nostalgia at their loss.

The use of a first-person plural voice continues in the third stanza, as the speaker proceeds with his evocation of "lo que queda," using images whose vagueness recalls to the reader all that has been lost. By the stanza's close, where the verb "dudamos" makes ours the speaker's doubt as to the color of his grandfather's eyes, a symbolic reality encompassing not just the speaker but humanity in a wider sense has clearly emerged. The notepad itself is not mentioned in the stanza, and yet it remains on the fringes of our awareness.

In contrast, stanza four is devoted entirely to an evocation of the final and most important item in the enumeration of things which remain: the sheets of poetry which inspired the speaker's meditation. Lines 19-23 contain a description at once detailed and more widely suggestive: the papers carry a flower in one corner, inked in red, and smell of "membrillos de armarios viejos, a madera antigua." These images, in their appeal to the senses of smell, taste, and touch, upon which, as children not yet in command of words, we depended to "know" our reality, convey a sense of the simultaneous tangibility and inaccessible mystery of the past. The speaker has faded completely from the narrative, and his absence furthers the illusion that the past being evoked is common to us all.

The depersonalization becomes still more apparent in the statements "se recuerdan," "se manejan," and "se emociona" in the fifth stanza of the poem. In addition the

"yo" of the first stanza has become "el que nieto iba." The items and events depicted, a kind of echo of those of stanza two, are memories just as universal and sensorially compelling. The image of the "confirterías cuyos dependientes / ya no recuerdan al que nieto iba" perfectly embodies a generalized sadness at time's effacing of certain cherished realities, its reduction of uncomplicated yet meaningful relationships.

The brief last stanza brings into focus again the particular "orla de versos" of the beginning of the poem, evoking its suggestive falling from "our" hands. The first two lines of this stanza are unpretentiously anecdotal, although the adjective "amarilla" suggests not only the brittle nature of the paper upon which the verses are written, but also the futility of the speaker's attempt to recapture the past which the paper symbolizes. And yet, it is the image contained in the poem's last three lines which most exactly, if mysteriously, captures and communicates the almost inexpressible feeling toward the past which the bordered paper has come to embody. The image draws an equivalence between the aroma's having freed itself from the penned flower (the poem's irreparably lost essence) and the dead grandfather freeing himself through the act of writing a sonnet to his sisters--or possibly through death. While this image ultimately resists logical analysis, its effect is to leave us with a heightened sense of the elusiveness of all things past, the final recognition toward

which the poem has been building. As opposed to the process of "La mano," where each succeeding image reiterated the basically unchanging meaning of the central symbol, the bordered notepaper in "La orla" becomes--in conjunction with the almost unnoticed change of the personal speaker to a generalized speaking voice, the accumulation of images which spark universal emotive responses, and the final illogical image--a generator of supplementary, yet ultimately elusive meanings suggesting a complex attitude toward time.

A symbolic embodiment of the theme of time very different from that of "La orla" emerges in "El río," the only poem in this first book from La cesta y el río. The allegorical nature of the experience points ahead to the processes of many of the works included in Book Two of En medio del camino. In this poem, a first-person speaker envisions an ever-widening river--never explicitly identified with an abstract value, but strongly suggestive of time--which flows from between his feet, sweeping away with it a variety of people and objects:

Un río nace entre mis pies
y poco a poco va ensanchándose.
Mira cómo se lleva las sillas,
cómo arrastra los muebles de la abuela;
contempla las camisas, los pañuelos,
mojados, blancos, que se pierden.

Ha entrado en la parroquia.
Allí el cura está en frente de los santos
y habla sin tregua de la salvación.
Pero el agua lo va inundando todo..
y el buen pastor separa con cuidado

el púlpito del templo
 y, bogando, se aleja con las aguas.
 (p. 32)

Advancing remorselessly, the current engulfs cows, grain,
 old letters, and souvenirs, prompting the poet to plead:

Reconciliaos los blancos con los negros
 hay tiempo aún para algunos abrazos.
 No todo es ahora mismo perdición:
 corta esa flor que nunca osaste.
 (pp. 33-34)

In the face of the current's apparently relentless
 destruction, the poem's ending, an enigmatic affirmation,
 comes as a surprise:

Esto del agua es tan antiguo:
 Del río que me nace entre los pies
 sólo se benefician las sirenas.

 Un río nace entre mis pies
 y, sin embargo, no me ahoga.
 (p. 34)

Though no explicit suggestion in such a regard is ever made,
 we are left wondering if it is not perhaps the poet's cre-
 ative effort which allows him to ride, rather than be over-
 come by, time's implacable current.

"El trigo" represents a departure from the poems just
 studied, revealing another dimension in Crespo's search for
 expressive techniques which will discover and impart to the
 reader essential awarenesses about man's temporal existence.
 The poem is not held together by a central symbol, as was
 the case in "La mano" or "El río," nor by an anecdotal

experience imbued with symbolic resonance, as in "La orla," but rather by the delicate experience of illumination undergone by the speaker as the poem unfolds:

Voy a la tierra y veo el trigo: crece
y no importa que el pájaro no pase
por ella y no se cante un breve trino
encima del sembrado.

Nada importa además y el trigo sigue
subiendo palmo a palmo y, luego, ondula
que igual parece el mar como la siembra.

Lo veo yo y me siento entre las matas
y me acuerdo de ver al saltamontes
que cazaba de niño.

El trigo, voy al campo y veo cómo surge
y el mayoral lo mira,
frunce el ceño y con un pañuelo grande
se quita de la frente mucha agua.

En mi casa me esperan,
pero yo miro al trigo y veo al pájaro
y quisiera saber por qué no canta
encima de este verde,
que a lo mejor le asusto.

(p. 29)

The setting of this poem, like those of the other poems from Quedan señales with which "El trigo" is grouped, is rural. The first stanza presents the first-person speaker confronting a particular scene. Despite an apparent attitude of matter-of-factness and detachment ("no importa"), a certain divided awareness makes itself felt in the reiterated negative emphases of the two subjunctive clauses. A vague dissatisfaction, not as resigned to itself as the speaker might like us to believe, would seem to underlie a statement wherein what is not happening ("no

pase . . . y no se cante") overwhelms what is ("el trigo: crece").

Any doubts on our part as to the speaker's true state of mind are dispelled by the opening clause of the second stanza ("Nada importa además"). The implications of this sweeping negation are rounded out by the following description of the growing wheat, in which the disinterest and detachment shown by the speaker in the first stanza echo: ". . . y el trigo sigue / subiendo palmo a palmo y, luego, ondula / que igual parece el mar como la siembra." The erasure of distinctions in nature characterizing the imagery of this last line suggests the emotional estrangement of the speaker from the scene.

The prosaic language and plodding rhythm of the third stanza, where the emphasis shifts from scene to speaker, and the unremarkable sequence of actions depicted do not appear to herald any significant change in the speaker's state of mind. And yet, the following stanza reveals that this simple act of memory has precipitated a startling transformation. The increasing spontaneity and agitation of the syntax of the fourth stanza, particularly that of the first line, is the first indication of this changing state of mind. It is almost as if the initial words "El trigo" were a brush stroke with which, jolted from his previous indifference, he begins to paint anew the scene presented in such a different light in the first stanza of the poem. The sudden acceleration of rhythm and the speaker's

absorption in concrete detail attest the renewed vigor he feels upon imagining himself a child again, while the continued use of verbs in the present tense suggests the strength of his imaginative envisioning as it overwhelms and replaces the initial vision.

This childish frame of reference carries over into the final stanza, whose imagery reveals the awakening of the speaker to nuances of feeling inaccessible to him in the first stanza. In the boyish affirmation "En mi casa me esperan" as well as in the imagery of the following four lines, the transformation of the jaded, querulous sensibility of the poem's beginning is striking. The personal pronoun "a" preceding both "trigo" and "pájaro" confirms the speaker's renewed sense of connectedness with a reality which at the poem's outset aroused only his indifference, as do his desire to know why the bird has ceased singing and his final shy awareness that his presence may be to blame.

In this disarmingly simple poem, no complex symbolic resonances have been set up nor has the poet dealt explicitly with themes of universal human concern. And yet, through the portrayal in straightforward language of a speaker whose immersion in memory causes initial estrangement to give way to a sense of responsiveness and wonder, Crespo affirms poetry's unique role in capturing and conveying the fleeting, transcendent awarenesses which counter momentarily time's destructive passage. Some of the

techniques central to this poem and which may also be seen in "El pan moreno" (p. 30) and "Un vaso de agua para la madre de Juan Alcaide" (p. 31) will come more extensively into play in the works of the second half of Book Two.

In all of the poems studied thus far, language has, in one way or another, brought about a commingling of literal and imaginative realms. This merger is frequently accomplished in Crespo's poetry by subtle word-use and the interspersing of lyrical, illogical imagery throughout primarily narrative passages. The poem "Las cosas" is a striking example of Crespo's ability to highlight, through just such techniques, the extraordinary essence of objects or situations which may seem drab, everyday, tedious:

Por los caminos encontramos bueyes.
 Vamos contando testas de animales cornudos.
 En los caminos encontramos árboles.
 Vamos contando ramas de vegetales altos.
 Vamos por los caminos contando hierbas.
 Pero también los bueyes cuentan presencias de hombres.
 Y los árboles cuentan nervudos brazos de hombre.
 Y las hierbas nos cuentan las pestañas.

(p. 23)

The way in which the disarmingly simple narrative structure of these first lines of the poem carries us trustingly along makes even more jarring--and poetically effective--the logical inversion of realities in lines 6-8. The statement that oxen count men's presences, trees count the vein-outlined arms of men, and grass counts our eyelashes is lent a quiet force by the intriguing visual correlation between trees and arms, grass and eyelashes.

The final six lines of the poem--reminiscent, as Pilar Gómez Bedate has pointed out, of the "enseñanzas" of fourteenth and fifteenth century didactic poetry⁴⁴--constitute a compelling warning against complacency about the world:

Todas las cosas tienen
ojos para mirarnos,
lengua para decirnos,
dientes para mordernos.
Vamos andando igual que si nadie nos viese,
pero las cosas nos están mirando.

(p. 23)

Similarly, in the poem "La cama," an everyday experience, lying in bed, is infused with transcendence as the poet highlights the understated narrative with lyrical images of nature. As in "Las cosas," use of a first-person plural speaking voice draws us into the poem's process:

Blandamente caemos en la cama,
igual que si la vida no fuese más que un lecho.
Piden liberación las piernas, que se sienten
con vocación de río,
de animal que deslízase sin prisa,
seguro de sí mismo,
y, levemente, el pecho nos cruje como un barco
que encallase en arenas conocidas.
Hiérguense como arbustos los brazos
y se abaten, después, sin concurso del viento.
De la boca se escapa un aire trasnochado,
como de una caverna en que viviese gente.
Nos encontramos solos, seguros, sin miradas,
sin ropa y sin poemas.
Y por la habitación flota una música
igual que si la vida no fuese más que un lecho.

(p. 19)

The characterization of "our" body in terms of nature --legs that feel a river's vocation or that of an unhurried, crawling animal, a chest creaking like a boat which runs

aground on known sands, arms first waving like bushes and then falling in the absence of wind, mouth like an inhabited cave--illuminates in a new way the pleasure and liberating leisure of lying in bed. The poem makes it a matter not of being prosaically idle, but of feeling as at peace, as pleasurably uncomplicated and self-contained as nature. The poem's last line is charged with a subtle irony absent from line 2, which it repeats. While its suggestion that life is as simple as a "lecho" seems to reiterate the poem's insistence on the encompassing tranquility of lying in bed, the entire thrust of the poetic process has been to dispel all notions on our part as to the simplicity of this "ordinary" act. Through the imagery which characterizes man at rest in terms of nature, both the bed and "ourselves" lying in it have been suffused with a mysterious transcendence. Once again, Crespo has used language to infuse an everyday occurrence with extraordinary, if enigmatic, significance.

Underlying and linking the diverse poems of Book One of En medio del camino is a commitment on the poet's part to exploring the implications and possibilities of the process of artistic creation. The titles of the volumes from which the opening and closing poems of this section are taken--Una lengua emerge and La pintura--clearly bespeak this concern, one which will permeate Crespo's entire poetic production. In his poetic probing of the artistic process, Crespo draws upon a variety of techniques,

many of which point ahead to expressive devices which will be developed further in later books. In the opening poems, in which artistic creation is viewed as the fruit of a joyous, unrestrained impulse, plays of sounds and words, fanciful, whimsical images, and a non-anecdotal speaker prevail. An awareness of time and of man's need to overcome the anguish of its passage through the act of creation increasingly pervades subsequent poems. Depicted as an abstract force in poems from the earlier volume Una lengua emerge, time takes on a more concrete character in such poems from Quedan señales as "La orla" and "Un vaso de agua para la madre de Juan Alcaide." As the thematic emphasis within this first book shifts from the artistic process to time and man's ordinary reality, the impersonal voice of the earlier poems gives way to a more anecdotal speaker, language becomes more narrative and colloquial, and imagery appears more concrete. And yet, through subtle linguistic usages, careful manipulation of the image/speaker relationship, and strategically placed illogical images, the poet suffuses the poems' narrative substructure with lyrical emotion. A look at three such different poems as "La mano," "La orla," and "El río" reveals the variety of the frequently symbolic resources the poet brings to bear in dealing with the theme of time.

Throughout the poems of the first book of En medio del camino, Crespo has evolved and imparted a vision which he will pursue with unceasing restlessness and originality

throughout his career, that of poetry as a means for capturing the mysterious truths which lurk beneath the deceptively familiar surfaces of things, for countering the devastation of time and the tedium of the ordinary. To use an image crafted by the poet in his allegorical poem "El río," the creative act enables man to accept time as a river which flows from between his feet and yet does not carry him away. Book One closes with this vivid exhortation from the long poem "La pintura," a dramatic evocation of the poet's desire to overcome time through the creative process:

Antes de que nos pise
esa sombra que avanza por los campos,
huyamos por la luz de los pinceles
dejando nuestra sangre en las cortinas.
(p. 48)

CHAPTER II

Although the interlocking concerns of time, man's everyday reality, and the creative process which centered the poems of the first book of En medio del camino also underlie those of the second, the processes and implications for the reader of these latter poems differ markedly from those of the earlier book. Unlike the poems of Book One, those of Book Two--taken from the three volumes Todo está vivo (1956), La cesta y el río (1957), and Junio feliz (1959)--rarely allude either directly or symbolically to the creative act. And yet, the processes of the poems themselves keep us keenly aware of art's ability to variously illuminate human experience. The book's two parts function complementarily in elaborating a rich and complex poetic vision, the poems of the first section drawing us into vivid experiences of poetry's ability to capture essential emotions through the imaginative transformation of reality, and those of the second embodying experiences of transcendence over time through immersion in nature and memory.

In this chapter, I would like to study the role played by a distinctive use of speaker and imagery in each of the book's two parts in determining the differing experiences

they offer. The poems of the first section bring alive Crespo's vision of the power of the imagination to deliver man from formlessness and confusion. In these poems, Crespo coincides with other poets among his contemporaries in channeling through an idiosyncratic kind of allegory his search to give concrete embodiment to intangible states of feeling.⁴⁵ Nearly all of these works feature imaginative, vividly dramatic images--often of animals--which, as they are developed throughout the poem, come to embody elusive emotions. These images seem not to have been wholly determined beforehand, but to crystallize, to acquire density and intensity, as the poem takes shape, making tangible first to the poet and then to the reader the particular affective awareness which inspired the poem. Our keen sense of these images as a gradual revelation, capturing both the urgency and the joy of the poet's search, springs largely from the relationship in these poems between the key image and the speaker. Consistently, the central images have a strikingly autonomous quality, while the speaker remains passive, subdued, often bemused. By sustaining throughout the individual poems this subordination of speaker to image, Crespo not only creates for us vivid experiences of the dominion of the emotions over rational man, but he also suggests the essential role of the imagination in the artist's struggle to create meaningful structures countering the randomness and chaos of existence. These poems implicitly affirm that the poet, rather than

engaging in a rational pursuit of imagery, must open his imagination so that the proper image may find and "overpower" him.

If the process of poetic transformation in the poems of the first part moves from abstract to concrete, in those of the second, as the poet begins with an everyday reality and moves through language to transcendence over it, that direction is reversed. In these poems, shaped more by a keen awareness of time than by the free play of the imagination, the speaker, rather than the image, is the unifying element. In each poem, as a personal speaker contemplates a specific rural scene, diverse imagery traces for us the path of his evolving understanding. By the poem's end, through immersion in nature, memory, and the imagination, the speaker reaches a transcendent awareness encompassing self, time, and nature. If allegory is an appropriate device in aiding the poet's search to make concrete an intangible emotional state in the poems of part one, in those of this second part the use of language and imagery which evokes a sacramental resonance is a resource enabling him to imbue the everyday with transcendence.

"Todos los hombres vamos," placed at the beginning of the book's first section, serves as a kind of poetic "thesis statement" for this entire group of poems, its very title affirming the human universality Crespo envisions as underlying their vividly imaginative processes. The poem presents and develops a powerful animal image, mysteriously

threatening, which comes to embody a wide range of human passions and fears. The first stanza sets up this image, suggesting both the animal's universal nature and its different character in different men:

Todos los hombres vamos,
 en un animal vamos subidos,
 de especie diferente y diferente andar,
 pero animal que mata si se tercia.
 (p. 53)

The subsequent stanzas of the poem reverse our expectation that, as is generally the case, man will be in control of the animal he rides. In this animal-rider relationship, it is, ironically, the rider who is "ridden," or subjugated, by the animal:

Todos vamos guiándonos,
 según costumbre, por las uñas
 y por los cuernos, si los lleva,
 o las cerdas inusitadas
 del animal que nos somete.
 (p. 53)

The use of the personal object pronoun "nos" in combination with a verb of action of which the animal is the subject--a pattern consistent throughout the poems of this section--affirms that it is the animal who is in control. This juxtaposition of an autonomous animal image and a passive speaker enables the poet to suggest, here and in other poems, the sense in which our emotions and fears often appear to rule our lives as if they were animate.

Crespo's avoidance in these poems of simplistic

embodiments, his success in forging images which evoke the contradictory nature of human emotion and experience, are a tribute to his poetic mastery. Thus, in the last stanza of "Todos los hombres vamos," through ironic, humorously incongruous twists in imagery, Crespo shows how this bold and terrible animal also has another side, that of the tame pet begging for food underneath a table. And the poem's last line captures the irony of the fact that this intimidating creature requires that we feed and attend to it so that it may continue--not conquering--but "fleeing":

Entre garras y dientes
 y horrorosos aullidos de placer,
 entre enseñanzas inútiles
 y descompasadas caricias,
 entre lujurias y frases hechas,
 una estampida sin desenlace
 nos lleva en vilo, nos derriba,
 nos pone en pie. Nuestro animal exige
 su vaso y cubo de agua, sus pasteles,
 para seguir huyendo.

(pp. 53-54)

As is true of many other poems in this section, "Todos los hombres vamos" not only embodies a carefully developed image which captures and illuminates complex human emotions, but also conveys a sense of the poet's joy in the creative and imaginative processes which make such an achievement possible.

The experience of "El ciervo" also coheres around the image of an animal. As in the other poems of this section, the animal portrayed does not pertain to the realm of ordinary reality but rather serves to center a dramatic and

sensually compelling vision which imparts an elusive affective awareness:

Sobre el atardecer camina un ciervo
mientras al sol la noche desposee.
El hocico del ciervo, malherido,
sangre derrama encima de las nubes.

Tiemblan las casas, crujen levemente,
mientras inquietos van sus habitantes
del espejo al balcón y, una vez más,
contemplan su mirada en los espejos.

Un ciervo a tales horas
corre el camino que ante el hombre pende,
devorando las hierbas luminosas
que alimentan los ojos.

Un ciervo abre sus fauces,
ciervo feroz de boca cotidiana,
que con los dientes rompe las cortinas
de la diaria luz, mientras derrama
sangre herida de sol en su camino.

(p. 57)

The language of the poem, from its very beginning ("Sobre el atardecer"), discloses the visionary nature of the deer, while the imagery ("la noche desposee"; "El hocico del ciervo, malherido, / sangre derrama") arouses feelings of repugnance and apprehension on the reader's part. While use of "mientras" implies that the dispossessed sun and fleeing deer are in some way associated, we are not encouraged to confer any exact significance on the deer. Tension is built up by the disparity between the violent, concrete images and the evidently non-concrete frame of reference ("Sobre el atardecer" and "encima de las nubes," significantly, frame the stanza). No personal speaker intervenes to offer an interpretation.

A human panorama is brought suddenly into focus in the second stanza, its imagery and vagueness as unsettling as the vision of the first. While the bearing of this scene upon the one described in the first stanza is not disclosed, their juxtaposition and the similar moods they evoke make us feel they are linked, that the disquiet of the inhabitants ("inquietos van sus habitantes") is in some way a response to the drama of the first part. Within the non-literal context already established, the language of this stanza ("Tiemblan las casas, crujen levemente") and the action depicted ("inquietos van sus habitantes / del espejo al balcón y, una vez más, / contemplan su mirada en los espejos") become more widely evocative, seeming even vaguely symbolic. We sense that these individuals, whose passive depiction contrasts so strongly with the vivid rendering of the deer, are enacting some imprisoning ritual they themselves do not understand as they await some impending confrontation.

The first two lines of the third stanza link the worlds of the first and second stanzas and begin to clarify their relationship. We begin perhaps more consciously to correlate the road with time or existence, although no specific significance is conferred upon it. The tension between concrete detail and a vision obviously removed from the realm of ordinary reality becomes even more compelling in the stanza's last two lines, where the deer is depicted as devouring the "hierbas luminosas / que alimentan los

ojos." The adjective "luminosas" and the noun "ojos" not only further elaborate the mysterious significance of the deer's flight, but also suggest its devastating effect upon the human world. As the poem has progressed, the deer has grown more aggressive and his negative impact more apparent; from seeming victim ("malherido") in the first stanza, he has become in the third the embodiment of a victimizing force, as the contrast between "devorando" and "alimentan" makes clear. His action, from the "camina" of the first stanza, has evolved into "corre."

The deer is brought before the reader with maximum intensity in the last stanza, where his characterization as "feroz" and three actions ("abre sus fauces," "rompe las cortinas de la diaria luz," and "derrama sangre herida de sol en su camino") evoke him. The jarring application of the adjective "cotidiana" to such a hallucinatory vision and the image of the deer's teeth tearing "las cortinas de la diaria luz" force us to modify our frame of reference and prepare us for a disclosure relevant to the real world. It is not until the poem's final line, in the image "sangre herida de sol," that the two realities of deer and sunset are brought together directly, linguistically, as they have been experientially from the beginning of the poem. It is to the withholding of this revelation until the last line that the poem owes its impact. By focusing us on the visual and dramatic qualities of the deer, and by implying rather than affirming its identity with the sunset and the

passage of time, the poem actually creates an experience of the emotions of impotence and dread with which the poetic voice identifies these phenomena. The vividness with which we were made to experience these feelings would have been greatly diminished had the poem's first line been, "The sunset is a wounded deer." The unreal quality of the central image, the way in which an animal normally identified with gentleness and grace comes to embody totally contrary attributes, not only give the poem a heightened dramatic impact but keep us continually aware of the outside manipulating presence of the poet.

Like "El ciervo," "El olor de las vacas" is built around an animal metaphor elaborated in the process of the poem to communicate a particular affective awareness. Here, however, the two terms of the metaphor are juxtaposed from the poem's beginning:

El olor de las vacas es un gato
que viene a mí, me lame las narices,
me araña la solapa
y busca su comida en mis bolsillos.

Este gato ha nacido en los pesebres
del vapor de los belfos,
ha caído en la paja, junto a la sal que lamen
con sus lenguas de trapo las vacas sudorosas.
Llega a mí de entre el heno,
de entre madejas de hoces y esportillas;
viene de la cebada mojada de saliva,
de entre el estiércol fresco y perfumado,
de entre el orujo con calor de vino.
No tiene voz porque los grandes ojos
de las vacas impónenle silencio;
no me hieren sus garras
porque tienen sabor y amor de leche
remansada en el fondo de las ubres.

Cuando de noche pienso que la noche
 es una vaca negra cuyas patas
 he visto alguna vez moverse un poco,
 este aromoso gato
 toca con los bigotes mi ventana
 y, sin pedir permiso, me visita.

Viene la noche con su luna puesta,
 con sus estrellas puestas, con su oscura
 yunta uncida a la luz de los andenes,
 y un olor de cosecha masticada,
 de polvo perfumado en los hocicos,
 entra en mi habitación y juega en medio
 de los seres que nacen de mi boca.

(pp. 60-61)

The startling juxtaposition of the first line abstracts us from the real world into a realm of more mysterious correlations, where affective rather than objective values reign. The description of the cat's actions in the second, third, and fourth lines of the first section compels us, in perceiving the "olor de las vacas," to draw upon a wide store of emotional and sensorial associations. The intangible fragrance suddenly becomes as tangible and endearing as a fawning pet cat. While this poem, unlike "El ciervo," does feature a personal speaker, it is significant that he remains passive, present only in object pronouns and adjectives, and that it is the created image which is truly animated.

In the second stanza, while the initial image of "Este gato" holds us within the imaginative realm of the first section, we are obliged by the abundant earthy imagery to acknowledge the origin of the vision in the real world. This section evokes realities normally thought anti-poetic

or even repellent: mangers, sweaty cows, their tongues and udders, sickles, saliva, and manure. Yet, since they make their appearance in prepositional phrases within sentences whose subject is the cat ("Este gato ha nacido . . . ha caído. . . . Llega a mí . . . viene. . . . No tiene voz . . . no me hieren sus garras . . ."), we are forced to see them in an entirely new light. Such is the affective force of the vision for the speaker that even the manure becomes "fresco y perfumado," and the cow's milk is portrayed as having both "sabor" and "amor."

Whereas in the second section of the poem we were made aware of the vision's links to the real world, the imagery of the third, drawing us away from this realm, evokes its debt to the transforming power of the imagination. In the metaphor of the section's first three lines, we see the vision arising not from the contemplation of a real cow but rather from the envisioning at night of the night as a black cow. The vision's having been conjured from the nothingness of night and the verbs "pienso" and "he visto," the first in the poem to modify the speaker, suggest its origin in a conscious act of the imagination. The speaker depicts himself once again as subordinate to the irresistible animation of the imagined world, as the cat "toca con los bigotes mi ventana / y, sin pedir permiso, me visita." The humorous insertion of "sin pedir permiso," recalling how cats, regardless of one's fondness for them, rub against one's legs and demand attention, captures perfectly

the autonomous and compelling nature of the vision the cat has come to embody.

Our experience of the transformation and illumination of reality through imagination is climaxed in the poem's last seven lines. Whereas the visitation of the "fragrance/cat" was first evoked (lines 1-4) in the metaphor "el olor de las vacas es un gato / que viene a mí," next (lines 5-13) in the image of the cat ("Este gato. . . . Llega a mí"), and for the third time (lines 22-24) in the image of the cat ("este aromoso gato. . . me visita"), the speaker now (lines 28-31) returns to the conceptual word "olor" of which the cat was originally an embodiment ("un olor . . . entra en mi habitación"). Although he also now uses the word "night" instead of "cow" (line 25), it is apparent from the imagery ("Viene la noche con su luna puesta . . . con su oscura yunta uncida" and "un olor . . . entra en mi habitación y juega") that "night/cow" and "fragrance/cat" have become fused realities in the speaker's vision and that he now envisions one while invoking the other. That the reader does also is a measure of the poem's success. Through the magically expressive concluding image of the fragrance romping with the other beings "que nacen de mi boca," the speaker conveys a mystified delight in the creative act, in feeling himself the medium through which these now strangely autonomous creatures have come into being.

Throughout a majority of the other poems of this first section--many taken from the appropriately entitled volume

Todo está vivo--skillfully elaborated animal images capture and communicate elusive emotional essences. In "El aire," for example, an animal metaphor is set up in the first line and developed to capture an experience of superstitious fear:

El aire ha pasado lamiéndonos
 como aquel perro, el de la casa,
 el que de noche se perdía y, luego,
 en los ojos traía un terrible retrato.
 (p. 55)

In "El heredero," a menacing animal presence embodies a similar vision of existential apprehension:

Precedido de un opaco
 y caudaloso rugido,
 sale, a veces un león
 del armario familiar.

 Surge un león, no la híbrida
 figura que, aunque inconcreta,
 guarda con él semejanza,
 sino el animal salvaje
 con su dorada melena,
 con su bravo olor, poniendo
 su calor en el ambiente,
 haciendo crujir las tablas
 que soportan su tristeza.
 (p. 68)

Important in drawing the reader into the vivid experiences of these poems is the combination of a lively, autonomous image with a speaker whose consistent submissiveness (when he is present at all) is indicated by the sparseness and relative passivity of the actions attributed to him ("ver," "pensar," "contemplar"), as well as by the abundance of first-person singular and plural object pronouns.

Manipulation of this image-speaker relationship enables the poet to convey dramatic experiences of the dominion of the emotions over rational man. These poems also keep us continually aware of the astute poetic consciousness lurking behind the scenes, intent on transcending the threatening forces of everyday human experience through acts of the imagination. The following quote from "El heredero" suggests the sense in which the imaginative visions of these works are a response to the poet's desire to order a formless universe. After describing the roaring lion's emergence from the family closet, the speaker says of him:

(Es preferible a esas sombras
que acortan, a veces, nuestro
paso a través de la casa
o que esos súbitos, blancos,
resplandores que se advierten,
helados, en las alcobas.)

(p. 68)

Finally though, alongside this seriousness of intent, the reader of these poems recognizes and is made to share in a disarmingly forthright delight in the imaginative transformation of reality for its own sake, as in "El olor de las vacas" and "La vuelta al mundo" (p. 63), whose speaker returns from an imaginary world tour to find his chair still warm, his house perfectly in order, and his mother serving breakfast. This sheer delight in the act of poetic transformation is another important part of the way in which the poems of this first section make us aware of the creative process.

We are drawn into the experiences of the poems of part two not through imaginative metaphors but rather through the device of a personal speaker who confronts a specific, rural reality, and whose evolving awareness throughout the poem is revealed in a series of linked images. "La vuelta" exemplifies the concern with past time which pervades the poems of this section. In the first part of the poem, a first-person speaker, at odds with himself and nature, describes a walk in the country:

Por el camino se me van cayendo
 frutas podridas de la mano
 y voy dejando manchas de tristeza en el polvo
 dondequiera que piso;
 un pájaro amanece ante mis ojos
 y en seguida anochece entre sus alas;
 la asamblea de hormigas se disuelve
 cuando en mí la tormenta se aproxima;
 el sol calienta al mar en unas lágrimas
 que en el camino enciende mi presencia;
 la desnudez del campo va vistiéndose
 según van mis miradas acosándole
 y el viento hace estallar
 una guerra civil entre las hierbas.

(p. 75)

The images of this stanza, rather than bringing objectively into focus the natural scene, offer a panorama deformed by a very personal vision and embody a strong sense of the speaker's restlessness and despair. Even the poem's first image becomes more than just literally evocative in light of the clearly non-literal image which follows it. This rendering of real phenomena in highly figurative language ("el sol calienta al mar en unas lágrimas / que en el camino enciende mi presencia") as well as

oppositions set up within the images themselves ("un pájaro amanece . . . en seguida anochece entre sus alas"; "la asamblea de hormigas se disuelve"; "la desnudez del campo va vistiéndose") cause tension to build as the poem progresses. The very fact that the figurative language does not seem controlled by any particular unifying principle, and the abruptness of transition from image to image, make our experience of the distressed emotional state of the speaker more vivid. A strong sense of process unfolding is created by the interspersing of verbs in the present progressive tense with those in present tense.

The speaker's sense of alienation intensifies in the second stanza, where he imagines himself an object of nature's scrutiny and negative commentary:

Noticia triste de mi cuerpo dictan
 las verdes amapolas en capullo,
 la codorniz se espanta
 y asusta al macho con noticias más.
(p. 75)

In the third section, the speaker superimposes on his present experience a memory of a past time when he felt at one with the natural world:

Vengo desnudo de la hermosa clámide
 que solía vestirme cuando entonces:
 clámide con las voces de los pájaros,
 el graznido del cuervo,
 la carrera veloz de la raposa,
 del arroyo que un día se llevaba mis pasos
 y de olores de jara y de romero,
 hace tanto tejida.

(p. 75)

The nostalgia which this memory arouses is evoked through the use of "soler" and through verbs in the imperfect tense. Its simple, enfolding beauty and the sense in which it protected and shielded the speaker are embodied in the image of the cape "hace tanto tejida," made of "el graznido del cuervo," "la carrera veloz de la raposa, del arroyo," and "de olores de jara y romero." This imagery, conveying a pleasure in the natural world accepted on its own terms, contrasts sharply with the distress-distorted natural imagery of the first two parts of the poem. The abrupt transitions of the first section give way here to phrases which flow smoothly into one another.

The increasingly subjective imagery of the next section suggests the growing intensity of the speaker's exaltation of his past:

Días de mi ascensión, cuando el lagarto
solía conocer mis intenciones,
cuando solía la retama
pedirme venia para echar raíces,
cuando algún cazador me confundió
con una piedra viva entre las piedras.
(p. 76)

The word "ascensión," an example of the sacramental imagery Crespo uses frequently in these poems, lends an almost religious resonance to this memory. Nature in this section, far from the hostile force of the poem's beginning, is remembered as having perceived the speaker's needs and even deferred to him.

A reconciliation of speaker with scene, past with

present, seems imminent from the first line of the last section, where the speaker, by addressing the fields, seems to acknowledge the diminished emotional distance between them:

Pero yo te conozco, campo mío,
 yo recuerdo haber puesto entre tus brazos
 aquel cuerpo caliente que tenía,
 y haber dejado sueño entre los surcos
 que abrían los caballos de otros tiempos.
 Yo te conozco y noto que tus senos
 empiezan a ascender hacia mis labios.

(p. 76)

The verb tenses ("recuerdo haber puesto . . . haber dejado") bridge the gap between past and present, and the imagery becomes more intimate and sensual, an effect heightened by its presence within an actual address to the fields. The transition in the last two lines from past to present tense and from the innocently sensual imagery of the section's previous five lines to the final powerful erotic image reveals the speaker's transcendent emergence from memory into present experience and compellingly embodies the new bond which unites him with the natural world. Here, as throughout this second section, the reader partakes of the poem's experience through identification with a personal speaker revealed through nuances of imagery.

"Junio feliz" also features a personal speaker who, through immersion in a contemplation of the countryside and the people of his past, attains an almost sacramental state of grace. Its first section is as follows:

Junio feliz
 entre los vivos y los muertos,
 no entre el ser y el no ser
 sino todo lo más
 entre el rebaño y las ortigas.
 Junio
 para los muertos y los vivos
 que venimos detrás
 con nuestro cargamento, oscureciendo
 el árnica y la grama
 que su estrecho contacto desconocen.
 (p. 79)

The poem's first sentence, a fragment in which no personal speaker appears, brings into focus both a particular reality ("junio") and an attitude toward it ("feliz"). In the depiction of June as existing happily "entre los vivos y los muertos" and in the opposition set up between "el ser y el no ser" and "el rebaño y las ortigas," the as yet impersonal speaker seems to reject divisive, abstract life-death considerations and to take comfort in a natural scene which reconciles both. The second sentence (lines 6-11) suggestively portrays "los vivos"--among whom the speaker includes himself ("venimos")--as following behind the dead with "nuestro cargamento." He contrasts them with the natural world, embodied in the image of "el árnica y la grama," which are unaware of this heavy burden. Despite the relative abstraction of language and vagueness of image in this section, the reader is made aware of a speaker conscious of time as a limiting factor, someone seeking to draw from this June scene a less divisive awareness of self.

The second section brings the speaker, nature, and the dead into a much more dramatic and dynamic relationship.

The speaker's musings are interrupted by an extraordinary event that contrasts with the matter-of-factness of language with which it is depicted: as the speaker touches the "amarga almendra," apparitions from the past ("los que fueron") dismount before him, reins carelessly held, and request that his prayer be given for the fields, as they have no need of it:

La soledad es imposible
 en donde los que fueron
 descabalgan ahora, cuando yo
 toco la amarga almendra,
 y, las riendas llevando
 con negligencia, piden
 mi oración para el campo, que ellos no necesitan.
(p. 79)

In some mysterious way, the touching of the almond has sparked a memory so potent that it causes the speaker to call forth and project upon the countryside a vision of people long dead. Not only does the bitter almond, as an object of ordinary reality, evoke sensorial responses, but perhaps, to the extent that the reader is aware of the almond's symbolic connotations in Christian iconography, it causes wider associations to be brought to bear upon his reading of the poem. Similarly, the later use of words such as "oración," "hostia," and "martirio," and perhaps even the occasional almost mystic imagery ("Con vuestra sombra ilumináis"), contribute to making the speaker's act of memory an almost religious vision.

In the following section, the speaker evokes the

materializing of the first apparition above "el lentisco":

Sobre el lentisco se recortan
 las barbas, el sombrero,
 una fina sonrisa que edificó. Las manos
 no están cruzadas: dicen.
 Yo también descabalgo. Con las bridas
 no sé qué hacer. Mi abuelo,
 o más lejano aun, ¿cuál es tu nombre?
 ¿Cuál es tu mano diestra,
 si veo y no me engaño, y de tus ojos
 qué surcos se deslizan? Mis espuelas
 ¿acaso tuyas son,
 serán o fueron? Yo no estoy seguro.
 (pp. 79-80)

The sparseness and simplicity of detail with which the ancestor is described counter the unreality of the appearance itself and render him at once as vivid and as enigmatic as a photo glimpsed in an old album. The speaker portrays himself as ill at ease ("con las bridas / no sé qué hacer"), in contrast to the apparition, whose hands confidently "speak." In the last lines of this section, the description comes to a halt as the speaker uncertainly addresses the apparition: "Mi abuelo, o más lejano aún, ¿cuál es tu nombre?" Remaining anonymous, this ancestor seems to become in the poem the embodiment of the elusiveness of all things past. The image "¿y de tus ojos / qué surcos se deslizan?" evokes the merging within the speaker's vision of the ancestor and nature, just as his growing identification with the vision and resultant sensation of disorientation in time are conveyed in the image of the spurs.

In the fourth section, whose initial "Junio feliz"

seems far more complex than the identical phrase with which the poem began, the speaker detaches himself momentarily from the dramatic encounter of the previous two sections:

Junio feliz, minando
mi desabrida cárcel, mi apretada
molicie de ciudad, y mi trivial
manera de crearme.

(p. 80)

The imagery summarizes the renovating effect he sees his experience of this June countryside having upon his life. Certainly the "desabrida carcel," the "apretada / molicie de ciudad," and his "trivial manera de crearme," are in stark contrast to the freedom and detached self-assurance of the imagined ancestors.

In the following section, this detached commentary gives way to the speaker's envisioning of the emergence of yet another ancestor. Although he remains ignorant of her/their precise identity, the image of the last two and one-half lines conveys his tenuous awareness of an essential common bond:

Uno más
descabalgá. Recórtase
al pie de la retama.
Veo ahora
un corpiño asomar
cerca de la melena.
¿Abuela o más lejana? No me sé
vuestrós rostros, mas siento
el mismo olor que a veces
noto en mi soledad flotar de mí.

(p. 80)

The process of the poem's seventh section, which begins, significantly, "Junio entero" (emphasis mine), affirms the synthesis within the speaker's vision of self, the natural scene, and the dead. The evocation of sheaves of grain and tools of harvest, as well as the reference to the "hostia" which in this season "initiates its martyrdom," heighten our awareness of the speaker's sense of fruition and fulfillment:

Junio entero
 con haces, con gavillas
 y crujientes cordetas,
 con el sudor del animal que nace,
 con los círculos de hoces
 en que la hostia inicia su martirio,
 enmarca vuestras claras siluetas
 que sólo yo soporto.

(p. 80)

The seeming directness and detachment of the first three lines of the last section of the poem make the event depicted in the closing lines all the more startling:

Junio, dispuesto ahora
 por este hombre y muerto y su caballo
 y por esta mujer,
 que atraviesa mi lengua con la aguja
 de sujetarse el pelo.

(pp. 80-81)

And yet it is this eerie image of the woman's crossing of the speaker's tongue with her hairpin, evocative of the administering of a highly earthly sacrament, which most effectively illuminates for the reader the speaker's achieved state of grace.

Like the poems just studied, a majority of the works of the second part of this second book are grounded in a very particular, time-bound reality. Rather than through metaphor, as in the poems of the first section, the reader is drawn into their experiences through use of a personal speaker revealed in nuances of tone and imagery. This speaker is generally drawn through the process of the poem toward a final transcendent intuition in which he, nature, and memory mysteriously merge. We have seen how, in "La vuelta" and in "Junio feliz," the use of imagery that is at once powerfully sensual and evocative of sacramental resonance is very effective in conveying to the reader a sense of these enigmatic unions. This trait may be seen in other poems from this section as well. In "Alarcos," for example, the personal speaker undergoes a transcendent revelation as he crosses the bridge over the Guadiana river into his town. He tells of how the river's waters "baptize" him, leaving his skin clear of "adquiridas llagas." Later on, he characterizes the river as a "santuario." The poem's ending confirms the sacramental nature of the experience:

Si mi pie, al desmontar,
saca de entre la tierra una moneda
con signos --no distingo
si de una lengua u otra--,
bien sé yo que es el precio
del nuevo sacramento, y en el río
dejo caer el disco de metal
y a pie sigo el camino que me lleva,
sin mirar mis pisadas.

(p. 77)

In "El rebaño," contemplation of a flock of sheep moves the poem's impersonal speaker to a vision of peace and harmony which verges on the beatific. He characterizes the animals first as "miel animal," and compares the music of their bleating with "campanadas . . . intermitentes / en una ciudad vieja de conventos / en la que Dios aún vive." Their fragrance ("olor germinal") forms a cloud "que es preciso / atravesar rezando," and the pasture in which they graze seems to grow "más ancho, más claro, más silente." In the next-to-last stanza, the speaker affirms the sacramental nature of the vision:

Se advierte que la encina
 ha suspendido su murmullo de hojas
 y el saltamontes se pasea
 con una dignidad que antes no usaba
 entre las huellas; se percibe
 que una consagración, un sacramento
 ha tenido lugar.

(p. 100)

In "La tarde: el pan" a metaphor with strong sacramental resonance serves to embody, rather than the speaker's sense of fulfillment, his frustration at having failed to grasp the opportunities a certain afternoon extended to him: "Del pan que no he comido me arrepiento: / del que había en las manos / abiertas de la tarde" (p. 99). Near the end of the poem, the poet embodies the waning afternoon in the image of a bird--ever smaller and more fragile--falling to earth. The "bird" carries in its beak:

. . . la última miga que llevarse a la boca,
 con el sabor a germen inicial: el que pierde
 el viento que a la sombra con insistencia llama,
 el que deja a mis dientes dolidos de su pan.
 (p. 99)

The crumb of bread--suggestive both of the "staff of life" and of the communion wafer--is all that remains of the afternoon's essence. The painful communion of the last line of the poem, almost an anti-communion, effectively illuminates the speaker's sorrow and sense of lost opportunity.

Finally, the closing poem of this second section, "Otra vez," presents a personal speaker as he addresses a mountain clearing in a location to which he has returned after a long absence. Little by little, he recaptures his childhood sense of oneness with the place. His ultimate feeling of transcendence and peace is beautifully evoked in the last image of the poem, both sacramental and sensual:

Dime si la señal para volver
 a poner corazón con corazón
 --el mío entre la hierba, como un pájaro rojo--
 es quizá esta tañido
 de campana, que llega
 sobre los campos y
 se posa como ave en una encina.

(p. 106)

The speaker-image relationship works in different ways in the two sections of this second book to create their differing experiences. In the poems of the first part, whose allegorical processes distill the poet's search for the expressive means to capture elusive emotions, strikingly

autonomous central images combine with speakers who remain notably passive. Through manipulation of this speaker-image relationship, the poet enmeshes us in vivid experiences of the dominion of the emotions and suggests the power of the imagination to illuminate human feeling. In these poems, our awareness of time is eclipsed by our absorption in the creative process which has allowed intangible emotions to be captured and experienced as dramatic unities. The surprising juxtapositions and emblematic animal presences keep us continually mindful of the poet's outside presence manipulating and conforming our experience. In the poems of the second section, a speaker confronting a natural scene, rather than an imaginative image, is the unifying element. The diverse imagery, often with sacramental overtones, traces his evolution toward a transcendent awareness of some kind. This format of a personal speaker pursuing elusive knowledge from image to image within the poem makes us almost involuntary accomplices in the poem's taking form. As the varied imagery reveals the speaker's growing awareness of his own relativity in regard to nature and time, so, too, are we drawn into the experience of transcendence over time through immersion in it. Throughout the poems of both parts of this book, careful manipulation of language and attentiveness to the possibilities of the imagination lead the poet toward deeper insight into human realities. While the poems of the first section might be said to illuminate reality from without, through

acts of imaginative envisioning, those of the second unfold step by step toward illumination from within reality's very midst.

CHAPTER III

Mario Praz remarks in his book Mnemosyne: The Parallel Between Literature and the Visual Arts that "in the modern period . . . creation goes hand in hand with an overdeveloped critical activity debating problems which are common to all the arts."⁴⁶ Indeed, as we follow the trajectory of Crespo's work, we discover that the creative spirit and the critical faculty--focusing both on art and on literature--are entwined impulses which stimulate and nurture one another. During the years 1957-1963, much of Crespo's poetry as well as a number of his critical studies were grounded in a scrutiny of the work of other writers and artists. In addition to his volumes of poetry, those years saw the publication of his Poemas de Alberto Caeiro (a translation of poems by Fernando Pessoa [1957]),⁴⁷ Antonio Guijarro (1960),⁴⁸ Antología de la nueva poesía portuguesa (1961),⁴⁹ Grabados populares del nordeste del Brasil (1962),⁵⁰ José María Iglesias (1962),⁵¹ and Situación de la poesía concreta (coauthored by Pilar Gómez Bedate and published in 1963).⁵² Crespo also collaborated as an art critic on the Madrid magazines Artes and Forma Nueva, served as director of the Abril Art Gallery, and was in charge of the exhibition rooms at the Círculo de Bellas

Artes.⁵³

This chapter is devoted to a study of the poems of Book Three of Crespo's En medio del camino, taken from the volumes La cesta y el río (1957), Júpiter (1959), Oda a Nanda Papiri (1959), and Cartas desde un pozo (1964). Most of these poems are addressed to and inspired in the work of specific writers and painters. Crespo's selection of artists is not at all random, but rather very consistent with and revealing of his own priorities as a creator. Far from delivering himself of eulogies alien to the reader's experience or incidental with respect to the rest of his work, Crespo actually seeks in these poems to make and to impart to the reader essential discoveries about reality and the creative act. Scrutiny of the work of some of these artists and writers leads Crespo to write poems which are very much in line, technically and thematically, with the works of Books One and Two. Such is the case, for example, in the poems directed to Picasso, Nanda Papiri, and Joan Miró, which reaffirm Crespo's belief in whimsy, humor, fantasy, and surprising juxtapositions as essential ingredients in the artist's struggle to redeem himself from time. The creative exploration which Crespo carries out through the processes of poems directed to certain other artists, however, seems to bring about a significant evolution in his own poetic vision.

Books One and Two have revealed Crespo's profound concern with illuminating human reality through the act of

poetry. Particularly in Book Two, we have seen how these two main thematic concerns--man's everyday, time-bound reality and the creative act--have tended to find poetic embodiment in technically very different poems which stress one theme over the other. Thus, the imaginative visions of the first part of Book Two, while illuminating human emotion, emphasized the power of the poetic act. And, in the poems of the second part, the development through varied imagery of a speaker's emotional state imparted visions of man's triumph over time through immersion in nature and memory. In addition, it should be pointed out that, up through Book Two, the portion of Crespo's poetry dealing directly with human themes focuses largely on personal, individual man, rather than on man in a larger, more inclusive social sense.

The processes of some of the poems of Book Three bring about a significant integration and a broadening of Crespo's poetic vision, revealing a coming together of the artist and the social man. In a sense, these works are pivotal within the poetic trajectory of En medio del camino. Not only do they move beyond some of the technical and thematic divisions inherent in the poems of Book Two, they also run parallel to the process of poetic exploration carried out in Book Four, and herald the works of Book Five, in which the poem becomes a vehicle for erasing boundaries among men of all times and walks of life. I will spend the first part of this chapter detailing the specific cultural

circumstances and the personal artistic beliefs which combine to prompt Crespo to write these poems. Then, through a detailed study of several individual poems and a brief look at some of the critical writings Crespo undertakes during the same period, I will show how the creative and critical faculties increasingly nurture and stimulate one another in his work, drawing the poet toward a new sense of his art.

Crespo's search to expand the expressive possibilities of his poetry through consideration of the works of painters as well as writers is not surprising if we recall his evident belief in the kinship of the two arts. This belief permeates the long poem La pintura (1955), included in somewhat altered form in Book One of En medio del camino. These quotes from various of its sections illustrate the extent to which Crespo views poetry and painting as synonymous and mutually illuminating:

Escribir un caballo en una sombra . . .
(Section 1, p. 37)

Las manos buscan signos . . .
(Section 2, p. 38)

Arriba están los labios,
mas las palabras nacen en las cuevas . . .
(Section 4, p. 41)

Os digo lo que veo: Dios escribe,
pinta, dibuja, la cigüeña nace.
(Section 5, p. 42)

. . . el hueco
 que al sentir una mano
 pondrá en pie la palabra
 que duerme desde siempre en la pintura.
 (Section 7, p. 45)

And in the poem "Tres Viajes por Picasso," Crespo writes:

Volando leo la escritura
 que se me ocultaba de cerca:
 empieza en piel y acaba en eco
 y descifra cientos de siglos.
 Bajo mis ángulos de mira,
 una muralla con relieves
 y cosas que antes vi
 por debajo de las palabras . . .
 (Section 3, pp. 135-36)

Likewise, the poem to Joan Miró affirms:

Porque todos tus signos son palabras . . .
 (p. 138)

Tú, que has puesto color a tus palabras
 para no confundirlas con el ruido . . .
 (p. 138)

Levedad de colores y de sílabas
 de tu camisa hasta mis ojos vuela . . .
 (p. 139)

Nonetheless, it is not this belief in the kinship of painting and poetry alone which concerns me here as much as the expressive ends to which Crespo directs it in his writing, as well as certain cultural circumstances of the time which contributed to his drawing upon it. As a member of the generation of Spanish poets which emerged in the Fifties and Sixties, Crespo was deeply concerned with the impoverishment of the poetic idiom and its general failure to

embody poetically the social concerns which had become central in the post-War era. In the introduction to the selection of his poetry included in Leopoldo de Luis' Antología de la poesía social, Crespo observes:

. . . la poesía se ha rebelado contra las causas pero no contra los efectos, lo que, en el plano de la correlación entre poesía y realidad, se ve claramente en la técnica, generalmente pobre y convencional, de sus cultivadores. ¿Cómo puede facilitarse un cambio de las circunstancias sociales con una técnica conformista? En nuestra poesía "social", hay mucho "98", no hay investigaciones formales serias y actualizadas sistemáticas. . . . Con ello, se ha empobrecido el lenguaje, y, así, se ha producido esa crisis de expresión que ha conducido a la no menos triste de valores, que también padecemos. . . . Lo que nuestra descuidada crítica debería hacer es buscar lo social en las obras verdaderamente poéticas que se han escrito durante los últimos decenios. . . .⁵⁴

These penetrating remarks, which accurately pinpoint the dilemma of a great portion of the Spanish poetry of those years, reveal Crespo's deep commitment to seeking new forms of expression capable of embodying, at once forcefully and poetically, broader social and human themes.

A brief glance at the list of poets and painters addressed in Crespo's poems (those included in other books as well as those chosen for inclusion in En medio del camino)⁵⁵ reveals a startling and suggestive discrepancy. While the writers, with the exception of Gabino-Alejandro Carriedo, are either foreigners or members of other generations, the painters, with the exception of Velázquez, are Spanish and contemporaries of Crespo's (although Picasso

and Miró were rooted in an earlier generation). In the selection for En medio del camino, this contrast becomes even more notable, since Crespo includes only Aleixandre and Calderón from among the ranks of Spanish poets, while eight Spanish painters, all of them contemporary, are featured. That Crespo feels a greater artistic kinship to contemporary Spanish painters than to contemporary Spanish writers would seem apparent,⁵⁶ and prompts one to question whether perhaps the search for artistically innovative ways of embodying newly emerging thematic concerns was, in the Spain of the time, being carried forth more successfully and polemically among the painters than among the writers.

The possibility that this may indeed have been the case is suggested by J. M. Moreno Galván's fascinating and insightful study of the generation of painters to emerge in Spain in the Fifties and Sixties, The Latest Avant-Garde.⁵⁷ Among the painters included in his study are five of those who inspire poems by Crespo (seven, if we include Picasso and Miró, whom the author classifies as members of the first Spanish avant-garde and whose artistic achievements he qualifies as intimately linked to those of the second). A brief summary of some of Galván's main points will clarify the kinship of the artistic search of this generation of painters to that being carried on by Crespo.

Moreno Galván defines in this way the movement he proposes to study:

I mean the avant-garde movement which came

onto the scene around 1956, and which was decided as much by the opponents as by the supporters of the phenomenon of non-formalism. Hence, the "Second Avant-Garde" includes both the non-formalists and anti-non-formalists, as well as those painters who derived from them later. . . .

(Prologue)

Although Moreno Galván defines the four fundamental ingredients of the painting of this avant-garde as non-formalism, abstraction, surrealism, and expressionism, it is clearly the former which dominates the movement and which will serve as a point of departure for most of Galván's subsequent observations and evaluations.

Moreno Galván points out that, while the year 1956 saw the overwhelming victory of the non-formalists, academicism was still far from dead. He portrays the non-formalists as struggling against "an art-form that was attempting to re-introduce the country to a concept of prestige by restoring the symbols of a former age of imperial glory," and observes further:

Here [in the painting of the time] prevailed the champions of perfection, the servants of heraldic imagery, overflowing with allegorical heroics. For those who failed to see in its decrepitude the first signs of falsehood, this vast pictorial backcloth was the triumphal banner that proclaimed the destruction of all contradictions of Spain . . . [and yet] Beneath the superficial appearances the old contradictory reality of Spain lived on.

(pp. 18-19)

It was precisely with these contradictions that the non-formalists chose to grapple in their art. They "refuted

all the scholastic rules and regulations . . ." (p. 37) and aimed at "extending the expressive power of reality instead of remaining shackled by the restrictive bonds of form" (p. 44). Galván sums up the specific contribution made by the second avant-garde to the battle against academicism as replacing "the art of what reality ought to be" with "the art of what reality actually is" (p. 19). The second avant-garde, he explains, creates an awareness that art "serves for something more than pure aesthetic pleasure: to show us reality. Because we now understand that art is a method of knowledge" (p. 216).

Significantly, non-formalism's more long-range effect was not to banish form from painting. Mature non-formalism, says Galván, was indifferent "to any tenet that tried dogmatically either to assert or to refute representation" (p. 47). As a result of non-formalism,

. . . form has not been destroyed. Only its sacrosanct character has been destroyed; it has merely been dispossessed of its charismatic powers. . . . [Painting] may indeed make use of form--and indeed it does--but form is no longer the prime factor in the work of art.

(p. 155)

It is not surprising that Crespo should find in the works of this generation of artists a struggle toward meaningful expression illuminating his own. Poets, too, during those same years, were seeking to battle constricting academicism and to come to grips in their work with an often contradictory and anguishing Spanish reality. They as well

were coming to view the creative process as a way of knowledge.

The poets and painters emerging as artists in the Spain of the Fifties did not exist in isolation from each other, but rather collaborated and engaged in polemics embracing their mutual arts. The relationship between Antonio Tàpies and João Cabral de Melo Neto, to each of whom Crespo addresses a poem in the third book of En medio del camino, is a case in point. Tàpies is the leading exponent of Spanish non-formalism, and João Cabral, who has collaborated with Crespo on occasion,⁵⁸ is one of the foremost Brazilian neo-modernist poets. It was João Cabral, living at the time in Barcelona, who wrote Tàpies' first presentation in 1949. Calling 1948 the year of Tàpies' real emergence,⁵⁹ art critic Alexandre Cirici observes the importance of Tàpies' contact with João Cabral in helping him to "develop a way of considering problems that was influenced by Marx, with greater projection outward than that of the personal conflict that had dominated him until then."⁶⁰ João Cabral's statement, quoted by Cirici, that:

. . . reality is not the idle enjoyment of an object. Reality is rhythmed by a fierce fight, and in it there is no giving up. . . . Suffering is not an orchard to be dug or a thing to be raised in dignity, but on the contrary a thing that seeks to be overcome.⁶¹

reflects the changing commitment of the emerging generation of artists with respect to reality. The following

statement, made by Tàpies in a 1954 Destino interview and quoted by Cirici, illuminates less flamboyantly but perhaps more clearly this changing commitment and voices concerns strikingly similar to those articulated by Crespo in his remarks in the Luis anthology:

[art is] . . . a source of knowledge based largely on the contemporary world. Outworn forms cannot contribute contemporary ideas. If the forms are incapable of wounding the society that receives them, of slanting it towards meditation . . . if they are not a revulsion, then they are not a genuine work of art. When the artistic form is incapable of baffling the mind of the viewer or of making him change his way of thinking, then it is no longer contemporary.⁶²

I have sought in the preceding section to suggest in a general way some of the main concerns of the generation of painters whose work inspires the poems featured in this chapter and to link them to those Crespo holds foremost in his own creative explorations. It seems only logical that Crespo--viewing poetry and painting as synonymous, and disappointed by the failure of the poetry of his contemporaries to creatively embody newly emerging themes--should turn to a scrutiny not only of contemporary painters but of writers of other times and nationalities in the hopes of forging a richer, more expressive poetic idiom. Although the writers addressed in Crespo's poems are not bound by a single generation or nationality as are the painters, a certain uniformity of intention and achievement, very much in step with those of the painters, underlies their surface

diversity: their work as poets combines a careful and original use of language with a poetic vision of deep human significance. It is clear that Crespo has singled out for appraisal in the poems of Book Three both poets and painters whose work probes and illuminates, through the skillful use of often highly idiosyncratic techniques, basic questions of universal human existence. A study of some of the particular poems will show how Crespo, as he exercises both his critical and creative faculties in responding to works of art and literature, enriches his own store of poetic resources and moves toward an ever-stronger awareness of the identity of the artist and the social man.

The poem "Fauna," inspired in a painting by Francisco Todó, illustrates Crespo's search, through scrutiny of the vision and technique of a painter, to expand the possibilities of his own poetry. The forms used by the painter become tools of the poet's self-discovery and the means by which he forges and conveys to the reader a universal intuition. The poem's imagery is at once strikingly visual and charged with affective meaning. Though we may initially expect to be handicapped by our lack of acquaintance with the specific painting, our first reading dispels these misgivings: the fauna of the title materialize suggestively before our eyes in the form of varied metal tools arrayed so as to suggest various animals:

El relincho del animal
metálico, la vaca

hirsuta de poleas, canto, y al corazón
 sé solidario del deseo
 que respiran los vertebrados
 de dóciles espaldas.
 Y a la rueda dentada, con la lengua,
 y a la lengüeta, con los dientes,
 alabo, mientras siento
 el metálico olor
 de una sangre tan roja
 como encendidos pensamientos,
 y abro mi poesía
 como las puertas de una fábrica
 en la que el pan se cuece
 entre el sudor y el hilo,
 y nombre al hambre y a la paz
 y al animal que nos oprime:

vieja máquina que se oxida
 mientras germinan las poleas,
 se abrazan astros y relojes
 y anida el ave en la turbina.

(p. 146)

The poem's first seven lines immerse us in the poet's playful, ingenious probing of the painter's metaphor. Although the animals introduced in the poem's first two lines appear made of completely non-lifelike materials ("metal," "poleas"), the poet's wry depiction of certain attributes brings these inanimate objects tantalizingly to life. Our realization that a serrated pulley might appear to be "hirsuta" and that metal, when struck or set in motion, might indeed seem to emit a whinnying sound, lends a certain whimsical objective justification to this unorthodox portrayal.

Allowing this vision to take shape in our minds, the poet refrains from alluding to his own participation in its evocation until the unobtrusively interjected "canto" of line 3. The next image, following right on the heels of

this verb, intensifies the affective link between the poet and the contemplated beings: not only does he attribute to them a certain vague "deseo," which awakens in his own heart a feeling of solidarity, but his characterization of them as "vertebrados de dóciles espaldas" also implies sympathy, perhaps a gratitude at their staunch willingness to be of service.

Animal and mechanical qualities continue to cross over in the depiction of lines 7 and 8, where the "rueda dentada" has a "lengua" and, inversely, the "lengüeta" has "dientes." The visual pun (a serrated wheel might be envisioned as a series of teeth surrounding a tongue--the axle?--and the jagged edge of an awl might appear to be teeth) is strengthened by the linguistic inversion ("dentada"-"lengua" /"lengüeta"-"dientes").

In line 9, the verb "alabo," although it marks an intensification of the speaker's voice from the initial "canto," unobtrusively follows the sentence's direct objects, so that while our attention is focused primarily on the metaphor, we register nonetheless an awareness of an increasingly intense poetic voice. The personal pronoun, "a," preceding each of the sentence's direct objects, contributes to reinforcing the intensifying affective presence of the poet.

Lines 9-17 find the poet evolving away from the playful rendering of the poem's first lines toward a heightened awareness of his art. The image of lines 10-12 hints at

this revelation, sparked in, yet taking him beyond, his whimsical scrutiny of the painting's forms: the ingeniously apt adjective "metálico," applied to "sangre," provides a sensorial link between inanimate and animate realities (blood really does have a metallic smell), while the simile "sangre tan roja / como encendidos pensamientos" identifies this vision with the poet's increasingly agitated mental process. The breakthrough in awareness itself is evoked in the imagery of lines 13-17. The verb "abro," in combination with the earthy simile through which the poet characterizes his poetry ("como las puertas de una fábrica / en la que el pan se cuece / entre el sudor y el hilo") conveys a sense of the poet's compelling need to link his creative act with universal human needs and realities. The following line ("y nombro al hambre y a la paz") hints at the beginning of a consummation: the poet, aware of his art as a tool for expressing solidarity with universal human concerns, is now ready to name or voice them. It is significant that, in keeping with the poet's "new" knowledge of the nature of his art, the verbs used in this section of the poem to describe the poet's activity ("abro" and "nombro") are far more concrete and less exalted than the "canto" and the "alabo" of the previous section.

If lines 1-9 revealed a poet/speaker engaged in a playful and ingenious verbal rendering of the forms in Todó's painting, and lines 9-17 disclosed an "opening up" in his conception of his poetry, then the imagery of lines

18 through 22 creates a visionary realm wherein is distilled the essence of the wider human awareness to which the poem's process has led him. In line 18, the abstract "hambre" and "paz" of the previous line give way to the vision of an enigmatic "animal que nos oprime." Though we are as yet unsure of this animal's specific connection to us (the pronoun "nos" makes clear he somehow threatens us all), we sense that he is a sort of symbolic distillation inspired in, yet transcending, the original fauna/implements metaphor.

Lines 19-22 are a restatement and an elaboration of this animal image. The oppressive animal, never identified with a specific existential force, becomes a "vieja máquina que se oxida"--an image strongly suggestive of the corrosive effects of time. Countering this disheartening image of decay, the poem's closing images express reconciliation, vitality, and hope. Within the very machine depicted as slowly succumbing to time's ravages, the irrepressible life force pulses and transforms. The machine is a particularly apt image for evoking the overly-mechanized, time-eroded reality of the contemporary world and our daily lives. Equally effective is the poem's final image, suggestive of a heart beating in a slowly failing body. The fragility of the bird nesting within the very energy source ("turbina") of the rusting hulk suggests the heroic improbability of human perseverance in a disintegrating body/universe.

Contemplation of the forms in Todó's painting has clearly unleashed in Crespo a process of discovery pertaining both to his condition as a man and as a poet. The arresting metaphor displayed on the canvas, with its jarringly disparate yet curiously complementary animal/mechanical elements, serves as a spur to the poet's imagination. As he probes it, the metaphor leads him first to a new awareness of his craft and finally to a poetic vision rich in the desired human significance--a vision which, while permeated with the same sense of a life inherent in inanimate (or life-denying) forms which characterized the painter's metaphor, far surpasses it in expressive power.

It is interesting to note how closely Moreno Galván's remarks about Todó's artistic process coincide with our own vision of the poem his painting inspired. He says:

His realism--supposing we dare describe it thus--is neither the voice of the prophet, nor does it visibly exhort its listeners to fight for the cause of justice. Yet the voice of Francisco Todó's art is evocative of poetry. Like a well-disposed Hesiod, he sings a hymn to the labours and lives of present-day folk: of carpenters, of blacksmiths, of bricklayers, of factory-hands. . . . And the song is sung with the delicate voice of the draughtsman--a draughtsman even when he is working in oils--which is likewise the even more delicate voice of the illuminator. There is undoubtedly a lack of reclamatory tone in his poems . . . he lacks the sharp, knife-like edge of criticism. On the other hand, he certainly does manage to describe a colossal world using very minute elements. . . .

(p. 206)

Whereas in "Fauna" the mode of envisioning reality was

metaphorical, in the poem entitled "El pájaro pobre," inspired in a woodcut by Farreras, a symbolic mode prevails. Despite the different poetic focuses of these two poems, they invite comparison since in each Crespo evolves a vision of a humanity which, however beleaguered by the passing of time and by adverse circumstance, perseveres, resilient and irrepressible:

¿Qué pías tú con ese pico
que ni lo veo ni me sé
si es puntiagudo, curvo, lleno
di dientes, borra o tafetán?

¿Qué pías tú, pájaro pobre,
lleno de andrajos por doquier,
lleno de mugre, piojos, polvo,
porque las cosas no te van?

Ave mendiga que te posas
en telarañas, bien se ve
que es poco el peso de tu cuerpo
presa del hambre de yantar.

Bien se adivina que en desvanes
has hecho oficio de ratón,
entre los trastos y las vigas
y piezas rotas de ajedrez,

que has anidado en los dominios
de la polilla y del moscón
y has enterrado a tu familia
sin canto llano ni ataúd,

que has escapado por milagro
de las descargas del fusil
y la escopeta, y en el ala
llevas el plomo que mi voz,

que andas de noche por las calles
como enemigo de la luz
cuando tu trino bien quisiera
abrirse a chorros con el sol.

Ave de presa, no: ave presa
de qué desgracia, ¿alguna vez

te has esponjado entre la brisa
de rama en rama de un rosal?

¿Cómo has llegado, tras qué triste
desolación, a ser así?
¿Te hiciste acaso solidario
de quien pregunta por su pan

y le contestan que se ocupe
del largo alcance del cañon
y siga en orden resistiendo
bajo los cielos y los pies?

¿Has contradicho, denostado,
y has recibido de un badil,
en la pechuga o en los lomos,
la bendición de hoz y de coz?

Esta es la historia que adivino
cuando te veo resistir,
si desplumado, no vencido,
siempre cantando porque sí.
(pp. 142-43)

"El pájaro pobre" features a personal speaker who, throughout the poem, wryly interrogates the "pájaro" depicted in Ferreras' woodcut in an attempt to decipher the enigma of his identity and its bearing on his own situation. In the first stanza, where this enigma is focused at a visual level, a lighthearted, whimsical tone prevails. The emphasis is on form and texture rather than on any particular state of mind with which the bird might be identified.

While the regularity of form and rhythm (the poem consists of twelve quatrains, each line having nine syllables) continues to lend a tone of restraint and understatedness throughout, the poem's initial playfulness is modified by the imagery of stanza two. From this point on, the poet's interest in the bird becomes increasingly serious, his

questioning of it more closely bound up with his own existential quandaries. Not only does the use of the adjective "pobre" after "pájaro" imply an increasing compassionate identification on the speaker's part with the bird, but the latter's bird-like afflictions ("andrajos," "mugre," "piojos," "polvo") take on human resonance as the speaker intones in line 4, "porque las cosas no te van," as if he were commiserating with some hapless human companion.

In stanza three, where the questioning gives way to affirmation ("bien se ve"), the bird takes on increasingly human qualities. It is portrayed as a "mendiga" and "presa del hambre de yantar." The imagery and grammatical structure of stanzas four to seven continue to heighten our awareness of the speaker's identification with the adversities of the bird's life. A breathless indignation builds through stanzas five, six, and seven, which are a grammatical continuation of the sentence begun in stanza four. The bird both retains bird-like characteristics and transcends them; he is not only depicted as a scavenger forced to fend for himself in grimy, inhospitable environments, but is also seen as obliged to bury his "family" "sin canto llano ni ataúd," thereby becoming representative of any poverty-afflicted human being.

In stanza six, the image "en el ala / llevas el plomo que mi voz" adds a significant dimension to the identification of the speaker with the bird's predicament. We see that the bird is linked not only to the anguishing

difficulties of man's everyday existence, but also to the dilemma of the creator, the poet; leaden shots weight the bird's wings even as equally debilitating difficulties impede the poet's creative "flight." The central image of stanza seven, depicting the bird as obliged to walk stealthily at night through the streets when "tu trino bien quisiera / abrirse a chorros con el sol" strengthens this tie between bird and creator, the bird's "trino" obviously akin in the poet's conception to his own voice.

In stanza eight, the humanization of the bird continues. The rhythm becomes more irregular, "encabalgamiento" is increased, and the speaker turns a potentially whimsical play on words ("Ave de presa, no: ave presa / de qué desgracia") to a serious conceptual effect, evoking his own commiseration and consternation. From stanza nine up to the last stanza, the speaker re-adopts the format of questioning. These questions, steeped in human imagery, reveal the extent of the conversion of the bird in the speaker's imagination to a being symbolic of humanity which endures arbitrarily-inflicted abuse and trauma. Again, the irregular rhythm, with some of the questions encompassing more than one stanza, bespeaks the speaker's greater agitation and indignation at the mistreatment which the bird has had to suffer.

In the imagery of the last half of stanza nine and all of stanza ten, the bird undergoes his most dramatic transformation, emerging as a quasi-heroic resister of the

militaristic forces of dehumanization and disharmony. Establishing an effective contrast to which the reader's emotions cannot fail to respond, the imagery of the following stanza ("en la pechuga o en los lomos") evokes the frailty and vulnerability of the "pájaro pobre" and, by extension, of mankind.

In the last stanza, the poet brings to a hopeful close this bird's invented history. The touching final image of the "plucked" or "featherless" bird who, nonetheless, persists in singing, affirms the speaker's vision of the resilience of both ordinary mankind and the creator, whose "singing," it is implied, continues to pour forth "just because." As in the poem "Fauna," it is clear in "El pájaro pobre" that the image supplied by the artist--probed and transformed by the poet throughout the poem--has enabled the poet to focus effectively and expressively such issues as war, hunger, and poverty without falling into didactic statement. Notable in each poem is the way in which the speakers grow into an awareness of the identity of the artist and social man.

Both the reverent attitude toward a certain past era and the way in which it is evoked poetically in the poem "Carta al Siglo XII" reveal essential aspects of Crespo's vision of life and of poetry. Central to the poem's experience is the evolution throughout its three parts of the attitude of the first-person speaker toward the era evoked in the title:

I

Calderón lo hubiera soñado;
 es decir, me imagino que don Pedro
 hubiera visto a un hombre
 no muy alto, fornido sí, con barbas
 abundantes y cota a modo de jubón,
 con un libro en la mano y una liebre en la otra
 y hasta con una cruz,
 y hasta puede
 que con una ballesta a la espalda,
 subiendo
 desde un paisaje oscuro --telón de fondo-- hacia
 la parte que iluminan las antorchas
 sostenidas por hombres y mujeres
 vestidos casi igual (en lo que a estar cubiertos
 atañe, y califica).

Ese serías tú, Siglo XII, y te habría
 dedicado una oda, una canción, un trueno
 o, qué sé yo, tal vez
 una carta.

Yo escribo
 de gente a gente, tomo
 lo que tengo, y lo envió a recorrer el tiempo
 contra corriente, a nado.

Sobre la realidad del recuerdo te escribo
 y --lo que puedo-- mis palabras
 remito, no al soñado personaje simbólico
 sino a la oscura herencia temblorosa
 que dejaron tus hombres a la vuelta de tantas
 esquinas europeas.
 Se llamaban Pueblo. Solían
 con piedras combatir
 y con las letras, que pesaban
 como sillares. A menudo
 tenían esos hombres
 una herramienta entre las manos.

2

¿Quiénes érais, canteros,
 talladores de mármol, fuertes
 herreros, anchos albañiles
 y picapedreros pedantes?

¿Cómo sonaba vuestro apodo?
 Juan la Verdad, Jenaro el Orden,
 Luis la Justicia, Pedro el Fuero,
 y, sin embargo, vuestra voz
 quedó en la piedra contenida
 para que hoy pasemos las manos

por sus perfiles y sus bultos
y despertemos las palabras
con el amor de nuestros ojos.

Ahora comprendo vuestra Biblia,
vuestros murales escritorios,
y pongo a andar los capiteles,
los pórticos y los retablos,
y, mezclado con tantas buenas
gentes crecidas, veo que eran
vuestros santos vuestros vecinos,
vuestros milagros ir viviendo.

Con elegancia me saludan
sin que mi atuendo les espante
y en cada mano que me roza
no son las manos fallecidas
que los labraron las que intuyo,
sino aquellas que usan
los hombres de mi tiempo,
los que no han de leer, oh Siglo XII,
la carta que te escribo
porque su aliento crece entre amor y ceniza,
entre rojos ladrillos y agresivo cemento.

3

Calderón... ¿Qué hubiera hecho
don Pedro? ¿Y qué yo hago?
Carta te escribo. Vamos --yo y nosotros-- subiendo,
desde un paisaje oscuro,
allá donde nos llaman las antorchas:
unos vamos cantando; los demás
avanzan en silencio.

(pp. 128-30)

In the first stanza of the poem's first section, the speaker, pondering how Calderón might have envisioned the twelfth century, imagines a dramatic, symbolic figure. This personage is seen as if on stage, advancing dramatically from the dark background ("telón de fondo") toward a foreground illuminated by torches held by identically attired, tantalizingly anonymous men and women.

In the second stanza of this section, the vantage

point shifts slightly, as the speaker turns to address directly, personifying it, the historical era whose symbolic synthesis he has just imagined. He speculates that Calderón would have dedicated to it an ode, a song, or, ironically, a "trueno," and by comparison, his characterization of his own mode of address seems modest and unassuming: "Yo escribo / de gente a gente, tomo / lo que tengo, y lo envío a recorrer el tiempo / contra corriente, a nado."

The succeeding lines suggest that it is just this unassuming quality, a grasp of the era's essential human characteristics, which the poet is pursuing. The tendency is for language and imagery to become ever simpler and more direct. Saying:

. . . mis palabras
 remito, no al soñado personaje simbólico
 sino a la oscura herencia temblorosa
 que dejaron tus hombres a la vuelta de tantas
 esquinas europeas. . . .

the poet expresses need of a confrontation more direct than that which the mediation of a "dreamt symbolic personage" would allow him. Characterizing these twelfth-century men, the poet resumes simply, "Se llamaban Pueblo." They fought, he continues, with "piedras," and even their literary endeavors, rather than exercises in abstraction, were as tools of combat and construction: "pesaban como sillares." The last sentence of this first part of the poem, so understated that it acquires a symbolic resonance almost by

default, observes: "A menudo / tenían esos hombres una herramienta entre las manos."

This image of the craftsman continues to rivet the speaker's attention throughout the poem's second part. Here, he turns from addressing the whole of the twelfth century as an abstract entity to addressing its imagined men: "Who are you?" he inquires of "canteros, / talladores de mármol, fuertes herreros, anchos albañiles / y picapedreros pedantes." This last image, humorously recalling the more seriously-evoked link between learning and craftsmanship in the image of the preceding stanza "letras que pesaban como sillares," also suggests through alliteration the harsh, clanging sound of a quarry-worker's activity.

In the next section, the speaker continues to try to unravel the mystery of the collective human identity of the twelfth century, asking "¿Cómo sonaba vuestro apodo?" Juxtaposed in each of the four answers he formulates are a commonplace first name and a word which evokes virtues or traits which his imagination attributes to the era ("Juan la Verdad, Jenaro el Orden, / Luis la Justicia, Pedro el Fuero"). We are struck with the complete naturalness of the pairing of such ordinary, unpretentious names with abstract values which contemporary man perceives as supremely elusive and removed from his everyday reality.

The surprising union of very concrete and abstract realities is evoked at a different level in the following image ("y, sin embargo, vuestra voz / quedó en la piedra

contenida . . . para que . . . despertemos las palabras / con el amor de nuestros ojos"). This is the most forceful reiteration yet of an idea which seems to possess the speaker: that stones, building blocks, are somehow repositories of learning and identity. Tantalizingly, he imagines that the collective voice of these twelfth-century men, contained in the stone, may be magically revealed to us if we lovingly pass our hands over its rough surface.

This imaginative envisioning heightens the speaker's comprehension of and identification with the era, and in the second part's third stanza he imagines himself setting into motion stone friezes, capitals, portals, and altar-pieces and then joining their procession of human figures ("mezclado con tantas buenas gentes crecidas"). The speaker suddenly understands that "eran vuestros santos vuestros vecinos, / vuestros milagros ir viviendo," an image which fuses very abstract and very concrete entities in a way reminiscent of previous images and which effectively evokes the humanity and simplicity of the era.

The last stanza of this second section consummates the act of communion between the speaker and his imagined twelfth century. The use of the present tense conveys the intensity and reality of the moment, no longer a matter of conjecture. The speaker envisions assembled figures welcoming him without being startled at his strange, modern-day attire. Miraculously, as their hands brush against him, he finds himself communing not with the spirit of the twelfth-

century craftsmen but with his contemporary fellow man ("los hombres de mi tiempo"). It appears that the real artistry of these craftsmen has been to imbue these created figures with such universality that, even at a remove of centuries, they bespeak a contemporary spirit, more real to the speaker than that of the men of his own time; he evokes his estrangement from the latter saying that they will never read his letter to the twelfth century, that they know only brick and aggressive cement--a melancholy indictment of the technical and therefore human impoverishment of his own time.

The poem's third part opens with an evocation of Calderón ("¿Qué hubiera hecho don Pedro?"), recalling the poem's opening musing. But with the following inquiry ("¿Y qué yo hago?"), the speaker quickly turns to reflect on his own process, and in the poem's final passage, following the affirmation "Carta te escribo," he reveals himself to have undergone a significant transformation, one totally in keeping with the nature of the imagined vision in which he has just immersed himself. No longer merely singular, but rather part of a compelling collectivity ("Vamos --yo y nosotros"), he/they emerge from a dark background toward an area to which torches summon them; some, he says, advance singing; the rest, in silence.

Significantly, this is a variation of the precise image which the speaker--imagining it to be the way in which Calderón would have embodied the twelfth century--

initially rejected, embarking instead on a search for the particular human truths the men of this era represented. It would appear that out of the poetic process of rendering these particular human truths a justification for the initially rejected symbol has emerged. Having communed in his own imagination with the human essence and universality of the time, the speaker comes naturally to see himself as part of this symbolic embodiment. Just as in his vision of the era learning is enclosed in stone, Truth's other name is John, and the saint is one's neighbor, so the final symbol he envisions does not betray the human reality it represents but rather is its deepest fulfillment. Similarly, in the poet's intense concern with deciphering the still-vibrant human meaning contained within the monuments built by twelfth-century artesans, we glimpse again one of the beliefs central to the poems of Book Three: that of the artist as a key to the human essence of his era. Once again, as in the previous poems discussed, the key awareness of the oneness of the artist and the social man seems to grow organically from within the poem rather than to have been imposed from without.

Within the body of Crespo's critical work, a keen interest in Portuguese poetry stands out. His translation of Fernando Pessoa's Poemas de Alberto Caeiro appeared in 1957 and was followed by his Antología de la nueva poesía portuguesa in 1961. Pessoa, self-diagnosed "hystericoneurasthenic," who often wrote using the voices of totally

distinct personalities culled from his consciousness,⁶³ is today considered the leader of the Portuguese modernists.⁶⁴ Says E. Honig in the Preface to his Selected Poems by Fernando Pessoa,

It is a recognized fact that Pessoa was a supreme inventor who made possible new combinations of sophisticated and idiomatic usages way beyond those of his contemporaries or of any Portuguese poet since Camões. Now no poet can write in Portuguese without feeling his influence.⁶⁵

Just as "Fauna" and "El pájaro pobre" embodied vivid poetic experiences whether or not we knew the particular paintings which inspired them, so the poem which Crespo addresses to Pessoa, regardless of what we may or may not know of his life, brings his unique and troubled creative personality into sharp focus and stands as a voyage of exploration undertaken by a creator looking to understand and expand the possibilities of his own art. Adopting certain characteristics of Pessoa's tone and style, Crespo composes a moving testimonial which reveals essential traits of his own work.

The form of this poem, though differing radically from anything we have seen so far in Crespo's work, is not at all a gratuitous experiment, but rather a vehicle perfectly suited to developing and communicating the protest which is the poem's axis. The long, run-on sentences and the images tumbling one after the other--all presided over by a strongly-felt first-person speaker--recall the poetry of

Walt Whitman, not so incidentally a strong influence on Pessoa's work. The poem's division into four stanzas, each beginning with the exhortation "Reconozcamos" and each consisting of one long, multi-phrased sentence, lends the poem its only formal regularity. Otherwise, line length appears determined only by the breath and emotion of the speaker, the lines' irregular endings forming a jagged outline expressive of the fluctuating rhythms of the speaker's indignation:

Reconozcamos que la vida es así, pero que no hay
 derecho:
 tú el ignorado, tú el reído en las mas burdas
 bocas:
 agonizante solitario, quien llorara la muerte de
 Alves el estanquero,
 quien escribía para no morir histérico perdido
 porque no, porque no comprendía al chico muerto
 en guerra
 con recuerdos de casa en los bolsillos
 ni la estupidez de la gente
 que en los barcos no sabía ver barcos
 sino máquinas de posible negociación en ruta,
 hipotecadas,
 desguazadas,
 reducidas a números.

Reconozcamos que tenías un lío enorme en la
 cabeza:
 por eso la quisiste dividir en compartimentos
 estancos
 (a la derecha Ricardo Reis, muy comedido y
 silencioso,
 pensando en su exilio voluntario y escribiendo
 sus odas
 en el talonario de recetas;
 a la izquierda el ingeniero Alvaro de Campos,
 un caso, un tipo absurdo y lleno de contradiccio-
 nes,
 un posible violador que se retraía en su cueva
 y desde allí gritaba su esperanza y su miedo;
 en la nuca, Alberto Caeiro, en el lugar en que se
 apoya
 --para dispararlo de pronto-- el cañón del

revólver,
 Alberto, ese pastor de metafísicos rebaños sin
 metafísica,
 ese mentor de los demás, también de ti, Fernando
 Pessoa,
 pasándose a la frente para poder tirar de los
 otros,
 entre los cuales Pacheco y Soares,
 alojados tal vez dentro de las orejas),
 por eso dividiste tus entrañas y tu cabeza,
 te convertiste en escenario y compañía de comedias
 terribles,
 en apuntador y en transpunte,
 en empresario,
 en público,
 en butaca de la fila cero.

Reconozcamos que no, que no hay derecho:
 fue demasiado tarde; desenterraron tus fragmentos,
 los fragmentos del tío Fernando,
 del primo Fernando,
 del inteligente y extraño amigo Fernando Antonio
 Nogueira Pessoa,
 del fracasado Fernando impresor,
 del gran poeta portugués,
 del poeta francés,
 del sonetista inglés,
 del proclamador de manifiestos escandalosos y
 excesivamente sutiles,
 del posible político sin candidatura ni distrito
 electoral,
 del cliente
 de lecherías y cafes,
 del corresponsal de oficinas comerciales,
 del fumador y bebedor paciente;
 desenterraron los fragmentos, los reunieron, los
 encajaron,
 los desencajaron, cosieron
 aditamentos a tu ropa
 y te echaron al mundo: un pecado de simonía.

Reconozcamos, pues, que no es así, que por lo
 menos no debe ser así:
 yo no quiero continuar, no deseo seguir
 hablándote,
 fingiendo que te hablo para que se enteren los
 demás,
 no quiero, no me da la gana,
 guardemos un minuto de silencio,
 un año de silencio,
 un siglo de violento silencio,
 para que después salgas desnudo de las más puras
 bocas,

salgan tus versos de tus labios nuevos
que sabrán imponer silencio y hablar cuanto es

preciso
--ni una palabra más--
sobre todos los ruidos.

(pp. 120-22)

The poem opens with an exhortation addressed to Pessoa by the first-person speaker, although his "Reconozcamos" may be interpreted as encompassing the reader as well. The first line discloses an individual who, while appearing to recognize reality for what it is, protests against it ("pero que no hay derecho"). As the poem proceeds, the protest against reality completely displaces any inclination on the speaker's part to accept life for what it is. Rhythm, sound, and grammatical structure are essential in etching vividly on our minds the speaker's outraged vision. Not only do the accents in line 2, for example, fall upon the harshest consonents ("tú," "tú," "burdas bocas"), obstructing any possible smooth flow of sounds and highlighting the speaker's anger, but the entire section comprised of lines 2 to 12 is composed of sentence fragments, as if the force of the speaker's rage has impelled him to abandon all formal considerations. These phrases, strung along on a series of conjunctions, prepositions, and relative pronouns, imitate the speech patterns of someone in a state of emotional agitation. The imagery of this section, evoking Pessoa's compassion, sensitivity, and humanitarianism, as opposed to society's gross, unrestrained materialism, forces us to identify with this "agonizante

solitario," so unjustly ridiculed and disparaged by "burdas bocas." The strong accents and choppy rhythms of the stanza's suddenly shortened last three lines lend a particular emphasis to the speaker's condemnation of this blind materialism.

The second stanza, after exhorting us to recognize the enormous confusion ("lío") of Pessoa's mind, turns to a vivid evocation of the frighteningly varied personalities his imagination created in an attempt to ward off the chaos of the world and his own encroaching madness. Each is envisioned as inhabiting a different region of Pessoa's mind, from the voluntary exile and composer of odes, Ricardo Reis, on the right, to the engineer Alvaro de Campos, depicted as a contradictory and absurd fellow, a possible rapist, hovering in his cave, on the left. Most dramatically rendered of all of these hallucinatory figures is the one designated the "mentor de los demás," Alberto Caeiro, a "pastor de metafísicos rebaños sin metafísica," who resides, chillingly, at the point where one would fire a shot into one's temple; this gripping image connects him most intimately to the energy and despair of his creator. Despite the apparent madness of the man in whom these contradictory personalities reside, Crespo's portrayal causes us to view them (and him) not just with a certain spellbound repugnance but with compassion; however anguished and contradictory, they still attempt to carry on meaningful activities, are prey, as we are, to hope and fear.

As this long parenthetical evocation comes to a close, we are released from one harrowing vision only to be immersed in another. The multi-pronged dramatic metaphor which follows--very appropriate in light of the just-finished account of the multiple dramatic personalities Pessoa's imagination harbors--characterizes Pessoa as scenery, company, prompter, manager, audience, and seat in row zero of "comedias terribles." This metaphor, and the last image in particular, conveys a powerful sense of the frenzied but futile inventiveness of a man attempting to redeem his life from madness.

The beginning of the poem's third stanza reiterates the protest of the second half of the poem's first line, a protest made this time more potent by the harsh rhythm and negativity of the repeated "que no." From the inner perspective on Pessoa's life supplied in stanza two, we are compelled to turn now to an enumeration of Pessoa's activities in the external world. Decrying the world's failure to recognize Pessoa's genius and the stupidity and absurdity of its eventual belated attempt to resuscitate him, the poet calls these ill-conceived efforts a "pecado de simonia." From the third line of this stanza onward, the poet bombards us with a series of short lines, each one introduced by the preposition "de" and each evoking a facet of Pessoa's incredibly diverse worldly personality: He has been a failed printer, a Portuguese poet, a French poet, a composer of sonnets in English, and a compiler of

manifestos, to list only a few. The harsh rhythms and almost incantatory quality of the lines heighten the stanza's tone of denunciation. It is significant that not only do the lines render Pessoa real as a struggling artist, but also as an individual with whom one may identify, for whom one may feel--as does the poet--affection and concern: "tío Fernando," "primo Fernando," "inteligente y extraño amigo," "cliente de lecherías y cafés," "fumador y bebedor paciente."

Although the poem's last stanza begins with the now-familiar plea that we recognize and condemn the injustice that was Pessoa's lot ("que por lo menos no debe ser así"), an unexpected and fundamental change in the speaker's attitude becomes quickly apparent. Suddenly he rebels against the very role he has eagerly adopted throughout the poem, that of Pessoa's vindicator. Now he confesses: "yo no quiero continuar, no deseo seguir hablándote, / fingiendo que te hablo para que se enteren los demás, / no quiero, no me de la gana . . ." (p. 122). The petulance of this sudden disavowal of his previous role matches in intensity the almost missionary fervor with which he initially undertook to defend Pessoa. Curiously, the speaker appears to have succumbed to the same self-contradictory impulses inherent in Pessoa's personality. Having perceived the sham of his efforts to vindicate Pessoa, the speaker makes one final exhortation to the reader:

guardemos un minuto de silencio,

un año de silencio,
 un siglo de violento silencio,
 para que después salgas desnudo de las más puras
 bocas,
 salgan tus versos de tus labios nuevos
 que sabrán imponer silencio y hablar cuanto es
 preciso
 --ni una palabra más--
 sobre todos los ruidos.

(p. 122)

This image evokes effectively the final knowledge to which writing of the poem has led the poet, the belief that only time--and a silence from within which Pessoa's words are allowed finally to emerge in their truest, purest essence--may truly vindicate his unrecognized genius. The emergence of these words is envisioned as a kind of sacrament ("para que después salgas desnudo de las más puras bocas . . . de tus labios nuevos"), and the poet is left with the melancholy realization that nothing he may do will accomplish the longed-for rebirth.

It would appear that what most moves Crespo to pay Pessoa this poetic homage is the vision of a man at odds with his time, a man beset by inner doubts and conflicts, who attempts nonetheless to create something significant--who, indeed, depends on this effort for his very sanity. Technically, the poet adopts from Pessoa the latter's colloquial language and conversational tone as well as the dramatic monologue in which the speaker actually comes to repudiate the task he initially embraced with eagerness. This use of dramatic techniques, of a speaker who indulges in self-contradictory statements, is perhaps one of the

most striking lessons Crespo absorbs from Pessoa's poetry. In Book Four, the increasing elasticity and unpredictability of the speaker becomes a resource enabling Crespo to create some of his most interesting and humanly significant poetic experiences.

The artists and writers (and, in the case of "Carta al Siglo XII," a past era) addressed by Crespo in the poems of Book Three share a profound concern with illuminating ordinary human reality through the skillful and imaginative manipulation of artistic forms and techniques. Far from conceiving of themselves as existing and creating loftily beyond the tiresome problems of everyday human existence, these artists respond to and embody in their work the deepest impulses of this very reality. Crespo's observation in the Luis anthology that society's crisis of values can be traced to the impoverishment of language and the "crisis de expresión" justifies in part his increasing identification with this conception of the artist: the direction society takes, he implies, is bound up with the vision and integrity of its artists.

The works of Book Three are at once explorations which Crespo carries out in search of greater relevancy and technical mastery, and poetic experiences capable of standing independent of the artists whose work inspired them. While a number of these poems establish a continuity with Crespo's previous work, revealing the creator joyfully bringing the resources of the imagination to bear upon

man's struggles to transcend the limitations of time, many others, among them those just considered, manifest an opening up of Crespo's poetry to new methods and thematic concerns.

The technical "discoveries" are characterized by a diversity very much in keeping with the restless nature of Crespo's search for greater poetic effectiveness. This diversity is exemplified by the surprising metaphor of "Fauna," uniting mechanical and natural worlds and illuminating the human dilemma; the initially whimsical symbol of "El pájaro pobre" which takes on increasingly sombre overtones; the personification of a past era and the imagined monologue addressed to it in "Carta al Siglo XII"; and, in "A Fernando Pessoa," the device of an unreliable personal speaker engaged in an irate dramatic monologue.

A revealing thematic similarity, however, underlies the considerable surface diversity of these works. Each of the poems studied in this chapter is permeated with an ever more acute awareness--stemming from the poet's recognition that to give ever greater human meaning to his work language must be used with increasing sensitivity--of the identity of the artist and the social man; each faces the dilemma of living/creating a meaningful life/work. This coming together within the poem of artist and ordinary man is a change from Crespo's earlier work, particularly from the poetry of Book Two, where the two key themes of man's time-bound reality and the creative process were embodied

in separate and technically quite different works. In addition, in the previous Books, that poetry dealing directly with human themes focused on man in his personal rather than his social dimension. Many of the poems of Book Three move toward a broader and more integrated vision, a vision upon which Crespo will continue to build throughout the later poems of En medio del camino. Each of the four poems studied makes a strong case for the intricate and essential connectedness of the artist and the social man, showing them merging to voice identical concerns. The poetically inventive voice of "Fauna" adopts eagerly the role of becrier of human misery and injustice; the "pájaro pobre," who comes to signify human perseverance in the face of suffering, symbolizes also the beleaguered yet resilient creator; in "Carta al Siglo XII," the craftsmen, creators of still-meaningful forms and structures, are indistinguishable from the larger "Pueblo" they represent; and, in the poem to Pessoa, this "poeta francés," "sonetista inglés," and "autor de manifiestos" is, as he struggles incessantly to order his chaotic mind and surroundings, just as essentially a "bebedor," "fumador," "cliente de cafeterías," and "tío Fernando."

A keen awareness of the identity of the artist and the social man pervades other poems written by Crespo to different artists and writers during these years. Not all of these works were chosen for inclusion in En medio del camino. This fragment from "Miguel Hernández," for example,

from the volume Suma y sigue, suggests how the poet and man in a broader sense commune with each other through the word:

La palabra cogida entre papeles
 con manchas inequívocas de sangre,

 abriéndose camino
 como la hoz entre la siembra,

 purificando el aire
 como la lluvia en descampado,

 la palabra desde los dientes,
 a partir de la lengua, del pozo,
 de la pared a cal y canto
 trabado; los poemas
 como banderas, como lechos
 para crear, como señales
 para creer, como maduras
 credenciales de cuanto vive

 Tus palabras, que ya son nuestras.
 Nuestras palabras, que nos hurtas.
 (p. 48)

In this section from "Homenaje a João Cabral de Melo Neto: El poema," Crespo suggests that the poem must partake of, not shield itself from, the life of the streets:

Para conservar un poema
 hay que ponerlo a la intemperie,
 sobre todo cuando graniza
 mejor que cuando llueve.

No hay que guardarlo entre algodones
 en un cofre o en una caja:
 mejor que en las aceras,
 hay que dejarlo en la calzada.

En vez de bajar a la calle
 y depositarlo en el suelo,
 deben abrirse las batientes
 y arrojarlo sin miedo.

Entonces, cuando es un poema
 y no es una flor fría,
 lo podremos recuperar
 de entre las ruedas que lo pisan.
 (p. 126)

And, in his poem to the Galician painter María Antonia Dans, Crespo acknowledges the power of her art to discover the essence of the "pueblo":

Tú nos los das: nos das la tierra
 y el hombre y su cansancio,
 pero también nos das el fruto
 que se va madurando.
 Siento el volcán bajo el camino,
 oigo la voz tras de los labios,
 veo la llama en la madera
 que todavía es árbol.
 Tú lo levantas: ese fruto
 todavía es amargo.
 Tiene su nombre. No lo digo.
 El pueblo lo ha sembrado.
 (p. 148)

The emergence in Crespo's critical writing of this same period of a similar awareness of the intimate connection between the artist and man suggests the extent to which the critical and creative faculties increasingly complement and enrich one another in this work. In Situación de la poesía concreta, Crespo (and Gómez Bedate), situating the phenomenon of concretismo in the so-called "neo-modernist" (1945 and beyond) generation of Brazilian poets, affirm: "no era una postura estética gratuita sino profundamente enraizada en la realidad de su tiempo y del país que la vió surgir."⁶⁶ They maintain:

La idea básica de los concretistas es crear un

arte de nuestro tiempo. . . . De ahí que, considerando como características del tiempo que vivimos la automatización, la técnica, la velocidad y la economía de los recursos empleados para conseguirlas, propongan una poesía, racionalista y exigentemente técnica. Una poesía tan adaptada a la vida de la sociedad que se pueda calificar sin violencia de poesía social. Social, desde luego, sin discursivismo, sin arenga, que estimule al lector en virtud de su propia estructura. . . .⁶⁷

Technically, according to the authors' study, the concretistas sought to "prescindir por completo de la estructura sintáctico-discursiva del verso," to use:

. . . palabras desarticuladas . . . cuya expresividad debe estar dada por las cualidades onomatopéyicas de la palabra en sí, por la repetición o el espaciamiento de las mismas palabras, por el poder de sugerencia que su grafismo posea, y por su ordenación en la página, la cual viene a ser la unidad poética . . .

and to capitalize upon "cuanta potencia expresiva pueda poseer la palabra, tanto en su significado semántico como en su representación gráfica. . . ."⁶⁸

Though we must remember that Crespo is not espousing concretismo but merely studying it, the discovery that certain elements of the concretista philosophy coincide with certain aspects of the poems of Books Three and Four (written during the same period) suggests that he feels some affinity for its ideas. Its emphasis on forging a poetry more suited to portrayal of contemporary realities through increasing brevity and compression of language, attention to the word, and "objectivization" is the same emphasis we find partially expressed in such poems of Crespo's as those

to Todó, Tàpies, and Ribera Berenguer, as well as in many of the poems of Book Four (e.g., "Amanecer," "La nube," "Tiempo en la cuesta del jaral").

Whereas the implication of the concretista philosophy seems to be that the meaningful apprehension and poetic rendering of a rapidly changing social reality requires that the writer scrupulously redirect his attention to the technique of the poem (primarily to the word itself), the thrust of Crespo's study Grabados populares del nordeste del Brasil would appear to be just the inverse: that the scrutiny of truly popular forms can revitalize art.

João Cabral de Melo Neto explains in his Prologue to the book that the woodcuts included in the study were created originally to illustrate the covers of pamphlets of popular poetry (generally anonymous narrative poems) traditional in the northeast of Brazil; he calls the woodcuts the most flourishing cultural form in a region outstanding for all kinds of popular art. Crespo himself, who first became aware of the woodcuts when they formed part of an exposition at Barcelona's Museo de Arte Moderno in 1962, concurs in calling them "una de las manifestaciones artísticas populares más puras e importantes del Brasil contemporáneo."⁶⁹ The following quote reveals what it is in these popular works of art that Crespo finds most noteworthy and admirable:

Gráficamente, las xilografías del Nordeste demuestran un extraordinario poder de síntesis --genial

en ocasiones-- y una limpieza de ejecución que asombra cuando se sabe que sus autores son autodidactas y se valen de instrumentos y materiales de los más primitivos.⁷⁰

Crespo's vision of this popular Brazilian art as a repository of values which could aid "cultured" artists in infusing with new life their work is forcefully affirmed in the following quote:

Pero una y otra, poesía y grabado, deben tener un valor permanente, por lo menos los más ejemplares de los que hasta ahora disponemos: el de mostrar el nacimiento y la evolución de un arte eminentemente popular y digno de incorporarse, a través de autores de sólida preparación artística, a las tendencias que tratan en la actualidad de lograr un gran arte de mayorías mediante la síntesis de las corrientes popular y culta, que no son, en el fondo, sino dos aspectos de una misma realidad de una verdadera unidad de aspiraciones.⁷¹

In his critical writing, then, as well as in the poems of the third book of En medio del camino, Crespo discovers and affirms the essential interconnection between the artist and the social man. If, as Crespo believes, the impoverishment of our means of self-expression and the corruption of society go hand in hand, then society's redemption may well lie, as Crespo suggests, in social man's becoming more "artful" and in the artist's becoming more "popular" without relinquishing sensitivity to the basic structures of his art. Crespo's scrutiny of the works of artists and writers engaged in a struggle with forms to illuminate mankind's contradictory reality has shown him the desirability of a world in which art is attentive to

the impulses of life and life is receptive to the structures of art.

CHAPTER IV

The poems of Book Four of En medio del camino, spanning the same years as those of Book Three (1958-1964), are taken from the volumes Suma y sigue (1962), Puerta clavada (1961), and No sé cómo decirlo (1965). These works clearly attest to a broadening of Crespo's conception of his art complementary to that revealed in Book Three. Throughout Book Four, as in parts of the preceding book, Crespo pursues a vision of poetry as a means for illuminating man's reality in a collective or "social," rather than a "personal" sense. The considerable technical diversity of these poems, very much akin to that we saw reflected in Book Three, must be seen as proof of the strength of Crespo's conviction that the challenge of embodying broader human concerns requires that the artist become more--not less--attentive to the tools of his art.

Book Four contains three kinds of poems, with some overlapping in technique among works of different groups. The first group consists of poems built around a central image which is developed to impart a certain symbolic resonance. Unlike the vivid, hallucinatory images of Book Two, which kept us continually mindful of the reality-transforming potential of the poet, the images in Book

Four come from the realm of ordinary reality. They are developed through a variety of lyrical and dramatic techniques to embody visions which--far from offering the imaginative transcendence of the poems of Book Two--submerge us in a contemplation of the pervasive ironies and ambiguities of human experience. These images do not require, as did many of those of the earlier book, that we suspend our conception of the world and give ourselves over to the poet's flight of fancy. Rather, we are expected to bring our knowledge of the world to bear on the reading of the poems. Indeed, our collaboration is vital to their dramatic integrity and suggestiveness, since our familiarity with the objective realities they begin by depicting enables us to be more effectively drawn into the subsequent symbolic transformation. In a certain sense, this makes us feel more integral to the experience of the poem than was the case in earlier works. In addition, the muted quality of the speaker's presence in most of these poems seems to diminish the distance between language and reader. This ever more direct confrontation of the reader with the poetic language is an even more striking effect among poems of the other two groups.

The second group is comprised by works in which Crespo uses manipulation of perspective to draw the reader into complex experiences of the contradictory and often unpleasant nature of reality. While all of the poems of the fourth book address themselves to issues of broad human

relevancy, this group of poems comes the closest to embodying the element of protest often identified with so-called "social" poetry. It is a measure of Crespo's artistic maturity that, in these poems whose themes could easily lend themselves to personal declamation and denunciation, a great restraint and even impersonality are at work. Crespo has turned sharply away from the personal speaker featured moving toward a transcendent awareness in the poems of the second part of Book Two. Instead, the sometimes detached, often highly ironic speakers of these later poems enable the poet to illuminate dramatically--again without resolving them--tensions and problems central to social man's existence. The replacement of a personal speaker with an elusive, changeable one results, as among the poems of the first group, in the reader's having to cultivate an ever greater sensitivity to nuances of language and tone. In this sense, the greater relative impersonality of these poems requires a compensating greater involvement on the part of the reader in the language of the work.

In the third group of poems, where the speaker is suppressed or even eliminated altogether, careful manipulation of language and suggestive juxtapositions of imagery enable the poet to evoke subtle emotions. This is quite an accomplishment, considering that many of these poems have a startlingly prose-like format and describe realities normally thought unpoetic. The influence of the visual arts

on Crespo's poetic language and structure is nowhere more evident in this book than in these poems. In the absence of a clearly defined speaker, we as readers must confront the language ever more directly, visualizing images almost as we would scrutinize the forms in a painting for clues to the artist's intended point of view.

Whether their experiences depend primarily on manipulation of image, perspective, or language, a considerable measure of "impersonality" is common to all these poems. The poet himself, as a personal presence, is much less in evidence than in Crespo's earlier poetry. This is a trait consistent with the author's evolving conception of his own role as a poet. It is very much in keeping with the poet's commitment to illuminating a broader, more "social" human reality that the poems of Book Four should call less and less attention to the poet as a transformer of reality. Instead, he takes on the role of a juxtaposer of suggestive elements, more interested in plunging the reader into an experience of the tensions and contradictions of human experience than in creating poems which enable him to transcend them. Far from the virtuoso creator of imaginative metaphors of earlier books, the poet emerges in the works of Book Four as a craftsman, content to retreat into the background and allow his materials to speak for themselves. Implicit in works such as "Poemas necesarios" (p. 205) and "Cambios del ferrallista" (p. 211)--as in "Carta al siglo XII" (p. 128) in the previous book--is Crespo's knowledge

that the poet and the craftsman labor in an identical sense to create structures which are transcendent insofar as they are "useful" to mankind. The ever greater emphasis on language and away from the speaker in these poems attests to the poet's keen awareness that language alone is the tool which, carefully wielded, will enable him to fulfill, in its broadest sense, this difficult condition.

Many of the poems of the fourth book of En medio del camino take shape around an image which is endowed with symbolic resonance as the poem progresses. These images differ significantly from those which centered the experiences of the poems of the first part of the second book. The latter nearly always had a hallucinatory, unreal quality, made clear to the reader from the beginning of the poem, and their main impact was to evoke the transforming power of the poetic imagination ("El ciervo," "El olor de las vacas," "Cada lluvia," "El heredero," etc.). The images of certain poems of the fourth book ("La cabra," "Una mujer llamada Rosa," "Caza menor," etc.) focus our attention first on the real world, and then, often through a speaker whose own importance in the transformative process is muted, draw us toward the realm of the symbolic.

The old farm animal featured in the poem "La cabra" is depicted from the poem's beginning in terms at once concrete and subtly suggestive of wider themes. The constraint on the part of the poem's speaker, his failure to intrude directly on the evocation of the goat, and the

careful manipulation of language which gives to the emerging vision a compelling autonomy, enhance the reader's apprehension of the attitude toward time which the goat comes to embody:

La vieja cabra que el cuchillo
 respetó. Se movía
 como la hierba cuando crece.
 De pronto, sus orejas
 ya estaban lacias, o su belfo
 entreabierto, o estaba
 el animal junto a la puerta
 del horno. El animal
 --o más bien bicho, fardo
 de piel y huesos, con las ubres
 como viejas talegas que guardaron
 cobre y, a veces, plata--,
 el bicho melancólico
 que se dormía al sol tocando tierra
 con los hermosos cuernos.
 Porque los cuernos eran su sonrisa,
 su afirmación, su gesto de haber sido:
 brillantes de mañana, por la siesta
 mates de polvo y tedio, por la noche
 oscuros de abandono, y humeantes
 de bruma con la aurora.

Vieja herencia
 de algún día que el hambre se olvidó
 de olisquear el filo del cuchillo,
 de lamer el barreño en que la sangre
 se cuaja, de mover
 la artesa que presencia el sacrificio;
 vieja cabra, durando
 como la duración, como las hierbas
 que cuelgan del tejado,
 como la voz idéntica que llama
 desde el fondo del patio cada día,
 como el tiempo que aprieta los costados,
 se va después, jadea
 y, cuando va a morir, clava los cuernos
 en el contemplador desprevenido.

(pp. 165-66)

A pensive, even somnolent tone characterizes the speaking voice almost from the poem's beginning. The first sentence, a fragment, does not invite us to contemplate an

action or a narrative sequence, but rather compels us to share the speaker's envisioning of "La vieja cabra." The dramatic juxtaposition of "la cabra" and "el cuchillo," with its suggestion of ritual sacrifice, the lack of a specific, anecdotal context, and use of the figurative verb "respetar" prepare us for the goat's emergence as a symbolic presence in the poem. In the image of lines 2 and 3, the goat is identified in the speaker's mind with a larger natural cycle, moving like the grass as it grows; the transition from preterite tense in the first sentence to imperfect (and then present) in this second seems to attest to the expanding resonance of the vision of the animal in the speaker's mind. Not only the imagery but also the structure of lines 4 through 8 (brief, successive clauses set off by commas and introduced by "o") evoke and invite us to delight in the endearingly skittish, inquisitive qualities of a particular animal.

Despite its length, the next sentence is actually a sentence fragment, a characteristic which both heightens our sense of the description's spontaneity and concentrates our attention on essence rather than on anecdote. As the initial repeated designation "animal" shifts suddenly to "bicho," and then to "fardo de piel y huesos," not only does our sense of the real animal expand, but we also note beneath the speaker's grappling with language a more transcendent reality struggling toward expression. The speaker's restlessness seems to subside with the transition

to figurative language, ". . . con las ubres / como viejas talegas que guardaron / cobre y, a veces, plata--", an evocation which endows the goat with magical qualities and articulates clearly the reverence felt for him by the speaker. The softening of the repeated noun "bicho" in line 13 with the adjective "melancólico," ascribing to the goat a human quality, and the strangely emblematic image of his dropping off to sleep with his "beautiful" horns grazing the ground, further suggest the goat's emergence from a merely anecdotal animal toward a more significant embodiment.

Lines 8-15, another sentence fragment, further imbue the goat with symbolic associations. The horns, abstracted from any time-bound reality, focus a vision of time's passage that embraces the human world as well, as their characterization as "sonrisa," "afirmación," the attribution of a "gesto," and the identification of the nouns "tedio" and "abandono" with stages of the goat's "day" make clear. These musings betray a certain wistful desire on the speaker's part to appropriate for himself the simultaneous submissiveness of the horns and their imperviousness to time.

The last section, beginning with line 22, continues in the incomplete sentences which have become the poem's trademark, holding our attention ever more intensely on the goat's emerging symbolic essence. The poem seems almost to have become a litany, in which the speaker, continually addressing a vision as it unfolds in his mind, affirms at

each step its sanctity to him. From the "vieja cabra" of the poem's beginning, the goat has now become a "vieja herencia," something of value the past has bequeathed the speaker and whose meaning he must discover. The death which the goat has eluded is evoked in terms both specific ("el filo del cuchillo," "el barreño en que la sangre / se cuaja . . .") and figurative ("de algún día que el hambre se olvidó / de olisquear . . . de lamer . . . de mover / la artesa que presencia el sacrificio;"), causing us to see him both as a real animal and as a potential sacrificial victim miraculously spared.

The poem's last sentence fragment, a series of subordinate clauses unfurling from the initial invocation to the "vieja cabra," is carefully structured for maximum dramatic effect:

vieja cabra, durando
 como la duración, como las hierbas
 que cuelgan del tejado,
 como la voz idéntica que llama
 desde el fondo del patio cada día,
 como el tiempo que aprieta los costados,
 se va . . . jadea
 . . . cuando va a morir, clava los cuernos . . .
 (p. 166)

The dreamily-intoned "Vieja cabra" is modified by the gerund "durando," which is in turn modified by four adverbial clauses, each beginning with "como" and each affirming the goat's identity in the speaker's mind with realities at once commonplace, mysterious, and enduring. The somnolent rhythm of the subordinate phrases, each introduced by the

increasingly incantatory "como," together with the imagery, lull the reader into a false sense of security. In the course of the poem, the goat has become the reassuring, always somewhat enigmatic embodiment of a vitality that endures sagely beyond the threatened death that should have been his lot. Even in the poem's last lines, we see him "durando / como la duración, . . . como el tiempo," and remember the evocation of his horns reflecting indifferently the passage of time, morning, afternoon, and evening. And yet, the poem's final lines, whose accelerating rhythm, greater choppiness, and return to concrete imagery brace us for the final startling disclosure, reveal the goat dying and, in a final act of defiance, thrusting his horns with a vengeance into the unwary spectator.

It is just this final ironic twist that gives the poem its poignance, as the goat comes to embody a much more equivocal and complex vision of time than we had imagined. A miraculous survivor, whose depiction in the poem carried him to the verge of timelessness, the goat is dramatically restored to his time-bound condition, and it is from within this condition that he asserts, in the precise moment of his death, an undiminished, truculent vitality.

Though the shocking tangibility of the last image might seem to represent a return to the world of concrete reality and a turning away from previous symbolic implications, we see that this very tangibility has reinforced and expanded the poem's symbolic level. The horns which were

strangely beautiful and which reflected the goat's submissive indifference to the passage of time are now the instruments that inflict the final act of defiance in the face of death. The goat's triumph--and, symbolically, his realm touches on and illuminates ours--lies not merely in his having escaped the initial knife, but in his having persisted with a cantankerous vitality which permitted him to defy death even as he succumbed to it.

The complex awareness underlying this poem, which acknowledges the inevitability of death even as it celebrates and reveres the irrepressible urge to life, is imparted to the reader through various techniques common to the poems of group one. Central among these are the use of a central image taken from the realm of ordinary reality, enabling us to be drawn more effectively into the evolving symbolic vision, and the suppression within the poem of an anecdotal speaker, requiring that we give ourselves over more directly to the suggestiveness of the language.

The poem "Una mujer llamada Rosa" parallels in several ways the one just studied. Its theme is that of the passage of time and the search for meaning; the poem uses a description of a seemingly anecdotal reality to point to wider themes. Here, however, it is not merely a central image, but rather the entire narrative, with its network of human relationships, which becomes symbolic. By the end of the poem, we discover that a kind of allegory has been created:

Recuerdo a una mujer entre las reses
 --su delantal, el cubo de agua--
 buscando algo, agachándose,
 entre las patas, las cabezas,
 entre las ruedas de los carros.

Recuerdo bien su vientre, sus colores
 subidos a la cara
 y la mirada del marido
 que era por cierto el mayoral de bueyes.

Bien lo recuerdo. Ella buscaba
 entre las piedras del corral
 --¿una medalla, una moneda?--
 y sin soltar el cubo de agua
 que salpicaba entre los cantos.

Yo apenas si medía
 lo que es preciso para hacerse oír.
 Junto al pozo, a la sombra
 de las poleas, contemplaba
 aquel ir y venir, y del marido
 la calma expectativa.

Recuerdo a la gallina que en las bardas
 se encaramaba y no sabía
 descender. Y recuerdo
 cómo aleteaba. Y el palomo
 zureaba en el porche.

Algo buscaba. Algo buscábamos
 el mayoral y la mujer y yo
 y las reses y el lento
 prosopopéyico palomo
 y la escandalosa gallina
 y el hijo que llevaba a medio hacer
 esa mujer llamada Rosa
 --que una vez hecho se llamó Daniel
 y la muerte encontró en aquel corral
 en el que nada halló su madre.

(pp. 169-70)

Except for her appearance in the poem's title, the principal character is not specifically named within the poem until its last lines. Her depiction in the first line as "una mujer entre las reses" makes her seem at once general and specific. The speaker, initially personal but

increasingly detached as the poem unfolds, remembers her ("Recuerdo . . .") engaged in a search for an elusive "algo." The use of gerunds in line 3 (as opposed to verbs in the imperfect), with their nervous, staccato rhythm and their suggestion of ongoingness, bring her search vividly into focus before our eyes, just as the choppy, almost breathless prepositional phrases of lines 4 and 5 reproduce the impulses of the search and draw us into it. The extraordinary vividness, detail, and intensity with which the speaker recalls the experience, despite his remove from it in time, hints at the unfolding of an experience suggestive beyond itself. In addition, in this first stanza, our attention is lured from the anecdotal level of the poem through the grammatical subordination of the concrete details to the motif of the search ("el delantal" and "el cubo de agua" are evoked in a parenthetical phrase, and "las patas," "las cabezas," and "las ruedas de los carros" are all objects enclosed in prepositional phrases).

The vagueness of the search contrasts with the explicit, rural environ in which it is carried forth. The poem's second stanza provides more vivid, everyday detail. The phrase "que era por cierto el mayoral de bueyes" simultaneously imparts a piece of anecdotal information and ("por cierto"), by affecting the ingenuousness of a child, seems to gently mock the significance of that disclosure, thus signalling the reader to discount its relevance to the search, which can only be the woman's.

The affirmation "Bien lo recuerdo . . ." with which the third stanza begins represents an intensification with respect to the "Recuerdo . . ." of the other two. It produces a certain stylizing effect, causing the remembered vision to loom in ever sharper, less anecdotal relief before our eyes. Despite the proliferation of concrete detail, our attention fixes ever more intensely upon the search itself and upon the singlemindedness of the searcher (" . . . sin soltar el cubo de agua / que salpicaba entre los cantos"). The search's object (about whose identity the speaker speculates in a significantly parenthetical interjection in line 12) has become of only incidental concern.

In stanza four, the speaker abandons the "Recuerdo . . ." which has introduced the previous stanzas, and interjects himself as a child into the scene, evoking it from within. In so doing, he situates us alongside him, "Junto al pozo, a la sombra / de las poleas" (images suggestive, despite their specificity, of infinity). Thus, we feel ourselves drawn ever closer to the emotions ("calma expectativa") that seem on the verge of crystallizing into revelation; the "ir y venir" of the woman, tantalizingly unspecific, allures and fascinates us as it does the spell-bound child.

In the fifth stanza, the two-fold repetition of the verb "recuerdo" seems to signal an intensification of the memory and to give to the pedestrian realities depicted an unreal quality that disturbs and unsettles, similar to the

effect produced by the extraordinary atmospheric quiet that precedes a storm. Nature, too, awaits the outcome of the search.

The last stanza begins with a brief "Algo buscaba," invoking again the woman's search. This affirmation expands at the beginning of the poem's next sentence, to become "Algo buscábamos. . . ." In the long enumeration that follows, all of the individual constituents of the scene, from "el mayoral y la mujer y yo" to the "lento prosopopéyico palomo," are envisioned as taking part in the search. Since the language of the poem has long since rendered the search far more than just an anecdotal event, this expansion comes as no surprise. We are brought up short, however, by the deceptively off-hand inclusion of ". . . el hijo que llevaba a medio hacer / esa mujer llamada Rosa" at the end of this enumeration. This abrupt revelation and the specific naming of the woman, just as the poem is nearing its close, are oddly disconcerting. The poem's final blow, impersonally dealt and concealed for heightened dramatic effect in a subordinate adjective clause, brings to an abrupt close this long rambling sentence: "que una vez hecho se llamó Daniel / y la muerte encontró en aquel corral / en el que nada halló su madre." Not only the impersonal disclosure of these facts without interpretative softening, but the abrupt change in tense from imperfect to preterite, and the colloquial, offhand language used to evoke Rosa's pregnancy and Daniel's birth

(" . . . a medio hacer"; "una vez hecho") enhance the dramatic effect of the ending. Although one might reason that this final return to an anecdotal and specific narration would enable the reader to distance himself, the careful manipulation of language throughout the poem has in fact enmeshed us in a symbolic reality from which we can not now extricate ourselves. Just as the corral within which Rosa's search unfolded became the arena of life in a far wider, more inclusive sense, so, too, does the brutally ironic consummation of her seeking only in her son's death reenact and illuminate universally devastated hope and illusion.

In each of these two poems, Crespo has taken a concrete, rural reality, made it take on wider associations, and enticed us with intimations of transcendence (the goat's timelessness, the potential happy conclusion of Rosa's search). Yet, in each work, just as revelation seems imminent, the depicted reality is turned unsettlingly back upon itself, dispelling our illusions and submerging us in a dramatic and ambiguous vision of man's inescapably time-bound existence. The use of a central image or anecdote based upon an ordinary reality, transformed subsequently through lyric and dramatic techniques to suggest wider meanings, and the suppression of a personal speaker diminish the distance between reader and language and involve us effectively in these visions.

These devices may be seen in other poems as well. In

"El indomable," for example, the central image of a bull is developed to embody not only a vague threatening force in the lives of men but their ambivalent feelings toward it:

El indomable toro, junto al agua,
 en las esquinas, y al llegar
 a la casa, nos mira.
 Derechamente nos ataca
 pero
 antes abate la testuz,
 como vencida de su peso;
 polvo
 y desazón levantan sus pezuñas
 del suelo, y el hocico
 vierte una sangre de color espesa.

.

Sobre la arena,
 junto al sauce tendido,
 dormitaba,
 y los pasos
 nos fue siguiendo siempre...

Prisa o toro
 empeñado en querer, en empeñarnos,
 ya siempre nos ataca, compañero
 nuestro --y su ausencia, compañera nuestra.
 (pp. 181-82)

And, in "El humo de la jara," contemplation of a burning pile of aromatic shrubs leads the speaker--rather than to a feeling of transcendence over time--to a vision in which the sacramental smoke enfolds all men, cleansing them of their anxieties, bringing them peace:

Cierra la puerta, cierra,
 tú mi hermana y pariente,
 la puerta del corral y la ventana
 y deja al aire que revoque y colme
 de humo y de monte la cocina, deja
 que yo vele, que duerman, ahogándose en el humo
 nuestros pasos pasados, que la voz
 de aquellos que arrancaban
 la jara suene aquí
 sin miedo a las herencias y salarios,

que --agua limpia-- nos lave
 y nos perfume el humo,
 que la lumbre que somos se despierte
 a la lumbre del pueblo.

(p. 180)

In poems of the second group, complex manipulation of perspective and the frequent use of an ironic, changeable narrator are techniques enabling Crespo to convey experiences which often, though not always, contain an element of social protest. In "El bombardeo," for example, the poetic effectiveness of Crespo's indictment of war derives from the changing, ambivalent relationship which the speaker maintains with the poem's central metaphor, that of a table perceived as a chicken:

Pues bien, igual que una gallina
 --naturalmente, desplumada--
 era la mesa aquella y, a pesar
 de la guerra y el hambre,
 bien vestida
 y con ceniza en cada plato.

Sí: lo mismo que el ave
 que abre las alas y cobija
 los amarillos vástagos.

Mi hermana

mayor --pues la pequeña,
 a pesar de la guerra, era ceniza
 por allí cerca, por mi madre--
 y yo nos ocultábamos
 entre las cuatro patas
 y entre los picos del mantel.

Y era de día. De la boca
 de mi madre, palabras; de los puños
 de mi padre, dos golpes
 sobre las costillas del ave.
 Eso era cuanto nos llegaba.
 Y el ruido del motor.

Y, de repente, un trueno próximo,
 un movimiento de la mesa

--como si el ave fuese a andar--
 y nosotros mirábamos la calle
 con su velo de polvo y humo
 y seguíamos aventando,
 digo, comiendo la ceniza.

(p. 207-8)

The opening stanza evokes a complex, metaphorical reality whose relation to the poem's speaker is elusive and disturbing. The deceptively whimsical first three lines of the poem, which equate the "gallina" with "la mesa aquella," are delivered by an anonymous speaker in an engagingly conversational tone ("Pues bien," "naturalmente"). We settle back, intrigued by the playfulness of the image, if disconcerted by its contrast with the gravity of the event of the poem's title, to await its further elaboration. The characterization of the chicken as "desplumada" strikes us initially as a humorous attempt to more nearly make the chicken visually resemble the smooth-surfaced table; it will not be until later that we will understand with just what chilling precision the image embodies the speaker's bitter vision of lost innocence. Our bemused expectancy is shattered with the unsettling subordination within the following ironic adverbial clause of the nouns "la guerra" and "el hambre." The inversion of ordinary values implied in affecting that these grave concerns are of only incidental importance within the framework of the metaphor is profoundly disturbing, as the speaker characterizes the table ("a pesar / de la guerra y el hambre") as "bien vestida / y con ceniza en cada plato." We forget, for a moment, the

"chicken" part of the metaphor, and focus on the grim reality the table embodies for this ever more ironic speaker. The ferociously offhand image of "ceniza en cada plato" compellingly evokes the real fare the war has provided in place of the family closeness and nourishment normally associated with a table. Though we cannot logically disentangle the complex images and tone of this first stanza, it seems clear as it ends that we are at the mercy of a speaker intent on distorting reality to convey a vision of war's devastation.

With the utterance of the initial "Sí" of the second stanza, a less abrasive vision seems to take hold in the speaker's mind. Although it is clear that the characterization of the table is continuing ("lo mismo que" parallels the "igual que" of the first stanza), the "table" term of the metaphor (with its association of ash-covered dishes) is suppressed, replaced by the startlingly tender image of a bird spreading its wings and sheltering its offspring. Although the memory of the disconcerting irony of the first stanza is still fresh in the reader's mind, he allows himself to be tentatively drawn in by the gentleness and lack of irony of the vision.

The act of imaginative envisioning of the second stanza paves the way for the transition of the speaker's voice to first person in the third stanza. As he focuses a seemingly anecdotal reality ("Mi hermana mayor . . ."), the suddenly confessional tone lures the reader into

drawing nearer to the speaker, anxious for a disclosure which will return events to a "normal" perspective. He draws back sharply at the chillingly ironic effect of the following disclosure (lines 11 and 12), heightened by its deceptively casual placement in a conversationally delivered aside. The clause introduced by "a pesar de" echoes the similarly ironic clause of the first stanza, and the inversion of values again dismays. And yet, despite the irony, this voice, in its narration of apparent facts ("por allí cerca, por mi madre--") retains a hauntingly childlike quality absent from the unrestrainedly ironic voice of the first stanza. "Ceniza" here is a much more literal reference to the death of his sister, although it reinforces the figurative "ceniza" of line 6. The stanza's last three lines, evoking the childrens' hiding among the "cuatro patas" and "picos" of the tablecloth, immerse us anew in the vision of the hovering, protective hen. As we catch a glimmer of the transcendent innocence that allowed the children, mindless of dire reality, to fabricate such a fantasy, the impending disaster seems, by contrast, all the more appalling.

The evocation of the "anecdotal" reality from the apparently childish point of view continues in the fourth stanza. The table and its negative associations remain a distant memory as, with no discernible irony, the "hen" side of the metaphorical equation continues to expand. Although the image of lines 17-19, with a compression at

once dramatic and childlike, suggests the adult anger and fear, line 20, depicting the blows and words falling upon the "costillas del ave" undercuts its effect by reinvoking the childish fantasy. The unironic vision continues to unfold in the stanza's last two lines, as the speaker with the childlike simplicity and objectivity states "Eso era cuanto nos llegaba. / Y el ruido del motor."

The first three lines of the poem's last stanza, while evoking the actual bombardment ("de repente, un trueno próximo, / un movimiento de la mesa"), shield us from a full awareness of the horrific event through the continued insistence on the childish vision of the table as chicken: "como si el ave fuese a andar." Likewise the aftermath of the bombardment seems curiously unthreatening ("y nosotros mirábamos la calle / con su velo de polvo y humo") because the prevailing point of view is still that of the child who, sheltered within his innocence and his fantasy, can unflinchingly observe the "polvo y humo" in the street without understanding the human devastation it represents.

The last two lines of the poem signal a reversion, with a "misstep," to the bitterly ironic speaker of the poem's beginning. Although the lines of meaning are difficult to disentangle logically, the speaker's self-conscious substitution of the verb "comiendo" for the "inadvertently" uttered "aventando" is a key to the complexity of the poem. "Aventando" is a verb which would accurately, non-metaphorically describe the logical reaction of someone, a boy

hidden under a table perhaps, upon seeing ashes on his plate in the wake of a bombardment. "Comiendo," on the other hand, takes us back to the bitterly ironic, figurative vision of the first stanza. In having the speaker say "aventando," the poet subtly conveys the impression that he is on the verge of recapturing (allowing himself to be overcome by) the lost innocent view of reality in which a table could be a protective chicken during a bombardment and in which ashes, rather than signs of devastation, were simply ashes to be blown from one's plate before sitting down and resuming the interrupted meal, the broken family routine. Dramatically, though, the poet snatches from him this possibility through substitution of the verb "comiendo," having him revert to the irony-distorted initial vision of the ash/death-covered plates which awaited figurative diners. In light of the poem's outcome, the image of the "gallina desplumada" of the first stanza acquires a new resonance, becoming the embodiment of the irreversible violence inflicted by experience on the speaker's innocence as signified by the warm, protective hen.

It is, then, the changing, carefully manipulated relationship between the speaker and the poem's central metaphor which gives this vision of devastation its peculiar force. The poem's beginning and end focus the table-chicken metaphor with biting irony ("gallina desplumada"), concentrating on the "table" part of the equation ("la mesa . . . bien vestida y con ceniza en cada plato";

"seguíamos . . . comiendo la ceniza"), while the poem's central stanzas draw the speaker and reader alike into the contemplation of the childlike fantasy of the hen which holds the threatening reality at bay. As the bitterly ironic reality of the adult gives way to the remembered gentle fantasy of the child, and as this is in turn subsumed by the finally ironic view, we are made to experience the devastation of the loss of innocence which was the price exacted by the war from so many. Indeed, so dramatic is the change undergone by the speaker with respect to the poem's central metaphor, and so indefinite is the portrayal of the bombardment, that the poem might be interpreted not just as an illumination of the devastation of war but of the tragedy of the loss of innocence to which the "bombardment" of reality subjects us all.

In "El túnel," use of a similarly ironic speaker again enables the poet to convey an attitude of outrage at injustice while avoiding sentimentality or overstatement. This time, the cause of indignation is the unsafe working conditions which construction men building a tunnel agree to because of the lure of higher pay. Alluding to his fellow workers, whose attitude he has tried to change, the speaker says at the end of the poem:

Pero ellos me dijeron
 que no chistase: a lo mejor
 les obligaban a maderas
 para contener la avalancha
 y, luego, cobrarían
 menos, llegado el sábado.

Porque, claro, morir
 o que te entierren una pierna
 es una cosa, y otra
 muy diferente,
 vamos, supongo, no comer.
 (Suma y sigue, pp. 61-62)

In "Con un clavo de paja," an ironic, impersonal speaker details a man's struggle for sustenance for himself and his family. Each day, we are told, the man nails his loaf of bread to the table with a stronger material, only to have it disappear:

Con un clavo de hierro y con otro de acero
 hizo clavar los sucesivos panes,
 golpeando sus hijos con la mano,
 su mujer con la mano, y él también
 con la mano, en lo duro del asunto.

(p. 214)

The poem's final lyrical image, in contrast to the preceding ironic narrative, captures effectively the pathos of man's struggle to subsist in the face of adversity: "Pero al día siguiente ya no encontró aquel pan, / y únicamente un pájaro cantando, / queriendo que del hambre se olvidase" (p. 214).

In "Montes de Aragón," Crespo uses techniques of perspective not to channel a vision of social protest but to embody an equivocal view of time's passage. This work features an oddly impersonal and unreliable speaker whose shifting relationship throughout the poem's four stanzas with an ever less specific scene conforms a vision of man entrapped in the life-sapping flow of time:

Aquí sólo podríamos
 vivir tú y yo (de amor)
 y las cornejas
 (de su imprudente cebo)
 y el hombre con la boca cerrada
 y mordiendo las mieses.

Y yo (supongo) me podría
 quedar ciego mirando
 tanto piedra.
 Y me podría convertir
 en el pasto de estos matojos
 (semideshecho, igual
 que el suelo semoviente).

Tú y yo, sobre los lomos
 de este oculto animal,
 vamos ardiendo (cabalgamos
 tiempo y tierra), crecemos.

Llega el otoño. Llueve
 y allá lejos va el río.
 Hinchido y ciego va.
 (Ahogando va sus peces.)

(p. 230)

The poem's two opening lines give us little hint of the ironic, mercurial speaker who will soon emerge. The speaker appears to be addressing his loved one, speculating that they might live on love; the initial "Aquí," we suppose, refers to the mountains of Aragón. The parenthetical prepositional clause "(de amor)" perhaps puzzles, but does not seriously cause us to suspect the speaker of deviousness. We are brought up short, however, in the next two lines (lines 3 and 4) by the impudent, wryly humorous parallel statement, "y las cornejas / (de su imprudente cebo)." This irreverent juxtaposition alerts us to the presence of a speaker with a seemingly droll, deprecatory vision of love, but our bemusement in turn is shattered by

the abrupt expansion of the projected reality to include, "el hombre con la boca cerrada / y mordiendo las mieses." This startling intrusion of an unmistakable image of death into a stanza whose speaker purported to be concerned with love establishes his intensely unreliable nature. No concrete reality, but rather a very personal vision is evidently being elaborated.

In the second stanza, the theme of love continues to fade into the background as the speaker addresses his singular reality ("yo") and continues to speculate on the consequences of retiring to this enigmatic territory. We observe the speaker ironically twisting the convention of a lover projecting for himself an ideal life in an ideal setting. Nature does not serve, as it might in a more traditionally romantic speculation, to enable him to forge a transcendent, unitive vision, but rather, in ironic contrast, to call forth in him images of decay and death (lines 7-13). Curiously, though, our attention is somewhat diverted from whatever desperation or melancholy these morbid projections may contain by the speaker's self-deprecatory awareness, a certain decadent enjoyment of their preposterousness. His is an aware and self-mocking wallowing. The casual, parenthetical "(supongo)" indicates the ironic distance he maintains from this negative vision, as does also a certain playful relish in the alliterative and repetitive sounds of the stanza's parenthetical final image, "(semideshecho, igual / que el suelo semoviente)."

Language and tone in the third stanza undergo a startling change. The "tú" of the first stanza, eliminated from the speaker's musings in the second, is reinvoked here, yet in the context of an unexpectedly unironic metaphor which embodies the lovers' transcendence in time. The force with which this vision (lines 14-17) grips the speaker is communicated to the reader through the change from conditional to present tense verbs and through the explicit correlation of the metaphor with dominion over time and "tierra" through love. This stanza represents a breathless ascent from the ironic, mockingly despairing reality of the poem's first two stanzas, drawing us in where the latter distanced us.

The poem's last stanza does not sustain this vision of transcendence but rather presents a natural scene from whose description a personal speaker is totally absent. The fluid rhythm of the language of the preceding stanza gives way here to unsettlingly brief, abrupt sentences whose images converge toward creation of an ever more ominous effect. This effect is intensified by our inability, after the powerful metaphor of the preceding stanza, to take this potentially very concrete scene only literally. Its autumnal nature, the evocation of the rain swelling the "blind" river which drowns its fish, seem, rather, intended to convey a vision of the inevitable annulling by nature and time of all life and all transcendent love--the latter an illusion as fleeting, it is suggested, as the poem's

third stanza is short-lived.

In this poem, then, Crespo has created an elusive, non-anecdotal speaker who emerges from the irony and ambivalence of the poem's first two stanzas to the momentary envisioning of transcendence in the third and is then eliminated entirely from the last stanza, whose ominously resonant natural imagery captures the impartially devastating essence of time's passage. Throughout this poem, as in "El bombardeo" and other works of this group, we are kept aware of the poet as a kind of background presence, skillfully juxtaposing voices to create enigmatic experiences. The elimination of an anecdotal speaker from a role as mediator of the poetic vision and an ever greater dependence on nuances of language to focus reality and to elicit meaning are traits that become increasingly evident in Crespo's poetry.

In the poems just studied, we have seen how Crespo has turned to poetry as a mode of capturing, rather than transcending, the complexities of ordinary reality, and how techniques of image and perspective have been integral to the imparting to the reader of his disturbingly ambiguous and dramatic visions. Turning to the startlingly different poems of the third group, we see that Crespo's commitment to fathoming reality and time through the language of the poem finds expression in deceptively prose-like descriptions of the world of nature, in which the speaker is suppressed or even eliminated altogether. In these works,

Crespo depends almost exclusively upon careful manipulation of language and suggestive juxtapositions of imagery to convey elusive emotions, and he requires of us, to an even greater extent than in poems of the first two groups, sensitivity to nuances of language and tone. The following studies of poems from this group will reveal how, despite their apparent "objectivity," subtle subjective awarenesses are elicited through the careful use of language.

In the poem "Amanecer," the vividly descriptive, sensorial language plays a far more important part in engaging the reader's emotions than does the speaker:

Las piedras de la calle, lavadas, por la escarcha,
 crecen y se
 avecinan; como losas, hacen a mi paso ruido de
 rompeolas.

Las paredes encaladas ascienden vertiginosamente
 contra la
 naciente luz y se curvan, a modo de viseras,
 sobre las calles,
 proyectando su sombra fluyente en la paja derramada por
 las aceras de cemento.

Al llegar a la plaza, la iglesia se muestra con
 su enorme y
 destartalado cajón en el que no cabe la imagen de
 la patrona.
 La santa, como imposible diosa rural, asoma por
 el tejado y se
 confunde con la torre.

Y un buey que muge, un can que ladra, un vecino
 que tose,
 me ponen en fuga, apedreándome con su guerra.

(p. 195)

A quick first reading of the poem seems to indicate a simple interest on the part of the poet in evoking the

sensorial, earthy details of a village dawn. The scene and the largely impersonal language with which it is rendered seem initially undramatic and pedestrian. The lines, rather than traditionally poetic, proceed with the apparent randomness of prose. And yet, this deceptive ordinariness of form and content is deftly subverted in the course of the poem by the poet's careful manipulation of language, which draws the reader in to the subtle progression in scene from quietude and purity to disproportion and chaos, and involves him in the poem's final intuition, the shock of the intrusion of everyday reality into a contemplated panorama of perfection.

Although the first phrase of the poem ("Las piedras de la calle") fixes our attention on a prosaic reality, the ensuing clauses endow the scene with an understated, impersonal purity. The adjective phrase, "lavadas por la escarcha," while within the limits of ordinary speech, suggests the elemental purity which the night's frost has bestowed upon the scene. In the verbs "crecen" and "se avecinan," applied to the cobblestones, a more clearly subjective vision emerges, and in the adverbial phrase "a mi paso," a personal speaker reveals himself. Significantly, although it puts into the framework of a man walking along the street the previous description (the stones appear to grow and draw nearer as he approaches), the language of the poem renders the speaker's presence strangely non-intrusive. His steps resound not with the slap of shoe leather, but

rather as if waves were splashing over a breakwater. While the speaker is a touchstone for our entry into the scene evoked, language assumes the primary role of describing its visual and auditory qualities and of eliciting subtle emotional responses.

Evocation of the beauty of the untouched morning intensifies in the poem's second stanza, from which the "human" speaker is fittingly absent. Such ordinary village realities as "paredes encaladas," "calles," "paja derramada," and "aceras de cemento" are imbued by such words and phrases as "ascienden vertiginosamente," "naciente luz," "proyectando," "a modo de viseras," and "sombra fluyente" with a dazzling, impersonal, almost geometrical perfection. The adverb "vertiginosamente" is the one clue to the presence of human emotion, and elicits from the reader an awareness of the dizzying effect of the contemplation of the visual beauty of the scene.

In stanza three, the constructions "Al llegar a la plaza" and "se muestra," while implying a human presence, sustain the essential impersonality of the presentation. In this stanza, though, the purity and proportion of the scene of the previous stanza give way to incipient disorder, a change communicated to the reader not through any explicit revelation of emotion but rather through nuances of language. The verbs evocative of flowing movement and perfection of the previous stanza ("ascienden," "se curvan," "proyectando") are replaced by static, prosaic, or negative

verbs ("se muestra," "asoma," "no cabe," "se confunde") reinforced by the pejorative adjectives "enorme," "destartalado," and "imposible." Rather than bestowing upon ordinary reality qualities suggestive of perfection ("las paredes encaladas . . . se curvan, a modo de viseras . . . proyectando su sombra fluyente . . ."), the figurative language of the third stanza denigrates this reality: "la iglesia . . . con su . . . cajón"; "La santa, como imposible diosa rural." The ludicrous visual image of the saint protruding through the roof of the too-small rural church mocks the proportion and beauty of the preceding stanza and foreshadows the irreversible shattering of the morning's symmetry in the last stanza.

The first line of the poem's last stanza strikes the final discordant notes that dispel the poem's initial vision of perfection. The three parallel clauses ("Y un buey que muge, un can que ladra, un vecino que tose"), with their harsh sounds, choppy rhythm, and abusive literalness, effectively evoke for the reader the cacophonous intrusion of reality into the quiet dawn scene. In contrast with the literalness of language of this first line, the poem's final thrust is delivered through a surprise metaphor, depicting the suddenly re-emerged speaker startled into flight by the ruckus, which "stones" him as he runs. It is significant that, despite the speaker's suppression in the rest of the poem, the metaphor seems a perfect vehicle for embodying and imparting the emotion the language of the

poem has, after all, prepared us to experience: dismay at the rude intrusion of reality into a peaceful scene. This language has, from the poem's beginning, removed any temptation for us to see the speaker as anecdotal. We accept him, rather, as a poetic convention, who, in his subordination to the language and reality of the poem (he is acted upon by, does not assert himself over, reality: "me ponen en fuga, apedreándome" [emphasis mine]) might be said to speak for Crespo's vision of a reality which, though it holds subtle rewards, consistently subjugates the individual. Just as the submissive speaker created by the poet in poems of the first part of the second book of En medio del camino made more gripping and accessible to the reader their imaginative visions, so, here, does the non-intrusive speaker seem Crespo's instrument for enhancing the illusion of the autonomy of the reality portrayed in the poem and for alerting us to yield with greater sensitivity to the language of the poem in acknowledgment of its potential to discover and impart the emotions and illuminations that lie concealed within ordinary reality.

This process is carried one step further in the poem which constitutes the third section of Crespo's long poem "Tiempo en la cuesta del jaral":

Bajo los cobertizos, entre el ala inquieta de la
gallina, ha
caído un escarabajo acosado por la lluvia. Lleva
entre las
pinzas el olor maternal de los estiércoles.

Al primer picotazo, cruza las patas --seis-- en
triple oración
y permanece bocarriba como la momia en su ataúd
hierático.
La lluvia golpea las chapas del cobertizo con la
insistencia de
su inmunidad. Y los picotazos de las muy zorras
añadiendo
van su dodecafonía al acompasado murmullo,
martirizando al
animalejo.

Sólo dos patas han quedado entre los polvos
húmedos marca-
dos por la huella trinácride de las que huelen a
piojo seco.

Y, cerca de la yegua, el agua sigue disolviendo
el estiércol y
escurre de él teñida de un ocre capaz de competir
con la
alegría de la luz que anda rompiendo las nubes.
(p. 200)

In the absence of a personal speaker, the poem's prose-like language alone must communicate to us its innermost reality. Rather than presenting us with a complicated maze of meanings through which we must find our way, this poem asks simply that we contemplate a rural scene, whose components (chickens, dung beetle, mare, a rustic shelter, manure) would appear to hold very little poetic promise. And yet, the attentive and quizzical eye and the careful language of the poet elicit from this reality a strangely transcendent, subjective intuition.

The two prepositional phrases and clause of the first stanza's first sentence set before us and invite us to contemplate a tiny, unremarkable drama: a dung beetle, driven by the rain, has fallen under the "restless" wing of a

chicken in a rural shelter. The verb "ha caído" creates the impression of an event unfolding before our eyes, as does the present-tense "lleva" of the second sentence. In the stanza's last sentence, the speaking voice, in an attribution that first startles and then seems curiously apt, identifies the dung beetle with the "maternal" smell of manure. This adjective is so understated that it does not seriously undermine the observer's distance which the objective language of the poem has encouraged the reader to maintain, but it does conspire subtly to make him enlarge his frame of reference, to see the dung beetle, instead of just strictly parasitical, as part of a larger, benevolent natural cycle.

From the first phrase of the second stanza ("al primer picotazo") with its staccato sounds, drama builds as the hens' attack on the "animalejo" proceeds. This stanza combines a compelling abundance of concrete, sensory detail ("picotazo," "cruza las patas," "golpea," "dodecafonía," "acompañado murmullo") with un-self-consciously figurative language. Curiously, the whimsically exact depiction of the dung beetle crossing "las patas --seis," is followed immediately by the iconoclastic qualification "en triple oración / y permanece bocarriba como la momia en su ataúd hierático." This incongruous, if visually apt, simile reveals the speaker's relaxed receptiveness to and relish of the ludicrousness with which the human and natural worlds sometimes touch upon one another. The contraposition

of the rain pounding the metal of the shelters with "la insistencia de su inmunidad" and the chicken's "martirizando" of the small creature reveals the attentiveness of the poet to the contrasts within nature and his interest, rather than in "judging," in inviting the reader to share these small illuminations through the language of the poem.

In contrast with the benevolent irony of words such as "martirizando" and "animalejo" in the previous stanza, the imagery of the third stanza, which describes the aftermath of the beetle's demise, reflects a renewed objectivity. The images of "Sólo dos patas . . ." and "los polvos humedos marcados por la huella trinácride . . ." evoke with an understated visual exactitude the drama of the "fray," and imply an objective acceptance of its violence. The reference to the hens simply as "las" echoes their similarly casual evocation in the phrase "las muy zorras" of stanza two, and the revelation that they smell "a piojo seco" recalls the "olor maternal" ascribed in the first stanza to the dung beetle.

The fourth stanza brings into focus a new reality, whose portrayal implies a curious transcendence over the drama just enacted. Although the "battleground" has been left behind, the stanza's initial "Y" stresses the continuity between the two realities, as does much of the imagery. Although this final long sentence comprises multiple realities (mare, water, manure, light clouds), their peculiar juxtaposition and the language with which they are evoked

reveal an underlying emotional identity. Curiously, the mare, evoked in the initial prepositional phrase, is only incidental to the scene. It is the startling characterization of the ochre-tinted rainwater running from the dissolving pile of manure as capable of competing with the "alegría" of the light breaking through the clouds that conforms the poem's final intuition of hope and joy.

The correspondence drawn between the colors and textures of the earthy, tainted stream of water, on the one hand, and the sun breaking through the clouds, on the other, as well as the identification of the emerging sun with "alegría," elicit from us a fleeting feeling of happiness at the re-establishment by nature of its momentarily interrupted equilibrium.

In this last group of poems, Crespo reveals his skill in using language to discover and impart to the reader the subtle illuminations contained in even the most commonplace of realities. He both savors the separateness of the human and natural worlds and acknowledges a belief in the power of language to bring the two together. Although the absence or suppression of a personal speaker requires of us as readers a greater attentiveness to nuances of language and imagery, the effort we make rewards us with the illusion that we ourselves have uncovered the quiet and unspectacular revelations of this poetry.

The poems of Book Four reflect the poet's knowledge--pervasive as well throughout Book Three--that the artist

and the social man are inextricably bound. These works, rather than enabling us to transcend momentarily the bonds of constricting temporal reality, as does earlier poetry, submerge us in visions of its often ambiguous and threatening essence. That Crespo's evident desire to address themes of profound relevancy to the collectivity of men does not cause him to look away from, but ever more deeply into, his basic tool of language--and that he requires of the reader the same kind of attention--is the key to the encompassing sense in which these poems may truly be called "social." In all three kinds of poems studied, whether they depend for their impact on a particular image which comes to embody wider meanings, on manipulation of perspective or of language, the poet as a personal presence withdraws into the background. As Crespo assumes the role of suggestive juxtaposer--both of images and of voices--and leaves behind him that of outright transformer, the reader is challenged to respond with an ever greater sensitivity to the nuances of tone and language in order to apprehend the meaning of the poem. Only in the measure that he does so--and the challenge becomes an ever more difficult one in the poems of Book Five--does he bring to fruition Crespo's craftsmanlike desire to create through language experiences which bring us together in a recognition of the rich plurality and ambiguity of the reality common to us all.

CHAPTER V

The poems of Book Five of En medio del camino--those of the first section taken from the 1966 volume entitled Docena florentina and the previously unpublished ones of the second and third written subsequently--bring to a new fruition Crespo's ongoing search to illuminate a complex personal and collective reality through an ever broader consideration of the creative act. The author himself acknowledges that these poems resulted from a consciously undertaken "indagación formal,"⁷² and indeed, their language and processes appear to represent a startling departure from much of Crespo's previous poetry. And yet, although they incorporate much technical experimentation, these works unanimously affirm Crespo's belief, which I have shown to be ever more pervasive throughout Books Three and Four, in "la universalidad de la poesía y . . . un mundo sin fronteras donde la humanidad puede reunirse por medio de la poesía."⁷³

If Crespo, in his earlier poetry, created experiences of transcendence gained by immersion in memory and imagination, and then developed in the works of Books Three and Four a view of poetry as transcendent insofar as it revealed man's collective, social essence, he embodies in

Book Five experiences of the ways in which human realities of all times and places enfold and illuminate one another. These most recent poems are permeated with a sense of the individual as a particle, of individual reality as encompassing multiple spheres of time and meaning. They offer, rather than illumination, visions of the baffling, compelling complexity of multi-layered experience. Insofar as they set up a tantalizing series of vibrations rather than lead us to more-or-less paraphraseable revelations, these poems may be said to resonate rather than to mean, to create for the reader an "experiencia en potencia." They reveal, to an even greater extent than did the works of Book Four, the poet's shifting away from the role of transformer toward that of artful juxtaposer, leaving the reader to grapple as best he can with the ironies and ambiguities suggested but never resolved.

Like the poems of Book Four, these works require of the reader an ever greater attentiveness to language. The use of a non-intrusive, generalized first-person speaker in some of the poems, and, in others, of primarily impersonal, descriptive, and metaphorical evocations brings the reader into an ever more direct confrontation with the actual poetic language. In the absence of a "guiding" speaker, the very forms with which the poet works--to the extent that the reader allows them to take hold in his imagination--become, as they do in the visual arts, the true protagonists of the creative experience. The gulf between words

or form and reality, bridged before in various ways by the indulgent creator, must be bridged by the reader himself, if at all. If he fails to make the admittedly difficult connections, fails to respond to the suggestiveness of the words, the enigma remains undeciphered. If, on the other hand, he allows the language to lead him beyond himself, this poetry will submerge him in a world of endless reverberations, suggesting the mysterious identity of disparate times, arts, and planes of reality.

Inspired in a visit to Italy, the poems comprising the first part of Book Five, most of them taken from Docena florentina, hardly qualify as touristic reminiscences. Although they contain many specific artistic and geographic references, the effect of these poems is radically and curiously nonspecific. Despite their spare form, these are open poems which, rather than disclosing ultimate or exclusive meanings, enclose multiple perspectives. In her perceptive study of Crespo's work, Pilar Gómez Bedate summarizes the outstanding features of these poems as:

. . . síntesis y desnudez formal . . . falta absoluta de nexos explicativos, . . . la brevedad de un enigma y la pluralidad de asociaciones de un emblema . . . (y) la unión en un mismo plano de personas, lugares y tiempos distintos cuyas connotaciones respectivas se superponen. . . .⁷⁴

Throughout the poems of Docena florentina, the city which inspired them functions as a metaphor. It is a medium through which the intimate connection among arts and

human experiences of all times and places is made known to the poet. Moved by the human and artistic grandeur and by the diversity of the city, the poet builds into each poem a recognition of the relativity of his own existence as artist and man. Rather than a limiting or inhibiting factor, this recognition unleashes within the poet a sense of the possibilities of his own art and causes his expression to become ever more enigmatic, nontraditional, and suggestive.

The poem "Affresco" provides an excellent example of the use of Florence as a metaphor:

Florenzia, yo me cuajo en tus paredes,
 donde la cal y el yeso
 blandos me acogen y compactos me asen,
 pongo manos y boca pies y manos
 manos y lengua y mis manos y piel
 para vivir con Ugo y Bernardino
 Vincenzo Beatrice Luca Antonio,
 con Andrea y Giovanni,
 mientras las horas suenan, suena el Duomo,
 suena sonoro el Arno, pasa el río,
 pasa la luz lamiéndole
 a David. Yo me sumo
 en cuerpo y alma y cuerpo,
 afirmado en el muro,
 para no ser aquel
che vive come pecora nel prato.

(p. 238)

While the poem's narrative format is fairly simple--the poet addresses the city of Florence--its multiple levels of meaning are suggested through the rendering of its central metaphor: Florence as a fresco into which the poet "paints" himself. This metaphor imbues with vitality and tangibility the poet's vision of the entire tradition of art as an

endlessly rich resource saving him from the fate of living "come pecora nel prato." As the artist applies paint to still-damp plaster which then hardens toward the unique realization that is the work of art, so may the poet's fusion with the possibility-rich world of Florence yield a unique fruition which "redeems" him from the ordinary.

The process undergone by the speaker is evoked in vivid, sensorial language: ". . . yo me cuajo en tus paredes, / donde la cal y el yeso / blandos me acogen y compactos me asen. . . ." The speaker places ". . . manos y boca pies y manos / manos y lengua y mis manos y piel" into the "wet plaster" of Florence. This imagery, whose impact is heightened by the repetition of "manos," gives a compelling sensorial consistency to the poet's turning to the past in the following lines: "para vivir con Ugo y Bernardino / Vincenzo Beatrice Luca Antonio / con Andrea y Giovanni." Within the transforming context of the metaphor, these names exude a tantalizing suggestiveness; it is not necessary that we identify them or the arts they represent specifically, for their enumeration merges into a resonant incantation whose effect transcends dependency on the individual components. They suggest the speaker's sense of identification with Italy's vast cultural heritage.

The images, alliterative sounds, and rhythm of the poem's next four lines (9-12)--a multi-pronged adverbial clause--convey a sense of Florence's somnolent timelessness; the river flows, the Duomo's bells chime, and light

glances off the famed statue of David as they have for centuries. It is significant that only here does the poem's first sentence come to a close; its effect has been a stream-of-consciousness one, creating for us an impression of the simultaneity of past and present.

The poem's second and final sentence ("Yo me sumo . . .") evokes the poet's integration into the fresco of Florence, a process both physical and spiritual ("en cuerpo y alma y cuerpo"). The verb "sumarse" functions effectively on these two levels, for the poet both becomes physically part of the actual fresco ("afirmado en el muro") and joins himself emotionally with multiple artistic achievements "para no ser aquel / che vive come pecora nel prato." Although this last line is in Italian, it flows naturally from the context of the poem; it functions both to communicate a concept (and the similarity between the Italian and the Spanish assures that this meaning emerges intact) and, as an isolated line from an Italian poem,⁷⁵ to attest to the poet's vision of the interrelatedness of all arts and all times.

Similarly, in the poem entitled "Galileo Galilei," the protagonist acknowledges a sense of the simultaneity of different places and times, a sense of the multiplicity of the self. It is one of several poems in the fifth book in which the speaker experiences the fusion of his childhood home (Alcolea) and a place to which he has travelled (see also poems on pp. 241, 250, 255, and 267):

Veo que la retama de Alcolea
 pernocta junto al Arno
 y no sé si se duerme o si se alumbra
 al sol, pues esta selva
 salvaje que ahora piso
 ¿no es, por ventura, dueña
 de otros pasos --y cantan
 florentinas aquí o alcoleanas
 las campanas sonando? Pues tropiezo
 con recados y piedras y girando
 --mientras lo veo y toco--
 reconozco al pastor de mis encinas
 cerca del puente, estando
 vigilando la Calle del Infierno,
 mientras tú le das cuerda
 y haces girar al mundo
 de dentro de tu tumba florentina.

(p. 239)

In this poem, as in many others from Docena florentina, the imagined mediation of a great figure from Florence's cultural past opens up to the speaker a multi-dimensional reality.

From the poem's beginning, we see a speaker immersed in an experience of the merging of different times and places. His bafflement is evoked through assertions such as "no sé" and the questions which intrude on his reverie ("¿no es . . .?"; "¿cantan . . .?"). This abstract, difficult-to-grasp awareness is made comprehensible to us through very concrete imagery. The initial image of the "retama de Alcolea" which "pernocta junto al Arno" embodies at a simple visual level the speaker's sensation of simultaneity of place. The following two images ("no sé si se duerme o si se alumbra al sol"; and "esta selva / salvaje que ahora piso / ¿no es por ventura dueña de otros pasos") are somewhat more figurative and add to the visual ambiguity

a temporal and spatial dimension. A very specific auditory image ("¿ . . . cantan / florentinas aquí o alcoleanas / las campanas sonando?") brings this sentence to an end; with the initial visual image, it forms a kind of frame for the two more figurative intermediary images. The singsong, almost childlike internal rhyme and rhythm of these first nine lines make the vision additionally beguiling.

The complex grammatical structure of the poem's last nine lines, in reality a single sentence, and the subtle balance in language between the figurative and the concrete reproduce for us a strangely exact sense of the speaker's spatial and temporal confusion. The two adverbial clauses introduced by "mientras," as well as the rapid succession of present-tense verbs ("tropiezo," "veo," "toco," "reconozco") broken up by two present participles ("girando," "estando vigilando"), invoke simultaneity, a sense of multifaceted process encompassing both the real and the mysterious. The disconcerting placement of the key verb "girando" at the end of line 10 following two nouns jars us into acknowledging its importance; while we realize that the speaker is not literally "girando," we accept his "whirling" as a metaphor for the inward condition which is causing two diverse realities to seem to merge. The two succeeding clauses stemming from this participle ("reconozco . . ."; "estando vigilando . . .") evoke the speaker's visually experiencing Alcolea and Italy as one.

Ironically, it is not until the poem's last three

lines that the figure evoked in the poem's title comes into view, and yet it is precisely these lines that give the preceding ones their peculiar transcendence. Addressing Galileo familiarly, the speaker imagines all the foregoing to have transpired while Galileo is "winding up the world, making it turn from within your Florentine tomb." This final twist is a highly significant one, for it takes the process of the poem out of the realm of a purely subjective, personal fantasy and links it up with a universally acknowledged scientific great: Galileo, who confirmed Copernicus' theories that the earth revolved around the sun, enhancing man's understanding of his universe. Despite what could have been a cripplingly heavy final flourish, the ending is a perfect example of the "minilocuencia" which characterizes many of the poems of Docena florentina. Not only do the informal manner of address and the apparent offhand humor of the central image save the poem from falling into abstraction or overstatement, but the image itself slyly manages to suggest Galileo's dominion over time ("das cuerda") and death ("desde dentro de tu tumba") through his scientific discoveries.

A brief comparison between this poem and one of Crespo's earlier poems, "La vuelta" (analyzed in Chapter II, pp. 69-72), points up how Crespo's poetry has evolved. In the latter poem a personal speaker, through initially discordant but progressively more harmonious imagery, evoked first a sense of estrangement from and then of union

with a particular natural scene. The act of returning to his childhood home and his attentiveness to a well-loved scene of his youth allowed the protagonist to recapture a lost sense of harmony and union. In "Galileo Galilei" the process is much more equivocal, though here too the poem features a specific protagonist, an apparently specific place (along the Arno River), and brings into focus a reality associated with the speaker's youth (Alcolea). What the speaker comes to feel in the course of the poem, however, is not a sense of inner harmony or fulfillment as in "La vuelta," but rather an enigmatic sense of one time and place enfolding another; it is an envisioning inspired not by an act of memory (as in "La vuelta") but through an imaginative consideration of a scientific visionary. The more recent poem does not lead to a moment of inner cohesiveness but to one of outward expansiveness, an expansiveness encompassing both time and space. Through the poem's deceptively simple and understated language, the reader has been led to experience the fusion of diverse planes of time and meaning and has been left with a sense of the way in which one man's accomplishment may continue to enrich the experiences and resources of all subsequent creators. As in "Affresco," the poem's speaker has been enticed into acknowledging the world's mysterious and beautiful multiplicity through response to a reality outside himself. While the speaker of "La vuelta" turned inward and back through personal time for his illumination, the speakers

in the poems of Docena fiorentina turn outward, to the greatness of others and to the variety of the world beyond, for hints of only-vaguely-fathomed correlations.

In the poem "Dante Alighieri," which focuses on still another figure from Italy's great cultural past, a confusion of times and places similar to that evoked in the poem just discussed overtakes the speaker:

La tarde inevitable y el poeta
 casi extranjero --una edición
 en biblia, las paredes
 llenas de sus palabras--, y no había
 quien le abriese las puertas
 de la ciudad (y ni
 siquiera era de aquí: le tengo visto
 tras las ventanas de mi pueblo
 para que se enterrase
 entre el sol y la sombra
 y no me lo topara ahora yo
 saliendo del Infierno.

(p. 241)

As Pilar Gómez Bedate points out in her article:

. . . el poeta . . . es descrito como extranjero en su ciudad, de la que no se abren las puertas aun cuando todas las paredes estén llenas de sus palabras (se mezclan el tiempo pasado de la vida real de Dante con el tiempo presente de su omnipresencia en su patria); además, por otra parte, se niega que Dante fuese toscano pues el poeta que escribe ahora lo ha conocido en su pueblo desde siempre pero, a la vez, se afirma . . . que se está encontrando con él en el momento de escribir el poema (mezcla de lugares).⁷⁶

In "Capella de' Pazzi" (p. 243), a similar fusion between the contemporary poet and a past artist occurs. In response to the harmony, measure, and beauty of the chapel's architecture, the poet finds the voice necessary to affirm

his own vision, and the poem ends:

Así
sí puedo. Mi canción
con la de Brunelleschi:
una bóveda, un eco.

This simple, unpretentious final image gives a strikingly visual and auditory dimension to the poet's sense of union with the vault's architect: a song sung within the vault of a dome produces an echo, just as the poet envisions his song to be an outgrowth of--yet contained within--the beauty and measure of the architect's creation.

In the poem "Cambios," as in other poems of Book Five, there is a compelling tension between the deceptively prosaic format and mundane subject matter (an open-air market in Florence), and the mysterious poetic images which paint themselves before the reader. Though the parenthetical clarification under the title ("Mercado de la Paja, Florencia") refers to a specific place, the poem itself takes us far beyond any such limiting consideration, suggesting ultimately the elusive beauty and complexity of human dealings:

Los hombres cambiaban cigarrillos, cambiaban
sombras, cam-
biaban cuerdas de guitarra.

Cambiaban los hombres manos, y piel y sombreros
cambiaban.

Y cambiaban también vértebras y alcanfor y
silencios. Y un
hombre cambió a otro su propia sombra.

Y las mujeres cambiaban anillos de aire.

(p. 244)

The poem consists of five sentences whose only verb, "cambiar," is repeated eight times, all but once in the imperfect tense. The subject of the first three sentences is "los hombres," of the fourth "un hombre" and of the last "las mujeres." The incantatory repetition of the forms of "cambiar," the imperfect's suggestion of a certain indefiniteness, and the generic use of "los hombres" and "las mujeres" draw the reader away from any specific attributions he might be tempted to make, weaving a web of suggestiveness. Essential strands in this web are the images, the items which the people in this marketplace are engaged in exchanging. These images encompass an alluring combination of concrete and indefinite, literal and figurative: "cigarrillos," "sombras," "cuerdas de guitarra," "manos," "piel," "sombreros," "vértebras," "alcanfor," "silencios." The sentence "Y un / hombre cambió a otro su propio sombra" breaks the rhythm established by the succession of imperfect verbs and, oddly, the only preterite verb--which we might expect to depict the most specific action--describes the most enigmatic exchange of the poem to this point: that of one man's exchange of his own shadow for another man's. The giving way within the poem of more to less specific imagery culminates in the final image, where for the first time women are portrayed. The depiction of their exchange of "anillos de aire," if enigmatic, is extraordinarily delicate and beautiful. Although a concrete visual dimension is hinted at (women's expressive hands describing

circles in the air as they speak), this image, rather than rounding off the poem with a specific illumination about the world, conjures up a vague suggestion of the mystery and beauty of human interchange. The "mercado de paja," without the speaker's having made any overt claims for it, solely through the visual suggestiveness of the imagery, has grown to encompass a much broader world.

Docena fiorentina includes other poems which portray-- rather than a recognizable historical personage--an impersonally, cryptically evoked scene. "Il Ponte Vecchio" and "Piazza della Signoria" are examples:

Van de la mano (bara-
tijas, o bien la herencia
--en plata, en oro, en perlas
o falsas-- de Benvenuto),
van
del brazo (sobre el agua
campando y depreciando),
van de las faldas, van
(oh yes, sí), van andando
(sobre el pez, bajo el águila
toscana), van y vienen,
van los americanos.

(p. 240)

y
las palomas
y
(los cuervos)
y
el arte que discurre de las piedras
a
los bolsillos
y
(el temblor que se escurre de los rostros
a
los bolsillos)
y
los cuervos

y
 (las palomas).
 (p. 242)

In each of these works, the poet's desire to enhance the suggestiveness of the words and images through punctuation and placement of words on the page is evident. While a certain wry, ironic awareness underlies both poems, their most striking quality is their impenetrability; they suggest, but ultimately refuse to disclose any absolute meanings.

On reading the latter poem, we note immediately its unusual and evident "architecture," perhaps influenced by the poet's studies of Brazilian concretismo (see Chapter III, pp. 124-27). Lines 1, 3, 5, etc. consist of one single-letter word (either "y" or "a"); threaded along on these words are lines 2, 4, 6, etc. Except for parentheses, lines 2 and 16, 4 and 14, and 8 and 12 are identical, while lines 6 and 10 have an obviously parallel grammatical structure. These latter two lines contain the poem's only verbs amid a profusion of nouns, definite articles, and the repeated conjunction "y" and preposition "a"; the sparse representation of verbs, in the poem, as well as their placement within subordinate adjective clauses modifying nouns, renders action subordinate to scene. In our effort to order and relate the parts of the poem, we receive no overt help from the poet, but must conform our own experience from the suggestively juxtaposed individual elements.

The parentheses provide our only clue as to intended emphasis and tone.

While the work yields no specific anecdote, neither is it devoid of concrete suggestion; in fact, the tension between the poem's overall vagueness and what appears to be the depiction of a particular scene is a central expressive device. The title conjures up a specific scene: the Piazza della Signoria in Florence. And yet the poem does not begin by depicting an individual scene or evoking a particular action, but rather, enigmatically, with the word "Y," as if what follows were a continuation of a process whose beginnings we did not witness. Rather than clarify our disorientation, the nouns of lines 2 and 4 ("las palomas"; "los cuervos") are more like brush strokes in an impressionist painting, suggestive and vague. All of the nouns in the enumeration which follows have the same effect: they are not strung along on the perception of an identifiable speaker, but seem instead intended to function on their own without benefit of a frame anecdote or state of mind. The brush-stroke images supply each other's only context.

Although the poem defies any effort to "explain" the correlation of its images, it is clear that the halves of the work are subtly modified mirror images which mockingly and ironically illuminate one another. Lines 1-8 contrive to suggest an approach to a scene punctuated by an action (lines 6-8), and lines 9-16 a fading-out from it. "Palomas" are dominant over the parentheses-muted "cuervos" in the

poem's first half, which culminates in a depiction of art that "discurre de las piedras / a / los bolsillos." In the last half, the parallel action is that of a "temblor que se escurre de los rostros / a / los bolsillos," and as the fade-out is consummated in lines 13-16, it is the "cuervos" who dominate and the "palomas" whose presence is muted through use of parentheses.

While lines 6-8 seem to suggest pieces of "art" being pocketed by greedy tourists and the parallel lines 10-12 a resultant guilty trembling upon their countenances, the poet's exact intentions remain a mystery. He requires that we grapple with the specific words and images to extract our own subjective meanings; he suggests, but does not resolve for us the tensions set up within the poem. Perhaps the most specific observation that could be made about "Piazza della Signoria" is that it seems to be the poet's wry attempt to create a structure reproducing the way in which--though outer reality (the poem's frame images: "palomas" and "cuervos") remains the same--the light in which we see it, the emphasis we give to it (as indicated in the poem by the changed placement of the parentheses) may be altered by an observed event. The poet's observation of the petty tourists' clandestine pocketing of stones they imagine to be "art" causes the graceful, pleasing doves to yield prominence in his field of vision to the prosaic, ungainly crows.

In the predominance within this poem of nouns over

actions or the perspective of the speaker, and in the emphasis placed on punctuation and the arrangement of words on the page, we see Crespo's growing sense of the word as a visual image akin to the form in painting, where perspective is provided through juxtaposition of images rather than by an intruding artist. This awareness of the word as a visual image becomes even more apparent in the poems of the second part of Book Five. Unlike painting, however, poetry allows the artist to give to the created experience a temporal dimension, and temporal tensions remain basic to Crespo's poetry even as he continues to cultivate techniques suggested by the visual arts.

Although the prose format of the previously unpublished poems comprising the second section of Book Five contrasts markedly with the generally spare, cryptic language of the poems of the first section, the underlying vision and effect upon the reader of poems from both sections are strikingly similar. The prose format is deceptive, for underneath its familiar veneer lurk mysterious and enigmatic images and intimations. Here, too, disparate planes of time and reality are telescoped together and the reader confronts a reality made bafflingly, yet alluringly multiple. Since most of these poems are narrated impersonally (an occasional "nos" or "yo" crops up), our vision of the world's multiplicity stems not from the process of a first-person speaker who yields to a complex revelation in the course of the poem, but rather from suggestively

juxtaposed visual images and metaphors and an occasional parenthetical inclusion which cues us to additional meanings. These poems are not static, self-contained entities, but, like stones tossed into a lake, form a series of concentric circles of meaning encompassing an ever greater surface.

Among the most intriguing of these poems, and the one which best exemplifies the qualities of this difficult and unsettling poetry, is "Pan Danza en la Parguera (Puerto Rico)." ⁷⁷ The startling, incongruous visual images which permeate the poem function in a relationship of creative tension with the disconcertingly objective quality of language and grammar and a peculiar dry detachment on the part of the narrator:

El mar bala en la noche. Hunde en sus frondas el
negro
vientre. Como orugas en la manzana, grandes
escualos-gato se
arropan con algas de salitre; y la luz de la luna
llega a sus
lomos como los halos de un espejo.

La isla es asediada por la quietud caliente del
mar. El rumor
de las freidurías, los cantos diminutos, el
ladrido erramundo,
el motor, llenan de otro remar de otro mar de otra
vida.

Como dientes en la corteza, consumimos la noche
en quehace-
res ácidos; o despojándonos del tiempo.

¿Quién es del mar? ¿Quién de la tierra? Entre
el temblor y el
huracán --agazapados hartos inconscientes
hambrientos-- que

nos velan, vuelan el mar, la isla, los múltiples
 devoradores del
 vientre nocturno.

¿Quién de la tierra? ¿Quién del aire? Pues todo
 amanecer
 es tembloroso; si bien (generalmente) no han sido
 permuta-
 dos los oficios.

(p. 262)

An essential characteristic of the poetic sequence is that the imagery consistently defines things in terms of something totally "other," causing the normal outlines of objects to disappear and dissimilar planes of reality to fuse in the reader's imagination. This process begins with the poem's title: not only are mythological reality (Pan) and a geographically explicit reference (La Parguera, Puerto Rico) combined, but we are struck by the incongruity of the spectacle of the Greek god of forests, herds, and woodlands dancing in the tropic.

Throughout the poem, land phenomena are rendered in terms of the sea and vice versa. Yet, unlike similarly startling transformations in much of Crespo's earlier poetry, these are not aimed at characterizing a speaker's state of mind. We are confronted in the first line with a disconcerting metaphor ("El mar bala en la noche"--the characterization of the sea as a goat, of course, recalling Pan) and are asked to accept it as a visual/auditory equivalence; we do not work our way into it in the context of the speaker's emotional evolution. This use of metaphor to focus the reader's attention on the outer, multiple world

rather than on an inner individual state is a significant departure from earlier poetry of Crespo's.

From the poem's very beginning, then, the imagery reverses or metamorphoses the world's "normal" attributes, nudging us toward a recognition of the hidden dimensions and identities of realities we thought familiar. Not only is the sea a bleating animal, but the night has fronds ("Hunde en sus frondas el negro vientre") and algae-enveloped sharks are like larvae in an apple ("Como orugas en la manzana, grandes escualos-gato se / arropan con algas de salitre").

In stanza two, where our attention shifts from sea to land, the "quietud caliente" of the sea, rather than a comforting tranquility, is characterized as "besieging" ("La isla es asediada por la quietud caliente del mar"). If in the poem's first section the sea was evoked in terms of land, in this second things of the land are at least partially characterized in terms of the water. The poet perceives the everyday sounds of civilization ("El rumor / de las freidurías, los cantos diminutos, el ladrido erramundo, / el motor . . .") as another kind of sea ("llenan de otro remar de otro mar de otra vida"). The words "erramundo"--as opposed to "errabundo"--and "remar"--suggesting "the sea anew," a new kind of sea, in addition to its literal meaning--are examples of how the poet cryptically signals the reader as to additional, if impossible to pinpoint, meanings by slightly altering well-known words or by placing

them within a suggestive alliterative context.

If the first section featured the sea and the second brought into focus the island and its sounds, in the third, for the first time, a first-person speaking voice surfaces. Despite the fact that it is our first indication of an identifiable perspective, it does not serve to orient but rather to suggest further dimensions. The section's first image is a simile; as every other reality in the poem, "nosotros" is presented in terms of something else: "como dientes en la corteza, consumimos la noche en quehaceres / res ácidos." While this image serves to convey a certain vague discontent, it is the following ungrammatically-appended qualifying clause ("o despojándonos del tiempo") which contains the most directly-stated human attitude of the poem: time is seen as something "we" struggle to rid ourselves of.

Rather than provide a solution of or a release from this temporal anxiety, the poem's last two sections reiterate and heighten it. The questions leading off section four ("¿Quién es del mar? ¿Quién de la tierra?") rhetorically reiterate the confusion between land and sea implicit in the poem's imagery from the beginning. In the harrowing, surrealistic evocation that follows, a tremor (earth-threat) and a hurricane (sea-threat)--described as "agazapados hartos inconscientes hambrientos"--watch over "us." Meanwhile, the sea, the island, and other "múltiples devoradores del vientre nocturno" fly. This hallucinatory vision, in

its violent alteration of reality's traditional attributes, effectively evokes the precariousness of man's existence in a hostile, changeable natural world. The imagery, once again, reveals the speaker's vision of nature's shifting characteristics, since now night has a belly, whereas at the poem's beginning the sea was a goat with a belly and the night had fronds. Although perhaps no precise visual correlation is intended, one may imagine the spectacle of island and sea becoming visible--devouring night's belly as if they were voracious birds of prey--as night gives way.

Alerted by the image of land and sea "flying" in the fourth section, we are not surprised to see the confusion between land and sea expand in section five to encompass air as well: "¿Quién de la tierra? ¿Quién del aire?" The poem's final sentence offers a cryptic comeback, certainly not an answer, to these questions: "Pues todo amanecer / es tembloroso; si bien (generalmente) no han sido permutados los oficios." The tone of this last sentence is mad-denyingly elusive, and no personal speaker materializes to resolve our doubts. In contrast with the vivid and violent metaphorical renderings of the poem's first four sections, the language of this sentence seems strangely flat, prosaic, and matter-of-fact ("Pues"; "si bien"; "generalmente"). Insofar as the first part of this last sentence ("Pues todo amanecer / es tembloroso;") puts the foregoing stanzas into the framework of just another dawn and reassures us that it is no different from any other, it seems to undercut their

startling originality: all dawnings are tremulous. Or perhaps the speaker is simply expanding the implications of this particular dawning to encompass all dawnings: they are all equally shrouded in vagueness and mystery. The final part of this last sentence is even more troublesome for, although in saying "si bien (generalmente) no han sido permuta- / dos los oficios," the speaker would appear to be affirming the underlying order of things despite a momentary appearance of chaos, the whole process of the poem conspires to suggest that this statement is intended ironically. Even if we could avoid suspecting the parenthetical "generalmente" of being tongue-in-cheek, it is impossible to take at its face value a statement that "no han sido permuta- / dos los oficios" when the overall thrust of the poem--from Pan's dancing in the Parguera onward--has been precisely the "permutación de los oficios." Although the precise tone of the poem remains difficult to define to the end, it is clear that the poet intended to leave us with a complex and unsettling sense of reality's disturbing multiplicity, mocking complacent belief in the predictability of the universe. Dawn, in its shrouding of forms that in daylight define themselves unequivocally, is an especially fitting context for this vision. This poem and others in this book leave us with a growing awareness of Crespo's vision of poetry as a means for attempting both to penetrate the world's mystery and to shatter what one critic has called "la letal comodidad."⁷⁸

"Piedras contra piedras" focuses more directly this idea of the poem as a way of knowledge. Despite the prose format, the rainstorm which is the poem's central motif is singularly non-prosaic:

Engañados por nuestros deseos, convertidos en
 (somos) lluvia,
 que (tras haber llovido) se convierte en nosotros.

La lluvia golpea en las piedras, en los tejados
 de cinc, en
 cuanto (des) cubren las aguas. Pero lame, moja,
 golpea, asedia,
 arranca, desbarata, arrastra, dispersa, abandona:
 y no penetra.

Como fragmentos de columnas o astros disminuidos,
 como
 extáticos ojos, las piedras bañadas, robadas (no
 penetradas)
 por las aguas, no sonrían, no muerden, nada beben.
 Y volvemos
 de la lluvia a nosotros: no hemos calado los
 secretos.

Van las gotas (volando, a gatas) y, al volver nos
 traen aromas,
 superficies, trampas: pero no han penetrado. Son
 piedras contra
 piedras.

Solas, nos quedan las palabras: esa otra lluvia,
 escombros o
 pólvora para amar con ella las piedras, que esa
 otra lluvia entre
 las piedras no puede penetrar.

(p. 266)

The poem's first section characterizes the downpour and a certain peculiar identification between it and "nosotros." That the rain withholds an illumination of some kind is suggested by the speaker's characterization of it in the second stanza as not only "covering" but

"discovering"; here, punctuation once again serves to enhance the suggestiveness of the poetic language. And yet this second stanza also introduces an idea to be reiterated on three subsequent occasions throughout the poem, that of the rain's failure to penetrate despite its impressive pummeling of the earth ("Pero lame, moja, golpea, asedia, / arranca, desbarata, arrastra, dispersa, abandona: y no penetra"). At the end of the poem's third stanza, "we" are evoked as pulling back into ourselves from our identification with the rain, realizing its inability to penetrate, to disclose secrets: "Y volvemos / de la lluvia a nosotros: no hemos calado los secretos." The final image in the fourth stanza reiterates and reinforces this idea of the rain's inability to penetrate: "Son piedras contra piedras." The last stanza introduces the poem's main idea: that of words as our only salvation, our only alternative to the non-penetrating rain: "Solas nos quedan las palabras: esa otra lluvia, escombros o / pólvora para amar con ella las piedras, que esa otra lluvia entre / las piedras no puede penetrar."

Although the theme of words as our only instrument for penetrating reality's secrets is focused much more directly in this poem than in "Pan Danza en la Parguera"--we sense from the beginning that the poem's visual imagery is in service of a concept, whereas in "Pan . . ." we were "at the mercy" of the imagery for three stanzas before any "orienting" concepts came into play--similar oppositions

are at work in both poems: the physical world, staunchly unyielding and impenetrable, and language, our tool for discovering its hidden dimensions. While this poem is perhaps less successful than "Pan . . ." in involving us in an experiencing of Crespo's vision, it is an unequivocal statement of his poetic priorities.

Despite its striking thematic similarity to "Galileo Galilei," the poem "Estampa Tropical," subtitled "Cruce de años y climas," has a markedly different format. In each poem, the speaker experiences a sense of the simultaneity of different places and times, in the earlier poem Alcolea and Italy, and in this one Alcolea and Mayagüez, Puerto Rico. Here, the use of parentheses signals to us the simultaneity of these two visions and the eventual supplanting of the real by the remembered:

Las faldillas del almanaque hundidas en el mar.
 Los tiburones
 enredados en las casillas y sus fechas: inevitable
 red.

(Bebemos vino espeso) contemplo el mar rielado (y
 más arriba
 cruje el fuego) y la luna enjoyando la noche
 tropical. (Es el
 día segundo de la siega) y la palma real se
 estremece (bajo
 el humo del atardecer) con la brisa marina.

(¿Cómo seran las islas a iré yo?) Cae de pronto
 granizo, rebota
 en las bardas (entre los mangos y flamboyanes) y
 la becerra
 alborotada muge por el corral (corren las olas y
 la arena)
 hasta llegar al porche.

(31 de mayo de mil novecientos sesenta) y nueve.
 Llueve
 (tras la granizada), arranco la hoja. Los
 tiburones y medusas
 escapan. (Llueve a mares) de América. (Las
 golondrinas), las
 gaviotas, vuelven mañana.

Arranco ahora el calendario. Cierro (lo olvido)
 la ventana en
 (Alcolea) Mayagüez.

(p. 267)

The enigmatic almanac/sea imagery of the first stanza evokes a possibly tropical reality and suggests the theme of time, perhaps an erasure or submergence of its ordinary boundaries ("Las faldillas del almanaque hundidas en el mar"). The second stanza juxtaposes two distinct realities, the parenthetically-enclosed images evoking a rural setting and the non-parenthetical ones the tropic; although the realities themselves are so different, there seems to be a subtle sensorial correlation between the images: "vino espeso" / "el mar rielado"; "la luna enjoyando la noche tropical" / "más arriba cruje el fuego"; "la siega" / "la palma real"; and "el humo del atardecer" / "la brisa marina." Repetition of the conjunction "y" and use of the prepositions "bajo" and "con" create a grammatical flow reproducing for us a sense of how the two realities meld in the speaker's mind, rendering barriers of space and time meaningless.

In the third stanza, after the initial question depicting the speaker wondering about the distant islands and whether he will go, the parenthetical images evoke the

tropic, the non-parenthetical ones the country. The rural reality subordinate in the second stanza has become foremost and the tropic reality has receded in the speaker's mind.

In the poem's last two stanzas, as the speaker first tears a page from the calendar and finally rips the calendar itself from the wall (dismantling time?), the tropical reality seems to reassert itself over the rural scene. But the poem's equivocal closing sentence ("Cierro [lo olvido] la ventana en [Alcolea] Mayagüez") suggests that the speaker exists wholly in neither reality but rather in an altered consciousness encompassing them both. As in the other poems of Book Five, Crespo has used language, punctuation, and vivid visual imagery to render the multiple dimensions of experience and to suggest the enigmatic fusion of disparate planes of time and space.

Throughout his career, Crespo's fascination with painting has found its way into his poetry, providing him with inspiration and suggesting to him formal alternatives. Nowhere in his work is the influence of the visual arts more apparent than in the poems of Book Five. The poet himself suggests the correlation between his activity as an art critic and the innovations these poems reflect: "Esta toma de conciencia" [which, he continues, gave rise first to the poems of Docena florentina and immediately thereafter to the rest of the poems included in Book Five] "coincidió con mi época de mayor actividad como crítico de arte."⁷⁹ Throughout the study of these poems we have

remarked on the increasingly visual quality of the imagery, the use of punctuation and of placement of words on the page to enhance the suggestiveness of poetic language. The suppression or subordination to other elements of a guiding personal speaker requires that the reader--as the observer in the visual arts--confront ever more directly the actual forms of the art, allowing their startling juxtapositions to spark enigmatic sensations and perceptions. But perhaps the key visual arts technique appropriated by Crespo in these poems is that of "montage." In his rendering of multi-dimensional experience through superposition of diverse realities--not just visual, but conceptual and temporal as well--Crespo reveals a strong affinity to contemporary art from the cubists onward, an art which, not content to represent experience from a single vantage point, strives to suggest, through incorporation of a variety of perspectives, the rich plurality of existence.

In Crespo's most recent poetry, the poet no longer situates himself, as it were, above or outside reality, using poetic language to extract a transcendent illumination from the disorder of existence; rather, he submerges himself in a recognition of the world's (and the self's) multiplicity, limiting himself to refracting, through the language and imagery of the poems, reality's enigmatic reverberations. In response to the poet's emerging vision of the poem as an open structure suggesting infinite ramifications rather than as a closed entity communicating a

unified perception, the reader, rather than expecting as with earlier poetry that his submission to the poem's language will yield a singular illumination, must allow the poetic language to submerge him in an equivocal vision of elusive, multi-dimensional experience. In a sense, not the poet but the reader himself is the command performer in the unfolding of the never wholly resolved or even completely defined dramas of these poems. Pilar Gómez Bedate, commenting upon the affinity of this poetry to that of Mallarmé, quotes a highly relevant remark by the German critic Hugh Friedrich concerning the latter:

Mallarmé piensa en un lector "atento a la comprensión múltiple." En realidad, su lírica excita al lector a que continúe con su propio esfuerzo el acto creador inconcluso que en ella se encierra, evitando, del mismo modo que lo evita el poeta, llegar a un reposo final. . . . La sugestión sólo brinda a un posible lector la posibilidad de sumarse a unas determinadas vibraciones.⁸⁰

Similarly, to a greater degree than in any of Crespo's previous poetry, the "inconclusive" poems of Book Five depend for their completion upon the reader's collaboration, his willingness to let language exert its power of suggestion. Only insofar as he embraces the difficult challenge these open poems present will their "experiencia en potencia" come into being.

AFTERWORD

Taken in its widest sense, the desire to renovate and overcome all previously established schemes which Batlló attributes to the Spanish poets of the Sixties has permeated Crespo's creative activities from their beginning.⁸¹ Throughout his career, and despite the conformism and polarization characteristic of Spanish poetry during the years of his emergence on the literary scene, Crespo has maintained a highly individual profile, refusing to allow any external literary or social posture to circumscribe or direct his work. Although he has branched out in many directions in his search for a more meaningful expression, the imperative underlying his work--cultivation of an ever greater attentiveness to the possibilities of language--has never altered. The thrust of Crespo's poetry has never been to erect, but rather to dismantle barriers of all sorts. His poems create for the reader experiences of the mysterious identity of art and life, past and present, the commonplace and the extraordinary, individual and collective reality, human insight and imagination. Motivated by a profound belief in the kinship of all artistic searches, Crespo has not only drawn upon such diverse literary sources as vanguardism, surrealism, the narrative and

lyrical, classical and popular Spanish traditions, and other world literatures, but has opened his work to expressive possibilities suggested by the visual arts. While critics have frequently pointed out the debt of much contemporary Spanish poetry to the Machado-Unamuno tradition, Crespo's vision of the poem as a vehicle for illuminating essential human realities, and the breadth of his search for an appropriate poetic language, reveal a striking affinity to the creative priorities of Juan Ramón Jiménez⁸² and of the members of the Generation of 1927. Both in his intense concern with language throughout the very post-War period which found many writers allowing preoccupation with social relevancy to undermine the poetic idiom, and in his consistent cultivation of imaginative metaphors, humor, and techniques related to surrealism, Crespo clearly provides an important link between pre-War poets and those of the Sixties. His poetic vision proves prophetic not only in regard to the poetry of the Sixties and its belief in attention to language as the key to social relevancy. The recognition of the oneness of art and life and the fascination with diverse cultural phenomena which increasingly pervade Crespo's writing during the Sixties seem to anticipate such features of some of the poetry of the Seventies as its deliberate prosaicness and the incorporation of references to films, "pop" art, newspapers, and other forms of popular culture.

Crespo's intense commitment to the task of deciphering

the multiple mysteries of the world and the self through the careful and original manipulation of language underlies and unifies the notably varied poems of En medio del camino. Its five sections represent different expressive stages in the unfolding of Crespo's search; in each, experimentation with language and different literary techniques brings about a broadening or a changing of the poet's perception of the possibilities of the creative act. The first book portrays, on the one hand, the poet's awakening to the joy of poetic creation and, on the other, his vision of poetry as a means for rendering the ordinary extraordinary and for momentarily halting time's devastation. Fanciful, imaginative images and lighthearted plays on words in some of the initial poems convey a sense of the poet's joy in the creative act. In other works, everyday objects or scenes are infused with a mysterious suggestiveness through the combination of surprising, evocative images with colloquial-sounding, narrative passages. In many of these poems, a lyrical impulse permeates and transforms the poem's narrative substructure. In the poems touching on the theme of time, symbolic usages are common. The long poem La pintura, through whose fanciful and suggestive images Crespo explores painting's struggle to give form to the void, is a revealing commentary on his own poetic priorities.

The poems of the second book draw upon increasingly complex techniques to involve the reader in experiencing

the poet's vision of the interlocking concerns of time and the creative act. Central to these works is manipulation of the speaker-image relationship. Prominent in poems of the first section of the book, which capture certain elusive emotions and allow the reader to experience them as dramatic unities, is the use of a passive speaker in combination with vividly emblematic, allegorical animal images. In the poems of the book's second part, a personal speaker interacting with a rural scene, rather than a central image, tends to be the unifying element. Through identification with the speaker's search for knowledge and transcendence, pursued from image to image throughout the poem, the reader experiences the poet's vision of poetry as a way of knowledge enabling him to momentarily triumph over time.

In the poems of Book Three, Crespo undertakes a creative examination of the work of artists and writers, seeking to enhance the expressive possibilities of his own work. Although the theme of dominion over time through the imaginative transformation of reality, central in Book Two, persists in many of the poems of Book Three, in other poems Crespo's imaginative reworking of forms or motifs of other artists leads him to a new awareness of the identity of the artist and the social man. This awareness, implicit as well in the critical studies Crespo completes during the same period, seems not to have been imposed on the poems but to grow "organically" from within them.

Although the poems of Book Four continue to incorporate

some of the techniques of Books One and Two, the later poems reveal a significant change in focus, complementary to that observed in some of the poems of Book Three. If the poems of Books One and Two illuminate man's personal reality--addressing his desire for transcendence, his fear of time and death, his hidden emotions--Book Four reveals the poet wielding language to focus the dilemmas of man as part of a larger social fabric. Oppression, poverty, hunger, and war--not just time's passage or the imminence of death--loom in these poems as sources of man's affliction. Stylistically, these poems reflect the poet's restless search to find expressive devices which will enable him to effectively encompass wider social meanings. The poetry of Book Four clearly represents not just a "responsable cala sociológica" but a "cala artística" as well.⁸³ Crespo's increasingly innovative use of language and image, as well as the frequent replacement of the personal, lyrical speaker of earlier poems with an ironic or impersonal speaker, allow him to create complex emotional experiences with strong social implications while avoiding sentimentality or sententiousness.

Rather than closed entities communicating a unified perception or capturing an elusive emotion, the poems of Book Five are open structures whose vaguely-traced superpositions of disparate times, places, and realities plunge the reader into a baffling awareness of the multiplicity of the world and the self. The use of a non-intrusive,

generalized first-person speaker in some of the poems, and, in others, of primarily impersonal, descriptive, and metaphorical language brings the reader into a confrontation with the language and represented world unhampered by the intrusion of the personal narrator featured often in Crespo's earlier poetry. The creator no longer intervenes on the reader's behalf to resolve the poem's tensions, but leaves the reader to make his own connections. While these poems certainly seem to be Crespo's most personal and hermetic creations, perhaps, in the sense that they aspire to the creation of a reading public whose sensitivity to the suggestive power of language will allow their "experiencias en potencia" to materialize, they may be seen as his most radically "committed" works. In their attempt to tantalize the reader with a suggestion of "las sutiles y salvadoras relaciones que se presentan entre los elementos más dispares del mundo,"⁸⁴ these poems are an outgrowth of the impulse which has shaped Crespo's poetry from the beginning.

NOTES

Introduction

¹Angel Crespo, En medio del camino (Barcelona: Editorial Seix Barral, 1971).

²Among the critics to group Crespo among the realist poets are José María Castellet, Veinte años de poesía española (Antología, 1939-1959) (Barcelona: Editorial Seix Barral, 1960); Leopoldo de Luis, Antología de la poesía social (Madrid: Ediciones Alfaguara, 1965); and Rafael Millán, Veinte poetas españoles (Madrid: Agora, 1955).

³Pilar Gómez Bedate, "La contestación de la realidad en la poesía de Angel Crespo," Revista de Letras, No. 4 (1969), pp. 605-45.

⁴See, for example, José Olivio Jiménez, "Medio siglo de poesía española (1917-1967)," Hispania, Vol. 50 (1967), pp. 913-45; José R. Marra-López, "Una nueva generación poética," Insula, No. 221 (1965), p. 5; and Florencio Martínez-Ruiz, La nueva poesía española, antología crítica: Segunda generación de postguerra, 1955-1970 (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1971).

⁵Carlos Bousoño, "Poesía contemporánea y poscontemporánea," Teoría de la expresión poética, 5a ed. (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1970), II, 277-319. Félix Grande, Apuntes sobre poesía española de posguerra (Madrid: Taurus Ediciones, 1970), pp. 45-46, also acknowledges "el complejo entramado de las influencias" in post-War Spanish poetry.

⁶Andrew P. Debicki, Estudios sobre poesía española contemporánea: La generación de 1924-1925 (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1968), shows, through detailed studies of the work of several members of this generation, how their poetry is not "dehumanized" but rather strives to capture and illuminate essential human emotions through a transformation of ordinary reality. For other valuable studies of this poetic generation, see Dámaso Alonso, Poetas españoles contemporáneos (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1952); Birute Ciplijauskaitė, El poeta y la poesía (Madrid: Insula, 1966); Joaquín González Muela, El lenguaje poético de la generación Guillén-Lorca (Madrid: Insula, 1954); Jorge Guillén,

Language and Poetry (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961); and Concha Zardoya, Poesía española del siglo XX, 4 vols. (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1974).

⁷These volumes are Alberti's Sobre los ángeles (1929), Aleixandre's Pasión de la tierra (1928-29) and Espadas como labios (1930-31), and Lorca's Poeta en Nueva York (1929-30).

⁸Members of the Generation of 1936 (also called "la promoción de la República"), among them Miguel Hernández, Luis Rosales, Juan and Leopoldo Panero, Luis Felipe Vivanco, José María Valverde, and Dionisio Ridruejo, also began around 1931 to publish a more "human" poetry. Their themes were love, homeland, time, and religious sentiment, and it is generally agreed that the Civil War impeded their development.

⁹Mario Di Pinto, ed., Poesie, by Angel Crespo (Caltanissetta-Rome: Salvatore Sciascia, Editore, 1964), p. 6.

¹⁰Poesía última, comp. Francisco Ribes (Madrid: Taurus Ediciones, 1963), p. 157.

¹¹Poesía última, p. 123.

¹²José Luis Cano, El tema de España en la poesía española contemporánea (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1964).

¹³Di Pinto, p. 25.

¹⁴Carlos Bousoño, "La poesía de Claudio Rodríguez," in Claudio Rodríguez, Poesía: 1953-1966 (Barcelona: Plaza y Janés, 1971), pp. 11-25, points out that Rodríguez' use of allegory differs greatly from traditional "alegoría monosémica," in which the object's concrete identity is sacrificed to the wider meaning being evoked. Bousoño defines Rodríguez' innovative use of allegory in Conjuros as "alegoría disémica," in which the object retains its ordinary associations while evoking simultaneously a wider meaning. In Alianza y condena, the "disemia" is lost as the poem proceeds from abstract intuition to concrete embodiment.

¹⁵This quote is taken from a letter from Crespo to me dated September 8, 1977.

¹⁶José Batlló, Antología de la nueva poesía española (Madrid: El Bardo, 1968).

¹⁷Luis, pp. 303-4.

¹⁸Batllo, p. 362.

¹⁹Grande, pp. 10-11.

²⁰Crespo's letter, September 8, 1977.

²¹Crespo's letter, September 8, 1977.

²²Crespo's letter, September 8, 1977.

²³J. Manuel Caballero Bonald, "Angel Crespo: Suma y sigue," Insula, No. 197 (1963), p. 4. Grande, pp. 17-21, discusses the postista movement more at length, conceding it greater importance and praising highly the little-known work of its founder Carlos Edmundo d'Ory.

²⁴Crespo's letter, September 8, 1977. He adds, still referring to postismo, ". . . influyó en mi manera de hacer poesía en casos muy determinados: creo que pueden servir de ejemplo 'Oda a Nanda Papiri', 'A Joan Miró', 'Tres viajes por Picasso' y, en cierto modo, 'La Pintura' y 'Júpiter.'"

²⁵Carlos de la Rica, "Vanguardia en los años cincuenta (Desde el ismo a la generación," Papeles de Son Armadans, No. 110 (1965), p. xxxix, includes the following poets in this Generation: Mathías Goeritz, Pinillos, Lagunas, Fernández Molina, Gregorio Prieto, Carlos de la Rica, Reuqenca, Gloria Fuertes, Manolo Pacheco, Félix Casanova, Laguardia, Madrilley, Miguel Labordeta, and Gabriel Celaya; its key members, or "triumvirato," he signals as Federico Muelas, Gabino-Alejandro Carriedo, and Angel Crespo.

²⁶De la Rica, "Vanguardia," Nos. 109, 110, and 112 (1965), pp. iii-xvi, xxxv-xlviii, and iii-xv.

²⁷In José Albi's introductory remarks "Introducción a la poesía de Angel Crespo," in Angel Crespo, Antología poética, comp. José Albi and Angel Crespo (Valencia: Ediciones de la Revista Verbo, 1960), p. 9, he judges Deucalión the more important of the two magazines and El pájaro de paja the more representative because of its adoption of a more radical posture.

²⁸De la Rica, "Vanguardia," No. 109 (1965), p. iii.

²⁹De la Rica, "Vanguardia," No. 109 (1965), pp. vi-vii.

³⁰De la Rica, "Vanguardia," No. 109 (1965), p. ix.

³¹De la Rica, "Vanguardia," No. 112 (1965), p. vi.

³²Albi, pp. 9-10.

³³Batlló, p. 20. Jerónimo Pablo González Martín, Poesía hispánica 1939-1969 (Estudio y antología) (Barcelona: El Bardo, 1970), p. 60, concurs with Batlló's judgment regarding Carriedo and Labordeta.

³⁴Martínez Ruiz, p. 37.

³⁵Martínez Ruiz, p. 37.

³⁶Rafael Soto Vergés, "Realismo y estilo (Notas a propósito de Junio feliz)," Cuadernos hispanoamericanos, No. 27 (1960), pp. 88-90.

³⁷Rafael Soto Vergés, "Angel Crespo: Suma y sigue," Cuadernos hispanoamericanos, No. 173 (1964), p. 450.

³⁸Gómez Bedate, p. 638.

³⁹Gómez Bedate, pp. 632-33.

⁴⁰This vision of the work as a totality, very common among poets of the Sixties, is linked to their idea of poetry as a way of knowledge, product of a personal, life-long quest.

⁴¹Crespo, En medio del camino, p. 9.

⁴²Book One comprises poems from Una lengua emerge (1950), Quedan señales (1952), and La pintura (1955), as well as one poem from La cesta y el río; Book Two includes poems from Todo está vivo (1956), La cesta y el río (1957), and Junio feliz (1959); poems from Book Three are taken from Júpiter (1959), Oda a Nanda Papiri (1959), and Cartas desde un pozo (1964); two poems from Suma y sigue (1962) are included; Book Four contains poems from Suma y sigue, Puerta clavada (1961), and No sé como decirlo (1965); Book Five includes poems from Docena florentina (1966) and a larger number of previously unpublished poems.

Chapter I

⁴³Crespo, En medio del camino. All specific references throughout this and subsequent chapters will be to this volume, except where otherwise indicated, and page numbers will be placed in parentheses following poems or fragments.

⁴⁴Gómez Bedate, p. 617.

Chapter II

⁴⁵See Introduction, pp. 9-11.

Chapter III

⁴⁶Mario Praz, Mnemosyne, The Parallel Between Literature and the Visual Arts (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 216.

⁴⁷Angel Crespo, trans., Poemas de Alberto Caeiro, by Fernando Pessoa (Madrid: Colección Adonais, 1967).

⁴⁸Angel Crespo, Antonio Guijarro (Madrid: Estades, 1960). Born in La Mancha in 1923, Antonio Guijarro studied painting at the Escuela de Bellas Artes in Madrid, where he is presently a professor. The post-cubism of Braque is the point of departure for his painting, although his work is highly personal and intuitive.

⁴⁹Angel Crespo, ed., Antología de la nueva poesía portuguesa (Madrid: Ediciones Rialp, 1961).

⁵⁰Angel Crespo, Grabados populares del nordeste del Brasil (Madrid: Servicio de Propaganda y Expansión Cultural de la Embajada del Brasil, 1963).

⁵¹Angel Crespo, José María Iglesias (Santander: La Isla de los Ratones, 1962). José María Iglesias, self-taught painter, was born in 1933 in Madrid. He is a prominent art critic in that city, and his work is widely known. The abstractionism of his painting is of the "objective" or "concrete" style.

⁵²Angel Crespo and Pilar Gómez Bedate, Situación de la poesía concreta (Madrid: Confección Gráfica de Francisco Nieva, 1963).

⁵³The following excerpt from a letter from Crespo dated September 8, 1977, suggests the breadth of his involvement in the world of the visual arts in Spain and elsewhere: "Siempre he vivido, mientras estuve en España, con pintores y escultores y he ejercido durante muchos años la crítica de arte. En Madrid, dirigí la sala da arte Abril a principios de los años 60 y las salas de exposiciones del Círculo de Bellas Artes hasta poco antes de venirme a Puerto Rico. He prologado y escrito catálogos y monografías artísticas, he sido colaborador fijo de la revista Artes de Madrid y redacto jefe de Forma Nueva,

también de Madrid. Pertenezco a la Asociación Española de Críticos de Arte y he visitado habitualmente las Bienales de Venecia y de Kassel, así como me he hecho presente, por obligación profesional, en otras muestras internacionales celebradas en Europa. Cuando vine a Puerto Rico organicé en la Universidad una Exposición Internacional de Dibujo con representaciones de algunos de los más conocidos pintores de diez y nueve países y he organizado aquí exposiciones personales de Frank Stella, de Roy Lichtenstein y de Robert Morris, entre otros." Crespo's book Juan Ramón Jiménez y la pintura was published in 1974.

⁵⁴Luis, pp. 303-4.

⁵⁵Poets featured in these works are: Rafael Alberti, Vicente Aleixandre, Dámaso Alonso, João Cabral de Melo Neto, Calderón, Gabino-Alejandro Carriedo, Miguel Hernández, Antonio Machado, and Fernando Pessoa. Painters featured are: María Antonia Dans, Farreras, Ferrant, Joan Miró, Nanda Papiri, María paz Jiménez, Pablo Picasso, Ribera Berenguer, Antonio Tàpies, and Francisco Todó.

⁵⁶Crespo acknowledges in his letter of September 8, 1977, that he did feel a stronger artistic kinship to the painters. He says, "me sentía más unido a la búsqueda de los pintores que a la de los poetas, y . . . en el sentido que usted apunta . . . : el de la búsqueda formal, que hacía que mis propósitos fuesen a un tiempo de creación y de indagación." In the same letter, Crespo cites as a reason behind his "difícil integración en el ambiente poético español" the general lack of interest among contemporary poets in the visual arts, poetry written in other languages, and music.

⁵⁷José María Moreno Galván, The Latest Avant-Garde, trans. Neville Hinton (Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphic Society, 1969). All further references to this work appear in the text.

⁵⁸João Cabral wrote the Prologue to Crespo's Grabados populares del nordeste del Brasil. He also figures in Crespo's study of Brazilian concrete poetry.

⁵⁹It is interesting to note, in this connection, that Crespo's first volume of poetry, Una lengua emerge, was published in 1950.

⁶⁰Alexandre Cirici, Tàpies: Witness of Silence (New York: Tudor Publishing Co., 1972), p. 119.

⁶¹Cirici, p. 119.

⁶²Cirici, p. 329.

⁶³Critics point out that Alberto Caeiro was the invented personality whose "work" Pessoa himself judged the most important.

⁶⁴Born in 1888 and educated in South Africa as well as in Lisbon, Pessoa wrote in both English and Portuguese, and his highly idiosyncratic work met with almost complete incomprehension on the part of his contemporaries. An alcoholic, he died in poverty at the age of 47, in 1935. Although even into the 1950's Pessoa's work remained submerged in critical obscurity, his importance as one of the most gifted and original poets of his time has been increasingly proclaimed by subsequent groups of poets.

⁶⁵Edwin Honig, ed. and trans., Selected Poems by Fernando Pessoa (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1971), p. ix.

⁶⁶Crespo and Gómez Bedate, p. 14.

⁶⁷Crespo and Gómez Bedate, p. 22.

⁶⁸Crespo and Gómez Bedate, pp. 14-15.

⁶⁹Crespo, Grabados populares, p. xiii.

⁷⁰Crespo, Grabados populares, p. xix.

⁷¹Crespo, Grabados populares, p. xix.

Chapter V

⁷²In Crespo's letter of September 8, 1977, he says, "Cuando vi publicado mi libro No sé cómo decirlo, me di cuenta de que había agotado en cierto modo un estilo poético del que de ninguna manera renegaba, y que debía iniciar una indagación formal que me condujese hacia nuevas posiciones culturales. . . . La primera respuesta creí conseguirla con Docena florentina, y en seguida con los demás poemas incluidos en el 'Libro quinto' de En medio del camino." He adds, "Mi libro Claro: Oscuro, que debe aparecer pronto, es la afirmación en este camino; y también lo son los poemas en los que ahora estoy trabajando."

⁷³Gómez Bedate, p. 634.

⁷⁴Gómez Bedate, p. 633.

⁷⁵Both Crespo and I have been unable to verify the exact source of the quotation. Crespo indicates it is from a work by a thirteenth-century master.

⁷⁶Gómez Bedate, p. 634.

⁷⁷I found very interesting the following observation made by one of my professors, Dr. George Woodyard, in written comments on this chapter: "Parguera, Puerto Rico, is in itself a haunting--almost magical--place because of the existence of the phosphorescent plankton in the Bay, a phenomenon which not only makes Parguera a tourist attraction but gives it a kind of surrealistic quality." Certainly, some of this "ambiente" carries over into Crespo's poem.

⁷⁸Soto Vergés, "Angel Crespo: Suma y sigue," p. 448.

⁷⁹Crespo's letter, dated September 8, 1977.

⁸⁰Gómez Bedate, p. 640.

Afterword

⁸¹Batló, p. 12.

⁸²In a letter to Professor Andrew P. Debicki dated September 31, 1974, Crespo says, "Siempre he admirado mucho a Juan Ramón y he mantenido contra viento y marea --y en pleno período machadista-- el enorme valor de su poesía." It should be pointed out, however, that many of Crespo's poems draw upon themes and techniques characteristic of Antonio Machado's work.

⁸³Caballero Bonald, p. 4.

⁸⁴Angel Crespo, "Per 'Una Generazione Realista,'" in Angel Crespo, Poesie, ed. Mario Di Pinto (Caltanissetta-Rome: Salvatore Sciàscia, Editore, 1964), p. 224, as quoted in Spanish translation by Gómez Bedate, p. 624.

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