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La turoj de la ĉefurbo by Mauro Nervi

Review by: Humphrey Tonkin

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least, are such epithets as *conservative*, *bourgeois* and *progressive*, of which Pipa makes quite liberal use in book three. Moreover, a general introduction on Albanian literature would have strengthened the overall coherence of the tripartite work and would have made for easier reading for those less familiar with Albanian literature.

Nevertheless, the *Trilogia Albanica* is on the whole a model of exact scholarship and sound exegesis, providing abundant information on Albanian folk and literary verse from a variety of perspectives. Furthermore, but for a few exceptions, the subject matter is presented with perspicuity and appropriate conciseness. It is highly recommended to even those with only tangential interest in Albanian literature or culture.

Anest Andrea
New York

Basque

Bilintx / Indalecio Bizcarrondo (1831–1876): Bizitza eta bertsoak (Vida y poesías). Antonio Zavala, ed. San Sebastián. Caja de Ahorros Municipal. 1978. 434 pages, ill. 800 ptas.

The oral literary tradition of the Basques found particularly rich expression in the songs of "Bilintx" (Indalecio Bizcarrondo Ureña). Surely one of the greatest practitioners of the art of the *bertsolariak*—those improvising troubadours of the Basque country—Bilintx was born and died (a casualty of the last Carlist war) in San Sebastián. This impressively beautiful volume was prepared under the auspices of the Caja de Ahorros Municipal de San Sebastián in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of his death.

Described by K. Mitxelena as the most truly romantic poet of Basque literature, Bilintx lived and created during a period in the nineteenth century that saw much of his beloved country devastated by war. Some of his poems, such as "Egun batian Loyolan" and "Izazu nitzaz kupira," remain popular songs. Although the complete works of Bilintx were published in 1962 in the Auspoa Liburutegia series (*Bertso talan guziak*), the present volume includes also the music that accompanied many of his most popular poems and reproduces the manuscripts of many compositions. The work is further enhanced by the introductory poem by Gabriel Celaya, "En el centenario de Bilintx," illustrations by some of the finest contemporary Basque artists, and the excellent appreciation of Bilintx's life and work by Antonio Zavala (a Spanish translation by Miguel Pelay Orozco is included). In summary, the obviously great effort and care which went into the preparation of this volume make it a fitting homage to the great *bertsolari*.

Gorka Aulestia
University of Nevada, Reno

Esperanto

Miyamoto Masao, Ueyama Masao, eds. *Japana variacio*. Kyoto. L'Omnibuso. 1978. 139 pages.

The Japanese contribution to Esperanto literature has been sustained and significant in recent years, and this modest set of "Japanese variations," drawn from the pub-

lished work of eighteen postwar writers, attests to its vigor and originality. The contributions range from Kurisu Kei's science-fiction story "Underground Elysium" to a study of Walt Whitman by Nukina Yositaka and an introduction to the verse form *senryu* by Shibayama Yunichi.

The well-known Haiku Club, whose six volumes of original haiku, published between 1967 and 1973, did so much to confirm the place of Japan in original Esperanto poetry, is represented by the work of several of its members and by an extended *renga*, the combined work of five poets. Ueyama Masao is one of the five, and it is his poetry, particularly the poems to his dead wife, that is the most disquietingly impressive of the contributions to the volume. His coeditor Miyamoto Masao offers a beautifully crafted, if somewhat melodramatic short story and a number of other pieces.

Several pieces in the volume reflect the pacifist and socialist strains of the Esperanto movement in Japan in the 1930s: for example, Oka Kazuta's moving short story "Trunk" and Shosaku Isobe's "To Tears and a Smile." Most of the items are drawn either from previously published volumes or from such periodicals as *Revuo orienta* and the modest but important literary review *L'Omnibuso*. As a whole, the volume is testimony to the truly international nature of modern Esperanto culture.

Humphrey Tonkin
University of Pennsylvania

Mauro Nervi. *La turoj de la ĉefurbo*. Manchester, Eng. Esperantaj Kajeroj. 1978. 120 pages.

Esperanto literature came to maturity in Budapest in the 1920s and 30s, when the magazine *Literatura mondo* brought together not only Hungarians like Kalocsay and Baghy but poets and prose writers from throughout Europe and beyond. In the fifties the so-called Scottish school took its place, introducing a "metaphysical" strain to replace the "neoromanticism" of its predecessors (the terms are those of the leader of the Scottish poets, William Auld). Now comes Mauro Nervi. "The Towers of the Metropolis," a collection of short stories and verse, along with two plays and a critical commentary, represents a new departure of startling originality and power.

Nervi's stance is aggressively anti-romantic. He constantly emphasizes the necessity of escaping from the shadow, the "mirage" of Kalocsay, holding to the "asphalt road" of reality and admitting into poetry all the complexities of conflicting forces that characterize the psychic cosmos of our own time. In the most successful works in the collection the result is a sharp confrontation of lyricism and intellectualism within the very literary structure itself. Occasionally Nervi's preoccupation with moons and sick seas and the machinery of the surreal may seem a shade dated, but these moments are rare.

Nervi's formidable intelligence is wedded to an almost uncanny verbal and technical control. It simply strains belief that most of this work was produced by a seventeen- and eighteen-year-old (Nervi is now twenty) largely isolated from the Esperanto-speaking community. Steeped in the classics and above all in classical prosody, Nervi demonstrates his mastery of the various lyric forms, his command not only of the rhythms but of the structure of Greek drama, his hold on blank verse, his control of prose cadence. The volume is a tour de force of literary technique.

It is no coincidence that Nervi is a chess player: his work is played out in the tension between the elegant power of the

forms of the past and the urgency (and perhaps impossibility) of confronting the configurations of today and tomorrow. There is much that is startlingly new here. "And yet," says Nervi himself, "I keep rereading the poems" of Kalocsay.

Humphrey Tonkin
University of Pennsylvania

Irish

Flann O'Brien. *A Flann O'Brien Reader*. Stephen Jones, ed. New York: Viking, 1978. xxix + 447 pages, ill. \$15.

Flann O'Brien was born Brian O'Nolan—in Tyrone his brother Kevin seems to believe, although the book under review says in Donegal. O'Brien's first and best novel, *At Swim-Two-Birds*, published in 1939, all but perished in the war, to be resuscitated only in 1960, since when it has been issued at least six times (Stephen Jones's bibliography does not list a 1976 New York reprint). His second and next best, *The Third Policeman*, was rejected in 1940 by every publisher who saw it, and the author until his death complained that one of them had lost the typescript. All the same it turned up in his posthumous estate, to be published in several editions beginning in 1967. Myles na gCopaleen (O'Brien) began in 1939 in the *Irish Times* a column called "Cruiskeen Lawn," written on alternate days in Irish and in English. In 1941 he published the funniest product of the entire consortium, a novel in Irish, *An Béal Bocht*. This was reissued in 1942, and a revised third edition came out in 1964. In 1973 in London and 1974 in New York an insipid translation by Patrick C. Power appeared under the literally translated title *The Poor Mouth*.

Sometime after the war, "Cruiskeen Lawn" was taken over by Myles na Gopaleen (to whom Jones misascribes the two editions he notices of *An Béal Bocht*), who wrote chiefly in English of a sort, and continued to the end. A collection of columns from both eras was published by the brother, Kevin O'Nolan, in both London and New York as *The Best of Myles* (1968). Jones says he regards *At Swim-Two-Birds*, *The Third Policeman* and the corpus behind *The Best of Myles* as the masterworks, and his purpose in putting out this *Reader* is to puff into flame the intermittent flickerings of a Flann O'Brien industry. *An Béal Bocht*, of course, and other writing in Irish, is—shall we say?—Greek to him.

The *Reader* contains extracts from five novels, a selection of columns arranged under topical headings, and two miscellaneous masses of material. Each of the resulting eight sections is preceded by an introduction, and twenty-one pages introduce the volume. The richest meat in these introductions is found in excerpts from the master's correspondence, but valuable information about a given work must be found passim. Although Jones rates *The Third Policeman* very highly, he says that, because of its general availability, he is excerpting "less of it than of some of the other novels." Fair enough—until we notice he gives it fifty-seven pages against twenty-two for *At Swim* (which he rates higher and is less available), thirty-one for *The Hard Life* and a paltry twelve for the paltry *Poor Mouth*. *The Dalkey Archive* at fifty-nine pages turns out sole member of the class of "some of the other novels."

If the mission of the *Reader* is to proselytize, Jones should do better at describing the Master's style than a baseball-

writer discussing a whiz pitcher, the stance he actually adopts. What is its charm for Jones? He knows not one word of Irish, yet that language permeates the writing. Only the slipshod reading that skips hard words could take him through most of what he reprints, but how can a reader become enthused about writing he must treat like that? Mostly Jones does not recognize the Irish under his nose, but he must find much of the text unintelligible. On pp. xxii-xxiii he quotes approvingly a passage from *At Swim* he reprints on pp. 12-13. Finn Mac Cool is cataloguing his sources of enjoyment. A sentence begins "I am friend to the pilibeen," and the subsequent list of twenty-six increasingly improbable birds (including the "crúiskeen lawn") mentions four apparent subvarieties of pilibeen. The last name on the list is "the pilibeen cathrach." The joke is tiny (*pilipin cathrach* could be "Little Philip in the Big City"), but what does Jones make of a text in which nine words of one sentence must be incomprehensible to him?

Misprints of Irish are predictably abundant, but English also gets both misprinted and mistranscribed: "Wiekla" for "Wickla" (Wicklow), and "Fusialcers" for "Fusialeers" (Fusiliers), and so on. Dublin nomenclature is oddly mishandled: Skerries, a village frequent in the Writings, is "the Skerries" to Jones (like the Skelligs or the Scillies?); the well-known tavern, The Bailey, becomes "the Bailey's"; Ballsbridge becomes "Balle's Bridge." Maybe these aspects of Flann-Myles explain his frequent relegations to oblivion. A more sensitive reader than Jones will not be converted to prose so full of unglossed indigestible lumps. If such readers no longer exist, the cause is lost anyway. But American professors of Irish literature, even that written in English, need to override the complaisance of their pals in Dublin pubs and master as much Irish as a schoolchild needs for a leaving certificate or breathes in with the air. Vivian Mercier will not be available forever.

Brendan P. O'Hehir
University of California

Breandán ó hEithir. *Lead Us Into Temptation*. Breandán ó hEithir, tr. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978. v + 142 pages. \$10.

On Easter Monday, 24 April 1916, under the portico of the General Post Office in Dublin, Padraic Pearse proclaimed the Irish Republic. After holding the city center for a week, he and fourteen of his colleagues were shot by British firing squads. In the United Kingdom general election of 1919 candidates pledged to sit in Dublin, not Westminster, won three of every four Irish seats. They reproclaimed the Republic and formed a government. A period of bloody chaos since called the War of Independence ended in December 1921 with a treaty establishing twenty-six of Ireland's thirty-two counties as a self-governing dominion within the then British Empire. President de Valera repudiated the Treaty for betraying the Republic and partitioning the country, and chaos deepened to civil war. By the end of 1923 the Civil War fizzled out, and William Cosgrave, surviving leader of the pro-Treaty party, contentedly governed the Irish Free State until 1932. Then de Valera's forces—now Fianna Fáil: the Republican Party—took power and held it until 1947, although diehard republicans saw de Valera's acceptance of reality as another betrayal of the Republic.

In 1938 de Valera cut the Empire ties, replaced the Governor General with a President, negotiated evacuation of