

it is a welter inhabited by poets, along with everybody else. On the other hand, being *in* it, how can we be said to make use of techniques for plunging *into* it?

A powerfully persuasive philosophy is one thing. Directives for making poems—call them techniques for plunging or whatever you like—are another thing altogether. Can we agree about that? Pound and Imagism certainly gave a phenomenological twist to poetics in our time. Wallace Stevens *thought* like a phenomenologist, though it would not have occurred to him that a new poetic system, a once-and-for-all-time doctrine, lay in that direction.

The 'phenomenal welter' is of course what Olson means when he demands that 'in any given poem, always one perception must must MOVE, INSTANTER, ON ANOTHER'. Elsewhere, having summarily dismissed Socrates (for his 'readiness to generalise'), Aristotle (for his 'logic and classification') and Plato (for his 'forms extricable from content'), he argues that these are 'habits of thought' which interfere with *action*; they get between us and what he calls the END. And what is the END? It is 'never more than this instant, . . . than you, figuring it out, and acting . . . If there is any absolute it is never more than this one, you, this instant, in action.'

The poem therefore becomes a record of instant, instantaneously experienced, perceptions; Camus's account of the Husserlian phenomena puts it perfectly: 'there is no scenario but a successive and incoherent illustration. In that magic lantern all the pictures are privileged.' It's easy to account for the fascination it holds, this arbitrary conversion of a philosophical position into a system of poetics! No pauses, no connecting grammar of ideas, no abstractions, no conceptual impurities, above all, no logic; 'logic' being a very dirty word indeed, and therefore requiring no definition or explanation.

It's easy, too, to see how some of my younger New Zealand 'contemporaries' have caught on. For instance, the anthologist whom I mentioned is happy to find that poetry no longer is required 'to conform to the dictates of traditional logic': myself, I never supposed that it was. And Mr Peter Bland, who read Olson's essay 20 years ago, is happy to find that Ian Wedde (and others) 'seem to be opening up new democracies of feeling'. Am I right in supposing that these 'new democracies' have something to do with the perceptions, the phenomena—all the pictures are equally privileged?

Experience must teach any working poet that Olson's poetical directive, the one about perceptions, simply won't do, citizen. It won't work, either for making poems or the 'management of daily reality'. That 'shimmering of phenomenological thought' is always