JOSE GARCIA VILLA: A STUDY OF
HIS POETRY

A Thesis Presented for the
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by
Angel Rizal Hidalgo, A. B.

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[Signature]
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PREFACE

There are several reasons for my choice of José Garcia Villa and his poetry for the subject of my thesis.

First of all, I think it a good idea to write on the work of a Filipino writer who writes in English, because most Americans, especially in this section of the country, are not aware of the fact that many Filipinos can write and speak English.

Secondly, the most logical choice among Filipino writers in English is José Garcia Villa. He is the foremost Filipino writer and poet in English today. His most important book of poetry so far, entitled Have Come, Am Here, has been published in the United States. It has been unanimously acclaimed by the leading critics of both continents.

Thirdly, in spite of the critical praise accorded him by the critics, only a handful of American readers have read Have Come, Am Here.

Fourthly, only a few people in the United States know that he wrote two volumes of poetry besides Have Come, Am Here.

Finally, so far as I know, no one in the Philippines or in the United States has as yet made a comparative literary study of his three volumes of poetry.
When I decided to write my thesis on the poetry of José Garcia Villa late this winter, I did not realize then the many obstacles that lay ahead of me. His two earlier volumes of poetry are not available in the United States. His book of short stories is out of print. The only critical articles and reviews on Villa's early poetry have been written in Manila. Because of the destruction of the public and private libraries during the liberation of Manila, it has proved rather difficult to obtain any copy of the magazines where these critical articles and reviews first appeared.

I wrote to Manila and asked my parents and relatives to look for copies of the two earlier books as well as for any article or review on Villa. Somehow my parents and relatives found the two books, some articles and reviews on Villa written before and after the war. But it took several months before they arrived.

When I saw the poet personally in New York in March, 1947, he politely declined to talk about his life and his poetry. He did answer my letters later and gave me a few facts about his life. Since no one has as yet written a biography of the poet, the biographical facts are hard to find; Chapter I is therefore written rather sketchily.
In this thesis I have tried to trace the artistic and poetic growth of the Filipino poet by considering each volume chronologically. I have noted the poetic development in each volume through an examination of the more significant poems. I believe that Have Come, Am Here is not Villa's definitive volume of poetry. It is undoubtedly the most mature and the most stimulating of the three volumes. However, I do not believe he has as yet tapped the hidden spring of his poetic genius. He has concentrated too much on the lyric form. Is it possible that his future volume of poetry will show excursions into other types of poetry? Will he be able to discard his most obvious fault, that of repetitiousness of words, symbols, and themes? The coming years will tell.

I should like to dedicate this work, full of faults as it is, to my father.

I should like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who in some way have helped me in the making of this thesis: especially, José Gracia Villa who has tried to help me in his own way; Frederick J. Hoffman, my thesis adviser, whom I admire and consider a friend; Norman Macleod, who considers all Filipinos his friends and who has helped me in the analysis of some of the poems; my
uncle, José M. Hernandez, who has aided me even from afar; my brother, Armando who has helped me type the rough draft; and last but not least, Mary Jane Feolich, who has taken more than a professional interest in typing the final form of this thesis.
CHAPTER I

JOSE GARCIA VILLA, THE MAN

When on March 17, 1947, I met Jose Garcia Villa in his apartment at 244 West 104th Street, New York, he was sporting a red plaid shirt with black stripes. A dark green tie hung loosely from his shirt collar. He showed me to a comfortable cushioned chair, while he sat before his desk with an open portable before him.

I told him that I was intending to write my Master of Arts thesis on his poetry and he smiled a rather quizzical smile. He offered me a Regent cigarette; a chain smoker, he smoked one Regent after the other during our conversation.

"Oh, do you intend to teach or write perhaps?" he asked me.

"Well," I said. "Perhaps, both."

"You can't live by writing. I don't."

Just like that. If he, the best Filipino poet in English cannot live by writing, what other Filipino writer can?

Yet Villa, in one sense, is right. He is acclaimed by the critic of both continents as a "great poet." But he has no job. He is not exactly starving.
Somehow he makes ends meet. He was married on December, 1946, to a beautiful young American girl.

A few months ago, when I asked him for some biographical data, he politely refused. So far as I know, no one has as yet written on the "physical events of his life," as he phrases it.

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The son of Dr. Simeon A. Villa of the district of Singalong, Manila, and María Guia Gracia of the district of Ermita, Manila, José García Villa has been precocious since his youth. He has three sisters, Lourdes, Ana María, and Remedios, and two brothers, Oscar Jesús and Antonio. Lourdes and Dr. Villa, the father, were killed in the district of Ermita during the liberation of the city of Manila in February, 1945. Ana María is married to Atty. Lorenzo M. Villanueva. They live at present in the district of Malate, Manila, with Ana María's mother. At the time of this writing, Remedios is living in New York. Oscar Jesús is a professor of accounting and auditing in various Manila universities. Antonio, the youngest brother, has recently returned to Manila after staying in various Manila universities. Antonio, the youngest brother, has recently returned to Manila after staying in the United States for several months.
The exact year of his birth has not been determined. José claims that he was born on August 5, 1912. Ana María, his sister, says that he was born on August 5, 1910. It is hard to discover which date is correct since the birth records have been destroyed. He was graduated from the state high school in 1925 and took up pre-medicine in accordance with his father's wishes at the state university, the University of the Philippines. He never did like medicine and changed over to law. Even at this time he had been writing short stories and poems. A born rebel against the set standards of the local moral code, his poems and stories were frankly and unashamedly sensual. On June 21, 1929, he was summoned to appear before the executive committee of the university council "to give his reasons why he should not be suspended from the University as recommended by the law faculty."  

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1 This quotation is taken from excerpts sent to me from Manila of the minutes of the 251st meeting of the Executive Committee of the University Council of the University of the Philippines.

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He was accompanied by his adviser, Dr. George Pope Shannon, who later was to prove a great help to him
in the U.S., Villa pleaded "not guilty" to the charge of having written "an indecent and obscene poem entitled Man-Songs!" Dr. Shannon also spoke in behalf of Villa.

The executive committee decided to suspend Villa for a year. Villa never came back. He had won $500 in a nation-wide short story contest in a local American-edited magazine called the Philippine Free Press with his story, "Mir-i-nisa," and he decided to leave his native land once and for all. He felt that he would never achieve fame and success in the Philippines; America about which he had heard so much, beckoned to him.

His father was opposed to his going to America:

"You can't live by writing," he told his son.
"You are crazy --- writing love stories, love stories! Phew -- love stories."²


But he was determined to go to America and earn his way by writing, since his father refused to give him any financial aid. He left the Philippines in 1930. Except for a short visit of two months in 1937, he has never returned to the Philippines.
He went to Albuquerque, New Mexico, because, as he explains in his letter of July 16th to me, "Prof. George Pope Shannon whom I had known (but never studied under before) at the University of the Philippines was... at New Mexico...."

Norman Macleod, who at the time was studying at the University of New Mexico and editing an avant-garde magazine called The Morada recalls Villa well in those days. "He was shy and very reserved then," Macleod told me. "I suppose he still is. There were two professors who actually helped José. George St. Clair, head of the English Department at the time, and George Pope Shannon, dean of the liberal arts. Both had been former University of the Philippines professors.

"His writing was very poor in those days, Macleod continued. "He was ten or twenty years behind the times. Yet Clay, the mimeographed magazine he edited, is probably the best of its kind ever published." The Little Magazine by Frederick J. Hoffman, Charles Allen, and Carolyn F. Ulrich, has this to say about Villa's Clay:
Clay began as a mimeographed magazine, sponsored and edited by José Garcia Villa. In its brief life, its chief claim to distinction is its publication of the "new American short story." It is a little magazine both in guiding spirit ("If the commercial magazines turn your stories down, give them away to Clay") and in the quality of its contents. Short stories are contributed by David Cornel De Jong, Erskine Caldwell, José Garcia Villa, Albert Harper, and William Carlos Williams; poems by Witter Bynner, Norman Macleod, and William Saroyan (one of a very few occasions on which Saroyan has attempted to write poetry).³


At first, Villa must have dedicated himself to the writing of short stories. He wrote story after story with a Philippine background, setting, and characters. By 1932 he had his short stories published in such magazines as Frontier, Scribner's, Story, Prairie Schooner, The New Mexico Quarterly and his own magazine, Clay.

His story, "Untitled Story"⁴ was included in

⁴It was also published in A Story Anthology, 1931-33, eds. Walt Burnett and Martha Foley (New York, The Vanguard Press, 1933), pp. 309-316.

Edward J. O'Brien's The Best Short Stories of 1932,⁵
which was dedicated by O'Brien to Villa. Eleven of his other short stories were also included that year in O'Brien's "Roll of Honor for 1931-32." Another story, "The Fence," also made O'Brien's The Best Short Stories of 1933, and "Man Who Looked Like Rizal" was included in O'Brien's annual roll of honor for the same year. In spite of the critical honor and praise he received for his short stories, he felt at this time that "he was not being true to himself," that his genius lay not in prose but in poetry. "I know my talent lies in poetry and not in any other branch of writing," he told me then. "You see, I believe in specializing." He stopped the publication of Clays and gave up the writing of short stories. After receiving an A.B. degree from the University of New Mexico in 1932, he left for New York.

In New York he had to spin the threads of his literary career all over. New York was different from New Mexico. It was big, chaotic, but inspiring.
He was able to find friends after a while. They recognized his talent and encouraged him.

In 1933 his volume of short stories was published, but he failed to achieve critical or financial success. In the meantime, he was starving. He had to work in jobs which must have seemed menial and irksome to his artistic soul, but he had to eat. He continued, however, to believe firmly and wholly in his poetic talent.

By 1938 he was practically living on the kindness and the money of an Irish janitor in the building he was living in. Federico Mangahas in his personal introduction to Poems by Doveglion describes the room which he called his home in those days,

He has a room on the fifth floor of an old rickety apartment house; you have to walk all the way up. It's just big enough to hold his bed and let you walk single file beside it. The room is really a hole in which to retire from the streets when you are tired wandering around, and it exacts a rent of $4 a week, paid, for the time being, by a friend. You would rather not talk about the ventilation.
The name of this "friend" is Liam Krepps. In his letter to me, dated July 16, 1947, Villa says that...

...two people really were of invaluable, human, spiritual, and monetary help to me: Krepps and Matthew Weber Jr. Krepps was killed in an automobile accident in 1940; Weber is now working for Western Electric in New Jersey. They were poor people, but rich in spirit, and they did all they could for me; I don't believe I would be alive now if not for their spiritual and physical helping hand...

In 1939 his first book of poems, entitled, *Many Voices*, was published in Manila. It was hailed there but critical success, as Villa knows too well, does not feed an author. He was still living a hand-to-mouth existence. He wrote to his father asking for some money to tide him over, but his father never sent him the money. He has never forgiven his father.

In 1941 he lived for a while on the $250 prize awarded to him for his second volume of poetry, *Poems By Dovegion*, which received "honorable mention" in the 1940 Commonwealth Literary Contest. It may be interesting to note the meaning of his pen-name, which has baffled many readers. In his July 16th, 1947 letter he said:
Regarding the term Dovegion I meant it for Dove, Eagle, and Lion: the dove for gentleness, the eagle for wisdom, the lion for courage. I just made the term up....

He worked for a while as the press-relations officer for the Philippine Government-in Exile which fled to Washington after the fall of Bataan. During this time he was continuously reading, writing, --- even breathing --- poetry.

By 1942 he had decided that his poetry was ready to be shown to the world. In September, 1942, Have Come, Am Here appeared, instantly hailed and praised by all the leading critics. He "had arrived" in the United States.

The American Academy of Arts and Letters and the National Institute of Arts and Letters gave him the $1000 Poetry Award for 1943. He received the Guggenheim Fellowship for 1943-44, which I believe he used to study for a year towards his Master of Arts degree at Columbia University. He received a stipend of $100 a month, and also worked on various occasions in the university library.

In December 1946 he married Rosemarie Lamb. Lydia Arguilla has described the wedding:

They got married on New Year’s Eve. There were no others present at the wedding other than his sister, Remedios; S.P. Lopez, and us. In a pastor’s reception room in Greenwich Village, the vows were exchanged. S.P. standing as best man and me as "best woman" because Remedios would not be it, "I'm only his sister. You know him better than I do."
This quotation was taken from a typewritten manuscript sent to me by Salvador P. Lopez, entitled "Doveglion, the Man" which Mrs. Arguilla must have had published in a Manila paper.

Villa is at present editing a new magazine, Viva sponsored by New Directions. Because of the high cost of printing only one issue has appeared. He will have a book of selected poems published in England by Nicholson & Watson. At present he is "hard at work" on a new volume of poetry which he hopes can be published in 1948.

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"Let's go out for a cup of coffee," he said.
"There is a new restaurant just around the corner."

So we did. He sniffed the cool afternoon air of New York, remarking,

"I like New York. It is the only civilized city in the United States."

We ordered coffee. I urged him to try a slice of the blackberry pie that looked so enticing on the counter.

"All right. I always give way to temptation."

We got to talking about poetry.

"I don't like T. S. Eliot's Wasteland. It is important historically but not as poetry. The Four
Quartets is a farce.

"E. E. Cummings and Wallace Stevens are good but not great poets. Edith Sitwell I consider a great poet.

"The earlier poets? John Donne and Gerard Manley Hopkins are my favorites."

When we had finished eating our pie and drinking our coffee, I told him I was going to Times Square by subway.

"I'll walk with you," he said.

"Are you thinking of going back to Manila?"

"Yes, I do want to visit Manila again, if I have the money. But I am happy now. I am married to the most beautiful woman in the world."

We shook hands at the subway entrance.

"I'll see you again. Be good..."

I waved back, but he had gone.
CHAPTER II

MANY VOICES

The publication by the Philippine Book Guild of José Garcia Villa's first collected volume of poems, entitled Many Voices, proved to Villa's admirers as well

1Manila, January, 1939.

as to his critics and detractors that, though they might not often understand, they could not ignore, his poetry. Salvador P. Lopez, in his introduction to the book, pointed out that Villa

...is an important literary figure, not only because of his ability to make capital of his eccentric experiments and startling opinions, but because his achievements in both fiction and poetry entitle him beyond doubt to a commanding position in the field of Filipino literature in English. 2

2Page 7.

To understand Villa's "commanding position in the field of Filipino literature in English," it is best to trace in brief its history and delineate its background.

From the outset, it must be remembered that the Filipino writer has known the English language only for the past forty years or so. It was not until the coming of Admiral Dewey in 1898 and the subsequent opening of rural
schools all over the archipelago by a small group of American school teachers that the younger generation of Filipinos began to learn the rudiments of English grammar and the intricacies of its idiom. These children had never heard the language before at home or in school. Yet today, billboard advertisements in colloquial American dot the countryside along the national roads; ramshackle showhouses showing American westerns and serials have sprouted in every big town; the small rural schoolhouses teach such subjects as arithmetic, geography, and history in English. Perhaps modern American educational methods are responsible for the rapid dissemination of English. Or perhaps Filipinos have a certain penchant for languages.\(^3\)

\(^3\)An educated Filipino must speak at least three languages well: English, Spanish, and Tagalog, the national language.

Dr. Carlos P. Romulo, in his article, "Will Filipino Literature in English Literature Endure?" has pointed out the Filipinos' extraordinary advance in the English language during the short span of forty years, adding that

For more than half of that period he has had to devote his whole effort to the learning of the tongue purely as a means of communication... Yet, even after he had mastered the mechanics of English sufficiently to wield it with ease and with force, he still had to overcome an even more difficult problem: the problem of using the English language not merely as a means of ordinary communication but as a medium of powerful and beautiful expression.\(^4\)
The phenomenal fact is that there should have been competent writers in English in just forty years. A large number of them have definitely outgrown the grammar stage; some have mastered so well the technique of the short story, the novel, poetry, or journalism that their writings have seen print in the United States. A few of the outstanding Filipino writers in English today are: Brigadier-General Carlos P. Romulo, 1942 Pulitzer Prize winner for interpretive journalism for his series of articles on his "observations and forecasts on Far Eastern developments" before the outbreak of the Pacific War, author of such best-sellers as I Saw the Fall of the Philippines and Mother America, at present Philippine delegate to the United Nations; the late Manuel E. Arguilla.


7 Mr. E. Arguilla was killed by the Japanese for his underground work during the Japanese occupation.
author of short stories which have been published in The Prairie Schooner and Story, winner of the 1940 Commonwealth Literary Contest in the short story department with his book, How My Brother Leon Brought Home His Wife and Other Stories; Juan Cabrero S Laya, winner of the 1940 Commonwealth Literary Contest in the novel department with His Native Soil; U.S. expatriate Carlos Bulosan, whose humorous short stories first appeared in The New Yorker, Town and Country, Harper's Bazaar and were later collected in a volume, entitled The Laughter of My Father; ⁸ Salvador P.


Lopez, critic, former editor of the leading afternoon daily before the Pacific War, who was given the essay award in the 1940 Commonwealth Literary Contest with his Literature and Society; Esteban Javellana, lawyer and guerrilla member, whose novel, Without Seeing the Dawn, ⁹ won critical acclaim;


Dr. Arturo B. Motot, whose sensitive short stories have been collected in a volume called The Wound and the Scar; R. Zulueta da Costa, whose book of poems, Like the Molave, was
given honorable mention in the poetry department of the 1940 Commonwealth Literary Contest; and, of course, José Garcia Villa.

There are others, too, who write with competence and even artistry: short story writers Estrella D. Alfon, Teofilo D. Agcaoili, Delfin Fresnosa, N.V.M. Gonzalez and Hernando Ocampo; essayists Antonio Estrada, Federico Mangahas, Leon Ma. Guerrero; poets Francisco Arcellana and Amador T. Daguio; critics Leopoldo Y. Yabes and José M. Hernandez. America and the literary world may yet hear from them.

As we have seen, José Garcia Villa, even in

See Chapter I, pp. 7-8

his early youth, has been the "stormy petrel" of the Philippine world of letters. His frankly sensual poems (some of which were incorporated in Many Voices), published during his undergraduate days in the state university, were considered "indecent" by the faculty. Consequently, in 1929 he was suspended for a year from the university. Meanwhile he was also writing short stories. And after he had won $500 in a nationwide short story contest in an American-edited local magazine, the Philippines Free Press, he sailed for the United States.
When he left his native shores in 1930, at the age of 17, this was his approximate age. For a discussion of his age, see Chapter I.

short story writer among the local intellectual elite. The years between 1930 and 1939 further enhanced his fame and influence in his native land. News began to filter in that his short stories and poems were being published in noted American magazines, that he was editing a magazine to which prominent American writers contributed, that Edward J. O'Brien had included some of his stories in his annual anthology of the best American short stories — and that he was without funds.

Undoubtedly his poetry more than his short stories has exerted a tremendous influence over the local poets. Even during the 1930's, local poets, and embryonic versifiers were aping the worst features of his eccentricities and experimental touches in the desire to be as "different" as he was. They did not realize that the poet himself considered these early poems as mere academic exercises, as a preparation for the later writings. Thus, Salvador P. Lopez's remark in his introduction that "he has been, for the past several years, the pace-setter for an
entire generation of young writers, the mentor laying down the law for the whole tribe, the patron-saint of a cult of rebellious moderns.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{12}Many Voices, p. 7

The comments by Carlos P. Romulo, chairman of the board of judges for English in the 1940 Commonwealth Literary Contests, are illuminating, especially concerning the state of Filipino poetry in English at this time. He says that it

\ldots has so far not entirely been liberated within the formal limitations which this genre imposes upon the creative artist. The Filipino poet is not yet fully at home in what may be described as the "golden cage" of poesy; either he attempts to ignore the cage and flies into all sorts of aberrations which he believes to be justified by the free-verse cult, or he readily conforms to the traditional requirements of form and produces verses of tortured perfection that scan strictly according to the rules and rhyme according to the dictionary, but accomplish little else.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{13}Literature Under the Commonwealth, p. 121

The last sentence suggests the stand of the board of judges\textsuperscript{14} on the "sorts of aberrations" which the judges

\textsuperscript{14}The board was composed of twelve prominent
writers and educators, four of whom are Americans, and the rest Filipinos.

may have felt characterized Villa's poems. It is significant that in the poetry department no full prize was awarded. Honorable mention was recommended for Like the Molave by R. Zulueta da Costa, with a cash award of $750, and a second honorable mention for Poems by Doveglion by José Garcia Villa, with a cash award of $250.

The report by Dr. Romulo goes on to say that Filipino poetry in English has made notable progress during recent years:

The heavy pall of sentimentalism and romanticism has begun to lift, and the pure lyric voice of the Filipino poet singing in an alien tongue is heard more and more. The command over the various poetic forms is becoming more the result of an intuitive sense of fitness rather than of slavish obedience to the rules. The verse, purely as verse, is becoming less arch and more natural. There is a deeper consciousness of poetry, less awareness of verse. Above all, as the Board's decision remarks on R. Zulueta da Costa's Like the Molave, Filipino poetry in English is beginning to be infused with a "social and cultural significance." The lyric voice of the Filipino poet has acquired a deeper and more resounding timbre suggestive of an emotion that has been touched into significant passion by the intelligence.15

15. Literature Under the Commonwealth, p. 121

So much, then, for the state of Filipino poetry in English during this time. In his letter to me, dated
July 2, 1947, Villa, with characteristic aplomb, comments on the decision of the judges thus:

(...) I sent some of these poems for the Commonwealth competition; but not those that are in "Have Come, Am Here", for I knew that these were too good for their judges, who are ignoramuses of course, and to send them the poems in "HC, AH" would be like casting pearls before swine...

Villa has described his first volume of poems, Many Voices, as "second rate poems." 16

16p. C. Morantte, "Two Filipinos in America", Books Abroad (Oct. 1944) XVIII, 327

An examination of the 225 "Definitions of Poetry" 17 and the poems in this volume reveals the artist with a sure mastery of words, an instinct for the music and the rhythm of the language, and a highly sensitive imagination. However, his main preoccupation seems to be with the purely physical aspect of love and sex as exemplified in most of these poems, while a predilection for a startling juxtaposition of imagery is presented in the definitions.

The definitions do not pretend to arrive at a
formulation of the intrinsic meaning of the word "poetry"—such as John Ruskin's definition, when he declared poetry to be "the presentment, in musical form, to the imagination, of noble grounds for the noble emotions." They are rather delicate poetic lines cast in the looser mold of prose. They may be divided into three general classifications: those definitions that paint a sensuous, arresting picture by an unexpected combination of different sensations, thus evoking a highly poetic mood or artistic pose; those definitions that reveal an intense personal experience; and those definitions that express a mystical identification with God, fashioned and regarded in accordance with his worship of beauty and love. In fact, throughout these definitions, poetry is related to Love (with a capital "L") in every possible romantic and emotional connotation; in these as in most of the poems the romantic hedonism and unalloyed eroticism of the earlier Villa are manifest.

Edith Rickert once defined imagery as "the mental representation, without external stimulus except through words, of things seen, heard, touched, tasted and smelled."\(^{18}\)

With the exception of the sensation of taste, Villa not only defines poetry in terms of all these sensations, usually as combined or contrasted with one another, but even invokes numerology in the mystical numbers of "7" and "3".

Definition 3, "Poetry is orchestral silence," is a definition in terms of the sensation of sound. It contrasts the word "orchestral," suggestive of loud yet pleasing sound, with the word "silence," denoting the absence of sound. The combination of the two words paradoxically states the "sweet sounds of silence," heightened by the sibilant "s" sounds in the words, "orchestral" and "silence."

Poe's excessive alliterative music in The Raven, specifically that line,

And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain

is found in definition 94: "Poetry is the rustle of music after the rustle of roses: the rustle of music after roses are red: the rustle of roses after music is dead."

Reading this definition aloud — as indeed his definitions and poetry should be read — one discovers that the music of the words given by the semivocalic "r" and the fricative "s" sounds, is conspicuous. The key word, "rustle," integrates the various relationships expressed between
"music" and "roses." Again, the sensation of the pure sound of words considered apart from the meaning, titillates the ear. For "words," as John Sparrow says in Sense and Poetry, "do more than merely express meaning: they sound and they suggest..."\(^{19}\)

\(^{19}\)New Haven, Yale U.P., 1934, p. 4.

The ludicrous extent, however, to which this musicality of words may be carried, is apparent in definition 182: "Poetry is the voidance of vain virginity by the victory and vibrance of Venus, vase of unvanquishable vibrance." Discord, not music, is the result; the alliterative attempt is too obvious; the initial "v" sounds fall of their own weight. "Poetry is the mockery more moving than masks and music: the mockery that is muffled, misted, hymned: mumbling love — and meaning magisterial, mephistophelic hate" (definition 156) is also guilty of inordinate multiplication of initial alliteration; in this case, that of the sonorous "m" sounds.

The first definition, "Poetry is the whitest distance between the inmost petal of a rose and Love," states, on the surface, the correlation between a definite thing of beauty and an abstract concept by a connecting
color. But an understanding of the symbolic words, "white" and "rose" will show how meaningful this definition is:

The color "white" is the key word, I find, in definition 173: "Poetry is the white wound of wisdom." It is, undoubtedly, the essential word raised to its highest power in definition 126: "Poetry is the whitest approximation of the Divine Unutterable: the whitest arrow for the crucifixion of the whitest delta: the whitest hunger, the whitest breast, for the catching of the whitest star."

An examination of these definitions shows that Villa uses this word as a sexual symbol. It is used as an expression of the complete fulfillment of love and beauty. It symbolizes the supreme achievement of wisdom in definition 173. It gives the nearest approximation of the Divine in definition 126.

In Directions in Modern Poetry, the authors explain that "In all ages mystical experience has made use of sexual symbolism for the idea of union with the divine, and of the phases of extinction and resurrection which accompany it..."20

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In modern poetry, T. S. Eliot and William Butler Yeats use the symbolism of the rose in their own personal and private manner. T. S. Eliot uses it, not as a sexual symbol, but as a symbol of the idealized beauty of the universe; the rose of Yeats is more akin to the rose of Villa. The rose, according to Yeats, symbolizes spiritual love and beauty. However, the difference lies in the fact that Villa uses it as a symbol of love and beauty in a more earthy and physical, rather than spiritual, sense. To him, the flower conjures up softness and delicacy of texture. It suggests the unfolding of red petals, one by one, until the "inmost loveliness" is at least revealed and exposed. Thus, definition 1 becomes an expression of the fulfillment of love, an expression of the relation of the feminine rose with masculine Love through the whitest distance.

The "rose" is also the key symbol in definition 20: "Poetry is rose-fevered: desire rose-lashed: lightning rose-tamed." Besides the associative and emotional values of the word "rose," we get a feeling of texture and of movement through the various aspects of the rose as it affects "music," "desire," and "lightning."

The combination and interrelation of the color "white" and the flower "rose" is, then, inevitable. As in definition 1, we find such a blending in definition
46: "Poetry is white music asleep on a red rose: the heart of music becoming flower: the heart of flower becoming music." This definition typifies a common device he uses time and time again — namely, a series of three statements revealing the relationship among different elements. The first statement presents the picture; the second and the third, the complete unity that exists between the feminine rose and the white music.

The perception of shape is revealed principally by geometric patterns and designs, not so much of abstract figures, but of things in nature with poetic and romantic associations. Take definition 3: "Poetry is the triangle formed by the wings of a dreaming butterfly and a swift arrow of love." The picture presented suggests to us a Dali painting: the two sides of the "triangle" formed by the wings of gigantic vari-hued butterfly, the base of the "triangle" being a flaming arrow tipped with red blood. In definition 108, "Poetry is the intersection of the eagle and the plane: the intersection of an immortal wish and a warm mortal tear," the picture evoked also depends on one's own private associations, as suggested by the intersection of the four elements mentioned in the definition.

Villa's mathematical definitions, too, do not mean; they imply and suggest. The number 7 is frequently invoked in these definitions. For example, "Poetry,"
according to definition 26, "is the intersection of the number 7 and the repose of Christos at Gethsemane."

Here, he seems to associate the seventh day of the creation (when God rested) to Christos, the God-Man, at the Crucifixion and Death. In definition 33, however, it is used in a purely pagan and phallic sense: "Poetry is the invasion of the virgin by a lover laurelled seven times seven with love."

In these definitions we get a foretaste of his first searching experiments with words that are more maturely developed and exploited in the later poetry in Have Come, Am Here. Like Gerard Manley Hopkins, he possesses the peculiar inventive mind, that fashions new and startling epithets by making a substantive serve the purpose of a verb,²¹ an adjective or an adverb, and

²¹"The verbid is a word or phrase doing the work of a verb but not conveying that sense of completeness necessary for making a sentence." Margaret M. Bryant, A Functional English Grammar (Boston, D. C. Heath and Co., 1945)

vice-versa.

Definition 17, "Poetry is Sorrow memorous of music," gives us the first indication, in these definitions, of his literary experimentation with the words of the English language. "Memorous" is a neologistic adjective
with a verbal quality derived from the common noun, "memory." It gives a tonal nature, a feeling of movement to the sentence. The use of the common adjective "memorable" would merely have evoked a stock response.

Looking over the 225 definitions, we find that the most common innovation introduced in the poetic fiction of the definitions is that of substantive turned into a verbid, "musicked" (definition 32); "lovelied" (definition 52); "monumented" (definition 78); "starred" (definition 85); "interpreted" (definition 93); "undeathed" (definition 107); "sumned," "wind'd," "eveninged" (definition 112); "impured" (definition 164); "infinite" (definition 177); and "prised" (definition 214). Among the nouns used as adjectives there are "eagled," "doved" (definition 210), and "energie" (definition 213). Startling are the verbs-made-nouns, such as "vibrance" (definition 152) and "imaginization" (definition 194).

Definitions 203 to 206 are especially revealing of the poet's intense personal experiences. They reveal the sensitivity and depth of feeling and emotion in Villa, the man. Definitions 203, 205, and 206 lay bare the early love life of the writer — probably during his college days — before he left for the United States.
Definition 203 discloses how he has fallen in love, wholly and irrevocably, for he has seen his heart love and break; gathering the broken pieces, he says to the littlest one:

My heart, my heart, the littlest piece of you glows far brighter, far whiter than the whole hearts of men: my heart, my heart, you are greater than they though you be broken; then the little piece of my heart answered: Nobody will believe it, nobody will believe it! Nobody will know it, nobody will know it! And my speech to my heart, and this speech of my heart, is poetry.

In definition 205, he continues the avowal of his great love. The important words in this definition are "her voice... coming like gods, like flowers..." for they give an indication of what the sound of his beloved's voice suggests to him — something precious like gold, something delicate and haunting like flowers. The definition follows:

I remember the voice of her that I love, coming like gold, like flowers, over the telephone to me, and I trembling with this storm of goldness, wordless, speechless in an inundation of love:
Are you there, are you there? asks she, and I can not answer, I can not answer, for the goldness of love is all over me.
And this is poetry.

But he has to say goodbye to the girl he loves.

He is leaving her, forever. The poignancy of the word "goodbye" — the finality, the cruellness of it — is expressed in definition 206:
... I know that goodbye shall ever be spoken, goodbye is a word too lovely for love not to speak, goodbye is the meaning of all love, goodbye is the word love builds up to utter into a flower of white, goodbye is the word entombing forever the history of love. And this is poetry.

In definition 204 Villa describes the silence within himself when he bids goodbye to his weeping mother:

I saw my mother weeping when I left, and I did not say a word and I did not weep, I that had flame for my heart, I that was love, that had the world for my breast— I did not say a word and I did not cry. And this is poetry.

Notice the restraint in this when it is compared with definitions 203, 205, and 206. The point of departure, though, is always himself, the poet, as provoked by the emotions of love or sadness. Hence, the sentiment is intensely personal and always keenly felt.

The third important theme of the definitions is the mystical identification with God— the poetical form, "Jesu" or the Greek "Christos" are the other names he calls Him. God, however, is conceived and fashioned in these definitions to conform to his conceptions of beauty and love, which to him make up lyric poetry.

In definitions 59 to 65 he discloses, through the symbols of the "lone Last Woman and the Last Star," the ultimate reconciliation of "Man" and "God," of humanity and divinity. Without love, Villa says, the "lone Last Woman" is not happy, though she is alone with the "Last Star."
She asks God "to dim the brightness of the Last Star." She berates God for "this eternity of herself" since she is loverless but finally achieves "ultimate serenity" through marriage and union with the "Last Star." The key to this allegorical series of definitions is given in definition 65: "Poetry is the history of God, who is Star, and of Woman, who is Man." Mark the skillful use of the symbolism: God is appropriately the last, the eternal Star; man is the loved, the wooed, the Woman.

In definitions 134 to 141, Villa attempts to demonstrate the mystical relationship between poetry "that was the Woman of Christos," and God, "the Christos, my Lover Divine." These definitions, however, fail to arrive at any satisfactory identification between poetry and Christ because of the error of his approach. He tries to reach God through the medium of sensuous physical love instead of exploring the spiritual, the intangible. In definition 134 he begins by saying that poetry is "the woman that Christos never had: for whose sake Christos made himself virgin: whose fragrance He could not forget: whose footsteps He was following — until He was intercepted by the Cross." Then he reverses his stand in the first sentence by saying in italics that "Christos had a woman whose footsteps were fragrant as frankincense and myrrh, whose footsteps diagrammed the loveliness of His life." In the last sentence of this, the longest definition in
the whole series, he says that "the magic beauty of this secret woman that was the Woman of Christos: the memory of her: the rose that is within the Rose of Christos: is Poetry." Trite in its expression, crude in its treatment, this definition is worth neither the reader's nor the poet's time.

In definition 136, he deifies poetry and identifies it with Christos. Unlike the neo-Platonic conception of love in the seventeenth century, Villa states that sensual passionate love is God. In the words of John Smith Harrison,

Platonic love... meant either a love devoid of all sensual desire, an innocent or hopeless passion, or it was a form or gallantry used to cloak immorality. Its one characteristic notion was that true love consisted in a union of soul with soul, mind with mind, or essence with essence.\footnote{Platonism in English Poetry (New York, Columbia U.P., 1903), pp. 160-161.}

\footnote{Villa's conception of love is the identification of Christos or God with the love that is extolled by "poets, lovers, dreamers: by those who have beheld the golden, wondrous, indestructible Fire: the Star, the Rose, the Eagle and Lark: the Force, the Fragrance, the Song in man's life: the fairest Jesu: the Christós: the Christos, my Lover Divine."}
The mere statement of various synonymous symbols for Christ does not show the divine nature of poetry.

The statement, then, in definition 223, that "Poetry is the sense of godhood in man: the sense of humanity in God: the sense of unity between man and God," leaves the reader uncomprehending; there is no illumination or clarity of cohesive thought in this "sense of unity between man and God." Hence, the identification is unrealized.

Taken in the aggregate, these 225 definitions reveal the author testing and feeling the power, as it were, of "his poetical wings"; his bold experimentation in English prosody produces, at times, unexpected and dramatic results as in definitions 3, 12, 19 and 20. Often they betray poor taste and crudity of expression in such definitions as 38, 101, 182, or 203. The effectiveness of most of the definitions is derived from the unexpected fusion of different sensuous imagery. There is a tendency to substitute one sense for the other, and following the Symbolist school of Mallarmé and Rimbaud, to emphasize the "logic of the imagination — that its method should not be one of direct statement or description, but one of oblique image and suggestion." 23

23 Elizabeth Drew, op. cit., p. 40
Though Villa uses the direct statement in such definitions as Numbers 11, 13, 51, 96, or 180, most of the definitions are suggestive rather than direct. Because of the poet's too inventive facility, the main theme of beauty and love as expressed by sex, is now and again stated in every possible manner, and its associative connotation wrung dry.

The noted American poet, Norman Macleod, has pointed out to me that Carl Sandburg has also written definitions of poetry. Upon examination, however, of Sandburg's "tentative (First Model) Definitions of Poetry," we find that Villa's definitions bear no resemblance to Sandburg's except for an occasional statement like the latter's definition 37, "Poetry is a mystic, sensuous mathematics of fire, smoke-stacks, waffles, pansies, people, and purple sunsets," which may have suggested Villa's definition 68, "Poetry is mathematics in fire and music." We may safely conclude that Villa's definitions bear the stamp of his own romantic conception of what poetry is. Probably his only debt to Sandburg is the idea of writing his own definitions of poetry.

In general, the poems in this first volume also have for their principal theme, love as manifested by the physical aspects of sex. It must be realized that to Villa, sex and love are interchangeable terms.
Arguilla, an old friend of Villa, quotes him in her article, "Doveglion the Poet" in this fashion:

"Do you know what my real work is?" he asks us.
"No."
"Love," he says, "my real work is love. I am an expert in love. I use poetry to explain my work." 24

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Thus, he explicitly tells us that his poetry explains himself, his own kind of "love." Love may be expressed in different ways, and may have for its end different objects it seeks to attach itself to. In these early poems it is quite clear that the particular kind of love he has in mind is based on physical desire and possession of woman. The emotion of love is sought as an end in itself and for itself alone. His position at this time is similar to that of Wallace Stevens's as stated by Yvor Winters in his criticism of the American poet:

Any philosophy which offers the cultivation of the emotion as an end in itself, I suppose, is a kind of hedonism. In any event, that is the kind of philosophy which we find here... emotion is not a good in itself but if cultivated for itself alone is merely a pleasant diversion so long as the novelty of a given experience endures, at most as long as new experiences can give us the illusion of novel excitement, and then becomes a disease of the spirit, a state of indifference in which there is neither novelty nor experience. 25

It is important to add that, in his later poetry, Villa manages to escape from the hedonistic cul-de-sac into which he has strayed. He has asked me, in fact, not to judge him as a poet on these poems. If I do examine them here, I do so in order to trace his progress as an artist and as a poet, in order to emphasize the stature of his poems in the second and third volumes in comparison to that of these early poems.

Classifications are dangerous but I believe that a group of these poems clearly show the influence of the style of E. E. Cummings or the language of Gertrude Stein; another group are reminiscent of the Song of Solomon, Hebraic verse, and Walt Whitman; another group of metrical poems have the characteristics of seventeenth century poetry; and others are the results of his own experiments in language and form. Note that I say "influence" because the "imitation" is far from slavish; in most of these poems he has absorbed and converted the form and the language into the Villan mode of expression.

The group of poems patterned after E. E. Cummings such as "Love Song" (p. 36) "Poem Designed By A Bird" (p. 41)
or "Duetto For Surrender" (p. 65) adopt the same typographical deviations, such as the absence of punctuation marks, the splitting of words, the excision of articles, connectives, etc. The second poem in this volume, entitled "Love Song," is a typical example:

And I do much love thee
and I will not leave thee not
answer me I being bright
and foreverly

Dear love brightourvely most
dear love strew roselly flame
bravely to reach me and

starkly wind fingers gracely
deply undeathing birds
luminous endlessly

Breathe me love I do much
love thee and of me bright
musical lyre dazzle god-
beautously foreverly

life

As indicated by the title, this poem is a song of love with the old theme of the writer declaring his love. A visual glance at the poem instantly reveals the absence of punctuation marks, particularly the comma, and the absence of capitalization except for the first words of the first, second, and third stanzas.

The first line is plain and clear enough; it is archaic in expression, perhaps deliberately so. The second line is ambiguous because of the absence of commas;
a re-reading of the lines shows that the second "not" is placed at the end of the line for emphasis. It works as a double negative, not in the grammatical sense which would imply affirmation, but in a poetical sense which would emphasize the denial of his "leaving" her. In the third line he asks her to answer affirmatively because of his godliness. "Foreverly," the last word in this stanza, is a Villa epithet, an adverb that is made more so by the use of the common adverbial suffix, "-ly."

The second stanza is particularly tricky; once the pattern of the adverbs is discerned, the passage becomes clear. The word, "love" in the first line is a verb modified by the coined adverb, "brightcurvely"; "love" in the second line is a noun modified by the adjective, "dear"; the pattern follows: "strew rosely, flame bravely."

In the first line of the third stanza, the adverb "starkly" comes before the verb "wind"; the context indicates that "fingers" is a noun; the two adverbs that follow, "gracely" and "deeply", modify the adjectival epithet, "undeathing." The phrase "luminous endlessly" at the end of this stanza modifies the verb "breathe" of the next stanza.

The noun "love" in the first line of the fourth stanza is clearly a noun, but it may be the object of the
verb "breathe"; or, with a comma placed after the pronoun "me," it may be considered a noun of address. We believe the latter explanation is more probable. The last two adverbs, "god-beamously" and "foreverly," modify the verb "dazzle."

This poem is a clever experiment in word order, as well as a bold attempt in the coinage of adjectives, especially of adjectives turned into adverbs. The word "love" is used both as a noun and as a verb, and one must note when it is used as a noun and when as a verb, if he is to read the poem correctly. Felicitous are such coined adverbial and adjectival epithets as "brightcurvily," "rosely" and "undeathing" with their associative connotations; merely trite are "starkly," "deeply," "bright," and "musical." The favorite Cummings device of the climactic word as the last line, separated by a double space, and coming as an alliterative summary of the whole poem, is found here. The word "life" is the climactic alliterative word that rounds off and summarizes the whole poem.

Also successful, if obviously artificial in form, is "Poem Designed By A Bird": 
And so then
if a little
blue bird
came trip
ping love
let music
run to it
let music
say it heard
let music

bloom in
flame: 0
I am with
out shame
for love:
I would be
death if
love would
love me
I would be

hate if
love would
take me: 0
I would be
anything
for love:
because a
little blue
bird thought
love: yes

This poem is a typographical attempt to put
down on the page the footprints of a skipping bird. The
device is not new; George Herbert, particularly, experi-
mented with it in the seventeenth century. Herbert's
"Altar" is written typographically to suggest an altar;
his "Maister Wings" is written and arranged on the page
to resemble the contour of the wings of a butterfly.
And of course, Cummings and his disciples have tried
their hands at this poetic scheme. The explanation by
Theodore Spenser of Cummings' peculiar typographical
arrangement in his article, "Technique As Joy" is also applicable to this poem.

It is a superficial observation to say that Cummings arranges his words in a special way on the page because, as a painter, he wants to make a typographical picture; he does so for a much more interesting reason than that: because he wants to control the reading of the poem as much as he can, so that to the reader as to the poet, there will be the smallest possible gap between the experience and its expression. Cummings' typographical irregularities are not merely a bag of tricks; they are a necessary consequence of his extreme honesty. ²⁶

²⁶ The Harvard Wake, No. 5 (Spring, 1946), p. 26. Under the guest editorship of José García Villa, this number is considered the first number of the new magazine, Viva. In his letter to me, dated July 16, 1947, Villa said that he fears Viva "cannot come out at all due to the prohibitive cost of production."

It is a matter of opinion whether the reading of Villa's "Poem Designed By A Bird" is controlled by the arrangement. The short two-or-three-word lines do convey an impression of lightfootness, reminiscent of the curt style of Williams Carlos Williams. Briefly, the poem narrates the approach of "a little blue bird" (a masculine love symbol) filled with emotion and desire. "Music" (a feminine symbol) should go to it and embrace it since the bird is desperate in its emotion and its desire.
The final stanza acts as a refrain and brings us back to the first where a 'little blue bird came tripping with love.'

The first stanza— if it may be called that — suggests a light gay atmosphere because of the light vowel, "i." The word "tripping," split into two parts, gives the effect of movement. The second stanza is characterized by the rounded "u" vowel; the third by the internal rhyming of "flame" and "shame," and the long "o" sounds; the fourth by the repetition of "would" and rhymed "be" and "me;" the fifth by the "o" sounds again; and the final stanza by the alliterative plosive "b" sounds, trailing off into the climactic word, "yes." An emphasis of affirmation plus intensity of emotion is suggested by this word, coming as it does after the dramatic pause attained by the colon.

"Duetto For Surrender" has the splitting of words as its important typographical characteristic. The expression, however, is crude, the treatment of the theme vulgar. In the first stanza, the woman is asked to surrender herself:

To you
who are rose-colored
with darkness,
love—
To you
who are softer than moonlight,
love—
Surrender, my virgin,
be dark,
O be dark!
The phrase "rosed with darkness" is a banal sexual Villan epithet; "softer than moonlight" is trite and gives a stock response; the exclamation "O be dark" is inadequately motivated. The splitting of the words "darkness" and "moonlight" is artificial and does not control the reading of the poem.

The second stanza is the answer of the woman. She does surrender, exclaiming with passionate hysteria,

—I surrender, love,
    I am taken
O am taken
by the victory of s
urrender.
    love!

This stanza does not show any beauty of expression, nor does it suggest, imply, or illumine. It states banally a banal exclamation. It should not have been written at all.

The emotion evoked in this poem is a vague sort of sentimentality; its apostrophes sound like rantings; the word "love," repeated three times, falls flat. Made to stand alone for its mere associative value, "love" in this context doesn't really stand for anything; its value is lost in the reading.

The love lyrics, most of which are erotic, follow the same pattern of "Duetto For Surrender" with some notable exceptions as "The Sweet Song Sonora Sang After The Setting of Sun" (p. 77) or "Poem for Violeta, I" (p. 165). The
love poems are usually characterized by mere pornography, by an obsession with the physical aspects of sex. The symbolism becomes trite and boring; the sexual symbols, "rose," "white," "music," "flower," "seed," "arrow," or "spear," are used with such invariable monotony in poem after poem that, after a while, the reader's palate is cloyed: It is as if an orchestra were playing the same tune, though with variations, for five consecutive hours. It is as if a five-course dinner were served with one kind of fish as the only dish, though presented with different kinds of dressing.

His "Bridal Song" poems further illustrate our point. "Bridal Song, I" (p. 69) with its closing refrain of

\[
\begin{align*}
0 \text{ how lovely thou art} \\
0 \text{ how lovely thou art}
\end{align*}
\]

is boringly repetitious and uninspired. The echoing of the first line in the third does not intensify but merely protracts the statement, trite as it is, of the bride: on beholding her bridegroom:

"Bridal Song, II" (p. 70) and "Bridal Song, III" (p. 72) are typical poems in which we find repetitious reference to sexual symbols. In the former poem, there is the iteration of the omnipresent word, "love":

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{he is a dagger of love} \\
\text{he is the sword of love and} \\
\text{the giver of love}
\end{align*}
\]
In the latter, there is the repetition of an archaic word to indicate the fruition of marriage:

Reft

Reft is the virgin dark: reft reft
is the music dark.

In "The Sweet Song Sonora Sang After The Setting of Sun," the alliterative lines and the careful choice of words are rather suggestive of the "Song of Solomon" with perhaps a trace of the naturalism of Walt Whitman. Consider the melodious effects achieved by the alliterative "l" sounds and the Biblical simplicity in the second paragraph:

Let my love come bringing
limbs rich with long denials: I am the meadow
and the well, the hills of love and
the shade.

Or the clear-cut phrasing, the admirable metaphorical language, and the flowing spontaneity in the seventh and eighth stanzas:

The talons of love fade with the sun,
blossoms of day arise: I am unwilling to leave
night;
she has eternity in her eyes, music

nests deeper in her arms, the banners of love unfold, glow, attain the eagleshood of star,
death becomes far

The same spirit of exultation that animates

...I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the
valleys...He brought me to the banqueting house,
and his banner over me was love. Stay me with
flagons, comfort me with apples for I am sick
with love.

Song of Solomon 2:1 4:5
has been displayed by Villa in his poem.

A contrast to the elated and triumphant mood that pervades the previous poem cited is the quiet, calm atmosphere that surrounds his early "Poem For Violeta, I":

YOUR name is a cool word; even as brookwater:
It is quiet like a young bird; under a green leaf,
Cool as brookwater, quiet as a young bird:
Your name falls from my lips.

It is thus you do not hear it called from these lips:
Your name is a cool word, quiet like a young bird.

This poem is a successful experiment with the sound, the musicality of words; the contrast between the "o" sounds in "cool as brookwater" and the vocalic qualities in the dipthongal "quiet" and the "er" sound in the word "bird" give a pleasing musical tonality. These two phrases are contrasted one with the other throughout the poem as they have been suggested to the "inner ear" of the poet when he has heard the name, "Violeta." The fifth line is rather out of place and is awkwardly phrased.

The poems incorporating the Gertrude Stein language fail because of a lack of perception in what Stein has been trying to do with the English language. Stein, to use the words of Laura Riding and Robert Graves, creates an atmosphere of continuousness principally by her progressive use of the tenses of the verbs, by intense and unflagging repetitiveness and an artificially assumed and regulated child-mentality..."
Villa assumes the repetitiousness unflaggingly without any intensity; he assumes the child-mentality, but it is not intelligently regulated. "Father On His Unsonment" (p.54), one of the several poems that use the Stein language pattern, follows:

**Lament**

I AM; was.

(Of thy hands touched, of thy eyes loved.

I am;
was.

I am;
was.)

O crucified father

(that wast not only nevermore to be only)
now so only:

O crucified
lover: so only!

Be still

be still. Let be
let be. Let be
only. Be only. Only.

The first line, "I am; was", presumably means that the father "was" a father but "is" no longer now. Its repetitiousness does not suggest intensity; the last four lines do suggest a child-like mentality, but there is no internal stress that regulates the lines together:

Villa even tries his hand in this volume at light satirical verse. "Humanitas" (p. 161) is a soothing thrust at the vanity of man:

MONKEY, monkey on the tree,
Look down and what do you see?
The monkeys that have ascended
By descending from the tree.
The monkeys that have unfriended
The monkeys on the tree:

Monkey, monkey on the tree,
Peep down and what do you see?
The monkeys that have descended
To raise their own dear tree!
The monkeys so faithfully bended --
About the tree of vanity.

But even at this time, he has been experimenting with "formal" verse written in imperfect rhymes and in irregular meters in such poems as "Tale of the Hands of Woman" (p. 53), "Come Wreathe Me With Love" (p. 63), "Tale of the Lover and the Voice" (p. 88), and "The Man Who Had
"Talk with the Sphinx" (p. 159)

"Tale of the Hands of Woman" is particularly interesting because of its short rhymed lines characteristic of seventeenth century poetry, particularly of John Skelton:

**HER hands:**
were flowers of crystal
each one long sweet petal
proud as metal.

**To these:**
my hands strayed
I was not afraid
Love had never betrayed.

**Yet now:**
my hands they went dead
how lovely their red
I bled and bled.

The use of the colon here after each subject is significant since the series of three rhymed lines serves as the whole objective complements to the three subjects. This poem shows how well he has absorbed the rhythmic pattern of the poetic form used by John Skelton in such a poem as "To Miss Isable Pannel," where a series of three rhymed lines is found:

My maiden Isabel
Reflaring rosabell
The flagrant canamell,
The ruddy rosary,
The sovereign rosemary,
The pretty strawberry, etc.

The first stanza makes use of "imperfect" rhymes, and the alliterative liquid "l" sounds make the short pungent lines almost startling in their compact brevity.
The words "crystal" and "metal" suggest indifference and coldness.

The second stanza makes use of the dipthongal long "a" sounds, suggesting softness and tenderness of the man's approach to the hands of the woman.

The final stanza, with its curt short "ed" rhyming sounds, suggests refusal and finality. The word "red" gives a rich associative connotation of passion and desire. The repetition of the word "bled" in the last line suggests intensity and the culmination of the passion of love.

"Come Wreathe Me with Love" is also written in imperfect rhymed couplets. Aside from the framing of the poem in rhymed couplets, the usual stock sexual symbols as "delta," "blue bird," "Arrow" and "music" are rehashed in the usual sexual theme.

"Tale of the Lover and the Voice" (p.88), "Lenten Poem" (p.98), and "Poems from the Cross" (p. 137) are poems foreshadowing the Divine and mystical poems in the second and third volumes. "Tale of the Lover and the Voice" is a sensitive poem of the love of God for man. Written in rhymed couplets, it pictures a young, inexperienced lover blinded by love, filled with sadness and rent with desolation. Suddenly, a voice speaks to him:
"Lover: be not afraid: this
Is but the way of love: for his kiss

Much must the real lover weep:
Aye, her kiss wounds deep."

These lines express what all lovers feel when in the throes
of that passion: a gnawing pain, fear of loss, untold
happiness mixed with bitter sorrow.

The lover replies:

"Alas, O Life, Love has made
Thee into night: nor moon nor star
Nor God nor the young flower

Can illumine thee now': . . ."
And then methought: 'But, voice, who art thou?'

The answer, -- which is the climactic line -- is spoken
with utmost simplicity and natural directness:

And quietly the voice answered me:
"I -- loved, and hung upon a Tree."

The last line is pregnant with religious meaning. It is a
synthesis of the Catholic doctrine of the Incarnation and
Death of Jesus Christ on the Cross. It alludes to the
Catholic belief that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came down
here on earth, became man, was crucified, and did on the Cross
because of His great love for man. And because He loved,
He "hung upon a Tree."

Like some of his definitions of poetry, there may
be found in this volume a series of poems that are
"autobiographical" in character, in the sense that they either reflect on some personal event or artistic viewpoint or shed light on his intimate association with the beauty and loveliness of poetry. They expose Villa, the man, who has defied his family to dedicate himself to the artistic life. They show Villa, the poet, the young poet, expressing the fever of poesy that has possessed him, trembling with the voice of beauty and love and immortality.

"Testament" (p. 191) is his testamental will to the artistic world. With ingenuousness, he confesses:

I have not yet sung as I want to sing. My songs are queer songs but as I grow older they will be queerer still. I shall write stranger songs. It is that I am filled with many quaint thoughts and I myself cannot understand them. I am confused and helpless. I cannot understand my own unorthodoxy.

Then he goes on to explain the "growths and lives" in the house of his mind that must be disentangled:

Roots, stalks, and trees: flowers and then mud; nudes and then people who put on clothes; males who hunger for females and then females who hunger for males.

And, finally, the feeling he experiences upon becoming a creative artist:

A song is a knot untied. I have many knots to untie. As I untie them I become a poet whose hands are trembling.
In the series of poems under the heading, "Songs of Explanation," he explores further the meaning and significance of being a poet. In "Song of Explanation, I" (p. 117) he reveals the fact that

I am lonely — why am I lonely?
who taught me to be lonely?

and then explains the loneliness and sadness of poets who will sing:

A warm gold moon rises in the east
like a disc tossed by a god;
the god played with the moon
and tossed it with a soft silver laugh —
Why don't I laugh too?

and concludes the poem, not in a mood of passive resignation but in a tone of defiance and pride:

I have learned to be lonely among men,
I have become like God the Ever Lonely.

In "In the Country That Is My Country" (p.122) he makes a plea for love of fellowman, disclaims any loyalty to "nations, tribes, peoples, flags," and says that his country

Is not the Philippines:
Nor America; nor Spain nor Hungary:
Nor is it any other country.

His world is the poetic world of nature and of God; his country

Is in the heart;


Is Earth: its men
Is Sky: the love within their hearts,
Is the Sky beyond the Sky: the One.
In "Poem Inevitable for Love" (p.124) he reveals the final estrangement from his father, who has wanted him to be a doctor. He says that he cannot live without love so he has to go

For I cannot live without love!
I cannot stay away from love!

Thus he breaks all family ties and dedicates himself wholly, irrevocably to love:

I break the chain of sonhood
For the bond of love:

I reject your parenthood
For the god of love.

The "Testamental Poems" are intimate portraits of Villa, the poet as a young poet. In these poems are found, "pared to the essential bone," his love for poetry, his realization and calm acceptance of the sorrow it brings as well as the exaltation of himself as a poet.

In "Testamental Poem, VII" (p. 139) we find this calm acceptance of the sorrow that a life of art may bring. It is written in imperfectly rhymed, irregular tetrameter, with a rhymed couplet at the close of the poem.

Wretched, O wretched is this life
This search for Beauty, O the strife
Ends only in sorrow: Leave Art,
Leave Art, take pity on the heart.

This is the wisdom of my mind declaiming,
The blossom of my heart breaking!
"Testamental Poem, I" (p. 130) explains his desire to attain love; he says that all sensitive men and women and Christ feel this terrible urge:

Only the breast
of starlight:
orchestral: memorous:
only the breast of silver:
irradiant: loveward:

0 breast of silver
0 breast of love!

this is I!
and it is as well you as I.

We close our study of this volume with "Testamental Poem, VIII" (pp. 140-141), a restrained exquisite poem of his affirmation of love. It is written in Hebraic verse-form,31 a form which needs a sure command

31I am indebted to the poet Norman Macleod for the analysis of the form of this poem.

of the language and an ear for the delicate nuances of word-pattern:

MY soul is sick,
My youth is gone:
But the tick of Time
Shall leave me sublime.

The leaves of my life
Are green, unloved:
For the Sun of love
Shall be found Above.
O how I weary of earth,
How I search for peace:
   My breast I bare,
   Smite it, I no longer care.

How many of you
Have smitten into me:
   How many of you
   Have proved so untrue?

This I know,
As this I say:
   Mankind hates the lover,
   Stamping on the godded rover.

Yet, as the leaves of the vine,
Climb up, divine:
   Loveward I strain
   Silver as rain.

The pattern makes a very interesting study. The first two lines of each stanza are usually written in iambic dimeters with some variations; the third and fourth lines of each stanza are usually a combination of iambic and anapastic meters. The last two lines of each stanza are rhymed; sometimes it is a suspended rhyme, sometimes a half rhyme, sometimes a perfect rhyme.

In the first stanza, the second line, "my youth is gone," repeats the thought of the first line, "My soul is sick." Thus the second is synonymous to the first. The third and fourth lines,

   But the tick of Time
   Shall leave me sublime.

are contrasted to the first two lines. Thus, they would be antithetical to one another. The whole four lines of the stanza are then climactic— which would mean a combina-
tion of any of these structural devices.

In the second stanza, the second line, "Are green, unloved," completes the meaning of the first line: "The leaves of my life" and thus, the thought is synthetic.

Knowing the basic devices then, we may classify the rest of the poem: the third and fourth lines of the second stanza are synthetic; the first two lines of the third are synonymous, the third and fourth lines of the third are synthetical with the first two lines of the stanza; the first and second part of the fourth stanza are both synthetic; the first part of the fifth is synonymous, the second part synthetic; the first two lines of the last stanza are antithetical, while the last two lines are synthetical with the first two lines of the last stanza.

The Biblical simplicity of expression and the carefully-developed thought content make this poem a landmark in this volume. Notice the simple unaffected alliteration in "My soul is sick my breast is bare"; the onomatopoeia in "silver as rain"; the repetition that makes for intensity in "this I know as this I say"; or the felicitous simile of the climbing limbs of the vine to his striving for love.

The progression of the thought is gradual and subtle to the point of delicacy. In the first stanza,
he bemoans the loss of his youth but is hopeful and confident of the future. In the second, he realizes his youthful inexperience, knowing that the heights can only be reached by a striving for the Divine. In the third, he bewails the turmoil and vanity of this world and is prepared to bear its blows. In the fourth, he confronts his doubters and calumniators. In the fifth, he explains this hatred of mankind for the undisciplined mind and heart. And in the last stanza, he compares his unconquerable reaching for love to the climbing leaves of the vine. Thus, from inexperience he attains the maturity of a poet. He has attained godhood.

To conclude, then, the main criticism of this first volume concerns the reiterated theme of beauty and love (or sex); the worship and deification of the emotion of love for its own sake; his use of an erotic symbolism that at times is clever but is more often tedious and boring; his experiments in poetic forms and poetic language that sometimes succeed but often are too extreme and obscure to reward the reader. But to his credit, I may mention his generally successful experimentation in the sound and musicality of English words; his own peculiar coinage of neologistic epithets; the intensely personal and emotional quality of even
his worst poems; his honesty and sincerity in constantly striving for the perfect poetic expression.

Perhaps the best critical appraisal of Villa, the young poet, at this time, is best expressed by the poet himself in his "Proem" (p. 55):

The meaning of a poem is not a meaning of words.
The meaning of a poem is a symbol like the breathlessness of birds.
A poem cannot be repeated in paraphrase.
A poem is not a thought but a grace.

The last lines of this key poem of Many Voices express his hedonistic philosophy and explain in his romantic words the "meaning" of these earlier poems:

A poem has no meaning but loveliness.
A poem has no purpose than to caress.
CHAPTER III

POEMS BY DOVEGLION

The key to the fundamental change and growth in the later poetry of José García Villa is given by the poet in his first sonnet, "First, A Poem Must Be Magical" (p. 45) in his second volume of poems entitled, Poems by Doveglion. In this sonnet he implicitly declares that

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1 Norman Macleod has informed me that this volume, published in Manila by the Philippine Writers' League in 1941 was also sponsored and promoted by the American Writers Congress in New York in 1942.

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he has freed himself from the insidious quicksand of romantic hedonism à la Wallace Stevens into which he fell in the first volume. From now on, "love", the controlling emotion of his poetic and personal life, is no longer purely hedonistic; it has entered the world of the mind and the spirit. He still asks, as he has done in his key poem in Many Voices, that

A poem must be magical,
Then musical as a sea-gull.

But he adds that "magic" and "music" are not enough, that the magic of emotion and the music of words do not suffice,

And it must hold fire as well.
It must have the wisdom of bows
And it must kneel like a rose.

He adds that a poem must be sustained, not only by the emotional element, but also by a deep intellectual
content, for

    It must be able to hide
    What it seeks, like a bride.

And like a majestic happy Creator, he states

    And over all I would like to hover
    God, smiling from the poem's cover.

The form of this poem is an indication, too, of the difference in technique and style from the early poems. Yet is peculiarly Villan; that is, he changes the form or the style or the thought into his own personal and unusual manner of doing or saying things. This first sonnet, for example, is written in sonnet form, but what a difference from the Shakespearean or an Italian sonnet form! It is true that the sonnet is written in the usual fourteen lines, but he uses every conceivable kind of rhyme to hold the poem together; it consists of seven couplets, an unusual sonnet form; the lines are usually octosyllabic, with many variations, instead of decasyllabic; the meter is not only iambic, but a combination of many other meters, as anapastic, spondaic, pyrrhic, etc. This poem also exemplifies his clear use of the caesural pause which he shifts for emphasis or for dramatic climax. Note how the caesura helps in the reading of the poem, what nuances of liquid music are indicated by the shifts. We have marked the pauses here to indicate what we mean:
First / a poem must be magical,
Then musical / as a sea-gull,
It must be / a brightness moving
And hold secret / a bird's flowering.
It must be / slender as a bell,
And it must hold / fire as well.
It must have / the wisdom of bows
And it must kneel / like a rose.
It must be able / to hear
The luminance / of dove and deer.
It must be able / to hide
What it seeks / like a bride.
And over all / I would like to hover
God / smiling from the poem's cover.

The caesural pauses here make for balance and clarity. Particularly noticeable is the pause after the first word in the first line, which is repeated in the same manner in the last line. But what a different result obtains in the last line. The word "God" in the last line, coming before the pause, comes like a thunder-clap to confront the reader

— smiling from the poem's cover.

The experiments in form and style are still there, but they are no longer extreme nor uncontrolled. There is a firm, sober restraint and a deliberate approach to intellectual truth and wisdom. This may still be Villa, "the dreamer of dreams, the music maker," but the emphasis has been shifted to Villa, "the seeker of truth, the lover of wisdom."
The first section consists of selected poems from *Many Voices* and published in this volume as they have been originally printed. There is no need to examine these poems fully, since most of them have been critically examined in the previous chapter. Suffice it to say that the critical choice of the early poems is consistently discriminating. Included are poems which reveal artistic harmony between expression and thought, such as the "Poem Designed By A Bird," the alliterative "The Sweet Song Sonora Sang After the Setting of Sun," the quietly musical "Poem for Violeta, I," the formal poems "Tale of the Hands of Woman," "Tale of the Lover and the Voice," and the Biblical "Testamental Poems." Some poems, however, have not been included in the "Selections": the successful experimental poem, "Love Song," and the Hebraic "Testamental Poem, VIII," which we have already examined in the previous chapter. And two or three poems which, in my estimation, betray the worst features of his romantic hedonism or display the crude exaggerations of his experimental poetic forms have been selected. "Speech Against Love" uses too much meaningless repetition; "Descriptive" is anti-climactic and evokes mere stock responses; "Poem Written Beneath a Blue Lampshade" is anemic in expression; and "Song for the First
Sweetheart" is an amateurish declaration of a young man's love.

Section II, which is entitled "Selections From 'Philosophica'" contains seven poems. These poems emphasize his dignity and his integrity as a creative artist and as a poet. It is probable that "Philosophica" has been intended by the author to be the title of a series of poems in which he reveals his personal philosophy of life. However, as far as I know, "Philosophica", if it has been completed, has not been published by the author.

It is to be noted that the new poems in this volume as well as those in Have Come, Am Here do not have titles; they are designated by their first lines.

The first poem, "Well, You May Come In" (p.38) gives the tone and spirit of these new poems; it is a good example of his new approach to the "meaning" of poetry; it does not use imagery merely to evoke romantic associations; the emphasis is on the intellectual message illuminated or intensified by imagery.

Well, you may come in
Sit on my brain.
Do not fear the skull
It is only a wall.
Come in and be comfortable.
My brain is very hospitable
Though in it there be a bull
Who can be very stubborn
And loom in his barn
Terrible with horns and scorn.

But if you are daring and subtle
You can easily get to the bull
And tie your rope around him.
Then you may whistle and hum
Unless of course you meet your doom.

If you die in my skull
Don't say I intended to kill
I merely sent an invitation
You had power to shun;
But you had presumption.

Note here the almost impish yet ironic mood in which the message is expressed. The use of the conceit in the figure of the stubborn bull is apropos of the singular obstinacy of his mind. The use of half rhymes as "shun" and "presumption," or dissonance as in "him" and "hum" convey an ironic implication as well as a sense of ease to the poem.

The first stanza invites the reader to look into his mind. With tongue in cheek, he teasingly says, in the second couplet,

Do not fear the skull
It is only a wall.

The second stanza introduces the conceit of the bull:
Who can be very stubborn
And loom in his barn
Terrible with horns and scorn.

The last line of this stanza, which, incidentally uses internal rhyme, suggests the astuteness of his mind and the pride of his intellect.

The third stanza again teases the reader to try to capture the "bull" of his proud and subtle mind, points out the gleefulness of his mind, as suggested by the verbs "whistle" and "hum," but warns,

Unless of course you meet your doom.

The last stanza sustains and intensifies the ironic mood of the whole poem. The last line, like the twist ending of a short story, denies the extended invitation at the beginning of the poem. The last three lines imitate the O. Henry ending:

I merely sent an invitation
You had power to shun;
But you had presumption.

The second poem in this section, "I Never, Never Really" (p. 39), is an imitation of William Blake's poem, "The Tiger." Unlike Blake's poem, Villa's uses the symbol of the tiger not to express his wonder at the awe-inspiring Creator of this fearful animal but to identify himself with the

Tiger, tiger, burning bright
Reaching for God's terrible Light.
The third and last stanza uses the sexual symbol of the rose, in a casual, oblique manner. The time in this world, he says, reflects a segment of the knowable eternal time of God, and the last line iterates this fact. The last stanza follows:

And if my logic clasps a rose
It is by a way only tiger knows
And tiger-time is proved God's time —-
Really, really! Ever, ever!

"Now Let Us Announce Me" (p.40) is the only poem in this second section included in Have Come, Am Here (Poem 61). It is eloquent yet simple, philosophical yet poetic, mystical yet explicit. It is a play of ideas, an exposition of his search for the Perfect and the Divine:

Now let us announce me.
This is a very grave duty.
Let us announce me.
Announce me perfectly.

I am most of all, most.
The least of me is most.
God can see almost.
The most He got to almost.

He was almost I
Until He could not die.
I was almost He
Until I learned to disagree.

A poem that on the surface is composed of declarative sentences, it is elusively elliptical and deceptively simple. The play on the words "most" and "almost" is
not so much punning as a concrete representation of abstract ideas. It is a modern analogue to a Platonic dialogue between man and God.

The first stanza is a proclamation of himself as a creator and a poet, a fact which he considers a rather serious matter. This proclamation or revelation of himself must be a perfect representation of what he is.

The second and third stanzas are statements of his essential relationship with God. In the first two lines of the second stanza, the poet and creative artist feels an emphatic relationship with the created world. The least part of him is most creative:

I am most of all, most
The least of me is most.

The next two lines of the second stanza deal with God, the perfect exemplification of all creative activity. They explain the hiatus between him, the mortal creator, and God, the immortal Creator. The gap is never fully bridged, however, and full identification is not realized:

God can see almost
The most He got to almost.

In the first two lines of the third stanza, he makes a complete reversal of a mortal's envy of God's immortality and makes an implied criticism of the Deity's inability to be mortal:
He was almost I
Until He could not die.

At the close of the poem, he realizes he could not be God; there is an eternal rift between him and God, since

I was almost He
Until I learned to disagree.

The conclusion, then, is that complete identity of the poet, the mortal creator, with God, the immortal Creator, is not possible.

In this short poem of twelve lines he has stated in the most succinct terms the relationship between the mortal creative artist and the immortal Artist. Its utter simplicity conceals the layers of meaning that lie hidden behind the words "most" and "almost". This poem is

... able to hide
What it seeks, like a bride.

"In Not Getting There Is Perfect Arrival" (p. 42) is another concise poem on his role as an artist and as a poet. This fact is stated in terms of a paradox: the paradox of a poet's success is aptly balanced with that of the victory of the death of Christ on the Cross:

In not getting there is perfect arrival.
Success is too much defeat.
The laureateship is the way as rival
To the defeatless feet.

Jesus never got there—He arrived
Perfectly. The, obstructive cross
Uprose as rival and contrived
To laurel the defeatless Ghost.
The first stanza states the paradox of poetic success. The state of arriving, but not achieving, fame and fortune as a poet is "perfect arrival". The attainment of success, and all the honors that go with it, would spell his final downfall. And his "laureateship", the crowning glory of a poet, would only prove a hindrance, an obstacle to his eternal journey:

The laureateship is the way as rival To the defeatless feet.

In other words, he believes that his integrity and importance as a poet can only be preserved by his always moving towards an ever-changing goal, in always striving for what cannot be reached. Success and approbation would mean that he has reached the top, the absolute, the static. Hence, his preference for unceasing motion, for continuous striving, for "the defeatless feet."

The second stanza is balanced in thought with the first in implied comparison and extended simile. The supreme example of his esthetic doctrine is Christ Himself, who never achieved earthly success; on the contrary, He was scorned and crucified by the world—yet "He arrived perfectly." However, the cross proved his downfall on earth, conferring the laureateship on Him as a man. Thus, as a man, Christ was a failure, for He was hung on the cross. But as God, as the "Ghost," He was defeatless, for
in His defeat as a man He became "defeatless" as God.

In "The Face of the Future Is Very Old" (p.43), the message is again stated by means of arresting paradox. This poem echoes the age-old philosophical concept of the eternal continuity of time. Villa has converted an essentially philosophical and abstract thought into a simple yet dramatic poem:

The face of the future is very old,
The face of the past is very young.
Tomorrow is very past
As yesterday is so future.

Time indents and projects
Time designs and calculates
A unity of Now and Then:
Time is a circular stream.

And if we meander in Tomorrow
We shall certainly meet Yesterday.
And yesterday, had we wandered well,
We could have kissed Tomorrow's face.

This poem is a very clever description of the present, of "Today," though the present is mentioned only in the third line of the second stanza. The first stanza contains four statements within the four lines on the paradox of time. It is but man's conceptual mind that divides time into the compartments of the past, the present, or the future. Actually these "divisions" of time merge imperceptibly into each other. Hence,
Tomorrow is very past
And yesterday is so future.

The paradox is made clearer in the second stanza
by the metaphorical reference to time as "a circular stream."
In this stream where the water flows in a never-ending
circle, where time flows from itself into itself, one cannot
say when the past merges into the present or the present into
the future or the future into the past.

The first stanza is an imaginative recapitulation
of the theme; though "Today," the aspect of time between
"Yesterday" and "Tomorrow," is not mentioned, it is
undoubtedly the implied subject in the last, highly-
imaginative lines:

And yesterday, had we wandered well,
We could have kissed Tomorrow's face.

The representation of time as a human face, though not new,
fits the context of the poem and does not evoke a mere stock
response.

One can see, then, that the poems in this section,
"Selections from 'Philosophica'," reflect a considerable
change in the poetry of Villa. They are concerned more
with the world of ideas than with the world of sensuous
delights. The title evidently means what it says; the
poems shed light on his esthetic creed, his relationship
as an artist to God, his concept of time. The scope and
range of his poetry, hitherto confined to the idea of love
as expressed in terms of sex, has been immeasurably extended in width as in depth.

His explorations into the intellectual, philosophical, and religious spheres are more clearly defined in the third and fourth sections of the book. In these sections he is intensely and deeply preoccupied by such themes, as wisdom, truth, poetic integrity, life and death. He also writes on the different qualities of God's infinity as His beauty, love and goodness, and his relationship with the Divine.

The technical form or mechanics of the sonnets and the lyrics deserves more than a passing mention. The twenty-two sonnets, particularly, comprising the third section of this volume, make an interesting study. He makes use of caesural pauses to great effect, as I have pointed out earlier in this chapter; he uses with facility what Gerard Manley Hopkins calls counterpoint. Harold Whitehall says that its

Rhythmic effectiveness depends upon the contrast between a well-established primary movement and a variation moment, both heard at the same time.²

²"Sprung Rhythm", The Kenyon Critics, Gerard Manley Hopkins (Norfolk, Conn., New Directions, 1945), p.35.

As far as the rhyme scheme goes, every poem has to be taken by itself; Villa uses so many variations of both the
Petrarchan and the Shakespearean sonnet forms that no generalization may be made except that each of the twenty-two sonnets ends with a couplet. The use of the couplet at the close of the sonnet is adapted by Villa, usually as a device to surprise or to climax his message. Nelly X. Burgos in her article, "The Poetry of Doveglion: A Study," discusses the liberties that the poet has taken with the form of the sonnet:

The liberties he takes with his form which Mr. Lopez thinks is necessary to forgive, reveal Mr. Villa's desire to adapt his medium to himself and to his subject. The practice is not only sound; it is the mark of the true artist, provided of course the results justify any change that have been made on the form. If Mr. Villa drops two syllables from some of his sonnets, he must think that decasyllabic lines are cumbersome and unsuited to certain subjects as well as inimical to certain effects he desires to achieve. Pure quatrain stanzas could not have been substituted because the clinching couplet, at which Mr. Villa works so well, would have been missed. The unorthodox rhyme schemes he employs should not shock anybody. A recent study made in Oregon disclosed that 51,300 arrangements with the sonnets are possible without destroying the form. 

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3The Herald Mid-Week Magazine (June 4, 1941), 10.

I should like to add that Villa has deliberately avoided, as much as he can, the full end rhyme. Instead
he has experimented with the subtleties of the half rhyme, such as "mind" and "unkind" in "The Little Mocking Bird Of My Mind" (p. 47); with the internal and hidden rhyme as in the line, "And upon your safeties and deities make war," in the sonnet, "Since The Virtues Of My Mind Are Compacted True"; and with dissonance, as in "Doe" and "brow" in "I Muse Me Muchly Of The Matchless Mind."

Sonnets 46, 47, 49, and 55 dwell on the integrity of his mind and his poetry. They reveal his pride and his defiance of any external element that may destroy or hurt this integrity.

Sonnet 46 is an objective contemplation of the beauty, the greatness, the indestructibility of the human mind:

I muse me muchly of the matchless mind,
A moving more than memory mirror;
He dwells there, yes, dwells there for Me and for all men — without pity kind,
Without armour strong — oh, a much-
Ness, a realness, a richness resoundless,
At whose fathering fatherly touch
Awakens Truth, Man and Man's own timelessness.

O musical mind of Hero, mysterious Doe,
Countless the caravans of, incalculable
Thy myriad foes! Lo, how they call, how they roll
To arms against thee, O purest brow!
Whereon ah!, is no weapon — none!.
Save the indivisible Word, brave like the Sun.

The rhyme scheme of this sonnet is a-b-b-a, c-d-c-d for the octave and e-f-f-e-g-g for the sestet. Note the half
rhyme in "mirror" and "for"; the breaking of a word, "much-ness" for the sake of rhyme; the dissonance in "Doe" and "brow" and that of "incalculable" and "roll." The breaking of a word for the sake of rhyme is characteristic of Hopkins' Poetry as "un-/warned" to rhyme with "fallen" in his "The Loss of the Eurydice." The use of the internal rhyme is demonstrated in line 11 of this sonnet.

"Thy myriad foes: Lo, how they call, how they roll" is likewise used extensively by Hopkins in his poems, as in the line,

Banned by the land of their birth

"The Wreck of the Deutschland." II, 34.

And of course the use of alliteration, as in the first two lines of this sonnet with its sonorous "m" sounds, is a common device of poets. Inversion and ellipsis are found in lines 10 and 11; in prose the lines would read "The caravans of thy myriad foes are countless and incalculable." The invocations in lines 11 and 12 seem rather artificial and mar the smoothness of the lines.

The sense of wonder at the movement and power of the mind is conveyed by the plurality of vocalic sounds and the alliterative "m" sounds in the first two lines, which allow the reading and suggest the weight and dignity of the thought. "He" presumably refers to the Divine power that resides in the mind, and this fact is emphasized by the repetition of the word "dwell." In the fourth, fifth,
and sixth lines he goes into rhapsody over the indwelling of God in the mind. The kindness and paternal love of God is suggested by the beautiful phrase, "fathering fatherly touch," echoing the music of Hopkins' line,

Spins to the widow-making unchilding unfathering deepa

The integrity and invulnerability of the mind are emphasized in the last six lines of the sonnet by the implied comparison of the mind to a fort or a bastion stormed at by its innumerable enemies -- in vain. For what makes the mind integral and indestructible is the "Indivisible Word," the intangible conceptual product of the mind.
Assuredly the most noble and the best phrased sonnet in this volume is "Since the Virtues of My Mind Are Compacted True" (p.55). With incisiveness, Villa proclaims the integrity and the matchless qualities of his mind:

Since the virtues of my mind are compacted true,
Though this mind stands heretic, unfriended and alone,
Its shape can never perish to a skeleton.
Yea, though tongues mislabel and minds misconstrue,
This mind shall itself and its light not rue:
There directs in it an Element superior to bone,
Invincible and austere, factor to God alone,
And Time and Death in vain for it shall sue.

If I am cancer to your minds, 'tis by this Element;
If to your natures I move counter and dissimilar
And upon your safeties and deities make war,
'Tis by this Element's decree -- without veilment:
Since that this Element wars not upon you alone
But also upon this very skull, its very own.

In form and in phraseology, this sonnet comes nearest to the standard sonnet. The form does not deviate from the Petrarchan in the octave which is here rhymed a-b-b-a,
a-b-b-a; the sestet follows the Shakespearean form, c-d-
d-c-, b-b. The lines avoid "running over." There are no coined epithets; instead, the choice of words shows how he has tried to preserve the classical form and language. However, the lines vary considerably in metrical length; Villa combines the anapest and the iamb freely. The tone of quiet assurance that pervades this sonnet reveals how acutely felt is the awareness of his mind's integrity. This is the declaration of a man who believes in himself, of a poet who knows and is sure of his purpose.
Another group of sonnets deals with the familiar subject of "love" but one notes the difference in treatment of the theme. Love is not sexual love, the physical desire of man for woman or woman for man; love is an idealized passion of the soul. The sonnet, "This Thing so Beautiful and High" (p.53) exemplifies this change in outlook. Like the first sonnet, it consists of seven couplets:

This thing so beautiful and high,
Imperial against an imperial sky,
Proud-browned and desolate,
Firm-shinned and immaculate.

This one brave and incorruptible,
Proud flame and imperishable,
Towards whom all the stars gaze
To learn her incandescent grace,

This lovely one is no ghost,
Nor soul homeless or lost,—
No, this one excels only Christ
By whom only she is best apprized.

She is not War, nor Death, nor Peace,
But Love, footed upon a precipice.

The identity of the subject of the whole sonnet, "this thing," is deliberately concealed until the very end. In the first three stanzas, the qualities of "this thing" are enumerated: her beauty and majesty, her solitude and purity, her courage and unity; and her pride and immortality. Then he describes what she is not:
This lovely one is no ghost,
Nor soul homeless or lost, —
yet she is best known to Christ whom she even surpasses. The
key to the puzzle is given in the last line:
But Love, footed upon a precipice.

The last line brings the subject of the poem into
sudden sharp focus. "This lovely one" is proud and elusive
love whom man pursues to the edge of the world, "the
precipice." This sonnet is a study in progressive climax,
in cumulative description with the climax in the revelation
of the subject of the description.

The sonnets, "That You Ask of Me Only the Hardest
Things" (p. 54), "The Star That in Me Is Drawn" (p. 59), and
"And This Was Love That Made Me Die" (p. 64) also have
idealized love for their main theme. In the first he
shows how closely love and truth can be identified,

For I am most he that is most truth for I am most
love.

In the second, love is the "voice" that rules the "star" of
his soul. And though still expressed as a sexual emotion
in the third sonnet, love is artistically subtilized,

Now does God complete his difficult task:
Play Judas to Love — and without a mask!

His preoccupation with the subject of Death is
apparent in a series of sonnets which show how at first he
defiantly faces this ultimate phase of life, then arrives at an understanding of the real relationship of death and man.

His poetic mind, which even death cannot touch, is the theme of "Nor Shall My Mind Devise an End" (p.50):

Nor shall my mind devise an end
Equal to its imperial blood;
That, unhonored and misunderstood,
Does yet the human heart defend
And all its insufficiencies mend
With wars delicate and fine
Building thereof the shrine
Where Death, alas, must bend.

Not Death but I am austere:
She may only come and hear
The music of the mind made clear.
She may only come and touch
With reverential grace the couch
Where lie I, deathless overmuch.

In the first eight lines he insists on the sufficiency of his mind that defends the errors of his heart. It is the mind that builds up an immortal testament, his poetry, that death cannot efface. In the sestet he inverts the conception of the despotism of death by assuming this prerogative for himself. Death, like an obsequious subject, is permitted to hear the clear "music" of his mind which is his poetry. Death may claim his body but not his mind, and thus she may

With reverential grace the couch
Where lie I, deathless overmuch.
The defiance of death expressed in the above sonnet is no longer found in "Always - upon the Brows of Death Dance I" (p. 63). Here he does not rail at death; he arrives at an understanding of her meaning. In this, the most imaginative of the sonnets, he presents a jewel-sharp etching of puny man dancing the precarious jig of life upon the grim face of death:

Always -- upon the brows of Death dance I ...  
And if he awake O if he awake! -- should  
His eyes behold me, in their graceless mood  
And see how bold, how daring were this I ...  
Thinking perhaps that my dance were to espy  
The secrets of his great secret Brow,  
Though that after he saw me I should bow, —  
O but if his hand should arise half dear, half sly

And brush me off that great terrible ledge —  
I should fall perished into the great Abyss!  
Yet should he grant me merciful privilege  
And move me to his mouth for a forgiving kiss  
Yet I should repulse, repulse that lovely grace  
And smite, smite at the Christ-tender, Christ-lovely face.

Repetition of phrase and of word is used with great effect in this sonnet. Like Hopkins, Villa uses this device not merely for the sake of rhythmical pattern but also for the purpose of gaining intensity and emphasis. In the second line he intensifies the horrible implications that would befall dancing man if sleeping death

... awake O if he awake!
In the sixth line he emphasizes the mystery that lies hidden in death by the repetition of the word, "secret."

The secrets of his great secret Brow,
Man's ignorance of the meaning of death is pointed out in the last four lines. For if death with "a forgiving kiss" should release man at last from the pain and suffering of this world to bring him to Christ, man would refuse this "loving grace" and strike back at the face of death in his ignorance and arrogance. The repetition of the verbs "repulse" and "smite" emphasizes and intensifies the irony of man's refusal to accept his heavenly destiny. The eternal beauty and happiness man would enjoy if he but kiss the face of death, "the other face" of Christ, are suggested by the epithets, "Christ-tender" and "Christ-lovely."

The religious sonnets and lyrics reveal his logical yet lyrical examination of his relationship with God. Suggestions of the passionate intensity of Donne, the flowing lyricism of Blake and the poetic devices and phraseology of Hopkins may be discerned here. In the sonnet, "When Finally Before God I Disrobed" (p.51), he bewails his mortal imperfections in comparison with the Perfect Beauty and Love of God, expressing the great love of God for man by way of religious paradox.
When finally before God I disrobed —
(He the most Nude the most Perfect
Lover — in whose eyes seeth most direct
Oh who but Love) — O I fell I sobbed
To see me so mortal imperfect
The very beauty of His mere feet
So outshining Me — to my whole defeat!
I looked at Him and was wreckt.

But came Hands to raise me as were
I the most Beloved: oh came speech
Then all religions most fair
And than all gold more rich —
"O sweet, 'tis I am not so perfect!
Too Godly I — to my immortal Defect!"

The sonnet opens strikingly enough with a picture
of himself stripping before God, "the most Perfect Lover," then dissolves into a close-up of his anguish and despair at the realization of his nothingness before the brightest perfection of the mere "feet" of God, as He is anthropomorphically considered. Thus, the octave of the sonnet is pervaded by a sense of frustration and despair. In contrast, the sestet turns frustration to triumph, despair to hope, as the outstretched "hands" of God lift him out of the depths of the "dark" night of his soul. God's love for his creature is expressed at the close of the sonnet in the form of a paradox. Because of His "immortal Defect," a reconciliation between man and God is effected unlike the unbridgeable gap that separates them in "Now Let Us Announce Me."
Another aspect of the great love of God for man is seen in "Hark! But I Do Not Think It Is" (p.61). The eternal suffering of Christ for man is exposed here:

Hark! but I do not think it is
He! how quietly He knocketh,
How gentle, how lovely is His breath!
And though I bid my heart to keep peace
How it breaks, how it breaks its wish!
It is all broken into angels and
Roses! and from each angel hand
The flowers rush in fullest unlease

to Him, the Bright, the Sun, the
Sum of my life! Till my angels all
Are empty-handed, and fall
to His feet in grief. But He
Sayeth to them, to break their
Grief: "Now is your turn -- these to wear!"

The poet's surprise at discovering that the person gently knocking at the portals of his heart is God, is aptly signified by placing "He" as the first word in the second line. It is the predicate object of the first line, and it is emphasized by the caesural pause that occurs after this monosyllabic word. The poet's heart is so agitated at His approach that it dissolves into symbolic "angels" handing out "flowers" of love to God. When the "angels" have given Him all their "flowers," they kneel before Him in sorrow. The symbolism means that the heart in its welcome of God tries to express its love for Him but fails, and therefore is filled with sorrow. God, knowing this, consoles the heart by reminding it of the
crown of thorns which He wears in expiation of the sins of mankind. As usual, the message is given at the end in an arresting statement.

Villa also attempts satire in the sonnet form. The last two sonnets reflect his disgust at the contemptuous rich ("God's greatest mediocrity") and the ambitious political wind-bag.

These sonnets reveal how studiously Villa has made use of the sonnet form to serve his own poetic expression. He attempts variations of the Petrarchan and Shakespearean rhyme schemes; he uses dissonance, the imperfect and half rhymes, usually, for certain poetic effects. The Hopkins devices of phrasal and word repetition, internal rhyme, alliteration, and the breaking up of words for the sake of rhyme, may be discerned in these sonnets. He invariably uses the "clinching" couplet for the sake of climax or surprise.

The wider range of his poetic themes is also reflected in these sonnets. He is concerned with the essential integrity of the poet and his mind and examines the poet's relationship with truth and wisdom. He still dwells on the subject of love, but the approach is different; love is idealized or subtilized. He is intensely preoccupied with death and its manifold problems as it touches
the poet and the man. He continues the study of the relationship of God and man started in the second section, "Selections From 'Philosophica'" with deepening insight and unaffected grace.

The fourth and last section of the book is simply entitled "Lyrics." The poems are further explorations and variations of the general themes introduced in the second and third sections.

The poems in this section often use the formal lyric form. They are usually composed of two or three four-lined stanzas. They are written in metrical verse, but the rhymes are usually imperfect or half rhymes. The Hopkins device of breaking up a word for the sake of rhyme, which the poet has adopted in the sonnets, is discarded here. Nor does he indulge any longer in the form patterns of E. E. Cummings or imitate the "simple" language of Gertrude Stein. The main tools he uses to convey his message are the paradox, the surprise ending usually achieved through a sudden reversal of thought, and the climax. With undeviating persistence he examines the many-faceted relationships between emotion and thought, poetry and the poet, love and the poet, man and woman, man and God.

"If My Sun Set in the West" (p.69), included in the third volume as Poem 48, is a terse exposition of his poetic aim:
If my sun set in the west
I could not bear it!
And if it rose in the east —
I must annul it!
Myself demands
Rarest Circuit.

'Twere natural history
To set in the west, --
But my sun's imperialcy
Hath this reversed, --
To reach all Lands
Exquisite and first.

The analogy of his poetic aim to a reversal of the natural rising of the sun in the east and its setting in the west is developed with expert workmanship in this poem of twelve lines. The second stanza is actually an explanation of the first. "Rarest Circuit," which he demands at the close of the first stanza, means

To reach all Lands
Exquisite and first.

The poem, "God Said, I Made a Man" (p.68) is also included in Have Come, Am Here, as Poem 49. The reversal of roles — man is the judge of God instead of God being the judge of man — is the device used to extol the man's poetic genius,

God said, "I made a man
Out of clay —
But so bright he, he spun
Himself to brightest Day
Till he was all shining gold,
And oh,
He was lovely to behold!
But in his hands held he a bow

Aimed at me who created
Him. And I said,
'Wouldst murder me
Who am thy Fountainhead!'

Then spoke he the man of gold:
'I will not
Murder thee. I do but
Measure thee. Hold

Thy peace.' And this I did.
But I was curious
Of this so regal head.
'Give thy name!— 'Sir! Genius'"

This is one of the few poems by Villa that assumes the form of a narrative. The raconteur is not the poet but God. Yet the hero of the anecdote is not God but the poet, whose other name, "Genius," is revealed only in the very last climactic line. What gives charm to this poem is the naïveté with which the poet gives his other name or tells God to hold His peace. Villa is not irreverent in this poem, though he may appear so in the first reading. On the contrary, he makes an obeisance to God, because in praising His greatest handiwork, man (who reaches divine heights by being a poet), he actually praises the Creator of man and the poet.
His preoccupation with the subject of love is also expressed in several poems. "Though But Once in Your Life" (p.93) subtilizes the physical aspect of love, but in "One Life Is Not Enough for Love" (p.96), the poet would ask God to

...move His Hand so
Love could have ampler space,
If God would just move His Hand so,
O for Him, praise, praise!

His deep understanding of the emotion of love, as it affects the relationship of man to woman, is revealed in two poems, "Her Face Was without a Fault" (p.83) and "To Ensnare a Proud Love" (p.86). In the first poem he pictures with compassion and comprehension the tragic life of a woman, whose love has been betrayed by man's "inconstant love":

Any man may know
The dazzle and the glow
Of a man's inconstant love.

But she may only move
To claim what he proffers
And that be her universe.

And if soon he move away
She must learn quietly to stay
And merely look and merely look

The way he closes her life's book.
When he is gone
She may pull the curtains down,
He need never know
The boundaries of her woe
Nor that death can be so slow.

The rhyme scheme is interesting. The poem is actually rhymed in couplets, but he combines three lines to make a stanza. Consequently, the penultimate line, "the boundaries of her woe," does not rhyme with any other line in the poem. Upon examination, however, I find that "woe" rhymes with "know" and "slow" in "reversed consonance," a Villan method of rhyming which he explains in Have Come, Am Here, and the discussion of which I shall reserve for the next chapter.

In the second poem, he advises the heart on the best way of "ensnaring a proud love." He says that

The heart must aim its mark
(Proud love, proud love address!)

With firmest, stoic hand.
Fly its arrow without sound
Till it prove imperial command
Or perish splintered on the ground.

The struggle within himself to decide which element to emphasize in his poetry, emotion or truth, beauty or wisdom, the mind or the heart, may be traced in a number of poems in this section. "And Did You See Wisdom" (p.76), a poem written in the form of question
and answer, contemplates the tyranny of wisdom. Though he admits that "the Divine One" (wisdom) is beautiful, he discovers that it can be cruel and inhuman. The final answer follows:

A. I ran and ran from the Divine One,
   I was glad again to feel the earthly sun,
   For though she was most beautiful
   Upon her throne so impeccable —
   O her lovely feet! naked
   And music-shaped
   These were upon a human brother's skull.

In "In the Beauty of My Skull" (p.84), though, he speaks glowingly of the "skull's gold" and comes to the conclusion that the heart can reach its fruition only when it is aided by the intelligence of the skull. Thus a fusion of the two elements is reached:

A day will soon come
That the heart is all stone
And completely numb:
The skull's gold will give it sun,
Till it is beyond the stars' control,
A cove stern and beautiful,
Beyond the pulse's annull:
Hard-flaming like the intellectual skull.

The religious poems may be classified into two categories, those that exalt the beauty and goodness of God and those that seem to exalt his own greatness in comparison with God:

In the first category are such poems as "I Skirted All Around Heaven" (p.67), "All Lovely Little Flowers" (p.78),
and "Poor Little Jesus Went Barefooted" (p.60). In the second category are poems like "God Said, 'I Made a Man"®

5This poem has already been analysed in this chapter.

(p.68), "Crisp Is God's Anger" (p.75), "Never I Knew The Secret" (p.79), and "When I Mimic God" (p.91).

The rare expression of his own humility before God® is found in

6Cf. "When Finally Before God I Disrobed," analysed on p. 89

I skirted all round Heaven,
There was not a nook of dark,
Not a place to lay the head on
For a repose of sleep --

Save within the hand of God,
Where the wounds still tell,
But I was so terribly afraid
Such sleep have no parallel!

Too deep, too deep,
Too royal a dark --
Such a royal landscape
For my head to park!

In "In All Lovely Little Flowers," he sings

the praise of the Mother of God. He compares little flowers to "saints anonymous":

But the white, white rose—
There anonymity ends!
She's Mary, Mary, lovely Mary,
Mother of God, everybody knows!

His attempt at simplicity fails in "Poor Little Jesus Went Barefooted," especially in the last stanza, where each of the three statements is artificially repeated twice:

O little Jesus! O little Jesus!
I wear your shoes, your shoes!
That should have been on your beautiful feet,
That should have been on your beautiful feet!

"Crisp Is God's Anger" seems like an implied criticism of God's mercy and goodness, but it really shows how God can forgive a sinner, no matter how heinous the offense may be. "When I Mimic God" focuses its attention on the infinite understanding of God and the pettiness of man.

I shall conclude this study by quoting one of the most poetic expressions I have read of the process by which thought, an intangible "quality" in the mind, becomes a tangible spoken "quality" called speech:

Silence is Thought Converging,
Unprecipitate, like
Dancer on tight wire balancing,
Transitive, budlike,
Till — her act finished — in
One lovely jump skips
She to the floor, bending
To make her bows, dips

Herself in bright applause —
Then silence is
No more. Now it is the rose
Called Speech.

Note the masterful competence with which he carries the conceit of a dancer balancing herself on a tight rope to represent the formation of a judgment in the mind. When a nexus of two ideas has been made and "thought" is formulated clearly in the mind ("her act finished"), then the mind communicates ("...dips Herself in bright applause") this thought by giving utterance ("Now it is the rose Called Speech.") to this thought as it has originally been conceived in the mind. Villa has, justly included this poem in his third volume of poems.

The poems in this volume, then, represent an almost complete change from the poems in Many Voices. They forecast a complete change in his poetic outlook. A new world, the world of the mind and of the spirit, is revealed with keen perception and, amazingly enough, with easy familiarity. Particularly important are those poems that examine the theme of death, the essential integrity of
his poetic mind, his esthetic poetic creed, and his relationship with God. These poems, which were sent to compete for the Philippine Commonwealth Literary Contest in 1940, reveal how he has attempted to expand his poetic range and to deepen his poetic perceptions. The poet's remark to me about these poems in his letter\(^7\) does not

\(^7\)see page 25

exactly "hit the mark," since he has seen fit to include seven of the poems from this volume in Have Come, Am Here: "Now Let Us Announce Me" (p.40), "First a Poem Must Be Magical" (p.45), "I Did Sternly (Why Not) Ask Very Death" (p.52), "God Said, 'I Made a Man" (p.68), "If My Sun Set in the West" (p.69), "When I Mimic God" (p.91), and "Silence Is Thought Converging" (p.104).

The poems in this volume show that his days of poetic apprenticeship are over. The book he has been preparing for all his life --- to show the Western literary world what a Filipino artist and poet can offer --- is now ready. Have Come, Am Here is that book.
CHAPTER IV

HAVE COME, AM HERE

In a letter to me, dated July 2, 1947, José García Villa reveals the background of the writing of the first volume of his poetry published in the United States. He aptly entitles the book, Have Come, Am Here. ¹


I say "aptly" because the title indicates that Villa at last feels that "he has arrived"; that he considers the poems in this volume worthy of himself, the man, and above all, of the poet. In his letter he says:

"Have Come, Am Here" was five years in the writing; from 1938 to 1942; and was chosen from 35 manuscript note-books containing approximately 1,500 poems; but the book contains only 127 poems.

One can see, then, what this book means to Villa. This book represents the harvest of years of toil, of hunger, of loneliness, and of deprivation. It is the result of his painstaking poetic study, reading, practice, and constant revision. The book is Villa, and Villa is limited by the book.

Yet Have Come, Am Here would not have been possible without the early Many Voices or the later
Poems By Doveglion. As we know, both these books were published in Manila, Philippines; consequently, with the limited circulation that they have enjoyed, they are comparatively unknown to Western readers and critics. To understand the achievement of Have Come, Am Here, one must realize the ineffectual attempt that is Many Voices. The poems in the second volume, which have been examined in the second chapter, do touch on so many poems in the third that the latter volume does not draw from me such ecstatic praise as the leading American and British critics have generally shown. Reading these poems is like treading on familiar ground. Yet there is no doubt that the ground seems deeper and richer than ever before.

An analysis of the main themes developed in this volume shows that in the main the poet has not strayed far from the subjects treated in the first two volumes, particularly the second. His adherence to familiar themes indicates that he has been wise in his decision since he can exploit and has in the past exploited these themes with consummate skill and considerable insight.

There are quite a few poems here, for example, which touch upon the earlier theme of love, as manifested in the physical aspects of sex. The approach, as in the second volume, is usually oblique and tangential rather
than direct; the use of symbolism refines and subtilizes the theme. Such familiar erotic symbols as "rose," "tiger," "flower," "bee," etc., have been augmented by such words as "peacock," "skull," "leopard," and the magic "God." His evocation of the Cummings symbols, especially of the iterated words, "tiger," "flower," "leopard," and "white" may be discerned in such subtle erotic poems as 7, 8, 9, 12, 27, 32, 35, 37, and 46. These poems follow with clever variations the symbolic pattern of Cummings' Poem 70, the first eleven lines of which sound almost like Villa:

nearer : breath of my breath : take not thy tingling
limbs from me : make my pain their crazy meal
letting thy tigers of smooth sweetness steal slowly in dumb blossoms of new mingling:
deeper : blood of my blood : with upward-cringing
swiftness plunge these leopards of white dream in the glad flesh of my fear : more neatly ream
this pith of darkness : carve an evilfringing
flower of madness on gritted lips
and on sprawled eyes squiring with light insane chisel the killing flame that dizzily grips.

Villa has discarded the near direct approach exemplified by this early Cummings poem, and in these erotic poems he manages to suggest rather than to state. Take Poem 27, which touches on and subtilizes the sexual theme:
her day-rose is much sweet
her kisses are most love
such kissaness is not told
withouten her rose's fold

but birds bees best lovers
brave lovers aseeke more
a seekness as of God's word
their loverness hath sword

for girlshape has girlgraces
of day-rose and night-rose
though day-rose be much sweet
yet night-rose is sevenly sweet

there where her night begins
there be her goldest roset rose
that in her deep wisdom knows
boygrace will knight her Rose

O there where her night begins
there be her wondrous wondrous rose
O withouten her night-rose
I be forlornly aloss aloss

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{2}}\textit{Also published with "I Can No More Hear Love's" and "I Was Speaking of Oranges to a Lady" as "Three Poems" in}\textit{ Poetry, LVIII, (June,1941), 136-138}

There is surely cleverness of a very high order in this
poem, though the theme is one that has been exploited
with sickening iteration in the first volume. Elliot
Paul, in his review, says about this poem that "Mr.
Villa pulls off one of the most erotic and highly
descriptive and most stimulating verses of recent years."
David Daiches, however, in his critical remarks, cites
this particular poem as an example of Villa's posing. Daiches objects to the "messing around with coined words, archaisms, and phony compounds" and he considers the third stanza "excessive." One critic's meat is another's poison.

The comment by Daiches is apt, I believe, when he points out Villa's "opposite fault -- simplicity carried to extreme silliness," quoting the third stanza of Poem 7, another erotic poem, to illustrate his statement:

He'll be broken He'll be broken He'll be broken
By my force of love He'll be broken
And when I reach your side O Eve
You'll break me you'll break me you'll break me.

The whole poem is indeed iteration of the most obvious kind: the first lines of the second and the third stanzas sound hysterical rather than emphatic and intense as Villa must have intended them to be. Here are the first and second stanzas of this poem, which chiefly exploit the magic symbol of "God" without motivation, and show puerile affectation:

Between God's eyelashes I look at you,
Contend with the Lord to love you,
In this house without death I break His skull
I ache, I ache to love you.

I will batter God's skull God's skull God's skull!

I will batter it till He love you
And out of Him I'll dash I'll dash
To thy coasts, O mortal flesh.
More subtle and restrained is Poem 32, a
sonnet which exemplifies a successful tangential and
indirect approach to the sexual theme:

than whose roses. And if her love be musical
as star more proudly moves than water
being by God's cause her diviner sister
move then to me brightly her body's vessel
and all its secrecies and all its dangers
than whose roseness there is no equal
but I, lone emperor of the gentlest tigers
the limbs' wild music, strange and beautiful.

I am more than God's equal — I am Love's
most equal. I am he that moves to kiss
her very soul, her very deep: who weaves
of her the bright banner of immortality's
most honor. I am he that through her shuttles
:Lover, divinest Lover: Father, Creator of
Immortal Battles.

It may be readily observed that this sonnet,
like those in the second volume, deviates in many ways
from the traditional form. Technically the sonnet is
far from being satisfactory; the lines vary too much in
metrical length, particularly the last line which con-
tains eighteen syllables; the iambic pattern is lost
by the use of too many other metrical variations as
the anapest, the spondee, and even the trochee, as in the
word "Lover" in the last line; while the rhyming of the
words "love's" and "weaves" can hardly be justified.

Yet as a study in the musicality of words and
in the oblique treatment of its theme, this sonnet
reveals the fullness of poetic conception and expression.
Note the startling, suggestive three-word sentence in the first line, which gives a musical tone to the poem. Listen to the subdued "internal" music of the second line. The description of her feminine "roseness" in the first six lines is balanced by his declaration of the masculine "emperor of the gentlest tigers" who is "most equal" to "Love." Masculine superiority is indicated by the disparate epithets, "diviner sister" in the third line, and "divinest Lover" in the fourteenth line. Though such stock adjectives as "strange," "beautiful," and "bright" weaken the associative connotations, this poem is more suggestive than direct.

Elizabeth Drew's comment on Wallace Stevens's early work which, she says, shows "a particular competence in the light 'little language' of lyrical rhythms,"

\[3\] \(\text{Op. cit., p.72}\)

applies as well to Poem 19. In this lyric, called by Daiches "that perfect little lyric," Villa shows the meaning and the intimacy that love holds for him by describing the "death in life" without it:
I can no more hear Love's Voice. No more moves
The mouth of her. Birds
No more sing. Words
I speak return lonely.
Flowers I pick turn ghostly.
Fire that I burn glows
Pale. No more blows
The wind. Time tells
No more truth. Bells
Ring no more in me.
I am all alone singly.
Lonely rests my head.
-- O my God! I am dead,

The rhymed couplet form checks the easy flow
of the bold declarative statements. The simplicity of
the lines builds intensity to the very last line, where
the climax appears with startling directness. It is the
same kind of climax we have seen in some of his sonnets,
especially in "This Thing So Beautiful and High," "Hark!
But I Do Not Think It is" and "Always -- Upon the Brows
of Death Dance I."

As in the second volume, there is a group of
poems here which examine love or beauty in their relation-
ship with himself, the poet. The viewpoint is always
subjective; in fact, most of the "Divine poems" in this
volume are but affirmations of himself in terms of the
Divine. Even in Many Voices there are poems charged
with this belief in his own greatness, such as those in
the "Songs of Explanation" poems (pp.117-129) and in
"Testament" (p.191). Frederick J. Hoffman has pointed
out to me Villa's conscious self-praise in many poems. Babette Deutsch, in her review, says that "he is more interested in himself than in the universe; and he greets the world with but decent urbanity." Federico Mangahas's comment on Villa's self-affirmation in introduction to Poems By Dovegion perhaps gives the answer:

It was quite one thing to hear him say that he was the greatest painter or poet and another to hear him say it. To hear him was like getting the naked truth, very much newly-born, no diapers interfering. Whether posterity would be interested to settle the question one way or the other is not my business now; but I shall perhaps forever look in vain for a simpler simplicity in affirming greatness like Dovegion does. He either has heard strange voices or he just knows and that's the end of it."

Poem 4 is a typical example of his naive belief in himself:

Nobody yet knows who I am, Nor myself may; Nor yet what I deal, Nor yet where I lead.

But in my skull already bright, And death in rose attire, And in my mouth already star And jewels firmly wrought.

And in my eyes a sweetness Almost fierce as the sun, And in my ears already music Hearing the future kiss.
Yet myself knows myself not,
Is it I have forgotten?
Yet Finality is very near —
I rush, I run, I run!

Yet even in this forthright declaration of self, Villa manages to be original and fascinating. The second stanza is suggestively Dali-esque in its word painting; the third stanza is reminiscent of the definitions in its unexpected combination of different sensations; the last line, fittingly written in iambic trimeter, suggests the speed with which he runs to meet his "Finality."

Not only in poetic diction, or in imagery, or in the "language of feeling" is Villa original and daring. With great pride, he writes at the back of the book:

The author is pleased to introduce in this book a new method of rhyming, a method which has never been used in the history of English poetry, nor in any poetry. This method is used in poems 1, 4, 9, 12, 16, 45, and 47.\(^5\)

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\(^5\)Page 151.

Villa goes on to explain that this new method of rhyming is based on the principle of "reversed consonance," which means that "the last sounded consonants of the last syllable, or the last principal consonants of a
word, are reversed for the corresponding rhyme." Thus a rhyme for near would be run; or rain, green, reign. For light - tell, tall, tale, steal, etc." Villa has taken Poem I to illustrate his method of rhyming, but I choose Poem 12, a suggestive erotic poem, for my analysis:

| Lean in my eyes and loved me. | a |
| Lean in my throat and spoke. | b |
| Dared my grovelling landscape. | b |
| It to a dazzeling diamond made. | a |
| Thighed me to its lust of light! | c |
| Thrust me to its deep of pride! | d |
| Blocked the only mortal door. | d |
| Where Anonymity in might steal: | c |
| Leaned, dared, thighed, thrust, | e |
| Blocked my descending dust! | e |

In the first stanza, d-followed-by-m in the words "loved" and "me" in the first line is rhymed with m-followed-by-d in the word "made" in the fourth line; p-followed-by-k in "spoke" in the second line is rhymed with c-followed-by-p in "landscape" in the third line.

In the second stanza, l-followed-by-t in "light" in the first line is rhymed with t-followed-by-l in "steal" in the fourth line; r-followed-by-d in "pride" in the second line is rhymed with d-followed-by-r in "door" in the third line.

In the couplet, d-followed-by-t in the words "thighed" and "thrust" is rhymed with d-followed-by-t.
in "dust." No "reversed consonance" here.

It may be noticed that this "reversed consonance" is not based strictly on consonantal inversion since the c in the second line of the first stanza is rhymed with k in the second line because c has a k sound in the word "landscape."

With unusual restraint, Villa concludes his explanation by saying:

That this new method of rhyming can be used successfully, the author demonstrates in the poems he has mentioned. In the author's belief, this new rhyme method is subtler and stricter, and less obtrusive on the ear, than ordinary consonance.6

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6Page 152.

In general the critics have taken kindly to Villa's rhyming innovation. Marianne Moore after analysing the "reversed consonance" of the first stanza of Poem 9, says that "the delicacy with force of such writing reminds one of the colors of black ink from a hogs' hair brush in the hands of a Chinese master." Babette Deutsch briefly says that "this invention however curious, is perhaps the least token of his skill." Peter Munro Jack remarks that "it is ingenious and effective." With critical perception, he adds that "it scarcely occurs to
the reader except as part of the musical sense that Mr. Villa always shows. It comes naturally to the ear; but it is another sign that this is a poet of instinctive genius who creates knowingly his own communication."

There is a series of poems in the third and fourth sections that shows the influence of the Symbolists and the Imagists as well as that of Marianne Moore, Wallace Stevens and other avant-garde poets of the past decades. I refer to those poems which use such symbols as tiger, leopard, giraffe, strawberries, blackbirds, etc. The thought pattern in these poems is implicit rather than explicit; the idea is to "feel" the emotional, intellectual, and connotative associations suggested by these symbols. John Sparrow points out the logical conclusion to which this kind of poetry will lead the modern poet:

Associations are evoked not merely by hearing a particular word, but also by the thought of the object which the word is used to indicate...modern writers are inclined either to give such free reign to the associations between ideas in their own minds that their meaning is irrevocably obscured, or else to abandon intelligible structure entirely, and to put together quite illogical collections of words and of ideas what those words and those ideas convey.

Take Poem 33 in Section III as an example:

I think, yes, a leopard in Dufy blue would
Be incomparable. Provided his eyes are green
And see death like two flowers. Myself would

Bring him me all in dazzling gold. Lie
At his feet for God's sake awaiting death. The
Blue paw will have its incomparable law. The

Green eyes incomparable words. What voice
This blue this green can muster is weight of
Immensest love. And I am love myself awaiting

This immensity. O fall quick, pure feet, pure
Eyes. Fall heavy, immortal leopard. Far death
Lift me, compare me to your incomparability.

The "I" in the first line is not a man but a
woman speaking: The word "leopard," as we have seen,
is a stock erotic symbol. "Dufy" would particularize
the kind of "blue," a color which in turn may suggest
masculine warmth. "Dufy blue" is then fittingly
referred to "leopard." The color "green" suggests a
cool color, hence it is associated with the feminine,
suggesting an invitation to the warm color, "blue."
"Dazzling gold" suggests opulence and power, and thus,
the leopard is to be brought in all its "dazzling gold."
The combination of the colors "blue" and "green" in the
second line of the third stanza suggests a fusion, a
blending of the two colors; therefore, the "weight of
immensest love." The last stanza asks for the consummation
of "death." The woman will then be "lifted up" to the
"incomparability" of the "leopard in Dufy blue."

In Poem 41, however, we have a poem that is
primarily a study in the musicality of words:

To make icecream chrysantheme
Mix Christ and chrysanthemeums

In a bowl of turkiz amethyst
To make icecream chrysantheme.

But since Christ is not so easy
(You must hunt him first among
The white shadows of black birds
With a mask upon your shoulder

And a rose upon your eyes!)—
Since Christ is not so easy

If you come Christless from the
Hunt, though chrysanthemeums be

Gold and bright as poems, and
Garry hugest themes -- naught

Can they avail, ah they will fail,
And then your lips must say

Goodbye, goodbye, goodbye
To icecream chrysantheme.

The key words in this poem are evidently
"icecream" and "chrysantheme." Though this poem does
not have the same thème as Wallace Stevens’s "The Emperor
of Ice Cream" the effect of the pure sound of the key
word "icecream" is also striven for. Elliot Paul in
his critical review goes into eustacies over this poem.
He says:

Those who remember Gertrude Stein's song
which concludes, "Toasted Susie is my ice-
cream," will understand Mr. Villa's pre-
occupation with that word which for pure
sound is one of the most arresting in our
language. It evokes its own texture which
is rare, even in a language as rich and
precise as ours.

No. 41 is one of the most poignant
emblems of English since Swinburne. Some-
how, as I read Mr. Villa's last four
stanzas they gave me a feeling which sent
me straight out into the kitches for one
precious drink of the Carlos Tercero of
which there is so little left in the world.

Although I agree that the poem, especially
in its last two lines, succeeds in conveying a musicality
of words that does leave a very pleasant sensation on
the tongue and in the ear, I will not go to the extent
of taking "a precious drink of the Carlos Tercero," if
there is any at home.

Poem 42, I think, is the best of these
"symbolist" poems. Expressed in terms of modern symbols,
it is a suggestive, provocative description of dawn and
twilight:
I have observed pink monks eating blue raisins.
And I have observed blue monks eating pink raisins.
Studiously have I observed.

Now, this is the way a pink monk eats a blue raisin:
Pink is he and it is blue and the pink
Swallows the blue. I swear this is true.

And the way a blue monk eats a pink raisin is this:
Blue is he and it is pink and the blue
Swallows the pink. And this also is truth.

Indeed I have observed and myself have partaken
Of blue and pink raisins. But my joy was different:
My joy was to see the blue and the pink counterpointing.

The key symbols are the colors "pink" and "blue"
and the nouns "monk" and "raisins." The color "pink"
suggests rose-tinted light; the color "blue" suggests
some dark-hued color. "Monk" is usually associated with
a hooded figure; "raisins" may suggest cloudy configura-
tions in the sky. Hence the first line refers to dawn:
the rays of the rising sun ("pink monks") dispel the dark-
ness of the night ("blue raisins"). The second line re-
fers to twilight: gathering darkness ("blue monks")
engulfs fading light ("pink raisins").

The second stanza, therefore, is a graphic
description of dawn, "pink swallowing the blue." The
third stanza is a concise portrait of twilight, "blue
swallowing the pink." The fourth stanza expresses the
poet's appreciation of that time of the day (which may either be dawn or twilight) when light and darkness are about to merge into each other ("the blue and the pink counterpointing.").

Note how truly inspired are the symbols used here to represent dawn and twilight. Villa describes with the least number of words; he uses his symbols with unerring accuracy; the result is a poem that is modern in the sense of being up-to-date, most suggestive in its allusions, and provocative in that it challenges the reader to unravel the meaning of the poem.

The "divine" poems comprise the greater and more important of the book. In these poems, there seems to be an apparent change in his concept of man's relationship with God. No longer does he directly extol the beauty and the goodness of God as he has done in such earlier poems as "Poor Little Jesus Went Barefooted," "When Finally Before God I Disrobed," and "Hark! But I Do Not Think It Is." Instead these poems with rather pungent iteration will make God human; they will ask God to submit to him, the poet, rather than he submit and make obeisance to his Creator and God.

Yet I believe that in these "divine" poems, considered as a whole, Villa does not so much proclaim
his own greatness and power as a human being as he implicitly exalts the greater glory of God by his paradoxical refutation of the divinity of God. In bringing God down to man, in "humanizing" God, he implies that man comes closer to God; man approaches divinity; and God becomes more human and therefore, more approachable as a being. Thus the gap separating lowly man from an apparently unattainable God is narrowed and, at least, the crossing is made possible.

In the words of Louise Bogan, Villa's "method was directly opposed to that of Blake, Thoreau, Dickinson, and Donne, all of whom, supreme mystics that they were, built up visions from a particular object, as distinguished from starting at the empyrean and working down."

Also in this connection, Peter Munro Jack points out in his review that Villa brings God down to him instead of ascending to God, that "God has to be instructed in humanity," and that the poet then "is the instrument of this instruction of God." He also adds that "the philosophy is not yet convincing. The poet has not yet replaced God." These statements are true enough, but I do not believe that Jack goes deep enough in his analysis of Villa's philosophy. The
poet does not and will not replace God. He tries to bring God closer to him by seeking some common ground where humanity and divinity will meet. That "the philosophy is not yet convincing" I admit. Villa has not yet constructed a cosmos out of his startling doctrine to approach near to God; Harvey Breit is right in complaining that as yet there are no "criteria."

Villa's position in this book touches George Herbert's. As Helen C. White says,

The most distinctive thing about George Herbert's God, however, is his yearning for man...It is Herbert's apprehension of God's yearning for man that enables him to do what so few seventeenth-century English writers can do, put into God's mouth words that are what He might conceivably use.8

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By implication, Villa's God yearns for man, but the difference is that he puts into the mouth of man words that God might conceivably use. Thus, by a reversal of position --- man speaking like God --- man is made to approach a step nearer to God.

Poem 60 is one of the best poems in this volume. It is also the key poem to his paradoxical approach to God:
The way my ideas think me
Is the way I unthink God.
As in the name of heaven I make hell
That is the way the Lord says me.

And all is adventure and danger
And I roll Him off cliffs and mountains
But fast as I am to push Him off
Fast am I to reach Him below.

And it may be then His turn to push me off,
I wait breathless for that terrible second:
And if He push me not, I turn around in anger:
"O art though the God I would have!"

Then He pushes me and I plunge down, down!
And when He comes to help me up
I put my arms around Him, saying, "Brother,
Brother."...This is the way we are.

In reference to this poem Jack says, "there
is a direct appeal to experience with God or Jesus as
the center of his life." In the first stanza, Villa
declares that man cannot attain God by taking thought;
in another connection he says, "Not by the mind, O
Blind" but by implication — by Love.

In the second stanza, he describes the
eternal struggle between God and man ("And all is
adventure and danger") as man not only refuses to
accept his Divine grace but also tries to push God
off the "cliffs and mountains" of his heart.
In the third stanza, he says that it is now God's turn to push man away from Him, and the stanza ends with man in anger; God refuses to "push" him away from Him because of His great love for man.

In the last stanza God does "push" man away from Him; He removes the shadow of His Hand that has all this time shielded man from spiritual "danger." Man is lost until God succors Him from the "depths" of despair, and man becomes once more a "brother" and close friend of God.

Through the analogy of the continuous battle between God and man for the possession of man's soul, this poem reflects God's love and His mercy in not deserting man though he may time and again turn Him away.

Poem 99 makes Villa's position clearer:

Now I will tell you the Future of God. The future of God is

Man. God aspired before and Failed. Jesus was too much

God. Since God is moving Towards Man, and Man is moving

Towards God -- they must meet Sometime. 0 but God is always

A Failure! That Time is the End of the world. When God

And Man do meet -- they will Be so bitter they will not speak.
In this poem Villa clearly says that God must "come down" to the level of man if He is to succeed in winning his love. Man too must strive toward God. Hence the end of the world will be the meeting of God and man. But when they do meet—and here is the paradox—both will "be so bitter they will not speak."

Behind the paradox lies the fact that man is too human, God too divine. Hence the mutual "bitter" feelings.

The rest of the "divine" poems are variations on the same theme, man's approach to God by making Him "more human," by bringing Him down to his level. Poem 49, for example, which starts with the line, "God Said, 'I Made a Man" 9 indirectly exalts the greatness of God.

9 This poem has already been analysed in Chapter III.

Poem 72, "Then When He said no I knew yes," is a clever study in the ellipsis of words as well as of thought. It also reflects the eternal Knowledge of God.

Then when He said no I knew yes.
There was no reason to say yes.
He said no.
But I knew yes.
I went ahead.
He said no, I knew yes.
I went ahead.
There was no reason not
I knew yes.

Knowing yes, going ahead, I knew no.
There was no reason not
He said no
I remembered He said so.

In the first stanza God told him not to do
what he had wanted to do. There was no human reason
to account for his act, but then he just knew that
he should.

In the second stanza he did what he thought
he knew he should do. There was no reason to account
for his act, but then he just knew he should.

Finally since he knew he should, he did. But
now he realized that he should not have acted so. His
mind had seen no reason why he should not act the way
he did. But God in His infinite Knowledge had told him
not to do it, and he remembered only too well that He
had said so.

Villa, it may be observed, purposely does not
specify what this "act" is. Thus, the appeal of the
poem becomes universal rather than merely personal to
the poet.

The conclusion of the other "divine" poems
is always the same: a paradoxical presentation of man
speaking as if he were God, bringing God down to his own level, instructing Him in the ways of humanity, in order to bring Him closer and nearer to man, to understand His divinity, to possess Him. The approach may seem blasphemous, but, as Peter Munro Jack says, "it springs from a deep religious feeling, best when it is least dogmatic."

Harvey Breit has complained in his review that these poems are "willful and arbitrary, even repetitious." But then, when has Villa in his three volumes of poetry not been "willful, arbitrary" and most "repetitious"? The early Villan faults, such as crudity of expression, experiments in poetic form and language that are too extreme or too obscure, and the worship of the emotion of love for its own sake, are no longer found here. The faults lie not in paucity of expression, but in the excess of imagination. His search for the unusual word has resulted in such compounding as "loverness," "desistance," and "couplement" or in such archaic words as "aseeken," "withouten," and "burnen." He uses words like "God," "luminance," "rose," "skull," "peacock," and "love" with such boring iteration that their very meanings and associations are lost.
Yet this book is assuredly the work of a mature poet. The critics have rightly proclaimed

In order that this chapter may not have too many unnecessary footnotes, I have not indicated the magazine or newspaper where the critics' remarks about this book are made. The bibliography at the end of this thesis will furnish the required data.

José Garcia Villa, as Irwin Edman has done, "by all odds the most original and genuine poet to have appeared in this country in almost a generation." The soaring imagery, the subtle phraseology, the intense feeling fused with deep thought of a born poet, are displayed here. His erotic poems are so subtilized that they delight, suggest, and tease more than they offend or repel. His "symbolist" poems are word paintings in miniature that a Dali or a Chagall (his favorite painter) might have wanted to paint. His "divine" poems, as I have noted, reveal one of the most unusual and paradoxical approaches of man to God. Moreover, they are expressed with such passionate intensity and authoritative strength that even if the book contained nothing but these poems, it would still be worthy of high praise.

The poetic growth and the deepening maturity of Villa emerge more clearly, therefore, when set against the background of his early poems. He has definitely
escaped the cul-de-sac of the early romantic hedonism into which he strayed. If some of these poems are erotic, they are subtilized, they suggest rather than state, and the approach is tangential. There are only one or two poems here that affect the Cummings typographical vagaries and the "simple" language of Gertrude Stein; and even they, like Poem 14 and Poem 78, make sense. The too irregular variations in metrical rhymes and rhythms have been replaced by a more strict adherence to formal patterns. He has even introduced a new method of rhyming, which, he proudly claims, "has never been used in the history of English poetry, nor in any poetry." He always reveals an intimate association with the beauty and loveliness of poetry. The intensely personal and emotional quality of his poems has been so adequately expressed that Peter Munro Jack has been moved to say that Villa writes "as if he had really invented the language of feeling." Norman Macleod, who knew Villa when he was just starting to write, tells me that this book shows that "his (poetic) growth is short of phenomenal."

Perhaps the best way to express the meaning of Have Come, Am Here to its author is to quote the words of Villa himself in his letter to me, dated June 20, 1947:
... I have a spiritual biography: which I cannot put in so many words, but which is found expressed in my work, especially in *Have Come, Am Here*. That is not just a collection of poems — it is a portrait of a man, a self-portrait. It is not a professional book (except in the sense of craftsmanship) — it is the product of my living; not the result of a desire to write a book — it is the result of a spiritual life. No matter how many books or volumes I write, I shall still have written only one book — the book of my life. And that is my true biography.
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