
**A HISTORY OF MODERN
POETRY: From the 1890s to
the High Modernist Mode**
By David Perkins
Harvard, 1976, 623 pp. \$17.50
L of C 76-6874
ISBN 0-674-39941-2

First of two volumes, this history of modern British and American poetry examines the period beginning at the turn of the century, when poets moved away from the Romantic legacy through political utterance to diffuse expressions of individual consciousness. Perkins, professor of English at Harvard, provides a broad overview of critical trends and major aesthetic approaches. His treatment of most individual careers is brief, but he gives more space to Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot, two of the three giants whom he considers to have been the shapers of modern poetry. This volume breaks off with their early work, however. Only the output of W. B. Yeats, the third of his giants, is analyzed *in toto*, to his death in 1939. Yeats's life work, in the author's view, reflects the whole period, culminating in (Perkins-defined) "modernism." A nourishing, readable reference work.

TALES OF POTOSI
By Bartolomé Arzáns de
Orsúa y Vela. Edited by
R. C. Padden
Brown Univ., 1975, 209 pp.
\$12.50
L of C 74-6574
ISBN 0-87057-144-3

Arzáns (1676-1736), a chronicler of Old Peru, wrote the three-volume *Historia de la Villa Imperial de Potosí*, a year-by-year account of his Andean hometown from its beginning with the discovery of silver in 1545 through its prime as the New World's largest city to its decline in the late 17th and 18th centuries. He enlivened the narrative with brief tales of the city's lusty inhabitants. These stories, translated by Frances López-Morillas and excerpted by Padden, a professor at Brown, center on Potosí's miracles, scandals, and ethnic strife (transplanted Basques against transplanted Castilians, Estremadurans, Andalusians, Creoles). The sporting priest who wore gold undergarments and robes of pearls and perfumed velvet ("he was all one great scent, so that folk knew from some distance away that Don Francisco Aguirre was approaching") is but one of the notables whose eccentricities are recorded, along with heroic kindnesses and dramatic conversions, violent crimes, the "unchastity of high-born women." Often moralistic, in the accepted literary fashion of his time, Arzáns' *Tales* bring to life a vanished, baroque Spanish America.