

A CHRONICLE OF LIVING LITERATURE

A PAVAN . . .

CYNICS and ROMANTICS

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JAMES BOYER MAY

TRACE

EDITOR

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A READING EDITION

ABOUT THIS EDITION

This reading edition preserves the issue's poetry, fiction, essays, correspondence, reviews, and other literary writing in their printed order. Advertising, subscription matter, mastheads, the magazine's own contents pages, annual indexes, address lists, and the running trade directory are omitted as reference apparatus.

The text was checked against newly rendered source pages. Poetry lineation, stanza spacing, shaped indents, and hanging continuations for long lines are retained; prose continuations are joined without false paragraph indents. Conjectural readings are enclosed in square brackets, while original spelling and punctuation are otherwise kept.

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THE CULT OF OVER-SIMPLIFICATION (OR) A PAVAN FOR THE POETRY & PROSE OF THE IMPOVERISHED

by Curtis Zahn

The trumpets from the brass section on the Left have been in strident voice lately; these are times when the long schmaltz reign of the violins is being challenged — not only by dissonants, but by actual discord. And there are, here and there, a few new notes, new words — sometimes flat, often dull, but very rarely very sharp. And the Kostellanitz-Modivani kind of sound seems to have gotten involved in a punctuation war with sheer, unguarded bass. And meanwhile, the new Petrillo of Poetry, Mr Lawrence Lipton, has generously offered to take over; he's ready to move in with his boys and straighten out the jazz department; indeed, there exists no greater authority concerning the persuasive power of drum-beating and wind-blowing composition. Trouble is, most of his boys have joined the Union without ever having learned to read a note, write a word, or improvise a thought. The New Revolution — if it is a war — is not a cold, but a Cool one . . .

In a time when Americans openly go around with closed minds, it is not surprising that one-dimensional writing has caught the present caprice of twentieth century (chronological, at least) adults. Chrome's splendour and fission's awe have gleamed too big for too long; increasingly, the populace embraced a wistful urge to scratch for the raw iron underneath — though, of course, not if it's going to take a little time, a little energy, a little thinking. And the alleged NEW WRITING serves the purpose admirably — instead of 'yup' they are saying No. Black is just as black as ever, except that it's white now. The heroes and villains have swapped uniforms, and the sloth has supplanted the lion in the hero legends. And the New Writing's real simple — see? No double-hinged dangling participles with abstract entendre. Few words containing more than four letters. And best of all, there are no Thoughts to give anyone trouble. Whoever's capable of wrestling with the cerebral protogyrations of Walt

Disney, De Witt Wallace and Orphan Annie can savvee the mumbling generation's new escutcheon. Especially, if one learns to substitute s—t for shucks, and agrees that the people at the bottom should be turned loose to run the country out of the tops of their heads.

The trouble is, I see no difference between the topside and the underside, except that one used to wear a grey flannel suit, and the other still goes on wearing sandals and beards. I don't think that Mr Lipton's boys — fitted out with violin cases and turned loose as artists — are very loyal to any cause except the right of the individual to behave as a jerk and get away with it in public. With a little hard work and discipline, any of them could bolt overnight to TIME magazine and, albeit wistfully, confess the real gone days when they were innocent young misguided sheep snatched into the corral by professional zealots. And paid handsomely for that wordage, no doubt. Indeed, I'll go farther and state that the new cult of over-simplification is playing beautiful tunes for the Luce legions without the foresight to copyright; both factions have undertaken to sum up mankind's problems in a few neat, real-simple capsules. Both have trumpeted human thought into dismissive slogans, phrases, labels, pigeonholes. ('If you're not a this, you're a that.' 'Whoever thinks those thoughts is one of them.') And now — once both groups have conspired to educate the population into one-dimensional simplification — there remains only the problem of who's going to be boss. Only I don't think it's much of a problem — the two enemies are too alike from where I sit. It's like Communism versus Capitalism — each endeavouring to persuade the liberal, the individual, that all his troubles are attributable to the other. And each is the same species of enemy. On the Zahn chart of human morality, integrity, unselfishness, they are as alike as the new automobiles, and certainly no more geared to the needs of the people.

But, besides the conspiracy to salve certain wounded citizens with the illusion that their troubles are all neatly tied up in a package carried by someone else — ('the world did this to me' or 'the communists did this to me') — or, at least whatever in hell's wrong with the world isn't their fault. But, unfortunately, the way things are is our fault, and the crusade should start somewhere in the bedroom. But. Added to the danger that the Luce-Lipton wind section is trying to make people grow up by walking backwards into infantilism, is the real damage to literature on the intellectual level. A lot of readers have stifled polite yawns and put aside their copies of COLLIER'S, TRUE, THE SATURDAY EVENING POST and, perhaps, even CONFIDENTIAL. Reason: they've heard the trumpets of the new Hacksters. They're curious about the browbeatings of the beat boys. They anticipate being caught in the middle of a surprise and sent off on a brand new literary odyssey — something gutsy, like Mike Hammer with social significance. Or Orphan Annie waving the flag of the Third Internationale. But, after laying down a perfectly violent little story in one of the Girlie magazines, what do they get? A dull pedantic shot at primitivism (or infantilism) by some deaf, blind, and dumb paranoid who got his finger stuck in the key marked 'F' on his typewriter.

This is literature? They've turned the clock back so far that World War II is still in the future. This is coming to grips with the problems that face every individual? This is throwing light upon the shadows kept dark for so long by the slick magazines? There is more to a revolution than turning one's self inside-out on a public sidewalk. Nor do I think Jazz and drugs are the solution to the common ailment. I see no difference between the Social Lie and the Anti-social Lie, other than that the former pretends to be pushing civilisation ahead, whilst the latter would take us back to the womb, or on down to the Simian stage.

Curiously enough, a surprising number of Little Magazine editors have fallen for the new gimmick. True, they've always been circulation-starved — or leastwise starved — but they were, originally, the champions of individualism. I continue to note stories and poems that are a kind of literary diarrhoea, a purge of art, imitative of other mundane and actually rather conventional writings. Some of it purports to be soul-searching; but the quest has turned up nothing. There is a fair amount of violence — as much, at least, as found in the other escape magazines — and the writer's lack of gifts is seasoned over with crudity, perversion, and a few words that would shock the subscribers to *READER'S DIGEST*. Of course, the whole thing is hopefully framed by what is alleged to be 'realism.' Because it is dull, it is assumed, at least, to be 'honest.' But dullness is only honest if the writer is dull; and while I'll not begrudge them this one plaudit, I nevertheless must point out that even the simplest-minded Rotarianesque Legionaire has about him zones of honesty. Honesty is not enough, and it is only one of art's requirements; honesty limited by one-dimensional thinking — i.e., ignorance — is but a very small part of a part-truth.

Yet, the gifted, experimental, avant-garde writing of the pre-war period continues to be crowded off the pages by the prosaic mumblings of the so-called Silent Generation which — when it finally did talk — turned out to have nothing to say, and saying it badly. The peep-hole curiosity of certain readers may cause them to lay aside *WHIZZ BANG* and take up certain Little Magazines, but I doubt that the latter can sustain the bid — the writing's simply not gifted enough, and the editors are not in a position to buck censorship as well as the big-league outfits. And for the average U.S. reader who, finally, is striking out on a talent search amongst the Little Magazines, there will be sufficient disappointment to turn him around and send him back to his TV set.

Television, after all, is the one permanent force that is going to alter our prose; television is precisely emulating the patterns, mores, formulae, and tabus of the slick sheets — the general magazines — and doing it exactly as badly. As one-dimensionally. The result is that fiction has suffered a serious defeat. This is good. Because the literature that will survive (if Lipton and his boys haven't killed off all the readers before that time) will have to be more, not less, literary. Writing will have to go into the 42-tone scale; it will have to move forward experimentally, just as have music, painting, and dance. It will have to give the reader an Experience — not just shock, crudity, violence, or other escape devices, but an experience in tones, sounds, textures, invention. In short, the antithesis of the over-simplified tirades of the people romantically called Disaffiliates. There is a difference between abdominal and abominable prose; but a lot of readers and writers have been allowing Fox Studios to dictate the formula for redblooded, all-American virility — worship of an overgrown, blustering, immature boy-child; toughness— worn inside out. But the really strong men are tough on themselves and gentle with others. They're fighting the Revolution where it starts; with the individual himself. The New Writing that survives shall have to be as complex as society is complex. It will have to be selective, yet play the tune on numerous levels — abstract, impressionistic, surrealistic (satirical). It will be forceful to the degree it refrains from employing half-truths to combat the big lie. It will be effective, in many instances, by its abstrusiveness — its non-objectivity— stimulating, but not guiding, the reader. By raising questions instead of giving answers. Most of the other arts do this now. They arouse the viewer into reacting — but permit him to bring along his own thinking. Conclusion: I reiterate — the cult of over-simplification is giving aid and comfort to the very evils it alleges it is combating. And on two or three levels. If you

have to bribe converts with the enemy's recipe, then you have no converts — only a statistical nonentity, a vacuous horde that can be bribed back again at any time. Certain of the Little Magazine editors and publishers would do well to re-examine their writers and readers, and see if they've really gotten anything they want to keep.

TOWARDS PRINT

by the Editor of Trace

(Concluding the prior essay : What is the Answer?)

To repeat — the valid changes which keep language alive are not under attack. The sharpened lance is for the muddled sickly sorts of change — the deteriorative sorts indicating insufficient knowledge of tradition to enable significant experimentation in the first place, and often ‘accidentally’ composed by irresponsible writers who do not realise that language is a contrivance for social communication, and that it must have reliable functioning parts (words). A cry for establishment of an English ‘academy’ recently has been raised ; and detrimentally conservative though this might prove, even a degree of reactionarism might help brake a disintegrative descent.

For, as surely as the loss of translatable intercourse would cause humanbeings to revert to superior apes, a loss of verity of expression (aside from specific object names and established scientific terminologies) would stymie intelligent speculation and reduce conception to the level of material sensationalism. In other words, the only definite questions men then could propound would relate to the means of day-to-day living ; no longer could comprehensible queries be voiced as to why men should live from day to day.

Imagine — if all parts of speech, except denotative nouns (and these misused as other parts of speech) and words in contexts of equations, should become chameleon — a conformity of conformities would ensue, the antithesis of the pretended liberalised enrichment of language. Should any be dubious of this statement, let him listen to a few parlor conversations amongst specialists who are limited by different categories of vocabulary. Let him listen to a chance

gathering of Ph.D.s from various university departments, trying to exchange general ideas about existence. The callow talk of bright secondary-school sophomores makes better sense.

What may be in store is forecast by the virtual deaths of words which already have lost precision, conveying no vaguest connotative expletive effects. Take ‘crap.’ Pages could be filled. Dictionary definitions are ludicrous, in the light of the last forty years of the word’s abuse. Intentions in calling upon this noun now range from gross obscenity to a fogged description of transcendentalism.

Thousands of words retain meanings only through contexts, or by oral inflexions. The ratio of decline accelerates, because many more readers than formerly also are writers. And there ARE just too many writers nowadays. Also — ‘nonconformity’ having been popularly championed, it’s thought that the chopping of the very trunks of words is justified . . . making stumps of them, then watching wild sprouts spring up! More and more writers are truncating more and more words, more and more of which exfoliate unrecognisably thereafter.

Outside of special fields, progression is toward blurred meanings in the verbal matrix, the contextual ‘stuff’ of definition in other parts of speech demanding gestual or tactual supplementation. Conceivably, written language eventually could become just haphazard artistic-or-not markings, without some ham-acting interpreter.

‘Horror’ once conveyed temporally-bounded surprise; and thus, horror never was long drawn out. The Latin of its origin intrinsically meant shivering, trembling, and bristling, as in sudden dread. This must have provided excuse for its first watering-down, into the ‘horrors’ typifying an anxiety state. That the word came to describe psychological symptoms is significant; for language also suffers from outré use of words for raw shock (soon dulled by banal repetitions), usually

accompanied by a kind of counter-correlative tendency to reduce them. Effectually, this wipes out noumenal meaning through phenomenal uses to identify symptomatic effects in positive denotations; and they may already have connoted these perfectly well.

To speak of extension in reference to such abuse is gross error. Bona fide extension of meaning is quite different from tearing a word half-away from its root and ensuring its decay. There now a happy horror (because one shivers with delight?) — to say nothing of sea-drift horror, and horror licking the flanks of desire. Does it send you, man? Whose little horror are you? She was . . . he was . . . it was a very horror of a day. And may horror feed you hesitation. So, horror marks the downing sun, daily tabloids shriek of horror-killings by aged sex-addicts (as though anyone might be other than engendered). And newspapers take no trivial part — pored upon by children innocent of Chaucer. These newsprint-nurtured youngsters too may grow up and become ‘writers’ to deal with words like cut-out dolls.

At the same time, the uncertain imprecisions of the very inconsistencies in handling words render their users’ intentions in different contexts horribly, horribly, and ultra-vague. Lend ear some time to an average group commenting on a poetry reading. Ten people may reveal ten conflicting impressions of one poet’s calculations of the effect of a single word — mind you, by conflicting definitions. Quite another thing from desirable manifestation of creative appreciation.

This is blithely defended through an irrational non sequitur — that enriched expression is stimulated; and overlooking that whatever new complexity may result, is guided by increasingly illegible signposts, the random sightings of which have lost communicational bearings. Finally — in a maze of literary ‘diversion’ (or — help us! — of supposed instruction) — one’s wits become inflamed by a

feeling of nightmare fever.

And yet, the effects, upon limited readerships, of such works are comparatively superficial. Vastly broader effects may be suggested by referring to an odd close relationship of this to trends toward standardisation. Odd, because this is what is antithetical; and yet, both result from desires to avoid responsibilities. One passes off scrambled pastiches, asserting that life is laughably fortuitous, the other tries to 'save' the trouble of choices; both reduce what must in logic become non-activity to lifeless duplications, through crude arbitrary eliminations. This negative bond between supposedly-opposite approaches is a wand dissolving a figmentary door, which — after the revelation — may be seen as having only speciously divided no-chambers of pseudo-philosophy. Exaggerations of secondary denotations, to utilise evocations of objective sensory symptoms accompanying the mental states of their evolvments, cannot bring significant diversifications of any sense. Such exaggerations are the abuse of imagism, and part of the unpoetic endeavour to be exclusively specific and impossibly non-abstract. In passing, note the application of 'realism' to brutal scenes of misnomered 'fiction.' Realism has even less to do with drawn-out descriptions of torture than it has to do with merciful angels and wind-played harps . . . As to poetry—this always comprises abstraction, albeit of varied kinds. In exactly the same manner that a primary lack of mentality for integrative thought would limit mind to moment-to-moment sensations, a mind lacking power to abstract analogical suggestions could produce no poetry whatever.

Thought is far unbalanced in a world where too many men of intellectual influence have oversold material 'progress.' Emphasis on scientific method, from a notion that knowledge may be enlarged only through processes modelled on laboratory experimentations, has raised havoc with

contemporary writing. The fanatical imagists have ignored that empirical devices apply only to materially and temporally limited research, and that over-concentration on them blocks speculative imagination. (In truth, in the sciences themselves, the greatest advances have followed quite ‘unscientific’ and essentially poetic theories.)

Enforced by the advertising-copy influence, this has elevated a literary fashion of treating language as a mere tool for control of environment; few seem to give consideration to the service of language in aiding the abstraction of REASONS AND PURPOSES BEHIND EXISTENCE. And, since creative writers function not according to scientific rules, but from intuitive and random explorations of other levels of consciousness, it’s amazing how many of them have prostituted their talents. Opportunism, certainly—plus understandable desires to reach paying audiences. Yet, not a few of them have been able to rationalise that they’ve made no sacrifices.

Can’t they see that using the WORD solely in piecemeal imagery must result in scrambled imprecision of IDEA, all but shutting off everything except sensation? Refusing to let themselves see this, they go on madly subverting language and destroying words. In a sense, they attempt to remedy their error by pushing the blame for failure to words themselves, using them in meanings never portended, ‘startlingly’ trying to compensate for their shallow evasions of hard struggles for genuine concepts. A recent article on the ‘organic’ method described poetry composition as a trial-and-error play with words, denying that the poet’s mind could control, through centred mood and intention, to draw forth any magical inspired phrases!

And finally, a sort of unifying postscript concerning something rediscovered and restated by psychologists, but always known by true poets. This is the need for opposition/s. The creative ‘motor’ of every psyche is powered by resistances, the charged statements which carry the

current endlessly negating conformist death. Suffering is entailed — from the voltage of the oppositions to passive acceptance of fixity or material determinism. Till death itself, everyone engages to some extent in this struggle and knows some degree of travail. Awareness that life is inseparable from differentiation keeps rousing minimal resistances in even the dullest of men. The comparative emphases on diversion and rest, in individuals, underlie psychological types in this aspect — the more creative types being those accepting diversion in larger measure. They more clearly recognise death in passivity, and try harder to participate in creation, becoming what are called artists. Conservative, less-creative individuals may be strongly powered — but negatively — by resistances to these very artistic movers and changers and all other elements of living cosmos. They delude themselves in their endeavours to ‘master’ these, with never a poet’s question ‘why.’

EDITORS WRITE

August Derleth (ARKHAM HOUSE): 'I was particularly interested in your proposal . . . about payment for contributors, particularly by the college-sponsored magazines. I am heartily in agreement . . . Quite apart from this, however: (a) many writers submit to college-sponsored and other little reviews only when mss. do not sell elsewhere; (b) book publishers consistently watch these magazines for upcoming talent, and the writer is thus afforded a select audience which may be important to his future. . . . This in no way negates your argument, but it is a point to be made.

'Mr Anselm's gripe struck a responsive chord in me, too. . . and I do feel that . . . (this) is perhaps the most consistently aggravating of all complaints in my own rather extensive experience. As an editor myself, I usually (have) reported on all mss. within a week, but I can conceive of many editors who have to work as hard as I do and with less stamina being deluged . . . As a writer, I allow three months on a book submission before writing, and six weeks on any submission to a magazine. I query books, but I simply notify magazines that, ten days after the date of my notification, the ms. submitted is to be considered withdrawn and will be sent elsewhere. The one important problem this does not solve is the necessity of retyping mss., which most of us simply haven't the time to do. It is also possible to submit mss. to several editors at once . . . provided due notice is sent to every editor in question that this is being done.'

CYNICS AND ROMANTICS (FROM A STATION WEVD INTERVIEW WITH ALFRED DORN)

No age and no society has a monopoly on cynicism. There have always been cynics and there will always be cynics.... A person who is critical finds fault with what he sees, because it fails to live up to his positive ideal; but a cynic would be dissatisfied with any actuality. He not only believes that things are bad as they are, but that they will never be better.

The leer of cynicism shows itself in many ways in modern poetry, and especially in criticism. Let me emphasise here that I am not an enemy of modern poetry or of modernism; I am merely attacking the drabness and cynicism which we find in some modern poetry.... the overwhelming sense of frustration and futility, the wallowing in despair, the obsession with ugliness and pain, to the exclusion of anything else. Poets who write like this despise life; they are constantly denying the goodness of life and its infinite promise. They regard everything in the universe with a jaundiced eye. One would think they have never been young. They are a hopeless, uninspired, insipid, humourless, and anti-human lot, and they believe it is sophisticated to be as miserable as possible.

What modern poetry needs more than anything else is more life. Too many writers today are nothing but complex sets of calculated revulsions.... A basic doctrine of this cult (refers to the New Critics and poetry-writing followers) is that the ideas expressed in a poem are of no importance in determining its value — indeed, they dislike any positive vision or idea in a poem. It does not matter what one says, only how one says it. This is not merely a question of putting form above content, but an almost complete neglect of content. And so we find poets searching for more and more complicated ways of saying absolutely nothing.

I note in passing that Byron is one of the poets most violently condemned by the New Critics. Byron was a great life-affirming poet — witness DON JUAN.... Personally, I would rather be consistently Byronic than consistently ironic. Life

is more interesting that way.

...

In the early civilisation there were fertility cults ...

But today we have a sterility cult in the form of the New Criticism. ... I am not condemning difficulty, complexity, virtuosity; what I am condemning is contrived obscurity, a deliberate attempt to baffle ... I am opposed to those technical difficulties which are not in organic relation to the content of the poem. Here we come to another facet of cynicism — contempt for the reader. Many modern poets are writing only for themselves; they want no rapport with their public. Why? Because they are suffering from elephantiasis of the ego.

The essence of romanticism is that it considers the emotional value of an experience to be supremely important. ... Wordsworth and the rest accomplished a kind of spiritual and aesthetic revolution. They widened the emotional range ... experimented with many techniques and developed old forms along new lines. ... Romanticism was always inclusive, positive, dynamic, expansive. ... We need the romantic stress upon inclusion rather than exclusion.

OPEN LETTER TO A CON-MAN

by Felix Anselm

Dear Sir : You call me friend and say you've noted that I am a writer of popular songs. I don't know how and where you've noted that, but it is a wrong notion. In fact, since I write poetry, you might quite on the contrary call me a writer of unpopular songs. Circular letters are no doubt great time savers and they must be lucrative or you wouldn't send them out ; but, like gloves, they don't always fit like a glove. I imagine one could write a fine popular song around that thought. In any case, as I have never written a Bobolink and have no plans of ever writing a Bobolink and don't even know what a Bobolink is and moreover don't want to know what a Bobolink is and indeed dislike a Bobolink also without knowing what a Bobolink is, I'm afraid I must decline your suggestion that I enclose thirty-five dollars and discuss with you your plan of collaboration. I am sure that you, as you state, have experience; and you obviously assume that I have money; and if your plan of collaboration should be carried through according to plan, I am equally sure that eventually you would have the money and I the experience. But somehow I'm not eager to make that exchange. (We both are aware, of course, that \$35 and the equivalent in experience would be merely a beginning and small fraction of the ultimate trade in these commodities; aren't we?)

But apart from such considerations, I must tell you that the mere reading of the sample song you enclosed with your letter made me feel just as mournful and sad and miserably bad as it did its protagonist. I can well understand why he should stay here and moan as he sat on the hillside like a drone. The only thing I wondered about is why the poor bastard didn't make his life a little easier by staying here and

moan as he sat on a stone? It would have cost the same money, wouldn't it? Why, he might even have sat there and moaned all alone like a king on a throne! How about that? For diversion, he could have gnawed on a bone, I imagine, preferably a funnybone. And when he got tired of moaning, he might have begun to groan, which would have introduced a certain variety without sacrificing either the rhyme or his misery; in other words, there are several possibilities for the man to while his time away without being quite as lazy and farfetched as a hillside drone. But here I go criticising instead of being grateful that you thought of me. So sorry.

I am sure mighty glad to learn that love, romance, humour, novelty, sacred, mother, all make good subjects. And I'm even mightier glad to hear that I shouldn't worry about how crudely my poems or lyrics may be written, since original ideas are more important than skill in writing. That is good to know. Anybody, after all, can have skill in writing, but original ideas, like love, romance, humour, novelty, sacred, and mother — ah, that's a

Ford of a different two-tone! I blush to tell you—I do have original ideas once in a while; particularly along the lines of novelty and humour, while I'm not so hot on sacred and mother. But however that may be, I'm glad to know that no matter how crudely my poems or lyrics may be written, trained editors can develop my original ideas and put them into proper form and construction for song usage. As you say, who knows but what my poems or ideas may actually have the makings for successful songs! And how true it is that unknown inexperienced writers often produce great Hits!! Very often. Yes indeedy. Even when they, as you point out, have never written a song before. How true. The papers are full' of such cases. And we also see completely eye to eye (or wink to wink?) on your fat-lettered statement that POPULAR SONGS EARN FORTUNES! After all, you should know.

You assure me that there is no charge or obligation involved in my writing to you. This I find particularly gratifying and it is one of the reasons why I'm doing so right now. There is no doubt in my mind that I would feel—if only I were a song writer—the complete satisfaction you guarantee, and I am confident that no need would arise for you to gladly refund my money. Frankly, the mere thought of (as you put it) all the financial loss and mental disturbance due to previously-misguided efforts you would save me, cheers me up. There are so many horrendously unscrupulous people in the world, aren't there?

Only one thing bothers me. Suppose I were a writer of popular songs—what would I need you for? Since all your efforts are directed towards making me a writer of popular songs? What you must mean, I suppose, is: if I were a writer of unpopular popular songs, you'd make me into a writer of popular popular songs—is that it? Or is this the kind of quibbling them eggheads indulge in? I suppose nothing but mental disturbance can come of such hair-splitting, not to speak of financial loss due to previously misguided efforts. And anyway, all this is really academic, if you'll pardon my French, because, try as I may, I just ain't no writer of no bobolinking popular songs, whether of the popular popular or of the unpopular popular variety. All I am is a writer of popularly unpopular songs — and there is nothing either of us can do about it.

Nevertheless, since you expressed the hope that you may have the pleasure of hearing from me, I didn't have the heart to disappoint you. You've had it.

Sincerely not yours,

F. A.

SOME ITEMS RECEIVED BY THE EDITORS

Timely, because of the current Romantic revival, EMILY BRONTE, *A Psychological Portrait*, Norma Crandall (Richard R. Smith, Inc., W. Rindge, N.H., U.S.A., \$3) is desirable for the limited private library as well as the big libraries. With intelligent imagination (not ridiculously trying to 'post-psychoanalyse'), Mrs Crandall weaves together all the available evidence concerning the intimate personal character of the enigmatic woman who remained withdrawn from most normal human relationships, and who yet produced the great romantic 'original' in novel form, and strong individualistic poetry, the full significance of which has only recently been recognised. Mrs Crandall underlines how Emily Bronte was the forerunner of both James Joyce and D. H. Lawrence, besides several series of later poets. She has exhaustively and meticulously examined every source; and while the book did not grow from materials not before available, it is the first study to utilise all of them unifiedly. A short critical summary (of the prose, not the poetry — which is, however, quoted at relevant lengths in the text) and a bibliography, comprising both book and periodical publications, round out this offering.

Average too-casual reviewers — though invariably startled by the honest savagery of a writer evading no manifest responsibility from his involvement in a sick society — largely have failed to observe that Gil Orlovitz (*THE DIARY OF ALEXANDER PATIENCE*, INFERNO PRESS, \$1 softb. and \$2), sensational though his unique uses of language and exaggerated though his tirades may be (wrongly judged sacrilege by some), is well grounded in the traditions he respects. And besides being a vital poet, he is a seminal thinker. A synopsis of his multidimensional or infinitely

different-framed theory of what might be contradictorily termed the comprehensive-subjective nature of being, cannot be undertaken ; but Mr Orlovitz is no superficial dabbler nor seeker after neotritcal shock, though he often does prescribe poetic shock-treatments (he has, in fact, indicated these psychological intentions — ‘DOCTOR’ ZENO is not a haphazard appellative). Not to go into his Shakespearean studies nor his work with the sonnet and familiarity not only with John Donne, but with all the poets of that period, his readers may be better alerted to learn (and those too bruised by Mr Orlovitz’s frankness may at first be incredulous) that amongst more recent admired predecessors, Emily Dickinson and A. E. Housman occupy high chairs.

A fat expensive No. 2 of THE TEXAS QUARTERLY illustrates, as no other periodical has done, whatever sumptuous and presumptuous print, the antithetical essences of wealth and creativity, the impossibility of large-scale financing of significant literature in our time. That this touted project is going regional, centering upon the State of Texas and the state of the South in toto, is minor next failure of its promise of beautiful typography for worthy writers, and bountiful payment besides ! At least some of the editors must have fought to the last . . . but finally to surrender to the dicta of the armoured dollars. Here are : scrupulously-innocuous commentaries on issues, national, sectional, and literary, superficially and untrenchantly kid-glovephrased in banal obliquities ; a sample of avant garde writing from Samuel Beckett, whose work indeed was exciting a decade ago when presented in English through the Paris MERLIN, whose editor, Alexander Trocchi, was forced to give away exclusive rights in order to eat ; and a lavish book-within-amagazine, utter unoriginalities by George Garrett, whose titles suffice to connote unsubtly all that need be said : THE SLEEPING GYPSY, I. The Music of This World. Mr Garrett not only seems unaware that his lines are prosodic distortions of the living

poetry of the no-doubt groaning ghosts of his so-obvious traditions, but that much more goes on in today's world than unfancifully may be reconstructed from the music of a gypsy's dream. Even so, the issue does provide wisps of interest—for instance, two pages of honest poetry by an editor, Frederick Eckman, who evidently does not share the 'symbolic' confusion of his fellow-editor, William J. Handy, in an essay the dull semantics of which contradict his muddled thesis of semanticist saviors illogically prophesied will guide art into an 'objective' heaven.

DANGER — PARLAY

I am indebted to Lawrence Ferlinghetti for having characterised the achievement of three new books published typographically as poetry, his own *A CONEY ISLAND OF THE MIND* (NEW DIRECTIONS, \$1), *DISPLACED PERSONS*, Don Gordon (ALAN SWALLOW, \$2), and *POEMS*, Martin Gray (SERIF BOOKS, Edinburgh, 5/-). His commiserative statement has it that some of our contemporary poets 'fatally assumed that some direct connexion does exist between language and reality / word and world / which is a laugh if you ask me.'

The insight, of course, could not have been generated without a luminous self-knowledge, curiously coincidental with the equally stricken Messrs Gordon and Gray.

All three, then, have reared to that tilt of perfection in which language and reality, word and world, have been severed without the least difficulty in poem after poem.

Mr Ferlinghetti has a right to look on this comically, since what he logically parlayed was the dead horse that never ran: a posteriori, no direct connection. What followed for the poets under consideration was quite simple: an honest, dereistic self-expression culminating in such ripe winners as 'around they go all hunting love and half the hungry time not even knowing just what is really eating them' (Ferlinghetti), 'a rain of confetti' (Gordon), and 'water writhing in white fury to the coasts' (Gray).

But in all fairness to objective prejudice, following leads established by such prosodic servitors to Western society as the Eclectic Graces of Pound, Eliot, and Auden, I should like to assume the existence of an indirect connexion between word and world, the link, as poetry would have it, made up primarily of the unique metaphor. Certainly Our Graces have sweated to the effort, so much so that we have the right to inquire into the contest between poetic and echoic intelligence.

I would suggest, therefore, that the reader draw his own reverberations from the following: ‘cement skies,’ ‘hallucinatory moons,’ ‘white electric vision,’ ‘voiceless laughter,’ ‘algebra of lyricism’ — Ferlinghetti; ‘garland of grenades,’ ‘hard flower of frost,’ ‘guilt, the great hound,’ ‘sea of leaves’ — Gordon; ‘tempest of my dreams’ — Gray.

But it is possible, as the jacket quotes Ferlinghetti, that the booting of ‘poetry out of the inner esthetic sanctum . . . into the street’ is responsible for the cited corner-loungers. Gordon and Gray have no such excuse. If I understand the levels to which the art of satire has got — and I think immediately of Rabelais, Swift, Sterne, Shaw, and Giraudoux — it would seem to me pertinent that at the very least, poetry should claim as much wit as prose. Consequently, if a reader is amused by the canned comedy of Our Eclectic Graces, with its undigested listings of grievances without transmutation into images of valid metaphoric power, then I certainly counsel him to run for the Ferlinghetti book — into the street.

As far as I’m concerned, these are three more dead volumes by authors who have been unable — fatally — to assume ‘some direct connexion . . . between language and reality . . . which is a laugh . . .’

G. O.

Intervention of the Associate Editor, above, supplies the key to say the most important thing about the work of Carl Larsen (*ARROWS OF LONGING*, HEARSE Chapbook No. 1, \$1). Mr Larsen does assume connexion between 'word and world' and strides this assumption realistically, whatever reservations may be valid with regard his poetic accomplishment throughout this selection. From his opening : 'Listen, Sweetie / There is no way out / of the Twentieth Century. / Stop. Go back. Now.'—to a line at the close : ' . . . we are really kill crazy kids (on a rock 'n' roll rampage),' in *EPISTLE TO BE LEFT IN THE SKY*, which reads in the radio-active detritus of modern man his love for Superman, a genuine young poetic intelligence does not fail. The booklet's name was drawn from Nietzsche, whose equation of the 'great despisers' with the 'great adorers' is quoted.

Lilith Lorraine's annual compilation of short poems by Avalon members, *TO EACH HIS SONG* (DIFFERENT PRESS, \$2) arrived too late for review. Yet, and whatever the merits of the contents, it should be reaffirmed that the world of poetry should thank this editor for continuing to enable many and varied voices to be heard, and thus providing support for Individual Man against mass anonymity.

Finally — another study of another important figure in living tradition, A. E. HOUSMAN, Norman Marlow (U. OF MINNESOTA PRESS, \$3.50). While endorsing this University of Manchester lecturer's assertion that a comprehensive study of Housman is needed, this particular book seems to fill the pedestrian requirements of coverage, without imaginative re-creative fire in any detail. Superficial and even trivial speculations are dealt with over-minutely in regard to influences. No main wellspring is traced ; and in his abbreviated treatment of the poetry itself, Mr Marlow is bemused by secondary observations of construction. There is no basic analysis of the poet's own peculiar identification in

individual metaphor, though the author makes statements about this and quotes concerning Housman's 'unimpaired' preservation of the 'primitive energy of words.' The reason perhaps is that Mr Marlow is a teacher, not a poet, himself ; and he has, after all, done admirably in arraying the materials, even to the (unused) biographical suggestions, and adding a brief and valuable survey of contemporary criticism.

ADDENDA

Far-off India is not now so air-far from America that ill-informed notes on U.S. poetry are pardonable in THE INDIAN P.E.N. Recently, one 'Roohi' declared 'dogmas of current American aesthetics have never been formally enunciated,' quoting Archibald MacLeish (as a 'front-ranking' poet!) on the misbegotten notion that writers have turned away from reality. Hasn't he read any vital neo-romanticists — Kenneth Patchen, Theodore Roethke, Gil Orlovitz, or Leslie Woolf Hedley? Has he never heard of such disparate poets as E. E. Cummings, John Hall Wheelock, Kenneth Beaudoin, Thomas McGrath? He seems to have been exposed to carping academicians and mewling neo-classicists. The thick mist through which the U.S. is observed is shown by the frequent deference to POETRY (Chicago), with no mention of the existence of THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL, nextdoor, nor other more lively magazines responsible for a national revival of poetry, and for which POETRY has for long now no longer been a representative medium.

A late Society of Cinema Arts release declared new California legislation will restrict free expression under 'anti-pornography' pretenses. Laws in preparation will attempt to legalise 'irresponsible' censorship, it is asserted. . . . At this juncture, the liberal and hitherto largely-topical FRONTIER announces expansion, to comprise all phases of the cultural scene. . . . And the efforts to overcome 'channel' difficulties for establishment of a large KPFA sister-station for non-commercial Southern California broadcasts are being redoubled in Los Angeles. . . . July's San Francisco POETRY CENTER series was of unusual variety: Louis Zukofsky, an Objectivist leader; chantings of Chinese poems by Chao Tez-Chiang; and readings by Muriel Rukeyser.

In London, the 'Company of Free Men' reflects the temper of anarchistic thought in the new FULL CRY with an international flavour, and including 'Quotes' from Australian Harry Hooton. . . . Price of that new bilingual Paris publication of another Australian's poetry, HOODED FALCON, Brian Cox, is revealed as 60 fr. B. (from Office Francais d'Informations Culturelles); and another book of his has just been released by BHARTI (India) at 50 c.—THE SINGING FOREST, not yet here for review.

A new poetry anthology under NEW ORLANDO PUBLICATIONS imprint (Warwick Rd., RFD 2, Orange, Mass., U.S.A.) has been announced will contain outstanding recent work out of Greenwich Village. . . . Important New York literary news has been acquisition of the GREENBERG titles by the great CHILTON CORPORATION, which has announced a huge programme of reissues and new books. . . .

Meanwhile, on her own initiative, Anais Nin has made available a paperback offset edition of her famous UNDER A GLASS BELL (from : 35 West 9th St., New York 11, \$1).

Conditions amongst the literary magazines definitely are looking up. The Canadian FIDDLEHEAD has fulfilled its promise of enlargement, and reports an accelerated international circulation. A 5th Anniversary Issue of THE FREE LANCE, instead of an array of 'names,' is dedicated to an aesthetic policy of unusual experimentation, featuring Russell Atkins' theory of 'psychovisualism.' An older issue of POETRY AND DRAMA (1957), not received here for review, is entirely devoted to work of Franklin Hamilton (PART OF THE HUMAN RACE), whose foreword is especially fine, and whose poetry deserves better audience that it seems to have obtained so far.

Anticipated soon is COBRAS AND COCKLE SHELLS : Modes in Recent Poetry, Frederick Eckman (VAGROM Chap Book No. 5, \$1.50), announced as an 'earliest definitive outline of poetry in the 'fifties.' Another is a small book of creative prose:

SOMETHING TO TELL MOTHER, Gil Orlovitz (AMERICAN LETTERS, \$1). And received, but too late to review, is THE GARDEN, Vincent Ferrini (HEURETIC PRESS, \$1, and \$2 with orig. drawing). Due in the fall is QUARREL WITH THE ROSE, James L. Weil, winner of the AMERICAN WEAVE Chapbook Award for 1958. Two important booklets of particularly pacifist interest also were amongst late arrivals : JOHN WOOLMAN and the 20th Century, and THE HUMAN WAY OUT, Lewis Mumford (PENDLE HILL Pamphlets Nos. 96 and 97, 35 c. each). And finally, a new press, HAWK'S WELL, has announced early appearance of Martin Buber's TALES OF ANGELS, SPIRITS AND DEMONS, transl. by David Antin and Jerome Rothenberg (N.B.—that HORIZON PRESS just published his HASIDISM AND MODERN MAN), plus several books of poetry, including Thom Gunn's FIGHTING TERMS, and work of Matsuo Basho translated by Donald Keene, who also offers another, an ancient Japanese fairy tale.

Besides the foregoing (for A.L., see magazine address—HAWK'S WELL is at 50 Broadway, New York, 4, N.Y. . . . makes payment in royalties, presently limited to 64 pages . . . keen interest in new writers), several new presses have been founded : MENDICANT PRESS, 707 Scott St., San Francisco 17, Calif., U.S.A. ; ODYSSEY PRESS, 1722 W. Carmen, Chicago, Ill. ; TROUBADOR PRESS, 28 Cornelia St., New York 14, N.Y. MAJOR PUBL. new name is COERCION POETS SERIES, ZERO PRESS is reactivating at P.O. Box 1995, Grand Central Stat., New York 36, and not previously listed is RICHARD R. SMITH PUBLISHER, Inc., Topside, West Rindge, N.H., U.S.A.

Announced on their way from JONATHAN WILLIAMS are : LUNAR BAEDEKER & TIME-TABLES, Mina Loy (\$3.50) ; 1450-1950, Bob Brown (\$2) ; A LAUGHTER IN THE MIND, Irving Layton (\$1.75) ; and THE EMPIRE FINALS AT VERONA, by the publisher himself, with drawings and collages by Fielding Dawson (\$2). . . . First ODYSSEY booklet will be

ADVERTISEMENT, Robert Sward, with an F. Eckman introduction (\$1).

Books of interest not reviewed in this TRACE include THE NEW CENTURY HANDBOOK OF ENGLISH LITERATURE, edited by Clarence L. Barnhart (APPLETON-CENTURY-CROFTS, Inc., \$12) ; OVERLAND TO THE ISLANDS, Denise Levettov (JONATHAN WILLIAMS, \$2.75); TEN POEMS, Jean Arsenault (Privately : 664 Duquesne St.,