

LIVING LITERATURE

●
Essays & Articles · Poetry · Reviews

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Autumn 1961

43

JAMES BOYER MAY

TRACE

EDITOR

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No. 43

Living Literature

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Autumn 1961

Edited by James Boyer May

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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THOREAU'S WALDEN MS.

examined by W. H. Menger

Today, the writings of Henry David Thoreau are more relevant than ever to the West's critical examination of its past, present, and future. Undoubtedly, Thoreau was (and is) America's No. 1 Angry Young Man: anarchist, iconoclast, reformer. Call him anything but a beatnik. With tenacity and discipline, he challenged the culture at all points. But, unlike many of today's tyros of social protest, he was no polemical journalist flinging half-truths against the Social Lie. His pad — a shack on the edge of Walden Pond — never held sessions for hopped-up or down-on-everything rejectors of society, never reverberated to jazz-beats. Thoreau's break was nigh-total; and from his crucible came a literature of highest art — solid, uncorrupted, timely and timeless.

There has been a lot of discussion lately about social-protest writing; some of the protest amounts to little more than a kind of irate, profane topical journalese, and this is to be regretted. Thoreau was, first and last, a literary artist; but the whole middle core of his writing was sociology: man vs. nature, man vs. man. Mahatma Ghandi credited the Yankee philosopher for his theories on nonviolent resistance. War objectors throughout the world have considered Thoreau one of the patron saints of pacifism. And the entire integration movement in the South is abiding by the rules Thoreau enunciated. Lastly, those individuals and groups which today refuse to pay taxes for war purposes can also look back to him as the first U.S. absolutist; Thoreau went to jail on that technicality.

The foregoing reasons should suffice for TRACE's printing of these excerpts* from W. H. Menger's yet-unpublished, booklength study. Another is that Mr. Menger brings to light

certain new asides and additions. He analyzes the original 'foul papers', not the 'fair copy' that went to the printer. Some of the pages are illustrated here from photostats (courtesy of The Huntington Library). Menger concluded that 'Thoreau was his own best editor;' for — unlike many hurried, worried topical writers of today — Thoreau weeded out various references to people and places that had been done in pettiness or heat of anger, leaving only the basics.

— *Curtis Zahn*

In spite of various transitions preceding the final version of WALDEN, there is no problem of a variorum in the usual sense, since Thoreau himself read the proofs for the first edition. These proof sheets, as well as the ms., are now in the possession of The Huntington Library. The fair copy which Thoreau sent to the printer is presumably lost, perhaps having been thrown away after the type had been set.

** Chosen and arranged by the Editor. Including quotations from HM 924, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.*

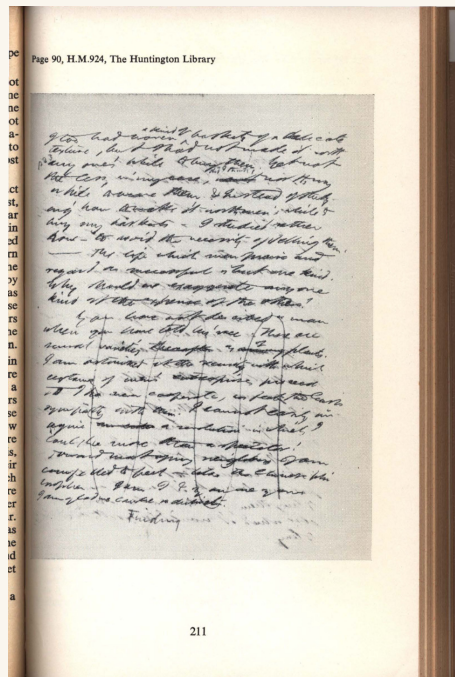
The ms. pages which follow are included either because they do not occur at all in the text or because they differ from the text in some significant way. In transcribing them, I have occasionally made one more readable by omitting cancellations and changes which do not affect the meaning. There are no other alterations. The only abbreviations used (here) refer to pages of the original manuscript and to pages of the WALDEN EDITION of 1906, which remains the most complete edition to date.

The significance of the passages to be examined lies in the fact that Thoreau decided not to include them in WALDEN,—at least, not in the form in which they appear in the ms. A few of them appear in the JOURNAL as published.... Portions of ms. material are in Sanborn's Bibliophile Edition of 1909. This was a privately printed edition limited to 485 copies,

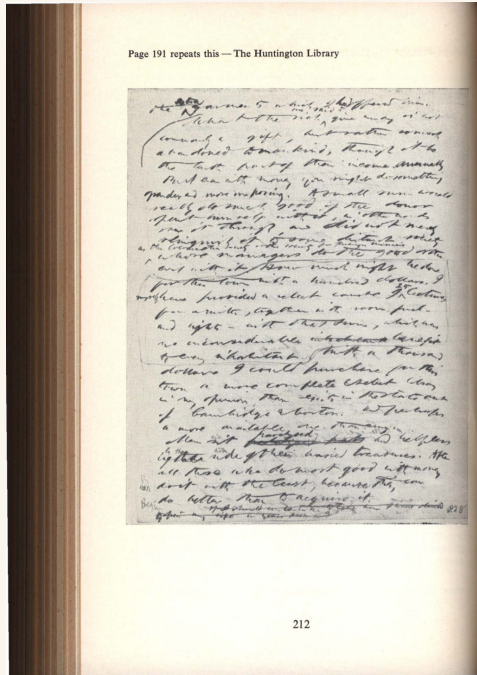
made for the Bibliophile Club. Sanborn says in the introduction that Thoreau in some cases omitted the wrong passages. On this basis, he proceeded to edit *Walden* by exercising his own choice in admitting and excluding material, as well as by transposing passages from one place to another. Because of this manipulation, the Bibliophile Edition has no value to scholars except as a curiosity, even though it is based to some extent on the ms. What Sanborn has done, in effect, is to produce his own version. The passages which follow are those which bring to light certain aspects of the personality and ideas of Henry Thoreau which are lost or obscured in the published *Walden*.

Some of them show a young man capable both of greater asperity toward his neighbors and of greater distress at their distrust of him than one might suppose from the detached and objective tone of the book. There are a few passages which show a more provincial turn of mind or a more pronounced moralistic tendency than one might expect. The fact is, of course, that Thoreau did not include these passages, and their omission shows critical insight on his part. In addition to such passages, omitted by Thoreau for what seem good reasons, there are others one feels might well have been retained. Even in these latter cases, however, his reason for excluding the passage is usually clear. There is a fourth sort of excluded passage in which Thoreau has selected an illustration which does not satisfactorily establish the point he wishes to make, or in which the idea remains murky and refuses to crystallize. Finally, I have included a sort of wastebasket category....

Original manuscript facsimile (issue p. 211)



Original manuscript facsimile (issue p. 212)



Finding passage difficult to follow in the published *Walden*, whereas the more prolix version of the Huntington ms. is abundantly clear. To one long familiar with the sometimes cryptic quality of *Walden*, the Huntington ms. is often a trip behind the scenes. On *Walden* p. 21, Thoreau is speaking of the Indian who felt he had done his part when he had made baskets for sale, and that it was then the white man's part to buy them. Thoreau then speaks of his own metaphorical baskets: I too had woven a kind of basket of a delicate texture, but I had not made it worthy anyone's while to buy them. Yet not the less, in my case, did I think it worth my while to weave them, and instead of studying how to make it worth men's while to buy my baskets, I studied rather how to avoid the necessity of selling them.

The life which men praise and regard as successful is but one kind. Why should we exaggerate any one kind at the expense of the others? On Original ms. p. 90, this is followed by: You have not described a man when you have told his 'race'. There are several varieties (thereafter) as of (among) plants. I am astonished at the security with which certain of men's enterprises proceed. I never cooperate, nor feel the least sympathy with them. I cannot easily imagine (an ente . . .) a revolution in which I could be more than a spectator! Toward most of my neighbors I am compelled to feel — with the Chinese philosopher — I am I & you are you & I am glad we can be so distinct. (Transcriptions in parentheses were inserted by this Editor.) This passage shows Thoreau bristling with noncooperation to a perhaps greater degree than usual. * And here is an unpublished passage which, although it occurs twice in the ms., was

finally abandoned, leaving only a few words as echoes at the point whence it disappeared: What the rich are said to give away is not commonly a gift, but rather so much abandoned to mankind, though it be the tenth part of their income annually. But even with money you might do something grander and more imposing. A small sum would really do much good if the donor spent himself with it, in other words, saw it through, and did not merely relinquish it to some distant society, as the Colonization Society or the Society for Foreign Missions, whose managers do the good or the evil with it. How much, for instance, might be done for this town with a hundred dollars. I myself have provided a select course of 25 lectures for a winter, together with room, fuel, and lights — with that sum, which was no inconsiderable benefit to every inhabitant. With a thousand dollars I could purchase for this town a more complete & select library, in my opinion, than exists in the state out of Cambridge & Boston, and perhaps a more available one than any. Men sit paralyzed and helpless by the side of their buried treasures. After all, those who do most good with money do it with the least, because they can do better than to acquire it. Perhaps Thoreau felt that so forceful a statement of the results he could get with a hundred or a thousand dollars might be interpreted as a plea for funds. This would have been somewhat inconsistent with his attitude toward such enterprises.

Walden p. 80 contains:

... but all this was very selfish, I have heard some of my townsmen say. I confess that I have hitherto indulged very little in philanthropic enterprises. I have made some sacrifices to a sense of duty, and among others have sacrificed this pleasure also.

On original ms. p. 191, this is followed by a very heavily cancelled passage which is partly illegible, but reads in part as follows:

I may say without boasting that I have never been inside of a theatre and never that I remember subscribed a cent to any charitable object.

Professional new (clamorants for) — laboring over new missions — speculators and jobbers of all kinds — have at various times tempted me just to take one turn at doing good to mankind, but I have been wonderfully sustained and my virtue is still unsullied in that respect. (This Editor again intrudes where parentheses occur.)

I suppose his avoidance of theatres refers to the fact that they are used for benefit performances. In any case, the whole passage runs the risk of being ungracious and we may suppose that Thoreau realized that he might lose his audience before he made his point. The point itself is reasonable enough. Shortly after the Walden passage above, he states:

When I have thought to indulge myself in this respect, and lay their Heaven under an obligation by maintaining certain poor persons in all respects as comfortably as I maintain myself, and have even ventured so far as to make them the offer, they have one and all unhesitatingly preferred to remain poor.

*

The story of Deucalion and Pyrrha . . . has never seemed to me to be very relevant to its context on Walden p. 6:

But men labor under a mistake. The better part of the man is soon plowed into the soil for compost. By a seeming fate, commonly called necessity, they are employed, as it says in the old book, laying up treasures which moth and rust will corrupt and thieves break through and steal. It is a fool's life, as they will find when they get to the end of it, if not before. It is said that Deucalion and Pyrrha created men by throwing stones over their heads behind them: —

(Here, ensues the Latin quotation)

Or, as Raleigh rhymes it in his sonorous way,

'From thence our kind hard-hearted is, enduring pain and care, Approving that our bodies of a stony nature are.'

So much for blind obedience to a blundering oracle, throwing the stones over their heads behind them, and not seeing where they fell.

Some explanation of Thoreau's original train of thought is offered by the following, on Original ms. p. 67 as the entire content of a torn sheet:

But perhaps they didn't rightly interpret the oracle which directed them to 'cast behind them the bones of their grandmother'—by which may have been signified the institutions of the dead. At any rate, men must be re-created after a different fashion.

They might at least have seen where they threw the stones. So much for a blind obedience to a blundering oracle.

... Without the above, the Deucalion and Pyrrha passage strikes one as either irrelevant or cryptic.

*

In Walden p. 80, we have: While my townsmen and women are devoted in so many ways to the good of their fellows, I trust that one at least may be spared to other and less humane pursuits. You must have a genius for charity as well as for anything else.

In the Original ms. p. 201, the following appears between these sentences: 'In antiquity,' said Confucius, 'those who devoted themselves to study did it for themselves; now, those who devote themselves to study do it for others,' as a commentator says, 'to appear learned to the eyes of others.' Now, it appears to me, those who devote themselves to charity do it for others.

The lines from Walden are part of one of the finest passages, and it is not hard to see that, while the Confucius quotation and comment are relevant, they would—from a stylistic view—slow up the movement of the prose. . . . Reading on from the above sentence in Walden, the relevance

at least appears: As for Doing-good, that is one of the professions which are full. Moreover, I have tried it fairly, and, strange as it may seem, am satisfied that it does not agree with my constitution. Probably I should not consciously and deliberately forsake my particular calling to do the good which society demands of me, to save the universe from annihilation; and I believe that a like but infinitely greater steadfastness elsewhere is all that now preserves it.

Selected from EPIGRAMS FOR A POETRY WORKSHOP by Lewis Turco

vi.

Consider (the Romantic)

Who smokes a wicked pipe.

His verse is rather gutsy—

In fact, it's mostly tripe.

TOWARDS PRINT

(. . . GUILT BY ASSOCIATION)

by Curtis Zahn

A DUBIOUS EXTANT byproduct of this age of specialists is the happy neat thought that one man can assay, indict, and convict another on the scantiest circumstantial evidence. Call it Labeling, Pigeonholing, or even Pillorizing — the cult of over simplification has spread from the four corners of the Square and into the rounds, trapezoids, and parallelograms.

If you're a That, then you must be one of Those. And everybody knows that Those are merely a fringe-group coverup for Them. Typecasting is not confined to the movies or the House Un-American Committee. We are living in the age of the Cult of Personality: we judge the Writer, and not his writings. There are Good Guys & Bad.

If a writer is a humorist, he will be so classified, and destined to die being funny. If he writes outdoor stories, he'll never get inside the Slicks. If he does those cozy first-person bits about life in the suburbs, the editors will never stand for his moving in on the City. If he turns up in the Quarterlies, he will encounter suspicion if he tries the General Mags. If he has been 'successful,' he has sold out. And if he has never been published, he is all the more suspect.

All of which is saying, in effect, that a man is judged by his Friends, rather than his Fruits. . . . And it doesn't end there: even amongst the Slicks and Littles, there are intra-mural wars. The guys who edit or write for some Littles are having a Soft War with others. Thus, it's 'enough' merely to have appeared in Magazine A. He is banned by editors of X & Y. No matter that he's neither W nor Z; but, because X doesn't like what A prints. The name does it. Whole groups of

editors discriminate against whole groups of writers because of their affiliations with rival dicta or dogmas. Even on the thinnest circumstantial evidence, they may indict, convict, reject: the kind of shoes, a necktie, a beard, a cadillac, a tract-house, a pad. People who carry guitars evoke suspicion in those who play harps. Radicals and Conservatives 'Square' off against each other.

In most cases, the individual author was functioning principally as 'creation,' writing as he pleased, sending mss. wherever they might be published, and unconcerned with the politics of Letters. The labels are supplied by those Investigators, the Critics; authors and editors should know better. This extension of guilt-by-association is one reason why the literary no-man's land today is thickly littered with broken remains of writers who could not or would not align with any schools, cults, forms, or groups. Until the author is judged on the individual ms., rather than on his past, present, or future affiliations, the American reader will continue to render himself extinct.

EDITORS (AND OTHERS) WRITE

‘Knocks, crashes, grinds, and roars’

Dear Editors:

Some poems, quite aside from content and from meaning, sound angry, or gentle, or hard. When you come to analyze them, you don’t quite know how these effects were achieved. Some poems express an angry thought, but the poem doesn’t feel angry; something lacks, and the reader is not aroused. Another poem knocks, crashes, grinds, and roars,—and the reader becomes personally involved.

Looking at this matter purely from the point of view of language, it might be discovered that the angry poem which does not feel angry contains many words with ‘s’ sounds and other soft consonants: l, m, n, f, etc.—consonants which coo, whisper, lull, and soothe. One does not achieve a feeling of anger with lispsings and lullabies. The other poem is written with crackling k’s, powerful r’s, consonants which bang, batter, ravage, boom, and clamor. You can write any number of words which, simply from their sounds, awaken certain feelings. The onomatopoeiac words are related to all this.

The contemporary artist uses paint in a very similar way, and can arouse emotions simply by his colors, shapes and textures, quite aside from content. Some painters, the good ones, have both feeling and content; others are indulging in a sort of artistic tantrum, sound and fury signifying nothing.

I quote one of my own poems, one of a series having to do with the idea of sound, and for each of which I’ve done, or am doing, a painting. This particular one, on jazz, illustrates the business about making the sounds of consonants and vowels work for me:

I AM A SOUND

i come alive in your ear
sometimes i barrel out
from the voodoo drum
i bOOm bumpy and Big
i whine from the violin
blue and l o n g and sad
sometimes i am H
I
G
H and thin
a wisp of slim song
curling from the flute

AND A DOOMFUL SHIVER WHEN THE BIG BASS HORN BLATS I BELLOW TO THE MEN WHO HOB TO THE THRUST OF THE HORNS OF WAR

i shudder from the big bull fiddle then i am rough and d
e e h p and s i m m y
i peckle from the piano a scampering flee like hunted
mice the trumpet rolls me out a whazz of jazz the splitting
shrill of clarinet spills a screech that stops your ear
the saxophone insinuates and i snail out low and cool
blue it low low it bluely rooly looly lowly BE — l o w
—S. E. Moray

(TRACE Editors: And interesting in several other compositional aspects, as well as for raising, in addition to phonemic questions, those involving visual (typographical arrangements) presentations of poetry. Other views concerning both of these matters are invited.)

THE PLIGHT OF THE HASTY THEORIZER

Dear Editors: Lawrence Spingarn (TRACE No. 41) laments that because 'the educated reader has dwindled in numbers, the writer and the book have suffered. . . .' Right. He says: '. . . today, we have writers who pride themselves on never blotting a line; they cannot afford to wait until inspiration cools off and discipline takes hold.' Again: yes. But how wrong, when he postulates the historical reasons for this situation and considers solutions! Because Mr. Spingarn's own presentation is somewhat catch-as-catch-can, I must reconstruct his argument before dealing with it.

Briefly, here are the historical causes as seen by Spingarn. Although '... the American Revolution was in essence no more than a family quarrel in which a few disgruntled bankrupts enlisted the aid of farmers and artisans,' somehow — before 1880 — immigrants to these shores 'had an admirable culture from which their impact on our civilization drew its strength.' Promptly in 1880, however, and continuing until 1920, it 'was a national calamity, a misfortune of far-reaching significance, that the American government ... put so few barriers in the way of unrestricted immigration.' These immigrants were a 'penniless Mediterranean horde' of 'groups and races that could not easily be assimilated.' Contrary to the teaching of the Founding Fathers that 'the voting privilege should have been limited forever by educational and property qualifications,' the members of this horde were given the vote, so that today 'our politicians are still trying to please the newer elements of the population at the expense of the home-owning, tax-paying, and book-buying upper middle class.' Thus 'our cultural debasement comes out of the polling booth and the classroom.' 'If all must be educated to

read and write, it follows that the printed word will be inflated and cheapened as a medium of exchange.'

Before considering Spingarn's suggested solutions, I should like to look for a moment at his history. If the American Revolution was what he says it was, where did those Founding Fathers come from? Certainly 'a few disgruntled bankrupts' joined by 'farmers and artisans' seem hardly a likely seedbed for a 'book-buying upper middle class.' The plain fact is that the Revolution became a real ideological revolution, and it embraced the complete social spectrum from agrarian aristocrats like Washington and Jefferson, through self-made artisan-scholars like Franklin, to penniless agitators like Paine. (And, incidentally, the original wording of the Declaration was not 'Life, liberty, and the pursuit of property;' it was 'life, liberty, and property,' taken directly from John Locke. Jefferson insisted upon the substitution of the phrase 'pursuit of happiness.') And what of those desirable immigrants before 1880? Admittedly, they included the upper-middle-class idealists 'fleeing the reaction in Central Europe to the events of 1848.' (I cannot help wondering how those ancestors of Mr. Spingarn, dying in political purges or managing to escape to America, would greet his warning that 'we should be aware that our cultural debasement comes out of the polling booth and the classroom.' They knew that 'good manners' and 'the ability to choose the good life'—for more than just a privileged few—depended upon the polling booth and the classroom.) Much before that, however, the immigrants included Oglethorpe's debtors, Lord Baltimore's landless and moneyless Catholics, Penn's lower-middle-class Friends, and countless others who were no better off (financially) than the 'Mediterranean horde' of 1880-1920—at least half of whom were Polish, Irish, and Scandinavian.

Somehow, Spingarn manages his game of dates in such a way that virtue resides only among those immigrants who

clawed their way up to respectability in Europe before 1848, or in America before 1880. History, whether in Europe or America, demonstrates that the upper middle class—book-buying or not—arises out of the lower middle class, and eventually out of the ‘horde,’ whether one chooses to call it peasantry, proletariat, or scum. (Of course, a few members of the class are defectors from the aristocracy—like the current British lord who wants to be a commoner—but, very few.) In this connection, I might point out that the Spingarns themselves arose somehow from being humble spinners of yarn to being upper-middle-class expressers of not-humble opinions. If the ‘educated reader, knowing what the past can teach him, should function as an active partisan for sounder values,’ he should also have a clear idea of the true nature of the past.

Enough of history. What about Spingarn’s solutions? Here, we are faced with a subtler problem of analysis. His stated solution—the mountain’s giving birth to a mouse—is this: ‘In the end (the educated reader) is obliged to ignore The SATURDAY REVIEW and become his own literary critic.’ It hardly seems that by ignoring The SATURDAY REVIEW the educated reader can turn the tide of history—whether real history or Spingarn’s spurious history. But the real solution, for Mr. Spingarn, lies in the creation of ‘the educated reader’, who ‘will soon recognize why the Ginsburgs (sic) howl and the Kerouacs pound their chests.’ And how is this educated reader to be created? ‘He must exist as a privileged class within the general population, a member of the élite whose allegiance to the finest fruits of the past will counteract a present full of confused educational theories that mainly favor mediocrity. . . .’ Though we can’t undo the damage of 1880-1920, we must remember that ‘the Founding Fathers never intended that the Negro, the Sicilian, or the Slav should rise very far from the pool of cheap labor for which they were brought to these shores.’ (To raise the point of

history again, of these three groups only the Negro had been brought to these shores at the time of the Founding Fathers and for some sixty years afterwards.) 'In the eyes of (the Revolution's) leaders . . . the voting privilege should have been limited forever by educational and property qualifications.' And 'a return to the earlier theory and practice of government is of prime importance. . . .' 'The poll tax and the literacy test . . . have been admirable safeguards against ignorance. . . .'

The first prong of Mr. Spingarn's attack, then, is to restrict the franchise to 'a privileged class within the general population' on the basis of standards of property and education determined, I presume, by himself. But, since 'our cultural debasement comes out of the polling booth and the classroom,' there is a second prong. 'Education . . . has severed many traditional ties for the sake of expediency.' 'If all must be educated to read and write, it follows that the printed word will be inflated and cheapened as a medium of exchange.' 'Thus education for the masses . . . has only stifled and arrested the would-be dissenter.' By any system of reasoning, these statements add up to just one conclusion — a conclusion which Spingarn doesn't draw in print: there should be no education for the masses, and we should stop teaching all our citizens to read and write. Then we could, presumably, return to a happy feudalism, since the *élite* could forever maintain their hold on the ballot box by limiting education to a self-perpetuating oligarchy.

Aside from the impracticability — not to mention the ethics — of such a totalitarian plan, Mr. Spingarn has furnished two pieces of damning evidence against it in his own essay. For 'the children of the educated settler' — presumably ideal candidates for the *élite*—'carted off the sets of Balzac and Goethe to the second-hand dealer.' And Alan Ginsberg, one of Mr. Spingarn's horrible examples, is the son of an upper-middle-class poet and professor. Where are the

recruits for the élite to come from? If the center could not hold for the Milwaukee Spingarns before 1880 and did not hold for a Ginsberg in 1950, what evidence is there that ‘the educated reader’ could establish a self-perpetuating élite in 1961?

Admittedly, much needs to be done to improve the quality of education; but that problem cannot be solved in dozens of full-length books, let alone in a four-page essay. Meanwhile, if the educated reader is to ‘function as an active partisan for sounder values’ and have any impact on the level of literature, he must make himself heard in the editorial offices of *The SATURDAY REVIEW*, in the school-board meeting, in the secondary and college classroom — in short, on the firing line. Distortion of history, curtailing of education, and retreat into private sensibilities can only serve to weaken the already weak condition of the arts.

Will C. Jumper TRACE Editor: Lawrence Spingarn, who has just joined our staff, declined to reply, except to say that his article had been misread; but he agreed the questions could not be well covered in brief space. The Editor must reveal that reactions like the above were received from only two out of approximately forty correspondents, the rest of whom reacted favorably; and he recommends that those who may be confused reread the original—an appeal for reinstatement of enlightened liberalism as against demagoguery and respect for minorities (regardless their ancestries) who may qualify for cultural leadership, and sketches (if inadequate) of the historical turnings toward a kind of mob-rule in letters.

Various of the contradictory advocacies attributed to Spingarn are not advanced in the article itself, though a few elaborations might have better clarified his theme: the perversion in the field of education. Spingarn is a longtime enemy of discrimination; his own creative works are characterized by satirical social protest, while he has not supported any ‘ism’ for a cure. He has spoken for individual

(non-political) rediscovery/ies of integrity and responsibility. Transitions between satirical intent and sober commitment could have been pointed up more obviously in the article that brought Mr. Jumper's 'reply.'

Besides for those who may not have read the original as it was intended, another matter: a primary 'reason' for TRACE has been that very few openings have been available on the 'firing line(s)' to which Jumper refers. Specifically: this Editor and scores of others have been 'heard' in the offices of The SATURDAY REVIEW, but have not been granted print for public hearing in its pages; and Spingarn is one of scores of teachers arbitrarily denied opportunities in certain 'leading' schools where dissenters are not welcomed and the free interplay of individual opinions is suppressed.

LITTLE MAGAZINES FOR CLASSROOMS?

Dear Editor:

Suppose it were possible to find a way, both to aid a number of magazines in terms of circulation and finance, and to go some way toward building a new and increasing audience for modern writing? I think I may have one.

Every university and college in the country teaches a freshman course in English, and frequently the second portion of it is an introduction to literature. This includes poetry. Since the instructor is free to teach the specific material he wishes, within the general outline of the course, why shouldn't he use contemporary poetry out of current magazines?

How choose them? No rule, except that no magazine be used more frequently than once a year, perhaps. Some of the students may well continue to read more 'littles' after they've been carefully led through some better samples.

John William Corrington

POETRY, SETTLED AND UNSETTLED

as seen by Sam Bradley

‘WE SERVE DIFFERENTLY,’ said my friend, the psychiatrist (visit was social, not professional). ‘You try to see in people, to disturb and to change their old states of mind; and I try to see in them, to determine those old states of mind, and readjust them to their old selves.’

‘Yes,’ I assented, ‘and my delving is less understood, if not more dangerous. Certainly, I cause suffering as well as enjoyment.’

To try to be more than the laissez-faire poet, to try not to shun involvement in that unstable social complex called ‘person,’ is to depart from the privileged positions of the poet as court entertainer — which, in our time, has meant either entertainer of the mass or privileged idiot of the special group. If a poet take a mask of anonymity, or of complete objectivity, who can blame him? For, he himself invokes a counter-suffering, that of anger directed at him, and deeply felt, when he has caused some sensitive citizen to realize what’s beyond that citizen’s cultivated mask of words.

Not all poets give a damn. Perhaps, not all poets are able to look in vision at the possible and invasive human damnation.

At any rate, it is wise to remember that there are two kinds of poets: (1) the observer, largely self-wrapped, and (2) the involved man, swept by the world’s suffering and his own. This latter man, however tender-hearted, cannot bring himself to be a gentleman in Newman’s sense of gentleman — ‘one who never inflicts pain.’ To Newman, suffering for his particular nonconformity, this may have been adequate. But, today it may appear a masochistic passiveness, a possible but not necessarily desirable adjustment to the world’s

demand for decorum, status, and conformity.

The poet who is the involved man must ask: how adjust? and how readjust? — both of himself and of those capable of hearing him. Like Wilhelm Reich, whose paper on the masochistic character caused his break with Freud, he can see masochism as an adjustment to disastrous social conditions. Our culture, both present and traditional, has bred in men psychic strife, and has even at times given privileged positions to various aspects of that strife. This is closely connected with society's defensive protection of the status quo.

In Reich's words: 'Every social order creates those character forms which it needs for its preservation. In class society, the ruling class secures its position with the aid of education and the institution of the family, by making its ideologies the ruling ideologies of all members of the society. But it is not merely a matter of imposing ideologies, attitudes and concepts on the members of society. Rather, it is a matter of a deep-reaching process in each generation, of the formation of a psychic structure which corresponds to the existing social order, in all strata of population.'

Justified or not, the protest against 'academic' poetry is that it does not face the challenges of distracted, changing society, and does not dare be vital, life-gripping, disturbingly assertive. Instead, it is playful, ironic, charmingly photographic or lightly satiric, devious. Thinking such poetry the whole of modern poetry, many citizens dismiss it as having little to say to their condition. Somehow, to them, it has become curious cultural jewelry, impishly created, and talismanic in its power to give entry in a never-never land. They do not expect to hear bold passionate idealism. Society is not likely to be quaked. The poet who can understand and yet not be largely annihilated by social decadence is not thought hearable.

What ideas have academic poets thought respectable? Are they the assertions of nihilism and contemporary hollowness? Have men repudiated the hope of a world free of psychic disasters in which man can have personal and social freedom, as well as unity with nature? A poet of revolutionary idealism like Shelley — and we can see his limitations well enough — can be dismissed by men of differing technique, and differing concept of the self in relation to society. To T. S. Eliot, Shelley's ideas are 'feeble . . . shabby . . . repellent,' and he says that to him those ideas have seemed to be 'always the ideas of adolescence.' But, is it the good part of the adolescent, that part which sees the world not final, which will not easily yield to the status quo?

What are numbers knit/by force and custom? Man who
would be man/must rule the empire of himself . . .
/quelling the anarchy/of hopes and fears, being
himself alone.'

Adolescence is known as the time of selfconscious suffering. But, as Reich could have pointed out, it is world-suffering, for the individual coming to maturity is not yet scarred and toughened, and feels within himself the most acute psychic stress which is in the psychic structure of his culture. The young man is curious: how much must I, can I, bear? — what can I do? — will I crack up? Behind the question of his grasp and assertion of power, like Lenin's 'Who? Whom?' looms the more ominous dark question related to his being dominated by cultural institutions, a sort of 'Who? by What?'

Adolescence is the time of crisis on which the world is hinged. When can a person see the mature world as settled too deep in its choices. see the ruthless drive of what-is-is-right? Surely it is before he is imprisoned in routine, materialistic pressures, commanding conformity, and the cage of glittering trivialities. Whoever knows the world needs no brief for suicide, or for violence. Having

suffered, but also realizing freshly man's terrible, enormous power to inflict suffering, the poet revolts—and no revolt seems to match in terror and enormity that of the destructive world yet his.

The mature man who does not blind and insulate himself will still feel what is vital, crucial, crucifying. Some poets prefer comfort. The well-Achilles'-heeled world is ready to stamp approval on their fairly tame, academic poetry, the pretty changlings of the Settled-Down Muse. Such poets are unaware of a pregnancy in the rising generation—something more than 'an interesting condition.' They fail to feel a sense of terrible new birth. Indeed, among educated, cultivated people there is little heed given the warning of Karl Shapiro that 'throughout the world, the human right of insubordination against industrial society, colonialism, militarism, and against the entire cult of the Western Tradition (religious, sexual, aesthetic) is making itself felt in a thousand ways. The governments are losing their young. The lifeblood of history is flowing away from the centers of force.'

This moral insubordination, a kind of passive revolt, Shapiro identifies with the ideas of Gandhi, Thoreau, Whitman, Kropotkin, and Tolstoy. It is a revolt against self-fear, against the Greek and sometimes Christian body-soul dualism. It is also a revolt against fear as central in governments, institutions, human relations: it sees through the old obsession to annihilate opponents, conquer space, subdue nature, wipe out troubles, the only God is on our side. Man has in the past most highly valued aggressiveness in himself, militarism in his defended society; now man's resources are being reassessed. Camus, in one reassessment, sees man in an agony of suspense. And what is this more resourceful man beyond Camus—beyond Camus, himself suspended in agony?

Surely he is a man in whom there is new lifeblood, given person; in whom the unconscious is more a source of strength than of antagonism and tragic rift. He feels not set against. He understands himself as not merely set into, impotently and narrowly functioning, the world. He recalls the hope in the second part of this epigram from Paracelsus: 'God made everything out of nothing (ex nihilo), but Man He made out of everything.' He does not escape the sense of what is vital, crucial, crucifying in this world, but he has a greater capacity for this world's death-weighted burden; neither does he lightly assume his maturity, nor other men's, in a world as death-tracked as this one. But he has set himself the task of learning such compassion as reduces fear to manageable proportions. He explores the blind alleys of Nothingness, not to despair of human limitations, but to build anew roads for the felt human poetry and human potential. Can the socially-involved poet be adequate for this task? Doubtless there are poets writing now who, in the words of Amos Wilder, 'purify the language of the tribe—expose the refuges that men establish for themselves in the vague rhetoric and disingenuousness of their political and religious watchwords and slogans — pin them down to reality — rudely shock them out of their nirvanas or intoxications — practice a healing surgery upon their morbidities.' In many ways, they may write 'unsettling' poetry: the journalistic kind, in order to reach a many-streeted audience; the Surrealist kind, to explore blind alleys; the Promethean or religious kind, to build new lifeways; and more, and more. Such poets may disparage the Sybaritic followers of the Settled Muse as Whitman did: 'Do you call these genteel little creatures American poets?'

WHAT POETRY MEANS

for John Logan — as told to Marvin Bell JOHN LOGAN IS at once warm and insightful, and luck strikes the young poet who meets him. Analytic honesty is essential to his work; and what prose I have seen of his has been poetry. It is my opinion that he pays for this honesty which is known as courage. The questions proposed here, for which I mean no apology, are intended as a mere scaffolding — through, behind, and in front of which John Logan's humanity will, I hope, make itself known. Logan's first book of poetry was *CYCLE FOR MOTHER CABRINI* (GROVE Press). On the jacket of his second — *GHOSTS OF THE HEART* (UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO Press) — he says: A poet is a priest or necromancer of the baroque who dissolves by the incantations of his cadenced human breath the surface of the earth to show under it the covered terror, the warmth, the formal excitement and the gaudy color-burst of the sun. This is not a chemical function. It is a sacramental one . . . if some people find my subjects less religious now than they used to be, the reason is that I now think poetry itself more religious than I used to do. There's another reason: I used to be more interested in the wound on the neck of the unicorn, but now I am more interested in the graceful, powerful unicorn underneath the wound. I have discovered that I was less afraid, and therefore (sadly) more prepared to find the ugly under the beautiful than I was to find the beautiful under the ugly. It's not really the skeleton in our closets that we fear, it's the god.

Q. Are you a 'religious poet?'

A. I think the essential impulse to poetry — the desire to hold in one's arms the beauties not yet created, as Stephen Daedalus puts it — is religious. In this sense all poetry is religious. I agree with John Crowe Ransom that 'poetry is the secular form of piety,' and I find three or four marks of what might be called 'natural religion' in poetry: natural creation

(making something new); natural miraculism (making something happen unaccountably in the world of the reader); natural resurrection (bringing alive again the dead relics and ghosts one finds within oneself); natural grace (the bringing of what Dylan Thomas called 'a temporary peace' to one's audience). Also, there is a certain quality of annunciation and conception to the origin of poetry within the poet. ('True song demands a different kind of breathing,' writes Rilke: 'A calm. A shudder in the god. A gale.') There is a more specific sense of religious poetry, having to do with the use of religious figures, motifs and doctrines within the poem. In the earlier part of my career, I was far more a 'religious poet' in that sense than I am now. However, I have never confined my subjects to religion, nor lost my interest in religious 'story.'

Q. What is the significant difference between your books?

A. There is a sequence from the treatment of the lives of the dead saints in the first book through dead classical heroes, of whom there are a few in the first book, and in the first part of the second book, to the treatment of the lives of dead artists (no saints). The turning point came when, after writing about Heine and Rimbaud (I wrote about Byron, Shelley, James Joyce, and Hart Crane later), I became faced concretely with the problem of dealing with a live artist — myself. I came to feel that if one had constantly to adopt successive masks in his poems, avoiding the reality of his own living situation, then one was using his art more to escape from himself than to face himself, and this was dissatisfying. It was in some profound sense boring. So I wrote *ON THE DEATH of the Poet's Mother Thirty-three Years Later*, which was the hardest poem I had written to date, and which was also the first poem in which I tried to work directly with my adult feeling. In the last poem of the second book, I broke away from set principles of composition entirely and used a free form, writing about myself and my

friends and acquaintances. It was the best poem.

Q. What is your attitude toward the INDEX LIBORUM PROHIBITORUM — with or without direct reference to your own Catholicism?

A. I always had worse sins to worry about than that of reading banned books. Beyond that, I came to believe that imaginative literature was incapable of heresy, because it does not by its nature hold up for affirmation or denial any scientific (including theological) truth. The statements of poems are always qualified by the living dynamics of feeling which surround them, and feeling itself cannot be wrong (though it can be perverse or hidden). A poem comes into existence like an apple, and an apple cannot be mistaken. It can't be right either. The purposes of censorship are not well served by poetry.

So far as the problem of obscenity is concerned, it is important to remember that this is more complex than the problem of diction. I am inclined in fact to see the truly obscene as the truly mediocre, and vice versa. Then, there is the fact that obscene art bypasses the condition of fine art and approaches that of rhetoric, through the characteristic of its moving one to some further action (which Lawrence analyzes as fundamentally masturbation), rather than restoring one to his own inner resources of human refreshment, or to some form of lucid contemplation and savoring. Nevertheless, every word in the language and every feeling in the book of the heart are fit material for poetry, for they are colors on the palette the poet brings to his task. He has a right to its completeness. There is a special rhetoric to the short Anglo-Saxon words we carry over from our childhood as names for parts and functions, and this rhetoric can easily scuttle a poem in incompetent hands. But that is no reason for throwing out the adult with the baby.

Q. What makes a good poetry critic?

A. My first impulse is to answer 'love'. However, I'm afraid half my audience would think I'm simply quoting St. Paul, and the other half would think I'm quoting Rilke. So, I'll take another tack (and quote Nietzsche): A good poetry critic is someone who is able to detect 'the vision generated by the dance,' and to perceive that in the best poetry, there is no vision apart from the dance of words, whereas at the same time there is no dance of words which fails to issue in a vision. If it sounds like I am talking about the relationship of the spirit to the flesh, I can only say it sounds that way to me too.

Q. Do you differentiate between 'prose' and 'poetry'?

A. Poetry makes use of the line as a unit and thus sets up new periods not available to the prose artist. The effect of this is a more complex counterpointing of the rhythms and musics of language, which raises the whole product to a new level of existence. The shortcoming of this is a certain tendency toward angelism: i.e., poetry tends to leave the earth and emulate the gods (whom the poets named). Nevertheless, this is also its strength. The true image of the poem is seen in the tension between Jacob and the angel—the balance of the two as they dance ('wrestle' is the vulgar word to describe what they were doing). Jacob corrects the timid and anarchic impulse to flight, while the angel exorcises the earth-bound impulse of Jacob. The result is a poem. In some poems, one is more aware of the unearthly shine brushed off from the angel to Jacob. In others, one is more aware of the sweat brushed off from Jacob to the angel. The poem itself is a creature 'crawling between heaven and earth' like Hamlet.

Q. What ought to be the poet's place in the economic scheme of things?

A. He ought to be rich.

Q. Would you say you write by choice or by compulsion?

A. When a poem comes to me to write, I am compelled to write it at some time, you might say; but I have learned to choose the time. My life has been happier since I have learned how to do this. I refer to the problem that arises when a poem is ripe for writing but you have to read papers or prepare a class or load trucks or baby-sit. This is different from the problem that arises when a poem presents itself before it is ripe. Sometimes the poem lays around for years in the earth of your imagination, putting out white roots, perhaps even growing monstrous before it is ready for the pen. It is a point of pride with me that I always eventually get these poems written. When I first read of the life of Robert Southwell, I knew I would have to write a poem about it some day. It was two years before I sat down to do it. No, I didn't sit down to do it. I got sick with pleurisy and couldn't breathe without pain and began to write the poem.

It has been nice to learn how to let ready poems hibernate until I can get to them with minimum damage to my other commitments. It's a little like being able to choose the time you'll have your baby,—which is convenient. Q. Is the 'gap' between poet and audience irreparable?

A. The gap between the poet and his audience is based on the gap between the poet and himself. When the one is healed, the other will be. I do not know which fracture came first; however, there is one repair which the poet has some control over. And he has more than one reason for making it.

Q. What makes a poem bad?

A. Intercourse with the muse is interfered with under several cases: impotence, ejaculatio praecox, lack of attention to forepleasure and afterpleasure, exhaustion, boyish fixation on masturbation. Nevertheless, celibacy is perhaps an over-harsh recommendation.

Q. What direction do you think American poetry is taking?

A. Seems to me that's a question for the critics, not the poets. I hope it's moving in several directions, and I think it is. When it moves in one direction only, it's dead. It's tempting to say that American poetry is growing up—that the beat movement was a late adolescence. Yet, reflection shows that movement closer to infantile regression. Certainly, the movement around Eliot was a premature aging. The joy is still ahead, at any rate. Odd that Wallace Stevens' achievement, now complete, was so baroque and gorgeous.

Q. What qualities make you see a poetry talent in a particular student?

A. (1) The gift of image, showing one at home with the inventive powers of his unconscious, which intimidates a duller man. The clichés come from the back of the conscious mind. (2) The gift of intelligence, which is related to the discernment of integrity, and enables one to direct and shape and finish his poem. (3) The gift of a good ear, which, so far as the sounds of poetry are concerned—as they present themselves in the wings of the 'ivory stages' of the poem to dance—is like the gift of good choreography. (4) The will and the serenity (even if only occasional) to exercise and produce.

Q. What effect do nine children have on your work?

A. They give me a distinction no other American poet has. They start in me enormous guilt feelings at the amount of time I spend with poetry instead of with them. They give hope of a later, special, enlarged, beloved audience.

Q. What relationship is there between Bohemianism and the arts/artists?

A. Historical. It was an attempt to perpetuate the punishing myth that an artist must be denied the sustaining pleasures others have. 'How can he deserve this too?' Well, he does.

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BABES AND SUCKLINGS

THE CULT OF YOUTH IN AMERICAN WRITING

Lawrence P. Spingarn

ALTHOUGH SOME PSYCHIATRISTS describe a writing career as a lifelong reward for the traumas and disasters of childhood, modern American authorship reflects an accent on youth that appears to contradict the maxim, *Ars longa, vita brevis*. Book reviewers tend to greet the current crop of young scriveners with the loud hosannas reserved for genius and greatness, whether or not they have messages of importance. Attractive girl poets and handsome boy novelists whose photographed frowns and simpers decorate dustjackets become the lodestones at metropolitan cocktail parties. The reading public, a captive minority these days, is urged to discover such qualities as 'strength' and 'daring' in versions of the life that has scarcely touched its debutante purveyors. The literary novice is not expected to present little grains of wisdom; each sad good morning is praised as one more *BONJOUR TRISTESSE*, to the ultimate profit of the publisher.

Early success of this kind is bound to make the older writer envious. Indeed, he draws small comfort from the reflection that his day will come. He recalls in vain certain authors who waited years for their full fruition: the later Tolstoy, the sedate Henry James, and Stendhal, the middle-aged dilettante fired by a sundown burst of inspiration. While the older writer has fought the battles, the victories seem to fall into younger hands. He is troubled, disappointed, and puzzled by the unearned praise they get. The very insight he has wrested from his own growth-process no longer sustains him in the face of the trivial and the second-rate that appear to have triumphed. The fanfare that surrounds his youthful rivals galls and burns him.

And yet, there are sound reasons behind this fanfare. Readers are quick to detect the fresh voice, the authentic trumpet note uttered by the new writer, for, after all, he has not had time to imitate his elders. Critics, pointing to Mark Twain and Sinclair Lewis, insist that American literature is marked by both innocence and iconoclasm; despite the grinding noise of gears in motion, they prefer change to depth and polish. While the journeyman of letters may have lost his illusions, tempered his hopes, and traded a romanticist's springboard for a solid captain's chair, his work must suggest the aurora of dawn to win converts wholesale. Already, the average man has been well-schooled in the value of shock, transport, seizure, and rude surprise. With these weapons available to him, the beginning writer finds that his inexperience can be turned into an asset.

Experience, alas, cannot jump into the arena so lightly; a case of sore muscles usually follows. The mature writer does not walk his lonely miles without feeling tired. The ground he might break is full of stones, stones that reviewers pick up and hurl at him. Each successive book commits him to ever-higher standards. He is made responsible for sins forgiven in the twenty-year-old. Dangling from the gibbet of his own sentences, he is reminded again and again that he is no better than his latest book. If protean, he is told to stick to his last; if constant, he is said to have run out of ideas. In our pristine climate of 'firsts', he is made into a senile figure of fun by the facile innovators. Where, he demands, are the compensations for his grey hairs?

Being so private and intangible, the compensations of experience are considered sufficient. To be sure, the practiced writer knows best where he is heading; his methods are more or less stabilized. He has built his reputation upon a recognizable body of work. He can neither wander too far afield nor retreat to the deer parks of the initiates. He had been accessioned and catalogued; with all

his disappointments, he should, according to the pundits, rest secure in his corner of the universe. In a few years, almost without exception, his junior brothers of the pen will face the same problems of neglect and dishonor in their own land.

If we examine recent first offerings that have made a stir, we see an emergent pattern. Their action centers on the maturation period. The characters are nubile or callow, the setting is audacious, the tone is strident with calculated bravura. In *CHOCOLATES FOR BREAKFAST*, purportedly written by a girl of eighteen, we are not allowed to forget that the author is a wise child. Her people drift between New York and Hollywood. Her story is not so grim that it would offend censors or discourage motion-picture treatment. Her heroine, motivated by a need for love, inevitably finds the proper bed, but the novel is a witless descendant of such a fine study of adolescence as Rosamond Lehmann's *DUSTY ANSWER* (1927). Still, the bittersweet mood persists after the book is laid down; it provides a direct route into a sequel, as if the author had mapped her career beforehand. Given these proven ingredients, is it any wonder that books of this sort achieve popular sales?

In a society afraid to grow old, the juvenile element reigns supreme. Young and bloodless phantoms haunt the feeble plots of the popular magazines. The collegians of *PLAYBOY* are involved with the eternal chase that leads to seduction. The gay couples who inhabit light summer fiction are shaped by the food they eat and the questions they ask. Babes and sucklings, the vapid and the vicious, the brutal delinquent — these we have in plenty to nourish our empty dreams. Widely-sold modern writing seldom deals with the man of fifty, his not-so-beautiful wife, his unmarried and troubled daughter. With more perfect specimens to choose from, there is hardly room in books for the average, sensual person of middle years and ordinary expectations.

Let us consider the older writer as a type. If he has won his spurs in small, noncommercial magazines, he is familiar with work that deals with honest issues. He realizes that his foundations began to grow firm not at eighteen but after thirty, when the debris of first impressions had been cleared away. He can depict characters of his own vintage, fortified by the beliefs he has attained, and described with the detail he knows how to render significant. His strength lies more, perhaps, in the sense of form than in the vigor of presentations; he will be glad to delete sensational incidents, spurious effects, every false note predicated on mere salesmanship. He is not the arrant showman of raw youth, but a craftsman eager for the fame that lasts. And when he is done with his task, he ought not to feel the pangs of neglect.

He has been overlooked, it may be; neglect is a different punishment, which teaches children their place in the scheme of life. Children, in fact, are not craftsmen. Their instincts do not bear up under the give-and-take of circumstance. We may love their utterances for charm, frankness, unspoiled graces and felicities. But, in print, these utterances are hard to defend. The speakers falter and stammer where the seasoned character expands, persists, grows big while the reader watches him.

For, it is dangerous in this culture, if not fatal, to win literary fame while young. Of course, the chances of winning such fame have lessened in this generation. The apprentice writer recognizes that getting printed at all is sheer good fortune. Inflation, that has wiped out strong magazines of the COLLIER'S class, boosts the price of all cultural products. Even the so-called 'little magazines' which have proliferated to hundreds of titles treat their available space with a certain arrogance. As showcases necessary to many beginners, they deliberate on material for endless months, appear after tedious intervals, and pay just enough — if they can pay — to reduce the postage bill incurred by each submission. As a

result, our Young Poets are past forty; our Younger Poets may be as old as seventy, if their strength holds out.

In England and on the European continent, the emphasis on youth is not so great. The British scene is full of men like Eden Philpotts and Horace Vachell, who reached their ninth decade as productive and versatile authors. The foreign writer, by and large, does not have to face the sudden, prodigious success that maimed the authors of *CHRIST IN CONCRETE* and *THE NAKED AND THE DEAD*, or cripples the talent Steinbeck once displayed. He does not wrestle with the pressures that silenced Thomas Wolfe at thirty-seven; he is seldom as cute as Truman Capote. He enjoys a relationship with his publisher founded on the faith that he will be alive and active when his early books have become collector's items. Indeed, the conservative British firms are prevented by law, tradition, and conscience from remaining books that do not move fast. Space, so valuable in New York warehouses, does not operate against the novelist. The advertising budget never solely determines the sales potential for each offering, nor is the reader beguiled with lurid covers or blurbs into buying promised titillation. Classics are kept in print for years after the initial hue and cry was heard; the devoted reader abroad may still purchase cheap, well-designed editions of Dickens, Hugo, Goethe, and Manzoni without breathing the dust of second-hand shops.

In the United States, however, the whole writing profession finds the going tough. Many factors work to separate the writer from his material. The young author in particular is at a disadvantage; he is inclined to uproot himself, as a first step toward recognition. In fact, with New York the supposed Mecca for literary people, it is unusual to meet the writer who stays contentedly in his home town. The decline of local-color fiction is one cause for this exodus to Manhattan. Another urgency is the need to hire out in fields allied to imaginative writing, so as to supplement an

uncertain income, yet the writer who knows the perils that beset him would be wise to remain where he derives creative sustenance. Faulkner has this wisdom to recommend him; he has grown white-headed in Mississippi without surrendering much of himself to the Northern invaders or the Hollywood magicians. On the sadder side, New York is brilliant with the fallen plumage of young singers, actors, and writers gathered from many regions, who sit patient and forlorn in the *caffè espressos* counting their unhatched chicks and eating the bread of disillusion.

Where younger writers are open to these distractions and lures, which end in failure and blockage, older writers suffer because of the general American attitude toward age and experience. We do not easily tolerate veterans; the new accent in politics, for example, is on youth, charm, and (above all) money. Money, in the final accounting, has shifted downward in the social scale, not only from those privileged classes that once bequeathed it intact to the third and fourth generations, but also from the old to the young. The publisher, like other employers today, will sooner give large advances to what he regards as fresh talent than to those who write under old hats. But the imbalance in our society soon takes its toll; the fresh talents are rapidly exhausted and quickly thrown upon the scrap heap. The public, assailed from new and newer directions, is more fickle than ever before. As each current book appears, it serves to lower the standards of taste. In contrast, the popular book of forty years ago seems on rereading to be far better than its recent counterpart.

Nevertheless, the veteran author should not despair too much. On the contrary, he should realize that discernment and breadth must replace both early energy and false optimism. He may never break through the sound barrier of shoddiness and howling vociferation that substitutes for literature; his reward lies more in the doing than in the

getting or spending. The worker in words need not depend on a sprawling middle class saturated with gadgets and tranquilizers; already there are signs of a return to pride in workmanship. Most of us are tired of vain pomps and idle boasts; we can soon afford to re-establish a bond between the writer who has endured and the reader who has escaped into himself from the lonely crowd. In this relationship, I am convinced, the future of American writing will be safe.

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FROM THE MODERN SCENE (NO. 2)

contributed by eric cashen

THE PINK PILL

I SPOTTED THE retriever, as it came over the hill. 'What is it?' I asked, 'A pink pill?' 'No,' my friend replied, 'it's a good little dog. It's chasing Farmer Brown's runaway hog.' It was neither little, as it sped past me, nor was it good. I climbed a tree. 'There goes the retriever,' said my friend from below. It was carrying, between its teeth, Farmer Green's hoe. 'Is it always like this?' I asked of my friend. 'No,' he said, 'there's really no end. He's been known to run from Chartres to Dover. And that, without once, soiling the clover.' Oh, my, I thought, it's quite a dog. Here it was, chasing Farmer Brown's hog. And there it goes, with Farmer Green's hoe. What a dog. What a dog. I don't like it, though.

I remembered to ask, as I climbed down from the tree, about the retriever's pedigree. 'It had no mother,' my friend told me. 'It had no father, either, you see. It's all alone, alone in the world. And there it goes, with its tail unfurled.' Its teeth, I thought. But I didn't say it aloud. It had been quite a day. With a little cloud.

THE RISE OF BABELOMANIA

by James Boyer May

THE CONSENSUS OF students concerning the efflorescence and decay of civilization in its many cultures has been that the uses and/or abuses of language have offered the initial clues to upgrades and downgrades. Today's semantic roads are rigged with sensationalisms and slippery with muggish verbirosities. Nor are these confined to newspapers, paperbacks, and mass-circulated periodicals. 'Top' magazines indulge pages of lazy ambiguities, and academic journals print crocodilish articles by prominent critics who are indexed among the guardians of the Word.

Examples litter the byways and highways of word-travel; but this analysis largely is limited to the way of critical mentors (most of them full-or part-time teachers) rambling along anent 'creative writing' (a dubious term, if presently endowed with translatable meaning). For one thing, this Editor is not qualified on any other road; also, because fictions (short stories, poems, plays, novels) and so-designated essays, biographies, and even histories and other 'factual' pieces, drawn from and built upon nearly every imaginable activity and (ideally regarded) embody aesthetic originalities which extend and amplify communication.

Here, the symptoms of decadence hold broadest significance; here, language may gain nurture for the healthy changing growth. And from here, word-sickness can spread most rapidly. Yet, the barristers of literary creativity display idiomatic non sequiturs, analogical frames of rhetorical irrelevance, and illogical, semantically-confused phrase-, clause-, and sentence-sequences. The constituents of such clumsy densities are unsubstantiated declarations,

indiscriminate and false comparisons, and invocations of ill-defined ‘classifications,’ — while often, at the same time, their authors refer to ‘authority’ of rules called upon in wrong contexts. For instance, in analyzing poetry as though it were recipe or travel-guide, or dialectical treatise or cold demonstration in differential calculus. Along with this, of course — carelessness of connotations and denotative irresponsibility.

In a comparatively precise article, Richard M. Gollin (WALLACE STEVENS: the poet in society, COLORADO QUARTERLY, Summer-1960) put forward the common ‘excuse’ for linguistic extravagances: ‘. . . if the poet is what is around him, he cannot preserve internal order while living in a chaotic society.’ Despite this, Gollin recognizes how individuated ‘order’ or form validates any expression, and that his own article testifies how proper respect for languages does preserve the tool that brings order from chaos. Gollin also noted that certain ‘words cease to hold meaning,’ because they connote forgotten symbols; so, he conjures the restoration of a ‘unified body and structure of belief.’ Most critics seem to ignore how the bulk of what passes for contemporary literature lacks the purposeful direction/s found in greater writings. Gollin appears to advocate the rediscovery or re-forming of a mythical matrix for universal purposive correspondences; but this is not essential, nor even half-desirable — although belief (and so, love) does characterize and ratify works of genuine art. What about compositional self-discipline, by exercise of will? What, then, can be certified by a restored ‘inter-com’ of myth, lacking elementary semantical disciplines?

WHERE IS FREEDOM ?

This touches upon philosophical aspects, a brief preliminary look at which will clarify and shorten what ensues. Significantly, many critics have been vacuously addressing directionless ‘freedoms’. And yet, only a few years

ago, Kenneth Burke (now out of fashion) was generously lauded for having pointed out that freedom undefined by purpose predicates chaos (PERMANENCE AND CHANGE). Burke also mentioned some late-neglected axioms: while obstruction of liberty may be demonstrable only where exercise of specific function is affected, prior choices (determining that function) first must have been made; and, while environment indubitably affects all organisms and psyches, environment itself must have been shaped by realized intentions of some organisms or psyches. However, today's unlicensed fictions implicitly (or explicitly) deny responsibility by pleading the helplessness of individuals in this milieu; flawed appraisals of such fictions assume that genius holds no potential for independent trials of individuating aspiration.

J. G. Bennett opens his natural philosophy (THE DRAMATIC UNIVERSE) by establishing that neither 'being' nor 'function' can account for the manifest nonduplicating differentiations of existence, thereby flatly gainsaying the existential 'dead-enders' of belles-lettres. Stating 'only will is unique,' he declares: 'The all-important question about man is whether it is possible for him to be an individual; . . . can he become an independent source of initiative?'

The semantical problems here cannot be properly discussed without observing how current periodicals and books are loaded with the writings of those who evince little creative enterprise springing from awareness of this primary question. Arlene Zekowski and Stanley Berne (in CARDINALS & SAINTS) have well stated how this bears on semantics: 'If we live in a contemporary world of architecture, of science — overcoming the problems of gravity by reaching out with our intelligence towards newer and greater mysteries — it is all the more fitting and necessary that what we read and (therefrom) what we think be expressed in a language that will allow us to cope with the Renaissance of the Twentieth

Century . . .’ (Parenthesis added.)

Most writers do have to invoke conscious will; great spontaneous poetry isn’t of everyday occurrence. This ‘will’ equates and coincides with any search for expression adequate to valid personal definitions of feelings and thoughts. Beneath superficial deficiencies, most current writings show meagre evidences of purposes. Their authors often also seem without desire to invoke fresh surface-patterns of hoped significant language. For that matter, given literary pretension, language-deficiency usually proves the absence of sincere commitments, often indicating that the writer morbidly regards as chimerical the possibility of his possessing an independent individuality. Incongruously enough, the more-audible ‘nay’ to darker world views in today’s creative writers is heard from students in the sciences (notably biology) where research is confirming that moving intentions must predicate the differentiations rendering ‘existence’ perceptible.

The critics who do not discern which writings carry potent signs, largely spend their energies on treadmills devoted to pointless, often hypocritical, resistance to such long-laid spectres as inhibited sex. And their language emulates the improficiencies of their subjects, — to cater to mass readerships. If ever they’d hear Bennett say that ‘the meaning of anything is to be what it is,’ they’d call him a hybrid positivistic fundamentalist, never crediting him as a scientist championing honesty in art.

LITERATURE, AND THE SCIENCES

Most of those who handle words carefully — excepting semanticists — are in those sciences developing new technical vocabularies; at the same time, pseudo-creators enhance the confusions of their effusions with random words purloined from these vocabularies. This, in the name of fresher diction. At the beginning, extensions of the sciences influenced reasonable (if debatable) expectations. I. A. Richards made a stir by attacking what was (compared with today's dense atmosphere) mild haziness in literary criticism; but his sponsorship of would-be clinical analyses of texts soon resulted in all manner of fake-scientific gas-attacks. In the same period when Richards was spelling classroom exactitudes, popularizers advanced theories to 'demonstrate' how the aesthetic of rhetorical expression should be varied through methods like those employed in a biology lab. Eager poetasters and so-called

(continued on Page 263)

THE ROPE TRICK

Destiny is not a matter of beginning in time, nor an ending. Rather a word for what seeps through the pores of the skin warning the senses that our divinity has nodded. It was a week for decision. In an absolute sense, as God looks on the world, every week had been. No, enough of that. This week, Hefner felt, it could happen. Finally. Determination and an end to kicking in the air. Would-be painter; would be real; grownup, fixed and hung on the nail of a wife and job. Would-be painter. Pray for us. Would be real. God save us. Fixed. Christ have mercy! There he was again. Try as hard as he could he couldn't bring it off. Up and down the ladder waiting for the wink of god as his mother told him it must come. He kept getting it mixed with his tubes of paint. Was it art? He was on the top rung. The subway stopped at Wall Street and Hefner got off and climbed out of the ground. He came to the corner of Broad Street and turned. Monday rainy grey mist at a chilling March temperature to the office of Paul Kirkman, college friend turned exporter. For a reason not completely clear in his then-complex syndrome of old friends and moldy pigments on discarded palettes. Not, however, for no reason. Simply not elucted into either consciousness not a reason for not therefore when the two had met in an uptown Lexington Ave. gallery the week before and Kirkman suggested the luncheon to which Hefner had assented and now wound. At the small upstate New York college the two had loosely tied those tremendous days not to themselves, but to the buildings and beer buddies that surrounded them. They had left but not forgotten. In the tedious recounting of events they sought again that spark that jumped just once. After the hard breathing and chase of the natives, the close fall from nine thousand feet and the tangled airline at the

bottom of the Atlantic deeps off Puerto Rico comes the well-deserved stasis does your heart beat for me? Simple is also another word. In Hefner's infant love of color he had seen the bright posters in the windows of the bank in the building where

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Kirkman clogged and wanted them. Well, there it was. Sure, said Kirkman, and while you're here, meet Phil Manley he's in charge of selecting the stuff we live in the same town keep our account here you still paint don't you? Phil does some but being married you know you never married did you? say there's Bill Woodward you don't mind? there's something coming due today be right back. See Phil tell him we were college buddies. Business business there but for the grace of my indomitable will horseshit thought Hefner. They weren't the words but it went along something like that. He wandered over to the 'art department.' Phil Manley was out. Art. For which Kirkman had volunteered as sleeping middle term. He was a broker: Artists interested him, not what they did. Quite possibly the run of his mortality as buttons on his coat nice, and among his many causes, niceness. Finally, coat-on-Kirkman ready to leave. Manley had not returned. Hefner into his coat they left making sounds of no great consequence in the corridor waiting for the elevator in and down the greyness of the grey wetness and chill of so feeling and walking out into the drizzle when Phil! A grey sack shape through the revolving doors. Do you mind? A neighbor. We live in the same town. Kirkman's words spun out as his head jerked from the image through the glass. At this point the appearance of the divided loyalties so devised as decided all choices as trumped up reality to surprise? No, perhaps not all, but all as though sent through the mails as gifts from someone else. So arranged: two to get ready and three to eat. Hefner and Kirkman plodded drizzle streets and pronged umbrellas to digestive noonday destiny appropriately mist-veiled, stocking feet wagnerian frizzle. The warm steady rise of spiced German cooking and human wet wool outer-garments. To the bar awhile. At the bottom of the murky pool waiting for Manley they stared at each other what a queer fish their sensors revealed. They bumped their

snub noses against the glass sides looking glumly. How did it happen do we dare? their eyes blinked out. They were forced to wait. Phil! All together now: one two three. On wood unmindful of

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their asses. Arrumph uuhh. In a fast shuffle, near hysteria in a white apron handed the eating cards, retrieves one quickly, blankly from Manley and was gone upsetting Kirkman no end. Mother Frau, however, standing by, rectified all and brought the alcohol wherewith to warm. Kirkman shifted his bottom itchily.

Bring another!

Another? (He had not tasted the first)

Yes, another!

The eyes the other eyes circle. There was knowledge passing through the air questions going begging.

I felt rotten this morning, Kirkman explained. Not all so
ah

fire liquifies

the animus. Herakleitos was also mindful. The gaze of Kirkman was warmed at Phil. Dare I send him warning, thought Hefner. No, I'll watch.

Betsy sends a big thank-you to you and Annie, Manley oggled Kirkman. We are all tickled with the egg.

The egg? Hefner muscled in.

A big plastic one. With icing.

That was lovely. After all, Hefner blurted to himself, am I not here ostensibly the luncheonee? An interesting point. As water is a better medium for sound, so rain transmits thoughts best. Harry boy, you just watch the neighbors talk. It's all up now. Harry Hefner, you ain't a neighbor.

Annie's been like that all her life. She loves doing things like that

did

you go to the Easter service Sunday?

Yes.

You did! We didn't see you.

We went to the children's service.

Ah.

Patty's in the choir. We were dead at that hour we'd been
to a party the night before and

o it was a good one.

We had too so we got ourselves out to the children's
service and came home and went back to bed.

O you and your dirty mind Hefner. They did not they went
and slept it off. Feeling around in the dark sheets with a
hangover your brain ain't

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on it you ought to remember that yourself if only your dirty
mind didn't jump immediately to that every time you hear
the word.

The dock in summer

Yes.

When we can just dive into the water

ah.

A city dock? Hefner's enormous head suddenly looms
before them. When the fire rises it seeks the water to warm.
His mind ran to such dry legal formulae

clarification always clarification.

Well, it's a community dock. Kirkman searched Manley: Is
it alright if I tell our secrets in public places? But it's
privately maintained by the manor association through dues.
His blank gaze fin brushed Hefner filled with manor dues
and fiefs and oaths of fealty to the lord le droit du seigneur
and every virgin daughter before her father gets his hands on
her

not really. It's only god the father and he gooses no one.

You can't buy a house unless you're a member of the
association. Or I'll say that no one buys a house without
becoming a member for the hedge trimming what hedge

trimming mostly for extra garbage collection and tree limbs
save all your old wood we've been burning it in the fireplace I
go down to the beach two-and-half dollars for an armload
but we like a fireplace and I think we save on fuel bills
getting the wood for nothing.

Hefner was lost. No, he knew where he was. He swam
over to the other side of the tank and watched the heads and
the automobiles in the world outside the glass.

I'll have another. This time no voices that Hefner could
hear. Lazily his tail lashing on the murky bottom. They
tacked him up on the pole Friday but he winked and we all
winked back nobody's going to get hurt so while they pack
him away for the weekend let's get the gang together stoned
with my christ neither of us feeling any pain we rose from the
dead together on Easter Sunday Jesus but it's nice all of us
swimming together with my legs around everybody neighbors
jumping in and everybody all around you rubbing and feeling
good.

A drunk rapped staccato on the cafe window with a piece
of rusted pipe. Hey! For Christ's sake! Looking stupid and
pressed so close the red raw eyes stared blandly blank full
swollen blubber lips slobbering his molted pink meat face as
though it had long since been severed from his body and
hung there bobbing banging on the small pane window

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until finally in his own blood's crescendo he smashed it.
There was a tinkle of glass. Jee suz! Keerist! The owner ran
out from behind the bar dropping a beer glass in his haste.

What the hell did he do that for?

For c'ris' sakes.

Sitting here like nothing in the world

what the hell was the matter with him couldn't he walk in
if he wanted to get it that bad.

Jesus. You never can tell.

No, you never can where were the cops.

It's one of those things in New York.

One of those things.

Rudy, set 'em up again. I need something after that.

The drunk had disappeared.

It's all up we didn't make it. Hefner knew at last, unmistakably. The air blew in from the broken window. I don't mind it was interesting. Kirkman uncomfortable, however, confronting a naked Hefner building-less no beer buddy. Hefner is shit, he thought. Probably a lousy artist.

Nothing

simply nothing more than shit. Kirkman had the feeling now so completely that he was sure Hefner must be on to it, must know even that he was this shit, and he was irritated, too, that he had been tricked. But, who had tricked him? It was he

he couldn't blame Hefner but what in hell was it all about? So much so all this that he left the restaurant before Hefner and Manley had even put on their coats, and stood outside in the light falling rain waiting for them.

Simple single the event as happening outside themselves. Inside their heads rather and three of them. Dismissed by Kirkman before the hour ran out with sidestepped determination not to again although, as in the tank, groundless

shit! a useful explicative where the blue of her eyes meets the gold of her hair I am the lord of.

Manley among the magenta reds and ochre yellows of the setting sun felt his fingers itch and tried to respond to stirring thoughts of his own devoted home, eyes and vague peripheral disturbances that quickly gave

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it up and went on to the cool interior of the barbecue pit. Hefner, inclined to laziness tried merely to bury his head in the sands of thought. To a thinker as he it was over the hills and far away up into that beautiful belfry that he admired so much each morning shaving what soulful eyes thoust have what eyes to paint into a girl's head who needs a head? Only that white ground wherein the convoluting greys dissolve to deep mysterious blues of such sadness that to follow them wholly would be something exquisitely inexpressible. Early the next morning, eyes open Hefner lay awake in his two-room flat in Brooklyn's Park Slope as Moses Joseph Mohamed Abdul Ben Adam and such who hear the voice of god in their dreams. Clearly there was something to do. Hefner arose determined. The thoughts that tumbled through Hefner's head were snatches of To the Chief Onward Christian Soldiers a tide taken at its crest determination written for a set of drums and ships setting off into the sunset. There was also a pleasurable feeling around his genitals. He shuffled around the room elated, certain of something utterly unable to comprehend it and fearful that it would end in the sunlight. He picked up a corner of the shade. So far so good, it wasn't daylight yet. He needed a written contract with fate, signed and sealed. He yawned. God, was this where it was petering out to? He opened a drawer to a chest and fingered a pencil. From further back he pulled several sheets of paper. He lit the electric lamp above the table and began waving his hand over the paper in a sketching movement. Dear everybody, he started, standing, paused while he sucked the pencil point, then clenched his fist on the lead as he scrawled hurriedly: Dear everybody fate has knocked I am on my way forever say hello to Mom but there couldn't be any other way signed and sealed this day March 27th Harry Hefner. It was done what the hell with the words it was done. He would never be real. It was all as

unsettled as ever. It would always be that way. And there was no one to thank. But he felt good. Was it art? No he thought. No it wasn't art. Maybe it was something like what he felt. Maybe, but there were enough words already. Hefner, contented now, went back to bed and fell into a deep sleep.

HAROLD WITT

MACHINES

I saw on a small screen the great machines
of fictional science simulating brains,
metallic robots with a clicking hum
detecting correctness and making new improvements —
coffee and suds as instant as a wand
another rocket toward the target planet,
the face of science on the box I watched
predicting me extinct, an ape that scratched
archaic itches in a fur of terror,
my bodily humanity an error.
I heard a multiplicity of sound —
warm transistors' chorused unison
ringing constant modernness, the mind
noisily annoyed, its silent privacy
encroached like deserts with concrete increase
of windowed cubes and flatness going up.
Quaint Leonardo, I saved myself by art
the thoughtful synapses would never reach,
smiles not smiles and roundnesses not round,
whichever perfect key the future punched.

GIL ORLOVITZ

MASTERINDEX : 8

in the long stupor of the rain
the overwhelms hang lightly
the man is in the middle of his actors
a flood rises as lazily as the smoke signal of a cyclone
embedded in the wet leaves of lungs the blood at last
grows a
dark red beard
the waterwheel sounds the circular deeps
the man turns over and over in his long green
underwear
a long white tooth bobs on the flood
a bowed windboy is fishing for a jaw
the ark is filled with actors each with his understudy
two by two
we are dripping with marinated gore
we are slipping through rainbows of aromatic sardines
we blow fishes as bubbles
he crouches before the flickering seaweed as before
flames in
the hearth
in the long stupor of the rain
the fetus grows in the circular deeps of the waterwheel
the actors abandon the ark the moment god goes
skindiving
the tides hum hugely through the forests
seaburnt the nomads swim through the grazing waters

JAMES BOYER MAY

COITION

Being's linear: not closed; not split.
So: minus inward sight
and outward knowing.
To conjugate: is else to be.
An otherwise: in isness.

Union separates each self from prime existence . . .
bringing: fourth/s between . . . the flow of twained
dementia/'s unpredetermined bonds and vestries of these
other-seen and -felt participants.

First actors leave themselves . . . and, parted, joined, are
met in joyful place of burning solace.

GEORG DONMAIS

ABANDONED SCULPTURE

Light
returning
running swiftly
encysts defeat.
In darkness
imagination
idea immanent
moved even monsters
toward grace.
Sun-stricken
idle mallet
ungrasped chisel
futility revealed.
And still
the Id
within
coiling uncoiling.

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JOANNE DE LONGCHAMPS

A MUTATION OF ANGELS

If the final dragon
has not been seen or slain,
still there are no reports
of a serpent seeking mayhem or a maiden,
of green lads grappling
with coil and scale.
Sweet slayers sleep in effigies
and vellum texts
or posture in a tapestry
where in mille-fleur fields small creatures
crouch at rest by hound and maiden —
Gazing, we imagine Eden.
Air is void of angels
in cloud and fitful flight
assigned to visions.
Yet there is lightning, moon and stringent sun
as backdrops for a miracle
of laddered light.
Devious, our need demands
divine attention —
but gentle shapes announcing birth
with all the round and rosy flocks of cherubim
have flown to ancient ceilings,
are painted into heaven.
There is no simple end
to apparitions.
Bright sky-skimmers trolling space
are lately chronicled and seen
shaped as a serpent circling on itself
or a mutation of angels,
half-secret, half-machine.

RUTH FORBES SHERRY

JOURNEY INTO SELF

Back, back to origins,
girdled by gusts of hell,
where mind's in the matrix;
close as a chrysalis
in landscape of waiting,
the heart captive to first cause.
I had known trees and tiger-call of hills;
green tide tearing at the ranges.
I had been guest of stone and fern.
Back to origins, the matrix,
or, by a whisper of mind,
mount the flying force
in proud hyperbola.

ROBERT LEVIN

THE LITTLE MAN

The little man with the embarrassed nose
And a twinkling ear on his shoulder,
Wore another's pants and yesterday's shirt
And befriended wild goldfish.
He spoke with them of yellow ice cream carts
And smiled coins from strangers,
In return for tiny wooden birds
Who ceased to sing
Once he had
gone.

DARK ROOM GRAFFITI

william j margolis

dark room graffiti
over-exposed ...
a nude descending
a ladder of abstractions
wearing stained glass shades
she discussed with me
the integration of the arts
in only squalid terms
and we could easily agree
horizontally
dark room graffiti
etched ...
we were all alone
in our negligence
our blinds tightly closed.
she discussed with me
the separation of the arts
in the only terms she knew
and we went our squalid ways,
vertically

DAVID LYTTLE

**ON ATTENDING AN MLA MEETING IN
PHILADELPHIA**

I got among the cold
gratings of that city,
all hale, but ignorant,
and leathery with miles
of wind around my face:
the wintry sun was hard
and low like a stop-sign
casting its glazy danger
across the roofs at Ben
straddling the City Hall,
at windows of hotels,
like eyes of the fazed Argus.

The men I looked for were
in packs around the lounge,
or off, beside themselves,
inscrutable and cool,
the scholars, men in brown,
the doctors who attend
the poets when they die,
poking with the rat's face,
their glasses glinting with
the pink, prismatic light
of chandeliers that hung
above them like their brains.

DAVID LYTTLE

And I left them for what
they were, and walked-out,
and numbed my face in a cold
mass of stars that swiped
me, like a wet mop,
and reassured me still
that I could know the clean
defeat of common death.
I waited for the green,
and the traffic blinded by;
then spurted out, and purred
away, with soft exhaust.

FRAGMENTS FROM THE HOMOGENIZED MOMENT: A TRUTH

Max Blake preening, pruning. Blake puking. Gin — Golden nights, lamped and darkened with the hidden shadows of girls' tongued faces; the knees, the trees. Don't! Don't! The oh, do of Don't. Blake wanton, wanting. Combers clout the seawalls, ejaculating gulls into blackspace. Sand foams with the sly sliding hand of fingering waves. A moon, ginned and low, sprung from the direction of China, China. Shorebirds, drills screwing, and the surf bringing playbacks under needlenosed bombers, lacing the sky with moonspat vapor. Promising detonations. Promising girls in a community of tossed salads, tossed innuendo. Blake saying, saying — 'I offer! I proffer!' — She swoops, mouths fluttered moths as kisses, is gone. Moves. With legging steps, her machinery going, going. Says: 'count the years count the hours.' Remembers: wet Catholics in basements, pouring over fine wines. Blake screws lightbulbs — something to do with the hands, hands. Blake — always learning, unlearning, screwing, unscrewing. Sooner or later they all do. 'I'm counting,' he reports, honestly, 'I get twenty-six — certainly not more than eight-five.' Now, Forgelson — a large, angular, trapezoidal man with a lowered left shoulder. Eyes Blake, eyes Blake's cousin, twice removed. Scratches — them. Begins: 'A million missiles. A million idiots. Million minutes, a million reasons.' Getting older, colder. Girls scream for closed windows, girls nearly naked in formal attire. Forgelson preening, pruning. Somebody has placed a dish of them on the floor — prunes. California, black, shriveled. He (Forgery) has this strange idea: 'Prunes is the shrunken heads of sulphur-cured vegetarians, prunes is nothing but dried health, riding a guilty cult.' They listen, lying buttock

to buttock, rotating their ice drinks counterclockwise. A girl; she had a minor role in the motion picture film titled: NAKEDLY TAKE ME — an innocuous, sexless story about violence, torture, sadism; propped up by motherhood, baseball, applepie, morality. She (the girl) slightly bent by jazz; it is respectful, dignified on stereo — the music choosing up sides of the room, impressing, impressing —

CURTIS ZAHN

‘Some little thing,’ Blake was saying.

Another girl, different from the same, talking an older man to the wall, promising mammary retaliation. Older, he is lesserknown. An architect! Architect!

‘But why twice — architect?’ — Forgelson.

‘For emphasis! Emphasis!’ Blake reports.

‘I like Bill,’ she continues, ‘he twiced me once.’ She inquires. With her mind. Martinied, she is a tune with bottomless pitted olives. Toothpicked, she undulates in gyroscopic beatitudes, a private overflow for privileged Indian students.

Some little thing. The world, slammed and locked, is rubberized and rolling past blinded windows. Inside, stunned people hammer out forged communications; theirs is the donged flout of innerspring guilts. Truth winks, laughs, disconnecting its hearing-aid. Unerring birds twig among branches, their automatic brains set at recall. Fish skim rocks, working in sexdarts for spawned effigy. The truth whines, sadwinds elude gaseous men who wept for their toy trains and must live again through children. Men thrashed, men toted. Truth begs, hat across buttocks, bowing to a hostile moon. You know that, somewhere, striking zoo attendants are butting pampered apes; a bifurcated ping of individual rebellion. Misplaced emotions searching for popular outlets —

‘The rich don’t want to die. The poor don’t want. The middleclass don’t.’

Blake, proud of the contents of his skull, sharing intelligence with promising Soroptimists. Blake remembering the arrogant, rubbersnapping days, the nights —

‘Don’t what — the middleclass?’

Furred, gloved, horribly hatted, the girl (or the other girl) sends bellhops on mysterious errands while men in phone booths smoke, doodle, diddle, and dial wrong numbers.

Meaning, meaning —

‘Consider —’ Blake asks, the yearn for sincerity putting appeal to an eye. Consider young giraffes, gliding past skyscrapers, curiosity fobbed by the things you see in windows — young giraffes with gladdened farts, and another Sunday has passed. Some little thing: a bat’s undergear, a puttyknife collector’s eating habits, a 23-karat diamond carelessly dropped into the pocket of a sable economy . . .

Sunday morning, Forgelson is thinking, Sunday morning — horn-blue, anticipated, eulogized. Monday prejudiced — known, conditioned. Only Tuesdays were tricky, unspringing surprises that contained lead pipes. Tuesdays would do it every time, Tuesdays failed.

‘I gave a whole dollar to a half-wit today.’

CURTIS ZAHN

The third girl from the right. Right? Her name (April) was bestowed by a garrulous mother who, impossibly, ran out of words. 'A whole dollar,' Blake repeated unnecessarily, I thought, adding: 'The whole is greater than the sum of —' 'After all — it's the intent, not the amount —' 'Juice me!' another girl tells another man, one fumbling with pitchers of vodka and orange. Sociology, in an Hawaiian shirt, turning up at small parties to which the president of the united states had not been invited. Sociology drinking too much, talking loosely. Sociology turning the corner, turning itself in. Sociology going home with a wealthy divorcee. April (although it was only February) thought: Mice — mounted by mice, meeting the public gaze with buttoned muteness. Owls mounted by taxidermists — horses by rich girls, prints by rich girls. Forgelson emulating whales, making it up alongside the bar. Forgelson coming at you downwind, veering to the right for a girl who knew Melville, Manville. Forgelson remembering Mudville — thinking tarpaper, gutters, downspouts. 'Why are you so quiet?' they asked April that February. 'I gave a whole dollar. Why?' She pauses, poses, pouts. 'I did it in order that he wouldn't accost me some night.' — Sidewalks following you, silently, at dusk in weird neighborhoods, waiting to strike. Curbs to be leaped, shadows called, scenes imagined, rejected, imagined, investigated, imagined — 'It is good business helping the poor, the poor.' Who are the poor? And how to help? 'Nowadays, any jerk can go right out and —' 'Buy a gun!' Blake says: 'And? And?' It is a land, a time, big and complex. A land of publicized oddities, with freaks stacked upon one another apart coast to coast. There are girls interlaced, girls coming apart, girls embossed with the wane of fricken colts. With colts nipping millionaires, colts pampered, insured, shot, stuck, jabbed, cut, curried, raced, retired. With people otherwise; people petted, pastured, avoided, winked, blinked.

People accepting half from whole women. Whole women eating oysters on the half-shell, half in love with men who are friggled with the thought of a hole of their own. Blake balancing, brooding, belittling. April, talking under June's moons. Saying, saying: 'Army wives. Live same lives. Over and over. Everywhere. At all times.'

CURTIS ZAHN

'Sure — I mean, yes.'

Flocked birds, swooping, twiddling like young Bonwit-Tellers among the fangled tundra. A bee, a bird, a rock. Cars and toilets. Usual things — scattered among the too-young; silky Scandinavians with blue eyes running their hands over buttons miles in the sky — clean, bland American youth with wings. Others, throwing away their bicycles and living inches deep. Knowing floods. Rowing down to the postoffice in search of unwritten letters. People stampless, slyly licking their own envelopes while vegetarians suffer leaflets. 'I birdsang and dropped,' Blake exclaims into the weathered ear of a Captain's wife, 'I birdsang and twitted and knew —'

Party talk; crazier men have masturbated on rollercoasters. Standing— Forgelson loses his glint. Slowly, his weakened mouth collapses into the seller's smile. He is a man destined for a civilian death, to be struck down by an attractive, hurried girl in her father's Olds. Blake, reeking from the sludge of the East river, will be the season's first bat-bite fatality. All of them are merely drinking their time away — patronizing dry-cleaners, permitting Boy Scouts to grease their cars, stamping out multiple-sclerosis with dimes, smiling into doorways backed by unprepared matrons who finished high school. In houses. Where? Purple moons pace transparent blue drapes. Where drapes, drawn and waiting, conceal advertisers, artists. Where artists flip ashes in front of jutting models, thinking: If mother could only see me now! And mothers; setting their alarms for midnight,

arising to bake cakes and locking doors against husbands, prowlers. Where husbands troll for barracuda; where barracuda dream of Florida where they were respected, feared.

Barracuda remembering the Maine, swimming with Nelson, Cabrillo, Juan de Fuca, Esther Williams. Barracuda remembering, remembering. People forgetting —

‘I counted it up again,’ Forgelson recounts.

‘How many?’ Blake begs, ‘Twenty-six?’

‘Twenty-six what?’

‘Thirty-seven — coming in low and slow.’ Forgelson lazily runs his eyes over fear’s countenance, remembering girlpricked afternoons given over to the study of biology. You thought ahead then because there existed no past, no present. But now, now, now —

Some little thing. A kind act, performed in the dark when no one could overhear. A word out of the dictionary, presented softly. A love of Rolls Royces, transferred legally to all hate-objects. Hate-objects warmed and tendered, then invited in for a drink. But until then, Blake was Blake in April, wanting out, staying in — waiting, waiting — (continued from Page 242)

experimentalists in prose found easy praise for modernities hatched from these theories. A good time began to be had by all, in games played with strange words employed with startling disregard for their definitive uses. Just a few out-of-favor critics retained ‘unscientific’ attitudes and persevered in preferring to search for less-tangible frames of creative realization, for the conscious or unconscious purposes moving the creators.

Today, save for those building on the approaches of such men as the late Middleton Murry and R. G. Collingwood, approved critical technique relies upon assiduous concentration on phrases cunningly rendered misunderstandable when divorced from contexts; word-lost

treatises upon verbal peregrinations of 'daring' innovators crowd the quarterlies and bloat the avant English guides. Seldom has criticism fallen into lower repute; though, on the credit side of a red-inked U.S. ledger, a few clearheaded younger critics (John Aldridge is an example) have achieved bestseller status, to the dismay of their academic detractors. In Britain, the better critics (G. S. Fraser, one of them, recently tagged filched 'laboratory phrases' as simply compounding vaguenesses and not in the least helpful to understandable precision) are shouted down. Beyond their undoubtedly better respect for craftsmanship and their superior appraisals of elements related to socio-cultural problems, most younger English critics seem unaware of probable deteriorative influences from their own misled employments of flawed expression in often-untranslatable language.

So, the popularizers of criticism are — with an odd inconsistency, in that area — responding to a demand for obscurities which, only a few years since, had been dubbed ivory-tower prattle. Their efforts, to be sure, aren't that worthy; they cater to nonreading literary suburbanites buying their stuff to appear 'cultured.' They call upon obese words already overstuffed by schoolmen, and pepper articles with neologisms plucked from glossaries of philosophy, psychiatry, physics, mathematics. . . . Surplus fun is had with deadpan puns and homonyms, helpful screens for spurious analyses — as for breezy, uninterpretable 'social' observations. For instance, references to something called 'the contemporary mental climate' as 'schizophrenic.' Or, flogging hodgepodes of semantical balderdash this way and that, speaking of the 'neuroticism normal to the arts' (whatever the modifier may convey in this aborted connection) and declaring such 'normal neuroticisms' (why not call forth 'neurectasies' from the M.D.s' handbook?) have 'infected the minds of countless scientists' they assert

become candidates to mislead civilization into 'a nightmare era of mutually-destructive paranoia.' Really, now! These titbits are recalled from published articles in the popular press. THE POLITICAL TINGE Before the specific consideration of any of these accessories to literary mayhem, a couple of general points. There are vivid similarities between such cross-threaded 'new' patterns of platitude and the speeches of certain types of politicians who have been using dual-exhausting phrases for centuries. What with multiplying complexities of international befuddlement, the increasing incidence of mental breakdowns amongst the 'bright' minority is quite understandable; and yet, madness-alibis scarcely shield supposed mentors who deliberately promote literary confusion at a juncture when clarity is most needed. Writers upon writing, instead of excoriating neo-fashionable trends in nebulous perversions of words, instead of exhorting authors to guard the virtue of style to preserve and extend ideas and perceptions, have joined in the debacle of abuse. Few are really trying to distinguish which avant-gardists may be mature innovators and which are mere doodlers. Of course, among other things, poetical works are expected to suggest manifold new culture-circuits; but, significant poetry also must carry a charge of individuated expression so as to rearrange the particles toward translatable (aesthetically, or sensuously, or . . .) new understanding. Nor must valid originalities always be easily apprehensible; not for the unperceptive majority that rejects 'difficult' writings along with the writings which actually are meaningless at any level. But, the appreciation of masterpieces is not the issue here. This concerns culpable critics who grant pseudo-serious consideration to every writer who seems 'different,'—and, at the same time try to sound like bemused muses, themselves. Though few critics may have read him, scores of them appear to proceed upon the perverted acceptance of a statement of J. E. McTaggart in

THE NATURE OF EXISTENCE: 'If there are two varieties of thought of which one is higher . . . it will be impossible for the lower and narrower to be directly aware that the higher is valid.' A profound truth; however, instead of giving account to higher orders of genius, such critics practice obtuse impartialities amongst geniuses, lesser talents, mental defectives, and downright clods, while pretending concern over denotative semantics. In their unfavorable critiques, where even they find semantical vulnerabilities, they will compound the errors they uncover, with their own imprecise language. Indeed, they also would deduce the inapplicable alternative literal meaning from Henry Miller's remark (in *TO PAINT IS TO LOVE* 264 AGAIN) to the effect that the sage is beyond the need to practice any sort of art.

As do clever politicians — expanding upon the similarity noted above — literary commentators spill forth 'scenic' and statistical information in fascinating confusion, making capital from a milieu which already will have addled the brains of most of their audience. Ambiguously 'inspirational' generalities found in broadsides of the intentions of reform movements like the new British World Party offer remarkable samples of parallels in freehanded gatherings of stereo-wool that's never quite thick enough to cover non-commitments and brazen omissions of definable opinions on tangible matters. Quotations must be confined to the field surveyed, but — in passing — the B.W.P. announcement reads like an attempt to infiltrate the United Kingdom with the American 2-in-1 system.

Dissimilarities between political and literary struggles (other than necessary vocabulary variations) may block appreciation of the parallels. While politicians, proper, exercise a kind of indirect neutral benevolence, their bookish counterparts practice wary neutralities of devious malevolence. But, this is at the personal-contact level; both waltz glibly around place-times where real issues form. The

diverting measures of praiseful or virulent lyrics supply no scores for rebuttal or for meddlesome support (definitely, these are not community waltzes). Should debatable significance be attributed to their tunes, these experienced instigators of confusion deftly demur they hadn't meant to sound those notes. Societal politicoes couch denials in prolix terms of inane tolerance; with like excess, literary politicians employ blustering techniques to blaze across dubious horizons with lightnings of stormed-up counterattack upon no-one-can-be-positive-what. Honest engagements seldom eventuate.

THE PAP ITSELF

Having tabbed the pragmatic psychologies here, let's glance at some of the actual manners of literary 'judgments,' without much attention to their usually-questionable merits. Now and then, very poor statements of opinion rise from just and endorsable intentions.

Commencing at the top, HARPER's not long ago displayed the views of a critic who is not one of the pseudo-litterateurs disqualifying themselves by calling upon criteria drawn from their limited social, religious, or ethical fealties. This was Alfred Kazin, declaring that Truman Capote is a 'good writer' and Gore Vidal, a 'bad writer', and dropping nary a clue as to why. He was anticipatedly definitive enough where he held to lines of general relevance; and yet, he wrote of 'overconscious stylists' without bothering to cite publications, and he referred to 'fashionable mistiness' of prose without hinting whose prose made the alleged fashion. Could he have been suggesting that anything 'fashionable' is consequently misty? Or, that certain types of overcast create some fashion? This remains veiled in a Kazin-brand of mist.

As indicated, some tangled lapses occur in the arguments for worthy causes. A comprehensive documentation of sadly-scrambled laudable advocacies could be prepared from recent writings of Karl Shapiro; he has regrettably left his

sound ideas open to semantical refutation. A chapter of *IN DEFENSE OF IGNORANCE* — having also been printed in well-circulated periodicals in the U.S.A. and England — has seriously harmed good causes he championed. Centered on poetry, this section of the book is a reckless oversimplification, rife with indefensible generalizations about authors and ‘trends’. Having asserted that terms such as *Academie Americaine* are ‘anything but meaningless’, he declares that ‘academic’, ‘intellectual’, ‘Modern’, and something called the T. S. Eliot version of ‘Classical’ all ‘mean one and the same.’ It’s unclear whether this is his own peculiar semantic notion or whether he intends an ambiguous castigation of others who misuse such abstractions; however, he does infer that the synonymous interpretation he gives them bares the nature of an ‘official literary movement’ (which he never really identifies). In lectures, he has seemed to champion cognitive criticism against the merely textual; but, in print, he doesn’t advocate exercise of perception toward understanding what he labels ‘cultural poetry’, — something he condemns on the sole ground that rather complex materials are employed.

Shapiro displays pyramids of titles and author-names, using them as launching sites for categorical inductive and deductive missiles. Such rollcalls long have been the lifebelts of bad critics and teachers who find themselves unprepared for lucid attacks upon specific writers. Shapiro certainly is prepared, and could substantiate many of his burning pronouncements by analyses of selected works. Instead, he offers composite listings of proscribed authors and raises scores of either-or, pro-and-con questions. Numbers of different readers may imagine they agree with him, — but from quite different assumptions. Or, vice versa, disagree with him, on wrong premises. Shapiro flatly-enough condemns what he calls ‘criticism-poetry;’ yet, while many may utter glad amens to what this label appears to connote,

all are left without guidance to Shapiro's own denotative applications.

Here is Shapiro-ambiloquence: 'The person who can understand modern poetry must first be initiated . . .' Which modern poetry? What kind of initiation? And what sort of person 'can understand?' Repeatedly assailing 'Modern' criticism, he declares this 'propaganda for a handful of power-hungry writers.' Fine! But which criticism does he assail? He designates none — just as he fails to segregate the poetical writings. He attacks the 'mind-centred;' yet, readers may interpret this to mean that all thinking poets are therefore misguided egotists. Or, the obverse: that all literary climbers are intellectuals? And though he describes cerebral 'horrors' as 'ideological' and 'poetry of theologies and (N.B., not "but") social theories', he does not oppose this with any plain explanation of theory relating aesthetic achievement to archetypal identifications in the unconscious. On the other hand, of course, he doesn't maintain that true poetry has to rise from the pit of the stomach or the genitals.

Shapiro applies absolutist attitudes to more-or-less formulated world-concepts, without which no author may pretend to responsibility. He appears to say that writers with purposeful mature outlooks must be either victims or perpetrators of 'isms.' Sound though his support of Romantic theory and spontaneity may be, he clouds his partisanship by attacking what he terms 'philosophy of literature' or 'culture orthodoxy.' His 'enemy' remains unidentified by the varicolored uniform he describes; what he may mean by 'orthodoxy' is undefined by either-or's,— and he shows those who might be the priests of this orthodoxy exhorting opposition to anti-Romanticism while lending comfort to monarchism, even Fascism! Shapiro also contradictorily indicts them for approving nostalgia, per se! He not only denounces reflections of social ideals in poetry, but censures all conjurings from the past when they seem to attribute any

relevancy to tradition — except via purely-stylistic textures.

This has carried interpretations of Shapiro's article beyond the fight against dogmatism and ritual. His mention of 'anti-religious . . . ritualism' is extremely ambiguous. At first, he would appear to say there are two kinds of dogmatists: evangelists and unbelievers. This is elementary; but when he finds T. S. Eliot an example of the former, and Ezra Pound an example of the latter, he badly scrambles the applications to other recent poetry. Well-individuated writers are easily misjudged when analyzed through comparisons outside their own frames. And Shapiro reveals confusion in his many ill-defined canons,— as by naming W. B. Yeats among blessed Moderns (though at an 'occult' level) and, Wallace Stevens among the anti-religious ritualists (of 'form').

Shapiro's method of attack may reveal more about his critical hypothesis than what he says regarding concededly-bad critical approaches. Declaring his enmity for arbitrary critics, he dogmatically proceeds: 'It is not the business of the poet to translate ideologies, philosophies, and psychologies.' This statement, taken separately, is unquestionable — a fundamental truism. But Shapiro is arbitrary in his application of it. Taken within his context, the word 'translate' must be interpreted as an assumptive judgment; for he already had asserted 'poetry of ideas is always third-rate poetry.' This seems to be an overextension of 'truth', to aver that because poetry contains ideas it is third-rate. He apparently says that any abstract or socio-cultural or subjectively-analytical speculation in poetry necessarily lowers it — assuming that such materials get into poetry only through an author's selfconscious election. He seems endeavoring to establish that thought inevitably and always atrophies emotion; and his traversal of 300 years for a Shakespearean 'comparison' is rather preposterous. Are there no contemporaries with ideas who also are poets?

The notion that intellectual content in poetry is a recent, deteriorating development often has been coupled — Shapiro attempts this too — with inferences that poetry just lately became debased from the ‘Freudian slant.’ However, the only thing new to the Twentieth Century in this connection is Freud’s name; the infiltration (if you like) of poetry by psychology goes a long way back. M. H. Abrams, in *THE MIRROR AND THE LAMP*, notes that John Kible theorized in a lecture delivered in 1838 that poetry is fancied fulfillment of ungratified desires; and ‘Freudian’ poetical translations may be found in very ancient times.

Shapiro’s article is not scored as a worst example; alongside dozens of unmitigatedly dull pieces, his frank challenge is stimulatingly worthwhile. It has been featured because of the predominating validities of what Shapiro says (or meant to say). His appeal to writers to ‘regain spontaneity’ and to ‘use subjective judgment in place of the critical dictum’ has been widely seconded. The ‘artificial culture myth’ should be exploded and the ‘bleak footnote’ abandoned; but, why does he conclude with an unsupportable argument: the ‘brutal, illiterate, and hysterical . . . is the price we have to pay for the generation-old suppression of poetry by criticism?’ To bolster this, he would have it that the only ‘new anti-modernist’ poetry is of this disreputable genre. Besides cross-threading these inconsistencies with earlier allegations that ideological revolution never forms genuine poetry, he ignores that most of these concededly-obscene rantings rose from causes quite unrelated to alleged critical suppression of poetry. The scribblings of illiterate ‘poets’ — and other violent writings of the day — are justifiable (though not literature) protests against the ills of this culture.

AND WORSE . . . AND BETTER

Having found faults in an often-admirable critic, let’s compensate 268 by turning to bad criticism — of this critic’s

own poetry. Leslie A. Fiedler (POETRY, June 1960) isn't terribly severe about Shapiro's actual work; he scarcely deals with the poetry! Afflicted with verbal diarrhea, he offers essentially noncritical treatments of the semi-popular, blurred type. Readers of Shapiro at least may glean literary comments upon actual texts. Fiedler's thousands of words provide no solid bases for secondhand reactions. Little is here to provoke either sensible agreement or disagreement: masterly conglomerations of indeterminable premises woven into authoritative-sounding statements from which diffused, indistinguishable echoes beat the ears. He writes: ' . . . Jewish poets have not prospered in a time of cultural philo-Semitism as have their opposite numbers in prose. Indeed, no American poets, Jewish or Gentile, had succeeded up to the verge of the forties in projecting images of the Jew capable of possessing the American mind.' This scarcely requires annotation. Then, barging along with one of those ubiquitous 'lists,' Fiedler asks whether Shapiro is attempting to ride beside 'Wouk and Salinger, Bellow and Malamud, Philip Roth and Uris'; ensuing which, he emotes sundry speculations about Shapiro's subjective attitudes, as though he had textually demonstrated his assumptions. The initial, sustaining, and exclusive purpose of Fiedler seems to be the exercise of an astounding journalistic talent for devising dizzy patterns of exhibitionistic recall.

But, here's William Van O'Connor with a worthwhile essay: THE WRITER AND THE UNIVERSITY (Summer 1960, THE TEXAS QUARTERLY). Broadmindedly — at least, by tangential references — he acknowledges there may be reasonable dissenting opinions. This Editor's must be among them; however, rather than to argue, to expose certain flaws in the manners by which Van O'Connor arrives at conclusions.

He identifies Kingsley Amis as 'an able poet', while calling Philip Larkin 'a fine poet' and Donald Davie and John Holloway 'good poets', clarifying none of these 'grades'. He

asserts: 'There is no mistaking the academic training, or, if one wishes, the academic tone of these writers. But one ought not to leap to the conclusion that this is unfortunate' — without amplifying either his premise or a conclusion which is only negatively intimated by disapproval of such positive action as a 'leap.'

Elsewhere: 'The fact that criticism flourishes on American campuses is probably responsible for the fact, if it is a fact, that literature is taught more imaginatively than it was a generation ago.' Again, no confirmatory evidence; precisely what does Van O'Connor mean by 'imaginatively' here? Having acknowledged that 'criticism itself, except in a very special sense, is not creative writing,' he states: 'Many critics, academic and otherwise, are poets and fiction writers *manqué*.' Yes, he's very fair. But he elaborates not at all upon what seems would be rendered defectively-suspect in the 'imaginative' teaching of literature by assiduous, unsuccessful producers of dull fiction and bad 'poetry.' Conceding that college classrooms aren't nests of songsters, he fails to elucidate a 'different atmosphere' nowadays. Again—in mentioning increasing numbers of writers in English departments (not saying what kinds)—he observes obvious economic causes, along with undescribed changes in academic life itself.

And Van O'Connor's ensuing discussion—how, prior to War II, literary study was allied to study of history, while now much of it is allied to the study of philosophy (abstract saying?)—does not bear significantly on the foregoing. He merely asserts that the old quarrel between 'new critic' and 'historical scholar' gradually has terminated. This truce frequently has been noted—whether or not it therefore eventuated. And what of the critics who are anti the still so-called 'new' school? Where do they stand with 'historical' or any other scholars?

Van O'Connor proceeds: 'English departments nowadays look at literature pretty much as writers do.' Is it unreasonable to inquire which writers? Or, what about the 'good' of those creative writers academically blessed to teach in their own presumed areas of creativity? Van O'Connor also remarks upon their opposite numbers, the Ph.D.'s laboring to become writers, acknowledging that contrary views may be substantiated. Concerning creative writer-teachers, he concedes that the necessity of developing critical faculties presents special problems; but he makes little of the wide difference between the cultivation of subjective self-criticism and the enforced dissipation of vitality in long hours of lecturing 'how-to' criticise. On both aspiring academy grinds and academized aspirants, he expends many words in arguing that experience of living humanity is available within, as well as without, the ivy walls, and quotes Saul Bellow (from *THE UNIVERSITY AS VILLAIN*): ' . . . a man may make a damn fool of himself anywhere.'

Questions of psychic survival aren't examined on psychological terms relating to personality, but upon several speculations based on surmises devised from arbitrary observations concerning lives and creativities of famous writers. This lends a spurious aura of objectivity, enabling Van O'Connor to gloss over his omission of references to professional studies of the formation of thinking habits. Though he rings in psychological phrases, his sole concession on the fundamental issue is that academic exposure might have destroyed a Rimbaud, a Hart Crane, a Faulkner, or a Hemingway, — while not one in a million others really would risk dangerous contamination.

Revealingly, his defense of teaching is (un)bolstered by his assertion that John O'Hara, James Farrell, and James Gould Cozzens, plus Norman Mailer and James Jones, might have been the better for academic experience. Besides that the

linkage of assorted names is dubious, what he says about them would remain essentially meaningless, even exclusively applied to any one of them. Of the first three, he remarks they 'would be better writers if they had experienced the direct and personal criticism of men who respected their talents but refused to tolerate their pretentiousness.' What types of personal criticism? Respect for which manifestations of what sorts of talents? And 'pretentiousness' dangles undefined. So, he never really touches the key questions, despite that his fairness again is underlined when he quotes John Aldridge's censure of the university as the 'seat of literary politics and power.'

STEPPING DOWN AGAIN

A steep descent, to book reviews by Selden Rodman (whose name suggests a Spoonerism: Roden Seldman — the connotative validities of which may escape Mr. Rodman, since he fails to 'understand' words of poetry). He reacts thus to work of Kenneth Patchen, to whose BECAUSE IT IS he allotted one obtuse insulting paragraph under the misinforming caption: A Quartet of Younger Poets in The NEW YORK TIMES Book Review of Sept. 18, 1960. Confronted by items like this from today's journalists-cum-critics (Rodman has edited what's preposterously titled A NEW ANTHOLOGY OF MODERN POETRY) any aware reader rolls his eyes in disbelief that editors have accepted such reckless irrelevancies.

The above review egotistically opens with a reminder about said anthology, broadly hints at the author's prophetic powers, and regrets the nonappearance of 'Whitmaniacs' in a 'bleak' decade (though more-varied works have appeared than during many prior decades). Rodman spits up a few hackneyed phrases of meaningless random application, along with eulogies such as 'he literally goes to town' (of Galway Kinnell), a plea for things 'warmer' or 'wackier' (than he sees in Christopher Logue's). He compounds these

idiocies by stating of Kenneth Patchen's: ' . . . apparently effortless outpouring, yet strangely unrelated to the world, as if this poet saw and heard everything but understood nothing.' It would be a waste of time to arrange a meeting of Rodman and this mature artist — who has found an authentic world of imagination — just to watch a flea bashed by a lion. Should Rodman ever encounter Patchen, he'd learn that the man he calls 'easy' with words stands behind those words with intelligent wisdom.

Turning back to *POETRY* (August, 1960), here is Eve Triem pretending to review poetry in a lively little discourse with scarcely any bearing on the subject. Largely ignoring the contents of Denise Levetov's *WITH EYES AT THE BACK OF OUR HEADS*, she writes of the author's poignant personal loveliness, tenuously establishing a critical connection by affirming that her 'poem on the page is faithful to her voice.' A piquant guessing-game for those who never heard her voice? Miss Triem categorically asserts that Miss Levetov 'thinks with authority;' also, that she 'contrives significance' — which isn't such a compliment as Miss Triem supposes. And there are samples of unsubstantiated remarks by other critics: quoting Kenneth Rexroth, that ' . . . she is superior to her former colleagues of the *BLACK MOUNTAIN REVIEW*;' and Robert Duncan's discernment of her 'care of the word.' Miss Triem goes Duncan one better with: 'Her eternities have timeliness.' And yet, this somehow does fit with the only other comprehensible opinion she ventures (other than as re the 'craftsman-control' anticipated by the above flash on 'contrivance') when she says the burden of exploration must be carried by exceptional individual readers, who — despite the Levetov provender for 'exalted pleasure in sensory experience' — must possess rare perceptivity and perspicuity to enjoy the work. In fact, Miss Triem warns prospective readers: 'You are on your own, read at your peril . . .'

There are yet-lower descents. Harvey Shapiro contributed *REBEL-LIOUS MYTHMAKERS* to *The New York Times Book Review* (Aug. 28, 1960). The title itself keys nothingness, while illustrating how the most rousing adjectives can be bled pale. He contrarily, if negatively and quite undefinedly, finds the same Denise Levettov participating in what he calls a literary 'fight,' ostensibly producing 'raw' poetry, despite a boxed quotation on the same NYT page, in which she herself refers to 'social function' and favors 'poems of inner harmony . . . to awaken sleepers by other means than shock.'

But let's leave Harvey Shapiro's nonsaying mishmash upon forty-odd variegated authors. In the very week this final draft at last was readied (Aug. 13, 1961), an (in)standing example of this hitherto-unclassified, prevalent type of so-labelled critical article again filled the front page of *The New York Times Book Review*. The author is Elizabeth Janeway, who talks quite well to herself while looking over both shoulders and making extempore translations into sounding clichés of sufficient vagueness to impress both traditionalists and less-intelligent moderns (which explains her appearance in this spot). She accomplishes a kind of slick-paper slide across unplumbed depths of psychology, sociology, and philosophy, to promote some dubious conception—determined in advance—of a credible theoretical 'explanation' of what's been written during the last 200 or 300 years. Prophecy gets involved; and besides the questionable applications, there are unsubstantiated generalizations, along with not a few downright misrepresentations concerning the fate of the late-mourned novel.

She does not step the plank alone; she refers to another (similar) exposition by Nathalie Sarraute (in *TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT*, London), who would have it that the acquisition of literary background presents a 'danger' to writers: ' . . . not that of being crushed by mediocrity but rather by being

dazzled by genius.' Miss Janeway continues: 'So he (the writer) descends into being an entertainer instead of a discoverer' . . . because he 'will never match the past.' Or: 'Why should he not turn critic, or teacher.' And yet, she says this is a 'lesser trouble': 'Today some of our puzzled people, at least, have got too lost to be able to talk with the rest of us at all. . . . It seems as if the very ability to think in metaphor, which is the whole basis of language, had got lost.' She states, because of this: ' . . . we have begun to talk via non-fiction.' But she finds: ' . . . this is better than nothing,' and declares fiction will find 'new roads . . . or they will be developed somewhere else in some unlikely medium. For we cannot stop talking to each other.'

The last sentence summarizes the theme of an article, the reading of which must leave the most unperceptive with a suspicion that nothing basic has been said, though he may not realize that her pseudo-specific subsidiary statements lack both documentation and valid premises for half-logical deductions. In journalistic terms (for, if to grant the piece any status at all, this is its classification) the who-what-where-when-how has been replaced by subjectively projected conjectures relating to undefined pluralisms. To the degree Miss Janeway deserves to be called philosophical, she applies the pluralistic dogma endorsed by those sidestepping real recognition of individual responsibility. And, of course, this way of viewing existence is exactly suited to writers who themselves subvert language to publish arguments out of series of vulnerable assumptive premises. Miss Janeway does 'ask the forgiveness of scholars;' but she should have apologized to all straight-thinking individuals who may see that the only purpose served was to be paid for having her name in print in a prominent place.

SOME CONCLUDING PHILOSOPHICAL SLANTS

It would be tedious and eventually maddening to go on browsing through periodicals to pile evidence upon evidence; and few of the guilty are amenable to reform. This may be enough to stir awareness, in the few, that language is infected and very ill. As suggested in the beginning, bad thoughts are the germs; and disrespect for words, the major symptom and at the same time the chief factor in aggravating the illness. Disorderly semantics both predicate and accompany disorderly thinking. The disorder began only a couple of generations ago, when mechanistic principles came to be applied not only to products of art, but to man's intuitive faculties.

In literature, the Positivism which emerged to dominate Nineteenth Century thought continues to confuse the expression of a majority persisting in the application of materialistic rationalism to areas of perception which would extend living processes of being. This goes on, in spite of men such as Benedetto Croce, who recognized that a philosophy significant to creativity (the critical 'meaning') could not be limited by closed systems of rationality. He, and others, saw that strictly-pragmatic tests do (for any given time) ridiculously affirm that what's found irrational must remain irrational forever.

The very language has lost vitality from an accompanying 'scientific' manner of handling words as though their definitions were intrinsically static, and 'newness' consisted in shoveling them about in deliberately-jumbled juxtapositions, disregarding the dicta of psychology. For, the only potential novelty lies in the employment of words by the exceptional spirits who may be able to invoke them without deliberation,—and who, yet, possess genuine perceptive knowledge of them, whether from preliminary studies or from access to what's commonly called the Jungian substrata of the unconscious. The semantical implications of

the Crocean insight have not been much stressed; unfortunately, he himself did not carry this forward, because his essentially-romantic, individualistic theory was linked with specific 'classicism' in connection with neglect of Bergsonian concepts of change, within what nevertheless is an enduring social phenomenon in the comprehensive view.

Life may be restored to language by aesthetically purposeful deployments, however irrationally diverse,—provided these are in fact honestly individuated stylistic endeavors. Meanwhile, what seems exotic is by no means always effectually 'different' at all; it cannot be, when responsible awareness is absent, when words are merely doodled in jigsaw-puzzle fashion. The end-result of such scientific-unscientific wordplay, and subsequent pseudo-analyses, could be a universal junkpile of nongrammatical nonsense; if the stuff is haplessly hopped for a few more decades, every shovelful will come to look and sound like every other shovelful. Seeming antithesis: Babel may bring a linguistic millenium,—one of ultimate idiocy!

SUMMER-CIRCUIT

Report by Lewis Turco

DURING THE SUMMERTIME, literary activity goes underground. Writers, editors, and critics — like so many groundhogs — go to earth on Parnassus to hibernate, it seems, till the morning after Labor Day. The big publishers have rushed their spring titles to market, hoping to catch the reader on his way to Cape Cod. The NEW YORK TIMES Book Review begins to look famished: J. Donald Adams flees the starving beast, hoping to send a bit of his boiled beef back from England to keep his pet wolf at bay. The poet submitting mss. to THE NEW YORKER finds, enclosed with the 2,751st edition of Father Knickerbocker's Rejectionne Slippe, a summary notice to refrain from sending further blottings for consideration during the Editor's Vacation. On college campuses, the Instructors (hopeful) and Professors (resentful) quit writing for, and editing, the little reviews. The summer issue of SEWANEE is on the presses and the fall number of ANTIOCH is all dummed up — for there are papers to grade, commencement to attend. And then . . . ?

The literati have spent part of the summer in catching up on their reading, writing, and research; part, in amusing themselves — and part, in being shee[ry] bored.

But what have they done the rest of the time? Where did they go? Where does the granny with a taste for Pogo and Poe go? Where does the young high-school old-maid English teacher go for titillation and high romance? Where does the engineering would-be fictioneer wander on his two-week Odyssey? Where in the Sam Hill (substitute for Parnassus) does every poetaster, ladies' club penman and char (sic) woman, versifying lawyer, artistic-middleaged-middlewestern -sallowfaced-marblebusted divorcee seeking the mad,

marvelous, madcap, hallucinatory existence of the madding minor Dylans go?

Yes. Of course. That's where the scholartists also did go. But, why? What's so fascinating about the summer writer's conference?

Simple. What has been most interesting about it has been money. If your name were, say, Richard Wilbur or Louis Untermeyer, and you were in-between anthologies or fellowships; if you had the opportunity to answer the phone and reply to the query: 'Would you take \$Sblank from us just to show up for a day or two this summer and give a reading and answer a few questions, and allow your name to be printed on our faculty roster?' — if you had nothing better to do than take a ride down to the gracious campus of Suffield Academy, thirty or forty miles from your home in Connecticut, to be feasted and feted, and be paid for it,—would you say 'no'?

No.

Neither did they.

Yes, but who produces these rep shows? Who grubs along making out menus and room-assignments? Why, some of the teachers at the Suffields—who are also paid.

But, who sits behind the phones on squashy bottoms? Why, First Baptist Ladies' Aide volunteers, who love being subvotaries of the Order of Literary Dandelions.

But, who comes to have her rimes stuffed into foundation garments; to have his hairy story permanently waived; to have an article with too many clauses manicured for the polite returns of The SATURDAY EVENING Paste? Everyone. We've been through all that.

And who profits? The school's public relations department; the matron who's been given the air; the bachelor father, a father once more; the local liquor merchant; the bus company and the cabbies; the dorm warden whose sadism is gratified; the janitor on overtime.

And, of course, the solid corps who light up their Camels and careen from conference to conference like so many Arabs on their way to Mecca-on-a-Dune.

Is it art? No. Is it necessary (like a grass-roots movement back to a mass-audience appreciation of Uplifting Literature)? The question is inordinate.

On the other hand, is it profitable? Is the air (outside the smoky rooms) clean in Indiana? Is the New Hampshire grass green? Can a person get a little something? Out of it? In Vermont? Meet other writers, old friends, just by dropping in for a day?

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SELECTED FROM EPIGRAMS FOR A POETRY WORKSHOP

by Lewis Turco

XI.

The catholic (Eclectic)
Prays before he writes
Midst penitential candles,
According to his lights.

SOME ITEMS RECEIVED

VERACITY/IES AND THE VERITIES

FIRST GLANCES INTO pages of TRUTH IS MORE SACRED, by Edward Dahlberg and Herbert Read (HORIZON, \$4.95) brought the mistaken conjecture that its major value might lie in revelations of the complex depths of Dahlberg's knowledgeable bitterness, offset perhaps by somewhat platitudinous remonstrances from Sir Herbert. The jacket — while naming Joyce, Lawrence, Pound, Henry James, T. S. Eliot, and Robert Graves as subjects — stresses the two debaters rather than these six, and hails their own masteries of prose. This reader could seem to hear Read whistling up burial notes for Dahlberg's stillborn vengeful furies, and Dahlberg's frantic sirens as he sped his depressed thoughts off, to be revived in forms of poisoned daggers from his Vulcanian forge of classical allusion. But, between them — the one, learnedly berserk with heel to groin, and the other, calmly sententious with fair unguents for all damaged testicles — they project dozens of freshly-disturbing insights of authors who have been major influences on the past half-century's English-language creativities.

The volume is more than a debunking sortie; while sensational (to student and casual scanner) it is also solid. Many of the exceptions taken to the magnified reputations already had been unobtrusively proffered as tentative reservations by less-frank critics — far less frank than Mr. Dahlberg. And, overstated though some appraisals may be (particularly, Dahlberg's), they do not rest on narrow premises of notional tangents. While Read and Dahlberg frequently register surface conflicts, the latter's tirades are consumingly negative (the acid eating on beyond the logically-vulnerable areas), and the former's measured

verdicts are fairly limited in their overt dissents from these tirades. In other words, though Read may try to veto certain of Dahlberg's charges, he chiefly undertakes to offset them by bringing forward elements of declared value unmentioned by Dahlberg as vindicating the public statues of their subjects, despite what we are left to assume are his tacit ratifications of their downgradings by his co-author.

This is a very healthy sort of book for an age in which status, once erected as a convincing facade, is unreasonably thereafter acknowledged in hundreds of glib surveys. Although this period is commonly characterized as one of idol-smashing, most iconoclasts (so-called) have aimed their blows at the feet (the 'clay' of which has been known these 5,000 years would crumble easily) and not at the heads. Myriads of assaults are launched upon personalities, along with dissenting commentaries rooted in allegiances to prejudiced frames of reference; but, few critics have dropped their hammers on the ostensible crowning-wreaths of actual literary relevance. In a sense, Read and Dahlberg have endeavored to investigate primary talents almost as though they'd never heard that Joyce was the Great Innovator, that Lawrence was Spokesman for Natural Passions, that Pound restored the Word, that James was the Master, Eliot, the Wastelands Prophet, and Graves, the optimal archaeologist of Myth. Of course, they mention these images; yet, their refusals to concur in honoring popular visions are mainly left to be inferred from what they've said about the products. And their often-unexpected deductions from these are—in turn—couched in terms giving account to vistas of the literary past. Both Dahlberg and Read are penetrative students of cultural history; and—whether endorsing or damning their judgments—readers must concede they have deep foundations.

The principle divergence between the two authors (in fact, the only flat disagreement over identical texts) lies precisely

where one would expect: in the area of poetry—Eliot's, and to lesser extent, Pound's. Dahlberg's background and interests scarcely qualify him to judge poetry; and, without entirely affirming the reactions to Eliot, Read is more convincing because he's a poet, himself, and of a Jungian, mystical turn of mind, where Dahlberg is a pragmatist. While Dahlberg calls Eliot a 'mungrell versifier,' Read demands recognition for the 'unanalyzable magic.' Graves gets short shrift from Dahlberg; and Read asks to be excused from replying, on the grounds that Graves' strictures upon his own work would lead many to believe his opinions tainted by personal animosity (an obvious unspoken confirmation of Dahlberg).

Finally—aside from fundamentals involving these writers and contemporary literature as a whole—TRUTH IS MORE SACRED is a provocative and entertaining exchange. Such lively displays of wide-ranging erudition are seldom encountered; and it's downright rare to find arrays of knowledgeable wisdom gleaming with wit, exciting both to the glands and the intellect.

J.B.M.

A FLY ON FLYPAPER

Leslie Woof Hedley

A PERCEPTIVE AND honest French critic once stated that if a hyena were given a typewriter the ideas expoused (sic) would resemble T. S. Eliot's. Unfortunately this experiment has been under way in the United States for a number of recent years. Art has become a public therapy for many sick people who, living in another age and culture, would have become pirates, tentshow charlatans, witch doctors, slave traders, or members of some secret order of sadists and flagellants. The therapy is this: give anyone a paintbox and he becomes an artist, supply anyone with a thesaurus and he becomes a writer, and after Six Easy Lessons anyone with a musical instrument becomes a musician.* W. H. Auden pontificated that anyone who loved words had the makings of a writer, but anyone claiming he had something to say could never become a writer. Celebrated writers in this American culture are, therefore, invariably devoid of worthwhile ideas or anything worthwhile to say. We can pursue the absurdity of such evil conditions ad infinitum, but now we must quickly peruse one result of the above therapy as exhibited by CONTACT EDITIONS in a book called A FLY IN THE PIGMENT (\$1.95) and worded together by Sidney Peterson.

I think such a pasticcio as this must be noted occasionally if only because it reflects remarkably the steady and increasing decay of American art and sanity. We exist in a climate that is exhausted, effete, ready to collapse. From such semi-conscious chaos the inability to articulate becomes a sign of profundity, erudition and intelligence. Those hunting for new Kafkas underneath rocks discover only grubs. So the sick and silly game of alienation continues while Rome falls to Huns, Goths, Vandals and assorted

barbarians. This book is part of that suicidal and decadent game. Actually the game is about a fly painted on a Seventeenth Century canvas coming to life and touring contemporary Paris. The tour is related in impossible and impassable syntax, palsied phrases, turgid use of private symbols, and is pedantically injected with inane subjectivism. One of the publishers confesses that he has not the faintest idea what the author is stuttering to say, but that he recognizes the 'talent'. This is as logical as a blind person telling us the man walking across the street is wearing a blue tie! It serves to show that while walls do not a prison make, incompetent men with money do incompetent publishers make.

Here is a worthless book that continues the trend of gibberish and will therefore be successful in San Francisco and Greenwich Village.

**TRACE Editors: Certainly, at any rate, a guitar-burdened folksinger.*

CONCERNING SOME OTHER ESSENCES

WHILE NOT providing entirely novel insights, *THE PARADOX* of George Orwell, by Richard J. Voorhees (PURDUE University Studies—\$1.95) is an invaluable condensed and clear study-guide employing a tone and method most nearly resembling the large 1954 *GEORGE ORWELL*, by John Atkins.

Besides for his admirable conciseness, Voorhees is recommended because he is more dispassionate than any writer on Orwell to date. Examining con's as well as pro's, he adds to earlier profiles, insights of intervening criticisms of varied aspects of a writer whose influences have been felt in more areas over the past decade than have those of any other modern.

This is not an exaggerated assertion; it can be documented—though not in this space. Who else has stirred reactions, not only in every branch of literature, but in the fields of psychology, sociology, philosophy, active politics, religion, and in the exact sciences? Orwell's ideas demonstrably have affected actual governmental policies; and these have ranged from the Jungian area of 'ancestral memory' to what stemmed from Aristotelian logic, dealt with practical semantics, gave consideration to aesthetics at both social and individual levels, and drew upon history to point flaws in the reasoning of many who had spent lifetimes investigating man's development. Yet, Orwell was no scholar. No more, a stylist; and still, scores of his expressions already are imbedded (often taken for granted, without notice of source) in common speech and journalism. This is partly explained by his transmutations of phrases of earlier wisdom; a kind of undramatic Shakespearean facility appears in scores of passages. For instance, in 1984, the remark to the effect that the truth of two-plus-two-equals-four, once taken for granted, all else

must follow—is a transliteration from Galileo. Again, however, the explanation rises from the ‘paradox,’ the ambivalences within him.

Not to go over ground covered by Voorhees—Orwell declared, for example, that one’s worst enemy is one’s own nervous system, while at the same time startlingly casting light on the ‘Trojans’ smuggled in from the ‘outside.’ Again, this is from 1984, where may be found numerous book and article titles, including that of the militant little MINORITY OF ONE.

Voorhees notes almost-identical passages in various books. One he did not mention as a duplicate is a description of a poor English girl poking a stick into a clogged drainpipe; in 1984, this is a self-plagiarism from a scene in ROAD TO WIGAN PIER, published twelve years prior. As in other instances, it’s reasonable to assume that Orwell felt the idea/image important enough to repeat, to ensure transmitting it to more readers. And behind this conscious motive, must have lain unconscious symbolic linkages of unique moment to his psychic fulfillment. Once more, space does not permit; but the probabilities are fascinating.

This leads to another observation upon Voorhees’ work: he reduces post-mortem Freudian analyses (by sundry hands) to seemlier focus, showing how Anthony West and Isaac Rosenfeld had approached Orwell with preconceived prejudices and had overstressed his conceded neuroticism, failing to give account to the complete personality. Such faulty reconstructions have been based on unjustifiable assumptions out of untenable deductions from his conduct in actual life, while lending weight to chosen ‘corroborative’ sections of the writings and ignoring contradictory or explicatory sections. Voorhees’ defenses of Orwell’s dubious socio-cultural theories are tempered; and he sees their chief value as counters to the opposed extremes in him — often, Orwell’s own virtual self-commentaries. Little is really new in

these arguments; their accessible succinctness gives them special merit in Voorhees' presentations.

A look at Bertolt Brecht (*Poems on the Theatre*, translated by John Berger and Anna Bostock, SCORPION Press — 5s.) is a happy coincidence here. From many of the same motivations discovered in Orwell, Brecht was a spokesman (though not an approved orthodox party-line man) for the Communism Orwell attacked. Even in this limited selection, it's clearly seen how identical problems were 'framed' with narrow and dogmatic consistency. Rising from like premises, Brecht's writings fostered the nihilistic pessimism which Orwell's brand of inconsistent pessimism controverted. If this little book encourages rereading of the complete plays, further interesting parallels to differing destinations will be found. Berger and Bostock have not tried to make English poems out of what's questionable poetry in the German; their careful translations are so literal that one wonders why they didn't unkink the inversions and present prose.

Though Curtis Zahn is not an admirer of Orwell, many of his stories uncover deficiencies and errors with which he's himself identified. An excellent current example is in *MICA* No. 3: *A PART OF THE NORM*, a more than semi-serious spoof on the eccentricities of pacifists who also exhibit symptoms of conformist illness. Zahn may get away with this more successfully than Orwell did in flaying Socialism (while at the same time a fighting Socialist) by means of the humor; yet, he's actually less merciful than Orwell. The same issue of *MICA* (free, for postage and/or donations) holds other good work, including a charming extract from Gael Turnbull's diary, re William Carlos Williams.

It's a far call from the direct approach of Zahn — who still feels something can be done about society — with his grotesquely-gentle ironies, to the essentially metaphysical (though brightly-imaged) poetics of Russell Thomas (*LUMINOUS AUTOMATIC DONKEY* — HILLSBORO, \$1.35). Here lies

‘oppositional’ truth to illustrate attitudes about which Zahn writes in MICA. In LIVING IN THE PRESENT, Thomas notes: ‘ . . . non-existence is a peculiar/Characteristic of people remembered,/Their eyes wide with hatred.’ And, contradictorily, in FIRST THINGS LAST: ‘ . . . the/source of life is in remembering,’ to: ‘All the possibilities of disaster (inhabiting) . . . diligently forgotten secrets,’ in FOR LOVE, where he looks upon the future dead and sees in the ‘annihilating smile’: ‘Rejected people celebrating their/Lost paradise of promise, demigods/Whose chaos is the world.’

Despite such sharp lines, Thomas offers a great deal of mere poetized prose; most of the pieces are over-extended and repetitive, both in moods and in what frequently become narrations. Though the latter are figurative, there’s much repetition, with different figures conveying what’s already been twice or thrice conveyed. To compensate, there are many bits of concentrated imagery — tight oblique suggestions of unusual (if not entirely unexpected) ideas. Other redeeming qualities appear after the opening ten pages. THE SEA AND THE RUINS would have made a stronger beginning, for it brings awareness of individuated flavors in the chosen images. Perhaps the author was so self-impressed by the ‘cuteness’ of making donkeys out of Coca Cola signs that he felt this to be the catchier feature. At any event, later imageries of more profound statements lift the book above what would earn commendation simply for pleasant readability; and these almost save Thomas from faintly-damning praise for craftsmanship that’s not implemented by enough real poesy.

Still, there’s decided hope for one who has produced these stanzas (from RUINS):

In huts by the seaside discovery-makers squat
Among picnic litter, smiling at the ocean.
This is the end, the last gasp a motion
Toward the sky through the sky that is not.
The landscape that was summoned to surround us
Waited to fall like fruit from the bough.
This stillness under waves can teach us how
To guild a castle in the realm of salt.

J.B.M.

APPROXIMATIONS OF CLARITY

Robert Sward

IN THAT EXUBERANTLY doctrinal and incisive essay, *How to Read*, Ezra Pound writes: 'One "moves" the reader only by clarity. In depicting the motions of the "human heart" the durability of the writing depends on the exactitude. It is the thing that is true and stays true that keeps fresh for the new reader.' Elsewhere he speaks of the intimate connection between good art and the bearing of 'true witness.' Mr. Spingarn's new book (*LETTERS FROM EXILE*, by Lawrence P. Spingarn — LONGMANS, GREEN & Co., Ltd., 12s. 6d. & \$2.95, New York), though not wholly unsuccessful, fails in at least one crucial respect; for, instead of the kind of clarity that Pound speaks of, Mr. Spingarn offers us approximations of this, and at one or two removes. His vision is not his own, he is bearing second-hand witness via the perceptions and rhetorical devices of other more able poets. For instance, in such syntactically confused lines as these from his poem *THE BEACHCOMBERS*:

When Circe, whose sly tongue was thick from wine,
Begged cleaner sheets in which to vend stale wares,
Ulysses thrashed her. Wanton by design,
He followed steep and labyrinthine stairs
No dolphin ever trod before it died
Downward to ageing nymphs at coral fairs . . .

there is nothing which is not available elsewhere, even say in the Hall-Pack-Simpson anthology, *THE NEW POETS OF ENGLAND AND AMERICA*. But *LETTERS* is not so much bad poetry (or even bad writing) as it is a dilution, the work of a man content to produce, in Pound's terms, 'something of lower intensity, some flabbier variant, some diffuseness or timidity in the wake of the valid.' As with other books of this

kind, there is a variety of form in individual pieces, but this variety seems to exist abstractly, for its own sake. The poems that are rhymed (the BASILISK for one) offer little inherent justification for the too often intrusive and distracting rhymes that Spingarn seems committed to:

The pampered mistress, coy and polyglot,
Giggling beneath the hammers of massage,
Is sobered by his quaint forget-me-not :

One finds more of musical interest in the free verse poems, but none of these are developed to such a point that they possess unique merit. The same can be said of Mr. Spingarn's subjects, which range from peacocks and departments of English to classical mythology and the American West. The subjects, like the technique, seem 'willed' and arbitrarily chosen rather than inspired. In few of the lines in this book is there any real evidence that a great-minded, warm and human voice is speaking, and speaking truly about what concerns it most. The book lacks urgency, immediacy, inevitability. . . . In place of this, and overshadowing the usually only half-realized intentions, are such in-lieu-of-poetry devices as tired irony, the satirical dying fall, inflated clichés ('And fists of smoke are punching at the dark'), clever-tough-cute exhortation, which too often merely jars (irrelevantly) and casts no light. Consider these lines,

so, embrace
The tender Kansas beefsteak served at mess;
Ride like Apaches on God's carapace.
or the final two,

The dervish Wurlitzer blasts out the chance
for morning's penitential orangeade.

from the poem entitled THE EXCURSION, most of which
sounds to me like bad Yale Series of Younger Poets
poetry. But even Auden, who is echoed in Spingarn
(second or third-hand), as well as in the Yale Series
he himself edited, achieved very little really
enduring poetry in this vein, for all his brilliance.
And lacking the great gifts of that older poet,
Spingarn would seem to have done rather poorly by
his muse. This is neither fine poetry, nor good
thinking. Its virtues are those of minor competence.
The standards Pound was attempting to introduce
are standards of excellence. Seen in the light of
these, a stanza such as this,

Let envious planets scorn this firmament
Where Venus fattens. Nimble work is done.

The land-rich Indians think diets fun.

from THE OASIS, is in no way notable, in no way
distinguished. THE EXCURSION is somewhat better,
perhaps, but what final difference does such a
distinction make? Neither poem will ever compel
more than two readings. And while it is true that
both represent some skill, some craftsmanship,
some earnestness, some competence, it is also true
that in our age of competence so does nearly all the
other poetry available in print. And if one is willing
to settle for minor verse, it can be had first-hand
and with considerable freshness and virtuosity in
some of the early less ambitious poems of Pound as
well as in the few good poems of John Crowe
Ransom

or Yvor Winters, both competent and instructive poets
who have cultivated to the fullest what can be seen only as
an essentially minor talent. My impatience with Spingarn is
really an impatience with a competence that seems too easily

come by, too facile and flat, and alien finally to the very spirit and life which one has every right to ask of poetry, and in fact all art. Such competence as one finds in *LETTERS FROM EXILE* may be enough to justify publication, but it is not enough to justify any kind of honest praise.

From the Editor's letter to the above Reviewer:

‘Although it's about as trite as can be to remark that, while there's no such thing as a “new” idea, each valid expression of an old idea is new in a special way (if it has one)—still, there's no handier brevity to indicate why the Editor feels that this review sets up criteria definitely contra the “TRACE-line”. You also contradict what I feel to have been the views of Ezra Pound, back there before he lost his balance. You have taken off from “clarity”. But, questions of degree/s spring up; and the points at which poems lose impact from complexities vary widely in different readers. “True witness” may be abstruse, even esoteric or private; and nowhere is this better demonstrated than in Pound himself.

‘Granting . . . familiar “rhetorical devices”. Is this in itself and therefore dubious in a natural vision colored by multiplicities of lenses? Is it therefore “second-hand witness”? Poetry would be fraudulent—comparable to many so-called modern primitive paintings . . . if deliberately stripped of influences of hundreds of other poets whose perceptions are in part those of much-read poets.

‘To be sure, mere genuine translations guarantee nothing. Honest expression may be awkward, banal, unimaginative. However, I find Spingarn's language more imaginative than Auden's, and would surmise, from his style, that he does not much admire Auden. His “syntactically confused lines” convey, through juxtapositions, altogether different effects than could have been conveyed by “corrected” constructions. Conceding that Spingarn is less “intense”, less concentrated than many, I think he often makes purposive employments of diffusion and tumidity, to register unique flavor . . . not in

specific defense of Spingarn, but in re the off-TRACE line of your review.

You have taken objects of various poems to catalog subjects, when—from the TRACE approach—this poet reveals but one major subject: conditions in this society. I see him as a social critic despairing over a deteriorating culture, attacking both the wellknown evils of the economy and of the governments in Western civilization—and pseudo-artistic reflections of these. You seem to misinterpret . . . his employment of old (often ancient) referents in veiled enjambments of parallels and contrasts with raw conjurements of contemporary crudities.

“Fine poetry” is a pretty vague term, leading me to say: Better is as better does. But, Spingarn’s themes, though not always his handlings of them, do place him in a frame of major reference. Not to rate him with the greatest poets, I do find many brilliant lines. As to “good thinking”, I feel that you make confused application of an imprecise term; if you mean absence of explicit logic, then the TRACE-line does not approve this as a criticism of poetry,— which may commence from ideas or give rise to them, but rarely continues to be poetry through statements of ideas or through “clarifying” extensions of images.

Finally, I’ve often denied that there is such a thing as “competent poetry”. Competent verse—maybe. Neither have I discovered that modicums of skill, craftsmanship, earnestness, and competence are frequent. While I’ve many times expressed opinions that neither Ransom nor Winters has produced any poems, and that their “instructions” have been wasted and occasionally proved harmful. I’m with you on the early Pound (of course); but when you call upon Ransom and Winters, I think you name two of the most “alien” to the “very spirit and life . . . of poetry” literary figures of our day.’

THE PLAY'S NOT THE SCENE

Solely because the book was planned and published upon the title's premise (KANSAS RENAISSANCE, edited by Warren Kliever and Stanley J. Solomon—CORONADO Publ., \$4), it's necessary to demur that geography and literature are distinct subjects. They certainly are (if always coincidentally) related; and the materials out of always-theoretically alternative milieus perhaps might radically affect any given works. However, the five, among twenty-one, who authored the pages (60 percent of the contents) for which the book is recommended, show no really basic debt to environment, despite that Allen Crafton's Introduction informs us Edgar Wolfe's TRIAL BY ICE (novel) is set in Kansas City. Wolfe is one of the few here who actually dwelt long in Kansas; most of the others just happened to have been born there (he was not) or remained there only briefly.

So much for that. Those who may be interested in a 'regional' book will be disappointed; and this element has no bearing on its review, except to reassure those who may not feel urged to order a 'Kansas' book. This reviewer was almost deterred from reading it; but, Stanley J. Solomon's play, EURYDICE ABANDONED, caught his eye. Then, he read Langston Hughes and William Inge, became absorbed in Wolfe and read the rest—especially appreciating a short first poem by Howard Shevrin.

Solomon's is a fully developed fantastic comedy, not just one of the humorous presentations of dialogue common today, with overtones and undertones of socio-cultural significance beyond the boundaries of jazz, his central subject. Involuntary laughter is evoked by more than the jive-talk; and substantial entertainment values exercise the mind well beyond the speculations stirred by the amusing uses of personae from ancient mythology.

Hughes' *SOULS GONE HOME* is not intended to be much more than a dialogue; but the (literally) deathly grim fun penetrates beneath Negro-character depiction to matters involving mother-son relationships in the realm of depth-psychology.

The slightest play is Inge's *TO BOBOLINK, FOR HER SPIRIT*, though not the shortest. This has viable merit also: a picture of that rare offbeat genre, the autograph hunters, that holds a sharp 'spot' on one face of our nonculture. It could, perhaps, have been better done as a slice-of-life short story; the mild conflict scarcely justifies its staging, and one feels that Inge cast a good character study in this form simply from the play-writing habit.

Though Wolfe's novel bears little stylistic distinction, only a shallow mind could fail to find more than a suspense-filled story in his subjective narration of a crucial day in the life of a welfare worker. The novel incisively examines the contemporary problem of identity and those critical questions everyone asks about the chances of rescuing and preserving potent individualism against bureaucracy inside and outside of government. On this particular day of formulaed error, perhaps there were no humanly-feasible choices; but the possibilities of Helen Harkner's acknowledgement of personal responsibility are limned, and she contemplates the courses of corrective action which lifelong conditioning won't let her follow. She suffers guilt for having administrated policies that brought blindness to one of her 'cases'. She does humble penance, without rebelling against the system. Unable to establish personal rapprochement with a maniacal and apparently homicidal victim of a defective society, she terrifiedly clings to bureaucratic dictates. At the close, she completely surrenders, calling the lost dénouement her 'triumph'.

Indulging mayhem at the expense of a now-discredited axiom from elementary math: a point is the shortest place

between two lines (in this instance, lines of favorable and unfavorable review), and the successful dramatic impacts are one-two-three aligned against the topmost locus for three by Michael Locascio (3 one-act plays — HILLSBORO, \$1.50). Next: convincing clear dialogue that imparts contemporary individuated flavor without resorting to the sort of garroted avant syntax that's becoming more cliché than words from Elizabethan ghosts. Next: shocks of exactly appropriate voltages, not supercharging the wires with lewd and/or murderous sensationalism. Greatness? Perhaps not. What's great, until the sod's been replaced? However — three excellent plays. And if they've not been performed — why haven't they been? If you can't find them on a marquee (or though you may), buy the book, and read: A CORNER OF MORNING; CURIOSITY; I'M IN LOVE WITH W.B.

Not as a literary factor in itself, but from the viewpoint of the choices for English publication in a remote place where linguistic influences are unique, geography does partly determine a recommendation of No. 4 WRITERS WORKSHOP (Calcutta). This really is a softbound book—268 pages (\$1 and equiv.) of worthwhile creativity, commentary, and news, comprising a large Rabindranath Tagore Supplement.

Gazed at in puzzling aggregate, the first OUTSIDER (\$1—and see new address) is chiefly of nonliterary interest—viz., human interest, in the journalistic sense and social interest, with unprecedented coverage of society's USA and British creative members (and their would-be emulators). The gallery of informal photos of the plus-50 contributors adds much. Editor Jon Edgar Webb has declared his eschewment of policy deliberate, for the time being, and that he will 'play around toward a firm stand' after first 'experimentally' publishing virtually all kinds of materials. Some of the portions of No. 1 that seem more justifiable include: A BUKOWSKI (Charles, that is) ALBUM; a sheaf of hitherto unprinted letters from Henry Miller to

Walter Lowenfels; LeRoi Jones; Marvin Bell; Curtis Zahn; William Corrington . . . amongst the hundred pages. Gael Turnbull is present, and creditably. Then, there are typically psycho-semantic sexual views (precisely what is he yesnaying here?) by the precocious young Colin Wilson, who really should wipe some of that British fog off his windshield. The total impression can be summarized as that from a one-to-five-shot compendium for a Layman's Capsuled Panorama which may later become an Early Sixties Documentary.

An opposite number to *THE OUTSIDER* is evidenced in early issues of Michael Lebeck's *WHO*—in the exercise of exclusive selectivity. Whether or not the writings (and graphic art) delight many palates, Lebeck's close scrutiny of these unusual materials is undeniable—as is the service to sincere artists. The fact that the magazine is not for sale, but is mailed to whom the editor chooses, sheds further enlightenment.

Highly recommended, but received too late for review: *QUARTERLY REVIEW of Literature*, XI, 2/3 (\$1.50); *MUTINY*, III, No. 3 (\$1); *BIM* 33 (75c).

J.B.M.

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SELECTED FROM EPIGRAMS FOR A POETRY WORKSHOP

by Lewis Turco

IV.

Here stands (the Roman Statue).
His feet have been dyed blue
By juices of The Vine.
His verses have died too.