

LIVING LITERATURE

•

Under the Figlinden Leaf

THOMAS MORRILL

•

Summer

13th

Year

53

6/6 \$1.25

JAMES BOYER MAY

TRACE

EDITOR

TRACE

No. 53

Living Literature

Essays & Articles · Poetry · Reviews

Summer 1964

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.

Artwork is not reproduced in this text edition. The visual material in the issue is described here so that its place in the magazine remains visible:

Four full-page graphics plates follow the creative section (issue pp. 173-176): a sculpture by P.-A. Gette, *Prise de Temps* by Key Sato, *Escape* by Shua-Kwan Lui, and *Ulysse et les prétendants* by Gianni Bertini. A facing publisher's advertisement is also omitted.

CONTENTS

Under the Figlinden Leaf	5
<i>'Superman' to Zombie</i>	8
<i>'Party Death'</i>	13
<i>Cerberus, Look Out!</i>	21
<i>Of Women & the Sex-Image</i>	26
<i>Apocalypse</i>	33
A Polluted Stream	43
Editors (and Others) Write	47
<i>English Poetics — Since 1730's — Downgraded</i>	47
<i>Seeking 'Civil Rights' Poetry</i>	49
<i>'Now ... That I'm Tiptoeing Through the Graveyard'</i>	49
<i>Kinetic Poetry Exhibit in Cambridge</i>	50
<i>Revival in San Francisco?</i>	51
<i>Asks Samples for New Mag Show</i>	51
<i>Author Retorts to 'Judgment'</i>	52
The Cliff Hanger	53
Report on 'Reader Report'	64
Naked in His Time	65

Of Hallows, Hollows, and Halos	109
A Dichotomy of Islands	116

ISSUE PP. 97-104, 185-202 · SCAN PP. 7-14, 97-116

SCOTT FITZGERALD

UNDER THE FIGLINDEN LEAF

by Thomas Morrill

*It's just that we don't know what's the matter.
Why did we lose peace and love and health, one
after the other? If we knew, if there was anybody
to tell us, I believe we could try. I'd try so hard.*
— Nicole Nelson, in Fitzgerald's story, *ONE TRIP
ABROAD*

(SATURDAY EVENING POST, Oct. 11, 1930)¹

*I HAD A DOG — at least I had him for a few days
until he ran away....*

— Nick Carraway, in *THE GREAT GATSBY*

Why DID DIVER DIVE? The hero of *TENDER IS THE NIGHT* seems to have started much higher up than most heroes. Why make Dick a 'diver?' Young, handsome, athletic, charming, brilliant, a psychiatrist with the psychiatrist's godlike power over people, Diver is omniscient even for a psychiatrist. He is a great lover; his wife, Nicole, is excruciatingly beautiful, and she loves him. Dick and Nicole have sweet children, swarms of admirers, and all that money will buy. They live in big houses with servants, in the Alps and on the Riviera. No one writes about himself without thinking himself, and making himself, at least on paper, a hero — and *NIGHT* ... is quite autobiographical. Diver bears no spot of the linden leaf.

Hasn't Fitzgerald portrayed the hero America wanted? — the hero she brought him up to? Oh, not just a Babbitt-hero, but the hero of young, free-thinking, free-feeling, free-wheeling America: America in its youthful energy and honesty more than the equal of Old Europe. ('... this was the greatest nation and there was gala in the air' — Fitzgerald, in *My LOST CITY*). Having turned the tide of Europe's war against its soul in the Great War: would not the young

Americans turn that tide in peace? The American writers and painters who stayed in France in the Twenties, and who went to France after the doughboys had done their job: Were they not priests of the new, fine, honest order, coming after Pershing like the priests after [Cortez] to Christianize the Indians? — Not to learn from Europe, to sit at its feet, but to dream, paint, write, think, and drink it into new life. For the young Americans who caught the Century as it began to flower at its pristine beginning, it was to be their Century, their world. ('It was an age of miracles, it was an age of art, it was an age of excess, and it was an age of satire.' — ECHOES OF THE JAZZ AGE. 'There was so much to read, for one thing, and so much fine health to be pulled down from the young breathing air ...' — THE GREAT GATSBY.) The new Century dawning with springtime purpose, the Twenties — the Century, and not only that Decade — lead to the millennium. And the millennium belonged, more than to any other man, to F. Scott Fitzgerald.

More than any other American, Fitzgerald — brilliant, good-looking, charming, vital — spoke for the new age. Perhaps because he had been born a Catholic (in 1896) and had then entered so fully a Protestant world, he felt afresh the ecstatic freedom and romance released from the faded paradise of Europe, the summer garden of Christianity. He was especially borne up by the tide which for four centuries rolled so vast a flood of people and hope to the New World. He would change the Century from Victorian to American, the millennium from Christian to Fitzgeraldian. His first novel closes with the hero, Amory ('America,' 'Amoral,' 'A-Mary,' as well as 'Lover') turning his back on the Church of Rome which cried only: 'Thou shalt not!'

He stretched out his arms to the crystalline, radiant sky. 'I know myself,' he cried, 'but that is all.'

This SIDE OF PARADISE ends as our search begins, on a doubt, on a deficiency. Something Fitzgerald and the

Twenties did not know. Something 'this side of Paradise' dogged the young heroes. At the beginning of Fitzgerald's life and at the end, some monstrous good-which-turned-to-evil he could not get out clawed and festered in his belly. He wanted to be young Heracles, fetching up to light Cerberus-eater-of-souls, to hurl it back to hell finally and completely; but he was Sisyphus.

¹ in *AFTERNOON OF AN AUTHOR*, edited by Arthur Mizener (PRINCETON — 1957, p. 164). ² In view of American post-War irreverence, the 'priest' figure seems grossly inapplicable. However, in his 'General Plan' of *TENDER ...*, the author described the hero as 'a natural idealist, a spoiled priest ...' (*THE FAR SIDE OF PARADISE*, by Arthur Mizener, HOUGHTON MIFFLIN — 1951, p. 307, & see additional citations from this book indicated in text as 'Mizener, p. [no.]'). A good deal of the Fitzgerald story reflects the triumph and corruption of personal Catholicism amidst historical Western Man's Protestant maturation. — Ed.

By 1936 when *THE CRACK-UP* appeared in *ESQUIRE* (Feb.), for many years he had been, to friends and fellow writers, 'poor Fitzgerald.' His life's 'crack-up' ends: 'I will try to be a correct animal though, and if you throw me a bone with enough meat on it, I may even lick your hand.'³ After this public debauch of self-pity, Ernest Hemingway felt justified to publish in *THE SNOWS OF KILIMANJARO* (*ESQUIRE*, Aug. 1936): 'Poor Scott Fitzgerald's' discovery that the rich are not a 'special glamorous race ... wrecked him just as much as any other thing that wrecked him.' *NIGHT ...* was already a long, delayed abortion (written from 1928 to 1933) when, in 1929, the author wrote Hemingway:

Just taken another chapter to the typist's and it's left me in a terrible mood of depression as to whether it's any good or not. ... Your analysis of my inability to get my serious work done is too kind in that it leaves out the

dissipation, but among acts of God it is possible that the 5 years between my leaving the army and finishing *GATSBY*

(1919–1924) ... may have taken all I had to say too early, adding that all the time we were living at top speed in the gayest worlds we could find ... (p. 306).

If 'acts of God,' what 'God?' Why? Failure to fathom Scott-Nick's fall sorely afflicts us who inherit from him. Even the children say bewilderedly: 'Superman shot himself.' 'Poor' Fitzgerald — yes. 'Poor' Superman — yes. 'Poor' Hemingway — yes. Why?

'SUPERMAN' TO ZOMBIE

We have considered that Diver was faultless. In fact, he is 'Walter Mitty faultless:' that is his spot. How unaware Fitzgerald was that he had described a paper hero appears in a letter (1936, p. 567) groping for an excuse for him. It was a Walter Mitty excuse:

(Dick) is after all a sort of superman, an approximation of the hero seen in over-civilized terms — taste is no substitute for vitality but in the book it has to do duty for it.

Taste includes vitality. Furthermore, in the first part of the book, Dick is a human magnet instilling a marshalled vibrancy in the ironing poseurs that flock to him. After he becomes only a woman- and cocktail-chaser, his colleague says that he is no longer a 'serious man.' But 'serious,' Dick never was! This German doctor who founds his career on the partnership with the early Dick's superior seriousness is not 'serious' either.

From the first, Diver, and the other Americans, are in Europe as permanent expatriates. Dick has no national roots; he has no spiritual roots of any kind; he is an expatriate from life. His hollowness leaves him the substance of a soap bubble (his brilliance is precisely a bubble's), wafted and exploded by his wife's money (Nicole is an heiress); her sex (she is ravishing), her emotion (she is psychotic). Diver is also destroyed by a Hollywood actress who, in contrast to Nicole, is endowed with some childlike

simplicity and innocence. At the last, we see that, like the majority of Fitzgerald's women, Rosemary, is basically a whore; she and Diver have intercourse to get it over with. Since Dick never lived, Fitzgerald cannot kill, or immortalize, him at the end. 'Superman' drifts westward across the Atlantic, a battered, besotted zombie, to live — die in some small town in upper New York State.

Night is evidently the story of our artistic and intellectual ruin. Good and evil, beauty and sordidness, are in inextricable deadlock. The American dream of being young in the world, of being young to the world, of capturing Europe and colonizing it with a superber man, of American savoir-faire and noblesse oblige — all this has failed. '... America is the story of the moon that never rose —' (Fitzgerald, in a letter [1925]). In the Twenties — the 'twenties of the Twenties' — the last great writers were writing: Ford Maddox Ford of *THE LAST POST*, D. H. Lawrence, Willa Cather, T. S. Eliot, Robert Frost, Hemingway, Thomas Wolfe, Fitzgerald. There would be none after them to match them. Dedicating Fitzgerald's last effort in *THE CRACK-UP* (p. 9), Edmund Wilson wrote with the conviction of poetry. The Dream washed back a zombie.

Wilson condemns, among other things, literary criticism such as we are doing here. Lest we be 'buzzards' and also 'monkeys scared of (our own) thunder,' let us face openly the prevailing view according to which *TENDER ...* is a better book than *GATSBY* — while *THE LAST TYCOON* is, or was on the way to being, Fitzgerald's best. A main principle in making or judging literary criticism is this: While an author is alive, it is almost a necessity to believe that his talent is declining; after he dies, it is a necessity to believe that his work got better right to the end. The reason for this is that what is most important to the critic, as to any person, is, of course, himself. Seldom and weakly do we simply seek the truth. While another man is alive, he is a competitor; when

he is dead, our need is to be generous and to expiate guilt for our jealousy. Also, by seeing steady improvement in the now safely-dead man, we overcome that paramount fear of dying before burial; the once-competitor is freed to illustrate, and be assimilated to, the spiritual principle that life is inevitably a growing-process. If the dead author really declined, it is easier to hail improvement — thus ignoring his best work, which competes even after his death.

Before Fitzgerald died, the thunder boomed that GATSBY was best, and that he was in decline. The moment he died, the thunder was all for NIGHT and TYCOON. Our present essay is in opposition to this formidable psychology. This intense personal need, not the philosophical impact of TENDER IS THE NIGHT, makes GATSBY 'seem neat and simple,' in THE FAR SIDE OF PARADISE (p. 251).

In a fall-worshipping age, one is artistic slightly by reason of the culture — largely, in spite of it. To 'succeed' is to be emasculated; one succeeds artistically, if at all, in loneliness and disrepute. No work shows this more than GATSBY — which could not be written until the popularity of THIS SIDE OF PARADISE had been expiated and dissipated in THE BEAUTIFUL AND DAMNED and [\[THE VEGETABLE\]](#). Gatsby was not popular when published, and the critics were generally cool. The most snide, at the time, was Edmund Wilson, who also belittled the earlier novel in his eulogium for TYCOON. In such a climate, it is comforting — and nourishing — to those calling themselves modern artists, also to critics who want their cake and eat it too, to confuse art and manure — Anti-art and [\[Anti-life\]](#). In such an age the Fitzgerald cult worships him in his filth. The buzzards like it dead.

In the two-page confessional Prologue to THE GREAT GATSBY, Fitzgerald wrote that Gatsby had qualities of greatness 'which it is not likely I shall ever find again,' concluding:

It is what preyed on Gatsby, what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams that temporarily closed out my interest in the abortive sorrows and short-winded elations of men.

The novel is Fitzgerald's high-water mark; the 'close-out' would be permanent. In the last year of his life, he wrote to his daughter:

... I wish now I'd never relaxed or looked back — but said at the end of *THE GREAT GATSBY*: 'I've found my line — from now on this comes first. This is my immediate duty — without this I am nothing —' (p. 79).

Gatsby is a potentially-deadly morass of 'abortive sorrows.' Note the setting, in 'the great wet barnyard of Long Island Sound,' the 'Eggs,' East and West; the yolk-yellow 'death car;' the drifting and aquaplaning pleasure boats; the fatal-fetal swimming. Thus, the principal characters' suspended purposelessness. But Fitzgerald gets his head out; out of *GATSBY* he hatched a soul: *Gatsby* was 'detached from me ...' (*LETTERS*, p. 430). Henry Dan Piper finds in the novel's first draft that *Gatsby* and Nick Carraway were almost identical projections of the author:

but gradually, after extensive revision, they assumed separate identities. What distinguishes Nick from *Gatsby* most conspicuously, of course, is the fact that despite his deeply-rooted self-identification with *Gatsby*, Nick is capable of judging him — and so is saved from a similar fate.

The patient, Fitzgerald-*Gatsby*, dies; the doctor, Fitzgerald-Carraway, lives. Doctor Diver is an embryo fantasy-man.

Almost precisely the ostensible characters and story in *NIGHT* follow *GATSBY*: spiritually rootless men are ruined, or 'exposed' or 'exploded' since they are ruined from the start, by defiling seductive women and barbarian he-men. Tom Buchanan and Daisy expose the effete *Gatsby*; Tommy Barban and Nicole explode the effete Diver. *Gatsby*, waving the crowd good-bye from the porch of his Party-wasteland at

West Egg, 'his hand up in a formal gesture of farewell,' is seen again as the departing Diver giving the 'Black Mass' sign over the Riviera beach of his corruption. Gerald Murphy, whom Fitzgerald first knew at Antibes, in 1924, is Jay Gatsby before he is Dick Diver.

Night is a close-out of the earlier book, because Gatsby and Daisy have a narrator conscience in Nick Carraway, whereas that narrator conscience disappears in NIGHT. As the reader probably has noticed, 'Carraway' suggests 'care always.' With his bungalow close by Gatsby's mansion, Nick is Gatsby's 'caretaker.' The homonym is nudged into place by Jordan Baker's telling Nick: 'I hate careless people. That's why I like you.' It is polished with a sly backhand, when, later, Nick being too careful to go on loving her, she chides: ... 'it was careless of me' ... to like you. On the next page, Nick, having taken his care away West, protests his companion of the year before — with three 'carelesses' in two sentences. Nick wants to 'leave things in order.'

In NIGHT, 'Nick' becomes 'Nicole' but with the sex reversed and her end anomic the same as Dick's. Fitzgerald called GATSBY 'masculine,' NIGHT 'a woman's book.' (LETTERS, p. 247.) Nick-Scott loses himself in Dick-Nicole. Literally, figuratively, and psychologically, the author returned to the womb of NIGHT: 'Tender is the Womb.' Ten years after GATSBY, Fitzgerald had become a zombie 'diver' as predicted in the GATSBY Prologue:

When I came back from the East last autumn, I felt that I wanted the world to be in uniform and at a sort of moral attention forever; I wanted no more riotous excursions with privileged glimpses into the human heart.

³ *THE CRACK-UP*, edited by Edmund Wilson (NEW DIRECTIONS, 1945, p. 84). Unless otherwise indicated, page references for letters are to *THE LETTERS OF F. SCOTT FITZGERALD*, edited by Andrew Turnbull (SCRIBNERS, 1963). In *THE GREAT GATSBY*:

A STUDY, ed. by Frederick J. Hoffman (SCRIBNERS, 1962, p. 329). — ED.

Fitzgerald drifted all the way back with NIGHT and Dick Diver, all the way to Hollywood.

Night tells us how total had been the ruin of a dream, a dream-become-a-nightmare without hope or end. If we are to find the 'foul dust's' end, we had better look to Fitzgerald's masterpiece.

'PARTY DEATH'

The GREAT GATSBY is told in the first person by a thirty-year-old expatriate from three comfortable business-generations in a mid-western city, and from the Great War. While learning the bond business in Manhattan, Fitzgerald-Carraway moves out on Long Island:

... on my right was a colossal affair by any standard — it was a factual imitation of some Hotel de Ville in Normandy, with a tower on one side, spanking new under a thin beard of raw ivy, and a marble swimming pool, and more than forty acres of lawn and garden.

In this house, from this house, Gatsby gives parties. Everyone comes, everyone but Daisy Buchanan who lives across the bay in another big house. She is Gatsby's love from before the War, his one love. Daisy is Carraway's cousin; Carraway is Gatsby's neighbor. Gatsby has Carraway invite Daisy for tea. Daisy again falls in love with him: partly from affection and admiration; partly from boredom; partly, because her husband, Tom Buchanan, has a mistress, Myrtle Wilson. Wife of a garagekeeper on the road to the City, Myrtle is killed by Gatsby's car; and the garagekeeper kills Gatsby. At the end the survivors move away, leaving the House of Gatsby to be visited now and then by 'some final guest who ... didn't know that the party was over.' Notwithstanding '... the party was over,' GATSBY's is a Big Party and is still going on.

Sprawling alone on the sand beneath the dead party-man's mansion, Carraway gradually becomes aware of ... the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes — a fresh, green breast of the new world. Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby's house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams ... man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent ... face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder.

Gatsby's Nature is a beautiful, bountiful seductress. Her wonder-innocence 'pandered' to man's dream: far from resisting, she 'made way' for the Hotel de Ville monstrosity. Our novel's Party is no less than Nature's final, all-corrupting fling, the Saturnalia of the World.

In A BOOK OF PREFACES (GARDEN CITY Publishing Co., 1927 [pp. 281 and 282]). — Ed.

To return to GATSBY's pandering view of Nature, H. L. Mencken seems to have been Fitzgerald's great teacher; and the long 1917 essay, PURITANISM AS A LITERARY FORCE, was surely central in GATSBY's intellectual and artistic ferment. Later, when we have tracked Cerberus to his lair, we will return to Mencken's essay to get a final grip on the beast. Here — to track him — note the following signs:

... it is sex that especially fascinates the lubricious Puritan mind Not only youth must be safeguarded, but also the 'female,' the untrustworthy one, the temptress.

Just as Nicole and her heiress sister use and ruin Dick, Daisy destroys Jay Gatsby. To win her, he buys this house and gives parties for vindictive strangers, piling up debts he cannot meet. Daisy runs down Myrtle — not Jay — and her silence to her husband sends woe to Gatsby. GATSBY's Nature is also Myrtle, whose enormous bosoms and hips [thrust] aside the Buchanan marriage. And She is Jordan Baker — cool, cheating, idly golf-playing and sofa-reclining

with Nick — helping to tie Carraway into the mess.

But the natural men are no better. With their physical strength they counter-seduce the women. Once, when Myrtle won't shut up, Tom breaks her nose with 'a short, deft movement of his open hand.' Gatsby's car, in killing Myrtle, tears off her breast, as his mansion ripped 'the fresh, green breast of the new world.' GATSBY's men also betray one another. Carraway pimps Daisy away from his friend Tom. Having stolen the garagekeeper's wife and self-respect, Tom betrays Gatsby to the garagekeeper who shoots Gatsby and himself.

Raw sex. Physical force. In addition, Gatsby's intimations of immortality come trailing clouds of money. Jay offers to pay Nick, in a 'deal,' for inviting Daisy to tea. Carraway first sees Daisy and Jordan lying on a couch, 'like silver idols.' Gatsby remembers Daisy 'gleaming like silver, safe and proud above the hot struggles of the poor.' When Carraway has trouble explaining Daisy's siren-seduction, Gatsby tells him: 'Her voice is full of money.' The women personify another Nature whose silver-baubled mountains and gold-gleaming valleys confirmed the nation's desperate tempo, its studied commercialism. Nor have we reached the end of the foul dust that palled the 'house that Gatsby built.'

"Civilization's going to pieces," broke out Tom violently... "Have you read *The Rise of the Colored Empires* by this man Goddard?" Later, Carraway-Fitzgerald interpolates racism (triggered by the Island's name?) as he and Gatsby, in Gatsby's Rolls-Royce, cross Blackwell's Island:

... a limousine passed us, driven by a white chauffeur, in which sat three modish Negroes, two bucks and a girl. I laughed aloud as the yolks of their eyeballs rolled toward us in haughty rivalry.

Race is etched deeply in GATSBY. East Egg houses are 'white palaces.' Daisy and Jordan are always dressed in white. Daisy's car in the 'Southern White' city of Louisville is

white. Of her and Jordan's origins in Louisville, Daisy breezes: 'Our white girlhood was passed together there.' Her next speech jokes about the 'Nordic.' Satirizing Tom's outburst, she flouts in the face of Southern Manhood that red flag of Colored link-up with White Womanhood:

'We've got to beat them down,' whispered Daisy, winking ferociously toward the fervent sun.

(For that one line, Fitzgerald is almost incomparable.) It is fervently hot the day Myrtle is killed — a Negro man appearing in Wilson's garage to retell the White catastrophe. Just as they need Colored servants, GATSBY's Whites need the Colored racial sun to keep them going. They disown its blazing hell to hide their cold dependence on it. Warmth is scarce in Whiteville.

Fitzgerald had a clairvoyance for word-sounds and was a wizard at 'packing' names. 'Great Gatsby' apparently came initially from Gateway Drive, Great Neck, the Fitzgeralds' address when they lived on Long Island in 1923. This prosaic, topical receptacle expands enormously. The summer he dies, Gatsby is 'a year or two over thirty.' The boldest meaning of 'Jay Gatsby' is Jesus Christ. GATSBY, however, is made a racial parody of the Christ story because: while Judas and the crucifying mob were Jewish, Jesus himself was a Jew; J. Gatsby is a polyglot, or rather an American whose Nemesis is the gambler-tycoon wearing human molars for cuff buttons, Meyer Wolfshiem. The last name, 'Gatsby,' suggests, in addition to 'God's boy' ('He was a Son of God ...') and 'gat man' (his guests rumored that he'd killed a man), the word 'catpaw.' Another of Wolfshiem's creatures is 'Katspaugh.' So Jay is the tycoon's catpaw as Christian Civilization is catpaw of 'The Jewish Conspiracy.' The 'man who fixed the World Series' — especially if a Jew — could fix the world.

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD and Literary Anti-Semitism is the title of an article by Milton Hindus (COMMENTARY, 1947). — Ed.

So terrific was the blow dealt anti-Semitism by Hitler that it is nearly impossible for non-Jews in the United States today to realize that anti-Semitism has been, and can be, an important factor in intelligent people. To some extent also, its raw-fear content has been displaced to the nuclear bomb; its intellectual appeal has been largely subserved, and has gone underground in that national nightmare, The Communist Conspiracy. A key-slogan of the Twenties and Thirties was Jewish Bolshevism.

Fitzgerald of course breathed this foul dust, most directly as exhaled by Mencken. Henry Ford's THE INTERNATIONAL JEW (later apologized for) was published in 1920. GATSBY was mostly written in France, where — at the time — Jew-ridicule was intellectually smart. The Protocols of the Wise Men of Zion was widely disseminated in the early Twenties. That awesome prophecy and blueprint for demagogic management of world-social-dissolution was supposedly written by the first Zionist Congress in 1897; actually (and the fabrication was transparent to intelligent people), the document was produced by the Czarist Russian secret police to promote the Jews' destruction as a means of halting liberalism. It is logical that the age's most ironic travesty would have its apotheosis in the age's ironic masterpiece. Hitler hung out his first swastika flag in 1921; Wolfshiem's headquarters bore the sign: 'The Swastika Holding Company.'

See Konrad Heiden's DER FUEHRER, the first chapter of which, The Protocols, has it the springboard for Hitler. — Ed.

Wolfshiem raised Gatsby from the gutter-manger to use his handsomeness and youthful winning ways. When Jay is murdered, Carraway visits the tycoon 'father' to ask him to come to the funeral; Wolfshiem 'washes his hands' of Gatsby, having been heard to 'whistle The Rosary tunelessly inside.' The parody upon the Christ story is so detailed at the Crucifixion that I find it hard to believe (though it must be

true) that the author was not conscious of what he was doing ... as well as in the grip of collective creative forces. Thus, the chauffeur, one of 'Wolfshiem's proteges,' hears the shots, but does nothing to save his master. This Wolfshiemer helps pump up the air mattress on which Jay would be stretched floating in the swimming pool when shot. An air mattress is a light burden —

Gatsby shouldered the mattress and started for the pool. Once he stopped and shifted it a little, and the chauffeur asked him if he needed help.

— not a cross. The helpful chauffeur is one of the replacements for the old retainers whose appearance, not long after the middle of the book, seems to form a hinge for Gatsby's downfall:

They're some people Wolfshiem wanted to do something for. They're all brothers and sisters. They used to run a small hotel.

Throughout GATSBY, details come like lightning flashes in clouds of mythical, monumental vagueness. We cannot be sure what is intended; for, so much is intended. To this writer, these helpers (they make a mess of the mansion, and 'proteges' are more than 'some people Wolfshiem wanted to do something for') seem to be executioners sent by Wolfshiem when Gatsby's notoriety ends his usefulness. Having them brothers and sisters numbering 'half a dozen' suggests to me the Twelve Tribes whose 'small hotel' background seeks to murder Christ's more-universal ministry. As Nick tells us: '... his hospitality. We were always thanking him for that — I and the others.' Nick last shares this wondrous largess the night of Jay's Gethsemane, and is gone as the cock crows.

Sexism, moneyism, racism — sexes', money's, race's over-valuing perversion. They are, however, less prominent in GATSBY than another evil. The other sources seem to be included, to be instruments, in a fourth cause — as Gatsby is

for Wolfshiem. Also included is the 'over-civilized' factor Fitzgerald cited for Diver's fall. This fourth cause is Eastism, the oldness, cynicalness, corruptness, fatigue of Europe and Eastern U.S.A. as contrasted with the 'new world' and Western U.S.A.

But, even as the West is catspaw of the East — is not the East itself a catspaw? Is there not in *THE GREAT GATSBY* a more sinister, final evil than the Wolfshiem East?

Long Island Nature was Western when she pandered to European sailors. Gatsby did not need the Jew of the East to ruin him. He was already a flawed source of corruption back at Little Girl Bay on Lake Superior:

... Son of God ... he must be about His Father's business, the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty.... He knew women early, and since they spoiled him he became contemptuous of them, of young virgins because they were ignorant....

Before he fell to the Wolfshiem temptation, he willingly embraced the cheap gaudyism of Dan Cody, the millionaire from Nevada silver and Montana copper. Daisy was 'fast' in her home town, Louisville, having intercourse there with Gatsby before her marriage to Tom and the Eastern affair; she and Gatsby took this misalliance East. Tom's anger over the inundation of the Nordic by the Colored race is answered by Jordan Baker recalling repressive solutions to 'the Oriental Problem out there:' "You ought to live in California ...". Toward the end of *GATSBY*, Carraway reflects:

I see now that this has been a story of the West, after all — Tom and Gatsby, Daisy and Jordan and I, were all Westerners, and perhaps we possessed some deficiency in common which made us subtly inadaptable to Eastern life.

Recognizing the East's grotesque 'distortion,' the narrator is

most keenly aware of its superiority to the bored, sprawling swollen towns beyond the Ohio, with their

interminable inquisitions which spared only the children and the very old.

In 1940, Fitzgerald urged Maxwell Perkins to read Spengler: 'I read him the same summer I was writing THE GREAT GATSBY, and don't think I ever quite recovered from him.' (LETTERS, pp. 289-90.) Spengler's book, of course, is THE DECLINE OF THE WEST. Fitzgerald sees that the nation never stands and flowers keeping open Willa Cather's spiritual frontier with Nature. ('We dreamed the railroad across the mountains...' — A LOST LADY.) To him, Westerners are only Easterners turned to the froth and celluloid of the Hollywood beach as the westering tide runs out. Expatriates by being Westerners, they are only more superficial, feckless Easterners. From their indigence of maundering romance willingly they travel hellward. Death is West as well as East; green youth is dying at the sunset, through the night. The profile of their lives is a vertiginous ascent, then, the long wasting decline of the Age. They were the unborn, THE SAD YOUNG MEN (Fitzgerald's title for a book of short stories), the 'hollow men' (Eliot was Scott's poet). The Western and Southern fall-stories of the Peters and Snopses, GATSBY universalizes on its island. The future is victim of the past, Cronus eating his children. THE GREAT GATSBY concludes:

Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future, that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter — tomorrow we will run faster, stretch our arms farther.... And one fine morning — So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.

So it was a sham, just a dodge, Eastism vs. Westism. Sexism vs. Virginity: the same. All of us who find in Fitzgerald the truth for our time are doomed, regardless where we grew up and live. Westward the coarse whore takes her way. It isn't 'Eastern life,' it is life we are 'subtly inadaptably to.' There are no 'Westerners;' life is death.

GATSBY and NIGHT are variations on that old sham according to Luther and Calvin: the Fall because innocent Eve gave innocent Adam the innocent Apple in the innocent Garden. Really we are falling because God made us and He is Original Sin.

An interesting article, but with the conventional conclusion, is Robert Ornstein's SCOTT FITZGERALD'S FABLE OF EAST AND WEST (College English — 1956). — ED.

CERBERUS, LOOK OUT!

We promised to lay hold again of Mencken's PURITANISM AS A LITERARY FORCE when the Fitzgerald beast was cornered. Under Calvinism, wrote Mencken: 'God himself was transformed into a superior sort of devil, ever wary and wholly merciless...' (p. 197). Founded under Calvinism, American literature 'never knew a period of naïf joie de vivre but was under harsh Puritan restraints from the beginning...' (p. 199).

(in the United States) Religion lost all its old contemplative and esoteric character, and became a frankly worldly enterprise, a thing of balance-sheets and ponderable profits, heavily capitalized and astutely manned. There was no longer room for the spiritual type of leader.... He was displaced by a brisk gentleman in a 'business suit' who looked, talked and thought like a seller of Mexican mine stock (p. 238).

Early in this study, we considered that Fitzgerald's Catholic breakout to Protestantism provided an elan not matched in his contemporaries who had already experienced Protestantism as a mass movement. But Fitzgerald also began a Protestant. Morbid Puritanism, the evil of beauty and youth, their 'commercial cheapness' ('Her voice is full of money'), is clearly the great evil GATSBY does not battle with. Not a little of the self-righteous 'foul dust' that pursues Gatsby clings to Nick Carraway at the end. In THIS SIDE OF

PARADISE, Amory Blaine's hallucinatory Devil drove him away from an attractive girl. The author's Chesterfieldian letters in the Thirties to his daughter reveal a Tom-Buchanan libertine-prig as good an example as can be found of Mencken's 'lubricious Puritan mind' safeguarding 'the "female," the untrustworthy one.' Long after he wrote GATSBY, Fitzgerald told how his first love, his pure love, had been foully crossed by money; when Zelda broke their engagement, any rich man coming along could have bought his girl. (ref. Mizener, p. 95.) In the newer Midwest soil, Protestant Christianity flourished long after it dried up in the East. Jeffry Hart in SCOTT FITZGERALD'S AMERICA regards the author as a breakout flower of Puritanism, adding as fellow outcaste-winners: Eliot, Hemingway, Pound, and Hart Crane. These Midwesterners were the Twenties' leading writers, Professor Hart believes, 'able to give sharp focus to feelings that remained amorphous elsewhere,' because they experienced directly 'the final collapse of that Puritan ethos.'¹ (Also from the Midwest, from Michigan, was Ring Lardner. Lardner was Fitzgerald's neighbor at Great Neck; and Scott, trying to prevent the admired older man's crack-up, prefigured Nick Carraway salvaging the murdered Gatsby. How closely the Nick-Jay relationship followed the Scott-Ring appears from a footnote in Mizener's biography. The two writers from the Midwest, jetsam on Long Island, intensely identified with each other in a sort of 'lost authors anonymous.' When the Fitzgeralds, fearing the deterioration told of in THE BEAUTIFUL AND DAMNED, fled to Europe in 1924, it was Lardner who 'took over the whole burden of their hastily deserted house and affairs in Great Neck and did an admirably efficient job of settling them.' [p. 334].)

¹ *NATIONAL Review* (Nov. 8, 1963, pp. 443-4). — Ed.

Professor Hart's essay draws heavily on one of the extremely few essays on Fitzgerald that I have read which seems equal to its subject — one by John Peale Bishop. By

1900, wrote Bishop (in 1937), the Midwest had become America. Going West, Americans had gone with their time, or ahead of it. But leaving the old seaboard resting place in the new, swifter time of railroads, Puritanism in the Nineteenth Century had been dissipated in Midwestern spaces much more than by the uprooting from Europe during the sailing centuries. Bishop makes the broken romance with Puritanism the key to Fitzgerald. Having lost his faith, this American American was always going back East, to Europe, to Africa, to look for what he had lost. From the Great War in the East, he returned to 'a world without values' (Bishop's phrase). But the values had already been lost in the West: that was why the War happened. Americans and Russians were spacemen long before rocketry, bound for California and Siberia, dispersing the world between them.

The BEAUTIFUL takes place in the billboard eyes ('their retinas are one yard wide') of the oculist, T. J. Eckleburg. Eckleburg is the clean interweaving of many ranging strands from Fitzgerald's life, personal and literary. First T.J. combines Scott's own maternal Grandfather McQuillan, a self-made millionaire grocery wholesaler in St. Paul; name and money, but his 'damned' self-righteousness. Weaving an epic garment in space and time, Scott-Anthony shuttled once more to Europe, to write his third novel. From there, in GATSBY, he raised his alter-ego of 'another generation' to an advertiser's heaven in America: T. J. Eckleburg is Adam J. Scottpatch, progenator of original sin, culture-hero of Protestantism after four centuries.

The immediate location of the Gatsby and Buchanan mansions is 'two unusual formations of land ... enormous eggs, identical in contour and separated only by a courtesy bay.' Similarly, the Doctor's 'enormous' painted spectacles 'pass over a non-existent nose.' They are yellow, the yolk color; and 'Eck'leburg, 'Egg'burg. Fitzgerald's 1928 story, A NIGHT AT THE FAIR, contains a connection of twin

communities with eyes; also a boyhood source of the countervailing East and West Eggs, in GATSBY:

The two cities were separated only by a thin well-bridged river; their tails curling over the banks met and mingled, and at the juncture, under the jealous eye of each, lay, every fall, the State Fair.

Scott's home town contrasted with Minneapolis in the GATSBY East-West way; just east of Minneapolis, St. Paul was older, wealthier, more fashionable, the State Capital. The St. Paul-Minneapolis State Fair combined with Great Neck and Manhasset Neck, along with West and East Necks only twenty-five miles farther out Long Island — (N)Eckleburg — in setting and sighting THE GREAT GATSBY.

Under the oculist-sign, Myrtle's seduction and Wilson's ghoulisn cuckoldry take place. Myrtle is killed, her husband crying: "Oh, my Ga-od! Oh, my Ga-od!" Staring up at Eckleburg's heaven-blue, -blind eyes, framed in false spectacles presiding over their ashheap, Wilson takes his cue as he prepares to kill the wrong man. "You can't fool God! ... God sees everything," repeated Wilson.' There is no doubt who gives the charge to the deathman who walks over Gad's Hill.

Tending the murderously-distraught Wilson is 'the young Greek, Michaelis, who ran the coffee joint beside the ashheaps ... the principal witness at the inquest.' Having the witness Greek suggests the oracular 'sin fate' of Athenian drama. 'Michael' derives from 'like unto God' (Webster). Michael is God's archangel sent to dispossess Adam and Eve, in Milton's classic. Most interesting for our study is Michael, the angel of the Book of Daniel, who prophecies the anti-God desecration of the world:

Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire for women, nor regard any god; for he shall magnify himself above all. But in his estate shall he honor the God of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honor

with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things (11:37-38).

This dream-prophecy of Daniel's through Michael looks very like Fitzgerald's dream of Gatsby through Nick Carraway; for, in the novel's last two chapters, Michaelis doubles for Nick. ('Michaelis' rhymes with 'Nicholas.') After sustaining Wilson who has lost Myrtle, and Gatsby who has lost Daisy — Michaelis to go to sleep, Nick to go to work — they loose their vengeful and suicidal catpaws. Bereft of their only life-dreams, Gatsby and Wilson are free to compass the novel's final desecration ('the holocaust was complete.'). Michaelis is chief witness ('narrator') at the inquest; Nick is chief witness at the funeral and narrator of the whole story. Like Daniel's angel, Michaelis and Nick in the egg-eyes of Dr. Eckleburg preside over and partake of the destructions.

Gatsby is Antichrist-son-of-anti-God. Carraway made this plain in the middle of the book; but we didn't believe him:

He was a Son of God — a phrase which, if it means anything, means just that — and he must be about His Father's business, the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty.

(meretricious 1. alluring by a show of false attractions; showily attractive; tawdry. 2. Archaic. of, pertaining to, or characteristic of a prostitute — [\[AMERICAN COLLEGE DICTIONARY\]](#).) Gatsby is a gilded Sungod as, in his yellow Rolls, 'terraced with a labyrinth of wind-shields that mirrored a dozen suns,' 'With fenders spread like wings we scattered light through half Astoria....'

Some weeks following this 'showily attractive,' half-ass(toria) ride to the City, Nick completes the circuit of the courts of the sun, coming home after dark to 'the whole corner of the peninsula blazing with light ... it was Gatsby's house lit from tower to cellar.' He tells Jay: "Your place looks like the World's Fair." Helios replies absently: "I have been

glancing into some of the rooms. Let's go to Coney Island, old sport. In my car." A Sungod-Gatsby can disappear: once, in the dark, after Nick sees him stretch his ray-arms toward Daisy's moon-goddess light; again, at the restaurant when he first faced his rival, Tom, and so defaced him. GATSBY is Fitzgerald's 1924 'day' or 'light' novel to his 1933 NIGHT. At the 'Last Supper' luncheon at the Buchanans' that blazing afternoon, Daisy insists of Jay: "You always look cool." The White Sun has no need of the Colored. Gatsby dying is the White Sun setting, the decline in the West.

OF WOMEN & THE SEX-IMAGE

As the novel's men tend to be anti-God fathers and sons, its women tend to be anti-God wives and mothers. 'Meretricious' — a favorite word of Mencken's — is more female than male. That we are dealing with an 'Unholy Family' seems likely, from Fitzgerald's upbringing in and apostacy from the Catholic Church. Before seeing if Daisy, Jordan and Myrtle fill the role, it will help us to see why this characterization of women was important to the author, as well as to gain insight into Fitzgerald's attitude toward religion generally — if we meet the remarkable man who was Fitzgerald's priest.

'... until he died very suddenly in the influenza epidemic in 1919, Fay was probably the greatest single influence on Fitzgerald.' (Mizener, p. 43). Father Webster Fay was headmaster of Newman Prep School when sixteen-year-old Scott met him in the fall of 1912. Fay is prominently written into THIS SIDE OF PARADISE, the very autobiographical first novel. Monsignor Darcy not only is Amory Blaine's spiritual father — by suggestion, he is his physical father as well; before conversion to Catholicism, Thayer Darcy was Blaine's mother's lover.

In a letter Fay wrote Fitzgerald, he called 'The fear of God ... your greatest protection — as it is mine....'¹ But, at the

end of PARADISE, Amory turned his back on just this 'Thou-shalt-not God.' Father Fay's dikes of faith, as we shall see, were graced with some sizeable chinks, through which would pour torrents of Fitzgerald-seeing and -creation.

Darcy's letters to Amory are 'almost transcriptions' (LETTERS, p. 469) of Fay's letters to Fitzgerald; one PARADISE letter reads:

But you are starting the spluttering magic-lantern show of life with much the same array of slides I had, so I need to write you if only to shriek the colossal stupidity of people.¹

This Fay-Darcy letter is a prelude to ABSOLUTION (1924), the story termed by Fitzgerald 'a picture of his (Gatsby's) early life...' (LETTERS, p. 509). In ABSOLUTION, a Catholic priest's apostasy absolves a boy's. "It's a thing like a fair, only much more glittering,"¹ cries the Father as the secular world beckons him to damnation. Advising fifteen-year-old Rudolph Miller to "go and see an amusement park," Father Schwartz promises "it won't remind you of anything." The boy exults: "There is something ineffably gorgeous somewhere that had nothing to do with God." Recalling Fay-Darcy's shriek of boredom, the jaded priest ('jaded' I think Fitzgerald meant for Diver as much as 'spoiled') cautions the boy: "... don't get up close, because if you do you'll only feel the heat and the sweat and the life."

The month Fay died, Fitzgerald had written a mutual friend: '... he wanted to die. Deep under it all he had a fear of that blending of the two worlds —' (LETTERS, p. 374). Nick Carraway echoes Fay-Schwartz's world-view when he tells Jay, the night the mansion is lit from attic to cellar: "Your place looks like the World's Fair." GATSBY's world-as-fair-and-ashheap was site of the 1939 Fair, reverted to ashheap, and is site of the World's Fair today.

Fitzgerald's best two novels are a joint working-out of the author's relationship with Father Fay. The year the priest died, THIS SIDE OF PARADISE was completed with its

end-of-the-Church ending, dedicated to Fay. (The first edition was to 'Fey.' Scott frequently botched another friend-enemy's name: i.e. 'Hemmingway.') Well before 1919, Scott was growing up, not only from Church religion, but from his adolescent dandyism as well; and Fay was, Mizener writes: '... something of an eighteen-nineties aesthete, a dandy always heavily perfumed...' (p. 42). Turnbull's biography describes the priest — the only physical account I could find — 'almost pure albino with thin flaxen hair, white eyebrows and lashes, and pink watery eyes that jiggled behind thick lenses —' (p. 39).

¹ SCOTT FITZGERALD, *Andrew Turnbull* (SCRIBNERS — 1962, p. 84). ¹ SCRIBNERS — 1960 (p. 157). ¹ THE STORIES of F. Scott Fitzgerald (SCRIBNERS — 1951, p. 171). — ED.

Fitzgerald's ambivalence to Fay's religion and memory was demonstrated the year he published his second novel: The priest, wrote Fitzgerald, made of the Church 'a dazzling, golden thing, dispelling its oppressive mustiness,' giving it 'the romantic glamour of an adolescent dream —' (Mizener, p. 43). By Fay-Darcy's death, Scott-Amory was delivered from PARADISE (from Paradise): 'Amory was alone — he had escaped from a small enclosure into a great labyrinth —' (p. 264). But the beautiful and damned priest was not dead: People grieved at Darcy's funeral because they 'leaned on Monsignor's faith —' (p. 266). Amory resolved to be like Darcy, 'not to be admired ... not to be loved ... but to be necessary to people,' to give people 'a sense of security.' For, 'of Monsignor's funeral was born a romantic elf who was to enter the labyrinth with him.' The elf in the world-labyrinth, the 'eighteen-nineties aesthete, a dandy always heavily perfumed,' the priest whose death and apostasy delivered the orphan-wanderer in PARADISE and in ABSOLUTION, culminates in Jay Gatsby. Father Fay also is 'the owl-eyed man.'

As might be expected in a convert to celibacy, women are very much included in Fay's jaundiced view. (In his black skirts, the priest doubtless suggested to Scott the fatuousness of women.) In the letter commending Fitzgerald to fear of God, Fay warned his nubile friend: '... if you begin with women you will run amuck.' That startling 'state of affairs' becomes in *THIS SIDE OF PARADISE*:

(What saves you on) this woman proposition is the fear that what you begin you can't stop; you will run amuck, and I know whereof I speak; it's that half-miraculous sixth sense by which you detect evil, it's the half-realized fear of God in your heart — (p. 106).

We have already identified 'sexism' in the foul dust that ruined Jay Gatsby. Maxwell Geismer has indicated that the boy in *ABSOLUTION* fears, as part of his religion, sexual seduction from the priest.¹ Similarly, in the 1920 story, *BENEDICTION*, the girl faints from sex in the church. For Fitzgerald, God is Sex; not love, not good, not God. Sex comes between men, or women, and God. Fay and Scott agreed that love and women could be enjoyed only by absolution from the Sex-god. That is, in empty dreams.

The month his priest died, Fitzgerald wrote a friend:

... my little world made to order has been shattered by the death of one man.... This has made me nearly sure that I will become a priest. I feel as if in a way his mantle had descended upon me — a desire, or more, to some day recreate the atmosphere of him — (p. 375).

If the hold with formal Catholicism was broken, the emotional and artistic hold was strong and would endure. Father Fay saw to that by his affection for and education of the author. Also by his untimely death — '... he never knew he was dying —'; Scott could not attend the funeral (*LETTERS*, p. 376) — requiring his young follower to perform the rites of passage. These rites, we may be sure, would include absolution from the Mary of the Catholic Church;

Fay also saw to that.

¹ *THE LAST OF THE PROVINCIALS* (HOUGHTON MIFFLIN – 1949, pp. 326-7 & 334). – Ed.

In the Church's Holy Family worship, Jesus' Mother is supreme — or nearly so. Even the mother of the Mother is worshipped. In St. Matthew, Joseph, like any man, thinks of putting Mary away because the Child is not his. Protestantism has considered the Church the false mother of Christianity; it is reasonable that an apostate would associate Woman and the Church in the light 'that has nothing to do with God.' Scott's experience with the two main women in his life strengthened this view. The writer's mother, a solidly practicing Catholic, excessively spoiled Scott. At the same time, her aggressive personality and her family's wealth contributed to the shame of his kind, indecisive father. For four years after he had finished *GATSBY*, Fitzgerald worked on a novel called *THE BOY WHO KILLED HIS MOTHER* (Mizener, p. 8). The summer *GATSBY* was written, the author's wife, to whom the novel is dedicated, had an affair with a French aviator; the author was deeply hurt (Mizener, p. 163).

Gatsby's women are false- and anti-Marys. 'Daisy' sounds vaguely 'Mary,' and her maiden name was 'Fay.' She is Nick's 'second cousin once removed,' a good simile for the author's relation in 1924 to the Mary of Catholicism. In *PARADISE*, Fitzgerald has the priest's given name, 'Thayer;' Scott's first engagement to Zelda Sayre was broken less than six months after 'Thayer's' death. Gatsby tells Carraway: "I drift here and there trying to forget the sad thing that happened to me." This world-sadness is from Jay's losing Daisy and their love, the same as Fitzgerald's losing Zelda and their first love, the same as his losing Webster Fay and their religion.

Jay Gatsby remembers Daisy in her beautiful big house,
... of the youth and mystery that wealth imprisons and preserves, of the freshness of many clothes, and of Daisy,

gleaming like silver, safe and proud above the hot struggles of the poor....

So the boy in ABSOLUTION, who was often humiliated by not having money for the collection, would have grown up remembering Mary in her Church. Daisy has candles in her house in East Egg (which she puts out). She is loose in Louisville, chaste in Chicago, meretricious and immaculate. Like Mary, she has a child. It is a girl like Zelda's; and because Jay is Daisy-Mary's son, as well as her husband — 'He felt married to her....'

Jay meeting Daisy at Nick's is speechless, Nick admonishing: "You're acting like a little boy." At the mansion, Daisy cries over Gatsby's shirts; she cries for her baby's growing up, for his not growing up, and for her son-husband's crucifixion garments. Later, she calls Jay to the window as the sun is setting: "I'd like to just get one of those pink clouds and put you in it and push you around." Gatsby's story, apart from Carraway's, is one of 'imbortion,' of 'the youth and mystery that wealth (Woman) imprisons.' In Daisy's white car in Louisville, Jay's spirit is 'betrayed.'

His heart beat faster and faster as Daisy's white face came up to his own. He knew that when he kissed this girl, and forever wed his unutterable visions to her perishable breath, his mind would never romp again like the mind of God. So he waited, listening for a moment longer to the tuning-fork that had been struck upon a star. Then he kissed her.

Five years later — just the interval between Father Fay's death and the writing of GATSBY — Jay is Wolfshiem's creature; and, Daisy driving the 'death car,' he is physically betrayed. Death cars are death wombs.

Daisy is Queen Bee of Hell, stinging her rival, Myrtle, letting her drone son-husband be stung to death by her sexless worker, Wilson. Perhaps it is significant here that the 'eyes of Eckleburg' were originally Daisy's, sent Fitzgerald on

a dust jacket for GATSBY by SCRIBNERS while the novel was being written (LETTERS, p. 166). Daisy's double-in-Mary, the other Mary, sucks the blood of her husband, returning bloodless George none of her immense life-restoring vitality. Fitzgerald apostatizes these Vampire Marys for the evil they have brought into the world, for the unfaithful sons, the ectoplastic monstrosities; the abortion and imbortion of what might have been good.

The mother-wife, son-husband cycle is well known, as in the 'Oedipus complex,' and appears in all the great religions in addition to Christianity; e.g.: Isis and Osiris, Ishtar and Tammuz, Semele and Dionysius, Demeter-Persephone and Pluto. Woman engulfing Man, as old as copulation, is psychological in many individuals, mythological in regressing cultures. Readers of William Blake will have seen glimmerings: 'And she grows young as he grows old,' 'Till he becomes a wayward Babe,' 'She nails him down upon the rock.'

Imagine meeting you here, Mr. Blake! — in a 'little, thin novel about the Twenties.' But then, Wordsworth said you were mad when you wrote: 'There is a Throne in every Man, it is the Throne of God; / This, Woman has claimed as her own, and Man is no more!'

We said earlier that GATSBY's Party was a 'Saturnalia.' Now, we suggest it has that highest meaning, 'Apocalypse.' The Conspiracy is not Jewish, not Communist, not Capitalist, Imperialist, Colored. Not even 'Womanist,' is the Conspiracy. It is probably no accident that Lothrop Stoddard, author of THE RISING TIDE OF COLOR, and the racial dust that clouded Gatsby, became 'this man Goddard;' the author left alone the Stoddard Lectures. The same Cosmic Conspiracy that built and let burn the Auschwitz and Hiroshima crematoria, now invents and stockpiles the Crematorium of Man. The 'ism' that is sweeping the world is somnambulism, a death-march somnambulism. Dr.

Eckleburg's East and West Eggs hatch to the Bomb-heaped and -exploding Russia and U.S.A.; the planet is his ashheap. We are fallen because GOD is a —.

APOCALYPSE

'The only contribution man makes' (toward attaining God's grace) 'is to resist it,' snarled Martin Luther. 'In actual fact, rebellion against grace precedes any receiving of it.'¹ Calvin taught perfidy in heaven: '... no necessity was imposed upon God of giving man other than a mediocre and even transitory will, that from man's Fall he might gather occasion for his own glory.'² Milton's Calvinist God gloats: 'Man falls deceiv'd ... so shall my glorie exel...' (PARADISE LOST, III). There is this tide, this season, this night, of the world. Shakespeare felt it, impelled it:

O how weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable seem to me all the uses of this world! Fie on't! O fie! 'tis an unweeded garden, that grows to seed: things rank and gross in nature possess it merely.

Gatsby is a throwback to Marlowe's Faust, the aristocratic Overreacher of the Renaissance²¹ (not Goethe's bourgeois swamp-redeemer). The God and Heaven in PARADISE LOST are phony; only Satan, as Blake recognized, is genuine — 'What though the field be lost...'. But, a field is lost — '... an irreligious time ... is a time of decline...'; though we may lie to ourselves about it, we cannot evade it.²² Nor is Karl Marx's 'economic determinism' legislated in heaven. It expresses a particular Culture's failure to subsume the economic; that Culture's subsuming by the economic. Freudian primacy of the unconscious reflects cultural decline, the 'medulla culture,' no eternal truth. Childhood sexual trauma determining psychological development is in the same cultural process as the Darwinian gene-mutation determining evolution. Nor is the Jungian collective unconscious really an answer to Freud. It is only the

collective unconsciousness engulfing individual unconsciousness. In the wake of Freud, Jungian archetypes represent the primitive racial past drowning the civilized individual future.

That is why this bankruptcy followed Fitzgerald; he said it so finally. America needed a lobotomy after GATSBY, and got it in Hemingway's THE SUN ALSO RISES. That is why we and the Russians so love the Bomb, our god's only begotten sun; why we are so very likely to blow up the world — not merely that we hate each other. We could not hate other men that much. God made the heaven and the earth — and lo! it was a Doomsday Machine.

¹ *Luther's EARLY THEOLOGICAL WORKS* (WESTMINSTER Press — 1962, p. 268). ² *INSTITUTES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION* (WESTMINSTER — 1950, p. 196, Vol. I). ²¹ *Introduction, FOUR GREAT ELIZABETHAN PLAYS*, by John Gassner (BANTAM Books — 1960). ²² *THE DECLINE OF THE WEST* (KNOPF — 1928, p. 44, Vol. I). — ED.

We said in introducing our study of GATSBY — and the study has borne out — that GATSBY's author was a 'serious man.' Is there another layer, another level, another 'story,' in F. Scott Fitzgerald?

The GATSBY Prologue has the narrator going home in the autumn, 'wanting no more privileged glimpses into the human heart,' yet nurturing Gatsby's 'gift of hope.' In the autumn of 1924, Fitzgerald had reached a crisis point, a decision peak, such as that in 1919 when he went back to St. Paul to rewrite THE ROMANTIC EGOTIST. Beginning with the success of THIS SIDE OF PARADISE, he had known the prodigious life of published authorship ('Now I spend my time wondering how it all happened' — 'Who's Who — and Why —' [AFTERNOON, p. 86]); of money ('How to live on \$36,000 a year'); of marrying Zelda, the elusive Rosalind of PARADISE; of being a father, having a child; of being an American author with money, Zelda, and Scottie — in

Europe. Now, that was finished, had, and lived through.

In 1930 Fitzgerald's five-year rhythm would bring him to another threshold. The Great Depression closed out the latest stage, as the Great War had closed out his life up to 1919; Zelda would break again — this time, mentally. There was no answer in *TENDER IS THE NIGHT*; 1936: *THE CRACK-UP*; 1940: no point but to die, in *THE LAST TYCOON*. Fitzgerald died at the end of 1940, of alcohol and three abortions at outcreating death. But, in 1924, he wrote *THE GREAT GATSBY* —

Icarus at the sun, Phaethon driving / and O,
Ever-Winged!

The Prologue 'confession' is like St. Augustine's of faith in the face of weakness — not weakness in the face of faith.²³ On the novel's first page, the author recalled that his father had given him 'a sense of the fundamental decencies.' In the first chapter, he tells us: 'My own house was an eyesore...' — in the eyes of Eckleburg. Also, it was an eyesore to the false-seeing son, who has the Carraway lawn mowed in the rain to impress Daisy. As we didn't believe Carraway-Fitzgerald when he said Gatsby was 'a Son of God' (and he was), we didn't believe Fitzgerald when he told us that, in *GATSBY*,

Everyone suspects himself of at least one of the cardinal virtues, and this is mine: I am one of the few honest people that I have ever known.

That also is true. At the end, Carraway throws over the lying Jordan Baker; he does not cross that 'Jordan;' she is Circe to his Odysseus. When she accuses him of being dishonest, he replies: "I'm five years too old to lie to myself and call it honor." ('Five years.') In the case of Carraway-Fitzgerald, this dating refers to the decision to wear the mantle of the Priest. Alone on the slimy shore of the sinking Island, Carraway cares for his neighbor; he honors the 'gift of hope.'

²³ *Introduction, THE CONFESSIONS OF ST. AUGUSTINE, by Herold C. Gardiner, S.J. (POCKET BOOKS — 1951). — ED.*

‘It has been a fair summer. I am unhappy but my work has not suffered from it. I am grown at last.’ (Mizener, p. 164). So, the author wrote his editor in the autumn of 1924. He could as well have written Perkins: ‘I am a man at last.’ Scott Fitzgerald was too honest to settle for the many manly phonies our Culture offers; just as he would not settle for the Culture which makes art and artists ephemeral and ‘fairies.’ His family made manliness difficult. His father was weak; Mrs. Edward Fitzgerald was a ‘smother’ (her first two babies died before Scott was born). Fitzgerald’s whole writing and life was fraught with immature homosexuality. Thus, his narcissism; his boyish good looks long after the insides were gone; his fear of marriage; the squalid ‘gang;’ the ‘fraternal’ or ‘filial’ sex of much of his writing (CRAZY SUNDAY — 1932, and the poem, BELOVED INFIDEL, to Sheilah Graham, are clear examples). Thus, his voyeur, onanist heroes ever-loosing to animal studs; his attractive women, whores — his loves in women tending to be narcissist athletes. Thus, his compulsion to self-injury and -sacrifice (Amory for Alec, Anthony for Gloria and Dot, Gatsby for Daisy, Dick for Nicole), and the drinking and brawling to prove ‘him’self — and to be beaten; thus, the conspiratorial relationship with Fay — ‘not essentially older than he —’. To a great extent, this immature side of Fitzgerald died in the pink-suited Gatsby. That is the only novel — including TYCOON — in which the Fitzgerald-person does not masochistically get himself plastered and beaten up. The influence on writing GATSBY was ‘the masculine one’ of imposing form (LETTERS, p. 480). As Nick, Scott was a man at last.

To some extent, this GATSBY manhood begets womanhood. Engulfing vampire, woman is also Holy Grail, in GATSBY. His Throne of God, Fitzgerald finds God in Daisy: ‘At his lips’ touch she blossomed for him like a flower....’

Though GATSBY is a Twentieth Century PARADISE LOST

—
... he must have felt that he had lost the old warm world.... He must have looked up at an unfamiliar sky through frightening leaves ... and how raw the sunlight was upon the scarcely created grass —

In GATSBY's terrible-wonderful leaves, Fitzgerald also found his soul.

This SIDE OF PARADISE concerns a youthful and college Eden, Adam-Amory and Eve-Rosalind, a romantic-egoism Serpent, a Thou-shalt-not God. GREAT GATSBY expands the fall to the Hotel de Ville World's Fair with its 'more than forty acres of lawn and garden;' Adam-Jay and Eve-Daisy; the international tycoon-Serpent, Wolfshiem; and the baleful ash-monger, T. J. Ecklegod. (TENDER IS THE NIGHT is also an Eden story. In the benign Riviera, psychiatrist-god Diver dispenses invented and highball gaiety, and 'walking in the garden,' etc.) Like MOBY DICK's Ishmael, Nick emerges from the Cultureship's 'black bubble,'² the 'red circle' of Gatsby's pool. But, while Ishmael signs and sails as an observer — and survives as an orphan — Nick acts. (Melville and Fitzgerald were similarly orphaned in life by their masterpieces, and fathered in immortality.) Melville began: 'Call me Ishmael!' Fitzgerald bids us: 'Call me Satan!' Ishmael is a castaway victim; Nick co-authors the Fall. Billy Budd was innocent Christ killed by heartless God; in GATSBY, Son and Father and good and evil find higher resolution. Moby Dick swims on — the Pacific white-mushroom cloud is he! The GATSBY Minotaur is dead at the end of the Culture-labyrinth. So, Carraway-Fitzgerald's emergence is in the heroic dimension of altering fate.

² *The source of this figure is D. H. Lawrence's essay on MOBY DICK, SELECTED LITERARY CRITICISM (Viking Press — 1956, pp. 391-2). — Ed.*

Huckleberry FINN is this same story: of the child of the town-drunk, orphan-son-of-fallen-God; Ishmael, boy-Satan. Missing the river north at Cairo, Huck and Jim drift south to slavery, from which Tom-Clemens cannot redeem them. Including the North-South parameter in the East-West, Fitzgerald has Gatsby not know that his dream of 'the old unknown world ...'

... was already behind him, somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night.

Scott was a spiritual as well as a geographical nomad (as you and I); he married nomadian Zelda ('Zelda' means 'gypsy'). His wandering realized pattern and meaning in THE GREAT GATSBY. In a strange way, in the only great mythical life-giving way, Nick-Scott came East to redeem Jay Gatsby: Heracles to the Caucasus, Dionysius to the Underworld, the Greeks to Troy — and completed the founding-journey home, to light and the West.

Nick is the Serpent who brings Adam the apple, i.e., Daisy's green light at the end of her dock; also, at the book's end: 'Gatsby believed in the green light ...,' symbolizing Jay's time-and-God defying ambition. Nick is also the loving Father, like the Biblical Father (unlike the Protestant False-Father), not killing Adam 'in the day that thou eatest ...,' giving him the world in place of the Eden-womb. Fitzgerald kills the mortal Gatsby, apotheosizing him in the novel. Jay's creator goes with him to greater life. Nick's name is also 'Carraway.'

Nick and Michaelis are parallel in the relation of prophet and also twin of the Antichrist. They are 'responsible' for Gatsby and Wilson, in the eyes of Dr. Eckleburg. A book of doubles, GATSBY has the economy and art of a Beethoven symphony. ('I want to write something new — something extraordinary and beautiful and simple and intricately patterned,' — letter to Perkins, July, 1922 [Mizener, p. 170].)

Gatsby is like an Australian tribe — so neat are its linkages. The intermarrying, intermurdering moieties are: Wolfshiem Clan — Wolfshiem, Gatsby, Carraway; Eckleburg Clan — Eckleburg, Buchanan-Wilson, Michaelis, Daisy-Jordan-Myrtle.

Of course, the GATSBY civilization is not so simple as the Australian Blackfellow. Its Clans occupy different levels; the Eckleburg is the shadow, the ‘shade’ in the greater-world sense, of the Wolfshiem, ultimately including it. Michaelis, being ‘the young Greek,’ seems inspired with generations cutting across, coming up through, families, clans, nations; inspired with civilizations supplanting civilizations. Sitting in the restaurant with Carraway, Gatsby urges Wolfshiem not to leave:

Mr. Wolfshiem raised his hand in a sort of benediction. ‘You’re very polite, but I belong to another generation,’ he announced solemnly.

Gatsby, Nick, Michaelis, and Tom contrast with Eckleburg, ‘dimmed a little by many paintless days, under sun and rain....’ At the close of the novel, the young Greek, Nick, and Tom contrast with the Gatsby Sungod, who — having dimmed Eckleburg — now is dimmed in turn by Buchanan’s disclosures and their witness.

Gatsby’s Party continues Sunday morning, ‘While church bells rang in the villages.’ Fitzgerald is only saying what the most honest theologians have said for a long time, what every preacher is saying today (whether he wants to or not): that Christianity is worn out. Gatsby is a debaucher of Christianity: The Bad Shepherd, to be sure. But the Christianity debauched is that of Blake’s creeping Jesus. The strayed flock is that of the Good-Shepherd-become-the-Bad — the jaded priest in ABSOLUTION — and leads Gatsby astray. Those in the churches are like those at the Party ‘who accepted Gatsby’s hospitality,’ knowing ‘nothing whatever about him.’ In the novel’s final chapter, the fatal linkages,

the Unholy Families, the strayed flocks, are split and dissolved. GATSBY is The Golden Bough myth of this civilization, the Europo-American, of contemporary young gods killing the old, the anti-parts-of-themselves — to be born to new honor, new love, new power.

Our novel then is not simply a 'racial parody' of Christianity. Instead, Christianity is broken down in this way, to be refigured in the context of all religions. Carraway is the criminal Barabbas and Faust and Everyman, saved by Christ-Gatsby's sacrifice. And Carraway is himself Christ redeeming the criminal egoist; for 'Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend.' To their fellow criminals on the cross, Jay and Nick promise: '... today shalt thou be with me in paradise.' Care-away permits the death of the Antichrist; Care-alway, the faithful caretaker, rubs out the boy's dirty word on the step.

In the novel's innermost-uppermost, deepest-farthest reaches is a testament of a New Civilization. T. S. Eliot, recognizing the same post-Christian void as GATSBY's, wherein the 'ashheap' is also the 'waste land,' went back to Europe and Catholicism. Fitzgerald, born a Catholic and writing in Europe, established his book in America, beyond the whole Catholic-Calvinist-Darwinian-Marxian-Freudian-Eliotian-Christianity-against-itself. (Come to think of it, 'T. J. Eckleburg' must also include T. S. Eliot — that is where the 'T' comes from.) The Old Civilization dominated by the United States, as Rome once dominated the Greco-Roman, is not simply damned in GATSBY. It is great; but it is at issue. It is in issue. A new seed is planted in the ashes and words of the Forty-second Psalm:

Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

At the funeral, when Nick has been unable to get a single one of the minions who had received Gatsby's hospitality to

come, out of the rain's desolation (it rains and is dark at the funeral of the Sungod),

splashing after us over the soggy ground ... was the man with owl-eyed glasses whom I had found marveling over Gatsby's books in the library one night three months before. I'd never seen him since then. I don't even know how he knew about the funeral or even his name.

Owl Eyes, Dr. Eckleburg! With Carraway-Fitzgerald, he stumbles to the grave. He had ordered the execution, all the business is his; at the moment of final death, he shares the sorrow, speaking the fallen god's universal benediction. In a summing-up ending that is marvelous, after an incredible five-year journey, Father Fay's mantle had descended on Scott Fitzgerald. Peter to Gatsby's Jesus, Scott provided, as he said of Gatsby,

a satisfactory hint of the unreality of reality, a promise that the rock of the world was founded securely on a fairy's wing.

(How Irish, this Peter!) Old Owl Eyes, god of the Culture-gone-to-dogs, is transformed. He comes through the mud, and he loves the sons. 'He took off his glasses.... "The poor son-of-a-bitch," he said.'

Scott found his truth in GATSBY, and lost it again; and that is what killed him. That Herculean labor, that harrowing spiritual encounter, left him too exhausted, or fulfilled — or more likely too lonely and confused from his public's and his friends' failure to see what he had been through, and accomplished. If Fitzgerald did not carry on to the end, delivering for us a greater soul in TENDER IS THE NIGHT or LAST TYCOON, if instead:

the void profound / Of unessential Night receives him
next / Wide gaping, and with utter loss of being /

Threatens him, plunged in that abortive gulf —

nevertheless, in THE GREAT GATSBY, a soul is found. A consciousness for Twentieth Century man indeed

‘commensurate to his capacity for wonder,’ it tells us ‘one fine morning,’ in truth, the fair shore and the way open.

— Thomas Morrill

PHOENIX

At 6:35 in the city
in the lime green dawn
splitting the metronome of traffic,
I heard a rooster crow.
Oh, triumph for the living:
of root over rock,
seed from the desert,
water into bone,
A ragged cock crow banner for the day.

— by Nancy
Coy

ISSUE PP. 105-107 · SCAN PP. 15-17

A POLLUTED STREAM

Nonassessment of Literature / Art — by the Editor

[W]here is the modern Molière to mock the many — and wrongly touted and popularly read — bad ‘critics’ of the art works of our day? These are the well-paid word-manglers (better compensated than most of the subjects of their confused appraisals) who are neither social scientists nor psychologists, themselves, but who glibly utilize a melange of reported theories. Often, they mumbo-jumbo in terminologies plucked from the advancing sciences, including biophysics, composing alleged analyses and passing out aesthetic ‘ratings.’

A preposterous ‘justification’ for such mishmash relies upon a non sequitur: that, because artists explore new areas of mathematics, chemistry, physics, etc., not only their personalities and moving ideas may be subjected to measurement by psychoanalysis and graphed in a sociological setting, but their music, sculptures, paintings, books....

These bad critics either never have understood, or have forgotten, or have wilfully ignored that the aesthetic values of art — springing from personal transmutations to effectual and effective expression — aren’t determinable through dialectical examination of the ideas or psychological probing of prototypes or socio-historical treatment of events, or physical investigation of objects and scenery. The mere fact that these have moved artists and have been used by them provides no ‘turnabout’ alteration of criteria for rating their achievements. No work of art is produced by scientific procedure; and no forms of art can relevantly be dissected and reduced other than by their effects upon the sensibilities of receptive and perceptive viewers.

The point may be illustrated in ridiculous extreme by suggesting that, because a poem resulted from the

stimulative appearance of a certain flowering tree, its values may accurately be weighed by crushing and dissolving the flowers and sawing down the tree to determine the correspondence of the rings in ratio to the years of the poet's life.

It's a matter of keeping separate and apart the critical task of assessing what a finished work does or does not do, gauged by what has been done in same or similar employments of like media in the past or contemporaneously. Such criticism is exceedingly rare. Almost as rare — though less so, because understandable and appealing to a wider audience than just to students and specialists — are biographical accounts utilizing the works to illuminate social movements and events in consequential relationship with an artist's personality and ideas.

The latter, however, should not comprise inane attempts to upgrade or downgrade works as such, by applying contextually irrelevant considerations involving causative influences and sources. True, an artist may draw from specific experiences laboring on a factory assembly line; but this doesn't mean that his art-product should be judged better or worse by the degree of faithfulness with which it translates some standard of factory technique. And to learn of the sexual inclinations of an artist is humanly interesting (significant, too, so far as these bear upon his ideas or choices of subject matters); yet, the art itself can be rated no worse or no better by references to ethical and psychological conclusions. Sigmund Freud himself stated, in effect, that psychoanalysis must stand mute before aesthetic consummation.

Literary art, of course, is the prime victim of such (non)criticism. And it happens that this Trace provides a 'pure' example from a scientist (an anthropologist) dealing with an author's motivation out of his milieu, frequently quoting from the writings — but nowhere undertaking any

sort of aesthetic evaluation of these writings from the angle of his speciality. In fact, Thomas Morrill confines himself altogether to the personal phenomenon of Scott Fitzgerald in the extended perspectives of this Century's social developments. He doesn't so much as toss in a random opinion in comparative terms, and there's not a word of aesthetic textual criticism in the entire article.

What may prove to be the reaction of Gil Orlovitz, our editorial advisor, to the Morrill piece, this Editor cannot guess — since it is an opposite number to the art appraisals he rightly supports. But a series of Orlovitz letters sparked this editorial. He deplores the mixing and misemploying of elements from social or physical sciences in the so-called criticism commonly met in reviews and studies. He wrote: 'You cannot assess art psychoanalytically or sociologically or in terms of biophysics. If artists had a mind to waste their time, the more ingenious of them could demonstrate the aesthetic of mathematics, physics ... psychiatry....'

A penetrative assumption. And borne out by one of the major Morrill deductions about Fitzgerald: that Fitzgerald had done this very thing. As part of his case, Morrill depicts Fitzgerald ending, in the later years of a short life, unable to produce his visioned culminating work, because he had wasted his creative force and vitality in self-conscious examination and ethico-aesthetic exercises outside the boundaries of his own art.

In his letters, Orlovitz carries his thesis further: 'Literary criticism is not LAW. These people, envious of literature's flow, have tried to apply laws and mensuration; yet there is no law of the aesthetic, nor measurement. Shakespeare continues to be staged in practically every society, including that of the Soviets — though, from the beginning, his work has been termed prolix, undisciplined, coarse, obscure, uneconomical, childish, easy to imitate (Bernard Shaw levelled the [last] two charges), jingoist, anti-Semitic, boring,

etc.'

Concerning reversed applications of words properly to be used only in identifying what goes on within the artist, Orlovitz says: 'The use of words "discipline," "economy," "control," etc. is totally foreign to the proper understanding assessment of art. A mere definition of any of these words suffices to blow up the so-called concepts. It is not true — for example — that the use of two words where only one is "necessary" is an instance of undiscipline. Merely by the definition of "necessary," the critic will come a cropper.'

ISSUE PP. 117-120 · SCAN PP. 27-30

EDITORS (AND OTHERS) WRITE

ENGLISH POETICS — SINCE 1730's — DOWNGRADED

by Ritchie Darling

Dear Editors: I remember saying once, in Academia, that it was English prose, since Defoe anyway — and drama — that deserved respect, rather than English poetry. This statement is very unfashionable; but I think for the most part true. English is a prose tongue which suits the drama, especially blank verse, very well.... From that day forth, I was labeled — not as a nut — as an incompetent. No one would bother to examine my statement or even to solicit an explanation. The statement simply cut across what my confreres had been taught, and it was wrong (that's the box they would have checked on a multiple-choice test).

I remember saying, six or seven years ago, when just beginning to get acquainted with the little-magazine world, how much the same all the magazines seemed. I don't think I explained what I meant. Certainly, it's demonstrable that there are different types of little magazines, different categories. But — in re the more-or-less experimental category (the modern) — certain conventions were observable over and over again, used by different writers in different magazines. These ranged beyond conventions of techniques and subject matter to what I then considered to be a dangerous manifestation of convention in the way these writers and editors looked at the world. Conventionally modern, conventionally experimental. TRACE, I have said — but maybe I never spelled it out before — prints, in the creative section, prose fiction which I consider on the whole to be unconventionally modern and conventionally experimental. If a poet, prose-writer, or editor is really a

cultist or very conventional beneath his conventional modernity and experimentalism, he will think nothing but orthodoxy: what he thinks to be good in his conventionally-modern and -experimental mind. He can rarely grow, though sometimes he is able to change (often, with the fashion). And I am not speaking through the top of my hat — I have run into it hundreds of times.

This type of poet, prose-writer, or editor usually is not so interested in art as he is in ego. We have this great problem of 'self-expression' confused as art; and self-expressors confused as artists. Of course, art is a form of self-expression; but the reverse is not necessarily so.... Cultism and convention are not limited to the commercial, the traditional magazines; they are rampant in the little-mag avant garde today. Only the very best, or the luckiest, little mags publish original work.

And, along the same line, look at the cultism — even though there seems to be a mixture of cults — evidenced (albeit objectively) in Franklyn's article on the British Columbia writers' conference (TRACE No. 51). That article was not only painful, it was funny. I mean — here were all these people (students, I guess, at the round-table discussions) sitting around, trying to learn from the horse's mouth how to write, how to understand, how to appreciate poetry. Much better — they should buy the books authored by the people involved at the conference, and read them. And — for God's sake! — never meet the poets. If a poet is any good and the reader is any good, they meet in the pages of the book.

The one positive aspect of that sort of conference is the readings. This is a legitimate — though perhaps organized for the wrong, celebrity-reasons — attempt to revive the aural tradition. There is sometimes much more in a poem than can be indicated by typography, even at its most artistic. (Of course, there is a counterargument here: that through the

use of a variety of letter-sizes, etc., one can convey everything the voice can convey. I believe this to be true; but I think we can benefit from readings as well as from expressive printing.) And readings do provide the poet with an income-source. I wish they would revive prose readings. But, again, to be sure, prose isn't important to the conventional people who think that verse-form makes a poem.

SEEKING 'CIVIL RIGHTS' POETRY

Dear Editors: Allen Planz and I are editing an anthology of poems on the Civil Rights Issue, to be called: CRISIS. Mss. should go to: A. Planz, 105 E. 2nd St. (Apt. G), New York, N.Y. — 10009. We'll wait until we have sufficient material before setting a deadline.

This is an individual effort (not from Seven Poets Press, which remains inactive).... Payment in Confederate Money.

— Carl Larsen

'NOW ... THAT I'M TIPTOEING THROUGH THE GRAVEYARD'

by G. R. Spiller-Speeden

Dear Editors:

The name of the new magazine is OFF/SET Monthly (the writer was one of the IN/SERT editors — Editor). Kinds of material wanted: most kinds, but Note/Scripts more than the largeness [round] of manuscripts. Also correspondence, cartoons, ideas, poems, [etc.] Also reviews, when I can suffer them. Also advertising. An irregular catchall of no special proportions — sort of a Toonerville-Trolley sort of thing — probably will offend the more spirited and be transparent over the indifferent segments.

Anyhow, I'm going to enjoy myself with this one, without any of the worries and panting and hoping, etc. Martyrdom

already is too much on me. Now that I'm tiptoeing through the graveyard, I enter no 'movement' too.

I suppose the average little-small editor does at times create for himself the personal illusion that his efforts join the token-lot of professional sufferers. Interesting attitude-tendencies become strangely apparent when he receives all manner of mss., but no manner of cash-subscribed contributions. ... So said, I've mellowed; and I have the satisfaction now of valuing what I know. Ideally, the facts harden, and I mellow. But, whatever I try to be and let be what I am, I know that I am not immune to the temptations of success — especially, and more so, to the temptations of the stranger school of 'pre-success.' In the end, I'm a realist — as anybody has to be.

— G. R. Speeden-Spiller

KINETIC POETRY EXHIBIT IN CAMBRIDGE

by Mike Weaver

Dear Editors: I've recently organized the International Kinetic Poetry Fund; and the first international exhibition will take place in Cambridge in November. The fund exists as a fund of ideas as well as money; and one of the ideas is to provide poets

with an exhibition for sale of their works. The achievements of the light-mobilists in France, Italy, and England have been due to group-work or industrial backing. We also seek aid in industry for photographic enlargement, motorized poems, making poems on glass, etc. The poetry of the future can't just be contained in the Book, but must take place in free space/time.

We seek to combine two new traditions: On the one hand, that of the graphic poets whose virtual movement must lie on a surface in space; on the other hand, the light-and-sculpture mobilists whose concern for actual movement takes us into the dimension of time in an

irrevocable way.

Organizing members are: myself, Reg Gadney (light-mobilist), Stephen Bann (art-cubic), Phil Steadman (typo-designer and editor of IMAGE). Honorary members are: Dom Sylvestre Houedard, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Frank Malina, Frank Poffer, and others. We would be glad to receive mobile poems (motorized or not) from interested readers of TRACE. Submit to the undersigned at: 30 Bermuda Terrace, Cambridge, England.

REVIVAL IN SAN FRANCISCO?

Dear Editors: Things really look up here, these days, and people are again saying there is a renaissance: a new poetry-reading series at the Blue Unicorn; a coffee house; at the Hardcastle; at the Anarch; at the Precarious Vision. Also, several new magazines out or coming out: DUST; AQUARIUS; SYNAPSE; OPEN SPACE; NORTH BEACH VOICE. Although some of the magazines were in planning stages prior to the 1963 Unicorn reading series, with Ginsberg and Ferlinghetti, there is really a new sense of being part of a poetry scene ... a new, exciting scene.

— Norman Moser

ASKS SAMPLES FOR NEW MAG SHOW

Dear Editors: I'm planning another show of little mags ... and would like to put forth a more representative and current collection than I can manage from my personal collection, purchases, and subscriptions. Those interested editors who wish to contribute copies of their magazines for display may address them to me, care of: English Dept., Milton College, Milton, Wis. — 53563.

— James Hiner

AUTHOR RETORTS TO 'JUDGMENT'

Dear Editors: Page five of the final COASTLINES carried an announcement to the effect that a long poem of mine was omitted because published in LIMBO magazine, earlier. Delays in COASTLINES publication and uncertainties at LIMBO caused the snafu. But the real issue is not timing — rather, the question whether any literary mag has the right to tie up or limit the publication of work; especially where one appears in Canada (LIMBO is) and the other in the U.S.... and readerships do not overlap by more than two dozen copies. It is time this question was aired and settled. I have never given any magazine publication rights beyond the borders of the country where published. That should be enough to satisfy the requirements — if not the petty pride — of any little-magazine publisher and/or editor.

— Lawrence Lipton

ISSUE PP. 121-128 · SCAN PP. 31-38

THE CLIFF HANGER

by Jack Wardell

Every DECADE HAS ITS PICTURESQUE and wacky Bohemian whose need for revolt against conformity makes him pursue certain eccentric behavior patterns; but, once in a blue moon, there comes along a bobby-dazzler like Paul Twitchell, the avant-garde novelist, who can lay the beatnik in the shade and make any huffer think the Angry Young Men, the Outsiders, and the Existentialists are a mob of button-busters or low comedians.

From the womb of this kooky civilization has sprung the most independent homo ecco of the times. He is known as the Cliff Hanger, a nonconformist, individualist, avant-gardist, rebel and innovator. But none of these labels fit Twitchell so well as the rarely-heard one, which he has given himself: The Cliff Hanger — or what might be called the 'label of the illogic.'

You can say that Paul Twitchell is an authentic nondescript individualist who absolutely refuses to reform or conform to any convention or orthodox patterns the American mass society has tried to impress upon him. He has as much randomness as James Joyce; and he suffers as many consequences of his eccentricity, because of his conviction that this civilization is hardly more than a conspiracy against mankind. He assumes that modern life is the silent compact of comfortable, smug Squares who keep up pretences; and that these pretences will abide as long as there are politicians who will keep nations from dropping atom-bombs on one another.

As the original Cliff Hanger of this age, Twitchell has turned his back on a mass-culture he looks upon as founded in abracadabra — as ill at home in it as an hermaphrodite at a D.A.R. convention. Like the Angry Young Men, he knows what has irritated him. He is outside the Outsider, and at

the opposite pole from the Existentialist who avers man has no hope in life; he has found a peace which isn't in this See-Three Universe with its socialized insurance and bilgewater literature.

Twitchell is not interested in such public bangles; nor is he willing to give himself the airs of a hero by proclaiming his great love of children, raising money for hospitals, or sponsoring any of the worthy causes that involve the enthusiasms of middle-class society. In other words, he isn't even a church member pledged to schemes to raise money for overseas orphans and for other noble projects the clergy dangle before congregations as hypothetical claims for getting into heaven.

Nothing in this collective culture is important enough to make him climb a wall — particularly not in religion. This zany has earned renown with the Squares from Squaresville as the vanguard of a new philosophy he calls 'Eckankar,' which has gained wide following in intellectual and college circles of Western Europe since a number of his works were published in European magazines.

He is a lonely individual, more cracked than a robber crow at a pink tea party, when the issue is orthodox worship of God. Also, he is a standout detester of the middle-class soap opera comprising Billy Graham, the Big Ten and the Beatles, Apple Pie, the present administration, and newspaper columnists — mainly because this soap opera is representative of a civilization which encroaches upon his freedom. Thoreau's dislike of social life was small potatoes compared with Twitchell's hauteur. He is more like the Yeti who lives in the mountain fastnesses of the Himalayas.

This lonely oddball seeks his solace in meditation and out-of-body experiences, or what might be called 'bi-location.' His [master] is Kabir, the Sixth Century Hindu poet-weaver, who taught what is termed Shabda Marg, the path of Shabda Yoga. Other saints in his book are: the Sufi

mystics; Jalal al-din Rumi; Shamus i-tabiz; Shams-ed-din Muhammad Hafi; Ramanuja — to name a few.

Eckankar, formed out of his own experiences, is based upon Shabda Yoga, an out-of-the-world form of Yoga. It is the Indian word for sound, the great sound-current, often called the Audible Life current, known in Anglo-Saxon vernacular as the cosmic river of God flowing out of His throne. St. John speaks of it as the Word.

Generally, the Cliff Hanger is an unusually quiet person; for, if he works, he detests being among the masses. Yet, he will never speak of his interior life, because none would understand his explanation of bi-location experiences. He knows somebody would call the paddy wagon with the white-jacket boys. His mild madcap behavior surprises everyone; it is such a sharp contrast with Jack Kerouac's Beatnik seeking solace in a noisy search through Zen Buddhism.

Paul Twitchell is in total revolt against the intellectual standards developed by our modern educational methods. He is an incorrigible against slick, smooth, gelatin-type literature, animalistic jazz, entertainers, and the living-aids which predominate our supermarket-department-store-culture. Among his other dislikes are career women and the overspecialization of professional vocations.

Nothing in this Century makes sense to Twitchell; he was born out of his time — and that's why he's not interested in the ordinary man's grabbing for money. He should have been a colleague of Cyrano de Bergerac, the romantic philosopher-swordsman; he would have been at home in the Seventeenth Century. Their attitudes are akin, judging by the no-thanks speech Cyrano gives in Rostand's play titled by his name.

Twitchell, the Cliff Hanger, follows in practice and theory that part of Cyrano which defied convention and gave a

no-thanks to the self-posed idea of cringing before grandees or patrons, of groveling at the feet of fame. In reality, his speech says: 'If you expect me to be a pedestrian fellow who will live to a hundred merely to collect insurance, no-thank you, sir. If you think I'm going home every night to a sweet little woman who expects me to act out her vision of a dutiful fellow she thought I was when we married, no-thanks, madame. If you expect me to quit spending the thousand dollars I do not have, and to exchange my wild dreams and desires for a tame, safe existence in an assembly line, no-thanks!'

The nomenclature identifying Twitchell as a Cliff Hanger came into being from the image of the lonely rebel hanging on the edge of a cliff while the world below swarms with the masses. In a sense, he's comparable to the aging Daniel Boone who awoke one morning to find a new neighbor, some thirty-five miles away, and — thinking the land overcrowded — moved to the Missouri frontier where none but Indians and wild animals dwelt within a hundred-mile radius.

Twitchell is neither frustrated nor neurotic, like the Outsider; he knows where he is going, why he is going there, and how he is going to get there. Where man generally is preoccupied with sex, crime, and disease, the Cliff Hanger is absorbed with out-of-this-world experiences and getting away from civilization.

Order and form, as it is known in this mass culture, cannot affect him, for he knows it is 'skag' (a word that — as part of his vocabulary — means useless). This attitude directly opposes the theory of the conformist, the mass thinker/philosopher asserting that thought is order. And Twitchell laughs at this culture, declaring that not even its art can affect him — art being thought, and thought only being the appearance of order to those weak enough to be convinced by show. Hence — the Cliff Hanger, the advocate of the 'Philosophy of the Illogic.'

His view of contemporary America is like that of John Stuart Mill toward England, over a century ago, saying: 'The greatness of England is all collective. Individually small, we only appear capable of anything great by our habit of combining.' Where Americans are inclined to rejoice over the superiority of teamwork, Twitchell maintains that history is made by the impact of great personalities — heroes, if you want to call them that. He is more apt to think of Ramakrishna, the Hindu prophet, in terms of his favourite maxim: 'All creation is the sport of my mad mother, Kali.' Kali is the destructive aspect of nature; and the Cliff Hanger, being aware that nothing in this world is permanent, finds little need to be interested in honors, fame, or materialist goals.

His faith is pinned on heroes, whether they be villains, according to Christian propaganda, or the heroes of Islamic sacred literature. He asserts that a bland society is never creative — that society needs eccentricity. Meanwhile, the national deification of the group causes us systematically to lop off the eccentrics, the originals — the proud, imaginative, and lonely persons from whom new ideas come. A free system cannot get along without its Cliff Hangers; they vividly exhibit the power of free men. Put in another way, Twitchell may be placed among those who have broken with society because society has come to regard superior men as dangerous. He himself is an incarnation of man's ideals — from the wisdoms of Socrates, from the divine imaginations of Blake, the creativities of Shakespeare, the potency of Hercules, the compassion of Buddha. Above all, his prototype is the saintly hero, Kabir.

Yet, the Cliff Hanger is deemed a super cough drop. He is a marked man in this chained society, unable to affirm his human freedom against the supposed inevitabilities of history. He knows the fate of Prometheus, who defied the gods, to assert the independence and autonomy of Man; and

to deny determinism (symbolically, by restoring the use of fire to mankind after Zeus had deprived them): chained to a rock, for the eagle to pluck out his liver. All brave men, the Cliff Hanger is saying, earn the right to shape their own destinies.

The appearance of the Cliff Hanger presages a crisis in whatever civilization he emerges. He comes, not with the weapons of war, but with the spirit of change — change through spiritual order. The Cliff Hanger is more than a successor to the Lost Generation of the Twenties and the Marxist avant garde of the Thirties; though similar to these predecessors in representing rebellion, his rebellion is of an altogether different kind.

As present-day society indulges in an unheard-of superabundance, the Cliff Hanger pushes self-alienation to unheard-of extremes. Since such extremity is inconceivable outside the context of the affluent society he furiously rejects, it may be said that Twitchell does not rebel against society. He rejects it, breaks with its economics and ideology, with what he calls a social lie and values he despises — especially the nationalistic values of wars, hot or cold, inherent in a commercial success-culture he calls the rat race of moneytheism. Though he cannot be regarded as affiliated with pacifistic or anti-capitalistic movements of the nuclear age, this does not blot out his significance as a social symptom.

Nor is Twitchell to the left; he is altogether apolitical, a visible manifestation of social displacement. All that society displaces spiritually, metaphysically is distinguishable in him. He has driven himself out of society in the literal sense — to live in voluntary alienation, like a rejected spiritual complex. He has not yet had time to produce major works; but his existence bodes more than his creation.

Twitchell's relationship to society is comparable to the relationship of a saint to this world. Meanwhile, in a

vocabulary unintelligible to the uninitiated, this Cliff Hanger calls himself a Jinglebrains — meaning something like a madcap with a brilliant knowingness which separates him from contemporary intellectual deceits. He sees through them; therefore, rejects them. His anti-type, his specific enemy, is the Square, the solid citizen. In truth, each and every American, excepting a few other Cliff Hangers, is his opposite number — all the non-Cliff Hangers living within the system. He also calls himself a ‘cat,’ because the promiscuous, unattached way of life of these prowlers is the nearest to that of the Cliff Hanger.

Most Cliff Hangers have trouble in this civilized milieu. Coleridge was a drug addict; Mozart had delusions of persecution; Swift went mad and fought against marriage, swearing he would not expose a child of his own to this worldly jungle; Baudelaire took narcotics, dyed his hair green, and wrote erotic poems to a Negro mistress. They wanted to divert their dreams to things beyond this world — unable to limit themselves to roles of big cuffers of their times. But St. Anthony of Padua was a Cliff Hanger who knew bi-location; history has left evidences, several and authentic, that he was one who could be in two places simultaneously.

Because Twitchell detests the flapdoodle of modernity, has flatly [\[refused\]](#) the great unwashed who are up to their craw with McCall’s sameness (credit cards, insurance plans, coffin boxes, and ranch-type homes), he puts himself (Jinglebrains) in out-of-the-war worlds where few ever travel. He would rather be in Hunza where the [\[people\]](#) are still in their sixties; but he mostly lives in that Far Country which Rudyard Kipling wrote of in his story of that title — or the Wonder Country Tom Lea described in his novel.

Gandhi’s experience with an insurance salesman might well be that of the Cliff Hanger. When the agent told Gandhi that insurance would take care of his family after his death,

he got this reply: 'If they are not sufficient to take care of themselves after my death, it's apparent that I've failed to give them the proper training for the material world.'

In the same sense, this is the attitude the Cliff Hanger adopts in a security-minded society which keeps telling him that to be safe is the first principle: to be safe for old age; safe for health; safe for the afterlife; safe for every concern of being.

Too often he suffers from deprivations of food, sex, and other life-necessities; but he endures these with an attitude comparable to that of the ancient Greek Stoics. Seldom does he have a cupboard affair, but occasionally he takes with a downy bit and has a jig-a-jig. There have been times when the Cliff Hanger has taken unto himself a Dutch Clock (wife); but he is too much of the Bohemian wanderer to settle in the pots. Though he has succumbed to this, his aberrance may not appear to others what it really is; for he never loses control over anything in this world — he remains the lonely dissenter speaking his mind when asked.

He is ordinarily pounced upon, brain-washed, hog-tied and thrown back into a rigid, conformed society which treats him like a low, impecunious cousin who has committed the ultimate sin. He is ignored or given an overdose of sympathy — with murderous effects sharper than a razor-edge and more agonizing than arsenic. That is, if he isn't imprisoned in some mental institution (e.g.: Ezra Pound, the poet, without trial).

Needless to say, he's more likely found in remote places, in high mountains, or along lonely seashores where wind and tide are high. He is the original lone wolf; and if any Jill takes up with him, she will be weaned from every orthodox activity. In time, she will find that her natural longing to mother all species will be abrogated by her connection with this bitter, unhappy specimen.

The style of life in this revolt against our mass cult is apparently anti: the skirts of the day; the pill and slice-up boys; the sea-lawyers; political enslavement; racial-issue propaganda; the matter of juice-bugs; the palm and credit boys; the money changers; control by the craw-thumpers (preachers) or the cushion-smitters (priests) or the brain-axes. The social answers of the rebel Cliff Hanger are hardly ever obvious to those living in the masses, for, they spell out 'Paul Twitchell,' the strange, gnostic fire-eater.

He actually is the descendant of an illustrious crew of Cliff Hangers who changed men's thinking in the centuries before our artificial, tinseled era. He admires those rebels who upset and dissolved the morals, dogma, and logic of their days. E.g.: Arthur Rimbaud, the poet; William Blake, poet-artist; Guru Nanak, founder of the Sikh religion; Paul Gauguin, the artist; T. E. Lawrence (of Arabia); Thomas Paine; Shelley; Keats; Yeats; Goethe; Kierkegaard; Rilke; Van Gogh; St. John of the Cross; Ibn Arabi, philosopher — and others in the magnificent legion of the Cliff Hanger — all who made their way to the first rung of the heavenly ladder and looked down upon the struggling masses with sympathy.

An indefatigable 'Seeker,' Twitchell may be found studying the life of George Fox, in the public library where he pores over the most diverse texts. He reads the Sar Bachan, the sacred scriptures of the Shabda Marg, more than any preacher his Bible. Besides being a follower of Kabir, the Indian poet, he's a late disciple of Jalal-uddin Rumi, the Persian.

Though an habitue of libraries, he's as likely to be found walking in the rain alone on the beach, solemnly listening to the boom of the surf. And he loves storms, whether at sea or in the mountains.

Yet, regardless what might be the essence of a picturesque sainthood of Paul Twitchell, there is a devil lurking in him; he would destroy his nearest kin, if that

would provide answers to life. There is nothing funky about him. Neither is he a penny-feister; for he never makes slight statements except in the company of the pompous. He is a master of Socratic irony and a skilful satirist who can cause the pretentious to squirm under his tongue. He persists in remaining himself, as he sees civilization heading toward destruction. And the bourgeois is his enemy, not simply because he's a unit in the society of the damned — still more, to be a disturbing influence to the middle class as performing no useful service that's understandable to this cultural stratum. Such an attitude itself is, for Twitchell, release from social obligations.

Living careless of the law and landlords, maintaining this posture of gay mockery, he of course does not save for the rainy day, as does the mass-cult man. Variedly gifted, and with an I.Q. pointing 185 on the Stanford-Binet scale, he can do a dozen different things to earn money honestly.

Though the Existentialist says all men are failures, Twitchell, as the Cliff Hanger, refutes this. His references are St. Augustine, St. Francis, Jalal al-din Rumi, Lao-Tzu, Meister Eckhart, St. Teresa; Plotinus, and a few hundred others who never lived by [conventional] standards — yet, were successful in reaching their 'other' goals.

The lonely hero of today, Paul Twitchell may not be the favorite of the worshipped gods; but he truly maintains that those who are willing to make the sacrifice and put forth the effort and drive for communion with the Absolute, need not be failures.

Editor's note: Paul Twitchell, who has appeared in Britain, U.S.A. and elsewhere abroad under more than twelve different pseudonyms, is concentrating on a major opus, a philosophical work centred upon 'The Cliff Hanger.' He recently rejected a large offer from an American film company for SHADOWS OF DESTINY, originally published in England. He said: 'I do not wish to sell ... to Hollywood. I'm not interested in their money. I might consider film sale if a studio in Italy, Britain, or France makes an

offer — even if the offer is lower.’ One novel, THE FIFTH WHEEL, was filmed in London last winter. Twitchell’s first book was poetry, COINS OF GOLD [1939] — approvingly reviewed in a score of leading periodicals such as THE BOOKMAN, YALE REVIEW, and NATION. Perhaps most prolific of living authors, his scope includes virtually every genre. [He also writes a weekly syndicated newspaper column!] He presently hides out in San Francisco. — ED.

ISSUE P. 128 · SCAN P. 38

REPORT ON 'READER REPORT'

Though the forty-nine readers who returned the preference form in TRACE No. 51 comprised but 2 & 6/10% of the subscribers to that issue, this exceeds the average response to such surveys where queries are not separately mailed. And, many more readers wrote in general approval, without specifying which types of contents they liked better. Perhaps of greater significance: nearly 100% of No. 52's expirations were met with renewals (first time in over twelve years).

An unchanging vote-pattern emerged after a couple of dozen responses. Three surprises: a high score for poetry; a low one for fiction; and a fair median, for EW (letters). Graphics gained higher place than had been anticipated; and directories did not tremendously outstrip other categories. Neither actually had been regarded as competitive: the former, because the magazine's focus is on literature with minor appeal to artists; the latter, because of its special informative value.

Point-scores in descending order: 262, articles; 230, poetry; 224, TP (editorials); 220, EW (letters); 206, reviews; 166, fiction. Directories drew 318 (18% of total); graphics, 145 (8%). The discrepancy in total points (1,172, while 'possible' was 1,764) resulted from a few tied placements. No. 1 choices were well distributed; not even directories neared a majority, and a sprinkling went to graphics despite the low weighted percentage for art.

ISSUE PP. 129-144 · SCAN PP. 39-54

The issue's creative section that follows — this story and the poems after it — is printed on badly degraded stock. The text below is transcribed as faithfully as the original allows; a few genuinely illegible words are marked in [brackets]. — ED.

A STORY

NAKED IN HIS TIME

by Charles Tekeyan

Just before dawn. At the moment darkness could last forever. The time came for Cara to go to the hospital. Only a block away. A short distance from the oblivion of himself.

While she struggled into her robe, Conrad Galre dressed quickly. In a rush to be naked in his time. He lifted her with ease and carried her out of the apartment. The self-service elevator was waiting for them. He appreciated this although it made him uneasy. He himself was an elevator operator elsewhere, at present. But look at this. Service without bad breath, convenience without unwanted glances. How indispensable the being of himself could be! Even in his part-time work he was not the master of the royal trumpets.

If a cab had been passing, he would have signaled and taken it. They might have saved a couple of minutes that way. Going down the street was the efficient delivery of the image of his unlost elegance in an awkward but nascent shape. There was peace in a forest, and there only under rocks. Rocks? Under every one the turmoil, loud and wild, was a satire on all time! On all the upstart worms of the earth!

Cara was heavier than he'd expected — as heavy as a pregnant pig. Of course she was not a pig and nothing could be done about her condition but to let her go on ahead and put the finishing touches on it. They did not want to have a child, being theatre people satisfied with pretending to be parents whenever the roles were given them. A child was going to be an awful burden, worse than the one it was already, bringing their careers to an absolute, irrevocable halt. And perhaps, one more child born into the world would be the straw that broke the [\[back of\]](#) eternity.

Of this he was certain: this temporary creature, Conrad Galre by name, resented so much permanence around him,

especially since he couldn't put some of it in his pocket. Exhausted, he stopped walking. But, standing was even more unbearable. He had to keep moving to [find] some sort of end to their misery. Wasn't that what everyone did all the time? — and when some were forced to stop, they found the sweets not to their taste every time?

The hospital! Had he merely imagined it? How could he have? Some things couldn't be imagined — only liquid, only the flow of clear and cold freedoms from mysterious moments. Several times during the past seven months, he and Cara had been in the place, visiting the doctor who would make the delivery. And from their windows at home, they had been able to see it fully: a rather small building, to be sure, but an impressive edifice nevertheless. Inside, it had presented a picture of an inward concern for life and death that couldn't be seen in most other places. Maybe he was looking right at the hospital now and refused to accept the sight of it. (That old incongruous stubbornness.) He squinted with all his might. By all means he did not intend to be a monumental idiot. If the place could be seen at all, nothing would keep him from spotting it and staggering in without further delay. To [him it was] merely swirls of gray darkness encircling the desperations and fears that scurried around him. He shivered. His cold feet hardly felt the pavement. Sweat from his face dripped down to the center of Cara's robe and made spots. Then there were other spots, in the center of a stream of recollections, not really memories, but picturesque distortions of things from a false sleep which still quite possibly held him in its grip, though he was wide-eyed.

'Help!' he screamed; and he didn't know why. The sound of glass shattering and the pieces falling all around him. Broken windows were a part of nature. But was it natural for man to be equally delicate without being equally transparent? He listened to an echo and was only sure that it

wasn't made by the voice of God. And then he wept. The imminent futility that would have no parallel. Every day, the people he'd seen, the things — nothing more than just spots.

At last, he became defiant. Cara was going to have help no matter what he had to do to get it for her! He'd had enough! What was the meaning of this? — pushing a man around all the time, especially from inside of him?

He hurried. His feeble steps. The wolves on the streets were after him, to sniff his soul. And the winds. Sweeping over mystic visions, gyrating in obedience to mediocrity. And the foghorn nearby — now it drew him. But he did not want to go toward the river. It was dangerous. It brought out the worst in everyone, except maybe those under the age of one. Oh, if only someone, something could stop him from going to the river, from being seduced by its shallow smile! That foghorn — the winds coiled around him, pulling him closer and closer....

And Cara's fists flailed against his head. But he plodded along. He should have pitied her — and of course he did — but he was revolted too because she was screaming like a pig in pain. For a moment he wondered whether what she'd give birth to might be piglets instead of.... But a man delirious with exhaustion and anxiety and a strange lapse of sentiment — could you blame him for getting an idea like that? This was no way to come to a Barmecide feast, he had to admit. Surprising that he didn't agree at once with what the foghorn was telling him to do. The river. Less than a block away probably. And a strong tide disassociating the sense of self-preservation from a runaway disenchantment.

The stench was familiar. Years before, he had known someone here: her name had been Nan Lazar. Remembering it made him shudder. She had so often [\[vexed\]](#) him. At times he had been apprehensive of the stench which had been like discordant background music to their dramatic encounters of passion. He had considered it a part of....

Never mind. Now the stench was wonderful, because it was a reminder of happier days, days when he was really young and certain that nothing could keep him from being a great actor. Only twenty, then. But that was almost twenty years ago, and the dozen small parts had shown that he was a good actor. Between parts, a variety of jobs, and now the one inside the elevator to keep from starving.

At twenty, he had been happier than.... Well, if he hadn't been exactly happy, it was only because there were too many things he had done and had been so anxious to do, on and off the stage. Periods of smug contentment, perhaps. And Nan Lazar had shared it with him — but not at the end. The clash of now and now and now and always, liquid with weightless solids.

It was true that when Nan told him she was expecting, he became panicky; but he did not run away. Later, after the baby was born, she told him she would kill herself if he did not marry her. They were walking along the river, pushing the carriage, admiring the easy air of a perfect spring day. The splash of small waves against the side of the clean-looking old dock. Evoking warm memories of all the sailors that had perished in the sea since the start of time.

But there was an ominous foam which seemed to follow them inside the shoreline. When they paused for a moment to argue again, he thought he saw bubbles of blood rising to the surface, staining the bellies of high-jumping fish. He told her finally that he could not marry her because he had no intention of wasting his time and energy with the petty duties that were heaped on a man when he became a husband and father. Besides, he was broke, he told her. The value of each scrap of life, precious even when worthless, and always never known till too late. All of his strength, even in the form of semen, had to go to advancing his standing in the theatre, from now on. To the bloom of his blossoming career, as the saying went.

She knocked him down and started kicking his ribs. 'I'm going to throw myself into the river this instant if you don't promise to marry me this week!'

Galre was frightened, but angry too. He got up and went so far as to tell her he'd never marry a monster like her. Violently, furiously, he picked up a dirty piece of pipe lying by the embankment. She was strong, he knew. As she came over to club him with the pipe, the baby in the carriage began to cry. The beginning. Of mayhem. Nan dropped the pipe and rushed to the carriage. A ghastly sneer on her face. Yes, yes, the most evil mother since Medea! And the most tragically comic. Swiftly, deliberately, she pushed it into the river — she pushed the carriage, oh my God, the carriage! By the time he ran to see what he could do, there was nothing to do, to see, to save. The surface of the water was almost as smooth as.... He felt his body scattering into pieces along the shore.

If he had known how to swim, he might have dived into the water to try to bring up the little body. A portrait of the infant as a martyr. But he was inadequate to the moment again. His own body became unbelievable. In the depths of cowardice. Some sort of opiate shot through him somehow whenever it was necessary to counteract the pathos. But, that day, his numbness was enough to fortify him. And then — his soul taking flight, he followed promptly.

He'd never seen Nan again. She had been as soft as a quilt, and just as comforting when the phantom of success got too cold. And yet, the worst days of his life had been caused by her, by her infernal fertility. The storm at the end — he had almost forgotten the destruction it had [wrought], and he had never mentioned it to Cara. Cara was always meek and sensitive. Being an actress, she found their numerous lacks natural, caused not by selfishness, but by the sacrifices they had to make for their art — a most satisfying predicament. Married for twelve years, the same,

using the same acting style, working just as successfully or unsuccessfully in the commercial theatre: they were made for each other — though for what consequence, Galre did not know. Certainly not for this, this piteous disruption.

He'd been sitting pretty, having found a wife who did not demand a home life, who did not get vicious because he refused to surrender to domesticity and the drudgery that went with it. As free as a bachelor, as relaxed as a married man: that had been the beauty of this one achievement of his existence. He'd even been free of middle-class tensions. But of course there were certain contemporary assaults on the spirit which put more than a strain on the fibres of his own essence.

Poor Cara. She hadn't meant this to happen — an act of the workaday world, disfiguring her body and their future. All his own fault, actually, taking chances for a year or so, not buying contraceptives and trying to save a little money. Now he was paying a price for foolish thrift. No freedom, not even a last-ditch heroism. Just a fumbling, whining grope in the maze, with nothing ahead but the river. And the suspicion that he had actually sought the punishment he had half-believed he deserved ever since that last day with Nan.

Peace: that was all he wanted now. Like every man when the air turns into poisonous vapors, threatening every breath of hope. But drowning: that was only for stubborn captains of ships. And suicide: that was a mundane matter which, even without women naturally, would still be a commonplace tragedy, and therefore not a tragedy at all — merely the usual duplication of ordinary behavior. This was worse for an actor than anything in life or death.

Both of them had been unemployed for long spells, and their type of acting had gone out of fashion. They were known as hams, though at least they had an elegance that made the 'method' people envious at times. To die in the

grand manner; perhaps that would be their one theatrical achievement. Without an audience, it would be pointless, the worst kind of death ... turning into realism which was as poetic as a cab driver's orgasm on his day off.

His arms had lost all feeling now; and Cara was unconscious. What a contrast to the bubbling anxieties within him! Suddenly, Cara opened her eyes and shrieked. He stumbled back, falling. She continued shrieking until she landed on top of him and inadvertently pinned him to the pavement. No strength to push her off. Breathing grew impossible because she was mainly sprawled over his chest. Waiting to die, Galre watched the darkness disappear. Time light and meaningless focus, enlightening and stupefying simultaneously. The edge of the river was only a few yards away. He groaned, and so did the same. He begged her to move, to make an effort to crawl....

She blinked and looked at him like a dumb animal fallen into soft concrete. She was more helpless than ever. Yet, maybe not thankless that he was suffering too.

The foghorn stopped. Now was their chance to escape. While time looked another way, a man could run and live another day in his own time. But a crowbar would be required to budge Cara's bloated body. His pride was terribly hurt; she was crushing him. Only fragments of his vanity were keeping him alive. What a disgrace — to be found dead in the middle of the street under a pregnant woman! The corruption of grace and elegance. The final destruction of Galre's splendor. Was a farce ever a tragedy? Only on doomsday. Which was today. For him. (Every man had his doomsday.) He listened. He could hear the water lapping, gurgling — in fact, thirsty for his blood. Galre spat on Cara's face suddenly. And when he lifted his head to apologize, he found her rolling off. She'd freed him! To drag himself from the doom which had been haunting him for so long. He'd live: avoiding tragedy even if he could have it by dying with

distinction.

Forgetting about Cara, he began to move. On his hands and knees, he rushed in the right direction. But it turned out to be wrong, wrong, wrong! He came to the river-edge and spat again. Then he heard Cara joining him. The meek inheriting the earth, but always at the wrong time. She seemed not to remember that she was supposed to give birth. Was that what frustration did? In a perverse universe where motivations seldom had roots, it was probably natural for creativity to turn into indifference. But, what were they doing here facing the dirty water and oblivion without a trace of tragedy to give it tone? — only torment and the misdirection of compassion?

At his side on her knees, Cara grasped his hand. He muttered that they should turn around and go back to a safe distance. She shook her head weakly and smiled. The liquid blackness below yearned for them, in order to churn up some white excitement. From behind, the sound of someone shouting. Galre turned, but saw no one.

Why couldn't he move his legs in the proper manner and get away from here? At crucial times, his body often betrayed him, asserting its neurotic independence. This was the fitting moment for unheard-of platitudes, for sacrilegious prayers! Why did compulsion join forces with revelation? Holding Cara against his side, he poised over the edge. It was going to be a long drop. The end of his slow plunge into ennui, beginning so long ago that....

But someone was running — coming closer to them. In seconds, a fat woman, a fringe of orange-coloured hair hanging around her head, arms akimbo, stood over them. She looked like a very unsympathetic savior. Galre listened to her reprimand, but understood nothing. Especially not why she had arrived at this instant. The inhumanity of being human. He and Cara remained quiet — though no less untragic.

The woman evidently felt that her words had no effect. Roughly, she grabbed both Galre and Cara by their necks and dragged them back about five yards from the edge. They were too weak to complain or to be resolute about their lives' ends. Despair required better — and she didn't insist when Cara shook her head.

'I feel like a bird with a golden egg in a nest under the sun,' said Cara as she put on her robe. Holding her precious bundle, a little while later she stepped out happily and got into the cab which Nan had summoned by phone. Galre entered the cab quickly. Both of them thanked Nan for her kindness and for everything else, especially for her resourcefulness. Which seemed to have more facets than the eye of an octopus. When the cab pulled away, they waved to Nan until they could no longer see her. Galre silently thanked her for not being the Nan he had once known.

'I hope I'll see her again soon,' Cara said. 'She was such a wonderful lady, so strong and still so gentle. I gave her our address and told her to drop by any time.'

'She's a busy woman, a professional nurse, you know. I'm sure she doesn't want to be our friend. This was just business for her. I'll send her a check for a hundred dollars.'

'She was as sweet as a young girl with me,' said Cara. 'She held my hand and wept when I had difficulty.'

'That's hard to believe,' said Galre. 'By the way, is the baby a boy or a girl?'

'Too early to tell,' Cara stated.

He knew she was not too experienced about such matters, but this was preposterous. 'Let me see the baby, Cara.'

'Wait till we get home.' Something defiant about her manner. 'The strong sunlight forcing into this cab might be bad for its eyes,' she added.

Well, she was going to be a good mother, cautious and thoughtful. But, right now, she was irritating. Hold the baby

up, woman! Throw aside the swaddling clothes. They are unbearable in this hot weather and cold ambiguity!

The cab passed the hospital where the baby should have been born. Galre felt embarrassed that he hadn't been able to find it, a couple of hours ago. Cara said nothing, just stared at the building. Not a single recrimination. She was not the nagging type; yet, her present silence seemed unnatural.

The moment they were home, she actually started dancing, waltzing with the baby in her arms and.... Oh, how futile the revels of mortification! He stopped her and made her lie down. She kept talking; everything she said was about the baby, about the crib and blankets and other things they would have to buy as soon as possible. For some strange reason they had not made any preparations for this happy event. They would now have to do everything in a hurry. Cara spoke only a little more, then fell asleep. Her obvious satisfaction in becoming a mother gave her a peacefulness that Galre envied. Perhaps for the first time, she was transcending herself. They were ruined, but she didn't seem to care.

Why wasn't the baby making some noises? Galre tiptoed to the crib and took the baby away from Cara's side. He put it on the table so he could examine it. It was so light. It? Well, he'd see about that. He unwrapped it quickly. From the way it was covered up, one would think it was the mummy of a baby.

Galre shrieked, and his knees folded, when he finally opened the towels and saw what was in them: the final surrender to oblivion. Nothing here but a mouse. Cara awoke and looked at him sleepily, proudly. She asked what he thought of the little one. Galre bawled and cursed; the mouse jumped to his shoulder and peered at him.

'Don't you like it?' asked Cara. 'This is a mouse, you damn fool!' 'Don't talk like that!' 'Where's the real baby?'

You're still against it — though it's born and here to stay!' She snatched the mouse from him and held it in her arms gently, cradling it. In a couple of minutes, it fell asleep. But not before he recognized it.

Those eyes. This was the same mouse, the mouse that had bothered him in Nan's living room. Here was something diabolical. The work of a witch, the scheme of a maniac, amuck with the worst kind of hostility. The mouse continued to look at him from a distance. It seemed to hate him as much as to beg for pity with those eyes.

Angrier now than he had ever been in his life, Galre vowed to see Nan Lazar at once and get back the baby which was rightfully his. Villainy would not triumph this time — though this humiliation was a weird victory of sorts.

As he stormed out of the apartment, Cara said placidly: 'Come back soon, Dear. You're going out to get some diapers — aren't you? Be sure to get a bottle of baby-oil too.'

He stopped to look at her for a moment. With contempt and pity. He did not bother to answer her. He left.

He pounded on Nan's door. When she did not appear, he opened it, rushed in; then stopped short. The place now looked so different; the heavy-scented silence was unsettling. Flowers had been put into vases and into bottles all over the room and hallway. Flowers even were strewn on the floor. The devil's hothouse. Galre winced. Colors streamed in all directions and he fought the spell they were creating. This time, he didn't want to lose his anger and be the puppet of flowers. At first, he thought the place looked like an abstraction of the joy of birth. Or the joy of death. But he was beginning to feel that the rich odor was simply the other side of the coin, the false reverse of the stench that usually [hung] here.

Where was Nan? More important, where was the baby? Galre went into the bedroom. More flowers. He shook his head violently to shake off his torpor. In the closet, under the

bed, in the drawers ... he did not find what he was looking for. He ran through the house, turning over furniture, knocking down bottles, kicking away clusters of flowers. He looked inside, under, behind, and on top of everything. The baby eluded him. A baroque setting for desperation. This fanciful design of ethereal exuberance to celebrate her brightest day of blackness!

Nan walked in, carrying a bunch of flowers. They were not like the others. They were faded and looked dirty from stem to petal. Nan's appearance was different too. Her hair was dishevelled — also, her clothes. And full of stains, as if she had been lying on wet grass. She wore no make-up and had a look of confusion. Seeing her without thick layers of self-assurance all over her, Galre was a little surprised. She almost looked [young].

'Where did you find those flowers you're holding? The bottom of the river, I imagine!' Galre said, quickly, to show he would be the winner for once.

'I'm grateful for anything that comes my way,' said Nan. 'And I have a thirst for flowers, today.'

Taking her by surprise, Galre knocked her down. He was surprised too. Not even on the stage had he ever before done this. It generated a new excitement in his knees. She got up, saying: 'I'm glad you came back. I was hoping you [would].' As she gathered the flowers she'd dropped, her face became as orange as her hair. She handed the shabby bouquet to Galre. He threw it in her face without hesitating. She started to speak, but stuttered and [stopped].

'I have so many things to tell you.' 'Just tell me where my son is!' She started to speak; but, stuttering again, she could not continue. Fuming, he sat down. She kept her eyes on him. In a moment, she came to him and sat on his lap. Galre was puzzled. Why wasn't she afraid of him? He pushed her off. It must have hurt when she hit the floor, but she came back to his lap again. Even twenty years ago, she hadn't

been the lap-sitting kind. And she would never have stood for treatment like this. If they had been up on the Empire State Building, and he had merely said a cross word to her, she would have pushed him off.

She fell asleep. So comfortable, she fell asleep. He shook her, shouting: 'What did you do with the baby?'

Wakening, she blinked repeatedly. 'Don't you remember? He drowned right out there. This year, he would have been twenty.'

'I mean today's baby!' She looked around. She seemed to be thinking very hard. 'I don't remember,' she said. He was almost inclined to believe her.

'Think!' commanded Galre. 'Are you demented?' 'I've been very excited today, because I've been celebrating.'

'Are you drunk?' 'Not enough.' 'Why are you celebrating?' 'That's something else I can't remember.' Galre forced her away from him. Furious. 'There are thorns all over my body, Nan. Don't come close to me.'

'From now on, I will always be close to you, no matter how bloody I get.'

'Bloody — yes — that's the right word! You gave us a mouse to take home today, so you have every reason to celebrate! Well, I'm not going to be a slave to a mouse!'

'You owed me a baby. Now I owe you one. You'll get the better of the deal, you'll see.'

Galre seized her by the throat; but she got away and ran into the bedroom. Deciding to speak quietly to her and promise no harm would come to her, if only she would tell him where the child was, he did not go after her. Yet when she made no sound, he went into the bedroom. He found her sitting on the bed with a doll in her arms. Her face very white, her eyes over-pathetic. Succumbing to warmth.

'Your child is here,' she said, almost in a whisper. 'That doll? You're not funny.' 'I am your child.' 'You're out of your mind!' 'No, I'm the one. I remember everything now. I was

born today.'

'You're older than I am, and practically senile.' She started to weep. When she began to sound like someone else, he came closer. By George, she looked different! Younger, cleaner, suddenly sweeter! A young woman of quality, perhaps. Then the picture went out of focus. When the blur was gone, she was different again — even younger, a naive teen-ager. But, thoughtful.

Was the soul dramatizing its immaturity? To what lengths a person would go to romanticize her rejection of herself! But this was not Nan, just as he was not the Conrad Galre who couldn't find the hospital this morning. He was now the Conrad Galre who could find anything, especially the solution to his own lifelong retreat from involvement with women, unplanned drama!

'What's going on here?' Galre asked. 'I'm sixteen now; but in a little while, I'll be younger,' replied Nan. 'In ten minutes, I'll be a baby. Don't worry — I'll be healthy. I'll grow up like other children and some day I'll be sixteen again.'

'How can I believe you? You've already fooled me once today.'

'Believe me, Conrad. This time, your baby is a fine beautiful girl.' And she wept while she continued to change.

Galre couldn't take his eyes off the picture — which was repeatedly dissolving. Until — there she was, smaller than the lamp shade. 'A daughter is better than a mouse,' he mumbled.

In a short while, he was listening to the baby-talk of a happy, amorous infant. When the crying began, it sounded like a newborn's. This couldn't be real. This was as much a dream as his whole life. Maybe nothing was there. He went forward to touch her. But the tiny form was full of warm flesh when he held her. He cradled her in the nook of his arm and caressed her — a baby girl more alive than any living

thing in the world.... He wrapped a tablecloth around her. Her hands were pushing against his chest. Beating on it, too. If only he could give her the milk she wanted.

Noticing the telephone in the hall, Galre went to it quickly and called Cara. He told her about the baby, said he was bringing her home ... said to get rid of the mouse.

'You never wanted us to have a child, and here you're talking like this, calling it names. I knew you'd be a terrible father!'

'I found our child!' Galre said. 'A beautiful baby girl. She's the one that was born today. The thing we took home was a mistake.'

'A mistake? Hell — he has your eyes and my nose! I'm not going to let you influence me any more. Did you get the diapers and the baby-oil?'

'No.' 'Then don't come home again! Who needs you anyhow?'

She'd hung up. Galre turned to the baby. Her cries seemed to be those of a baby who was desperate. He held her and kissed her. He would never let her go. If Cara didn't want to raise her, he would do it himself. All alone, if necessary. He would give up looking for acting jobs, forget about success and fame. What had more distinction than a real tragedy turned into imaginary happiness? He'd play the role with classic grandeur.

ISSUE PP. 145-151 · SCAN PP. 55-61

DESCENDING

Wai-lim Yip

A POEM IN FIVE PARTS

I. THE SAIL OF SILKEN AFTERNOON SWELLS

The sail of silken afternoon swells
With the lustre of bronze. Everything is ready now.
Pursue to where our desire reaches. The open
thoroughfare
Tapering into the spinning sun yields
To the rising of our dust-laden feet. The gentle gold
sand
Of the aquatic star yields
To the barbaric gong. Clouds of trees
Pull down the limpid sadness of the high sky, drowning
The ticktocks we counted night after night
And the grains of youth rain from the sieve of a
winnowing-machine —
The bolts of jubilee shot
From the gazing apple-faces of children, glistening
In their falling, the other boys and girls run to welcome
The swelling of silken afternoon opens to the steps of
horses on
expedition and
Lingers
In the glory of boundless ashes. The horn of Tower
winds
Is blown over a phalanx of sunward masts
And sacrifices sanctified by drums and trumpets
And spices whirling every current
Of crystal flesh
Golden bells ring. The resounding sunny winds

Roll away the unintelligible breath of officers in the
foreign trade
And the hubbub of coolies at the port
Over the obscuring boughs of a clear afternoon and stay
In the lovers' play with oranges on a lawn
And the grains of youth rain
And a pyramid of songs on the eve of expedition pour
Into the life-giving pecks and bushels
Waft golden hair before a screen of translucence
Wave jade hands in the blending sun
The sail of silken afternoon launches
The first clean voyage of jubilee
— Everything must be ready now.

II. THE PRISON-WALLS OF WINTER VIBRATE

The prison-walls of winter vibrate
To the crystal waste. The sad chains
Of cold
Ring
An icicle of tinkling
The sun of the prison-window
Alone governs the frost-haired tract of dry grass,
Returning the dripping beauty of the trees
Cleanliness returns
To compacted cities on far-off mountains
Busyness is
Spring and summer and erotic is
Night

(A pack of wolves howling one afternoon after
The chilblained feet that passes loessal slopes
The wings of hail answered
The crouched nerves under the vast serenity)

And sad chains of cold ring an icicle of tinkling
And night is erotic and busy are the young and cold are
the

prison-walls
of winter

Thoughtless, I see a soft movement of snake
Foldingly go up the terrace

III. EVERY DAY MOUNTAINS RISE AND FALL FROM OUR SHOULDERS

Every day mountains rise and fall from our shoulders
and

Like great wings of care directing sea-currents
The far-pouring sun of mercury
Directs radiations of our dreams. The conch of Death
Blows for many sumptuous weddings of yesterday.

Tempests
silently lead

The eagle of our desire to circle above the lines of
earth's palm

Heads of curiosity and sickness a torrent of falling
stones

Run into the all-reaching long long streets
The gibble-gabble of women and children in the
afternoons

Reveals new deities

The transient beds

Point out every day, our confine

(We no longer see the woman's offering of breasts
in
her hands)

And then, dear Exile of exiles, we discarded all our
ice-winged ships
to keep night watches on our way through the quick
sand; and then we
burned all the hubbub of cities and arose; and then we
were flags —

flags without the festivities of Ching-ming and
Chung-yang.

Every day the white fungoid sun stays on earth's
mercury

Every day the eagle of our desire pecks the rising winds
and

When the high land is stretched by the fires of evening
You will find me and my horse standing there

IV. CRAWLING OUT FROM OUR FINGERS . . .

Crawling out from our fingers, you at once commanded
The monstrous age and weather. Emerging from water
the ships
commanded

The port of bone-ashes and tombstones. Brother, how
your
clamorous wagon-theatre

Went into the prison of singing and drank the rising
sands of the
horizon

And at the turn of a broken wall you found yourself
eating lime
fruits and flowers

After the avalanche that alarmed the villagers, how you
became

The vocabulary of our desire and the flawless virgins of
the rock took
off

All their draping to face the persisting azure —
What can be compared to this persisting azure?

And the flawless virgins of the rock took off all the rigs
of steel

And began their great mastless voyage under the eaves.
Brother, when a woman falls asleep on your shoulder,
does she

Know that the drama of your tremendous robe has
already
commanded
All ages and weathers, does she know that on that night
You, holding a lamp, saw me out of those happy steps
to look for
The sacrificed moon and the burnt stars and to
sea-bury
The woman of the land?
Brother, when the flawless virgins of the rock took off
all their
draping
Had you fallen into this persisting azure?

V. CHASMS AND GOLD HARVEST CRUMBLE

Chasms and gold harvest crumble together from my
loins
Seeds of peartrees and almonds are buried one by one, I
turn
to you
Sleepless and martial Accident! My uprising
Monolith following your directions, just as
The youth on horseback following the custom —
unwarnedly wrest
The bride from the sea and thrive
Unwarnedly with loamy soil give the long hot towns
wings
And feed the baked aspirations of my people with
rustling of
leaves
And with the rhythm of strained bronze muscles the
river-craft is
driven
And suddenly exploding on high boughs the millennial
flower

Opens to the surf spring of children. When the
 perpetual drumming
Of hooves rushes into our first acquaintance, the
 caravans,
 however, depend
On their unhurried speed toward the long sky-linking
 road, women
 tea-pickers
Turn from Buddha caves and pass to the slope of
 tea-forests
When the climate that carved jagged mountains carves
 war and love
I will lead you to grapple for a sunset of our ancestors
 on the
 black steppe
And regain two banks of caroling on the tranquil river
 There's a lil garl
 She roun' like de sun
 She smoot like de water
 She bright like de sky
 There's a lil garl
 She plump like de corn
 She breath like de orchid
 She warm like de earth
I will lead you to weep, for the legendary color and for
 rye
And then put on a bit of white worsted to resist all
 diseases
Dark and mysterious Accident! Seeds of peartrees and
 almonds
 all are buried
Chasms and gold harvest fall altogether from my loins
 and I am
An uprising monolith following your direction. . . .

THREE POEMS FROM CATULLUS

Gaius Valerius Catullus · translated by Barriss Mills

XXVIII

You followers of Piso —
an empty-handed crew,
with duffels always at the ready
and easily transportable —
good friend Veranius
and you, my Fabullus,
how's it going with you?
Have you had your fill by now
of freezing and starvation
with that scum? Do your budgets
show a slight balance on the debit side,
as mine did, after I'd followed
my praetor and wound up in the red?

O, Memmius, you really
gave me the shaft in that affair.
And as nearly as I can see,
you fellows are in a similar fix —
screwed by the same kind of bastard.
No more of this chasing after
influential acquaintances!
But may the gods and goddesses
load you with curses, you blots
on the lineage of Romulus and Remus.

XXVII

You boy there, serving
the old Falernian, bring me
the straight stuff after this.
Those were Postumia's orders —
our hostess, who's drunker
than the drunkest grape.
Skip the water. Water
kills wine. Take it away
somewhere, anywhere.
Give it to the teetotallers.
This is the juice of the gods!

XLV

Septimius, holding in his arms
his darling Acme, murmured:
'Acme, if I don't love you
to distraction — ready to go on
loving you every moment
through all the years to come
as completely and as desperately
as any lover can —
may I face a green-eyed lion
all alone, in Libya
or scorching India.'

As he said this, Love sneezed
in approval, on the left
and then on the right side.

Then Acme, tilting her head
slightly backward and kissing
with her red mouth her darling's
love-drunken eyes, replied:
'Then, Septimillius, my life,
we'll always serve the same master,
for an even fiercer fire
is burning inside of me.'

As she said this, Love sneezed
in approval, on the left
and then on the right side.

And now, starting out with this
good omen, they love and are loved
with mutual affection.

Poor Septimius prefers
his Acme to all of Syria
and Britain. And faithful Acme
finds all her love and pleasure
in Septimius alone.

Who ever saw a happier couple
or a more auspicious love?

ISSUE P. 156 · SCAN P. 66

CENSUS

Howard McCord

A butterfly fat as rum
Bottle and yellow sinfully
As a canary or a fish
Lit on the considerable fence
That halves my mind.
A picket structure, it
Nimbly slits the past
Into thin apertures
Through which sparrows flit
Counting aloud the names
Of all my randy loves.

Salamander-tight in
Its butterfly skin,
Wry as a cherry pit,
Its multifoliate eyes
Blinked dumb at the traffic
To that alley
Behind my considerable
Fence.

SURFERS IN WINTER

Jascha Kessler

A half a glass of beer,
a plate of fish and chips,
a long cold foggy day:
out there on the water
slip slap slop like always
with a few gulls asleep.

They think it's monotonous,
they think it's just a fad
you will grow out of yet —
like you quit hide and seek,
driving the car too fast,
or touching every blouse.

But it's not that, not that;
there's a basic rhythm
that goes on for ever,
and you sit out there and wait
and watch the steady swell
and take the one that counts.

Sometimes nothing happens.
Mostly nothing happens.
They break, you break, or both.
The day passes, a day
like all the other days:
the tide drops and you quit.

But sometimes there's a wave,
that certain lift you feel,
a shadow in the green,
and you know it's the one
and you're with it coming —
you're on, you're up, you're in.

There's never someone else.
There's only you alone.
If it's right and you're right,
you're walking on water,
coming in from the sea
as if you were just born! —
though you never reach shore.

ISSUE P. 159 · SCAN P. 69

At the Bus Stop

Gene Frumkin

A woman weeping No one knows her

7 a.m. bus stop

streetlamps dowsed

by oncoming morning

A woman weeping

Someone speaks to her

someone says who are you?

We look about us at the morning

inhale its grass and trees

run our hands across its mountains

A few automobiles

slowly pass

a patrolcar smiles at us

Who are you?

Under our feet

maroon rivulets flow through sewers

sharp green foliage

thistles and briars they struggle

converge in small islands

opposing the flow they are beasts

under us

A woman on a bench

weeping

buses come and go

What should we do?

It is the bluest

most transparent of days

ISSUE P. 160 · SCAN P. 70

(FROM) THE PLAYGROUND

Bob Nystedt

Twist three limp wires high
in a warm October sky
where the playground swings an asphalt raft
or sanctuary perhaps

where the playground sings and swings
on steel web wings which tense and pull
but cannot rise

where the city sins or prays or sleeps or weeps
or dies a bit within itself
beneath three scratch marks mired
in the constant sky

the blacktop cries against the savagery of sun,
the pelting pain of summer rain,
and then the snowmen shrunk in the playground
bright with spring

while tired snowmen sag
the children romp and splash and sparkle bounce
to topsy turvy taps-on-leather tunes
they cry and fly
while murdered snowmen bleed so quietly
impaled on sunlight shafts

for in the playground oily dew dense dawns
could cut and trace or spill
above the asphalt in red and rose and rust
through scruffed and dusty climbing weeds
they somersault toward large neat signs
forbidding hardball games

but pop and pot and pig and pad or gifted gigs
it could not post and never would

while a smog wind sighs
across three limp
wires high.

THE CANON OF THE CITY

Erik Kiviat

The Heat wears false moustaches
and exhumes the bones of dead junkies
buried markerless in arid ground.

The Hipsters count their heartbeats
steamrattling in pads occluded
with black ceilings and broken records.

The Heat straps on teflon masks
and stainless claws and goes out
to hunt dogfaced in the snow of
dirty buildings and lost generations.

The Junkies sit contemplating walls
dead-eyed and alone in coldwater flats.

The Hipsters snap their fingers
bodies swaying to lost imitators
of the indelible Bird.

The Junkies have forgotten even
the rhythm of light and dark as
they droop coldfaced in quasi-darkness.

The Heat frowns at alleycats and
slithering between parked cars and
garbagecans grins at the night
ape-mouthed like a hairy mask.

The Hipsters steal wallets in
subway stations and wear thin thin
ties with small sharp silver tacks.

The Musicians revolve bicolored
in the polished octaves of their sets.

The Heat blasts thru sootcaked walls

with future rayguns sniffing out
the last faint odor of hot gelatin.

The Junkies shoot up in the perpetual
shadows of knotholes buried under
slight sunbeams of bricks and the
occult machinery of five-flight walkups.

The Musicians rub copper and brass
in fluid remembrances of pagan aladdins.

The Poets pay homage to mirrors
stained and greasy with the fingerprints
of three millennia of strange deities.

The Junkies strangle arms in old
solitudes of leather and sliver and
floors log-cabined with cluttered matchwood.

The Poets look at trees and see books
and sometimes look at trees and see
trees fingerbranched and still in the
morning of multiple soul-wanderings.

The Heat nurses blowtorches and
flamethrowers in the lead-primed
gunmetal mist of their habitat.

The Junkies ball blueflashing
bubblegum machines in colored alleyways tinted with
the smile of night.

The Musicians slit their wrists on
stage and do a hundred handstands
behind opaque windows in empty dusty
woodsheds of three part harmony.

The Junkies turn heads from pain
in cellars unbelievable with crusted
walls damp with the code of death.

The Heat holds summit meetings with

stoolpigeons in beercolored rooms and
sends indecipherable messages on the
rust of antique automobile engines.

The Musicians listen eerily to trains
passing often in interminable subterranean corridors
under the debris
of a century of silent years.

The Hipsters record rhythms
of balling alleycats making the
warm dark streets echo tenfold with
the shouts of their reproductions.

The Poets keep their ears to the sky
and their eyes profound to keyholes
in the glistening patina of leaves.

The Heat melts cactus plants in cold
florist shops looking for a trace of
forbidden chemical in their white labs.

The Junkies flow thru concrete
search for the life-giving fluids
in veins of extinct animals living
again in polychrome cafeterias.

The Hipsters slash open the envelopes
of loveletters with the vengeance of
their blindness of bleak colors.

The Junkies look up long at windows
and look long at the moon in the
clear hard night of cruel stars and cities.

The Heat analyses samples of
teardrops fallen on the sidewalk for
evidence of criminal nicotine and lactose.

The Junkies pause in shirtpocket corners
losing thoughts over tan dogs.

The Poets talk nightlong in dim rooms
wallpapered with posters and human skin.

The Heat frisks the underwear of
prostitutes their powderstained homicide
fingers searching contraband sperm.

The Poets move their homes into the
woods at the edge of town and dont
return until the sun falls into the water.

The Heat puts on the masks of unshaven
bums and panhandles a bust in the dirt
of bowery corners and lampposts.

The Junkies die on stoops and in doorways
waiting for salvation in the guise
of an old blind man wearing shades
to protect his eyes from the yellow sun.

The Hipsters moan and clap slowly
in the memory of belated Kings.

The Musicians hear the sounds of clear
voices floating across the gulf of
footsteps and the melody of their horns
an effluvium of purely mixed colors
drifts thru the streets and windows
and rides evanescent and true out to
sea on the backs of negro porpoises.

THE LOST INDEMNITY

Raymond Steiber

I can hear them moving around in the Dark, searching for us. Over on the left, one of them shouts something to a comrade; and in that strange language of theirs, it sounds like somebody grunting and belching after a heavy meal.

The lieutenant eases himself close beside me and whispers in my ear. 'I think it's about time we started working our way back to our own lines.'

I don't answer. I know if I do they'll hear me and find us in the Dark and hack us to pieces like they did the rest of the patrol.

'There's a gully a few yards back,' the lieutenant says. 'We'll shinny up that a ways, then cut across the barbed wire. Let's go.'

I don't move, and the lieutenant seems puzzled.

Out in the Dark, the Enemy is making scuffling noises like rats. That's what they are — Rats. And there's millions of them, fat and gray with red shining eyes. Only they cover their eyes at night so that you can't see them until it's too late. Soon they'll find us and rip into our faces with their scummy teeth. Then they'll move on, a great dirty sea of gray spreading across the landscape.

The lieutenant tries to give me a shot of confidence. 'Come on, buddy boy,' he says. 'We'll make it back all right. I know we'll make it.'

He knows we'll make it. That's because he doesn't feel the Terror like I do. At the Academy, they took away his mind and replaced it with a manual so that he can't feel any more — he can't even think. All he can do is repeat what the manual says, and right now the manual says that we'll make it. The manual can't understand about the Dark and the

Rats and the Terror. If you could only make it understand, if you could make all the manuals in the heads of all the wheels in the world understand, then maybe they wouldn't send us out on these crazy patrols any more.

The lieutenant has grown tired of Reasoning with me. He tugs once at my elbow and begins to crawl away into the darkness. I stay where I am for a moment or so, then I start to follow after him. I don't want to be left alone out here with the Rats.

As I work my way on my stomach toward the gully, the butt of my rifle clinks noisily against the rocky ground. I stop, hug the rifle closer to my body and crawl on. The rifle clinks again, louder this time. This damned rifle is going to get me killed, I think. It's going to get me killed. Gently I ease it to the ground and start forward again, leaving it behind. What did I ever want with that damned rifle anyway?

The lieutenant reaches the gully first and pauses, waiting for me to catch up. I increase my pace, crawling toward him as fast as I can, but I don't seem to be making any progress. Every time I look up to gauge the distance between us, it always appears to be the same as before. Suddenly I'm aware of the deep silence that surrounds me. There's no sound at all except that of my own labored breathing. I keep my eyes glued to the ground in front of me now, because I'm scared, really scared to look up. Because I have the feeling that if I do look up, I'll see the Rats standing all around me, laughing at me from behind their greasy fangs; and as long as I don't look up, it's the same as if they weren't there.

Abruptly, I reach the edge of the gully. I glance quickly behind me, but the Rats aren't there any more. They've disappeared into the covering darkness.

The lieutenant grabs a fistful of my sleeve near the shoulder. 'Where's your rifle?' he hisses.

I lie there in the shadow of the gully, breathing hard, not answering him.

‘Did you ditch it?’ he asks; and reads the answer from my silence. ‘That’s going to cost you a stripe, buddy boy. I’ll have to report you to the C.O. when we get back to our own lines.’

We’re out there in the middle of the Dark surrounded by the Rats and he’s going to report me for losing my rifle. I start to giggle. It’s all so funny that I can’t help myself.

‘Quiet!’ he whispers harshly.

He raises his hand to slap me. I guess he once saw somebody do that in a movie or something. I reach out quick and grab him by the wrist before he can hit me. He starts to wriggle around so that he can let me have it with the other hand — though why, I don’t know, because I’ve stopped giggling by this time. Suddenly we freeze. The Rats are moving again, moving toward us. They heard my giggle and now know where we are. I wonder what they’ll do to us when they catch us. Maybe they’ll just kill us outright and take our scalps for trophies like the Indians used to do. I’ve got a fine head of hair, but the lieutenant’s is close-cropped.

Maybe they won’t take his, maybe they’ll throw it back like a lake trout that’s too small.

That makes me want to giggle again, but the giggle dies in my throat. Because I see one of them standing motionless just overhead on the rim of the gully. I release the lieutenant’s wrist and lie back and stare up at him. He’s short and stocky and so still that if you didn’t look close you would think he was a part of the landscape. But I know he’s real, and the lieutenant knows it too because he’s reaching slowly, ever so slowly, for the commando knife in his belt. His hand closes over the hilt and he draws it out.

The lieutenant is calm and cool. He has no reason to be afraid, not as long as he has his commando knife. In another second, he’s going to leap up, grab the man from behind, and slit his throat. And then the Rats will come out of the crevices where they’ve been hiding and they’ll tear out his eyes, and then they’ll find me and tear out mine.

Reaching around behind me, I begin feeling for a rock. I find one about the size of a grapefruit and pick it up. If the lieutenant lunges toward the man on the edge of the gully, I'm going to bash his head in. It won't do any good, of course, because the Rats will hear the noise; but at least it will be the noise I make and not the one the lieutenant makes that brings them down on us.

Easing himself up on his hands and knees, the lieutenant prepares to spring. Now, I'll have to hit him with the rock; now, I'll have to splatter his brains across the gully. Now! But the lieutenant doesn't spring. He remains where he is, and I can see that he's sliding the commando knife back into his belt. I look up at the rim of the gully. The man is no longer there. Maybe he was never there. But, no, I saw him, and the lieutenant saw him too. But, if he was there, why didn't he see us? Maybe he did. Maybe he's gone back to tell the rest of the Rats where we are. Maybe —

The lieutenant touches my arm. 'Let's get moving, buddy boy,' he whispers.

Cradling his rifle, he begins worming his way up the gully. I put the rock back down on the ground and follow after him. As I crawl along, I have the feeling that the Rats are moving with us. They're strung out in a line on either side of the gully just out of sight, and when we finally reach the barbed-wire perimeter and start to cross it, they'll be there waiting for us. Because, you see, the Dark's their natural element and they know how to use it to their best advantage.

But the lieutenant doesn't realize this. He thinks that the Dark is our friend. The manual in his head tells him so. When he came up to me yesterday and told me I was to go on tonight's patrol, I tried to explain to him about the Dark and the Rats. But he just shook his head and grinned at me like I was trying to goldbrick or something.

I told him flatly that I wasn't going, that I'd been on too many patrols already, that I'd had enough of the Dark and the Rats. Then he got mad and asked me — didn't I love my country? That's what they always ask you when they want you to stick your neck out. I said: 'What's my country got to do with this? I'm just one man with one life, and I'm not going to crawl around in the Dark risking it any more.' Then he really lost his temper and threatened to have me court-martialed.

So I gave in. I had to. Because, back there on our side of the barbed wire, a court-martial seems more powerful and terrifying than the Dark and the Rats. But that's only back there. Here in this gully, there is nothing worse than the Dark and the Rats. Nothing in God's universe.

Why did we go on this patrol anyway? The lieutenant says it's for reconnaissance purposes; but what can you reconnoitre in the Dark? You can't see anything but black, uncertain shapes. I wonder what the lieutenant tells the C.O. when he comes back from one of these patrols. From what we could see, Sir, the Enemy doesn't seem to be up to anything. And — oh, by the way — we lost four men. And the C.O. says: That's all right just so long as we know they're not up to anything. But — God! — what if you're one of those four men? Is it all right then?

Up ahead, I can see that the lieutenant has reached the point where the gully begins to peter out. About twenty-five yards beyond that is the barbed wire. I can't hear the Rats moving any longer. They've quieted down and are waiting for us to show ourselves against the sky line.

The lieutenant raises his head above the level of the gully. I wait for the flat crack of a bullet to end his life, but nothing happens. It's so quiet that I can hear him breathe. He sounds like somebody with a bad head-cold. I wonder — is he beginning to feel the Terror? He eases his body up over the side of the gully and motions to me.

I don't want to leave the safety of the gully; but, on the other hand, I don't want to stay there either, so I follow the lieutenant. As I climb up over the side, I notice that it's getting light out already. We've got to hurry now. We can't afford to be caught out in the open when the dawn begins to come. The Rats would mow us down then; and afterwards, they would crawl back in their holes and wait for the Dark to come again.

There's about twenty-five or thirty yards between us and the barbed wire. We start to work our way toward it on our bellies. Behind us, the Rats hold their silence, and I begin to think that maybe the lieutenant was right, that we will make it. But, no, the Rats are only being cagey. They'll wait until we just get to the barbed wire and begin to think we're home free; and then they'll open up on us with everything they've got.

It's about ten yards to the barbed wire now. As I crawl along, I can feel the rough, rocky ground tearing at the underside of my stomach; but I don't think about that. I only think about the ten yards. And suddenly it's only five yards, and then the lieutenant and I are there beside the wire.

My back stiffens involuntarily in anticipation of the bullets that are going to cut me to pieces any second. But no bullets come. The Rats are biding their time. There's no hurry. They know they've got us where they want us.

The barbed wire is the accordion type. The lieutenant examines it a second, glances up at the sky, then says: 'We'll have to cross here. It's getting too light to make our way back to the place where we came over last night. If I remember rightly, they didn't booby-trap this section, so we should be all right.'

Booby traps! I hadn't thought about that. I feel myself go tense all over. Suddenly I realize why the Rats haven't cut us down before now. They know this section of barbed wire is booby-trapped, know that there are anti-personnel mines

buried a few inches beneath the soil. The second we put any pressure at all on the wire, the mines will detonate, spreading our intestines across the hillside.

‘You cross first,’ the lieutenant says. ‘I’ll keep you covered with my rifle.’

I stare at him. So that’s the way it is, I think. I’m the guinea pig. I test the wire to see whether it’s rigged with mines or not.

The lieutenant frowns. ‘Let’s get moving, buddy boy,’ he says. ‘We haven’t got much time, you know. It’s getting light.’

So that’s how my life ends, I think. Blown apart by mines my own buddies have laid.

I stare at the lieutenant a moment longer, then abruptly jump to my feet and scramble over the barbed wire. Not work my way through — but scramble. A needle-sharp barb catches my right leg and rips a long strip of flesh from it. My hands push forward through the wire and are torn raw and bleeding like freshly-ground hamburger. But I make it. Somehow, I make it! The barbed wire wasn’t booby-trapped after all. The Rats have made a mistake and let me go free.

I lie there on the ground on our side of the wire, panting hard, bleeding freely from my wounds. The lieutenant looks at me kind of funny, then pushes his rifle through the accordion to me.

‘Cover me,’ he says.

But I don’t bother. I leave the rifle lying on the ground.

The lieutenant starts to crawl through the wire.

He tries to do it the way they taught him at Ranger School, but somehow it doesn’t seem to work. His clothes keep getting caught up in the barbs, and he has a lot of trouble freeing them. I can see he’s beginning to get worried. His face is drenched in sweat and his eyes are showing too much white. He begins working harder, even tries to scramble like I did; but he doesn’t get anywhere. And then suddenly he’s all tangled up in the wire like a fish in a net.

There's no way he can move without getting himself into a worse position.

He begins to feel the Terror now. He's trapped in the wire and dawn is coming on fast. Soon it will be light enough for one of the Rats' outer-perimeter guards to see him. And then it will be over for the lieutenant for all time.

He struggles violently in his snare, shaking the accordeon wire all along the perimeter; but it does him no good. He gestures at me with a barb-pierced hand.

'Help me, dammit!' His voice is a hoarse croak.

Now he knows how I felt back there in the Dark. Now, too late, he knows. Only, with him, things are reversed. It's not the Dark he fears, but the dawn.

'I said, give me a hand!'

He's still enough in possession of himself to give orders; but I know that if I wait long enough, the Terror will swallow up his authority as if it never had existed.

'Give me a hand.'

Weaker now.

'Look,' he says, 'I'll forget about you ditching your rifle. I won't mention it to the C.O. or anybody; but you've got to help me. Don't you understand? You've got to help me!' His tone is supplicating now. In another minute, there'll be tears streaming down his cheeks.

I begin to feel sorry for him. In fact, I almost reach out and begin working him free of the barbed wire. But something stops me just in time. You see, there's this warm, sticky sensation in my abdomen, and it feels so good that I don't want to lose it, so I hug it to me with my arms; and then I lie watching as the lieutenant succumbs to the Terror.

He shakes all over with fear. He knows I'm going to leave him tangled in the barbed wire. He knew it from the beginning, even before I myself had decided; but he was afraid to admit it.

I watch him a moment longer, then turn away and begin working my way up the slope toward our lines. My legs are so badly cut that I have to crawl.

Behind me, the lieutenant screams. I wonder idly what the men up in the fox holes think of that scream. Do they recognize it as the lieutenant's? No — probably not.

After a while, the lieutenant stops screaming; and I know that he is trying desperately to free himself from his wire trap. But he won't succeed. The Terror won't let him succeed.

Up ahead, I can dimly make out the earthworks which mark the beginnings of our trenches. It's only a short distance, but I don't think I can make it. I'm too tired, and the coming daylight seems to be sapping what little strength I have left.

There's a deep shell-hole a yard or two to my left. Painfully, I drag myself over its edge and throw myself down into it. A shallow layer of icy water covers the bottom; and, as I lie in it, I can feel it stealing the warmth from my body. But I don't make any effort to move, because I don't care whether I'm hot or cold any more. I only care that I'm safe.

Overhead the sky lightens more and more with each passing second. Soon it will be possible for the Rats to see the lieutenant trapped in the barbed wire.

I lie there in the shell-hole for what seems a long time. After a while, I hear the sharp crack of a rifle in the distance. There is a long pause as if someone is taking careful aim, and the rifle cracks again. Then a deep, leaden silence settles across the Front.

Twenty yards from my shell-hole, the lieutenant's body is dangling in the barbed wire, a thick carpet of red forming beneath it. Even though I can't see this from where I lie, I know it. I almost think I can hear the blood dripping from his wounds.

Suddenly I wish it was me caught out there in the barbed wire. Then it would be all over and I wouldn't have to face the Dark and the Rats again, and — oh, God! — I don't want to face them again, not again, not ever again.

— ED.

ISSUE PP. 179-186 · SCAN PP. 89-96

SOME ITEMS RECEIVED

OF HALLOWS, HOLLOWS, AND HALOS

by Milton VanSickle

Even AFTER HIS DEATH, it is difficult to assess the life of a man. Not that it is difficult to write about him, generally; but a life may be viewed on various levels, any one of which may be in a sense true. And yet, the truth of one level invariably contradicts that of another, so that no truth is altogether valid. Nonetheless, since we have a need for answers (the question cannot be sufficient in itself), we create myths and legends which we accept as the truth, as history, as knowledge. That is why each generation of each nation-state must rewrite history, rediscover truths, and — correcting the errors of the past — hand down to others what is termed ‘the torch of knowledge.’

Recent death leaves the survivors with a compulsion for the summing-up which cannot be completed before the death. There is always something a little irritating about a living artist. Whatever we say about him, he may well reverse himself in the near future. If, with his death, he escapes us — afterward, he cannot escape, cannot gainsay us. The living can laugh — they still possess themselves; but the dead belong to us: we create them as we wish, and so they become.

In his lifetime, Jean Cocteau further complicated matters by choosing to live a sort of conscious legend. It is easy to dismiss him as a phony. He was — though never essentially pretending to be what he was not. He might be characterized as narcissistic, seeing himself mirrored in everyone and everything, never able to shatter this image completely. Fascinated with the self, he observed the world around him as a pan-egoistic panorama of love and pain. With his death, STOLEN PAPER REVIEW (No. 2, \$1.) has published twenty-five pages of Cocteau’s THE DIFFICULTY OF BEING, translated by Charles Guenther, who terms them essays.

Rather, they are opinions, observations, reminiscences. Cocteau's writing here varies from the flick aphorism to the unpolished, rambling record of perception. He discusses his childhood, the theatre, and such people as Radiguet, Nijinsky, and Satie — men hardly closer to most of us than names of the Nineteenth Century. He also considers dreams, which were so integral to his art. He says he never sat down to write because he wanted to (one recalls the disciplined daily writing periods of Mann and Hemingway), but waited till he was forced to it by inspiration.

Cocteau's life (seventy-four years) seems crowded with things to be done: writing, painting, sculpture, poetry, plays, movies — and especially conversation. Yet, he confesses to a periodic need for solitude (otherwise, how could he have written anything?). Amo Karlen's translation of *THE ESSAY OF INDIRECT CRITICISM*, by Cocteau, comprises *THE QUARTERLY Review of literature* (Vol. XII, No. 4 — \$1.50). With comments on Oliri and others, the work becomes a manifesto of the arts; ultimately, a self-bounded work of art, interweaving the subjective, objective — realism and surrealism.

These publications, taken together, provide a sort of preparation for understanding Cocteau — preliminary to the creation of an acceptable legend. Cocteau will probably never be classed as a first-rate writer, poet, or painter; but he has had an influence (important?) on prose and on cinema — and certainly, on movements and trends and poseurs in the arts. His personality was much more stimulating than his works. To him, life itself was an art which few mastered; and, in the art of living, his greatest talent lay. His writings are brilliant flashes and the froth of his experience: the excess of an insatiable appetite for life — sated only with his death.

But, elsewhere in the world, there are still hungry ones. Poetry is no longer a civilizing manoeuvre, a replanting of the bamboozled gardens; it is a holocaust, a violent and

somnambulistic jazzing of the hymning five, a sowing of the tempestual hunger.’ So begins THE HUNGRIALIST Manifesto on Poetry, written and translated from the Bengali by Malay Roy Choudhury.

Beginning with Emerson and Thoreau, the ideas of India and the Orient have influenced poets, authors, and thinkers — later, painters — in this country (U.S.A.) and Europe. However, such influences are not unidirectional for long. Some contemporary Chinese writers and poets admit their debts to the French and English; and much of their recent painting and sculpture is abstract, while still retaining something of the misty magnificence of Tang landscapes. Now, in Pakistan, there are The Hungry Ones. Asked to name a Bengali poet, the most likely answer for most of us would be Rabindranath Tagore, who was canonized by those arbiters of acceptable excellence, the Nobel Prize Committee, many years ago. The Hungry Ones have about as much chance of acquiring such a halo (nimbus?) as Ginsberg — who seems to have become an inspiration to them.

‘Poetry ... should convey the brutal sound of breaking values and startling tremors of the rebellious soul of the artist himself, with words stripped of their usual meanings and used contrapuntally.... Poetry should present images not as wrappers but as ravishograms.’ Americans sometimes fall into the pose of feeling that they invented progress, speed, iconoclasm. Admittedly, The Hungry Ones are an embryonic group ... but time passes more quickly for some.

‘... most of the younger prosed-rhyme writers, afraid of Satanism, the vomitous horror, the self-elected crucifixion of the artist that makes a man a poet, fled away to hide in the hairs.’ And these Hungry Ones are not they who would stand outside (I suspect they would feel it’s the politico-socio-humdrum world which is outside); nor do they lean on pseudo-Zen and ‘pot’ to justify self-destructive surcease. They aim contrariwise at creative, enlarging,

meaningful experience. They hunger for more — not less.

But that is today; that is now. If only one of the group succeeds, it will be one of those rare miracles that births all important creativity. And perhaps it is enough that they are not afraid to face their hunger. Not a few have been afraid.

It is usual, when considering Hart Crane, to adopt a 'forgive-him, he-knew-not-what-he-did' attitude. But we consciously obscure the fact that the tragedy was not in his life — it was in his death. And it was not his tragedy — it was ours. Kirby Congdon recently issued *HART CRANE: A Conversation with Samuel Loveman*, by Ray C. Longtin (INTERIM Books — \$1.), which includes a short, previously-unpublished poem by Crane (with holograph which differs slightly from the printed version), and his own brief preface. The body of the work is a rambling interview with a long-time friend of Crane, consisting of fragmented reminiscences: Loveman's views of Crane, Crane's mother, and of himself. As such, it adds something of interest — if of uncertain significance — to Cranean lore.

Certainly, whatever causes a man to do whatever he does is reflected in whatever he writes. A man necessarily is the result of his heredity: that peculiar relation of genes, chromosomes, etc. — a teeming-infinite complex of factors. But, also, he is the product of his age and culture: his environment. And these, together, make him what he is. (Despite this, we speak of free will — indicating that, whether or not a man is responsible for what he does, he must accept responsibility for it. Because, indeed, he will be held responsible.) Schopenhauer justified suicide, but never committed it. Dostoevsky was fascinated by suicide, and several of his characters embrace it almost as the fulfillment of lustful hedonism. To Sade, suicide was a sensual delight — for others; the flaw, when applied to oneself, was that there could be no retrospective enjoyment.

When a man is alive on one day, dead on the next, there's this strange shock of emptiness. We are almost never prepared, and our emotional reaction just about equates with the mute comprehension of a dog nosing at his companion struck down by a speeding car. In death, a man is taken from us; but, death by suicide is a conscious — if desperate — rejection, leaving us with (besides grief) the outrage of a scorned lover.

With Hart Crane full fathom five — which, like Shelley's funeral, has captured the romantic imagination — we are faced with the need to explain. More: to justify — as if the life, the poetry, and the death were not sufficient justifications in themselves. However, we cannot be satisfied until we transform them into other terms, especially psychiatric terms (Oedipus complex, death wish) — which, far from being answers, only tend to obscure the questions. The conversation with Loveman makes no pretense of answering questions; but it does express some of the confusion surrounding Crane, and some very real emotion concerning him.

To turn from Crane and the others to GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS, by The Kenyon Critics (NEW DIRECTIONS — \$1.50) may give the impression of completing a Dantean circuit, to emerge in 'shining from shook foil.' But Hopkins never consummated the dark night of his soul, as had St. John of the Cross; he never reached the abyss of hopeless despair, though he hovered. He was, apparently, always aware of himself and always suspicious of himself, so that he could not simply love for long, but must soon criticize and analyze his motives. Nevertheless — or more likely, because of this — the fragments from his poetry, letters, and notebooks included in this volume are the freshest parts of the book. Critics — especially those who play the role consciously — must ever be little more than fingers pointing toward some distant sun. And the scholarly essays here

published are, to a large degree, autopsies where sightless fingers probe singular details, presuming to augur thereby a necromantic revivification of the organic whole.

Not that haruspicy is devoid of significance; we can point to Hopkins himself undertaking just such academic post mortems on occasion. They are of interest; but they are useful, generally, only to a poet. For, only a poet can be 'taught' to write poetry; and, primarily, he must teach himself. In reality, as with music (and Hopkins, like Rousseau and Nietzsche, was also a composer), ultimately the ear almost alone must decide poetry. These critics continually emphasize that Hopkins is to be read aloud!

Of the seven Kenyon Critics, only Austin Warren displays imagination and insight (though Marshall McLuhan and Harold Whitehall approach these). Robert Lowell and Arthur Mizener are better unread. The first-named three save the book from barrenness. Warren explains much of Hopkins' startling effects of freshness by citing his use of Anglo-Saxon words or words which should-have-been (but for the influence of Latin on the language); and he points out that Hopkins' 'thinking about beauty, man and nature is unimpressive ... the rewarding experience of concern with Hopkins' poems is to be let more and more into words and their linkages, ... to stress the inscape of our own language.'

Still, beyond this, Hopkins had a lush, almost lascivious, love for the sound of words. There's something of this in his contemporaries, Swinburne and Rimbaud; but they were sensual as well as sensuous, and their works lack the minute, crackling explosions which characterize Hopkins at his best. Hopkins escapes the limpid gloom, the juiceless despair and oversweet evocations of past pleasures of Swinburne, as well as the angelic animal cries of Rimbaud, that monstrous adolescent whom Cocteau would have understood so well. If Hopkins knew the physical world of Rimbaud or the emotional one of Swinburne, he gave no hint

of it. His poetry is infused with sunlight; the light of his spirit
emanated, not from his brow, but from his pen.

— Milton VanSickle

ISSUE PP. 181–186 · SCAN PP. 93–96

A DICHOTOMY OF ISLANDS

by David Galloway

The VERSATILITY OF ONE OF THE more creative writers at work in America today is exhibited in *SECOND SKIN*, by John Hawkes (*NEW DIRECTIONS* — \$4.). But time has dimmed many of the experimental qualities of his work, which has close parallels in the writings of Paul Bowles, Joseph Heller, Thomas Pynchon, Wright Morris, Djuna Barnes, Edward Dahlberg, and Thomas Berger. Seen in this larger contemporary perspective, much of Hawkes' precociousness begins to fade. As a prelude to the more imaginative fiction of deracination of the Fifties and Sixties, *THE CANNIBAL* survives with much of its original freshness intact; yet, that novel also seems neither so daring nor so obscure as it once did. *SECOND SKIN* may point toward other fresh and provocative accomplishments, or it simply may be the first whispering of the once-keen blade being slipped into its sheath.

In a literary career that now embraces a full quarter-century, Hawkes is still relegated to a creative underworld from which the ministrations of sage (Albert Guerard) and satyr (Leslie Fiedler) seem equally ineffectual in liberating him. If the relatively wide and consistently favorable attention which this current novel has received in popular critical circles appears likely to reverse this talent for Obscurity, it is, ironically, because this one seems to possess fewer of those militantly experimental qualities for which his small, but intense, group of followers has revered him.

In the definition and defense of Hawkes' 'experimentalism' — with which he prefaced *THE LIME TWIG* — Fiedler commented that Hawkes makes 'terror rather than love the center of his work....' In *SECOND SKIN*, terror gives place to love; and Hawkes' effortlessly baroque style apparently is almost as well suited to this latter vision as to the one of

terror which he introduced in *THE CANNIBAL* and recapitulated in *THE BEETLE LEG*, *THE GOOSE ON THE GRAVE*, and *THE LIME TWIG*.

The physical landscape of the novels has undergone major alteration — the relentless dirge of death (just as Skipper's mother had poured hot candle wax into her ears to shut out the sound of the explosion ending her husband's life). Hawkes always has worked within the shadow of fantasy; but, in this novel, the tropical fantasy has a confectionary quality which no doubt may seem too fragile to many readers. This, despite its lyrical supports, when compared to the brutal determinism dominating the remainder of the book. Though *SECOND SKIN* is more economical and in many aspects more arresting than Saul Bellow's *HENDERSON THE RAIN KING*, Hawkes' blundering knight-errant hardly has the dimensions of Henderson.

The idiosyncratic and reckless abandon of style, reminiscent of the earlier novels, here does service to a vision vastly more humanitarian and optimistic than in the former books. *SECOND SKIN* is a complex apologia pro vita sua delivered by Skipper (alias Papa Cue Ball), a former naval officer who at first moves in a world with a terrifying potential for self-destruction; at middle age, he grows a second skin among people with an equally great power for love and regeneration. Oblivious to chronology and only slightly more attentive to motivation, Skipper tells his own story, fusing his chaotic and violent past with an idyllic present in a tropical paradise. The narrative moves like 'the erratic flight of the hummingbird,' and Skipper himself calls his story 'the chronicle of recovery, the history of courage, the dead reckoning of my romance, the act of memory, the dance of shadows.' It is the serpentine tale of a man with an endless capacity for love and life, an enormous fleshy receptacle like Bellow's Henderson, whose spirit calls out for life when everything about him breathes death and decay.

The son of a mortician, the child Skipper had knelt outside a locked bathroom door, trying to scrape comfort from the strings of a cello (Henderson trying to recall his father's spirit by learning to play the violin?), only to hear his father fire a bullet through his head. Skipper's mother disappears; much later, his own wife commits suicide; his son-in-law, Fernandez, is brutally murdered in a squalid hotel for whores and homosexuals; and his daughter Cassandra flings herself from a lighthouse into the sea. As a parting token from the world of death by which Skipper has been tormented, he is made a breakfast-table present of a bottle containing his dead daughter's two-month-old illegitimate foetus. This final episode of horror occurs in a Maine farmhouse owned by Miranda; but there is no redemptive enchantment on her island, and Skipper flees to the idyllic tropical retreat where what he calls his 'capacity for love' can at last be realized, where his family's long line of 'soft and well-intentioned bastardy' can finally reverse its fatal indirection.

Second SKIN consistently juxtaposes terror and love, death and birth, illuminating them with the unerringly-visual quality of Hawkes' prose. The cold island of despair, ridden over by Miranda, looms on the novel's bizarre horizon in angry contrast with the lush [island] infused with the warm fertility of Catalina Kate. The pregnant [Kate] draws near the time of delivery as the novel progresses; and all around her, life flourishes in intoxicating tropical profusion.

As he awaits the birth of his child (or possibly that of Sonny, his simple-minded Man Friday), Papa Cue Ball artificially inseminates the island's cows. (Henderson raising pigs, trying to save the cattle of the Arnewi, presiding as Rain King, returning with the lion cub containing the soul of the dead King Dahfu?) The fertilization of the urgently-plaintive Sweet Phyllis is one of the most splendidly comic and lyric

scenes in contemporary literature.

ISSUE P. 184 · SCAN P. 96

RECONSIDERATION

The lover of
that other summer
came to visit me
‘Can’t we resume? at
least a while?’

Now what retort
can you make
to a thing
like that?

And outside the sun
is high ...
air right cushion
for a joyous cry.

— by Ronald H.
Bayes