

LIVING LITERATURE

Year's Magazines, Presses
POETRY, & WHY: VIEWS

Winter
13th
Year

55

6/6 \$1.25

JAMES BOYER MAY · EDITOR

TRACE

TRACE

No. 55

Living Literature

Essays & Articles · Poetry · Reviews

Winter 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:

The issue devotes eight pages to a portfolio of drawings and concrete / visual poems by Marie Koehler, D. A. Levy, and Liem Soen Sing — including Levy's visual pieces "fleuf fiejd," "metropolis," and "rain is a wild horse," and Liem Soen Sing's "Image of Privation" and "Nude." Because these works are image-based — their meaning inseparable from their hand-drawn typography, spacing, and graphic form — they cannot be reproduced as running text and are omitted from this reading transcription.

The issue's note on the artists adds: A native New Englander whose home is now in Montreal, Marie Koehler also exhibits in New York and Toronto, where her second one-man showing is on this spring. A book (portfolio) of her brush and ink drawings will soon be published. Besides having appeared in many journals, she has illustrated poetry volumes. D. A. Levy's work has been featured in several books and booklets recently. His studio is in Cleveland, Ohio. Liem Soen Sing is a very young Javanese, in secondary school in Kebumen. He recently won an award which may send him abroad to study under

instruction. His, to now, has been largely self-taught art.

CONTENTS

Modern Poetry's Own Trajectory	7
Towards Print	16
Editors (and others) Write	18
<i>Urges 'Reader-Activation' Magazines</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>T. S. Eliot's Message on Democratic Life</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>A COASTLINES Response to Lawrence Lipton</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>'Best Poets' Criterion Called in Question</i>	<i>22</i>
John Keats: Pioneer of Modern Existentialist Thought . .	24
Profile for the Loving Critic	36
Gil Orlovitz: Poems	39
<i>Art of the Sonnet: 166</i>	<i>39</i>
<i>Median 7</i>	<i>39</i>
<i>Median</i>	<i>40</i>
<i>Median 42</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>Median 30</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>Conjugates: 1</i>	<i>42</i>
Best Always, Puerco	45
Impasse on a Rainfat River	52

The Artistry of a Hornman	55
It Doesn't Matter Now	57
Weedlike Woman	58
Fourth Season Sketches	59
Some People	60
Three Classmates Thirty Years After	61
Circle	63
I Want Small Hand	64
Troublin' Mind	66
Rumors from the City	74
Don't Let Monday Come	77
The Avant Garde & the Official Culture	86
At the Village Vanguard	93
Some Items Received	94
<i>Thoughts About a Few Poetry Books</i>	<i>94</i>
<i>The People Pattern</i>	<i>98</i>
<i>Social Satire: 'Tight' & 'Swinging'</i>	<i>101</i>
<i>larksky</i>	<i>103</i>

Unusual Materials Unsensationally Handled 103

Wordy Snake-bite Cure 105

ISSUE P. 301 · SCAN P. 7

MODERN POETRY'S OWN TRAJECTORY

Richard O'Connell

*the objects memorized for beauty
have kept one from the truth
— Elliott Coleman*

The substance of this article was presented, Nov. 27, 1964 in Cleveland, Ohio, at the Convention of the National Council of Teachers of English (co-sponsored by the College English Association) under the title: Modern Poetry: Today and Tomorrow. — Ed.

In opposition to the fashionable view that modern poetry has passed its peak, I feel that it has yet to fulfill itself, that it has yet to achieve its unimaginable form and style. I think that new prosody has flagged or somehow faltered only when it has sought to be something other than itself, whether it be philosophy, theology, economics, politics, or psychology. If there is something wrong with modern poetry, it is only that our poets have not dared to be modern enough. In many instances, they have compromised their artistic principles by lapsing into traditional views of poetry and the poet's function in relation to society. In such cases, they have adopted a defensive attitude toward an ingrown and obsolescent criticism, attempting to justify themselves and their poetries in terms which are not really applicable to the modern genre. One cannot help getting the impression that some of our best moderns recoiled from the full implications of their own poetry; furthermore, that what are usually regarded as the peculiar flaws or weaknesses in these works constitute instead their strongest and most salient features.

It is important, I think, to theorize in a very general way about the nature of modern poetry and to consider its underlying characteristics and principles. All too often in the United States today discussions rapidly degenerate into silly,

pointless polemics where one is asked to choose between, say, Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams, or T. S. Eliot and Allen Ginsberg. The setting up of such absurd ‘oppositions’ is the besetting sin that negates the value of almost all recent talk upon the subject. For too long we have allowed the noise of the ax-grinders to drown out the small voice of clear critical thought.

What is modern poetry? By this term, we apparently mean that movement which began in France in the late Nineteenth Century and which quickly spread to every civilized country on earth. From its very beginnings, we note the international, global character of modern poetry. More specifically, we mean the poetry of Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Valéry, Apollinaire, and René Char, in France; that of Ungaretti, Quasimodo, and Montale, in Italy; that of Antonio Machado, Jiménez, and García Lorca, in Spain; of Neruda, in Chile; of Borges and Alberti, in Argentina; of Rilke, George, and Hesse, in Germany; of Blok and Mayakovsky, in Russia; of Cavafy and Seferis, in Greece; of Yeats, in Ireland; of Pound, Eliot, Stevens, Hart Crane, and Dylan Thomas, in England and the United States — to name but a few of our outstanding moderns. Furthermore, we realize that it would be a mistake to consider modern poetry merely in terms of its lyrical output, neglecting to consider the decisive role it has played in transforming other areas of literature. The novels of Joyce, Proust, Hemingway, and Hesse as well as the plays of García Lorca, Cocteau, and Tennessee Williams all are deeply indebted to modern poetry.

Most of us would agree that when we speak of modern poetry we refer to works of a certain indisputable value and quality. Generally, we use the term modern in this rather special and exclusive sense. In this respect, we recognize that what is contemporary in poetry is not necessarily modern. A useful illustration is the work of Robert Frost. Frost’s poetry seems to me traditional and not modern in any

crucial way. After all, what does Frost have in common with Yeats, Pound, Eliot, or Stevens? On the other hand, he does seem to have a lot in common with the Georgian traditionalists and his New England forebears. This is not to dismiss Frost or to suggest that his contribution is not valid and beautiful — merely to locate its proper place outside the main flow of modern poetry. Now, the same is true of many of our so-called moderns. They are contemporary by historical accident; but they evidence little or no real connection with this movement. Even today, the vast amount of work that gets into print — while superficially appearing ‘modern’ — is not modern poetry in any vital sense.

Does modern poetry exist today? In my opinion, a small quantity of good modern poetry is currently being written in the United States. For a long time now we have been hearing that modern poetry is either dead or dying off, that it has ceased to matter as a literary movement. It has always had its share of lugubrious pallbearers. However, even the staunchest supporters would admit to a strong suspicion that all is not well. Our poetry seems to lack impetus and direction. There seem to be no outstanding talents comparable in stature to such commanding figures as Yeats, Pound, and Eliot. Undeniably, modern poetry in the English-speaking countries has been in decline for the past twenty-five years or so. Yet, even during this bleak period, good things continued to appear: Pound’s later Cantos, the later poems of Wallace Stevens, and poems by William Carlos Williams, and others. But, before drawing critical conclusions, we should remember that it is not really possible to make an assessment merely in terms of what is written in English. In my estimation, what happened during the past twenty-five years was that the center of modern poetry shifted back to the non English-speaking world. For, if it seemed to lose much force and direction in England and the United States during this period, it showed remarkable

new power in the work of such important foreign poets as Ungaretti, Neruda, and René Char.

Modern poetry began when poets deliberately broke with all traditional concepts regarding poetry and the nature of reality. This was and still is its revolutionary principle. From the point of view of the modern poet, every aspect of his experience is seen in terms of its problematic character: himself, the writing of poetry, the flow of phenomena, and every conceivable sphere of human activity. In general, he finds it impossible to believe in any stable philosophical outlook or any absolute hierarchy of values. Everything and anything is seen to be equally and simultaneously valid in relation to the poem. Poetry itself is seen to be no less real as event or actuality merely because it is imagined. In this respect, the subjectivity of the modern is infinitely greater than that of the romantic. The former rejects all classical and utilitarian concepts of poetry and its function, because he feels such notions are derived from outmoded interpretations of reality. The problematic, relativistic character of modern poetry is an inescapable fact, in my opinion.

Closely related to the problematic emphasis is the experimental attitude of the modern poet. It is important to realize that his preoccupation with experimentation is the result of a profound shift in poetic consciousness, the feeling that there can be no distinction between poetic technique or style and content. For him, language itself becomes the overwhelming, continual problem. In his view, language cannot be conceived as existing anterior to the composition of his poem — as a problem already ‘solved,’ as vehicle, communication, or social convention. In his work, the modern poet seeks to approximate the process of word-making itself; this, for him, is the miraculous source of the poem. The poetic process is of primary interest; and the words of any given poem are only provisional clusters of energy emanating from the initial act of creation: poetry

becomes the event of its own approximation.

This is a new and radical attitude. Traditional discursiveness and syntax are ruled out in favor of an incredible compression of language so that the word may be revealed in its primal power. But each new poem poses all over again the enormous problem of creating and discovering its language. Thus, we see that poetic technique is never ‘ solved ’ — that the only valid alternative for the modern is constant experimentation.

Too often we emphasize the experimental character of modern poetry on the most superficial level. Experimentation should go much deeper than dribbling four-letter words on a page or employing wild typography. Of much more importance is the tendency to annihilate traditional concepts of time. To a large extent, all classical concepts of temporal ordering in terms of beginning, middle, and end are abolished here; and action, as normally conceived, ceases to be. We inhabit a kind of eternal present where something is just about to happen; we become a consciousness. The modern poet deploys language to thwart or defeat almost all our traditional expectations. There is a notorious absence of verbs and an abundance of suspended grammatical structures. All is elliptical, discontinuous, fragmentary. Preoccupied with negative effects, the modern poet even seeks to approximate silence. Metaphor takes on an entirely different and drastic character. Instead of being used to suggest correlations and possible natural patterns of order, metaphor functions to suggest the incomparable, discrete nature of all things.

A third characteristic of modern poetry, and one most often obscured and misinterpreted, is its high degree of anonymous detachment. Generally speaking, the modern strives to achieve an almost super-personal, contemplative state in his poetry. Thus, he, for example, treats his personal emotions with the same tone of distant neutrality as he

treats objects. This does not mean, however, that the poems are lifeless or dehumanized — as is so often maintained. What it means is that the modern poet views personality differently than, say, the romantic traditionalist. For him, personality is but another problem inextricably connected with his problematic view of everything. Put another way, one might say that he is vastly more concerned with the complex problem of personality itself rather than its mere expression or exploitation. By objectifying his emotions through a process of deliberate de-personalization, the modern poet seeks to arrive at a closer approximation of the nature of his personality in its changing relation to the world.

Most of the objections to modern poetry usually hinge on one of these three main characteristics. Take, for example, the standard critical complaint that the trouble is that it so often lacks a stable world-view to give it the coherence and philosophical framework that are thought to be needed. The whole point in modern poetry is that no fixed philosophical point of view is possible or desirable. The modern can employ no great synthetic philosophical scheme because, in his problematic view of reality, no single scheme is valid. He has no ‘subject’ in the traditional sense. What chiefly interests him is the interplay of endless possibilities. He can only experiment with a multitude of conflicting frames of reference and clashing perspectives.

I think some have wrongly assumed that a modern poetic synthesis would or should resemble one or another of those of the past. There is no reason, in my opinion, to suppose that a modern synthesis would or should in any way resemble Dante’s *Divine Comedy* or some great myth of the past. The attempt to superimpose some frame of reference from the past represents a denial of the modern poet’s own artistic principles. This poetry functions finally as its own reference; the past is studied in order not to repeat it.

Another common objection is that modern poetry is too intellectual, too cerebral, too ‘difficult.’ The majority of such objections will be found, on closer inspection, to be based upon some disguised restatement of the classic-romantic dichotomy of the Nineteenth Century. Already by the time of Mallarmé, all such dualistic simplifications had become meaningless. Romanticism-Classicism, subjective-objective, imagination-reality, thought-feeling, form-content (all the comfortable dichotomies of the Nineteenth Century) — What can they possibly mean in relation to poetry today? They are not even useful as points of reference. Modern poetry cannot be analyzed or judged in terms of the very polarities it demolished. For the poet, the trouble with modern works is not that they are overly intellectualized, but that they are not nearly intellectual or ‘difficult’ enough, in relation to this enigmatic transit of consciousness.

Unfortunately, modern poetry betrays a tendency to collapse into forms either of traditional romanticism or of classicism whenever the intellectual going gets rough. But, in my opinion, it will never achieve its destiny through any willful return to such outworn modes of thought and behaviour.

How often do we hear the complaint that the modern poet is entirely too private both in his language and peculiar point of view? Yet, the intimate, private quality of his creations is one of the elements that best define it. Indeed, he can only be private; the productions preclude the possibility of their being public in any conventional sense. To a great degree, the language of each modern is autocratic, wholly dependent on itself for interpretation and appreciation. Strictly speaking, modern poetry does not exist except as an abstraction; what we have really are modern poetries.

All those who lament the so-called isolation of the modern poet in relation to his supposed public, exhibit little comprehension of the true nature of modern poetry. It is not

that the modern takes an arrogant or snobbish attitude toward his public, but that to a great extent he is his public. Whenever he has sought to become public in his utterance, he has almost always written badly. True, modern poets have often achieved a good deal of popularity by doing so; but that has nothing to do with modern poetry — the writing of which presupposes an uncompromising private point of view.

A good deal of the best work of our great predecessors — of Yeats, Pound, Eliot, Stevens, and Hart Crane — represents not modern poetry so much as the breakup of traditional poetry, in my opinion. The transitional position these poets enjoyed gave them the strategic and tactical advantage of being enabled to utilize the best features of traditional poetry in combination with the indirect, discontinuous techniques of modern poetry. Yet, all to some extent fell victim to traditional modes of thought and expression.

The true modern stands today in a far different and I suppose more difficult position. He knows that it is his responsibility to fulfill many of the main promises of modern poetry. He realizes that there are no guarantees in life or poetry and that he may prove simply unequal to the great task. But, above all, the modern poet knows that modern poetry will be doomed never to realize itself if it fails to develop and follow the principles of its own evolution.

AT THE STATLER-HILTON

Norman Guynn

At Trader Vic's
In the Statler-Hilton
They have a drink known as the
Suffering Bastard,
A name constructed for the
Lower Uppers
(The New Money)
As carefully put together as
The material for
The New Man's Journal.

ISSUE P. 307 · SCAN P. 13

TOWARDS PRINT

by the Editor

[T]hemes of modernity thread this issue of Trace, though an objection may be that all synchronisms are transient. The purpose [of the] several writers here, either by example or by analysis, is [the] definement [of] areas of predominating modes of expressing reactions to contem[po]rary circumstances — and which yet may endure, by reason of indi[vid]ual honesties, in restating truths distinctively filtered through the [chan]ging lenses of the Sixties. None of them spells out in so many words this basic factor for [dete]rmining (at least, more probably) the lasting literary and artistic [wor]ks. Confusions and contradictions multiply the more complex the [cul]tural pattern becomes. There is no common matrix, no universal [set] of standards. Not only are there differing, more-or-less-approved [vie]ws and manners of arriving at depictions and expositions of en[viro]nment, there are quite varied choices of elements from the variable [pas]ts as potent talismans. This largely explains the widespread preo[ccu]pation with history, the current rewriting of virtually all histories [in] terms of present problems. For, in another sense, contemporary is a perdurable concept — not [tran]sient. In every time and place, is this idea — always comprising [wh]atever past lies within the knowledge of the individual expressing [it].

Getting to linguistic and other arts, it can be demonstrated that [degr]ees of dissidence are chiefly exaggerated by the degrees to which [the] emphasis is given dependence — upon whichever elements from [th]e past are then deemed vital to the writings, music, paintings, etc., [thro]ugh which the artist endeavors to reflect an immediate sense of [bein]g.

Without indulging a silly and impossible advocacy of ‘ breaking [with] tradition ’ (there’s always a tradition, just as

there's never any[thin]g 'new,' except in the individuations of abstractions from the [Six]ties). This means that pseudo composition must soon be insignifi[can]t. It's not composition at all, but attempted recapitulation. If it has [been] said (that way) before, nothing is being said.

And intolerance often flaws judgment. This does not indicate adop[tion] of an uncritical attitude of take-one-take-all. Simply the recog[niti]on that no single person or group can be positive that his or their [meth]ods provide the sole instruments for depicting beauty and wisdom [in] our time.

It also can be suggested that more is involved than toleration of every type of genuine lively difference — as by editors of the wait-and-see school. It's even conceivable that modern complexity requires endless disaccordance — not discovery of any inclusive and conclusive answer. Maybe the very discongruities of contemporaries — despite the cacophony of argument — are realizing the true aesthetic 'meanings' of the Sixties.

EDITORS (AND OTHERS) WRITE

URGES ‘ READER-ACTIVATION ’ MAGAZINES

Dear Editors: New publishers’ programs department: Kick Back Magazine.* Editorial theme: Certain ideas activate readers, whereas most merely are of passing interest.

A Magazine of Activating Ideas that boomerang profitably — to publish what someone will pick up, either to DO, himself, or to promote into practice.

Our analysis of magazines is that most are reflective momentarily, evoking only attention, not actual interest-participation. (Exceptions include Trace’s Directory — which does.) But there are those where published provocative plans and ideas are such that someone with authority says: ‘ Why don’t we? ’ And the Response fathers success — not just conceived, but acted upon. This is the age of innovation. Each new discovery sparks scores of new projects, with many more now hatching than ever before.

An undertaking (Kick Back Magazine) primarily for natural researchists, hound dogs for info, with bubbling ready-reference capacity.... Or, as title: ‘ Why Don’t We Do It ’ Magazine. Certainly the response-conscious reader will do more than write letters to editors — like a former associate, fecund in advertising promotion, who, when he heard an idea mentioned, would call out: ‘ Mine, that’s mine! ’

We’ve seen this work. Why hasn’t it been developed further? (Our excuse for insinuating connotation — ‘ Kick Back ’ — [is] that it is a newsstand title.)

Mr. & Mrs. Clarence VanVredenburg

** Not an actual magazine. The writers hope to induce several to utilize [the] principle. — Ed.*

T. S. ELIOT'S MESSAGE ON DEMOCRATIC LIFE

Dear Editors: The death of T. S. Eliot marks the passing of an era. Only Pound is left alive of that group of poets who changed the language in the period after World War I; and he is now senile and diffuse.

Because I imagined myself to be particularly in tune with Eliot's wave length, I found myself often defending him against attacks made by my friends. On the whole, it was always easier to attack Eliot than to defend him. For — what is one to do with a poet who calls himself a ' Royalist in politics, an Anglican in religion, and a classicist in Literature '? All of those things were of course anachronisms — to be credited to Eliot's particular upbringing and eccentricity. The trick in appreciating Eliot was to look beneath the surface. Few did.

Eliot has been called a square, a pompous bore, and a fake, whereas Allen Ginsberg is now regarded, even among the clean-shaven, tweedy literati, as a near-prophet. I think that Eliot, in his own way, accomplished in *The Hollow Men* and in *The Waste Land* the same thing that Ginsberg did in *Howl*. The difference is in the language. Whereas Eliot tried to stick to academic, conventional English, with arcane references thrown in, Ginsberg felt he had to resort to slang and neologisms. So far as the avant garde is concerned, the language is no longer sufficient and must be changed. But, in changing the language, it is not necessary to reject all the values of the past. Because Eliot did not smoke pot and did not wear a beard and did not support Mussolini, does not mean that he didn't have the sensibilities of a real artist.

Eliot represented the intensely-rational man, the moderate man who does not go to extremes to prove a point. He lived a quiet retiring life in a small English town. He was not involved in the hurly-burly literary scene. In this sense, he was a failure; because in the Twentieth Century, the rational, moderate man is invariably pushed aside by the

fanatics, the partisans and counter-partisans who fight and propagandize for one cause or another.

The great danger is that fanaticism often poses as altruism. Whole populations are taken in by it, believing that the greatest good will be achieved if only they believe in the ‘ leader.’ Then, in the final outcome, the followers are disillusioned.

The poet who wrote *The Hollow Men* saw this all very clearly. But he was not talking about life in a dictatorship; he was talking about life in England, a democratic society with safeguards against fanaticism — and with the knowledge that no political system can guard life from becoming insipid and the intellect from becoming hollow. I think this is Eliot’s great message; and he says it beautifully.

John Tryford

A COASTLINES RESPONSE TO LAWRENCE LIPTON

Dear Editors: It seems almost too silly to pursue this dialogue with Lawrence Lipton (Trace #53, p. 120) concerning publication of a poem of his [\[in\]](#) LIMBO, which had been previously accepted for the final COASTLINES. Nor do I object to Mr. Lipton’s having the last word. But, as an Editor of that final issue, I insist that the last word be accurate, at least.

There are errors of fact and, in my opinion, of judgment, in Mr. Lipton’s letter. (1) A petty point, but perhaps indicative: it was on page 12, not page 5, that we printed our original statement concerning the poem. (2) As far as I know, there were no ‘ delays ’ in the publication of this COASTLINES. Once it had been decided to devote the issue to Los Angeles, letters were sent [\[to\]](#) many previous, local contributors, including Mr. Lipton. In response to that letter from me, he submitted two poems, one of which I accepted. Very soon, typescripts went to the printer, proofs were returned to us and forwarded to the authors, and in due

course the issue was mailed to subscribers, with no more than twenty-four hours elapsing between each operation. (As for ‘ uncertainties ’ at LIMBO, even had we been aware of them, they would hardly have been the concern of COASTLINES Editors — unless these uncertainties concerned Mr. Lipton’s poem, and in which case he had several months during which to make them known.) (3) How does Mr. Lipton know that the respective readerships of LIMBO and COASTLINES overlapped ‘ by not more than two dozen copies ’? More precisely — what difference would it make if they did not overlap at all, or overlapped the entire readerships? Even beginners know that it has never been considered fair play, or very wise, to submit the same ms. to more than one periodical simultaneously, for the very reason that it might be accepted by more than one — leading to embarrassment (to the faint-hearted), public explanation (for the bolder), and possibly copyright entanglements (for the careless). To argue that the publications are in different countries seems to me merely a diversionary tactic. Which brings up point four: What does Mr. Lipton mean when he writes that he has ‘ never given any magazine publication rights beyond the borders of the country where published ’? In any case, whatever the nature of this gift from Mr. Lipton, its meaning surely has to be communicated to editors each time a ms. of his has been accepted. Why, then, did he not inform COASTLINES of its territorial rights, when we accepted his poem? I should think he might have done this as a matter of courtesy, if not of principle.

Eleanor R. Edelstein

‘ BEST POETS ’ CRITERION CALLED IN QUESTION

Dear Editors: One comes across George Hitchcock's statement (GIST, Vol. I, No. 4) '... will print what the editor considers the best poets now working in the United States. . . . ' Certainly it is Mr. Hitchcock's business to print what he wishes, after any fashion he chooses; however, one questions the soundness of such a policy. From this point of view, it would seem to exclude any serious and open-minded approach to 'the poem' for itself, irrespective of the name of the author. . . . Perhaps it is even a stupid attitude.

Any editor who trusts his own judgment this much must be taken seriously, even literally. Remember: he says 'the best poets.' Certainly one could not hope that any editor could be such a wizard and possess the magic ability to pick out the best poets in America . . . until read Obviously, we have our man. I am not trying to throw mud at Mr. Hitchcock: it simply happens to be raining today

I have begun to bring out COERCION again, after five years' absence. I am in need of great poets, and would appreciate it if someone with a gift for picking out the best in the U.S.A. would kindly lend a hand. But I can't be serious. My next issue (out by the time this letter appears) contains what many would judge to be good poems; but whether the poets (Dave Rasey, Will Inman, Paul Washington, etc.) will ever fit the tag 'best,' I cannot say. This probably is not the concern of anyone now living. A dead-serious, unmerciful attitude toward poetry being offered during this current mimeo-revolution, this revolution of the new romantics, etc. is both questionable and hazardous — for the individual.

In 1958-59, when Coercion Review first appeared, the reaction was good. This time, we would hope for a little less noise . . . wish no subscribers, etc. Most of the copies are being mailed out to editors of other little magazines as exchange copies.

Clarence Major

WILD CHERRIES

by Robert Davis Harris, Jr.

Bees make honey ...
Bees make honey
 from wild cherries
Wild cherries that have
 fallen ...
Fallen to the ground
 and dirty.

ISSUE P. 322 · SCAN P. 28

JOHN KEATS: PIONEER OF MODERN EXISTENTIALIST THOUGHT

by Edward Carben

Although John Keats was born over a hundred y[ears] before Albert Camus, his thinking was closer to Camus and oth[er] Twentieth Century existentialists than it was to his contemporaries.¹ Keats stood unique among the major Romantic writers of his tim[e] because of his emphasis upon positive individualism and his penchant for relativism.

(Though Camus was such an uncompromising individualist that he refused to have the term 'existentialist' applied to him, he is alm[ost] universally regarded as a leading exponent of the existential point of view. Even though existentialism is a way of thinking rather than a system, the elements of positive individualism and relativism are generally common to its adherents and are embraced by such diverse thinkers as Heidegger, Sartre, Tillich, Bultmann, Maritain, Marcel, Ortega, Unamuno, Beauvoir, Jaspers, Buber, and Berdyaev.) While Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, and Byron favored individualism and abhorred systems in theory, in practice they all, in one way or another, either sought absolutes for themselves or wished to impose absolutes upon others.

. . . one must say of their poetry as a whole that it represents a deliberate campaign to express philosophical and religious truths for the benefit of their fellow-men. They glorify their art not on aesthetic but on moral and spiritual grounds, exalting creative imagination as the key which unlocks the secrets of the universe. (Religious Trends in English Poetry, Hoxie Neale Fairchild, Columbia University Press — 1949, III,

p. 452.)

Because Professor Fairchild has difficulty in explaining see[ming] contradictions in the thought of Keats, he agrees with Prof. H. W. Garrod that Keats reveals his greatness ‘only when the senses cap[ture] him, when he finds truth in beauty, that is to say, when he does n[ot] trouble to find truth at all.’ If Keats is understood in terms of modern existential thought, these seeming contradictions disappear, and one concludes that Keats was equal to any of the major Romantic writers in the profundity of this thought, if indeed he did not surpass them in the reasonableness of his logic.

¹ SEE DOUGLAS BUSH, MYTHOLOGY AND THE ROMANTIC TRADITION IN

English Poetry (Pageant – 1937, p. 81). While Professor Bush does not ex[plain] the basic reasons for Keats’ contemporaneity, he does note: ‘Keats speaks [to] us directly, almost as one of ourselves; we do not need to approach [him] through elaborate reconstructions of dead philosophies or dead poetic fashions.’ See also Amy Lowell, John Keats (Houghton Mifflin, 1925, I, p. 33). — ED.

Since the works of Keats antedate every publication of both the German and French existentialists, it cannot be said, obviously, that he formally belonged to that school of thought. Nevertheless, because of the effects of severe suffering — that ‘suffering unto death’ of which Kierkegaard spoke — Keats came to the same basic conclusions as modern existentialists.² Repeatedly during his short life, through misfortune piled upon misfortune, Keats was brought to those existential ‘moments of truth’ — suffering, conflict, guilt, death³ — which resulted in freedom. Like Sartre’s Mathieu Delarue, he perpetually stood on the heights looking into the murky waters below. As he contemplates suicide, Delarue stands on the Pont Neuf, looking down into the waters of the Seine:

All hawsers cut, nothing now could hold him back: here was his freedom, and how horrible it was! Deep down

within him he felt his heart throbbing wildly; one gesture, the mere unclasping of his hands, and I would have been

Mathieu. Dizziness rose softly over the river; sky and bridge dissolved: nothing remained but himself and the water; it heaved up to him and rippled round his dangling legs. The water, where his future lay. At the moment it is true, I'm going to kill myself. Suddenly he decided not to do it. He decided: it shall merely be a trial. Then he was again upon his feet and walking on, gliding over the crest of a dead star. Next time, perhaps. (The Reprieve, Jean-[Paul] Sartre, transl. Eric Sutton, Knopf — 1947, pp. 364-65.)

In the face of death, Mathieu finds freedom. Thus, life is reduced to its simplest terms, and the way is cleared for the future.

There were periods when Keats wavered in his desire for life and longed for death (see Letters, pp. 177, 504, and 522). Before sailing for Italy, he obtained a bottle of laudanum so that he could commit suicide when his illness proved incurable. The drug was removed from his room before he could take it, however (see John Keats, Amy Lowell — 1925, pp. 467 and 523). That he did in fact choose [life] rather than death is a remarkable testimony to the endurance of [the] human spirit; for he accepted none of the traditional answers to [the] question of existence, answers which might have comforted him. He would have agreed with Sartre that man is doomed to be free and 'subjectivity must be the starting point.' He wrote:

² Søren Kierkegaard, born in Copenhagen in 1813, is usually considered the father of modern existentialist philosophy. His works were published in Germany, but he went unrecognized until the Twenties of our century. Thus, with the exception of Nietzsche and Dostoevski, existential thought leapt historically from 1855, the year Kierkegaard died, to the publication of Sein und Zeit, Erste Hälfte by Martin Heidegger, in 1927. ³ See The Letters of John Keats, ed. Maurice Buxton Forman (Oxford — 1952, p. 133). Cited hereafter as Letters. Karl Jaspers calls suffering, conflict, guilt and death 'limit-situations,' crises through which one either develops into something larger and —
Ed.

FINER OR LOSES ONE'S SOUL. SEE THE SELF AND ITS HAZARDS: A GUIDE TO THE
THOUGHT OF KARL JASPERS BY E. L. ALLEN (HODDER &

Stoughton — 1953, pp. 32-33). — ED.

The common cognomen of this world among the misguided and superstitious is 'a vale of tears' from which we are to be redeemed by a certain arbitrary interposition of God and taken to Heaven — What a little circumscribed straightened notion! (Letters, p. 334.)

In place of such traditional answers, Keats asked himself certain fundamental questions: What is the meaning and purpose of human existence? Should the poet exist at all in a world of evil and suffering? Should his expression be self-centered, or should it be rooted in the heart of man and human life?

Since Keats, like Nietzsche, had concluded that 'dead are all gods,' he had to answer his questions in that light. Experience had taught him that he could expect no help from the world:

This is the world — thus we cannot expect to give way many hours to pleasure — Circumstances are like Clouds continually gathering and bursting — While we are laughing the seed of some trouble is put into the wide arable land of events — while we are laughing it sprouts it grows and suddenly bears a poison fruit which we must pluck . . . (Letters, p. 314.)

Thus, he was alone; he had only himself. In accepting this fate, his alienation was augmented further by the scorn of society. The crowd — the 'ciphers,' Kierkegaard called them — is invariably suspicious of the individual, and the 'rebel' is always considered a threat to the established order; he creates discomfort and jealousy in those less alive and intelligent than himself. It was this brutality of the crowd which caused Keats, in his weaker moments, to cry out in anguish.

Existentialism, Jean-Paul Sartre, transl. Bernard Frechtman (Philosophical Library – 1947, p. 15). Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra, transl. by A. Tille (Dutton – 1933, p. 69). See Fairchild, III, p. 452. See Søren Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death, transl. by Walter Lowrie (Princeton University Press – 1941, p. 51). Camus termed him ‘l’homme révolté.’ The world typically crucifies its individualists. In Camus’ The Stranger, Meursault is executed supposedly for murder, but in reality he was himself murdered in the name of justice, because he was not like the average man. See transl. by Stuart Gilbert (Vintage – 1946). – Ed.

(For Kierkegaard, this choice of being a positive individual or part of the crowd was in reality a choice between living comically and living vitally. While the comical man spends his life being something he is not, the vital man discovers the distinctive essence of his own being and pursues it as his life, defending it as part of his very existence. For Sartre, this distinction lies between being-in-itself [l'être-en-soi] and being-for-itself [l'être-pour-soi]. Sartre considers the man who exists pour-soi, sincere, while the man who attempts to get by as en-soi, acts in bad faith [la mauvaise foi] with the world. Heidegger's corresponding division is between natural objects [Vorhandenheit] and human life [Dasein]. While, technically, all men belong to the category of Dasein, those who do not choose to live as individuals are behaving in the manner of the Vorhandenheit.) But Keats knew that if he were to go on living, there was only one answer to these problems — a commitment to suffering; and he accepted it. Like Camus' Sisyphus who had displeased the gods through his independence and concern for humanity, Keats understood that he was doomed perpetually to roll a huge stone to the top of a mountain, a stone which, once the top was reached, inevitably slipped back down to the bottom, where the painful process had to

be initiated all over again. The gods had thought that
there
was no worse punishment; and they were right, for
Sisyphus
was conscious. He knew — just as Keats knew — that
there
was no hope of ultimate success.¹

Nevertheless, Keats' commitment to suffering did not
become a futile wallowing in self-pity. Once he had
chosen a
philosophy of life rather than of death, suffering became
an
important weapon in the battle against his own
finitude. As
Camus has written:

There is but one truly serious philosophical
problem and
that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not
worth
living amounts to answering the fundamental
question
of philosophy. All the rest — whether or not the
world
has three dimensions, whether the mind has nine
or
twelve categories — comes afterwards. These are
games;
one must first answer. (The Myth of Sisyphus, p.
3.) . . . I
must admit that the struggle implies a total
absence of
hope (which has nothing to do with despair), a
continual
rejection (which must not be confused with
renunciation), and a conscious dissatisfaction
(which

must not be compared to immature unrest). (Ibid.,
p.
23.)

For this reason, existentialism has been defined as 'the homelessness of man.' See J. Glenn Gray, The Idea of Death in Existentialism (The Journal of Philosophy, XLVIII — Mar. 1, 1951, p. 114). See also Martin Heidegger, Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry, Existence and Being, transl. by Werner Brock (Vision — Ed.

— 1949).¹ SEE ALBERT CAMUS, THE MYTH OF SISYPHUS AND OTHER

Essays (Vintage — 1955, pp. 88-90).¹¹ Ibid., p. 89: ' . . . Sisyphus is the absurd hero. He is, as much through [his] passions as through his torture. His scorn of the gods, his hatred of death, his passion for life won him that unspeakable penalty in which the whole being is exerted toward accomplishing nothing. . . . He goes back down to [the] plain. It is during that return, that pause, that Sisyphus interests me. . . . ' — Ed.

[Once] one has chosen life, this philosophical tension of the subjective-[object]ive dialectic can become a vehicle for finding meaning in the [wor]ld; not ultimate meaning, but meaning for here and now. This is [wh]y Keats could write such lines as: ' Welcome joy and welcome [sorro]w.' And Camus (again in Sisyphus):

One does not discover the absurd without being tempted to write a manual of happiness. . . . Happiness and the absurd are two sons of the same earth. They are inseparable. . . . I leave Sisyphus at the foot of the mountain! One always finds one's burden again. But Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks. He too concludes that all is well. This universe henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile. Each atom of that stone, each mineral flake of that night-filled mountain, in itself forms a world. The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy. (Pp. 90-91.)

Keats realized that it was in the paradox — the verbalization of the ‘[a]bsurd’ — that the essential meaning of life was to be found. Not [o]nly was suffering necessary to make an individual worthwhile — to [sch]ool an intelligence and make it a soul — but it was essential, para[doxi]cally enough, even to those transitory moments of pleasure which [he] was able to enjoy in the world. Beauty and mortality, joy and [me]lancholy, good and evil, life and death — all were indissolubly [link]ed.¹² Keats, as had Socrates in ancient times and as did Freud in [mod]ern times,¹³ knew that the pleasure-pain paradox was one of the [essen]tial laws of existence. He indicated what would happen if this [la]w of paradoxes were suspended: ‘. . . the Hawk would lose his [bre]ast of Robins and the Robin his of Worms — the Lion must [starv]e as well as the swallow.’ (Letters, p. 315.) Because Keats embraced the paradoxes involved in existence — not [o]nly as inexorable laws of nature, but as means of human spiritual [growt]h — he was able to identify with the entire universe of nature and man. He had learned, as had his Endymion,¹ the importance [of] ‘being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable r[each]ing after fact and reason.’ (Letters, pp. 70-71.) He had deci[ded] that one must forego striving for the ethereal, embrace suffering, [and] live within one’s ‘natural sphere’ — the earth. He had discovered, [as] had Endymion, that by detaching oneself from all desire in regard [to] sky and earth, one gains both sky and earth; by surrendering one[’]s life, one finds it. In his acceptance of this paradox, he was in a[gree]ment with mystics of all ages, both secular and religious.¹ And wh[en] Keats spoke of mysteries and doubts — although he was spea[king] primarily of literature in the foregoing passage — it seems that [he] considered Negative Capability as a virtue desirable in man himse[lf]. He said that Negative Capability is a quality of ‘a Man of Achie[ve]ment, especially in Literature’ — apparently not in

literature alone.

¹² SEE JOHN KEATS, ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE AND ODE ON MELANCHOLY. ¹³ SEE THE DIALOGUES OF PLATO, ED. WILLIAM CHASE

Greene (Wright — 1927, p. 52). In his Phaedo, Plato relates an observation made by Socrates concerning the relationship between pleasure and pain, on the removal of his chains before execution. See also Sigmund Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle, transl. by C. J. Hubback (International Psychoanalytic Press — 1932). ¹ See John Keats, Endymion: A Poetic Romance. — ED.

In keeping with his mystical proclivities, Keats possessed [an] existential theory of knowledge which was primarily personal [and] intuitive. He wrote:

. . . axioms in philosophy are not axioms until they are proved upon our pulses: We read fine things but never feel them to the full until we have gone the same steps as the Author. (Letters, p. 141.)

In Lamia, Keats indicates what happens when ‘reason’ is purs[ued] to its extreme conclusion:

Do not all charms fly
At the mere touch of cold philosophy?
There was an awful rainbow once in heaven:
We know her woof, her texture; she is given
In the dull catalogue of common things.
Philosophy will clip an Angel’s wings,
Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,
Empty the haunted air, and gnomed mine —
Unweave a rainbow, as its erewhile made
The Tender-personed Lamia melt into a shade.
(II, lines 229-238.)

¹ See T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets* (Harcourt Brace & Co. — 1943, p. 15). Eliot paraphrases Saint John of the Cross, the Spanish mystic: ‘In order to arrive at what you do not know / You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance. . . . And what you own is what you do not own / And where you are is where you are not.’ Gabriel Marcel, in his *Être et Avoir*, makes a distinction between being, which is freedom from encumbrance, and having,

which makes it difficult for being to exist. See also — ED.

SØREN KIERKEGAARD, THE GOSPEL OF SUFFERING AND THE LILIES OF

the Field, transl. by David and Lillian Swenson (Augsburg — 1948). — ED.

[This] is not to say, however, that Keats lacked respect for thought. [Alth]ough he had doubts about the value of ‘consequitive reasoning’ [in] arriving at truth, he at the same time recognized the value in ‘study [of] thought’ (Letters, pp. 67 and 133).¹ He was very much like [Cam]us’ man of the ‘absurd,’ who ‘does not absolutely scorn reason, [but] admits the irrational.’¹ Similarly, Kierkegaard felt that academi[cians] are unfit to explain life, because they separate themselves from [it]. He referred to thought that is abstract as ‘thought without a [thinker].’¹ [I]t is often in art that the intuitive individualist finds his place in the [wor]ld; and this was certainly true of Keats. He said: ‘I find that I [cann]ot exist without poetry — without eternal poetry’ (Letters, [p. 2]21). Not only did art become his means of expression, but — as so [often] happens with modern existentialists — it became in large [meas]ure a means of salvation, a way of life. His Ode on a [Gre]cian Urn concludes with the words: ‘Beauty is truth, truth [be]auty, — that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know’ ([lin]es 49-50). Thus, when earth is all there is, aesthetic style — impart[ing] good form to life — becomes of prime importance.¹ In choosing to become an ‘apostle of beauty,’ Keats once more [chos]e life rather than death, not only for himself, but for mankind. [He] said: ‘I find there is no worthy pursuit but the idea of doing [som]e good for the world’ (Letters, p. 133). Not only did he [con]tinuously emphasize the importance of ‘character, disinterestedness, and fine doing’ (Ibid., pp. 79 and 373), but through utter [un]selfishness and devotion to others, he proved his humanitaria[nism]. As have most modern existentialists, he made a definite commitm[ent] to the cause of human life. As

Jean-Paul Sartre said, in Existen[ti]alism (pp. 19-20):

¹ See William Ernest Hocking, *Types of Philosophy* (Charles Scribner's Sons — 1929, p. 390): 'The great mystics, though relying on [intui]tion for the final leap of knowledge, have commonly been keen reasoners.'¹ See Camus, *Sisyphus*, p. 28.
¹ — ED.

SEE KIERKEGAARD, CONCLUDING UNSCIENTIFIC POSTSCRIPT, TRANSL. BY David Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton University Press — 1941, pp. 85 and 296). See also Karl Jaspers, *Reason and* — ED.

EXISTENZ, IN WALTER KAUFMANN, EXISTENTIALISM FROM DOSTOEVSKY to Sartre (*Meridian* — 1956, p. 164). ¹ From an existential point of view, it is difficult to distinguish between [aesthetics and ethics]. *Ibid.* Kierkegaard (p. 314): 'Existing is an art.' — ED.

When we say that man chooses his own self, we mean that every one of us does likewise; but we also mean that

in making his choice he also chooses all men. In fact, in creating the man that we want to be, there is not a single one of our acts which does not at the same time create an image of man as we think he ought to be. To choose to be this or that is to affirm at the same time the

value of what we choose, because we can never choose evil. We always choose the good, and nothing can be good for us without being good for all.²

Keats, who would have agreed with Camus that 'There is no [sun] without shadow, and it is essential to know the night' (*Sisyphus*, p. 91), saw the danger of ringing the entire world in permanent d[ark]ness. It is for this reason that he, like Camus, always returned to [the] nature of man — to existential man, to man as he actually exist[s]. Camus wrote: 'In a man's attachment to life there is somet[hing] stronger than all the ills in the world. The body's judgment is as g[ood] as the mind's, and the body shrinks from annihilation.' (*Ibid.*, p. 8.) Keats recognized this same truth,

in writing:

What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth — whether it existed before or not — for I have the same Idea of all our Passions as of Love they are all in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty. (Letters, p. 67.)

He understood that it was necessary for man to be in uncertainty[es], mysteries, and doubts. He realized that this was necessary, not o[nly] for the continued growth of man, but for his very survival.

² Also see Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, transl. by Bernard Frechtman (Philosophical Library — 1948, p. 71); and Miguel de Unamuno, *Tragic Sense of Life*, transl. by J. Fitch (Dover, 1954, p. 24). — Ed.

HOMAGE TO DENMARK

by Kenneth Bernard

The old cat Tommy's mouth
Is my text for today.
Gums: pink and firm, but filmy.
Teeth: erupted. Repeat, erupted.
The salivary is functioning.
Heaven, hell, and all directionals
To assist salvation ...

Read ulcer, maybe whiskers:
All is not well.

JUDSON CREWS DRAWS A

ISSUE P. 331 · SCAN P. 37

PROFILE FOR THE LOVING CRITIC

The artist (poet, musician, or dancer — as well as painter) has always been a copyist. His vaunted creativity has always been only a knack for mimicry.

The traditional artist has attempted to copy the order he sees in nature. The modern artist has copied the disorder in nature. Then came the avant-garde modern artist who copied the order in the disorder in nature. And currently, the ultra avant-garde modern copies the disorder in the order in the disorder in nature.

In view of the fact that the artist is not creative, but only imitative, it should surprise no one that a monkey or a machine is able to do his work as well or better than he himself. Thirty years ago, a friend and I discovered that we could write excellent poems by sorting out nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc. in various hats and then picking them out according to predetermined, arbitrary patterns. Mechanically, this setup was crude; however, the principle is virtually the same as that of the electronic computer. Certainly we could not do 150 poems a minute (it probably took us the better part of half a day); but on the other hand, how long does it take an operator to program a computer to do 150 poems a minute?

The question, of course, is purely academic. I know the machine has me licked on the factor of speed, and it has me equaled on the factor of quality. However, I am writing a brief for man as against either monkeys or machines. And it is my plea that the question of speed (and for that matter, the question of quality) is beside the point.

Who needs 150 poems a minute? What we need is 150 good appreciators of poems.

Even without resorting to the ‘ Crews hat method,’ practically any self-respecting poet can produce more poems in six months than the entire reading public is likely to

appreciate in a lifetime. Even after thirty years, not more than about one-half of the 200 or 300 hat [poe]ms written by my friend and me ever have been published. And [h]ow much appreciation these have received is highly problematical.

But again, this begs the question. There is, in any case, as much appreciation — little though it may be — for the monkey's painting [as] for the man's. And there is as much appreciation for the poems of [the] computer as for the poems of Crews' hats.

No, the artist is not creative and neither is the machine — and the [mar]ket for the 'creations' of either is practically nil.

Meanwhile, there is one precious thing the man has that [the] machine has not. This is a boundless ego — a swollen pride in w[hat] he chooses to call his creations. Which puts an entirely new light [on] the question. There certainly is very little appreciation for the artist unless account is taken of this matter of self-appreciation.

How much self-appreciation did the computer get out of doing 1[50] poems a minute? 'His' self-satisfaction was exactly zero; and I [would] say that the satisfaction of the prize picture-painting monkey was n[ot] perceptibly greater. It is taken for granted that the monkey's [prize] painting was undeniably better than, say, a painting by Dwight Eisen[ho]wer; but the key to man's superiority over both monkey [and] machine lies in vast enhancement of vanity experienced through th[e] joy of creation (copyist though he may be!).

Well do I remember the words of my friend as he pieced togeth[er] the last line of that first hat poem, trembling as he was in a ve[ry] uncool manner. 'Man,' he said, 'dig this cool bit like creation.' (M[y] friend and I, you will note, already were beatniks, even in those dust[-]bowl dreary depression days of the Thirties.) It is exactly here that man most clearly resembles his Creator ('An[d] God saw every thing that he

had made, and behold, it was very good.’ — Genesis 1:31).

Speaking of God, I am reminded that man’s major faculty is critical, not creative. The importance of the artist has long been a shrinking one, while the critic’s ascendancy has fast been expanding.

Did it occur to the monkey, or to any other monkey, to give the monkey a prize for his precious picture? Has any gadget come for[ward] with a proposition that all superior gadgets should quit work and be awarded Guggenheims? Has the race of orangutans ev[er] suggested Oscars for unusual acting?

No — it was a man, a critic, who suggested that RCA 301 had rivaled Eliot, Donne, and Blake. Left to his own devices, and not being swayed by the poet’s false modesty, he probably would have said he hoped some day, working hard, to be as good as Edgar Guest (making them rhyme) or as good as Fulke Greville (some loving critic explicating all his good).

No — the machine will never advance an opinion of his own. So he has slight chance of ever getting ahead — or, for that matter, of being thrown in jail, or shot for treason.

These are domains wherein man excels.

Judson Crews

GIL ORLOVITZ: POEMS

ART OF THE SONNET: 166

[H]ow shall a man be human if he is not me?
 [y]ears thicken at the intervals. I slap at my eyes
 [in] the dark — do they not sting me through the most
 [in]visible grids? I crouch over my hungers, those
 [tha]t have the secret low saturation — no animals
 [ca]n do this man justice, for he is only
 [a] man, nobody but me. Turn the others
 [ou]t for actors, christs, eggs, transcendental
 [ep]idermies mounted on the monstrous membranes of
 the cow-cow,
 but I am to be kept, yes?
 [be]cause, picking myself apart, I hunt
 [an]d trap my parts, come on myself fat,
 [ca]rved, part alive, part dead, a terror, a fury,
 [al]one human because partly, rising, bury.

MEDIAN 7

of the blond blank tongewood chair
 I make the crotch the family crest,
 void, hairless, lambent with lyrelight
 to backrest on ones laurel crucifix
 while through the windowmaze the bullseye
 sacrifices the bloodshot trajectory,
 but stray not thou lampooned lamb
 drawn and martyred on the woolgathered
 transparencies mounted on mouthcurved
 memory, the rump of rigid tresses
 pressed against the plastic plumbing of
 absented form traced by siphons
 lathed inside out, the nerve sucked

through mildly hammered silences,
the thin black metal legs stabled
in the aproned torso
that bareness convey vented virginity
in gripped typhooning buttocks,
the thrust of vacuums against the temples,
the tilt of hips hurled by prim
proxy, nothing so sorreling the dusk
than the menstrual saddlesail thou
moonmint of the shadowshale,

MEDIAN

The number of this Median is cropped from the top of the page in the scan. — ED.

play of ferned cities under the hand
towers kneel between the chairs
and the fingers of mammoths
the back of the ruptured head,
sit down, calm skeleton,
bereaved by touchlessness,
of pale amber irises,
sapphires coasting through the drowse,
cavities of crocheting fishes
through the lowerlip subterraneans,
whatever may avail the funneling
outlined by lipoid loins
overflow the harping fundament
the throne tentative to cathartic
bent on doubling gravity
to eagleswanned ceilingsips,
by oviparous camouflage
will not, willing, occupy an empty
in the itch of luxurious estrogens,
not the god of ghosted motives
I must in alls fair hypnosis

adjacent exile to his manmade moult

MEDIAN 42

absolutely still with apes
the morning happens like christs
these crossbar mariners
the boy shinnies the mainmast
chainmailed in opal and gold studs
the sails absolutely still with apes
the long shadows like canopeners
cutting out the manholes
everywhere for the moment he
drops down the trafficlites like
the bulls decorated horns
the morning happens like
christs absolutely still with apes
flying iron pennants from
the boys towertops with each box
of god youve nothing to lose but your loins
nothing to lose but your tights
the sea biting into the land like
a pack of surly white mongrels
into the mainmast skyscrapers
absolutely still with apes

MEDIAN 30

This page is cropped at the binding edge; bracketed line-openings are reconstructions. Orlovitz's in-line slashes are preserved. — —
ED.

ED.

[pi]cking the airfoiled windows higher
[and] Jack and the Morguestalk,
[st]uff them with gazes, the rags
all replicas —
[my] eye moving like a cat /
[rig]id as a rakish /

[scr]ewing tinfoil celery /
[m]oving like a flat shadow behind my eye /
[?]ck climbs the Morguestalk shaped like a windfunnel
/
[the] cyclone is flat consciousness /
[the] Ogre is a windowcleaner high above the dreams /
[the] snow of ovaries settles on the windows /
[Jam] is the Ogres name /
[he] wants to see his father /

to build an apartmenthouse
[wa]y up the morguestalk
[...] which to take circumcized

CONJUGATES: 1

Gil Orlovitz

a long man sucking his knuckles
out of the hung side of beef distance
gives his nipples to gaspfish
that erect them for female amphitheatres
worn for bloodcatchers on his hams

signs of famine glitter in his nostrils
brains stuck as barbs in his fists
his chaste mucosae launch underground
fish an idiots feather tickles
the bats in his armpit they fly
out to mat his body into an apes
he lays claim to the hung side
of beef distance he eats hairily

his knuckles raw from motherhood he feeds
them to children oscillographed on gelatin dunes
he squats in the mens room of a mirage
he gives shiny new claustrophobias
to his softwon angels he laments
the pictographs cheeping about their heads
cut off he has a coffin tattooed
on his rump Lazarus sticking out between

I pickle the long man for the yeast of green
short of distance I must go underground I listen
for crystals magnetic knives in their teeth the nuclei
tap out misleading codes for my giant
brain hanging like a hairbrush distance hungry
for the truth I seek stunted captives clinging
as sponges to my coffin I lay about me with
a stifled yawn grovelling for silvermoss appendages
from the moon grinding my beef exceeding slow
tattooing a mirage on my amphitheatred
mother I threaten her with the violent audiences
of humped feet offbeating in crippled
unison and the daft dunes lamely drift
obscuring the angels wingprints on my skeleton
how shall I not long for man under the wingpits
of bats hanging sound up in effigy
I catch a sibling by the toe and throw him to the apes
who tear him into strips of fathers I go
back with a glitter of nuances under my nose
you tickle a long man under the eaves of his
innuendoes
you recant absolutes for the sake of the apes pitted in
the hung
side of beef distance nothing but an angel with holes
in his flutewings as you claim motherhood the hair of
the dog
you eat off the mat of his hams as the bats blackball

you for guanocide in your amphitheatred blindness
nothing
but a long man for your tapping stick avoiding the
nucleus
potholes father dear father come numb with me now
the pandora coffin alive with jackinthebox sons
your stuckup Lazarusnose rubbing up against your
vast

catbrain your collection of the soiled vests of
aphrodisiaphiles
stripping your clothes from the long man you hang
yourself
in effigy the gaspfish hooked to your sullen nipples
your knuckles performing as intestines unlimbering to
the hairbrush

strokes

of distance as your vesicles put out to sea the long
cilia of your mucosae towing female amphitheatres
emptying your blood to the angelbats cheeping out of
the godcave

long man put on the winter drawers of shadow

he is naked in the sight of the bored
I am grouped about him in a trice of trinity
you have not killed him with your crystal knives only
gambled

magnetically

what if we were to part before long
still hungry

BEST ALWAYS, PUERCO

by A. Fredric Franklyn

*This is a six-page spatial poem whose shifting indentation and columnar interplay are integral to the work but cannot be faithfully reproduced from the scan. It is given here as a linear reading that keeps the poem's interwoven strands — a personal meditation, italic quotations from Sir Thomas Browne's *Hydriotaphia*, dictionary definitions, and chromosomal glyphs. A few cropped line-openings are bracketed. — Ed.*

now these uglinesses appear
so easily with
the years
the small crimes of being and
it's a tightness somewhere

‘ . . . in the saclike dilation of the alimentary canal
beyond the
esophagus, or gullet, in which the earlier stages of
digestion take place.’
attracting the razored regard
of beau monde snobs
not important what
they think but
it's there and it's
not pleasant not
nourishing
to
my self-esteem i don't know
why it wears so ill my
little share of
the amenities why
it's so stupidly difficult
to be personable or
to warm this avoirdupois
generating perspiration but not

warmth and my dirt-blond
head and these elbows
and hands and
this cyrano-appendage they
don't all come quite to-
gether no
music in any of these prides
in the larger sizes (when we
think of a morning
[drinker] why
is it we
always picture a gentle
man or
an unused woman)

*From the Hydriotaphia of Sir Thomas Browne: ‘
We*

present not these as any strange sight or spectacle
unknown to your eyes, who have beheld the best of
Urnes, and noblest variety of Ashes; Who are your
self

no slender master of Antiquities, and can daily
command the view of so many Imperiall faces;

Which

raiseth your thoughts unto old things, and
consideration of times before you,'

before (adv.): In time past; previously. (prep.): In front
of; ahead of. (conj.): Sooner than; rather than.

'When even living men were Antiquities; when the
living
might exceed the dead,'

atom (n.): (From L., fr. Gr. atomos, — uncut,
indivisible; as n., atom, fr. a- not plus tomos —
cut.)

'and to depart this world, could not be properly
said, to
go unto the greater number.'

vigintillion: 1000 novemdecillions (fr. & u. s. systems);
1,000,000 novemdecillions (british and german
systems)

'And so run up your thoughts upon the ancient of
dayes, the Antiquaries truest object, unto whom
the

eldest parcels are young,'

$$X + X = \tau \quad X + Y = \tau \quad \tau + \tau =$$

'and earth it self an Infant; and without Aegyptian
account makes but small noise in thousands.'

even the wishes as
seasonal constructs seem

as divided in their displacement as those
exquisite styles the
clothes we cannot wear
well we
are not beautiful the
manner we are not to ape [on]
summer streets the
long afternoons that bring us
no sign that bring us
to this and we
are fragmented
into many worlds
a softness and then
in too many
worlds and then
and then as quick the
look that hurts so
unreasonably and
we keep it
why
a candyball of pain in
that saclike dilation in-
the chest and
knowing
many worlds and
knowing
saclike dilations a

pointer pointing us
on to
a great deal more of
this

kissing audrey was like pulling the strength out and
leaving a sweetness that didn't cover anything. she was
two

years older than me. she had those [power]ful legs of all
the
women in that part of the family. they all had [the]se
straight
legs with soft curves and painfully clean dimpled knees.
[An]na was always crying. she was younger and
developed
these same [legs] when she began to be a girl. and
another
girl cousin dis[appeared]. even her name is gone. i
sometimes
think we all went to school [tog]ether. but i think we
couldn't
have. just we should have. i thought i [was going to] be
[an
a]ctor. my father was. and my mother. but they said [be]
an
agricultural chemical engineer. that's how much they
knew
about — i'm a bookstore clerk.
the narrow young
heads and
bodies the ones they
[ma]ke clothes for who
[are] so right they
make the hand
itch for
a pencil to
looking to
capture that dominion with
[beca]use that is the ideal because
exc[el]lent and
[b]eautiful and
i seem to add these uglinesses
adding manners and pour[ing]
they aren't important

i mean these slicing glances
haberdashery clerks but i

but they do
their cutting and i
well i
am not proof
against them not
very big at all a
small knowledge of
wines and set a
nice table but the
careful style a little
evident i know like
just too much even
now on the fork and
taking liquids milk and water and even
colas openly with meals which
is a mistake the
head of hair that
no amount of shaping is
ever going to barber and
it all seems so small but
i guess it isn't i
guess it isn't all that
small i
think i'd like so much to
have half the graces and
generosity of spirit that
i have feet and i wait
for that to come of
course be-

[in] angers i
wait
for that
i wait
for it to

begin happening some-
(these lengths) to
get from one
[s]elf-betrayal to
[th]e next and they
[w]ouldn't be supportable
[ot]herwise well one
thing anyway well
[n]arrow ties i too
[c]an wear these and they
[l]ook good in the way
[they] should when i
find a collar deep enough i
[(ame]rican) to close a-
[aro]und the thickness of
[m]y throat my
it's filthy if i
couldn't have that write
on hierro
in lingotes
[co]nejillo de indias that's
'The Rapidity of Sleep ' that's

A. Fredric
Franklyn

Focus bino farside springrainfatten river
Study refinery downstream (20-tank farm cracker shed)
Light by river humpivot monster eye eye cyclopean
probe night
No penetration far bank you and others flat wait
scruboak cottonwood
Fuzz on light farm cracker (six altogether rifle sidearm)
Four wait hear plan give low slow clear
Whet knives (what four?) not so many anymore
But enough enough to do
Through it all bloody war immunity you gave the oil
refinery
Thought it yours and those who followed
Never was never will be ... you know it now
This time tomorrow if they want it let them filter every
cloud
Tank 5 trigger any fool tell you space will cushion
isolate
You know better you still remember how the big one
started
Tank 5 farm altogether cracker too but nitro
This time there won't be nitro (cracker farm everything)
Party party come to party what they rake the ashes for
Go last night union hall padlock now swaggershit rattle
lock hour hour
Break window back window stay night rancour night
Lone lone vast hall you led how many ready sharp
Seat row row row empty row mock rage (shake rattle
lockshake
bantysuck)

Platform stood goaded thousand quasi-crises
prosperous
Then strike real strike somehow somewhere got to be
war
Picket line turtle car tavern fight bitter crud guano
Gone all gone car home saving self-respect
Family men defected first puzzle apologetic
Some stay even they spook by death accidental ...
company flux
refrigerated
By a wandering 30-30 aimed across the river at a
searchlight
Yellpaper yell bloody murder for the early capture
you and four who even now stay on
[...] no more (sharp though) hone ready for the final
carve
[ot]hers? Hell! Contemptible! Forgot or never knew what
union IS
[p]ower concentration deliberate amoral
[th]ousand thousand skinny little fingers wrapped into
one godawful fist
[en]ormous irrefutable
[fo]rgot or never knew ... but I? The game is almost over.
[I have] not won. I have not lost.
[num]b paper swaddle wax bundle babe (hell tonight
cold tomorrow)
[?]d day hell ever forget accidental one years ago
[?]er tiger fight tiger leg arm scar forever fluid rainbow
roar hell
[del]irium for a moment to four sharp knives on their
haunches by the talking
river
[ni]ght by the two hells in your face
[a]ngry ragged craze-hellwolfish they have been hunted
now they hunt
[...]m stare over river where you once upon a time

[...] your laughter sweat and dreaming
[pl]aster hummy flashy eye
[num]b shirt jacket zip pregnancy ... now it is time
[...] again make sure: you cross they gun eye cyclopean
[...]w lichen fire here give time you leave bundle baby
 Tank 5
[th]en eye rivulet to hell ... first one yellow stinks in the
 morning

[...]le slow wade out ... river now not voice dark eternal
[som]ething feel ... be felt by ... something fight
[...]h push push the river back to ice ... high ice
[...] belt BANG smack head smack bullet behind your
 side river
[...]f turn brief to witness blur fight four dim figures
 though die now never know who why

ISSUE P. 348 · SCAN P. 54

THE ARTISTRY OF A HORNMAN

by Henri Montandon

Ragtime beats of gadfly jazz bands
Combo up a sense of conjuring;
Beaten tracks of tin hammered jack smiths
Lure on down the throstle gentle soul,
Belt he around with a bostulating four.

Could be a tough rough slough off of freight trains
Hung itself around he neck just a night,
But in the horning bell swings out ringing,
The heat's still singing mutes the chuffing down the
line,
Woe be gone with the smoke of he remorse.

Off in a whatnow, a dewdrop of time sense,
Understood from a could-be less remorse,

He mutes all the sound of a citier's fine flowering
In the Last End a be all temquieto fine voice,
Found in the stillness endless and loud.

[Co]uld be a loud proud tramping of crowding
[Se]ated itself like a city on a sea;
[B]lown by the rag winds of pick cited fog sounds
[...]ured again by the blasts of the birds,
[H]ammered out in jack time — an epicless hurrah.

[...]nd leading pretty the heavy belly notes
[Dr]opped in among the do lackey throng;
[...]ty for the pretty ones off in their hunger
[...]ing the drips of melodious monks,
[Gr]ey friars holy as the coals they are burning.

[Co]uld be a lone flown calmly eyed lovely,
[U]nlikely as the shape of a tenorman's bawl —
[...]t he up a knockdown, pocked off old grey hair,
[St]ench voiced from coal town to light-heavy Bronx,

[B]ut stand he up for his river and the bow.
[...] be do end it proud like and lordly,
high in mystery like he deepstill C,
[...] he do end it yet it be in you,
[No]t even crumbled ever for a time,
[...]ugh-cry and dance-squat, preyed for our silence!

ISSUE P. 350 · SCAN P. 56

IT DOESN'T MATTER NOW

by Frederick Thorgood

No.

It doesn't matter now if you fill in your coffin
with the dark stones of your eyes;
you don't need other things to enclose you now,
now that you have buried yourself in yourself.

It is of no avail, now that you try to wear red
instead of black.

Your need to squeeze an artery and convulse with
sexual action
is only a ghost making actions that don't exist
anymore.

You have buried yourself.

Listen to me —

the sky is a dim gong of lead now that you have
compressed your dreams to such a pitch of
fantasy.

There are no flowers in your world, only black
moths fluttering and cluttering the webs of
your mind.

Don't stand up, you make me impatient, and stop
that nervous movement of fingers in your hair.

You are too close to yourself to see anything
clearly,
and I can see that you are fading quickly.

I can hardly see you.

I'm not going to follow you anymore; you are not
my concern anymore.

Neither am I.

WEEDLIKE WOMAN

by Frederick Thorgood

Weedlike woman.
On a day
when
your sticky fingers
smell

of sweet oranges semen
and the
chameleon-skinned sun
snakes
through blocks of shade
grape
from the tooth
shatters
the spittled body in two
and the
heart makes amoeboid
movements
to the round red poles —
a symbol
for an englishman
who
winds the vein too
tight
for wine when
passion
makes him your
victim.

ISSUE P. 352 · SCAN P. 58

FOURTH SEASON SKETCHES

by Frederick Thorgood

Blackthorn and blueberry
lie in Death's socket
bleached to their bones
cold as blunneedle
and pale as a cheek
in the grip of a cry.

Clenched in vicious iron
jaws of dark blue limbo
a black skeleton rides
the night with silver spurs
and a mouth of brittle teeth.

Lacefrost skates mystic rings
inside her sharp casement,
my nail grinds it to powder
and reveals our round names.

Hopeless bucolic music
shivers on the wind
over the greyblue landscape
waiting for the thaw
watching the gunmetal South
but only seeing a dark bird.

ISSUE P. 353 · SCAN P. 59

SOME PEOPLE

by Frederick Thorgood

[g]irl sitting on a bath-edge
[pl]acing her feet in the tap-thrust
[...]s how toes go pink when pushed enough.

[sh]e is black against the window
[an]d white against the door,
[...] world is as high as the ceiling
[an]d as low as the floor.

[he]r almost fear of squatting,
[...] quick movements of mirror-looking
[...] nothing to rupture the impression
[...] a fever carefully boiling.

[...] is staring at the snowscapes,
[...]ned with words and descriptions of landscapes,
[ha]lf-listening to Beethoven, nursing memory-
[no]stalgia's skirts and too much barley.

[...] thinks he has lost too much time;
[...] makes the face an iron mask clamping on the dark;
[...] says that if the Sun doesn't give birth soon
[...]lone will be thrown in that endless park.

ISSUE P. 354 · SCAN P. 60

THREE CLASSMATES THIRTY YEARS AFTER

by Dorothy Ellin Flax

Coddling her platinum indolents
Olivia has won the yacht, the Cadillacs and sables,
three-carat diamonds in concentric swirls,
the winter home in Trinidad, and summers on the arctic
seas.

Still Olivia loves to please —
between country club bridge and canasta,
benignly caring for the old,
commemorating anniversaries,
endowing unwed mothers' nurseries —
apportioning each deduction dollar to
penultimate effectiveness.

Virginia's gentle quiet persistence —
her Quaker patience —
brings Wellesley fluidity to adolescent minds
canalled in midwest concrete
between the twin rigidities
of left and right,
fostering the tranquil flow of reason
through byways of the absolute.

Walled in by living green,

Ann breakfasts with gold-bellied hornets drunk on
apple juice
and the connubial cardinals feasting on the seeds
and the sesamied crusts of her Lite Diet toast.

[In]side a typewriter still holds last night's experimental.
[U]p the pandemonium of her desk's overflow
[...] -letters from London, Tokyo and Bombay)
[...] in Rookwood girls,
[...] and book flung back against the books between

[...] poetry Ann wrote between)
[...] squeezed into an ecstasy of relish —
[Virgin]ia's graduation gift to Ann —
[...] cherished in a [drawer]
[w]ith John's last blotched letter from Manila,
[the] card Virginia wrote: ' This little girl is you.
May she be forever! '

[At] seven Ann breathed her dolls alive
[and] prayed to find milk flowing from her breast.
[...]n hugs her loneliness —
[...] starved rejection of the flesh —
[stri]ving to sift star sapphires from debris.

ISSUE P. 356 · SCAN P. 62

CIRCLE

by Ruth Finer Mintz

A circle rims the dark
Seeing before sight
Light does not grow
It is woven
From broken threads
Of darkness.
All we know quickens
By a word.

Who fear to touch
Cold dark alone
Never warm with light
Or know, the name
That shapes the storm,
But live without a center
Wandering between
The boundaries of form.

Fingers stretch
To another knowledge.

ISSUE P. 357 · SCAN P. 63

I WANT SMALL HAND

by David J. Raine

This page is cropped at the binding edge; bracketed line-openings are reconstructions. — Ed.

[h]igh as corn husk
[...] as the waves
[...] pebbles
[a]utumn
[b]rick structures
[...] evening sky
[...]
[...] hand
to twist grass
[...] bands
look
liquid motion of a gull
you see
grass break on white fingers
[...] fingers
[...] ached bones of a bird
[...] and broken
[an]d wish to hold
the stain
blood
lack of your care
my hand
crescendo of silence
[...] are no words
the brick scar
[as] a chimney [full]
of soot
heal in the dark.

ISSUE P. 358 · SCAN P. 64

TROUBLIN' MIND

by Byron Williams

*These pages are cropped at the binding edge in the scan;
bracketed words restore text lost in the gutter, reconstructed from
context. — Ed.*

James Matt was on his way to Mathilde's Dress and Gift Shop with [a] box that had come in on the 3:17, when Faith Greenly turned the corner. Her father was pastor of the white frame church three blocks farther [on], and James imagined that she was going there. He slowed his walk to [stay] behind her.

He had grown up in this midwestern town that was surrounded by [wheat] farmers and kept alive by the railroad for which he worked. He helped wrestle freight on the station platform; he carried packages to homes [and] businesses in the town; he wrote out all the little white tags that had to [be] put on packages that were sent away. He always stopped whatever he [was] doing to stare after a departing train until it had gone from sight. No [one] bothered him much; no one ever thought to call him anything but James.

His nineteenth birthday had been yesterday, the ninth of August, [and] the station master had given him the afternoon off. He'd had a bottle [of] whiskey, and he'd gone to sit in the vacant lot across from the home where he had lived with his mother until she had died the year before. He'd drunk [at] his whiskey and felt like he might cry a little, but the [day] had been too hot and the sun-brittled weeds had scratched him until he'd given it up.

Later, he'd stood in line at the movie house. The man in the ticket booth had sniffed.

'You been drinking?' James had looked down at the shiny tube where change rolled out if you gave the ticket-seller a dollar bill.

‘Some.’ He’d shrugged his shoulders. ‘It’s my birthday.’ ‘Oh.’ In the end, the ticket-seller had let him in for nothing. When he’d gone to bed last night, James had been sorry that his birthday was over.

He continued to walk more slowly. Faith was sixteen and a treat to walk behind. Her hair was a peculiarly bright red; her skin was so fair that it seemed transparent. She loved bright colors, and wherever she went in the sunburnt town people looked after her with a longing like thirst. Next month she would begin her fourth year in Mr. Jennings’ eighth-grade room. Mr. Jennings didn’t mind. She sat quietly, and he was grateful for the spot of color in the drab room.

James watched the free sway of her hips until he tripped over a curb and went sprawling. The box he carried burst, and spools of bright red rib[bon] for the tying of fancy packages scattered in the sticky street. [Ja]mes went after them.

‘Oh, what a pretty color!’ She must have heard him fall. She had a spool of ribbon in her hands; [she] was unwinding it with delight and twining her fingers in it. She [rub]bed it against her face.

‘Please, Miss, don’t muss it.’ ‘Oh, what a pretty color!’ James picked up the last spool from the street. ‘You’ve mussed it. Here: I’ve got to have it back.’ She peered coyly through a mass of the red stuff. Her eyes were more [bl]ue than anything he had ever seen.

‘I want it.’ James felt helpless. ‘It ain’t mine to give.’ He thought of the station master’s hard eyes and took a step toward [her]. She dropped the spool and turned away, still clutching a handful of rib[bon]. On the sticky street the spool revolved slowly and a bright [threa]d of red trailed behind her.

‘Hey!’ Faith ran; and James, desperate, ran after her. But Faith was a good [runn]er and she had a head start. He

reached the white frame church as [she] went out of sight behind it. At the rear he found an open door that [led] to Sunday-school rooms in the basement. It was dim inside; he had to [mo]ve slowly through the little rooms. He found Faith in the farthest [room]. She was crooning softly to herself, and the bright ribbon glittered in streaks all about her pale flesh.

An hour later, the Rev. Greenly found the two tangled together in the rib[bon]. He separated them with a roar and a kick that nearly broke [Ja]mes' leg. He still limped when he was married two days later.

James liked having a wife. He told the station master, who blinked his eyes in surprise, grunted, and gave James a small raise. James liked [the] color of Faith's hair in the glare of the kitchen light, harsh against [the] dawn, when she made his breakfast. He gave her money for paint, [an]d she bought twelve quarts in different colors to do their apartment.

[He] liked that too, after a day of hard sunlight, mustard-colored railroad [sta]tion, and bare dun hills that grew away from town. He would not have [min]ded [good] cooking, but she cooked little. They ate grapes and lettuce; [oran]ges, carrots, tomatoes — anything that caught Faith's eye with its [bright] color. For meat, she boiled hot dogs and ate them with no delight. J[ames] didn't care.

At the station, now and then one or another of the men would [josh] about James and his wife. James would grin and move off. It was [more] notice than had been taken of him before; he didn't wonder what [was] said beyond his hearing. In the evenings, he watched Faith and [be]lieved that she spoke to him rarely. In bed, if she were pleased with [him], they had no need of speech. And she was easy to please. If he brought [her] something bright; if he took her to a movie in technicolor; or to look [at] the neon lights before the town's gossiping saloon.... She always [seemed] pleased. Then, as she came to bed, she would take the ribbon from

[the] dresser drawer.

With November's first advance warning of Christmas, James [began] to plot his wife's gift. On Christmases past, he had envied other [men] their smug secrets of gifts planned and hidden; now he felt warm[ly and] sly as each payday he slipped a few dollars into the crack behind [the] bathroom mirror. He knew by heart the growing displays of C[hristmas] gifts in the town's stores, but there was nothing that seemed go[od] enough. Finally, Faith, with no idea of what was in his mind, sh[owed] him what he must buy.

There was a Christmas display in one of the department store's [win]dows: cotton snow and [a] snow man, a glittering tree that dwarfed a pl[astic] log cabin, plastic children dancing gleefully before the tree. And over [the] whole scene, there played a shifting beam of colored light; piercing, fi[n]e spots of light that shifted and mingled and spiraled blue and red [and] orange — every color and mixture of color imaginable. Faith shiv[ered] in a sort of trance.

The next afternoon, James was in the store. 'How do you make that light in the window?' he asked. 'You know: with all the colors?'

He pestered the clerks until he was in the manager's office and, mo[re] insistent in that one afternoon than the total of his life's insistences, arranged to buy the display lamp. For seventy-five dollars — which w[as] double its cost and treble what he had dared to think of spending. Wi[th] the Christmas rush building, he talked the station master into letting [him] work ten extra hours a week. It was worth the cold hours, to stand wi[th] Faith each night before the window and hold his secret inside him.

Faith's parents gave them a tree on which to hang the globes[,] lights and silver angels they had accumulated for her during ten y[ea]rs. For the first time since the magic light had appeared in the store window, Faith didn't ask to go look at it. She trimmed their tree and wouldn't let James touch a

thing. She did it all while he sat in a corner and watched her.

'She looks just like a fairy,' he said to himself. He was pleased with this eloquence and repeated it often, until it was midnight and the store lights were going out and he could go down as arranged and take the lamp from the puzzled janitor. That night, the lamp had its place in the saloon gossip; but James didn't know. What with the tree and the lamp [and] his own wit, James was happy. Faith was in bed when he returned, [and] angry.

'I didn't know you were going out. You didn't say you were going.'

'It's all right; I wasn't gone a minute.' 'You went to look at the color-light. Without me. I know you did.'

'Hush now; look what I got you.' He was too excited to wait until morning. He plugged the lamp in and [aim]ed the flaring spot of colors at the bed.

'Oh! Oh!' Then not a word more, but only croonings as she flung the [covers] back and lay twisting under the fierce caress of light.

In a small town it's [b]ad manners to confront someone with the things [tha]t are being said about him. None of the saloon members were so [im]polite as to ask James about his life with Faith, nor about the colored [lam]p he had paid seventy-five dollars for. Instead, they climbed to the [porch] roof under his bedroom window to see for themselves, sweating [quie]tly in the cold night. On the third or fourth night that they watched, [one] of them was moved to inspiration.

'She don't know what she's doing,' he said. And then a kind of awe [at] his own perception leaped into his voice: 'I'll bet she doesn't even [know] it's him!'

In the hour of winter's early dark before James came home the next [nigh]t, the inspired one proved the truth of his perception; and the stories [whi]ch never reached James went through the town until eventually the [Rev]. Greenly

took his turn on the porch roof and looked in at his [daug]hter under the piercing swirl of colored light.

James was warming his hands at the rusty iron stove in the station [house] when his father-in-law came in. He thrust his hands behind him [has]tily when he looked up and saw the same look that had been there [that] day under the church. But Rev. Greenly wasn't roaring this time; [and] when he spoke, his voice was almost friendly.

'Are you about through here, James?' 'Yes, sir. Another ten minutes.' 'I don't think it would hurt if you left a few minutes early, this on[ce], would it? I'd like to have a talk with you.'

Outside, the preacher turned toward the center of town. 'Faith'll be waiting for me,' said James. 'Faith is with her mother. We can get a bite to eat at McKay's.'

James' head came only to the preacher's shoulder and he had to h[urry] to stay beside him. He walked with his head bent and asked no questi[ons]. At McKay's they sat in the farthest booth. James stared at his roast [beef] sandwich covered with dull brown gravy and wished he were in his o[wn] kitchen.

'You didn't want to marry my daughter — did you, James?'

He looked at the preacher, puzzled. 'I never thought about it bef... before we... I never thought about getting married at all. Then... that... and you said we had to get married. But I didn't mind. Hon[est], I didn't mind.'

'It's not easy for a man who's tried to do right to admit he's wrong, James; but I was wrong and I admit it. I shouldn't have [made] you marry Faith. You don't have to any more.'

'Sir?' 'I took her home. You won't have to worry about her any more.'

'It's no worry, Mr. Greenly. We get on just fine.' Rev. Greenly jerked his head impatiently. 'Do you know what

they're saying about my daughter?' 'Who?' 'Everybody.' It didn't take long to tell, the way the Rev. told it; [his] voice was hard and he didn't use many words. When he finished, J[ames] stared at his plate for a long time.

'Well?' the Rev. Greenly demanded. James looked at him and for the first time noticed a small cut on [the] Rev.'s right cheekbone.

'You cut yourself. There.' He pointed. 'I broke a window. But that doesn't matter. Didn't you hear me?'

'Maybe it's not true, what they're saying?' 'It's true.' James looked at the cracked table top branded by careless cig[arettes], then around the drab yellow walls, the windowpanes[,] covered with [steam], and at Mrs. McKay sagging inside her stained white uniform, her hair a limp tangle of dirty brown.

'I don't care.' While the Rev. Greenly stared at him, James tried to form into words how it was to have such a brightness as Faith and how important it was. And [something] more, that was too formless for him to know could be formed: how the thing that made all men one to her made it possible for him, who was no one, to have someone; how wrong it would be to take her from him. While he sorted shapes that weren't yet words, the Rev. Greenly paid the check.

It was only when they reached the street that James found any words at all. 'Why can't they just leave us alone!'

But it was too late, and James followed silently through the dark streets and the stiff white smudges of snow. He helped the Rev. carry out the armloads of Faith's brightly-colored clothes and pile them heaping into the back seat of the Rev.'s car. The pile was weighted down with the pots and pictures and scarves and shawls Faith had collected, until the apartment was bare and the bright walls were garish under naked bulbs. The Rev. locked the apartment and told him to go to the hotel.

James waited until the car was gone, then climbed up onto the porch roof and through the shattered window. For a while, he tried to fit back together the pieces of the lamp that the Rev. had smashed. He lay down on the naked bed and thought he might cry a little; but it was too cold....

ISSUE P. 364 · SCAN P. 70

RUMORS FROM THE CITY

by Ronald Caplan

I would be careful not to talk of mills the way one who loves a woman will not talk of her hair, if others know her only by her hair.

It was because he would still tell them of the city, still spoke of it in rapid, nervous terms, made jokes of it, gestured, called it the largest small town in America: — was because he would still speak of it as mistress, as something he could take up in his arms and talk to on those long enormous walks, and talk of, later, claiming it was very much alive: — that is, finally, he talked, still needed talk, and though of talk there is not always desperation, for him till there could be no need of it, could be the words as much as bridge and parks and sense of concrete under leather over snow — till then he could not live there, could not sleep.

He had climbed to the bridge above panther hollow, had stood near the center on a sunday before winter with cars alive behind him and the city at great distance on all sides, the water far below him like someone's 'small blue lake' and the green of the hollow an incredible green, rich in large patches around the lake or suddenly, beautifully black as seen down through the trees. From here, out, a chiseled sky in all directions, and in all directions, massively, the woods.

It would remain, of course, dream — this taking her for a ride to frick park and walking her with the clarity of murder up the rocky hill through the trees, beyond the trees and tiny fountain of still water for small summer children and uncoiling dogs that fought along the edges of the pool, beyond the larger pool where legend said a boy had drowned, a boy who did not live in squirrel[hill] but came from another portion of the city, from greenfield, perhaps, or the soho strip, came in levis and jersey and shoes that were dress shoes as only the poor can have only dress shoes, and came

alone one evening to the park to the pool and drowned with no story since no one was there: — no story but only legend which has whatever truth a need can make of it, can make of poor people who come to swim, who drown in a pool now filled with chunks of dirt and concrete gravel, the water gone and grasshoppers infest the mound and fly buzzing like mad running through dry late-summer grass when a boy comes by with a woman he would murder were her life not quite so situated as to finally be his wife. But — [Th]is was schenley park, panther hollow, the marriage a full year dead, and there had been for him no talk of it, not yet; he had not even had a night of dreams since they had parted, or, rather, he had dreamed, but he had not yet remembered. It would come, he was certain it would come, and there would be long days of frantic condemnation, nights alone of memories of the small times it was good — and talk, talk with everyone, anyone who would ask or just be there: — and he would be able to tell the story, to speak of any part of it and believe the things he said — and his life again would let him remember dreams.

He talked, instead, of the city, which was very much the same: — as we talk that way of things we merely love, dealing with them with sleep as the shutting off, the shutting off, finally, as the mind lies in its dark and carries fragments of what enters on the barest smallest sound: the flapping of an awning, the bold crisp snap of a rubbish bag back into shape in its dark in the next room: — anything as sound to ride upon, deliberately, thought upon thoughts, from the flapping of an awning to the pad of cotten slippers in the hallway, a mother's slippers outside your door listening for your sleep, your being able to sleep, to the pad of another woman's feet bare across the floor of her apartment opening windows to stand there dark and very slender against brilliant light turning [...] coming at you darker through the light to the sound of a woman climbing up a hill before you through

small bare trees into frick park where you would [hold] her in your arms to hurt her your way, your way, but hurt her only in the way she understood, the moist sound of her lips at your ear like the suddenness you fall off into sleep, over an edge and brittle, like the snapping of a paper bag back into shape.

He talked of city, he wrote of panther hollow: — but he moved the boy across the park so the grass was mostly gone and the crouched unsprung panther stared down an industrial road along soho where the railroad tracks ended and one jutted up like a finger, steady rust becoming waiting clay.

He one day had met a woman and had taken her with him to the park, had taken her to the pool and call that the scene and it stinks god save it and you got it right. ‘Are you going to hit me?’ ‘Someone should.’ ‘Not you: — you said it instead.’

Her lying on her back with her eyes closed and you knowing you either murder her or marry her, and suddenly you tell her to open her eyes and look at the park, at the filled-in pool, telling her legend, your tale, the story of one way to drown.

DON'T LET MONDAY COME

by Robert Lowry

*These pages are cropped at the binding edge in the scan;
bracketed words restore text lost in the gutter, reconstructed from
context. — ED.*

June straightened the chairs. It was Saturday night and the rain came down hard. It'll be so dead tonight, she thought. Would Keplar come down? All dressed up with his suit well pressed and his breath killed with Listerine. Thinking of him, she found herself scheming and wondering and afraid. You could always play around on the side... tell him to go to hell after you was married to him. But she was afraid. I hope he doesn't come, she thought, and tried to forget that she knew he would.

The same crowd started trickling in despite the rain, into the little saloon at the end of the car-line, just as though there were an important meeting on, as though it were all prearranged. That slick and dapper Spud O'Brien, the former bookie, everything about him neat and shining: his pressed grey, striped suit and his hazel-colored tie and the diamond on his long finger; his pointed-toe shoes; and most of all that thin face, so cleanly shaved and briskly rubbed with lotions, pink and smelly. For six months now he hadn't been doing anything, since the cops closed him up; just sitting around his father's house, taking in picture shows, playing the slot machines, going down to Augie's every night. Nice easy slick life, taking care of his clothes and his whiskers and himself all right. And George Ketcher, too, got in somehow and was taking his first one at the bar.

Everybody got here, after all, by ten. Karl Becker, in his little 1928 Chevrolet coupe; Karl, getting fat — unemployed and still living [\[at\]](#) home, and a little disgusted with life, but somehow dumb and bighearted and [\[fri\]](#)endly too, feeling

better in Augie's than anywhere, now. A couple of [th]e bright younger set from the streets of Turkey Bottoms came in — Art Kramer and Tom Buschkes, driving up in style with Art's old man's new Buick sedan, and about sixty-five cents between them. And right after[ward,] Jake Brueninger: a small, ridiculous old man who told the same [sto]ry night after night at the bar. 'I cum from Svitzerland but I'm good [Am]erican,' he would say. 'Where I lived, was the biggest vaterfall, 5,000 [feet].... And I'm good American, my sons in the army, two in the navy. [Th]ey was in Worl'd Var.' In ragged clothes and bus driver's cap, he would [go] from one to another along the bar — that ridiculous little fellow. With sloppy, grey mustaches and the straight way he stood, he looked like [an] old sea captain.

June stood in the background, leaning against the doorway that led to [the] little dark room where the nickelodian and the tables were. She stood quietly, her hands folded over her plump waist. Only the local talent tonight — nobody to wait on at the tables. She was the kind [of] girl you didn't shout at, or smack on the bottom in passing; there was something sensitive and decent about her, and you went up and talked to her personally and bought her a drink.

June knew Keplar's car when she heard it outside. Keplar came through the door. In his hat, she thought, he doesn't look so old — not over sixty. He bought a drink at the bar before he looked up and acted as if he just saw her. When he came near her, she felt nothing inside. She had been listening to George Ketcher, but now she went with Keplar into the back room, as though she had been waiting for him.

George Ketcher was the one who was always going home! He was a young fellow, about thirty, who supported the old aunt who had raised him. He worked in an office. He had a little, well-trimmed mustache and smelled of after-shave lotion and hair pomade and Wrigley's Spearmint. He wore

good clothes and drove a good car, and everything about him was neat. He was the one who was always going home. He came down to Augie's every evening, just for one drink. Then, he was going home. Right now, he was going home for the seventeenth time this evening. 'Well, so long fellows,' he was saying. He had his overcoat on.

'Oh, George!' Art Kramer was yelling at him. 'Oh, Geor-gie!'

'What? What?' George said. His eyes were a little bleary and he had a good-natured smile.

'Come here, George, I got something to tell you!' 'You better tell it quick,' George said, holding on the doorknob as if somebody were going to snatch it away from him. 'I've got to get going, got to get up early in the morning.'

'No, come o-ver here, George; we got to tell you something,' Art said. 'Come on.' So George came over and Art threw his arm around his neck. 'We're all friends here, aren't we?' he said. 'What do you mean running away like this?'

'I know, fellows,' George said. 'But there's a lim-it!' 'No.... No, Georgie, that's where you're wrong. There is no limit!'

'What is this? What is this you want to tell me?' George said, as if he really believed he'd hear something.

At the other end of the bar, somebody bought drinks all around — one for George too. So it would be impolite to leave now.

In the back-room, over in the corner-shadows by the nickelodian, June sat with Keplar. Keplar was holding her hand and rubbing the palm with his thumb, slowly, a circular movement. He was looking at her small white hand; she was looking at him.

She did not have any feeling while he sat there holding her hand. She looked closely, studying him, and could not help what thoughts ran through her mind. She was not afraid of him. That was the odd thing. But she was afraid of

herself, and what she would let herself do. He [loo]ked old, now he had his hat off. His hair was grey and thin. A blue vein ran down his left temple to his eye; it looked discolored and old. He was old. His old hand was holding hers, the thumb moving around and around in her palm. To be old is like being dirty, she thought.

Suddenly, he looked up at her. 'I bet you don't know what I got for [yo]u tonight,' he said.

'What?' He still held her hand, smiling to himself. Then he reached in his [pock]et and brought it out — a little box. He opened it for her. He took [out] the ring — all the while, with a little smile on his face. 'Look what I [go]t for you,' he said.

Looking at the ring, she was unable to take her eyes from it: a large [diam]ond in a beautiful setting; little diamonds all around it.

'I got this for you,' he said — still with the mysterious little smile.

Suddenly, he was talking again, holding her hand, putting the ring on [her] finger. 'I'm not so old as you think I am. I can give you a good time [for] the next ten years. That's all. We can go around and have a good [tim]e, that's all....'

Looking down at the ring, she was afraid of it, and of him, of what [he] would do. She was afraid of her life. And yet all of this was so [ind]efinite; it flitted through her and was gone; and she was sitting in [A]ugie's Place, while out in front, they were laughing and making noise. [Whi]ch one of them cared for her? And would she go home tonight, tired [and] feeling nothing, and crawl into bed? She was tired. She was only [twen]ty-one, but she was tired — very tired, and watching him, she was [afrai]d of what she would do and say now....

Look at the clock! Time is going around and around in that rowdy-[dow]dy end-of-the-world place. It is one o'clock... five after one... [ten] after one....

Only George Ketcher thought of leaving. Old Jake Brueninger had [gon]e; but they had grown used to not noticing him. Now, the bartender, [Augi]e, had begun to drink with the customers, and everyone had a smile [on] his face. People were circling round, starting to shake hands with their [frien]ds. It was the good hour, the good hour of one o'clock Saturday [nigh]t, when everybody was a friend — when New Year's Eve was right [there] now, any week. Was it still raining outside? Nobody listened; but it was still raining. Within the cafe, everybody was himself: alone, [and] complete at last, with a glass in his hand and a smirk on his face.

Unnoticed, Keplar came out of the back room and went quickly [out] the side door, closing it gently after him. Outside, his car started up, [and] nobody noticed or cared he was gone.

George Ketcher was trying to leave again, but Tom and Art [and Joe] were all over at the door with him, talking the whole thing over. Wo[uld] it be advisable to leave now? — they wanted to know.

'What will Augie think?' asked Joe. 'He'll think you don't like [the] place or something.'

George was confused. 'I got to get up early,' he said. Loudly and abruptly, Karl announced: 'Well, boys, I'm going up [to] the Flamingo Inn and get a sandwich. One sandwich.' Then: 'Any[body] going? Anybody going?' — crazily to everybody.

June appeared in the doorway, round face as calm and as childish [as] ever. 'Where you going, Karl?'

'To the Flamingo Inn!' Karl pointed outside, as if that were it. 'For a sandwich!' he said dramatically.

'I'd like to go,' she said. 'Are you going, George?' 'No,' said George, 'I got to get home. [Early in the] morning.'

'Oh, hell with getting up early! Come on, George!' Tom and Art pulled George out the door. He said 'No;' but they

took him anyway.

'Everybody wants to go. Come on!' Karl said, leaving by the side door.

There was Karl's little car parked by the curb. The rear end was all torn out, and several paint jobs from years gone by showed up all at once. The imitation leather seat was worn and torn, fixed up with an old couch-cover from his mother's living room. Karl walked around and got into his little car authoritatively. 'I'm going after a sandwich!' he shouted. 'Get in, all who's going to get in!'

They all got into that little one-seater. How? They did not know. Three sat at the bottom on the seat, then June, then Spud cramped against the top like a grasshopper — five of them.

Karl had a little trouble getting her started. He pulled many things on the dashboard, shoved down hard with his foot, backfired a couple of times, backed up — then off with a spurt, down Eastern Avenue right on [and] up over the viaduct. They were cramped and laughing in there all together. The little car roared along.

'I'm going to have a hard time making Mt. Washington Hill!' Karl shouted above the motor. 'All I want is a sandwich, then I'm going home!'

The car rounded a corner, going fast; its slick worn tires squealed against the wet pavement.

'What I want to know — is everybody in?' Karl shouted. 'Because, by god, if you're not, you're not going to get in!'

'I don't know what I'm doing here....' George said, making a last stand. But his voice trailed off under the noise of the little car; and then they were climbing Mt. Washington Hill.

June suddenly started feeling gay too. 'I'll bet people think we're going to a fire!' she shouted out above the noise.

It sounded dumb; but everybody laughed. They'd never heard her shout like that before.

Then the light caught something in the car, and George leaned over and said: 'What the devil's that you got on your hand, June? Are you engaged?'

She laughed nervously. 'Sure I'm engaged,' she said. 'Didn't you know that? I got engaged tonight.'

'You don't mean to old man Keplar?' Karl tried to look around into [h]er face.

They were almost to the Inn, going down the main street in Mt. Washington.

'Sure,' she said. 'That's who I'm going to marry. What's the matter [wi]th him?'

The four men went silent. Something made June say: 'Maybe you're wondering why I'm going [to] marry somebody so old. Is that it?'

'Well, hell, if you love him, June —' 'Well, I don't love him — do you see?' Now she felt herself going out; [she] couldn't stop. 'I'm marrying him because I'm tired of working in [tha]t place — do you see? I'm tired of working there and I'm never going [to] work there again! So you won't be seeing me any more. I'm going to [sit] at home in front of the radio in the evening, just like everybody else. I [won't] be serving you boys any more! Now you know all about my [rom]ance!'

Nobody said anything. She held up her ring. 'How do you like that, [guys]?'

'Boy, that's a beauty,' Karl said. 'It looks expensive,' George said. The four were all frozen up inside themselves. She had been a girl, always in the background of Augie's Place, and now she was talking like this, in this tough way that didn't even sound like her voice.

They went into the Flamingo Inn and sat at a table, and Karl had his sandwich. But even though he put on lots of yellow mustard, it was not so good as he thought it was going to be. The guys talked for a while about the two marble games at Augie's Place. Then Spud and [Tom] played the one over in the corner and came back and said it wasn't so hard

as the one at Augie's.

They took June home first. She lived on Massachusetts Avenue, a little run-down house at the end of the street.

There was confusion getting out. They were so packed in, Spud and George had to get out first. 'Well, congratulations, June,' Karl said.

She turned around, feeling all her blood stir in hatred for them. 'Oh, I'll be around. You know my husband works at night, and if any of you boys get lonely you can drop around some evening.' She turned and ran up the walk. Before she reached the door, she had begun to cry angrily.

The little car loaded up again and drove off. The guys sat, amazed. Only Spud was not amazed; he had taught himself to think only of betting odds.

'Boy, you know,' Karl said suddenly, 'all of us always keeping our hands off her and treating her respectful — Jesus Christ, you don't know what to expect from people! You think a girl like that is decent, and now look what she does.'

For a minute, nobody said anything. They were going up Heemin Avenue to George's house.

Then Karl said: 'She'd have let any of us have a little, all along!'

They all laughed. Now they all had something to say — tough guys, rough drinking men from Augie's Place. But their sensibilities had been hurt, and now they wanted to have their say about her. 'We'll go up and see her one of these nights and give her the old once-over,' Karl said. 'Before or after she's married?' George said. 'Hell,' Karl said, laughing, 'we better go up and get her before that old guy marries her, or he won't be able to do anything with her!' 'Maybe he'll hire one of us to give her the once-over oncet a week just to keep her happy,' Tom said. And they all laughed, and felt better.

Then the little car stopped and George got out and said good night, and Karl drove on again.

ISSUE PP. 373-380 · SCAN PP. 79-88

ISSUE P. 381 · SCAN P. 89

THE AVANT GARDE & THE OFFICIAL CULTURE

by John Tryford

*Poetry is a grown-up
making life look like a child;
Not the glib patter of strangeness in a line,
but a tool to work the heart.
— Carl Linder**

** From Earth of Eyes (limited privately printed edition). — ED.*

The top lines above are a curt summation of Linder's philosophy of poetry. They also say something about poetry in general, as I see it. In poetry, a child is very often the symbol of something primeval, archetypal, or primitive. Poetry itself is the use of language as pure sound, or music. It relies on forms and devices that are very old. Language and the ability to recite stories or tales are natural, and surely must have been among the early activities of men. Poetry thus belongs to what some commenters have labeled: 'the childhood of mankind.'

The second stanza states that poetry is a tool to work the heart — which means not simply communicating with another person, but touching that person in a way that ordinary prose cannot, touching him at a higher level of his existence. Many sociologists, psychologists, [and] columnists today talk of 'alienation' as a major problem in the [wor]ld. They complain that the vast technological and bureaucratic complexes have dulled men's minds and hearts, killed enthusiasm for [rea]l values and replaced it with artificial cerebral excitements — tele[vis]ion, fast cars, mass spectator sports. This may be so; and poets [als]o have to live in and with the modern world — rendering them [just] as alienated as other men. However, poets break the cycle of [ali]enation

with creations of beauty which others may share. They [crea]te enthusiasm — which signifies getting out of one's self and into [‘ god ’] or whatever draws one out into the stream of life.

Music, dance, and on another level, sex and alcohol — as well as [poe]try — can produce this enthusiasm. All are ‘ tools to work the [heart].’ Poetry and other devices have been used in religious rituals, [bo]th Christian and pagan, to induce states of intense emotional excitement and eventual physical release among the participan[ts], usually followed by a period of fasting and austerity. This is [the] raison d'être of Mardi Gras celebrations in Catholic countries — [and] these are simply continuations of the Roman Saturnalia and the Greek Dionysian orgiastic rites.

The poet may or may not have an audience to share his enthusiasm, as an actor or a concert pianist does. An actor does not have to write his play, nor a pianist his concerto, but the poet has to create his poetry. If he recites, he must have, in addition, the good qualities of an actor. He has to arouse feeling in the audience of an intensity corresponding to his own for his work. This means that he must spend a lot of time alone, perfecting his lines and living with his fantasies — which precludes what that foolish man, Warren G. Harding, called ‘ normalcy.’ It precludes a business career; it precludes sharing fully in an affluent, consumer-oriented society — that very same society which generates the alienation most people are said to experience.

The poet, alone with his daydreams and imaginings, must break the cycle of alienation in solitude. This is very difficult, perhaps the most difficult; but in the end it results in good. I do not mean that the poet becomes a saint or a holy man; rather, he becomes a sane man. He leaves the door to his subconscious open, sometimes even submerging himself completely in his subconscious. This leads the ‘ world ’ — signifying repression, hostility, status, acquisitiveness, etc. —

to label the poet insane, or at least suspect.

Archibald MacLeish was a poet. He also happened to have some influential friends who thought that he should be given the post of Assistant Secretary of State — no doubt a reward for his many contributions to American culture. When he appeared before a Senate Committee to be confirmed in the nomination and was asked his occupation, he replied: ‘Poet.’ One of the senators was perplexed by this, almost doubting that MacLeish, as a poet, would be qualified for such a high position. It was almost suggested that poets were some sort of unwanted beings, unfit for what MacLeish himself termed the ‘normal discourses of men.’

Now I do not care too much for MacLeish’s poetry. I do not think that he really suffered much, as other poets have. I do sympathize with him in one respect: that he nearly had to apologize for calling himself a poet. This little incident is an example of what happens when the poet comes into conflict with the official world. The bureaucracy does not read nor care to read someone as sophisticated as Archibald MacLeish, let alone Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, Kenneth Patchen, etc.

At the other extreme, there is the poet who is beyond even the pretense of respectability, who defines his reality in terms that attract very few persons to participate in his enthusiasms. This man, the world labels insane; but in my opinion his effect actually is to bring sanity, light, joy, insight into a world burdened by grief, hate, death, etc. He pushes the forms to their extreme limits, creating an avant garde. The visions of such a poet are so intense that at times he is completely engulfed by them — not like MacLeish, who strictly controls his consciousness but like Baudelaire, Verlaine, Rilke, Pound, Thomas. Such a poet may labor all his life to produce work that will be little read and not at all appreciated until after his death.

The difficulty of a genuine avant garde is that it cannot accept compromise. It must continually challenge the status quo until the new art is accepted. Then, when those tenets have finally become respectable, the movement no longer is in the forefront of events, but a part of history. A new movement must rise to make a new challenge. And so the cycle goes on.

In this century, we have seen a profusion of avant-garde movements, reflecting the rapid pace of modern life. The regular pattern of discon[tent], rebellion, feverish militance, and final acceptance seems almost contrived — for those people who have no real interest in art, [bu]t join such movements for a transitory thrill. Faddists and dilettantes [ma]y have some potential; but — since they just dabble in poetry — [th]ey are only amusing themselves for the moment, before passing to [som]ething else. But real achievement may be realized by the serious, [dedi]cated poet who abides with his work through bad years and [good], despite the cynical remarks of destructive critics and the prizes [an]d awards (if any).

‘Poetry is a grown-up / making life look like a child.’ This is why [m]ost poets try to gain insight into their origins. Unless they can tap the [ex]periences of early life, their attempts will fail. The drama and the [nov]el require maturity, but poetry requires the exuberance of youth. [It] also requires belief in the self, the personality; and with this, the [des]ire to express personality through language.

The idea of youth is also related to the avant garde — which springs [from] youth, the blend of energy, enthusiasm, and belief to challenge [the] status quo. Older people are congealed in their ways, worldly-[wise] — too tired to challenge a system of which they already are [in]tegral parts. Corollary to this, those who have successfully chal[len]ged accepted ideas, to become regarded in old age as ‘elder [sta]tesmen’ of the avant, will have flung down the gauntlet

in early [li]fe. Cocteau and Picasso are examples. They did not sacrifice integrity [by] altering opinions or writings or paintings to fit conventional, circumspect judgments. They persisted in what they thought best, until many began to comprehend that they pointed toward new values in art.

Poetry does not necessarily make complex statements about the world. It is not an academic discipline. Rather, it is a way to crystallize experiences in beautiful language. This is difficult; it demands sensibilities which most people do not think they have, because such feelings had been beaten out of them when they were children — and replaced with artificial sensibilities officially approved in their culture. The school system is the medium for this cultural discipline; and since the school merely reflects the society as a whole, if the system produces dullards, then that is what is required. Creative explorations are not encouraged in children. Men like Cocteau, Picasso, Henry Miller, or even Bertrand Russell are not held up as examples.

Yet, the final battle is not with the forces of apathy, with the indifferent ones, with the television addicts. The final battle all artists must fight to preserve their inner lives is with the active forces of repression and death, those who would ban every artistic activity, who would burn or tear up the books and paintings, smash the sculptures.

Fascism is not only a political phenomenon. Hitler burned books before he started burning people. In the United States and England, long court battles have been waged against the police and professional moralists, to restore literature to a real and sane art. The repression and conformism of Fascism equates with ultimate death. It is the element of Thanatos in human nature. Poetry and the other arts represent reproduction, love, sex, creativity — the opposite of Thanatos, Eros. The basic dichotomy in the human psyche is between Eros and Thanatos; a balance must be maintained if life is to continue.

Psychologists do little more than label the death-forces; they seem unable to explain the causes. Meanwhile, as man becomes more alienated from himself and a healthy projection of his own environment, the death-urge grows stronger; and now, man can destroy himself completely with nuclear weapons, the ultimate victory of Thanatos. Besides the manifest threat of nuclear holocaust, there are many smaller manifestations of Thanatos in everyday life: all the ritualized spectator entertainments such as bullfights — and including the executions legalized as capital punishment. These entertainments permit large bodies of people to participate vicariously in violence and death, without any terrific sense of guilt.

Poetry's part in countering Thanatos is paramount, because poetry is interconnected with all the other arts. Its language can evoke music [...] Thanatos, where everything must be ruled and regulated by the dead hand of authority, morality, law — or by whatever name Thanatos takes for disguise.

Literature has been criticised by moralists because it is gloomy, pessimistic, or depraved — an extreme irony. I find that the moralist's idea of life is extremely depraved, since it lacks enthusiasm, the vitality of any kind of art. I do not know exactly what form the poetry of the future will take; but it must — through people who have had unique experiences, experiences not predetermined by official institutions — expose to the core the inanities of this adjusted, technological, bureaucratic nonsense-society.

There are many signs of healthy protest today. Among the more obvious is the civil-rights movement; the goals are essentially political, but they shade off into varied areas of aesthetics. The cult of non-violent resistance to authority, as typified by Joan Baez, Seeger, and other 'folk' people, is also good; and so was the student uprising at the University of California, last December. Generally, such movements affirm

life as against the official dreariness of moralists.

Young, intelligent people are not being conditioned through the established channels of academic learning; they go to college to learn basic techniques, but then they strike out on their own, find lofts or workshops in which to write or paint or stage dramas. Another encouraging sign is that the modes of expression are becoming uniquely American — less derivative and dependent on Europe. This means an end to the old-style cultural pretentiousness, hailing everything from abroad as superior. America is different, physically and psychologically; and we need to create art forms to confront these [diff]erences — as, the pathos and terror of sprawling metropolitan [ugl]iness.

So I am not foretelling the death of the arts. I believe that the arts [will] continue in a new and more authentic phase. Poetry is a tool to [w]ork the heart, and will endure as long as there are hearts to work.

John Tryford

AT THE VILLAGE VANGUARD

by Warren Slesinger

Miles Davis played
like a man in a jar.

ISSUE P. 386 · SCAN P. 94

SOME ITEMS RECEIVED

A selection from the issue's book-review pages. These pages are set with decorated drop-caps and are cropped at the binding edge in the source scan, so a few readings are reconstructed; titles of books under review are given in small capitals. — Ed.

THOUGHTS ABOUT A FEW POETRY BOOKS

reviewed by James Boyer May

Both space and time are inadequate for the detailed examinations deserved by the first three of these poets; they have practiced long — with large or limited recognitions. Each has changed through several phases, with resulting developments of complexity. Their books — too briefly described here — consist of materials selected after more than a quarter of a century of print.

In an introduction to Walter Lowenfels' *SOME DEATHS* (JARGON 32 - \$3.50 - Highlands, N.C.), Publisher Jonathan Williams touches upon another factor which often may be reason for apology; and he proceeds to make one by observing how, being a younger man, he does not share the background in time - that, not having been 'there' in the Thirties (he could have included the Twenties), he cannot measure Lowenfels by the 'level of his "social reality" and "political maturity."' This Editor is at least unable to put forward such an excuse, since he has lived as their contemporary and has read all three over their writing spans.

The substance of thought permeates the Lowenfels volume, and the selections were made upon the basis the title indicates. The 'why and what' always energizes the 'how' of his lines. Yet, they almost unfailingly come alive through the Word, and the 'messages' almost never transcend the expression of a remarkable verbal imagination.

Containing over a hundred, chiefly well-filled pages of works dating from 1925, *SOME DEATHS* nevertheless consists of a majority of pieces of recent vintage previously appearing only in periodicals. Eight sections are set off by 'people' photographs, the final one being a free translation of Paul Eluard's lengthy *POESIE ININTERROMPUE*. Virtually every aspect of Lowenfels is presented, including three fine examples of prose, despite the seeming limitation predicated by the title. A minor matter: the Contents page numbers slip behind actual paginations, after the second section. But the book is one which will be read compulsively from beginning to end, and small concern how the numbers run.

Thomas McGrath, about one generation younger than Lowenfels, has been - notwithstanding - conditioned by similar, though not identical socio-cultural influences. From the start, his poetry also has largely been motored by reactions to conditions (including the political) and by contemplations of the human problem on many planes. *NEW AND SELECTED POEMS* (ALAN SWALLOW - \$4 and \$1.85, paperb.) demonstrates, however, a greater sensuousness and reveals a preponderance of concessions to personal passions. This, of course, is a more comprehensive coverage - with portions from all earlier books, as well as recent things not till now between covers.

Not only that McGrath invariably works through a close and richly detailed self-vs.-environment method - often really solipsistic - but that his style is utterly different. He and Lowenfels have - as nearly as any poets today - each created his own always-recognizable syntactical vehicle. Yet, though Lowenfels does have a unique way of saying, he occasionally becomes more than a shade cold - with his higher percentage of generalized images and references, and in spite of an ability to project through visions of other personalities. Rarely generalizing, McGrath's second- and third-person passages are obvious translations of other facets of himself;

he does not seem to think less than Lowenfels, but the heat of emotion all but submerges elements of ‘ protest ‘ in the onrush of fired phrases. The contrasting styles not only reflect quite disparate personalities (socially likeminded though they are). but result in part from employment of two quite disparate methods of engaging close sympathy (empathy).

With the third older poet, Joseph Joel Keith - represented by his best selection to date, *ACROSS THE DARK* (WINDFALL Press — \$3)- we encounter one harder to see as a person, though everything in the book springs from direct, often intimate, personal reactions. This is because he reveals no points of view other than those of immediate delight, horror, pity, sadness, happiness... or those of sustained sensitivity and compassion. He also functions with more considerable awareness of techniques, and is more meticulously involved with form/s. Such elements render his poetries less individuated; it cannot be said that a good reader always will recognize the authorship without the name.

Which may be the better path toward self-knowledge is hard to determine: whether the poet should seek himself through attachment to some sharply-defined socio-ethical principle, or through an ‘open’ approach to experience. But Keith has been writing only about ten years less than has Lowenfels (longer than McGrath) and he still appears very much the ‘ young ‘ poet - thematically undecided except in an enduring sense of wonder and urgent sense of being. His control and exercise of restraint, however, identify the mature craftsman; Unlike his perhaps more socially-dedicated fellows here, he writes shorter poems of eminently quotable succinctness, poems which stand as things-in-themselves. The ‘ why ‘ of them may not be of any vast controversial significance, but he taps universals and re-sounds few notes of older poetries - undeniably a

creator in the intrinsic definition.

Although hitherto less published than the others in FIVE POETS of the Pacific Northwest (U. OF WASHINGTON Press - \$5 and \$1.95), Richard Hugo's work indicates a more prototypal talent than do the poems (shown here) by Kenneth O. Hanson, Caroline Kizer, William Stafford, or David Wagoner. Most of his have intenser life, more verbal originality. They are too, on the whole, more distinctive, less derivative, and definitely display a developed individuated idiom. Besides exhibiting the several essential qualities of good poetics, Hugo seems to be in the process of accomplishing what a poet must, if to survive the time-test: he gives expression both to universals and to then and here - a recording, so to speak, of his own present realities. Sometimes he does this in a general way, sometimes very specifically. An example of the former is a stanza from IN STAFFORD COUNTRY: Where land is flat, words are far apart. Each word is seen, coming from far off, A calm storm, almost familiar, across The plain. The word floats by, alive. Homes are empty and the love goes on As the odor of grain jumps in the wind. And a stanza from NEIGHBOR illustrates the latter: I admit my envy. I've found him in salal and flat on his face in lettuce, and bent and snoring by that thick stump full of rain we used to sail destroyers on. And I've carried him home so often stone to the rain and me, and cheerful.

The four others have been written of elsewhere; and, not that they are actually badly represented in this book, but it would be unfair to make analyses on comparisons solely based upon these selections, when each has produced many times the poems here available.

Rather, to turn - though forced to do so very briefly - to a young, new poet, Russell Salamon (PARENT[HETICAL Pop]PIES - \$1 - RENEGADE Press), who is doing original experimentation with old words mixed with neologisms. There are better poems in this pamphlet, but the beginning

lines of HESSLER 2 best elucidate: A gnacile depthless plane: / flies within us / drematolic rest within us. I setferro drobitam / All about our heads / we paint patches in / a sleep of void. / We (drauma) -s-talk / green about each other; / tangled. / Only streets within us pounding. / Only veins within us walking / setferro lubicum ' J.B.M.

James Boyer May

ISSUE P. 389 · SCAN P. 97

THE PEOPLE PATTERN

reviewed by Howard McCord

Some beautifully complex and profoundly stirring recreations of men's minds are, in a strict sense, irrelevant. I think of — say — the patterns of chess and the many mathematical models which are essentially games. I will not deny that the instinct to play is fundamental to man, nor do I deny it significance; but I do [refuse] to believe that the game as game, and the pursuit of it as such, is [not] essentially frivolous. And I will ask the obvious question: How much [of] contemporary poetry is frivolous? How many poems are written in response to no more urging than the desire to create a shape of words that is aesthetically stimulating and satisfying? Enough, certainly, that our need for play is met. But, as every definition strives toward exclusiveness, those who hold that the poem is a beautiful game have attempted to deny that it can be anything else.

Poets OF TODAY, edited by Walter Lowenfels (International Publishers — \$5 & \$1.95, paperb.), is an anthology which counters this assertion. Lowenfels has chosen 85 poems by 85 poets on the basis of the poem's relevance to man in the world. He has chosen pieces that speak of the very plain, ordinary human profundities of life, birth, death, cruelty, hope, despair, illusion, compassion,

and loss. He has chosen to listen to the voices of boneman, bloodman, and bowelman. There are no headpoets here. The break with the head cult is final.

Thirty years ago, this anthology would have been quickly labeled 'social consciousness stuff,' and that would be an end to it. Nowadays, after two decades of engagement, I am not so certain the label would be anything more than a curiosity. The poems, however, are not curiosities. The poets are serious in their protest, honest in their [convic]tion, demanding in their anguish. They all are aware that nearly [every] experience can leave a scar, and that the best of us are only as innocent as the guilty. William Pillin speaks this way of the whores and usurers of the Polish ghettos: I want them returned, the dwellers of dives, brothels and taverns. I want them back as they were, piteous, ignoble, instead of these grey ashes that like a winding sheet settle on shivering Europe.

It is [an] anthology, then, in which that part of the poem called content is most powerful. What is spoken takes precedence over the manner of speaking. I find that possessing such a direction, such a theme, is a real virtue, for so many of the anthologies I have seen in the last few years have been arranged by other and lesser criteria. Some have been formed around the literary coterie — the academics, the vernaculeros, the anti-beat and the re-beat, the whatever-traditionalists, and so forth. Such criteria are transient (or, as the Cumulative Book Index would say, 'fugitive, ephemeral, and local'). Others have been made with the lucrative textbook market in mind — no dirty words, lots of names, and poems which can be explicated in fifty minutes. And others are, in diminishing order of importance, organized — according to historical period, nation, types, language, region, state, contest winners, and you-pay-we-print.

Most of the poets included are not well known outside the little magazines, and some are hardly known there; but here are poems by Bukowski (a wild domestic scene), Corso, Ferlinghetti, Field (a camp on Castro), Gilbert, Ginsberg, Hedley, LeRoi Jones, Larsen, Levertov (a quiet celebration of the real), Margolis, McClure, Oppenheimer, Snyder, Swallow, Jonathan Williams, and Zahn. There is considerable youth (at least twenty-one born after 1930), age (eleven born 1910 or before), both sexes (seventeen women), and racial diversity (twenty are Negroes).

There is no pattern other than people. People — as seen here — have consciences and private thoughts and dark shadows pell-mell hurtling through their minds. They are concerned with others, and with themselves; they are privy to shock, anger, love, and disillusionment. And they are sufficiently practitioners of the word to reach us, to talk. I like listening.

Too often, conscience, values (public and private), and the ethos of poetical works, have disappeared in clouds of relativism and have been obscured by the guise of toleration. Here, however, are poets writing from firm foundations of experience, knowledge, and clear perception. Here are poets who are essentially moralists and who admit the didactic as a valid facet. Consider this from Jack Gilbert's *The Abnormal Is Not Courage*: ... But I say courage is not the abnormal. Not the marvelous act....

Not strangeness, but a leap forward of the same quality.

Accomplishment. The even loyalty. But fresh. Not the Prodigal Son, nor Faustus. But Penelope. The thing steady and clear. Then the crescendo.

The real form. The culmination. And the exceeding.
Not the surprise. The amazed understanding. The
marriage,
Not the month's rapture. Not the exception. The beauty
That is of many days. Steady and clear.
It is the normal excellence, of long accomplishment.

Howard
McCord

ISSUE P. 391 · SCAN P. 99

SOCIAL SATIRE: ' TIGHT ' & ' SWINGING '

reviewed by Carl Larsen

Satire seems to be the only weapon that poor old poetry has left. Just getting out there on the stage and raising hell will no longer do; Allen Ginsberg spoiled it for those of us who'd like to lie down in the middle of the street and howl our brains out. Even a little free style whining is old hat, though some of the hard-core American Beats still suffer from Moaning Sickness. Two new collections of poems by Undergrounders David Kalugin and Ottone M. Riccio serve as perfect examples of a poetic soft-sell. Both have healthy respect for our decay; and, if the poet cannot correct things, he can at least make us think about them - providing he gets noticed in the plethora of communications media filling every instant of our time.

David Kalugin's fifth book, *THE TINTINNABULATIONS OF BOOS AND APPLAUSE* (VILLIERS — \$2) is as warm and human as an electroencephalogram — and just as revealing. He has chopped away extraneous verbiage, and what he leaves is displayed baldly under the lights of Madison Square Garden. With almost nursery-rhyme simplicity, he leads one through a world carefully dissected by his bright, sparse eye. His work is not sugar-coated (Lilith Lorraine, in the

Foreword, praises him for not leaning on ‘ the crutch of puerile pornography ‘ - which has nothing to do with it, or him, or anything); but the book does go down easy.

Kalugin has the gift of letting things speak for themselves (a sprig of Christmas holly hanging in a Fallout Shelter). He himself is very like his work: living quietly in the Bronx, he works for the Post Office, and avoids the local poetry scene as though avoiding the plague. Among his devices are interior rhymes and rather gentle puns; and he displays a mastery of the controlled couplet. Preach a sermon with a dream in your eye... then be ready to live in a world without sky’ is his answer to a currently-popular song. He takes apart what he calls ‘ The popular mechanics of living in clover ‘ with an ease that would put Ben Casey to shame -and without a scowl.

Against A WALL OF LIGHT (HORS COMMERCE — \$1) is Ottone M. Riccio’s first collection. It is a welcome, exciting nightmare of a satire. Whereas Kalugin traces our arteries with his tight needles, Riccio takes a big terrifyingly-logical swing at everything in sight. Holding in view those aspects of our society which are unhealthy, he extends them to the ridiculous... ranges from a wild Joyride atop the planet to the Real contents of those Top Secret Plans buried in the Pentagon. Science has presented us with a pear-shaped world; Riccio simply wonders who’s yanking at the stem. His language is relaxed and hip, but just hip enough to make palpable his portrait of Man ‘foundering toward a mute eternity.’ These are both city poets, and their books are city books. One can readily envision Kalugin sitting in Union Square (where the police yearly gather in the nuts) waiting for Klein’s Department Store to open ‘because everybody, nearly, in the bronx says you should really have your head examined to pass up a television bargain for ninety nine cents ‘ - or Riccio reading betrayal on the concrete and glass fa~ades,

suggesting ‘what’s needed is a permanent city and doors and windows that have actual rooms behind them.’

Poets are frightened people - which perhaps is why they do not enjoy a larger audience (even though Culture, according to the NEW YORK TIMES special year-end report on Finance, is America’s third-largest Industry). Perhaps Kalugin and Riccio are working out a way to sound the alarms in a world not square, and not even round. Carl Larsen

Carl Larsen

ISSUE P. 392 · SCAN P. 100

LARKSKY

by Walter Leslie Denny

a green mist
against the April sky ...
Summer to summer
the deep heart beat,
on stiffened wings the lark
against the freshly-laundered sky

ISSUE P. 393 · SCAN P. 101

UNUSUAL MATERIALS UNSENSATIONALLY HANDLED

reviewed by James Boyer May

Having said that Marion Montgomery’s DARRELL (Doubleday — \$4.50) is a fascinating latest story-novel, of real life in a real place in our time, and that an adolescent epileptic enraptured over a motorcycle is the hero, the manner of the accomplishment is this book’s signal feature.

This has enabled him to do several things. Primarily, of course, to develop unusually convincing characters through

an uninterrupted flow of plain ‘telling’ about events. Although about three-fourths of the text is dialogue, there are longish passages of narrative which do not explicitly present thoughts or feelings from inside the characters; rather, the reader’s discernment of the individuals is sharpened by inconspicuous alterations of his choices of words. The professional critic might contend that Montgomery should have worked harder and have altogether avoided the common device of translating emotions and thoughts. This reviewer believes it could have been done. Yet, all the same, he has earned attention on the basis of the extent to which he has eschewed the usual method, and for the degree to which he succeeds in shifting viewpoints purely through verbal technique. There also are mixed passages, partly author’s telling, partly telling through actors; and he fashions these so that the reader is hardly aware of the transitions.

The key lies in minimal verbiage, as in poetry (Montgomery also writes poetry), and in restraint; for *DARRELL* is a story of sickness and horror, told without the currently-favored resort to sensationalism. The author never talks ‘above’ the characters, but supplies essential connective portions in the projected language of the people themselves, largely leaving the reader to imagine terribly painful details. This could have been a macabre novel; Montgomery has made it a moving and compassionate (without sentimentalizing) translation of tragic reality.

Among other things which the author has been enabled to achieve, through gradations of verbal implication, is a virtually complete success with regional colloquial utterance (Georgian). His use of typical inversions and phrasings of Southern children (who - other than Darrell’s Granny—are the chief characters) does not distract one. Again - restraint -he does not overdo this, while effectively transporting the reader to that place and time. Linguistically speaking, it all

'fits.'

Not least important, so far as size of potential audience is concerned, Montgomery has been enabled to tell a long story swiftly. Suspense never falters, though the elements of 'thriller' technique are moderated by a relaxed tone. The lines of conflict remain consistently clear; but the tensions are restricted to expressions of the participants, none of whom is either wholly 'bad' or wholly 'good.' And a feeling of inevitability also gradually rises as the story begins to near an end -with the final conviction that there could have been no other ending (likewise a test of a good book - which DARRELL is). J.B.M.

James Boyer May

ISSUE P. 394 · SCAN P. 102

WORDY SNAKE-BITE CURE

reviewed by Marcus Peterson

Whether Irving Wallace writes to entertain or to enlighten is debatable, and probably not important insofar as story interest is concerned.

Wallace has his own particular knack for taking most diverse and unrelated characters and situations, and gradually — dramatically, almost inexorably, it seems -drawing them together for the emotional high-charged climax. In the first place, Wallace bases his novels on rather unusual situations.

In *THE MAN* (SIMON & SCHUSTER, inc. - \$5.95), a multiple vacancy occurs in the White House residency through a series of deaths and accidents. Suddenly, for the first time in history, a Negro is catapulted into the Presidency of the United States. The repercussions are immediate and emotional. Because the new chief executive is Douglass Dilman, a Negro, the fact that he is an intelligent,

sensitive, well-educated, experienced, and perceptive human being is not even considered by a majority of Americans -according to the Wallace projection.

Instantly, Dilman's cabinet members begin machinations to get rid of him. White House personnel begin a new alignment. Some decide to support Dilman; some do not. There is no middle ground. The effects of these new alignments upon the personal lives of those involved constitute one of the major dramatic aspects of the story. The other aspect is the personal life and struggle of Douglass Dilman himself to adjust to this unsought dilemma: the terrific responsibility of his high post, and the inheritance also - with his new job - of hostility and hatred and resentment.

Wallace has a tendency to categorize which oversimplifies things in this novel. This immediately creates noble images of its heroes: Dilman, who just happens to be about the finest Negro in or out of the White House; Nat Abrahams, who just happens to be about the finest Jewish lawyer in or out of the White House. On the other hand, the rest of the poor Congressional and White House mortals included in this tale are unfortunately very human. They exhibit all kinds of weaknesses, indulging with prejudice and vindictiveness in bribery, treachery, and much else. It appears incredible that the noble President and his close friend, Nat Abrahams, can survive in such a nest of rattlesnakes; but purity, courage, and loftiness of purpose and ideals do conquer all-or so Wallace will have us believe.

Because of the emotional atmosphere of *THE MAN*, perhaps it was necessary for Wallace to create such a fictive contrast in the natures of his characters; such disparity certainly does build sympathy for his heroes - and it is persistently, yet subtly, fashioned and maintained with insistence through some seven hundred and sixty pages. By the time the reader wades through this sea of wordiness,

Wallace has achieved his objective more through the sheer cumulative weight of the volume than through any device.

Marcus Peterson

Marcus Peterson