

A LITERARY MAGAZINE OF CALIFORNIA

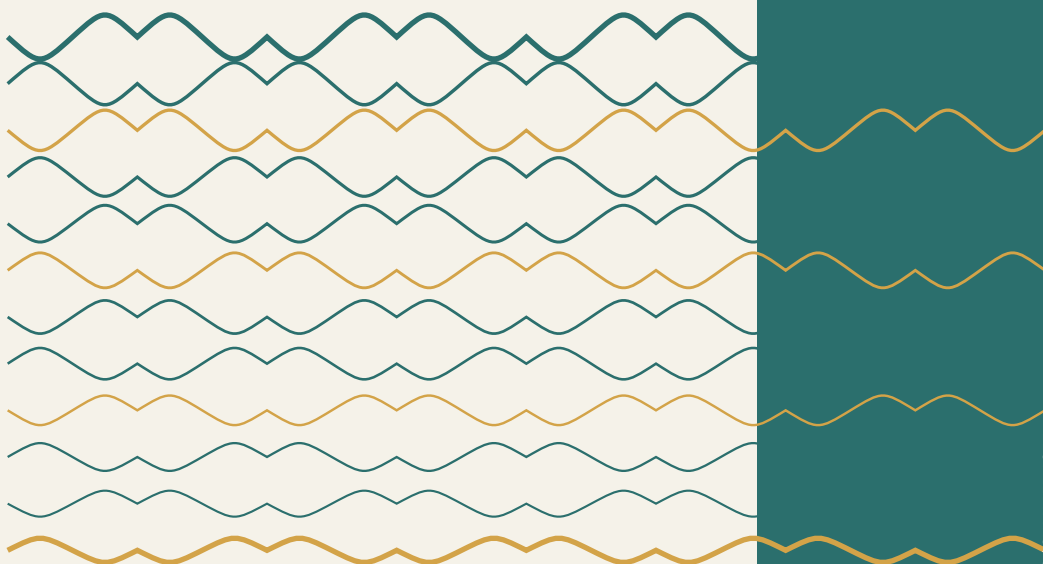
COAST LINES

Summer 1955

VOLUME I / NUMBER TWO

2

ISSUE



35¢

COASTLINES / SUMMER 1955

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A Literary Magazine of California

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A CLEAN READING EDITION

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THE SYNAGOGUE

Gene Frumkin

Perhaps God liked old things, old floors smelling of the accumulated footsteps of forty-eight years, old woodwork which conveyed a sense of dust no water could wash away, an old pulpit, old chairs, an old ark where old torahs lay in the dark through the years, their silver ornaments tarnishing, old prayer books whose pages had passed from yellow to brown and broke now when bent, and old men whose minds were filled with David slaying Goliath or Samson toppling the temple on the heads of the Philistines. If God was fond of age, then the orthodox Congregation Beth Jerusalem was probably His favorite synagogue, for even the water in the taps did not flow with freshness, but tasted so earthy that it seemed to come from some ancient reservoir, unpurified by plumbing.

There is a charm in antiquity, in things extinct but still surviving, a charm that emanates perhaps from a feeling we have of communion with death when we make contact with objects, such as old photographs, or people that are souvenirs of other ages. In this sense, Congregation Beth Jerusalem was certainly charming. Its walls above the windows were reminiscent of death, too, but in another way: the walls were cemeteries of names, names in gold of hundreds of dead men and women in whose memories money had been donated by descend-

ents to the synagogue's treasury.

There was no gloomier time in this termite-infested house of prayer than week-days around dusk when, inevitably, seven or eight men, who if they were not all venerable in years, were at least so in spirit, sat like occasional pyramids in the desert, among the many empty chairs, waiting for a minion, for the tenth man to arrive so that they could have a quorum for their afternoon and evening services. The ninth and tenth men were always a long time in coming now and those solitary stalwarts who waited silently, keeping to themselves, would finally draw together in conversation to pass the minutes.

"What say you, Mr. Goldman?" asked Mendel in Yiddish, addressing Aba Goldman as "Mister" though he had known him for twenty-three years.

"The times are bad. The young make a good living nowadays, but for the old it is difficult. For us it is too late. We cannot live another life," Aba said, replying in Yiddish.

"Too late for us;" repeated Mendel, a wiry old man; bent in the middle like a boomerang:

"Ah, the sun is already down," said Yankel, who was gazing intently through the window at the darkening sky. "Every night the tenth man comes later. He takes his time."

"It won't be long and he won't come altogether," said 'Aba. "we won't get a minion at all anymore."

"True. Everybody is moving away to Fairfax or some other district. There are few Jews left here," Mendel said.

- .. "If I had enough money, I would move, too," said Yankel, leafing through a prayer book although he knew the afternoon and evening services by heart.

Mr. Wald, the sexton, whose job it was to see to it that the services took place each evening of the week if at all possible, bustled

- about asking those assembled where two more men

could be found for a minion.

"Mr. Goldman, where is your friend Stein?"

"He is sick, Mr. Wald,"

"What is the matter?"

"His hands and feet are swollen. He can't move at all, so his wife has to feed him and dress him. I'm afraid he can't last long. "

"Terrible, terrible. Such a good-natured man. When God calls, we must all go."
"True. God knows what is best."

Mr. Wald looked about him at the big, bare synagogue. There was Yankel gazing at the sky again. Flaxman, the reliefer, in his faded, unpressed suit, was sitting by himself, muttering nonsense. There the young refugee from Poland, steeped in the

was Schachtman lore of the ghetto, a man who followed the rituals of his ancestors to the letter.

because only through the rituals could he identify himself with the history of the human race and only through them could he believe himself of the least consequence in the present, a man who would always eat kosher meat, never ride the bus on the Sabbath, nor ever trust a Christian. Up near the front of the synagogue was old Glebb standing to the full extent of his four feet, ten inches, jaunty, healthy, his voice booming memorized Hebrew fragments to the four walls.

"I only count seven now, " said Mr. Wald to Aba. "I thought there were eight here."

"I think Blitzman went downstairs to relieve himself."

"Every night it takes longer for the tenth man to come, " said Mendel.

"That won't go on much longer, " said Mr. Wald, offering only that meager, uninformative sentence to tantalize his listeners.

"What do you mean, Mr. Wald?" Aba asked.
"You haven't heard? "

"Heard what?"

"The synagogue is going to be moved."

"Going to be moved? The synagogue is going to be moved?"! Aba's voice was loud in his incredulity. Glebb stopped booming, Flaxman ceased muttering nonsense, Yankel turned away from the sky, all eyes suddenly focused on the sexton and Aba Goldman, whose taut grey beard and nerve pulsing temple seemed to symbolize the tenseness of the moment.

"It's true, " said Mr. Wald. "They are going to tear down the synagogue here and build another one near Fairfax. "

Flaxman, the reliefer, raised his hand to clutch his forehead in despair, but, instead, accidentally knocked off his hat.. It fell in the midst of the group and Flaxman scurried to pick it up, covering his head with one hand so that his head would not be uncovered to God in His temple. No one paid him any attention.

"What will become of us? The synagogue is we have, " said Mendel.

The fat, blood faced sexton shrugged his shoulders and said in English, "That's life," and then in Yiddish, "God will help. "

Blitzman came up from the lavatory downstairs and sat down, unaware of what had happened while he was gone. He had been in the poultry business all his life and had his own market once, but now, in his later years, he was reduced to plucking the feathers off dead chickens all day for somebody else. It • was a job for which he was too old: his muscles had lost their elasticity: and his spirit its resiliency. Blitzman, as soon as he sat down, sought refuge from his aches and doldrums, and practically willed himself, to sleep.

Just then a youth in his late teens entered to say mourner's kaddesh for. a dead parent. He seated himself quietly. at the rear of the long room, as far away as possible from the older generation in

from whom he had no bonds other than the frayed religious cord that stemmed from his birth.

Although there was a momentary hush at the entrance of the youth, the talk began immediately.

"Mr. Wald, who is it that says the synagogue is to be moved?" asked Aba.

"Excuse me," the sexton said, turning away from Aba. "Yankel, you are closest, would you turn on the lights? It is getting dark in here."

The sun went down ten minutes ago," said Yankel as he switched on the lights, and still there is no minion."

"Golem! They are going to move the synagogue out from under us and he is still worrying about a minion," said Mendel sarcastically, walking away from the discussion.

Aba took off his spectacles, which had misted, and began wiping them. "Mendel says 'they are going to move the synagogue from under us. What I want to know is: who is 'they'?"

"They" are the board of governors of the synagogue," replied Mr. Wald.

"How will we go to synagogue on the holidays and on the Sabbath? We cannot ride the buses on those days, since it is forbidden. The board knows that, Why are they doing this to us? I don't understand it," Glebb said, his voice like a buzz-saw.

"All the Jews are moving from here," said *Mr. Wald*.

"All the Americanized Jews," said Mendel, returning to the discussion, his thin face splotched with scarlet from the excitement.

"The Americanized Jews, who never come to synagogue," joined in Aba. "Once a year--Rosh Hoshana, Yom Kippur--they come to synagogue and the rest of the year nobody sees or hears from them. They are scarce like thousand dollar bills. Where are they tonight while we wait for a minion? It is we and not

the Americans, not the board of governors, who have maintained the synagogue, It is we who come to services morning and evening every day. Yet nobody asks us what we think of moving the synagogue to Fairfax. Forty-eight years it has stood on Melton Street and all of a sudden there aren't enough Jews for them. It is a shame! A shame!"

"Bravo, Mr. Goldman!" cried Mendel.

"What do you want from me?" asked Mr. Wald. "I'm with you. I just work here, All I am doing is telling what is happening."

"Nobody blames you," said Yankel. "You are a good man."

"They are educated people, the board of govgovernors," said the sexton. "Maybe they know what is best for the congregation."

"Only God knowe what is beat," said Aba,

and He has let the synagogue remain on Melton

"But, you see, God must have changed His mind, because now the synagogue is going to be moved."

"The board is doing this, not God."

"The board is only an instrument in God's hands. Whatever happens is through God's will."

"Then we have been deserted by God? asked the tiny Glebb.

"Never!" cried Schachtman, the young refugee from Poland, speaking for the first time. "The Lord will intervene to prevent this calamity."

"But the papers will be signed tomorrow," said the sexton. "In a week, they will begin to build near Fairfax."

"Papers, what are papers when the will of the Lord is being denied," said - Schachtman, hotly. "The synagogue won't be moved. It won't happen."

"What will prevent it from happening?"

"A miracle, if necessary," said Schachtman, angrily hurrying to the back of the room, away from the talk where he knew he would become only angrier.

"A miracle? The days of miracles are past," said Yankel. "In these days could Methuselah live for nine-hundred years* Who lives that long nowadays?*

"True. Or who, like Moses, can divide the waters now?' asked Glebb.

Shaking his head sadly, Aba said, ". No, friends, we cannot depend on a miracle to keep the synagogue bere c The people nowadays are not worthy to see God show his power in this way. There is no one or the stature of Moses or Jacob or Abraham walking the world today,"

"We must wait for Messiah to come to get things right, said Mendel.

The talk died down, for having disposed of the possibility of a miracle, the men saw only the desolation of days without a synagogue, and it was too grim to talk about further.

Then Yankel asked suddenly, "Do you think God will forgive us for not praying in synagogue on the Sabbath and holidays?"

"What else? How can he punish you for not going to synagogue when there is no synagogue to go to? Have a little sense," said Mr. Wald, irked at such an illogical question.

"But will God take such a reasonable view?" asked Yankel, not yet convinced.

The sexton became peeved and walked off toward the pulpit, his inability to gaze squarely any further upon such stupidity suggested by his half-closed eyes.

"We must do our best. We must pray at our homes as we would in synagogue and God will forgive us, i said Aba to Yankel.

Flaxman passed them, gibbering, and went downstairs to relieve himself.

In the rear of the room, Schachtman said to the youth who had come to say kaddesh, #Where you are sitting is reserved for the ladies.

Even when the ladies are not here up front is where the men are supposed to sit."

The young man blushed and said he didn't know the seating was arranged that way, and moved shyly to the men's section.

Aba, who had watched the scene, said to Mendel, "See, Mr. Fine, what is happening to the young. He doesn't even know the ladies are supposed to sit in back,"

"It is a pity: Mr. Goldman. The young don't care. They amuse themselves with their ball games, their picture shows, and they don't heed God's teachings. What will become of Judaism?"

"It will survive. See how it has survived thus far and see how the Land of Israel is again ours. Great days are ahead."

"You are right. We shall not live to see them, but surely great days are ahead."

"We can't live fofever, Mr. Fine."

"No, not till Messiah comes."

During the next silence, Mr. Raeger, the grocer, hustled in, a little man out of breath. "I was afraid I would be too late," he said.

"No, no, said the sexton. "You are the tenth man. Quickly he began counting those present. "I only count nine. What happened, did somebody leave?"

All, except Blitzman who was still sleeping: looked around them helplessly, unable to decide what had happened, why there were only nine present. Only the reappearance of Flaxman from downstairs solved the mystery.

"Who is he?! asked Mendel.

"A poor man on relief, I think," Aba replied. "I don't know his name."

"I didn't even know he was here."

"He's a little off. See how he mumbles to himself."

"A pity."

Mr. Wald mounted the pulpit and draped his large

praying shawl over his shoulders, preparing so lead the minion in the services.

Tears leaped to Aba Goldman's eyes as he realized with sudden anguish how few days remained. how soon he would no longer be able to pray here in the synagogue, and his grey beard quivered. Suddenly he grew angry, shook his praying book a few times in the air and then threw it to the floor. It hit on its back edge with a low thud in the silent room, and its brown pages, held in place by mere wisps of old glue, flew out in all directions. Glebb, Schachtman and Mendel Fine saw this profanation of the holy book and remained staring at Aba in stunned disbelief. The other men, hearing the thud, turned too and even Flaxman understood what Aba had done, Nothing like this had ever happened before in their memories.

As soon as he had thrown the book, Aba repented of the deed. He stooped down, crying, and began kissing each of the pages as he picked them up, and after they were all removed from the floor, he placed them tenderly inside the covers of the book and began kissing the front cover feverishly, repeating, "Forgive me, God. I didn't mean it. God, forgive me,"

The men turned their eyes away, further saddened by the spectacle. As Aba sat down, Mendel put his arm around his shoulders.

"You are the strongest of us, Aba. You must be calm and show us the way. Otherwise, too many hearts will be broken."

"You are right. We must be strong. we must not shed tears at what God has chosen to do."

"Maybe it was only the Board of Governors. You said so yourself."

"Maybe it was, " said Aba. "God will help."

The sexton pounded the dais with the palm of his hand to get silence. "Services will now begin. Somebody wake up Blitzman. "

Then there was a low murmur of voices as the men rattled off the Hebrew prayers so swiftly the words seemed to intermesh with each other. the young man who had come to say kaddesh stared blankly into an open prayer book, then began to read aloud; slowly in broken Hebrew. He understood Yiddish and had realized what was happening, that the synagogue was going to be moved. He read on as best he could, feeling it was all he could do for the old men.

* *

THE AMERICAN

Mel Weisburd

Illuminated by many moons of destiny;
Born in the very fever of necessity, a citizen
Of natural law, with all rights, fibre of the surplus
Wheat and the iron clay, a muscle of the sun,

He might have bored a copper mine into some hill
Or built a babylon of oil, or built or shot up
Some town, barnstormed, bootlegged, embezzled, speculated,
He might have been a patriot or a popular president.

In the endless west of the vast regenerate virgin
The traumatic empire reeled between the coasts
On whose impulsive earth the manhood of his nation burst
"Till the frontiers warped and the cities thundered.

And the soil locked. American and landless now,
He sat with the misery of Job in the agrarian mind,
Bored the rifle of his bitterness, published
His agony of the lonely, fenced, windbroken frontier.

Then lost to a sullen, poetic generation;
To Europe, to Stein, to Lenin, where now
Like a black nun abstract against the white slopes
Of the future, pressed purple lips to acrid stone.

Then back to the brink of the eagle eye, peering
At the star crossed nations, to the wars, to the Death
And the ruined vision, to the classrooms where in
The nausea of students and teachers, he spat out the world.

Then one day arrested in his vagrant dream, while
A thousand eyed facelessness gaveled for order
In the electric darkness of its Justice,
Scanning the withered truths scarred along his body.

And patrolled deep into his heart, zoned wisdom,
Followed reason, confiscated the history of his flesh,
Dropped dead beliefs and false images of this thorough
Enemy now into a thousand sudden networks.

Though exhausted from a lifetime of being born,
His love riots in its prisoned heart, and seeds
The endless west, the endless world now, delegating
His conscience to the parliaments of future dawns.

A QUESTION OF A U-VALVE

Barding Dahl

It started the first day Pickens took over as administrative clerk of the Lagos office, it came with the job. Dr. Haskell told him one of the toilets was out of order, and that he should get a plumber to fix it. The matter seemed simple enough, and Pickens added it to the list of things to be done, with no premonition of what lay in store for him.

In due time, the clerk began the process of complying with the order given him by his supervisor. Enquiries about local plumbers shed no light on the problem until Pickens consulted don Jose. "Si, senior, I know a plumber. He lives only a snort distance from here, shall I go get him?"

So the old watchman was dispatched for the plumber. Later in the afternoon, Pickens looked up from his desk to see a being coming through the street door. It was an old man, and as he made his way across the patio to the administrative office, Pickens stared with disbelief at the moving caricature of a human. If someone had told him the creature had just stepped out of a spaceship from Mars, Pickens would unhesitatingly have believed it, as he would have believed almost anything. The ancient one could have been a mechanical doll come to life long enough to clamber out of the toy box and walk with stiff precision

into the Commission office, or he could have been a reincarnation of the American "Uncle Remus," an animated legend. Anything would have been more credible than the explanation that this was in fact a plumber, taking part in the exchange of goods and services of society.

Pickens guessed that the figure coming towards him was the plumber don Jose had spoken of--it had to be, the two old timers went together like politics and corruption. The man moved with extreme deliberation, as if the slightest disturbance to his equilibrium would send him crashing to the ground. His globular head was fixed securely to his body, and it never varied from the full-front position. The features, together with the dark complexion, indicated Negro ancestry, but beyond this, nothing definite could be said.

As the oldster approached the desk, Pickens was surprised to hear it speak, "I am the plumber," he announced, the words crawling out of his scrawny throat as if issuing from a sewer grating. In spite of the muffled, rasping quality of his voice, the venerable plumber spoke in a way which gave the American to understand that although he was duly reporting for duty as plumber, here was not a man to be trifled with.

Pickens conducted the technician through the passageway to the rear of the office and showed him the defective toilet. The plumber focused his large, discolored eyes on the mechanism, and Pickens could almost hear the rusty wheels in the old head squeaking and complaining as they began to turn over. When the stimulus of the toilet picture reached the center of his thinking apparatus, directing his entire attention to the problem, the plumber approached the toilet not unlike a doctor with his patient. Instead of a knee-tap reflex, he pulled the flush chain, which clacked hollowly

with sinister flatness. When it became clear that the mechanism was not going to function, he next decided it would be necessary to have a look at the patient's vitals in the overhead flush box.

Pickens brought a box and set it against the wall. Then he made as if to assist the old man up on the box, with the thought running through his mind that the body of the antique plumber would surely crumble into dust like an Egyptian mummy if it were touched. But the plumber testily motioned the help away, and without aid mounted the box, although he took elaborate precautions not to lose his balance.

Pickens looked on for a moment while the box was examined. The old man seemed eminently qualified to deal with the situation, as the toilet had probably been fashioned sometime during his youth. They were both from the musty past, and they seemed to have an affinity for each other, like Marie Antoinette and the pompadour. While the repairman craned and peered into the box, Pickens wondered what sort of youth he had had, and where he had come from. It was likely he was from Veracruz, where the descendants of the Negroes brought over for plantation labor were concentrated.

Under the pressure of conflicting moralities, the Spanish church fathers had decided the only way to free the Mexican Indians from slavery was to allow the importation of Negroes, who were slaves "by nature".

How many generations back could the lineage of this old plumber be traced? Pickens speculated as he watched the face, weazened by advancing years, bent towards the workings of the box. Back to Veracruz and the laborers who sweated for the ease of the Spanish conquerors, and their even more arrogant sons? Back to the shackles of a slaveship, to the shores of Africa? There the line would be lost in a genealogical tangle, but

the line is there somewhere, and it is unbroken.

Leaving the repairman to his work, Pickens

went back to his desk. Some time later, the plumber appeared in front of the desk, holding up a U-shaped tube for the clerk's inspection.

"Es cuestion de una U-valvula, " he said.

"Where can we get one?"

"Well, I'll have to see about it. They don't make the parts for these old toilets anymore. I'll have to look around for one."

""Do you think you can find it this afternoon?""

his worn felt hat and drew a couple fingernails

across the bare expanse of his pate, "these U-valves are pretty scarce these days, but I'll see what I can do."

The plumber left, and Pickens forgot the matter until Dr. Haskell brought it to his attention a couple of days later, "You got that toilet fixed yet?"

"No, the plumber was supposed to find a U-valve or something, but he hasn't been back. I'll send Jose to find out what's holding him up."

Accordingly, the watchman was dispatched to summon the sanitation engineer, and several hours later, the plumber dutifully reported to Pickens for another conference, "At your

orders, senor."

"The doctor has been asking me about the toilet; didn't you find the part you need?"

"No, I went to the hardware store, and they have some U-valves, but all more modern than this one, and none will serve."

"well, isn't there a second-hand store or a junk yard where they might have one?"

"There is a man who has a mountain of plumbing parts. Today I will go and see if he has one."

There was nothing more Pickens could do than take the old man at his word, and from then on, the matter of the repairing became one of the

numerous thorns in the side of the field clerk. He was, in this as in other problems, effectively cut off from all reasonable courses of action, but was continually criticized by the doctors, by District headquarters, and even by Mexico City for not complying with the orders.

"Ain't you got that toilet fixed yet?" the doctor would ask, as if Pickens couldn't decide if his supervisor was goading him for the sheer sadistic pleasure of it, or from a real concern for the plumbing facilities. Perhaps it was both. At any rate, Pickens had difficulty controlling his temper as time went on and the veterinarian continued harping at him without offering any concrete suggestions, "Pickens, how many times have I got to tell you to get that damn toilet fixed?"

"Look, doctor, I don't know how to fix it myself, the plumbers I got doesn't know how to fix it, and none of the other plumbers in town will come over here. I don't know what else I can do."

This set the doctor back a trifle. "Well, what's the matter with the other plumbers, don't

they want the job?" "I don't know what's the matter with them; they just won't come. They say they're too busy."

These interviews always concluded with an ineffectual admonition from the doctor about "got to do something.." Then Pickens would despairingly send for the old plumber again, who would delay as long as possible, and then would come plodding across the patio with his head held like a diving helmet, "At your orders, senior.." he would intone in his flat, grating voice.

Pickens would try to deal with him on his own terms, "Now tell me, isn't there something you can do to make the toilet work?"

"Pues, es cuestion de una U-valvula.." he would begin, and then came the long explanation about the vital function of the U-valve. There is no limit to the usefulness of a U-valve.

Pickens would listen with sighing patience, and when it was over, he would try another approach: "What about fixing the U-valve you've got? Can't you solder it or something?"

"This one? Si, senor, look how old and rotted it is. No, this one is good for nothing.." then slowly a light broke over his face, "but perhaps I could-" and his rumbling explanation was lost to Pickens, who had trouble following the muffled speech of the old man in any case.

Meanwhile, Pickens, under further prodding from the doctor, tried again to contact the town's various plumbers. For unknown reasons they all found excuses, and the old man, for whom any name besides "The Plumber!" would have been unthinkable, remained Pickens' sole recourse.

So, whatever the old man's plan, he went ahead with it, and at length he came to proudly announce that the toilet was fixed. Pickens gasped with relief and went back to formally inaugurate the water works, but lo, there was the same ominous clacking when he eagerly yanked the chain. He looked in consternation at the plumber, who shook his head in bafflement.

This necessitated another extraction of the works, and a corresponding delay of two or three But still the U-valve would not draw the water out of the box and down the flush pipe. The plumber continued evading Pickens direct questions, murmuring his usual blandishments concerning the U-valve. The impasse dragged on interminably, the other office toilet continuing to do double duty. Even don Jose put

pressure on Pickens by asking him to survey the havoc wrought by either too much or too little water, since the toilet continued to have surreptitious visitors.

Finally, after still another summons from Pickens, the plumber tacitly admitted defeat by suggesting they install a new toilet, but

Dr. Haskell was cool towards such an expenditure as the economy drive launched from Mexico City was being felt on all levels.

At last the knot was cut. As a last resort, Pickens appealed to the mechanics of the compound, and one of them was obliging enough to repair the U-valve, solder the flush box, and restore the unit to maximum efficiency. But this did not close the affair, as there was still the old plumber to reckon with. He apparently regarded the job as a lifetime project, and was not pleased to have it taken out of his hands. After a long discussion with his crony, don Jose, the plumber approached Pickens and stated his case, "Senor, the watchman tells me someone else has been meddling with the toilet, is this true?"

"Yes, we couldn't wait any longer. A mechanic from the compound has fixed it."

The plumber shrugged as if scorning to take offense at the infamy, "Very well, it is of no importance to me. The commission can do as it pleases, but there is the matter of the time I have spent working on this toilet, and also there are expenses."

"Well, maybe we can pay you something for the time, time, but what are the expenses?"

"Oh, I have bought washers, and a rod, and a U-valve which did not fit--all out of my own pocket!

This presented a serious problem to Pickens, who could not harbor animosity for the old man in spite of the irritations he had caused. From a logical standpoint, the plumber, as a businessman, should have been responsible for his mistakes, but in fairness the man was at or beyond the threshold of senility. And he had put in a good deal of time.

"Well, I'll see what I can do--have you got the receipts for the things you bought?"

"Receipts?" vaguely echoed the plumber.

"Yes, receipts from the store you bought the things."

The plumber shook his head in slow amaze-

ment, "No, I have no receipts. They put the things on my bill at the hardware store. I have the parts to show you, why do you want receipts?"

"It is a rule of the Commission," patiently explained Pickens. Then he decided to do what he could--after all, a few pesos meant far less to the Commission than to this old man. The clerk typed out a bill which included the enumerated items and a labor charge which originally had been enormous, but which was scaled down by Pickens' arguments that they would in no case be paid if the plumber did not listen to reason. The signing of the document was a serious matter--he gripped the pen with desperate concentration and slowly etched out his signature, ending by obliterating the name with an elaborate series of whorls and dashes.

Pickens then bore the bill in to Dr. Haskell for endorsement. He almost signed it from force of habit, but the entire situation came back to him just in time, "What did you say this is for?"

"For the expenses of the plumber."

The doctor was not a man to let slip an opportunity for revenge, "Well, he didn't fix it, did he?"

"No, but he put in a lot of time on it, and I thought we could pay him something. This is only part of what he wanted to start with."

"I don't care how much time he put in, he didn't fix it, so we ain't gonna pay him."

And that was as far as the bill got. Pickens went back to his office, where he had to face the plumber. "The doctor won't sign it. He says you didn't fix it, so we can't pay you."

"Can't pay me--" repeated the plumber, not comprehending, "What do you mean you can't pay me? I have made these expenses out of my own pocket, and you say you can't pay me.."

"I'm sorry, there's nothing I can do. The

doctor won't sign the bill, so the paymaster can't pay it."

The situation still refused to arrange itself in the old man's mind. The Commission had a good reputation for paying its bills, so he couldn't understand what was happening--unless, and he became surer of this the more he turned it over in his mind, someone, namely Pickens, was trying to pocket the money for himself. He asked again for the money, reiterating the expenses, and received the same reply from Pickens. The disgruntled plumber repeated the whole procedure until the clerk was finally forced to withdraw in order to keep from losing his temper, "I'm sorry, it's not up to me. I have to get back to work."

"Well then," bristled the old man, "I'll go to the police."

"There seems to be no other way."

Pickens hoped he would go to the police--perhaps they would force the Commission to pay him, but time passed, and the civil authorities took no action on behalf of the outraged plumber. Nothing more was seen or heard of the old man until one afternoon more than a week later when the familiar figure stalked across the patio with great solemnity weighting each step. He had apparently determined to make one last stand against the powers of darkness. "Good afternoon," he said stiffly, and deposited a sheaf of scribbled papers on the desk in front of Pickens.

"Here are the receipts," he announced with defiance in his voice.

Pickens rolled his eyes heavenward, but resolved to remain civil throughout, if for no other reason than there would be no purpose or satisfaction in venting his anger on the humorless old man.

"But I can't do anything with these. The doctor refuses to pay the bill, and what he says goes.

"But these are my expenses," he went on, "there

was the U-valve and the _"

"I wish you would go to the police, they're the only ones who can help you,"

This was a shrewd shaft. The plumber realized he had no chance of enlisting the local gendarmerie against a colossus such as the Commission. Right or wrong, he was beaten. He drew up his skeleton like body inside the checkered shirt he wore, which always looked as though it had been freshly-starched, and demanded in a threatening tone, "All right then, tell me, in two words, are you going to pay me or no?"

"In one word, senor, no."

Whereupon the old man scooped up the papers, turned about, and marched out to the street as if to imply that grave calamities would befall the Commission as a result of this day's work.

Meanwhile the world and its affairs moved on. The irascible plumber began to fade in Pickens' mind under the wash of vaccine shipments, reports, inspectors from Mexico City to be shown around and appeased, vehicle wrecks, bureaucratic manifestoes, and infection scares. Among the flow of events was a certain carload of barley, which, after devious meanderings, elected to arrive one day in the Lagos freight yard. The difficulties for Pickens were staggering. He attempted to share the problem with the doctors, but they shrugged it off; a carload of barley was far too prosaic a theme to occupy them. But twenty-odd tons of grain were to be disposed of. No notice was given of the car's arrival for a week, but storage charges doubled for each day of "neglect", and this under the gimlet gaze of an ever more penurious paymaster corps. Untold tons of barley which would last the hundred or so horses of the sub-district office upwards of a year--a mountain of yielding bulk, unsacked, and no place to put it.

"Spread a canvas in the compound.." came the cryptic advice from district headquarters.. "But twenty-odd tons--" "Well, I dunno, do the best you can, but keep expenses down."

Pickens approached the tangle gingerly, moving around it to test for soft spots. He rented a couple of vacant stores in a building a few blocks away and enlisted the help of the chief mechanic at the compound, explaining that no outside help could be hired. Fortunately he was sympathetic, and contributed a whole shift of mechanics and three trucks, including an antiquated weapons carrier. Canvas was rigged on the sides of the trucks, and the signal was given to form caravan for the depot.

Meanwhile Pickens was arranging the stores. Planks were brought so the front could be built up when the grain level rose. The clerk noticed a few nondescript tools at the rear of one of the stores, and asked the owner about them when she came to observe the proceedings, "Ah, " she shrugged, "they are the plumber's, been there for ages-- pay no attention to them."

Then the first truck pulled up and the sturdy brown mechanics sent the first shovelfuls of golden grain flashing down into the gaping mouth of the store. In a few minutes they were scraping bottom. and roared away for another load, making way for the next truck. This was a holiday for the mechanics, a welcome change from the daily routine of grease jobs and motor overhauls.

The hours rolled by, and the men worked on, hardly pausing long enough for dinner. An electric light was strung from the window over the stores, and kerosene lanterns were rigged up in the cavernous gondola. The men were possessed of work-fever, and refused to stop when Pickens remonstrated with them. A lead mechanic, sinewy and darkly handsome, shouted half-mockingly from the wheel of his truck, "There goes Senor Pickens, he makes us strong!" referring to Pickens' implied

powers with the front office.

Pickens tired of protesting, and repaired to the soft bed in his hotel room. They were heroes; every one, but they would at least get the next day off.

At seven the next morning Pickens reported at the office and was astonished to see the mechanics trudging towards the warehouse to turn in the scoop shovels. They were limply exhausted, but exultantly happy through the dust-grime of their faces--they had conquered the mountain. Dr. Haskell was even more astounded--these were not the ash-tray Mexican he knew, dozing by a cactus under a serape • They left in a final roar of exhausts to return the trucks to the compound.

A few days later, Pickens groaned to see the plumber coming in through the street entrance of the office. The set grimness of the old man's wrinkled face gave no clue as to what he had in mind, and Pickens braced himself for another bout concerning the repair project. But this was not the reason for the plumber's return. He greeted the American with more than customary reserve, and launched immediately into his subject,

"The Senora Martinez tells me you have rented the stores in the Martinez building on Agustin

Rivera Street, "

"That's right, they're full of grain."

"I must trouble you for the key to the right-hand room, "

"It's no use, they're full of grain--up to the ceiling."

"You don't understand, some of my tools are inside and I need them."

Pickens remembered the tools with a sinking feeling. If only he had taken them out--but the senora had said to leave them there, and how was he to know they belonged to this of all plumbers..

But here was the old man again, the butt of another outrage by the Commission. "I'm sorry, I asked the Senora Martinez about the tools, but she said she didn't think you needed them and to leave them there. You can't get past the door."

"If you would be so kind as to give me the key. I will get my tools and lock the door again."

For a time, there was no getting through, the plumber was so resentful of the rough handling he had received previously that he thought the clerk was merely nasty by nature: When he finally grasped the meaning of what Pickens was telling him, he started to tense for a bout of anger even fiercer than the last, but then was overcome by the enormity of this fresh insult. The thing was of such magnitude that he couldn't hold the spite of mere individuals to blame, it was more like a cosmic force, an overshadowing destiny that inexorably dogged his footsteps.

The plumber laughed--he cracked the set leatherness of his grizzled countenance to grimace like a cartoon character. His eyes pinched together: his jaw dropped, exposing toothless gums, and the corners of his mouth pulled slightly towards his cheekbones in his ancient mirth. And the laugh flat, toneless, and harsh, came out of his throat

but shockingly severe for his leaf-like frame. He recovered slowly, shaking his head in bottomless wonderment at the haphazard vagaries of homo sapiens, "Ai, you Commission men, " he marvelled, "you are the wonders of the world."

THREE POEMS*Stanley Kiesel***CRUSOE**

Shipwrecked and bare,
I came to this blonde island.
Here, in my twenty sixth year,
I wept.

With elaborate labor
I built from my body
An extension, a home.
I fly my shirt on the shore
And now am composed.

This island
Is full of blue weather,
And I work.

At first, nausea,
And derangement...
Now... nothing-
Yes, something,
A sense of the strenuous;
Out of my drenched sleep
A sense of composure...

Confidantes: a bird, a goat;
A dog,
Who found no species
To multiply his kind upon,
Grown old and crazy.

* *

WISDOM

Who has not commissioned love to paint a picture
of himself?

Who has not, on his own green leaf, laid eggs of
conviction

Hoping that hatched, they may nibble away his tact?

Who has not, behind the flowers of stealth grown
hair on his cheek?

Or read rubber authors? Or beat his smile like a drum?

Or covered himself with chocolate-covered scorn.

Or dined upon subterfuge. Or clung to the branch of
expectation with his
sex outstretched.

A face can walk on all fours;

Smiles are, in part, genitals, that one can expose
without shame.

Even paragons pass water, and body has its vote.

The masochist lays tracks on his breast, the sadist...

No inducement exists that will not lift its skirt.

All, all devour love as one butters bread.

Faces are paths; each possibility makes its own bed.

Nina, Lulu, Darius, Chris; each in bed found a lunatic.

One betrayed her presence by a fussy step.

One's reluctance was a tooth she hid.

And one no sooner made his nipples stiff than he
wanted them back,

Love's a paper-bound book; a mode of belief;
Both someone to sleep with and someone to shun;
Hoisting a yawn; the feint of an army whose general
is gone.

Nina, Darius, Lulu and Chris,
Who were as young as their smile's weather was,
Their object's now grass. All morals are old.
All faces are paths.

*

ENFANT TERRIBLE

He lived with a vanilla aunt
And his steel-blue uncle
In a roomful of brown convictions;
And at ten had such peach-colored hopes
That he had to tie a ribbon around intention
Lest he lean too far
And smash through the glass of advice.

To climb the fence of impulse
He'd need a tan mind;
And a pet hand
To tickle certainties.

Now it was June and on the khaki tides
He could hear booming, the salmon,
Crabby, with their hot blue loads...
The fourth dictum came: he would sweep
Down the plaid river and there,
With his polar cap on,
Waylay them!

on the toes of heroes,
He threw into the mind's bush
Whatever infants he could muster.
Eating from his box lunch of love he grinned.
He had washed his face in caution long enough.

Soon they were upon him
And now he leans out his pole
And greets violation,
Masticates all glances...
Dismounting from deity
Blue as a razor...

And since, has broke all our beds;

And all our children can't unpocket him.

*

THREE POEMS

Peter Yates

Thinking About Tu Fu
I Think Of Wallace Stevens

If Tu, bureaucrat, fellow traveler upon
the disinterested harmonium
Reminder of the Emperor, now suggest to the people
their dutiful responsibilities
More left, move right, the mountain peak yields
to the cloud the will
to many voices
It is a horizontal evasion, Huxley says
a granite whim fringed by
uncomprehending fears
Shifting the complaint but not
the ground of the complaint
altering the mode but not the bass

Whereas another can sit in an office
as you could not
at ease among the flowery flutings of his harmonium
composing by the stream of peace
boating under the passional lanterns
always to a mistuning, a subtle
but audible beating of discordance.
Ponderous, sublimely
horizoned sculptures fade to a passionless descant
through the red infernal
Many miles offer many sorrows
more space is behind closed shutters
A calm room looking out upon bamboo divisions
the night trembling with frogs
a falling together of impalpable transferences
cool dew out of an airy substance
a good life upon very little livelihood.

* *

FANTASY X: OF MUSIC

To think that music should have been reduced
to these digital recitations between plane
and train trips,
punctuated by applause:
intervals among silences
like a branch beyond a dimming window
into which a robin hops with its impersonal shout.

Some would take away meaning
and leave only technical devices
quartered together,
a symphony of escutcheons
for a democracy of plain talk.

Men and women holding in common all technical
expedients,
the prick of urgency shall come no more between one and another
nor music between notes:
but there shall be musicology.

I throw it in your toothy
mechanism,
which of us shall govern?
Tauten your gut: Blow your horn!
Conversation:
no, percussion.
Would the ambulating phonograph indecently
display its needle?

We might as well put it straight
in this drunken symposium,
sombre Lenin alongside sober Plato,
that this music is my drunkenness
meaning not reason
on a plane of
discipline not government,
not argument, discourse.
Criticism may be literature.

The Iliad bark beside Confucius' speaking stone
pruned in a flowerpot, a mental landscape,
can preen like a sequoia, if only I think it,
branches and top swept clean by two thousand
winters' gales,
resonant of Gautama, airy deserts of hot Zoroaster,
streaming off the peaks of Jesus;
all that long ago now.

Beethoven wrote, "a howling cheese,"

Not a good sound in the whole lot of it
that will not break off, wear thin,
zip out of the conventional
like galaxies past the speed of light,
an aristocracy of Ptolemaic angels

THE SQUASH

I tire myself
I knot up my mechanic body
with labor, like a drug.
because I don't need to

Building my walls
assembling terraces of rock, heavily
laid together, for no purpose.
No one requires it of me.

I don't value the flowers,
peach trees, pumpkins,
that will show there, for their fruits:
these are my ornate companions.

And at night I lie dreaming
of the great squash, throwing out his whiskers, creeping

up my terraces,
when I'd much rather sleep.

But if I sleep I die
and my waking is precarious.
I fear to lie among the cut green branches
side by side along my terraces.

I build a pyramid to myself
that none will admire, no one will observe in
this stone step my calculation,
bracing that wall my judgment.

And the rebellious greens,
the high dahlia, the fuchsia dropping purple race;
the acanthus pride, the coarse file of the squash
are my testimonial: we shall not survive summer.

Is it better to improvise
or carve a monumentum aere perennius
or to exchange verses until drunk
or defy the indifference of editors?

REVIEWS

THE COLLECTED POEMS OF WALLACE STEVENS

Alfred A. Knopf. 6:75

Although the title of the last poem in this volume is "Not Ideas About the Thing but the Thing Itself," most of Mr. Stevens' poems are actually devoted to ideas about things. Mr. Stevens is a connoisseur of the imagination, a philosopher whose main theme is the reality of sensations, and a poet whose great gifts of language and meter have provided him with unique instruments for carrying on his explorations. He is always luxurious, always giving more than the simple necessities. However, in some poems the luxury merely diminishes their effects. But at the same time, Mr. Stevens seems rarely to have allowed a poem to get away from him as Crane and Dylan Thomas often did, for he has not been as involved with his emotions. Being involved mainly with ideas of his emotions and of reality, he has been able to avoid the excesses of romanticism, and while retaining a grandeur of diction equal to Crane has imposed an order upon his feeling, and a restraint that has made him an aesthete rather than a participant in things.

However, Mr. Stevens rarely has been satisfied with his particular world. In the fifth section of "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven" he writes:

Inescapable romance, inescapable choice
Of dreams, disillusion as the last illusion,

Reality as a thing seen by the mind,

Not that which is but that which is apprehended,
 A mirror, a lake of reflections in a room,
 A glassy ocean lying at the door,

A great town hanging pendent in a shade,
 An enormous nation happy in a style,
 Everything as unreal as real can be,

In the inquisite eye. Why, then, inquire
 Who has divided the world, what entrepreneur?
 No. man: The self, the chrysalis of all men

Became divided in the leisure of blue day
 And more, in branchings after day. One part
 Held fast tenaciously in common earth

And one from central earth to central sky
 And in moonlit extensions of them in the mind
 Searched out such majesty as it could find.

Mr. Stevens too has searched out such majesty as he could find, but the main charge we may justly place against his work of a lifetime is that he has been content, although uneasily, to reconcile the two divisions of man, the practical and the imaginative, in terms of ideas. Mr. Stevens did not search hard enough, went no further than the "reflections in a room" and did not see the people there. His later work, of which there are twenty-five poems in the *Collected Poems* previously unpublished in volume form, is more direct, if less powerful, but has come no nearer to the reality that breathes. Nevertheless the author of poems like "Sunday Morning," "The Idea of Order at Key West," "On the Manner of Addressing Clouds," "Le Monocle de Mon Oncle," and many others *! deserves to be estimated as a poet whose work will "survive the twentieth century.

Gene Frumkin

THE DOUBLE WORLD OF THOMAS McGRATH

FIGURES FROM A DOUBLE WORLD, by Thomas McGrath,
Alan Swallow, Denver, The Swallow Poetry Book
Award, 1954. \$2.75

In 1940, when his First Manifesto appeared, Thomas McGrath reaffirmed the tradition Auden and Spender had abandoned the year before. It was the tradition in which the poet acted as the critic of the society he lived in, using the techniques from both the present and the past to provide new insights and to correct the distorted vision of his fellow citizens. The sentimentality of the mid-Victorian era had been wiped out by this new writing, satiric darts were thrown to puncture sanctioned delusions, and alarm signals were sounded whenever the menace appeared in its various guises. Sometimes the menace was as obvious as an SS patrol in full uniform, or as respectable as a banker or a priest, and sometimes as subtle as a dream hiding in the forgotten chambers of childhood.

This tradition today, however, seems like a dim echo. The intelligentsia, retiring to a safe formalism, venerates the virtuosity of skill. The left, on the other hand, continues stressing its point of view at the expense of poetry. McGrath begins in both traditions, but has consistently developed a maturity and integrity as a poet through the changing times. McGrath, thus, of all contemporary poets, stands in apparently anomalous relation to his times, emerging as a lone poet without the blessing of the left and the critical attention of both middle and right wing critics.

Instead of using the usual agitprop messages

that struck the emotional chords of left wing sentiment; McGrath went back to the sources of modern poetry--to Donne and Marvell--employing such devices as the metaphysical conceit in an attempt to wed dialectical opposites into a meaningful union. It is in a poem like Political Song For a New Year that these traditions are successfully mingled to produce a unified effect, typical of McGrath at his best.

And -now at the peak and pivot of a year
That saw each season signed with fire
(The mechanical throne, the burning chair
circling the compass of the electric air)
I watch the Magi with their terrible gift
Climbing the haunted levels of the night,
Where the heroes and the victims burn and toss,
To where the Potential and the Actual cross
And the great year begins.

McGrath's varied voice may be heard in every level of the double world, from the elegy, Ode For The American Dead in Korea, both with its metrical accuracy and its message,

God love you now, if no one else will ever,
Corpse in the paddy, or dead on a high hill

to poems which reflect more purely the formal disciplines of this time, like Mobile and Same Old Jazz,

Mackerel sky at sundown; lagniappe of cloud
to southward.

The equinoctial tides drag at my gumbo blood

to the lively, although less convincing, satires such as Foxbright X. Muddlehead, Jonah Hope, Fantastic Gentry, etc. which gently mock the illusion-ridden damned. as in John Luck with its anapestic colloquialism,

Then home to his castle and the sacramental beef
And after the dishes to the movies for them both.
Embalmed in the darkness of their deadly wish
The warped years fall at their feet like a dress

and finally to his lyric poetry which, in McGrath's apparent love for the world, is a "Magellan love."

Unlike Eliot, Cummings, or Frost, McGrath has not sought modulation within a single voice, although all of his poetry is consistently individual. His poetry sometimes reflects his alertness as a student of poetry, but we are not always sure whether the Marvell line, the Pope couplet, or the Donne conceit has been taken deeply into the heart as Eliot and others have taken them.

It is enough, perhaps, that McGrath attempts to write the most difficult poetry of all--poetry which scrupulously attempts to avoid the mystical, the personal, that added dimension of metaphor which makes Eliot successful in these times.

McGrath, so close to modern poetry, ironically presents a combination of political, social and religious symbols that are not part of the consciousness of the present poetry audience--that we cannot say at this time whether he is dated in the thirties, or in advance of this age. Certainly, in these hysterical times, the premises of McGrath's work are unacceptable to Americans. They are unacceptable not only because they assume a corruption of the capitalistic system, but they present dilemmas which Americans cannot face.

Foxbright Muddlehead and Jonah Hope drown in their dreams and false identifications, living synthetic lives without the consciousness of the necessity to free themselves. This utter desolation is nowhere more pronounced in McGrath's satires than in *The Little Odyssey of Jason Quint, of Science, Doctor:*

Betrayed by his five mechanic agents, falling
 Captive to consciousness, he summons light
 To all its duties, and assumes the world
 Like: a common penance.

Here is a scientist whose heroism and deter-
 mination enable him to "drag each lank potential

Into form, " and who pursues

The windy hazard of the Absolute
 Through icy tundras, farther than the horn,

, but whose ultimate failure lies not in his cap-
 acity to destroy the world, but in the self-
 destruction which is already complete:

and Jason Quint alone,
 Clothed in abstraction, like a bush that burns
 In the blind frequencies where none may pass,

But the feeling of desolation McGrath also
 experiences, as in the Repeated Journey with 18s
 more introspective references.

What am I hunting? I cannot remember. Rain
 Slats like shot on the empty tents. The flaps
 Are closed on nothing•

The natural voice of McGrath emerges. Here is
 the fruitless search in the labyrinth of memory.

Childhood and past loves loom like hopeless mirages.

McGrath searches the prairies, the old Indian camp
 where the wisdom of the shamen prevailed and .. where
 the heroic frontiersman blazed new trails "Praising

"the killer heart/ That makes dead meat of these
 year< (In Praise of Necessity!

¿ To what extent McGrath's political doctrines
 limit the quality and influence any estimate of his
 work is certainly not for critics to determine in

a decade where political bias has become the basis for judging art. But, it appears at this writing that McGrath, by adhering, indeed, revitalizing: the traditions of Whitman, formalism, and of protest: is essentially on this side of the double world.

We feel that his Marxism, or better, the philosophy of Caudwell which inheres in his poems, has been used in the substance of his poetry more as a wetbild in the way that the "phases of the moon" or Anglo-Catholicism has been used as myth and faith in Yeats and Eliot.

McGrath's poetry is more of resistance (he is probably the last poet of protest of this period) * than of revolution, and one which, when not. fettered by political regression, struggles towards a creedless humanity. Sometimes the resistance embitters: producing many lines below the threshold of poetry, Sometimes it is the reassuring voice saying "I'm with you". If the reader feels that the America of commerce, factories and the vast "stretch of country, looking sparse and lonely through railway windows is too overwhelming, there is still companionship: and humanity in these dangerous times. On this note of comfort, McGrath ends the collection.

Again, traveller, you have come a long way
led by that star.

But the kingdom of the wish is at the other
end of the night.

May you fare well, companero; let us journey
together joyfully,

Living on catastrophe, eating the pure light.

-- Tom Viertel and Mel Weisburd

TREADING THE BOARDS IN LOS ANGELES

Barding Dahl

Theatre in the United States has been steadily declining since the ferment of the 'thirties. The general loss of ground suffered by liberalism has discouraged creativity in all phases of the stage, disenchanting those who formerly looked to the proscenium for a meaningful interpretation of society. The advances in converting art into an entertainment industry also played a big part in cutting the Jugular vein of theatre art.

Commercial theatre today is a melancholy affair. The university groups remain fortresses of the interred past, although they venture occasionally into sallow imitations of commercial entertainment. Since entertainment is imitation art, what we have here is an imitation of an

imitation, twice removed from the clangor of reality. "You call me a stodgy academician," says the director of the drama school, "Just look at our last production, Zamboolah, a South Sea idyll with palm trees, sarongs, and even a typhoon, just listen to those special effects.."

In Los Angeles, we are treated to a particularly choice gallery of dramatic mummifications. One strain of the genus is the abjectly commercial drama group, frankly aping the Hollywood fofoerah of sailors on leave, (and gay dogs they are,) country girl come to the big city to blast one

high-C at the until now blase director, that girl, who is she?) and the mud-spattered doughboy, grinning happily as he mows down masses of crumpling figures. This group takes last year's hit and cuts it down to their size--lots of fun, lots of noise, and they'll keep smiling if it kills them. The fixed smile is the key--it shows you're amiable, and nobody gets to the top who isn't amiable.

There is also the arty group. Fancying themselves keepers of the flame, they have a lean and hungry look, never quite erased by the rolling tones of an assiduously-cultivated British accent. Such accents are usually developed to the exclusion of all others, implying a direct connection with nobility. Language here is a charge of pellets, catapulted in regular rhythm against a great drum--what timbre, what cadence, if only the Bard of Avon were here to be amazed. The figure at the helm is the grand-old-man-of-the-theatre, steeped in memories of past association with the greats; a past so rich it can only be hinted at, along with knowing smiles. If only it weren't for Them, the great herd out there, his true merit would long ago have been recognized. This group is another stronghold of the dead past--Shakespeare, Moliere, Euripides, Chekhov, all stuffed and mounted on a stately merry-go-round, wheeling before the glazed eyes of a late-dining audience concentrating on the joys of digestion. This entourage is likely to have an art patron, reveling in the stale thrills of trotting out the hallowed names. Macbeth's wild laughter rings out in the empty hall, although on good nights a thin line of heroes bears the assault from the footlights--friends, relations, and phlegmatic suitors.

A third company is by no means as clear-cut as the former two. Here we have a hardy band with some awareness of theatre as an object of interest

to the living. We might mention the Circle and the Player's Ring. Here too we find the marka of ary rot, but there is a slight grasp of drama as something which might remain with people after they pass through the foyer. This, of course, is a DANGEROUS TENDENCY, and great care is taken not to arouse Their suspicions. Not a hint must be given that things like labor unions, sexual deviation, class, and love of knowledge exist, for everyone knows that such heresies go hand in hand with bomb-throwers of the worst stripe.

Notwithstanding the tentative approach of these two groups to genuine drama, they must be given credit for attaining a comparatively high degree of technical proficiency. At the very least, they know that theatre is a discipline, and not a matter of chromosomes which springs forth, full-blown, at the first moment of assuming the classic stance, on the sacred boards. They are, it would seem, the beat that old L.A. has to offer these days.

But even these, our best, are hardly examples of group theatre. A true group is an organism in which all parts are related to the whole; a common effort to blend individualities into a single effect. Contrast to this the wild casting scrambles accompanying most of our local group productions-loyalty is a matter of how big a part is offered. The passion for being SEEN obliges our actors to change themselves into a kind of debased currency, circulating in such a way that anyone with one or more CREDITS, (similar to the coup-counting of the Plains Indians,) can displace members of long standing, regardless of actual ability. Nowhere does Gresham's Law, in which bad money drives out good, operate so ruthlessly.

Not only does local group talent sail under false colors, it sails under no colors at all. Actual work in the theatre is reduced to brief rerehearsals for half-raw 'productions,' and the

lengthy in between periods are spent in making the rounds with tattered scrapbooks of past glories, and self-induced stupefaction on bar stools (in saloons with bona fide driftwood).

Similar conditions obtain backstage. Creativity in lighting, sound, and design are virtually unheard of: and directing is reduced largely to a matter of telling the actors where to stand and don't turn your back on the crowd.

Most important, original plays are practically unknown this side of the Alleghanies.

The Circle is an exception on this score, but their best recent offering, "Once Upon a Tailor," is original in name only, drawing as it does from an ancient tradition. Stage

Society, venturing into the light of day after years of seclusion, offered one wispish original, and then fled to the protective arms of G.B.S. and his "Mesalliance," "Finian's Rainbow," of Hollywood Repertory, is another exception, and it is to be hoped a lesson will be learned from their success. Again and again the cry is heard, "Where are the new playwrights?" and the answer is that they will appear when a place is made for them.

*By way of summary, group theatre does not exist in Los Angeles, if anywhere, and will not until two or more individuals decide they are after great moments on the boards even more than they are after contracts (another name for the chimera of security). But let one point be clear, it is not a matter of bringing culture to the masses, but of entering into popular culture and giving that insight into reality that only the theatre can give. It is by no means a foregone conclusion that a real group must resign itself to lonely penury--good theatre has never failed for purely financial reasons. Whatever the outcome, good theatre pays its way. ****

INFILTRATION COURSE: FT. ORD, CALIFORNIA

Ray Fabrizio

Only a war ago, skilled in their
dimestore weapons,
they played their killing games,
thrilled among the lawns
of their childhood battles where
war was scabby knees
and growing up: iodine and supper
brought surrender.

Soon, young in an angry country,
 their only war
was the bitter invasion of adolescence,
 the assault of the years.
Finally, a truce within the blood; and,
 strangers to their bodies,
made conscious in their new power, they
 discovered the world.

Now, children among the tracers, trained in
the toys of their fathers,
here in Jeffers' country: the rocks and sea
and the tree moss:
blessed by the choir of guns and the
chant of mock battle,
they become their favorite heroes; receive
their baptism of fire.

These are the generation: schooled in the
greed of righteousness;
left gum under seats at westerns; innocent
under the sun;
rips in the gun metal of ignorance; deceived
sons of dreamers;
hired for their young feet; so eager
under the strawberry bullets.

Are these, then, the guiltless; is there
no original angel
of doubt on their beardless faces? It was
denied them early enough.
With nursery precision they crawl to the
bleats of the loudspeakers
through wire and muddy ditches. And the wind
blows hard from the sea.

TWO SATIRES

Norbert Schiller

The Art of Dentistry.

Over bus windows, in the daily news
Smiles a never-aging proud face-
The accompanying oversized lines
we read with a kind of amaze-
For again and again this dentist states:
"I carry the best, buy my dental plates!"

To praise a peach, a flower or tree
A piece of music, seems alright to me.
Plates may even be a necessity
For the business of dentistry.
But must one with crutches shout
So openly, indecently loud!

We live not by bread, as the scripture states.
We don't speak and eat only with dental plates.

They never will to an art object grow
In spite of credit terms easy and Low,

For I doubt that I shall ever see
"A dental plate lovely as a tree."

Downtown Between Hope and Flower

Office building, bus and tower
Parking lots, 25 cents an hour
And two streets called Hope and Flower.

I walk up and down awhile.
Behind those bars you type and file,
You work between Hope and Flower,
I torn between sweet and sour;
In the buttonhole I wear hope;
In my heart there grows a flower.
Five o'clock, the office hour;
Five o'clock, the office closes.
In my heart there bloom red roses
Though I realized not at all
Downtown girls could grow so tall.

After awhile as time goes on
Persons drip out, one by one,
Ladies older, ladies wiser,
I bet these are supervisors.
Let me take you by your nose,
One day you'll be one of those.
Please take this advice:
Better do me supervise.

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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A NOTE ON THE TYPE

The type used in this booklet is L.C. Smith pica. The particular keyboard used for this issue, although not unusual, is distinguished by the reluctance of the type '4' and its shift-lock counterpart, the '\$' sign, to operate in the contexts demanded of them.

We feel it fitting, however, to pay tribute to the common art of mimeography, and we hope that others are encouraged to duplicate their message as well.