

A LITERARY MAGAZINE OF CALIFORNIA

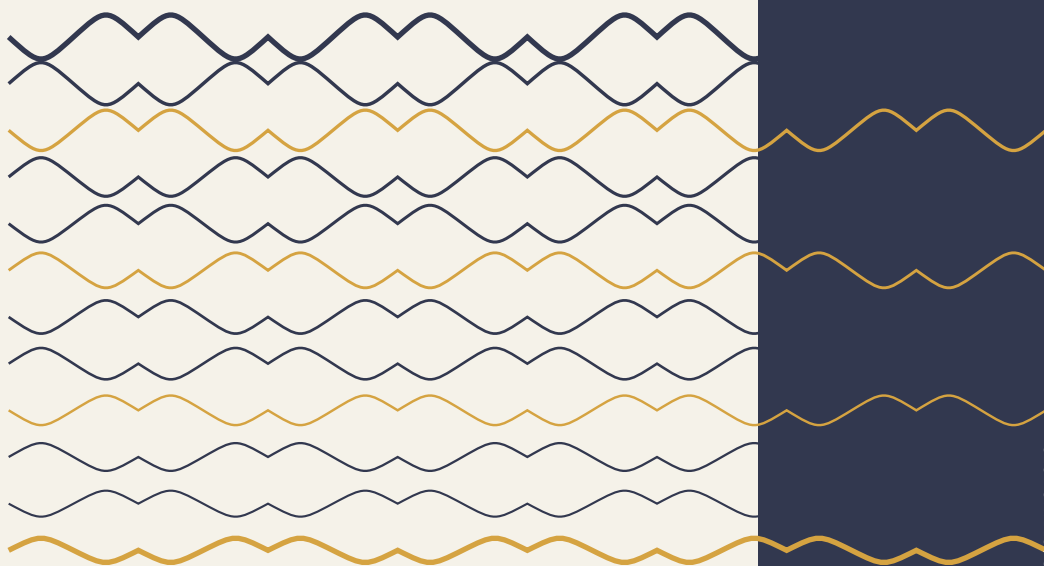
COAST LINES

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A Literary Magazine of California

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EDITED BY

Gene Frumkin

A CLEAN READING EDITION

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SUSAN BLODGET is 23, a Stanford grad, has pitted apricots, packed oranges, worked on a weekly paper and as a steno; her most recent work was social. Has lived in Madrid, San Francisco, Mexico.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI was born in Germany, starved in Greenwich Village, also in New Orleans, in Florida and 'on the limb of an apple tree? Was drunk for ten years. Told writing to go to hell. Told everybody to go to hell. They didn't. I did."

WINIFRED CULLEN, Los Angeles public school teacher and a past contributor to Coastlines as well as other literary publications, died in 1958 after an extended illness.

R. R. CUSCADEN is co-editor of *Odyssey*, in his spare time attends Roosevelt University (Chicago) where he is a tremendous all-around football star, mentioned with great fervor on several All-America teams.

ANGEL G. ESPARZA came to the United States from Mexico; now is an artist for ABC Studios. Believes there is a future in Coastlines covers; does not explain what he means by this.

VAHAN K. GREGORY is a buddy of ours who runs a coffee house with an Armenian twist, name of 'Capriccio'. We run his ads sometimes, for which he pays us, sometimes.

STANLEY KIESEL is a friend of Gregory's (see above), writes poems about little kids with a little pencil in a little room.

RON OFFEN is the other co-editor of *Odyssey* (tight little group we have here, hasn't had anything published in ten years due to his not having written anything in ten years. An insurance adjuster, trying to get an M.A. at U. of Chicago.

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White Goddess; he choked it down, he writes, and became temporarily unbalanced thereupon.

DAVID RAY teaches at Northern Illinois University, is editor of the forthcoming Chicago Review Anthology; his review in this issue deals with *Odyssey* (see above) and Sward (see below).

JAMES SCHEVILL lives in Berkeley, Calif., where possibly he knows the whereabouts of Miss (or Mrs) Wakoski (see below). He is a well-known poet and dramatist.

WINFIELD TOWNLEY SCOTT is not a co-editor of *Odyssey*, but has some claims to fame, nevertheless; his last poem, a long one, *The Dark Sister*, received a rave review in Coastlines.

JAMES SINGER operates Hennypenny Press, does a lot of printing for us at commendable prices; also carries on a profitless business distributing little magazines; refuses to do respectable work.

ANN STANFORD, a Los Angeles resident, studied under Yvor Winters at Stanford before becoming a nationally-recognized poet in her own right.

GEORGE STARBUCK is employed in a highly important capacity at Houghton Mifflin, don't know exactly what. Formerly at the U. of Chicago, where he knew one of our editors and probably Ray (see above), but not sure he knew Offen (also above).

ROBERT SWARD had a group of poems published as *Odyssey* Chapbook No. 1, castigating American advertising; had to flee the country briefly, then returned to assume a humble teaching position at Connecticut College.

DIANE WAKOSKI when last heard from lived in Berkeley, Calif. We wrote a note asking for biog, but no reply. Hope she is not lost.

MILLER WILLIAMS writes to us from Lake Como, Fla. That is, he sent the poem from Lake Como, Fla.; he hasn't really written to us.

force in Poetry Los Angeles, a series of monthly poetry readings, of which Coastlines is also one of the sponsors.

Three Poems

*Winfield Townley Scott**Four Old Boys*

(A passage from work in progress, Walpurgis the Autobiographical Night)

One bobolink's triplicate bubblement out of the woodside, and
a brook's soft sound.
I spied on four men sitting in a field riffled by bluets under
a sunned wind:
They lazed around on campstools by their tents in the field:
four old boys away from it all,
Camping out in the Green Mountains, the White Mountains, the
Adirondacks --
Loafing in that field of flowers; three rich men and a bearded
old bird-watcher.
To famous and powerful men, life liberty and the pursuit of
happiness may
Be realized, recaptured, reaffirmed
By crossing a meadow and straddle-legged peacefully peeing
into a blueberry bush.

Harvey Firestone and Henry Ford, Thomas Alva Edison, John
Burroughs, surrounded
By the field and the sun and the trees and the wind in the
trees and a sense of Huck Finn;
They traveled in two cars accompanied by two trucks (for the
cooks, tents, lights)
Up and down and around and over the back roads of the world
they loved and remembered,
The world that was the world before they changed it; hoping to
find themselves unchanged.

He had a beautiful name and he made Firestone rubber tires, and he was
there; he's gone now.
The others remain. Each of the three died at 84:
Burroughs in a train berth hurrying home to die;
Ford by candlelight (no Mazdas), a stormy night;
Edison -- how does a god die? So incredibly that we soon
forget that he has.
But these were subsequent hours.

Behold this god

beaming above the bluets,
 Hands in the pockets of his rumpled pants; five-nine to his
 pork-pie hat;
 2% inspiration, 98% perspiration; a quart jar full of medals
 back at the house. The wizard's house.
 Multitudinous voices over one wire -- he would like to have
 heard Napoleon's --
 * Mary had a little lamb' -- what he thought to say at the
 beginning;
 Cells, filaments, tungsten, carbons; and faces and voices
 moving forever;
 1200 patents including concrete construction and goldenrod
 rubber;
 From a burning thread he illuminated the earth, now among the
 planets a brightening star.
 This hardest working man in the world, this most impure of
 scientists, this triumphant tinker, this joker, this god:
 Benevolent farmer of ease in a field; fuzz-browed, keen-eyed,
 deaf.

Whenever

One of the cars broke down on the road, the clever mechanic
 Henry stripped to his shirt-sleeve start,
 Crawled under and worked his wonder. Then Edison
 Strolled by the wayside gathering wild flowers. Like a schoolboy
 scuffing to teacher
 He brought them back to Burroughs to learn their names.
 While the peace-loving and Jew-hating and wage-raising, history-
 scorning Henry, her only begetter,
 Lay flat on his back under his sweet Tin Lizzie and readjusted
 her parts.
 In the Adirondacks, the White Mountains, the Green Mountains,
 the back roads
 Edison loved to explore.

Wake-robin (jack-in-the-pulpit)

and bobolink
 Under the cool woodside in the silent forenoon. Bearded old
 bird-watcher Burroughs --
 Oom John, his friend Roosevelt (the T. R.) called him -- at home
 where he was.
 Friend also of Walt Whitman. A literary naturalist. Lover of
 birds and of flowers and poetry,
 Despiser of woodchucks and Warren Gamaliel Harding. A good
 and a vain man.
 Sometimes at townships where the old boys turned into celebrities,

More folks came out to see Burroughs than Ford or Edison. So
 Oom John recorded.
 He stood -- he had said -- amid the eternal ways; ' for what is
 mine shall know my face.'

Whistle me over the ridge of the sky into the valley of
 yesterday's buttercup gold
 With the sun soft and the trees dark, a puddle and paddle of
 brook water,
 A living return to the earth, dreamed, to the leaves of grass,
 amid bluets, innocents' hands,
 And the eyes cleansed of the cataracts of factoryed years,
 glance be nimble and quick again,
 Make giants to see as children so the world grow green and large
 In the Green Mountains, the White Mountains, the Adirondacks,
 wherever
 Over wake-robin and under bobolink: Edison, Ford, Firestone --
 It was some such song of silence they pursued - Whistle me
 over - inviting
 Oom John, of the country they sought, a native, knowing the
 language, the obliterate trails.

Later, after the death of Burroughs, they took along the new
 President, Harding.
 Who had -- quote -- room in his heart for all -- unquote. According
 to the New York Times.
 They could see he had smilingly opened America onto one big
 front porch, rocking away.
 Not to mention the boys in the back room. But not. And Mary
 Had a little lamb a little lamb a little lamb a little lamb...
 Record stuck.

S Street

(A passage from work in progress, Walpurgis the Autobiographical Night)

It will be seen...

A dark cold day, and a rain of brown-yellow leaves across the
 crowd.
 A small crowd in the gray street. Silent. Its faces toward the
 old man on the front steps. Woodrow Wilson.
 In the silence -- the pause -- the gust of Washington dampness is
 bone-chill as a tomb.

The leaves fall methodically. There has been applause.
 The pause is like the pause at a play. About to begin? No. No,
 this is rather
 The second before -- the audience not quite certain in memory -
 'Isn't it now?' -
 The famous monologue. The more confident anticipating silently
 To be or not to be
 While the great tortured man stands staring there in his black
 cape alone.

But no, he does not stand alone. Half a pace behind him a
 Negro servant
 Supports Wilson at his withered arm. (The Kaiser was born with
 a withered arm, but this is different. Struck.)
 Under the smart silk hat the tragic face is a twisted mask -
 save the eyes and the jaw.
 So he waits for a moment as though for himself, his spared hand
 on his cane, heavily.
 The ex-President of the world.

(Harding was already dead: as
 Alice Longworth remarked, just a slob.
 Now there was in the White House, as Wilson remarked, no one
 in particular.)

His time is near. This, in the bitter air of a smudged morning,
 the little last crowd.

* No one has ever heard such cheers; I, who heard them in
 the streets of Paris, can never forget them in my life. I saw
 Foch pass, Clemenceau pass, Lloyd George, generals,
 returning troops, banners, but Wilson heard from his carriage
 something different, inhuman -- or superhuman. Oh, the
 immovably shining, smiling man."

What is the true agony in S Street? What is the question? What
 had to be? What need not have been?
 How can we know, more than the sliding leaves? How will it be
 seen in the overcast?
 Was the hand moulding the world torn to pieces? Or did the
 hand falter? Jornada del muerto.
 It will be seen that we worshipped false prophets and turned cool
 and blind in the heat-lightning of gods passing.
 It will be seen perhaps that we recognized a god and moved
 hurriedly away.
 It will be seen by subsequent generations ignorant too of
 their own times.

*I am not one of those that have the least anxiety about the triumph of the principles I have stood for. I have seen fools resist Providence before and I have seen their destruction, as will come upon these again -- utter destruction and contempt. That we shall prevail is as sure as that God reigns.'

· - *Words to the End of the World'*

Never invert the tree.
 O you will try in the drying seasons
 And some days it can be done.
 But see what is there:
 Roots dying in the forced air, and all the curves
 of flowers
 Broken and brown, head-down.
 The signals of the sun are
 The signals of desire --
 That shuttle of light, or nothing.
 Brain alone cannot say to sex, Arise.
 When lust no longer ascends from the loins
 Do not send for it, old man.

You know that terror, too:
 That you are due at a place somewhere
 By honor or duty, that you once knew
 The way, the destination,
 The expectation of you; and now the hour.
 But now: where? when? how far?
 Dream's dark paralysis.
 Failure's dull agony.
 Yet by day it is some days true
 That, wondering about the unreachable place,
 You turn a corner and stare,
 Walk the new grass beneath the old trees.
 After all, alone; yet there.

To begin again -
 The garden
 The innocence -
 Is only and always to begin.

Not by mind but by flesh taken.
Nakedness thoughtless as all the curves of flowers.

*And of course the girl there, too,
Not as remembered but as if new.*

Unsummoned, the rose rod
By whom you are driven to her
Till the world is nothing but her receiving him
There on the grass under the flowering trees.

But remember Koheleth.

There is a time to read Ecclesiastes,
When you are full-grown young,
So swollen with joy, so mad-sad,
And all so safely so
As in a play --
Yourself to enjoy yourself at one remove.
There is a time again

When you are beginning to be old.
Ecclesiastes opens the hole in the wind
Through which, soon, you will walk forever.

Bark-stripped, bare,
Forked chalk-white, stark, thrust high,
A tree, a white tree:
Your mark in the forest -- the still wood within wind
Amid all the laving leaves of the live oaks --
Toward which you always walk.
Do you remember Antaeus?
Now and then you must rest on the ground.
It matters most just where
Since Earth, although your mother everywhere,
Is also at certain intervals yourself
And those not easy to discover.
You, Antaeus, are only you.
Remember Heracles, there are thousands of him
Can hoist you to death --
O aging son of Poseidon.

Indifferently, the sun
Nurtures and kills you.
Its golden words are two, Alpha, Omega.
Write the alphabet in a ring-round
So the two that belong together stand together:

A and Z, beginning and end, side by side.
 This is the shape of the world.
 God's hoop
 To jump through
 Once.

Offshore, will you watch
 How the island glides toward you
 As though it were rolled on the loll of bells lazy
 in a summer ocean.
 Faintly, doodle of cockcrow repeats, repeats.
 A woman in a doorway shakes out a white tablecloth.
 All this is far, clear,
 All beautiful with meaning.
 Most of all the old man in the meadow
 Bending down,
 Planting trees above the hysteric sea.

"We are the ones"

We are the ones
Who were dangerously close to danger
 And know better.
 We are liberals.
 You can tell.
 We faint at the sight of blood but
We talk a good fight. We do not sign.
 We know which civil liberties we've got.
We like baseball but prefer a forum
 On television.
 We do not march -- we are too refined.
We have enough intelligence for guilt
Enough guilt to need, if we are rich,
 A course of deep analysis;
 If we are poor,
 A whore.

Liberals talk.
 Look out for them.
 They're used as hostages by men.

-- Winifred Cullen (1909-1958)

THE FUNCTION OF CRITICISM

REVIEWED

Peter Yates

· Picasso cocked his head to one side. "Eh bien, tant pis ! I don't paint pictures in the hope that people will understand them. They understand or not, according to their capacity. It's wrong to be so concerned about people's understanding, anyway."

*"Then you think that the critic or whoever puts himself in the position of trying to help people to see or to understand things like that is performing a useless function?" I asked.

· Picasso shook his head vigorously. "No. The critic or any intermediary must build a bridge people can walk over to join the artist."

· "But in building that bridge," I said, "he has to make use of materials -ideas, symbols, reasoning-that have meaning for them; otherwise it's just so much poetry."

· Picasso grinned, reached for a cigarette. "Poetry's all right," he said. "Perhaps it would be better if all critics were poets and wrote poetry instead of pedantry."-(Picasso Speaking, by Carlton Lake, *The Atlantic Monthly*, July, 1957).

This would be persuasive enough; but I remember asking Schoenberg why he had not accepted the translation of one of his critical works made for him by a friend of mine. "Too much poetry in it," he explained.

In the short run nearly all scholarship breaks down at a failure of description. The most common type of such failure may be called classification: in place of the object one is given a cubistic reconstruction of the object, recomposed out of approximate definitions of approximately similar parts. Where the original has a leg, here is a leg of mutton wrapped for market. The other leg is a rubber boot; the torso a washboard draped in an automobile tube: I could see that he had welded pipes of one kind or another into it. He pointed out a piece of a pottery oven that had found its way into the frame. From a table beside it he picked up a key attached to another metal object. "I must get this thing in there," he said . . . (Picasso Speaking).

Classification applies definitions as so many approximations of parts of the object. Thus the same scholarship working backwards, by attacking and discrediting each approximation, can cause an object to vanish. I have at hand a sprightly example of this sort of higher legerdemain, *The Function of Criticism* by Yvor Winters, of which the first chapter is called *Problems for the Modern Critic of Literature*. The title is a good measure of Mr. Winters's method, because, when the article ends, there are no problems.

Description is another matter. Description may be in terms of words, paint, definition (of the thing itself, or of whatever comes handy. "That is my guitar," says Picasso. "It may not be yours." Consisting of a piece of coarse

cloth with a hole in it, two dozen two-inch nails, string, black lines, and a news clipping, the guitar is a play guitar but unplayable; it is also unassailable. Scholarship may find the usual approximations for it, calling it a montage because it is made of odd objects affixed to a canvas, or a mobile because it moves, or montage mobile because it both is and does: nobody has been helped.

Theory is easy to learn, to poke around with, to enjoy for its own sake, to furnish up for obfuscation: the background history of science can be told as an elimination of theories, including the theoretical alternative that whatever anyone cannot understand must be wrong or, if it is required to be right, may be ascribed to God. Theory is the true science of fiction, the folklore of superior imaginations, able to propagate its fictional kind for generations under the regal canopy and sheet of logic. Apply theory where you will; the result when exposed is likely to be scandalous. Like Louis XIV of France or Charles II of England, the theorist who believes in or asserts the divine right of theory will create Dukedoms for his bastards.

'I have tried,' Yvor Winters concludes, 'to indicate the kinds of problem which must be studied if we are to estimate the possibilities of any of the forms, and some of the most pressing problems in connection with each form. I may be wrong in any or all of my particular conclusions, but if I am wrong it will have to be demonstrated by argument. If my arguments are merely brushed aside, I shall win by default within twenty years. If I am right, there will be no great harm in this, and it will not be the first time I have won an argument in this manner; but if I am wrong it will be unfortunate.'

I really don't know why it will be unfortunate, and Mr. Winters does not tell us. He leaves us with the threat. What Mr. Winters does amounts to this. He begins by taking up the few critics whom he accepts as worthy of his consideration and cuts them down one after another until he has left a former pupil, to whom *The Function of Criticism* is dedicated. He then takes up the forms of poetry, including for some reason history and the novel but excluding non-verse drama, and disposes of them also, the epic, the verse-drama, history, the novel, and so on, until only the short verse form, for which he finds the word lyric an unsuitable title, has been left for acceptance: he accepts that. On the way or in other articles, such as that on the poetry of G. M. Hopkins, he wipes out nearly all short poetry by the same sort of quick theoretical reasoning that has already done for Homer and Dante and shown up the inadequacies of the best of all verse-dramas (his choice) *Macbeth*. The same pupil is, again among the exceptions. Then he fixes his attention on a relatively long short poem, definitely not a lyric, by Paul Valéry, *Ebauche d'un Serpent*. *The method is every bit as fine as that of the Renaissance poets, so long as the poet practicing the method has the necessary qualifications.' He decides that M. Valéry does have the qualifications: '*Le Cimetière Marin* and *Ebauche d'un Serpent*, so far as my knowledge and judgment will guide me, are the two greatest short poems ever written.'

He proceeds to describe, according to his method, *Ebauche d'un Serpent*,

quotes from it, interprets it, praises it: to summarize: *The primary theme is the descent from perfection to imperfection in the act of creation, and the plight of the intellectual creature whose desire is for the infinite perfection of which he is deprived and who realizes that his nature is evil by virtue of the privation; this provides the expository form of the whole poem. Subsidiary to this is the exhibition of the character of the creature in question, the Serpent, both in his philosophical meditations and in his account of the seduction of Eve. . No suspension of intelligence is required of us; in fact, we shall have to keep our intelligence wholly alert if we are to follow the poem. No question of belief or disbelief in a myth is involved, for the myth is not offered as a myth -- it is offered as a figure of speech. I do not wish to give the impression that I am trying to startle my readers for my own entertainment, but I have studied this poem for a good many years, and in my opinion it is the greatest poem I have ever read, regardless of, kind."

It's a strong sales talk for Valery, whatever it may be as criticism. Mr. Winters is a great one for textual analysis, which consists of going through a poem piece by piece and throwing aside with disdainful cries whatever does not strike him. Let me, therefore, point out in the quotation above the malformed cliché, 'his nature is evil by virtue of the privation'. I won't argue about it: Mr. Winters can keep it if he pleases.

A myth may be offered not as a myth but as a 'figure of speech', as one speaks of the Fall' in theological terminology or Bach represents it by a dropping interval in the choraleprelude *Durch Adams Fall*. But Mr. Winters concludes the notes to this article with the words, 'for the Serpent, as myth on the one hand, or as the figurative representative of the mind of man on the other, is immortal in any event.' In fact it is immortal only so long as it exists also as myth. And putting a myth on the one hand and a figurative representative on the other may hide his fingerprints but will not keep the chill out of our response.

After all the fuss, the assertiveness, the threat, the theoretical extermination of every presumed competitor or impediment, Yvor Winters has done no more than tell his readers with elaborate argumentative excursions *Ebauche d'un Serpent* is his favourite poem.* Homer and Dante will not vanish in twenty years to oblige him: the flaws of style-if one choose to call them that-which make the poems of G. M. Hopkins so interesting to read aloud will continue to strike the human mind as vividly as the ecstatic painting of Van Gogh. Poetry will continue to deny Yvor Winters's distinction: 'that poetry is written in verse and prose is not'. It is, as he tells us, a 'workable distinction', provided you don't make a theory of it. If I were to choose between Valery's long poem in verse about the Serpent and Shaw's short

*Robert Graves used the same method recently. He erased his principal competitors among the twentieth century poets by an anecdote apiece, pertinent or not, and brought his article to the satisfactory conclusion that, in the dearth of all others, there can be only one Robert Graves. I have read him to the same end on the White Goddess, on Milton, and on mushrooms.

prose poem (in John Bull's Other Island) about heaven, I should call Shaw's the better poem, as it is in every reference the more intelligible. Beginning in myth it does not depend on myth: the figure of speech is at once the moral corrective, the revelation. This short prose poem, which does have a refrain, is strong enough to support the entire weight of the play - in fact, to give it weight: so that the farce, with a fresh meaning, becomes pathos through the comedy is seen an unexpected tragic vision of man's estate; the landscape, the player's scene, is lightened for a moment as by the real presence. To get the full throw of it one needs the leverage of the entire play.

* In my dreams it is a country where the State is the Church and the Church the people: three in one and one in three. It is a commonwealth in which work is play and play is life: three in one and one in three. It is a temple in which the priest is the worshipper and the worshipper the worshipped: three in one and one in three. It is, in short, the dream of a madman.'

The last line would entitle me to add Winters's valediction: 'That is the final horror of the situation.' It is the response, through an eloquent dramatic spokesman, of one of the most acute intelligences of our age to the discovery that humanity can no more comprehend the religion it professes than it can use his theories. Eric Bentley has called recognition of the defeat of spiritual illumination Shaw's tragedy; the poem which contains this tragedy is not less meaningful because it is spoken at the end of a comedy of which a prominent offstage character, far from being of the aristocratic rank suitable to tragedy, is a pig. I say this in defiance of Aristotle, Yvor Winters, Francis Fergusson, and Herbert Muller. To have one's theories unaccepted is not tragic: it is a general and normal condition of theorists.

Bertolt Brecht dramatized such an event in Galileo. In the last act Galileo learns that the vision he denied has ceased to be theory because it has been shown to be a true description of events. Galileo has no joy in it; he cannot retrieve the truth he denied under the enactment of a false theory. We see constantly around us the enactment of false theory destroying the first sprig of truth: we see but do not perceive.

Shaw prophesied both World Wars, in part explained them, and tragically survived them, to die at last as cut off from the esthetic-theoretical establishments of his youth, which he did so much to disestablish but at their best believed in, as he was intellectually but not spiritually adjusted to the atmosphere of his final years with its relativism - embodying it in the last and most beautiful of his seriously comic dramatic poems, in prose, *In Good King Charles's Golden Days*.

If Yvor Winters's article were all bad, I should disregard it. There is some good in it. By reading it I have been encouraged to look up for what it is worth the poetry and prose of the admired disciple to whom the book is dedicated, J. V. Cunningham. I have looked again into Mr. Winters's verses. I have taken the volume of Fulke Greville's poetry from the public library, being the third to do so since the library acquired the volume -- possibly we are all three in Mr. Winters's debt. I have looked into Robert

Bridges and found him, through all contemporary disasters, the happiest, the best insulated poet of modern times. And I have been given a sentence to dwell on.

'There comes a time in the lives of some men,' Mr. Winters writes, 'when the spectacle is no longer informative but the theory is packed with meaning: One no longer sees anything but understands it thoroughly.

Whom Shelley moves is not deceived, nor sleek
Milton's admirer a Cretin, less a Greek.

*In the warm season of humility
A Winters' chill seems less futility;
Laurel springs on Graves ... etc.*

Art is the most serious play of which we are capable. Play is governed, to a degree, by rules: indeed, without rules, there can be no serious play. The rules are simple: such as they are anyone can learn them; everyone knows them and no one formulates them adequately. Jargon, the promoter, is always taking credit, and Judgement, the umpire, turning up on the wrong side. The critic is not a little umpire but another who plays the game.

Dow Jones: Down

how can we endure?
how can we talk about roses
or Verlaine?
this is a hungry band
that likes to work and count
and knows the special laws,
that likes to sit in parks
thinking of nothing valuable.

this is where the stricken bagpipes blow
upon the chalky cliffs
where faces go mad as sunburned violets
where brooms and ropes and torches fail,
squeezing shadows..
where walls come down en masse.

tomorrow the bankers set the time
to close the gates against our dam
and prevaricate the waters;
Shilitz, stiltz, bang the time,
remember now
the flowers are opening in the wind
and it doesn't matter finally
except as a twitch in the back of the head
when back in our broad land
dead again
we walk among the dead.

- Charles Bukowski

Five Poems

*Stanley Kiesel**The Divine Average*

There was Mark, whose vision weighed a ton, becalmed
on his two buck teeth,
And David of the right-angled ears;
And Judy, whose love for me announced to all other
children
Standing Room Only; and Bill, polite retcher, soloist
of the wastebasket.
Dressed in tongue-tied perfection: Peggy,
And Greta, a whiner, with a voice like a forceps.
Fifty-odd Lindas and eighty one Bobs;
Wet pants and hiccoughs;
Hundreds of miles of slightly crossed eyes.

These children will hitch a ride with anything I say,
Burglarizing my words, my looks, my laugh, even my
pretence at being stern.
And that is just. Because in a sense, they are wet-
nursing
Their future history. They have names,
They are in the custody of their nature.

They shall vote, give homage to and vase their opinions,
Yes and chase indiscretion with hounds;
Because they are in sequence.
Salud, all my Bobs and Davids, Kathys and Lindas,
You are that extensible filament wound upon the
firmament.
Demand nothing but your own direction;
Thread the deity.

Your foster mother's dead, goodbye, Gregory;
It's Christmas and you belong to the State.

For what are you looking so mournful?
They have a tree there for you,
Trained staff and a fake Santa.

If horses had portfolios they would study you.
If books had lips they would probably bite you.
A monstrous little future is pasted on your forehead.

The matron, who brings you the last day, is a cheerleader,
But her affection is full of artificial preservatives;
The natural goodness is gone.
There remains only myself, a stage direction of this
 fraudulent school
Which, like a bank, closes at three.

Au revoir, Gregory, looking like a blank between teeth.
- Why the sobs?
You were only guaranteed for one year;
 Read the fine print in your contract.

Jamie

Snowman of mirth, small hired hand, erase the board
But do not ever erase that infectious scribble on your
 face.
It is not important to discover what you celebrate,
The single and lovely animal within you that cavorts
 to make me happy,
The joy in you, Jamie, is a certificate of birth for
 everyone.

To everything she has a hunchbacked response.
She looks like something spoiled in the darkroom;
She inhabits dresses rather than wears them.

Seven times today she washed her hands.
She embarrasses the blackboards.

Mother arrives, parachuting in from the society page.
Her soup kitchens, she proclaims, are at our disposal;
But the charity closest to her heart (she insists)
is her pet child.

You alms-giver, there is nothing non-profit about you,
Your breasts are selfish with milk.
This child was a hobby of your bedclothes, a little
memorial to an expensive perfume.

- Go, go wash your hands, Marsha!
You little unaddressed envelope.

Bob and Lance

Bob, toothless and shy,
His eyes threading a needle;
Lance, listening to no one but his friend's impaired
speech.
Arms entwined, they'd hike through every response,
Riding the rails of their own jokes.

The world's an old horror movie, boys,
Where you'll pay for every inch to be yourself.
The ne'erdowells who pray on credit,
The jinglers who don inhibition's cap and bells,
The anteaters whose offers have pimples on them,
In times to come will all be your teachers. Learn
from them.

Recall this affection when you are old and most
humane,
And be proud. It was love that made you good.
And as for brotherhood
Tell Man, Bob and Lance, what he must do:
Be his own highest bidder.

Winter and Morning Traffic

*Driving to work each morning
my mind to me a kingdom
is of children in humdrum
jackets all hunched and handleless
with arms that swing brown-paper
fists: they are playing Captain
Lunch, or the Elephant Dance.*

*Each morning they stand waiting
on red brick blocks for buses
that wallow up each morning
after the morning rush-hour
as if by chance in bunches
so they can pack them standing
each morning (a schoolbus can't).*

*It is a good arrangement
of caps and winter jackets
against drifts that the snowplows
leave, with the tall brick projects
providing a red background
as neutral in the snowfall
as a Breughel winter sky.*

*It is, for both the city
and me, and for the transit
outfit, and for the children
who choose (or are the chosen)
after the crush at bus-stops
to walk, a good arrangement
of lingering ones and twos.*

*I see them making snowballs
the mornings I'm late driving
to work; I see them sliding
down driveways; even better,
I see them late for classes
with Mrs. Linch, and Miss Weir,
who may still be teaching there.*

- George Starbuck

A GOD IS DEAD

Tom Poots

From his shack on the hill, steeped in summer, the trees and bushes, all the land and all that was on it, seemed to Gordon to be in the process of disintegration due to a steady ascension of heat waves. The green wiggled and the roads within his view turned skyward with frightful suddenness. His shack was equipped with electricity, drapes on the windows, an old sofa (Gordon sometimes slept there nights), running water, a radio, and an old refrigerator containing notes scribbled on scrap-paper and cold beer. It was indeed serviceable.

Gordon Metzger was working at his drawing table in the shack when he heard the telephone ring in the house twenty yards away, and he hustled to answer it.

'Telegram,' Sophie, the Western Union girl, said. 'You want I should read it? Or will you come and get it?'

'What's wrong with Ralph?' Gordon asked, sweating from his sprint from the shack to the phone. 'He's your delivery boy, isn't he? Why can't he bring it?'

'He had this package to take over to Marronneck Point,' Sophie informed flatly. 'He'll be gone hours.'

Gordon had no choice. Things such as that gnawed at him. He drove down to the Western Union office and picked up the message. He opened it while walking back to the car. It read:

**GORDON OLD JOHN HAS PASSED AWAY STOP LIQUOR AT
LAST STOP PLEASE COME BRONTORN SOON AS POSSIBLE STOP
LOVE MOTHER.**

He drove immediately back to the shack, seeing the heat waves doing what they were -- now even the shack looked disjointed as he drove up to it. Wetting his lips he went inside, sat at his drawing table and penned a note. Running to the house, beginning to sweat, he pinned the note to the screen door. This read:

Sally, honey, work cut off by telephone call. Had to go get telegram because Ralph the delivery man was pedaling to Marronneck Point with

Didn't think then. Must be the heat. Terrible day. Will see Fenton about yo ter the dare package. Sorry didn't stop to see you at the store when I was in town.

napkin designs when I return. Be gone overnight, maybe day or two, maybe not. Going to Bronthorn at Mom's request. Don't worry, honey, I love you. By the way, father died.

love your Gordie.

'Your Mom's been looking for you,' said the tall burly gentleman with the mascaraed-black mustache. 'She'll be glad you got here.'

'When did it happen, Mr. Bunly? Do you know?'

* This morning about four, Gordon. He drank up your Mom's big bottle

of vanilla when he got up to go to the bathroom."

'What's the Doc say?' Gordon inquired.

*Jerry? He says it was indigestion. Damned if it weren't!' Mr. Bunly rocked back and forth, laughing. 'Old John would've thought that a fine joke!' Gordon shot him a sickening glance and Mr. Bunly regained his composure. 'Well, he would've!' Mr. Bunly declared stubbornly.

'I suppose so. Where's Mom?'

'Your Mom's in the kitchen.'

'In the kitchen?'

'Yep. She's stopped crying long enough to make some pies. Blueberry. You staying for supper?'

'I guess. Wait a minute, where's his body?'

'Stapleton's got him. Old John favoured him. Always said Ned Stapleton uses lots of lilies to make a body look right pretty. Old John liked lilies.'

'Well, I'd better see Mom. Goodbye, Mr. Bunly. Thanks for the info.'

'Not goodbye,' said Mr. Bunly. 'Im staying for supper. Can't miss blueberry pie!'

Gordon considered the mustached man for a moment, then with a pang of relief turned and sought out the kitchen. It was three rooms to the rear and he passed through the bedroom and dining room to get to it. His mother was placing the last of three pies on a wire rack in the open window. Steam rising out of the punctured piecrust tangled about her fat wrists. When she turned, suddenly at the sound of Gordon's footsteps, her body swung out ahead of her. She was wearing a large flowered dress of light silk and when she rushed at Gordon open-armed, he thought in a moment of anxiety and silliness that he was about to be buried in a great living nightmarish garden. But she stopped short, her eyes glistening with mixed wets of sorrow and happiness. Gordon saw once more that they were fairly the same size and made a mental note for the tenth-hundredth time, to tell Sally he must lose weight.

you did You look to sayou werent frightened by the telegram were

'No, I wasn't frightened. Mr. Bunly says Doc Jerry says he died of indigestion. That right?'

'Right? It must be right! You want the papers to read he died of drink? Heaven forbid.' She shot her eyes upward, yanking them down just as quickly. 'Have you seen him?'

'No, I just got here. You shouldn't be making pies.'

*I had the berries, what could I do? They'd never last till it was all over. You know that. And I can't waste!'

'Mr. Bunly says he's at Stapleton's?'

'You must see him,' she said, a tear appearing, threatening to destroy her completely. 'He looks remarkable, better than in years. And he's sober -- at last he's that. But, Gordon, don't talk to me any more right now. Go see your father. He's waiting at Stapleton's.'

Gordon turned, went back through the rooms and out. He passed Mr. Bunly sitting on the porch, eating gumdrops out of a white paper bag.

Without looking at him, Gordon said, 'You're all crazy,' and walked down to the road and turned right toward the sign in the yellow distance reading: Stapleton's Funeral Home.

The lights fanned softly toward the rubbery ceiling, the ceiling which seemed to Gordon to be made of putty. Indeed, there were lots of lilies, around the coffin, in baskets between the chairs, arranged among long tapering candles in front of the drawn ecru drapes. The coffin rested altarwise on a great draped bier of black velvet. Mr. Stapleton had somehow managed to make the coffin look like an open cradle. The old baby lay inside on white satin, wearing his best blue suit and his Hunters Association watch-chain. Beneath the folded hands was a white envelope, looking peculiarly out of place. It bulged in the middle.

Gordon looked back to the face and went cold. The left eye, he thought, looked ready to blink open. The mouth seemed to be saying, 'Indigestion you say? Imagine that! Ho-ho, ha-ha. Damned if I'd figured on dying of that!' Gordon's legs got jittery. He wished, prayed, someone, anyone, would come in. His father was thinner than he was, thinner and harder as he'd been in life. Incredibly there was a spot of dust on one of the corpse's shining black shoes. Gordon jerked out his handkerchief and stiffly dusted the spot as he would dust off a vase. He began coughing, sat down, spit into the handkerchief and put it back into his pocket. He rose again and looked at the powdered face. It was, he admitted, theatrically beautiful -- hard cut-glass features, the skin the pink-tan of the out-of-doors old-timer. Not the barking demagogue, the politician. This sleeping beauty was not even that man who was once an avid member of the Hunters Association. It was too beautiful a countenance. For an insane moment Gordon wanted to lean in to the corpse and kiss it. But as soon as thought of it, it repulsed him. He jerked back from the coffin as though the dead hand with all of its former power had lashed out and pushed him. Coughing irritably, Gordon made tracks for the door, nearly colliding with Mr. Stapleton.

'Oh! You're here! Are you going?'

Gordon bowed and coughed. 'Gone,' he said. And he went, leaving Mr. Stapleton staring down his nose.

Mr. Bunly was still on the porch. Gordon marched right by him. He found his mother in the kitchen and he asked:

'What's in the envelope?'

'Why, what envelope's that, dear?' she counter-questioned, eyeing vaguely the sections of the kitchen as though she might spot the envelope in the sink, on the stove or on the shelves.

'The envelope on his chest!'

'Oh, that.' She spread down her apron. 'The pies are almost cool enough to eat.'

'What's in it? It's bulging in the middle.'

'I know. I saw it. I don't know what's in it.' She pouted.

' Well, I'm going over to see Marion.'

' Don't mention that name in this house!'

' Okay, okay. I'm going over to see your daughter. My sister.'

' No. She's not my daughter! '

' Well, I'm going,' Gordon said.

Mrs. Metzger frowned disapprovingly. 'Send Mr. Bunly in for a piece of pie,' she said and turned her back.

Gordon delivered the message to Mr. Bunly who went immediately into the house licking his lips. Then Gordon walked briskly up the street to the left to the red brick apartments over the bank. He climbed up the outside staircase to the second floor and knocked on the kitchen door. Marion, in a red housecoat, nail polish brush in one hand, came to the door waving her other hand through the air to dry the paint. She blew on her fingertips, reached down and pulled open the door.

' Gordie!' she said. 'Gordie! For Pete's sake. Come in. Come in!'

He stepped inside feeling the refreshing coolness of the apartment's air-conditioning. He'd been sweating heavily and now a shivering centipede crawled up his spine, bristling the hairs on his neck.

'Come in, Gordie, honey,' said Marion, leading him into the living room. 'It's good to see you, Gordie. How's Sally? Is she with you?'

'No,' said Gordon. 'I left a note. It -- it was all so sudden.'

'Poor John,' said Marion, sitting on a crimson divan, going ahead with her nails. 'The old witch finally killed him.' She sighed.

' Have you seen him?'

'No, honey. I'm not going to see him. I want to remember him like he was, Gordie. Like fifteen years ago when he was mayor. Not like the past twelve. Uh-uh, Gordie, I ain't never going to see him again. I lie in bed at night thinking of all those grand campaign speeches he made from that old platform on the green. That's enough, Gordie. He was a god then. A real god. But the town's changed. Ain't no more of the people who knows around any more. All young couples. Never heard of Old John Metzger. Only seen him drunk in the streets, you know?'

Gordon nodded, lighting a cigarette to have something to do.

'Did you hear those lies about the vanilla?' Marion asked.

'Yes, I heard,' Gordon said, coughing to clear his throat.

'If he did take it, I'll bet the old witch handed him the stuff deliberate.' She shook her head quickly. 'You look fine, Gordie. Gained weight?'

' No, I'm going on a diet. What do you know about the envelope?'

' Nothing. But I heard about it being there. Bill told me when he came back from seeing the body. You know what he did?'

'No. What?'

'He leaned over the casket and tried to explain to Old John why he couldn't marry me. Ain't that something?'

'Yes,' Gordon agreed nervously.

'Damned fool,' said Marion. " As if old John didn't know all along Bill's got a wife somewheres already. See what corpses do? They knock you off your nut. And you know what Bill said? He said he thinks Old John

understood him. Now if that ain't something!

* They were sort of close, Sis. Can I use your phone?'

* Sure, Gordie, go right ahead. You gonna stay for supper here? Bill's going to be back in about an hour or so. He went to see about having the Hunters Association put some special kind of marker on John's grave. But it seems there's some trouble. Some special wish Old John made. But Bill's try That'll be nice; Gordon said, dialing the operator. When he got her he spoke softly.

'Only fitting,' Marion went on. "The things Old John did for this town. They owe him a little respect. He was a god he was. Why the reason they insisted on him being mayor was only due to all that kindness and pulling together Old John did for the community during The Depression. When you could look a man straight in the eye while he talked and see him flinch if he wasn't good. Not like TV. Old John Metzger never flinched from nobody. ·

'Hello, Sally?' Gordon said into the phone. *Look, honey, I've decided to drive over to Feyville tomorrow morning and see Fenton about the napkins. Yeah, I don't need the drawings. No, he's got the old stuff there still has to be worked out. Yeah, honey, I saw him. Good, he looks good. I just don't know how to act, you know? Indigestion. Yeah, I know, I'll explain it when I get home, honey. Maybe I'll be back tomorrow night. Miss me? Bye, baby' He hung up.

· so Bill thought of this deal with the Hunters Association only this morning,' Marion went on. "And I told him it was the least they could do when Old John was responsible for them even having a club house at all. 'Course I never did believe it was built with graft Old John made on community property deals. Those were damned lies! It was them set him off to drinking! But that's the way it goes, Gordie. The minute you done what you could, they kick you in the backside and tell you to go peddle your papers. You going to Feyville? '

'Yes,' Gordon said. 'On business, long as I'm down this way?

'You staying at her house?'

'What do you mean her house? Can't you say Mom's?'

'Nope, not on your life! She threw me out when I met Bill and that's enough to hate her, but killing Old John was the last straw ! '

*You're all crazy. You know that?' Gordon said. Marion blew on her nails. He asked, 'You don't know about the envelope?'

'I don't give a scratch about it,' she said. 'You staying for supper? Bill'd like to see you.'

'I'm going to run along.' Gordon said. 'I want to get some sleep if I'm going to Feyville tomorrow.

'Big business? '

'Yeah, very big business. I'm not much good at it, but I'll try like hell'

· Nobody beat Old John Metzger at business. Nobody fooled him."

'Well, I'm not trying to fool anybody.'

'You ain't like him, Gordie,' Marion said. 'You don't look like him and

Bunly's happy voice in the kitchen and knew they were talking everything over.

'Fine,' Gordon said. 'Fine.'

He dreamed of Old John standing on the platform on the green. He was making a speech about improving the school system and waving a bottle of vanilla extract in the air. Every so often he'd stop and take a nip. And every time he did, Marion, in her red housecoat, would catapult up out of the crowd and fly over his head shouting down at him, 'Don't drink it, Dad! Don't drink it!' She flew over Old John's head half the night. In his second dream Gordon tossed and tumbled down long corridors the walls of which were lined with napkin designs. He saw an envelope on the end of a stick, propped up at the spot where the corridors all joined like the spokes of a wheel. But whenever he reached the spot it was always in the opposite direction, farther away than ever. 'It's mine!' he told himself in sleep. 'It's mine! I know it. It's something of mine! The old man wanted to take something of me with him!'

'I wasn't exactly expecting you, Gordon,' Mr. Fenton said as he stood looking out of the big glass windows of the Feyville Paper Company. He had his hands locked behind his back and looked with great respect toward the rolling lawns surrounding the factory. "You understand, don't you, Gordon? '

'Yessir,' said Gordon.

'I didn't promise to buy your designs. I said we'd see about them.'

'Yessir, I know that, Sir,' said Gordon. *That's why I'm here. To talk them over with you. To try and see if I can give you the sort of thing you want.

'I quite understand, Gordon,' Mr. Fenton said, still examining the lawns. *I wish I could help you. I wish I could help you right now. But I can't do that. You must realize I'm a busy fellow around here."

'I know I should have made an appointment, Sir,' said Gordon. 'But you have the designs. And I'm here -- in the next town - Bronthorn. And-thought - it - would - be - saving - time - to - come - now - to - discuss - the things - we - went - over - a - little - before.'

Mr. Fenton wheeled about, staring at Gordon as he would stare at a talking do Noir you, el no sino at all. ve just had a little upset.

My father died and . .

'Old John? Yes, of course. My wife mentioned it. She reads the obituaries. I don't. Too bad, Gordon. He was a most influential man in his day. Of course, we all have to fall down to death sometime, don't we? '

'Yessir, we do.' Gordon began to sweat. Mr. Fenton took a last hungry look at the lawns and slid his trim diet-conscious body into the grey metal swivel-chair behind his grey metal desk. He locked his fingers together again on the unmarred desk blotter and stared coldly at his thumbs. Gordon shifted his weight, wishing he would be asked to sit down.

'Your designs,' said Mr. Fenton, chewing the words. "Your designs.

Well, Gordon, I don't know what to say about it. This --uh, situation. You see I don't like your designs. Don't like them at all."

Gordon started, regained his composure at once, said nothing, waited.

"I owed your father -- uh -- Old John, a favour, Gordon. It was a minor matter he took care of for me, one time, but nevertheless of enough importance for a favour to be asked in return. Do you follow me, Gordon? Not saying "No" to your simple little designs was a way of repaying Old John -- so's to speak. You understand??"

'Yes, I think I do.'

'Fine,' said Mr. Fenton. 'I dislike buying material I have no use for, Gordon. My secretary, Miss Hallison, will give you your folder on the way out. Just a minute, I have her get it ready for you so there'll be no delay.' He flipped on the inter-com. "Miss Hallison, would you please get Mr. Gordon Metzger's portfolio of napkin --uh - designs, and have it ready for him to pick up on his way out? Thank you, Miss Hallison.'

Gordon coughed into his fist.

"I'm sorry, Gordon. But I don't pull punches. Of course, I wish you all the luck in the world. You sold some ideas to the Samnax Company over at Marronneck Point, didn't you?'

'Yes, yes, I did.'

'Good,' said Mr. Fenton. 'Since they like your sort of thing I'd suggest you stick with them. Can you find your way out?'

'Yes, yes.'

'Goodbye, Gordon. Oh, by the way, your father, I take it, died of drink, did he not?'

'No,' Gordon replied firmly. 'It was indigestion. He was getting old.'

Mr. Fenton's face hardened. 'Goodbye,' he said.

'Goodbye, Mr. Fenton.'

Miss Hallison, all smiles, all unknowing, all compromising, handed Gordon his portfolio. "They're so cute," she said, flirting wildly, batting her eyes, dipping over her desk.

"Thanks," said Gordon. "Thanks a bunch." He jarred the portfolio under his arm and stormed out of the office banging his feet loudly on the stairs.

He drove to Bronthorn slowly because he was so disgusted -- with the world, life, himself, Mr. Fenton, Marion, Old John, everything -- he was afraid he might have an accident. Then too, he remembered the voices of Mr. Bunly and his mother the night before in the kitchen and wondered whether or not he'd like Mr. Bunly for a stepfather. Keeping his mind on the road was difficult. Twice he stopped at wooded sections and just sat, wiping his forehead and the back of his red sweating neck with his handkerchief. The second time he stopped he opened the portfolio and flipped through the neatly matted drawings, reading the notes jotted in appropriate places. Then he re-tied the lacings and dropped the portfolio on to the floor of the back seat. He hadn't calmed down a bit, but the day was turning toward noon, and he wanted to get back to Stapleton's during the lunch hour; the whole town's lunch hour. Everybody ate at noon when the steam whistle on top of the local Tool and Dye Works blew the signal for it.

During that hour it was a good gamble there'd be no one staring at Old John, no one standing sorrowfully among the lilies, no nosey mourners or curious onlookers -- no one to see.

He parked in front of the funeral parlour as Mr. Stapleton was coming out of the door.

'Pardon me,' Gordon said, walking up to meet him.

'Yes, yes, Gordon. What is it?'

'Is there anyone inside now, Mr. Stapleton?'

'No, only my wife. Oh, I see, you want to be alone. Is that it?'

'Yes,' said Gordon.

*I understand. Very admirable. But don't let it get you down, boy. It happens to everybody.'

'It's not that, Mr. Stapleton. Do you know what's in the envelope?'

'Oh, no, no. Now don't start in about that. I've got to get bread for Mrs. Stapleton to make lunch.

Gordon stood still, watching till the man had gained half a block of distance. Then he turned and went inside. Mrs. Stapleton, a fat always busy woman, was dusting off the mahogany tables in the foyer. As he entered she looked up.

'Good-day, Mrs. Stapleton.'

'Gordon. Come to see your father?'

* Yes, I thought while no one was here.

'Isn't that nice. I know how you feel, Gordon. He was a bit odd in his later years, wasn't he --all that drinking. People forget the good things Old John did. You've got a right to be proud of him. But he was -- odd. That monument business and all.

'What was that?' Gordon asked.

'Why, didn't you know?'

'Know what, Mrs. Stapleton?'

* Well, it's what that Welkum fella says, anyway. Old John's last request was that nobody should put any monuments on his grave.'

'I didn't know?'

'Not even a marker. I suppose Old John had his reasons. But it's odd, Gordon. I understand the Hunters Association is having some trouble about it. If I were you, Gordon, I'd talk to your family about it. Mr. Stapleton's got some lovely stones in the catalogs. Have you eaten?'

'No, said Gordon. 'I'm not very hungry?'

'Of course, how foolish of me. Go right on in. Before the crowd starts. I understand your relatives from all around are coming in this afternoon.'

'I didn't know that either,' said Gordon. "Thanks for telling me.'

The room, the lilies, the ecru drapes, the candles, Old John's cradled body, all smelled stuffy as a closet. The soft lights fanning up to the ceiling cast no shadows. Gordon went straight to the casket and looked inside. He glanced quickly at his father's face, believing he detected a definite change of colour, a new greyer complexion to the powdered flesh, a hollowing in the eyes and puckering of the lips. He winced inwardly and focused

on the envelope beneath the hands. He reached in and slid the envelope free. He worked his fingernail carefully under the flap, feeling the bulge of the object inside. A nervous spasm rocked his legs. He coughed, cleared his throat, coughed again. The room was dim, quiet. And at last the flap was open.

The object of secrecy rolled out into his hand.
'An acorn!'

He rolled it up on the tips of his fingers and stared at it. 'A stinking acorn!' He choked. The blood rushed to his face. He felt radiant and was sweating profusely. 'Why that damned fool!' he cursed, fumbling with the acorn and the envelope. "And he said no monument! He cheated everybody! Everybody! 'In his state of awkward panic mixed with surprise he dropped the acorn. It rolled inside the casket, down between the folds of satin and the hard body of the corpse.

Gordon reached for it automatically, but on first contact with the body, withdrew his hand in terror. He looked quickly around for a substitute. Anything. Something! Preferably his. His! He removed his black onyx ring with the diamond chip in the center and slipped it into the envelope. With what nerve remained he slipped the envelope back in place. He stepped back. It looked the same.

Gordon sat heavily on one of the lined-up folding chairs, trying not to look at the candles, trying not to look at anything. 'No monument,' he said bitterly.

He felt he could no longer hold back that grief he knew would shatter him. It came all at once, doubling him up. Out of the corner of his eye he saw Mrs. Stapleton stop to look in on him and then go quickly away. He was drying his cheeks when the first relatives arrived, the remains of Old John's brother's family, the wife and children of Gordon's uncle, Paul Metzger, who'd died in an auto accident. Gordon rose to greet them. He knew he looked appropriately dishevelled for the occasion and saw in their eyes that they thought he did.

When they had shaken his hand and paid their respects to Old John's remains they came to Gordon and sat around him. It was then his aunt leaned in toward him.

'You should be proud,' she said. 'He was a fine man. During The Depression he was a god to the people of this town. He did all he could for everybody. Of course, he sometimes let his own family go a little, but -- She paused. 'What's in the envelope, Gordon?'

'Nobody knows,' Gordon said, choking again. 'Old John wanted it that way.'

'Nobody?' his aunt asked.

'Nobody,' said Gordon, and getting up he excused himself and hurried toward the door leading outside. He knew he was going to be violently ill, sicker than he'd ever been in his life up till that very moment.

Robert Sward

Labor Day- Third-Floor Rear

1. *The sun is our Chicago- holiday-
alley- garbage truck, orange*
2. *And at moving-rest. We see it
on vacation, in the morning*
3. *As it rises, still, and rises
out of the alley.*
4. *It licks up all the garbage-cans,
and cheers the busted gates.*
5. *Our ham in us, we stink:
mashed sweet potatoes:*
6. *And the morning's sausage, coffee-
fat... cream & sugar.*
7. *It is a day for the complexion; one digests
upon the porch. We laugh,*
8. *And for the second time, we read
the funnies. Smilin' Jack*
9. *Now flies a U.S. sun- steel jet; he stops
for nothing; - the coffee also reads him.*
10. *And Terry has outgrown the pirates;
he wars upon pink beards!*
11. *The sun makes the garbage smell;
the cans expand, and sleep.*
12. *I sit upon the porch, with my aunts
and uncles; we puff, eat grapes*
13. *And spit the seeds. Grandma
goddamns the sun; she blinks*

of the garbage-pail.

*15. We'd like to dump her
off the porch!*

*16. Little uncle TV - Smitty coos;
his brains observe*

*17. The baseball tubes. His ears are frazzled,
blue; -- grandma hit him, home'd him with a pail.*

*18. The games end! The Cubs split!!
and grandma, up, swings her pail.*

*19. Uncle Smitty screams, and starts
to cry. The set grins; and dies.*

*20. The clothes soak beneath the sink . .
(the sun behind us all).*

Lines in Lieu of a Prayer

Dear God: I've been pencilling the candle-
Wax, putting my point beneath
The flame, and pressing wax against the wick.
It lies flat now, and burns: right angles to you.

*Our electricity is off
And has disappeared - like money, God*
Money! I wish that you were everywhere. .
Rather than like where money goes.

The wax, the wax is you; the fire's you.
And I've been playing with God - disappears
And is not, and is everywhere. Let me pray
To you, the wax of you, the cash, by candlelight.

Two Poems

Vahan K. Gregory

Elegy: Wilhelm Reich

*He walked populating a canny home,
Carried it with him, open at the throat.
We saw our faces signing their names
· Like nervous wounds on panes of clever*

*Glass that marked our invisible passage
Beyond each wilted year of grace.
He welcomed us to his shiny ideas
That bored to the innocence stalled somewhere*

*In the ghostly parlors of our broken brains,
The altered attics where old puberties
Stare in the breeze from fear to fear,
And impotence peeks like an axe thru a door,*

*Combing its hair, whistling elegies,
While hysterectomies swing thru the trees,
Hold wild parties, congratulate themselves,
And tear each other limb from limb.*

*He did not flee our shame till we stoned him
For the revelation spelled in his vision.*

Affair

*We met in a market. She was so English -
Her lips engaged my desire like treasure.
'Bombed?' I asked, pouring into her gaze.
She gave me her number and came to dinner.*

*The food was fine but she appeared bored,
Confessed she wondered if I were queer
(Suspicious of poetry, fiddle, and bullfights;
Besides I wore sandals and had long hair).*

And became one another. Our longings were ferried
 Across an exquisite week like a panic.
 We moored on a sheer desire to get married.

Our galaxies beamed, but a subtle change
 Occurred like a symptom and voted to grow.
Now when something dear would come,
Something in us would cower, and go.

Our love went broke like fireworks.
 We cried as the spectacle astounded us.
Sparks showered the shuddering air
And died strafing the days around us.

Lines on a Fractured Tooth
(for my twenty-seventh birthday)

Disconcerting, to be munching bread and stew,
 comfortable but tasty
mouthful, and suddenly crunch down
on what appears to be a stone
or piece of glass -- nasty
omen too, if your birthday's due
 next week, and the offending lump turns out to be
half a molar hollow with decay.

Examining the labyrinth of rot
that cores the porcelain facade,
 I cannot curse some cruel incalculable wrong,
but ask, how could it last so long?
Then fear - the mouth cascades
saliva at the mere thought
of an exposed nerve's sensitivity,
 and the mind brims metaphors of mortality.

Tentative as peanut probing finger
of a wavering elephant,
 the tongue-tip reaches
the ruin, retreats, then searches
for some hint of former elegance:
 just so, the mind's tongue leaps and lingers
 after the first jab on the jagged shape
 of death, still convinced there's some mistake.

But now, my restless tongues have worn smooth
the sharp edges of that ragged peak.

There are new wounds to lick;
 lately I've developed a persistent crick
in my hip, my eyes are getting weak,
 and do I just imagine that my hair is loose?
 Yet since, oh fatal tooth, I mourned your last remains,
 my grief has numbed me to death's growing pains.
 - Ronald Offen

Poem

(To the young man who left the flowers
on my desk one April afternoon

*I accepted them, It was the graceful
 thing to do, even though I knew*
 they weren't meant for me;

Far, far too lovely they were --
 half blue, wild tolling blue
as lucent and yielding as new
 melon flesh and dew, dew on their lips;
half demure, demure and elegant
white rose, sleeping beauties quiet
and masked against any beast.
I cannot say what they meant
to us all, coming at the time
when they did. It was love,
 and we opened our hearts,
 so much evil having recently skulked about.

They were left, I know, for another girl --
 perhaps the afternoon-nymph with unwilting
grace and enormous blue eyes,
 so much like those wild, fragrant first flowers
 whose heavy perfume I could smell all night,
or maybe it was the white-limbed
marble greek, smooth as cool Chablis
 whom I found to be so like
those silent tea-roses that I gasped
 to see perfection in a thing still young;
 and yet the flowers pleased me most of all
 because I am plain,
and beauty means so much..·
 so very much to me.

- Diane Wakoski

INDOOR SPORT

Susan Blodget

·Kierkegaard premised his thought on the apocalyptic command."

'Yes,' she replied as she placed her hand on his knee beneath the shadow of a sphere peopled with espresso cups, cigarettes, ash-trays and a book of untranslated 13th C. Sanskrit poetry. 'I feel his "either/ or" pre-occupation was somewhat compulsive in that he had to justify his action concerning Regina. But, regardless of any emotional motivation behind his work, I maintain that he is largely responsible for the religious renaissance in our century.

He nodded his head in affirmation. The Victorian concept of God could not be accepted by the moderns - and such system-builders as Hegel destroyed any attraction philosophy could hold as a vehicle of faith. Kierkegaard and the other theistic existentialists have presented man with some direction toward a meaningful life.' His hand slipped over hers, pressing it urgently against his thigh.

'Of course,' she continued, ' St. Augustine and Pascal were fore-runners of today's theistic existentialists, yet their solitary struggles for an authentic personal faith have lost their intensity, somehow, in comparison to Marcel, Maritain and others. Perhaps the luster of their sufferings has been dimmed by their historicity? With this, her hand turned under his, the nails attacking the soft flesh of his palm.

A grin briefly punctuated his face as he attempted to control this teasing, lustful agitator. 'You're right, of course. Pascal's *Pensées* are not half as inspiring to me as some of Kierkegaard's prayers, also his *Sickness unto Death*. Life to me now is not an absurdity, as Sartre would have it, nor, as the so-called "beat ones" seem to believe, is it to be overcome with jazz, chicks and tea. I have established a guiding ethos which precludes any possibility of my being lost. I feel above and beyond the faddish Bohemian life and the chromium-plated bourgeois existence -- something of a Zarathustra, but a Christian Zarathustra, you understand Now, as his hand rested upon her soft upper leg, she pulled it closer.

'Yes,' she said, 'I believe we have freed ourselves of material burdens, at least to the extent that we are only truly happy within the realm of ideas. As St. John of the Cross commands, we have subjugated the lower part of our natures. And, when we suffer, we suffer, not from the fashionable "welt-schmerz" which afflicts only those who unwisely involve themselves with this world, but from our necessary journey through the dark night of the soul'

'We are very fortunate,' he replied. ' We have achieved what the Zen Buddhist will be striving for until and beyond death. I thank God.' He

could feel the warmth of her smooth skin, and did not mistake the significance of her loose, wet lips and intent eyes.

'It's late.

He collected his black sweater and poetry book. She slipped on her dark glasses and pulled at her Capris.

'Which pad? Yours or mine?'

The Crippled Girl

Stretched by the darkness and broken by light,
 She woke to find the world all clever arms
 And legs -- bodies that had somehow slipped right
 By; unsleeping ones possessed, no doubt, of charms.
 But, invariably kind, these wise ones bundled up
 Their button-less shirts and raveled sweaters,
 Placed them on her table, next to the cup
 Containing thimbles, pincushion, and threaded needles.
 She thanked them and, despite protests, wheeled
 Her chair to the stove, offering tea in
 Cracked china. Later, the money sealed
 Away, she drank herself to sleep with gin
 And dreamed through the night as the bed grew soft
 That by staring at people their legs fell off.

- R. R. Cuscaden

Omega Be

The day the bomb left bloodstains on the sky
I stood an hour at 21st and Vine.
Cold-brained, I saw humanity flow by,
 and heard the horns, the helpless sirens' whine.
Her city now, as once her buffalo,
 bewildered by thunder on the cloudless plains;
 outraged that life so easily should go,
 staring at blood, spilling through broken veins.

A toy doom. Rain and the city ran
like watercolors, and a Roman prayed.
 The lightless stumbled on some useless man.
 A broken mouth moved side to side and made
 new words. Fear found me green: so new to fright
 I ran all day, and far into the night.

- Miller Williams

Books New or Neglected : II

The spring books for 1956 were a rather shabby lot and generally need no discussion here. But there is one exceptional title which was launched gently, with mild enthusiasm, and surely not enough promotion budget, that deserves attention. Nearly three years later a few diehards are still talking about Thomas Anderson's *Your Own Beloved Sons* (Random House, \$3.50); this is an interim report of a diehard.

The book's advance notes were cheerful: Bennett Cerf said it was 'one of the finest first novels that has ever borne the Random House imprint; Carlos Baker wrote of it as 'one of the most memorable first novels we have lately had'; British publisher Victor Gollancz declared that it had been 'years since I have read a book by a young American beautifully written'; Granville Hicks praised it as 'An extraordinary novel for so young a man to have written. deeply impressed by the subtlety and the precision with which he portrays personal relationships.'

Your Own Beloved Sons is a story. It cannot be compared with *The Young Lions* or *The Naked and the Dead*, or to similar WW II novels; it doesn't have the scope of these books, the complexity, the dimensions. This is not by way of condemnation, however, but of praise. Anderson writes of a small unit action in the Korean War, a limited microcosmic affair; even so, his is not the story of that war. It is less a war story than a story of men; the battle-scenes involve them as individuals.

The action of the novel follows a six-man patrol sent out from an American armored cavalry company bottled up in the south end of a mountain-ringed valley by Chinese and North Korean troops. The patrol must prepare for the northward movement of the company and through the valley to a Dutch-held town. Sergeant Stanley makes up his patrol of 'volunteers' and takes them into the easily visualized landscape, and the relationships of the six men emerge clearly, free of home folks, past irre-

Reviews

levancies and future dreams.

Anderson's most obvious skill is described by Robert Gorham Davis: 'It is astonishing that so young a novelist should have described so revealingly how what at first seems comradely love and a desire to lead and protect can develop, under the pressure of combat, into a perverse and destructive obsession.'

The key to Anderson's considerable achievement is his ability to show the buddy-buddy relationships of military duty from all angles while maintaining his characters as real people with speech that is accurate and emphatic, weaknesses and strengths that are entirely believable, sacrifices without any bulling around about America. Nobody thinks much of home and we are spared both blueberry pies and letters from the telephone operator in Squareville.

As the central character, Sergeant Stanley is a hotshot patrol leader who has never had a casualty. His platoon sergeant, Miles, says of him: '... he's possessed by this insane idea that he's got to take care of all of his men, and if he finds out they can take care of themselves, he makes up trouble so that they'll need him.'

Stanley's efficient, hotheaded and murderous subordinate is Corporal Decker, and Decker's buddy-buddy is Gardner. Decker has been with Stanley a long time, admires him, but thinks he has given up his independence: '... in

place.'

To these three are added: Olsen, the gunner enamoured of his .50-calibre gun and squeamish about bayonets; Littlejohn, a cook's helper who begs a ride in Stanley's jeep, has read James Agee, and finds most soldiers crude; and Richard Avery, an enlisted reservist who desires to soldier and receives a baptism of fire.

The half-dozen men in their two jeeps do not leave their company until midway through the book, but the action and inter-action start with the first chapter, so that the trapped unit itself

a certain respect and admiration for characters like Miles. There are people in the novel fit to the taste of the most exacting novel-builder, say E. M. Forster. And when the people die it is a complete death, complete in the way they fade out of the novel, the way we do not see their agonies much or follow their thoughts or imagine that death is a kind of life. When a murdered civilian

corpse is dragged into their where company commander's hut, Richard stacks another soldier's on a tank during combat in a phoenix-like ritual, they are still corpses and never dead characters.

To the very end Anderson seems to have but one statement to make: this is the way it is; which would be enough. Then, on the last page, it buckles on shining armor. Richard, eating up the gunmanship now, is riding on Miles' tank and the old sarge practically assures him that he can take over when Miles rotates.

· Miles looked at the young, admiring face. "Wanna be a tanker?" he asked. The boy nodded.

They go wheeling into the burning rubble of Hoengsong with all guns going, ala cinema Bataan or Wake Island, surrounded by the odour, to me, of 'creative editing'. Aside from this, there is little of the flavour of Ernst Junger's *Storm of Steel* (Doubleday, 1929), none of the transport of battle, the ennobling and cleansing experience that the storm-trooper, described for pre-Nazi Germany. Anderson's Nietzschean-Wagnerian heroics on halftracks develop perhaps from the mood of battle but not with the last man going down shooting.

Rather, with escape to fight another day. Not with death at the bridge-side ala Robert Jordan, but the reincarnation of the hero in his successor as they reach the peak of action.

Anderson's army speaks the same language as James Jones', but as punctuation; only when a man is actually being cussed out do the words assume other natures, verbs and adverbs that were no more than commas become adjectives of realistic description.

Perhaps the casual appearance of his language and action escaped too many

re-viewers. Perhaps, since book reviewing is generally an old man's game, they were baffled by this generation. Yet, I suggest that they might have seen beyond the mere statement of this is the way it is and agree that Anderson is saying something else of interest: that buddy-buddy love is an insubstantial thing, functional attachment that is to the madness of warfare no more than a rationalization; that it becomes a vicious circle, a never-ending cycle of dependence, adoration, desire for attention, hatred and withdrawal. The pattern is unvaryingly familiar; there is no one in the novel a reader is likely to want to be, as one might want to be a character in another book; they are all too much like ourselves already. There would be *no transition*.

Why do I go back to the book? Because the old critics didn't get the idea? Because it's worth reading even when I know how it will end? Perhaps. As the seduced woman told the lawyer: I knew what to expect, but it was so damned nice the way he did it.

- Lachlan MacDonald

Three Kinds of Vision

WESTERN REACHES, by Leonard Nathan; The Talisman Press, San Jose, California, \$2.25.

THE FOREVER YOUNG AND

OTHER POEMS, by Pauline Hanson; Alan Swallow, Denver, \$2.50.

IN THE MIDNIGHT WOOD, by Cecil Hemley; The Noonday Press, New York, \$3.00.

Though the subjects and symbols of poetry have been used again and again through the ages, each generation manages to make its poetry unique and fresh. One reason for this continuing vitality is the ever new personal vision

of the poet.

There are many ways of looking at the world, but possibly the broadest categories include, first, the outward view, the description and comment on things seen; second, the inner vision, the attempt to describe the personal and abstract or emotional world of the individual; and third, the thematic view, which sees the

world, both inner and outer, as a means of exemplifying certain propositions, emotions, or ideas held by the poet.

The books covered by this review serve as examples of these three kinds of poetic vision.

As the title *Western Reaches* implies, Leonard Nathan has written a book of landscapes. But he has managed to endow the landscape with more than what is obviously there.

He brings into the contemplation of the familiar an epic touch. By combining the familiar with the abstract he gives significance to the common, as in 'True Husbandman.'

With a blossom stuck in his hat,
with a severe hand,
With an ancient justice, he is
moving toward us,
A motion in live oak, a figure holding
The sky up. In the network of
vines and veins

He shears, unspeaking in his
implication

With the fields, and brings things
to bear as nearly sweet
As mercy, the slashing foliage
and the fair.

This combination is always, in the hands of Nathan, interesting; and it is always well done, for he has had the intelligence and grace either not to write bad poems, or not to include any in this collection.

Many of the poems evoke the feeling of classic spirits moving through a landscape, fusing the object beheld with, behind it, the timeless object it represents. Nathan transmits in many of the poems classic feeling through the combination of persons seen as spirits of the earth or the sea; and a calm, precise style, rich in natural detail. This is found in such poems as the one quoted, in 'Ordinary Swimmer,' and in 'A Mexican in Passing.' In all of these, people are glimpsed as evocations of the natural order.

The book is written in a free, smooth, and flowing style which does not vary greatly from poem to poem. The unity in tone, rhetoric, and theme goes beyond the individual piece to make the book itself a whole rather than a series

of disconnected performances.

Nathan is a consistently good poet, and because he is also a young poet and worth watching, there are two aspects of his work which may point to his future development. First, this is the book of a spectator, who is not emotionally or personally involved in the material of which he writes. This is appropriate to what he is doing here. Whether he will develop more involvement or continue as disengaged but valid commentator will be interesting to see. Second, the style he has developed is admirable, but whether he will develop more ways or other ways of meeting other material, will be worth watching as well.

In contrast to the external landscapes of Nathan, are the internal landscapes of Pauline Hansen.. This poet speaks of the personal and interior, with scarcely a reference to the visual world.

Such a poem is 'The Sudden Body' which is short enough to quote *entirely*:

But if it lifts to ecstasy,
Something of me small and free
That wept in coming, now in going
Goes mothlike to the afterknowing.

Where every dream of death is death,
The wantful mind waits like a moth
Or now more wantfully will not wait
And where it dreams there its despair

Is such desire, is sure desire
The mind is flesh and flesh is fire
And more than what I was, I know --
As from a dream or death ago--

The sudden body itself is all
To which I lift, from which I fall.
But singing this I sing the name
Of who still finds the form of flame.

The poem not only illustrates the kind of poetic vision expressed by Miss Hansen, but shows the peculiarities of her intensely personal style. The repetition of words and phrases is found throughout her work and combines with her instinctive rhythm to give all her poetry a dreamlike lyricism.

The musical quality of her style is found too in the longer poem, 'The

last part of the book. It is not surprising that this poem, after its original publication in 1948, was set to music by Herbert Elwell. The poem proceeds through a series of quatrains, connected by theme and mood rather than logical sequence.

The bloodbeats keep their own
chronology;
They stop the century and stop
the day.
And breaking, stop the thought
it is by them
That we take time from its eternity.

Miss Hansen has enriched the ancient poetic ideas of love and death by bringing them into her own meditative inner world.

"In the Midnight Wood" brings together all the poems of Cecil Hemley. This is an impressive and distinguished, though small, collection. Hemley is a mature poet, who has written some of the best modern lyrics on the attempt of man to embrace the idea of God. Included are such lines as:

I would be His if He were anywhere;
If He were anything He would appear.

If He had any name the name I give
Would find Him in the night and
make Him live.

But He is nameless, nothing, and
nowhere,
Beyond concern with me and my
despair

or, on the incarnation:

O Virgin, God is sucking at your breast,
But He will bring you little joy or rest.
O wise men, now divinity is here,
He has no Word to make His
meaning clear.

Hemley is equally apt in his handling of themes as various as the inability of men to be heroes in 'The Heroes,' or the dubious nature of conquest in 'The Conquerors,' or the meaning of silence in 'Witnesses.'

Each poem is a deft statement of its

cations that the poem seems in a sense a new poem on each reading. This is true of the best of a certain kind of poetry, poetry with the clear and definite touch that appears to give its meaning on first or second reading, but continues to add to its significance as it is reread. Of this quiet, growing poetry, Hemley is a master. He is a poet who deserves to be known and read much more widely than he is at present.

-Ann Stanford

The Lack of

Individual Responsibility

PARKTILDEN VILLAGE, by George P. Elliott; Beacon Press, 1958, \$3.50.

Due to our modern communication systems and their concern with a mass there is a shocking moral thinnessaudience in most popular novels today

as well as in television, radio and films. This moral thinness consists mainly of extreme simplifications, i.e. television is bad and corrupts the innocent idealist; or television is a wonderful medium and it is only that evil tycoon, Frederick Stackpole, President of the Amalgamated Networks, who is responsible for the sentimental violence that flows over the screens. In an age of constant, scientific change, when reputable scientists can say that human nature is changing at an extraordinary pace and that a new kind of humanity is coming into existence, it is hard to avoid moral thinness. Publishers and audiences alike demand either the reassuring statement of the familiarity of human nature or the possibility of a brave, new humanity. The fact that man's fate has been, is, and always will be trapped in a mysterious web of good and evil, strength and weakness, is too terrifying to contemplate, and not enough of a 'gimmick' to sell. This is the reason for the current, sad spectacle of the furor about Boris Pasternak's novel, *Dr. Zhivago*, as being mainly anti-communistic, when its intent is of far greater importance. Inevitably, the moral idea is lost behind the political slogan, the economic battle-cry, or the sentimentalized character.

A novel that does not employ one of these simplified approaches is likely to vanish in the roar of communication (the perversion of the word communication is one of our great ironies). To a certain extent, this has been the fate of George P. Elliott's important first novel, *Parktilden Village*. *Parktilden Village* has been praised and snubbed by influential critics, but the publisher, Beacon Press, has failed to push it and has dropped both Elliott and the interesting new fiction program that it inaugurated. Fortunately, Little-Brown has taken an option on Elliott's second novel-in-progress. It remains to be seen whether the courage and originality of this writer can find their own sizable audience. Let me state my belief that such an audience does exist. The problem is to reach it through the maze of our high-pressure communication and *then, will* such an audience find in Elliott's work?

Parktilden Village is the story of a sociologist named Hazen. Hazen, a courageous, personable man who has been a war hero, teaches at a university in California. He is a member of what might be called, "The Middle Generation, middle in the sense that it stands between 'The Lost Generation' after the First World War and the so-called 'Beat Generation' after the Second World War. I use these labels deliberately because they again indicate our unwillingness to cope with individual moral responsibility. It is far easier to create labels than it is to probe into a moral wound. Hazen becomes involved in affairs with two women, a mother who represents the best qualities of easy-going suburbia, and a daughter who is revolting from the materialistic values of suburbia to the extremes of a hot-rod gang. The rootless, affable Hazen drives these women into a tragic split and refuses in the end to take the responsibility. Hazen is a striking indictment of the contemporary specialist, whose research is supposedly objective, progressive and scientific, but who is creating, in reality, a dead, statistical world without moral value or individual responsibility.

The frequent brilliance of Elliott's

style can only be demonstrated by quotation:

... Hazen liked automobiles with a deep, American liking. He liked driving hard, he liked taking chances once in a while when he was in a hurry, on a beautiful afternoon he liked driving in the country, he liked driving precipitous one-way roads in the mountains or eight-lane freeways or cobblestone alleys in Boston, he very much liked a stretch of good highway in the desert where he could keep the throttle wide open till the car vibrated like a taut wire and loped, when it went over a little bump, in hundred-toot-long luxurious bounds: He liked the raising of mountains, circling of cities, high progress over swamps; he liked the whine of the tires when the asphalt was soft and the hum when he crossed one of the metal gridiron stretches of a bridge and the singing on wet concrete pavement. He even liked long hard trips, such as the one he had just made across country. He had driven his old sedan from New York pleasantly to Detroit, where he had bought a brand-new, gleaming-red Buick convertible with all the trimmings: fog lights, curb finders, necker's knob, heater, radio, white sidewall tires, genuine leather seats, an extension-cord light that plugged into the cigarette lighter, two spotlights, three ashtrays, and five clarion horns: he could raise or lower the top with the turn of a knob, he could make the front seat go forward or back by pressing a lever, he could adjust the height of any window with buttons on the door by his left hand. The car was fat and sleek as a beetle, there were eleven gauges and dials on the panel-board and nine buttons, the aerial rose from a flexible mount on the rear bumper support like a wand ten feet in the air, and the chrome of the front bumper and grill grinned like the bare teeth of a politician a week before electionday; inside the car he could hardly hear the motor, but if he stood out in back when the engine was idling he

would hear coming out through the stainless steel tailpipe a sumptuous sound as of velvet jugglers tossing silver bells; it rode so smoothly and picked up so fast and steered so easily and stopped so sharply and leaned around the curves so elegantly that there was scarcely any work to driving it at all, only skill and vigilance ... What he liked about cars was the control which driving gave him: he became the brain of a powerful organism; he was being active, not passive; and according to the sociological canon of good and bad (although under such aliases as 'other-orientation' or 'decreased societal atomization') it is better to do than be done unto, that is, it's better to drive than ride. The moral depth of this passage is evident in the balance between irony about the car and appreciation of the car's power. The description is precise, detailed and imaginative. It is one of the best descriptions of an American's paradoxical relationship to his car that I

An excessive use of similes is the one minor fault in the passage, so that the comparison of the front bumper and grill to 'the bared teeth of a politician a week before election day' makes the ironic effect too and overdone. Otherwise, the description is masterfully controlled and points to Elliott's individual quality, a metaphorical style which refreshes his familiar modern ironic tone with its moral depth. This style of Elliott's strikes an interesting balance between the compressed, colloquial rhythms Hemingway and the long, flowing, rhetorical rhythms of Faulkner, the two extremes which have dominated recent American fiction. Elliott's rhythm depends for its effect on his poetic talent for the right metaphor. The danger here is that while metaphor is the essence of poetry, it is a device that can easily interfere with the flow of the plot in a

Occasionally, one feels Elliott's concern is less with the relationship of character to plot than it is with the relationship of character to metaphorical description.

The rare quality of moral depth in this novel does not exist because of a didac-

tic method. The didactic method that is used so often in the novel today merely makes one wonder why the author has not written a work of non-fiction. The effect of moral depth in fiction can be achieved only through a mastery of the relationship between plot and character. Although in Parktilden Village, one feels at times that the author's hand is too obvious, the novel is nevertheless both an achievement and a promise. In the character of Hazen, Elliott has portrayed successfully the figure of a likeable, talented man trapped by the complexities of modern society and by his inability to love. At the end Hazen says to one of the women whom he has betrayed:

'OK,' he said, 'I've heard this sermon all my life, so spare me now. The thing is,' and he meant it, 'one learns from experience. An adult does anyhow; that's part of being adult. OK, so I behaved badly. I know it. I've learned. So I will use that knowledge to enrich my relationships in the future. OK?' He had himself once said to her that jargon was a cage: she saw him now cowering in the center of his cage. 'OK?' he insisted.

Here, in the image of jargon as a cage, is the final perception of the novel, the fact that our inability to love and our lack of individual responsibility are tangled inextricably with the betrayal of language that surrounds us today in our distortion of the term, communication.

--James Schevill

A Chicago Venture

ODYSSEY, No. 1; 1722 W. Carmen Ave., Chicago.
ADVERTISEMENTS, Poems by Robert Sward; Odyssey Chapbook No. 1.

Odyssey is a new little magazine devoted to poetry. This magazine is financed and printed, edited and stapled together with all the serious quixotism of the important little magazine tradition by two young Chicagoans, Ronald Offen and R. R. Cuscaden. With a limited budget they have put out an

impressive first issue. The editors have, moreover, surpassed themselves first of a series of Chapbooks, an imaginatively designed volume, *Advertisements*, by Robert Sward.

Contributors to the first issue of *Odyssey* include Curtis Zahn, Langton, Michael Grieg, Judson Crews and Frederick Eckman. My favorites were by Michael Grieg and Frederick Eckman (who, incidentally, contributed a fine introduction the Sward book.) A refreshing inclusion is by David Cohen, whose poem begins:

We pasted pictures of famous writers
On green-plastered dorm walls.

Such a rawly confessional poem is not obscure, quadruple-punned or obliquely metaphored enough to send out to the larger poetry magazines.

should be a place for this kind of work -- as sincere and unafraid as a letter to a friend. In such pages writers can communicate with one another, exercising their skills without having to defend them to a suspicious audience. This kind of poem, and the kind of magazine *Odyssey* promises to be, is one we can enjoy when we have our guards down. When tired of sophistication, we can turn through these non-commercial efforts, written solely to communicate to an understanding reader (the kind of reader who supports ventures like *Quixote*).

That is not to derogate the quality of work in *Odyssey*. Poems of great skill and of permanent value will doubtlessly find their way into such a magazine. It is also part of the undefensive foolhardiness of the little magazine to open its arms to talent in the rough.

the material (or more) in any little magazine and in the big, too) is ephemeral; but the occasional success makes the magazine worthwhile historically.

The editors promise the kind of tolerant encouragement to talent that will allow growing writers to publish a few magnificent failures - that hybrid sensitivity and frustration which makes perhaps the most exciting reading. This is all any little magazine, including the best, can do and ever has done; statement includes the famous Little Review and, it is to be remembered that

one of the most respected literary magazines published that most abominable of all English poems, "Trees." In short, *Odyssey* is a welcome addition to the little magazine mainstream, a happy relief from the pseudo-little magazines which have tried so hard to purvey avant-garde values while making a buck and have generally succeeded only in creating a new *derrière-garde*.

By publishing Robert Sward's *Advertisements*, the editors have done us all a favor. Sward has the kind of idiosyncratic and erratically brilliant talent which must make its way slowly into the public consciousness. To do this he needs pages to spread himself over; *Odyssey* has given him these pages. The poems, which are without Sward's usual complex linguistic antics, focus on a single theme, the meretricious advertising of cigarettes, brassieres, airplane rides and cosmetics. Sward on deodorants:

But again, the caption: You are the
very air he breathes (the male is
hard upon her).

She appears to be undisturbed by this;
and with both shaved armpits bared,
she arches

For him . . .

And takes the male . . .

She smiles,
and she lies there, the very air
he breathed.

Sward is perceptive, amusing and incisive on brassieres as well as automobiles:

Inhale -- you're a perfect 36!
Exhale - 35.

Sward actually succeeds in capturing some of the pathos of the spent dreams, the twisted passion, and the longing hunger surrounding, like effluvia, the country of our magazine advertisements.

The publication of such work allows us to see a talent in the process of maturing. As an encouragement to poets of Sward's generation the enterprise is welcome to our cultural scene.

--David Ray

Poetry of the
Non-Existent City

POETRY LOS ANGELES, edited by James Boyer May, Thomas McGrath and Peter Yates; London, Villiers Publications Ltd., 68 pp.

PASSAGE AFTER MIDNIGHT, by William Pillin; Inferno Press Editions, San Francisco, 39 pp., \$1.00.

The reading of poetry in public, currently so popular, is not particularly new; there have been times when established poets have appeared before audiences to read from their published works, and occasionally from works in progress. The current activity, however, is distinctive for the large number of young poets and new poets reading poems that are for the most part unpublished. One of the most noteworthy series during the past year was the readings of Poetry Los Angeles. The editors have arranged the readers choices of poems read at these meetings, with the note that the grouping does 'not repreture y predetermined thesis or pos-

The selections may be called Poetry Los Angeles chiefly through the fact that the writers are resident in this area and so were available for the readings. As one of the rare cultural meetings that might be expected to provide an image of Los Angeles the readings have been particularly free of any attempt to force this image into existence. The downtown ghost for tourists through which residents pass fleetingly on the freeways provides no actual community center -- similarly the poets in this collection do not pause to identify themselves with the area, with a single alleged influence, or with any of the wild publicity-generated attitudes that have been applied by irresponsible writers.

The chief characteristic might be vaguely stated as variety, the tone as awareness, the styles and techniques as versatile. The eighteen poets, three of them women, are not equally skilled, and their concerns do not weigh equally with the reader.

The five selections by Gene Frumkin are accomplished, particularly the philo-

sophical 'The Hawk and the Lizard' and the haunting Poem for Childhood' with its final: 'Custer's last word was spoken/ on my Big Horn rug a World War Two ago./ And I haven't heard from Crazy Horse in years.'

* Letter to An Imaginary Friend' by Thomas McGrath is a long poem, sensuous, fervid, nostalgic, and compassionate, but not likely to be anthologized by the commercial presses for some Comstockian nights to come. For contrast and a quiet power of its own is the brief Picture Framing' by Bert

Meyers:

My fingers feed in the fields of wood.

I sand pine, walnut, bass,
and sweat to raise their grain.

Paints, powder and brush
are the seasons of my trade.

At the end of the day
I drive home
the proud cattle of my hands.

Comparable to McGrath's poem for its fervor, but unique in its comingling of love and politics, is 'M'Sieu Mishiga: 7' by Gil Orlovitz, a long poem that displays his penchant for verbal fireworks but is essentially pessimistic, fearful of the technology from which he borrows so many images, perhaps a little hysterical at the sight of 'Jesus Christ slaking his thirst at the Strontium 90 waters'. Orlovitz seems to be saying: this is where we are. McGrath, contrast, ranges through past and present and manages to make an affirmation to a kind of White Goddess: *O hot, great-hearted women/ The world turns still on the axis of your thighs! '

A pessimist with a completely different style is Lawrence P. Spingarn, a poet more conventional in form though original in treatment of his subject matter. Spingarn has shown himself elsewhere to be capable of the long historical view and in the poem 'West' he extends his knowledge into a 40-line survey scenes and customs that will win no Chamber of Commerce friends, but does ring true.

Most felicitous of the ladies is Ann

this group is The Weathercock.' Other individual poems that deserve a more extensive treatment than space permits are Mel Weisburd's 'When I Go Down To That Sleep' and 'The Integration of Failure' (the latter a seemingly masked polemic), Curtis Zahn's 'Homage to a Girl Named Cupcake,' and Peter Yates' 'From My Window.'

A brief review of so many poets must admittedly do great injustices, and for omissions of criticism there can only be regret. The books and pamphlets of several Los Angeles poets have been reviewed here; since the series will be repeated, and another annual may be expected, it would be useful to urge the publisher to include in the next volume some biographical notes on the contributors, with bibliographical guides to larger selections of their works.

One of the most recent of such titles to come to hand is William Pillin's *Passage After Midnight*, his fourth book. Seven of his poems are specifically Jewish evocations of rootlessness, oppression and genocide, nostalgia for relatives, and lamentation for a vanished culture. All carry a keening tone, the suggestion of the haunted survivor. A typical example of Pillin's style and a strong statement of his broad humanistic love which never allows his mourning to become hate and vengeance, is 'Miserere':

I will not endow you with a false
glow ghetto
or say that only poets and seers
died in your ashes.

Many mourn the scholars and
dreamers,
the beautiful innocent talented victims.
I will spare my tears for the
loudmouthed unhappy conniving
jews
the usurious lenders,

tuberculous hunchbacked
scum of the ghettos (the sweepings
of Europe).

For them I will weep,
for the whores
pale in the doorways, for the
spiderous tradesman
with his false measures
and for all the grey sparrows

the grief of whose eyes
went up in thin smoke like a final
prayer.

For them I will weep, 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 settles on
shivering Europe.

The title poem is an eight-section description of the author's work as a potter with home kiln and clay. For Pillin: *Just at the moment/when day should end/ the ten thousand channels of life/ open before me."

One suspects that this is the time, also, when he writes his poetry, much of it emphasizing love: for wife, a young son, for home. It is a love maintained against a consciousness of the ravages of time and aging, the imminence of death and atomic destruction, the empty-eyed 'man of undistinguished mien.'

Perhaps it is Pillin, his poetry an even address of free verse, his concerns for affirmation in the face of assured defeat and destruction, and his individual glimpses into the shape of the city--for these qualities it is perhaps Pillin who typifies the Los Angeles poet. For this reason his glimpse of their common environment might be of more than usual interest:

THE TRIP HOME

1 came to you on a black span
of asphalt
straining my lungs
against a downpour of torn newspapers,
running from cascades of broken glass,
from live coals glittering through
darkness,
igniting restaurants, cinemas, shop
windows.

1 Walked through percussion of death,
my nerves in tune with a thousand
sirens.

I walked through terrible silences
punctuated by flutes of gloom;

past fear haunted houses
 where people with ghostlike faces
 spoke in strange tongues;
 past pedestrians frozen by boredom on
 streetcorners;

past billboards of venereal roses,
 past placards illustrating the
 profanation of the kiss,
 past nudities on streetcorners
 instigating youths to bacchanalian
cakewalks.

I ran from maniacs crouching
 in dimly lighted alleys.
 I elbowed a snarling thug,
 I kicked at a whining beggar.
 I won free, I ran, I came to this
clearing
 hidden by poplars and moonlight.

The perhaps unknown
 of not everything
 fountains still a
 forgotten spring

summer, a run by
 of oh no you cant
 darkens her temper
 (hand in her plant)

falling fair flying
 the laughter of aut-
 umn throws care to
 wind, wind to oughta

and I was home again
 in a clearing of pale stars
 at the edge of Gomorrah.

If Pillin's picture of the city is re-
 presentative, and I believe it is, should
 we really wonder that the poets in
 Poetry Los Angeles do not concern
 themselves with the area, the city, the
 daytime existence? And is it possible
 that in such retreats in the clearing these
 individualists have reclaimed something
 of their unique selves, which makes
 what they have to say of interest to us.
 Perhaps the editors of the anthology had
 something of the sort in mind when
 they noted: "A poet is one who in
 company thinks alone and offers his ex-
 perience as a poem."

-L. MacD.

Pome

or april's a silly
yeah lonely girl
 with wonders of lovers
tales to thrill

which while june
does so giggle
 (Rune of a wagman
detects a wiggle)

of octavia slight
 turning chill in the bare
 coming cold, lies
 in close with the hare

but winter's the
wonder in most of us yet
 fleet for the cold
 (quick for the get)

as jan runs fingers
 the flick of our spine
 and sends us to bedlam
 yr fleece to mine.

- James Singer

Editorial

In the Tense Present

Despite the scattering of the 'Beats' to other parts, near and far, there has been no diminution of West Coast literary activity. If anything, it may be said to have found new momentum -- in a different direction -- with the birth of two new quarterlies, the San Francisco Review and Contact, the latter published in Sausalito, a whisker away from the Bay City. The initial issues of both publications give evidence of financial stability; they are fat (not obese, though, like the Texas Quarterly), contain substantial graphic displays (especially Contact), and are rumoured to pay their contributors. But still more significant are their introductory statements of purpose, remarkably similar as they are and indicative of providing a fresh publishing point for those works that ought to be classed, broadly, in the humanistic branch of the literary family. The Contact editorial says:

. Contact does not intend to take sides -- not literary sides, not

Humanity, whatever that means. Presumably, however, we would publish an inhuman author should he present us with a magnificent work of inhumanity.

Contact · · is edited for the Uncommon Man - a catchy term meant to define the man (and the woman, too) who has taste and a sense of humour, who is concerned with the fate of Man, who has denied the courage -- or simply the desire -- to close his eyes to any idea that no longer illuminates reality and open them on one that does.

And from the San Francisco Review:

· We have no crusades to announce, no gauntlets to throw down; nor have we strictures to set forth as to style or subject matter.

The policy of the San Francisco Review, simply stated, is to publish humane and original expressions of moral, intellectual or emotional individuality. We take this broad approach because we feel that current theories or rules of creative writing are inadequate. Artistic expression . . . is not susceptible to logarithmic computation; the human mind is the only device sensitive enough and scrupulous enough to perceive its worth.

· It is our view that an authoritarian or dictatorial atmosphere is unhealthy and stifling, and attention will be given in these pages to civil liberties and individual rights.

The San Francisco Review has a short essay by Bertrand Russell and an article on censorship; Contact prints a piece by S. I. Hayakawa entitled *How to Be Sane Though Negro' and an interesting letter by Norman Mailer commenting on the film butchery of The Naked and the Dead. Neither quarterly contains a piece of literary criticism nor a review of the customary sort -- which does not mean this will necessarily be the case in the future.

These two magazines are of special interest to Coastlines because they ease our existential dilemma. There are others! Hail! Our gallant little band -- survivors of four years surrounded by professorial fuzzheads, fuzzy no-heads and the sharks -- we shall receive succor, for there over yon sand dune ripples the banner of mighty reinforcements (though it must be admitted that these mighty reinforcements may not even know we are here, waiting). That is why we hasten to welcome them.

Regardless of their declarations that they are not looking for a fight, our northern brethren are quite evidently in reaction against the narrow conception of literature and the role of the literary magazine most common in those quarters where prestige makes its home (or perhaps prestige is only a guest -- who is to say?). It is mainly in that spirit that Coastlines too was founded, and our past statements of policy connect in temper with those more recent

or rather the substance is only to be found in the artistic creations which the policies of the magazines may help to foster. It remains now to attempt to establish a more definite attitude about the destiny of Coastlines and perhaps, without presuming to speak for them, of one or both of the other ventures, too.

As a prelude, it is a duty to note that Coastlines has violated nearly every policy, written or conjectured, that it has ever put forth. The reason, simply, is that a policy too rigidly adhered to becomes inflexible, practically a dogma. In matters of art, as in other areas, dogmas are stultifying and lead to decadence. Therefore, we prefer to take our chances with an eclectic balance to our 'laws,' to make of them signposts instead of roadblocks.

In order to look ahead, it is first necessary to look back. What Eliot said nearly forty years ago remains true today: *The poet must be very conscious of the main current [of the past], which does not at all flow invariably

through the most distinguished reputations. He must be quite aware of the obvious fact that art never improves, but that the material of art is never quite the same . . . The difference between the present and the past is that the conscious present is an awareness of the past in a way and to an extent which the past's awareness of itself cannot show.' Most of the writers who followed Eliot mastered this lesson well and those still younger practitioners who are anxious to make their reputations do not dare to forget it either. The future is well-reckoned with, too, by these writers, for if they are serious, they wish something of their work to be original with themselves and to endure. In that sense they are writing for the future. It is the present, our own monstrous and exhilarating time, which the writer does not adequately penetrate or delineate.

Of course it is easy to say that the future will look upon that past which is our present with different vision than we do, that in the future some unperceived greatness in this present will be seen and acclaimed. But to say this and probe no further is to evade responsibility. After all, it is the job of editors to publish, and of critics to illuminate, those masterpieces to which only tomorrow may do full justice.

Neither the Beats nor the Unbeats (whoever they are), the New Critics nor the Old, have given us a view of man in society that is whole, in which the individual is identified, given roundness and extension, against the milieu of a world that functions through shapeless groups. What I refer to is reality, imaginatively conceived and provided with the texture of the society we read about in one place or another every day. The texture is inherent in such quotidian adventures as earning a living, sitting in a bar, eating lunch, riding on a bus, being ill, shopping in the market, seeing an apple fall from a fruitstand; and the imaginative conception consists in generalizing these small affairs, of placing them into relationship with the political, social

method may be religious or moral or intellectual - perhaps even lyrical - but it is such a fusion which must be made, and made in coherence with the past. Unless the writer is concerned with living in the present and of trying to feel it with his mind, heart and senses, it is difficult to envisage him surviving as a force the various onslaughts that are today being made, and increasingly so, upon his reader's time. The situation calls for the writer to compete with other media, and to do so effectively he must be as absorbing and as relevant as they; and he must go for greatness, the big dimensions.

This is not a call for the artist to be patronizing towards his reader nor to strive for popularity for its own sake or the sake of his pocketbook. What we, Coastlines, are insistent in emphasizing is the need of the writer for an increased competence in putting his perception of the past to use in the present, for it is here that his struggle is won or lost. Our aim is to publish stories, poems and essays that find their inspiration in our time and with the fullest scope the individual work can accommodate.

- Gene Frumkin

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