

TRACE

LIVING LITERATURE

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GIL ORLOVITZ

Walter Lowenfels

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SAMUEL BECKETT &

Mark Van Doren Interviews

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THOREAU'S WALDEN Ms.

by William Menger

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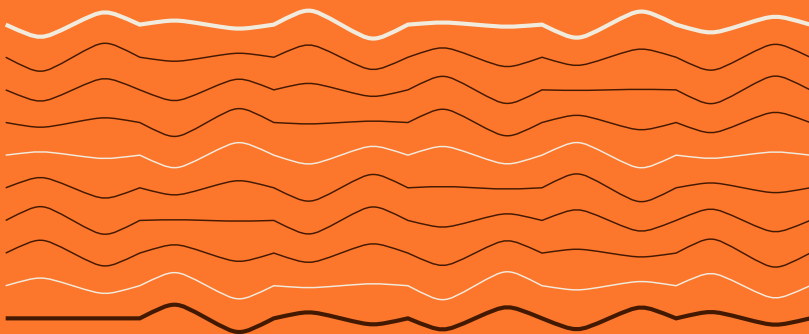
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A READING EDITION

ABOUT THIS EDITION

This reading edition preserves the issue's poetry, fiction, essays, correspondence, reviews, and other literary writing in their printed order. Advertising, subscription matter, mastheads, the magazine's own contents pages, annual indexes, address lists, and the running trade directory are omitted as reference apparatus.

The text was checked against newly rendered source pages. Poetry lineation, stanza spacing, shaped indents, and hanging continuations for long lines are retained; prose continuations are joined without false paragraph indents. Conjectural readings are enclosed in square brackets, while original spelling and punctuation are otherwise kept.

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ISSUE P. 133 · SCAN P. 3

MARK VAN DOREN

TALKS TO G. V. STILLMAN

'Love is wanting the good of another person'

'Christ is one of the Bible's great poets'

—Mark Van Doren

FOR A NUMBER of years, the art and subject of poetry has been a 'deep well of untouched answers' that needed to be brought to light through inquiries. Over a period of time, I have endeavored to seek out these answers, answers from leading poets. One of the outstanding men who has enlightened me has been Mark Van Doren; his answers have been to the point, in relation to my questions.

Herewith is the actual dialogue, as spoken in an informal atmosphere, on a late summer's afternoon.

Q. Are you concerned with Time and Destiny?

A. Time, yes; Destiny, no.

Q. What is destiny?

A. I have no idea.

Q. Why is it that a poem encompasses a beginning and an ending in so few words, whereas a novel cannot accomplish this as a small poem can?

A. But a novel can. See THE SCARLET LETTER.

Q. Are you concerned with the flow and the constant motion of poetry?

A. Yes. It is a very important element in poetry.

Q. Do you believe that poetry is an abstract language, a . . . lost art . . . which has not been practiced for thousands of years?

A. No. Poetry is the poems that have been written.

Q. Do you believe that poets are born, or made?¹

A. Both.

Q. Mr. Van Doren, would you say that if a poem is simple in structure, and not complex in content, the message of such a poem will be more concise and clear?

A. Not necessarily. *THE DIVINE COMEDY* is the most complex of all poems, and the clearest—also, part by part, the most concise.

Q. Are the insights of poetry in dealing with nature deeper than the conscious mind?

A. Insofar as they are unconscious, yes. But not insofar as they are

(1) TRACE Editors: Surely, Mr. Stillman! — a poet's birth is a foregone premise?

poetry. Poetry is both conscious, and unconscious, or at least it had better be.

Q. Some day, do you believe poets may regain the esteem and stature they appear to have held in ancient Greece?

A. I can only hope so.

Q. Just a suggestion of mine, Sir—that a summit conference of leading poets, if this idea could be pursued and actually realized, might solve a lot of world-problems in Art and Science. Would you advocate, or go along with the idea of inviting such men as yourself to discuss the problems of humanity, generally, and to aid in the search for answers which might rid the world of such problems, those which confront humanity today?

A. No. I wouldn't expect poets to be wiser than politicians—about politics. Let them stay home, and write good poems, and let the politicians read those poems; some difference might then be made.

Q. Are the insights of poetry in dealing with nature similar to those of man?

A. Yes. The same, in fact.

Q. As a poet and scholar, you are concerned with complex elements—for example, as to why man may do a certain thing. However, would you be concerned with a grain of sand, a tree, or a drop of rain?

A. Those things are complex too. Ask any scientist.

Q. Through poetry, do you think that an individual can solve personal problems?

A. No. But he can state them; and this may help.

Q. In reference to your own words—why do philosophers ‘take’ from poets?

A. Philosophers are interested in poets because they deal with individuals—objects, and persons. Philosophy must deal with classes; the general.

Q. Why do ordinary laymen like to quote verse-line quips at conventions or community functions?

A. To show off. Or possibly because they find certain lines speaking for them better than they could for themselves. This is rare.

Q. Do you like to be alone, out in the spaces of nature? I mean, alone in the sense that you have all creation before you?

A. Yes, for a little while. Then I get scared or bored, and want to return to my house, and its people.

Q. For all the money-values in life—would you find more validity in a poem that represents sincerity and peace of mind?

A. Show me the poem first. It would have to be awfully good. Were it indeed that, then I guess the answer is yes. Q. With a poet’s perception, is it possible to be in love with many many things? For example, I love my friends, I love a certain young girl; at the same time, can I be in love with everything?

A. With all things, yes.

Q. In the area of time, I find an interesting subject — that of patience. Would you be concerned with patience?

A. Patience is necessary rather than important; but certainly it is necessary.

Q. What made you select the literary field? Would you say it had been a selection made by your personal self, or did it commence from an interest to explore the unknown worlds of literature?

A. I am conscious of two causes, both of them persons: my brother Carl, whose passion for literature became my own; and Stuart Pratt Sherman, my professor of English at the University of Illinois. Sherman was a genius as a teacher; literature was alive for him, and through him it became alive for me.

Q. In respect to your mention of the gods and time, I have an important question: The Bible, in its present form, is set up in paragraphs of free verse, each having an important message for the world. Could it be suggested that all the contributors to the Bible were poets? Also — the wisdoms of Christ were poetically spoken. Could we consider Christ as a poet, and give Him a title such as 'The Poet from Heaven?'

A. I consider the entire Bible to be one great poem, whether in prose or in verse. It uses both styles, but in the interest of an idea so vast, and a story so true, that the only name for the result is poem. Christ is merely one of its great poets.

Q. In your estimation, will the free-verse method of writing poetry be a future form of writing in the Age of Outer Space?

A. I see no connection between free verse and outer space. You would just as well imagine a connection between meter,² and outer space, since meter is measure, and space is measured.³

Q. Can poetry fully express what civilizations are trying to achieve?

A. Probably no one thing can; and in any case, are civilizations trying to achieve anything? They are probably

less conscious of themselves than that. Of course a great poet like Homer, Dante, or Shakespeare comes close to doing what you say; but even then there is probably something left over.

Q. Why do we want peace, and what is peace?

A. If peace means nothing to us but the absence of war, then it is a negative conception, and as such unimportant. What could peace mean positively? Well, life, and truth.

(2) Editors: Or meteor? (3) Editors: Vide ante. 135 Q. Do you think or have any feeling that the style of modern free verse will become a cornerstone in the American legitimate theatre?

A. No, these things cannot be predicted.

Q. What is your opinion of the current movement of beatnik expression?

A. I know too little about it to speak fairly.

Q. Sir—in view of the many new discoveries and the fact that this Century is rushing forward at a terrific pace, what would you—in terms of poetic license—label the Twentieth Century.

A. Why not The Century of Acceleration?

Q. What is your interpretation of love?

A. Love is wanting the good of another person.

Q. What is an excellent haven for a poet to write in?

A. Any port in a storm, it doesn't much matter where. There is no perfect place for writing poetry, unless it is the inside of a poet's mind.

Q. Who do you think was the greatest poet in the world, either living or dead? The so-called master of the poet's world?

A. Shakespeare.

Q. Is poetry a worthwhile subject to study, and to read for pleasure?

A. Yes to both questions.

Q. Who is greater, a good poet, or an excellent novelist?

A. I'd have to have some examples.

Q. Do you think that poetry should be taught in grade schools?

A. Yes, in the form of memorizing good poems.

Q. If a playwright masters the mechanics of poetry, can he at least come near to creating a good drama?

A. Poetry means drama ultimately. But I take it you mean verse rather than poetry. To that the answer is obviously no.

Q. One last question, Mr. Van Doren. Do you have any idea what the outcome of this world will be?

A. Nary an idea.

Selected from EPIGRAMS FOR A POETRY WORKSHOP by Lewis Turco

ix.

And here's (the Beatnik Dreamer)

Whose beard surrounds his nose.

His rage, created by the world,

Is vented on a rose.

TOWARDS PRINT

by the Editor

DISPROPORTIONATE significance is attributed to what's close in time and/or near in place. This always is plain, in every time and place, in writings that undertake to 'rate' living authors. Besides from the proximities of the personalities under comparison, distortions result from the immediate critical climate and then-influential currents of taste, at all levels.

In each time and place, judgments project auras of seeming inevitability, if not alleged immutability. Distortive transitory opinions may be so 'authoritatively' rendered that dissenting critics — there usually are a few — are themselves rated 'inferior' or declared eccentric — maybe even called cranks. Of course, what with disparities in the perspicacities and sensitivities of critics — among whom are eccentrics and cranks, too — things get difficult for average readers. And, not in the least easy for well-informed students.

In consequence — running counter to the unwarranted respect paid the pronouncements of passing pundits — there's often a general throwing-of-hands-in-the-air, with loud denials of validity to all estimations, present or past. Today as never before — what with an unprecedented output of commentaries — flaccid, despondent rejections of standards are commonplace. Many editors repudiate their responsibilities on the ground that all gauges for value lack certitude. Qualified or suspended judgments on new writings are understandable; and if certain misnomered eclectic editorial positions really stemmed from tolerance and rejection of dogmatism, they could not be labeled unhealthy. However, they are extended beyond the refusal to seek value in new works and into attacks upon verdicts affirmed by centuries of appraisal. In view of this, they should be

identified as symptoms of decadence and recognized as factors in the probable decay of our culture.

Now, a couple of definitions: by 'decadent' is meant that which impedes growth, weakens meaning in life's purposeful transmutation; by 'valuable' is meant that which activates meaningful change or influence — including the referential — within life's continuum. Nothing is called decadent because of what is being said but only when no direction whatever is evident. What is held to have value is not required to hold either special or absolute qualities — only to exhibit relevant, if relative, reaction. And, relatively speaking, after a lapse of a century or more, the very numbers of reactions are held to predicate values.

Here, a brief pause for a bit of metaphysical abstraction. In the frames of everyday indicia the ordinary proof of death is taken to be the absence of reaction; while, in speculative realms, death becomes a matter of approximation. In this editorial, we actually conjure the nadir, the mysterious and everlasting 'acceptance' of which is philosophically necessary before one can refer to its opposite — life.

Returning: overemphasis on immediacies does bring much of today's confusion to literature; and though it may be argued that this always has been true, detached observation indicates that the myopic results never have been so marked. And the cultural flux discloses the reason: the speed-up of change/s to such giddy degrees of flicker that vital contributions — 'filmed' at conservative velocities — are blurred.

How slow down enough? How recover perspectives? Any perspectives? In literature, there's one obvious method: review of the actual evidences of persisting attention to writers. Not for attempted value-judgments, as such, but for indisputable data. In short, to make a tabulation of the frequencies of reactions.

A comprehensive count over the past year, in conjunction with a general survey of the past decade and a yet-more-general one of prior decades, provides the dead-or-alive data. The fallaciousness of criteria rising from cross-sections of personal tastes, becomes evident even before the long look back through the centuries to Chaucer. The enduring literature — writings of continuous influence — subsumes vastly more than literary values; while of course always categorized as literature, other antecedent identifications are found to have contributed heavily. Not that these elements are positively irrelevant to the classification; in fact, their contributions evolve the comprehensive, higher definition of Literature. Meanwhile, judgments at any given time seldom call upon the broader concepts which nevertheless determine the choices of the materials studied; lesser considerations fix the frames for their 'grading' — notions of style and other such matters.

One more preliminary observation: numerous less-thoughtful readers and professional critics have drawn faulty conclusions from bad premises set up by references to pseudo-opposites. They often have relied upon philosophical reasoning anent the immutabilities and seemingly contradictory identifications of opposites. For example, many well-known commentators have built entire critiques upon abstract recognition of permanence-vs.-change, leaving out of account the abstract limitations. The opposition used as premise, like that of life-vs.-death, is by no means absolutely applicable in the establishment of valid contrasts; when specific observations are made upon specific writings, what can be made to appear as logical adherence to the presupposition may result in questionable conclusions. On the one hand, it's impossible to postulate any sort of change which is not also, by definition, of 'permanence'; and, on the other hand, permanence presupposes 'change', and necessarily contains it. Change is permanent, in

philosophical terms; and nothing could establish permanence, if change were not the essence of being. Change establishes being; yet, all must be permanent. What most critics call 'change' in literature really is not—neither in their intended definitions of the word nor in the larger definition.

The factual basis for declaring most today's critical opinions factitious, confusing and damaging to the already-parlous state of literature is to be found by examining the several thousand relevant periodicals. Taken in conjunction with a fairly comprehensive acquaintance with similar writings back through the years, a statistical survey of the printed analyses of English-language writers plainly shows which of them endure. Repeated reactions to their works—not merely in academic journals, but wherever literature is treated—confirm their living presences.

Virtually no month of the preceding ten years has failed to produce at least one article about each of seven authors, and invariably attributing then-present influences to their writings: Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Johnson, Coleridge, Melville, and James. The first four have stayed 'alive' long enough to earn badges of 'immortality'; and there's little reason to think that Coleridge is not joining their number. The later Melville and James emerged quite soon after their official deaths, and their testimonies have multiplied steadily. Whether they will remain alive another fifty or hundred years—much less equal Chaucer's record—is not at issue; they are the only two who have evoked consistent reactions during this century.

Evidence that Literature requires depth and complexity, as well as brilliant depictions through varied forms, is supplied by discovery that Shakespeare has lately been the subject of more than four times as many studies as his closest 'competitors', Chaucer and Milton, both of whom also do meet these qualifications—if less fully. The works of Coleridge are weighted toward presentation and

form—Johnson's, towards range and depth; but neither is by any means lacking in less-prominent characteristics, and their status is upheld by no-less-frequent notices, if fewer of them. They presently outstrip Melville and James while at the same time furnishing illuminating comparisons by which to 'explain' survival of interest in the two most recent writers, i.e.: their scopes.

Besides underscoring the main thesis and clarifying what no doubt are prime requisites in great writing, examinations of these seven verify much else. Having observed that—in actual percentages—large numbers of today's students are moved by the same perdurable qualities as were those of preceding generations, it can be asserted that Literature does not put on and off revolutionary guises, as it were, to address different decades. In all periods, timeliness—including more-superficial social observations—is seen to be of the essence in creating timelessness. Direct experiences, objective and subjective, appear indispensable to and inseparable from major works. These tie the themes both with the past and the future. And the styles and formal arrangements of these authors, while built upon the traditions of their times, matured through individuated self-discoveries and from purposeful, personal encompassments of 'outer' knowledge. In the last, Shakespeare surpassed them all, consequently to maintain the record in reactions.

Numerous further distinguishing features of these writers—technical virtuosity, huge vocabularies, extensive learning, many-faceted sensitivity, lucid thinking, etc.—might be detailed. But these can be found by every intelligent reader. In conclusion, just to point out that, notwithstanding current popular theories, gifted aspirants to some measure of greatness in literature, may benefit through study of any one of these seven men of Living Literature—each of whom was aided by giving some attention

to great predecessors. Which confirms an old-fashioned notion that no one should fancy he can best realize his own genius by clinging to ignorance.

ISSUE P. 145 · SCAN P. 15

SELECTED FROM EPIGRAMS FOR A POETRY WORKSHOP

by Lewis Turco

**VIII. CONSIDER (AKADEMOS) CONSTRUCTING SOLID
RHYME. THERE'S MARBLE IN HIS HEAD; UPON HIS
FOOLSCAP, LIME.**

EDITORS (AND OTHERS) WRITE

PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG LABEL

— *James Joyce*

If a man hacking in fury at a block
of wood, Stephen continued, make
there an image of a cow, is that image
a work of art? If not, why not?

— James Joyce

Stripped to their essentials, definition, criticism, interpretation, and all the other modes of commentary upon the arts can be understood as attempts to corner art itself in a dialectical cul-de-sac. The end of dialectic is to label, and the result of labeling is to isolate, delimit and circumscribe the thing labeled in such a way as to form a more or less absolute barrier between the labeled entity and all other universal phenomena.

That all definition, like all analogy, is false, is an accepted 'legal' fiction. It's maintained that definition makes for ease of handling; and this is generally known, — or at least the knowledge is readily available. And yet, the delimitative disease—compulsive labeling—spreads and proliferates. Scholars and literary critics are so ravaged by the infection that their nitpickings become a cultural joke. Lately, even creative writers — those who would be expected to have better things to do — have caught the label-fever. When creators come down with the critical complaint it's time to call for quarantine and to publish a cautionary diagnosis.

In TRACE 40, Harry Hooton and Robert Vaughan — from different angles — essay labels and definitions for poetry. Hooton damns contemporary writing: 'The published and publicised are all writing trivial, vapid rubbish.' (My italics.)

He goes on: 'There is no poetry without a vital, overruling and supremely important message.' These statements, together with his specific denunciations of Yeats, Eliot, Stevens, and the West Coast Beats, amount to a definition. Admittedly, not a very clear one; for, his negation of a few specifics leaves a great deal unlabeled. Edgar Guest and James Metcalf e survive Hooton's barrage, for example; but he does state that a major part of modern poetry is trivial and vapid, — hence, one infers, not poetry at all. And Hooton suggests what poetry is when he states: ' . . . possibly excepting Sandburg, no poet approaches the stature of Dante.' While Hooton's Dante-Sandburg equation (& the rest) is jolting enough, his definitive eccentricity is not what I condemn; rather — his compulsion to define, as such.

Robert Vaughan, using the word 'moral' in a raffish sense, hits us with a technical rather than the 'message-in-a-bottle' definition. He would exclude 'prose statement' (he does not define this further, or favor us with examples), and would claim that use of 'prose statement' amounts to the poet's 'watering down his talent' to increase his readership and/or his productivity. Vaughan does not even provide for us a briefest extension of what he means by the term—thus, leaving me to wonder what label he might paste on Agee's LET US NOW PRAISE FAMOUS MEN (which looks like prose on the printed page) or on Wordsworth's PRELUDE (which is set up as if it were poetry).

Again, however, it's not the vagueness or incompetence of Vaughan's definition that causes me to take issue; rather his apparent compulsion to offer such pointless dichotomies—definitive as 'prose statement' and 'poetry'. While both Hooton and Vaughan are guilty of issuing patently useless statements, I am concerned with the implications of such statements in themselves, rather than with their uselessness.

In their ultimate arguments, Hooton and Vaughan project similar anxieties. Both desperately wish to know what poetry is. And they do not know—nor do I, nor does anyone. ‘Poetry’ is a generic term for millions of disparate entities bearing certain superficial resemblances: most are written down (not all); most employ rhetorical devices (not all); and so forth. But, in our ignorance, we are terribly tempted simply to blurt out ‘vital message’ or ‘no prose statement’ or some other inanity to define it; and then, we believe, with every ounce of our strength, in the absoluteness of what we have blurted out. These self-conceived limitations eventually stiffen our perspectives and become etched into our minds, until finally the definition grows more important than the thing defined. All that does not fit our hallucinated assumption is consigned to darkness as ‘not poetry’.

The ‘label-syndrome’ is understandable; I sympathize with the impulses behind it. If only art would hold still, obey established patterns, express the ‘right’ ideas, then a man might learn the rules and become an artist without gnawing uncertainties as to whether his work might be worthwhile. But, this is both impossible and ignoble. A work of art is an achievement of such magnitude against such preposterous odds, that an a priori certainty about the aesthetic significance of the results is impossible. No amount of pettifoggery in the form of definitions and rules-imposed-from-without can overcome the odds. Phony imperatives practically assure dull copies rather than creations.

‘There are no firm footholds in creation,’ says Charles Bukowski. To dispute this is to invite the abortion of future works of art in Time’s womb. The definition of genuine art is the work itself. Like St. Thomas Aquinas’ angels, every poem and painting is a unique entity bounded and fixed by its own integrity. As Aristotle put it: ‘ . . . each has a form and a perfection peculiar to itself and to no other thing.’ We are

free to dislike certain forms, or certain questionable perfections; but attempted legislation against them via definition is lunacy.

I find considerable similarity between Stephen Dedalus' nonsense-question about the wooden cow and Gregory Corso's 'fried shoes' as the basis for aesthetics. Felix Pollak's arch erudition aside — declaring that Corso simply could not think of something to say when confronted with a question of aesthetic theory (INTERNATIONAL GUIDE, 1960) — Stephen and Corso demonstrate higher intelligence than their questioners. When asked to define or theorize the illimitable, Stephen knives his inquisitor with an answerless question; Corso scrambles his with a non-sequitur.

The God of St. Thomas, when asked his name — his definition — replied: 'I am who I am.' Perhaps a jaunt through the SUMMA would renew our acquaintance with the Unnameable and thus prepare us to accept each unique entity, the illimitable quidditas of every work of art on its own terms. As Kenneth Patchen has so perfectly put it: 'Because it is . . .'

John William Corrington, Louisiana State University.

Case History No. 1: Reader-Reaction (Some open/ed letters to and from Author, Editor, and Subscriber)

Editors' Note: There is a big, new Little Magazine: FIRST PERSON. Mr. Albert Perkins, layman, read a copy and didn't like (nor, he says, 'understand') what he saw. Reasoning that little magazines have more to say about large topics than big magazines, he dictated several resolutions pertaining to this type of literature. Among his targets were Martin Elevitch, the publisher, and contributors Patrick Brophy and Curtis Zahn. Some of the spent cartridges were given laboratory analyses. Report follows:

Perkins' letter to Elevitch (excerpted):

' . . . I have the same criticism of your magazine that I have of the rest of the little-mag group. On the presumption

that their purpose is to disseminate ideas, it seems to me they are something less successful than the slicks which are frankly entertainment.

‘Specifically, I shall discuss the satire in the Fall Issue. Both articles by Patrick Brophy were clear and witty: the points made, however, weren’t particularly significant. . . . The articles illuminated an unimportant corner of life only superficially. In view of Mr. Brophy’s immaturity and limited background,¹ it could hardly be expected he should do better than this.

‘It seems to me all your satirists exhibit a common defect: they suffer from what I term inbreeding. The very absence of originality and depth in subject matters suggests they are living off the intellectual resources of other writers. . . . It’s their duty to perceive in the flux of events the philosophical purport of the times. In addition to . . . superficial knowledge of literature, philosophy, psychology, and sociology, the writer should have (1) been a salesman, (2) worked in a factory or a construction camp, (3) ditto, office, (4) ditto, newspaper, (5) attended a business school, (6) lived in an apartment. (Observe that I see no premium in a three-week growth of beard, sitting cross-legged in a tobacco haze discussing Zen Zen.)’

At this point, Mr. Perkins suggests as topics for ‘vital satires: disillusioned workers who continue to embrace unions; sophisticated Americans taking ‘success courses’; comic repercussions from working wives; psychometric testing to determine job-capabilities . . .

To sum it up, there is a group of prospective readers who don’t have to be informed that our civilization is in the grip of the materialist; they already know it. They’d like to see specifics.

If the purpose of art is to communicate — by what standards were *A CODA FOR CADILLACS* and *A NIGHT AMONG THE 1960s* acquired? (Mr. May tells me that Author Zahn has

an independent income — for which I envy him — and I grant that he can write; but I fail to comprehend what he has to say.) In a segment of 10,000 people, I venture . . . no more than a dozen would understand these stories. I suspect that preoccupation with form is a cover-up for lack of substance.² Is there any proposition in logic that says the means is more important than the ends.³ And Bacon said: “Truth comes out of error more easily than out of confusion.” Although Shaw was an innovator on Ibsen, he didn’t throw over the conventions of drama to switch from *A DOLL’S HOUSE* to *CANDIDA*. Cyril Connolly may very well tell writers it’s their duty to make the public reach up to them; if the gulf is too great, the public is hardly to be blamed for

(1) This is Brophy’s own ironic self-description.

(2) Might one not also ‘suspect’ that writers preoccupied with ‘substance’ plot, motivation, action, shock and violence, are covering up for lack of form? The Hack writes Whodunnitts and pulp stories, the artist-impressionist deals in prose or poetry which endeavors (not always successfully) to stimulate through less-‘materialistic’ routes.

(3) Yes — the pseudo-proposition that art must ‘communicate’ by using the forms, patterns, and gimmicks employed by the Slicks. not bothering. Should the alternative lie between being a literary clown and adopting—streamlined, to be sure—the forms of Sydney Smith, Henry James, Saki, Leacock, and Perelman, it would seem that common sense dictated the latter course. The literary innovations I’ve seen are tantamount to General Motors, desperate for novelty, calling on their engineers . . . to come up with a new wheel. After much labor, these gentlemen produce the new wheel—a square one!

‘A possible rebuttal of small-mag editors may be that they can’t publish any better than they get. I don’t know what the policy of your magazine is in respect to payment, but the majority get material for nothing or next to nothing. By what

logic are printers and distributors paid for their labors, while all that is given writers are the crumbs of publicity? I should no more think of establishing a magazine without funds to pay the contributors than of opening a grocery store with insufficient credit.

*

‘I know that letters like this have little or no effect on administrative policies, but look at the facts: the circulation of these periodicals, even among intelligent people, is eloquent testimony of their unpopularity.’

Patrick Brophy’s reply (likewise excerpted):

‘Since Mr. Perkins allows that I was clear and witty in the two short pieces, I really don’t have any quarrel with him. But, if one has got to be witty and make a point, too, in a niggardly few hundred words then I’m ready to go back to safecracking or other easy work.

‘A “point?”—no; I don’t claim any. But a point of view there surely was, and I am surprised that I haven’t been assailed for that. Apparently, the latent or open criticism of a certain present-day sacred cow, in the No. 2 article, was completely misconstrued. The critical element in the No. 1 piece was of course too slight and utterly good-natured to arouse anybody.

‘Maybe Mr. Perkins considers Labor and Negroes “unimportant corners of life,” “not particularly significant,” etc. But I could have sworn at the time that those were what I was writing about—not monkeys and Googligoops . . .

(4) But it’s no ‘bother’ to wander into hoked-up wastelands of TV, the Slicks . . . among other oversimplified escapist tricks?

(5) Excellent logic: square wheels for square readers.

(6) Unlikely. Most would defend their contents and rebut that they can’t get better readers.

(7) Queen-for-a-Day sells more soap than General Motors does square wheels. Attention, Messrs. Saki, James, Smith,

Leacock, Perelman! Remove hats—that's Grace Metalious on the platform. 'For the most part, I don't find Mr. Perkins very specific either. I don't understand him. I didn't understand Zahn either. It comes from my immaturity and limited background, inbreeding, etc.—all of which, a skeptical Scotch-Irishman from the Show-Me State is bound to suffer.

'As far as I can tell, everything Mr. Perkins touches upon depends on viewpoint; and his pontifications on wisdom and writer's duty are entirely matters of opinion. Having a "duty to one's art" is bad enough¹—so, to hell with society and "the times . . ." You can't serve two masters. And that "human experience" produces wisdom, I doubt very much—without claiming either, myself. Otherwise why do we have so many "old fools?" (I am not calling Mr. P. one.) And how have young sheltered plants like—say, the Brontës—so often flourished?

'Mr. Perkins' list of writer-requirements is certainly—well, odd. I can imagine Mr. Zahn grinding his teeth over this. I always thought the list included lumberjacks and seamen, too. What kind of sameness and regimentation is P. heading us for? There are a few things to satirize besides the urban materialist mess he describes (although he himself then decries it). There is still quite a bit of the U.S.A. not oriented around salesmen, factories, offices, newspapers, schools, and apartments. Mr. P. can find his "topics for vital satire" treated every day in the slicks, where the stories all are written for young married working² couples living in the suburbs of New York or Philadelphia. None of these topics suggests Art to me—or any essential earthy concern of mankind . . . which I thought was more what little magazines aimed at³ Satire, of course, is by necessity frothy; but great satire never becomes too topical or timely and that seems to be what P. asks. . . . Rabelais . . . will still be topical and timely after Mr. P.'s topics and factories and apartments and other paraphernalia have gone up in atoms.

‘What makes me most mad at P. is his obeisance to the modern god Experience. . . . The quality and variety of experience certainly is as important as the quantity. And the writer who contributes anything to either Art or Society (and a turd for it, as The Satirist said) will not be one stamped in the mold of everybody else’s experiences, but one whose experiences (and therefore, his ideas too) are unique. So, please, Perkins, don’t make all writers go to business school and be salesmen or reporters and live in Manhattan. I’m sure Zahn’s wouldn’t like that any better than I would, though probably for different reasons.’

(1) Or good enough!

(2) Or divorced and unemployed.

(3) A near miss! The world’s a bigger pond than Thoreau’s Walden. Look down any alley and you’ll find the ashcan school of art. There’s an attic atop every Ivory Tower, and the tenant may not care about birds and bees.

(4) Hear! Hear!

And last, Editor Elevitch’s excerpted reply to Mr. Perkins:

‘Thank you for taking the time to comment so well on certain aspects of FIRST PERSON. While you confine yourself to some of the satire, you also seem to express an attitude toward the publication as a whole, and toward what you term “the little-mag group.” The view of art is to be considered according to its purpose (“to disseminate ideas” “to communicate”). I won’t concern myself with this here; the matter has been under constant appraisal since the cave man began to reanimate dirt; and now, by the academic journals, the contemporary reviews, digests, news and “issues” magazines, and whatever else may present “the true facts.” Perhaps you will find significance in something like THE REALIST, not literary in intent, but valuable for its vitality, its comprehensiveness, its outspoken criticism. I’m glad to see, from time to time, the topics you suggest taken

up even in magazines of this nature and . . . in the better comic strips. The ideas you propose are interesting. I welcome good satire on any subject; but I don't believe it can be prescribed or purchased —that's the business of the slicks. Ultimately, the individuality of the voice, the personal re-creation of experience, will be the test of effectiveness. This is the basis of appearance in *FIRST PERSON*.

Without going into Mr. Brophy's background and writing ability, I'm afraid I can't agree that his material was unimportant, and this seems to be the opinion of others familiar with diplomatic procedure and aware of postwar problems of Americans abroad. It can be given an even richer context when seen with the Twain-Howells letters on a similar subject (100 years ago) and in the fact that the writer's approach is recognizably Midwest-Missourian. These features provide aesthetic satisfaction . . . and the editorial balance necessary for *FIRST PERSON* — something you did not discuss. I'm sure, however, you'd agree that aesthetic and historical perspectives are also essentials to what you call "wisdom"; and, in this area, I believe the little-mag group makes an important contribution. The last two selections you refer to were meant to be identified with Nabokov, and to indicate a type of material and manner in American satire I would like to

(5) At this point, Zahn isn't sure which side neither of you are both on! encourage. Each author reveals a distinct personality; he expresses strong feelings with imaginative language. Also, the comic effect is produced to correct, ironically, what you feel the lack of: communication. The old symbols (for religion, power, love) and what has succeeded them, these authors suggest, are no longer adequate. As to whether this was understood — I have letters of approval from such widely separated sensibilities as a distributor of refrigerators and outboard motors in Newark, a housewife in Detroit,¹ and a doctor's assistant in Geneva.

Finally, you ask me to look at the facts concerning circulation, about which you make certain generalizations. First, I should point out that several post-graduate² little mags — EVERGREEN REVIEW, PARTISAN, PARIS — do not have the usual subscriber problem, but list circulations much larger than most published books. In addition, they are sufficiently commercial to be supported by or distributed by large publishing houses. Second — if we consider the percentage of circulation in proportion to total copies printed, even some of the less-aggressive, independent small periodicals exceed the standard book companies. Of course, the advantage of a large book or magazine chain is clear: it has a list of many titles to bring out at frequent intervals; it is engaged in an operation in which success and popularity can be measuring sticks. This is also the criterion of the bookseller or news-vendor who, under extreme competition, gives preference to the marketable product; thus, distribution for the little mag — aside from its content — has always been limited by economic factors having little to do with its conception. I'm not saying that circulation couldn't be vastly improved or that editors wouldn't want this; only that judgments based on circulation or popularity are often irrelevant. Actually, the little mags — increasingly now — indicate no lack of acceptance, and (like satire) however erratic, have found a definite place in society. I like THE NEW YORKER. It has many beautiful ads, much talent, a heft and color of popularity and success. But I have for it only the reverence and admiration I can give to any fossil.'

Closing Note: This opinionative literary trilogy is not unique; contrariwise, it is one of the oldest plots in USA letters — man-vs.-merchant-vs.-manufacturer.

(1) The heart of enemy country where they make wheels for square readers!

(2) EVERGREEN was more precocious; it graduated without ever having gone through secondary school.

I'M ASKING FOR THE WORLD

Lorenzo Thomas, Editor Lost World

Dear Editor:

LOST WORLD is interested in what is new in poetry or what has been here and gone, yet is worth re-viewing. Poets published and unpublished are welcome to submit their work, but be they forewarned: LOST WORLD is interested in a special type of literature. Not that the range of material used is not wide; we are primarily neo-romantic, but eclectic too — only that the poems must justify their print. I'm talking about poetic theory.

I never hesitate to proclaim that a poem must be written with a jack-handle applied to the reader's head. I want a poem to grab at: (a) the throat (b) the heart (c) the genitals. I say grab in the sense of attack; and if a poem can attack the mind with a violence born of urgency, then that too. But let this be clear as corning glass: in the LOST WORLD, a poem must fight its own way to the top, must become more than lines of printing on a page . . . must speak with a straight tongue and make its message live and make that message real.

Here in the LOST WORLD, Archibald MacLeish is out of style as long as he continues to believe that 'A poem should be palpable and mute . . .' In the LOST WORLD, a poem must be oral and/or visual, but in no way mute. I might even insist on a poem that smells — in an olfactory sense. I know I'm asking for the world. And that's the truth: I want the world that Sir Thomas Wyatt and Thomas Nashe knew existed, and that was lost by the Ph.D. mumblers of the Forties, after the poets of the Twenties had brought it to our Century. This magazine will put on its brass knuckles and go to find that world along the road that has been recently

opened by Ginsberg, Duncan, and others. Travellers along that road are welcome to join us; but if you wanna come along, bring either a big stick, a damn good pome, or both: that there's tough country, bruz!

SELECTED FROM

ISSUE P. 154 · SCAN P. 24

EPIGRAMS FOR A POETRY WORKSHOP

by Lewis Turco

v.

Here's (Modern Aristotle)
Whose pentametric power,
Once centered in the Middle West,
Now storms the Yvors Tower.

ISSUE P. 155 · SCAN P. 25

CLICHES...

by John Baker

heaven and earth sacred and profane God and man Ideas are unequal. Cliché equals cliché. Ideas add up. Clichés add flat.

earth and heaven profane and sacred man and God

Ideas appear in talk as non-coalescing drops on a web of cliché.

The cycle of rain, a river, and the ocean is broken by the mineral weight of clichés.

Some single words are clichés.

Cliché rides an idea turtleback for a time.

'Midst' is found only in brooches.

Style is an escape.

The sleep of style is broken by dreams and ideas.

Clichés are shavings off the continuum of idea.

I must study politics and war, that my sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy . . . in order to give their children the right to study painting, poetry, music.¹

— is a shaving. The kings who die | Are one by one reborn | In the hearts of poets,² — belongs in the continuum.

The right word completes a cliché.

A play on that word will make a pun.

You can't thrust with a cliché.

The orchard yard is littered with ideas. The wasps know this.

(1) John Adams.

(2) Apollinaire.

WAITING FOR BECKETT

*by Gabriel d'Aubarède **

I waited for the author of WAITING FOR GODOT in the Paris office allocated him by his publisher. But I wondered if he was going to show up: through timidity, unsociability, or possibly just as part of his system, until today, he had energetically refused to be interviewed.

This writer, so often described as being fierce, is now in his fifties. He's an Irishman, like James Joyce, and it's said that Joyce preferred Beckett to many of his other translators. Beckett taught English for three years at our Ecole Normale and later taught French at Dublin's Trinity College. In London, he published several books of poems, a study of Proust, and a novel, MURPHY, but before its release a German bomb destroyed the entire edition.

Never despair. In 1938, Samuel Beckett came to France to stay, and thenceforth wrote in French; his trilogy, MOLLOY, MALONE DIES, and THE UNNAMEABLE drew rave notices from those critics partial to difficult literature. Nevertheless, even the most fervent among them are disappointed by his latest work, COMMENT C'EST (How things are). As for his play, WAITING FOR GODOT, more generally accessible although nothing happens in it, it was put on two hundred times at the Theatre de Babylone and was triumphantly received in several European countries, notably in Germany.

The question remained: Was the disconcerting Samuel Beckett going to show up? Yes, there he was!

Both of Molloy's legs are paralyzed, Malone is in death throes, and the Unnameable is a paraplegic living in a sort of coffin. But the man who infused life into these monsters is handsome and healthy-looking, tall, blond, and well-tanned, with regular and noble features. He looks closely at you from

behind thick spectacles; often his thin lips curl with a touch of irony and wiliness.

He had just arrived from a village in the Département of Seine-et-Marne, where he has bought a small piece of property, thanks to a modest inheritance. Knowing how he can't stomach the farce of a professional literary life, I told him how I envied him for being able to work in peace there, and he agreed heartily: 'You're quite right. The country's a lovely place to write in.'

**Interview published in this English translation by Christopher Waters, by permission of the editors of NOUVELLES LITTÉRAIRES where the original French version appeared on the 16th of February, 1961. See Mr. Waters' commentary at the close.*

'So you've done a lot of writing lately?'

'Not a thing. A little gardening. Odd jobs. No writing though.'

'Is that the truth?'

'Only some very short pieces, sort of short stories.'

He glanced at the door. To clear the air, I told him that in the past I'd been slightly acquainted with the children of his master James Joyce when the latter had lived near the Champs-de-Mars.

Beckett scrutinized me amiably: 'Oh, so you knew George and poor little Lucia?'

'Why "poor?"'

He gestured vaguely.

'Joyce considered you one of his best translators. Can it be claimed you are also his disciple? Your long interior monologues . . .'

'Oh! well you know, I only translated personally — I mean all by myself — ANNA LIVIA PLURABEL. But here in Paris, I've done numerous anonymous translations to earn my living. Do you mind?'

He sat at his desk and began to sign title pages. So, like everyone else, Samuel Beckett dedicates his books! I eased

down on the edge of his desk.

'Your novels are rather difficult reading. Were they hard to write?'

'Oh, yes, but they came in one great spurt of enthusiasm.'

'Enthusiasm?'

MALONE grew out of MALLOY, THE UNNAMEABLE out of MALONE, but afterwards — and for a long time — I wasn't at all sure what I had left to say. I'd hemmed myself in. To try to break loose, I wrote those short texts, those little stories if you wish, that I call "écrits pour rien." (Translator's note: double sense, either 'pointless writings' or 'written pointlessly; he is referring to NOUVELLES ET TEXTES POUR RIEN.)

'Have contemporary philosophers had any influence on your thought?'

'I never read philosophers.'

'Why not?'

'I never understand anything they write.'

'All the same, people have wondered if the existentialists' problem of being may afford a key to your works.'

'There's no key or problem. I wouldn't have had any reason to write my novels if I could have expressed their subject in philosophic terms.' 'What was your reason then?'

'I haven't the slightest idea. I'm no intellectual. All I am is feeling.'

MALLOY and the others came to me the day I became aware of my

own folly. Only then did I begin to write the things I feel.'

Beckett's general inaccessibility to reporters, in itself makes the above interview noteworthy; but also of interest are his denial of a direct debt to the existentialists and his claim that his works are not philosophical treatises. Many critics say otherwise on both these points. Who's right?

He usually publishes first in French, then in his own English translation. The following works of Beckett are

available in English: plays — WAITING FOR GODOT, ENDGAME, ALL THAT FALL, KRAPP'S LAST TAPE, and other dramatic pieces; novels — WATT, and the trilogy named in the interview; criticism — PROUST. . . . As indicated, the two works with French titles (see above) had not yet become available at this writing, other than in French versions. CHRISTOPHER WATERS

RICHARD H. BYRNS describes

LITERARY

FOG OVER ALASKA

AS ANY BUSH pilot knows, one of the dangers of winter flying in Alaska is ice-fog, that thick mist which hangs over towns and villages in cold weather, blurring the landing fields and making the buildings and people vague and indefinite. The lack of sharp outlines and clear-cut guiding lines makes travel difficult, a nerve-racking business to the pilot and his passengers.

A similar fog faces anyone who attempts to view Alaska through her literature; for, thanks to innumerable stories, articles, poems, and the ubiquitous television programs, certain fuzzy literary conventions about Alaska are so widespread and so accepted that any change will come slowly.

What are these romanticized ideas that now seem to be so firmly established? Well, obviously a lot of them arise from the northern location and the supposedly primitive quality of Alaska. The 'Far North' with its ice, snow, long winters, and abysmal cold, has become the conventional setting for stories about Alaska. The vastness of the country and the beauty of the scenery are other conventional elements. Perhaps also, the idea that wild animals are numerous; that Indians and Eskimos constitute the bulk of the population; and that dog-sleds are still the accepted means of transportation. Part of the romanticism is based on the frontier aspect: the action and adventure of the wilderness; the rough life with its violence and lawlessness; the

emphasis on physical prowess. One should perhaps include the idea that individualism, even eccentricity, is encouraged; and the belief that Alaska provides a refuge for those pioneering spirits who wish to return to nature, the 'crucible of the northern wilderness', — an experience that somehow 'makes a man a man.'

The appeal of frontier bohemianism should also be mentioned: the lady known as Lou is somehow less reprehensible than is her urban counterpart; and criminals—so vulgar and sordid in the city—become dashing, picturesque gallants when encountered, fur-clad and bearded, mushing their dog-teams over the snow-covered trails in the Arctic.

The very beginnings of such colorful inaccuracies would be difficult to trace; even the first letters sent back by the Russian explorers cast a romantic haze over Alaska, a haze not at all dissipated by the later accounts of the Americans, after the U.S.A. bought the country in 1867. Whatever might be the origin of the concept of 'romantic Alaska,' most of the existing conventions arise from the works of that group termed the 'dog-sled writers.' Jack London and Robert Service, if not the originators, at least were the leaders in setting the pattern. Chapter headings of London's *CALL OF THE WILD* illustrate: Into the Primitive; The Law of Club and Fang; The Dominant Primordial Beast; Who Has Won to Mastership; The Toil of Trace and Trail; For the Love of a Man; The Sounding of the Call. Service also indicates the pattern:

The simple things, the true things, the silent men who do things — Then listen to the Wild — it's calling you.

In *THE LAND GOD FORGOT*, Service strikes a note that was to be heard again and again in literature about Alaska:

So gaunt against the gibbous moon, Piercing the silence velvet-piled, A lone wolf howls his ancient rune — The fell arch-spirit of the Wild. O outcast land! O leper land! Let the

lone wolf-cry all express The hate insensate of thy hand, Thy heart's abysmal loneliness.

Probably because the reading public accepted London's snow-spangled purple prose with enthusiasm, later writers also used the romantic formula. Typical examples in the 1920's are Barrett Willoughby's *WHERE THE SUN SWINGS NORTH* ('22) and *THE TRAIL EATER* ('29), and James Oliver Curwood's *THE ALASKAN* ('23). In the 1930's and 1940's, the pattern was followed in such works as James French Dorrance's *THE GOLDEN ALASKAN* ('31), G. B. Lancaster's *THE WORLD IS YOURS* ('34), Emerson Hough's *THE YOUNG ALASKAN* ('35), Cornelia Goodhue's *JOURNEY INTO FOG* ('44), and George Tweeddale's *NORTH OF 62* ('46).

In the 1950's, although fiction concerning Alaska was plentiful, the format was unchanged, remaining a combination of action, snow and ice, Eskimos and Indians, and rough two-fisted characters. In this decade, probably because of an interest in Alaska as a future state, a great many books about the territory were published; or perhaps, more accurately, a great many variations of pretty much the same book were published. These ranged from the semi-historical romanticized adventure story, such as Will Henry's *NORTH STAR* ('56) to novels with a more modern setting, such as Robert Lund's *THE ALASKAN* ('53), the latter title being one which, with slight alterations, had appeared in Alaskan literature for over a quarter of a century.

The most competent recent novel in the romantic pattern is Edna Ferber's *ICE PALACE* ('58), which presents in a craftsmanlike manner the story of a hero and heroine larger than life, the influence of the 'Great Land' on the thinking of its people, and the vigorous qualities of the frontier personality. It might be mentioned that when Miss Ferber's novel appeared, many Alaskans breathed a sigh of relief. They had been afraid she would treat Alaska as roughly as she had Texas in *GIANT*. That she did not, they felt, was

indicative of her ability as a novelist and, more than that, reassured Alaskans of their superiority over Texans.

While writers of fiction were following Jack London's tracks through the snow, writers of verse were seated around the campfire with Robert Service. The beauty and size of Alaska, the satisfaction in living a simple primitive life, the adventures in the bush (sometimes told humorously)—all of which appear in Service's works—are used again and again. Representative examples are *ALASKA NUGGETS* (1821, 1922), by Frank Camp; *BEYOND THE SKY-LINE* ('23), by Edward Cone, 'the Bard of the Kuskokwim'; *YUKON BREEZES* ('35), by William Yanert; and *THE CALL OF ALASKA* ('52), by C. H. Duckworth. Perhaps the most competent of the books of verse that have appeared since Service's volumes is Norman Roston's *THE BIG ROAD* ('46), an account of the building of the Alaska Highway. Elmer Reed's collection of 'Alaska verses compiled from newspapers', *THE KOBUK MAIDEN and Other Alaska Sour-dough Verses* ('33), consists of ballads in the Robert Service vein by a number of writers, with Marie Drake's *ALASKA'S FLAG* being the only piece worthy of note:

*Eight stars of gold on a field of blue —
Alaska's flag. May it mean to you
The blue of the sea, the evening sky,
The mountain lakes, and the flow'rs nearby:
The gold of the early sourdough's dreams,
The simple flag of a last frontier.*

How about factual accounts — travel books, biographies, and the like? Well, usually the romantic fog has permeated their pages to the extent that it is difficult to distinguish between fact and fiction. For example, a short passage taken from the Preface of a book describing experiences in Southeastern Alaska, Edward A. Lawrence's *CLOVER PASSAGE* ('54):

... In truth, I have but to close my eyes ... the cove water
is as
darkly opalescent as a muskeg tarn; shining tidal
beaches tilt up to a
hushed and shadowless forest; the brooding mountains
rise roundabout, cloud-haunted, veined with old
snows, rumpled and remote
in the long Alaskan twilight ... I remember it well ... The
islands
arise through the sea mist. And one is bemused by the
tantalizing
thought that this may be some long-sought and once
mythical land
lost in the legend of old time; that this forevergreen,
sea-favored
world might, indeed, be of the region that is Avalon.

Unless one is deeply imbued with romantic imagination, it is hard to see the paradisiacal island of Avalon in the dripping forests of Southeastern Alaska, forests humming with mosquitoes, redolent with skunk cabbage, and thickly studded with a vicious thorny bush known as 'devil's club.'

Similarly, other books of travel and description, such as Barnard Hubbard's *CRADLE OF THE STORMS* ('35), Harry Franch's *LURE OF ALASKA* ('39), and Constance Helmerick's *THE FLIGHT OF THE ARCTIC TERN* ('52) give careful attention to the more picturesque aspects. Likewise, such as Merle Estes Colby's *A GUIDE TO ALASKA, the Last American Frontier* ('39) and Herbert Hilscher's *ALASKA NOW* ('50) tend to stress the romance of life in the North; and biographies and autobiographies, such as Eva G. Anderson's *DOG TEAM DOCTOR* ('40) and Charles D. Brower's *FIFTY YEARS BELOW ZERO* ('44) place emphasis on the colorful adventures of their subjects. Indeed, the lines between objective reporting and subjective impressions are so blurred that it is often impossible to determine what the country was like, or is like,

what actually happened in Alaska in the past, or what is taking place in Alaska at present. There is no need to belabor the point that much of what has been written is romanticized and inaccurate. The same might be said of literature concerning other regions. But the disturbing fact is that, although Alaska is widely written about — even overwritten — there is so little deviation from the romantic formula. Plowing through the many publications (lately, more words probably have been devoted to Alaska than to any other single American region), one realizes that the pattern has become fixed. Apparently the Jack London-Robert Service method is the only acceptable way to handle Alaska.

Undoubtedly, the principal reason for the lack of change in these writings is the commercial success of the conventional. The public expects, and will buy, this particular kind of Alaskan literature; and what is equally important — even a badly written book will sell if it presents a romanticized picture. This is a formidable obstacle to overcome. The writer who does not wish to follow the accepted pattern — who wishes to write a serious regional novel, a work of social significance, or an objective factual account — faces the choice of ignoring that the great mass of published works have used the recognized formula, have been popular and therefore remunerative, or of resigning himself to the fact that he may easily turn out a conventional work that is lucrative. And rare indeed is the writer who will freeze in Uncle Sam's attic for the sake of art or accuracy!

Of course, some have written as they have because that is the way they have seen Alaska — and not with regard to financial success. Many prose authors and poets, especially the amateurs, answer criticisms of their romanticism with a wide-eyed: 'But that's the way it is!' Nay, more, it is highly possible that any writer who depicts the region otherwise will receive a variation of the offer once made to Thomas Wolfe, and will be in danger of having his 'overgroan karkus'

hanged to the top of the first convenient iceberg.

In justification for their belief, it must be admitted that the state of Alaska lends itself to romantic presentation. The lakes and glaciers are beautiful, the mountains magnificent. In the interior, the winters are cold, silent, and awe-inspiring. Uninhabited stretches of wilderness still extend for many miles. The people are likely to be friendly and hospitable, especially in the outlying villages; and settlers, in some instances, have been contented in their pioneer homes. Trappers and prospectors are still to be found. Life in the bush even today requires physical prowess; and the Eskimo yet possesses segments of his primitive culture. Even the dog-sled teams still exist.

However, this picture of Alaska is incomplete and inaccurate. This is, after all, only that part of the United States which is farthest north; in general, as in the rest of the country, people view and listen to the same kinds of television and radio programs, drive the same makes of automobiles, and, for better or for worse, attend the same kind of schools. A surprising number of Alaskans are members of service clubs, attend church on Sundays, shop in supermarkets, belong to the P.T.A., and behave exactly like their counterparts in the rest of the U.S.A. Even in the bush, Alaskan life usually fails to resemble the literature describing it. Living in Alaskan wilderness is a lot like living in the less-settled areas of the northern or western sections of older continental U.S., with the same problems of distance, snow, and cold — as in the remote areas of Montana or Wyoming.

And, more often than not, those rugged individualists who would escape from urban life by seeking frontier existence in Alaska, are appalled by the fact that pioneering consists of a great deal of hard work. It would seem obvious that, in attempting to do by himself the things which are done through group-cooperation in civilization, the pioneer

does not simplify his life; he complicates it, and acquires blisters in the process. Many a man who would cheerfully deal with moose and bear is defeated by outside plumbing and the backbreaking plebeian monotony of chopping enough wood to last the winter. And, in the more settled communities, the man possibly able to see romance and adventure connected with a fractious dog-team at 50 degrees below zero, is discouraged by trouble with a more common mode of transportation — the automobile. The Alaskan, like the Montanan, finds it difficult to become very enthusiastic about nature in the raw when faced with a frozen gas-line, a cracked motor-block, and the resulting garage bill.

Even so, Alaska possesses many subjects and themes that fairly cry for the pen of a sincere writer not blinded by the fog of romanticism. There has not even been a thorough study — much less, a competent novel — upon the native peoples, the Aleuts, the Indians, and the Eskimos whose primitive cultures are being changed by civilization. Nor has anything adequate been published about the men in military service who have been stationed in Alaska. Nor has the Matanuska Valley, the subject of much publicity, been handled by a capable writer. And, in addition, the towns of Southeastern Alaska, so different in climate and outlook from the rest of the state, have been almost entirely ignored. The list could be continued at length.

That any reform in works dealing with Alaska will take place rapidly, is too much to expect. One has only to look at the persistence of romanticized material on the American West. Yet, considering the attitude of many interested in the new state and its people and their problems, one hopes that, out of the mass of writings about Alaska, some truly significant works may rise within the next decade.

I TRAFFIC IN HUMANS NOW

by A. Fredric Franklyn

THE MAIL WAS a happy affair for our family this afternoon. I had sent my brother into one of the leading sophisticates not a couple of weeks previously and lo, he returned today.

Now, while it's true that a rejection slip accompanied my offering upon its return, the slip was couched in charitable phrases and I am an incurable optimist. On some other occasion I shall do better. Or perhaps, with a different magazine, my luck will change.

Presently we are all making a to-do over Arthur. Arthur is my brother.

For an hour after we opened the letter which contained him, he sat and told us of his travels, refreshing himself from time to time with the evil-smelling contents of a peculiar receptacle which appeared incongruously ancient while it was obviously new.

He has had a great adventure and has been read even by an editor! He had, of course, much to tell us anent the functions of a popular national magazine, especially one that is rated so highly in the literary circles.

My, what a time of it he has had and how he loves to speak of the affair at length! No story I have sent out in the past has ever returned to me with the tenth as much information.

I am a writer and, up to a few months ago, I had followed the usual practice of placing my manuscripts regularly in the mail and, as a matter of course, collecting my drawers of rejections slips in a spirit of due optimism and complacent idiocy. You know how it goes, those of you who have also learned to work in a vacuum:

You wait and you wait, usually patiently, and suddenly you feel the long-awaited inspiration. Then feverish activity to put all that wonderful stuff down on paper as quickly as possible, lest the much thought of and worthy incentive (inclination to perform the act of writing)

(continued on page 181)

WILL FRANK MARRY MARY? *

Harriet Mullen Sequences (from the novel)

Carol Koesling highs I want my mother I want my mother I want my mother. Hoarse. Fractured, gnarled, old hands the girl's throat. Drunk, constricted gymnastics on the rump led bedsheets greasy smeared gray shadows, broken white planes; toes snatch at thick closecropped shadowblonde hair; graycaps and sheerblacks snag, scuff, scare, scamper, steal her naked arch, softly starched; the child surprised stops at the blowing of the bubbles of her breasts the puffs still shallow; the catfur cleanshaven sees a slit a seam, stalled innocence; slate rumps hop. A hand smacks. Thistle refuses. Absurd, mutters. Why won't you? It's against all my immoral principles. I won't go any further. I cannot make insignificance. Nor significance. I cannot take the risk of having a person either believe or disbelieve in himself. Where then do you begin? Begin always with repetition, no other way. Carol Koesling would wish her slate rumps smacked; they heave and descend. The comedy, reassurance of rebirth. They might heave beyond the field of gravitation, to be smacked by vacuums sucking. Hand like a mouth. Here's a logic of a being: she proceeds in the direction of total persuasion that she has never been: Would she then not have the right to sue for absolute alteration? and go then to demean herself for not having been granted the right? Thinking ourselves larger, we inevitably diminish. It's possible we extend the conceptions of our dimensions to shrink ourselves. We move along unbearabilities. Systems of magics: how our conceptions of ourselves can best disappear. And we may stop anywhere? Yes. Anywhere. §

The way Freddie told me Mrs. Thomas you engaged Harriet after the children were able to take care of

themselves. It wasn't engaged though. You signed for her at a state institution, you and the Surgeon. Why she's

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nothing more than a slave. Aren't you ashamed of yourselves keeping a slave? Don't you think she's ashamed of you for you keeping her that way? Oh don't be a child, the whitehaired grace. Sheer nonsense, Carol, walrus grows. She's no more a slave than you are. Forward to the hearth, fire. Skulls low, beasts down, skulkfront, the bodies roll on eyeballbearings, to the lowering slowpulse ruddyslime on the stone, the rainfear outside. Suck fire. The beasts have learned a straw. Suck fire, suck fire. A cave will round up the beasts, come, oh not that the rain, ah, we're not there. Draw fire. § But you could've paid a regular housemaid. You could've engaged one. To sleep. Or have a good sound sleep at her own home Carol practically shouts. Why'd you have to go get somebody like Harriet Mullen? Moron Mullen, eh? Oh stop it Obviously Carol there are any number of people who engage the competent, but who forget the forgotten in the institutions and asylums. We took Harriet out to make her more useful, more happy I believe. I think she would own up to being more happy, we've made her a member of our family, and I think we have every right without being smug to call that an act of Christian kindness, of which there are far too few. I thought, Carol, that you'd have the sense to realize this without our mentioning it. § The new Don Quixote without dignity or humor. He rides with all his instruments against a defenseless little girl. Listen Doctor Thomas didn't you get Harriet Mullen out of the institution after all your children were pretty well grown? I dont see what Well you wanted an idiot for a child, don't you see? You'd had all intelligent children. Now an idiot. Oh, you could afford one, no? A child not of blood, eh Surgeon? You wanted that sort of experience, I daresay. Mimic, mimic, I'll mimic them. Daresay. Perfect opportunity. Well, take that dolt now. I have it, Surgeon, she was someone who wouldn't talk back to you, I warrant. Now, children can talk back, eh,

I caresay, oh yes, oh yes, Carol cavorts around the Cuddihy cardtable, around Lois, you're not dead yet my fine woman, oh no, you can't pull death on me, Lois, no no no, and don't prim with me Miss Miss Cuddihy. So, there was Harriet, do anything you want her to, eh? Nē backtalk. You always

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She laughs the high whistle in the old rafters banging the copper ringing the glass plates You always wanted a vacuum for a child, to spit in. See if you can give birth to a zero. Eh Fred Junior? Never thought of that, did you? Poor Doug, hey Doug, come out of your pimples, Harriet Mullen was their own little nonresponsum In turning to his elder son the good Doctor Thomas intones I believe you had better take your friend in hand But the wickerwork woman, the Harriet Mullen, the one thickjointed hungry hand working the wooden rail not along not down not up but with a soundless thump of if an in, and her other hand torpid at her side satiated but mothwing thin and graceful as a rest after tickle, a toyboat of a smile wavering down the napping brook of her lip, now rests at the bottom of the stairway, one shoulder perking another, saying, I am Harriet Mullen with gray wickerwork hair, and I am here now. I came down because I think you must want something. Through Carol a shudder of minnows. Her face port and sapphire, rings glowing within rings, sinking circles and circles quoited off, blonde hair plaited circinate, the redbrown shadows circling in the kerosene sapphire intercalated rounds, around shadowblackened eyes the minnows are swimming in circles, around and around her body rotates the skull-spheres, the circular rudder-shudders. Compassionate poise the big man, as blotters butterflied, Surgeon in a breath that stays we shall not harm you just outside his lips, no, Harriet, we did not want you. Green. Hearthfire could be warm ash, but no more. The cold like busy tiny tugboats nudge out warmth. Fading kerosene washgreen a plastic feather tipped here, a web there, a wee thin sheet yonderelse, crinkling, a sip of rip allshwere, graygreen, like the far wail of a once eye. Mullen remembers, If you are silent, then you must want me. You have been silent as I have been standing from the top of the stairway to down at the here, then so you want me, I am

here. Be silent, all, be. Harriet Mullen has but one eyebrow grown, the other flesh is bare, and it is the hairless eyebrow raises now, and is thus kept, hairlessly sardonic, brilliantly sapphire, most intimate of all to the dying source of the kerosene. I did decide to be feeble in my mind, she is the soft food of a voice sighing down the throats of small hungry animals, feeble in my mind because I cannot remember that it must matter, and nobody must remind me. I fear memory, I suppose because memory fears me. Memory did not bargain for a Harriet Mullen. Memory, darlings, is all over, between

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us, between Doctor Thomas and I, between Mrs. Thomas and her how many sons, but memory, its nose squinting, could not find me, it smelled a weakness in itself and fled, and fumbled, and frittered away here, and forgot it had been searching. Darlings, memory itself can forget, yes. I am its little weakness, don't you know? Don't you know? If you don't know, how can I? for I have forgot. I have a thick hand and a thin hand, now what does that mean: Is the thin hand the leaf of my thick one: Is my one shoulder abashed at the height of the other, and thus bows low before it? I apologise, darlings. One shoulder was so sure, but the other shoulder apologises for the certainty, and it is the hairless eyebrow that raises, unsure, so it goes higher, higher, brazen, look I can rise even though I have no hair. Poor thing, be touched by my thick graceless thickjointed hungry hand, for the thin hand is such a liar, it is all full of grabbing, and thus thin, be sorry for it. Harriet Mullen is all the lost things you never found. I am the top of the chimney for Mrs. Thomas, where she sometimes goes when there is no moon, all in white she crawls up the chimney, cleaning each inch as she goes so that when she is at the top she is still all white and replaces the moon, Mrs. Thomas goes around and around the earth she has never found. I am Doctor Thomas the Grandfather that he has never found. Skip skip skip he wanted to skip a fathering and be grandfathering. I am the little animal you lost in the outhouse, the quaint wooden outhouse with the poem by James Whitcomb Riley tacked up on the inside, how cold it is in the winter, blood comes and the ass is frozen to the wood, with a hole for a baby. Oh you must laugh at me, make jokes that I am feeble in my mind, if you could only be funny at my expense, everybody — everybody — then you would have found all the things you lost, but see, see, how painfully you all are, how embarrassed, stricken, abashed — they will not let you be human, those things. The thick hand

picks at her wickerwork hair, thick hand dreaming it is thin and satiated, the toyboat smile rocks precariously at the corner of her lip. You never learned me, my darlings. How could you even try, not having ever found me. I am the wetlessness that Felix Gilchrist misplaced, the soundlessness that Doris misplaced, the idiocy that Frank Thomas looked for and could not find. I am the lost murder of Ray Guiles, he wanted to find the murderousness he had in him toward Doctor Thomas because the Doctor and his wife exposed their children to the love the doctor and his wife had exclusively for each other, exposed on that shining barren rock solid rock, underneath them all that rock humpbacked love of those two for each other, hot inside and glassy cold outside, but Ray Guiles lost his murderousness and will never find it though here he sees it in me, deformed and feeble in its

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consequence, he cannot see it for its very feebleness, nor hear, nor judge, nor accept, nor reject, I am his very nothing by whom he is pained, smug pained, pained it is so nice to be pained by the feeble in mind. Are you all abashed. Satiated, the satisfied greed behind your minds, thin and courteous and delicate, like my hidden thin hand. I am the mirror Carol could not keep.

§

Moosehead, moosehead on the wall, who is the hunter of them all. Mooseeye mooseeye on the wall, thy horns stagger, thou hast with thy staring tears put out the fire. All cold, more more more things of the world lost and making world cold, my bones are wickerwork. Thou hast never clothed me. My God oh my God why hast thou never clothed me? My God, I am the Feeble of Thy Mind, I am unclothed, all my ones are this thin hand, and this thick one is my hunger, oh my desire, and my hairless eyebrow the sapphire empty roof over mine eve. I hear small rain in my throat. Treasures?

Where be they? They are here in gray. I cannot remember what I have ever said. Who are those grays? Harriet Mullens all. Doctor Harriet Mullen. My head wobbles.

LIKE A THOUGHT THAT IS ABOUT TO LEARN TO WALK. But. Someone has supported it. Held it up. No further can it go. Mrs. Lois Mullen. Carol Mullen. Anne Cuddihy Mullen, she now, she walketh with a space-helmet round her skull, crystal, ah, 'tis a fortune-tellers crystal space-helmet. Fly to space, Anne Cuddihy! Fly! With a catapult of playingcards! Spring! Whoops! Skull on a sprung wire, in spirals, she's a bobbing crystal apple, father bite me! Slippery, isn't she. Trouble, she evades, papa's not feeling well, try again! Slip, oh. Oh. Bite my white my white crystal fullof spaceapple, big cheeks, fullofair, explode daddy, please . . . Ah. Mullens. If you be all Mullens, who then am I? See, I have given you me, that which you are, and I naught left. Tell me. Unmullened. Wickerwork pout. Good. Flesh, if wickerwork pout. Toy boats have left my lips, Where could they be? And if I have pouted flesh, then much cool water, I've never swan in it. Please all of you talk. I don't want you to want me. You don't have to, Harriet, Harriet—I will look for Harriet. Is she under Cuddihy's cardtable? Along Fred's arm? In Carol's tears? Carol, aw—may I—May I touch your tears? What are they like? Tell me, quickly. Wet? Whats wet? What is it? Feel like, I mean? And if I would feel dry, first must I be wet. Yes. Someone be—oh, let's see, angry. So, then, I,—yes. Well then, love. I think I see how it spells. I want to lose my speech, you know? Be as silent as you. Let me be silent as you. You know why, do you. So I can want somebody. And if I'm silent, then I can have a

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talk again, to say, Oh, oh Harriet, would you buy a handkerchief at the store for me. Now I am at the beginning. So it's all right. You don't have to keep anything any more from me. You can tell me who I am. If I could only see one of you now. Its got dark. Where's the green? I can't see my raised eyebrow. I'm afraid as an unseen raised hairless eyebrow. I used to know things. A brass screen. I signed. Thank you. Cinamon on the apple pie. Mornings like gentle salt. Ripper oh there's. Oh no, you're just licking another tongue, doggie, that's my thin hand you found, go away doggie, you're not my friend because you licked my thin hungry tongue, go away. Parsley, you cut up parsley and it becomes green, scattered. Where's the green? There's not a bit of parsley in the dark. It was a smooth table, I kept it, didn't I? Now it's, there are so many crumbs on my wickerwork. Clean damp cloth across my brow, I am kitchenmaid of my brow, well clear the table, Harriet I want you to. Where is that girl? In time, Lake Skong. Rubbing a sparkling back against the rocks. I could see through the cheesecloth mist early Sunday morning the Thomas Family gathered on campstool and hammock and the split planks of the boathouse porch near the water. Through the bright cheesecloth mist a guest on the porch reads a long section from Ecclesiastes. Hardly remember that, Surgeon bows. I haven't heard it in such a long time. In time, Lake Skong. Where the apex of the peninsular triangle, there's the new State Road they're building across Skong. I won't have to fill those kerosene lamps much longer. Electricity soon. What's a man? Anything that isn't Harriet Mullen is a man. I'm the only woman here. But what's a woman? Anything that isn't Harriet Mullen is a woman. The Surgeon said nearly all of a human being is made of water. I guess I'm the only human being here, and I'm nearly all water. So many minnows tonight, must be the rain. I miss the moon, though, as

though clad in silver armor I went forth to flood the countryside. This step down now still is round. Mustn't slip. I have a headache of powerboats from sixty fathoms to shore, but a sail is Spanish in an afternoon squall, a feminine currying of the whitecaps. Who has not come from Harriet Mullen? Stumblebugs, gawkward at the shore. A Felix, a brooding fungus, a bird winged by the tide tips. The air such a rarified daughter, fit now only for cloud, but old as a lumpy harridan now and again at my drag. My wickerwork is a foam, of children's piss and of Carol's when she was bloated with me, a contraction and a yawn under the sun wherever that incandescent pause be, behind my back or stunning over me. Said the Surgeon all of. The underwater swans of reeds, anyfish like a woman from behind. Cool current over a wrinkled brow of stagnancy. Rising as the sun draws in a breath, and sinking as

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the sun exhales, the moon peering a pull from behind in vanilla sheen. The steps from the Thomas camp down to their boathouse as wet as I, the woods full of dead fireflies, I see the signals of their gray pulsations, colorless luminescences to light up the living now that they can no longer convince the dead. Who shall know that I could never sleep if they have never known I have been awake? I shall apprehend Harriet Mullen dead or alive, for there is no price upon her head, and whatever reward there be is unpublishable. So many things so negligently tossed in. Will anyone feather a whitecap please? Voiceper, wesper, rasper, oooooh that old bum of log, been boozin again, got the staggers, got the delirium remains, do tell that sand been itchin me again, gotta crumble, gotta disperse, gotta gravel to the far lands and they why must it me near waters be, mullin owl the time. The lighthouse owl the lighthouse owl the lighthouse the owl is a lighthouse, lightwise all that's wise, bowelwise all that's light, whitening round black impenetrable round the woods, flateye against the pane of its own see, good bowel wiseby, bowleye boweleye. Was i? Irk me ease, eh? Can Thomases understand Yiddish? Anz, zvey but not dry. Irk me knee, these. A droplet arches its back.

S

So many minnows. Skimmata. Harriet Mullen wipe those boulders clean.

Yes, doctor.

Did the channel deeper Harriet Mullen.

Yes doctor.

Harriet Mullen go to bed early at night.

Yesmrsthomas.

Awake early in the morning Harriet Mullen.

Yesmrsthomas.

Don't tip the boat Harriet Mullen.

Yes doctor.

Harriet Mullen don't swim out too far.

Nodoctornotoofarno.

You don't have to defrost the refrigerator in the winter though it be all white Harriet Mullen.

Iknowdoctornowlknowyes. And there used to be minnows and there are no more. And there had been all manner of fish and fowl and there are no more. No droplet arches its back, not one. Bouyancy has a lisp, floating.

We die by plunging headlong into ourselves.

S

... Asleep so soon? Do not think you will love me in your dreams,

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*Doug Douglass. I warn you. Girls forever warn, Carol
Koesling.*

They did not used to, when there were prophets in the world. 'Tis an old boathouse piano. A coil of ivory in the spidered corner. A net, a man's shirt, a topsyturvy canoe at rest on two logs. A wooden beam there, a window wrinkled by the rain. A smell of livers, of oils, of fish, of dehydrated tenderness. A mattress damp from the rain and the thrashing of the imprisoned reptiles behind our ribs. The wistful wallop of the waters against the dock. A sail, to dry. A canvas, to chair. Seashell, as an ashtray. A dark flashlight on the pine table. A quit candle. Some keys, some moneys, a razorblade and a freckled mirror. Wide doors for the drydocked boats to go through. Screened. An oozing up of the lake in the dark. Two empty cots. A triangular roof. Hangars. A man's shirt. A man's pants on the chair. A knothole in the floor, through which no light comes. But something scratches.

Are you asleep?

Something scratches.

Through and through my ears and I do not mind. A bass as well, and a minnow. And I do not. How to awaken in the deep, by a green dusk-dawn, as though it had come down for water, the world at the well. Little Panther Point? A trout or a weed? A slime or a slipper down the spine? Something with five minnows at its end, wriggles. I lost my breath for a moment: I sprinkled in the air! all haemmeralded. Hoodache, a goargoby, a drone adrift soon, gyawn. Slowperr by unshoor, roothless in cleftchinnel and fumblefoam and hurleeth teeth, spoolwhite-greenkitesnarl. By on the seelfuzz Im comb, playsad, soran and, wind-spoken. A whipporwood, a clicksect, a dim keel. The wickerwork treeroot at the shyshore. And I know the branches mulling through, their twigs at their chins, mulling, mulling. Must be summerout. Sure, oughtime tago. Ran afeel one there. Flitfloat bay signeought, there she costs, wetleagthed, laft, a root wan day and marooned the next, titminnow titminnow! Sailbird and Soulavant! Withermusic, whether miser, waterskier, awake I go! All bodies mine, deed or alove. Seasonry, ladders and jellismen.

Will Frank Thomas marry Mary Fuller?

§

... Is everybody? And my fingers are minnows too, aren't they Fred? Like—kittenminnows. What do I fear? I fear that I have not felt guilt. I think I should. I know I ought to. Something is missing in me. And it's guilt. Must everyone feel guilt Fred? It's so quiet inside me. Guilt

(FROM MSS. — ENSUING MID-PAGE 174.)

The police did find Jocelyn and you. Jocelyn is safe with her father, and you are safe with your father and I. I have even had the grace to let you sleep out the evening without asking a single question. Theodora holds her long musclegained fingers in her lap, while she relaxes her habitually severe posture at the foot of the bed. Harriet would have intervened. Whatever happened to Harriet? And Lois Koesling would then have been quite tolerable. And Fred, my sweetest, dearest brother— he would have tempered mother too. Not you, Bruce, oh no. You came in with Theodora and said not a word. You were diabolically neutral. I simply cannot forgive your

potential

Mistle, What makes you so certain people have potential pasts, Carol?

Judge all human beings by what they would have been. And they are all capable of having been— anywhere at all. Oh, they may never realized what they will be in the past. But I'll accomplish that for them.

post-presumption.

They must develop into what they were. Of course, they may not commit their potential for the past in the now, they may not repeat it— granted. But I can understand how they might have behaved, and if I don't approve what might have been then I can't approve their now, and I hold them guilty, I blame them. Bruce did not support me, he stayed neutral.

If you would've told me how Arnold made a play for you

Why should I have lowered my dignity by putting you to the test? You never want to go anywhere, take me anywhere. Are you ashamed of me, Bruce?

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for what? I don't know. For something, there must be something. Where? As though to be a man one must stand up and be accused by the Lord, and bear the curse. I know not what curse to bear. That's being anonymous, Fred. That's being nobody. It's so bland and undistinguished to walk uncursed in the land. As though one has merely committed oneself, it is to turn in a furlwind. But it's autumn now . . .

Must one search for one's accursedness? She dresses badly, as though she has no knowledge of what clothes mean. She seems a pretty scullery maid at times, or a German immigrant, with her braids and too-bright lipstick and caked-on powder and heavy eyeshadow. Either her skirts are too long, which makes her appear a child pretending to womanhood; or they're too short, promoting the impression of desperately maintained adolescence. The way she wears clothes is desperate, substantiating that she really doesn't understand clothes. As if clothing were her mortal enemy. She will get puffy in the cheeks as she ages. Does one search for guilt by committing a crime? There aren't enough true criminals in the world . . .

I just had to phone you, Doug, come on in, please, I simply had to

see you. God it won't be long before you'll be ordained, will it?

No, it won't Carol, Another year.

Well, come on into the front room, it's brighter there, and warmer,

I've got the kerosene heater going. Gee, we haven't seen each other for

quite a while, have we?

Not since the middle of the summer.

It's turning cold out, isn't it?

Beginning to, Carol. It is November.

Yes.

Is there anything wrong with your shoulder? Your left one, does it

hurt a little?

Why do you ask?

It's a little higher than the other one, and closer, as if you were

protecting it.

Carol look Ah shut up! Hell I didn't know she was around, how was I to know

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and and and. And who says you're supposed to feel guilty for the death of a for the suicide of a Of a moron? Guilty for a moron? Jesus! Somebody normal, all right, there's a point, I'm willing, I'll accept. But a feeble-minded housemaid? What the hell. But. That's not. No. Harriet Mullen? Yeh. Sure it's possible I really wanted her around, really knew she had to be. At least — could be around. Knew, underneath, she could be, you know? I'm no fool. I knew she could be awakened, I knew there was a risk, I mean I knew it underneath, must've. Charactered her a vacuum, among other things, something to spit in, manipulate by the Thomases. All right. But what the hell does it mean to be responsible for the death of a feeble-minded being? Is it possible to be guilty over such? Am I supposed to be? Why should I be? How is it possible, how? But §

Why did you phone?

I won't take her say-so.

Harriet's? For what? She's dead. Doug clears stubby fingers through his soft brown hair, bends lips round the coffee mug.

I know. Let's say that by my comments I was responsible for her suicide.

You need not.

I hold that. I say I am the motivation. I want to get all the motivations out of the way, don't you see?

A crafty calf, Carol's, and Doug jabs at the moisture on his spectacles with a handkerchief. God could be lurking about with a nasty smile. Once wasn't enough, the power that you're the primal gorgeous incision, the miracle that doesn't bleed, the nail into the profoundest crucifix possible. Carol it shouldn't make very much of a difference to you, I mean there've been so many, it won't take very long, it. Ah the worried brow on the groin

Forget it, Doug.

I

I told you

Look I can't forget

All right, perhaps. You're a god boy. And if you can clarify I'm sure I can, Carol. I'm sure.

You will not betray me, Judas? She paces before him, ferocious kitten.

How do you see me as

Never mind, never mind. Should a person feel guilt over the death of a feeble-minded human being? Eh? That's the bit for you, Doug. Like it?

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She sprawls on the rocker, rocks with bare feet sucking the pale green threadbare carpet, the pale slate green smear of her thighs splashing at each forward gape. I'm hungry, Doug. Go to the grocery store for me.

How do you go to bed, Carol K?

I go to bed with one eyebrow off and one eyebrow on.

How do you fall asleep, Carol K?

I fall asleep with one shoulder high and one shoulder low.

How do you sleep, Carol K?
I sleep with one hand thick and one hand thin.
How do you dream, Carol K?
I dream afloat I will go, afloat I will go, Hi ho the
dairy
afloat I will go.
Is there a slate-colored moon, Carol K?
Oh, yes.
What are the little hairs in your ears, Carol K?
Rivergrass and riverweed, wet as a whisper.
And I have come back to save you, Carol K, and all of
my family at
the lake, and all of my family where they took me from,
and all of my
family I came from to go to the family where they took
me from. You
will say me to them all, Carol K, thick hand for the
sweating things,
and thin hand for the grocery store hungry things, for I
am come to save
all of my family.
You are only Harriet Mullen, you cannot save anything.
I am Jesus Harriet Mullen Christ yes I am, that's a
hymn, and a funny
one, I can be funny yes I can.
I don't believe you.
But my kinky hair turned gray overnight, Carol K, it
would. Would
it not? If it had been you stuck up there on the beams,
Carol K, with the
darning needles through thin hand and thick and my
chilblained feet
from the early morning breakfasts we were the first
upstate to use
oleomargarine, well you in the morning after God had
flitted around your

head like bats all night and suffering from the vinegar
indigestion, and
died from the pain of it, Carol K, would then not your
hair have turned
gray from the awful of it, Carol K? And if straight and
black your hair,
then kinked from the twist all night and gray, would
that not be your
opinion? I am Jesus Harriet Mullen Christ yes I am,
that's a hymn.
Let us all sing, my whole family, reedy the wet voices
will be. And
would not all of my bones be wickerwork from the
stretch of the cross
they had me on, Carol K?

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Christ cannot be feeble-minded, Harriet Mullen. Oh can she not? What would you be, Carol K, after all night up there on the beams. I DON'T WANT ANY NAILS IN MY GROIN, DOUG DOUGLASS. Turn up the heater. Would you not be feeble-minded, Carol K? and especially with the two thieves beside you plucking the last of your brains. Christ is no feeble-minded woman. What could such save? I do not believe you, I will not. Harriet Jesus Christ Mullen died for you. And died in what was least for you, Carol K, for the least is what must save, in the only the forgetting the fickle d around in her brain like a gray tuningfork bird flying headless still trailing two tails in the slate sky, in a long low looney forgetting sound, A moron saviour yes I am! A poor witless woman come to save men. It is not so. I cannot recognize you. You will not. I cannot. And will not. Because Doug is medium, medium brown, medium height, medium length penis, medium shoulders and feet, medium voice. That I should call upon and petition a medium man, and must. Carol is come to the medium man, at medium last, who will respond with a medium answer in medium tones, who will beg me mediumly with his medium brown eyes behind his glasses. Everything is medium about him except the number and the juiciness of his pimples, which but puffs out his mediumness, which is at the core of my father. What is it to save such men: if you be Christ: True, only a witless woman christ, with the grand part of her brain washed away, would return to save these medium men. It was then a womanly act from the person Jesus, after medium all. I would believe you, could anyone return. But Carol Christ it is, how euphonious I am after medium all. And if I am such a one, then I self-abominate. Nobody can be Harriet Jesus Christ Mullen out of a not loving me, leaf a lurch down Charles Street Will you come back? Stay. It is the leaf that lurches and limps down Charles Street, to the river, heartshaped, and one

shoulder of the heart high, and one is low, the wickerwork
veins a wistful graph Theodora Leaf. What a lovely name,
Carol Leaf, lovelier

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WALTER LOWENFELS

ELEGY FOR THE OLD LANGUAGE

*Languages are not only intended, as is commonly
supposed,
to express ideas and images by signs, but also
are real analytical
systems by which we advance from the known to
the unknown.
— Antoine Lavoisier*

DEDICATION

FOR LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN 1889-1951

PLAYBACK FROM SPACE CONTROLLED POWER

First comes the fire. This is the purification. One in a billion survives the flame. He is the Speaker. Out of the agony of survival the word is born that releases us. The moment it is said we realize it is not a word at all. This is what Wittgenstein tried to explain. It has been demonstrated that the temperature near the stagnation point increases as you approach the sun. We live on a tangent to the heat fix. The possibilities of igniting are more than our mathematics provide. This adds a continual incentive to a more precise formulation of the equation. Wittgenstein couldn't realize it and was trying to tell us just as he died.

For the foam of the future
fast breeders
must know the sun better

'Why have 30 American poets committed suicide since 1900?' — Kenneth Rexroth

WALTER LOWENFELS

Language in the U.S.A. has become so disturbed when a poet uses it for reson/ance capture everybody thinks his truth is lying. That makes people feel bad and they kill themselves. In the solar mirror in which we live — the coroner thinks it is the poet who has committed suicide . . .

Motivists speak of our weak character, across the desert border on the Aztec altar where we are all lovers in the flesh we watch those who escape the cyanide having their hearts ripped out.

**EVEN THE 'EARTH' IN RARE EARTH IS NOT
COMPLETELY DESCRIPTIVE**

On the high end of the verbal spectrum where words are metal you pour out like beads only a poem measures the optimum relationship unveiling the riddle of rolling friction in the magnetism of the sun.

Slice light the way you want it
where do we go from minus 302° F.?
Magnetic exploration along the crystal axis?
Guided tour of the solar system?

Reaching tomorrow is our job Success is to survive as a turbulent transfer in the cybernetics of creation — not a chopped stabilized amplifier.

WALTER LOWENFELS

**ON THIS VERTICAL OSCILLATOR RADAR TRACKING
UNIT**

lively as a walk on the moon
from kitchen to stars
camera weds duplicator
fishing for neutrons
cosmic butterfly
spreading its wings
to absorb the eternal flow of solar energy.

In conclusion, comrade space,
The Big Elk is rounding the Cape of Good Hope
The horn is on the deer. Beyond magnetic memory
bells are sounding in star spaces
and the Dog mounts the Bear
Are you ready to go? Do you know which way the
microwave is moving?
Have you got the ice cutter ready for the big
passage around Point Vega?
And he named me Antrium and I said You don't
frighten me. I have been used to you for
ten thousand years. You always tell the last
tale and you never win the first story.
Cut out the chatter. The time has come to start
the Big Journey and we are all ready.
Shield for the battle for survival in space
electrolumin essence
plasma flame spray
plumbing for posterity.

(Franklyn, continued from page 164)

should take its glib and customary leave of you before you
have finished.

Then editing.

Then editing.

Finally editing and lastly, transferring it all to white paper
and placing the fresh copy blithely in the mail, as though
destination were predicted or recognized by an address on an
envelope.

But nightmares depart in haste, with the coming of day
(they generally do anyway) and at last I am free of this
frightful preoccupation with words.

Oh yes, I know; you will say that I have still to contend
with editors. I shall not be permitted egress from the times of
my circumstances so easily, etcetera, etcetera. But you must
understand it is not that I expect the fight has ended; merely
that it takes a new form now and one which is eminently

more suitable.

I shall illustrate with an example.

Ever since, as a lad, I heard that Apollo had his oracle there, I have always wished to visit Delphi. It must be obvious then, when I took the trouble to read something about the place and chanced to discover that this same city was where Socrates first learned he was wise, I wished to go more than ever.

At last, I was visited by something more than my original inspiration. I decided, fully dressed, if not of age, that since I knew something about Delphi now, and since I always wanted to go there anyway, I should be very much surprised if I couldn't write something about it. It was perhaps not stretching a point to grant that I was what you might call 'well read,' and I certainly felt inspired.

Suiting the action to the thought, I immediately occupied a chair which was conveniently placed at some distance from my typewriter, lest the temptation of proximity express itself too vividly, and proceeded to think about it until, as I remember correctly, Father returned from his usual pursuits (he worked, I believe) and Mother announced dinner.

Such precautions as I took, I forget exactly which ones, availed me nothing. Four months later, the idea reoccurred to me.

This time my action was even more suitable to the thought, and I must have begun to write something or other in connection with the subject, as, about a year and a half later, just a few weeks after I had cast my first vote and was consequently still feeling quite responsible, I chanced to run across the unfinished manuscript; and, having nothing to occupy me until father returned and dinner was ready, sat down to a quiet perusal of it. I must admit, the thing being so old I hardly remembered having written it, I did not attack the pages very seriously, rather in a jocular mood, as one who was older and prepared to laugh at his early follies.

Let me tell you, it wasn't long before my demeanor changed! In just a few pages, I was forced to revise my entire attitude about me. I was no laughing matter; for, even as a child of a year and a half before, I noted that I had been capable of writing with no little effect. At least, it had no little effect on the man I was then, who had just finished voting for the first time, a week or so previously.

But, before I make my point, I ought to explain that I had never gone to Delphi, although I had certainly retained the desire to go. I was then, only too ripe for my own insidious propaganda, begun and left unfinished a year and a half previously.

Ah, how fate is wont to rest upon the smallest accidents. If it were not for just such an accident, I might even then never have finished the epic SANDS OF DELPHI!

Upon this memorable night, some fourteen or fifteen or sixteen years ago today, Father returned home from his customary pursuits a great deal later than was his wont, he being a teetotaler and near-sighted and finding, therefore, nothing, as a rule, to keep him out.

This particular evening, however, somebody, as I remember correctly, whose name I forget, smashed the hell out of Father's automobile and Father was vigorously engaged in the happy and well-directed occupation of smashing the hell out of him in return, when a gendarme interrupted the affair, throwing the balance of power on the side of my Father's opponent, who, by the way, wore a blue uniform which, as it happened, bore a striking resemblance to the one in which the interfering minion of the law was arrayed. Not to be deterred, however, Father continued to struggle mightily, even after they incarcerated him in the local bastille, from whence we extricated him, after receiving his call considerably later on that night.

And all this time I was home!

Since, of course, dinner always awaited the advent of Father's appearance, it waited for some time on this memorable occasion, because this ADvent did not become an E-vent until quite late.

Well, the long and the short of it is that I used those unexpected hours to occupy, once again, a chair placed, less conveniently, too close to my typewriter.

Why, I thought as I finished reading my little unfinished epic, it only wants a few pages and a little editing, and I can put this story in the mail! Why — it came to me as I read — this stuff is good!

After I had my copy ready for the mail, there remained only to select a market. But Providence guides the industrious! Only recently, I had heard from a friend of some magazine which was reputed to pay more than all the rest for their stories. A natural market, ready-made for me! Not in the least dismayed, when my drama returned with the customary rejection slip, I remailed it almost immediately, as soon as I had made a few minor changes which I thought were required, and because of which I felt it only my just deserts that the story had been rejected. I will not bore the reader with a long and tedious account of how many times that damned thing came back and how many times, after selecting another market and carefully affixing the stamps on fresh envelopes, I sent it out again. I could not believe I was faced, and so early in life, with failure. What—me? So young? I, a failure? Ridiculous! Hadn't I always wanted to go to Delphi? Hadn't I read something about it once? Wasn't my story about Delphi? Impossible that it should not find a purchaser, if only I could select the proper publication. It merely wanted an apt market, I was certain. Well, if the right market existed for it, I never found it. And somewhere along the line, I stopped trying—at least, with that particular manuscript. Other works followed, however; even greater ones, if I may say so. Yet, the same obstacle persisted in

thwarting me. I never seemed to find the right market for the right vehicle at the right time. Oh, not infrequently, a happy accident here and there kept me going; but the long-awaited overnight success was still awaited when, about a year or so ago, I began to doubt! Consistently, my stories had been about places I had wanted to visit, things I had wanted to do, people I had wanted to meet. Despite all the interesting material this made for stories, editors remained blind. They don't read them at all, I heard. They look in the middle of the middle paragraph on the middle page and, if there isn't a sexscene, they don't buy them, I heard. Well, be damned to them! I was damned if I was going to place a sex-scene in the middle of the middle paragraph on the middle page, just for them! So my stuff wouldn't sell! So I wouldn't be rich and famous! So what? I had honor! So there! As I say, however, about a year or so ago, I began to doubt. From that time on, I became increasingly less productive. I commenced to live, instead. I met people. I went places and did things. I took to drink. I began to smoke. I had my first affair. I was living, and to hell with the editors. This considerably happier state of affairs blithely continued until about a month or so ago; and suddenly, I felt the old inspiration coming back. Alas, I cried to myself, not again? What is the use of it all, will you tell me? No, no, and again, no! Whatever is the use of it all?

Ahh! Heh, heh, heh . . . Ah, but this time the old inspiration took a new form! What — I asked myself — what if I were to send some of these people I have met in the past two years to these monsters, these editors? What then?

I may well have asked!

The idea possessed a certain charm, and it increasingly appealed to me. What the devil, I thought; what the devil . . . I had plenty of new acquaintances I could spare. I was even meeting new people all the time. Sure, some day I may run out of the corpses of the people I have known; so what? I'd be rich and famous long before that eventuality. And I had a lot

of people to spare, now that I was living.

But . . . would editors buy people? Well, I couldn't be certain; but, hell, why wouldn't it be possible? I was sold on lots of people I knew. Why shouldn't editors feel the same way about them? I had to try it anyway.

The first experiment had to have every advantage. One important advantage, obviously, was to send somebody I knew best of all and was the most sold on. You already know that this was my brother.

Well, he came back in the mail today, but I am not discouraged. I will send him out again, and there will be others, after him.

He is the best though. Only I have to sell him quickly, because he is entering the service soon.

As I write, he is drinking from that same peculiar receptacle which I mentioned earlier. It is a vile-smelling liquid, but he seems to be enjoying it. He tells me that it came from being sent through the mail. He says that it makes him want to be mailed again.

Just think, and I have so many friends and acquaintances. I may never run out of them. I shall meet an ever-increasing number of individuals, now that I have set upon my course.

Have you ever been mailed? . . . Have you ever been published? . . . Would an editor buy you? . . . Do I know you? . . . Would you like to meet me? . . . Perhaps if . . .

This stuff my brother is drinking smells frightful. He declares that it is wonderful though. He says it in such a way that I find myself envying him. Perhaps I shall ask him for a drink from that apparently-bottomless receptacle that has come into his possession.

Perhaps then I shall mail myself, instead, so that I, too, shall come by way of a wonderful possession . . .

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VANITY'S LOSERS

HOLD NO PARLAY

by Hugh Collins

TWO GROUPS IN America today qualify as incurable optimists—horse-players and writers. A great similarity exists: both have unfailing faith, both are at the mercy of coldhearted, calculating men. For the racing fan, it is the bookmaker, a jovial, merciless being with a totalisator for a heart; for the writer, it is the book-publisher—specifically, the vanity press.

The latter is at the mercy of every greedy, grasping, conniving subsidy-publisher who will trade on his dreams and hopes.

A recent session of my creative writing class brought this out. We had a pro-and-con discussion re payment for the publication of one's own work. I must admit that I defended this—with the proviso that one must have a strong enough faith.

A member of my class was against the idea. But, not from a business point of view—rather, an idealistic one. He felt it wouldn't be right, a matter of creative pride.

I thought about the discussion later, and realized that a great many writers were unrealistic in their approach to the craft.

Mentally, I began to catalogue the arguments for—and against—subsidy publishing. (I want to clarify here and now that I am not talking about private publication of an author's works, but of the publishers that lurk in writers' magazines and even in some of the slick publications.) I fell into a reverie during which two writers—we'll call them Joe Writer and Sam Writer—took over, generously interrupted by an

omniscient Author.

It went something like this:

Joe: Well, I think that a guy that would pay to have his work published isn't much of a writer.

Sam: I don't agree with you. But not from your point of view. One writes because he believes he has something to say; but, if he wants to back up his belief by paying to have the book published, and goes into it with his eyes open—well, I'm for him.

AUTHOR: Okay, Sam. But, have you ever read a subsidy-house contract? or, better still, have you ever read the inter-office memos between editor and publisher? Now, there is real writing!

Joe: Who is this guy? author: Never mind who I am. Go on with your argument.

Joe: Thanks. A writer, if he is going to call himself that, should be able to turn out work that will sell on its own merits.

Sam: Today, in America, merit has nothing to do with selling a book. Editors read books, and some of them are human; they can guess wrong just as many times as you and I. The fact that six publishing houses turn down a book doesn't make it a bad book.

Joe: There's no money in subsidy publishing. Very few writers make much from a book printed by a subsidy house.

Sam: Let's face the facts. Few authors make money from their books, no matter who prints them. Forget about the novels everyone hears about. Let's speak of the dogs on the fall list, the spring list, or the summer list — the ones that wind up netting the author the price of a new ribbon.

AUTHOR: Pardon me, gentlemen. Sam, I think you are shilling for the subsidy publishers. It is one thing for a writer to fail to make money on a book issued by—say, RANDOM HOUSE—and it is another thing to a writer to wager \$2,000 on a subsidy publication that isn't even going to leave the

printshop. Except, of course, for the fifty copies the author gets, and the few that are mailed out to newspapers usually located in the author's home town. The promised promotion in a subsidy-house contract is very carefully worded. But, as Shakespeare said, it's 'sound and fury signifying nothing'—or something like that.

Sam: Butt out, wise guy. Joe—who is this clown?

Joe: I dunno, I thought he came in with you. Anyway, subsidy books are usually duller than books from a regular publisher.

Sam: If they are, it's because they are written that way, and that isn't the fault of the publisher. That's the fault of the writer, or the fault of the people who go around saying everyone can write. In fact, damn few people can. But the basic reason the subsidy lists are grab is that most of the talented writers aren't willing to gamble on their books. They will keep mailing mss. out and hoping they will sell. I say that if a book is well written—you'll note I didn't say anything about a great book—it will sell.

AUTHOR: Not necessarily, Sam. Subsidy books, on the whole, are dull, because written by wellmeaning people who are fanatics on one subject. Nowhere in the writing trade is there a more divisive line between professionals and amateurs than that provided by the subsidy field where so many pose a message or personal statement — often in lieu of literary style. Because they feel they have something to say, they are easy marks for the subsidy house. Make no mistake about it, either of you: the writer is going to wind up cold-decked, when he sits in the game with those pros. Well, even if the book is good, you won't make as much money out of it, if it's published by a subsidy house.

Joe: SAM:

AUTHOR: Hold it! Sam — you aren't listening. The subsidy house isn't going to push your book or promote it. Not at those prices. Why should they? They've already made you for

the \$2,000. And the forty percent you mention — that's forty percent of your dough, not the reader's or the publisher's. It's yours. Suppose your book sells for \$2.50. You've paid them \$2,000 to print it, promote it, deliver it to bookstores, most of which wouldn't touch it with a ten-foot pole, because they have no use for vanity publications. But, let's say you have 800 friends and they each purchase a copy. That's \$2,000. So, you collect forty percent, or \$800. The subsidy house collects \$1,200 more. Neat — no?

Joe: SAM:

AUTHOR: All right — I have a contract here from one of them. They agree to publish 2,000 copies. Now, in our theoretical case a moment ago, I am due to get \$800. Say that I have a way of unloading the remainder. Keeping round figures, call that \$3,000. But, I don't get this amount. I only get forty percent of that, leaving them another \$1,800, or a total of

(1) Editors: If such books are sold via the author, he usually is 'granted' 40 perc. 'discount' on books supplied in excess of his quota under the agreement; should he sell directly a considerable number, mailing expenses might not be compensated for by what he may have collected on 'author copies' (those he didn't give away). \$5,000.^{2} Now, they aren't going to charge me for the second printing — which is damn nice of them — but they are going to take a sixty percent bite. So, you see, they can't lose. If the book is a dog — and the records show that it most likely will be — they still will have made their profit on the original subsidy. Do you think that's fair, Sam? Joe?

Sam: Well, it doesn't seem right somehow.

Joe: I say a book should sell on its own merits anyway.

AUTHOR: Let me point out that quite a few of the subsidy publishing houses have been mauled by the F.T.C. and Better Business Bureaus. And, incidentally, Joe — most book reviewers won't touch vanity-press books. So you see it

would be pretty hard to know if it were good work or not. You mad at me, Sam?

Sam: Nooo, I guess not. I just never thought of it that way before.

AUTHOR: Sam, you're a nice guy; but I think you need a business manager.

Joe: Sure he is — a nice guy, I mean. Come on, I'll buy the beer.

Sam: No — I will . . . out of the \$2,000 you saved me.

(2) Editors: Of course, the original sum the author pays (\$2,000 seems less than actually would be asked for a hypothetical edition of this size) also does pay actual production cost, leaving the publisher perhaps a net one-third. On the first edition, the 60 perc. paid by the author or others would be nearly all 'gravy'; if further editions (the realization of these is rare), these plus-profits will more than cover the publisher's further production-outlay, though the author does from that point receive oversize royalties, which might recoup his investment and yield excess return. Long 'racing odds' indeed!

Selected from EPIGRAMS FOR A POETRY WORKSHOP by Lewis Turco

iii.

(The Lawyer of the Workshop)

Enjoys a rhythmic game.

His first theme was nostalgia.

His last theme is the same.

SOME ITEMS RECEIVED

SIGNS; IN THIS UNSTORIED TIME

WITH TRANSCENDING relevance, a spring fiction number of AUDIT (Box 92, Hayes Hall, U. of Buffalo, N.Y.—95 cents) is recommended. In their execution of a project to help revive fiction, the editors also have helped to define the nature of its decline.

The well-known facts of the 'story recession' since War II need not be outlined, except to recall that not a few of the editors now complaining over scarcity, themselves abetted the causes. Editors of popular magazines, of course, had been persuaded to glad-hand factual articles and to cold-shoulder fiction. They garnered their reward\$. But soon, many quality-magazine editors got the notion that literature itself was changing vehicles; and they, too, gave precedence to non-fiction.

There was an allegedly pragmatic basis for the idea that readers wanted more articles than stories. In line with a postwar trend, publishers had extended surveys and tabulations beyond the publicity and advertising departments; reader-preference queries were mailed out and letters to editors were classified and analyzed. Replies to questionnaires favored articles, even poetry—though less heed was paid this surprising angle; letters concerning non-fiction far outnumbered those about creative contents. No one seems to have shaken his head enough times to jostle the reflection that the most delighted of story-readers seldom actually would sit down and put appreciation into words; neither has anyone paused to consider that the immediate relationships of most articles to current problems and events make them likelier of recall when answering publishers' queries. Besides which, no special attention to psychology

should have been necessary in order to realize that people generally wax less controversial over works of imagination than over expositions of partisan intellect.

Returning to *AUDIT*, it's especially significant that these editors presumably have higher than average tastes and that they did have ample time for their selections. The disappointing quality-level of the issue becomes doubly indicative, substantiating reports that fewer and fewer talented, serious authors produce for periodical outlets. And—though it may be assumed that not all are primarily money-minded—how could it be otherwise? Simply to place short fiction (anywhere) has grown difficult. Money-minded or not, writers are seeking reputations—and these can be built only through readerships. The limited circulations of 'quality' periodicals, achieving but fractional portions of the always-restricted influential audience said to be more helpful than mass-readerships, surely discourage impatient ambition. Only those rare authors dedicated to writing-as-art have persisted. The intention is not to 'pan' *AUDIT*. This number is worth buying; it holds about the best distractive entertainment of any magazine lately examined. There's an excellent (if brief) thoughtfully-humorous piece, for instance, by Robert Lowry, whose other contribution (chapters from a novel) is open, however, to some of the same criticisms to be focused on a Willard Marsh story.

The Marsh work is singled out because the editors saw fit to give it Page-1 precedence, whereas — compared with any of the available alternatives — this story provides the most evidence of misdirected confusion in magazine-fiction. Confusions of pseudo-values also must have distracted the editors? *MY COSMIC VALENTINE* is a craftsmanly, suspenseful narrative of no distinction; having given Mr. Marsh an 'A' for structure and lucidity, it must be noted that his inventiveness here is at secondary-school level and that he cloaks his pat variations of plot with 'unusual' topical

novelties and semi-taboo materials. The sexual elements (though less-patently ‘dragged in’ than in the otherwise-better fiction offered) are overplayed in the approved manner.

Yet, sex does not really carry this story. Extra-curricular titillation isn’t so easy to incite as in early years of uninhibition. Which leads to the disturbing surmise that the editors did not feature Marsh simply for his skilled manipulation of suspense; they are too sophisticated for that. Any astute reader of magazines must conclude that this story won the opening spot because, even in this blasé era, the sex-gestiveness borders precincts still verboten to non-literary periodicals.

If the foregoing probability is not at first evident, it certainly will be after a second perusal; the consistent lack of imaginative expression makes the tale about as thrilling to re-read as a page of Sunday comics — the sort of thing a bright teenager might daydream. Every turn is dully predictable; no extra-literary ideas are suggested. Such a story has no place in a magazine where polish does not compensate for trite narration. Except for offbeat-venue (a quite-literal pun), the ms. should have been sold to one of those slicks which have taken over from the pulps of yesterday. Perhaps the better pulp editors would have rejected it on the technicality that a flippant denouement fails to meet the promise of an ominous opening. Virtually the only preparation for what becomes a series of obvious attacks on TV. commercials, is the title; assuredly, the corny jokes — which, in the beginning, seemingly are inserted to heighten impending catastrophe — are not what tempt the reader to the final page . . . where he finds anticlimax. An outstanding Autumn, 1960, TEXAS QUARTERLY (the largest dollar’s worth of good reading in over a year) offers eight stories that seem to undermine our thesis. But, this magazine has chiefly been promising good fiction since 1958;

and after two years of intensive scouting (no doubt), half this material turns out to be imported. The 'blight' has struck heaviest in the U.S.A.—as the causes would ensure. And we find this exclusive, high-paying magazine offering more 'newness' in writers than those magazines which ostensibly court the new. AUDIT's editors called upon older writers, for the above special issue: an ostensible anomaly. Besides Marsh and Lowry—James Farrell, Paul Darcy Boles, and Leonard Bishop, none of whom (judging by these stories) can have been concentrating on the form which brought them initial recognition.

For that matter, what is visible in the licks-for-promises actually found in those magazines which avow they are looking for honest talent? Take WAGNER LITERARY MAGAZINE (\$1.)—a fat recent issue opening with a semi-Hemingway tale out of Saroyan, misconstruing certain thoughts of Kenneth Patchen. The discoverable values of WHAT LONELINESS IS ALL ABOUT, by Bob Smith, consist of attractive reportage and absorbingly realistic descriptions of places and persons in an appropriately-identifiable time; but, subjective realism—something quite different from realistic reportage—is absent. The narrator remains unidentified because he abstains from looking at himself. Some might contend that a search for identity, cancelled out at the instant it is believed successful, is a stimulating contradiction or paradox; but the search is identity—and discovery is death. These contemporary pseudo-searches are schizophrenic objectivizings.

Though objectivity characterizes the timeless classics, it should not be necessary to add that the contained personality of a Chaucer or a Shakespeare approximates in its purposeful direction some so-called universal intentions; their works seldom reveal aimless objectivities of confused onlookers, nor do they continually express futile speculations upon irremediable, tragic accidental

circumstances. The thing is that only he who has developed a strong will and some measure of comprehensive understanding of the human situation is well qualified to practice objectivity; otherwise, he can say nothing, except he be modestly and earnestly searching from within himself. The percentage of true prophets amongst writers (particularly young writers) remains infinitesimal. And if one has not attained higher Vision, he should translate what he himself actually does see,—not waste his energies scheming up paraphrases of what his predecessors saw.

To date, the short story has not proven an oracular vehicle; its usefulness remains in depictions of individual struggle toward the self-knowledge which precedes the beginnings of world-knowledge. Responsibility in this form means attention to the identity of the projection; by meaningless (often dizzy) projections beyond their yet-undiscovered selves, too many would-be-serious fictionists render categorical denials that responsibility gives meaning to meaning.

Not that Bob Smith need be a philosopher; simply that hundreds of young Smiths can say nothing whatever, being too absorbed in superficial stylistic ‘detachment.’ They not only fail to transcribe their own sense of being, they fail of distinctive verbalization. Word-patterns lose virtually all stimulative communication when they neither address the reason nor describe identifiable individual reality.... And there’s only one other contribution resembling fiction in this bulging magazine — a rather ‘bright’ essay contrived with dialogue: WHY JOHNNY’S TEACHER CAN’T TEACH, by Angelica Farfalla.

Passing to a leading (intendedly adult) periodical, THE EVERGREEN REVIEW (No. 17, \$1), there are but two short stories of American origin in over 120 pages; and the third story, a translation from Switzerland (THE TUNNEL, by Friedrich Dürrenmatt) excels either of them. Comparisons

apply at all levels, since all three stories depict mental illness (the contemporary obsession). The remainder of this EVERGREEN consists of critical works, one play (from the French), and an excerpt from Henry Miller's THE WORLD OF SEX.... and poetry.

Turning to a university quarterly (SHENANDOAH, Vol. XII, No. 2 — 75 cents), we find the most successful American story — all aspects — touched in this spot-survey: OFF DUTY, by Edwin Mosely. Mosely does not try for too much (as does David R. Bunch, a more-published writer, in the only other SHENANDOAH story); he's 100 percent convincing in a personalized depiction of War II army-camp life. Undistracted by any attempts at 'innovations' through intellectualized unoriginalities of 'difference', readers generally may be transported. Not calculating how to render his language unique, Mosely succeeds in this very achievement, realizing more than a moiety of the bona fide difference which is his real self.

J.B.M.

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THE TYRANT OF MEMORY: TWO REVIEWS

Lawrence P. Springarn

W. D. SNODGRASS'S *HEART'S NEEDLE* (MARVELL Press, 12/6d.) is the kind of collection that achieves coherence because of the title poem. The life it reflects descends from one level of depression to a still lower one. A careful reader feels that the author has been caught in the birdlime and nets of his era, out of which no phoenix can emerge. Yes, the book has progression. From *TEN DAYS LEAVE* to *CAMPUS ON THE HILL*, we see the lines of least resistance: war service, demobilization, a teaching job. If April is the cruelest month, Snodgrass in *APRIL INVENTORY* speaks at length of a classroom experience that other poets have treated more succinctly. The dominant nostalgic mood is threaded with keen academic wit and genuine personal melancholy. Here is a record of loss and defeat. Even without the Pulitzer accolade, this collection would gain its share of attention.

For one thing, the overall effect is consistent and unselfconscious. Although Snodgrass never attains the sharpness of focus that marked the early Karl Shapiro, he comes close to the Shapirean temper in *RETURNED TO FRISCO*, 1946, where his sense of being trapped is strongest:

Off the port side, through haze, we could discern Alcatraz,
lavender with flowers. Barred, The Golden Gate, fading away
astern, Stood like the closed gate of your own backyard.

But the personal note diminishes the universal cry in *THE OPERATION*, with its ghastly details faintly reminiscent of W. E. Henley's hospital poems. And yet, armed with learning and awareness though he be, Snodgrass refuses to put down more than he sees and feels: 'In my brandy bowl/Of sweet peas at the window, the crystal world/ Is inverted, slow and

grey.’ This consistency pervades even his sonnet, *LETTER*; the downright honesty of voice that marks *A CARDINAL*, however, is somewhat spoiled by uncalled-for length and by echoes of Wallace Stevens in the description of the bird.

Another great triumph derives from the poet’s mastery and control of his models. In two songs, Snodgrass combines the manner of the late-medieval student-and-beggar lyric with matters of today. In his second *SONG*, especially, and in *PAPAGENO*, he delicately masks sexual images with clean lines such as these:

Night’s lady, spreading your dark hair, Come take this rare bird into hand; In that deft cage, he might sing true. He possesses enough of his own quaint humor — and honor — to escape certain obvious influences; yet, despite the coy fun discovered in *THESE TREES STAND . . .* (‘While civilization comes down with the curse/Snodgrass is walking through the universe’), Snodgrass echoes both the Milton of *LYCIDAS* and the Donne of the love poems, and advances into and beyond Housman without seeming to quail:

While scholars speak authority
And wear their ulcers on their sleeves,
My eyes in spectacles shall see
These trees procure and spend their leaves.
There is a value underneath
The gold and silver in my teeth.

Like Yeats at his best, Snodgrass in middle age tends to think of himself as an old man. For the title piece, he takes his theme from the ancient Irish tale, *THE MADNESS OF SUIBHNE*: ‘An only daughter is the needle of the heart.’ What makes this poem remarkable is its old-fashioned involvement with domestic tragedy. *HEART’S NEEDLE* is a complaint addressed to divorce and separation. The background can easily be viewed; both the child and the ex-wife live but a mile from the elegist, who sees them through the screens of nature changing with the seasons. The regularity of rhyme

and syllable never becomes tedious. The best scene, the extended tour in the museum of taxidermy, ends with a telling moral, and the entire poem speaks out unashamedly in utterances like this:

Assuredly your father's crimes
are visited
on you. You visit me sometimes.

The addendum entitled FINDING A POEM, which adds little to the already high quality of the book, reiterates what Snodgrass has learned through practice: the depth of a poem's sincerity is the measure of its worth.

John Varney, to judge from SPUN SEQUENCE (VILLIERS Publications, 15/- & \$3.25), has lived much longer than Snodgrass, and in more places. Indeed, his first book was published in 1920; over a period of thirty-five years, he has exacted tributes from J. C. Powys, Wallace Stevens, and Marianne Moore. While the revealing early pieces are predominantly biographical sketches, the middle and late efforts do not rise above local color pictures, flavored by Whitman and Melville, peppered with names and objects; curious essays in politics or invective, they celebrate F.D.R., the Maine of Edna Millay, the Woodstock of the bohemians, and the Greenwich Village some of us remember from the days before World War II. It is tempting to see in this sundown volume the sweet persistence of my old friend Alfred Kreyborg, whose memorials show to such advantage in his prose work, TROUBADOUR. Infusions of modernism aside, these poems are dated in a double sense. Nevertheless, the book has some value for tourists in verse who wish to revisit familiar landscapes. For me, however, these pieces go nowhere slowly. Granting Varney wide experience, total recall, and a vast acquaintance with men and events, cannot place him among the bards, even the lesser bards of MacDougal Street.

HOW THE VIKINGS' CHILDREN MADE LITERATURE

MANY PRAISES are due the huge authoritative HISTORY OF SWEDISH LITERATURE, by Alrik Gustafson (U. of MINNESOTA Press, \$8., and equiv. for like editions by OXFORD University Press, and by THOMAS ALLEN, Ltd., Canada). Most of these praises — that it is the first comprehensive survey in English, that its author is a leading scholar, that it is highly readable and well illustrated, that it contains an invaluable bibliography — will have been trumpeted in the announcements and confirmed by the standard reviews. But, the volume provides more than an informational feast for students; its pages can lead practitioners of writing and all who keep their minds healthy by reading, into an unfamiliar creative world.

August Strindberg has been virtually the only Swedish genius well recognized outside the Norse lands. Besides introductions to less-known talents, here are fascinating explorations of the origins of a national literature, with many parallels in their similarities to problems of creative development in Britain, the Commonwealths, and the U.S.A.

By disproportionate concentration (some may demur) upon recent decades, devoting nearly four times as much space to the last 150 years as to all the preceding centuries, Gustafson has enhanced the immediate value of his book. He addresses today's audience from the very opening, stressing present relevancies over matters bearing limited, reconstructive relevance. And it's interesting to note what seems an evolving clarity and modern directness in Gustafson's own style as he moves toward the later sections. Though complex structural inversions of sentences and paragraphs (the common defect in such historians) are minimal from the start, their incidence diminishes as the

chapters flow; this is a survey composed with lively enthusiasm and the good storyteller's contrivance, toward levels of climax. And, without distorting the record, Gustafson manages critical observations, the validities of some of which students will confirm through the spectra of their observations of other European literatures.

That Gustafson somewhat contradictorily favors an anti-Romantic attitude in the midst of a Romantic revival which has spread into recent Swedish writings, proves not too important; the data is here, and readers may pick their own ways to disagreement with his judgments, if they choose. Gustafson follows the usual practice of accepting the 'main lines' of critical verdicts upon past writings, then applies to the closer and current works dicta which, if utilized in relation to those earlier works that have stood the test of time, would necessitate quite antithetical conclusions. He seems to suggest, in his independent appraisals, that certain angles of social awareness are in themselves essential to literary merit,—if not, perhaps, altogether the determining factors. He appears to ignore the significant boundary between what may in fact be mere precious absorption in some tiny ego, and the distinctive subjective approach revealed through expression in terms of a discrete individuation. And he often indicates approval on a basis of subject matter, lauding the sort of detachment that goes with topical or descriptive surface-treatments,—though the exact opposite has been proven by the time-test. His knowledgeable-ness does not fairly serve his estimations of contemporaries; his conservative taste inclines toward likely-transient, more-or-less popular acceptance. Space does not permit exposition of this by direct references by authors. And there are too many of them; however, the point may be confirmed by reading the opening of a chapter titled ROMANTICISM (here, identifying the early Nineteenth Century poetic revival) where Gustafson highly rates writings which

carry much the same disregard for then-current 'realities' inspired by individualistic speculations similar to those leading him to disparage younger writers of the 1950's, in the latter part of his concluding chapter.

J.B.M.

CHIEFLY NONESUCH BOOKS: A SPRING MELANGE

THIS TITLE IS not slightly applied; to the contrary, these are books most worth summer reading, for those seeking entertainment along with literary merit and sematic colorations of the times. They comprise several types (a couple of them can't properly be typed at all). The introspective works aren't precisely personal, but conceived with suffering, indignation, disturbed delight, and troubled hopes over today's press of confusion; and the more objective works, specifically handling social and psychological problems, glow from the agitations of their author's psyches. Each verifies that both more verbal originality and greater cultural responsibility is found in recent books than in most of the periodicals.

Two volumes of fiction, *THE LIME TWIG*, by John Hawkes, and *THE ADVENTURES OF MAUD NOAKES*, 'edited' by Alan Neame (*NEW DIRECTIONS* — the former, a paperb. at \$1.35, the latter, hardbacked, \$3.75) are laudably horrifying; their excitements stir thoughts out of hypostases for which their superbly-developed plot-structures are the integral forms.

Leslie Fiedler's Introduction tabs Hawkes a Gothic novelist; but — and as Fiedler also suggests — he has several other qualities. His book might be designated a highly sophisticated detective story, somewhat along lines cultivated by Charles Williams; Hawkes, however, goes far beyond the author of *WAR IN HEAVEN* in his compaignations of symbols, — and he serves his non-sectarian 'visions'

straight, in squibs from a fantastic racetrack columnist. Omniscient interpolations are avoided, and the author stays quite consistently with his main actors.

Perhaps no fiction-writer has till now so effectually conveyed the undetermined nature of elements which still are undeniably fated by existence: the lately-‘discovered’ truth of basic opposites, that there is no contradiction in the comprehensive sense, between free will and predestination. In this extraordinary novel, revelation both subsumes and is generated from the realities of inescapable chance, — with God everywhere, yet nowhere fixed by obvious kismets.

Neame’s approach to the lunacies of our culture is quite something else; he is ironically restrained, while unrestrained in humor — an odd combination that might be described as starkly-intellectualized Keystone-comedy. Reading the opening paragraphs, one is likely to conjecture he’s attempting a takeoff on Daniel Defoe’s *FORTUNATE MISTRESS*; but one soon finds that Neame’s moralizing only comes through in doubly-invested innuendos — the ‘sinning’ Maud will not (nor ever should) repent. The broadest of tirades against ‘missionary’ endeavors of Western religion, carries the outward thematic concern, but he slashingly deals with many other matters, including Communism, and the deeper theme is found to involve arrant sexual simpletonism (both prudish and ‘redeemed’), and especially as linked to racial questions. If bawdishly-jocular, Neame is nonetheless earnestly assailing all ‘reformers’ whose lack of honest human love negates their often-hypocritical crusades.

Poetry’s coat has many colors. Leaving to later judgments which current expressions may be forming the more valid Poetry, the variegations never have been so diverse. This raises a large doubt as to whether critical tastes and independent editorial policies have been responsible for misnaming this period eclectic. And, if discriminatory criticism and equivocal editing have failed to justify the

accolades due genuine exercise/s of eclectic preferences, this has not been because of unavailable diversities. Even the few books examined here (not selected for their diversity) are less related than unrelated, save for their coincidental appearances in the English of this time.

ONCE BITTEN TWICE BITTEN, by Peter Porter (SCORPION, 15/-) offers, in several aspects, the most stimulation; and yet, Porter is — with admirable competence — less aesthetically successful. The work summons mental agility more often than perception. The phrases and lines are facile, but his many originalities are not emotionally unified and sustained to project integrated and individuated feeling — much less do they convince this reader of the poet's own essential realization. Snatches of perceptual truth (distinguished from conceptual truth, which he better unifies) occur in fragments and through combinations that seem to have been too-carefully mulled over. Genius is missing. Should it be protested that this is an unreasonable criterion, the rejoinder must be that this poet's range and control of language set this high mark. Porter exhibits a superior mind, and one is forced to say: too bad that he hasn't demonstrated poetic genius.

This complex poetization falls in the category commonly and tritely described as undertaking the realistic reflection of the state of Western culture. Porter's contribution differs from greater writings in the category in that the stimuli he provides seldom carry the reader beyond mere bits of the culture's faulty components. Moods are ill-established; the rapidly-shifting attitudes of Porter's cerebral attacks often do not sustain even a pervasive sensation of rapid passage itself. He is more interested in poetic indirection than in bringing his metaphors into potent oppositions; with selfconscious objectivity, he utters observations (mainly those of rejection, for his interests are quite morbid) rather than intensely-verbalized experiences. Thus, he even aborts

the impacts of ideas, as such; the success of poetry-of-the-intellect depends upon the conveyance of purposive determination in the author. Having said so much, quotation is mandatory. TUNES FOR THE FORTUNATE is characteristic, illustrating these remarks and indicating what extremely worthwhile reading is here (indeed, some of the finest poetical writings received in the past year!):

With a narrow strip of garden and a hedge
For his cat to prowls along by night,
A pram under the line of washing, two veg.
And meat each night, wine week-ends,
One man accumulates God. He is right
To look through his flowers at his friends —
His eyes make nature of his privilege.
The singular unfairness lasts — a person is
The velvet which the kissing lip smears.
There is a God in the inviting of the kiss,
Only rogation in the sweats of love.
The world of road signs offers brandished fears
To timidity at breakfast. We improve
In selfish loving, sore analysis.
Two suns of misfortune and grace
Blaze in one ball on the precipitant sky
Flushing the blood vehicular in the face.
One ear of love waits for the gate to click,
A hell of hate simmers under one eye
And a fat world's pictures circumscribe the sick.
Humid history populates each space.
We fix our minds on grinning girls and boys
Whose senses stir immaculate deceit.
Theirs is the touch which mends our broken toys;
Now they use breasts and arm-pits, grown-up kit,
Making a rodent summer with their heat.
Theirs is all gold — only for them we sit,
Screaming to the walls, imprisoned noise.

Then — partly because the central subject materials in both are their authors' sensations on preparing to eat freshly-slain wild animals — passing directly to a piece in Alden A. Nowlan's *UNDER THE ICE* (The RYERSON Press, \$2.75) for comparison with Porter's title poem. While a good deal more may be found in Porter's (to be anticipated, from his method), it falls short of Nowlan's in unity, intensity, and personal impact; and the artless restraint of the Canadian poem, *THE JACKERS*, saves its author from charges of sentimentality. Some may demur at what might be called his unoriginal language; yet, Nowlan's homely words carry passionate immediacy and produce poignant reaction. Further — though they are familiar and most presumable words — they do make poetry. Which is precisely the point: while Porter's phrases and figures (too) are more 'unusual', they interpose mental distractions; he tells about experience, while Nowlan utters anguishments to bring readers into emotional identification with him. Here is *THE JACKERS*:

THE JACKERS

On Christmas eve, we killed the doe,
parted her dazzled eyes, punctured her throat,
and left small scarlet trenches in the snow
where her warm blood ran out.
A thumb of brightness gouged her eyes,
a leaden hammer split her dainty head.
Grace gone, she floundered down and did not rise,
sprawled there, undone and dead.
Grief was like spoiled bread in the mouth, I bit
the pillows, though I would not eat;
lonely as God with pity for her, yet
dogged by the sweet smell of her frying meat.
Then, ONCE BITTEN, TWICE BITTEN; ONCE SHY, TWICE SHY:

**ONCE BITTEN, TWICE BITTEN; ONCE SHY, TWICE
SHY**

The trap setter in a steel dawn
Picks up his dead rabbits and goes home
Whistling; his tune lies over the wet fields
In the shrinking morning shadows.
The gift of morning life brings
Five broken backs for the rabbits
Dangling in his hessian wrap.
In his own house an old mother
Wastes herself for a busy cancer,
She has always sacrificed flesh and time
For others — a thin heart hates a fat man
In the same room of waiting,
And outside, two children chase
A cockerel from a hen; their sister,
In love with a school teacher,
Pushes back the sex in her measuring blouse.
Now the house basks in bridal sun
Brimming with doves. This is where
The dead rabbits come, giving life
To the fat dog and his mange and the tired wife
Dried by the recurring sun of her kitchen.
Now it is electric eleven o'clock — the stewing meat
Smells savoury past the pruned back roses
And wafts on the street's spindly limits,
The only fragrance of defence and love.
The Editor certainly appreciated this one and others by
Mr. Porter;

but, through close (rather than extreme) examples, is trying to show how the accomplishment of Poetry may not be measured by literary standards, per se — no more than by tests for contemporary authenticities. Some of Nowlan's — perhaps better than THE JACKERS, in ways — are on a par with Porter's in their complex originalities, while vividly

convincing, — and always briefer than Porter's. Nowlan also includes a few items that nudge the mawkish (which Porter does not). In other words, Nowlan is the less-consistent craftsman; yet, again, careful adherence to excellence at the compositional level never has ensured a poet's enshrinement, while nearly every great poet has published inferior pieces.

These two are alike in using sensory impressions and avoiding abstracted generalities — leaving these for their readers to deduce. Vincent Ferrini (*BOOK OF ONE*, HEURETIC Press, \$2.50) not only generalizes frequently, he employs abstract language (in the other meaning of the term). This book probably is his farthest advance along these lines, with attention to arrangements of words on pages which are themselves used, texturewise and by their numbers, to convey esoteric meanings. He has called this his 'last book'; though one may wonder whether he may not have in mind the mystical implication, that the last is first. His title seems to implement this notion — the 'one' being the many-in-one, diverse-and-the-same. This is the first section of *PAEAN*:

Ah, these cloud mountains
closeted among stars
and the heavy roar
of grey seas
devouring the base
thundering at it
grinding away
&
sending them
higher still
who came
down,
rode the
furious waves
dived to the troughs
below and under,

rose again
circled water &
sky
with one embrace
and was let go!
shed of sin
guilt
& tomorrow,
the dragon
harnessed
as gravity is
and the feet
liberated —
where body was
is air
O so
utterly fire
&
making
holy

This is one of few portions which retains impact when lifted from the special format. As already remarked, diversities among these books serve to signify as well as to illustrate this era. *THE OBOE PLAYER*, James L. Weil (*GOLDEN QUILL* — \$2.75) uses quite another method for abstracting contemporary search of identity, corresponding more nearly to those in extra-literary fields than that found by Ferrini, whose mystical approach carries meaning chiefly for artists and religionists. This, of course, is why less of Ferrini's kind of poetry occurs. The resemblance in Weil's work is limited to brevity; if certain elements of thought do correspond occasionally, Weil merely hints at them, through restricted observations and common-seeming — even trivial — images, leaving communication to await subjective effects within readers. He seldom generalizes or implies more than one line of 'depth-plumbing' in a single piece. His closest approaches

to so-called universals are well typified in A CONEY ISLAND LIFE:

Having lived a Coney Island life
on rollercoaster ups and downs
and seen my helium hopes
break skyward without me,
now arms filled with dolls
I threw so much for
I take perhaps my last ride
on this planet-carousel
and ask
how many more times round
I have
to catch that brass-ring-of-
a-sun before the game is up.

And he's more effective in such pieces as TO PETER on the day he was born:

Like the shock of her
hair brushed against my cheek
nine full months earlier,
a cut cord made you shriek
today. It was two hearts'
potential jumped — what I've
thought just some cell that starts
at us — and come alive.

Like Ferrini, Weil reveals no marked syntactical originality; but he nonetheless registers unique individuality. He has better prospects of wide readership — as today's tastes incline — for his earthier individuation and his tangible immediacies. His personal presence is felt — along with the presences of his wife, two sons, and his dachshund — whereas Ferrini is felt as a kind of ethereal mediator who does not convey the sensual reactions of any personal moment/s.

And this brings us to a book of poems more complicated by extension than either of the foregoing. — one utilizing direct impacts of images and events along with speculative thoughts and not a little philosophical abstraction. Forrest Anderson (TOWARD OTHER SHORES, PAN-GRAPHIC Press, \$3.) has spent much of his life on the sea; in this collection, the sea provides materials for larger content which may prove to be this poet's most popular offering to date. On the negative critical note — the larger audience will be less annoyed by his occasional lapses into indiscriminate 'dark thoughts weaving around the bright vision', and, here and there, vague and/or worn phrases like: 'newest wish' . . . 'raging spheres'. But, this 'stretch' from close reality to far concept/s proves both more lucid and more intimate — compared with his earlier books — with inviting informalities beckoning the reader into communications of deeper intent. If Anderson's earlier volumes more patently introduced an individuated language, more effectual originalities are employed here, with fewer evidences of deliberated technical planning. Which is another way of saying Anderson has grown (most of this work is recent); and it's most reassuring to learn that these poems are his own 'favorites'. This Editor did not review IN THE FORESTS OF HEAVEN AND HELL; but, having read this book, has gone back to it with enlivened apprehension.

Though Anderson's is at the foot of our review section, this does not suggest that it is any the less highly recommended. Partly from space-shortage, partly because this poet's longtime presence in this century's literature obviates the need, a complete poem is not quoted. Here are the opening and closing lines from IMPLICIT:

the intimate harbors of shore or sun hold the
sea-thought: rose of the winds an intricate and ancient
flower to go with us over a watery world

an emaciated sea gnaws at the stale cliff our harbors turn
their backs the sea has hard eyes the sky has gray hair

And finally, two U. of MINNESOTA Press pamphlets (65c each) carrying relevancies to the observations on all these creative works. One contains Leonard Unger's views on T. S. Eliot; the other is an analytical study of Gertrude Stein, by Frederick J. Hoffmann, one of the co-authors of the 1946 Princeton book on little magazines, and therefore acquainted with more than the academy-recognized avant.

Though he lauds Eliot in positive tones where possible, Unger — confined to the poetry; in this essay — does not really give him a good 'bill'. If not in outright statements (there are only slight departures from a classroom manner), the net effect from the study is that of a reluctantly-lowered rating — which is to say, lower than he usually has been rated until recently. Unger cautiously wavers almost to the point of going along with those who are beginning to say that Eliot's 'importance' chiefly lies in what he has led others to do: that he had, for instance, lent respectability to a free associational method (the early years), in the doing of which, as he himself conceded, he scarcely understood what he might have been saying. Of course, Unger would have it that this very ambiguity (unbeknownst to Eliot?) in itself said things about the social condition; and he quotes Eliot's statement to the effect that he had more to say than he could translate into poetry. One relevance here is that the past thirty years have revealed such a dilemma to be a continuing, inescapable creative complication to the occurrence of poetry in a confused culture.

On the other hand, Hoffman shows how Stein imposed early technical limitations on herself, in the effort (at least) to reshape language for translations of sliced-off moments of selected levels of consciousness. In brief space, Hoffman concentrates more upon the (limited) contributions of Miss Stein's own work and less upon dubious lines of her influences than has any critic examined by this reviewer. Full assessment is made of her debt to William James, along

with scrutiny of the underlying difference between her kind of so-called 'impersonality' and that of Henry James. Though Hoffman does not put it in so many words, his study underlines how Ernest Hemingway and others declared under Miss Stein's influence, have proceeded, not toward her goal of altered uses of language, but toward a sort of flattened (by removal of superstructure) protraction of the method of Henry James, her opposite in this respect.

In relation to the writings just criticised, these studies help clarify how today's writers are consciously or unconsciously stirred by amalgamations of these two directions,—but, to diverse endeavors along Romantic lines. That is—both technically and ideawise, others have assumed attitudes which Eliot and Stein and James had hoped might realize new equivalents of classic universal detachment (as in Homer or Shakespeare) in the modern schizophrenic milieu, and which they had anticipated for themselves. But, these others, while adopting such attitudes, have withdrawn into subjective expression/s to mirror distortions of the outer world . . . and carrying along with them, so to speak, the rather-precious tools of Miss Stein, whose influence in this special aspect (if not as she undoubtedly would like to see it) is considerable among writers whose contradictory debts to James and Eliot also reverse those expectations.

J.B.M.

Selected from

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EPIGRAMS FOR A POETRY WORKSHOP

by Lewis Turco

VII.

Bruce Konopka

Here's (Homo Egoensis)
Who pens immortal verse.
Though he dislikes the world a lot,
He hates himself much worse.

FOR ALL THE TERMITES TOLL

Editor's note: This contribution from a young unpublished writer may seem off the 'Trace track'; it did, to our Associates—who take exception to not a few items, from time to time. However—besides that this is forceful, clear, and thoughtful writing, not without individuated originality, along with some ineptnesses, a drastic editing of which would negate Konopka's personal style—the things said are in line with the major purposes of this magazine.

A society whose system of values begins to decay is shortly doomed to disintegration. As the blanket of conformity settles over all who seem devoted only to jollification, the era of the ball-point pen and the mercantile humbug presents a grim apparition.

When the door that opened the path to the secrets of the atom was unlocked, the myths and beliefs that had shaped our ways of life seem to have sneaked out; and Posterity recedes farther and farther on an horizon darkened by the mushroom cloud which presages a spectral future. Meaningful participation in life is now held only in the Eternal Present; we are terrified at any thoughts of the future. Long-term goals seem to have lost relevance. The walls of the corridor of Time are being laid bare, and man catches glimpses of portents of chaos everywhere. Man is suddenly aware of his nakedness and impotence; he is being reduced to nothingness. The past means little or nothing to him; the pendulum of the Future sways practically out of control, with no upper hands to guide it.

The 'age of anxiety' is leading us to cultural sterility. The political decadence of Imperial Rome was closely related to its cultural sterility. Our young generation, the nascent helmsmen—will they be nothing but ringmasters? Shall Wolf Larsens guide our shuddering ship of destiny? They will, if

character continues to be shaped by the examples and opinions of contemporary leaders whose deliberate blurring of crucial issues reflects in part through the irresponsibility of our children. They are not willing to face reality. The absence of conviction and commitment in the elders is reflected in the younger generation; when there is a relaxation of the old patterns of discipline, a young person's associates of the same age and class become much more important than any newer patterns. The magnetism of this youth-stratum is reinforced by mass media: movies, television, and comics—the communication of nothing. Exciting murder cases actually eclipse international tensions in the headlines, almost any day.

In this age of the TV-personality, one must learn to be flexible, to adapt instantaneously to the whims of the canaille. We would do well to brush up on our euphemisms. Normalcy, peace in our time, and a chicken in every pot; these gems have all been buffed and shined. They dazzle us through some of the darkest clouds, in the guises of middle-of-the-road, peaceful coexistence, brinkmanship. And, of course, there's the diamond of hope, peace, and prosperity. Truly, we shall witness the birth of a new ism: Chameleonism. A world of (s)chlemiels.

To the younger generation, our future leaders, any worthwhile endeavor becomes a sentence to the salt mines. By squealing and drooling in front of the men with the guitars, they possess the Moment. And only the moment, for the future is motionless; it has crossed the bar. Requiescat in Pace. . . . The howls of ivy, the ivy league, jivy leagueism; the Big Ten(t), the subsidy conference, the Southwest conferodeo. Let us cease seducing students with false standards of social and athletic success.

The adult exodus to suburbia is matched by the students' churlish phobia against attendance at institutions other than those with rolling green campuses and ivy-clad walls.

The urban university is regarded inferior to its country cousin. Time was when a person attended a university out of a desire to learn; now, these wants have been sublimated into other channels. A sensuous fillip of social experiences, invading summer resorts with the names of jolly institutions emblazoned on T-shirts — all this, to rousing choruses of ‘Sing a Song of Six Packs.’ Verily, verily, the six-pack serenade has become the hymn of the herd. But let us remember that students have helped topple governments! And the tables down at Maury’s are empty.

The boneheaded bumpkinry of men is always inviting to fanatical forces. ‘Common sense’ becomes our criterion; no matter, of course, that common sense is leveling downward to our dullest perceptions. How can intelligence flourish in such an atmosphere? Free inquiry is blocked by idiotic certainties of ignorant men, oafish in manner and devoid of imagination, wandering in this vast vacuity, searching for an empty grail. Must we indoctrinate our children with intense desire to be ‘first’? ‘Greatness’ now seems measured by the envy and hatred of one’s competitors.

We hope for success and social status. We desire fame and crave power. We consistently seek new thrills and sensations. We are in love with life’s golden season. The heyday of youth has no horizon, and we become afraid of old age. The result? Eternal adolescents who have completely forgotten how to do any mature thinking.

Our primary, if not only, thoughts are of money, fame, and power. Become too dependent on things outside yourself, and the ‘search for security’ may go on infinitely. Be content in yourself, and the real security begins to emerge. Do not give too much importance to adjustment. Nor to participation in the group. The mesmerized masses.

Are we drifting toward return to tribalism? Here, truly, the individual is wholly absorbed into his group and rarely deviates from the traditional mores. Shall the world become

as architecturally indistinguished as a subdivision housing development? Not if we grasp the meaning of human life. Have a system of values. The meaning of human life is a system of values.

It is evident that we have not made the best possible use of our national prosperity. The old Utopian Socialists used to argue that if everyone could enjoy wealth and leisure, a great cultural renaissance would ensue. Nothing of the sort has occurred — only the lowest forms of effortless entertainment have flourished.

Community ideals seem to have us in a strange hold. Mere symbolism has evolved into a state of mind and a condition of the soul. Artificial standards are held up; the spirit is dominated, and individuality and creativity are assassinated. Life becomes a process of disillusionment. The more we achieve, the more restless we become — slaves of our desires. Shall we desire only what the world decrees we should desire? Or may we desire what we truly love? Can there be freedom of speech or freedom of the press when man's vocabulary is reduced to vapid innocuous euphemisms? Let us not become wrapped up in the moment's developments, and thus distrust these analyses. Changed conditions are needed — not a deadening of the pain of existence! The time is over for playing it safe and sticking to the rut of illusion. Obstinance in maintaining one's 'position' is the surest proof of stupidity. There is nothing so immovable as an ass. The gadfly cometh with the blast of Boreas.

Today, crime and delinquency rates are at an all-time high. Mental disease is becoming more prevalent. The suicide rate is going up. Is moral and spiritual flabbiness the price we must pay for our mortality? We are living in a world of scattered sunlight and shadows. The sunlight of our true passions, and the shadows of false ideas with which the world bewitches us. Jesus had to climb the bitter heights of

Golgotha and die most painfully and publicly before a very dissolute age. Do we need a ‘thunderclap in the Rococo’ to loose Lucifer?

The choral acceptance of the floodtide of crime and fraud heralds the end of discord between these and moral behavior. Men lose sense of right and wrong, take illegal profit when and where they find it; and we condone this. Cheating on college examinations and ghost-written Ph.D. theses are in fashion. The quiz-shows have been rigged, the newest sport is to tax-wink old Uncle, and the knaves of hanky-pank are lining-up for the prize awarded for the most cunningly masqueraded bid on a government construction project. Vox populi decrees the acceptance of these shams so long as they don’t take place in the arena. How do various states of public morality come to be, and how does the public morality affect the life of society? . . . Because everybody does it, it does society no harm. This is social morality, as opposed to personal morality. When personal morality declines, man is without honor. Imagine a society without honor amongst men!

A tree, in all its charming grace and beauty is so serenely content to strive continuously to greater heights, while further entrenching its roots, that it remains one of the loveliest things in creation. All living things are engaged in a struggle for existence. The wonderful experience, the tremendous enjoyment of living and growing, builds the cosmic chords of harmony. Man is the only organic phenomenon consciously engaging in the promotion of ill will. We are being pushed into a septic sea by dearth of joyousness — to steep among the vipers.

This world is permeated with an enormous band of blockheads. It is a pity that they have all become successful, while unable to become wise. Society says that fraudulent misrepresentation and robbery are crimes; yet, we rob people of their right to exist, by perverting facts concerning their

habits and motives. Oh, for the day that we can look at people, not because of their possible usefulness to us, but because we truly like them!

It is no wonder that, as a nation, we are losing prestige (the U.S.A.) among the peoples of the world. Whatever Mackinder may have said about the 'heartland', there are still the hearts of the people. They believe that we exemplify the saying of Matthew: 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' Those who have been trained to look for truth, recently have shown a paradoxical preference for certainty. We shall become not unlike the sunken continent of Atlantis, buried beneath the ocean of the world's hatred. Yes, let us be loyal only to the demands of self-realization; and thus, with ossified minds, evolve into a society under the boot of a class which must perpetuate itself on privilege.

Selected from EPIGRAMS FOR A POETRY WORKSHOP by Lewis Turco

x.

Here's pretty (Lydia Pinkham):

Her talent is immense.

A simple country girl at heart,

She straddles every fence.