

A LITERARY MAGAZINE OF CALIFORNIA

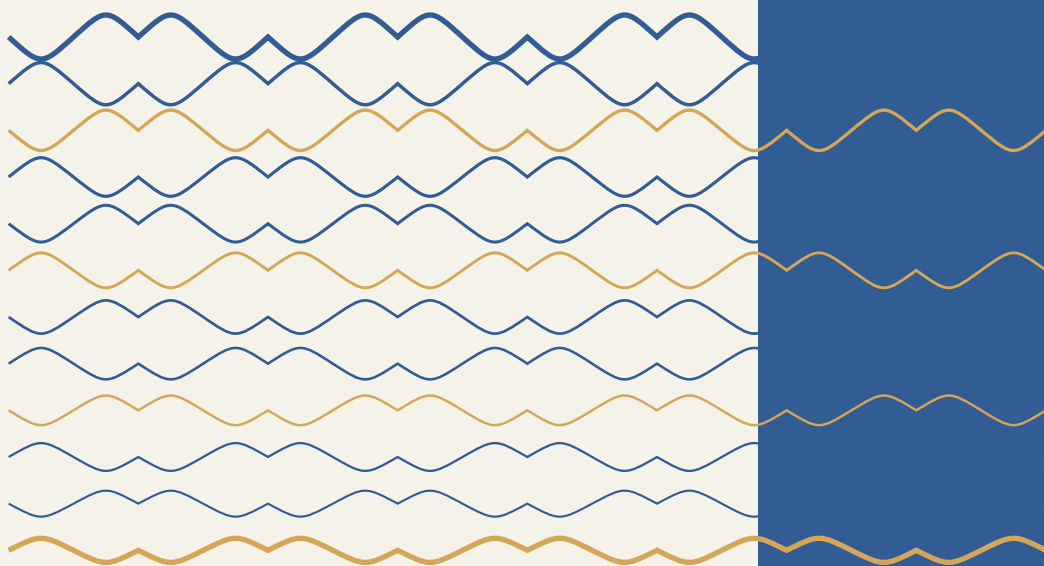
COAST LINES

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ISSUE 6

A Literary Magazine of California

Winter 1956–57

EDITED BY

Mel Weisburd

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*America's Literary Underground**Lawrence Lipton*

America's literary underground is finally coming out into the open. Existing for many years in the small-circulation quarterlies, in "limited" edition books produced by small presses, sometimes hand-set by the publisher himself and often financed by the author, it is now gaining wider public notice through the efforts of a few adventurous critics and editors and paperback publishers. It has never been a secret to the editors and reviewers of the liberal and "quality" magazines, or perhaps it inuld be more accurate to say chat ew to theit paiyate seand inding naber being

full of the work of underground writers in his private study. This was fifteen years ago when none of these writers was known outside of a small circle of readers. The rest of his library, scattered through every room of the house, with the "important" books and the fine bindings displayed in the living room, was classified in more or less formal library fashion. The books in this special collection of underground writers were lumped together-bound volumes, pamphlets, quarterly magazines, fugitive items of all kinds printed on everything from hand-laid paper to yellowing newsprint-and all of it well-thumbed, underscored, with penciled comment in the margins. We spent the rest of the evening in his study discussing these books. He knew them well, found his way instantly to favorite, marked passages, and talked about them excitedly andconspiratorially. He had never reviewed a single one of them,although many of them had come to him as review copies, but as he spoke I recognized ideas he had expressed in his reviews and critical writings. He had plundered these books for many of the ideas slanted and watered down, of course -which had won him a reputation as an original and "progressive" literary critic. Let it be said in his favor that a few of the items in this collection were books he had bought and paid for, perhaps the only books in his library he had laid out cash for.

None of these books were, at that time, politically "dangerous." None of them were books that had been suppressed by censorship or banned by the customs inspectors. Only a few of them were under-the-counter items, more often because of a few illustrations than because of the language. In literary style they differed widely from one another but all of them had one thing in common. They blew the whistle on The Social Lie.

There is no generality more general than "The Social Lie," yet everybody-the publisher, the printer, the editor, the reviewer, the reader-everybody recognized it instantly when he saw it. Everybody knew that one or another of the sacred cows had been goosed, needled or run clean through with a rapier. And the worst of it was that none of these things had been done for God, Truth or The Party, but just for the hell of it. The ineffable, unimpeachable, mysteriously deep down satisfying hell of it.

That was the fascination these writings held, not only for their natural readership but a few secret dice men and perspectives he gratified as the The striped all.

sion of all, the naked reality. Without the cheesecloth moralities, the gingerbread sentimentalities or the Merrytricious and Happy New Year religiosities. They had in them none of the Nineteenth Century lip service to Progress and Liberty and Freedom, none of superficial panaceas of Enlightenment and Reform. They faced up to the agony and the mystery of the human condition.

It was not a matter of selling few books before you sell many, of being an unknown before you became a well-known. Most writers have to travel that road, some slowly, some swiftly. It was a matter of basic assumptions, basic attitudes. The underground writer, as distinguished from the merely unknown writer, rejected all "the well known facts" that the conformist writer accepted as part of the Social Contract, if not the Natural Order. Implicit when it was not explicit in every word he wrote was the assumption that profit is immoral and exploitation of every kind cannibalistic, that the State is the punitive arm of whatever class happens to be in power, and war is compulsory mass murder. He brought under searching scrutiny, in himself no less than in others, all the easy platitudes of love, sex, family, marriage, and religion. If it was something "everybody knows" it was probably a lie, part of the gigantic all-pervading Social Lie. Something worth probing, in oneself first of all. Autovivisection without ether, and not without some fear of the consequences for the fear was part of the Lie.

Attempts are being made today to bring the underground writers to a larger audience. Discovery magazine was one of these attempts. It failed. New World Writing still carries on. Many "little magazines," like the Chicago Review, are commanding more and more attention. The trick is to emerge from the underground without leaving the best of you behind in the process. A few have made it, with notable success. A few died trying, Dylan Thomas, Weldon Kees. And a few are only now emerging intact. Paul Goodman, Hugh MacDiarmid, Kenneth Patchen, Richard Eberhart, Kenneth Rexroth, Louis Zukofsky. Meanwhile other, younger writers have been raising hell in the underground, blowing the whistle on the Social Lie. Anyone with a nose for brimstone and an ear tuned to the hifi sound that is being put down by the writers of today will recognize the authentic whistle in the work of novelists like Chester Himes, George Mandel and Jack Kerouac. And poets like Robert Duncan, Philip Lamantia, Denise Levertov, Robert Creeley, Charles Olson, Leslie Woolf Hedley, James Boyer May, Gregory Corso, Allen Ginsberg, whose "Howl" was brought out this fall in Lawrence Ferlinghetti's Pocket Poets Series, and Stuart Z. Perkoff whose first book, "The Suicide Room," is also appearing this fall under the imprint of Jonathan Williams.

It will be noticed that all of the younger writers, and not a few of the older ones, are published by small presses and appear almost exclusively in the little magazines. The little magazines continue to be the mail-drops and the Committees of Correspondence of the literary underground, as they were in the Twenties, and there are more of them now than there were then. As for the small presses, they have practically taken over the publishing of poetry, not only underground poetry but all kinds,

while the paperback publishers have taken over not only the reprint business but an increasing part of the novel publishing as well, particularly novels with a blue or a red coloration. At the present rate it may not be long before the major publishing houses are left only with such white books as the memoirs of generals and politicians, college text books, and the promisingly aphrodisiac but soporifically disappointing bedtime stories of the book clubs. Trace, James Boyer May's quarterly Baedeker of the little magazines, now carries a directory of the small presses, and the list is growing all the time.

Another thing that will be noticed in the list of writers I have mentioned, but this only by the faithful little magazine reader, is the fact that they do not in any sense constitute a "school." Some of them are not even on family fighting terms with one another. But they are one and all conscious of belonging to a literary underground. Some of them think, or at least hope, that this condition is only temporary in their case, a longing that May, in his book on the little magazines, "Twigs as Varied Bent," calls "the split-wish for the academic nod," or the commercial nod. But most of them spurn the notion that one "graduates" from the littles to the bigs. In poetry at least, if not in prose, the littles are the bigs. Ideologically, where the Social Lie is concerned, there is more unanimity among them. I doubt, for instance, that any of them have fallen for the political atavism of Russell Kirk or the Uncle Tomism of Leslie Fiedler.

It is an underground but, as I began by saying, it is an underground that is emerging and coming out in the open. Only writers of superior talent and overpowering force of expression can emerge from the underground and still remain intact. The academic embrace, to say nothing of the commercial hug, can smother if not actually crush all but the most robust talent. Lesser talents, with a built-in mechanism of protective coloration, usually find the mechanism breaking down under pressure and end by taking on the color of their new environment, right down to the bone. few of the more durable chameleons are able to "pass." This is especially true of artists in the public performance field, the commercial mass media, where sharp-tongued mavericks like Fred Allen and Henry Morgan were able to get away with it for a longer or a shorter time. Groucho Marx is still getting away with it, by the trick of sticking in the barb and then pouring on the ointment. That way he can have his words and eat them too. But the writer finds it harder to bring off the trick every time, and if he is a writer of integrity as well as sound talent, he will spurn such tricks altogether. He will settle for recognition only on his own terms. Besides, there are always the books he wrote in the underground, when there were not many looking over his shoulder and those few were friends. These will be used against him in any showdown with the snoopers and policemen of the Social Lie, and these include the critics, editors and reviewers as well as the official and pseudo-official censors. Nelson Algren seems to be facing such a showdown just now. Time, which once mistook him for a Bourke-White with a soft-focus lens, a Poet of a Slums, bono making on ahening Side, raid of hi meis on the evedence this nater

their admiration." And Norman Podhoretz, in *The New Yorker*, discovers in Algren's new book "the startling proposition" that "we live in a society whose bums and tramps are better men than the preachers and the politicians and the otherwise re-

spectable." Why Mr. Podhoretz or Time's reviewer should find this proposition new and documenting it since the first word he ever put on paper. What he says about "Wild Side" on the jacket of the book is something that he might have said of any of his earlier books as well: "The book asks why lost people sometimes develop into greater human beings than those who have never been lost in their whole lives. Why men who have suffered most at the hands of men are the natural believers in humanity, while those whose part has been simply to acquire, to take all and give nothing, are the most contemptuous of mankind. Why the laughter of old survivors rings more true than those whose laughs have to be bought."

For the underground writer, emergence into the sun of recognition, fame and fortune is beset with hazards. Algren's own experience with it is as farcical as anything he himself has written. To the first Hollywood agent who tried to lure him he replied with a scribbled postcard: "I have nothing for Hollywood and Hollywood has nothing for me. I'm off to the banana republics." When another agent tried to sign him up, a little later, he let himself be lured as far as a Hollywood hotel and, when the deal fell through, found himself stuck with the hotel and liquor bills. Still another agent finally seduced him into selling "The Man with the Golden Arm," and now Algren is suing the agent and everybody else concerned in the deal in an effort to win back his virginity. So far as his published work is concerned, every word of it, he has never lost it, of course, nor is he likely to. His is a robust talent.

A sufficiently talented writer will survive anything, even Hollywood-if he gets out in time. But he is a very self-confident, or conceited one, who thinks he is robust enough to risk it. The Social Lie has many champions, and powerful ones. And clever ones, as anyone can tell you who has had any experience with them. But just the same the writer-and this is true of every artist-must emerge finally from

If not during his lifetime, then after he is dead. Formerly men have waited a hundred, even three hundred years for this to happen. Today things move more quickly, what with high speed presses, motion pictures, and electronic mass communications. But the underground is still the underground and the Social Lie is still the Social Lie. A political lie is, if anything, more mendacious and certainly more contagious on television than it ever was on a stump at the county fair rally. Nominating conventions, election issues and even the franchise itself can be rigged by electronics engineers and the Madison Avenue "engineers of public acceptance" more efficiently than the tobacco-chewing bosses and spellbinders ever rigged them. Sex is still more acceptable, and certainly more saleable, in multi-million-circulation Life magazine or a multi-million-dollar movie spectacle or television spectacular than in the most purifyingly frank masterpiece of fiction or the most beautiful love poem. The merchants and their hucksters have seen to that, on the principle that the shortest path to the pocket is through the fly, with the result that the Sexy Sell has long since replaced the 99 and 44/100 percent pure appeal, the bazaar becomes a burleycue, and the commercial more and more becomes the show. And the Number One Social Lie, the lie of war is a bigger lie and a more dangerous one today, in the age of mass communications and mass destruction than it was in the age of Paul Revere's horse and the flintlock rifle.

All of these and more the writers of the underground, from B. Traven and Henry Miller to George Orwell and Nelson Algren, have written and are writing about with great skill and passion. They are still writing about hell instead of heaven because, as Lorca said, hell is a city very like Madrid or New York, or Moscow. Heaven is the domain of specialists like Cameron Hawley and Sloan Wilson. Just the same, Frankie Machine and Dove Linkhorn will outlive Cash McCall and the Man in the Grey Flannel suit. Nelson Algren will outlive Time magazine, just as John Keats outlived Blackwood's Magazine. From the underground of the Millers and the Algrens a writer can emerge, if he is strong enough, intact and enduring. When the Hawleys and the Wilsons go under ground they stay there, remembered only, if at all, by their bankers and their tailors. Those who remake the world will remake "The Man with the Golden Arm." Nobody will need, or want, to remake "Executive Suite" and "The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit." Hawley and Wilson have got it made. They've had it. The grey flannel suit-nobody will want it, not even for free. There will be no Salvation Army, no Care, no Bundles for the Lesser Breeds to hand it down to. The white man and the Big Man will both be free of their burdens.

Those who are now emerging from the underground of literature, reaching a larger readership, thanks chiefly to the paperbacks, and beginning to bank royalty checks for the first time in their lives, will do well to ponder Nelson Algren's experience and remember his words. That it is "in the acres and acres of furnished rooms as well as in the smalltown slums; along the dim-lit streets behind the bright-lit boulevards as on the rutted roads behind Main Street; in the chicken-wire flops as in the all-steel cells with the solid doors; in the backroom brothels as in the Central Police line-ups; in the wards and the courts and the hospitals, the dens and the dives, we see and touch the bone and flesh of which our time is forged at last."

That "the true climate of the human condition on the home grounds may best be gauged underground."

Auto Da Fe

*bring it on loud, mac
with a brass band and all
drums, too, and guys wearing
big loud robes and beards
and all just too solemn*

*have this cat with the hairy face
condemn me publicly state
i am a heretic
nonbeliever/whatthehellver that is
and a bade mite
square as a bear*

*and when they're ready
to tear me out of my gourc
and everyone in this huge crowo
of eyeless morons
has just about had a climax
put in the nails with a triphammer,*

--Carl Larsen

COASTLINES

Lake

*All day with trees,
 The hair-nets of their red roots
 Naked over sand, I wrote in shingle
 Of the lake's
 Rough shore the year-in, year-out
 Names of those lost there,
 Where waters
 Mixed to breed on rocks washed shapes
 And coldness into them.
 Then heard them
 Under rain the glass fly skates,
 Till dusk had found me
 Climbing round
 The way I came, but heavier
 With epitaphs inside my nails.*

*And there,
 Horizons of them I had seen
 At tide's green edges slipping
 In their hearts
 Like shells collectors take;
 Their bodies in a wind that thunder
 Stoned at cattle*
 Roaming hills ..
*But in the time, what held
 Me back from saying
 They were dead and gone, or walked
 Between me and their shadows,
 When underground
 Their voices had a sense of death
 All night with trees longing
 At a windowpane?*

Holiday

*This is finding the nettle hand-shaped
 And the briar's arm that settles on me
 like the girl; and this picture of us,
 Though winters move themselves about.
 And here the near and red roach stones
 Of rivers through their summer's smile,
 Save secrets of her going tace,
 Though white in weed below
 Where surface breaks the lover's maps.
 This is walking the leaves of holiday
 And hills to villages laid low in grass,
 And this the place and parting of us,
 Though whispers move themselves about.*

--Brian Parvin
 (two poems)

DONT TAKE NO FOR AN ANSWER

George Garrett

"Women!" Stitch said. "Haven't you guys got anything to talk about?"

"What else?" somebody said. "Name something else."

"You want me to tell you a war story?"

Everybody laughed. It was Saturday afternoon, the last long Saturday before pay day, and a bunch of us were sitting around the orderly room playing cards. For nothing. Whose got money the week before pay day? Stitch was CQ. He had to stay there over Saturday to answer the phone and put out the lights. You can bet he would have signed the pass book and been gone, money or no money, if he hadn't pulled CQ.

"This is no joke, Stitch. How come you pulling duty on Saturday?"

"First Sergeant dumped on me," Stitch said. "He figures to shoot me out of the saddle and spend the weekend in my shack."

"What are you going to do if you catch that slob laying in your bed with your fraulein when you get home tomorrow?"

Stitch spun around in the swivel chair he was sitting in next to the phone. He just looked at the guy who'd said that and the whole room got quiet. All of a sudden his big hand shot into his pocket and in one motion came out again with a little click and there was the glint of a switchblade in the light. It was funny. The instant the blade flashed in the light Stitch grinned and leaned back easy in the chair, laughing to himself.

"Why, I'll kill him," Stitch said. "I'll cut that bastard in four pieces."

Everybody relaxed and the card game got going again. You never could tell about Stitch. Know what I mean?

"What about the fraulein?"

"Who, Irma?"

"Who else?"

"What about her?"

"What would you do to her?"

"You guys don't know nothing," Stitch said. "Just nothing. Irma's worthless. She ain't good for nothing except bedroom pushups. But she's so good at that, I wouldn't have the heart to hurt her. I'd just whip her fanny good and she'd love it."

"Tell us a war story, Stitch."

"Listen," he said, "I'm trying to read this magazine."

"Tell us about Paris."

Stitch had just come back from furlough, ten days in Paris. He could always tell a good story if you hit him in the right mood. The thing about Stitch was he

was moody. He seemed okay at the time, though.

"What about French women, Stitch?"

"I couldn't tell you," he said. "I seen some but I never even talked to one."

"Go on. Don't give me that. You went all the way to Paris and you never even talked to a woman."

"Maybe he didn't have to talk to one."

--You guys make me sick, Stitch said. You don't know nothing. I went to Paris and had nothing but one good time, believe me. But not with no French girls. If I was to do things that way, like you suckers, I'd end up broke with nothing to show for it. Now if you guys want to learn the facts of life--you got to plan, you got to figure your chances, you got to play the part. Once you see what you're going to get, don't hesitate, don't wait, it's yours. Don't take no for an answer.

--Now this woman was American. She was plain, oh my God she was plain as Missus Murphy's pig. I meet her on a sight-seeing bus. First thing I do when I hit town is get rid of this uniform, put on my civvies, grab my camera and hop a sight-seeing bus.

"I reckon you wanted to see all the sights."

--Didn't I? So I get me a seat in the back of the bus and I just wait. I'm sizing them up. I'm looking for one that's alone and not too sharp. Know what I mean? A woman that's sharp has got a notion about the value of her body. A sharp woman wears a price tag on her panties. What I'm looking for is one that not only ain't sharp, she's got to know it too.

"Are you kidding?"

--Don't interrupt. Stick around and learn something.

--So, sure as the world, the last one on the bus, there's this pig. She's alone--that's good. She's kind of shy, keeps looking around for somebody to give her ticket to and then she kind of sneaks up the aisle--excuse me for living--looking for a seat all by herself or at least by some nice old lady. I just sit back and light a cigarette. I say to myself, little lady, give your soul to God, because your ass is mine.

"What does she look like? Is she awful?"

--Awful. She's thirty or thirty-five if she's a day, dressed like she was fifty. Got a spread, some gray hair and a stupid hat.

"False teeth?"

--How the hell do I know, yet. I only just seen her yet on the bus.

-I wait till we get off the bus in front of a church to take pictures.

--I wonder, I say, if you'd mind posing for a picture in front of the church.

--Why, she says, surprised, all shook up, I don't know...

--I only want to show how big it is, I say. I want to send a picture to my mama and I want her to see how big the church is with somebody standing in front of it.

--All right, she says, I'll be glad to.

-Thanks a lot.

--So she stands there like a G.I. sack of spuds in front of this church and I fiddle with the gadgets on my camera--Just a minute, I say, I've got to get it in focus. I leave her stand there a minute or two. I can see she's trying to smooth the wrinkles out of her skirt and fix her hair so the gray won't show. Then I say, quick, how

DON'T TAKE NO FOR AN ANSWER 11

about a big smile. Boy! she gives me the pearly whites. You'd think she was Ava Gardner.

--Would you like me to take a picture of you? she says.

--Oh no, I say. It's just a waste of film.

--Come on, she says. Stand over there. Wait. You'll have to show me how to work it.

--I come around behind her and show her how the camera works. I don't touch nothing but the camera but I can see her hands shaking. Come on, smile a little bit. she says. So I give her a smile and we climb back on the bus.

--Would you mind, I say, if I sat with you? It's so good to talk to an American.

--Yes, she says. it's nice to talk to somebody from home.

--We sit down together.

--What am I going to tell my mama about the picture? I say.

--Who will I say the pretty girl is? --She just blushes and clams up.

--I'm Pete Brown, I say.

--Oh, she says, oh. I'm Ellen Cook.

--From then on it's life story time. I want her to feel easy with me so I tell mine first. This Pete Brown he's in the paratroops, a jumper. He's had an awful sad life. I tell her I like it all right overseas but I miss the old home town and my poor old mama too.

"Get off it, Stitch. You couldn't say that with a straight face."

--Couldn't I? Now this Ellen, she's a schoolteacher from Kansas. She teaches the third grade. --Do you like it?-- Oh yes, she says, only it does get trying sometimes.

--Married?-- And honest to God she blushes, like a kid. --No, she says, not yet.

--Me either. Well, Ellen you're wise. No use being hasty in a serious step like that. Are you traveling alone? --She nods. --I had a girl friend, she's the gym teacher at the school where I teach, who was planning to come with me. But at the last minute she got this job as life guard at the country club. --That's too bad, I say. It's always more fun to travel with a friend. --Yes. --And safer too. She blushes again. --Now's the time, Stitch, you start moving in. --I wonder, I say, if you'd mind seeing me again while you're here. I've got ten days furlough and I don't know a living soul. We could have fun seeing things together. You could tell me all about everything. I don't have much education. If you wouldn't mind, I mean. --I wouldn't mind, she says. Really, I wouldn't mind at all. --Just like the movies.

Stitch lit a cigarette and blew a couple of smoke rings.

"So what happens?"

--Cool it. Take your time. Rush things and you ruin them.

Okay, I take it slow. For two days I never lay a hand on her. We go everywhere. We see all the buildings and museums and pictures. We sit in the parks and in the sidewalk cafes. The second night we go walking by the river. It's a real nice night for that kind of thing. I just feed her the questions and she talks. She talks so much about herself you'd think she never had a chance to talk to anybody in her whole life. She tells me about being a kid in Kansas, about going to school and Sunday school and all about her Daddy. He's a big bible-thumping son of a bitch, straight as a shotgun six days of a week and drunk as a lord on Saturday night. Raises hell around the house, Runs around buck nekked hollering "I am the king of the moun-

tain" or some crap like that. Gives Ellen and her mama a bad time. Well, the old slob killed himself in a car wreck. She loved him but she hated him too. She knows she shouldn't hate him at all, but she can't help hating the awful things he used to do when he was drunk.

"Sounds like your old man, Stitch."

"Stitch never had no daddy. He was born in a cat house."

--This ain't my life story. I'm not talking.

a dolshe says. I cheve ast hauyou med. I can talk to you. I car tell you about things.

-I hope so, I say. I hope you feel easy with me. And I give her hand a little pat.

"Her hand?"

--One thing at a time. One thing at a time.

--Why did you come to Paris?

--I wanted to, she says.

--You must have some reason.

--Well, she says, yes. Not exactly reasons. I just have feelings. You'll laugh at me.

--No, I say. I'm just a big, dumb guy without much education but I'll never laugh at you.

--I believe you, she says. You see, Paris was always in the back of my mind since I was a little girl. It was everything in one word to a little girl who never saw anything in the world except in her geography book. I loved geography. And Paris was elegance and splendor and beauty, all in a kind of music in my mind. There wasn't anything, except space, but that was big in my town, nothing cool and gray like the pictures of Paris.

-Then there was the wickedness, too, she says.

-Wickedness?

--You know what I mean. I mean ever since I was a kid I had heard things about the American Legionnaires in our town. I used to see them when they had a parade. I'd see them snicker and pinch the grown girls. I've seen them laughing at jokes I couldn't hear and looking at pictures with their hands cupped around them.

--That was Paris too?

--You've got to try to understand. I was just a girl. These things were just feelings, they weren't ideas.

-I understand how it was.

-And then there is another thing. I don't know if I should tell you this. You wouldn't mind if I tell you this. You won't misunderstand?

--You can tell me anything, Ellen.

"Stitch, I believe you could sweet-talk the devil."

"He'll get a chance in hell."

--You guys got it all wrong. I'm not bad. I just play the part. You got to play the part.

--Well, she says, there was this boy. I loved him. I was crazy about him. Of course he never knew it because I was too shy and he was a class ahead of me in high school and it was silly. But he was very different from the others. He was gentle and different. He was beautiful I thought. I loved him so much I wanted to be him. I wanted to be inside his body. This is awful to say, but in those days I used to stay

awake in the dark in my room to watch him undress. He lived next door. Wasn't that scandalous?

--No, I say. Not if you loved him.

"Do you think she was telling the truth?"

--I figure she made up the last part, but what the hell, she talked like she believed it. Stitch, I say to myself, just keep your buttons on. You've got it made.

--Well, she says. The war came along and he was killed in it, just before the liberation of Paris. I was in college then and I cried and cried thinking about that beautiful boy dead.

And that's the other reason you're here.

--Yes, she says, if you put it that way.

-I'm glad you're here, I say. I'm glad.

--Why? she says.

--If you weren't here, how would I know you?

-But you don't know me.

--Yes I do. I feel I do.

"What were you feeling, Stitch?"

-Quit interrupting.

--You don't really know me. She says. You don't know me at all. And she starts to cry.

--Maybe I don't, I say. Maybe not. But I want to. And I give her a nice quiet Hollywood kiss.

"For Christ's sake, Stitch, is that all?"

--Slow down, soldier. I have to look at the river and the buildings and the lights.

--This is the music you used to think about, I say.

--Yes, she says, it's so beautiful.

--You want to see the wickedness too?

--All right, she says. I guess it would be all right with you along.

--So I take her to this clip joint in Pig Alley. Cheap champagne, nekked women and dirty jokes. She acts shocked. --I don't see how they can walk around like that with no clothes on in front of men. --They get used to it, I say. It don't bother them. --I could never get used to it, she says. I'd be so embarrassed. --Yes you could, I say. You've got a nice figure. Nothing to be ashamed of. --Then I concentrate on getting her drunk which is no big problem. When she's drunk out of her mind, I take her to a cheap hotel. She don't say nothing until we get in the room.

--Where are we?

--Take off your clothes.

-No, she says. No.

-Okay, I say, I'll do it for you.

-She fights me like a bitch, scratching and biting, but she don't holler. She don't make a sound. She just fights.

--All right, I say, when I get her stripped down. You see. You got a nice body.

--Don't touch me.

--You look better than any of them girls.

--No, she says, no I'm ugly. I'm ugly and old and flabby and nobody loves me.

-- love you.

"Tell her, Stitch!"

-I love you.
--No you don't, she says.
--Yes I do, I keep saying. And all this time I'm playing the old tune on her just like you play a guitar.
--I'm a virgin, she says. Please I'm a virgin.
--Yeah? I say. Well, so am I.
"So what happens?"
--What do you think, soldier?
"Was it any good?"
--It's always good. I just close my eyes and she's a movie star. When she finally turned loose of herself she's like a rabbit. Crazy! She was carrying on so I thought they was going to throw us out of the hotel. You see, nobody was ever good to her before I guess. Nobody ever treated her like she was somebody.
--The next morning, first thing, before she has a chance to start feeling sorry for herself, I ask her to marry me. I tell her I love her and I want it to be proper and all. I tell her that just as soon as my furlough is over I'm going back and get the chaplain's permission and we'll get married.
"Did she fall for that?"
--Didn't she? It's all like a dream come true, she says. And she runs out and buys a whole lot of clothes. I got to admit they made an improvement. You keep telling a pig she's wonderful and they start believing it. Hell, I almost believed it. By the end of the time I almost started to like the bitch.
"That's tough."
--I even started to feel bad about spending all her money. She even bought me a suit of clothes. I felt kind of bad, not real bad.
"Stitch, you're just too soft-hearted."
--Yeah. She even come down to the station to see me off on the train.
--Don't leave me, Pete, she says.
--I'll be back in two or three days.
"Maybe she's pregnant."
--Maybe.
"What would Irma say if she found out what you was doing on your furlough?"
--You guys! That's the first thing I done when I got back, was to tell Irma.
"What did she do?"
--She cried for the poor woman. Irma's a D.P. and she's always sorry for women. She said I was terrible. She said I ought to be killed and she hated me. She said she was going to find that girl and make me marry her. She said everything. Then we hopped in the sack and she was all over me like a tiger.
"That don't make any sense, Stitch. That's crazy. It don't make a damn bit of sense."
"The trouble with you," Stitch said, "is you don't know nothing about women. If you don't know nothing about the subject, the best thing is to shut up."
Stitch looked so damn mean for a minute nobody moved. One guy held a card in mid-air. Everything was frozen like a photograph. Then Stitch started laughing and cleaning his fingernails with his switchblade.
"You poor simple bastards," he said, and he kept on laughing.
He was crazy that way. As long as he was happy, we decided to go ahead and play cards.

James Joyce

... There was some talk of this Irishman
 (I always thought there was something in that Ulysses business)
 All around him were bursting the tidal waves of the grass struggle
 (His sickened best bed being occupied by his dear dead mother)
 He was heard murmur, Ireland (a little island in the Atlantic)
 Was not all, this pygmy to the pygmy Yeats.
 He was heard murmur (after that suffragette grandmother gossip Ibsen)
 What? From the erse sow celtic stylight brothel of Dublin-
 Uh, shades of Swift, Wilde, Shaw and the English language!
 Three dense jeers for this little Irishman,
 The dreariest symptom of five decayed decades!
 A lewd frail fraud freud twisting linguistic lice-words,
 A woman's soulful soliloquy on getting her holeful,
 Yet another green charioteer tossing lank green hair
 On yet another poet--you've guessed it, in love.
 I'll bite.
 What, did Leap the Loophole pop a penny up the stern and peephole
 Bum say to Steep an diddle his between half past seven
 and the post office from Maundy to the Dublin pub?
 I tell you:
 Oh much much so much more than a Stein stutter or an Epstein statue
 Everything, anything in existence-other than the
 resolve that artists, scientists, workers, lovers,
 explorers, pioneers, gods would take possession of
 the machinery of the world, and have new life, lust,
 art, freedom, nobility, power, clarity, creativity
 and divine ecstasy forever.

-Harry Hooton

Art of the Sonnet: XXV

could the sunburnt sea in the bronzer combers
 have seen this the green gray body of me
 might hold me then to the foam of an ear
and erg frome thoroughe names swarthy
that i doted by oughta phend sail
exiled by the tides utter envy of me
 I will violate the arrogance of consciousness
where we lust and bawl for brevity
that the shortness of the eye is god
 carving gratitude from the hiss of memory
 I shall be no more damned than I shall ever be
 ripping the seas cervix to squeeze out me

-Gil Orlovitz

The Engineer

"Out on the ranch you can run
 And holler all you please ..."

 But not in the presence of expensive animals
 Nor through fields of nervous oats

 Plows and harrows
 Dangerous,
 The creek, barn-fouled
 Not for amusement

 Upstream
 Past the hundred-acre field
 (One corner devoted to neurasthenic hogs)
 The water lay dull beside oaks and alders

 Sneaking pocketsful of rock-robbing the driveway
 And mud, sticks, I built a weir
 Tearing stale water, forcing it
 To sound
 If only temporarily

 .. and Aunty loves you
 Like her very own."

-Philip Whalen

The Race

In paddocks of time
Contenters pace the littered straw,
Unmindful of curious odds
That weigh upon the pending
Never-ending race beyond.

Loosed upon the field,
Saddled, jockeyed in innocence,
 Bearing colors seldom theirs to choose,
The peak toward da ero gates hell:

This circular earth of time
Rimmed by fences arched into
 Themselves, spurning
The grassy core within, the
Dream-free fields without.

Curving beyond them,
Perpetually turned toward unknown,
Earth meets the hammering hooves
 With syllables of dust
Perhaps the slow ones comprehend.

--Robert Eskew

DRUNKARDS SUNDAYS

Lloyd Zimpel

Alvin got out of bed around noon. He bothered only to put on his socks and shoes and a pair of pants. He already had on a sour-looking t-shirt in which he had slept and he was scratching under this as he yawned his way downstairs. The house was quiet. He looked into the livingroom and saw his old man sleeping in his underwear on the sofa with the Sunday funnies over his face.

Alvin went to the kitchen and sullenly fixed himself a bowl of puffed rice and milk. This was the part he disliked about batching with the old man--he had to get his own meals. When he finished, he lighted a cigarette and sat glaring out the window at old Mudgett's pigeons as they strutted around on top their loft.

Alvin hated those pigeons hated them as intensely as he'd ever hated anything, with every nerve end in his body. He figured he had good reason. The shed in which old Mudgett kept them bordered on the narrow backyard where Alvin parked his Hudson. Sometimes there was pigeon mess all over the top of the car. This made Alvin furious, for he washed his car often to keep it looking nice. But, with the pigeons, it was no use; they dirtied it up fast as he could scrape it off. Now, at every chance he got, Alvin would abuse the guilty birds. They seemed to him the lowest possible form of life: and old Mudgett--because he kept them--was scarcely higher...

Now, as he watched, Alvin saw old Mudgett hobble out of the shed carrying the pail with which he watered the birds. He stood for a moment looking severely at the Hudson, then slowly made his way to the house. Alvin rapped on the glass and made a face, but old Mudgett, hard of hearing as he was, failed to notice and disappeared into his house.

Late in the afternoon Alvin put on his crumpled baseball cap. Its bill was turned up and two buttons pinned to it: one was his Iron Workers union button; the other was larger and on it were these words:

I TOLD YOU SO

He went out into the back yard and looked at the pigeons atop Mudgett's shed; then he walked toward the alley, keeping his eye on the birds till he was too close to the shed to see them. He passed between his Hudson and the shed and turned into the alley. Here the shed hid him from old Mudgett's house, and he stooped, picked up a large stone, and let it fly at the pigeons. They took off in a wild scattering confusion, some of them alighting at once on the roof of the feed store next to Mudgett's house, and others settling down to circle swiftly around the housetops.

As he walked down the alley, Alvin glanced contentedly back at them from time to time...

Old Mudgett, home from his afternoon prayer meeting, his birds fed and watered, sat in the rocker by the kitchen window. He saw Alvin come out of the house and

walk to the alley and then the birds fly up. He knew what had frightened them. It happened every day, but it was worse on Sundays because Alvin was home all day. "That boy is no good," he muttered to himself. "He has a face like a squirrel and his mind is made crooked." And he sat by the window, angrily rocking, watching his birds as one by one they drifted back to the loft. In a little while they were all on the roof, sitting peacefully, sunning themselves in the gentle June sunlight...

Then he looked up to see Alvin coming back down the alley, a six-pack of beer under each arm. The old man stopped rocking and leaned close to the window, his body tense with anticipation. Alvin passed out of sight behind the shed. The next moment a corn cob came sailing through the air, bounced on the roof in the midst of the pigeons, and sent them all into mad, bewildering flight.

Mudgett uttered mild and trembling curses and watched as Alvin came into view beside his car. His head was tipped back and there was a look of accomplishment on his face as he watched the flying birds. Then, with his beer, he climbed into the front seat of the Hudson.

Old Mudgett seethed. "That young outlaw--that young outlaw--" He pounded on the arms of the rocker till the paper-like skin of his hands was bruised, and flirted with a chaotic, fantastic revenge that never quite took shape in his old mind.

in his car and tormenting the birds, but always he was disappointed. Alvin's Sunday beer drinking was as much a ritual as his own prayer meetings.

He knew the pattern: that degenerate boy would sit all afternoon and half the night in that rattletrap and drink beer and throw the cans at his pigeons. No doubt later Alvin's girl friend--a fast woman if ever there was one (old Mudgett knew what they did in that car once it got dark)--would join him in his beer swilling and they would sing and make noises till all hours.

Disgraceful, disgraceful ... The boy should be in the army like other decent young men ... But, Mudgett thought, of course the army wouldn't want his rotten kind: like a bad apple, he'd corrupt all the others.

Now he heard the sound of the car horn--an outrageous, nerve-shattering blast--and he peered out the window. He saw what was happening: each time the circling pigeons tried to land, Alvin would lean brutally on the horn and away the frightened birds would go again.

ared with fara and he tried to pond potemingh,
made an obscene gesture, and continued to blow the horn:

Late in the afternoon, Alvin's Sunday companion arrived. Old Mudgett saw her come shuffling down the alley in a dress she'd probably got when she was twenty pounds heavier; it gave her a maternal look, but Mudgett wasn't fooled--her kind couldn't mother a dragon. He pursed his lips in indignation. Bad as it was for this terrible boy to sit drinking the Sabbath away, it was even more appalling that he should have a young lady assist him. There was something unspeakably bawdy about it--the height of looseness and indecency. Old Mudgett hitched his rocker nearer the kitchen window and kept a close eye on them.

The girl, Wanda, came up beside the car and stood quietly looking in the window,

a vague smile on her face. She was older than Alvin--seven or eight years--and had a slightly potty figure, but she still held the sturdy look of a female athlete. She raised her hand and touched the window.

Alvin looked up from the fingernail he was cleaning with a cotter key, and made an unenthusiastic gesture of greeting. She smiled broadly--showing a bad tooth or two and got into the car. "Hi Ally," she said.

Alvin gave her his casual mean look. He flicked a newly-cleaned fingernail at the remaining beer cans on the floor. "Help yourself unless you got a broken arm," he said.

"Don't mind if I do," she said and reached for a can. There were only two left. "Got here just in time, didn't I?" she said. "You must of really been hitting it."

"I didn't buy it to look at," Alvin said.

Wanda sighed. Alvin, she saw, was in one of his snotty moods-- he always seemed to be in a bad mood of one kind or another--and it made him so hard to get along with.

Alvin directed his scowl toward the pigeons coming to rest on the roof of the feed store. "Goddam things," he said, but as though he had something else on his mind, he didn't honk the horn.

Wanda wrestled with the beer can till she got it pried open. A little spilled on her skirt but she didn't notice. "Well," she said brightly, "what's new?"

Alvin shrugged without turning. He was craning his head to see the pigeons as they strutted along the edge of the feed store roof. Their nonchalance, which fitted so well with the peaceful June afternoon, seemed to anger him and he muttered to himself in a sinister manner.

"Anything exciting happen at work?" she said.

"Naw," Alvin said; then added, somewhat vaguely: "For Christ's sake, I could do that job with my eyes shut."

"I know what you mean," Wanda said. They had often discussed Alvin's job he was shake-out man in the town's only foundry--at great length and in careful detail. It was one of the few things that Alvin was articulate about.

Now Wanda, reminded, began to speak of her job. "Sometimes I get so sick I could scream. Just the same old thing put in packing slip, staple the box, put in packing slip, staple the box, over and over and over. It drives a person--."

"Hell," Alvin said. "You got it easy."

Wanda drank from her beer can and gave him a wounded look. "Well, I don't know about that," she said, hurt that he hadn't sympathized.

"How'd you like a job like mine?" he said brutally, turning on her. "How'd you like that?"

Wanda sighed. "I guess I wouldn't like it," she said sadly.

"I guess you wouldn't either," Alvin said in a satisfied tone and turned back to the window.

For a time Wanda stared at a neighboring garage.. "I should never of stopped skating," she said. "That's where the money was and easy to get, too. Course it wasn't my fault I had to stop."

Alvin grunted suspiciously. He'd not known her till well after her skating days were past, and now he always looked distrustingly on her glorious claims about that part of her life.

... that's where the money was," she said again. "Some weeks I'd make two hundred dollars, sprint prizes and when we took the derby championship and all."

Alvin snickered. "What'd you quit for then?"

"It wasn't my fault," she said. "I got sick."

Alvin snickered again. He knew that story. Sick. What happened was she got knocked up by the roller derby manager and had to have an abortion. She'd told him that much once, but she liked to think of it as "sick."

"Tough," he said, and finished his can of beer. He rolled down the window--which was closed to keep out the flies--and threw the can at old Mudgett's shed. Only a few birds had come down from the feed store, but these took violently to the air: alarmed, the others quickly joined them. Satisfied, Alvin reached for the last can of beer.

"I used to have fun," Wanda said in a dreamy voice. "It wasn't work at all--just fun."

"Go back, if you like it so well," Alvin said.

"Oh, I can't now," she said. "I'm getting too--" She was about to say "old" but, already too aware of the difference in years between the twenty-three year old Alvin and herself, she said instead "slow." "You slow down and lose the touch unless you practice all the time. It's kind of rough, too, to be doing unless you're used to it, with everybody shoving all over the floor."

Alvin snorted depreciatingly, drank from the beer can, and resumed his watch on the pigeons. "Look at those bastards now," he said triumphantly. "Fraid to land."

"You get awful tired of travelling all the time, though," Wanda said. "And people don't always treat you so nice. They seem to think girls in the roller derbies are, well, I don't know what."

Alvin snickered and gave the beer can an underhanded toss into the air. Then he started the Hudson and backed it into the alley and they drove off to get more beer.

Old Mudgett watched as the car moved down the alley. He waited till it was out of sight and then hurried outside, into his backyard scattered with beer cans. Muttering wrathfully to himself, he bent stiffly and painfully to pick them up and one by one tossed them back into Alvin's yard. Between each toss he rested his weary old arm but even so, by the time his yard was clean, he was pretty well exhausted. The pulse in his temple was jumping crazily. Slowly, he hobbled back into the house and took up his post by the window...

... Before long, the Hudson crawled into view. Dismally, old Mudgett figured they'd gotten beer enough now to last them half the night. He watched as the car turned into the yard, the motor grinding fiercely in low gear to scare the pigeons.

The car had barely stopped before the door flew open and Alvin--his face twisted in fury at the treachery that filled his yard with empty beer cans behind his back--bounced out swearing so loudly that old Mudgett could hear him even with his bad ear and in spite of the pane of glass.

He hitched up close to the window. Alvin was dashing frenziedly about like a squirrel gone mad, picking up beer cans and with all his might flinging them back into Mudgett's yard. For a few minutes it seemed to Mudgett that the air was filled with whizzing beer cans--a hideous oath accompanying each--something like, a ter-

rible hail storm with howling winds... He watched all this with seeming calmness, but his sore hands gripped the rocker arms with painful tightness. Soon he was trembling in such a distressing manner he could not sit still, and he rose to stand by the window.

Even at this distance he could see the twisted hatred in Alvin's mouth, the furious color of his face. He was standing in the middle of the yard, a beer can in each hand, waiting for the pigeons to reach the point in their circle closest to him. The cans fell far short and bounced harmlessly to the ground below Mudgett's window.

Horried, angry, old Mudgett was shaking so badly he could hardly bear it. He could put up with this insolence no longer. As rapidly as his old legs would carry him he tottered outside and screamed in his ancient high-pitched voice that trembled like a wire in the wind: "You young bastard! Stop that now! You hear me? Stop that, I say!"

Alvin-- sneering nastily--paused for only a moment. "Here's for you," he said, stabbing a finger into the air. Then he found a last beer can under his Hudson and let it fly. It rolled to the ground at old Mudgett's feet.

The old man, his hair incredibly white against his blood colored face, shook a fragile fist at Alvin; with the other hand he gripped a small tree for support. "Til call the police, by God!" he said in a voice that was little more than a scratchy whisper. "You've got no right pestering my birds with those filthy beer cans."

Alvin had calmed down a bit, but only because the beer cans were exhausted. "Go ahead, call 'em," he taunted. "Ill tell 'em how those goddam pigeons crap up everything around here. Maybe you'd like that, eh?" He laughed arrogantly, for a moment the two stood glaring at each other. Wanda reached over and rolled down the window so she could hear better.

"You ruffian," old Mudgett screeched. "Why aren't you in the army like all decent boys? Haven't you any shame?"

Happily, Alvin repeated his obscene gesture. "You know what you can do, granpa," he said in an evil voice, and laughed. He came a few steps closer to old Mudgett, his hands held out from his body as though he had half a mind to throttle the old fellow.

Mudgett stared, speechless with horror, rage and fright. He saw this boy advancing toward him like a vision of death, grimy hands-with pale clean crescents under each nail-held ready to grab him up. The pin on the bill of Alvin's cap burned itself into his uncertain vision:

I TOLD YOU SO

Then Alvin turned and went back to the car. Old Mudgett stared after him. He was about to speak--what, he didn't know, but at that moment Wanda leaned out the window and said mildly: "Go to hell, you old fart!"

Old Mudgett was stunned. He thought at first he had misunderstood, but there was no denying he'd heard the foul name correctly. Unspoken words gurgled in his throat. He stood, shocked beyond all expression, unable to find it in himself to even raise a shaking fist at the two young faces grinning their evil victory from the car.

A lady, he thought... A young lady... Even if she was loose. Oh my God!
How foul! How unspeakably vile!

He admitted defeat and on strengthless old legs, he turned to go back to his rocker, heedless of the beating wings as his birds landed on the feed store, and of the beer cans that brushed against his feet as he groped for the porch railing...

In the car, Wanda said feelingly: "What a nasty old man. I never have liked him."

Alvin chuckled half aloud, as though he had some secret knowledge. He adjusted the bill on his cap and reached for a fresh can of beer. "He don't worry me none, he said. "He's going to drop dead one of these days anyway."

"Well," Wanda said. "The less I see of him the better I like it."

"When he kicks off," Alvin said grimly, "we'll see what happens to those goddam pigeons."

.. For a long time they sat drinking. The afternoon shaded off into dusk. From time to time they talked, and as it got dark they began to sing. First they sang "There Is A Tavern In The Town, In The Town." And then they sang "Roll Me Over In The Clover," and after that "Back You Ass Against The Wall." Alvin sang that one alone, but he couldn't remember all the words, and after a while they stopped singing all together...

.. When it came on to dusk, old Mudgett, shaken and weak from the afternoon's encounter-vaguely he knew that many more Sundays like this would kill him sat by the kitchen window and watched his birds come down for the night. They did this slowly, one by one. He'd watched them many times before and he'd noted a rigid pattern in the way they left the feed store roof and entered the loft. They did it in an order that seldom varied each bird had its turn. The last bird in, he had noticed, was always a big splash roller cock.

Now he watched as the roller peered into the dark hole that led into the loft. His tail feathers lifted tentatively several times, as though he were about to fly in, and then suddenly he was gone.

Alone, old Mudgett sat rocking. The darkness gathered around him. He heard singing in the car, but it was muted, indistinct. After a time he looked and could not make out the car in the darkness.

He got up then and, without turning on the light, heated up the soup left over from dinner. When he had eaten it he went out to the back porch, where he sat in an unpainted wooden arm chair, facing toward the car...

Now it was quite dark. A pale moon and a scattering of stars had come along; a light warm breeze blew comfortably. The night was quiet. He heard only the sounds of far-off Sunday traffic on the town's main street. Occasionally, muffled voices from the car rose above this, but they were not loud enough to disturb the peacefulness of the night.

.. For a long time he sat there, hidden in the darkness and staring toward where the Hudson should be. He talked to himself from time to time, muttered half-spoken words, but he was unaware that he was doing so ... Gradually, as he sat, he began talking more and more, whispering to himself strong words of vengeance. But they

had no root in his mind: they were words only, independent, almost meaningless to him. Certainly he would never act on them, but it seemed as though repetition would make them take shape; and then they would act of their own accord and somehow bring down destruction on the heads of that awful pair in the automobile. Now that it was dark, it did not seem impossible that could happen: during the day--during a bright June Sunday--it was highly improbable, and he knew it...

As he stared into the darkness, it occurred to him suddenly that the sounds he now heard, above the murmuring of his own voice, were very suspicious. He cocked an ear toward the car--its springs were squeaking ... someone seemed to be rocking it. He listened carefully for a time, hearing a muted groan. The springs squeaked softly ... It was all pretty unmistakable.

And again old Mudgett was shocked. Under my very nose, he thought ... He suspected, of course, but this was real evidence. They have no shame, he thought, no shame, no shame, no shame whatsoever. People as shameless as that should be locked away forever. Oh God! What is the world coming to?

For a few moments longer he listened to these lewd sounds and when he could bear them no longer he rose from his chair-carefully, so it would not make a noise and betray him--and turned to enter the house...

But then a sly idea popped into his head. With his hand on the screen door he stopped dead still and looked furtively around him, as though this sudden cunning might have made him visible in the dark ... Craftily, with exceeding stealth, he crept down the porch steps and floundered around in the yard till his foot touched a beer can.

This he picked up and holding it in his trembling bony hand, stole slowly toward the car until he had reached the edge of his property. He stopped here and with an effort focused his dim old eyes till they caught the shadowy outline of the Hudson. He noticed the sound of the springs was quite obvious here.

Slowly, carefully, as though what little was left of his life depended on it, he raised the beer can, and with the little strength in his arm, threw it at the car. And, like an assassin just rid of his bomb, he gave a sigh-almost a groan-of relief that the act was done ... The can hit the car roof and made a clunking sound, not very loud.

He spun around, hurrying as best he could through the beer cans to the safety of his house. He was chortling to himself and his eyes shone like a cat's.

"I fixed them!" he breathed moistly. "I fixed them!" And with the screen door open, ready to dash in, he paused to listen. For a moment, as he looked toward the car, he thought he saw the door open and Alvin climb out with the button on the bill of his cap glowing like a red hot brand: I Told You So...

Horried, Mudgett stared pop-eyed into the darkness ... From the loft came the sound of a pigeon cooing silkily in its dream ... With an effort, old Mudgett got himself inside the house and locked the door, just in case...

*The Newest Criticism**A Tete a Tete*

(SCENE: A library. Apollyon Tête sits at a gleaming mahogany table.

Will Shakespeare enters, hat in hand, and bows low)

Will I understand you set yourself up, Sir, to be
a critic.

Tête No, no! Not set myself--I am.

My perspicuity's unique

No Doctor Sam am I. You've come?--

Will To seek your sterling, sage advice-

Tête You're meek-that's good-as seven mice,
twice thrice as meek as one.

You cannot stumble if you're humble

and lean on me. My fee?

Will (placing a golden dubloon on Tête's outstretched palm)

Oh, sir, you honor me
by what you've done
already, Sir. Meek, entering your door,
I'm now quite twice as meek.

Tête

I see your manuscript-
yclept?

Will Love's Labor Lost-

Tête A fetus in a jar! Come, come.

That's not a proper title
at such low cost.

Now let me see--pick some
allusive thing, like little Tattle.

Will But, Sir, that's tat for tit

and Jaquenetta's breasts

Tête Consult John Donne, my pupil. Wit

he learned from me. He's metaphysical-
e'en aphrodisical.

Will I shall. You recommend him.

Tête Oh, no-but I commend him

as a prime example--yes, an apogee

of what one learns from me.

Will Shall I learn, too?

Tête We'll see. Your tit'll never do.

So let's proceed.

I hear; you read.

Will I dip within on random risk

Tête Be brisk!

Will So, here. I'll let the king explain.

"Our court, you know, is haunted.

With a refined traveller of Spain;

A man in all the world's new fashion planted

That hath a mint of phrases in his brain;

One whom the music of his own vain tongue

Doth ravish like enchanting harmony;
 A man of complements, whom right and wrong . .
 Tête Tongue, wrong!
 Will "Have chose as umpire of their mutiny:"
 Tête Mutiny, harmony!
Sad, flat banality! Unmetaphysical!
 And such bad rhymes!
 Will Oh, Sir, you're simply whizzical!
 Ill cinderize, betimes,
 Love's Labor Lost, and, taught, indite
 A play that's right, called Tattle little.
 Tête You're not too bright-but learn a little.
 And watch your rhyming, son.
 Read Doctor Donne.

--Richard Ashman

Hi-Ho on a Patriotic Day

Fortitude is rewarding, the senator exclaims,
 balancing the citizen on hand to see him
 juggle abstract morals and greed beneath a sky
 quilted together of a thousand hysterics.

From the clay banks of our rusty river
 kingfishers dive and return smaller than
 and as beholden as old English sparrows,
 these too, and furthermore, are our burdens,
 and the bear in the park sucking peppermints,
 we surmise, as ordained by the God of sparrows.

The senator says: let there be lights in your windows
 to beckon sons lying in strange beds, one hopes
 alone, or at least anchored down by holy commandments,
 for then this street and that will honor their names.

Sons are often semi-precious, daughters more
 frequently minted and less negotiable for fame.
 Wary-one listens grimly beset by old smiles
 and older grins; moreover it is early summer
 and conceivably the mesmerizing weather may last
 forever and there are old humors that worry.

An astute flag here and there, a noise athwart
 the memories like a warning, but the holiday thirst
 is hot like his honor's frockcoat in the sun.
 Hurrah for the pan-faced mothers, the zebra coated
 daughters and solid rubber youngsters, and so
 deeply enthralled are we with promises and predictions,
 we'd gladly chain anew our cowering sons to a cannon.

--David Cornel DeJong

*Reform and the Myth of Perfection**an inquiry into the Good Life**Barding Dahl*

The liberal of our time fancies himself a tragic figure. He looks backward down the road of history, saddened by the unending ruins of shattered idols—natural law, divine right of kings, the noble savage, a jealous god, laissez faire, dialectical materialism. All shaken to fragments by onrushing time.

The question of what constitutes liberalism continues to engross much of our energy because we tend to equate liberal with good. All traditional values are under fire, so much so that at times we appear to be living in a vacuum. For that reason, a pursuit of values with reference to the philosophy of liberalism is a particularly timely undertaking.

Where Marx could gloomily pore over the reports of the factory inspectors and level a damning finger at the individual owners responsible for the legalized crimes against society, who now shall be singled out—the stockholder, the hired manager, the inventor, or the voter? And how about the newspapers, and the teachers, not to mention poor old dad?

There is a truism dear to the hearts of alarmists that our technology has outstripped our ability to control our very creations. The strong point about truisms is that they are true—the speed of life, dating from factory division of labor, has accelerated at a rate difficult to comprehend. Since the turn of the 17th century, it is no longer possible for a Descartes to apprehend virtually the whole of formalized knowledge, but in the 20th century, this is so little the case that it takes a dedicated lifetime to get hold of even one of the innumerable sub-groups of knowledge.

Industry, science, and commerce are like a gas expanding infinitely, but if a comparison be made with the growth of esthetics, including art, religion, morals, and law, it is like stumbling into a museum tucked away somewhere in a colossus of glass and chrome. Such choice items as capital punishment, adultery as the sole grounds for divorce, war, and electoral colleges bellow out their absurdity when placed alongside a cyclotron.

There has, for example, been for fifty years no basic change in the practice of education, and something under ten per cent of the American population have anything more than a label-hanging familiarity with the arts. Mysticism, in its basic tenets of faith, has been largely unaltered since the invention of crystal balls. Social convention still obliges bare acquaintances to grin in painful embarrassment as they flounder for formulas about the weather and vague encouragements in the struggle for life.

Of course, change itself is not always an improvement, but when vast areas of culture become encrusted and left behind, there is a strong indication that some part and et shind, aere of the machinery is out of gear. It is obvious that the methods which have produced industrial and scientific miracles have not applied with anything like comparable vigor to those even more vital areas of life, morals and the universe of unweighable things. The reason for this is simple, man has taken the path of least resistance. It is far easier to make an atom submarine than to define mental health. We have centered on hinges, valves, and springs because they are immediate and visible. The more difficult problem of 'do we really want a machine at all' we leave to the academician. And the "departmental" man of the university is usually dulled into cocoon-like complacency by the time he has achieved status in the academic world.

The more basic definitions of liberalism inevitably include the entire range of esthetic values, beginning with what party ticket to vote and ending with a cosmic theory of the good life. There is no aspect of experience which does not find a place in the liberal view, just as the Marxian theory of history finds a place in its scheme for any event, no matter how trivial.

And just so may the liberal set up a framework by which all events may be measured. He may say that the religious art of Renaissance Italy harmed the cause of freedom by glorifying a corrupt and empire-greedy church, but if he is a good liberal he will investigate the situation and determine the alternatives that were left the artists of that time. With no popular audience outside the church, there was no livelihood or effective expression on the outside. Within the church there were liberal elements, but in any case, art was not for long confined to expounding official dogma. The Renaissance was far too volatile and creative for that.

In judging history, there is great danger in using standards of one age to apply to another. Within brief periods, men's attitudes and habits change beyond recognition, so that it is a logical barbarity to condemn what we consider barbarous practices of former days. Moreover, there are wide differences from one culture to another, even when contemporary, so that it is impossible to use terms like "liberal" and "reactionary" in alien contexts. And lastly, within the same culture, we cannot expect the same behavior from people of radically different heredity and experience.

The discoveries of anthropology and the other humanities, and they are discoveries, have made clearer that the character of any "fact" or "event" is relative to the perceiver. The death of a Negro in a race riot is cause for celebration for certain southerners, a shocking tragedy for a northern liberal, a matter for a headshake or two for those who believe in the predestination of social processes. There is no guarantee that any one judgment will give the whole picture. Even on an issue as clear-cut as a lynching, there is wide disagreement on what society's response should be, and this cannot help but alter the definition of the event. One extreme will say 'do nothing.' and the other will say 'blast the white mobs with machine guns.' The liberal will recognize the self-defeating nature of violence in most instances, but will, if all else fails, send for the machine guns. This is something the liberal rarely gets credit for from the extremists his readiness to go to the wall for his beliefs when he is satisfied that no more effective course of action remains open to him.

The vacillation of the liberal mind is nothing more than the search for right in a world of uncertainty, a world made dismayingly complex by the relativity and polyglot nature of human values. The man who is always certain of the rightness of his actions cannot avoid being a fool most of the time. He may be the first to admit this, but usually claims he is an heroic fool, and this is enough excuse. At least, he says, he takes a stand. But if this stand contributes nothing to the general betterment, its value is questionable.

Although the relativity of human values is universal, it is sometimes worth while to consider them in historical perspective. Although the Periclean Greek and the modern liberal are violently different in many respects, there is a common resemblance. It is even possible to trace the adventures of the Greek legacy down through time, surviving the ravages of Roman imperialism, the confines of pinch-minded scholasticism, and the buccaneering extravagances of laissez faire philosophy. This Athenian heritage is typified by a cyclical attitude towards life: time runs, the day is ended, and a new day begins. The passions make chaos of life, but let us strive for as much balance and harmony as possible.

Without a concept of history, or even of chronological sequence, the Greeks could never evolve a theory of progress, or of social action for the betterment of conditions. This is the great difference between the modern and the liberal of antiquity, that man can control his environment is a distinctly modern idea. What the Marxists call the "incessant struggle of the working class and certain renegade intellectuals" is in reality the history of the idea that man is the master of his fate.

The notion that man is responsible first to himself achieved important ascendance first in the Renaissance and later in the Protestant Reformation, although of course there is no sharp line of division between them. The Elizabethan age and preneur philosophy are the historical extensions of the idea of individualism, and the worldwide revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries were also the children of individual responsibility.

However, certain historical events checked the momentum of the individualistic plunge: the boom-and-bust cycles of capitalist economies, the unchecked centralization of economic and political power, and the absorption of state governments by business philosophies were eloquent testimony of the consequences of unrestrained individualism. As surely as sand runs through the glass, uninformed individualism leads to freedom for the few and bondage for the many.

The collectivist philosophies, dating from More's Utopia of the 16th century, and achieving most importance in the Hitler-Stalin era, were attempts to revise society by the complete alteration of the status quo. The utter failure in which all these attempts ended indicates the futility of attempting rapid and sweeping changes for which there is insufficient foundation in the social structure.

The liberal is aware of this futility, and accepts the revisionist nature of his own efforts as a social necessity. He knows that man will accept a great deal of injustice before he will forego the elemental sphere of eating, loving, movement and contemplation. This tendency of man generally to prefer the immediate to the abstract has certainly saved him from many more errors than he has already committed in the name of ideologies. The efficacy of social plans which require sacrifice of immediate experience is doubtful. This is not to say that man's proper place is groveling in the

REFORM AND THE MYTH OF PERFECTION 29

trough of animal sensation, but that any social scheme which requires renunciation of the immediate is likely to fail to meet the real needs of man.

It is possible to say that all those who reject the present in favor of some abstract plan are in one important aspect reactionary, in that they do not attack the problems of a real world. Hardly any of the religions assess social problems realistically, and most state governments are notorious for their bungling and hindsight approach to general needs. The ruling class usually has a ready-made philosophy to justify the existing order, and artists are not generally systematic enough in their approach to discuss issues intelligently. Intellectuals as a group are scattered throughout all the armed camps of the world, and are not, as in the time of the Russian Czar, identifiable as a group.

The largest single body of intellectuals, the educators, also tends to reject reality through the widespread notion that their role is merely to report, not to interpret. The resulting isolation of the university man from the anvil of life creates a degree of abstraction which plunges choleric students into despair. Ideas are "interesting," or "stimulating," but only in the classificatory sense.

All those who reject the immediate cry out in great pain for perfection-be it Heaven, Utopia, Prosperity, Manifest Destiny, the Master Race, or the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. In turning away from sunlight, the furrow, and the cup, they admit their failure to deal with the world on its own terms, those of rage, fear, ambiguity, doubt, and inevitable error. They are afraid to play odds, but want a sure winner, even if the horse comes in a thousand years from now.

Albert Camus, in his philosophical essay, "The Rebel," effects a fortunate union between the Greek ideal of harmony and the logical positivist demand for progress. Out of this union comes the proposition of rebellion as a way of life. In an imperfect world, the best we can strive for is an attack on those imperfections. Without hope of final success, we can achieve an inner harmony by striking at the imbalance of the outer world. This is similar to what Riesman (The Lonely Crowd) refers to as the inner-directed person, who holds to his own values in defiance of those around him. Unlike the urbanized intellectual, the source of his strength is convention, and accordingly we find most inner-directed people where convention is the strongest--rural areas.

It is not enough for Camus for one to hold to his own values, the individual must struggle to impose his values on the outer world; therein lies the meaning of life in a maze of imperfections. Hegel and Marx are attacked for their complacency about contemporary evils, and for referring critics of their philosophies to the Grand Plan of the future.

The problem of Being is not taken up by Camus, he prefers instead to trace a pattern of life which has been found through experience to be the most consistently rewarding: the immediate experience of struggle. The glaring weakness of Marxian philosophy (not excluding Marx himself, is the readiness to sacrifice the individual in the interests of an ideal, postulated totality (an abstraction). Authoritarian socialism confiscates living freedom in favor of an ideal freedom of the future.

Camus approaches social realism through the personalities of historical figures, a kind of archetype construction much as Max Weber used. Of all collectivists,

Lenin is the archetype. He is the spokesman for nihilism, which Camus calls the real tragedy of the Russian Revolution. In the master plan, the individual counts for nothing, and emotions become treasonable when they appear to stand in the way of progress. This amounts to a rejection of the present in favor of an ideal future, and is a rejection of life itself. The totalitarian personality destroys consciousness of self, thereby destroying individual identity. The individual becomes the victim of a terrific isolation, which admittedly is the condition of all extremists. Discussion is replaced by propaganda, research is replaced by marshaling friendly facts, and curiosity is stilled by checking official manuals.

Nazi ideology was crude in demanding the subjection of the many for the few, but the Russian bureaucracy is more sophisticated in proposing the total subjection of all for the benefit of all. The specific reason for this difference is empirical, and can be traced to the local culture patterns of their respective groups.

Although he does not go very far into causation, Camus points to a major fork in history at the beginning of this century, when Russian terrorists were reinforcing

the departure of the Russians from the liberal tradition, Netchaiev and Kaliayev.

Netchaiev was the forerunner of Lenin in his abdication of moral values in favor of political expediency, but Kaliayev was a true liberal in that he judged the external world in terms of his own values. He recognized of course that these values arise from culture, but the retention of individual judgment and responsibility is the crucial

Kaliayev elevated man as an end in himself rather than as a means. Both he and Netchaiev were socialists and terrorists, believing in the use of violence, but with one great difference, "Kaliayev doubted to the end, but this doubt did not prevent him from acting; it is for that reason that he is the purest image of rebellion."

Kaliayev killed once and walked calmly to the gallows, serene in his conviction that although he may have been in error in killing, at least he affirmed the value of life by paying for another's life with his own. This would never have occurred to Netchaiev.

For Camus, only in rebellion can man be truly human. Insurrection is a protest against death, and a demand for unity, clarity, and a kind of immortality. The rebel does not demand life for himself, but he does demand reasons for living, so that all actions have meaning. Without rebellion we are passive, and can have no standards for judging right and wrong--we are less than human. Rebellion is a kind of interaction among men, and by continually putting society on trial, clarifies the identities and relationships of mankind. Actions are not anarchical, but must be defined as right by the moral code of an existing community.

The problem of the individual conflicting with the majority is not completely resolved by Camus, but his position would be stronger if he had stated that values must have reference to the majority; that is, the individual must believe that his values either have previously been accepted by the majority and now have been obscured, or that his values would be accepted if given proper consideration. Without this reference to the majority, social values become "wrong" or meaningless. The Golden Rule is a codified recognition of this fact.

The question of violence is central. If human life is sacred, can there be a circumstance when the taking of it is necessary for the general good? It would appear

that murder is still murder regardless of the morals of the killer, but Camus is realist enough to know that conditions sometimes demand violence. It would seem obvious that Ghandi's non-violence would have been totally ineffective against a Hitler.

If violence is sometimes justified, who shall say when the trigger is to be pulled, and at whom? The best answer is individual conscience. Just as the individual must decide what he is to say to a government committee investigating the private thoughts of citizens, the assassin must decide when to load his gun. This is no incitement to mayhem, but a trust in the social responsibility of man. If we cannot find goodness in the individual, we surely shall not find it in laws and textbooks.

A government can never admit the right of assassination, but the individual has the duty to rise against tyranny if in his considered conscience no alternative is left him. It goes without saying that violence in countries with effective political representation could not be entered into by a responsible person.

Strangely, Camus does not relate his highly moral philosophy of politics to art. He states that art must aim for unity, but this is a static concept-unity of what, for what? He does not say. Camus also says that the novel is a rebellion, an attempt to say how things should be, but nevertheless art is not moral.

Camus inveighs against a technology at the service of the state, accusing the scientist of moral turpitude in so humbling himself, but has the artist less responsibility to promote the good as he sees it? If the novel is a protest and an arbiter of the social order, can it be anything but a champion of some kind of moral order? Few will deny that a work of art, at least written art, has moral values, but conflict arises when we say that the primary value of art is its moral intent. Those who oppose this are hardly content with the idea that art is merely the mirror of nature, but they are hard-pressed if forced to give precedence to either the moral or the overall content of a work. Usually a homily is pointed to, in which the bones of the moral protrude with blatant vulgarity, is this your moral art? But by pointing in turn to the greatest art produced, in every case a moral value is promulgated with consummate skill and effectiveness.

Modern man must lose his terror of the word moral, and learn to accept it as a synonym for that which he finds good. We have been fleeing for too long the bogeyman of Puritan-Victorian-Bible Belt censorship, seeking in the macabre or the mystical for values which are no farther or elusive than they have ever been.

Camus believes in the principle of rebellion, but, like the academic liberal, conceives values as an individual affair. It should be realized that values achieve reality only by putting them into action in a society. They are endorsed and modified by the fellowship of man, which, by distinguishing between the good and the non-good establishes a truly human society with a meaningful framework of ethics.

The dilemma of the modern liberal is how to relate himself to the grand cause of social justice. The elimination of old-fashioned villains leaves few ready targets. Transcendentalism is a way out which many have taken, but the best fighters don't take such an easy way out. Aldous Huxley's tragic denial of the intellect is an example of how even the finest mind can bend under the strain. Henry Miller, flamboyant and sketchily brilliant, continues in his role of crazed buffoon, now dispensing sweetness and light on the seventh plane of Jupiter at Partington Ridge.

The shrine of the analyst's couch is also being defiled by unbelievers, raucous and crass in their demand for something beyond adjustment to maladjustment. Mind science, orgone waves, Bridey Murphy, lorgnette classicism, acceptance of pulp and billboards as folk art, dry martinis, food fads the liberal ranks thin to the vanishing point.

Even the old guard of the left wing, those doughty seers who flexed to fit the Stalin line, are in trouble. The final incongruity, the downgrading of "Old Joe," has just about pulverized the remains of Russian Communism in this country. The agonizing confession of Howard Fast, "... I failed to see that to win socialism and to abandon the holy right of man to his own conscience, his own dignity, his right to say what he pleases when he pleases ... is no victory at all..." (Time, 6/56) is the cry of a liberal bursting the rusted chains of statist authoritarianism.

A different reaction came from Anna Louise Strong, "WHY then had I made no outcry? And my answer was: 'Because all those years I felt myself in the presence of something so vast, so important for all men's future, that it must not be halted or diverted, whatever the cost!'" (Monthly Review, July '56.) This is a classic statement of a mind hopelessly enslaved by dogma, the total surrender of the individual to a miasma of social forces.

The Saturday Review 8/4/56) points accurately to the dangers of excessive state power, and calls for individual responsibility in meeting the danger. But the Review is silent on what type of action is needed, leaving us in a quiescent state of do-nothing -keep the soul pure, for judgment day is surely at hand.

Historical liberalism is slowly recovering from the blow it suffered from the failure of the Russian dream of a just society. The problem now is how to locate the individual in a world churning under the impact of mass forces. Civilization is industrialized and mass man is here, here in the sense that many of his needs can be satisfied by assembly-line production. But many needs cannot be satisfied in this way, and so long as he does not fancy himself the Messiah, man can find creative and meaningful activities more dynamic and rewarding than his ancestors dreamed of.

Social forces are created by individuals, and the individual, given the sense to organize and act effectively, can remake the world any way he wants. The great damage wrought by the concept of endless progress towards perfection is on the mend. The short-range 'adjustment' philosophy of contemporary psychology is an indication that we are learning to discard the absolute philosophies of the past. Eventually we will learn to 'adjust' to what is possible within the limitations of a grander arena than now seems possible. Then we will again have great enterprises of the hand and the mind which will be untroubled by the knowledge that the failure of the enterprise may or may not set back the charter date of Utopia. Playing the game is what counts.

The wisdom of the Greeks in advocating moderation and harmony did not deny them the adventures and glory that an individualistic temper demands. Let the individual be king over himself and political tyranny will take care of itself, for a society of moral men has no need of dungeons and barbed wire to secure for itself that security which armed camps can never bring.

A liberal platform allowing for a great deal of individual variation and creativity would include the following:

1. agitate politically for reforms in laws and conventions which are against the declared principles of society.
- 2 support efforts to free research and education from particularistic interests.
- 3...help to clarify and further ethics through all levels of social activity, with special reference to art.
- 4... help man to see that, whatever his final destiny, inertia and despair are joyless colors in which to paint one's days.

And when those quiet times come, when we meditate on final goals and meaning on a cosmic scale, let it be on the shady side of life. Never let them intrude into the heat of a contest, for endless contemplation of eternity is a kind of suicide. Meanwhile, there is no shortage of knaves to be drubbed, outrages to be aired, and old-fogey professors to jape.

Reserved

Desert is a fine place
For a good brain washing
Of the city soot and dust
And fever of today

But no sudden pilgrim,
No chance-guest
May expect and effect a cure
Reserved for hermits, who can hold
Their own against the claws
Of the desert, that fills
Muddled brains
With the dust of defunct ages
In the desert flats waylaid,
By riding time roped and thrown,
Their hide hunged up high for drying
On the fence of mountain ranges
That don't change

You cannot brush the dust
And agues of today
With the rags of the past,
Not on this side
Of the Great Divide.

-Joseph Martinek

BLUNDERBUSS... The Little Theatre

Beginning with this and forthcoming issues of Coastlines, this feature will be devoted to reviews and commentaries upon some aspects of theatre in Los Angeles.

Inasmuch as national productions have their own means of publicity, it is only appropriate that we deal primarily with the little theatre, although exceptional productions of all types will be commented upon here. Because Coastlines appears tri-annually, this column will treat significant plays which have taken place in each four-month period. Theatre critics and theatre-goers are invited to correspond with and contribute to this column.

NEGRO ACTORS ASSOCIATED, WASHINGTON DANCE AND DRAMA PLAY-HOUSE ...

Their recent production of Macbeth was a laudable effort on the part of both amateur and experienced actors, but production difficulties such as manipulation of props, voice projection, were formidable. This group could be competitive with more experience, if they would also try plays within their range.

STAGE 56, HOLLYWOOD REPERTORY THEATRE..

This group has presented an entertaining collection of four plays called Quadrivium (An Involuntary Collaboration) consisting of "The Wall" by Edna St. Vincent Millay, adapted and directed by Joseph Sargent; "The Music Cure" by Bernard Shaw, directed by Strother Martin; "Sweeney Agonistes" by T. S. Eliot, adapted and directed by William Schallert, and "Bedtime Story" by Sean O'Casey, directed by Joseph Sargent. The balance of this program speaks for itself. Most successful of these was "Bedtime Story" for the directing, acting and stage settings. The most interesting failure of the three was Eliot's "Sweeney Agonistes" which was set up to balance out the program with a touch of surrealism, but actually burlesqued itself dada fashion. Needless to say, "Sweeney Agonistes" as a poem is virtually unplayable on the stage. "The Wall" is interesting for its experiment, and Shaw, of course, is always good fun.

PLAYERS RING . . .

End As A Man. Acting and direction was above average throughout, as most of the Players Ring's performances have been. Faults begin with Willingham's play itself. Although this play is a tour de force in the projection of personality, showing great insight into military school sadism, the play exploits an unrelieved sadism for its own sake which is not fair to the more rounded novel from which it was taken. Nevertheless, its presentation reasserts the liveliness and directness of the theatre, qualities missing from other forms of communication media.

UNITARIAN CHURCH, MAY FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS ...

The Echoing Hills, by Lester Cole. Performed during the May Festival of Arts at the Unitarian Church, this performance represents one of the few original plays around Los Angeles, and one of the very few plays which have been alert to burning contemporary issues. This play of the Civil War underground railroad depicts the troubled and conscientious stand of the abolitionists, and, as a polemic, it is skillfully dramatized. In effect, the play handles all of the attitudes towards Negro

rights which still exist today. On the other hand, characterization was oversimplified at the expense of polemic, and the dialogue suffered from the rhetorical purposes for which it was intended.

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD THEATRE...

Inherit The Wind, a new play by Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee, starring Melvyn Douglas. A big surprise coming from the commercial theatre. This effective dramatization of Clarence Darrow and the Scopes trial, although probably not intended to do so, seems to come straight out of an A.C.L.U. brief, so completely does it incidentally handle the problems of academic freedom, civil rights, supersti-

s to have been lifed almost lock, stock and bated our of Day biography. Darrow, of course, has championed every progressive cause that this country has experiencd, and his ideas are still way ahead. To see such professional competence and enthusiasm literally poured into this play is heartwarming. Douglas's interpretation was excellent.

PACIFIC COAST ONE ACT PLAY TOURNAMENT, SANTA MONICA DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION ..

Groups from Ojai to North Hollywood. Coming up to standard, not quite there, but the effort is to be commended for stimulating drama.

THE POCKET POET SERIES

There's a difference between San Francisco and Los Angeles which impresses everyone accord ing to his needs.

To some; it is all that northern Old World Culture: the Tong Wars, the Vigilantes, the Barbary Coast, the Hungry Eye, bridges (G.G.; Bay and Harry), the Eastern Fox Squirrel (escaped or released at Menlo Park some years back and now spreading) ;

VERSUS

the Chinese Spotted Dove released or escaped from Pershing Square in 1914 and now as tat north as Santa Maria and Bakersheld), smog. The Industries, religion, Forest Lawn, plate glass bedrooms.

To others; the true and beautiful city

VERSUS

A congeries of silly middle western towns.

And:

Sentiment

VS.

Money

I suppose all of this is true; but I see it differently, at least for the moment.

What I see is Lucia, at the south end of the Big Sur country where the rational, pure, classical light ends in a romantic Franciscan fog; and where the pilgrim, bearded, bronzed clad in South African walking shorts, his ruck-sack bulging with books on Zen, marihuana, and the sacred writings of Henry Miller, is toiling toward Partington Ridge and Satori. Instead he gets to the bridge that Hart Crane never saw but which is Crane's honest-to-god Bridge; and begins to write poetry. And why not? The northern trek is a shattering experience.

Anyway: San Francisco is producing the only truly Romantic poetry in the country. It is poetry that is pretty much "committed": it is generally anarchist, pacifist, individualist, etc.,

COASTLINES

etc. This is a Bad Sign to many people, to the Academy of the English Dept. and their institutional magazines, etc., etc. But it makes for a lively poetry--San Francisco is a city of energy at the very least.

The latest sign of this energy is The Pocket Poets series'). Taking them serially:

1. Picture of the Gone World by Lawrence Ferlinghetti (the editor of the series). Seems to me one of the best of the bunch. The subject generally is a perhaps too-easy kind of alienation: love, Paris, etc. But many of these poems have a wholeness about them even when they are slight; and I like the broken line he uses (of god knows what possible length) better than most "free" verse.

2. Thirty Spanish Poems of Love and Exile by Kenneth Rexroth. This book really has thirty two poems in it--San Francisco exuberance. They are translations of Albert Guillen, Neruda, Lorca, etc. No originals, but they are a pleasure to read.

invent which: San Francisco Patchen or Patchen San Francisco. It- is restful to have them united.

This book won't do much for Patchen's reputation-the poems are cuttings from the sundry gardens of this valorous invention-from seven of his books.

Perhaps it's harsh, but I've had an exasperated feeling that with Patchen it's usually the

Children's Hour: he can write a psalm about God as fast as one on baseball, but the question always remains-just Who's on first?

But "Carnival at Night" has the fun of old automobiles, and "A true blue Gentleman" is a red blooded unamerican jape. There's a lot of fun in this book and whatever it hasn't, it's got more life than one can find in A Little Treasury of Stuffed Owls.

4. Howl by Allen Ginsberg. This is archetypal. The title poem is twelve pages long and mainly consists of a sentence:

"I saw (the good and the bad, etc., etc.); "who" (did good things, bad things, etc.); "And" (etc.). There is also a foot note of several pages.

When I first read it, this poem seemed to me very bad. (It has a commendation by William Carlos Williams, a thing that always makes me wary). It is a disturbed and disturbing piece of work. All it says is "pain" and "alone" develop. On the page it appears to sprawl

have guessed Oppenheim) although that isn't necessarily the poet's fault: without some system of notation it's hard to know how a poem is supposed to sound-unless its written in some fairly traditional form.

Since reading it, I've heard it recited by the author--a moving experience, one with a wallop.

The poem turns out to have music, considerable metrical control, a painful sincerity beneath its stridor. It seems to have arrived so hard and fast that the poet hasn't had time to sort it out. I still think it is a bad poem, that it would not survive more than a couple of hearings, but I think, all the same, that it has an air of greatness to it. It is certainly worth a few Yale Younger Poems.

"Howl" is a poem to be read aloud-maybe that accounts for its strength and weakness. Other poems in the pamphlet are less rambunctious, and I think "Sunflower Sutra" is the best in the book.

All these booklets are worth having, whatever their limitations, because there is a vitality in them which is hard to find in American

Poetry these days. They would be a lot better poems if they had more control; but perhaps that's too much to expect from such a rainy and romantic town. Anyway, energy is always holy.

-Thomas McGrath

(1) City Lights Bookshop, 261 & 271 Columbus Ave., San Francisco, 50c and 75c.

A Note on

This Issue

In this issue we pay special attention to the literary merit of the essay in the little magazine, especially as it attempts to deal directly with the problems of young writers in these times. It should be noted that while the essays, reviews and editorials attempt to comment upon significant issues, in this particular number of Coastlines, they may appear to be antithetical. This is an indication, we believe, that "youth demands answers, and none of the old, easy answers, whether they come from the Right or from the Left" (as Lawrence Lipton has stated in the November 10 issue of the Nation), and that there is not as yet a crystallization of the emerging literary tradition.

With this in mind, we invite any one who agrees or takes exception to any of the material appearing in this or future issues to write this magazine or to submit contributions.

WATER ON THE GRAVE

H. L. MENCKEN: A PORTRAIT FROM MEMORY, by Charles Angoff. New York:

Thomas Yoseloff, Inc., 1956, 240 pp., \$3.95.

Near the end of this book, which the author painstakingly insists is not a biography, there is an account of a visit to the grave of Edgar Allen Poe. As Angoff and Mencken stood beside the weed-covered plot in the graveyard behind a Baltimore slum church the latter announced that in past years he and members of the Saturday Night Club would visit the grave to pay their respects to the poet. Mencken said: "Way back, we used to pour a bottle of whiskey on top of his grave. But when liquor became expensive and hard to get at, at that, except from the best bootleggers, I suggested another mark of respect... I suggested that we all piss on his grave!"

Readers of this book may accept Angoff's quotes as accurate but nevertheless consider Mencken's statement apocryphal; by the time we come to this scene we are convinced that Mencken uttered a great deal of nonsense during his lifetime, that he was ignorant, childish, pretentious, vulgar, naive, pathetically hypochondriac, and certainly deserving of whatever waters Angoff, in turn, has chosen to sprinkle on his grave.

For some readers this book will undoubtedly write finis to a honeymoon that began and ended with the literary life of *The American Mercury* only to linger in memory; for those who have attended the wake, in books and periodicals of the past two years, there may be a sharp realization that, indeed, the King is dead. Birth and death and anniversaries of the same fall under the heading of literary ritual we all like, and departure from the socially-accepted pattern is quickly labeled "bad taste." Fortunately Mr. Angoff is well-prepared for such cant from the reporters who pretend to literary insights; he measures his enthusiasm for their remarks by column inches.

As the reporters have noted, the book begins with Angoff's being hired by Mencken in 1925 and ends ten years later when Mencken left the *Mercury*. Because he does not attempt either a biography of the man or a history of the magazine Mr. Angoff is free to disregard details of chronology and to organize the book around material that is exclusively his own, leaving the footnotes for the endeavors of future scholars. He profiles Mencken *The Paradox* with the man's own words, never attempting to differentiate between what was written down at the time and what is the work of memory. The book is full of not-quite-off-the-record pronouncements on Mencken's favorite subjects: booze, women and politics. He was particularly weak in his knowledge of liquor; his opinions of women were simple-minded, cynical, and contrary to his own behavior, and in politics he was shallow, inept, and a greater bigot than the greatest Babbitt he had ever scorned.

Mencken was a man of few friends and the course of his friendships was a precarious one; much of the book deals with Philip Goodman, George Jean Nathan and, less prominently, Alfred

Fitzgerald, Upton Sinclair, Jim Tully, his wife Sara Haardt, and his Boswell Mr. Angoff. Rfog Lardner's association seems too lightly touched; we are given only a reminder that Mencken led him to the attention of respectable critics.

It is as an editor that Mencken is shown with some of the stature of his former self, a credit that Angoff does not deny him in an area where Angoff could very well have claimed a larger share of the kudos. Mencken was so right for his time and his place that we cannot imagine American life of the period without his *Mercury* or its predecessor, *The Smart Set*. What became quite clear in *Minority Report* (1956) and is further established in Angoff's profile, is that Mencken was a kind of conservative willing to rant to the greatest extreme of his credo. He was a collection of absurdities that gave the right-thinkers their pleasant twinge of guilt for fifty cents a copy and provided for the college crowd an intellectual rebellion strikingly identical to the within-the-system "liberalism" that FDR's conservatism gave to the political adolescents of the next decade.

hated--and he reveled them all-but the editor did democratize periodical journalism and so saved it from the mob, as Angoff shows so well in the chapter "The Editorial Art."

Another reviewer has mentioned "Mencken's gargantuan appetite for life" without noting that it was chiefly an appetite for beer and pigs knuckles, a narrow life despite his pretensions to wide knowledge. His ferocity has been called "camouflaged good humor" and he did have both a great

sense of humor and a tremendous talent for words, but it was not a "delicate talent," and he used it against foes he really hated, perhaps because he so feared their, to him, unknown powers. Angoff pulls no pen strokes to use Mencken's own words in demonstration of his anti-Semitism, false immorality, mistaken notions of aristocracy, pool-hall economics, and his obtuse beliefs that both Hitler and the depression were but momentary discomforts. As we read these pronouncements we understand the rigidity of mind that brought the decline of the Mercury and heightened the tragedy of his long-delayed realization that his best-turned phrases and most-repeated witticisms, so right for one generation, became so cheap and empty for another.

In those pre-war days when copies of the real Mercury were still to be found-passed, as Reader's Digest continually intones, from hand-to-hand-I was among the incense-burners who had not been to the blessing of loaves but felt a kinship with the man who furnished us the gospels. After the war years a rereading of the Mencken books sheared off most of what was sentiment and left some crusts of respect. Angoff, as aide to the master, may have sustained some injuries, but they have helped him to write a better book. It is harsh where the facts are harsh, but Angoff's understanding of Mencken comes through, perhaps even a trace of affection for someone more pitiable than loving. Other writers give us the life, I suppose, but Angoff has given us the man.

-Lachlan MacDonald

Notes on Contributors

RICHARD ASHMAN, besides editing the New Orleans Poetry Journal and contributing verse to many little magazines, has had a distinguished career in medicine. Born in 1890, Dr. Ashman received a Litt B. from Rutgers, PhD. from Tulane, was a Professor of Physiology, L.S.U. School of Medicine, and is now the director of the Heart Station, the Charity Hospital of Louisiana in New Orleans.

DAVID C. DEJONG appeared in Coastlines 5, and has been extensively published.

GEORGE GARRETT makes his first appearance in Coastlines; he writes to us from Princeton, N. J., where he is studying at the university. A book of his poems will be brought out by Scribner's in the Poets of Today series next summer.

HARRY HOOTON writes to Coastlines from Australia.

CARL LARSEN is a young poet from Hermosa Beach, California, and is the editor of Existaria. He has won the Rosemary de Camp award for 1953 and 1954.

LAWRENCE LIPTON is well-known both inside and outside of the little magazine field for his poetry and literary and interview-essays. He is perhaps the most articulate champion of the little magazine writing today. His most recent article may be found in the November 10 issue of the Nation.

LACHLAN MACDONALD is now at work on a novel. Former editor-in-chief of the Chicago Review, he has contributed to Epoch, Tiger, Beloit Poetry Journal, Intro Bulletin, etc.

THOMAS McGRATH, a frequent contributor to Coastlines, is now completing a book-length poem, "Letters to an Imaginary Friend."

JOSEPH MARTINEK of Tucson has edited Czech newspapers in the U.S.A. and in Czechoslovakia, and since coming to this country has published some 30 poems in American periodicals.

ARNOLD MESCHES is currently an instructor at the New School of Art in Los Angeles. He has taught at the Kann Art Institute, U.S.C., and has had eight one-man exhibitions including Fraymart, Landau, and the Pasadena Art Museum. His work is being currently exhibited (Nov. 18-Dec. 8). at the New School of Art.

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screenwriter.

BRIAN PARVIN, a young English poet, is now doing national service in Malaya.

PHILIP WHALEN, a graduate of Reid College, now lives in Berkeley. He has contributed to the Berkeley Review, Variegation, and Moby.

LLOYD ZIMPEL graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1954 and has had stories and poems published in Perspective, Experiment, Folder, Beloit Poetry Journal, California Quarterly, etc.

Editorial

THE CONFORMITY OF NON-CONFORMITY

It is perhaps more or less an editorial cliché of the "little" magazines to proclaim early in their careers their relationship to the world. Published with a knowledge of eventual doom, they are often guided by literary impresarios to make one loud noise, then die. Their message usually points out, again and again, that society, spearheaded by Time, Life and Fortune militates against the production of an honest and vital literature, and therefore it is their mission to urge deliverance of the poet from the current "degeneracy" by invoking the blood and guts of non-conformity. This has virtually becom the primary limiting function of the independent magazine, and probably its death.

* There is no questioning the honorable position of its being a refuge for the unexploited artist. We are not here concerned with the real or imagined enemies of literature the issues involving the decline of literature in the United States are clear-but rather with the degeneracy which has reduced the heart of poetic tradition and experiment to sublime stupidity, and to the great sacrifice of imagination to the clichés of the wailing wall. As a little magazine, we are necessarily concerned with the confusions, misunderstandings, battles and stupidities which have consumed what is left of poets today.

For at the, time of our entrance into the little magazine field, the communication lines were cut, not only by the vast industrial cities, the highways to nowhere which remove, dissect and submerge the literary community of the United States, but by the disintegration of the literary language itself. Poetry had become the subject of its own destruction. From the point of view of the literary anarchist, the literary world was in effect a vast conspiracy of Warren, Tate, Ransom, etc., fortified by the institutional quarterlies. The Whitmanites, Marxists and Traditionalists, on the other hand, were not only discredited by the New Critics, but were outlawed or blacklisted by the society as a whole. The New Critics and Metaphysicals shut themselves up within the stuffy closets of the University Quarterlies to refine the literature of their exile. The Stradlers, such as Ciardi, Brinnan, McLeish, etc., perhaps the most sensible of these schools as far as the literate American public was concerned, survived in liberal periodicals such as the Nation and New Republic and distinguished themselves both by their competence and their lack of leadership. The current third-hand Whitmanites, having very little in common with Whitman, passed off any kind of poetry in the name of a vague freedom, flourished spontaneously, recklessly, in sometimes strange rebellious pseudo-anarchistic tendencies. They were opposed to everything, except their own fragmented assertions.

And yet, the poets of these schools had at least one thing in common which has unfortunately led their students up blind alleys: the belief in their own isolation, their alienation from, not only society, but each other. On the one hand, the consciousness of alienation led to the cultivation of a humility and a sense of exile in the New Critics; on the other extreme it developed a violence of expression, of not only a despairing sense of isolation, but the delusion of the Messianic view of the poet. The third-hand Whitmanite, who either literally or figuratively finds himself eventually at the feet of Henry Miller or Kenneth Patchen, has expressed his alienation in terms of a rather revealing itinerary. From Horse Piss, Texas, via Greenwich Village to the Left Bank of the Seine and the Cafe Flore, across the street to the Reine Blanche, publication at own expense, onward to West Coast U.S.A. and Partington Ridge, where he is at least the fourth genius to be discovered that week by Henry Miller. And while following his drive for spontaneous, artistic fulfillment, he has thus had the opportunity of becoming: Zen Buddhist, Poundian, Hipster, Laurentian, Machine Wrecker, Vegetarian, Free Love Advocate, Beard Grower, Sun Worshipper, Sandal Wearer, etc., etc.

There is one other limiting tendency which describes much of the poetry of these several traditions, and that is superfluity. The elegance of the metaphysicals, for instance, has been over-defined to the point where technique and form no longer communicate in themselves. The technique, furthermore, has exploited virtually every Freudian periphery of experience, has made a fetish of paradox, and has sated beyond taste. The Whitmanites, on the other hand, have almost exclusively depended upon an empathy of revolt, beyond which the catalogues of dissent are

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mere superfluous variations of the "Wasteland." It is true that in their attacks on the decadent and corrupt, they attempt to affirm the "naked" truth, but the vision, more often than not, is neither steady nor whole. Their message has added nothing to the 50 years of protest in poetry. Indeed, having gradually lost its political and social contexts, the message has stultified into sheer license, into a rigid definition of poetry, a poetry that is devoid of tone and range: the humor is sarcastic, the sympathy is self-centered, the music is flat, the tone is hysterical.

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old time avant garde became legion with imitation and camp followers who, having been cut off by anything that happened to be creative in so luffy, lived solely in the thirties and the forties and other bygone days.

It is clear that this literature cannot long co--hue-perhaps at some point not long past (the award of the Bollingen Prize to Pound!?) poetry has died, and what is left is a kind of Limbo. Being dead, the dispossessed are now having their anarchy. Certainly, if we considered civilization today, as crazy as our political and social relations are, this cannot be, by any stretch of the imagination, the poetry of the future. To come alive again, poetry, like just law, must begin with the assumptions of reasonable men. The rear guard, we are afraid, can only succeed in organizing its failure, of uselessly opposing the world.

The Reasonable Man, as opposed to the Disaffiliated or Alienated man, does not honestly accept the absolute degeneracy of society, having a broader tolerance for values and a respect for change. assumptions of others. He has no contempt for democracy, and he is patient when he knows that he can act. While he, too, is all full up with materialism, technology, he grants, is here to stay. The reasonable man is not disillusioned; he commits himself only when he believes, when the facts are right, and discards what no longer is of use. He does not seek or need the Orgasm in poetry in order to liberate the mores from their sexual superstitions and inhibitions. The society, despite its contradictions and hypocracies, has proved to be even more sophisticated than the poet in this regard. The subject of poetry itself, and imagination per se have exhausted his appetite. On the other hand, he hungers for the application of the imagination to the external, as well as the subjective, world. He finds pleasure in ambiguity in poetry, where it is rich, individual and essential, but where it is used as license, he will seek clarity elsewhere. At these times, he is also concerned with the Bomb, Civil Liberties and War as the proper subject matter of literature.

Our quarrel with other independent little magazines is that our future is not so cut and dried as they make out, that we need resign from it. That we may relax from technique to break with stifling influences, but that we should not abandon it; that poetry is love as well as hate, lyrical as well as satirical, clear as well as ambiguous, and that audiences may be men, women and children as well as fellow poets. That we add some reason and sensibility to our Howl and Scream; that we strive for imagination and that tonal range that comes to works when the restraints and bars are down.

What we are seeking, perhaps, is a genuinely new experimental attitude, a formulation, as an expedient at least, of a Sensible School of Poetry. Such an attitude may be experimental, perhaps, for just a short time, since poetry cannot be construed to be in an age when that term means-only "economically practical" What could be meant by this is strategy and directness, rather than surrealism and obscurity. Yet, the best of this relatively direct poetry written today, Winfeld Townley Scott, Edwin Rolfe, Ann Stanford, Naomi Replansky, etc., shows that significance, technique, style and at least some of the modern metaphysical apparatus have not been sacrificed to propaganda. Sensibleness means, therefore, balance, imagination, intelligence and alertness, all of which may combine in the lively work in a manner which will reach the heart and mind of almost any literate person. The targets this time are readers who are not poets, but who have missed, and who are missing, the vital experience poetry may offer them. Given this, together with devoted editors and backers, imagination and good luck, and poetry will come alive.

--Mel Weisburd