

A LITERARY MAGAZINE OF CALIFORNIA

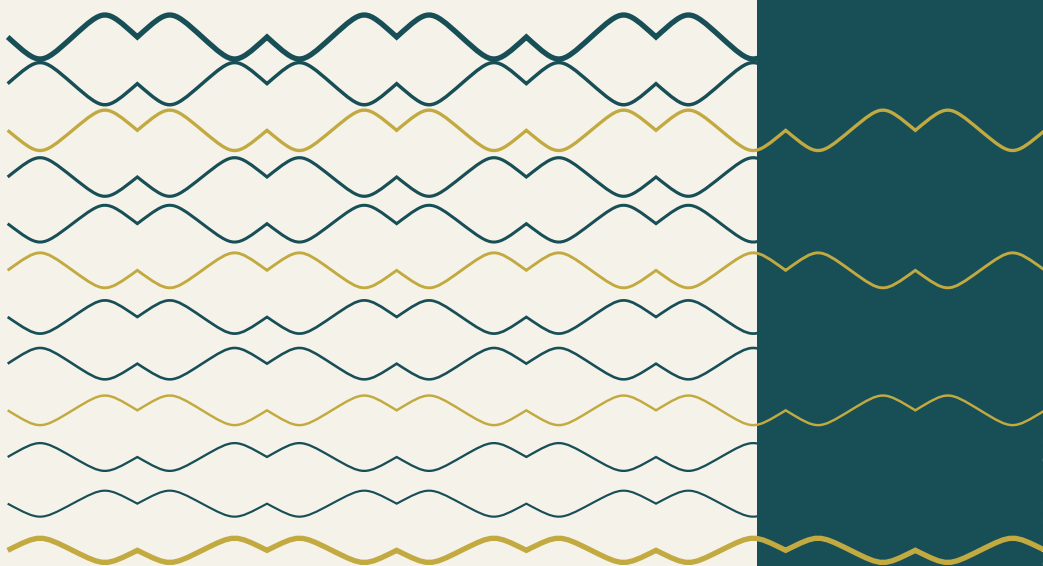
COAST LINES

Autumn 1957

VOLUME II / NUMBER FOUR

4

ISSUE



50¢

COASTLINES / AUTUMN 1957

COASTLINES

ISSUE 8

A Literary Magazine of California

Autumn 1957

EDITED BY

Mel Weisburd

A CLEAN READING EDITION

The text is reset in clean type from the issue's archival text layer. Original page divisions are retained for reference; complex and display pages are rebuilt positionally in clean type. The original scan remains the authority for damaged or uncertain readings.



CONTENTS

FICTION

The Damnation of Eugene Kaske	<i>J. D. Koerner</i>	3
-------------------------------	----------------------	---

POETRY

'Saturday Is My Drinking Day'	<i>Winifred Cullen</i>	14
Three Extracts from a Science-Fiction Opera	<i>Arthur Castillo</i>	15
Gadarene Swine	<i>Richard Ashman</i>	20
Hunger and the Treasure of Flight	<i>Melissa Blake</i>	20
Two Poems	<i>Nelson Bentley</i>	21
Three Poems	<i>Louis Johnson</i>	22
On Crowning Good with Brotherhood	<i>Philip Appleman</i>	23
In the Forest	<i>Don Gordon</i>	24
Two Poems	<i>Jack Beeching</i>	24

ARTICLES & EDITORIAL

Correspondence from the Field	<i>Barding Dahl</i>	26
The Poetry of Relevance	<i>Gene Frumkin</i>	28
A Few Cool Words for 'Howl'		34

BACK MATTER

Notes on Contributors		35
-----------------------	--	----

REVIEWS

Blunderbuss: What's Going On Around L.A		36
---	--	----

ARTICLES & EDITORIAL

The Writer's Position in America	<i>Arthur Miller</i>	38
----------------------------------	----------------------	----

ART

Cover	<i>David Lemon</i>	
-------	--------------------	--

LOUISE

for fine mimeographing and typing

I.B.M. Executive Typewriters

4042 Denny Avenue · North Hollywood

POplar 3-2965 POplar 6-2110

PUBLISHING

If you are planning to publish a book or booklet, send for our free folder describing a low cost production and distribution service-all copies and rights belong to you, plus 70% royalty on our sales for you.

THE WILLIAM-FREDERICK PRESS

313 West 35th Street New York 1, N. Y.

THE NEW ORLEANS POETRY JOURNAL

Announces the publication of the following books, each of the first four, \$1 softbound and \$2 hardbound.

Felix N. Stefanile, *RIVER FULL OF CRAFT*

Harold Witt, *SUPERMAN UNBOUND*

Vassar Miller, *ADAM'S FOOTPRINT*

R. G. Lowrey, *STONE AND THE SEA*

Tom Wright, *INTERIM REPORT*

The New Orleans Poetry Journal and A HOUYHNHNM'S SCRAPBOOK, \$2 a year for both, or 50¢ a copy. Scrapbook alone, three issues, \$1.

Box 12038, New Orleans 24, La.

THE DAMNATION OF EUGENE KASKE

J. D. Koerner

If there had been any doubt in his mind about the importance of the occasion, it was removed by the familiar, frenzied voice that met him as he entered the corridor. It had become part of the ritual of Sunday afternoon--that voice; and it now came bursting its way around the closed door of the Sister Superior's office. He realized or, rather, sensed--with a kind of animal acuteness sharpened to precision, that nothing short of a crisis could come between Sister Mary Rosalie and Father Coughlin on Sunday afternoon.

He knew Father Coughlin only as a voice that once a week reverberated through the shadowed hallways of the school. But he also knew that there was something sacred about the voice, and that, happily, it was the voice that freed him and the others for a brief time each week from the supervision of the sisters. He had been expecting the summons he had just received, but not on Sunday morning.

He paused outside the office door and examined himself to see that he appeared properly in the funereal dress of the small academy: heavy, dark-colored knickers that clasped long black stockings below the knee, black shoes, black shirt, and somber bow tie. He swiped quickly at his shoes, stuffed his shirt in, combed a hand through his hair, and knocked.

As she opened the door and then turned her back to him, he knew at once that things were indeed to be the same this year as they had been before--a fact which gave him, amid the real dread, a fleeting sense of pleasure and of triumph.

"Shut the door, Master Kaske," said Sister Mary Rosalie, switching off the radio at the opposite corner of the small office. Eugene closed the door softly and stood beside the large desk next to the entrance. She walked to the window, still not looking at him.

"Did you just come from the game room downstairs?" she asked.

"Yes, Sister," said Eugene, his eyes following her warily as she turned back to him--a tall figure which he had often pictured as marvellously thin and bony beneath the shapeless folds of her black-silk-and-white-starched habit.

"And what were you doing there?" she said, stopping in front of him.

"Playing billiards, Sister.

"Alone?"

"No, Sister."

"What did you do that you shouldn't have done?" she asked, fingering, in a curious way that Eugene had come to know, the large beads that hung from her waistband, caressing them, running her fingers up and down the decades of the rosary.

she had erward to liver a resuing slapon the bide

right. "Will you speak when you're spoken to?" she said.

"Yes, Sister."

"Well?--what were you doing in the game room that you shouldn't have been doing?"

Eugene looked steadily into the face of Sister Mary Rosalie. Her mouth was clamped

in a grim line, the hairs of her upper lip pinched darkly together--a definite mustache. "Nothing, Sister," he said.

The long-fingered hand flicked from the beads and caught him on the same cheek.

"I might have known you'd choose to lie, Master Kaske," said Sister Mary Rosalie. "That's one reason I sent for you as soon as your behavior was reported--so that we could understand each other at the start this time. I was extremely lenient with you during your first year at St. Anselm's, and last year, partly because of your age, and partly because..

Interrupting herself, she eyed him closely, searched with her foot for the chair, and sat down.

"After all," she continued, "there are other boys here as Charities, other boys whose parents have been called away by God, other boys who neither ask for nor get any special consideration. I think this year is the time for you to accept your responsibilities..

Eugene looked attentively on her face as she continued saying the things he knew by heart, the things that she had said the previous year, several times; and, with variations, the year before that. He had learned not to protest and not to interrupt. But he had not learned to bow his head and to allow the aspect of deep contrition to come over his face. He knew that an upturned head suggested unrepentance, if not defiance, and that things would be easier for him if he followed the accepted pattern. But his eyes remained level.

... and now, Eugene," Sister Mary Rosalie was saying, using his first name as she usually did, he knew, when she was trying to impress upon him the gravity and reasonableness of her remarks, "let's make this your best year. Take care of your tasks around the school on time each day, pray earnestly to Our Lord for guidance and to the Virgin Mary, and above all, let's make a special effort to observe all rules and regulations."

"Yes, Sister," said Eugene.

"And to tell the truth at all times."

"Yes, Sister."

"Now, then, Eugene--what were you doing in the game room a few minutes ago that you shouldn't have been doing?"

"Nothing, Sister."

Eugene saw her hiss at him as the hand lanced out with astonishing speed at the same cheek, swept across his face and landed on the other cheek.

"Sister, I..." He felt both her hands hitting his cheeks simultaneously.

"I don't know why I waste time," she spat at him. "Such a boy as you--a boy who has willingly given his soul to the devil ... Well, I haven't any more to waste right now. We will break that devilish will of yours, Master Kaske! Break it, promise you!--and remold it as it should be. You will go to the dormitory and remain there the rest of the day. And I shall deal with you, Master Kaske, tonight."

Hearing the click of the radio as he went from the room, Eugene started down the long corridor toward the stairway that led to the massive third-floor dormitory. He went slowly, though not unhappily. There was only one thing about it all that

was really disturbing. Although he knew that he was not as evil as Sister Mary Rosalie had always assured him he was certainly he had not given his soul to the devil-yet he was equally certain that the Christ Child was far from pleased with him. He had always held the Christ Child in particular reverence, and found extremely painful anything that might strain that love. Of course, he had strained it many times, but never, he was sure, wantonly; for that love had been, after all, his sole means of survival at the academy. Still, he couldn't be sure that his present actions would really offend that Being Who, in their special way of understanding one another, had always understood.

On reaching the top of the stairs, Eugene made his way slowly through the great length of deserted locker room that led to the dormitory, down the long rows of neat, brown-blanketed bunks to his own. He stood at the window next to it and gazed stolidly out at the playing field, now covered with a hundred black figures that raced back and forth in the September sun. Everything, it seemed, brought him back to God. There, rising from the front of the gymnasium that stood on the edge of the field, was the Cross his first memory of St. Anselm's. It was that object which had remained most vividly in his mind from his first trip to the school two years before: he had ridden the hundred miles from his home town with an officer of the court, and he had always remembered their approach to the grounds, the little sign that read:

**ST. ANSELM'S ACADEMY
FOR BOYS**

Grades 4-8

Sisters of Mercy

... the long, curving driveway that swept around the main building to the entrance in back, and was so situated that the first object to be seen was the Cross that rose tall, simple, white--from the dingy pediment of the gymnasium, and that was now spreading its giant, elongated shadow across the players and the wide expanse of meadow that served as the playing field.

He turned from the window and lay down on the bunk, knowing that this, too, was against regulations, and thought dully of the hours that had to pass before nightfall. He knew that Sister Mary Rosalie was impatient for a Pandy Party, three weeks of the new year having passed already without one. It usually came once a week, sometimes oftener, but seldom did three weeks pass without one; for the Pandy Party was, as Eugene had long realized, the heart of Sister Mary Rosalie's disciplinary system. She put a faith in it second only to that in God--indeed, one was but a part of the other, and Eugene now felt sure that she was delighted to have an incident around which to hold the most important Pandy Party of the year, the first one.

He woke to a gentle shaking of his foot, and opened his eyes to see Sister Angela peering over the iron bedstead. He smiled automatically, and sat up on the edge of the bunk.

"Supper's over," she said, digging a hand deep into an invisible pocket and bringing forth a large apple. "This is all you'll get tonight, I'm afraid, so hurry and eat it. The others will be coming up soon."

"Thank you, Sister Angela," said Eugene, biting at once into the apple. "I've been confined to ..."

"Yes, I know," she said as she turned to go. "Better come along to the lockers with the others as soon as you finish that."

Eugene raced around the apple, buried the core in a waste basket, and went into the locker room as the others began to arrive. He could hear Sister Mary Rosalie's chant to them as the entire school, perhaps 150 boys, filed up the long flights of stairs: "Keep to the right, keep to the right, stay in line, stay in line, keep to the right."

He busied himself at his locker and the basin opposite it as the line of boys, arranged according to grade and age, began to fill up the room. Out of the corner of his eye he watched Sister Mary Rosalie stride to her place. It was a large, L-shaped room with a double row of fifty wash basins and lockers on the long side and some thirty or so on the short. During the period before bedtime, Sister Mary Rosalie invariably sat in the corner of the L that separated the two rows, where she had an unobstructed view down the length of each.

Eugene felt the unmistakable tension that pervaded the locker room as he and the others washed, brushed their teeth, and got into their long wool nightgowns and robes. Whether the word leaked out ahead of time, whether there was something in the hurrying aspect of the sisters themselves, or whether it was a kind of clairvoyance, Eugene never knew: but the night of the Pandy Party was infallibly known by every boy in the school at wash-up time, and revealed itself in a muted sense of excitement and expectation. Things moved faster and more efficiently on such a night.

Eugene presently heard the series of sharp raps from Sister Mary Rosalie's gold ring as she struck it on the arm of her chair, a signal for each boy to close up his locker and seat himself on the large wooden shoe box attached to it. "There will be silence," she said loudly, and the buzzing undertone of the room gave way.

Eugene noted a certain stiffness on the faces of the robed figures that, with tombstone regularity, lined the sides of the L. Although a boy would usually know when he was to be called, no one could be certain that he wasn't. Eugene knew how often it happened that a boy would breach a rule unaware that he had been observed, and would therefore make a great show of surprise and innocence when his name was rung forth at the Pandy Party—perhaps as much as two weeks later. Sister Mary Rosalie was known to have an extensive spy system, and was known also to carry a small note book in which she instantly recorded every infraction of the rules, infractions which she saw with ubiquitous eyes; and to punish each entry with absolute certainty, whether at the moment of its perpetration or later. That, Eugene realized, was perhaps the glory of the system: the knowledge it gave each offender that, however long it might be in coming, his punishment, even for a crime he thought he committed in the darkest secrecy, would surely come. And thus the sense of inescapable, but indefinite, retribution was, for each boy, an earthly metaphor of the Last Judgment.

"We have," began Sister Mary Rosalie with loud and precise enunciation, "some of the devil's own children here tonight—boys who have strayed from the path of Our Lord and who are in grave danger. The devil constantly roams about the world

DAMNATION OF EUGENE KASKE 7

seeking the destruction of souls, especially the souls of boys, and we must therefore do everything possible to save those that fall by the wayside..

Eugene one more scanned the faces of those near him. He was sure that there were several names to be called besides his own. Sister Mary Rosalie always saved a few typical offenses for the first Pandy Party, and it gave him some consolation to know that at least he was not to be singled out of the entire school.

cc ..and we must," she was saying, "teach them God's will and pray for them. No strong-willed and recalcitrant boy can be saved until that selfish will is broken and recast. Francis Lyons!-come over here."

Lyons was, Eugene knew, a Charity like himself, who had come the year before to St. Anselm's out of a Chicago slum. Eugene saw him get up from the middle of the long row, a lean boy in a faded blue robe, and walk slowly, head hanging very low, to the end of the aisle and stand before Sister Mary Rosalie.

"Three days ago," she began, "Master Lyons took a football without permission from the equipment box in the gymnasium and did not return it for two hours. You all know the regulations governing the use of athletic equipment. Yet Master Lyons thought he was exempt from them. You knew the regulation, Master Lyons?"

"Yes, Sister," said Lyons. Eugene saw him dig his chin farther into his breastbone while Sister Mary Rosalie, never taking her eyes from him, produced from the mysterious folds of her habit a pandy bat--an instrument the length of an ordinary ruler but wider and thicker and made of hard rubber.

"Master Lyons," said Sister Mary Rosalie, "hold out your hand."

Lyons extended his right hand.

"Your left hand, Master Lyons!" cried Sister Mary Rosalie. "You know full well it should be your left."

Eugene watched sullenly as Lyons withdrew the offending hand that could take the blows of the pandy bat so much better, and gingerly offered the left. Sister Mary Rosalie grasped it by the fingers obliquely in front of her and brought the pandy down in wide, full strokes on the palm, the sharp slap resounding through the room. Lyons winced and shifted his feet. He began to double up his fist between each stroke, careful to have it open again before the next one came down so as not to get his knuckles skinned. Eugene noted with vicarious pride that Lyons did not cry out as younger boys invariably did: in the last two grades, the seventh and eighth, crying out was against the code, unless the punishment was truly extreme. A boy was expected to take a routine pandying without utterance. In order to gain mercy, he might honorably resort to other visible means of showing his suffering and contrition. He might make grotesque faces, he might shed tears silently, he might weave and bob his head and shuffle his feet; he might, in short, do anything except cry out.

There were murmurs of approval among the older boys as Lyons remained silent to the end of his strokes. But he was obviously startled when Sister Mary Rosalie retained his hand, paused a moment, and began again, saying, "And five more, Master Lyons, for that little trick with your right hand."

He had, Eugene knew, steeled himself to the usual ten for minor offenses, had rationed his courage accordingly. Now he needed reserves. Eugene leaned forward to see better around the row of boys ahead of him and watched Sister Mary Rosalie

place the extra five exactly where she had placed the first tenon the soft mound of the thumb; and he knew how long it took before the bruised muscle of the thumb could be used. He could see the tight-set lips of Lyons and the water coming into his eyes. Then it was over, and Lyons let his hand go limp at his side, no longer daring to close it, but dangling it free of his body as if it were contaminated and not really a part of him.

Sister Mary Rosalie, breathing heavily, motioned him to stand in back of her chair, and then said into the quiet of the room: "William Boring!-come over here!"

Boring was in Eugene's grade, the sixth, a pleasant, well-to-do boy from Oklahoma City, who seldom got into scrapes. He had, it seemed, broken the regulation about turning in money at the beginning of the year, and had been caught with change in his pockets.

Eugene was not surprised to count only seven strokes, placed irregularly on the palm of the right hand, and placed without anger. Boring was, after all, a Regular, one who paid his full fare at St. Anselm's, and was subject to a slightly different disciplinary code from that of the Charities. With each stroke, Boring rent the hall with screams of pain, and writhed his body through the most extravagant contortions, his face an image of unspeakable horror. Eugene joined in the sniggering that went up here and there around him. While Boring's behavior was acceptable form for a boy in his grade, it was not taken seriously when carried to such extremes. Sister Mary Rosalie was through with him quickly and motioned him to the rear of her chair where he joined Lyons and ostentatiously wiped his eyes with the sleeve of his robe and caressed his hand. There were four other cases whose sentences varied from five to ten strokes, and Eugene, knowing that his would be last, sat back against the locker and made no further attempts to watch the boys as these it abily a rheir feet and hen led intre, dallanged rented a lo to

come around in front of the chair again and kneel on the floor. "I think," she said, "that we had all better say three Our Father's for these incorrigible boys and ask God in His mercy and goodness to forgive them. ... 'Our Father Who art..'"

Eugene murmured the prayers along with the others. When the last Our Father was finished Sister Mary Rosalie motioned the six to their places and waited silently while they walked back, heads still absurdly low, and sat down.

And then the words that to Eugene always rang through the hall like the sound of a great gong the words that he dreamed about afterwards:

"EUGENE KASKE!-COME OVER HERE!"

He knew he should be up at once, but his body seemed frozen to the locker seat not so much in fear as in loathing.

"MASTER EUGENE KASKE-I SAID COME OVER HERE!"

He got up and walked with his head erect to Sister Mary Rosalie. He stood in front of her, and looked into her face, feeling suddenly the emptiness of his stomach.

"And here, I'm afraid, we have a true disciple of Satan," said Sister Mary Rosalie, speaking slowly and with care. "Eugene Kaske, Master Eugene Kaske, who comes to St. Anselm's a Charity, who takes everything we are able to provide for him but who gives no gratitude in return--who is not content to sin against God by

DAMNATION OF EUGENE KASKE 9

breaking rules whenever he feels so inclined, but who throws insults in the Lord's face by lying when he is caught."

Eugene's revulsion reached its outermost limits at these times when she publicly exhibited his status as a Charity, and as a "disciple of Satan."

"This afternoon," she went on, "Master Kaske destroyed the good Lord's property. Contrary to the instructions that Sister Henry and I have repeatedly given about the use of the billiard table in the play room, Master Kaske took it upon himself to show his superiority to those instructions by sitting on the edge of the table. He was perfectly aware, as are all of you, of the damage this does to the rubber cushions. But Master Kaske holds himself, although he is here as a Charity, above this rule."

She paused, sneering, or smiling, at him he was never able to distinguish the two expressions on her face. He continued to look at her, knowing that this would also infuriate her, yet being unable to hang his head.

"But the Lord knows," she continued, reddening, "when boys have sinned, and Master Kaske was caught. And what did Master Kaske do then? Did he confess his sin and ask forgiveness? Did he bow his head in shame as any decent boy would? Did he give Our Lord a chance to enter his heart and remake his incorrigible will? No, he did not; nor does he even now. He shamelessly tried to lie his way out. Oh, what can we say of such a one who persistently chooses the way of the devil instead of God? Perhaps the good Lord will forgive him-though he is well along the path to eternal damnation, to the awful flames and everlasting torment that await all such boys. Master Kaske are you now prepared to confess your sins and to ask God for forgiveness?"

Eugene knew that there was only one acceptable answer, but he could not give it.

"Perhaps we can help you to God's will," she said. "Hold out your hand."

Eugene held out his left hand and felt the fingers squeezed together at the joints and the sharp, hot sting of the pandy bat on the mound of his thumb, again, and again, and again. He knew that the first ten were not intolerable, but that the pain then became rapidly more intense as the same spot was repeatedly hit. As he

fist between strokes in an effort to shift the pain of impact. But Sister MaryTATE* hit win the bai ha counted thirteen, he closed his eyes, but did not cry out. He began to shut his

Rosalie began to take half-strokes and rapped his knuckles with the hard rubber until he left the palm open. When he thought he could stand no more without screaming in her face, she stopped the pandy, but kept his hand.

"Did you sit on the billiard table?" she said, recovering her breath.

Eugene remained with his eyes closed and said nothing. "Did you?" she hissed. Again he felt the pandy bat on the same spot of his thumb. She stood up now and struck with her full strength. He ground his teeth into each other, but did not cry out. At the finish of another ten, she cried, "Did you?"

Eugene, feeling the paralysis of his arm, opened his eyes, and said, "No, Sister."

She dropped his hand and sat down, and looked at him in astonishment. He was conscious of the utter silence in the hall. Finally she got up, brushed past him, and went to the supply cabinet that was situated near her chair. She came back with an orange box in her hand and a large spoon.

"Open your mouth!" she said. Eugene opened his mouth and received the heap-

ing spoonful of epsom salts. He clamped his jaws shut, arched his tongue, pressed the sickening crystals against the roof of his mouth and tried to swallow them whole, but only gagged. He knew that he had to chew them or melt them in his mouth before he could swallow them.

"Perhaps that will make your devil's tongue tell the truth!" she said.

He tried frantically to swallow again, working his tongue to keep the raw salts at the back of his mouth, feeling them begin to melt. He got part of them down, but the rest stuck in his throat as he felt the nausea rising up from his tightened stomach, and the hot tears begin to fill his eyes.

He vomited. It splashed from the floor on to his nightgown and robe and on to the habit of Sister Mary Rosalie. He heard her cackle something at him as she jumped away, but he no longer cared what she said or did.

When he was through, and his stomach gave way to a series of dry retchings, he heard her say to the rest: "All right, you will all go on to bed while this child of the devil cleans up his sins. And you will all say five Hail Mary's for him before you go to sleep. Let us all pray to the gentle and loving Blessed Virgin to intercede with God to save Eugene Kaske from hell"

II

During the weeks that followed, Eugene's physical punishment was changed to a deeper, spiritual one. Sister Mary Rosalie gave him a new name which she required all the pupils and the sisters to use when they referred to him or addressed him. He was known as Child of Satan. He was to be so regarded, she announced to the entire school, until he recanted his sins and did a great penance. "Where," she might say, coming into the kitchen where Eugene worked each night after supper, "is Child of Satan?" Or she might ask, "Why, Child of Satan, didn't you dust the night table in the dormitory? Hereafter, I shall write your name on it so that you can see the dust."

Rosalie assigned him alone to the front row of the chapel where, for services each force of the chapel wing al the ayes Eugene began at once to feel the force of his peculiar identity. Sister Mary

morning and evening, he knelt and prayed in isolation, feeling all the eyes of the school on the back of his neck. He knew that the older boys, while secretly admiring him, realized they were witnessing a struggle that could not be long sustained, and would therefore do what they could to sustain it.

As he retreated slowly into his own world, which shrunk a little more each day, Eugene came to believe in, or at least in the probability of, his own degradation; that he was, in fact, a child of Satan. He prayed. He prayed with all the fervor and imagery at his command - conscious of the many warnings he had received about the futility of prayer not accompanied by appropriate thoughts. He pictured the devil in a thousand bizarre shapes to impress upon himself how horrible it would be to fall into his grasp. He pictured the holocaust of hell as he had so often heard it described at St. Anselm's, and tried to imagine what it would be like to spend eternity amidst the flames and the terrible shrieking of the damned. He pictured Calvary as he said innumerable prayers in his bed after the lights were off. He pictured it overhung with heavy, black mountains of clouds pierced with blinding

lightning and earsplitting thunder that emphasized the wrath of God. He prayed himself to sleep and dreamed of the terrible Day of Judgment when Christ, magnificent in size and array, called his name. Seated in the heavens against a blinding sun, as Eugene had seen Him displayed in books, He looked kindly at first, then patient; and then, as Eugene sought to explain his behavior on earth, though somehow he could not say clearly what he meant, Christ turned angry-and finally swept him off into space with a tremendous blow of his hand, saying in thunderous tones that echoed through the universe: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire ...

And yet, he could not recant. Sometimes, in the despair of isolation and the fear of damnation, after one of his soul-searing encounters with Sister Mary Rosalie, he thought of confessing, of rushing up to her, falling on his knees and begging for mercy. But, of course, he knew that he could not ever confess to Sister Mary Rosalie. He knew also, during the weeks that followed, that she ultimately had to win; that he had challenged something with which he could not cope; that, in short, the two of them were now caught up in a savage no-give, no-take war in which all the weapons, and the victory, had to be hers. But he could not confess.

*

He knew the time had come when, one day toward the end of October, nearly a month after his banishment, he was again directed to report to the office of Sister Mary Rosalie. He lingered along the way, hating to see the issue come to a climax, afraid of what would follow. He checked his dress outside the door as though it were the final act of his life, and knocked. He was told to come in by a not unfriendly voice. For a long moment, Sister Mary Rosalie studied him noncommittally as he stood beside the desk and returned her attention.

"I have called you in, Eugene," she began, addressing him with the name she had not used for a month, "because I think you have separated yourself from the other pupils long enough, and because I thought you might welcome the opportunity to see me in private."

When Eugene didn't volunteer anything in reply, she asked: "Have you enjoyed the kind of life you've led during the past month?"

"No, Sister," said Eugene.

"You know how it can be improved, do you not?"

"Yes, Sister."

Eugene knew that he was expected to add something to that, but he remained silent and watched the sharp-cut face before him, dominated by the small mustache.

"Eugene," she began after a moment, "do you think you can run away from God?"

"No, Sister," he said, glad of the chance to say something he knew they agreed on.

"And don't you think we know what is best for you here that we are doing what is best for you?"

"I don't know, Sister."

"You have been a very evil boy this year. You do know that, don't you?"

"I don't know, Sister," he said

"Eugene," she said reasonably, "the Lord is often very forgiving when people who have made mistakes admit them and ask His forgiveness. It even happens that they are sometimes better for their mistakes. Now, I would like to show you that this is true, and

help you find God again. But you must help me a little. You must start by wiping the slate clean, and this means, of course, that you must admit your past mistakes to me and to your companions so that we will all know that you are in earnest. And then perhaps I will lighten some of your tasks around the school so that you can have more time in which to know your schoolmates better. I think you will find that you can be very happy here, Eugene."

"Do you mean I have to confess in the locker room, Sister?" asked Eugene, feeling as he said it that he shouldn't have said it quite that way. Eugene watched her finger the beads, and then saw a smile come into her face.

"Perhaps not, Eugene," she said. "Perhaps I can even excuse you from that. I will make the announcement myself, tonight-and then tomorrow..."

"No," he said suddenly, trying not to show in his voice the sense of triumph that he felt. "No, Sister. I do not have anything to confess."

"Eugene! ... Eugene there is, believe me, a limit to my patience! And you have strained it sorely ever since you first lied about the billiard table ..."

"I didn't lie, Sister," said Eugene quietly.

"Oh, you horrid boy!" she cried at him, bouncing out of her chair. "This is the absolute end! Right here and now you are going to learn..." She fumbled the words. Eugene remained where he was as she dug into her garments for the pandy bat.

"You are going to confess, Eugene Kaske, before you leave this room!" She spat the words at him between her teeth. "Open both your hands on top of this desk. Both hands, I say!"

Eugene, knowing the futility of what she was about to do, and suddenly overwhelmed by a wave of revulsion and fear, whirled for the door. She caught him by the hair and dragged him struggling back to the desk. She held one of his hands against the top of the desk and began to beat at it with the pandy, while he fought in terror to free himself.

"Stand still, you savage!" she cried at him. He wrenched free and bounded for the corner of the room where he cringed against the wall. She advanced slowly toward him. "You little beast of the devil," she said, pronouncing each syllable with great clarity.

"You hag!" Eugene screamed at her, losing all his control. "You hag! I hate you! I wish you were dead, you damned old hag!"

"Aawwkkk!" she gurgled. Even in his fear, Eugene noted the incredible size to which her eyes opened as she rushed upon him with the bat. He cowered into the corner, covering himself with hands and arms. He felt her slashing blindly, and knew that she was using the edge of the bat when he felt it cut into his wrists. He sought to plunge out of the corner but was blocked by the sheet of black silk in front of him. The pandy thwacked into an unprotected ear, which he groped to cover, and then it raked along his cheek. He crumpled into the corner, blubbing, and ineffectively protecting himself.

And then, suddenly, he did what he had always known irrefutably that he could never do, what he had only dreamed of doing he doubled up both his fists and, with a complete, terror-stricken abandon, began flaying at the black object in front of him. Cartwheeling his arms wildly, one after another, he struck and struck, and struck and

DAMNATION OF EUGENE KASKE 13

struck. It was an unimaginable ecstasy which, at the moment, he would have considered a fair exchange for his soul. She was now pulling fiercely at his hair with her free hand, and then he felt a hot rippling pain in his face as the bat crashed into his mouth. He stumbled back against the wall. When his vision cleared, he saw Sister Mary Rosalie leaning against the desk, gasping, holding her side with one hand, and pandy in the other, the beads of sweat standing out on the hairs of her upper lip.

"You hag, you hag, you hag!" screamed Eugene.

She looked away from him and started toward the door.

Eugene sent his screams out the door and down the hallway after her. "You hag, you hag, you hag!" he bellowed, wishing with all his heart that she would die at that moment and go to the everlasting flames that she had promised so often for him. He remained against the wall, uncertain whether to bolt the room, to wait for her return, to run away from the school. He sat down in the corner, whimpering, unmoving, a long time-- until he heard the swishing of a nun's habit and the clacking of beads, and he knew by the rhythm of the steps that it was Sister Mary Rosalie. She came in and stood by the desk, her face drained of its color.

She said softly: "Go to the dormitory and remain there until you are sent for. I have made a long-distance call, and an officer of the court will be here tomorrow to remove you from the school. We can do nothing for you here, I can do nothing, the school nothing. You are only a mortal danger to every pupil in the academy. You are completely lost, Eugene Kaske, and we shall no longer even pray for you."

Eugene got miserably to his feet and went out of the room and up the stairs. The dormitory was empty as he went to his bunk and again stood at the window and watched the afternoon activity on the playing field that was now becoming brown and close-cropped with the cold nights. There was a football scrimmage and he watched the black-running figures of the Regulars as they drove back and forth over the shadowed outlines on the field

He became aware of Sister Angela and turned to see her approaching him from the entrance of the dormitory. During the past month he knew that she had avoided speaking to him except when necessary and then did so without using any name whatever. He had been supremely grateful for this. He sat down on the bunk and faced her.

"You knew you would be expelled, didn't you?" she said, coming up close to him.

He nodded to her in reply.

She sat down beside him and took one of his hands in hers, and said, seemingly to herself, "And what will be done with you now?"

"I don't know, Sister," he said

"Eugene, did you lie about sitting on the billiard cushions?"

He glanced toward the window, finding it hard to meet her eyes. "Yes, Sister," he said.

"Yes, of course," she said. "And why did you sit on them when you knew that... that someone was there who would report you? Did you plan it that way?"

"I guess so, Sister," said Eugene, still looking at the window. "I--I guess I did."

"That was a mistake, Eugene, a bad mistake. Even if you wanted so much to leave St. Anselm's, that was a very bad way to go about it."

"Yes," he said. "Sister--do you, do you think God..."

"I don't know, Eugene," she said quickly. "That's up to you. That will be between you and Him. Perhaps we can talk a little before you have to leave. Right now, why not get into bed and try to sleep? I'll bring you some supper after a while."

Eugene lay for hours in a kind of stupor, not really thinking of anything, but lost in a confusion of feelings which he could not separate. He did not eat the supper that Sister Angela brought for him, nor could he go to sleep. He did not try to pray. He felt sure that his private bond with God was now broken completely, never to be restored. It was long after the supper was over downstairs, after the evening study period, after the rest of the dormitory had gone to bed with many furtive and excited looks at him, after Sister Angela had removed his untouched tray--that Eugene became at all sleepy. At last, when the night was quiet, and the room completely dark, he went wretchedly to sleep thinking of Sister Mary Rosalie and his own damnation, knowing that he had lost his immortal soul and that he would burn in hell, surely, horribly and forever.

Saturday is my drinking day'

Saturday is my drinking day
I'm not at home to friends
Except those I materialize
In my drunken way.
So I don't have to make amends
If I insult someone.
I don't have to get up and look in the mailbox.
It doesn't matter.
If I clean the house...
But if I do it's done as well or better
Than anyone can or does.
Saturday I'm not only clever.
I surprise myself.
The things I write down.
The Ideas
Like shoes to walk on water.
I could patent them
But it takes at least \$200.
And the rest of the week I drown.

-- Winifred Cullen

Three Extracts from a Science-Fiction Opera

*Arthur Castillo**Post Meridian*

Sense the shuddering trees
That feel a galaxy in motion
And the crash of blunt tomorrows
In the cunning, poisoned
Teacup of Today,
Which whisper a mellifluous monotony
And stencil in their stipules
The rhythm of a monster
In Today.

Sense the radiant mills
Of this rational republic
Spewing sighs at video love
In the babbling, bubbling
Colic of Today,
Which hallows an hallucination down
The turnpikes of the madmen,
The rollcall of the rabid
In Today.

Sense the tightening screw
That sustains our death in life.
A pro-gress and a retro-gress,
Bawl the sickly, ritual
Pain-cries of Today.
A right-or-wrong or virtue-sin
Are fruitless for the sickbed,
The shredding of the leper
In Today.

Sense the fevered pall
That shards improbity in science,
Cleaving cankered panaceas
On the moral, septic
Abscess of Today.
Be pious and conceal the in-flamed in-valid,
For cretin and for pedant,
The logic of hysteria
For Today.

Ballad for a Space-Dog

What barks above the armored sky
Joining lonely trails there,
Reading esperanto of
Muted stars in silent air?
Rockets of the Race of Man.

Moon! moon! cool and lonely light!
Reflecting ball that's never done
With summer's never-ending sun.

Who spills the jets and walks the bridge,
Eyes the calibrated light,
Soars at worlds of likely life
Dying in the muted night?
Crewmen of the Ships of Man.

Moon! moon! bitter bitter light!
Swaddled in the snowless pit
Of winter of the infinite.

Heaven burnt and icy hell:
Who brawls in taverns of the Moon,
Weeps with trembling nerves for homes,
Dawdling on a loveless tune?
Crewmen of the Ships of Man.

Moon! moon! foul, foul unclosed eye!
Cold corpse afloat in starless wombs:
What sleepers sleep in metal tombs?

Judgment Day

Now is earth concluded.
Now is Kultur bedded down in sheeted light.
And yet, dear god., what lies here
Lies heavier than gravity!

What tots we are! What wrinkled embryos!
Messiahs drip about us,
Quiet as lather,
Loud as chaos,
Poor as reason,
Weak as passion,
Bearded,

Beardless,
Depressed,
Elated.

Extinguished dark cannot compel
The end of light. This
Decorticated imagery
Just lines out our schizoid
Knowledge of illusion.
The known is known by
Contrast only-so Paradox
Is God and Pandemonium
In human consciousness.
We cannot expunge War
Without erasing first
His brother, Peace.
Each fructifies the other
And Ahriman and Mazda
Bite their tails to detours
Of conscious Time.

But this dangling retrospection!
All these fancy dallyings
By ostensibly unstable-
To pray and bray--
To squeal and scream
All our talk of talk and talk
Are only questions after illness
And its therapies.

All these blinking, fluttering wounds
Of history!
Swallowing shards of vases, spears,
And blood electrocuted!
All these fevers are the seismic contours
Of civilization!
Decline and fall of
Detumescent cancers:
Life erupt for camera motion
On a camera screen.

Not what,
But where,
Is Life?

Do we go with the shrunken teacher
Wandering out of Plato's cave,
Imprisoning in a zoo
Jagged rags of life
From Alexander's wars?

Or like Aquinas contemplate
The lamps of Hell-and like old
Goethe, cry, "More light!"
Where none is needed?

Or like Immanuel Kant
Fix eternal stakes
In each assaulting fantasy
Of possibility?

Or rebel to this like Sigmund
And Rousseau and erect the
Salivating frantic brute
Who dribbles filth on ivory pigs?

And who dreamed on
That light had velocities at all,
But that Einsteinian eyes,
Moving minus motion
On a camera screen
Were either shut or open
And saw or saw not,
But never moved at all?

Now is earth concluded.
Draw up the sheeted light
Above our mouths stoppered shut
With shadowed symbols.
In temporary night
Evolution's guillotine
Has beheaded cortex
From the viscera
And parked paralysis
On camera screens
Observed by camera eyes:

ARTHUR CASTILLO 19

Logic for those who cannot think.
Passion for those who cannot love.
Symbols for those who cannot see.

The phantoms steeply shrivel.
Do we sleep to waken
To biologic wholeness,
Omniscient in feeling,
Messiahs to ourselves,
In content just becoming?
In intrinsic reason?
In intrinsic love?

The phantoms steeply shrivel.
Death cannot destroy
What Life has not created.

Now is earth concluded.
Draw up the sheeted light.
Let Life come!
The bobbing torches of our
Soul's re-creation
Safari deep into that
Darkening continent.
Let Life come!

Look deep!
The earth is throbbing, throbbing
With grass!
Look deep!
The trees are booming golden!
Look high!
The hot wine of volcanoes
Toasts the sea!
And god!
The sky is hemorrhaged with sun!

Gadarene Swine

That we gained souls from a cruel transmigration
we may deny, but so the myth maintains.
We root for truffles in the appalling sun
among the roses, roses, watchful vines
that hang their beauty on the ephemeral season.

Our jowls are pink with petals, the Great Boar
pinker than all his sisters under azure.
Kingly the kill that gave us into his care.
We couch in petals for his kingly pleasure-
tumble in roses in his boarish bower.

Small oinks lift up, asking a petalled life,
till appled mouths silence the tentative squeals.
The Boar ordains that swinish life is safe.
Petals are falling, obedient to the pull
of invisible forces, dark below the cliff.

--Richard Ashman

Hunger and the Treasure of Flight

A dazzle of linnets, seed pod small,
Invades the clutter of blossoming shrubs.
New baubles, nervously exact
Which bobble and comment in organized chirps.
They shift position and plumply preen
Rumple a grey huff under a bib
Twist to display a theatrical line
Drawn black to lengthen an Egyptian Eye.

If, in air, they left a substantial trail,
As spiders might, or snails, or even jets,
Like pencil lines connecting puzzle dots,
What form, what maze in depth would this reveal?
What pert equation of appetite and aesthetic?
They could eat more by staying still, not chirping.

--Melissa Blake

The Bone

A gnawed, blood-tinted bone
On a dandelioned lawn
Lay like a storm-flung shell
Or a lost syllable,
And I saw in a light antique
My dog of boyhood, Mike,
Half airedale, half collie,
With wag-tailed melancholy
Savor it under a peach
Twenty years out of reach.
I saw our ardent, meek
Research along Elm Creek
In sunny synagogues
Of cat-tails, crabs and frogs
Where his soft scholarly barks
Caused wild amphibian arcs,
His lifted ears and paw
Controlled by what I knew:
And I saw I had understood
In that croaking, froggy Odd
Clear as in rose or dove
Imponderable love.

Pine

Two pine trees made a ritual of rain.
Fragrant needles repairing a rent sky
Cradled in their sinews hyaline
All ancient tears' habitual embassy.
 To pine, to pine,
Is properly to yearn to illumine.

Well up in the Cascade Range a cataract
In a world of pine makes a quadruple plunge
Whose white tumult is a changeless pact.
Green awes of childhood awake awash,
 Well up, well up,

And, poised by pine, unite all start and stop. --Nelson Bentley

(Two Poems)

Three Poems

*Louis Johnson**Lullaby*

My sleeping wife with thunder in her arms
stumbles on smiles and stirs, but does not wake
breaking the china trance that cups her eyes:
her breath hints ripples on a linen lake

where she, in feathered transport-some white swan-
glides towards morning and the cautious world
that waits with feather-dusters to begin
concentric cyclones, revolutions mild

storming in teacups. May no reef of hurt
raise jagged teeth to wreck the morning sky,
count falling feathers-but the vessel, safe,
complete its journey in the kind light's eye.

Marrows

These lusty plants, complete with blaring sex
have to be helped in the essential act;
beg bee or stud-groom-gardener to fix
the man-sized pollen on the female fact.

Their golden horns rear up at poles apart,
attracted, aching, with no power to move
to interpenetration: they've no art
for more than passive hankerings in love.

And many simply rotted ere I found
reasons and remedy-to take the male
and shake its sperm-stain out upon the round
realistic genital. They never fail

if the job's properly done: the rot is held,
the genes clock over in their natural task,
and marrow-bellies swell: the male is dead.
The rotund widows in ripe sunlight bask.

Housewife Blues

What's to be done? There are bills to meet
And thousands to please on the ditchful street;
The day is so long, and the means so few;
Twirl all the knobs on the radio.

There's pie in the sky, but the crust is hard
And the clothes-line's busted out in the yard;
The oven's too hot, but my blood runs cold
And there's no dream left of the age of gold.

The nerveless children scream in the sun
(Do they sense, in their way, that no race is won?)
And there's no condolence, there's nothing to do
But turn all the knobs on the radio.

Once a new singer could croon and please
But this morning's voice held a note to freeze;
There was blood in my egg like a certain sign
That the world was ending, tonight, at nine.

O the wine's all dregs and the milk is sour
And there's no curl left in the ends of my hair;
My lover has left memy husband too
For twirling the knobs of the radio.

On Crowning Good with Brotherbood

There! Ace on king the last trick falls and all
Thirteen are joined in that consummate kill
As husband (dummy) and the foe who fall
Congratulate the victor on her skill.

And lone in Constantine one Arab, dead
For crimes against the state-committed, though,
Pro patria--could not get through his head
The scheme Inertia framed with Status Quo.

A grand slam! Why, this wife in unborn days
Will stand a-tiptoe when that feat is named
And rouse to chant fresh measures to her praise.
Meanwhile, humane perspective bears no loss
From pride. Her church donations can't be blamed,
And annually she gives to the Red Cross.

-Philip Appleman

In the Forest

The odd child was disturbed at night by thoughts
of the forest:

If a tree falls, a thousand miles from the human ear
or the ear

Of the fur-bearing animal or the bird in flight-
is there a sound in that world?

Six million persons were dissolved in the calm
of a sea of leaves.

The youth listened for the report of a single cry
from the furnace

Or even a bubble heard in the lung in the chamber
of colorless gas.

They went without a word in a country of people.

The man entered the older world of wounds:

No one seemed to hear the wars go by or the peace
strangled as a child;

The injured lay in the street for years, the lonely
perished in their rooms;

Everyone fell a thousand miles from anyone.

It was late before he understood: they hear what they wish.

He found toward the end the motif lost in the beginning:

There is always a sound as the tree falls, the cry itself
is the human condition.

--Don Gordon

A Spontaneous Dance

His fingers touch six wires, the plangent sound

Rises like smoke into her watching eyes.

Wires shake the air and she with tapping hand

Beckons the beat his fingers improvise.

Now nerves are tied to wires, and she rises

A graceless hoyden puppet, and yet rapt

To proffer what in an adept is rapture

Gestures from nerves the touching finger trapped.

Gestures for words. The man with the guitar

Is young and smiling, looks at his own hands.

For whom does the girl dance? Not for herself

Who utters far more than she understands

Nor for the boy, who plucks from wood and wire
The ghost of a girl's body, who gives flesh
The vast dimension of his own desire
And traps her in her own nerve-woven mesh.

What if they never learn each other's name?
Vibration binds them closer than caresses.
Music is carnal as a quick desire
And is a figure of love's real excesses.

Yet to this dance none brings a silver mirror
To hold illusion like a severed head
Or shudders at a counterposing rhythm
Cruelly, or simulates the dead.

This dancing is true love. His music over
The young man blindly lights a cigarette
And in the smoke his accidental lover
Is lost with neither rapture nor regret.

Song of Amber Sand

Good King Whence's lass looked out
On the coast of Stephen
Where the lovers lay about
Toasted crisp & even.
Brightly shone the sun that day
Bright enough to blind them,
Naked women lay in front
& their men behind them

Hither lass & stand by me
Come & tell me truly,
Are the folk on Stephen's coast
Not unclad unduly?
With a blush she dropped her eyes
Like a pair of marbles.
Taking off her clothes she cries,
Sir, I think it's harmless!

Blind she fell down from her tower,
Ran across the pebbles.
Naked men & women rose
Blind as bats & shameless.
Dancing there upon the shore
See their feet have dinted.
Whence o King the song we sing
& why not get it printed?

-Jack Beeching
(Two Poems)

*Correspondence from the Field**Barding Dahl*

"... for, in truth, poetry is like unto a battle--its advances are in many ways retreats, and its retreats are in many ways advances." Elgood Bozamkin, *Cry from the Underground*, Banshee Press, \$9.50, Hangman, Kansas. (Green stamps accepted.)

EDITORS, Coastlines, "Literary" Magazine,

I see you have rejected another batch of my poems. This, of course, is your privilege, but I can't see how you can compare my work with the tripe you published in your last issue. I note that many of the writers you published have few if any credits, while I have appeared in BLAST, PARBLEU, SCRAMBLE, PEPPERPOT, PUM-

BULLION, THE SCREECH OWL MOUNTAIN JOURNAL, SQUEAK, HELLFIRES, WHAT?, POTPOURRI, NO QUARTER, and NEW DAWN, to mention a few. I would think you owe something to the literary public to select seasoned craftsmen over untried newcomers, but, as I say, this is your privilege as editors. Far be it from me to try and tell you how to run your magazine, but I might add that your constant plea for new subscribers might be answered if you would realize that little mag readers demand the very best. You will not receive any more of my poems unless you request them and indicate that you are willing to forget your prejudices and judge works on their intrinsic value.

Eva Jean Lodestar

DEAR EDITOR,

Your letter came as quite a shock to me. Your request that I rewrite "Leaves A-Dropping" I resent as an unjustified intrusion into the author's prerogative. I might point out that this poem is not meant to be "understood" in the usual sense, it is to be felt. The poet receives impressions from the outside, then by some magic gives these impressions back again strangely altered, touched with a perception that transcends time-space orientation. Do I make myself clear? Believe me, you are not the first to comment on the subtlety and complexity of my work. It sometimes makes me sad, knowing I reach so few, but those few may shake the world. Keep your remarks, you are not among the few.

Arthur Glagg

DEAR EDITOR,

Referring to your last issue. This is a painful duty for me, but in the interests of all writers who suffer from high-handed editors and their dictatorial methods I must speak out. In line 14 of my poem, "Belshazzar and the Hermaphrodite," where the original reads,

*"Crystal dawn's dew spangles
Whisking from hell-ratt's whiskers,"*

you have struck out the extra 't,' destroying the balance of the entire poem and cloud-

CORRESPONDENCE FROM THE FIELD 27

ing the meaning. Any literate person knows that the double 't,' when used in verse, signifies Allah, infinite mercy, and bounteous harvests, with Freudian overtones. Striking the 't' shatters the pediment, makes a mess of the alliteration, and ridicules the essentially reverent tone of the poem.

You should also know that the double 't' was introduced in 1519 the year of the Great Rat Plague in Bombay, by Casper Japes, the author of *Onomatopoeia Extravaganzus*.

In the future, if you care to use any of my poems, I must insist that you do not alter them in any way, for details which are lost to the careless reader are loaded with significance for the painstaking.

Sorry to be so blunt,

Christopher Podd

DEAR EDITOR,

Thank you for the very kind note you enclosed with the last poems I sent you. Here are 19 more, which, although they might not be exactly what you are looking for, are somewhat closer to it than the others. Please excuse the bad typing and punctuation, also the spelling, and the copy is getting a little dim through handling, but I am pressed for time. Thanks again for your excellent criticism, I will certainly take it into account in the future. Honest opinions are always appreciated.

p.s. If you don't like these poems, I have quite a few others, which although not quite what you want, may interest you for various reasons.

Horace MeBoy

DEAR EDITOR,

Your rather uncalled for comment which accompanied my last poem I sent you was not appreciated. It may (or may not) interest you to know that there are still people to whom such things as little white cottages and blue lovebirds have a great deal of meaning. You are probably very young people with pseudo-sophisticated ideas about life, but let me tell you there will always be a place for sincerity.

Alma Hardbit

DEAR EDITOR,

You guys are the most. Honest, you're way out. Those bits were knocked out strictly on the fag end of a jag, and I mean really, they're not supposed to cut the Gordian Knot or nothing like that. I mean, they're just bits, and the rest of the felines will have to find their own way home to their pads, you know what I mean? I mean, things are racked and all that, but don't look at me, I'm just Lonesome Sidney, the weed-beater, get me? I mean, don't count on me for nothing. I'm just me.

L.S.

DEAR EDITOR,

You swine.

Finletter Archesi

THE POETRY OF RELEVANCE

Gene Frumkin

Poetry today is fighting a rearguard action. The poets are pell mell scuttling to the sanctuary of the academies or their own neuroses. This is no sudden disaster but one that has been accreting momentum for nearly half a century. Nor is it a disaster that will be denied; even the safe poets, those who at least make a living teaching poetry, are almost eager to admit that they have been and still are under fire--if we can call ostracism fire. Perhaps this admission gives them the feeling of insecurity, of danger, without which no poet worthy of his tradition can carry on.

the novel, some twenty years ago. He said that with Dorothy Richardson, James said it with What has happened was diagnosed by Christopher Caudwell, in a discussion of

Joyce and Proust, "the novel begins to disappear as an objective study of social relations and becomes a study of the subject's experience in society." Writing from pre-World War II Marxist viewpoint, Caudwell blamed this decay on the good artist's awareness of the "bourgeois trap"-the commercial market on his inability to evade it, and his consequent frustration and withdrawal into his personal experience. The poet, however, has been especially successful in evading the commercial trap, which has never been baited for him; but not specifically concerned in his art with studying society, he has frequently removed his experience from it entirely and has developed an hermetic kind of writing that is vital and interesting to no one but himself.

Our culture has bludgeoned itself into insensibility with a great mass of delicate, competent works of "sensitivity," works that rely for their impact on the aesthetic insight to the neglect of the life insight expressed aesthetically. I call the difference between the two, one of scope. The aesthetic insight is content with the poetic formulation deriving from some sensation stimulating to a particular temperament. The poem becomes an attempt to give meaning to this stimulus, but purely an aesthetic meaning, i.e., there is no concern with an ethic, a moral, an ideal (such as justice, beauty) nor with the consequence of this meaning to society. This kind of poem is

The life insight expressed as a poem means more than what it is; it has affinity, connotative or direct, with abstract conditions and ideas. So this poem takes in matters beyond itself, although, if it is well-formed, it will exist as a complete entity, will be (to use MacLeish's term) no less than the poem of aesthetic insight. And it is no less concrete than that poem. What the life insight adds is exactly that: the dimension of life as it goes on around the poet. The poet relates himself to a life that subsumes his "sensitivity" and provides him with, beyond his personal, disconnected sensations, a direction, an attitude towards society. Much of the poetry published today by the most venerable and respected of the nation's literary magazines evinces no direction; these poems are detached, fragments of quite tame observation adrift in an uncertain and anxious age.

Caudwell, in his era, could foresee the death of bourgeois culture and the emergence of a new social organism, the society of the proletariat, in which the dominant rela-

", disdaining an audience. There is no scientific fact to prove Caudwell correct in his premise for the novel,, as altered here to fit poetry. No proof except his and my interpretation of what we have observed in the history of poetry, namely, that great poems have been stimulating to readers other than the poet himself, many readers, and not all of them critics.

In seeking to exculpate the poet from what appears to be the guilt of his artistic suicide, we now hit upon another possibility. If he is so much at the mercy of the societal condition, his environment, and if in this environment the quality of emotion is deteriorating, how dare we call the poet's death suicide; it is plainly murder. And, indeed, it is undeniable that under the impact of the growth of science our cognitive faculties have grown keener, more ponderous in their narrower realms, while the feelings, correspondingly, are withering inside. It is an age of bones; the flesh, unhappily, is even weaker than the adage would have it.

Here, in Riesman's words, is the pattern of our behavior, those of us, anyway, who are establishing the new American character:

What is common to all the other-directed people is that their contemporaries are the source of direction for the individual-either those known to him or those with whom he is indirectly acquainted, through friends and through the mass media. This source is of course 'internalized in the sense that dependence on it for guidance in life is implanted early. The goals toward which the other-directed person strives shift with that guidance: it is only the process of striving itself and the process of paying close attention to the signals from others that remain unaltered throughout life. This mode of keeping in touch with others permits a close behavioral conformity, not through drill in behavior itself, as in tradition-directed character, but rather through an exceptional sensitivity to the actions and wishes of others.

[Riesman's italics]

Were this "exceptional sensitivity" a profound one, cutting through man's superficial desires and cherished sentimental notions, to those needs he might have did he know of their existence (needs more primal than our culture teaches us early to have), how grand this new other-direction would be. However, what is happening, of course, is an attunement on the plane of the thing. Thingness, at the center of bourgeois mores, remains the hub of the new change, for what is our education based upon but things, the vocational specialization needed to earn substantial pay and acquire things, not the least of which are leisure and power, and a high niche in the social hierarchy? What is our leisure devoted to but things: driving in the automobile, watching television, going places where there are things to do? And if we go to a concert, a museum, or see a play or read a novel, we often do so because it is in good taste, our "peer-group" does it, and we, good other-directed people, are sensitive to what our peer-group does, would not deny the value of what the group does by not doing it too. The words, the pictures we are given by the mass media, they add up to consumer awareness and purchase of products, things, and ultimately to a way of life.

Poor poet. No wonder he has lost his readers. They no longer demand the strong, emotional stimulation he could, maybe, under happier conditions, provide. They would

rather relax, be comfortable. Where there is a diminishing demand, there is sure to be a like situation in the supply-this is a scientific law, almost.

Yet serious poetry still exists, and that is surprising, a hopeful sign. For it indicates the rearguard battle might be won, to the extent at least that the small legion of practising poets may one day soon dare to come down from the hills and walk as accepted citizens (not as the bearded or too-clean-shaven guerrillas of today) in the streets of the cities. What I mean is that though the poet may still be disliked, feared or thought slightly mad by the layman, he will yet be respected, for his work will be regarded then as a sort of profession, as opposed to the harmless trifling, the nonsense of genius, which is its usual classification now even among the well-educated.

But to gain this--not "respectability" but "respect"--the poet himself will have to make an effort. Instead of scratching surfaces, in common with the emerging other-directed man who has as his objective the sensitive understanding of others so that they will approve him, the poet will have to put some guts into the achievement of his own aims. He will have to take a social role in the sense that his private observations, his personal experiences, must take on public relevance, i.e., must interpret the world, the times, in the largest dimensions of which he is capable.

*

In one of his most recent dicta, W. H. Auden says, "If the charge of being unnecessarily private and limited in subject matter can legitimately be brought against modern poetry-I think that it sometimes can-the reason is ... not that the poet is too conceited but that he is too timid. Knowing that he can only produce genuine work about events to which he has a personal relation, aware of the awful results of attempting to deal with anything else, he sticks for safety to some area in which he is sure of his personal relations, an area such as his childhood experiences, when, as a matter of fact, if he would take the risk, he would find that the possible area of the personal is larger than he supposes." True enough. Exactly so. But when Auden later in this article describes the poet's search for individuality, his dread of becoming a member of that "chimerical creature", the public; when he declares that the public "is nothing in particular ... the least exclusive of clubs; anybody, rich or poor, educated or unlettered, nice or nasty, can join in," it is time to take a second look.

This is not Riesman's public of urban America, from which he is able to abstract a certain character, with certain distinct traits. Nor is it C. Wright Mills's "public" (a word which in Auden's lexicon corresponds to "society"). Mills's public is the small, liberal democratic body politic operating through some kind of general will, arrived at by free discussion among individuals of independent mind; it is a public, he says, not much in evidence today. But, nevertheless, he and Auden differ in their assessments of the current condition. For Auden, the society seems to have given way to the crowd (or what he calls, the "public"), not entirely perhaps, but enough to make it massive, amorphous, unstable. There is also competition between two huge "communities"-the West and East-for embodiment as the dominant force of the global society. The hours the poet might spend in the midst of this public nullify him for that time, for he lives then in a void; his only hope is within his own personal experience, to assert his individuality from the crowd. Mills agrees that the

public (or society) is in decline, is being unseated by a mass type of society without a will, in which the mass man's day-to-day experience is a "vague chaos although he does not know it because, strictly speaking, he does not truly possess or observe his own experience. He does not formulate his desires; they are insinuated into him."

This mass society almost negates as grimly, he only surmises the idea of an elite. There is hope. For Riesman--whose other-directed man, it should be noted here, is usually a man of the upper or middle classes, while Mills's mass man begins probably around the lower middle class and descends from therefor Riesman, the present flux of American society is not only not grim but, on the contrary, has much promise. What the other-directed man, that arch-conformist, really wants, Riesman believes, is to become an autonomous individual. His sensitivity to others is the new, peaceful and cooperative way by which he strives to attain such autonomy.

What grows apparent in roughly contrasting the tones of these views is that the analyses of the sociologists imply or directly state that the condition of American, of Western, society is not as bad as the poet Auden says it is. The former observe the situation as clinically as they can; they present their findings, for the most part, detachedly. Auden is almost passionate in his denunciation of our society in its mass aspects, in its mechanization and impersonality. No doubt a spokesman for a large segment of the poetic community, Auden is an eloquent representative, indeed one of those serious, dedicated individuals who would perform useful service in one of Mills's archetypal publics of opinion. It is surely a sign of the times, however, that this former poet of public relevance now must voice his passion in prose. His poetry today is not the hard, forceful stuff it used to be; the musical virtuosity is still there, but the song is gone: the feeling of the late poems is cereal.

Now we come nearer to an understanding of why it is that the sociologists are the ones who appear to be creating the myths of our time rather than the poets or novelists. They are far more willing to confront--they have to confront, by definition the facts of our civilization, are far more eager to construct a theory of its outlines and direction. If some of them believe all is not lost, it is to the credit of their spirits, which seem to be sturdier than the poets

But those the poets and novelists whose traditional task it has been to give flesh to the framework of science, or if they wish, to splinter the framework with a few solid, fleshly kicks and build their own, have refused to join in. Consequently, our myths have as much vitality and substance to them as the constructions of an Erector set. Until our artists once again decide to become relevant, that is the kind of world the intellectual will know: the world of dullness, conformity, stagnation, the individual utterly powerless.

The poet is not daring to experience the potentialities of our society, is only recording, in his timidity, its drab surface. The poet is becoming increasingly the other-directed man, the sensitive conformist, though he is doing this from a poet's distance. It is bad taste has been for the past eight or nine years in America to protest, to explore too deeply not only Communism but the American Way of Life itself. And the poet, taking note of the hard jolts some of his predecessors of the Thirties have received as penalties for a too-ready willingness to participate in the affairs of society,

POETRY OF RELEVANCE 33

has accepted the taboos. After all, the poet's interests are aesthetic, aren't they? What has he to do with public problems?

Auden would reply that our hypothetical poet is unquestionably aware of the world situation. "It is unjust, I believe," he writes, "to attribute a lack of patriotic or political poems to a snobbish lack of concern for the real world on the part of the poets. After all, what poet today does not know only too well that a political decision can overnight transform his existence?" But, says Auden, the world is too big, too amorphous, for the poet to have anymore personal contact with events even though, overnight, he could be changed forever by that with which he has no contact.

There were times when the poet's imagination was supposed to be the bridge between what he had experienced and what he could only conceive; his imagination gave him that personal touch his bodily limitations prevented him from having. But Auden is right. No one today will make contact from within the creative center of his being with the surrounding, unmanageable swirl of public events. Until, of course, somebody does it.

Our society, outwardly stolid and conservative, a society whose entire imagination appears to be concentrated on creating nothing that cannot be untouched by the human hand, is really a society that is afraid. It is afraid because transformations come about now so quickly and so cataclysmically. Yet the fact that they do so come about is all the evidence we need to realize that all is not so stolid and conservative, that these characteristics are just a facade, a hope against hope that the changes will not be too rapid, too destructive.

That the wheel of creation will once more turn becomes an imminent prospect, for some a portent, for others a faith. The poet, however, does not probe except into his own psyche. He sees only the grey shadow of the time slanting on the pavements. The time itself rises diffuse and multitudinous to a dangerous height, an unsurmounted Everest. From his position in the low-lying hills, the poet asks, "What am I supposed to be, a mountain-climber?" If the past is an indication, the answer is Yes. At least, Poet, you must climb higher than your indifference or despair.

I do not propose that the poet immerse himself in political questions or even in social commentary, for these are more the matter of the novelist. But the purpose of this piece is to suggest that the field of experimentation for the poet at this mid-century impasse is in discovering new themes and structures of public relevance. A relevance of intensity, of concern or belief or indignation, whatever it may be, comparable at the very minimum to the lifeless intensity of advertising. Formally, we may well be conservative for a time, farmers of a poetic soil that has been enriched for us by the pioneers of the first half of the century. But our seeds must be those of a deep participation, encompassing, yet contained within, the eternally private ego, so that the eventual harvest will have been worth the trouble.

A Few Cool Words for Howl

(The following article is reprinted from a May "Between the Lines" column conducted by William Hogan, book editor of the San Francisco Chronicle).

Lawrence Ferlinghetti, San Francisco bookseller, poet and publisher, was the central figure in the recent action by the local Collector of Customs who seized 520 copies of the paper-bound volume, "Howl and Other Poems," by Allen Ginsberg. The books, seized last March 22, were being shipped to Ferlinghetti's City Lights Book Shop by the British printer, Villiers. A first edition passed through U.S. Customs in October, 1956, and was released without incident by Ferlinghetti. The March shipment was halted by Chester MacPhee, Collector of Customs for San Francisco, on the grounds that "the words and sense of the writing is obscene... You wouldn't want your children to come across it." The following is a statement by Mr. Ferlinghetti in defense of "Howl."

The San Francisco Collector of Customs deserves a word of thanks for seizing Allen Ginsberg's "Howl and Other Poems" and thereby rendering it famous. Perhaps we could have a medal made. It would have taken years for critics to accomplish what the good collector did in a day, merely by calling the book obscene. Since City Lights Books has now had an entirely new edition printed locally and thereby removed it from Customs' jurisdiction, I should like to justify this action by defending "Howl" as a poetic work, leaving the legal argument to others.

I consider "Howl" to be the most significant single long poem to be published in this country since World War II, perhaps since Eliot's "Four Quartets." In some sense it is a gestalt, an archetypal configuration of the mass culture which produced it. If it is also a condemnation of our official culture, if it is an unseemly voice of dissent, perhaps this is really why officials object to it. In condemning it, however, they are condemning their own American world. For it is not the poet but what he observes which is revealed as obscene. The great obscene wastes of "Howl" are the sad wastes of the mechanized world, lost among atom bombs and insane nationalisms, billboards and TV antennae. Ginsberg chooses to walk on the wild side of this world, along with Nelson Algren, Henry Miller, Kenneth Patchen, Kenneth Rexroth, not to mention some great American dead, mostly in the tradition of philosophical anarchism.

Ginsberg wrote his own best defense of "Howl" in another poem called "America. Here he asks: "America, when will we end the human war?" and "America how can I write a holy litany in your silly mood?" Speaking of the "best minds" of his generation, Ginsberg writes in "Howl":

"What sphinx of cement and aluminum bashed open their skulls and ate up their brains and imagination?

Moloch! Solitude! Filth! Ugliness! Ashcans and unobtainable dollars! Children screaming under the stairways! Boys sobbing in the armies! Old men weeping in the parks!"

A world, in short, you wouldn't want your children to come across. I pity the Harvard prof in the "Partisan Review" who wasn't sure whether "Howl" was an imperative or a noun. It's an imperative. Considering the state of the world (not to mention the state of modern poetry) it was high time to howl. Thus was Goya obscene in depicting the Disasters of War, thus Whitman an exhibitionist, exhibiting man in his own strange skin.

Henry Rago, editor of "Poetry" (Chicago), will soon publish a defense [published, July "Poetry"] of "Howl" which reads in part:

with whom I have discussed the book that it is a work of the legitimacy and validity contemplated by existing American law ... I would be unworthy of the tradition of this magazine ... if I did not speak for the right of this book to free circulation, and against this affront not only to Allen Ginsberg and his publishers but to the possibilities of the art of poetry in America.

The "Nation's" poetry editor has written that "seizure of such works is ill-considered and justifiable neither morally nor legally." William Carlos Williams, who wrote the Introduction to "Howl," said: "I'm amazed that 'Howl' has been denied release.

the young can look to keep them virtuous?" Kenneth Patchen wrote that the really obscene four-letter words are in common use: "hate" "kill" "maim" "bomb" etc. while other four letter words such as "life" and "poem" and "love" are considered subversive and obscene, especially if there is "the remotest reference to that unclean and only fit to be starved and stoned and blinded and burned alive beast, our Fellow-man!"

Notes on Contributors

PHILIP APPLEMAN is an instructor in English at Indiana University and is editor of the new quarterly journal, *Victorian Studies*. He has published in various literary magazines.

RICHARD ASHMAN is familiar to the little mag field as editor and publisher of the *New Orleans Poetry Journal* and *A Hounhm's Scrapbook*.

JACK BEECHING writes that he lives in a cottage older than Columbus where he raises his own food as well as his third beard. Has had a variety of jobs, as well as war service on the lower deck of the Royal Navy. He has supported a growing family by the manufacture of advertising copy and commercial fiction-about 40 books under various pseudonyms. Is the author of *Aspects of Love* and *Truth Is a Naked Lady*.

NELSON BENTLEY-his poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *New World Writing*, *Poetry London*-New York, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Experiment*, *Western Humanities Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, etc. He is now teaching American and English literature at the University of Washington.

MELISSA BLAKE writes to *Coastlines* from Big Sur, California. She recently read a group of her poems at Peter Yates' "roof" in Los Angeles.

ARTHUR CASTILLO-his poems appearing here are part of a libretto for a science-fiction opera, *The Millennium*, which is now, "an opera in search of a composer." Mr. Castillo suggests that the composer be capable of "subtle impressions, militaristic clangor, romantic innuendo, and cosmic cataclysm."

WINIFRED COLLEN has lived most of her life in California, attending UCLA and U. of C., where she won a prize in *First the Blade*, intercollegiate poetry anthology, as well as contributing to the *Californian*.

DON GORDON-a new volume of his poetry, *Displaced Persons*, is now being published by Alan Swallow.

LOUIS JOHNSON is a New Zealand writer and is the founder-editor of the *New Zealand Poetry Yearbook*. He is also editor of *Numbers* as well as the national P.T.A. monthly.

J. D. KOERNER is an instructor in the Department of Humanities at M.I.T. Articles by Dr. Koerner have appeared in *Harpers*, *Pacific Spectator*, *South Atlantic Quarterly* and elsewhere. He is also editing anthologies for the D. C. Heath Co. His story in this issue is his first to be published.

DAVID LEMON, cover artist for this issue, has designed covers for two previous issues of *Coastlines*. He is now living in Berkeley.

Blunderbuss... what's going on around L.A.

This summer has almost had the touch of death in it as the little mag seemed to wither everywhere. Los Angeles, despite the enormous hidden concentrations of talent, seemed asleep. But it wasn't. We don't know whether or not we've been juiced by Frisco, whose impresarios have driven the issue of poetry into public notice, or whether it is the itinerant poets--Jonathan Williams, Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, Henry Birnbaum, Del Weniger (Climax), Alexander Trocche (Merlin and Olympic Press) and many others who have been passing through L.A. At any rate, events in Frisco are being paralleled in L.A., what with the seizure by the L.A. Police of works appearing in Wally Berman's *Semina*, the beginning of Bob Alexander's *ex tempore* press which will produce pamphlets similar to those of the City Lights Book Shop in Frisco, and the development of groups of writers such as that which meets at Larry Spingarn's house, 6506 Agnes Avenue, every Tuesday night. This is a fiction and a playwrighting group, organized by Spingarn. Zach Walsh, a member, will have the distinction of seeing a group of his one-act plays performed at the Horseshoe Theatre. Spingarn, a veteran contributor to many magazines, himself has achieved the distinction peculiar to writers in these times of being fired from his teaching job at UCLA because of the appearance of a recent story by him in *Jem*. (The dauntless ACLU is handling this down here.

Word also has it that Tom McGrath's every-other-Wednesday-night poetry sessions, though temporarily suspended, will resume this fall. New publications forthcoming or just printed by writers from around here include Don Gordon's *Displaced Persons* (Alan Swallow); Peter Carr's *Messages*; Lars Lawrence's last volume of a trilogy, *The*

science-fiction novel. Other projects include Peter Carr's "Poetry and Talk" on KUSC, which recently featured a talk with J. B. May; a heavily-financed fiction anthology also will originate from L.A., as well as a new publication *Square*, "A magazine of conformity," which will be, as may be guessed, the beginning of a struggle between the squares and the cats, or between the neo-affiliates and the disaffiliates. Also on the line is a new documentary film in the making by Ben Maddow on life here in old L.A., *The*

Savage by Daniel Savage Eye. Finally, we must ask, what are those incessant get-togethers at J. B. May's and Guy Daniels'. Every barnstorming editor or writer has been passing through May's place on Westerly Terrace. Has the west coast become Mecca or are poets building another Union Pacific? We have asked May to enlighten us in future issues. As a matter of fact, all are invited to enlighten us.

FROM PETER YATES

A series of monthly readings by Los Angeles poets began last December at the home of Sol and Mae Babitz in Hollywood. In February the group moved to 1735 Micheltorena Street, the original home of Evenings on the Roof concerts.

Peter Yates read at the December meeting and was followed by Joe Rabinowitz in January. Tom McGrath brought an enthusiastic turnout to the February meeting. For March, Peter Yates, tentatively functioning as MC, read poems from *Ring Song* by Naomi Replansky, following a list of titles recommended by the poet. A furious discussion ensued, which was calmed by reading a poem in the form of haikai by Melissa Blake.

The April meeting offered two poets, Gene Frumkin and Morton Moss, the latter having as stand-in a prepared tape. The previously sizeable audience dwindled at the May meeting, without harm to poetic feelings, since the time was given over to hearing the recorded album of *Waiting for Godot*.

In May the poets were Stanley Kiesel and Melissa Blake. Peter Yates, sitting in as reader for the latter poet, extended the evening by reading at sight "America" from *Howl* by Allen Ginsberg and selections from *Hurrah for Anything* by Kenneth Patchen. At the June meeting a small, substantial group of practising poets gathered to hear Ann Stanford read from her work of the last four years and parts of the long narrative poem, "Magellan." There followed a spontaneous discussion of the long poem in style and form.

I have not offered you the two pages you should have on LA as a world music centre

last year we have honored the 75th birthday of Stravinsky with a concert including an American and a world premiere of his compositions *Canticum Sqcnun* and *.4gon*; have presented Pierre Boulez in lecture and as conductor of his *Le Marteau sans Maître*; and produced, under the direction of Robert Craft, important recordings of later works by Schoenberg and Stravinsky, an unequalled record of Gesualdo madrigals, and an epoch-making album, the *Complete Music of Anton Webern*. I do not know any city in the world that can show a comparable list, nor do I know anywhere the musicians would be able to take such feats of preparation and performance in stride.

Readers who wish to become better acquainted with these musical events may read about them in back-issues of *Arts & Architecture*.

FROM CURTIS ZAHN

Our Writers' Workshop continues 8 p.m. every first Saturday of the month. And it continues to disappoint me much of the time. The turnover is at least 50% from meeting to meeting; in the few years it has been going I'd say hundreds or a thousand different aficionados or curious have Sat In, but few make it more than twice a year. We tried having it in different places in Town, but that proved confusing so it's back here again [Malibu]. Part of the trouble is the distance, no doubt.

Some of the time, the criticism is inadequate or incompetent; some of the time there are hostile elements, or a dominant party-spirit (both kinds of parties). It is difficult to obtain really gifted, all-round readers and the state of the captive audience is totally dependent upon that man under the bright light. Again, some writers don't enjoy having their stuff incompetently read, and then taken apart. Of late there have been increasing numbers of goof-ups--members of the Great Ungifted, possibly liberated by Mr. Lipton. Their main contributions lie in such things as hamming up the reading, falling on their asses, spilling drinks or getting into a corner and talking animatedly to somebody they would never talk to if there wasn't a reading going on which they drove 50 miles to attend. And on the other hand, the squares who, year after year exclaim over the fact that the stories don't follow the rules established by Satevepost. Or the subversive material therein. Still, there are moments even seconds--when the endeavor seems worth it all. I do however feel that I'm becoming an anti-disafiliophile--too many of them are taking out their aggressions on their colleagues instead of the revolution they signed up for.

I wish a lot of us could pool our finances and launch a few things effectively; buy time on radio and TV for some literary programs? Publish a few anthologies of west coast and/ or national writing, prose that is. Form a film making co., purchase a radio or TV station--projects that would reach outside the knowing circles and into the eyes and ears of the squared-off populace.

FROM VENICE WEST

Lawrence Lipton writes CL of the formation of a lively group of experimental poets whose headquarters is the VENICE WEST POETRY CENTER, 1107 Ocean Front Walk. Venice. This group includes Lawrence Lipton, Stuart Perkoff, Charles Newman, Charles Foster, Saul White and Bruce Boyd. It is attempting to reintroduce poetry as a living art by combining modern poetry with jazz. The jazz of Shelley Manne, Buddy Collette, Jimmy Giuffre and Jack Montrose is played together with the speaking, chanting and singing voice with head arrangements, improvisation and composed musical scores. One such poem, by Stuart Perkoff, "Round About Midnight," uses four voices, music and dance. Poems by Kenneth Rexroth, Allen Ginsberg. Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Lipton and Perkoff-and prose poems by Henry Miller--were recently read.

The credo of this community of writers consists of "(1) an emphasis on the vocal tradition the pantry, al the render// religios magical, assigned the treatiom toe.

audience, (4) total engagement of the writer in total rejection of the Social Lie and the lifeways that flow from it; disaffiliation and cultivation of the art of poverty"

On August 2, VENICE WEST was host to Jonathan Williams, visiting poet and publisher of Jargon Books.

THE WRITER'S POSITION IN AMERICA

The following is the text of a lecture given by Arthur Miller before the National Assembly of the Authors' League of America at a panel on "The Writer's Position in America". Since this subject is relevant to the little magazine field, we are printing this lecture in its entirety below.

In six minutes one can't hope to do more than make an assertion or two about so complex a thing as the writer's position in any society, let alone in America. One relationship, however, can at least be profitably touched on, even if a just balance cannot be struck in so short a time. It is the question of the integration of the writer into the domestic and foreign policies of the nation at any particular moment.

Through most of history the relationship between the artist and political power has been, how shall I say, uneasy. Our profession has had a higher percentage of exiles, jailbirds, and public offenders than any other. This is probably due to the conflict between the artist's personal search for life's meaning, and the politician's insistence that his policy and his power embody all the wisdom any honest patriot requires. It is possible to pity both politician and artist, but it seems evident that the welfare of the race must insist upon those conditions of freedom which will make the competition for truth at all possible.

I believe that we are in a period when, in a rather submerged and stuttering way, power is striving, sometimes consciously, oftentimes in ignorance of what is at stake -striving to preempt the field entirely for itself. The most recent and blatant example can be found in last week's exchange of letters between Mr. Sulzberger who publishes the N. Y. Times, and Mr. Dulles. The immediate issue revolved around newspaper writers, but in 1957 it seems no longer possible to imagine that its weight does not fall equally upon novelists, playwrights, and poets.

Mr. Sulzberger wrote to protest the State Department's refusal to allow American newsmen to go to China to report the news and its threats of reprisals for any who dared disobey. He wrote, "As things now stand, I cannot escape the feeling that the Administration is abridging the freedom of the press and using the press as an instrument in its diplomacy." Mr. Dulles replied in part, "When young men are drafted and sent abroad, they are used as instruments of foreign policy. When business people are not allowed to trade with Communist China, they might equally argue that they are being used as instruments of our diplomacy:

"Foreign policy and diplomacy cannot succeed unless, in fact, it channels the activities of our people, and in this respect newspapermen have also their loyalty and patriotic duty"

I do not know how many of you share my view of history in this respect, but I believe that this statement of Mr. Dulles is a new thing among us and represents a way of thought which, to phrase it charitably, departs from our practice and traditions. I am not saying that you can't agree with this "channeling," but, if you do, it seems to me you have to recognize that it entails certain drastic concessions of traditional liberties. My point here is less Mr. Dulles than the accuracy with which his statement reflects a misconception, widely held in and out of government, concerning all writings and all writers, science and scientific thought as well. The basic assumption here is what Mr. Dulles says it is, that "foreign policy cannot succeed unless, in fact, it channels the activities of the people

I don't think it unfair or inaccurate to say that this is what has been called "Total Diplomacy." If it means anything, it means that every resource of a nation is organized into the effort to achieve a diplomatic end, and not the least of the resources required is the thought, the ideas, the information of the people and their projection of what should be in the world. I think it must be said for Mr. Dulles that American administrations in the past have done their best to confute internal opposition to their policies; that Franklin Roosevelt, for one, campaigned against individual members of the House and Senate to eradicate or reduce their influence against his policies. But excepting during the Civil War and in the time of the Alien and Sedition Acts, the very punitive power of government itself has not been used to limit the liberties of citizens, or to equate political opposition with disloyalty, in order to cut off its potential opponents.

I cite this exchange of letters only because it puts the dilemma so clearly.

I can say from my experience that plays and playwrights are also considered as bearing upon high policy, and are justified as being forbidden to go abroad, while within the country other arms of government are used to organize them out of circulation. The State Department has interfered with the circulation of American books abroad, American music and musicians, and American painting. It is no news that it is now impossible for American scientists to act as hosts to international scientific con-

gresses within the United States because so many foreign scientists will not be admitted here. I believe that once we assent to the idea that high policy alone is sacred, and that every other value can easily be sacrificed to it, we shall have abdicated our independence as writers and citizens. I believe we have by silence given this consent, and by silence helped to raise the state to a kind of power over all of us which it cannot have without crippling the soul of art and people themselves.

I wonder if it is not time for some expert testimony on this problem. I wonder if it is not time for writers, who know best the delights of freedom because they use freedom every day, to make it clear to government and the people that there is in fact a very important difference between businessmen and soldiers on the one hand, and writers and artists on the other, even if the actions of all do bear upon foreign or even domestic policy. The government is proceeding on a very hollow syllogism. All mice have four feet; all lions have four feet--therefore a mouse is a lion. The virtue of syllogism is that while it may bring out similarities, it totally obscures differences that in real life separate one thing from another. It is not the part of writers to concede, let alone to pretend, that they are the same as businessmen and soldiers. And this, simply because the salvation of the nation and the race do not and cannot depend upon steel ingots and shoes and jet planes in the same way as they do upon the free expression of opinion, of viewpoints, and of the saving awareness and wisdom that not infrequently springs from the written word and cannot spring from iron or armies. The mission of the written word is not to buttress high policy but to proclaim the truth, the truth for whose lack we must surely die; it is a mission not lightly to be cast aside for temporary advantage.

It is now common among us, if not downright fashionable, to inveigh against the trends of conformity, the emergence among us of the "organization man," the "lonely crowd," the--in short--"channeled" personality. The writer knows that for him to be organized-in, so to speak, is to lose his very field of action, his reason for existence as a writer.

Is it not time to state that high policy is not the only value worth serving, just as we do not believe--at least I hope we do not--that efficiency and progress may rightfully consume whatever in the human being does not fit into efficient and progressive patterns? Is it not time to state that the news is still sacred, too, that the freedom to write, to create unmolested and unblackguarded by government is at least equal to the sanctity of high policy. For God's sake let us at least cling with one finger, if we cannot grasp it in our hands, to the most secure proposition mankind has ever proved in its bloody time on this earth---that an artist and his vision need not be any more mistaken than even a politician's.

It is not a question even of our rights. It is not a question of complaining. It is not even a question of trying to uphold the dignity of America before the world, even though, believe me, it has been gravely sullied by this brand of "realism." It is purely and simply a question of preserving the conditions of a free press and a free literature.

The people do not understand those conditions, not because they care little for things of the spirit, but because we who are experts, or should be, have not made clear what those conditions are, nor how they differ from conditions required if business is to flourish, or soldiering. What freedom we are using now we have not helped to make, and what is being eroded around us we are making no effort to protect. And I say these things because I have learned them at my cost, and because I wish none of you will have to learn them the same way.