

TRACE

A CHRONICLE OF LIVING LITERATURE

James Schevill on Verse Drama

No. 17

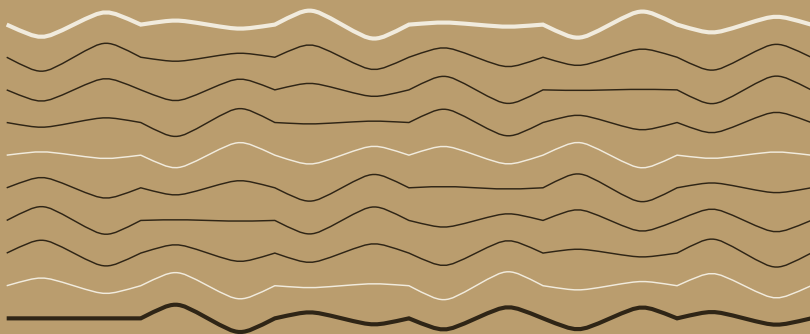
ISSUE

June, 1956

1/6

30c

JAMES BOYER MAY / EDITOR



TRACE

No. 17

Living Literature

Essays & Articles · Poetry · Reviews

June 1956

Edited by James Boyer May

A READING EDITION

ABOUT THIS EDITION

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

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

CONTENTS

A Style for Action: Notes on Verse Drama	4
Towards Print	11
Editors Write	13
<i>Alan Swallow</i>	13
<i>D. Vincent Smith</i>	14
<i>William H. Scarborough</i>	14
<i>Ronald Voigt</i>	14
<i>Fred Cogswell</i>	15
<i>Grace Ross</i>	15
Interpreting the Approach Story	16
Some Items Received	22
Reports on Presses	25
Addenda	27

A STYLE FOR ACTION: NOTES ON VERSE DRAMA

by James Schevill

The difficult position of verse drama in our society is well illustrated by two stories. A few years ago, when Ronald Duncan, the English poet and playwright, translated Jean Cocteau's *THE EAGLE WITH TWO HEADS*, he adapted most of it into poetry. But when he sent the play out to a London agent, he made sure it was typed as prose, since he knew that the opportunity for production would be greater.

There is also the story of a young American playwright visiting a New York agent. 'Whatcha got, son?' asked the agent paternally. 'A play with real action,' said the eager playwright. 'End of the first act the hero's in jail for a murder the villain committed. End of the second act, the defense lawyer, a beautiful woman, has fallen in love with the hero and is about to be attacked by the villain as she searches his house for evidence to acquit her lover. In the third act the hero escapes from prison with his dumb friend who furnishes the comic relief. They reach the villain's house just in time to save the girl, but a sudden storm blows the lights out and there's a terrific shooting episode in which the dumb friend almost kills the hero. The dumb friend finally strangles the villain to death and he confesses just before he dies.' 'Sounds great movie-wise,' said the agent. 'I'll contact Hollywood pronto.' 'There's just one thing,' said the playwright hesitantly. 'It's in heroic couplets.' 'I don't care if it's in heroic triplets . . . wait a minute!' said the agent. 'What'd you say?' 'It's written in poetry. Heroic couplets.' 'Poetry!' shouted the agent. 'What the hell

**Commissioned by the National Council of Churches, the new verse play of James Schevill called *THE BLOODY TENET* was given its premiere in the Central Congregational Church of Providence, R.I., on April 19 and 20. These notes on verse drama*

formed the basis of a talk that Mr Schevill gave to the Second Annual California Writers Conference on April 13 in Oakland. — ED.

are you trying to do to me? Put Mickey Mouse in the ring with Joe Louis?’

Fortunately, this situation has begun to change since War II. More people now recognise the simple fact that the three greatest periods of Western drama — the Greek, the Elizabethan, and the France of Louis XIV that produced Molière — all involved verse techniques; and that with poetry you can create effects of depth and precision that are not possible with prose.

Even Arthur Miller, who became famous for the agonised, realistic prose of *DEATH OF A SALESMAN*, has concerned himself recently with the relationships of poetry and prose in drama. Some critics of his latest play, *A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE*, were surprised to find many passages in the published version printed in verse. In a new essay called *THE FAMILY IN MODERN DRAMA* in the April, 1956, *ATLANTIC MONTHLY*, Miller writes: ‘When one is speaking to one’s family, for example, one uses a certain level of speech, a certain plain diction perhaps, a tone of voice, an inflection, suited to the intimacy of the occasion. But when one faces an audience of strangers, as a politician does, for instance — and he is the most social of men — it seems right and proper for him to reach for the well-turned phrase, even the poetic word, the aphorism, the metaphor. And his gestures, his stance, his tone of voice, all become larger than life; moreover, his character is not what gives him these prerogatives, but his role. In other words, a confrontation with society permits us, or even enforces upon us, a certain reliance upon ritual. Similarly with the play.

The implications of this natural wedding of form with inner relationships are many, and some of them are complex. It is true to say, I think, that the language of the

family is the language of the private life — prose. The language of society, the language of the public life, is verse. According to the degree to which the play partakes of either relationship, it achieves the right to move closer or further away from either pole.’

While Miller’s discussion of how family and social relationships have affected dramatic poetry and prose is extremely stimulating and has valuable insights, it seems to me misleading to split up language into two categories: prose for the family, for private life, and verse for society, for public life. Language is an organic process—in a constant state of flux—but nevertheless the primal force of man’s fate. Without language there would be no men, no machines, no love, and I might add, no poetry. Poetry, in turn, is the force that energizes language, gives it powers of imagery and varieties of rhythm. Miller is wrong, it seems to me, when he thinks of poetry as a formal device for public occasions only. If language is radically poetic and capable of being intensified into verse at any given moment, theoretically any kind of dramatic character can speak it in any given situation. The problem in the theater then becomes one of suiting the poetry to the particular action of the play, whether that action is public or private.

In drama, prose can trace the external action as well as poetry. But prose cannot examine character and quicken emotion as deeply as verse. This has been demonstrated anew recently by Richard Wilbur’s fine translation of Molière’s great play, *THE MISANTHROPE*. In the preface to his translation, Wilbur states: ‘The constant of rhythm and rhyme was needed, in the translation as in the original, for bridging great gaps between high comedy and farce, lofty diction and ordinary talk, deep character and shallow. Again, prose might preserve the thematic structure of the play, and other “musical” elements would be lost, in particular the frequently intricate arrangements of balancing half-lines,

lines, couplets, quatrains and sestets. There is no question that words, when dancing within such patterns, are not their prosaic selves, but have a wholly different mood and meaning.' Here, it is clear that Wilbur, contrary to Miller, is speaking of poetry as an organic form of language that can be controlled to meet any dramatic need.

Wilbur also says in his introduction: 'Molière's logic loses all its baroque exuberance in prose; it sounds lawyerish; without rhyme and verse to phrase and emphasize the steps of its progression, the logic becomes obscure like Congreve's, not crystalline and followable as it was meant to be.' Today, this is a particularly unusual and pertinent idea about verse drama. Though verse drama is often considered more obscure than prose, Wilbur points out that the opposite can be true. It all depends on the craftsmanship.

What is it, then, that has divorced poetry from drama in our time? The economic factors are obvious from my story about the agent. Our real difficulty is that we have reached a point in history when through our vast, new communications systems, the flattest and most sentimental qualities of language receive the greatest stress under the label of prose. Consequently, prose has split further apart from verse, and from the controls of the advertising towers seems to hold an invincible position of dominance. This position of supreme power has tended to make people forget that the two were once far more unified and that poetry can be made out of prose elements just as prose can be made out of poetic elements.

If we examine the economic situation a little more closely, it is still painfully clear that despite the development of such organisations as THE POETS' THEATER in Cambridge, Mass., and the production of occasional verse plays on and off Broadway, the possibilities for productions of verse drama are shamefully inadequate in the U.S.A. Strangely enough, one of the difficulties is that even the little theater groups,

supposedly dedicated to the fresh and experimental, rarely present new plays. These little theaters have such precarious budgets that, too often, their directors feel the pressure to present the tried and true. As for the colleges and universities, except for a few, they tend to be less friendly to new plays than the little theaters. We cannot any longer dodge the fact that U.S. colleges and universities, many of which have better producing plants than the Broadway theaters, have failed to give the vital and experimental educational leadership in the theater which is their task. There seems to me one major reason for this. This society is still basically Puritan in attitudes and vague distrust of the drama is reflected by the status of second cousin given it as far as funds and power in the academic scene are concerned. The theater, by its nature, has always mirrored man's problems, and the plight of the American theater reflects national problems. It is far easier and safer to give funds and authority to materialistic goals that will produce planes and rockets and highways than to the theater which is bound to produce controversial moral images of man's nature.

There is another important reason for the split between poetry and drama that has been going on since the seventeenth century. Increasingly, poets have come to use the devices of rhythm and imagery in different ways from poetic dramatists. Imagery in verse drama must be subservient to the action and characters. In poetry, however, the image has become more and more the focus of experimentation used to effect brilliant surface texture. While this surface texture may have great power as it is read on the page, it is often too intricate for the function of verse drama. A difference in the treatment of rhythm has also taken place. In verse drama, the rhythm must drive the action forward without its patterns intruding too consciously on the ear. In poetry, however, rhythm has come to be used frequently for pure metrical effects. In this period of

experimentation and specialization, the poet was divorced from the theater and his primary attention was focused on the printed page instead of on the ear and eye of the spectator. The results cannot be classified as wholly bad, for this experimentation has created a background in poetry that has added formidably to the poet's technical resources.

However, there is no doubt that the time has come when many poets feel constricted by the printed page and wish to return to writing for the theater. Their difficulty, so far, is that too often they write for the stage as though they were writing for a book. Technical experimentation in poetry for the theater has languished far behind the mastery of intricate short forms that poets have displayed in recent times.

Today, there are two successful verse dramatists, T. S. Eliot and Christopher Fry. Although Eliot has written what seems to me the finest modern verse play, *MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL*, his recent plays are in what might be called a conversational style. He has been seeking as he says in his essay, *POETRY AND DRAMA*, 'a rhythm close to contemporary speech.' His laudable aim has been to create a verse drama that can deal with modern as well as historical characters. Fry, on the other hand, in his best-known plays, *THE LADY'S NOT FOR BURNING* and *VENUS OBSERVED*, has written in a much more elaborate, rhetorical style. His plays are set back in time because he evidently feels the historical perspective gives the range of his verse greater freedom.

As far as style is concerned, I think a modern verse dramatist might strike a middle range between the lows of Eliot and the highs of Fry. This style can gain a great deal from the curt, swift rhythms of colloquial speech, from shoptalk and slang, and it must at the same time have a command of imagery that is not romantic and traditional. The power of metaphor, which is so essential to the force and

colour of poetic drama, must include the ability to compare and transform the mechanical and spiritual objects that we see around us in our lives today. Yet, as I said, it seems to me that this problem of a suitable style, while important, is secondary. The primary problem for the poetic dramatist is to learn the nature of the particular action he wishes to portray.

What is this knowledge of action that the verse dramatist must learn? It involves acquiring what the critic, Francis Ferguson, calls 'the histrionic sensibility,' the ability to perceive and discriminate actions, as he defines it. This is a process that requires the functioning of all the senses. Words cannot have an abstract clang or fall into the pattern of the page. The verse dramatist must not only express his selected action in such a way as to disturb and arouse the ear, but he must also convey for the actor's benefit the sensuous responses of tasting, smelling, feeling, and seeing.

This sense of action will free the playwright from his recent addiction to verse drama written for the interiors of closets. In the age of nuclear energy, of extreme speed, and ever-faster acceleration of the industrial patterns of life, the true function of theater is not to compete with radio and television. The theater will always have its unique individuality—the direct physical and verbal contact between the actor and the audience. Verse drama can only regain its place of pride in the theater if it learns again to suit the style to the action. Then the power of poetry on the stage, the power to exalt and transform as no other medium can do, will be apparent.

TOWARDS PRINT

by the Editor of TRACE

Complementary to the APPROACH story in this issue is a detailed financial history of another little mag, from a publisher who asks to be unnamed. He kept exceptional books; and these figures, together with careful paid-circulation notes verified against inventoried remainders, provide valuable signposts. The periodical also strikes a median, average sales per issue being 4,105 copies—thus, neither a little-little nor a big-little.

In various contexts, it's frequently remarked how many magazines collapse with the crucial third issue, after an over-encouraging sale of No. 1 has carried them through No. 2; but here are demonstrated the perils of that third year, many also have found crucial.

First, a few over-all significant facts. The price per-copy was set only seven cents below the unit cost of production and distribution, the first year. NB that no provision was made for salaries and that much office-equipment was obtained on loan or had been donated. While plans were made for advertising and some space sold, this never was realistically planned to be a major source of income. The subscription never has been increased, though cost items not at first demanding cash-outlay later heaped up the expense load (equipment and overhead), plus larger promotion costs than had been foreseen.

With each number, over-optimism developed re prospective sales of each future number, for every one of which, until the very present fourth year (with a rigid plan of printing only the equal of the last sales figure plus realistic quantities for newsstand and bookshop stocks and consistent promotion) there were over-productions.

The unit-cost maintained the first year (\$2.16 for the one year's issues) actually was covered by gross receipts. The

exact totals are presented ; but to use them would provide any good detective enough information for identification. In the second year, it slipped into the red, though average circulation had leaped from 2,442 to 5,940. Despite financial embarrassment, the publisher believed he was logical in enlarging and improving the format and spending a good deal more on promotion, the third year. After all, he reasoned, if the percentage increase in circulation were maintained, he'd once more break even — and if it accelerated, he might pay writers and his help! Well, the circulation dropped to average 3,933, and his unit-cost skyrocketed from \$2.86 (note that this no longer balanced with the subscription rate) to \$4.43 ! He had to issue an S.O.S. and raise funds from gifts, and this fourth year sees continuance in diminished size and very modest format.

The governing major factors make possible a few warnings for others. First, that the subscription and single-copy price must be set at the highest commensurate with making sales, not at the lowest commensurate with expected costs. That, from the very beginning about the same amount must be spent for promotion as is spent on production, itself. It's extremely significant here that there was no give-away programme of any proportions in the first or second years, but that finally in the third desperate year, an average of 1,000 copies of each issue was expended for promotion (and this item, a mere printing over-run, was a small part of the dismay ing cost total). Free magazines in the right places are the cheapest, most effective advertising. Yet, it was not unusual that the then-wasted over-printings in the prodigal second year (average, 2,700 copies including returns) weren't

EDITORS WRITE

ALAN SWALLOW

‘Some of the thinking which lay behind TWENTIETH CENTURY LITERATURE: (1) It is co-operative . . . sponsored without institutional help by a group of young scholars, all but one of whom are graduate students of mine at the University of Denver, most now with Ph.D. degrees and out teaching. (2) Most of this group are interested in scholarship and criticism in contemporary literature, as well as their own creative endeavours. (3) The basic concept is that the pattern of the critical review quarterly has become so dominant in the last fifteen years of little magazines that it has become repetitive. No particular reflection on the three or four best journals of the “quarterly review” type, but a feeling that something new needs to be injected for the student and scholar and critic. With the increasing development of magazines in the “little” field devoting space chiefly to creative work, the need for emphasis upon creative endeavour at least is in the consciousness of many. However, the needs of the other are not too well satisfied, it seemed to us, by the pattern of the critical quarterly. After all, the literature of the twentieth century is now more than a half-century old; it appears to form a definite period which has in many ways closed, with transitions to new elements. We (should) turn away from what passes as the “critical” article these days to offering real factual and scholarly material which would be of basic help to the student and appreciative reader of that half-century of literature. (4) We do not shy away from critical analyses and opinion, but we emphasize the provision of factual help to accuracy of study and interpretation. We consider the literature of all countries as our province. We also place emphasis upon: (a) individual bibliographies; (b) the “current bibliography.”’

D. VINCENT SMITH

‘Olivant has had enough of its predecessors’ “not with a bang but a whimper.” How well Eliot expressed his age is my opinion of Eliot: he did a fine job of it — all the death, rot, and perversion that it whimpered over . . . But OLIVANT will not whimper. It begins with a bang and never whimpers. It has no intention of pleasing anybody but ourselves, and that is a very hard job . . . It’s not a traditional publication. (But that word will surprise a few the way OLIVANT uses it.)

WILLIAM H. SCARBOROUGH

‘Your listing of THE CAROLINA QUARTERLY in the February, 1956, TRACE contains . . . perhaps an error of judgment as regards content and contributors, to wit: “seems less eclectic under new editor.” While I have made no concerted attempt to render the magazine eclectic, I have not paid court to any particular group, interest, or genre, nor have I imposed my personal preferences upon selection, insofar as that is possible . . . a variety of styles and subjects from contributors representing geographical and critical diversity will be apparent.’

RONALD VOIGT

‘Although we here at WWHIMSY encourage the use of “mind-splintering imagery,” we recognize that the sum of the parts should not be confused with the whole. Plot, image, et al should all be subject to individual technique. We force no restrictions on the poet. We prefer poetry that has jarred itself from traditional paths, has decided to dismiss the more conservative rather than produce ineffective expression . . . poetry that is complex or simple, as the thought or theme demands, but above all employing originality proceeding outward from the inner personality-thought. We have not yet been convinced that any kind of form is necessary for a poem, only that a poem needs an inner coherency or

hold-togetherness to prevent tangential disassociation. We feel . . . an effective poet . . . believes that to sacrifice his inner originality for certain artificialities and conforming actions detracts from his ability to communicate.'

FRED COGSWELL

'To date, we have been unable to find a bookseller in the city in which Dr Downes (THE LOST DIVER author) lives who will handle her publication. Since THE FIDDLEHEAD POETRY BOOKS SERIES was started, we have written more than forty booksellers, enclosing sample copies, offering to take back and pay for any unsold copies, and offering a liberal percentage . . . Ninety-five percent . . . have not even replied . . . It is quite obvious that Canadian bookstores do not wish to be troubled. That is their business, and . . . not to condemn them. However . . . there is no point in publishing books, if no outlets by which they may be put before the public are available.' (Editor's note : This is by no means peculiar to Canada! Will all TRACE readers please adjure booksellers on long-range benefits purely prestige and goodwill items?)

GRACE ROSS

'We believe that too much public beating on the wailing wall has been done; nothing succeeds like success, and how can any respect for poetry publication be engendered as long as these devaluations keep being affirmed . . . A disservice is done all poetry journals . . . A poetry journal is like any other special-interest periodical in that it must be important to its special-interest group. It has to find readers who are capable of interest in poetry as distinguished from their own poetry solely.' (Italic by Editor.)

INTERPRETING THE APPROACH STORY

by Helen Fowler

The end of the war had dispelled many things. It had dispelled many of the enforced activities we had been more or less forced to struggle with during its course. At long last we had time at our disposal, time freed from many frustrations and fears, time without a taskmaster, time to turn about.

A few of us happened to gather for one reason or another in and around Philadelphia in the winter of 1946-47. When we met, we discussed mainly ideas, for ideas had been severely rationed due to the war; we discussed mainly those ideas of the 'twenties and 'thirties which had originally stimulated and formed us. We went back to our Eliot, Toynbee, Hesse, Jung, Auden, Cummings, and Patchen. We felt the truth and force behind what they said. But we were no longer quite the same people who had been fostered by their light. The war, no matter what our attitude toward it had been, had changed us.

What had changed was not their words, but our reception of them. Our former selves had faded, had receded into the past and had acquired the outmoded and slightly comic look of the pictures in our albums. This caused in us a certain amount of chagrin and dismay, for we did not relish acknowledging the break with our own past selves that the war had forced. As we listened to the authoritative opinions each of us produced in his turn, opinions that had greater relevance to the speaker's own predilections and glands than they had to the works of the 'twenties and 'thirties, we felt we had to get in closer touch with the words tossed off so easily. We wanted to stand off from them so as to choose among them and range them in order. We wanted to come to grips with the change in ourselves that had occurred while we had been busy with the unwonted activities the war had induced.

I do not believe that any of us quite realized the many individual reasons why we began to spend longer and longer periods at our desks. But the manuscripts began to mount.

It happened at breakfast one Sunday morning that Approach was born. A few of us had gathered as if for a festive occasion, brought together because the early winter sun lit up a newly fallen snow with such a glitter as to dazzle our spirits. The talk turned on the manuscripts on our desks. That morning they seemed too good to go on piling up unheeded.

One bolder than the rest suggested that what we needed was a magazine, one that would encourage and cull the best of our efforts, at the same time that it opened its pages to other writers. This suggestion was immediately acclaimed. Before the last cup of coffee had been served, we had scouted the possibilities in every direction and had come to the conclusion that founding a little magazine was within the range of our capacities and might be fun. We could hardly wait to take leave of each other, so eager were we to recruit others as fellow editors.

As we discussed our magazine, what it would be like and what it would stand for, we came to realize that each of us had a different notion and a different vision. We were a diverse set. Some of us were journalists, some housewives. Others were teachers, artists, social workers. Most of us had tried our hands at several occupations. Each of us was an individualist who had been too long bombarded by the suggestions and appeals that ran counter to his principles. Such a group of individualists could be expected to disagree. But we had been fired with the ambition to found a little magazine and that vision still enthralled us. In the end, we agreed to face our disagreement with as open a mind as each of us could muster. We agreed to approach each other and our common undertaking experimentally on the theory that we could agree on the merits of a particular ms. when we

could not agree on a philosophy or an esthetic.

After having negotiated the reefs of first principles, the shoals of management were child's play. It was easy to decide how to make the magazine pay for itself by subscription, where to find our potential subscribers, and how to run the editorial board. We were impressed that most magazines reflect too strongly one man's tastes and one man's opinions. We would have as many editors as there were people, up to a dozen at least, who would like to serve, each to have a share in and a responsibility for our decisions. We would learn from firsthand the mechanics . . . and rely on each other to see that the magazine was free from the cult or the cant of our fellow editors.

In the next few weeks, we found a publisher, designed our format, discussed and selected material for our first number from among our own mss. as well as from those offered by people outside our group who were interested. Then we sent out cards proudly announcing the birth of a new magazine. To our surprise the response was immediate. In no time, our first issue was over-subscribed. Our optimism was boundless; there was no trick at all to putting out a little magazine.

We were not prepared for the realities that faced us with our second number. Our friends had sampled *Approach* and felt that they had done their duty. The collectors of first numbers of little magazines were not interested in the second number. One of our more respectable critics told us our lack of purpose (was) dangerous to society. Our method of expecting a large group of editors, each of whom had a full-time job which whittled away the hours for his own writing, to read and give an opinion on a mass of copy, broke down. We had not come to terms with the fact that each editor differed from all the others in his tastes as well as in his philosophy. We were apt to be surprised when our opinions were questioned, as they were. We expected our

differences to be ironed out in discussions which proved either too infrequent or interminable. We expected the magazine to run itself without any fuss about files or bother about answering letters.

With our third number we grew lean. Although we had started out to be a quarterly, we were reduced to bringing out one or two numbers a year. To cut deficits, we turned to printer after printer. We assembled two issues ourselves and stitched them on borrowed sewing machines. Two editors hand-set and hand-printed one number, the sixth. The money saved was spent on cards and mimeographed letters to people who had subscribed to other little magazines generous enough to allow us to use their lists.

Those lean years helped us to take stock of ourselves. By that time, we were scattered beyond convenient reach of each other all over the Atlantic seaboard. By letter and by consultation, we decided to return to quarterly publication and increase the size and number of our pages. We found the kind of printer who would help us technically. We relied for a time largely on a backlog of our own writing in default of contributions from outside which we liked. To make our own work stand the test of Approach's more exacting standards, we subjected it repeatedly to the hawk-eyes of our fellow editors. We learned to trust our collective judgment, partially because we wrote it out in phrases which would seldom appear in the critics' columns or in the lecture room. We put our experience to work. More subscribers came. More of them were the kind of subscribers who would tell us whenever they found something to their liking. More of the material we had been looking for came in . . .

This experience made us aware of the freedom which a little magazine such as ours possessed. We were relatively free from subjecting each ms. we considered to the test of popularity as it could be determined by a more or less arbitrary appeal to what were the going trends in the mass

media. This freedom allowed us to consider all sorts of material, which, though interesting and well written, could not be said to fall within the canons of popular taste in its widest dimensions.

Since we were free to dispense with the test of mass appeal, we were forced to grapple with individual taste and individual judgment. In dealing with this problem, we found the sturdy individualism of each editor stood us in good stead. No two of us held the same canons of taste nor upheld the same principles. But each of us was the representative of a fairly wide group of individuals, even though we might represent a different group each time we discussed a new ms. This divergence of opinion often made our discussions hilarious and made us look forward to them with interest and pleasure.

Despite, or rather because of, the fun involved, we slowly came to realize how much the test of mass appeal masks and hides the individuals that make up the group and what small confidence can be placed in criteria derived from group study in the individual case. No category, no matter how wide, can be made to fit the individual or to tell much about that individual, even though what he is and does and thinks may be common to many individuals. This insight of course is not at all new. What is new is rather the ubiquity of the mass with its insistence on turning the individual into the common man, whatever that concept might mean, and the charm that this common or mass man exerts on the imagination of the writer and his reader. It is only when we are in a position more or less to dispense with the force exerted by the idea of the mass, as on *Approach*, that the individual reassumes his age-old aspect and dimension.

Let me hasten to add that not all my fellow editors agree with this analysis. Some dissent rather vociferously. They would put their emphasis more on other sociological and psychological forces than that exerted by the mass on the

individual. Each has his viewpoint and it is well taken and tenaciously held. What I have attempted in the story of Approach is a history, no matter how much that history is subject to interpretations other than mine. Since that story is still not far from its beginning, it is much too soon to speak about it authoritatively . .

Our magazine will continue as it has in the past to take its shape out of the unexpected with each future issue. Our experience has given us confidence that that future should be allowed to evolve its own forms and not be forced into predetermined designs. If we have agreed on anything, we have agreed on this. It is not a policy; neither is it a philosophy nor an esthetic. It is an attitude of mind.

ISSUE PP. 21-22 · SCAN PP. 21-22

SOME ITEMS RECEIVED

John Beecher, long missing from the literary magazines, offers *LAND OF THE FREE* (MORNING STAR PRESS, \$5). Here's lucid sincere concern with contemporary dilemma from an earnest intellectual who has been buffeted by reaction destructive to his ideals of justice, his personal realisation, and his hopes for mankind. He does not sink to frustrated frenzies, but speaks, if not altogether detachedly, restrainedly. The contents are in forms of poems in a beautiful looseleaf folder. But more than by typography, one is impressed by the control of words, phrases, periods . . . philosophical maturity . . . unusual balance, with nothing resembling passive acceptance, and neither denying nor admitting defeat. Satirical without bitterness, the destructive attacks, never over-reaching. Indignation is aroused without unseating reason — but nothing tiredly academic in these exposures. Such pieces might be brought to that final quiet conference for judgment, man-on-man, that final site of wonder why and why, and pondering then on ultimates. They're a far call from the hysterical expediences nowadays expected from pleaders for lost causes.

Yet, most concomitants commonly identified with poetry are lacking. Since offered as poetry, it must be stated the work is didactic and deliberative, not utilising indirection, plainly saying not suggesting, and illuminating reason rather than imagination. Poetic oppositions are analyzed at distances where almost no sensory impressions are conveyed. The effects don't lack power, but they're unemotional by poetic standards. Not to say the presentation is unsuited to the material either. Perhaps, to address numbers of mature minds, this method may be best? Today, not enough intelligent people can seem to appreciate the fired stuff of poetry.

First glance at the impressive typographical raiment of FAMILY IN THE FOREST by Harold Witt (PEREGRINE PRESS, \$5) — together with Mel Fowler's illustrations — so affects the senses that one almost might not discern the talent.

And this is POEMS AND PICTURES No. 7, selections for which series have been for imageful, 'finished' pieces by no means often ensuring the untrite or experimental.

The work seems chosen for the format. Opening and closing poems tie neatly with shots of the strand, marine life, and child-wonder at creation. The title poem, while comprehensively-intentioned, isn't too successfully persuasive with its compact beach-scene amalgam of cultural references and anthropological suggestions. The pictures, bit-by-shining-bit are brightly successful though, and anyone with half an eye and not tone-deaf will recognise a master of the apt phrase and piquant adjective ('the world : warm beach and apple smelling sea, / sun's sphere, salt air red lungs pulse upon / like dragonflies of rapture ;) — yet, as in others, the bits don't add to integrated splendour.

But brilliant exceptions, marvelous weddings of content and effects are here. One is VILLA. Another is THE PAST AS PARADISE, while ARCS is Mr Witt at his best — meanings, images, and sounds.

Ten young English-Canadians, Raymond Souster calls the 'new' generation, appear in well-produced duplicated format (CONTACT PRESS, \$1, POETS 56). Each has its own selection of about 200 lines — and Mr Souster emphasises no editing. But inquiring then how the participants were chosen? Not faultfindingly — but the work indicates those invited already were more or less approved by Mr Souster. So this wasn't any come-one-come-all affair, despite intentions expressed in a letter to Louis Dudek used as introduction. Mr Souster's hand was there, at least from fairly accurate pre-vision of what would be contributed. Most of the young

poets bear relationships to him and other older poets within his best favour. The term 'representative' is misleading, because there's little non-representative of the arranger's notions of significance — and with which this writer often agrees! A stimulating and rewarding collection — a splendid idea which other elder poets in Britain, U.S.A., and on about the world should imitate.

ISSUE P. 23 · SCAN P. 23

REPORTS ON PRESSES

Editor-owner Loren Phillips states THE BLUE RIVER PRESS (Shelbyville, Ind., U.S.A.) will do booklets and bound books for poets on printing-sale terms. . . . THE CAMAS PRESS address now is P.O. Box 3005, Victory, etc. . . . And THE DIVERS PRESS has moved from Mallorca to Black Mountain College, N.C., U.S.A. . . . Small books will appear from IMAGI address under imprint EDITIONS IMAGI. . . . GOLDEN GOOSE PRESS hasn't answered correspondence. . . . 153 Waverley Place, New York City, is new address of H. L. LINDQUIST PUBL. . . . Instead of JARGON PRESS, books from that source now bear imprint JONATHON WILLIAMS. . . . A quality project is that of Barbara and John Beecher, MORNING STAR PRESS (849 Kingston Ave., Oakland, Calif., U.S.A.), for fine limited editions, poetry, belles lettres of social content. . . . See ADDENDA for book-series from NEW ORLEANS POETRY JOURNAL. . . . PENNYEACH PRESS (240 E. 9th St., New York 3, N.Y., U.S.A.) reported under Editor Jorge Goya, but direct word not yet obtained. . . . Details on THE PINCHPENNY PRESS (2520 Channing Way, Apt. 3, Berkeley 4, Calif., U.S.A.): owners, Al and Toni Frank; founded in 1955; producing outstanding classics in both limited and inexpensive editions—otherwise for the time restricted to private editions. . . . Dr Lorne Pierce writes that more-relevant RYERSON PRESS specialties are poetry and belles lettres and that 164 RYERSON POETRY CHAP-BOOKS have appeared since 1925, plus THE CONTEMPORARY CANADIAN POETS SERIES. . . . Of yet-unascertained relevance may be VOYAGES (35 W. 75th St., New York 23, N.Y., U.S.A.). . . . WORLD PRESS is at 1340 Speer Blvd., Denver 4, Colo., U.S.A. L. J. Dougherty, president, explains they're book-manufacturers rather than independent publishers, as they give no royalty contracts and have no sales outlets.

ISSUE P. 24 · SCAN P. 24

ADDENDA

Another in a series from NEW ORLEANS POETRY JOURNAL is Harold Witt's SUPERMAN UNBOUND (\$1 soft-covers and \$2 boards—same price for Felix Stefanile's RIVER FULL OF CRAFT, already announced). ADAM'S FOOTPRINT by Vassar Miller and STONES AND THE SEA by R. G. Lowrey will ensue. . . . Of more than limited interest is POETRY, THE GREAT THERAPY by George Abbe (\$1 from WHETSTONE or AMERICAN WEAVE, joint-publishers). . . . An American edition of Herbert Read's A COAT OF MANY COLORS issues from HORIZON PRESS, Inc., 220 W. 42nd St., New York 36 (\$3.75). . . . Significant new poetry includes: SPECTRE IN THE FAN . . . TASTIC LABORATORY by Jay Pell (INFERNO PRESS, \$2); A WORLD OF SAINTS—First Poems by Thomas Cole (EDITIONS IMAGI, \$2.50); CAESAR'S GATE, Poems 1949-50 by Robert Duncan (\$2, DIVERS PRESS); THE YARDARM OF MURPHY'S KITE by Mason Jordan Mason (\$2.50, DEER & DACHSUND); SELECTED POEMS of Irving Layton—as JARGON 18 (\$2.50). Announced for August is THEN-NOW-FOREVER, Poems and Verse 1948-55 by Felix Singer (Privately—1249 N. LaSalle St., Chicago 10, Ill., U.S.A., \$3).

A final tenth issue of THE POUND NEWSLETTER, directed from U. of California by John Edwards, appears simultaneously with a POUND SYMPOSIUM, as Issues 5-7 of NUOVA CORRENTE (25/- or \$3 to Via Plinio 1, Milano, Italy). . . . An 'international peace contest' in poetry planned Ass'n (Suite 1102, 210 5th Ave., New York City 10) asks one cent to one dollar, the total for an award to the winner. To same should go work for an annual anthology, THE AMERICAN POETRY REVIEW, Dr Gardner LeLand Green, editor—and for which no purchases of copies are required.

A Master Catalog of all California resident poets and all state poetry publications under auspices of CHAPARRAL

POETS provides example for others in other parts of the world.

*PRINTED AT THE PRESS OF VILLIERS PUBLICATIONS
HOLLOWAY, LONDON, ENGLAND — Ed.*