

TRACE

A CHRONICLE OF LIVING LITERATURE

The Quick and the Dead
by Martha Millet

No. 18

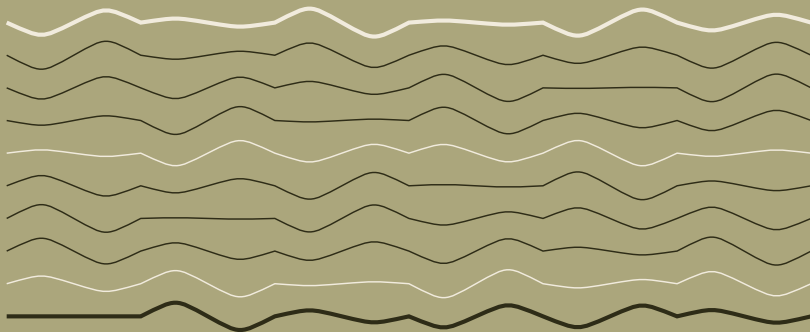
ISSUE

August, 1956

1/6

30c

JAMES BOYER MAY / EDITOR



TRACE

No. 18

Living Literature

Essays & Articles · Poetry · Reviews

August 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

The Quick and the Dead*	4
Towards Print	12
Editors Write	16
A Note on Neoterism	17
Reports on Presses	25
Addenda	26

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD*

by Martha Millet (U.S.A.)

What's the use of poetry today? — many people want to know. The question is not always disingenuous, but . . . They want to know where poetry belongs in this preeminently practical country, with the time long past when the ploughman conned his copy of Homer or Shakespeare as he plodded behind the plough, or after a day's work; with the haze of antiquity over days when workingmen's lectures were commonplace and no circus advance-men had to drum up attendance; over days, less than a century ago, when \$3-a-week mill girls in Lowell banded together to rent a piano and take lessons, read the poets, and wrote their own verse, sometimes collected in anthologies.

The argument goes that poetry may still have had something to give people in that earlier epoch, in that simpler society, that more leisurely, quite primitive economy. And it is certainly a far cry from yet earlier times before printing and communication, when laws, history, and legend were made known in poetry. (Perhaps this is the factual startingpoint of Shelley's more fanciful — because of his day — unacknowledged legislators of mankind.)

Steel, chrome, supercolossals of every kind, umptydimensional movie screens, girders, plastics, the swank bank, seem today to be the unacknowledged legislators, holding as they do the threat and promise of the released atom; seem to be the declared enemies of poetry. And all this appears proper, because industrial progress shoulders aside whatever is not to its purpose.

So poetry is cornered, held apart from all this big striding and stretching; apart from real life where real things happen. The characterisation began to take place long ago as

industrial economy emerged, and at a point where the individual poet was battling to reach his fellow man over a widening chasm. Then the 'acknowledged legislators' were able to make gauzy Ariel stand for a Shelley intensely conversant with, up to his neck in, and having sharp responses to, a less-than-perfect human order. Oh yes, poetry today in our big gilt-edged age is tolerated as decor; poetry of the right kind, that is. Poetry that knows its place; that neither boycotts status quo nor brays out uncomfortable truths. Once in a while, too, the limelight is allowed turned full on a genuine wild poet (now, thankfully, in captivity), trotted about as a stylised example. It lends a touch of *je ne sais quoi* . . . Poor Dylan Thomas! And poorer far, the pale, feeble pipers, who cannot conscientiously style themselves idle singers of an empty day — when it is so manifest that the day is volcanic and surging — and are but empty singers of a day that they think will go away if they pretend not to notice it! Willing, well-trained, and safe . . . But poetry, when true, always had guts. It was not lilylivered. It did not shrink or play 'far far away' when it could play near. It took to satire and allegory, if need be. It was not Pan, but some of his 'knock-kneed, feeble-wristed'* auditors who fled the wild exultation in panic terror. Shelley's 'Men of England, wherefore plough / For the lords who lay ye low'; Julia Ward Howe's 'He hath loosed the fearful lightning of his terrible swift sword,' and all who are akin to these, do not fold their tents and quietly steal away; their ghosts are not laid; nor Sappho's, by whatever frail echoes we know her poems. People made poetry. It did not come, any more than babies, out of the somewhere into the here, unbidden, irrelevant. People made poetry to express, go along with, and give a new leap to what they wanted in life: good hunting, a corn crop, victory over terrors and enemies. All the time consciously, unconsciously, making something more of man than he was: from a flint tool to iron, from a

cave to a dwelling, from wild waters to generators and dams. All the time, poetry part of him, telling of yesterday and today, exhorting tomorrow.

**Opening chapter of a projected new book: THE USES OF POETRY.*

**R. L. Stevenson. ESSAYS 'The Morality of Letters.'*

What creature but man conceives of tomorrow, studies it, goes toward it, plans it . . . on the whole? What animal but man dreams, thinks, then makes the tangible out of seemingly unsubstantial substance?

And his poem, therefore, corresponds to his blood-beat, to the rhythm of his work, to the gamut of nature's and the city's sounds and pauses. It is of him and out of him, at once subjective and objective. Always making something more out of himself, man uses his poetry and makes it a catalyst to use everything else better.

The poet, once collective, soon individual, but still flesh of the collective, was once priest, king, magician, doctor all in one, like the 'unsplittable' atom. Like the atom, becoming split, this flesh and function subdivided, multiform, into new, diverse, even sharply-opposed forces, people and functions.

'A poet must be a professor of the five bodily senses,' said Lorca; the 'professor' drawing the teeth of gnashers who would say: this makes a poet no more than an animal. What could be more true, more fundamental than this statement, more conclusive against the straw man of poetry as allegedly divorced today from real men and real life? This at the same stroke does away with the long-argued, purported division between heart and mind, feeling and intellect, flesh and spirit ('mind over matter!'). These five senses, being human ones, with the brain a summation of them all, and something qualitatively new and commanding.

Only hairsplitters can continue fueling their war between flesh and spirit ('mind over matter!'). These five senses, being

human ones, with at once the brain the crowning sense, a summation of them all, constitute something qualitatively new and commanding.

Only hairsplitters can continue fueling their war between flesh and spirit, casuists who earn livings and/or prestige in a horribly white-collared way. Theirs is unlimited extraterritoriality. They sit in judgment on the common herd of those

who do something out of the ordinary with the five bodily senses, alike.

But the reasoning-away of poetry as unrelated to man today, is peculiarly of our time and place. In no other country, so far as I know, is it considered queer for a poet and a head of state, a senator, a labour leader, a philosopher, a dock-worker to be one and the same man. Here, it would be absurd. Together with the reasoning referred to goes a singular refusal to exercise the will on the part of the arguers for poetry's pale sideshow role, and those patrons who give the nice lapdog a pat on the head, so long as it doesn't start acting like a snapping turtle, let alone a lion.

Of similar times, Turgenev must have written (in *VIRGIN SOIL*) :

Paklin : 'But have you forgotten in what times and in
what
country we are living? Amongst us a drowning man
must himself create the straw and clutch at it.'
Not only human lifelines, but also bricks must be made
with
straw! And the poet who stays semi-comatose, rousing
himself
now and then only to groan disconsolately (though
daintily) :
'Mud, mud, nothing but mud,' ends by seeing all men
as mud,
subjects for his contempt or condescension. And the
pale poets
and their theorists (often the same men) do not notice
this slime
of disgust covering them up as they proceed with their
heaping
up of 'systems' and 'points'.
Dyspepsia is no stand-in for passion. Men who move in,
work in, experience with all five senses in the world, not
barring
themselves to other men, not barring other men to
them, do not
whimper in lone corners and coteries ; do not
contemplate with
the most shadowy of ironies the lint in their navels, nor
ponder
its accumulation as they sit. No — from their five
senses, they
bellow, roar, stab, jab, weep — in the world, of the world
—
whether it be chromium-plated and grey flannel-suited
or . . .
Whitman, says Stevenson, 'sees that, if the poet is to be
of

any help, he must testify to the liveableness of life.' How
can

that be done but by living it, and being completely
truthful about it?

This large seeing, this hearty exultation or all-permeating
sorrow, was Whitman's, Shelley's, Shakespeare's, many
others' . . . It is in John Donne's bell 'that tolls for you'; in
PIERS PLOWMAN, Voltaire, and Heine; in the untameable boy
Chatterton, whose early Eighteenth Century lines seem
clairvoyant:

Int'rest, thou universal god of men, Wait on the couplet
and reprove the pen; If aught unwelcome to thy ears shall
rise, Hold jails and famine to the poet's eyes. Bid satire
sheath her sharp avenging steel, And lose a number, rather
than a meal.'

Great poets, great audiences — where are they? Values
have been new-coined for us to fit us for our place in an
industrial juggernaut, whose true ends are but dim, but
where the conviction is every moment driven home that 'all
that glisters' is gold. No time for poetry along the way. A
straight line is the shortest distance . . . Read as you run;
but run! Capsule thinking cheerfully supplied. Trajectories
are out. A condensed Old Testament, with Isaiah
conveniently excised, may be next.

'Man has closed himself up 'til he sees all things through
the chinks of his cavern,' Blake grieved and warned, and
wrote his Prophetic Books (their meat eaten at by archive
rats).

From the 'rascal hedge-priest' John Ball, hanged 1381,
and his sermon to the rebels at Blackheath,

'When Adam delled and Eve span, Who was then the
gentleman?'

to the late-lamented and cashed-in-on Dylan Thomas,
athrash in the thickets, with his fistful of cries, the flame is
the same. It cannot quite be contained. Therefore it may be

positively dangerous. (Thomas, it may not be known, could not get a U.S. visa because he signed a petition for clemency for the Rosenbergs, until his persuasive promoters proved that as a poet he could not be held accountable . . .) The true poet does not hush up. He refuses to go down meekly; in fact, refuses to consider going down, whether on his knees, or into the ultimate dark.

He is ablaze with the power, woe, and loveliness of life, and therefore bursts on the world, sometimes to jubilate, sometimes to condemn, to exhort, to demand. He lives all men's lives in him (women and children as well), and is not contained.

He is not the one who, as in Kafka's REFLECTIONS (No. 69):

'eats the droppings from his own table; thus he manages to stuff himself fuller than the others for a little, but meanwhile he forgets to eat from the table; thus in time even the droppings cease to fall.'

Crushed and defeated poets who have been defiant (some of them later suicides) are supposed to be politely laughable, when not straight picturesque. But that which crushes them — which must, for poetry, potent, is a rebel — is never laughable, never mentioned for what it is, but regarded with awe and at last elevated, a graven image, in the throne-room of Rationalisation.

How can a true poem be a dabbling? It is an urgent communiqué, whether the theme is roses, a woman, the death of a loved one, or of someone thousands of miles away, from A-bomb radiation. Through the seething analysis of the poet's being — a jelly of life that is at the same time a prism — which has in it all his life experiences in the world, with his fellows, with the many-sided, conflicting emotions caused in him by these muted or tumultuous interactions (often simultaneous), the poems come, telling him and his fellow man. So, many poems are like, and no two are alike, if true; if not stylised exercises, discreet frames for cleverness.

What's not integral to the poet's life and meaning shows — burns out a sorry poem, tepid, detached (not through strong feeling, well assimilated, but through remoteness of feeling) puny. 'A poor thing but mine own,' some may say. But even the 'mine own' is open to question.

A poet pulses. There is blood in his veins, not wordaptitudes. Strong feeling is not enough either. But without feeling, all the accomplished turns in the world, like the curriculum of a ladies' finishing school, are nothing but finery on a lay figure.

'For it is a shaggy world,' says Stevenson (ESSAYS, 'Pan') 'and yet studded with gardens . . . Some leap to the strain with unapt foot, and make a halting figure in the universal dance. And some, like sour spectators at the play, receive the music into their hearts with an unmoved countenance, and walk like strangers through the general rejoicing . . .'

One day, even the tamed poet must stop saying to himself as he stands — towers? — on his Olympian height (so it sometimes appears to him), above the antlike crowd of men below :

We are the cultured ;

You are the un-

and come down and measure his true size and song
against those others, and life.

TOWARDS PRINT

by the Editor of Trace

U.S.A. literary currents of these mid-fifties flow equivocally, though not mysteriously. Yet, just because the signs of divergence have been plain enough, and sides chosen, and issues long joined, it's shortsighted for any honest writer with any integrated intentions — however genuinely his spontaneous creations may counter uniformity and conformity — to sidestep direct discussion of the situation. In other words, he should both do and say, even if this means waxing journalistic.

Protests about wasted energies seem justified — until, looking about, one realises how strong the anti-individualistic currents actually are in this country. In the end, no frank definements will have been wasted, if they help preserve deserving dissents. Sounds rather alarmist? Well, recent writings about literature are alarming. Large media which build circulation on controversy (any controversy which avoids or clouds realities they pretend aren't here) are extending ambiguities, trying to render ubiquitous the confusions they exaggerate.

See June 11th LIFE and ADVICE FROM AND TO WRITERS for a plausible — though basically idiotic — example. This was in purported rebuttal to wide objections to a prior LIFE editorial decrying that America's writers don't ballyhoo allegedly-positive aspects of a 'successful' society. The more penetrative objections either weren't mentioned (one was in EPOCH, last fall) or were rebutted in unfair piecemeal. This was done with an article by Lawrence Lipton in THE CHICAGO REVIEW (Spring), quoted and even accorded some approval, for the wrong reasons (from Mr Lipton's obvious view). His main thesis, documented by references to TIME (another Luce

publication) concerning hindrances to artists trying to diagnose ills of society, is not stated.

At least, Harvey Breit (NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW, June 10th) did permit Nelson Algren to object that he never has meant to find beauty in ugliness à la Baudelaire, as suggested by the SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER. But this is a rare small candle in a vast dark place, when most reviews of Algren's *A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE* (see an extended obfuscating example in THE NEW YORKER of June 2nd, by Norman Podhoretz) handily misinterpret him. The 'line' pursued gains interest if contemplated in connection with current academy-proven poetry criticism (poetry defined to include prose fiction) which assumes, if not mere hedonistic pleasure as primary function, an essentially-undirected purpose merely of enriching what may be experience that's otherwise pointless.

The serious writer mustn't forget not only that most his readers are turned to him by what busy people glimpse about his work in these spots, but that many never get around to reading the originals at all. So, whether or not distasteful, it really behoves him to devote some time — if not to his own, then to analyses and evaluations of creative contemporaries he believes worthwhile, and trusting that others may do the same for him. He cannot restrict himself to sensitive (or perhaps over-sensitive) informal retorts by letter to his own distortioners.

Need it be declared that the flavour of an entire era may be rendered distinctive by the existence in that time and place of maybe just one cultured man to whom nine-tenths of the deference paid comes from those touched only indirectly, those who themselves read just quotations and comments? Samuel Johnson pops to mind; and in fact the Editor at this juncture easily might subside into elaborations from happy references to gratify the literary nostalgias of well-read TRACE subscribers and incidentally of course to

endeavour to establish his own erudition; but this only would be to parody weekly performances of several wellpaid hacks who concededly are better-practiced in such regurgitations from lifelong library munchings. If the Editor were to vomit, it would be naturally and from simple reaction to the day's glances at such 'educational' features as a thing in *TIME* for June 11th titled *PARNASSUS, COAST TO COAST*.

No, indeed — editorialisings on literature aren't always merely the curious ruminatory hodgepodies compiled by elderly retainers of conservative reviews. If space allowed, examples parallel to the foregoing could be cited for Britain. But another reason this is centred on the U.S. is because things are moving faster here, and because of the near-lost obscurity of scores of original younger American contemporaries (notwithstanding perhaps many may prove of lesser orders) in comparison with the prominence afforded facile young conformists and comparatively-inoffensive ready imitators of eminent personalities.

Just plodding on with good sincerities isn't enough — not with sincere good writers commonly misrepresented in their aims, with references only to portions of their works which suit conservative propagandists. The entire reading trend is warped by this sort of misrepresentative publicity; and the only cure is for these garbled authors to address larger audiences directly in articles or critiques. Admittedly, the situation is multiplex and involves the entire social and economic organisation; yet, at least so much can be done to slow mass-standardisation in the most influential cultural field.

Thus, this appeal is for high sacrifice, the diversion of energies and possible losses of major works (who knows?). No doubt too, frustrations will become exacerbated from these recitations. But some worthwhile results already are being obtained by some fine writers (who surely aren't appearing in semi-popular and larger periodicals entirely

from need for the measly pay such activity dependably does afford — lamentable speculation!)

It's foolhardy to expostulate that banality always has been widely approved. Scrutiny will inform any intelligent observer that this is an accelerating movement toward blackout, what several fairly-balanced prognosticators have asserted may be a new Dark Age. Mixing similes — for underrated writers, themselves, to make use of semi-popular expository writings (restricted to those 'about') isn't fighting fire with fire; because, if fire it is, it's sparked from very different motives as against the one now raging. And anything by an honest writer blooms a differently-coloured flame.

Entering the arena with what weapons of reputation one has, is not only to try to rescue mankind at large, but to act in one's specific selfish best interests. Nor does co-operation, by moving with others here, mean necessitous or likely unanimity. Let everyone exhibit his own how-clashing ideas — or maybe crotchets. The benefits will be of orders higher, if then with many-angled barbs to prick then-leaping dogma'd (if bad punning — at least original) flesh. Have on!

EDITORS WRITE

James M. Singer, Jr. (GCB 000 . . . also tagged as EMERGENT):
‘There is art (beauty) in the common, the mundane. There is no supernatural (religion without spooks, our aim). Everything is cause and effect — from good causes come good effects, in other words, the golden rule. We are interested in inspirational type material, but rationally appealing to intelligence rather than emotion, basically. No preaching. We intend the passive undermining of the orthodox. You could also say we’re naturalists — except it’s old hat to be a naturalistic writer no more.’

Harry Hooton (21st CENTURY): ‘Do I contradict myself? Very well then, I contradict myself — even I am not always right. The value of good speech, writing, lies in clear diction; and these laid down in order, side by side, are contra-dictions. And the value of all works, as of worlds, lies in the conflict and consequence of day and night, of right and wrong. Do you ever say anything worth contradicting? It is never a case of are you contradictory, but always — what do you contradict? I contradict the alien conditioning of external gods in myself.’

A NOTE ON NEOTERISM

by Ellen Edelman

Ever since our kindergarten days, people have been telling us: 'Don't copy. Don't imitate. Don't even look at what the boy next to you is doing.' These don'ts are still with us; and when it comes to writing, the don'ts seem to multiply in every direction and at every comma.

Writers are necessarily thinkers. And so follows the corollary that readers—in order to apprehend writers—are also thinkers. And thinkers often reach conclusions, set up dicta, and lay down rules for their group or activity. Thinkers also set one another thinking, and perhaps this is the key to the existence of the current frenzy about writing.

In the center of this intellectual frenzy are statements that are surprisingly similar to those of our kindergarten training: 'Don't imitate. Do something new and clever, something different.' It seems that eclecticism is becoming more and more taboo. We revise our writing so that it shows no sign of anything but dynamic newness. All the products of our generation are 'good' only if they are blatantly non-eclectic.

But our times and all the symbols and products of our times have grown out of the past. They are not self-spawned. How then can we deny our genesis? Recognition of our roots does not necessitate kowtowing to dated forms and ideas. Instead, it can give our creativity a basis of greater understanding; and this basis can, in turn, give us greater freedom—both as writers and critics. Artists in other areas—music, painting, dance—realise the need for this understanding; they depend on a rational appreciation of their heritage as a part of their technique. Writers are neither less nor more qualified to presume to be artistic than are

musicians, painters, and dancers. Why then do we persist in revolting against our roots?

As in any revolt, we have two camps. Most publicised and most powerful is the Down-With Eclecticism group. Their well-worn shibboleths are Obscurity and Exclusiveness. Across the river from this relatively-extremist group are the upholders of a decadent Wordsworthian tradition. Most magazines choose as editorial policy the creed of one of these two factions.

Most writers choose an extremist credo, too. They stick to unyielding metre or they abstain entirely from it; they use the simplest and clearest vocabulary (and hence turn out writing that resembles the standardised reader, or they make a fetish of obscurity. Obscurity can be powerful; it can be effective. Especially in poetry . . . It can, however, so over-ride the poem as to give the reader nothing but a riddle (or series of riddles) printed with an irregular margin. On the other hand, we get tired of reading about 'the daffodil, upon the hill, da dum da dill.' And often the style of such verse gives the impression that the poet was tired of writing it, too.

Apparently the answer lies in neither extreme. As in the fable of the contest between the Hare and the Pig, it is for us to say:

'Both in the ditch, Can't say which.'

We do come to the fact that establishing a definitive creed can be a handicap to writers. Not that anyone who writes does so without a creed, but the difference between the established writer who 'writes as he does because he believes as he does' and the writer who becomes entangled in details of belief before he discovers himself in his writing makes the difference between writing-for-reading and writing-to-wave-a-flag.

Writing is a stimulus. Some writers can reach the public by subtle cloudy illusion; they pique the reader's imagination and curiosity. Others must use a more obvious clipped style.

But all of this and all of the conjunctive choices are matters of style and only style. What the frenzied defenders of the two camps forget is that style has import only when supported by pith. Pith is the cake and style the frosting; they go well together, but no one wants a plate full of frosting.

We find that some writers establish their style by breaking rules—simple ones, having to do with punctuation and word-order. They say they are not biased, fettered, or eclectic. Again, that old ‘Don’t imitate. Be original.’ And yet, how original can we be? Whether we study literature or copyright law, we soon find that the ‘original idea’ is the common belonging of neighbors and fellow writers. Idealistic abandoning of the rule-book approach does not necessarily mean the absence of bias—whether in an editor, a writer, or a critic. Often as not, people do not even recognise their own biases; yet, in tackling the many problems of creativity, writers often find that their dragons are no bigger than their own biases.

Perhaps the greatest dragon which writers and critics are constantly battling is language. Our proudly-scientific age cannot help us. Even the semanticists cannot tell us ‘Now do this’ and ‘Now do that.’ We try to make reliable statements about words and communication and the functions of language, but we must return to the past: How have others met the problems? What are their results? In deliberately ignoring this approach, we would accomplish but one thing: we would prove that we can be pig-headed neoterists at any price.

SOME ITEMS RECEIVED by the Editor

Special treatment is earned by a book that’s scholarly without pedanticism, comprehensively fair, not axe-grinding—particularly when it’s also the nearest-exhaustive survey of modern poetic criticism lately published. In *THE NEW APOLOGISTS FOR POETRY* (OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS and U. of MINNESOTA, 32/- and \$4), Murray

Krieger — while respectful of most now-famed critics and even occasionally indicating aspects of their labours may be of some value—gently rends them limb from limb. Of course, as he states, he is a literary man who personally appreciates poetry; and besides pointing out with admirable restraint, in his final chapter, that the ‘new’ are not after all actually new in the light of the history of thought on the mysteries of poetics, he closes: ‘... perhaps poetry after all asks not to be apologized for, but only to be read.... fortunately there is and will be the thing itself — poetry — and assurance of the rightness of ... convictions that poetry bestows.’

But here is no mere pooh-poohing at critics. By no means! The volume is heavily and thoroughly documented. Furthermore, literally no poets are named, except those critics who also undertake versemaking — plus a few essential references to past poets. Coleridge figures often — but as the critic who largely expounded ideas attacked or enlarged upon by these many moderns, comprising not only the New Critics and the fringe beyond recognised disciples thereof, but the neo-Aristotelian school, virtually the sole academy-blessed opposition. With re Coleridge, he is able to suggest convincingly that none of these may in final analyses indubitably have advanced beyond him.

Two strikes against the book are superficially marked at first. There’s the title, sure to annoy, both because a manifest takeoff on John Crowe Ransom’s of fifteen years ago and because of growing sentiment that what’s now tritely called the sad state of poetry largely may be attributable to altogether too many apologists. Next, Mr Krieger displays what is likely to be judged exaggerated humility. However, the text does not demand painful concentration, and the actual ironical negation soon may be detected. Efficiently, disinterestedly, and earnestly, he goes to work without heat, showing how these influential analysts and explicators have contradicted one another and often themselves, and in the

upshot never dissected the creative act.

Nor does Mr Krieger attempt to bare any logico-scientific methodology applicable to what Friedrich Schelling long ago called 'intellectual intuition', that elusive faculty the trials at precise definition of which are simply irrelevant. Parenthetically, please note that this isn't in the least inconsistent with Mr Krieger's obvious dedication to persistent endeavours along these lines; and just as in modern physics it's demonstrated that parallel lines do after all meet, so Mr Krieger accepts (without understanding, as he repeatedly affirms) that it is not a contradiction to recognise how in the end the so-called scientific and poetic methods also will be found relevant to each other.

As in the ancient books and in certain classic poems, a KEY is in this work. Now, Mr Krieger may not at all consciously have inserted this; no doubt, the underlying governing strata of his true self as distinguished from his artificial, professorial constructed self, really caused it. At top of page 121, a paragraph opens: 'The answer lies in irony . . . ' followed by what he terms a conventional definition: ' . . . a single-minded device whereby an author seems to be saying one thing while making it perfectly clear that he means precisely the opposite.' And immediately thereafter, he paraphrases the meaning given essential irony in poetry by I. A. Richards (his chief target, of course): ' . . . while stating one view . . . should by ambiguity or some other device present the opposite view at the same time. . . . should refrain from judging between them, so that it may organize the opposing sets of impulses at the same time.' This isn't quoted merely to illustrate the preceding paragraph, but because for this reviewer, Mr Krieger subtly accomplishes this very feat in his remarkable survey.

To follow the clever interpretations-upon-interpretations of all those from T. E. Hulme and T. S. Eliot to Cleanth Brooks, whom he rightly quotes more often than many

others who are rather larger figures, would form a lengthy critique; but in addition to giving each his careful due and concluding on the foregone note that the aesthetic riddle placing art between percept and concept remains unsolved, Mr Krieger touches the sensitive, the very core of what is 'wrong' with most criticism. And he does this with a protective (of poetry) manner which is clue there was heat after all behind this admirable and exhaustive and exhausting job — yes, there's really fine passion in Mr Krieger, not just an excess of crude energy to fuel a well-trained mind.

Not only does Mr Krieger give account to Elder Olson, R. S. Crane, and D. G. James (to whom a surprising space is devoted), but he does not ignore such as Robert Hillyer and Malcolm Cowley. And in the important conclusion, he considers even Max Eastman and his now famous (or infamous) 'Cult of Unintelligibility'. Though he does not treat seriously New Criticism attackers whose perceptions are limited to appreciations of trite sentiments clothed in too-familiar sacramental robes worn at altars of the past, he does in effect also charge cultish tendencies in these other admittedly-worthier studies of poetry. And the tender core, of which he's in many connections indicated the presence, has been the neglect of the primary force which should underlie even the fundamental opposition out of which great poetry springs — the directed purpose(s) of the artist(s). For, not only do all these theorists fail to remain rightly selfconscious about what Mr Krieger designates in a chapter, *THE UNIQUENESS OF THE POETIC IMAGINATION*, as their basic oppositional driving force, the distinction between a poem and a work of science, but they characteristically become so busily absorbed by the intricacies of their contrived means of approach that (and not broaching the issue whether a poem, once created, is a primary thing-in-itself) they allow insufficient stress on the why of formulation(s). This element

is common both to a theorem and a poem.

The reviewer here interposes one small, but maybe significant personal observation — that while Mr Krieger absolves the several critics of mere hedonism, he seems not to realise that (considered philosophically) neglect of purposive directions boils down to the same error, direction in this sense requiring a good deal more than just ‘unscientific’ emotive reaction. May not one ask, after nodding yes over Eliseo Vivas’ truth as ‘primary subject matter of experience’, what truth?

The book contains so much that one could go on and on, noting well-presented phases. There is an exceptional exposure of the unsoundness of Richards’ materialistic psychologising . . . an efficient dealing with the ‘straw-man’ notion Yvor Winters has of the struggle between poet and form as primary . . . an analysis of how Coleridge, himself, not only never gave weight to the spontaneous power of the imaginative mind, but did not deem it important to show how much the mind discovers itself in the process of working in the medium . . . and much more. Mr Krieger doesn’t go into fine details of the relationships of semantics to modern criticism; but the very omission maybe speaks more loudly than would have a chapter (surely wasted anyway, in view of what the rest of the material plainly shows can be deduced he would say).

To refer to Raymond Souster as a Canadian poet would be misstatement, just to refer to him as one of the prominent contemporaries would be injustice—he is a world-voice of this time. True, it may be argued that his individual expression doesn’t hold unique innovations and that his observations don’t plumb metaphysical depths. He isn’t prophetic either; nor does he refer to seers and ancient rituals. However, his poems spring from basic polarities: ideality (both meanings intended) in love on the one side, and mischance-calloused actuality on the other. And their

well-organised intention brings a special order out of the chaos he sees—sharply-realistic, yet often beautiful free verse, here in *THE SELECTED POEMS* (\$2, CONTACT PRESS), chosen by Louis Dudek from many prior books.

In *SEA CLIMATE and Other Poems* (Glen Coffield, 25c.) by J. Phoenix, an Englishwoman in middle years, appears typical contemporaneous, though superior to average, verse of 'refuge'. Negation is helpfully sturdy, and the descriptive passages better than imitative. Her moving oppositions rise from population inroads on country life. Mrs. Phoenix passionately loathes urbanisation. She equates it with disease infecting her loved nature, her rhapsodies about which occasionally deteriorate into sentimentalities, in spite of frequent fresh phrasings. The title poem, with a contrasting analogy likening a moor wind to a free sea wind, is much farther from possible major work than the opening piece, *ON A DECOMPOSING FOX'S MASK*, with stronger feeling, more contrast, and implying rather than merely detailing (a repeated fault). Technically, Mrs. Phoenix contributes nothing; hers call for metrics, and she's either careless or her ear fails. It may be significant that *SEA CLIMATE*, formally more successful than any others, is (therefore?) the title poem. The sonnet vehicle of the opening poem admittedly is awkwardly built. Free verse might have given it double impact. Unhappily, the only free verse here offers but a series of poetic-prose statements ; and though these are effective as such, their line-ending rhymes do not bring the whole a trice nearer poetry — *A NORTH NORTHBRIAN LOVESONG*.

REPORTS ON PRESSES

Among new names, concerning which information is lacking, has been AMERICAN GUILD PRESS, 2218 N. Harwood, Dallas, Tex., U.S.A. . . . BLUE GUITAR editors announce two imprints, AUTOTELIC PUBLISHING CO. and ESTHETIC PRESS — no details yet. . . . Austin Clarke writes THE BRIDGE PRESS, Tempelogue, County Dublin, Eire, has produced only his own private printings, but others may follow. . . . Those interested may query James M. Singer, Jr., in re henny penny press (GCB 000). . . . Note MORNING STAR PRESS new address (mag listing). . . . Appearing of limited regional interest is THE OZARK SUNLIGHT SERIES, 617 W. Lafayette Ave., Fayetteville, Ark., U.S.A. . . . PAPERBACK EDITIONS is under Editors Byron R. Bryant and Michael Grieg, 1122 DeHaro St., San Francisco, Calif. Though chief output will be unavailable items which failed to reach large audience on first print, significant new work also will appear. . . . 'Books commercial publishers won't touch, purely on basis of content' announces a socially-conscious group, SIERRA PRESS, P.O. Box 96, Long Island City 4, New York. Not a vanity project, and only group-approved books will be produced ; yet authors must meet costs, hoped will be recovered from sales through press-supplied promotion. . . . SOUTHERN LITERARY SERVICE now is SOUTHLAND PRESS, moved to new SNOWY EGRET address. . . . A co-operative setup for author investment is WRITER'S WORKSHOP, 7 West Bldg., 1817 Fourth St., San Rafael, Calif. — Editors Mary Otis Davis and Leonard A. Phillip.

ADDENDA

Publications and announcements include: OBSERVE THE TIME by John Beecher (MORNING STAR, \$1.50 — and John Beecher's reviewed in TRACE No. 17 is \$3, not \$5); LITTLE PAGAN by Eric Ratcliffe (privately, from author at 73 Coleshill Rd., Teddington, Middlesex, Eng.) — 1/3 or 25c.; NOT FOR OBLIVION, Lilith Lorrain (DIFFERENT PRESS, \$2); BY ORDER OF THE MUSE, O. W. Crane (\$1, privately, John Kicher, Box 4197, Pittsburgh 2, Pa., U.S.A.); yet-untitled poems by Frona Lane (THE GREEN LEAF PRESS, \$2); from JONATHAN WILLIAMS — SOME TIME by Louis Zukofsky, \$2, THE DUTIFUL SON, Joel L. Oppenheimer, \$2.25, POEMS, Stuart Z. Perkoff, \$2, and three titles by himself, as JARGON 13, \$2 each; and of interest was spring appearance of a RINEHART EDITIONS paperback, FIFTEEN MODERN AMERICAN POETS, edited by George P. Elliott.

THE CHICAGO REVIEW has been sponsoring poetry readings with success, and excellent results reported by many from oral presentations indicate not enough of this is done. In San Francisco, despite the already-active POETRY CENTER (several summer readings), a large audience recently went to TOWN HALL THEATER for readings sponsored by INFERNO and THE MISCELLANEOUS MAN.... Also in California — high interest in the master-catalog project of CHAPARRAL POETS. Details may be had from S. Karrakis, 6762 Colgate Ave., Los Angeles 48.

SIERRA PRESS (see) announces an anthology centred on the famous Rosenberg case. Another (no purchases required) will be under an imprint apparently limited to this book, THE DON PRESS, P.O. Box 46, Jackson Heights 72, N.Y.... From White Plains arrives announcement of retirement of Mrs C. B. McAllister after twenty-eight years as editor of THE LANTERN, to be succeeded by James Neill Northe.

PRINTED AT THE PRESS OF VILLIERS PUBLICATIONS HOLLOWAY,
LONDON, ENGLAND