

TRACE

A CHRONICLE OF LIVING LITERATURE

Two Reasons for Indifference
by Joseph L. Grucci

No. 22

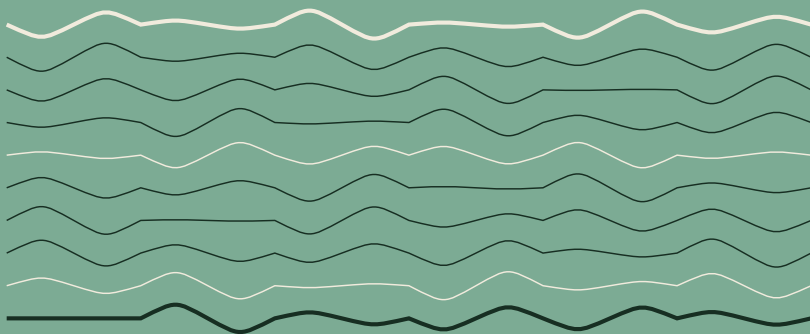
ISSUE

June, 1957

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JAMES BOYER MAY / EDITOR



TRACE

No. 22

Living Literature

Essays & Articles · Poetry · Reviews

June 1957

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

Two Reasons for Indifference	4
<i>I Infantilism</i>	4
Half-Poetry	5
The Call to Order	10
Editors Write	15
I Like It	20
Nugae by Stanley G. Eskin	22
Addenda	29
The One-eyed Gunner	35
A Mortal Pitch	36
Villiers Publications	37

TWO REASONS FOR INDIFFERENCE

by Joseph Leonard Grucci

I INFANTILISM

Poetry, as Allen Tate has said, is 'neither religion nor social engineering.' Unless one mistakenly believes that poetry cannot stand on its own and should be used only for some less esthetic end, the point is unarguable. But, one wishes to add, neither should poetry be confined to the navel-gazing of the closet virtuoso.

Yet, one cannot deny these closet artists their right to commune with their most secret muse, though one wonders why they seem so sure that their mutterings out of the subconscious are more than incomplete creations; and also why, when the public is becoming increasingly indifferent to poetry, they berate its apathy with an innocence that is truly revealing. Obviously, the reference is not to those poets of the meaningful interior comment, such as Eliot and Stevens and others of a somewhat comparable artistic discipline, but to those who are so saddled by their creative impulses that they apparently have no control of them. This irresponsibility of the poet toward his material, one feels, has partly contributed to the dwindling of his audience.

Perhaps this quarrel with them is not so much that their very private expression is often unintelligible—poetry can be good or at least exciting even when not clearly understood, as even the most stolid traditionalist must admit—but that it is lacking primarily in one quality basic to mature art. It is plain that their real failure is esthetic—one of selection. They seem unable to distinguish between the raw material of poetry and its essence, between what should go into their poems and what should be poured out (uncensored) on the couch of an analyst. This is the artistic discipline which they

no doubt resist, since the subconscious is not only their father confessor or psychiatrist, but also their modern substitute for the spirit world of the tribal priest. At any rate, their creative processes clearly derive from an irresponsibly overwrought or self-hypnotic state, with a chaotic profusion of images cluttering their expression. And although arresting images do come through, as indeed they will even in automatic writing, they do not cohere (or else the private symbols seldom become public) to create the fullness and unity of a poem.

While one has no doubt that these mumblings out of the subconscious are useful in widening the areas of experience—certainly, they have enriched our literature when used by more disciplined artists—one is not at all sure of their artistic importance when so rawly presented, no matter what come-on label is attached to them, whether it be automatism, primitivism, dynamism, or whatever. Such raw outpourings should be called what they rightly are: infantilism. Still, infantilism can be a cozy disease in a climate of fear and insecurity, and perhaps one should not be too hard on those who have found in irresponsibility an escape from the truth of their situation. Nevertheless what Samuel Johnson remarked of a no less irresponsible group in his day, applies to them: ‘Truth is a cow that will give these people no more milk; therefore they have gone to milk the bull.’

HALF-POETRY

However, all bucolic images concerning truth and poetry aside, ‘I, too, dislike it [\[poetry\]](#): there are things that are important / beyond all this fiddle,’ says Marianne Moore in one of her disarming poems. But when the elements that go into the making of a poem ‘become so derivative as to become unintelligible,’ she continues, ‘the same thing may be said for all of us, that we / do not admire what / we

cannot understand . . . ' We, too, feel that what is genuine in modern poetry we warm up to, what is derivative, we distrust. And, like Marianne Moore, we also feel that when the raw material of poetry is 'dragged into prominence by half poets / the result is not poetry . . . ' If we insist on this distinction between the real and the spurious in modern poetry, as we do in all other things, then we cannot dislike everything that poets write today.

Many lovers of poetry do not like modern poetry for one reason or another — because it doesn't scan or rhyme or make sense — but mainly because they do not understand it, they confess. Their main criticism can perhaps be explained, and very likely the fault is not entirely theirs. Yet, the fault is not altogether the poet's. It may well be that for him the time is out of joint.

Instead of uniting the worlds of imagination and fact, as Dante's and Shakespeare's language has done, the language of modern poetry is divided into two kinds: the languages of fact and symbol. Neither language can express the whole of man or his reality, as Renaissance poetry did. The poet who attempts to compete with science in a world of fact is in danger of suffering from emotional atrophy, and the poet who feels the need of a private mythology to sustain the creative impulse is liable to end up in a padded cell talking to himself. Yet, both have this in common: a feeling of alienation from our society. (They have been shunted aside as useless, by our machine civilisation — no need to banish them, as Plato did from his Republic.) The poet in competition with science, however, desires to belong to the world of the machine, but the poet in pursuit of myths feels so completely cut off from society that he has declared his hostility to it. He refuses to recognize its reality. He has therefore encased himself within a protective shell.

It is this walled-in poet who offers real difficulties for those who say they dislike modern poetry. It is in his poetry

that one finds an unwillingness to communicate, for he seems to live in a world in which 'the center cannot hold' and the pieces do not seem to fit at all. And with sweet poetic justice, he has avenged his alienation from society by deliberately refusing to talk its language. What's the meaning of his incoherent, private discourse? Is his poetry becoming more and more complicated,

with a whole set of private symbols, one inside the other like a nest of Chinese boxes?

Certainly, a great deal of modern poetry is complex and neurotic — and irritating. One reason for the difficulty of understanding it is that the poet today expects a little more of his readers. He demands their full attention so that they may share in the creation of his poems, which are usually not made to scan or rhyme, simply because poetry has lost, for our society, its functional or ritual value. And because it is poetry that appeals largely to the intellect, the modern poet dreads the obvious and tame as much as he shudders at an inevitable rhyme.

Still, the half-poets (the target of Miss Moore's poem) are the real problem, for in them one sees the weaknesses of their betters dignified. It is mainly the imitators who keep the poet from his audience. In their desire to be 'difficult,' they have become wilfully obscure. In their snobbism, they seem preciously content with the intimate symbols that make for coterie poetry. In their cynicism, they expect their own confusion to be mistaken for profundity. And although they seem to have learned every device and strategy of those they unashamedly imitate, one recalls what Heine said of a minor poet: 'Uhland's poetry reminds me of Bayard's horse: it has every conceivable virtue, but it is dead.'

These remarks, directed as they are against the posturings of the near-poets, are not meant to give comfort to those who say they dislike all modern poetry. For them, one would recommend the reading of some 'difficult' modern

poem, and perhaps their experience will be like that of Muriel Rukeyser's student who, after reading *THE WINDHOVER* several times and growing angrier with each reading, reported: ' . . . I felt very irritated and tired, and fell asleep. When I awoke in the morning, I thought of the poem at once. The book was still open, and I read *THE WINDHOVER*. It leaped into place, clearly and in purity of speech and music I had never known before.'

I knew things I had not suspected, but in a strange way, like remembering.'

A good poem, then, whether old or new, should have that kind of effect on anyone who honestly believes it may be worth the trouble.

THE EDITORS OF AUDIENCE MAGAZINE have the pleasure to announce that the new quarterly edition of AUDIENCE, a journal of literature and the arts, will be published this month.

In the past three years, as one of the leading reviews of contemporary poetry, AUDIENCE has had the privilege of publishing some of the most interesting and talented poets of the younger generation, together with such established writers as Richard Wilbur, Marianne Moore, Robert Lowell, Allen Tate, Donald Hall, Philip Booth, May Sarton, and W. S. Merwin.

It is against this background that we have introduced, to the pages of AUDIENCE, and to our readers, many of the new writers who will comprise the mainstay of our literature for years to come.

With the 100-page format of the quarterly edition, AUDIENCE will now be able to publish a larger selection of poetry, articles of fiction, and creative essays. It is our hope that these will reflect, and in many cases create, the vitality of thought and expression that will distinguish contemporary literature and art. Manuscripts are warmly invited, and will be given full consideration. Subscriptions are two dollars for

a year, for four issues, mailed, and are available from:

AUDIENCE Six Quincy Street . Cambridge . Massachusetts

ISSUE P. 8 · SCAN P. 8

THE CALL TO ORDER

by Guy Daniels

There have been a good many straws in the wind, recently, indicating a general dissatisfaction with much of the 'poetry of protest' appearing in the little magazines. Since a large percentage of the poetry being published today comes under this head (on the West Coast of America an entire 'literary renaissance' is based on it), it seems worth while to inquire into the symptoms of what may very well be a disease affecting this large body of poetry.

The charge most frequently levelled against the poetry of protest (and this by critics who share the basic sympathies of the poets in question) is that it tends to lapse into flat statement. In other words, it is no longer poetry at all. Thus Bernard Raymund, reviewing John Beecher's *LAND OF THE FREE* in *MISCELLANEOUS MAN* No. 10, says: 'The bulk of the ten fairly long poems in this collection are written in a form that seldom rises above journalism, which, to be technical, is the exact antithesis of metaphor.' And John Sankey, in *POETRY IN THE LITTLE REVIEWS* in *TRACE* No. 21, echoes Raymund: 'Contemporary magazines are half-filled with verses that can be reduced to such meanings as "What a pity we go on having wars — making hydrogen bombs, etc."' with no residue of meaning whatsoever.

In the same vein, M. L. Rosenthal, reviewing Allen Ginsberg's *HOWL* in the *NATION*, refers to '... that flaccid sort of negation, too easy and too glib, that so often reduces the charge in the writings of Patchen and others . . .' (This by way of praising Ginsberg; though the general prosiness — absence of metaphor and indirection — certainly applies to *HOWL* to an eminent degree, despite its 'agonising appraisal' of our world.)

That, roughly, is the way the general charge reads. And since it has been brought by numerous other critics in addition to the three mentioned above, we may be permitted to assume (without extensive citation, impossible in a brief essay) that at least some grounds exist for it.

The obvious question to be raised at the outset of this inquiry is: Why all this flatness precisely in the poetry of protest? Is there something about protest, per se, which tends to vitiate the powers of invention — of metaphor and indirection (which George Abbe has called ‘the modern poet’s most distinctive technique’)?

One answer to this question has been given by Sartre in his long essay, *QU’EST-CE QUE LA LITTÉRATURE?* In the opening pages of that essay, he specifically states that there can be no such thing as a poetry of protest (*poésie engagée* — ‘committed’ poetry¹). The poet, in Sartre’s view, does not use language to utilitarian ends. For the prose writer, words are a means of acting on the world around him. But, for the poet, words are things in themselves. He is not interested in words as signs denoting things (utilitarian function), but as materials for building a self-sufficient world — a poem. And in this employment, their colour, sound, and connotations — not denotations — are what count.

As usual, Sartre goes a little too far — this time in the opposite direction from the literary utilitarianism he is often accused of. The poetry he has in mind is ‘pure’ poetry. (He cites Mallarmé’s *BRISE MARINE* and the famous lines from Rimbaud: *O saisons! O châteaux! / Quelle âme est sans défaut?*²) And, if only for a moment, he sees eye to eye with John Crowe Ransom, who has said ‘poetry doesn’t have to communicate.’

But we know — or should know — that Sartre and Ransom (a jarring juxtaposition!) aren’t here speaking of poetry in general, whatever they claim. Least of all are they speaking of the poetry of protest as exemplified, say, by

Milton's sonnet

¹Or music, or painting, or sculpture.

²The line I grew up with was: *Quel coeur est sans défaut?* Unfortunately, I am not scholar enough to say whether Sartre is misquoting, or whether there is an alternative reading.

**ON THE LATE MASSACRE IN
PIEDMONT OR ROBINSON JEFFERS'
SHINE, PERISHING REPUBLIC,
BOTH OF WHICH ARE PRETTY
OUTSPOKEN.**

Nonetheless, Sartre's distinction is heuristic. It is a fact that the writer who wants to change things tends to use words as signs; i.e. as a means of acting on the outside world, rather than creating a poem which is a little world of words unto itself. And unless one is a Milton or a Jeffers (the Jeffers of the early lyrics), this tendency can often make for degeneration into the flat statements deplored by Messrs Raymund, Sankey, Rosenthal, and many others.

Once having recognised this dangerous (though perfectly natural) tendency, what course or courses of action are left open to the poet whose primary animus is one of social protest? At the risk of being hanged in effigy, I should like to suggest several possible choices.

1. If he really wants to change things — now — he can write pamphlets (preferably seasoned with satire) aimed at rousing people to act. That this can still be done effectively we know from the example of the satirical verse pamphlet which ignited (or helped ignite) the recent rebellions in Poland. (Another example is the hair-raising parody on Pushkin's Prologue to *RUSLAN AND LUDMILA* which is circulated by word-of-mouth in the Soviet Union.) But there are two obstacles to this. First, it requires a country where

oppression is sharply felt and widespread, and where poetry is in common use among the people. (Any volunteers for the Soviet satellites?) Second, pamphlets are not poetry. They may be more useful in the final analysis (sometimes one suspects they are), but they are not poetry.

2. He can follow the example of several good poets in England and America in recent years, and personalize his art, so that the impulse to protest becomes one of several interacting forces on the personal plane. This, of course, involves a seeming sacrifice. In order to do it, one must forgo certain easy gratifications, like this line from HOWL¹:

‘Go f . . . yourself with your atom bomb.’

It involves, in short, the kind of self-discipline recommended by Lillian Kay in *THE PREEMIES* (TRACE No. 21). But that poets whose primary orientation is one of social protest can manage this feat — and very successfully — is illustrated by quite a few poets of the West Coast school of protest poetry, e.g., Thomas McGrath, William Everson, James Schevill, and Gil Orlovitz (in his shorter poems).

3. He can become another Milton or Jeffers (the Milton of the aforementioned sonnet, and the Jeffers of the early lyrics). That is, he can stick to his outward orientation (in his poems of protest, at any rate) and also to his direct statements. But those statements must be few and far between (not constituting the majority of the lines, as in so many poems). Further, they must be heightened — not flat — and, best of all, richly prepared by metaphor, like the statement at the end of *SHINE, PERISHING REPUBLIC*.

This is of course not the ‘purest’ poetry (direct social protest never can be) in that, to go back to Sartre, most of its words are signs instead of symbols. And it is fraught with the great danger of lapsing into mere statement. But when a product of rigorous internal discipline, it can be genuine poetry.

Finally, by way of postscript, there is another kind of statement (used quietly and sparingly by lyric poets like William Pillin and William Stafford) wherein the protest is tempered by a compassion which raises the whole to the level of enduring art.

¹Incidentally, it is very much to be regretted that such a knowledgeable and discerning critic-poet as Kenneth Rexroth, who long ago saw the need for personalization, should, in what is apparently a burst of Local-Patriotismus, have given loose endorsement to this kind of pseudo-personal 'poetry'.

EDITORS WRITE

Sheldon Kranz: 'As to DEFINITION PRESS: the best way of describing it is, an emotional co-operative. It was founded in 1955, with the encouragement of the Society for Aesthetic Realism. The relation of the Society is so close that the makeup and purpose of DEFINITION PRESS would be hard to see exactly, unless the Society, itself, were "placed". Poetry, literature, art in the most undivided sense are the main concern. A recent story in THE VILLAGE VOICE includes the following: "A working definition of Aesthetic Realism is: The art of liking oneself through seeing the world, art, and oneself as the aesthetic oneness of opposites."'

Fred Cogswell (THE FIDDLEHEAD): 'The other day, I had a note from a poet who asked if the poems I rejected would be suitable for sending out to other magazines, since they had been rejected by us.. I would say that at least 60 percent of the material which we reject is as good as 80 percent of that which we publish. Apart from 5 percent of genuine poetry and about 35 percent of genuine tripe, the rest of the poetry we receive is competent and so much on a par that only subjective liking on the part of the editors determines what is accepted and what is rejected. I have seen our rejects appear in all sorts of magazines including POETRY (Chicago) and NEW WORLD WRITING, and have no doubt that many of the poems we print have been likewise rejected by many magazines before we saw them.'

James M. Singer, Jr. (EMERGENT): 'A liberal education only begins in college. Never ends. The true liberal education is the ever-growing, -expanding search for knowledge. It is what happens when a man leaves job-talk at work and reads something besides the comics when he gets home. Since most of the people we will be reaching are college educated (or at least in the "upper intelligence bracket"), we intend to

broaden — that is to supply the material for the broadening process — their scope of knowledge. We will, therefore, be looking for articles, essays, critiques on NON-literary subjects, AS WELL AS literary subjects. . . . Yet, at a layman level (presupposing the layman can think). It seems to me that the two go hand-in-hand: that the person REALLY interested in good writing (fiction, poetry, etc.) will also be interested in music, psychology, sociology, politics (though some limiting here), art, travel, and yes, even consumer buying, practical or applied economics. In fact, one thing I'm really after right now is a Christmas story for CHILDREN, for the fall issue.'

Peter M. Wyman (AUDIENCE, of Quincy St.) : 'May I emphasise that we emphatically do not emphasise (note triple emphasis here) "established poets" per se ; but that we publish them to keep the more unknown poets in "good company" as they themselves would wish it. We have never considered ourselves reactionary or traditional — although we do believe in taste and unassuming dignity. A "shock" can be a magnificent poetic experience — but ever so much more so if its vitality has meaning and depth — not merely artificial titillation. In any case, we have always tried to publish poetry, not poets.'

WHAT IS IT LIKE TO WORK FOR A LITTLE MAGAZINE?

by Carol Noble Kalsen (U.S.A.)

Working for a little magazine is no small job! This may surprise a lot of people, perhaps even some of our readers, but it can be heavily underscored without being exaggerated. Editing and managing a magazine of any size, or even just helping out in a secretarial or girl-Friday capacity, equals a full-time job ; but unfortunately, most people engaged in this fascinating but frustrating endeavour are able to give it only part of their time. The 'characters' who are dedicated enough to slave away their spare time without pay in order to keep a creative project alive must cope with two occupational

hazards — shortage of adequate help to accomplish all they would like to do (since dedicated characters are in short supply) and the even more serious shortage of money with which to enlarge and promote their magazine, that is build the desired audience and encourage new poets.

The time spent in editing and producing the magazine, including the selection of poetry, the setting up of the mag, the proofreading and consulting with the printer, actually comprises only a rather small fraction of the total job. Surprised again? What then takes most of the hours? Correspondence, promotion, and the tedious, ever-present detail work necessary to any business. Correspondence is heavy and never-ending. AMERICAN POETRY MAGAZINE receives about 100 pieces of mail per week, every week in the year. Usually sixty of these are submissions of poetry which must be farmed out to various readers for approval or rejection and then passed to another reader for a second opinion. Then, there are new members to welcome, answers to various inquiries on poetry, both general and specific, letters of appreciation and of criticism, and requests from libraries, agencies, and individuals, all of which must be answered. (Only a very few odd-lot letters are ignored.) Then come books to be reviewed, other little magazines to be read and appraised in order to keep current on all activity in the poetry world, renewals, orders, requests for extra copies. Last, and unfortunately sometimes the least, are contributions and subscriptions. But this is only incoming correspondence. There remains correspondence which we initiate, to make contacts, further public relations, seek funds, increase circulation, and promote APM in every possible way (if it doesn't cost too much money). Besides the above correspondence, there are such mundane chores as keeping card indices (mailing lists) up to date, filing, addressing and stamping each issue of the mag, making stencils, filing, keeping up clipping files on poets,

bookkeeping and taking care of the bank account, filing, sending out renewal notices, planning lectures and answering lecture requests, filing, and delegating various jobs to members of the board and checking on progress. All this office work takes place in the attic-office of an imposing fourteen-room flat at 3039 North 53rd Street in Milwaukee, and where a 700-volume library is housed in romantic fashion under garret eaves, and where homemade cabinets hold paper supplies and work is batted out on portable and loud standard typewriters which are getting on toward middle age.

Twice a year, there is a meeting of the Board of Directors and Advisory Board (more letters to write), to consider the business and policies of operating the American Literary Association. Perhaps the foremost topic of discussion is—promotion. How can we improve our project, publicise our efforts, extend our services effectively—at a minimum expense, of course? You have to be clever to keep coming up with good answers to that question! But we are always trying, and thank goodness for some clever hardworking people who are also dedicated. Recent steps were a complete revamping of our cover, a plan to promote APM subscriptions in public and college libraries, and plans to increase our criticism service to those contributors who are seriously interested in developing their talents. Since only about 5 percent of the pieces submitted are usable, we feel this effort is more than worth the time. So many contributions come very close to the mark, but must be rejected for minor faults, simply because many of our contributors have had no opportunity to obtain competent criticism.

The prevailing general fault is inconsistent quality. Our line of critical attack is to make the writer more critical, to sharpen his awareness of what is good and what is trite and weak in his own work. We emphasise ways of developing his good elements logically and consistently. We do this solely in

terms of the individual's work, and avoid completely holding up any set 'rules' or 'method' or end result. We aim mainly at developing discrimination in the writer. So far, most recipients have taken it well, and their work has shown considerable improvement. In fact, a goodly portion of marginal work has thus been made usable, which is encouraging both to us and to the writers. Considered on an hourly basis, criticism doesn't begin to pay for itself, but we feel it is well worth the effort from the standpoint of helping writers and of building solid reader interest.

This newly-enlarged Criticism Bureau is our pet project just now. We feel it is one of the most promising ways to develop our audience. But we find it difficult to give all the time to criticism we would like, because routine chores must be kept up to date. Also, qualified critics are hard to find, especially when it comes to taking on an unsalaried job demanding so much time. Since we cannot buy services such as addressing (nor printed envelopes), we spend too much time in such chores. Something suffers. And we must continue to do as much promoting as possible, to broaden our audience. And so it goes with a little magazine. Anybody have any good ideas for making more money? Because if we had more money, we could enlarge and expand so we could get more paying customers. Better yet — got any money?

ISSUE P. 18 · SCAN P. 18

I LIKE IT

by Eric Cashen (U.S.A.)

The girl in the long blue jeans stooped to pick up the piece of lint on the cellar floor. 'Jim,' she said, 'it really won't do.' He looked at her. He lifted up the leggings of his trousers and paused. 'Why not?' he asked.

'Because it's too damp, and too musty, and too dirty. It's just no good. You might as well make up your mind to that.'

He sat and thought. 'I don't know,' he said at last. 'I like it.'

And that was that.

They lived on the first storey. The cellar was to house a printing press he had found in his aunt's barn; and he intended to spend most of his spare time down there. That's why she didn't like it. She did not want him to spend his spare time on something that was not worthwhile.

He had had a friend of his, who was a trucker, bring down the press, and together they nosed it into the cellar. Three small boys were on one end, and the trucker's helper, a tall beefy man, was on the other. They held the mainstays in front, and down it came. Part by part, it took up most of the cellar. They assembled it, hurriedly; and went upstairs for a drink.

The three kids had root-beer, the trucker's helper had rye, and they each had a gin-on-the-rocks. Barbara was out, so they didn't get her anything. The press was a mighty ordeal. They sat back, and sweated freely on their kitchen chairs.

'What-cha gonna use it for?' the trucker's helper wanted to know.

'I'm gonna print books,' Jim said. He laid down his drink.

'Comic books?' a kid asked.

‘No, the ordinary kind.’ He picked up his drink again. He finished it. He said goodbye to his friend, the trucker’s helper, and the kids, who lived nextdoor.

Barbara came home from her job. Around five-thirty. ‘I think it’s awful,’ she said. ‘I don’t think you can print a goddam thing on it.’

He didn’t say anything . . . ‘What d’ya mean?’ he wanted to know. ‘I’m goin’ to start on the novel,’ he said.

NUGAE BY STANLEY G. ESKIN

When we read the dedicatory piece to Cornelius Nepos in which Catullus labels these poems of his mere trifles ('nugae'), we are apt to smile knowingly to ourselves and to feel a glow of tenderness for that dear, great man (did he really know!) who could dismiss his superb lyrics in so cavalier a way. Other poets imitated Catullus' gesture, and we end up with a series of images of major poets from Petrarch to Gerard Manley Hopkins, blushing to hand a friend a sheaf of masterpieces, saying: '... just a few things I tossed off ... really nothing at all ... If you'd ... care to glance at one or two of them ... Actually, Catullus knew what he was talking about; and what he talked about were his poems taken individually, not collectively. A collection of good lyrics can be anything but trifling; but there is inevitably something nugatory about an individual lyric, or even two or three lyrics. A poem, to be sure, reorganises the universe and becomes a little universe in itself; but it is a universe glimpsed in a flash — vividly and brilliantly, perhaps — tenderly and deeply — but a quick exposure on the unstable stuff of mind, whose visions of eternity, alas! are ever momentary.

That is why the few poems of an author published in a magazine almost always seem somewhat slight, ephemeral, and 'minor'. It is only in a collection of poems that these little lyric universes flash insistently enough across our consciousness for them to contribute to a total, cumulative effect. Only then does a bigger, weightier, more substantial universe compose itself and a more lasting vision appear. The poems that appear in little magazines are, in a sense, occasional poems, regardless of what they are about or how good they are. The little magazines, themselves, serve very much the same purpose that was once served by a

circulation of manuscripts. As Drayton wrote the sonnets of *IDEA*, he presumably gave copies to friends who in turn passed them on, until they were circulating within a fairly wide group of literary enthusiasts. A devotee within that circle probably received a good variety of individual poems every two or three weeks, and the effect must not have been unlike opening the latest issue of *WHETSTONE*. As the Earl of Oxford, say, glanced through the poems that had come with his morning mail, and even if one of them was: 'No longer mourn for me' by that fellow over at the Globe Theatre, it is unlikely that he felt deeply absorbed in a vast creative vision. Rather, reading these manuscripts must have involved the pleasure, interest, and excitement of glancing at the latest production of a variety of poets, representing a wide range of accomplishments from genius to mediocrity. Likewise, one opens a little magazine with a lively sense of participation in active literature, but not with the kind of expectations with which one opens a book. The reader of little magazine poetry should seek stimulation and pleasure rather than revelation and total immersion. He should pass only the lightest kind of judgement — or perhaps no judgement at all — on these scattered handfuls of poems, for they may represent the poet's best, or may be the whim of an instant. It doesn't matter. The relationship involved is a three-way affair between poet, magazine, and reader ; and 'magazine' is the central term of the formula, not so much because of the tone set by editorial policy, but because of the mere fact that it is in a magazine — and not in a book or an anthology — that the poetry in question is appearing. Perhaps reading poems in a magazine is more like meeting people at a cocktail party — a good cocktail party, that is — not one of these chitchat affairs, but a gathering of interesting and articulate people. One feels alive and stimulated, going from group to group, receiving here and there sparks of wit, flashes of insight — never lingering at any one spot or finding the opportunity of

deepening any contact. The deeper, more fruitful, more ambitious contact which in social relationships is friendship, can only be paralleled in poetry through a book.

SOME ITEMS RECEIVED by the Editor

A perpetual heterogeneous flood of poetry books makes all but inaudible any cry that there's one deserving to be snatched from the waters and read with a care uniquely earned by its rare qualities . . . if not perhaps to ensure lasting distinction for that very volume, to earn better than oblivion for a skilled sincere writer achieving passages of original expression. And more difficult, because such a book usually also exhibits crude faults which in countless insignificant others may be damningly unredeemed. THE UNPROPHET'S MONOLOGUE and Other

Poems by William R. Brashear (GREENWICH, \$2.50) reveals a young man of intellectual power coupled with passion and ability to draw both terrible and delightful refreshment from a well of true inspiration. And his 'stuffs' of dreams and subconscious conjurements of analogies do not merely sprawl rawly tumbled from the source. He competently and sometimes impressively deploys his materials. Plus which — and reassuringly for those who shy away from philosophical moderns 'hard to read' — his most complex offerings are no more obscure than poetry's nature necessitates. The title piece opens: 'And did you see me as I struggled / With the brute swine, cleaving the mud / To open access to that priceless gem / I threw in their oats. / Their project / Is to eat, and they ignore my quest, / And take me as a rank competitor / For sustenance, or with sloppy smile / Discredit my intentions, as if I were / A politician come to tie their tails.' Brashear shows much leavening humour; and other examples could be quoted, illustrative of yet livelier distinctive idiom. The purpose in quoting average lines is to convey his general readability and to exhibit a couple of faults as well — and of which worse samples might be

excerpted. The younger poet who does not echo some clichés, and, when pressed, employ stock devices and even climb upon some imitative long-abused pomposity, is nonexistent. What's important is that this young poet frequently displays his own bona-fide revelations, with not a few superior passages of imageful metaphor. Clean compression opens *THE VISIONARY* (although it ends in near-straining after effect with 'benighted, Buried') : 'In my cave or cavernous mind / Where I no journey contemplate / But am my state, / Think I on / The Cartesian polygon / As many-sided as I can contain / Within my vision. / These be the walls / Of my mental cave, within is I, / My mental state.' Regrettable inversions and all, here is indisputable clean driving power; and Brashear overnight may stop using his occasional obvious devices and quasi-obsolete poeticisms.

Kenneth Patchen's poignant *HURRAH FOR ANYTHING* (JONATHAN WILLIAMS, \$1.75) comprises all new pieces, each accompanied by his own drawing. The range of Patchen's ironically-humorous protest is impellingly here in the titillating guise of a nonsense book which is by no means all nonsense. Oh, the good laughs are many; but in between, and integral to not a few of them, are sad and awful thoughts. Certain to be marked by all who are familiar with the body of Patchen's poetry will be that this is the antithesis of his more characteristically-abstract (and therefore critically-berated, in some quarters) self. Out of fifty, there's but one abstraction, *PERHAPS IT IS TIME*, and just two other totally unfunny pieces, *IT IS THE HOUR* and *ALL THE ROARY NIGHT*. The whole makes excellent reading aloud (as things of this sort should). Taken together with the delightful 'looking' Patchen's expressive graphic art provides, nothing else really should be demanded — however, the last-named piece quite possibly is capital 'P' poetry.

In rather startlingly remote contrast with others detailed here is *THE TESTAMENT OF CRESSEID*, translated by Fred

Cogswell (RYERSON PRESS, \$1). But the translator is far from remote, being the same editor of *THE FIDDLEHEAD* whose intelligent promotional interest in modernity is indeed at variance from his interest here in the 'Schulemaister in Dunfermeling', Robert Henryson of the early sixteenth century. In a limited edition (250), the editor, who is identified with the advance guard in his criticism, if not overly experimental in his own poetry, nevertheless hasn't made the error of undertaking to render in current idiom what only retains its proper flavour in an English of the late past. With contemporary spellings and without obsolete words or meanings, he manages, in a lively near-literal version, a blend which preserves the exact sense in a felicitous tastefully-poetic expression which also conveys the medievalism of the original.

To enlarge on social protest concerning a book titled *THE ROSENBERGS, Poems of the United States* (SIERRA PRESS, P.O. Box 96, Long Island City 4, N.Y., U.S.A., \$3) is superfluous. Beyond which, literary merit isn't (though not entirely absent, and particularly in the outward qualities of contributions from several well-known poets) what makes this book exceptional. Rather, the super-emotional charge, which makes of the contents as a whole a human document of rare interest. The elements which have wrought burning fusions of articulate (and some not-so) protest, are sufficiently complex that numbers are bound to respond in emotional kind. Of course, death, itself, and capital punishment, are heightened to the nth because the victims were young parents, who — innocent or not of Communist treason — were subjected to unthinkable mental agonies. But of more moving consequence than the controversial ingredient of a political ideology which in fact always has had more intellectual than social appeal (and in the name of which uncounted atrocities have been committed in other parts of the world) is the fact that the Rosenbergs were of

Jewish extraction. And the real factual irrelevance of this detracts not an iota from its weight. Just as for a pacifist there can be no defensible war nor any killings, least of all by human judgements in a court of law — just as for an anarchist there can be no warrantable conviction of sedition against any nationalism — so, for world Jewry, there cannot ever actually be a moral punishment of a Jew outside the faith. The multiple evident contradictions here enhance the psychological and social richness; and every sensitive thoughtful person, no matter his individual creed or politics, will find cogence in these pages. The presentations range from obvious and trite sentiment to abundant original invective and subtle modernity.

Nothing can be more disappointing than inept inadequacy in a pamphlet such as *ALLEYWAYS* (privately : 663-A Green St., San Francisco, Calif., U.S.A., 25c.) ; for such an endeavour's intentions are so desirably valid. A considerable bill of exceptions is here compiled — exceptions to what exceptions undeniably should be taken to — and its alert contemporaneity is testified through such lines as Thomas Green's 'Shouts of revolution / Are as outmoded as cathedrals.' Yet — considering first, co-contributor, -publisher Martin Hoberman — a great part of the writing is dispersed, until even the essential formulations lack poetic concentration. Worse, his lines tritely bell echoes, with scarcely any originality in developing unique expression. Influences are manifest, though diversified—and there are not a few no-doubt-unconscious borrowings. In Green appears more component concentration; but in the fashion of prose, not of poetry, which his work purports to be. Nearly 100 percent terse plain statements, here's not one poetic obliquity; and the imagery, when itself poetic, is projected objectively in prosaic terms 'about' (also the case with Hoberman's use of images). Green keeps his thinking straighter than does Hoberman, and demonstrates more

forethought; while Hoberman is to be credited with having read more than Green, plus achieving better transmissions of intense feeling. Whether he actually is more sensitive, lies, of course, beyond objective ascertainment; but the point is that, despite having evolved no personal idiom, his derivative outpourings are convincing.

Two elements have conspired to cause several regretted omissions of books from review in this feature: reluctance (apparently) of publishers to send books, unless specifically queried; and lost timeliness, due to publishers' tardiness in mailing review copies, or to the early TRACE deadline, or both. Three, out of many perhaps as deserving, have been strongly brought to attention. *THE EXILE* by Frederick Eckman (NORDIC PRESS) contains more unobscure and entertaining poetic invention than scores of others cluttering the scene; but—released about a year ago—it's already out of print! This writer just received one, forwarded from another reviewer, at the author's request. Perhaps less in need of added promotion have been two out some while in the *CITY LIGHTS* series: *HERE AND NOW* by Denise Levettov, and *TRUE MINDS* by Marie Ponsot (85c. each). Selfconscious stylisation in both doesn't by any means always place too much curb on their young spontaneity; and if major thematic significance seems unportended by either, this doesn't subtract from the value of their technical accomplishments in a period when deliberate shunning of poetical similitude appears in some quarters prized in itself and literally for itself . . . so that evidences of meticulousness have become (there) damning! Which is to remark that, regardless what status a well-weighed appraisal may accord either, they show conscientious skill far above average and are sure to be prized in some other quarters.

ADDENDA

Events of national, even international, interest to serious writers have been taking place in San Francisco, Calif., with a U.S. Customs censorship ban on imports of the magazine *THE MISCELLANEOUS MAN* and a book under *CITY LIGHTS* imprint, produced in England. Especially astonishing—that allegations of obscenity should be invoked, when the authors so charged are freely circulated, and in equally frankspoken works within the U.S. and without any similar difficulties with the P.O. Department—because the Bay area is one of the more ‘advanced’ centres. The American Civil Liberties Union has taken up the cudgels and, in the *CITY LIGHTS* case, Publisher Lawrence Ferlinghetti has prepared a detailed defense of *HOWL* by Allen Ginsberg, inviting other editors, critics, and poets to contribute statements of their ideas about the book’s artistic validity. William J. Margolis, *MISCELLANEOUS MAN* editor, fears a brew of poison in preparation, to peril basic freedom for expression and to reinvoke the hypocritical suppressions of the ‘pre-*ULYSSES*’ era. The general public too has taken keen interest, judging by the letters columns of California dailies.

Other ‘spot’ deadline news includes controversy in Boston between two *AUDIENCE* periodicals, only one of which can be the legitimate continuation of Ralph Maud’s *AUDIENCE*. Elsewhere in *TRACE* are details concerning the larger of these, the editor of which reportedly purchased his right to carry on; yet, months ago, meanwhile, at least one issue under the *AUDIENCE* name and in original format, with selections similar to those of the Maud periodical, appeared under editorship of Anthony Cowan. Both editors are Harvard University undergraduates.

Announced for late 1957 is *INDISPENSABLE* (*DIFFERENT PRESS*, pre-publication price \$1, regular price \$1.50) to

comprise varied practical information, not only for poets, but for everyone involved in whatever aspect with this field of writing and publishing. All the valuable features cannot be outlined here; but full information may be obtained from Lilith Lorraine, Alpine, Texas.

The censorship matters described above have been hampering the circulation of a special double MISCELLANEOUS MAN devoted to Gil Orlovitz—his own selections of fiction, poetry, and drama, with a statement of his poetic theory, plus a condensed bibliography. Imports were delayed, to avoid possible losses through confiscation, inasmuch as the government agency had in effect alleged the tenor of this literary bi-monthly ‘obscene’! Orlovitz, whose experimental plays have been New York-produced and whose writings have been widely published both in books and in leading magazines, resides in Hollywood, where he’s active in motion pictures and television, enjoying early success in commercial regard in addition to winning comparatively esoteric approval. But even the avant-garde Orlovitz has been on radio and attracted attendances for readings on tapes.

Many tape-recordings have been featured at the EVERY OTHER SATURDAY NIGHTERS (conducted by Mr Margolis at the MM address) and are effectively used at many U.S. gatherings where poets’ personal appearances prove infeasible. Shifting to London, to note last season’s comparative series of CONTEMPORARY MUSIC AND POETRY CIRCLE (second Monday eves, from October to May, at 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, Kensington High St.). Those wishing data on the next series may write: Alec Craig, 5 Avenue House, Belsize Park Gardens, N.W.3. Already listed at its Georgia, U.S.A., address in the 1957 Directory, OLIVANT no longer is edited in Japan. D. Vincent Smith returned to the States in March. Heralded of ‘giant paperback’ format and with world representation of experimental writers, it will shortly be available.

While public political commitments quite generally are avoided by U.S. writers, and increasingly, not only by British people of letters, but even on the more-partisan Continent — in Asia and the Far East, living literature seems closely identified with socio-political turmoils. Typical of this has been the new AKLAN NEWS, published at Sampaloc, P.I., by the Aklan Writers Guild; and their announcement of a policy of overall neutrality alters not a whit that most artists here, as in Japan, China, India, and Oceanica, seem to assume that repercussions of current events must be visibly reflected by the creative offerings of the day. On our side of the globe, a majority of artists meantime continue trying to maintain inviolate private worlds, if not retiringly esconced behind academy ivy. For a stimulating elaboration of a major line of interpretation of this phenomenon, it's suggested readers send for the initial issue of the new SPECTRUM (see Directory Supplement), which contains a late version of an essay read by Hugh Kenner at a Harvard Summer Session, last year: MANUSCRIPT TO BE PLACED IN A BOTTLE.

With sharp regret, reporting post-deadline arrival (too late for review) of George Abbe's valuable YOU AND CONTEMPORARY POETRY (an Author Audience Publication: from Mr Abbe, 75 Manor Road, Springfield, Mass., U.S.A., \$2.00). Among other books of importance not received in time for review is a CITY LIGHTS edition of William Carlos Williams' KORA IN HELL — also a poems-in-pamphlet publication of henny penny press, COMING OF THE ATOM, by Seymour Gresser (\$1.00). Future CITY LIGHTS pocket books just announced are GASOLINE, Gregory Corso (75c.) and Selections from PAROLES, Jacques Prévert (95c.).

Another provocative East-West contrast is underlined by the prevailing differences in types of writings encouraged organisationally. Where the East abounds in group activities centered on advanced experiment, literally no occidental societies are other than conservative. Space does not permit

enumeration — but currently on the desk is No. 3 issue of ATTACK (from one of many similar Tokio groups) typically indicating exclusive interest in American and European poets never mentioned at, say, meetings of the California Federation of Chaparral Poets, whose annual announcements happen to be on the desk also. A number of young and not-so-young Americans are public names in down-under countries, and merely amongst those listed between apologetic parentheses in specialised articles at home! NB, that these are not ‘joiners’: and in Great Britain, most of the fraternisers are found in societies dedicated to studies of the famous departed ones — called to mind by announcement of the editorial address of the DUMASIAN: West Cliffe, Skipton Rd., Keighley, Yorks.

Asserting Hindi now to be the ‘national language’ of India, translations, with Indian distribution of books by Western writers in that most most widespread native tongue, constitute part of the printing, publishing services of the BHARTI Association. The government is subsidising work of this sort through library purchases, and these translations likewise become entries for government prize contests.

Television-script courses are being added to school curricula almost everywhere; but in the short courses or writer-conferences, of which numerous new projects are starting in the U.S. this year, stress continues on less-commercial creative endeavours. Of top interest is that of New York University, where despite the foregoing, and a slick-sounding ‘magazine-article’ course too, the names of Charles Angoff, Ralph Bates, and Louise Bogan head the roll of instructors.

Among presses, activity has been above average, particularly in the U.S. DEFINITION PRESS, 20 West 16th St., New York City 11, founded in 1955, hadn’t been previously detailed (see Sheldon Krantz, in EDITORS WRITE); CUMMINGTON PRESS (Harry A. Duncan) has moved to Iowa City, Ia.;

MORNING STAR has moved along with the magazine of that name (per Directory); and also unlisted has been WINDOVER PRESS, 24 Franklin Place, Summit, New Jersey. New address for BOOKMAN ASSOCIATES is 31 Union Square West, New York City. From new address (see) EREW HON PRESS announces entire new book list for late 1957 soon ready.

Poetry books just received, or of which announcements have arrived, include: A LIBATION, Gael Turnbull (POET CAMEO SERIES, 2/-); ZERO HOUR, Leslie Woolf Hedley (INFERNO PRESS, \$2.00); THE ANTEROOM OF HELL, William J. Margolis (INFERNO PRESS, \$2.00 — and extended review of which by the Editor appears in another magazine); HOT AFTERNOONS HAVE BEEN IN MONTANA: Poems, Eli Siegel (DEFINITION PRESS, \$3.00 hardbound, \$1.45 soft-bound); THE ARCTIC TERN and Other Poems, Edwin G. Burrows (GROVE PRESS, \$1.00); LYRIC VIRGINIA TODAY, Vol. II (THE DIETZ PRESS, \$5.00); PASSAGE, Michael McClure (\$1.50 from JONATHAN WILLIAMS, also announcing near-future books by Stuart Z. Perkoff and Larry Eigner).

Also received has been a mimeo pamphlet with helpful practical listings for writers: THE NEW AUTHOR'S DILEMMA, Edward A. Dobran (Privately: 2816 Jean St., Youngstown 2, O., U.S.A., \$1.00). And a new book from GREENWICH PRESS is part-prose, part-poetry, TREASURES OF WISDOM (philosophical rather than practical), John Madahgian (\$2.00).

Besides the annual publicity attendant on numberless U.S. poetry contests and 'occasions', 1957 sees some perhaps more significant poetry-promotional activity involved in publicity for special anniversary issues of the magazines APPROACH and THE FREE LANCE, tenth and fifth years, respectively.

While radio, everywhere, has been coming up, not simply as a literary propaganda or promotional vehicle, but as an actual communicatory instrument — and especially for poetry — it seems that it's been chiefly in Britain and parts of

the Commonwealths that literature of the higher type has been so publicised and to some extent disseminated (orally). And one widely-travelled and -published man, Roy MacGregor-Hastie, deserves at least a few flowers-for-the-living, for extended and quite successful efforts in bringing this about. While this TRACE was in preparation, he was extremely active in London and in large measure personally to be credited for many broadmonwealth that literature of the higher type has been so publicasts; and his plans then called for a tour of the U.S.A.

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