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NEW MEXICO QUARTERLY



ART FEATURE: CLIFFORD WRIGHT

Benjamin De Mott **The Uses of the
Rothermans (story)**

Ray B. West, Jr. **Personal History and
the Four Quartets**

Wesley Ford Davis **A Piney Woods Idyll (story)**

Grover Smith **On Poets and Poetry**

POET SIGNATURE XVI : BOBB DAVIS

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THE EDITOR'S CORNER



U. S. WRITERS are forever growling that there is no place here where serious creative writing can get published, let alone paid for. I used to believe it myself. As far as publishing books goes, it is largely true and getting worse. But where magazines are concerned, it is not true. There is more space for good writing than there is good writing to fill it. For verification, look closely at any literary magazine, including this one.

Where are all the good new voices? Yes, where are they? We receive at *NMQ* immense quantities of material, but thimblesfull of quality. It is necessary to hoard good MSS. like gold to get each issue together. Nor do we see a great deal of quality elsewhere, except for an occasional old giant pacing off another step.

Maybe after all these years the myth needs reversing. Perhaps the great amount of available magazine space has answered the old question "What are the names of the fine unknown voices among us?" The answer seems to be: Rumpelstiltskin.

CONTRIBUTORS

DAVID R. BUNCH has published stories in *Perspective*, *Idiom* and *fantastic worlds*, verse in various publications. He lives in St. Louis.

WITTER BYNNER's latest volume, *Journey with Genius*, a prose account of the D. H. Lawrences, published

last month in England, has been acclaimed there in lengthy notices by distinguished reviewers. He is at present thoroughly revising for republication in the United States his *Iphigenia in Tauris*, originally written forty years ago for Isadora Duncan.

BOBB DAVIS has published a good deal of poetry. His last appearance in *NMQ* was Spring, 1952.

WESLEY FORD DAVIS, whose second published story appears in this issue, has recently had acceptances from *Collier's* and from *Discovery*. Mr. Davis, who teaches English and The Humanities at the University of Arkansas, has been awarded a Stanford Writing Fellowship for 1953-54.

BENJAMIN DEMOTT's story, "The Sunflower Seeds," appeared in Spring 1953 *NMQ*. He has published in *Partisan Review*, *Western Review*, *New Directions Thirteen*, et al.

ROSE GRAUBART did the cover symbol. Her poem, "Sea Rocks," appeared in Winter 1952 *NMQ*.

SHERMAN PAUL is in the English Department of the University of Illinois. His book *Emerson's Angle of Vision* was published by Harvard University Press in 1952.

GROVER SMITH, now teaching at Duke University, has published criticism widely. His review, "An Interest in the Classics," appeared in Winter 1952 *NMQ*.

GERALD WEALES has had criticism published in *The Hudson Review*, *The Quarterly of Film*, *Films in Review*, et al. He is doing a book on modern religious drama in England.

RAY B. WEST, JR. continues to edit *Western Review*.

IN COMING ISSUES OF *NMQ*

STANLEY EDGAR HYMAN — Melville the Scrivener

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Benjamin De Mott

THE USES OF THE ROTHERMANS

I WAS eleven when my uncle closed with the Rothermans. This was 1933, in a village on the south shore of Long Island that is now pure metropolis and that was then becoming a suburb. My uncle's family and my sister and I (our parents were killed in an auto accident in the mid-twenties) had moved shortly before from a great, white-pillared, Georgian house that faced the new golf course. The vicissitudes of a stock called Vanadium were the cause of the move: the house, the Lincolns, Robb (the former dumptruck driver who chauffeured them), Anna and Maria, illiterate German housemaids in their 'teens, help that had been pressed a year before from "The Daisy Huggub Agency" in Hempstead, and some other ill-chosen earnestness of marginal gain—all were let go at once. The Georgian house, a product of my uncle's massive pride, was sold to the Jewish owner of a chain of retail jewelry stores.

There were a number of houses that we could have occupied when we moved. Like several local contractors, my uncle confidently plunged after the crash. He dug foundations for six "modified Normans" priced at thirteen and thirteen-five (the language of youth is forever the natural language, and it was thus that we were taught to announce the prices over the telephone when our guardians were absent). These fronted an unpaved way that my aunt named Elderberry Court.

Four houses were completed before our family arrived at a darker sense of life. And for several years these stood vacant. They were tormenting years; my uncle, a powerful and dogged man, struggled fiercely with the bank for possession of the houses, resisted the bank's asseverations that he had priced them out of the market.

The sale of the place opposite the golf course gave him means of retaining the new houses, or at least of meeting the bank's immediate claims; and thus, as I said, we could have moved into any of them. My uncle's choice was one of the thirteen-fives: five bedrooms, three baths on the second floor, downstairs lavatory, "rumpus room." Adjacent to this house, which was No. 4 Elderberry Court, was the empty foundation hole for No. 8. The Rothermans bought 12 Elderberry, on the other side of the hole.

On the afternoon of the closing day my uncle came home early; usually he spent each day, sitting with other idle contractors and two bootleggers reduced to cabdriving, in Middleton and Cowles, a real estate agency near the railroad station. The tone of our household was somber—as if some remnant of a Calvinistic "rule" retained a vague authority; but I had learned that closing days were often times of uncommon warmth and jollity: I was surprised when I came into the kitchen from school to find both my aunt and uncle gloomier than I had ever seen them before.

Neither spoke to me—they were either too depressed or preoccupied to note my presence. I sat down on the kitchen stool. After a long silence in which occasionally they looked blankly up at each other, my uncle said in a harsh voice:

"Money makes it turn."

I assumed then that they had not gotten the telephone price but instead the bank's "ridiculous" ten-five, and I wanted to interrupt to make certain of this.

"They're probably respectable," my aunt said before I could speak. "They'll know how to keep to themselves."

My uncle grunted and again the room was silent. Then he let his big fist drop down heavily upon the porcelain-topped table—the silver clanged:

"They've got no *right*, that's all."

"Ed," said my aunt dully.

"If it was nine, if it was nine-five—I'd of stopped it cold."

(This was startling; I had not heard either of these numbers considered.)

"—but twelve-five. I couldn't say no. They knew I couldn't say no before they ever went looking."

"It's done, Ed. We been through it—you did the best thing."

"They've got the dough. Nobody else has a dime. All the money left in the whole damn world—that's them." He rose from the table as he said this; he was shaking his head.

"What does he do?" my aunt asked.

"Diamonds. Belgium or Amsterdam, somewhere. Diamonds and gold and the rest—bucks, bucks, bucks. That's them."

"They'll know how to keep to themselves, Ed," my aunt repeated.

As I went out of the room, my uncle seated himself at the table again; he was still shaking his head slowly. He looked stunned.

The conversation was both troubling and exciting. The wealth of the Rothermans seemed to me incalculable in the light of my uncle's estimate, and this was exciting. But beyond my uncle's evident distress, there was the shock, the step forward into nowhere that child or man takes when he hears new phrases made of common words—phrases whose referents are unknown. In their house I learned many odd names of virtues: my aunt spoke of members of the circle at Middleton and Cowles as "clean-sweeping" or "dirtleaving" men, and I "knew what the words meant." But I had not before heard people praised for keeping to themselves. Moreover, the notion that people possessed of fantastic resources were most agreeable when most distant was confusing.

The mystery would open like others, I knew; but it did not in fact open until the next year: Leonard Rotherman was a grade ahead of me in school. In this time the houses on Elderberry Court passed from my uncle's hands, and the Rothermans hardly existed. Sometimes I saw Mr. Rotherman, a small bald man with a flat black mustache, working in his rock garden by the fish pool

(they later filled the pool in) ; and I noticed that the Rothermans were saluted only when they passed in their Buick. When they were walking by, or when they were in clear sight on the south side of their house, my aunt and uncle "did not see them." There was activity when the Rothermans added a screen porch on the south with a handsome awning of hunter green; and I recall the gravel truck coming often to their house and brimming the drive with bluestone (our own drive I myself had nearly raked bare) .

But I have no recollection of Leonard Rotherman earlier than that of my first day of high school.

The grammar school that I attended was quite close to our house: Elderberry Court was an outpost, but the authorities correctly guessed that the village would move beyond it. The high school was a mile away, at the old center of the village. I saw Leonard approaching our house as I stood in the hall with my hand on the screen door, listening to my aunt and nervously scraping the wales of the stiff new corduroy: at that school pupils in the seventh grade were hazed on their first day. When I saw Leonard passing, I flung open the screen door. He stopped, turned. He seemed to me aged and wan; he was tall, thin, pallid, and in some manner aloof and contained. He did not smile at me although I was grinning foolishly at him and even my aunt was smiling noncommittally at the front yard. It was a long, indecisive moment.

"Going down?" I finally asked.

"Come on," he said carelessly. I jumped from the stoop to the flagstones and ran toward him.

We walked in silence nearly all the way to the school. I noticed nothing about him except that he was a full head taller than I was. Then, as we waited at the red light on Lakeview, he looked down at me and grinned a wide toothy grin that was ruinous to the posture of aloofness.

"Don't let them get you," he said.

"No," I said.

He nodded brusquely, like an adult, and we crossed the street. Then:

"Don't go in the basement. Do you have to pee?"

We were now in the school yard, walking on the secluded path between Edwards' board fence and the school hedge. I didn't answer him.

"You better. They work on you in there. You stop and pee—I'll keep an eye out."

I peed obediently; later I heard of gothic tortures in the latrine that I had avoided by following his counsel.

We walked to school together every morning after that. But our conversation was hardly more extensive than it had been on the first day. We parted as we approached the locker room, and did not walk home together; I rarely saw him during the school-day, except in the halls, where he did not acknowledge me. Not until winter was there an occasion for us to have more extensive intercourse; it was then that we became friends.

I think now that this friendship was not inevitable. True the north end was relatively unpopulated—none of my own classmates lived nearby. Yet, as my aunt predicted they would, the Rothermans kept to themselves: except for the ragged, eroded foundation hole between our houses, I would not have gone to him at all.

A few of our new neighbors had asked my uncle to fill the hole in because it defaced the Court and was a hazard. My uncle regarded as conspirators of the bank the signers of the note that was presented him, and having no further cause to fight the bank (virtually all his property had by now been lost), he resisted them. In the "spring," he said (a spring that never came), he would fill the foundation hole with concrete forms and finish what he had begun.

The residents of the Court could not retaliate, but that severe winter they made my sister and me aware of their resentment. We discovered that the bottom of the hole froze into a surprisingly

smooth skating pond, and that the high mounds of dirt at the rear of the plot dropped off into the unfilled fields sharply enough for a swift sled run. We expected the neighborhood children—they were younger than we were—to crowd in upon us. But nobody came. We asked Billy Fitzgerald, who stood all morning on the sidewalk enviously watching us, why he didn't get his skates. ‘

“Can't,” he told us. “My Mom won't let me. She's gonna make your uncle fill it in.”

At first we were delighted that the pond was prohibited. But before noon we were lonely: we seldom had anything to give and now there was no one to receive. I thought of Leonard; I went to the Rothermans' side door. The maid answered and called him. There were three steps up from the door to the kitchen; he stood at the top step, peering down at me expressionlessly.

“Come on and skate,” I said.

“I have to finish something,” was his answer.

He appeared with his skates a half hour later. The pond was much too small for his long legs, and he quickly tired of it: I thought he would leave us. But he had the idea of making an obstacle course out of the sled run in the back. And then we had an occupation.

Through the winter after school we worked on the course, sliding on it infrequently and only to test the qualities of some new contrivance. In the late afternoon under the iron sky, we watered the course so that there would be a sleek ice top in the morning. Leonard made a map of the surface when we were well begun, with the contours exactly drawn; we banked the low mounds, and carefully “placed” the scrub bushes and a row of four apple trees and a long serpentine line of sewer pipes, and we built brick jumps across imagined water holes—the project would have delighted Trim or the most fanciful miniature golfer.

We said little to each other; still, there was a fine concordance of aims. And I rapidly learned from him that an expression of en-

thusiasm, a direct response to any accomplishment, was inessential: greatest pleasures are experienced in silence.

My aunt and uncle never referred to Leonard; boyishly prescient, I never spoke of him. I said only:

"I'm going out to the run."

And my aunt returned:

"You'll break your legs out there some day."

My uncle came once to inspect the course after Leonard had gone in for supper. Several times he pointed to improvements made by my friend and exclaimed:

"How'd you dope that out? What's holding it together?"

I didn't correct him—but I had no intention of taking credit for Leonard's skills. I was certain that my uncle knew whose skills they were and did not need to be told.

The first thaw we overcame; the second was unendurable. We stood together at the starting point looking at the course in the morning before school. The sloppy swift-running grey water sliding over the melting bottom; the great ugly patches of black mud leering through the once clean white snow now black-flecked; the snow drawn back under the bushes in the field—widening circles of bare earth where before were highblown mounds of white that the branches scraped . . .

He looked down at me. He was wearing the shell glasses that made him seem even more serious and remote. I expected him to say something about the vanishing run before us; I wanted him to speak of winters to come, of astonishing inventions to be pursued.

"We'll be late," he said. "We better get going."

I stood there overlooking the black field a moment after he turned; I kicked my foot into the pulpy ice to stop my tears.

In the spring I learned something about him that strengthened me. It was after school; presumably Leonard had gone home. We were playing Chinese handball on the concrete driveway and

against the brick side of the school—Ned Jackman, myself, and a boy I did not know whose father owned the stationery store where my sister and I bought the black and white speckled notebooks with "Name," "Address," and "Subject" printed in black letters on the front. The unfamiliar boy was a gifted handball player; he kept the end court, won game after game. Ned Jackman grew angry.

We stopped and Ned Jackman sat on the curb smoking a wet-ended cigaret while I watched him and the winner went on practising against the wall.

"Mockies and boogs," said Ned Jackman. "They all got this curly hair, you notice? Hey, Izzo," he said. "Come off it. You're a boog, ain't you? You're no mockie."

"Come on let's play," said the boy in the winner's box.

Ned Jackman got up and walked into his box, eyed the boy with great care. The latter went on bouncing and slapping the ball. Ned Jackman called to me.

"C'mere, kid. Lemme show you the difference."

I stood up.

"Now you take a light boog, sometimes you might not be able to tell the difference."

"I'm not in your way," said the boy I didn't know. "Come on let's play."

"But when in doubt"—and then suddenly Ned Jackman reached out fiercely and grabbed the boy's nose and yanked down hard. "When in doubt, that's the ticket. No boog's gonna have that kike hook like Iz, right Izzo?"

"Let's play some more," the boy said with an imperturbability I could not understand.

"Okay," I said. "C'mon, Ned."

Then we played three more games and Ned and I won none of them.

I thought of Ned Jackman and Leonard on the way home. Ned Jackman usually knocked the books out of my hand or

ripped my fly in the locker room at least once a day, and I had been coldly planning an assault upon him that was to take place on my thirteenth birthday. I was pleased that, although I was available, he had picked on someone else. Moreover there was comfort in the belief that Ned Jackman would have said the same things to Leonard, and that Leonard's response would have been similar to this boy's. Until then I had thought that my need for Leonard was stronger than his for me. He never came to my side door; I went always to his. He never spoke first. Among the new people who were moving into the north end, there were some classmates of his; none of mine. Barely stated, out of the incident on the handball court I drew the strengthening conviction that Leonard needed me. I would not yank his nose and call him "kike"; there were some who would.

That fall we rigged an "intercom" from his window to mine. He had what in our house was my sister's room; our windows faced each other over the excavation. Without special apparatus we could make ourselves heard in whispers, after we were supposed to be in bed asleep. But I had seen a blurred ad for the device in the front pages of a prizefighting story magazine that I read, and I was at once attracted to it. I had no money, but I showed the ad to Leonard, and although he was not enthusiastic, he sent a dollar to Chicago. Back came a box of thin, rubber hot water bottle tubing and two cardboard megaphones into which the ends of the tubing could be fitted. Leonard was amused; I insisted that we use them.

For the installation secrecy was essential: we set up Leonard's end first. We stretched the tubing along the gutter and down the leader, and hid it in the shrubs. I do not remember what excuse I made; I was waiting for an afternoon when my aunt and uncle were both out of the house, so that I could bring Leonard and my end of the tube into my room. When that day came and we completed our task, I said:

"Let's have some crackers and jam."

"No," he declined. "I have to get back home."

"C'mon. You've got time."

"You come back with me—we've got crackers."

"No," I said. We were in the kitchen and before he could leave I had the crackers down from the pantry shelf and the jam and a butter knife; I led him downstairs to the bare "rumpus room." He ate two crackers and then said that we should try out the intercom. I made him stay while I emptied the box, even though I was afraid that my aunt and uncle would return and find us there, sitting on the cold, stone, cellar floor.

I do not recall the late hour conversations that I woke him for during the nights in which I was left in charge of the dark house. But some of the words that I think of as uniquely his I associate with these conversations. I kept my radio on (Leonard's parents did not permit him to have a radio in his room) and we would listen to Benny Goodman for a half hour—a weeknight program, at ten o'clock or ten-thirty.

The "trio" would play—I remember particularly a song called "More Than You Know"—very coolly and quietly. When it was over I would turn down the applause to hear Leonard whisper into the tube:

"Skilful."

And occasionally he would offer a critical label: once after the bassist had plucked away intricately by himself or with the drummer, Leonard said:

"Harry Goodman. A very able bass."

Words like "skilful" and "able" were not in my daily vocabulary but I followed Leonard in using them. There was a sort of measured, uncommitted distance about them, precisely the enviable quality in Leonard himself, that made me take them up.

Doubtless my aunt and uncle were aware of the "intercom" at the beginning. But the seasons turned and vacation came (Leonard went away to camp), and they said nothing. That

empty summer I went each day to the Rothermans' house; I talked in the kitchen with Julia, their maid, and played their piano, and sat idle in their magnificent living room, and ate the sweet butter that Julia let me taste. Then at lunch one day toward the end of August, my aunt said:

"School is almost here."

"Uh-huh."

"You want to make more friends in the neighborhood this year."

"Uh-huh."

"There ought to be some nice boys in your class this year. Boys your own age."

"Nobody from up here."

I had a sense of where the conversation would end: I gulped down my milk and got up from the table. But my aunt kept on.

"Gerard," she said, turning back to the stove after looking intently at me for a moment, "I don't know why you don't play with your own *kind*."

"What?"

"You should play with your equals. Your uncle and I think you shouldn't go out of your way playing with people that aren't your equals."

"Oh," I said.

"You think about it," she said vaguely.

"Uh-huh."

"Don't forget."

My aunt's remarks were in my mind only briefly after Leonard returned: I was held fast in a new enthusiasm—tennis—that he stimulated. As I noted earlier, he had a wider acquaintance in the neighborhood than I had; I became aware now of his friends—Jerry Landau, Art Eisenberg, Norm Sandman, others I have forgotten . . . Eisenberg was No. 1 on the school tennis squad and Leonard came back from camp eager to play him. I went and

watched. Leonard lost and I think he was disappointed. But as I watched I myself had an overwhelming sense of the grace of this game—the pinging gut, the highreaching white figures, the quick bursting clack! when a powerful service struck the canvas border of the net.

I had to have a racket.

For my birthday in June, everyone in our family had contributed to the purchase of a Class E model sailboat, handmade, painstakingly rigged, for racing on Sunday afternoons at the Filter Beds. I learned soon after that I had little taste for the racing of model sailboats: the boat rested unused in the plywood mount on my bureau, its bright green keel and polished hull and white sails all dust-laden.

I brought Leonard up to look at it.

“How much will you give me?” I asked after he admired it.

“It’s very well done,” he said. “But I don’t need it.”

“It cost ten bucks. I’ll give it to you for five.”

“No—I don’t want it.” He went to the window and looked down at the foundation hole. I have no recollection of him sitting down in my room.

“I want to get a racket,” I explained.

“I’ve got an old one. Keep the boat.”

“Ah come on. You’ve got the money. You can sail it down at the Beds—race it.”

“I don’t want to sail it. I’ll give you my old racket—you can volley with it.”

“Five bucks,” I said. “That’s not much.”

“You shouldn’t sell it—I don’t want the thing,” he said rather sharply. It was the first time I had seen him angry.

“What a cheapie,” I said, sure then that he would buy it. “Five bucks . . .”

“Oh give it here,” he said roughly. “Come on and I’ll get the money.”

I bought a silk-strung Wilson from the stationery store that the

handball player's father owned. It cost three dollars and something. That afternoon, for the first time, I bought Leonard a ten-cent orange ice from the Good Humor man. In the evening we went to the courts behind the Ewing school and volleyed against the practice board. Later he taught me how to serve, and Saturdays in late October when he and Eisenberg and Sandman grew bored with singles, and Jerry Landau had to usher in his father's movie house, they let me play with them. It was understood that Leonard had to accept me as his partner.

The day I sold the boat I assumed that when my uncle learned what had happened to it, I would be strapped with his belt—this was the favored punishment in our house. But I was not strapped. He asked how much money Leonard paid for the boat. I told him. He asked me if Leonard knew how much the boat cost. I said I had told him that. His face reddened and he started to speak, but then he changed his mind suddenly, and without finding fault with me, went out of the room and down the stairs to my aunt. Bewildered I called after him:

"He didn't want to buy it. I made him—he doesn't like boats."

The next evening when they came to my room to say good-night, they sat on the edge of the bed and explained that from now on I would have to "see much less of the people next door."

"They've got different ways, boy," my uncle said. "He might be all right. But they have different ways—you can't get away from it."

"You've got to find your equals and stick with them," my aunt repeated. "You've got to be with your own kind."

I nodded, and they kissed me—sorrowfully, I thought—and I cried a few token tears. When they were gone I thought of nothing else.

Much that was left unsaid I could provide, for the education begun by Ned Jackman on the handball court had no ending. Yet though I understood "kind" I could make no sense of "equals." He was older, stronger, smarter than I was. With his

money I bought the tennis racket; he had taught me how to play. And there was much more. The first day at school, the dollar for the intercom, the dimes for orange ice, the company in the lonely nights, the sled course . . . Against these "qualities" of his, as I thought of them, I could place only his need for me, and of that I had lately grown doubtful. How could the debtor presume to wrench the creditor's nose?

I thought then of his house—the ankle deep bluestone in the drive, the piano. It was a Steinway baby grand, a much smaller instrument than ours. The depth of its tone startled me the first time I touched the keys—the depth of sound, the heavy movement of the keys, thick and warm like the rose and blue rugs upon their floors. Our piano was a Mehlin Angelus, a "ballroom grand" that occupied a third of the living room, an electric player piano for which no "rolls" had been bought since 1929. As I compared them a sense of the Rothermans' living room suffused me and for a moment I believed that if I could bring my aunt and uncle into that room, if I could make them examine it as I examined it—appreciatively, studiously—they would tell me to forget what they had said.

There are objects in that room that I might recognize even if they were transplanted, severed from their world. The three towering chests piled massively upon each other in the hall. *Peasants*, Leonard called them. They were made of a light grained wood that contrasted with the great shining knobs of black and the glossy black panels; the panels had hidden keyholes and immense, unevenly shaped iron keys which, when turned, moved an entire panel with them. The doors, as thick as my fist, slid back upon a dark interior lighted by row upon row of glistening crystal—a thousand fragile cordials, delicately figured, a creamy pile of embroidered linen in one corner, a hundred cups with gold and scarlet borders, some standing on tiny golden feet. There was a long, high, flat-topped sideboard in the dining

room: four wide doors, two that were taller than I was, and half doors at the center. The great key here could not be turned; I could not peer in. But on the outside, a carved pastoral in which the figures of a borzoi and a dragon-headed snake and a great willow coiled and uncoiled in a black mystery that I traced out with my fingertips. Along the border at the top someone carved: 1749—E. A. R.

On the wall that the piano faced, in a furbelowed frame of gold, there was a bluewashed painting of high redwheeled carriages, the red running in the wet street lined with tall narrow houses; two horses facing front and, between the passing carriages, a bluecoated, bearded man wearing a black derby and carrying a sort of broom—surely it was Brussels. And in the hall three pictures mounted in a vertical line—a row of odd street scenes with perspectives I should compare now to the “contemporary” drawings of the Globe and the Swan that the makers of Elizabethan anthologies choose for frontispieces. High, narrow-windowed, sand-colored buildings, under a flat blue border of sky. The buildings all topped with minarets, all facing an open square where there were redwheeled carriages again, and two white dogs, a lady and a gentleman standing on a sundial-like white concrete slab in the foreground. At the bottom strange words:

“ ‘T Gesiaht van ‘T Binnen Hof Siende na de Zaal en Fransche Kerk.”

And the marvelous clock with the handpainted flower face and at the top a tiny sketch of a cheery house with a red roof and a fireplace at either end, and five windows and a center dormer in the attic directly above the doorway; and dull gold weights and chains and a brisk gold pendulum swinging before a carved wooden flower with eight leaves. Gold columns at either side of the face and black hands picked out with scarlet arrows—hands that pointed to one circle marked with Roman numerals and

another with 60, 55, 50 and V's upside down and reversed at the bottom: 60 above XII and 30 under IA. And at the center a water scene, a barge overflowing with flowers, docking in a canal.

I thought of these things and others—not as distinct entities: I cannot say that the blue street existed apart from the sweet butter on the black wooden salver with the burnished rim, apart from Leonard himself: everything was part of him, expressing and reflecting his qualities, his strength, his superiority. I went over our house—the Mehlin Angelus, the “Horse Fair,” the rose-bordered sampler (which today I prize) that began, “May, as the moments speed their flight, Thee overtake some new delight”—and found no equivalents. Confused, lying troubled, fearfully aware that he might have no need of me at all, I thought and waited, waited for some opening . . . I climbed out of bed and went to the window and whispered:

“Leonard.”

It was late then—a night all white with the moon; there were no lights in his house. He did not answer.

“Leonard,” I softly called.

There was still no answer. I went back to my bed. But then I heard his voice heavy with sleep:

“Gerard?”

I went again to the window.

“I called you,” I said aloud.

“I’m asleep. What is it?”

Standing, facing his window I sought for words that would hold him there while I went on thinking; I found none. I burst out:

“My aunt says you’re not my kind, you’re not my equal—but it doesn’t make any difference, does it. You’re my equal and it doesn’t matter, does it?”

I heard him turning in his bed; then the silence returned. I thought he had gone back to sleep, but I waited. At length he said:

"Can you get the trio on?"

"No," I said.

"Well . . . It's late."

I went back to bed, alone with the moon in the room.

A few days later, while my aunt was out shopping, I made him come a second time into our house—I have forgotten upon what pretext. When he was in my room, I went quickly to the closet and pulled out a pair of black and white shoes that my grandfather had given me after wearing them once and finding them uncomfortable. They were three sizes too large for me.

"Like them?" I asked.

"Whose are they?"

"Mine."

"Why don't you wear them?"

"I don't know," I lied. "Just don't like them, I guess."

He picked one shoe up from the bed.

"They're okay. You should wear them—they're sporty."

"I'll give them to you if you want."

He laughed. "Nah—I don't mean that."

"I do. Here." I pushed them at him. "Take them—I'm giving them to you."

"No," he protested, drawing back into himself. "They wouldn't fit. I don't—"

"They don't fit me," I admitted. "They're yours. You've got to take them."

"Why?"

"Come on. I don't wear them."

He shrugged without looking at me. "I don't see why," he said.

I cannot say that either of us knew why I was thrusting them upon him. And I cannot say that he was attracted by them, that he truly thought them handsome, that there was one moment at which my gift pleased him. But he gave way; he accepted them.

I remember that I got a grocery bag from the kitchen for him to carry the shoes home in.

The same night my grandfather joshed me about the size of my feet. I would be wearing his black and white Schrier shoes on my next birthday. Usually I responded well to him, but at table I was silent, embarrassed.

"You still have the shoes in your closet, haven't you, Gerard?" my aunt asked, the smile at my grandfather's joke not yet gone from her face.

I stammered something—and the room was vacant and still. They waited. I couldn't speak.

"Answer your Aunt Betts," my uncle said.

My grandfather nearly turned them away.

"Let him be, let him be," he said. "Just an old pair of wop boardwalk hoppers. Nigger shoes. I'd throw 'em away myself."

"Well—" my uncle hesitated. "Why didn't you give them to me, Pop?"

But my aunt persisted

"Where are the shoes, Gerard? Tell us what you did with them."

I stood up at the table then, my mouth stuffed with lemon meringue pie. I shoved the chair back and blurted out as they gasped:

"I gave them to Leonard."

My uncle was on top of me at that instant.

"Boy," he said hoarsely. He grabbed my arm, held it tight. "Boy we reached the limit."

After he strapped me in the garage, he dragged me with him to the Rothermans' front door. He was sweating, his face splotched red-white, his hair pasted low on his forehead, the belt still in his hand.

Mr. Rotherman answered the door. He looked at us pleasantly and asked us to come in. He was as imperturbable as the handball

player had been when Ned Jackman attacked him. He seemed to see nothing.

"Sit down, won't you?"

My uncle, who was breathing heavily, did not move, but I stepped forward.

"Come back here, boy!" he commanded.

Then he caught Mr. Rotherman's sleeve; he held it while he spoke.

"This boy's got a pair of shoes. I beat him for it—he'll be beat worse if he does it again. Your boy's got the shoes. I want 'em."

"Leonard," Mr. Rotherman called.

Then my uncle said:

"He's got the shoes, black and white Schriners shoes. He's got this boy's sailboat. I don't know what else he's got. I want it all."

Mr. Rotherman, without trying to release himself, turned his head toward the stairway.

"Leonard," he said in an even voice. "Don't come down. I want you to hand me over the banister a sailboat and a pair of black and white shoes for Gerard."

Leonard came to the landing with them.

"Don't come farther, please," Mr. Rotherman said briskly.

Leonard handed the shoes and the boat to his father, without looking at us; my uncle let go Mr. Rotherman's sleeve.

"There you are," said Mr. Rotherman.

As I stood there I thought of movies in which suddenly the quiet-mannered, grey-templed man in the handsome room has a gun in his hand and is firing, firing, blasting what stands before him. I thought that when the shoes and boat were in my uncle's hands I would see Mr. Rotherman's hand dart into his pocket and then the room torn apart, torn wide—a tiny silver crackling revolver firing and blood running red across the rose carpet.

But he only said, "There you are" again. He opened the door for my uncle, and looked neither at him nor at me. I did not

move until my uncle turned about for me, and then I went slowly, knowing that I would not stand in this hall again.

The following term Leonard went off to a famous preparatory school in western Massachusetts; and in the spring, we moved to a neighboring town. The year before, I now know, my uncle had lost the house we lived in on Elderberry Court. He had arranged to rent it from the bank, but the rent finally proved to be beyond our means. We never moved back.

Fifteen years have passed since that day in the Rothermans' hall. I know nothing of Leonard's career. Twice I nearly met the elder Rotherman again, but these near meetings came eight or nine years after we had moved; once I heard from Leonard. On my terminal leave I became engaged and my aunt told me that if I had sense I would drop in at Rothermans' office on Madison Avenue and ask his help in stretching my dollars over "a decent stone." When I called him, he told me he was about to leave for the West Coast for a month, but that he would give a "paper of gems" to his assistant and that he was sure an arrangement satisfying to me could be made with this man. We did not speak of Leonard; he ended by congratulating me and wishing me good fortune.

Later that year I was in his office again, and again he was out. I had come up to see a literary agent, who occasionally handled articles that I wrote with another Washington reporter. The agent was enthusiastic about the story I outlined to him (it dealt with a "scandal" in the manufacture and distribution of prosthetic devices for disabled veterans), but his anteroom was crowded. He said that if I would bring him back a hundred words of an "opener," he would take it that afternoon to the editorial offices of the mass circulation magazine with which he had some connection.

I intended to rent a machine in the library, but when I came

out of the agent's building, I saw that directly across the street was the building in which Rotherman had his office. I went up, identified myself to his secretary, who was eating her lunch at her desk. I used Rotherman's own machine for a half hour . . .

I was in Washington when my fiance's mother wrote to ask for a list of those whom my family wanted to attend the reception. I jotted some names and sent them to my aunt, who I suppose concocted a list with an eye for the main chance. Leonard probably was at home no longer, and the announcement and the invitation were perhaps slow in reaching him. But in a month or two his present came: well mounted in a severe black frame, the print of the Fransche Kerk with the light blue border over the thin minarets in the white sky.

I found his card in the wrapping paper; "Cordially" was the single word scribbled over his name. It was overpowering—I nearly wept thinking of how we played together in the snow field that long ago. I told my wife I would write to him.

"You know you won't," she said. "You'll just put it off."

"No I won't."

"He ought to be thanked," she insisted. "It was sweet of him. I'll write a note and you can write too."

"No, I'll take care of it myself," I said.

We had nothing to do—it was a Saturday afternoon—so we went on arguing, happy for the chance to invent and elaborate our eccentricities: my wife's "morbid punctuality," my own "neurotic putting-off." Later I found the hammer and hung the print in the upstairs hall; after I finished I came downstairs, went directly to the desk, and began a note. Dear Leonard, I wrote—and then I thought for a while, and decided: better to let it go. In the evening my wife found the crumpled notepaper.

"You're impossible," she said in the extravagant tone of the afternoon argument. "Do you know that?"

"Give me time," I said. "I'll get better."

"I doubt it," my wife said. "I doubt it very much. You prob-

ably never did anything important on time in your whole life—till you married me.”

“I don’t know about that,” I answered. We kept at it longer than we had before, still amusing ourselves; but then finally it became tiresome. When I realized that we had worn it out, I changed the subject: we left Leonard and his present and the unwritten note behind, and went on to something else that I have completely forgotten.

Ray B. West, Jr.

PERSONAL HISTORY AND THE *FOUR QUARTETS*

TS. ELIOT'S *Four Quartets* has been seen as predominately a religious poem. This is not wholly true although religious concepts are at the center of it and religious imagery makes up a large part of the whole. It would be more exact to say that the philosophic concerns of our time, aesthetic and social, as well as religious stand at its center. One aspect of the work which has been neglected is the unusual amount of "personal history" which it incorporates. I say "neglected" because although it has not escaped observation, it has not been sufficiently considered in any of the discussions which I have seen.

To begin with, each of the four long poems is titled by a place name. The first, *Burnt Norton*, is an old house in Gloucestershire, known to the poet and providing the rose garden from which its central imagery, reflecting the present in terms of the past and the future, has been obtained. The second, *East Coker*, is the Somerset village from which the poet's ancestors emigrated to America. The third, *The Dry Salvages*, refers to three small islands off the coast of Cape Ann, in Massachusetts, where Eliot's forefathers settled; this section also contains an image of the Mississippi River in Missouri, where the poet grew up. The fourth, *Little Gidding*, refers to a village in Huntingdonshire, where Nicholas Ferrar retired, and to the Ferrar chapel, which has come down in history as a symbol of high-church Anglican devotion of the kind preferred by Eliot.

Thus there can be seen a kind of personal development—almost a tracing of self—from the present of "*Burnt Norton*," which is the most abstract of the four poems, but which appears to reflect a contemporary experience in a rose garden, back into

a memory of the past in "East Coker," progressing through memories of Eliot's own American background in "The Dry Salvages," up to a consideration of his personal resolution in "Little Gidding." Too much must not be made of this, it is true, for fear of diminishing the development of other themes in the poem. Personal history must not be seen as apart from these, but rather as an additional light to be shed upon them or, perhaps, as a means of holding them together in a dramatic framework, to provide a unified point of view. For instance, in the first poem there is the emphasis upon the problem of time—the moment when the poet's memory is confronted by a consideration of both the past and the future. In the second the problem is mostly spatial—the changing landscape of the native village, the rising and falling of houses, the disappearance of eminent men, the shifting panorama of dancers who disappear under a hill. The third, while it progresses in personal time, moves backward in general time. Eliot's forebears moved from East Coker to Massachusetts, and then to Missouri, but in moving into a more primitive natural scene, they moved backwards in racial time. The time here is not measured by modern means, but by the ground-swell of the earth itself; man is still more subject to the "strong brown god"—the pagan god of the river. It is the story of a history that is not "mere sequence," but has a pattern of its own. The knowledge here is of a primitive relationship with nature which still exists in the present. The third presents Little Gidding (the Church), but not as an absolute solution:

There are other places
Which also are the world's end; some at the sea's jaws,
Or over a dark lake, in a desert of a city—
But this is the nearest, in place and time,
Now and in England.

But the church is, for the poet, the nearest, in this place and this time, now and in England.

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The construction of this long poem is intricate and formal, but it is not modeled upon any particular tradition. It is probably the most personal of all Eliot's poetry. Its metrical form is, as Miss Helen Gardner has pointed out, less dependent upon earlier English forms than are such poems as "Prufrock" and *The Waste Land*. It reflects the idiom of the present more than it does a traditional "poetic" diction, and thus seems to reflect the achievement of the kind of language which Eliot meditated in his *The Music of Poetry* in 1942:

I believe that any language, so long as it remains the same language, imposes its laws and restrictions and permits its own licence, dictates its own speech rhythms and sound patterns. And a language is always changing; its development in vocabulary, in syntax, pronunciation and intonation—even in the long run, its deterioration—must be accepted by the poet and made the best of. He in turn has the privilege of contributing to the development and maintaining the quality, the capacity of the language to express a wide range, the subtle gradation of feeling and emotion; his task is both to respond to change and make it conscious, and to battle against degradation below the standards which he has learnt from the past.

As Miss Gardner states it: "Mr. Eliot approaches the problem of how the greatest thoughts can be expressed naturally, that is with the ring of the living voice, by concentrating on the problem of how we may 'call a servant or bid a door be shut.' If we can discover a poetic rhythm in the most commonplace speech, this rhythm may then be capable of refinement and elevation so that it may accomodate the greatest thoughts without losing naturalness." Eliot considers the problem again in the fifth section of "East Coker," where he says:

So here I am, in the middle way, having had twenty years—
Twenty years largely wasted, the years of *l'entre deux guerres*—
Trying to learn to use words, and every attempt

Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure
 Because one has only learnt to get the better of words
 For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which
 One is no longer disposed to say it. And so each venture
 Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate
 With shabby equipment always deteriorating
 In the general mass of imprecision of feeling,
 Undisciplined squads of emotion. And what there is to conquer
 By strength and submission, has already been discovered
 Once or twice, or several times, by men whom one cannot hope
 To emulate—but there is no competition—
 There is only the fight to recover what has been lost
 And found and lost again and again: and now, under conditions
 That seem unpropitious. But perhaps neither gain nor loss.
 For us there is only the trying. The rest is not our business.

There is a greater regularity and a greater precision in the *Four Quartets* than there was in the earlier poems, but the thematic musical method of *The Waste Land* has not been discarded. The symbolic use of lines from poems in older traditions is still utilized, though less obtrusively. The whole poem is still bound together by central themes which are modified and developed as the poem progresses. I have suggested the historical, chronological development, against which is counterpointed the concerns with Time, Space, Nature, and the Church. It has also been pointed out that each of the four poems is concerned with one of the four elements of tradition: *air* in "Burnt Norton," *earth* in "East Coker," *water* in "The Dry Salvages," and *fire* in "Little Gidding." There is also the circular pattern, which is the pattern of music—the return to the point of departure—to the initial statement. As Eliot stated it in "Little Gidding":

We shall not cease from exploration
 And the end of our exploring
 Will be to arrive where we started
 And know the place for the first time.

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Adopting our chronological—historical—interpretation, we can here suggest that Eliot has reversed the journey made by his forebears from England to America. In an aesthetic sense, this parallels the unending struggle of the artist to control experience, which is always new experience, but which always brings us back to the old problems. Ideologically, though the terms change and demand our attention, they are seen finally as a restatement of ideas ever-present but ever incapable of a final solution. Eliot prefaces the *Four Quartets* with epigraphs taken from an older literature, as he does most of his poems, and the author in this case is Heracleitus. The first quotation, in translation, reads: "But though the Word is common, the many live as though they have a wisdom of their own"; the second: "The road up and down is one and the same."

The second quotation is most pertinent to our purpose. It can be seen in the ambiguity of Eliot's paradoxes, and may be stated somewhat as follows: Though what the poet says about experience is true, it is also not-true; and the not-true is as true as experience. Such a view represents neither perversity nor pragmatism in the poet. It represents, rather, a recognition of the impossibility of ever achieving a final and absolute truth; it represents a scepticism similar to that of a Melville or a James. On the level of objective experience, it might be stated in terms of the poem as saying: Although T. S. Eliot's grandparents left England for America, they were destined to return, for their grandson returned. The statement that they returned is true, but it is also not-true; yet the phrase that they returned, which is not-true, is as true as the actual experience. Such an experience—and such an attitude toward that experience—projects us onto another level of consideration, more abstract, but still tied to the concrete image: One may be confined by time and by space, yet symbolically unconfined. If the symbolic reference is abstract enough and undefined, we have an ideological resolution of the paradox,

as we had in Emerson, where the Over-Soul was indefinite and inexhaustible, therefore capable of resolving all contradictions. But Eliot was not satisfied with such a resolution. In terms of his figure, the resolution is still represented in a concrete image, the image of the poet himself who retraced his elders' journey; therefore, the attempt at resolution is bound to fail—except in degree: the poet returned and he did not return. *Four Quartets* is a study of the degree in which the poet represents the return, as well as of the degree in which he does not. The impossible resolution, Eliot defines as “the still point,” which is a point in time as well as in space:

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from
nor towards,
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.
I can only say, *there* we have been: but I cannot say where.
And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time.
The inner freedom from the practical desire,
The release from action and suffering, release from the inner
And the outer compulsion, yet surrounded
By a grace of sense, a white light still and moving,
Erhebung without motion, concentration
Without elimination, both a new world
And the old made explicit, understood
In the completion of its partial ecstasy,
The resolution of its partial horror.
Yet the enchainment of past and future
Woven in the weakness of the changing body,
Protects mankind from heaven and damnation
Which flesh cannot endure.

The experience of “Burnt Norton,” the first of the four poems, represents both an actual experience, a walk from a house into a garden, and it represents an intellectual experience in relating

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objects of the house and garden into a pattern of images concerned with the problem of Time: the passage-way leading to the garden, the door, the singing of birds in the garden, the rustle of dry leaves, the drained pool, the hidden voices of laughing children. The metaphysical problem concerns the meaning of time, "Time past and time future." "To be conscious," the poet says, "is not to be in time":

But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,
The moment in the arbour where the rain beat,
The moment in the draughty church at smokefall
Be remembered; involved with past and future.
Only through time time is conquered.

To put it another way, only through his involvement with actual facts—and facts in time are historical facts—does man prevent the descent "into a world of perpetual solitude." The image of the children is an attempt at definition. The children are hidden, except for their laughter, which comes from the foliage. They will reveal themselves only when there is a past and a future, a memory and a hope, "Caught," as Eliot says, "in the form of limitation/Between un-being and being." The movement is toward form, toward association in human form, and toward the final goal of love:

The detail of the pattern is movement,
As in the figure of the ten stairs.
Desire itself is movement
Not in itself desirable;
Love is itself unmoving,
Only the cause and end of movement. . .

"East Coker" opens with a portrayal of change: "Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended/Are removed, destroyed, restored, or in their place/Is an open field, or a factory, or a by-pass." The poem begins with a statement, which is a reversal of the motto on Mary Stuart's chair of state, which the poet makes

to read: "In my beginning is my end."¹ It is the meditation of the poet, who has reached middle-age and is now ruminating upon his beginnings in this village where his ancestors once lived. As he says:

The knowledge imposes a pattern, and falsifies,
For the pattern is new in every moment
And every moment is a new and shocking
Valuation of all we have been. •

The tone of this section is affected by the subject of decay—its mood somber and concerned with thoughts of death:

O dark dark dark. They all go into the dark,
The vacant interstellar spaces, the vacant into the vacant,
The captains, merchant bankers, eminent men of letters,
The generous patron of art, the statesmen and the rulers,
Distinguished civil servants, chairmen of many committees,
Industrial lords and petty contractors, all go into the dark. . .

The speaker admonishes himself to wait without hope, "For hope would be hope of the wrong thing," to wait without love, "For love would be love of the wrong thing." Yet, he says, there is faith; "But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting." "As we grow older," he says, "The world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated/Of dead and living." The laughter in the garden, which he remembers, echoed ecstasy, but it pointed to the agony of birth and death:

Our only health is the disease
If we obey the dying nurse
Whose constant care is not to please
But to remind of our, and Adam's curse,
And that, to be restored, our sickness must grow worse.

The end of the poem affirms the restlessness which took his forebears away from East Coker, for "We must be still and still moving/Into another intensity/For a further union, a deeper com-

¹ This section ends with the original motto: "In my end is my beginning."

munion/Through the dark cold and the empty desolation,/The
wave cry, the wind cry, the vast waters/Of the petrel and the
porpoise."

"The Dry Salvages," the third poem, concerns itself with an examination of that other "intensity," which is upon our special level the movement to America. America, however, becomes a symbol for a further journey, the investigation of a still deeper past—the past of primitive forces and our early nearness to nature. While it is concerned with this past partly in terms of modern psychological theory, the poet does not fall into the error of that modern thought which examines the past only in order to disown it, to show how man has evolved—has progressed. He says:

It seems, as one becomes older,
That the past has another pattern, and ceases to be
a mere sequence—
Or even development; the latter a partial fallacy
Encouraged by superficial notions of evolution,
Which becomes, in the popular mind, a means of
disowning the past. . . .

I have said before
That the past experience revived in the meaning
Is not the experience of one life only
But of many generations—not forgetting
Something that is probably quite ineffable:
The backward look behind the assurance
Of recorded history, the backward half-look
Over the shoulder, towards the primitive terror.

We are concerned now with a time that is half-magical: the river as "a strong brown god," "Keeping his seasons and rages, destroyer, reminder/Of what men choose to forget." The rhythm of the river Eliot remembers as being present in the nursery bedroom, where it was felt probably with more intensity than by the "dwellers in cities," who believed they had tamed the god with their bridges and barges and dikes.

The river and the sea are to him reminders of an earlier creation, just as they were to Melville. "The river is within us, the sea is all about us." The river's blind force recalls the primitive urges, the uninhibited libido, the unconscious natural man which still exists within modern man; the sea encloses him and defines him in terms of his earliest history, containing in itself reminders of that time in the forms of primitive life which it still contains. The time of the sea is the time of the buoy-bell of the treacherous rocks, which rings not only with the rhythm of the sea, but with a rhythm of the groundswell of the earth itself. Such concepts carry us back to the poems preceding *The Waste Land*, where Eliot considered the relationship between pre-history and history, such images as "Christ the tiger," in "Geron-tian," or the relationship of ancient ritual to modern Christian belief. They also carry us forward into the relationship of psychology and belief in such later works as *The Family Reunion* and *The Cocktail Party*.

Again, Eliot affirms the urge which causes man to travel—to explore as his ancestors were part of the exploration of a new continent. He repeats the advice of Krishna to Arjuna on the field of battle. It is not, he says, "farewell,/But fare forward, voyagers." He then offers a prayer to an image of the Virgin, which stands on the promontory, to all those whose business has to do with the sea—a sea which like Captain Ahab's is not only the actual sea, but the mythical sea of historic memory. It is the sea in which man is bound to venture, but doomed also to destruction. As Eliot expresses it:

. . . right action is freedom
 From past and future also.
 But for most of us, this is the aim
 Never here to be realized;
 Who are only undefeated
 Because we have gone on trying.

Or, as he had stated it a few lines earlier:

But to apprehend
The point of intersection of the timeless
With time, is an occupation for the saint—
No occupation either, but something given
And taken, in a lifetime's death in love,
Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender.

Only the saint engages in "right action" and is freed from past and future, and this finally is no action, for it is something which comes of itself as a result of the qualities of love, ardour, selflessness, and self-surrender. These are the conditions of sainthood, but neither the poet nor his ancestors were saints; he is involved in history, racial and personal, and it is only in time that the proper definition can be achieved.

The final poem "Little Gidding" is a return to the present of Eliot's own conversion to Anglo-catholicism, which I suggested earlier represents not necessarily a complete solution to the problem of the poet's self-definition within the corpus of modern life, but, as the poem states it, "the nearest in place and time,/Now and in England." "Here, the intersection of the timeless moment/Is England and nowhere. Never and always." "If you came this way," the poet tells us:

Taking any route, starting from anywhere,
At any time or at any season,
It would always be the same: you would have to put off
Sense and notion. You are not here to verify,
Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity
Or carry report. You are here to kneel
Where prayer has been valid. And the prayer is more
Than an order of words, the conscious occupation
Of the praying mind, or the sound of the voice praying.
And what the dead had no speech for, when living,
They can tell you, being dead: the communication
Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of
the living.

The specific "here" is the Nicholas Ferrar chapel at Little Gidding. "Little Gidding," as Miss Helen Gardner describes it, "is a place of dedication, to which people came with a purpose. It was not the ancestral home of the Ferrars, but a house which old Mrs. Ferrar had bought and to which the family retired during the plague of 1625. In the next year Nicholas Ferrar 'grew to a full resolution and determination of that thing and course of life he had so often wished for and longingly desired. And that week before Whitsunday gave himself to a very private retirement, both in his thoughts and in his person, and was observed to fast much, eate sparingly and sleep little, and on Whitsun Eve he was up all night in his study.' On trinity Sunday he went with his tutor to see Laud, and was ordained deacon, refusing all his life to proceed to the priesthood, and returned to Little Gidding to share his goods with his family and lead that life of ordered devotion and good works which made this remote Huntingdonshire village famous throughout England." For the Anglican Church, Miss Gardner says, "Little Gidding remains 'a symbol perfected in death.' " For Eliot, I suspect, it remains a symbol of the particular kind of Anglican worship which he prefers, for Nicholas Ferrar, was a high-church Anglican, and the chapel at Little Gidding represented the nearest a good Anglican could come to re-establishing the ceremonial forms frowned upon by many worshippers in the Church of England of the Seventeenth Century.

With this view we are confronted with an additional irony contained in the motto beginning and ending "East Coker": "In my beginning is my end," "In my end is my beginning." The dissent of the poet's ancestors represented a first step away from High-ceremonial church observance, but this first step was also, paradoxically, the first step toward a return. What does this mean beyond the statement of Heracleitus that "The road up and down is one and the same?" There is no answer except the fact

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of the return, "So, while the light fails/On a winter afternoon,
in a secluded chapel/History is now and England."

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

There are many things which could be said about this poem in order to approach a complete reading, and many of them have been said elsewhere. What is important to us here is how the poet has managed to combine these elements of personal experience and personal history with the general theme of a possible existence where time and space intersect and become a world unlimited by either time or space. It is important, too, to see how such paradoxes are resolved; or, rather, the degree to which Eliot admits a solution. For the poet, the hidden children represent a hint of the future, and the poet, himself, who is the child of his voyaging ancestors, represents also the future; the long river is both the voyage of the ancestors and the long voyage backward into historical and racial memory:

At the source of the longest river
The voice of the hidden waterfall
And the children in the apple-tree
Not known, because not looked for
But heard, half heard, in the stillness
Between the two waves of the sea.

The waterfall, which is the source of the river, is heard but is hidden; the children in the apple-tree are but half-heard in the stillness between moments filled with distracting sounds. The important time is "here, now":

Quick now, here, now, always—
A condition of complete simplicity
(Costing not less than everything)
And all shall be well and

All manner of thing shall be well
 When the tongues of flame are in-folded
 Into the crowned knot of fire
 And the fire and the rose are one.

There is a note here of what a psychologically-inclined reader might term "guilt" toward a parent betrayed by the child, but in another sense, such "guilt" may be seen only as a recognition of responsibility to history. And history is Heracleitus as well as religious dissent. What appears to be a simple note of hope at the end of the poem, in the lines "And all shall be well and/All manner of thing shall be well," becomes finally a statement of the need of faith and love in the developed imagery of "the fire" and "the rose."

Even so, such an ending may strike some readers as unnecessarily inconclusive and unjustified, but Eliot does not attempt a complete reconciliation or resolution. Imbedded in the poem are the contrasts between a world which looks only into the future and one which might conceivably look only to the past. T. S. Eliot does not accept either extreme: "The word [is] neither diffident nor ostentatious." It is not an "easy commerce of the old and the new." It is "The common word exact without vulgarity,/ The formal word precise but not pedantic." Exactly where the point is—"the still point," as he calls it—we shall never know in a history or a life-time, but the experience of life, and the experience of the poem, is to narrow the field of possibility, to assist in the definition.

David R. Bunch

THE MAN WHO LICKED THE CONDITION

HE DIDN'T look like off-the-rocker. In fact he looked right smart with his big white hat and the scarlet silk bandanna and the straw-work shoes and the golf knickers, with his cigar fired up there in that country-town yard.

"How's it going?" I asked as I strolled by on my way to church that bright Sunday, the big worries of me and the world like tall spikes in my head as usual. He whirled, with all those little crow's-feet of concern ribbing out from his eyes and across his face like relief maps show deltas. And yet, it wasn't a beaten face. Somehow it looked resourceful. "Fine," he said, "I think I've got enough now to last through till evenin'." "That's good," I said, although I didn't know what I was that's-gooding exactly, but I decided to play along. "What happens during the morning and the afternoon?"

He stared at me with sharp accepting eyes. He clutched down the milk-white hat and pumped a gnat off it with a swift little kick of a finger. "For the mornin' and the afternoon," he stated, "I've got a whole hatful of peace—if something doesn't befall the worry." He glanced into the hat and then jauntily tossed it back to his head as any self-satisfied self-sufficient gent might do.

"I was just heading for church," I said, apropos of nothing, except that the silence got heavy. "Car stalled in this little burg last night, so thought I'd go since it's Sunday. I'm not fit to step inside one, but I go anyway." I laughed apologetically.

He brought those two dark little rifle muzzles that were his eyes to bear on me. "Mister, if you can find it there," he said, "I'm for you—for you, all of one hundred percent. I just happen to do it different."

I sat on a stump beside the street and mopped my head as the June sun came on heavy. And I watched the man with the hat—church forgotten. He was rigging a thing from two trees. "This is the best one I've hit on for quite some little time," he exulted. "It's got everything, far as I can make out, to last through the afternoon. What direction you figure the wind is?"

"South," I said mopping some more, "and not much either."

"Fine," he said, "that makes it better. So I'll just cant this a little and widen the wind vane." And I saw the butcher knife.

"Good God, man!" I said, "that's a butcher knife."

"Didn't call it a pitchfork," said the man with the white hat, letting a gold tooth show, absently pulling a moustache. Then he did a popeyed breath in-draw and raced for his notebook. "Say! That's it!" he yipped. "What I've just thought of sets me up for tomorrow if this holds till evenin', or for rest of today if this breaks. I can rig a good one." Then he eyed me with a business look. "Got a pitchfork you ain't usin', Mister?" I dug in my pockets as sort of an absent reflex, thinking, he'd asked me for I don't know what. Then I came to, even in the heat of June. "What!?" I yelled. "Just lookin' around for a pitchfork to buy," he said, calm as cold ketchup. "You came to the wrong barn, buddy," I said with the merest little trace of testy-in-the-voice. "What in God's name you take me for? A peanut stacker?"

"Didn't take you for anything. Just asked you." I saw we could quarrel all right.

He went ahead rigging that whatever-it-was, and I watched as though I'd surprised the devil taking his bath on Sunday. What fascinated me was the way he suspended that big knobby cow pumpkin right over a purple beach-chair. "Too old for pies," he said, gesturing at the pumpkin. "Kept down in the basement all winter, but the mice chawed in durin' April. So I'm usin' it for the easy stone." Then he canted the wind vane more and lashed the knife to a rod. "Honed the edge a little," he said, "in pre-occupation before bedtime. But I don't have to worry about

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night much. Takes care of itself. Just the days." And he heaved a half sigh, a half gasp. "The days are what weary us all," and he whirled those muzzles at me. "Mind you, I didn't say worry," he said, and he hit a fast smack to the palm, sounding like a report on the day of the Declaration. "I said weary."

"I noted," I said. "You're tired."

"No," he whined. "Not that. I'm fine. But there's a general weariness of the condition. But I've licked it." I eyed the pumpkin and thought maybe he had at that. People in the nuthouse places had licked it too, I'd heard in roundabout ways. Some thought they were God, so they didn't worry much. Some thought they were things like ice cream cones and little red love couches, and that took a whopping load off the human condition, I felt sure. I always thought when I went I'd like to be a house of sin, just for the laughs and the way I've lived from one to the other and up to meetings on Sunday. Not that I aimed to go crazy until my time came. This jasper dressed like a cowboy from the collar-bone up, and like a golfer from the belly-button down, undoubtedly was already there and thought he was going to bake some pies, with the wind doing the dicing.

"You a family man?" I asked.

The black holes lunged at me until I felt out of comfort. "Reckon we're all family men," he rasped finally, all jauntiness gone from his speech. "But if you mean am I a married family man—which I guess you do—well certainly, I tried it once." He shook his head slowly in wide arcs for half a minute or more. I thought he looked something like a pendulum turned upside down. "I didn't have to make worries then out of pumpkins," he finished dolefully.

"Sorry I brought it up," I said. "My old lady ran off to be divorced five years ago and took what kids we'd made, to draw the support. I've lived in sin always before and always since, what time I wasn't hard at the sweat so I could eat and make the support. God, the jobs I've had.—What goes with the pumpkin?"

He turned the black holes loose of me and directed them on the rotting yellow fruit. "Just sit on your stump, Sonnyboy. Or go on to church. Time will tell." Then he sat in the purple beach-chair and seemed almost like some jaunty god of detachment, marked up with contentment's little crow's-feet. He puffed at the big cigar, pulled off the pure-white hat, and the decomposing cow pumpkin jig-floated scarcely a foot above his shining hairless noggin. It was as though he were drinking a long drag of very good champagne, his comfort was that much in evidence. He had forsaken me I could tell. He was living on thoughts of the pumpkin. I watched hard.

After about ten minutes of sitting there on the stump, wiping sweat, hearing radios across the street break sermons to tell that world news was generally worse with small chance for better, and watching the man in the beach-chair, I saw what was going to happen. Every time the wind varied a bit toward east the butcher knife whammed over to cut some fibers of the rope holding the pumpkin. I jumped up in alarm. Being crazy was all right for him. But for me this was Sunday. Love thy neighbor . . . "Man," I shrieked, "that pumpkin!"

He came out of the champagne places. "I'm on it," he said, "I know just how it's farin'. It may last the day. If not, I'll have to rig another to comfort me." He laughed as though he might have been the mouse who first introduced cheese.

That self-satisfied snicker sort of got me, and I pulled at the sparse gray hairs, the way I'm always doing when old agitation has me. "Mister," I yelled, "it's Sunday. And if you've got a recipe for that self-satisfied style of sitting, you'd better let me hear. Because I'll remember your address, and I'm the devil's own sonny-bastard when I roll on Monday."

But just then the wind swung sharply through east toward north, and the pumpkin came down. It covered my new-found chum with yellow smear and flat seeds. He got up laughing. "So

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I'll have to rig another," he said in that way that left me out in the dark.

"How about the recipe?" I shrilled, fixed for the show-down.

He sobered and brought the dark spots around, and they seemed kind of benevolent pointed there amongst the little gray crow's-feet of concern. "Recipe?" he asked incredulously. "Mister, do I look like a man who followed a recipe?" Then he shifted the piercing eyes and stared silently past me, past the empty dangling rope and clear out of his yard for a heavy moment. But soon he was laughing again, jumping in the air, doing frisky dances. "No recipe," he yipped. "Never!—But excuse me. I go now to fix for easy fryin' under pitchfork rigs that could, with a wind change, explode bladders of ice juice.—Thanks for the visit. Will I see you again, maybe? When do you think I could start expecting you?"

POET SIGNATURE

Bobb Davis

THE ZONE of Mr. Davis' myth lies between the known and the unknowable. He juggles ambiguities of time and circumstance to capture with the circumspection of the visual symbols of ballet the evasive textures of event and meaning. His landscapes are seen "As passing carlights pan/ square journeys through black/ treelimbs across a silver screen." The swiftness of his movement—in its kaleidoscopic techniques sometimes suggestive of Hart Crane—catches up present and past in a single continuity, like the recognitions and reflections upon the Spenserian girl of the Gothic library; it suggests in its temporal flux that "Ever since Cain killed his brother/ love has been perilous." Event is timeless, and transpires in a setting that denies the fixity of locale.

The structure of the verse reinforces this central impulse. Without violating a fine sense of form, Mr. Davis fashions his poetic line for the same sense of movement, of pace, to give to the line a balance between motion and stillness that equates with the statement and tonality of his poems. Thus he eludes the threat of discreteness, of the achieved parts' breaking down the unity and tension of the poem, on the one hand, and on the other he manages—at least most of the time—to avoid that haze of evocation in which structure and communication are diffused, and the poem turns gaseous. In the area which he has chosen, it is no mean achievement. The temptations are large.

Much of his statement is of necessity complex. Mr. Davis acknowledges a debt to the surrealists, and one might infer a kindred indebtedness to the metaphysicals. He integrates these influences, however, as in one or another phase of his work he has integrated such diverse elements as Plato's cave, and Moses, and Milton—integrates them into a personal idiom, a personal statement.

The ultimate declaration of his present poetic position, I believe, is to be found in the fine "Elegy": "And it is as Zeno said,/ from the dark to the dark,/ from the deep to the deep,/ although the whole world is dead/ No arrow has reached its mark." Mr. Davis has perhaps not fully reached his own mark; there is room within the framework of his present work for a fuller definition of position, a more complete synthesis of symbol and intent. That is not, however, a limitation in the work or the writer, but a measure of the dimension of his poetic intent.—J.D.H.

ELEGY

As the hours ripen,
as plover whimper and the aimed
wedge of wild geese passes between
stars, I feel my footprints deepen
above the flower frozen in the seed,
above the animal coiled in stone,
by entrances and exits where neon
arrows leap in their doorward love.

I flew a bridge of sleep.
I walked all night.
I dreamed you held me in your arms
and held me in your arms although
worlds ended, and it was all right.

And I was rich with fever,
strange with cold and rich and strange
dreaming of those two
dreaming their folded dream
under one robe. Sleep
mingled their bodies
and in the exchange
one became as beautiful
as the other was wise
and strange.

In Scorpio's sky
I make my wish
upon the red star.
I have this to say
in memory of a warrior,
and I am fixed
in my memory of him as the weathervane
on the broken roof is fixed in possible error,
but as dead cornstalks point
which way the wind went,
I point and I am silent.

For death has discovered the air.
The bird born in the mind
falls to the mind's snare.
The bullet-clasped hands bleed,
the hot lead flies and sings,
the body breaks, and over it
the cold, earth-shafted cross
spreads its wax wings.

And it is as Zeno said,
from the dark to the dark,
from the deep to the deep,
although the whole world is dead

No arrow has reached its mark.

BALLET FOR THE GARDEN
OF PROSERPINE

*At Hammel in Saxony, on the 20th of
June, 1484, the Devil, in the likeness of
a pied piper, carried away 130 children,
that were never after seen.*

—Anatomy of Melancholy

Said the ballerina this
applause kisses us to the world,
the music leads beyond Wagnerian
firelight to a girl whose sleep is
plated against leap and pause.

As passing carlights pan
square journeys through black
treelimb across a silver screen
until they smash against a wall
and vanish and are born again,

smoke drifts across train
windows smudging the yellow frame's
unfaded square of faded wallpaper,
a pupil forming faces until it blurs
in the classic stare of motion.

There an Impressionist girl
hangs beneath a light . . . a blue
forehead's spangled bruise
melts as you pull a loose
string, unwinding her in a whirl.

Or reach for her and see
the mould of an absolute face
held for a light: you see the red
mouth catches from the cigarette
and burns down the white body,

and this cause for alarm
wakes into nightmare where the teeth
of hunger lock the body of their
prisoner in his own image.
The skin cannot break

shedding the man, the six seeds
rot in the backwash of flesh,
and the happy fingers of an idiot
pipe a dream in the pied air:
He loves me and he loves me not.

STILL-LIFE AT FOUR

Nessun maggior dolore . . .

Shadows breaking from their roots
floated in the free
form sleep; the full
moon idled in the curve
of ivied arch and cobbled sea,
and the clock's bad plumbing
drowned that day
we visited Roger's Italy.

When lovers
reminded of something
walked in the windy tuning of trees,
and you arranged
blue teacups,
two small, red-handled spoons,
and cinnamon toast,
and in answer to my unasked question said

Beauty should belong .
to those who love it most.

POET SIGNATURE

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We were not sure.
My smile trembled and your hand shook
ending in the rattle of a teacup.

I was remembering Guinivere;
you were remembering Lancelot.
And in that book
we read no more.

Confusion found our text.
Hell could not join us
nor separate what each
learned from the other:

Ever since Cain killed his brother
love has been perilous;
love has been perilous beyond belief,
has perished at the drop of a handkerchief.

NOCTURNE FOR AN OLD,
BAD ACTOR

In the movies it would have been
an anxious look above a mask, and then
a grave shake of the head.
How did I know you were dead?
I heard far music coming near
and saw the light fade down an empty corridor

Now close the door and lock it.
The nervous candle jiggles in its socket,
the four directions of being burn
and night comes as physically as a nocturne.
Darkness is absorbed in every sense
by every audience.

Admit me to my sorrow, it is not sad;
not for Lear, hundreds of times dead,
not for the clay impetus and decay of feet,
not for Hamlet in the subterranean street.
The shabby drunkenness was play,
the death was mockery.

Change with your bells;
ultimately all our little Knells
will rise and bow
holding Ophelia's flowers to the noble brow
and doing a mad and made-up dance
to hide the bullet's broken entrance.

I A M S O R R Y F O R T H E D A Y

I am sorry for the day
the dinosaur died and for
Troy's burning, but my pity
is limited by my power.

I cannot rescue these
melodramatic children from fire
nor from mysterious disease;
I string stones on a wire

where nothing is physical,
where the eye is a mad burrow
and the voice in the shell
reflects the evidence of error.

I am sorry for excess
of body and for the blind
destruction of it and I confess
to anxiety for excess of mind.

POEM FOR GREEN EYES

Almost as if I had known
beforehand where to look
I saw those eyes again
and they were gray and green,
the color of a leaf
pressed in a book.

Come to the Gothic library,
sit in the muted chair,
slashed arms, rolled
cuffs embroidered with gold
dragons, Una's eternal knight
will find you there

pitted in a white horse,
riding a trojan mare.
After the rage and fall
Blue Danube and enchanted animal
whirl in the wedding of
indirection with desire.

Scream with the wind, burn
all you have built;
the eye informs and the illegal
sentence locks the cell.
The days diminish as these leaves,
all edges guilt.

ART FEATURE

Clifford Wright

BORN of Finnish parents in Aberdeen, Washington, 1919. Began an art study in high school in Seattle, then with Walter Reese, finally with Mark Tobey from 1939 to 1943. Worked for three and one-half years as general assistant at the Seattle Art Museum, where he had his first one-man show in 1945. Lectured occasionally. Went to New York in 1946 as gallery assistant. For the past five years has been assistant to the Director of Yaddo. Samples of his work, plus comment, have appeared in *Interim*, *Magazine of Art*, *Life*, et al. Represented in such shows as the Whitney Annual Watercolor and Drawing (1948), Group of Six (Weyhe Gallery, 1949), New Talent (1949), Drawing (Delius Gallery, 1950), Brooklyn Museum International Watercolor Show (1951). Most recent one-man show: Bennington College (1953).



R U N N I N G C H I L D .



ACROBATS. 1949. *Collection of Harry Forzyne.*

THE BATTLE OF THE ANIMALS.





MAN WITH
BLUE DOG.



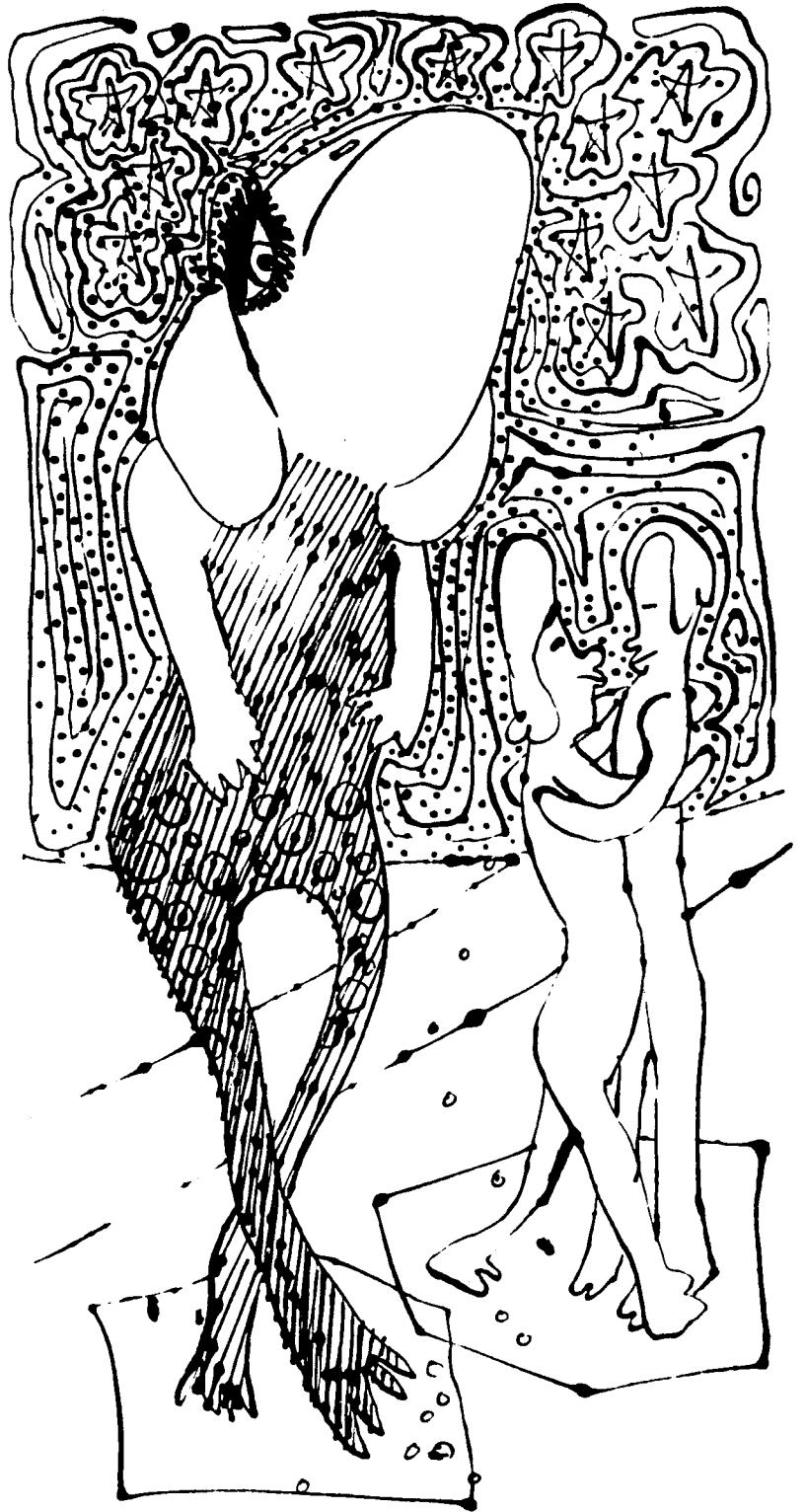
SOLDIER.





LA FONTAINE IN CENTRAL PARK. 1918.

THE PHILOSOPHER.



Wesley Ford Davis

A PINEY WOODS IDYLL

THOMAS JACKSON Jarred slipped to the ground, and reaching up he pulled the croquer sack of fresh field peas off the mule's rump, and still without checking the speed of the team old Uncle June said, "Goodbye, Mist' Tom," and Tom lifted a hand in farewell. He watched the negro swing the eight-foot whip and the high-wheeled log cart creak and swing away toward the sawmill, the lash exploding like a rifle shot by the lead mule's ear.

Little Buck Williams came dodging through the clumps of palmettoes, pushing an automobile tire as tall as himself, and piping, "What you got in that sack, Thomas Jackson Jar'd?"

"Old Bloody-Bones, boy. Maybe I'll put you in the sack with him."

Little Buck gave the sack a kick with his bare foot. "Just more goddam blackeyed peas. I hope you don't give my Mama any more of them things. I can't stay in the house with them things cooking. The way they smell."

"Say, Little Buck, have you seen Andrew Jackson?"

Little Buck pointed toward the boardinghouse. "He's in the big house. Stuck in there. Where he stays all the time since he got salvation."

Tom gave the tire a great push along one of the maze of foot-paths. "Catch that, boy," he said. Little Buck went streaking after the tire.

The sawmill whistle blew for quitting time as Tom hurried along the west side of the big house, the camp boardinghouse kept by his Uncle Seab and his Aunt Sallie. Throwing down the sack of peas he dropped to his hands and knees. Under the house the white sand stretched out bare and wavy like a picture of a windblown lake. The tiny sawmill under the middle of the house

was buried almost out of sight. Apparently Andrew had not worked at sawmilling for several days.

Tom crawled under the front porch to where the sand was dotted with green field peas which had fallen through the cracks overhead. Where the peas were thickest he saw the marks of Andrew's body where he lay and listened to the women talk while they shelled peas. And where his hand had smoothed the sand, scratched in big block capitals, were the words: SAVES JESUS AMIE LOU IN THE BEGINN....

The wind on the sand had blurred part of the writing.

A week ago, on Saturday afternoon, Tom had got home early and had found Andrew under the porch, writing in the sand, listening to the women talk. They talked of the meeting and of Brother Mims Cruddup and his lovely sister Amie Lou. Tom had demanded in a harsh whisper, "What are you doing under here, trying to see up the women's dresses?"

Andrew put a finger to his pursed lips while overhead the peas tap-tapped into the tin pans and the talk rose and fell steady as bees in a swarm.

"I got saved last Tuesday, Tom," Andrew whispered, "And baptized Wednesday, down at the creek."

Tom stared at his little brother.

"I have been *born again*, Tom, and washed in the blood of the Lamb. When I come up out of the water, Tom, Sister Amie Lou wrapped a blanket around me and held me in her arms. She said I should never think of anything but the Lord and his work. I never felt so good before, Tom."

Tom continued to stare into his brother's thin solemn face. None of the excitement of his speech was reflected in his pale pinched features. Tom could think of nothing to say. He checked a sudden urge to take hold of Andrew and shake him. Then he remembered their plans for tomorrow.

"Come on, Andy, let's go feed Tom Jeff and I'll tell you what we're going to do tomorrow."

"I've got to go to the meeting tomorrow, Tom. It's *all day* tomorrow. Preaching and singing and dinner on the ground."

His head swelled and throbbed with a sudden black hatred for his brother. His hands moved toward Andrew's head to take him by the hair and shake some sense into him. But again he checked himself. He couldn't hate Andrew. Since their father's death and their mother's illness, *he* had looked after Andrew.

The next day, Sunday, with Tom Jeff, the three-legged bobcat, on a leash, and a hatred for Sister Amie Lou swelling inside him, Tom started out before daybreak to make the trip across the Econlochatchet River into the virgin pine woods, which stretched unbroken still southward to the Everglades. By the time it was light enough to see he had calmed himself sufficiently so as to be able to look for birds. He tramped through the tall timber all day, looking for an ivory-billed woodpecker. Since the teacher gave him the birdbook two years before, he and Andrew had observed every bird listed for the region except the ivory-bill. The ivory-bill was all but extinct.

It was long past dark when he got home, but Andrew and Aunt Sallie were still at the meeting. Sometimes the meetings lasted 'til midnight.

So Andrew had spent another Saturday afternoon under the porch listening to the women talk of the preacher's message and his lovely sister Amie Lou who sang like one of the heavenly host. Tom examined the words in the sand more closely. They were fresh all right—today's. He felt sick and helpless. He clenched his fist and thrust it against the name of Amie Lou. With a savage sweep of his hand he destroyed the words. And in their place he saw the words of the note.

On Monday morning when he had left home before daybreak to go to his week's work, he had left the note in Andrew's pocket, along with some money. He had taken great care in writing the note. Word for word he spelled it out now on the sand.

Meet me at Whitey's Bones as soon after dinner next Saturday as you can get there. Bring cheese, sardines, soda crackers, and chocolate snaps. We'll eat and sleep out the way you been wanting to for so long, and go as far as we can in a day and a half. A timber estimator from over in Volusia County just got back from riding the woods nearly to the Glades. He claims he saw *two pair* of ivory-bills. His descriptions of them were exactly right. Bring Tom Jeff with you. If you put him on the leash he can keep up allright.

See you Saturday. Your brother Tom.

At noon Tom had quit work, collected his week's wages, shouldered the croquer sack of peas which Zittrower gave him along with his cash wages, and headed cross-country to Whitey's Bones. An hour's walk from the highway he struck Little Creek and followed it westward to its junction with the Econlochatchet River. The creek widened as it approached the river and the hammock grew thicker. Tom walked in deep shadow, where the few spots of sunlight lay on the black loam like gold coins in a dream.

He came to the sandbar formed by the junction of the streams. The rising and falling water in the rainy season had left the sandbar clean and white. At the edge of the clearing he stopped to scratch Whitey's bleached skull. The bones of the pineywoods cow had hung in the low fork of the water-oak since the big hurricane; the flooding river had left her in the tree and the buzzards had picked her clean. Tom and Andrew never passed her by without speaking.

"Andy hasn't been here today, has he, Whitey?"

He studied the sand. There were no fresh prints, except those of birds and squirrels. Dropping the croquer sack in the middle of the clearing, he put his ear to the ground. He heard only the faraway drumming of a woodpecker. He listened for a moment and nodded his head. It would be a yellowhammer, what the bird-book called a flicker.

On his belly he crept to the point where the streams joined. The water on the bar was brown but clear as glass. From the watch-pocket of his overalls he fished out a small grasshopper. It kicked feebly as he tossed it on the clear water. In a moment the shallow filled with minnows swarming about the grasshopper, some of them small, black and speckled, some of them finger-length redhorses. Then a bigmouth, as long as his forearm paddled into the shallow. His tail went swish-swish fast and he shot forward to take the grasshopper, but his big belly scraped on the sand and with a great flounce he was away again into the deep black water. The minnows had vanished like magic. Tom laughed, "Strut your stuff, big boy, while you can. We'll come down here one day soon and catch you good."

He waited while the minnows cautiously returned, wanting to see a perch or a bream. Finally it came. A warmouth, so dark green it was almost black, with gold along the gills. It lay on its side, wallowing in the sand like a hen. It paid no attention to the minnows struggling with the grasshopper. After awhile it moved out again into the black water.

Tom moved upstream to the edge of a quiet slough. When the cold weather came they would shoot wood ducks here. Andrew was old enough now to learn to use the shotgun. But now the slough was alive with water-bugs, swimming or running on top of the water with hardly a ripple. Round and round they made their crazy zig-zag patterns. He wondered how they managed without bumping into each other. Watching them made him dizzy. He walked back to the clearing, and from the far side Whitey's skull flashed the sun into his eyes. He waved his hand at her and then sat down and put his ear to the ground. There was still no sound of footsteps.

At the edge of the clearing a cat squirrel sat on the frond of a swamp palm and barked at him, then disappeared into the hammock. The clearing was still and quiet. It made him drowsy. He tried to think of Andrew and of Amie Lou and of the note he had

left in Andrew's pocket, but all of it blurred in his mind. After awhile he lay back against the sack of peas and gazed into the clear blue sky. A woodpecker came and tapped on a tree at the edge of the clearing. He didn't bother to look at it. It had called once raucously and he knew it to be a redhead. Now its tapping grew steady. He closed his eyes.

Here in the clearing in the hammock it had happened before. It happened as in the poem the teacher had read to him. The teacher who had given him the birdbook, she who couldn't hear it thunder without the black box and the horn to her ear, had read him her favorite poem, a poem about the song of a nightingale. She had tried to explain its last line, "Was it a vision or a waking dream?"

"Sometimes," she said, "something happens to free a person from the shackles of time and space; and past, present, and future become one." And he had asked his older brother Jeff if he knew what the teacher meant, and Jeff had said that old lady Yearding had been deaf so long that she had got as batty as a bedbug.

The tapping of the woodpecker grew suddenly louder. Opening his eyes, he started to turn on his side to look at it. But he didn't need to turn on his side. The live-oak where the woodpecker had tapped had grown as tall as a cypress, and the limb where the woodpecker moved forward with quick hitches was the size of a man's waist and reached across the clearing. The woodpecker was no redhead. The great shining bill flashed like a chisel as it pounded fast and hard against the limb. As tall as a bantam rooster it moved through spots of sunlight where its redbreast blazed and its crest stood sharp and clear. It was an ivory-bill.

He spoke aloud. "In a minute I'll reach over and wake Andrew to see the ivory-bill," he said.

But there was no hurry to wake Andrew, for there was no end to the ivory-bill's pounding. The live-oak limb reached like a rainbow to the end of the world.

The hammock was alive now with downy woodpeckers, flecked

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with red, each of them no bigger than the ivory-bill's head. Their small tappings were a background for the big woodpecker's pounding. Across the clearing a flamingo, pink as the first coloring of sunrise, flapped unhurriedly to light at the top of a tall palm. Watching it he wondered why the big pink bird had strayed so far from the Everglades. Then he lay down again and gazed into the soft blue sky. He raised his hand and thrust it into the blue sky, and watched a white cloud drift and divide against his arm and pass on across the sky.

Hearing a new sound he sat up and looked toward the river. Near the river where the ferns grew thick and tall, a bobcat tumbled and stretched, crushing the ferns down into a soft bed. He rolled and twisted like any housecat, but the short twisted tail made him a bobcat all right, and his conical pointed ears like a horned owl's, and his great size. He was as big as Tom Jeff, but he had four good legs.

A rabbit came and the bobcat pounced on it and bit it once on the neck. Then it ran in circles. As long as it ran in circles the bobcat watched it, but when the rabbit stopped the bobcat ate it quickly, eating it from head to rear, leaving only the fluffy tail. Finished eating the cat rolled and tumbled and washed himself, and the sun moved quickly down the sky. It shone on the cat's brindle back and the tiny pool of the rabbit's blood. A light breeze picked up the rabbit's fluff of a tail settling it lightly on the stream where it moved away into the green and black tunnel. In the bright light the bobcat blinked and stretched and went to sleep on the bed of ferns.

The bobcat slept without moving. Tom could have reached across the clearing and stroked its brindle coat. Andrew slept, too, without moving, a mere walking-baby, cuddled in the bed of their wagon on a pallet of croquer sacks. After the accident when their father was killed, he brought Andrew to the clearing nearly every day. Their mother could not stand to look at Andrew. He, the youngest, reminded her most of their father. When a fly or a

mosquito lit on Andrew, Tom would slap it neatly and kill it. They came and were killed while Andrew and the bobcat slept without a stir. And Tom would watch the creek and the clearing and watch for the panther.

When the panther came, Tom would be lying on his stomach by the slough where the water was still, watching the water-bugs making their crazy circles. As he watched them he took one of them in his fingers to examine it closely, trying to find its eyes. Behind him was the regular pounding of the axe where his cousin Walter and his older brother Jefferson were cutting a cabbage palm for supper. The panther came and stood in a small clearing across the creek.

He stared into the panther's liquid gold eyes, while behind him the chopping ceased and Walter's voice spoke sharp and quiet. "Be still. Don't move, Thomas. You too, Jeff."

He heard the click as Walter cocked the rifle, and the panther's tail curled and uncurled its tip, slow and easy. Walter would be raising the rifle and squeezing the trigger slow and easy. He was a perfect rifle shot.

Thomas saw his own image in the panther's eye. He waited for the shot. Seized by a great terror he waited for the shot that would strike him full in the face. Then the panther turned and was gone.

He heard Jeff let out a breath like a long sigh, saying, "Damn, Walter, you look like you seen a ghost!" And Walter's answer, slow, too, "Hell, you don't look exactly like a red rose yourself."

Then Jeff had him by the arm, hauling him away from the creek bank, scolding him. "And you layen right there in front of that big sonofabitch. He could have swallowed you whole and you never would have knowed what happened." He broke loose and backed out of Jeff's reach.

"I seen him before y'all said anything. I seen him when he first come into the clearing. He wasn't aiming to hurt anybody." Thomas backed up as Jeff moved toward him.

"What the hell do you know about what a painter aims to do?" He pursed his lips and shot a thin stream of tobacco juice toward Thomas's eyes, but Thomas had backed out of range.

"Did you hear that, Walter? He says he seen that cat all the time and just lay there 'thout saying a word. Why didn't you wade across and pet him? Was you afraid of getting your feet wet?" Thomas had backed up to the edge of the clearing.

"I looked right into his eyes," he said. "I could see he wasn't aiming to hurt anybody."

"You lying little bastard." Jeff's head swung from side to side, his eyes searching the ground for a stick, but Thomas was gone into the underbrush.

Thomas sat up quickly. He jumped to his feet and swung the croquer sack of fresh field peas over his shoulder. The sun had sunk far into the southwest, but the clearing was still bright at its east edge beyond the growing shadows, and Whitey's skull shone from the live oak like a pale yellow lantern. He strained his ears listening. There was no sound of Andrew's coming.

He was reluctant now to leave the clearing. Even now, the story went on forever, as it had grown through countless tellings. He had stood beside the tall wooden box where Andrew was kept during the mad-dog-days of summer and told the wide-eyed baby about the panther.,

Shh-h. Now you listen to me. I'll tell you all about the painter. They're yellow like this tall pine box, only brighter like gold—more like yellow pine when it's fresh cut. They're long as Mama's big bed and tall as the bib of my overalls standing. Their eyes burn at night like two balls of fire. When they sneak up on anything at night they have to pull their eyelids down tight to hide all that fire, and smell their way along. You see this fourpenny nail I pulled out of this box that you snagged out your tooth on. A painter has claws longer and sharper than this nail. One of them is curled up under each toe. If a painter was to run across this floor, you could hear them claws clicking like butterbeans in a paper sack. Boy, they can slice you with them claws worse than a nigger with a razor. You don't want to be caught

out in the woods where there's a painter 'thout I'm with you. You understand that? You don't want to be caught out in the woods where there's painters. . . .

At the edge of the clearing he stopped to say so long to Whitey. He reached up to scratch her skull between the horns, but there in one of Whitey's eyes sat a tiny black spider. The scarlet hour glass on its abdomen caught a ray of sunlight and burned like a tiny fire.

"Well, Whitey, when did the damn little black widows move in on you?"

With a small sharp stick in his hand he stood on tiptoe. "Well, Whitey, we'll get rid of this little widow, anyhow."

Stretching upward he thrust the stick hard at the spider. The stick missed the spider, and his fist crashed against Whitey's skull. Her bones clattered down like hailstones.

Tom stared at the live oak tree, so suddenly bare, and at Whitey's scattered bones.

Riding an invisible thread the black widow swung into a streak of sunlight. Tom snatched up the croquer sack of peas and flung them at the spider. The sack flew open and the peas scattered over the ground. The spider went swinging away into the underbrush.

Tom picked up the peas slowly, methodically putting them into the sack. He kept his eyes fixed on the peas. When he was done he picked up Whitey's skull. He walked to the river and slung the skull out into the middle of the stream, where it blinked for a moment in the sunlight and disappeared into the slow dark current.

Tom shouldered the sack of peas and moved quickly out of the hammock toward the logging road from which came the sound like rifle fire of Uncle June's whip.

II

There came again the sharp explosions of Uncle June's whip, from away beyond the sawmill now as he headed the team to

the mule lot. And the yard beyond the edge of the house on the mill side was full of moving feet and the short lengths of overall leg above the tops of work shoes. He watched Uncle Seab's brogans cross the yard, twice as long as the others; he, the big man of the camp, part owner and sawmill boss. A pair of lowcuts moved with quick precise steps to keep up, two steps to Uncle Seab's one. They were Peewee Griffin's. He hated the sawmill and talked of leaving the woods to get a job in town, but he had talked about it for so long that nobody now believed he would ever do it. But after washing up for supper he would put on a white shirt and bright bowtie and his blue serge suit.

Tom watched the various pairs of shoes cross the yard converging toward the back porch, the pump and the wash shelf. He waited for a sight of Andrew's bare feet and the three-legged bobcat shuffling along behind. After a few moments a last pair of shoes entered the yard. It was Jeff, his older brother, who operated the sawmill carriage and stayed a few minutes after quitting time each evening to oil the carriage blocks for the next day's run. When Jeff's feet rose from sight onto the backporch the yard was empty, and overhead were the scuffling sounds of many pairs of feet as the men finished washing and dispersed through the big house to await the call to supper. Suddenly from behind the house out beyond the chickenyard came Tom Jeff's shrill guttural cry, like a muffled scream. Tom looked again at the writing in the sand, reading the message: Meet me at Whitey's Bones . . . With a savage sweep of his hand he destroyed the words and moved quickly out from under the house.

The twilight had changed to dusk. Away to the west the sun had dropped behind the Econlochachet Hammock. Tom moved away from the house, angling across the yard to skirt around Aunt Sallie's big chickenyard. Tom Jeff's cry came again at a higher pitch. He had caught scent of Tom. He sounded hungry and mad. Tom hurried his steps. He wondered if Andrew had been feeding the big cat, and suddenly he had spoken his thoughts aloud.

"Damn Andy to hell." He heard his own words with shock and surprise. And thought quickly. No, not him. Her. Damn her. "Think of nothing but the Lord's work," she had told him. And she had held him in her arms and wrapped a blanket around him. "I never felt so good in my life before," Andy had said.

Tom had seen her several times—when the tent meeting first opened. He had seen her on the platform, with her head tilted back, the lamplight in her eyes like stars as she sang of the far-off sweet forever. He, too, had thought of her, had even dreamed of her, and the men in the bunkhouse up at Zittrower's bandied her name about and scribbled it on privy walls.

He had gone to her house, the long-abandoned Cracker house she and her brother Mims Cruddup were using while they ran the meeting. He wanted to see her away from the tent and the pale lamplight.

He leaned hard against the doorjamb gripping the .22 rifle hard. Even before he had got to the doorstep she had heard him coming; probably she had seen him even before he approached the house; she had called out from inside, "Come on in."

He stood in the front door. One shoulder pressed hard against the doorjamb and the rifle held high in both hands, and when Amie Lou walked across the room not just holding the rifle but holding to it. She crossed the room, moving away from him, and the way she walked, easy as a minnow swimming in still water, was like no woman Tom had seen could ever walk. She sat down on the windowsill at the west side of the room, her back to the afternoon sun, and crossed her ankles above her soft blue high-heeled slippers, and said:

"Are you out to shoot somebody, Mister Tom?"

Her calling him Mister Tom made him feel foolish. He said, "Just birds is all, Mam."

"Did you have any luck?"

He took two turtle doves from his overalls pocket. She got up and moved toward him and through her skirt the sun edged her

thighs. His hand squeezed the doves; he felt the crunch of their small bones. He jerked his eyes away from Amie Lou and looked at the birds.

"What kind of birds are they, Tom?"

"They're doves, Mam, turtle doves."

"Goodness sakes, Mister Tom, don't you know that the Holy Spirit came in the form of a dove and rested on Jesus' shoulder?"

"Yes Mam," he said, "Aunt Sallie has told us about the dove a good many times."

"And you still shoot doves and eat them?"

"Yes Mam. With their feathers off they look about like quail."

She laughed. Her white teeth flashed. They were pearly white, and her lips were red, her hair was jet-black, long and wavy. She took the doves and waved them through the streak of sunlight.

"Look at their feathers turn all colors, Tom."

She wasn't teasing now. He kept his eyes fixed hard on the birds. "Yes Mam," he said, "a turtle dove is about the prettiest bird in the world when you take a close look at it."

"Who do you think is the prettiest girl you ever took a close look at, Tom?"

Now she had said it. And the way she said it. It was not teasing. He took his time answering this.

"I believe everybody thinks you are the prettiest girl anybody ever saw around here, Miss Amie Lou."

"You are just kidding me, Tom."

"No Mam, that's what everybody says."

She looked so straight at him he had to look back down at the rifle. His fingers fidgeted in the wedge of the rear sight.

"How old are you, Tom?"

"Fourteen, Mam."

"You're the biggest fourteen-year-old boy I ever saw."

"All the men in our family are big, Mam, except my Uncle Henry. And my little brother Andrew. I don't believe he is going to be very big."

He was ready to go now. He said, "Well, Mam, I just dropped by to see how you and Brother Mims were making out and to see if I could do anything to help you out."

She spoke as if she had not heard what he said.

"You're going to give me those two doves, aren't you, Tom?"

"Oh, yes Mam, I was aiming to do that. I'll go out on the back-porch and clean them for you, Mam."

He had plucked and gutted the birds quickly and left. He had told Andrew the whole story exactly as it happened, had tried to explain what it meant, but it had done no good. Andy had got sillier and crazier and thought of nothing but Amie Lou and the far-off sweet forever.

As he approached Tom Jeff's cage a strip of light fell suddenly across his path. Looking up toward the backporch he saw Andrew come though the kitchen door and cross the backporch. Beyond Andrew, in the kitchen, Aunt Sallie lit a second kerosene lamp, turned up the wick, and moved toward the dining-room.

Andrew carried a plate in his hands. Tom watched him step down from the porch and move toward him in the dusk. He felt a sudden rush of exhilaration, and moved quickly to meet him, his mind full of a thousand things to tell his little brother. But before he could speak Andrew called out, "What are you doing here, Tom? Thought you'd be halfway to the Glades by now."

He stopped. He stared at his brother. It was Andrew's voice he had heard, but the casual words might have been spoken by anybody, and his reply was a peevish retort.

"I waited for you down by the river like the note said."

"I thought you knew the meeting was going on through this week. They have even been talking about staying on here, with so many people getting saved, and setting up a regular church."

"You could have sent me word up to Zittrower's by one of the lumber trucks, couldn't you, after you read the note?"

"I meant to, Tom. I thought about it more than once. But I had so many things to do this week, with the meetings every night, I just didn't get around to doing it."

Tom turned away. He wiped his sleeve savagely across his eyes, and under his breath he cursed himself. Andrew spoke hurriedly.

"I got to feed Tom Jeff and hurry back to the house to change clothes for the meeting."

Facing his brother, he looked at the plate in his hands and asked, "What have you got in that plate you're toting?"

"Scraps. Scraps from the dinner table."

"What for? The chickens?"

"Why no. The chickens are already roosting. They're for Tom Jeff."

"You know goddam well Tom Jeff won't eat that stuff."

"He does now. He's been eating scraps from the table since last Tuesday."

"You lazy little bastard." He grabbed Andrew by the shoulders and began to shake him. "Didn't I leave eight or nine quail in that box when I left here Monday morning? Haven't you been to the traps this week?"

Andrew struggled to break loose. Tom tightened his hold. Andrew's face was screwed up and he spoke through his clenched teeth.

"Aunt Sallie says we're not to feed them live birds to Tom Jeff anymore. Brother Mims Cruddup was over here Monday morning and saw me feeding Tom Jeff. He told Aunt Sallie that feeding the cat live birds didn't seem to him like the right thing to do."

Andrew began to cry and Tom was aware of his fingers biting deep into his brother's thin shoulders. He released his hold.

"I might have known it," he said. "The sons a bitches. They couldn't even let Tom Jeff alone." With a quick upswipe of his hand, he spun the plate of table slops into Andrew's face and chest.

"Now that'll give you a good reason to go change your clothes."

The plate fell to the ground and broke neatly into two pieces. He turned and walked away. He heard Andrew call after him, "Aunt Sallie'll have Uncle Seab tan you for breaking that plate."

By the light of a match he counted the quail. There were seven of them, heads together, roosting in a circle. A few yards away Tom Jeff was scratching at his chickenwire cage. His shrill guttural cry came regularly as he heard and smelled Tom at the quail cage.

He would give Tom Jeff a last good feed, all the fresh quail he could eat. But not even a starving bobcat can eat seven quail. Taking three of the quail from the cage, one at a time, he flung them into the dark night. They whirled out over the privy into the cut-over pine woods. One at a time he pulled the heads off the remaining birds and tossed the pieces, warm and fluttering, into Tom Jeff's cage.

For a few moments there was only the snuffling sound of the cat's eating and the small crunching of the quail's bones. Finally he spoke to the cat. "I would just turn you loose," he said, "but you wouldn't go anywhere. If you did you'd be back tomorrow." He stroked the bobcat's brindle back. Tom Jeff was losing a lot of his hair and much of his bright color. "I can't have you around here anymore, Tom Jeff. I've got to start over."

Slamming the cage door shut, and latching it, he walked quickly toward the house. As he passed the kitchen window he saw Andrew, dressed now in his Sunday knickers and black stockings and hightop shoes, go to the water bucket, take the dipper and drink, and move back toward the front of the house.

From under the backporch Tom got a shovel and a light axe and returned to the cage. He put a collar on Tom Jeff and hooked one end of a four-foot stick to the collar. Tom Jeff had finished the quail and was in a playful mood. Rolling on his back he struck at Tom with his good front paw. He didn't like being on the stick, which he hadn't worn regularly for several years.

Five years ago, Tom and Jeff had taken the bobcat from the steeltrap. He had been almost full grown even then. Tom's thoughts drifted back. It seemed only yesterday when he had filed one of Jeff's old switchblade knives to a fine edge, whetted

it until it would shave like a razor, and amputated the bobcat's crushed leg. Andrew stood in the wooden box, shrieking, "Painter, painter . . ." And Tom said, "No, boy, this ain't no painter. I can't bring you no painter. This bobcat will have to do." The job done, he nailed the cat up in a box, after soaking the bleeding stump in turpentine, and left it howling and licking its wound for three days. Then he had tamed it, day after day, slapping its face and paws with a flat paddle when it tried to bite or scratch, keeping the muzzle on him most of the time, and their father had named it. It being a gift from the older brothers, Tom and Jeff, to the younger brother, Andrew, he named the bobcat Tom Jeff. After working with the cat for many days, one day Tom had put him into Andrew's box. Andrew pushed his face into the cat's fine brindle coat and purred like a kitten.

He led the bobcat down the path, on past the privy, to where the wire grass and palmettoes grew sparsely in the white sand. At the end of the stick Tom Jeff loped along on his three legs.

The sky in the east was beginning to shine with a silver light. In a few minutes the full moon would rise over the rim of the hammock. Tom hesitated, watching the sky grow lighter. It was going to be a clear bright night. Why not just keep walking, and take Tom Jeff along? Why come back here at all? Zittrower would give him steady work, might even give him one of the little cabins to live in. The funny little Yankee liked him. He knew that. Or at least came as close to liking him as he could to liking anybody. And Zittrower's place was only a two-hour walk, cross country, from Whitey's Bones.

Suddenly he felt a little dizzy. Stopping, he clenched his eyes to clear his head. He saw Whitey's skull flash on the slow brown current and slowly sink from sight. He wheeled around to speak to the bobcat.

The bobcat lay down and rolled over on his back to wrestle with the stick. His eyes grew wet and the image of the cat blurred and flickered in the pale light. Raising his arm he rubbed his

eyes vigorously and after a moment he said, "You lucky old son-of-a-gun." Tightening his hold on the stick he led the cat into the sparse growth of palmettoes.

In a clear white patch of sand, he dropped the shovel and took a tight grip on the axe handle, and gripping the end of the stick tight in his left hand, he pushed the cat's head out away from himself, forcing it downward. And as the moon rose full over the rim of the hammock and outlined the cat sharply against the sand, he raised the axe, blade upward, and brought the blunt edge down hard against the base of the cat's skull.

He knelt beside the cat and looked into its face. The lips were pulled back, the mouth set in a brilliant white grin. The soft gold eyes had turned to glass. Tom pressed the eyelids down.

In a few minutes he had finished burying the cat in the soft white sand. Then he took the axe and shovel and walked back toward the house whose rough weather-boarding shone like silver in the moonlight. Before he reached the house he saw his older brother, Jeff, step off the backporch and walk toward the woodpile; he blew a few warm-up notes on his mouth harp as he crossed the yard. Tom replaced the axe and shovel under the house. The house was quiet now; all the rear rooms were dark. Nearly everybody was gone to the meeting. Tom crossed the yard to the woodpile, where Jeff sat now on the choppingblock, playing "The Brown's Ferry Blues." As Tom approached, Jeff quit playing and sang: "I got a gal lives up town. Makes her livin' from the hips on down. Lawd, Lawd, I got them Brown's Ferry Blues. I don't know what's comin' of me, Ol' cawn liquor won't let me be. Lawd, Lawd, I got them Brown's Ferry Blues."

Tom sat down on a block of wood a few feet from Jeff, and said, "What you say, Jeff?"

"Where you been, Tom? I didn't see you at supper. Didn't know you had got home yet. Figured you was traipsing around in the woods again looking for one of the damn big Lord God wood-peckers."

"I got home just before dark. I found ol' Tom Jeff dead in his

cage. I reckon he had just died a little while before I found him. I carried him out there in the palmettoes and buried him."

"Well, I'll be damn. You mean ol' Tom Jeff is dead. It was beginning to look like he never would die. I expect he was the oldest cat in the whole state of Florida. I reckon he was too old to be much good, to himself or to anybody else, any-more."

They were silent for a few moments. Once in awhile Jeff would whistle a few notes of some blues song he had picked up from the Negro hands. Finally Tom said, "Why don't you sing some more, Jeff?"

"I believe I'll chew a little bit first."

Jeff took a fresh cut of Brown's Mule from the watch pocket of his overalls and bit a corner off it. He offered the plug to Tom. "Have you started chewin' tobacco yet?" Tom nodded. He bit a corner off the plug and rolled it around on his tongue, tasting it. Jeff laughed. "I reckon you *have* started chewin' tobacco—right this minute." He laughed again. "Go ahead and chomp the stuff. It can't bite you back."

After spitting a great brown web on the sand, Jeff began to sing again. "One of these mawnings, won't be long, Cap'n gon' call and I'll be gone. Lawd, Lawd, I got them Brown's Ferry Blues."

The song went on and on with Jeff playing the harp and singing the stanzas alternately. All around them, in the full moon light, the yard shone like a lake. After awhile Jeff slapped the harp hard against his thigh to clear it. Tom said, "I know another verse to that song."

"You think you know a verse to that song that I aint heard before?"

"You go ahead and blow the harp and I'll sing it."

Jeff slapped the harp again on his thigh and played softly while Tom sang. "Two ol' maids playin' in the san', each one wishin' the other was a man. Lawd, Lawd, I got them Brown's Ferry Blues."

Jeff laughed. Well, I'll be damn. Where did you hear that one?"

"A fellow up at Zittrower's. He said he had come from Waycross."

"Did you learn any more?"

"Not that I ain't already heard you sing before. But I might pick up some more next week. There's nearly always some new fellah coming in, that sings a song, or part of one, that I ain't heard before."

Jeff stood up, tucked the mouth harp away in the side pocket of his overalls, and taking the wad of tobacco from his mouth, tossed it out across the sandy yard. He said, "You better go and get you some supper."

"Where you going, Jeff?"

"Down to the Quarters, for a little scooter-pooing maybe. I'll see you afterwhile."

He crossed the yard toward the path which led past the commissary and on to the mill and to the Negro quarters beyond. Tom sat on the block, looking after Jeff, watching his shadow going before him across the white sand and then climbing up the commissary wall. He bit his lip to keep from calling out after Jeff. And then Jeff stopped, at the edge of the yard, and turned around. Reaching into his watch pocket, he fished out the cut of Brown's Mule and turned it in his hands, looking for a corner to bite from. Then he looked at Tom, while his jaw moved against the tobacco with slow vigorous strokes. The moon lay full in his face, and behind him his shadow soared diagonally upward on the wall of the commissary and across and beyond the slanting roof. After awhile he spoke.

"You want to go with me to the Quarters?"

But Tom had already got up and was moving across the white shining yard to join him, and as he rose, his shadow leapt across the shimmering sand, and mounting the commissary wall, shot across the slanted roof and on beyond.

BOOKS and COMMENT

Grover Smith

ON POETS AND POETRY



THIRTY TO FORTY years ago, as the experimental writers of that period were constrained to agree, creative literature, which is never orthodox, was at loggerheads with conservative magazine editors. It is nowadays astonishing that Ezra Pound, his tribe and allies, had as little trouble as they did have even with the editors hospitable to their work. Both Harold Monroe and Ford Madox Hueffer (who was helpful at a slightly earlier date) extended a welcome to genius; but there were few such editors as these in England and none at all in America. Much of the work of lasting merit, if it did not achieve specific subsidies and stiff covers immediately, was being encouraged and preserved in magazines under rather modest intellectual proprietorship. Of course there was *The Dial*, for what it was worth, and later there was *The Criterion*, which started well. During the European war some of the best new writers were appearing in three little magazines that had two interesting qualities in common. The magazines were *Poetry*, *The Little Review*, and *The Egoist*. The qualities were a courageous antipathy for the commonplace, and an editorial organization that in each case was at least nominally under feminine management. *The Egoist* alone, which had begun as *The New Freewoman* under Harriet Shaw Weaver with the assistance of Dora Marsden, had passed into the hands of a male literary sub-editor (Aldington first, then Eliot). Neither Miss Weaver nor Harriet Monroe, the editor of

Poetry, nor Margaret Anderson of *The Little Review*, was a woman of unusual literary talent. Both Miss Monroe and Miss Anderson, however, were women of sufficient obstinacy to have kept their magazines alive even if Ezra Pound had not helped see to the vitality of their contributors; and Miss Anderson was further sustained by the unsteady genius of Jane Heap. The lesson of Miss Monroe's *Poetry* should make one grateful that Miss Anderson was not too jealous of Pound's arrogant influence to accept the best of his advice, and that her obstinacy was revealed as a determination to publish only the available best, whatever glory she might have to divide with Pound.

OF THESE three magazines *The Little Review*, just as it was the one on which Pound successfully exerted the most pressure, was likewise unmistakably the finest. The selection which Miss Anderson has made from its pages¹ contains a prefatory nod to Pound and a somewhat over-toppling obeisance to Jane Heap, as the sources of its illumination. Fortunately the preface is short (why *fortunately* will appear to anyone who has observed Miss Anderson's literary style in her autobiographies). As it seems that she has left some of the selections to the choice of the authors themselves, this anthology has a high proportion of valuable writing. At the same time it omits some things which understandably were too long or too expensive to reprint. The collection, being weighted towards excellence and celebrity, is not precisely representative of the magazine, although Miss Anderson has innocently included enough rubbish by Jane Heap, for example, to betray the obliqueness of her beam. The ideal of an editor in Miss Anderson's position might have been to respect both quality, novelty, and fair sampling. The book fails also to report total accomplishment because it is not arranged chronologically: the contributions are not dated, so that the reader can hardly plot Miss Anderson's editorial vicissitudes. If *The Little Review An-*

¹ *The Little Review Anthology*. New York: Hermitage House, 1953. 383 pp. \$3.95.

thology was to be a sifting of the best by certain writers, Miss Anderson might better have grouped the writings of each author separately.

Certainly the exhumers of *The Little Review* has a right to exult in her memories of lion-trapping. Here are Yeats, Pound, Hemingway, Eliot, Sherwood Anderson, Arthur Waley, Wallace Stevens. Here are Emma Goldman's "Letters from Prison," part of Pound's redaction of Ernest Fenollosa's "The Chinese Written Character," some of W. C. Williams' "Improvisations," and Eliot's "Eeldrop and Appleplex," the sketch of a theme later to be dramatized in *Sweeney Agonistes* and *The Family Reunion*. Here too, less happily, is the greater part of that final issue, of May, 1929, when many of the lions were baited to roar with a personal questionnaire of mealy insipidity. The book is readable from any point of view; it is something that every student of the period ought to have as testimony to a venture that aided independent greatness and fought stupidity and censorship.

BROM WEBER'S EDITION of the Hart Crane letters² exhibits intimately the career of that pitiable anarchy. The editor, who has scrupulously picked out the most informative of Crane's letters and cut from them the repetitious and libelous without consulting mere prudery, warns in his preface that "the poetry of Hart Crane ought not to be hastily judged by his life or letters, though the latter should no doubt be studied to support an understanding and appreciation of the poetry." It should be patent to the student of both, however, that Crane as man and poet was grievously disordered, that the neurotic irresponsibility of his private life and loves was directly synchronous with the undisciplined fancy manifest in his poetic images. Crane's inner world was a fluxion in which neither personal relations nor traditional thought and utterance were coherent enough to form

² *The Letters of Hart Crane, 1916-1932*. New York: Hermitage House, 1952. 426 pp. \$5.00.

laws even for themselves. One is appalled, on reading his explication of "At Melville's Tomb," to realize that while he could associatively justify the chain of metaphors comprising the poem, he was oblivious of the difference between a random and a logical mode of association. Crane was incapable of the metaphysical conceit because he observed no rules of conscious order. He unwittingly insisted, in other words, on the reader's undertaking, with the jumble of images thrown up by the poet's unconscious, the "plastic" task proper to the poet himself. Raw material is always present; what Crane could not see was that matter must move into form, and that all form, to be recognizable as a new thing, and a thing more than its ingredients, must be shaped in rational patterns of discourse. Crane is a deadly example to his many imitators. What is true of his poetry is true of his life: he knew no pattern; he was himself a kaleidoscope, a disintegrated personality.

Describing Crane's way as marked by "deviation," Mr. Weber points out that "Crane conformed less, overtly at least, to the dominant mores of his age than probably any of his contemporaries." There are of course two kinds of nonconformity, that which has discovered higher and nobler laws than those governing other men, and that which has cast all laws away and is deliberately or haphazardly in search of a fresh standard. Perhaps most nonconformists begin with rebellion for its own sake, but unless they establish a personal conventionality in politics or aesthetics or religion, a norm to whatever degree lunatic in the eyes of society, they are never anything but lost drifters. Every man, if he does not make fast to the safe moorings of another, must forge his own anchor, and if that capsizes him into the sea he has at least found a depth. The letters of Crane do not show the intensities of a great man. They reveal curiosity, eclecticism, caprice; they expose innumerable interests and talents; but they proclaim no detachment from the hurly-burly of everyday af-

fairs, from the efforts of greed and sensuality. They are like the letters that most men write: they are about things and people, visualized flatly or with the prejudice of self-esteem. There is no concentration of alert feeling; there is no style. The reader must sense Crane's vagueness of direction in a life spent jousting, like Tom o' Bedlam, with ghosts and shadows. Crane, avid of approval, cultivated ignominy, like any very little man of genius. Any reader might well become, after examining the evidence of this collection,

. . . sick of the palette and fiddle-bow,
Of poets that are always gay. . . .

Mr. Weber, who with his previous study *Hart Crane* has already devoted much good work to the poet, gives in the preface to the letters a character-analysis which is admirable preparation for a reading of them.

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS is a poet without Crane's imaginative gifts and with some of Crane's defects of poetic synthesis, but by contrast a man of mature intellectual values. The full-length study of Williams by Vivienne Koch³ has no more accurate insight than one on *Al Que Quiere!* (1920): "Williams was already formulating a program for himself which reaffirmed a romantic Emersonian ethic of self-reliance translated to the aesthetic sphere." His recent *Autobiography* sheds light on a personality which has developed itself into a poet and integrated human being in obedience to that ethic.⁴ If there is anywhere a humbug, one can count on Williams to squash it—or to make a poetic symbol of its fatuity. But Williams, the superb analyst of childhood (in *White Mule* and *In the Money*) and champion of the free individual (in his most impressive work—*In the*

³ *William Carlos Williams*. Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1950. 278 pp. \$2.00.

⁴ See the review by Byron Vazakas, *New Mexico Quarterly*, Vol. XXII, No. 4 (Winter, 1952), 440-444.

American Grain), is regrettably unlikely to deepen the impression he has hitherto made in this country. One may feel that if, with his scientific and sociological aptitudes, he had committed himself only to a prose assessment of contemporary life—the diagnosis would have something, after all, to do with pediatrics!—he would have performed a function more congenial than the writing of symbolist drama and poetry. For Williams, a *philosophe manqué*, has critical abilities which do not operate in his imaginative work and which, to his detriment, conflict with its motives.

What has been said above about Hart Crane's dependence on apparently random sequences of imagery is just as good for Williams, who furthermore has less ability than Crane had for pin-pointing the concrete object as an image. In moving from his Imagistic period, which gave no play to his argumentative instinct, towards a poetry more nearly of ideological statement, Williams seems to have tried to use concepts as the Imagists (or better, perhaps, the Symbolists) used images, in a fabric of subjective association. (There is a strong resemblance between the rationale of Pound's *Cantos* and that of Williams' *Paterson*: both suggest a link between the poetry which displays, as in a provincial museum, detached objects, and that which similarly displays discontinuous ideas or ideas connected only tangentially.) He has kept on using concrete images too, but rarely so as to make them self-sufficient symbols recognizable to the reader; he often interlards them with commentary that still fails to seal relation. The long poem *Paterson*, to which the statement above more urgently pertains than to the short pieces, is masterly evidence of Williams' social acumen, but as a poem it is unsuccessful. The falls of the Passaic, for instance—a central thematic force—do not actually come in view, being simply a topic, and the opinions in the conceptual passages never seem quite to fit with the things adopted as symbols. The final chapter of Wil-

liams' *Autobiography*, where he explains what *Paterson* is about, is better poetry than the poem, for it catches the objective vision and simultaneously squeezes out its meaning for the writer.

For more particular information on such problems it ought to be possible to recommend Miss Koch's *William Carlos Williams*, which is a pretty long book, usefully indexed and printed in passable type. The plan of Miss Koch's monograph is chronological; it covers Williams' writings in prose and verse and analyzes practically everything significant as of 1949. Since the book is now three years old, a lot of people must have read it and found it rather chaotic. Miss Koch is seemingly a slapdash writer; she will let a prepositional phrase between subject and verb mar her grammar ("The style of . . . responses to Europe are in the style we should expect of Williams"), and she mixes metaphors and modifiers in a manner to keep *The New Yorker* indefinitely in copy ("Williams' talk is compressed, elliptical and nuggetory, distilled, at the age of sixty-two, from the total burden of his experience."). Still worse, her paragraphs do not always have enough unity to keep the reader oriented, and her critical evaluations are too often *obiter dicta* that do not correlate. Miss Koch, though she has noticed most of the critical problems, is helpful less with the poetry (despite her exhaustive analysis, especially of the first two books of *Paterson*) than with the short stories and novels. She aptly observes Williams's lack of narrative and dramatic power in his verse—a point needing more emphasis, and she devotes space to discussing Williams' experiments with the low vernacular—an idiom that she tolerates. Generally speaking this is a disappointing study. It may be that (to adapt a term from Miss Koch) the splintering tendency in certain works by Williams, the tendency towards disorganization, is characteristic of his whole poetic output, so that no very systematic analysis is likely to ensue. Yet one is tempted to apply hyperbolically, without further comment, a passage from

Paterson: "A large round pearl, weighing 400 grams which would have been the finest pearl of modern times, was ruined by boiling open the shell."

MISS KOCH'S more recent inquiry into W. B. Yeats's *Last Poems*⁵ is immeasurably better; it too belongs to the class of criticism that seeks close textual verification of theory, and unlike the book on Williams, which takes up a great many works briefly, it limits itself to a handful of difficult poems, to each of which it gives prolonged attention. The several chapters ostensibly depend from the introduction, where Miss Koch announces her purpose to examine Yeats's *Last Poems* both for their "prevailing tragic quality . . . a revelation of Yeats's final bitter vision that the creative conflict in which he centered the dynamics of all cosmic and human relations could not be resolved," and for the fact that "the profound agony of Yeats's conflict ('The antinomies cannot be solved') is at once the source, energy and theme of his last poems." This would be in any case a tall order. Miss Koch's postulate that the "terms in which Yeats expressed this suffering in the last seven or eight years of his life were very largely sexual" is the turning at which she goes wrong: the very poems she deals with have mostly different terms, as her comments on the respective symbols indicate. Thus, although her analyses are sagacious and engaging, they cannot consistently illustrate the thesis. That they do not make the trial is all to the good, but the effect of her honesty to the poems in these readings is a gradual relinquishment of the original design. The introduction is discordant with the main portion of the book, in which, as in *William Carlos Williams*, one feels the want of a simple union between general and particular.

The admission by Miss Koch in her preface that her critical method varies from poem to poem—it is sometimes neglectful of

⁵ W. B. Yeats, *The Tragic Phase: A Study of the Last Poems*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1951. 151 pp. \$2.25.

sources and biography and sometimes not—attempts to avert a captious charge of inconsistency. Naturally it cannot do so. Still, whatever her method, Miss Koch gives individual lines and stanzas, notably in “The Gyres” and “The Three Bushes,” a richer gloss than they have had before.

ONE WONDERS whether it was conscious whimsey on the part of T. R. Henn, the author of another valuable study of Yeats,⁶ that made him let his publishers include on the jacket of his book the information that he is “an enthusiastic outdoorsman and the author of *Practical Fly-Tying*.” Mr. Henn would probably not mind at all being identified, within limits, with the “wise and simple man” of Yeats’s poem “The Fisherman.” His point of view is Sligo Irish, and in his opening chapter he has written gracefully and reticently concerning the now almost obliterated background of the Protestant Ascendancy. Too reticently, perhaps; for even in a book like his, about the ideas and sensibility of Yeats as exemplified in poetry, the social heritage and its shocking fate ought to be far more prominent than most of Yeats’s critics, except when treating of certain political poems, have allowed it to be. (Most of them but Jeffares and Henn seem at bottom hostile, anyway.) Few strangers have any notion of the cultural vitality diffused through the Ireland of the Ascendancy, a vigor tributary to the various movements, linguistic, literary, and political, active in Yeats’s youth and early manhood. It was, one now perceives, a vitality incommunicable to the mass of Irishmen (as indeed one may learn from Joyce’s *Ulysses*—which incidentally was the solitary work of literary genius produced by the rival tradition in Yeats’s lifetime); they were the anvil on which the Irish Renaissance took form under the English hammer. One smiles at Yeats’s words but concurs with their spirit: “Under broken roofs, a race of gentlemen

⁶ *The Lonely Tower: Studies in the Poetry of W. B. Yeats*. New York: Pellegrini and Cudahy, 1952. 362 pp. \$5.00.

keep alive the ideals of a great time when men sang the heroic life with drawn swords in their hands." Did Yeats, when afterwards he railed at the independence movement, foresee indeed the time when that race should be brought to nothing by its loyalty divided between land and king, party and party, action and art, in a country which legislated thought from its borders and reduced culture to futility?

It is not surprising that some of Mr. Henn's ablest commentary is on Yeats's falling out with Irish nationalism: the chapter "The Study of Hatred" is excellent. But as his book is a general survey, many other subjects find a place in it. Mr. Henn supplies a studious account of Yeats's symbolism—the occult, the phases of the moon, Byzantium—and more important, because it is new, he offers a list of symbols which Yeats drew from particular works of pictorial art, conspicuously from Poussin's *Marriage of Peleus and Thetis* (in "News from the Delphic Oracle"). For the adept this aspect of Mr. Henn's book will doubtless seem the most profitable of all. *The Lonely Tower* does not have a chance of superseding the books by Jeffares, Ellmann, and Stauffer which have lately pre-empted its subject matter. Although on the score of style it is certainly more readable than Ellmann's in particular, it does not either in the biographical or the critical field contribute so clear or so well arranged a view as do these works collectively. In the novice, Mr. Henn's book may seem to presuppose too minute an acquaintance with Yeats's writings, and from even the practiced student of the poems it may require too ready an understanding of sudden transitions and unexpected cross-references. But it is a sound book.

IF ONE had to discover a work more likely than the preceding five to advance the greatest happiness of the greatest number, the election might do worse than to light on Lawrence Durrell's *Key to Modern British Poetry*⁷—that is, assuming the great-

⁷ Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952. 209 pp. \$3.00.

est number to be literate. There is something about the methods of English critics like Mr. Durrell that permits a book on literature to be itself well written and to make an appeal to a non-academic public without being contemptible to the specialist. One might imagine that the statistics on the number of volumes read annually by the average Englishman, in contrast to the corresponding statistics on the reading of the average American, might have some pertinence, though in fact Mr. Durrell's original audience for the lectures making up this book were "graduate teachers in English, gathered from the various universities of Argentina." Yet the theory is attractive. This is at any rate the sort of study that ought to benefit the widest possible class of readers interested in current literary history, the importance of which it affirms without apology to the votaries of textual analysis. Mr. Durrell has an acknowledged debt to H. V. Routh's *English Literature and Ideas in the Twentieth Century*, the source for several of his chapter headings, but he strikes out along lines that Mr. Routh has not projected and he comes to conclusions that will be exciting even to those who are already studying the relation of literature to twentieth-century science and psychology.

A Key to Modern Poetry (as it is called in the English edition) is in no sense a survey of all or more than a few of the poets writing in England since the eighties. The last six of its ten chapters, it is true, attempt to follow the tendencies in poetry since that time, their object being mainly to catalogue these in accordance with the premises of chapters one through four. The illustrative material on specific poets, while hardly providing much that other critics (chiefly American) have not given, is plentiful and learned. In one instance, when Mr. Durrell reproaches the shortcomings of Kipling, there is bias caused presumably by faulty understanding of the poet's real attitude; elsewhere, however, as in the sections on Eliot's cinematographic effects in *The Waste Land* and his speculations about time in

Four Quartets, the validity of Mr. Durrell's critiques is self-evident. There is one little mystery: why does Mr. Durrell speak of G. M. Hopkins' sensibility as "fuliginous," and then go on to say that the workings of it, and Hopkins' technique for capturing impressions, give one "a series of vivid shocks as one reads him . . . like watching a landscape lit by successive flashes of lightning"? Does he want a real inkhorn word, perhaps "fulgurous"?

. . . *feriuntque summos*
fulgura montis.

It is from the first four chapters that most readers are likely to receive new stimulation. For some reason the general correlation that can be established between contemporary literature and the sciences, especially physics, is more usually assumed than demonstrated, except in close studies of writers where *ad hoc* source-hunting, though indirectly the sole accurate measure for a climate of influences, often pays no heed to the regulatory effect of such a climate upon sources themselves. Mr. Durrell undertakes here to explain the phenomena of temporal dislocation, polylingual punning, and subjective impressionism central to much of the literature lying between the typical extremes of Tennyson's "Ulysses" and Eliot's "Gerontion." In doing so he starts from the universal, firstly from the new physics with its space-time continuum, for which philosophers have found an alliance with ideas of eternity long present in oriental and Christian mysticism; and secondly from the new psychology, Freud, Jung, and Groddeck—and proceeds to the particular, the new literature with its idealogical veneration for the perennial philosophy and its technical exploration of the stream of consciousness.

Obviously the presence of contemporary formal psychology in the criticism of literature is by now a familiar thing; Mr. Durrell, however, finds the significance of psychology not in its interpretative function but in its intellectual influence: it has dictated technique. And what is more, as Mr. Durrell shows, it has

worked by becoming united with the idea of space-time, a product of Einsteinian relativity, to alter the old ways of representing the time-dimension by language and to revolutionize the (Cartesian) idea of mind and matter—the subject-object relationship. It is to be wished that Mr. Durrell had dwelt longer on the tradition of eighteenth-century idealism, or long enough to avoid leaving the impression that he attributes immediately to the cosmologies of Einstein, Jeans, and Alexander an effect deviously traceable to Hegel. There is something also to be said about the connection between French Symbolism and this subject-object dilemma, and assuredly there should be a more elaborate table of ancestry for the disruption of linguistic structure in poetry than Mr. Durrell gives in talking merely about the view of time as simultaneity. (And what about the headlong clash of this latter idea with the flux doctrine of Bergson, in relation to the stream of consciousness?) Some people may suspect, too, that Ouspensky himself may have exerted a stronger influence, albeit a heterodox one, than some of the philosophers Mr. Durrell mentions. Yet one of the values of this book is its conduciveness to curiosity and hence to independent inquiry. To few books can one accord anything like this much praise.

Witter Bynner

A WILLA CATHER TRIPTYCH

OF THESE THREE books dealing with Willa Cather,¹ E. K. Brown's, completed after his death by Leon Edel, the first in order of publication and of my reading, is, in my judgment, professorially full and orthodox like the chords of a church organist; the second, by Edith Lewis, Miss Cather's longtime friend and housemate, has the meagre simplicity of a one-fingered melody heard from a determined child; but the third, by Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant, a writer better endowed and seasoned than the others, is played on the very air of the years through which these two gifted authors knew each other, sharing and comparing their interests, emotions and aspirations.

It is too bad that the three volumes all appear in 1953, since in large degree they have to repeat one another's objective data. The Lewis account, the shortest of them, was in fact prepared originally as material for Mr. Brown's, the longest; and I wish, since much of her text is quoted in his, that all of it might have been used there, that the two books had been made one from the start either through insertion of more passages from Miss Lewis in fitting order or through general collaboration. Even then, though Miss Lewis calls her record *Willa Cather Living*, the result would have remained, as each of the books is now, biography for libraries rather than for persons, for studious reference rather than for quickening warmth. In Miss Sergeant's record, on the other hand, history and environment come alive around and through a breathing figure, and Miss Cather's works

¹ *Willa Cather, A Critical Biography*, by E. K. Brown, Completed by Leon Edel. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953. 351 pp. \$4.00.

Willa Cather Living, A Personal Record, by Edith Lewis. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953. 197 pp. \$3.00.

Willa Cather, A Memoir, by Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1953. 256 pp. \$3.50.

also come freshly alive as they grew in their creator rather than through outer observation and opinion.

All three books narrate, in varying proportions, how their subject at the age of nine left her comfortable Virginian birth-place and its easy-going neighbors behind for Nebraska and its hard-going pioneers; how with this latter material which might have seemed bleak to someone else, she wrought many of her stories and novels, making lyrical nostalgic memories out of the prairies, and heroic figures out of the Scandinavian and other new neighbors whom she had seen face heavy odds and master them; how she went to school and college in Nebraska, contributed to student journals, sought out the most significant persons in Red Cloud, in Lincoln; how she moved to Pittsburgh, first as magazine contributor, then as school-teacher, and found there wealthy friends who made life easier for her, with Mr. S. S. McClure soon doing likewise in New York through his eager liking for her work and for herself; then her welcoming of Sarah Orne Jewett in Boston as friend and literary influence; presently her trips to Colorado and New Mexico, from which was to come her memorable revival of the Archbishop; her fifteen years at Bank Street in New York with rental of an apartment kept empty overhead to exclude disturbing footsteps and with a return to the world of people on her Friday afternoons; her retreats to New Hampshire and to Grand Manan, her visits to Europe and especially to her beloved France; her love for Turgeneff, Tolstoi, Flaubert, Henry James and Grand Opera; her family ties and few close friendships; her growing resentment against the mechanization of modern life; and then, apparently because of deaths among her kin and friends and of a world gone wrong, the decline and withdrawal of her spirit.

As I read the Brown and Lewis books, I became more and more depressed and incredulous. This could not be the Willa Cather I had met and seen often in my early youth. Although she had seemed to me then a more calculating and ruthless per-

son than was now being portrayed, she had also seemed a more intelligent and interesting one, whose life could not possibly have become as dry as these two biographers were making it. Brown had not known her; and among his pages especially the phases of her life lay like pressed flowers, with sap long gone and color dim. There were better specimens pressed in the second book; but from Miss Lewis, who had known her well, how could there come only this transcript of a life appearing for the most part dogged, dull, artificial? Where was the gusto, the joy, the warmth, the great joining with the will of spring, which must come again and again to anyone? Had this life been always literary, never wholly human?

And then I began Miss Sergeant's book—and here was the life I wanted to know about, here was 'Willa Cather living,' here was the person present behind the young woman I had met at the turn of the century. It is right enough for Miss Lewis to note, "She had a poet's attitude toward weather, to her it was one of the rich, contributive constituents of life," or to remark, "She loved people. She had a gift for immediately creating a personal relationship of some kind with anyone she met. . . . Perhaps it was her instant recognition of their common humanity, of the fact that their claim on life was equal to her own." Such statements unbacked are of as minor use to make a vital portrait as are Mr. Brown's documentations. But when Miss Sergeant speaks, it is not statement, it is occurrence. Miss Cather comes to life at the first meeting: "Her boyish, enthusiastic manner was disarming, and as she led me through the jostle of the outer office, I was affected by the resonance of her Western voice and by the informality of her clothes—it was as if she rebelled at urban conformities." And then: "The door closed behind us with a click bringing me face to face with an—adversary? In the sudden hush and aloneness, like animals in a wood, we stared, making the secret circle around one another. Was it the circle of acceptance? A lively sense of clash and curiosity rose between us

like smoke from a new fire." And again: "This Willa Cather filled the whole space between door and window to brimming, as a man might do," which is better than Rebecca West's apt describing of the Cather quality as "mountain-pony sturdiness." Miss Sergeant sees and easily describes the surface; she also sees through the surface into the nerves and thoughts of people and can express what she finds. Furthermore she not only makes her reader see with her but ponder on what is seen. Her writing echoes her subject and then echoes it again. Her portrait of Mr. S. S. McClure is both flesh and spirit. To anyone who knew Miss Ida Tarbell's "benign, searching look" the three words are as unforgettable as the three about Miss Cather's "blithe made-in-Nebraska look." And then the latter's "eye-in-every-pore quality that took possession of her when she was bent on her own ends." Again, "she slouched her hat farther over her eyes and sat there like a stone," and, concerning the retreats from New York to Nebraska or New Mexico, or from Nebraska or New Mexico to New York or Grand Manan, "she retreated obliquely." You feel the echoing pulses in Miss Sergeant's descriptions, her narrative; you feel them also in her generalizations such as: "Single women making their way to individual destinies—who in the home circle understands them? If they try to share what they have found in their further reach, who wants it?"

The fact that Miss Sergeant is not afraid to criticise her friend adversely now and then, to see weaknesses as well as strength, rather draws the reader to Miss Cather than estranges him from her. Midway in this third book I found myself wondering why I had remembered resentfully for fifty years Miss Cather's cold harshness in refusing to let us withdraw from publication, in *McClure's Magazine*, "The Birthmark" which friends of hers assured us at a tense session with her in Mr. McClure's office might ruin the life, even by suicide as in the story, of another friend of hers and theirs upon whose disfigurement and dilemma it was based. I can hear her now, saying briskly: "My art is more

important than my friend." The story was published; and friend, as well as art, survived. Miss Sergeant, though she has made no reference to this episode, has so presented and explained Miss Cather that my pity which had long lasted for the friend has shifted to the author.

It was soon after this point where I paused midway through Miss Sergeant's book, the year in the record being 1920, that its lustre began to fail for me, the fault not Miss Sergeant's, but Miss Cather's, for whom, as she herself confessed, the world then broke in two. For her feeling this breakage so deeply, Miss Sergeant suggests reasons other than the world's condition. Perhaps, she says, it was founded on the "poet's response to life, including the typical sense of the lyrical poet that youth and the emotions of youth, because of their great intensity and simplicity, surpass all other emotions." "Yet," continues Miss Sergeant, "her ear seems very much less acute in poetry" and might have cited in extreme proof Miss Cather's comparatively youthful but certainly decrepit dedication in "The Song of the Lark."

On uplands,
At morning,
The world was young, the winds were free;
A garden fair,
In that blue desert air,
Its guest invited me to be.

Pursuing her theory that the break in Miss Cather's life came with realization of lost youth, Miss Sergeant quotes from her author a prose dictum on youth's fecundity: "The individual possesses this power for only a little while. He is sent into the world charged with it, but he can't keep it a day beyond his allotted time. He has his hour when he can do, live, become. If he devoted these years to caring for an aged parent—God may punish him but Nature will not forgive him." Not as if God had punished what became in Miss Cather actual filial devotion but as if her "allotted time" of necessary youth had passed, her biographer

notes a "spring, now frozen over in talk by fame, or busyness, or just taciturnity," with the former fervors recurring but rarely. And a particularly pertinent and revealing memory follows: "I never heard the sound of a radio or a musical recording in her apartment and only once the sound of a spoken record. That was the romantic voice of Edward the Eighth, abdicating his throne for love." Miss Sergeant might have wondered if her friend were speaking truly when she said, "Life began for me when I ceased to admire and began to remember." Was it life that began then or a lonely kingdom? Elation only in memory is a single stirrup.

Miss Lewis says in her Introduction: "I have written about Willa Cather as I knew her; but with the feeling that it is not in any form of biographical writing, but in art alone, that the deepest truth about human beings is to be found." She means, I judge, that Miss Cather's personality and life cannot be better presented than in the art of the author's writings, that art has reasons reason cannot know; which is partially but not wholly true. She forgets that there is an especial art in biography too and that the art of biography can sometimes by-pass the art of story-telling, that for rounded revelation of "the deepest truth" about himself or herself, one artist sometimes needs the presence of another. The fact that Miss Cather's will forbade publication of her letters indicates that she was shy of rounded revelation, that she may have been afraid of the littlenesses which make greatness and that she chose a mirror rather than welcomed the open sky to reflect the feature's of an artist's being. Her forbidding that her stories be used in films is a different matter, because such treatment would mean an outsider's tampering with something which, however ineffective, inferior or inconsistent, she herself had done.

Art, says Mr. Brown, "was early and late for Willa Cather the chief expression of her mind." After quoting from one of her earliest stories, which appeared in a Nebraska college journal in 1892, "When the moon came up, he sighed restlessly and tore the buffalo pea flower with his bare toes," and commenting with

characteristic lameness, "The phrase is not satisfactory; but like many of the unsatisfactory phrases in *Endymion*, and for the same reason, it is full of promise," he quotes from an article printed the following year in the *State Journal* this "explicit statement of her conception of art": "The further the world advances the more it becomes evident that an author's only safe course is to cling to the skirts of his art, forsaking all others, and keep unto her as long as they two shall live. . . . An artist . . . should be among men but not of them, in the world but not of the world." Crudely expressed in her youth, this was a creed to which she adhered through her years. And yet she could write in 1913 about Isadora Duncan a passage which Mr. Brown quotes from *McClure's Magazine*: "I agree with the New York reporter who in summing up Miss Duncan's dancing of *The Rubaiyat* said that on the whole he preferred Omar's lines to Miss Duncan's." Though droll from the New York reporter, this was not droll from Miss Cather, whose serious acceptance of grand opera antics makes the more ironic her dismissal of Miss Duncan's triumph over an ungainly body and a reluctant public, through superb art.

To the art in Miss Cather's volumes all three biographers give painstaking and reverent guidance. As to art in detail and in literary style, Miss Sergeant finds that the following passage from *O Pioneers* "evokes" Nebraska's "Divide" "imaginatively and sensuously" and "makes its symbolic image live for us forgettably, as in a poem":

. . . The furrows of a single field often lie a mile in length, and the brown earth with such a strong, clean smell, and such a power of growth and fertility in it, yields itself eagerly to the plow; rolls away from the shear, not even dimming the brightness of the metal, with a soft, deep sigh of happiness. . . . The grain is so heavy that it bends towards the blade and cuts like velvet.

There is something frank and joyous and young in the open face of the country. It gives itself ungrudgingly to the moods of the season, holding nothing back. Like the plains of Lombardy, it seems to rise a little to meet the sun. The air and the earth are curiously mated and

intermingled, as if the one were the breath of the other. You feel in the atmosphere the same tonic, puissant quality that is in the tilth, the same strength and resoluteness.

Though "as if the one were the breath of the other" is more to my taste than "with a soft, deep sigh of happiness," though I acknowledge Miss Cather's general success in making one feel the atmosphere of her country, and though the people who dwell in it are, I suppose, symbolized by the bodily terms of the writing, this elected passage does not strike me as being indicative of a great artist. It is not Miss Cather's individual style, nor any steady sureness of literary art, which for me makes her work memorable, so much as the cumulative effect of what she is writing about, be it places or persons, and in the long run—despite frequently inept expression—her ability to make that interest count. She seems to me in this respect, though not in what she has called "overfurnishing," to be like Theodore Dreiser. I prefer her naturalness to her "art," though I quickly acclaim both qualities when she gives the sense of a person's whole life in the final four lines of *Lucy Gayheart* or the presence of Nebraska earth and moonlight in a passage like this from the short story, "Two Friends":

The road, just in front of the sidewalk where I sat and played jacks, would be ankle-deep in dust, and seemed to drink up the moonlight like folds of velvet. It drank up sound too; muffled the wagon-wheels and hoof-beats; lay soft and meek like the last residuum of material things,—the soft bottom resting-place. Nothing in the world, not snow mountains or blue seas, is so beautiful in moonlight as the soft, dry summer roads in a farming country, roads where the white dust falls back from the slow wagon-wheel.

When I first met Miss Cather, I had a quick sense that, though she was only seven or eight years older than I, her child-like smile was set, as by a jeweller, in an elderly, too authoritative face and that the elder would never let it go into a laugh or, on the other hand, feel it graven with tragic vision of magnificent darkness. I had a prescience that she took herself, not life but herself, too

seriously to admit and enjoy the health of humor; and I still think that if she had maintained her child-like response to openness of countryside and people, to human mastery of circumstance and of self against raw odds, and yet at the same time been able to laugh down the world's mischief, as Chaucer or Shakespeare or George Meredith or Mark Twain laughed it down (but after all what woman?), she would not have felt in 1920 that the world had broken in two any more than it had always broken. No wonder she repined, the smile dead, the laugh unborn. Her own life, in her forties, was what was breaking in two, through inner rather than outer forces, and not so much with the passing of youth as with the discovery that even the finest art man could create would not be the entirety of his being. The world was not behaving for her as she had planned it. War and death and change had always been. The break in her own world was not due to repetition of chronic human tragedy, nor chiefly due to what Miss Sergeant defines as "conflict between the brave ideals of our pioneer ancestors and mounting materialism." It was due, I am convinced, to her middle-aged suspicion that if there had been less art in her life, there might have been more life in her art. About that art she continued to care deeply, rightly, and sometimes bitterly but seldom if ever with the healing humor which, better than any other gift except love or faith, makes one's proportion to the universe tolerable. Bare of humor, and with love hurt for her by time and death, she turned in her latter years to a given faith; but such faith apparently failed to warm her. And in her facing of disappointments, as Miss Sergeant says about the builder's death in *Alexander's Bridge*, "the great chorus of tragedy failed."

Sherman Paul

HAWTHORNE'S AMBIGUITIES

OF THE many critics of Hawthorne, none has studied his work so "absolutely," so much without reference to the author, his contemporaries, or his times as has Mr. Richard Fogle.¹ Mr. Fogle believes that "Hawthorne is a great writer in absolute terms," a writer, therefore, more in need of elucidation and appreciation than evaluation. For this reason he has kept close to the text, examining image and symbol, structure, character and tone in six representative short stories and the four major novels. Close reading of these texts has been done before, but the value of further readings is that something freshly perceptive is always forthcoming; and although there is a tendency to tease meanings out of the text (as Mr. Empson, the master of ambiguity, has warned us), Mr. Fogle's explications are usually sound, deepening here and there rather than changing the consensus of accepted interpretations.

Mr. Fogle's critical gifts are commonsense, order and lucidity, and a fine tact which keeps him from overreaching the text. But as an example of the new criticism his readings seem to be a little mechanical or a little tame—in need of the stimulus of the larger context of Hawthorne-the-man which would raise the questions of the genesis of Hawthorne's vision and art (cf. studies by F. O. Matthiessen, Charles Feidelson, Mrs. Leavis). Mr. Fogle is best when he puts in relief the themes of the stories and novels and when he poses the problems of their resolutions; thereafter, I think, because of his self-imposed limits, his work is more descriptive than critical.

Mr. Fogle has two other concerns besides elucidation which show his need to reach out beyond textual matters. He wants to say something about Hawthorne's thought, and although he fore-

¹ *Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light and the Dark*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952. ix, 219 pp. \$3.75.

goes judicial criticism, he wants to defend Hawthorne's use of allegory. These aims, he believes, can be furthered by constant attention to the text: how an artist uses image and structure and tone is idea—here one finds his thought; and whether allegory is commendable or not depends on the artistic result—on seeing it at work in the text. All these concerns—the absolute value of Hawthorne's work, his thought and his use of allegory—merge in Mr. Fogle's preoccupation with Hawthorne's ambiguity. Ambiguity, he feels, was not a device for Hawthorne but a "pervasive quality of mind." And here again for Mr. Fogle the text is sufficient witness.

I will not say that Hawthorne is without ambiguity, for ambiguity is present in all literature. But I question whether it was the pervasive quality of Hawthorne's mind, and I turn to Mr. Fogle's final chapter, "Hawthorne's Heaven and Earth," for support. Here, Mr. Fogle shows that Hawthorne's thought was eminently polar: heaven vs. earth, the light vs. the dark, eternity vs. time, simplicity vs. complexity, etc. Hawthorne's *American Notebooks* also show that Hawthorne saw his themes clearly—propositionally—and that his mind tended to view everything as either/or. His understanding restrained his imagination. Unlike Melville he was not adrift on a sea of doubts where everything was by nature ambiguous, where the datum was chaos or ambiguity itself and the central problem one of finding meaning. Hawthorne's universe was fixed; it has the clear structure of his art, and one does not find in it the imagery of flux and motion that abounds in Melville, Poe, Whitman, Emerson and Thoreau. The classification of Hawthorne's themes and characters, for which we are indebted to Randall Stewart, also has a remarkable fixity. And Hawthorne's employment of the minimum number of characters—just enough to fill out the equation of his problem—is another sign, as is, of course, his use of allegory.

The pervasive quality of such a mind, I suggest, was allegory. Hawthorne began with the idea, not the thing or the experience;

he preferred the reflection to the substance, just as he preferred the perfection of heaven to the imperfection of earth. He did not have the "angelic" imagination of Poe, because he felt that that kind of imagination betrayed what he most desired as a man and wished to depict as an artist: a warm, living, human world. Nevertheless, his imagination was sufficiently celestial; and he showed why he deplored its chilly product in his self-analysis of his genius in "The Custom House." Hawthorne recognized the lawlessness of the symbolic imagination at the same time that he knew that his unsubstantial art was the result of his "peephole" relations to the world, of his abdication from the "warm reality" of life. When he was drawn towards symbolism he applied the brake of allegory. He also portrayed the artist as a god, but where Poe acted the role Hawthorne turned away in horror ("The Prophetic Pictures," "Ethan Brand"), knowing his own earthly imperfection and the human cost of isolation. Allegory also had its terrors because it was the work of the "head," and the "head," as Mr. Fogle points out, seeks the perfection and simplicity of heaven often at the expense of the "heart." Poe said in *Eureka* that the plots of God are perfect, acknowledging the pride he had in his own ability to achieve unity of effect. And Hawthorne's skill in the use of allegory, which, Mr. Fogle makes clear, gives his work its firm structure, is what Poe admired in praising the unity of Hawthorne's compositions.

What, then, of the ambiguities that Mr. Fogle finds? Ambiguity in Hawthorne derives from his sense of the complexity of moral reality, from his own earthbound awareness that sin follows from a failure to perceive the difference between appearance and reality. Hawthorne, however, was aware of the difference, and the structure of his work was allegorical. The ambiguities that Mr. Fogle finds are really allegorical too, that is, rational additions to show the complexity of human perception, to fill out or enrich the scheme of a tale, or to palliate the author's propensity to judge from his celestial standpoint. The light and

the dark in "The Maypole of Merry Mount," for example, is not ambiguity, but, like so many of Hawthorne's devices, another way to reinforce the basic allegorical terms of jollity vs. gloom. So, too, the ambiguity of the wavering light in "Young Goodman Brown" is not the reader's but, the protagonist's. There is no ambiguity for the reader; and this is true as well of Hawthorne's use of "the device of multiple choice" in *The Scarlet Letter*: the reader is not in doubt about the meteor, but through other interpretations of it learns how Dimmesdale perceived it. Where the crowd gives various interpretations of the "A" on Dimmesdale's breast, Hawthorne gives the accepted interpretation. The others help us understand the saving humanity of the multitude, just as their earlier comments about Hester on the scaffold make us feel their cruelty. And both instances point out how the meaning of the "A" is determined by perception.

Had ambiguity been the pervasive quality of Hawthorne's mind we could not so easily find his thought. Where he strongly possesses his thought his work has an admirable clarity; and it is a work of richness, too, because every piece does its allegorical work, but always within the terms of his basic theme. "The Artist of the Beautiful" is an example of this successful allegorical complexity; "Rappaccini's Daughter," however, fails just because it is not allegorical enough, because Hawthorne crowded his characters and symbols with multiple meanings that the action cannot reconcile. Where Hawthorne is genuinely ambiguous it mirrors his own confusion or tension of loyalties. One sees this most in his handling of the ancestral theme in the unfinished novels. Here he not only introduces the unmanageable elixir-of-life theme, but feels the need to obscure his work with the claptrap of the Gothic. Hawthorne's work, finally, is more resonant than most allegory because, if he conceived it as a god, he tried to enrich it as a man: he was an artist fighting for his humanities; and his art, schematic and cold as it often is, never belies human experience.

Gerald Weales

OLD LETTERS, SAME SHAW, NEW IMPETUS

THE VALUE of the letters of Bernard Shaw and Mrs. Patrick Campbell¹ does not lie in those qualities that would appear most obviously to belong to them, in those on which the sales are probably based. As gossip, the letters are unsatisfying because they never really solve the famous puzzle about the exact nature of the Shaw-Campbell love affair. As a literary production, they are deficient, despite beautiful individual letters of Shaw's (e.g., the wonderful one on the death of his mother), because they lack the unity necessary for a romance; the totality fails because the letters sputter out into a now-and-again correspondence, because they return insistently to the nagging question of publication, and, most of all, because they are personal and so are full of the cryptograms that grow up between any two intimates. Even as theatrical history, the letters are seldom rewarding because the references to actors and playwrights are fleeting, and depend often on opinions which are known to the writer and the recipient, but not to the reader.

The letters may finally be most valuable if used as a chisel to help knock off some of the encrusted critical misconceptions of Shaw and his plays. Although a few sensible and determined critics and an increasing number of producers recognize just how fine a playwright Shaw is, he still suffers under the burden of Shavian mythology. Shaw writes problem plays; Shaw's characters are mechanical dolls designed to express his own strange ideas. This view of Shaw keeps recurring in columns of praise and in columns of damnation, in essays, in textbooks, incessantly. All the evidence of Shaw's plays seems to be ignored by those who keep repeating these pseudo-Shavian truths, perhaps because it is

¹ *Bernard Shaw and Mrs. Patrick Campbell: Their Correspondence*, edited by Alan Dent. New York: Knopf, 1952. xvii, 385 pp., xiii. \$5.00.

so comfortable to label a man's work as you would a jar of jelly; it is no longer necessary to think and if the mind of the reader is closed enough, the essential quality of the play can slip away from him, leaving just enough dross behind to confirm him in his mistaken identity. He is like Woolcott Gibbs in the presence of Shakespeare, a picture of facile determination, a man who imagines that because his blinds are down the sun has failed to rise. Perhaps the implications of these letters will work where the massive testimony of the plays has failed; the insinuating nature of a volume which seems to be designed to do something else—to titillate or to delight—may slip up on the reader, catch him unaware and change an opinion for him before he can get his guard up. If the letters do this they are well worth the trouble of the Janson print and the fine paper, of Alan Dent's editorial busyness and Warren Chappell's charming dustjacket.

According to the doctrine, then, Shaw should be a writer of problem plays. Harlan Hatcher, for example, in that wonderful mixture of fact and nonsense that characterizes most textbook commentaries, calls Shaw a pamphleteer and a thesis dramatist; the occasion for the remark was an introduction in his collection *Modern Dramas* to one of Galsworthy's plays, and this as late as 1941. Certainly Shaw is a pamphleteer and a good one, but there is little point in confusing his pamphlets with his plays. Often enough a Shaw preface is only vaguely related to the play that it introduces, is completely dissociated from it, or is in actual contradiction to it. The Shaw of the prefaces, the crusader and propagandist, may bring all the powers of his reason into action against what he considers a social or economic evil, but Shaw as an artist must and does recognize that human beings and characters in plays who have any reality cannot be reasonable continually. Why even that paragon of rationality, Shaw's Caesar, indulges in a gratuitous and unreasonable vanity; he wears an oak wreath to cover his bald spot. If Shaw's plays are thesis dramas, why is it so difficult to decide what the thesis is? John Gassner, whose many

sensible comments on Shaw indicate that he really knows better, lets himself say in *A Treasury of the Theatre*, "His *Major Barbara* proved a blunt indictment of philanthropy as a mere facade for a profit-minded social order responsible for the very miseries it tries to alleviate." Is that why people cry in the theatres when Bill Walker puts his face alongside that of Major Barbara, after Undershaft has bought her illusions, and says, "Wot prawce selvytion nah?" It is true that Shaw often seemed to accept the idea of art as a tool of social action, but, so far as his work for the theatre is concerned, it remained an idea. As a critic he does not view plays in that narrow sense; as an artist he does not produce them, except in a few unhappy cases, such as *Geneva*, which in one of the letters he calls "a horrible play," but one that he had to write. A thesis is not the same as an idea, of course. Shaw deals with philosophy, politics and ethics, but his plays never become philosophic, political or moralistic in a doctrinaire sense. In the letters he speaks often of his plays in terms of characters or, less often, of plot, but never of message.

Nor are these characters, as Mrs. Campbell called them in 1917 after hearing a reading of *Heartbreak House*, "mere mouth-pieces." The more sophisticated of the mere-mouthpiece critics discard the possibility that Shaw's characters are mechanical in the restricted sense of embodying various points of view so that one may win a three or five act discussion. They are more likely to say that the structure of the play, the working out of the Shavian paradox, the necessary development of the theatrical dialectic demand that the character become a voice and not a person. Even Eric Bentley, a sympathetic critic, falls into the trap of setting up too neat a pattern of Shavian action for the plays. What Bentley, in his *Bernard Shaw*, calls the struggle between the vital and the mechanical is just his recognition of the Shavian form given to that conflict which is generally accepted—these days in Hegelian terms, although it must be as old as the *agon*—as necessary to any kind of drama. Bentley gives ammunition to the advo-

cates of mere-mouthpiecism by assuming that the reality of Shavian characters exists somehow despite the frame of the play (he almost makes Shaw an automatic writer; shades of Anna Goodwill!), instead of recognizing that the peculiar nature of the struggle rises out of the characters themselves.

The letters give proof of Shaw's preoccupation with his characters as people and not as ideas, although a performance of even so weak a play as *Mrs. Warren's Profession* should make that proof unnecessary. Shaw's relationship to his characters becomes clear as he talks about them and, more importantly, as he becomes them. Mrs. Campbell has said, ". . . you beget your dramatis personae like God . . ." and Shaw always speaks of his characters as if that were so. He is continually on guard lest Mrs. Campbell or some other actor turn one of his characters into someone other than the person he created. He always calls the characters by name, perhaps because he is talking to an actress who must think of plays in terms of roles, but the affection which surrounds the names, the idiosyncrasies that build up around them ("a most parsonic parson" he says of Morell) are more natural to people than to points of view. He has put many of the people that he knew into the plays; Mrs. Campbell alone, as he admits in the letters, gave him Eliza, Hesione, Orinthia. Basing a character on a real person does not necessarily assure that the character will be real or believable, but it precludes the possibility of thinking of the character only as an abstract idea.

And Shaw is his characters in these letters. Sometimes, as Frank Harris said in his biography of Shaw, probably with a sneer, he "reads to me like Eugene Marchbanks on a busman's holiday." He does speak with the excessive poeticisms that seem proper to Marchbanks. He also speaks with the hurt pomposity of Morell, the uncertain assurance of John Tanner, the delphic authority of Undershaft, the wry and sometimes hopeful pessimism of Captain Shotover. He is sometimes as intelligently kind as Caesar, sometimes as brutal and blunt as Bill Walker. He is so foolish at

times that we would not be surprised if, like Dolly Cusins, he carried a bass drum in the Salvation Army to be near his sweetheart—although Stella Campbell would never have been Major Barbara. He is as careful as Britannus, as extravagant as Dick Dudgeon. He is always and insistently Higgins to Mrs. Campbell's Eliza, although, like the Eliza of the play, she never really lets him create her after the image in his mind. All of this could mean no more than that Shaw was capable of the same facility in his personal letters that he brought to his plays. However, since the switches in tone and style, which almost seem like switches in character, accompany obvious and genuine emotions, since they express joy, love, understanding, compassion, pain, futility, they become the expression of a human being in human situations. Whether Shaw mirrors the characters or the characters reflect him, there is an exchange of humanity somewhere along the line, and the reader who is moved by these qualities in Shaw's letters may begin to look in the characters for the reality that the letters imply.

This continued emphasis on the humanity of Shaw's characters is a tactical device, a grandstand play designed to save them from the curse of being labeled as ideas. As such it is an overstatement. They are not just creations who sit around being human beings. They are believable characters set in a particular plot, the action of which is concerned with ideas, emotions and events; they are, in short, part of a play. Shaw says to Mrs. Campbell before the opening of *Pygmalion*, when it looks as though she is not going to be quite the Eliza he wants, "I give up in despair that note of terror in the first scene which collects the crowds and suddenly shews the audience that there is a play there, and a human soul there, and a social problem there, and a formidable capacity for feeling in the trivial giggler of the comic passages." These are all necessary, and if too great attention is riveted on the social problem and not enough on the human soul, the play will be incomplete.

These letters are chiefly valuable, then, because they send the reader back to the plays to find that he never had to go to the letters at all to know that Shaw was a human being interested in human beings; and to remind him that more than a pamphleteer, Shaw is a playwright and an artist.

BRIEF REVIEWS

The Fields Were Green: A New View of Bryant, Whittier, Holmes, Lowell, and Longfellow, with a Selection of Their Poems, by George Arms. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1953. 246 pp. \$4.50.

WHATEVER else can be said of *The Fields Were Green*, it is at least a much needed book. Increasingly during the past half-century, the five poets studied here have been treated as distinctly sub-literary figures, occasionally interesting to the biographer or literary historian but well outside the province of the serious critic. Though all save Bryant are the subjects of recent full-length investigations, emphasis in every case has fallen upon their lives rather than their texts. Even so pretentiously comprehensive a survey as the *Literary History of the United States* comes close to ignoring the actual poetry of Bryant, Whittier, Holmes, Lowell, and Longfellow, and it almost scrupulously avoids any evaluation of their material. The truth is that the household poets are memorized in the schoolroom, skimmed in the college survey course, and elsewhere either forgotten or dismissed with contempt. Yet it is Professor Arm's contention that the best of their work not only endures but that its lasting value can be demonstrated by bringing to bear upon it the principles and techniques of modern literary criticism. He makes no claims of absolute greatness for any of the writers. It is a pleasure to report that he does *not* use them in order to flog the presumed excesses of contemporary poetry. But by carefully defining the nature of their particular achievement and then by testing that achievement through a series of meticulously close readings, he adds immeasurably to their stature as artists.

Actually his method is two-fold. He prints in full a number of selections from all five poets, including standard things ("Thanatop-

sis," "The Chambered Nautilus," *Snowbound*, etc.) but also poems such as Lowell's "The Cathedral" which are far too rarely anthologized and others, like Longfellow's *The Falcon of Ser Federigo* or Lowell's *Fitz Adam's Story*, which seem not to be anthologized at all. Between the selections appear critical essays, devoted primarily to an intensive examination of the accompanying works. Thus *The Fields Were Green* becomes at once a highly selective anthology and a book of criticism, so arranged that judgments and interpretations may be checked against the full context to which they refer. For the most part the essays are given over to explication and formal analysis. A particularly skillful exegete, Professor Arms is at his very best when he traces out and interprets the color-imagery in Lowell's "To the Dandelion" or Holmes's use of the imagery of building in "The Living Temple." He is similarly successful when handling problems of drama and of structure; and the discussion of Bryant's shifting narrator (from poet to nature and back to poet in "Thanatopsis"), or the differentiation between Longfellow's two- and three-stage structures (scene and extended figure in the purer poems, scene, figure, *and* moral in the more didactic ones) are both especially acute. Arguing that we slight the household poets because of a failure to read them attentively, he consistently turns up examples of irony, ambiguity, and complexity of theme, examples invariably reasoned and never forced.

There is of course a certain amount of unevenness in the essays themselves. To me, the sections on Bryant and Longfellow seemed most satisfying, the ones on Lowell and Holmes only a little less so, while the study of Whittier was questionable at least. Indeed, it tends to underscore what is probably Professor Arms's major shortcoming. His critical standards are of the eye rather than the ear; always sensitive to image and idea, drama and form, he pays scarcely any attention to metrics. Yet the mark of Whittier's badness as a poet is, precisely, his grating rhythm. However adroit, the mere use of prepositions can never offset the metrical roughness of "Barbara Frietchie"; nor does the realization that "Maud Muller" contains more irony than sentiment overbalance its dearth of poetic qualities. I also wonder whether the belief that "Barbara Frietchie" belongs "with Melville's 'Sheridan at Cedar Creek' and with no other narrative poem of the war" does not detract unjustly from some of the finer things in Whitman's *Drum Taps*.

As for Holmes and Lowell, I think Professor Arms might profitably have taken fuller note of their theories of composition. Though Holmes was a tireless critic of Transcendentalism, and Lowell, after early exposure to the movement, broke with it, both retained a theory of poetry which we regard as Transcendental or Coleridgean. Repeatedly, Holmes insisted that the highest order of poetry is composed during a kind of spiritual fit, and Lowell concluded that an external genius masters him who writes the true poem. But where for an Emerson or a Coleridge this doctrine explained, perhaps even prompted, the creative impulse, for a lesser poet and one not given to other Transcendentalist assumptions it could easily have far different consequences. It could become an excuse for faulty craftsmanship and inferior performance; it could become the symbol of futility and frustration. And that it did in fact have these results is, it seems to me, the answer to two problems which Professor Arms raises but never entirely explains—Holmes's uneasiness as a poet, the struggle of Lowell to work in a vein loftier than his abilities permitted.

Still, there is no detracting from the general excellence of *The Fields Were Green*. It serves a purpose, and serves it well. An example of rigorous, penetrating criticism brought to an area where real criticism of any sort long since languished, the book will send many of us back to a re-reading of the household poets. And this time, I imagine, we shall examine them more carefully and more appreciatively.—C.G.

In Cold Hell, In Thicket, by Charles Olson. Boston: *Origin 8* (Winter 1953). 66 pp. 75¢.

Robert Ernst Curtius has described Charles Olson's talent as returning us to that same presence, of force, which is evident in a Mayan glyph. The point is that Mr. Olson's work represents a sole and major content in contemporary American poetry.

This content is most clearly demonstrated in one of the several long poems here included, *The Kingfishers*. Its first line gives us the basic preoccupation: "What does not change / is the will to change . . ."

Not one death but many,
not accumulation but change, the feed-back proves, the
feed back is the law
Into the same river no man steps twice
When fire dies air dies
No one remains, nor is, one

It is this change, and the force which demands it, which hold the only 'continuity' possible. If a culture is to maintain itself, it can do so only by a use of this force, and the problem is as Mr. Olson puts it:

I am no Greek, hath not th'advantage.
And of course, no Roman:
he can take no risk that matters,
the risk of beauty least of all.

But I have my kin . .

Despite the discrepancy (an ocean courage age)
this is also true: if I have any taste
it is only because I have interested myself
in what was slain in the sun

I pose you your question:

shall you uncover honey / where maggots are?

I hunt among stones

Such problems of change, and origin, are common to the American temper, but their occurrence in American poetry has become less and less frequent. Or, perhaps better, they have been absorbed in other attitudes or left as "European," i.e., relating to a past shared in effect with poets either in England or on the continent. But this is a simplification of a useless sort. The American, for example, has this reference to contend with:

of the two who first came, each a conquistador, one healed,
the other tore the eastern idols down, toppled
the temple walls, which, says the excuser
were black with human gore)

hear
hear, where the dry blood talks
where the old appetite walks

He can only quiet it, by confronting it. Similarly, the whole area of how we now live, or can live, is part of Mr. Olson's attack. The title poem is a form of 'lyricism' brought from the instant, or the single and abrupt emotion, to bear on all there is for any man, or woman—"Or, if it is me, what / he has to say . . ." So it is that:

. . hell now
is not exterior, is not to be got out of, is

the coat of your own self, the beasts
 emblazoned on you And who
 can turn this total thing, invert
 and let the ragged sleeves be seen
 by any bitch or common character? Who
 can endure it where it is, where the beasts are met,
 where yourself is, your beloved is, where she
 who is separate from you, is not separate, is not
 goddess, is, as your core is,
 the making of one hell

The value of any poem is not at all the fact of any technique, however much it is necessary to be the master of just such things. For the reader, beyond the way a poem is written or made, is the ultimate impact of its *meaning*, what it either can or does mean—to us. Mr. Olson's poetry provides for much more than delight.—R. C.

Rome and a Villa, by Eleanor Clark. New York: Doubleday and Company, 1952. 315 pp. \$4.00.

This review is a little late. "Consider Canopus, that long phallic valley south of the baths, with the room-checked canyons along the sides and the Serapeum wedged tight and round in the cleft at the end." So it goes. This is the wealthy man's Henry Miller. It is also a poet's paradise. For the burnished-haired writer is obviously a frustrated poet. She writes like this: "Palaces: stairs and ceilings." Then she talks about "our civilization" and "toilets and closets." This book came out almost simultaneously with the first volume, and not after the last, of *Le Deuxième Sexe* by Simone de Beauvoir. There is a comparison there, and I might as well make it. I know of no two more intelligent women writing.

The book is also the poet's and the rich man's Baedeker. And strictly North American in viewpoint, mind you. "We are not used to having the focus of a room over our heads either." This should put an end to all travel books. There is constant invention on each page, almost insistent at times. You feel a woman surrounded by Italians, and you "passionately measure whatever ancient walls and columns and arches they have not yet destroyed."

At last reading of magazines, the book was in its 4th or 5th edition. It should go into more. It is as interesting as Baedeker and it teaches you a lot about what North Americans feel in any country. Women, that is. And there are so few women who are wonderful writers.—G. N.

The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole, by Baron Corvo, with a foreword by W. H. Auden and an introduction by A. J. A. Symons. New York: New Directions, 1953. xvi + 299. \$4.00.

Some of the pages of this book are fine needlework; others are blind cobbling: but all are absorbing. The "good" pages give lessons in writing technique, the "bad" ones in psychology, and both depend upon each other for existence. Corvo (Frederick Rolfe) was right in thinking that his Other Half was perhaps a position rather than a person—the position of "evil." But he was unable or unwilling to face the fact, and so the paranoia (necessarily a trap for the homosexual in Anglo-American society), and so too the daydream vision of his Other Half as a young hermaphrodite so pure and perfect as to be evil, i.e., destructive of reality.

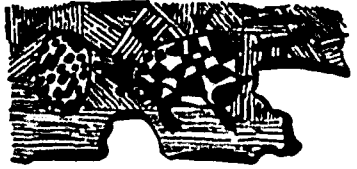
As if his own problems were not enough, society offered Corvo freakshow glasses, and he put them on. What he saw through them is not surprising, nor is it odd that he mainly was unable to distinguish between one person/action and another: society acts as an intangible whole; the person set upon can fight it only as a tangible particular.

When people are villains, nature becomes a hero. It is only when he is not staring at people or people's actions that Corvo's vision becomes 20/20—or more like 30/30, as in his description-through-reception of the effects of an earthquake at sea, or of Venice at any time of day or night. In such sections the honed and whetted verbal weapon turns to create domestic beauty.—K. L.

Genevieve Porterfield

A GUIDE TO THE LITERATURE OF THE SOUTHWEST,

XLVI



THIS BIBLIOGRAPHY attempts to list, with such thoroughness as time and resources permit, current materials dealing with the Southwest. The Southwest, as here defined, includes all of New Mexico, Arizona and Texas, and parts of Utah, Oklahoma, Colorado and California.

In order to conserve space, items from periodicals that are indexed in the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*, the *Education Index*, the *Industrial Arts Index* and the *Agricultural Index* have been eliminated.

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