

POETRY

LONDON-NEW YORK

EDITED BY TAMBIMUTTU



Calder 56

W. H. AUDEN • LOUISE BOGAN • JEAN GARRIGUE • GEORGE BARKER
ROY CAMPBELL • E. E. CUMMINGS • WALTER DE LA MARE
LAWRENCE DURRELL • BABETTE DEUTSCH • RICHARD EBERHART
WILLIAM EMPSON • ROBERT GRAVES • ARTHUR GREGOR
HORACE GREGORY • CHRISTOPHER LOGUE • W. S. MERWIN
MARIANNE MOORE • SIR HERBERT READ • STEPHEN SPENDER
DYLAN THOMAS • CLAIRE McALLISTER • MARYA ZATURENSKA and others.

Cover By Alexander Calder

NO. 1
MARCH-APRIL

PLNY

75 CENTS

The first number of this magazine was made physically possible through the generosity of Mr. Dwight Ripley.

Others who have sent donations of \$100.00 to \$5.00 include: Mrs. W. Murray Crane, Mrs. Maurice Green, Mr Victor Weybright, Mrs. Hugh Bullock. We wish to thank them all.

We also acknowledge with many thanks the kind help given us by our friends with the office work: Amelia Green, Selwyn Kittredge, Carolyn de Castro, Marilyn Gant, Fritz Huchting, Safia Tyabjee Tambimuttu, Helen Heller and Cynthia Morehouse.

This magazine is published by The Poetry Institute Incorporated. *Chairman:* Winthrop Palmer; *Directors:* Louise Bogan, James Oliver Brown, Horace Gregory, John Heller, Charles Frederick Hoffman III, Selwyn Kittredge, James McGee; *Treasurer:* Tambimuttu; *Secretary:* Ward Morehouse.

Some Comments on Poetry London:

"Strictly within the field of poetry the magazine that has moved the most mountains is Tambimuttu's *Poetry London*. . . . For all the years of the war he published the best verse and the newest verse in England. Without Tambimuttu the picture might have been different, more like America where the generation that came up during the war is still struggling for a hearing."—Kenneth Rexroth in *New British Poets* (New Directions, N. Y.).

"The handsomest 'intelligent' poetry magazine I know of. . . . *You've* shown, in your introduction, how much you believe in the good of poetry and in the mischief of cliques, rackets, scandal schools, menagerie menages, amateur classes of novitiate plagiarists. More subscribers and power to you."—Dylan Thomas in *Poetry London* No. 2.

"*Poetry London* is always exciting . . . is the best unofficially produced poetry display of the year."—Stephen Spender in *The Observer*, London.

"Handsomest of and most celebrated of existing British poetry magazines."—*Canadian Poetry Magazine*.

"Quite the most important periodical of its kind that we have had for many years."—*Catholic Herald*, London.

SUBSCRIPTION FORM

To POETRY LONDON - NEW YORK
338 East 87th Street, New York, N. Y.

I enclose \$5.00 for a year's subscription (six issues):

I wish to send a gift subscription to:

R. Pathmanaba Iyer
27-B, High Street,
Plaistow
London E13 0AD

POETRY LONDON - NEW YORK

Editor: TAMBIMUTTU

Associate Editor: WINTHROP PALMER

Managing Editor: CHRISTOPHER MOORSOM

Advertising Manager: ANNE SHEFFIELD

VOL. 1, No. 1

MARCH-APRIL, 1956

The first number of this magazine is inscribed to the memory of the late Prof. R. C. Archibald of Brown University, Providence, R. I. It was his keen and dedicated interest in Poetry London, that was the starting point for the founding of Poetry London-New York.

First Letter

Poetry London - New York, No. 1 comes out at a time when neither city has a magazine devoted entirely to poetry, either through carelessness and indifference, or the inability of editors to secure the material the public will pay money to read. This was the confession of an editor, whose magazine had to close shop recently.

We have assembled together between these covers the work of some of the best new and established writers from America and Britain. We hope the public will be as glad to possess these poems, as we were to receive them. A magazine could die from a lack of interest from the most worthwhile writers themselves, when it begins to exude the musty depression of a mausoleum, or shop full of stuffed birds, and not the heady mountain-air of exhilaration we associate with the truly creative and new. We are a magazine devoted to *new* work from known and unknown writers.

We hope the regular and, we think, unique juxtaposition in the same magazine, of the elegantly conceived and intricately, suavely executed British forms, with the adventuresome, boisterous and innovating American (we owe Pound and Eliot to America) will have beneficial and therapeutic effects on both sides of the Atlantic. Most of the issues will also feature poems from India, but for the time being, until the special Indian number of *Poetry* (Chicago), for which I am guest editor, appears, Indian representation, unlike in that august institution, the United Nations, must be regretfully withheld. But, since this is the first number, and I have wished to set the right tone at the beginning, and give our venture its correct bearings, at the start, I have included three Indian poems at the end of the poetry section.

Now for our policy. The old magazine I edited, *Poetry London*, was chiefly concerned with keeping a clear head and

a level point of view in the face of lopsided "movements", vested interests and political coteries. In Britain, we survived Objective Reporting, The New Apocalypse, The New Romanticism; and at a time, when other editors favored the already established, or declared outright that there were no new writers, we built up the reputation of a whole new generation of poets. Kathleen Raine, for instance, or G. S. Fraser, Norman Nicholson, W. S. Graham, John Malcolm Brinnin, David Gascoyne, Keith Douglas, Anne Ridler, Lawrence Durrell, Bernard Spencer, Sidney Keyes, Michael Hamburger, and Tom Scott, either made their first London appearance in the magazine, or had their books published by Editions Poetry London.

Our policy was to throw our weight on the side which would restore a balanced view, and would be the most beneficial to the reception of modern verse. During the 'Thirties, for instance, when the witty, the commonsensical and the scientific technological approach to poetry was generally popular, we tried to focus attention on the poetry of Walter de la Mare, Dylan Thomas, Stephen Spender, or George Barker. In *Poetry London*, No. 1 (January 1939) I wrote of Dylan Thomas as a "great poet" purely in the sense that here was a poet who dared to emphasize the sensuous, the emotional, or even the purely incantatory approach to poetry, as in much folk poetry. But the critics did not like it, since "Objective Reporting" was the fashion. Later when the poets of the New Romanticism and the New Apocalypse upset the balance we printed more of the "Objective Reporters".

That, actually, will be our policy for our new magazine—for Britain or America—

to ignore the poetical theorizing and to get at the best poetry of our time, from established and new writers, and at the same time neutralize the results of extremist movements. Today, in America, as well as Britain, there is much theorizing and criticism, but precious little new poetry; and in Britain there is a tendency towards a new Georgianism, a versified pastiche, being encouraged, with the established poets of stature being criticised for not conforming to this deliberate distortion of the best that has happened in modern poetry. In Britain there are also the neo-Empsonians (Empson himself has disowned them) as well as the followers of Robert Graves. Some new poets like Thom Gunn are interesting, and we hope to print them (Christopher Logue, also a new poet, is printed in this number). But many of the so-called new poets in Britain are those *Poetry London* rejected from 1939-1951 as not very interesting—and we see no new development in them.

The American scene. There are some poets who are new to me included in this number — Claire McAllister, Kenneth Eisold—he is eighteen—Nelson Bentley, Alice Monks Mears. As we proceed we hope we will find the new American poets of significance. And there is much we want to say in future numbers about the present scene.

A word about the awkward title of the magazine. The foundation of *Poetry London* led to the subsequent foundation of *Poetry Scotland*, *Poetry Ireland*, *Poetry Manchester*, *Poetry Commonwealth*, *Poetry Gibraltar* and *Poetry New York*. We return the compliment now with our new title and we hope that it is a logical and significant development.

TAMBIMUTTU

"ANALYSTS"

They too came Nature's way;
And so
Did Shakespeare, Newton, Michelangelo.

Mind, body, spirit, they;
And none
Of this strange trinity can the others shun—

A subtle and miraculous Three;
Since even in dream
Their tri-twined influences twist and gleam.

Why, then, so dingily
The theme perplex
By strum—strum—strumming on *one* note, called Sex.

WALTER DE LA MARE

THE OTHERS

How few the human frailties we can never
With mere good-humour and a smile annul!
But how, sweet heaven! to exercise the clever?
How dodge the dread contagion of the dull?

WALTER DE LA MARE

THE RIFT

'We argue on of gods, not God,
And might all strife resign,
If only I could find in yours,
What you reject in mine.'

WALTER DE LA MARE

LA MANCHA IN WARTIME

A Land of Crosses, in the law's despite,
Where every chance designs a crucifix.
For the cicadas, in their choir of sticks
And for the horseman, in the kestrel's flight . . .
The kestrel, and the stationary mill,
That sailless hangs upon the tide of war,
Had not this one significance before
With which the merest shadow signs the hill.
Where men have waifed the land with fire and steel
Of what it spreads its arms to represent,
In all their dire abortion of intent,
That symbol is the only thing that's real.
Where widowed of its sign (all they possessed)
The plundered hamlets semaphore their loss,
As in this next, where, half the plain across,
Three giant windmills crucify the west.
Each mule-slow road beneath a plangent sky
Pursues its destination like a ghost,
A station of the cross at every post
In endless repetition filing by.
While to each gust, as to an angry blow,
From post to post, through leagues of groaning wire,
The tons of metal sound their mournful lyre
Vibrating to a thunderstorm of woe—
The Earth, that patient labourer for blows,
It seems, that brays prophetic from the metal,
Defrauded of the life-sufficing nettle
For promises of corn that never grows!
From whose whacked sides, that can support no more,
Its Maker to the madness cries a halt,
Reclaiming from each desecrated vault
The sign its myriad martyrs will restore.
For in these paths blind pilgrims seem to flee
And every road's a search to find the Cross
By nothing more asserted than its loss,
That towers like midnight, and outroars the sea.

ROY CAMPBELL

A SONG WITH REFRAIN

The mid-century rocks, its figures rise—
Madman, hesitant saints, whose eyes
Close on the brutal world and silently
Perform with grace their miracle and depart,
But leave a blessing on the astonished heart.
Time, time alone condones and pardons me.

All lives find their one miracle, to all will come
The angel with the lily wand who cries
(Where none will hear), "Arise and follow me
Among the whirlpools of obscenity
The evils that you feared face you and fly.
Pandora's box is broken, imprisoned demons rise—
Unseen, but half-revealed, life's delicate mystery."
Time, time alone consoles and threatens me.

Soon all the candles burn, soon all our loves are known,
Foeman and friend are one—
Beyond the precinct of the obscuring sun,
Among the olive trees and lilies He
Reveals the oasis in the furthest sea
Bringing the grace that is denied to none
When all is done, done well and none to see—
Time, Time alone has tamed and ravished me.

In the old cities in the furthest sea,
In the wild conflicts, in the withheld sigh,
In troubled visions of futurity,
When mind and soul are dry
I bless the visible world's security.
Even thou, even thou my ancient enemy,
Time, Time alone has charmed and conquered me.

Each season finds its miracle I know,
Where the seed flies where the wind blows
The price is reckoned (Ah the price of blood!)
It is of God and cannot be withstood.
The earth grows like a tree, the heart is free
It too grows old, grows grey, like the old sea
It pays its tribute to mortality.
Time, Time, alone reveals, enlightens me.

MARYA ZATURENSKA

THREE FACES

In half profile, one behind the other,
As in a Greek frieze the edges of horses
One behind the other ; between them
A family resemblance, no more :
Not the multiplied identity
Which in the drunkard's vision spreads and shifts,
Nor the unity of the Trinity.

All three, looming long as the heads of horses,
Are shaped as tears falling upwards in a wind
Whose darkness fashions them, defining
In each the pallid half-light, vast eyes,
Distorting them singly and together to those
Irregularities which are their features.
Chins in their hands, elbows on solid darkness.

So their differences are of darkness,
Whose reflection three times varied in
Their eyes, shows not itself but them
Changing on one hand and on the other
Through gradations which must be infinite ;
And yet their shape it is, and common nature,
And to their partial spectrum the white light.

W. S. MERWIN

For Spring Publication

DECLENSIONS OF A REFRAIN

by ARTHUR GREGOR

New poems by the author of *Octavian Shooting Targets*. Mr. Horace Gregory said of Mr. Gregor in *The Saturday Review*: "No poet under forty in this country has a better command of dramatic form in poetry; and in his poems, several of which are vividly placed within a European setting, no young poet, has shown greater inventiveness in creating new verse forms. He is the only younger poet that I know of who in spirit has the promise of a new and unpredictable avant-garde in America." \$2.00.

PLNY

POETRY LONDON - NEW YORK BOOKS

GALA
(Lago Maggiore)

There was fire on the water that night
Violence and splendour for the common delight
But the stars were false and too slowly fell
To death. Such artifice could not dispel
The sense of endless space, of burning spheres
Expend in a black abyss.

When fires
Are lit by physical friction, some trace
Is left as stigmata on the blank face
Of heaven above us.

Stars go out, but we
Fretted to this same white intensity
By the harsh collision of our hates and loves
Shine only inwardly. Our little globes
Turn their opaque shells on human eyes
And what is born brightly, darkly lives and dies.

HERBERT READ

THE EPIGONI

No use invoking Apollo in a case like theirs ;
The pleasure-loving gods had died in their big chairs
And would not get up again, not one of them, ever,
Though guttural tribes had crossed the Great River,
Roasting their dead and with no word for the yew :
No good expecting long-legged ancestors to
Return with long swords from island paradises ;
They would be left to their own devices
(Supposing they had some) : no point pretending
One didn't foresee the probable ending,
As dog-food or, landless, submerged, a slave :
Meanwhile, how should a cultured gentleman behave ?

It would have been an excusable failing
Had they broken out into womanish wailing
Or, dramatising their doom, held forth
In sonorous clap-trap about Death ;
But, to their honor, a reader will only perceive

That the language they loved was coming to grief,
Expiring in preposterous mechanical tricks,
Epanaleptics, rhopalics, anacyclic acrostics:
To their lasting honor the stuff they wrote
Can safely be spanked in a scholar's foot-note,
Called shallow by a mechanised generation to whom
Haphazard oracular grunts are profound wisdom.

W. H. AUDEN

MOUNTAIN SHRINE NEAR LERICI

Rose of the rocks that loves the mountain dryness
Grows here tall as a garden rose,
The baby broom creeps in the grass with many strange-flowered orchis,
And here, on the dry-sweet mountain plain
Is set the shrine.
Ilex encircle it, their plated leaves
Like armour greaves,
And the cool bead curtains of the olives
Are hung against the hot blue sky.
"Welcome" once was written over the doorway,
"Welcome to men and to all spirits."
A dangerous invitation, long since cancelled.
And yet, if such a welcome could be spoken anywhere
It surely would be here.
The mountains embrace the sea, an alien creed,
The sea bears up the swimmer's head,
And Venus, rising from a turquoise wave
On to white rocks, bequeaths her shrine to Peter.
Flowers rush to the all-distinguishing light,
Each form defined—the open-handed fig-tree,
Arbutus with its emery fruit,
Hermit juniper, each in its proud identity;
And human life spills out of doors—
All is in sight
In the oecumenical light.

O elsewhere, or at other seasons,
Evil spirits menace through the fog,
And we must wall us in and ward off terrors;
The dancing lights will lead us to a bog,
Despair can drown us, even in buoyant waters,
Squalls arise, and the poet sinks like a stone.

But here is the shrine which said
"Everything that lives is good";
And now the dancing spirits are seen
As when the sky sheds diamonds down
That trouble the sea's surface like drops of rain;
Or when, at night,
The valley seems a sky beneath our feet
Where fireflies flash among the trees like stars.

ANNE RIDLER

FOR A HIMALAYAN GRACKLE

Oh what do you do
I said to the bird
Oh what do you do?
That you sit in your cage night and day
Night and day with lacklong eye

That you sit in your cage and sigh
Life denies, denies, and tear
With your beak at your own dark breast,
Oh what do you do, do you do?

You have lost your song, you cry
And you are chained to this small air
In chains malingers joy
You cannot fly. Who did it, who?

You would have it that they did or I
And the fiend resides in someone's cloud
A madness you beat and cry
In your huddled suit you sigh

For the pity of love, the pity of love,
When our woe must begin with whom?
Not with me, say I, nor with me, say you,
And the pity of love asks whom?
And whom? said the bird in his cage, and whom?

JEAN GARRIGUE

SEA-RUCK

Washback of the waters, swirl of time,
Flashback of time, swirl of the waters,

Loll and stroke, loll and stroke,

The world remade, the world broken,
Knocked rhythm, make of the slime,

The surge and control, stroke of the time,
Heartbreak healing in the grime, and groaner

Holding its power, holding the hurl,
Loll and hurl, power to gain and destroy,

The tall destruction not to undo

A saffron inevitable sun, far and near,
Some vast control, beyond tear and fear,

Where the blood flows, and nights go,
Man in his makeshift, there is home

And the dark swells, the everlasting toll,
And being like this sea, the unrolling scroll,

Stroke and loll, loll and stroke, stroke, loll

RICHARD EBERHART

WHAT GIVES

I shake an absolute around the world.
It is this: love never dies. It is alive.
This I tortured out in fifty years.

What others show, what I may know, before
Lung-blasting Death usurps my spiritual theme,
I do not know, but think will show the same.

As after years of rigorous spectacles
When evil mocked, and passion ruled and blazed,
And fear was lurking with a mullein eye,

There is the stealthy health of an hiatus,
Growth to a grandeur, strong and round.
Bring on blessings, Time, stay and sing.

Strength grows and throws around us holy love.
It is this I count on to the end of time.
Love is the end of knowledge, and sublime.

RICHARD EBERHART

PART OF A CHINESE BALLAD

(The author was moving around in the north under the Japanese Occupation, and collected peasant ballads. His own long ballad is in peasant style, and the bit translated here was specially admired because the theme comes in classical poetry but feels natural here; a point the translation can't bring out. The translation is word for word except for the two lines about children, which seem to be part of the point as the word specifically means dolls for children—I do not know the language but could ask about details. The man is going to fight the Japanese, and crosses the stream where it turns because it is wider therefore shallower there. The ballad has also been made into an opera very popular in Peking.)

Now he has seen the girl Hsiang-Hsiang ;
Now back to the guerrilla band.
And she goes with him down the vale,
And pauses at the strand.

The yellow mud is deep and thick
And their feet stick, where the stream turns.
"Make me two models out of this,
That clutches as it yearns.

"Make one of me and one of you,
And both shall be alive.
Were there no magic in the dolls
The children could not thrive.

"When you have made them smash them back ;
They yet shall live again.
Again make dolls of you and me,
But mix them grain by grain.

"So your flesh shall be part of mine
And part of mine be yours.
Brother and sister we shall be,
Whose unity endures.

“Always the sister doll shall cry,
 Made in these careful ways,
Cry on and on, Come back to me,
 Come back, in a few days.”

WILLIAM EMPSON

(Dylan Thomas was a regular contributor to *Poetry London*, and these two poems were his last contributions to its pages. They are reprinted with the permission of the Trustees of the Dylan Thomas Estate since one of them has never before appeared in the form the poet wanted; nor have they appeared in any of his books. On his last birthday in New York, October 27, 1953, the morning of which he spent with this magazine's editor, the poet delivered an amended version of one of these poems. There are two changes to be noted in this poem.)

POEM

Last night I dived my beggar arm
Days deep in her breast that wore no heart
For me alone but only a rocked drum
Telling the heart I broke of a good habit

That her loving, unfriendly limbs
Would plunge my betrayal from sheet to sky
So the betrayed might learn in the sun beams
Of the death in a bed in another country.

DYLAN THOMAS

POEM

Your breath was shed
Invisible to make
About the soiled undead
Night for my sake,

A raining trail
Intangible to them
With biter's tooth and tail
And cobweb drum,

A dark as deep
My love as a round wave
To hide the wolves of sleep
And mask the grave.

DYLAN THOMAS

MEIN KIND KAM HEIM

After Stefan George

My child came home.
The seabreeze still curves through his hair.
His tread still rocks
From fears withstood and his young lust for faring.

The saltbrine spray
Still burns along the bronze bloom of his cheek:
Fruit quickly ripe
In foreign suns savage with haze and flame.

His gaze is weighed
Already with some secret hid from me
And softly veiled
Since he from spring into our winter trod.

So open burst
This budding forth that almost shy I watched
And forbade mine
The mouth that knew another mouth as kiss.

My arm surrounds
Him who unmoved from me for other world
Blossomed and grew—
My one my own endlessly far from me.

STEPHEN SPENDER

THE HUNTER OF HIS AURORA

Once as the world at midnight was,
So, Evening Venus, sleep beside
The banded priapus of Eden
Who dogs your leaping heart because
The haunt of dreamers is so wide
A kid might slip the horn of Adam.

Then tenderly in morning move
The twin Hesper of your breasts
Into my bridalled hands. O Love
Bind the bands of Orion over
This bed of sky, where never rest
Taurus of his sunrise gorer,
The hunter of his Aurora,
Venus of her hot nest.

GEORGE BARKER

BALLAD OF THE MUSE AT SEA

I lean against a lonely door
Under a black hill.
What are the fallen feathers for
White on the window sill?

It is the seabird of desire
Turned into bitter salt
Come home to roost by a dead fire.
I saw the image melt.

Once, once over the bright-eyed sea
That pinioned symbol rose
So high there were two suns in the sky,
And only golden seas.

The gilded dolphins of my heart
Sprang up the fiery stairs
Into the sunrise. And never to part
Joy went about in pairs.

I felt the mind in a great deep
Roll like a whale possessed
Across the breeding ground of my sleep
And break out of my breast.

Or over the placid glass of youth
Sailed the red swan of love
And recklessly a royal path
Down the long doldrum drove.

So lofty over rock and bar
 A young rainbow hung
I held all hazardous things that are
 Under the arch of my tongue.
Asleep in tempests of the mind
 Such halcyons lay smiling
That every affliction seemed to find
 A pearl of reconciling.
O innocence, O innocence,
 The dove falls from the sky.
O larvae of existence
 Vultures return on high.
This is a sad word here written
 Because it cannot speak
To the one whom I have not forgotten
 Dead many passions back.
O white face at the dark pane
 O wild voice in the cellar
You cry out in a hurricane,
 You supplicate a killer.
I lean against a lonely door
 Under a black hill.
What is that fallen image for
 White on the window sill?

GEORGE BARKER

ODE TO MEMORY

The owl in welkins of old time
 Folds his deep tree
With the weird sisters' cloak and spell.
The country school floats on a damasked sea;
The shelves of Hawthorne are a loom.
 Old hope haunts sleepy horns
That bellow slow by moon and buoy
A sad love reconciled to doom.
The Cascades' time-aloof blue bourns
 Are the school bell
That summoned me at six, books' new envoy.
 Cool on the coal barn's roof
That rode dismay like a red ark
 I heard the omened hoof

Of eohippus in my head.
 Clear dread
 Rich as Arabia adorns
 The sequent years.
 Memory: complex repair:
 Insatiable linkage of Good Hope and Horn:
 Illustrious repeat the ears adore:
 Knot of keen cares:
 Congress of illusions: diminished bark
 Whose fading sail summons the flown:
 Ruffling hoot: hone:
 Quick ruins where ghosts go to work.
 Faith flares when we can recapitulate
 Early or late
 An owl-deep, unchanged, ordained wariness.
 I acquiesce,
 Sole key
 To appearance and reality.
 The past is all the light below the lash.
 The days are ash
 In a cyclone unless
 Calm memory
 Fills each grain with a love that will atone,
 And actions fall
 Into the real world Shakespeare had long known
 Writing *Ripeness is all*.

NELSON BENTLEY

END OF THE WORLD

When, at a sign, the Heavenly vault entire
 Founders and your accustomed world of men
 Drops through the fundament—too vast a crash
 To register as sound—and you plunge with it,
 Trundling, head over heels, in dark confusion
 Of trees, churches, elephants, railway trains,
 And the cascading seven seas:
 It cannot signify how deep you fall
 From everything to nothing. Nothingness
 Cushions disaster, and this much is sure:
 Some buoyant couch will bear you up at last,
 Alone, alone—but for the succuba.

ROBERT GRAVES

A DEDICATION

Lucilla, saved from shipwreck on the seas,
Dedicates to those who bade her live—
The ocean deities—
Her wringing hair; there's nothing else to give.

Dedicates to those who bade her live
And told her walk on the tall waves with pride,
Her wringing hair; there's nothing else to give
Except the hoar sea-fruit at her side.

Walk out over the black waves with pride.
No sea was ever crossed not crossed in fear.
Her heart that talked to men died;
Who, but the sea gods' hear?

No sea was crossed but crossed in fear.
From a land of slime and shard she gives what is left.
Then may blind love see, so brought ashore,
And she beg, wringing out her hair: Accept.

What from all the flotsam had she kept?
Forgetting salt-stung eyes and tired arms,
She entreats: My seaweed hair, accept.
He goes his way, with fishing nets, and psalms.
Stung eyes, tired arms,
The dark divinities
Go their way, with fishing nets, and psalms,
Plucking lovers from shipwreck on the seas.

CLAIRE MCALLISTER

POEM

Could I bring you where the red West falls
Into the hemlocks, far from any road,
When gunshots split the wind and evil tales
Are hinted at when a disgruntled toad
Croaks out at that orange of a moon,
Then might the night not hunt you. One was spared,
When through the lonely hut of Daniel Boone
A mountain-lion sprang and, crouching, stared,
Until the nerve of either one should break

Each stared at each; it was the cat that crept
Away. O love, I say, let us look straight
At this terror in the heart that one day leapt
And crouches by us and, as coldly, stare.
Why should we have the nerve-strings of a hare?

CLAIRE MCALLISTER

ILIAD

I blame it on an epic
Reading that tumultuous book;
Achilles raged into his tent,
Sent legions spinning like toy tops.
Dogged Agememnon firm, he stamped
With all his love's importunance.

I blamed it on an epic,
That, thrown with his wrath,
My pulse was a hoof
Routing grass,
Kicking wishes. The old world,
Much dust around me, choked.

I blamed it on an epic
Refusing the whims of a world
Always wanting what we cherish.
I'll hold a disobedient sword,
Abused for things I most would shelter,
As when Agememnon took
From him, Achilles' Trojan maid,
Achilles' sweetest Trojan maid.

CLAIRE MCALLISTER

R. Pathmanaba Iyer
27-B, High Street,
Plaistow
London E13 0AD

POEM

over us if (as what was dusk becomes
darkness) innumerably singular
strictly immeasurable nowhere flames
—its farthest silence nearer than each our
heartbeat—believe that love (and only love)
comprehends huger easily beyonds
than timelessly alive all glories we've
agreed with nothing deeper than our minds
to call the stars. And (darling) never fear:
love, when such marvels vanish, will include
—there by arriving magically here—
an everywhere which you've and i've agreed
and we've (with one last more than kiss) to call
most the amazing miracle of all

E. E. CUMMINGS

SEVEN SONNETS

I

Monday's child is full of grace,

The cherubim tune up their instruments.
Our dance begins; with eyes, and after, words.
And soon our limbs are moving around a core,
And we are loved; who were unloved before.
The cherubim tune up their instruments.
She moves her lips: I give her words to sing.
Thus on her tongue my tongue may gently swear,
Love, poetry is my body speaking.
The cherubim tune up their instruments.
I start this sentence on a Winter's day,
To fit our love, and finish it in August.
Mindful, that where she danced and I held say,
Could bring catastrophes that hell repents,
Where cherubim tune up their instruments.

II

Tuesday's child is fair of face,

Seek her. Find out her mouth. Kiss her red mouth.
With your devotions satisfy her mouth.
And in these fresh collisions loose your mouth,
As a bright instant, throbbing everywhere:
Not less between her limbs than in the South,
Her dark voice tasting like an Hemisphere
Before known only by its songs and fruit.

In what condition do you find yourself?
Dumb-tongued and sick for joy, while brain is mute?
Your marrowbone's and the heart's red cellar
Swarmed to adore the motion of her youth?
Quick particles of blood make hive her mouth,
Whose lips are midnight darlings, and seek out
The origin of kisses in her mouth.

III

Wednesday's child has far to go,

Our desire moves in a lewd orbit;
Together we may make a planet.

Her belly is like a jug of white wine,
The lip of it is ferned and darkling,
Into the gentle hummock of her loin.

Where her divided breast is tentative,
Behind coarse silk clustered and pouted,
My lips disturb, and smally, under webs,
Of endless tendernesses moved to give.

And in the measure of her walk, tip-toe—
Girls do in love, this girl in love walks so—
Is apprehended by the rest of you
All the momentous secrets of us two.
In such has lust expression and runs true.

IV

Thursday's child is full of woe,

William, though great, was wrong. Love is time's fool.
But worse is separation. He, left alone
Grinds out his love between the round here-stone,
And the white horizon's rim; for she is there.
His force taken from others, unaware
That he turns on and on, not only fool
But Tom against the World, crouched on his fear
In a dark lobby, Bedlam's Senator,
Mumbling unreasonable means. Who said,
"How could I be so wrong?" But waits to hear,
" 'Tush, it is little—why she might be dead!"
Better perhaps? Stop up your mouth and swear
Love grinds your bones *Fe Fi* to make his bread;
You read the crust *Fo Fum* of a lover's head.

V

Friday's child must work for a living,

Me to slay, out of abominable
Compassion upon I. Conceited grief
May fluently persuade its own brief
Pandemonium of misery, all
Reasons for self-sake lie in your will
To her: they are imperfectly bequeathed
Within a testament that robs of sleep
Even the memory of possession.
Becoming we, the child of thou and I
Continued, till a dangerous Bethlehem
Sawed up its manger to suit Calvary,
And cut divine obsessive melody.
The wisest do not love but guard their kin.
I have been saved, perhaps to die again.

VI

Saturday's child is loving and giving,

For God's sweet sake give me back part of that
I gave. Part of a part? One loving jot?
Child, I am no Elizabethan hack

Spicing his dalliance in a sonnet's pot,

But a most recent ape on his bald knees,
Head down, with cap in hand, eagerly wrong,
And aptly pleading for—you know my rage—
Brass farthings of reconciliation.

Dismissed: I held palaver with Venus,
And other mythic govellers of love.
Why? Why in God's name? Silence. Concluded thus,
Your anguish is not meaningful to Gods.

Her it may touch; but is not best to win.
If you must love, she must give back again.

VII

*But the child that is born on the Sabbath day
is bonny and bright and good alway.*

Who will, if I do not, remember her?
Cast me again—as King; and then again—
A beggarman; and then again and when
I have been crying through a dozen selves,
Leaf, flesh, the changing air or mineral,
Shall I come home upon her name? Me, me,
A christopher who must be borne not bear?
I will. What's left of my three score and ten
Is mostly word work, wages of my sin,
And the paraphernalia of love.
The best, some active memories that move
Her to be compass while I twist and turn
Waiting bone idle for her self's return,
Prepared to let all other lovers burn.

CHRISTOPHER LOGUE

AHAB

Yon day whan, iron-fast til Moby Dick,
the fleeand whale-line clawcht him frae the boat,
he didna dee. Evin afore the water
gurl'd abuin his haed, he'd got baith nieves (fists

ticht on the stentet raip, and freed his neck. (taut
Syne, he micht have given the baest the slip
and saved himself, but like his hands, his harns (brain
steekt on the rinnand line, as mongoose chafts (closed
lock on a snake till it is duin til daeth.

Doun throu deeps nae man had evir seen,
in the wauk of the whale he breeled, a clod of aerth (span
at the tail of a kite in a windy sea of sky.
Whether it wes that God syne heard his prayer,
or thon Goddess saved Ulyssie frae the swaws (waves
petied this chiel tae, I dinna, ken, (chap
but a ferlie spell protecket him frae daeth. (magic

Past treen of coral, drouket hulks they gaed,
and fish's maws were gorphing at the sicht.
Hermit-pallaes couried snodder doun, (crabs, closer
dauphins skelpet awa like flegget queyns, (frighted girls
and sharks like spivs that hear a siren's scream.
Anerlie the ferny weeds stuid still,
or boued their crouns as thir twae whuddet bye, (these two
and the pearly argonauts on the surface swaw
felt nae reeshle of the steer ava. (swirl, commotion, at all

Bylins the breel wes owre, and Moby Dick (rush
surfaced sare forfochen, seik with pain, (exhausted
and smooled in the lea of an unkent coral ince. (isle
He had nae thoct but he had left ahent
ilk enemie to perish in the sea,
until the haed of a lowse harpoon he'd trailed
in the taigle of gear that gey near coatet him,
fund his hert, whaur Ahab had at last,
spieling up the baest's hauf-senseless back,
broddet the daeth-blow hame. (driven
The island natives
took him for a god, and knelt and prayed
whan they saw the hauf-daed, wuiden-legget man
hirpling ashore, harling at the line (limping, dragging
that tent the whale. (held
Leviathan fairlie
maistert at last, for the first time he wes free.

TOM SCOTT

P O E M

Venice at night, and I
like the wakeful dreamer
or the dreaming walker,
like the hooded watchman
counting time, awake,
and wakened by my cry.

A moment full, and rare
of course, moon in the canal
and moon cutting the statue
of a Doge on his horse,
only the ruler's head and
horse's mane were lit.

Stone bench, stone railing,
an erstwhile promenade
where I stood and sensed a
stillness still beyond my cry,
beyond boats sailing
to a brightness lived fully

only in a dream. Such was
the scene. These were the
constituents, artwork, water,
space and inner world,
several ways merging to
a single trend, and beyond

Venice one with water,
leader one with horse,
I one with sound and sight,
one with that surging force
that flowed from ocean,
hero and his horse; and then

from sidecanals felt I
the inhabitants of ages come
as if looking and careful not
to be caught, and looking
their look aimed at distance
rose to a tremendous cry

in me. Compound of point
beyond and absolute, and
fogridden door and stairs
on dim waterway, the beauty
of a horse, and a Doge
certain of what he must say.

ARTHUR GREGOR

DRY AIR

Combed by the comber under into a sea of dark
selves, deep in our loves and hates, we breathe by old
gill-slits, go blind on fury's shelves that slope
toward the rifted basalt and canyons of primal fault.

Then is thought's jutting rock our rescue:
an object firm as that coast of lava where
the cell, deprived of its watery breath, seized life
from air, reshaped itself, evolved new purposes.

So we sea-cast rise on the rock, make in dry air
new minds: grow these lidded eyes to watch
the facts of sun and cycling dark: to glimpse in star-
light's distance inland, far inland, the slow magi
of the spirit cross and cross the inexplicable plain.

ALICE MONKS MEARS

THE BAD BLACKBIRD

In risky thickets, near the grazing sheep,
Near the good sheep, I hear the bad blackbird.
Its noisy beak can spoil the fields of wheat
For the good farmer trying to preserve
His solid and substantial livelihood.
In risky thickets lurks the snarling wolf,
Who loves no better than to kill his food
And gobble up good sheep from head to hoof.
But otherwise the country lies serene,
And goodness lies all over farmers' lands.
Only the hidden wolf and blackbird scheme
Upon the fragrant fields of grazing lambs;
Only the hidden wolf and blackbird lie
Alone in thickets, preying with their eyes.

KENNETH EISOLD

FEEDING THE CHICKENS

Yellow yellow yellow you are the child's
First richness, piled in a cornbin's hillocks.
Farmer gives her a fistful, hard to hold.
Of the crammed kernels, a few spill.
Hard to lose: the dribble of orange bright
Sunny white-tipped seeds. Two all but golden
Chips burst through the tighter clutch. Farmer
Seems not to mind, but so much beholden, the small girl
Wonders. And she may carry the crowding yellow
Handful out to the yard? Among queer feathered smells,
Craned pecking necks, and she may call
"Here chick! here chick!" and they will come?
And she must throw the sunny grains to them,
Yes: from the farmer's pan take more and more to scatter
Wide as she can, spattering a yellow hail.
Funnily they run to find it, greedily fight
To pick it up; bested by the stout fellow with the proud crest,
They bicker, cluck and peck. "Here chick, here chick!" But
Soon, too soon it's gone: among the gravel,
Droppings, feathers, the prodigal wealth dispersed, snatched up
And swallowed. The small girl, abruptly bereft
Of glory, is left empty-handed.
Farmer's leathery face turns toward the barn, his other chores.
He does not have to tell the child: she knows
Her sunfilled moment was his commonplace, all weathers, every day.
She will go and play. Not now, but right away. Here still the spell
Of the warm brightness that she held so tight
Hovers: yellow yellow yellow

BABETTE DEUTSCH

CLERIHEW

Said Titian to El Greco:
"Dear chap, just take a Deco
At that fellow's name!
It's Hieronymos Bosch
Or some such
Synonymos Tosch,
I wonder who's to blame?"
Said El Greco To Titian:
"I have a suspitian
That, with Domenico Theotocopouli
I own the Monopouli . . ."

DIANA MENUHIN

15TH AUGUST 1947
(India's Independence Day)

The morn is my morn of hope
The night is my night of promise.
I am the voice of my earth,
This is the tale of the earth ;
Tonight is the night of promise.

Out of the scent of every leaf
Comes the fragrance of my breath.
From every grain in every ear of corn
They are my limbs that peep.
The night is the night of promise.

For centuries forcibly yoked,
For ages driven by might.
So much has happened, but now no more
The rape of my people's food.
Tonight is the night of promise.

I have shaken the tears from my eyes
I have banished from my lips all words of appeal
I am now myself the cure, myself the treatment,
Myself will I be the healer.
Tonight is the night of promise.

Smile now my summer and my winter harvests
Smile now unchecked my months, my years.
Laugh now the hot winds of June, the frosts of December
And laughs the season of the cooling rain.
Tonight is the night of promise.

With my own hands I have ploughed the earth
With my own fingers I have sown the seed
The wheat is mine today
And mine is the rice.
Tonight is the night of promise.

The earth now belongs to the people
The people belong to the earth.
Cook a full pot today, young maiden
Fill the dough-pan to its brim.
Tonight is my night of promise.

AMRITA PRITAM
(Translated by the author from her
original Punjabi poem)

THE POET YOUNG AND OLD

But what happened later? Andersen is silent.
He who was fledged on that lovely lake in April,
Imaged in melting ice and glistening water—
After the first glad applause, did he
Manage to get along, shed the heavy plumage
To make room for fatty deposits,
And turn to a backyard duck again,
All the more a duck, pleased with himself,
Admired by his kind, liked by the kitchen-maid?
Did the tale go thus? Or, grown more beautiful
With the waning day, more rich in enterprise,
Did he wing the fabulous crystal air
And, poised on the streaming sunset's gold,
Challenge the gods with his dying song?
. . . None knows, none can guess. Only this is sure,
Although no winter is hard enough
To make the holy waters desolate
Yet the keen-eyed children of the world
Await a younger, newer one
With crumbs of honeyed bread, every day, in April.

BUDDHADEVA BOSE

(Translated from his original Bengali poem
by the author.)

ASRUKANA

The grey owl takes its flight to the stars.
Wild ducks have left the marshes below
At the call of the moon, and quickly cut the air;
The whirr of their wings I hear;
One-two-three-four—the birds are countless;
Specking the dark of night they fly on—on—
Their wings are engines of magically accelerating momentum.

They are gone: the vast sweep of stars now loom;
The smell of duck feathers and one or two mementoes stay.

Under unknown compulsion, the face of Asrukaná Sanyal
Of a Bengal village, long since crumbled,
Flashes upon my mind.
Let the wild geese fly—fly—in December moonlight;

When all other sound and colour are gone from the earth
Let them fly—fly in the mind's flood of light and annunciation.

JIBANANANDA DAS

(Translated from his original Bengali
poem by the author.)

Notes On Contributors

CHRISTOPHER LOGUE: One of the most interesting of the younger poets of Great Britain. Lives in Paris, and hopes to bring out a first book shortly.

KENNETH EISOLD: Is under twenty and still at college. His poems have a deceptive simplicity. First printing. American.

ALICE MONKS MEARS: American. Her poems came through the post and we know nothing about her.

TOM SCOTT: Had his first poems printed in *Poetry London*. One of the best poets writing today in Scotland. or for that matter England.

JEAN GARRIGUE: One book of poems with *New Directions*. One of the most interesting of the younger Americans.

CLAIRE McALLISTER: Though she has had poems now in *Partisan Review* and *Atlantic Monthly*, she says we "discovered" her two years ago. 23. Lives in Michigan. We will print her regularly.

NELSON BENTLEY: Is attached to English Dept. of Washington University. Contributor to *Poetry (Chicago)*, *New World Writing*, etc.

W. S. MERWIN: A noted young American poet who lives in England. A second volume of his poetry is due in the Spring.

ANNE RIDLER: Her first praised collection of poems, *A Dream Observed*, and her verse play *Cain* were published by *Poetry London*, to which she was a regular contributor. Two volumes of poetry published by Faber of London.

ARTHUR GREGOR: Young American poet who will have his second book of poems published by *Poetry London - New York Books* in the Spring.

DIANA MENUHIN: Wife of the famous violinist. *Poetry London* has published her Clerihews before, because we think they are a good antidote to stuffiness in modern verse.

POETRY LONDON - NEW YORK No. 2 (May-June) will contain A Gram-
marian of Motives by Marianne Moore • A Poet of Stature, W. S. Graham by
Robin Skelton • Garcia Lorca by Edwin Honig • Contemporary Portrait
No. 2: Wallace Stevens by Babette Deutsch • The Poetry of Robert Graves by
Harvey Breit • Poems by E. E. Cummings, Lawrence Durrell, Richard Eber-
hart, Robert Graves, Arthur Gregor, Horace Gregory, Michael Hamburger,
Stephen Spender, Robin Skelton, William Jay Smith, Emma Swan, Claire McAl-
lister, Ruthven Todd and many others.

Contemporary Portrait No. 1: Walter de la Mare

It was Frank Morley, discerning reader of Wordsworth and Coleridge, inventor of transcendental moves in chess, the friend of genius and the friend of poets, who introduced my wife and me to Walter de la Mare. Morley himself has an air of Timelessness that seems always to surround him either in London or New York, yet if I am forced to give him a specific time and place, the place is the Garrick Club in London and he is forever raising a half-filled glass in homage to the portrait of Nell Gwynne above his head.

After an exchange of letters we arrived by bus at South End House in Twickenham for tea. A cool thin rain was in the air and the suburb seemed preternaturally green, all the more so, because the House fronted a large cricket field, one of the greenest broadest lawns of grass I had ever seen, and from this view we were guided up a flight of stairs within to Walter de la Mare. The House was probably Victorian, but the greenness around it and de la Mare had invested it with the atmosphere of a Druid fastness. Although the room had all the protective warmth of a sittingroom-parlor, it was like having a twilight tea among the branches of an elm. Aside, from ourselves, there was another guest, a practising psychologist, a large man, who like us, had come up from London, and attending de la Mare was one of his beautiful granddaughters.

De la Mare seated and leaning forward in his chair,—a gesture which seemed to be sustained from an early habit,—looked *up* at visitors as though he felt a youthful impulse to ask them questions. It was as though he kept his listeners as well as

his own attention fixed with a quick dark eye. He turned to the large man seated at his side, and the question came, "What is the first thing *you* think of when you wake up in the morning?" De la Mare's voice was kind, nearly fatherly, almost grandfatherly, as though he wished to shield the man from some unnamed misfortune. But the man had grown suddenly shy; he flushed slightly and was silent; he was far away from his office, his neat desk and the pad of paper on which he jotted down the answers given to him by his patients. He had come to Twickenham to question de la Mare, to ask him about the imaginative life of children. De la Mare was at some pains to restore his ease, to move by slow degrees toward more general speculations; he offered other questions: "Why do some children at the age of nine write such inimitable letters, as if touched by genius? And a few years later write nothing but empty words? Is the human vessel so quickly overturned, emptied at the ages of eight or nine or ten? Is that the fate of some?" Then steering his way to an exit from further embarrassment of his quiet guest, he mentioned Henry James and of his early delight at reading "The Turn of the Screw." At this turn de la Mare neared the provinces of his own stories, his "Seaton's Aunt", his "Physic", even his anthology of writings about childhood, "Early One Morning," but of course he spoke of none of these; he continued to talk of James, and of "What Maisie Knew."

The conversation glided from James to Thomas Hardy, from prose to poetry. "If anything is wrong with poetry today," said de la Mare, "it is because it

lacks compassion, the kind of human passion felt in reading Hardy's poems, compassion that has an understanding of human errors and their fatality."

"I remember," de la Mare continued, "when I was young and made a pilgrimage to Hardy's home. In answer to my ring, he met me at the door, and stepping forward, said, 'Come, we shall take a walk.'"

"And walk we did. He led me through a graveyard, and as we turned through aisles of grass with tombstones on either side, he stroked the heads of the worn stones with his hand. They were his familiars; he caressed them as though he loved them. 'These are my friends'; he said, 'bend down and read their names: do you see them? And here is one you must read carefully. She is a child, a girl, a year younger than I, someone I wronged.' The girl had died, aged 13, more than fifty years ago. 'Shortly before her death,' said Hardy, 'I had quarreled with her. It was in a schoolroom on a winter afternoon. I thrust her against a white hot stove and burned her horribly. From another cause, some childish illness a few months later, she was dead. All this may seem irrational, but since that day of her death, I have never forgiven myself: and she is with me now, today.' Then he stroked the headstone and moved among others where I followed, he assuring me that they were all his friends."

Certainly the apparition of Hardy strolled through the room, weaving between the chairs and the tea-table, the image of an old man walking between his tombstones and fading slowly into graveyard grasses. It was a vision rather than an anecdote with its annotated moral. More than that, the telling of the

incident without the effort to bind it logically to the humane temper of Hardy's poetry, pointed the direction in which de la Mare's perceptions moved.

The incident was a reminder of a Wordsworthian tradition in English poetry, the clear and yet elusive simplicities of speech and action that Hardy furthered, and to which after Hardy, de la Mare gave still another turn of music, and with it a hint of latter day pantheism. Wordsworth's "still, sad music of humanity" had undergone a significant mutation into Hardy's "Satires of Circumstances," and Wordsworth's "trailing clouds of glory from God who is our home," had undergone a transformation into Hardy's "The Dynasts" and into Hardy's ghosts who people the wind and who return to Nature, speaking from grasses and from the lips of flowers, who haunt, like the shade of Gibbon, a garden at Lausanne where chapters of "The Decline and Fall" had been written. It is to this tradition that de la Mare has given new life and meaning, and a music that it never had before. And in return that heritage has given him the authority to speak of Time and its passage from human birth to an after life as though they were among the ironies of fate, ancient enough, ever present, and shared by future generations. It accounts perhaps for the persuasive quality of de la Mare's youthfulness, a quality that seems to deny that age impairs the spirit. Surely it permitted him to look up brilliantly to say, "we shall probably live in this room forever,—or shall we haunt it?" and with this he smiled at the granddaughter who handed plates of cake around the table.

If I have given the impression that he was merely being kind, being charming in an Edwardian, early Georgian fashion,

that impression would be wrong. The peculiar quality of his youthful quickness had a touch of the Devil in it, not a delighted boyish Devil, but one of a well-established, seasoned antiquity, one who had a kinship to the Serpent whom Adam came to know through Eve, and who invaded the dark rooms where Seaton's Aunt made herself mistress of her nephew's fortunes. If for over fifty years de la Mare has written lyrics with all the grace of a Bernini angel piercing the heart of St. Theresa, it is his Devil who has purged them of an overplus of sweetness.

It was appropriate of de la Mare to speak of Purcell's music, to speak of Herrick, Campion and Lovelace, for the genius of his poetry is one that has united a Wordsworthian tradition with the purest strains of music in English poetry. Within this union of nearly indefinable forces the secret of de la Mare's magic works its spell. It contains the paradox of tensile strength, something that is revealed, yet scarcely seen in the movements of a cat of which he himself has written "speak in a language no man knows." His poetry warns a tone-deaf generation that new miracles of music can be performed.

As we left his house, an instinct made us turn to look back at its third floor windows. The sash flew open and de la Mare leaned from it and waved a hand, then pointed upward through the rain to the green leaves that swayed above the roof. He was Prospero in a Druid shelter.

II

Although the poetry of Walter de la Mare seems innocent enough to the unwary reader, the note of warning, the

invisible *something*, the meaning hidden in the sound of words themselves, is heard between its lines. Even the best-intentioned of well-wishing critics had better not try to paraphrase his poems; the critic will be trapped into saying something the poems do *not* mean. Nor do the poems permit the machinery of academic analysis to grind out answers of "true" and "false" words and lines,—like every lyric poet of the first order, de la Mare is far beyond the reaches of text book definitions. One can say that his poem, "The Last Chapter," shows the contribution—which is a metamorphosis—he has made to the tradition of Hardy's simplicities of language:

I am living more alone now than
I did;
This life tends inward as the
body ages;
And what is left of its strange
book to read
Quickens in interest with the
last few pages.

Problems abound. Its authorship?
A sequel?
Its hero-villain, whose ways so
little mend?
The plot? still dark. The style?
a shade unequal.
And what of the denouement?
And, the end?

No, no, have done! Lay the
thumbed thing aside;
Forget its horrors, folly,
incitements, lies;
In silence and in solitude abide,
And con what yet may bless
your inward eyes.
Pace, still, for pace with you,
companion goes,

Though now, through dulled and
inattentive ear,
No more—as when a child's—
your sick heart knows
His infinite energy and beauty
near.

His, too, a World, though viewless
save in glimpse;
He, too, a book of imagery bears;
And as your halting foot beside
him limps,
Mark you whose badge and livery
he wears.*

But what of de la Mare's reaches be-
yond the visible world?

“Who knocks?” “I, who was
beautiful
Beyond all dreams to restore,
I, from the roots of the dark
thorn am hither,
And knock at the door.”

* * *

Silence. Still faint on the porch
Brake the flame of the stars.
In gloom groped a hope-wearied
hand
Over keys, bolts and bars.

A face peered. All the grey night
In chaos of vacancy shone;
Naught but vast sorrow was
there—
The sweet cheat gone.

* Collected Poems of Walter de la Mare;
Henry Holt & Co.: 1941; Winged Chariot and
Other Poems by Walter de la Mare: Viking
Press: 1951.

The English translator of Marcel
Proust's "Remembrance of Things Past"
chose the last line of this poem as a
title for the last volume of the novel; it
was an inspired choice, and it remains
the best possible commentary on the
poem.

Nor are these quotations enough to
circumscribe the range of de la Mare's
magic; still another cycle is represented
in the following lines:

Not toward Death, who, stranger,
fairer,
Than any siren turns his head—
Than sea-couched siren, arched
with rainbows,
Where knell the waves of her
ocean bed.
Alas, that beauty hangs her
flowers
For lure of his demoniac powers:
Alas, that from these eyes should
dart
Such piercing summons to thy
heart;
That mine in frenzy of longing
beats,
Still lusting for those gross deceits.
Not that way!

The temptation is to continue quoting
lines as memorable as these. Saying so
reminds me that de la Mare is the best
of living anthologists; without quoting
himself he has endowed each of his col-
lections with the singular touch of magic
that his imagination has inspired. He
can well afford to wear the mask of
Prospero.

HORACE GREGORY

Correspondence

(After Dylan Thomas' death, a London publisher approached the editor of this magazine to gather together a memorial volume for the poet. The project was abandoned after a week as premature, but not before the following two contributions had been received from Roy Campbell and Lawrence Durrell. They are now printed in our Correspondence pages, for the information they have to convey, unedited, and in the exact form in which they were received.)

2nd February 1954

Bellapaix, Cyprus; Dear Tambi—good to hear from you again. I would love to associate myself with any expressions of regret for Dylan Thomas' death and admiration for his work. My memories of him, however, are over ten years old. I never managed to catch him on my flying visits to England. I first met him by chance; he was staying with Anna Wickham in that squalid house of hers. He was then a slim and neat young man with cropped hair, tidily dressed—unlike the sublunary golliwog I met some time later. We shared a long bus-ride together and I remember his marvellous voice and his quick spurts of interest in people and things around him. He was so self-possessed and so very much his own man that day that I carried away the impression of someone not over-expansive. It was not that he was reserved—but that one felt hidden reserves in him banked up against the day when he found his perfect audience. I don't think I can consider myself an intimate friend of his—alas. But we exchanged vigorous and jolly messages from time to time! and I tried to get him to visit us in Paris and then return to Corfu for the summer. But he steered off the Continent and did not seem to have any interest in France, or anywhere but his beloved Wales.

Later in the same year, late 1937 I think when I piloted Henry Miller (trembling and swearing) past the customs at Dover on his first real visit to England D. Thomas' name immediately came up at the head of the list of people

Miller wanted to meet. I managed to nail Thomas down to an evening and Nancy contrived a dinner of sorts. We waited hours for our guest and were just about to give him up for lost when the telephone rang and Dylan Thomas said in a hollow muffled tone "I can't find the flat so I'm not coming." He did not sound tipsy but terribly nervous. "I'll come and get you" I said, at which he said: "As a matter of fact I'm too afraid to come. Please excuse me." He then told me that he was at a pub immediately opposite the house and I at once ran out to lay hold of him. This was when I met golliwog Dylan. He looked as if he had been sleeping in a barn and he wore a weird muffler round his throat. He said he was too frightened to move and suggested that we stayed at the pub together. He was indeed nervous, and quite aggressive, but finally I painted such a ludicrous picture of Henry walking round and round the dinner table cursing him that he changed his mind and we went back to the flat together. I don't know why he should feel so nervous about meeting H.M. except that he admired his work. I suppose it is the same sort of mental paralysis which always afflicted me when I went to see Eliot before the war. Anyway we had a splendid evening and Dylan recovered himself enough to read us one of his free-verse fragments. I didn't like his way of reading—it was sort of 'thrasonical' as an Elizabethan would have said; and later when I heard him on the wireless I realized that I had been wrong. He was really splendid.

I had several opportunities of discussing poetic theory with him. He answered questions quickly and honestly. I was disappointed to find that he wrote slowly and with difficulty and went on mutating his nouns and adjectives until he got his colours sharp enough to carry the effect he wanted; but he seemed then to be more interested in sound than in meaning, and he played all his shots from the net—as it were. Every stroke was a smash. But all this aside he was tremendously robust mentally, absolutely dedicated to his job, and knew damn well where he was going. One knew he was a live creative limb on the great tree: and I got him to write me out a poem in my private notebook—a poem he had finished that afternoon. I have it by me now as I write: “24 years remind me tears of my eyes” and I see that he has dated it *January 1938*. I mention this because of a curious incident which followed about a week later. I was at that time reading in the British Museum and by chance was drifting about among the Autograph collection when I saw what looked to me like a page of Thomas’ crabbed botchy script. It was a page of Emily Bronte. I was so struck by the resemblance that I bought a facsimile post-card and mailed it to Dylan Thomas to see whether he could read it. He replied at once “Strange that page of Emily Bronte. I thought it was a rejected poem of mine when I opened the envelope. Yes, it’s my writing and I can read every word of it.”

There were a few other meetings, some silly and some funny, but I can remember very little of anything that he said or did.

I was most angry when I read of his death in a wretched local newspaper. I

think it was wrong of him to allow himself to die. There are few poets whose mechanism can carry them successfully past the hurdles of middle age into their winter work. It needs robustness of mind and body—both of which Dylan Thomas had; he is a gift wasted on death. We needed his poetry of the fifties and sixties: his winter tales.

One thing I forgot to add: a day or two after the Bronte-script episode I happened by chance upon the painting of the 3 Bronte girls (is it by Bramwell: half-finished, or defaced in some way?) but the features of Emily bore a distinct resemblance to those of Dylan Thomas—the dark, slightly popping eye, the toneless skin—something of this you will see if you compose the portraits of Emily with the lovely Augustus John of Dylan Thomas. I accused him, I remember, of being a reincarnation of her, which pleased him. He agreed with a smile that of course he was “And what is strange about that? She is the only woman I have ever loved.”

I am very sorry about the scrappiness of these notes. I shall not in the least mind if you don’t consider them worth printing. I’m living a hard life at the moment which leaves me no time for thought or work. But I felt that I would like to write a line or two to express my regret at Thomas’ death—and to join my admiration to that of all who knew him.

LAWRENCE DURRELL

Dylan could happen only once in one’s lifetime. Whenever I was in England we were pretty close friends: and I see that in Cecil Gray’s autobiography, “Musical Chairs,” Dylan in conversation with him expressed about the same feeling about

me as I had about him. We took a Rabelaisian delight in astounding and making each other nearly die of laughter. I came in close contact with Dylan during his first period of hardship and poverty in London and we needed high spirits to keep going on two pounds ten a week from which we had to pay the rent for lodgings. Dylan's beautiful and courageous wife supplied her share of the high spirits. She was the daughter of an old shipmate of mine, Francis Macnamara. They were a wonderful couple together: always in love, even years after their marriage to the day of his death. They would quarrel like newlyweds on the slightest pretext with never a dull moment and make it up in two minutes. Caitlin Thomas is one of the most beautiful women I ever saw. She meant more to Dylan than anything else in his life. Dylan went through most of the phases that the British Intellectuals went

through—Red, Pink, then self-debunked—but when the English poets held their meeting to ban my books from mention: he was the one who said I had a right to my opinions. It took a lot of courage for him to drink with me in front of them though he apologized that he had to review me more adversely than he felt like, just to keep his family. Although (or perhaps *because*) I was the only well-known poet with a pre-war reputation to enlist as a volunteer in the last war, I was looked on as a black-leg—but Dylan would separate from the left wing poets and drink with me, even when I was wearing the uniform of a Common soldier and the left-wing poets of the socialist plutocracy of bureaucrats were scowling disapproval at him and me. This was real courage and I remember it with gratitude and love. But so did old Tambi used to drink with me too.

ROY CAMPBELL

Louise Bogan

Collected Criticism - Prose, Poetry - by Louise Bogan. Noonday Press. \$5.

This writing has fibre. The subject matter, reprinted from various sources, is arranged chronologically except as it has been regrouped for clarity. Miss Bogan's first book of poems was published in 1923; and in 1924 her first book review, in the *New Republic*. Her contributing of verse criticism to the *New Yorker* began in 1931, "at first as 'omnibus reviews' which covered the year's books at six-month intervals. From 1937 her *New Yorker* reviews have appeared as a regular sub-department of 'Books' under the heading 'Verse'".

*As summarizing Emily Dickinson, Miss Bogan's review of the three-volume *Poems of Emily Dickinson*, edited by Thomas H. Johnson (*New Yorker*, Oct. 8, 1955), seems the natural apex of these studies—a masterly critique.

An extensive survey, this; which includes besides Emerson, Emily Dickinson*—and her father "who stepped like Cromwell when he went to gather the kindling"—Thoreau, wholesome Thoreau-like Robert Frost, Henry James, Hardy, G. M. Hopkins, W. B. Yeats; also, as coloring their respective periods, Wyndham Lewis, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Wallace Stevens, e. e. cummings, W. C. Williams and others; Edmund Wilson and R. P. Blackmur (as critics), Gide's *Journals*, Collette, Virginia Woolf, Robert Graves, and poets 1944-1955.

As the precursor of modernism in literature, mingled sensibilities, tendencies, and inter-related experiments, are accounted for by Miss Bogan and brought

into sequence. "The population after the Cuban war," she says, "was infatuated with power, . . . an era of gilt wicker furniture, hand painted china, lace curtains, and 'sofa cushions'", of "the pulp magazine" and "a taste for 'sordid elegance'", "attacked by Thorsten Veblen and others from the left" "American realism finally broke through": we had Dreiser's novels, "'disguised autobiographies'" and free verse. Wagner and Villiers d'Lisle-Adam, Debussy and Mallarmé, post-impressionist "anatomizing of nature" and the Armory show in 1913, are correlated. We have Gertrude Stein in Paris, Imagist poetry in England and America, and "the novel as a Luciferian universe in the hands of Joyce."

"With an eye to virtues rather than defects", Miss Bogan does not overbear; she has no literary nephews, her pronouncements are terse, rendered with laboratory detachment. Unmistakable emphasis is placed on two capacities as indispensable to achievement — instinctiveness and "coming to terms with one's self", instinctiveness as contrasted with Henry James' Mona Brigstock who was "all will". "Goethe's central power" is seen as "interpretative imagination", an interior compulsion linked with integrity. In *The Family Reunion*, "an integration", Miss Bogan sees T. S. Eliot "in complete control of himself". Was Joyce in *Finnigan's Wake*, she asks, "the farceur" or have we here, 26* "immaturity transcending suffering?" — a query one connects with Henry James' observation in discussing Turgenev's fiction: "The great question as to a poet or novelist is how does he feel about life? What in the last analysis is his philosophy? This

* The numerals in this article refer to page numbers in the book.

is the most interesting thing their works offer us. Details are interesting in proportion as they contribute to make it clear."

These compact unequivocal studies are set-off by a kind of dry humor-incognito which becomes at times, markedly eloquent. James "really was a great poet and profound psychologist", Miss Bogan says. 265 "He has been thought genteel when he had become the sharpest critic of gentility, a dull expatriot when his books flashed with incisive American wit." "He must be approached as one approaches music," she says. "He continuously shifts between development and theme, never stops, never errs." She affirms Rilke's conviction that "we must adhere to difficulty if we would make any claim to having a part in life" and feels that we have in Rilke "one of the strongest antidotes to the powers of darkness"; 77 "often exhausted, often afraid, often in flight but capable of growth and solitude—he stands as an example of integrity held through and beyond change."

The combination of open writing, unsterotyped insights, and daring, is most attractive, as when Miss Bogan says, "Yeats and Pound achieved modernity. Eliot was modern from the start". We have Ezra Pound, "whom", Miss Bogan says, "time will in the end surely honor", delineated in his statement, "I am trying to use not an inch rule but a balance"; and perhaps with his tendency to diatribe in mind, she 138 says, "Pound's ideal reader is a person who has experienced real discomfort in being shut up in a railway train, lecture hall, or concert room, with well-modulated voices expressing careful, well-bred opinions on the subject of the arts."! Contradictions presented by W. B. Yeats are set forth: his august

remark: 135 "We are artists who are servants not of any cause but of mere nature" and his "lifelong struggle against the inertia of his nation"; "his variety of stress and subtlety of meaning" his vehemence in saying 99 "how hard is that purification from insincerity, vanity, malignance, arrogance, which is the discovery of style."

W. H. Auden is especially well observed. "He gives humanity a hard unprejudiced stare," Miss Bogan says—but is capable of gaiety which can even be "hilarity". "He points up and freshens the language", "describes with great originality the power drives of succeeding eras", and in *Poets of the English Language*, has had a part, with Norman Pearson, in "a peculiarly modern achievement," she says. His "lack of hatred, his fight against intellectual stupidity as well as outer horror" 277 are noted; certain speeches in *The Sea and the Mirror: A Commentary on Shakespeare's "The Tempest,"* 280, as constituting "a little museum of form: terza rima, followed by a sestina, a sonnet, and a ballade". We have in Mr. Auden, Miss Bogan feels, "a poet, one of whose urges always will be to transcend himself." Paul Valéry is portrayed at a stroke. While discerning his gifts,—"that he continually denies them," Miss Bogan says, "lends to his work, a faint continual tone of sophistry." And nothing said about James Joyce seems to me sounder than her precision—regarding *Finnigan's Wake*—its "miraculous virtuosity of language maintained through a thousand variations in its attack on every known patois—the whole resting on Bruno's theory of knowledge through opposites and Vico's theory of psychic recurrence." This "private language" of mixed meanings, "re-

lated to 'the puzlator' of Panurge, to the language of "Lear", "Carroll", and Mother Goose, is summed up by Miss Bogan in W. H. Fowler's definition of the pun as "a jocular or suggestive use of similarity between words or a word's different senses"—'For a burning wood is come to dance inane'. "The Letters of Rainer Maria Rilke" and the study of Gide's Journals show the bristling amateur who fears to be soft, what philosophy that is equity can be; and typical of the whole temper of the book—Miss Bogan says of Yvor Winters, a writer "very nearly without listeners, let alone friends and admirers, his interest appears limited only because he has made choices, 271 proof of probity and distilled power in unlikely times. These facts should delight us."

A fascinating book, abounding in important insights, such as, "Loose form must have beneath, a groundswell of energy." 180 "If one hates anything too long, . . . one forgets what it is one could love." W. B. Yeats is quoted as advising that we "write our thoughts as nearly as possible in the language we thought them in"; and we should bear in mind this warning against "stubborn avant-gardism when no real need for a restless forward movement any longer exists. The moment comes," Miss Bogan says, "for a consolidation of resources, for interpretation rather than exploration."

One has here, mastery of material and associative creative insight—a conspectus of the transition from fettered to new writing—"from minor to major art"; to precision and "a transcending of the self through difficulty." The book rises above literariness, moreover, and fortifies courage, in practising a principle which is surely Confucian; implying that

one need not demand fair treatment; but is fair.
rather, see that one's treatment of others

MARIANNE MOORE

The Poet's Eye

The Fire and the Fountain, by John Press (Oxford University Press) is "an essay on poetry"—indeed, a very complete poetics—which I praised highly in a recent number of *The New Statesman & Nation*. It is a book worth returning to, especially as there are questions of more particular interest to the practising poet which could not be dealt with in a review intended for the general public. Among these is the nature of the poetic image, to which Mr. Press devotes his fifth chapter.

This is, by exception, a somewhat confusing chapter. Mr. Press thinks that rather too much stress has been put on the need for visual imagery in poetry. This, he says, is due to the fact that certain writers on the subject are themselves visual types, but also because there is a mistaken notion that all images are visual. He then suggests that "a distinction must be drawn between a visual image, which evokes a clear picture of an object, and a symbolic image, which arouses a network of associations". And he adds, by way of illustration, that "the word 'aspidistra' will call up, for some people, the exact, photographic image of *this small domestic flower*. The non-visualizer will be unable to describe an aspidistra with any precision, or to recall what it looks like, yet the word may evoke a stream of mingled pictures, associations, and reminiscences—a Victorian drawing-room cluttered with furniture, the smell of leathery arm-chairs, the distant lineaments of a world that was full of confidence and purposeful energy". Mr. Press is evidently himself a

non-visualizer, for who, who has ever *seen* one in a Victorian drawing-room, would describe an aspidistra as "this small domestic flower"? But my real objection to this passage is that it makes a distinction without a difference, for there is no reason why a visual image should not be symbolic—it generally is in poetry. Indeed, a few pages further on Mr. Press himself says that "the type of imagery most commonly found in English poetry is, simultaneously, descriptive and emotive, combining a pictorial representation of an object with an evocation of its latent significance". And by the end of the chapter he has come to the conclusion that "the command of imagery, whether visual or non-visual, is one of the distinguishing marks by which we recognize a poet".

But what does Mr. Press mean by "non-visual imagery"? Surely it is a contradictory phrase, for the root-sense of image is essentially visual—the image (Latin, *imago*) is the visual reflection, the percept. What the poet makes use of is generally the memory-image, the revived perceptual image; but he may occasionally be endowed with the gift of eidetic imagery, which is the capacity to re-evolve perceptual images in all their original intensity.

What then, Mr. Press would ask, of the other sense-impressions—the memories of sounds, smells and of touch? There is a certain justification in psychology for speaking of sound-images and touch-images, and presumably some people can imagine a smell. But the whole concept of imagination is built up from

visual images, and other kinds of imagery are admitted by analogy. Mr. Press says that "the republic of the five senses admits no king." This is simply not true. "The eye is all", I said in an early poem, "is hierarch of the finite world", and this I think is nearer the truth. Statistically there are far more visual than audile or tactile types, as Galton long ago proved, but admittedly there are some people who have no visual images at all worthy of the name. But I do not think we find poets among them.

However, the importance of the visual image in poetry has more than a statistical basis. The visual image has a definite priority in the formation of human intelligence, as we may see by comparing the effects on intelligence of the congenital absence of each sense. But we do not need such tragic proof; we have only to enquire into our own imaginative processes to realize how much they depend on visual percepts. Vital thought is visual thought.

But poetry is made of words, and words have tones and overtones that are purely audile—there are poems, Mr. Press rightly claims, that are pure philosophical argument, like Blake's "To Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love". But Mr. Press omits the title of this poem, which is, significantly, *The Divine Image*, and its whole point is to suggest that the

abstract virtues of mercy, pity, peace and love only come to life when we can visualize them as "a human heart", "a human face", "the human form divine", "the human dress". "All must love the human form divine" in the visual images of "heathen, turk, or jew". Mr. Press could not have quoted anything apter to *disprove* his argument!

There is a further point to make in favour of the visual image. It prevents the easy flow of that "poetic thinking" which Arnold and Hopkins rightly distinguished from poetry proper. Poetic thinking is the string without the beads. It is the effortless ooze of words that may be mellifluous or that may be "glowing with warmth, wit and tenderness", but which, readable as they are when our mood is in such a low gear, have nevertheless nothing of Homeric vividness or Shakespearian intensity. I would not deny that an ingenious poet might write a poem consisting entirely of imageless concepts, and in an idle moment we might be amused by such ingenuity; but in our more imaginative moods we call for a Bow of burning gold, a Chariot of fire.

Finally it should be noted that Mr. Press did not choose a conceptual title for his excellent book!

HERBERT READ

MacNeice

Autumn Sequel: A Rhetorical Poem in XXVI Cantos, by Louis MacNeice (Faber and Faber 1954)

Louis MacNeice wrote "Autumn Journal", a long occasional poem published in the spring of 1939, during the period from August 1938 to January 1939. Using "an elastic kind of quatrain", MacNeice was then able to put down much of his early dash and verve, and to indulge in that tune-making which was his

special gift among his contemporaries—a gift rare even among lyric poets as a class. He was able, moreover, at that time, to make poignant use of imaginative flights, hit off situations with an epigram, and render reality in the most dazzling way, while projecting emotion with seemingly effortless skill—not only

the public foreboding engendered by the felt imminence of war, but the private pathos attendant upon the break-up of a first marriage: the weight of coming danger linked up with the weight of private grief. And his interest in the public situation was crucial; he made a journey to Spain, late in the narrative. He was occupied with himself, but, casual and serious in turn, he could fasten his attention upon several backgrounds without strain, and his then profession of schoolmaster seemed to fit him well.

"Autumn Sequel", written from August through December, 1953, bears very little likeness to "Autumn Journal." As the title announces, it is a much more conventional production. "Autumn Journal" accomplished its effects effortlessly: the poem was candid and free; the reader saw the public scene as it existed behind the private life, and sensed history behind both. Times have changed and Mr. MacNeice, as he freely admits, openly and by implication, has changed with them. It is almost impossible, it is true, for the maturing poet, and particularly for the poet whose chief endowment is lyrical, not to lose over the years a certain innocence of eye and heart; we cannot demand youthful gayety and uncompromising wit to last out a lifetime. But with MacNeice it is not so much that these qualities have disappeared as that nothing positive has taken their place. His enforced close relation to everyday reality in his position as writer for broadcasting and the cinema has, he tacitly admits, interfered with his talent and his physical freedom; but he has not taken the line of Yeats (another Anglo-Irishman) who, when forced into a similar position, made it the basis for a new approach to life and to writing. MacNeice's private emotion has shifted into a mel-

ancholy key. It is clear that he wishes to see his surroundings as a poet must continue to see them, shot through some manner of significance and occasionally falling into unsuspected design. But in spite of good intentions and of passages especially devoted to a seeking out of pattern, this imaginative transcending of material never quite happens. We get instead a highly intelligent and extremely clever approximation of this process, and the poem as a whole—which seems much too long when read, because of its lack of true break-through—turns out to be a perfectly well-sounding rhymed discourse, suitable for broadcasting (and "the bulk of the poem" was indeed broadcast by the B.B.C., in the summer of 1954).

It is the relentlessness of time and the more dour aspects of place which now haunt the poet. Friends are dead, and one dies in the course of the autumn months; the death of Dylan Thomas (here appearing, like others, under a pseudonym) and Thomas' funeral in his Welsh village, become a center for the narrative's pervasive air of loss and change. MacNeice, tied to a desk job, nevertheless moves about rather freely, and we are made to see several of the locales which have a crucial significance to the British artist-intellectual: the pub, the ballet, the foot-ball field, the art-gallery and the museum. The nightmare atmosphere which settles on some of these scenes condenses with startling effect in the poet's experience on the train at Christmastime.

Terza rima has been an unfortunate choice of form. This rhyme scheme, and the cantos into which it naturally falls is, after all, identified with a great work in which meaning is thoroughly canvassed—with a Comedy which takes into com-

plete consideration the human as well as the Divine. It is a form which requires, we must feel, a partly revealed, partly concealed armature of conviction; it cannot rest on shifting skepticism and doubt. And we expect, in a poem of this length, some exciting progression as well as some satisfying resolution. "Autumn Sequel", tied to a daily human round, has

a certain tameness, even though its exposition of a sensitive man's hope and dubieties is thorough and often sound. Coming from Mr. MacNeice, who once offered us the happy center of the occasional (where much truth abounds), rhetoric is not enough.

LOUISE BOGAN

Dylan Thomas in Limbo

Dylan Thomas In America: An Intimate Journal by John Malcolm Brinnin, Little Brown and Company, Boston. \$4.

Mr. John Malcolm Brinnin had the unenviable task of being lecture agent for the roaring and difficult Dylan Marlais Thomas. He filled that position very well and we are grateful to him for having introduced Thomas to America, "on the platform", and thus adding to his reputation. But, now, Mr. Brinnin has gone and done something else. He has written a book about Thomas. One wishes he hadn't.

The task which may have been forced on him in indecent haste—the recriminations and scandals were so great—finds him quite unequal to it. The picture we get of the poet is one-sided and misleading. Mr. Brinnin should have delayed writing this book, until he was able to compare and assess his conflicting experiences, and to relate them with some attempt at coherence to Thomas' background and writings. He might have put his journal away in his drawer, if only in deference to the feelings of Dylan Thomas' family, and to that of his own close associates, whose confidences too he has betrayed.

Portions of this book are bewildering. They cancel each other out. At one point the poet is said to be blessed with a saintliness he cannot hide (p. 20) and at another, he is more adept than any other

man in killing what he loved (p. 261). There is the statement once that Dylan's drinking was not an act of denying life, or of fleeing from life, "but of fiercely accepting it". Elsewhere the drinking is Guilt, Puritanism, a failing in poetical powers, or pure escape from himself and his responsibilities. Parts of the book show Dylan as a sympathetic husband (p. 136) with Caitlin in her solid role as Dylan's wife for nearly twenty years, (p. 154, p. 271; see also Roy Campbell's letter in this issue) but the rest of the book is slanderous to the extreme and in the worst possible taste, since it *unreservedly* reveals the most intimate aspects of their marriage to the public gaze, in the crudest terms, with no sympathy, and without understanding:

Caitlin turned to me to ask, "Who is that bitch with him now?" I began to tell her exactly who the young woman was, only to have her interrupt with: "Does Dylan sleep with her?" (p. 155)

Caitlin, with one fierce grip, reached for his hair and pulled him out of his seat onto the floor. Before Bill and I knew what was happening, we were in the midst of a melee. *Chairs got knocked over, dishes were pushed from the tables as, blow for blow, the combatants wrestled toward the kitchen . . . With a sudden cry, Dylan broke away and we could hear him running up the stairs.* In a moment Caitlin came back to the dining room and, *towering over us, her eyes flashing, her*

face steely, said "THANK you for helping a lady in distress!"

The italics in the last passage are mine. They fairly indicate the dime-novel *Confidential* level of the writing, which is full of hyperbole:

Within a few minutes, I opened the door to the palest, most fragile and soft-spoken young man I had ever seen. He reminded me of faded photographs of the young Gerard Manley Hopkins. (p. 10)

. . . had within the mere space of a week made him the most exhausting, exasperating and most completely endearing human being I had ever encountered. (p. 40)

amateur psychology:

The draining forces of guilt, indolence and onerous little commercial assignments, had brought him into a state of mortal anxiety. (p. 232)

It was another curious instance of the way in which Dylan could be sent into almost unshakeable depression — a state in which his easily-tapped feelings of guilt were magnified and burdensome. (p. 199)

irrelevant and damning detail:

Dylan writhed in his sickbed, cursing the Beekman Tower Hotel and all its "rat-faced staff". (p. 28)

Caitlin began speaking to Billy and we heard her say loudly that she was anxious to get home, where she was expecting a visit from some "real friends, not Americanos." (p. 110)

immodesty:

To correct this state of affairs, I suggested that we agree between us not to think of another such tour for years to come . . . Dylan responded with quiet seriousness and agreed with everything I said. Yet I remained wary of his true feelings, partly because I had long ago learned how easy it was to direct him. (p. 206)

Desperation had so muddled his sense that even his most intimate relations were affected. He could not admit to himself, much less to Caitlin or to me, . . . But at last I did give in—and so abetted his final effort to escape from himself . . . When it became

obvious that he was waiting for my direction, I became practical, point by point. (p. 232) The little help I could give Dylan, it seemed to me, was twofold: by doing all I could to help him earn money in America, and by showing an undemanding affection for him as a person, and faith in him as a poet.* (p. 175)

And a surfeit of unsifted detail which tells us of more "direction" and which in the context of this book is perhaps unfair to the people mentioned:

Around nine o'clock we left together with Arabel Porter, an editor of the New American Library, Howard Moss and Joseph Everingham, a friend of mine and Dylan's from Cambridge, to go downtown for hamburgers at Julius's. This was again the onset of a long night of bar-hopping. We went next to the crowded San Remo, where, notably, Dylan's presence was no longer a notable event, and then on to the White Horse . . . (p. 203)

Mr. Brinnin has truly presented us with a garbled view of the man and his work:

And yet I am aware of no other poet whose work carries with it that sense of having encompassed the stratifications of human history, of possessing the past as well as the present, of having sounded again echoes that make the early darkness alive. And it is just this recreation of the living past in the living present that distinguishes him as a poet, and which contributes to the wonder and astonishment with which American readers first encounter him . . . (p. 117) A further aspect of Dylan Thomas' poetry that appeals to Americans is the exotic unfamiliarity of its imagery. This perhaps is a lesser source of appeal, but an important one. (p. 120)

I wonder how Thomas himself would have reacted to the first passage. As for the second—the imagery being a lesser source of appeal—all one need add is that without it there would have been no poetry at all.

* Again my italics.

Now that we have had Mr. Brinnin's view of Dylan Thomas it would be appropriate for us to have Thomas' view of Mr. Brinnin. I feel confident that the letters for this revelation exist. Dylan Thomas had great reservations about every one. He once wrote to me about a man he had carried on an intensive and friendly correspondence with, and who had been helpful in his career—that is, if any of Dylan's professional friends *really* helped him in his career, and they were not merely indulging their own egos and experiencing an excitement and importance they lacked in their own lives:

Although I am a friend of X, I think he is a loud and brawling hypocrite . . . Also I think it's a mistake for one young poet to shout at length, in print, about the work of an almost exact contemporary. X has been climbing for some years now, and he isn't even in sight of the ladder yet. And he's surely old enough now, you'd believe, to realize that he won't get anywhere up those snob-snotted rungs by licking the bums of his creative friends or by describing, incorrectly, the contours of them for the benefit of other blind and moutheys climbers. I don't think it's a bad thing to be a climber, so long as you make sufficient entertaining noises as you slime your way up.

As Caitlin Thomas writes in her brief protest included in the book, it was difficult to know Dylan "over an intensive handful of months, at divided intervals, over a comparatively very short number of years . . . There is no such thing as the one true Dylan Thomas, nor anybody else; but, necessarily, even less so with a kaleidoscopic-faced poet."

It is for this reason Mr. Brinnin (with his nightly diary habit, which accounts for practically every hour he spent with Dylan—otherwise, would there have been a book?) has the most muddled impressions of both Dylan and Caitlin. He

does not seem to possess the mental and psychological make-up for the time being, to write a balanced and unprejudiced account. How else can one explain the fact that he was "disappointed to the edge of desperation" when Caitlin walked out on the strip-teasers in a burlesque theatre where he had taken husband and wife in "another misguided and useless effort to please her?"

The most irritating thing about Mr. Brinnin's book is the "holier than thou" attitude. If he was so disgusted with the poet's drinking, why did he accompany him from party to party, and from bar to bar? No one is going to blame him for Thomas' drinking and death as he seems to have unconsciously assumed. On the contrary, the friends and admirers of Dylan Thomas have been only conscious, up to now, of all the good works he did for Dylan and other poets.

Though he has, in parts, treated his association with Thomas like a love affair, full of emotionalism, tears, and re-cremations, what does emerge from the book is a picture of Dylan as a monster, and a pure, generous, dependable and much ill-treated Mr. Brinnin who was his benefactor, friend, philosopher, and guide. Knowing Mr. Brinnin I feel sure he did not mean this to happen. It is the hysteria of the times that has made him reveal the most private matters (even the sexual aberrations of his friends) at the expense of his subject, who has no human decencies left, after all the dissection and explaining.

He has given a full account of all the advantages that befell Thomas at his hands. But he should have also told us about the advantages that should have befallen him as Dylan's friend. For instance, we hear that his trip to Wales in

1953 was the result of a commission from *Mademoiselle* magazine for an article on Thomas. What about the other trips? Were they undertaken solely out of admiration for the man and his work? There is much else we would like to know.

Since he has mentioned it, what about all the great sums of money he handed over? Did he receive them back, or was he simply being a benefactor as we are left to imagine? Was Dylan Thomas the biggest British draw of The Poetry Centre, or was it Dame Edith Sitwell? Did he think the trouble that came to him arranging Dylan's lecture tours worth it, after all?

We are told that Dylan ran after women (many men do) but was it not that more often they ran after the successful moon-struck poet, they, and the hangers-on, as we frequently noticed in England? Didn't Mr. Brinnin notice that Thomas really despised these people, and those who treated him as if he were a very special person? That his clowning and antics really stemmed from the one fact that he had a deep moral sense of what was right and wrong, and which was at loggerheads with what was happening to him all the time?

It seems to me Mr. Brinnin has had the normal troubles of any other poet-critic admirer of Dylan's who got close to him. If we must praise his effort it is for this. He has timed the book well to ensure its better sales as well as that of Dylan Thomas's works.

II

But the more serious short comings in Mr. Brinnin's book are the misrepresentations of Dylan Thomas' writings.

We are told that "since his genius as a poet was in jeopardy he turned to prose, the drama and the opera" in 1952. The facts are that Dylan Thomas always wrote prose together with his poetry, right from the start, and quite early in his career he was also handling dramatic themes. Mr. Brinnin tells us that "When Dylan Thomas came to the attention of Americans as a major poet, he was creatively already past his prime," (p. 177); that "the means by which Dylan might grow were no longer in his possession, (p. 176). These statements are ridiculous. Dylan Thomas was constantly developing as a poet. One has only to compare his first *18 Poems* (1934), with those in *Deaths and Entrances* (1946), the poems in *In Country Sleep* (1951), or the last unfinished poem left among his papers, to see how he was evolving. He was progressing all the time towards a simpler and more universal language, towards a greater clarity in his ideas, and the use of imagery with less fuzzy edges. With the years he was finding greater lucidity and power:

The force that through the green
 fuse drives the flower
Drives my green age; that blasts
 the roots of trees
Is my destroyer.
And I am dumb to tell the crooked
 rose
My youth is bent by the same
 wintry fever. (1934)

Now as I was young and easy
 under the apple boughs
About the lilting house and happy
 as the grass was green,
The night above the dingle
 starry,

Time let me hail and climb
 Golden in the heydays of his eyes,
 And honoured among wagons I
 was prince of the apple
 towns
 And once below a time I lordly
 had the trees and leaves
 Trail with daisies and barley
 Down the rivers of the windfall
 light. (1946)

Do not go gentle into that good
 night,
 Old age should burn and rave at
 close of day;
 Rage, rage, against the dying of
 the light.

Though wise men at their end
 know dark is right,
 Because their words had forked
 no lightning they
 Do not go gentle into that good
 night. (1952)

These extracts from three different periods, the youthfully revolutionary and technical, the middle toning down of the simply technical, and the last merging into the mainstream of English poetry, show a constant growth to me. It is strange that another critic in England, Mr. Derek Stanford, should also have written about "the poet's spent powers" and the "slackening of spiritual tension" in Thomas' last poems. While Mr. Stanford's statement is comprehensible (Thomas' poems never "meant much" to him he says until he heard of the poet's death in New York, when he discovered that "not only had English poetry endured a desolating loss," but that "the English poetic imagination had itself suffered a great disaster") it is not so easy to accept such a judgment from

Mr. Brinnin who has long known and appreciated Thomas' work.

Mr. Stanford suspected the loss of power only because Thomas now wrote on the average of one poem a year . . . the six poems, *Author's Prologue*, *In Country Sleep*, *Over Sir John's Hill*, *Poem on his Birthday*, *Lament*, and *In the White Giant's Thigh* are the only ones Thomas added to his *Collected Poems* of everything he wrote since the publication of *Deaths and Entrances* in 1946. But Mr. Stanford has forgotten that the period of *The Map of Love* which was as difficult a period for Thomas was succeeded by the fullness of *Deaths and Entrances*. While Mr. Stanford gives us many other unacceptable reasons for his supposition of Thomas' loss of poetic power, Mr. Brinnin does not give us any.

Towards the end of his life, Dylan Thomas finished his play for voices *Under Milk Wood* at breakneck pace, egged on by Mr. Brinnin and his assistant. He was "imagination afire", according to Mr. Brinnin, inventing plots for the opera he was to write with Stravinsky; the one outlined in this book sounds as if in it Dylan would have found his true stature, of which we had become aware in his last poems. Stravinsky and Dylan Thomas are an exciting combination to think of.

Then there was the second play for voices he had planned. Much more exciting than *Under Milk Wood*, it sounds the very thing that would have brought out Dylan's talents for dramatising the landscape of his short stories and poems, and for dramatising the situation of a solitary which he has covered over and over again in his short stories. Between *In Country Sleep* and *Under Milk Wood*

he had written *The Doctor and the Devils*.

One does not know what Mr. Brinnin implies by "the means by which Dylan might grow were no longer in his possession". If, like Mr. Stanford, he is questioning the quality of Thomas' last poems, I should say that they represent for me the achieving of something I had long looked forward to from him. In his 25 *Poems* (1936), the path Dylan Thomas could take was already there in his short piece *This Bread I Break*. Embedded among the rest, with their great invention, originality and density, here was a poem that was very simple and easily communicable, yet true to his original vision of what his poetry should be. He did not choose to follow this path in his next book, *The Map of Love*. But in *Deaths and Entrances*, one notices he has once again discovered that path. To take two poems at random from that book (probably there are better examples like the *Hunchback in the Park*), the title poem, and *On a Wedding Anniversary*, which I know well, many of the images in them have a reference to real events and are not merely invented ones as in his previous books. These lines from *On a Wedding Anniversary*—"From every true or crater carrying cloud," and "Too late in the wrong rain"—describe real events and not invented ones like in "Where once the waters of your face/ Spun to my screws, your dry ghost blows," of the early poems. They refer to the *blitzkreig* on London. In *Deaths and Entrances*, too, almost the whole poem has references to events that really took place in war-time:

On almost the incendiary eve
of deaths and entrances,

When near and strange wounded
on London's waves
Have sought your single grave,
One enemy, of many, who knows
well
Your heart is luminous
In the watched dark, quivering
through locks and caves,
Will pull back the thunderbolts
To shut the sun, plunge, mount
your darkened keys
And sear just riders back,
Until that one loved least
Looms the last Samson of your
zodiac.

Besides the advent of the real world in his poems, one notices a greater control, as well as a new simplicity.

In his last poems Dylan Thomas finally broadened the path that should have led him to his finest poems, and some of his most poetic plays. Without negating his past, he has at last discovered in them a language which is his own, and yet simple. Whereas the language of his early poems would not have suited his more mature age and designs, here is a language he could have successfully used to any purpose—poetry, drama, the opera. The development was inevitable since it was already there in his early poems: it was the next logical step. Now the language is more flexible and relaxed. No longer is it driven on by a dense and difficult intensity all its own, as in the early poems:

Hoo, there, in castle keep,
You king singsong owls, who
moonbeam
The flickering runs and dive
The dingle furred deer dead!
Huloo, on plumbed byrns,

O my ruffled ring dove.

.

Huloo, my prowed dove with a
flute!

Ahoy, old, sea-legged fox,

Tom tit and Dai mouse!

My ark sings in the sun

At God speeded summer's end

And the flood flowers now.

(*Author's Prologue*)

There is a striking new note in all the
lines:

There

Where the elegiac fisherbird stabs
and paddles

In the pebbly dab-filled

Shallow and sedge, and 'dilly dilly',
calls the loft hawk,

'Come and be killed' . . .

(*Over Sir John's Hill*)

Though the language is still Thomas'
own, the shift-over from the language of
his previous poems is so great, and its
purpose so different, that there are some
lines in them, I think, which could be
compared to Auden's:

Never and never, my girl riding
far and near

In the land of the hearthstone
tales, and spelled sleep,

Fear or believe that the wolf in
a sheepwhite hood

Loping and bleating roughly and
blithely shall leap,

My dear, my dear,

Out of a lair in the flocked
leaves in the dew dipped
year

To eat your heart in the house
in the rosy wood.

Sleep, good, for ever, slow and

deep, spelled rare and
wise,

My girl ranging the night in the
rose and shire

Of the hobnail tales. . .

(*In Country Sleep*)

While others brought back to my mind
T. S. Eliot's 'austere' and cool-fingered
approach to words:

... Have mercy on

God in his whirlwind silence

save, who marks

the sparrows hail,

For their soul's song.

Now the heron grieves in the
weeded verge. Through

windows

Of dusk and water I see the
tilting whispering

Heron, mirrored go.

Whether these lines remind others of
Auden and Eliot doesn't matter (the re-
semblance is only slight) but the fact
remains that Dylan Thomas had changed
vastly, writing more simply and more
directly in the tradition of the main-
stream in English literature, and proving
a development which Messrs. Stanford
and Brinnin have denied him:

Through throats where many
rivers meet, the curlews
cry,

Under the conceiving moon, on
the high chalk hill,

And there this night I walk
in the white giant's thigh

Where barren as boulders wo-
men lie longing still

To labour and love though they
lay down long ago.

(From *In the White Giant's Thigh*)

TAMBIMUTTU

Important new titles in the revolutionary new soft-cover series **EVERGREEN BOOKS** \$1 and up

Not merely "reprints" but truly distinguished books,
strikingly and sturdily bound, for a permanent place in your library.
Order with the handy coupon below, and note
the money-back guarantee of satisfaction.*



Winner of the Grove Press Award

MANO MAJRA (E-28)

By KHUSHWANT SINGH. The prize-winning novel of violence and tragic love in one Indian village during the great uprooting of peoples in the partition of India. \$1.25

DEMOCRACY AND DICTATORSHIP (E-31)

By ZEVEDEI BARBU. Are both democracy and dictatorship inevitable outgrowths of Western civilization? A brilliant study of the conditions that cause each to arise. \$1.45

VIRGIN SOIL (E-27)

By IVAN TURGENEV. The Russian nihilist movement of the 1870's reflected in the story of an aristocratic girl and her poet lover. \$1.45

THREE EXEMPLARY NOVELS (E-30)

By MIGUEL DE UNAMUNO. Three intense tragedies by one of the most vigorous literary figures of our period. \$1.45

MID-CENTURY FRENCH POETS (E-26)

Ed. and tr. by WALLACE FOWLIE. Verse by Emmanuel, Michaux, Desnos, Eluard, Breton, Cocteau, Perse, Fargue, Jacob — original French text with English translation. \$1.45

THE POEMS OF CATULLUS (E-29)

Translated by HORACE GREGORY. The famous English version of Catullus' witty, candid, and erotic poetry, with a new Introduction by the translator. \$1.25

PUDD'NHEAD WILSON (E-25)

By MARK TWAIN. "The most extraordinary book in American literature. Deals not only with slavery but with miscegenation." — Leslie Fiedler. \$1.25

STORM AT CASTELFRANCO (E-32)

By CHESTER KALLMAN. First collection of verse by this 1955 winner of a grant by the American Academy of Arts and Letters. \$1.00

WAITING FOR GODOT (E-33)

By SAMUEL BECKETT. "One of the most noble and moving plays of our generation." — London Times. \$1.00

*Send no money. Just mark the books you wish to examine and mail this coupon today. You risk nothing.

To GROVE PRESS, Dept. B23, 795 Broadway, N. Y. 3 (or your favorite bookseller)

Please send me the books circled below:

E-29 E-25 E-32 E-33
E-28 E-31 E-27 E-30 E-26

If not delighted, I may return books within 5 days and owe you nothing. Otherwise I will pay you the low Evergreen price plus few cents postage.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....Zone.....State.....

SAVE. Enclose remittance. We then pay postage. Same refund privilege.

R. Pathmanaba Iyer
27-B, High Street,
Plaistow
London E13 0AD

spring 1956

NEW DIRECTIONS

100 JAPANESE POEMS *translated by Kenneth Rexroth*

An inviting introduction to the whole of Japanese poetry. This gift edition is beautifully printed in Italy. \$3.50.

FLOWERS OF EVIL *by Charles Baudelaire*

Edited by Marthiel and Jackson Mathews; a complete and definitive bilingual edition. \$6.00.

NEW DIRECTIONS 15

This international number of the celebrated New Directions annual includes an index to all 15 issues. \$3.50.

PLAYBOOK

Five plays by Lionel Abel, Robert Hivnor, Junji Kinoshita, James Merrill and I. A. Richards. March, \$3.75.

SECTION: ROCK-DRILL (*Cantos 85-95*) *by Ezra Pound*

The next eleven Cantos in the series which follow directly on *The Pisan Cantos*, which received the Bollingen Award in 1948. March, \$3.00.

NEW DIRECTIONS

333 Sixth Avenue

New York 14

the new book of poems by HERBERT READ

*including the celebrated
dramatic dialogue*

MOON'S FARM

MOON'S FARM
and other POEMS

is published by
HORIZON PRESS at
220 West 42nd St.
New York 36

\$3

THE POEMS OF GENE DERWOOD

"This posthumous collection of her poems shows that America has lost a poet of great strength. She left comparatively little work, but a remarkably high proportion of it comes off . . . a very considerable achievement."—LONDON TIMES *Literary Supplement*

"A Cassandra-like dedication. Rewarding, and many times beautiful and memorable . . . a poetic gift and accomplishment of stature and distinction."—THE SATURDAY REVIEW

"She had an idiom of remarkable richness and individuality . . . a rightness and an integrity in expression that is most impressive."—*David Datches*

Limited Edition: Buckram Binding:
80 pages: \$3.00

GENE DERWOOD *Reading Her Own Poems*,
10-inch Long-Playing Record, Recorded by
The Library of Congress: \$3.95

CLARKE & WAY, Inc., Publishers
35 West 21th St., New York 10, N. Y.