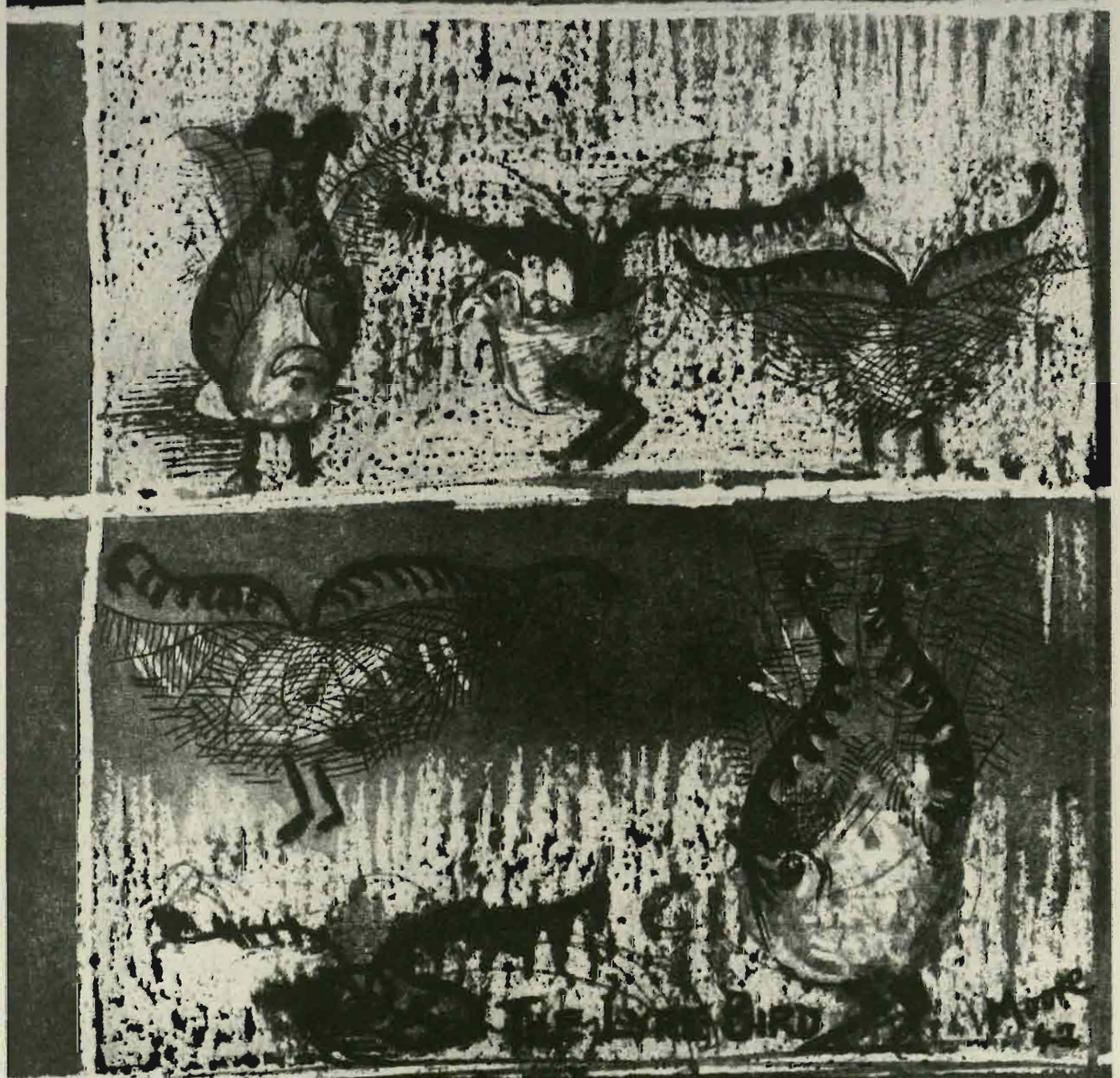
POETRY

LONDON



Nº ELEVEN

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6/-

PL EDITIONS POETRY LONDON

KEITH DOUGLAS

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". . the only book of the late war comparable in descriptive power and intelligence to the books of Remarque, Sassoon and Blunden which spoke in similar terms of 1914-1918 . . . one of the two or three classics that this war has produced."

—The Spectator.

"To many readers the claim made on the jacket flap of this book that Keith Douglas's poems are 'probably the most mature and interesting written by any soldier poet' in the recent war will come as a surprise; yet the sixteen poems printed as an appendix to this concise, vivid, excellently sturdy account of tank warfare in the Western Desert during the Alamein campaign do much to bear it out. . . . with his death . . . a potentially major gift was lost."

—Times Litt. Supp.

8/6

PL EDITIONS POETRY LONDON

Just published

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Edited by

Stefan Schimanski

and

Henry Treece

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8/6

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by George Reavey

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8/6

Lindsay Drummond

STEPHEN COATES

SECOND POEMS

Stephen Coates is one of the most original of the younger poets. He writes in a manner very much his own, betraying comparatively little similarity to most of his contemporaries. As well as shorter poems there is a Choral Play, and a long poem adopted from Boccaccio. This is one of the most interesting new books we have published.

7/6

PL

EDITIONS POETRY LONDON

CONTENTS

COVER BY HENRY MOORE

Lithographs by

CERI RICHARDS

MSS. (with stamped addressed envelopes) should be sent to the Editor, business and general communications to the Secretary, 26, Manchester Square, W.1. Welbeck 8178

ABOUT CONTRIBUTORS

KEITH DOUGLAS: First became known as a poet of promise at Oxford (two of his Oxford poems are printed here); his book of war experiences *Alamein to Zem Zem* was hailed in *The Spectator* as one of the classics of the war just over, and the poems included in that volume attracted universally favourable comment. He was killed in action in Normandy.

RONALD BOTTRALL: His *Selected Poems*, with an introduction by Edith Sitwell, have just recently been published. He first became known in the Thirties, as a member of the Cambridge school of poets (Empson was another), who were the lesser known, but in some ways profounder, rivals of the Oxford Group of Auden, Spender and Day Lewis.

BERNARD SPENCER: Was a frequent contributor to *New Verse*, whose quiet and excellent talents were undeservedly overshadowed by the showier and more startling work of Auden, MacNeice and others. In *Aegean Islands*, his first book, recently published by PL, he lays claim to the attention he deserves.

ANNE RIDLER: Her latest book is a verse play, *The Shadow Factory* (Faber and Faber), and she also edited for Faber an excellent introductory anthology, *A Little Book of Modern Verse*. She contributed to many of the early numbers of PL.

PATRICK EVANS: Has yet to publish his first book, and has been little published in magazines but is one of the most accomplished and original of the younger poets.

JAMES REEVES: First became known in the mid-thirties, when he contributed much to anthologies and magazines, including *The Faber Book of Modern Verse*, and had a first book published by Chatto and Windus. PL is to publish shortly a new book of his poems, *The Imprisoned Sea*, which besides new poems contains all he wishes to preserve from his first book.

LAWRENCE DURRELL: One of the original contributors to PL who has recently published many books with Faber, and become known as one of the outstanding poets of the younger generation.

KATHLEEN RAINE: Receives, and deservedly, a better press than any other poet of her generation. She first became known before the war as a contributor to *New Verse*, but it is her more recent work in *Stone and Flower* and *Living in Time* that has given her a wide and appreciative public.

GEORGE BARKER: Contributed to the first number of PL, when he was already beginning to be spoken of, with Dylan Thomas, as one of the most promising poets of the post-Auden generation. His latest book is *Eros in Dogma* (Faber).

KEIDRYCH RHYS: Is well known as the editor of *Wales* and of *Poems from the Forces*. His own poems have been appearing in the little magazines since the late thirties, and have been published in book form by Routledge.

RUTH SPEIRS: Has made new, and, we think, the best translations yet of Rilke into English. A few of her translations appeared in *Personal Landscape* (*Poetry London*).

EDITH SITWELL: Needs no introduction.

GEORGE SCURFIELD: Has had poems in several of the wartime anthologies, and was one of the early contributors to PL. A pamphlet of his poems was published as PL pamphlet No. 1, called *The Song of a Red Turtle*.

HUGH GORDON PORTEUS: Contributed a review to the second number of PL. He also contributed poems to *Personal Landscape*, and used to contribute frequently to *Twentieth Century Verse* in the late thirties.

G. S. FRASER: Author of *Home Town Elegy* (*Poetry London*), and one of the most promising critics of the younger generation. His new book is to be produced jointly by PL and The Harvill Press.

PIERRE JEAN JOUVE: Author of *Les Noces*, *Sueuer de Sang*, *Matières Céleste* and other books of poems. PL is shortly bringing out a book of translations from his poems, and one of his novels, *Vagadu*, is also due to appear in translation shortly in this country.

DAVID GASCOYNE: Author of *Poems* 1937-42, is also deservedly well known for his translations from the French.

STEPHEN COATES: First appeared in *Cambridge Poetry*. His *Second Poems* were recently published by PL.

JOHN HEATH-STUBBS: One of the best-known of the Oxford poets, contemporary with Keith Douglas and Sidney Keyes, he has also been making a reputation for his sound and scholarly critical articles.

MARGARET DIGGLE: Wrote an essay on *The Ancient Mariner* in the last PL.

CHARLES WILLIAMS: Died last year. He was perhaps best known for his novels and criticism, but he was a considerable poet, and thought of himself as a poet first.

NICHOLAS MOORE: Author of *The Glass Tower* (*Poetry London*). Also edited *The PL Book of Modern American Short Stories.*

JULIAN SYMONS: Was a contributor of poems to *New Verse*, and founded his own magazine, *Twentieth Century Verse*. He has lately written much criticism for *Our Time*, *Focus*, *The Critic* and other papers and magazines.

ED. BY PIERRE SEGHERS

*

POESIE 1939-45

*

This anthology has been edited by M. Pierre Seghers from the pages of his bi-monthly magazine, *Poesie*, which he kept alive all through the war years and the occupation of France by the Nazis. In it he continued to publish the articles and poems of all the most prominent French writers, both those well-established and the younger generation who were having to make their reputations in those difficult times. He even printed the work of those who were playing an active part in the resistance movement, though sometimes their contributions appeared under pseudonyms. Paul Eluard and Louis Aragon, the two major living French poets, contributed, as did André Gide and other prominent men of letters, and their contributions are included in the present anthology with those of the younger contributors such as Pierre Emmanuel, Loys Masson and Pierre Seghers himself.

The book we are publishing has been translated into English by various hands, many of them themselves English poets of reputation ; and the contributions in verse are accompanied also by the original French text.

M. Seghers has contributed an introduction, which throws an interesting light on the literary life of France during the war, and on the particular part his magazine and its writers played in it.

SEPTEMBER 1947 10/6

FORTHCOMING ANTHOLOGIES

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Edited by Gwyn Williams : THE RENT THAT'S DUE TO LOVE (translations of Welsh lyrical Poetry).

Edited by German Arciniegas : THE GREEN CONTINENT (South America by its leading writers).

PL

EDITIONS POETRY LONDON

POETRY

LONDON

EDITOR: TAMBIMUTTU

VOLUME 3 September-October, 1947 NUMBER 11

ELEVENTH LETTER

With this number PL becomes a bi-monthly again. It seems appropriate that its reappearance is at a time which is in some respects similar to 1938. There seems to be no intelligent platform, today, for the reception of the poets' writing, and to the careless journalist, the man who either will not bother to find out or has not the acumen to winnow the grain from the stuff, modern poetry presents a drab picture. As in 1938, Dylan Thomas and Edith Sitwell have been the targets of censure, while some Eliotose has been singled out as the best poetry of the late war which, charming as it is, hardly fulfils the claim made for it (Henry Reed). Other interesting poets, Barker, Gascoyne, Fraser, MacNeice have been either misread or dismissed too lightly. There are still critics who consider literature as illustration for their social theories or attempt to find the goodness of a poem from its prose argument and the 'truth' of what is being said, thus making poetry compete with philosophy and science; or they try to find the poetry in the charm of the technical elements—'coherence of rhythm within the variations of a scheme, coherence of form, and power to rhyme,' (Geoffrey Grigson on Dylan Thomas in *Polemic No.* 7).

While grubbing for copy-book rhymes, Mr. Grigson has surprisingly missed Thomas' subtle ability to pun, that is make one word act like another, or several words—rhyme is the terminational form of punning and alliteration the initial. Punning, the oldest and most pervasive device in poetry from Tamil to Welsh and Anglo-Saxon is put to its fullest use in Dylan Thomas, as in the moral epigrams of the third century Tamil poet Auveiyar. Considered as mere sound, it has an immediate and universal power to please, and for this reason Thomas' poetry has been said to have an elaborate 'musical structure.' Besides missing the complicated assonance, alliteration, internal and half-rhyme, in the four lines he quotes;

> The bows glided down and the coast
> Blackened with birds took a last look
> At the thrashing hair and whale-blue eye;
> The trodden town rang its cobbles for luck...

while looking for 'construable sense,' he has missed the typical catalogue of correspondences and almost elemental (literally) terms of reference that are Thomas'.

The *cynghanedd* in '*B*lac*k*ened with *b*irds too*k* a last look,' gives a clue to the metrical method of Thomas.

A free use of *cynghanedd* (which is almost the foundation of Welsh prosody) is typical of his verse. *Cynghanedd* is 'a fairly strict system of alliteration in which instead of one consonant being repeated, as in English verse, a series of different consonants is repeated in varying order.*

Shakespeare used it and Gerard Manley Hopkins. But Thomas' line is a special form of *cynghanedd* called *cynghanedd sain*, in which the poet divides the lines into three parts, making first and second parts rhyme, and second and third parts alliterate:

Na merch *bach*/na *gwrach*/na gwraig.

which appears in Hopkins as:

The down-*dugged*/ground *hugged*/grey

and in Thomas in an inverted form:

Blackened with birds/*took* a last/*look*.

Rhyme, alliteration, are the direct avenue to the poet's undifferentiated sense, and in their fullest use as gesture they join the perceptions of the different senses together, heightening them into a sensation. Not only that, and this is a point the American critic R. P. Blackmur has made, produces an undifferentiated gesture of meaning, complex, yet accurate in its references. Used skilfully, as in Thomas, punning is the onomatopoeia of meaning. That is, the play upon words is the most immediate and most final pattern of figures. It is the direct method which identifies the elements of the sound with the elements of the meaning.

I cannot see why Messrs. Eliot and Thomas are bracketed together, or why they are said to lack 'education in art, severe selection and control, some knowledge of what to reject.' Mr. Eliot, 'this self-deluded playboy of poetics,' is supposed to have championed 'unreadable flatterers of themselves, purveyors of diabolism, expositors of unreason,' (Baudelaire, Byron, Rimbaud, Lautreamont are all diabolical: Mr. Grigson is not of his age in wanting Wordsworth's the Sublime and the Beautiful) but, while commending Mr. Auden for his distrust of the 'personal and formless,' he forgets that Auden is one of the 'flatterers of themselves' that Mr. Eliot has championed.

Destructive criticism is without value because it is clear that, as is usual with this type of criticism, the wrong yardstick has been applied to the poems. Each poem, a complex of meanings, has its own logic, creates its own standards for its criticism and mere analysis, 'explaining away,' will yield nothing but the bare skeleton in which the poetry has evaporated away. To show how poem after poem 'works' in the Empsonian manner of *Seven Types* would imply just appreciation of the elements that make the poem. If these elements have been missed, the wrong yardstick will be used by the critic, and as to what results we have seen in Mr. Sparrow's *Sense and Poetry* and Mr. Lucas' *Decline and Fall of the Romantic Ideal*. These gentlemen's critical habits were formed a generation ago, as Mr. Grigson's was in the Aldington Aftermath of Imagism, the *vers de societé* of Betjeman and the lesser Auden, tempered with the surrealism of Eluard or the diabolism of the unknown Philip O'Connor (the last two Mr. Grigson now seems to have thrown overboard as unfitting his 'high seriousness.') Ideally, as Henry James has put it in his preface to *The Spoils of Poynton*, 'criticism is an irrepressible appreciation.' 'To criticise is to appreciate, to appropriate, to take intellectual possession, to establish in fine a relation with the criticised thing and make it one's own.' Unless the critic has established in fine a relation with the poem criticised he

* Prof. Gwyn Williams.

will search like Mr. Grigson in Thomas' rhymes for isolated sensuous beauty that plays no active part in the complex unfolding of the poem, with the qualifying and establishing of the total meaning of the poem; he will see metrics as ornament merely, and not functional, in corroborating the play of meaning throughout. That is why he has failed to see that the unity of a Thomas poem is not something relatively static but dynamic, the product of growth, the fulfilment of a total process. In considering Thomas' rhyme which he finds 'low, lazy and an offence to the ear,' he appends examples of rhyme well used, which enforces the emotional grain of the poem and the sense of what is being conveyed:

> All the rest is silence
> On the other side of the wall
> And the silence ripeness,
> And the ripeness all . . . .
>
> Auden

> Calm and deep peace in this wide air,
> These leaves that redden to the fall;
> And in my heart, if calm, at all
> If any calm, a calm despair . . . .
>
> Tennyson

which seems completely irrelevant to the image-breeding, agglutinative cross-talk of Dylan Thomas. It is astonishing that he finds a 'pointless disorder' in the careful construct of the *Ballad of the Long-legged Bait:* he obviously dislikes the roughness of the English folk ballad which is different to the excessive smoothness that spoils Wordsworth's ballads. He has missed the 20th century sense of crisis that the modern poets have expressed from Baudelaire to Rilke, Eliot, Thomas, Keith Douglas; and it is the more astonishing that Mr. Grigson who at one time edited the most 'lively' poetry magazine in England has backslided into a J. C. Trewinish conservatism that is symptomatic of his staleness and lack of faith in the present. Rather for us the remark of Jean-Paul Sartre: 'We will not make ourselves absolute by reflecting in our works dessicated principles which are sufficiently empty and negative to pass from one century to another, but by fighting passionately in our time, by loving it passionately, and by consenting to perish entirely with it.' This does not imply an attitude of Neo-romanticicism. 'Loving passionately' does not mean uncritically. Mr. Grigson's Hobbesian view of poetry, of calling a spade a spade, reduces the status of the poet from *maker* to *copyist.* He literally would like the poet 'to hold the mirror up to nature,' and metric nature would be that prescribed in the pedant's copybook. Some of his remarks like 'the unit in Mr. Thomas' poetry is . . . . phrase or line' (I see nothing wrong with this method when it results in a Thomas poem) are true, but they are useless as criticism since he has not seen the tradition and method behind the work—the daring use of metaphor like the Elizabethans', the Blakean willingness to risk obscurity, the flashes which are close to metaphysical wit

> Paper and sticks and shovel and match
> Why won't the news of the old world
> catch . . . .

to take one at random.

While Mr. Grigson is accurate in his documentation and provocative in his remarks, there is another inept piece recently published that hazards the remark: 'since 1939 very little of any permanent value has happened in poetry.' The critic then proceeds to find Mr. Henry Reed's *Lessons of War* 'the best war poetry I have read.' I have no objection to Mr. Reed, who besides writing the witty *Naming of Parts* (which is the same type of verse as MacNeice's *Bagpipe Music*), is one of our soundest critics. But if Mr. Reed, why not Mrs. Ridler? The extraordinary run of poetry he dislikes (the objectivist-telegraphese of G. S. Fraser, the pagan-spiritual landscapes of David Gascoyne, the poster poetry of Paul Potts, Stephen Spender, the five sonnets of George Barker in which he finds the lines 'you as gentle as water and simple

as oxygen' and 'mad as a mechanic with a broken spanner, un-sublime and un-beautiful, the pointedly garrulous MacNeice, the visceral Thomas) makes one wonder *what* poetry he likes besides Mr. Reeves.' It is plain that this critic's knowledge of modern verse ends with Eliot as with all critics of the Scrutiny group—the younger generation in *New Bearings* is represented by Mr. Ronald Bottrall who is accepted by the group.

Interest in criticism, without interest in the subject—the journalistic mania—is alarming. When the judge of poetry since 1939 asks who is Gavin Ewart, Mallalieu, Ruthven Todd, Philip O'Connor who were regular contributors to *New Verse* and *Twentieth Century Verse* one asks, what are the minimum qualifications for a critic? This is the reason why, from its inception, the criticism in PL has been written by poets. They have the necessary knowledge and interest. Besides, the best criticism in English has been done mainly by practicing poets from Dryden and Coleridge, to Yeats, Eliot and Empson, and in America, Tate, Stevens, Ransom, Blackmur, Winters.

Again, the remark that 'PL was expressly intended as the organ of a new Romantic Revival' is wide off the mark. PL has never used any labels nor has it supported a movement. Surely, at this late stage in the history of literary criticism, it should be possible for a magazine to concentrate on publishing the work, leaving the readers to fulfil their proper function as interpreters. To have the circular view is not to have any view at all. Having seen the misrepresentation taken out of their contexts, and time, of Wordsworth's contrasting propositions 'Fancy' and 'Imagination,' Housman's 'Wit' and 'Imagination,' Johnson's following 'thoughts to the last ramification' and 'the grandeur of generality' for the purpose of discussing the metaphysical or romantic periods in poetry, it is a pity critics do not realise that these contrasting propositions are only made to help grasp a literary point, and that the contrasting propositions are co-axial in verse, in varying proportions according to the nature of the poet. Gerard Hopkins wrote in the Romantic twilight. And when Coleridge condemned as 'a species of *wit*, a pure work of the *will*' 'the excitement of surprise by the juxtaposition and *apparent* reconciliation of widely different or incompatible things . . . as when, for instance, the hills are made to reflect the image of a *voice*' he was right, for, after all, Cowley's phrase is trite. All these contrasting propositions are co-axial, and if PL is supposed to support any tradition, let it be the tradition of co-axial literature—different types of writing which are all facets of poetic experience. I think it was Mr. Eliot who remarked that, today, we should expect to find different types of literature existing in the same language and in the same country. As PL has done in the past, it will continue to publish what seems the most significant verse written today, and we will leave the interpretation and classification to the critic. As it is, I feel I have done my share of criticising modern verse in assembling the material for the ten numbers of PL published during the last nine years.

KEITH DOUGLAS

THE HAND

The hand is perfect in itself—the five
fingers, though changing attitude, depend
on a golden point, the imaginary true focal
to which infinities of motion and shape are yoked.
There is no beginning to the hand, no end,
and the bone retains its proportion in the grave.

I can transmute this hand, changing each
finger to a man or woman (the hills behind
to be drawn in their relation),
and to more than men, women, hills, by alteration
of symbols standing for the fingers, for the whole hand,
of the nature and position of symbols, all or each.

I make an infinity of pictures, actually drawing
Shapes within the shapes of the hand—
this is a simple alchemy of forms. But hence
(more difficult) try to impose arguments
whose phases, each upon a digit, tend
to the centre of reasoning, the mainspring.

To do this is drilling the mind, still a recruit
for the active expeditions of his duty
when he must navigate alone the wild
Cosmos, as the Jew wanders the world
and we, watching the tracks of him at liberty
like the geometry of feet
Upon a shore, constructed in the sand
look for the proportions, the form of an immense hand.

Palestine
Nathanya, 1941

JOHN ANDERSON

John Anderson, a scholarly gentleman
advancing with his company in the attack
received some bullets through him as he ran.

So his creative brain whirled, and he fell back
in the bloody dust, (it was a fine day there
and warm). Blood turned his tunic black

while past his desperate final stare
the other simple soldiers run
and leave the hero unaware.

Apt epitaph or pun
he could not hit upon, to grace
a scholar's death; he only eyed the sun.

But I think, the last moment of his gaze
beheld the father of gods and men,
Zeus, leaning from heaven as he dies,

whom in his swoon he hears again
summon Apollo in the Homeric tongue:
Descend Phoebus and cleanse the strain

of dark blood from the body of John Anderson.
Give him to Death and Sleep,
who'll bear him as they can

out of the range of darts to the broad vale
of Lycia; there lay him in a deep
solemn content on some bright dale.

And the brothers, Sleep and Death
lift up John Anderson at his last breath.

Oxford, 1940.

LEUKOTHEA

When you were alive, my Leukothea
your loveliness was puzzling
and only I knew the processes
by which my ornament lived and breathed.
And when you died
I was persuaded to store you in the earth
and I remember when they put you there
your too expressive living eye
being covered by the dark eyelash
and by its lid for a cerement.
At that moment those who looked at you
wondered I know how you could be made
in such exquisite material
and I would not explain for the world.
Even when they put the soil above you
they saw its unusual texture. The very grass
was a strange plant, precious as emeralds.

So all these years I have lived securely. I knew
I had only to uncover you
to see how the careful earth would have kept
all as it was, untouched. I trusted the ground.
I knew the worm and the beetle would go by
and never dare batten on your beauty.

Last night I dreamed and found my trust betrayed
only the little bones and the great bones, disarrayed.

Oxford, 1940.

RONALD BOTTRALL

ELEGIACS

Down the long drenches of the sun
Up scaling the shrill parapets of the wind
Travel, sometimes split by jagged passion
Sometimes weathered by tears,
The fragmentary apprehensions of our past.

Now we touch tender flesh, tight over the breast-bone
In humid tropics, now tingle down our fingertips
With hot wine on the snow of unaccustomed mountain-tops.

Amid the press of cities the residue
Is insufficiently filtered, imperfectly precipitated,
Cloudy grains in the creeks of a vast reservoir.
Are there, then, aqueducts where the mind
Flows clear and tumbles crystalline to the plain?
Or is the firmament a bowl
Transparent into luminous nothingness
Wherein goldfish aimless and unregarding
Turn endlessly within their watery sphere
Moving towards light, scales glowing
Unknowing the pervading gold of the sun?

Within the vault is the rock.
In the pain of yesterday is the pleasure of today.
On the rock is the shipwreck.
In the pleasure of today lies the pain of tomorrow.
Upon the shipwreck blows the wind.
The pain is the pleasure and the pleasure is the pain.

On the bleak hill of time we lie exposed
Like granite dolmens
To every gale of pain and pleasure
Beating indifferently our barren heads.
Oh! the virgin forest dark within our hearts
Twined with lianas and rotting orchids!
Oh! the derelict hulks, the Sargasso Sea!

BERNARD SPENCER

OUT OF SLEEP

Surfacing out of sleep she feared
voices in the sky talking
with thick tongues. Night flashed
brightening her eyelids; Yet as panic cleared
she knew those voices never spoke the harsh
brogue of the guns; And then the rain
sighed in the leaves; it was thunder.
The rain said, hush.

It has been peace in our world a year:
What worse-than-memories seep
to infect our nights with fear
up from the angers of that other war,
ours copy here?
What towns burn on what darker coast of sleep,
how many histories deep?

ANNE RIDLER

VIEWS OF THE NORTH COAST

The yellow mustard-field and green cliff,
Bright and flat as a racegame landscape,
Smooth coves and upward combes with a stiff
Thatch of sea-shorn oaks, these
For the estuary, that smooths the brimming seas
Below the Bar where late the mermaids sang;
And oyster-catchers, snatching the light,
Fly in a black-and-white cartoon before
The wind—these for the estuary, endless days
That silt in centuries against the shore.

Seaward, the great capes with foreheads pressed
Against the tide; after the storm
The sun a red ship rolls in the breakers westward,
Ridge upon ridge the steep seas
Rush on the rocks, Alps that flame and freeze
Endlessly pouring down the slope of the world,
And flecks of foam like gulls in a flock
Catch the last light, until the red ship sinks:
Then still the unseen monstrous waters pour
In centuries against the crumbling shore.

Trebetherick, 1946

PATRICK EVANS

CHRISTMAS, GREAT BRITAIN, 1941

Christmas the feast of skulls and coloured candles
Approaches; its mystery we cannot fathom.
Deep as bells
In an engulfed cathedral,
Deeper than ever plummet sounded
Our spirits have sunk, have retreated;
The music is here.
Like spirits a child believes keep house in wells
We inhabit a fern-world, a dumb world, a fish world;
Our voices strangely ring their expected knells,
The death of a wish or the growth of a passionate bias;
Incurring, perhaps, a deeper kindness. And the bells fly by us
Out and out and across the snowy night,
Their music exploding, fading. Let ravens protect us!
All that is fell and deep mouthed like a bell infect us!
When the post-girl grinned me a greeting this morning
Was it only my hangover, some morning obsession or wish,
That gave her the mute cut-off-ness of a fish?

" Unto you a child is born," they said.
And the wise men wept. And Mary did not bleed,
And all was joy. The very beasts
On that bitter night were snug, ruffling with joy;
And so the wonder-child was born.
But the miracle stales.
To these old tales
We prefer nativity of those we love
(Whether the first or second birth).
My sister Barbara's little red-haired boy
Laughs, is uncivilized and a proper animal.
And this is of us, and this the actual
Is our good-will to men, our peace on earth.

We can never return; our parents' bones are burnt;
The raven's note across the abyss of the night
Hard as the times we live in has no tone.
And who denies the bell shall live in hell!
Yet have no fear; the raven's flight,
The curve the times are describing, leads to the light
Through broken circles of darkness. And those who trust and love
Shall find in full what now is far removed.

GREEN GRASS GROWING

Green grass growing upward splits the concrete pavement.
Who shall tell us of the loveliness of women?
Their words are water, all the fond describers'.
The green grass growing splits the concrete pavement.
No man living tells the majesty of women.

The river flows away, the imperial Thames.
The wrist watch and the alarum clock run, oh, they run down
But no one knows the majesty of women,
The depth of those their bodies, time's soft river.
Clocks run down, but time obeys no watch,
Time stays the same, while fade the imperial women.

The buttocks are an empire and the breasts
Two Indias, while the escarpment of the spine
Is lonely as the Andes. Who loves the Andes,
Who shall expound the loneliness of women,
Women most loved but never understood,
Their sex enduring as the enormous Andes,
Their throats where desire croaks and cowslips grow,
Eyes whose betrayal speaks but utters never a sound?

The taxis dart and overtake the buses,
The colours are bastard and the time is true.
Who shall explain the majesty of women
To us? to us? Exaltation, softness, pleasure.

JAMES REEVES

A FAIRY TALE

Too late he saw the watcher in the shade
Signal from the laurels beside the lawn,
The circle close and the loved figure vanish
In a maze of pointed feet, a flash of hair.
He heard the leaves of the sycamore complain.

Now to the garden the lapsed years recall
No cloaked betrayer and no mythical dancers
Who steal by moonlight in the month of August.
Instead, upon the lawn together pace
A child's ghost and a man of ageing heart.

INTROSPECTION

Curious how something quaint and long discarded
Revives a rapture you had thought forgotten.
Take in your hand this shell. The ear held close
Catches a whisper from the inward past.

It is a mouth singing secretly
Or a cave where restless water slides
Over the shingle; it is consciousness
Locked upon innocent experience.

You recall how downstairs seemed such a cave.
The after-bedtime music, the low voices
Were spells your mother and your father made;
The child listening at the stairhead, you.

Does not the circumstance amaze you now?
"Could it be I," you say, "who suffered such
Tumult on tumult of melody and feeling?
Was I so deeply moved? Could I be, still?"

It was your father rescued you so cold
So wide-eyed on the shore of sleep and wonder.
Bearing his strange child to bed he asked
What you ask now, could it be really you?

A hundred things could move you, many times
Drowned in that sea you came to life again.
Those vanished phases of experience
None knew, none knows but memory the creator.

These are the lips of memory. Lean close
Your ear and know what once you were.
Troubled by changed intensity,
Perplexed by what became of you,
Be certain that the imprisoned sea
Has other mysteries to speak of yet.

LAWRENCE DURRELL

IN THE GARDEN OF THE VILLA CLEOBOLUS

The mixtures of this garden smell at night
Of pine and oleander, with perhaps
Dry edge of dust or sour lime
Where the cork-tree rubs the house:
You drink in the moisture and the dense
Weight, swollen in the note of the thrush,
Exhaling on the margins the wild thyme.

Extending through you like a voice in praise
Among the circular leafage here, and now
Comes the Roman serving-woman, holding up
The candles shielded at her breast
Down the dark pathway like the moon upsways;
Ventures and brings with her,
As if she led the way for the Alone,
An unremembered passage from a fugue—
Painful because it cannot be expressed—
Played from a neighbour's house on an old horn gramophone.

And you think: given once
Authority over the word how shall we
Capture or praise or even measure
In one identity the full round
Of even this simple garden, all of it's
Equal nonchalance at being and pleasure?
Build square on the English vowels
In a Greek garden where a Roman maid
Presses the figs like little golden acts
Against her body through the crude, good
Pottery of this lovely neighbourhood?

Later: white force of candles
Burning in pools of oak, and now again
The intruding music and you think: indeed
The good outweighs the evil in the least:
The Gods are still the ghastly children
They were: and art for this poor beast
Is only the public sorting out
One's yield of pain to be confined
Within the loving chamber of a form:
Then launched on the hairline of the normal mind.

Not even this perhaps—yes, but somehow
To outflank the personal neurasthenia
That lies beyond the ending of each kiss;
Bring joy, as, lustrous on this dish
The painted dancers, motionless in play,
Spin to eternity, describing for us all
The natural history of the human wish.

Rhodes, '47.

KATHLEEN RAINE

ABSOLUTION

Sometimes by angels of the mind
The absolving words are said,
Sometimes the heart is touched with mercy in a dream.

Lost innocent flower faces smiling
Into childhood's tear-wet eyes
Bless with divine forgiveness from the grass.

Birds sing their phrases from green places,
Pure voice that self-imprisoned lovers hear
Clear above the clamourous mourning of desire.

The deafening thunder of the passionate tide
In that dark heart that rages against its shore
Batters upon the ear-drums absolution
In the blood-beat of life's continuance.

Chairs, withering flowers, mirror and pictures, clock and hearth,
The quiet things of home that anger has assailed
Outraged and sorrowful proffer their silent pardon.

Flower of the violated grass, voice of the lost grove,
Unheard, unheeded eloquence of wronged things,
Thunder that rends the self-accusing soul,

Voice of those bleeding silent wounds ourselves have given,
Sole divine judgment on the murderous heart,
Forgiveness, too terrible to be born!

GEORGE BARKER

MEMORIAL INSCRIPTION

O Leopardi! O lion pawed Seas!
Give tongue, give tongue, against, again
The hill of miseries and skulls,
The weeping law of mysteries.
O Lion-pawed heart! O voices of stone!
Shatter the jacket in which we rejoice
Shatter the tabernacle in which we die
Alive for ever alone.

KEIDRYCH RHYS

48 HOURS AT TENBY

BLUE sparkle of sea rounding the harbour
Quay Alley opening on to two beaches
And blue, deep blue the bay over the sand
Following the vague indeterminate coastline
Green shadow of scaly waves on reddening sails
Airplanes banking overhead patrolling as far down as Worm's Head
Porpoises leaping near bathers in the calm oiled patches
And a little ship tied up at the pier
The island-green is monk deserted no other than Caldy
So pleasant after the eyesore rock called St. Catherine's Fort
A few marines and a dribble of a crack county regiment take it easy
...The refreshment bars on the shore might serve as orderly rooms
While cluttered ramshackle hotels with a sea-view cost the lucky a fortune
Grey men in flannels with Eton ties the genteel old and
Coffee-drinking newly marrieds with soluble baby napkins
Sun takes away the cares of morning and journey
Soft sand trickles through fingers and palms
Of those who feel awkward being not free in mind
Sun does us good idling on the galloped sands
Tires us out before teatime.

The " Welsh " Gift Shop sells reproductions of
  Paul Nash, Matisse, Van Gogh, a country-life series,
  buckets and spades, has a tabby cat in the window
And the houses in South Parade remind us of
  Augustus John, Nina Hamnett, and Herbert M. Vaughan
  who is known to speak up on the town council.

RAINER MARIA RILKE

THE DUINESE ELEGIES

THE FIRST ELEGY

Who, if I cried out, would hear me
out of the orders of angels? and even
supposing that one of them took me suddenly to his heart:
I would fade because of his stronger existence.
For the beautiful is nothing but the beginning
of the terrible which we can only just bear,
and we admire it so much because it composedly
disdains to destroy us. Every angel is terrible.
And so I contain myself and suppress the call-note of dark
sobbing. Ah, whom are we able to turn to? Not angels,
not men, and the sharp animals sense it already
that we are not very reliably at home
within the interpreted world. Perhaps there remains for us,
that we may daily see it again, some tree
at the slope; there remains for us yesterday's street
and the pampered fidelity of a habit that liked
being with us, and so it remained and it did not go.
O and the night, the night when the wind full of world-space
wears out our faces—, for whom would it not remain,
longed-for, gently disappointing, in toilsomeness imminent
for the single heart. The night, is it easier for lovers?
Ah, with each other they only cover their fate.
Do you not know it *yet?* Out of your arms
fling emptiness into the spaces we breathe ; it may be
that birds will feel the expanded air in more intimate flight.

Yes, the spring-seasons needed you. Some
stars expected of you to feel them.
A wave in the past surged near,
or a violin gave itself as you were passing
the opened window. All that was mission.
But did you master it? Did expectation not always
divert you still as if all things announced
to you a beloved one? (Where will you harbour her,
the great strange thoughts going in and out
and often staying with you in the night).

But sing the lovers when you feel longing;
their renowned emotion is far from immortal enough.
Those, you envy them almost, who were deserted, you found them
so much more loving than those whose love was requited.
Start ever anew the praise that is never accomplished;
think: the hero preserves himself, even his end
was to him only a pretext for *being:* his last
birth. But lovers exhausted Nature takes back
into herself as if twice there was not the strength
to achieve this. Have you enough recalled
Gaspara Stampa, that by this intenser example of love
some maiden, deprived of her lover,
feels: 'that I were to become like her'?
Should not these oldest pains finally grow
more fruitful? Is it not time that we, loving,
free ourselves of the beloved and tremblingly master it:
as the arrow masters the sinew, gathered
in the leap to be more than itself. For staying is nowhere.

Voices, voices. Hear, my heart,
as only the saints heard: so that the gigantic call
lifted them off the ground; but they, impossible,
continued kneeling and gave it no heed: it was *thus* they heard.
Not that you could bear the voice of God
—far from it. But the breathing wind hear,
the uninterrupted message shaping itself out of silence.
Now its rushing sound comes to you from yonder young dead.
Wherever you entered, did not their fate
calmly address you in churches at Naples and Rome?
Or an inscription sublimely impressed itself on you,
as lately the tablet in Santa Maria Formosa.
What do they require of me? quietly, I should discard
the appearance of wrong which at times
slightly hinders their spirits' pure movement.

True, it is strange to dwell on the earth no longer,
no longer to practise customs scarcely acquired,
not to give the meaning of human future
to roses and other peculiarly promising things;
to be no longer what one had been
in infinitely anxious hands, and even
to discard one's own name like a broken toy.
Strange, not to continue wishing one's wishes. Strange,

to see all that applied, so loosely fluttering in space.
And to be dead is toilsome and full
of making up for, that one gradually feels
a trace of eternity.—But all of the living
make the mistake of drawing too strict distinctions.
Angels often (it is said) do not know
whether they move among living or dead.
The eternal current always tears with it all ages
through either region, and it out-sounds them in both.

They finally need us no longer, those early-deceased,
one is gently weaned from this earth, as one mildly
outgrows the breasts of the mother. But we,
who need such great secrets, to whom blissful progress so often
springs forth out of sadness—: *could* we exist without *them?*
Is the legend in vain that once, in lament for Linos,
barren numbness was broken through by daring first music,
that only in frightened space—out of which there stepped,
all at once, for ever, a youth who was almost a god—
emptiness fell into that vibration
which transports and consoles and helps us now.

(*Translated by Ruth Speirs*)

THE SECOND ELEGY

Every angel is terrible. Yet, woe is me,
I sing of you, almost-deadly birds of the soul,
knowing of you. Where gone are the days of Tobias when one
of the most radiant stood at the simple street-door,
for the journey a little disguised, and already no longer terrible;
(a youth to the youth looking out with curiosity).
If now from behind the stars the dangerous archangel stepped
only one step downwards and hither: high-up beating,
our own heart would slay us. Who are you?

Early happily-chanced successes, Creation's favourites,
mountain-ranges, dawn-purple grates
of all that has been created,—the blossoming deity's pollen,
joints of light, passages, staircases, thrones,
spaces of being, shields of bliss, tumults
of violently rapturous feeling, and suddenly, single,
mirrors that draw up into their own faces again
their own beauty that had been streaming away.

For we, when we feel, lose substance ; ah we
breathe ourselves out and away; from ember to ember
we emit fainter scent. There someone may tell us:
yes, you enter into my blood; this room,
spring, is filling with you . . . What does it avail,
he cannot hold us, within and around him we fade away.
And those who are beautiful, o who retains them? Appearance
incessantly rises and goes in their faces. Like dew
from the morning grass, like heat from a hot dish, there rises
from us what is ours. Whither, o smile? O upward glance:
new, warm, vanishing wave of the heart—;
woe is me: yet, we *are* it. But does
world-space which we dissolve into, taste of us?
Do angels only absorb what is theirs, what has streamed
from them—or is in it, sometimes, as if by mistake,
some of our being as well? Are we mingled into their features
only so much as that vagueness is mingled into the faces
of pregnant women? They do not perceive it within the whirl
of their return to themselves. (How could they perceive it).

If they understood it, lovers might strangely
speak in the night-air. For it appears that we
are kept secret by everything. See, the trees *are ;*
the houses in which we dwell, still exist. Only we,
like an airy exchange, move past everything.
And all is united to pass us over in silence, partly perhaps
as shame, and partly as an ineffable hope.

Lovers, you who suffice in each other, you
I ask about us. You grasp each other. Do you have proofs?
See, it happens to me that my hands grow conscious
of each other or that my worn face finds
forbearance in them. That gives me a little feeling.
Yet who would, for that, already dare to *exist?*
But you who grow in the other's rapture
until, overwhelmed, he implores you: not *more—;*
you who under each other's hands
grow more copious like years of abundant vintage;
you who at times fade away only because the other
completely prevails: you I ask about us. I know
that you so blissfully touch each other because the caress
lasts, because the part which you, tender ones, cover
does not vanish; because you feel pure duration beneath it.

Thus, from embrace, you expect for yourselves
almost eternity. Yet, when you mastered the terrors of first
glances, the longing at the window, the first
walk together, *once*, through the garden:
lovers, are you *then* still the same? When you raise
each other to your lips and commence—: drink after drink:
o how the drinker then strangely withdraws from the action.

Did not the caution of human gesture on Attic stelae
surprise you? was love and farewell not placed so lightly
on shoulders as if it were wrought of a substance other
than we use? Remember the hands, how they rest without pressure
although there stands strength in the torsos. By that
they knew, those who mastered themselves : so far it is us,
thus to touch one another is ours; more forcibly
the gods urge us onwards. But that is concern of the gods.
If we, too, found some pure and low-toned and slender
humanity, one, our own, strip of fertile ground
between stream and rock. For our own heart still
transcends us like those. And we can no longer gaze after it
into images soothing it, nor into god-like
bodies in which it assumes a superior restraint.

(*Translated by Ruth Speirs*)

THE THIRD ELEGY

It is one thing to sing the beloved. Another, alas,
to sing that concealed guilty river-god of the blood.
He whom she knows from afar, her youth, what does he himself
know of that master of lust who, from solitude, often
—before the maiden had soothed, and often as if she did not exist—
lifted his god-head, ah, dripping of what unknowable things,
rousing the night to an infinite uproar.
O the blood's Neptune, o his terrible trident.
O, out of a wound shell, the dark wind of his chest.
Hear how the night moulds and hollows itself.
Stars, is it not from you that the lover's delight in the face
of his loved one has derived? Has not his intimate insight
into her pure face come from the pure constellation?

Not you have, alas, not his mother has thus
tautened the curves of his brows into expectation.
Not with you, maiden feeling him, not with you
did his lip bend into more fruitful expression.
Do you really assume that your light step had shaken
him thus, you who move like the early wind?
Yes, you frightened his heart; but older terrors
rushed into him with that touch of appeal.
Call him . . . you do not call him completely away from dark association.
Surely, he *wills*, he breaks out; relieved, he grows used
to your secretive heart, and he takes and commences himself.
But did he ever commence himself?
Mother, *you* made him small, it was you who began him;
to you he was new, and over the new eyes you curved
the friendly world and checked the unknown one.
Where gone, alas, are the years when you simply,
with your slim body, stood in the way of a surging chaos?
Many a thing you hid from him thus; the night-suspicious
room you made harmless, and out of your heart full of refuge
you mingled more-human space with his night-space.
Not into darkness, no, into your nearer existence you placed
the night-light, it shone as though out of friendship.
Nowhere a crackling that, smiling, you did not explain,
as if you had long since known *when* the floor would behave itself thus . . .
And he listened and quietened. So much your tender
rising was able to do; tall in his cloak, his Fate
stepped behind the wardrobe, and, easily shifting,
his restless Future pressed into the folds of the curtain.

And he himself, as he lay there, soothed, under sleepy
eye-lids melting your light body's sweetness
into the tasted beginning of sleep—:
appeared protected . . . *Within*, though: who checked,
who hindered within him the floods of origin?
Ah, there was no caution in him who was sleeping; asleep,
but dreaming, but feverish: how he committed himself.
How entangled he was, he, the new and the shy one;
with the farther-reaching tendrils of inner event
interlaced to patterns already, to strangling growth,
to forms chasing animal-like. How he gave himself—. Loved.
Loved his inner being, the wilderness of his inner being,
this primeval forest within him on whose silent downfall
his heart stood, light-green. Loved. Left it, went

from his own roots out into powerful origin
where his little birth was already outlived. Descended,
loving, into the older blood, the ravines
where horror lay, satiated still with his fathers. And every
terror knew him, winked, was as if informed.
Yes, frightfulness smiled . . . Seldom
have you smiled so tenderly, mother. How should he not love it
since it was smiling at him? *Before* he loved you
he had loved it, for when you were pregnant with him it already
was there dissolved in the water that lightens him who is budding.

See, we do not love like the flowers,
out of one single year; immemorial sap
rises into our arms when we love. O maiden,
this: that we loved *within* us, not one, one to come,
but numberless brewing; not one single child,
but the fathers who rest like ruins of mountains
within our depth; but the dry river-bed
of former mothers—; but the entire
soundless landscape under a cloudy or pure
ill-fate—: *this*, maiden, was there before you.

And you yourself, what do you know—,
times of yore you lured up in your lover.
What feelings of beings gone burrowed upwards.
What women hated you there. What sinister men
did you rouse in the veins of the youth? To you
dead children wanted to come . . . O gently, gently,
show him good, a reliable day's-work,—lead him
close up to the garden, give him the nights'
preponderance . . . .
Compose him . . . .

(*Translated by Ruth Speirs*)

THE FOURTH ELEGY

O trees of Life, when are you wintry?
We are discordant. We are not informed
like birds of passage. Suddenly,
outrun and late, we force ourselves on winds
and we come down on an impassive pond.
Bloom and decay are at the same time present in our mind.
And somewhere there go lions still and know,
while they are magnificent, no impotence.

But we, when we completely mean the one,
already feel the opposition of the other.
Our first response is enmity. Do lovers
—who had expected spaces, hunt, and home—
not always step to brinks, one in the other.
There is a ground of contrast, for a moment's sketch,
laboriously prepared, that we might see it ;
for there is great exactness for our sake.
We do not know the contours of emotion,
we only know what shapes them from without.
Who has not sat in fear before the curtain
of his own heart? It rose: the scenery was Parting.
Easy to understand. The well-known garden,
softly swaying: only then the dancer came.
Not *him*.. Enough. However light he feigns to be,
he is disguised and he becomes a bourgeois
and, through his kitchen, walks into his flat.
I do not want these half-filled masks,
rather the doll. That is full. I want
to endure its body and the wire and the face
of appearance. Here. I face it. And even
if the lights go out, and even if I am told:
Nothing more—, and even if from the stage
emptiness comes with the grey draught of air,
and even if none of my silent ancestors
sits with me any longer, no woman, not even
that boy any more, with his brown squinting eye:
Yet I stay on. For there is always watching.

Am I not right? You whose life tasted bitter
because of me—you, father, tasting mine;
ever again, as I was growing up, you tasted
the first, the dull, infusion of my Must;
and, occupied with such an unknown future's after-taste,
you scrutinized my clouded upward gaze,—
you who, my father, since you died,
are often full of fear within my inward hope
and who abandon equanimity such as the dead have,
realms of equanimity, for my small share of fate,
am I not right? And you, am I not right,
you who have loved me for the small beginning
of love for you, from which I always turned away
because the space within your faces changed,

while I was loving it, to world-space
in which you were no longer . . . If I feel inclined
to wait before the puppet-stage, no, so entirely
to gaze there that at last, to counterbalance
my gaze, an angel—as an actor—tearing upwards
the puppets, must step there.
Angel and doll: then finally there is performance.
Then is united what we disunite,
incessantly, by our existence. Only then
there rises from our seasons the entire
movement's circuit. Over and above us
then the angel plays. The dying, see,
should they not apprehend how full of pretext
all is that we accomplish here. It all
is not itself. O hours in childhood
when there was more behind the figures
than only what was past, and not the future
before us. We were growing, though, and sometimes urgent
in wanting to be grown-up soon—for *their* sake, partly,
who had no longer anything but their grown-upness.
Yet, in our lonely wandering, we rejoiced in
what lasted, and we stood there in the intermediate
space between world and toy,
upon a spot that from the earliest beginning
had been intended for a pure event.

Who shows a child as it stands there? Who places it
into the constellation, gives the measure
of distance to its hand? Who makes the death of children
from grey bread that turns hard,—or leaves it
within the round mouth, like the core
of a fair apple? . . . . Murderers are
easy to comprehend. But this:
death, the whole death, even *before* life
so gently to contain and not be bad,
is indescribable.

(*Translated by Ruth Speirs*)

THE FIFTH ELEGY

But who, tell me, *are* they, these acrobats, slightly more fleeting
even than we are, from early days
urgently wrung—for whose, whose sake—
by a never satisfied will? But it wrings them,
bends them, slings them and swings them,
throws them and catches them back; as if out of oiled,
more slippery, air they come down
onto the threadbare carpet thinned
by their eternal leap, this lost carpet
in the universe.
Laid on there like a plaster as if the suburb
sky had hurt the earth.
Hardly there,
erect, there, and shown: the capital letter
of Standing . . . . already, the strongest men
are rolled again, for a jest, by the ever
coming grip, as by August the Strong
a tin plate at table.

Ah and around this
centre the rose of onlooking:
blossoms and sheds its petals. Around this
pestle, the pistil, met by its own
blossoming pollen, fecundated again for the sham-fruit
of reluctance they never are conscious of,
reluctance gleaming with thinnest, lightly sham-smiling surface.

There, the withered, the wrinkled lifter,
the old one who now only drums,
contracted in his enormous skin as though it had once
contained *two* men, and the one were already
lying in the churchyard, and he had survived the other,
deaf, and sometimes a little
confused, in his widowed skin.

But the young one, the man, as if the son of a nape
and a nun: tautly and firmly filled
with muscles and simpleness.

Oh you
whom a suffering once, when still small,
received as toys in one of its long
convalescences . . .

You that fall, unripe,
with the thud only fruits know,
daily a hundred times off the tree of mutually built-up
movement, (the tree that, more swiftly than water,
has spring and summer and autumn within a few minutes)—
fall off and rebound on the grave:
sometimes, in half a pause, your face
wants to begin conveying affection across to your mother
who seldom was tender; but it gets lost—this timidly,
scarcely attempted face—on your body
that spends it on surface . . . Again
the man claps his hands for the leap, and before
pain can ever become more distinct
near your ever galloping heart, the burning
in the soles of your feet comes before it, its origin,
with a few physical tears chased hurriedly into your eyes.
And yet, blindly,
the smile . . .

Angel! o take it, pluck it, the small-flowered plant of healing.
Shape a vase for it, store it! Place it among
those joys not yet open to us; in a lovely urn
praise it with flowery, sweeping inscription : "Subrisio Saltat."

Then you, the lovely one,
you who are mutely passed over
by the most exquisite joys.
Perhaps your frills are happy for you—,
or, over your young full breasts,
the green metallic
silk feels endlessly pampered, lacks nothing.
You,
market-fruit of equanimity,
ever differently placed upon all swaying scales of balance,
publicly, there, among shoulders.

Where, o where is that place—I bear it within my heart—
where they still were far from being able to, still
falling off each other like mounting, not quite
pairing animals;—
where weights are still heavy;
where, from their rods that are twirling in vain,
the plates still
reel . . .

And, suddenly, there, in this toilsome Nowhere, suddenly
the ineffable spot where the pure Too Little
incomprehensibly changes—, switches around
into that empty Too Much.
Where the many-digited sum
resolves itself into zero.

Squares, o square in Paris, infinite show-place,
where Madame Lamort, the modiste,
winds and twists the restless ways of the earth,
endless ribbons, and from them devises new bows,
frills, flowers, cockades, artificial fruits—,
all untruthfully coloured,—
for the cheap winter-hats of Fate.

. . . . . .

Angel: supposing there were a place that we do not know,
and there, on an ineffable carpet, lovers—that here
never attain ability—showed their bold
soaring figures of heart-flight,
their towers of lust, their ladders
long since, where ground never was,
leaning only against each other, trembling,—and were *able* to do it
before the surrounding spectators, the noiseless uncountable dead:
Would these then throw their last, their ever saved-up,
ever concealed, and unknown to us,
their eternally valid coins of happiness
down in front of the finally truthfully smiling pair on the soothed
carpet?

(*Translated by Ruth Speirs*)

The remaining five Elegies will be published in the next number of PL.

EDITH SITWELL

From "*A Canticle of the Rose*"

HYMN TO VENUS

An old woman speaks:

"Lady, beside the great green wall of Sea
I kneel to make my plea

To you, great Rose of the World . . . . Beyond the
seeds of petrifaction, Gorgon of itself,
Behind the face bright as the Rose—I pray
To the seeds of fire in the veins that should
Hold diamonds, iris, beryls, for their blood:

Since you are grown old too, and should be cold,
Although the heat of the air
Has the motion of fire
And light bears in its heart
A cloud of colour . . . where

The great heat ripens in the mine
of the body's earth, ruby, garnet, and almandine,

And in the dark cloud of the blood still grows
The rainbow, with the ruby and the rose.

Pity me then,—a poor old woman who must wear a rag
Of time's filth for a dress . . .
O who would care to hold
That miserly rag now!

So I whose nights were violent as the buds
And roots of Spring was taken by the Cold,

Have only the Cold for lover. Speak then to my dust!
Tell me that nothing dies
But only suffers change,—
And Folly may grow wise.

So we shall be transmuted—you who have grown chill, and I
Unto whose heart
My love preferred a heart like a winding-sheet of clay—
Fearing my fires would burn his body away.

Gone are you temples that were bright with heat:
But still I kneel at the feet
of you who were built through æons by a million lives
Whispers and instincts, under the coralline light
That seems the great zone of sea-depths!

Though your grief
In my blood grows
Like chlorophyll in the veins of the deep rose

Our beauty's earthly dress
(Shrunk now to dust)—shall move through all degrees
of life, from mineral to plant, and from still
rock to the green laughing seas;

From life's first trance, the mineral consciousness
that is deep blankness inside an invisible
And rigid box—defined, divisible,

And separate from its sheath—(breathe not too deep
If you would know the mineral's tranced sleep . . . .
So measure Time that you, too, are apart
And are not conscious of the living heart)—

To the plant that seeks the light that is its lover
And knows not separation between cover
And sentience . . . . the Sun's heat and the dew's chill
It knows in sleep with an undreaming thrill

And colour breathes that is reflected light,
The ray and perfume of the Sun are white:
But when these intermingle as in love
With earthbound things, the dream begins to move

And colour that sleeps as in a dreamless cloud
Deep in the mineral trance within that shroud
Then to a fluid changes, grows
Deep in the stem and leaves of the dark rose.

So could the ruby, almandine and garnet move
From their great trance into a dreaming sleep,
They might become the rose whose perfume deep
Grows in Eternity, yet is
Still unawakened for its ephemeral hour
Beneath the great light's kiss;

The rose might seek the untamed rainbow through
The remembering Eden of a drop of dew;
Until at last in heavenly friendship grows
The ruby and the rainbow and the rose.

Nor will the one more precious than the other be
—Or make more rich the Shadow's treasury.

So, Lady, you and I
And the other wrecks of the heart, left by the lion
Of Love, shall know all transmutations, each degree!
Our apeish skeletons, clothed with rubies by the light
Are not less bright
In the Sun's eye than is the rose . . . and youth,
And we,
Are but waves of Time's sea.

Folly and wisdom have dust equal-sweet,
And in the porphyry shade
Of this world's noon
The Poor seem Dives burning in his robes bright
as the rose—
Such transmutations even the brief moment made!"

NOTE: Verse 2, line 1,
". . . . seeds of petrifaction, Gorgon of itself"
Sir Thomas Browne: "Of Vulgar Errors."

GEORGE SCURFIELD

SONG—"THE BITTER MANGOES"

I'll only tell the story once
it doesn't do to tell it twice;
the sergeant and the family man
will tell you that it isn't nice.
O the bitter mangoes O.

There were bamboos to the left of us
and bamboos to the right
bamboos all the morning
and thorns of course at night.
O the bitter mangoes O.

How shall we ever get there?
We shan't the captain said,
he fell among the cane trees
and broke his stupid head.
O the bitter mangoes O.

Stuck in the mud for lunchtime
stuck in the mud for tea
with centipedes and leeches
crawling round your knee.
O the bitter mangoes O.

Breaking your nails for supper
climbing up a cliff
trembling like a jelly
not daring once to sniff.
O the bitter mangoes O.

Crawling round for breakfast
under bamboo bush and tree
the ants are biting nicely
they're getting in your tea.
O the bitter mangoes O.

The rain is falling gently
the rain its tumbling down
every single thing is wet
wouldn't you like to drown.
O the bitter mangoes O.

They're shooting in the pine trees
grenades are crashing down
the little man behind the tree
is going to get you soon.
O the bitter mangoes O.

HUGH GORDON PORTEUS

THE ORACLES

Bearing tureens and urns of crystal
From Iranian tabernacles, tall,
In Caspian caps of serge and vestal
Pyjamas, emerge the virgins.

Swims in the oasis of each sibyl eye
The scornful aviator, high
Above the barnacle of Fujiyama
Far, ringed with marine scums.

But in the Caucasus, guns rust
Though autumn evenings in the West
Bloom, bleeding like wounds, like burst
Plums, or profusion of fuschia.

O ruthless the irrigation of crops
With crude petroleum, where weep
The alien; but from gutted wells creep grapes
Of mirth up derelict girders.

Then from the caked earth of Irak
The fat painted lady of the duff oracle
Squirms in her squalid stye, while fume of arak
Sours the heated evening.

Morning of lutes and flutes and garlands!
Enchanting with plaintive aires the arid sands
To a vision of islanded terraced gardens,
Emerge the virgins. 1942.

THREE THINGS

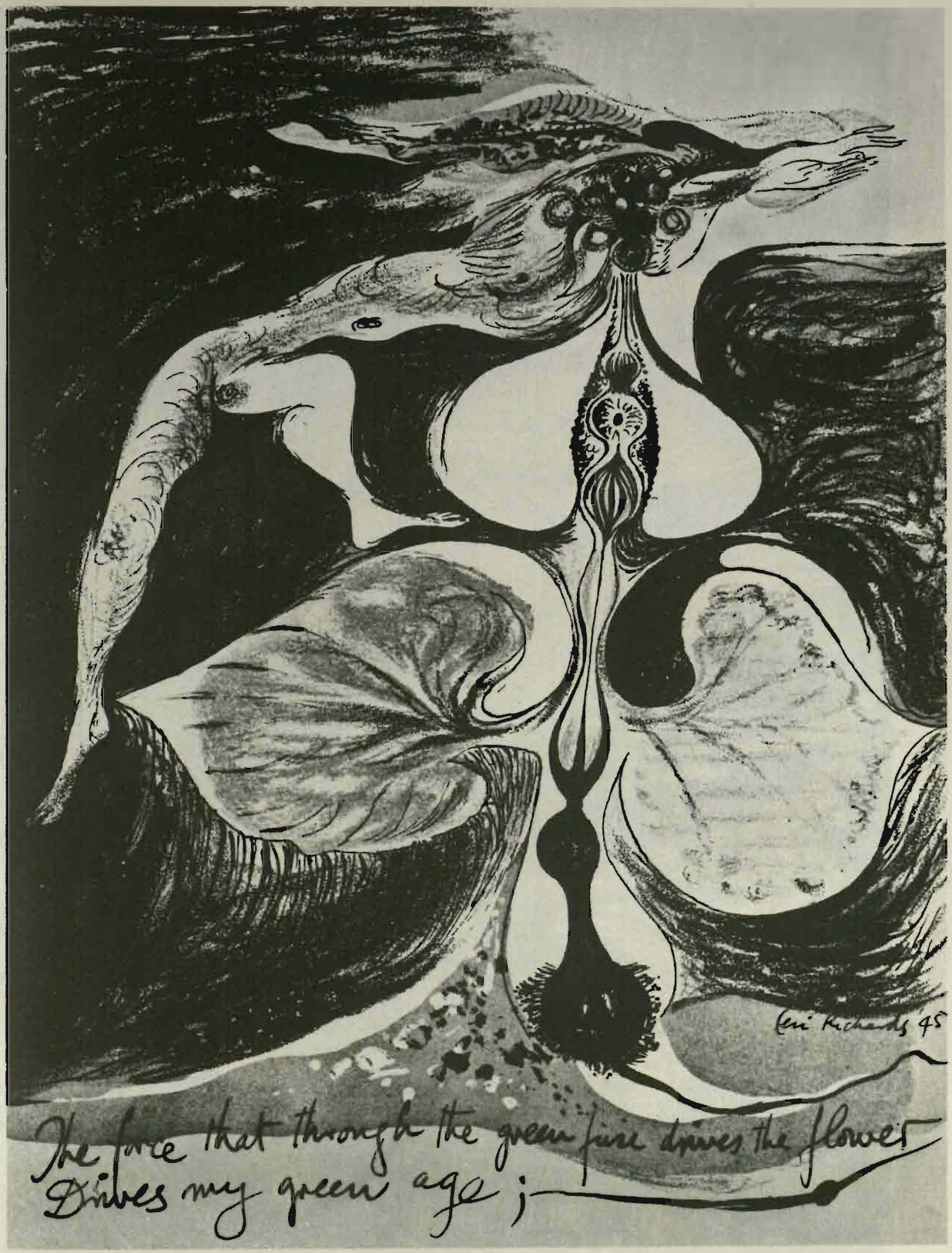
Through the dark tent the gale flapped brown and red
Dust in the nose and eyes; and in the mouth
And ears, the sand and grit flew red and brown
And blew about the arab words I heard,
Blew in and out the words the Arab said.

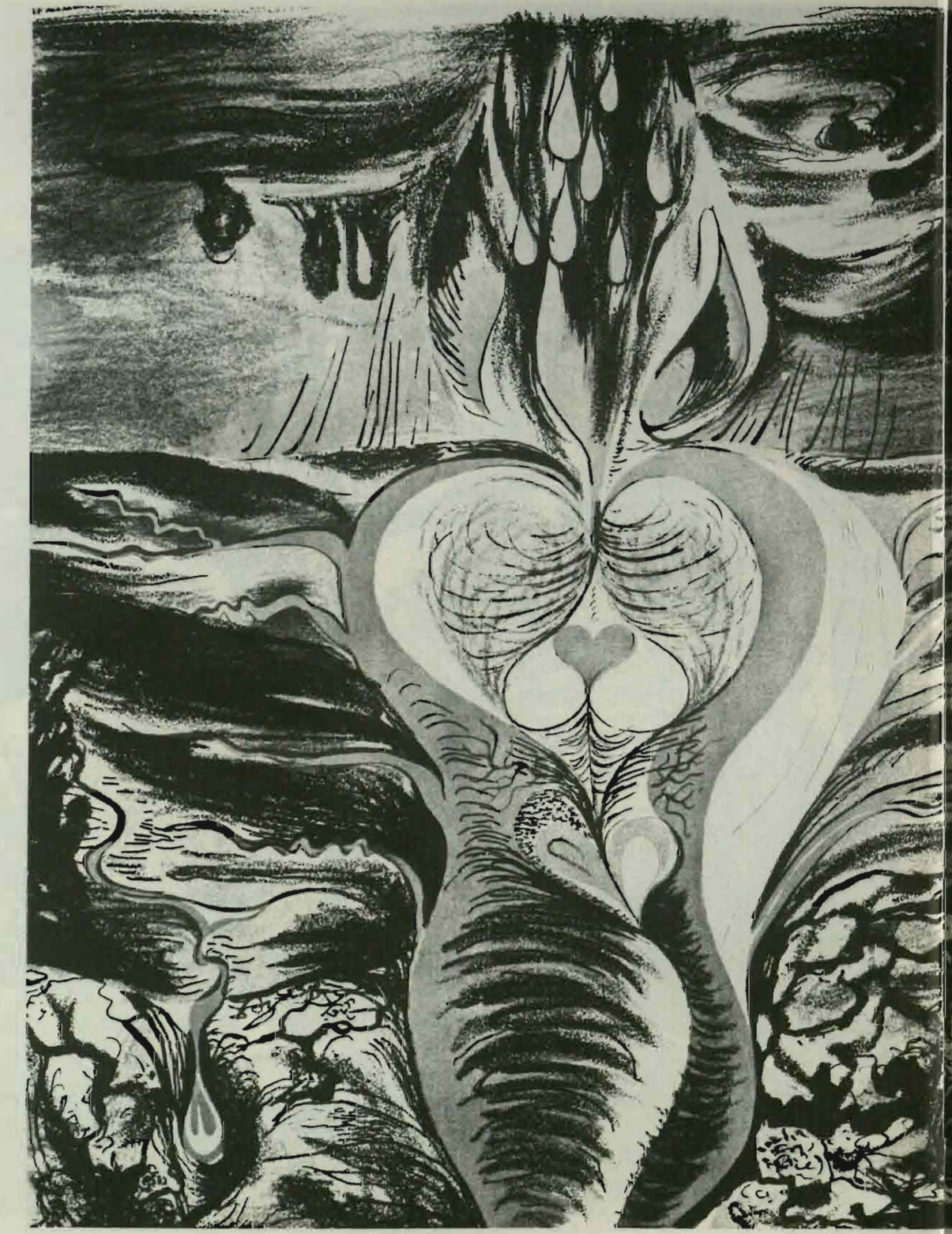
" The Arab sings," (the Arab said,) "three things
There are, three things there are that ease
That ease the heart from sorrow: quick
Waters, verdure, and the grace of girls."

" O running waters, running through the lawn
Borders of the water, under green
Umbrels, trellis tunnels of moving leaves
Of trees, under the dancing light:

The changing pattern of the bright
And shadowed web, that ebbs and leaves
Only the fragrance and the triple tongues :
The woman's fragrance and the treble tongues."

(All this the Arab eloquently said
While, loud without, the sand sang brown and red).

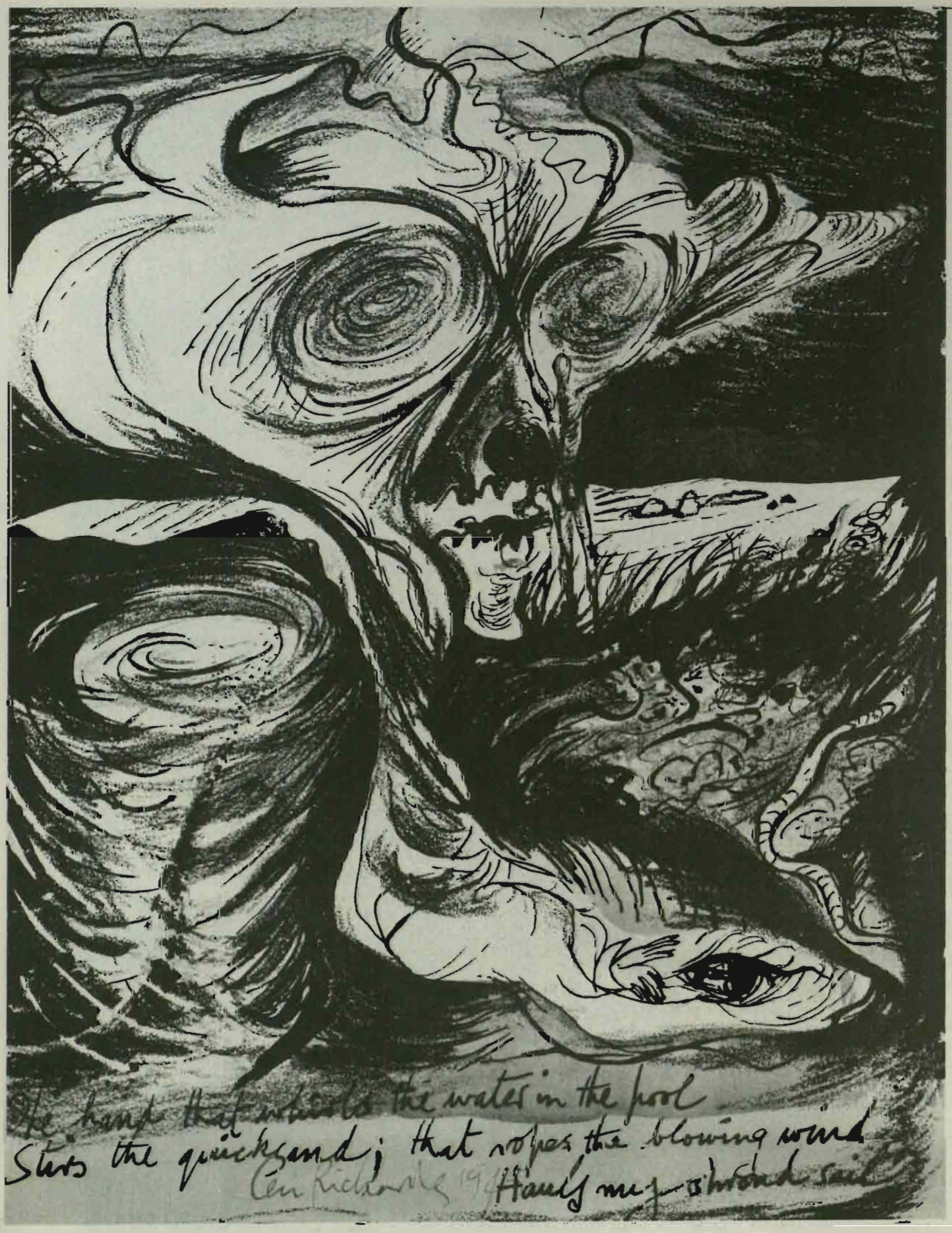

Keri Richards 95
The force that through the green fuse drives the flower
Drives my green age ;



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.
The force that drives the water through the rocks
Drives my red blood; that dries the mourning stream
Is my guide to weep
And I am dumb to mouth unto my veins
How at the mountain spring the same mouth sucks.
The hand that whirls the water in the pool
Stirs the quicksand; that ropes the blowing wind
Hauls my shroud sail.
And I am dumb to tell the hanging man
How of my clay is made the hangman's lime.
The lips of time leech to the fountain head
Love drips and gathers, but the fallen blood
Shall calm her sores.

And I am dumb to tell a weather's wind
How time has ticked a heaven round the stars.
And I am dumb to tell the lover's tomb
How at my sheet goes the same crooked worm.

Dylan Thomas


The hand that rubbed the water in the pool
Stirs the quicksand; that ropes the blowing wind
Hauls my

G. S. FRASER

THE DEATH OF MY GRANDMOTHER

There's little personal grief in a quiet old death:
Grief for a landscape dying in our heads,
Knowing how London melts us to her style.
What if she got those touches in her talk
(The half-impression of a scene that had
Flowed in her youthful blood and set as bone)
From phrases in some novel by John Buchan?
A memory is other than the words for it:
Persistence was her gift, not literature,
A character no town could penetrate,
Not Glasgow's sprawl, nor London's repetitions—
No more that landscape now: no more the old
Books in the glass case, and the box bed
I half remember as a boy in Glasgow:
Caithness enclosed within a house in Glasgow,
Glasgow enclosed in London: time in time,
The past within the past, parentheses.
In laying her to rest, it is as if
We folded up with her brown age a landscape,
A ribbed and flat and rocky map of duty
That is the northern edge of every island
Where pleasure flowers only in the swollen south:
Mourn character that could persist so long
Where softer personality dies young.

These lights and glimpses lost now: only bones,
Shapes of our heads, only the arguing voice,
In a foreign milieu the improvised fine manners.

Think of these rock-stacks in the stony Orkneys
That, toppling, stand improbably for years,
The sea persisting at them: and at last,
Boys' bricks, they crash on the untidy beach.
So with her piled and uncemented past:
Its tottering tower seemed out of the tide's reach,
Time merely fretted at the base. No more
Of all the colour of her years was hers
Than brown rock's is blue sea's. O travellers,
Who take the stain of Time, as I have done,
Expose your fluctuations to the sun:
Yet, for such stony virtue, spare your tears.

SONG FOR MUSIC

The fountains and the garden,
The garden and the ghost,
I lay my love before you
And do not count the cost
And know my love is lost.

I lay my love before you
For your unlucky hands
To break and spoil, but suffer
To suffer, while it stands,
What no one understands.

You will not break nor spoil it
Since you have other loves
Gathered with beaks as eager
Out of the air as doves
To peck your olive groves.

But suffer it to hover,
But suffer it to live,
Around the pools and fountains
Ghostly, where ghost birds dive,
And both are fugitive.

Birds of the air, I call you,
Birds of the air, my throng,
Towards a ghost oasis
Where I shall linger long
But longer shall my song.

When images have faded
Like this delightful tree
Of mirage, like these waters
That were not meant to be,
My song, come back to me.

Come in another country
And with another coat
To smart my eyes to sobbing
And catch me by the throat
With these things of no note.

PIERRE JEAN JOUVE

WHEN GLORY'S SPRING RETURNS

The sun sheds its incandescence on the new-sprung shoots,
A sun no eyes ever beheld, there were none pure enough—
Sun rearisen after the combustion of long death.
The Spring of ancient glories is all crystal and fresh air
And the works of the great masters—Dante, Virgil—now appear
As sacred garments that adorn the naked outward form
In which they walk abroad. One may perceive
As with miraculous candour the child Baudelaire shewed forth
And Delacroix and Courbet from their tents of light emerged
To reassume eternally their golden fleece of dream.
From high savannahs of the air Rimbaud smiles down at last.

(*Translated by David Gascoyne*)

FROM "SUEUR DE SANG"

I not in vain beheld that bitter sex. The woman's back
In its appearance gleaming. Silence of the birds
On that day now among mild shades sunk dated down.

Miracle of the voice, O if my work endure,
Did you then rise from circumstances desert-like as these
That did such evil to the soul, of one so pure?

(*Translated by David Gascoyne*)

FROM "SUEUR DE SANG"

The sky is intimately hid in cloudy sky
The clouds are in the water and the water in the house
The house within the heart, the latter in
Despair, but such despair within the heart
The heart inside the house, the house in space,
Space stricken with human sickness beneath the sky—

The angel of destruction sets to work; and I rejoice.

(*Translated by David Gascoyne*)

STEPHEN COATES

THERE WAS AN EMPTY PLACE IN THE GRASS

There was an empty place in the grass
Beside the stream going between willows.
Passing trout paused and wondered,
Glancing upwards. The grasses bent over
Heavy with seed; but none grew in that soil.
And a bird came and dropped a seed
Which this time lived. Rain fell in the night.
The root pressed downwards, searching,
Between the grains of soil, for the food which
Would make the flower. The rain falling
Dissolve the salts, and the root hairs
Drew the liquid to the seed; which flourished.
The sun rose and fell and the days passed.
And a white daisy with a yellow centre
On a green stalk with silver hairs
Stood up from the leaf rosette.
And the daisy grew in the empty place;
Its white petals were simple and uncounted.

And the sun rose and fell and the days passed.

Till there came a man with a spade,
Passing, and a plant in his hand,
Who pushed the edge of his spade deep
Into the soil, broke its surface, snapped
The roots of the daisy, grasped the leaves,
Breaking the stalk in doing so, pulled up the plant
And threw it into the stream. The flower fell
And stared at him from the broken soil.
With finger and thumb he picked it up,
Rolled it into a ball and flicked it
Over the grass. And he prepared a place
And planted his plant. Its leaves had thorns,
Spikes were dangerous on the stems.

And the sun rose and fell and the days passed.

The rain fell, the plant flourished,
The bud grew, became bigger,
Burst one afternoon of cloudy weather
But in the bright blue morning
Was a tumultuous rose.

YOU ARE ALL BEAUTIFUL, WHO FILL MY TERRIBLE DREAMS

You are all beautiful, who fill my terrible dreams.
What shall I say of you, smaller than trees, taller
Than seed-heavy grasses, the round water
Standing glittering in the petals of your bodies?

Like delicate roses, fold and bend of tissue
Around dark closed centres, latent powers
Curled in the curve of the hidden spring,
And the straight look of deep deep eyes.

What shall become of you, where will you go?
In what sad rooms, among tired grey people
Will you find yourselves, damaged by suffering,
Clothed in the heavy mantle of permanent sin?

And must this wonder change to another wonder
When the gates are closed, the black doors open
And the soiled food of deathless generations
Is presented to you in place of experienced good?

O may you preserve the delicacy of your palms
And the confidence of your regular feet,
In those roads, between tall mocking houses,
Where the flat world will offer ancient prizes to you.

CHARLES WILLIAMS

i. THE POETIC ACHIEVEMENT OF CHARLES WILLIAMS

by JOHN HEATH-STUBBS

It is now two years since the sudden death of Charles Williams, and it is, I hope, unnecessary to apologise for calling attention to his poetic work. But that side of his writing is comparatively neglected, and, I believe, under-rated, in comparison with his work as a critic, theologian, and novelist. Yet he regarded himself as primarily a poet; a passionate enthusiasm for "the grand art" informs the whole of his writing, and small though the number of the readers of his poetry has been, some of the most enthusiastic of them have been poets themselves—of the younger generation, on whose own work it has exerted a lasting and deep influence.

Williams' poetry is undeniably difficult. Not only does it employ an intellectual and symbolic language of its own, but its ideas also are often remote from those commonly current among our contemporaries, and hardly to be apprehended until the reader has familiarised himself with the workings of the author's mind. Indeed, I should hesitate to recommend any one to whom Williams' work and general philosophical outlook were unknown to begin straight away on his poetry, before having familiarised himself with the author's leading ideas by the perusal of two or three of his more important prose books—such as *Reason and Beauty in the English Poetic Mind*, *The Figure of Beatrice* or *The Descent of the Dove*, or the series of novels which began with *War in Heaven* and closed with *All Hallows' Eve*.

It is important to realise, nevertheless, that the "Taliessin" poems do not represent the by-product of a mind primarily critical or philosophical, but are rather the crown and consummation of a lifetime of extraordinary creative activity—which has included the writing of plays (*Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury* is a work of importance comparable to *Murder in the Cathedral* on which I suppose it is largely modelled), novels, theology, criticism and imaginative biography—and in particular of a purely poetic development which is one of the most remarkable of the century. Charles Williams belonged, more or less, to the generation of Eliot, Lawrence and Herbert Read. His earlier poems, however, are not "modern" in the same sense as theirs have always been. *Divorce* and *Poems of Conformity* are, formally, in the Georgian tradition. Yet they have an intellectual quality, and a preoccupation with spiritual problems, which is quite foreign to Georgianism. They are unsatisfactory, because this intellectual energy is cramped by an artificial formal convention not strong or flexible enough adequately to give it realisation. It was only comparatively late in life that Williams was to develop the personal technique of a "modern" poet. That he was able to effect this transformation sets him apart among his contemporaries, among whom Robert Graves alone, though less rapidly and completely, went through a similar change of style. But, of a somewhat older generation, Yeats' remarkable capacity for formal development provides a closer parallel. Superficially the resemblance to Yeats is not close, but Williams approaches him in his employment of myth, in his adoption of an oracular or vatic *persona*, and in his use of a series of recurring symbols, with definite, almost mathematical significance, which nevertheless mere intellectual definition is not enough to express. The influence of Yeats on Williams was, I suspect, considerable; and the last occasion I met him, he testified to me of

the excitement which, as a boy, the chance discovery of the older poet's *The Countess Cathleen* induced in him.

It is not my purpose—even if I felt myself able to do so—to attempt, within the space of this article, an exposition or interpretation of the philosophy which lies behind Williams' writings. I only desire, so far as I can, to give a sufficient indication of his standpoint as is necessary for an understanding and appreciation of his poetry, and to supply a pointer, however inadequate, to the interpretation of the difficult symbolism which makes that poetry undeniably obscure and, at a first reading, forbidding. Williams was a religious mystic and a professing Christian of the Anglican tradition. In this he agrees with Eliot, but the resemblance between them almost ends there. Williams himself has recalled our attention to the two paths of approach to God which have been set forth in the classic writers on Christian Mysticism. The one of these which orthodox mystics have most frequently followed is that of the Rejection of Images—ascetic, negative—whereby the soul, casting aside all that is not God—the World, and everything in it which makes itself known to our senses, passes through the Dark Night described by St. John of the Cross. Along this way, I think, Eliot may be said to have proceeded :

I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope
For hope would be hope for the wrong thing ; wait without love
For love would be love of the wrong thing; there is yet faith
But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting.
Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought :
So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing.

But there is the other way, that of the Acceptance of Images, which Diotima reveals to Socrates in Plato's *Symposium*. Here, every finite manifestation of beauty is regarded as the revelation of a Divine Beauty, and is accepted in the faith that it, too, will lead ultimately to God. This is the way, Williams believed that had been followed by the great Romantic poets—the word Romantic being used in its wider sense—of the past: by Virgil, in his vision of the Ideal City which was to be represented by Rome (and no less by the Revolutionary poets of our own time when they depict the Unjust City which must be destroyed in order that the Ideal City be realised)—by Dante, to whom the vision came through the medium of his passion for Beatrice, by Wordsworth who sought it in the beauty of Nature, and by Keats, who in the "Grecian Urn" Ode, records the apprehension of this same beauty in the experience of great art. It is in the tradition that descends from these poets that he places himself.

Williams' two latest and most important volumes of poems, then—*Taliessin through Logres* and *The Region of the Summer Stars*—attempt to reveal the nature of this, which he called the " Romantic Experience," under the form of a myth. The nearest analogues to these poems in English are Blake's prophetic books. The difficulties are, admittedly, almost as great, and they will not, any more than Blake's poems, yield much to the student who is not prepared to read and re-read them carefully, giving attention to their all-pervading symbolism. They differ however from Blake's works, in that this symbolism is more intellectual, and there is, to my mind at least, a corresponding gain in concreteness. Moreover, the mythology employed, is not, like Blake's, private, but one whose symbols have been already charged with poetic significance by tradition, in the collective consciousness, particularly of English readers. This is the Arthurian Legend—but stripped of its original Medievalism and of the picturesque trappings

with which Tennyson overlaid it, and enacted against a background which is at once that of Eternity and of the Sixth Century Europe in which the historical Arthur may be supposed to have lived. That Europe, the Europe of the Dark Ages, it should be remembered, presented a picture perhaps closer to our own time than that of any intervening period—the civilisation of the Empire threatened by the forces of barbarism, the rise of new phases of faith and patterns of society.

The central theme, which underlies the whole structure of the poems, is never directly referred to in them. This is the Second Coming of Christ, which was, in point of historical fact, very widely expected in Christendom during the Dark Ages. The endpapers of *Taliessin through Logres* show a map of Europe at this time, on which is superimposed an image of the human body, the parts of which correspond to different countries, and also to spiritual states. The Empire is envisaged as an organic whole—that ideal and integrated Christian community which Dante looked for in his political treatise "De Monarchia." Its heart is at Byzantium, and the figure of the Emperor, in the poems, corresponds to the unifying principal of life, at times to Divine Providence. The hands, the sacramental hands of the Pope, as the ideal Priest, are at Rome, and in Gaul, or France, always the cultural centre of Europe are the breasts, in which rises "milk of Doctrine." Caucasia, the buttocks, represents the healthy animal side of Man—natural sex, etc.,—and at the opposite extreme to Caucasia lies Logres, or Britain, the head. This is the region where the whole drama of the poem is played out, becoming conscious, or hypostasised. The Second Coming, which should have brought all things into a state of perfection, was heralded by the manifestation in Logres of the Holy Grail. But the achievement of the Grail was frustrated because of the sin of Lancelot and Guinevere, and by the rebellion of Mordred against his father, and thus by the selfishness and pride of individuals the process initiated by the Divine purpose is reversed.

The brief sketch given above can do no more than furnish a very imperfect clue to the framework of the poems, and I cannot here attempt to indicate the details of minute and subtle inter-relation which lie within it. Once, however, the intellectual nature of the poems is grasped, the reader will at each renewed perusal become increasingly conscious of the inherent and essential poetry. It is clear that Williams intended, like Blake in his prophetic books, something akin to Epic; and it must be admitted that he is lacking to a great degree in the power to convey concreteness of action or character. The movement is continually held up by metaphysical digressions, and the poet, holding as he did that the metaphysics ought to be subordinated to the poetry, was conscious of and admitted this difficulty. Nevertheless we are perhaps wrong to expect, as it were, painting in the round from such a poet. He believed, as many thinkers and poets (including Paul Valéry) have believed, that there is a close analogy between poetic truth and that of pure mathematics. This is the truth embodied in a passage he was fond of quoting—Wordsworth's vision, in the fifth book of "The Prelude," of the Arab with the shell, poetry, and the Stone, mathematics, which are yet one and the same. The characters and scenes of the Taliessin poems have a mathematical or emblematical quality, rather than an organic one. Or we might draw an analogy with Byzantine mosaic, and compare the whole body of the poems to some vast cathedral, such as St. Sophia in Constantinople. At first our eyes are bewildered by the ranks upon ranks of stiff and apparently forbidding figures —saints and angels, virgins, martyrs, emperors

and soldiers. Then gradually, we become conscious of the significance of the whole design, and are overpowered by the splendour of gold and porphyry, and inlaid glass.

This, to me, is the nature of Williams' poetry. Yet there are also many lyrical episodes which could stand apart from their context, and still hold a high place in contemporary poetry. Such is the description of King Cradlemass, who stands for social injustice, and is overthrown by Arthur on his coming to Britain.

Cold and small he settles his rump in the cushions.
Through the emerald of Nero one short-sighted eye
peers at the pedlars of wealth that stand plausibly by.
The bleak mask is guilded with a maiden's motionless smile.

The high aged voice squeals with callous comfort.
He sits on the bank of Thames, a sea-snail's shell
fragile, fragilely carved, cast out by the swell on the mud; his spirit withers and dies.

This is an example, certainly, of what the writer of his obituary in *The Times* aptly characterised as Williams' terrifying insight into the nature of evil." It can be seen also in the vision of P'o-lu, the subverted, anarchic empire of evil, antipodean to his ideal, where

Phosphorescent on the stagnant level
a headless figure walks in a crimson cope,
volcanic dust blown under the moon.
A brainless form, as of the Emperor,
walks, indecent hands hidden under the cope,
Dishallowing in that crimson the flush on the mounds of Caucasia.

Such, again, is the empire of fantasy of which Mordred dreams in *The Region of the Summer Stars.*

Apart from these, there are moments of pure and limpid lyricism. I would instance " Taliessin's Song of the Unicorn," which is however too long to quote here, or the mysterious grandeur of the scenes which describe the coming of this ideal poet, with its echoes of Milton's " Comus " and Keats' Nightingale Ode:

Covered on my back,
untouched, my harp had hung;
its notes sprang to sound
as I took the blindfold track,
the road that runs from tales,
through the darkness where Circe's son
sings to the truants of towns
in a forest of nightingales.

I could instance many more such passages, but it is the grandeur of the whole design of these poems, which to my mind, makes them so rewarding. They will amply repay the effort which they require from any serious reader. The number of such readers will I am certain, steadily increase as the years go by, and Williams' place among the most important writers of the century be increasingly recognised.

ii. THE MATHEMATICS OF THE SOUL

by MARGARET DIGGLE

"*Taliessin through Logres.*" O.U.P. 1938.

"*The Region of the Summer Stars.*" POETRY LONDON, 1944.

Charles Williams is not the first poet whose aesthetic passions have found satisfaction and expression in the symbols of mathematics, nor the first theologian or metaphysician who has seen, not the symbols but the mathematical ideas themselves as the true basis of reality.

Whether we think of Plato as poet or philosopher, there is no doubt of the fascination he found in the symbol, and, if we take the 'Timaeus' as an expression of his own idea at one period of his thought, then to him the real world was built on mathematical formulae.

Before him Pythagoras, too, seems to have found that the metaphysical world was chiefly to be approached through the study of figures, lines and curves, and the eastern astrologers and arithmaticians failed to make a clear division between the calculated motions of the heavenly bodies and their spiritual meanings.

Likewise among philosophers who can lay no claim to being poets there have always been those whom the wonders and mysteries of mathematical problems have led or accompanied through a maze of metaphysical inquiry: Aristotle among the ancients, Spinoza, who opened the wide gates of unhampered thought to Christendom, and Whitehead in our own day.

To Mr. Williams there was still another allurement offered by the geometrical figure and the specific number: the magic with which the Middle Ages and ecclesiastical symbolism endowed certain of them. The pentagon for instance, (perhaps because of the five fingers) has always been used in European magic, both white and black; the circle has always been a symbol of eternity, the triangle of the Trinity. The ritual of the ancient Hebrew tabernacle made 'seven' a sacred number and this was emphasised for the christened world by the vision on Patmos.

We have, then, in Charles Williams, poet, philosopher, theologian, anthropomologist, all finding outlet, expression, delight in mathematical ideas and more especially in the form and suggestion of geometrical diagrams and the allusive property of certain figures.

Twentieth century artists who belong to the 'abstract' school have said that they do actually see the external world in definite lines and regular curves, and I think a determined effort of imaginative vision will allow many people to see what they mean. If, for instance, one looks at trees in winter, one can see them geometrically.

Charles Williams's mind is such a mixture of the clear, concrete vision and the fine metaphysical speculation as only a great poet possesses. The geometrical diagram springs to his eyes out of the most unexpected complex of perceptions. Women's arms fascinated him not only because of their beauty, but because of the straight lines and the angle; it is up Elayne's arm that the fish, sent to her by her husband and lover, Bors, darts; the 'golden clothed' outstretched arm of Gwinivere, the Queen, directs; when Taliessin and the slave girl experience, in their different degrees, the star of Percivale, they stretch out towards each other and 'the cords of their arms were bands of glory.' A slave girl turns the winch as she draws up water from the well, 'her arm balanced the line of the spine and reached for the gain.' Dindrane, beloved of Taliessin, becomes the ideal and inspiration of yet another

slave. The hazel of the cattle-goad, of the measuring-rod, of the slaves discipline, of Logres' highway, of Merlin's wand of magic, of her lord's line of verse, of the octave of song, of the footpace under the altar straight and strong was in Dindrane's bare arm.

But it is, perhaps, in the revelation which Palomides enjoys in 'the Queen's arm's blessed nakedness,' when first he sees Iseult that one most clearly realises what is gained by seeing as the poet sees: the arm is bent at the elbow as it lies along the table, and the Saracen's imagination joins the shoulder to the finger tips by a third line, and so sees the equilateral triangle ; so realises a new unity, not that of the prophet, 'there is one God,' but of the Trinity, the 'single equalateral trine'; and 'firery circles leap round finger point and shoulder,' so that the symbol becomes that of the three in one, the diagram of the Athenatian creed. By seeing the image as the poet saw it a difficult passage becomes clear, very beautiful, and awakens the true aesthetic emotion which can, perhaps only come when a great idea is clothed in the magic of word and image.

The line, I think, means more to Mr. Williams than the curve. The hazel haunts his verses and anyone who can follow all its maze of meanings has penetrated to the heart of this work. The hazel is so clean and straight and yet so supple, and so full of suggestion, if only through the divining twig—two lines and an angle. Lines and angles rather than curves; and here again we are made to think of the painters' vision as experienced by the cubist school. Even when Taliessin, gazing at the slave drawing up the bucket from the well is fascinated as the 'round plane of water rose shining in the sun,' it is with the radii and their implications that his mind grapples. Mr. Williams is often very, very Elizabethan in his mind and approach to verse, and not least in his love of a conceit. Neither Donne nor Herbert can carry an extravagant comparison to a finer ridiculousness than Charles Williams. And we surely descend from poetry to mere wit, when, having shared with Taliessin a mystical vision of the world, been introduced to 'the rare face of Blanchefleur' 'who walked dropping light as all our beloved do,' and having realised her as that which joins the abstract to the concrete, the eternal to the evanescent, the means to the end, are asked to conceive of her—and that in the last lines of the poem as: 'proportion of circle to diameter.' 'the infinite decimal.'

As a contrast to this 'metaphysical' faut pas, and before leaving the subject of Mr. Williams' diagrammatic idiocyncrancy of vision, an imaginative understanding of which illuminates so much that will otherwise remain obscure, I cannot omit that marvellous example of the cone in his Miltonic glimpse of the stellar universe, the nobility of which may be opposed to the mere curiousness of his 'infinite decimals.'

> 'Done was the day; the antipodean sun
> cast earth's coned shadow into space;
> it exposed the summer stars.'

So much for the symbolic and actual diagrams, geometrical figures and solids that make up so notable a part of the poet's imagery. His arithmetrical figures carry less vision, but gain from suggestion what they lose in visual appeal, they may almost be compared in this philosophical poem to the persons in a poem by Shakespeare or Browning. Each has its character and emotional tone ; each carries a weight of meaning and a light of passion. A poem may be regarded as a mathematical rhapsody. I say 'each' for from the 'One', symbol of the Absolute, of perfect unity, to 'ten' and its 'recurring decimal' each plays its part. Even the nondescript 'eight' finds a meaning in the 'octopods' of hell ; the unsuggestive 'four' in the fires in the angles of the pentagon which throw Brisen's shadow, as she stands on the fifth angle,

onto Logres, the destined seat of the new emanation of the spirit. And :

"Four
zones divide the empire from the Throne's firmament,
slanted to each cleft in each wall, with planets planted :
Mercury, thriving and thickening, thirsty to theft :
Venus preference—though of the greatest, preference ;
O earth between, O seen and strewn by the four."

We are not then surprised at the sacred 'seven' that accompanies Taliessin when he returns from his initiation in Byzantium to accomplish his work in Logres :

"In a train of golden cars
The Emperor went above,
for over me in my riding
shot seven golden stars,
as if while the great oaks stood,
straining, creaking, around,
seven times the golden sickle
flashed in the Druid wood."

But is it 'one,' 'two' and 'three' that carry the weight of his meaning—'one' always in the background, that unity to which everything in the end must be reduced; 'three', the special conception of this new vision of God which is to be realised when from the Land of the Trinity' called Saeras in maps of the soul', into this land of 'Geometry breathing geography' the Grail is to forerun the second coming of Christ.

Then 'two', the problem of being, the apparent contradiction of Unity : Good and Evil, Mind and Body, Active and Passive, Time and Eternity, 'The double categories of shell and stone,' and the two-fold nature of Christ so brilliantly and beautifully indicated by this poet as 'The Golden Ambiguity.' In short the 'Acts in contention' the contradiction seemingly at the heart of things, the opposition and strife, and their final resolution may be said to be the real theme of the poem which he expounds in his two most notable doctrines—'the doctrine of Largess' and the doctrine of 'substitution.'

If one desires to understand a great poet one must learn to see and hear and think as he did. It is not alone the function of a poet to cloth our experiences in embalming words, but, for some at least, to enlarge our nature and our understanding. Among these Charles Williams will take his place. But no one must hope to gain what he has to give unless he is prepared to see reality in its mathematical aspect, in which science, ceremony, ritual, art, the external world, man's motive and action, man's body, God's nature, are seen as patterns in which the aesthetic soul can take delight.

Some of the lines and phrases with which I close this note are beautiful in themselves, some enlightening, and so indirectly beautiful and some urge to meditation, so fulfilling another poetic function.

"diagrams of light moving in the light."
"the impassioned diagram of space."
"the balance and poise needful to all joys and all peace."
"She heard in the air, above the centaurs, a voice
drop from the third heaven-fixed is the full."
"the rhythms of ceremony"
"the sliding planes of the raiders sails."
"the terrible schism of identity into the categories."
"The formulae of glory are the food of of intellectual love."
"Spiralling instincts."
"if there be wit in the rolling mass of waters, if any regiment in marshes beyond P'o-lu, (Hell)
if any measurement among the headless places,

bless him, praise him, magnify him for ever."
"the deep breath dragging the depth of all dimensions."
"Taliessin in the crowd beheld the compelled brutes (the banners)
wildness formalized, images of mathematics."

"Gospels trigonometrical
measured the height of God in man
against the unmathematic night
of ignorance and indolence."
"Immortal tenderness
magically exhibited in the ceremonial arts."

iii. THE HOUSE OF THE OCTOPUS

by ANNE RIDLER

The House of the Octopus.
A play in three acts by CHARLES WILLIAMS (EDINBURGH HOUSE PRESS), 5s.

This posthumously published play is perhaps Charles Williams's best work for the stage, except the Nativity play SEED OF ADAM, published six or seven years ago in *Christendom*, which is equally good. Like all his work, it is about heaven and hell and our earthly experience of both states. "Would it not be odd," he wrote some ten years back, "if I, who have made hell so credible, should end by making heaven credible?" He did achieve that, in all his later work ; and in his last two completed books (this and the novel ALL HALLOWS' EVE) there is an extraordinary quality of joy—unearthly is perhaps the easiest adjective to find for it, but not an adequate one, for it includes the human. And if in ALL HALLOWS' EVE the forces of evil had lost some of their plausibility, here they certainly have not: there is a real conflict. It is an intellectual conflict, yet not an abstract one, for he has performed the difficult feat of imagining human beings who will typify the abstract forces which make the drama, and will yet remain human, and interesting as humans.

Hell, for Charles Williams, is always the seeing of good as evil: the same principles exist for hell as for heaven, but with different results. Thus Simon Magus in ALL HALLOWS' EVE triplicates himself in an obscene distortion of the Trinity ; and in the OCTOPUS the Christian substitution, by which one soul freely suffers for another, is reversed—one man tries to make another suffer instead of him. The central horror is the same as that in Dante's Inferno—an inappeasable hunger which everlastingly consumes those who have delivered themselves to it; here, in the leisurely process of the Octopus. This too is the distortion of a heavenly process : "There is one choice everywhere" says the intelligent Marshal, the representative of P'o-l'u (that is, hell),

"and that is to be
the swallowed *or* the swallower. I have heard say
that these Christians pretend an *and* enters—
swallow *and* be swallowed, consume *and* be consumed.
That is folly."

P'o-l'u was the antipodean place in the Taliessin poems, where the Emperor is headless, brainless, and "the feet of creation walk backward through the waters."

Over against it here is set a community of Christian converts with their priest (for this was commissioned as a Missionary Play—surely the most surprising ever written). When the armies of P'o-lu invade their island, the choice for them is not a simple one, and for each the danger is different: for the priest,

it is not cowardice but vanity—he is ready to compromise with the enemy (consenting to call their Emperor by the same name as his God) because he does not trust the converts to get on without him; in the last analysis, he does not *want* them to get on without him. But his converts see more clearly than he does:

> What is due to you and God we shall well pay,
> if we may: do not fear; you being gone,
> we will walk alone; his work must be done in us,
> thus, or in some other way: and this
> shall not be much amiss. We must be ourselves
> to him, if the time comes, and not you.
> Young as we are, we shall do as God will have us,
> if God give us grace: we must leave it at that.

In the end, he sees too and is martyred, but without fear, for one of the converts who had denied the faith without escaping death, bears his fear.

The Christians speak sometimes in chorus, but the commentary is provided by the Lingua Coeli in the form of a Flame, a most satisfying device which has a good deal in common with the Skeleton of *Cranmer*, but with a clearer symbolism. There is plenty of action in the play, and not only of the mind. Charles Williams was a natural dramatist, because he conceived ideas dramatically, setting one off against the other: he was intent on this, rather than on the technique of dramatic writing, and therefore his plays (as almost everything he wrote) are *tours de force*, and to criticize them by alien standards is futile. Sometimes the verbal framework cracks under the strain to which he subjects it; the rhythm of his verse can rarely sustain it for the length of a paragraph. But the verse always has a strong sinew: it may sound harsh but it is never flabby ; the words are alive with an intellectual passion.

> Fire of the Spirit, life of the lives of creatures,
> spiral of sanctity, bond of all natures,
> glow of charity, light of clarity, taste
> of sweetness to sinners, be with us and hear us.

> Composer of all things, light of all the risen,
> key of salvation, release from the dark prison,
> hope of all unions, scope of chastities, joy
> in the glory, strong honour, be with us and hear us.

That, he points out, is a free translation of a hymn by St. Hildegarde, but the choice of words stamps it as Charles Williams's unmistakeable in style, as everything he wrote. He was indeed most effortlessly original ; his position amongst contemporary writers, a late-achieved and lonely one, remains assured.

POINTS OF VIEW

THE GREEK ANTHOLOGY

by CHARLES WILLIAMS

Poems from the Greek Anthology: translated by FORREST REID. (FABER & FABER), 5s.

This would once have been called a beautiful book; if it cannot be now, with any credit, it is because the word beauty has lost the piercingness that it should have, and it is no longer, in itself, an intellectual and physical pang. Also we have been warned to distrust the Greeks; they cannot really have been so effective. And, finally, we know very well that translation always spoils its originals. So that, for all these reasons, Mr. Forrest Reid cannot have done much, after all.

And yet . . . I remember reading once the English version of an epitaph, perhaps from the Anthology : 'O Apollodorus, farewell!' All the chat about beauty, the Greek tradition, and translation, could not prevent that piercing. Beside it, all the other literary lingerings over death seemed redundant. It had all inflexions in one note; in comparison, even 'Fear no more the heat of the sun' was decorative, and 'Poets themselves must fall like those they sung' self-indulgent.

Shelley enlarged—and for the worse—the epigram he translated: 'Thou wast the morning star'; Plato has only 'Aster, as Star of the Morning you shone among the living. Now, as the Evening Star, you shine among the dead.' And the English language itself seems to do the same dis-service, even in Mr. Reid, to the still more famous: 'Stranger, tell the Lacedemonians that we lie here, obedient to their commands.'

This kind of verbal finality is frequent in Mr. Forrest Reid's choice, or so it seems to me, though judgment on such simplicities is the most difficult of all. Mr. Reid tells us that the Anthology 'contains a great deal of indifferent, even unreadable stuff,' and I suppose that this kind of writing is easier even than Shakespeare to imitate unsuccessfully. The consummation of style is to intensify something which is quite other than the style. The more intense the fact, the more complete the disappearance of the style; it is therefore more marked in the more serious poems. But even in the lighter, where we can more easily speak of beauty, the same principle is true.

'I am the grasshopper who with the shrill music of my wings brought deep slumber to Damokritos.'

'And Damokritos, O traveller, when I died, built this befitting tomb for me, near Oropos.'

Expected epithets? proper names? the fantasy of the tomb? All three, and then the something else, which causes all the rest to be there, the sense of the living grasshopper dead. Mr. Barfield in his new *Romanticism comes of Age* has reminded us that the Greeks thought in terms of 'becoming,' that they were peculiarly aware of the thing in process of happening, and it is perhaps this quality of their awareness which is in their style and lingers in Mr. Forrest Reid's versions. The 'now becoming dead', the 'now seething with love,' give intensity in a very different way from ours. It is, in a way, why they persuaded us of beauty; beauty, says Mr. Reid, 'was to them the most precious gift of all.' But it was not a received gift; it was a receiving of the giving, the immediate piercing of the heart. The lightness did it as well as the sadness; the cruelty of the beauty as well as the joy. Things in their very happening ; the crying to the dying—'O Apollodorus, farewell!'

AUDEN UP TO DATE

by G. S. FRASER

'For the Time Being." (FABER & FABER), 8s. 6d.

"With his unattractive stock-in-trade, and his clap-trap," says Kathleen Raine, "Auden, nevertheless, as none of the rest do, touches the human heart." The unattractive stock-in-trade is, I suspect, for Miss Raine the facile use of generalisations—the taking of a leading idea from Freud, from Marx, and now from Kierkegaard, and seeing how it works out in a different context. It is the adoption, by a powerful but not a very scrupulous intellect, of any convenient "working scheme." (The first section of "The Orators," with its startling application of Dante's ideas about love, as the only human motive, to the problems of public school life is an admirable example of Auden's pragmatism at its most fruitful and illuminating level). God, like the libido, or like the dialectic, is for Auden chiefly a useful generalisation; assuming the existence of God, he finds it possible to solve certain problems. The clap-trap is the unction, the over-persuasiveness the mixture of blarney and bullying that goes with this sort of pragmatism. Hugh Sykes Davies, an excellent critic, who writes too little, has hinted at the morally repellent side of Auden's attitudes . . . the element that has something in common even with Buchmanism. "It is not possible," Sykes Davies says, "to adopt a new theory or a new loyalty overnight for valid reasons, and the reasons for such overnight changes are always invalid. The crisis in the patient's ideas and feelings does not arise from observation and speculation, but from internal psychological problems, of course unperceived; and the solution is determined not by observation and speculation, but by the needs of the psychological condition . . . Every convert is psychologically ill. . .Morally, he disgusts because the act of conversion solidifies personal neuroses into social form. *In time, converts band together in such numbers that they, the diseased, can interfere with the healthy unconverted—and they are always anxious to do this.*" It must be admitted that it is almost too easy to apply this generalisation to Auden. He has, since he began, been threatening his readers with a variety of calamities—disease, madness, death in war or revolution, and now eternal damnation. He has, as he admits himself,

adopted what I should disown
The preacher's loose, immodest tone.

Yet, when all this is said, Auden does remain the most considerable poet of his generation. He does, as Miss Raine says, touch the human heart. He cannot be dismissed just by saying that one doesn't believe what he says, and doubts (because he is too emphatic about it) whether he really believes it himself. Auden's attitudes, reduced to average prose, would result in a writer as unpleasant as, say, Mr. Middleton Murry. But they are not reduced to average prose. They are *used* for rather extraordinary poetry.

Let us take an example of the clap-trap—the gift for sinisterly effective Kiplingesque slogans. "We must love one another or die." Has anybody thought of a more nasty and horrid motive for our loving one another? (Just what would a love vamped up on such prudential considerations be really worth?). But it has its effectiveness as a slogan, as *telling* clap-trap, just because it leaves to the reader the choice of the level at which he wishes to interpret it. There is the level of mere platitude: "Isolated people wither away." There is a level of frightful cynicism: "Though all my impulses are selfish, I need other people as a source of new energy." "I am so lonely, that I must love you, though there is nothing in you to love." There is the level of fear : "I had better love you, for otherwise

you may kill me." There is even an honest level, as in Christ's answer to the rich young man who asked what should he do to inherit eternal life. "I admit that to try to love everybody, in a quite undiscriminating way, is a terrible strain and a sacrifice. But you are not forced to. You can always die . . . the more usual, and perhaps the more dignified choice." But the total effect of such slogans is *mainly* frightening, revealing a ghastly hollowness, but putting up a sort of facade in front of it, or suggesting a cheap way out . . .

What touches the human heart is certainly not Auden's solutions (which are other people's solutions, ready-made solutions, taken over) but the situation in which Auden, and most of us, more often than we care to admit, find ourselves : that of complete isolation. Isolation is the disease and Love, however, much he cheapens the word, can still remain the word that suggests a remedy :

Released by Love from isolating wrong
Let us for Love unite our various song,
Each with his gift according to his kind
Bringing this child his body and his mind.

That is from "For the Time Being," and, according to the Christian framework of this oratorio, Love in the first line would mean charity, in the wide sense, and Love in the second God, or more precisely the Christ-child; but the effectiveness of the passage is partly due to the fact that, owing to the vague echo of the Counter-Reformation—the note of Dryden and Purcell—in the style, we *also* think of sexual love in the first line and of Cupid in the second. Thus to "bring this child my body," while it *ostensibly* means to bring the Christ-child a body dedicated to chastity, *also* suggests bringing Cupid a body dedicated to pleasure; this faint and trembling ambiguity creates more effective poetry than a merely Christian, or a merely pagan statement possibly could. We are aware of the death from which Auden's Love ("Winter and Love," says a more subtle poet,"are desperate medicines") is an escape; we forgive him a great deal because, we, too, are aware of the "isolating wrong." Admittedly, Auden's escape has never been into personal love in the ordinary sense; rather into something larger and vaguer and more full of energy than the ordinary human situation—the dialectic (loss of oneself in history), the libido (loss of oneself in sexual ecstasy), and now God (surrender of one's will to another much more powerful one). He has been seeking situations less painful and complicated, with less of a prosaic drag about them, than this. His success as a poet, perhaps, is his failure to remain satisfied with his escapes. The pathos, what touches the human heart, is that after all these efforts the great waves move away, and the poet is as much alone as ever, lying awake in bed and regarding the other body

mortal, guilty, but to me
The entirely beautiful.

Something like this perhaps is true—whether wholly intended by Auden or not—about Auden's Prospero, a Gerald Heard type, in "The Mirror and the Sea." That he quite fails (as Antonio maliciously suggests) to break his wand. There is an obvious comparison. Shakespeare was not intensely or especially a religious writer, yet in that conventional little epilogue to "The Tempest," with, as Walter de la Mare says, "its curiously apt overtones,"

now I want
Spirits to enforce, art to enchant,
And my ending is despair
Unless I be relieved by prayer,
Which pierces so, that it assaults
Mercy itself, and frees all faults. . .

in that, we feel a consciousness of the "last things" so habitual that it does not need, so to say, to write itself up.

Auden's Prospero, on the other hand, in what might be an expansion of this passage, writes himself up to some tune.

When the servants settle me into a chair
In some well-arranged corner of the garden,

And arrange my mufflers and rugs, shall I ever
be able
To stop myself from telling them what I am
doing—
Sailing alone, out over seventy fathoms?
Yet if I speak, I shall sink without a sound
Into unmeaning abysses. *Can I learn to*
suffer
Without saying something ironic or funny
About suffering?

I would say, no: the old gentleman will be talking . . . (In passing, these three lines I have italicised show one weakness in the style of this volume—an excessive bookishness. They are like bad Aldous Huxley. They irritate because Auden's Prospero has given no evidence, sententious, loquacious, and sometimes eloquent as he is, that he is at all capable of thinking of anything very effectively ironic or funny to say; and people may be irritated, too, at the notion of suffering as a rather expensive and special luxury for the truly high-minded).

But one sees the differences. Shakespeare is a dramatist but his people are not, in quite this sense, incessantly dramatising themselves. For Auden the dramatic gesture (not the dramatic incident) is all important. Everything he would do would be this special sort of thing, with its sharp rhetorical edge to it—"Leave for Cape Wrath to-night!" or, "Sailing alone, out over seventy fathoms." Yet ordinary common little people pray and repent, and feel the emptiness of their small successes, just as they work for a political party, or go to bed with their wives; it was not, after all, Auden who invented religion or sex or politics. Like Miranda, Auden finds novelty everywhere and everywhere assimilates it; as with her brave new world, "'tis new to *him*." This is part of what Miss Riding and Mr. Graves meant by calling him a synthetic, not a traditional, writer. Everything has to be questioned, everything explained. This partly explains the queer and rather unfeeling detachment Mr. Spender has noted: for Auden's Prospero,

A stranger's quiet collapse in a noisy street
Is the beginning of much lively speculation,

not the beginning of doing anything practical for the stranger.

That everything is seen from the outside, and as new, and as having to be explained (that is, as having to be set against a wider background, which is assumed, so that there may be explanations) is one reason, perhaps, for certain faults of taste and feeling which are rather noticeable in this new volume. He ignores the fact that lives of ordinary routine, which look dull and simple from the outside, from the inside, broken down into their day to day detail, may seem interesting and complicated enough. And this causes him occasionally to indulge in a peculiarly unpleasant mixture of spiritual and social snobbery:

The solitude familiar to the poor
Is feeling that the family next door
The way it talks, eats, dresses, loves, and hates
Is indistinguishable from one's own.

Both the facts, and the values implied here, seem to me wrong. It is the upper classes in all ages, who have tended to conventionalise their behaviour; Goldsmith somewhere has an acute remark about the manners of the gentry being the same all over eighteenth-century Europe—one must look both for national characteristics, and individual eccentricities, among the peasantry. I am sure, I am much more *like* any other middle-class intellectual of my age, than a plumber in Bradford is like a plumber in London. Secondly, I do not see what is wrong with the family next door being like my family. Real conversation, real intimacy, is, in fact, only possible when two people share a general background of behaviour, and indeed of reading, and of taste, which is so much taken for granted that it need

not be talked about. The individualism which Auden *seems* to be advocating here is rather like that which, along so many English streets, jostles together the fake-Tudor or neo-lavatorial pub, the commercial Renaissance bank, and the jazz-modernistic cinema. I prefer the amenity of the Georgian crescent. An even more snobbish (and very badly written) passage is this

> Redeem for the dull the
> Average Way
> That common ungifted
> Natures may
> Believe that their normal
> Vision can
> Walk to perfection.

It is not really such a colossal and crushing tragedy not to be Mr. Auden; and the best of us are very common and ungifted, in very many directions, and the most limited of us is capable of sacrifice and of love.

This stuffiness is all the more depressing when one remembers Auden's former gift, in a poem like "August for people and their favourite islands," of summing up, quite easily and lazily, the whole atmosphere of a place and the people there; and he seems to have lost that, and to have lost the unaffected pleasure he once felt in the sight of people being easily and lazily themselves; America could have offered him Coney Island, instead of these depressing and unconvincing generalisations, but the American scene, the American atmosphere, the speech habits of America, appear not to exist for him. I think there is a reason, a sociological one. The facade of English life is a very composed one, the flaws in the surface are difficult to detect, and one of the things that made Auden before the war a poet of such extreme social significance was his ability to put a finger on points of extreme, but hidden, stress. But America does not present a composed facade; it makes a cult, almost, of the incongruous; it is almost blind to the incongruous; and American writers tend, like Henry Adams, or the Southern Regionalists, either to invent a manner adapted to a composed society which doesn't exist, but ought to, or like Sinclair Lewis, in his earlier and less regrettable days, to shout at the top of their voices to draw attention to incongruities which, even for the least sensitive English observer, would be glaring enough. A writer like Auden for instance, or like Rex Warner, might do a fruitful parody of a leader in the "Times," the "Economist," or the " Spectator"; but a leader in the "Saturday Evening Post" parodies itself. There is a degree of rusticity which exhausts the resources of language. In America, I suppose, there are only three alternatives ; one surrenders, one becomes hysterical and hoarse like Mark Twain or Sinclair Lewis, or one withdraws. Auden seems to have withdrawn, and America, for all it exists for him, might be a desert island. There is only one outbreak of the old beautiful malice and mischief, a poem which I first read in a scribbled copy over a bar in Cairo:

> In the Retreat from Reason he deserted on
> his rocking-horse
> And lived on a fairy's kindness till he tired of
> kicking her,
> He smashed her spectacles and stole her
> cheque-book and mackintosh
> Then cruised his way back to the Army.
>
> *George, you old numero,*
> *How did you get in the Army ?*

That is nicely done. But, on the whole, and at least for the time being, Auden seems to have lost that promise he had once of being our best poet in a conversational style (that is, our best poet with an adult social sense) since the Byron of " Don Juan " or perhaps even since Pope.

On the other hand, Auden is steadily increasing his mastery over the actual craft of

verse. There is almost no form, no metre at which he is not capable of having a pretty competent try. His most interesting metrical innovation in this volume is the borrowing of syllabic metre from Miss Marianne Moore. He uses this in what is perhaps his most perfect single poem to date, "Alonso to Ferdinand." Each line has exactly nine syllables, the stanzas have an elaborate and difficult rhyme scheme, but since stressed can rhyme with unstressed syllables the number of possible full rhymes in English is greatly extended ; the general effect of the metre, in Auden's use of it, is to give an effect of careful but successful concentration, like a military slow march with the soldiers counting their steps, or like counting your steps when you are dancing a slow waltz. His use of the metre is quite unlike Miss Moore's, who always has the air of balancing say, a pile of plates which are always about to topple over but never quite do; the air of doing something surprising, difficult, acrobatic, sometimes almost (elegantly) clownish . . . indulging, as she does, in lines of varying length and slyly concealed rhyme patterns. Auden's use of the metre is more straightforward, his effect smooth, grave, and majestic. I think syllabic metre is a very important and useful innovation in English verse . . . much more so, for instance, than Hopkins' type of metre, which tends to distort the natural syntax and cadence of the English language, and can only be used effectively, indeed, in Hopkins' own peculiar type of rhetoric. It would be a mistake, of course, to attempt to read "Alonso to Ferdinand" without any stresses at all; what the reader will find himself stressing is what the French call the "mobile accent" . . . or those words on which, from the sense pattern (of the individual line, not of the sentence or paragraph) there is a natural rhetorical stress. That stress, however, will be a modulated one, so as not to rack the slow and grave syllabic pattern.

With this advance in metrical accomplishment, there goes, however, that tendency towards an impressive vagueness, even towards a triteness or wooliness, of metaphor and simile first noticed by Julian Symons. The contrast with the tightness of Auden's earliest poems is striking and from some points of view depressing. " My dear one is mine as mirrors are lonely." That, as reviewer after reviewer has pointed out, is a very lovely line. But just how does my dear one being mine resemble mirrors being lonely? (To anybody with some knowledge of how poems are composed, it must seem possible that Auden may have written first, " My dear one is mine *though* mirrors are lonely," and then, by the alteration of a syllable, created at once a more euphonious and a more mysterious line). It might be a mere comparison of degree: mirrors are so lonely that they reflect everything which is in front of them, and my dear one just as completely reflects me (or I may be, indeed, comparing myself to the mirror; I am as lonely for my dear one as a mirror is for everything, and for me there is nothing else, my dear one is everything). That is enough to satisfy the syntax, but the sadness and the beauty of the line come partly, I think, from the fact that mirrors are so obvious a symbol both of understanding and separation; I am reflected completely in the mirror, but I also, my real self, remain completely outside the mirror; or, in love with you, I reflect you completely, but you are free, as a person, to move away, while I still possess—for a little time—your image. And if *both* you and I are like mirrors, we only know each other as reflected in each other, and being in love is important as a way of possessing oneself. But this possession is illusory, for the surface never melts away, never quite dissolves even in love, and we can never, like Alice, enter the looking-glass kingdom, and wander together there, hand in hand. All these ideas are more or less relevant, and there are probably others I have missed. The point is that one can't, of course, stop to work them all out

while actually reading the poem. One has the impression, merely, of something moving, intricate, and perhaps true, and passes on. This intricate vagueness has its own fascination and I cannot agree with Mr. Symons in regarding it as mere laziness on Auden's part. He knows very well, I should think, its peculiar effectiveness.

I have been delaying coming to grips with Auden's thought. William Empson has a striking little poem, "Reflection from Rochester," in which he says that the mind

now less easily decides
On a good root-confusion to amass
Much safety from irrelevant despair.
Mere change in numbers made the process crass.

Auden is not a thinker in the sense that Empson is; but what he has really been doing all along is seeking, in politics, or psychology, or religion, for a good root-confusion which would make the despair (which is, I think, his centrally important experience) irrelevant. Partly for that reason his politics, his psychology, and now his religion are always off-centre. And they are, in fact, confusing. They are ways both of explaining and of attempting to get rid of—but also to infect others with a personal sense of guilt. He does seek in that sense, in Sykes Davies' phrase, to solidify personal neuroses. The particular type of religious thinking to be found in "For the Time Being" is not new in his work. It is to be found in the famous poem that begins,

Sir, no man's enemy, forgiving all
But will, his negative inversion, be prodigal....

and that ends with the rather undergraduate line,

New styles of architecture, a change of heart.

It is a religion of emotional conversion, and, among historical forms of Christianity, it resembles Lutheranism more than either Roman Catholicism or High Calvinism. It makes much more of God's will and less of his reason, much more of the individual's direct response to God and less of the idea of fellowship in a Church, than Roman Catholicism, but is does allow some scope for man's emotions (if not for his reasonable will) to cooperate with God, and it does not go all the way with that type of extreme Protestantism which makes man's salvation or damnation *entirely* dependent upon God's particular election. The general effect of such a religion would be to make men feel that, whether or not necessarily wicked, they are certainly weak, and that perhaps it is better to sin strongly and to repent strongly than to be puffed up with a sense of one's strength and virtue. (Herod, the good administrator, in Auden's aratorio, is the man who tries to rely on his own will and reasoned moral standards; he is rather venomously treated. Caesar, in another poem, stands for all man's attempts to stand on his own feet—in science, in culture, in philosophy, as well as in politics—and it is made clear that from Auden's standpoint all these are equally wicked and disastrous). The dangers of this particular type of religion, with its emphasis on some sort of emotional surrender, are seen more clearly in "The Mirror and the Sea." Antonio's great crime is that he has not surrended to Prospero,

Your all is partial, Prospero;
My will is all my own:
Your need to love shall never know
Me: I am I, Antonio:
My choice myself alone.

But if Prospero can be a symbol for God, he might also be a symbol for Hitler. No man has the right to compel another man's love, unless he can prove himself worthy of it; no God either, for that matter, unless he can prove that, as well as being powerful, he is good. "God is not without sin. He created the world," says an old proverb from the East, and

it is not very noble to worship a God just because he is powerful and can harm us. Auden, indeed, does show that he is aware of this dilemma:

Alone, alone, about a dreadful wood
Of conscious evil runs a lost mankind,
Dreading to find its Father lest it find
The Goodness it has dreaded is not good...

but his solution is Kierkegaard's, that of the emotional leap in the dark, not Milton's, that of justifying the ways of God to man. We have seen some of the results of the emotional leap in the dark in politics (and German politics have suffered greatly from the tradition of passive obedience that goes with Lutheran pietism) and German politics, when Hitler played Prospero, suffered greatly from the lack of a few Antonios. Auden has perhaps found a temporary solution for a number of his own personal difficulties, but I do not think that he has lighted on a very useful root-confusion for the rest of us. He seems to me, on the whole, to be *less* illuminating than in the days of his psychological and political probings.

He is not, I think, fundamentally a religious poet, any more than, for example, Milton was.* A person with the genuine piety, the sense of mystery and awe, of, say, Dr. Johnson could never have made out of the truths of the Christian religion the purely mythological pattern—the argumentative deity and the cannonading angels of "Paradise Lost." The artist and the dialectician were strong enough in Milton to make use of this dangerous material and the artist and the dialectician are strong enough in Auden. But I find no evidence anywhere in this book of Auden's, any more than anywhere in Milton, of any profound *personal* spiritual experience; such as one finds, for instance, in Mr. David Gascoyne's "Noctambules" or in some short poems of Miss Kathleen Raine's. He is not a religious poet in that sense, and though "For the Time Being" has some affinities with "The Rock," I do not see Auden going on to write something like "Four Quartets." His gifts are of another sort, and his strength is of another sort. Antonio's mockery is true,

Antonio, sweet brother, has to laugh.
How easy you have made it to refuse
Peace to your greatness! Break your wand in half,
The fragments will join: burn your books or lose
Them in the sea, they will soon reappear
Not even damaged: as long as I choose
To wear my fashion, whatever you wear
Is a magic robe . . .

We can allow no peace to Auden's greatness. He will not be satisfied until he has written something which is utterly moving, persuading, convincing to *everybody*, and, of course, he will never do this. There will always be the schoolboy who doesn't attend, the scout who skips the parade, the man who chooses dying instead of loving, the heckler with the awkward question, the fellow conjuror chiefly interested in how he does the trick—there will always be Antonio. Prospero, again and again, will have to postpone the breaking of his wand. But, after all, it is to be regretted? There are so many professional mystagogues; so many dull preachers; so many cheapjacks with their bottled spiritual cure-alls; but of all poets writing to-day, there is only Auden with just that range and scope. His strength is not in what he accepts, but in what he discards. It lies just as much in a certain fundamental ruthlessness as in the love about which he talks

* I hope this doesn't sound too paradoxical. The distinction is between grasping a theology as a coherent parable, or a coherent system of ideas, which is what Milton and Auden do, and having a certain kind of personal experience, a sharp and immediate sense of goodness or of evil. Or perhaps it might be described as the difference between generalised and personal experience, between accepting a set of ideas because on the whole they seem to fit, and being absolutely gripped and held by a certain sort of experience. Neither Auden nor Milton seem to be gripped and held. They choose, rather, to grip and hold. They could let go.

Because they could let go, poets like Auden and Milton are more anxious to persuade than poets, like Herbert, or Vaughan, or Crashaw, of actual religious experience. One does not need to argue about actual experience. One has had it, and can merely attempt to record it.

so vaguely and so much. He is a much greater man than his ideas; as a poet, a major voice; as a thinker, about on the level of Mr. Middleton Murry. Because he has a major voice, what he says will always be relevant, without having to be, in a sense, true. (In one sense, it always will be true; it will always be a possible synthesis of an unusually wide reading and experience—it will always be pragmatically true, a possible "working scheme.") "All I have is a voice . . . " It is for that, in this volume, that we must feel gratitude; and it is in that, for the future, that we must feel hope.

THE STATE OF MODERN CRITICISM

by NICHOLAS MOORE

The Intent of the Critic

by EDMUND WILSON, NORMAN FOERSTER, JOHN CROWE RANSOM W. H. AUDEN, edited with an introduction by, DONALD A. STAUFFER (*Princeton University Press—Oxford University Press*).

Reviewing is a foolish, but perhaps a necessary job, particularly in this country where the public will not find out things for itself—yet I think it is a general condition. It is foolish because it is without purpose: it is necessary, because without it there is so much that remains unsaid or at least unsaid to those who read the reviews : it gives them the opportunity of appreciating what perhaps they would never have taken the trouble to look into otherwise. But it is purposeless, because it cannot achieve anything of permanent value. Criticism—literary criticism—at its best is quite another matter. It is a serious study of literature, whereas reviewing at its best needs must be superficial, at its worst is thoroughly vicious.

The Americans are inclined to be laughed at by us for the intensely serious interest they take in many things we do not consider worth an intensive study: moreover American research often seems to us, though serious, foolish. We grant them the intensity of their interest, but we do not grant them any great ability. We are inclined to scoff at American civilization as an essentially commercial civilization as compared to ours, which has a solider background and a longer tradition behind it. American culture is apt to be thought of as a joke.

Of course, in certain respects this is true, but though these things are true of America, they are also true perhaps to a lesser extent of our own civilization and culture. Journalism—the commercial aspect of literature—may not be such a big business as in America, may not be—in the minds of the pundits—such a *vulgar* business, yet it is essentially the same. The difference is merely in degree.

Of course, intelligent people in both countries are aware of this. Yet it still remains a fact that among English scholars there is at most a grudging admiration of American scholarship whereas among American scholars there is an almost unhealthy respect for English scholarship. The same is true to a lesser extent of literature. We are apt to think of American literature as racy, and novel,

good of its kind, but not comparable to our own: and unfortunately many Americans are apt to think the same. American critics and writers are apt, therefore, to be overlooked, to be dismissed without fair trial. There are exceptions, obviously, but in general I think that is true.

Here I am dealing only with criticism, literary criticism, and therefore with only part of the literary relationship between ourselves and the Americans—yet it is a very important part, perhaps the most important part. For criticism, as opposed to ephemeral reviewing, is most important, and it is at the present time most advanced, particularly in America. For in England at the moment criticism occupies a minor position in the literary world. In a way it is right that it should do so. It is right that the creative writer should be considered of greater importance than the mere critic—he writes the works that make up our literature, the critic merely writes about them. But it is not right that criticism as a serious and useful function should be ignored or denied, or confined to a merely scholarly scope. The importance of serious American criticism at the moment is that it is concerning itself with the contemporary scene—and if criticism does not do that it cannot take its proper place in the world. A good criticism is, in a world as complicated as our own, necessary to a good literature, and it is perhaps for lack of sufficient good criticism that our literature over the last two decades has been so barren, if it has been barren, compared with the literature of former ages. Certainly it is partly through lack of good criticism that the divorce between writer and public has been allowed to grow so wide, and it may be through a return to it that the gulf will be bridged.

The troubles afflicting the criticism of the last two decades have been so many and various that one cannot hope to specify them all. Of course, reviewing itself, the superficial appreciation of books in newspaper columns, has had a lot to do with it: the over-appreciation of bad books for commercial reasons and the dismissal of good books or promising books by reviewers who have not a sufficient understanding or appreciation of literature to know what they are condemning. This has itself perhaps been intensified by one of the further troubles of contemporary criticism, the temptation of the critic or would-be critic to turn to scholarship alone. Academic criticism in this country has been quite good. There are many names that immediately come to mind of critics who have written excellent books on our literary past: the weakness is that, for criticism to attain its highest function, it must have also not only a relation to the present, but a definite interest in and understanding of contemporary literature: this most of our academic critics have lacked. And what doth it profit a critic, however excellently he may have delved into the works of John Donne or William Shakespeare, if he have no ability to understand or appreciate the writers of his own time?

Academic criticism is, of course, not worthless. But it is worthless by itself. If there are no critics at all concerned with contemporary literature—and I mean critics, not reviewers—then that literature will be in a bad way. It will have no standards, it will not know where to turn next. It will be just what these very same academic critics are so fond of complaining that modern literature is—incomprehensible. For, for a literature to be comprehensible, it must have someone to comprehend it—and by that I do not mean the casual reader, but the expert. To make an analogy, a new scientific invention, say, would be useless if no-one with an expert understanding of it could explain its uses to the public, and thus make its value comprehensible: and, of, course, the creator of this invention himself might not be able to do so. He understands his invention, but it will probably take a different type of person to make clear and

generally comprehensible its possibilities. It is the same with literature. Sometimes one person is both artist and critic—but such persons are rare, and very often it is the artist-as-critic who is responsible for the most superficial or the most biassed criticism. For so often what he writes as general criticism is only true of himself.

THE INTENT OF THE CRITIC, the book under review here, is as its title suggests an examination of what the function, if any, of the critic should be. It contains four essays, one each by three of the foremost American critics, with conflicting views, and one by W. H. Auden, whom I suppose one should now describe as an Anglo-American. There is also an excellent summary by the editor as an introduction, in which from the start he makes clear the purpose of the book. He quotes a piece of criticism by Coleridge on Hamlet and then remarks of it that "His opinion is a safe guide, therefore, only if we know Coleridge the critic as well as we know *Hamlet*, the play criticised. Such examples of the necessity of rectifying a critical pronouncement by some inquiry into the critic's character and bias and intention might be multiplied. They show that the question, "What is the intent of the Critic?" may be as important to the reading public as the prior question, "What is the intent of the artist?" is to the critic himself. The title for this gathering of four essays proposes a topic which every year grows in importance. In a simpler world critics had taken for granted that the work of art, like Pallas Athene, had come into being in full maturity. Slowly men became aware that a work of art could not be properly evaluated it if were considered as self-begotten. A poem, a play, is the creation of a particular man living under particular circumstances." So much for the aims of the book. But Mr. Stauffer has many more valuable remarks to throw out, before we come to the essays themselves.

In the second section of his introduction he makes another most important point about criticism: "A critic is not an ideal critic if he thinks of himself as the impersonal voice of truth; neither is he an ideal critic if his primary concern is not the work of art. His interests must be deeply rooted in art itself. If they are not, then he is acting not as a literary critic, but as an observer in some other field who uses literature to furnish illustrations. This distinction is so immediately evident that it need not be labored. We should be on our guard, however, to remember the distinction in practice as well as in theory; in a piece of writing about some book, when we encounter a writer who is primarily or solely the preacher, the politician, the sociologist, the psychologist, the philosopher, the rhetorician, the salesman, the patron, the blood-relative, or the school mate, we must recognise him as such. We must not consider him, as he frequently considers himself, a literary critic merely because his subject matter is literature, when his purpose is not criticism of letters. He fails to be a literary critic because his prime interest is not in literature as it exists ; his heart is overseas."

I think this is a very important distinction to make at the moment, particularly to readers in England where there is so little real literary criticism. For a failure to understand what the critic is *not* causes many people to put faith in people like Van Wyck Brooks in America or James Agate here, whose attitude of patronage is obvious. Often, of course, it is mingled with vague sociological theories of the "decadence" of the present younger generation, and of the writers of the post 1918 generation. And it is purely a sociological or moral view that leads to a false estimation of writers like T. S. Eliot or Joyce—who cannot be good writers because in the view of Mr. Brooks or Mr. Agate they have not the right ideas, i.e., the moral or social or historical ideas that Mr. Agate or Mr. Brooks consider good.

They therefore automatically are reduced, in the estimation of such men, to writers of mere twaddle, or talented writers who waste their talent on the desert air. (Instead of on Messrs. Agate and Brooks). Their interest is not in literature but in "what literature means to me" or its moral and sociological qualities only. They are interested in "life" as reflected in books.

But this matter of criticism by those who are not properly critics has ramifications much greater than that. It includes these people at the top end of the pole and people like George Orwell and various would-be Marxist critics at the bottom. A writer like Mr. Orwell, who writes lucid and excellent prose, can very easily become accepted as a literary critic proper, yet an examination of his articles on literary subjects shows very clearly that his interest is that of a sociologist only, or at least mainly. One may grant him a certain genuine liking for literary works, but at the same time it is quite obvious, from his essay in *Poetry London* on T. S. Eliot, for instance, or on Henry Miller in "The Tribune" that he is quite incapable of appreciating the literary qualities of the work if it holds no sociological interest for him—if it does not fit in with his general idea of literature and society. For he is using literature to prove his points about society. Similarly there is nothing wrong with a Marxist approach to literature, in itself, but there is everything wrong with a study of literature by a Marxist who does not properly understand both Marxism and literature. If the critic is merely using literature to add to the fund of historical support for the communist point of view, then again it is the case of the sociologist or politician posing as a critic for the sake of his social or political creed. There is no reason why a person of Mr. Orwell's views or a Communist or possibly even a Nazi should not write excellent literary criticism, but he must be an expert in his subject, not merely or largely an expert politician, with literature as a mere side-line. For he has a serious function to fill as literary critic: if he does not realise that, then he is not a literary critic at all.

It is partly because these people have usurped the position of the literary critic proper, these and others on the list given by Mr. Stauffer, that criticism here is in such a bad way. As I have said, there are the academic critics, and some of these like the brilliant C. S. Lewis are at times suspect of ulterior motives, in his case his religious viewpoint, in some of their criticism, but what else have we ? There is I. A. Richards, a first-rate critic in his own sphere, with one very valuable book, PRACTICAL CRITICISM—but his interests are avowedly more philosophical and psychological than purely literary. There is William Empson, who follows Richards excellently in a limited field. There is the promising, but unclear book of the young Marxist critic, Christopher Caudwell, good in its way, but very badly written—and another necessary quality for a first-rate critic is that he should write good prose. There is F. R. Leavis, and other writers of the Scrutiny school, who do fulfil their proper function as critics, yet seem somehow to be more interested in criticism itself than in the thing criticised. There is T. S. Eliot, who came from America and is in many ways an extremely typical New Englander, who has written excellent criticism from a limited viewpoint. These have, like the academic critics—and some of them are perhaps almost academic themselves—dealt with the literature of the past alone, though in satisfactory relation to the present, And after them what ? We are left with a few poets such as Day Lewis, Spender, Kathleen Raine, Francis Scarfe, who have all applied themselves to critical consideration of contemporary literature, but who are mostly poets and not critics—their criticism all seems drawn to the end of advancing the cause of

poetry—sometimes their own poetry—rather than from any critical interest in literature—they are preachers. And, of course, there are many other general outlines about new writing in England and the like, which serve their purpose as publicity, but cannot be taken as serious criticism: though H. E. Bates' book on the Modern Short Story is good, and is something more than a mere outline. And there is the possibility that G. S. Fraser will develop into an excellent all-round critic: he already has the merit of writing intelligibly, a merit most of his fellow poet-cum-critics lack.

But I don't think that is a very good list: Richards, Eliot, and perhaps Empson may, moreover, not be producing any more strictly literary criticism. If this situation is as bad as I think it is, then Mr. Stauffer is certainly right in emphasising the importance of an examination into the intent of the critic in our time. And the essays that follow are certainly illuminating. Mr. Wilson writes on " The Historical Interpretation of Literature," Mr. Foerster on" The Esthetic Judgement and the Ethical Judgement," Mr. Ransom on "Criticism as Pure Speculation," and Mr. Auden on "Criticism in a Mass Society." Mr. Wilson and Mr. Ransom are two of the best critics of our time; both write excellently, especially Mr. Wilson, and both here expound the viewpoint on which their criticism is based with exemplary clarity. Though their viewpoints are almost opposite their essays do to a certain extent complement each other. Mr. Wilson is, or was, a Marxist (no longer an orthodox Communist, though I believe he was at the time he wrote his book, "Axel's Castle "), but he is also, eminently, a literary critic, so that his historical interpretation of literature does not blind him to the necessity of distinguishing between good and bad literature. As he himself writes "We must be able to tell good from bad, the first-rate from the second-rate. We shall not otherwise write literary criticism at all, but merely social or political history as reflected in literary texts, or psychological case histories from past eras, or, to take the historical point of view in its simplest and most academic form, merely chronologies of books that have been published." Though he puts the emphasis on the historical interpretation Mr. Wilson has in fact a very full armoury of critical weapons at his disposal, including Freudian analysis. Possibly it is a weakness that he cannot explain how one is to know good from bad, except by saying that some people know and some don't. He writes: " The man who is more highly organized and has a wider intellectual range will feel it in connection with work that is finer and more complex. The difference between the emotion of the more highly organized man and the emotion of the less highly organized one is merely a matter of gradation. You sometimes encounter books that seem to mark precisely the borderline between work that is definitely superior and work that is definitely bad—the novels of John Steinbeck, for example. When I was speaking a little while back of the experts who establish the standards of taste, I meant the people who can distinguish Grade A and who prefer it to the other grades." Anyway, however unsatisfactory this explanation may be, it is certain that Mr. Wilson himself is one of these. And any good critic must be.

Mr. Ransom is also a very good critic, of a different kind to Mr. Wilson, but also an expert; in his essay he comes out very strongly against what he calls the moralistic critics, under which category fall both Mr. Wilson and Mr. Foerster: the former he calls—with Mr. Auden too—a Marxist "in some degree and shade," the latter a Neo-Humanist. And he says " The thing I wish to argue is not the comparative merits of the different moralities by which poetry is judged, but their equal inadequacy to the reading of the poet's intention. The moralistic critics wish to isolate and discuss the "ideology" or theme

or paraphrase of the poem and not the poem itself. But even to the practitioners themselves if they are sophisticated, comes sometimes the apprehension that this is moral rather than literary criticism." And, though he grants them the fact that they are both "dualists" rather than mere moralists, he goes on to say, " My feeling about such a position would be that the moral criticism we shall have with us always, and have had always, and that it is easy—comparatively speaking—and that what is hard, and needed, and indeed more and more urgent after all the failures of poetic understanding, is a better esthetic criticism. This is the branch which is all but invariably neglected by the wise but morally zealous critics; they tend to forget their dual responsibility. I think I should go so far as to think that, in strictness, the business of the literary critic is exclusively with an esthetic criticism. The business of the moralist will naturally, and properly, be with something else."

In this he makes a fair enough distinction, and it is certainly true that a better esthetic criticism is needed. In fact the very lack of serious criticism in this country that I have been deploring in the first part of this review is due in large measure to neglect of the importance of esthetic criticism: however, if the critic of Mr. Wilson's persuasion does *not* forget his *dual* responsibility, it seems to me on the whole his kind of criticism is a fuller and more satisfactory kind. On the other hand Mr. Ransom denies that he is an exponent of the Art for Art's Sake theory, and he also denies kinship with the psychological criticism of Richards, though he does believe in analytical criticism of a kind. It is easy to agree with him that a purely moralistic criticism is quite useless, and also that the type of close criticism he demands is of the greatest value in itself. It does seem to me, though, that perhaps the complete critic should combine with close analytical treatment the historical interpretation that Mr. Wilson favours, and, of course, Mr. Wilson himself, as Mr. Ransom admits, is no mere moralist. But; whatever one believes oneself, these expert essays are of vital importance to-day, when criticism is at odds with itself. Both these writers are creative critics, in that they are producing new ideas and new values: this is what criticism should be doing. It cannot be useful if it is a static and lifeless thing. It cannot be useful if it *merely* analyses works of the past or if it *merely* puts them in their historical perspective.

The remaining essays in this volume are not so important, though Mr. Foerster's is a very able and readable championship of what seems to me an untenable position: he is a fairly extreme example of the moralistic critic with whom Mr. Ransom is at odds, though even his position is not so extreme that it cannot be to some extent reconciled with the others. Mr. Auden's essay is less deeply concerned with the central problem, and it is less well written than the other essays: moreover it is more dogmatic and less carefully argued. He is concerned in his essay not so much with the critic's beliefs and tasks as critic as with the practical problem of how to make the public delight in good literature: and so for him the critic is a publicist who must "show the individual that though he is unique he has also much in common with all other individuals" and teach him how to enjoy works of art that do not, in their subject matter, touch his own life. He must also instruct him in the appreciation and understanding of the culture of the past. There is a good deal of truth in his essay, but much of it is rather obvious, and there is also a good deal of doubtful sociological theory. It is interesting to learn that Mr. Auden has a profound belief in original sin, but I don't see why he thinks it is particularly important that the contemporary critic should share it. Nor does it help the problem of criticism very much to be told " Indeed all the critic knows for certain is that, since his actions are never perfect, he

must always do others harm, so that the final aim of every critic and teacher must be to persuade others to do without him, to realize that the gifts of the spirit are never to be had at second hand." Leaving aside the rather doubtful truth of part of this statement, I do not see how, whether the critic believes this or not, it can have a very much effect on his function as critic: unless it is merely a way of saying that criticism, as distinct from the mere teaching of historical facts about literature is of little use to anybody: which disposes of the true critic's function altogether. In fact, though Mr. Auden chooses in his essay to consider the practical problem of educating the public rather than the less general, yet no less important problem of how the critic himself should perform his function, his beliefs are so vague and some of his assumptions so doubtful that his essay is in fact of less practical use than the others: all that is unquestionably true in his essay would, it seems to me, be taken for granted by any responsible critic. As for the rest, it is interesting perhaps to know where Mr. Auden stands as a teacher, but it is depressing to find him so vague as to his own or any teacher's usefulness. It seems to me that most of what he says could have been put more clearly in a single paragraph : however, as he says, we are all weak fallible creatures, and perhaps I have misunderstood or missed altogether the point and relevance of Mr. Auden's remarks—which may not be his fault.

Reviewing, as I said, is a foolish business ; for it is not true criticism; yet it seems necessary particularly when real critics are lacking. I know Mr. Tambimuttu thinks highly of the poet as critic, but, frankly, I don't. It is not often that a poet is also a good critic, though he may be an interesting one in some respects—usually not critical respects. In America there are a number of good critics who are, most of them, not primarily creative writers, except in so far as their criticism may be called creative—there are Mr. Wilson and Mr. Ransom, and a good many others besides, R. P. Blackmur, Cleanth Brooks, Philip Wheelright, Allen Tate and others, including an Englishman, David Daiches, whose criticism sets a high standard of seriousness and accomplishment. These we sometimes read in American periodicals, such as the Partisan Review—but the general public probably doesn't see them, and for the most part their work is not published in England. And here a review such as this can perhaps be of a little use, if it does persuade some dozen or so readers to pursue the matter under discussion further. For no sound criticism will arise in this country unless the lack of it and need for it are brought to notice. I can only recommend those who are interested—they may be few, but I think they should be many—to get THE INTENT OF THE CRITIC and also THE LANGUAGE OF POETRY, another volume published by the Princeton University Press, which include four essays on that subject, by Philip Wheel right, Cleanth Brooks, I. A. Richards (at present in America) and Wallace Stevens. These books are available here through the Oxford University Press. They should provide an incentive for good criticism in this country. There is nothing a reviewer can do but recommend, and until there is a real criticism, poets, novelists and other interested parties will have to, however little the task may suit them, review as best they can whatever they consider important or whatever they consider has gained in the popular mind an importance out of due proportion to its merit. It might be better if, instead, authors were to issue regularly to their readers lists of books that they personally recommend—yet that would probably not gain the same attention as even the most foolish review.

Perhaps we may dare to hope that a serious and much needed criticism will arise here soon. And, of course, for it to have the beneficial influence it should, it must be (a) competent and (b) well-written.

FOUR QUARTETS

by HUGH GORDON PORTEUS

Four Quartets by T. S. ELIOT (FABER, 6s.)

The poems here gathered under the title of FOUR QUARTETS have already seen separate publication as *Burnt Norton* (1936), *East Coker* (1940), *The Dry Salvages* (1941), and *Little Gidding* (1942). The collective title suggests the sort of significance these works may have for their author and for his public. If we consider that it was in their late quartets that such composers as Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven enshrined the music they themselves and their followers most dearly valued, that is perhaps as far as analogy need reach. The public for the more *intensive* orders of creative activity is at no time inconsiderable: it is only relatively, not numerically small. And experience seems to confirm that the proportion is probably constant, cutting right across all barriers of place, time or class ; and that intensive work cannot be popularised for the stallholders who enjoyed that famous murder play or that grandiose symphony in which Fate is heard knocking at the door.

One might say that grave adagios alternate with songs on the pattern of the minuet; that one finds exposition, expansion and recapitulation of recurrent themes; and that there are the familiar leit-motifs: (the music unheard and the wild thyme unseen, the moment of the rose and the yew tree, the hidden laughter of children in the foliage). The titular subjects of the poems (the Somerset hamlet or the rocks off Cape Ann) have the sort of relevance that titles have in much contemporary painting : they are *points d'appui* while Chronos and Logos again supply the obsessive objects. Rather as Futurist painters, a decade before the advent of Disney, would try to convey the dynamics of a living body by some Shiva-like congeries of superimposed limbs, transfixed in frenzy, so sometimes in the fluid mediums of literature and music have exasperated attempts been made to arrest the fleeting instant, the eternal moment, "the still point of the turning world" or the timelessness proper to the plastic arts. And yet, as in the string quartet,

> Only by the form, the pattern,
> Can words or music reach
> The stillness, as a Chinese jar still
> Moves perpetually in its stillness.

In his mastery of this architectonic, this intricate articulation of momentous images in a cage of words, how Eliot must command our admiration! But his triumphs are not easy. They are won not against silence but against a terror of the meanings of time, the meanings of words, "In my beginning is my end." But in the beginning was the word. And in the end it is always the word that is Mr. Eliot's first conscious concern.

> Since our concern was speech and speech
> impelled us
> To purify the dialect of the tribe
> And urge the mind to aftersight and
> foresight.

And first and last there is the search for *le mot juste*

> The word neither diffident nor ostentatious
> An easy commerce of the old and new
> The common word exact without vulgarity
> The formal word precise but not pedantic
> But time turns on the word as the word
> turns on time: words strain,
> Crack and sometimes break, under the
> burden,
> Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,

Decay with impression, will not stay in
place,
Will not stay still.

—leading inevitably to a nest of Chinese boxes, paradox within paradox.

Endless the series of things without name
On the way back to where there is nothing
By seizing on the way that was
You can ride the things that are not.
(And passing on means going far away
And going far away means returning)
To know what once there was, in the
Beginning—

—is the way of the sage who pursues : "action-less activity and wordless teaching." I do not know what Mr. Eliot knows of Taoism, but if anyone will compare with the above excerpts (from Chapter XIV of the *Tao te Ching* in Mr. Waley's translation) the following passage at the close of Section III in *East Coker*, I think he will concede a strikingly coincidental identity of vision :

In order to possess what you do not possess
You must go by way of dispossession
In order to arrive at where you are not
You must go through the way in which
you are not
And what you do not know is the only thing
you know
And what you own is what you do not own
And where you are is where you are not.

After each passage of formal stanzas Mr. Eliot drops resignedly into informal communion with himself on questions of ends and means :

That was a way of putting it not very
satisfactory
A periphrastic statement in a wornout
poetical fashion
Leaving one with the intolerable wrestle
with words
With words and meanings, the poetry does
not matter.

What could be more paradoxical than a poetic denial of poetry itself ? Certainly it lends colour to a general notion that Mr. Eliot is emigrating from literature into the territory of the mystics. Elsewhere, to be sure, he confesses that

to apprehend
The point of intersection of the timeless
With time, is an occupation for the saint.

And Mr. Auden, it may be recalled, once defined the saint as "one to whom ethics have *almost* become aesthetics"; and the Poet's Prayer as " Lord, teach me to write so well that I shall no longer want to." It even seems not improbable that some of Auden's work has left its impress on Mr. Eliot. The paradoxes of psychology are a favourite quarry for Mr. Auden, of whom one is reminded here and there in an occasional verse as in " Who then devised this torment ? Love," or

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

Well, consider Art as autobiography, so that (since the word dies almost as the ink dries) "every poem is an epitaph" of the significant moment ; and autobiography as the cure for all ills ; and art as "the most difficult game conceivable to man" (Auden again); and the poet's progress as an obstacle race with ever more Herculean hazards :

So here I am, in the middle way, having had
20 years
20 years largely wasted, the years of *l'entre 2 guerres*—

Trying to learn to use words, and every
attempt
Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of
failure

Because one has only learnt to get the better of words
For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which
One is no longer disposed to say it . . .

Whatever value we attach to the failures of Mr. Eliot's wasted years his *Four Quartets* are evidence that he has not failed in creative power in invention of metaphor or metric, in depth or subtlety, in control of form.

And verse, after all, is chiefly a means to an end—and " The end is where we start from ;" and all the travelling is to one end, whether to Somerset or Massachusets; and the end is the voyage of self-discovery.

And on the deck of the drumming liner
Watching the furrow that widens behind you

You shall not think "the past is finished"
Or "the future is before us."
At nightfall, in the rigging and the aerial,
Is a voice discanting (though not to the ear,
The murmuring shell of time, and not in any language)
" Fare forward, you who think you are voyaging."

Self-discovery leading to "purification of the motive" and

Liberation not less of love but expanding
Of Love beyond desire, and so liberation
From the future as well as the past.

And the disentangling of the timeless from time and place:

Love is most nearly itself
When here and now cease to matter
Old men ought to be explorers
Here and there does not matter

If you like, these poems comprise confession, prayer and incantation; and especially the plea for the wisdom of humility and patience, for

The faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting.

Until the glimpse of beauty and the glimpse of terror are fused

And all manner of thing shall be well
When the tongues of flame are infolded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one.

TWO AMERICAN, ONE ENGLISH

by JULIAN SYMONS

POEMS 1941-1944 *by* HARRY BROWN (SECKER & WARBURG, 6s.). PERSON, PLACE AND THING *by* KARL J. SHAPIRO (SECKER & WARBURG 6s.). THE BLACK SEASONS *by* HENRY TREECE (FABER & FABER, 6s.).

The very general ignorance prevailing in England about American poetry makes one welcome Secker & Warburg's venturesomeness in introducing Mr. Brown and Mr. Shapiro. Other American poets, one is bound to say, might be more welcome still: Mr. Randall Jarrell, for instance, Mr. Delmore Schwartz, or Mr. Robert Penn Warren. But Mr. Brown and Mr. Shapiro will do very well to demonstrate the vices and virtues, vulgarity and vigour, of most American poetry just now.

Mr. Brown writes in many styles, and some of them are elaborately mock, dead echoes. (See page 30) :

Came once to my window a small storm-beaten starling,

Starving, fluffy-feathered, whose black beady eyes
Neither asked nor demanded nor hoped for nor could want.
Yet the body demanded breath. Received death instead.
Tumbled clumsy to the far ground, all its organs revolting
Against this most puissant change.

A curious mixture of mock-Elizabethan and mock-Auden. Or page 45:

O mortal ruins,
Temples of praise, those antique white-fleshed, golden Queens.

No no, one says, and looks with not much more pleasure upon the mock-Ransom. On page 52 :

It was a sweet murmuration of pretty ladies
Came to him as he rode upon the waters.

But if one puts together all the mock-poems and adds to them the vulgarity that can say " Too bad that Achilles on one of his good days caught him," Mr. Brown has still enough virtues to earn him a credit balance.

A summary of those virtues can be made by considering two short poems : "The Time was Summer" (page 40) and " Questions to be put to a Biographer," (page 63). The first poem is marked by a simplicity and smoothness which are not artificial, but wholly in keeping with the poem's gentle, faintly nostalgic evocation of love ; the four-line stanzas with feminine line-endings are handled skilfully to accentuate an effect which it would be churlish not to appreciate. A number of the love poems which make up the third section of the book have these virtues, and frequently there is joined to them a well-handled, slightly self-conscious rhetorical exaggeration. These poems can be re-read with a good deal of pleasure.

" Questions to be put to a Biographer " is typical of the better poems in the last half of the book:

Oh where are the days that seemed to endure forever,
And the nights that went by in a tick of the quiet clock,
And the Augusts that went sailing calmly over the cove,
And the Januarys that coasted so easily down the hill,
And the Mays that rolled like marbles into a ring of years?

This poem (and the many others written in the same manner, with the same all-too-human approach to what is basically the same theme) is brilliantly competent in execution, skilful even though not greatly exciting in imagery, recognizably the work of an intelligent and sensitive—though hardly of a subtle—poet.

Reading this through, it seems in total to produce an effect which is hardly that of a credit balance; and yet it seems to me a fair estimate of Mr. Brown's talents. Let me say finally that this is a better book than any but two or three of the books by young English writers which have been applauded in the last five years.

Mr. Shapiro has a number of good lines, but hardly a good poem. " University " begins : " To hurt the Negro and avoid the Jewish curriculum." Or there is " Hollywood "— "Where castles cultivated like a style breed fabulous metaphors in foreign stone." But Mr. Shapiro marks all he touches with a slick vulgarity ; how slick, how insensitive he frequently is, can be seen in "Buick," beneath the layer of language borrowed from Hopkins via Auden :

As my foot suggests that you leap in the air with your hips of a girl,
My finger that praises your wheel and announces your voices of song,
Flouncing your skirts, you blueness of joy, you flirt of politeness,
You leap, you intelligence, essence of wheelness with silvery nose.

Notice the low plane upon which this is effective, the straining for excitement, the basic emptiness: notice too the general dullness of the fairly varied rhythms in this book, the concealed cliches and puffed-up language of "Hospital"—"Distance is dead and light can only die," etc. Mr. Shapiro is nearer to Paul Engle than to Auden. Some poems in his book which are written with reasonable restraint, and which come-off—though one must say even that with reservations—are "Epitaph," "Death of Emma Goldman," "Israfel," "Mongolian Idiot" "Haircut." Reservations: their need will be indicated by the first stanza of "Haircut."

O wonderful nonsense of lotions of Lucky Tiger,
Of savoury soaps and oils of bottle-bright green,
The gold of liqueurs, the unguents of Newark and Niger,
Powders and balms and waters washing me clean.

Mr. Treece also gives us a pastiche, which is almost a parody, of many styles, Intoxicated Housman:

There is no sweeter sight, I swear, in Heaven,
Than blossom on the cherry-trees by Clee.

Village Blake:

A beggar ran in flapping rags
And shod in broken shoon;
The village dogs sniffed at his legs
And horror howled at the moon.

Wilhelmina Stitch with a dash of Rupert Brooke:

Let us go out in the rain, love,
And keep these memories clean

And fairly pure Treece:

It's time I learnt to shoot straight
Or fly an aeroplane.

The very extravagance of his bad verse makes Mr. Treece of some interest as a poetic "case." His most frequently-used manner is rather like that of a Mrs. Radcliffe writing verse in the twentieth century; the same library of academic horrors, myths or oddities, the same determination to convince the reader that something *strange* is going on, something very weirdly *poetic*. Very occasionally one seems to see a faint flash of imagination in the forest of phonusbolonus—see "Ophelia" and "Ballad" (page 69). Perhaps, after all, in spite of appearances, something genuinely odd is going on? But when one examines a poem or a phrase it falls apart in a muddle of inaccuracies. For instance: "The unborn listen to the dead tongue's tale," (page 12). The purpose of this phrase is to indicate that human nature never changes, which is the basis of the sonnet containing the line. What is meant, in fact, is: "The just-born listen to the live tongue's tale," and since they listen (since they are the same as their fathers) human nature does not change; but that is precisely what is not said. Mr. Treece's poems, with a very few exceptions, are compounded of such absurdities: absurdities which would not pass unnoticed anywhere but in England, and in wartime.

A WORLD WITHIN A WAR

by KATHLEEN RAINE.

Poems by HERBERT READ. (FABER, 6s.).

Herbert Read's literary development has never placed him in a secure niche of any kind, even among the outcasts. In comparing him with some better known poets and critics of his generation, I find myself thinking of Banquo-

"Lesser than Macbeth, yet greater,
Not so happy, and yet happier . . "

I believe that Herbert Read will be vindicated by time, because, through countless literary misalliances, misplaced faith and mistaken prophecies, he has kept his integrity and his humility in the face of experience. Herbert Read's hopes from "new" movements and parties, both in arts and in politics, have often been—have nearly always been—too high, (he is an idealist, how could it be otherwise?)

He has never hesitated to bear the discredit such movements have brought him, or to admit that they have fallen short, and that to find the good and the true, it is necessary to go on searching. His theorisings in this search have often been boring to those not inclined to theorise and disappointingly inadequate to those who are. But through it all shines a steady beam of faith in man and God. The faith in man places Herbert Read in the humanist's eternal predicament (Prometheus and the Vulture are its symbol—

"Happy are those who can relieve
suffering with prayer
Happy those who can rely on God
to see them through
They can wait patiently for the end.
But we who have put our faith
in the goodness of man
and now see man's image debased
lower than the wolf or the hog—
Where can we turn for consolation?"

Yet he has adhered to that faith in the goodness of man however often disappointed in the way that man-made utopias have turned out in practice. (The disciple of Kropotkin, Herbert Read believes that the only free expression in Russia today is to be looked for, if anywhere, in Siberia). As for his faith in God

(" In a free hour
I walk through the woods with God
when the air is calm and the midges
hover in the netted sun and stillness")

it is perhaps the only aspect of his intellectual life upon which Herbert Read has *not* attempted to erect a consoling edifice. It would have been too easy, perhaps. One may conclude that all this goes to show how wrong Herbert Read has been. To one who has read his writings over many years, and who differs from him over many things, they show only how honest he has been, preferring to suffer and err with human beings, than to sit apart behind a formula that is only a screen from those sufferings and experiences that come to the rest of mankind. (That goes for ninety-nine out of every hundred professing any religion including communism). Only one of those Christians rather of Dostoievski's kind than Messrs. Faber and Faber's could perhaps tell Mr. Read anything that he does not already know. With all his perverseness, there is something inherently saintly about Herbert Read. At least he has never hoped to buy wisdom cheap, or pretended to know anything that he has not learned.

One might expect all this to emerge more clearly in his poetry than in his prose, for poetry does not theorise, it states. In it the poet writes what he knows, not what he thinks. (That at least distinguishes good poetry from

bad). For some reason this is not so, and his poems, although those of a great man, perhaps, are not those of a great poet. His language is exact with a precision that fits the intellectual concept rather than the total experience that a poetic idea should be. His style is so far from the hieratic that it becomes flat. In his prose writings Herbert Read often writes with passion. As a poet, he writes without any of the advantages that Hell (Blake's version) brings to the creative act. His poetry has the flatness of Blake's Heaven.

Herbert Read is a poet's poet, nevertheless. He never lies, never plays false in order to get an effect. His images are often perfect pieces of detail—

"the martyred limbs
Lie like trimmed branches on the ground"

or

"In this rocky ghyll
I sit and watch
the eye-iris water move
like muscles over stones"

and yet the detail does not make a whole. Few of these poems seem quite complete. They are pieces of poems, or of a poem.

Of those poets who fought in the last war—Sassoon, Blunden, Graves, those who survived no less than those who died, like Owen, Sorley, and Rupert Brooke—that war was a key experience. Herbert Read has his own version of this theme. Man for him is a living, wonderful being, unfolding like a bud on the tree of life, having within himself all the infinite possibilities of that life, rooted who knows how deeply. War, for Herbert Read, is the terrible, blasphemous, violation of the inherent holiness of a life that is destructible.

Perhaps Herbert Read allows pity too much play. Who shall judge ? The fact remains that, war or no war, this world is not, in its nature cannot be, the kind of Utopia that the poet would have it. Nor are the pitiful and terrible—even evil things—of war or life in general—grounds to justify any man from holding aloof. (Herbert Read would not say that they are. Herbert Read's pacifism after all, he learned on active service). If the world is as the materialist believes, maybe death, even premature and painful death, does not matter so very much. It is only, after all, a chemical vortex that dissolves when a life ends—and other vortices will form. If, on the other hand, the human soul is an eternal being, again death, solemn though it may be, is not so terrible either. To those who see war from Arjuna's chariot, driven into battle by Krishna himself, the great out-pouring of life is but a phase in the experience of living souls of men.

But the humanist has neither of these consolations. For him life can really be destroyed. His position may not be as far-seeing as that taught by Krishna to Arjuna, but it is more humanly tragic. Herbert Read has chosen to stand with Prometheus, whose human terms are pity and terror, rather than with Christ. But still less has he anything in common with the cynical materialism of Marshal Stalin, or the nameless and smug behaviourists of our own materialist civilisation.

On a return from Egypt

To stand here in the wings of Europe
disheartened, I have come away
from the sick land where in the sun lay
the gentle sloe-eyed murderers
of themselves, exquisites under a curse;
here to exercise my depleted fury

For the heart is a coal, growing colder
when jewelled cerulean seas change
into grey rocks, grey water-fringe,
sea and sky altering like a cloth
till colour and sheen are gone both:
cold is an opiate of the soldier.

And all my endeavours are unlucky explorers
come back, abandoning the expedition;
the specimens, the lilies of ambition
still spring in their climate still unpicked:
but time, time is all I lacked
to find them, as the great collectors before me.

The next month, then, is a window
and with a crash I'll split the glass.
Behind it stands one I must kiss,
person of love or death
a person or a wraith,
I fear what I shall find.

Keith Douglas

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