

POETRY

(LONDON)



No. 14

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER, 1948

TWO & SIX

T. S. ELIOT

A SYMPOSIUM

COMPILED BY RICHARD MARCH AND TAMBIMUTTU

Although much has been written on the subject of T. S. Eliot, this is the first book that attempts to present a picture of the greatest poet of our time, both as a man and a writer.

The contents of the book were collected in the first place as a tribute of affection and esteem, on his sixtieth birthday, from Mr. Eliot's friends and admirers in many countries. The contributions are broadly of four kinds: biographical, as for example the reminiscences of his early contemporaries and associates, Wyndham Lewis and Clive Bell; secondly, personal statements by writers, including distinguished continental writers, who describe their first contacts with Mr. Eliot, and the effect his poetry has had on the literatures of Europe, India and America; thirdly, essays of pure criticism; and, fourthly, there are poems in homage by such famous poets as Edith Sitwell and W. H. Auden, as well as tributes from poets of the younger generation for whom T. S. Eliot has in one way or another been a guide and master.

In its general scope therefore the book has far outgrown its original function. Collectively the various authors have produced an important and fascinating chapter of literary history, which should prove of absorbing interest to the general reader, and invaluable to all students of literature.

Price 10s. 6d.

POETRY **PL** LONDON

POETRY

LONDON

EDITOR: TAMBIMUTTU

Associate Editors : RICHARD MARCH & NICHOLAS MOORE

VOLUME 4

November-December, 1948

NUMBER 14

KEITH DOUGLAS

POEM: I LISTEN TO THE DESERT WIND

I listen to the desert wind
that will not blow her from my mind;
the stars will not put down a hand,
The moon's ignorant of my wound

moving negligently across
by clouds and cruel tracts of space
as in my brain by nights and days
moves the reflection of her face.

like a bird my sleepless eye
Skims the cold sands who now deny
the violent heat they have by day
as she denies her former way

all the elements agree
with her, to have no sympathy
for my impertinent misery
as wonderful and hard as she.

O turn in the dark bed again
and give to him what once was mine
and I'll turn as you turn
and kiss my swarthy mistress pain.

Wadi Natrum 1942.

EGYPT

Aniseed has a sinful taste:
at your elbow a woman's voice
like, I imagine, the voice of ghosts,
demanding food. She has no grace

but, diseased and blind of an eye
and heavy with habitual dolour,
listlessly finds you and I
and the table are the same colour.

The music, the harsh talk, the fine
clash of the drinkseller's tray,
are the same to her, as her own whine;
she knows no variety.

And in fifteen years of living
found nothing different from death
but the difference of moving
and the nuisance of breath.

A disguise of ordure can't hide
her beauty, succumbing in a cloud
of disease, disease, apathy. My God,
the king of this country must be proud.

Egypt 1942.

THE HOUSE

I am a pillar of this house
of which it seems the whole is glass
likewise transparent to the touch
for men like weightless shadows march
ignorantly in at the bright portico
or through a wall serenely go
unnoticing: myself am like a mouse
and carefully inspect all those that pass.

I am the pillar about which
like a conjured spectacle, such
amazing walls and floors appeared
as in the house that devils made.
Yet this queer magnificence
shows not to many its defence
not being walls but in the property
that it is thin as air and hard to see.

I am the pillar and again the one
walking a perpetual up-and-down
scrutinising all these
substances, shadows on their ways
crowding or evacuating the place.
At times a voice singing, or a face
may seem suspended in the cunning air;
a voice by itself, a face traversing the stair

alone, like a mask of narrow porcelain.
These I introduce but lose again
which are of the imagination, or of air,
being in relation to the house, actually there
yet unreal till I meet with one
who has that creative stone
to turn alive, to turn all alive:
prospecting this is all the care I have.

In order of appearance chosen by chance
whether to speak, to sing, to play, or dance
to my mute invisible audience
many have performed here and gone hence.
Some have resided in the house a time
the best rooms were theirs, also for them
scents and decorations were introduced
and other visitors were refused.
But when for weeks, months no one came near
an unpleasant prompting of suspicions, fear
sent me climbing up to inspect the high
attic, where I made a curious discovery.
In this room which I had not entered for months
among the old pictures and bowls for hyacinths
and other refuse, I discovered the body
conventionally arranged, of a young lady
whom I admit I knew once, but had heard
declined in another country and there died.

Here's the strange fact, for here she lies.
If I but raise them, my incredulous eyes
discern her, fairer now than when she lived
because on death her obscure beauty thrived;
the eyes turned to fine stones, the hair to flexible
gold, her flesh to the most natural marble,
until she's the most permanent thing
in this impermanent building
and to remove her I must use
some supernatural device
it seems: for I am forced to say
she arrived in a miraculous way.
I never studied such things; it will need a wiser
practitioner than me to exorcise her
but till the heart is dust and the gold head
disintegrates, I shall never hear the tread
of the visitors at whom I cannot guess,
the beautiful strangers, coming to my house.

Army, Wickwar, Glos. 1941.

NEGATIVE INFORMATION

As lines, the unrelated symbols of
nothing you know, discovered in the clouds,
idly made on paper or by the feet of crowds
on sand, keep whatever meaning they have,

and you believe they write, for some
intelligence, messages of a sort;
these curious indentations of my thought
with every week, almost with each hour, come.

Perhaps you remember the fantastic moon
in the Atlantic—we descried the prisoner laden
with the thornbrush and the lantern—
the phosphorescence, the ship singing a sea-tune.

How we lost our circumstances that night
and like spirits attendant on the ship
now at the mast, now on the waves, might almost dip
and soar as lightly as our entranced sight.

Against that, the girls who met us at one place
were women old and young at once
whom accidents turned to pretty stones,
to images alight with deceptive grace,

And in general, the account of many deaths—
whose portents, which should have undone the sky
had never come—is now received casually.
You and I are careless of these millions of wraiths

for as often as not we meet
in dreams our own dishevelled ghosts;
and opposite, the modest hosts
of our ambition stare them out.

To this there's no sum I can find—
the hungry omens of calamity
mixed with good signs and all received with levity
or indifference by the amazed mind.

Palestine, November 1941



Drawing by John Craxton

PABLO NERUDA

THE FURIES AND THE GRIEFS

... in my heart there are furies and griefs.

—*Quevedo.*

(This poem was written in 1934. How many things have happened since then! Spain, where I wrote it, is a belt of ruins. Ah, me! if with one single drop of poetry or of love, we could placate the wrath of the world! But that can only be done through the struggle and the stout heart. The world has changed and my poetry has changed. One drop of blood, fallen among these verses, will remain alive upon them, indelible like love.—*Author's note.*)

We are together in the depths of the heart,
in the heart's reed-bed we are travelling
through a summer of tigers,
lying in wait for a yard of cold hide,
in wait for a branch of inaccessible skin,
with our mouths smelling at sweat and green veins
we meet in the wet darkness that drops kisses.

You, my enemy of so much sleep, broken in the same way
as plants of bristling glass, the same as bells
distongued in a threatening fashion, just like shots
of black ivy in the middle of scent,
enemy with broad haunches that have touched my hair
with a hoarse contact, with a tongue of water,
in spite of the teeth's dumb coldness and the hate in the eyes
and the battle of dying animals guarding forgetfulness,
somewhere in summer you and I are together
lying in wait with lips that thirst has invaded.

If anyone is boring through a well
with phosphorus circles
and wounding the centre of certain gentle limbs
and biting every leaf of a wood, shouting,
I, too, possess your eyes of bloody firefly
that are able to pierce and impregnate knees
and throats by universal silk surrounded.

When, at parties,
there's chance, ash, drinks,
the interrupted air,
there, however, also, are your eyes smelling of hunting,
of a green ray that penetrates breasts,
your teeth, opening apples that drip with blood,
your legs that, uttering groans, adhere to the sun,

and your nacreous nipples, and your feet of poppy,
like funnels full of teeth seeking the darkness,
like roses made of whip and scent, and even,
even more, more,
even behind the suits and the jaunts, in the streets where people urinate,
you detect bodies,
in bitter half-ruined churches, in shacks that the sea supports on its hands,
you lie in wait with your lips still flowering,
you slash at wood and at silver,
and your great veins grow, that frighten:
there is no husk, there is no distance nor iron,
your hands touch hands,
and you fall, making the black flowers crackle.

You detect bodies:
like an insect wounded by mandates,
you detect the centre of the blood, and you watch
the muscles that postpone the dawn, you attack
shakings, lightnings, heads,
and you touch the full length of the legs that guide you.

O, guided wound of special arrows!

Do you smell the dampness in the middle of the night?

Or a sudden cup of burnt rose-trees?

Do you hear the falling of clothes, keys, coins
in the thick houses where you arrive naked?
My hate is a single hand to indicate
to you the silent path, the sheets where someone
has slept in terror: you come,
and you roll on the ground, mauled and bitten,
and the old smell of sperm, like a climbing plant
of ashy flour, slips towards your mouth.

O light, lunatic cups and lashes,
air flooding a gaping river
like a sun-dove of angry trajectory,
like an attribute of rebellious water,
O substances, tastes, eyelids of live wing
with your tremor like a terrible blind flower,
O heavy, serious breasts like faces,
O full of green honey, great thighs,
O heels and shadows of feet,
and respirations, and pale stone surfaces,
and hard waves raising the skin towards death,
waves full of soaked celestial flours!
And so, does this river
flow between us, and along one bank
do you go, biting mouths?

And so, am I really, really far,
with a river of burning water, passing into the darkness?
Ah, how many times are you the one hate does not name,
and how deep sunk in darkness,
and under what rains of smashed-up dung,
your statue in my heart devours the clover.

Hate is a hammer that beats at your clothes
and your scarlet brow,
and the days of the heart drop into your ears
like vague owls of eliminated blood,
and necklaces, drop by drop formed of tears,
encircle your throat, burning your voice like ice.

It is so that never, never
you may speak, it is so that never, never
a swallow may burst from the nest of your tongue,
so that the nettle may destroy your throat
and a wind of bitter boat inhabit you!

Where do you take your clothes off?
In a train, beside a red Peruvian,
or with a reaper, among clods, in the violent light of the corn?
Or do you run near certain lawyers with terrible eyes,
long and naked, on the shores of the waters of night?
You look: you do not see the moon nor the hyacinth
nor the darkness with its drips of moisture
nor the train of mud nor the split ivory:
you see waist slender as oxygen,
beasts that wait, accumulating heaviness,
and, identical with the sapphire of lunar avarice,
you pulsate from the soft navel towards the roses.

Why? Or why not? Discovered days
bring red sand, ceaselessly destroyed,
to the pure propellor of the day,
and a month goes by with its tortoise-back,
a barren day goes by,
an ox goes by, a dead man,
a woman called Rosalia,
and nothing remains in the mouth but a taste of hair
and of gilded tongue that feeds itself on thirst.
Nothing but a pulp of creatures,
nothing but a cup of roots.
I go on, as in a broken tunnel, at the other end
flesh and kisses I must unjustly forget,
and on my back in the waters, when the mirrors are already
reviving the gulf, when tiredness and sordid clocks
knock at the doors of suburban hotels, and down falls
the flower of painted paper, and the velvet soiled by rats, and the bed
occupied a thousand times by wretched couples—when

everything tells me that a day is over, you and I
have been together laying waste our bodies,
constructing a house that neither endures nor dies;
together you and I have explored the same river
with chained mouths, full of salt and blood,
you and I yet once again have made the green lights tremble,
yet once again we have called up the vast ashes.

I only remember one day
which perhaps was never meant for me,
an unending day. Thursday.
I was a man carried along haphazardly
with a woman picked up vaguely,
we undressed
as if to die, or to swim, or to grow old,
and we penetrated inside each other,
she surrounding me like a hole,
I breaking her, like a man
beating a bell,
since she was the sound that wounded me
and the hard dome intent on trembling.

It was a deaf science of hair and caves
and pounding tips of marrow and sweetness,
I rolled down the great genital crowns
among stones and agenda.
This is a story about ports
where one arrives, by chance, and going up into the hills,
so many things happen.

Enemy, enemy,
is it possible that love has fallen to dust,
and was no more than flesh and bones worshipped too hastily
while the fire burned itself out
and the horses, caparisoned in scarlet, galloped to hell?
For myself, I want oats and lightning
with a basis of skin,
and the devouring petal opening out in fury,
and the labial heart of the June cherry,
and the repose of slow bellies that burn without direction,
but I am lacking a soil of lime with tears
and a window from which to await foam.

Life is thus:
go, run among the leaves:
a black autumn has come:
go, run dressed in a skirt of leaves and a belt of yellow metal,
while the mists of the season eat away the stones.
Run with your shoes, with your stockings,
with dispersed grey, with the hollow of the foot, and with those hands
that the wild tobacco plant would adore;

go, beat on stairs, tear down
black paper protecting doors
and enter amid the sun and the rage of a day of daggers
and throw yourself like a dove of mourning and snow on a body.

It is a single hour, long as a vein,
and between the acid and the patience of ruffled time
we make our passage,
pressing back syllables of fear and kindness
exterminated, ah, interminably!

(Translated by G. R. Coulthard and G. S. Fraser)

RONALD DUNCAN

HYLAS

(A Canzone)

I

Chorus of Argonauts:

Through the blue waves
we Argonauts row:
In out;
In out;
oars bending,
Backs straining;
Our helmsman seeking the Golden Fleece;
Our steersman dozing; whilst we sweat like slaves
moving slowly over the unending waves, as we row:
In out;
In out;
wrists aching;
Backs breaking:—
When, oh! when will our Timesman's hammer cease
And we see Pegasae again?

Jason:

Not till I, Jason, son of Aeson, hold that Golden Fleece
Shall we cease
Or turn our course from Colchis.
Will you a crew of fifty heroes
turn back to Pegasae again? Will Orpheus?
Or you, Heracles, would you return and leave my throne usurped by Pelias?

Heracles: *Jason:* *Heracles:* *Jason:* *Hylas:*
Hylas is weak. . . But Heracles is strong! . . . As strong as Hylas! . . . For love is weak! . . . Peace!
From Heracles' vow Heracles knows no release;
 And though my lips bleed from thirst, as a chrysalis
I can lie in his cool shadow till we reach Colchis.

Chorus of Argonauts:
 Now our prow lifts like Pegasus
As Heracles' strength is doubled by Hylas' weakness.

II

Orpheus:

And through the sultry night
 we rowed into the sullen dawn;
A merciless sun
 vaults the horizon;
Its brief moisture teases
 our fierce thirst, as our Timesman's hammer beats
The brazen brass of light
 till it's as thin as a shadow on a lawn;
And the drunken sun
 reels to the horizon
 and spills his dregs of wine and leaves
Darkness as our mistress again
 and the night breeze our silken sheet.

Heracles:

What falls more softly than the petals of a rose? These eyelids
On Hylas' tired eyes.
 And where is there a violet
Petalled as delicate
 As these frail veins set in his golden skin
So cool, so smooth, sweeter than jasmín?

Hylas:

Oh Heracles, it is better that I should die
Of thirst than you should try
 to row the Argo all alone and set
Yourself against the gods and fret
 your strength against their cruel will; for when
The gods see we mortals love like gods, they are jealous, and punish us for that immortal sin.

A crack in the volcanic
rock and up this crawled to where sun drenched lizards sprawled and blind
Heavy lidded bats were
as lepers hung over

an ivy-covered well.

Naiads:

And as I looked into its water I heard the Naiad's call: Hylas! Hylas! Oh lovely Boy!

Hylas:

And as I drank, in music was I drowned!

A Nymph:

Hylas, oh lovely supple boy, kneel down and slake
Your hot thirst, take

Our cool water to your lips, drink deep; then in our shade, sink down and sleep, for, as
you drink us

We of your loveliness

Chorus of Naiads:

may drink, and steep your image in our eyes. Just as an indolent willow
Leans into its shade so does our song seek Hylas for its echo.

Hylas, who is now Echo:

And as I drank, in music was I drowned!

Orpheus:

Jason:

As night fell, Hylas had not returned, so Jason said: We can wait
No longer. We must take the tide! *Orpheus:*

Then Heracles leapt from the boat and promised us. . . .

Heracles:

If you will only wait till I find Hylas

for that boy is all my strength; I will then lift the Argo from the shallows.

Orpheus:

Heracles:

Orpheus:

And as we left we heard his call: Hylas! Hylas! And the indifferent cliff mocked him with
dead echo.

V

Heracles :

How lonely is that moment

when we are lost from those we love;

It is as though

we'd died and go

like urgent ghosts which sudden grief has sped

Up the unending cypress avenues of the dead

dragging our heavy hearts—for hearts are heavier when they are left behind

Just as dreams are lighter when they are with us before our sleep is spent

Now through tear-blind eyes, I seek the image of my love:

Each form, his shadow;

each sound, his voice, my echo

Echo:

Heracles:

Hylas! Hylas! And as the wind whispered with his voice I called: Hylas! Hylas!

Then followed, or was led

to a quiet well that shouted with the cry within my mind.

And as a voice rose from the silent water and called:

Echo:

Hylas! oh Hylas!

Heracles:

I answered:

Hylas! Hylas! And with dumb grief stumbled seeking
His shadow in the night then I heard the Argonauts calling:

Chorus of Argonauts: *Heracles:*

Heracles! Heracles! And thus was I caught
Between his echo and my vow and in wild sorrow sought

The secret well again, watching them row away as echo answered:

Hylas! Hylas! as I called.

So, as if to hear his voice, I cried my own name; then as I listened to the echo calling:

Echo:

Heracles! Heracles! it was as if sweet Hylas was in my arms crying

Heracles:

My own name. And thus I stayed and cheated grief or sorrow,

For our love is as immortal as undying echo. . . . Hylas! Hylas!

LYNETTE ROBERTS

GREEN MADRIGAL

Peace, my stranger is a tree
Growing naturally through all its
Discomforts, trails, and emergencies
Of growth.

It is green and resolved
It breathes with anguish
Yet it releases peace, peace of mind
Growth, movement.

It walks this greening sweetness
Throughout all the earth,
Where sky and sun tender its habits,
As I would yours.



Drawing by John Craxton

LAWRENCE DURRELL

SELF TO NOT-SELF

Darkness, divulage my share in light
As man in name though not in nature.
Lay down truth's black hermetic wings
For less substantial things
To call my weight my own
By love's nomenclature:
Matriculate by harmlessness
From this tuistic zone,
Possessing what I almost own.

The egg, the apple or the rose
Perfect the median way in birth
Accepting space and time's contract,
Deflowering, disclose
The perfect finish of their mode
In nature and in growing fact
Beyond the skin-deep of the pose
Bloom in unapprehended Act.

And where each heap of music falls
Burns like a star below the sea
To light the ocean's cracked saloons
And mirror its plurality
Through nature's tireless nights and noons
Teach me the mastery of the curse,
The bending circumstance to free,
And mix my better with my worse.

KATHLEEN RAINE

THE UNKNOWN FEAR

At the bottom of my fear
There lies a power too mighty to be mine.
I dare not ask the name
Of the monster in my heart.

Is the fiend lust, or murder,
Or some intolerable despair
That hides from me my own desire,
Hides from me my love and hate,
Stifles my power?

My shoulders bow beneath an invisible weight.

THE HUMAN FORM DIVINE

The human contours are so easily lost.
Only close your eyes, and you seem a forest
Of dense vegetation, and the lurking beast

That in the night springs from the cover
Tears with tiger's mouth your living creatures,
A thousand innocent victims without name, that suffer.

Science applies its insect-lenses to the form divine
As up the red river (all life comes from the sea)
Swim strange monsters, amoeboid erythrean spawn.

Rock-face of bone, alluvium of cartilage
Remote from man as the surface of the moon
Are vast and unexplored interior desert ranges,

And autonomous cells
Grow like unreaped fields of waving corn.
Air filters through the lungs' fine branches as through trees.

Chemistry dissolves the goddess in the alembic,
Venus the white queen, the universal matrix
Down to molecular hexagons and carbon-chains,

And the male nerve-impulse, verging on reality
Conveys the charge, dynamic of non-entity
That sparks across the void, *ex nihilo*.

At the extreme of consciousness, prayer
Transmutes all heaven and earth into a globe of air,

And life streams away out of the top of the head
Like flame in a lamp-glass carried in the draught
Of the celestial fire kindled in the solar plexus.

Of man, Oh garden of Eden, there is nothing
But the will of love to uphold your seeming world,
To trace in chaos the contours of your beloved form!

DAVID GASCOYNE

THE SACRED HEARTH

TO GEORGE BARKER

You must have been still sleeping, your wife there
Asleep beside you. All the old oak breathed: while slow,
How slow the intimate Spring night swelled through those depths
Of soundlessness and dew-chill shadow on towards the day.
But I, alone awake close by, was summoned suddenly
By distant voice more indistinct yet more distinctly clear,
While all inaudible, than any dream's, calling on me to rise
And stumble barefoot down the stairs to seek the outdoors air
So somnolent, so sweet, not cold, and at that hour
Suspending in its glass undrifting strata of thin mist,
Stilled by the placid beaming of the adolescent moon.
There, blackly outlined in their moss-green light, they stood,
The trees of the small crabbed and weedgrown orchard,
Perfect as part of one of Calvert's idylls. Then,
Wondering what calm magnet had thus drawn me from my bed,
I wandered out across the briar-bound garden, spellbound. Most
Mysterious and unrecapturable moment, when I stood
There staring back at the dark white nocturnal house,
And saw gleam through the lattices a light like purest gold
Made sanguine as with roses, where the firelight all night long
Stayed flickering upon the sacred hearth. Still did the dawn
Withhold its pallid fingers from the skyline, and the strong
Magic of rustic slumber held unbroken; yet a song
Sprang wordless from inertia in my heart to see how near
A neighbour strangeness ever stands to home. George, in the wood
Of wandering among wood-hiding trees, where poets' art
Is how to whistle in the dark, where pockets all have holes,
All roofs for refugees have rents, we ought to know
That there can be for us no place quite alien and unknown,
No situation wholly hostile, if somewhere there burns
The faithful fire of vision still awaiting our return.

PATRICK EVANS

ONE SUNDAY IN ATHENS

The aeroplane (it's like the dragonfly
That halts its flight in middle air and glistens)
Over the Parthenon goes flying by
And treads the moment where life shines and listens.

And so (for all our lack of understanding)
The ring of hills the jewelled crown behind them
Of snow and thyme salute the aeroplane on landing;
So men love life, to which no death can blind them.

(But when shall I find answers for my love?
In absence now, I cannot bear this truth,
All that I see and sense. Be quiet, my love;
Love that speaks early or too late's uncouth,

A grounded plane appealing to the sky,
Angles in angles.)
So now, men love life
And day by day resume their argument
By hating killing loving endlessly.
What one shall bring the universe to wife
And make love simple? None. For they're intent,

Hellenes and English, Esquimaux and Poles
Not to enjoy the subtle moment's glitter,
The little things, the tumbles and the rolls,
But to make all a shambles and a litter:

To alter by destroying. So they love
Whose fertile brain engendered God and man,
Embellished gold with diamonds and drew the dove
Out of their God in heaven; so they love,
By hating; hate themselves, and kill the moment's plan.

A moment is a living thing and we
Drawn from the bowels of love and living there
Split it and kill it. Teach me how to flee
And lead me to the lion's or coney's lair.



Drawing by John Craxton

RONALD BOTTRALL

THE PALISADES OF FEAR

The world floats like an orange fruitfully in the sky
Bearing by-blows of dragon's teeth and randy old men,
Pips in the pulp. The young girl swinging her buttocks high
Across and across feels the stallion rise within
Her and rise again and again; then soothed to solace
She ignores the dormant child, blindly housing the blind.
You, mother, giving suck to your son, shifting his face
To a new position of rest, getting up his wind
By judicious pats, what are you asking from heaven?
Behind the night-light is the dark, death and pain, the fear
Of the unknown. To-morrow may take from its haven
Your dream ship, from your bed your man, your warmth, from your ear
Its tone. To-morrow will bring the croak of the raven.
And which of us cannot show a hoof that is cloven?

That girl you were able to cover
With flesh and with love. Was it not pride
Of yourself, burning like a lover
But perverted inwards? On each side
Was there not a reflecting mirror?
Then if you lost her, like a queen pearl
From a string, how you felt the horror
Of loneliness, the pitch, play and hurl
Of the severing sea. You were left
Scree and shingle, your rich springs gone dry
Sapped and run out into desert drift,
Overshadowed by a dateless tree.
Sails amber and mauve against the sky;
You madder and insanely lonely.

It may be strange not to see oneself at home
And easy; stranger to feel the oppression
Of critical eyes yellowing in the gloom.
And how it hurts at the moment of passion
(Shivering eagerly, rent) to meet quiet
But firm withdrawal, denial of fusion.
O the word unspoken in the huge riot
Of chicanery, O glib mime of fashion!
The cramp around the heart, cold as a surname,
Crawls back to smear the uninterpreted truth;
And spurning a golden harvest, for brief fame
You sow tares in your heart—widowed, exiled Ruth!
You, scorning the wide-winged eagle flights of youth,
Have dropped silently down into envy's mouth.

A slap on the back or a brisk hail-fellow
Salute may plug your defences for a time
But behind there is the sheer drop and the gnaw
Of emptiness at your vitals. A poor mime
This brandishing of torches at the tall sun
Trying to counterfeit love where is only
Sunlessness and the freezing of the deaf stone.
You without sun why do you hanker to pry
The sun from another? You without action
Why do you fight against the living gestures
Of the warm new-born? Man cannot live alone
By bread or words. And fearing fear the cold whores
Of the mind have entangled and mined the shores
With platitudes and crippled the will in snares.

If someone should say a ravisher
Is at your elbow, or the virus
Of diphtheria at your throat, there
Would be a flicker of the iris
And a tearing visceral shudder.
Like Christ standing on the parapet
Of the temple, we see the world here
And gone like a spasmodic comet;
Or borne up by archangels we laugh
At depths slipping nervously away
And earth crumbling quickly in a cough.
Those of us nearest the womb will lay
Heads on mothers' knees. The rest will play
Hide and seek with God's curst ashen day.

So we fumble after fragments of yesterday and
To-morrow, unable to bear the past or ourselves,
But still piecing together there a foot there a hand
Till we have assembled the half-truth of broken halves
Of stark-naked wrestlers on Athenian vases.
In covering the space (broken as we are broken)
Did they satisfy a current need for new phases
Of human exertion, or were they the frail token
Of the fierce wind billowing through a craftsman's fingers?
Were they his shelter, his sheet-anchor, his breakwater?
Were they his warring selves sublimed in linear gestures?
Were they the last refuge of a near-crazed self-hater?
O Attic picture of our ambivalent postures!
O noble freezing of our incoherent fractures!

In the arena are the stale urine and the scars;
Above the tent are the fearful hollows between stars;
Behind the fencing are the clown's grimacing features,
Behind the masks are the lineaments of God's creatures.

POINTS OF VIEW

RICHARD CHURCH, LTD.

The Collected Poems of RICHARD CHURCH
(DENT, 15/-).

Time and again I have been half amused, half exasperated, at reading reviews of poetry: not by praise or dispraise with which I have not agreed, but by the assurance with which critics contradict each other. *De gustibus . . . ?* Yes, of course; but it is the business of critics (and of their readers) to be quite clear about where those tastes begin and end—and, if necessary, why. Far too much criticism is written out of a bland assumption of a whole unspecified and perhaps unrecognised world of individual predilection: until the critic's private world is publicly mapped, his judgments from within that world are invalid. Obviously, in a world of which Whitman is king there is no country in which Eliot can live; Rilke cannot be on the Governing Board of Edward Thomas Ltd.; and though Treece may lie down with Durrell ("and a little child shall lead them"?) like the lamb and the lion, I can see little hope of reconciling, say, Church and Auden. True, a capable mind will embrace very diverse styles of thought and of writing; but it remains to be shown that most critics have such a mind, and that the limit of diversity does not in any case come much sooner than we think. In writing of Richard Church's verse, therefore, I had better begin by making it quite plain that this is a kind of poetry which enters my world only as an occasional invader and never as a natural citizen. What my world is, I have repeatedly made clear (both by precept and by example) in my own verse.

The volume under review covers the whole of Mr. Church's poetic output (except *The Lamp* and *Twentieth Century Psalter*) from 1926 to 1947, with one poem from 1920 and a handful dating from 1910-26. What immediately strikes one is the singular lack of

development, during the last twenty years, in the poet's thought or manner. Which of these poems is from the early, middle, or late periods?—

Over the tops of the elm trees
Day broke at last; the cattle stood
With the dew-mist about their knees.
Darkness still lingered in the wood.

The sleeping and the waking world
Divided, and gave place to one
Which Hellas in her sculpture told,
And poets will tell when I am gone.

* * *

Quietly from the cottage door he crept,
And slipped into the shadow of the night.
But as he fled, I called upon him, "Death!
Oh coward, have you touched them while
they slept?"

The Shape heard nothing; only crouched and
fled.

Then I crossed the threshold; trod the stair,
And stood within the chamber of the dead.
But when I looked; Oh miracle of breath!
The dark marauder had not halted there.

* * *

Soon, when the Sun despairs in heaven,
And space and time go blind,
War and wisdom, love and folly
Shall drop from humankind.

No heat to rouse their dead desire,
No light to lead their pride;
The sons of men shall vanish then,
The guided with the Guide.

* * *

Apart from a series of experiments in free verse (1928) Mr. Church seems not to have changed, rhythmically or metrically (or, let us admit, have particularly needed so to change) during almost the whole of his productive life. Early maturity? Admirable consistency? Perhaps—though I do not find his technique so *very* distinguished, so *very* finished. But he has hardly changed intellectually or emotionally, either: seen in bulk, his verse produces the same sensation as Walter de la Mare's, seen in bulk—that of a small and very individual thing done again and again—without the peculiar mastery and magic, without the distinction, without the personality, of de la Mare. And in matter, of course, the two poets are as different as in style; if one feels a certain relationship, it is only that of cousins.

But surely this absence of change is not a good thing?—no matter how perfected one's early manner. Look at Eliot; look at Edith Sitwell; look at Yeats; God save the mark, look at Shakespeare. Poetic integrity is one thing, and Mr. Church has it (his is always clean and honest verse); fixity of poetic habit is another, and unhappily Mr. Church has that too. Style is not the same thing as self-plagiarism; and I feel that there must be some weakness, poetically speaking, in a mind which passes through the last twenty years with as little response to world-changes as this collection shows. It is not as if Mr. Church had started with a philosophy so perfect and embracing that it was ready-equipped for anything that might happen; he did not, except in so far as the philosophy of *Twentieth Century Psalter* is so equipped. As a poet he continually turns inward from the romantic-sensitive impressions which he gathers out of the external world (and they are *extremely* sensitive impressions, too). This is a habit which can only be justified by the extreme profundity and originality, by the extreme intellectual athleticism, of the in-

ward process—and by the Rilkean or Metaphysical ability to handle the intellectual process as poetry and emotion. I do not think that Mr. Church does this, or that he has this ability. What he thinks and what he "poetizes" are not the same thing; there is a gap between prose-content and poetic-content, and the prose content is far too often flat or commonplace. So, as a result, and in spite of considerable but occasional ability in "music", are many of his single lines or stanzas: writing conceived as prose, born as verse, swaddled with "the poetic". Mr. Church is at his best, to my mind, in his more straightforward nature-poems; but even in them he recalls, without rivalling, Andrew Young, with an echo now and then of Robert Frost.

This is good minor verse; and, like most minor verse of this century, it is verse which has not grown up. (We can no longer look for the adult minor poet like Marvell.) Heaven forbid that a poet's stature should be measured—except adversely—by his following of fashion or his apeing of contemporaries; but a reader is entitled, I believe, to expect in a poet some awareness of what new thought, new responsibilities and stresses, new practice, have brought about in verse-technique—and brought about by necessity, not by choice. Mr. Church as critic is well aware of these things; as poet, he seems either to ignore them or to regret them: there is scarcely a poem in this collection which could not have been written even if all the major poets of the last thirty years had not been born. Some time ago, a school-boy wrote to *Picture Post* complaining of the contempt in which Rupert Brooke was held nowadays, and pointing out that it was unfair to censure him for writing of unpleasant matters. There are several morals to that story, all of them relevant to this review. But I will forbear to point them.

TERENCE TILLER

DERELICT ERECTIONS

The Lightning-Struck Tower by SHEILA SHANNON
(MULLER, 7/6.)

In the Tower's Shadow by N. K. CRUICKSHANK
(O.U.P., 6/-.)

The Derelict Day by ALAN ROSS
(LEHMANN, 5/-.)

Music for Statues by DEREK STANFORD
(ROUTLEDGE, 6/-.)

Selected Verse by JOHN MANIFOLD
(DOBSON, 7/6.)

"Alexandria's was a beacon tower, and
Babylon's

An image of the moving heavens, a log-
book of the sun's journey and the
moon's;

And Shelley had his towers, thought's
crowned powers he called them once."

W. B. YEATS: *Blood and the Moon*.

All these poets are, one way or another, obsessed by towers; and it is, of course, a not inappropriate image for the making of a poem, the building of a tower, the attempt to set up something which rises above its landscape and strikes the eye with its magnificence; and Yeats, for all their craziness, found them apt symbols, and came near to the erection of something of permanent value, no matter how much he might mock at himself and his own efforts.

"In mockery I have set
A powerful emblem up,
And sing it rhyme upon rhyme
In mockery of a time
Half dead at the top."

Yet no matter how decrepit, "A storm-beaten old watch-tower", Yeats' tower becomes a profound and moving symbol. Yeats imbues his symbols with his own emotion. They are not arbitrary. Or, if they are arbitrary, they become something else.

The erections of the poets under consideration here are not so happy; they are all engaged, some of them frantically, in making

a name for themselves; but there is very little here that will stand up even to a second look. Miss Shannon's tower is lightning-struck and it is a dream; Miss Cruickshank's is a nightmare; Mr. Ross's broken buildings in a landscape of dereliction; Mr. Stanford's peopled with statues and other fancy pieces; while Mr. Manifold is the big bad wolf who would "huff and puff till I blow your house down". It is curious that it is in fact Mr. Manifold, in spite of some of his attitudes, who comes nearest to writing something worth remembering.

First, Miss Shannon, who lisps sweet:

"Ayin, the lightning-struck tower, the
parapet fallen:

Fallen are Jack and Jill:

The ivory tower is broken, the dark tower
fallen:

Broken Parnassus hill."

All her poems are literary and emotional without attaining any real perfection of craftsmanship or depth of feeling, and at their worst they are unbearably banal and bathetic:

"Though she is old
Her heart
Out-beating Time's disaster
Still sings apart
Youth's tender aria"

—and sentimental to boot! *The Lightning-Struck Tower* contains nothing but rather pretentious occasional poems; as Miss Shannon herself acknowledges "All artists have at some time realised in profound despair the inevitable degeneration of the original idea into its ultimate material form". She flatters herself.

Miss Cruickshank is a little her superior in technique, and has a rather more powerful grasp of the nature of her medium. But her poems are never more than inoffensive and neat—and at that they are scarcely neat enough! Though, as in her poem *The*

Tower, she sees "the signpost warning *Doom*", it does not seem to affect her very violently. She keeps on writing her mild, tidy, rather uninspired poems; as she says herself—

"My meaning ends now in my hands'
Useful movements, dull as canvas"

—a not too inept description of her own poetic activity.

Mr. Ross is little better. He is one degree more topical than Miss Cruickshank, and his descriptions are a little more precise; as against this, Mr. Ross's poems have a supreme formlessness and dullness, a dull fashionableness which seems to come easy and too often, as thus:

"The similar scenery, the mess
overlooking the terrace and pinewoods,
the murals and the flowers on tables,
all, behind a transparency of mood,

acquire the character of symbols,
images behind whose eyes, like winter,
lurk a lost manhood, another self
splintered on war, the sighs of a shelved
time."

and so on indefinitely. Mr. Ross, however young, and wherever may "lurk a lost manhood" is, as a poet, a profound bore. It is true that the landscape and scenes he is describing are limited, and in themselves inclined to be dreary. Nevertheless it is also true that Mr. Ross observes them, with some accuracy, with a lack-lustre eye.

Mr. Stanford has more intelligence and more breadth of outlook, but he too, like Miss Shannon, is too literary. His poems, for one who writes such an obscure and contorted critical jargon, are surprisingly simple—a remark that might also apply to Mr. Grigson—but it is rarely a pleasing simplicity. At worst, he is very sentimental:

"I felt your sad
and heavy gaze upon me,
I saw the dark green water's secret smile,
I locked my throbbing eyes against your
beauty,

and hurled you from
the stair-way where we stood.

So ended love."

This, one must suppose, is the new romanticism—it looks pretty old stuff to me! Between this sort of thing and the sort of thing Mr. Ross perpetrates you can take your choice.

Finally, Mr. Manifold. He at least has sufficient sense of humour to pun on his own name:

"So in earth and darkness rolled
Sleeps the harvest of wild lands
And again in summer stands
Vigorously manifold."

It is true that one tends to get fed up with seeing Mr. Manifold being so conspicuously vigorous all over the place ("virile" is the adjective the blurb applies to his poetry), but, where his rather nasty heartiness does not obtrude, one can see the lineaments of a poet. I am always reminded by "Selected Poems" of fruiterer's notices "Selected peaches", etc., where the selection is always something of a myth. But Mr. Manifold is precious enough to call his book *Selected Verse* with a graceful and surprising modesty, and reports "I burn five for every one I keep". Moreover, his dedicatory poems are conspicuously titled "For Comrade Katharine" (though this comrade appears in fact to be his wife). All these devices, I take it, serve to put a nice big gulf between him and the Ivory Tower. Nevertheless, having done all this, he proceeds to show his influences with a vengeance, influences the chief of which are, surprisingly enough, Roy Campbell and W. H. Auden, on both of whom his diction and technique is very closely modelled. He is nearest to Mr. Campbell, and at his best his lines do have the same bite and tension as Mr. Campbell's best, but he has also captured many of Mr. Campbell's faults. Roy Campbell's influence is most obvious in the satires, but it is everywhere; Auden's appears mostly in the sonnets and ballads, in the sentence-structure and in the kind of casual, off-hand tone, as in "The Laurels", which is almost pure Auden pastiche. Most of the sonnets are too glib, but "The Sirens" is funny and

not unrewarding: the Satire is all well-aimed, but in many places not as pungent as it should be; weak or silly phrases have to make do instead of the proper bite, but on the whole they are skilful, and the passage on Stephen Spender displays a fine viciousness and is as devastating as could be wished:

“He spread like smut on crops or mites on cheese,
Till half the press submitted to his reign
And soft contagion ran through all their train.

Now in degenerate prose, not verse alone,
He rapes (as formerly he bayed) the moon,
Now, as a critic, shows for all to see
Shelley and Whitman were the same as he.
The passing years brought little change of plan—

The Sweet Young Thing became a Grand Old Man.”

The “Songs” are mostly rather feeble, the ballads too often bathetic (a fault shared, of course, with Wordsworth), though “The Last Scab of Hawarth” is goodish. There is a suspicion of pastiche in almost everything

(the ballads too consciously follow traditional ballads, though they are much more skilful than most contemporary attempts at this), skilful pastiche, but pastiche nevertheless. Mr. Manifold has not yet assimilated thoroughly his influences and materials; he does not yet speak with a voice of his own (perhaps he thinks he shouldn't, but the fact is he does speak with the voices of Roy Campbell and W. H. Auden). Is he merely a ventriloquist's dummy (an extremely *alter ego* for Roy Campbell!)? At the moment it seems to me his poems are much too much clever exercises, and he has no assimilated symbols of his own to help him; (when he uses the stock communist symbolism, Red Flags, etc., he does it rather feebly, and it remains only a surface symbolism); nevertheless, he has the inestimable advantage of a great, if limited, skill in technique, and a sure knowledge of what is needed to get us out of a “time half dead at the top”. He may, with the necessary poetic discipline, be able to erect something of value. It is more than any of the others here are likely to do.

NICHOLAS MOORE.

SAUSAGES AND NO MUSH

Collected Poems by EDGELL RICKWORD
(THE BODLEY HEAD, 7/6.)

With the exception of one poem all the verse in this volume was written between the years of 1918 and 1930, most of it in the middle 'twenties. It is extraordinarily characteristic of the best poetry of this period, a period that can now be viewed with the same detachment as the poetry of the past.

The first five poems in the book show the predominant influence of Siegfried Sassoon and two of these at least are quite as good as any of his—*Winter Warfare* and *The Soldier Addresses His Body*—

“I shall be mad if you get smashed about;
we've had good times together, you and I;
although you grouched a bit when luck was out,
and a girl turned us down, or we went dry.”

Another poem—*Trench Poets*—is an attempt

to do something that Wilfred Owen did very much better, to invoke horror and pity for the casualties of war. The disgust and the irony are there but the poet fails to transmit the essential element of pity and the disgusting corpse becomes something merely fantastic and even ludicrous. This is the poem of a young man who does not quite understand what he is writing about; extremely competent but lacking in any strong emotion. I make this point, realising that this of course is an early poem, because I feel that lack of strong emotion is the one chink in Mr. Rickword's poetic armour.

It is not true to say that the “metaphysical” technique does not lend itself to emotional outbursts. Donne's love poems lose nothing through being expressed in this form, nor does his religious verse, which is as highly charged with emotion as any in the language (“When thou hast done, thou hast not done”). Mr. Rickword in the 'twenties was obviously

a great admirer of Donne—and of Mr. Eliot. The background was “cynical”, “disillusioned”, and this was the period of Freud and *The Golden Bough*, the early (and best) novels of Aldous Huxley, the renewed interest in Petronius’ *Satyricon* and the works of Thomas Love Peacock. It is interesting to notice that in the allusive fashion of those days Mr. Rickword refers to Peacock in the title of one of his poems—*Sir Orang Haut-Ton At Vespers*. When he wrote this poem I think it is reasonable to infer that Mr. Rickword had Mr. Eliot’s Sweeney in mind as well as Peacock’s noble orang-outang and it is interesting to compare it with *Sweeney Erect*—a perfect poem and one that could not have been written at any other time.

The verse is formal, the words are used and chosen carefully, the writer avoids direct statement. Both are poems about Evolution (though one might not suspect it at a first reading) and both express a mild pessimism. Mr. Eliot uses classical allusion, Mr. Rickword draws on the new science of anthropology—

“as tram-lines on Bank Holidays
lure to that worn familiar sod
where the Ancestral Tripper plays
in pungent groves the pagan god.”

Mr. Eliot, being the better poet, makes more of the rather negative attitudes that lie behind these poems—but that is not to say that Mr. Rickword’s verse of this period is not remarkably good. One can say of him, as Dr. Johnson said of “the metaphysicals” in general, that “if his conceits were far-fetched, they were often worth the carriage”, but indeed the whole of this part of the essay on Cowley could be made to apply (by a hostile critic) to Mr. Rickword. The writers of this school, of which Mr. Rickword and Mr. Empson are two outstanding examples, modelled their poetry on that of a great poet—John Donne. That they lacked Donne’s passionate religious feeling (whether for women or God is immaterial) was their misfortune, not their fault. It was a salutary and necessary phase through which serious English poetry had to pass.

Occasionally the resemblance to Donne is almost too obvious:

“Our better nature then proceeds
to sublimation of its dross,
and flings a bridge of painted needs
to mansions ransomed by the Cross.”

But in spite of its rather top-heavy intellectualism this poetry compares very well with the “Georgian” verse that was its contemporary. One has only to compare Mr. Rickword’s best poems of this type—*Invocation To Angels* and *Farewell to Fancy* with anything written by the *Squirearchy*.

The highbrow poets of the ’twenties were not “popular” in any sense, they dealt in what Kathleen Raine would call “unattractive subject-matter”, but they did keep their intellectual eyes open, they did not “see the light” or flounder in the seas of verbiage which nowadays engulf a poet as good as Mr. Dylan Thomas. If anything, they suffered from too much, not too little, critical sense, and for this alone, it seems to me, one must respect them—

“Let us abjure the stately creeds,
love’s plangent groves and choristers,
with all that Eloquence confers
upon our elemental needs.”

The third section in this book consists mainly of satires, which have of necessity a more direct approach—*The Encounter*, *The Handmaid Of Religion*, *Hints for Making a Gentleman*. These, although of a high standard, suffer from the limitations of topical verse. The best is undoubtedly that in which the metaphysical style is used in parody (written, one would guess, in 1930, the year of *Ash Wednesday*)—

AN OLD RHYME RE-RHYMED

“But our lot crawls between dry ribs
To keep our metaphysics warm.”

T. S. ELIOT.

Those who are much obsessed by death
and see the skull beneath the skin,
may cheat their fear of wanting breath
with dry philosophy or gin;

or with the arduous of the birch
or lure of buxom female form,
but whose lot creeps into the Church
to keep its inhibitions warm?

GAVIN EWART.

AN OLD BOOK, NEW ANGLE.

Beauty and the Beast by JOHN HEATH-STUBBS
(ROUTLEDGE, 5/-).

In many of the poems of this collection Mr. Heath-Stubbs is actively engaged in erecting a smoke-screen between himself and his reader. The writer of dramatic or semi-dramatic verse is at no time compelled to express an opinion of his own or expose a raw emotion: he is shielded from too close a contact by the characters or scenes he creates, and is even at liberty to put down on paper an emotional reaction he knows to be insincere. Such a mode of expression is capable of unlimited variation and makes an instantaneous intellectual appeal, but it leaves both writer and reader relatively untouched. Compared with his beautifully written exercises in mood and manner, this poet's more personal poems may look naïve and crude; but if Mr. Heath-Stubbs is to develop as a poet it will be along the lines of his final sonnet sequence—which is intensely introspective—rather than over the well-worn ground of other people's actions and outlooks. I do not believe that he can possibly achieve the distinction of which he is clearly capable until he has combined his technical ability with a greater depth of personal feeling.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of his work at the moment is due to a faculty for cumulative description; in contra-distinction to such a poet as George Barker whose imagery, though florid, is sharply contracted, this poet spreads a minimum of evocative words over many phrases to produce a diffuse but definite effect:

“Do you see that old man over there?—
He was once a gentleman's gentleman;
His skull is bald and wrinkled like a
leathery snake's egg;
His forehead is not high, but his eyes,
though horny, are cunning,
Like an old jackdaw's beginning to moult
a few grey feathers;
His nose is sharp like a weasel's, and his
lips always a little smiling,

His narrow shoulders crouched forward,
hinting a half-finished bow.
Did you notice how beautiful white and
smooth and soft his hands were?”

This is fine, goodish observation, a little colourless perhaps; but he can intensify it—still without much brilliance in the images themselves—as in the long poem, *Edward the Confessor*:

“The King's in Council; his white body
propped
Upon his high carved throne.
His voice is soft and French. His eyes are
blue
Like water; like long sunlight his hair.
His limbs are virginal, and his skin is pale,
Clear, and smooth as oil. His eyes are
vague
And bright, like winter stars.”

His adjectives do not produce the same almost outraged recognition in the reader's mind as do those of Nicholas Moore or W. S. Graham; but this detailed description (in a poem long enough to sustain the weight of it) is both powerful and convincing. He is perfectly at home with the long periods and flowing forms that have been neglected by most serious poets of the last twenty years; but he works stiffly and with a heavy hand in short lyrical shapes. I think the two serenades and the *Lament of Tristan* the least successful poems in this book; in neither of them is the music simple or delicate: and there is a forced quality about the semi-pastoral *Song* that cannot redeem its rather commonplace detail.

Somewhere between these five-finger exercises and the fumbling but interesting sonnet sequence at the end of the book stands *Valse Oubliée* which smacks perceptibly of Eliot:

“ ‘Only once I saw one, once, once;
Far out over the snow, in a hard winter—
When I was a little girl, at our country
place.’ ”

but has a sudden outburst of lovely sound in the third part:

“Oh curved curved in a scroll the violin’s
neck and carved
With concentration of the patient hand.”

and a wondering, questioning atmosphere about it that makes it perhaps the most interesting poem in the book.

The Heart’s Forest consists of twenty-one sonnets, some of which are titled and some not. Petrarch, Keats, Addison and others are touched on and invoked; and in between Mr. Heath-Stubbs comes up to the surface, not always with confidence and sometimes painfully, but at least we are allowed to see him. Almost immediately his style changes; he becomes less formal and acquires greater flexibility and a more direct imagery:

“And this cold wind and these black clouds
that pelter

Have overtaken us both in the dark
wood,

Were blowing up already in childhood,

And they have driven me back to that
bare hall

My heart—I have no other place at all;
But you were wiser going elsewhere for
shelter.”

Even his resuscitation of Isabella has, while he is in *this* mood, a simple truthfulness:

“But O my darling, though I know your
heart

Is hidden from me now, away in the
deep

Woods, nothing shall make us part;

For though I wake in the barren moon-
light to weep

I can be sure of you now as I never could
Though your living body lay beside me
in sleep.”

The Heart’s Forest starts from nowhere and gets nowhere. The ground it covers has been covered before and covered more adequately. As I have already suggested, it does not show the poet at his technical best; but it does show him dealing, sometimes beautifully and often movingly with an experience of his own. Nothing here serves as an insulating layer between him and his emotion, and I would rather have the simple directness of:

“ evening’s conversation,
Coil upon coil, and roads that always skirt
The central meeting place within the
wood,

Because that heart is strange which has my
heart,

Because I came too late for consum-
mation;

O blackbird, blackbird, it isn’t any
good!”

than the bathos of Mosca resurrected (Oh, how dim) from the galleys.

Mr. Heath-Stubbs has escaped the most characteristic fault of his generation; he is not impressed by the apposition of a few unusual words; nor does he needlessly distort sense and syntax, and he never becomes obscure through his own laziness. His feeling for words properly used is based on sound judgment and wide reading. For this reason as much as any other, I believe him capable of more than he has accomplished in this short book; but I think the way to a productive synthesis of influence and experience lies not so much in the practice of formal expressions as in his own thought and feeling: whatever in him still refuses to accept the domination of other intellects and the power of vicarious emotional response should be in the ascendant at present: otherwise we shall gain a competent stylist at the expense of a poet.

ALISON BOODSON.

POETRY FOR SCHOOLS

The Poet's World: An Anthology of English Poetry. Chosen and edited by JAMES REEVES.
(HEINEMANN, 6/-.)

Poets have always been trying to formulate a definition of poetry, but none of these definitions has really been adequate, or exclusive—that is to say, they have often not excluded prose. Wordsworth's emotion recollected in tranquillity finally becomes in his own poems, one may agree with Dr. Bronowski, recollections recollected in tranquillity, and in the end poems become "the moral memoirs of a retired poet". In any case, the tone of certain passages, of prose, of certain prose books, is just this emotion recollected in tranquillity. Auden, in the preface to *The Poet's Tongue*, gives "memorable speech": the Gettysburg oration is memorable speech; it is not a poem. Paul Valéry writes that a poem is a form of speech quite different from other forms of speech and emphasises the importance to the poet of the actual process of creation as opposed to the finished poem. Most poets' definitions are prejudiced by the kind of poetry they write themselves, particularly when they have a conscious theory about their poetry, and are usually coloured by the thought of their own age.

In the introduction to his *The Poets' World* which is primarily an anthology for schools, Mr. Reeves attempts the difficult task of working towards a definition of poetry, that will be understood by senior school children and make them interested in reading poetry, and sometimes difficult poetry. After saying that the obvious answer to "What are poems made of?" is that they are made of words, that words express meanings: "all the possible experiences and ideas which can occur to our minds", that words are the means by which we think about everything in life and about life itself, he writes "although we may say, then, that poems are made of words, it is really truer to say that they are made of life". This is rather a quick jump, and leads him towards a definition that is

briefly this: that poetry is concerned especially with the exciting and important experiences in the life of an individual, that in themselves are transient; the poet is anxious to make something permanent and memorable out of these experiences—love, human beauty or the beauty of nature, courage and disaster. This seems yet another definition of poetry that is inadequate; at once a little loose, and not so wide as it might appear: taken literally, it would favour one kind of poetry; and it is certainly by no means true for all poets or for all the work of any one poet: the process of making a poem is too complex.

How do the poems Mr. Reeves has chosen for his anthology come within this definition?—Fortunately, many of them do not: for there is a variety of poetic thought, imagination and sensibility in *The Poets' World* which covers, in time, Anglo-Saxon poems admirably translated into English by Gavin Bone—welcome inclusions in an anthology of this kind—to poems by Robert Graves and Norman Cameron. Among those that clearly do come within the definition, are the great ballad *Sir Patrick Spens*, Dunbar's *Lament for the Makers*, Henry Vaughan's *Man*, and Hopkins' *Felix Randal*. Poems that do not come within these limits are *Kubla Khan* which is only obliquely and remotely related to such experiences of life as Mr. Reeves has named, Henry Farley's *A Complaint*, W. H. Davies' *The Villain*, and the anonymous *Darby Kelly*. And we can come across these lines of Skelton:

My maiden Isabel,
Reflaring rosabel,
The flagrant camamel,

The ruddy rosary,
The sovereign rosemary,
The pretty strawberry.

(*To Mistress Isabel Pennell.*)

Here the exciting experience is in the words themselves, it did not exist before the poet

made it. There are poems that do not so much spring from an experience common to all and recognised by all; rather the poem itself, when read, creates a new experience for the reader, as it did for the poet when he wrote it.

Mr. Reeves' anthology is a very good one for its purpose—"to make of poetry a living voice" and to contain poems suitable for the upper forms of secondary schools and for training colleges: really, it ranges a good deal farther than this, and will interest a wider public. Poetry must be read with enjoyment, but also with respect, Mr. Reeves says: there are few poems in this book that cannot be read with both. Some "anthology pieces" are inevitable in a volume of this kind, and necessary; since it would be a pity for fairly fresh readers of poetry to miss such poems as *To His Coy Mistress*, *The Tyger*, *A Red, Red Rose*: I should like to have seen some of the harsher, satiric poems of Burns included; *A Red, Red Rose* is the only Burns poem in the book. And against these

well known poems one can set many more that are likely to come as discoveries, or at the least to be not particularly familiar, to many of the readers for whom this book is intended. Mr. Reeves has succeeded in one most important thing—he has avoided completely the dull and the pompous in poetry: there are none of those traditional "class-room" poems that I myself remember having to read, only too clearly.

The poems in *The Poet's World* are arranged chronologically, so that the reader can, if he chooses, trace the development of English poetry: this arrangement does provide a pattern and a plan that have significance for a student.

In his introduction Mr. Reeves has some direct and sensible points to make about poetic technique—rhythm, rhyme, alliteration, metre, and imagery; and ends by encouraging pupils to write poems for themselves—a practice that has always seemed to me to be important for the teaching of poetry.

KENNETH GEE

SOUTH AMERICAN BARNYARD

Anthology of Contemporary Latin-American Verse.
Edited by DUDLEY FITTS. New Directions.

The anthology of Latin American poetry is an essentially North-American phenomenon, indeed, almost a dozen such anthologies have been published in the course of the last fifteen years. The American's interest in Latin American culture does not stop at poetry; most of the best Latin American novels have been translated, exhibitions of Latin-American painting are frequent and quite a lot of Latin American music is played. As this intense interest displayed by the Americans is in strong contrast to the ignorance and indifference concerning Latin American culture in England, and indeed in Europe, it might be profitable to consider some of the possible reasons for the existence of the American attitude.

In the first place, there is no doubt that there is a general belief that the "Latins" are more artistic than the practical North-Americans, a belief which is very much encouraged by the Latin Americans themselves, who feel that their spiritual supremacy is something that can be set off against the material achievements of the men of the North.

Secondly, there is the attraction of the exotic. This exotic attraction of Latin America is by no means new and has effected European literature from the eighteenth century onwards, and, of course, exists on a popular level to-day, as can readily be seen in films, best-sellers, etc. The exotic mirage has also influenced Latin-American writers for over a century (Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Chateaubriand, Marmontel showed the way to the exploitation of American

material to the Latin-American romantics). The situation is comparable to the nineteenth century conception of a "romantic" Spain influencing Spanish literature, music and painting.

In the period covered by this anthology (1892-1942) there is no "school" or "movement" differing sufficiently and significantly enough from European literary movements to merit special attention. The only perceptible literary theory which has had any deep influence is that of literary "americanism", that is, the preoccupation with American themes. Even where literary americanism is not openly professed by a particular writer the ever-present tendency to descriptions of scenery and atmosphere is a clear indication of its presence. The poetry of this period is a poetry of impressions and sensations and possesses a directness and simplicity based on a free and creative use of imagery. The heritage of symbolism is very apparent although purified of the cacophonies and grotesque imagery of the Modernistas (the Latin American *fin de siècle* writers). The traditionally Spanish preoccupation with death seems to have produced much of the best poetry, indeed, one gets the impression from this anthology that death is the subject par excellence for poetry. Very noticeable to the English reader, is the absence of the deep seriousness and anguish concerning the state of the world which gave an edge to English poetry in the period between the two wars.

Remarkable for its originality and unity of character is the poetry of the Brazilians, Manoel Bandeira, Ronald de Cavalho, Drummond de Andrade and Jorge de Lima. These poets have a common and distinctive feature which is a sort of easy work-a-day lyricism arising out of simple things; a city park, children playing with balloons, evocations of the streets of one's childhood, love for Brazil (not patriotism or nationalism). There

FORGE OF HABIT (Mr. Stanford's, of course)

Mr. Robert Payne is a force of nature; a poet with the mind of a "straight" Dylan Thomas and an unself-conscious style which savours of Walt Whitman.—Derek Stanford in *Poetry Quarterly*.

is an ease and spontaneity, a mingling of realism and fantasy and an absence of rhetoric which is in striking contrast to the declamatory quality of much of the verse in Spanish.

The main objection to this anthology is that, instead of employing a selective criterium based on general poetic relevance or on the significance of the work of a particular poet to a literary movement, it has used the purely geographical criterium of "Latin American", in other words, a bit of something from everywhere. The book is indeed, a mare magnum on which no small island fails to float. This criterium could perhaps be defended on the grounds that, good or bad, the poetry is at least representative. But what does one odd poem A from a country B tell us either of the poet in question or of the literature of the country? As an "introductory survey" of contemporary Latin American poetry the anthology is misleading and as a guide to the quality of the poetic production of individual writers it tends to be unfair. Some of the more outstanding writers are given their due, Nicolas Guillen, Eugenio Florit, Pablo Neruda, for example, although even in the case of Neruda, one would have thought it possible to select, eight poems from his abundant output without choosing the equivocal *Lone Gentleman*. On the other hand, Alfonso Reyes, Octavio Paz receive far too little attention; Ricardo Molinari none at all, and the choice of poems by Jorge Luis Borges is so undiscerning as to leave a completely inadequate impression of one of the most important poets of America. He merely appears as one in a jostling crowd. It is such misrepresentations and omissions as these that irritate and fill with dismay any student of Latin American literature, especially when one sees that this book is intended to serve as an introduction to the subject of contemporary Latin American verse.

G. R. COULTHARD.

SIX-CYLINDER POET

As he hurried ahead on his six powerful cylinders, it served him well that he had not disqualified himself as an observer by becoming a part of the welter which he observed.—Giles Romilly on MacNeice's *Holes in the Sky* in *The New Statesman*.

CORRESPONDENCE

LETTER FROM NEW YORK

13th January, 1948.

DEAR PL,

I have been in this country for exactly one year today, so it seems a good occasion for me to sit down to write this letter for you. As you know, I came here with the intention of finishing my catalogue of Blake's drawings and paintings, a project which goes along nicely, as I've seen a good many of the pictures I wanted to see. I suppose that, having run out of money pretty early in my visit, owing to travelling around and having photographs taken, I've had as good a chance to find out about America as most visitors; better perhaps, than some, as I've not had to play the "distinguished goat" as most writers seem to have to do. (I could gossip about this but, feeling kindly, refrain.)

How I've managed to last for a year I don't quite know; of course I've mostly stayed with friends particularly with Bill Hayter, the painter and engraver—though I did have a few days in a seaman's hotel on West Street, beside the Hudson River, where I paid \$7.00 a week for the curious privilege of being in jail; the man at the desk had quite obviously been crowned with a bottle the day before I arrived. Hayter used to run the engraving studio, Atelier 17, in Paris before the war and now runs it on East 8th Street here. It was in his studio that I did the Blakean experiments which resulted in the poems which you're reproducing in PL; so far, I've done them with Joan Miró (who spent the summer here working, in terrific heat in Spanish Harlem, on a mural for an hotel in Cincinnati), Bill Hayter, Helen Phillips (Hayter's sculptor wife), Fred Becker, Yves Tanguy, Alexander Calder, Jacques Lipchitz, Abraham Rattner, Max Ernst, and plates have gone to Henry Moore, André Masson and Picasso. Now I'm going to leave New York for four months as I've got a lectureship at the University of Iowa, in Iowa City.

But I suppose I'd better cut this personal gabble and tell you something about the current little magazines here, and so I'll try to deal with a few of them, as there are too many to hope to mention all. I'll give the addresses of the ones I know and any other details, such as payment, that occur to me (you can pick up a bit out of selling poems here, even if the money here doesn't go so far when you've got it: personally I got \$317.00 out of poems during 1947, but that was mostly accounted for by the *New Yorker* and the *Tiger's Eye*).

The best place in New York to find "little mags" is the Gotham Book Mart, on West 47th Street, where Miss Frances Stellof has bundles of back numbers as well as the current ones, but there are other shops which handle them, mostly in or around Greenwich Village: these include Lawrence R. Maxwell, Christopher Street, the Four Seasons Bookshop in Greenwich Avenue, and Harold Briggs of Books 'n Things in Fourth Avenue. The Grolier Bookshop in Cambridge, Mass., also carries them (I mention this as it is one of the few bookshops out of New York which I know well). Whenever I see a new magazine I buy it, if I've got enough money on me, but as a rule they are disappointing when I come to read them. I've tried to keep this account to the good ones, as there was no reason for cataloguing the duds.

First of all I should say that one of the best maga-

zines, *Chimera*, is dead. Barbara Howes, the editor, married William Jay Smith, whose first book of poems was published here by the Banyan Press last year, and as he's got a Rhodes Scholarship, they've gone to Oxford.

However, as soon as one magazine ceases publication another one seems to appear. The most lavish of the new ones is undoubtedly the *Tiger's Eye* (edited by Ruth Stephan, R.F.D. 4, Westport, Connecticut) which has colour plates and collotype reproductions, and which pays for poems at the fabulous rate of \$2.00 a line. So far two numbers have appeared and it doesn't yet seem to have settled down to any definite editorial policy, and there are one or two things about it which annoy me, particularly the fact that the names of authors and artists are not attached to their works but have to be found on a folded leaf in the middle of the magazine, so that the reader keeps on flipping the pages to discover who wrote what. When Auden and Garret, in *The Poet's Tongue*, followed the example of Bridge's *Spirit of Man* in presenting the poems as if they were anonymous there was a purpose to it: the child is apt to think that a poem must be good because it has the name of a good poet along with it: I don't think that, for a periodical, this argument is equally valid. I think that the annoyance felt by the reader prevents his reading the poems as they should be read.

However, such eccentricities do not prevent the magazine from being interesting and printing interesting material, such as the reproductions of Marianne Moore's notebooks in the first number, and a section on the sea in the second.

The *Partisan Review*, having found a fairy godfather, is now appearing every month instead of every second month, and I expect that this will mean that they will print considerably more poetry than before, paying 50 cents a line; the English edition, published by *Horizon*, will continue to appear at the old frequency, but will contain two numbers instead of one, a trick managed by omitting all the advertisements. (The new address of the *Partisan Review* is 1545 Broadway, New York City 19, N.Y.)

The *Keryon Review*, edited by John Crowe Ransom (Gambier, Ohio), has received a Rockefeller grant and is fatter than it used to be, and also pays 50 cents a line for poems. The new issue, Winter 1948, has a long poem by Wallace Stevens, and a careful dissection of Caroline Spurgeon by Stanley Edgar Hyman, which is a part of his forthcoming study of modern critics called *The Armed Vision*.

Touchstone (17 East 42nd Street, N.Y.C.17) has been struggling in a typographical bog during its first two issues (an advertisement by Doubleday and Co., regarding subsidies was headed "New Author Subsidies"!), but better things are promised. It appears monthly and pays about \$1.50 a line for poems.

I appear to have been rather mercenary in my notes so far, and have listed the magazines that pay well (the *New Yorker*, though not a little magazine, pays well but eccentrically and publishes good poems sometimes), but most of the little magazines can't afford to be so lavish. *Poetry* (232 East Erie Street, Chicago, Illinois), pays 50 cents a line, and has recently appeared in a burnished dress, with photographs of contributors; I may tell you more about *Poetry* in a later letter, as I'll be in Chicago early next month and expect to see

the editors. The *Sewanee Review* (Sewanee, Tennessee) always pays well, but John Palmer says that at the moment he's suffering from Allen Tate's enthusiasm; when Tate was editor he accepted so many poems that it's going to take some time to print them all. It's a very fine paper, in many ways comparable to the late lamented *Criterion*.

Furioso (R.F.D.1, Madison, Connecticut) pays \$5.00 a page and is usually lively and amusing, seeming to have inherited some of the sharpness which Dunstan Thompson and Harry Brown took over from *New Verse* for their too short lived *Vice Versa*. I can't say, though, that I think there's much point in a little magazine publishing unprinted fragments of Scott Fitzgerald at this date; there is altogether too much praise for Scott Fitzgerald going around at the moment, it's a sort of contagious disease spread by Edmund Wilson (whose *Memoirs of Hecate County* is Scott Fitzgerald twenty years too late, and which did not deserve the reputation its banning seems to have given it).

Three new magazines which have recently appeared are *Epoch* (252 Goldwin Smith Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y.), *Halcyon* (P.O. Box 109, Cambridge 39, Mass.) and *Perspective* (216 Menges, University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky). As they have only done one number each it is difficult to say how they'll get on; they are nicely produced and lively, but it's easy to bring out one good number—the difficulty lies in keeping the level over a number of years.

An occasional review, *possibilities* (Wittenborn, Sultz, Inc., 38 East 57th Street, N.Y.C.) "is a magazine of artists and writers who practice in their work their own experience without seeking to transcend it in academic, group or political formulas. Such practice implies the belief that through conversion of energy something valid may come out, whatever situation one is forced to begin with. The question of what will emerge is left open. One functions in an attitude of expectancy. As Juan Gris said: you are lost the instant you know what the result will be."

From Canada, *here and now* (70 Grenville Street, Toronto) should be out any day; I've seen the cover and some proofs but there's apparently been some sort of mail-man's strike in Canada which has held things up. It looks as though it should be good, and it is avowedly in favour of printing poems from the U.S. and Great Britain.

In New York I know of two which are in labour at the moment; a small dadaish sheet called *Instead* (*view*, incidentally, is dead from lack of money), and the *Hudson Review* (16 East 95th Street, N.Y.C.), which is to appear on 1st March, and claims to be "The first major literary quarterly to appear in America since 1939". It promises articles by Allen Tate on "The New Criticism", Yvor Winters on "Gerard Hopkins" and R. P. Blackmur on "The Possessed"; other contributors include Wallace Steven, E. E. Cummings,

Alex Comfort and Herbert Read. It sounds as though it might be rather good: *transition* is threatening to appear once more, but I'm afraid I can't work up any real enthusiasm about the prospect: Joyce is dead and he was the best they had: the dead donkey they'll find will be a Jolass.

I'm afraid that this letter reads rather like an extension to the *Writer's and Artist's Year Book*, but I felt that it would be useful to give these details as I suppose the currency regulations mean that the papers can't be imported into England, and most of the magazines which I've mentioned are interested in poetry and would probably like to see poems from writers in Great Britain. I'd say though that *possibilities* is rather too specialised for anyone who hasn't read it, as the whole issue which has appeared is compacted very thoroughly into one ball.

Should other magazines appear in the interval before I send you my next letter, dealing with books of poetry during the last year or two, I'll add a note about them; though, as by that time I'll be in the Middle West, I'll probably be dependant upon Miss Stellof sending new ones to me. Another thing which I forgot to mention is that, sometimes, these magazines take a long time in deciding about poems: *Poetry* is good about quick decisions, and the *Kenyon* acknowledges receipt of MSS.

There's been a bit of a "recession", as they say, in the publishing business here, and most publishers are a bit timid about bringing out books of verse, which apparently are considered to have done well if they sell about seven hundred copies, but the slump doesn't seem to have hit the little magazine yet. The first issue of the *Tiger's Eye* sold all the three thousand that were printed; it sells for \$1.00 an issue and, of course, can't possibly hope to recover its costs. It seems a pity that there is no place in London where people can see these little magazines, even if they can't buy them, as I'm sure that, if there was such a place, some sort of arrangement could be made to ensure that a copy of each issue was sent there. I'm sure too that, in Chicago and Iowa, I'll learn about other magazines which I don't know here. I'll do what I can to get the facts about them. As one of my duties in my new job will be working with the senior students in the Poetry Workshop, I'll probably discover a lot about what is happening to the younger writers, as most of the poets I know round about New York are of my own generation or just a little younger, and it will be interesting to find out what the student is writing like and which writers he admires.

Yours as ever,

RUTHVEN TODD.

P.S. The best-seller of the moment, so far as I can judge, is The Kinsey, Pomeroy and Martin *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male*: a fascinating book which is as big as, and infinitely more interesting than, any of the historical horrors which hit the headlines.

CRITICAL BOUILLON

Mr. Gascoyne, like Keats, gives his best only when he is in his subjective home, making real to us the individual problem, the microcosm of the self. . . . Mr. Lee and Mr. Gascoyne succeed because they have

chosen their ground and know where they are: Mr. Terence Tiller fails (so far) because he cannot choose and does not know.—W. G. Bebbington in *The New English Weekly*.

PL BOOKS

CRITICISM

- Garcia Lorca by *Edwin Honig*
7/6
- Modern Poetry and the Tradition by *Cleanth Brooks* 10/6
- Nikolai Gogol by *Vladimir Nabokov* 8/6
- Virginia Woolf by *David Daiches* 7/6

ART

- Blue Book of Conversation
by *John Banting* 10/-

PHILOSOPHY

- Art and Poetry by *Jacques Maritain* 6/-
- The Dream of Descartes by *Jacques Maritain* 7/6

FICTION

- The Mountain of the Upas Tree
by *Richard March* 7/6
- The Real Life of Sebastian Knight by *Vladimir Nabokov* 8/6
- Halfway down the Cliff by *Diana Gardner* 6/-
- Interval in Carolina by *William Abrahams* 8/6
- Cefalu by *Lawrence Durrell* 8/6
- Under a Glass Bell by *Anais Nin* 10/-
- Bayamus by *Stefan Themerson* 8/6

JAZZ

- The PL Year Book of Jazz 1946
cheap edition 3/6
- The PL Jazz Book 1947 8/6

MISCELLANEOUS PROSE

- The Cosmological Eye by
Henry Miller 10/-
- Sunday after the War by *Henry Miller* 10/-
- The Wisdom of the Heart by
Henry Miller 10/-
- Alamein to Zem-Zem by *Keith Douglas* 10/6
- Faces of Day and Night by
Kathleen Raine 6/-
- The Facts of Life by *Paul Goodman* 8/6

ANTHOLOGIES

- Personal Landscape, edited by
Bernard Spencer, Lawrence Durrell, Robin Fedden 6/-

SOUTH AMERICA

- The most important book on the subject yet published in this country.
- The Green Continent, edited by *German Arciniegas*, 483 pp. 15/-



NEW POETRY

CONRAD AIKEN

The Soldier

RONALD BOTTRALL

Farewell and Welcome
Selected Poems

WITTER BYNNER

The Way of Life according to
Laotzu (trans.)

ROY CAMPBELL

The Complete Works of Lorca
(trans.)

MAURICE CARPENTER

John Nameless and Other Ballads

STEPHEN COATES

Second Poems

HERBERT CORBY

Hampdens Going Over

KEITH DOUGLAS

Bête Noir
Collected Poems

IAIN FLETCHER

Orisons, Picaresque and
Metaphysical

G. S. FRASER

Home Town Elegy
The Traveller has Regrets

DAVID GASCOYNE

Poems 1936-42
(with illustrations by Graham
Sutherland)
Allegories and Emblems (anthology)

W. S. GRAHAM

Second Poems

MICHAEL HAMBURGER

Poems of Hölderlin (trans.)
Twenty Prose Poems of Baudelaire
(trans.)

PIERRE JEAN JOUVE

Selected Poems (trans.)

NICHOLAS MOORE

The Glass Tower
(with designs by Lucian Freud)

KATHLEEN NOTT

Landscapes and Departures

PAUL POTTS

Instead of a Sonnet

KATHLEEN RAINE

Stone and Flower
(with designs by Barbara Hepworth)
Living in Time

JAMES REEVES

The Imprisoned Sea

ANNE RIDLER

Cain (a play)

FRANCIS SCARFE

Appassionata
(with drawings by William Stobbs)
Poems of Pierre Emmanuel (trans.)

PIERRE SEGHERS

Poésie (anthology)

BERNARD SPENCER

Aegean Islands and Other Poems

TAMBIMUTTU

Poetry London
Natarajah

JOHN WALLER

The Merry Ghosts

CHARLES WILLIAMS

The Region of the Summer Stars

GWYN WILLIAMS

The Rent That's Due to Love
(anthology)

