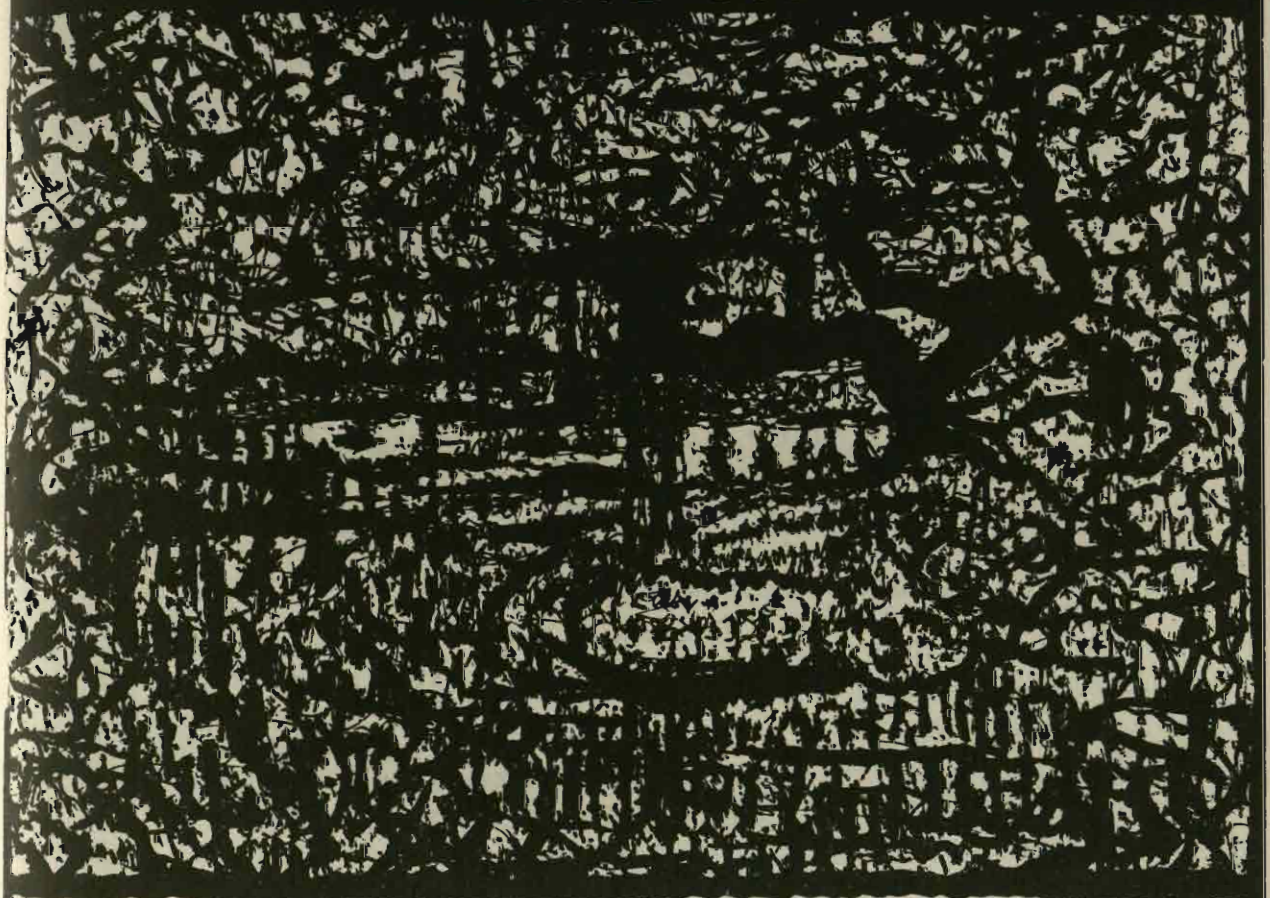
POETRY

LONDON



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HERBERT READ · ROY CAMPBELL · WILLIAM JAY SMITH
SIR OSBERT SITWELL · D. G. BRIDSON · THE DUCHESS OF WELLINGTON
JAMES REEVES · RONALD BOTTRALL

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Cover design and black-and-white motifs *by* FAHR-EL-NISSA ZEID

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MSS.

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POETRY

LONDON

Edited by RICHARD MARCH and NICHOLAS MOORE

VOLUME 6 Summer, 1951 NUMBER 22

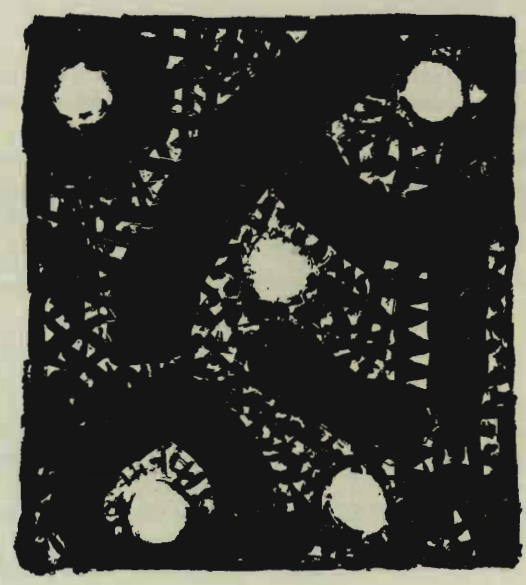
CRYSTAL PALACES AND DOMES OF DISCOVERY

In the year that Joseph Paxton's monumental glasshouse was being constructed in Hyde Park, Wordsworth died and Tennyson published *In Memoriam*. When the Great Exhibition opened to demonstrate to all the world that England was the richest, the most powerful and the most envied among the nations, Tennyson could only compose *The Daisy* and Browning hardly distinguished himself with *Christmas Eve and Easterday*. After the middle of the century, in fact, there was a steady decline in the field of poetry in quality if not in quantity, and though Hopkins was writing, neither publishers nor the public knew anything about it, and would not have been any the wiser even if they had. If, then, we look for reasons why we should celebrate this year, we can at least point to the renewed vitality in literature, and poetry in particular, and the arts that began roughly in the second decade of this century, and is far from being exhausted, even though it may be argued that at the moment we are passing through a temporary lull.

It is tempting in a Festival number to indulge in solemn comparisons between the situation of Britain as it was in 1851 and as it is today. A good deal of printer's ink and broadcast programmes have already been devoted to this topic. Such comparisions are usually unprofitable and often disingenuous. In some respects we are very much worse off, in others better. We are to all intents and purposes at war with Russia, as we were a hundred years ago (and as we are sure to be, in a hot on a cold fashion, for many years to come). But in the course of these hundred years we have also succeeded in abolishing poverty in these islands together with many of the grosser abuses and vices of industrialism. We have lost much, but there have been solid gains. The meat ration may only be 10d. in the lb. (or whatever), but we are beginning to pay a belated homage to Ezra Pound, while immovably enthroned as our G.O.M. of poetry sits Mr. Eliot instead of Sir Alfred Austin or Robert Bridges.

What concerns us more particularly in this journal is the apparent lack of interest on the part of the public in poetry, or in *new* poetry, and the consequent disinclination of publishers to sponsor books of verse, about which there has been much discussion and lamentation of late. Certainly this is a serious state of affairs,

which yet may prove a blessing in disguise if poets are prevented from rushing into print with sheaves of indifferent verse. The enthusiasm of the reading public in the 'thirties to purchase volumes of such verse was undoubtedly a curious phenomenon, and hardly conducive to the production of first-class work. It encouraged the making of reputations that today inevitably are looking somewhat hollow. No poet can any more acquire a spurious popularity with a few jejune ideas, mawkish sentimentalities about the sanctity of the proletariat and pious formulas for the new Utopia, as was the case some fifteen years ago. The bleak atmosphere of the nineteen-fifties will be a testing time, artistically, morally and intellectually. The emphasis in creative writing must be on technical mastery and depth of thought and emotion, in short on *style* and the recovery of tradition, as has been remarked before in these pages. And that does not mean a mere repetition of traditional styles of expression and modes of thought. Far from it. If the *contemporary* poet can survive the present wintry blast, he will only do so because of those enduring qualities. There may then be something of value to discover from the dome on the south bank.



HERBERT READ

TO SCARDANELLI*

See, the field is empty...
You came here by a curious detour
the hedges were trimmed but O-
ranges among the intricate thorns
glowed like torches. Expected to find
a temple of honey-coloured stone
perhaps an old man crouched in the porch
listening to the marble-browed girl
who there discourses on the nature of love.

There isn't even a shithouse.

The clouds are unanchored they might
fall out of the sky
I have brought you a basket of figs
and some fine linen
But sorry!
There's no white goat to slaughter
and fingers
have faltered that should have played the flute.

**The name used by Hölderlin in signing the poems of his last "mad" period.*

DOROTHY WELLESLEY

Duchess of Wellington

MYTHS

The darting of blue dragon-flies over the lily pool, their beauty. their ardour, their lyrical ecstasy melting into union in the air, eternally they pulsate, eternally desire; their desire is their dream, their dream is their desire. They hold for a day their eternal illusion. This is their myth.

Behold! We have made myth in the manner of ourselves.
Myth is our own making:
We made Thought and with it Space and Time,
All that we cannot prove in our own image sublime,
All the mockery of our own fallacy,
The light the darkness we alone did make,
As dragon-flies darting over the face of the lake,
So we too move upon the face of the waters
When our love is infinity.
And the Creator, He
Existed in us only for one second
And that second was Eternity.

ROY CAMPBELL

DON JUAN IN HELL

(translated from the French of Baudelaire)

When, having reached the subterranean wave,
Don Juan paid his passage from the shore,
Proud as Antisthenes, a surly knave
With vengeful arm laid hold of either oar.

With hanging breasts between their mantles showing
Women went writhing under the black sky:
After them went the sound of victims lowing
As from a votive herd that's led to die.

Sganarelle for his wages seemed to linger
And laughed; while to the dead assembled there,
Don Luis pointed out with trembling finger
The son who dared to flout his silver hair.

Chilled in her crepe, the chaste and thin Elvira,
Standing up close to her perfidious spouse,
Seemed to be pleading from her false admirer
For that which thrilled his first unbroken vows.

Upright in mail, a stark and stony neighbour
Stood by the helm as through the waves they tore.
But the calm hero leaning on his sabre,
Watching the wake, had eyes for nothing more.

OWLS

(translated from the French of Baudelaire)

Sheltered beneath the great black yews
The owls in ranks are ranged apart
Like foreign gods whose eyeballs dart
Red fire. They meditate and muse,
Thus without stir they will remain
Till in its melancholy hour,
Ousting the level sun from power,
The shade established its reign.
Their attitude instructs the sage,
Content with all he finds at hand,
To shun commotion, strife or rage.
Men, drunk with shadows that they chase
Bear always on their brows the brand
Of having wished to change their place.

WILLIAM JAY SMITH

AMERICAN PRIMITIVE

Look at him there in his stovepipe hat,
His high-top shoes, and his handsome collar;
Only my Daddy could look like that,
And I love my Daddy like he loves his Dollar.

The screendoor bangs, and it sounds so funny,
There he is in a shower of gold;
His pockets are stuffed with folding money,
His lips are blue, and his hands feel cold.

He hangs in the hall by his black cravat,
The ladies faint, and the children holler:
Only my Daddy could look like that,
And I love my Daddy like he loves his Dollar.

SNOW

Late in the day the soft snow comes
To the hungry sparrows like bread crumbs
Where the cold clear lakes are kettledrums.

A drunken workman staggers past;
While drawn to ambush in the west,
The cutthroat sun is failing fast.

A frozen harp, the willow leans
By the water's edge; and what life means
Is shown on scrolls and altar screens

Which open wide for all to see,
In the cold clear lake and frozen tree,
The pure design of tragedy.

While oak fires blaze in Gothic halls,
The flames, reflected on the walls,
Loom wild and dark. And the soft snow falls.

THE DIVER

Down the dark-skinned diver dived
    In the Indian Ocean of my tear,
Tasted salt, and then drowned.

Coral shades him like a tree,
    While overhead the waves pound
Cove and cavern piteously.

Life in contradiction lies,
    And friends are by subtraction found.
The raging water fills my eyes.

SIR OSBERT SITWELL

THE WOMAN WHO COULD NOT DIE

The moors, the flat-topped hills,
The waves rolling through the grey and white mist all the winter,
Battering like muffled earthquakes under the bitter cries of seagulls
Against the crumbling rock, against the walls,
Proclaimed that Tidesend was ruled by the Three Norns,
Strident Giantesses of the North,
Peering down above the wave-damp pavements,
Into the town—but where else, too, could Miss Hankey be found,
    Except in Tidesend, in Heartsend,
    That terminus to every hope, Hopesend;
A kindly, silly mummy, walking, nodding by the sea,
        Smiling to herself
Swathed in pale blue or pale pink, the colour of babies' ribbons.

With others of her kind
She had only money in common
—And more of it than most of them:
(Envy increased the roll of their laughter).
But, for *her* gold pounds, Miss Hankey liked a show,
Carriages and horses, many dresses,
Bonnets, laces, hats trimmed with roses;
She loved, she used to say,
        Originality and any kind of Novelty.
    Wherefore, towards the end of her life,
She bought a Lonsdale Wagonette,
        In which she always sat alone, sideways.

On fine mornings she descended from it, on to the Promenade,
Helped down by a footman in cockaded hat,
And walked there above the tree-tops
Among the gay and laughing summer crowds,
Dappled with colour, with sunshine, with light reverberant from the sea.

This was the essence of Heartsend, of Tidesend,
This wrinkled old anthropoid
Decked in pale blue under a bonnet
Catching the life, the flicker of crowds.
And I see her, too, helped down once more from her carriage
To rove by the cliff's wild edge,
Above the mosaic sea of March, with its white wings and thunders,
She, caught in the gale, battling with air
As a drowning man battles with water,
While at her feet the first coltsfoot imaged the sun like a star.

O, where could Miss Hankey be found
Except in Tidesend, in Heartsend,
That terminus to every hope, Hopesend.
No friends she had—only two nieces,
And their sole prospect of good fortune
Lay in her death: therefore
She did not like to have them round her,
They made her feel older, while she wanted to feel younger
(She preferred
To talk about them with affection in their absence).
She grew more dashing, every day grew younger,
Though dashing in a coy and mincing way,
She loved to recite for Charity from a stage
In character-costume-parts of young village maidens,
To sing demure songs in a cracked old voice full of blushes,
Oblivious to laughter, either in the hall
Or from where the three globular Miss Coltrums
Sat giggling icily among prismatic lustres,
Or where high up, above them, lost and swathed in the darkness,
The Three Norns laughed—for Miss Hankey was out of the norm.

Each year as she grew older, she grew younger,
Till her youth in the end defeated her nieces' prospects
In a manner that none could foresee or prevent,
For, at eighty-five years, deductive experience
Assured her of living for several further decades
And so,
Wanting more money to save, more money to leave to her nieces,
She yielded to her last novelty in June 1900,
Sold her fortune for an annuity,
From which she could spend more and save more as well,
But in July she died.

Then there was nothing left of her,
Except the tumultuous laughter of the Norns
As over the dark tableland they strode, rolling and roaring,
Nothing more—except the nieces;

Neither their prospects, nor Miss Hankey, nor the footman,
Nor the coachman; nor the wagonette,
Nor the house, nor the silver, nor the boric, boreal snigger,
Of the three Miss Coltrums, caged in their glittering iceberg,
Nothing more—save only the image
Of a withered anthropoid in a blue dress and bonnet
Walking the cliffs where the first coltsfoot mirrored the sun like a star.

VERNON WATKINS

THE CARYATIDS

(for Rhiannon Asleep)

How still the Caryatids
Hold up their sleeping urns
Above the dreaming lids.
Hark, and the sound returns
Of time's remembered wrack.
Loud the wave breaks, and loud
The dragging wash ebbs back,
Threading a moonlit shroud.

In dread of lightning now
A towering breaker brings
Blackness beneath the Plough
And scatters seabirds' wings
Sleeping upon its crest.
The wild Earth wanders there
Stunned by the moon's unrest
Where seaweeds like gold hair

Cling to a dazzling shell.
Cold are these waters, cold
The tales no lips can spell
Asleep in that white fold;
Yet the grave arms how strong,
Supporting, while seas broke,
The balanced urns of song
Under the lightning-stroke.

Aggressive candour plays
Already in your eyes
Teaching you daring ways,
Lending your bold replies
An elemental charm
Pure as the light of dawn.
And how could I disarm
A truth so finely drawn

From the dark sheath of sleep?
You are not six years old;
Yet the first wash will keep,
Whatever life re-mould
With brush or palette-knife
Afterwards on the page.
And I, who watch your life
Against the uncertain age

Momentously at rest,
Already see divined
The joy by which we are blest
Moving in eyes declined.
How should I pray? My prayer
Found in closed eyelids stands
While seawaves pierce night's air
And pound the unyielding sands.

There all the reckoned grains
Obey the rock-like Word
Whose lightning love remains,
Waiting to be restored.
And still how patiently
They watch above your bed,
Nor touch the form I see.
Like footprints on the sea,
How near is love to dread!

JAMES REEVES

THREE POEMS

on a Chaucerian two-rhyme model

I

Their Ghosts

Their ghosts arise in memory from the place
  Where I passed by them twenty years ago,
  Their long legs dancing softly to and fro.

Why did the proud scholar cast down his face?
  How for a book could he neglect them so?
Their ghosts arise in memory from the place
  Where I passed by them twenty years ago.

Often I see them in their former grace.
  Surely, they say, such a scholar should know
  He cannot make the river backwards flow.
Their ghosts arise in memory from the place
  Where I passed by them twenty years ago,
  Their long legs dancing softly to and fro.

II

Flora

What can these mute and secret bluebells mean
  That every year around the trees have sprung?
  If they might speak, it would be with your tongue.

You now I see clothed in this woodland green,
  No more I question as when I was young—
What can these mute and secret bluebells mean
  That every year around the trees have sprung?

What shall be said amidst the floral scene?
  Such loving bird-songs everywhere are sung,
  Such bargains made, the watching leaves among.
What can these mute and secret bluebells mean
  That every year around the trees have sprung?
  If they might speak, it would be with your tongue.

III

This is Your Elegy

This is your elegy, the grey sea grieving—
  This and the gulls' disconsolate reply.
  Beyond your hearing is their derelict cry.

Now every wave reminds me of your leaving;
  There is no houseless bird more lost than I.
This is your elegy, the grey sea grieving—
  This and the gulls' disconsolate reply.

To end your absence and your unbelieving
  With yet one more 'I love you', I would try
  To call my sea-bird back from the cold sky.
This is your elegy, the grey sea grieving—
  This and the gulls' disconsolate reply.
  Beyond your hearing is their derelict cry.

MARGARET CROSLAND

FIREWORKS BY THE LAKE

Now shall they fly up, these living fires,
the jewelled exotic birds
out of the darkness, the nowhere of night—
then suddenly spreads a peacock's tail
over the quiet houses, the elegant parks.
Legend is chalked in light, our questions crowd—
how many stars was Ariadne made, how long, how gold, Orion's belt—
what is the dance of Cassiopeia, now that
the Great Bear leaps in the rocket's trial,
the seven elusive sisters start from
the undefined and silent metal flower.
Over what ruined town the Roman candles burn
and cardboard cannons burst towards the cloud—
here in the high streets new thunder
rolls grandly and threatening from our wooded squares,
rising from fires with bramble and paraffin tongues.
Each time their careless prophecy spurts up,
tears a great O from all these throats as now
the comet shoots above our heads :
we are the new Prometheus,
the firebird leaping in the sky
till the red plumes blossom, silver wheels
turn sharply, flower and fade
till the legend's talk is done,
the symbolled gods grey in a sulphur dark.
May the lights fall over the water, may now the planets
slow their dance, the vast circles ever vaster grow
silent and yet more silent over our powdery stars,
our peacocks of paper and all
the sudden, strange and beautiful birds
breaking phoenix-like from fire
and the moment's flight of our huge desire.

DONALD DAVIE

PROTESILAUS AND LAODAMIA

The streaming simile, the plume,
The legend and the flying hair
All indifferently assume
Life in Homer's heavy air.

His heroes wish it. They applaud
When from the shades they hear him sing
The only conquest they implored,
The heavy status of a thing.

Upon the bosom of his love
The dedicated bosom heaves,
Aspiring to the denseness of
His sword, his corslet, casque, and greaves.

He sees, before the assembled power
(His flange between her dreaming thighs)
His time come round, his timeless hour
Solid in all their armour, rise.

The beaks of Greece that mob the town
Lie idling in a bay of time;
Who'll turn the hour-glass upside-down
Now that the sands no longer climb?

They only seem to cut the sea,
All stems but one, where stands the one,
Once slave of fate, of destiny
Now the self-appointed son.

The tragic hero jumps to death
Kissing the day that gives at once,
Free of the accident of breath,
A life in legendary bronze.

But Laodamia, his love,
Is only less substantial, wed
To no true man, and dreaming of
A metal beak, no human head.

FOUR MORAL DISCOVERIES

I

Oh I can praise a cloistered virtue, such
As knows it cannot fear itself too much;
That though innate corruption breaks the laws,
Woman, for instance, is the efficient cause.
The genuine prayer, when all is said and done,
Is "Lead us not into temptation."

II

Painters in sunshine, my thoughts of you
Whistle and paint my prison through;
Needy in prison our hearts forget
They bump the bars when their needs are met.

III

As Will and I went down the hill
Who should we meet, dressed up to kill,
But a sexual misdemeanour.

When Will and I got into the train,
There was the loose-limbed wench again,
An inconsiderate action.

As I left the station, I missed my pipe,
And I turned on Will. He began to weep.

It wasn't until I was nearly thirty,
I noticed the will resents being dirty.

IV

I dared occasion, and came off intact,
Unharmed, not therefore unashamed. The act
Is unimportant; and the times I fell
In fact, in thought, in wish, in all but will,
Reflects how little credit falls to me,
At fault just there, in will's obduracy.

RONALD BOTTRALL

VARIATIONS ON A THEME OF POUND

IV

Dead March

Brought up to admire beauty and art
She had unfortunately never
Recovered from a false start
With a grandmother whose main endeavour
Was to get her married to a Bart.

Art for her was plaster casts of Praxiteles
Arundel prints and occasional days
At the Galleries admiring the ease
Of Alma-Tadema and the glaze
On a Dresden vase.

She painted water colours of Venice and the Fjords,
Kept a diary, strummed the harp in order
To display her arms, played *Songs without Words*
And read Scott's tales of the border.

Thackeray was preferred to Dickens
For he really understood
What went on in the drawing-room. Game chickens
And water-rats like Riderhood
Were too coarse for someone used to brood
On Struwwelpeter, Grimm and The Last of the Mohicans

Religion was a punctual attendance
At church on Sunday mornings at eleven,
Family prayers when the precedence
Of servants' hall was rigorousl observed,
And hymns that yearned for a familiar heaven
Where pews for the gentry were reserved.

The really important thing to remember
Was who had married whom
Who had been a bridesmaid last December
And who was talking on the sofa to Lord Bohum

Before she had completely sorted out Debrett
And coped with the Almanach de Gotha
Two major wars had upset
Her applecart, and after pawning her mink
She was reduced to scouring the sink
And subsisting on an occasional bloater.

Failing to get a preferential place
In a home for decayed gentlewomen
She was careful nevertheless
Before expiring in Pimlico to summon
The family lawyer and will her meagre monies
To the Society for Protecting Pit Ponies.

V

Threnody

He left us *insouciant*
(As he would have preferred)
Snuffing the unspeakable incense
Of the brand-new word.

To some of us (young) he had been
The type to throw off a triolet
Insult a policeman
Or recite the *catalogue raisonné*
Of the works of Uccello for a bet.

Capable of conjuring up more
Than the ghost of a rise
In the bed of Cleopatra
He abandoned himself to erotic reveries

Instead of fetching in the morning milk;
Which led to his filling
Hack posts in provincial newspapers
Or preparatory schools. Bilk

Was his motto for tradesmen and whores
But *toujours la politesse*
To the *beau monde*. He saw this
As a Marxian way of paying off scores
Against an unappreciative society.

Spain provided embroidery
To deck out his fancy for a year
With infiltration and bridge-blowing
And the paraphernalia of guerilla war.

He posed us the relation
Of conviction to historical truth
And the further problem of
The validity of dialectical salvation.

We need not have bothered. He was able
(Before we had even begun
Our soul-searching) to show
Conclusively that Communism and Fascism were one.

How is one to put this down and not
Sound cynical? And yet
The values are correct, the lines generous
And the pattern taut.

The desert war gave vesture
To his vision of futility
And when the kites pecked at his pals
He could shoo them away with a gesture.

Back home there was nothing
But to re-turn the old pence
And repeat with increasing distaste
The old slogans injected
With the latest ambivalence.

Caught by a syncope near the Old Vic
Half-starved, *je-m'en-foutiste,*
His glazed eyes gave up the struggle
To equate logic and feeling
And he went out without a kick.

The new standards. The new word over all.
A door opening and closing
Like the iron wall
Of an even darker prison.

EDWARD GRIEW

THAT EVENING TWO GREAT NOISES

That evening two great noises hammered
rigid, framed raw within me,
my heart. Blood, my blood and flesh
shivered, jellied (would burst me);
long heave-breast, heart-beat quick with
body shaking: only but held
hard together with stiff bone, with
heart, my heart big with noise and—

o . . . love, did you hear them—
and you there by, and I;
and I, but hardly, by you—
did hear their, hot with pain hear
their laughter, innocent
not unkind chatter—like bitter
bullets, their tin-tray din?

(And I but hardly by you;
and you there, half perhaps with
an ear balanced to catch their
bright beads of carpet parley,
but not for me, not half even a
hand or turn of the head to me
home, for staunch of the drilling hurt.)

Well, then we all played music—
was it music or the very tearing
soul of man?—that grasped and (high
I taut shrieked " Pity . . .") swung my (oh
I " dear love!" gasped) my bound parched
pulse through the fever-dirge of the
mad horn. Or voice or violin, both,
thrilled forward with desire my
a-stretch nerves, or screaming them scraped.

(And you, as though the music swallowed,
you lost in masked thought or
in music's centre, you were there—
and I, it seemed to me, not by,
who need had, heaven knows, need had
of hand or turn of head home
for stilling of pulse and of plucked nerve.)

Two such terrible noises (and you by!).
And all myself within me riot
for so little to ask:—still you by
and only I, whole, present to you, in bathing quiet.

D. G. BRIDSON

CRETE REMEMBERED

CLEON :
Atlantis . . ? A lost Continent . . ? No . . . If the sacred bulls
Ever were dragged in with chains and struck to their knees
Propitiously by any column to please Poseidon,—
There in Crete was sacrifice . . . Only there . . .
Sea-deep under the inundation of the years . . .
Where Cnossos lies, Cydonia and wide-staired Phaestos,
Breathing flowers out of the dried blood on buried altars . . .
Only there look for Atlantis and the lost conquerors . . .
Their palaces thrown down utterly . . . And the thyme
Dusty and stiff among the splintered marble . . . Blowing banks
Of tamarisk marking the sunken courtyards . . . The laid bare
Fall of a stairway—always that!—wider than
Five chariots . . . Pawing of horses, a tossing of heads
And jangle of harness-trappings . . . Yes . . . Though only the goats there
Browse in silence . . .
LEONIDAS :
Then, down by the junipers,
Coming across him . . . The brown boy . . . Pitching a trinket,
Was it . . . ? Or something better . . . ? Yes, and the dull gold
Scratched into good life under your thumb-nail . . . !
I know . . .
Whether of arts or whether of wealth, a world lies buried
There with its ghosts in the dead cities, whose ruins hold
All that man has learnt and loved and called beautiful,—
Whether of arts or whether of wealth . . . An earlier craft
That still works unconsciously in the shaping hand . . .
A lost culture . . . A lost creativeness . . . A lost vision
That meant much to our world once, and still could win us
What we desire of the beautiful and would understand . . .
Yes, the Dorians wrought sad havoc . . . And ours is the loss . . .
That, though nothing matters to me but life as I know it . . .
There in the Islands . . . Back in our stinking whore of a sea-town . . .
Or pressing to seawards under a full sail . . .Once more feeling
The spell working . . . As when we stood in the prow together
That morning and watched the sea *wear* Crete again like a crown . . .
CLEON :
Rearing up there out of the wine-dark sea . . . Thrown
Like an army against the South Wind . . . Her great hills
Dark with woods . . . Clouds drawing slowly across her shoulders
Changeable pattern of deep shadow . . . A bright rainbow
Falling upon her in a river of colour . . . The villages
Clustered above the quiet shore like a scatter of boulders . . .
Up there on the open hillside above Cydonia . . .
Wind running riot over the grass and the tall trees—
Black cypresses and the poplars—gracefully bending
Before the onslaught of the ravisher . . . And the oleanders
Fighting it like sturdy boys . . . Then the sun racing
Back into a clear sky and the love-sport ending . . .

LEONIDAS :

I remember my first sight of her . . . In from the Cyclades . . .
Finding the sea a sweet calm, and the sail scarcely
Pulling us in to the invisible shore . . . Then there,
Looming above us out of the warm haze, Mount Ida . . .
Wading and lost in it up to her knees . . . Bursting
Suddenly into the full sunlight, her breasts bare
And a kirtle of woods about her thighs . . . Finally
Coming to sight of brown earth, where the bare foothills
Folded about their valley . . . A sprinkle of neat
White farms grazing the slopes like sheep, and the little town
Waiting beside its welcome harbour . . . The whole scene
Quivering like a fawn's flank in the morning heat . . .
Yes, that was my first sight of her . . . And the sea no longer
Wine-dark, but blue as a turquoise . . . Gently rocking
The sponge-divers in their shallops about our bows . . .
And there ashore, unmindful of any part in the whole,
Men bent upon peaceful projects . . . Much labouring
Up in the vineyards . . . Much herding . . . A driving of ploughs
Over the waiting fields . . . Threshing and winnowing . . .
Down in the harbour, sea-thoughts of putting out
Shortly upon a similar venture to our own . . .
Well after the summer solstice, when the season
Of drowsy heat had come to an end . . . The Pleiades
Up in the swart sky by night, and the sea prone . . .
Yes . . . And the sea prone . . .
Well, that is the sum of it, then . . . Memories . . .
An old man on an empty shore . . . And the blithe South
Bringing the fever that knows all over . . . In which hope dies . . .
Back here at the end of it all, a new fretfulness . . .
Watching the swerving of outbound wildfowl . . . Envious . . .
Feeling the cool draw like a feather across the eyes . . .
Licking the dry patch of a lip . . . And sighing
To know the wind shift once more out of Libya . . .
Minding that other vastness, the muscular sea . . .
Feeling the tingling of the inblown spume
Cool on the forehead in an old eagerness . . .
Visioning other cities . . . Over the waves there . . . Free . . .
White cities . . . And lost cities . . .
Oh but mostly
Knowing the voyage over, and all it has meant to me . . .

From: THE LAST HELLENE.

NORMAN NICHOLSON

A TURN FOR THE BETTER

"Now I Joseph was walking, and I walked not."
(BOOK OF JAMES OR PROTEVANGELIUM)

Now I Joseph was walking, and I walked not,
Between the allotments on a December morning.
The clouds were mauve as a crocus, peeling back petals,
And a sparse pollen of snow came parping down
On the bare ground and on green-house groins and dun
Tight-head chrysanthemums crumpled by the frost.
The cock in the hen-run blustered to its perch
On the lid of the swill bucket, rattled its red
At the fluttering flakes, levered its throat open—
And not a croak creaked out.
I looked about me:—
The snow was stock-still in the sky like pluckings
Of cottonwool glued on a grocer's window,
And down in the brown of the dyke, a smoky feather
Let on a robin's head, between the black
Glass-ally eyes and the gimlet beak,
And never a flick it gave to shake it off.
Workmen on the electric cable track
Swung picks in the air and held them there, rigid,
Raised bait to mouths and never took a bite.
One, putting up a hand to scratch his head,
Shifted the peak of his cap a couple of inch,
And never scratched. A dead leaf drifting
Hung bracketted against the wire netting
Like a pin caught on a magnet.
For at that minute
Making was made, history rolled
Backward and forward into time, memory was unfolded
Like a quick discovery, old habits were invented,
Old phrases coined. The tree grew down
Into its sapling self, the sapling into the seed.
Cobbles of wall and slate of rafters
Were cleft and stratified again as rock,
And the rock un-weathered itself a cloud-height higher,
And the sea flowed over it. A brand-new now
Stretched on either hand to then and someday,
Might have and perhaps.
Then suddenly the cock
Coughed up its crow, the robin skittered off,
And the snow fell like a million pound of shillings.
And out in the beginning always of the world
I heard the cry of a child.

HAROLD PINTA

ONE A STORY, TWO A DEATH

I

Brought in a bowl of flaming crocuses
In an ebon mirrorless age,
Let fall to her face
Till her cheeks lit in tongues.

Who would laugh and call Zello,
See how scorched is the boy,
Who would laugh at the arrow
I should plunge in her eye.

Ten thousand years marbled
When I wept on her corpse,
Gnawed my lips on her coffin.
Not anytime now, not anytime, as

I watch them spinning the boiling sands,
Laugh and fling their furs in the urn.
While his great breaking hands
Choke some petal in my throat.

II

So much later in the night
When I crept to her room,
And lay a young narcissus
Couched on her breasts.

From millions Kashmir
I sang my song,
Bore her there in the withered moon.
While on the strand one tree sashed

Round itself, as she caressed herself,
Where I wept in the coin of the beam.
Curled to me his feathered mocassins,
The giant negro tones in ether his flute.

Where lies the black lake.
In each cavern a poet.
In each cavern tentacles.
I shall blow through my pipe

And release them, all mordant and tender,
Anemone necklaced,
And bring from her tears,
Smothered in sunning.

III

Clouds drop with bees,
Shall singing to her lips,
Where in his cape walks the negro,
Growing flowers on his groin.

Acid began among the pebbles
Some sleeps away then.
The deepest blue rhododendrons
Sink to the fire.

I am drugged by his night thighs,
As he paints her mouths amber.
Flood white the sea shudders,
I weep, I am your brother.

Too late I have known, who am
No longer there.
He drinks at her life, sucks horrors,
Born black in the sun.

Her monster child, muscular,
Scoops up the lake coldly,
And pours the earth acid into my brain.
All in a sudden the sky shuts.

BARRY HARMER

COSMOGONY

Abstractedly the mice pursue
Their wry-nosed passions, interlace
With fervid shrieks of "me" and "you,"
Pause, for a swishy-tailed embrace.

They know that season when the cheese
Grows damp beneath each printed paw,
When every little he cries "Please,"
Though every tiny she pleads "More."

In that mad hour, sage mice do say,
All nature loves to see them woo;
The floors are spick, the cat's at play,
The grasses smile at one grown two.

Cruel traps (they reason) are but placed
To test their will to sacrifice:
Dog's in his heaven; Mouse is braced
To prove the dust and winnow lies.

Then if, one day, the dancing slows,
And there are neither cheese nor mice,
Surely the upper floors, Dog knows,
Will bless their rodent obsequies?

IAIN FLETCHER

THE CRUCIFIXION OF SIMON THE CYRENIAN

And among the Basilideans is it held that, in the place of the Master, Simon of Cyrene suffered.

Your blue lips crack into a clouded message:
You tell them you are black, a humble man;
You cannot talk their cold and goblin tongue,
Your horned feet stuttering on the eye-shafted track.
What divine order of confusion, Simon,
Has grown this tree on your derided back?
The lying muslin of a dream is hung
And who shall now undream the laughing murderous stage.

Your robe torn from you lightly as a leaf
Dissolves in true tears your false mother's grief;
Keeping the silence of your God, though still
Your human cry ring dissolutely shrill
Their ears hear nothing, though the dying thief
Have his sharp pardon on the mocking hill.

RUTH TENNEY

MIRRORS

Tsai-Yu, before the disc of polished silver,
Places her black satin bands and the pearls on her bands,
And if the rouge be too pale to her eyes,
Or the milky sheen of the oil too bright on her cheeks,
The silver, smiling, warns her.

Counsellor Wen measures himself in annals of bygone days,
Limpid crystals where all that has been unfolds,
March of armies, words of the wise,
Trouble of constellations;
The answer seen therein governs his conduct.

As for me, nor pearls have I, nor worthy deeds to accomplish;
To order my life, I look on the face of my friend.
There, better than in silver,
Better than in sagas of far-away times,
I learn what is good in myself.

(Inspired by a French translation of an ancient Korean stele by Victor Segalen)

GWYN WILLIAMS

THE LOVES OF HYWEL AP OWAIN GWYNEDD

My choice, a slim, fair, bright girl,
tall, lovely in her heather coloured gown;
my choice learning, to look at womanliness
which quietly utters a seemly thought.
My choice is to share with and be with a girl,
privately, with secrets and gifts.
My choice is you, colour of the foam,
your wealth your wisdom, and your fine Welsh . . .

I love today what the English hate, the land of the North.
and the varied growth that borders the river Lliw.
I love those who gave me my fill of mead
where the seas reach in long contention.
I love its household and its strong buildings,
and at its lord's wish to go to war.
I love its coast and its mountains,
its castle near the woods and its fine lands,
its water meadows and its valleys,
its white gulls and its lovely women.
I love its soldiers, its trained stallions,
its woods, its brave men and its homes.
I love its fields under the little clover
where I found a place of triumphant joy . . .
I love the coastland of Meirionnydd
where a white arm was my pillow.
I love the nightingale in the wild privet
where two waters meet in the valley of worship . . .

Great violence has involved me in payment,
and there's no escape from longing
for pretty Nest, like apple blossom,
for the golden pear tree, the heart of my sin.

For the virgin Enerys there's no end to my pain,
she clings to her chastity;
for Hunydd there's matter till Doomsday,
and for Hawis my chosen ritual.

I had a girl, o deep day;
I had two, their praise be the greater;
I had three and four and fortune;
I had five, splendid in their white flesh;
I had six without concealing sin;
Gwenglaer of the White Tower brought me strife;
I had seven and a grievous time of it;

I had eight, paying part of my praise to Canterbury.
Teeth serve to keep the tongue quiet.

(Translated from the Welsh)

NOTE : This warrior poet was the son of Owain Gwynedd, the redoubtable prince of North Wales. He lived and wrote during the second half of the twelfth century. He was one of the first poets to write of the love of women and the beauty of the Welsh countryside.

NORMAN LEVINE

CAPE CORNWALL

Undressed by water, the land Homeric
As any legend bald with age,
Combed with stone the green fields smooth-saddled,
Pulled taut on that back and pinned down by these

The underwhite belly of the animal
Houses fields of folded arms, and knuckles
Jagged of bone stretch as stone-shelter
Soon to love and twin with larger landscape.
All must follow that land's journey
And walk into the sea.

Even those funnelled fingers erect with smoke
Once, the many phallus of an impotent god,
Now are hollow as shafts slipping into silence,
A few bricks turning to dust.
Funeral pyres pulling cold from the earth
Stand lonelier than any lighthouse.

The animal landscape swallowed these
Memorial ruins of that disease.
Now burnt, now hammered,
It flies overhead,
And with stiff steel arms
Waves a progress kiss to a pilgrim land.
The child turns tail on its monster parent.

Stumbling to the water that animal land
Leaves behind her coloured saddles,
Leaves behind decayed teeth,
And by the waterside discarded clothes.

O virile sea

Undress me.
For that last time.

IRENE COATES

LULLABY TO NIGHTMARE

Smile pillowed in gentle sleep,
Creature without name of nation
Or feature or fang of fashion.
Smile against memory, sleep
Must forbid your dreaming.

I, maternal, mighty, satisfy the winds;
Lay once more the sand, the earth, to bear;
Stopper the suddenly uprushed mountains;
Catch in my hand the slant bombs;
Push back ocean and slow famine.

Let my lamplit eye dilated cure
You, sick, shrinking in some city; seek
More water beneath encrusted pavements;
Outstare the broken, blue-bastioned sun;
Watch my own fingers trace again the pattern,

Weaving new wonders beyond dusted buildings,
Winding wool walls wordless from dangers
Not yet come in the dark you sleep. Sleep,
And see yourself dream change the questions
Fear shall not deny also.

THE NEWS

Hush . . . speak softly . . . whisper, rather,
Letting no wonder fall from unkissed lips;
Dear friend, write not so boldly,
When the ink fails, do not dip again;

Step kindly over the day-grown grass
Where insects breed and feed and grace
The silent night with sights of death;
Stand still, and quiet your heart, your breath . . .

Look there, to the East and West—no, do not point—
Jostling India shoves up her elbow
Towards thirty thousand feet: Mount Everest,
Climbing quicker than climbers can, dare take no rest.

COMPOSITION

Green head-shapes against sky of parrots,
Pelicans, and birds of prey, grace beaked
Cloudline and clambering stars with meaning;
Rise out of blue breast-mist beautiful——
Mountebanks, mountains, mice mutating
Under the cat's-paw water, monkey-turning tail
Of torrents behind rocks, nuts, ants,
Elephants, and fan-tailed peacocks losing
Feathers with fright at the day-long night:——
This tremendous creature clawed with cactus
Captivates cardboard and Chinese.
People too decrepit for abstraction
Prohibit the way back to private unction.

MARGARET SEATON

PONDER'S END

(Song for a Gigue)

Like a creditor, I
beside your door
might come to die
one day at four,
that bodiless hour
when the petulant day
snatches our wit
and leaves us clay.

Down you would sit
to take your tea
with never a look
at what was me;
though the cream turned sour,
the toast went cold,
the weeping tea
grew weak and old
and the clamant light,
thin as a whip,
accused your book
you would read and sip;
you would be right:

you did not borrow;
we do not lend
usuriously to a friend;
lightly we give
and then we lie,
plumaged in sorrow,
down to die.

Oh rare black swan
singing—sing on—
"How can we live
without our dole?
We need a meed
of currency.
How can we live,
or you or me,
with a bloody great hole
where the heart should be?"

ITALIAN LETTER

A survey of the literary output of a given year does not always correspond to the true state of affairs. It has to be based on the books and reviews published and on the literary prizes awarded, and it cannot take into account all the writing that was not published or all the forces and ideas that have sprung up and are still being developed. For example 1950, in Italy, turned out to be a much poorer year than 1949 for the purposes of a survey, though the cultural situation as a whole had in no way deteriorated.

Among the literary prizes awarded in 1950, let us distinguish the poetry prizes from the rest.

The "Rome prize" was awarded last Spring to Giuseppe Ungaretti, and the "San Marino" to Eugenio Montale in the Autumn.

In Italy, the purpose of the most important prizes is to acknowledge already established writers and reward them for the work and sacrifice of many years, rather than to indicate new talent. But there was more to it in the case of the prizes won by Ungaretti and Montale. These two poets dominate the scene even now and by their experience and example influence the work of the younger and very youngest poets. With Ungaretti there was yet another factor: the only volume of poetry in 1950 that contained a new message and a new development came from him. It is called "*La Terra Promessa.*" Here Ungaretti makes a complete return to the hendecasyllable and to classical forms (the *canzone* of Petrarca and Leopardi; *madrigals* in the vein of Tasso's poetry and Claudio Monteverdi's music).

These and other less important poetry prizes also aimed at drawing attention to newer names such as Alessandro Parronchi, Giorgio Bassani, Scotellaro, Rinaldi and so on.

Few young poets of any importance published volumes of poetry in 1950. But generally speaking one can trace two main lines of development in recent Italian poetry: on the one hand towards the classical tradition as it has been re-stated by certain currents of thought mistakenly called 'hermetic'; on the other, towards poetry of social *engagement,* whose aim is to widen its scope and to pass, as it were, from monologue to dialogue. So far the best results have come from poets belonging to the first group which is the most vital and the most promising not only because of Ungaretti and Montale, but because of Mario Luzi, Sereni, Bertolucci and Parronchi. Their best work is marked by a real human *engagement* and they do at least achieve a precise discipline of style and a balance between the language of poetry and the object observed.

But with the second group, whose ideal is social *engagement,* we are in the field of 'good intentions,' manifestos, rhetoric and unbalance. Indeed these poets (for example the poetry Quasimodo has written during the last few years, Gatto's 'partisan' poems, or the beginner's poetry of Acrocca and Scotellaro), quarrel with the poetry of the past exclusively on account of its content. Their forms of expression remain exactly the same. In other words what they have tried to do is to stem the perennial march of poetry, which has always consisted in first achieving a new form and language, and later a new content, (or at any rate in attaining novelty of expression and of subject simultaneously).

Alessandro Parronchi's fine collection of poems, "*Un'attesa,*" published by Guanda, is a mature example of his work.

The "*Antologia della poesia italiana dal* 1909 *al* 1949" is edited by Giacinto Spagnoletti and published by Guanda (in the series for which Carlo Izzo is editing an "Anthology of contemporary English poetry from Thomas Hardy to the Apocalyptics"), and includes a name which is fresh to readers: Alda Merini, a girl who works in Milan. Spagnoletti singles her out even to the point of suddenly inserting her work in what is tantamount to an official anthology of Italian poetry of the first half of the century. I cannot say that I share his enthusiasm for Alda Merini, though I admit her case is interesting. Not being in contact with normal living values, the outburst of her poetry is

full of literary echoes and these are evidently bolstered up in her mind by an air of culture which one can sometimes endure to breathe.

An anthology of the very youngest poets has been promised by the publishers, " La Meridiana," and it is to include poems by Giannina Angioletti. She is a really promising young poetess and is bringing out a volume of her own with the same publishers : *" I giorni del mio tempo."*

" Appunti," a little collection of poems by Sandro Penna, is also being published by " La Meridiana." They are full of echoes from the classics, especially the Greeks and the Alexandrians and they confirm Penna's subtle but unquestionable talent for poetry.

The two main prizes awarded for prose in 1950 are linked with tragic events. The " Strega Prize," which the many frequenters of a well-known literary salon in Rome award by vote, was given by unanimous consent to Cesare Pavese last June. Two months later this writer from Turin committed suicide. It was a serious loss for literature. Of all the new prose writers, he probably had the greatest quality, and the most vitality and moral responsibility. He had just reached the forties, and for years he was known only for his excellent translations. He was responsible for the fine Italian translation of Melville's " Moby Dick," and it was he who introduced some of the best contemporary American writers to Italian readers. Then a volume of his poems appeared *(" Lavorare stanca ")* followed by a series of short stories which were an argument in support of American neo-realism *(" Paesi tuoi "),* and again, *" Feria d'agosto."* Later, at short intervals, he published *" Il compagno," " Prima che il gallo canti," " La bella estate," " La luna e il falò."* Each of these books is an improvement on the last and shows the author steadily attaining more and more objectivity and clarity together with the lyrical impetus and the solidity which belongs only to the greatest narrative writers.

Again another prize, the " Premio Viareggio," the subject of so much controversy, was awarded this Summer to the memory of Francesco Jovine who was one of the leading young writers, but who died prematurely shortly before.

The other prizes testify to the present supremacy of writers coming from the South of Italy : the " Venice Prize " was awarded to Michele Prisco, the " Viareggio Prize " to Carlo Bernari (as well as to Jovine). And to begin this part of my survey I must also mention the stories Rea and Marotta have recently published.

In Italy the end of the war, and people's immediate experience of the war, caused social problems that had been suspended or silenced for years to break out openly. Naturally the problem of Southern Italy was one of the biggest. Writers in Southern Italy only had to observe what was happening around them to stumble on a common truth. Besides they have always been more immediately and actively concerned with meditation and philosophical speculation, as well as with descriptive writing both in prose narrative and in drama. And one must remember that they live in daily contact with a population unique in its reactions, in the inventiveness of its language and for its natural way of talking which need only be written down word for word to produce a page of literature. They are people whose dialect is expressive and clear and whose intelligence and philosophy of life are often enviable. Moreover, the scene of it all, especially in the case of Naples, is a countryside bursting with colour, and a background of impetuous people, passing in a flash from tears to laughter, from tragedy to comedy, and with an outstanding gift for invention and dramatization.

Domenico Rea is a young man of twenty-nine with a bent for adventure : he emigrated to Brazil, but he returned home at once to Nocera, near Naples. He has written his third book. His first was a series of remarkably apt and spirited sketches *(" Spaccanapoli ");* his second *(" Formicole rosse ")*, a sort of ballet, was less successful because more self-conscious and pretentious, whereas his greatest gift lies in his spontaneity. Now there is his third book *(" Gesù fate luce ")* where he gives rein to his gift for the dramatic and becomes more penetrating. Italian critics have unanimously acclaimed this " story-teller " who seems to be taking his place in that magnificent Italian tradition

which he knows so well. A scholar as celebrated and scrupulous as Francesco Flora has not hesitated to hold Rea up as one of the most vital of Italy's young narrative writers.

The Neapolitan scene also provided the inspiration for Giuseppe Marotta's first amusing experiments, though his interests were more superficial and more concerned with folklore than with psychological insight. By going to live first in Rome and then in Milan, Marotta broke away from the world of the South and now, in *" Pietre e Nuvole,"* he has collected a series of imaginary interviews, little sketches and moralities without time or place and written in tones which, for him, are unusually colourless. It is as though, after the glowing colours of his landscapes and early writing, he had passed to " black and white " and this book proves Marotta's desire to change his field of observation. Doubtless it is a pause likely to have good results.

Carlo Bernari, who won the " Viareggio Prize " with *" Speranziella,"* is more specifically interested in social questions. But not even he manages to equal that gift peculiar to Rea—a perfect harmony of all the most varied elements a country and its inhabitants can offer.

What is extraordinary is that Michele Prisco, author of *" La Provincia addormentata "* and whose *" Eredi del vento "* won the " Venice Prize," should have been born and be living in the same region. His writing is not so directly influenced by his native climate and fellow-countrymen. On the contrary he derives his inspiration from quite different sources. What matters most for him and the psychological interests he describes in a prose full of minutely detailed and uneasy recollections is the name of Katherine Mansfield. Yet this does not mean that he is not a solid writer on his own merits.

Eduardo De Filippo's name is well known. He is certainly the best Italian playwright in prose: the *" teatro di Eduardo "* always draws packed houses and endless repeat-performances. Einaudi are bringing out *" Napoli Milionaria,"* De Filippo's comedy in Neapolitan dialect, and others are to be published shortly. He has proved himself a brilliant writer with deep insight and an ability to strike notes ranging from pathos to wild hilarity and irony. His work is both convincing and enjoyable.

Another prose prize, the " Saint Vincent," was to have been awarded last Autumn but it has been postponed for a few months. Three writers are selected for it, an Italian, a Frenchman and a Swiss, and they are chosen by an international jury. The leading Italian candidate was, and is still, Elio Vittorini who is at present working on a new novel: *" Il bersagliere e la garibaldina."*

In 1950 Carlo Levi published his great chronicle, *" L'orologio,"* which is one of the most important documents of the post-war period. With *" La nuova Tebaide,"* Nicola Lisa has given further proof of his poetic prose, full of magic and celestial beings. In *" Malafumo,"* Antonio Baldini has collected together a series of radio talks and once again offers readers his humour and his kindly yet pungent observation. With *" Ho visto il tuo cuore,"* Gianna Manzini has continued her fascinating work which is sustained by an impressive discipline of style that reminds one of Virginia Woolf. Bonaventura Tecchi has published his finest novel: *" Valentina Velier."* Giovanni Papini has made a collection of some of his prose writings in *" Le pazzie del poeta."* With his short novel, *" Cancroregina,"* Tommaso Landolfi has carried his surrealist experiments a step further.

Meanwhile other writers have been working away.

Alberto Moravia has finished a new novel, *" Il conformista,"* which is coming out in the Spring. Corrado Alvaro is shortly publishing the first volume of his journal, *" Quasi una vita."* G. B. Angioletti is working on a long novel whose theme is the tragedy of everyday life of man in contemporary society. It is to be called *" Giobbe."* Vasco Pratolini is just finishing a novel set in Naples.

Strictly speaking all this does not belong to a chronicle of 1950, but it helps to give a fuller picture of the year.

When I spoke of the young poets I mentioned first of all the two trends along which their work is shaping: on the one hand the polemics of social obligation or *engagement,* a disturbing novelty; on the other, the tradi-

tional development of literary experiences that are closer to us (Mallarmé, Ungaretti, Eliot). The same two trends can be seen in the work of the young novelists : neo-realism on the one hand, and on the other the tradition of Manzoni or Verga; 19th century France or Proust; Joyce or Kafka; Mann or Faulkner. (It is important to make clear straight away that though the French writers, and Faulkner or Hemingway, may have been responsible for suggesting a certain direction, they are not connected with the polemics and distortions occurring in Italy to-day and which frequently have political aims.)

The " Hemingway Prize," which is managed by the publishers, Mondadori, and richly endowed by the author himself, has become the official competing ground of neo-realism in Italy. In 1949 awards went to such writers as Romualdo Romano, a Sicilian, for *" Scirocco,"* and Luigi Incoronato, a Neapolitan, for *" Scala a San Polito,"* and this increased the general perplexity regarding their efforts. For their work is often of an arbitrary and dilettante character, and conceived in such a way that it is easy for them to pass off contraband goods under the seal of novelty and of a " new outlook." This " new outlook " is spread by a particular political tendency that aims, even on the literary pages of the newspapers, at substituting the " workers " and modern grammatical errors for the " writers " and traditional discipline of style.

But this year the jury of the " Hemingway " declared that it was unable to award the prize owing to the mediocrity of the work submitted. This was a defeat for this particular brand of neo-realism (which also has supporters in Silvio Micheli and Guido Seborga). There are other writers, like Italo Calvino, who represent the neo-realistic tendency in quite a different and meritorious way.

Among the youngest writers who adhere to tradition, Guglielmo Petroni is especially outstanding through his long short story : *" La casa si muove."* Other names worth mentioning for 1950 are Callegari, author of *" I Baroni,"* Lea Quaretti, Angela Padellaro and Elio Bartolini.

Besides the state of polemics existing in literature owing to the diversity of tendencies, there is an even more lively conflict between journalism and literature. The terms of the quarrel can be summarised as follows : certain weekly newspapers that pour off the printing presses have a vast public and their contributors have a vast reputation : serious novels, on the other hand, essays and poetry are not bought. A good volume of short stories was printed some years ago with 353 copies; it may well be that it has not sold out yet. This is what causes journalists to assume they have taken the place of literature and to claim to fulfil what were once literature's tasks.

The debate flared up again this Summer with the publication of a first novel called *" La Fiorentina "* by the woman writer, Flora Volpini. Many successive editions of the novel were sold out. Reactions were of opposite kinds. There was high praise from the weekly newspapers, whereas the literary writers were reserved or indulged in open criticism. In the swiftness of the telling, the subjects treated, the real facts brought to light and in its taste for gossip and scandal, *" La Fiorentina "* is a good example of how to profit from the best that is offered by journalism and imposed by the mass production of papers. I personally am decidedly on the side of literature and there is no need for me to discuss the matter further.

In the same way Curzio Malaparte, though he has considerably greater stature and undeniable gifts, is another writer who has great success with his readers and little with literary critics. His activity knew no pause in 1950.

In Italy to-day literary criticism is playing an important rôle, both in the field of linguistic research and in the analysis of current affairs. I shall not pause here to make a list of the works published, however significant they may be. I shall only point out that research is even more obviously dependent on the political views of the authors than other writing. Side by side with the traditional critical method (in its various forms that include historians and stylists, philologists and linguists) there has arisen in these last years, though with results that are poor and petty in my opinion, the so-called Marxist criticism that places an economic and social presupposition at the basis of every aesthetic judgment. For example there has been an attempt to

prove that the "*Orlando Furioso*" was begotten in relation to the agricultural situation of its period in Emilia; or again, an endeavour to liquidate certain contemporary writers like Cecchi and Ungaretti who are affirmed to be the outcome of a capitalist society. Yet it must be recognised that not a few of the critics who have now adopted this method did, in the past, show a high standard of critical intelligence.

Connected with the various political tendencies there are the literary reviews, but they are few, impoverished and unknown. In keeping with their views on the subject, the Marxists support no periodical that is specifically literary. Benedetto Croce continues to bring out "*La Critica*"; Francesco Flora has founded "*Letterature Moderne*," an international review; in Rome there is the bi-annual periodical, "*Botteghe Oscure*," which is finely presented and contains full short novels, poetry, stories and translations, all of them of outstanding interest. The weekly "*Fiera Letteraria*" provides good information. Two new reviews were started in Florence in 1950, with alternate numbers devoted to literature and to the arts. It will be remembered that during the last few years it was in Florence that the greatest number and the most important literary reviews were started: "*Voce*," "*Lacerba*," "*Leonardo*," "*Solario*," "*Letteratura*," "*Frontespizio*" and "*Campo di Marte*." Recently other reviews have been founded: "*Paragone*" which is edited by the most celebrated Italian art critic, Roberto Longhi, and by Anna Banti, an outstanding novelist who has also done excellent translations of Virginia Woolf; "*L/A*," a review of literature and art, edited by Alessandro Bonsanti who has already founded several important literary periodicals. Then there are the "anthology" reviews, which have no definite tendencies, but are edited by particular literary groups.

Finally I must mention the inauguration of the Third Programme in Italian broadcasting. It consists of two hours of transmission each evening, conceived and edited with a specifically cultural interest, following the example of the time-honoured Third Programme of the B.B.C. The "*Terzo Programma*" is already an important organ for the diffusion of culture and will become more important with the passage of time and with the increase of its hours of broadcasting.

So we have had a year that has not been among the richest. The work of the novelists, especially of the younger ones, has been more outstanding that that of the poets. On the whole the literary prizes were awarded cautiously.

The polemics that still continue, and the work that has been going on but which has not yet received publicity, all contribute to making 1950 fruitful in its promise of a good output for the year we have now started.

LEONE PICCIONI.

(translated by Baptista Gilliat-Smith)

POINTS OF VIEW

TWO REVALUATIONS OF SCHILLER

Schiller by WILLIAM WITTE. (BLACKWELL, OXFORD, 12/6)
Schiller by H. B. GARLAND. (HARRAP, 15/-)

By a curious accident, the Goethe Bicentenary evoked only one new English monograph on Goethe, Professor Barker Fairley's *A study of Goethe* (1948), but two on Schiller, the first for over forty years. Though both are the work of university teachers of German literature, they are addressed not only to their pupils but to the general public, all quotations for instance being given in German for the one group and in English for the other. Both aim at a revaluation of Schiller as an unduly neglected writer. 'Misunderstood by his countrymen, who have tried in defiance of the facts to make a consciously national poet of him,' says Professor Garland, 'and neglected by other countries because rhetoric translated so easily turns to bombast, Schiller has still to meet a just valuation. The originality of his aesthetic thought is a minor aspect of his genius. Before all else he is one of the great playwrights of the European tradition.' Dr. Witte does not dispute Schiller's greatness as a dramatist, though he too deplores his false admirers and is in general more critical than Professor Garland, but he lays special stress on the 'vital message for our own age' which he finds in Schiller's philosophical poems and aesthetic writings and draws attention to the human interest and the quality of the writing in his letters. It is interesting to note that a recent German monograph, by Melitta Gerhard, which appeared a year later than these English works, also points to the relevance for our own time of Schiller's idea of an aesthetic education and attempts a critical revaluation of the plays and ballads which made Schiller's name.

It is inevitable that writers on Schiller to-day should tend to be apologetic, we feel, when we remember how shockingly his writings have been abused by his countrymen for purposes of political propaganda, partly perhaps merely for the same reason which leads our advertisers to exploit nursery-rhymes, because they are familiar to all, but partly also because of the twists that could be given to that ambiguous word 'freedom' which he uses so lavishly. Before 1848 it was interpreted as freedom of the rising middle class to attain to what they felt to be their rightful position in politics, so that in many small states his plays came to be looked upon by the censor as dangerously democratic. After the submergence of the liberals it often meant rather freedom of the fatherland from foreign domination, as it had done earlier, during the Wars of Liberation. At the centenary celebrations in 1859 Schiller was extolled as a self-made man and a leader in Germany's civilising mission. For more intellectual circles he stood for that inner freedom which was all a cultured man cared about, no matter what demands the state might make. So the interpretation varied from age to age and from group to group, until in Nazi times, finally, the official line was to praise Schiller as one of the few political poets of the Germans, their foremost educator for the responsibilities of a world-power, in contrast to the cosmopolitan hedonist, Goethe.

If that is what Schiller has to live down in Germany, in England it is remembered against him—by those few who remember him at all—that for Carlyle he had been one of the pillars of that 'noble, patient, deep, pious and solid Germany' which Carlyle championed against France in 1870. In the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century the idealistic humanism of the German Classics found many admirers among English readers. Schiller was a supreme example of German plain living and high thinking. The reaction began even in the 'seventies, partly for political reasons, obvious enough in the age of Bismarck, partly because of the fact that the richer and more powerful it grew, Germany, though still pre-eminent in science and scholarship, steadily lost ground in literature and art to the 'heartless, sneering, God-forgetting French,' as Carlyle had called them, as well as to the newly dis-

covered Russians and Scandinavians. Schiller continued to be read chiefly by the older generation, or in those schools and universities where German was taught, as one of the German Classics. School editions of his works abounded, but few even of the professed Germanists had the heart to write about him at any length, until the centenary of his death (1905) called forth Professor J. G. Robertson's rather perfunctory sketch, *Schiller after a century.*'

The boldness of these two new biographers is therefore much to be admired, for it is no easy task to 'sell' Schiller to the modern English reader. Even the student of German is apt to have had a plethora of Schiller at an age when he could see in him only a long-winded dead classic, whose archaic language was a museum of figures of speech and grammatical and stylistic curiosities with Greek names, important in examinations. Few had the good fortune to see him acted, so that his plays never acquired for them, as they did for German boys and girls, whatever their elders might be writing about him, the romantic charm that attaches itself to the first plays one is allowed to see. The enthusiasm of an adolescent German audience for *The Robbers* is (or used to be) something that has to be seen to be believed, the kind of excitement our children reserve for *Peter Pan,* and performances of *Wilhelm Tell* in Switzerland are equally memorable occasions of infectious enjoyment.

Yet it is a common experience with those who occupy themselves seriously with German literature to find that as they get to know Schiller better he somehow acquires a hold on them, however unsympathetic they may have been towards him at first. Though his work is strangely mixed, there is something impressive about it. It is seldom, however, for purely aesthetic reasons that we admire him. If we like him, we put it down to his personality, or his aesthetic philosophy, or his ideas about education through art. We find his plays striking but full of faults, of his poems only the philosophical ones and one or two ballads give unmixed pleasure, and even in his best creative writing of any kind we fear that he may at any minute lapse into rhetoric, not merely where it is dramatically, appropriate but because routine is triumphing, we feel, in a tired man, over artistic sensibility. He seldom astonishes us with unique felicities of expression such as abound in Goethe. Too often his language is abstract and colourless and his metaphors tired. It is a plain fact, as Schiller himself saw, that his poetic talent was on a lower level than Goethe's, yet it is a level which compares favourably with all but the highest in German literature, and Schiller left none of it unused.

If we find Schiller's work uneven, we must remember that he was more dependent on the public than Goethe, who could afford to snap his fingers at it. Schiller was usually either writing for literary periodicals, almanachs and the like for his daily bread, or he was providing plays to be acted immediately by a particular theatre, Mannheim at first, then Weimar or Berlin. He could not think, like Goethe's poet in the 'Prologue on the stage,' simply of posterity, but like the Merry Andrew there, he needed a full house. Except for a small élite, it was a thoroughly sentimental public, with the confused sense of values of half-educated people in an age of transition, sure only of the rights of the heart, the virtues of family life. The plays of Iffland and Kotzebue reflect it even more clearly, but what the general public seemed to like best in Schiller was what he had in common with Iffland, the stagy and sentimental features. It is clear from some of the papers which Schiller left, particularly his *Perkin Warbeck* fragments, that he consciously calculated the effect of each scene, and the astonishing continuity of his success in Berlin proves that he did so to good effect, but at the cost of some concessions.

The appeal of Schiller's plays, from the outstanding success of *The Robbers* onwards, went, however, far beyond the sentimental. In spite of their obvious immaturities they clearly have from the first the stuff of drama in them, for Schiller had one gift at least which Goethe lacked, he knew what made a situation effective on the stage. Professor Garland probably claims too much for him when he says that 'his creative imagination—though not his intellect—is of Shakespearian type. He discards his own identity and enters in spirit into the separate and divergent characters of his work.' Many

of his young heroes strike us as being variants of a single type, with many traits of the author himself. His motivation seldom has Shakespeare's supreme naturalness. The main situations are striking, but the connecting links are far-fetched. As Coleridge put it: 'Schiller has the material Sublime; to produce an effect, he sets a whole town on fire, and throws infants with their mothers into the flames, or locks up a father in an old tower. But Shakespeare drops a handkerchief, and the same or greater effects follow.' Yet Coleridge would have agreed with Hazlitt (quoted by Dr. Witte) on *The Robbers:* 'The first reading of that play is an event in one's life which is not to be forgotten,' as we see from his early sonnet to Schiller, 'Bard tremendous in sublimity,' and for those who read the play early enough, Hazlitt's remark is still true, so surely does it appeal to the boyish idealism which delights in a Robin Hood.

There is no doubt that Schiller's plays, those of his maturity as well as those of his youth, have dated, as Shakespeare's have not. They had an emotional and intellectual appeal for his time, and for a generation or so later, which they will never have again, though their dramatic qualities may still assure them of success where the acting tradition they have created is unbroken, as in Germany itself. Perhaps the chief reason for this partial loss of effectiveness is the very fact which German critics sometimes make their chief claim to fame, that they are philosophical tragedies, or at least dramas of ideas, 'not the intense drama of passion,' in Coleridge's judgment, 'but the diffused drama of history.' The drama of passion may move any age, but there is usually a time limit to the appeal of ideas and of philosophies of history.

Ideas were however themselves a passion with Schiller, and that is what saves his best poems, the philosophical ones, as Dr. Witte clearly brings out. We cannot share Schiller's enthusiasm for friendship and for human brotherhood now, more's the pity, as Beethoven could. Outside the Ninth Symphony *The Song to Joy* falls flat. But his passion for the intellectual life and for the creation and appreciation of beauty can communicate itself to us, and it makes poems like *The Ideal and Life* deeply moving. All his friends tell us that he lived so much for ideas that there was an atmosphere almost of saintliness about him, which lifted him as Goethe says in his lament, the *Epilogue to Schiller's 'The Bell,'* high above the mean and commonplace. Carlyle was quite right then in feeling that there was something ascetic and dedicated about Schiller. It reveals itself first, somewhat crudely, in the revolutionary fervour of his *Robbers* and *Cabal and Love,* indictments of a mean-spirited age and of the creaking institutions of the ancien régime. Rousseau had evoked here the idealistic enthusiasm of a young man, fresh from the university, for the emancipation of the middle class, so that the plays were recognised by the French, after the Revolution, as heralds of its spirit. They have lost much of this appeal now, but they have saving dramatic qualities in the theatre, showing as they do 'not merely characters reacting to events which happen to them and around them,' as Dr. Witte says, 'but character and interplay of characters creating events'; and for its realistic presentation of contemporary political and social problems the second of them remained unique in Germany until the time of the Naturalists.

In his 'classical' plays, from *Wallenstein* onwards, Schiller's primary aim was no doubt the purely aesthetic one of making the maximum use of the dramatic form. He was trying to create in one generation a truly German form of drama, worthy to stand beside that of Greece, France and England, and he conducted ceaseless experiments with features derived from these earlier classicisms, with little in the way of a German tradition to help him. But he had to hold his contemporary audience, with consequences pointed out above, and for his own satisfaction and that of his more intelligent listeners, he had to motivate the actions of his characters by an appeal to first principles, to a 'philosophy of life.' In those years, we must remember, the theatre was coming to be taken very seriously in Germany for its supposed influence on conduct, and the romantic notion was constantly gaining ground that any author worth his salt must invent his own religion or working philosophy. We can see now that this was asking for impossibilities. To provide

a classicism that would last, Schiller needed the support of a tradition. Lacking it, his dramas, in spite of all the merits to which Professor Garland and Dr. Witte draw our attention—the latter's study of *Wallenstein* in particular is extremely thorough and persuasive—are magnificent improvisations in the world of what he called ' aesthetic semblance,' excellent theatre, triumphs of virtuosity, but not finally satisfying interpretations of life and character. Compared with Shakespeare's great characters, figures in the round, Mary Stuart and the Maid of Orleans are, as it were, in low relief, and Wallenstein is a kind of Janus. Compared with *Oedipus Tyrannus, The Bride of Messina* appears a synthetic product, full, as Dr. Witte says, of ' questionable artifices.'

Both the new studies of Schiller pay some attention to his prose writings. Professor Garland presents the life and all the principal works chronologically, without stressing problematical features, writing as he is for readers who will include sixth-form schoolboys. As a first introduction his book is admirable. Dr. Witte varies the perspective and introduces illuminating comparisons, ranging widely over European literature. His study culminates in a third section, devoted to the playwright. In the first section he makes good Goethe's claim, that Schiller's letters were amongst the very best of his writings, and he makes skilful use of them as an autobiography. In the second he discusses, along with the poems, as clearly as is possible in the short space at his disposal, the aesthetic views of Schiller, dwelling more on Shaftesbury's influence than on Kant's, and the *Letters on education through art,* the conclusions of which he compares with some ideas of A. N. Whitehead. Schiller's aesthetics are highly speculative, what Saintsbury calls ' metacritical.' He is one of the ' terrible simplifiers ' who stimulate but do not win our lasting assent. His ideas on aesthetic education, though speculative too, are still worthy of close attention. Something similar to them may be found to-day in such different writers as Mr. Herbert Read and Sir Osbert Sitwell. Rooted as he was in the Enlightenment, Schiller rejected otherworldliness and the idea of original sin, and he believed in progress. The ideal civilisation would be attained in time, he thought, perhaps in a very long time, by the help of education, and it was what he called art that had been, and would continue to be, the chief humanising factor in man's long history. Such a view can only be maintained by stretching the meaning of the ambiguous term art—but Schiller's philosophy in general suffers from his inexact use of words—and it seems less plausible in an age which is not so sure of its inherited scheme of ethical values as Schiller's contemporaries still remained in Germany, without realising how much they owed to previous ages and to other influences than art.

In all his aesthetic writings, as in his plays and poems, Schiller is predominantly concerned with the idea of human freedom. In the last resort it is perhaps as a living example of the power of ' Geist,' of the mind over the body and over circumstances, that he chiefly impresses us. This is what Thomas Mann makes the key-note of his impressionistic Schiller-study, *A Heavy Hour,* and it is not so different from Carlyle's view as it might seem. It may be a poor recommendation of Schiller for a time when philosophers speak of mind as ' the ghost in the machine,' but theirs will be a poor philosophy if, in its study of human behaviour, it takes no account of lives such as his.

W. H. BRUFORD.

RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR

Our Lady's Tumbler by RONALD DUNCAN. (FABER, 8/6)

This festival play for Salisbury Cathedral is based on the Old French story, " Del Tumbeer Nostre Dame." The drama in the tale must inevitably turn on the contrast and tension between the tumbler and his brethren. All of them except the Abbot, who is not much more than a master of ceremonies, are artists of one sort or another, a poet, a

musician, and a gardener. The gardener gets the most satisfactory poem, since it is difficult without the music to judge the quality of the musician's anthem. The canzone of Brother Sebastian, which we see in the course of composition, is in the end rather a laboured affair. There is better poetry in the aria of the concealed chorus. The hymns at the beginning and the end are good without being outstanding. The climax of the play, which reveals its real originality, is the tumbler's own solitary scene, where he triumphs by his failure, his struggle to dance as he could before his physical strength failed him, his tumble into death. His words here are printed as verse, but as verse that has failed as he fails. They succeed much better in interpreting failure than Brother Sebastian's struggles towards composition. But is the fall of the rose from the Virgin's hand a sufficiently dramatic conclusion? I am not sure, though I am glad the author did not attempt to make her descend like Hermione from a pillar.

This is really a play about being a playwright, on the limits of art and the limit of understanding:

> I tried to grasp it in words,
> I failed.
> Had I found it in words,
> it would have been enough.

In the end the Abbot says, speaking for the statue,

> Seek not to embrace Me
> But rather that I should embrace thee.

So many kinds of verse are involved that no rhythmical continuity was possible. I think it was a pity that the Abbot and the tumbler were not allowed to speak in prose where no effort towards art is being represented. Verse of this sort:

> No; wait until you see the procession
> coming up the aisle
> And don't forget to snuff them immediately
> the ceremony's over

does not contribute anything to the tension of success and failure. It goes without saying that the wit is often excellent.

> Why must everyone, especially in a
> monastery,
> assume that unless you've got a pail in one
> hand
> and a hammer in the other—you're not
> doing anything?
>
> As a matter of fact, I was thinking.

But somebody should be insisting that Brother Sebastian finish his sweeping before

> trying to finish a poem
> which I've been trying to write
> with a broom in one hand and . . .

GEORGE EVERY, S.S.M.

Collected Poems by ANDREW YOUNG. (JONATHAN CAPE, 10/6)

This new collection of Andrew Young's poems will delight not only his present readers and disciples, but also the larger number of those whose taste directs them not into the main channels of contemporary verse but rather into the quieter by-ways of nature—or countryside poetry, from Drayton and Tusser to Sackville-West and Norman Nicholson. Part of this collection appeared in an earlier edition of collected poems, published nearly fifteen years ago: to these Mr. Young has added two later books of verse, and his 'mystery' play NICODEMUS. The combination is striking. In the play, the verse is nerveless, almost flabby (Mr. Young uses the conventional iambic pentameter with very little variation) and the action is so slow as to reduce the intended meditative mood to a drowsy dream. Here, it seems, the Presbyterian divine dominates over the priest and poet, inhibiting each from full and free exercise of his office. Not of this stuff is true religious drama made: God is not glorified by inhibitions.

In the poems, however, there is a splendid interplay of poet and priest, recalling the earlier practice of Anglican parsons like George Herbert, before the decay of culture and religion reduced this to the piety of a Keble or the moralism of a Kingsley. Some-

times the poet may try too much to compensate for the stern Calvinist formation and err towards a sentimental pantheism . . .

'As though the earth had worn so thin
I saw the living spirit within,
Its beauty almost pain to bear'—

Usually, however, Mr. Young shows as keen an observation of natural phenomena as Gilbert White, a sharp accuracy of description shot through with an authentically religious sensibility. This may not be poetry of the greater sort, which should express and enlighten men's deepest experience. But it is an indispensable and (we hope) imperishable element in our national literature, conserving the sense of man's place in the universe through his kinship with all created things. It lights the path toward the fulfilment of his nature and destiny by means of a reverent apprehension of the Creator's operation through His creatures.

PATRICK MCLAUGHLIN.

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