

THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL

Volume 1 - Number 4 Summer 1951

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Drawings by James R. Thompson

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ON COMING OUT OF ETHER

The poppy crowded redness
 Rains the rain of head and heart
 And rents a rainbow slash across
 The churning cavalcade of pain.
 Wild waves leaning, leaning,
 Breaking in a sudden roar of foam,
 The bleach white break of fright,
 The light bright shriek of gulls
 Or voices is it, is it, sound
 Of surf be black white greying shades
 Of sound and sense? Words
 Of meaning moaning, saying, speak.

"He's coming round now."

O round and sound and round
 The sound of, the faces of, the love
 That bounds the white white walls up
 In the straight and steady shape of room.
 Crop head flowers flower in a vase,
 The flying window roars in day,
 And here, here, the giant people
 Of my life and love! Hello, hello,
 And welcome!

Sol Stein

2

FAUST AS HEMLOCK

See what the moon has built:
High on the cogitating stones,
Where the lemon fog chills its brazen throat,
A gargoyle takes the moon, while I
Disrobe a candle with my stare,
Immodest jackal of sagacity.
I'll conjure, by my Greek inductions,
That moonstruck doctor and his dancing beard
Out of the squeezed wax, impersonate
The shadow spat up on the wall
By a spilt flame, until I split
My eyeball down the angle of its sight
And leap from my flesh into the laughter
Of doomed Athens, in my tight fist
The rage lanced by the hemlock tooth
That chews our wisdom when we covet it.
The moon rolls its eye; I shut mine
And slide down its split nerve to where
Hell is a gesture of audacity—
Socrates, you won it when you burnt
By poison the bone's laughable wax
And taught Faust in his womb, teaching
That breath is an easy lie, a shadow
Or a pox of the celibate marrow—
Pull down these stones on my twisted eyes
And I'll swim the long nerve up
Though each touch is a knife, till I see
The gargoyle moon fainting away,
The mob at Athens, Mephistopheles
Who lost your secret in a cup of clay.

Stanley Rosen

THOMAS HARDY'S PRAYER IN 1951

Slowly bending round the global
 Treadmill of man's soul,
 Solely spending Charon's obol
 After all that toil,
 Why have we to tread at all?
 Holy Juggler of earth's snowball
 Who, unmoved, made planets mobile,
 Be less nimble, be less noble,
 Drop them, let them fall.
 Larcenist who'll steal our "hybris"
 When we're drugged with death,
 Arsonist whose spark amoebas
 Fanned with upward breath,
 Why hast housed that fire with
 Hearts half black, half white like zebras,
 Heads made light by "Cuba libres,"
 Too few Solomons and Shebas,
 Too much mask and myth?
 Dutiful racers round rotundas,
 Why — where — do we go?
 Beautiful faces drowned in sand is
 All we are or know.
 God, for God's sake, let us go;
 Keep us not with dangled candies;
 Only way to understand us
 Lonely pacers on verandas
 Is — let go, let go!

Peter Viereck

4

FRAGMENT

(from "America I Love You")

Well here's a salute to
that clean old man who's
out every day fishing up
coins with a string and
a bit of gum through the
subway gratings on Broad-
way he says that he aver-
ages five dollars a week
and he says that's enough
for a man who don't drink.

James Laughlin

WELL ALL RIGHT

if that's how it is
then that's how it
is & I'll just have
to put you back in
that box labeled
"wonderful people."

James Laughlin

TO THE ANGEL

I Will you never leave me in peace,
 You who attack me every day
 Blighting the roots of belief
 And each new shoot of praise,
 Stark angel?

Every human face
 Shows your presence. I am accused
 By what I cannot be and lose
 You when I find myself again.
 Yet wherever I go, you are.
 Wherever I turn, the doors close,
 The weather changes to dark.
 Do you destroy to make me live?
 Am I so driven and shaken
 Only by love, only by love?
 And the one answer given
 Always pain within pain
 Where the green must wither
 And the desert all we share?

II It was you who asked the first question,
 Stark angel with no wings.
 You showed me the leafless desert,
 The shadowless sand,
 And I followed you there, believing
 The answer was love or death
 Or the one place where these two

6

Faces might be reconciled,
First passion, then emptiness,
The white radiance at the heart of pain,
The immense hopeless gift into space.
I have gone to the limits of the world
To answer that first question.
I have followed you so far into the desert
That now I live on hunger alone,
Drink my own thirst and still burn.
But you do not listen or will not turn.
We neither die nor live here,
We have not found the spring,
The cool water of peace.
We have only found new and more terrible ways
To burn and to be burned.

III I am nothing, only the words are real.
Radiance pours out of the nothing I am,
Light from a wound. This does not seem
But is, this rests outside and in time,
In balance and reserve all I am not.
What matter that the heart is chaos,
The body become so poor and small,
Withered by parting beyond consolation?
I lose all earthly joys in this one joy.
The tree of light shows where the seed grew,
The radiant leaves promise and hope forever,
The poem that surpasses all self-pities
And tells of love if only to the skies,
But to them says it every day, every hour:
I am nothing, but the words of praise endure.

May Sarton

THE BAT

Fear makes monsters of our love.
Tonight the bat waving crazily
Along the half-lit hall, like
The carnival caterpillar shutting
And opening, eclipsed our love. Poor
Thing, how was he to know
He entered to death? But the window
Was open and his empty eyes failed
Him in our trap. Then to have closed
The window! We are undone in such
A simple act. But the bat was in
And the lights went on and the house was wide
With terror. Pauline struck with her rolled
Newspaper, shielding her unkempt hair
With a frantic hand. On the green
Velveteen divan his folded wings
Prayed our mercy. O little mouse
Of the air, thy stuttering cries
Frightened us the more. And braver
Than the ant that dares death to bring
Home crumbs, we flailed thee on that green
Divan and shuffled thy limp body
Into a paper bag. Only
To have turned off the light and opened
The window to thy blindness . . . Self-
Contempt and a week of utter darkness
Will plague us at thy terrible end.

Thomas Cole



CORAL CITY

Hidden in the deeps of Being,
The will to hear, to see lies sleeping;
Shaping is working toward awaking.

From embryonic slime within,
Sentient worlds are modeling,
Molding the necessary thing.

So these organic structures grope,
 Knowing neither fear nor hope,
 Working upward slope by slope.

Above the sense of space, the chain
 Purposive, welding cane on cane,
 Pushes coralliferous gain.

But all the while from billionth year,
 Still mute, unconscious, deaf to hear,
 Building blindly, tier on tier.

Alida Carey Gulick

JUBILATE

Now yellow and blue spun into winter wheat,
 Hold little skies within each saturate hollow.
 Across the meadow at the aspen's feet,
 The banks of the wakened stream are all a-wallow,
 A-flood, whence turtle's plodding trek will follow
 A blind ascent to where she'll lay her young:
 A cache of jelly beans. Here's cress and mallow,
 Cowslip and circinate fern all overhung
 By new-born willow kittens. Down among
 The ooze and slime of leaves long-pressed together,
 The careful worms start plowing unheard, unseen,
 While in the applauding populus, grackles blether.
 Now Mourning Cloaks will burst their imprisoning
 seams,
 And Sphinxes sit as though new-risen from dreams.

Alida Carey Gulick

10

AND AFTER EIGHT DAYS AGAIN, THOMAS CALLED DIDYMUS RETURNS FROM AN UNACCOMPANIED JOURNEY TO EMMAUS: St. John xx: 24-29

They say they saw. Well then, suppose they saw?
Still I did not, and my road was the same.
Where were His wounds? How could they miss that face?
I'd know that face if it were only skull.

There's been too much sight-seeing since He died,
And each man has a Sign for souvenir.
The Magdalene's fable grows each time,—poor wench!
The opened tomb; they go; when she's alone,
Behold, an angel, then — God bless us! — two:
And finally the poor old gardener
Protests her heckling mildly with her name,
(Why, every man in town knows her red head!)
And down she goes upon her knees and calls
The poor old stick Rabboni. Ah, the tomb
Was empty, and the gardener himself.
But now of course the others claim as much:
Could this bitch wind what they could not,
The brace of matrons and the old-maid pack?
That Hunter, dead, is quarry to their lust
At last. Alive, He was no ladies' man.

Though, leave women out, there'd be no bush to burn.
Old Simon's by his guilt strung upside down:
The cock-crow canceled out that pointless ear.
His conscience, so soured it will not again
Digest denial, belches up assent,
Relieved to have the pressure off his heart.

There is to John no credit for belief:
 If I should go with scratches in my palms,
 He'd call **me** Lord and never search my face.
 So blinded by that Light he dreams, he wakes
 To darkness, like a man who looks too long
 Into the sun: the colors fade from truth;
 The honest shapes of earth go blank and flat;
 And light and shadow flicker alternate.
 Our world dissembles darkly in his gaze.

Our world is all I know. Oh, there are more,
 They say—a Roman Empire of belief;
 But I was never out of Galilee
 Until He came, and haven't got far since.
 He laid us out a course that tacks through such
 Imperial distances I have no ship
 To follow. Now, without His pilot eye,
 The others will get lost along His Way,
 Dragged down in rip-tides or in shallows calmed,
 Like John, already islanded in time.
 Me, I'm no captain; I don't know the stars;
 I sail to fish, and then I don't sail far.

After my father died also, as I'd near home,
 With breath held strictly and with eyes transfixed
 By what they would but should not see again,
 I'd pray, "Until I'm there. At least for **now**." But
 I never was a child for sugar-teats.

The Nicodemus-faithful huddled in
 Will bleat again: We saw; you must have faith.
 They mean in what they say, not what they saw.
 If that will wash, then so will Pilate's hands.

Why was I singled out? God knows I would.

Eugene Haun

12

HALF-CHILD

For ages half-child cowered in the hole,
Secreted in the dankness from the Big Ones;
Who flew in planes and dropped bombs on his home,
That roared, rebounding like a hundred thunders,
That slashed the city streets like giant pin wheels,
Entombing all his family but him,
That made the ugly crooked scar on his face.
It was he who first found the hiding place,
The leader of the homeless little ones.
They caught the others but they could not find him;
His small sharp wits were pitted against them all.
The little thin boy with the hungry eyes,
He who was fleeter than the wind-swept shadows,
Whose bones lie in their crypt by the cellar wall.

Maude G. Totten

GOING DOWN TO ENNISKERRY

Going down to Enniskerry on a bright spring day
 The roads all white made enchantment for my sight
 Where the little fields came running out to play.

Going down to Enniskerry on a bright spring day
 I was laughing in the sun, and my thoughts every one
 Were as happy and as young as the sea's light spray.

Going down to Enniskerry on a bright spring day
 I left my youth behind with a wild and wandering wind
 So, good-bye, Enniskerry, and your bright spring day.

Padraig O'Horan

BALLERINA

This young leaf
 Is a ballerina of the bough
 Putting on her greenest dresses now,
 And for a moment brief
 Is loveliest in the sun:
 And lo! is now begun
 The Wind Dance while the grasses sway
 Applause as the green flounces stay
 In lovely symmetry
 Against the watching tree.

How beautiful, how bright
 This ballerina
 In the green and golden light.

Padraig O'Horan

14

IN THE DAYS OF RIN-TIN-TIN

In the days of Rin-Tin-Tin
There was no such thing as sin;
No boy-made mischief worth God's wrath
And the good dog dogged the badman's path.

In the nights the anguished horn of Bix
Gave presentiments of the pleasures of sex;
In the Ostrich Walk we walked by twos—
Ja-da, jing-jing, what could we lose?

The Elders mastered The Market, Mah-Jongg,
Readily admitted the Victorians wrong;
Everybody happy? Yeah, man! Who heard
Jeremiah raving, unkempt, absurd?

Daniel G. Hoffman

ACTUAL GRAPE

Begin
with actual grapes
in actual sun: they will prepare
you for the wine as if you could remember
the taste before your tongue: they will
prepare you too for raisins
that will be both meat
and sweet when you
are old at table
trying to recall
the actual
grape.

Louis Kent

WREATHS FOR THE PHOENIX

In August, when the laurels quench
Their leaves in dust, the phoenix dies:
Over the still green leaves he turns
His shielding breast. September burns:
October scatters from the pyre
Yellow flakes of phoenix fire.

November, when the ivies clench
The creviced rock, the phoenix sighs:
But what chilled listener will care
For ashen sorrows on such air?
December, January deep
Fold the laurels to their keep,

While inch on inch the ivies wrench
Stone from stone in subtle prise:
Then the phoenix, born to praise
Birth in ivies, death in bays,
Leaps to find them greenly grown
And calls the glossy wreaths his own.

Louis Kent

16

THE MISCHIEF

What is the subtle harmony of the senses?
It is that mischief of the profound.

That the pourings and roarings of the world
Lie underground: and over this world

An ancient beauty come: to strike dumb.
So it was when I opened the sea,

Turning the golden floodlock, and saw pour
The lavish splendor of archaic turbulence.

Time roared on. Yet over the world lay meaning.
The heart bore the failures of the gods.

Richard Eberhart



MONDAY MORNING MONTAGE—LONDON

- † Sunlight crumbing from rooftops beheads
 Once more the equestrian conqueror of Monday
 Columned on the skyline he divides.
- Sir, grant me, as you must, that to be human
 Man contradicts one minute with another
 At violence with his own calms and occasions.
- So these grenades of light shatter us all,
 A violence gathering at the heart of calm
 As a hearth-pot croons in gathering to a boil.
- So in a sea of English roofs I stir
 Half waterlogged with ease in a hot tub
 Watching my naked body sail the sky—
- A green-white corpse on a yellow rip of sun
 Floating on chimney pots by a pane's
 projection.
 A flowering bough on the waters. I near shore
- And rise from foam, a Goyan Aphrodite
 From my voyage of elements to a turkish towel,
 A dressing gown, and coffee at the sill.
- Below now bowlers roll in a swell of time
 Like buoys over their clerks, a squid-gray cat
 Licks itself on the red reefs of a bomb pit.
- This might be calm and yet it is not wholly
 Calm nor violence. Slyly in air
 A ghost raises my hand in a glassy mist
- And drains my cigarette. No time at all
 Or as good as any to be asking questions
 Out of the windows of another land,

18

A bathed rich idle man in his own reflection
Under the tourist sun, a year, two years,
Three years, perhaps, before his death in a war.

II The water knocks in the pipes: di-di-di-DAH.
V for Eroica. That's a pretty bathos
Out of the guts of plumbing. My man in the
window

Stirs in advance of his death like Chapter One
Of a book I am re-reading. I buried him once
On a last page. So he has no surprises:

I am re-reading him for style. On this page
The equestrian conqueror rears on the reflection
Of my man's head at a still center of time.

He gallops, but in no hurry. Everywhere
After all is the center of a universe,
The top of my man's head, the top of my own.

Unhurried my death waits at the center of all:
At this moment exactly a man in a field,
Is planting the day I shoot him through the eye,

A recruit from one country is polishing in another
A rifle whose butt I must prepare to gnaw
On a chance curve. I am, of course, just
supposing:

Graphically represented this would resemble
A Dow-Jones average of 48 staple stars
Computed on a base of 13 stripes.

And the wind blowing, and a brass band at the train.
Di-di-di-DAH. Save us a way to grace,
An index point. Give meaning to our graphs.

- III This question of my own private dying
 For public causes—I disapprove on principle.
 The morals of bullets are notoriously loose.
- Physically, they are carriers of all infection,
 Camp followers. What war have I ever trusted
 Enough to die for?—Not that I will not go:
- My man will say, "We might as well see the show."
 So we will see the show. But at once I imagine
 What heretofore only happened. I am in a
 plane
- Miles over Japan. We have been hit. The flames
 Have washed the plexiglass out of the blisters.
 The air
 Is minus 50. Burning, I am frost bitten;
- Frozen, I burn. There are perhaps ten seconds
 Before the explosion. Perhaps none at all.
 There is time for one thought only. What shall
 I think?
- My man smiles at the plot. Aesopian:
 The ice-colored goose in the jaws of the red fox.
 Everyone loves a story and a riddle.
- What would you think? What would you think,
 Edward?
 You, Jane? Quick, there's a time limit.
 Yes, there's an answer, but it will spoil it...
 Well,
- The way it happened the goose had given up
 Wheedling the fox. It spoke to itself only,
 And all it said, which it repeated twice, was .
- "Well, you damn fool," and beat its wings and died.
 Which may or may not be moral enough for
 the action,

20

And certainly is bad narrative technique:

Riddles are not to answer, and the well-made story
Must not conclude but always be expected.
Good hard truths. But wasted on the goose.

- IV But imagine, if you will, that we have met,
The glass shattered between us and our voices
No longer muffled by waking. Imagine
That you have watched a face change as in sleep
And leaned over its breathing infinite
As sleep itself, gently as a wish
Filters itself into a dream. Imagine
That you have stood just so, and the face spoke
And you heard your own question.—What has
been answered?
Nothing perhaps, but so you will understand
How a sky of rooks rips from the eaves of time
Darkening all light with the heart of light.
I mean to say there is a dream as full
Of wings as the wind from here to Hatteras.
There, every honest meeting is two ghosts
Walking the mid-Atlantic of that wind
Toward one another as through time itself
Where no horizon's higher than an ankle.
- V The water knocks again. Di-di-di-DAH. Enter
Mrs. Hamilton, poor old stick legs
Carrying too much body nowhere exactly
Through the cost of living. A maker of beds for
others
And morning's witness to all nights. Well then,

Did I sleep well? Thank you, I did, quite well.
 A sheet flows on the air, subsides like water
 From two fat thighs. Aphrodite Bedmaker
 Bent to the waters of sleep. Out of that sea
 It's a Fine Day, a sun to Warm a Soul,
 Will I be Going Out? I retire to shave
 A face with a lather beard in a cracked glass.
 The hour of examination: stretching of skin
 Over its bones. There's a pimple in the crow's
 feet,
 Hair growing out of the nose. How did these
 find me?
 On whom are these visitations? (There were two
 kings
 As like to one another as two falcons
 And where one raised a dove the other dove.)
 Knock on the door: "Is there anything else you wish?"
 "Thank you, Mrs. Hamilton, all's well."
 "Then here's clean towels and I'll be moving on."
 (An epitaph.) Stick legs across the floor
 And a door turning into another bed.
 A day that is from toothbrush to lotion,
 At the window the ghost of a pigeon descending
 in light,
 Sun bursting the chimney pots. Thank you, all's
 well.
 All's well. All's well. All's well. All's well.
 All's well.

John Ciardi

22

SAD SONGS, SOME HAPPY, ALL HUNGRY

Words came from the lips of the man singing
Sad songs, some happy, all hungry
For any group, a kind of chorus
Of simple men or children
Singing the words, then humming
The way a wind hums in the reeds,
No effort, like a saint born in hell
And singing of the heaven in him
And grass springing at his feet
The green, the spring rain green
Where elsewhere the iron seals all the earth
Where the feet of people walk on mines
Where all day they dug with their teeth
And never thought of walking
Where the saint walked singing
And they died without singing
Died they spinning their web of myths.
And the grass grew green on the turf
And the bones that sang not sang
Through the tears of the man that sang
Sad songs, some happy, all hungry.

Allen Kanfer

CELEBRATION FOR MY AGE

Cool antique desires have knelt
Fixing silence in a chorale of eyes,
Begging paroles which would be kept
In a touch, caroling proud applause
Of this gift of these years; so seldom caught,
So rarely savored, meagerly as wines
For its spectral bouquet, a benevolence
Bequeathed, for now, from thoughtful skies.

Then in shadows an octave below defeat
Of wishful chorales, guilty laws,
Its voice sounds in mercy's suite
And echoes from caverns of sea-retreat:

And with cause . . . but without the loss
The feat of tomorrow's empty shade
Surfeits us with its muted moss
And we loiter in today's arcade.

Carroll Arnett

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

It seems to me that Judson had some cause
In finally robbing the store and going to jail.
He showed at last his great respect for laws
In making sure of guilt while out on bail
Charged with having robbed it once before.
I knew he wasn't guilty of the first offense,
Though even then there wasn't much in store
For him but jail despite my strong defense.

As for the law, I began to wonder a bit—
In view of his race and record at the time—
If safety's needed from, or under it.
Now that the jury's freed from a greater crime,
I'm forced to consider here with some disgust
How Judson had to make his justice just.

Charles E. Ross

CHILD DANCING

That child went out
In a flurry of August
And the song she hummed
Was Ophelia's ditty
As she raised her arms
To a delicate balance
And danced her little
Childhood game.

Oh, you can laugh,
And you can sing,
And you can turn your face to the wall.

That child went out
Through a crazy green meadow
And the little song hopped
Like the eye of a sparrow
As she bent her arms
To the delicate wind
And danced her slyly
Childhood game.

Who sent that leaf
To a skittering balance?
Was it love
Set the child dancing?

Oh, you can laugh,
And you can sing,
And you can turn your face to the wall.

Harvey Shapiro

OPINION

The Poetry of Drama

The curious condition of modern English drama may be summed up in a single defiant clause: it is neither drama nor, in most instances, very good English.

Were I to extend this heresy, I should point out that, with a few remarkable exceptions, no writer of any country has produced anything approximating drama since that time when first the playwright as thinker pushed his foot into the face of the playwright as artist.

How far this hypothesis deviates from the approved attitude toward drama is fascinatingly apparent to even the most casual student of World, English, or American drama and theatre. For with the burgeoning of the middle class as an economic, humanistic, and materialistic society, the subsequent enhanced instability of all class divisions, the development of realism as an end rather than a means of art, the violent growth of positivistic science, and the dubious evolution of human thinking and understanding which permitted Taine to declare that "vice and virtue are products like sugar and vitriol!"—with all of these it became fashionable, indeed, almost obligatory, for the playwright to put aside his foolish trinkets of form and metre, of myth and morals for the more utilitarian elements of problems, proof, and propaganda.

Since, as all naturalistic thinkers were willing to demonstrate at the drop of an ideal, the universe is an inscrutable chaos, an ill-kept cave wherein man, deterministically tethered, exists unwanted and unwatched and since our purpose as playgoers could obviously be nothing more than the endeavor to see and to weep over the shadows of our pathetic helplessness reflected upon a

stage, the disintegration of the poetry of drama was as inevitable as the growth of the ponderous dialectics of Shaw, the psychological mouthings of O'Neill, the tasteless propagandizings of Brecht, and the vulgar re-write jobs of Broadway's many Hellmans and Millers.

Reactions against the triumph of naturalism in the drama have been as remarkably frequent as they've been unsuccessful. "Expressionism," "theatricalism," "formalism," "surrealism"—these and any number of less well known "isms" were futile attempts to return to a drama whose claim to distinction might be something more than prosaic tediousness and triviality. That these attempts were futile, that Maeterlinck, Rostand, Capek, Molnar, and Saroyan, among others, led revolutions memorable only for their ineffectuality is a comment on the method by which these playwrights tried to meet the desiccating implications of regnant philosophy.

For them, to revolt was to accept. Labeling undeniably true if vaguely unpleasant the dialectics of naturalism, they fled to their various ivory towers and whittled away on strange new forms of drama. Had not the walls of these towers been hung with the trappings of an alien universe and had not the substructures of the towers been the pilings of a weary fatalism, the plays that they conjured up might have been the beginnings of a new life for drama. As it was, the "revolutionary" drama differed from naturalistic drama only in that it was slightly more absurd.

I suspect that the vast majority of present-day theatre and drama aficionados would look upon the thesis that the dramatic art exists only in the unity of the points of view of the playwright and his audience—that is to say, some common denominator of social, ethical, moral, and artistic standards—with a mixture of horror and amusement.

Only the extremely naive individual, these earnest devotees might argue, only that individual who is dead to the vital trends of his civilization would imagine that a social or moral or any other sort of standard could be universal enough to function as an unifying element in

the modern world. This question, they might go on to point out, was raised and adequately polished off many years ago. Ibsen looked at social and ethical standards and proved them useless; our "advanced" playwrights of the 20's in America, those young men and women who concerned themselves so energetically with free-love and feminism, demonstrated the folly of moral standards. How, then, can I, how can anyone who would ally himself with this brave new world of atomic energies and television succumb to a pernicious conservatism that refuses to believe that all standards of good and evil, all hopes of human dignity are passe and poor taste?

The answer to this question, or so it seems to me, characterizes that which has been the second major reaction against naturalism in the drama. During the second and third decades of this 20th century, a vast dissatisfaction with not only the anti-aesthetic but with the anti-ethical and anti-moral elements of naturalism began to take positive form. No longer was the denial of a wasteland of metaphysical values as final and proper for our civilization to be the isolated expression of a boy fresh from Harvard. Men in diverse areas of intellectual endeavor made vital contributions. In the drama at least three important playwrights suggested that there are certain standards by which man may measure himself and in terms of which man is measured. These playwrights are Federico Garcia Lorca, T. S. Eliot, and Christopher Fry.

Even though Lorca was superficially an atheist, a lip-service disciple of 19th century confusion, he drew upon and wrote from within a national culture that better than any other in the Western World resisted the anti-traditional, anti-human impulses of 19th and 20th century naturalism. Because he was Spanish and because the conduct and traditions of the Spanish people furnished him material for his dramas, Lorca, whenever he dealt with the "primal" passions, with the animalistic urges that Dreiser would have called "chemisms," was concerned with the conflict between these urges and the restraining forces of custom, social attitudes, and what

might be designated as man's inner check or man's sense of moral proportion. With perhaps a single exception—**The Love of Don Perlimplin and Belisa in the Garden**—this conflict in Lorca's plays inevitably resulted in a "tragic" victory of man's passions over man's perceptions. Although this in itself would seem to indicate that Lorca was a naturalist, the fact that he acknowledged a respect for custom and tradition and the fact that he acknowledged the existence of free will and responsibility are patently anti-naturalistic.

Without Lorca's vantage-ground of a more or less stable social tradition, Eliot and Fry (the one an Anglican, the other a Quaker) turned to the ethical and moral stability of orthodox religion. As exemplified in **The Cocktail Party** or **The Lady's Not for Burning** or **Murder in the Cathedral** or **The Firstborn**, they both utilize traditional Christian structures as a means of exposition of some part of that sense of emotional and intellectual wonder that comes from the necessary human pursuit after the mysteries that are man's. In the same way that through the ritual of the church truth is made plain and belief sustained, so through Christian myths and attitudes Fry and Eliot hope to provide a framework that will assist man to perceive and to understand himself and his universe.

I began this article with the suggestion that modern English drama—and by this, of course, I mean English and American—is neither drama nor very good English. If in my enthusiasm I've overlabored the first point, I've completely neglected the second. Indeed since this originally was to be a discussion of poetic drama versus naturalistic prose drama, the neglect is probably a serious flaw. However, I have only to refer to any play, any act, any scene of O'Neill or Odets or Miller (or one of the other of the many "etceteras" who turn out stage pieces for the theatres of New York and London) for examples of the curiously processed English that is known as naturalistic prose drama. Further, I need only to point out that, significantly enough, Lorca, Fry, Eliot, and most of the large number of playwrights who are

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participating in this second major reaction against naturalism have used poetry in one form or another. The conclusions to be drawn from a comparison here seem rather obvious.

"Poetry," Fry has written, "is the language in which man explores his own amazement. It is the language in which he says heaven and earth with one word."

I wonder if Willy Loman could say heaven and earth with one word?

Charles Holt

The Moral Life and the Ethical Life. By Eliseo Vivas. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 390 pp. \$6.00

The relevance of philosophy to the central concerns of poets and critics is not always obvious. But it is always there, as I. A. Richards long ago demonstrated, in a way from which we have not yet fully recovered, in his **Science and Poetry**. If, for example, the objective world is really "value-free," as the philosophers say—adequately described in all its reality by physics and chemistry—then poets are little better than fools and poetry is, as some have called it, a "relic of the antique ages" of myth and superstition. For poets, almost to a man, write about values discovered, not values imagined or made up. As one of the best of our younger poets recently said to me, "As a poet I intuit—or imagine I intuit—the permanent beneath the flux, the values beneath a gregarious, hedonistic, materialistic surface."

Or again, to turn from poet to critic, I think it is not an accident that nearly all the best literary criticism of the past thirty years—and this has been a period of great criticism, perhaps more a critical period than a creative one—has come from critics out of sympathy with, or openly at war with, the dominant materialistic, pragmatic, instrumentalist, positivistic "climate of opinion." While the slanderous and unprincipled insinuations directed two years ago by a journal of ill fame against the critics were, as made, without foundation; yet there is a sense in which the attackers were on the right track: it is quite

true that the best critics of a great critical revival have been notably lacking in enthusiasm for the world-view of orthodox "liberalism." Although it remains possible to Untermeyer poetry and DeVoto fiction without acknowledging the binding force of any principles, it is becoming increasingly clear that to be a critic, and not simply a journalist or a businessman of literature, is to run the awful risk of being labeled an "absolutist."

All of which is prefatory to the main point of these remarks, which is to call the attention of the readers of the BPJ to a work of "technical philosophy" which has recently appeared, which has been almost completely ignored by the popular reviewing press, and which should be of great interest to all poets and critics. **The Moral Life and the Ethical Life** by Eliseo Vivas is the first important attempt by a philosopher in some years to destroy the pretensions to finality of the dogmatic positivists and the "scientific" apologists for the directions in which our scientific secular civilization is and for years has been moving. What Vivas tries to do is (to use non-technical language and thus to run the risk of oversimplifying) to show that moral values are **real**, objective, things to be discovered, not just projections of our "interests" or "drives" or just "derivatives" of a culture. We discover, we do not invent them, Professor Vivas argues. And if this is true of moral values, it is very likely true also of aesthetic and other values. But of course to suggest this is to play the traitor to "the modern mind"; it is to return to "medievalism" (read "superstition" and "priestcraft" here); and there can be little doubt that Professor Vivas will be dealt with by the reviewers not as a man trying to re-establish the possibility of reason but as one "disloyal" to reason.

This book should be read along with Douglas Bush's **Science and English Poetry**, R. P. Blackmur's "The Lion and the Honeycomb" in the Winter, 1951 **Hudson Review**, and Peter Viereck's forthcoming history of the way the nineteenth century sold traditional values down the river and thus prepared the way for the present age of genocide, barbarism, and pragmatism.

Hyatt Howe Waggoner