

THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL

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SOME TYPEWRITTEN VERSES

more than the angled scrawl of pens
 the printed letters catch her subtle face
 clearly this morning, strange as the sky's blue
 empty, and silent, passing in the ages
 of a moment ago.

and if I wrote on from here into
 imagination, she should become splendid in
 memory as the sweet sun rises higher,
 as images become the prey of words. but
 what I feel then about her

is lovelier only for desire.
 the act of seeing her does not revive, so
 with the simple sight of actual lips recalled,
 I shall curtail the dream imagined in the ink
 and print love plainly lest,

falling into false poems for her,
 I should see all an unconjured
 look in the cool eyes
 of her seen once at morning
 pass and die.

Alan Brownjohn

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PASTORALE

When I have had you full and wholesome as a nut,
impenetrable as hay in the gold sunlight,
or green-eyed in the grass and rooted like a tree,
straight from juicy genius like the wild strawberry,
then I can dub our love a hedonistic state
that bids this wormy world be properly forgot
by higher attitudes; in flickered flights to heaven
we'll live like giddy gods, to take the good that's
given.

Our witty principle! and fraught with airy pose,
to guard the mind in full with love's subversive ease,
to slyly mark its passing, as if from double brain,
finds a chatty mysticism in every dumb stone.
For love, our love's contented! a cuckoo-cow that
whistles;
Jack Foolishness, the wise man; a cloud that's borne
of hustles.

Come opposites contending, be interchangeable;
make best of our abundance, who love to rise and
fall.

Jane Mayhall

SONG AT DELPHI

At the altar of a bull
 with honey on his horns,
we display a virgin's tapestry,
 gold and alabaster,
Apollo and Dionysius,
 gilt-and-green, twin-latticed,
covering the metaphysical footprints
 where a god's passion has fallen.
Proud-chested, the bull,
 with blue medallion eyes,
never moves, engraves
 his breath like bronze fire
on the clear air
 and pure worship
of roseate women—
 strewn like coral
curving white, wind-blown
 and dissolving like foam
where he licks
 his marble tongue.

Jane Mayhall

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TERTULLIAN ADDRESSES THE MEN OF CARTHAGE (Late August, 208 A.D.)

I've gathered my words from the public orchard.
Mules, yellow with dust and the sea-coast flies,
Scuff through your trees. The fruits drop. The fruits rot.
In the bazaar, you take your comforts
Here, in the after-dinner sun
Talking politics.
Let the foreign moons and the black frost come,
You'll turn again to women,
To thick hot wines.

I speak the things of peace. The body, like love,
Is niggardly when it comes to prices.
It is a sour bride. The elders chill
When the sun is down. Make your soul coarse,
Indifferent; for who would hire a whore,
Even the bronze Phoenician kind,
To sing of warmth into the early hours,
If tomorrow, in a bloody sky,
Hovers the Paraclete
And all that terrible song?

Paul Carroll

THE PLUNDERERS

One morning early
onto the grain field
newly plowed,
young hens and old
stepped out precisely
while all the cocks
for once were circumspect.
For these gregarious simpletons
were treating themselves to a lush meat diet
actually quite a feast.
Neither did they know that every juicy fellow
they now swallowed
depleted their staple,
tended to defeat in the long run
their god's endeavor to support their kind,
by just that gulp of flesh.
Nor would these opportunists care an egg
could they so comprehend;
not a pinfeather!
So what, not in our time the doom,
something like that they'd cluck
as man's-best-friends slid past
their gullets into each craw-mill crypt.
But the Almighty an hour later
wrung the necks slit the throats
flung all those wriggling benefactors
back again to the smoking furrows
along with the slippery warm guts.

Alida Carey Gulick

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COLOR OF JADE

Jade is more than green (as seaweed green
as jade) though greenness (apple, evening, plum)
consumes the word. Some from that cold river,
down from mountains bear the rainbow home:
Jade of cinnabar, lilac, trout; milk
and wildrose, leaves of the honeycomb, tangle of moss
in melting snow; and jade blacker than eyes
of unicorns, trembling at dawn across
the plain. Forms (of men and flutes and arrows,
bowls for blood) museumed in a piece of mind
can tipple heaven by a certain light.

Jade (they say) is green as drowning;
black beyond all singing lies our death.

Bernice Slote

COUNTERPOINT-THREE

The light fell musical between the leaves.
It was right. Notes were a spatter of gold
And all was a ferris of greening sound
Around the words that rose like a tree,

That rose in a rhythm of sun-whirl, leaf and line,
Binding the gold root under. It was mine:
A green-song molding the brightest hour
And body a flower to rise in the sun,
To touch the sun through the summer tree.
I grew in the poem. Not it in me.

Bernice Slote

THREE GARDENS

A garden seen from the upper room
 Ruminates a sadness often told.
 Where Judas blooms by the broken wheel,
 Pray, prepare that garden not again;
 Waft not we lie in petals petulant, and
 Decay, and death-deceived. In sin you ate
 No flowered wheel in wheels. Perpetuate
 No spinning rose, in roses spinning,
 All garnished and crusted with gold.
 Dawn to sleep and up to weep.
 We shall not bet on rose roulette.

A garden seen from the middle room
 Ruminates a sadness seldom told.
 Where an eye discloses the thorns of roses,
 Pray, propose that garden not again;
 Waft not we lie in floral flagrancy, and
 Sun, and slow rivers of light. Perpetuate
 No whirring lily, to the wind stirring,
 Or the hopes of our fathers unfold.
 Dawn to sleep and up to weep.
 We will not bet on rose roulette.

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A garden seen from the lower room
Ruminates a sadness never told.
Where Jesus assembles with other secret men
Pray, prepare that garden once again.
Waft that we lie in the heart's light,
Under the heavy lid unknown black fire,
Moon within moon and star within star,
The suspended lotus symbol of our desire.
Dappled only with the eyes of night.
Dawn to sleep and up to weep.
We must not bet on rose roulette.

Tipton Barnard

AMOEBA TO AMOEBA

Fission will unearth us,
Far and near agree.
Copulation's rampant
In air, on land, in sea.
Ah! for antique manners;
Oh! for piety.
Each Jeremiah praises
Past society
When amoeba to amoeba
Sang in jubilee,
"Olden times were better times
Before this cell of me."

Norman Nathan

THE BUBBLE

A foaming bubble pounds atop a crested wave
And bursts before its neighbors burst. The nothingness
That's left can never see the course compatriots
In transitory flight will take until their tick
Or tock of time is gone. No mourn, no weep, the course
Of things has gone as we all knew it would. Some go
Before the wave has crashed into its trough. Some stay
Until a useless foam is spread upon the beach.
But even then, the sand soaks up or wind will blow
Away the vestiges of riders on the wave.
Following perfectly, comes another wave, and there I see
A foam that only means an airy bit of water
Full of splattered bits of space. Again some stay a
moment
More than wind and sand would wish, but all become
The same, as once again the metronome swings back.
What good is there in bubbles' birth if all that follows
Can be death? Just watch the bubbles lashing, being
lashed,
And whipping forth intensities of happiness.
Then close your eyes and see the nothing that is nothing-
ness,
And know these bubbles for their worth. Far better are
they
Smashed in space than buried always never born.

Louis Hoffman

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THE INFANT

perambulator his in backward Riding
gave me the erect infant .
an arrogant glance
W. S. Allen

APPROVED

The police car
looked at us with its
spotlights
but
not raising its eyebrows
passed on

W. S. Allen

GOOD BOY

The Hunter's Moon hung huge and queer that night
As the boy walked up the rutted road;
It mocked at his misery and stirred strange thoughts
Thoughts of flying like bats and frightening folks.
The car braked to a stop, the old man spoke,
"Can I give you a ride to some place, Son?"

Wind sounds moaned past the boy's tense face and he
flew,
Flew up the hills and down on his great black horse.
Shadowy things, like worms, crossed the moon's face
Fear gripped him, "What if the old man is dead?"
"I am a good boy" he thought, "So I must return
To the place where I left the kind old man."

The horse was gone, the car rattled up the hill
Up to the top, by the big black rock and the bush,
Big black rock and the bush which hid the precipice.

Maude Totten

A BALLAD FOR JEANNE

Do lovers love, kind sir?

Not that we can see,
But if they don't, my love,
There is grave misery.

Do lovers age, kind sir?

Not that we can see,
But if they do, my love,
There's no grave misery.

Do lovers die, kind sir?

Not that we can see,
But if they do, my love,
There's no grave misery.

Where lovers lie, kind sir,

Is there not grave misery?
Two mounds of dust, my love,
Can own a strange affinity.

Paul Bennett

"OVER AGAIN I FEEL THY FINGER AND FIND THEE"

Electric cat, you are struck fire from forth His finger,
Yea, struck forth from His almighty knuckle
And flamed out in blood, brain, fur, and vibrant tail,
Framed bone and flesh whereon you velvet, velvet glide,
Whereon you stride upon the jungle in your golden going,
And that inward power of slow thrust and stretch,
That vivid flowing and that tensile poise—
This grace is far beyond the engine's blue metallic
thought,
Beyond the short sharp jolt of piston's pump—
Steel cannot dream the quality of fur and glide
Flame-tiger, you alone, in mystery, on pad and prowl,
Slide through a flowering silence like a flowing fire
And sink down noiseless to colossal calm;
You watch from golden, golden eyes,
And, God, you burn. You burn.

James L. Rosenberg

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AGAIN

The red undulant sand hanging from his eye
reminds the sun of nothing
so much as water released to flow
toward the rose red city of rock
and the gulf of Aquaba.

An Israeli soldier
watches where Solomon made a navy of ships;
from the strait of Tiran
and across the Red Sea,
the tide draws to and from Aden stones
brackish water rank with salt
toward that unchanneled isthmus:
setting star and simitar against the evening sky
and silhouetted cross.

Varley McBeth

INTERSECTION AND CROSSING (for Joyce)

No shadows multiply the interstices of leaf
or vine alone beside pneumatic memory:
wanting neither sun nor shadow
falling on the lawn. Requiring nothing:
kelp, sand, vetch, or winter haymow.
Desiring neither intersections (gull,
sparrow, hawk) nor the crossing at the lane.

October apple box holding spring rain
and summer sun, hinting at the joining
of leaf and sun, water, root and earth.
Each day encompassed by the cyclic
watching sun, and beneath the water of the lake,
the moon; brings at the touch of fog
or leaf or sun or shadow or tongue
the remembrance of our yesterdays.

Varley McBeth

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PRIMER FOR THE LAST JUDGEMENT

When Jesus bruised his toe on a stone wall,
Men crowned him—all of them,
The pure and the bitter—punctured him
Finger and toe, pinned him there;
And coughed less from conscience than phlegm.
Yes, they regretted, they began to call
At once for traditional values, unaware
They were asking their own liquidation.
"Ending is pending," quoth Paul.

But it never came anyway, that anticipated day
Of lamentation, except at a pedestrian gait.
Daily the spent heart came home to find
A space with the dimensions of home
Ambiguously empty like the Christian tomb.
And now with us: only a few years back the sun
Touching the Pacific, at war's close found
Two cities crumpled; men world over
Darkened and whispered, "Ending is begun."

But is this the ending? Can it come with bombs
Breaking flesh off innocent bones,
Mechanized, official, and at once?
It has less arrogant ways. It comes
On foot and is never worth recording
Until long after it is over,
When everyone's forgotten. We may break our world
 apart
Or not, but ending is always: it tramples our hearts
With a crowned head and broken toe forever.

Galway Kinnell

KELP COVE, CAPE.

Now when the north-wester slightly discolours the water
 gurgle-tidelets, little-fish-twiddled-through, mingle
 among gnarled gneiss and micaceous schist where
 serpentine seaweed

sways aggressively (foam-wash, you'd think, is the over-
 flowed

venom) and the black long-necked duiker is dipping
 with venturesome vertical dives into the serpent-
 iferous seaweed—

this crab-and-crawfish-cluttered kelp, alive
 with haarder, sardines, stompnose, silver-fish,
 poisonous blaasop, rock fish, (serpent-
 iphillous seaweed

swaying,) roman and rietbul, kabbeljou,
 sturgeon, elf, snoek, mackerel, steenbras,
 seventy-four, yellowtail, galjoen, leervis, tunny,
 (serpented seaweed

fatted and throat-swollen on it,) shark,
 geelstert, eel . . . and a host of others nameable
 via guidebooks and encyclopaedias—serpent-
 -complexforming seaweed

always having the oversay as the waves break
 unevenly, thumping the blunt humps, spraying

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an occasional cornice, making for the cleavage planes
where un-

serpentine seaweed

mosspatches coral-coigns, algae, masses
of barnacles and clustered mussels (look for the mussel-
cracker as the roller-rhythm muscles in from the serpent-
-complexiform seaweed).

Terence Heywood

TIME TRANSLATES ME

At midnight, the moon rides witness;
And faces, like horror, lie revealed.
Recognition stirs its
Brand-new stumps—
But heavy doors,
Locked in lust or rust,
Are sardonic impediments to flight.
Time translates me
On the hem of language,
Through the wilderness of years;
I can be read—
But cannot understand.

Dorothy Dalton

WOMAN WAITING ALONE

The phone is a little black box with nothing in it
 And the room a cave of fear.
 She sits by the clock to hurry the hourlong minute
 And starts from her chair to hear

The cricket that grates like sudden tires in the driveway.
 A firefly distantly burning
 Seems, in the darkness, the flick of lights on a highway.
 . . . O, where is the car, returning

Tangibly to the woman of vanished perspective,
 Who waits where the lamps are bright,
 Yet rides all roads of a world grown small and subjective
 Out terrified in the night?

Kaye Starbird

THE MOON'S NO BASKET

The moon is not a basket to gather apples in.
 You cannot tie a wind around your hair.
 You never had a star to pin the lace beneath your chin.
 And there is not a soul who knows you care.

For you may carry apples inside a reedy basket
 And tie your hair with ribbons or a net.
 If you should want a shining pin, you only have to ask it;
 So keep on trying maybe you'll forget.

Try to forget the love you wore like sun upon the face
 And tended in the gusty heart like flame.
 Go look for something trivial to almost take its place
 And call your heartbreak by another name.

Kaye Starbird

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A USELESS ALLEGORY

It seems that for used things to grow
useful they must deteriorate still
further enter the unexpected take
on a new form

It is the tale of a boy
and his kite each kite needs a tail
to tell us which way the wind is blowing
to maintain itself in the unexpected
air

Mother's dress served a useful
purpose to clothe her to protect
her to give her pleasure there is
pleasure in strolling with the children
on a Sunday in the warm summer air

Mother's

dress has outlived its usefulness (do
not think of Mother changing becoming
a part of the earth and air) Mother's
dress (part on the kite part on the
duster) has entered the unexpected
struggles it is fragile handle
with care

It seems that for used
things to grow useful (etcetera
etcetera) is a useless allegory if
this is true then so is the tale of
a boy and his kite and the tail of
his kite and the air

Sanford Edelstein

A POEM FOR THE NEW YOUNG DEAD: 1952

We have eaten the flesh of nightingales and now
 We cannot sleep and amethysts keep us sober;
 The night is forever five lurid wanderers,
 And the omens sigh that God sits in his web,
 A golden spider, but spinning somewhere else now;
 The old are foolish; our women spin disaster.

In this white clock, dreaming of women's eyes,
 We tick aloud, and sink where white arms lift
 And voices whisper quietness like sea-weed;
 And deep in green water where the pearl love keeps
 Turns golden in a languid hint of fire,
 The mind drifts silent through a forest of ears.

Mamillae mellitae and the comfort of the body
 And two warm where one by one lay cold before,
 Not ours, no comfort in erotic night,
 Or the stale whistle of the bird or inching wind
 Or the cold sun feebly searching out our blood.
 We can see our faces curled in the devil's pond;
 Narcissus sitting froglike on his rock,
 Kissing his face, kisses his buttocks there.

But so little touches us alive, o now and then
 The throb of a bomber, the gnawing of the clock,
 A little fear, a little dream of meeting death
 Unarmed in the naked woods, in the boar's mirror
 Frozen with roots in our eyes, frozen in youth's
 Impatient posture with so much love to be suffered
 And the gain this handful of splintered bone and heart
 Burst in the eyeless void beyond the oak.

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We are afraid of strangers' eyes and hair,
And strangers' hands and the rich malevolent curve
Of strangers' lips. There were strangers once,
The men who died and escaped these animal woods,
And we are afraid of meeting them again.
It would never do. If only the dead stayed dead,
And did not walk in these cadenced crosses of rain,
Or real stones raise their heads in love's pasture.

Robert T. Taylor

ANY NIGHT IS MEMORY

static in the shattered synapses of memory

crackles!

and the world the world is silent,
listening.

the word is left unsaid the deed undone.
lapt in the comfortable assurances
of tomorrow the world, asleep, is
listening.

a swelling, rose soft wind
carries forth, increases the unsaid word
to pyramids of power. the silent world,
asleep, is waiting,
listening—

and though the melancholy willows weep,
the flowing river moves with slow confidence
through other rolling meadows,
hushed beneath the moon.

Walt Klein

MODERN PORTIA

Well, let us talk of jurisprudence, then—
 Since beauty is a thing that you abhor—
 The countless laws that men have made for men,
 Till no one knows what the damn things are for;
 Of cases and decisions and opinions
 (You have some strange opinions of your own);
 Of that Dame, Justice, and her legal minions,
 Your goddess, blindfold on her wobbly throne.

Will this content you? Is this subject quite
 In line with your decorous contemplation?
 We will forget the beauty of the night,
 And I'll ignore your wicked fascination,
 While I give ear to the dull things you saw
 Or did in some infernal court of law.

Joseph Upper

THE AWAKENED

Perhaps a voice, or loud belief
 Of bells: a shape of noise rapping
 On the brain's relief, a knuckle to
 The eye we thought asleep.

No matter where, we have to scale
 The last blue arbor of the mind.
 We have to lift each stone of trust
 And see ticking what we hear to find.

Like that time we met, in the hall.
 Almost one body when souls hit.
 We had to sit among persistent cups,
 Waiting late up for it.

Leon Wittack

WHEN STANLEY DIED

He went to sleep with an evening
But the dawn awoke without him;
He lost his heart in the darkness,
No wife to search beside him.

The landlord found him in the morning,
Gray hair parted the setting eyes;
He ran outside and raised the sun,
Crying like a tall man cries.

The blue men came in a siren,
Marched into the sleepy doom;
Three gavels smote the lady's throat, they
Bound their eyes and scaled the room.

Stanley's purse kept name and fortune,
His smile lay on the table;
They took his teeth and fourteen dollars,
The rest the state's, the flesh the moon's.

By noon the dice were drained.

Leon Wittack

OPINION

Achievement in American Poetry. By Louise Bogan, Chicago: Henry Regnery Company. 157 pp. \$2.50

A Key to Modern British Poetry. By Lawrence Durrell, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press. 209 pp. \$3.00

Poetry in Our Time. By Babette Deutsch, New York: Henry Holt and Co. 411 pp. \$6.00

Poetry, Religion and the Spiritual Life. By George F. Thomas, Houston: The Elsevier Press. 113 pp. N.P.L.

It is interesting and in some ways alarming to note that major publishers are issuing almost as many books about poetry as books of poetry itself. Guides for classroom use, explications which rival in complexity the poems they purport to analyze, subtle or mystical or "brutally frank" autobiographical narratives that wind up as little more than apologias, panoramic national surveys, detailed historical evaluations of specific movements—all of these are claiming more and more of our reading time. Most of these studies are the work of poets. Each grinds his own axe each pleads his special case often to the exclusion of all others. Is it any wonder then, that confusion, feeding upon itself in this manner, grows so wildly in the minds of many readers?

Much contemporary poetry is complex, much is confusing, but there is every good reason why it should be. A complex and confusing culture has produced it. No amount of theorizing about cause and effect can simplify our age one iota. On the contrary, this only tends to cloud the issues. Books which attempt to popularize relativity, psychoanalysis, quanta, nuclear fission, atonality, dialectical materialism, non-objectivity, or any of

the other backgrounds for contemporary art and philosophy usually end by vulgarizing them. It is time for us to face the somewhat harsh fact that we must as individuals come to grips with the theories, formulae, and special vocabularies which are the basic ingredients of so much contemporary creativity. This is inescapable if we are ever to understand our own culture with anything approaching a workable comprehension or appreciation. We can no longer rely on the old tools and the old vocabulary. Eternity to the poet has become the space-time continuum. The soul is now the id, ego, and super ego. Free will is tempered by economic determinism. The family is now a social nexus. The sooner we become familiar with these concepts and their implications for art, the sooner we will be able to understand the cultural products of our age. For any profound effect, this familiarity must be bred first hand.

This is not to say that critical or explanatory works are valueless. To maintain such a thing would be to discard some of the most original and provocative books of our times. However, such books are seldom if ever satisfactory substitutes for the original works on which they elaborate. Great ideas can seldom be absorbed at second or third hand.

There are, however, two interesting by-products of many critical works. First, in the field of poetry where so many such books are written by poets, a new light is often thrown on an author's own poetry through his opinions and analysis of the work of others. "What Paul tells us of Peter reveals more of Paul than of Peter." Much that is obscure in Eliot's poetry has been made clearer by his comments about works other than his own. Second, such critical thinking helps us develop our own thinking, pushes us—albeit reluctantly—to the necessity of independent judgment and synthesis. As Lawrence Durrell expresses it in the book under discussion" . . . sometimes a poetical explanation can illuminate something for us—but it is always something in us, and not in the work we seek to understand."

With this much as introduction, let us now turn to four completely different critical studies which have recently appeared. Louise Bogan's book deals with the past fifty years of American poetry primarily in terms of chronology: who did what first and what were the effects. Lawrence Durrell concentrates on the scientific, philosophical, and psychological theories which smashed the Victorian frame of reference and drew poets into new patterns of thought and expression. Babette Deutsch frankly allows her study to revolve about her own sense impressions and groups poets by mood and content rather than chronology. Her's is the most personal document of the group. Pleading a very special case, George Thomas examines the nature and conceptions of the spiritual life and explores poetry's position in relation to it.

Though there are probably few contemporary American poets of any major or even minor significance whom Louise Bogan has not read in the course of her twenty-odd years as poetry critic for the *New Yorker*, she has chosen to sketch her portrait of twentieth century poetry in a carefully limited frame. The book is obviously not meant as a complete field survey. True, the title stresses the word "achievement" rather than "history," but the historical implications cannot be avoided that easily. Miss Bogan concentrates her analysis on some dozen or so major figures and leaves the rest to scant mention or to silence. For this reason a fairly complete reading knowledge of the field is required if one is to derive much benefit from the book.

Neither of these points alone might present too serious a drawback. Miss Bogan probably has every right to suspect that her audience will consist largely of specialists. (Let us set aside the obvious objection to this point of view—how can we expect to increase the poetic audience if we write only in terms of predisposed parties?) However, the combination of narrow focus and assumed knowledge often creates another, more serious problem. In a highly selective study, ellipsis is unavoidable. In

dealing with highly controversial statements then, the author has the choice either of omitting the necessary arguments and documentation to support these statements adequately, or of extending the scope of the work to cover all of their logical implications. In theory, a happy medium should be possible. In practice, it seldom is.

To cite two examples. Miss Bogan presents an accurate picture of the bleak period during which Robinson worked. Despite all his skill, she states he ". . . did little to reconstitute any revivifying warmth of feeling in the poetry of his time." Granted. Unfortunately, she goes on to assert flatly that ". . . this task, it is now evident, was accomplished almost entirely by women poets through methods which proved to be as strong as they seemed to be delicate." To whom is this evident? Certainly not to this reader. It is not enough to duck out of a supportive argument with the evasion that ". . . the involved question of woman as artist cannot be dealt with here" when Ella Wheeler Wilcox, Lizette Woodworth Reese, and Louise Imogen Guiney are presented as examples of these "strong" poets.

It is evident through this book that Miss Bogan feels a direct relationship between painting and poetry. In a sense, all arts are related but their different vocabularies usually preclude any but a vague, nodding sort of relationship. Statements like "Miss Stein was the friend of the group of cubist painters in Paris headed by Picasso and Juan Gris. The connection between modern poetry and modern painting becomes definite in her work." or, speaking of Wallace Stevens, ". . . his affiliation with impressionism is marked . . . and (his) relation to impressionist painting, in his use of color and texture, is clear." all require further evidence. She must demonstrate a general relationship between poetry and painting as well as the specific connections she cites.

Am I quibbling? Perhaps. But my objections point, I think, to a basic flaw in this kind of study. One feels that the author is so busy cutting fancy designs in the

surface of the ice, that she never takes time to examine how safe or sturdy it may be.

Lawrence Durrell swings to the opposite side of the picture. He wisely points out the vast gulf that separates the "old" poetry and the "new." The reason for the gulf, he maintains, is that a wholly new way of looking at the universe has been presented to us through the advances of science in the past fifty years or so. Astronomy, psychology, anthropology have revamped our outlook. The poet being a sensitive member of society easily reflects these changes. This is well travelled ground.

Mr. Durrell then proceeds to analyze at length some of the basic differences between Tennyson's "Ulysses" and Eliot's "Gerontion." Both are the reflections of an old man about his past life. But there the resemblance stops. Why are two such outwardly similar pieces so inwardly different? Almost half the book is devoted to elaborate and often ingenious explanations of the reasons. Groddeck, even Madame Blavatsky and Giordano Bruno are called upon for evidence. Their theories are explored in detail. Poets and novelists are mentioned in passing to illustrate a point, but these intrusions are always short-lived.

Finally the stage is set and Durrell comes to grips with poetry. Here, unfortunately, he is less successful than with science. Ever wishing to be abreast of the times, the author talks in terms of the movies, of Marxism, of semantics as he briefly analyzes the work of the Georgians, Eliot, Hopkins, the Auden-MacNeice-Spender-Day Lewis coterie, and two or three younger poets. These, Durrell feels, hold the key to modern British poetry. Perhaps they do. He treats them too superficially for one to be sure. In his zeal to present his scientific background he has failed to show which of the many doors he provides this key will open. One feels like a frustrated Judith in "Bluebeard." The key is there, and the doors . . . but no further instructions.

About Babette Deutsch's book one could write end-

lessly. Without introduction, she plunges into the critical business. She holds theorizing to a minimum. She disregards historical order where necessary to group poets by inherent relationships. She makes flat and occasionally startling judgments. You can disagree with her on almost every page. You can applaud her courage and rage at her unorthodoxy. But none of this really matters.

The important thing is that with calculated recklessness she stimulates us to think and to read. You cannot accept her evaluation of Kipling without wanting to read him. You cannot be indifferent when she seems to slight a major figure like Frost to dwell on a minor one like Mark Van Doren. Every page bristles with contagious enthusiasm.

Can one ask more of this kind of book? I doubt it. Miss Deutsch has a keen eye for style. Her ear is alert to subtle changes in harmony. She allows every poet to speak for himself and then exercises her critical perogatives. This is a personal book. It is a document of likes and dislikes from an astute and energetic lover of poetry who has deliberately turned her back on the complicated mechanics of over-intellectualized criticism. It's an exciting book and that's rare: so few critical books are.

George Thomas' book was prepared originally as a series of lectures at Rice Institute in Houston. The work betrays its origins. The Rockwell Lectures were established to further the promotion of religion. This is an admirable purpose but one not necessarily conducive to good poetic criticism. When Dr. Thomas concerns himself with the spiritual life, its many interpretations, and its religious significance, he is stimulating and well worth reading. He seems thoroughly aware of all that has been written in the field. When he turns to poetry it is quite another story.

It is no longer possible to accept a view of what poetry is (mind you, not was but is!) when all of the examples, arguments, and conclusions are drawn from the works of Wordsworth, Milton, and, as representatives of "recent" writers, Hardy and Arnold. Had Dr. Thomas set

out to write a scholarly piece on Wordsworth's conception of the spiritual force in poetry, he would have succeeded nicely. But can we, in the light of a Kenneth Fearing or a Carl Sandburg, any longer think of poets as ". . . dreamers who help free us from . . . the present order of things?"

The book has a precious air which, I am sure, Dr. Thomas never intended. His total disregard for the newer spiritual qualities of a St. John Perse or a Wallace Stevens, his refusal to take into account even the more traditional spirituality of someone like Hopkins, forces the work into a hothouse class. He surely realizes this to some extent since he partially explains the narrowness of his view by stating that he is ". . . not one of those who subscribe to the view that beauty of form can redeem decadence of thought and feeling." Few serious critics are. The unfortunate thing is that Thomas obviously seems to consider just about every contemporary writer as a representative of decadent thought and feeling. This is so obviously untrue that it needs no serious refutation.

Here, then are the four books. They are a good cross section of what one can expect to find in any publishing season—some safely historical, some biased, some stimulating, some just dull. They practice all the known gambits and introduce a few new ones. Taken alone, almost any one of them provides some food for thought, albeit often nigardly and even occasionally tainted. Taken together, they produce little more than intellectual indigestion.

Faced with the constantly increasing barrage, it is well for all of us to remember that, despite the critics, poetry is still its own best explication.

R.H.G.