

THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL

Volume 1 - Number 2

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THE FIFTH COLUMN IN PHILISTIA

If a "little" magazine follows tradition it appears about eight times and then vanishes. For tragic reasons the mortality rate is very high. Second hand magazine stores are graveyards bulging with copies of strangely named periodicals—single numbers and complete runs. Still, they continue to appear and to disappear. The individual representatives may be weak but the form itself is hardy.

The reasons for this impermanence are well documented. They all boil down to the fact that, by its nature, the "little" magazine appeals only to a very limited group which can rarely support it. The designation **little** more correctly refers to the audience than to the size of the publication. The mass appeal of commercial publications is wholly lacking in them. But consider, the record they have rung up despite this.

They have brought to the fore virtually all of the great literary figures of the past thirty-five years. Hemingway, Moore, Eliot, Wilder, even recent Nobel Prize winner William Faulkner were all first published in little magazines. Writers like Sandburg, Pound, Lindsay, Frost Stevens, Fletcher, and Crane, did not attain the followings they merited until after their little magazine appearances. Dynamic personalities like Harriet Monroe, Margaret Anderson, Dr. S. J. Watson, and Gorham Munson have continually appeared to work through these publications and to bring vitality to the literary scene.

Perhaps what is most important is that from the very outset the little magazines have been involved to the

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last line of type in every major creative movement of the past four decades. They have taken sides with a vigor that frequently spells their doom when the battle goes against them. In this respect, their influence cannot be overestimated.

In recent years, however, a great many voices have been raised against these magazines. They are charged with being snobbish and undemocratic. It is not possible to deny too much the charge. If little magazines are to stand for only the best in writing that bespeaks an interest in a minority of the writers. If they stand in the van of artistic controversy they do so with little company other than their own kind. But this is not through choice. If, primarily, they appeal to intellectuals that is no fault of the publications themselves. Such readers are highly critical. It is doubtful if they would be consistently taken in by a sham designed to flatter them as a group.

The reasoning which promotes these charges is very important to us. We can not answer them once and for all. . . .but we have some ideas.

It just **may** be that the difficulty arises in a different quarter than the one charged. Perhaps it can be found in the general indifference of the public to matters of art? Perhaps in its lack of concern for the young writer? Or in its smug refusal to listen to unproven poetic voices? It may also be the final desperation of creative thinkers everywhere and in all fields who have been thrown together pell-mell in their final attempt to get away from the black apathy of Philistia.

Fortunately the urge to write (or compose or paint) is basic in men. There have been countless attempts to suppress the arts, to control or direct them. In recent years the preferred technique has been the slow freeze in an atmosphere of inattention. It doesn't work and it never shall! It just **may** be that factors like little magazines and the people who read them have had considerable influence in the survival. Let's see that they always do.

R. H. G.

THE INSTANT CHANCES

The bobcat in the thicket harbors death;
The big-eared hare runs after life,
Ends in blood, or by a twitch of twig,
A shift of wind, swerves out of death.

Roused by the agile weasel from its sleep,
The bat swoops through the burning day,
Hangs by the hooks of the hunting hawk,
Or finds a chink and shudders back to sleep.

The hopeful spider moors his silver span,
Snares a fly and feasts on azure flesh,
Or nets a wasp and takes the savage sting,
Lies limp and lost beneath his tattered span.

For my part, I would have been a panther
Or a deer, a goshawk or a thrush,
Living the instant chances, than member of
The swarming breed that brings the holocaust.

Joseph Payne Brennan

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GEORGE HERBERT

On this high day, the birde of throat and earth,
I contemplate the fury of perfection,
And for my Self and my divine election,
I ask your prayers to sing my second birth.

I see you wearing Love's annoying smile,
teaching saints and martyrs how to sing
(at Bemerton a bell begins to ring,
at Bemerton the bell rings broad and pale),

pausing at the moment of surrender
to write a little verse to make God happy,
nodding to the Christ, serene and dapper—
and your surpliced heart flaming up like tinder.

O high firm day, O catholic generation,
listen to the bell at Bemerton
saluting Herbert's fathers' Father's Son,
and teaching all the mice the use of patience.

Albert Paris Leary

POEM

"non amittuntur sed praemittuntur"

When our faint loins and eloquent tongues were mingled,
the dancing blood behind my eyes turned white;
we lay more painfully aware than singing,
more truly filled with fear more sharp than light.

When our young quivering thighs were burnt to sleep,
and feet became no part of what we were,
whirling about the room more swift than fleet,
and all the seasons of the rhythmed year

danced, danced into our holier parts,
 assuaging all the pleasant moment's grief—
 we spoke our sacrament too new to parch,
 more poised than when we stood upon our feet.

We sank through years of rug and months of wall,
 falling faintly balanced by our pain.
 We felt the light within us break our fall
 and hold us high, trembling at the place

of understanding. I laughed into your mouth.
 Then, waiting for our eucharist to fade,
 too near to touch, more far away than out,
 we waited for what each would never say.

Albert Paris Leary

SOLO FOR A DEAD PLANET

Through the wild fingers of cities
 where vultures have more than cannons to eat
 a parade of monsters
 run amok through empty sewers
 walls of buildings vibrate
 with poison eating below the belt
 chewing away at elevator shafts
 and diplomats open eyeballs
 the whiskey bottles crash endlessly
 as rats ramble through nightclubs
 tearing away
 the last G string
 everything's naked now.

Leslie Woolf Hedley

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TWO POEMS FOR MELANCHOLY

i

A dog howls its death outside the house
A train sends its terror through the air,
It is night and water drips from faucets—
When it was summer I dreamt of hills
And orange flowers threw radiance.
Living chants its usual cry,

The simple beast remembers loveliness
And the stairlanding whispers;
Old love remains in the curtain—
It is no wedding veil.

At night I may pray to the floating dusts
That one wore more than all live's worth,
But it is evening and who will remember
In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
And of the Holy Ghost.

ii

Warm and soft your breast is
—My head needs such a rest;
Remove my pillow, now, I go to bed,
And make of space your room.

It is snowing or raining a hard wet rain,
Shadows from old graves seek a keeping,
Termites wander within, between my toes,
Spring is no more than one bedpost.

But wait! when I sleep come in soft gown,
Rose and green, and white arms,
Come a dandelion and a daisy—
I will weave a magic, a garland, and a charm.

Gene Magner

SEA-GULL

Will you know me now, indeed?
 Then count my fingers five upon your breast,
 My feet on the stairs' descent going One

Two

Three

What a little child you have in bed with you,
 Clambering toward the womb again.
 The moon was a sublimation, really.
 This red return was what he hunted for
 In adolescent haymows,
 Connubial rituals drowned in lost hotels.

Will you know me now?
 A sea gull came down one when I was fishing on a pier,
 on a piling.
 He was wilder than sunlight,
 Whiter than the white girl frozen in the blizzard bank.
 His wing went across my face, that close.
 He took the heart out of my mouth.
 I have been a sea-gull ever since.
 Ever since then I have been looking for that girl.

Will you?
 She is all I want, really,
 Whipping the heart out of my mouth,
 And her hair like rain,
 The red womb, the snow-breasted. . . .
 She is all I want.

John Dillon Husband

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THE TRAVELERS

How far have we come across the leagues of snow?
Where was it we began, and who will guess what end
On what long field or high plateau,
Plain for the world to see or gone to earth as foxes go,
We shall scrawl our final word upon the rock,
Croatan?

Or shall we be the ones under the golden star,
For whom the capricious heavens let their angels down
To sing hosannas in the sunset fire?
Shall we be the millionth couple through the turnstile
gate
Filling the blank check with the platinum pen,
The lucky-numbered foxes finding the break in the
fence?

The lady shuffles her cards with a pudgy hand,
And drinks her beer and goes
And these our fortunes oh the puddled table lie
Piled loose like forgotten stars.
What is it they say? Shall we open tomorrow's paper
And read? Or shall we throw the glasses over our
shoulder,
Walk in the creak and cold of the snow
Out to the world's end
Where the scarecrow whispers under the wind?

We cannot go home again, having been to the stair,
Having seen the empty moon searching the rooms,
Having heard the wind in the darkness fumble the
broken door.

There are no voices calling us now,

Nor directions on the box-top nor forecasts from the
 radio,
 And who will tell us the password into tomorrow,
 The set of the compass, the road not mined with de-
 ceptive stars?

Button your pockets over your courage,
 Get used to the door behind you closing,
 Pick up your feet.
 There's a jug of Spanish gold at the rainbow's end for
 you,
 A girl from a magazine cover waiting in a doorway.

The street ends here.
 Your tracks fill up with snow.

John Dillon Husband

VISITOR

Enough of death and burning violence
 Sits on that sofa smoking casual cigarettes
 To poison all the wells and bloody all the books.
 Yet so he sits, a man like you, in a gray suit,
 And says how the hills are like his hills at home,
 As if he had a home,
 There where the directed bombs came down
 And the detected agent died without his eyes.

And I think: This is what war always is:
 To sit in a later time with men like these,
 The walking deaths,
 Listening to music as the day burns down,
 Pretending that we have, both they and I,
 Excuse to live.

John Dillon Husband

10

THE SILVER BEAST

from "The Silver Circus"

Cage him now, great paws and shining head!
And beat beat beat on the silly drum
Calling the people to hear and come
To come and hear before the beast is dead.

Be sure to anchor his paws!
Drive a spike in his head, a silver spike
To rivet the bright eye shining into space,
But also be wise, be wary of his claws,
Keep shy of the teeth, the golden teeth,
The red lips ruby tight.
They will nibble your skull to paper,
They will suck the marrow out of your tightest dream.

But look at him, look how he lies!
The silver spike shines in the sun,
The great paws are still, he will not rise,
He will stay peacefully there till he dies.

You will not need the cage with chromium bars;
And the littlest child can sweetly come,
The girls can scream in lovely delirium,
The masculine worldly males, the strong men's sons,
Can stroke the silver fur, can study the golden eye,
Can wonder what the grave beast sees
Looking so fixedly now into the trembling sky.

John Dillon Husband

CHANGE

His dry face
 furrowed by the rain of years,
 his sand grey eyes,
 worn by the sun:
 Working plowed-out,
 fallow ground,
 one crop failure every year.

What force of change
 had separated memory and desire?
 What shadow fell
 between that vision
 and that furrow on the land?
 The camera kept the question
 In the sand grey eyes.
 I could only turn the page;
 I could not make the separation
 Nor feel the sun blot out the shadow.

Varley McBeth

THE WEB

As children watch a spider spin its mesh
 of silver filament about an unwary
 and luckless moth or fly, and feel their flesh
 crinkle with fear—now I watch, though the quarry
 is no small winged thing, lacking disguise
 or choice; but I. And dread is the decision:
 whether, while there is time, whether to rise,
 snap the benevolent cords, shouting derision
 and flee, run shivering with some blind delight
 to exquisite destruction . . . or whether I
 will stay to see the heart snuffed like a light
 that burns but poorly, or let it die
 more slowly of itself . . . I only know
 the web grows closer, closes on me, so.

Velvia Hargis

12

JOBHUNTER

I sow my name in the year's behalf
And do they hear the pulses sown?
And not a feather of bread grown.
The tongue's a winnow of chaff
Dusting the outside ear with blown
And politic laughs.

Should I suppose men's eyes
Forever rainless?
They glaze with fair chicane
Against the candid prize,
Myself in harvest places
Tossed and teased by current faces
Of one hope.

Along the hectic slope
Where day has lost the day's event
Other figures plant
The landscape with return.
I neighbor them with yearning
Sharp as heartburn
For the jubilant, a race apart.

The nightly rockets of my scheming
Color the black wilds
Before they gutter into dreams.
Each sun invents my enterprise
Memory remains a child
The mind a lark rising.

In men's markets I am green
 Again between the double
 Word. But now is all the troubled
 Man mine who sucks the sour weed.
 Without his food he feeds
 Me through our fallow living,
 My implicit relative.

S. Raiziss

WINTER, 1950

We will know better this time; time
 Is never a beginning, only change
 We fearfully resist and fearing prop
 The toppling status quo prop friction wears
 Into dry powder we would wet with tears
 And use to resurrect time monuments.

Night is the hour, still the heart of yet
 Stopped in chill cavernous because;
 I kiss your hand Madame;
 Come sir and sit
 Beneath this stone I'll rest my stick upon.

Lillian Burgin Stocking

14

NEW ORLEANS SALON

The mirrors, gleaming with chandeliers,
Speak to eyes that understand their speech,
But the ears are soothed by Mozart, there is perfume,
And taste is wooed by delicate brandied peach.

The talk is of men and anecdotes, not methods,
In phrases like shimmering ice or bright balloons.
Every beauty is most gaily not herself
And in her eyes intriguing love blooms.

Versailles has moved to smaller Creole quarters
With sultry wit and summer most of the year.
Do not look in the mirrors for a moral.
There is no moral there.

Alice Moser Claudel

PATIO NIGHT-CLUB

Under the shadow of chivalry, a lady
And gent, as sharp as any in the nightly crew,
Sit in the courtyard by synthetic fountains.
Hot stuff, as the ballads say,
And a bottle of rum for two!

Passes are not for dice alone, the lady knows.
What are the means of finding a man's intentions?
From an adjoining table, a guy with a lemon
Ogles her, a fact the lady mentions.

Here is the sign, but love and the drink are weak.
Her date declines a joust and turns to the small dance-
floor.

By the light of the moon his pride shows, satisfied
That the fluff he brought is snappy and nothing more.

Alice Moser Claudel

FOR BAYARD RUSTIN

I being white can't say what you don't know
 nor bring two angels clothed
 in gold—devils steal their light—
 they'll sell you down the river to a man.
 I am the ash of your dark fire,
 earth-held, transformed
 to rock. What colors! Yellow, black—
 scoop from the same red boiling pit.
 Saw the rock open—pigments gleam—
 with a toothed tool the steel shines black;
 look at the haft—pure pine, sunwhite—
 gript in a hand darkfashioned on the aft,
 half-light: for many hands,
 grasping, wore the stain away.

—When I recall

my old hates, stratagems
 I am the white suncotton borne away
 new fluff upon the breeze; you the pod
 not only wrought to stay but sing.
 Sing these dry bones into a godly sweat
 or sing for pain, for lust
 of singing. Sing your chant.
 Be Christs of song and pound a can
 into great sound. Coax from air,
 a car-horn, seive,
 tunes that cause a piece of ice to melt
 in sapphire silence down the street,
 drawn from earless windows wild applause
 of withered leaves that fall like tiny hands.

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—Transude

the breaking work, the dirt
into whatever love your white teeth have
for you can shovel snow like shuffleboard
bending to score. You are my heir.
—I say these things to you being white.

Howard Griffin

LINES

"For the dead man is not like the rest of us still in search of adventures in which we may experience many exciting events and seventeen times forget what we have said. When you say to a dead man 'I shall never forget you,' then it is as if he answered, 'Good! Rest assured that I shall never forget that you have said this.' —

Kierkegaard

Suppose in perfect reason
you want to die, you want earnestly
knowing for years the meaning,
you want above all to die—
recall the eager, the blonde
beavers who died in shelterhalves
of steel or ground like coral
to reefs where there was no choice.
Life defines the power to choose
and when you cut the thread

you are chosen, you become
 a total, a togetherness.
 More difficult to go on
 bowling silk-end
 to end with awkward hand.
 If for any cause you want to die
 recall the dead who wanted simply
 to live and who had every reason
 to go on yet who died
 for no accurate reason that you
 could name. The pure line
 is never poetry
 but in walking down the street
 to the store.—Wrong or right
 they could not be colder dead
 whatever side of the fence
 the beast is. They eat
 out of our mouths, they gaze
 through our eyes that look
 at a plant. If for any cause
 you want profoundly to die
 remember the dead. Re-
 collect the dead.
 Recall the finished dead.

—Of the slim there were many who tried,
 for hours the strong, even the young
 died; the tall, the naive died
 at the channel. The arrogant
 fell on that shore; those who understood,
 who could not ever understand
 died and over them the waves came.

Howard Griffin

18

EATING

The thing becomes the thread
Sewing me to my senses,
Defining my placeless place
Opposite an oyster eater who
Stabs his fish;

Three times a day it breaks my padlock,
Makes me stomach history's rummage sale
of rump on dish and chair,
Rumor on the menu made it
Authentic;

The fourth meal is a rule-of-thumb fate,
Is midnight's run from the torpedo of self,
Followed by a cigar masquerade's dishonest feat,
While death misses the goal-line I would have made
Certain;

The fifth meal makes the label on my beer can
history's only page, Makes the napper on my chair
the only fact, Grows a new metropolis on the tablecloth,
And the anemone in the sea of my beer glass;
Fear ignored five times is starved.

Stymean Karlan

MOMENTS

i

It was a good joke . . .
laughter flew from the car,
along with cigarette ash,
and slid across the softness
and brownness of corduroy fields;
while ladies of decadent corn
stood in reminiscence of the party
and waved with faded taffeta arms
at a youth speeding into town.

ii

The derelict men
sit facing in a railroad waiting room
and never speak,
and seem by a signal agreed upon
first one, then the other,
to slump in nervous sleep
or stare at forgotten bussyness,
yet daring not to despair
of watchfulness.

iii

I have been gone for years,
but I do not return:
my train is passing through;
perhaps I shall see on the platform
the face of someone I knew
who has come there
to welcome me
or who will go away
in the empty seat I save.

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iv

Here,
on the land,
the dumps are eating at swamps
and the wreck of a car is burning;
the blaze illuminates rubble
as it has the shells of cities
fired by incendiary headlines
from gutters
which collect the papers of our past.

Donald Lenox Mahan

THE PHOENIX

The phoenix bird on fire, trembled on
From derangement and shock, and lashed its wings
And gagged from the flames in which its bowels shone,
Until reborn, all youth, all plumagings.

Louis Second

TO A SMALL GIRL SLEEPING

Spun from foetal griefs and joys
Now your sleepbound fantasies
Turn you bellyward babywise,
As clouds of self-love round you sweep
Flattering you to whorl of sleep.
But soon your girlworld's twittering boys
Shall stud your night with owl's eyes
In whose pools your fantasies
Shall waft you breastward womanwise,
Floating you no more alone
In your spindly sleepbound engine:
Ascend you then to half-known places
With illusory flesh and haunting faces.
And when in time you will have learned
To place your churning psyche on
The tea-tray of civility,
You'll soar no more, mere sleep will be
In itself illusory;
Though the bed may lounge your bones well,
Your mind will chip its lighthouse skull
Descend its peopled mass to hell
While juts out from your womanshell
A desolate stalk of infant will.

Elise Asher

22

INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

It is the hideous mute intransigent rebellion
Of devices, gadgets—of conveniences,
Partly worn out, not quite ready for discard,
Clamping in their bared teeth the silent knife of
 obsolescence,
Crawling through the darkness from tree to tree
Of paydays silhouetted against the sky.
Neurosis is a skinned knuckle from replacing worn parts
 unsatisfactorily,
Lurking in the small movements of the quivering
 phalanges.
Madness lies in the subversion of the machines,
Never mute, never quite inglorious,
Characterized by grating, and the flat squeal.
The blinded entempled Samson became,
In one eruptive magnificence,
The first bulldozer off the first assembly line
Just long enough.

Hanson Kellogg

THE ORDERED ECONOMY

I am planning a life from the mouth of a cave
To as far back as the light reaches in afternoon
Striking off the other hidden life, the river's.
Two beds are too many for a room,
Two rooms too many for a house;
I am planning the life of the kempt rifle,
The worn keen axe, the bound bucket
For carrying silted water,
Matches, a poke of salt, no condiments of compromise.

Hanson Kellogg

THE OVERPOWERED

It is no more impossible now
 To have been almost feasible then,
 Than it is for a worrying brow
 To bequeath compliance to men
 Who ought, but seldom have been.

Incensed, we insinuate further,
 To flash forth the perfect all seek.
 But we find that each prospect would rather
 Unmove than exert to that peak,
 And our flesh, Lord knows, is too weak.

So on to insomniac search
 For the foilers, the lashers of skin
 Who have thrown up their lots to a perch
 Whence to leer at our postulate sin
 And befoul every bed we are in.

To what end, should we find them?
 To the end of our days in this tear,
 For at least we shall serve to remind them
 We had nothing to worship but fear,
 And nowhere to weep more than here.

David M. Stocking

UNDERGROUND

The smell of the subway is the
 taste of iron. Exits confuse;
 and strangers gaze, at loss,
 for signs. As I descend,

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The mind accepts, the sight
completes the underground.
It is as though a trap were
here, a poise, a place from

Which one had to move, a trap
from which no place to go
is less escape than fatal
urgency. I drop a coin.

I pass through the turnstile's
halting click with renewed
surprise that it moves my
way. Across the platform,

Passengers assess the news.
They halt before the
magazines. They blur
the newsstand's shining

Cenacle. Here, panic is the
dangerous pause between
two unattainables. Here,
air trips like a stupid

Lie. Nothing is kind; and
nothing compromise. The
gaping tunnel terrifies;
the pit reminds of suicides.

The telescoped, onrushing
train defers retreat.
Doors gape, and close.
The train proceeds.

Byron Vazakas

THE CITIZEN'S PALETTE

the grey notes chord up
 the grey notes dirge
 their blackened tune
 the same the same
 always the same
 color me blaze me
 fire me red and purple, orange
 brilliantine my head
 send the red surging
 sweep me with rainbow
 spin me the wheel
 of primary yellow blue and red
 and all their hued second cousins
 drench me chartreuse and watermelon
 cinnamon and aquamarine

 o these grey men with grey thoughts
 and brown noses
 who stalk me with their shrouds
 of grey and black
 to squeeze me into coffins with them

 the dead, like misery
 cannot bear to be alone

 I'll rout them with my vermilion tone
 I'll send them faint
 with my barium rose, my persimmon
 my cinnabar
 see how they run
 everything that is not grey
 absolutely is red
 o see how they run
 like witches at midnight

S. E. Laurila

BOOK REVIEWS

(**Note:** These are the first reviews to appear in the JOURNAL. The opinions expressed do not in any way constitute an editorial policy. They are merely the personal judgments of the critics involved. Every care will be taken to present as liberal a cross-sectioning of critical opinion as possible.)

The Heel of Elohim: Science and Values in Modern American Poetry. By Hyatt Howe Waggoner, Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press. 235 pp. \$3.00

I shall stick my neck out. I think this book is the pioneer work in what will be called the "Newer Criticism." Prof. Waggoner, who wields all the technical tools of the Kenyon group and keeps them sharp, has taken the necessary next step: he has restored the question of **content** to criticism, and has shown that form itself is so inseparably wedded to content that the two cannot be separated without a bloody act of surgery.

The problem that Prof. Waggoner sets himself is to explain the odd behavior of the major modern poets. Living in a world dominated by positivism (nothing can be believed unless it is "publicly demonstrable") and materialistic naturalism—a world in which values have no respectable excuse for existence—the poets, mavericks that they are, "seem often to imply that the statement of the fact-value problem should be reversed to read: the place of fact in a world of value."

The explanation for this defiance of the unspoken assumptions of the age is to be found, Prof. Waggoner believes, in the fact that the poets are actually better adjusted than the average citizen; they have insisted on living as whole men, instead of sloughing off any human traits and aspirations that cannot pass the tests of logical positivism; "they have actually concerned themselves very largely, that is—whether they should have done so

or not—with those very promptings and secret undebatable sentiments which science and semantics define as meaningless."

Six poets are considered in the book—Robinson, Eliot, Jeffers, Frost, MacLeish, and Crane. The thing that becomes clear—and it will be a bitter pill for many critics to swallow—is that a poet's beliefs have a bearing on his greatness as a poet. If he has a shallow or confused philosophy, the very form of his poetry will be affected adversely. The sprawling vagueness of much of E. A. Robinson's later verse illustrates this. Robinson, wistful quester for the "Light", never formed any very clear idea of what the Light was or where it came from. He was continually tossed back and forth between a diluted Emersonianism and the man-in-an-alien-universe shivers of the late nineteenth century. His inability to make sense of the universe gives an indecisiveness and floundering quality to large parts of his poetry, as Prof. Waggoner shows in a series of brilliant technical analyses.

Of the other chapters, I found those on Frost and Jeffers particularly acute. Mr. Frost, instead of wistfully seeking the light, has decided to safeguard human values by a strategic retreat. He makes derisive gestures at science, and plays in a kittenish way with theology, but in general he has chosen to erect a stone wall around the area of life that a man can know thoroughly. Inside the wall he cultivates his garden. "Mr. Frost has saved himself from Robinson's melancholy, Eliot's pious despair, and Crane's agony by not asking for a Purpose or a Law, by not attempting to redeem or regenerate the natural, by not listening for the sounding heel of Elohim, by cracking a joke and listening instead for an ovenbird; in short, by accepting a diminished thing."

Mr. Jeffers, on the other hand, has gone all-out for science of the late nineteenth century variety: man in an alien universe. He can write of hawks with more sympathy than of man, and of stones with more sympathy than of hawks. His tremendous power and passion, scarcely equaled by any contemporary poet, are channeled to the glorification of the non-human or dehumanized. Since

man is "a moment's accident" and "the last least taint of a trace in the drugs of the solution," the poet is more and more driven to deny the value of all experience, even scientific experience. What logically remains is hawks, stones, and silence.

The temptation is very strong to summarize the rest of the book, with liberal quotations, but I shall conclude with Prof. Waggoner's own comments on the state of contemporary criticism: "Just what the newer criticism should become if it is not to stagnate and so eventually be replaced by some activity quite different is anybody's guess. My own is that it should become more philosophically self-conscious, more aware of its ultimate assumptions and implications. Only thus, I think, can it find the new insights and methods necessary if it is not to become a progressively sterile application of fixed techniques of analysis to works ever more minor and unrewarding. The insights afforded by philosophical criticism and those afforded by close criticism actually can, I believe, be made to serve a common end, which is a more adequate understanding and a juster evaluation of literary works than can be attained by either alone."

C. W.

An Herb Basket. By Richard Eberhart. Cummington, Massachusetts: Cummington Press. \$1.00

The poem that Mr. Eberhart presents here is divided into twenty stanzas of six lines each. The form takes its guidance from the essay-like exposition of the theme. Each thought is given for its own sake, yet in highly indirect manner supplies the impetus for the next. There can be no legitimate complaint against this method. It has its beginning, middle and end, and Mr. Eberhart is thoroughly in control of his thoughts. We are, in fact, treated to a display that is surface to emotions strongly in evidence, but that is yet so managed as to make its presentation the prime task of the poem. The emotions

imperceptibly guide along its development.

We have to ask what are these thoughts and by what feelings are they drawn from beginning to end? Mr. Eberhart is palpably a poet of the New England transcendentalist tradition. He has discovered his own emphasis, however. With the instrument of idea he seeks to grasp life apart from idea. In the poem under review he starts with a stanza that is nearly the rejection of thought.

We are fighting still to know
 what we are doing in writing.
 Are we making an engine, making
 it go? Are we playing with a balloon?
 Are we inviting Heraclitus?
 We are fighting: but do we know?

Subsequently, however, as Mr. Eberhart continues to question himself in this vein, stressing in the third stanza the possibility that because of confusion we are without love (for the world) he comes up with the stopper.

But what of the gay girl in the grass,
 and of that simplicity, Alas!

The let-down is too intentional not to be studied. It would appear to lie in Mr. Eberhart's partiality to his method. Its very use appears not to permit him its final abandonment, try as he may; and when faced with such phenomena that does not permit of rationalization he is inevitably drawn to a position that makes light of his confusion.

It is the weakness that ultimately reduced the transcendentalist school to an absurdity, as in much of Emerson's rhetoric. But while Mr. Eberhart senses the situation and tries to work against it by direct apprehension he appears bound by it. His ending on a personal level in which he has withdrawn to his own 'blooded destinations' seems far removed from the wide dilemma of the beginning. This is not to say that Mr. Eberhart does not express a sense of reality; we are left with the impression of a sincere follower of life, but one who must pursue it at a remove from its center.

David Ignatow

Welcome to the Castle. By Alfred Hayes. New York: Harper and Brothers. 83 pp. \$2.50

All the qualities which brought striking life and vitality to Hayes' novels are clearly in evidence in his verse. His terse gift for characterization, his scrupulous ear for dialogue, his ability to pick out the identifying minutiae of a landscape—they are all here liberally. In the novels, as subtle underlinings they gave depth to the dramatic framework. It is now apparent that without that framework they can not stand alone.

Hayes usually employs one or another of the narrative techniques: monologue, dialogue, or letter. He is at his best, in "Adriana" for instance, when a vignette is sketched in a few lines and his particular poetic gift is made to vivify the characters and their situation. Or, in "The Loggia," when the drama emerges through almost naturalistic dialogue and the poetry sets it and makes it bitter. But there is never any real synthesis of the two aspects of the work. The poetry flashes into the drama and illuminates it for an instant. It never becomes part of the constant picture.

The book is a battle between the story teller and the poet. In only a few instances does the poet win. What Hayes has to say constantly overwhelms the way he says it. Unfortunately, the quality of his thought is neither original nor striking nor powerful enough to sustain him. Some of the pieces are as devoid of drama as Hayes can make them. They are the weakest in the collection. What he says in them has been said so often before and so much better that one is shocked by their triteness.

And shocked is the right word. For Hayes is **essentially** a poet. Perhaps not in the taut and wonderful precise way of an Eliot or an Auden. But certainly in the tradition (and I mean no comparisons) of a Robinson, a Benet, a Hardy....even of a Kafka.

R. H. G.

Poetry and Opinion. By Archibald MacLeish. Urbana, Illinois: The University of Illinois Press. 52 pp. \$1.25

Mr. MacLeish subtitles his book: **the Pisan Cantos of Ezra Pound, a dialogue on the role of poetry.** He has here made an attempt, through his two speakers, Mr. Bollingen and Mr. Saturday, to form a clearly defined consideration of the issues involved in the Bollingen award to Pound in the Spring of 1949. He gives us a portion of what he maintains "...should have been a great debate" on the function of poetry in our age.

The two viewpoints, defending and opposing the award, are shown with careful equity, although it is evident that MacLeish is in favor of the decision of the judges, and Mr. Bollingen has no great difficulty in overcoming his adversary.

The question of opinions in poetry or the opinions of a poet as related or divorced from the poem itself is certainly no new controversy. But this question is eloquently evoked again to show "...that a poem is not necessarily 'bad' if its opinions are 'bad'," that criticism must not be based on political, social, patriotic, or whatever similar standards but on the poem itself in its disclosing of the poet's intuitive knowledge.

With crisp and penetrating dialogue MacLeish's well spoken voice is raised in the cry for freedom in and of poetic utterance as shown through Mr. Bollingen's last words: "Is it so little to ask of any art, even the greatest, that it gives mankind, in such an age as ours, an image of our lives?"

James R. Thompson