

THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL

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CONTENTS

GALWAY KINNELL	The Jewess	1
FELIX N. STEFANILE	Fall of Adam	2
MORTIMER SLAIMAN	There Are No Toads in My Garden	3
MARGARET TOARELLO	Unanimously from This Cowle of Flesh . . .	4
WILLIAM W. CHANCE	Passage and Restraint	5
MAUDE TOTTEN	Old Orlie	6
TERRENCE HEYWOOD	Native Reserve	7
HENRY E. SOSTMAN	Five Poems	9
G. ANTONIO BORGESÉ	Dream of a Decent Death	14
JAMES BLISH	The Poet Waiting for Charon	16
ALIDA CAREY GULICK	Journey	17
CHARLES G. BELL	Gaius of Britain to Cinna of Gaul	18
M. B. TOLSON	A Long Head to a Round Head	19
JOHN DILLON HUSBAND	Army of Occupation	21
CARROLL ARNETT	Anthem of the Poor Lovers	22
JAMES BOYER MAY	5th Demos Sanction & Reward	25
RUSSELL ATKINS	It's here in the	26
BAXTER HATHAWAY	Song	27
OPINION		28

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THE JEWESS

Sticks, stones, when a child,
When half-way grown
Looks sharper than stone
Stung her heart wild.

She clenched her ribs like a fist
Around the wild nickel,
And nobody knew how total
The sting was, or guessed.

Until a gentile was trying
To put her hands in his,
And she dodged his kiss
Like a thrown stone, crying

The dark story out. He said hush,
And putting her wrist by his own
Showed her two spots where the skin
Flickered in time like flesh.

Galway Kinnell

2

FALL OF ADAM

From heaven my rainy father reigned
more Gabriel than the dawn,
walking how heavy in his top-dollar town
to wear the sun like a derby.

And what first knuckles were those alps
in such a calendar:
the oceans sang with forty throats
as he whistled in his splendor.

The animals elected him
their tipsy citizen
for his slow saunter and noise of grapes,
and a honey tammany.

To relish once that sudden rib's
omen singular,
he woke to all those monied hills
touching the round of her.

And from heaven my rainy father ran
with such a frightened girl,
inventing autumn as he went
than the night more Ismael.

Felix N. Stefanile

THERE ARE NO TOADS IN MY GARDEN

There are no toads in my garden
I pay no attention to trained seals
not a single poet is planted there
it is free of eels.

Monkeys stay out of my garden
never hoed by Markham's man
a birch could never grow there
nor the pipes of Pan.

My garden has lost its magic
so empty of tangible things
it boasts only a rotted piano
and a dog that sings.

The dog is dead in the garden
the piano's without any strings
but I know they want to make music
and the dog insists that he sings.

So I set him out on the ivories
nestling his jaw on the keys
then behold the bloom in the garden
as I fall down on my knees.

For all is new in my garden
the dog rattles the ivory keys
the dead bones fleshen sprightly
and he sings as sweet as you please.

But nothing is changed in the garden
the dog didn't change a hair
the piano's still kind of rotted
but the music insists that it's there.

Mortimer Slaiman

4

UNANIMOUSLY FROM THIS COWLE OF FLESH AS COUNTRIES RIVEN

Unanimously from this cowle of flesh as countries riven,
in tattered grace my frame's five senses break
quickenings, wrought buds at civilization's wake.

Through rhythms vast as sight my Shadow flares
like Mind that with the nostrils tastes Earth's cares,
till spiralling amid the winter's imagery stricken,
five griefs break as one covenant through dust.

Should fires for this twelfth month cast on drifts of streets
shapes from the dance of centuries where lightning sleets,
though Chaos span the movement in my words, my ghost
risen
and rocketing in Time, with Song would bell my sight.

Yet ash as reminiscence weaves my eyes
peeling Spring's antiphons from pyres like cries.

Buoy'd forth from me the parts of multitudes,
gold in reflections, gleam across the Spirit's center:
Heaven,

whose sowers fan the crysalis of dreams
into a prophecy, my Heart's tides sound your streams.

Margaret Toarelllo

PASSAGE AND RESTRAINT

Passes the velvet interval to gray,
 And night, the night whose spirits hovered rest,
 Glides like a vampire down the lightening spears of mist.
 Deep violet fades into rose, into sea of tumbled gold. . .

And so to the nave of day; comes again as on tides
 of desire—day,
 No night more, no nightened soul,
 Soul ebbd on the wave of night to thrall of imprisoning
 day.

From sleep, drowse-scented, sultry widow
 Coquetting the aisles of shade, shadowly wooing
 (Oh heavy-lidded lie undaring the blinking day!):
 From sleep to unvisioning eye, dawn-terrord and daying
 deep.

How fled the brave thought, one bravely dreaming
 Sense to its supersensuous, smile to its bloomful laughter;
 Whence fled the star-draped spectre, whence miracled
 god?

Whence god—and gone? Still, then:
 Rather the winds shape all, rather the primal disorder,
 Rather the earth mass melt, resolved into nothings,
 Rather this near-oblivion, much, much rather
 Than lose one thrust of lightning, sourced where the bolt
 begins!

6

Nay, nay, nor pass, the music need not pale
As sun in baptismal seas, like twilight with its lovers near.
Each gasp of eternal swoon swoons back to eternal,
Eternally dear.

Comes dusk, comes the dusk houri-veiled from her boudoir
of hours,

Broods again silence upon its old heights.

Lone one, be not beguiled by the plodding tomorrow,

Nor by the illusory triumphs tonight,

When each is victoriously captor, when each becomes
captive

(As the dew-drunk to an opiate day);

Yet beyond temp of time, momentous, the Powers

Far-mountained, anciently sit.

William W. Chance

OLD ORLIE

The pine tops moaned while Orlie fed his hogs

In black-lipped night, the way he did before;

Both witless sons aprowl in humid gloom

The wraith-moon hidden by the coming storm.

A stranger walked toward the hill-top farm,

Another skirted the abandoned road—

The others inclosed him in a still spun web,

Then pounced, like bats upon an insect swarm.

"What are you after me for?" Orlie screamed

"She's gone, she ran away with the hired man."

A dozen shots were drowned in rumbled thunder.

"You fiends", he shrieked. "You shot my nice fat hogs."

Maude Totten

NATIVE RESERVE¹

Past Rhodes's favourite flower, the blue plumbago,
 We cycled swerving downwards through the kopjes,²
 With here some girls beneath enormous bundles
 Bouncing their breasts and bottoms as they journeyed,
 And there watching for cars an older woman
 Whose spreading baskets bulged with prickly pears.

Till issuing from the kloof by a narrow defile
 We followed greener swatches, wag-'n-bietjie³
 Of more prolific growth and rusty zinnias
 Dusting the roadside, until Umzimvubu
 Moved moodily its muddy mass beneath us
 Black-speckled with nude divers from the bridge.

White-collared huts now greeted us on downlands
 Exuding ease in day-long lush siestas.
 Except for cattle whose sole worth's ndola,⁴
 The kraals⁵ were all asleep, with lazy mongrels
 Blocking each open doorway onto meadows
 Of kaffir-corn⁶ and mealies⁷, aloed off.

8

Rich land but poorly handled: How our morals—
Our poor utilitarian narrow morals—
Had followed us two whites into blacks' country!
"We'll soon be getting into cheeza manzie⁸,"
I thought, "If we should let our small opinions
Be overhead." Fingo is I invent.

Terrence Heywood

Notes

¹The Transkeian Territories (Fingoland, Galekalaland, the Idutywa Reserve, Griqualand East, Pondoland, Tembuland with Bomvanaland), about 15,000 square miles in area and populated by over 1,250,000 natives, form the biggest native reserve in South Africa.

²kopje—(pronounced: copy)—small hill (Afrikaans)

³wag-'n-bietjie—(literally: wait a minute!)—the short, thorny, flat-topped mimosa very common throughout most of South Africa (Afrikaans)

⁴ndola—dowry, reckoned by head of cattle regardless of quality, paid by a native before marriage to his future father-in-law (native word)

⁵kraal—native village, surrounded by fence or stockade (Afrikaans)

⁶kaffir-corn—what sorghum or millet is called in South Africa.

⁷mealies—Zea Mays, American corn or maize

⁸cheeza manzie—(literally: hot water)—(native word)

FIVE POEMS

1. Winter Arrangement

We crowd for warmth; this is the day for snow.
 The pinpoint city in the valley swirled
 away last night. We are our own circumference;
 but cold, the beadsman shivers. On the ice
 that caps our road, murder was done today.

You could hardly imagine a lovelier world than this,
 dreaming in summer: the white rime on the trees,
 the violet airless voids, the purple snow.

Married with chaos in the ice, I thought
 back to the bruising alleys of the city,
 the wheels, the dirty slush, the pinwheel signs;
 to friends, to known places, the delight, disgust,
 anger, cunning, wisdom. Twisted in snow
 and this wild aboriginal mountain, beautiful,
 I thought of hands and bright faces, mind and stone.

In the still of a white world full of nothing
 We crowd for warmth, huddle against the feral
 shift and roar of the sifting wind and snow.
 We shiver and hate each other; hate the ice
 with passion more than anything like itself.

2. The Everlasting Exiles

He drummed the silence with his queen's knight's pawn
 under the double star by Brunanburh
 after the rout.

10

In the hour of the pearl he came to a fertile plain
neither too cold nor hot, the water fresh,
a chromo land, bright earth, bright leaf, bright rain.

He built his house with care, in algebra
founded his beams. With dull knives cut the sod
easily. The grass, transplanted, grew.

In the hour of the poppy, hedge exuded thorn
laced into thorn. At later date a bird
founded a sterile nest under their shade.

For years he labored and he did not rest.
Many came to the big house to toil with him,
others to sleep in the cellar and drink his tea.

In the hour of the moon the house was alive with lamps
in twenty colors. By the offensive light
he walked the grass with pebbles in his hands.

Denn was ich nicht gefürchtet habe
ist über mich gekommen
und was ich sorgte nicht
hat mich getroffen.

Watching the dark, and darker for the watching,
after the walking in the sun on bones,
and wrapped to the bird's disgust within the thorn,

War ich nicht glücklich?
war ich nicht fein stille?
hatte ich nicht gute Ruhe?
Es kommt solche Unruhe!

3. Speech of the Man with Three Eyes

God save me from being alone on windy nights!
drowned over by the seven whistling stars
and the great hound howling!

Passionate souls
pound through me like wind in the chimneys
stating a protest; cracked harsh strident
their shivering familiar voices are
like flagstones last year frightened.

The street tilts suddenly to the side of a mountain
huge momentous indefinite wide
the shattered streetlamp gutters in the wind
stabbing a ripple of light to the twisted curb.

This is the wrong end of the glass wherein I
watch myself mitelike
in terror dash from bole to bole
climbing the empty street, climbing the high street
under the posts of the blown and battered sky.

A million feet of wind behind me beats its drums
hammers its maledictions
gropes with chill fingers
up the angular street
and the wind sways into ellipsoid protean figures
visible, audible, breath to my ear
as I scramble deafly headlong shouting
the vertical street.

Pinpoints of light flare to sudden stars in my ribs
a black comet bursts like a shell in my brain
after such nights I am something else than I.
God save me from being alone on windy nights
when the winds come and the cold comes
and the stars that scream beside me are not there.

and as instantly,
 thunder coughed, the rain gasped and went out.
 The stars wheeled in. At the edge of the circle of lamps
 eight adagio drops ticked from the chickweed.
 The pines wove audible patterns in the yard.
 The circle of lamps breathed in and sucked him back,
 claimed him, and that was all. He closed his eyes,
 this was a prologue:

blinked the crawling lids
 open. Bolted the door, slid shut the windows
 (the drama asked it) drew the curtains hard
 against the shrivelling stage. He crouched the sentry
 lamps, four at his head, three at his feet,
 shivered between the sheets, and went to sleep.

5. Die Sterne Funkeln

(Directional Numbers)

"There is a world dimensional
 for those untwisted by the love
 of things irreconcilable . . ."

and now the purple tableland of evening
 planes slopingly down toward the horizon
 acutely bulging
 and blueing at the apex

seven small stars
 hang by the necks until alive
 from the dark vault

looking very distant very small
 very cool

14

as they swing softly in slow circles
teasingly too far above my head
for plucking like the grapes of Tantalus

they say you cannot touch us
you cannot know you must accept us
dark hair blown to moonlit waves in the later evening
is beautiful, and too
we are beauty we are light
we are very pure but are not cold

you cannot know that we are also truth
but it is true
and it is perfectly possible
thus
for you to love us

Henry E. Sostman

DREAM OF A DECENT DEATH

- I Did you deserve a quiet death? did you
—at least since you heard those flutes of the night—
live your life without greed or fear, sloth or
wrath, an unbroken day that earned its sleep?
And did you trust the undisclosed tomorrow?

Then Death will stand by your bedside with folded wings, ready to receive your last breath, long, full-drawn, ascendant, like the word expire.

Then dying will be easier much than was being born, a choice not yours yet willed by acceptance mild, and there will be no crying, your name burning past you like a pure lamp.

II I dreamed that Death was a staircase of marble, deep-toned, not black, with fluorescent luster far-kindled lambent on its massive rails. I went down step by step and was alone.

I even had asked my young wife to go to a party where she might hear music and pass bright drinks on unvacillating trays, then to report to me late at bedside.

Thus solitary I went the spiral way, dim but not dark, neither hurrying nor remiss nor leaning on the stately rails, self guided earthward to the large low floor and bed to lie on and take sober leave.

I thought everybody in that mansion lived and died as I did, tuned to the hours, until he hears the call of his midnight.

G. Antonio Borgese

THE POET WAITING FOR CHARON

Well, I was wrong. But all those miles of rock
rising geologic past the fundamental eye
to come to this? Here's reddened God's reply
staked out in murk ill-painted flats from stock.
Cradled by prop stones among a flock
of seedy candidates, can I say why?
What final sin or hundredmillionth lie
brought me, guilt with no edges, to this boatless dock?

Violence? No, God does not work in metaphor.
The sixth gulf must be bored with overflowing.
Dis is a city for a man who knows his name.
to bewray benefaction, one needs a benefactor,
and as for fraud, has God put truth in anything?
Thunder . . . Ah, I have it. Hope of fame.

James Blish

JOURNEY

No no, I'll never step down to the pool.

Milk-white the rounded turnings so complete

The black depth would forshorten and distort;

There would be nothing left but raveling soul

From scattered fragments of the ivory whole.

No no, I'll not go down however cool:

Let milk-white rounded columns ankle-neat

Melt like candles in the journey's heat!

No no, who would consent to such delays?

Bone-white the weary leverage must extend

While groaning motion moves deliberate

The vital purpose regulating pace

With danger all while enclosing space.

O, for the shore might there reveal blind ways,

Stealing the laughter after the final bend,

The hallowed, peeling laughter at the end.

Alida Carey Gulick

**GAIUS OF BRITAIN TO CINNA OF GAUL:
BROTHER:—**

Here we stand at the northern waste of the world.
 Our season's course is gray. It is no place for
 Leisured living. There is neither wine nor oil.
 Most of the country lies in fens and forests,
 Savage, inhospitable. Above the lowlands
 Shoot bare arms of the moors like land through waters.
 Here a little life feeds on the stonecrop acres,
 Made almost as savage by the wind and cold.
 Our towns are walled with stone, guarding the imperial
 Ways; our villas dark, closed to the damp air;
 And we conduct hot flues of tile in the walls.
 We sit shivering through the long winters. The poems
 Of our fathers are without place in this land,
 And the women strange fish of the northern seas.
 When spring returns I weep for Sirmione,
 And the sweet warm days in the wine of Gaul.
 Then comes a grunting savage whose wit is alien,
 And I must bend to his state our high Roman laws.

Brother, if you may pass a good word to the
 Favorite of Ceasar in his turn through the province,
 Speak of my condition, call me from these shadows.
 I have lost enough years holding moorland roads
 Over the desert of oak-darkened fens.
 I fear that it will never turn to good.
 We are building baths west of the central downs,
 But never Rome in this sun-forsaken land.
 Brother of my youth, let Gaius be enlarged.

Charles G. Bell

A LONG HEAD TO A ROUND HEAD

- I A camel, vain
 in the pitch-and-toss
 of 'Ibhri yesteryears,
 sought horns
 and lost
 its ears.

The timid, athwart
 the Sophoclean edge,
 see an ocelot
 sabre-toothed till flesh redeems the pledge
 change signeted in blood for change
 that changes not.

The timorous,
 medieval as an Evpatorian rood,
 see Ticino, perilous
 on a platitude,
 switch the jewels in the razor's rings
 to match his mood.

- II Since polysyllabic pomp
 is but crude rubber in a roller
 marathon, your face
 turns to frozen whey as nose and shoulder
 vilipend the race.

Although the sun of fate's high C
 peacocks in the wentletrap door,
 your shadow is no longer
 than before.

20

Although you glut the wretches
who take nor give
the purgative
whatever is, is,
before your dilettante sketches
only the phrases in the glasses
of werewolves fiz.

None calls the folds of Caesar's toga back:
before your vanity
westers to the maggots' feast,
your izzard thought shall be
of trousers creased.

- III The needle's eye impedes the camel less
than the narcissist's pate
the **Vox** proverb Alcuin's letter quotes
to Charles the Great.

Levite caesuras on the road to Jericho
heed not the arses of the widow Scorn
in travail; so
the Caesarean ictus of irony romantic
delivers the torn aristocratic
particle **de**
stillborn.

Salons may cheep
Odi profanum vulgus et arceo,
remembering not
anonymous thumbs and index fingers keep
the candelabra of the ermined aglow,
remembering not

the nameless tier
 the ultimate Thule of a name,
 just as a hundred thousand hands
 pyramided Cheops' fame.

A despot is to the people as
 a dangling participle to a noun:
 a sceptre's seal is an iota's scribble
 upon the testament of a crown.

M. B. Tolson

ARMY OF OCCUPATION

I am nobody now. I am no one's son,
 Nor your lover. I am not even my own.
 I am a weapon and a tool, a number,
 To be counted like a polished stick or a round stone.

I am a digit of an enormous hand,
 Remote as a star from the conceiving brain.
 I am plural and anonymous now
 Here under this arc-light in this fall of rain.

I must remain anonymous still
 As I was in the plunge up the contested beach.
 Whatever the war has returned of me,
 Myself, as I was, you will not ever reach.

You may hunt me under the shadows at evening,
 Shake me, and call me desperately by name;
 Nevertheless, I shall not return,
 More than the ash of paper returns from flame.

John Dillon Husband

22

ANTHEM OF THE POOR LOVERS

One winter in Lausanne they took
A chalet above the frosting town
And skied, tobogganned, laughingly shook
The great gray icicles down.
Each night he said: "It'll be fun
Again." But Mary was cold, so
They left the Alps and chased the sun
Enchanted by the heat of Mexico.
The summer burned away behind
The bright windy beach and they roamed
The villages, hurrying to find
Unbargained relics. Mary combed
Her foreign hair, while Paul mocked
Back at the gulls who soared and squawked.

White caps on green waves make
White caps on green waves make
Slap slap against smooth
Speckled stones with green frogs
Beneath. Shall green frogs soothe
This boiling bed? The driftwood logs
Are coated with pulsing gray meringue . . .
But singing frogs aren't cold.
And still the chesty gulls sang,
"Where o where? Are you cold?"

Mary hunted with Paul for geese
And bundled warm when she was cold.
He shot a yellow flicker—"Please,"
Said Mary, "You know that we were told
To never kill a song bird."
(You know, he didn't hear a word!)
Wagons of thunder rolled across

The night while Mary cried, "I hate a storm."
 They'll sit before a fire and toss
 Cigarette stubs in the flames and warm
 Their toes. Cognacs and woodsmoke
 And Mary cold till the storm broke.

And on the liner going back
 To America it was cool at night.
 The music, as they lay awake,
 Sounded close although it was quite
 Far away. **The captain requests**

**You dine with him tomorrow at eight:
 Dress, if you please.** All the guests
 And dinners too, were always late,
 But always delightful, really delightful;
 And everynight was cool.

"Darling, I must stop at Saks.
 What time do we arrive Chicago, darling?"
 In the station Paul was watching the tracks
 Meet beneath the cross and snarling
 Sky. O State Street, that great street . . .
 You'll have the time, the time of your life—
 The estate was left complete.
 In October the house in Lake Forest was stiff
 And cool with dusty shut-off rooms.
 Mary was cold. "I **will** leave this tomb!"

"Darling, let's be sane about
 This thing. Let's act as grown-ups should.
 Still, Paul, if there's any doubt. . . ."

"No, I couldn't if I would
 We'll be intelligent in everything.
 Nothing like really native
 Intelligence, is there, to bring
 In fun? and then too, it's creative.

24

It makes nothing but sense:
Stop at Harold's Club, won't you? Terribly intense."

Now Mary was neither warm nor cold,
And Paul went to many chalets
And many lakeshores. He sold
His cognac and woodsmoke to pay
For many Marys who were not,
Or very seldom, cold at all:
The only one cold was Paul.
He was cold at first. Later he got
Warm and everything was fine:
Warm, but never, never hot.

Carroll Arnett

5th DEMOS SANCTION & REWARD

Ite missa est . . .

dark dawn . . . dismayéd bird
 cringing, fearful, singing
 in black tall silhouette
 of leaf-shorn poplar

to those departing prison chapel.
 Murked franchise after ritual—
 professions of truth in red bread.

Sad bird chants for Sebazius denied,
 unthroned and wriggling—
 and never can he strike again
 their mortal heedlessness . . .
 striped god will twitch until
 they sup on holocaust.

Count the self-residual commons—
 first was Greece, then early Rome;
 with Cromwell's Commonwealth (the third),
 when errored prophecy,
 fifth monarchy did not educe;
 and in this conning, fourth and last,
 our country and sham Soviets.

**Chained cauldron of demoted deity
 brims steaming formulaed destruction,
 foretold for bombing selfhoods;**
 and chauvinist, chameleon fiend,
 as Ceridwen, atomic gloried one,
 imbrues spectators with
 rare scalding testamentated blobs

26

sopped redly from ingenerated coils,
dead ancient virile father serpent . . .

Fifth demos men encounter next,
as soon as stones of war mass workhouse states—
and per old oracles—
reality . . . and adequate
divider of material good . . .
nonentity.

James Boyer May

IT'S HERE IN THE

Here in the newspaper—the wreck of the East Bound.
A photograph bound to bring on cardiac asthenia.
There is a blur that mists the page!
On one side is a gloom of dreadful harsh.
Then breaks flash lights up sheer.
There is much huge about. I suppose then
those nos are people
between that suffering of—
(what more have we? for Christ's sake, no!)

Something of a full stop of it
crash of blood and the still shock
of stark sticks and an immense swift gloss,
And two dead nos lie aghast still.
One casts a crazed eye and the other's
Closed dull.
The heap up twists
such
as to harden the unhard and unhard
the hardened.

Russell Atkins

SONG

The tink of time the tink of tone
To rhyme them on their marrowbone
Before the croesus cancels out
The coinage we were mad about

The horde of fishes in the sea
Are more than you can mean to me
And all the acres of the sun
Are hot and cold but never one

So if the Dragon bites his toes
Wherever Aphrodite goes
He thinks about the petalled rose
Beneath her snowy underclothes

The rivers of the hemisphere
Glide from mountains to the sea
Trees will point where mosses fear
And this is all you mean to me

So Lord have pity on his soul
And on the little fish that swim
If he cannot make the planets roll
Or any stars look after him

Baxter Hathaway

28

OPINION

In Country Sleep. By Dylan Thomas, New York: New Directions. 34 pp. \$2.00

Dylan Thomas's first volume of poems since 1946 deals with his familiar themes and has some of his old power. But the effort to hold a position he no longer can feel has serious effects on the quality of his poetry.

The poetry of Thomas celebrates the sexuality and unity of all nature, with its cycles of birth, death and rebirth symbolized by seasonal change, with the pain and violence which are the conditions of change. Despite the poet's disturbing awareness of the decrease and eventual loss of one's vigor and love, of the inevitable loss of identity, Thomas exults in the wild, overpowering force of Sex, which for him as for D. H. Lawrence has always been religion and ritual. Thomas's passionate intensity generates a highly charged language and a poetry of extraordinary vitality, which, in its first appearance, served as a startling contrast to the "dry, hard" poetry of Eliot and the reasoned dactylic verse essays of Auden.

In the six poems of **In Country Sleep** we detect a difference in tone and in poetic quality. The poet's usual affirmations serve only to convince us of his desperation. In "Poem on His Birthday" Thomas feels that "Thirty-five bells sing struck/ On skull and scar where his loves lie wrecked,/ Steered by the falling stars." He knows "That the closer I move/ To death, The louder the sun blooms/ And the tusked, ramshackly sea exults." He "tackles" the whole world "with more triumphant Faith." But the faith is verbal and the tone one of bravado. Thomas is trying to convince himself. In "Do Not Go Gently Into That Good Night" old age is told to "burn and rave at close of day/ Rage, rage against the dying of the light." In "Lament" the "gusty man and a half" becomes "half the man I was," and then is "a man no more (Sighed the old ramrod, dying of women)", submitting to marriage and convention.

With mounting doubt, belief depends on reiterated and increasingly exaggerated affirmation. The result for Thomas is that the turgidity which often marred the earlier poems becomes in these latest pronounced. We are unmoved by poems we cannot take seriously, poems which, at times, appear to be parodies of the Hopkins influence in the poet's earlier style: "and again the gulled birds hare/ To the hawk on fire, the halter weight, over Towy's fins,/ In a whack of wind."

In Country Sleep, despite moving passages, will add little to the reputation of the fine poet of **Twenty-Five Poems** and **Death and Entrances**.

Morris Greenhut

Modern Poetry and the Christian Tradition: A Study in the Relation of Christianity to Culture. By Amos N. Wilder. Awarded the Decennial Bross Prize. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 287 pp. \$3.00

One does not ordinarily think of the seminaries as centers of literary criticism, but Dr. Wilder, who is professor of New Testament Interpretation at the Chicago Theological Seminary, has produced one of most interesting and provocative of the recent reports on the state of modern poetry.

In an attempt to understand the strange and wonderful features of the poetry written in the past half century, Dr. Wilder examines first of all the cultural crisis of the western world—the breakdown of its religious order, the growth of secularization, the tendency to divide life into compartments and say of everything, "It all depends on how you look at it." Out of all this comes the typical agony and confusion of thoughtful men today.

"'Traditional' Poetry as a Cultural Survival" is a section of the book dealing with such distinguished figures as Robert Frost who have managed to retain some of the stability of an earlier age, which includes the ability to write with relative clarity and directness. But the author sees in the typically "modern" poets the major figures

who, in their own being, are grappling with the cultural crisis that besets us.

There are some excellent "explications de textes" devoted to such poets as Dylan Thomas, St.-John Perse, Gerard Manley Hopkins, W. H. Auden, and quite a number of others, all of whom are labeled "modern." For the most part, Dr. Wilder does not try to force any of his conclusions. The one point at which he is perhaps slightly guilty of an ideological bias is his insistence that a Protestant background is especially favorable to the production of a type of poetry that can really come to grips with the modern temper. At the same time, he is compelled to admit that the living poets who are peculiarly alert to the crisis in all its fulness are mostly Catholics of either the Roman or Anglican variety, Jews, or else total unbelievers. It may well be that in the future the flexibility of the Protestant tradition will prove adaptable to vital poetry, but the indications are not yet very clear.

One thesis maintained very effectively by Dr. Wilder is that a great deal of the most profound religious poetry of recent years has been written by people who have no ties with church or synagogue. A great deal of the religious vitality that was once channeled through definite institutions now flows in the outside and seemingly secularized world. In W. H. Auden the author sees a particularly hopeful example of the possibility that church and poet will once again enter into a formal and fruitful alliance.

C. W.

EZRA POUND AND THE CANTOS. By Harold H. Watts. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company. 132 pp. \$2.75

The higher brows are at last **reading**, not merely vilifying Pound's major work, and here is one of several recent studies of the yet unfinished poem. After pointing out that Pound's expatriation was a search after a "usable past" and not a wholesale rejection of America, Mr. Watts goes on to show what led to Pound's mistaking

Mussolini's political setting-up exercises for "ideas in action" (the key-phrase in Poundian philosophy). He maintains that Pound is not alone in his notion of the terms upon which a renovation of Western culture may be effected. With whom this notion is shared we are not told.

The author believes **The Cantos** are an effort to "alter the world as it appears to Pound." This alteration is to come through the method of the ideogram, the use of what may be called (Mr. Watts would agree to the barbarity of the term) "specific abstraction." This *modus operandi* traps Pound, however, leading him ultimately into the native all-back, all-white generalities of melodrama: Malatesta is persona of The Good because he resisted usury; Aaron Burr stands for The Evil because he encouraged it.

The devices of **The Cantos** are discussed in some detail: Pound's use of a "dynamic" imagism; the dramatic monologue; what Mr. Watts calls "declamation"; along with an interesting theory as to Pound's peculiar use of pronouns in time-binding, in making the Italian, Chinese and early American epochs coterminous.

The last chapter is a "reckoning" of the poem, in which we are told that "ideas in action" is not, as Pound might think, an emergent concept, but merely "the latest round in the realist-nominalist struggle." Pound is a nominalist, believing that reality is to be grasped in isolated moments which must, somehow, all tie together without forming an orderly and deadening generalization. He would re-shape the will with these "gasps of beauty between clichés." But because the mind must choose greater from lesser, must sort experience, generalization will inevitably follow.

One senses all through the book that Mr. Watts wants very much to be "for" Pound. But in the end, he becomes an apologist, asking us to accept Pound for his sincerity rather than for his artistic excellence. In another study, he pointed out that Pound's sense of evil is more intensely conceived than his sense of good. He is, as another critic so well put it, right but for the wrong reason.

Carroll Arnett