

THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL  
Volume 4 - Number 3                      Spring 1954

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SPECIAL NOTICE

On the following 21 pages, we present an excerpt—one entire section—from a long, autobiographical poem by George Vukelich entitled **Memoirs of a Young Man**. Though it is generally not the policy of this magazine to present only part of a work, we feel that this excerpt is capable of being judged as an independent entity, however much it may be an integral part of a larger whole.

The Editors

SONG OF THE OUISCONSING

the sounds of the strongnames range over this land  
 like the winds

Oconto

Oneida

Oconomowoc

these are the moccasin words: moving like duckdeer into  
 the big marshes: the silent and the speechless and the  
 instincts of the snowcap country are heritage here  
 you must keep downwind  
 the shadows holding their heads high and flowing  
 in rivers through the bottomlands  
 shifting from bank to bank they go quietly  
 as the sandbars

you must listen hard for certain splashings or wholeherds  
 will slip past you and be lost in mudtangles of muskeg  
 and tamarack

# 2

Lac du Flambeau

Lac Vieux Desert

Manitowish

these branches breaking: the brushings  
the musk of skunk to the highheads  
they will bolt the flatcreekbeds in longleaps  
you must standstill as the trees  
and be listening

Manitowoc

Minocqua

Matengo

the bullmoose with the bodies like boulders  
they left this land in the swishing of summerwind  
they crossed on into Canada with scarcely a sound

Manawa

Ojibwa

Chippewa

the untamed words: the bigwild words moving through  
these woods like the whitetail deer:

the courer de bois came hurrying here from the upnorth  
land the singingmen: with the chanson of home on the  
Indiancarries the paddled west to the Grand Portage  
from the freight canoes: the small lands offshore  
all looked to be like St. Marie  
the Frenchmen driving deeply into the sun and squinting  
their eyes at Manitou

The bigland is off to the left, bebe:

Ouisconsing waits for our bodies like a sleeping woman  
they shouldered into the paddles and drove past the

Apostles: the last of the Great Lakes clawing at the  
fat gunwhales and it could not cling: the foam track  
falling behind there is nothing that can run with the  
Canadian

only bubbles on the empty lake surface going the  
otherway long long after the voyageur had gained  
Siskowit Bay for a dinnermeal, bebe, and a potfire  
cookingup the new coffee down on the beach:

the one who is called Viggo looks into the wind  
he sleeps and there are the women from Ouisconsing

the river St. Croix runs the sunset shore of Ouisconsing:  
there is council held with its brother on the lean  
beaches:

Chicog Totogatic  
and

Namekagon of the clan of rivers

the blood of the watertribe is intermingled:  
common spring veins are lanced to reveal the line of  
Ouisconsing: from the seed: the strong sons hunt  
with the eagle heart of the father:

St. Croix leads the hunters southward

others of the same blood track out of the home country  
and stand in the shoreflats  
awaiting their brother: the hunt is downstream

Yellow

Clam

and the one called Squaw

# 4

their clans can be traced like loosened bow strips  
to Chequamegon

Marengo

Tomahawk

Brule

Ontonagon

Eau Claire

and Wapogasset: brave warrior chiefs who pushed a  
wild country back into the Great Lakes

at a sharp bend in the stream bend:  
the hunters are met by a young bear muscled warrior from  
the West: his strength is greater even then the arms  
of the crying St. Croix: St. Croix falls:  
he will lead them now and it will be a warparty to the  
south: his broodhardened back throws them down in turn  
when they fight for St. Croix as leader  
his name he tells them in a tone that should be used  
only in talking to squaws about stone pounding the  
cornmeal: his name is

Mississippi

I am the people of a proud land:  
I am the spirit of a tallpine state that started in  
1848 and considerably before

I am the words from the quiet firwoods of the slow  
north country

I am the Indian words that stood spreadlegged on the  
wickiup shores of Lake Superior: guarding the land of the

## Grand Portage

I am the Frenchman's furtrapper words: the courer de bois carrying in the crucifixes of Pere Marquette to the medicine men:

I am the whitewater words from all the veinways of the Great Lakes Drainage Basin pumping like blood through this ground:

I am the rawhide words of the packrat lumber robbers stealing out the big woods and the little people and leaving only the stumps:

I am the words of the railroads laying down the law and the rightofways along the waterways and dynamiting the dams of beavers:

I am the words of the lografts and the logrivers and of the manbreed as strong as axehandles:

I am the words of the Winnebago watching the white man harnessing the hunting grounds to the plough horses:

I am the words of the Sioux watching the crawlings of snakefences:

I am the words of stormwaters swept hard into the fishermen's beach

I am the words of pioneers

I am the words of a people called: Wisconsin

I have left the woods and come away from them and yet these words are of the woods and the people of the tall pines: the bonehandle breed of men

# 6

brash: with the big wrists and the legs like cedar  
roots cutting down a country in the clear mornings:  
riding a millionfeet of logmiles to the millponds  
riding the horsewhip currents of the Wisconsin and  
the Chippewa in the cold mornings before the big  
freezeup:

stream bends: braced and balanced in the midcurrents:  
the men are faraway in the mists of riverstream:  
their voices ring like axebites across the channel  
mouths from shore: you can see them clearing the

marking the miles by the shorescud and endless tobacco  
chews: they are bearded and anklebooted: rivermen  
without riverboats running the waters like driftwood:  
downhill to the big mills

It may be that they are anxious for the shore towns  
and the cleanshaves: the bar whiskey from new bottles  
and the warm legs of the norsk girls:

it goes lonely with the lografts:  
there is the drift of dreams down these wooden rivers:  
an empire is on the way here:

the riverways are trafficked with the legions of  
Rome: the spoils outpour from the slaveland like  
the wealth of Carthage:

Alexander stands on the booms of white pine and cries  
for the unconquered worlds.

the water is all woodentopped: it is a rooftop nailed  
tight from shore to shore in the narrows:

the front logs jam: the boom piles up behind: the pilot

yells for the pikes and all the men go skipping to the  
stuck logs and slam at them with the hooks: the trouble  
is a sandbar: shallowly and ugly:  
the leadlogs are nosed in solidly with the boom hung  
up the bigsticks grind against each other like animals  
caught in a stuffedup slaughter chute: the pikepoles  
are useless: the pilot comes up fast: there is deep  
water beyond the sandbar: a few feet further and the  
channel is free again: but the boom will not budge:

the pressure bangs the bark from the locked in logs:  
the pilot shouts for dynamite: certain men make for  
the rafthouse and come forward carrying fuses: they  
are fixed at the front above the sandbar: the pilot is  
the last man to run

there is a moment for running and the wind and the  
silent shore: and then the bar flows straight up  
in the sky: the geyserstream is dirty with sand and mud  
and the slabs of exploded wood  
the logboom slides forward like a ship from drydock  
the bow is blasted out but it will be seaworthy nonetheless  
the channel will be deep enough from here the rest of the  
way: and it will take awhile for the sand to pile up  
in the mainstream again

this will be a cooperative river until then

the pilot goes back to watching the fresh coffee cooking:  
keeping one eye on the hunched up shoulders of the  
balanced pike men picking at the loosened logs where  
the front blew out

a few small dead perch bob up in front of the logs  
and are held there as the current catches the boom  
once more.

# 8

I will walk slowly from this place  
my steppings are part of a masterplan, I think  
and have been measured out for me much before me  
anyway: it is better to be on the move and not hanging  
like beefsides in the cold lockers

I should like to stay and scan the silage skies in  
the spring mornings

there will be signs of summer: grazing on the fringes  
and munching in green grasses like the milch cows  
Winter is a badtime in the pasturelands: the frost  
drives deeply: the dirt is hardpan

Summer stands in a steel stanchion with its head  
locked in at a dented feed bucket dreaming cow  
dreams in the month of December

I should like to leave for the Florida keys and  
count the days like conch shells and not come back at  
all even when the homefarm is green again and the snows  
are running like barnrats back through the deepcut culverts

I must walk slowly in this place  
my boats are stiff in this season  
I pass the nailed up pump in back of the sunporch and  
stamp out my feet

Christmas has come and it has left:  
a new feed bucket  
Also: many many conch shells:

and some coral bits and pieces

**the woman is a stranger on this shore  
she must walk softly in alien sand  
is the wind a woman do you suppose**

my husband walked here with rolled down boots  
 in the fouroclock dawns, he went down to the  
 fishboats: he carried fishing gear and oilskin  
 slickers: he walked with his brothers side along  
 side

the mornings lay moored to the rivermouth  
 the wooden fish boxes were put aboard  
 the lines were loosened from the bow  
 my husband took his place in the right pilothouse  
 the gas engine awoke with the cold morning hack

I used to watch them leave this shore  
 I used to walk the wet beachsand after they  
 were pointed outward for the fishgrounds  
 and the fencelike spiles poking up like strings  
 of matchsticks a mile out

**he has left this shore**

**he has not left his son**

**this is empty beach hereabouts: clear back to the dunes**

I shall stand upon the stairs  
 I shall reach out for one star  
 the moon will fit into my hand: it is no larger  
 then a bird heart. It is true my hands are wings  
 these things are familiar with the high winds and I  
 will burst free like a quail from weeds

**the hawks will drop to hunt you down**

**they come hard hunting and hungry at dawn**

I shall sweep above their wings  
 I shall go steeply into the high winds  
 I shall be beyond them

# 10

I shall be beyond time

at first: the being alone will be like a tomb  
my hands will become familiar to me again:  
after a waiting

**and the hawks**

**an old tincan and nothing more  
breaks up the flow of flattened shore  
the current comes cold against this sand  
the current comes crawling without a sound**

the boat gear shack drops its paint like leaves  
the winter is harsh with paint and fisherman's laughs  
the blackrats stumble forward to feed  
in the stubblewhite of summer field  
they squat sucking in the bare birch groves  
their mouths are cold with the mould of graves

June and July lie buried here  
August too and the sandflies hum  
they are not beyond the reach of rats  
they fill the beachlands with their rot  
they are trapped: they crippled fast  
the rats will reach them first

a summer man once searched these dunes  
a fly once crawled cathedral domes  
the water watched and washed in crosswood  
the duckgrass stood dumb in the wind

the summer storm formed up in the west  
August scattered for its life in behind  
the seawall

**In another summer:**

this will be a clean and flowflat shore  
 the old turtles will sleep:  
 and the sandworms will bore

today is the burning of the brush  
 the summer debris where the rabbits bunch  
 the gasoline is spilled on the sticks of snow  
 the fire catches with a cry: it is a scavenger  
 nosing the dead things

there is a stench of September here also  
 suicide leaves floating like ash from the soft  
 wood trees: the big pines stand proud and not abandoned  
 the poplars are cleanstripped: all like crosses  
 the wind watches the dumb woodpeckers on Calvary  
 the flames climb like crows  
 two rabbits explode from the far side and crowd back  
 into the ground under another pile  
 they are quick like shotgun blasts  
 the snows have made them stringy: and fast

also: the deer at this time of year are bagbellied  
 and thinly: high snows will moor them to the marshes  
 and the cedar swamps  
 the starvations will hunt them hard like high  
 powered rifles: and the wolves

the flames bite back into the snow  
 water runs upon this ground and cannot enter  
 a little bit of spring is seen  
 Summer is foetus in this sun

the ground is charred stuff and hot from this burning  
 this is a strange and hostile season  
 the sky is clear: and yet reveals nothing

**this fire will die out**

# 12

and tonight the weasels will come crossing  
the snowshoe trail from the cabin  
and they will poke in the ashes of ice cold  
pine branches:

## **and old rabbit houses**

there is a loghouse by the lake  
its ribs are stoved and it is lank  
the winds breach the windows and the walls  
the dam is pressurebusted by hammering heads  
of winter: it is deathveined like concrete  
in the teeth of raw water

Once: it was more  
yet: it is mine

the fieldmice nest down the stove  
the floursack is hard like stone  
the noises of summer are all stilled  
the fireplace is full of silences  
this emptiness is in me like stiletto  
like a fishhead nailed to a beam  
I shiver my arms and watch my breath

I would like to bake five loaves of bread  
if the stove still served  
and I still starved

this menu must be stark  
there is no hunger after dark in me  
and yet there was more  
and it was mine

**You are only a mile from her now**

**she sleeps a mile from here in the snow**

the lake is silent with her sleep  
you will be able to see her from here  
when spring comes:  
and the crows

the graves of grandfathers dug into these  
Wisconsin woods: the bloodlines of the  
fishermen's boys stretch like purse seines  
to the Frenchman's shores:

the sun of Brittany burns like creosote:  
the spring eels swirl like blacksnakes into  
the creek mouths: Father La Fave the parish priest  
walks the beach in his leather coat:

the nets lay like fences: the tarring will make  
them stiff like cable  
the priest will bless them for the summers catch:  
from the east: the wind is bad

we will walk along this watershed:  
by the old beaches we must stand  
watching into the sorrowing winds:

the wood is in this sand from all the old hulls  
quietly they slip in among the fishheads  
the spray blows above the beach like rain  
we stand wetted with our remembering

the golden gulls have the heights and are gone  
at the sandbars: every spring the water gains  
like dogfish the dunes lay in among the duckgrass

the fishermen's beach sleeps in the open grave  
from here they watched the fat full fishing grounds

# 14

now no more  
the fourclock mornings:  
the stiff gas engines rolling beyond the bars  
the water goes into the lighthouse blocks with a banging  
above this beach: the sandpipers scratch  
below: the sandworms  
  
we stand: staring at the fish birds blowing  
the waters beyond  
the weeds string like anchor chains out of the  
sandboils: the spiledriver barge lays like a broken  
wall: the dead bolts hang in the holes iike worms  
  
in the deep waters  
the lampreys go driving into the trout bodies like nails

## **This Wisconsin Land**

the fightingmen took on this country when it was  
frontier: into the wilderness they came  
into the fast waters  
they workedout the big woods  
they paid their way with beaverpelts and  
then the broadaxes  
  
the land was strong: the wild country  
slashing with the trapped claws  
the fightingmen marked with the clawings  
the men in the big woods  
piling up the bodies: the bullets: the blades  
dynamite: and the smell of fires  
  
the bigboned men  
blasting down to bedrock: hammering their way

to the lakeheads  
the gougings in the leadmine towns  
the roadbeds pushed north: the tracks  
the conquistadors in this country  
staking out the land claims  
breaking into the blackdirt: crossing all  
the claybanks: the hands of Yugoslavs, Finns,  
French: upon this land  
marking this land and moving on  
getting theirs and moving on

the record of their stay is in all the stumps  
the burying fields are full of stones  
they were here for a time: cruising timber  
they knew they were not timeless

they filled their bellies and their strong boxes  
they took on this country and it was full of strength  
they fought it with fire

the farmfields full of glacierrock  
the icesheets were into this ground like granite  
the farmer staring at the broken blades  
his fathers' blood is here and his sons' blood  
men: the men will kill themselves in this country  
the young men: more men than you can count  
throwing their backs into the bucksaws  
bracing themselves and lowering their heads like bulls  
they will ride to their deaths on the log rafts  
they will be slammed into all the riverrocks  
they will lose arms: legs  
they will chokeup the millponds with logs

# 16

the song of the shanty boy is on the wind  
crying: it moves through the night like a woman

the men:

rough: and built from the groundup like pineknots  
pulling double their weight: the rotgut and a prayer  
the arms of the big men

hard like axles

the pikepoles and the broad axes  
and the people pushing into this country  
like crownfires

they built submarines for the Navy at Manitowoc  
they tested them off Kewaunee in Lake Michigan  
then they drifted them to the Gulf down the Mississippi

**Michigan was always the oldman's lake  
he worked the fish grounds off this land  
he built upon this beach with his hands  
behind his buildings the whitetail deer came  
down to water in herds**

the gill nets sprawling on the open sand in spring  
tarred stiff like cable before they are hung on  
the spiles

the old man walking among his sons watching the work  
all the nets will be in before too many more weeks  
if the good weather holds and the winds are fair

at the dinnermeal the talk is of fish: the laketrout  
it will be a hard season: there are the lampreys  
it is not only here: all up and down the beach  
the talk is the same

again: no fisherman is safe

the laketrout fishermen will end on the beach  
some of them soon: this season

they are operating their tugs on a shoestring  
 it has happened to the Eastern fishermen  
 on Ontario, Erie, Huron: this season they are farmers  
 they are beached, sold out, moved, working in cities:  
 the rest of the dinnermeal is eaten in silence

after the coffee and the slow cigarettes  
 the fisherman's sons return to their nets and  
 the steel drums full of creosote

**the fishheads and guts bagged up in the old newspapers**

the whitefish in the smoking shed:  
 the fishermen putting out from shore  
 for the potnets they cannot see

somewhere: the sun has risen  
 the winds from Canada kick through the fishrig  
 the fouroclock coffee burns in their bellies  
 the fishermen bunch behind the pilothouse  
 the tug goes fighting into the gathering blow

**the knifemen: the old man staring at the scarhole  
 in the trout**

the short blade into the fish bellies  
 the quick slice up to the head  
 the gills cut loose: the guts hanging  
 the sharp pull  
 the tough hands hauling: holding  
 offal bunched like twisted strings  
 the whole works into the oil drums  
 the farmers behind the beach feed their hogs  
 on fish guts

the price is better than nothing for the fishermen  
 the old man looks at the sky: and down again to fan

# 18

his thin blade against the pocket stone

quivering: the emptied lake trout on the crushed ice  
the ashes from the old man's cigarette whip into  
the open belly like sand grains

in the pilot house: Rueben holds the bow on the  
Two Rivers point and lights a farmer match with  
his fingernail to start up his pipe

**the old man will end up on the beach so very soon  
there is no fighting the snakes from the sea  
they will drive him high onto his own beach  
they will drive him as they drove the trout before  
they will kill him: the old man  
as they killed the trout before**

Rueben cannot look away from the old man now

the north counties: Oneida and Vilas  
Eagle River and the Three Lakes village  
they fought the state for the deerherd  
they aimed to close their counties: the  
state be damned

the whitetail deer going down the drain  
the people: the scappily people in the  
northtowns: this country: the land of shotgun law  
the politicians pass the laws no matter how they  
put it: there must be the money involved: the  
graft: the deer and the hunters from out of state  
and the money and the guns

the land will be closed  
there will be hell to pay in the legislature  
the people will police this land

with their shotguns and their rifles  
and leanmen with the sunburnt necks form  
up the roadblocks  
the pickup trucks parked on the sand shoulders  
they sit waiting for the first deerhunters:  
smoking

sitting with the shotgun  
he waits for the state men  
on the fringe of the big Nicolet woods  
the northman smoking: awaiting the wardens  
the law is bad for this land  
we told all that to the legislature: they  
wrote back the same old songs: the herd is  
browsed out, we have buyers for the rest  
the people's will and democracy  
it applies to the deerherd  
they signed it Sincerely  
they do not take our words seriously  
we think they will understand the shotguns

what the hell: we are the people too  
the chain of lakes and the Three Lakes town  
we told them what we wanted in spring  
no deer hunting: they heard and still they  
opened the season  
we think that they will understand the shotguns

they have gone through the deer like dynamite  
the herd: they sold it for fifty dollars a head  
well: they got their price  
the same thing happened to the pine  
history is the same old story with different people  
we don't aim to write another letter  
we are the people: when we become stronger

# 20

we will be the law

Indian Head Country: Headwaters Country

in fall: the dogs working the cornfields

for pheasant

from the weedbeds: the yellow perch by the

pailful:

the mallard hen herds the ducklings downshore

the weasel up against the chickenwire

the old man reaches down the small rifle and

cartridges: he goes out by the backway without

a sound

the whiteness of the north country: the winter

drift: still: the traps are out for the timber

wolves

the men bringing brides to this land

the snows are deep in the fire lanes

the woman watches the thin deer from her window

the jackrabbits are hunched up in all the windfalls

the cold cracks into the big trees like rifleshots

the burnt out neighbors and all the

following weeks for the barnraising

the deerfawn in the middle of the road with

its brainpan blasted out

the crustedup carcasses in the smouldering

cowbarn: the trucks driving up into the ashes

the men loading everything up with the hooks

the lakeshore full of floating fish

perch and panfish: the bodies white and washed  
out like broken bits of watercolor

the north country blowing on its fingers  
in the cold mornings

the big pancakes and the porksausages  
the fresh pipes: and then the Indian packs  
across the portages

**the spirit of Wisconsin**

the long snows and the sun strong enough to  
put out your eyes and the people standing with  
the old shotguns

**in Washington, D.C. the junior senator goes  
shooting doves and crying wolves  
the hunter from the land of Frank Lloyd Wright  
the shotguns: are they right or wrong**

after the feet of bullmoose: the fieldmice  
after the spore of black bear: the black ants  
after the talk of men: the old old crickets

**After all: twilight into the shores of this**

**Ouisconsin**

Twilight: and all the cryings in the wilderness

**George Yukelich**

# 22

## LANDSCAPE

The country  
of olive trees  
opens and closes  
like a fan.  
Upon the olive grove  
there is a sunken sky  
and a dark rain  
of cold eyes.  
Rush and penumbra tremble  
by the river's edge.  
The gray air curls itself.  
The olive trees  
are full  
of shouts,  
A flock  
of captive birds,  
that move their very long  
tails in the shade.

Translated by H. M. Ortiz

## SOLILOQUY OF THE MOON (from *Blood Wedding* Act 3, Scene 1)

I am  
Round swan in the river,  
eye of cathedrals,  
false dawn on the leaves;  
they will not be able to escape!  
Who hides? Who weeps  
through the wastes of the valley?  
The moon leaves a knife  
abandoned in the air,

**PAISAJE**

El campo  
 de olivos  
 se abre y se cierra  
 como un abanico.  
 Sobre el olivar  
 hay un cielo hundido  
 y una lluvia oscura  
 de luceros fríos.  
 Tiembla junco y penumbra  
 a la orilla del río.  
 Se riza el aire gris.  
 Los olivos  
 están cargados  
 de gritos,  
 Una bandada  
 de pájaros cautivos,  
 se mueven sus larguísimas  
 colas en lo sombrío.

**Federico García Lorca**

**From BODAS DE SANGRE  
 (Act 3, Scene 1)**

Cisne redondo en el río,  
 ojo de las catedrales,  
 alba fingida en las hojas  
 soy; ¡no podran escaparse!  
 ¿Quién se oculta? ¿Quién solloza  
 por la maleza del valle?  
 La luna deja un cuchillo  
 abandonado en el aire,

# 24

which being an ambush of lead  
desires to be the pain of blood.  
Let me enter! I come frozen  
through walls and mirrors!  
To open roofs and breasts  
where I may warm myself!  
I'm cold! My ashes  
of sleepy metals,  
seek the fire's crest  
through woods and streets.  
But the snow carries me  
upon its back of jasper;  
and hindering me, hard and cold,  
is the water of the dams.  
Well, this night my cheeks  
will have red blood  
and grouped rushes  
in the wide feet of the wind.  
There is no shadow nor bush  
that can escape!  
Oh, I want to enter a breast  
so I may warm myself!  
A heart for me!  
Hot, so it may spill  
over the hills of my breast;  
let me enter, oh, let me!

I do not want shade. My rays  
must enter into all parts  
and there will be in the dark trunks  
a murmur of lights,  
so that this night my cheeks  
may have sweet blood,  
and grouped rushes  
in the wide feet of the wind.

que siendo acecho de plomo  
quiere ser dolor de sangre.  
¡Dejadme entrar! ¡Vengo helada  
por paredes y cristales!  
¡Abrir tejados y pechos  
donde pueda calentarme!  
¡Tengo frío! Mis cenizas  
de soñolientos metales,  
buscan la cresta del fuego  
por los montes y las calles.  
Pero me lleva la nieve  
sobre su espalda de jaspe,  
y me anega, dura y fría,  
el agua de los estanques.  
Pues esta noche tendrán  
mis mejillas roja sangre,  
y los juncos agrupados  
en los anchos pies del aire.  
¡No haya sombra ni emboscada,  
que no puedan escaparse!  
¡Que quiero entrar en un pecho  
para poder calentarme!  
¡Un corazón para mí!  
¡Caliente, que se derrame  
por los montes de mi pecho;  
dejadme entrar, ¡ay, dejadme!

No quiero sombras. Mis rayos  
han de entrar en todas partes,  
y haya en los troncos oscuros  
un rumor de claridades,  
para que esta noche tengan  
mis mejillas dulce sangre,  
y los juncos agrupados  
en los anchos pies del aire.

# 26

Who hides himself? Out, I say!  
No! They will not escape!  
I will make the horse wear  
a fever of diamonds.

Translated by H. M. Ortiz

## **BALLYHOO FROM A DRUNK BRETON SAILOR (an imitation from Max Jacob)**

Me, me, I'm your Moses;  
Come to see the Land of Roses.  
The passage? Won't cost a cent:  
All free, for you—Oh yeah, I meant  
To tell you how I tunneled down  
Below the Red Sea that time and found . . .

Me, me, I'm your Samson;  
I'm the barber's patron saint.  
If I'd stayed single, that damn' son  
of a . . . **She's** my cross, but I ain't  
One to complain. Griped and groused,  
S'all she did, so I got soused.

Me, I'm your fine King Solomon.  
For my war with Alex the Great  
I put up a hundred million,  
Then this Greek (he wouldn't wait!)  
Had to see where I keep my bullion—  
Wasn't enough left to use for bait.

Wait a minute . . . God, it's Our Lord, Christ . . .  
Me! . . . It's me! . . . I saw Him twice—  
My smile's as soft as the angels' blue:  
Here, I'll swap with you . . .  
I AM GOD! Take my advice:  
I'm inviting you to Paradise.

Translated by Carroll Arnett

¿Quién se oculta? ¡Afuera digo!  
 ¡No! ¡No podrán escaparse!  
 Yo haré lucir al caballo  
 una fiebre de diamante.

Federico García Lorca

### VANTARDISES D'UN MARIN BRETON IVRE

C'est moi, c'est moi suis Moïse  
 Venez à la Terre promise  
 Rien à payer pour le passage,  
 venez car c'est votre avantage  
 Tous les tunnels de la mer Rouge  
 Je les percerai de ma gouge.

C'est moi, c'est moi qui suis Samson.  
 Je suis le patron des coiffeurs.  
 J'aurais bien dû rester garçon  
 ma femme a causé mon malheur.  
 Comme elle faisait la besogne  
 qu'avais-je à faire que l'ivrogne?

C'est moi le grand roi Salomon  
 Pour ma guerre avec Alexandre  
 j'ai fourni plus de cent millions.  
 Quand ce grec a voulu descendre  
 dans la cave où est mon pognon  
 l'or s'est trouvé changé en cendres.

Attendez! . . . Dieu, c'est Jésus-Christ  
 C'est moi! . . . c'est moi! . . . je vous le dis.  
 Mon sourire est doux comme un ange  
 avec le vôtre je l'échange.  
 Je suis Dieu! écoutez mon cri:  
 Je vous invite au Paradis.

Max Jacob

## OPINION

**Dream and Responsibility.** By Peter Viereck, Washington, D.C.: The University Press. 65 pp. \$1.50

This brief volume consists of four essays published in various periodicals during the last few years. They are bound together by their common theme of the poet's role in society, in particular his function as mediator among the crucial tensions in politics, art, and industry. It is Mr. Viereck's contention that the poet does have such a function and that his work, apart from its intrinsic merit, ultimately must be judged by its power to unify and harmonize his society.

The essay on Ezra Pound is the justly famous one published at the height of the controversy raging around the Bollingen Award to this poet. A rereading of Mr. Viereck's piece establishes it as the classical job for the humanist opposition. Throughout the tone is one of evident restraint, supported by a most conscientious recapitulation of the arguments in favor of the award, and finally an incisive, poised, riddling demolition of it by comparing the ideas of the defenders with their own actual literary practice.

At the time, it took courage for Mr. Viereck to voice his opposition so unequivocally. It was under the aegis of the venerable T.S. Eliot that the award was granted. In effect, Mr. Viereck was pressing Eliot on his own grounds of literary evaluation, for in essence the decision had been made on the assumption that a man's creative work is distinct and apart from his personal beliefs. This has been an influential idea of Eliot's since its first expression in the Twenties; it has affected in many ways the greater number of members of the Bollingen Award Committee.

Examining this theory of the separation of a man from his work, Mr. Viereck makes it stand the test of its own grounds. At the time of its enunciation, traditional cultural and religious values had disintegrated under the impact of the first World War, and in order for the individual to preserve some form of inner integrity, he was forced to separate himself from his meaningless environment and even from himself. This strategy was designed with the purpose of maintaining the minimum objective honesty one needed for one's own cultural self respect. In that case, Mr. Viereck demands in effect to know, can it be said that objective honesty or one's cultural integrity is served by offering a crown of laurel to a fascist and anti-semitic? The decision of the Bollingen group marked the crescent of this kind of separatist thinking and the start of a turning away from it, with Peter Viereck one of the outstanding rebels.

The essay on Stefan George, of less immediate importance, throws light on one, perhaps the most compelling, cause for the association of political and academic figures with Hitler during his struggle for power. These men had elevated Hitler to the regions of the superhuman myth by an approximation of his rantings with the prophetic Nietzschean poetry of Stefan George. But unlike Pound, George did not associate himself with any single group for political or social ends, and the ascendancy of Hitler was the signal for George's voluntary exile from Germany, in revulsion.

The last two essays, "Art Versus Propaganda" and "The Poet in the Machine Age," though their material has been more extensively treated by others, have their point in Mr. Viereck's search for the mediative solution for the poet, whose problem is to be himself within an ordered society. Recognizing the disastrous consequences of extremes, the fatal yea saying of Hart Crane, or the inanities of Dadaism, Mr. Viereck urges the poet to make himself the focal point of the conflict and tension so that they may subsequently emerge unified and harmonized through his art. This is in sharp contrast to the dogma of the school of Pure Poetry, the New Criticism.

In theory, the New Criticism has sought the protective isolation of the poet and his sensibilities. In itself it is an excellent idea, considering the noisy, confused state of the world, but for the fact that these dedicated purists reveal in themselves an increasingly befuddled tone. As writers and critics, they find their energies and vision turned inwards, so that constitutionally they have been rendered incapable of self defense and are thus exposed with lamentable effect to the explosive issues of the day. It is through the strategy of mediation that Viereck would provide for the defense and strengthening of such a poet.

For this task, he offers the poet the resources of the Judeo-Christian ethics, essentially an appreciation of the individual in balance with his respect for an ordered society. In spite of, and more, because of the inherent weaknesses in our culture, the poet must always strive for his goal. Though he may ultimately fail, and it is more than likely that he will, by his very effort he will have created the climate in which our fundamentals may be reclaimed. The effort is everything. That is the scope and the nature of the order of our culture. That, as Viereck puts it, is the dream and the responsibility.

The formulation is strikingly analogous to that of the Nineteenth Century among the great English poets and moralists. Our problem, however, as Viereck states, is compounded by the tragedy that has gone before and that we feel is daily imminent in our lives. We must live with the awareness of the inevitability of change, whether or not it is for the best. We cannot escape it any more than the air we breathe.

But this is not Mr. Viereck's answer, and he would, by all means, including social, political, economic, and aesthetic, defend, conserve, and maintain within change the precious traditional balance between order and the individual.

The question with which I would end this review is an obvious one, arising from Viereck's position, as I see it. Granting the analogy between the moralisms of the Nineteenth Century and now, the self-evident conclusion would be to predict collapse from causes that destroyed

its forbear. But I am not so sure, since Viereck's position is infinitely more flexible in its bearing toward either side of the conflict than its predecessor's. My question concerns the ethical basis on which he grounds his hopes of unity and harmony through mediation. Nothing much has changed in respect to the contradictions suffered since the Nineteenth Century, save that today they are far more complicated by our inability to present any fixed, affirmative solution at all, in contrast to past hopes. Nor is Mr. Viereck under any such illusion, since he offers a means that will accommodate itself to the needs of either side, without, as the hope goes, committing one exclusively to either. But this is a kind of admission that no one overarching solution exists. "But the future may lie with a literature facing both the wheels and the aspiration," Viereck says, adding, "Unless these two worlds can be united our road to hell will be paved with good intentions." He is not at all sure of the ability of Judeo-Christian ethics to do the job. But this uncertainty also forms an important part of his thesis, in which he appeals for an heroic effort from the poets.

This is quite a big order for individuals to undertake in a society at odds with itself. It would seem to expose the poet once more to his environment, without the compensation he would require, the protection by custom and tradition of his position as a poet. Viereck's formulation seems to reduce itself once more to the romantic level of the individual against society.

But the explanation for Mr. Viereck's uncertainty can be made clear. Ethics, as he would be the first to acknowledge, cannot exist without a religious insight into their need, and since he is doubtful of the effectiveness of his program, it is logical to assume that he cannot affirm, at least for the country as a whole, its religious basis.

But all this is by the way of admiring Mr. Viereck's courage and humane righteousness which he evinces so forcefully in these essays and of expressing a desire to see him develop in subsequent work the questions which he himself has had the insight to raise.

D. I.