



The Key Reporter

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PHI BETA KAPPA AND ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Deteriorating academic standards and their impact on liberal education have been issues of much concern at every level of the Phi Beta Kappa constituency. They were the subject of a wide-ranging discussion at the 1976 Triennial Council in Williamsburg. The annual reports of the chapters indicate that almost all the campus units have been dealing with related problems. And individual members of the Society have addressed many inquiries about these questions to the Washington office.

At Williamsburg, the Conference of Chapter Delegates was devoted to the topic of "Grade Inflation and Academic Standards." Dr. Howard R. Swearer, Phi Beta Kappa Senator and President of Brown University, was chairman of the session. Participating with him were Professor William Vincent of Michigan State University, Professor Harry G. Day of Indiana University, and Dr. Kenneth Greene, Secretary of the United Chapters.

There was general agreement that the most frequently noted example of declining standards — grade inflation — was a serious problem on most campuses. Each of the speakers emphasized, however, that the usual method of coping with the situation, "tinkering with the mechanics of the grading system," affected only the highly visible symptom and failed to come to grips with the complexities underlying this phenomenon. The panelists cited the abolishing of distribution and general education requirements as perhaps the primary cause of grade inflation. When students are permitted to choose all their courses in areas that interest them and in which they are likely to do well, they obviously will get higher grades. It is clear that more troubling than inflated grades are the implications of this condition for traditional scholarship. Dropping the core of required work in the humanities, the social sciences and the natural sciences and eliminating foreign language and mathematics requirements threaten

the basic definition of liberal learning.

Additional pressures upon the liberal arts curriculum have come from the shift of students to professional and vocational majors in which they are expected to take programs heavily weighted with narrowly specialized courses. Current financial stringencies are another factor in the erosion of standards. The insistence of state legislators that funding be based on "productivity," as measured by enrollment, has led to competition among divisions and departments. Faculty members feel impelled to develop courses with popular appeal, less demanding assignments and generous grading practices.

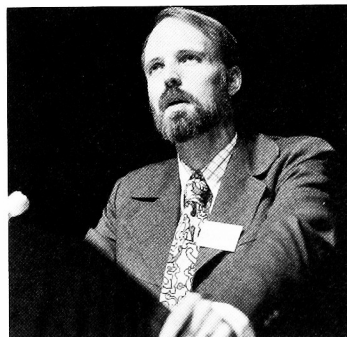
In the face of these difficulties most Phi Beta Kappa chapters have persisted in meeting their responsibilities of identifying and recognizing students with the highest academic achievements. To deal with grade inflation, chapters have been raising the minimum grade point average necessary for initial consideration for membership and reducing the percentage of a class eligible for election in a given year. This tightening of standards is revealed in the number of new members elected. United Chapters records show that from 1952 through 1976 the numbers of members elected annually rose fairly consistently with increases in the enrollments of the sheltering institutions and with the addition of

new chapters until the 1973-76 triennium. Since 1952 and up to the 1973-76 triennium, the number of new members elected increased in each successive year. In the 1973-76 triennium, however, that pattern was reversed. In 1973-74, 17,184 new members were elected; in 1974-75, 16,173; and in 1975-76, 15,754.

Nor are new members being elected solely on the basis of their grades. Many chapters give careful attention to the breadth and difficulty of a candidate's program, to departmental recommendations and to the quality of honors work. Several, such as those at Stanford, Indiana, and Ohio State have devised new methods of evaluating the academic performance of potential members.

The Society's commitment to its traditional policies is also reflected in the actions of the Committee on Qualifications. When studying applications for charters, the committee has maintained its rule that only institutions with strong programs in the liberal arts and sciences are to be considered for new chapters. In response to requests from the Council and the Senate, the committee is also reviewing its constitutional mandate to study existing chapters where there may be deterioration of standards.

From recent surveys and from chapter correspondence and 1976-77 reports, there are indications that grade inflation has levelled off and that some curricular reform is being undertaken. A number of institutions have begun to reinstate general education and distribution requirements and mandatory writing courses. Chapters, while not excessively optimistic, seem more confident of their ability to judge the quality of students eligible for membership. By maintaining rigorous standards and by encouraging the current reassessment of liberal education, Phi Beta Kappa may now have the opportunity and the obligation, as one chapter secretary has said, "to make its principles operative on the campus."



Professor William Vincent of Michigan State University participates in the Council panel discussion.



THE DEMANDS OF POETRY ON CRITICISM

by Helen Vendler

I should like to look briefly at a number of contemporary American poets who have confronted criticism with new forms, new attitudes, and new poetics. Their poems make the perennial demands of any new art form. The first, elementary demand is always "What does the poem say?" and source study, paraphrase, and annotation rise to meet it. The second demand is "How does it say what it says?" and explications, studies of language, structure, and technical form, meet that question. The third demand is "Who is this poet, at his best?" and that question produces judgments and definitions. It is the poets themselves who license us, their audience, to this last freedom of judgment, who ask us to confirm their legitimate pride in their own triumphs, as Hopkins, for instance, rebukes Bridges for not liking "The Wreck of the Deutschland," as Yeats writes proudly to Lady Dorothy Wellesley of having completed "Lapis Lazuli," as Keats copies out "To Autumn" for his brother George in Kentucky.

Though the demand poetry makes on us to judge is an enfranchising, it is also a burden. Yeats dedicated his *Vision* "To those few people, mainly personal friends, who have read all that I have written." Believable and responsible judgments have, at the very least, to be based on just that — our having read everything that the poet has written. Only then, and only if the poet is one long known and long loved, can we risk saying "here is the essence, here is the periphery." Beyond that discerning of center from penumbra, there lies one other demand poetry makes of the critic. It was uttered by Rilke through his oracular archaic torso of Apollo, and it is the demand that we change our life. Not all poets put that demand in the same way as Rilke, but in each poet there is a testimony speaking of the irresistible and undeniable rearrangement of the mind brought about by the confrontation with achieved aesthetic beauty. It is hardest of all for a critic to speak of this rearrangement in himself, and he can speak legitimately of it only with respect to the poets who have caused it in him. It is a happiness or a solacing, says Keats, like Adam's dream when he awoke and found it

truth; it is knowing what good means, says Hopkins, or knowing that God and the Imagination are one, says Stevens; it shores up our ruins, says Eliot; it is a stay against confusion, says Frost. It comes differently, even from the same poem, at different times. It is the only reason to write interpretations for others to read, and yet it is the despair of every interpreter to express it.

Since most lyric poetry insists fundamentally on the primacy of feeling, it ratifies us at a far more primitive level than do social or intellectual ratifications. "It takes so long," says Yeats somewhere, "to know what the feelings we are having are before we can name them ours." Fidelity to the oscillations of feeling gives force to the credences of art that exposition in objective terms alone must lack. The demand that we see further than our own feelings, into the most vivid and personal and perhaps alien feelings of others — and yet that we recognize these feelings as buried or half-conscious or cognate ones of our own, and therefore know ourselves more truly and more strange — this is the most important, because constitutive, demand poetry places upon us. We have not read a poem until we know both its strangeness and its familiarity. Also, as our own feelings change, so do our favorite poems, and the motive which keeps poets writing until their deaths keeps us reading until ours — the inexhaustible and inescapably self-contradictory plentitude of feeling and its expression.

One continuing problem for criticism is the difficulty of the partial critical mapping, book by book, that goes on during a poet's publishing lifetime. An earlier generation of critics had the privilege of reading first editions of *A Lume Spento*, or *The Waste Land*, or *North of Boston*, or *Harmonium*, or *Spring and All*, or *White Buildings*; and there is still no better way to relive the probable emotions of those earlier critics than to go to a rare book room and handle these single volumes in their frailty, their temporary air, their modesty of self-presentation, free from the rather intimidating canonical form and printed ugliness of volumes of collected poems. The demands poetry makes, when it is altogether fresh, are so strenuous that there result only too frequent lapses on our part when we are unable to rise to these new demands. The most famous errors of criticism are not all by reviewers of new poems, but still, the dismissal of Keats as a Cockney poet,

the Jeffreyan "This will never do" said of Wordsworth's *Excursion*, the refusal of the Jesuit periodical *The Month* to print Hopkins, T. W. Higginson's wish to correct Dickinson's grammar, Burnshaw's review of Stevens' *Harmonium* — these are all first responses that have set poets' teeth on edge and have given rise to the idea that there exists a natural enmity between critics and poets, or between scholars and the verses they teach: "Lord, what would they say" (said Yeats of classical pedants) "Did their Catullus walk their way?"

Though poetry has been preserved, collected, edited, annotated, explained, and transmitted, in great part, by scholar-critics for whom these labors have been often labors of love, poets remain wary, still, of the critic's off-the-cuff review, praising or damning, from the outside, the lines which they, the poets, to quote Yeats again, rhymed out in despair. Dead poets cannot protest; live ones can. And so the most hazardous, most difficult, and most demanding task for criticism can be the review of current poetry. It is not the most pleasurable task, nor the most profound; for profundity and pleasure, any critic would rather write at leisure on a poet whose work is complete and whose career can be known deeply and well. Yet nothing matches the excitement of seeing a wonderful new book, and attempting to rise to its demands. And so I would like to sketch some of the questions raised for me by the work of six poets — Berryman, Plath, Ginsberg, Merrill, Rich, Lowell — who have published new books during the time I have been writing criticism and reviews.

I began to read Berryman when he was at the half-way mark. Full of admiration for *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet*, the long poem in which Berryman takes on, as an alter ego, the self and voice of our seventeenth-century poet Anne Bradstreet while keeping his own twentieth-century voice as well, I hurried back to early Berryman, only to find that the cupboard was bare, or rather, so to speak, that funeral baked meats had coldly furnished forth the marriage tables; I found imitation Yeats, imitation Auden, imitation Hopkins, but hardly anything to equal the real Berryman in *Homage*. What critic, given Berryman's first volume, full of pastiche, to review, would not have been tempted to say, "This will never do?" And yet, while I was feeling disappointed by the earliest Berryman, the *Dream Songs* were waiting in the wings, with their marvellous invention of the sad, comic, incorrigible Henry and his

Professor Vendler, of Boston University, delivered this lecture, now reduced by one-half, as a φBK Visiting Scholar in 1976-77. It was set in type before the recent death of Robert Lowell.

minstrel-show blackface conscience. In Berryman's almost frightening expansion of 77 *Dream Songs* into the 400-odd songs of *His Toy, His Dream, His Rest*, published in 1968, reviewers saw a new major expression of the American voice, coming from a soul miserably consumed by guilt yet capable of a mad gaiety or a defiant boastfulness, a wistful and sly presence compelling readers with him through trips, fantasies, marriages, grants, binges, affairs, arrests, and breakdowns, a voice so insistent it never asked whether anyone cared to listen, and yet so shy that it hesitated to utter a word without immediate self-reproof and pangs of conscience. The infantile omnipotence in Berryman was matched by his childish polymorphous pleasures, and an unashamed greediness played itself out in dialogue with a sterner conscience, raising, by that dialogue, a question for interpreters — is our pleasure as polymorphous as his experience? His appetite for love and fame — to have all the girls, to write all the poems — as he resurrected it in his next-to-last volume of poems, put some reviewers off. The appearance of a conscience at the end of a poem, or at the end of a life for that matter, does not obliterate those words and acts which conscience had earlier been powerless to prevent. Crane's transcendent voyages in verse do not reproduce the intermittent fumbling violence of his life, but Berryman's poems are a faithful account of representative errors and escapades, and Berryman knew it. "When Shakespeare said, 'Two loves I have,' " (Berryman once wrote) "reader, he was not kidding." Berryman, in his stories of Henry's horrors, was not kidding either. But if the response to such horrors in life must be therapy, Alcoholics Anonymous, hospitalization, jail, and finally suicide, what is the critic's response to the art narrating them? Is it sentimental to be endlessly forgiving and sympathetic? Is what is so easily named "the aesthetic response" so disjoined from our response to events in life? These arguments have to be faced by critics of Berryman (and of Lowell, and of Sexton, to name two others who raise some of the same problems), and the critics must likewise face Berryman's terminal religious reversion, in sentiment and language, before his death. The mystery of the hollow failure of some of the last Berryman poems is still unsolved.

When I first reviewed Merrill, I found him both too difficult and at the same time, as I then thought, too explicit.

Used to Crane's hermetic visions, to Eliot's and Pound's allusiveness, to Stevens' private language, I was not prepared for a poet who could use old well-worn words, who could say outright that his lover was "masked,/ As who was not, in laughter, pain, and love." Yet Merrill mixed an unsettling amount of irony with his sentiment, decoration with his passion, narrative with his lyric, and chit-chat with his myths. This pot-pourri of the social, the theatrical, and the intimate in Merrill, which I found almost indecorous on first exposure, seems, the second time round, to be a new and supple vehicle, recognizing fully the worldly milieu of the poems and the mocking sophistication of that milieu in its discussions of passion, while admitting inwardly that passion, to the sufferer, is never sophisticated. Provocative, impulsive, real and gauzy at once, Merrill's spangled and yet serious poems reach with a Midas touch through the world, flashing it into gilded appearances, and then allowing it to subside into dust, distance, or death. But the impertinence, almost, of Merrill's language put me off, too long, from his inner and more nostalgic harmonies; now, won by the harmonies, I see the conversation of the poems, especially in his new *Divine Comedies*, as the most exquisite of casual overlays, a transparent shawl thrown carelessly over a chair. The flippantly earnest in Berryman is always childlike and therefore immediately winning; in Merrill there is what seems a brittleness of wit that has put off, initially, others besides me — but I think he has taught us, by now, to read him as a new alchemist of love and irony.

Plath and Rich I had read earlier than Merrill and Berryman. I read them specially because they were women of my generation. We do not yet have, apparently, all of Plath's finished poems, and we certainly lack as yet that knowledge of manuscript work which alone makes certain poems clear; we have only some of her letters home, no journals, and not even an adequate chronology of composition. The problem posed for criticism by Plath's poems is that they seem excessive. Their intensity seems unrelenting, their emotions unmoderated. Judged by the usual practice in lyric, where we find a modulation of response, a fluctuation of feeling, Plath's poems are fixed, savage, unmoving — or so I first felt them to be. But now I see them as a different sort of lyric. They are not occasional poems, commemorating a given moment: they do not embody passing

feelings so much as mental fixities, permanent crucifixions in relationship, akin to the endless repetitive toil, seen in the title-poem of Plath's first book, of reconstructing the Colossus. The soul is repetitiously being initiated into a communal horror, always in danger, endlessly horror-struck, perpetually enslaved, eternally confined. In each of the poems, the speaker is embedded in some hopeless trance which is clearly coextensive with life, and in spite of gestures of repudiation, she cannot get free. We are invited to watch Sylvia Plath watching herself, and the tone of deadly dispassionateness and even detached curiosity that accompanies so many of the horrific revelations in Plath's poetry arises from the fact that the poems are often written about states of physical pain (whether from fever, hospitalization with electroconvulsive therapy, or disruption by childbirth) — states in which it is natural for the mind to stand off in fixity and watch the body writhe, or burn, or abase itself. However, if it is part of the greatest poetry to convince us that everything is true, or, as Yeats put it quoting Blake, that everything possible to be believed is an image of the truth, then Plath's poems of stasis and hopelessness are not entirely satisfactory. The partial and despairing truths they embody, whether they are the truths of murderousness or victimage, of loss and absence or of intolerable presence, of indifference or of passion, of energy or of apathy, remain convincing in their eternity but shrunken in their totality. Her poetry is, in the end, less than life is. This is a remark that can be made of all but the very greatest poetry, and historically, whatever the ultimate rank of her poetry, Sylvia Plath will remain the poetic liberator of what Blake, with awe mixed with some revulsion, named the Female Will.

Adrienne Rich, so far a less electric poet than Plath, has nonetheless a staying power which suggests that she will continue writing. An odd problem for criticism — one I have not yet mentioned — arises for a contemporary woman interpreter, if I am at all typical, in the case of Rich: the problem of shared experience. One needs the edge of difference between oneself and the poet in order even to see what she writes as poetry and not as pure fact. But Rich has written down, with great accuracy of detail, the life that many women of my generation have led. She went to college; she fell in love; she had visions of grand personal possibility; she went abroad; she was lonely; she

decided she was American nonetheless for all the seductions of Europe; she experienced disaffection from her parents; she married; she tried motherhood and was shocked by its demands; she was disturbed by the separateness possible in marriage; she saw her marriage end, and her children grow up; she found herself alone. Criticism of these poems seemed to me at first scarcely possible, except to the extent of underlining or checking lines in each new book. And for seventeen years, in fact, I nodded my head and subscribed my acquiescence to that truth of what Rich had to tell. Then, to my surprise, she became polemically and politically feminist, both in her poetry and in her prose. The problem her political activism posed for critics is still alive among us, polarizing some critics according to their own response to her ideology. For myself, while not liking all of the new poems, I nonetheless found much of the more recent verse better than the old. Better because it represented a new self without repudiating the former one; the old love of decoration is still there in a more understated form; all the old memories are there, none denied; and though the story is ongoing, the primitive characters remain the same and the scenario, though differently seen, retains a recognizable skeleton. The chiefly domestic metaphors in which her themes are embodied may seem as alien to critics who are men as some of the metaphors, used by male poets, of hunting, combat, and wilderness-travel seem to critics who are women. To write criticism about a poetic voice we need to feel it not wholly different from our own. Women are socialized into the world of men, by literature as by life, far more than men are socialized into the domestic and familial world of women. Perhaps the full understanding by each sex of the voice of the other will have to await a socialization which brings the sexes together rather than distinguishes them from one another.

Among recent poets, no one was, on first appearance, more a scandal to the multitudes than Allen Ginsberg, and although the scandal has been blamed on everything from unprintable words to Ginsberg's taking off his clothes in public, the real scandal, as in any attempt to *épater le bourgeois*, lay in the aspects of life espoused and declaimed and exposed in Ginsberg's poems — their subjects, their details both realistic and surrealistic, and their language. Though Ginsberg's origins are Jewish, his story is universal: the half-immigrant family,

rising painfully to become part of the white-collar class; the inevitable nervous toll (Oscar Handlin's statistics on alcoholism and insanity among immigrants come to mind); the pride in the son who wins a scholarship to college; the son's talent recognized and praised; the son's graduation; the acceptable job in the white-collar world (Ginsberg's was market-research) — it is the story of half of the families in America, the Horatio Alger story, the story of most of Ginsberg's friends. And what was the result? In the famous opening lines of *Howl*:

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness,
starving hysterical naked,
dragging themselves through the
negro streets at dawn looking for
an angry fix.

And what had driven his generation mad was a combination of family and society:

Robot apartments! invisible suburbs!
skeleton treasuries!
blind capitals! demonic industries!
spectral nations!
invincible madhouses!

But it was not these general indictments which fixed Ginsberg in the public mind, but rather the revelation of what went on in the houses of America, the family romance brought to its conclusion of mutual torment and repentance. Ginsberg's family portraits — Naomi, Louis, Eugene, Max and Eleanor, Aunt Rose — are in American poetry to stay, a gallery of misspent lives, viewed in a mixture of pathos, sadness, disgust, anger, revulsion, admiration, yearning, and repudiation. But these family portraits — and the catastrophic emotional detail the poetry felt obliged to include in order to embody them — seemed at first unsettling in lyric. Did they not rather belong in some Dostoevskyan novel? But the question was absurd as soon as it was posed: Ginsberg's passion was not novelistic but lyric. The details were incidental to the history of his feelings, and outer life was, in the poetry, the burning glass which kindled the howl in Ginsberg's soul. Those poems are now over twenty years old, and Ginsberg has had some difficulty in recent volumes in finding both subjects and passions to go with them, in keeping his poems from wandering afield, in organizing his memories and his observations as they become increasingly numerous and disconnected. At the same time, he has had more success than any other poet in his readings, by drawing the audience, through simple modes of participation, into the rhythmic experi-

ence of poetry; he has also composed remarkably witty impromptu poems, that have never seen print, but are perhaps preserved on tapes. His buoyancy has kept him afloat, his experimentation has kept him popular, and his talent has kept him one of the best recorders of the contemporary face of America. Except for Lowell, the other poets of his generation do not approach his geographic ambition and scope (extending even to the moon); as he describes "These States," he remains the poet of a wide audience, and the critical and academic world has admitted him to the anthologies.

As for Lowell, to my mind our greatest poet — and therefore the most demanding — what is there to say but that he escapes our categories? All the received categories fit — he is so admirably what his predecessors have been — and yet he is confined by no one of the descriptions. He is formal, he is free; he is backward-looking, he is revolutionary; he is religious, he is nihilistic; he is nostalgic, he is prophetic; he is confessional, he is impersonal; he is American, he is European; he is boyish, he is old; he is frank, he is hermetic; he is the creator of an unmistakable style, he is unpredictable in his next form. The successive efforts of critics to place him are an entertaining spectacle. Before the most recent essay has characterized him, he has invented something else, a hare to the critics' hounds. His recently-issued *Selected Poems* represent an intimidating-intelligence and a restless creative force reinventing the world over 40 years.

"They told us," says Lowell, remembering the old motto, "by harshness to win the stars." That was, for a long time, his mode — the Luciferian embattled ascent, accompanied by an orchestration of clashing arms and wars in heaven. Now, making a net, as he says, to catch like the Quaker fishermen all the fish in the sea of life and history, even up to Leviathan, he works with no props but the mood of the occasion, the event of the day, susceptible to the vagaries of history's offerings, with no sure guide but the inexplicable distinctiveness of personal taste.

In "Epilogue," the poem closing his new volume *Day by Day*, Lowell says "the painter's vision is not a lens"; unlike the camera, "it trembles to caress the light." Lowell's poems have often been nakedly autobiographical,

(continued on back cover)

humanities

social sciences

natural sciences

GUY A. CARDWELL, ROBERT B. HEILMAN,
FREDERICK J. CROSSON
EARL W. COUNT, RICHARD BEALE DAVIS,
LEONARD W. DOOB, ANDREW GYORGY,
MADELINE R. ROBINSON, VICTORIA SCHUCK,
JAMES C. STONE, ELLIOT ZUPNICK
RUSSELL B. STEVENS, RONALD GEBALLE

RUSSELL B. STEVENS

Changing Rural Landscapes. Ervin H. and Margaret J. Zube. Massachusetts. \$10. This modest collection of essays, some 150 small pages, conveys a rather remarkable warmth and charm. They are taken from a magazine titled *Landscape* that seems to have been published between the years 1951 and 1968 by one John B. Jackson, himself the author of several of the selected pieces. Nostalgia, new insights, colorful prose, evocative subjects? Which one or more of these account for the impact of this volume on the reader is unclear. But no matter, the book is eminently worth the time.

The Food Crisis in Prehistory: Overpopulation and the Origins of Agriculture.

Mark N. Cohen. Yale. \$15. It is unquestionably a good thing when thoroughly accepted ideas are confronted by an informed skeptic. Cohen, in this volume, takes sharp issue with the notion that agriculture was a discovered technology that spread through the human societies and that provided a means to maintain substantially increased population numbers — an invention that improved man's lot and opened new opportunities. Rather, he argues, with a welter of detail that probably detracts eventually from the impact of the case being made, that population pressures of themselves tended to force man toward an agricultural way of life that was not necessarily to his advantage. This is an important issue and merits careful consideration.

The Nature of Human Aggression. Ashley Montagu. Oxford. \$9.95.

Montagu's volume, quite openly, argues one side of the story. Indeed, it can fairly be read only in conjunction with one or more of the several volumes by those he calls the "innate aggressionists." Yet there is no pretense here and the arguments are well presented. To an extent that is perhaps not overly common, the author takes specific pains to review the arguments of those on the other side and to address his attention to them. It is as if the whole volume were a rebuttal, persuasively put. On whether he or his intellectual adversaries are the more nearly correct rests the critical issue of man's dealing with his fellows.

Insects and History. J. L. Cloudsley-Thompson. St. Martin's. \$18.95.

At first glance this book seems overly pedestrian, but two elements combine to rescue the text from this initial view: (1) the information itself is sufficiently new and interesting as to shake off the

handicap of the style in which it is presented and (2) human history itself — all too often shown to us as an endless parade of governments and wars — comes alive in a new and little-known light.

Magnificent Microbes. Bernard Dixon. Atheneum. \$8.95.

Dixon makes a good point in arguing that too much emphasis has been placed on microorganisms as agents of disease and decay, not enough on their essential and beneficial roles. Not all of his material will be new to the biologist reader, but much will be, and in any event the story is well told. In places I find the views expressed to be a touch extreme, such as the suggestion that it would be risky to cause the extinction of the smallpox virus, but on the whole the book is readable and necessary.

Large Mammals and a Brave People: Subsistence Hunters in Zambia. Stuart A. Marks. Washington. \$15.

It may well be wise, from time to time, to look carefully at a very different culture from one's own, if for nothing else than to reach a new perspective. Stuart Marks makes this possible with his detailed account of a year or more spent in careful analysis of the hunting process in a very limited area of African Zambia.

LEONARD W. DOOB

The Third Try at World Order: U.S. Policy for an Interdependent World. Harlan Cleveland. Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies. \$3.95.

A popularized, unobtrusively documented analysis of the grotesque state of affairs on this war-prone planet. Obviously nationalism and war have not been eliminated by the League of Nations and the United Nations. *The Third Try*, according to this political scientist, must recognize the interdependence of mankind, the intimate relation between domestic and foreign policies, and an obligation to alleviate poverty everywhere. The essay is not screaming with sloppy sentiment, rather it is packed with concrete suggestions stemming in part from the author's practical experiences and sophistication.

Sleep Positions: The Night Language of the Body. Samuel Dunkell. Morrow. \$6.95.

An informal, clinical application of a simple cause-and-effect doctrine to the thesis that "our sleep positions are determined by the essential way we live in the world." After padding a quarter of the book by summarizing what is known scientifically about sleep, the author

describes what he believes to be the common sleep positions (he assigns them the snappy names of full-fetal, prone, royal, and semi-fetal) as well as the "exotic" positions (ostrich, mummy, sphinx, dutch wife, etc.). He argues almost convincingly that couples' basic attitudes toward each other may be significantly revealed by their positions during sleep. He is a psychoanalyst and hence should be the first to suggest that his name means "dark" in German minus one of the l's; at the very least he has pointed out yet another possible way through which we can try, however vainly, to understand ourselves.

My Analysis with Freud. A. Kardiner. Norton. \$6.95.

A brief, modest, dignified account of the author's six-month analysis by the Master himself in 1921-22 and its effects upon him and his subsequent career as therapist and scholar. Some insight is obtained into Freud from descriptions of how he reacted during the analytic sessions, and from anecdotes about him and his adoring disciples in Vienna. Kardiner, however, remains elusive. Although "from my present vantage point," he concludes more than a half century later, "Freud's analysis was a brilliant performance, done with speed and accuracy," he adds that one of Freud's hypotheses about himself "put me on a wild goose chase for a problem that did not exist."

Mussolini's Roman Empire. Denis Mack Smith. Viking. \$12.95.

An indignant, well documented account of how Mussolini "could be strangely irritated when foreigners spoke to him of the glories of Italian art and climate, because he imagined, and resented, that Italians had the reputation of being disinclined to fight and eager for pleasure." So that Italians could become "healthy," he "determined to change their reputation and make them less nice, more hateful, and more violent." This Oxford historian relates how a boastful, conceited dictator, driven by a perhaps pathological desire to secure homage at home and respect abroad, pushed his ill-prepared forces into many countries (Ethiopia, Greece, Spain, and so on); he perforce allied himself with Hitler; he ordered the use of poison gas, though he never achieved a *guerra lampo* or a notable victory. He often fussed more about press releases than about the crucial military decisions he himself insisted on making. The role of the individual here looms large and challenges social scientists who would explain history through a doctrine of economic or social determinism.

Androgyny: Toward a New Theory of Sexuality. June Singer. Doubleday. \$8.95.

An "extremely tentative," modest, confident, unabashedly Jungian defense of the thesis that the "human psyche" contains a non-culturally determined archetype which is both masculine and feminine. The evidence is primarily clinical, but astute, even profound references are made to historical documents and to various doctrines (e.g., astrology,

alchemy, Yin/Yang). Androgyny is definitely not bisexuality; its relevance to woman's status in our society is sensibly — not sensationally, not fashionably — indicated. The book's final sentence: "Look within."

ROBERT B. HEILMAN

Monsieur Proust. Celeste Albaret. Ed. Georges Belmont. Trans. Barbara Bray. McGraw-Hill. \$12.50.
An effortlessly idealizing portrait by the woman who from 1914 to 1922 was Proust's cook, caretaker, concierge, courier, and finally confidante. The correction of Proust myths and the recording of many details of domestic and artistic life are constantly fascinating.

Truth to Life: The Art of Biography in the Nineteenth-Century. A. O. J. Cockshut. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. \$3.95.
A re-issue of a recent work that significantly and readably surveys the standards, methods, attitudes, commitments, and reticences that influenced Victorian biographers. Cockshut evaluates six major biographies and judges Froude's *Carlyle* the best.

Ficciones: Four Stories and a Play. Miguel de Unamuno. Trans. Anthony Kerrigan. Princeton. \$12.50.
A novella, three long stories, and a play compellingly explore ambiguous personalities — the "virgin mother" who brings up nieces and nephews, the unbeliever who is a saintly priest, the good doctor who loses patients because he publishes fantastic fiction, and Cain and Abel as twins who suffer equally and whose wives both desire Cain.

Celine. Patrick McCarthy. Viking. \$10.
The biographical framework encloses an explication and scrupulous evaluation of the works, from the nihilistic genius of the novels to the paranoia and vulgarity of the pamphlets. McCarthy identifies religious and comic elements in Celine, and his Rabelaisian and Joycean language games.

Rymes of Robin Hood: An Introduction to the English Outlaw. R. B. Dobson & J. Taylor. Pittsburgh. \$12.95.
Meant mainly for the general reader, this book opens with a good discussion of the Robin Hood tradition and of its literary manifestations from late medieval ballads on through 19th-century verse and fiction. It reprints 18 "Rymes of Robin Hood," 7 playlets and parts of plays, and 5 "other outlaw songs," including one on Jesse James.

Malraux: Life and Work. Ed. Martine de Courcel. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. \$12.95.
Informative and analytical essays (the best by Isaiah Berlin, John Lehmann, and E. H. Gombrich; the only poor one by Victoria Ocampo) admirably portray the remarkable figure who in war, literature, art, and politics was resolutely his own man. Many typos.

Anna Akhmatova: A Poetic Pilgrimage. Amanda Haight. Oxford. \$10.
Writing about an important Russian poet who survived many years of official

hostility, Haight provides, not a complete biography, but a penetrating exposition of the poetry in the light of biographical facts. Her summation is excellent. A sprinkling of apposite illustrations.

The Letters of Virginia Woolf. Vol. II: 1912-1922. Ed. Nigel Nicolson. Asst. ed. Joanne Trautmann. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. \$14.95.
These 700 letters, well edited, reveal an unofficial Virginia Woolf (age 30 to 40) full of wit and humor, sharp in vignettes and caricatures, diverse in interests (from gardening to gossip), independent in judgments, happy in marriage and friendships. Superior introduction.

The Art of Presence: The Poet and Paradise Lost. Arnold Stein. California. \$10.95.
The Ethic of Time: Structures of Experience in Shakespeare. Wylie Sypher. Seabury. \$10.95.
Perceptive essays on major poets by established but original critics.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary of French Literature. Joyce M. H. Reid. Oxford. \$15.
This very valuable reference work covers the ground from early medieval Latin works to structuralism and the new criticism of Roland Barthes.

Nadar. Nigel Gosling. Knopf. \$25.
A splendid collection of photographs (over 350) from the Atelier Nadar, mostly by the founder, Felix Tournachon (1820-1910). Gosling provides a life of the versatile Felix (journalist, author, caricaturist, balloonist, photographic genius), and biographical sketches of 80 Nadar subjects, who include many of the major literary, artistic, musical, theatrical, intellectual, and political figures from 1850 on.

FREDERICK J. CROSSON

A Companion to Wittgenstein's "Philosophical Investigations." Garth Hallett. Cornell. \$27.50.
Alas for the price (not without some justification, for 800 pages), this is a work which every reader trying to wend his way through the *Investigations* should have or have access to: a superb commentary, with overviews and detailed explications, with information and interpretation. It offers cogent expansions of cryptic passages, accounts of why Wittgenstein says what he does and extensive notes on the sources of his thinking. A first-rate piece of scholarship, of enduring value.

Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning. Paul Ricoeur. Texas Christian. \$6.
Four lectures which attempt to give an overview of a comprehensive philosophy of language, modifying some of Ricoeur's early views (e.g. on the paradigmatic status of the symbol for language theory) and charting further explorations. Overall, on his trek from phenomenology to hermeneutics, Ricoeur continues to move closer to structuralism, while clearly distinguishing himself from it. His steadfast defense of the semantic autonomy of written discourse and of the objectivity of meaning is paired dialectically with

the equal primacy of experience as the ground of saying. An informed, intelligent and stimulating essay.

The Origins of Stoic Cosmology. David E. Hahn. Ohio State. \$17.50.
Inevitably a large amount of conjecture and interpretation enter into the attempt to trace the antecedents of Stoic cosmology, but Hahn argues persuasively that Aristotle is the major source from which the Stoic categories are mined and transformed, often beyond easy recognition.

Philosopher at Large. Mortimer J. Adler. Macmillan. \$12.95.
Subtitled "*An Intellectual Autobiography*," this brisk and candid *memorabilia* is more about persons and events than ideas. So much the better, because Adler battled and worked with some of the most interesting people and movements of our time, from John Dewey and Robert Hutchins to the great books curricula and the re-casting of *Britannica 3*. Long in the academic world but never domesticated there, his recollections of Columbia in the twenties and Chicago in the thirties are especially revealing of both him and those milieus.

Paul Tillich: His Life and Thought. Vol. 1 Life. Wilhelm and Marion Pauck. Harper & Row. \$15.
Preparation for this authorized biography was begun fifteen years ago via extensive interviews with its subject and dozens of his friends all over Europe and the U.S. It is a good but not excellent biography, which while it does not avoid mentioning the more puzzling aspects of Tillich's personality does not go far in trying to explain them either. But on the whole, it is an objective and capable account of one of the century's most powerful and original thinkers.

Mahatma Gandhi and His Apostles. Ved Mehta. Viking. \$14.95.
More or less familiar biographical facts bounded by vivid recounting of multifarious interviews with Gandhian disciples, family, editors, etc. While the interviews are always interesting (Mehta's writing never sags), one can't escape the feeling that Gandhi has somehow eluded him. Perhaps the intent to demythologize a great soul is bound to leave us with a sense of binocular disparity particularly since the persistent psycho-biographical issues are not carried through. Still, there is a vitality and power in the telling which makes this worth recommending.

Phenomenology and Logic. Robert S. Tragesser. Cornell. \$9.75.
A careful and non-transcendental application of phenomenological analysis to some problems in the foundations of logic, suggesting an alternative to Quine's ontological relativity. The nature of abstract entities was, after all, the theme that most pre-occupied Husserl in his published works, even though continental phenomenologists have largely focused on his existential categories, and this book should help to demonstrate the fruitfulness of his approach.

ANDREW GYORGY

The Japanese. Edwin O. Reischauer. Harvard-Belknap. \$15.

Edwin O. Reischauer, University Professor at Harvard and United States Ambassador to Japan from 1961-1966, has produced a classic work on the historic evolution, political and cultural system, economic structure and future ideological expectations of Japan. This beautifully written and comprehensive book ingeniously combines the elements of a basic introduction with an advanced and sophisticated analysis of the Japanese people. The reviewer particularly enjoyed the chapters dealing with the role of women, religion and "psychological traits" of the Japanese people.

Russian Realist Art. The State and Society: The Peredvizhniki and Their Tradition. Elizabeth Valkenier. Ardis, Ann Arbor. \$7.50.

Dr. Valkenier has written a challenging study on the historic origins and political background of Russian realist art. Her painstaking recreation of the artistic achievements of a group of Russian realist painters known as the *peredvizhniki* is a particularly valuable contribution to a better understanding of current Soviet society and politics because it deals minutely with a specific Russian movement, born of protest in 1863 and dead in 1923. Ten years later this artistic trend was resurrected for political reasons by the Stalinists and became the basis for Socialist Realism. This interdisciplinary study will appeal to historians, sociologists, economists, political scientists.

To Be Preserved Forever. Lev Kopelev. Lippincott. \$12.50.

Prison Diaries. Edward Kuznetsov. Stein & Day. \$8.95.

In the vast outpouring of literature on Soviet, and more broadly speaking, communist dissenters, these two studies emerge as having a particularly relevant message for both the survivors of the prison system and the Western public at large. Both are eloquent testimonials to the tenacity and strength of the human spirit under great strain and stress, as well as fascinating in their descriptive details of the operation of various gulag structures in the communist world. Exceedingly well-written and ably translated, these books are "musts" for readers interested in the current global discussion of the issues on human rights.

Uncertain Greatness: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy. Roger Morris. Harper & Row. \$10.95.

Roger Morris, who served on the National Security Council under Henry Kissinger, has written a lively and controversial profile of his former superior. His analysis is filled with detailed and valuable factual information while presenting in vivid colors the inside operations of the Nixon administration. The author takes a pessimistic view of Kissinger's diplomacy, particularly in its long term implications. Kissinger's essential failure is reviewed at length emphasizing his arrogance, over-sensitivity, suspiciousness and secretiveness.

Revolution in the Third World: Myths and Prospects. Gerard Chaliand. Viking. \$11.95.

This is a significant theoretical study dealing with case studies of revolutions and quasi-revolutions in the non-industrialized world. Among the exceptionally interesting chapters are the accounts of various patterns of armed struggle in Latin America and the Middle East. The tone of this book is neither optimistic nor cynical. It reflects, rather, a sober understanding of the immensely dangerous revolutionary possibilities of our uncertain world.

Shattered Peace: The Origins of the Cold War and the National Security State.

Daniel Yergin. Houghton Mifflin. \$15. Yergin has produced a fine contribution to the rapidly mushrooming literature on the immediate post-war origins of the Cold War.

RICHARD BEALE DAVIS

Commons Debates 1628, Vol. I. Intro. and Reference Materials: Vol. II. 17 March 19-April 1628; Vol. III. 21 April-27 May 1628.

Eds. Robert C. Johnson, Mary Frear Keller, Maija Janson Cole & William B. Bidwell. Yale. \$12.50, \$32.50, and \$35.

Compiled and edited from a variety of official papers, private diaries, and letters, this fascinating day by day account of proceedings and of men, careers, and principles reveals the legislative background of American colonial debates and laws and of men connected with the founding of Virginia and New England. Essential for the colonial historian.

Magnalia Christi Americana, by Cotton Mather; Books I and II. Eds. Kenneth B. Murdock and Elizabeth W. Miller. Belknap/Harvard. \$25.

Richard Mather of Dorchester. B. R. Burg. Kentucky. \$15.95.

A Lyme Miscellany 1776-1976. Ed. George J. Willauer, Jr. Wesleyan. \$15.

Three interesting approaches to New England history include the long-awaited (first part) of the Murdock edition of the *Magnalia*, the curious prose epic presenting among other things the still sad story of the witchcraft trials; an approach to an understanding of Puritan doctrine through the life and writings of Richard, grandfather of Cotton Mather; and an essentially eighteenth-century account of a Connecticut community both thorough and entertaining.

Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom. Lawrence W. Levine. Oxford. \$15.95.

The Booker T. Washington Papers. Vol. 5; 1899-1900. Eds. Louis R. Harlan and Raymond W. Smock. Illinois. \$17.50.

Levine's book offers abundant evidence of the robust liveliness of a distinctive black culture in slave America. Folk thought is approached through religion, song, and laughter, among a variety of things. This volume of the *Washington Papers* indicates the growing reputation of the Tuskegee president but declining

(continued on back cover)

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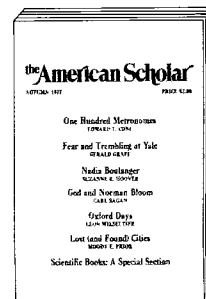
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BOOK REVIEWS (con.)

fortunes of his race. Included are some important addresses printed from original manuscripts.

Of Books and Men. Louis B. Wright. South Carolina. \$7.95.

The Education of the Heart: The Correspondence of Rachel Mordecai-Lazarus and Maria Edgeworth. Ed. Edgar E. MacDonald. North Carolina. \$17.50.

Law, Society and Politics in Early Maryland. Eds. Aubrey C. Land, Lois Green Carr, and Edward C. Papenfus. Johns Hopkins. \$17.50.

John Pory, 1572-1636: The Life and Letters of a Man of Many Parts. William S. Powell. North Carolina. \$16.95.

The second volume in Louis B. Wright's informal autobiography by a native South Carolinian is like its predecessor replete with whimsical humor and piquant anecdotes as well as with a straightforward account of the building of two of our greatest centers of research and scholarship, the Huntington and Folger Libraries. The Mordecai-Lazarus correspondence with Maria Edgeworth is an unusual and charming, well-edited presentation of nineteenth-century feminine intellectual interests in North Carolina and England and Ireland. The essays on Maryland edited in honor of Morris Radoff are representative of the recent resurgence of scholarly writing on this colony and state. Powell's **Pory**, the first biography of the remarkable Speaker of the first representative legislative Assembly of British America (at Jamestown) also includes in microform appendix Pory's newsy correspondence.

Grants of up to \$2000 for lectures on general topics of public interest are available from the S & H Foundation for 1978-79. Any accredited college, or any department or official college society, may apply. Further information may be obtained from Professor Richard Schlatter, Executive Secretary of the S & H Foundation, Box 315, Neshanic, New Jersey 08853.

THE DEMANDS OF POETRY

(continued from page four)

but Lowell's caress of their medium, language — comic, tragic, mocking, ironic, lyric, beautiful — makes his life-studies rival great portraiture. "We are poor passing facts," he says; nobody but a great contemporary could have found that noun. His journals in verse chronicle the passing facts of self and friends and nation; fixing them in phrases that haunt the ear. He is so prolific and so learned that each new book asks several years of reading: only now is *Life Studies* wholly absorbed; only now is *History* beginning to settle into our inelastic minds. The shine of his verse dazzles and blinds us.

Ginsberg, Lowell, Rich and Merrill — now that Berryman, Plath, and O'Hara are dead — will continue to raise problems for criticism. When Merrill, for instance, was given the Bollingen Prize for his volume *Braving the Elements*, the *New York Times* felt impelled to print an editorial wishing that the prize could be given to more representative American verse, and not to what it regarded as Eastern Establishment poetry — a distinction which really has nothing to do with the poetry of Merrill, our most distinguished poet of delicately-apprehended sensuality. Rich's poetry is used for feminist debate by admirers whose standards are solely ideological, and Ginsberg's predictions of the Fall of America alienate some by the substance of their critique, others by an increasing garrulity. Lowell's practice of increasingly casual and spontaneous poetry — as it appears in *Notebook* onwards — asks for an entire revision of our notions of lyric structure. And the list of

shocks to our always reactionary, yet always appetitive sensibility can be indefinitely continued. The only criterion we can invoke is pleasure. If someone new gives us pleasure in ways we can feel, though we can't define, we wish immediately, if we are critics, to find the origins of this new source of aesthetic response. Elizabeth Bishop's reticent geographies of feeling, Archie Ammons' serial unstopped ruminations, Frank O'Hara's brimming transcriptions of daily happiness, Charles Wright's exactly collocated burning images, Gary Snyder's limpid vision, John Ashbery's purposefully-graphed fluidity, Charles Simic's folklore surrealism, Louise Glück's poised stationing of grieving figures, Dave Smith's weighted landscapes — all of these various beauties are mysteries awaiting exploration. In its first response — always to subjects and themes — interpretation sees through a glass darkly, peering through the murk of contemporaneity, blinded in part by the theoretical or historical beams in its own eyes, but nonetheless, I think, pointing out, in the midst of its mistakes, true things about the individual poet, American art, and contemporary self-consciousness. "Of these beginnings, gay and green," said Stevens, "propose the suitable amours." He was talking to poets, but his words will do for critics writing about new books as well. We can propose the suitable amours for these beginnings, and not worry particularly about the outcome: Stevens assures us, "Time will write them down." Provisional and limited, but with all the hope and freshness entailed in watching new beginnings, contemporary criticism attempts a response worthy of the poems it sees created before its own eyes.



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Consulting Editor: Kenneth M. Greene

Editorial Committee: Irving Dilliard, William F. Hahnert, Robert H. Irrmann, Raymer McQuiston.

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