Mainstream

7 CALIFORNIANS

Curtis Zahn — THE GENESIS AND EXODUS OF STATION A-23-44

John G. Roberts — THE 'FRISCO BEAT

George Hitchcock — THE HOUSEWARMING

Thomas McGrath — LETTER TO AN IMAGINARY FRIEND

John Howard Lawson — BOLD, BAWDY AND DULL

POEMS

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THE GENESIS AND EXODUS OF STATION A-23-44

CURTIS ZAHN

THE darkening skies had bellowed and leaked; for awhile a frigid zephyr worried itself into promise and wildly furled the pantslegs and skirts of the devoted groups waiting at the airstrip. An electrical extravaganza moved past, high and ineffective, and then, impossibly, sunlight glared against the wet asphalt, even as large, embarrassed raindrops continued to pelt the heads of citizens who had removed their hats as gestures of farewell, sorrow, homage.

Every member of the Expedition was there, waiting. All except Captain Blewitt had marched into the isolation zone an hour previously—exactly at the time commanded—and lined up in twos. They clung together, identical in rain-gear manufactured by the same Government tailor, laughing and joking uneasily while photographers from every major European press took pictures from the permitted distance of 23 feet. As Processed scientists they were aware of their newsworthiness—owned, insured and guaranteed by the State itself, loved and feared by the populace, destined from birth until death to move from one cloistered environment to another.

"Isn't that—why it looks exactly like——"

"The Captain?"

"Blewitt? The government man?"

A hundred raincoats swung wetly at the provocative name. Blewitt also, then; the captain who'd never fought a war, who had no ship, who had never been a member of the armed forces. As they watched, the captain saluted his way through aisles of guards, pompous, squat, fraudulent appearing. He handed a sheet of paper to Professor Girde, and another document to Doctor Adjector. And now he had personally discovered the girl, drenched and pink, wearing a child's face; a boy almost, an attractive neuter.

"Who is?" Blewitt's voice was a whisper that carried deep into the crowds on the other side of the steel mesh.

"She's too young of course," Professor Girde said, his back narrow and taut against the attentive faces. "And too attractive of course, but she can type, of course! Of course! Of course! And wants to major in mutations."

"Mutations!" The captain introduced everyone to his laugh. The event was not unlike an explosion of fireworks, ignited in anger. It had absolutely nothing to do with the conversation, and it carried discontent. A dozen raincoats swung wetly in the beacon's light, and as many faces, pinched and cold, viewed the miracle. Not rudely—as later they were to do—but in the main, scientifically. If a joke had been dispatched, they were amoral. And then Blewitt said, "Mutations. I got only as far as the sixth grade. Imagine a minor majoring in mutations!"

Professor Girde paid crisp attention. Dr. Adjector contrived anonymity. He had known Captain Blewitt for several hours over India one season; a man who chronically imagined fleas—one to scratch, drip, cry, leak, laugh, sneeze or belch unconditonally. On Tuesday, Blewitt had been inserted into the expedition as a Government Observor. On Tuesday he seemed to have lice or ants. Serenely he was to be remembered for going over technicalities with the scientists while his fat, functional fingers crawled inside his clothes in pursuit of unmentionables, snatching and pinching.

"The plane! The engines running. In a hurry——"

Blewitt had noted this. Elaborately he brought out his portable medicine kit. He selected several colors of pills and began to chew enthusiastically. "The plane that is to take us half way around the world for certain but never to bring us back——"

Dr. Adjector said, "We'll get back all right—with a Government man aboard——?"

Blewitt let go a brief spurt of his laughter. He watched the propellors revolving lazily. The great bore cylinders of the obsolete engines quacked ominously, and the pilots—visible through the fogged glass of their front compartment—were playing chess. They would continue the game throughout the flight though it was illegal, but of course nobody would be able to see them.

The girl who was too young, and too attractive, but who could have been a boy, and was a neuter in a raincoat, smiled. Yes: smiling came easily to her. It was the idiotic, the authentic device of certain youth. Children who'd had God on their side from the start—up until now, at least—girls who had traveled in thermostatically insulated

cabins through rain, rebuke, tragedy, frustration, violence, theft, disillusion. Soundproofed against profanity and screams. Blinded for adventures into squalor. Eager for the air displaced by their swelling breasts and cheerily braced for an ordained leap into the totalitarian epic they had subtly been bred and geared for; love. But the girl who stood large-eyed, diminutively smiling, was going to be somebody high-up in mutations.

"Is she the only girl abroad?"

Professor Girde handled the Captain's question, trying out the words for size and, finding them semantically invalid, repeated the entire sentence. "Is she the only girl aboard." He had never looked less like Professor Girde, rained upon and ridiculed by a flapping piece of headgear which ruined his precise, immaculate facial construction. "Girl. What is *girl?*" These words he examined carefully for possible flaws, sentence structure, anti-scientific nonsense. "Female! *Female*—there exist *females* assigned to the expedition. That is to say, females as designated by customs of the culture. In effect, six persons shall, upon occasion, use the sanitation door marked 'Women,' and eighteen shall utilize the door marked 'Men'."

"Thank you, Professor."

"I had nothing to do with the arrangements."

As these truths passed between Blewitt and Girde, a doctor of philosophy clutched the sleeve of the senior grade archeologist. The archeologist was not so easily purchased; he continued to look longly at the familiarity that was to disappear, even as he heard the girl and smelled Captain Blewitt's uncontrolled perspiration. To the gorse-choked mountains he looked, confoundedly lacerated with their new homes and streets, the gashes and blotches of progress having the license of papery finance. He saw, and dismissed, the city's skyline. He tested the darkened, constipated sky, and then he wetly drew out a single cigarette, ignited it with a sputtering match. And now, he was noticing that water lay half an inch deep on the asphalt between himself and the airplane that was going to take them to Christ only knew where. Christ, surely, and Professor Girde officially. And upon the water stood the other members of his staff; men of specialization, without the rubbers they'd forgotten and the umbrellas they'd mislaid. Men who hadn't quite enough left over for life, for details, for nonsense. Girde had cooly questioned the tradition. Professor Girde examined everything, and especially he examined things already examined, classified, dismissed. He was young, gaunt, disciplined, invincible, impeccably dressed like some high echelon broker. And with a face that was a skull economically

clothed with flesh except where the nose and chin broke away to become standardized, regular features.

The Doctor of philosophy continued to tug at the sleeve of the archeologist who continued to focus his bland attention upon the landscape while his thoughts moved inwardly into a ferment of the inescapable Professor Girde. The girl sneezed; a young, soprano exclamation which was followed by disarming smiles, the laughed apology. One of the pilots forgot his chess to peer through the smudged porthole at her, and even as his intelligence censored her as too young, his eyes wept for the hundred *Ifs* of outlandish possibility. The archaeologist noted the fact watching the face. He trusted its judgment and his own eyes panned from the clock in the control tower to the girl's appearance. Stingy. Hiding it. Only a wet, pink oval of humanity showed, and he hated ovals. The rest you could throw away; why imagine the rest with so little to go on? He found himself wishing it had been an unbearably hot day on a deserted beach, himself accidentally hidden in the tall grass. And the girl alone, walking along with herself, with things going up and down or sideways, and no raincoat at all, at all. . . .

"Mutations! So what's so exciting about mutations—why everybody getting so excited about mutations?"

It was the man, Blewitt, the captain. He had burst from the corridor as though fired from a gun. He shouted into the glad face of the girl, pumped her cold hand which even cold must be warm. He stood as close—so close that his own ants must be crushed, illuminated with charm, the unbelievable voltage almost melting rain into steam, all of his batteries turned on full. Blewitt would have to economize later built up a recharge. He said, "Mutations—like growing three hands four breasts——" and then, not wanting her reply yet, quickly announced "I'm Blewitt. Government observor."

"I'm Robinson. Paula Robinson."

"Not very imaginative. Your parents——"

"No. The republic of Grimsby."

"Hell, I'd guessed that. I was there in ninety-five. Some execution from the coal riots. They don't make them any longer—the months, I mean to say."

"Yes—I guess you could put it that way if necessary——"

No rebuke. She was organized, secure, serene. Young people nowadays——.

"Let's have a cooco-cola and talk this over." Blewitt always said "cooco-cola." It did not mean that he was entirely out of control. The man had certain blocks against words, against things. An eternal

persecutor of the English language. The girl unhesitatingly agreed, totally throwing him off guard. There wasn't time, but if Captain Blewitt said there was time, well, there was time. The archeologist watched them move as an exciting pair towards the airport's steamed, turgid lunchroom. An eager face, damaged by a raincoat; a man powerful, squant, bluff, with a thousand moving parts. Sixty years old? Thirty? A hundred?

The hand clutched again. The voice said, "Why does the professor always take one along on every expedition?"

To the heavy voice of the doctor of philosophy the archeologist replied, "Perhaps he's a voyeur? A masochist? Would you go for a masochist?"

"Sure. Why not. Love them."

"They make an impossible couple. The girl and that man, I mean. The pilots are so upset they'll be dangerous for hours."

Again the archeologist's eyes broke from discipline, from honor. They told of the clock tower, the drenched, mutilated hills, the metropolitan skyline. And now they fell asleep on the pilot's face. The pilot resented it as an invasion of privacy. He stared back until the archeologist once more faced the doctor of philosophy, and now was forced to say, "The girl's part of an overall experiment. Professor Girde carries on a thousand projects at a time." He altered his voice to that of the absurd interrogator, "Will the government man get through his rat's maze of officialdom and capture the bait? Will the laws of a new, alien environment supersede the dicta of a culture——"

"I don't get you at all, fellow."

"You don't follow, fellow?"

It was true, the doctor felt. He was a fellow, oh, not a Guggenheim, not a Fulbright, but a fellow. A bright fellow. He was no pun for the lazy overtures into humor by a fellow scientist. And it was true that Professor Girde would drown in scientific metaphors before he'd pass up a chance to make assholes out of his very friends, employers, servants, colleagues, observors. Girde no doubt had noted the departure of Blewitt and the girl. No doubt he'd forecast it, arranged it; had indeed predicted their dialogue. But vaguely, now, the doctor was aware he'd been assigned a question. "You mean that this man with the government fleas is going to compromise official dignity by an act of lechery? You mean that a damp teenager shall grow suddenly old enough?"

The chimes on the clocktower belled romantically.

"My heavens," the steward exclaimed, "twelve sharp."

It was curious—the custom of the airport stewards to preface an an nouncement of time with the phrase, "My heavens." One did it an they all did it. The pioneer became the maker of the patterns if h survived rebuke. Professor Girde would have noted that. Standing erec cold, immaculate, the Professor would have caught the phrase in hi right hand with scarcely a visible movement and then thrown it bac as an envied ball, a torrid river, an object of scientific folderol for ape to muddy-up. "My heavens—it's half past ten. My heavens—eigh o'clock." Supposing it were twelve and you had hoped for eleven How could you top it? The stewards were not permitted to say "Jesus Christ—it's twelve o'clock."

But the fact that it was twelve had begun to change everything The archaic airliner's quacking motors began to bleat rapidly. Spra from the propellors lashed against the furled raincoats of the waiting talking, joking staff. The girl and the man Blewitt hurried out from th lunchstand. The Professor turned rigidly like a dummy on a revolv ing platform so that he faced them. And the rain—as though stimu lated by the electrifying significance of man's clock—commenced t drum down furiously. A whistle blew. The members of the sta lined up in twos. The steward whinnied into the ears of reluctan wet, wind-lashed heads. An ovation rose from the forgotten handfu of friends and relatives who watched from the grills half a mile awa Professor Girde commanded himself to march somberly to the plane opened door. The rest followed—eighteen scientists forever ordaine to enter restrooms marked "Men," and the five scientists or assistan who would use the one that said "Women."

* * *

"How does one become chosen to be a member of the expedition? the reporter had asked, not looking up from his typescript.

"The usual way."

"Any restrictions as to sex or age?"

"None whatsoever."

"Do they really expect to find living remnants of the chrome a or is that a publicist's enthusiam?"

"Yes."

"Which part of the question are you answering?"

"Which part do you wish me to answer?"

The reporter was ready with a thin smile. A retreat of the ones wo by trapped ambassador in the sixties. He burned it for a few secon

then called it back and said, "The first one. Do they really expect to find living humans from the chrome age?"

"Yes. And of course, yes to the second part—the possibility of finding live, functioning descendants was invented by a government publicist. All right. Let them do the inventing. We'll try to throw a scientific foundation under their dreams."

The reporter knew that this was to be translated into acceptable news. The obscenity of the statement would be denied anyhow. He thought, must science always be so lame? Is it always to mount its bicycle and trudge wearily after the fact? Hell, was this the purpose of science—shaking its head skeptically until the miracle occurred, then, reluctantly, setting about to prove that it was statistically possible for an improbable to occur? Now he had come to the final and most foolish question of all. He served it up with a crooked smile. He said, "Professor—what, in your belief caused the people of the chrome age to become extinct?"

"Why, they lost electricity."

"Thank you, Professor William Girde——"

Professor Girde, watching an entire continent slip past down below, recalled every detail of the interview.

He had given it out at 1:30 on the day of October sixth and it had been released to the wire services November seventh. Twenty-three hundred pieces of mail had ben received concerning the experition; approximately six hundred were in the enthusiastic positive, twelve hundred merely wanted to argue, or "self-express" as the psychychologists would define it. The rest were applications. Do you need a guide? A cook? Bodyguard? Big game hunters? Good luck charms? Interpreters?

No.

Blewitt, the Professor noted, intelligenced the young girl in a forward section of the plane. Blewitt talked clinically on sex, love, female disorders and affairs of the soul. The girl was becoming bloated with knowledge, falling serenely into the invention of father-daughter relationship. Later, the Captain would stage a breakdown and become the impetuous, wrongful boy. This would add years to the girl's age, enabling her to enact mother and son. And from there? From there each would move toward a common age; one would grow down to the other or up to the other. Contemporaries. Mates. Male and female. Science had ordained it thus far, but could the two provide an unpredictable beyond this?

"Science is amoral. Wrongness is all right with us—the rest is up to the police, the lawmakers."

"Then science has little value to mankind. Men kill and disappear while science pores over its microscope. . . ." There was the cartoon,

with the scientist dressed like Sherlock Holmes, tracking down a footprint, while the dinosaur, making the footprints, stamped out whole cities as it walked. An extremely interesting point.

The shape of the land below remained faithful to the photographs. From an elevation of approximately 5,000 feet harbors and pennisulas came and went as scheduled. The coastal water retained its healthy blue, fading into the greens and pastels until a white fringe of surf announced shorelines. And here of course began the haunted, sinister, sterility that was more easily witnessed than imagined.

"Professor—you noted the colors!" The archeologist delicately held in his hands a long, old fashioned tubular telescope.

"Colors—or lack of colors. Sand of course. Fused and bleached but if there exists color, that color might be air contamination——"

A group of Fellows were around the archeologist; all who were not airsick, homesick, or suffering from fatigue—fatigues of the seventeen excusable varieties. Their expressions stated that Professor Girde had engineered a semantical disaster; they were not actors. The Professor affixed a cold, youthful eye upon the group and said, "Retraction. Comment withheld."

They laughed with relief.

Captain Blewitt had gained the window now. Hunched with his cranium almost filling the glass, he gesticulated, orated, intelligenced the epicenter of significance by the mere geography of getting in the way. Even the girl roosted her elbows on his shoulder, the daughter of a father pedagogue. Now Blewitt announced dramatically, "The North American continent. The United States, in fact. In fact, California——"

And of course framed in the window—whatever you saw past the Captain's outsized, bald, glistening cranium—nothing; only the fringe of surf, the biege land, glistening like the Government observor's skull —and three shades lighter. Treeless, stoneless, mountainless, valleyless. A flat piece of profile; not unlike melted vanilla ice cream. "After the crime—science." Blewitt's eyes narrowed so that even from behind his grotesque back there existed serious pain. "We arrive a dozen years late. As detectives we have failed to save the victim from the killer."

"How many were killed?"

"The population was estimated at 180 million at the time. It's fantastic! But millions may have evacuated before and after. Three million expatriates exist in the known world—expatriates——"

They were being intelligenced by a Government man. His was the privilege of evoking the *ahs* and *ohs* of response; so long as political history moved across the footlights. Custodian of certain statistics;

willing informer, consecrated master, permitted to wade deeply in sheer hogwash with the things that were Ceasar's. But even this was a trespass. The archeologist and the chemist were authorized spiders, spinning webs that eventually impaled the historian. And then the backing up, the graceful step down, so that The State's functional lie could continue to exist. The expedition was subsidized by a patron who risked embarrassment; it was as though a murderer hired a detective to track down the killer knowing that eventually he must disenfranchise the detective in order to save himself. . . .

The girl said, "Were the one hundred and eighty million people——"

"Cremated." Blewitt's voice was gruff.

"Shall we be the first to set foot on the continent since the—since——"

"No."

"But the first to work the Southern California area?"

"Even the first to set foot on it."

This kind of talk was the strange, unscientific thing about people, the Professor thought. People knew, but they wanted it repeated. Wanted it from other lips with other voice tones. Every one of them had been coached, intelligenced, crossexamined on the subject. For two years all of them had read millions of words and passed hundreds of orientation and aptitude tests. Handpicked for the expedition, psychoanalyzed, conditioned, stamped and labeled. And then, given the fact from a height of five thousand feet they became wide-eyed laymen, asking immature questions of other children, trying to get the instructor to say it again. The next question would concern Hollywood. There had been Hollywood, and all of its celebrities—untouchables, invincibles, humans too internationally magnificent, caught in a world without electricity——

"Where's—" The Captain's voice halted in the middle of foolishness, and then it had to go on. "Where's Hollywood——"

"There——" The archeologist's finger pointed, singling out a specific nothingness surrounded by flat space. "But it never was geographic, it was mostly a state of mind——"

Somewhere, fused as ash and promising silence were the names that had encircled the world and made civilization smaller, more understandable, somehow; reduced it down to the shape of nonsense and human error, thus to become God-symbols. For the universal God had never been loved, he was only respected, admired, hated, feared. He had never been divorced, drunk, capricious, or caught in lovenests. He'd never failed; he lacked wonderous physical statistics, he avoided anything and

everything required by humanity. The real Gods slept as a solidified mas as dust, as petrified refuse—more alive and more real than the othe things who lived. . . .

"Is curious!" Captain Blewitt had forgotten who he was. Shamelessl tears clung to the creases in his taut face. With a ruthless thrust h hand cuffed away sentiment. "Is like the Roman Empire! Viewing re mains of history book! An entire dynasty sleeps—but how is a cultur so alive so dead?" Fiercely he seized the young wrist of the girl, exclaim ing into her eyes as though she, somehow, were a universal guilt. "Wa it worth the trouble? What does anything matter? They worked, fough stole, cheated, deviated! Lived, laughed, cried, suffered, strove! And who benefitted?"

The Professor watched, thinking. Here we are, an ape-group—a tou of the zoo by classroom students. Awed by their first sight of tige mating tiger. Of what use is education if it is of no use? The latter phras bothered him, it bothered up and down and sideways. Semantical suicide an utterance for the inventors of truisms. He was a manufacturer o tomorrow's cliches and the rest of them were turning in their diploma with sad little cries and setting up the world for another disaster. The had to be intelligenced. Was it worth the trouble? Did anything matte really, after all; but of course it did—of course! Of course! For his ow psychic survival it must matter. Take away a man's oars and he has lo control of his boat. Always the hull must be turned upstream, propelle by a sense of direction, even if it actually is drifting backwards and soo to be sucked into the rapids and pitched over the falls. For himself, th Professor, it was functional to row stoically against the vast, easy drif Some time— *in another thousand lifespans* (it was even that possible the detective would catch up with the dinosaur; he would turn aroun meet him face to face, stopping the monster from his pillage; stoppin him with cliches older than pre-history itself. . . .

THE 'FRISCO BEAT

JOHN G. ROBERTS

THERE has been much sanguine talk about a "literary renaissance" in San Francisco. Even the boastfully non-literary prosecutor in the *Howl* obscenity trial last Fall had heard of it, and tried to strangle it in its untidy cradle. In the disproportionate publicity about our "cultural underground" this reawakening is attributed largely to the itinerant "Beat Generation" which, as you know, has one of its way-stations in the venerable Latin Quarter of North Beach.

The slick magazines, after decades of attacking Greenwich Village as a threat to home, church and flag, discovered that in our era of conformity, bohemia sells. So they have published numerous articles romanticizing our jazz-poets, hipster-writers, bop joints and off-beat bistros. The poet finds himself suddenly glamorous, not only photographed and written up, but listened to and occasionally read. Such eminences as Kenneth Rexroth, Jack Kerouac (hitherto staunch adherents to the "voluntary poverty" enunciated by Lawrence Lipton) have accepted, somewhat apologetically, night-club engagements at plump salaries. The picture magazines subsidize studio parties where their sensation-sleuths gather authentic material; and Hollywood, perhaps encouraged by the success of "The Wild One," is said to be cashing in with a movie to be called "The Beat Generation."

It makes great copy, enhanced by a milieu which includes part of the old Barbary Coast and boasts a tradition studded with such names as Jack London, Ambrose Bierce, Bret Harte and Frank Norris. The center of North Beach, around Columbus and Broadway, is half a mile from the Bay but still within the sight of seagoing ships and the sound of foghorns. It overlaps Chinatown, the Italian district and a populous Spanish-speaking settlement, and is one of the few non-Negro neighborhoods of our cosmopolitan city in which Negroes can live and mingle with relative freedom. On the edge of the financial district, in a valley

surrounded by Nob, Russian and Telegraph hills, North Beach is a magnet for tourists, college youth, jazz and opera aficionados, seamen, soldiers, seekers of exotic food, drink, dance or sex, shoppers for imported specialties, art students, immigrants and nostalgic foreign-born workers.

Its international flavor and interclass composition attract bohemians, who find stimulation from the variety of cultures and comfort in the illusion of democracy attained without struggle. They have concentrated their activities on upper Grant, an extension of Chinatown's main stem; in old stores surmounted by cheap hotels and lodgings are such modest enterprises as weaving, ceramics and silversmith shops, art galleries and folk-music and dance studios, interlarded with European and Chinese groceries, gay bars and sweatshops. The non-conformist, no matter how far out he may be, can find kindred souls in such hangouts as The Place, the Co-existence Bagel Shop or the Vesuvio Bar.

It may be that the more picturesque bohemians feel less self-conscious in such a variegated community, but it is equally probable that the setting is a challenge to their exhibitionism, for some of their getups display ingenuity without departing from the unifying emphasis on defiant slovenliness. The more hirsute and least groomed are commonly identified as the "Beat"; but the criterion is unreliable. Few of the bohemians will admit belonging to the Beat Generation . . . or to anything else, for that matter, since the one tenet shared by all is that of "disaffiliation." So, to avoid injustice, it would be well to attempt some definitions.

KEROUAC, the most successful spokesman of the hip tribe, denies that there is any of the "actual original Beat Generation" left. But he admits, with condescension, the existence of a movement which conforms to the mystique of the original hipsters, who flourished almost unremarked in the late Forties. According to him, the Beat Generation includes "everyone from fifteen to fifty-five who digs *everything*." These folk are "serious curious beatific beautiful in an ugly graceful new way." The term "beat" connotes the jazz beat as well as beatitude; it was originally used to describe hoboes or bums who were "down and out but full of intense conviction." (J.K.)

As to their conviction today: "We know all about the Religious Revival, Billy Graham and all, while the Beat Generation, even the existentialists, with all their overlays and pretenses of indifference represent an even deeper religiousness, the desire to be gone, out of this world (which is not our kingdom), 'high,' ecstatic, saved, as if the cloistral

saints of Chartres and Clairvaux were back with us again. . . ." Thus, writing in *Esquire,* Kerouac tells us that these "beatific" vagrants (too old for college and too young for skid row) are "yearning for God, Heaven, the spiritual quest for Endless Love."

The more specific religious propaganda of Philip Lamantia, a surrealist poet described as "a neo-Catholic Zen Buddhist," seems unexceptionable in Kerouac's corner of beat religiosity. The same may be said of William Everson (now Brother Antoninus), a Conscientious Objector converted to Rome and regarded as an outstanding Catholic poet. He is right in the groove when he chants of original sin, divine design, castration and resexing. Sex is, of course, at the core of the New Revelation: there are frequent invocations of "the lost and holy joint" and saintly sodomists; Whitman's body electric is stepped up to high voltage and the indiscriminate "reverence for life" requires that prose and poetry be abundantly irrigated with blood, sperm and holy nocturnal sweat.

This piety is no mere figure of speech. "The best minds" of Allen Ginsberg's generation, those "angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry machinery of night" actually believed that they "bared their brains to heaven under the El and saw Mohammedan angels staggering on tenement roofs." They had peyote and pot visions of the Second Coming (televised), the end of the world, Armageddon and the Apocalypse in Texas. They were "all inspired and fervent and free of Bourgeois Bohemian Materialism" (Kerouac). They have their saints: James Dean, Dylan Thomas, Marlon Brando, Charlie Parker, even Elvis. Their martyrs are those of their fellows who are jailed for petty theft or narcotics violations, and their prophets are those who attain *satori* (intuitive wisdom in Zen philosophy) by going insane.

The hero of *On the Road* is only one step from Bellevue; Mardou, heroine of *The Subterraneans,* is a psychopath; Ginsberg's *Howl* is dedicated to a mental patient: "I am with you in Rockland where you're madder than I am . . . where we are great writers on the same dreadful typewriter. . . ." Other poets are writing odes to idiots and maniacs and are striving (with not infrequent success) to go mad themselves. Herbert Gold, having put away his motorcycle, now says of this cult: "Madness is the penultimate escape, which seems to allow joy and illumination to oil over the troubling itch of responsibility." He calls the hipster-writer "a perenially perverse bar-mitzvah boy, proudly announcing: 'Today I am a madman. Now give me the fountain pen.'" (*The Nation,* Nov. 16, 1957.)

David Meltzer, a young poet and novelist who, like many of his fellows, migrated here from New York, describes the onset of this syndrome in a book of poems printed with Donald Schenker (five copies signed in blood): "Uniforms of black; disciples of the castrated ball; we danced at the Waldorf, turned on in the Automat, threw ourselves under the A train in order to know motion; we were living visions of weekly suicides, crawling into hangouts with our bandages dripping and our rebellions slipping. . . .

"This was just the genesis one . . . we were to be away, discovering Zen, spiritualism, Norman Vincent Peale, the positive, the negative; even then, whisper of Sartre and the Paris existentialism."

WHILE the extremists of this persuasion are not significant in numbers nor in the amount or quality of their output, they must be taken seriously to the extent of their attractiveness to young intellectuals. The stigmata of the holy madman, the ecstatic jazz musician, the disenchanted hipster and his chilly nihilism continue evident in the prose and poetry of writers who are otherwise serious and temperate. It is more than imitation: the young artists of today are hampered by the same frustrations, surrounded by the same cultural degeneration and disillusioned by the same betrayals that provoked the symptoms of the Beat. Threatened by a society destructive of human values (and perhaps of the race itself) which seems impervious to their sporadic protests, they have withdrawn from the world to fashion a refuge which, if not pleasant, is at least endurable. But such self-exile has destructive effects, and one of them is parochialism. The "disaffiliated" mingle voluntarily only with their own kind or with the neurotic fringe with whom they are symbiotic. Hence they write about the pointless pullulations of people so much alike that they soon lose even the interest of novelty.

For example, the cast of characters and many of the incidents of *On the Road* are almost identical to those of the earlier novel *Go* (1952) by Clellon Holmes. The isolated writers are overly conscious of themselves and of each other in the act of writing, a characteristic of those with too little to say. The protagonists of *Go* are two competing novelists, presumably Holmes and Kerouac; the "I" in the latter's first-person novels is plainly Kerouac, but Holmes bobs up now and then. In real life, both write about Gingberg, who returns the compliment. All three write about "Dean Moriarty" (modeled on a vagabond well-known here) and alternately they write about themselves writing. They even become each other's critics, and their excessive tolerance marks the deterioration

of their literary standards. In his introduction to his friend Gregory Corso's book of poems, *Gasoline,* Ginsberg writes: "What is he saying? Who cares! He's said it."

But surely this clowning in the void has some deeper purpose, like that of the Dada Manifesto; else why would Norman Mailer name the hipsters (whom he calls "White Negroes") as the only significant new group of rebels in America? He explains in *Dissent* (a quarterly appealing to the uncommitted socialist intellectual and favorably received here): ". . . it may well be that the rise of the hipster represents the first wind of a second revolution . . . moving not forward toward action . . . but backward toward being and the secrets of human energy, not forward to the collectivity which was totalitarian in the proof but backward toward the nihilism of creative adventurers . . . to turn materialism on its head, have consciousness subjugated to instinct."

SUCH a revolution is not likely to alarm the Establishment; indeed, it is typical of the Beat that their howls of outrage are carefully modulated to exclude advocacy of any action to alleviate the conditons which they find intolerable. While they privately deplore instances of injustice brought to their attention, they make no effort to help the victims, nor even to inform themselves of the circumstances. Their difficulties with the police, whom they loathe with pseudo-proletarian ferocity, are usually the result of drunken escapades or the infantile satisfaction of their desires by illicit means; they fear the Vice Squad and the Narcotics Bureau far more than the FBI.

Nevertheless, they titillate themselves with daydreams of violence. One suspects that they honor Rexroth less for his lifelong campaign against bourgeois cultural corruption than for his poetic visions of retribution, as in "Thou Shalt Not Kill":

"I want to run into the street/ Shouting, 'remember Vanzetti!'/ I want to pour gasoline down your chimneys. . . ./ I want to burn down your editorial offices/ I want to slit open the bellies of your frigid women. . . . I want to strangle your children at their finger paintings,/ I want to poison your afghans and poodles." (It should be noted that Rexroth is both a more accomplished and far more socially oriented poet than his untrustworthy admirers. The "gasoline down your chimneys" is a reference to the *petroleuses* of the Commune.)

Henry Miller, another Beat saint who can be invoked in such crises as the *Howl* trial, justifies the surly non-resistance of the disaffiliated. From his mountain retreat at Big Sur, down the Coast, he

writes (in *Evergreen Review*): ". . . these individuals are not concerne with undermining a vicious system but with leading their own lives— on the fringe of society." But the cantankerous author, some of whos major works are still banned from the U.S., adds a note of calculation "The presence of these 'renegades,' small in number though they be, i but another indication that the machine is breaking down. When th smashup comes, they are more likely to survive catastrophe than th rest of us." If you can't lick 'em, outlive 'em.

WHETHER or not a few thousand aberrants at large in the big citie constitute a "generation" is questionable; and that they are reall producing a literature is even more dubious. Herbert Gold, writing in th *Nation,* takes the position that the hipster-writer is no more a hipste than Nelson Algren is a Polish poker player. He means that to be trul hip, one must "put down" serious writing along with every other matur activity; to be more a hipster is to be less a writer. For the First Law of Hipsterism is to be "cool," non-reacting and non-acting. If you are typical hipster, a bona fide member of the Talking Class, you give th impression of having read everything; but you seldom read, and yo speak in non-objective, unrelated fragments. You drop names: Celine Pound, Sartre, Gênet; but you need never have studied nor understoo their ideas because no one listens long enough to find you out.

But to write (really write, not just jot down unassimilated impres sions) you must feel, then organize and impose a viewpoint. If, occa sionally, the hipster lapses from coolness to commit to paper som nightmare induced by weed, bennies or wine spodi-odi (or to cri from similarly exalted friends, â la Kerouac and Holmes) he mus avoid any rational analysis or unifying theme; to do otherwise woul be square, than which oblivion would be preferable.

And what is the square, this protean enemy of young rebels fro the rock 'n rollers to the post-graduate hipsters? Once, he was th "square John" of prison lingo, the feckless con who believed in law an order but landed in stir anyway. But the concept was extended to includ the makers and enforcers of law as well as those who accept the "soci lie" at fact value. The square is the solid citizen, the conformist, th Organization Man; he is the sleek Stanford student with the butto down mind, the executive in gray flannel or the worker in blue denim busting a gut to make his payments. He is the serious man who gets a hung up on religion, business or politics. The anti-Communist fanat is a square—but so is the Communist, whose resentments are likely t take the form of active rebellion. But he is also the hapless fall-gu

who believes what he reads in the newspapers; who may even believe in the patriotic motives of the corporation lawyers who lead us to the brink.

To this squarest square, who doesn't dig *anything,* Kenneth Patchen (an older poet who has the distinction of being respected by the young) speaks gently in a poem entitled: "I Don't Want To Alarm You but—/ they are going to kill most of us." "They" are the squares, one supposes, and Patchen is concerned, as are his readers. But it is in their choice (or misapprehension) of the enemy that these dissenters show their fatal weakness. What an earlier Malcolm Cowley said about an earlier rebellion (in *The Exile's Return*) is equally true of our own literary rebels:

"The Dada manifestations were ineffectual in spite of their violence, because they were directed against no social class. Their significant gestures were gestures in the air."

IT HAS become a platitude to say that the non-conformist posture is simply an inverted conformism. And it is undeniable that the young creative bohemians are basing their conduct on patterns which have proven productive in the past: there is little in their *Weltanschauung,* customs or vicissitudes which would surprise the ghosts of Gautier, Gerard de Nerval, Verlaine or Tristan Tzara. Neither are their motivations very different; Edmund Wilson wrote of the post-World War I generation:

"When the prodigious concerted efforts of the war ended only in impoverishment and exhaustion for all the European peoples concerned, and in a general feeling of hopelessness about politics . . . the Western mind became peculiarly hospitable to a literature indifferent to action and unconcerned with the group."

The artist's contempt for the cynicism of the ruling class was extended to the masses who allowed themselves to be manipulated (and were unappreciative of the personal art of a socially isolated coterie). Art became divorced from social ethics; and the artist, relieved of responsibility, was free to dissipate his talents in irrelevancies. He was encouraged to believe that he as an individual was all that counted, and became finally like Kafka, who said in his *Diaries*: "Yet I felt no certainty about anything, demanding from every single moment a new confirmation of my existence . . . in truth, a disinherited son." In this respect, he was not unlike Colin Wilson's Outsider, whose "salvation lies in extremes . . . (he) only ceases to be an outsider when he becomes *possessed.* . . ." He requires "a more intense life than his own will is capable of inducing." (*Religion and the Rebel.*)

Similar attitudes, fortified by vulgarizations of Sartre (stripped of his explicitly expressed burden of social responsibility) became articles of faith for the postwar Beat Generation and their younger counterparts who were embittered by the Korean sellout.

Self-exempted from real tasks, they felt little need for rationalism and materialism; it seemed no longer necessary nor possible to understand the world. But there was still the self, and they embraced the idealism and subjectivism which magnified their individual importance. "We all ride a separate wind and howl in an individual Hell," writes Martin Hoberman in "Four New Poets."

Thus a young local poet can say blandly (at a time when half the world moves irresistibly toward political and economic liberation): "Shouts of revolution are as outmoded as cathedrals." And Philip Whalen wonders vaguely: "Where's the action?/ What's going on?/ What are we going to do?" Then, speaking of Hungary, he asks rhetorically: ". . . who cares/ about revolutions, the old corpses in the street routine?/ Who cares?"

MANY of the Bay Area writers do care. One of the origins of the "renaissance" was in the Western C.O. camps where poets met, wrote and published. The remnants of a once-strong anarchist movement and of the Wobbly anarcho-syndicalists strengthen the pacifist ranks. But too few understand the nature of the forces they oppose. The Bomb, symbol of the ruin prepared for them by the State, is dreaded; but although the origin of the danger is recognized as political, the atom has become for them a blind force impervious to popular political control. Helplessness in the face of catastrophe leads to apathy, as in Jack Spicer's poem, "Berkeley in Time of Plague": "We died prodigiously; it hurt a little while/ But left a certain quiet in our eyes."

In Bohemia political books are seldom read, and such is the distrust of the media of communication that reading on current problems is negligible. There are self-styled anarchists who have never heard of the Smith Act,* much less that writers have been among its chief victims. Such is the prevailing phobia for Soviet Communism (because it requires the individual to be responsible to society) that any publication with a "Stalinist" taint is regarded almost as suspiciously as the *Reader's Digest*. Yet most of the bohemians are radicals of some hue, and socialist periodicals sell steadily in North Beach while rightist or-

* Anarchists please note: The Smith Act provides for the imprisonment of those who teach or advocate violent overthrow of the State.

gans gather dust. But the more militant followers of the line of least resistance prefer ignorance to the obligations entailed by knowledge.

In the Thirties, when the old hag Reality shook one awake every morning, many of these escapists would have been Marxists. But in the boom bohemia, Ginsberg could finance a trip to Europe with his savings from a job in Alaska; Kerouac earned good pay as an apprentice brakeman. A high proportion of the writers have jobs when necessary; but by remaining single (or ducking out) and avoiding the birdlime of conspicuous consumption they refain aloof from the economic concerns that might draw them into working class activity. They ditched Marx for Zen and Taoism, as ther earlier counterparts turned to Gurdjieff, Freud and Jung. The student of Zen attains wisdom by introspection and self-knowledge; truth comes through intuition, by-passing study and experience, an attractive arrangement which provides plenty of time to sit around the bistros, digging *everything.* Which now includes the specter of involuntary poverty.

A PERENNIAL best seller on the Beach is *The Catcher in the Rye,* Salinger's tender but biting novel of misunderstood adolescence. And current fiction favorites are Kerouac's *On the Road* and *The Subterraneans,* which carry adolescence on toward middle-age. A more sedate poet remarked of his fiction: "Anybody with a Columbia education and plenty of pot could do it." But this is to underrate Kerouac's talent for sociological reportage and his painful honesty. He tries but fails to find the meaning of America among those who have despaired of finding any meaning beyond their selfish whims, while his lack of a world view prevents his understanding even the microscopic slide of diseased tissue he studies.

Kerouac borrows liberally from Wolfe and Joyce. Ginsberg describes such a writer, "who scribbled all night rocking and rolling over lofty incantations which in the yellow morning were stanzas of gibberish. . . ." (But which were snapped up by Viking before noon). His free associations have a pyrotechnic effect but tempt him to an unbearable prolixity. In *The Subterraneans* a serious square young writer says to him, "Well, I believe that the most important thing is selectivity." But Percepied-Kerouac snarls, "Ah, don't give me all that high school stuff I've heard it and heard it long before you were born almost for krissakes. . . ." But in his unselective jumble of words he manages to express the tragedy of our unassimilated youth who try to substitute

sensation for feeling, lust for love, madness for method and motion for action. Or is tragedy the right word for these post-juvenile delinquents? For having refused to grow up they are defeated by their own choice.

Rexroth criticized *The Subterraneans*: "The story is all about Jazz and Negroes. Now there are two things Jack knows nothing about—Jazz and Negroes." (Or about people, life and love, he might have added.) But these are the things the hipster *must* really dig; for jazz is regarded as his private language and the Negro (of the bop joints) is his model. It is true that bohemians do not discriminate racially; they make a fetish of welcoming Negroes into their midst. But they tend to receive them not as human beings but as romantically uninhibited, orgiastic savages. They "love" Negroes for the same phoney reasons the Klansmen give for hating them. The Beat idea of integration is that of "dragging themselves through the angry negro (sic) streets at dawn looking for an angry fix. . . ." (Ginsberg). Negro women appear in the literature only as needed for exotic sexual kicks.

Describing the Beat writers of the Forties, Kerouac says: ". . . we'd write stories about some strange beatific Negro hepcat saint with goatee hitch-hiking across Iowa bringing the secrets of *blowing* to other coasts other cities. . . ." Now in the late Fifties Walter Ballenger devotes an otherwise skillfully written story in the *Berkeley Review* to an identical character, who is becoming as stereotyped as a minstrel-show Rastus.

But the religion of non-conformity requires some to rebel against even this pseudo-tolerance. A young writer confessed to me that, although in the South he would champion Negro equality, in the North he felt compelled to take an anti-Negro position to avoid liberal sentimentality. Racist epithets are used defiantly by writers who would disclaim prejudice. A local publication, *New Editions,* printed a bigoted description of African life written by a slave-trader to justify "liberating" his Negro captives from such an inhumane society; the narrative had no redeeming literary merit, but it proved the editors' "objectivity."

The Actors' Workshop, the best of our resident theater companies recently produced "A Gift of Fury" by Herbert Blau, a leading figure in the group. This strident play is about a Jewish professor who having escaped from the predominantly Negro slums where he had been raised amidst savagery and vulgarity, can regain his sense of identity only by returning to his vulgar family and reverting to violence. Blau's intention is not anti-Negro nor anti-Jewish, but his emphasis of the negative qualities of both groups and his profuse employment of such terms as nigger, sheeny, wop, yid, and dago offend the audience gratu

itously. His theme concerns the effect of guilt on the personality; but the neurotic "guilt" of which the hero purges himself (by clubbing his pathetic, mad cousin) seems to include his responsibility toward society as well, and his "liberation" is curiously like the studied irresponsibility of the hipster. "Democracy takes care of itself," one character explains to the professor, just as Dean Moriarty says: "Everything takes care of itself."

Similarly Wallace Stegner, who teaches writing at Stanford, in a story in the March *Esquire* ridicules liberals and do-gooders (guilt-laden figures from his rejected past?), villifies "commies" and holds up to contempt the Mexican-American victims of police persecution whom all these "busybodies" have freed from San Quentin by organized action. Neither Blau nor Stegner is "disaffiliated," but both share a pervasive anxiety to dissociate themselves from the ethical restraints of leftish squares.

A NAME heard more than any other in discussions of the "renaissance" is that of Kenneth Rexroth, who might be called the Svengali of the Beat (though his protegé has begun backbiting). In addition to being San Francisco's most influential critic and a poet of the first rank ,he is a radio commentator, publicist and essayist. His articles in the *Nation* and elsewhere are as a fresh breeze in the doldrums and his translations of poetry from several languages, including the Chinese, are perceptive and creative. He has nurtured many young talents (for better or for worse, and although his criticism can be blistering he is more apt to err toward overenthusiasm as in comparing Kerouac favorably to Wolfe, and Ginsberg to Lindsay and Sandburg.

He calls himself a "professional revolutionary" but although he is knowledgeable about Marxism he is anti-Communist and his philosophy is a loose idealist anarchism. As an idealist he professes a belief that art does not emerge from the social context. Rather: "Artist, poet, physicist, astronomer, dancer, musician, mathematician are captives stolen from an older time, a different kind of society, in which, ultimately, *they* were the creators of primary values." And as an anarchist he condemns those "captives" who allow their talents to be used by the "despots." "The special ideology of the only writers and artists who deserve to be taken seriously is a destructive, revolutionary force. They would blow up 'their' ship of state, destroy it utterly." But "This has nothing to do with political revolutionarism, which in our era has been the mortal enemy of all art whatever." (Oh, shades of Gorky, Sholokov, Shosta-

kovich, Aragon, Eluard, Rivera, Siqueiros, Nexo, O'Casey, Picasso Robeson, etc. etc.)

Although he excoriates Ezra Pound for his fascism, and ridicules those who make a martyr-hero of him, Kenneth is like Ezra in his penchant for "shockers" and unsupported statements He will publicly defend Negro dancer. Zack Thompson against obvious racial persecution by the police, and yet write: "There have been no racial conflicts in the city for fifty years." As a man of integrity who has been relatively successful in his field, he writes, unblinking: "It is impossible for an artist to remain true to himself as a man, let alone as an artist, and work within the context of this society."

Along with his hatred for capitalism he harbors a fierce distrust of "Stalinists"; in *Thou Shalt Not Kill,* a Memorial for Dylan Thomas, he mourns those poets who have been "murdered" by hostile societies "Where is Sol Funaroff?/ Countee Cullen? Lowenfels?/ Who animates their corpses today?/ . . . How many stopped writing at thirty?/ How many went to work for Time/ How many died of prefrontal/ Lobotomies in the Communist Party?" Yet when Lowenfels (not a decerebrate corpse after all) came to San Francisco last year, it was Rexroth who introduced him to an enthusiastic audience, and who produced from his own library rare volumes of the early Lowenfels, for whom he had never faltered in his respect. In doing so, he gave a bronx cheer to the red baiters, who have sought to use him as reactionaries habitually use anti-Soviet radicals. His peculiar political convictions, too glibly dismissed as opportunism by some, have not blinded him to the genius of Pablo Neruda, whom he has brought to American readers in translation, along with Guillen and Alberti, in *Thirty Spanish Poems of Love and Exile.*

REXROTH'S outlook and steadfast bohemiamism should endear him to the young avant garde. He seems, however, to be resented as much as he is admired. His past role as an arbiter of the Beat annoys some, and others find him too "causey." In an ungenerous open letter in a now-defunct Chicago Beat magazine, Ron Offen writes:

"Pops . . . The trouble with you is you're starting to take the whole gig too seriously, getting bugged by Brooks Brothers suits and all that jazz, I mean nobody really digs that stuff anyway. . . . What's with the big Social Lie . . . I mean don't worry about us so much, we know what's happening . . . like you keep yelling like that and we begin to wonder if you're straight like your boy Ginsberg. . . ." In the same issue, a reviewer of Rexroth's latest book, *In Defense of the Earth,* objects: 'A

a certain age, this protest poetry is heady stuff—but why, oh why does he have to keep *on* writing it . . . he will ultimately see that *his* defense of the earth can best be accomplished by outgrowing such postures. . . ." Well, you can't please everybody, and one of Rexroth's merits is that he doesn't try to.

An old jazz buff, he was largely responsible for popularizing jazz poetry in San Francisco and parlaying it into a national fad. This was nothing new for him; he recalls reading Sandburg to Frankie Melrose's piano at the Green Mask in Chicago thirty-five years ago. He is one of the most conscientious practicioners of the art, and unlike imitators who simply read verse to the accompaniment of a combo, he works toward a real integration. Shoddy performances have somewhat discredited the medium, but Rexroth still draws SRO crowds.

The effect of jazz poetry has been good, arousing popular interest in poetry and providing an audience with which the poet is in dynamic contact. Under Rexroth's influence jazz musicians have been looking to poetry for a more mature and contemporary content for a musical form which has outgrown those contrived or improvised jingles called lyrics. Some, notably saxophonist Bruce Lippincott, have written their own poetry for jazz performances.

ALTHOUGH its distance from the literary marketplace has isolated San Francisco's writers, it has contributed to the vigor of autonomous publishing, particularly of little magazines and poetry. The most active publisher is still Lawrence Ferlinghetti, poet, translator and proprietor of the City Lights Bookshop, in North Beach; among his customers are the semi-Beat who still read. He issues the Pocket Poets Series which includes Patchen, Rexroth, Ferlinghetti, Williams, Denise Levertov, Gregory Corso and and Marie Ponsot. However, the publication of Ginsberg's *Howl and Other Poems* skyrocketed his modest enterprise into a national business.

This leap into prominence resulted less from Ginsberg's unripe talent than from the oafishness of Chester MacPhee, the bookburning Collector of Customs, who seized the edition (printed in England) charging obscenity. When MacPhee had to backtrack, Officer Hanrahan of the Juvenile Bureau seized the torch, arresting Ferlinghetti for the high crime of selling books "unfit for children to read." The trial, well attended by the bearded set, was turned into a class in comparative literature as prominent scholars and writers testified for the defense (but none for the prosecution).

In a crucial decision that reached beyond the immediate issue, Judge Clayton Horn held that a literary work of "redeeming social importance" enjoys immunity from censorship under the First Amendment, and that vulgar words do not of themselves make a work obscene.

Ferlinghetti's poetry, well-liked here, is relaxed and conversational clearer than that of Kenneth Patchen but with a similar drily understated social criticism reflecting his anarchist outlook. Like many poets in his orbit he sees life from a detached viewpoint, without sentimentality and "without benefit of perjury." He gives jazz poetry readings at the Cellar with Rexroth and the two have issued a record of their performances.

ANOTHER exhibit brought in evidence of "obscenity" at the *Howl* trial was a copy of a periodical. *The Miscellaneous Man.* Poet William Margolis, the editor anud publisher, is with the Beat Generation but not of fit; un-cool, he gets hung up about bomb tests and injustice. He is interesting as an example of the idealist who does not use his philosophy as an escape from responsibility, he exhorts the individualist to seek means of resolving social conflicts without subjugating the individual to the mass. As a Conscientious Objector he would use only non-violent means to that end, but, like so many of his miscellaneous cohorts, he is indifferent to all the political alternatives available to his generation. His only "program" is that of maintaining one's integrity and intellectual independence. Of the *Howl* trial he wrote: "Until more of us value and cherish our right to think for ourselves—by using the right—the MacPhees and Hanrahans will continue to think for us. Freedom is our kind of love and censorship is our kind of hate."

Unlike many of the younger poets he insists that communication is as essential as expression, and what he has to communicate is not always subjective nor innocuous. In his poem "A Pound of Cant" he remembers what too many have forgotten: "I am a Jew, Mr. Pound, and your cant does not amuse me . . . only the fact of your humanity (though you deny it to others) calls forth my compassion."

True to its title, his magazine publishes a great variety of work, but not that which is anti-human. Among pieces which are obscure, involuted or mystical, one may find examples of hard-hitting social realism such as William Norton's story "Too Free for Matagordo" about an attempted lynching. And there is space for Leslie Woolf Hedley's "Chant for All the People on Earth":

> Not to forget not ever to forget so long as you live so long as you eat wash walk think see feel read touch laugh not to forget not ever to forget

so long as you know the meaning of freedom . . . let us see it recognize it in each others faces and eyes taste it with each bite of bread each time we shake hands or use words for as long as we live not to forget what happened to 6 million Jews to living beings who looked just as we look men people children girls women young old good bad evil profound foolish vain . . . all dead gone buried burned not to forget not to ever forget. . . .

THE distinction between the nihilists and the humanists, in danger of being lost amidst the fanfare about the North Beach exhibitionists, is emphasized by the same poet in his "Unfriendly Letter to Bohemians" concluding: "Children, you are not the 'beat' generation but the beaten generation,/ although once you were good for a laugh,/ we don't want to die laughing. . . . ."

A good many of those who might be identified with the Beat because they frequent the same haunts, are motivated by a serious concern about the plight of the world and resent the apathy of the hipster. They respond to the corrosive irony of Kenneth Patchen (who disclaims being a part of the San Francisco movement) when he tells would-be patriots: "Humanity is a good thing. Perhaps we can arrange the murder of a sizeable number of people to save it." They are irreconcilable enemies of the smug and complacent who rate property above human life (exemplified by Richard Brautigan's undertaker: "He lies awake in bed and wishes/ that more people would die."

There are such as George Hitchock, a playwright, poet and novelist, whose social criticism is oblique but witty and trenchant. Some protest is more direct, even political. James Singer has his economics professor say: "O course/ they are starving in India/ but . . . (upon the board graphilc symbols)/ viz: the proportion of mortality/ is inverse to food supply/ in good years: more progeny, until the supply is exhausted/ (supply is now a line curving through a wasting warehouse)/ by the increased population/ which will then necessarily starve./ He turned wellfed/ and smiling/ looked at us/ I wondered what if he were lean/ and Indian."

There are indeed some angry young men and women around here, and they do not all say "down with everything." But, with notable exceptions, their social outlook is negative and their program nil. They are disenchanted by what they know about America; but they have been so besieged and bewildered by propaganda that they cannot believe in the existence of any genuinely progressive trends anywhere in the world. They affirm a tenuous faith in Love, the holiness of Life and the sacredness of the Creative Individual, but they are persuaded that they

can create honestly only by remaining uncommitted, even to a consistent idea.

It is easy to scorn bohemians for their way of life, but to do so is to misunderstand their role. Few of them, however serious or talented, can hope to make a living at honest art in a profit economy and to keep working they must live cheaply. They are free, of course, to get eight-hour jobs or join the middle class, and usually do so at an early age; yet neither culture nor progress are served by starving creative rebels into conformity. Bohemia is one of the few, and perhaps not the worst, of the alternatives the American Way offers to the unyielding, unsubsidized artist or writer. But bohemia is at best a slum where too many of our better minds and more sensitive spirits succumb to alcohol, narcotics, despair, madness or suicide. When Rexroth wrote, "They are murdering all the young men. . . ." (the poets) he was quite literal. People "choose" bohemia for the same sound reasons that hoboes "choose" the Bowery . Their posturing is often defiance in the face of necessity, and "beatness" is as much as symptom of a sick society as of a sick personality.

Nevertheless, we could spare more compassion for these mavericks if they had become weary and broken in some cause more significant than the preservation of their individualities. True, they turned out for the *Howl* trial, and by their presence supported a poet's right to choose the words with which to express his outrage. But in all their reverence for freedom, life and love in the abstract, where were they when real people were being imprisoned for using words to propose concrete means of securing those values against the vandals? Where have they been in the fight against McCarthyism? How many of their voices were raised against the blacklisting of artists, writers, singers, teachers, scientists? To a man they oppose capital punishment, but where were they when innocent people were being sent to the chair, the gallows, the gas chamber? To a man they desire peace, yet where have they been in the vast international campaign against nuclear warfare? They flocked by the score to a party paid for by *Look*; but when a non-partisan peace parade honoring pacifist sculptor Bufano was formed in the heart of North Beach, hardly a dozen of them showed up.

They have been no more inert in these matters than the general public, to be sure; but their inertia is more reprehensible because it is a betrayal of their professed values. They are not the Beat Generation because they haven't even met the enemy; at the risk of over-optimism perhaps we could call them the Waiting Generation. But let's *go*, man! How long have we got to wait?

THE HOUSEWARMING

GEORGE HITCHCOCK

Characters
Mrs. Walter Amery
Mr. Walter Amery
Gloria, their daughter, 17
Cahill, their manservant
Bonzano, 60, a veteran of vaudeville
Mr. Gamp, a puppet
A Young Man from Uruguay
Various guests of the Amerys.

TIME: The present. A rainy afternoon.

PLACE: Dining-room in the just-completed home of Walter Amery.

The room is ultra-modern. A steel-and-plastic buffet table at the rear spread with glasses, bottles, hors d'ouevres. One or two Swedish modern chairs. Left rear, a picture window with an interior planting box. Right rear, a glass door leading outside. To the left a swinging door leads to the kitchen. The exit right gives on the main dining room.

Mrs. Amery (*Revealed*) It's broken. Right above the haft. And no matter what you say it can't be mended.

Mr. Amery (*Revealed, knotting a fuchsia-colored 4-in-hand*) I remember the instructions. "Rinse only in lukewarm water."

Mrs. Amery. You remember everything. But always afterwards.

Mr. Amery. It was ice cold. No wonder.

Mrs. Amery. That had nothing to do with it.

Mr. Amery. Don't raise your voice.

Mrs. Amery. Did you close the garage door?

Mr. Amery. It closes itself. Electronically.

Mrs. Amery. And the driveway? What about the driveway? When I got up this morning it was covered with sawdust.

Mr. Amery. I had Gloria sweep it.

Mrs. Amery. There are too many things to remember. (Calls) Cahill! (*To her husband*) Change your tie before they come. I can't abide fuchsia.

Mr. Amery. And I like a spot of color.

Mrs. Amery. Cahill! Where *is* that man?

Cahill (*Entering from the kitchen with a bottle*). I'm here, Mrs. Amery.

Mrs. Amery. Are the canapés ready?

Cahill. Three dozen with anchovy. Three dozen with Brie.

Mrs. Amery. With what?

Cahill. Brie. (*He uncorks the bottle*) It's a cheese.

Mrs. Amery. Very well. But I don't like the way you said it.

Cahill. I assure you——

(*Bonzano appears at the glass door, outside. He is a small man in an old-fashioned box-back coat. He carries a violin case*).

Mrs. Amery. That will do, Cahill. (*Cahill goes*) Where is Gloria?

Mr. Amery. There's someone at th edoor.

Mrs. Amery. Change your tie. I'll answer.

Mr. Amery (*Going*). You can mend it with furniture glue. The instructions are on the package. (*He goes*)

Mrs. Amery (*Opening the door*). Yes?

Bonzano. From the agency, ma'am.

Mrs. Amery. I've been expecting you.

(*Bonzano enters*).

You're getting mud on my floor. You can't come in this way.

Bonzano. Bonzano. From the agency.

Mrs. Amery. You'll have to scrape your shoes.

Bonzano. I was sent for, ma'am.

Mrs. Amery. Then go around to the kitchen. It's that way. Cahill will let you in.

(*Bonzano disappears outside: She calls*)

Cahill!

Cahill (*Entering*). Yes, Mrs. Amery.

Mrs. Amery. There's someone at the kitchen door.

Cahill. Is that all?

Mrs. Amery. Well, go let them in. (*Cahill goes: Gloria enters*)

Gloria. The Moylans will be late. They just phoned.

Mrs. Amery. You're wearing too much rouge, my dear. (*Gloria shrugs*) Did you finish the guest room?

Gloria. Yes, mother.

Mrs. Amery. And the coat-hangers? Are there plenty of them? I won't have them throwing their coats across the bed.

Gloria. There are plenty of coat-hangers, mother.

Mr. Amery (*Entering with a black tie*). Is this better?

Mrs. Amery. You needn't carry it to an extreme.

Bonzano (*Entering from the kitchen*). Bonzano. From the agency.

Mrs. Amery. Good. Are your boots clean?

Bonzano. Yes, ma'am.

Mrs. Amery. Then bring your instrument and come with me. You will stand on the Philippine mahogany stairs. There will be no dancing, nothing but background music.

(*A bell rings*)

Gloria, there is someone at the door. (*To Bonzano*) This way, please. (*Mrs. Amery and Bonzano go out, right*)

Mr. Amery. There's someone at the door, Gloria.

Gloria (*Without moving*) I know.

Mr. Amery. What's the matter with you?

Gloria. I don't know.

Mr. Amery. A girl your age. Is it spring fever?

Gloria. In October? You're so confused, father.

Mr. Amery. Bored?

Gloria. I don't know. I don't want to get up in the morning. What does that mean?

(*The bell rings again*)

Mr. Amery. All right. I'll answer. (*He goes*)

Gloria. Cahill!

Cahill (*Entering with a tray of canapés*) Yes, miss.

Gloria. Is there anything to drink?

Cahill. Pepsicola.

Gloria. I don't mean that. I mean really to drink.

Cahill. I can't give it to you, miss.

Gloria. That's all right. I'd prefer to steal it.

Cahill. Well, you know where it is.

(*Gloria exits to the kitchen. Cahill sings a stanza from "The Pagan Love Song" as he arranges the canapés*)

Come with me where moonbeams
Light Tahitian skies,
And the starlit waters

Linger in your eyes . . .
in your eyes. . . .

Bonzano (*reentering*). It's all a mistake, you know.

Cahill. Flat, eh? I was afraid of that.

Bonzano. There's been a mix-up. I'm not a violinist. And now she expects me to play.

Cahill. Why didn't you tell her? I know. She never gives you a chance to answer, does she?

Bonzano. There I was. Standing on the stairway and I suppose I could have come straight out with it but the truth is I need the job.

Cahill. Haven't the money for a shoeshine, eh?

Bonzano. Not a dime.

Cahill. But the agency sent you?

Bonzano. Of course.

Cahill. Then what is it? The French horn? I don't suppose you're a singer?

Bonzano. No. Bonzano & Gamp. (*Pause*) I can see you've never heard of us.

Cahill. Sorry.

Bonzano. No, it's to be expected. Times change. Audiences, too. And we've been travelling abroad a great deal in these last years. Still—you're quite sure?

Cahill. Have a sandwich. I'm stretching my memory. There's something about the name. . . .

Bonzano (*Eagerly*). Fanchon & Marco, 1927 . . .

Cahill. Before my time, I'm afraid.

Bonzano. Sixteen weeks at the Warfield in 1930.

Cahill. Hold it. Hold it. It's coming!

Bonzano. Personal command appearance at the court of Saint James. Unprecedented run at the Fulham Palace in Soho——

Cahill. One more and I have it!

Bonzano (*Rhapsodically*). Guest of honor with Major Bowes on broadcast of March 22, 1937——

Cahill. Of course!

Bonzano (*In triumph*). Bonzano & Gamp! Now it comes to you, eh?

(*Pause*)

Cahill. Not quite.

Bonzano. Oh.

Cahill. I was close.

Bonzano. If I were to give you the first letter——

Cahill. That might help.

Bonzano. V.

Cahill. B as in Baker?

Bonzano. No, V. (*Makes the sign with his fingers*) V as in——

Cahill. Don't prompt me. Valkyrie, vampire, vendetta—I have it! Ventriloquist!

Bonzano. Perspicacious, young man!

Cahill. Bonzano & Gamp, Ventriloquism. Of course, of course, I should have known from the first. The moment I saw you I said to myself, "I've seen that mug before." But if I'd known it was you, Mr. Gamp——

Bonzano. Bonzano!

Cahill. You're Bonzano?

Bonzano. Yes.

Cahill. Are you sure?

Bonzano. Of course.

Cahill. No disrespect meant. You would know, of course, wouldn't you? Then I suppose Mr. Gamp will be along presently.

Bonzano. Mr. Gamp is already here.

Cahill. Personally?

Bonzano. Personally.

Cahill. Why don't you have another sandwich?

Bonzano. Thank you.

Cahill. Try the cheese this time. It's camembert.

Gloria (*entering with a drink in her hand*). Why is there so goddamned little love in this world? That's to you, Cahill. I'm asking you a question.

Cahill. I must decline to answer it, miss.

Gloria. I thought you would.

Mrs. Amery (*Entering with guests*) There is concealed lighting behind the planter boxes). (*She flicks a switch with no observable change*) Unfortunately, it doesn't show up very well in the daytime. Gloria, dear, where have you been?

Gloria. Fixing a peanut-butter sandwich, mother.

Mrs. Amery (*to guests*). I must show you the linen-closets. They are panelled in Port Orford cedar.

Gloria? Why?

Mrs. Amery. It's moth-resistant, dear.

Gloria. Oh. (*Gloria and the guests continue into the kitchen*)

Mrs. Amery. I'll be with you in a moment. (*To Bonzano*) And no Slavic melodies. Friml or Strauss will do very well. Do you know them?

Bonzano. Yes, ma'am.

Mrs. Amery. Good. And you must be careful with the Philippine mahogany. It scratches very easily.

Bonzano. Yes, ma'am. (*Mrs. Amery goes out*) There. You see. I've no willpower.

Cahill. It isn't easy to be truthful.

Bonzano. I love to please people.

Cahill. Why not?

Bonzano. We drift and drift and drift and then it's too late. Why not what?

Cahill. Give them your act. Brazen it out. Forget the violin. Make them accept you as you are.

Bonzano. You think I should?

Cahill. Why not?

Bonzano. You're right.

Cahill. Remember the Fulham Palace in Soho. What was it like?

Bonzano. Draughty.

Cahill. But when you stepped out on the stage. What did you think? That they were going to hate you?

Bonzano. Of course.

Cahill. And did they?

Bonzano (*excited*). No, no, it was all different!

Cahill. Well, tell me what happened.

Bonzano. I had wings. I forgot my heart beat. I was on a mountain-top.

Cahill. And then?

Bonzano. And then. . . . And then it was all over. There was applause.

Cahill. Thunderous?

Bonzano. Almost thunderous.

Cahill. All right. Do it. Do it again.

Bonzano (*firmly*). I will.

(*Mrs. Amery and the guests cross the stage*)

Mrs. Amery. The copper pipe for the heating system alone cost more than two thousand dollars. But it's guaranteed against corrosion for a lifetime. And, of course, we specified nothing but aluminum nails on the exterior woodwork.

(*They go out, right*)

Bonzano. I'm old.

Cahill. The hell you are.

Bonzano. It's different here.

Cahill. It's different everywhere.

Bonzano. All right. I'll do it.

Cahill. Remember the Warfield in 1930. Sixteen straight weeks, eh?

Bonzano. Sixteen weeks. And the Fanchon & Marco circuit. America's Top-Entertainment-Personalities. Twenty-seven-air-conditioned theaters in twenty-two states.

Cahill. That's the spirit!

Bonzano. Who are *they,* anyway? (*He shuffles into a dance routine and takes a quick bow. Then he seizes his violin-case and runs out, right*)

Cahill (*singing to himself*)

And we'll cheer each other
With the Pagan Love Song!

(*He eats a canapé. Gloria comes in from the kitchen with The Young Man From Uruguay*)

Gloria. Look. I found him in the kitchen. He's the Uruguayan consul.

The Young Man from Uruguay (*modestly*). The commercial attaché.

Gloria. Isn't he lovely? He's from Montevideo.

Mrs. Amery (*Entering right*). Gloria!

Gloria. Yes, mother.

Mrs. Amery. What did you put in the coat closet?

Gloria. Nothing. A lavender sachet.

Cahill. Ssshh! (*They are silent. Applause can be heard in the next room*)

Mrs. Amery. What is that?

Cahill. The wings of the dove.

Mrs. Amery. Well, I won't have the closet smelling that way. Take it out. This minute.

Gloria. Mother!

Mrs. Amery. Immediately.

(*Gloria goes. Mrs. Amery turns to the young man*). She's so harebrained.

The Young Man from Uruguay (*politely*). Such a charming house you have.

Mrs. Amery. Thank you.

The Young Man from Uruguay. Everything is so unusual and . . . charming.

Cahill. A sandwich?

The Young Man from Uruguay. Thank you.

Cahill. Try the cheese, sir. It's Gruyère.

(*Laughter in the next room. Mr. Amery enters*)

Mr. Amery. Do you know, my dear, your violinist isn't a violinist at all? He has a puppet in his violin case.

Mrs. Amery. A what?

Mr. Amery. A puppet. With red hair.

Mrs. Amery. Walter, you've been drinking. Listen. (*A violin can be heard*) There.

Mr. Amery. It's the phonograph.

Mrs. Amery. But the agency promised me a violinist.

Mr. Amery. See for yourself.

Mrs. Amery. This is fantastic. (*She goes*)

Mr. Amery (*To Cahill*). With red hair. And a light green face. About this high.

Cahill. Does it talk?

Mr. Amery. Cahill.

Cahill (*Freshening up his drink*) Yes, Mr. Amery.

Mr. Amery. What do you do on your day off?

Cahill. That depends, sir.

Mr. Amery. On what?

Cahill. On the weather. If it's damp I play billiards or go to the motion pictures.

Mr. Amery. Would you like to go duck-hunting?

Cahill. Generally or specifically?

Mr. Amery. Is there a difference?

Cahill. Certainly. Generally, I don't care for shooting. But specifically, if you would like me to accompany you, I should be happy to.

Mr. Amery. Oh. (*Pause*) Cahill.

Cahill. Yes, Mr. Amery.

Mr. Amery. What's your honest opinion of this house?

Cahill. My opinion, sir?

Mr. Amery. Man to man.

Cahill. That's a difficult question.

Mr. Amery. Would you say that for sixty thousand dollars I did or did not get rooked?

Cahill. It's very efficiently laid out.

Mr. Amery. Efficient. That's the word. Sterile, sanitary and—efficient. But for sixty thousand dollars I was rooked, wasn't I?

Cahill. I really wouldn't know, sir.

Mr. Amery. Well, I was. There isn't any basement, there isn't any lawn, and the maple trees are all thirty-seven inches high. For sixty thousand dollars I call that being rooked. (*Pause. He picks up a canapé*) And you call these sandwiches? You could eat a dozen of them and never

notice it. (*Pause*) Cahill.

Cahill. Yes, Mr. Amery.

Mr. Amery. I *like* duck-shooting. (*Pause*) What about Friday?

Cahill. Friday, sir?

Mr. Amery. You and I. We'll get an early start and put in a whole day.

Cahill. Friday is not my day off, sir.

Mr. Amery. Never mind that.

Cahill. Mrs. Amery will be upset.

Mr. Amery. Look. I'll take care of the petticoat department.

Cahill. Will you?

Mr. Amery. What do you mean by that?

Cahill. Nothing at all, sir.

Mr Amery. Cahill, let's get one thing straight. You're not to meddle in my personal affairs. Understand?

Cahill. Perfectly, sir.

Mr. Amery. Friday, then. Do you have boots?

Cahill. Not of the correct sort.

Mr. Amery. There's a pair in the garage that may fit. Friday!

Cahill. Friday.

(*Mr. Amery goes out*)

Bang, bang.

(*He eats a canapé. Bonzano enters wearily, dragging his puppet, Gamp, by one arm. Gamp is dressed in a fuchsia-colored silk suit.*)

Well, how did it go? (*No answer*)

Not so good, eh?

(*Bonzano lets Gamp fall to the floor. He throws himself on a chair*)

Too bad. (*Bonzano sobs*)

Here. You'd better have a drink. (*He mixes one*)

Bonzano. I'm all through.

Cahill. Buck up, old-timer.

Bonzano. Done. Washed up.

Cahill (*by his side*). Here. A hair from the dog. (*Bonzano shakes his head*)

Do you good. (*Bonzan turns away*)

A sandwich, then? (*Attempting a joke*) Imported cheese. Pure Liederkranz. (*Silence*)

Bonzano. It never happened like this before. Never.

Cahill. I heard them laughing.

Bonzano. Did they?

Cahill. Sure.

Bonzano. You know what happened? He stopped talking.

Cahill. Who?

Bonzano. Gamp. He stopped talking.

Cahill. So?

Bonzano. He wouldn't answer me.

Cahill. Are you certain?

Bonzano. You think I wouldn't know?

Cahill. Well, I though you might have lost your choice. Momentarily.

Bonzano. My voice?

Cahill. Only momentarily.

Bonzano. Is there anything wrong with my voice? Listen. Do you hear anything wrong with my voice?

Cahill. No.

Bonzano. Then I haven't lost it, have I?

Cahill. No, you haven't lost it.

Bonzano. It's *his* voice. (*He picks the puppet up*) No, it's not even that. He can speak, all right. But he won't.

Cahill. Why not?

Bonzano. He's got a stubborn streak in him a yard wide.

Cahill. Maybe he's got laryngitis.

Bonzano. No. he's stubborn.

Cahill. Why not try again?

Bonzano. It won't do any good.

Cahill. What have you got to lose?

Bonzano. My self-respect, that' all. (*But he sets Gamp on his knee*)

Cahill. All right, where were we?

Bonzano. When?

Cahill. When he stopped talking.

Bonzano. At the farmhouse. Right outside the farmhouse.

Cahill. Try him once more.

Bonzano. All right. But it's the last time. (*His voice takes on a professional glibness*) It is a dark, tempestuous night. I am a travelling salesman.

(*The Amerys and their guests drift silently into the room*)

Dusk overtakes me on the road——

Cahill. What are you selling?

Bonzano. That's immaterial. The night is infelicitous. It is twenty miles to the nearest commercial hotel. A light glimmers from afar—

Cahill. The farmhouse!

Bonzano. Perspicacious, young man! I approach. I rap sharply upon the door. I rap again. A buxom and pulchritudinous young lady throws

the door ajar. (*He holds up Gamp and pinches him. Then in an affected voice*) Pardon me, miss, but do you have accommodations for travellers (*A long silence. Bonzano struggles with himself*) Gamp! Answer me! (*The guests commence to laugh*) Do you have accommodations for travellers? (*Silence*) Gamp! Don't you hear me? (*Silence*) Oh, you've made up your mind, have you? Well, we'll see. (*He slaps the puppet's face. General laughter*) All right, now. Why does a chicken cross the road? (*Silence. He shakes the puppet*) What is black and white and read all over? (*He shakes the puppet fiercely*) Mister Gamp! This is your last warning. Are you going to talk to me or not? No? (*Pause*) Very well. I've been a friend to you, Gamp. I've made you what you are. Who dyed your hair for you? Who pressed your jacket and mended your filthy socks? We've grown old together. But that's all over, Gamp. Understand. It's over. It's war between us now. (*He takes out a folder of paper matches*) War. Do you know what that means, Gamp? Well, I'm going to teach you. (*The guests laugh, Bonzano tears matches from the folder and inserts them under the puppet's fingernails*) One for the money, two to get ready, three for the show. Changed your mind? Not yet? Last chance, Gamp. (*He lights a match. The guests fall silent. He thunders*) Have you accommodations for travellers? (*Silence*) All right, you little redheaded bastard. (*He lights the matches*) Now, talk! Damn you!

(*There is a moment's complete silence as the matches burn toward Gamp's fingertips*)

Mr. Amery. Stop that! (*He strikes the puppet out of Bonzano's hands, and as it falls to the floor, stamps out the flames*)

Mrs. Amery Walter!

Gloria. Father! It's only an act! (*Pause*)

Mr. Amery. Well. It's not the sort of act for mixed company.

Gloria. Father, you're so old-fashioned.

Mrs. Amery, Cahill, clean up the floor, please.

Cahill. Yes, Mrs. Amery. (*He kneels and cleans the floor*)

Gloria. This is 1957. There isn't any mixed company any more.

Mrs. Amery. Gloria!

Bonzano. (*Suddenly rising*). Ladies and gentlemen—— (*The Young Man from Uruguay applauds*) Thank you, sir. My associate and I have appeared on three continents before many of the choicest gatherings of the Four Hundred. In the summer of 1932 His Royal Highness the then Prince of Wales was pleased to be in attendance at the Palladium at Brighton . . . the night was balmy and afterwards we all strolled on the beach and listened to the Spanish guitarist. . . . Delahodde was his

name. He enjoyed great esteem that season. . . . La Paloma, if memory does not desert me. . . . (*He is lost in his thoughts for a moment. There is general embarrassment*). . . . I shall always treasure a remark His Highness made on that occasion. . . .

Mrs. Amery. That will do.

Cahill (*On his knees*). Ssshh! (They are silent. A child can be heard crying)

Mrs. Amery. Where is it?

Cahill. Underneath us.

Mrs. Amery. Are you sure?

Cahill. Listen. (*They are silent. Again the child's sobbing can be heard*)

Mrs. Amery. It must be caught under the house.

Mrs. Amery. Did you close the garage door?

Mr. Amery. Of course.

Mrs. Amery. You couldn't have. There's no other way down there.

Mr. Amery.. There are air-vents.

Mrs. Amery. With a grill across them.

Mr. Amery. Well, we can soon see. (*He goes out center, followed by Mrs. Amery, Gloria and the guests*)

Cahill (*Rising*). That's peculiar. (*To Bonzano*) What about you old- timer? Going to help?

Bonzano (*Somnambulant*). Not any more.

Cahill. What did the Prince of Wales say?

Bonzano. You don't give a damn.

Cahill. Sure I do.

Bonzano. You don't give a damn.

The Young Man from Uruguay. That is untrue. I am most interested

Bonzano. You are?

The Young Man from Urugual. Indeed.

Bonzano. And you?

Cahill. Me, too.

Bonzano. His Royal Highness turned to me with the affability for which he is justly famed and remarked, "Bonzano, the oysters here are bad. Remember that."

Cahill. Thats all?

Bonzano. That's all. And now, gentlemen, good night. (*He bows.*

Cahill. How about one for the road?

Bonzano. No thanks. (*He does some dance steps*) Thanks a lot, but no thanks. (*He sees Gamp on the floor*) Judas! (*At the door*) God rest ye, gentlemen! (*With a final bow he goes out*)

The Young Man from Uruguay (*After a silence*). May I make an observation?

Cahill. Do.

The Young Man from Uruguay. Everyone is so informal and friendly in your country. I cannot get over it.

Cahill. You think so?

The Young Man from Uruguay. And the spaces! What great spaces there are! I had expected to see many sky-scrapers and, of course, your gangsters and Indians. But I did not expect the spaces in between.

Cahill. The sandwiches are all gone. (*He takes a tray to the kitchen*)

The Young Man from Uruguay. It is all so unpredictable. (*Gloria reenters center, gives him her femme fatale glance, and goes out right*) Like the Arabian Nights.

(*He follows her. Cahill reenters, sets his tray down, then picks up the fallen puppet and seats it on a chair*)

Cahill. You might speak when you're spoken to. That's common civility. (*He goes to the window*) They could at least put in a lawn. But no, that's her idea: give the weeds a season to come up first, then hoe them down. (*He turns to the puppet*) Have you any opinion on the subject? No? I don't blame you. Keep your mouth shut and you'll go a long way.

(*The child's cry is heard again; it ends in a strangled cough*)

There it is again. (*Pause*) I hope they have to rip the flooring up to get at it. Tear the whole place down and get a fresh start. (*To the puppet*) What do you say to that? Not committing yourself? You're smart. You'll go far.

(*Mr. Amery enters, rubbing his head. His clothes are streaked with dirt*)

Mr. Amery. Bumped my head on a waterpipe.

Cahill. Did you find it?

Mr. Amery. Theres nothing there.

Cahill. Nothing.

Mr. Amery. No child. No nothing. I had to crawl through the areaway to get to the upper part. But there's nothing there.

Cahill. Will you have a drink, sir?

Mr. Amery. Scotch over ice. It's certainly mysterious.

Cahill. So it is, sir.

(*Mrs. Amery enters with the guests*)

Mrs. Amery. Where was Bassano standing? (*A guest indicates*) Now, Cahill, where did the sound seem to come from?

Cahill (*Indicating*). About here, Mrs. Amery.

Mrs. Amery. Exactly. Well, I think we have been the victims of a rather tasteless practical joke.

Mr. Amery. Why didn't I think of that? It was the ventriloquist!

Mrs. Amery. Of course. Cahill, will you see if you can find him? Ask him to step in here for a moment. We have one or two things we should like to discuss with him.

Cahill. Yes, Mrs. Amery.

(*But before he can leave, Gloria comes running in*)

Gloria. Mother! That funny old man is hanging in the coat closet!

Mrs. Amery. Gloria! How many times have you been told not to come charging into a room like that?

Gloria. But, mother——

Mrs. Amery. What you have to say can wait. Come in again like a young lady. (*Gloria goes*) She's at the most difficult age. (*Gloria re-enters properly*) That's better. Now you may tell us what it is you want to say.

Gloria. He's hanging in the coat closet with his belt around his neck and his face all puffy.

Mrs. Amery. Who?

Gloria. Mr. Bonzano. I think he's dead.

Mrs. Amery (*Rushing to the door*). Cahill, phone the police.

(*Everyone rushes off. The stage is left empty except for Mr. Gamp, who sits bolt upright in his chair. It is now late afternoon and as the lights change we become aware of Gamps' eyes which are by no means opaque but opalescent and luminous.*

After some time a guest comes in, goes quickly to the buffet, pours himself a drink and downs it. In a moment he is joined by Mr. Amery.)

Mr. Amery. Mud in your eye. (*He drinks*) Funny, isn't it? You travel all over the world. You sleep in hotels. You sleep out-of-doors. You sleep on steamships. Everywhere. Then you come to this particular house just to die. Among total strangers. If he knew us it would be different. But we're total strangers. It just doesn't add up.

(*The telephone rings*)

Mrs. Amery (*Entering*) Cahill.

Cahill (*Entering behind her*). Yes, Mrs. Amery.

Mrs. Amery (*Pointing to Gamp*). I want that horrible little monster out of the house.

Mrs. Amery. Throw it in the incinerator and see that it is burnt.

Cahill. I should rather not, Mrs. Amery.

Mrs. Amery. Rather not what?

Cahill. Burn it with my own hands, that is.

Mrs. Amery. You're getting squeamish, Cahill. Very well. Walter, get rid of it.

Gloria (*entering*) That was the Moylans.

Mrs. Amery. Who?

Gloria. The Moylans. They're sorry but they won't be able to make it.

Mrs. Amery. Walter dear, I asked you to do something.

(*Mr. Amery looks at Cahill, then shrugs his shoulders in resignation. He takes Gamp gingerly by the hair, opens the door and throws him out*) That's better. (*She turns to her guests*) It's a dreadful imposition, but I think you'd all better remain till the police come. It shouldn't be more than half an hour, but we'll have to explain how it all happened. Cahill will fix sandwiches for anyone who's hungry and——

Mr. Amery. Ssshh!

(*They are all silent. Clearly and distinctly we can hear the sound of a child crying. The child continues crying until the end of the play. The guests stand motionless*)

Mrs. Amery. Walter, be a dear and put on the phonograph, will you? There are some waltzes in the cabinet. (*She takes a bottle from the buffet and turns to her guests*) Well, shall I fill your glasses?

LETTER TO AN IMAGINARY FRIEND: VII

THOMAS McGRATH

"Expropriate the expropriators—that's Marx. But Plato's guardians
Might not eat off gold plate."
Hovey is speaking,
Muttering, low voiced, in the funky dark.
I hush him quiet, whispering, hearing
A papery rustle of onions, a surd trill
And a thudding and sighing collapse, the waltz of potatoes
As the pile slides. Then they tick in the sack.

"All property is theft. By stealing Prexy's potatoes,
Behold, I'm become a man of property."
I say nothing, fishing around in the dark
For the slippery onions that peel themselves in my grasp.
I feel the push of the wind on the low-slung roof,
The sound distant, like far trains, like the sea
Shoving its thunder inland.

"Stealing is better done without philosophy."
I tell him. He mutters. Light leaps out of his hand
And the root-cellar lifts around us its solid arms.
"Turnips" he says and points to a far corner.
"Third ingredient, the philosopher's stone, the Magus
Of all stews. Get some."
The match goes out
And I fill the sack by feel in the darkness under
The earth; in the warm and vegetable dark
I mend my philosophy, stealing pieces of night,
Out of the press of the long storm.

Outside, the wind still pushed its heavy freight
South. The cold laced at our throats. The night
Boomed down from the north. A hang-dog moon
Was racing about in the clouds, and a rapid branch
Of music bloomed at the President's window, its flowers
Flapping loose in the gale.

We went, then, over the swell and swale
Of the campus back-lots, past the dwellings of Greeks,
Their monogramed houses founded on light and their lawns
Crew cut. We past the creek and came out
At the railroad siding.
The raw edge of a fire
Rubbed at the windy dark. One old tramp in his hunger
Jungling up in the cold. Bummed us. We gave him
A part of what we had stolen, and made for Camp.

2.

Camp Depression!
O smallest particular
In the chilly universality of want!
Pustulant diamond hung on the pure brow
Of our golden west!
O bob-tailed quiddity,
Earnest of earnest compromise with the cold,
With the entropy of the failing system!

Now, under the northwest wind, in the first snow of the season,
We enter the ring of light.
A string of cabooses,
Remnants of vanished trains, crouch in a square
Like the pioneers' covered wagons, a tight perimeter
Against the Comanche winter.
I came with our stolen grub
Into the cooking stink and twitch of talk. . . .
—Crossed the high passes,

Came to the named pool, to the omen stone.

That's how I got there, finally, to Grand Forks
In North Dakota, to the University there,
And to Camp Depression, with a few potatoes and onions
Out of the President's cache.
O impeccable faubourgs
Where, in the mornings, you fought bedbugs for your shoes.

3.

Implacable need:
the search for the blazed tree,
And the long and lonely hunt for the naming rune—
In that legendary journey so early and hard begun
Toward joy, toward the laughter, I was no longer alone
In that cantrip circle, in the bright chime of their talk
Among those pilgrim souls.
Wendell I see, wearing the dog on his back,
And Weston comes in with the snow, with the howling night,
And Sorensen, with his clenched face, and his hard
Opinions.
And all the others.
Shapes of the dark
Faces
Blown to windward
Blown past our head lights
Proofs
Of a lost, ebullient season.

Time has its tin ear, history drops at your gate its yellowing
gazettes. . . .
Off-beat functions, seasons too soon or too late
Begun. It was that sort of time. It was not
The Year of the Blue Snow.
But we couldn't have known it, plucked from the sweat of our
sleep
In the north Forty. . . .
blown out of spring toward
The steep of winter, the metaphysical cold.

We talked to keep warm (and made love, even, alas
To keep warm) my vision of everything flat
The ninety-nine-mile shelf of books, the sledding fathers
Touring south on their beards—in the smell of hunger,
In the small eye of a rifle six years unmade
The talk flickered like fires.
The gist of it was, it was a bad world and we were the boys
to change it.
And it *was* a bad world; and we might have.

In that round song, Marx lifted his ruddy
Flag; and Bakunin danced (And the Technocrats
Were hatching their ergs. . . .)
A mile east, in the dark,
The hunger marchers slept in the court-house lobby
After its capture: where Webster and Boudreaux
Bricklayer, watchmaker, Communists, hoped they were building
The new society inside the shell of the old—
Where the cops came in in the dark and we fought down
the stairs.

That was the talk of the states those years, that winter.
Conversations of east and west, palaver
Borne coast-to-coast on the midnight freights where Cal was riding
The icy red-balls.
Music under the dogged-down
Dead-lights of the beached caboose.

Wild talk, and easy enough now to laugh.
That's not the point and never was the point.
What was real was the generosity, expectant hope,
The open and true desire to create the good.
Now, in another autumn, in our new dispensation
Of an ancient, man-chilling dark, the frost drops over
My garden's starry wreckage.
Over my hope.
Over
The generous dead of my years.
Now, in the chill streets
I hear the hunting, and the long thunder of money.
A queer parade goes past: Informers, shit-eaters, fetishists

Punkin-faced cretins, and the little deformed traders
In lunar nutmegs and submarine bibles.
And the parlor anarchist comes by, to hang in my ear
His tiny diseased pearl like the guano of meat-eating birds.
But *then* was a different country, though the children of light
gone out
To the dark people in the villages, did not come back. . . .
But what was real, in all that unreal talk
Of ergs and of middle peasants (perhaps someone born
Between the Mississippi and the Rocky Mountains, the unmapped
country)
Was the generous wish.
To talk of the People
Is to be a fool. But they were the *sign* of the People,
Those talkers.
Went underground about 1941,
Nor hide nor hair of 'em since; not now, in the Year
Of the Dog, when each hunting hound has his son of a bitch.
Their voices got lost in the rattle of voting machines . . .
—In the Las Vegas of the national politic. . . .

4.

We go out in the stony midnight.
Meridian cold.
The stars,
Pure vitriol, framed in the blank obsidian dark,
Like skaters icy asterisks, smolder; and sing; and flame.
In the flickering light, auroral, of the North lifting its torch,
The stacks of the powerhouse fume and sigh.
High up, streaking
The lower dark, the smoke whisks east in the slack of a
cranky breeze.
A train mourns. Distant. A broken fifth of its spoor
Crowns the brow of the night with its wild mystique.
And under the hysteria of the time, its blind commitments,
Is the talk and electric whisper of the power
Loud in forgotten counties where the poor
Sharpen their harps and axes in the high shine of the dark.

That was our wintry idyl, our pastorale in the cold.

The train whistle for the journey, the smoking stacks for power,
And in every country the need and the will to change.
O landscape of romance, all iron and sentiment
Under the prose of snow!

Later, crossing the black yards of the campus,
We heard the dead cry out from the long marble of sleep—
The old heads of the past, a-dream in their stony niches,
Above their Latin Wisdom.
Being classical—
In the teeth of the northwest wind.
The old dead, and the dead
Still walking around.

I saw all that as the moon spun down toward the Badlands
In the singing cold that only our blood could warm.
A dream surely. Sentimental with its
Concern for injustice (which no one admits can exist).
And some of them died of it, giving blood to the dream.
And some of them ran away; and are still running.
And it's all there, somewhere.
Under the hornacle mine. . . .
In the tertiary deposits. . . .
—Ten minutes before the invention
of money. . . .

BOLD, BAWDY, AND DULL

JOHN HOWARD LAWSON

IT IS important to define, as far as possible, the general direction i which the American motion picture is moving. But the task is dif cult: conflicting tendencies seem to confuse the pattern. Predictions ma be more symptomatic of the critic's hopes or preferences than of Holl wood's compulsions.

A few years ago the success of *Marty* led many observers to fores a revolution in subject-matter and social attitudes. There was a rash imitations, which proved so unprofitable that today the mere mention *Marty* arouses the ire of film producers. The truth is tht Chayevsky humanism is almost as shallow as Saroyan's: the "slice-of-life" type story is lustreless unless it is illuminated by anger or compassion. Holl wood, its sensibilities dulled by a decade of blacklist, has neither the sk nor the will to give poetry or depth to the Chayevsky formula.

Today, the trend is away from humanism and away from simplici The film industry flounders in the worst crisis of its crisis-ridden histo The economic situation in Hollywood reflects the general condition of t nation's business, aggravated by special factors—the competition of te vision, rising costs of production, high price of theatre tickets. But ov shadowing all the economic details is the monumental fact that audien are not interested in the films that are presented.

It is a crisis in content. The attempt to find a solution, as reflec in current films and in the views of industry leaders, lies mainly in the rection of more extravagant films. In a recent editorial in the *Hollyw Reporter,* W. R. Wilkerson stresses the failure of low-budget or ' between" pictures, which have now "proved to be of no value in carry the business." Wilkerson asks producers to set their sights on films t promise to bring in fifty to a hundred million dollars in the world mar

This hopeful advice is like Eisenhower's plans for avoiding a dep sion. Producers are eager enough to get fifty to a hundred million fi

the world market. They are trying, with an urgency that suggests more of desperation than of sound business policy. However, the more intelligent film-makers are aware that the physical scale of production does not determine the scale of profit. Vistadome and thrill-o-rama and all the other mechanical splendors have proved unable to arouse the apathetic, or lure the absent, spectators.

Therefore the main trend at present is toward spectacular productions which attempt to super-impose some sort of ethical or social comment on a confusingly "large" story. The result is a sort of social panorama, a multiplicity of highly-charged emotional situations which are not explored in depth but are held together by the implied *meaning* of the whole structure.

The method is not original with Hollywood. It reflects a major tendency in the modern American novel, exemplified in *Peyton Place, No Down Payment, Ten North Frederick, Marjorie Morningstar,* and the still un-filmed *By Love Possessed.* The only one of these which has anything resembling a story in the classic form of the novel is *Marjorie Morningstar.* But here too the story values are subordinated to pretentious generalization about present-day society. There are varying points of view in these books, but all of them reflect in one way or another a sense of corruption and frustration and the loss of human dignity: the responsibility of individuals is associated with conservatism or authoritarian control; or responsibility is abandoned in the tangle of emotions and sexual drives.

Hollywood has turned to these novels, and has also reverted to Faulkner, O'Neill and Dostoievsky, in an attempt to resolve the contradiction which is at the heart of the problem of content: a story has no impact unless it faces real moral and social questions, but films cannot confront these questions with directness and valor without violating the totems and taboos of our disordered culture.

The panoramic view of a community or theme combines apparent largeness of vision with an appearance of moral earnestness. *Island in the Sun* dealt with a tremendous theme: the picture avoided the usual stereotypes: not content with one story of interracial love, we were given three versions of the theme. The assumption that three couples would be three-times as interesting as one may strike us as one of Hollywood's usual miscalculations. However, it is really very carefully calculated to avoid grappling with the emotional life of the characters. There is a *fourth* story which diverts our interest because it is more violent; the murder melodrama serves to provide racist overtones, and subordinates the two serious love relationships to the tale of the wealthy family which has the taint

of Negro blood. The murder committed by the son of the family is related to the daughter's relief that her illegitimacy avoids the taint.

I do not wish to suggest that all American films are as dishonest as *Island in the Sun.* It exemplifies a Hollywood trend, but the search for meaningful themes sometimes achieves notable results. Amidst a flood of war films which excuse or glorify the Nazis, we find one picture which is a notable work of art: *Paths of Glory* is exceptional in the economy and intensity, the cinematic directness, with which it tells its story. This miracle is achieved for the simple reason that there is a story to tell. There is no need of diversions or emotional traumas in order to evade the moral problem. The French patriot faces the corruption of the military system in the first world war. The one man's experience has vast social implications and touches moments of greatness. Ironically, *Paths of Glory* received no nomination in any department for the 1957 Academy Awards.

While it is important to note, and applaud, films which transcend Hollywood's limitations, it is also desirable to discern the pattern determined by these limitations. It is the general pattern, and not the exceptions, which has the most serious effect on American life and thought.

Let us consider two recent films which illustrate the panoramic view of a community: *No Down Payment* and *Peyton Place.* The former goes further than the triple construction of *Island in the Sun.* In *No Down Payment,* there are four married couples in a housing development. A realistic approach to their economic and emotional difficulties is sufficiently indicated to suggest a theme. But nothing is explored in depth, and the potential development of the theme is avoided by melodrama. The haphazard rape that brings the action to a climax is given phoney "significance" by making the man who commits the crime a Southerner with fascist tendencies. Since the action is merely a "crazy" expression of the man's frustration, and leads to nothing except his accidental death, the emphasis is wholly on immorality and violence. The scene in which the car falls on him while he is mending a tire illustrates how far Hollywood will go to satisfy the Code demand that crime must be punished. But the absurdity of the scene springs from the nature of the story-structure which poses questions that have no valid dramatic consequences. The rape merely suggests that criminal drives are customary in American society and nothing can be done about it.

The rape in *Peyton Place* performs an identical function. In the novel the girl's pregnancy as a result of the step-father's attack and her later murder of the man are part of a complex portrayal of American small town life. The novel is shallow and negative in its approach. But in the

film, the rape and subsequent murder have such visual and dramatic impact that everything else is overshadowed. The film reaches its climax in the girl's trial and the doctor's decision to tell of the pregnancy so as to establish the motive and save the girl. Thus the doctor's decision is the only active element in the story: the horror is resolved by the girl's release, and the townspeople rejoice that the rape has been cancelled by the murder and life goes on.

IT is not necessary to deal at any length with *The Brothers Karamazov*, *Desire Under the Elms* or *The Long Hot Summer*. It has been reported that *Karamazov* was booed at the Cannes Film Festival, and the report has been denied. We can hope that the ghosts of Dostoievsky and O'Neill are too busy with cosmic matters to attend the movies. It is more difficult to understand why Faulkner has not cried out in protest against the misuse of fragments of his work in *The Long Hot Summer*.

Hollywood has succeeded in removing all sense and sorrow from Faulkner's clouded vision of the white rural South. The tragic figure of Eula Varner has become a familiar sex symbol. The cinematic Frenchman's Bend is remarkably similar to the cinematic Peyton Place. But Faulkner has been honored with a theme song—"The long hot summer seems to whisper what a flirt you are."

Sayonara is almost as bad. But *Sayonara* requires consideration, because it has been widely approved by people who seem disposed to ignore its lack of artistry because of its supposedly "progressive" theme. I am told that this view is not held in Japan, where the picture's misrepresentation of Japanese customs has been strongly resented.

What is the basic theme underlying *Sayonara's* gaudy settings? The hero's upper class Southern background offers a false parallel to the American South: thousands of American soldiers have married Japanese girls: the ease with which the hero abandons his prejudices gives false significance to his decision.

But all the embellishments of *Sayonara* are designed to debase the theme. Although the subordinate characters, Kelly and his Japanese wife, are treated sympathetically, the climax is haunted by the ghosts of *Madame Butterfly*, and there are the same imperialist overtones. The genuine moment when the crowd assembles with signs demanding that the Americans go home is dissipated by the announcement that these are "troublemakers." The suicide of Kelly and his wife offers the customary melodramatic sense of futility, and the union of the hero and heroine becomes a triumph for romance and enlightened American policy.

It is like a breath of fresh air to turn from *Sayonara* to a small film

that has much that seems true and beautiful to tell us of Japan and i people. The adventures of two small boys in *Episode in Japan* are touc ingly genuine; but the film, as well as its leading characters, is small. An industry leaders are convinced that there is insufficient profit in ventur of this modest sort.

IT MAY not be fair to use motion picture advertising as a baromet of the moral climate. Yet advertising is an appallingly accurate expre sion of what the industry thinks the public wants. *The Brothers Kar mazov* is described as follows: "The violence of youth! The desperatio of the damned! The passions of the Devil!" Advertisements for *The Lon Hot Summer* quote critics as saying it is "better than *Peyton Place* . . bold and bawdy . . . hot-blooded . . . larded with sex, lusty humor, ba burning and repressed individuals who cut loose."

The treatment of Dostoievsky and Faulkner on this level suggests th depth of the Hollywood crisis. Shock-treatement may be a valid cure f certain neurotic conditions, which may be helped by deadening the nerv or cutting off part of the brain. But Americans do not want their nerv deadened, and they tend to be bored rather than shocked by the cinemat treatment they are receiving.

There are many talented artists in Hollywood. Like their colleagues other countries, they are aware of the challenge of the times. It may l too much to hope that the shock which Hollywood producers seek to in pose on their audiences will react on Hollywood, and that they will beg to learn that spectators are not entranced by the magic of "barn burnin and repressed individuals who cut loose."

Perhaps the pressure of reality will bring recognition, at least on th part of a few film leaders and film artists, that drama achieves intensi when it touches some aspect of Man's moral dilemma, when it shows ind viduals who respond to social problems and demands, when conscio ness and will are meaningfully tested, when men and women face situ tions that reveal the torment and greatness of the human spirit.

TWO POETS

BULOSAN NOW*

Had to be
she would come
with telegram
stop instead of comma
rest in peace

with cable
come in place of reason
rest on earth

had to be
your absent-minded flesh
would answer
in time and wiry body
and we would be companions
beyond a nasty seam
but no moment knows you dead Bulosan
or gone or vacant or destroyed
intervals are vaults
where death can bandy us
in a wild arch
but between its twin possessions
spring
the wasted eternal instants
of life

* Carlos Bulosan was born of a Philippine peasant family. Illiterate when he migrated the United States in 1931, he worked as a common laborer in an Alaskan cannery, and ter taught himself to read from children's books in the Los Angeles Public Library. He is e author of *America Is In My Heart, The Laughter of My Father,* some volumes of poetry d numerous short stories, one of which appeared in the June, 1949 issue of *Masses and ainstram.* He was proud of having retained his membership in Local 37, ILWU. Chroni-lly ill for years, he died in 1956 in Harborview County Hospital in Seattle, Wash., and is given a union burial.

and the flicker and the crush
fermenting
in the clasp of generations
the permanence of those
who like you
gave yes an answer

oh persecuted of autumn
hunted by door and day
for instigating orchards
here is where abuse
kneels in your presence

accomplished now
fulfilled in lesser shadow
are loaves of bread
sturdy ladders
inches of protection
growth by womb of membership and dues
this done by daring lift
the rocks of the forehead
into clammy notebooks
stuffing margins upon jails
by abandoning your hungry fingers
to the mercy of suspect pages

peculiar feeling that
when freedom shares a fingerprint with fear
when a sick lung has to share its milk with ulcers
or when a country lane is blocked
and unionists dragged
immediately before the innumerable agonies
have lips
or your knuckles have bruised
the tender radiance of America

strange crammed feeling
by dint of hounds behind the life expectancy
of a moment
Filipino of I suppose
tight skin upon fine bones

you were brave
in those days
your manhood
of smashed testicles
standing by the brothered stranger
like a little flag frayed at the edges
of incapable bullets

brave
and I wonder
at how wide the interval
between the center of Carlos Bulosan
and the ifs and obs of a careless funeral
that are gently setting a date for a reunion
I can raise the thankful inkwells of my voice
to place you squarely and concretely among this brutal instant
of life
in irreplaceable fashion
as one who knew how to forever subsist later upon *now.*

ALVARO CARDONA-HINE

SPEECH TO THE SILENT GENERATION

1

Let us admit it. We are china dolls
Who stand upon our mantels quietly,
Not daring to oppose what we dare not see.
Our silence is the glaze that blinds the eye,
Holds mind and mouth in politic disunion
So that we would not know what to propose
If we should speak.
Suppose, if we should speak,
Suppose we are not heard, our voices dust.
Suppose, in speaking, that our characters break,
And no one hears our going, no one sees:
Our voices then would be irreparable.

2

I too, who prophesy life, am afraid.
The spider, spinning in his musty corner,
Reproaches me, for he accomplishes
At least his webs, those small personal webs.
While I would crawl out to spin a web of the world.
And God's heel presses me. I disappear.

3

I praise the pessimists: they give me hope.
Why else but to refute them do I kill
My grudge against myself and, purified,
Become the blood of others? When I select,
Say this is pain, that joy, man is my compass.

This age is fable whose meaning is a fox,
Wiser than we; it is a flower also,
One secret on a mountainside of stems.
Once I have it in my hand, the fox is mine,
And what I speak opens the eyes of dolls,
Glassy as in death. May the scent be true:
My messianic eye climbs distant mauve.

GENE FRUMKI

books in review

Answers and Evasions

DECLARATION, edited by Tom Maschler. E. P. Dutton & Co. $3.50.

DECLARATION is a very varied collection of personal statements from eight comparatively young English writers, all described enthusiastically by the book jacket as "brilliant and iconoclastic" and by their editor as "writers of today who may determine our society tomorrow." Tom Maschler also refers resentfully to the fashion of lumping his contributors, and one or two other contemporaries like Kingsley Amis (who was invited to participate in this volume, but scornfully refused) as a group of "Angry Young Men"; yet he himself speaks of them, collectively, as "A number of young and widely opposed writers [who] have burst upon the scene and are striving to change many of the values which have held good in recent years."

While it is indeed apparent from the essays in the present volume that these writers—seven men and a woman, ranging in age from twenty-five to thirty-nine years—do sharply disagree with each other, it is also apparent that the group label is frequently as flattering as it is inaccurate. But although only three or four of the statements have much of value to contribute, the book as a whole is a useful as well as an interesting one.

It is, of course, difficult for an American reader to guess how complete a cross-section it provides of young intellectuals in postwar England; but there are enough resemblances (with significant differences) to our own highbrow religious revival, our own silent generation in the colleges, and even, at a distance, our own beat generation, to make this highly localized English picture comprehensible as well as stimulating over here. And the very lack of any "opposite number" in the United States to the three serious non, or ex, but not essentially anti-, communist writers who all take for granted a belief in socialism and who contribute the best part of the discussion in the present volume, gives us a new perspective on our own intellectual climate compared with that of the rest of the world.

Since, with two possible exceptions, the individual writers are as unfamiliar to most of us as the specific attitudes they represent, the quality and relevance of the collection can, perhaps, be most effectively given by a brief running commentary on the eight contributions—all evidently written independently and, I think, even unread by the other contributors before publication. (Those who attack each other do so on the basis of previously published work, from which they quote.)

The book begins badly. In its opening essay, "Beyond The Outsider," Colin Wilson (twenty-seven-year-old author of *The Outsider*) expresses a peculiarly unpleasant aspect of belated adolescence, at once smug and peevish, in

his confused and pretentious reiteration of the need for "an Outsider viewpoint, the viewpoint of a religious existentialism."

"Ways Without Precedent," the contribution of Bill Hopkins, journalist, novelist, and erstwhile press officer for the Crusade for World Government, is a much less egotistical and more sympathetic but, basically, equally nonsensical appeal to writers to save civilization (from exhaustion, the H-bomb and other evils) by rediscovering "the reservoir of power within belief" not "any belief in particular, of course, but rather belief divorced from all form whatsoever." After an excellent description of the present state of his world the author declares, "If we are to break out of our present encirclement, we must envisage Man from now on as super-rational; that is, possessing an inner compass of certaity beyond all logic and reason, and ultimately far more valid." And he concludes by urging writers to become prophets and heroes so that they may prevent the crash of our civilization by bridging the gap until it has had time to develop "a new religion to give it strength."

There is still a third explicitly antirational and mystical, or pseudo-religious, viewpoint presented in Stuart Holroyd's "A Sense of Crisis." The author, who has published a number of short stories and essays as well as a philosophical book length study of religious thought in seven contemporary poets, *Emergence From Chaos*, here states his credo with admirable, if not disarming, clarity.

After declaring that "only the religious attitude can restore to man his depth and his freedom" Holroyd succinctly summarizes the reactionary pl osophy this viewpoint implies. says:

"The obstacles which prevent average modern man from ever atta ing to the religious attitude are merous. Three centuries of huma culture have bequeathed us a burd of ideas and attitudes which few peo ever get around even to questioni and which are quite incompati with the religious attitude. Liberali the dogma of equality, the faith scientific method, the myth of progr and the idea of the perfectibility man, may be cited as examples. We grew up in the climate of these ide and it is difficult for us to shake o selves free of them. But we must, son how, if we are to survive as anyth more than a race of ingenious li animals."

It is hardly surprising that when turns from his major concern of ma striving, through religion, to rea freedom "within himself"—"Freedo I repeat, is an inner condition"—to brief comment on the political sce Holroyd finds that "government is art which should be in the hands of expert minority. . . . The example the greatest civilizations of the past be out my point: for they were all h archical."

John Wain's idealist and conser tive philosophy provides a transit from these three would-be mystics the four materialist and more or socialist writers included in the bo This novelist, poet and literary cr writes a witty essay, "Along the Tig rope," composed of a good many cidental truths and a large number misleading half-truths, all purport to show that you can't—or, at le that you haven't—much changed man nature or anything else of imp

tance in the last sixty years. He believes that the present is a time for making haste slowly, for "keeping one's head," for "having balance and critical awareness" and concludes that "the young must continue to ignore their elders who jeer at them for being cautious, for dealing in half-measures, for not having 'passion' or being 'commited'."

John Osborne, whose provocative plays *Look Back in Anger* and *The Entertainer* did manage to crystallize something of the baffled, undirected resentment and shabby disintegration of the educated but disinherited minor bourgeoisie in contemporary England, is not quite as successful speaking in the first person here.

His essays, "They Call It Cricket," contains many good things but is a remarkably confused and confusing piece, apparently written by the method of free association. He does vividly express his disgust with "Royalty religion . . . this trough of Queen-worship," his hatred of the "stupid, insensitive, unimaginative beyond hope, uncreative and murderous" people "who rule our lives," and his contempt for such actions as Suez, "a typically Tory venture . . . not only [in] its deception, its distaste for the basic assumptions of democracy, but [also in] the complete ineptitude of its execution."

Even more impressive is Osborne's judgment of those intellectuals who, like himself, objected to England's nuclear bomb-testing, but did nothing to prevent it or its repetition. He says bitterly:

"We sat at home, well-fed, with our reputation and our bank accounts intact, and left it to some hard-up little Unitarian who was over sixty to hitchhike all the way, making the only gesture on his own. Nobody laughed at us, we made quite sure of that. 'H-bomb Harold' the brave lads of Fleet Street called him. No doubt he was a crank, or he may not have been very smart or intelligent, but he was the only one of us who had the decency or the courage to leave his wife and children, take his savings out of the bank and make his comical litle protest that was certain to fail. The liars in Westminster saw to that, the liars in Fleet Street saw to it. We 'intellectuals' saw to it, with our 'campaigns' and our signatures. During the Suez Crisis I had collected signatures to a letter to *The Times!* That was the limit of my imagination then."

Yet despite all this, the essay as a whole lacks coherence, perspective, and, finally, real impact. Osborne seems to see the Welfare State, the society page, journalistic jargon, political platitudes, the profit motive, the hypocrisy of the church, and the terror of atomic weapons, on the same uncriticized level of importance and, in this case, the whole of his argument is curiously less than several of its parts.

The remaining three contributions are all more closely reasoned, carefully considered, and well organized, although Kenneth Tynan's forceful "Theatre and Living" is still rather eclectic than analytic.

Mr. Tynan is a dramatic critic with a large number of radio and film scripts to his credit, as well as an almost completed book on the theatres of New York, London, Paris, Berlin and Moscow. He begins his essay with the forthright statement, "A drama of 'no comment' is a drama of no future," and continues, "As long as it does not impair his vision or exclude from his work the virtues of pity and irony, a political belief is the most enriching thing

which can happen to a writer." Dismissing his contemporaries' mysticism with a quotation from Bertolt Brecht, "The only questions worth asking nowadays are those that can be answered," he moves on to attack both conventional religion and the "young *Fuhrers* of the soul . . . who declare that Hitler, for all his faults, was after all an outsider, and who commit themselves to stating that 'the most irritating of the human lice is the humanist with his puffed-up pride in reason'."

From a consideration of religious ascetism and the taboos it imposes on the theatre Tynan proceeds to consider the "anti-fun bias of English socialism." He complains that "The true statement —'the Tories are wicked and have most of the fun'—gets perverted into: 'The Tories are wicked, *because* they have most of the fun.'" After developing the idea, "The trouble with most Socialist drama, and with much Socialist thinking, is its joylessness. . . . Left-wing humor seldom reaches the stage without declining into a prim Orwellian sourness," he concludes, "Socialism ought to mean more than progress for its own sake: it ought to mean progress towards pleasure. . . . To discover that one is a Socialist should be a liberating experience."

Then, after a slashing attack on the social and political reaction of "the Establishment," with a delightful sideswipe at Somerset Maugham and Evelyn Waugh, he somewhat incomprehensibly sings a brief but uncritical hymn of praise to the realism and intellectual daring of both Hollywood and Broadway, the genuine "internationalism" of American foreign policy, as exemplified in Graham Greene's *Quiet American* (whom he champions), and the "devotion to accuracy, directne and unwounding wit" of "the bett American magazines." Perhaps he a proves all these, which are often snobbishly contemned by "the Estal lishment," on the general princip that "my enemies' enemies are m friends." In any event, this surprisi naiveté does not really vitiate the mar real insights and penetrating wit of h rather discursive essay. He finally en with a letter to a college student war ing him (among other things) again "Arthur Koestler, the most brillia and persuasive of the defeatists. . . The time to read Koestler is after yo have been defeated, not before. T read him before is to guarantee failure

Co-incidentally or not, the best tw essays in the book are far and aw those of the two oldest contributors- a thirty-five year old Scottish film cr ic, writer and director, and a thirt nine year old Persian-born novelist. Bo of these are essentially concerned wi the problems and possibilities of the particular crafts, and in both cas their serious examination of art nece sitates a simultaneous examination of social setting and implications.

Lindsay Anderson, whose docume tary films have won many prizes, i cluding the American Academy Awa in 1955 and the Grand Prix at Ven in 1957, begins his "Get Out a Push" with a quiet, almost technic consideration of the extremely limit range of the British cinema which, says, makes impossible "equivalents *Marty* and *The Grapes of Wra Two Pennnyworth of Hope,* and *T Childhood of Maxim Gorky.*" As as documentaries are concernend, continues:

"The nationalization of the coal fields; the Health Service; nationalized railways; compulsory secondary education—events like these, which cry out to be interpreted in human terms, have produced no films. Nor have many of the problems which have bothered us in the last ten years: strikes, Teddy Boys; nuclear tests; the loyalties of scientists; the insolence of bureaucracy—. The presence of American troops among us has gone practically unremarked; so have the miners from Italy and the refugees from Hungary. It is only with reference to facts such as these, that criticism of British films can now have any relevance; for on the present level, aesthetic discussion can hardly be more than a game."

Anderson explains this lack of significant mass art by a devestating summary of the Tory mentality, and its pervasive effect even in the ranks of the Labor Party. Then he undertakes an equally concentrated and vitriolic review of a number of his fellow contributors and their friends.

This is introduced by a perceptive comment on the popularity of *Look Back In Anger* in which, he says, the youth of London saw "a tremendously forceful expression of their own disgust with contemporary hypocrisy, and at the same time a reflection of their own sense of confusion and lack of focus. . . It is not really Osborne's anger that is significant so much as the complement of it: his baffled aspiration, his insistent plea for a human commitment."

Osborne's humanity, he concludes, stands in sharp contrast to the inhumanity of such other "angry young men" as Kingsley Amis (author of *Lucky Jim*) and John Wain whom he cites as typical of "what we may call the *Liberal* establishment."

Here, in those 'too scared to take up any stand at all," in "the disavowal of responsibility [which] is complete and specific—though quite unargued," in "the inferred denigration of the 'intelligentsia'—the cranky reformists" we on our side of the Atlantic can certainly recognize many features of our own well-educated 'silent generation."

We may also be saddened by the ease with which we can apply his further criticism: "But it is not only the liberals who refuse to make these primary connections [between capitalism and the low level of contemporary mass culture]. We find them equally shunned by intellectuals all along the Left to whom art remains a diversion or an 'aesthetic experience' and Brecht is a bore."

After a passing glance at the "egotistical, confused and anti-human" implications in "Colin Wilson's doctrine of the neo-Superman [the outsider]" Anderson spends a more hopeful moment discussing the possibility of a new political maturity in England. He says:

"The myth of the imperialist, hierarchic society has foundered at Suez and can never be raised again, and the myth of Russian-Communist infallibility, which for so many years absolved our left-wing intellectuals from the duty of thinking for themselves, has gone with the Twentieth Party Congress and the Russian action in Hungary."

Finally he returns to the need of fighting for a cinema that "can be respected and understood by everybody, as an essential part of the creative life of the community" and concludes:

"Fighting means commitment, means believing what you say, and saying what you believe. It will also mean being called sentimental, irresponsible, self-

righteous, extremist and out-of-date by those who equate maturity with scepticism, art with amusement and responsibility with romantic excess. . . . But one thing is certain: in the values of humanism, and in their determined application to our society, lies the future. All we have to do is to believe in them."

This note is echoed by Doris Lessing, author of six novels and winner of the Somerset Maugham prize in 1956, in the first sentences of her essay on the novel, "The Small Personal Voice":

"To say, in 1957, that one believes artists should be committed, is to arouse hostility and distrust. . . . The reaction is so powerful and so prompt that one has only to stand up on a public platform and say that one still believes in the class analysis of society and therefore of art, in short that one is a marxist, for nine-tenths of the audience immediately to assume that one believes novels should be simple tracts about factories or strikes or economic injustice."

Undaunted by such probable misinterpretation Miss Lessing goes on to assert:

"I hold the view that the realist novel, the realist story, is the highest form of prose writing, higher than and out of the reach of any comparison with expressionism, impressionism, symbolism, neturalism or any other ism."

She then compounds the offense by declaring:

. . . a writer . . . must see himself, to use a socialist phrase, as an architect of the soul and it is a phrase which none of the old nineteenth century writers [like Tolstoy, Stendhal, Dostoevsky, Balzac, Turgenev, Chekhov] would have shied away from."

After a compact discussion of the human meaning of an atomic age, and some understanding criticism of t "jolly, jaunty curiously unemotion novel about the collective farm, t factory, the five-year plan, which reminiscent of nothing so much as small boy whistling in the dark," M Lessing says:

"Meanwhile the best and most vit works of Western literature have be despairing statements of emotion anarchy. . . . I believe that the pleasu able luxury of despair, the acceptan of disgust, is as much a betrayal what a writer should be as the accep ance of the simple economic view man; both are aspects of cowardic both fallings-away from a central visic the two easy escapes of our time in false innocence. . . . One sees man the isolated individual unable to co municate, helpless and solitary; t other as collective man with a coll tive conscience. . . . The point of r should be the writer's recognition man, the responsible individual, volu tarily submitting his will to the coll tive, but never finally; . . . I think th a writer who has for many years be emotionally involved in the ba ethical conflict of communism—what due to the collective and what to t individual conscience—is peculia equipped to write of the dangers herent in being "committed.'"

This point, which is of course ba on the premise that commitment is solutely necessary, as well as dangero for the serious writer, is developed a thoughtful account of a discuss the author had had with a So writer, some months before Twentieth Congress, on why "si Sholokov there had been many inter ing small books produced in So literature but none describing the g conflict between good and evil wh was still being played out in his co try."

There follows an amusing and

vocative sketch of the provincialism of English thought—still so much more cognizant of the rest of the world than is ours—and of the complete lack of real political interest in the British House of Labor as well as in the House of Peers.

Finally, closing the circle with a return to her belief in the special responsibilities and possibilities of the novel—despite the far greater audience achieved by mass media of communication—she says:

"But the novelist has one advantage denied to any of the other artists. The novel is the only popular art-form left where the artist speaks directly, in clear words, to his audience. . . . The novelist talks, as an individual to individuals, in a small personal voice. In an age of committee art, public art, people may begin to feel again a need for the small personal voice; and this will feed confidence into writers and, with confidence because of the knowledge of being needed, the warmth and humanity and love of people which is essential for a great age of literature."

ANNETTE T. RUBINSTEIN

Co-existence as Possibility

A NEW BIRTH OF FREEDOM? World Communism since Stalin, by Konni Zilliacus, M.P. Monthly Review Press. $5.00.

BASED largely on a visit to the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Yugoslavia in the fall of 1956, this new book by Konni Zilliacus is a friendly but critical appraisal of the changes that have taken place in these countries since the death of Stalin and particularly since the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party. Mr. Zilliacus went uniquely equipped to get a full view of the situation, not only by his reputation as an outspokenly independent Labor Member of Parliament and long-time student of East European affairs, but by his previous acquaintance with leading personalities and his knowledge of Russian, Serbo-Croat and Czech. He is that rare Western politician who could lecture to the Soviet Institute of World Economy and International Relations and to the Academy of Social Sciences in Russian. His impressions are particularly interesting in the light of current differences between the Yugoslav and other Communist parties, and Monthly Review Press, which has given us such books as I. F. Stone's *The Hidden History of the Korean War,* Harvey O'Connor's *The Empire of Oil* and Agnes Smedley's *The Great Road,* has here produced something of a journalistic scoop.

In his long public life, Mr. Zilliacus has fought for two fundamental goals: peace and freedom. And his prescription for today is a combination of these two: "active co-existence," meaning co-existence implemented by political and economic cooperation, disarmament agreements and a system of relations based on the Charter of the United Nations; and democracy and political freedom, both as instruments of co-existence and as ends in themselves.

Although he differs with the Soviet conception of democracy, Mr. Zilliacus feels that the achievement of these aims has been brought much nearer by the changes since the death of Stalin. Gone are the anxiety and strain that he found in Moscow on a previous visit in 1947, replaced by confidence and a

sense of power. Substantial advances have been made in the field of education, including the institution of costless university study. Restraints on research have been lifted, and there is a greater interchange with Western scholars. Law and penal reforms have been carried out, curbing the executive organs, releasing political prisoners, revising the criminal code, and re-enforcing the position of the courts. Legislative bodies are playing a greater role in policy-making, and steps have been taken to democratize the inner life of the Soviet Communist Party. Workers can now freely change their jobs, the trade unions are functioning more effectively, and the social security system has been considerably expanded. Mr. Zilliacus was particularly impressed with the decentralization of control over industry and agriculture, of which he saw the opening phases and which he describes as "a real and serious attempt to democratize the processes of production by giving more scope and influence to all those engaged in it." As far as peaceful co-existence is concerned, Mr. Zilliacus points out that this has been a fundamental principle of Soviet policy from the beginning, although the meaning of the concept has been enlarged and influenced by the growth of the Socialist world, the appearance of a group of uncommitted nations, and the implications of nuclear war.

The chapters on Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Poland indicate the extreme complexity of the problem of creating a freer society in the face of Western hostility on the one hand, and various survivals of domestic social and economic backwardness, on the other. Mr. Zilliacus quotes a Polish friend as saying, "More democracy and political freedom will for a tim mean anti-Semitism rearing its u head again." And one does not ha to be a "Stalinist" to look with m givings on the following developm in Poland, where, Mr. Zilliacus wri "relations between Church and St are once more becoming normal":

"A period has been set aside State schools, during which pare who wish their children to have ligious education can make the nec sary arrangements. In practice, as land is a solidly Catholic country, t means that priests come to the scho to give religious instruction. Inde the boot is now on the other foot: p ents who do not want their children be taught religion are complain that the other children set upon the and call them Communists!"

Hungary is, of course, the outsta ing example of this problem, and though Mr. Zilliacus did not visit t country, his report of Polish and Yu slav views sheds much light on w happened there. This view is t when the Nagy government asked viet forces to leave, when it announ its intention to withdraw from the W saw alliance, when reactionary and cist elements appeared and started groms of Jews, when atrocities w committed against Communists me because they were Communists, w in the midst of all this Nagy pro ised "free" elections and gave in every new anarchic demand, "the R sians were faced with the prospect not only Stalinism but Commun itself would go down in the Hunga revolution, and the régime that mately emerged, after more or less longed and bloody disorders, might 'Christian Democratic' or someth of that sort." In other words, the H

garian developments presented challenges both on a state and on a party level. And all this at a time of the Anglo-French-Israeli attack on Egypt which marked a sharpening of the cold war. In this situation, Tito has said, Soviet occupation of Budapest was a lesser evil than the alternative of counter-revolution, civil war, Western intervention and a possible world war.

However, Mr. Zilliacus, while noting all this, condemns Soviet policy in Hungary and criticizes the Czechs for not having gone far enough in the process of democratization. He is generally inclined, it seems to me, to search for freedom in an abstract way and to attach insufficient importance to the difficulties of progressing from the rigidity, bureaucratism, intolerance and brutality of the Stalin era without falling into a species of laissez-faire liberalism with its own immoralities. Mr. Zilliacus apparently agrees with the Polish Communist Central Committee member whom he quotes as saying, "Better even reaction in Hungary than Russian intervention. For in the former case it would be the responsibility of the Hungarian people and a disgrace to the Hungarian workers. But Russian intervention is a dishonor to Communism everywhere." This strikes me as a very idealistic and irresponsible view, springing from a distortion of international solidarity and a faulty sense of history. What was happening in Hungary threatened to affect not only Hungarians, and even if it did. . . .

Nor can I agree with Mr. Zilliacus when he takes the Yugoslav viewpoint and confuses the forms of achieving Socialism with the substance of it, mistakenly finding a contradiction between what Khrushchev said at the 20th Congress concerning the possibility of the transition to Socialism by peaceful and parliamentary means, and the fundamental requirement of establishing working-class rule. I think Mr. Zilliacus also underestimates the obstacles that reaction will put in the path to Socialism for some time to come and consequently he is unable to recognize the role Communist parties must play in the struggle. It seems historically wrong to project a judgment on the basis of the present weak state of the British and American Communist parties and to deny the necessity of their function in the future.

However, the very nature of these criticisms will indicate that Mr. Zilliacus has written a very worthwhile and thought-provoking book.

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