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IN THIS ISSUE—

NEW YORK LETTER— RALPH GUSTAFSON

STORIES WINGATE TAYLOR, IRVING LAYTON

POEMS A. M. KLEIN, PATRICK ANDERSON
JAMES WREFORD, MIRIAM WADDINGTON, R. G.
SIMPSON.

ARTICLES CRITICISM & REVIEWS

APRIL & MAY 1945.

VOL. 2, NO. 12.

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FIRST STATEMENT

VOL. 2 NO. 12

APR—MAY. 1945

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The English Lesson

—IRVING LAYTON

The woman walked up the stone steps, pausing long enough on the landing to get back her breath. Then she nervously adjusted her hat, shook the snowflakes off her fur collar and pressing her black bag firmly against her side as if it were a weapon she might later on need, pushed the door open. She found herself in a small, unlighted passage which smelled of fresh paper and envelopes.

She peered about her uneasily, at a loss what to do next. There were no cards on the wall and even if there were it was too dark to read the names on them. Nevertheless she groped about — this *must* be an apartment building she told herself — but her next thought was that she had the wrong address. And she stepped back to the door, her hand seeking the door-knob; leaning against the plate glass she looked out into the street as if expecting help to come from there. A lone taxicab speeded past the house followed by swirling columns of snow.

It was nearing 8.00 and the traffic had died out. The street looked deserted.

Then seeking a definite clue, the woman turned again toward the darkness and sniffed once or twice, quietly. The pervasive, acrid smell of paper and envelopes, reminding her of fish, almost made her dizzy. No he couldn't live here she decided at last. How foolish

to have been in such a hurry! Now Goldie would have to give her the number again, since she didn't remember it.

She opened the door to let herself out when she heard a heavy tread on the narrow, winding staircase. Clutching the door-knob tightly, she strained her eyes in the direction of where the sound was coming from and made out the figure of a man. She moved away from the door and waited.

"Iss—iss dat you Mister Griffiths?" she said in a scared whisper. The man was already level with her and the light from the street enabled her to see him more distinctly. He was a thickset man, about fifty.

"Nom de Dieu, you have frightened me," he exclaimed, startled. There was a silence and the woman could hear his heavy breathing and smell the brandy on his breath. She backed away from him quickly, toward the door.

"It is so dark I see no one," the man grumbled at the woman who was reproaching herself for not having fled. He started to come toward her but halted when he saw her move away abruptly to one side. He realized she was frightened.

"I . . . I'm looking for a Mister Griffiths, he's a teacher," she said, stumbling over the words. "Maybe you know if he lives here."

He tried to calm her by answering boisterously. "Sure, madame, this Mister Griffiths live here. If you go up on the stairs he live on the top floor."

The woman, much too nervous and relieved to thank him, brushed past him without a word and began to climb the winding staircase and almost tripped over the row of cartons on the first landing. They were packed to the top with brown, sealed envelopes ready for mailing and were pushed against the wall but a tiny bulb which burned feebly in the congested hall enabled her to see her way to the next staircase.

She stopped before the first door and after a few seconds' hesitation knocked timidly. Almost at once the door was opened by a slender, red-haired, serious-looking young man in his early thirties. There was a penetrating smell of tobacco about him — or maybe it come from the cupboard-like room — and he had a pleasant smile.

"Come in Mrs. Webber," he said. "I wish all my pupils were

this punctual." he helped her with her coat which he folded neatly, placing it on his unpretentious cot, and watched her remove her hat and gloves. She had thick, greying hair tastefully combed back, a rather heavy face, and tired eyes that glinted out of their deep sockets. Her green, woollen sweater which buttoned up to her ample bosom seemed a size too small for her. She wore a string of amber beads around her neck.

Hurriedly extracting pencil and exercise book from her black bag, Mrs. Webber crossed over to the desk-table and sat down on the chair which Griffiths held for her. He seated himself in the armchair beside her, unscrewed his Waterman and pulled out a notepad from the neat pile of books in the corner of the table.

Excelsior Griffiths M.A. smiled at her pleasantly.

"Before we begin, Mrs. Webber, do you mind telling who recommended me?"

"Mrs. Kravitz. Didn't I say over the phone?"

Griffiths wrote the name down, blotting it carefully.

"She lives upstairs from me. She explained me what a wonderful teacher you are. Mine gosh, already she is speaking like a . . . a Canadian."

"It's very kind of you to say so," he said gravely.

"Only I'm hoping . . ."

"Yes?" he enquired politely, stroking his thin chin and regarding her attentively.

"Oh nothing, excuse me. I'm a such worrying person," Mrs. Webber said, flustered as though surprised in some unwelcome thought she wanted to drive away. She looked up and saw, though she didn't recognize it, the Sun Life building lit up like an enormous wedding cake with many layers through the frosted window which gave out directly upon the terminus. As she settled herself in her chair her woman's eyes itemized the scanty furniture in the room, the oppressive curtains, the iron cot and chipped dresser near the door and the bookcases, the largest of which she could touch with her hand. She concluded everything in the room needed a vigorous dusting and almost looked at the floor to see if it were scrubbed, which it wasn't.

And this time she scanned her teacher's face more carefully, saw it was pinched and unwell. He had lit his curved pipe, the one he always smoked when teaching and was thinking his own thoughts while she made survey of his room. At irregular intervals the ugly steam pipes creaked protestingly below the table and the snow pattered off the window-pane in sharp little noises.

Griffiths leaned over and adjusted the table lamp. For more years than he could remember he'd been teaching English to Jewish women, teaching them grammar and spelling and the right pronunciation. He taught them, he believed, conscientiously but not many had the patience to continue lessons for more than a few months. Sometimes without even the graciousness of an excuse they stopped coming to him or took themselves another teacher and long ago he had decided these were like neurotics who went ailing from one doctor to another.

Of course their accent — there wasn't much he could do about that. It was a discouragingly hopeless task trying to correct it. Might as successfully attempt to restore a spoiled fruit to its original firmness. He looked up at Mrs. Webber doubtfully. Anyway, it was a livelihood. Far better than working for some insensitive exploiter, punching a clock . . . And his textbook was coming along fine. It was almost done, all except for the final chapter on the adverbs. His "English Made Easy" would sell at least ten thousand copies. The Government was bound to encourage immigration after the war. Ten thousand? Why not twenty thousand? The frown disappeared from his face and he turned to his pupil who was modestly rustling her exercise book.

With a professional gesture he placed a book in front of her, adjusted the lamp so that the light fell directly on it and told her to read. Using his Eversharp for a pointer, he guided her from sentence to sentence as she read on jerkily in a high-pitched, stammering voice, mispronouncing most of the words. When she came to the end of the paragraph she stopped and waited for Griffiths to comment. Tapping lightly with his pencil, he peeled off as one might an orange his three rules for proper reading. She must try to read more slowly, to give the syllables their full value, and to lower her voice when she came to the end of a sentence. So intensely did his pupil listen to the automatically delivered instructions he was embarrassed and stopped tapping.

Her eyes hypnotically glued to each word above the pointer Mrs. Webber read the next paragraph with something like desperation. She read slowly, with painful vigilance. Whenever she made a mistake she would repeat the correction under her breath as if she were rinsing her lips with it and read the sentence over again from the beginning. She gripped the table with her hands, straining over the book as though each word had life and could be lifted bodily from the page. Griffiths watched her in astonishment. He had never seen so much animal eagerness, such a frantic

desire to accomplish. Nonetheless he was bored and kept glancing surreptitiously at his wrist-watch, making an unnecessary movement with his hand each time to do so.

"Well, that's an improvement," he said insincerely when she had finished reading her simple story.

His pupil looked at him — anxiously. "You don't think my head is maybe too old?"

Griffiths smiled his re-assurance. "You're not old, Mrs. Webber. Anyhow it's all nonsense to say that anyone is too old to learn. It'll simply take a lot of hard work — from both of us."

"Mr. Griffiths, I must know the langwiche! If you can help me I won't never be able to thank you." There was something almost comic about her desperation.

"Don't say 'won't never'. That's a double negative and means the opposite of what you want to say, Mrs. Webber. For example, if you say 'I haven't no money' what you're actually saying is that you do have money. 'Haven't no money' means . . . 'have money'. Do I make myself clear?"

Mrs. Webber thought for a moment before she said eagerly, "Yeh, I understand perfectly. Like I'm always saying, 'he don't do nothing'. That's wrong, eh? What should I be saying?"

And trying hard to fight down his weariness which kept rising like a bad supper, Griffiths told her. As she muttered the correction to herself he stole another glance at his wrist-watch. The lesson was nearly half over. He now knew for a certainty that her English was a twisted, unsalvageable wreck. A prophet's lifetime would be needed to weed even a corner of the luxuriantly over-run garden of her speech. Were he honest — or even moderately well-off — he would tell her so.

Excelsior Griffiths gave a thin, meaningful smile at the manuscript lying beside his elbow, neatly typewritten and almost ready for the waiting, solicitous publishers. Yes, the book was practically done, the book was as good as finished.

He noticed his pupil had shifted her position slightly in order to have a full view of the bookcase at her side. Except in a library, she declared, she had never seen so many books.

"And you've read them all?" she asked him somewhat breathlessly.

Griffiths made a non-committal gesture and smiled. What odd fury drove each of his pupils to ask precisely that question? It made him feel queer inside the way she was looking at him now, almost reverently.

"With such a edjication, one could do anything," she suddenly blurted out. "My I wish I should know so much like that! What I wouldn't do with it! What I wouldn't do . . . Maybe with a little nawlich everything would of been diff'rent." And then sadness came like a mist into her eyes and Griffiths was really touched and not so much angry as embarrassed when she asked him what he did besides teach old fooling heads like her own.

"Nothing else, Mrs. Webber, All I do is teach," he replied and there was no anger in his voice.

"But if you wanted you could do something else too!" she urged. "Like work for a big company, be a manacher or a salesman. Mine gosh, with so much nawlich!" She stopped to catch her breath.

Griffiths cleared his throat.

"Wisdom, as someone remarked, is good with an inher — with money."

"Yeh but mit nawlich you can make money! Nawlich is money! Ef only I could speak the langwich I could get mineself a job, I could support . . ." She stopped in confusion. As much to divert attention from her slip as because she was probing desperately for something, she said:

"It's not mine business to ask but explain me something. Why do you live here on top of a . . . a factory?"

Griffiths give a wry smile. "It isn't a factory. It's a mail order house."

"Whatever is downstairs," she said impetuously, as if the distinction was quite irrelevant. "Mit what you know you could live in a duplex . . . You could have even lots of servants. I don't understand. Please explain me."

He did not reply immediately. He seemed to be framing alternative answers to a question which he had seldom put to himself — at any rate not quite so bluntly as that. The best answers, he realized, were not always the true ones. The truth was a kind of partnership between oneself and another. And leaning over he picked up the manuscript which he held up to her.

"You see Mrs. Webber," he said simply, "I'm writing a book."

Lightly she brushed her fingers against the folder as if fearful of soiling it. She seemed excited by it and regarded it thoughtfully for a long time. At last she said in a hushed voice, still keeping her eyes on the folder, "So now I understand. You too have dreams."

"We'd better get on with the lesson, don't you think. Let's see what your spelling is like."

The pupil eagerly seized her pencil.

"I could always spell not bad," she said. "I used to take out words from the papers and concentrate myself."

Just then they heard footsteps on the staircase. Griffiths saw Mrs. Webber start and glance at the door apprehensively.

"What makes you nervous?" he asked, wondering.

But instead of replying she sat listening until the footsteps, slow and dragging, became more distinct. Then she gave a short laugh, as if at her own fears.

"You know how it is with us women and the mouses."

"In mercy's name there are no mouses here, only mice! Now what am I saying? That was Paul coming upstairs."

"Oh the big man with the accident."

"I didn't hear about Paul being in an accident. A-ah you mean an accent, don't you? It's accent, Mrs. Webber, not accident."

She bit her lip and once more the sadness moved like a mist across her tired eyes. She shook her head despondently.

"It's of no use, Mister Griffiths, I make too much mistakes. English already I will never learn. My head is too old.

"You must be patient," he countered firmly, afraid he was losing his pupil. "They say Rome wasn't built —. No one is too old to learn."

And hastily snatching up a battered speller, he told her to write in a straight column down the page the words he was going to dictate to her. Mrs. Webber crouched over the exercise book like a starved animal over food, her big bosom pressed against the table. At intervals moistening the lead of her pencil with her lips, she wrote each word with painful deliberation. As if each word she was writing was her signature to a promissory note. Then she muttered it under her breath, a conquered enemy whose name she was triumphantly desecrating. Her mouth puckered up with nervous concentration; her eyes seemed more sunken than ever. But the enemy had once been powerful, his spirit might still be abroad, and so she whispered his name softly, if vindictively. When she reached the bottom of the page, Griffiths stopped dictating and ran his pencil down the column, pointing out the misspelled words which she corrected savagely.

Afterwards he told her that conversation was helpful and that she should speak about anything that interested her. A movie she had seen, what she did during the day, the winter scenery,

anything at all. Mrs. Webber said could she speak about herself, she knew that better than anything else. The teacher nodded, remembering the other pupils who conversationally had told him their life histories.

So Mrs. Webber said about how she came from Lithuania a girl of seventeen and lived with her aunt on Sanguinet street. Her aunt kept a small grocery and sent her on all the messages and ordered her around like she wasn't her niece but a stranger. She kept her all day cleaning the rooms and making the beds and washing the dishes for the whole family while her own two daughters never put a finger in cold water. When night came she used to cry herself to sleep no matter how tired she was. But what could she do? She had no one to turn to, she was all alone and friendless. How could she make friends with anyone when she wasn't ever allowed to put her nose in the outside unless she was going to a customer. And on Sundays when her cousins did nothing or went out with their friends or fellows she had to do the whole week's laundry. Her cousins, yes, they could learn the langwisch and get an edjication but not she. It was 'Elsa' do this and 'Elsa do that' from the time she opened her eyes to when she closed them again with tiredness.

"You see," explained Mrs. Webber, "I was paying back my ship's money. Mine aunt used to say I wasn't worth even my board, that I couldn't never pay her back for taking me from Lithuania and bringing me to such a fine country like Canada. And what should I know? I was only seventeen so I believed her."

Griffiths, listening half-heartedly wondered at what point he could stop her flowing recital to amend her speech. He saw an opportunity.

"Mrs. Webber, try to say 'my aunt' not 'mine aunt'." He picked up the speller and said earnestly, "It's 'my speller' not 'mine speller'. Do you see what I mean?"

Then, shrugging his thin shoulders, he put the book down. Corrections were useless. In the very next sentence they repeated the same mistake. He glanced at his watch again. The lesson would soon be over. Poor Mrs. Webber. She too didn't want a teacher, she was probably a poor lonely soul who wanted someone to talk to. He reflected on how richly he deserved his fee as the woman went on.

At the home of one of her aunt's customers she met her husband. He fell in love with her from the first day he saw her. She was very beautiful when she was seventeen. She had red, red

cheeks and thick black hair so wavy that . . . ah well, foolishness! But she was beautiful even if no one who knew her then would recognize her now. From that day on he came to see her every day and he always brought some little present and spoke nicely to her. He spoke the langwisch like he had been born here all his life. No one knew anything about him. In company he never said anything, almost nothing at all. That used to worry her a little. Without nawlich a person is blind! He seemed a quiet, steady man. Did she love him? What does a young girl know about love? And anyway is there such a thing as love?

He asked her to marry him and she said, yes, she would marry him. And when he told her aunt he would pay the balance of the ship money her aunt was happy and she made a big wedding for her in the front room and cried at it too as if she had been her own mother. After the wedding, her husband took her to live in Mile End where there were only French people and where she didn't know a soul. There he opened a small Dry Goods store. And then his mother, God should rest her soul, came to live with them and she . . . she wasn't altogether in her right mind. Her son had just taken her out of the asylum.

"She wasn't exactly crazy," Mrs. Webber explained to Griffiths wearily nodding his head, "but sometimes she say many bad things to me. I became afraid from her especially as mine husband always said she was right. He always took her part against me and wouldn't never listen to one word against her. Well . . . I suppose it was his mother, what else could he do? After she start such arguments—mine husband has a such bad temper—the mother would sit by the stove and sing to herself quietly, tears rolling down her cheeks big like pearls." Mrs. Webber sighed deeply and fidgeted in her chair.

"As I said, God should rest her soul. She's in a better world now. But when begin the arguments I ask mineself if mine husband . . . like I said before, without nawlich a person is blind. They make mistakes. Then the children started to coming. First Sylvia, then Dorothy and then Freda. They're growing up, already the oldest has a job but the other two . . . Maybe if I learned English I wouldn't have to worry with them also," she concluded cryptically.

And Griffiths who had heard confusedly only a part of the last sentence said cheerfully because the hour was up.

"You don't need to worry, Mrs. Webber. With a few more lessons you'll be speaking like a native."

He was about to say something more when they were both surprised by a loud thumping at the door. Griffiths got up to open it and looking back noticed his pupil was white as a sheet. Full of dread yet saying to himself there was nothing to be frightened about, he turned the Yale look.

The door was pushed open violently by a heavy-set man who strode angrily into the room, almost upsetting the slender bookcase at the foot of the cot. When he saw Mrs. Webber who had risen from her chair and was facing him he exclaimed without really noticing Griffiths, "So Elsa, this is where you spend your evenings!"

"Please . . . Harry. Not before the teacher."

Her husband turned around quickly and saw Griffiths standing beside the open door. His black, staring, crafty eyes went over him like a pair of rollers. They seemed to be feeling his muscles, testing them. Then, having satisfied himself, he snapped:

"Teacher! There are other names for such people!"

Griffiths' face reddened as he felt the blood rush over his face. He has never encountered a man of such vulgarity except in books where properly enough they received a bleeding nose one or two pages further on. He was frightened and tried to be dignified and stammered:

"I beg your pardon, Sir!"

Webber looked at him menacingly.

"Look her mister! I don't know who you are but you'd better keep your mouth shut!" Then he turned to his trembling wife and as he spoke the thin blue veins under his staring, malicious eyes stood out prominently. He said with an affected gentleness that was maddening:

"Goldie told me where I would find you. I always told you, Elsa you spoke more than was good for you to the neighbors."

"Please . . . please Harry."

"And those other nights," her husband continued, his voice still affectedly gentle but now etched in with malice and self-righteousness, "I believed you when you said you were going to the library. To the library! A whole philosophe you became in your old age!"

Each word was like a blow to the poor woman who was holding on to the back of her chair for support. Her face deathly pale she seemed incapable of speech and her hand ludicrously clutching her pencil was shaking.

Webber scooped up her things and threw them at her.

"What are you waiting for? Get dressed you fool!"

Without a word she began to get into her coat while Griffiths, crossing over to the table, watched her as if in a dream. He was telling himself this wasn't really happening, not in this century, that it was a delusion until he heard Mr. Webber, who had in the meantime been taking keener note of his surroundings, saying ironically, "Of course now that you've started going to libraries you can associate with the intelligentsia. Nothing is too good for you, Elsa."

Griffiths turned on him like a baited animal.

"Take that back, Sir!" he said. "I don't like your filthy insinuation. Your wife . . ." But before he could bring out the rest Webber struck him a brutal blow on the side of his face so that he fell backwards against the table which he upset and slumped down dazed upon the floor. The books and notepads and pencils clattered about him in a head, the inkwell splashing its contents upon the neatly typewritten pages of his manuscript.

When he came to a few moments later he heard as in a confused dream their footsteps on the lower staircase and Mr. Webber shouting to his wife, "You sonofabitch! You sonofabitch!" Then the door shut with a bang.

A Night at the Pictures

Be to my want the intemperate cry
 and traffic horn that lets me by,
 green all the way prefer my love
 at every crossroad corner of
 impatient search, that I may find
 the white light district of the mind,
 a space to park the limb's unrest
 then see the world awaiting breast
 hollow for me, and feel that mouth
 awake my half forgotten youth,
 and have the queen of stars to toast
 for fifty cents at most.

—JAMES WREFORD

Adam

And birds were comets burning on the bough
yet from the tightlaced leaves' astronomy
I pulled the fact out of the zodiac.
Eve was beside. A. woman tempted me.

It was my boredom in the noon of day,
the serpent, something. God was conjuror,
his vested interest had thought up that tree.
I drew it down, the apple tight with rondure,

the fist fruit. First I held and nothing did
except my searchlight fingers, paleing round,
went to the poles and pitched into their tips—
I sensed myself. Slurred off. And clutched the found,

the green pulse beat in mine. I gave a bite
through peel like glossy map of coloured countries.
It was, I thought, the very taste of daylight
my tongue explored. Then with his mysteries

Abacadabra God came, shining junk
dismissed us. O it was a little round
nice apple, buoyant as a children's ball,
tightfit and bright, close cradled in the hand . . .

and yes, we knew the evil and the good:
geologists to outer canyons hurled,
scientists exiled. So, we learn the rock,
the mind, the human circle, the green world.

—PATRICK ANDERSON

The Horse-Stall

—WINGATE TAYLOR

As Krebs awoke that morning, so effortless was the transition from dream world to day life that the vision of elephants through the high open gate of the horse-stall — the great stone-coloured neolithic shapes, their tails and trunks swinging curiously as they snuffed and tramped the moist turf — might still have been from the familiar, improbable, time-less landscape of sleep. There was something he tried to recall, — the faded trumpeting, muted like the horns of taxis heard from an hotel room behind the rue du Faubourg. St.-Honore, like the distant urgent frenzy of wild geese driving across the St. Lawrence; yes, but also like other vagrant, anonymous sounds that years of mornings had funnelled into his head, something merely muted and fading as the appeal of a dying Roland, a memory whose character itself died out, growing fainter and fainter as its echoes and transmutations became formless, unidentifiable, spread out and were swallowed in the mists of the thousands of his mornings which had no record at all. He opened his eyes again: Tired old waiters on corny feet, the elephants were still circling backwards ineffectually, gyved and staked in the grassy centre of the race-track.

Loosed and in the proper mood, thought Krebs, wouldn't they take the fair-grounds apart! Butt in the concessions, scatter the whole shebang, cattle and horses, dogs, men and monkeys. Like a bear, an elephant might scare a horse: but could he outrun one?

'ATTRACTION!

'Race Between Elephant and Horse

'At the World's Fair

'Krebs Froelicher, Promoter

Better than half a dozen horses running round the track together.

'Variety. Real Competition. Instructive. Delightful.'

'BASED CAREER ON JEU D'ESPRIT, SAYS ELEPHANT MAN

'Owe All to Brome Fair

"The celebrated Elephant farmer and breeder, Krebs Froelicher, the small farmer's friend, whose slogan "An elephant on every Canadian farm" has worked the regeneration of the rural community of the E. T., offers for sale at private treaty several choice young head of male and female animals of his own breeding, sired by his champion bull Haroun, out of his prize-winning cow Pride of the Plain. As well as being adapted to all regular farm work these animals have been specially trained to

Cord wood

Bale hay

Break roads

Dig potatoes and other roots

Pick apples

Fill the wood-box.

They are warranted invaluable to farmers, horticulturists, backwoodsmen, R.R. contractors, owners of country estates, and others.'

Would an elephant survive the winters? How would you harness one? Could they pull from a collar or yoke, or would a simple breastplate be better? Need an anatomist to decide. Anyway, the calves would smash up lots of gear before you got them broken. Bitting-machine, perhaps. A dumb-jockey for Jumbo.

An idea in it all, though. Only one animal to keep, better than horses or a tractor. "Boy, wipe Mumps down, saddle him with the governess-basket, we're going on a picnic." For pleasure and profit. Lots of elephant for the swipe to brush down, of course. But no shoeing to do. Keep the toes pared down perhaps.

Some time of year they go berserk. Call of the wild, gallivanting off from circuses, disobeying keepers. The Carthaginians gave the driver a chisel and mallet. To be applied to the occiput in case of emergency. Horrible. But that was in war. No, not so docile as horses, creatures of habit. Nor so absurdly, pathetically brave. But Beery says the horse cannot reason. Beery: Rarey: *Dr Dadd on the Horse*. Froelicher on the Elephant . . .

Well, even if he could, Krebs decided, he wouldn't supplant the horse. He thought of the sweet-smelling broodmares whose grassy breath blew the assimilated essence of summer in one's face, of the foals, born sneering and glaring at mankind, with their

crimped tails and carpet-fringe of mane, trotting along as if on springs, and of the stallions, alert and arrogant, cocking their ears for signs of danger to a wild herd they remembered but had never known, sires and guardians in whose eyes one saw the panorama of their race's history on the plains of Crim-Tartary, with the grazing troop suddenly warned and marshalled, forming in a circle, and the males receiving the onset, rising, bellowing, striking with murderous forefeet in a cloud of dust, — until the keeper twitched the lead-strap, and feeling the chain their heads went up and only the white flash of the rolling eye was left as the precipitate of all that savagery and verve. He thought of the show — and race-horses, lovely freaks, creatures of whom it had been arranged, with incredible labour of selection and ingenuity of training, that, against all nature, they trot a mile in two minutes, or, stepping delicately in a ring, pick their feet up to their chins, flex their hocks like scissors, arch their necks and stiffen their tiny tails, in an exaggeration of the equine gait that was at once monstrous and beautiful: these, at least, would always be cossets beyond price, their rearing and manège undertaken without consideration of cost, works of art worth all the pains, disappointment and sheer drudgery undergone by the scapegoat owner and swipe. Worth all that to whom? Well, to the world, the grandstand, — and, by reflection, back to the artist and the artificer, to the owner and the swipe.

And here am I, thought Krebs, my father's swipe: lying in a horse-stall instead of waking at home in my bed beside Dolly.

But he wouldn't exchange these few days before fair for anything, not even for the fair-days themselves. Indeed, if he had to choose between the two, he would take these. He knew it wasn't the result of any perverse preference for the quiver of anticipation over the thrill of the real thing, no, nor of a choice by which ordinary hope could be safely pitched unnaturally high, — only that of a simple evaluation of the conditions under which happiness, the feeling that all was well, came and was grasped, and of the sense that, for him at least, the prelude was somehow likely to be better than the work itself. It was this that made these days of the closing summer so perfect, that gave their own quality of fruition and beauty to the rustle of awakening in the grey morning and the hush and earnestness of bedding down in the red evening, as things charged with a meaning that seemed at times almost beyond the looming, immediate purpose, beyond the significance they borrowed, after all, from the coming fair.

In fact, Krebs thought he would more enjoy the whole process of preparing for shows and exhibitions, — from the first summer schooling to the eventual trucking to fair-grounds and arenas — a period that was like the overture to a play, had he not known so well the tawdry scene the curtain would reveal when it went up and the music stopped. Then, he saw in the gaunt features of the horses — bald-eyed, red-nostrilled, ears flattened to their skulls — the fixed faces of the exhibitors, and sensed the rancour and spite behind the cadenced rivalry of hooves: then, too, he saw the foolish, instant hatreds formed at these meetings, flare-ups that would die down only to smoulder on for years, and, as one confronted with the existence of a man's choice between being either a social human being or a horseman, was troubled by the crass and idiotic vainglory, the fierce blind egotism that scrapped all knowledge and judgment in the face of the bare fact and fortune of ownership, as if a man's horse were an extension of himself, a living symbol of everything that life and his neighbours had denied him to possess in the way of strength, speed, grace or manners . . .

It had been on the Friday when the news looked better that they had decided to show Hillbilly, Heron, Cynthia and Penny and her colt at Brome. This year Krebs was to sleep over there with Gob Whittaker and the horses.

The news of the declaration of war, which had only reached them at the fair-grounds late on Sunday and in the conflicting and irreconcilable versions of rural hearsay, distracted Gob and exhilarated his spirits. "Guess will be our last fair togever, Krebs," he kept repeating as each fresh confirmation of the news reached them. "Go to fair no more, Krebs, you and me and Willie. Yes, no Toronto, no Sherbrooke any more Krebs, all be cancelled, yes. Brome last fair. Hope its a good one for its a last one Krebs oh boy!"

That evening when the horses were bedded down, he accepted cheerfully when Krebs invited him to the village hotel for beer, — first disappearing into his stall and returning shortly in sports jacket and flannels, his face shining redly, his hair dampened with some lotion that surrounded him with a fragrancy of lemon-drops. Then before leaving he watered the horses, stepping delicately among the fresh droppings in his polished shoes.

At the gates he greeted a knot of acquaintances. "Heard news, Baissel?" he asked. "War!"

One of the men turned towards Gob a face with the contours,

the sun-ripe fiery autumnal colour and the utter blankness of a carved pumpkin, except that instead of the serrated segment of circle chopped out for a mouth there was only a thin lipless slit into which a straw had been stuck. "Why, they've fitt for three days already, them Poles and Germans," he said in a languid, musical drawl, rotating the straw slowly. "But the Bible tells us there always has been wars and there always will be wars, and I guess thats about right aint it, Mr. Froelicher?" He turned the face on Krebs, with a movement that suggested it was easier to move his neck than his eyes.

"Going to join up, Baissel?" Gob asked him.

The straw stopped moving for an instant, then began again. "Taint very likely after keeping out of the last war I'd go and get myself kilt in this one," he said, and as if carved by the child's knife of its own rustic wit, the pumpkin slowly split in the classic Hallowe'en grin which was all it had lacked, the grin that in this instance expressed a simple appreciation of everything implied in its owner's attitude, and which had been summed up, as a probable matter of satisfaction for hours, in what he had just said. With a wink and a Good evening to Krebs, he moved off.

Gob and Krebs marched resonantly and in step down the village's single sidewalk.

"I'm fum old cuntry, you know that eh Krebs?" Gob asked.

Krebs knew his history dimly: how at an early age he had been shipped to Canada by some charitable organization which 'placed' Protestant orphans in farm homes in the colonies, — and he had heard him speak, in a matter-of-fact way and without bitterness, of the work he had done for the iron-fisted, penurious farmer who milked eighteen cows and served neither milk nor butter at his own table, and who, seizing on the boots Gob wore on his arrival, put them away to keep for him.

"I'm a Britisher," Gob went on. "If old cuntry's at war I know my place."

"You're a good fellow, Gob," said Krebs sincerely.

"Baissel he aint no good, Krebs. If he dont want to join up wif you and me, better wifout him. Dont you fink so Krebs."

Krebs acquiesced. They marched down the main street in step.

The bar was beginning to fill up when they entered. Seedy and neglected for the rest of the year, the hotel based its whole existence on the custom of these few days in fair-time, — and the rapacity of the proprietor and staff during this period gave the place so much the atmosphere of the underworld that stepping

into this small country hotel, set in a dusty village in the middle of miles of farmland, was like being transported into the air of the dives and brothels of Montreal itself, of the hideaways of streets with names sinister from their long association with vice, squalor and the police, DeBullion, Cadieux, Ste.-Elizabeth.

Krebs and Gob had to share a table with a pale countryman wearing a wide black felt hat and an overhanging white moustache.

"You're here with the fair, I suppose," he said in a surprisingly gentle voice, trying to catch their eyes while they were ordering, fingering his own almost empty glass. "Strangers, I suppose."

"Yah, strangers eh Krebs," said Gob with a wink. "Wif the show, wif the vawdville." Then, gesturing towards the patient horse that was tied at the back door of the bar: "Keep at beast tied out there all night?" he asked the old man.

"No, I'll be taking him home pretty soon," said the stranger meekly. "Both of us have to get supper."

"Supper," said Gob drily. "Its after supper now. Here's luck, Krebs," he said, addressing his beer.

They were surprised to see a soldier in uniform already. He stood at the bar talking to the proprietor's wife, whom Gob had greeted with a familiar "Evening, Lillian." She nodded to Gob and Krebs without breaking off her conversation.

"Lillian, I want you to meet a particular friend of mine," said Gob, getting up. "Meet Mr. Krebs, — Mr. Froblisher I mean. Krebs is the son of Mr. Froblisher you know."

Lillian and Krebs exchanged a reserved greeting.

"How's the army, soldier?" Gob asked. "On duty here?"

"Live here. I come back for the fair," said the soldier. "We was called in yesterday and issued all this stuff."

"You recruiting?"

"Oh we aint recruiting. Most of our company's been in for a year or two. The other boys got me to join up two-three months ago."

"Oh, militia!" said Gob. "You know any units recruiting round here? Me and Krebs goin to join up."

"Couldnt say. Havent heard of any," said the soldier, turning back to the proprietor's wife.

"I dont believe they'll go looking for so many men this time," said the elderly countryman. "Twont be the same's the old war."

"Old war," said Gob. "Oh he means the Boor War!"

There was a general laugh.

The old man coloured. "I know what war I mean," he said, "and taint the Boor War. But some parties think they're right smart when they've had a glass too much," he said, rising.

"Goodnight, old timer," crowed Gob, motioning him to the door. "Got rid of him!" he said to Krebs gleefully.

After three bottles Gob was willing to eat. They ordered chop suey, to be served in the dining-room. Then Gob, returning from a visit to the hotel yard, reported a change in the temperature and decided first to return to the fair-grounds and close the upper gates of the stalls so the horses wouldn't catch a chill. Krebs endorsed the idea, thinking that if Gob always had to defer his actions, even in so simple a piece of business as eating a snack, it was just as well that the pretext should subserve the wellbeing of the horses. By now, he was beginning to understand that Gob's tactics of delay, obstruction and adjournment, his inability to accept a favour or a suggestion without first sheering off and fetching a wide circle like a loose horse one was trying to catch with a dish of oats, were for him gestures by which he fostered the illusion of being something more than a functionary or swipe. "Besides," he told Krebs, "dont like at one-eyed nigger wif the race-horses. Been watching me all day. I just look in tack-room. Close horses all up," he winked, "then if we stay late, Krebs, no one suffer."

Well anyway, he was a good swipe, thought Krebs.

Later, while they were eating, his violent face rose-tinted from beer and chop suey, he listed to Krebs the advantages he stood to gain by enlisting. "One buck ten a day, Krebs, ten cents more I'm making. And me cloes, Krebs, me cloes! An not so much work to do, Krebs. An besides Krebs, army offers me a chancet. What chancet I got, Krebs, as fings stand? Just a swipe. Just fit for a swipe and to go on being a swipe for firty dollars a month and the rest of me life. You wonder, Krebs, I'm joining the colours?"

Krebs nodded to signify that he understood. But he wondered whether the attractions of army life weren't summed up for Gob in the recruiting-phrase he had just used, as something that carried a suggestion of more vividness and vibrancy to be found in life than what was afforded by the endless, daily shaking out of straw and shovelling up, the filling and presenting of water-buckets, the brushing out of dried, caked urine from a long row of hocks.

"What about you, Krebs?" Gob asked. "You joining." His bulbous cheeks and prickly hair came close as he leaned earnestly across the table.

"We'll see how things shape up, Gob," he said.

"Come on, be a man Krebs," said Gob. "Only be young oncet. Just for the hell of it, eh Krebs. Of course," he added thoughtfully, "I was forgetting Dolly, — excuse me, Miss Dolly. But at wouldnt stop me Krebs, if I was married. I've me girl, Krebs."

The proprietor's wife passed by to see if they wanted anything more.

"Whats a matter, Lillian?" Gob asked. "High-hatten us. Don't know your old friends. Sit down beside me Lillian."

"I dont mind resting a minute," said Lillian. "We've been busy tonight, allright."

"Krebs and me finking of joining up, Lillian," said Gob, taking her hand.

"Thats what I'd do if I was a man, Gob. What I was saying to Harry tonight."

Krebs thought of this driving force from the back room,— where on the way to the dining-room he had caught a glimpse of the proprietor himself sitting alone, bulking enormously by his desk, his aging body expressive of a slow agony of frustrated power — from the black frenzy of worry and despair in which the man lived, emotions which had become focussed in the woman's animated eye, her bustle and activity, so that the femininity of her approach to the customers, the only approach she knew, was revealed as something surpassing the hardness of the prostitute, as a travesty whose most striking feature was the woman's own bland, indecent obliviousness of her character of passive agent of the man sitting in the back room in a striped collarless shirt.

"Course I'm younger than Harry. We been here too long I guess. I was telling Harry tonight, you're only so old as you think you are. Anyway he's not getting any younger and he's not getting any richer here either."

"Going to sell the hotel, Lillian?"

"If I can get him to, Gob."

"Good idea Lillian. No more fair now its war. Good time to get out. Krebs and me's going to join the colours Lillian."

"You told me that, Gob," said the proprietor's wife, disengaging her hand.

"You'll write to me, Lily."

"Write to you, Gob," said the proprietor's wife, rising, "Gob when I see you in uniform I'll kiss you! And thats a promise."

"Promise, Lillian!"

"Its what I'd do if I was a man."

"See, Krebs?" said Gob, smirking, when she had gone.

The overflow from the barroom was spilling into the dining-room, so Krebs carried the two bottles back to their table. Gob followed him through the bar, seeking acquaintances. "Dont see nobody I know," he complained to Krebs. "Hey Lillian, where's crowd tonight?" he called to the proprietor's wife, who was taking the orders of some new arrivals, — a party of dark shiny-faced young men trussed in their city clothes and plucked and powdered girls in flowered print, who, as if the creation of some disturbance, as part of a general programme of noise, were for their race an indispensable feature or at least an unmistakable sign of a party, had just dragged two tables together. "Where's crowd? All Frenchmens or strangers here now, Lillian! Where's everybody, Lillian?" he insisted when she did not reply. "Gone home to bed?"

"Well, they keep out of trouble that way, Gob."

"Not always," said Gob, sniggering. He nudged Krebs. "Not always, eh Krebs? Oh no no. Fink at one over Lillian."

"Well its good advice to you," she said.

"Ats where you're wrong, Lillian," said Gob. "I feels like trouble. Feels like singing." He began to sing to Krebs in a tremulous tenor,

"Ooh Dann-ee boy, the pipehs
—the pipehs
Air calling—"

"Mr. Froelicher, please get him to go home," said the proprietor's wife, approaching Krebs quietly. "I don't want to see him in trouble when he's that way."

Krebs nodded to her.

"Trouble," said Gob, "whats your trouble, Lily."

"I dont want no trouble," said the woman.

"No trouble, no trouble at all," said Gob, waving his hand. "Going to enlist."

He made no resistance when Krebs suggested that he accompany him to the hotel yard. Out in the yard, while they made water, Gob said, "Go back to fair-grounds, Krebs? Getting late. First day of fair tomorrow, — this morning."

They set out. The cold landscape of night stretched out on either side of them, offering itself with the intensity of geometric lines and angles. The inconsequential daytime effect of trees, bushes and fields, with their excrescence of leaves and vegetation, the flimsy man-made buildings and shed, the patched paint and sagging clap-boards, assumed a permanence, a solidity, an indefinable rightness of perspective and dimension, as objects from which the fuzziness of colours and the blur of condition and association had been washed, so that they seemed to be walking through a world stripped to a silhouette, themselves parts of a composition that united the firm, tactile quality of a contour map with the harmony, balance and fitness of pure design.

The half-mile walk through the cool midnight air sobered them up. "Wevver going to be colder," said Gob, looking at the sky, where the stars, enormous and seeming closer together, were furred with tiny aureoles like a phosphorescence.

"You mean — St. Elmo's stars . . ." said Krebs, groping in his memory for something indistinctly connected with a good omen.

"Dunno. Rain perhaps," said Gob.

The lights were all off in the fair-grounds. They walked uncertainly over the rough, humpy sward between the blackened shapes of tents and buildings, moving instinctively towards a dim light that appeared in the inchoate darkness of the Midway and which turned out to be a popcorn wagon. Around this island of light there clustered, like moths, a dozen characteristic figures, waifs of the fair that had not yet begun, hangers-on of uncertain business and purpose, of whom nothing more could be said than that they were where they were now, as they would be on the night when the fair would be over until next year, when they would be there again, listening as they were now to a vendor's radio. There, Krebs and Gob learned that the Athenia had been torpedoed.

"Wimmen and kiddies . . ." said Gob.

". . . Several hundred returning Canadians," said the voice on the radio.

"I crossed on that ship," Krebs said to Gob. "She's the second of that name."

"Is that right," said Gob. "Was it the same one to go down as your old man lost his wife on, Krebs?"

"Eh?"

"Your father, — Mr. Froblisher's wife was drowned, you knew that Krebs, way before you was born."

"That was the Titanic."

"Some name like at, anyway," said Gob. "I'd heard them tell of it round the tavern."

" . . . Several hundred returning Canadians," said the voice on the radio.

"Goin to turn in now. See you in the morning," said Gob. "Cant see any place to get hot dog."

Krebs lingered on by the popcorn wagon, where the vendor with haggard face was twisting the dial of the radio.

" . . . un quart d'heure d'musique de danse, venant directement du Continental-Roof à New-York! . . . And here's the old maestro Fran Faraday himself, brought to you by the makers of — . . . Are you troubled by aching, itching —" The vendor threw up his hands.

"I fight for Germans in last war, 1916 I was conscript," he explained desperately to the others. "I'm Pole, not German. Where I was born was Germany last time. No Poland. I desert, I prisoner. After, I go to Latvia to fight Bolsheviki. League of Nations send battleship, Boum, boum, boum! No more fight, no more independent country, General give up. When I am demobilised, everything change at home, friends gone, my brotter killed. I come to America, now I got little business, again everything finished! Twice in my life war smash it all up already . . ."

Krebs reflected on the destiny of this Pole, whose history the idlers listened to noncommittally. An active muscular man below the middle height, he looked too young to have been in the German army in 1916, or even in that Russian mix-up. Was it only because he was a veteran of at least two disastrous campaigns that this man preferred the ways of peace and popcorn?

" . . . brings you the Voice of Experience."

For Krebs did not believe that people were led into wars by ambitious leaders. They were, perhaps unconsciously, merely led on, — because like Gob they felt they might better their lot, not worsen it, or because they sought in war a meaning and excitement their life had always lacked. If war had not come might not this popcorn vendor have been complaining just as colorfully of the cold weather or the dearth of custom? He seemed to be pretty volatile.

" . . . singing an old favourite, 'You Will Remember Vienna.' This number was requested by: Miss Caprice Foy, 11027A Park

Extension, Irving Gobine, 4410 . . ."

Picking his way through the tent-ropes and parked trailers of the concessions, Krebs headed for the horse-stalls. There was silence in the tack-room where Gob slept. Cynthia's shed, in which Krebs had made his bed, was locked, so he prised open the top gate. Cynthia gave a whinny of alarm.

"Shut up, Cyn. Steady girl," Krebs called. Through the wall he could hear Hillbilly stirring in his sleep, and hastened to quiet the filly before she woke the whole line of horses. When he got in he stroked her neck, murmuring to her. In her excitement she forgot to threaten to nip, bunting his arm with her head in recognition.

"Sleepy sleep, lady," Krebs said softly. "Thats my girl. Wars arent your concern anyway, thank God." With a flashlight he checked her halter and sheet, and kicked away the manure from her heels, rearranging the straw.

He took off his coat, trousers and shoes, laying them where they would be handy in the morning, and stretched himself out on his cot. Trying to brush aside the world's commotion and his sense of an unfolding drama in which he would probably have his own part and costume handed to him in plenty of time, he tuned first his ear, and then the rhythm of everything in him that knew and acclaimed its source of motion and emotion and where, for the moment, its happiness lay, back with an ecstatic sigh of content to the soft rustling and gusty tranquil breathing of Cynthia alongside.

Pawnshop

I

May none be called to visit the grim house,
 all cup-boards, and each cup-board skeleton'd
 with ghost of gambler, spook of shiftless souse,
 with rattling relict of the over-dunned!
 Disaster haunts it. Scandals, once-renowned,
 speak from its chattels. In its darkness glow
 the minds of the poor who stalk its rooms at night.
 One should have razed it to the salted ground
 antitheses ago,
 and put its spectres long ago to flight!

II

Near waterfront, a stone's throw from the slums,
 it lifts, above its wreckage, three gold buoys;
 yet to its reefage tattoo'd flotsam comes
 dropping the snared bags of exotic toys.
 Also those stranded on their own dear shores,
 the evicted tenant, the genteel with false name,
 the girl in trouble, the no-good sons and heirs,
 waver, and pause before its brass-bound doors,
 look right and left, in shame,
 enter, and price, and ticket their despairs.

III

So, for a coloured cardboard, wave out of sight
 the dear, the engraved, the boasted inventory:
 the family plate hocked for the widow's mite;
 the birthday gifts; the cups of victory;
 the unpensioned tools; the vase picked up in Crete;
 the hero's medal; ring, endowing bride;
 camera; watch; lens; crushed accordeon:—
 O votives of penultimate defeat,
 weighed, measured, counted, eyed
 by the estimating clerk, himself in pawn.

IV

Whose lombard schemes, whose plotting kapital
 thrusts from this lintel its three burnished bombs
 set for a time, which ticks for almost all
 whether from fertile suburbs or parched slums?
 That entrepreneur is rusted from his plaque.
 Was his name Adam? Was his trade a smith
 who thought a mansion to erect of wealth
 that houses now the bankrupt bricabrac,
 his pleasure-dome made myth,
 his let-do hospitality made stealth?

V

This is our era's state-fair parthenon,
 the pyramid of a pharaonic time,
 our little cathedral, our platonic cave,
 our childhood's house that Jack built. Synonym
 of all building, our house, it owns us; even
 when free from it, our dialectic grave.
 Shall one not curse it, therefore, as the cause,
 type, and exemplar of our social guilt?
 Our own gomorrah house,
 the sodom that merely to look at makes one salt?

—A.M. KLEIN

Personae

I

Thread-bare and placable,
 Bearing the hour's twitch
 In his fig-dried skin,
 His ears soothed to the gasoline cough,
 He waits in the rain on a corner,
 His green-glass eyes and putty nose
 Showing neither haste nor happiness.

II

Thick legs apart, like a stunted colossus
 Or the ungraceful rococo
 Of the Arc de Triomphe;
 Thick belly, round, like a gluttonous vat
 Poured full of richness and nitrous fat;
 Thick neck, falling flabby
 Like a bulging sock;
 Thick nose, thick face, and thick cigar—
 Thick with decision
 And the night's revision
 Of the day's certainties.

III

Stretched on a wire, a burning filament,
 His personality devoted
 To the electric passion,
 (Certain only of the negative pole)
 He pounds the dark areas,
 Is neglectful of his stubble,
 And his cracked fingernails
 Disavow the concessory—
 Goes his own way to a rented room
 To stare at the pictureless walls.

—R.G. SIMPSON

Lullaby

hush dove the summer
 thrush is dead deep
 under withered leaves
 and yellow sickled smooth.

hush and the blue edges
 of your folded wings
 quiver in my hands, stain
 the white apron of morning.

At dark the fluted moon
 floats in the window
 and the curtains weep,
 their white arms

cradle your sigh and hush—
 night will put a kiss
 on the tired brow
 of your imperiled love

and with his ribbled touch
 promise you a prince
 almonds and raisins
 at your feet,

rose petals and honey
against your mouth,
and on your thighs a spell
of silver needles bring.

if he never comes?
you will lie asleep
for a hundred years
on your pillared hope.

hush uneasy grief
that curves the beetled woods,
kerchiefs folded white
between the birches blow,

and night's sweet gypsy now
fiddles you to sleep
far from snows of winnipeg
and seven sister lakes.

—MIRIAM WADDINGTON

New York Letter

The other day, Drew Middleton referred to T. S. Eliot. He slipped an ironic penny to the Old Guy. The *N. Y. Times* correspondent, witnessing the fall of Cologne to the American First Army, wrote in a leading dispatch: "Cologne, a key to northwest Germany since it was founded under the aegis of the Romans 1,895 years ago, fell not with a bang but with a whimper." It has been demonstrable since Dunkirk that the hollow men inhabited alien provinces. So far, it has largely been only the war-correspondent who has affirmed it.

The crusade for affirmation in literature, current in certain quarters down here, points the measure of the failure of writers to make this demonstration. It is evident that we are done with the mouths of Munich, that we are not the stuffed men leaning together, headpiece filled with straw.

*Never could have housed the present
Arches of the skull this valiance,
Whose previous bone was based on straw.*

Equally obvious, we are not the millenium. If victory is assured, peace as certainly has yet to be won. Claude Pepper recently read, on the floor of the United States Senate, Archibald MacLeish's poem, *The Young Dead Soldiers*, who say

*Our deaths are not ours,
They are yours,
They will mean what you make them.
They say,
Whether our lives and our deaths were for peace
and a new hope
Or for nothing
We cannot say.
It is you who must say this.*

It is not yet said. Events have falsified the poet still thumbing his negations, who can't see the sun for the umbrella. The cleavage between poets and the present social scene is as marked as was the loss of contact between the people and the prophetic warnings of the poets of the 'thirties. The tremendous progression of the United States toward internationalism — affirmation — is poetically unrealized, or it is side-stepped. The question is, no longer, whether or not to affirm what all the shooting is about. The necessity to do so has been accepted. The only question now is, how. And yet, American poets are measuring this progression with their thumb-knuckles.

Prose is doing otherwise. I do not refer only to such a book as John Hersey's *A Bell for Adano*. That novel belongs to a beginning. I refer to significant deviations. Somerset Maugham's latest hero passes over the sharp edge of a razor to Salvation. Aldous Huxley's declares that "time can never be worshipped with impunity. . . And it is only by deliberately paying our attention and our primary allegiance to eternity that we can prevent time from turning our lives into a pointless or diabolic foolery." Hemingway's Robert Jordan, in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, accepts life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness (unfortunately, in just so many words). Prose is finding out that time cannot be worshipped with impunity.

Poets, like Eliot's lovely lady, still put records on the gramo-

phone. That this will no longer do, is becoming increasingly evident. It is the theme of critics from the *Sewanee Review* to the *New Republic*. Cerebral negations of life do not meet the present. Life has been bought with too many deaths. It is, I suppose, necessary to point out that it is not being urged that myopia betake itself forthwith to rose-coloured spectacles. Nor that poets wind themselves up into the mood and manner of Russell Davenport's *My Country* (now approaching its 46th thousandth!). But poets cannot extricate themselves from the fact that Davenport's appalling pastiche reflects inarticulate social forces that make the persistent poetic coteries smell more than peculiarly stagnant.

The latest export from Canada to the United States is Hambleton's anthology, *Unit of Five*. It is too early to report the reception. There are the usual reasons why a book of the right kind of Canadian poetry should have as wide a consideration as possible in the United States. In too many quarters Canada means little beyond wheat, a mounted policeman and a visit of Mackenzie King to the White House. Currently, Canada is synonymous with beef. It is vaguely realized that the Canadian First Army has the answer to what is Canada. But this is still to be told abroad. Where does the dislocation lie between Canadian poets and that affirmation? Are Canadian poets really forced to the necessity of having to

suck
A bit of life out of a drying reed,
And lift dull slabs of civic rock
To scratch the pierced earth for seed?

Does Canada's brave new world run only pus-lines, and has it to be questioned

Who are you, O world, that the sun should favour
this dunghill?

Is the Canadian poet like Miss Page's Cullen who
knew there was a reason, but couldn't find it
And marched to battle half an inch behind it?

Reviews are beginning to come in from England of *Canadian Accent*, a collection made by the present writer of contemporary Canadian short-stories, essays and poems, published last January in London by Penguin Books. The book contains pieces by Leacock, Callaghan, Gelber, Pratt, E. K. Brown, Knister, F. R. Scott, W. W. E. Ross, A. J. M. Smith, Leon Edel, Earle Birney, Sybil

Hutchinson, Patrick Anderson, McConnell, Klein, Patrick Waddington, MacLennan, Finch, Sinclair Ross, Katherine Marcuse, P. K. Page and L. A. Mackay. The book is one more salvo of some of the right ammunition (I think) against the prevailing opinion abroad subordinating Canadian writers to the also-rans. The *London Tribune* declares, "Some good stuff here. Except for pieces by Pratt and MacLennan, the contents will be new to most English readers. . . The stories, almost inevitably, reveal American influence, but how much better they are than English stories cut to similar patterns!" The *Birmingham Post* finds that "two things almost immediately strike the reader of this book: First, the predominance of an authentic Canadian tradition; second, a critical self-consciousness of this tradition — 'the attempt to describe the surface of local life with heavy stress on material environment' — which largely defeats itself. Though slight, the tradition is genuine and unforced, as most of these stories show. . . An illuminating glimpse of Canadian literary adolescence."

There you have it. "An authentic tradition" that — under the blight of pre-conceived conclusions about Canadian writing — is "literary adolescence." *Time and Tide*, in noting the book's appearance, promises "separate treatment in these pages in the future." I shall hope to report no contradictions.

—RALPH GUSTAFSON

Book Reviews

EARTH AND HIGH HEAVEN, by *Gwethalyn Graham*. Lippincott.

This is the story of beautiful Erica Drake, Westmount socialite and newspaperwoman, of her love for Marc Reiser, Jewish lawyer and army lieutenant, and of Erica's father Charles, capitalist, clubman and anti-Semite; and of how love conquers all. Its interest lies in the striking way it points up that anomaly of fiction written by women, — the symbolic castration of the hero.

Without going into the whole question of the necessary ambivalence of the romantic novelist's attitude towards his principal characters, — an attitude which, consciously indulged in and kept within proper limits, operates to great artistic advantage and is in fact one of the mainsprings of creative fiction — it is enough to point out that in the works of all modern women novelists the hero is presented in either of two roles: as a subject whose bouncing virility makes him especially suitable for the symbolic operation, — or as one on whom the operation has already been performed by chance or nature, as the 'finished article'. The character of Mr. Rochester in *Jane Eyre* is the classic example of the first; the collection of blackguards,

weaklings and nincompoops who set off the passionate, brooding heroines of George Eliot are perhaps the best examples of the second. For the past hundred years the hero has simply not been allowed to deviate from either of these roles: the only development has been in the increasing cloudiness and tenuity of the symbol of castration, — and has given us the invalids of May Sinclair, the bankrupts and *hommes manqués* of Sheila Kaye-Smith, the ineffectuals of Katherine Mansfield, the criminal types of Rebecca West, and the poor bedevilled madman of H. H. Richardson's great Mahony trilogy. The only two exceptions that come to mind are doubtful: in *Wuthering Heights*, where the hero is by a stroke of genius divided in two, — Heathcliff the sexual myth, and Linton the complete weakling; and in the novels of Virginia Woolf, where there is no hero at all. All these, of course, represent artistic and often deeply felt attempts at a solution of the problem of castrating the hero or at least of resolving the sexual antagonism; they are quite distinct from the blinded or maimed servicemen of present-day popular novels and magazine-stories, or the principals of those sadistic little sketches shot through with pity and indignation, all blood, wounds, lice and cries of agony, turned out by more sophisticated writers like Kay Boyle. They are also distinct from the Jewish hero of the book under review.

Miss Graham's novel, while falling into neither the artistic nor the sensational category — its values are cinematic and strictly spurious — borrows shrewdly from both: there is the familiar parade of culture and advanced social ideas, the pseudo-preoccupation with a 'race problem'; and there is the slow torture and humiliation of the Jew who, as a man already symbolically gelded, is dealt with accordingly. But everything is qualified, toned down, sterilised, — and it is only the fact that *Earth and High Heaven* highlights an obsession unhealthy to the point of neurosis that makes it so appalling.

Such an obsession may not be altogether the fault of women novelists themselves: perhaps an attitude of frustration and resentment towards mankind has been the only one possible to a sensitive and intelligent woman for the past hundred years; but the fact remains that the results of such an attitude, as far as literature is concerned, have been highly unsatisfactory. It is as if the heady liquor which was made available when the Romantic Revival tapped the sources of sexual emotion, instead of acting on women as a tonic, had set them reeling. What is most discouraging is that there is no indication of the effects wearing off yet, — and the admirer of all that constitutes real female genius, — satire, sense of atmosphere, clarity of thought and expression, and brilliant narrative power — can only turn with a certain nostalgic regret to the conditions that produced great novelists like Jane Austen and George Sand, conditions under which the female artist, whether cloistered spinster or emancipated virago, accepted a man simply as an entire human being, and was content to leave him so.

—J. S. GLASSCO

POEMS, by A. M. Klein. The Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia. \$2.00.

Excepting the long, magnificent poem, *In Re Warshawer*, the best of this volume lies in the thirty-six psalms in which A. M. Klein continues the passionate debate with the Deity he first began with the publication of *Hath Not A Jew*. The debate is of a high order; interesting because the principals are not without ability, humour, forceful eloquence, and repartee. God's repartee is the occasional thunder which breaks from His lips almost like a divine afterthought. Also His wisdom is darkly inscrutable and terrible — terrible because inscrutable. For sometimes through the cracks of His ineffable fingers He sends

*The fierce, carnivorous Messerschmidt,
The Heinkel on the kill.*

Or absent-mindedly employs

. . . . *abominable scales
On which the heavenly justice is mis-weighed.*

The Lord, however, has been a member of the Jewish family for such a long time that disagreement with Him about His conduct is almost in the nature of a domestic quarrel. To the Jews He is an Elder Relative; in His more expansive mood, the generous uncle, portly and a trifle deaf. To them He is neither a mystery nor the gaseous, elaborate construction of the metaphysicians. For this reason Klein's employment of the Absolute as a synonym for God has a quaint flavour about it; as though he were calling upon Him by a nickname.

To know God truly, one must also have known Satan; Klein gives no evidence of ever having been within a hundred yards of that versatile gentleman. A brisk acquaintance with the latter might have injected a deeper note into some of the verses. As it is, the Psalms are not a record of spiritual trials undergone and the religious insights derived from them, so much as a recording of specific, communicable emotions. Nonetheless, taken altogether, they wonderfully express the Jew's attitude toward his God, an attitude which is a rich and puzzling alloy of self-abasement and pride, of humility and defiance; it is one of accepting the heavenly scourge while establishing at the same time his human dignity by questioning its necessity or its timing. It is this peculiarly intimate, sultry and difficult relationship between the Jews and their God which is revealed on almost every page of the Psalter. If the poems had no other virtues, this alone would make them memorable.

They have other virtues. The structure of these poems is simple, a fact that may warn off those who will not read a poem unless they're assured beforehand they won't understand it. The best of these poems have gusto, warmth, eloquence and imagination. They are as human as laughter is. Only a very few — Klein's weakness is a tendency towards rhetoric — are noisy

and unconvincing. When he writes from a full passionate heart, out of pity and indignation, he is capable of such lines as

*They'll not be green for very long,
Those pastures of my peace, nor will
The heavens be a place for song,
Nor the still waters still.*

—I.P.L.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

PATRICK ANDERSON. Born in England in 1915, he was educated at Oxford University. Has contributed to various magazines, and is the author of *A Tent for April*, the book of poems just published by the First Statement Press. Now living in Montreal, where he is active on the editorial boards of *Preview* and *En Masse*.

J. S. GLASSCO. Born in Montreal in 1910. Lived in Paris, 1927-1930; Spain, 1931. His *Memoirs* appeared in *This Quarter* in 1929; his *Contes en Crinoline* was published in 1930. Selections from an unpublished novel, *Frogmore en arriere*, have appeared in *First Statement*.

RALPH GUSTAFSON. Born in Sherbrooke, Quebec, in 1909, he was educated at Bishop's University and at Oxford. Is the author of several books of poetry, including *Lyrics Unromantic*, *Epithalamium in Time of War*, and *Flight into Darkness*. Has edited several collections of 'Canadian poetry — including a volume in the Penguin series — as well as a prose anthology entitled *Canadian Accent*.

A. M. KLEIN. Born in Montreal, 1909. Educated at McGill University. Is the author of three books of poems: *Hath not a Jew*, *The Hitleriad*, and *Poems*. Has contributed to *Poetry* (Chicago), *Canadian Forum*, *Contemporary Verse*, and numerous other magazines. Is a member of the *Preview* group.

IRVING LAYTON. Born in Montreal, 1912. Received a B.Sc. from MacDonald College in 1939. Has worked as bus-boy, waiter, insurance agent, salesman, clerk, boxing instructor, proof-reader, supervisor of an orphan asylum, lecturer, etc. Is the author of a book of poems, *Here and Now*, and is one of the editors of this magazine.

R. G. SIMPSON. Born in Winnipeg twenty-four years ago. Later moved to Montreal where he attended McGill University. One of the original editors of *First Statement*. Joined the Navy in 1942, "where", he says, "I have been completely occupied ever since."

WINGATE TAYLOR. Wishes to be described as "a farmer in the Eastern townships of Quebec."

MIRIAM WADDINGTON. Formerly a social worker in Toronto, she is now studying in Philadelphia. Has appeared in *Canadian Forum*, *Preview*, *Contemporary Verse* and other magazines. Is a frequent contributor to *First Statement*.

JAMES WREFORD (WATSON). Born in China, 1915. Educated at George Watson College, Edinburgh, and the University of Edinburgh. Came to Canada shortly before the war, joining the staff of McMaster University. Has contributed to *The Listener*, the *Canadian Forum* and *Contemporary Verse*, and was included in the recent anthology, *Unit of 5*.

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