

View

*Parade of the
Avant-Garde*

An Anthology of View magazine (1940–1947)

Charles Henri Ford: Editor

Foreword by **Paul Bowles**

Compiled by **Catrina Neiman and Paul Nathan**

Introduction by **Catrina Neiman**



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Foreword

BY PAUL BOWLES

In the years following the demise of Frank Crowninshield's *Vanity Fair* there was not much in the way of arresting periodicals to be found in the United States. Occasionally one might come across a copy of *Minotaure* or *Verve*, but these were imported from France and the one American review that could be considered to compete with them, *VVV*, did not prosper, and soon disappeared. It was not until Charles Henri Ford's *View* came along that America had its own avant-garde literary and art magazine.

Ideologically *View*'s policy adhered fairly strictly to the tenets of the Surrealist Manifesto, in spite of its editorials extolling "magic," which it claimed had supplanted Marx and Freud. Observing Breton's excommunication of Dali from the Surrealist confraternity, *View* scrupulously excluded mention of the Catalan painter from its pages, except for Nicolas Calas's scathing "Anti-Surrealist Dali" piece in 1941. Appropriately Dali's only artistic appearance in *View* was a strictly commercial one, in an advertisement for Schiaparelli cosmetics.

It was not Ford's initial venture into editing. A decade or so earlier he had launched a small magazine called *blues*, in whose pages he introduced such new writers as James T. Farrell, Parker Tyler, and Erskine Caldwell. *View* began modestly in newspaper format, and one was not sure when the next issue would appear. Then it became a thin magazine printed on slick paper. When its circulation warranted more frequent publication, it began to be issued eight times yearly, each month save for the four summer

months. Had the war not caused the flight from Paris of so many important painters and writers, it is unlikely that *View* would have existed. Certainly without its surrealist bias it would have been a far less interesting publication.

The magazine's success on the newsstands was largely due to the brilliant covers created for it by such artists as Man Ray, René Magritte, Marcel Duchamp, Pavel Tchelitchew, Alexander Calder, André Masson, and Wilfredo Lam. Ford's particular pride in this venture was the Duchamp issue, in which certain pages were pierced and cut along the edges of photographed objects so that, folded back, they revealed vignettes of the succeeding pages, likewise incised and folded. The accompanying instructions explain: "The cut-out flaps, when bent toward

the center, transform the interior wall into a vision of *The Bride Stripped Bare.*"

Prose, fictional and critical, by Peret, Roussel, Borges, Chirico, and Sender was presented in its first English versions. I should never have expected to see William Carlos Williams reviewing a book of poems by André Breton and incidentally finding them "magnificent." Ford also had a penchant for "primitive" writing by Americans whose education had not included the study of grammar or syntax. The juxtaposition of these bits of authentic illiteracy and critical texts using surrealist (basically Freudian in spite of the disclaimers) analysis helped to keep the magazine fresh. The aim of *View* was not to shock, but to surprise.

*Paul Bowles in Morocco
(courtesy of Christopher
Sawyer-Lauçanno)*



Introduction

View Magazine: Transatlantic Pact

CATRINA NEIMAN

V*iew* has long been recognized as one of the most important avant-garde magazines of the '40s. Founded and edited by Charles Henri Ford, it first appeared in September, 1940 as a six-page tabloid headed "View—Through the Eyes of Poets." The early *View*, Ford suggests, was something of a grass-roots precursor of Andy Warhol's *InterView* in that it was the first paper to carry interviews with "cult poets" (as he referred to Marianne Moore and the reclusive Wallace Stevens). The surrealist number (Oct./Nov. 1941) published the only interview done with André Breton while he was in New York.

Growing by stages into a magazine of the visual arts, literature, and ideas-at-large, by 1942 *View* was averaging 40 pages and devoting entire issues to individual artists or suggestive themes (Max Ernst; "Narcissus"). In April, 1943 *View* adopted the format of a full-scale commercial magazine, though it would always be distinguished by its covers, contributed by modern artists of renown, and by the highly stylized typography of its designer and associate editor, Parker Tyler. Though *View* was sold throughout the world, its circulation, Ford says, "peaked at 3000"—not enough to sustain it as a monthly. By selling shares of stock in the magazine, in addition to expensive ads, he managed to keep it coming out regularly, at least on a quarterly basis, for seven years. "In the vast history of the American little magazine," wrote Tyler, "*View's* formula is destined never to be duplicated. We cover the arts, are

lavishly illustrated, and try to combine luxury with the avant-garde. The nearest equivalents are European: *Minotaure* and *Verve*."

Ford in fact intended *View* to replace, in America, the European vanguard publications that folded as World War II approached: *transition* and *Minotaure* of Paris, and the *London Bulletin*, the British surrealist journal for which Ford had been the American editor (and Tyler a New York correspondent). Thus besides presenting the work of contemporary Americans, ranging from the earthy fiction of Henry Miller to the ethereal collages of Joseph Cornell, *View* was the chief publishing forum for the many European artists and writers who suddenly found themselves refugees in the United States.

Many of *View*'s writers had known each other since at least 1929, when Ford began editing *Blues*, "A Magazine of New Rhythms," out of Columbus, Mississippi. With Tyler serving as *Blues*' associate editor in New York, and advisors such as Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein, and William Carlos Williams, Ford cultivated an impressive roster of modernist poets. Contributors who would later write for *View* were Williams, Rosenberg, Abel, Bowles, Roditi, Kay Boyle, Louis Zukofsky and James T. Farrell. For a magazine that lasted only two years, *Blues* has survived well in reputation, due in part to Stein's epitaph in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*: "Of all the little magazines which, as Gertrude Stein loves to quote, have died to make verse free, the youngest and freshest was the *Blues*."

Ford first when to Paris immediately upon *Blues*' demise, to arrange publication of the camp novel he had written with Tyler, *The Young and Evil*, now acknowledged as a classic in homosexual literature. On the recommendation of Gertrude Stein and Djuna Barnes, the book was put out in 1933 by the radical Obelisk Press, Henry Miller's publisher. Banned and burned, it was destined to travel the underground circuit only, despite Stein's proclamation on the jacket that "*The Young and Evil* creates this generation as *This Side of Paradise* by Fitzgerald created his generation." In 1960, upon its first reissue, Tyler adapted Stein's words to re-introduce *The*

Young and Evil as "the novel that beat the beat generation by a generation." The same may be said of Ford's life in the '30s in Paris and other outposts of bohemia, like Tangier, home also to Roditi and Bowles, the master linguists who would become *View*'s chief translators.

As late as the '70s, when Black Sparrow Press brought out new collections of poetry by Roditi, Bowles, Ford, and Tyler, the four were still being grouped as "the American surrealists." They haven't bothered much to dispute this, as all had been freed by automatic writing, for example. Bowles' story, "The Scorpion," reprinted here, was the product of one such experiment. But we can see from his "Bluey," written at age nine, that he needed nothing beyond his own genius to achieve what Breton was calling surrealism. Surrealism proper, Roditi reminds us, was a closed society. "One must be invited to join, and we never sought admission." The community of poets identified with *Blues* and *View* in effect paralleled, rather than represented, surrealism on American ground. They were barely a half-generation younger than the surrealists, and like the French movement they took their cues directly from Mallarmé and Rimbaud. Kenneth Rexroth, another colleague from the *Blues* days, brings out this lineage by placing them at the head of his list of "the American post-symbolists as they constituted themselves on the eve of World War II."

* * *

"You're always building up just when everything's breaking down," Bowles told Ford when *View* was launched. He was referring to Ford's having started *Blues* in the year of the Wall Street crash and now *View* at the outbreak of World War II. It would turn out, of course, that things were not breaking down in the U.S. in 1940 but were building up. No one knew that as a result of the war New York would replace Paris as the center of modern art. The displacement was at first temporary, occasioned by the exodus of Europeans and expatriate Americans fleeing the Nazis. Among the Europeans were Mondrian, Léger, Miró, Chagall, Duchamp, Breton, Ernst,

Dali, Masson, Tanguy, Matta, Seligmann, and Tchelitchev; returning Americans included Man Ray, Calder, Henry Miller, and Virgil Thomson. What would insure the transfer of power to New York, though, was the post-war rise of Abstract Expressionism, which, as the first indigenous movement that could compete with the European masters, would be vigorously promoted in the '50s by the powers that had come to be.

It is the alchemical transformation of New York's raw material into gold that has made the war years, and the publications of the time, such an important focus of study. *View* is also of interest for the links it provides to the first avant-garde, primarily Dada in spirit, to agitate New York under similar conditions, during the first world war. (Henry McBride, art



Parker Tyler, photo by Maya Deren
(courtesy of Charles Boultenhouse)

critic of the *Dial*, had declared then that New York had become "the Capital of the Arts.") *View* was the only American journal of its time to recognize Marcel Duchamp, for example (the Duchamp issue was the first monograph ever published on his work), and his close friends of the early days, artists as different as Man Ray, the Dadaist of many media, and Florine Stettheimer, the brilliant folk artist of High Bohemia, best remembered for her stage sets for the Gertrude Stein/Virgil Thomson opera, *Four Saints in Three Acts* (1934).

View is probably best known for having been one of the primary vehicles through which the wider American public was introduced to surrealism, existentialism, and their sources. Lionel Abel's dialogue on Lautréamont, summarizing his ten years' tortured fixation on the chief pre-surrealist poet, was billed as "the first important essay on Lautréamont in America." The existentialism issue (March/April 1946) was a "scoop," as Ford puts it, in first publishing Camus and Genet in translation. *View* also sponsored Sartre's lecture on "New Tendencies in French Theatre" at Carnegie Lecture Hall (March 5th) and had a hand in the first American production of *No Exit*, translated by Bowles, directed by John Huston, and starring, among others, Ruth Ford (sister of Charles Henri).

But *View* was not a conduit of European ideas only. In that curious reversal, brought about by the war, of the expatriate scene in Paris, New York was now in a position to acquaint its European guests with American culture. This was a role *View* happily took on, conducting the tour with that ambivalent mix of delight and irony familiar to Parisians as surrealism. Tyler characterized Ford's editorial strategy as one of "making a cultural popular front between fashionable transatlantic elements and neglected aspects of American talent Within *View's* range are all the native affiliates corresponding to the imaginative sources approved by Surrealism: self-taught, fantastic and naive poetry and art." The attention to "primitive" American artists, such as Morris Hirshfield, discovered by the collector Sidney Janis in the '30s, or the "Negro Naif," Paul

Childs, claimed as “a *View* discovery,” also reflects the era of the Works Projects Administration, just coming to an end in 1941, during which so much of America’s “folk” talent was preserved. (Several *View* writers were employed on WPA projects.) Tyler’s preface to the “Americana Fantastica” issue stands as something of a *View* manifesto on the importance, for art, of fostering the eccentric and irrational elements flourishing unnoticed in this country, impervious to professionalism and the market.

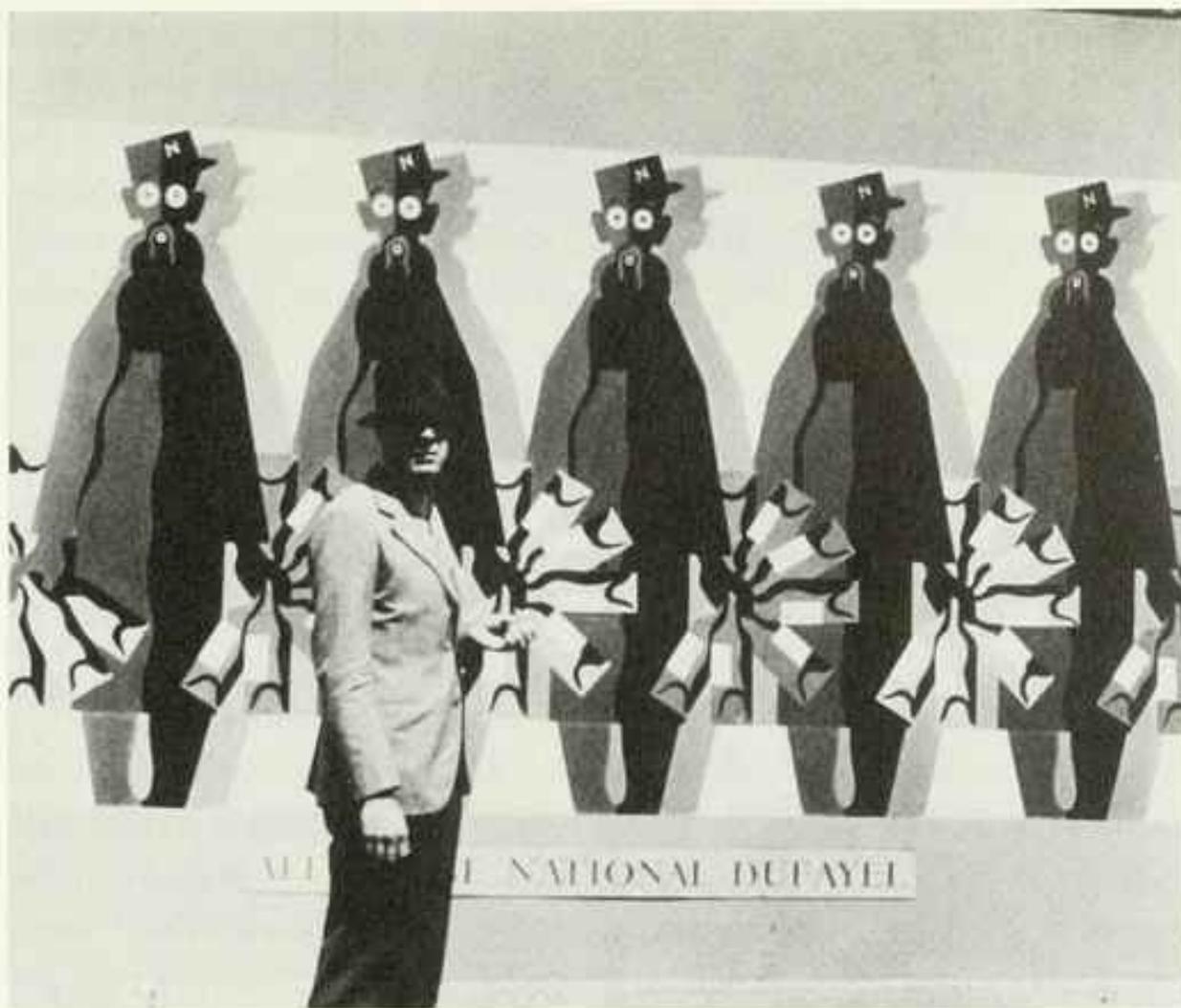
View’s program was akin to the surrealists’ in its appreciation of “the monstrous” as well as “the marvelous” in American life. And though the magazine was criticized for overstepping the bounds of propriety, its intention was not, as Paul Bowles has pointed out, to shock the bourgeoisie but to amass evidence that this was not the land of Puritans and the American dream. Like the surrealists also, *View* cast the artist in the role of seer (variously the playful magician or the angry prophet) and saw its mission as that of keeping the arts vital at a time when the world’s attention was on the battlefield. Unlike them, however, *View*’s writers tended not to espouse a particular political ideology. Nicolas Calas, Breton’s newest protégé, was the only one to uphold the surrealist party line, which at this point was allied with Trotskyism. *View*’s political disposition—to the extent that the magazine can be said to have represented a group—was individualist, anarchist at most. It was in accord with Trotsky’s conviction that art must remain free of political interference but not with the theory in which this was couched; that art will serve the revolution only if it remains true to itself. *View*’s editors thought it delusional to believe that art could ever serve any cause other than its own. For Ford, this was a matter of natural inclination. He felt “the left could take care of itself,” and he wanted to create a magazine that would be distinctly different from “the boring *Partisan Review*,” something that captured the imagination at play rather than at work. For Tyler and several other of the critics, it was a position that had clarified itself after a decade of debate and growing disillusionment with Marxism; by the fall of 1940 this was nearly complete. A year

had passed since the disclosure of Stalin’s pact with Hitler, and in August, when *View*’s first issue was in press, Trotsky was assassinated.

The magazine, then, advocated nothing political other than individual resistance, in the tradition of Thoreau, to all forms of authority. As we read *View* today, it is striking to see how consistently the poets urged opposition to a war that could not be averted and that is considered the absolute case of a just cause. *View* printed no editorials denouncing the war; many friends and subscribers were servicemen stationed overseas. But its most dominant note was clearly pacifist, and it served as a rally-post for conscientious objection. Thus the anarchist Paul Goodman, for example, could count on regular publication in *View* after cutting himself off from the *Partisan Review* and *New Directions* in protest over their support of the U.S. involvement.

Where literature and art were concerned, *View* pitted itself against the *Partisan Review* from the beginning. Its *raison d’être*, in fact, was to form a base of power in the intellectual community from which it could redress the *Partisan Review*’s extensive influence. Harold Rosenberg has observed that the *Partisan Review*’s distaste for “Bohemian literature” reflected its roots in the conservatism of Marxism and of its mentor in criticism, T.S. Eliot. It follows that the *Partisan Review* would also disdain impressionist criticism written in the spirit of Walter Pater, which Eliot deplored and which *View* would embrace.

Such literary skirmishes are the stock-in-trade of little magazines; much more serious was the fight to control the fate of modern painting. *Partisan Review* editors Philip Rahv and Clement Greenberg pronounced Surrealism dead on arrival in New York. Greenberg’s attack on decadent art included the neo-romantic painters, Tchelitchev and Bérard, more popular in the ’30s than is generally remembered. (See Virgil Thomson’s autobiography.) The neo-romantics and surrealists (and *View*) were patronized by the moneyed bohemia of Paris and New York, from Helena Rubinstein to Kirk Askew’s salon, which included influential museum directors,



Pavel Tchelitchew
Photo by Charles Henri Ford

notably Alfred Barr of the Museum of Modern Art. The art establishment's neglect of the abstract painters (one of whose advocates was G.L.K. Morris, an editor and benefactor of the *Partisan Review*) was among the pressures that prompted Greenberg to take up the argument, and it would be a deadly one.

With Greenberg packing double punches in both the *Partisan Review* and the *Nation* throughout the '40s, urging on the invention of what would become abstract expressionism, the symbolist aesthetic—indeed, the entire figural tradition—was taking a serious battering. One of the painters whose careers was at stake was Tchelitchew, who lived with Charles Ford, and whose charisma and opinions held sway with many at *View*. Tchelitchew dismissed abstract art as being of no human interest. More threatening to him was the cubist distortion of the figure: he considered this an aggressive violation of the integrity of the human form. From behind the scenes, Tchelitchew led *View's* effort to preserve art's "humanist" program. This is why there is almost no representation, apart from ads for Peggy Guggenheim's gallery, of the work of the emerging abstract expressionists.

If the neo-romantics and surrealists had been mutual critics in Paris, in New York they found themselves allies, coupled as the target of Greenberg's offense. This accounts to some extent for Ford's hospitality to the Surrealists, apart from his genuine enthusiasm for their work. But it would be an uneasy rapprochement. Ford says his relationship with Breton was "cool." He did not feel free to publish his friends, Dali and Cocteau, knowing it would alienate the Surrealist leader. Breton had just ousted Dali officially and christened him "Avida Dollars" (an anagram) for his showy New York entrance. Breton also scorned Cocteau as a publicity-seeker, but particularly, Ford said, because "Breton felt that Cocteau was getting the attention as a sexual propagandist, and Breton was always prejudiced."

Breton's discomfort with homosexuality contributed not a little to his aloofness toward *View*. He was known to have been intolerant of Tchelitchew and the other neo-romantics for this reason. John Myers, *View's* managing editor, reports that Breton broke with the magazine after seeing Ford's "ready-made," the photographs documenting personal injuries (for lawsuits), inserted in Marius Bewley's essay on

America's sadistic humor. Breton did not appreciate this rationale for publishing them, and as it was women whose wounds were depicted, he took the photos as evidence of *View's* (or Ford's) misogyny. Ford managed to pacify him by offering to publish the first American collection of his verse. Breton replied, "*Vous êtes malin* [shrewd]," but he agreed. "Disapproval of the homosexuality of the *View* group" is also frequently cited as the reason Breton started his own magazine, *VVV* or *Triple V* (1942–44), though the official explanation was that *View* was too eclectic to serve as a true Surrealist vehicle. According to Ford, Breton proposed a collaboration but Ford declined, knowing this would mean subjugation. (Breton had managed to take over many a new magazine that showed some pluck.) Breton had been in New York less than a year when *VVV* appeared. As Tyler records, "Soon there appears a 100% Surrealist, rival magazine, short-lived though it be, *VVV*, or *Triple V* as it is called. We conclude that obviously it is meant to be three times as good as *View*." The two journals actually shared many of the same writers, including Ford, but the rivalry between them, evidenced in various defections and betrayals, was electric. It was Marcel Duchamp, per-

haps in the guise of his androgynous persona, Rose Selavy (Eros—c'est la vie), who bridged their differences, as he did so many others, not least that of the overwrought dichotomy between the abstract and the mythic in art. As always, Duchamp remained above the fray (he was advisory editor to both magazines), but he was not above a good prank. In devising the cover for *View's* issue on his work, which Breton helped edit just after *VVV* folded, Duchamp created a superb pun that effectively reduced the two magazines to one. He lettered the "W" in "View" to make the title look like "VVV." The joke was too fine to ruffle any feathers at *View*.

In the end, the reason *View* outlived *VVV* was because it possessed wit, meaning both humor and business acumen. Ford did not disdain commercial avenues of support, as *VVV* did; on the contrary, he knew not only how to navigate capitalism but how to appreciate (appropriate) its imagery, namely, through the lens of camp, a "view" that converged with surrealism then and with Pop Art twenty years later. Ford would in fact be one of the first to embrace Pop in the '60s. *View* magazine, complete with ads for cosmetics and perfume, set the stage for what was to come: it succeeded in popularizing the avant-garde.



Rose Selavy (alias Marcel Duchamp)
 Photo by Man Ray (Philadelphia Museum of Art)

1940-1942

Through the Eyes of Poets

Max Ernst Issue

Tanguy/Tchelitchew Issue

View "through the eyes of poets"

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE:

H. R. Hays, Nicolas Calas, Parker Tyler, Gordon Sylander, Troy Garrison, Wallace Stevens, Henry Treece and others.

10¢ THE COPY

SEPTEMBER, 1940 VOL. I, NO. 1

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Portrait by Gordon Sylander

PAVEL TCHELITCHEV

Poetry—the Only Hope of the Drama

(Drama—the Only Hope of Poetry?)

by H. R. Hays

The drama (or what passes for drama these days) has never more reached a crisis. The theatre shows signs of a complete surrender to musical comedy. Or would reaction in times of stress.

For the drama has been passing through an era of partnership with every playwright his own Dorothy Thompson or Mike Gold. (Significant enough that Thompson herself has just had a conspicuous fling at playwriting.) This and scramble to keep up with the newsreels and the radio has led us nowhere. Competition with the movies, a more intrinsically realistic medium, always spells disaster. Badly digested action and various forms of New Deal (and even fascist) thinking have created the impression that every play must draw an immediate moral like the English (I, a column, whether it is Robert Arden—discussing democracy—or Sherwood attacking Russia, or Mr. Belsham testifying in the face of an inky).

The Living Newspaper has perhaps done less harm for it was always, frankly, journalism tricked

out with theatrical devices. As such it makes the issue even clearer, or the issue between poetry and journalism. It is my conviction that the drama must have recourse to poetry if the theatre is not to continue (as it is now) supporting fewer and fewer worse plays.

Poetry, by its very nature, must attack more persistent problems, must ignore the immediate in favor of essentials. This does not mean that maxims and dramas are incompatible. Historically, drama has been dependent on mythology. It has told great stories with moral and emotional meaning for whole nations. But the concept of meaningful action depends on some sort of philosophical outlook. Aristotle conceived the playwright as interpreting the will of the Gods, interpreting the course of action, gradually not trying to change it. Diabolics is as inevitable as fate. Caught in the clash of cosmic forces, great figures shape their own doom. And diabolics is also a philosophy of conflict. But poets are needed to apply such a point of view before Marx and

VERLAINE IN HARTFORD

Has the Mystery Man of Modern Poetry Really Another Self?

An Interview with Wallace Stevens by Charles Henri Ford

It is true that Wallace Stevens is something of a Mystery Man. You can be really be called the "Verlaine of Hartford." Wallace Stevens is as "reputable" as Verlaine was "disreputable," but in his imagination—what is he?

The poetry of Wallace Stevens was for years, according to his own admission, a sort of "secret vice" and the "eyes" of Verlaine—how secret were they, and secret from whom? Perhaps from God. It was wonderful for Verlaine to have a God in common with Wallace Stevens, perhaps, confessing only to the God of Poetry—his vice and God identical. Now that his "vice" has become less secret—"I don't care any more"—is not the poetry affected in some way?

In most of Hartford, Mr. Stevens is a successful lawyer, not a poet. And neither does he call himself a poet—even to himself. He doesn't talk poetry with his associates—because they would not be interested. But someone in Hartford may know that he is a poet. James Thrall Soley, for instance, does not know Stevens the man, but knows his poetry and knows the man on sight. Sometimes it rains in Hartford, and Wallace Stevens walks home. James Soley may be driving up the street when Stevens is walking. Stevens has taken off his coat and throws it over his shoulders; his hat is at an angle tilted to the rain and not many people are walking. Soley, with his pictorial sense of the romantic (think, why it's Verlaine after his third alcohol?) Wallace Stevens hasn't been drinking of course. But didn't he once write



WALLACE STEVENS

to Parker Tyler, I am waiting for a rainy day to make a poem?

When I arrived at the house, in a remote "residential" section of Hartford, I knocked on the front door; no one came at once so I went around to the back, having been told over the telephone that Mr. Stevens might be in the garden. Not there, so I went again to the front door and it was opened by, yes, Mr. Stevens. He had been drinking; it was Sunday afternoon, or was it afternoon. Hello, Mr. Stevens, with a deep soft voice, pink skin, curly grey hair—and, of all things, smiling—asked if I would like to come in the house or go into the garden. I chose the garden and we sat under the trees on rustic furniture. A rabbit came up. Does he belong to you? No, he's looking for his brother. Put that in.

How do? But before the visit was over—how do? "As warm as one's own father!" He was rather severe with

(CONTINUED ON PAGE SIX)

Aristotle can be done together in the theatre.

Today our playwrights would give us Antigone with either Oedipus in a fascist uniform and Antigone wearing a triangle, or Oedipus wearing an F. O. I. badge, butting down Antigone as a Fifth Columnist.

Man in this era of partnership, we are all struggling wretchedly to keep alive that all perspective has been lost on the nature of life—prescriptions with which used to be considered worthy of rational beings.

The problem of a profound viewpoint and poetic insight is

only obscured when a bad but successful artist enters the picture. Such a stumbling block is Maxwell Anderson, a trivial and anarchistic thinker, whose shoddy verse fortifies his melodramatic plots in heroic scrolls. Anderson is completely unaware of what has gone on in English poetry in the twentieth century. His imagery is derivative, reveals nothing, and is never an intrinsic part of characterization. Yet he is the popular notion of the poet in the theatre and his success has helped corrupt public taste and prevent

(CONTINUED ON PAGE SIX)

Verlaine in Hartford

*has the mystery man of modern
poetry really another self?*

AN INTERVIEW WITH WALLACE STEVENS
BY CHARLES HENRI FORD

It is true that Wallace Stevens is something of a Mystery Man, but can he really be called the “Verlaine of Hartford”? Wallace Stevens is as “reputable” as Verlaine was “disreputable”; but in his imagination—what is he?

The poetry of Wallace Stevens was for years, according to his own admission, a sort of “secret vice.” And the “vices” of Verlaine—how secret were they, and secret from whom? Perhaps from God. It was wonderful for Verlaine to have a God to confess to. Wallace Stevens, perhaps, confesses only to the God of Poetry—his vice and God identical. Now that his “vice” has become less secret—“I don’t care anymore”—is not the poetry affected in some way?

To most of Hartford, Mr. Stevens is a successful lawyer, not a poet. And neither does he call himself a poet—even to himself. He doesn’t talk poetry with his associates—because they would not be interested. But someone in Hartford may know that he is a poet. James Thrall Soby, for instance, does not know Stevens, the man, but knows his poetry and knows the man on sight. Sometimes it rains in Hartford, and Wallace Stevens walks home. James Soby may be driving up the street down which Stevens is walking. Stevens has taken off his coat and thrown it over his shoulders; his hat is at an angle suited to the rain, and not many people are walking . . . Soby, with his pictorial sense of the romantic thinks, why, it’s Verlaine after his third absinthe! Wallace Stevens hasn’t been drinking, of course. But didn’t he once write to Parker Tyler, I am waiting for a rainy day to make a poem?

When I arrived at the house, in a remote “residential” section of Hartford, I knocked on the front door; no one came at once so I went around to the back, having been told over the telephone that Mr. Stevens might be in the garden. Not there, so I went again to the front door and it was opened by, yes, Mr. Stevens. He had been dozing; it was Sunday afternoon, a warm afternoon. Hefty Mr. Stevens with a deep soft voice, pink skin, curly gray hair—and, of all things, smiling!—asked if I would like to come in the house or go into the garden. I chose the garden and we sat under the trees on rustic furniture. A rabbit came up. Does he belong to you? No, he’s looking for his brother. “Put that in.” How shy! But before the visit was over—how decided: “As naive as one’s own father,” too. He was rather severe with me—though apologizing for the “lecture”—“as much of your fantastic life as I’ve been able to follow” . . . “but don’t you see too many people?” . . . “one must be serious” . . .

To begin with, he was born in Pennsylvania—Dutch. Early influences? There was a friend, they walked together, stopped, drank a bottle of claret together, ate cheese, walnuts, and walking back home, this friend recited poetry—going through the woods—very loud. Very clear.

There was Harvard. Maybe he wrote a bit of verse in Harvard, didn’t take it seriously, wanted to be a lawyer, studied for that, wanted material success, wife, home, comforts—all that he has. But before he could get started on all that, there was a time spent in New York, a remeeting of various college mates—some also wrote—some wanted to write or paint or dabble in the “mind and senses.” Who was there? Carl Van Vechten for one. Greenwich Village was budding, blooming, one poem after another was written down, not with the idea of a book or literary career: later, urged by Alfred A. Knopf, they added up to “*Harmonium*.”

Then poetry was forgotten, more or less. Business of being a corporation lawyer; advancement. But poetry came back, intermittently, in spite of himself. Perhaps, especially, when it rained? Poetry, then—a recurrent memory, made real.

“Now that I am getting older I am more jealous of the demands business makes—I should like to devote more—all—of my time to the study and writing of poetry.” And he went on to describe a Chair of Poetry that should be created, but when I suggest that he occupy this Chair, he said, Impossible.

There were lots of mosquitoes in the garden “Dylan Thomas?”—“an essentially poetic mind.” But he (Stevens) doesn’t read much contemporary poetry—afraid he will “pick up something” and unconsciously incorporate it into his own poetry. Shakespeare, of course . . . Keats in college . . . And—he nearly forgot—Verlaine! How just one musical French phrase of that poet was exalting enough for the whole day! “Your ‘ABC’s’* you seem to have been troubled.” “Troubled?” “Now that I think of it, there is some of the same youthfulness and force of Dylan Thomas there, but Dylan Thomas has an essentially poetic mind. Perhaps you do too—you must be imaginative, but I think perhaps you want to epater too much. Yes, Thomas has an essentially poetic mind.”

How England, in the U. S., undersells the American insurance companies. How he and his wife were in the same airplane with Mrs. Roosevelt (Mrs. Stevens said, she looks better dressed in person than in pictures—“I said, She looks just like Mrs. Roosevelt”) and the crowds got thicker at each stop. By the time they arrived in Florida there were about a thousand people gathered to welcome Mrs. Roosevelt. How she waited until just the right moment, letting everyone else get off first, to make her exit. How disgusted Wallace Stevens was by such pose and theatricality. How he doesn’t take walks as often as he used to—“such an uninspiring neighborhood.” How his daughter, Holly, is allowed to buy each week one book and two pieces of music of her own selection. How he used to work in the flower garden but doesn’t anymore. The robins who live under the eaves of the back porch, and how sometimes in the backyard wild pheasants appear and disappear.

*Refers to Ford’s verse collection, published by James A. Decker Press, 1940, with a cover by Joseph Cornell. —C. N.

What the neighbors must be thinking at the sight of his being photographed. How he doesn't get along with everybody who drops in . . . May I use the telephone?

Wallace Stevens wrote to me in Paris that perhaps I might have access to the studios of Bonnard or Braque and select a painting or two for him. Now he would show me his collection—the kind of things he liked: paintings here and there by obscure Frenchmen, mostly impressionist in style. “You see?” he said. “Soby would probably be contemptuous of these paintings.” Yes, I said, recalling Soby’s beautiful Chiricos and Tchelitchews. You could probably du-

plicate Soby’s collection fifteen times, said Stevens. I wondered, thinking of the uniqueness of each picture, not of the names. Did Mr. Stevens mean to imply that he himself was more independent in his choice of painters, more original? I said nothing.

Make me look romantic in those photographs, Wallace Stevens said, opening the front door for me. And when I was outside, Here’s Holly, who wants to meet you. Blond, blue-eyed Holly, who paints, and writes poetry, which the man with the blue guitar never discusses with her.

SEPT. 1940

Materia Poetica

BY WALLACE STEVENS

I

Merit in poets is as boring as merit in people.

II

It is life that one is trying to get at in poetry.

III

The poet confers his identity on the reader. He cannot do this if he intrudes personally.

IV

Accuracy of observation is the equivalent of accuracy of thinking.

V

Collecting poetry from one's experience as one goes along is not the same thing as merely writing poetry.

VI

The relation of art to life is of the first importance especially in a skeptical age since, in the absence of a belief in God, the mind turns to its own creations and examines them, not alone from the aesthetic point of view, but for what they reveal, for what they validate and invalidate, for the support that they give.

VII

Art involves vastly more than the sense of beauty.

VIII

Life is the reflection of literature.

IX

Usage is everything. ("Les idées sont destinée a être déformées à l'usage." Georges Braque, *Verve* No. 2.)

The romantic cannot be seen through; it is for the moment willingly not seen through.

A dead romantic is a falsification.

Poetry is a means of redemption.

Poetry may be an aspect of melancholia. At least, in melancholy, it is one of the "autres choses solatieuses."

The poet must come, at his worst, as the miraculous beast and, at his best, as the miraculous man.

(Poet,) feed my lambs.

The real is only the base. But it is the base.

The poem reveals itself only to the ignorant man.

The relation between the poetry of experience and the poetry of rhetoric is not the same thing as the relation between the poetry of reality and that of the imagination. Experience, at least in the case of a poet of any scope, is much broader than reality.

To a large extent, the problems of poets are the problems of painters and poets must often turn to the literature of painting for a discussion of their own problems.

Abstraction is a part of idealism. It is in that sense that it is ugly.

In poetry, at least, the imagination must not detach itself from reality.

Not all objects are equal. The vice of imagism was that it did not recognize this.

SEPT. 1940

PART II

The essential fault of surrealism is that it invents without discovering. To make a clam play an accordion is to invent, not to discover. The observation of the unconscious, so far as it can be observed, should reveal things of which we have previously been unconscious, not the familiar things of which we have been conscious plus imagination.

* * *

The imagination does not add to reality.

* * *

The great well of poetry is not other poetry but prose: reality. However it requires a poet to perceive the poetry in reality.

* * *

At the moments when one's terror of life should be greatest (when one is young or old) one is usually insensible to it. Some such thing is true of the most profoundly poetic moments. This is the origin of sentimentality, which is a failure of feeling.

* * *

Poetry is reality and thought or feeling.

* * *

If one believes in poetry then questions of principle become vital questions. In any case, if there is nothing except reality and art, the mere statement of that fact discloses the significance of art.

* * *

The dichotomy is not between realists and artists.
There must be few pure realists and few pure artists.
We are hybrids absorbed in hybrid literature.

* * *

All poetry is experimental poetry.

* * *

Each of us has a sensibility range beyond which
nothing exists. In each this is different.

* * *

*In poetry, you must love the words, the ideas, the images
and the rhythms with all your capacity, to love anything
at all.*

* * *

A journey in space equals a journey in time.

* * *

Poetry must be irrational.

* * *

The purpose of poetry is to make life complete in
itself.

* * *

Poetry increases the feeling for reality.

* * *

Consider:

- a. That the whole world is material for poetry;
- b. That there is not a specifically poetic material.

* * *

One reads poetry with one's nerves.

* * *

The poet is the intermediary between people and the
world in which they live and, also, between people as
between themselves; but not between people and
some other world.

OCT. 1942

Marianne Moore's Views on Writing and Editing

she reminisces about "the dial"

IN AN INTERVIEW WITH
PARKER TYLER

Why should one who has talked with Marianne Moore feel that the interview has been primarily wordless—primarily a matter of seeing Marianne Moore, of hearing her intonations, of observing her hat, the look from her eyes? Perhaps because her poetry in itself is so verbally satisfying. Our interview occurred at the Grand Central Station, but not between trains, at 2:30 in the afternoon.

Miss Moore had been very specific in her letter making the appointment that we should meet at the spot where the two descending ramps meet, like streams, and glide a few feet to balustrade, as I approached [sic]. We walked to a bench on the other side, and composed ourselves. I was more excited, I daresay, than I seemed, for Marianne Moore had been a glamorous literary legend of my early youth, and while she had been editor of the *Dial*, I could not help remembering, she had mercilessly rejected my adolescent poems.

Her hat was of the ageless kind that Venus or Minerva might have worn incognito on a lark in Athens. The face beneath was small, honest as a penny, blondly roseate as a child's, with a flush that increased under the pressure of conversation. She was very agreeable, though a little shy. Her almost pedantically broad white collar was the sole relieving touch for the uniform blue of her suit, yet it rescued her from the contours of the wren, and saddled her neck with a token of the white peacock.

I can't remember how we began speaking of the complexion of the present world, but she made me

feel she did not wish to speak of it, that it was too disturbing. In that direct-indirect way of hers, she brought the attitude of a good suburban homeowner to social problems, and said: "When children throw broken glass into the streets, so that automobile tires are punctured, it is wrong." It is characteristic of Marianne Moore to speak first, and accurately, of what she observes in the physical scene. She is as aware of significant images as an animal of significant scent. But political thinking, she implied, is not hers.

I looked for another path, and this led to the magazine which Miss Moore edited with such distinction for several years till its final bow in 1927.

When I mentioned the *Dial*, asking her if she thought she could maintain the high literary standards of yesterday with the material available today, she exclaimed, "Oh, I could do even better today! Looking back I feel sorry that some writers who publish now were never in the *Dial*. The *Dial* was very experimental. Why, it was almost a scandal! One should be very careful, of course, one should watch every poem of a poet, weigh this one against that one. No, it does not do to judge anyone on the basis of just a few of his poems. For instance . . ." Here she mentioned a contemporary poet she was now sorry to have excluded from the *Dial*.

"Sometimes you miss by a hair," she continued. "A poet's work may be uneven. You see something somewhere else that you feel would have been good in your magazine, whereas you could not take anything the poet sent to you. . . . One identifies oneself with a magazine." She said this with emphasis. The pink flush was heightened by a conscience as delicate as a harp string, but there was controlled chastity in her next remarks.

"I used to be glad to get even a word from an editor. Anyway, there is something inherently weak about a poem that never gets published."

"Yes, there is," I agreed.

As though rising, however, to the challenge of posterity, Marianne Moore then said in tones cool as an image from the Greek anthology: "My conscience is clear."

She softened, and spoke with regret, if also with a touch of reproof for their manners, of the would-have-been contributors who had laid siege to the very door of her office. How difficult it must have been for her to sit behind her desk almost within hearing distance of the sobs of the insulted and injured! She divulged the name of a woman poet who had never been accepted by the *Dial* and who had most dearly resented it.



Marianne Moore strikes a characteristic pose
Photo by Francis Lee

"But please do not mention any names," Miss Moore cautioned me. "I should not want anyone's feelings to be hurt."

I asked her about the theory of editing a magazine. She does not believe in a magazine as the organ of any one group or school, nor does she approve of a magazine's being too arrogantly preoccupied with the avant-garde. Mentioning surrealism, I learned that she sees some merit in it.

"Has inspiration come to you," I asked her, "in the shape of new formal discoveries?" At this, she told of the great difficulty she was having with a few lines of a poem comparing the ridges of the chambered nautilus to those of the chevelures of the manes of the horses on the Parthenon. With a great ravenousness, she desired more simplicity—that dream of needle-like execution known to those who cannot reach the height of fashion without it.

Today Marianne Moore's poetry maintains its richness and pertinence, I feel, when so many values are falling by the wayside. When the younger-than-she imagine the world to be trembling in its place, she does not rest without putting the image upright, immaculate on the platform of the page.

The next moment, I learned with a little surprise that she considers herself the spiritual descendent of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. Still, this is not very strange. Between the democracy of the Democracies and the democracy of free artistic execution, there is unquestionably an ideological link.

And then I realized that there were probably but a few more minutes to our interview. Since, Miss

Moore had informed me, she was to meet her mother at the dentist's her eyes had been straying to the catholic gaze of the clock in the middle of the arcade.

"Tell me, Miss Moore," I said, "do you feel that your work is American—apart from its being, of course, universal?" I could not eliminate from my mind the notion given me by Miss Moore of the Father of Our Country.

"I feel ultra-American," she replied. "We in America, of course, are necessarily provincial—"

"By which you mean colonial?" I interrupted. "You do not approve of regionalism, do you?"

"No, indeed," she said. "It is absurd to say that Tennessee is a better state than some other state. That is the wrong form of thought. Then you might become mechanical about it and say that any American is better than any Hindu, or than any Chinese. One should not forswear his birthright, but national boundaries should be respected." There was nothing in this with which Abraham Lincoln would not agree wholeheartedly.

Yet Marianne Moore was to wind up our interview more symphonically than this, using a well-known American theme in a curious way: "You must have humility toward your work. That is the way to obtain success. It is what one sees, hears, that makes one. Men are not created equal."

Was this apparent contradiction a form of Marianne Moore's irony? I could not pursue this theme, however, as we had arisen, and were walking toward the point where the two ramps fork upward, each in one wide wave, to the level of the street.

NOV. 1940

Why and How Lorca Is Translated

BY EDOUARD RODITI

The cult of modern poetry has its saints, some of them martyrs, others mere theologians. Hölderlin, Novalis, Nerval, Poe, Baudelaire, like the early Christian fathers, were both martyrs and theologians; Mallarmé, Hopkins, Eliot, Rilke, Valéry, are its later theologians; Lautréamont, Rimbaud, Hart Crane and Lorca, its last martyrs. There exists today an international gang of poets, amongst whom Stephen Spender is perhaps the most active, who devote much time and energy to admiring, commenting, translating and propagandizing all or a few of these saints. Within the gang, one smaller clique, almost thomist, devotes its whole attention to the theologians; another clique, the left wing, more augustinian or surrealist, admires the more passionate martyrs and is suspicious of the more intellectual theologians.

The martyrs are chiefly remarkable for their lives, which were often as poetic as their poems. Hölderlin's madness, the suicides of Novalis, of Nerval and of Crane, Baudelaire's bitterness and sickness. Poe's life of failure and sordid death; Rimbaud's betrayal of poetry, his subsequent adventures as an explorer and final conversion to Catholicism on a dingy hospital death-bed. Lautréamont's nihilism, his life of solitude and depersonalization. Lorca's cold-blooded murder; the legends of the Russian poets, of Essenin, who married Isadora Duncan and died tragically, of Maiakovski, who perhaps was exhausted by the Revolution and renounced the "perfect society" by killing himself—all these are myths of one introspective poet-hero whose varied lives have injected a subversive moral

significance into poetry which, since the age of Romanticism, has been slowly becoming subversive only through its esthetic affectations. Now it is difficult to disentangle the skein of action and poetry: the mythical lives of these poets prolong their poetry just as the lives of saints are permanent dramatizations of their faith.

I had occasion to meet Federico García Lorca some years ago. . . . He was less brilliant in conversation than many who discussed poetry and politics more glibly, who wrote less persuasive poetry and are now alive. Like Andre Gaillard and Hart Crane, Lorca left me with an impression of his being wholly wrapped up in the personal problems of living and writing. He lacked, however, that detachment which allows skillful avoidance of dangers in living and of pitfalls in poetics, and he was strangely unpolitical. Political discussion seemed to bore him almost more than the esthetic talk of Montparnasse. He had chosen a life of poetic action; he died a death of political significance which was thrust upon him by the unavoidable political action of the society in which he wrote.

Today, we tend to interpret his poetry too much in terms of his death, because he is the poet of a cause whose loss, to many of us, has been our bitterest disappointment. Lorca was indeed a poet of the people, much in the same way as Whitman, Vachel Lindsay or Sandburg; without the Spanish war, he might have continued to live the life of a Vachel Lindsay, part esthete and part bum. Had Verlaine murdered Rimbaud in Brussels, instead of merely wounding him, there would have been no "Season in Hell," no renunciation of poetry, no Abyssinian adventure, no problematic conversion.

The world of modern poetry often seems small, petty, safe, cold; everything is there reduced to mere words and technical trickery. But the modern taste for the biographical makes Rimbaud seem a greater poet than Racine, Lorca more poetic, because more legendary, than Ruben Dario. However, the many translations of Lorca, as those of Rimbaud, have nearly all been indifferent or bad. We now have no standards of poetry, no fundamental sense of poetic



Automatic portrait of Federico García Lorca by Matta

idiom—and hence no standards of translation. Translations, because of the awkwardness of their phrasing, the exotic quality of a common foreign idiom which subsists, word for word, as a novel image, must seem peculiarly poetic merely through the resultant verbal surprises.

Most of Lorca's translators are oddly qualified for the task. Lloyd, for instance, was a good Communist, I believe, but knew little Spanish and had less experience of writing English poetry. Gilbert Neiman, who has translated Lorca's lyrical drama, *Las Bodas de Sangre* (*Blood Wedding*, New Directions), seems to be easily confused in grammatical matters. The play, full of mistakes, translated into atrociously stilted English, yet retains much of its original beauty of a dramatized ballad, with its typical peasant-vendetta plot. A few lines revive my doubts concerning Lorca's leftist views. The bride's father seems almost to share the anal-erotic psychology of an "Associated Farmer": "Each young vine is a coin of silver. What I am sorry for is that the lands . . . must be separated. I like everything united . . ." He says elsewhere: "This land needs arms which are not bought. And these arms must be those of the owners, who whip and dominate, and make seeds spring up. Lots of

sons are needed." Come, come! Have we not been told that the Loyalist peasants fought for Agrarian reform and that Lorca was their poet? But ideological vagueness does not detract from Lorca's worth as a poet of the Spanish people.

So much for Lorca's *Gebrauchsdichtung*, which delighted the Spanish masses and earned him a terrorist's death. But Lorca did not devote all his energies to the creation of popular and successful art, as did Bert Brecht and some of the more modern composers. *The Poet in New York* (W. W. Norton) reveals a quality of Lorca's work which has not yet been sufficiently stressed by his foreign admirers and translators: his complete lack of interest in all subject matter except as an opportunity for stylistic, descriptive and lyrical development. This quality of virtuosity, at last now made clear to American readers, explains much that remained obscure or unsatisfactory in our understanding of Lorca's more conventional works which had already been translated. *The Poet in New York* is as brilliantly paranoiac as the paintings of Dali in its descriptive and lyrical developments of something which always remains more or less ambiguous. *The Lament for Sanchez Mejias* was a "blue-period" interpretation of commonplace genre, that of Pagliacci, of sorrow behind the clown's grinning mask or tragedy in tinsel and sawdust, death in the gay circus or cheering arena. *Blood Wedding* was another Picasso-like interpretation of a commonplace genre, that of *Cavaleria Rust-*

icana, such as Verga described in prose or Leopold Robert in paint. *The Poet in New York* is more abstract: guitars, montage, all the paraphernalia of cubism and surrealism. But in all three, as in any three discrepant manners of Picasso, there remains something which is surely and essentially the artist's own virtuosity. At times, one is bewildered and disconcerted by the apparent lack of emotion in artists who cold-bloodedly present the same subject matter in seemingly contradictory styles or vary their style so radically. Today, the artist derives his emotion from his own skill rather than from his attitude toward the nature which he skillfully imitates. Plato suggested that nature was already an imitation of pure ideas, that art was therefore an imitation of an imitation. In Joyce, Picasso, Stravinski and Lorca, art is even further removed from nature and, unless the circle is closed again by his retreat, from the "reality" of pure ideas.

The most obvious example of this individualistic and intellectual excitement, in *The Poet in New York*, is the "Son of Negroes in Cuba," which imitates a sort of Rumba, yet imitates this primitive imitation of nature in terms of Lorca's own sophisticated surrealism. Descriptive as it may be, Lorca's poetry is thus as far from naturalism as any poetry can be. Wallace Stevens and Gertrude Stein have achieved analogous ideals, each in terms of individual emotional attitudes toward the production of art.

OCT. 1940

Anti-Surrealist Dali

i say his flies are ersatz

BY NICOLAS CALAS

What can we not expect to see from the artist who says, "I am a prince of the Catalonian intelligence, colossally rich"?

There is in this adolescent arrogance a Maldororian flavor which saves it from becoming just another advertising slogan or the latest Shavian wisecrack. But if this defiant cry is to lead youth in revolt simply to the rediscovery of his navel, it means that his life has become a miserable farce. This is precisely what has happened to our ex-youth who says that to be a painter it is necessary to be called Dali and to be born a Spaniard. All right! He does think his navel *the* most perfect So what?

The wind that turns the mill of fashion may now be a product of his own belly; it is a stinking Don Quixote therefore, the cohort of Sancho Panza's of both sexes will have to follow!

How easy to protest in the name of Pure Art: "You attack Dali, after having praised him, because he no longer believes in revolutionary values! He has rediscovered Spain, penitence, Catholicism, classicism; he adores form and tries to draw as well as Ingres."

I make my hypothetical antagonist say "try" because I expect him to be honest and not assume that Dali has succeeded in drawing as well as Ingres when he obviously has not.

Yes, I accept the challenge and unhesitatingly reply, "Dali is a renegade!"

For those who threaten the world with the stake of the Inquisition nothing can be allowed to remain outside the field of interest of the ferocious god of Philip the Second, nothing, not even a pair of old

shoes. Dali, the painter of Franco's ambassador, must believe in this deity, and form for him cannot just be an aesthetic principle but is, on the contrary, an evidence of Divine Grace. Philip's critics clearly understood the importance of love and hate when conflicting ideologies clash, that is why his Dutch slaves in their pamphlets accused this abhorred tyrant of tying cats in the tubes of church organs so that he might enjoy the strange mixture produced by their screams and the melodies of Mass. What a lesson for those critics who never dare attack or praise so as not to disturb the sepulchral peace in which the art *they* love is buried! Incapable of enthusiasm or fury, cut off from all ideology, they merely bend under the weight of words of flattery their own pen designs, or curl with envy each time they pour out the ink of their jealousy! But should these critics, themselves but frustrated artists, be thrown into flames lit by fanatical priests in public squares in days of appalling bigotry? It is enough to spit on them, and they will drown. When they call themselves surrealists I loathe their company just as much as Dali does. But, after all, it is of so little importance if, in the Year of Disgrace 1941, weak-minded creatures think that to be a painter the brush must become a substitute of the phallus! "Dali dislikes imitations!" What a feeble excuse for the radical ideological change he is now so anxious to proclaim *urbi et orbi*! He knows this himself only too well.

He declares the era of experiments closed and tells us that the rose, is a prison. The victim is no other than Dali himself! As for the rose, we can admire its perfection without having to worry if it is happy or not to be a palace of scented songs or a dagger in a lady's breast.

The reason for Dali's change is very different:

Confronted, as we all are, by *results* entirely opposite from all for which our experiments were preparing us, Dali was seized with terror and, led by remorse, while there was still time, he hastily retired to those positions in art which would seem agreeable to the masters of the triumphing counterrevolution. Perhaps his new friends will excuse him if his mistakes are sometimes clumsy. When he tries to imitate

the style of Alfred Jarry, the dissonance of the rhythm of the words and the ideas expressed is painful to all ears which know how to appreciate the fierceness of Jarry's sarcasm.

Trapped by his errors, not knowing any more what is modern and what is not, in the field of science and aesthetic philosophy, Dali is like the poor country girl who thought she could become fashionable by putting a new ribbon on her grandmother's hat. Laws of science, of art, are but instances in an endless time. The utmost we can achieve is to feel sometimes the rhythm of their change. For this, experiment is necessary. Each new discovery is a beat of the pulse of life. A *heart* is needed to feed this movement. Inevitably the adorers of form will adopt a heartless attitude. Their antidialectical extremism (nothing else but dogmatism) forces them to become renegades in the battle for life, and unless they substitute this life for metaphysical values, their work will remain *dead*. I leave aside the question as to whether or not a metaphysical attitude is now possible; it is enough to know that Dali's painting is not metaphysical.

We could easily end our criticism here. We know that the most we can expect from Dali's painting is to show a few roses in a prison, and none can blame us if we prefer to look for flowers in a less dismal place. But we do not want to be among those who on coming across a prison turn their heads away from the depressing sight. On the contrary, we believe that prisons must be destroyed!

A skull in a skull in a skull is no original vision of war, but is the sordid remains which putrid monks play with in hours of appalling prayers in the Casa dos Ossos at Evora, in Portugal; or in Castel Gandolfo, in Italy.

—It is much more extraordinary to see an armored and manned tank descend in a parachute than a banal piano.

—To exchange the telephones of Munich (Dali's previous exhibition) for the roars of cannons is perhaps a journalistic achievement that would give Dali the next Pulitzer prize, but such a cheap kind of modernism has nothing to do with pictures.

—Those who would like to see crutches in such abundance can go to Europe after the war; but those who want to paint the horrors of war should first look at the drawings of Goya!

How can one expect to discover profound shock effects in the work of an artist who believes in the supremacy of form? It is not surprising therefore that the incongruous in Dali should just become a badly designed pattern and that the only value it can possibly claim to have is of a purely decorative nature. That is why we who are interested in emotional values cannot be interested any more in Dali's pictures.

The technicolor effect of his painting results from the fact that he does not know how to compose his colors. The realism he creates is entirely superficial. Dali imitates reality instead of producing it. Never do we feel in his picture the inevitableness of this or that hue. That is why all the objects of his pictures could be so easily replaced by objects he has painted in other pictures. This is also the reason why his backgrounds are lifeless and become interchangeable. To compensate for their weakness Dali feels the need to replace what I would call morphological determinism by tricks, which constitute in his work the only link between the various figures. The trick consists in using double images without any intrinsic reason. At other times, to avoid the monotony such synthesis inevitably produces, he returns to the most banal type of composition. I do not know if Dali hopes to discover new applications for the theory of the golden section. The cover of his catalog shows he has used designed capital letters the way Fra Luca Pacioli conceived them in his *Divina proportione*, but Dali's drawing and painting, *The Family of the Centaurs*, has far from convinced me that he has understood the problem of the golden section. If he had, and I presume he has read the work of Matila Ghyka, he would have known why the effect of his picture is symmetric and has nothing to do with the divine proportion which is to be found in the pentagon and is asymmetric. Symmetry, Ghyka is very convincing, is inorganic and dead, while the golden section is at the basis of all alive forms. The struggle

of the centaurs represents movement, something alive and must therefore follow lines that, when they arrive at the end of the picture, can "return" in the picture according to the laws of the golden section. In Dali's *Centaurs* on the contrary the movement is outward and if it is to be completed it will lead to an extension of the picture beyond the frame. Theoretically this is an impossibility; that is why the movement of his *Centaurs* is killed and makes the picture look dead.

Water, air, sky, are elements Dali entirely ignores, although he paints landscapes. This is another reason for the unrealness of his backgrounds. It is because he does not know how to create a symphony of colors that he cannot paint skin and manages only to illustrate it. But at the same time this is his force! As he cannot replace the sky or water or air, he casts aside all problems that deal with these elements and in this atmosphere of technicolor unreality he turns the skin into leather. All the effects of Dali's paint are a matter of oiliness of the skin, from his self-portrait to a pair of shoes. He paints with his glossy hair and draws with his thin moustache! Leather and not skin! Blood and fat feed the skin, oil covers leather. Ersatz skin in an ersatz painting. Because the skin is simply leather it can be stretched and look like a face, the emptied body of a woman or an old shoe; it all depends in what kind of mirror we are looking at reality. The mirror instead of a dream. Ersatz psychology!

Because he does not understand life Dali cannot understand death otherwise than as an illustration. So do the monks! Death is not dry but full of life and marvelous rotting fats. Decomposition is a process of life and starts before birth to continue till after death. Why should flies be attracted by corpses if decomposition was not alive? Dali's flies are ersatz flies!

Because he understands leather he understands an element which is its opposite, sand; because he feels what is oily he understands what is dry. But for these sincere pictorial elements to become really valuable a third term is needed. Dali—and this is his tragedy as a painter—has not discovered it. If he was once on the way of finding it, he is no more so. If sand and

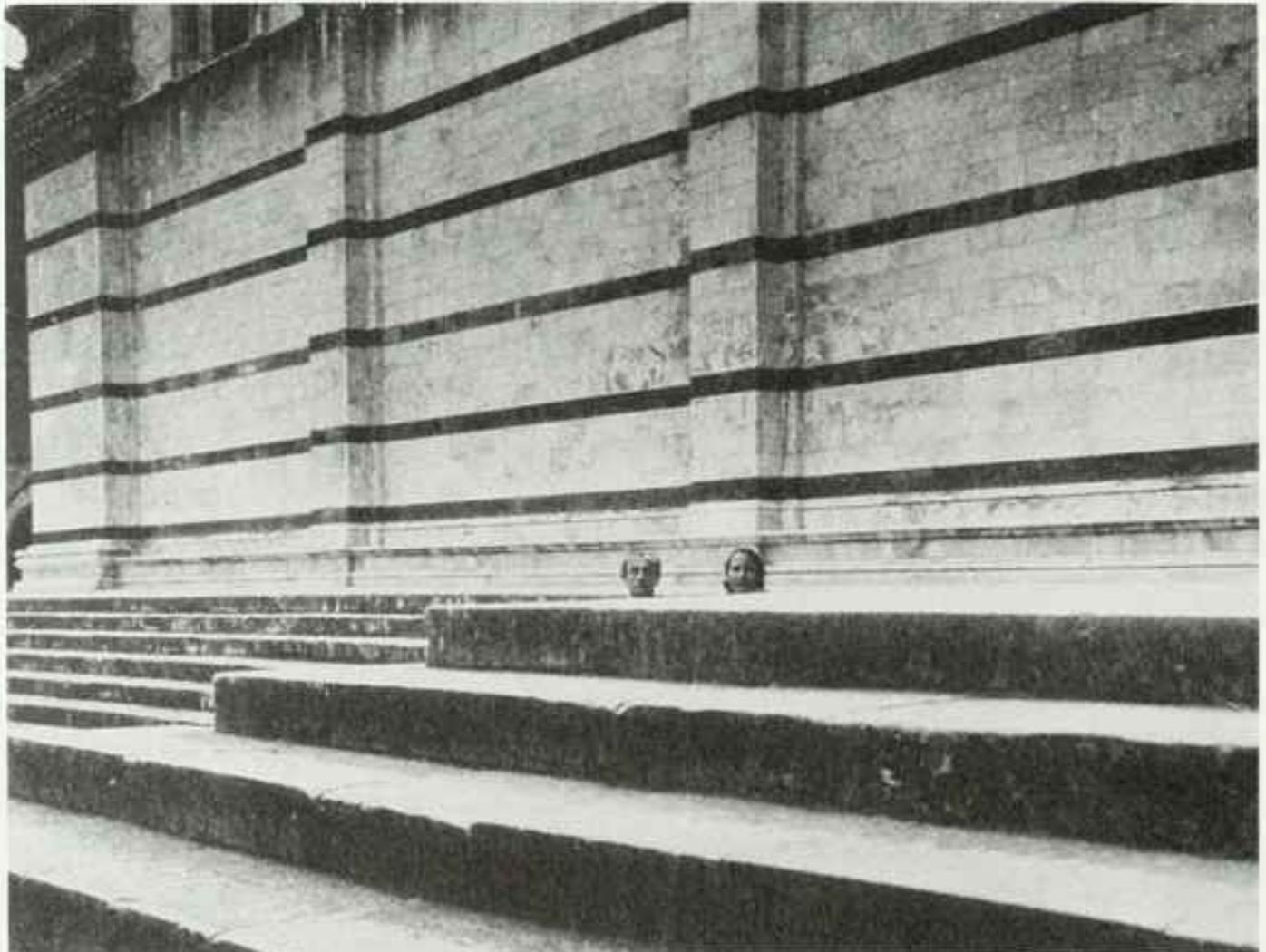
leather—dry or oily—could be absorbed in another element Dali could then finish his pictures and resolve the problems he tries to show us as riddles, because they remain unanswered.

A riddle or an anecdote, that is all that remains of the myth of the original sin when a leg and a shoe replace Adam and Eve. Lost in his unconscious,

when conscious reality has become so terrible, he tries to escape from both and discovers the shadow of form in neo-platonic philosophers of the Renaissance! Because he is too frightened to be a poet, his pictures become lifeless! He is uninspiring.

JUNE 1941

*Salvador and Gala Dali
in Verona
Photo by
Charles Henri Ford*



Every Man His Own Private Detective

BY PARKER TYLER

See *The Maltese Falcon*.

It's a movie, but it's not about Hollywood. It's about what really goes on.

It is not some star's synthetic effort to rehabilitate her old and desperate fortune by putting on a new and desperate face, and no one—man or woman—comes, thank God! to dinner. It is not, either, the eighteenth-century play trying to re-enact itself in the shiny and humble circumstances of Noël Coward's head. Nor is it one of those unhappy pieces of literary driftwood, such as the highly forgettable *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, whose awful destiny it is to bump square into a Hollywood director and get brained. Nor is it a Shavian conceit on which is lavished a million times its weight in movie gold, nor a questionably lucky Ibsenian concept marked for its cinema contracept. It is an unconscious masterpiece. It is the only truly modern work to justify the visual vivacity of the screen exploited by such directors as Hitchcock in the catch-as-catch-can melodrama. In comparison with it, your favorite hitchcockade is knocked into a cocked hat.

Frankly, I didn't mean to be as frivolous as all that. Because *The Maltese Falcon* is not mere bravura. A Paul Muni tough guy is mere bravura, a raising to the nth power of high school precociousness, and a Jimmy Cagney tough guy is a chunk of cute commonplace raised to whatever power you think it deserves. But Humphrey Bogart's hard-boiled number in the *Falcon* shoots straight from the lip of literature and hits life. I don't know exactly to whom to credit the actual literature (I mean the dialogue)

of the picture, but the director, John Huston, wrote the screen story from the novel by Dashiell Hammett. I have never, perhaps mistakenly, read Mr. Hammett's novels, and I cannot stop to do so now. Let the credit fall where it may, not only Mr. Bogart's lines but everyone's are peculiarly right and more interesting than lines usually dare to be in front of a telltale camera. But in this picture the talkie is fully justified in its love for the movie. Not that good dialogue is unheard, or unheard of, on the screen, but that Hollywood has always been an unconscious disciple of Bernard Shaw in one certain respect: its dialogue can never be good without creating a devastating effect of "pains taken." The words in the *Falcon* slip by as easily as the landscape next to a train window. But they are just as important, because if they weren't there, like the landscape, you wouldn't know where you were. Moreover, it is a verbal landscape so streamlined that it identifies itself at every moment with the physical and psychological movement of the plot. Result: not a moment of boredom.

So far, I have not revealed my hand—that is, what is in the cards of *The Maltese Falcon*. But it is the Dostoievskian pack, designed on the backs if not on the faces for the suffering modern soul, a combination of Raskolnikoff, Muishkin, and the Underground Man: of the criminal, the crippled genius of pity, and the Average American. The character chosen from modern society to represent this moral amalgam is itself a stroke of imaginative genius—the Private Detective. That is Mr. Bogart's role.

Has it ever occurred to anyone to ask: Just what *is* a private detective? I mean, what is his character, morality, beliefs—his rudimentary ethical role as a member of society? Surely it is obvious that he is in some sense an "underground man," a man convinced in his heart and soul that his doom is to "look at life" from beneath. The peculiar orientation of a private detective to this situation is that he decides to look at others of his own kind objectively and philosophically—he becomes a professional investigator of the Underneath, a free-lance investigator rather than, for instance, a Psychoanalyst; nevertheless, someone of whom considerable ingenuity and technique are re-

quired. Dostoievsky's own underground man in the story of that name vacillates helplessly between the polarity of desire and the polarity of reality. He fights his obsessional doom of inferiority, while the Private Detective simply exploits it; another type also exploits it, the Gangster, but differently: he is *outside the law*; the Private Detective (while shady) has decided to play safe and, as in this picture, remains *within the law*. Here I mean simply the sphere of police enforcement of the law—not the metaphysical sphere of Kafka's law. Raskolnikoff was also metaphysically involved with the law; that is why I state that Spade the Private Detective, while an essentially lifelike character, is an amalgam in the imaginative sense—the Average American in him, no less than the Muishkin, converts him into a creator of new movement and a participant in a new drama. Who are his antagonists, whom he consciously serves for their money, unconsciously pities with his tears of granite, and somehow envies for their capacity to believe in an intangible objective—in the promise of Space and the Future? Is Spade the Private Detective not an ideal antagonist of Romance?—and Mystery?—both of which the black statuette of the falcon symbolizes? Does the Average American, whose underground burden is willy-nilly shouldered by Spade, believe in anything but money if he lives in the city, or anything but money and the weather if he lives in the country? God, too? But what would God be without the contribution to the church's monetary support? Yes, the State. But what would the State be without the Income Tax? It is absolutely essential to the pattern of my interpretation, no less than to the plot of this picture, that the statue of the falcon, under whose black coating is supposed to lie a fortune in jewels, should turn out to be a phoney. That is to say, if it had *not* been a phoney, Spade's whole philosophy of cynicism toward the Above (the Future, Space, Art, Ideals, etc.) would have been wrested from him; he would have been robbed of his *raison d'être*: his underground profession as an ethic. Look at his face, especially his eyes, as the fat man unwraps the layers of rags and newspaper which cover the supposedly priceless statuette: the

lashes are licking the eyes in prospect of seeing the falcon itself, but unlike all the others, he is reconciled to no event but that under its enamel feathers lies—lead. And that is what does lie there: nothing but lead.

Spade's antagonists (who in another sense are also, of course, his clients) are Romantics of a certain type: bigtime crooks and adventurers. Their professionalism, like his, covers sizable sums of money as reward for their endeavors, but—and this point is most interesting and important—whereas the reward in the crooks' situation is, though much larger, not guaranteed and most risky, Spade's unalterable rule is . . . money on the line. The radical difference is that between *the job* and *the profession*—thus, it is appropriate to make Spade an American, or someone who never works at anything but “a job,” and the crooks foreigners, or those in whom exist the pitiful vestiges of aristocratic leisure. As we see so acutely today, crossing the Atlantic for Lindbergh was first a job, and second an adventure. Even financial speculation in Wall Street is highly methodized, and the risk is a group risk—a shock which, when it comes, the main structure is supposed to survive . . . as it *has* survived. But Spade and his antagonists are primarily *individualists*, even “lone wolves”; partners who tend to part and who may be ready at a moment's notice to betray one another. How perfect it is that the springboard of the plot is the murder of Spade's partner in the agency, at whose corpse he does not even care to look. In the end, Spade sends to prison the murderer, who turns out to be the female member of his adventurous clientele, because (he explains to her in the screen's most touching love scene) when you lose a partner you ought to do something about it, you ought to take vengeance on the agent of destruction; this is, he adds quickly, only “good business.” Though his partner's wife is in love with him, and for this reason he himself is suspected as the murderer, Spade has never seriously encouraged her and is obviously not in love. He does not believe in *love* as a partnership; he believes only—how naively and with what cruel smallness—in a *business* partnership. This sort of brotherhood is the

measly minimum social demand of Spade the Private Detective.

Why is Spade such a beautiful character? I realize I ought to show this. But all characters are beautiful so long as they are characters and not messes made by would-be writers. Spade is so typical and so well conceived that he is one of the most beautiful I know. He is so attractive that his courage and wit should please even Mr. Hemingway, though in comparison with a Hemingway Knight of the Party Line (reformed), Spade is all man and no bull. This is because he has no sentimentality, and hence no self-pity. The sentimentality of the Average American is converted in Spade into the ironic pity of Muishkin—Spade is strong because, like the Police Inspector in *Crime and Punishment*, he has an invincible belief in the physical processes of the law: it “gets its man”; he is weak, and reveals his weakness in the last scene, because he is tainted with the irony of this belief: he does not go so far as to believe in the *virtue* of the law. *That* is why he is a Private Detective, that is why he lashes out in contempt at the official police, the guardians of the public weal, that—his unorthodox legal individualism—is why his very character is suspect in the eyes of the police. Spade unquestionably believes that the law is capable of error; that is why he has chosen to help, while exploiting, the underdog—the fellow in a scrape from which he wants to extricate himself without publicity, the husband or wife who wants legally acceptable evidence of unfaithfulness in the marital partner, the businessman who wants to discover if he is being cheated by his associate. All these people have Spade's sympathy no less than his contempt: his *sympathy* because they share his own suspicion of open legal processes and legal commitments and his *contempt* because they are in one sense or another victims of entanglement with the legal system. The price for admitting to himself that the legal method is effectual in righting what is wrong in human relationships is . . . his *fee*. Because he must exist in the social order, because he must have a job and be self-respecting, he accepts—like a crook—his own bribe in the form of his clients' fee. A beautiful woman comes to him

with a tall story. Being an expert in human nature, he deduces from the extravagance of the fee he is offered that she is lying . . . but he doesn't know how wildly, or why, she is lying. Being what he is, he is fascinated by the problem arising when his partner is murdered in the line of duty in this client's case, and when, as a helpless woman, she throws herself upon his mercy. But, resisting his "clinical" efforts, she continues to lie.

How skillfully Spade's sexual morality is thus revealed and given point. He is tremendously attracted to this woman but, like someone who has been deserted at the altar, he constitutionally has come to suspect all legal intentions and so in this case he suspects the vows of honesty which place the woman under his protection; they cannot be *bona fide*, Spade reasons, since the natural morality of woman is to exploit man's strength with her weakness and, in the end, to place money above love—an objective which he has cause to believe is this woman's specialty. It is *she* who knows the whereabouts of the Maltese Falcon but will not confide them to him.

So, according to the typical American psychology, life—even love—is largely a question of "rackets." What is a "racket?" Is it not merely the *form* of legality without the supposed virtue of its *substance*? What is such a thing as "illegal tribute" extorted by gangs but an arbitrary exaggeration of the margin of profit asked by the businessman from whom the extra-legal tribute is demanded? Customers invariably think of themselves as "robbed" when they buy an inferior piece of merchandise, for which they have paid in standard coin. And they are right. *How* right, they cannot tell, nor can Spade. Just as even those who much admire *The Maltese Falcon* perhaps, being ignorant of the profound sources of its verisimilitude, cannot tell how "right" their admiration is. The great dramatic interest of Spade's story is the air of mastery with which he moves through it to a climax in which he triumphs.

We applaud the art of the movie and are entranced by Spade because the whole action is a complete vindication of his judgment of life and the *reasonable*

mode of that judgment: the private detective agency. He outleuths the police, outwits and traps the criminals, avenges his partner's death, escapes from love . . . and emerges with a six-hundred dollar fee. He himself is a symbol of universal distrust in the shape of a specific figment of social morality. How American and modern he is in isolating himself from the ambiguous truths of love, its deliciously barefaced and implicating lies! The statuette of the falcon becomes for him the symbol of his social enemies . . . the vague "higher-ups" who believe in some emotional value such as love or art—believing sufficiently, at least, to confuse money with love, money with art. The Maltese Falcon is a work of art. Woman is an instrument of love. But Spade is not confused in the presence of their seductive magic; he believes that such a romantic method of acquiring wealth as looking for a "black bird" is all hooey; the bizarrerie of the crooks is a reflection of his attitude toward them. Spade exits from the picture carrying the lead falcon, the phoney bird. That is to say, he unwittingly carries a symbol of the profit motive in art (the dollars, for instance, that lie "under the skin" of an oil painting). This is a great social tragedy of our time, and especially of America: the average belief that art is a phoney unless it can lay the golden egg.

Spade, alas! hates more than he pities. To be an individual who makes for yourself a solid place in society, you must hate more than you pity, you must marry oftener than you love, and if you stay single, you may even have the futile illusion of frustrating the aims of the State. One of the most wonderful elements of the movie is Spade's treatment of the cheap version of himself, the young gunman who is bodyguard and spy of Gutman, the man who has sought the statuette for seventeen years. The "gunsle," whose only duty is to shadow and shoot, is practically a zombie through his excessive individualism . . . he seems in his terrifying passivity toward his social role to be constantly whispering to himself, "I am I because I am a Shadow; only in this form do I exist as wholly and solely myself." Spade adopts the most mentally brutal, tongue-sticking-

through-check attitude toward him because—and only because—he isn't in business for himself; he is the strong arm, not brain, of the organization, and thus has a "boss." To the last, and it is a crowning, pathetic glory, Spade is his own boss. *The Maltese Falcon* is so good because you feel the continuity of its movement beyond the end of the picture, beyond the

boundaries of the screen. Doubtless, the slightly hacked statuette of the falcon will find a deserved place on Spade's mantelpiece as a memento of this adventure—a phoney bird to whose prototypes a million American homes are enthusiastically hospitable.

DEC. 1941—JAN. 1942



Portrait of Parker Tyler by Pavel Tchelitchev
(Yale Beinecke Library)

"ENCHANTED WANDERER"

★ Excerpt from a Journey Album for Hedy Lamarr ★

By
JOSEPH CORNELL

Among the barren wastes of the talking films there occasionally occur passages to remind one again of the profound and suggestive power of the silent film to evoke an ideal world of beauty, to release unsuspected floods of music from the gaze of a human countenance in its prison of silver light. But aside from evanescent fragments unexpectedly encountered, how often is there created a superb and magnificent imagery such as brought to life the portraits of Falconetti in "Joan of Arc," Lillian Gish in "Broken Blossoms," Sibirskaya in "Mendlmontant," and Carola Nehrer in "Dreigroschenoper?"

And so we are grateful to Hedy Lamarr, the enchanted wanderer, who again speaks the poetic and evocative language of the silent film, if only in whispers at times, beside the empty rear of the sound track. Amongst screw-ball comedy and the most superficial brand of clap-trap drama she yet manages to retain a depth and dignity that enables her to enter this world of expressive silence.

Who has not observed in her magnified visage qualities of a gracious humility and spirituality that with circumstance of costume, scene, or plot conspire to identify her with realms of wonder, more absorbing than the artificial ones, and where we have already been invited by the gaze that she knew as a child.

Her least successful roles will reveal something unique and intriguing—a disarming candor, a naivete, an innocence, a desire to please, touching in its sincerity. In implicit trust she would follow in whatsoever direction the least humble of her audience would desire.

"She will walk only when not bid to arising from her bed of nothing, her hair of time falling to the shoulder of space. If she speak, and she will only speak if not spoken to, she will have listened her words yesterday and she will forget them to-morrow, if to-morrow come, for it may not."

(Or the contrasted and virile mood of "Comrade X" where she moves through the scenes

* Parker Tyler



★

like the wind with a storm-swept beauty fearful to behold).

At the end of "Come Live With Me" the picture suddenly becomes luminously beautiful and imaginative with its nocturnal atmosphere and incandescence of fireflies, flashlights, and an aura of tone as rich as the silver screen can yield. Her arms and shoulders always covered, our gaze is held to her features, where her eyes glow dark against the pale skin and

her earrings gleam white against the black hair. Her tenderness finds a counterpart in the summer night. In a world of shadow and subdued light she moves, clothed in a white silk robe trimmed with dark fur, against dim white walls. Through the window fireflies are seen in the distance twinkling in woods and pasture. There is a long shot (as from the ceiling) of her entangled in white covers, her eyes glisten in the semi-darkness like the fireflies. The reclining form of Snow-White was not protected more

lovingly by her crystal case than the gentle fabric of light that surrounds her. A closer shot shows her against the whiteness of the pillows, while a still closer one shows an expression of ineffable tenderness as, for purposes of plot, she presses and intermittently lights a flashlight against her cheek, as though her features were revealed by slow-motion lightning.

In these scenes it is as though the camera had been predated over by so many apprentices of Caravaggio and Georges de La Tour to create for her this benevolent chiaroscuro—the studio props fade out and there remains a drama of light of the *tenebrismo* painters—the thick night of Caravaggio dissolves into a tenderer, more starlit night of the Nativity—she will become enveloped in the warmer shadows of Rembrandt—a youth of Giorgione will move through a drama evolved from the musical images of "Also Sprach Zarathustra" of Strauss, from the opening sunburst of sound through the subterranean passages into the lyrical soaring of the theme (apotheosis of compassion) and into the mystical night—the thunderous procession of the festival clouds of Debussy passes—the crusader of "Comrade X" becomes the "Man in Armor" of Carpaccio—in the hall lights of a prison dungeon she lies broken in spirit upon her improvised bed of straw, a hand guarding her tear-stained features—the bitter heartbreak gives place to a radiance of expression that lights up her glossy surroundings—she has carried a masculine name in one picture, worn masculine garb in another, and with her hair worn shoulder length and gentle features like those portraits of Renaissance youths she has slipped effortlessly into the role of a painter herself—the *chasseur d'images*—out of the fullness of the heart the eyes speak—are alert as the eye of the camera to ensnare the subtleties and legendary loveliness of her world.

[The title of this piece is borrowed from a biography of Karl Maria von Oken who wrote in the last quarter of the century in "Der Enchanted Wanderer."]

“Enchanted Wanderer”

*excerpt from a journey album for
hedy lamarr*

BY JOSEPH CORNELL

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Or the contrasted and virile mood of "Comrade X" where she moves through the scenes lovingly by her crystal case than the gentle fabric of light that surrounds her. A closer shot shows her against the whiteness of the pillows, while a still closer one shows an expression of ineffable tenderness as, for purposes of plot, she presses and intermittently lights

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DEC. 1941–JAN. 1942

La Femme 100 Têtes*

BY MAX ERNST

Crime or miracle: a complete man. The immaculate conception that failed, failed and failed again. Then the landscape changes three times, one, two and three, and the sky takes its hat off twice, one and two. Therefore the semi-fecund lamb dilating at will his abdomen becomes a ewe and Loplop, the best bird, brings the mighty repast to the streetlamps in the basin of Paris. At the same time: the immaculate conception.

* * *

Extreme unction for extreme youth. The great St. Nicolas, followed by impeccable parasites, is led by his two lateral appendices. Remember: to disemboweled baby dove-cote is open, and when one sees a charming little insect with metallic hair, then the unconsciousness of the landscape becomes complete. Here in preparation the first touches of grace and games without issue. Bring the wash to a boil and

*Ernst studies—even that of Werner Spies on the autobiographical Loplop cycle (*Max Ernst: Loplop*, Braziller, 1983)—give no information on the status of this text or its translation except to indicate that it was published here for the first time. The title is that of Ernst's collage novel of 1929, published in Paris with a preface by Breton. Its English rendition as "the hundred-headless woman" is unfortunate, carrying none of the resonance of the French, which is fourfold at least. Undoubtedly of auditory origin, "La Femme Cent/sans Têtes" is one of the most condensed and provocative puns of all time. It connotes simultaneously "the woman with 100 heads" and "the woman without a head" (this reads a shade differently than the compressed "headless woman"), as well as "the hundred-breasted woman" (*tettes*, phonetically, which means teats) and thus the woman without breasts. —C. N.

increase the charm of transportation and the silence of bleeding wounds, and go on and on with the daytime games, twilight and nocturnal. Odor of dried flowers—or I want to be Queen of Sheba. *Germinal*, my sister, the 100-headless woman. In a cage in the background: God the father. New series of daytime games, twilight and nocturnal. Continuation! Continuation! During the day angelic caresses retire to secret regions near the poles. Continuation! *Fiesta* coiled in bracelets around branches—*Prometheus*—the 100-headless woman opens her august sleeves. (This monkey, could he by chance be Catholic?) The exorbitant recompense: *Perturbation*, my sister, the 100-headless woman.

* * *

Without a word and in any weather: magic light. Without a word and in any weather: obscure lessons. Sunday phantoms shriek. Dear granny! In cadence more than one passing notary lets his voice drop. Suddenly *Loplop* reappears with the mouse's horoscope. When the third mouse sits, the body of a legendary grown-up woman flies by. Then let me introduce you to my uncle whose beard we love to tickle on Sunday afternoons. We had hardly strangled the uncle when the marvelous young women flew away. Call it witchcraft or some macabre joke, when suddenly a wide cry of the great diameter stifles the fruits and meat in their coffins. We'll begin then with a little family-party, with physical culture or the death that you prefer. Have a rapid look at the hibernians of this island and catch the numb train (registration of baggage is worth title of nobility). Open your bag, my brave man, catch the yacht and see the rising sap. *Loplop* the swallow passes. Nourishing themselves on liquid dreams and quite resembling sleeping leaves, here are my seven sisters together. *Loplop* the swallow returns.

Loplop the best bird chases in terror the last vestiges of the communal devotion, the sphinx and the daily bread visit the convent and God the father, his beard furrowed with lightning, continues in a subway catastrophe.

Loplop meets the belle jardinière.

Almost alone with phantoms and ants: *Germinal*, my sister, the 100-headless woman. The moon is beautiful. And the volcanic women with a menacing air raise and agitate the backpart of their bodies.

* * *

Nothing can stop the passing smile which accompanies the crimes from one sex to the other, the unlimited meetings and robust effervescences in the supposedly poisoned wheel, and public discharges at any place (all places equal). And *Loplop*, the best bird, made himself fleshless flesh to live amongst us. His smile will be elegantly sober. His arm will be drunkness, his sting fire. His look will descend straight into the debris of the parched cities.

Living alone on her phantom-globe, beautiful garbed in her dreams, *Perturbation*, my sister, the 100-headless woman. Every bloody revolt will make her live endowed with grace and truth. Her smile, the fire, will fall like black jelly and white rust on the flanks of the mountain, and her phantom-globe will find us at every halting place.

* * *

Lighter than air, powerful and isolated: *Perturbation*, my sister, the 100-headless woman.

But the waves are bitter, the truth will remain simple and gigantic wheels will furrow the bitter waves. And the images will descend even to the ground. Every Friday the titans will travel over our laundries in a rapid flight with many hooks. And nothing will be more common than a titan in a restaurant. In the blindness of the wheelwrights we will find the germs of very precious visions. The blacksmiths, grey, black or volcanic, will turn in the air over the forges and forge crowns even larger as they rise higher.

More powerful than vulcans, light and isolated, *Perturbation*, my sister, the 100-headless woman. *Perturbation*, elevation, diminishment. Rumbling of drums in the stones, dilapidations, *Aurora* and a phantom excessively meticulous. Tranquility of ancient and future assassinations. Pieces of conviction.

* * *

The departure for the miraculous fishing-voyage.

More isolated than the sea, always light and strong, Perturbation, my sister, the 100-headless woman.

Here is thirst, that resembles me, the miraculous fishing, clamors and love, the jubilant and gracious thunder, the master of the night, the sea of serenity, the elegant gesture of the drowned, serenity, the sea of jubilation.

* * *

The night howls in its hiding-place and approaches our eyes like wounded flesh.

A door opens itself backwards by the night of silence. A bodiless body places himself parallel to his body and shows us—like a phantomless phantom with particular saliva—the matrix for postage stamps. Two bodiless bodies place themselves parallel to their bodies, falling out of beds and curtains—like phantomless phantoms.

* * *

The 100-headless woman would smile in her sleep so that Loplop might smile at the phantoms.

Loplop, drunk with fright and fury, recovers his birdshead and remains immobile for 12 days at both sides of the door. Then the forest opens itself before an accomplished couple followed by a blind body.

To evoke the seventh age which succeeds the ninth birth, Germinal of the invisible eyes, the moon and Loplop trace ovals with their heads. At this moment the phantoms enter a period of voracity. Sometimes naked, sometimes clad in thin jets of fire, they make the geysers spout with the probability of bloodrain and with the vanity of the dead. To the glamour of their scales they prefer the dust of carpets, to the masturbation of fresh leaves, the pious lies. But they escape with fear as soon as the rumbling of drums is heard under the water. They pick up some dry crackers in the hollows of the giant's causeway. The giant's causeway is a pile of cradles.

* * *

Therefore the phantom remains who speculates with the vanity of death, the phantom of repopulation. All the doors are doors and the butterflies start to sing. After a slight hesitation, you will identify among these phantoms: Pasteur in his workroom, the monkey who is a future policeman, Catholic or stockbroker, Phantômas, Dante and Jules Verne, Cézanne and Rosa Bonheur, Mata Hari, St. Lazarus gloriously resuscitated from the dromedary's droppings.

Let it hereby be known, that since the memory of mankind the 100-headless woman has never had relations with the phantom of repopulation. She will never have. Rather would she macerate herself in morning dew and nourish herself with iced violets.

* * *

Let us thank Satan and be happy for the sympathy he has shown us (bis).

Eyeless eye, the 100-headless woman keeps her secret (ter).

Eyeless eye, the 100-headless woman and Loplop go back to the savage stage and cover the eyes of their faithful birds with fresh leaves. God the almighty tries in vain to separate light from darkness.

Eyeless eye, the 100-headless woman keeps her secret.

She keeps her secret.

She keeps it.

Rome—Rome—Paris—marsh of dreams.

Ask the monkey: who is the 100-headless woman? In the church-fathers' manner he will answer you: It suffices me to look at her and I know who she is. It suffices for you to demand of me an explanation, and I no longer know.

Loplop the sympathetic annihilator and ancient best bird shoots some elderballs into some debris of the universe.

END AND CONTINUATION

OCT.—NOV. 1941

View Listens

selected letters: 1942

SURREALISM AND THE MOMENT

Dear Ford:

By your persistence you are beginning to prove something, AND you're creating the impossible magazine of the arts no one could have dreamed. You know how many plans there are for making a new magazine. Everyone is trying. That is why they fail. You are not trying. That is why you succeed.

The exhausted world is like an exhausted individual. Take a mother who is closed in day in and day out with a diabolic child of her own creating. She goes mad. Every doctor who knows anything about his business when such a mother brings such a child to him at once faces her with the statement: You are the patient, not the infant. What the infant needs is a ten acre lot and a fat negress in the center of it in a reclining chair.

But to return to the mother. She is now a confirmed neurasthenic. She says, I try my best! That's the whole trouble. She tries. She tries this, she tries that. She tries to give the child the right diet, she tries to stop his masturbating habits, etc. The doctor's answer is, Don't try!

Don't try! Put the dinner on the table and let him know it's there. Ignore him, etc., etc. But the principal thing is, Don't try. Thus you have made a relaxed magazine, a normal, a healthy magazine: by not trying. To me (though I do not claim it to be a profound opinion) Surrealism is just that: Don't try. An incentive to creation.

Only in the unknown lies the inevitable. To me Surrealism is to disclose without trying. Only thus shall we get a healthy literature. If we try to stop bad habits, perversions, amputations, falsehoods—we shall get only high pathology, the organs on an

enameled dish . . . I play too much, I talk too much. I am probably right.

Brilliant articles cry out to be written. Why bother? No one would read them. The thing is, make the things that such world shaking deductions would imply and OMIT the deductions. There's a nice word, OMIT. It looks odd. Truncated. Rather close to VOMIT. It might save the world. Omit trying too hard, just enter and look about and do, etc., etc.

The thing seems to be that *View* might become anything; that is what I admire about it. It's not a party organ and has no more relation to SURREALISM than that has to the moment, and no less. When it becomes sold on some viewpoint and fixes itself there, you can have it.

William Carlos Williams

MAY 1942

"A PIN-HOLE VIEW"

Wednesday (after reading View, 11-12)

Dear Charles Henri Ford,

I like *View*, more and more. Especially Parker Tyler's piece on the *Château d'Argol*, which I will have to read several times, and Leonora Carrington's story.

If *View* grows bigger I hope you will keep the same format—it is just right. The title (and contents) always suggest to my mind a pin-hole view through a black curtain. I would keep it thus. Reminds me of those stories of Tibetan sages, saints and seers, who, after months of confinement in a dark cell, make a tiny pin-hole in the wall to let in the faintest stream of light. Why don't you reserve a permanent page for Death, for Mystery, for Magic, etc.? Why don't you devote a whole issue to Paracelsus, to Nostradamus, to Pythagoras, et alia? Why not give Parker Tyler a roving commission to write about anything and everything, from twigs to nebular gases? Why not give reviews of books nobody reads? Long, exhaustive studies. Why not give reviews of mythical films which never appeared, but which might have, or ought have? Why not some writings from the insane, together with some scientific hocuspocus by the medicos? Why not publish certain things in the original—German or French or Spanish? Why not



Bone Forms, Picasso (Beinecke Library)

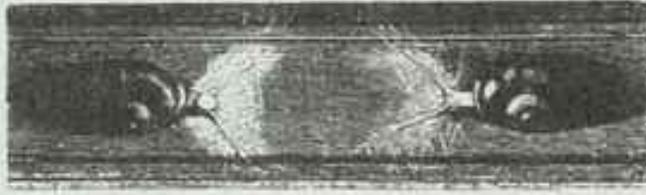
give descriptions of the world after the war, as imagined by the various political fanatics? Why not ask for "recipes" of annihilating weapons, poisons, gases—suggestions for total annihilation of the enemy? What books would you recommend for reading during a bombardment? Do you believe that children should continue to be educated in wartime—or should they be put to useful employment? Do we need money any more, and if so, why? Should Congress be disbanded or incarcerated? Should men and women fight together or in separate groups? Should we evacuate our big cities before or after bombardment? Should we carry on as usual, or should we turn everything upside down and make Death king? How would you go about it—if war were the sole reality?

Don't give us any bigger *View* for the moment. Anything bigger than a pin-hole in the curtain of darkness might bring a light which would blind us. I would suggest that someone commit hari-kari in an orange spotlight—for the next number.

Henry Miller

MAY 1942

VIEW



"through the eyes of poets"



M A X E R N S T

N U M B E R

The Legendary Life of Max Ernst

*preceded by a brief discussion on
the need for a new myth*

BY ANDRÉ BRETON

My old friend the President de Brosses,¹ as we were finishing the delightful dinner which he tendered me the other day in New York (he, too, had been forced to leave Europe, the Italians never having forgiven him his irreverences) said to me—and my shoulder gave way under the crushing weight of his hand:

“Are you sure, my dear fellow, that things have come to such a pass? For then mankind would be more than ever in the dark; you are trying to take me in. And there are those clever fellows—you yourself called them to my attention—sanctioning the resort to a controlled idolatry! But these gentlemen of the College of Sociology who have set things going in Paris² assume a heavy responsibility in trying to codify the pure stupidity of the people. In my day, free men with good sense . . .”

He was quite flushed. This was not the first time I had tried to show him to what degree his attitude involved the anachronistically aristocratic and, what is more, sheer inconsistency. “My dear President, from this point of universal history at which we have now arrived (1942) it remains for the ignorant and credulous ‘lower classes’ to pay the expenses of military ventures. Nations, since nations still exist, are hurled periodically against each other. Nothing has changed to such a point that one must admit that their divinities, their fairly simple

¹We are indebted to him for: *Du culte des dieux fetiches, Lettres sur l'Italie, etc.*

²Cf. *Vertical*, 1941, Eugene Jolas, editor.

ideals—or, as you put it so well, their fetishes—or more exactly, the degree of faith and exaltation they place in them, do not decide, to a considerable extent, the issue of battles, and hence the respective fates of philosophies, finally of everything we care about.”

M. de Brosses looked through the window and when he could not locate his famous mail coach, cursed. “Come, come. That’s all nonsense. Egyptian civilization is threatened and some sages propose as a remedy the creation of a new religion! We must first of all preserve from decadence the cults of the dog, the cat, the lizard and the onion!” (His laughter sounded all over the room and it was a long time before it died out.) “But you are not going to tell me that your friends believe they can invent this religion out of the whole cloth?”

“They are somewhat indefinite about that. For my part, I have often reflected on the fact that the average man, in France for example, derived less and less support from secular beliefs and institutions during the last twenty years. No further point can be reached in the process which has separated the symbol from the thing for which it stands. Very well then, making a clean break with all that benefits only from external marks of veneration or respect, I do not fear to say that I have seen engendered—oh! after how many attempts!—the embryo of new signification. Why should one refuse to seek among the poets and artists of today for what has always been found, from far off, among their precursors, why should not their evolution translate into a decipherable code what ought to be, what will be? . . . Notice what is strange about the attitude of these people: nobody could be more skeptical with regard to received ideas, but see how attentive they become, as if they were listening to new prophets, when it is a question of a teaching which is not yet current, this teaching I tell you, they grasp piecemeal. The prophets are Rimbaud, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, many others: only yesterday there were more than enough of them to agitate the schools. You cannot deny that some of them handle imperatives powerful enough to deflect the course of a young man’s life and to decide the adoption of heroic careers. This much I can assure you of. The obscurity of their language as it reflects their exhortation is not different in kind from that of John or Daniel. Notice, too, that the most active

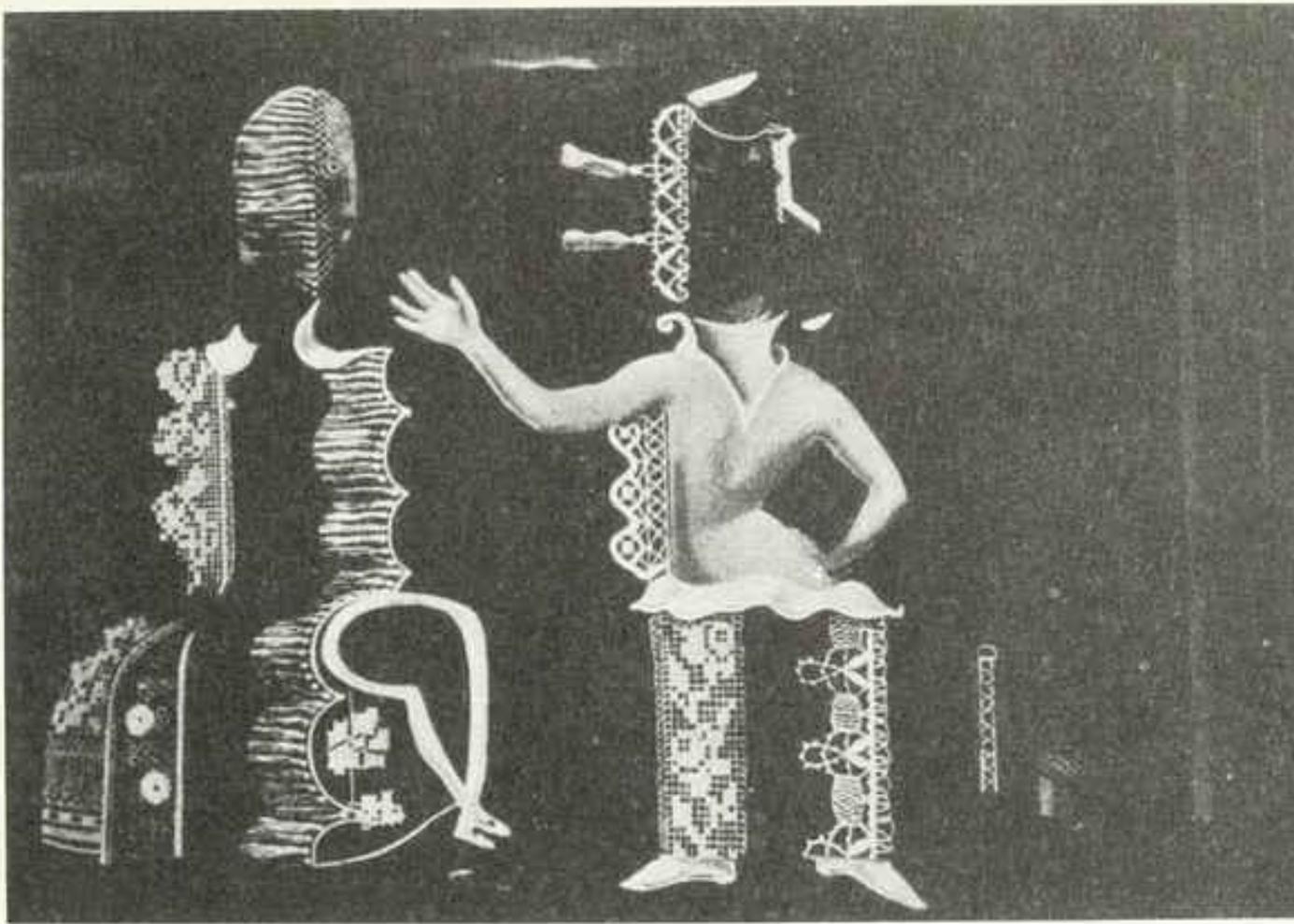
are those who have left no portraits: Sade, Lautréamont, or those who have left ambiguous testaments: Sade, Lautréamont,³ Seurat. You see, I cannot grant you that mythology is only the recital of the acts of the dead: I who speak to you have lived to see disengaged from the banal transcription of his deeds the life of one of my dearest friends, Max Ernst. Here the eyewitness I could be yields voluntarily to the adept: I consider the work of Max Ernst pregnant with facts destined to be realized on the plane of reality; what is more, I believe that it prefigures the very order in which these facts are destined to appear. Have we not known for a long time that the riddle of the sphinx says much more than it seems to say? and the labors of Hercules, and the Golden Fleece? If I held the pen of the great bards . . .”

The President was dozing. “Max Ernst? But isn’t he fond of beautiful thighs? Incidentally, could you take me to a burlesque show?”

* * *

Not in vain it is supposed of Max Ernst that he was born in Cologne, on one of the coils of that liquid serpent which is pleased as no other to excite the sword, the Rhine in which enchanted girls with endless blond hair comb themselves when you are twenty years old. No matter what alibi he deems it wise to present, his *mother-wit* was clearly identified four centuries earlier in another who started from the same city: the arch-sorcerer himself, the great Cornelius Agrippa. One trait suffices to distinguish the wit which these two alone share: that sort of omniscience which achieves balance by means of its gift for satire and mystification and creates what the vulgar understand as “humor.” There should exist in some barn with starry windows, hung with a thousand canvases, a not yet discovered portrait of the great Master in the visor of the crescent moon conversing with the Bird which plies the shuttle for all plumage and shields the highest note of mockery. It is fitting that Max Ernst be recognized first of all in this unique Bird. After that each one can behold the

³Poesies



Le Couple, Max Ernst

argus of his message whose blaze lights up the very abysses of the time in which we live.

Max Ernst, midway between his birth and us, is easily recognized in an image from the work *British Goblins* by Wirt Sykes published in Boston in 1881. This image is supposed to represent "Master Proca" who fills the high office of *phantom of the mines*; he crackles in the blows of the pickaxe and suspends himself from the car of those miners who are not expected by wives and fine children down below in the grass.

Later on, in order not to lose sight of him, I ran into him in the Tyrol. He could not, come to think of it, have chosen to appear before me anywhere else. For it was St. John's day, the day when they cut the diviner's rod. The rod is called Gaspard, Balthazar or Melchior in accordance with whether it reveals gold or silver or discovers hidden springs.

But for me the spirit of Max Ernst, as I understood it from that moment, could never be a prisoner of the human envelope, or, for that matter, of any kind of elegance. But you would not want to see Satan made up like an actor for the role of Mephistopheles! By his first signs in 1919 I understood that he was here for

something else again. In these signs a prosaic and routine criticism could discover nothing more than "collages"; but here were fabulous visiting cards! The Bird, "Master Proca" and Melchior spoke to me with one voice, better still they spread out before my eyes treasures gathered from the depths of the air, the earth and the seas. And all these treasures were telescoped without loss, I say they divested themselves of every trace of usury. Flaws of light opened in the most opaque masses even as the heart shows itself without reason in images of piety or love. The galled flight of the bird, the always more profound pump, and the mounting of the mine elevator determined a *totally unsuspected* meeting place where were confronted and married the forms of sidereal beasts, of germination, of mechanical traction, of blossoming crystals, as well as, devil take it, the somewhat anodyne pattern of the wallpaper in my room and the bundle of shadow that falls from my hat. *First commandment*: Let everything be rid of its shell (its distance, its comparative grandeur, its physical and chemical properties, its affectation). Not in the depth of the cave put your faith, but in the surface of an egg.

Then, one day, Max Ernst—on this day he wore a magnificent black velvet necktie much bigger than he; since the knot corresponded to his throat his face was detached on the upper triangle—went for a walk with me in Paris. It goes without saying that we were accompanied by the cricket of the sewers, which, since Lautréamont, has the task of magnetizing “flourishing capitals,” and, alas, “brings them to a lethargic condition in which they are incapable of looking after themselves as they should.” Our steps took us to the prophetically somber quai de Bercy, to the Halle-aux-Vins, streaked with sour and dizzying gusts, to the Châtelet, where you are confronted by the hedge of orthopedic gadgets which ingeniously exert themselves to prop man up, to the slaughterhouses of la Villette, where the sky looks at the blouses of the cattledrivers. At dawn Max Ernst got back to the abandoned reservoir which he had chosen for his home; it is not far from where the outside boulevards cut the Saint-Martin canal. Clear and level with us a nude woman in a black velvet mask skated without changing place. 1921–22–23 went by. *Second commandment*: Wander, the wings of augury will attach themselves to your heels.

Then, unexpectedly, a fearful event: those with hurts were carried off, rape was committed in broad daylight, woman herself was walled up, the ram of spring hung his head, even the nightingale was in-



volved and for the first time appeared malevolent. What had happened? That which results from a great hope followed by a terrible depression. Look into the history of human societies. Max Ernst, in the armor of the Black Prince, crossed the stage. In spite of everything, anyone who listened attentively could hear the singing.

It was then that he made his marvelous retreat to the forest. A hermit? yes, and more beset than any saint, folded with woman into a single case of flesh. The sun's sole concern was to crown this forest—the shafts of the trees pressed closer together to prevent anything from entering from the outside. Here we touch on the great secret. Have you observed a lyrebird in the throes of love performing its mimetic dance in the fern? The only emotion which reaches out as far as the eye can see is the emotion of this bird, and, yes, that of the sensitive plant. *Third commandment*: Put it far beyond your reach and you shall not cease to create your desire.

Silence. Then Max Ernst made his presence felt by a sudden tumultuous reappearance “in the basin of Paris.” In the guise of a large bird he took the name of Loplop, sometimes known as “the swallow.” With the help of a superb young female, Perturbation, whom he referred to as “My sister, the hundred-headless woman,” he gave himself over with impunity to the vilest crimes against the human self. “Drunkennes shall be his weapon, fire his bite”: this program was methodically carried out. Here was the ultraneronian dream, the *sack* of all successive Romes. Only the beauty of woman, guarantor of the eternity of art, can be ennobled by sacrifice. These systematic depredations continued throughout the following year. The devils of Loudun made less commotion than those which a new emissary of “the sympathetic annihilator,” the little Marceline-Marie brought with her to Carmel. Max Ernst as a young priest: in 1731 he officiated at night in the cemetery of Saint-Medard. *Fourth commandment*: (already promulgated, always valid) Beauty will be convulsive, or not be.

That's all over, like the Flood. The laboratories were opened again: eggs and flowers were re-

discovered in the foam. From the thicket imperfectly differentiated beings began to emerge. Atop old and crumbling walls profuse scenes were organized in the elective light of nitre. The vulture whose unsuspected presence in Leonardo's *Virgin of the Rocks* had been detected, pursued its own course (it was already Loplop in the 15th century). After some majestic evolutions above the flotsam—passing by he presented *A Young Girl* (1931)—he penetrated to the mountains where we could see him reappear as a god in plate of gold between the six arms of his Sakti. Travelers who have come back from this region speak of transparent men, winged by asceticism, who cover impossible distances by abrupt routes. Max Ernst ruled for several years over these solitary effects of tender caresses, gentle and perverse as the heart of the Sakti, of matter born ceaselessly from matter and engendering the *Spirit* capable of dominating it. *Fifth commandment*: Deny yourself. Revelation is the daughter of refusal.

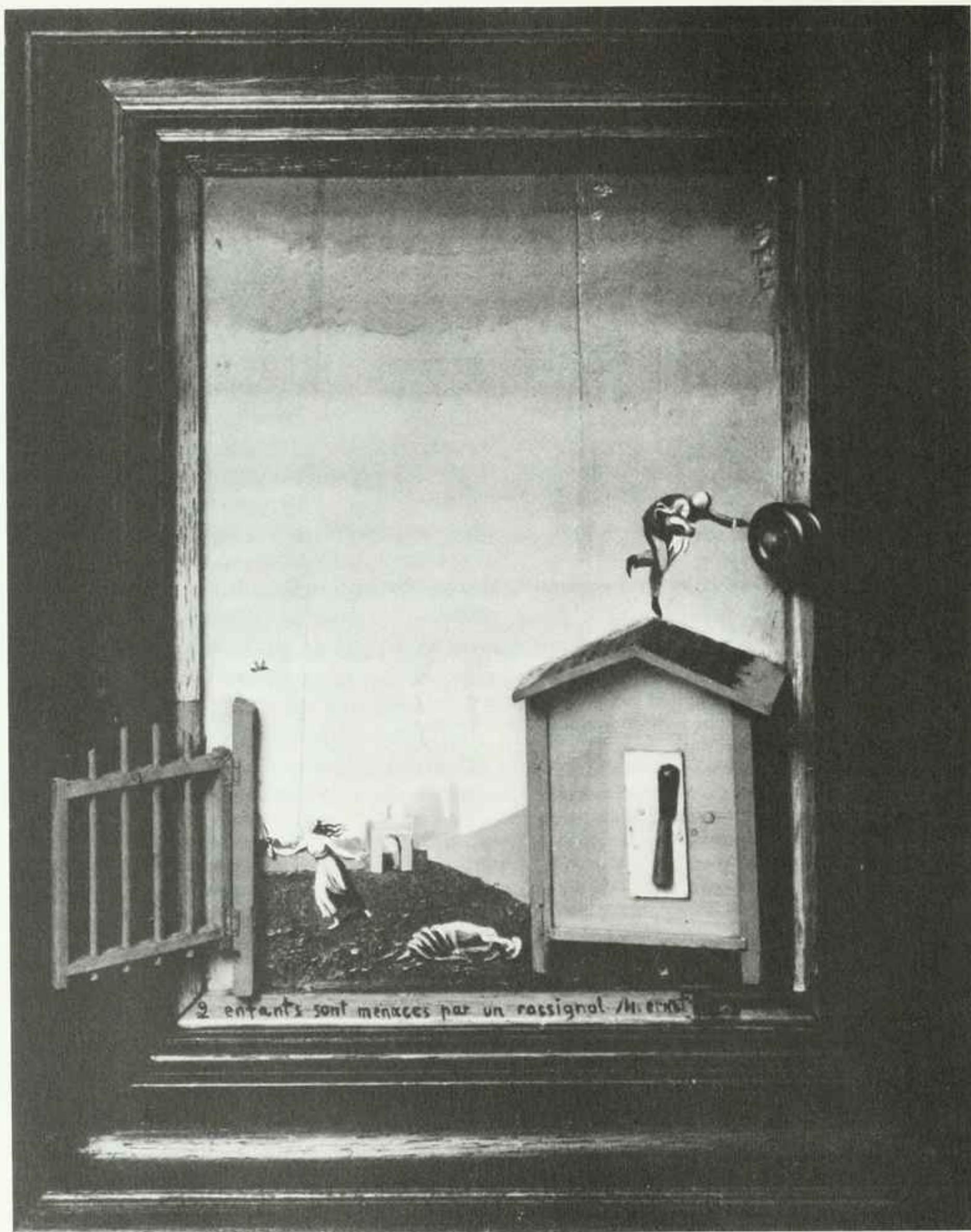
But even snow is not the most perfect element for certain carnivorous plants. Here is Max Ernst, further on in time, next to Semiramis. Here are hanging gardens in which gigantic and invisible nepenthes have been planted—it is the last word in the art of

sieges. The future aeroplanes are swallowed up like flies, and what a discovery: technical progress is arrested in its contradictory course, death *delegated by man* is no more! Restoring death and progress to their middle peak, we see the mantis in ghostly attitude, then Max Ernst. Hopes. The scene shifts: this is the jungle which bore the human jungle. First ages. A tribunal is set up in the obscure web of liane. The Great Naive Spirits: we recognize the two Rousseaus (Jean-Jacques and Henri), Jean-Paul Brisset, Benjamin Péret, in the center, Max Ernst. *Sixth commandment*: Whatever happens, never doubt.

By all these sluices emotion returns and overflows like the waters that Max Ernst tried to conjure up during *une semaine de Bonté*. It seizes him like a great sunflower to lift him from the caves to the highest summit of being itself: the story of a man. Take care: the torrent carries with it the autobiographical detail which one is weak enough to want to guard like the apple of one's eye. The totem pole continues to look at the sea. The stallion regards the sea mare with tenderness and terror. Love is always before you, love (*seventh and to this day the last commandment*).

[translated by Lionel Abel]

APR. 1942



2 enfants sont menacés par un rassignol, Max Ernst

Journey into a Painting

by Ernst

BY SIDNEY JANIS

Perhaps no work represents a focal point in the metamorphosis of Surrealism to the same degree as *2 enfants sont menacés par un rassignol*. Made in 1924, the year of the first Surrealist manifesto, it records for the future the moment of the birth of Surrealism. A manifesto in paint, it speaks of the past, recalling the poetry and mystery of early Chirico, the revolutionary upheaval of *collage*, the violent cleansing of Dada; it speaks of the future, forecasting the crescendo of Surrealist search into the unknown.

The year 1911 saw in Cubism the inception of *collage* through the introduction of the printed letter, and the same year Chirico began to create his nostalgic and metaphysical landscapes. Though these two fountainheads are at opposite poles, one structural and classic, the other poetic and romantic, both chronicle the mysterious world. Picasso in his *collage* pictures did this by penetrating beyond the externals of commonplace objects and expected relationships; Chirico presented uncommon objects and images in extraordinary relationships.

It was in 1917, Chirico's last fruitful year and Ernst's first, that Ernst began his Dada works. The technique of *collage* which he employed from the beginning has ever since been a source of technical and ideational discovery for him. But it was not until 1924, in this picture, that Ernst merged with his own spirit of Dada the obliquely perceived emotions of Chirico and the full impetus of Freud and made of them a fresh germinating source. It is this picture which foretells Tanguy's removed sphere of spun

myths, Dali's Freudian content and "paranoiac" images, Ernst's own realm of the marvelous as we have come to see it unfold through the years that followed.

The title of the painting, *2 enfants sont menacés par un rossignol*, a literary extension of the picture itself, is a clue to its meaning. Ernst's *deux enfants* are adolescent girls frightened by the nightingale winging overhead. To the songbird, timeless symbol of masculine persuasiveness, the young girls respond oppositely, one fainting in ecstasy, the other fighting off the "menace," paradoxically, with a knife. The configuration of the bird, repeated close up, becomes a figure of a man carrying a young child and alighting storklike upon the rooftop.

These figures enact a dream ballet as the bird and the man holding the child glide in one direction, and the girl wielding the knife, in another; while the prone figure in complete relaxation is a foil to these opposing movements.

The episode transpires within a landscape colored by prismatic hues out of the world of Chirico, brilliant green earth, pink orange house and gate, a pink wall that recedes to the horizon, and a bleached green sky rising through darkening gradations to become eventually deep violet blue.

In the same way that the bird and man paraphrase each other, the image of the keyhole within the rectangle on the shack is repeated in the form of the archway within the arch in the background. Then, the tiny statue with uplifted arm standing atop the arch casts a huge shadow which in turn becomes a temple set against the sky. Projecting the characteristics of one object upon another, Ernst has confounded their commonplace identities and supplanted them with new ones. These practices, subsequently used and developed by Dali, became part of the activity he termed "paranoiac."

In 1935, Dali painted a *Nostalgic Echo*, obviously of this very picture by Max Ernst. Eleven years divided the two paintings; still the lapse of time has not interrupted a continuity of idea which takes place between them. For now we have the next sequence of events. Ernst's adolescent with the knife appears again in the Dali, her gesture identical but free of her

earlier emotional tension. We find her contentedly skipping rope, her contour and movement echoed in the belfry as a ringing bell. And here it is the nightingale that is menaced. It alights, and as it does, a shadow moves toward it in the form of a snare. This shadow-snare is thrown by the girl and the rope. Finally, the nimble-footed man no longer leaps the rooftops—he is brought to earth to brood in the shadow of his own senility. Relegated to a humble corner of the foreground portal, he is a sorry sight, while in the belfry-tower which repeats the image of the portal, the feminine form triumphantly dominates the aperture, swinging against the sky. The play of ideas in the two pictures is like a Surrealist game in which one participant carries on where the other leaves off.

* * *

Then the game takes a turn. Continuity of idea is replaced by interpenetration of idea. Ernst's father and child in proximity to the knob on the frame, which is a mother symbol, creates a family unit. This representation carries us to another Dali painting, *Illuminated Pleasures*, 1929, where the family unit appears again. However, the symbol is now the father, being portrayed as a lion's head, and the mother and child are realistically presented but metamorphose into a brimful cup. All of this transpires, as in the Ernst, on top of a construction against the sky. So much for the game.

* * *

Returning to *2 enfants* . . . we explore what might be called the *psycho-pictorial* experience. It is to the anarchy of technical means that the picture owes the full impact of the Freudian symbols and dream atmosphere. Ernst has nailed to the frame a gate and the knob referred to above; to the panel on which the picture is painted, a shack protruding at a sharp angle. The wall creates an illusion of deep space. Conversely, proceeding from out of the distant background, the wall is oncoming, and led by the shack, breaks through the surface of the picture, producing a shock which momentarily freezes the observer

in his tracks as one is held transfixed by a rapidly oncoming train. Shades of three-dimensional films!

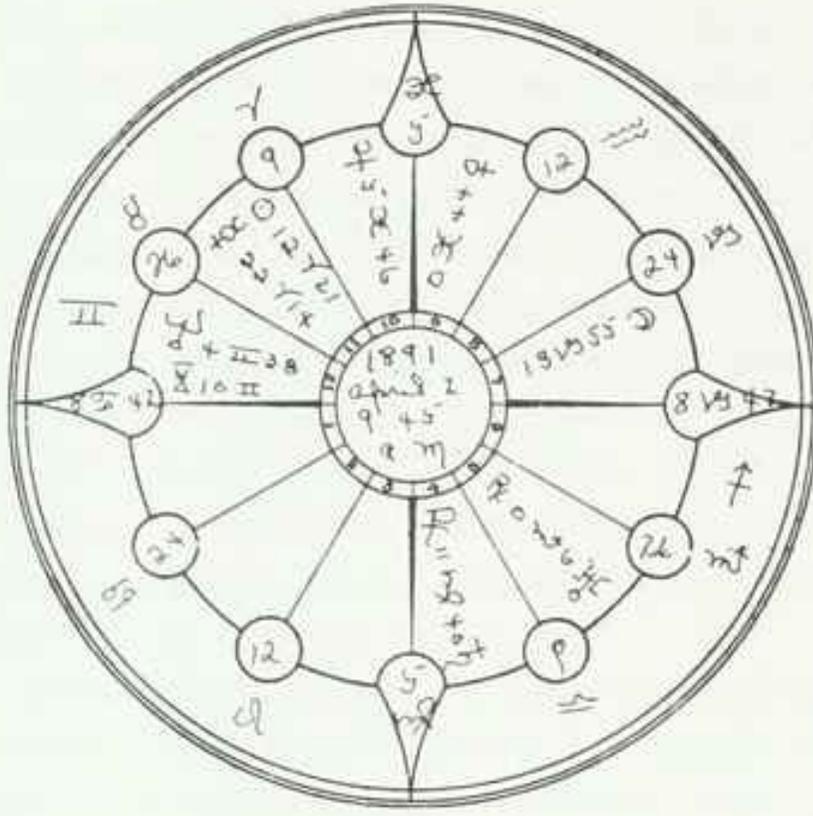
Accepting recession as valid, Ernst at the same time accepts the validity of space projecting forward and out of the picture plane. As if to emphasize this, he swings open the gate, breaking into the vacuum that ordinarily separates the spectator from the picture. By this token the observer is given his cue to enter the world of the painting. Moreover, the mother

symbol on the picture frame invites the touch so compellingly as to make inevitable the gesture of the man on the roof reaching for it. The very fact that this tactile experience is unconsummated creates within the spectator an irritability so strong that he is urged involuntarily to complete the gesture, that is, to grasp the knob, which, through multiplicity of suggestion now becomes a handle, opening the door to unknown worlds that may lie beyond.

APR. 1942



Portrait of M.E., *Leonora Carrington*



Some Data on the Youth of M. E.

AS TOLD BY HIMSELF

The 2nd of April (1891) at 9:45 a.m. Max Ernst had his first contact with the sensible world, when he came out of the egg which his mother had laid in an eagle's nest and which the bird had brooded for seven years. It happened in Brühl, 6 miles south of Cologne. Max grew up there and became a beautiful child. His childhood is marked by some dramatic incidents, but was not particularly unhappy.

Cologne was a former Roman colony called *Colonia Claudia Agrippina* and later the most radiant medieval culture center of the Rhineland. It is still haunted by the splendid magician Cornelius Agrippa, who was born there and by Albert the Great, who worked and died in this town. The craniums and bones of three other magi: Jasper, Melchior and Balthazar, the wise men of the East, are preserved in the dome cathedral. Every year, the 6th of January, their golden, sumptuously jeweled coffin is shown to the public with extraordinary pagan pomp. Eleven thousand virgins gave up their lives in Cologne rather than give up chastity. Their gracious skulls and bones embellish the walls of the convent church in Brühl, the same one where little Max was forced to pass the most boring hours of his childhood. Maybe their company was helpful to him.

Cologne is situated just on the border of a wine-producing region. North of Cologne is Beerland, south is wineland (Rhineland). Are we what we drink? If so it may be important to state that Max always preferred wine. When he was two years old, he secretly emptied some glasses, then he took his

father by the hand, showed him the trees in the garden and said "Look, Daddy, they move." When later he learned the story of the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), he had the impression that this was a war of beer drinkers against wine drinkers. Perhaps he was right.

The geographical, political and climatic conditions of Cologne may be propitious to create fertile conflicts in a sensible child's brain. There is the crosspoint of the most important European culture tendencies, early Mediterranean influence, western rationalism, eastern inclination to occultism, northern mythology, Prussian categorial imperative, ideals of the French Revolution and so on. In Max Ernst's work one can recognize a continuous powerful drama of those contradictory tendencies. Maybe one day some elements of a new mythology will spring out of this drama.

Little Max's first contact with painting occurred in 1894 when he saw his father at work on a small watercolor entitled "Solitude" which represented a hermit sitting in a beechforest and reading a book. There was a terrifying, quiet atmosphere in this "Solitude" and in the manner it was treated. Every one of the thousand of beech leaves was scrupulously and minutely executed, every one of them had its individual solitary life. The monk was terrifically absorbed by the content of his book, so that he represented something living outside the world. Even the sound of the word "hermit" exercised a shuddering magic power on the child's mind. (The same thing happened to him at this time by the sound of the words "Charcoal-Monk-Peter" and "Rumpelstilzkin.") Max never forgot the enchantment and terror he felt, when a few days later his father conducted him for the first time into the forest. One may find the echo of this feeling in many of Max Ernst's *Forests and Jungles* (1925–1942).

(1896) Little Max made a series of drawings. They represented father, mother, the one-year-older sister Maria, himself, two younger sisters Emmy and Louise, a friend named Fritz and the railroad guardian, all of them standing, only the six-month-old Louise sitting (too young for standing). In the sky an

abundantly smoking train. When someone asked him: "What will you become later?" little Max regularly answered: "A railroad guardian." Maybe he was seduced by the nostalgia provoked by passing trains and the great mystery of telegraphic wires which move when you look at them from a running train and stand still when you stand still. To scrutinize the mystery of the telegraphic wires (and also to flee from the father's tyranny) five-year-old Max escaped from his parents' house. Blue-eyed, blond-curly-haired, dressed in a red night shirt, carrying a whip in the left hand, he walked in the middle of a pilgrims' procession. Enchanted by this charming child and believing it was the vision of an angel or even the infant of the virgin, the pilgrims proclaimed "Look, little Jesus Christ." After a mile or so little Jesus Christ escaped from the procession, directed himself to the station and had a long and delightful trip beside the railroad and the telegraphic wires.

To appease father's fury, when the next day a policeman brought him home, little Max proclaimed that he was sure he was little Jesus Christ. This candid remark inspired the father to make a portrait of his son as a little Jesus child, blue-eyed, blond-curly-haired, dressed in a red night shirt, blessing the world with the right hand and bearing the cross—instead of the whip—in his left.

Little Max, slightly flattered by this image, had however some difficulty in throwing off the suspicion that Daddy took secret pleasure in the idea of being God-the-Father, and that the hidden reason of this picture was a blasphemous pretension. Maybe Max Ernst's picture "Souvenir de Dieu" (1923) has a direct connection with the remembrance of this fact.

(1897) First contact with nothingness, when his sister Maria kissed him and her sisters goodbye and died a few hours afterwards. Since this event the feeling of nothingness and annihilating powers were predominant in his mind, in his behavior and—later—in his work.

(1897) First contact with hallucination. Measles. Fear of death and the annihilating powers. A fever vision provoked by an imitation-mahogany panel opposite his bed, the grooves of the wood taking



Max Among Some of His Favorite Dolls, *photo by James Thrall Soby*

successively the aspect of an eye, a nose, a bird's head, a *menacing nightingale*, a spinning top and so on. Certainly little Max took pleasure in being afraid of these visions and later delivered himself voluntarily to provoke hallucinations of the same kind in looking obstinately at wood panels, clouds, wall-papers, unplastered walls and so on to let his "imagination" go. When someone would ask him: "What is your favorite occupation?" he regularly answered, "Looking."

An analogous obsession conducted Max Ernst later to search for and discover some technical possibilities of drawing and painting, directly connected with the processes of inspiration and revelation (*frottage, collage, decalcomania, etc.*). Possibly "Two Children Frightened by a Nightingale" (1923) have some connection with the fever vision of 1897.

(1898) Second contact with painting. He saw his father make a painting *après nature* in the garden and finish it in his studio. Father suppressed a tree in his picture, because it disturbed the "composition." Then he suppressed the same tree in the garden so that there was no more difference between nature and art. The child felt a revolt growing in his heart against candid realism and decided to direct himself

toward a more equitable conception of the Relationship between the subjective and the objective world.

(1906) First contact with occult, magic and witchcraft powers. One of his best friends, a most intelligent and affectionate pink cockatoo, died in the night of January the 5th. It was an awful shock to Max when he found the corpse in the morning and when, at the same moment, his father announced to him the birth of sister Loni. The *perturbation* of the youth was so enormous that he fainted. In his imagination he connected both events and charged the baby with extortion of the bird's life. A series of mystical crises, fits of hysteria, exaltations and depressions followed. A dangerous confusion between birds and humans became encrusted in his mind and asserted itself in his drawings and paintings. The obsession haunted him until he erected the *Birds Memorial Monument* in 1927, and even later Max identified himself voluntarily with *Loplop, the Superior of the Birds*. This phantom remained inseparable from another one called *Perturbation ma soeur, la femme 100 têtes*.

(1906–1914) Excursions in the world of marvels, chimeras, phantoms, poets, monsters, philosophers, birds, women, lunatics, magi, trees, erotism, stones,

insects, mountains, poisons, mathematics and so on. A book that he wrote at this time was never published. His father found and burned it. The title of the book was "Divers' Manual."

(1914) Max Ernst died the 1st of August 1914. He resuscitated the 11th of November 1918 as a young man aspiring to become a magician and to find the

myth of his time. Now and then he consulted the eagle who had hatched the egg of his prenatal life. You may find the bird's advices in his work.

(1941) The bird followed the plane which brought Max to this country on the 14th of July and built his nest in a cloud on the East River.

APR. 1942

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ERNST | *Some Data on the Youth of M.E.*

V I E W *"through the eyes of poets"*
TANGUY



Covers for Tanguy/Tchelitchew issue, May 1942



Iconographer of Melancholy

BY JAMES JOHNSON SWEENEY

In Yves Tanguy we have Surrealism's iconographer of melancholy. Brittany, its skies and shore, probably supplied his basic repertory of forms. His sensibility to tone, to linear rhythms and to space relations, is the sinew of his expression. But the consistent communication of a dream mood and the fertility of reticent suggestion he achieves through forms purged of practically every conventional symbol is Tanguy's individuality.

Ideographically, Tanguy employs a private or lost language. His forms are closer to those of the menhirs and dolmens of the Armorica peninsula than to those of the world in which he paints. Yet they are frankly fantastic and imaginary. Unlike so many of his contemporaries the symbolism of his compositional elements seem to have little interest for Tanguy. He does not lean for his effect on a suggestion of specific ambiguous or incongruous associations. The mood produced by his work is a response to the manner in which he employs his pictorial means rather than to the subject matter of his compositions. The dream character and melancholy note are products of his color handling and the disposition of compositional elements in the great lonely spaces of his canvases.

Thomas de Quincey in writing of his dreams—that "power of painting, as it were, upon the darkness all sorts of phantoms"—said: "I seemed every night to descend—not metaphorically, but literally to descend—into chasms and sunless abysses, depths below depths, from which it seemed hopeless that I should ever reascend . . . The sense of space, and in the end the sense of time, were both

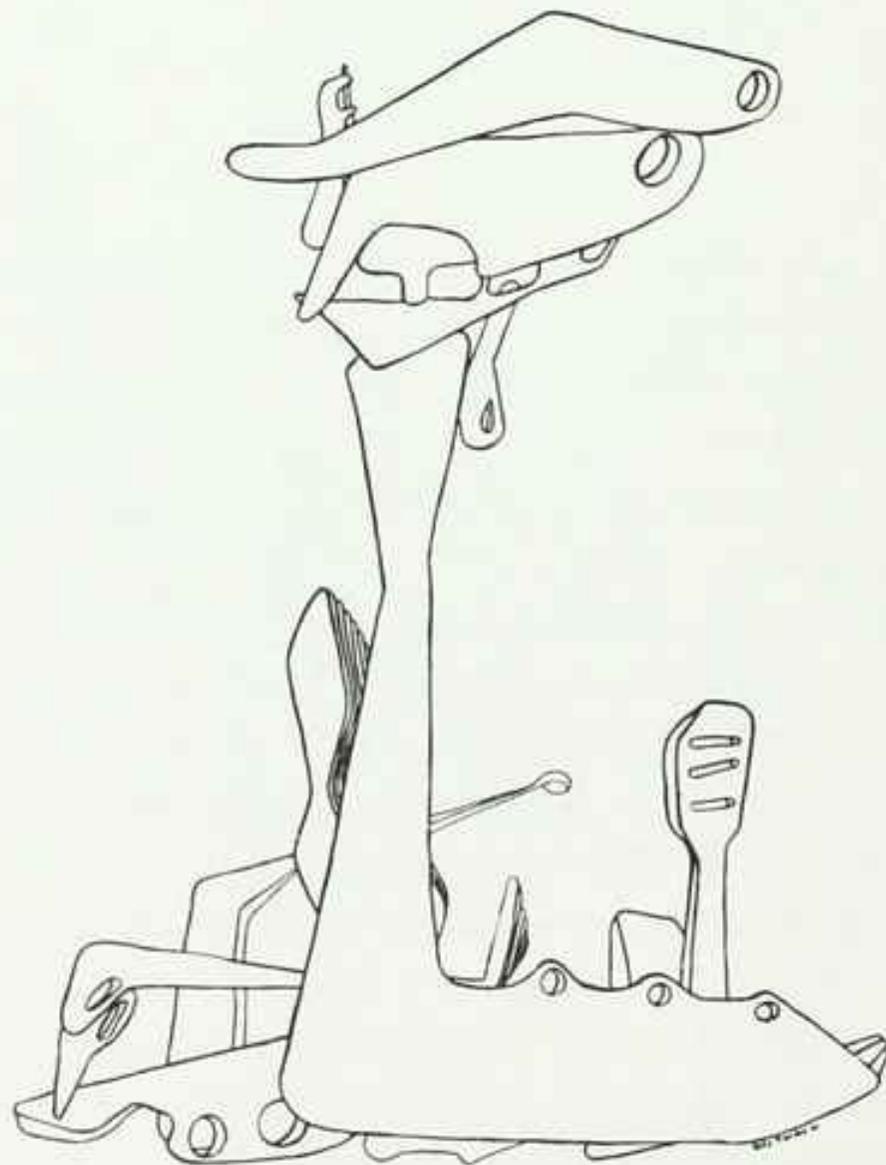
powerfully affected . . . Space swelled, and was amplified to an extent of unutterable and self-repeating infinity. This disturbed me very much less than the vast expansion of time. Sometimes I seemed to have lived for seventy or a hundred years in one night; nay, sometimes had feelings representative of a duration far beyond the limits of any human experience."

This is the world of Tanguy's painting. Yet the dream is ours as well as the artist's. He sets the stage and we dream onto it. For essentially Tanguy's art is an abstract art in the sense that his forms have been stripped of familiar individualizing resemblances to objects in the world of nature. He has retained, however, one vital factor: the fundamental logic of physical relation in the natural world. As a result we are as quickly struck by the convincing reality of his

vision as by its strangeness. No technical tricks assert themselves unduly. The haunting emptiness of space and of far horizons is effected by a subtle modulation of tones, rather than by evident perspective lines. The mood is set by the dominant grays, blues and violets of the artist's palette. Suddenly the barrier between us and the picture melts and we find ourselves building our own interpretation of the stripped forms, colored only by the melancholy note which the painter had carried always with him from the bare landscapes of his youth.

This is Tanguy's art: the production of a simple but perfect vessel into which the imagination of the spectator can flow freely and share the creative pleasure of the artist himself.

MAY 1942



Feu Flamme, Yves Tanguy

The Position of Pavel Tchelitchew

BY LINCOLN KIRSTEIN

It is hard to indicate the exact position of an important contemporary painter since his work is incomplete until he is dead, and his unique contribution is often obscured by superficial similarity to other painters whose work is chronologically parallel. Think of the position of Picasso in 1922, in relation to Derain or Matisse, at the same period. Twenty years after do we hear much of the two latter masters? Similarly today, with Tchelitchew. He is familiar as a painter of a certain prestige, but his position is confused. His qualities combine elements which inspire resistance, distrust, as well as exceptional curiosity.

Tchelitchew has been loosely labelled as a surrealist, a neoromantic, a late member of the School of Paris. Each label is dubious. He is not, nor ever has been a surrealist.* His essential basis is neither romantic nor neoromantic, but rather traditional and classic. That is, the behavior of his talent in the expression of his sentiment is not amorphous, subjective, or accidental, but rather disciplined and objective. Although he has lived in Paris, and for the last eight years in New York or New England, he

*It is significant that Alfred H. Barr, Director of the Museum of Modern Art, and the most conscientious historian of contemporary art, in editing *Fantastic Art: Dada Surrealism* (1936), the best study of the movement, does not mention Tchelitchew's name even among artists 'Independent of the Dada-Surrealist movements.' Tchelitchew was invited to show in this last category, but refused.

Page from Tchelitchev's
 sketch book for the Teatro Colon
 production of the
 Balanchine ballet Concerto



has never been French but simply a Russian working in the West, as Greco, an Italo-Byzantine, painted in Spain.

Critics misplace him, in spite of his constant denials, with the surrealists, chiefly because of his use of the so-called double image. With Tchelitchev the double image is by no means merely double, it is multiple; it is no trick to be pulled, but rather the

employment of the principle of *metamorphosis*. In certain surrealist works there is indeed a multiple rather than a dual image, but its significance is more virtuoso and accidental than expressive or rational. Its referential symbolism is frequently autobiographical, applying academic Freudian formulae to purely idiosyncratic concepts. Tchelitchev's symbols on the other hand, like those of Klee, the early

Chirico, and the Renaissance myth painters, refer to the traditional legends of the race. For example, to demonstrate two attitudes toward symbols, oppose the selection of Dali to that of Tchelitchev. The former uses the obsessive repetition of a drooping piano leg, which at best refers to some personal compulsion in his childhood. The latter continually paints children in the activities, infantile, imaginative and precocious, of all childhood. It has not been necessary for Tchelitchev to melt watches, cut up old magazines, or play with decalcomania. He uses, with extraordinary manual and intellectual mastery, the ancestral iconography of beasts and flowers.

His two chief technical resources are perspective and metamorphosis. A very rough historical sketch of the development of both may make more concrete these general assertions. Uccello is popularly accepted as the source of western trompe-l'oeil optics. By his primitive researches, he was able to indicate space by foreshortening forms as they diminished toward a single vanishing point. Masaccio (and later Piero) commenced to create the illusion of atmosphere. Thus linear and aerial perspective commenced their great advances. His vision was unitarian, and his space was delimited within its frame. Objects were seen from a single viewpoint. Uccello's technique was developed with increasing scope and exactness by painters and architects, particularly in Piero della Francesca down past Leonardo, who dissected the human eye and first mentioned the camera obscura.

Michelangelo on the Sistine ceiling, and Greco in his *St. Maurice and the Theban Legion* indicated the possibility of a dual or even of dispersed viewpoints. That is, in their flying angels seen in combination with figures set on the ground beneath, they indicated the possibility of at least two vanishing points, above and below. Ceiling decorators from Correggio to Tiepolo, with large spaces to cover, learned to delineate heretofore ignored angles of observance. The surface was broken; air flowed in. Space freed from frames was extended and amorphous. The baroque conceptions of torsion and controposto were

extended by the precipitation of hurtling forms released in air.

Not until the work of Georges Seurat did spatial perspective receive still another potential. In *La Grande Jatte*, each object or figure exists *independently* of every other object or figure. There is little overlap. The forms stand clear of one another. But here the vibration and contrast of the local color of the object, rather than an absolute mathematical diminishment of shape, create their ambience. Figures painted in blue are seen larger than nature. They are exaggerated in equivalence to the intensity of their color value. The people in red and white are drawn smaller, proportionally, since, mixed in the eye, their specific local colors increase their size. Seurat's people are inserted in space as separate units, isolated, maintaining the independent dignity of their personal as well as their social hierarchy. They stand still, sit or lie down, and at the same time promenade. These people exist in a multiple temporal and spatial world.

Then in the work of the Cubists, and notably in Picasso, with his ideographic profile seen also as front face, as well as the vase and tables seen simultaneously from multiple aspects, there is a further development. While all perspective to a degree is artificial and metaphysical, Picasso's is the most intellectual and arbitrary. The late Cubists eventually organized given forms in a given space on a given surface in their most essential and laconic relation. But since their subject matter was generally still-life, in spite of their introduction of imitation wood veneer, sand and newsprint, all human interest was minimized to accentuate formal elements, so that cubism tended to become useful chiefly as decoration, and for us, primarily instructive or academic.

By the use of his metamorphosis, Tchelitchev has pushed perspective one further step. We must understand his conception of metamorphosis. The Greek roots of the word mean change of form. As he uses it, it is more than the charming punning images of Arcimboldo or Bracelli. His metamorphosis is linked to the realistic forms hidden in the garden arabesques of Persian carpets, to Jerome Bosch and to

the monsters Leonardo saw in a saturated wall, whose corruscations formed a fluid universe, as his eyes saw shifting outlines and the looming forms they enclosed.

Metamorphosis, in Tchelitchew's work, is a dialectic in time and space, the investigation of a structure of fact by its contradiction. There is to begin with a thesis, that is, a statement; the drawn rendering of an immediately apparent object, as for example, a wintry Connecticut landscape. Then its antithesis—a contrast or opposite, such as a tiger's head superimposed, the tawny fur indicated as sere stubble, the ice as dripping tusks. Finally, there is the synthesis, a resolution of thesis and antithesis which provides the essential definition of the whole, which can in this particular picture* be best defined by the line from Eliot, "In the juvenescence of the year came Christ the Tiger."

In Tchelitchew's later paintings we find always three different subjects, in three different perspectives, seen from three different moments in time. This trinity, ideological, spatial and temporal, is at once simultaneous and independent. As in Seurat, objects indicated exist isolated in their own air. Their contours may lock into the profiles of contiguous forms, but there is no overlap. Each has its essential temporal and spatial independence.

This dialectical approach is further developed by Tchelitchew's manipulation of color and of the rendering of surfaces indicating matter. Frequently his light reads dark, his dark light. There is a parallel ambivalence in his rendering of substances—air is transmuted into water, water fire, and flames stone.

As for his choice in objects, Tchelitchew has always been attached to realistic forms, not because of the ordinary impulse to overcome the difficulties of naturalistic rendering, or even for a preference for particular objects, but simply because a realistic form, that is, a form which has an identical connotation to everyone looking at it, may be shown from multiple angles of perspective, and still maintain its identity. Using a realistic form, whether a human

body or a tree, as point of reference or departure, one cannot mistake it for something else, as abstract forms found in post-cubist pictures suggest different formal associations to different eyes. By the use of a single realistic form in multiple perspective, each and the same are seen in different, or even sequential moments in time and space, simultaneously. This is by no means the cinematic profile double exposure of the futurists (Balla), but rather an extension of the activity of Uccello's horses, whose prancing hooves seemed to be shared by two or three other chargers at once, and which seen separately and in sequence create an actual kinetic motion.

We find in Tchelitchew preference for recurring clowns, acrobats, freaks, and dancers. He has been attracted to acrobats because of their profession. Their bodies are trained machines for release in space. Their functional timing coincides with the exchange of their moving bodies. Similarly, he is occupied with dancers, above all with classic ballet, not as Degas, who saw it as *nature morte*, but as an ordering of bodies emotionally and ritually expressive of certain concrete gestures in an absolute way, in time and space.

His personal development has been logical. His choice of subjects may seem to have been fantastic or fortuitous, but his individual researches, even his fixations, as well as his widening capacities, are as orderly as a parade. Born in Russia in 1898, he left for Constantinople in 1920. He was in the Balkans, and then Berlin till 1923, arriving in Paris late in that year. His choice of subject was then arbitrary, even primitive. He painted what he accidentally liked, and did not look at what he hated. Then, by contact with the academy of Cubism, he began to investigate the simplest forms, taking the most elementary colors. He painted amplified eggs in black and white, gradually adding ochre and red ochre. Around 1925, the interest in the big ovoids developed into studies of the human face (*Portrait of René Crevel*). By 1926 he dominantly employed blue and its ranges. He began to make bodies, giving the previous faces a definite existence in time and space by relating them to the bodies. These bodies were frequently composed of

*"Portrait of My Father"

the unrelated domestic objects of studio still-life, but he added nets, shells, fans, masks, animals and smaller figures, which could be seen inlaid as individual detail or building up to a monumental anatomy. In 1927–28, the blues, again with the addition of ochre, shifted to green. In his ballet *Ode*, produced by Diaghilev in 1928, he made a recapitulation of all these tentative researches. The dancers were seen as moving in a photographic negative, connected by ropes indicating recessive perspective, and dolls in diminishing sizes, clad as the dancers, heightened the illusion of a forced precipitation.

In 1931–32 there was a dominance of red and red violet (*Portrait of Mme. Bonjean*). As a result of a trip to Spain he became involved in landscape and in the vegetable and mineral world, particularly in trees and mountains. Some blossoms were puns on faces. Tree trunks resembled human bodies, fingers and hands.

A series of Tennis and Bullfight pictures (1934) mark the first attempts at his characteristic perspective. From the sole of the Toreador's shoe to the far tip of his sword is indicated simultaneously a nearest point and a farthest point in rapid, collapsible, accordionlike, bent space. He turned increasingly to the investigation of portraiture, and by relating accessories, background and anatomy came to a more exact psychological clairvoyance.

Phenomena (1936–38) was the initial important manifesto of his dialectic in time. Its composition, a faceted diamond, derived from his utility of Cubism. Its subject was the orderly horror of our epoch in terms of Marxian opposites. In spite of his self-imposed exile from Russia, his talent was deeply affected by the October Revolution. The picture was peopled with freaks—Siamese twins, one richly dressed, one poorly; bearded ladies and multi-breasted girls, examples of glandular disbalance, the physical symbols of moral inadequacy and economic compensation. These symbols were literally rendered from the polar bear sweating in summer to the wall of stony faces. There was no ephemeral caricature or reference to abstract or purely formal concepts. Everything was organized for its contrasts and anti-

nomies, rich and poor, hot and cold, light and dark, tall and short, fat and lean. Equally, the color, spread as a recessive spectrum, and repeated in its rainbow, the bands of red, yellow, green and purple, coinciding with the natural local areas in the depicted objects and figures. *Phenomena* is a picture to look at, not a mural decoration. It is possibly a tract, naively overcharged with intention, but in both detail and concept it repays study.

His new picture, *Cache Cache [Hide and Seek]* (1940–42), not yet exposed, is an enormous technical advance over *Phenomena*. The whole huge canvas seems to swim in a giant drop of water. While *Phenomena* was based on a flat diamond, *Cache Cache* seems a crystal globe with flowing reflections from the air outside and from its own air within. The composition stems from a central tree whose roots are a gnarled foot, and whose branches are fingers. In between branches forming the frame for children's heads are seasonal landscapes, while these landscapes are portraits, and the portraits in themselves, grimacing children, insects, fruits, flowers, leaves and snow suitable to the year's weather and the times of day. The detail is cyclic and again supercharged. But what was coarse, nervous or insistent in *Phenomena* is serene and jewellike here. It is a very large picture and in it holds the source of many others, not only from its author, but from young artists who will investigate its meaning. For Tchelitchev will be found to be a teacher, and these pictures new Schools of Athens. It is not too much to claim for him that he has discovered and can teach a new way of seeing.

In his ceaseless voyage between microcosm and macrocosm, Tchelitchev uses the tools his time provides to portray its confusion and destruction, its infantile savagery and human possibility. His methods, to give him his largest credit, are equal to so awful a subject.

MAY 1942

Cache Cache

BY WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

I imagine the angels will have forgotten, by that time, whether they had been niggers, archbishops—or even the sex of their parents. Memory will not be their occupation, they will have escaped it or escaped all its less significant details. When they look at the new pictures of those who remain artists among them they will seek qualities more mineral than protoplasmic, to be graded as they repel, absorb or transmit light.

But we—are full of memories and the best we can do is to seek in them for the luminous. As Tchelitchew says: Every picture has a heart of light, a mind and—remains a composition on a flat surface revealing too much. Cache cache! It is made of all that the painter should hide—of himself, of his times. It gives him away. It is shocking, disgraceful. It reveals him in his secret, perhaps, as very stupid. Not the details. These are beefsteak or something else quite as necessary. Nothing is shocking that you can see. It is what you cannot see that may be shocking. Or superb. The pure chemistry of insight, geometric, borrowed from a rotting memory, shall we say? revealed, crystalline, to the imagination. In words, a triviality. In a picture an arresting possibility.

Raphael cannot be imitated unless we know and identify ourselves with the core of his secret. The secrets of Greek perfection, the concepts that made them as they were, are essential to the knowledge of one who would borrow from them. Raphael was a crystal sphere. His realizations are of the sphere, crystalline, transmitters of light. How can they be followed, even with every addition of contemporary

paraphernalia, without that realization. Impossible! Each creator has as his base some such secret core. Unless we hit to the base of the underlying purity from which ALL a man's work emerges we produce—in trying to realize Raphael's purity and tranquility, his luminous quality of the sphere—the opacity and confusion of Ingres's scene in the harem.

A man, in America, surrounds himself with a forest, to be able to continue to desire to discover a means to exist. I gathered from looking about the penthouse studio—the seaweed, the stump, the muddy statue, the debris of all sorts from breaking and moss, that here was an indestructible something masquerading, for survival! under brokenness. Obscene as an eel. The Indians have cursed this country, he said. Sand and feathers. I am sure they have put a curse on it. Painting, deciphering, reassembling, clarifying, packing, packing, packing the sphere within the cube, the cube within the sphere. Tchelitchew does not treat lightly the tenets of magic and necromancy.

There is nothing recondite in this, nothing—What is the word used by the hemiplegics?—nothing esoteric! It is plain sense, like a tree. A seed is planted. Well, there it lies, in the ground. The ground is a man's life partaking of life as a whole. Tchelitchew saw a tree and made a sketch of it in England ten years ago. There it lies. Very childish, very naive. He says so himself. But it is a seed. Maybe it will grow, maybe it will die. In this case it grows. Five years later there is another sketch that has developed from the first. The seed did not rot. The tree is growing into a new area of the imagination. It was an old, gnarled tree to begin with. Now it is indulging in vagaries, it is getting new attributes that no other tree ever experienced. Children's faces, nine of them, are beginning to appear as outlines in the crotches between the trunk and the main branches. They have open mouths. The leaves, from the first red hands opening, through the extended full of the green maturity, to the mottled reds of winter approaching, assume their parts.

Tchelitchew would not let us see the picture. Cache cache! It is a large square canvas of a tree with

a dandelion-seed head, a luminous sphere, growing under it. The picture is to be shown to no one until he, Tchelitchew, has left the country. It speaks and he does not want to be present when it says what it has to say. By that time he will be in the tropics. He showed us only the sketches he had made over several years, sketches slowly evolving into the thing, the organization, the composition on a flat surface, the seed that has developed, the shocking discovery it holds, the fulfillment it signalizes, the confession, the sweeping out, the purification of memory it represents, the nostalgia, the skills, the contempt, the humor, the despair, the translucence—summarizing poetry, flattening out superficial differences and resemblances—overfelt details, details that catch the eye as the thorns on a blackberry bush catch the hand and the sleeve as we reach for the fruit.

The tree has become monstrous. Only in the monstrous do we approach the moon, the sun and the stars! plant roots and the heart of a man. The imagination has horns and a tail, therefore we have created ourselves in that image. Tchelitchew has lifted the dry sphere of the dandelion-seed head also into the text of his picture. Monsters frequent the earth everywhere. Science is the accident and the accidental the true. Our very lives prove how we are bedevilled by the supernatural, we see it in everything especially in architecture. But if we run from these things we return to our childhood. Nobody can predetermine the secret of this tree, the tree of the artist's life or growing out of the upturned end of his left great toe, what difference? The world is monstrous, only the monstrous can be true of it. Or the world is not monstrous, only the monstrous can truly reveal that fatal error. The foot is for the shoe as the shoe is for the foot. Paint!

Either the picture portrays the core of a man or it is not a picture. Place your emphasis where you have the ability to place it. I speak out of my recollection of what Tchelitchew said. He has strong and substantial opinions concerning the relative merits of French and Italian painting. He laughs! If they knew *why* Giotto painted as he did! He saw first, then he painted what he saw. He saw nothing the way they wanted him to

see it. He saw as little boys see who paint their thrilling anatomical concepts on the insides of water-closet doors. Why did Giorgione . . . Why, why, why? You have to know those things. Seurat was completely unknown. He died at thirty-two and everything he attempted turned out to be a masterpiece. Why? He knew what he was doing. It remains a secret, a realization of the miraculous—on a flat surface, an effect of the light.

Some hands are silver, some of gold and a very few—very, very few! are like diamonds. But these are not of artists.

Good-bye Tchelitchew! be at home with your old friend to whom you can talk without the necessity of explanations. Walk barefoot in the sand to your heart's content. If you go broke, paper your walls with newspapers, upside down! V for victory. You are leaving us—this cold and damp New York that gives us stiff necks or dries the blood in summer with its baked concrete flame—forever! you say. You

say you left Russia the same way, with nothing but a pocketful of pigments as your possessions. What you left there I don't know but you are leaving us, bespeaking your affection, this picture, a hidden treasure; so you mean it and so I accept it for the others. It is a great treasure to you and that is how you leave it. If no one wants to look at it, that's just too bad. It is your seed. You have signally honored our soil by wishing to plant it here.

This man is a monster, a very terrible monster. Cats have funny little faces, he says, but the faces of tigers are never funny. As soon as I have the opportunity I intend to look long and hard at the face of this, Tchelitchew's latest work. It is the labor of the last two years of his residence with us in New York. I know the monster revealed there will not be smiling. *Cache cache*. The gods are chasing the children along the edge of the sea below Positano, where the old priest in a gingham dress stands watching them from the cliff's edge.

MAY 1942

The Extinction of Useless Lights, *Tanguy*
(*Museum of Modern Art, New York*)



1943-1944

Americana Fantastica Issue

AMERICANA FANTASTICA

The fantastic has a great tradition, but it is in its nature to be great rather than traditional. And when it is not great, it is always fantastic. Above all, it is never professional. The only professional fantast is the prestidigitator. If there be any craft of the fantastic, it is acquired by the spur of the moment. The formal organization of an object by Joseph Cornell or a painting by Florine Stettheimer is fantastic because will has become the reflex of an unpredictable perception. The fantastic is the compulsion neurosis of a whim. For fantasy converted into professionalism, we may go to Picasso, who made a mardi gras from styles of painting. In his works, the fantastic, if it was in the subject matter, has departed or appears in the degraded form of the exotic. The fantastic is never exotic. Having no home but its own, it cannot be transplanted without transplanting the soil in which it grows. Its cosmic myth is the magic carpet.

Hence the Americana Fantastica in this number of *View* are not so much indigenous to America as susceptible to it, just as oranges are not indigenous to this country, but could grow here. The fantastic is unique in that it does not generate its individual species, it does not hope to duplicate itself by immediate progeny. Only methodologies of the fantastic have this logic of generation, by which they hope to become the rule rather than the exception. The fantastic is an uninterrupted series of exceptions. In the methodologies, the tyranny of the father and the schoolteacher can appear all too easily and becomes, if not a fantasy, at least a spectacle. Before becoming an art, or the illustration of a psychological theory, the fantastic is a realm of the imagination; as such, it is definable as the imagination of the underprivileged aware of a fresh and overpowering strength. The fantastic has the secret of a spontaneous combustion. It is the Stalingrad of the imagination.

Anything that can be called fantastic is earmarked with the universal because an explosion can occur at any time, any place, and is most effective when not announced. All that appears to limit it, from our viewpoint, is the species, man — which is perhaps all that the cryptographic writings of Poe and the photographs of Harlem children by Helen Levitt have in common. The fantastic is completely recognizable at a glance. It is grasped and exposed so close to the source that no one can miss the electric thrill of origin or fail to sense the

mechanics of birth. In the extracts from the prose narrative of Alva N. Turner, the fantasy is one of an author to whom technical knowledge, which attracts him profoundly, remains altogether strange. He speaks eloquently for all those to whom facts learned in a classroom ultimately become mysteries because they are not related to a real dynamic context.

Most important of all, the appreciation of the fantastic does not depend upon a technique of communication. It is non-idiomatic and thus, while primitive, it is also sophisticated, since it makes direct appeal to that anarchy of elements which binds the most rational man to the lunatic, and enables a child to penetrate to the meaning of a cloud of words he does not understand. In this respect, the fantastic coincides with the monstrous. The monstrous is produced by desire without reason: it is the longing for the exotic satisfied immediately and symbolically, but not without a violence contrary to the world of order. The child's desire for the moon is monstrous, fantastic and violent. Mythologies are orderly, and hence they are not fantastic.

The fantastic is the inalienable property of the untutored, the oppressed, the insane, the anarchic, and the amateur, at the moment when these feel the apocalyptic hug of contraries. The fantastic is the child of unmeasured love and unmeasured hate. As such it cannot avoid being the soul's *trompe-l'oeil*. It is illusionist, not in the sense of representation, but in the magical sense. It fools the eye of the soul as it did the eyes of those typesetters who, called upon to illustrate a typeface for advertising purposes, were possessed with a contradiction inherent in their orderly and professional act, and made up fantastic poems.

The fantastic is in no instance properly defined as the mere irrational. It is the city of the irrational. It is the irrational plus architecture. It is the real Constitution of a romantic State, and, being primarily spatial in nature, organizes, without permission, boundaries that arbitrarily include all features of the social. This organization proceeds at a rate of leisure peculiar to someone unaware of the surveillance of the academy, the police, or God. Yet its livery of lightning, that builds as it destroys, does not cause the fantastic to appear evasive. Before everything, it is the Anti-camouflage, the enemy of self-effacement, and has the ferocity that such a total negation of deceit implies.



P A R K E R

T Y L E R

Americana Fantastica

BY PARKER TYLER

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JAN. 1943



Bluey*

PAUL BOWLES — AGED 9

A DIARY

1919 DECEMBER 1919

26. Minnesota was erected. Bluey plans to come.
27. Dolok Parasol stops her saying "Marry me don't go." Bluey gets mad.
28. Dolok Parasol tells her again to marry him. She knocks him down.
29. Bluey gets her things packed and puts on a beautiful blue sash.
30. Bluey sails for Wen Kroy and lands. Bluey loves it.
31. Bluey thought this country was heaven. Bluey writes to Dolok.

1920 JANUARY 1920

1. Dolok sails for Wen Kroy and gets wrecked.
2. Dolok got back to Wen Kroy. Bluey welcomes him.

3. Bluey gets an awful cold, and gets into her bed.
4. Bluey feels a little better. Dolok comes to see her. Bluey cries.
5. Bluey was worse. Doctor says she has Pneumonia. She faints.
6. Bluey feels better and gets up. Dolok gets diphteria.
7. Dolok gets worse. Bluey gets a Pierce Arrow Automobile.
8. Dolok almost dies. Bluey weeps. Bluey takes a lesson in running her auto.
9. Bluey has a blowout. Dolok dies. Bluey faints.
10. Dolok had funeral. Bluey goes. Mrs. Jobestor dies. Red Cross Day.

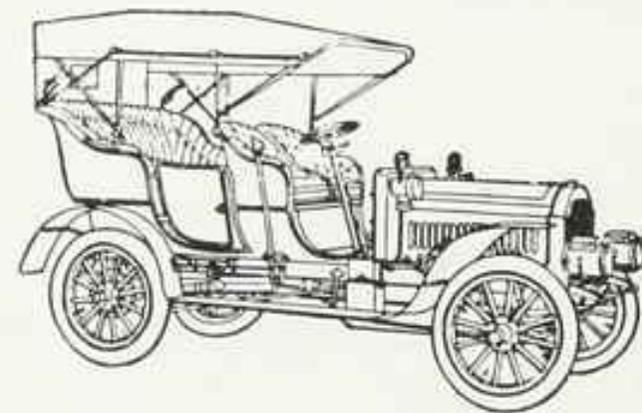
Oct. 1943. Bowles' "Imaginary Diary," written over the course of a year (when he was indeed age nine), 1919-20, consists of about 450 entries. The hero who emerged in these notebooks is one Bluey Laber Dozlen. [Source: Sawyer-Lauçanno, in bibliography]—C. N.

11. Bluey shuts herself in the closet all day long. Dolok is buried.
12. Bluey buys a new tire. Bluey takes another lesson on her auto.
13. Bluey goes out to ride in the auto and gets frozen.
14. Auto runs on four hundred miles still frozen.
15. Auto runs fifty-eight miles and gasoline runs out.
16. 37 degrees. Bluey comes to. Faints when she finds herself.
17. Bluey comes to. 37 to 39 degrees. Bluey gets some gas.
18. 40 to 41 degrees. Bluey starts for home and goes one hundred miles.
19. 39 to 40 degrees. Bluey gets home again.
20. 30 to 31 degrees. Bluey gets a bad cold. Henry Altman visits.
21. Bluey falls in love with Henry. Bluey worse.
22. Bluey worse. Doctor says she has pneumonia.
23. 21 degrees. Bluey better. Henry Altman calls again.
24. Bluey better. 20 degrees, about five o'clock it begins to snow.
25. Snow worse. 18 degrees. Bluey all right. Bluey goes to call on Henry.
26. 16 degrees. Great blizzard in Chicago. Bluey stays at Henry's.
27. 12 to 14 degrees. Great Blizzard arrives. Bluey still at Henry's.
28. Bluey tells Henry she loves him. Henry tells her he loves her.
29. 10 degrees. Bluey gets snowed in has to stay at Henry's.
30. 6 degrees. Blizzard worse. Henry wants to marry Bluey.
31. 2 degrees. Bluey wants to marry Henry. Blizzard covers everything.

5. 5 degrees. Snow still melting. Bluey tries to dig through.
6. 6 degrees. Bluey digs and digs. Snow stopped melting.
7. Bluey finds out she has dug a block under the snow.
8. Bluey and Henry dig some steps up and land a block away.
9. 13 degrees. Bluey uses that way to get home. Henry goes with her.
10. 15 degrees. Bluey feels bad. It snows. Bluey reads "Hovertis."
11. Doctor says Bluey must get weighed once a week. Bluey yells.
12. Bluey gets weighed 95 lbs. 19 degrees. Bluey goes back to Henry Altman's.
13. They get snowed in again. 2 degrees. Bluey reads and gets a headache.
14. Bluey's headache worse. 23 degrees. Henry worries.
15. Bluey and Henry get out. 25 degrees. Bluey's headache all right when she gets out.
16. Bluey and Henry go ice skating. Henry falls down.
17. 29 degrees. Bluey goes home again. Henry goes with her.
18. 31 degrees. Bluey says she loves Henry. Henry almost faints.
19. Bluey weighs 95½ lbs. 33 degrees. Bluey says she wants to weigh 186.
20. 35 degrees. Henry digs out the house. Bluey helps him.
21. It starts snowing again. 34 degrees. Bluey wants a child.
22. Henry says they cannot have a child until they get married. 31 degrees.
23. Bluey says in seven weeks she will marry Henry. Henry faints.

1920 FEBRUARY 1920

1. 0 degrees. Bluey and Henry get engaged. Blizzard worse.
2. Snow covers all the houses up. 1 degree below zero at noon.
3. It stops snowing. 0 degrees. Bluey still at Henry's.
4. 3 degrees. Snow starts to melt. Bluey wants to marry Henry.



24. It still snows. 25 degrees. Bluey goes back to Henry's house.
25. It snows and hails. 22 degrees. Bluey has a headache stays in bed.
26. 19 degrees. Bluey gets up. Henry tells her to marry him.
27. 16 degrees. Bluey has a fight with Henry. Bluey yells.
28. Greatest storm in world's history. 13 degrees. Bluey knocks Henry down.
29. 10 degrees. Bluey hits Henry. Henry hits Bluey and gives her a black eye.

1920 MARCH 1920

1. 8 degrees. Bluey tries to get out but snow is 108 feet high.
2. 5 degrees. Bluey breaks down and cries and forgives Henry.
3. 6 degrees. Henry forgives Bluey. Bluey still cries and cries.
4. 8 degrees. Still snowing and hailing snows 86 feet that day.
5. 9 degrees. 195 feet of snow. Bluey weighs 96½ lbs. Henry is so mad he has a fit.
6. Bluey starts crying again. 10 degrees out. 197 ft. of snow.
7. Still snowing and hailing. 8 degrees out. 198 feet of snow.
8. Bluey reads "Da Lod help ma." Bluey laughs so she has a pain.
9. Henry finds out there is no food in the house.
10. Bluey tries her best to shovel out but cannot.
11. Bluey faints of hunger. Henry eats a live cockroach.
12. Henry faints of starvation. 201 feet of snow.
13. The cat dies of starvation. 20 degrees out. Still hailing.
14. Bluey and Henry both unconscious. 21 degrees out.
15. It stops snowing. 200 feet of snow. Robbers try to get in.
16. 194 feet of snow. Dolok Parasol's mother gets a cold.
17. 192 feet. She is worse. 24 degrees. Robbers try to get in.
18. 192 feet. Robbers get in and don't find anything. 23 degrees.
19. 190 ft. Dolok's mother is worse. 26 degrees.

20. 188 ft. Doctor says she has Pneumonia, she faints. 28 degrees.
21. 186 ft. She is worse. She tries to get another doctor.
22. 180 ft. She gets another doctor. 30 degrees at twelve o'clock.
23. 174 ft. The other doctor says she has the influenza.
24. Dolok Parasol's mother dies of grief for loss of Dolok.
25. 163 ft. Dolok Parasol's sister weeps and weeps for her mother.
26. 160 ft. Bessie still weeping.
27. 154 ft. Bessie gets influenza.
28. 147 ft. Mr. Parasol gets influenza. Bessie worse.
29. 137 ft. Mr. Parasol gets crazy. Bessie worse.
30. 127 ft. Mr. Parasol almost dies. Bessie has Chrisis.
31. 117 ft. Mr. Parasol wishes he would have Chrisis. Bessie better.

1920 APRIL 1920

1. 110 ft. Mr. Parasol has Chrisis. Bessie better.
2. 101 ft. Mr. Parasol dies. Bessie allright.
3. 97 ft. Baker comes and stuffs a roll down both of their throats.
4. 72 ft. Bluey and Henry come to and thank each other.
5. 70 ft. Henry kisses Bluey, Bluey kisses Henry. He faints.
6. Bluey and Henry get out. Snow still 62 feet.
7. 60 ft. Bluey and Henry find 7 billion dollars, divide it.
8. 51 ft. Bluey gets \$3,500,000, gets an arcoplane.
9. 45 ft. Henry gets a beautiful car, Packard.
10. 34 ft. Bluey says she will live and keep house for Henry.
11. 30 ft. Bluey gets a maid. Lina Minner. Bluey faints.
12. Bluey Dozlen & Henry Altman get married. 21 ft. Bluey faints.
13. They go on their honey-moon. 18 ft.
14. 57 degrees 6 ft. They go to Niagara Falls.
15. 2 ft. Bluey weighs 99. Bluey faints.
16. 1 ft. They go to Thousand Islands.
17. 6 inches. Bluey says she will stay at Thousand Islands.
18. 2 inches. Henry doesn't want to.
19. Snow melts entirely away.
20. Houses all flooded in Ridgefield. OCT. 1943



And now to get back to my dream of Mobile. . . The other night, having no money to eat with, I decided to go to the public library and look up a chapter in a famous book which I had promised a friend of mine in Washington I would read. The book was *The Travels of Marco Polo*; the chapter was devoted to a description of the city of Kin-sai or Hang-chou. The man who asked me to read about this splendid city is a scholar; he has read thousands of books and will probably read thousands more before he dies. He had said to me at lunch one day: "Henry, I've just found the city I'd like to live in. It's Hang-chou of the 13th century."

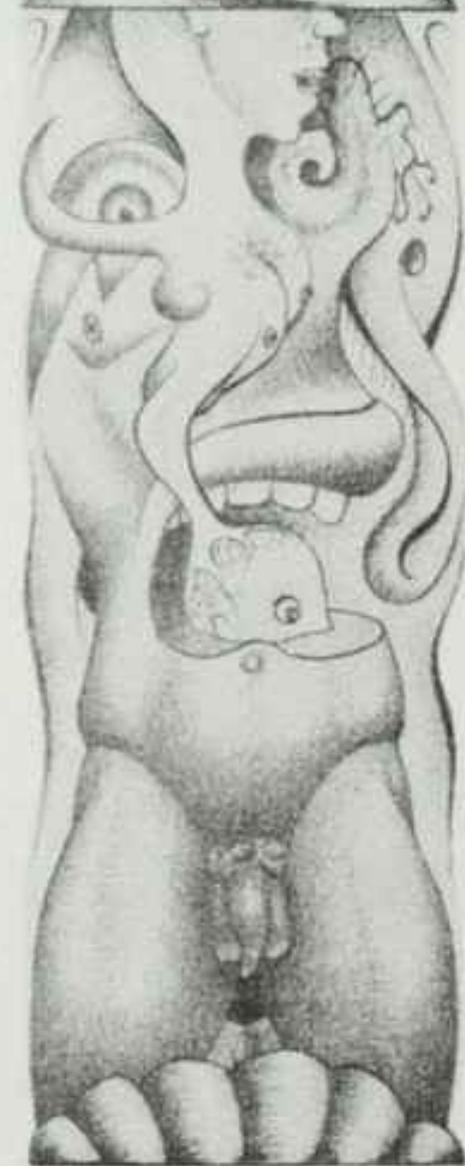
The conversation took place about a year ago. I had forgotten all about it until the other night when I was hungry. So instead of physical nourishment I decided on a spiritual feast.

I must confess I was disappointed in Marco Polo. He bores me. I remember having tried to read him about thirty years ago and coming to the same conclusion. What did interest me this time, however, was John Masefield's introduction to the book. "When Marco Polo went to the East," writes Masefield, "the whole of Central Asia, so full of splendour and magnificence, so noisy with nations and kings, was like a dream in men's minds." I have read this sentence over several times. It stirs me. I would like to have written that sentence myself. With a few strokes of the pen Masefield evokes a picture which Marco Polo himself, who had seen the splendour and magnificence of the East, fails to do — for me.

I would like to quote a few more lines from this splendid foreword of Masefield's. It has a lot to do with my trip through the United States — and with my dream of Mobile.



"It is accounted a romantic thing to wander among strangers and to eat their bread by the camp-fires of the other half of the world. There is romance in doing this, though the romance has been over-estimated by those whose sedentary lives have created in them a false taste for action. Marco Polo wandered among strangers; but it is open to any one (with courage and the power of motion) to do the same. Wandering in itself is merely a form of self-indulgence. If it adds not to the stock of human knowledge, or if it gives not to others the imaginative possession of some part of the world, it is a pernicious habit. The acquisition of knowledge, the accumulation of fact, is noble only in those few who have that alchemy which transmutes such clay to heavenly eternal gold. . . It is only the wonderful traveller who sees a wonder, and only five travellers in the world's history have seen wonders. The others have seen birds and beasts, rivers and wastes, the earth and the (local) fulness thereof. The five travellers are Herodotus, Gaspar, Melchior, Balthazar and Marco Polo himself. The wonder of Marco Polo is this — that he created Asia for the European mind . . ."



Dream of Mobile

BY HENRY MILLER

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Marco Polo was seventeen when he departed from Venice with his uncles. Seventeen years later he returned to Venice in rags. Almost immediately thereafter he enlisted in the war against Genoa, was taken prisoner and, during the course of his incarceration, dictated the book which immortalized his journey. Curious, *what?* Consider the state of his mind, locked up in a dungeon as he was, after having lived out a dream of splendor and magnificence. "*When Marco Polo went to the East . . .*" The phrase repeats itself like a refrain. "*Like a dream in men's minds. . . .*" Think of Balboa, of Columbus, of Americo Vesputius! Men who dreamed, and then realized their dreams. Men filled with wonder, with longing, with ecstasy. Sailing straight for the unknown, finding it, realizing it, and then returning to the straitjacket. Or dying of fever in the midst of a mirage. Cortez, Ponce de Leon, de Soto! Madmen.

Dreamers. Fanatics. In search of the marvelous. In quest of the miracle. Murdering, raping, plundering. The Fountain of Youth. Gold. Gods. Empires. Splendor and magnificence, yes—but also fever, hunger, thirst, poisoned arrows, mirages, death. Sowing hate and fear. Spreading the white man's poison. Spreading the white man's fears and superstitions, his greed, his envy, his malice, his restlessness.

When the Spaniards sailed West. . . . Quite another story.

The Gold Rush. The Stampede. The Gadarene Swine. A sequel enacted by their successors, the Americans.

Gone the splendor and magnificence, noisy the land with dynamos and factory whistles. The wonders have been extirpated, the quest is ended. The gold has been put back into the earth, deep down where no bomb can ever reach it. We have almost all there is, and it is rotting there, of no use to any one, least of all to those who hoard it and guard it with their lives.

"*When Marco Polo went to the East. . . .*" You have only to incant the phrase and the fulness of the earth opens up. The imagination is drowned before the sentence is finished. Asia. Just Asia, and the mind trembles. Who can fill in the picture of Asia? Marco Polo gives us thousands of details, but they are like a drop in the bucket. No matter what man has accomplished since, no matter what miracles he has wrought, the word Asia floods his memory with a splendor and magnificence unequalled. Prophets, scholars, sages, mystics, dreamers, madmen, fanatics, tyrants, emperors, conquerors, all of them greater than Europe has ever known, came out of Asia. Religions, philosophies, temples, palaces, walls, fortresses, paintings, tapestries, jewels, drugs, liquors, incense, clothing, foodstuffs, culinary arts, metals, the great inventions, the great languages, the great books, the real cosmogonies, all came out of Asia. Even the stars came out of Asia. There were gods and demigods—thousands and thousands of them. And God-men. Avatars. Precursors. Asia was inspired. Asia is still inspired. If in the thirteenth

century Asia was like a dream in men's minds, today it is even more so. Asia is inexhaustible. There is Mongolia, there is Tibet, there is China, there is India. Our conception of these places, of the people that fill them, of the wisdom they possess, of the spirit that animates them, of their striving, their goals and their fulfillment is almost nil. Our adventurers and explorers lose themselves there, our scholars are confounded there, our evangelists and zealots and bigots are reduced to nullity there, our colonials rot there, our machines look puny and insignificant there, our armies are swallowed up there. Vast, multiform, polyglot, seething with unharnessed energy, now stagnant, now alert, ever menacing, ever mysterious, Asia dwarfs the world. We are like spiders trying to cope with giant cedars. We spin our webs, but the slightest tremor of the slumbering giant which is Asia can destroy the work of centuries. We are giving our guts, hollowing ourselves out, but the Asiatics swim on the breast of a mighty ocean, and they are tireless, endless, inextinguishable. They move with the great earth currents; we struggle vainly against the tide. We sacrifice everything to destruction; they sacrifice everything to life.

Well, *Mobile*. . . . Supposing now that you were me, that you were living in Paris and content to remain there for the rest of your life. Supposing that every night, when you came back to your studio, you stood a few minutes with hat and coat on, a big, fat pencil in your hand, and you wrote down in a big book whatever came into your head. Naturally, if you went to bed with the names of cities jingling in your head, you would dream some fantastic dreams. Sometimes you might find yourself dreaming with eyes wide open, not certain whether you were in bed or standing up at the big table. And sometimes, when you had hoped to close your eyes and give yourself up to the most delicious dream sensations, you found yourself wrestling with a nightmare. Take a classic one such as the following. . . .

Someone you think is you is looking in the mirror. He sees a face he doesn't recognize. It is the face of an idiot. He becomes terrified and soon thereafter finds himself in a concentration camp where he is kicked

around like a football. He has forgotten who he was, forgotten his name, his address, even what he looked like. He knows he is crazy. After years of the vilest torture he suddenly finds himself at the exit and, instead of being driven back to the pen with a bayonet, he is pushed out into the world. Yes, by a miracle he is made free again. His emotion is indescribable. But then, as he looks around, he realizes that he hasn't the faintest conception of where he might be. It could be Queensland, Patagonia, Somaliland, Rhodesia, Siberia, Staten Island, Mozambique—or a corner of an unknown planet. He is lost, more completely lost than ever. A man approaches and he starts to explain his predicament, but before he can form a phrase he finds that he has lost his language too. Fortunately at this point he wakes up. . . .

If you have never experienced that particular form of nightmare try it some time: it will make your hair stand on end, if nothing else. The dream of *Mobile* is another thing, and why I coupled the two I don't know, but for some obscure reason the one and the other *are* coupled in my mind.

I think what really started me dreaming about *Mobile* and other places in America which I had never visited was the extraordinary curiosity which my friend Alfred Perlès evinced whenever the name America came up. He used to grab me by the sleeve sometimes and beg me with tears in his eyes to solemnly promise that I would take him with me if I ever returned. Arizona was the place he was particularly nuts about. You could talk all night about the Deep South or the Great Lakes or the Mississippi basin and he would sit goggle-eyed, with mouth wide open, the perspiration dripping from his brow, apparently thoroughly absorbed, thoroughly carried away. But when you had finished he would pipe up fresh as a daisy: "*Now tell me about Arizona!*" Sometimes, having talked for half the night, having exhausted myself, having drunk enough to fill a tank, I would answer—"the hell with Arizona, I'm going to bed." "All right," he would say, "go to bed. You can talk in bed. I won't go home till you tell me about Arizona." "But I've told you all I know," I would

remonstrate. "That doesn't matter, Joey," he'd answer, "I want to hear it all over again." It was almost like the Steinbeck duet between Lennie and the other guy. He was a glutton for Arizona. Now he's "somewhere in Scotland," with the Pioneer Corps, but I swear to Christ if he ever runs across an American in that Godforsaken place the first thing he'll say will be: "Tell me about Arizona!"

Naturally when a man has such an unbounded enthusiasm for a place you are familiar with, a place you think you know, you begin to wonder if you do know. America is a vast place, and I doubt if any man knows it thoroughly. It's possible too to live in a place and not know anything about it, because you don't want to know. I remember a friend of mine coming to Paris on a honeymoon, finding it not at all to his liking, and finally coming to me one day to ask if I would give him some typing to do—because he didn't know what to do with himself.

There were certain places, like Mobile again, which I never mentioned in the presence of Perlès. The Mobile I knew was thoroughly imaginary and I wanted to enjoy it all by myself. It gave me a great pleasure, I might say, to secretly resist his prying curiosity. I was like a young wife who delays telling her husband that she has become a mother. I kept Mobile in the womb, under lock and key, and day by day it grew, took on arms and legs, hair, teeth, nails, eyelashes, just like a real foetus. It would have been a marvelous accouchement, had I been equal to it. Imagine a full-fledged city being born out of a man's loins! Of course it never came off. It began to die in the womb, from lack of nourishment, I suppose, or because I fell in love with other cities—Domme, Sarlat, Rocamadour, Genoa, and so on.

How did I visualize Mobile? To tell the truth, it's all quite hazy now. Hazy, fuzzy, amorphous, crumbling. To get the feel of it again I have to mention the name of Admiral Farragut. *Admiral Farragut steamed into Mobile Bay.* I must have read that somewhere when a child. It stuck in my crop. I don't know to this day whether it's a fact or not—that Admiral Farragut steamed into Mobile Bay. I took it for granted then, and it was a good thing I did probably. Admiral

Farragut has nothing more to do with the picture than that. He fades out *instanter*. What is left of the image is the word Mobile. Mobile is a deceptive word. It sounds quick and yet it suggests immobility—*glassiness*. It is a fluid mirror which reflects sheet lighting as well as somnolent trees and drugged serpents. It is a name which suggests water, music, light and torpor. It also sounds remote, securely pocketed, faintly exotic and, if it has any color, is definitely white. Musically I would designate it as guitarish. Perhaps not even that resonant—perhaps mandolinish. Anyway, pluckable music—accompanied by bursting fruit and thin light columns of smoke. No dancing, except the dancing of mote-beams, the evanescent beat of ascension and evaporation. The skin always dry, despite the excessive humidity. The slap-slap of carpet slippers, and figures silhouetted against half-drawn blinds. Corrugated silhouettes.

I have never once thought of work in connection with the word Mobile. *Not anybody working.* A city surrounded with shells, the empty shells of bygone fiestas. Bunting everywhere and the friable relics of yesterday's carnival. Gayety always in retreat, always vanishing, like clouds brushing a mirror. In the center of this glissando Mobile itself, very prim, very proper, Southern and not Southern, listless but upright, slatternly yet respectable, bright but not wicked. Mozart for the mandolin. Not Segovia feathering Bach. Not grace and delicacy so much as anaemia. Fevercoolth. Musk. Fragrant ashes.

In the dream I never pictured myself as entering Mobile by automobile. Like Admiral Farragut, I saw myself steaming into Mobile Bay, generating my own power. I never thought I would pass through places like Panama City, Apalachicola, Port St. Joe, or that I would be within striking distance of Valparaiso and Bagdad, or that by crossing Millers Ferry I would be on the way to the Ponce de Leon Springs. In their dream of gold the Spaniards had preceded me. They must have moved like fevered bedbugs through swamps and forests of Florida. And when they hit Bon Secours they must have been completely whacky—to give it a French name, I mean. To cruise

along the Gulf is intoxicating; all the water routes are exfoliative, if one can put it that way. The Gulf is a great drama of light and vapor. The clouds are pregnant and always in bloom, like oneiric cauliflower; sometimes they burst like cysts in the sky, shedding a precipitate of mercurium chromide; sometimes they stride across the horizon with thin, wispy legs of smoke. In Pensacola I had a crazy room in a crazy hotel. I thought I was in Perpignan again. Toward dusk I looked out the window and saw the clouds battling; they collided with one another like crippled dirigibles, leaving streamers of tangled wreckage dangling in the sky. It seemed as though I were at a frontier, that two wholly different worlds were fighting for domination. In the room was a monstrous poster that dated back to the days of the sewing machine. I lay back on the bed and before my eyes there passed in review all the screaming, caterwauling monstrosities of the poster art which had assaulted my innocent vision when a child. Suddenly I thought of Dolly Varden—God only knows why!—and then a perfect avalanche of names, all theatrical, all sentimental, assailed me: Elsie Ferguson, Frances Starr, Effie Shannon, Julia Sanderson, Cyril Maude, Julian Eltinge, Marie Cahill, Rose Coghlan, Crystal Herne, Minnie Maddern Fiske, Arnold Daly, Leslie Carter, Anna Held, Blanche Bates, Elsie Janis, Wilton Lackaye, Kyrle Bellew, William Collier, Rose Stahl, Fritzi Scheff, Margaret Anglin, Virginia Harned, Henry Miller, Walker Whiteside, Julie Opp, Ada Rehan, Cecilia Loftus, Julia Marlowe, Irene Franklin, Ben Ami, Bertha Kalich, Lulu Glaser, Olga Nethersole, John Drew, David Warfield, James K. Hackett, William Faversham, Joe Jackson, Weber & Fields, Valeska Suratt, Snuffy the Cabman, Richard Carle, Montgomery & Stone, Eva Tanguay, the great Lafayette, Maxine Elliott, David Belasco, Vesta Victoria, Vesta Tilly, Roy Barnes, Chick Sales, Nazimova, Modjeska, the Duse, Ida Rubenstein, Lenore Ulric, Richard Bennett and his most lovely, beautiful wife whose name I have forgotten, the only actress to whom I ever penned a love letter.

Was it the Talafax Hotel? I can't remember any

more. Anyway, it was Pensacola—and again it wasn't Pensacola. It was a frontier and there was an aerial drama going on which subsequently drenched the earth with violent hues. The stage stars were traipsing back and forth over my closed eyelids, some in full-length tights, some décolleté, some with flaming red wigs, some with laced corsets, some with pantaloons, some in ecstasy, some morbid, some smoked like hams, some defiant, some piquant, but all of them posturing, gesturing, declaiming, all trying to crowd one another off the stage.

I had never anticipated an appetizing banquet like that when dreaming of sailing down Mobile Bay. It was like being in limbo, a levitation act on the threshold of the dream. A day or two before we had crossed the Sewanee River. In Paris I had dreamed of taking a boat and sailing right into the Okefinokee Swamp, just to trace the river to its source. That was a pipe dream. If I had another hundred years to live, instead of fifty, I might still do it, but time is getting short. There are other places to visit—Easter Island, the Papuan Wonderland, Yap, Johore, the Caroline Islands, Borneo, Patagonia—and Tibet, China, India, Persia, Arabia—and Mongolia. The ancestral spirits are calling me; I can't put them off much longer. "*When Henry Miller left for Tibet. . . .*" I can see my future biographer writing that a hundred years from now. What ever happened to Henry Miller? He disappeared. He said he was going to Tibet. Did he get there? Nobody knows. . . . That's how it will be. Vanished mysteriously. Exit with two valises and a trunkful of ideas. But I will come back again one day, in another suit of flesh. I may make it snappy, too, and surprise everybody. One remains away just long enough to learn the lesson. Some learn faster than others. I learn very quickly. My homework is all finished. I know that the earth is round, but I know also that that is the least important fact you can mention about it. I know that there are maps of the earth which designate a country called America. That's also relatively unimportant. *Do you dream?* Do you leave your little *locus perdidibus* and mingle with the other inhabitants of the earth? Do you visit the other earths, whatever they be called?

Do you have the stellar itch? Do you find the aeroplane too slow, too inhibited? Are you a wanderer who plays on muted strings? Or are you a cocoanut that falls to the ground with a thud? I would like to take an inventory of man's longings and compare it with his accomplishments. I would like to be master of the heavens for just one day and rain down all the dreams, desires, longings peculiar to man. I would like to see them take root, not slowly through the course of historical aeons, *but immediately*. God save America! That's what I say too, because who else is capable of doing the trick? And now before I jump Mobile by way of Pascagoula I give you the greetings of a "hotel de luxe," The Lafayette, in New Orleans:—

"To you who enter this room as a guest, we who manage this hotel give hearty greeting.

"We may never get to know you, but just the same we want you to feel that this is a 'human house,' and not a soulless institution.

"This is your Home, be it for a day or night only.

"Human beings own the place.

"Human beings care for you here, make the bed and clean the room, answer your telephone, run your errands. We keep a human being at the desk and a human being carries your valise. They are all made of flesh and blood, as you are; they have their interests, likes and dislikes, ambitions, dreams and disappointments, just as you have.

"Of course you have to pay your price. Everybody has to do that everywhere. But the best part of any business transaction is the flow of human interest that goes with it.

"We are going to take care of you. Whatever rules there are here are made for the purpose of protecting you and insuring your comfort, not to annoy you.

"A good rule for a hotel, as for anything else, is The Golden Rule—Do as you'd be done by.

"We shall try to put ourselves in your place. We ask ourselves, 'How would I like to be treated if I were stopping at a hotel?'

"And we ask you to put yourself in our place. Before you condemn us, ask yourself, 'What would I do if I were running a hotel?'

"If we fail to measure up to that standard, let us know.

"We assume that every man guest here is a Gentleman, every woman guest a Lady. We believe the average American is courteous, quiet, law abiding, anxious to avoid trouble, considerate of others, and willing to pay as he goes.

"May you be healthy under our roof, and no evil befall you.

"For a little space you lodge with us—and we wish to put these good thoughts upon you—so God keep you, stranger, and bring you your heart's desire. And when you go away, leave for this hotel a bit of grateful feeling."

(What a friend we have in Jesus! I brush the pearly tears from my eyes, spit a good healthy gob, and quietly eviscerate the cockroaches I left behind in the cuspidor of Room 213. Make a mental note to reread Ouspenski's *Tertium Organum*. About face!)

I am back in the fourteenth arrondissement and the cot on which I am lying is steaming into Mobile Bay. The exhaust pipe is open, the tiller is at the till. Below me are the crustaceans of the zinc and tin age, the omnivorous anemones, the melted icebergs, the oyster beds, the hollyhocks and the huge hocks of ham. The Lufthansa is conducting a pilgrimage to Hattiesburg. Admiral Farragut has been dead for almost a century. In Devachan most likely. It is all so familiar, the ricocheting mandolins, the ashen fragrance, the corrugated silhouettes, the glassy stare of the bay. Neither toil nor spin, neither bubble nor trouble. The cannons look down on the moat and the moat speaks not. The town is white as a sepulchre. Yesterday was All Souls Day and the sidewalks are peppered with confetti. Those who are up and about are in white ducks. The heat waves make their ascent slantwise, the sound waves move seismographically. No rataplan, no rat-a-tat, but slap-slap, slap-slap. The ducks are floating up the bay, their bills all gold and iridescence. Absinthe is served on the verandah with scones and bursting paw-paws. The caw, the rook, the oriole gather up the crumbs. As it was in the time of Saul, as were the days for the Colossians and the nights for the Egyptians, so it is now. To the south the Horn, eastward the Bosphorus. East, west, clock, counterclock, Mobile revolves like a torpid astrolabe.

Men who knew the shade of the baobab swing lazily in their hammocks. Haunched and dehaunched the boneless bronzed women of the Equatorial regions amble by. Something Mozartian, something Segovian, stirs the air. Maine contributes her virginity, Arabia her spices. It is a merry-go-round standing stock-still, the lions affable, the flamingos poised for flight. Take the milk of aloes, mix clove and brandywine, and you have the spiritual elixir of Mobile. There is no hour when things are different, no day which is not the same. It lies in a pocket, is honeycombed with light, and flutters like a plucked catgut. It is mobile, fluid, fixed, but not glued. It gives forth no answers, neither does it question. It is mildly, pleasantly bewildering, like the first lesson in Chi-

nese or the first round with a hypnotist. Events transpire in all declensions at once; they are never conjugated. What is not Gog is Magog—and at nine *punkt* Gabriel always blows his horn. *But is it music?* Who cares? The duck is plucked, the air is moist, the tide's out and the goat's securely tethered. The wind is from the bay, the oysters are from the muck. Nothing is too exciting to drown the pluck-pluck of the mandolins. The slugs move from slat to slat; their little hearts beat fast, their brains fill with swill. By evening it's all moonlight on the bay. The lions are still affably baffled and whatever snorts, spits, fumes and kisses is properly snaffled. *C'est la mort du carrousel, la mort douce des chou-bruxelles.*

APR. 1943

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by Henry Miller (\$5.00)
an anarchist's journey through the U.S.A.

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by Thornton Wilder (\$2.50)
short plays of an eccentric comic talent

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ten complete novels by the author of "Fanny Hill"

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the most extraordinary adventure novel of 1942

The Great Gatsby
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writing that
 *is modern*

but not unworthy of the great
traditions of the past





300 Park Avenue, New York City



Narcissus, *Naples Museum*

NARCISSUS ISSUE /
OCTOBER 1943

Narcissus

BY WALLACE FOWLIE

I MYTH

quod cupio mecum est
Narcissus is the myth of the profound present when man looks at himself and questions himself. The fountain, sole element of the setting, is in reality the universe, the choreographic, summarized, and tranquil site of the universe. The dreaming boy, on his first escapade, is praying for the waters of the fountain to sleep. He is praying for a quasi-impossibility: the sleep of all the disorders of the universe, so that he may mirror himself in them, so that he may grant himself the right of seeing himself, of seeing all his contours during the terrible present moment of living. Nature must arrest all change and breathing so that a youth may perceive himself and become his own double!

The child, precociously too tender, is seeking solitude and, before knowing that the world needs his tenderness and even expects it according to a great principle of love, confides this tenderness to himself in his fixed stare. To become oneself is the law of his happiness. Adam, before the division of himself and the creation of his other form we call "woman," must have resembled Narcissus and known also a sweet and mirrored self-sufficiency. Adam must have told himself, as Narcissus did, that he would not know any other soul but his own. The destiny of man, since the fleshly divisioning of Adam, has been the search of that part of himself separated and different from himself. And now Narcissus is bent

upon opposing this destiny and forgetting it in his horizontal mirror!

Narcissus desires himself. He is no longer the child considering himself with mild curiosity or desirous of seizing the reeds which grow out of the shallow waters near the bank. And he is not yet the man who feels disgust for himself and longs to possess a person other than himself and of a different sex. Narcissus is the adolescent on his knees who has for himself and for the flesh he sees reflected a strange and new desire. He knows for the first time the sensation of death because in his thoughts he is striving in vain to reach himself. While other boys play, battle, and jeer at one another, he discovers his pleasure in the admiration of his own picture, in his love of self. The showing of his body to himself is the sole rite he wishes to perform. Everything in his mind and in his blood rushes toward his lost form which is now rediscovered and which his immobile vision penetrates during these passively lived moments. So pure an androgynist, he sees himself now as man, now as woman. It is vital for him to be duped by this subjective phantom.

And yet Narcissus is modest. By the very slowness with which he contemplates himself and by the long analysis he makes of his features, he proves his scorn for any hasty and dewarding improvisation. His one hesitating smile is really an agreement between two smiles, and from his reflection mounts up to the boy a light which intoxicates him steadily, sweetly. He has no feelings of immodesty which are feelings of facile possession and declamation. Velleities, instincts, sentiments, all disappear save this game invented by him of the image lost and the image seized. Water is the source of his life, but can one embrace an aquatic reflection?

When Narcissus penetrates the intimate meaning of the dormant water, he is actually renewing his own myth and explaining to himself the harsh lesson of his destiny. "He will live if he doesn't know himself," had predicted at his birth the soothsayer Tiresias. But, as he leans over the water, he is thereby committed to self-knowledge and self-exploration. Death is already touching him and coveting his flesh.

With the first glance which intoxicated him, he entered the full glory of a hero. But the hero, by definition, is a man who has no future. As soon as his deed is accomplished, the life of a hero is a gradual dying. And Narcissus, with his first look, which reveals to him his love for himself, becomes a hero because at that moment he exhausts the triumph over himself. The hero is the man who suddenly stands alone without anything; no principles and no parts of the universe have importance for him any longer. He became, by his deed, the universe for himself, and after his moment of triumph, there is nothing, there will be nothing save the void and the desired annihilation of every day, the wearing out of every minute. The hero and amorous Narcissus equal one another because at the supreme moment, at the moment of sacrifice which is one of self-discovery and self-knowledge, they both desire and will disaster. They extinguish an entire life in one flash, and discover a moment afterwards that what they hold in reality is motionless death.

Narcissus creates his own victory and then takes up exile in it. It is for an instant, but that very instant must subsume the future. What is the action of Narcissus? Of what does his heroism of a youthful exhibitionist consist? Like all heroes, Narcissus wishes to lose what is pure in himself. He seeks what is profoundest in himself in order to extirpate it. The innocence of Narcissus is in danger because for the first time it is tinted with an erotic shade and longs for its own disappearance and death. This is the deep universal present of heroism, the moment known by us all which will be called henceforth the narcissistic moment: conceived as the desire to lose one's unity since this unity, once it has been measured by the senses, exacts its own dispersal! The soul, bending over an abyss of reflections, wills the scandal of a loss, just as military glory wills on various occasions the collective loss of an army or of a nation. Held by his own beauty, unmindful that man should contemplate a beauty other than his own; Narcissus feels himself bound precisely by what will not enrich him. Risk alone increases the stature of man. Narcissus is the hero who runs no risk because

he wagers all his being on what is most personal to that being.

II FIGURES

pariterque accendit et ardet

In the evolution of the *libido* Freud indicates three stages, of which the second is primarily essential to this study. The child is interested first in himself and in his own body. When this natural interest is increased by an erotic impulse, the psychologist calls it the narcissistic *libido*. In the normal development of the adolescent this desire is quite quickly transferred to another person. This cycle of three stations has an almost concentric cycle in the customary evolution of the human mind: the child poetizes, the adolescent analyzes, the man dogmatizes. Avid for silence, sun and trees during the first part of his existence, man then devotes an expression of his life to endless discussion and controversy, and finally, after his youth is over, discovers in the traps of bourgeoisism his faith stabilized and silenced in conventions, laws, social equilibrium.

Narcissus, or the modern hero whom I believe we may call Narcissus, stops at the second stage of these erotic-sexual and spiritual cycles. His vision is immaculate and his desire inviolate. What solitary emotion fills him? What strange despotism reigns over his nature which, after very few modifications perhaps, is human nature in its universal state?

The modern world is about ready to recognize in Narcissus one of its most beloved sons, the one of its many captives who has known himself the best and the one who has most profoundly ignored the world in which he lives. This is no ignorance cultivated through some principle, nor is it an absence of sympathy. It is rather an illness comparable to the fever which attached Narcissus to the brink of his fountain. Stendhal's hero, Julien Sorel, is par excellence the nineteenth-century hero. All the diverse types created by the century are in him: René, the pale sensitive lover of nature; Napoleon, the conqueror of battles; Byron, seducer and egoist; Hernani, the fated hero of obscure origin; Perdican, the man who

doesn't know whether he is gambling or not with love. *Le Rouge et le Noir* of 1830, which is the most bitter account of restoration bourgeoisism and pessimism, and of the entire century's, for that matter, is, in spite of its prose texture, made up exclusively of real facts, the most poetic myth of the modern soul. Above all, Julien is Narcissus. He is modern and ancient at the same time, the man of inflexible sweetness. As was the solemn hour of Narcissus which he spent at the edge of the river, Julien's life is composed of hesitations, retractions, inconstancies. He prepares in the desert of each house he lives in a perverse and secret triumph. A persistent doubt joins him with Narcissus: he knows his love is perishable. He knows each love, each ambition, each dream is perishable. As it was for Narcissus, it is impossible for Julien to distinguish between love, ambition, dream. The absent ones, those who are loved and those who are hated, are only a name. He sees no face save his own.

Behind Narcissus stretches out the world of men, and before him, in the mirror of the pool, the reproduction of his own traits. He is immobilized between the life of action and the life of contemplation. The world fails to attract him and he spends himself in his contemplation of nothingness. Julien likewise is immobilized between the necessity of bending himself to the will of the world and the desire to dominate the world. Thus is explained and reproduced the narcissistic myth of infecund dreams. Sensuous and solitary Narcissus finds his double in willful and impotent Julien. Narcissus loves without being able to embrace the image of his love; Julien is incapable of loving and tries to attain, through the conquest of his mistresses, to some higher rank. Seated on the rock in the forest, he watches in the flight of the hawk the symbol of his destiny, and becomes, in his imagination, the bird of prey, just as Narcissus, by his steady self-contemplation, makes himself into his own ravisher!

Thirty years after Julien Sorel, Mallarmé's swan (as well as his clown, his faun, his "terrified hero" of the sonnet and of *Prose pour Des Esseintes*) recapitulates the fate of Narcissus. It is winter. The lake is frozen, but the ice is transparent, and the wings of

the swan, uselessly outstretched under the covering of ice, demonstrate the same tragedy of impotent love in their "flights which haven't flown." Narcissus incapable of loving, Julien incapable of dominating, and the swan (who is the poet) incapable of creating, are arrested in their existence by the monstrous force of a dream which appears in the form of three kinds of love: love of self, love of the world, love of artistic creation.

The swan, a symbol white, pure, motionless and dying, is a new reincarnation of Narcissus and Julien, and a new development of the pride which attached them to their destiny of frustration. Narcissus kneeling in his childlike pose of self-adoration, and Julien, seated on his rock and contemplating himself in the flight of the hawk, prefigure Mallarmé's swan which, this time, is not held down by his dream or relegated to the limbo of the darkest subconsciousness. He is immobilized, not by himself, but by the hard cold substance of the ice, exiled in the kingdom of frost and snow. The hidden theme of sterility in Narcissus and Julien becomes clear in the white prison of the swan. The inner personal struggle of the hero, so sumptuously composed of eroticism and narcissism, lasted too long. It was surpassed. The world could no longer wait for the hero to recognize the divine and gratuitous beauty of nature, and the simplicity of true love which is self-donation and even self-immolation. Cruelly it closed down over this proud being in increasing its amorous embrace. The gesture which Narcissus could not accomplish and which Julien didn't wish to accomplish, is imposed upon the swan as supreme punishment and verdict of death.

The novels of the twentieth century provide countless examples of narcissistic heroes, but the most astonishingly faithful to the ancient dilemma is Marcel, especially Marcel of *La Prisonnière* who keeps Albertine hidden away from everyone, in the room at the end of the corridor in the Paris house. At Balbec Albertine belonged to everyone, but in Paris, in the spacious mornings when Marcel awoke, she is a canticle to the glory of the sun, and serves as a mirror for the suffering of Marcel, who looks at



Le beau narcississe, *Daumier*

himself in her face which he doesn't love but which he needs to possess alone.

All three heroes of Proust: Swann, Charlus, and Marcel are united in their imperious need of seeing and of seeing themselves. They fall in love with the ideal vision of themselves which they discover in someone else. Marcel says, at the beginning of his long narcissistic meditation in which Albertine represents his fountain whose calm and sleep are so grievously indispensable to him, a short sentence which resounds like some explicit condemnation and which is perhaps at the basis of the psychology of Narcissus: "la vérité change tellement pour nous." (*La Prisonnière*, I; p. 24.) Nothing is stable in the world except oneself. Narcissus does not dare contemplate a force or a beauty different from his own. Marcel will never love Albertine because the principle of love is the absolute (cf. the sonorous first line of Crashaw's poem to Saint Teresa: "Love, thou art

absolute sole Lord.") and Albertine symbolizes waywardness and temptation.

In *Albertine*, Marcel sees not only the cause of his suffering, but also the person from whom he has nothing more to learn. The immobility of passion for Narcissus and Marcel is this vision of nothingness: the vision of himself in the case of Narcissus, and the vision of the girl who will give him no joy in the case of Marcel. Their drama is the illusion of happiness, the game of hide-and-seek with oneself regulated by the refusal of running a risk. Marcel contemplates Albertine without feeling any joy, and in the zone of vagueness and solipsism which his contemplation engenders he learns to fear the moment when Albertine will disappear, when he will no longer have even the certainty of his suffering. Narcissus fears the evening, the immense desolation of evening, when he will not be able to see himself in the fountain, as Marcel fears the night into which Albertine will plunge in order to disperse forever the remorse of the jailer and the too well known beauty of the prisoner.

III LOVE

si se non noverit

Narcissus is the myth of love which is really sleep. When all of nature is sleeping, and especially the calm waters of the fountain, Narcissus can see himself purely and possess himself ideally. He captures the passion of tranquillity as another man would seize the most vertiginous moments of passion. In her sleep Albertine resembles a plant stretched out under the eyes of Marcel, a kind of charming captive in whom all of life is summarized and possessed. In watching Albertine sleep, Marcel feels as complete a joy as that known by Narcissus when he watches himself breathe. And Julien Sorel, the most representative Oedipus of the nineteenth century, falls asleep under the sweet persuasiveness of maternal love. Equal in him are the two forces of dream and action. Everything in society, traditions and the moral code, directs him toward the philosophy of universal nihilism. He lives at the dawn of modern pessimism, after the night of Oedipus and before the



Narcissus: Master of Paris

noon of his sad partner of the twentieth century, the gigolo, who appears also in the features of the "voyou" and of the clown.

In his triumph with artifice the clown is a new approximation of Narcissus. He plays tricks on the public as Narcissus plays tricks on love, as Rimbaud played tricks on reason, and as Julien played tricks on God. The clown, as well as the modern poet, illustrates the Baudelairian theory of the lie. He symbolizes the purity of desire and intention. His actions have no moral significance because they are imitated and improvised. In his game, which is for him livelihood and vocation, he has no shame. The soul of the clown has no sense of guilt and no memory of sin. That is why, in a sense, the clown is the modern mystic, the man penetrated with religious sentiment, but always invulnerable. In "acting" sin, one doesn't commit it. Narcissus simulates sin; he doesn't know it.

All these figures are perhaps the same: Narcissus, Oedipus, Julien, Marcel,—or the clown, the voyou, the swan, the gigolo, the angel. Of all beings they are the most humble. They ask nothing from the uni-

verse; they don't even ask to live. It is true that their nature is proud and passionate, but they do not inhabit a décor which can easily be replaced. They live under the sign of an impotent desire. They play tricks on their essence and their setting, as the deep-sea diver (so precious to Jean Cocteau) plays tricks on the ocean depths. The deep-sea diver is a man who persists in living despite the entire mass of the ocean capable of crushing him.

Narcissus is the clown of our sentiments. The clown is the gigolo of our actions. The adolescent on his knees before the mirroring of himself (it is the voyou hostile to the eyes of others), and the grease-painted figure playing before a public (it is the voyou hostile to the beating of his own heart), both tragically represent the perversion of purity. The travestied purity of Narcissus and the travestied vice of the voyou are the same experience or the same incompleting voyage to the sensible world. Narcissus who looks at himself without seeing the world, and the clown who looks at the world without seeing himself, are the same hero simultaneously humble and humiliated.

Between Narcissus and the clown lives Hamlet, who cannot understand his tragedy. Between the adolescent who hides himself and the man who exhibits himself lives the mysterious being who is neither adolescent nor man but who is both at the same time. Hamlet desperately seeks solitude in his books and in himself, but the world has taken on for him the image of an immense impalpable circus. Wherever he goes, he is seen; wherever he hides, he is betrayed. The same search for love unites him with Narcissus and with the clown, but he represents a different stage in the search. Between love of self, characterized by Narcissus, and fear of love or even personal negation of love, which we see in the clown,

exists Hamlet, who struggles equally against the egoism of analysis and the fear of giving himself. Love is the loss of oneself in someone else. Hamlet approaches this, but Narcissus denies the very concept of love, and the clown denies it also, in his own way, by the donation and cosmic dispersal of himself.

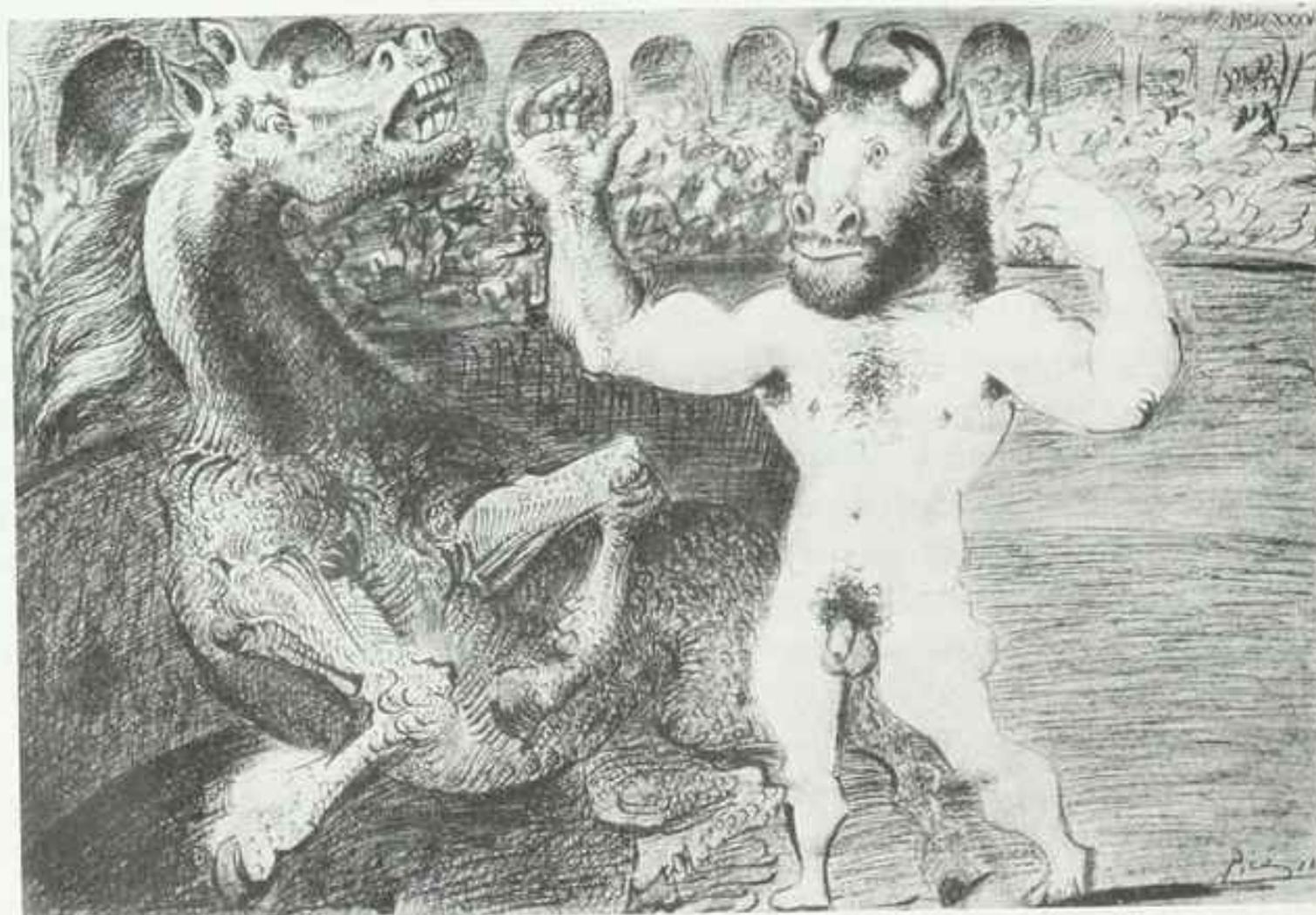
The sentiment which harms love the most, which deforms it monstrously if it doesn't destroy it integrally, is pity. A sure and subtle poison against love, pity is the vice of the bourgeois and the permanent danger of Narcissus and the clown. The dramatic action of Hamlet is his struggle against pity. Each character in the palace seems capable of awakening in him the sentiment of pity, but Hamlet is conscious of the trap which is the narcissism of his nature. The man who feels pity doesn't love, for pity is something added to our heart which fails to change it fundamentally. Pity is the intermittent virtue, as jealousy is the intermittent malady, of the heart. In the clown's true circus and in Hamlet's impalpable circus the intermittences of pity and jealousy have no place. Pity is the reverse of jealousy, or the mask and disguised principle of jealousy.

The abortive attempts of the modern spirit are lucidly drawn by the artists who have seen in the traits of Narcissus and in the traits which resemble his, a dilemma of an aesthetic and a moral order. But the hero created by the artist is always the artist himself, and the artist is all men of his age, their soul canonized by a tacit agreement between men and their time. All men are mirrored in the artist elected by themselves and in spite of themselves, as the mythical adolescent was mirrored in the clear fountain. History becomes myth, myth becomes history, and the earth today is waiting to see whether man will act or lose himself in the analysis of his imaginary actions.

OCT. 1943



Ganymede, *Michelangelo*



Le minotaure, *Picasso*

View Listens*

selected letters: 1943-44

DEC. 1943

DER FÜHRER AS NARCISSUS

Editors, *View*:

Here is an aspect of the Narcissus problem the writers of *View* did not cover. [*Reproduced below.*]

A Regular Reader

New York City

MAY 1944

Editor, *View*:

I am opposed to any kind of censorship that says in an official way that we must not speak in a personal way. As for *View*, the readers of *View* have been exposed to demoralizing strangeness from the cradle up, and are not going to be harmed by anything that anyone with a gift for novelty, offers them.

I am indebted to *View* for making me somewhat



**View* was banned by the post office in early 1944, with no reason given but presumably, according to the editorial in this issue, because of the reproductions of nudes by Picasso and Michelangelo in December 1943. Subscribers were asked by letter if they wished to pay the postage to receive the next issue by first-class mail.—C. N.

closely acquainted with the work of Joseph Cornell; and am full of gratitude to you and Parker Tyler for defending me to a public, that if it is aware of me at all, is likely to regard me as a drawback. But I look upon *View* as not in good health. There is usually in each issue something I wish to keep, and I ask myself as I ponder the whole content, why can one not have something acutely irresistible without having it negated by what is intolerable? Why may one not be a matchless rugmaker of Daghestan without being a woman of Daghestan who has never washed? Why, on a dare or under a vow, does one mask as a leper so perfectly as to earn commiseration upon one's mortal affliction?

The sense of your generosity has led me to read *View* with dozing optimism, hoping for the best, and would have kept me from thrusting on you my dissatisfactions, but since you ask me how I feel about the paper, I answer.

Sincerely yours,
Marianne Moore
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Thank you, Miss Moore. We are happy to elicit from you a firm and lucid statement on censorship. However, in your second paragraph, you transfer your relation to the "official" (which is also ours) to your relation with View. You ask why it is you do not wish to "keep" everything in the magazine, which, according to your own diagnosis, is the same as asking why View can't be in "good health." At the end of your paragraph, you imply that some artists and writers in View are not really in bad health, but "mask" themselves with it. . . .

By your use of the language of common hygiene to criticize us, it seems you make a most important error. Your juxtaposition of the art of a rugmaker and the unwashed body of a woman makes it inescapable that you refer, not to metaphysical cleanliness, but to the sensual experiences of art.

The Puritan moral code, with its tiresome infringement on physical cleanliness, is a challenge to those in whose natures (I need mention only Villon and Poe) debauchery and the acquisition of dirt have been somehow inseparable from the aggrandizement of the spirit.

It was such a profoundly spiritual man as D. H. Lawrence who wrote: "One should not bathe too often; it impoverishes the blood." And what would Joyce's Ulysses or Djuna Barnes's Nightwood be without their sublime flavor of earthly decadences, without that beautiful rot from which springs, eternally cleansed, the artist's spirit?

The Editors

Editor, *View*:

I am enclosing two dollars in renewal of my subscription to *View*; I wish it might be two thousand dollars to aid in the fight that you are carrying on. My sense of freedom (and especially of artistic freedom) is outraged by the banning of *View* from the mails; and the outrage would not be abated even though I entirely disapproved, critically, of the contents of the magazine. If the December issue of *View* is obscene, then the Michelangelo frescoes in the Sistine Chapel are obscene, too, and we may look to have no more reproductions of them sent through the mail. . . . I had hoped that in America we had won the old battle against evil-minded Puritanism; unfortunately, the present war seems to be furnishing an occasion for a rejuvenation of the movement to make us pure—i.e., eunuch-like, i.e., inhuman—by fiat. It is a further irony that the war is being fought to rid the world of those who condemn certain art as *Zersetzenkunst*! It is saddening to think that the battle for artistic freedom must be fought all over again; but if it must be fought, then I am on the side of artistic freedom, certainly, and I see the suppression of *View* as a flagrant violation of that freedom. If my name would be of the least service, please use it freely among those of the other civilized Americans who prefer not to be treated as if they were mentally twelve years of age.

Very truly yours,
George Marion O'Donnell

By all means, send me a copy of the forbidden *View*. I have no illusions about its obscenity. I am sure that if I were expecting that sort of a thrill, there are plenty of other weeklies and monthlies that would amply satisfy the desire. No, you will never be a big-

time paper, because you do not know how to put over pornography.

If I can be of any help in the fight to unsmirch your reputation, just call on me. For instance, I might propose to the post office a little machine I have invented. All you have to do is run a questionable reproduction or magazine through this machine. If the publication is O.K., a green light goes on. If, however the work in question is dirty, a red light appears. This will eliminate all personal and arbitrary decisions.

Good luck to you,

Man Ray
Hollywood, Calif.

HALLUCINATION PAPIN

Editors, *View*:

I can't tell you how much I've enjoyed reading the last two copies of your magazine. They seem to have been the realization of so much that *View* had promised. Really—there is so little going on anymore that is first rate and creative that you should feel very proud about what you are doing. One has come to have the feeling that each new issue of *View* is going to be fresh. And it is.

By the way I was reading a little 25-cent pocket book called True Crime Stories, in the back of which there is an account of the murder of the Lancelin sisters by the Papin sisters which occurred in February 1933. It's the most marvelous murder I've read about in a long time and I was interested to see that *Minotaure* published a scholarly essay called "Motifs du Crime Paranoïque: ou Le Crime des Soeurs Papins" which recorded the very remarkable hallucinations of one of the sisters only six months before she was beheaded. I should love to read a translation in *View* of some of these hallucinations.

Several of my friends and I have also wondered when you were going to have another picture story by Joseph Cornell. The Crystal Cage was surely one of your most exciting contributions.

John Myers
Buffalo, N.Y.

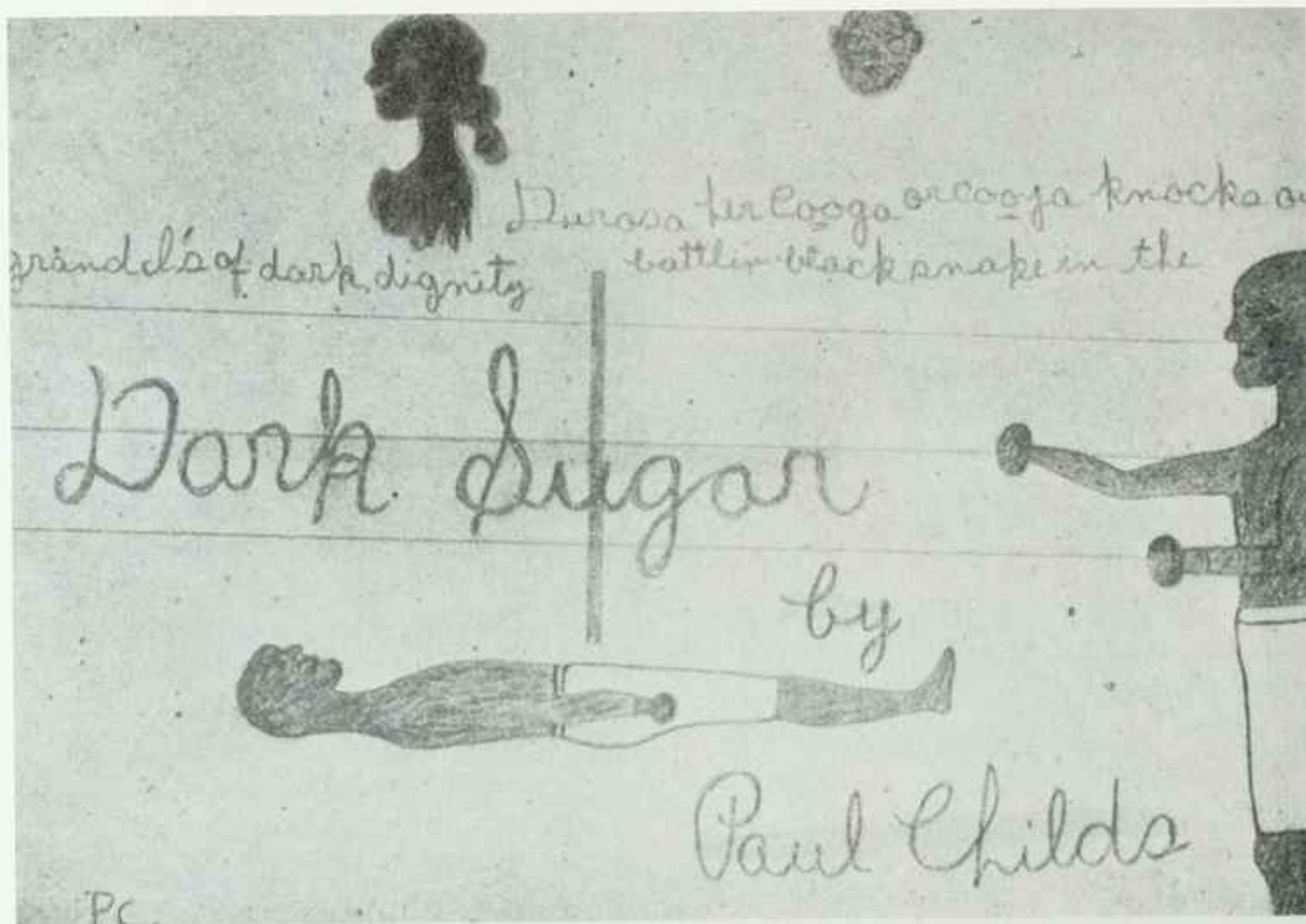
PAUL CHILDS IN HIS SELFFIGRAPH

I was born in Wellsburg West Virginia May 30th 1906 of Christian parents devoted to their Church work, my father Samuel Childs died when I was eleven years old but my education at school went on until had finished high coming to Cleveland a year, later in 1920 I continued my studies at the library and its various branches twas not until I had finished grade that I continuously, heard the beyond call of the poets and the irresistible urge on of the sweet goddess rhyme and long with my writing also goes my hobby for drawing ships and whales and here in my fond devotion to my better self or life write work I often enchambered myself to fast loneliness to become an unastructed deciple or servant of that invisible goddess of verse chant of rhyme song and verse prevailing goddess so yealous her few precious I am a lover of gangster talkies and adventure romantics stirring bigtime stage shows ice or roller skating football games wrestling matches archery I love good singing and grand opera performances, though I can't understand its nonenglish words it is my fast and fond desire to write america better literature to read to write my works in solacing beauty, to the reading of them will be so gracious and beautiful it is also my desire to a small farm whereon I can and will raise chickens and geese corn and white potatoes and bermuda onions, head lettuce, a large artificial lake where I can specialize in marketable fish raising and turtlery thought of when in my early teens

I usually do skilled labor or porter work
and building labor also a caremaker

and I am often fond of bigtime floor show bars
amusement parks and usually just, and ordinary
solitary individual taking prosperity just as it comes
and retaining a respectful balance of things it is daily
effort to do the best in my profession and hope a
happy and overthrilled american and even world
will knowing and readingly enjoying more of me

Yours *Newly*
Paul Childs
Cleveland, Ohio



A novel of fiction, the names of persons and amusement bars are intentionally fictitious.

PAUL CHILDS

KID, the Go-Grandski, a young, spectacular football star, evening canary tone tenor, skate and ski prince, was well liked by Gladdy and many others, but often envied by many more. Though his home was in Chicago, he finished high school in New York City. It was three years previous to his high school days that Gladdy first met him after a spectacular football performance, and now he's in the popular and entertainment song world.

Traveling considerably between New York, Pittsburg, Detroit, and Chicago, he often visited his two uncles in Pittsburg, who were very proud of him, and he often took prolonged notice of Gladdy's collection of chocolate dawns, for instance, his 5 ft. 1" 130 lb. Custard Sue; his 5 ft. 4½" 126 lb. Doll Bostonnette, and others, including the most prettful and delicious faced Sauggie, which he lately married.

And Kid, the Go-Grandski, had also seen Gladdy in his temporary spells of social success, at which times Gladdy would

ask, "Well, have you seen any pretty people?"

One June evening the Kid, the Go-Grandski, was sitting in company at the social magic bar of a big time cafe, when Gladdy approached the next seat to them. Kid, the Go-Grandski, his glomantic face blossomed with the joy of social victory, as he introduced Gladdy for his first time to meet Anny Prettipeople, of whom Gladdy later remarked to his friend Snooswell, that Anny Prettipeople was the many of any but pretty. Her hair was only five inches long but it was of a silkified quality; though only 5 ft. 2½" tall, her weight was 153 lbs., and a stock bulk of comic looking girlitry. Yet her voice was often like spoken silver, and her frequent laughter subjugating compliments to her attention of love, but to Kid, the Go-Grandski, she was only another mild occasion. Here in this same cafe, Gladdy meets the Kid again just two days later, then asks, "Who was the pretty one

I saw in your blue sedan yesterday?" The Kid answered, "Dark Sugar, born in Springfield, Illinois, educated in Detroit, worked a year as a maid in New York City and then became slightly Harlemized."

The girl she likes my singing, and my arms about her waist, she keeps the phone a-ringing when we're some distance space.

Some smarts have tried to make her drink, to steal her out her clothes, but my little so quick to think, do not as they suppose.

As mellow as a salad, the joy glow of ale, the princess of a ballad, she's mine and not for sale.

A pie meal two tone chocolate for from her highfull bust on down she's tannish, her fillaswellfia, or just plain natural lunch pack a forty degrees tilted, model, dinner compartment.

Though her dark skinned face broad spannish, from her bust on down she's tanish and then said smiling Gladdy,

Dark Sugar

BY PAUL CHILDS

A novel of fiction, the names of persons and amusement bars are intentionally fictitious.

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The color law the dark skinned face, takes nothing from her grace, or race.

The two tone form is well in place, your glory all to all embrace.

And the girl I seen in your blue car,
Was that pearl serene! Dark Sugar!

But then said Kid the Go-Grandski, the drama's more than that

To start she liked my singing and I liked her face
In both our ears kept ringing, the don'ts of cunning negroes.

And then she liked my going outs, and I the more liked hers, up to the clinch, in lovabouts, with mingled, Ohs and purrs.

Now one very hot day in July and the breeze, were very few.

They went out with a boating party, and just as they made shore, met a big time roughhouse Smarty, who started a furore. Took his cigarette from his mouth and with it burnt her arm. Go-Grandski hit this trampaboo, from the south.

And falling, he exclaims: "Scuse me, Miss, scuse me. Scuse me, buddy, please."

Kid, the Go-Grandski, frantic, half mad, was desperate to continue his attack upon the knocked down Roughty Ruffa, but Dark Sugar, screaming, grabbed his arm, and begged him not, but still—

Roughty Ruffa daring Go-Grandski to take advantage of his down condition, began calling Go-Grandski wicked names, as he yelled, "You black trampaboo, why you ape-faced brute, buzzard skunk you, haven't you got more sense than to hit a man while he's down," and then suddenly he sprang to his feet. And as suddenly, Go-Grandski knocked him down again; this time Roughty talked, but yelled out in awesome fury.

"Well, you blue crazy ape, you done knocked me down twice, and if you do it again you frog brained old fool, I'll get up from here and wreck hell with you." Then said Go-Grandski, "Being already down is all that saves you."

Dark Sugar with their four boat friends, now urges him to come on away, as Roughty's gang swarm up and worms up. Roughty again sprang from the ground, declaring that he'd rough the life out of that coon hound but Dark Sugar stood before him. Then twelve gangster queens anxious to carve Dark Sugar's pretty face with their gleaming switch blade knives, dashed at her madly. For a moment she then sidestepped, and ran for her own personal safety.



'Twas then that Roughty with terrific right to the left cheek knocked Go-Grandski to his knees. He soon gained his feet but as quickly was knocked back by another fast right to the same left cheek five steps, right into Dark Sugar's arms; he was faint and groggy, but kept his feet.

With Dark Sugar to the motorboat, now to their rescue, and as the gangster hollered "Kill them, kill them damned black apes," but the great sleek craft was now sliding through the water fifty miles. Then Roughty sought to pursue; he said, "We'll ram the boat in that way go through them, so they'll drown, like a legs-tied goat," but soon after two miles his three long racy line boats were fast losing chase, and after heavy fire of his five automatic shot guns, Roughty knew Kid the Go-Grandski, and party had escaped.

They cruised on up the Hudson until they came to a beautiful restover, a poeticised picture garden of love, its empresses of trees, magic lawn, its symphonic bathing waters refreshed wearied, living forms, while occasional breeze orchestrated the empress trees, and sublimized the soul. 'Twas here they rested, dine guested and jested.

Then said Go-Grandski, to his boat party friends, I both won and lost my greatest victory on this dramatic day.

Then said Slim Swimmons, proud owner of the all aluminum gleaming chromium plated 43 feet super deluxe motorboat cruiser, *Swansure*, as he stood, and spoke in courtly grace, Oh no, there with you I see Dark Sugar, and smiled Kid the Go-Grandski, as he rehearsed it like a Together we went through fire and shot, together we are saved, for you holds the dearest thought of how you in love behaved.

Though Dark Sugar had now become Lady First of Harlem singers and evening entertainers, she cared for only one night prince of fame, that was the 5 ft. 9" flashy dressed Kid the Go-Grandski, and how they did love it. There was Roughty Ruffa's and many other night king's first place endeavor to princify Dark Sugar, the prettiest dawn, or darkskinned, in evening New York. Though Roughty Ruffa had lived all the way from Hollywood, California, to

Harlem, New York, he was previously born twenty-five years ago in Miami, Florida. He was 6 ft. 1½" tall, weighed 203 lbs. He was the prince of five big night clubs, and plunderword king, a ruffist, and sportmonger. His hobbies were large bullet proof sedans, luxurious speed boats, his most famous one the thirty-nine feet bullet proof cruiser, *Night Ghost Hauntly*. . . .

Now in the beautiful blue night of the moon, the portable phonograph was playing a familiar blues and up danced Pony Rony with vinesweet torrid Zaney, who said, the excitement was furious, the action ferocious, but our tonightment, securious, cause for love I'm an ocean, in a tropical notion.

Then the Jetinum Dawnd—and the darkskinned Dolly came themselves alone—and came just a jolly.

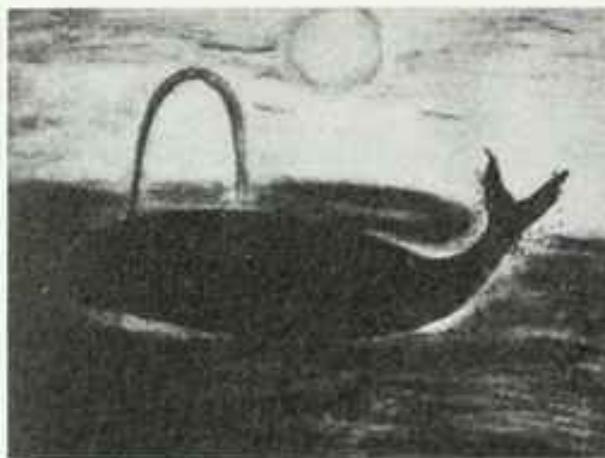
Then said Jetteema, my pretty dollish friend is always the spring and summer time, on which I can depend.

And then Jetteema comictrized folks just a few evenings ago at one of our New York evening life Clubs. I heard some young Clevelandized southern black boys remark of me, she certainly hurtingly is a pretty big black ladish girl with a princely form in the full trousered evening suit. Jetteema, then said I, you would rather I be an all black woman, than flower garden maid, that you blacks, can room in.

Then said Slim Swimmons, now that's all right, yes, we are all tired of flower garden folly. We want some prunes and black eye peas like Dark Sugar, and your chocolate Dolly.

Then jested pretty jolly Dolly, though dark I am in hue, ya, big man size, roly poly, I'm a little yellower than you, by four full shades or two.

Now while the men of the party were on their tiptoes in a game of professional bet bomb ballists wherein only special size ½" diameter bomb balls are and must be dropped from above the head as far as player can reach into the ½" diameter grooves of imitation ships, forts, and animal targets, and keeping their grooves before them can make winning score, the chocolate dawns congregated into a woman's world wherein tall Jajiva asked Jetteema, did you love getting here on your long river trip?



Then Jetteema, about ninety, before reaching here safely I saw near us, a man eating shark, so large, I twice thought it an axis, or some kind of assis submarine, and so fast it ran up to sixty five miles an hour. The faster and nearer us that shark came, and having heard of men ramming submarines, and believing myself the equal of most such men and in this particular case one and a half man better, for as the great shark came up like a swift projected demon I maneuvered my forty one foot sports sedan cruiser perfect through his midsection. He flapped and dived; I thought him dead, but just eleven minutes before reaching safety here, this same shark must have been reincarnated into a super massive whale, which after missing us with his house size tail, caused a terrific wind, a hurricane gale. The boat controls now in my little pal's care, I went onto the after deck, with a hunting knife in each hand. The wind from his tail took me in its gale; I rode the air currents up and I made this whale the Clown like a human, plane diving, upswinging and rediving with a knife in each hand, till I'd cut off his tail in a dozen big chunks and each went down buzzing, in resounding palunks.

Then the girls all seemingly both soul and body charmed, by her sophisticated boating drama, came nearer, closer till on one of her knees sat Pony Rony, and on the other Dark Sugar. And each said, Jetteema, magnificent. Then up spoke her pretty little pal, 'twas more than that, it was manrifficent and then the girls—they all intoned, manrifficent, manrifficent. And then asked they of full fine formed proportionry, aren't we heavy on your knee?

Then exclaimed Jetteema, you're only playthings

on my lap. You see I'm some seventy inches tall, and weigh two hundred and forty five pounds in all, and if those Japs don't come to our American terms, I'll form us such an amazon division—and out Jap the Japs, take their best possessions, and proclaim an all woman ruled, independent state. And the girls all cheered—a woman's state—a woman's state, a woman's state—for our Jetteema.

Then rushing to the scene, the men shouted out, There'll be another war, there'll be another war before we do without our girls, and Dark Sugar. . . .

And then said Jetteema in a triumphant pose of first grace massive feminine splendidry as she recessed from her blitz line tailored, parlor coach of a boat, into a shower of moonlight to join the jolly party, in a voice sublime, went she in rhyme:

My build is of might, it's news when I fight, but I vouch for our Harlem's true star, and when fools fly the kite, I roughens in tight—and saves, and presents, Dark Sugar.

And then Kid the Go-Grandski, gallants out with Dark Sugar, and as they gladly face each other, the Go-Grandski bows, and kisses her bare right shoulder, then taking her by the hand, he said,

I'm as strong in love for you so fine, as vim fire, in the nines of Thinkennine, so now my dear we'll sing and swing in all your song, Dark Sugar.

And soon the whole party joins in a vocal charm-ony, and swing stormony of Dark Sugar.

And now just about four hundred yards away from the party of joy, death comes through the blue night of an ever resounding adventure, as six are roughed away, from a large grayish blue colored motorboat of rough world night lifers just a thirty yards jaunt from the waiting craft. And the victims are told to halt, this rushing into death has two phases, first the direonic, because of such, grim and final consequences for such foolnonse—contempt of black, and all were black folks from the south, who spoke race wreck with a boast, and cursing mouth.

That alone was direonic enough, but all six hopelessly tied, with their hands knotted down behind them, though single in file they were in even numbers, from Georgia, Alabama, Georgia, Alabama,

Georgia, Alabama. And soon one youngster of the killing squad noticed the hardened and fixed face of an older defiant woman of sixty-two from whom he withdrew the aim of his automatic shotgun, saying; well, mother, remembering her who just three years previously had then refused her second oldest daughter permission to accept his then best intentioned company, saying with a boast in high tone contempt fo black skin,

No-o, hell, no-o. Never for a child of mine, for it is better to walk the streets both day and night with a brown skinned boy, though he hasn't a penny, than ride in an airplane with a black millionaire.

Then spoke up a buddy gunman, no time for pity. I'll take that one Slingshot—then said Slingshot, I've never misfired yet, but I will switch with you. And spontaneously the gunmen fired six super slugs into the back of necks of two girls, one eighteen and one nineteen, one old woman and three young men all less than twenty-five years old. . . .

But more was to be known of the six, car road-house harbored, boated on the Hudson to a lonely landing, and there were shot. The Black March gave a stirring version, pathetic and graphic. The Black March was a worthwhile twice-weekly negro paper connected with the Dark Genesis, the Sunday publication, all by Elder Pray Monson, a class scholarly black man of progressive degrees. Well overmatched in social eloquence by his young all charming dark-skinned wife Swell O'May, intelligent mother of their boy and two girls, marvelous reportress of both papers, choir singer and Sunday School teacher of her husband's church with five thousand members, the over commodious and beautiful Temple Cross Calvary.

Elder Pray Monson was just thirty years old, born



in Chicago, Illinois, but established his church in New York City. His success throughout the nation was startling, impressive, sixty-five thousand black following admirers in New York City alone and over three millions throughout the nation.

The Black March's version of race verbal saboteurs, among the six victims killed, a few nights before, June twenty-seventh, was Sportam, formerly Mrs. Welldo whose husband was a very popular farmer and house building specialist, living near Birmingham and a taxpayer of modest property worth.

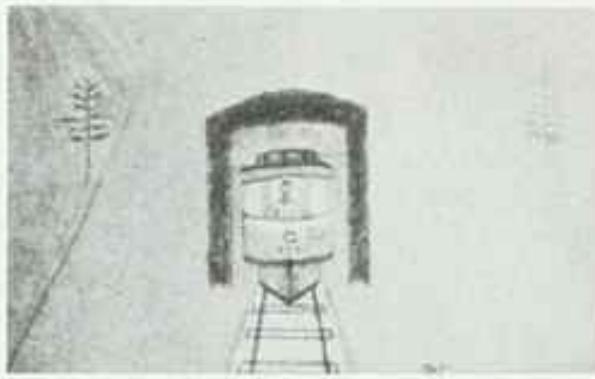
He was a church member and meant it but his wife would seldom attend, and when she did it was usually without him. They had two children at that time; both were little, dark girls.

Her husband was doing well but he was black, and it was at the home of one of her light skinned city friends, Mrs. Farfront that she met her princesome looking, tall light brownskinne cousin, who had been living in New York since he was fifteen and the head waiter in a large New York hotel. It was late that evening when she got home. Mrs. Welldo thought Sportam the most wonderful man of her lifetime and her care for Welldo grew rapidly less and less to a complete breakdown.

She infamously told him she'd never have another black child. Just two days later he sued for a divorce, and three weeks time he got it. . . .

His former wife went straight to Harlem, where she and Sportam lived, and loved together and now Mrs. Welldo had been in New York fifteen years and was the proud mother of a fine looking brown-skinned boy and two beautiful brownskinne girls. Her two older daughters by Welldo, both now in Chicago—and each happily married to young darkskinned professionals, one a physician, the other a lawyer. . . .

And now [she] is killed, along with six others, whose greatest and gravest mistakes, according to some reports, were verbal sabotage against blacks. Their fast opposition to progressive blacks for blacks: to make sure a security at the expense and exclusion of the blacks, for a heir broken and yellow relatives



and friends. Conclusion: and so, what had to be is just what was.

And from other sources 'twas said the six victims had threatened mass violence against the homes of many of the following admirers of Elder Pray Monson. And above all threats, they had vowed to dynamite and destroy the Black March Publishing House, and the grandeurous Temple Cross Calvary, and that a few blackmen of great financial standing guaranteed Steal Nightard ten grand to blast out those anti-negro demonstrationists. . . .

Now 'tis 10 P.M. at a big time night sports resort known as the Evening Life and Floating Joy. Now Swellma, first lady of Nightard's heart and attention, had only been within six minutes after leaving Nightard nearby in the large sedan, when she noticed a finely dressed blackwoman sitting at the long picturesque bar telling a young darkskinned girl, in a high tone of much anger, well, I wouldn't give a black person a drink of life saving water if I owned all of this Hudson river. Then retorted the girl smiling and walking on her jolly way, you may wish that I give you one some day, Mrs. Welldo.

Now haunting Swellma knows Mrs. Welldo and taking a seat beside her as though she was least concerned, and a few moments later Mrs. Welldo is compelled to take first notice of Swellma's alluring beauty, her all sweetening perfumes, and her perfect face make up a peach in color tint. Mrs. Welldo speaks kindly and most certainly polite, and doing the same Swellma offers her a drink, and drink follows drink until Mrs. Welldo is soon the sixth. As Swellma says to further explore and discover her identity, don't you think it's awful the way that black-

man's the Dark Genesis is so extolling in beauty of the darkskinned girls, and especially Dark Sugar.

Then said she, I, Mrs. Welldo, would rather live in a cave with a brownskinned man, than to live in a millionaire blackman's mansion and would rather have TB by one than a blackman's child. Then said Swellma, you are not by yourself about that, and soon Swellma persuaded Mrs. Welldo to ride home with her and there stay all night. But nearly sobered, when she saw dark Steal Nightard at the steering wheel, saying, I never ride with no one that black—but the car hurried her on to the hideaway and the 27th, with the other five boated up the Hudson to a lonely spot, and shot.

Then said the Dark Genesis, in final comment, it is not our aim to elaborate on a case of murder but those who've died, are dead, and if formerly they lived of worth, later here they shall be read.

However, in its comments on Dark Sugar said, she is a stirring singer of colorful charm, she's pleasing, she's gentle, she's everything in reason, and perfect printtomental.

She's Dark Sugar, thought for the future, a thrill right now.

Reading in the same paper Vinesweet quotes, thus those boys who said that they'd rather be killed by a pretty brownskinned girl than loved by a black one, and would rather go over Niagara Falls on a two by four with a brownskinned girl than walk with a black one across a palace floor, and that it was better to blast out black Elder Pray Monson, his wife, and their little ape shaped African cubs, were no doubt the unfortunates raised among brownskinned and yellow people, who hated them, and taught them to hate each other, never coming into better understanding of our girls like Dark Sugar. Those boys who said to mispicture, or plight, the social-face of Miss Brownskin is a gross offense, which we cannot allow blacks to commit, and so they died without the wished comments of girls, like Dark Sugar.

And so writes Vinesweet, noted dancer, and the girl's enhancer.

Song they all knew, which brought up a dance to such a tempo, until Anny Prettipeople, now the



La lecture, *Fernand Léger*

Léger and the Search for Order

BY JAMES JOHNSON SWEENEY

Léger is a Norman. His best work is Norman in its severity. It has a peasant bluntness. It is as unambiguous as an arch of the Abbaye-aux-Hommes. He puts his prime dependence on force. He parades vulgarity in his work where he feels it may contribute to the effect of crude strength. He looks on cajolery and seduction as unworthy.

This is the immediate impression Léger's painting gives. But there is another feature which has characterized it since his earliest efforts: a persistent striving for order. This is what he had in common with his fellows of the cubist generation, at the same time the peculiar type of order that he sought was what made his work seem so different from his contemporaries that it has frequently been questioned if he were ever a cubist in the same sense that Braque, Picasso and Juan Gris were. It was the conscious structural character of this interest that separated him on the one hand from the fauves, and on the other from the surrealists. Finally it is this interest in order and the peculiar twist he gives it that makes his *Three Musicians* of 1944 one of the key pictures of his work.

Each of the great cubists, Braque, Picasso, Léger and Gris, was eventually clear on his individual path and worked out his personal contribution to the painting of our day. But in their beginnings they were all linked in a common reaction from fauvism's emphasis on emotion and intuition and from its dependence on sensibility. They felt a lack of assurance from such an approach. They turned to a structural order for the stability they sought. A generation earlier Cézanne and Seurat had both felt

impressionism's need of a compositional reinforcement. In 1907 and 1908 Braque and Picasso had begun to take example from Cézanne and go even further in simplifications of form. Minor details were stripped away and the basic geometrical elements stressed. During the same years, Léger, while working on his large canvas, *The Nudes in the Forest*, had been producing a series of ink sketches making use of similar simplifications. And in his *Seamstress* of 1910 we see this approach brought to its full realization in a static, architectural composition of sober low-keyed tones.

But beyond the common revolt of their generation against the ideals of their fauve predecessors, Léger had few ties with Braque and Picasso. His Montparnasse and their Montmartre were different worlds. And while Braque and Picasso's interest clung to the static, with a fragmentation of naturalistic forms to lend variety and to permit a free exploitation of three dimensional features, Léger in *The Nudes in the Forest*, begun in 1908 and completed in 1910, had already set out on a different path—a path which was to lead him in the next few years closer to Delaunay's orphism and to certain aspects of futurism, than to orthodox analytic cubism. For in *The Nudes in the Forest* we already see that interest in dynamic movement and the suggestion of machine rhythms through staccato contrasts which are to play such important roles in Léger's work as it matures.

Here was the first major affirmation of his personal reaction from the work of his predecessors: massive volumes in contrast with the pointillist inscriptions of impressionists; a dominant gray in contrast with the aggressive colors of the post-impressionists and fauves. Here also was his first clear enunciation of a pictorial order as consciously organized as that of his fellow cubists, but essentially different from theirs: built out of contrasts rather than from harmonies—an ordering of compositional rhythms rather than an architecture of tranquil forms.

Contrast was to become the backbone of Léger's expression. Contrasts of the static with the mobile, of plane surfaces with rounded volumes, of curves with

right angles, of gray grounds with primary colors—the stronger the contrast among the elements within the composition, the greater its vitality, provided the interplay of contrasts is effectively controlled. And to this latter end throughout Léger's work we find the most militant contrasts among minor elements balanced by a proportionate tranquility and obviousness in the large lines of the composition.

A similar persistence of contrast is recognizable from objective to objective in Léger's development. For example, in the *The Nudes in the Forest* color was practically absent and flat planes practically nonexistent. In his next phase, that of the *Landscape*, formerly in the Museum of Vienna, and the *Woman in Blue*, color has come in with a primary violence—flat unmodelled areas of it, just as it was squeezed from the tube. In the next stage a new emphasis is placed on volumes through the introduction of pseudomachine forms; and this in its turn gives way in *The City* of 1919 to the flat forms reminiscent of the cubist papier-collé approach. From the two-dimensional emphases of *The City* he swings to monumental volumes of the *Grand Déjeuner* of 1921; then from such a related work as *Reading* of 1934, back to the flat in his *Mural Paintings*, and from there to the relative naturalism of such a drawing as his *Three Musicians* of that same year.

But as a true painter, his most striking dependence on contrast is in his use of color. From the comparatively monochrome *Seamstress* and *The Nudes in the Forest* we find the boldest oppositions of pure tones in his work. In the phase immediately following the completion of these two canvases he began to introduce color, but only in the boldest contrasts, practically limiting his palette to reds and blues on a gray ground. Gradually, step by step, other colors found their way into his work, but always at their purest and always opposed to their neighbors rather than harmonized with them. Forms were painted in pure local tones rather than in broken color. Colors were chosen for their pictorial strength and assertiveness and for the distinctness of formal contour their oppositions afforded rather than for their naturalistic appropriateness. His work took the character of

chromatic counterpoint rather than one of color harmony. Within the large lines of the composition we find a continual impression of conflict and movement. His ideal of order had become clearly a tension between the strongest possible oppositions.

And to balance these conflicts among the compositional details, the broad lines of his composition had to be given a phlegmatic, almost banal calm—a classical calm achieved, as he has put it, “by will power and rigidity.” The classical expression of his ideal never offers any surprise to the onlooker. It never attempts to effect one. And while romanticism advocates the widest possible embrace and a full, free, even haphazard organizational approach, classicism for Léger is the refinement of selection.

Here we come to the essential difference between Léger the constructor and Picasso the discoverer. For Léger’s prime interest throughout his entire development has been to work out a detailed personal order for his own expression, while Picasso’s interest has

been to open new doors for pictorial expression as a whole, even if at times he succeeds in no more than pointing the way. And while all the painters of the early cubist generation were looking for a new structural base, already in 1911 Léger had taken a path of his own in that search for a pictorial order to which his researches have all been related ever since.

For while Braque and Picasso on the Montmartre side of Paris were painting their analytic compositions in subdued harmonies of brown, gray, slate, and olive, Léger and Delaunay had already turned to their explorations of the dynamic effects of contrasted areas of pure color. About the same time Marinetti and the Italian futurists in Milan and Paris were preaching their doctrines of movement and the machine. Possibly Léger had no direct encounter with the futurists at the time, but the cult of the machine was very much in the air. And machinery had an immediate appeal for Léger: its coldness, its austerity, its hardness, its strength, the power of its



The Three Musicians, *Léger*

rhythms—even the pure primary colors used to protect it; in sum, from an aesthetic standpoint, its stripped, dynamic unity. The futurists' approach to the machine was a literary, romantic one. To them the machine was a symbol of progress, a symbol of the future; to Léger, it was a paradigm of order—a pictorial order which need not look to natural patterns which had been abused by the academicians and the naturalists—a fresh paradigm which need not and should not be copied literally.

At first, between 1914 and 1920, we see Léger patiently studying and assimilating this potential new order in his work by a frank adaptation of its forms, or by giving them a superficial human caricature as in *The Balcony* of 1914 or *The Men in the City* of 1919. But already, in the *Game of Cards* painted from studies made in the trenches before Verdun in 1917, a reversal of this procedure appears. Léger had begun to see human gestures in the simplicity and order of mechanical movements. *The City* of 1919 still remained a machine. But with the *Grand Déjeuner* and the *Cup of Tea* of 1921 the transition was complete; now instead of humanizing machines, as in his earlier work, he had begun to visualize human forms as well as human gesture rhythms against the machine pattern: a model of order at once structural, clearly articulated and ideally suited to his interest in mobile rhythms, bold contrasts and sharp contours.

Léger had now found in a sense the organizational skeleton for his work. But this was not enough. He was first of all a painter and a North European, and as a North European he felt himself a realist. As a painter he was interested primarily in wall paintings rather than in easel compositions; and as a realist he was interested in a broader field of representation than a strict adherence to the machine would allow. But he realized that he had found his base; his problem clearly became how to give a flexible complexity to his expression and at the same time keep his representations free from easel limitations without abandoning this basic order. The answer was evidently through the pictorial study of the human figure in space. And this is what has occupied Léger for the most part since 1929.

During the years 1926 to 1929, his interest had been focused on mural compositions of details enlarged after the manner of cinema close-ups. In these canvases the elements were visualized as swimming free in space. This research in turn led him to a more flexible treatment of the human figure which neither compromised the mural character of the composition, nor the fundamental order of contrasts and resultant contrapuntal rhythms. The mannequin forms of the late twenties gradually assumed the more specific detail of the *Woman with the Two Parrots* of 1935–39; the lazily floating figures of the early thirties became the interlocked spinning forms of the *Swimmers* of 1942; another series of *Swimmers* brought back those solid strips of flat color like papier collés which characterized *The City* of 1919 and contrasted them with human figures in space constituted merely of running arabesques; the summer of 1943 near Lake George in upper New York State introduced Léger to the weathered colors of abandoned automobiles against an August landscape. And he returned to his Manhattan studio to take up his 1924 drawing of the *Three Musicians* with all the nostalgia for Montparnasse it held for him, and with all the resources his explorations of two decades had provided.

For here we have that order which Léger has worked out for himself, unifying his expression without distractingly dominating it; in the yellows, reds and blues we have all the strength of pure unmuted colors; in the forms we have a simplicity which gives the composition an architectural monumentality and yet a variety of detail which keeps it from appearing bare. We have a contrast of assertively modelled volumes and plane surfaces and at the same time a suggestion of three dimensionality in the forms without any disruption of the surface unity of the picture—in other words, figures placed successfully within the picture space. And finally in it we have perhaps the most authoritative portrait composition of Léger's maturity, at once a resumé and a resolution of all the researches which he has been pursuing over the past forty years.

OCT. 1944

Three Moves in the Big Game

BY ROBERT MELVILLE

Revolt against the father is a mark of individualism, of a struggle for freedom and of an irreducible opposition to an existing order.

NICOLAS CALAS

In *The Poet and His Muse* Henri Rousseau associates the muse with Apollinaire's mistress, but turns her into a kind of theosophical priestess by clothing her in a garment suggestive of the close-fitting robes of Egyptian and Buddhist effigies, and raising her hand in an occult sign reminiscent of the gesture of the Christian annunciation: in spite of its naiveté it was a definite step forward in the pictorial conception of the muse, but Chirico brought it into much closer contact with the sources of inspiration by identifying it with certain aspects of his parents.

Chirico's muses first pose for formal portraiture in *The Jewish Angel* (1915), but only their heads are depicted, one as a white egg with occult markings, the other as a fragment of an arcade surmounted by a black wig. I take the expression "Jewish Angel" to be a euphemism of God, and in this instance the image embodying divine power is double-headed, bisexual, and without love. But *The Disquieting Muses* (1916) is the official, full-length double portrait of the rulers of Chirico's poetic universe. These muses are disquieting for more than one reason: they are not only intimidating, they are surrounded by their luggage and are on the point of departure. All the images of Chirico's early period are here; the ones that are not visible are packed away in the trunk, the cardboard egg and the geometrical box: *The Disquieting Muses* foretells the withdrawal of inspiration.

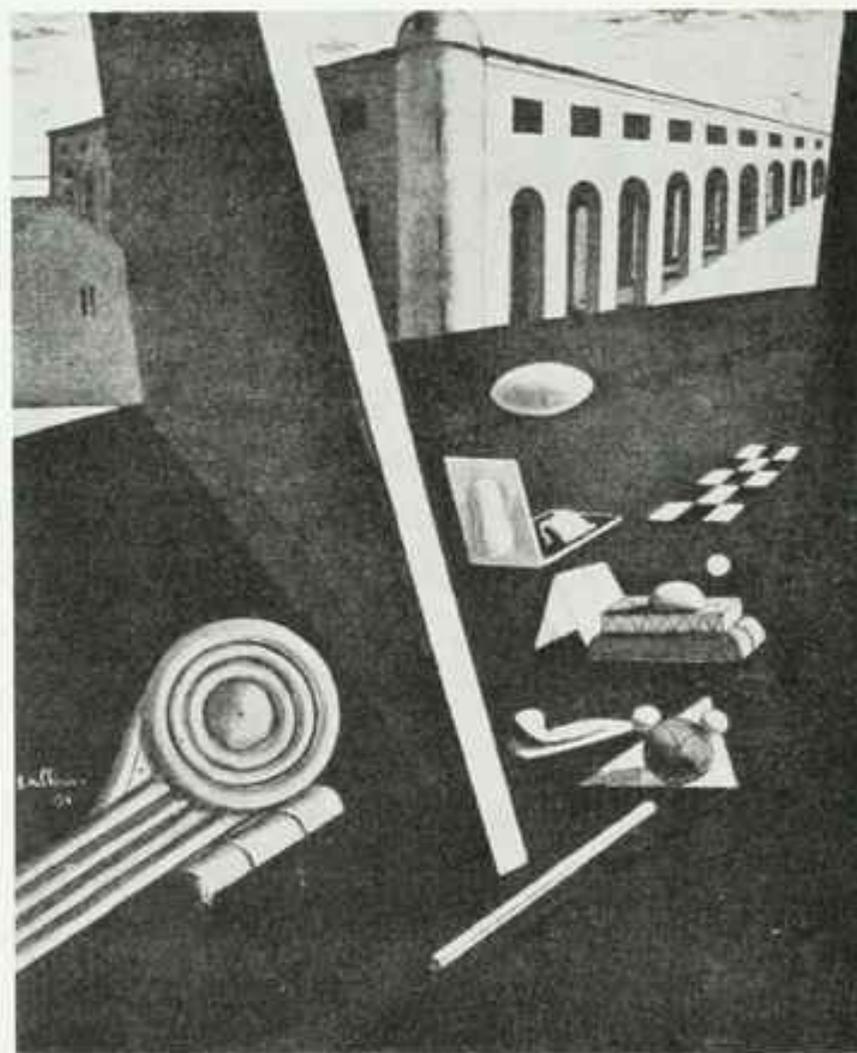
The male muse contains deliberate references to *The Child's Brain* (1914); his back is composed of the same pulpy flesh as the naked father, and his nether portion is a plinth made out of the regular folds of the drawn-back curtain which exposed the father's nakedness to the public gaze: exposure, meaning "showing up" is a fixed attribute of this muse, and does not reduce its efficacy as an intimidator. (The curtain turning to stone is a reminder that the dreamlike interchangeability of substances in the early Chirico constitutes a parallel to the interchangeability of representational shapes in the art of Picasso.)

The female muse is under the protection of the more alert male muse; she sits with horrible complacency in her sexual upholstery, and is the easychair in which Chirico was snugly ensconced until birth evicted him. The trunk on which she is seated was guarded by the frock-coated statue in *The Enigma of a Day* (1914), and stands for that sexual aspect of her significance as a muse which Rousseau gave to Apollinaire's mistress, with the important difference that the trunk also means "forbidden fruit."

While these muses reigned in the mind of Chirico magical procedure was an implicit element of his painting, paradoxically aimed at undermining their power. His early period is a long, continuous dream of the breaking of taboos. He "exposes" the father, and eventually, in *The Regret* (1915), "dominates" the mother, and in so doing destroys the power of his disquieting muses. After the completion of this compulsive task his work began to yield evidence of remorse and of the restoration of the taboos, and no example is more indicative of the nature of the change and fall than his sickly illustration of the prodigal's return.

In 1913, the year of preparation for his greatest creative works, he affirmed that art must be "disembarrassed of all that it contains of recognizable material" to make way for "the image, embracing a certain thing, which has no meaning in itself, which has no subject, which means absolutely nothing from the logical point of view." The "certain thing" embraced by his own images no doubt remained par-

tially hidden from him. With the exception of a few unwittingly popular symbols with which he pays tribute to Aphrodite Pandemos, as in the picture of the twisted marble torso and the bananas, and which nevertheless transcend their popular evaluation, his paintings present an innocent surface because the obvious homesickness which projects the concrete language of most of the works painted in 1913 causes him to attach a fetishistic importance to objects associated with his childhood, and his arrangement of them on his canvases in ways which mean "absolutely nothing from the logical point of view" revives emotional conflicts which the child probably resolved in elaborate arrangement-games of a not dissimilar kind: in *The Language of the Child* Chirico deliberately imitates a child's make-believe by standing a biscuit on end to give it the appearance of being responsible for the lines scrawled on a board, *The Child's Brain* is a homemade peepshow, and some of the titles of his pictures—*The Playthings of the Prince*, *The General's Illness*—suggest the games of an imaginative child.

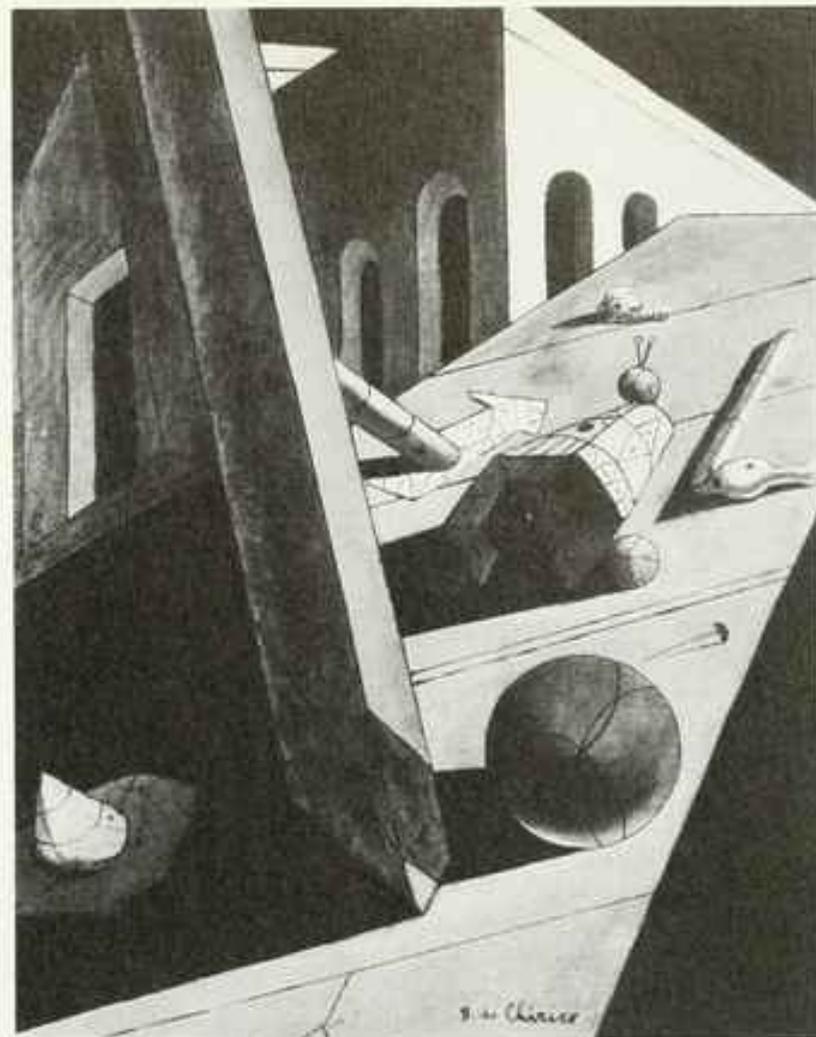


The Sailor's Barracks, *Giorgio di Chirico*

The General's Illness is one of three variations on a set of images which represent three moves in a subtle psychological game. Only one of the canvases, *The Sailors' Barracks* (1914), is dated, but James Thrall Soby suggests that *The Evil Genius of a King* and *The General's Illness* were completed in the same or the following year, and in *The Early Chirico* he reproduces them consecutively in the order mentioned here; it is an order in which they are peculiarly coherent as the stages of a subjective event.

Before the event can be described, the identity of the platform of objects, which is the dominant feature of all three paintings, has to be established. In such works as *The Child's Brain* and *The Mystery and Melancholy of a Street* we are conscious of the invisible presence of the painter; before *The Child's Brain* we seem to be looking over his shoulder at the peepshow, and we feel that he has experienced the sensation of drawing aside the curtain; to see *The Mystery and Melancholy of a Street* we have, in a sense, followed him into his room on an upper floor of a palace to stare through the window at the square below, for the open pantechnicon, staring back at us, insists on the presence of the watcher who dreamed it into being, and turns the picture frame into a window sash. But in the "still-life" painting dated 1913 which he called *Self-Portrait* he had already climbed over the frame into the picture. It is his first depiction of a platform bearing heterogenous objects and projecting from the foreground into the picture space. The fact that he called it a self-portrait indicates that he associates the objects with his own identity. It would involve us in arid ingenuities to attempt to ascribe a precise symbolical meaning to each object on the platform; it is sufficient that Chirico considered them to be emblems of his personality and that the composition as a whole adumbrates the lonely, aloof, romantically enigmatic Chirico who appears in the mirror likenesses painted in 1908 and 1911.

If a palace had appeared in *Self-Portrait* we should have had to consider it a *double* portrait, for the presence of a palace in the other three pictures containing the platform is tantamount to the pres-



The Evil Genius of a King, *Chirico*
(Museum of Modern Art, New York)

ence of another human being; and the evident significance of the building in *The Child's Brain* disposes us to consider these palaces to be symbols of the opposite sex.

The Sailors' Barracks contains another familiar image—a tiny, far-off couple, which the homesickness pictures have taught us to recognize as the parents. So this picture presents a three-cornered situation, with Chirico directly in front of a woman and his parents standing some distance off.

The disposition of the images on the canvas discloses the specific psychological factors of the situation. The tilt of the platform suggests that the objects placed upon it are not within view of the parents, but Chirico divides the platform with a vertical board to screen the objects on the left with a deep shadow. It is evident that great importance is attached to the objects lying behind the screen and that they are not intended to be seen by either the parents or the palace. He is concealing himself from his parents and keeping something back from the palace.

The cunning disposition of the platform images in relation to the two figures and the palace is necessitated by the vigilance of the disquieting muses; Chirico's coming into the open is fraught with danger: but if he fears the disquieting muses it is partly because he is preparing to strike another blow at them. I believe the mother is present in the picture not only in the rôle which includes her in the couple but as the person through whom the blow is to be struck. The mother as a separate entity is usually presented as an intensely desired object—biscuit or golden book—but in *The Sailors' Barracks* she is not so much a contemplated object as a contemplating one, and for this rôle a building is a more suitable image. The platform is preparing, with a mixture of cautiousness and audacity, to exhibit its objects to the palace.

The Evil Genius of a King depicts a development in the preparations, and at the same time betrays the purpose which lies behind the immediate plan to display the objects to the palace. The preparations are in an advanced stage. Platform and palace are alone and close together. The couple has gone, and the narrow gap on the side where they were to be seen in *The Sailors' Barracks* has been sealed by a brick wall. The palace is more obviously staring now. Yet caution is still being exercised, for although the platform is nearer to the palace it is tilted at a more oblique angle, and the object which remains behind the screen like a last scruple is in a blacker shadow. But an amazing transformation has overtaken the objects. They are no longer inert, no longer mere esoteric playthings, they have become biomorphic. (For this reason *The Evil Genius of a King* is one of the most important landmarks in modern painting: these living objects are the precursors of the typical images of Tanguy and Miro.) They demonstrate a most emphatic desire to be seen by the palace. The arrow points the direction. Some of the objects have even banded together to form a large creature, with antennae standing up from the head; this creature is crawling up the slope, making for the edge of the platform. The tilt of the platform and the collection of distending objects form an image of a secret

organic movement, a stirring and rising, anticipatory of sensual pleasure.

The third picture, *The General's Illness*, adopts a more realistic attitude to the immediate situation and is content, so to speak, with a small but useful victory, achieved through greater caution, and for this reason is perhaps less exciting both aesthetically and psychologically, than *The Sailors' Barracks* and *The Evil Genius of a King*.

In those two works, the objects on the unscreened area of the platform were all directed toward the heart of the picture space, but in *The General's Illness* there is an obvious breakup in the alignment. The queer shuttlecock image points out toward the right; the pole no longer rests against the screen at an angle pointing toward the palace, but, with its shadow, forms a transparent set square placed like a futile obstruction across the path to the palace; the thin end of the wedge-shaped block which bears a mathematical device is directed away from the palace, giving the sense of a turning back or a falling away. This placing, which looks deliberate enough, constitutes an "illness" of the images compared with the drive of similar images in the other two paintings. And they are no longer biomorphic; with one exception, they have returned to inertia.

There is significance not only in the use of the word "illness" in the title, but also in the substitution of "general" for "king" in the identification of the platform objects. "General" takes the place of "king" because there is now more concern with tactics than with the dream of power. (*The Sailors' Barracks* as a title has a more tenuous relationship with the images, but the sailors, the king and the general are all one person.)

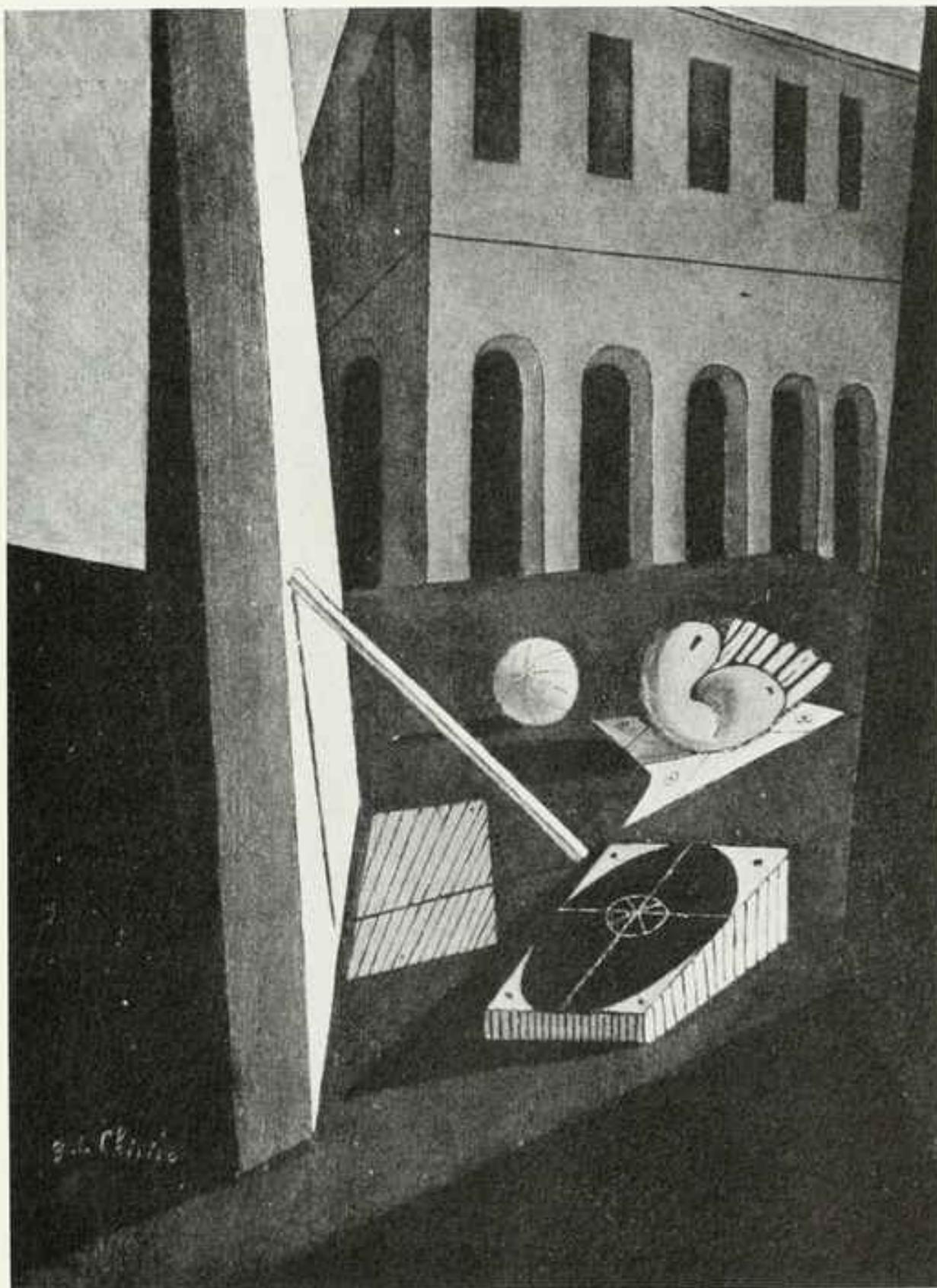
The platform has been lowered and discloses a large area of the palace. This building is bleaker than the sailors' barracks and depicted from a less interesting angle than the palace in *The Evil Genius of a King*. It is not a desired object at all, but purely and simply the image of a stare. And nothing now hides in the shadow of the screen: everything on the platform is out in the open.

Upon the "shuttlecock," the only image which

remains biomorphic, falls the task of making a final concession to the pondering eye. Its form suggests a completely naked being, and its position suggests that it is unaware of being overlooked. This suggestion of unawareness is supported by the air of indifference worn by the other objects, which have become inert because any organic stirring would give the game away. The "shuttlecock's" unawareness is a ruse: the son lies naked, simulating sleep

and exposing himself under the eye of the mother. In the other two works the aim is disclosed and the action concealed; in *The General's Illness* the situation is reversed, and is a decisive step in the direction of the ultimate dénouement in *The Regret*, where a red rod lies between biscuit-coloured laths, under the lowering ceiling of the father's house.

OCT. 1944



The General's Illness, *Chirico*



dialogue



by Lionel Abel



and on Lautréamont

to Matta

A: I understand that *Maldoror* has appeared in a new English translation.

B: I have seen the book. The translation, by Guy Wernham, is often brash and uninspired. But what is really staggering is the introductory note. It is signed "The Publisher" and is in the worst imaginable taste. After indicating that he will not go all the way with the surrealists in their admiration for Lautréamont, "The Publisher" dedicates the edition to the profit of "the serious student of poetry"—whoever that is—with the deliverance that after all *Maldoror* "is literature of a sort." "Of a sort," indeed! What impertinence!

A: From what you tell me the book must have been published by *New Directions* . . .

B: So it was.

A: An "advanced" publisher, whose book lists are interesting, easily forgets that his views are not . . . But I can understand why you find such comment outrageous. Lautréamont's poem has not for you been "literature of a sort." It has been a new revelation, a pronouncement of doom, a beginning of the word, a charm, a curse.

B: The truth is that for a while it poisoned my life. It took from me all taste for literature. Every other work seemed to me, as Aragon has said, "insipid and contrived." I despised the poets I knew who had not read Lautréamont and continually urged them to read him, though in my heart I envied them that they had not. Why had not I too been

spared? *Maldoror* was not in this country, as in France, one of the books it was obligatory for a young man purposing poetry to read. I might have escaped like the others . . . I might have followed Yeats, Eliot, Valéry . . . At least I would have expressed myself . . . I say *Maldoror* made me unresponsive to everything in literature, but it did not endow me with its creator's powers. It destroyed everything and substituted itself, not leaving the smallest space for anything I could do . . . Lautréamont had said that poetry should be made by all, but he effectively prevented me from writing any . . .

A: You no doubt felt a certain pride in being demoralized by a poet . . .

B: To be a victim of Lautréamont was to be superior to everyone else . . . And there was no escaping the charm of his *Song of Maldoror*, that mighty sadic chant, which someone has compared to the song of an octopus riding the ocean waves . . . To what has it not been compared! . . . I was not far from thinking him the only man in modern times who had spoken *darkly* . . .

A: By *darkly* I suppose you meant something more than *mysteriously*?

B: I used to point out that to express what is hidden one must move from the circle of presuppositions in which words tend to confine us, and this would seem to be a contradiction, seeing that expression involves the use of words. If I called Lautréamont great and made him my oracle, it was because I believed he had resolved this contradiction . . . He spoke

from the dark, from which we are separated by speech . . .

A: But this miracle has been achieved by other poets. In fact such achievement is precisely what we mean by *poetry*.

B: Just as you say . . . But I felt that no one since the sibyls and poets possessed by muses, had gone so far from the verbalized, categorized, suppositional life of the ordinary mind as he who called himself Count of Lautréamont . . . Of course, this could not have been achieved—by an intellectual man, whose head was full of theories and ideas, who knew that he was not a magician or a primitive mythmaker but an author, and even when he referred to himself as "a man, a bird or a stone," did not forget that his purpose was literature: to "begin the next canto"—without a difficult and brutal technique of self-alienation. In one of the immense formulations of his *Poésies*, Lautréamont says: "Only by yielding to the night physically can one deal with it morally." And he adds, "O Nights of Young, what migraines you cost me!" He had his "bloody ropes" for stringing up logic by the thumbs, his way of spitting with serious mien on "sacred axioms," his "vague perspectives that grind one in their imperceptible gears," an abundance of perturbations, anxieties, rages, and he made use of all of these, not neglecting to derive what inspiration he could from "exceptions in the physical and moral order," from whatever in nature is in some sense continuous with what in man we call

(Continued on page 151)

A, B, and C on Lautréamont

A DIALOGUE

BY LIONEL ABEL

A: I understand that *Maldoror* has appeared in a new English translation.

B: I have seen the book. The translation, by Guy Wernham, is often brash and uninspired. But what is really staggering is the introductory note. It is signed "The Publisher" and is in the worst imaginable taste. After indicating that he will not go all the way with the surrealists in their admiration for Lautréamont, "The Publisher" dedicates the edition to the profit of "the serious student of poetry"—whoever that is—with the deliverance that after all *Maldoror* "is literature of a sort." "Of a sort," indeed! What impertinence!

A: From what you tell me the book must have been published by *New Directions* . . .

B: So it was.

A: An "advanced" publisher, whose book lists are interesting, easily forgets that his views are not . . . But I can understand why you find such comment outrageous. Lautréamont's poem has not for you been "literature of a sort." It has been a new revelation, a pronouncement of doom, a beginning of the word, a charm, a curse.

B: The truth is that for a while it poisoned my life. It took from me all taste for literature. Every other work seemed to me, as Aragon has said, "insipid and contrived." I despised the poets I knew who had not read Lautréamont and continually urged them to read him, though in my heart I envied them that

they had not. Why had not I too been spared? *Maldoror* was not in this country, as in France, one of the books it was obligatory for a young man purposing poetry to read. I might have escaped like the others . . . I might have followed Yeats, Eliot, Valéry . . . At least I would have expressed myself . . . I say *Maldoror* made me unresponsive to everything in literature, but it did not endow me with its creator's powers. It destroyed everything and substituted itself, not leaving the smallest space for anything I could do . . . Lautréamont had said that poetry should be made by all, but he effectively prevented me from writing any . . .

A: You no doubt felt a certain pride in being demoralized by a poet . . .

B: To be a victim of Lautréamont was to be superior to everyone else . . . And there was no escaping the charm of his *Song of Maldoror*, that mighty sadic chant, which someone has compared to the song of an octopus riding the ocean waves . . . To what has it not been compared! . . . I was not far from thinking him the only man in modern times who had spoken *darkly* . . .

A: By *darkly* I suppose you meant something more than *mysteriously*?

B: I used to point out that to express what is hidden one must move from the circle of presuppositions in which words tend to confine us, and this would seem to be a contradiction, seeing that expression involves the use of words. If I called Lautréamont great and made him my oracle, it was because I believed he had resolved this contradiction . . . He spoke from the dark, from which we are separated by speech . . .

A: But this miracle has been achieved by other poets. In fact such achievement is precisely what we mean by *poetry*.

B: Just as you say . . . But I felt that no one since the sibyls and poets possessed by muses had gone so far from the verbalized, categorized, suppositional life of the ordinary mind as he who called himself Count of Lautréamont . . . Of course, this could not have been achieved—by an intellectual man, whose head was full of theories and ideas, who knew that



Illustration for *Les chants de Maldoror*, René Magritte

he was not a magician or a primitive mythmaker but an author, and even when he referred to himself as “a man, a bird or a stone,” did not forget that his purpose was literature: to “begin the next canto”—without a difficult and brutal technique of self-alienation. In one of the immense formulations of his *Poésies*, Lautréamont says: “Only by yielding to the night physically can one deal with it morally.” And he adds, “O *Nights* of Young, what migraines you cost me!” He had his “bloody ropes” for stringing up logic by the thumbs, his way of spitting with serious mien on “sacred axioms,” his “vague perspectives that grind one in their imperceptible gears,” an abundance of perturbations, anxieties, rages, and he made use of all of these, not neglecting to derive what inspiration he could from “exceptions in the physical and moral order,” from whatever in nature is in some sense continuous with what in man we call *morbidly* . . . He had his ways, and not a few were terrible, of rending the categories of normal con-

sciousness which might have impeded what he called his “undaunted and rectilinear pilgrimage.”

A: A marvellous phrase! . . . But often I feel that he seeks the exaggerated for its own sake. For example there is the passage in which, having referred to some writer’s description of a donkey eating a fig, he goes on to say that he himself has seen something ever so much funnier: a fig eating a donkey! . . . Isn’t that a case of “standing everything on its head in order to be original”?

B: I used to say that Lautréamont was original in order to stand everything on its head . . .

A: It is true that one feels a moral—or immoral—quality in the *strangeness* of his excessive, jolting tropes . . .

B: I never tired of pointing out that simile was never for Lautréamont, as for other poets, the bringing together of two elements into one qualitative context so that we rejoice to see that what was lost has been found . . . We are not made happy in *that* sense by the accidental encounter on an operating table of the sewingmachine and the umbrella. They do *not* belong together as do the red rose and my love. Yet Lautréamont, playing on some obscure need of our sensibility, is able to enlist our aid in foisting on one another these two alienated objects, which have thus become companions for eternity . . . He likens the wings of countless wasps along the Nile to the incessant collisions of icebergs during the breaking up of the polar seas, beauty to defects in the structure of man’s sexual organ, the good looks of a youth to the retractibility of the claws of birds of prey . . . The image is always the imposition of some object or quality on another, it is never a marriage, always a rape . . . In such a passage as: “Burn, good people, on a red-hot spade, with a bit of brown sugar, the duck of doubt with vermouth lips,” it is not a question, as with Donne and the metaphysicals, of images which while “farfetched” are “worth the carrying.” The tropes of the metaphysicals, being half-serious, appeal to us as charming or fantastic, and far from damaging reason, rather confirm its sway over the mind. The absurdity in Lautréamont’s images is altogether different, being involuntary, massive, fun-

damental, expressing the impact on language of something that has not really yielded to it, something bleak, evasive, menacing—the darkness of the human mind, evil, if you will . . . I used to say that Lautréamont, going further than Borel, Baudelaire or Huysmans, had introduced evil into the trope, thereby increasing its energy and bringing about its expulsion from the old paradise of naive poeticalness.

A: Lautréamont did indeed speak of having celebrated evil . . .

B: But he pointed out that to celebrate evil was to celebrate the good, only more philosophically . . . Here is a topic on which, had it been broached to me some time ago, I would have waxed eloquent . . . Lautréamont, like the writers of the great religious myths, who represent the devil as continually goading God to assert Himself and overcome His unfortunate tendency to torpor, conceived evil to be the progressive, dynamic principle of life, the active force that assures the continuity of creation and keeps the universe going. Maldoror, in whom Lautréamont personified his grandiose discontent, is cast in the traditional role of the *instigator to creation*, and it is not mere exhibitionism that makes him display with such pride his lips of sulphur and eyeballs of jasper, stigmata of suffering and guilt. He pursues the Creator with imprecations, persecutes Him and is persecuted in turn, but no terrors can induce him to leave off accusing, offending, spying. He jots down all the peccadilloes of his Victim and Victimizer. Truly, Lautréamont’s poem is still the best dossier humanity has on the sloth and hoggishness, the *uncreativity* of the Most High . . . In what literature, occult or humanistic, is there such fury and intransigence as in the *Song of Maldoror*? . . . God, I once remarked, could never have appeased Lautréamont as He did Moses by presenting His posterior. For what was an apotheosis to the law-giver would have been a provocation to the poet who wrote: “O if only instead of being a hell the universe had been an immense celestial anus! . . . I would have plunged my penis through its bloody sphincter, rending apart with my impetuous motion the very bones of its pelvis!”



Death, *Gustav Doré*

A: It seems to me that you are going too far in making it an inferiority of Moses that he was not a pederast . . . And I don't understand why you keep using expressions like "I once said," "I used to point out," and so on . . . Don't you hold to the views you state so eloquently?

B: No. I have freed myself from the spell of Lautréamont.

A: I find that hard to believe!

B: I was merely trying to express what was once my attitude and was carried away by the old thundering formulations and phrases.

A: But what led you to change your views?

B: An article on Lautréamont by Gaston Bachelard which I came across in an old copy of *La Nouvelle Revue Française*.

A: This is amazing. How could the mere reading of an article on Lautréamont, by no matter

whom, snuff out an enthusiasm which makes you interesting, and maybe as "creative" as you can hope to be?

B: As I told you my enthusiasm had become obsessional, and I was determined to be rid of it. I want to be a poet in my own right. . . .

A: As if that could be achieved by getting rid of an enthusiasm! . . . But in any case, what did Bachelard say in this article which has had such remarkable effect?

B: You must have gathered, from the way I talked about Lautréamont, that in my admiration I explained his peculiarities in very lofty terms, as if he were someone who had *found a path* which could be followed—though perhaps not by me. Now Bachelard explains these peculiarities as the expression of nothing more than a psychological complex, of an extremely energetic type.

A: A psychological complex?

B: What Bachelard calls "the complex of animal life," the complex of aggression. The work of Lautréamont, he says, is a veritable "phenomenology of aggression."

A: And how does he go about proving this hypothesis?

B: He points out the peculiar feeling for *time* in *Maldoror*. He claims that in the poem time is specialized in such a way that it can be identified with the *time of aggression*, which, in his phrase, is always "homogeneous with the first impulsion." For the attacker takes the initiative always. Now Maldoror is never passive, waiting, receptive, persevering. He is never asleep, defensive, satiated; he inflicts suffering, he does not suffer. . . .

A: Interesting. . . . But you yourself spoke before of Maldoror's "stigmata of suffering and guilt. . . ." It seems you are now denying what you asserted earlier. But the point is that I *myself* think of Maldoror as suffering. And there is that passage in the fourth canto, the passage which begins "I am filthy," in which Maldoror, his body the prey of insects and animals, his spine replaced by a sword, is found in a posture which would seem to be describable as "de-

fensive," "receptive," "waiting," "passive" and "persevering" in a situation of extreme suffering.

B: That's so. . . . That is a discrepancy.

A: Which however may not vitally affect Bachelard's thesis.

B: Bachelard calls attention to Lautréamont's persistent animalization of his hero, Maldoror, who is constantly identifying himself with some animal or magically assuming some animal organ of attack.

A: The fact is undeniable. . . .

B: And there is no interpreting away the incredible *density* of animal life in the poem. For this point Bachelard offers a statistical proof. Using as his text the Edmond Jaloux edition of 247 pages, Bachelard counted the names of 185 different animals, most of which are mentioned more than once, often several times on each page. Not counting the repetitions on each page Bachelard found 435 references to animal life. Now that is rather impressive.

A: It would be except that André Malraux, comparing the 1868 text *Maldoror* with that of 1874, showed that this "incredible density of animal life" *was not present in the earlier version*. Bachelard could scarcely argue that Lautréamont's animal complex or complex of aggression only began to operate when he was *correcting* his poem. . . . Malraux showed that Lautréamont's masterpiece was at first more conventional in effect and not unlike Byron's *Manfred*; but then, as Malraux put it, "he hit on a *technique* which gave his work its originality; he replaced all the abstractions with the names of objects, or, preferably, animals, logically unrelated to the poem." In the second version, the name of his friend Dazet, who was supposed to represent the spirit of goodness, had been replaced by "octopus with the silken stare," and "the mite that brings the mange" as well as by a number of animals and objects which I cannot at the moment remember. But you will find Malraux's discussion of this point in the appendix to Lautréamont's *Oeuvres complètes*, the edition with the fine introduction by André Breton. . . . By the way, Bachelard, who certainly knows all the literature on *Mal-*

doror, must have had something to say about this. . . .

B: Not in the article I read. However the article was part of a book on Lautréamont which unfortunately is still unobtainable in New York. . . .*

A: In that case until Bachelard's book arrives from France, we will not say his theory is false but that it is *inacceptable*.

B: And I thought I was finished with *Maldoror!*

A: Of course I haven't read Bachelard's piece; everything would depend on the precise claims he makes for his hypothesis. But the formulation you gave it—

B: Was quite accurate.

A: Well, then. . . . But don't be so downcast. You really don't want Lautréamont *destroyed*, what you want is to see him in a definite perspective, historically, and not as the sole determining force in poetry. Now there I can't help you. . . . But I have a friend, C, who no doubt can. Whereas I try not to have false ideas, he tries to have valuable ones. I seldom see him. He warms me a bit and I chill him as much. . . . The fact is we make each other mediocre. . . . But I will give you his address and arrange for him to see you.

B: What am I to do?

A: See C.

B AND C

C: You are a capital discovery. I must remember to thank A for sending you to see me.

B: Just what is it about me that pleases you?

C: Why, your enthusiasm for Lautréamont, of course.

B: Which I hoped you would cure me of.

C: But it is your enthusiasm for Lautréamont which enables me to criticize him properly.

B: I confess I don't see the connection.

C: Let me explain. There are, roughly speaking, two ways of approaching works of art. The first, which I shall call *idealist*, directs one to find in the

work and its creator only what is discoverable by *admiration*. You project back into the work the sentiment of freedom it produced in you, and in this way become especially alert to those effects in which the freedom and consciousness of the artist were determinative. The *materialist* approach is just the reverse. Instead of starting from the aesthetic qualities of the work, you look for the social aims of which they are the sublimation, noting to what extent the freedom and consciousness of the artist were *not* decisive. You isolate all the respects in which the work was imposed on by other factors, class, complexes, etc. . . . The idealist method helps you to see the work as homeless—

B: I always thought Lautréamont's poem somehow homeless, like the square circle. . . .

C: The materialist method lays bare the work's antecedents, connections, affiliations. Turning to the creator, the first approach shows him in relation to history as a *victor*, the second, as a *victim*.

B: The materialist method, pointing up what was *unintended* in works of the highest consciousness and freedom, would seem to be essentially ironical.

C: It is a method professors should be forbidden to use. A suave intellectual courtesy—a quality rare in academicians—is indispensable if one is to employ it fruitfully. And there is another difficulty. The value of the method also depends to a great extent *on the sensibility of the one who is to be instructed by it*. An enthusiast is needed, one who knows how to admire, for the *reversals* in which materialist criticism specializes to take effect. . . . What is now to occur is made possible by your admiration for Lautréamont as much as by any capacities that I may possess. You came looking for me. But, what is equally to the point, I have been looking for you.

B: Now that you have defined our roles won't you proceed?

C: What we want is to see the formidable Lautréamont not as a creator but as someone created along with his masterpiece, as someone augmented and diminished by all sorts of chances on which he did not speculate. However, we have very few facts to work with. We know almost nothing of Lautréa-

*Gaston Bachelard, *Lautréamont*.

mont's life or character. He was born Isidore Ducasse, the son of a minor official of the French consulate in Montevideo, Uruguay, was sent to France by his father to study at the Lycées of Tarbes and Pau, got to Paris, wrote *Maldoror* and *Poésies* (which was to be the preface to a second poetical work), and died in 1870 at the age of twenty-four, not even leaving us a photograph.

B: Accident has collaborated as in no other instance with the poet's feeling for his mystery, leaving the materialist method you propose to use against him little *matter* with which to operate. . . .

C: Fortunately, we know the period and its characteristic stresses, and we know from one of Lautréamont's letters the literature on which he fed, the writers he wanted to surpass: Mieckiewickz, Milton, Byron, Southey, de Musset, Baudelaire. . . . But most revealing of all is Lautréamont's hero Maldoror, in whom the poet expressed all his values, those he hoped to impose on us, and those, as we shall see, which were imposed on him. Let us look at Maldoror and observe the many contradictions in this contradictor of laws human and divine. I shall deal first with his attitude toward God, which has so impressed you. His hostility to God does indeed appear to be absolute, but he is equally hostile to other men and he is unaware of the untenability of this position. In fact we observe that he is not disinclined to possessing, or being possessed by (the two seem to go together) mysterious powers, or to aping those traits of the Deity which he affects to hate most: arbitrary malice and ungovernable rage. He even presents himself with a halo of horror to match his Opponent's. I refer to his claim to have been scalped. The truth is he imitates God as shamelessly as the American plainmen imitated the redskins they were trying to exterminate. Very well, the plainmen were pioneers. But Maldoror is not interested in being a pioneer. . . .

Lautréamont, I should say, was not hostile to supernaturalism, but only to God's monopoly of it (a monopoly Maldoror often seems to want for himself), and, for all his intransigence, did not rise above the point of view of the individual in civil

society, opposing the existing *distribution* of the mysterious, not striving to bring mystery as such under human control. For such an effort the fraternal aid of other men would be required. But Lautréamont, as we glimpse him behind his superman Maldoror, was interested in greatness, not in fraternity, and had the typical nineteenth-century conception of greatness as something necessitating a repudiation of the common-feeling world of men, as something demonic, destructive, evil. Lautréamont thought himself a destroyer of idyllic relations and did not see that the staid respectable bourgeoisie had been destroying idyllic relations for almost a century. . . .

Lautréamont came to Paris shortly before the Third Empire was shattered by the Commune. Well, it was under the Empire that Baron Haussmann, acting on the orders of Napoleon III, undertook the modernization of Paris; in a few years the city underwent more changes than during the previous fifteen centuries. Haussmann did not hesitate to disfigure or destroy whole sections of the city, undisturbed by their beauty or importance to Parisian sentiment. "It was the end of the old Paris, the quarter of uprisings and barricades," he boasted in his memoirs. In his attitude toward the city there was no lack of sadism. Baudelaire, the "radical aristocrat," mourned:

Le vieux Paris n'est plus; la forme d'une ville
Change plus vite, hélas! que le coeur d'un mortel.

In Haussmann's dissection of the city there must have been liaisons of objects stranger and more wounding to sensibility than those in Lautréamont's poem which have become so famous. . . . But to return to Maldoror. He is above sleep or laughter, which last seems to him to be morally low, but he is not above trying to make an impression. He wants to make a *bad* impression, true, but this scarcely improves matters. In his most horrible actions we cannot but see the talented reader of Byron and Baudelaire; this posturing is sometimes redeemed by a kind of gasping humor, as when he says: "I am the son of a man and a woman, from what they tell me. This astounds me. I had thought to be something more!" But then he goes on: "For my part, if it had

been left to me, I would much rather have been the son of a female shark, whose hunger is the friend of the tempest; and of a tiger, whose cruelty is acknowledged: I would be less evil." This trying to impress as *bad* is of course in the tradition of moral bohemianism, it suggests not the cosmos but the café . . . Which brings me to another point. Maldoror, whose name has the ring of occult metal, has no economic function in society, not even that of a wastrel. He has desire; desire, as he tells us, for the infinite. But every man, as Hamlet remarks, has business *and* desire, in other words the ego is bound up not only with feeling but with the performance of a specific economic role. This is evident also in the image with which Othello *gives value* to his despair: "Othello's occupation's gone!" Maldoror, who has no business or occupation, cannot give this type of value to any of his emotions. His egotism, to use Hegel's excellent phrase, is without an "I." Often when he says "I" we feel there is some misunderstanding. For Maldoror's ego is as informal, as lacking in human resonance as the "I" of dreams . . .

B: But if Maldoror has little ego or sociality, he has all the monstrous richness of natural life, he has animal organs and the power to effect biological metamorphosis; thus he has a "criterion of extremely fortifying consolation." Instead of criticizing his defects as a social being why not consider his incomparable attributes as an animal?

C: His "animal attributes" symbolize his social inferiority, the isolated wretchedness in which life can only be, to quote the celebrated formula of Hobbes, "nasty, brutish and short." After all, Maldoror's metamorphoses are purely *rhetorical*, the animal organs he assumes are the condemnatory words, the insults of the human group—from which he is alienated—taken for parts of his own body. I would point out that when an individual is alone and without associates the group transforms him rhetorically into some kind of animal. We say of an individual who keeps to himself that he is a "lone wolf." Political or racial minorities cast out of larger collectivities have in recent times been verbally "changed" into all

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sorts of insects and animals. The important thing to note in this connection is that the magical conferment of animal characteristics proceeds from, and is controlled by, those who are most convinced, often erroneously, that they are men. The one on whom animal traits are conferred is sometimes being prepared for sacrifice or death. We see this very clearly in Franz Kafka's story *The Metamorphosis*, the theme of which is the exclusion of the son from the family group. Gregor Samsa, a young salesman, is transformed into an enormous vermin; this transformation gives Gregor's father the strength needed to mortally wound his son, and it justifies the segregation of the dying Gregor by the rest of his family. What Kafka does here is to treat the formal cause of exclusion—the young man's transformation in the rhetoric of the members of his family, which he himself accepts—as if it were the efficient cause. But what I want to emphasize is that his metamorphosis endows not Gregor, but the family, with strength . . .

B: But Lautréamont's treatment of metamorphosis is just the reverse of Kafka's, as Gaston Bachelard, in a brilliant article—the main thesis of which I do not accept—has shown. Metamorphosis in Kafka's stories, Bachelard says, is always associated with a lessening; in Lautréamont's poem with a heightening, of vital functions . . .

C: An interesting aperçu . . . I might remark, in passing, the fact that these writers, dominated by a sense of alienation, were both fascinated by the magic of metamorphosis which I still insist is the rhetorical magic of the group. But the distinction Bachelard

makes is incontestable. Lautréamont, in his hero Maldoror, *pretends* that social weakness means biological strength; the animal masks fabulated by the human group—not without the aid of his own guilty consciousness—Maldoror wears with exultation.

B: Is not this the secret of his charm?

C: There is no denying his intensity of instinctual feeling. He has the peculiar attractiveness of acts we perform for reasons we do not know and do not want to know . . . Lautréamont, following in the path of the romantics who had dissociated the passions from reason, went still further, dissociating the instincts from the passions. And he discovered a new poetic tone, the music of the obsessional act and compulsive phrase which require no logical content or profound meaning to appear inevitable, but affect us without rhyme or reason. Some of the surrealists have made a dogma of this discovery. But the mere absence of formal structure does not insure the presence in a poem of those arbitrary tones, which, incom-

municative for the mind and heart, yet seem to speak, and with the utmost urgency. These tones abound in Lautréamont's poem and have made its fortune.

B: I did not expect you to concede Lautréamont anything.

C: You are not disappointed, are you? After all, we have seen the limits of his radicalism, we have seen the bourgeois in him and the bohemian. We have arrived at the notion that his poetry owes everything to one effect, being the expression of a part of a man, the part submerged below the ego, choked with the nonsense of the body, just this side of the inarticulate.

B: But a part of man so charming, seductive beyond imagination!

C: We have taken Lautréamont from lordship over the infinity of poetry and found the domain where he is really king.

B: I would give anything for his bad dreams!

DEC. 1944

RUTH



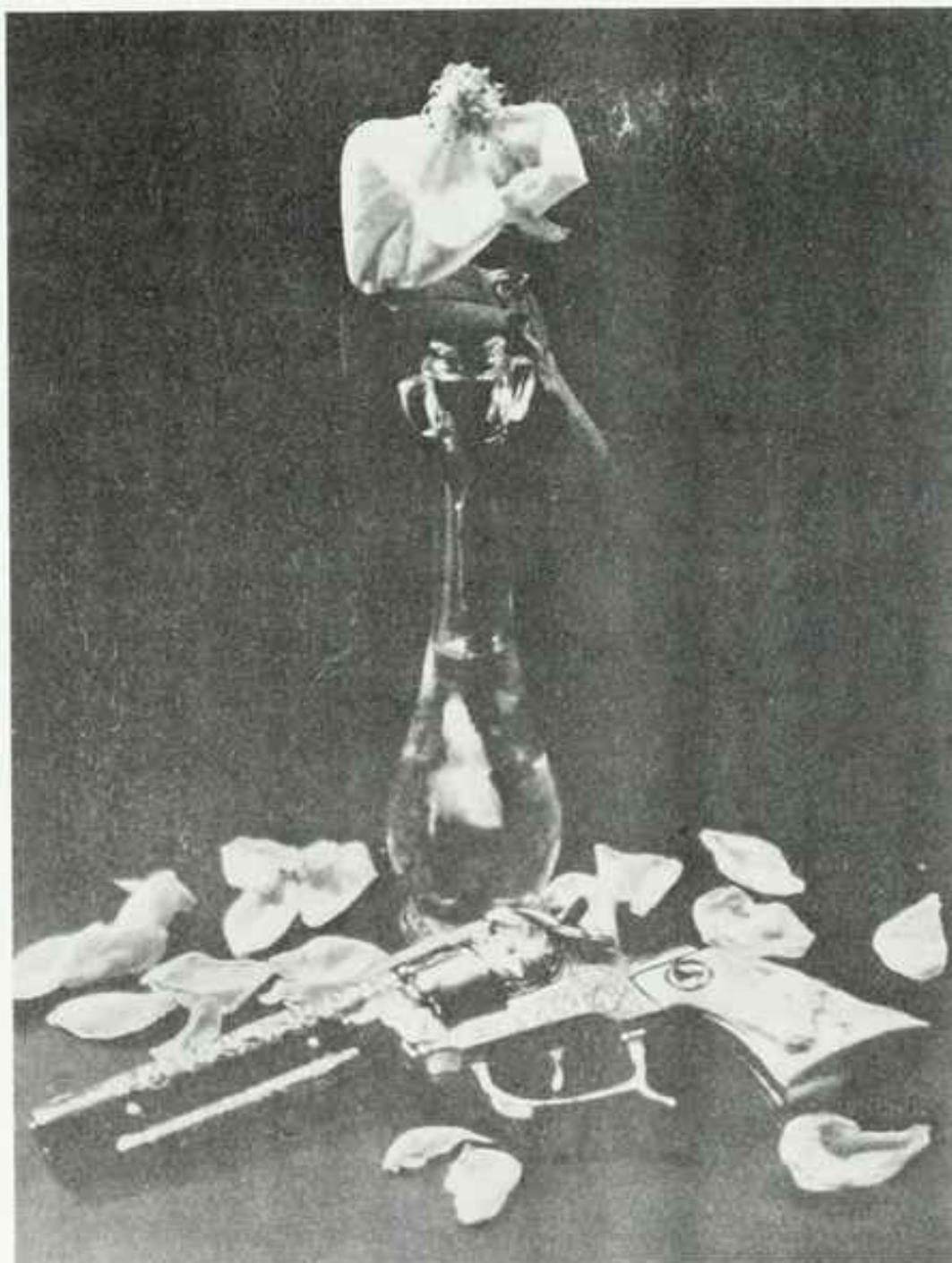
ROSES



AND



REVOLVERS



Ruth, Roses, and Revolvers

BY MAN RAY

*Toi ma patiente ma patience ma parente
Gorge haute suspendue orgue de la nuit lente
Révérence cachant tous les ciels dans sa grâce
Prépare à la vengeance un lit d'où je naîtrai*

PAUL ELUARD: *Poésie La Vérité* (France 1942)

P DAY 1944

I swore to you I would not paint another picture, photograph a pretty woman, nor make love to her, until the day of the liberation of Paris.

Today I shall do all three. Have I already lost the faculty of counting? So many days have passed since I resolved to become a tree en espalier in the Jardins du Luxembourg as the only way out from destruction. It seemed the only way possible of surviving those monsters who could see no further than their Aryan noses.

Why do you look at me as if I were some foreigner who speaks a strange language and who refuses to assimilate himself to your peculiar ways? You know perfectly well you can be as easily seduced by an exotic prince as by your own colloquial yokels. You are a pendulum that clicks like a metronome within the space limits of two inches, risking the same destruction that threatens your victims.

I laugh with you, for only in risk is an escape possible; those who have assured themselves against all risks are bound to lose all.



Juliet, *Man Ray*

I have not really sought peace, not this peace as detestable as war. Peace without risks also has its death. I am still surrounded by threats, menaces and longings. I thirst for good wine and I hunger for large spaces without trees and without perspectives. The daily music and poetry fly off into tangents of commercials, while unfinished tales lead me into the cold recesses of refrigerators.

Do not mistake me, I don't complain. While there are still diversions and interruptions, the situation cannot really be grave. I have lived where silence precedes extinction, where all activity ceases. You understand.

Do not knit your brows and assume an air of boredom. I shall not try to cash in on my misfortunes by recounting my experiences, nor even the experiences of others less fortunate than myself.

Nor shall I retire into the dreaded silence, not as long as I still am capable of inspiring air.

You see, I try to walk the tightrope of accomplishment between the chasms of notoriety and oblivion; were I not a product of my time, I should never be conscious of anything but my accomplishments. Hence the desire to become a tree en espalier!

Never was I capable of gracefully participating in any movement that required the cooperation of more than two people, and as far as a work of art was concerned, I was self-sufficient. It takes one man to create a work of art, not two. Of course, I mean man or woman.

* * *

We are walking slowly along this quiet residential street toward the evening. Juliet wears a long satin heliotrope dress, I carry a heavy yellow-bound book under my arm.

As we approach our destination, the red brick house on the corner, we note that all of the heliotrope painted shutters (same color as Juliet's dress) are tightly closed except one on the street level. Juliet runs forward with small steps, waving back to me reassuringly, "I must first close that shutter." I note that the interior seen through the open shutter is quite dark.

While Juliet runs forward I stop at a nearby tree and relieve myself of the book by placing it on the ground at the foot of the tree. The title "SADE" appears in heavy letters on the cover of the book. This, I am sure, will dissuade anyone from taking any further interest in the book, or tempting anyone simply to take it. Besides, it is so cumbersome that it is worth taking the chance anyhow.

As I turn to rejoin Juliet a small group of men in black evening clothes, led by Ruth in a heliotrope dress identical with that of Juliet, are mounting the few steps to the door of the house, followed by Juliet, as she beckons to me.

Ruth from the top of the stairs beckons to me crying, "Hurry, they will soon be here."

Inside, camp chairs are arranged in two connecting rooms before a small white screen on an elevated

platform in the corner of the end room, with a number of chairs on each side of the screen, facing the rest of the seats.

The party disposes itself on the platform, while, presently, people ordinarily and even carelessly dressed begin to arrive and fill up the rest of the seats.

When all are expectantly settled and silent, Ruth rises gracefully, and after an effective pause, addresses the audience: "Good evening. We are going to have the privilege tonight of witnessing one of the most unusual films ever produced. Whatever it may lack in the way of sound and color you may supply out of your own conversation and by looking at me." Here Ruth gracefully spreads the folds of her dress, smiles and bows slightly. "But for the real success of this presentation, you are earnestly requested to collaborate even more actively. You all know the principal character in this film, you have every confidence in him, and in the economy of his gestures. To give these gestures their full meaning I earnestly implore you to follow, and to repeat these gestures as they occur. Are we agreed?"

There is a murmur of approval. "Thank you" concludes Ruth, seating herself with great dignity and deliberation.

The film begins, accompanied only by the monotonous rattling of the projector. A long series of shots showing different landscapes in different moods, with and without clouds, mountains, running water and still lakes, a close-up of a large rock with an open book at its base, as well as a military-type drum, evidently used as a seat; all this unfolds before an expectant audience.

The scene changes to an empty room, but in the middle the hero is seated on a chair, in deep thought. Close by is an isolated priedieu. The audience as one man leans forward intently, and automatically adopts the same pose as the actor on the screen.

Presently our hero rises, climbs up on his chair, and stands motionless, looking straight ahead of him. Again the audience follows suit, and with a scuffling of feet and a scraping of chairs, it also rises and climbs up on the chairs.

I am extremely annoyed, and get up reluctantly on

my chair, not because I wish to comply with Ruth's request, but in order to see the film. So I say to myself.

The actor finally descends from his perch, looks at the priedieu, and kneels down upon it. Without a word, and amidst a heavy thumping of feet, as well as a fall and a groan from one of the less agile spectators, the crowd descends from their chairs, and proceeds to kneel on the floor.

This time my patience is at an end and I cannot help exclaiming, "What is this, are we in church?" A few turn to look disapprovingly at me. I do not kneel like the others, but resume my seat, secretly rejoicing in the improved view over the heads of the others.

The actor, after a minute's silent prayer, rises again, turns and slowly walks to the rear of the room, leaving by the one door in the middle of the back wall.

The audience scrambles to its feet, and pressing each other closely, manages to file out of the house.



Ruth, *Man Ray*

Having risen with Juliet, I linger awhile until all have left, with the exception of the group on the platform. I look intently at Ruth, who has also stood up amongst her remaining guests. She bows gracefully to them, excusing herself, and joins me with Juliet. As I lead the way out, flanked by the two women in identical heliotrope dresses, I cannot help feeling a certain compensation for the ill feeling the whole atmosphere has given me, and I say jokingly, "Now that we are alone again, we can finish this film according to our own desires." As we go out, the last groups are seen disappearing in different directions.

I lead my companions in the direction of the tree where I had left my book, and pick it up without having had any misgivings of not finding it there. I pick it up carefully, for close by is a withered rose stuck in the excrement of a dog. Juliet bursts out

laughing, "All that is lacking now is a revolver."

I do not relish this flippancy, but taking a coin out of my pocket, I speak with patience and great indulgence: "You see, it is like this coin, people look only at one side of this for the more prosaic details of value, country of origin, motto, but look carefully at the other side and you will see the real decorative value including the date of coining."

The head on the coin bears a striking resemblance to my imaginary portrait of Sade, as well as the date of his birth, 1740. For further details please consult. . . .

DEC. 1944

NOTE: Script used for sequence in *Dreams That Money Can Buy* (1945), by Hans Richter. "Ruth" refers to the actress Ruth Ford, sister of Charles Henri, whom Man Ray photographed in Hollywood. The photos of her in this piece, some not reproduced here, are his.—C. N.

1945

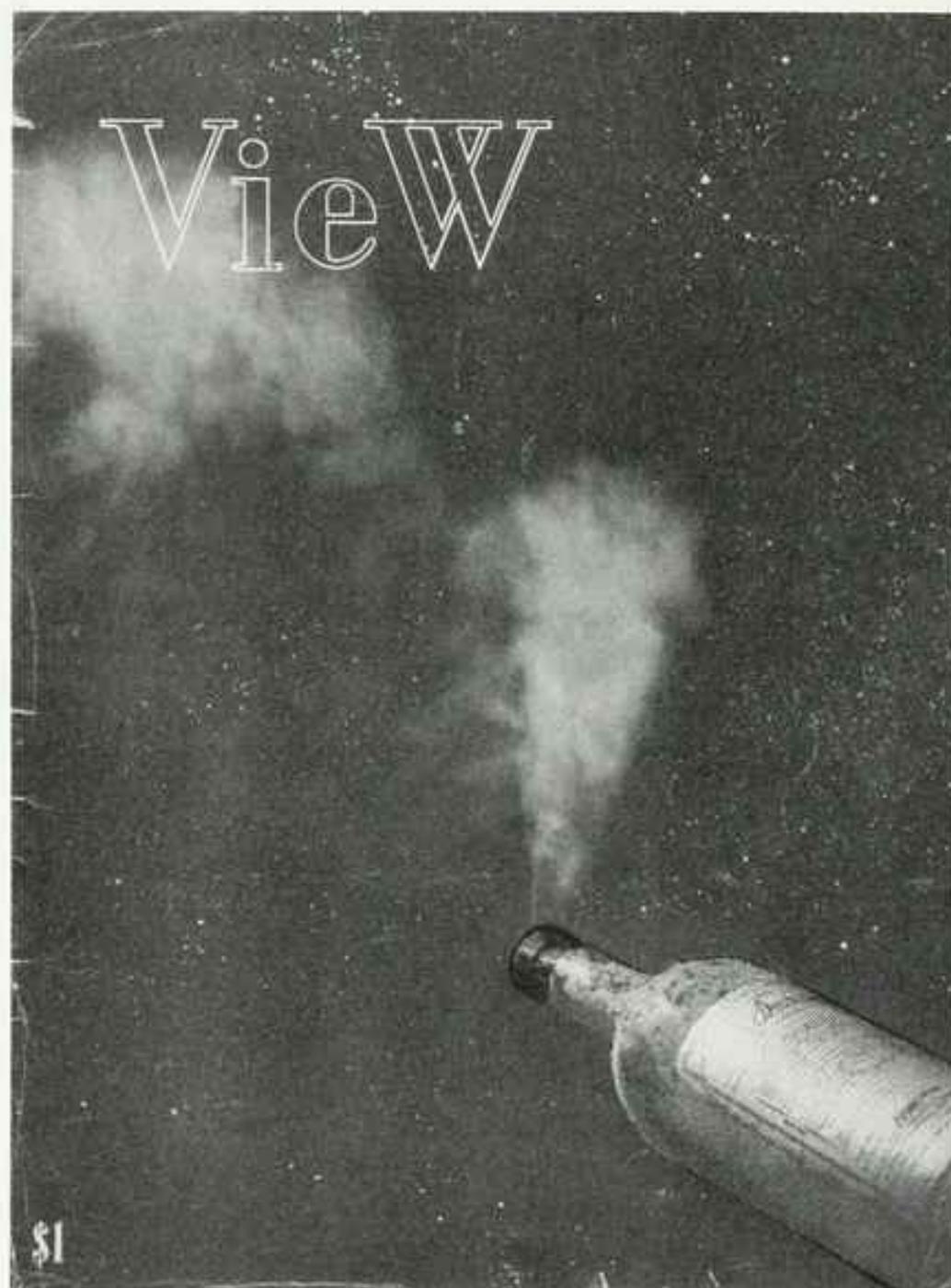
Marcel Duchamp Issue

Tropical Americana Issue

American Issue

QUAND
LA FUMÉE de TABAC
SENT aussi
de la bouche
qui L'EXHALE,
LES DEUX ODEURS
S'ÉPOUSENT par
INFRA-mince

marcel Duchamp →



Cover for Marcel Duchamp issue, March 1945.
Also reproduced in Color Section.

I Cover the Cover*

BY PETER LINDAMOOD

Let's start with the wine bottle, even as Marcel Duchamp and André Breton did one evening. Marcel flatly denies that the dinner was anything special in a commemorative or flamboyantly conversational sense despite what we all might have imagined, but he did save the bottle which now spumes that smoke across the cover. "Vintage cobweb?" "Indeed not" (Marcel). "Cobwebs never stay on bottles in America!" When cover-creating time arrived, Duchamp seized a handsaw and rached it through a yelping piece of gray cardboard which bore the tattered tradename "DUCASSE." The clever droppings from this operation (now you saw it, now you didn't) fell upon the be-glued bottle, making all that could be desired in caveau culture. Meanwhile, every hole-boring expert in the glass manufacturers' almanacs dampened any hopes of tubing the smoke through the bottle, bottom-to-topwise. So, calling upon thirty years of art-plumbing expediency, Duchamp rigged up a smoke pipe (now invisible) under the bottle, the pipe's end coinciding with the bottle's neck and held thereto by a clip extending from the cork's customary cove.

This triumph of the smoking bottle made up for the failure of the much-experimented-with ray of light which was to have shot from page left across the planetarium illusion of the background, under the smoke. As for the zodiac-pointillism just referred to, Marcel in telling it and I in covering it have to

*See art in color section.

telescope a sad saga of experiments ranging from abortive essays at condiment-sprinkling to the finally successful technique which was really a toothbrush offspring of frottage (in this case a paint-soaked brush dragged with choreographic tension down the paper).

Now between the third (or fourth?) montage stage which Duchamp showed me and the finished job, I understand, there were to be several more interludes. All this latter involves quite magical little halftone screens which push the peppery stars way back into the telescopic reality of the Milky Way, at

the same time isolating and pointing up the wine bottle in all its sculptural glory. What better place than this to tell of the Enormous Room—Surrealist Manifesto French War (I) veteran connotations of the bottle's etiquette, or label, which (look twice), has nothing to do with grape snobbery but is really Duchamp's Livret Militaire (Service Record).

Finally, all the color accents involved in the cover making—arrived there thanks also to the wizardry of those halftone screens—whose potentialities Marcel was too modest to admit to me he had considerably expanded during the accouchement. MAR. 1945



3/4 Bird's-Eye View of A Watch-Case for Marcel Duchamp, Joseph Cornell

The Point of View: Testimony 45

BY ANDRÉ BRETON

It has been said that from the moment of its publication, it became impossible to think as if *The Critique of Pure Reason* had never existed. One can, likewise, ask oneself to what extent it will one day be considered legitimate to have continued painting as if *La Mariée mise à nu* had never been produced. The intervention of Marcel Duchamp continues, with the passage of time, to assume the character of a more and more imperative formal notice. It tends to denounce as obsolete and vain the greater part of recent artistic production (including what could be revealed in America of Paris wartime artistic activity). Critical laziness alone can explain those innumerable repetitions, that delectation in which the spirit has no longer any share, those insignificant variations on superannuated themes. To this general disposition for marking time, even for backsliding, are opposed, indestructible and unique, not only the work of Duchamp but also his whole attitude throughout recent years, as is affirmed, *quite detachedly from the consecrated forms of expression*, by the appearance of his signature appended to Twine Rigging at the International Surrealist Exhibition at the Coordinating Council of French Relief Societies and on the cover of the catalog for that exhibition, to the cover of *VVV* No. 2-3 and the cover of this issue of *View*, as well as to *A Genre Allegory* reproduced in *VVV* No. 4 and to a pocket chess set shown last January at the Julien Levy Gallery. These signs, so valuable to those who know and each one of which *dates*, continue to bear witness to the absolutely exceptional span of his imaginative compass and mark his unshakeable fidelity

to the sole principle of *invention, mistress of the world*. I say that Marcel Duchamp's journey *through the artistic looking glass* determines a fundamental crisis of painting and sculpture which reactionary manoeuvres and stock-exchange brokerages will not be able to conceal much longer. This crisis cannot be intellectually surmounted by denying its existence contrary to all evidence, but only by agreeing to recognize its scope and by throwing light on all its data. This can be achieved only by tackling the difficult problem of where the personality of Marcel

Duchamp is situated, in order to know what irradiation passes through it or whether it is at the crossroads of several traditions—philosophical (La Mettrie—Cournot), esoteric (Uccello—Seurat), utopian (Charles Fourier—Raymond Roussel), erotic (Sade—Freud), humoristic (Jarry—Jean-Pierre Brisset), etc., which could explain its uneclipsed radiations and make of Marcel Duchamp the only one of all his contemporaries who is in no way inclined to grow older. *[translated by Edouard Roditi]*

MAR. 1945

CLASSIFIED PERSONALS

GET ACQUAINTED! Send DIME for FRESH WIDOW. With names, addresses 25.

LONESOME? Join world's greatest social directory. Members everywhere, (many wealthy). Interesting descriptions. Ask for MACHINE CELIBATAIRE.

BRIDE! Six month membership—Progressive club, list of names, addresses, descriptions, either sex, all for stamp and 25c (coin).

CLEVER dice trick: STRIPPED BRIDE. Call your point and make it. Never fails—instructions, 25. Free: 25 rackets exposed. Buy now!

MARRY rich SAD YOUNG MAN IN A TRAIN. 200 men's addresses (photos) \$1.00. 100—50c. 50—25c. Ladies join free.

PRETTY GIRL Photos, TO BE LOOKED AT WITH ONE EYE FOR ALMOST AN HOUR. Sample sets 25c. Write: Keyhole.

WHY BE LONELY? Let me arrange a romance for you. Ladies and gentlemen, all ages, some with business. Join: NINE MALIC MOULDS!

IMPORTED South American Art, birds, pictures, etc. write: CHOCOLATE GRINDER.

THE KING AND QUEEN SURROUNDED BY SWIFT NUDES, attractive widows, widowers, bachelors, maidens long for sweetheart and life-mates. Their descriptions, names, addresses (only 25c).

BEST CLUB for lonely hearts. Penpals and lifemates. List with names. Write: THE KING AND QUEEN PIERCED BY SWIFT NUDES. c/o Selavy (Rose).

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MEET your heart's desire in CEMETERY OF UNIFORMS AND LIVERIES. Sweetheart, friend or mate, through our individual list of congenials, members everywhere, confidential introduction by letters.

SOLVE that love problem! Wield a greater love control. Make others love you. Secure a clever woman's private methods (confidential). Call: WATER MILL.

WANT a lovable sweetheart? NUDE DESCENDING A STAIRCASE! Confidential introduction. Happy results guaranteed. Free information and description.

GIRL poses: TRANSITION FROM A VIRGIN TO A BRIDE 100 large, artistic studies. Write Sunshine Social Club.

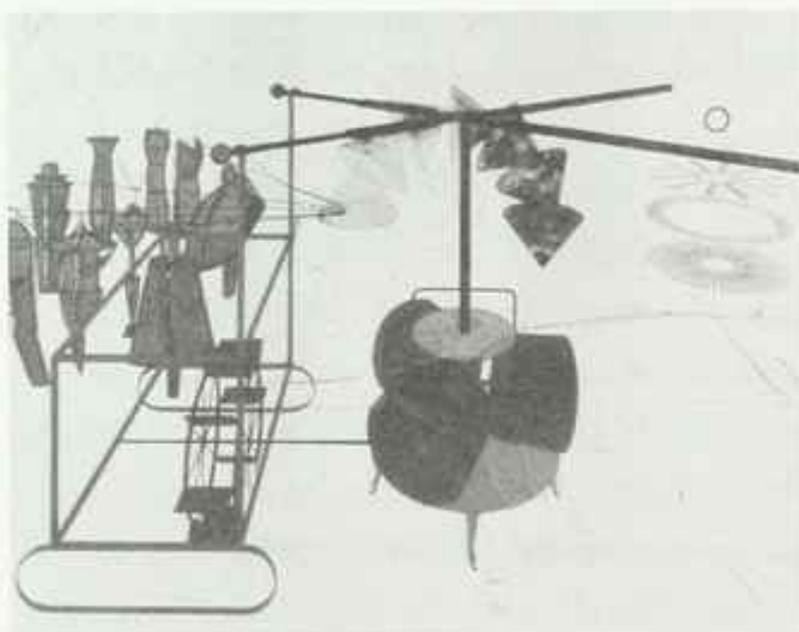
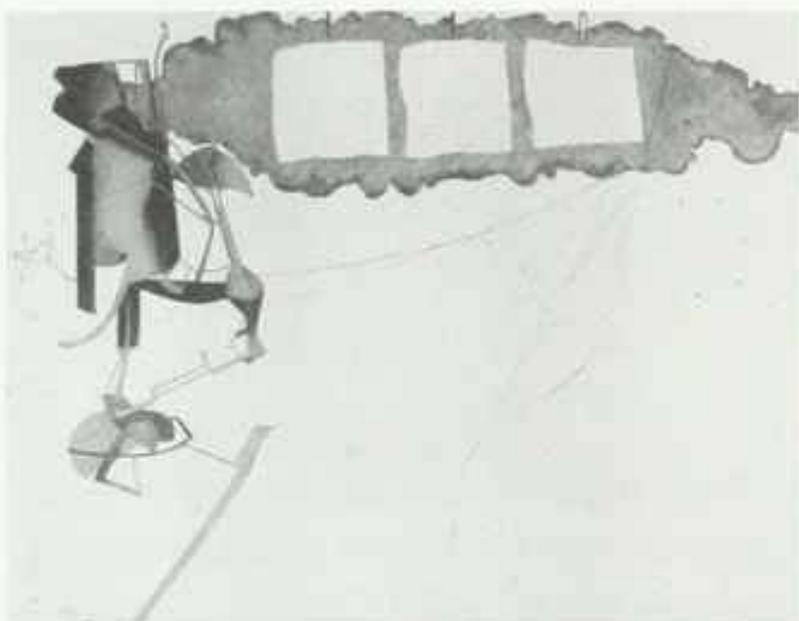
"Classified Personals," advertising the signed and numbered edition of the Duchamp issue

Lighthouse of the Bride

BY ANDRÉ BRETON

Buildings flung under a gray sky turning to pink, very slowly—it is in a troubled and anguishing style of conquest, where the transitory conflicts with the pompous—all this has just arisen in no time at some extreme point of the globe and there is nothing that can prevent it, besides, from melting for us at a distance into the most conventional scene of modern adventure, gold prospectors or others, as the early years of the movies have helped to fix it: *haute école*, luck, the fire of feminine eyes and lips; though in this instance it is a purely mental adventure, I get easily enough this impression of the greatness and the indigence of “cubism.” Whoever has once caught himself in the act of believing the doctrinal affirmations from which this movement draws authority, of giving it credit for its scientific aspirations, of praising its constructive value, must in fact agree that the sum of research thus designated has been but a plaything for the *tidal wave* which soon came and put an end to it, not without upsetting from base to summit, far and wide, the artistic and moral landscape. This landscape, unrecognizable today, is still too troubled for anyone to pretend that he can rigorously untangle the deep causes of its torment: one is generally content to explain it by referring to the impossibility of building anything stable on socially undermined foundations. However expedient may be this manner of judging, which happily recalls the artist to a just appreciation of his limitations (the more and more necessary transformation of the world is *other* than that which can be achieved on canvas), I do not think that it should absolve us from studying the process of formation of the

particularly hollow and voracious wave which I have just mentioned. From the strictly historical point of view, it is very important, in order to bring this study to a proper conclusion, to consider attentively the place where the very first characteristic vibrations of the phenomenon chose to be recorded, in this instance the general disposition of this or that artist who has proven himself on this occasion to be the most sensitive recording instrument. The unique position of Marcel Duchamp at the spearhead of all "modern" movements which have succeeded each other for the last twenty-five years was, until quite recently, such as to make us deplore that the externally most important part of this work, from 1911 to 1918, rather jealously guarded its secret. If the "tidal wave," which was later to be so vastly disrupting, could have once begun to swell, one had certainly



The Large Glass
(*La mariée mis à nu par ses célibataires, même*)
Marcel Duchamp (Philadelphia Museum of Art)

come to think that Duchamp must, from the start, have known much about its resources, and one suspected him rather of having opened for it some mysterious valve. But one scarcely hoped to be some day more fully enlightened as to the part Duchamp had played. Therefore the publication, in October 1934, of ninety-four documents assembled by him under the title: *La Mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires même*,* [*The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*] which suddenly overturned before us this wave and afforded us a glimpse of all that is most complex in its enormous machinery, could not fail to pass for a capital event in the eyes of all who attach any importance to the determination of the great intellectual motives of our day.

In a text that was destined to stress the most unfortunate aesthetic calculations, Edgar Allan Poe, after all, once expressed an admirable decision that has ever since been shared by all artists worthy of that title and still constitutes, though perhaps unconsciously for the majority of them, the most important of all directives. Poe wrote indeed that originality, except in minds of the most unusual vigor, is in no way, as many seem to believe, a matter of instinct and intuition; to find it, one must generally seek it laboriously and, though a positive merit of the highest order, it is achieved rather by the spirit of negation than by the inventive spirit.

Without prejudging the degree of "unusual force" which precisely can be the mark of a spirit such as Duchamp's, those who have been introduced to him to any extent will feel no scruples in recognizing that never has a more profound originality appeared more clearly to derive from a being charged with a more determined intention of negation. Does not all the history of poetry and art for the last hundred years strengthen in us the conviction that we are after all less sensitive to what we are told than to what we are spared, for instance, from repeating?

*Three hundred numbered and signed copies of a collection of manuscript notes, drawings and paintings (1911 to 1918) which served as basis for composing the glass: *La mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires même*, by Marcel Duchamp. —Editions Rose Sélavy, 16 rue de la Paix, Paris.

There are *various means* of repeating, from pure and simple verbal repetition, so inept, like for instance “blue skies”—which, when I come across it as soon as I open a book of poems, relieves me, with good reason, from the need to become aware of the context—passing through repetition, in the sphere of art, of the subject treated, fallaciously excused by the new manner of treatment, or repetition of the manner, fallaciously excused by the novelty of the subject, to repetition, in the sphere of human existence, of the pursuit of some artistic “ideal” which requires continuous application, incompatible with any other form of action. Where else, if not in the hatred we feel for this eternal repetition, can we seek the reason for the increasing attraction exercised on us by certain books which are so strangely self-sufficient that we consider their authors have discharged their indebtedness: *Les Chimères*, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, *Les Chants de Maldoror*, *Les Illuminations*? Is it not, besides, reassuring and exemplary that, at this price, some of these authors also considered *themselves* free from debt? Absolute originality, from refusal to refusal, appears to me to lead inevitably to Rimbaud’s conclusion: “I am a thousand times the richest, let us be as miserly as the sea.” This refusal, pushed to the extreme, this final negation which is of an ethical order, weighs heavily on all debates arising from a typically modern artistic production. Nothing can prevent the abundance of this production, in a given artist, from being, until this attitude changes, its very drawback. Originality nowadays is narrowly connected with rareness. And on this point, Duchamp’s attitude, the only one that is perfectly uncompromising, whatever human precautions he may surround it with, remains, to the more conscious poets and painters who approach him, a subject of confusion and envy.

Marcel Duchamp limits to approximately thirty-five the number of his activities in the field of plastic production, and even then he includes among them a series of achievements that an insufficiently sophisticated critical attitude would refuse to consider in one class: I mean, for instance, the act of signing some characterless large decorative panel in a restaurant

and, generally speaking, that which constitutes the most obvious (and what might be the *most dazzling*) part of his activities of twenty years: the various speculations in which he became involved through his preoccupation with those ready-mades (manufactured objects promoted to the dignity of objects of art through the choice of the artist) by means of which, from time to time and with complete contempt for all other media, he very proudly expressed himself. But who can truly say how much it may mean, to those who really know, a signature that has been used openly in such a parsimonious manner? An intense and fascinating light is cast by it, no longer only on the narrow object that it generally locates, but on a whole process of intellectual life. This process, a most peculiar one indeed, can achieve its full meaning and become perfectly understandable only once it has been reunited to a series of other processes, all of a causal nature and not one of which we can afford to ignore. And all this means that one’s understanding of Duchamp’s work and the fact that one foresees its furthest consequences can only be the result of a deep historical understanding of the development of this work. And because of the prodigious speed with which this work developed, the very limited number of Duchamp’s public utterances would make it necessary to enumerate them all without omitting any. I am, however, forced here to list only his more characteristic works.

Duchamp’s *Coffee Grinder* (late 1911) indicates the start of the purely personal development that interests us; compared to the guitars of the cubists, it takes on the appearance of an infernal machine. The years 1911 and 1912 indeed already reveal the full extent of Duchamp’s dissidence, a dissidence that affirms itself brilliantly as much in the subject matter as in the manner of his paintings; and one should note that the major part of his more purely pictorial work falls into these limits of time (*Sad Young Man on a Train*, *Nude Descending a Staircase*, *King and Queen Surrounded by Swift Nudes*, *King and Queen Crossed by Swift Nudes*, *Virgin*, *The Passage from the Virgin to the Bride*, *Bride*). It was as early as the end of 1912 that Duchamp suffered the great intellectual crisis that

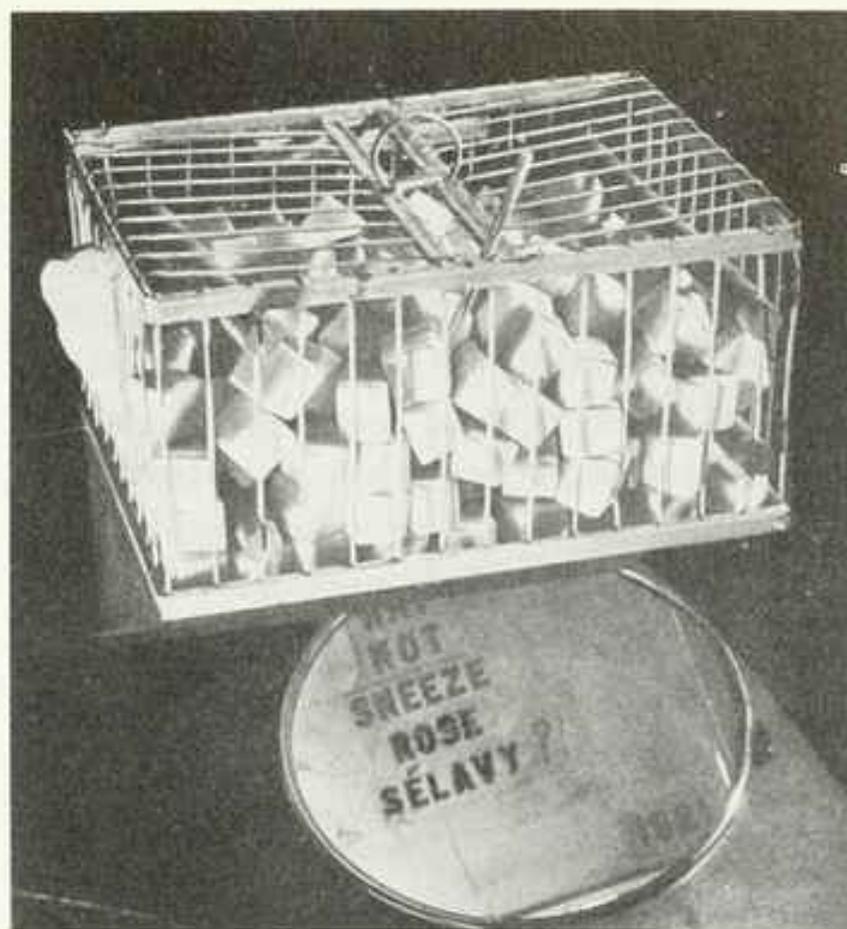
progressively forced him to abandon this mode of expression which seemed vitiated to him. The practice of drawing and painting appeared to him as a kind of trickery that tended toward the senseless glorification of the *hand* and of nothing else. The hand is the great culprit, so how can one consent to be the slave of one's own hand? *It is unacceptable that drawing and painting should today still stand where writing stood before Gutenberg came.* To delight in color, which is all based on enjoyment of the sense of smell, is as wretched as to delight in line which is based on enjoyment of the hand's sense. The only solution, under such conditions, is to unlearn painting and drawing. And Duchamp has never abandoned this purpose since that date; this consideration ought, I believe, to be enough to induce one to approach with a very special interest the gigantic purpose to which, once such a negation had been formulated, he nevertheless devoted his strength for over ten years: it is into the details of this purpose that the publication of these documents initiated us, a purpose unequalled in contemporary history and which was destined to be achieved in the huge *glass* (an object painted on transparent glass) entitled *La Mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même* and left unfinished in New York. In this work it is impossible not to see at least the trophy of a fabulous hunt through virgin territory, at the frontiers of eroticism, of philosophical speculation, of the spirit of sporting competition, of the most recent data of science, of lyricism and of humor. From 1913 to 1923, the year when Duchamp finally abandoned this work, all the paintings, whether on canvas or on glass, that would have to be included in a catalog of his works are but research and fragmentary attempts to achieve the various parts of *La Mariée mise à nu*. Such indeed is the case of the *Chocolate Grinder*, of the *Glissière* or *Slide*, of the *Neuf moules mâlic*, all of 1913, as well as of the 1914 *Chocolate Grinder* and the glass *To Be Watched Closely with One Eye for Almost an Hour* of 1918, which latter is a variation on the *Oculist Witnesses* that likewise are part of the general description. At most, one might class as a partial exception to this rule the composition entitled *Tu m'* where there

appear, on the right, the *Three Standard Stoppages* that are included here in the composition with two ready-mades, on the one hand (an enamelled hand and a ceiling brush), and on the other hand with the shadows cast by three other ready-mades brought close together (a bicycle wheel, a corkscrew and a coat hanger).

A falling back on these ready-mades, after 1914, began to supplant, for Duchamp, all other forms of self-expression. It will be of great interest, some day, to explain the full meaning of all these projects, each so rigorously unexpected, in this respect, and to try to unravel the law whereby they progress. I can only recall now the *Pharmacy* of 1914, conceived in Rouen when Duchamp saw a snowscape (he added to a watercolor, of the "winter calendar" type, two tiny characters, one red and the other green, walking toward each other in the distance); also the ceiling of Duchamp's studio in 1915, bristling with objects such as coat hangers, combs, weathercocks, all accompanied by some discordant inscription that served as a title or a caption (a snow shovel was titled, in English, *In Advance of the Broken Arm*); Duchamp's birthday present to his sister, which consisted in suspending by its four corners, beneath her balcony, an open geometry book destined to become the plaything of the seasons; the rebus composed of a nursemaid and a lion's cage (*Nous nous cajolions*); the latrine exhibited [under the pseudonym R. Mutt] in 1917 at the New York Society of Independent Artists show under the title *Fountain*, and which Duchamp was forced to withdraw after the opening, as a result of which he resigned from the Society; his adding, in 1919, a moustache to the *Gioconda* (L.H.O.O.Q.); his 1921 window entitled *Fresh Widow* which was a pun on the sound's ambiguous similarity with *French Window* (this consisted of a small window, manufactured by a carpenter after Duchamp's instructions, whose glass panes are covered with leather so that they become leather panes that must be polished); his 1922 window, a replica of the earlier one, but this time with a wooden base where bricks are drawn and with glass panes streaked with white like those of newly built houses (*La bagarre d'Austerlitz*); his

little 1923 birdcage filled with pieces of white marble cut to look like cubes of sugar and through whose top there emerged a thermometer (*Why Not Sneeze?*); his design for a perfume bottle, *Belle haleine—Eau de violette*; his 1925 bond on the Monte Carlo roulette (*Moustiques domestiques demi-stock*); finally *Duchamp's door*, described for the first time in the summer 1933 issue of *Orbes* as follows: "In the apartment entirely constructed by Duchamp's hands, there stands, in the studio, a door of natural wood that leads into the room. When one opens this door to enter the room, it then closes the entrance to the bathroom, and when one opens it to enter the bathroom, it closes the entrance to the studio and is painted with white enamel like the interior of the bathroom." ("A door must be either open or closed" had always seemed to be an inescapable truth; but Duchamp had managed to construct a door that was at the same time both open and closed.) One should also list contemporary with this series of activities that do not lack continuity, on the one hand some optical research intended to be particularly applicable to movies, to which category belongs his famous cover design for an issue of *Minotaure*, as well as two different versions of a moving sphere on which a spiral is painted (the first version belongs to 1921 and the second, *Rose Sélavy et moi nous estimons les ecchymoses des Esquimaux aux mots exquis*, belongs to 1925–26), and, on the other hand, some verbal research in which he was more actively and particularly engaged around 1920 (some puns by Marcel Duchamp were published in the fifth issue of the new series of *Littérature*, October 1922, as well as on the front inside cover of Pierre de Massot's *The Wonderful Book*, in 1924).

To this day, no cataloging of this sort has been attempted; I therefore feel that my own may suffice, temporarily at least (until somebody chooses, as is proper, Duchamp's ready-mades as the subject of a thesis, and even this would not exhaust the topic). But we still have to consider rather closely, likewise for the first time, Marcel Duchamp's monumental work beside which all his other works seem to gravitate almost like satellites, I mean *La Mariée mise*



Why Not Sneeze?, Duchamp

à nu par ses célibataires, même. The collection of documents that Duchamp published some years after abandoning this work in an unfinished state casts some appreciable light on its genesis, though this light itself cannot be truly enjoyed without some additional information. To recognize the objective value of *La Mariée mise à nu*, one requires, in my opinion, some Ariadne's thread that one would seek in vain among the thickets, whether written or drawn, that are contained within this strange green box of published documents. And it is necessary first to go back to a reproduction of the glass object before one can identify the various elements that constitute the whole, before one can become aware of their respective parts in the functioning of the whole.

1. *Bride (or female hanged body)* reduced to what one might call its skeleton in the 1912 canvas that bears this title.—2. *Inscription for the top* (made out of the three *pistons for drafts* a, a' and a'', surrounded by a kind of *milky way*).—3. *Nine mâlic moulds*, or *Eros machine*, or *Bachelor machine*, or *cemetery for uniforms and liveries* (state trooper, cuirassier, policeman, priest, bellhop, department-store delivery man, flunkey, mortician's assistant, stationmaster).—4.

Slide (or *chariot* or *sleigh*, standing on runners p and p' that slide in a gutter).—5. *Water mill*.—6. *Scissors*.—7. *Sieve* (or *drainage slopes*).—8. *Chocolate grinder* (b, baïonette, c, cravat, r, rollers, l, Louis XV chassis).—9. Region of the *splash* (not shown).—10. *Oculist witnesses*.—11. Region of the *gravitation manager* (or *gravitation caretaker*, not shown).—12. *Pulls*.—13. *Bride's clothes*.

The above described morphological analysis of the *Mariée mise à nu* allows a very summary idea of the physiological data which determined its elaboration. Actually, we find ourselves here in the presence of a mechanistic and cynical interpretation of the phenomenon of love: the passage of woman from the state of virginity to that of nonvirginity taken as the theme of a fundamentally asentimental speculation, almost that of an extrahuman being training himself to consider this sort of operation. Here the rigorously logical and expected are married to the arbitrary and the gratuitous. And one very soon abandons oneself to the charm of a kind of great modern legend where everything is unified by lyricism. I will limit myself again to facilitating one's reading of it by very briefly describing the relationship with life that seems to me to unite the thirteen principal component parts of the work that I have just enumerated.

The bride, by means of the three nets above her (the draft pistons) exchanges *orders* with the bachelor machine, orders that are transmitted along the milky way. For this, the nine mâlic moulds, in the appearance of waiting, in red lead, have by definition "received" the *lighting gas* and have taken *moulds* of it; and when they hear the *litanies of the chariot recited* (the refrain of the bachelor machine), let this lighting gas escape through a given number of *capillary tubes* placed toward their top (each one of these tubes, where the gas is *drawn out*, has the shape of a *standard stop*, that is to say the shape that is adopted, as it meets the ground, by a thread one meter long that has previously been stretched horizontally one meter above ground and has then been suddenly allowed to fall of its own accord). The gas, being thus brought to the first sieve, continues to undergo various modifications in its state until in the end, after passing

through a kind of *toboggan* or *corkscrew*, it becomes, as it comes out of the last sieve, *explosive fluid* (dust enters into the preparation of the sieves: *dust raising* allows one to obtain four-month dust, six-month dust, etc. . . . Some varnish has been allowed to run over this dust in order to obtain a kind of transparent cement). During the whole of the operation just described, the chariot (formed of rods of *emancipated metal*) recites, as we have seen, its litanies ("Slow life. Vicious circle. Onanism. Horizontal. Tin for cans, ropes, wire. Wooden pulleys for excentrics. Monotonous flywheel. Beer professor.") while at the same time performing a to-and-fro motion along its gutter. This movement is determined by the regulated fall of the *bottles of Bénédictine* (whose *density oscillates*) that are axled on the watermill's wheel (a kind of water jet comes in a semicircle from the corner above the mâlic moulds). Its effect is to open the scissors, thus producing, in 9, the splash. The liquid gas thus splashed is thrown vertically; it goes past the oculist witnesses (the *dazzling of the splash*) and reaches the region of the pulls (of gunfire) corresponding to the *reduction* of the objective by an "average skill" (a schematic version of any object). The gravitation manager, lacking at 11, ought to have been balanced on the bride's dress and thus suffered the countershock of the various episodes of a *boxing bout* taking place beneath him. The bride's dress, through whose three planes the *mirroric return* of each drop of the dazzled splash takes place, was intended to be conceived as an application of the Wilson-Lincoln system (that is to say by making the most of some of the refractory properties of glass, after the manner of those portraits "that, seen from the right, reveal Wilson then, seen from the left, reveal Lincoln"). The inscription for the top, supported by a kind of flesh-colored milky way, is obtained, as we have seen, by means of the three draft pistons that consist of three perfect squares cut out of bunting and are supposed to have changed their shape as they flapped in the wind. Through these pistons are transmitted the orders that are intended to reach the pulls and the splash, in the last of which the series of bachelor operations reaches its

conclusion. One should observe that the chocolate grinder (whose baïonette acts as a support for the scissors), in spite of the relatively important space that it occupies in the glass, seems to be specially intended to qualify bachelors concretely, by applying the fundamental *adage of spontaneity*: "a bachelor grinds his own chocolate."

This commentary has but one object, to furnish a spatial basis for the orientation of anyone who questions the image of *La Mariée mise à nu* and allows himself to be intrigued to the point of classifying according to some order the loose papers of the magnificent 1934 box. But to this commentary one should add several others: philosophical, poetical, expressing faith or suspicion, novelistic, humorous, etc. Probably only the erotic commentary on *La Mariée mise à nu* cannot be ignored now. Fortunately,



Unhappy Ready-made, Duchamp

this commentary exists: written by Duchamp himself, it consists of a ten-page text that anyone who *wants* can today afford to seek and find among the ninety-four documents in the green box. I quote it too briefly, but may this extract inspire some reader to study the whole admirable document and thus reward him for the effort I have demanded of him when introducing him to the analytical details that alone could initiate him into the life of this kind of antipicture:

"La Mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires. 2 principal elements:—1. The Bride.—2. The Bachelors . . . As the bachelors are intended to serve as an architectonic base for the Bride, the latter becomes a kind of apotheosis of virginity. A steamengine on a masonry pediment. On this brick base, a solid foundation, the bachelor machine, all grease and lubricity (to be developed). —just where, as one still ascends, this eroticism reveals itself (and it must be one of the major cogs of the bachelor machine), this tormented cog gives birth to the desire part of the machine. This desire part then changes its mechanical status, from that of a steam engine to that of internal combustion engine. And this desire motor is the last part of the bachelor machine. Far from being in direct contact with the Bride, the desire motor is separated from her by a gilled cooler. This cooler is to express graphically that the Bride, instead of being a mere asensual icicle, warmly rejects, not chastely, the bachelors' rebuffed offers . . . In spite of this cooler there exists no solution of continuity between the bachelor machine and the Bride. But the bonds will be *electrical* and will thus express her being stripped: an alternating process. If necessary, short circuit.

*"The Bride.—*In general, if this Bride motor must appear as an apotheosis of virginity, that is to say of ignorant desire, white desire (with a point of malice) and if it does not graphically need to conform to the laws of the equilibrium of weights, a bright metal stanchion might nevertheless represent the virgin's attachment to her girlfriends and her parents . . . Basically, the Bride is a motor. But before being a motor that transmits timidity power, she is this very timidity power which is a kind of petrol, a gasoline

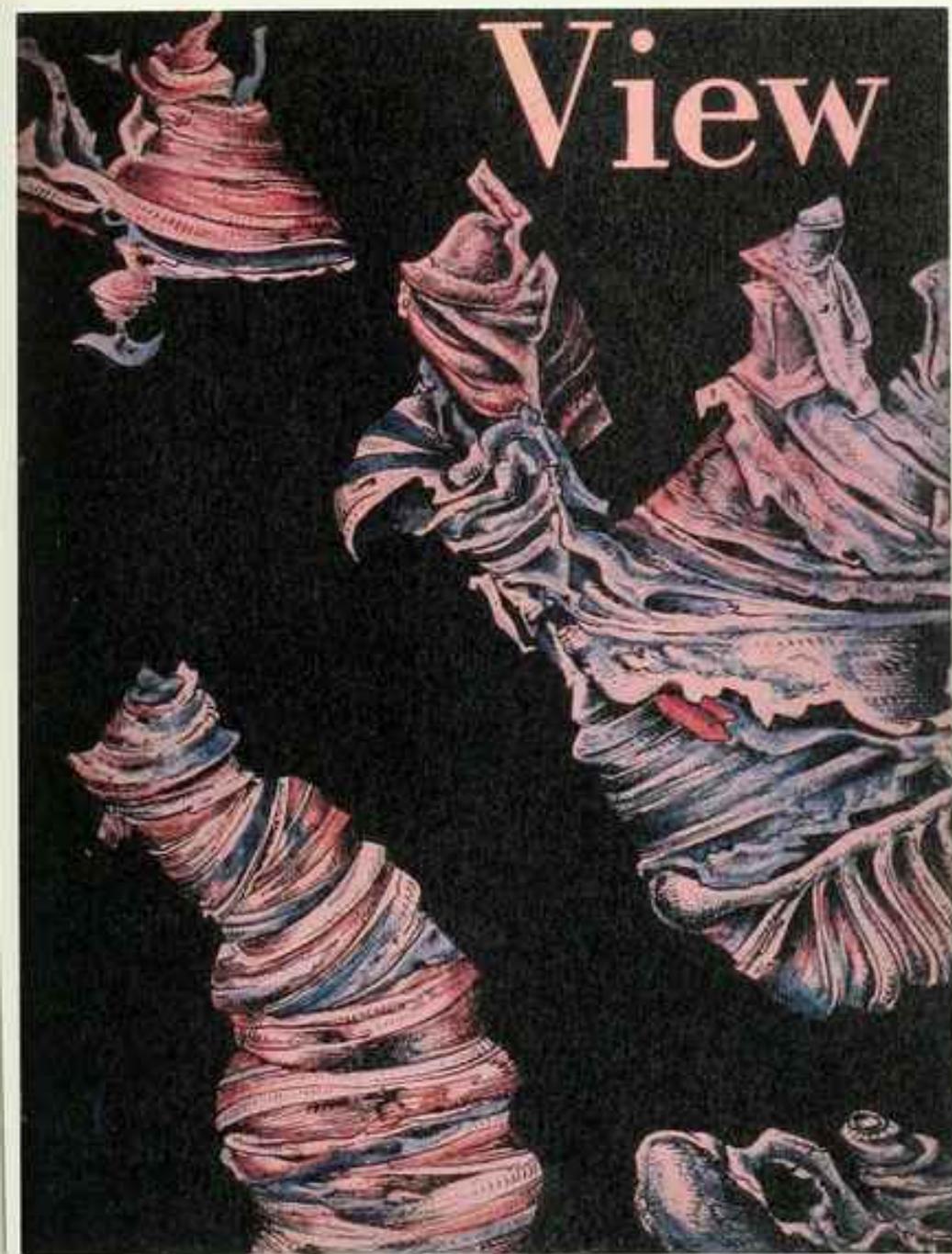
of love that, distributed among the very weak cylinders, within the reach of the sparks of its constant life, serves to achieve the final flowering of this virgin who has reached the goal of her desire. (Here the desire cog will occupy less space than in the bachelor machine. It is only the string that binds the bouquet.) The whole graphical stress leads up to the cinematic blossoming which, determined by the electrical stripping of the clothes, is the halo of the Bride, the sum total of her splendid vibrations. Graphically, it is not at all a matter of symbolizing in a lofty painting this happy goal, the Bride's desire; but more clear in all this blossoming, painting will be an inventory only of the elements of this blossoming, elements of the sex life imagined by the desiring Bride. In this blossoming, the Bride reveals herself in two appearances: the first is that of her being stripped by the bachelors, while the second is that of the Bride's own volitional imagination. On the coupling of these two appearances of pure virginity, on their collision, all the blossoming depends, the higher whole and crown of the composition. Therefore one must elaborate: firstly, the blossoming in the stripping by the

bachelors: secondly the blossoming in the stripping imagined by the Bride; thirdly, once these two graphical elaborations have been achieved, one must find their reconciliation which must be the blossoming without any casual distinction."

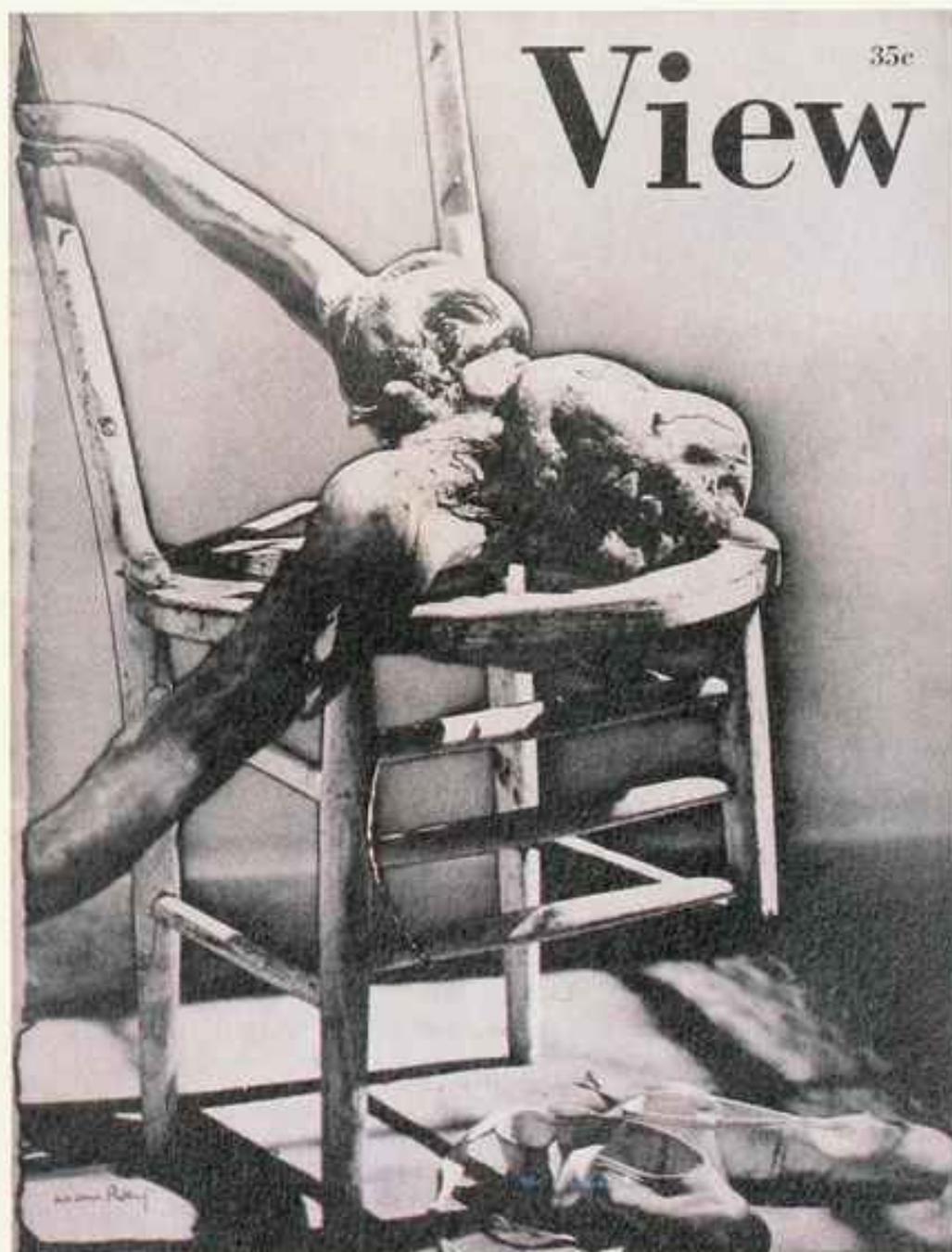
I think it is unnecessary to insist on all the absolute novelty that is hidden within such a conception. No work of art seems to me, up to this day, to have given as equitable scope to the rational and the irrational as *La Mariée mise à nu*. And even its impeccable dialectical conclusion, as one has just seen, assures it an important place among the most significant works of the twentieth century. What Marcel Duchamp, in a caption to be found amongst his notes, has called a *glass delay*, "a delay in all the general sense that is possible, a *glass delay* as one says a prose poem or a silver cuspidor," has not finished being a landmark whereby one can truly classify everything that artistic routine may yet try to achieve wrongly as *advance*. It is wonderful to see how intact it manages to keep its power of anticipation. And one should keep it luminously erect, to guide future ships on a civilization which is ending. MAR. 1945

La **D** An
 mariée **U** analytical
 mise à nu **C** reflection
 par ses **H** by
 célibataires, **A** K. S. Dreier
 même. **M** and Matta
 250 copies **P** 5 ill. \$1.75
 Wittenborn **P** 38 East 57 St.
 & Co. **r** N. Y. 22
 Books on the **S** Catalog on
 Fine Arts request.

GLASS



Kurt Seligmann, April 1943

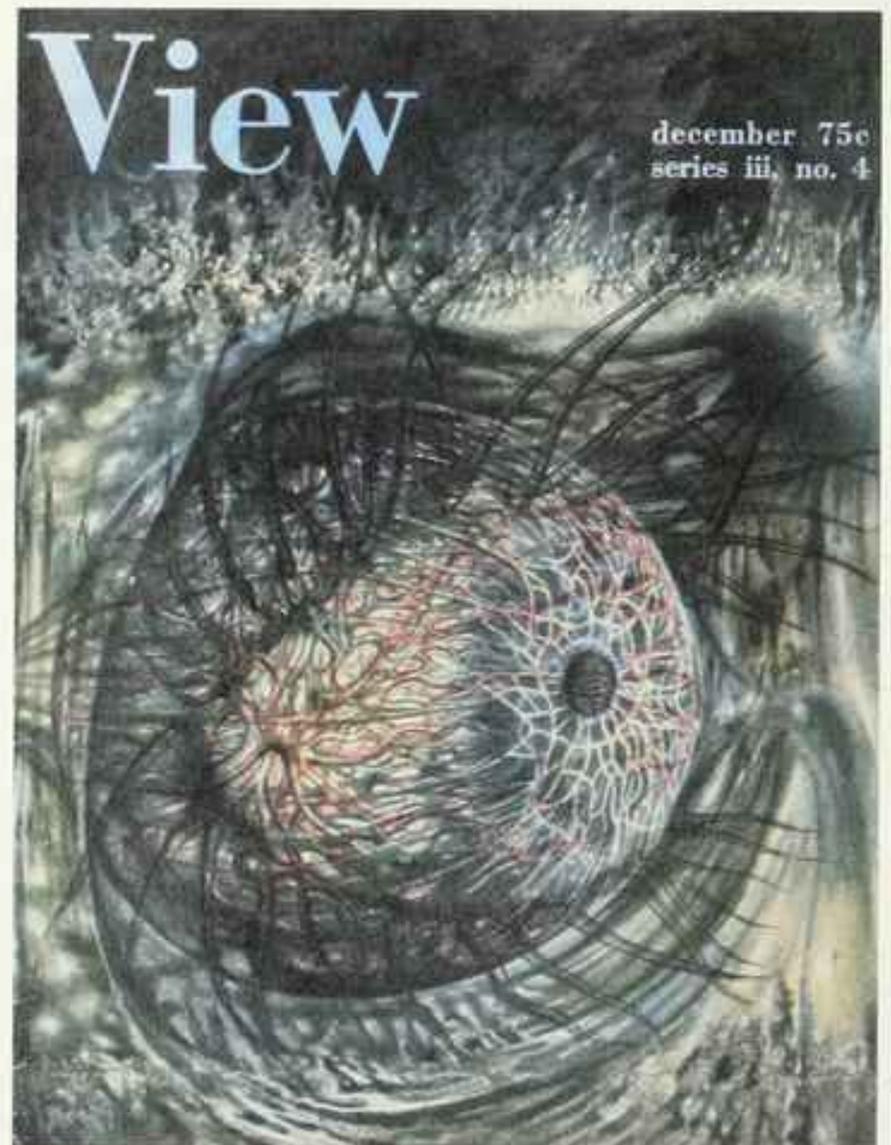


Man Ray, June 1943

Alexander Calder, Spring 1944



André Masson, *Narcissus issue*, October 1943

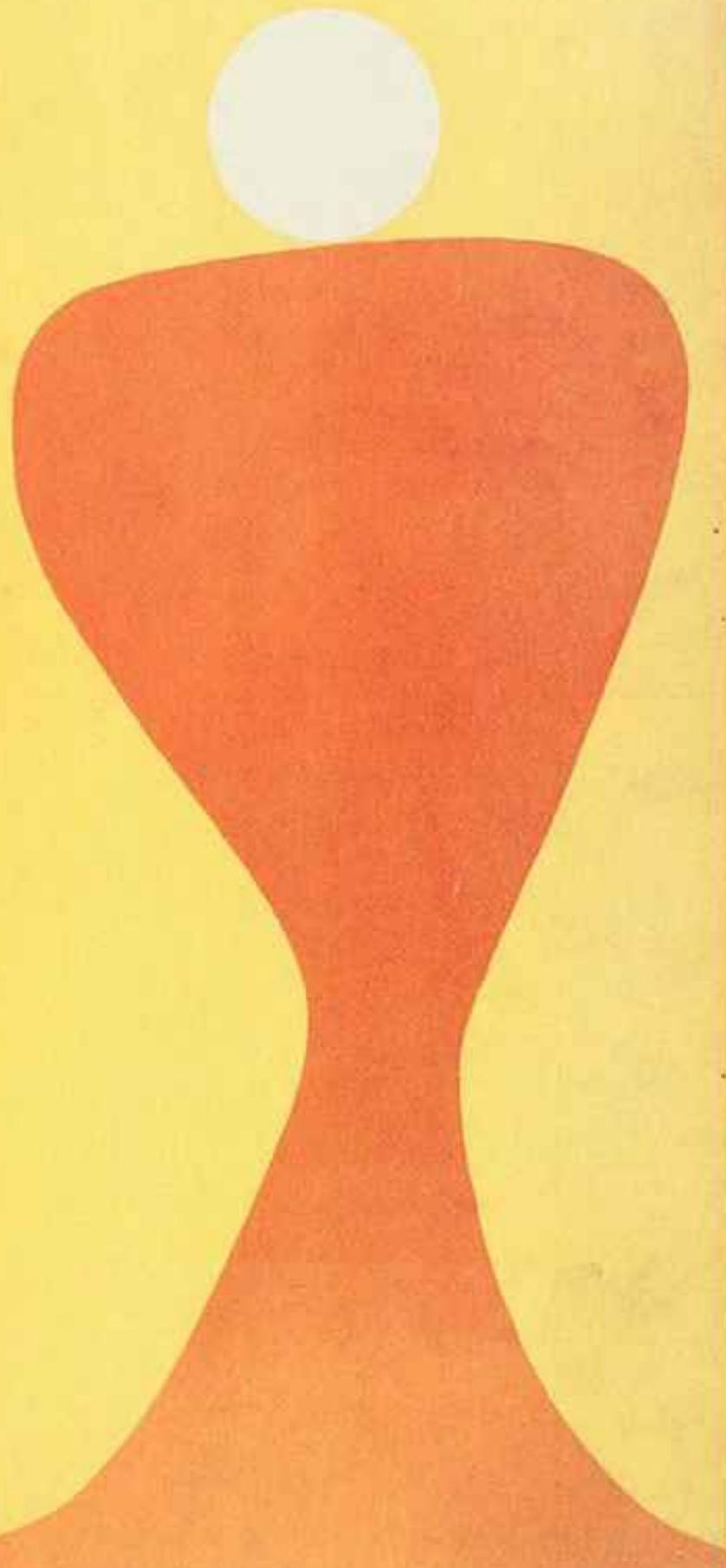


Pavel Tchelitchev, *December* 1943

View

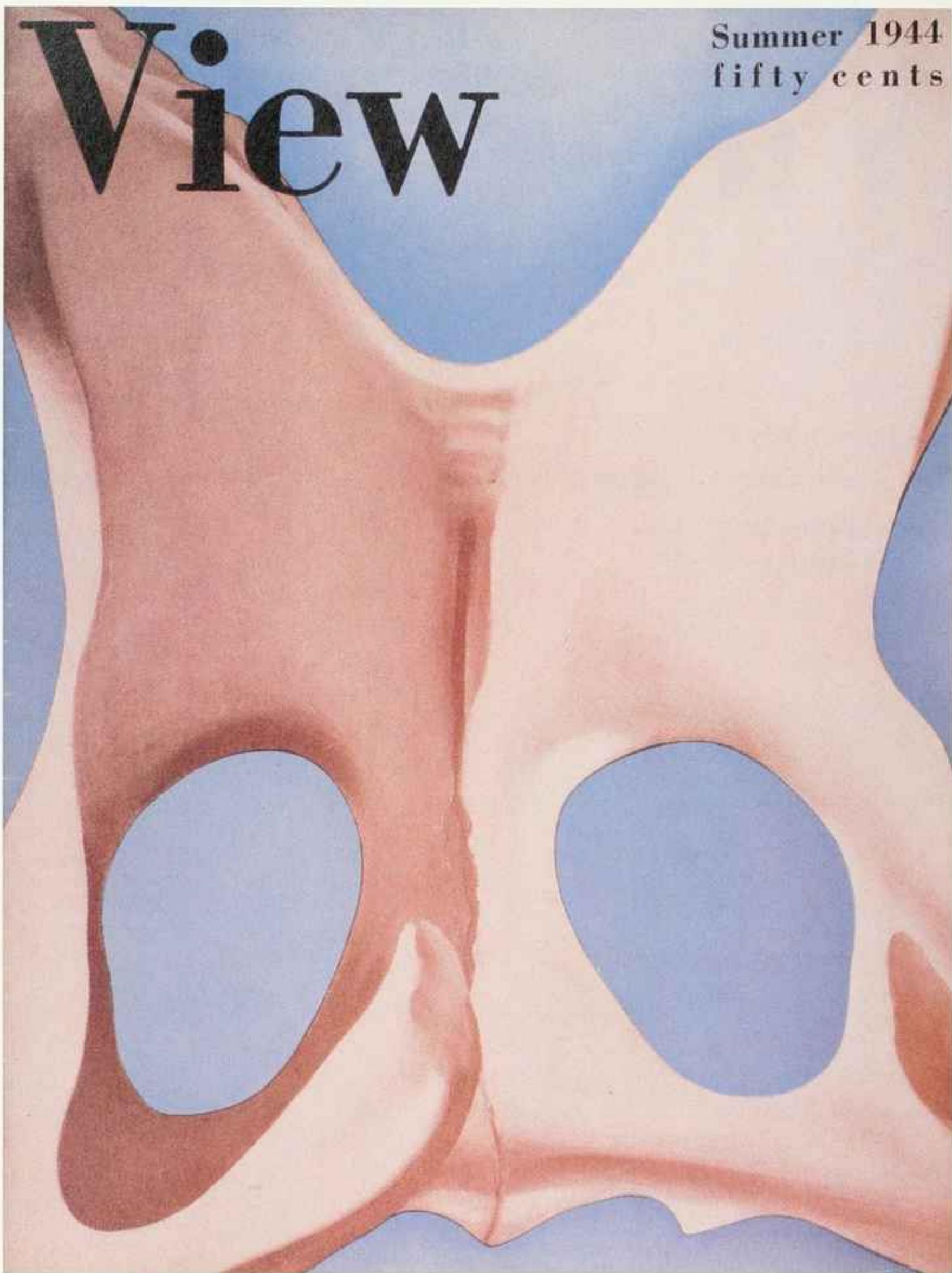
Spring 50c
no. 1, series iv

- New Writers
- New Sculpture
- Astronomy
- Impressions of Africa
- Oedipus and the Forbidden Fruit

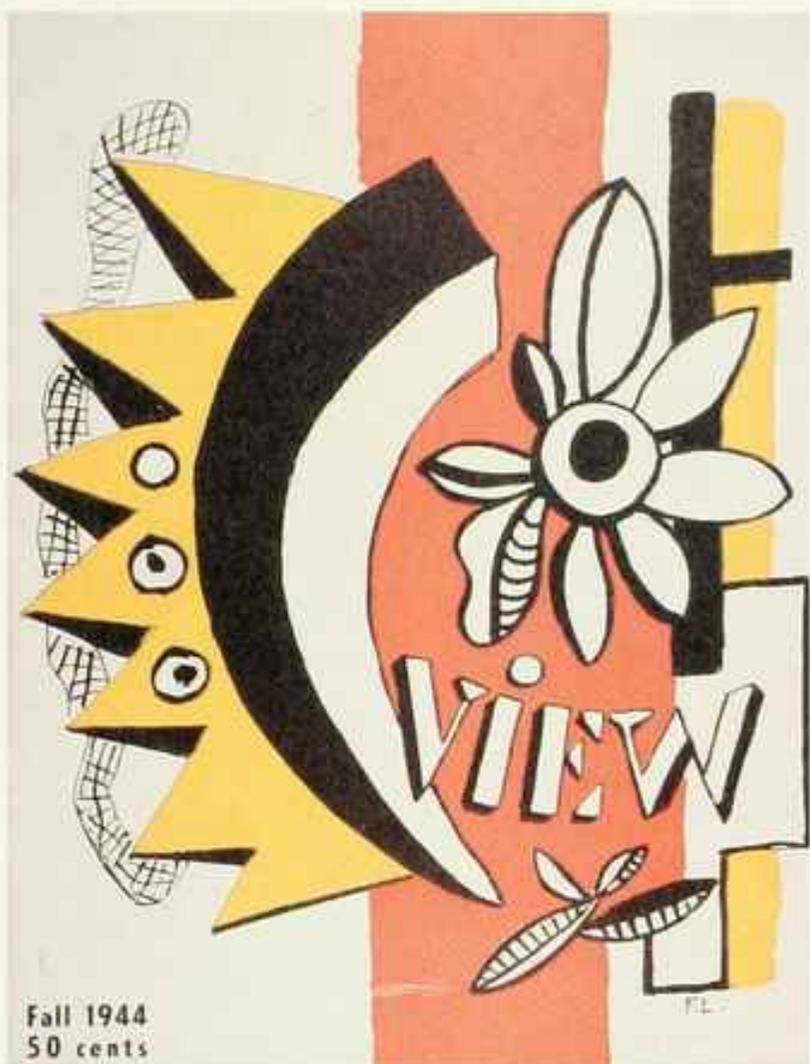


View

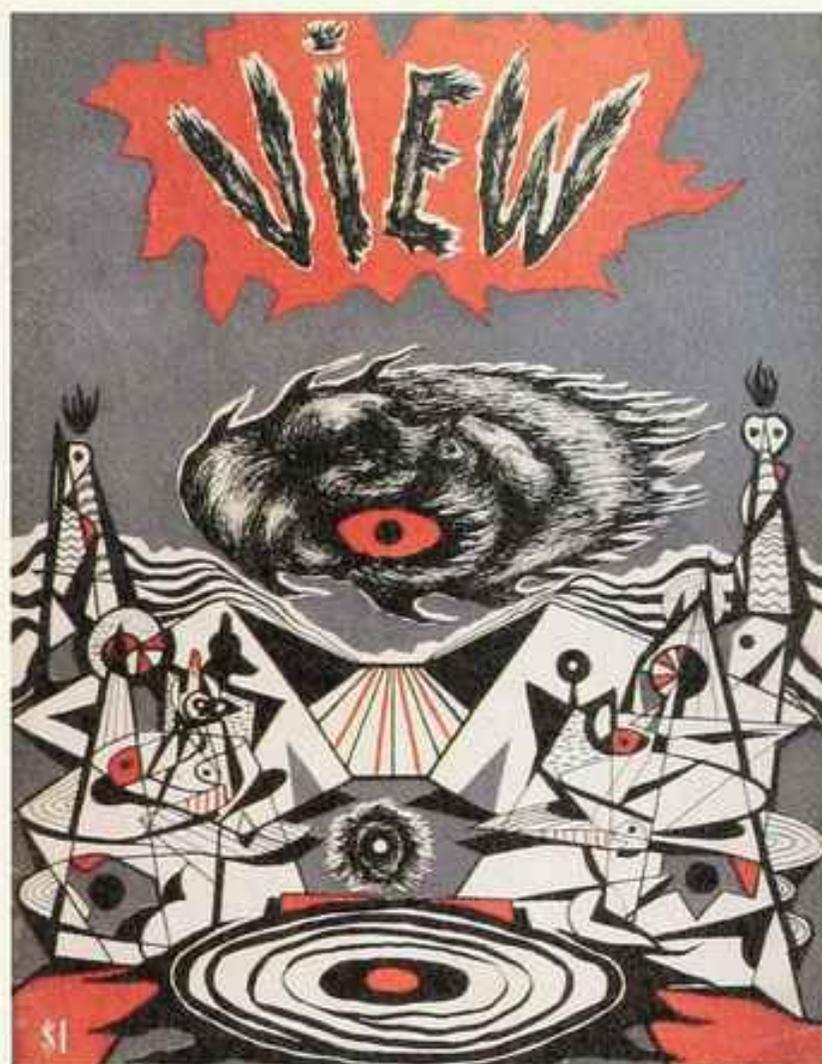
Summer 1944
fifty cents



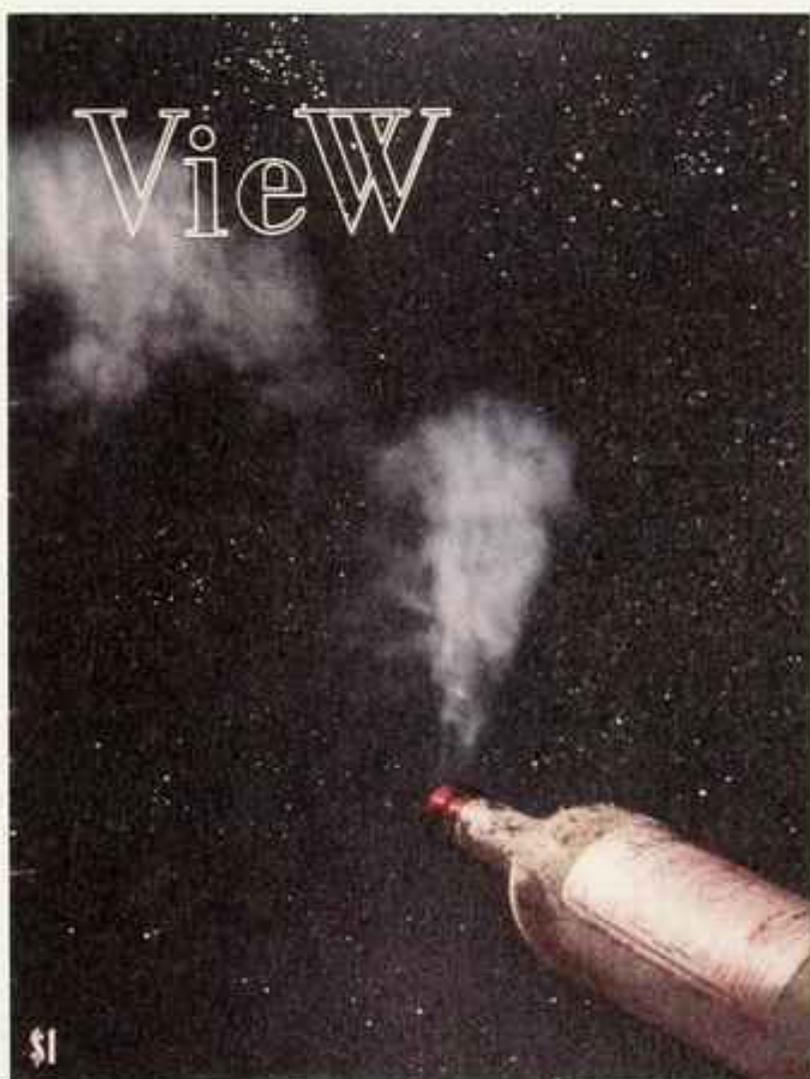
Georgia O'Keeffe, Summer 1944



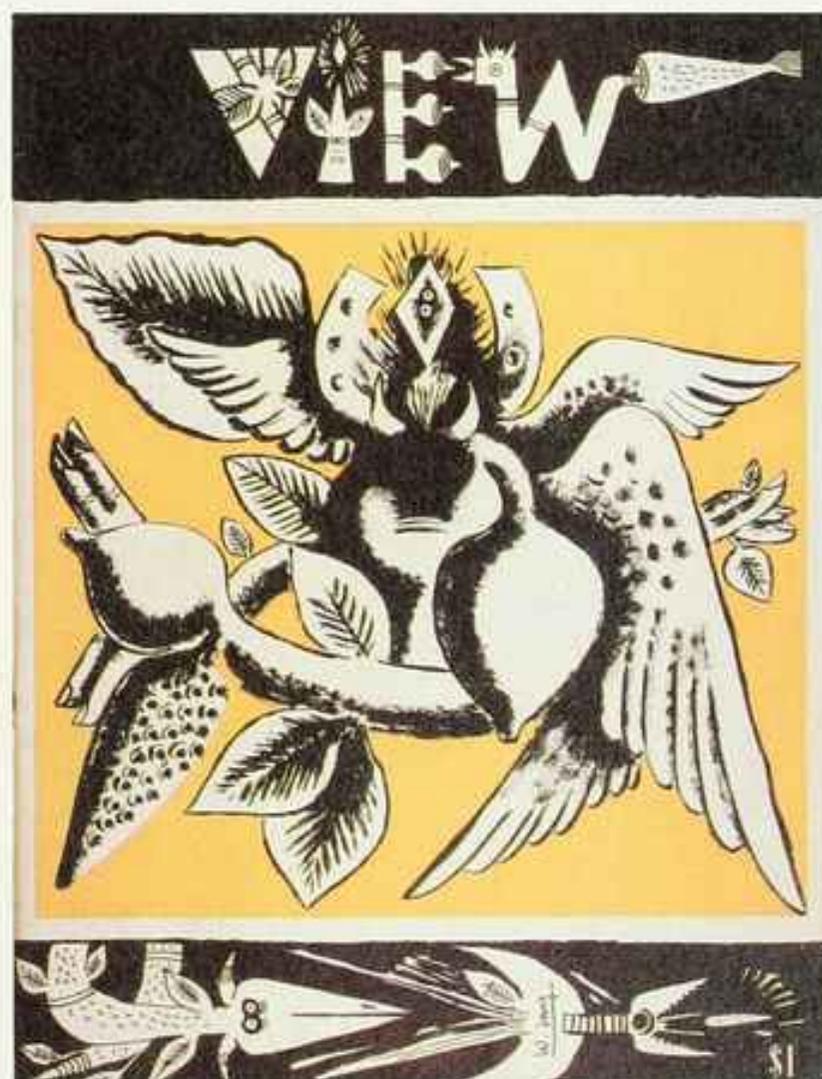
Fernand Léger, Fall 1944



Esteban Frances, December 1944



Marcel Duchamp, Duchamp issue, March 1945

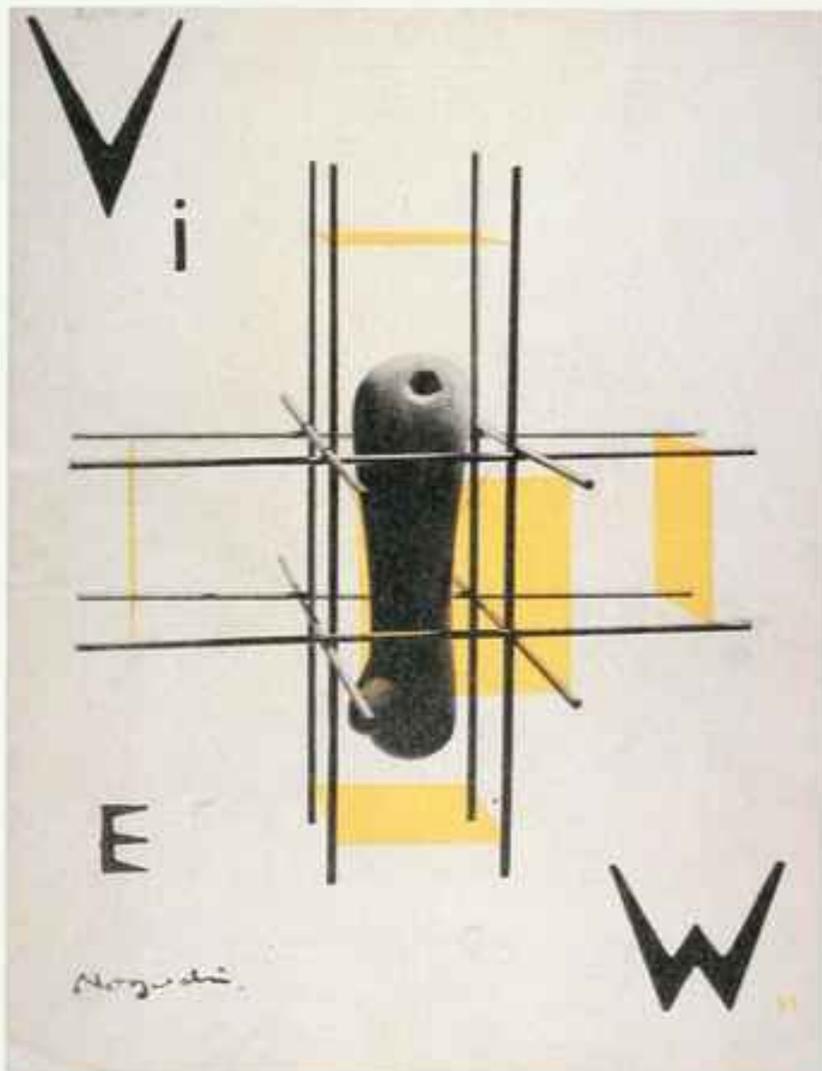


Wilfredo Lam, Tropical Americana issue, May 1945



André Masson, December 1945

Morris Hirshfield, American issue, October 1945



Isamu Noguchi, October 1946



Leon Kelly, November 1945

THE MODERN
MAGAZINE

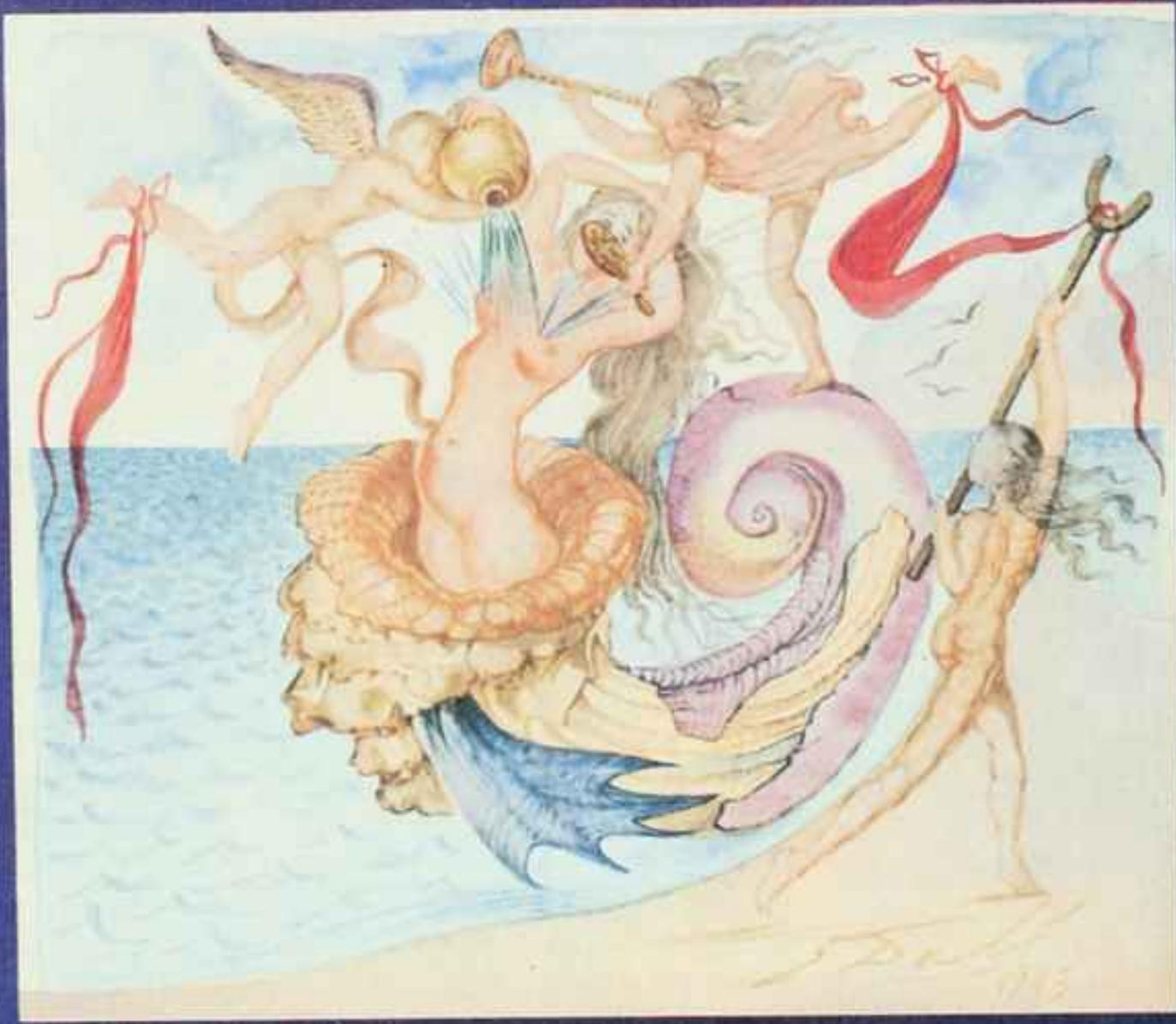
VIEW

50c



OCTOBER 1945

M. HIRSHFIELD 1945



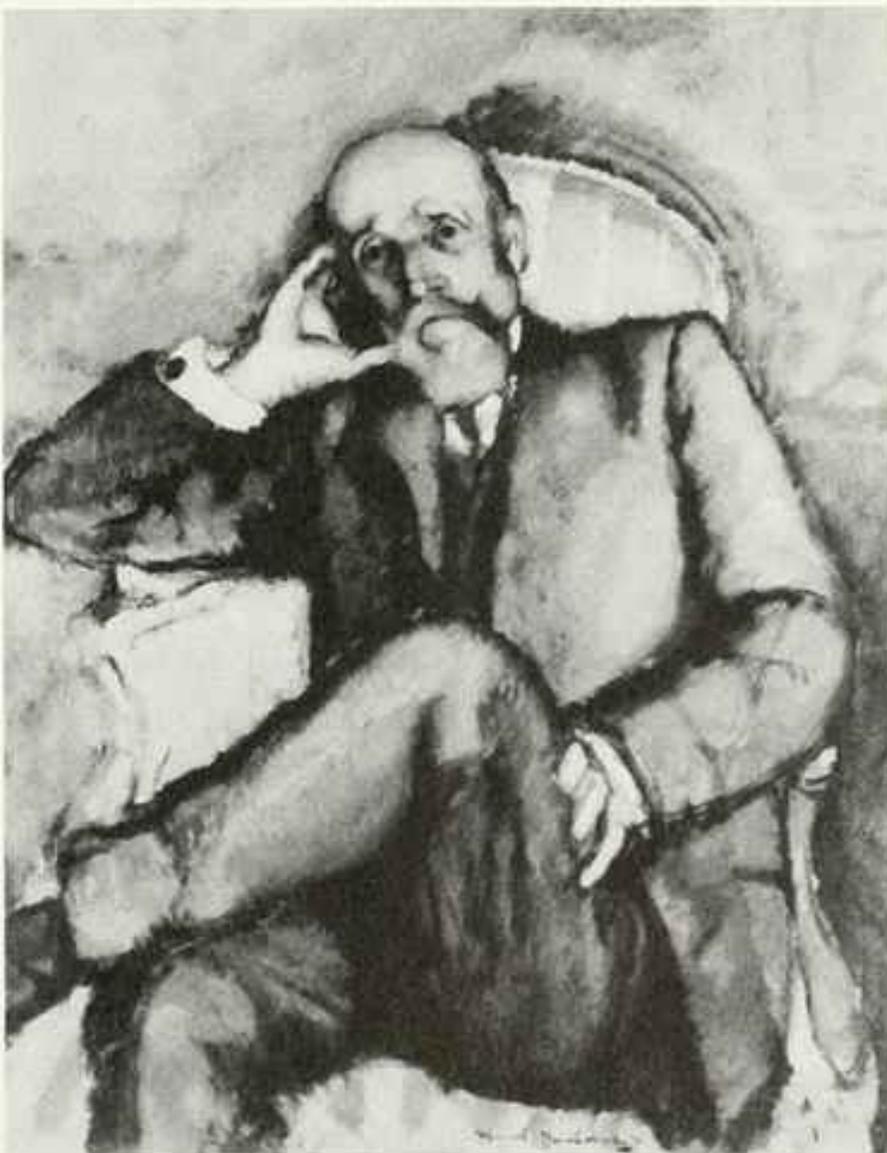
The 4 oils of Schiaparelli
"Shocking Radiance"
they cleanse - smooth - perfume!



Ad for Schiaparelli perfume, by Salvador Dalí. Dalí, probably the most widely known and outspoken of the European Surrealists, was not welcome at View (see Nicolas Calas, "Anti-Surrealist Dalí: I Say His Flies Are Ersatz," p. 15)—this ad was his only significant appearance in the magazine.



Marcel Duchamp
From the Arensberg
Collection,
Philadelphia Museum
of Art
The Chess Players
(top)
Portrait of His Father
(bottom left)
La sonate (bottom
right)





L.H.O.O.Q., *Duchamp*

MagiCircles

BY GABRIELLE BUFFET

Even to his best-informed friends, a work by Marcel Duchamp is always a source of surprise and reflection. I shall take his optical *RotoRelief* discs as a starting point to trace the thread of an evolution which has remained obscure to many of his contemporaries; they are, indeed, not immune from this peculiarity, and arise from a sort of wilful confusion of values and of the arbitrary limits, which, according to human concepts of order, separate concrete from absolute and Art from the Commonplace. These discs are ordinary phonograph records on which Duchamp has painted in color a number of plane geometrical shapes: spirals and circles. The optical illusion created by their rotation gives birth to unexpected objects which appear as though in relief: a boiled egg, an aquarium full of goldfish, a glass of champagne, etc., in fact as sort of visual rebus very closely related to the verbal rebus. They provoke the same kind of surprise and ambiguity and thereby come close to a kind of humor which is frequently met in Duchamp's works. But the most astonishing thing is certainly how, while seeking without further ambition a trick of illusion for the spirit, he stumbled upon a new form of illusion for the eye, a new process for suggesting plastic form or the third dimension: for the third dimension belongs to the realm of touch, not of sight, and the eye can register the suggestion only by a sequence of psychological phenomena in which memory intervenes as translating agent. This illusion of an illusion points therefore to a close collaboration between certain sensory and cerebral processes; and I admire the fact that, having always preferred to interpret esoteric

values whose applications are diversified, Duchamp should be fortunate enough to be successful in a so far unpublished optical experiment which falls within a mixed and complex scientific class at the borderline between psychology and physics.

These discs are, furthermore, of a much more complex origin than might be expected; they are born, not of scientific inquisitiveness, but rather of an inexplicable predilection which their author has for the circle. This need for a mysteriously parasitical form of the faculties of conception could lead us into such involved and distant discussion that we shall mention here only one characteristic manifestation, for there has never been a more consciously armed and tense will than that of Duchamp for resisting the hold of natural and composed appearances. The circle obsession is found in his very first works: in the gears of the coffee grinder (*Moulin à café*) which was destined to adorn the kitchen of his brother R. Duchamp-Villon, in the bicycle wheel, in the optical pictures on big glass sheets. His first movie, made in 1920 and one of the first movies called *abstract*, is made up entirely of circles and spirals; in 1920 also, Duchamp built a complicated mechanism of different-sized glass blades fixed to an axle driven by a motor, a truly infernal machine which nearly killed Man Ray when the motor was badly adjusted and the blades flew out. The rotational speed absorbed the appearance of the glass and there remained visible only a sort of blinking and shimmering circle formed by black lines inscribed on the tips of the blades. In 1925 he made with Man Ray and Marc Allégret another movie called *Anémic cinéma*, which was another variation in black and white on the circle and the spiral and in which he observed for the first time the plastic illusion more fully developed in his *Rotoreliefs*.

But this retrospective digression contains not only the note of biographical and entirely fortuitous scientific interest arising from his research; Duchamp's aim was primarily to modify all plastic matter, to reject once and for all from his working arsenal all the traditional tools and equipment (tubes of paint, canvas and brushes); to obtain the *effect* by mech-

anical means instead of through the expression of personal dynamism inherent in a particular individuality; to substitute technical value for expressive value (I note in passing that this conception can be compared to that of the wonderful cathedral craftsmen of the Middle Ages). It is by reason of his attitude as a volunteer technician that Marcel Duchamp exhibited at the annual inventors' fair, the Paris Concours Lépine, his *Rotorelief* which nevertheless could be assimilated to no object of current or commercial interest. Hence the impossibility, for seekers after aesthetic theses and immediate reasons, to classify his discovery; hence its lack of identification and the confusion mentioned above and on which I must insist, as I see therein not only the characteristics of an individual, but also a flagrant symptom of the present state of human thought which is too absorbed in details of general interest to devote a glance to the particular and to artifice. Of what value, in the face of problems which shake our very foundations, are the worries, emotions and egotism of the Romantics, or even the revolutions, recent indeed, of Impressionism, Cubism, or their successors?

Marcel Duchamp has resolutely relegated them to the category of ethnographical records.

It appears as though certain natures are gifted with antennae, thanks to which they detect and register, with the sensitivity of a seismograph, at their very inception, the first vibrations of human evolution. They participate in their gestation, without any possibility of our discovering how they are subjected to its movement, nor how they accelerate it, but their development creates between them and their generation a state of schism which is perhaps the key to the works of Duchamp. It could be said that, from his very first work, produced nearly thirty years ago, he has consistently gone out of his way to meet all those great currents of thought which have led to a general depreciation of all social and vital values. The subject matter of his work is made up of a conscious elimination of all that ritualistically constitutes and exalts the *raison d'être* of the Arts; of the sensitive ego, of the emotional ego, of the memory ego. A strict discipline was necessary for this self-control, this self-

prohibition. It was aimed not only against the customary processes of aesthetics, but also against all the admitted notions about daily life; and it could not but impose on him a singular and inexplicable attitude which resulted, in fact, from the commands of an imperious reasoning, from a logic forced and followed right to its very ultimate consequences, and which could, in its final horizons, have met at some point those of the most rigorous Mysticism. Each phase of composition corresponds to an arduous task of revision and rejection. Duchamp's dominating will to control each element of his work, to hunt down implacably everything that it might conceal of tradition, explains why his works are so rare and produced at such long intervals. He turns from them or signs them only when he has completely freed them of every reflex expression.

Pushed to the extreme, this rejecting leads to the very negation of achievement. It is useless to beget the work in any special material, to give it any finite form, and trademark, to recreate for the senses the subject conceived in the spirit. The visual world becomes a dictionary of subjects which he isolates and qualifies according to his choice; representation and interpretation are now only useless and old-fashioned finery; the privilege he confers by this differentiation is sufficient, and this is the principle of the ready-made.

This is also the period when Duchamp lives in a sort of junkpile, surrounded by chosen objects, dusts which he photographs, weathercocks, bicycle wheels, snow shovels and other heterogeneous articles, for his choice also proceeds by strict elimination. There are very complex reasons for this extreme theory which exalts transcendent personality and denies it all illusory materialization. There is, in particular, a certain irony aimed at *Art as a trance and mystery*, at the masterpiece born of inspiration and divination.

The most reliable sources that can enlighten us on this decisive period of Duchamp's life, which can be placed at the time of his stay in the United States, are to be found in the notes from which he prepared his most important and also his last work: *La Mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même*, as he has since

refused to do anything of a purely *ritual* nature. This work is not known in Europe. He worked on it in New York from 1915 to 1923, but it was spiritually fully conceived and partially carried out in Paris as early as 1913, as is shown by the documents written at that time and which he decided to publish twenty-two years later.

Put into words and recorded step by step as they were conceived, these notes were written on chance scraps of paper, in cafés, out on walks. They are reproduced in their original condition by a photoprinting process which gives a most convincing illusion of ink and pencil.

Duchamp added to his notes a few reproductions of the various stages of his work and several sketches which were first done in paint on canvas, then on glass (the design being figured in lead wire stuck on the glass) before being finally *copied* on a glass sheet over 9 feet tall at which he worked daily for ten years as though fulfilling a vow.

This picture on glass, which he calls *Retard en verre* or "glass delay" in the same way as one says "prose poem" or "silver cuspidor," became the property of Walter C. Arensberg long before it was completed, then passed into the hands of Katherine Dreier, was then exhibited at the Brooklyn Museum in 1926, then . . . broken. (And that freed Duchamp once and for all of the onus of ever completing it).

All the preliminary glasses suffered the same fate: but although they could be repaired and came out of it without too much damage, their fragility destined them to a rapid destruction which is part of the *system* from which are excluded all values of duration and posterity. (The *Glissière* on glass is in Hollywood in the Arensberg Collection, the *Célibataires* on glass is in the H.P. Roché Collection in Paris).

These various documents, about a hundred in all, assembled in a box which Duchamp designed and made himself with the meticulous patience which he brings to all the work he undertakes, are still at the present time of immediate interest and constitute the best means of investigation for a study of that evolution which, branching off at first only from the plastic arts, went later beyond the limits of purely aesthetic

research and developed finally into Dada and surrealism. When he was still very young, through the environment of his brothers Duchamp-Villon the sculptor and Villon the painter, Marcel Duchamp had been introduced into Cubist circles where the new theories of abstract painting were hotly discussed; passionately interested in dialectics and controversy, he was impregnated with Cubism and Futurism, but without leaving there anything of his own personality, as is shown by *le Roi et la Reine traversés par de Nus vites*, and the *Nu descendant un escalier*.

This last picture, which no group would admit to its ranks at the Indépendants of 1912 (shown the same year at the Section d'Or), was sent to the United States in 1913 to the first Exhibition of Modern Art and earned for its author extraordinary reputation and honor. But accustomed to a need of absolute logic and forever striving after a perfection of which he is the sole center and the only judge, Duchamp's exacting spirit could halt only at the extreme limit of his deductions and arguments. For him there is no longer any question of dissecting in more or less

logical manner the objective forms, of mixing the representative and dynamic elements of the subjects, but rather of creating from the base to the summit another code of the representative values, a new signification of forms. He began then to elaborate that huge work: *La Mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même*, which achieves that re-creation of a visible and totally new world where mechanical organisms experience nevertheless very human adventures (as shown by the title) with the logic of a driving belt.

Not a single line has been left to chance. Duchamp seeks out and tracks down and ruthlessly excludes anything which appears to be a vestige of effect, emotion, sensation, personal sensitivity (I think of Cézanne, who painted not apples but sensations). And if chance intervenes it is only because it has been authorized, or rather commanded, to act in the role and place of personal choice and taste. Thus, to compose the primordial essential signs of this code, signs which Duchamp calls *stoppage-étalon* (standard stoppage) he drops at random from a height of one meter a horizontal thread one meter



The King and Queen
Surrounded by Swift Nudes,
Duchamp
(Philadelphia Museum of Art)

long. One of his notes tells us that this *stoppage-étalon* is also 'canned chance.' Or else Duchamp indicates that to increase his repertory of forms he "must take a Larousse encyclopaedia and copy out all the abstract words, those which have no concrete reference, and compose a schematic sign which will designate each of these words . . . make use of colors to differentiate what corresponds in literature to substantive, verb, declension, conjugation"; and a while later he notes: *This writing is suitable only for this picture probably.*

Thus, after long years of preparatory notes and trials, there appear grouped together on the huge sheet of glass, drawn in lead wire stuck on with varnish with a watchmaker's precision, the outline of this ideal machine which answers a fictitious utilitarianism, gratuitous and entirely invented, and into which there enters no consideration whatsoever of aesthetical or emotional order.

We see, for example, a waterfall driving forward the *Glissière* which in its turn lends motion to a pair of giant scissors, the water channels shaped like toboggan runs, the air-draught pistons . . . these act as a semaphore for the Bride, etc. But the mechanical specification constitutes only the graphical part of the work. Each wheel, each moving part corresponds to a psychological and physiological structure of the characters involved. The *Bride* is a complex motor running on love gas: "generally speaking, the *Bride motor* must appear as the apotheosis of virginity . . . a metal stanchion can simulate the bonds between the virgin and her girlfriends and parents, and these correspond graphically to a solid base of masonry on terra firma like the *Bachelor machine*," etc. There follows a long list of details on the psychology of the *Bride motor*.

Note again the lubricity of the red-lead color used for the *Moules malics* representing the Bachelors which are reproduced in color at the bottom of the box.

This tyrannical work, whose effort of disincarnation and rationalization is manifested in every detail, is nonetheless stamped with the seal of an unconquerable personality which imposes itself with no other explanation. In spite of its evident obscurity

and of the need for arduous preparatory work for reading it, this work in no way diminishes the popularity of its author today, which explains no doubt why his activity manifests itself more and more rarely and in most unexpected forms, wilfully scandalous, deceiving, cruel even, which can be qualified as the search for the *Antimasterpiece*. Duchamp exhibited a public latrine at the New York Independents in 1917 (which cost him quite some unpleasantness); he signed a photograph of the Mona Lisa after surcharging it with a moustache, an imperial and the double-meaning block capitals: L.H.O.O.Q. (*elle a chaud au cul!*); he cultivated hoaxes, gags and humorous puns as ornaments for objects; the *Anémic cinéma* is thus a sequence of variations on geometrical shapes interspersed with captions made up of word plays. But make no mistake, these are no innocent games, the humor of Duchamp is gay blasphemy; this usurping of the masterpiece's privileges by the pun is aimed at destroying its prestige more effectively than any thesis could do.

It would be wrong if this decision *to do no more work* were accepted as a sort of abdication: a decision arising from Duchamp's alienation from all normal activity and particularly from the world of the arts and of his ambitions. Forced however to burn with that extraordinary need for controversy and intrigue, he suddenly changes his whole constitution and dismays all his friends by becoming a passionate chess player.

I add that the escape of Marcel Duchamp into the fictitious world of chess did not seem to him sufficiently irreparable and he therefore created for all esoteric manifestations a second personality, fixing his choice for this reincarnation on a feminine figure. Thus was born Rose Sélavy (New York 1920) about whom for want of space we cannot write at length. We can say, however, that this enigmatic person lived in a bank, that she publishes books, signs readymades, and sometimes haunts the spirit of her contemporaries and even inspires them with weird dreams.

[translated by Edouard Roditi]

MAR. 1945



Fountain by R. Mutt (*pseud. of Duchamp*)
Photo by Alfred Stieglitz

Duchampiana

BY JULIEN LEVY

He is known as “that painter who refuses to paint,” and a thoughtless person would conclude that Duchamp’s fame derives from what he *has not* said and what he *does not* do. He usually wears a suit of a darker tan than his face and freckles and sandy hair, and when he smiles his teeth show slightly yellowed. He is quite invisible! And certainly he is silent, his only gestures being ambiguously negative. I once invited him for cocktails in Paris. He rang my doorbell at 9 rue St. Romain, to say that “he had come to say that he could not come,” and then he left. But a new idea will appear in the painting world, and someone will always say, “Duchamp first suggested that,” although where or when they will not remember.

The *secret* he never explains. He smiles, and you may take his smile as mysterious or as merely vacant. If he will not explain, then books and articles are written by others to describe what may never have been there. He is a High Priest and his words are puns:

“My niece is cold because my knees are cold.”

“Daily lady *cherch demêlés* avec Daily Mail.”

“Paroi parée de parèsse de paroisse.”

“Lits et ratures!”

When he abandoned painting in 1923 Duchamp was immersed in the study of numbers. He became a chess master and theorist, writing a book, *Le Jeu de la Reine*, which only a few experts can understand. He organized too an investment trust to play Roulette at Monte Carlo by a system of his own. This venture neither won nor lost for the stockholders. It paid Duchamp's expenses in Monte Carlo. He was beginning to arrive at his system of dynamic equilibrium, by which proudly he made neither profit nor loss. All his subsequent activities were on this basis. The books he published of great quality and workmanship he sold for a very low price. "When I sell the entire edition," he would say, "I will break even."

In 1920 he had adopted a second name, *Rose Sélavy*. Francis Picabia was decorating a new night club, "Le Boeuf sur le Toit," and asked his friends all to autograph a panel. Duchamp signed "à Francis Pi qu'habilla Rose Sélavy." [arroser c'est la vie, etc.]

At this time he had two addresses in Paris. He lived in an attic studio, seven flights up without an elevator on the rue Larrey, and also with a very likeable American girl, Mary R., on the rue Halle, far off past the Lion de Belfort. I could always find him at either place, as if he were in both at once. If I did not wish to climb to his rue Larrey studio, I would shout up, and he would meet me at the restaurant of the nearby Turkish mosque for coffee. Or I would visit Mary, and Duchamp would also be there!

It is such apparent juggling with time and space that adds significance even to Duchamp's slighter gestures. I had hung on my wall, at one time, the "Réseaux des Stoppages," a large canvas and yet at first glance a most unprepossessing affair. I could not easily call it a painting, although signed, three times signed in fact. If it had been on a small piece of paper, I would have said that it was some accidental scrap, a rumpled sketch used once to clean the palette. But the large area of cracked monotonous canvas became familiar, and as it became familiar it became preposterously congenial. It had an unobtrusive but insistent personality,

and I decided to analyze, if I could, this quality, as I knew that Duchamp himself would not answer questions.

The body of the canvas is primed with greens and ochre. The colors of the famous *Nude Descending the Staircase*. This part of the painting is half-erased, but one can distinguish what seems to be multiple female figures grouped like the composition of Cézanne's "Les Beigneuses." If these are what they seem, then the picture should be hung vertically with the supposed nudes upright. It had been impossible to decide the top and bottom of the picture. Now hung vertically, I find Duchamp's signature in the lower right-hand corner, with the date 1911. But there is another signature in pencil (1913), when the picture is hung lengthwise. Should not this signature apply to the design drawn over the whole canvas, and drawn in pencil, which can be recognized as a rough sketch for the composition of *La Mariée mise à nu*, executed in glass (1915-1923), Duchamp's major work? Then the third signature, the canvas hanging with the first signature upside down, would apply to the strange series of lines, circles and numbers, the lines all traveling toward a large bull's eye of circles which would be the "réseaux des stoppages." This portion is of a later date; would it be the year Marcel Duchamp ceased painting? I argue that the canvas was made up of the souvenirs of probably the first painting Duchamp ever attempted, of the project for his culminant work, and the postscript when he should last have set brush to canvas. The whole had been launched upon the public without explanation, to make what effect it could by its own mysterious worth, wound up to run by its own inner springs for as far as it might carry. Such a gesture would not be foreign to Duchamp. His great painting on glass which he calls a "glissière en verre," was obviously an experiment in the dynamics of space. The composition was devised so that it might retain a constructive relation with whatever heterogeneous objects passed in back of the transparency. When I first saw the *Large Glass* at the Brooklyn Museum I was fascinated, not merely by the work itself, but by the numerous transformations which were lent the com-

position by its accidental background, by the spectators who passed through the museum behind the glass I was regarding. The *Mariée mise à nu* seemed to absorb them all partially into her own cosmogony, while at the same time she lent some of her own form indefatigably to them. There can be no doubt that this big toy was a sincere experiment with space and a successful one. It projected too, slightly into time; for the glass broke one day. Duchamp was called to America to reconstruct it. To everyone's surprise Duchamp was gleeful. "Do you think I should have made it on glass," he said, "if I had not expected it to break?" And he showed a sketch he had drawn, prophesying the shape of the fragments, so that the reconstructed glass could truly be said to have im-

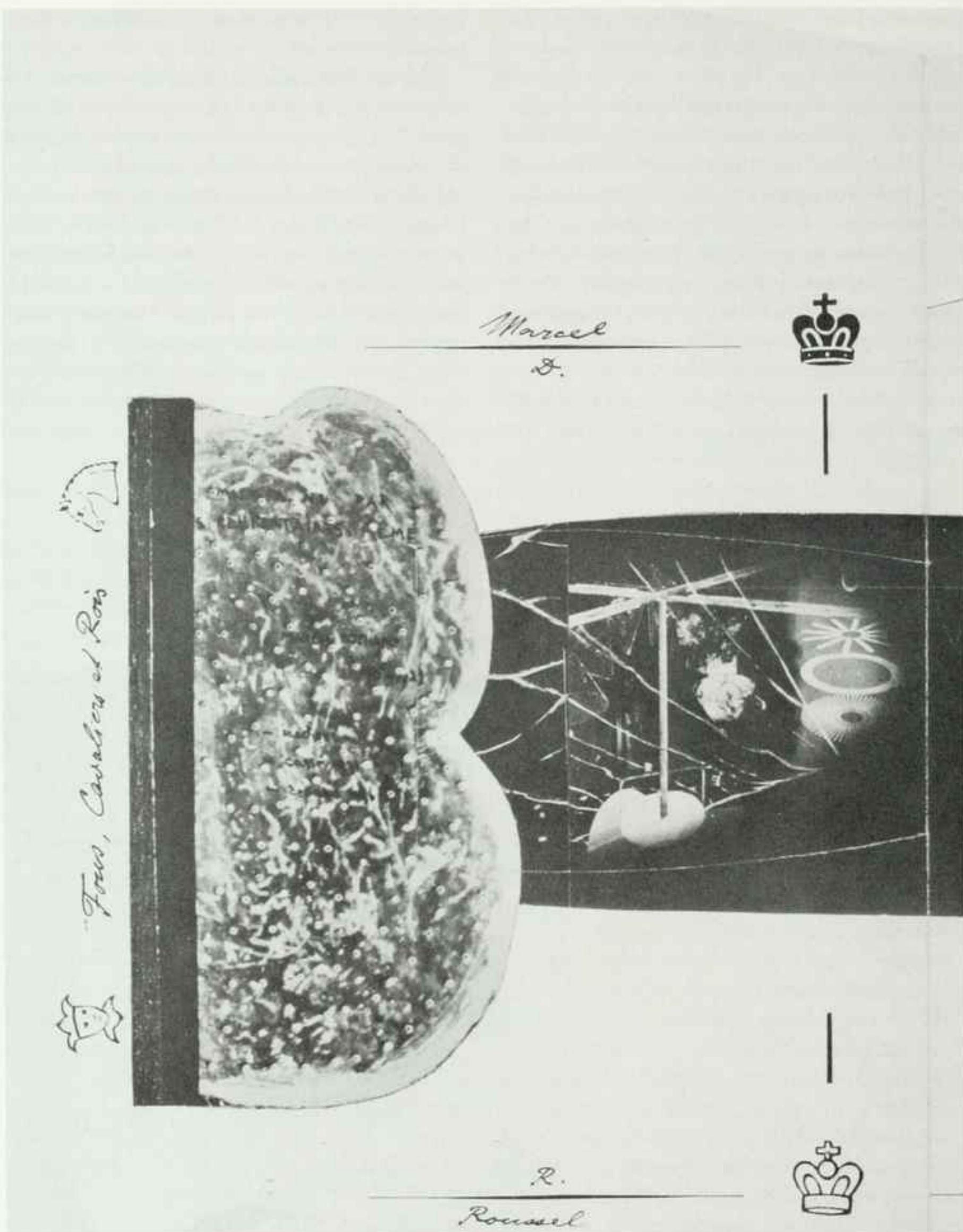
proved in composition with the addition of these ineradicable cracks.

The railroad-track marks of the "réseaux des stoppages" are the form of those cracks of the big glass. This picture is Duchamp's experiment with time, *Glissière en temps*. On the rejected underpainting of the first ambitious picture he had ever attempted there is also the sketch for his one most important work, that one toward which the others had been directed and upon these two is imposed a hasty farewell note in the form of a prophecy, bearing the title "Réseaux des Stoppages," for the day when he ceased painting. The problem is really not what such a painting means, but WHAT IT MAY COME TO MEAN!

MAR., 1945



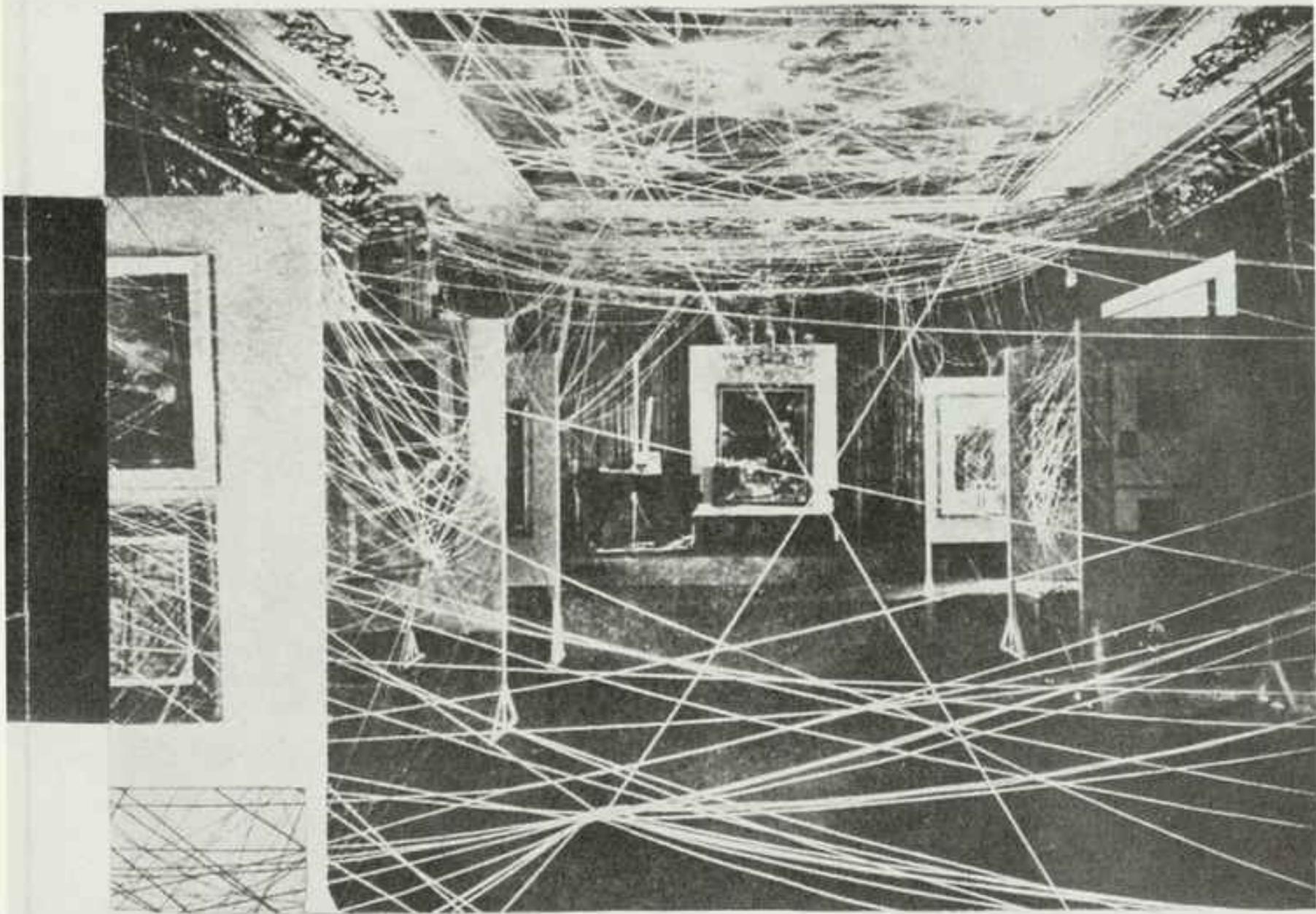
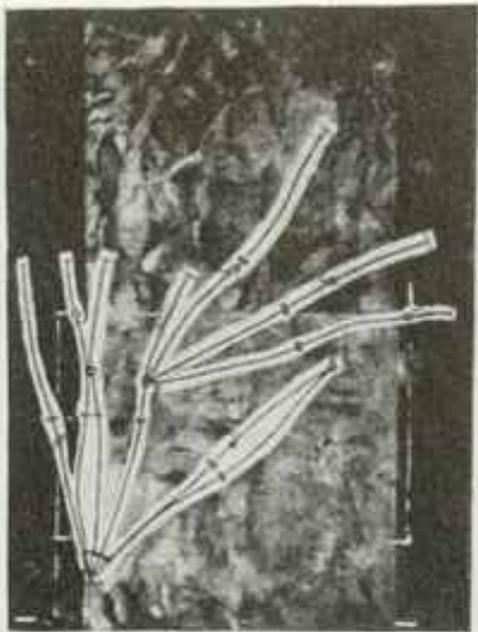
Portrait of Marcel Duchamp
Florine Stettheimer



Duchamp Triptych: The original contained cut-out flaps that, when bent toward the center, transformed the interior wall into a vision of *La Mariée mis à nu* . . .

né
1887

artiste - inventeur



né
1877

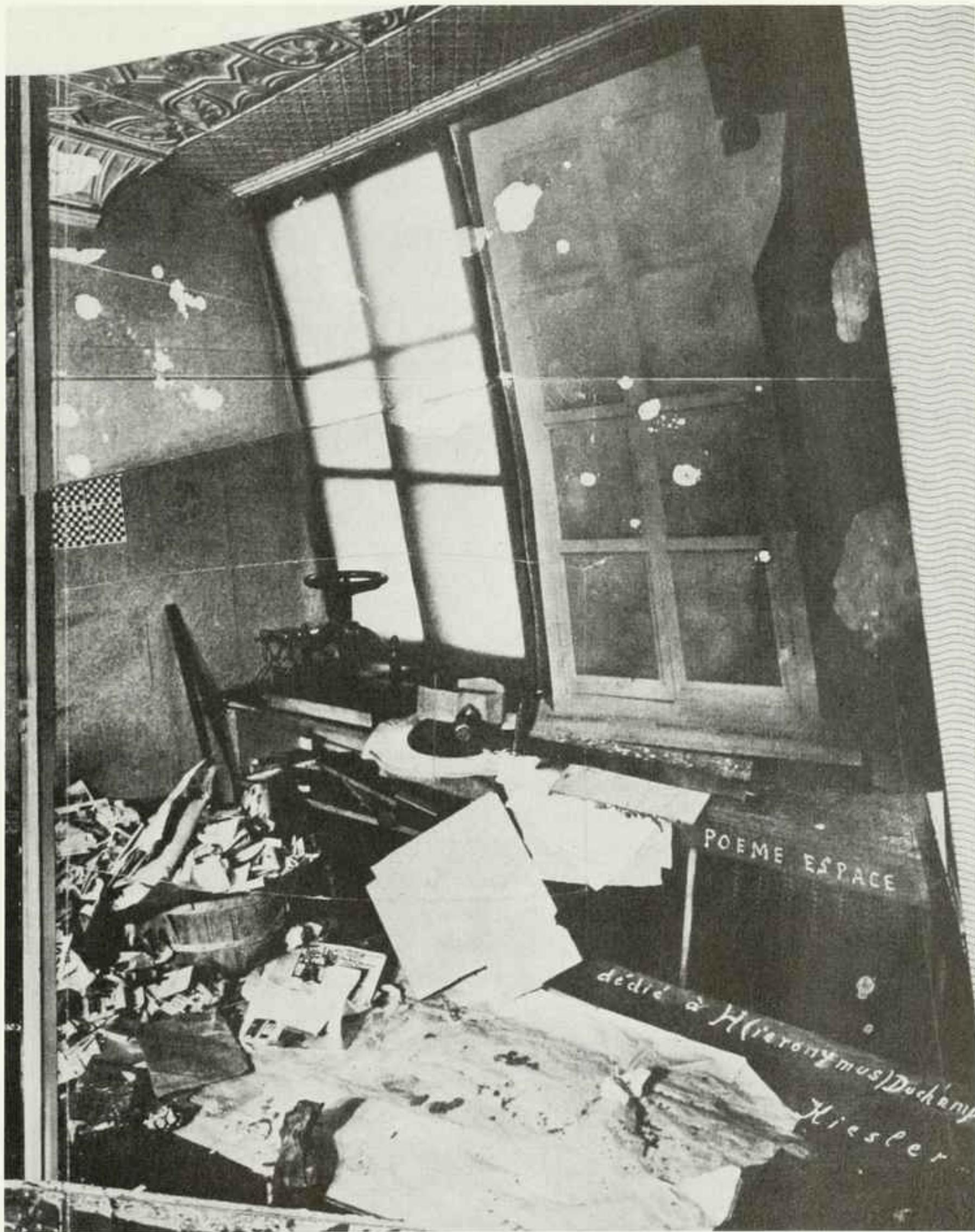
artiste - inventeur



DUCHAMP | Triptych



Interior of Duchamp Triptych: two walls from Duchamp's studio on 14th Street in New York City



DUCHAMP | Triptych

1922

MARCEL DUCHAMP AT
THE AGE OF 35

1972

MARCEL DUCHAMP AT
THE AGE OF 65

O Marcel: or I Too Have Been to Louise's*

BY MINA LOY

I don't like a lady in evening dress, salting. . . .

From here she has black eyes, no mouth, some. . . . Will you bring perfection, well bring a bottle. . . . Two perfections WELL I want to SEE it. . . . he will know it afterwards. . . . will you bring the bottle. Really, have I? . . . Which way? Oh did I? WHEN? Too much? You are abusing myself. No, you would not. . . . Did you ask Demuth about it? Anything you like, would I? Ough Naow? of course not? Yes I do. I used to kill myself with the syphon. . . . You don't remember that ball. Well don't do that because I am perfectly sober now. . . . that's the kid he looks like. . . . It will probably cost me very much I have not got money. Did I say I wanted the bottle all right—SEE it! Excuse me, explain it. You don't need any.

I will give you some paper Mina and keep silent to give you a rest. Oh! I will give you some paper all the same. . . .

*Reprinted from *The Blind Man* (1917)

THIS was written at the Ball where I saved Marcel. With his robe afloat, the symmetry of his bronze hair rising from his beautiful profile, wavering as a flame, he was—actually—climbing a paper festoon hung from the top of the dome to the musicians' gallery.

To clarify his "subconscious" *In Memoriam* of that era—when my notes in "The Blind Boy" caused, in New York, a bewildering uproar as to the base immorality of the modernists—I mention: Marcel let fall his "favor"—a miniature American flag—into his champagne.

Very much. He said to me, we will toss whether you resign or I resign . . . a very old French story about "the English man must shoot first." She has a pencil in her hair—very impressionistic. You know you should have some salt on your hair it's so nice—because? Nothing—its music. Ah this is, this is, this is, is IT.

Do not worry about such things as lighting a match. I give you my key Clara—HEY—have some yellow paper. If carried away If Clara ever returns it. Well, you did about a week, after. Here's the salting lady—I will show her to you—salting lady. She passed. Do not speak any more . . . you have to squeeze it, maid of the . . . I used to go every day . . . waitress. I felt ashamed in front of this girl—she looks at me from far its wonderful—its wo-nderFUL!

Yes, have a drink lady, teaspoon by teaspoon. No please take this—Do I eat? You know why I have one—I do—I do have it—I want some tongue I will give you some—but don't do too much what? Suck it. Well I don't know how I will get up early tomorrow I have a lesson at two—no not with the "bell-emere" You don't know what a wonderful sensation it is. . . . I have some preference for some company where is our waiter—where is he it sounds it doesn't he?

Mina are you short-hand?, I never knew it. I want tongue sandwich, anyway it keeps me awake. You know, she comes riding school fifty sixth street you

know she comes. Lunch 12 o'clock. Well you know it was. How do you light a cigarette—how do you light a match. Did you, well it is not dangerous at all—Did you got it?

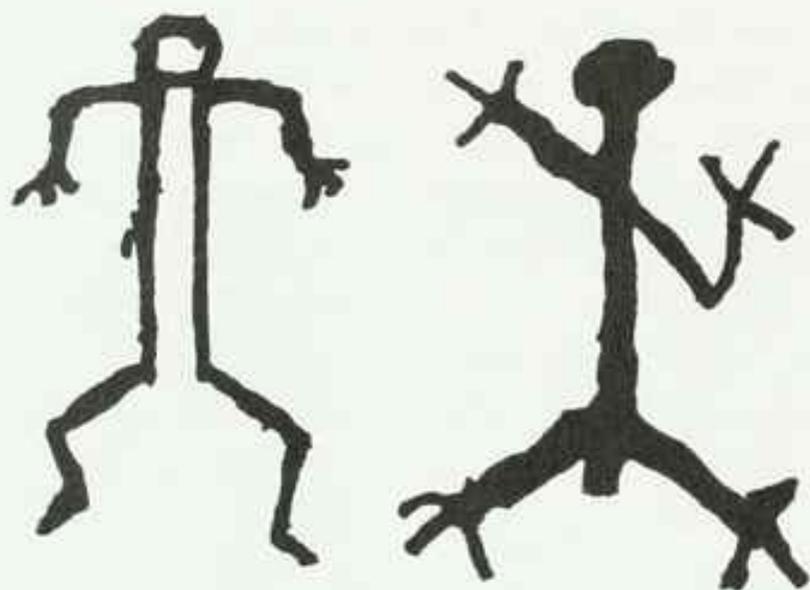
Are you an American representative—I am sorry. You are Pennsylvania I am Boston. Do you want some cigarettes. . . . Did you put the pronunciation.

Waiter! tongue sandwiches. Do you want hot milk. Two perfections she doesn't want anything—you got it? She can't write it down anyway—through the flag oh some cigarettes—waiter I want some cigarettes for Mina—this is a wonderful tune Hi li li laera Mina I give you two dollars, it means to me two dollars—Ti li li laera . . . it is twice I need to shave now.

Demuth you must be careful of your key she keeps it about a week every key she gets she keeps. You speak like Carlo, well when he wants to imitate—well have a drink! You know those two girls are crazy about that man, they mustn't, you must get him out. I will have a tongue sandwich—you must suck it. . . . Censorship Don't let your flag get wet . . . is that Billy Sunday—There's always a sky in heaven! . . . that is too low. My ancestor is tall people. Don't write, he is going to leave you for a minute.

Sandwiches—Oh I forgot to telephone—what shall I say. Ti li li laere—she said—all right!

MAR. 1945



The Point of View

BY PAUL BOWLES

In collecting the material presented in this issue of *View*, the editor has not borne in mind anything like journalistic responsibility, nor tried to be what is sometimes, perhaps dishonestly, referred to as scrupulously objective, or even "just" to all the elements involved. Above all, he does not assume any political responsibility toward affairs today in the Western hemisphere. The final aim of this issue of *View* is to present a poetically apt version of life as it is lived by the peoples of tropical America.

That basic difficulties exist in the relations between social groups there is accorded amusing and pertinent evidence by *Time* magazine of January 29, 1945. However the unyielding viewpoint of the Chavantes be judged, the reader is likely to feel a quick sympathy start in him for their resistance toward Brazilian aggression, since it emphasizes so pointedly the rights of small nations and all minorities in the democratic framework which, in theory, dominates this hemisphere:

One of the difficult problems that has long faced the Brazilian Government is how to deal justly with hostile Indians. Much of the richest land in the great interior State of Matto Grosso is inhabited by aboriginal isolationists. The Government wants the land settled; the aborigines do not. The Brazilian Army could easily wipe them out, but the Government's policy of race equality precludes violent methods.

The Indians themselves feel no such inhibitions. Most ferocious are the Chavantes, a tribe of husky, dark men who hold a fertile area directly in the path of projected settlement. They are marvelous shots

with arrows, but—for reasons believed to be connected with their religion—they prefer to mash the heads of palefaces with heavy, triangular clubs. Airplanes apparently have no religious significance. When an airplane recently flew over a Chavante village, the Indians neatly riddled it with arrows.

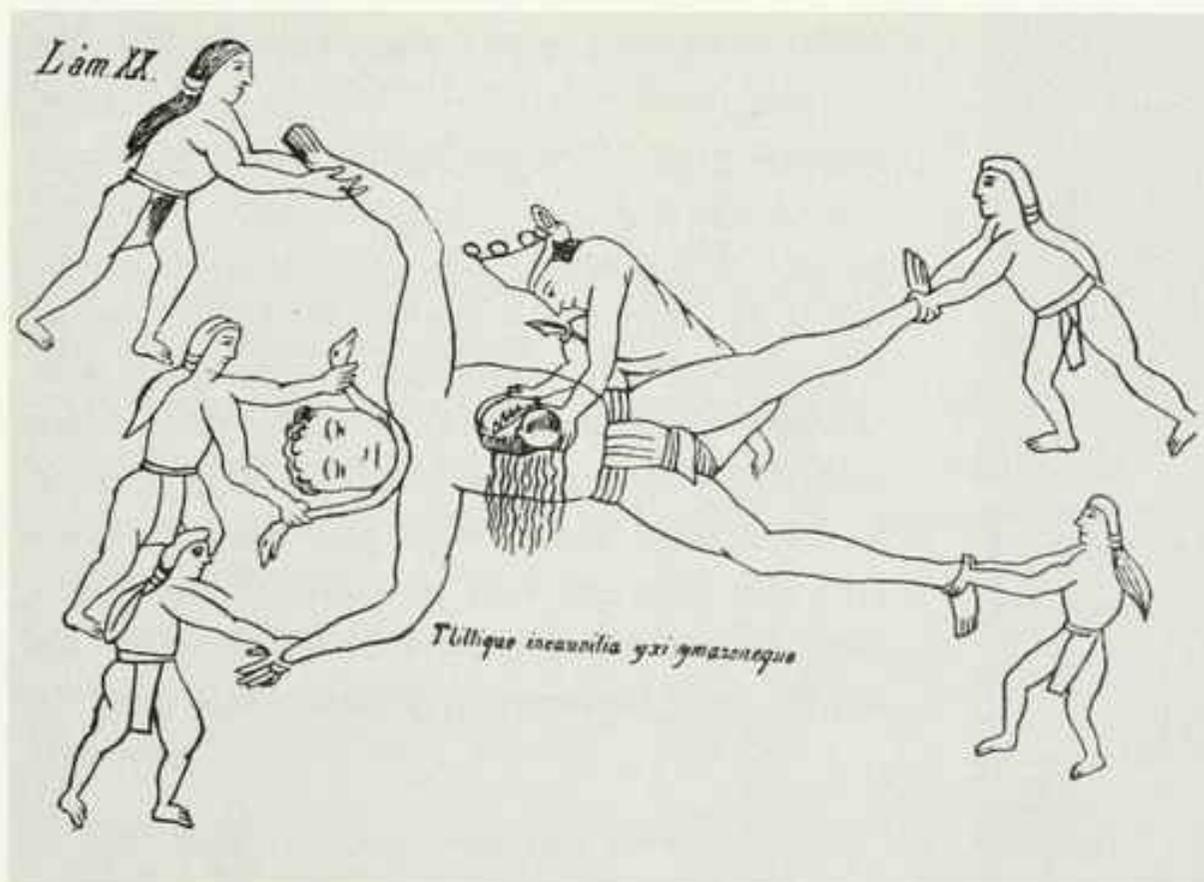
They did not frighten off the Brazilian Government, which last week was still trying, by dropping manufactured goods from airplanes, to rouse in the Chavantes a yearning for civilization.

The Chavantes seem to have fathomed the plan. The first presents were bundles of bandana handkerchiefs dropped on one of their thatched villages. The Chavantes built large fires and ostentatiously burned the bandanas.

Indeed, this is what tropical America is all about. It offers the tragic, ludicrous, violent, touching spectacle of a whole vast region still alive and kicking, as here it welcomes, there it resists, the spread of so-called civilization. The avant-garde is not alone in its incomplete war against many features of modern civilization; with it are the ponderous apathy and the potential antipathy of the vestigial primitive consciousness.

The existence, alongside the church, of a widespread system of practical magic, is an important phenomenon; it keeps the minds of its participants in a healthy state of personalized anarchy, and individual practitioners, rather than an international religious syndicate, gain the monetary reward. Doubtless one of the chief difficulties to be encountered by the Falange in its attempt to obtain this part of the world will be the extirpation of this basic religious tradition and the recanalizing of its profits for mass-scale organization.

In tropical America there are not even the remains of barbarism, because man will not arrive at any "classical" barbarism there. Passing over that phase in the development of the species, he is now going straight into our sort of civilization. But fortunately, he is not entirely there. Along the disproportionately publicized boulevards of transplanted palms, Cadillac, and glass facades, together with those people who, by virtue of hoping, will soon be like us, a few human beings still stroll. They wear clothes somewhat different from ours, but we must not be fooled. They have retained all the human qualities.



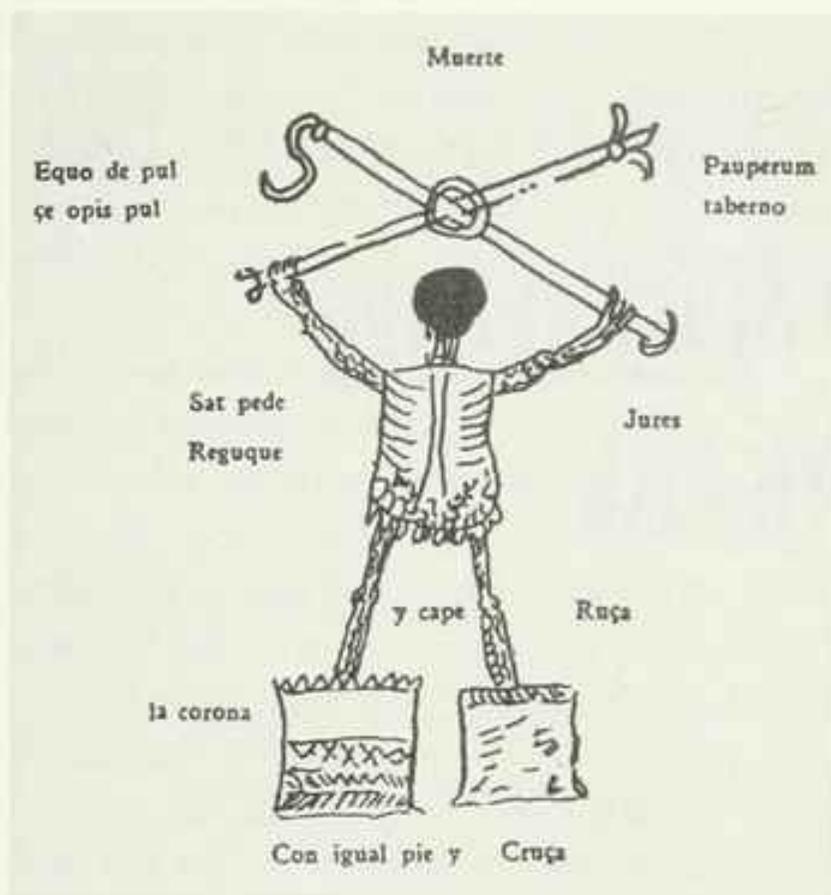
John Very Bad: A Story*



John very bad was when then little was hit others boys no obeyed his father one day killed one goat which no he his was his father angry scolded then ran away the town bad did that he went around governor angry governor looked he but he always escaped one night met near house where went steal one bull they caught carried prison inside prison he sick he was went doctor get well doctor said that he will die would go that the soul was going pay back hell when then John died doctor said go quiet do not come back for that no bad those remaining that given food passed one year we will make you owl's dance little time later one wolf ate one lamb other time other day took away many animals they could not kill this wolf because now John his soul was.

MAY 1945

*"A word-for-word translation from the Tarahumara," as found in a monograph. See Index for May 1945.—C. N.



The Thirteenth Ahau Katun

BY CHILAM BALAM, PROPHET

Lo, the face of the *Katún*, the face of the *Katún*, of the *Thirteenth Ahau*: The face of the Sun will be shattered. It shall fall, smashing itself upon the gods of today. The Sun shall be bitten and remain seen during five days. This is the representation of the *Thirteenth Ahau*.

God gives the signal that the King of this land is to die.

Also, that the old kings will return to fight, when the Christians come to this land. Thus, God Our Lord will give the signal that they are to come, because there is no concord, because much misery has been transmitted to the sons of sons.

We were made Christians, but they make us go from one to another like animals. And God is offended by the *ones who suck* (*los chupadores*).

One thousand five hundred and thirty-nine years

Thus 1539 years

To the East is the door of the house of Don Juan Montejo, the one who introduced Christianity into this land of Yucalpetén, Yucatán.

[translated by Ramon Sartoris]

MAY 1945

The Story of Sage Earth-Fish

Here follows the story of Sage Earth-Fish, first son of Principal Macaw. "I, the maker of mountains," he used to say. So it was that Sage Earth-Fish was bathing at the edge of the water when he spied four hundred youths going by, dragging a tree trunk to their house. Four hundred youths went by on foot, after having cut down a great tree to use as the master beam of their house. Then Sage Earth-Fish walked over to them.

"What are you doing, young men?"

"We would like to lift this tree and carry it on our shoulders."

"I can carry it on my shoulder. Where do you want it taken? What do you intend to do with it?"

"It is the pillar of our house."

"I see," he said; then he lifted the tree, placed it over his shoulder and carried it to the entrance of their house.

"Good! Stop with us a while. Have you a father or mother?"

"No," he replied.

"Tomorrow we will show you another tree we want brought to our house."

"All right," he said.

Then the four hundred youths called a meeting. "Here is this youth. How can we kill him? Because it is not a good thing that he should have been able to lift that tree all by himself. Let us dig a deep pit,

and then we can get him to go down into it. 'Go and make it deeper; carry the dirt out of the hole,' we will tell him. And when he has gone down inside and is bent over digging, we can throw a big tree in on top of him. That will finish him off."

Then they dug a great hole deep in the earth, after which they called Sage Earth-Fish. "We have great respect for you. So go down and dig out some more in this hole; we have done all we can down there."

"Good," he replied. And he went down into the pit. While he was digging they called out: "Have you gone all the way down?"

"Yes," he answered, but he was busy fashioning a cave at the side of the bottom of the pit, to hide in. He knew they wanted to kill him, and so he was making a second hole to save himself.

"Is it good and deep?" called the four hundred youths from above.

"I am still very busy. As soon as I have finished I shall call out," said Sage Earth-Fish from down in the hole. But he was not hollowing out the floor of his own grave, as they thought. Soon he called out, being safe in his cave. "Come and carry away the dirt I have dug out. I am deep down in. Can you hear me? I can hear your voices ringing back and forth down here with one, two echoes."

So the young men dragged a big tree to the edge of the pit. "No one must speak. Wait until you hear him screaming. Wait for his death rattle," they said to each other in whispers, and they looked at each other. Then with great force they threw the tree over the edge into the pit. Sage Earth-Fish called out as if he were dying, but only once, just as the tree fell.

"We have carried it off right! He is dead! It would have been bad for us if he had gone on living. He

would have ended up by giving orders to all four hundred of us," they said, rejoicing. "Now we should brew our fermented drink for three days, and pass another three drinking it in celebration of the opening of our new house. Tomorrow we shall see, and the day after, too, if the ants do not appear from down below, carrying away the remains. And then our heart will be at rest while we take our drink."

Down there in the hole, Sage Earth-Fish heard what the adolescents were saying. Later, on the second day, the ants suddenly appeared, coming and going in great numbers beneath the tree. From all sides they crawled, carrying the hair and nails of Sage Earth-Fish. Upon seeing this the youths said to each other: "So he is finished off, that wretch? Look! The ants have arrived in armies; they are all carrying his hair and nails. It is done."

But Sage Earth-Fish was very much alive; he had cut the hair from his head and pared his nails with his teeth, to give to the ants.

On the third day the four hundred youths began to drink their fermented liquor, and soon they were all drunk. And being intoxicated, they no longer had power. Their house was then pulled down upon their heads by Sage Earth-Fish, and they all finished by being destroyed. No couple, nor even one, of the four hundred young men was saved; they were killed by Sage Earth-Fish, son of the Principal Macaw. Thus the four hundred youths perished. It is also said that they entered into the constellation called on their account *The Market*,* but this statement may be only a fable.

MAY 1945

*Pleiades.

Feminine Ecstatic*

BY EDOUARD RODITI

Stripped of the antiquarian charm of its English of A.D. 1436, this “modern version of the earliest Autobiography in English” loses much of its more immediate documentary interest. Margery Kempe was, by nature, a mystic, ecstatic at that, and, unfortunately, most mystics are frightful bores, self-centered and self-important, who see tremendous significance in everything they experience, not so much because it exists at all, which is miraculous enough, but because it happens to them, which is merely accidental. Blind to the miraculous in the lives of all others, the Margery Kempes of this world thus tend to attribute their own most petty whims, chances and misadventures to very tremendous and respected causes. Everywhere they see proof of God’s direct interest in their daily doings; and the church, quite rightly, has generally been suspicious of all but the very greatest mystics, those who at the same time either were or might have been great thinkers, whose intellects were as remarkable as their emotions.

But Margery Kempe was no such exception. Living in England in the first half of the fifteenth century, in a world where religion was still the greatest source of prestige and where the career woman would strive to become a saint rather than a movie star, Margery thought and behaved in a late gothic manner, much as the heroine of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* did in her later gin-age manner. An incurable

**The Book of Margery Kempe* edited by W. Butler-Bowden. The Devin-Adair Company.

and surely unbearable go-getter, Margery declared, when she no longer wished to sleep with her husband, that God in person had ordered her to remain chaste; and many among her contemporaries believed her, though many others were as hostile to her declarations and as skeptical as the more worldly or the more psychoanalytically inclined would be today if some such Margery were to declare amongst us that her "instinct" or her "intuition" prompted her to fly off to Reno. And indeed, when Margery felt an itch to visit Holy places, Jerusalem, Rome or Saint James of Compostella, much as Anita's Lorelei later went to pay her respects to the salons of the dress-makers and perfumers of the place Vendôme, she again insisted that God had whispered this project

into her ear. In fact, God apparently wanted her to do everything that she herself ever wanted to do; and Margery, in an age that held simpler beliefs concerning God, got away with it and even managed nearly to get canonized as a saint.

As literature, Margery Kempe's book lacks interest: Margery was interested too exclusively in the fantasies that were prompted by her own ageless little glands to offer us any unique or very original descriptions of the age in which both she and Chaucer lived. But as a document revealing the eternal feminine, her autobiography can vie with those of Louella Parsons, Ilka Chase and Grace Moore.

MAY 1945

View for October



AN AMERICAN NUMBER

Florine Stettheimer: A Reminiscence

BY HENRY MCBRIDE

For twenty years or more, at every opportunity, I have been preaching the doctrine of seclusion to American painters,* seeing how unequally they seem to be coping with the pressure that present-day publicity puts upon them. Obviously in doing this I have addressed only those who felt the imperative urge to create. Those others who looked upon painting as a mere money-making profession could, I thought, be left to their own devices. They would get the money very likely; the others would win that deep attention of the connoisseurs that more often leads to fame.

* * *

*Noting the frequency in America with which quite evidently gifted men start promisingly upon their careers only to succumb, at the first taste of success, to the temptation to paint what sells, and noting also that most of our native "classics," such as Winslow Homer, Thomas Eakins, Albert Ryder, George Fuller and Ralph Blakelock, lived practically as recluses. I thought for a time that this inability to be valiant in the face of the public was a weakness peculiar to this land. But in that I find I was mistaken. Only recently I came across a remark in the memoirs of Stefan Zweig, *The World of Yesterday*, which convinces me that the trait is characteristic of this period rather than this country exclusively. Mr. Zweig said, recounting his experience in Paris:

"From 1900 to 1914 I never saw a reference to Paul Valéry as a poet in either *Figaro* or *Le Matin*; Marcel Proust was looked upon as the dandy of the salons, and Romain Rolland as a well-informed scholar in music. They were almost fifty years of age before the first timid ray of renown touched their names, and their great work had been accomplished in the center of the most inquisitive, most intellectual city in the world."

I never had occasion to preach the idea to Florine Stettheimer, for she seemed to be considerably aloof from the world when I first came to know her; aloof, that is, as an artist. She and her two sisters, the Misses Carrie and Ettie Stettheimer, had a numerous and intimate acquaintance among the "intellectuals" of the town and there were frequent dinners and "evenings" in the Stettheimer residence and sometimes in Miss Stettheimer's studio, but no one that I knew was much in the artist's confidence in regard to her projects for painting, or knew her processes in achieving them. The pictures were shown only when finished, but when finished they were apt to be shown triumphantly in the studio to a few invited guests. The portraits in particular usually had parties given for their "debuts," the sitters being permitted to invite their own guests for this unveiling and steeling themselves in advance not only against the *badinage* of the portrait but also of the "assistance," the sum total of this *badinage* always being considerable. The sitters, I should hastily add, never actually sat, for the portraits were imaginative portraits and sometimes exceedingly whimsical.

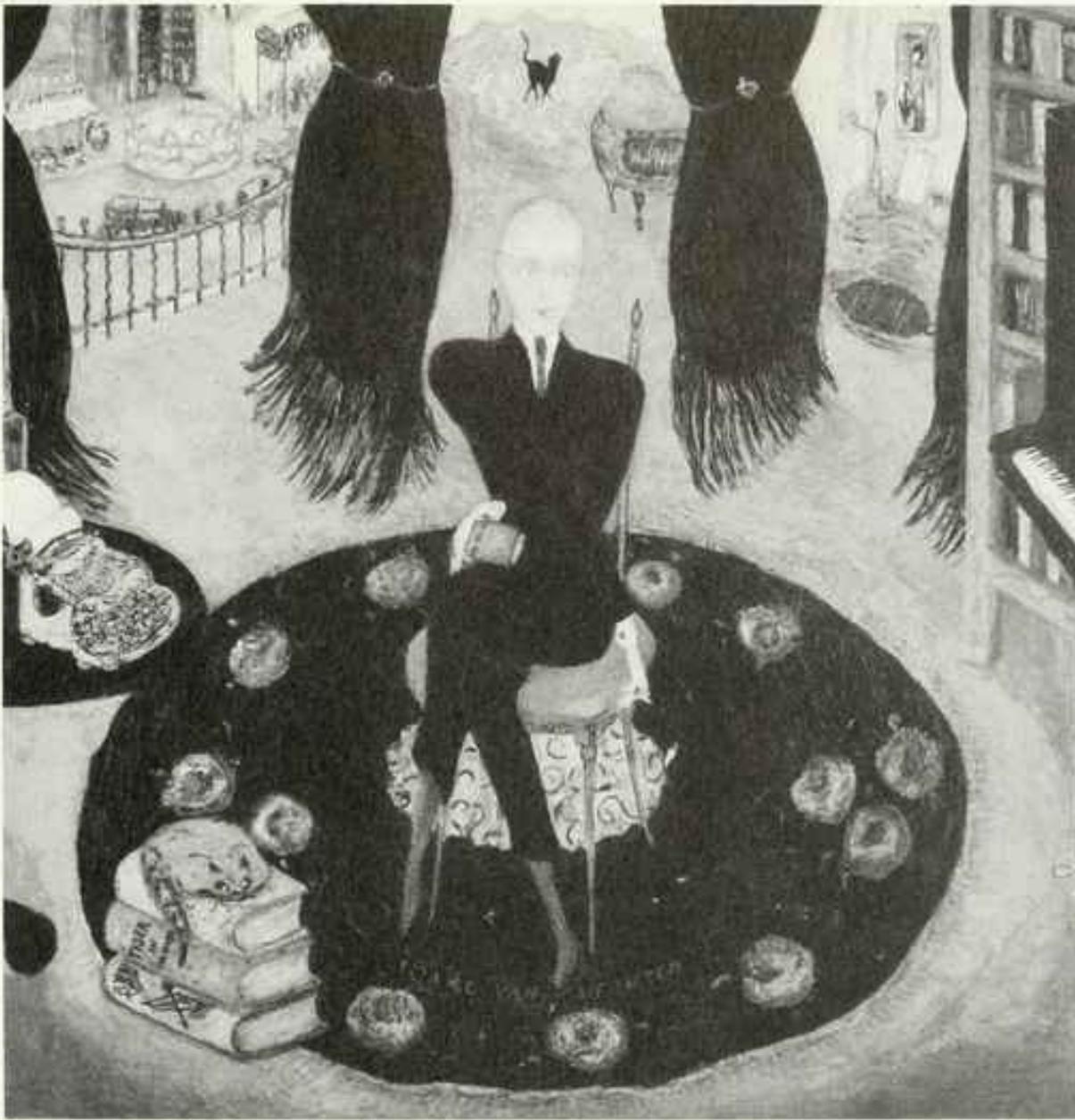
I suppose I came nearer to sitting than most of the others, for my portrait originated during a house party given by Stettheimers in a Seabright cottage many years ago, and one evening I detected the artist over in one corner of the salon furtively jotting down, presumably, some of my lineaments, but I was not permitted to see what hieroglyphics she had acquired nor how many—but they must have been few. At the time of this house party the Seabright lawn-tennis tournament was in progress and as I was in those days something of a player and mad about the game I went over each afternoon to see what the sensational new Frenchmen, Borotra, Cochet and Lacoste (then playing for the first time in America), were doing. When my portrait made its debut the next winter I was as much astonished as anybody else to find myself seated in the picture against the background of a tennis tournament in full progress. Up above in the sky and elsewhere were references to my aesthetic preoccupations, such as a hint of the celebrated palm-tree watercolor by Winslow Homer, the statue

of "Woman" by Gaston Lachaise, a watercolor by John Marin, and so on; but the heavy emphasis upon tennis in the picture was something that I had to explain away to many critics. I have scarcely yet lived it down.

The heavy emphasis in the Carl Van Vechten portrait is laid, properly enough, on books, two heavy tomes occupying the foreground of the composition, one of them being the already classic *Tiger in the House*;—but in spite of these products of a mature mind Miss Stettheimer preferred to take an ageless view of the author and portrayed him as a guileless youth. She rejected age in all of her friends, for that matter, and in the portraits turned us into the essences of what we were. The "too, too solid flesh" meant nothing to her. She weighed the spirit. She knew very well that Mr. Van Vechten frequented cafés, both in Paris and New York, and said so in the picture;—but apparently she did not hold it against him.

But for whimsy, the portrait of Marcel Duchamp is "tops." There was nothing accidental in this, for Marcel in real life is pure fantasy. If you were to study his paintings, and particularly his art constructions, and were then to try to conjure up his physical appearance, you could not fail to guess him, for he is his own best creation, and exactly what you thought. In the portrait he is something of a Pierrot perched aloft upon a Jack-in-the-box contraption which he is surreptitiously manipulating to gain greater height for his apotheosis. Among the "outside" portraits this is the best from the point of view of pure painting. It is also the simplest. The most complicated character in the whole contemporary range of modern art has been reduced to one transparent equation. I call them "outside" portraits, for though Miss Stettheimer did witty, colorful and acutely observed portraits of Louis Bouché, Baron de Meyer, Joseph Hergesheimer and Virgil Thomson, she lavished much the best of her work on delineations of her own family. She did them all, her sisters, her mother, and herself many times.

The security of her home life released all her powers. Knowing herself to be immune from crit-



Portrait of Carl Van Vechten
Florine Stettheimer

icism in that quarter she dared everything in the way of technique and rounded out the highly personal method of painting that now gives her a clear title to general attention. No other woman painter in America, with the possible exception of Georgia O'Keeffe, has achieved so distinct a style; and in France there is Marie Laurencin; those three stand out definitely from the throng, but as they hail from different planets, are not to be classed together. The Stettheimer way of painting, as I have said, can only be imagined, as I never saw it being done. I confess to looking at some of the new pictures years ago with skepticism, for there were all sorts of unusual doings in them not to be observed in other artists' work, and which looked impermanent. But they have lasted. In the twenty years or so that I have known them I have seen no discoloration of the pigments nor any fading; which is more than I can say for most of our American impressionistic works of the same period. What disquieted me most were the thin tones washed over

heavily built-up foundations of Chinese white, and other areas of paint which looked occasionally as though they had been "poured" upon the canvas rather than brushed. But the fact remains—these things have lasted—and I was needlessly alarmed. On the few occasions when I spoke of this work in the press I used the word "alchemy." I had no other term for it. It violated all the rules—but it worked.

The one exception to the *vie secrete* of Miss Stettheimer, the one time she dared to come before the public, was, as you might suspect, a concession to friendship; and it resulted in the famous presentation of Gertrude Stein's famous opera, "Four Saints in Three Acts." I think I was present in the studio the night Virgil first saw Florine's paintings and his enthusiasm for them touched her deeply. Like Pavel Tchelitchev, like Marcel Duchamp, like all the Parisians who saw the artist's work, he exclaimed: "Why have I never heard of these things?" and added, "What a *succès* they'd have in Paris!" When the



Portrait of Henry McBride, *Stettheimer*

thought was put into words by someone, "Why shouldn't Florine do the sets for *Four Saints*?" he said instantly, "That would be perfect," and there was never any question after that but that Florine was to do them. The actual presentation occurred, as you remember, in the Wadsworth Atheneum of Hartford, due to the courageous connoisseurship of its director, Everett ("Chick") Austin, a genius of the first order as museum director (and one whose honorable record should be compiled before the details of it fade from mind). Many of us had heard the composer sing the words of the opera to his own piano accompaniment in Carl Van Vechten's house and later in the Stettheimer house, but in spite of our ecstatic appreciation of the unexpectedness and humor of both words and music few of us actually thought it ever could be "done." So when the curtains were pulled apart at the first performance even those who were already admirers of Miss Stettheimer's work were dazzled and surprised by the enchanting spectacle the stage presented. For my part, in all my considerable experience, I don't recall a more painter like décor for an opera. The background of

crumpled cellophane, itself illuminated from the rear, repeated the effect of the brushstrokes, which must have been a happy accident—for how can it have been anticipated?—but "happy accidents" only arrive to artists who deserve them, i.e., to those who think in a painterlike way. And before this background the costumes of the actors at once took on El Grecoish, Mantegnaesque characteristics. I saw the opera eight times, each time with increased admiration for the libretto, the music, and the settings; and if there should turn out to be truth in the rumor occasionally going about that Sir Thomas Beecham intends to do the opera in London, then I shall make one grand effort to get there and see it a ninth time.

The exhilaration of this affair and the publicity that attended it possibly made the artist more aware of the outside world for it was after this that she began the series of "cathedral" pictures, playful satires upon certain great city activities, and which some critics hold to be the finest achievements; the "Cathedrals of Wall Street," the "Cathedrals of Broadway" (summing up cinema activities), and the uncompleted "Cathedrals of Art" (summing up the picture galleries). These astonishing panels glisten with gold and radiant colors. Miss Ettie Stettheimer told me once that she thought the most characteristic trait of her sister's work was its power of giving off light. This is certainly true of these panels. They are also packed with ironic comment upon the great, the powerful and the merely conspicuous elements of the city. It is peculiarly unfortunate that the "Cathedrals of Art" remained unfinished, for in it she had a theme that entertained her vastly—but her last illness prevented its complete realization.

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With the memorial exhibition scheduled for the Museum of Modern Art, the general public will have an opportunity to make acquaintance with the work that has entertained the artist's friends in private these many years. For them, these friends, it was difficult to separate the two: the artist and the work. There was something flowerlike and fragile in each production and the same adjectives applied to the

artist and to the studio background that she had contrived for herself. This studio in the old Beaux Arts Building on Bryant Park was a first-rate curiosity, certain to startle the visitor privileged to enter it but stifling the criticisms even of the inexperienced by its authenticity. The picture that might rest on the easel spoke in a language that everything in the room confirmed.

The Modern Museum memorial is an unprecedented enterprise, for the public is now invited to judge the work of a comparative stranger. The event, at the moment of this writing, has had no preparatory publicity. The fame of Miss Stettheimer, if she is to have posthumous fame, starts at "scratch." This is unique. Fame, in the arts, is usually brought about by

the competitive interest of the collectors. In this case the collectors have been kept at bay by the artist's reluctance to exhibit, a reluctance not at all morbid but based on an awareness that imaginative works of art require imaginative backgrounds not always available in the average art galleries. So the attitude of the public toward the paintings will be watched with peculiar interest. The "rapport" between the public and this art may be hesitant at the beginning but one may believe it will develop. After all, Miss Stettheimer's painting is not more difficult than Odilon Redon's. Fantasy is not caviar! The taste for it scarcely has to be taught.

OCT. 1945



Portrait of Joseph Hergesheimer, *Stettheimer*

Lunch Hour: 1923

BY JAMES T. FARRELL

M*y sweetie went away, but she didn't say where, she didn't say when, didn't say why, Or bid me goodbye . . .*

Tom Finnegan and Al Bates rushed into the song shop on West Monroe Street. It was a large store. The floor was of tile, and silver dollars were embedded in it in a regular pattern. On the right, from the entrance, there were counters, and on the left-hand side, directly down from the doorway, there was a glass case. In the back, there were several glassed-in booths with victrolas and chairs inside of them.

"Rain'n all right," Al Bates said.

Tom nodded.

The female song plugger, a blonde with a slightly bloated face, sang to the crowd in a cracked falsetto.

I know she loves another, but she didn't say who, she didn't say which, she didn't say what her papa has got—that took my sweetie from me.

"Keen, all right," Al said.

Tom nodded. He looked around at the crowd of youths like himself, and girls, cake-eaters and flappers who came here almost every lunch hour to listen to the new songs. They were all about the store, singly and in groups, and some of them swayed and kept time to the songs by swinging their shoulders or tapping their feet in fast rhythms.

"I'd like to have all of them on the floor," Al said, pointing at one of the silver dollars.

I know that I'll die—Why don't she hurry back home . . .

Al mumbled the first lines of the song *My Sweetie Went Went Away*, and then he said:

"Keen."

Tom, medium sized, blond, good looking, gazed around to see if he might spot anyone he knew, or else, to try and catch the eye of a girl.

"Nice mamas come here," Al said.

"Uh yeah," Tom answered. "If I had dough, though, I wouldn't be coming here."

"That's why I said I wish I had the dollars in the floor, and more of the same," Al said.

The proprietor sang in a broken-voiced tenor. *You're the kind of a girl that men forget,*

Just a toy to enjoy for a while . . .

"Sad song," Al said.

His eyes roved here and there, and fastened on a thinnish blond girl in a raccoon coat. She stood by herself, her face betraying a sentimental absorption in the singer.

"You'd get a lot mamas if you owned a shop like this," Al said. *And you'll soon realize you're not so wise . . .*

"I like the blond mama in the raccoon coat," Al said.

"I, too," Tom said.

When they play Here Comes the Bride, you'll stand outside

Just a girl that men forget . . .

Young people came and left continually, and there was a constant noise of shuffling feet. Three cake-eaters lounged by the glass case a foot or so away from Tom and Al, and surveyed the scene with sophisticated superiority. Al and Tom looked at them. They were better dressed than Al and Tom, taller and better built.

"Those cakes are dressed collegiate. Keen. Hot," Al said.

"Uh-huh," Tom exclaimed.

They wore long, loose beltless coats, and their black hats slanted devilishly over their foreheads.

Their shirts looked brand-new, and they had colorful ties on. They wore new tan broughams, also.

Tom looked outside. He was not so well dressed. It was raining out, and his clothes were damp, and had lost their press. He looked back a bit enviously at the three cakes.

No, no Nora, nobody but you dear . . .

Many in the crowd shuffled their feet. Patent leather toes wiggled, slid on the floor. Bell-bottoms flounced, and hips and shoulders swung and swayed. *And would I trade you for kisses.*

"Ah boy. Keen," Al said.

A blond youth began moving and dancing back and forth in a radius of about two square feet, doing what seemed like a combination of the frisco and a cake walk, sticking out plump buttocks now and then, shaking and wiggling them, holding his chest erect, his face clouding with an expression of intense absorption in himself and his movements. He snapped his fingers, bent, squatted, rose, swayed and toe danced, while others clapped and cheered, and swayed their shoulders in rhythm with him.

"Ummm," exclaimed Al.

No, no Nora, No, No!

Then there was a bustle of conversation in the store. A girl's giggle rose above the talk. Al and Tom looked outside. It was still raining.

A lad of about seventeen, with full round red cheeks flirted with the girl who had giggled. He wore a blue herringbone suit with wide bell-bottoms, a belted overcoat, and a square-shaped brown felt hat. The girl who had giggled talked with him, and smiled. He noticed Al and Tom.

"Hi," he exclaimed.

"Hi," exclaimed Al.

"Hi," exclaimed Tom.

"Like it?" he asked.

"Nice," Al said.

"Yeh," Tom said.

"Nice mamas here," he said.

"I'll say they are," Al said.

"The cat's," Tom said.

Tom watched a baby-doll blonde with avid eyes.

"Like her?" asked Al.

"Yeh."

"I'd like to make her on the back porch," Al said.

"I'd like to make her any place, back porch, front porch, park, on a raft, any place."

"Nice," Al said.

Yes, we have no bananas . . .

Al looked around, avid. Tom rubbed his hand over the down on his upper lip. Tom gazed down at the frayed cuff on his bell-bottom trousers.

"I know that one," he said, nodding in the direction of a brunette.

"Yeh?"

"Her name is Peggy," Tom said.

"Nice. Peg of my heart," Al said.

"I'd let her be the peg of my heart," Tom said.

Monday night, I sat alone

Tuesday night, you didn't phone

Wednesday night, you didn't call

A tall lad, athletic of build and wearing a yellow slicker, talked to the girl named Peggy, and Tom frowned. The lad took off his gray fedora and held it ostentatiously, exposing his blond marcelled hair.

"Handsome brute," Al said.

"Vain. He gets his hair curled," Tom said.

"Maybe she's his peg of his heart?" Al said.

"He looks like a bum halfback to me," Tom said.

"More like a parlor athlete to me," Al said.

But you brought three girls for companee . . .

Al swung into the rhythm of the song, snapped his fingers, twirled his feet, shook his shoulders. Others also did likewise, and soon, the store was full of shuffling, swaying, dancing, friscoing boys and girls while an infant-faced songplugger sang with a whine in her voice, and the piano jingled. Eyes met eyes, and smiles were exchanged. With ecstasy and desire shining in his eyes and on his face, Al tapped on the floor and shook. Tom was caught up in the rhythm and he imitated Al. As he did so, his eyes met those of the girl named Peggy. She smiled at him. He smiled back.

The music stopped. Peggy left the lad in the slicker, and came toward Tom and Al. She smiled.

"You don't remember me," she said.

"Peggy, of course I do."

"Do you come here often?" she asked.

"No, I came today because of the rain."

"So did I."

"Yes, it's rainin' out," Al said.

"Say, I'm glad I saw you. How about a date on Saturday night. Saves me the nickel for phoning," Tom said.

"Use a slug," Al said.

"Why, yes, I'm not doing anything," she said.

"Suppose I call at eight-thirty?"

"Yes."

"Oh, excuse me, Peggy Shanahan, this is Al Bates. He works in my office."

"How do you do," she said.

"I do do do doodle de do," Al said.

"I have to dash, but I'll see you then, Saturday night, Tom?"

"Be ready 'bout half past eight," Al sing-songed.

"All right. We'll go dancing," Tom said.

"Yes. And thank you. And I'm glad to have met you, Mr. Bates," she said, and she walked out.

They looked after her, eyeing her slender, young figure.

"Keen. A neat mama you copped off."

"Yes, she'll pass in a crowd."

"Ever take her out before?"

"No, but I've been thinking of trying to date her. She's a decent girl, but a good dancer, and she's good fun."

"Neat, neat and a hot mama."

"She's pretty," Tom said.

"Yeh. Keen."

"She graduated last June from Saint Paul's," Tom bragged.

"Does she rate?"

"Yes, she rates. That's why I dated her."

"So, she rates?" asked Al.

"Yes, she rates," Tom said proudly.

A look of weariness came over the round face of a girl near them, and she exclaimed to another girl:

"If I dance tonight, I'll die-e."

"But dearie, Jack and Pete are going to be at the Gardens tonight, and you know they're simply divine."

"So are we," Al said.
"What?"
"Divine," Al said.
"What an old line you got," the first girl said.
"Da-dad-dad-da-da deedeer da da . . ." Al sang at the girl.
"You sing worse," the second girl said.
"But you don't know what I can do," Al said.
"I don't want to," the first girl said, turning her back on him.
"Tramps," Al said.
"Polacks," Tom said.
"Smarties," Al said.
"You know, Peggy now—she's different," Tom said.
They heard thunder outside, and some lads and girls hurried in, laughing.
"I'm going to dance tonight. Keen. Come along," Al said.
"No, I'll have to save my pennies for Saturday night's date. She rates. I'll have to take her in cabs," Tom said.
"Too bad. It's going to be keen," Al said.
"I'll get enough dancing Saturday night," Tom said, boastfully.
"Is that all?"
"She's decent and rates."
"Can't she kiss?"
"Well, I'm not sayin'," Tom said.
"Let's go in and play some records," Al suggested.
They went into an empty glassed-in booth. Al put a hot jazz piece on the victrola. Tom sat on the couch. His face was thoughtful.
"Thinking of Peggy?" asked Al.
"I'm not sayin'," Tom said.
"She looks worth thinkin' about," Al said.
The music was very fast, and they tapped their feet on the floor.
"Makes you wish you had a piece on the back porch," Al said.
"Or any place," Tom said.
"Hot," Al exclaimed enthusiastically as a coronet wah-wahed.

Al got up and danced, shaking his abdomen, and making eyes at the glass.
"Daddadada," he sing-songed.
He paused, looked at Tom, and said:
"Whoops Finnegan, where's your pep?"
"I'll save it for Peggy."
"I think you're gone on her already," Al said.
"She rates," Tom said.
Al danced, shook his buttocks, and mumbled to the wild burning jazz.
"Ummmmm," he exclaimed as the coronet again wah-wahed.
He stuck his tongue out, slobbered it across his lower lip, and made slobbering noises by the use of his tongue, and by forcing saliva against the membranes of his mouth. Tom swayed his shoulders, and tapped his feet to the music.
The record ended.
"Say, we got to dash, or we'll be late," Al said.
"Yeh," Tom said.
They left the booth. The store was still crowded.
My wonderful one . . .
"She's singing about your Peggy," Al said.
"I wish she were mine," Tom said, moodily.
"Maybe she will be. Don't give up the ship," Al said.
"I wish it was Saturday night," Tom said.
"We'll have to run," Al said.
"The damned rain, too," Tom said.
They lit out east on Monroe Street, running in and out of people with umbrellas.
Winded, they entered the building where they worked.
"Well, you achieved something on your lunch hour," Al said.
*My wonderful one, whenever I'm dreaming love's love-light,
I'm dreaming of you.*
"Yes, you're singing about her already," Al said.
"You'd sing too, if you had a date with her. She rates," Tom said.
They entered the elevator and were whisked up to their office.

OCT. 1945

On the American Macabre

BY MARIUS BEWLEY

The problem of the macabre, if it is to be regarded as something more than a bonbon for the connoisseur of letters, involves a set of terms larger than those commonly employed by literary appreciation. Its meaning is not so exactly registered as to prevent ambiguities of interpretation, and if disputes have not more often arisen among critics as to its nature and significance, it is because they have evaded its darkness by christening it *The Ghoul-Haunted Kingdom* and leaving it to the esoteric exorcisms of writers like Montagu Summers or, at best, Mario Praz. In such a brief consideration of the macabre as the present one, the most that can be done is to point toward a partial working definition, hoping that such a makeshift will bear up under the various strains imposed upon it. One finds the germ of such a definition in an episode of Hawthorne's story of the White Mountains, "The Ambitious Guest." The grandmother, turning to her children, requests that when she is dressed in her grave clothes and lying in her coffin, they will hold a looking glass before her face so that she may see "whether all's right." The macabre deals with the coquetry of decay. Like the grandmother, it presents Death contemplating himself in the conviction he has a legitimate physical life of his own. Starting with the positive, the macabre progresses through decay toward final annihilation. It is therefore only analogously an esthetic, for its final end is compression and negation. Romanticism and Classicism with their activist modes aim in an opposite direction. Their final effect is to reassure and absolve. But the macabre turns its face backwards and seeks the beautiful by painting



PHOTOGRAPH YOUR INJURIES AT ONCE. You cannot photograph your pains but you can photograph the wound. Time heals everything—so photograph it now. Photo by A. J. Drummond

the skull. It represents the desperate resolve of a guilt-ridden sensibility seeking escape through impenitence. Therefore, as an esthetic it does not compass the problems of a fully matured and conscious personality, but it has a facility for getting itself picked up in crowded places by other attitudes whose embraces may be larger than its own. It is this promiscuous compoundability that accounts for its intrusion into the most unexpected quarters.

When we qualify terms such as Romantic or Classic by attributing a nationality to them we radically narrow and intensify their meanings. We understand this when we consider how disparate are the concepts which rise in our minds at the terms American Classicism and French Classicism. Not only do we think of unequal, or even hostile brands, but by contemplating the difference we are able to arrive at a more accurate idea of the peculiar genius of either nation. And so it is reasonable to suppose that when we speak of the *American macabre* we use a phrase from which it might be possible to draw

certain conclusions that would throw a slightly stronger light on our literary development.

The American macabre, inasfar as it is an endemic growth and not a Gothic importation in the novels of Charles Brockden Brown or the plays of William Dunlap, exhibits a steady line of development that has consistently been in close communication with the changes in national temperament, and which has arrived at its fullest definition in our own time. Something of the character of this development may be gleaned by juxtaposing three passages of macabre content. The first passage, taken from *Letters from an American Farmer* by Hector St. Jean de Crèvecoeur, was written a few years before the American Revolution.

"I was," writes Crèvecoeur, "not long since invited to dine with a planter who lived three miles from ———, where he then resided. In order to avoid the heat of the sun, I resolved to go on foot, sheltered in a small path, leading through a pleasant wood. I was leisurely travelling along, attentively examining some peculiar plants which I had collected, when all at once I felt the air strangely agitated; though the day was perfectly calm and sultry. I immediately cast my eyes towards the cleared ground, from which I was but a small distance, in order to see if it was not occasioned by a sudden shower; when at that instant a sound resembling a deep rough voice uttered, as I thought, a few inarticulate monosyllables. Alarmed and surprised, I perceived at about six rods distance something resembling a cage, suspended to the limbs of a tree; all the branches of which appeared covered with large birds of prey, fluttering about and anxiously endeavouring to perch on the cage. Accentuated by an involuntary motion of my hands more than by any design of my mind, I fired at them; they all flew to a short distance with a most hideous noise; when, horrid to think and painful to repeat, I perceived a negro suspended in the cage and left there to expire! I shudder when I recollect that the birds had already pecked out his eyes, his cheek bones were bare; his arms had been attacked in several places, and his body seemed covered with a multitude of wounds. From the edges of the hollow sockets and



Photo by A. J. Drummond

from the lacerations with which he was disfigured, the blood slowly dropped and tinged the ground beneath. No sooner were the birds flown than swarms of insects covered the whole body of this unfortunate wretch, eager to feed on his mangled flesh and to drink his blood. I found myself suddenly arrested by the power of affright and terror; my nerves were convulsed; I trembled. . . ."

It is noticeable that Crèvecoeur is personally involved in this passage only by his delicately protracted contemplation of nerves tingling in response to horror. This tautness of the nerves, this high-keyed reaction to the dreadful, was to characterize American writers like Poe, raising their work above the English brand of the macabre where, as in the writing of Monk Lewis, horror becomes largely a matter of visual decorative detail. But the significance of this passage lies chiefly in presenting at such an early date the raw material for a national guilt with which the frontier would later deal in its own ingenious way. Crèvecoeur, a cultivated French gentleman who had entered the Colonies from Canada,

is still able to pass a detached European judgment on the horror that confronts him, and therefore the passage is free from any tortured or neurotic undertones. It is macabre only because of the fact related.

The second passage is from an Abolitionist novel, *Autobiography of a Female Slave*, written by Mattie Griffiths in 1857. The heroine is a beautiful mulatto girl whom we find in this passage confronting the whipping post because she has broken a saucer.

"This was a quadri-lateral post, about eight feet in height, having iron clasps on two opposing sides, in which the wrists and ankles were tightly secured.

'Now Lindy,' cried Jones, 'jerk off that gal's rigging, I am anxious to put some marks on her yellow skin.'

I knew that resistance was vain; so I submitted to have my clothes torn from my body; for modesty, so much commended in a white woman, is in a negro pronounced affectation.

Jones drew down a long cowhide which he dipped in a barrel of brine that stood near the post.

'I guess this will sting,' he said as he flourished the whip towards me.

'Leave that thin slip on me Lindy,' I ventured to ask, for I dreaded the exposure of my person even more than the whipping.

'None of your cursed impudence; strip off naked. . . .'

Lindy and Nace tore the last clothing from my back. I felt my soul shiver and shudder at this; but what could I do? *I could pray*—thank God I could pray!

I then submitted to have Nace clasp the iron cuffs around my hands and ankles. . . . With what misery I listened to the obscene and ribald jests from my master and his overseer!

'Now Jones,' said Mr. Peterkin, 'I want to give that gal the first lick which will lay the flesh open to the bone.'

'Well, Mr. Peterkin, here is the whip; now you can lay on.'

'No, confound your whip; I wants that cow-hide, and here, let me dip it well into the brine. I want to

give her a real good warmin', one that she'll remember for a long time.'

The first lick from Mr. Peterkin laid my back open. I writhed, I wrestled; but blow after blow descended, each harder than the preceding one. Mr. Peterkin having fully gratified and quenched his spleen, turned to Mr. Jones and said, 'Now is yer turn. . . .'

Probably no reforming novel ever carried a heavier message of frustration and perversion. National guilt has become explicit by the very idea of an Abolitionist novel, but the moral censure has made an about-face since the pure days of Crèvecoeur. The writer is no longer detached from the guilt which he contemplates, but is personally involved in it. The lip-licking tone of this writing, its secret delight in its nastiness and brutality, indicate a contaminated sensibility not yet wholly aware of itself. The tendencies that are inadvertently revealed here through the author's cultural illiteracy are unabashedly acknowledged in the third passage taken from a story in a pulp-paper magazine which was banned from Middle Western newsstands several years ago.

"Gilda was tied by her wrists to a post in the basement of the hangout. In the yellow glare of the electric light her breasts rose like two ivory globes under her brassière. The Weasel approached her from the corner of the basement. A cigarette dangled from his mouth and his little eyes gleamed evilly. He stood in front of Gilda, letting his eyes pass over her. She shrank in terror as he drew a long knife from his pocket. Raising his hard, merciless hand he jerked off her brassière and placed the sharp edge of his knife against her quivering breast.

"'Cut it out, Weasel,' snarled Charley who had been watching from the door. 'There's better things to do with pretty girls than that.'

The guilt which aroused Crèvecoeur's indignation and tickled Mattie Griffith's moral sensibility so delightfully has been by the time this passage is reached, transformed into the cold hard fact of confessed sadism. It is not to be held against this quotation that it comes from a pulp-paper publication, for Weasel's counterpart can be found at several levels of

American literature. He is not far removed from Pop Eye, the degenerate hero of Faulkner's *Sanctuary*, who began his career by cutting up a pair of love-birds with embroidery scissors, and ended it by committing an unnatural rape. And they are both members of that American family in which Steinbeck's Lennie, with his love for girls and dead mice, is a more sensitive member, and the criminals pursued through the comic strip by Dick Tracy are recognizable cousins. In the three passages quoted the effects of a brutal environment are increasingly apparent on the writer's sensibility, until in the third it is difficult to envisage a further submission to its claims. And it is a roughshod brutality remote from the finesse of the French macabrists. The hierarchy of intense perversion across which Maldoror won his way to fulfillment in a female shark means little to a literature in which such brutality, so far from being an esoteric and cultivated malady, became the respectable by-product of national expansion. America is peculiar in offering an historical development that enabled her macabrists to pass for folk writers, sociologists, political theorists and humorists.

This American triumph in metamorphosis was largely possible because of the unusual conditions prevailing along the shifting line of frontier. William Dunlap wrote of the frontier as "The asylum of European crimes," and Audubon in his *Journal* tells how, in the Ohio Valley, it was necessary in punishing desperadoes of the worst species to cut off their heads and stick them on poles along the wilderness roads as warnings to other criminals. The frontier code of manners and morals was distorted by the fundamental requirement of survival, and vices and virtues had a habit of becoming transposed. The most popular story told in the backwoods of Sam Brady, the honored Indian scout, was how he had saved himself from the savages by throwing a papoose into the fire. Backwoodsmen, stripped stark naked and tied within a few inches of each other so that neither could run away, fought to death armed with bowie knives; and where eye gouging was looked upon as good form it was unlikely that finer discriminations should be delicately apprehended.

The effect of a helpless slave class in fostering American brutality, despite the Carolinian talk of a Greek democracy, was suggested in two of the quotations given here. But the war of annihilation which the Americans waged against the Indians was only a little less gruesome in its ravages on the American sensibility. One does not even have to go to the frontier for evidence. In 1837 the Philadelphian playwright Robert Montgomery Bird published the most successful Indian story up to that time. *Nick of the Woods, or the Jibbenainosay* tells of an epileptic Quaker, Bloody Nathan, whose family had been murdered by Indians before his eyes. He himself had been scalped, but lived through it to bear the horrifying scar as a reminder to kill as many Indians as possible. He becomes a kind of avenging Dracula, known as the Red-Devil of the Indians. "Often would the snakelike creeping files of Indians, while seeking the peaceful habitations of the Kentuckian or emigrant for blood and plunder, stumble in their path upon the cold and stiffened corpse of some Shawnee warrior, the leaves glued to his scalped head with gore; with two long and deep gashes cut upon his breast in the form of a cross, the certain and fatal mark of the avenging spirit." The Indian was regarded as a barrier to national growth and a threat to frontier security, and the cult of Indian killing which the swashbuckling heroes of the backwoods professed did a great deal to define the character and direction of the American macabre.

But it is in American humor of these years that the native macabre begins to congeal. In his humor the American confirmed his attitudes and responses. If he had felt any uncertainty or guilt before, he could now escape it by laughing loudly and passing for a rough but jolly fellow. This description of Natchez, Mississippi, written around 1840, shows how easily the focus may be shifted, by such means, from the essential moral criticism to one of bullying acceptance. "Natchez is a land of fevers, alligators, and cotton-bales, where to refuse grog before breakfast would degrade you below brute creation, where bears the size of young Jackasses are fondled in lieu of pets, and knives the length of barber poles are

used for toothpicks, where negro women are knocked down by the auctioneer and knocked up by the purchaser." The insistence on the monstrous and the ugly in this passage is camouflaged but not hidden by the rollicking good spirits. This illicit marriage of disease and rippling muscle, of horror and hearty laughter cropped up everywhere. One of Jim Crow Rice's most successful songs, "Sich a Git-tin' Upstairs," told of a captain who was cut in two in a fight, glued himself together again, laid down to sleep, but the day being hot, the glue melted and a thief ran away with his thighs. Even such a story as Mark Twain's "Celebrated Jumping Frog" has its sinister side. Analysis would reveal it to be fundamentally more perverse than such an innocent example of the macabre as Poe's "Thou Art the Man," in which a long piece of whale bone is thrust down a corpse's throat to make a jack-in-the-box of him. Filling a live frog's belly with buckshot may seem merely coarse and insensitive, and Poe's invention more deeply afflicted, but the two stories placed side by side reveal Poe, like Crèvecoeur before him, to be drawing on a traditional body of moral feeling, while Twain's moral sensibility, at least in this story, is at a level with that revealed in the Natchez passage. One might remark, incidentally, that Poe is scarcely related at all to the macabre tradition being considered here. He invites the contemplation of cruelty, but never the direct participation in it, and the feelings he incites have reference to a wider range of values than those which were endemic to the Mississippi valley.

Finally, by considering the characteristic speech images that run through frontier talk, one comes directly to face the gaudy symptoms of disease. The boast of the flatboatman in *Huckleberry Finn* is significant in this respect: "I'm the old original iron-jawed, brass-mounted, copper-bellied corpse-maker from the wilds of Arkinsaw! . . . I'm the man they call Sudden Death and General Desolation. Sired by a hurricane, dam'd by an earthquake, half-brother to the cholera, nearly related to the smallpox on the mother's side! Look at me! I take nineteen alligators and a barr'l of whiskey for breakfast when I'm in

robust health, and a bushel of rattlesnakes and a dead body when I'm ailing. . . . Blood's my natural drink, and the wails of the dying is music to my ears!" That this imagery is an accurate reproduction of the old frontier idiom, and not merely Twain's imagination, cannot be doubted in view of our versions of Davey Crockett's and Mike Fink's boasts.

The limits of American expansion were achieved by the exploitation of humans, the degradation of slaves, the extermination of natives, the careful cultivation of brutality and callousness. Such spiritual leavening as was present came from the Shakers, the Groaners, the Muggletonians, the Hard-Shell Baptists. But it was necessary that such rugged characteristics should appear not as perversions, not as macabre, but as the natural expressions of a robust spirit. The necessity resided not only in the demands of national self-respect, but in the desire to escape guilt through impenitence. As long as America was actually engaged in an immediate struggle with the frontier the poisons that were being generated were in some measure cast off. But as the receding frontier left a spawn of ugly cities across the prairies, the situation was radically changed, and what had passed as the courage and bravado of trail blazers degenerated into the criminal exercise of lust in characters like Weasel from the pulp magazine story that has been quoted. Instead of games with jumping frogs, high school students swallowed goldfish and ate records; and instead of fights with bowie

knives, there were professional football and lodge initiations. One recalls the description of the initiation in *Studs Lonigan*, and how, in William Maxwell's recent novel, *The Folded Leaf*, Chicago high school boys are given pills during an initiation that simulate the symptoms of venereal disease.

The American macabre that has been considered here, to judge from the examples that have been quoted, does not represent a literary genre of a very high type. But the principle of limitation in this literature is not so much the macabre itself, as the national elements with which it chose to be compounded. It would have been possible to have chosen more gracious examples from our literature than those which were quoted, but the particular point to be illustrated would have been less clearly made. The American tradition assimilated the macabre with gusto, but the frontier brutalized it, national pride denied it, and in the end, when we except Poe, it had neither enough consciousness nor enough refinement to achieve anything artistically comparable to the work of French macabre writers. It is only in the contemporary regional novel that the American macabre has begun to achieve the necessary poise and sureness.

The chief thing to note is that the American macabre was not a literary trend. It was not even consciously macabre.

It was only consciously American.

OCT. 1945

William Harnett: American Necromantic

BY EDOUARD RODITI

*Et puis, il s'en va ailleurs,—loin, loin, loin.
Et depuis, le hareng saur—sec, sec, sec,
Au bout de cette ficelle—longue, longue, longue,
Très lentement se balance—toujours, toujours, toujours.*

CHARLES CROS: *Le coffret de Santal* (1879)

“**B**eautiful as the fortuitous encounter, on an old door-panel, of a horse-shoe and a newspaper-clipping. . . .” A parody of the oft-quoted comparison, from Lautréamont’s *Chants de Maldoror*—yes, but also an exact description of a painting, *Colossal luck*, by William Michael Harnett (1848–1892), the Irish-born American “magic realist” whose still-life arrangements of objects, painted in trompe-l’oeil and supernaturally motionless in their mellow light of melancholy, fetched fabulous prices for a brief while in the last years of his life and then were completely forgotten for close on fifty years.

In Munich and then in Philadelphia and New York, strange tales were told about Harnett’s paintings. Revamping an ancient Greek story about a bird that tried to peck at painted fruit, one journalist wrote that a dog had tried to steal a side of lamb painted by Harnett, and another that he himself had mistaken the artist’s picture of his letter-rack for the letter-rack itself. One particular anecdote caught the fancy of those American journalists whom Oscar Wilde, when he visited the

States, found so outrageous: Harnett painted several pictures representing Treasury bills of various denominations, till two Secret Service men came to investigate him in his studio as a counterfeiter. One of the incriminating paintings was seized and sent to Washington: "It is to be hoped," wrote a journalist, "that the Treasury Department is gifted with sufficient mental capacity to decide justly on the question, and do what is necessary to save the country from a flood of wooden counterfeit five-dollar bills. Almost anybody would carry around an inch plank thus decorated without at all supposing that it was a genuine bill." Judge McCue, Solicitor of the Treasury, decided however that the painting was a work of art, no common forgery; but he warned Harnett to avoid such models for his pictures, as a Federal law forbade the reproduction of the national currency.

Harnett's Barnum-minded contemporaries were amused or bewildered by his deceptive realism; owners of fancy New York taverns paid high prices for his pictures that attracted gaping crowds to their bars. Today, it is an element of the macabre that mystifies us most in Harnett's "magic realism." When his art was rediscovered, in his first twentieth-century one-man show at New York's Downtown Gallery, in May 1939, the catalogue bore the oddly incorrect title of *Nature-Vivre*; it should have called these paintings *Nature vives*, if they are at all more live than most still lives and not more dead. Harnett seems, indeed, to have been constantly haunted by the conscious or unconscious thought of death. He painted lovingly *The Faithful Colt* or his elegant knives or the weapons of *After the Hunt* and other pictures. He might have said, like Lautréamont: "Ce style était mignon, car j'aime la grâce et l'élégance jusque dans les appareils de la mort". Harnett required an elegance there more than elsewhere, it seems, since he sometimes departed from realism in such cases to depict more elegant instruments of death than mere realism required, so that a Parisian critic was able to write, in *Gil Blas*: "Mais pourquoi associer un lapin tué d'hier à des armes de chasse, telle qu'une arquebuse?"

Lautréamont wrote: "D'où peut venir cette répug-



Mortality and Immortality, William Harnett
(Yale Beinecke Library)

nance profonde pour tout ce qui tient à l'homme?" And Harnett, avoiding the human figure even more strictly than the French poet who could never refrain from describing what he loved or hated most, admitted once, in an interview granted to a journalist: "With the exception of two finished portrait sketches all my art work has been in the still life line." Harnett was moreover most unwilling, according to the same interview, ever to sell these two portraits, though we know that he was generally hard-pressed for money and anxious to sell his works even before they were finished. Finally, however, Harnett was unable to resist what then seemed to be a particularly attractive offer, and the two loved or hated human figures were sold out of his studio into the mysterious world of posterity that the artist can no longer control, where he can no longer destroy the work that causes him the greatest anxiety and about which he feels most insecure. But fate was favorable to Harnett: today these two portraits are lost, and all the sketches of human figures that are listed in the catalogue of the sale organized by his executors are also lost, so that his only known works that approach the confines of human portraiture are his *Mortality and Immortality*, where still-life elements are grouped around a human skull, and a painting of a

curiously dead-looking hand holding an ivory cane.

In Harnett's other known paintings, the human figures are pictures of murdered Lincoln, the photograph of a presumably forgotten or dead woman in *Old Souvenirs*, the engraved portraits on Treasury bills, etc. . . . Elsewhere, man's instruments, his pipes and newspapers and beermugs and hunting-gear, the animals he has killed, the musical instruments he has played, the books he has treasured but discarded, his guttered candles, unanswered letters and torn labels and bits of tape and string, are all carefully grouped or oddly but securely balanced, sometimes all askew but still steady as in *The Student's Table*, absolutely motionless in their mellow world of death whence living man is banished, like evidence left after a murder by some maniac who has fled and now taken his own life.

Only lifeless objects arranged, however concrete in themselves and however realistically painted, in patterns as abstract as those of any twentieth-century Cubist or Abstractionist, could offer Harnett the quality of motionlessness that his compulsive devotion to detail required of all models. Rationalizing his unconscious choice some years later, at the height of his career when he could certainly afford human models, Harnett explained: "This very poverty led to my taking up the line of painting that I have followed for the past fifteen years. . . . I could not afford to hire models as the other students did. . . ." But we also know that, on at least two occasions, Harnett tried "to do such work as the other young artists were doing," once when he decided to study in New York under the portrait-painter Thomas Jensen, and again later in Munich when, as Harnett says, "I had even a poorer opinion of myself than I had before" and "wanted to follow the instructions of the older painters."

But in explaining his methods, Harnett was not fully conscious of his principles. Actually, for instance, his compositions avoid telling a story, or endeavor rather to tell the barest and most generalized outline of a story. He lived in a society that expected the plastic arts and even music to convey an anecdote and a moral; but the objects of his

Emblems of peace or *After night's study* illustrate general themes rather than any particular story. Indeed, there is a peculiar lack of anecdote and *Kitsch* in the compositions of pipes and beermugs that Harnett painted in Frankfurt and Munich in a decade when most German painters, even in still lives, had nearly all relapsed into the sentimental anecdote that was their punishment for having commercialized Romanticism.

America was, in those years, one of the artistic backwaters, like Tsarist Russia, where the macabre and bizarre elements of earlier Romanticism sometimes still flourished unadulterated. In his isolation, the American artist was not yet tempted to compromise; and his public, trained by barkers to expect a sideshow freakishness in all art, accepted such minor devices as the trompe-l'oeil realism of Poe's stories or Harnett's paintings as a sufficient concession to its demands. This very purity of American macabre Romanticism served also to keep similar traditions alive in Europe. The American composer Louis Moreau Gottschalk was acclaimed in Paris by Baudelaire and Liszt; it was in Poe that Baudelaire found an incentive to emulate and transcend the extreme Romanticism of an earlier generation of French Romantic poets; and it was from Montevideo that Lautréamont came to Paris with his Satanic visions that transcended those of Petrus Borel, the self-styled werewolf poet of 1830. The catalogue of objects of art left in Harnett's estate and sold by his executors reads like a description of a curioshop in an early Balzac novel, (*La Peau de chagrin*, for instance), and thus illustrates tastes that were prevalent in Europe more than fifty years earlier but had now become an American tradition. And Oliver Wendell Holmes, writing *Elsie Venner* in 1859, some twenty years before Harnett began to paint, already arranged objects in Elsie's room as if he were waiting for Harnett to paint them: "Elsie's room was almost as peculiar as her dress and ornaments. It was a kind of museum of objects, such as the woods are full of . . . Crows' nests . . . eggs of rare birds . . . mosses and ferns of unusual aspect, and quaint monstrosities of vegetable growth. . . . They helped to give her

room a kind of enchanted look. . . . With these sylvan curiosities were blended objects of art, some of them not less singular, but others showing a love for the beautiful in form and color . . . pictures, bronzes, vases and the rest.”

Old sword, rare old gun, combination shotgun and rifle, powder-horn, Cremona violin, Roman lamp, antique pitcher, XIVth century brass Egyptian pitcher, Byzantine vase, these were a few of the objects in Harnett's studio, models that he could afford to buy though presumably too poor to pay human models, and that were sold at auction after his death. To the nineteenth-century aesthete of the

Art for Art's sake movement, such curios were sacred relics in a new religion whose martyrs were men like Novalis, Poe, Baudelaire and Rimbaud, whose scholastic philosophers were Ruskin, Pater, Wilde or finally Croce. They were lovingly described by writers or depicted by painters, with a “magic realism” that was also Flaubert's ideal, in his reconstructions of the past as much as in his descriptions of the contemporary scene, and that was, above all, the artist's device for defeating death in death's own game, by creating a realistically unreal world where everything stood almost lifelike, but where neither moth nor rust corrupts.

NOV. 1945

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A Night with Jupiter ☆ EDITED BY
AND OTHER FANTASTIC STORIES CHARLES HENRI FORD

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A View Edition

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I See the Pattern of Nijinsky Clear

BY PARKER TYLER

When I was a boy and my father wanted to teach me to swim, he threw me into the water, I fell and sank to the bottom. I could not swim, and felt that I could not breathe. I kept the little air I had, shutting my mouth, thinking that if God wishes, I shall be saved. I do not know how I walked under the water, and suddenly saw the light. Understanding that I was walking towards shallow water, I hastened my steps and came to a straight wall. I saw no sky above me, only water. Suddenly I felt a physical strength in me and jumped, saw a cord, grasped it, and was saved.

The Diary of Vaslav Nijinsky (Simon & Schuster, 1936).

Vaslav Nijinsky's diary, written in 1919 and published seventeen years later (after being discovered by his wife in 1934), is preceded in the published volume with thanks to distinguished persons helpful in the accrual of funds for the Nijinsky Foundation, and with a preface by the dancer's wife explaining the circumstances of the diary's composition, and is followed by a note on the Nijinsky Foundation, its purpose, and an appeal for more funds. So not only cardboard covers keep the record closed; it is bound within the conventional world whose laws and modes Nijinsky sought always to escape but which finally, as he realized the endlessness of its trap, became intolerable to him. At this juncture, he abdicated from collaboration with it, but he could not escape (as he has learned for the past quarter of a century) the continued persecution of its "well-meant" offices.

Nijinsky's tremendously moving document and his tremendously simple sentences (each as dynamic as a match flame) proclaim that their author constantly sought a freedom to be termed unprofessional,

unorthodox and irrational. However, the desires of people attracted to him and the structure of society consistently opposed the dancer's negative efforts; freedom (which, as he asserts on the diary's first page, was entirely a matter of "feeling") escaped him even when he abandoned his positive and special means of seeking it: the dance; escaped, because he was hopelessly trapped within the limitations of the ordinary, real world in which he was never happy. The fundamental environment of the world did not alter for Nijinsky when he was committed to an institution; it only narrowed down, trapped him a little more thoroughly.

His wife, Romola Nijinsky, begins her preface by saying: "This Diary is Nijinsky's message to mankind. . . . I am giving it. . . in the hope that it will be helpful to many." It will be, indeed, if one knows how to read it. We must be grateful for Mme. Nijinsky's generosity, even if unavoidably she is to be included in that unceasing and "innocent" conspiracy of the world to appropriate, utilize and control the human sources of its spiritual wealth and power in the manner it does its grain and chemicals, without regard for the innate desires of the wonderful, individual exceptions: its geniuses. Above all other examples of maladjusted genius, Nijinsky's is the classic one to be studied, because it is an artistic tragedy: a "case history" so astonishing in its crystalline purity and the starkness of its outlines that it is like some limitless area of reality revealed by a single flash of lightning.

Nijinsky wrote: "I do not like Shakespeare's Hamlet because he reasons. I am a philosopher who does not reason—a philosopher who feels." Constantly, in the diary, he identifies himself with life (as directly opposed to death), with God, and with love. He also said: "I am not Christ; I am Nijinsky, a simple man." But Christ, on occasion, said much the same thing of himself. And it is possible to say it in the same sense only by denying, as Nijinsky did, that one is Christ. Nijinsky was right. When he went insane, he merely became a philosopher of pure feeling. Physicians call his state pathological, and it is possible that some traumatic condition (even, the-

oretically, inherited, "in the blood") was the direct cause of his mental breakdown. But the diary establishes this quite clearly: before Nijinsky lost the capacity to think coherently in words, he wrote down the apologia that conceals in its pleas and prayers a curse. Endlessly, he proclaims his love for everybody, including among particular persons his wife and child, and reiterates his repulsion from and fear of Diaghilev, the impresario who had such great influence on his life, although he denies his hatred for him. Endlessly, he cries out how deeply he loves to dance, how much he wanted everyone to understand his dancing, and that he always wished he could dance without recompense in money. Repeatedly, as well, he insists that his wife does not understand him and that Diaghilev tortured and persecuted him, forcing him to create a ballet, "Jeux," he did not want to do because it represented Diaghilev's perverted sort of love. This ballet was the worst thing Diaghilev could have done to him, since joined to its intrinsic theme was the fact that it was hackwork.

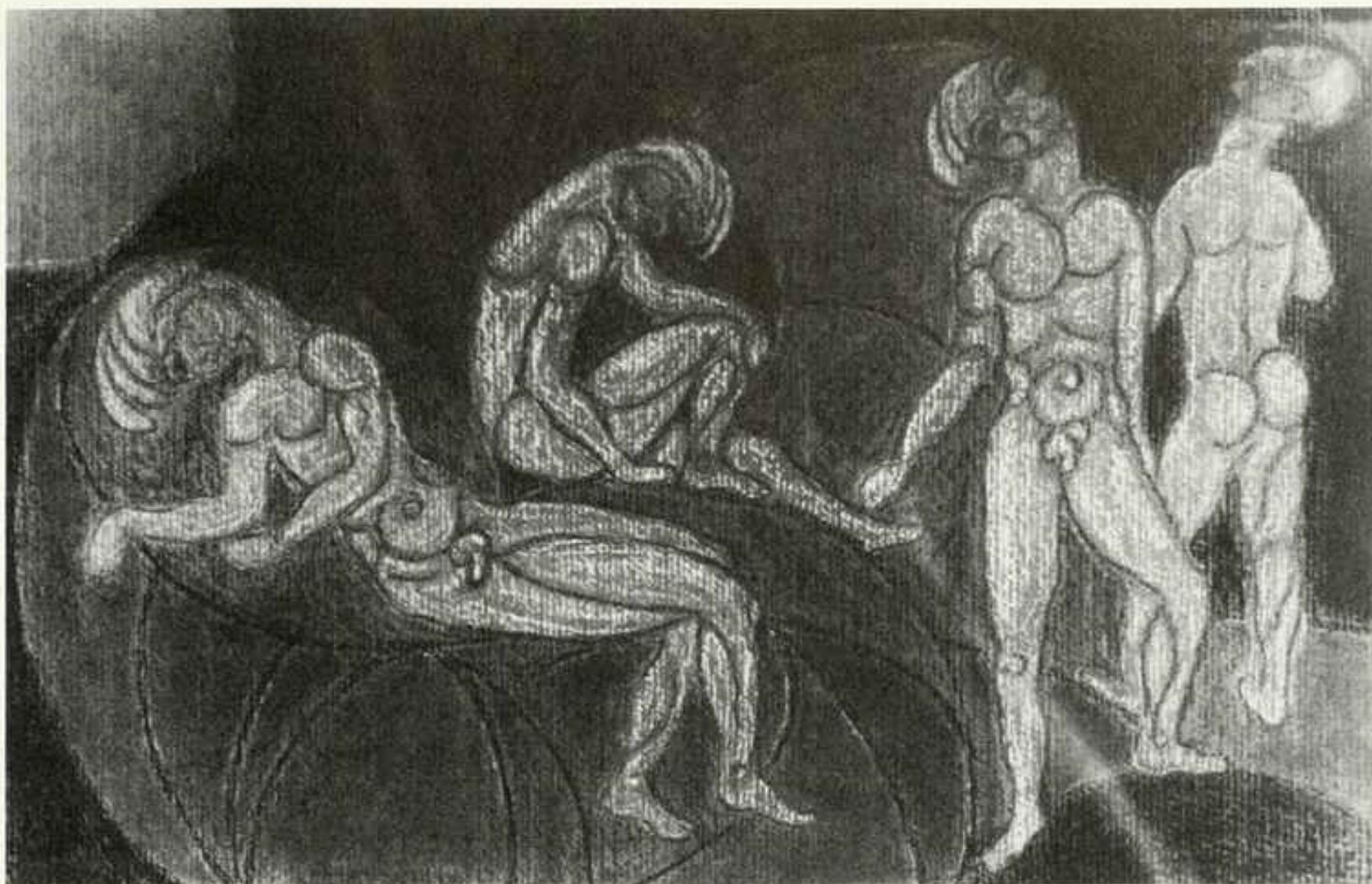
In the diary, it is not a mere question of facts in the journalistic sense, or even of logical relationships among events, people and ideas. It is the certainty and lucidity of Nijinsky's feeling that matter, the observer's knowledge that he was dominated by extremely simple emotional reflexes, and that these reflexes controlled his inner workings without let up or compromise; that his concessions to normal social and professional life were always superficial. In this trait, Nijinsky was much like the child who arbitrarily refuses to obey a parental order. What can make this issue clearer than that moment in the diary when Nijinsky (according to a note) is called to bed by his wife, and writes: "I do not want to be told to go to bed, and I will go only when God orders me to. I told my wife that I would come soon, but I will go on writing for a long time." Here is the universal experience of childhood: placating the mother with a false promise to gain precious time for his own disposal. Moreover, this incident furnishes us with a clue to Nijinsky's complex, which is undoubtedly that of Oedipus. The image of his father, who had thrown him into water to make him swim, was

displaced by that of Diaghilev, and the image of his mother by Mme. Nijinsky, his wife, who looked after him as a man. "God," who constantly appears in the diary as a Being in complete harmony with Nijinsky, became the ideal parent, the one who really "understood" him. And God, in terms of displacement, was obviously the apotheosis of Nijinsky's own ego, his inner desires.

The diary is divided into four parts: *Life, Death, Feelings, and Epilogue*. In the part called *Death*, Nijinsky tells about his money difficulties with Diaghilev. "I knew well," he wrote, "that if I left Diaghilev I would die of hunger because I was not ready for life. I was afraid of life. Now I am not afraid any more. I wait for God's wishes." Why was Nijinsky afraid of life, and why, at the time of writing, waiting for "God's wishes" (i.e., his own impulses), was he so no longer? It is hard to make the public believe that so personal and pyrotechnic an art as the dancer's has any object but that of technical virtuosity and brilliant style. But if it was hard for Diaghilev, a talented and sophisticated man, to realize that Nijinsky was deeply wounded by having to compose ballets he did not like and to dance when he was exhausted, how much harder would it be for those who adored the "thousands of red rose petals" in "The Spectre of the Rose" and the dancer's sensational leaps to believe that Nijinsky "meant" anything by the entire form of ballet, that dancing was for him a subtle, precise and mature expression of his inmost feelings, of his spirit—and, more than this, that it was a fetish against fear, a ritual to exorcise fear? Yet the fact is that again and again in the diary, we learn that dancing was the refined summit of Nijinsky's personal expression and that nothing upset him so much or made him so desolate as things that interfered with the ideal nature of his performances. "I am not mad," he wrote, "and Dostoevsky's 'idiot' is not an 'idiot.' I felt nervous and therefore made mistakes." This nervousness was fear—fear of making a mistake as Muishkin was afraid of knocking over the vase. His madness was a raising to the "infinite" power of his fear that, because of personal quarrels with Diaghilev, fatigue or

general unhappiness, he would not dance well, and so would fail to receive the great and final spiritual release that dancing gave him.

Increasing pressure from forces alien to the pure performance of his art brought Nijinsky to the point where he could not be sure of the spiritual coefficient of his gymnastic prowess. This was the fatal turning point of his "madness." Just as he had feared, during the legendary period of his intense and hazardous rivalry with a fellow pupil in the ballet school, that he "would not leap high enough," he began to feel he would not scale the *spiritual* heights, would not be able to climb the Faun's little symbolic stairway. In the section called "Feelings," Nijinsky explains the essential spirituality of his love for his wife, that he does not love her "as a woman," and that God wishes her to leave him. Earlier, he has expressed his reluctance to eat meat and his resentment of Mme. Nijinsky's fondness for it. He connected (as he says) the eating of meat with sex, and in his case, with self-abuse, which weakened his physique and therefore his dancing. Evidently, a libidinal struggle took place in Nijinsky as in all of us. The manner in which he relates that he scorned Diaghilev's sexual advances and ran after girls, frequenting whores, indicates that he wished to dispose of his sexual feelings spontaneously and without moral obligation to the object. When we learn that he submitted himself to treatments of autosuggestion in order to identify himself more entirely with the Faun while on the stage, it is not hard to guess that Nijinsky rationalized his sexual expression into the spiritual form of Mallarmé's conception of onanistic trance. Nijinsky feared the ravages of onanism and in symbolizing them in dance motion and gestures, he probably took away some of the power of the actual impulse. Eventually he seems to have been disillusioned with whoring, not for his own sake but for the sake of the girls, who felt little or nothing, their spirits having been ruined. Nijinsky's spirit could not be ruined, but it was fearful. Out of fear he was married, for a wife proposed a tentative answer to his animal need that likewise promised spiritual sustenance. But apparently the animal need and its satisfaction became



Figures, *Vaslav Nijinsky* (Museum of Modern Art, New York)

an onerous domestic duty, rather than the physical safety valve permitting him to achieve spiritual freedom in the dance.

To finally comprehend the pattern of Nijinsky's fear of life and profound need to dance, as well as what he refers to as his "nervousness," it is necessary to invoke the incident described at the head of this article: his father's act of throwing him into the water. Although Nijinsky's recollection (as is natural enough) emphasizes his own self-rescue and its manner, the "boy of six or seven" must have felt that his father might have succeeded in killing him, but at least that the desires of his father entailed the risk of the boy's life. "I am life," he wrote Diaghilev. "You are death." Clearly the man who wanted him to swim by violent edict and the man who wanted him to dance by parallel violent edict are one and the same in the deepest realm of Nijinsky's feeling. Nijinsky was mortally afraid of not pleasing Diaghilev because he identified him with public success; not

with art, that is to say, for of that he was inwardly confident, but with the worldly reward of art: a livelihood. But more than to live as an animal (even a luxurious animal), Nijinsky wished to live as spirit. He was constantly "nervous" because Diaghilev had convinced him that it would be fatal to make a "mistake," and if he did not take his (Diaghilev's) advice, he *would* make a mistake. Nijinsky sought in the woman he had married an escape from Diaghilev's tyranny as he must have turned to the tenderness of his mother from the severity of his father. But Romola Nijinsky was not a genius, and she could only extend the tyranny of the ordinary "power-world" of success by providing its semi-private nature: the success of marriage and the home. To Nijinsky, every success but one, the act of dancing well, was alien and a nuisance.

During the last ten years, articles and photographs have continually appeared in the press, announcing that Nijinsky's "recovery" might be near at hand, that

he was coming to America, or that, recently, he had "danced" before the Russian soldiers. These articles presumably arouse the hopes of dubiously sensitive beings who would find pleasure in contemplating Nijinsky's "return to sanity." Although enfeebled somewhat in body, the man is far too clever to do anything so stupid as voluntarily to return to "sanity"; however, it is possible he may be conscripted. In terms of space and visual variety, his present world is much narrower and humbler than in the days of his glory, but the world he has gained has a relative freedom: a choreography of the mind that is unshackled by any professional and social exactions. I do not mean that madness was a conscious device of Nijinsky's to escape from the world, although the feigning of madness has often been proven close to "the real thing," but that the positive greatness of Nijinsky, his genius as a dancer, may have had its innately *spiritual* impulse in the trauma of fear probably incurred when his father plunged him into the swimming pool, and—lips shut tight—he sank helplessly to the bottom. . . .

The genius of life is that it offers to very exceptional beings the unique challenge of death that, shaking them to their deepest depths, causes them *by reaction* to reach the heights for which they are destined. Nijinsky has described without flaw the sublimity of his self-resourcefulness in the terrible moment when he might have died. His words and

tone leave no room for doubt that he was certain of the transcendent strength of his legs to make the life-saving leap that he completed over the windowsill into the chamber where the young girl dreamed of the rose. But if Nijinsky always leaped *into* life (even if it was life as a dream, half-illusion and half-reality) he leaped *from* death. ". . . children do not forget what happens to them," wrote Nijinsky. "I saw my father diving into the water," he says, "but I was afraid. I disliked somersaults." The leap is always upward, and the body is not inverted, merely being momentarily in air and stretched in all directions to its uttermost. Air and life replaced water and death for Nijinsky. Only the shut mouth of subaqueous terror could reply to Diaghilev's quick tongue and implacable will. Only the birdlike surge of the leap could provide escape from the remorseless paternal critic that was magically revived in Diaghilev, who was immeasurably terrible because he criticized the very form of Nijinsky's life-saving "device," which had revived as *the dance*. In the eyes of the child, the father's dive was a descent, a descent into death, and that is why Vaslav feared seeing it. When forced into the same situation, therefore, he had to use his utmost strength to convert the descent into the rise, to complete his father's downward arc by leaping over the wall of death that was the side of the swimming pool. The suspended elevation of Nijinsky's leap was the eternal moment of life.

NOV. 1945



Heritage of the Accursed

BY KURT SELIGMANN

top—A Strange
Reconciliation: The Father
Swallows the Son
middle—The Neurotic
Character of Alchemy:
Woman Suckled by a Toad
bottom—Gnostic Serpent

This episode is furtively mentioned in Genesis: "The sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair."

The fathers of the Church have declared that the sons of God were fallen angels who mated with mortal women of antediluvian times. These angels betrayed the secrets of God in teaching their sweethearts the art of dyeing cloth, of working metals, of cutting precious stones, etc., arts which brought to men mundane pleasures and corruption. For this betrayal the angels were cursed, and a curse lay upon the arts. It was the second time that the Elohim were robbed of their secrets which they wanted to withhold from the mortals. Before that, Genesis reports, the serpent had planted in Eve's heart the longing for knowledge. She and Adam ate the forbidden fruit, and they became like God, knowing good and evil. Twice, women had been the promoters of knowledge. But science, or knowledge, was according to the Church leaders "a vain curiosity." And the women were severely reprehended by Paul, who wanted them "to keep quiet in Church." For, said he, if they want to know anything, they may ask their husbands at home.

Such were the views of early orthodox Christians. They still owed women a grudge for having brought knowledge to man, together with the punishment of heaven.

But simultaneously with such views there existed contrary conceptions. The *Gnostic Ophites* declared that Eve had been divinely inspired, that the serpent of paradise was a beneficent being sent by

God-Mother Sophia (wisdom!). She had been alarmed about man's being kept in ignorance! The Hebrew God, they declared, was the creator of the material world, which is imperfect. The world of ideas, and the highest heavens were the product of a superior God.

When Sophia and the redeemer ascended to heaven a ray fell upon the waters. From this contact of the divine light and matter was born Iadalbaoth (Jehovah).

Did not the Old Testament repeat that he was a jealous One? He was jealous because man had given thanks not to him but to the Supreme. . . .

* * *

Orthodox doctors chose the tree of knowledge as the symbol of science and *sinful curiosity*.

Gnostic philosophers chose the serpent of paradise as the emblem of knowledge and *rightful investigation*.

Both agreed that the Father had been despoiled of divine secrets. But their attitude toward the Father and toward the problem of *guilt* were diametrically opposed.

The Catholics humbly accepted the fact that they were guilty. The Father was offended, and forgiveness could come only through the Son who would shed his blood for mankind.



The Hermaphrodite

The Gnostics did not admit their culpability. They projected their feeling of guilt upon the Father, saying that he had treated them badly. And He had done worse: The Savior had come down not to wash away the original sin which did not exist, but to teach man still more of the divine secrets, withheld by the Father. Jehovah had wickedly incensed the Hebrews to do away with the Son. By the Father's intrigue the Son was killed. With such arguments the Gnostics pleaded *not guilty*. And they accused the accuser.

Ophite sects worshipped the serpent of paradise, the *Ouroboros*, which bites his own tail. Many ideas were imposed upon this image. The serpent was thought to be divided into light and dark, good and bad. The light *Head* devours the dark *Tail*. The tail renews itself eternally, for it is the head's nourishment. Should the tail be destroyed, the head would perish as well, body and head being one. Good and bad partake of the same body.

In reference to the tree of paradise this could mean that the power deriving from knowledge produces equally good and evil. From plants we can concoct healing medicine and deadly poison. The knowledge of alloys promotes industries and falsifications, etc.

The serpent hid still another meaning. In regard to the universe he signified that there is a never-ending circuit of *metamorphoses*. Matter changes continually from the perfect to the imperfect, from the vile to the noble. The world of matter contains the good and the bad. They are intermingled and change constantly from one to the other.

Ascending to the *world of ideas*, of which the material world is but a mirage, we can say that good and bad are *compatible* in the divine. In ancient Egypt, the evil Seth-Typhon was the brother of the good Osiris. In Persia of old the twofoldness of the divine was the very base of the religious system. According to Zoroaster (Zarathustra) the evil Anra Minju had sprung from a doubting thought of the good Ahura Mazda. They combated one another, but there will be a day of reckoning, when the opponents will reconcile themselves. Good and Evil

will be united and side by side Mazda and Anra Mainju will enter the purified new kingdom.

Though differing in many important points, the Gnostic conceptions were also dualistic.

* * *

The *earliest alchemists* adopted the serpent Ouroboros as their most cherished emblem. The *tree* and the *serpent* have ever since held a preponderant place in alchemical graphisms. Gnosticism and alchemy were closely related. No doubt the alchemists accepted the Gnostic version of the happenings in the garden of Eden. They sanctioned Gnostic views when accepting their famous emblem. They shared with them the belief in the divine origin of knowledge. And from the Catholics they readily accepted that *a curse* lay upon the arts. For Iadalbaoth was jealous and vengeful.

Yet they proceeded with their alchemical experiments.

A most curious fact is that among the earliest alchemists we find several *women*: Mary the Jewess, Cleopatra, Isis and Theosebia.

In orthodox communities women had to keep quiet; among the Gnostics—and the alchemists—they played an important role. The myth of the Genesis became a reality: from the second century on, women are the promoters of scientific investigation.

In her writings Isis boasts of how she acquired her knowledge. She reveals to her son Horus that the angel Amnael taught her the Hermetic art in requital for the intercourse to which she had condescended. This sounds like a challenge to Genesis and to its orthodox interpreters.

In Cleopatra's book on gold-making, Gnostic conceptions are evident. For the first time in alchemical graphic, Cleopatra represents Father, Mother and Son in their macrocosmic garb: Sun, Moon and Mercury. The Gnostic heavenly family has ever since remained in Hermetic literature. True, the orthodox Trinity was also accepted. It ruled above in the highest heavens. To the *Gnostic trinity* a place was assigned in the *macrocosm*.

Sun, Moon and Mercury were identified with the three essences of the universe, Soul, Spirit and Matter.

* * *

The state of perfection is the union of the male and the female principle, the synthesis of what seems to be forever separated. This idea was heeded by many Gnostic sects, for instance by the Valentinians. In a secret temple chamber the faithful was to witness the heavenly union of Sophia and the Redeemer; and in a state of rapture he would experience union with his protecting angel.

According to the alchemists, the philosophers' stone could be made only through the union of the male and the female, the fixed and the volatile, day and night, Sun and Moon, etc.

A seventeenth-century etching shows Sun and Moon in an embrace. From this coition is born the philosophers' stone, emerging from the female element, water.

The stone partakes of both sexes. Often it is called the Hermaphrodite.

* * *

In Basil Valentine's famous alchemical diagram the partition of the world into male and female is summed up. Male are the Sun, the soul, fire, earth, gold, etc. Female are the Moon, the spirit, air, water, silver, etc. In the world below, soul, spirit and matter have their replica in sulphur, mercury, lead, whose signs are indicated with these minerals upon the alchemist's face. The synthesis must be attained through the seven stages of the alchemical process, shown upon the disk that covers man. His feet standing upon water and earth, female and male, allude to the belief that perfection is the hermaphrodite.

In Nicholas Flamel's Hermetic figures, Ophite ideas are clearly discernible. The fourth stage of the process is symbolized by flowing blood. In the fifteenth century, one would expect flowing blood to be symbolized by the crucified Son. Instead, Flamel represents the iniquitous Father, King Herode killing the Innocents (the king is the father of the people).

The sixth stage is emblemized by a cross. Flamel, however, does not show the Son hanging upon it, but the serpent: redemption came through the serpent of paradise, i.e., knowledge.

Abraham Lambsprinck stresses the conflict between Father and Son. Father is the (imperfect) matter, Son is the soul. The Son climbs upon a hill (the Father). They are reconciled by the Spirit. Yet the reconciliation is of an ambiguous character, for

“... when the Son entered the Father’s house,
The Father took him to his heart,
And swallowed him out of excessive joy.”

Finally they ruled together, united forever by the spirit. The happy end reminds one of the Zoroastrian dogma.

The instigating role played by women, Michael Majer shows in an etching where a man in armor fights the flames, encouraged by a “beautiful daughter of men.”

Many more such instances could be enumerated, showing that the Hermetic doctrines were endowed with Gnostic elements. Is it necessary to point to the importance of the alchemist’s taking his stand below the tree of knowledge? Against religious prejudices he promoted scientific investigation.

• • •

Psychoanalysts have revealed the neurotic character of alchemical images and practices: the adepts’ fondness for putrefaction, experimentation with nasty substances, their peephole curiosity in erotic matters, their glorification of the hermaphrodite, etc.

Investigation into these psychic realms will solve many riddles. The analysis of the alchemist’s “true essence” may also throw light upon the little-known Gnostic religions.

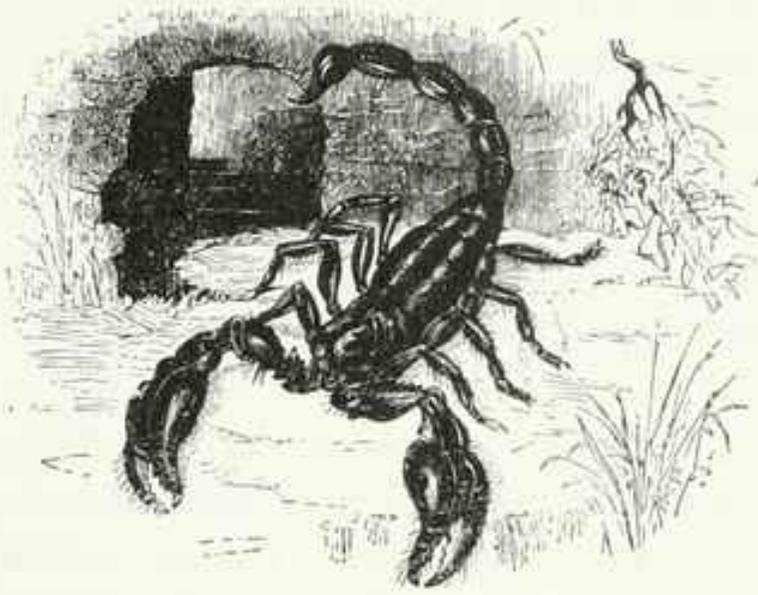
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The foregoing is an excerpt from Seers, Wizards and Magicians, to be published in 1946 by Pantheon Books. It will be fully documented with illustrations.

Other chapter titles include “Magic about Hair and Nails,” “Mystery of Stars and Numbers,” “Casting out the Fly Demon,” “Omens, Oracles and Astrology” and “Dreams and Ghosts.”

DEC. 1945

NOTE: Discussion and illustrations are expanded in Seligmann’s book, *History of Magic* (1948), reprinted as *Magic, Supernaturalism and Religion*, 1971.



The Scorpion

BY PAUL BOWLES

An old woman lived in a cave which her sons had hollowed out of a clay cliff near a spring before they went away to the town where many people live. She was neither happy nor unhappy to be there, because she knew that the end of life was near and that her sons would not be likely to return no matter what the season. In the town there are always many things to do, and they would be doing them, not caring to remember the time when they had lived in the hills looking after the old woman.

At the entrance to the cave at certain times of the year there was a curtain of water drops through which the old woman had to pass to get inside. The water rolled down the bank from the plants above and dripped onto the clay below. So the old woman accustomed herself to sitting crouched in the cave for long periods of time in order to keep as dry as possible. Outside through the moving beads of water she saw the bare earth lighted by the gray sky, and sometimes large dry leaves went past, pushed by the wind that came from higher parts of the land. Inside where she was the light was pleasant and of a pink color from the clay all around.

A few people used to pass from time to time along the path not far away, and because there was a spring nearby, those travelers who knew that it existed but not just where it was, would sometimes come near to the cave before they discovered that the spring was not there. The old woman would never call to them. She would merely watch them as they came near and suddenly saw her. Then she would

go on watching as they turned back and went in other directions looking for the water to drink.

There were many things about this life that the old woman liked. She was no longer obliged to argue and fight with her sons to make them carry wood to the charcoal oven. She was free to move about at night and look for food. She could eat everything she found without having to share it. And she owed no one any debt of thanks for the things she had in her life.

One old man used to come from the village on his way down to the valley, and sit on a rock just distant enough from the cave for her to recognize him. She knew he was aware of her presence in the cave there, and although she probably did not know this, she disliked him for not giving some sign that he knew she was there. It seemed to her that he had an unfair advantage over her and was using it in an unpleasant way. She thought up many ideas for annoying him if he should ever come near enough, but he always passed by in the distance, pausing to sit down on the rock for some time, when he would often gaze straight at the cave. Then he would continue slowly on his way, and it always seemed to the old woman that he went more slowly after his rest than before it.

There were scorpions in the cave all year round, but above all during the days just before the plants began to let water drip through. The old woman had a huge bundle of rags, and with this she would brush the walls and ceiling clear of them, stamping quickly on them with her hard bare heel. Occasionally a small wild bird or animal strayed inside the entrance, but she was never quick enough to kill it, and she had given up trying.

One dark day she looked up to see one of her sons standing in the doorway. She could not remember which one it was, but she thought it was the one who had ridden the horse down the dry riverbed and nearly been killed. She looked at his hand to see if it was out of shape. It was not that son.

He began to speak: "Is it you?"

"Yes."

"Are you well?"

"Yes."

"Is everything well?"

"Everything."

"You stayed here?"

"You can see."

"Yes."

There was a silence. The old woman looked around the cave and was displeased to see that the man in the doorway made it practically dark in there. She busied herself with trying to distinguish various objects: her stick, her gourd, her tin can, her length of rope. She was frowning with the effort.

The man was speaking again.

"Shall I come in?"

She did not reply.

He backed away from the entrance, brushing the water drops from his garments. He was on the point of saying something profane, thought the old woman, who, even though she did not know which one this was, remembered what he would do.

She decided to speak.

"What?" she said.

He leaned forward through the curtain of water and repeated his question.

"Shall I come in?"

"No."

"What's the matter with you?"

"Nothing."

Then she added: "There's no room."

He backed out again, wiping his head. The old woman thought he would probably go away, and she was not sure she wanted him to. However, there was nothing else he could do, she thought. She heard him sit down outside the cave, and then she smelled tobacco smoke. There was no sound beside the dripping of water upon the clay.

A short while later she heard him get up. He stood outside the entrance again.

"I'm coming in," he said.

She did not reply.

He bent over and pushed inside. The cave was too low for him to stand up in it. He looked about and spat on the floor.

"Come on," he said.

"Where?"

"With me."

"Why?"

"Because you have to come."

She waited a little while, and then said suspiciously: "Where are you going?"

He pointed indifferently toward the valley, and said: "Down that way."

"In the town?"

"Farther."

"I won't go."

"You have to come."

"No."

He picked up her stick and held it out to her.

"Tomorrow," she said.

"Now."

"I must sleep," she said, settling back into her pile of rags.

"Good. I'll wait outside," he answered, and went out.

The old woman went to sleep immediately. She dreamed that the town was very large. It went on forever and its streets were filled with people in new clothes. The church had a high tower with several bells that rang all the time. She was in the streets all one day, surrounded by people. She was not sure whether they were all her sons or not. She asked some of them: "Are you my sons?" They could not answer, but she thought that if they had been able to, they would have said: "Yes." Then when it was night she found a house with its door open. Inside there was a light and some women were seated in a corner. They rose when she went in, and said: "You have a room here." She did not want to see it, but they pushed her along until she was in it, and closed the door. She was a little girl and she was crying. The bells of the church were very loud outside, and she imagined they filled the sky. There was an open space in the wall high above her. She could see the stars through it, and they gave light to her room. From the reeds which formed the ceiling a scorpion came crawling. He came slowly down the wall to-

ward her. She stopped crying and watched him. His tail curved up over his back and moved a little from side to side as he crawled. She looked quickly about for something to brush him down with. Since there was nothing in the room she used her hand. But her motions were slow, and the scorpion seized her finger with his pinchers, clinging there tightly although she waved her hand wildly about. Then she realized that he was not going to sting her. A great feeling of happiness went through her. She raised her finger to her lips to kiss the scorpion. The bells stopped ringing. Slowly in the peace which was beginning, the scorpion moved into her mouth. She felt his hard shell and his little clinging legs going across her lips and her tongue. He crawled slowly down her throat and was hers. She woke up and called out.

Her son answered: "What is it?"

"I'm ready."

"So soon?"

He stood outside as she came through the curtain of water, leaning on her stick. Then he began walking a few paces ahead of her toward the path.

"It will rain," said her son.

"Is it far?"

"Three days," he said, looking at her old legs.

She nodded. Then she noticed the old man sitting on the stone. He had an expression of deep surprise on his face, as if a miracle had just occurred. His mouth was open as he stared at the old woman. When they came opposite the rock he peered more intently than ever into her face. She pretended not to notice him. As they picked their way carefully downhill along the stony path, they heard the old man's thin voice behind them, carried by the wind.

"Goodbye."

"Who is that?" said her son.

"I don't know."

Her son looked back at her darkly.

"You're lying," he said.

DEC. 1945

1946-1947

View Paris Issue

The Circular Ruins

BY JORGE LUIS BORGES

In the dead of night no one saw him land, no one saw the bamboo canoe draw up onto the sacred mud, but within a few days it was common knowledge that the taciturn man was from the south, that his homeland was one of the myriad villages lying upstream on the precipitous flank of the mountain, where the Zend language is not contaminated by the admixture of Greek words, and where leprosy occurs but seldom. Certain it is that the gray man knelt and kissed the mud, climbed up the riverbank (without pausing to protect, probably without even feeling, the cuts lacerating his flesh), and dragged himself, nauseated and bleeding, to the circular inclosure. Looming above this is a tiger—or a horse—it is hard to tell which—of stone, once the color of fire, but now ashen. This ringlike construction is a temple devoured by ancient conflagrations, profaned by the malarial jungle; its god now receives no homage from men. The stranger stretched out on the ground below the pedestal.

The high sun awakened him. Without astonishment he noticed that the wounds had healed. He shut his pale eyes and slept; this was not feebleness of the flesh but determination of the will. He knew this temple was the appointed place for the carrying out of his indomitable purpose. He knew that downstream, also the property of burned, dead gods, were the ruins of another propitious temple which the incessant trees had not yet managed to strangle. He knew that his immediate obligation was to sleep.



Itinerary for Aerial Journey, *Tchelitchew*

Toward midnight the inconsolable cry of a bird awakened him. Prints of bare human feet, some figs and a jug apprised him that the inhabitants of the region had watched his sleep respectfully, and were soliciting his favor or seeking to neutralize his magic. He felt a chill of fear, and having discovered a tomblike niche in the dilapidated wall, he covered himself with a blanket of unfamiliar-looking leaves.

His guiding purpose, although supernatural, was by no means impossible. He wanted to dream a man, to dream him integrally, in all his minuteness of detail, and then to impose him upon reality. This project of magic took up all the space in his soul; if he had been asked his own name, or for some trace of his former life, he would not have managed to reply. The crumbling, uninhabited temple suited him because it represented a modicum of the visible world. The proximity of inhabitants also suited him, since they had taken it upon themselves to supply his frugal needs. Their small gifts of rice and fruits provided enough nourishment for his body, dedi-

cated as it was to the sole task of sleeping and dreaming.

At first, the dreams were chaotic; a little later they took on a dialectical quality. The stranger dreamed that he was in the center of a circular amphitheater which was in some way the charred temple. Masses of taciturn students filled the graded seats; the faces of those in the highest rows hung there at many centuries' distance and at a starlike height, yet they were clearly visible in every detail. He was dictating lessons in anatomy, cosmography and magic to them. The faces were paying anxious attention, and he found it possible to extract understanding answers from them. It was as if they divined the importance of that examination, which would redeem one among them from his state of mere seeming, and thus thrust him forth into the world of reality. Both in his dreams and when he was lying awake, he continued to consider the answers his phantoms had given him, not allowing himself to be deceived by those who were tricksters, and sensing in certain of their perplexities a growing intelligence. He was seeking a soul that deserved to participate in the universe.

After nine or ten nights he realized with some bitterness that he could expect nothing from those students who took his doctrine passively; only from those willing at times to risk a reasonable contradiction of his ideas. The former, although lovable and full of good will, would never rise to being individuals; the others already existed a little.

One afternoon (now the afternoons were also devoted to sleep; now he remained awake only an hour or so at dawn) he dismissed the vast illusory class for good, and remained alone with a single pupil. This was a calm, citrine boy, ungovernable at times, and with sharp features that suggested those of the man who had dreamed him. The boy was not disconcerted for long by the sudden elimination of his colleagues; at the end of a few private lessons his progress was such as to amaze the master. Even so, the catastrophe came about. One day the man emerged from his sleep as a lost traveler straggles out of the dense wilderness, looked at the waning light of

afternoon, which at first he took for dawn, and then realized that he had not dreamed. All that night and the next day he was depressed by the unbearable clarity of wakefulness. He decided to explore the jungle and consume his energies in that way; but in among the trees he arrived at only a few feeble wisps of dream, fleetingly veined with visions of a rudimentary sort: unserviceable, useless visions. He thought of reconvening the class, but scarcely had pronounced a few short words of exhortation when class blurred and melted away. In the almost constant insomnia, hot tears of rage would rise in his weary eyes.

He understood that the task of modeling the incoherent and vertiginous material of dreams is the most difficult thing a man can attempt, even though he penetrate all the enigmas of both the higher and the lower orders—much more difficult than the weaving of a rope of sand, or making conversation with the faceless wind. He swore to forget the monstrous illusion which had sidetracked him at the outset, and began to formulate a new method for working. Before embarking upon this, he devoted a month to restoring his wasted forces. He abandoned all premeditated dreaming, almost always managing, however, to sleep for a reasonable length of time each day. On the few occasions when he dreamed during this period he made no observations. Before renewing his labors, he waited until the moon's disk was perfect. Then, in the late afternoon, he purified himself in the waters of the river, humbly addressed the planetary gods, pronounced the proper syllables of a certain powerful name, and slept. Almost immediately, with a pounding heart, he began to dream.

He dreamed him active, warm, secret, the size of a closed fist, garnet color, the shade of a human body as yet without face or sex; with a minutely precise love he dreamed him for fourteen bright nights. Each night he could see him more clearly. He did not touch him, but contented himself with witnessing his presence, observing him, at most correcting his growing with a glance. He perceived him and lived him at many distances and from many angles. The

fourteenth night he touched the pulmonary artery with his index finger, and then the entire heart, outside and in. The examination satisfied him. Deliberately he refrained from dreaming for one night; then taking the heart again, he invoked the name of a planet and began the seeing into existence of another of the principal organs. Before a year had passed, he came to the skeleton, the eyelids. The innumerable hairs were perhaps the most difficult part. He had dreamed a complete being, a youth who could not sit up or speak, nor yet open his eyes. Night after night, profoundly asleep, the man dreamed him.

In the Gnostic cosmogonies the demiurges mould a red Adam who does not succeed in standing erect; as incapable and crude and elemental as that Adam of dust was this Adam of dream, forged in the magician's nights.

Having exhausted his vows to the divinities of the land and the river, he threw himself at the feet of the effigy which may have been a tiger and may have been a colt, and implored its unknown aid. That twilight he dreamed of the statue. He dreamed it alive, vibrant: it was no longer an atrocious hybrid tiger-colt, but rather both of these vehement creatures at once, and also a bull, a rose, a storm. The multiple god then revealed that its earthly name was Fire, that in this circular temple and in others like it, it had received sacrifices and homage, and that it would magically animate the dream-created phantom in such a way that all creatures save Fire itself and the dreamer would believe him a man of flesh and bone. It commanded that once the youth had been instructed in the rites his master should send him down the river to the other temple whose pyramids still exist, so that one voice at least might glorify its name in that abandoned edifice. In the dream of the dreaming man, the dreamed youth awoke.

The magician carried out these orders. He dedicated a period of time (which in the end stretched out to two years) to discovering for his son the arcana of the universe and of the fire cult. The withdrawing of the youth from the man's being was intimately painful. Under the pretext of pedagogical necessity, each

day he added to the hours set aside for sleeping. He also remade the right shoulder, which seemed a little deficient. Sometimes he was troubled by the impression that all this had happened once before.

In general his days were happy; upon shutting his eyes he would think: "Now I shall be with my son." Or more rarely: "The son I have engendered is waiting for me and will not exist if I do not go."

Gradually he was getting him used to reality. Once he sent him to plant a flag atop a distant peak. On the following day the banner fluttered from the summit. He tried other similar experiments, each one more daring. With a certain bitterness he finally came to the realization that his son was ready to be born—and perhaps even eager for it. That night he kissed him for the first time and sent him downstream to the white ruins of the other temple, through many leagues of tangled jungle and swamp-land. Beforehand, so that he might never know he was unreal, so that he might think himself a man like others, he imbued him with total forgetfulness of his years of apprenticeship.

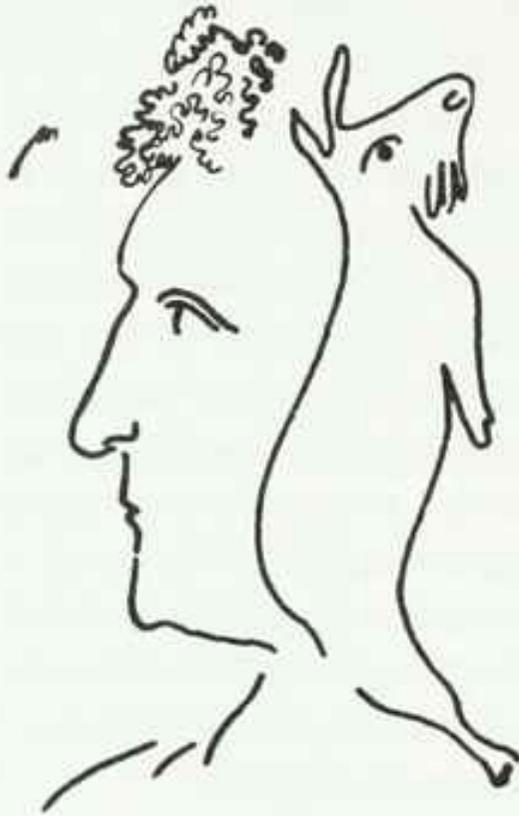
His victory and ensuing peace were marred by a certain disgust. At twilight and again at dawn, he would prostrate himself before the stone figure, perhaps imagining that his phantom son was in the act of carrying out the identical rites in other circular ruins, somewhere downstream. At night he either refrained from dreaming or dreamed merely as other men do. The sounds and forms of the universe came through to him but feebly: the absent son was being nourished with these diminutions of his soul. His life plan had been realized, and the man continued to live on in a sort of ecstasy. At the end of a period of time which certain narrators of this story prefer to reckon in years and others in lustra, there came a midnight when two men arrived rowing on the river, to awaken him. He could not see their

faces; however, they told him of a magician in a temple of the North who could walk through fire and not be burned. The man suddenly recalled the words of the god. And he remembered that of all the powers which go to make up the earth, fire was the only one that knew his son was not real. This memory, at first calming in its effect, ended by giving him great torment. He feared his son might meditate upon this abnormal privilege and in some way discover the truth. Not to be a man, to be but the projection of another man's dream, what incomparable humiliation, what vertigo! Every father has an interest in the sons he has procreated, (say, rather, allowed to be) in happiness or simple confusion; it was thus only natural that the magician should fear for the future of that son, thought as he had been into being, entrail by entrail, feature by feature, throughout a thousand and one secret nights.

His worries were short-lived. First: (at the end of a long drought) a far-off cloud on a mountain peak, light as a bird; then, toward the south, the sky, pink as the gums of a leopard; then the clouds of smoke that rusted the metallic nights; after that the panic flight of the beasts. For that which had happened many centuries ago was being repeated. The ruins of the fire-god's sanctuary were destroyed by fire. In a birdless dawn the magician finally saw the concentric fire encompassing the walls. For a moment he thought of seeking refuge in the water, but then he understood that death had arrived to complete his waning life, and relieve him of his labors. He walked into the ragged flames. They did not bite his flesh; they caressed it, and swarmed about him. There was no heat; nothing ignited. With relief, humiliation and terror he realized that he too was an apparition, and that in turn he was being dreamed by another.

[translated from the Spanish by Paul Bowles]

JAN. 1946



Self-Portrait, *Marc Chagall*

My Life: Two Excerpts

BY MARC CHAGALL

The first thing that met my eyes was a tub. Simple, square, round at the corners, and shallow, a tub from the bazaar. Once within it, I filled it up entirely. I don't any longer remember, was it my mother who told me, but just at the moment of my birth, a great fire broke out in a little house on the outskirts of Vitebsk, close to the highway, behind a prison.

The town was on fire, the poorer part of the Jewish quarter. They carried us out, bed and mattress, my mother and myself, the baby at her feet, and took us to a safe place at the other end of the town.

But actually, I was stillborn. I didn't want to live. Imagine a white lump that didn't want to live, as if it were already heavy with the paintings of Chagall. They pushed needles into me. They plunged me into a bucket of water, and at last I uttered a feeble whine. But essentially I was stillborn.

I hope that psychologists will not draw any improper deductions from that. I beg to be indulged.

However, this little house near the Peskowitz road remained intact. I saw it only a little time ago. My father, no more than a little better off, sold it. It reminded me of the knob on the head of the Rabbi in green that I painted, or of a potato thrown into a cask of herrings, steeping forlornly in the brine pickle. Contemplating this little house from the height of my recent "enlargement" I shuddered and asked myself, "In all truth, how could I have been born here? There is scarcely room to breathe." But when my grandfather, a man with a long black beard, died honorably, my father bought another place for a few roubles. And in the neighborhood of that other place, no more madhouses as at Peskowitz, a

neighborhood of churches, precise enclosures, market stalls and synagogues, simple and eternal like the fortifications of Giotto's frescoes.

Around me, coming and going, turning this way and that, or trotting sagely, all manner of Jews, Jawitchs and Beglines, the beggar and the rich man, schoolchild and Papa, all going home.

At that time there wasn't any cinema. People went home or went to market. And my little tub reminds me of that.

I say nothing of the sky or of the stars that lit my childhood. They were my stars, my cherished ones. They went with me to school and waited in the street until I came back. My poor darlings, forgive me. I left you trembling on your great distances, and I left you quite alone.

My town, sad and gay, as a little boy I watched you. I watched you as I stood at the door of our little house. You were naive and simple, but very clear to the eyes of a child. When the partition hindered me, I got up on a little paving stone. And if again I couldn't see, I got up on the roof . . . And why not? Grandfather had gone up there too. And I looked and looked at my pleasure. Here in the street called Pokrowskaja, I was born for a second time.

11

One fine day (there are no others quite like it) my mother was putting her bread into the oven. I came up to her as she held the flat baking shovel, and taking her by her flour-smudged elbow, said:

"Mama . . . I would like to be a painter."

"So that's an end to that, I am no longer to be trusted or held responsible. Enough. It wasn't for nothing that I felt something was going to happen."

"You understand, Mama, am I a man like the others?"

"What can I do about it?"

"I would like to be a painter. Save me, Mama. Come with me. Let us go, let us go. There is a place in the town; if I am admitted and if I complete the course, I shall be a finished artist. I would be so happy!"

"What! A painter? You are mad. Let me put my bread into the oven; don't bother me. I have my bread to look after."

"Mama, I can't wait. Let's go."

"Leave me alone."

At last it is decided. We shall go to see M. Penne. And if he acknowledges that I have talent then we shall think about it. But if no . . .

(I will be a painter nevertheless, thought I to myself, but on my own initiative.)

It is clear that my fate is in the hands of M. Penne, at least in the eyes of my mother, who is sovereign of the house. My father gives me the five roubles, the monthly cost of the lessons, but he sends them rolling in the courtyard where I have to run after them.

I had discovered Penne at the moment when, on the platform of the tramway rolling down toward la place du Dome, I had been dazzled by a white inscription on a blue ground: "Penne's School of Painting."

"Ah," thought I, "what an intelligent town is our Vitebsk." I decided forthwith to make the acquaintance of the master. Actually this sign was only a great blue poster in sheet metal, in every way similar to those you could see everywhere on the fronts of shops. Indeed in our town, the little visiting cards, the little door plates had no meaning. Nobody paid any attention to them.

"Gourevitch, Baker and Confectioner."

"Tobacco, All Brands of Tobacco."

"Fruiterer and Grocer."

"Warsaw Tailor."

"School of Painting and Drawing of the painter Penne."

All that is commerce. But this last poster seemed to me from another world. Its blue color is like the sky. And it trembles in the sun and under the rain.

After rolling up my tattered drawings, trembling, excited, I departed for Penne's studio accompanied by my mother. Already, climbing the stairway I was intoxicated, drunk with the smell of colors and paintings. Portraits everywhere. The wife of the town governor, the governor himself, M. L. . . . and

Madame L. . . . , Baron K . . . with the Baroness, and many others. Did I know them?

Studio crammed with paintings from the floor to the ceiling. On the floor also are heaped piles of paper and rolls of canvas. The ceiling alone remains free. On the ceiling, cobwebs and absolute freedom. Here and there are set Greek heads in plaster, arms, legs, ornaments, white things covered with dust. I feel instinctively that the way of this artist isn't mine. I don't know which way is. I have no time to think about it.

The vivacity of the faces surprises me. Is it possible?

All the way upstairs, I touch noses and cheeks. The master is out.

I will say nothing of the expressions and feelings of my mother who found herself for the first time in an artist's studio. She looked into every corner, and cast two or three glances at the canvases. Suddenly she turns toward me, and almost supplicating, but in a distinct clear voice, says:

"Well, my son . . . You see quite plainly, you can't ever do things like that. Let us go back home."

"Let us wait, Mama."

Privately I have already decided that I will never do anything like that. Is it necessary? It's something else. But what? I don't know.

We wait for the master. He must decide my fate.

My God! And if he is in a bad humor, he will decide "These are worthless."

Anything is possible . . . prepare yourself, with Mama, or without her. Nobody in the studio. But in the other room, somebody stirs. A pupil of Penne's, no doubt. We enter. He scarcely notices us.

"Good morning."

"Good morning, if you want it that way."

Right away Mama asks him a question.

"Tell me, I beg, Monsieur S . . . what kind of business is this painting, not bad?"

"What do you think? No shop, no merchandise."

Naturally we couldn't expect a reply that was less cynical or less vulgar. It was enough to persuade my mother that she was right, and to pour into me, stuttering boy, a few drops of bitterness.

But here is the dear master. I would lack talent if I couldn't describe him to you. That he is little is no matter, his silhouette is only the more intimate. The ends of his waistcoat hang obliquely toward his legs. They float to the right, to the left, up and down, and at the same time, his watchchain follows them.

His blond goatee, pointed and mobile, expresses sometimes his melancholy, sometimes a compliment, a greeting.

We advance. He salutes us negligently (one salutes attentively only the town governor and the rich people).

"What can I do for you?"

"Well, I don't know for myself . . . he wants to be a painter. He is mad, isn't he? Look at his drawings, if you please. If he has talent, it may be worth his while to take lessons, but if no . . . Let us go home, my son."

Penne didn't blink an eye.

"Spiteful man," I thought. "Blink that eye."

Mechanically he turned over my copies of "Niwa" and muttered:

"Yes . . . He has an aptitude."

Ah, you . . . I thought to myself in my turn.

Most certainly my mother hardly knew any better, but to me that was sufficient. Be that as it may, I received from my father the five roubles, and I taught myself for barely two months in the school of Penne at Vitebsk.

What did I do there? I don't know.

A plaster cast was hung up in front of me. It was necessary to draw it as quickly as the others did. I set myself assiduously to this task. I pressed my pencil close to my eyes. I measured and measured. Never right. The nose of Voltaire always slips down. Penne advances.

They sold colors in a shop next door. I had a small box and the tubes were poised inside like the corpses of little children. No money. I was going to study at the very end of the town. The further I went, the greater my fear.

In my dread of having cleared "the frontier" and of finding myself close to the military camps, my

color became bluer and my painting sharpened.

Where are these studies on sackcloth that were hung over Mama's bed: water carriers, cottages, streetlamps, processions on the hills? Apparently as they had been painted on coarse stuff, they had been put on the floor as carpets.

That was a nice thing to do.

You have to clean your feet. The floors have just been washed. My sisters used to think that paintings were made expressly for that, especially when they were painted on sackcloth.

I sighed and all but strangled myself.

In tears, I gathered up my canvases and hung them again on the door, but finally they were carried away to the attic, where, gradually covered with dirt, they buried themselves peacefully forever.

At Penne's, left to myself, I painted with the color violet. What is this? Where did that come from.

That appeared such an audacity that from that time I attended his school gratuitously until it was for me, as S. . . . had expressed it, neither shop nor merchandise. The neighborhood of Vitebsk. Penne.

The earth in which my parents sleep . . . that is all that remains dear to me nowadays.

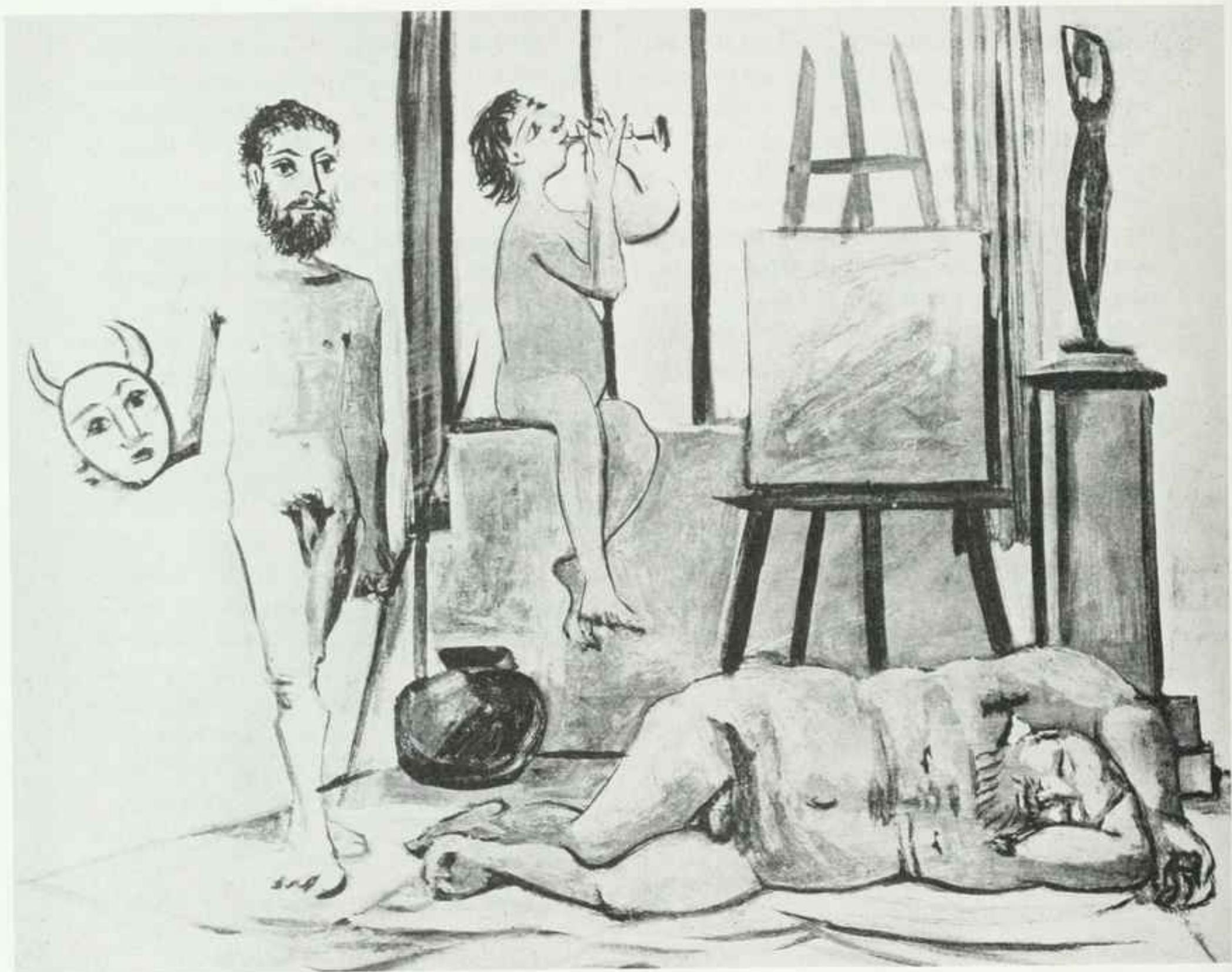
I love Penne. I see his quivering silhouette.

He lives in my memory like my father. Often when I think of the deserted streets of my town, he is sometimes here, sometimes there. More than once, before his door, on the threshold of his house, I wanted to entreat him.

I do not need to have fame, but only to be a silent artisan like yourself. Like your suspended pictures, I could wish to be suspended myself in your street, near you, within your house. Permit me.

[translated by John McNeil]

JAN. 1946



Les modeles, *Picasso*

Existentialist Theater

BY WALLACE FOWLIE

The term "existentialist" as applied to a distinguished group of French writers who have been active in Paris during the last eight or nine years was used first almost by chance, in much the same way that the word "cubist" took its origin. The writers in question objected for some time to the term, but finally, weary of opposing a fashion which had rapidly spread, accepted the name with many of its original philosophical implications. The leader, M. Jean-Paul Sartre, now edits *Les Temps Modernes*, the recognized periodical of the movement. There are essays and philosophical treatises which explain the existentialist attitude. *L'Être et le Néant*, a 700-page work by Sartre, who was at one time a teacher of philosophy, is the most elaborate statement to date and may well be a landmark in the history of French thought. As yet, Americans have not had the opportunity of studying this major work, but a few copies of the novels and plays have reached us.

Albert Camus, who now claims that he is not an orthodox existentialist although he retains much in common with the group, Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir all show great diversity in their writings. Each one of them has published essays, novels and plays. During the recent German occupation the existentialist theater proved to be one of the most successful aspects of the movement, and it is now probable that New York will see an adaptation of Sartre's play *Huis Clos*. Their theater is metaphysical and not psychological. The word *existenz* in the writings of the German philosopher Heidegger signifies the being of man, or *dasein*. Existence is for him a progress toward annihilation or

nothingness. The novels of Kafka illustrate the vain search of man's existence, his gratuitous condemnation. The forlornness of man, as described in the writings of the Danish philosopher Kierkegaard, is closely allied with the existentialist nausea toward life, with the homelessness and fearfulness of the characters created by the French writers. "I am unable to make the movements of faith, I cannot shut my eyes and plunge confidently into the absurd, for me it is an impossibility," writes Kierkegaard in his book *Fear and Trembling* (p. 44). Countless sentences in Sartre's novel *La Nausée* bear the same resonances and reflect the same metaphysical dilemma. "Nous étions un tas d'existants gênés, embarrassés de nous-mêmes, nous n'avions pas la moindre raison d'être là." (*La Nausée*, p. 163)

* * *

Sartre's play *Huis Clos* (*No Exit*) was first performed in Paris, at the Vieux-Colombier, in May 1944. The action takes place in hell, represented by a living room furnished in Second Empire style. The illumination is glaring and constant. The action is never interrupted and might well continue forever after the single curtain comes down. There are three characters, a man and two women, who are introduced one after the other into the room by a kind of bellhop. The idea of hell is ingenious in its use of existentialism. For each character, hell is the presence of the other two. "L'enfer, c'est les autres" is one of the final sentences spoken by the hero, and it is substantiated by the entire action and movement of the play. The theme is the disgust which each character feels because of the contingency of existence.

Garcin, the man, is a deserter who had been shot when trying to escape military service. Inès, the first woman to appear, is a lesbian who had seduced her cousin's wife. Estelle, the second woman, is an infanticide who had killed the baby she had had by a lover. The play appears to fall into four movements. The first, a scene between Garcin and the bellhop, is the discovery of the room and the inquiry into the kind of punishment which awaits the newcomer. Garcin discovers one main difference between the room and

life. Here he will never sleep because his eyelids are unable to close. He is struck by the constancy of the light and the absence of a mirror. The second scene begins with the appearance of Inès, who like Garcin is perturbed to find no looking glass. But to this initial theme is added the feeling of irritability. Garcin's nervous twitches exasperate Inès. The third movement, beginning with Estelle's entrance, is longer than the first two. Each of the characters lies to the other two about his reason for being in hell. When they realize the uselessness of subterfuge in such a place, the fourth movement is given over to a series of confessions. In place of a mirror, in which they might see themselves, Estelle, during her confession, has an awareness of what is going on in the world. She literally sees a dance hall where her lover is dancing with a girl. This power of vision causes her to suffer.

Huis Clos, which observes so strictly the law of the three unities and whose style is sober and non-analytical, is an admirable development of Baudelairean drama. It is the drama of the closed room and immobility, the torture of the place from which one cannot escape. The particular kind of tragedy which is so moving in the faces of Rouault's clowns is summarized succinctly in *Huis Clos*. The melancholy of Rouault's clowns and prostitutes can be explained philosophically by this concept of existence as being a feeling of dereliction and of estrangement. It is a philosophy of anxiety which seems to answer the anxiety of our day, the particular worry of young men in France and elsewhere faced with our contemporary problems of life and annihilation.

* * *

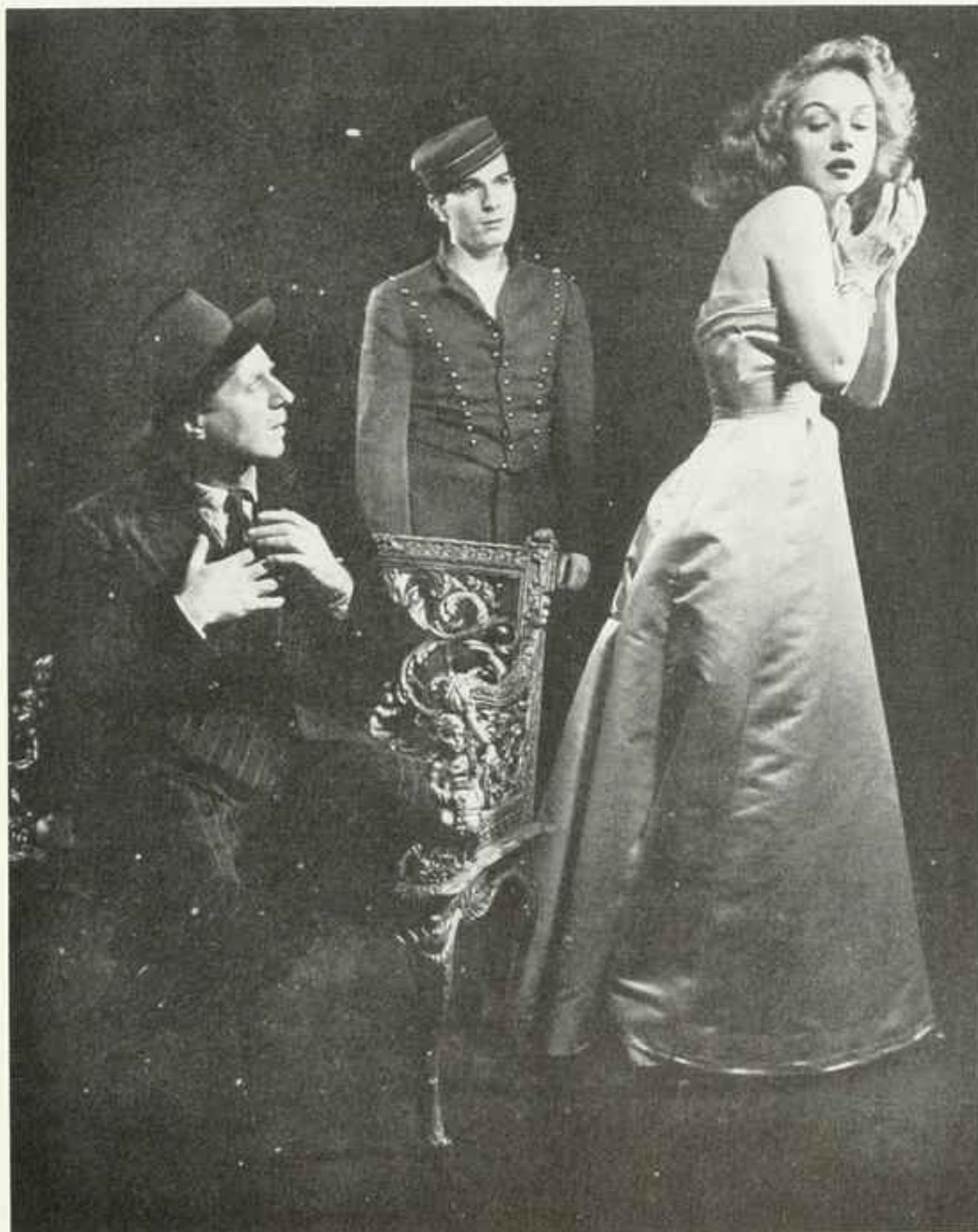
The second current success of the new theater in Paris is *Caligula* by Albert Camus. This play was written in 1938 and therefore antedates, I believe, Camus's essay *Mythe de Sisyphe* and his novel *L'Étranger*. It was published in 1944, and first performed in 1945.

The style of *Caligula* is very close to the traditional classical style of the French theater. After so many paltry and unconvincing attempts at "realism" and

"naturalism" in the French theater, this play of Camus, more perhaps than his other play *Le Malentendu*, represents a means to recapture and reanimate a great tradition. Its language has traits of purity and forcefulness which were developed in the seventeenth century and which reappeared in the twentieth century, first in the theater of Jean Cocteau. It is true that there are themes and tonalities of lyricism, cruelty, impertinence and humor, but they are all spoken without rhetorical affectation, in as stripped

and bare a form as Racine used, without the music of Racine.

Caligula is about an idea, articulated by the emperor himself: "Les hommes meurent et ils ne sont pas heureux." The thought of men dying without being happy is reasoned throughout the entire play until its most extreme consequences are reached. This is the doctrine of existentialism which in the particular philosophy of Camus treats of existence as something "absurd." Experience is irrational and un-



Claude Dauphin, Peter Kaas, and Ruth Ford in a scene from Jean-Paul Sartre's "No Exit" as presented at the Biltmore Theatre by Herman Levin and Oliver Smith in Paul Bowles' English adaptation. The play is staged by John Huston with a single set by Frederick J. Kiesler, and includes Annabella as Inez. [publicity photo: Graphic House]

justifiable. The discovery of the absurd in existence is the most decisive moment in a man's life, and when an emperor reasons thus, the results will be tragic and far-reaching.

The first act of *Caligula* is a kind of summation of all four acts. Caligula returns from three days wandering about the countryside and looks at himself in a large mirror. (The absence of a mirror in *Huis Clos* is as important as the presence of a mirror in *Caligula*.) At the end of the act, when he realizes that his life is being plotted against, he calls in the patricians and reflects himself, in a demented state, in the same mirror. The works of Camus all gravitate around the problem of whether life is worth being lived or not. This is why he chooses Sisyphus as the central myth, and why in his essay he can write: "Juger que la vie vaut ou ne vaut pas la peine d'être vécue, c'est répondre à la question fondamentale." (*Mythe de Sisyphe*, p. 15)

* * *

The first years of the existentialist movement were given over to the metaphysical problems. In the new drama the problems are becoming more recognizably ethical. It is quite clear that the existentialists do not believe in the reliability of reason, nor in the immortality of the spirit, nor in the transcendency of

God, nor in any spiritual progress of man. Men exist but there seems to be no apparent reason for their existence. Existence when described and analyzed, appears essentially "contingent" for Sartre and "absurd" for Camus.

Yet, the secret of human liberty, for the existentialists, seems to lie in the absurd or the contingent. In Simone de Beauvoir's essay *Pyrrhus et Cinéas*, every project is analyzed as being a perpetual surpassing of the present. M. Sartre in a recent lecture defined the verb "to exist" by the phrase "to sketch the future" (*esquisser le futur*). The eternally superfluous quality of existence has been discovered by the French existentialists in the writings of some American novelists with whom they feel close affiliation: Hemingway, Faulkner, Dos Passos and Steinbeck. The impression of the irremediable already outlined in the American novels, especially in those of William Faulkner, has deepened in the French existentialist theater. As in the myth of Sisyphus, so totally applicable to this philosophy, it is possible to continue existing and even working, to continue leading a multiple life, provided one understands and accepts its vanity. Sisyphus can continue rolling uphill his infernal rock as long as existence is impossible to deduce or differentiate from the void.

MAR.-APR. 1946



*Photo by Francis Lee
(Yale Beinecke Library)*

The Nationalization of Literature

BY JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

In those fine years of anarchy which followed the Treaty of Versailles, authors were ashamed to write and critics did not care to read. In the literary salons, one scarcely encountered a writer, but merely professional craftsmen in erotics, in crime, in despair, in revolt or mystical intuition, who, once or twice a year, at the insistence of their publishers, agreed to deliver a message. As they never bothered themselves in the least over their readers, and since it was understood, at the outset, that words could not express thought, many books were bought and few read. When a reviewer with professional care did consecrate a few hours to this exercise, his gaze passed over a text as a ray of sunlight crosses a windowpane, and penetrated directly into the man. Terrorism was à la mode. One pretended that the authors had never written, and if one considered their work, it was uniquely as a sum of disparate notes on their morals. Their processes and rhetoric were spoken of as if they were constructed, not of artifice and craftsmanship, but of piquant and licentious details of their private lives.

Today the wind has changed; literature and rhetoric are reestablished in their dignity and their powers. It is no longer necessary to light bush-fires with language, to match "words that burn themselves up," and to push the explosion of the dictionary to extremes, but merely to communicate with other people, and to utilize modestly the means at hand. Since we no longer have the conceit to separate words from thought, we cannot even conceive how words betray thought. Probity has

sufficiently recovered for us not to want to be judged on some ineffable idea of which neither the words nor the actions could ever be exhausted; we pretend to recognize intentions only by the acts which realize them, and thoughts by the words which express them. Suddenly, the critics are sent back to reading; everything would be for the best if we did not detect in the tone adopted by critics in speaking of matters of the spirit, the foreshadowing of a new fashion even more disturbing than the former. Certainly we no longer take an author for an idiot, an assassin or a miracle worker—that is to say, for a clown; no occasion is missed to remind him of his grandeur and his duties. But I don't know finally if it would not be better to pass for a clown than a cop, for the respect given a writer curiously recalls that accorded charitable females and civil servants. An official character spoke to me one day of Dullin.¹ "Dullin is a national resource." That does not in the least make me laugh: I'm afraid today they are only attempting by a subtle manoeuvre to transform artists and writers into national resources. Doubtless we should be congratulated in speaking less of their love lives and more of their work. But we speak of them with too much consideration. It is not that criticism is more indulgent, not that more orchids are handed around, but that criticism of the works considered is otherwise allocated. There was a time when it was assumed—after Racine, Fenelon or Pascal—a rare impertinence to publish a book, and an author needed all his talent to pardon him for writing at all. Today, it's entirely to the contrary, and the new productions benefit from a favorable prejudice even before appearing. But this kindness is not directed to the always solitary and uncertain efforts of an artist to make his feelings explicit. It has happened that each new book is considered as an official ceremony, and frankly, as a benevolent contribution to the festivities of the Fourth Republic.

A new book is not in the least considered as a green fruit which still needs ripening to clarify its meaning, but rather—and all at once—as a war

veterans' convention and the Annual Automobile Show. The reading public has limited the whole field: in certain circles we no longer say of a novel or a poem that it is lovely or agreeable or moving. A rich tone is taken, which carefully counsels: "Read it. It is *very* important." Important—like a speech of Poincaré defining his fiscal policy on the occasion of an unveiling of a war memorial, or an interview with a trade-union chief. Imagine Madame de Sevigné writing her daughter: "I have just seen Racine's 'Esther.' It is very important." Are the literary gossips becoming the really important ones?

How can one decide the importance of works whose careers are just commencing? Isn't it a hundred years later, by their influence, from their origins, that they are recognized? We immediately seize on the procedure of criticism and of the cheerful critics: they trouble themselves less to appreciate the value of a piece of writing than to value indirectly, from the outset, all its actions and its influence, defining with a perspective no further than the end of their noses, the literary currents that will be determined, analyzing the role they will play in such and such a social movement not yet born. Did M. Julien Gracq publish his *Beaux Tenebreux*? Our critics immediately spoke of "A return to surrealism." Return of *whom*? For indeed M. Gracq had never left surrealism. And, even if one referred to his *Chateau d'Argol* (see *View*, Volume I: Nos. 11 and 12) it appears, to the contrary, a profound extension of his first manner. But our clever critics are not bothered in the least to point out a continuity of attitude or the slow evolution of an individual who changes while remaining faithful to his general line. They consider the work entirely in itself, and as cut off from its creator. In 1945, six months after the Liberation, a "surrealist demonstration" had taken place. It was only that which interested them. Similarly, long before the war, they used, when speaking of the appearance of *Saint-Saturnin*: "An Important Step." This novel marks the return of "order" in Literature. What a strange sentence: for M. Schlumberger, from his very birth, was always in the party of Order. And as for the fomenters of disorder, the Bretons, the

¹Famous French actor.

Cocteau, I don't know that *Saint-Saturin* has profoundly influenced them. Perhaps they even forgot to read it. The critics never bother themselves with anything so unimportant: each year, each new publication marks a new departure, and a return. Here is one of our reviewers predicting twenty years of the lean kind: we shan't get any great works for twenty years. At the same time, another holds out for the fat kind, explaining marvelously well how the literature of tomorrow was fertilized by the sufferings of the Occupation. Still a third denounces the peril which the American influence represents for French letters after twenty years of American novels! But still a fourth reassures us: the publication of some novel has tolled the bell for this sinister influence. A fifth, a sixth, a seventh, discover present confusions in the literary schools: there is the spread of existentialism, they tell us, even into the field of the graphic arts, since one knows some painters and draughtsmen as existentialists. And even the musicians. It seems—and I beg pardon for speaking of myself—that part of it is my fault. But no, all the same, if one believes another critic, I am the Chief of Neo-Surrealism, having under my command Eluard and Picasso (I humbly ask their forgiveness for all this; I have not yet forgotten I was still in short trousers when they were already masters of their talents). And here is the most recent—the miserabilist school, so young indeed that it has not as yet had, so far as I know, any representatives at all. There are other tricks: certain critics, for example amuse themselves in depicting the book for which we are waiting. They see it, as Geoffroy Rudel saw his faraway princess,² and they find such persuasive accents to speak of it that we see it with them. Here is what the world is waiting for. Already the future novel, so eagerly expected, participates in the dignity of a holy ceremony. We shall find therein our own traits, hopes and furies. After that it only needs some volunteer to step forward to write it. We are in revolution, says another. Our literature has, *ergo*, all the characteristics of a revolutionary literature. And so on. Who could not understand his scorn

²*La Princesse Lointaine* by Edmond Rostand.

when he then stated that the young writers are superficial enough not to verify his prophesy? It is because they are false writers, saboteurs, perhaps even Trotskyites. Another, speaking last month (October 1945) of a very good French novel on the Polish partisans, writes serenely: "It is *the* novel of the Resistance." Formerly one had reserved a little for the future, had left their chance to the Russians, to the Belgians, to the Dutch, to the Czechs, to the Italians, to the Poles themselves, as well as to some two thousand French who have a work in reserve on this subject. Contemporary criticism is not embarrassed by such silly prudence: its pleasure is to depolarize: after each new work it makes a Statement, as if this new work marked the end of all history and literature. Statement of the Occupation: Statement of the Year 1945: Statement of the Contemporary Theater: they adore Statements. In order to make them the more easily, they halt careers by a stroke of the pen. Several pamphleteers, after *L'Invitée*, after *Enrico*, cheerfully agreed that Simone de Beauvoir, that Mouloudji, would write nothing further. I remember that M. René Lalou³ was disturbed to know whether *La Nausée*, which was my first book, was not also my "literary testament." It was a polite invitation: an author who knows life at the age of thirty writes his literary testament, and stops here. The scandal is that, with these literary monsters producing a book every two years, the critics are obliged each time to reconsider their previous judgment. Unable to guess immediately the nature of the new writer's career, they act like that reader of a big publishing house, who wrote, after reading a manuscript Pierre Bost had recommended to him: "Ask Pierre Bost if the author has any talent." Talent—that is to say in the publisher's terms: how many books has he in him?

What does all this mean? And what is there in common among the various opinions which we have just outlined? When an article in a magazine annoys you rarely do you think of its author. Your annoyance would be mitigated when you thought of him only if

³A French William Rose Benet.

it is some celebrity; but if the article seems to you the obligatory exercise of some poor bastard who has worked it up at night in the bedlam of a study hall, then your anger turns to pity. It is thus that you do not consider the words which irritate you as scratches traced on the sheet held in your hands: it seems that you are hearing them repeated by a thousand mouths like the sound of wind in the reeds. Each of them is a social event because it is passed from the lips of one to the ears of another, until it has been the occasion of repeated contacts between different members of the community: and finally, the article has nothing more in common with the lucubrations of an irresponsible journalist: it is an immense collective representation, reaching a hundred thousand minds—a kind of representation which seems to you fatal and holy. Criticism and letters today agree to consider a book as the editorial of a daily paper. Critics do not occupy themselves with what the author *wished to say* in them, and, actually, they are looked on as really having no author at all. They are only interesting to a critic as a slogan which, for a few days or months, will gather together an army of readers: they see in him a spontaneous production of the collective conscience, something like a public institution. In order to understand this institution better, in order to sketch its fate, to enumerate its repercussions, the critic chooses to look at it with the eyes of his grandchildren and to explain it, as a literary textbook about a piece of writing a hundred and fifty years old. A textbook might appreciate the influence that a production of the spirit *has exercised*; or explain to us its chances and judge of its effects, simply because it is qualified by a hundred years' perspective to write it into history. In a hundred years one could decide for good if surrealism had made or had not made a comeback in 1945, if the *Education Européenne* (of Romain Gary⁴) was or was not *the* book of the Resistance; in a hundred years one will determine the literary currents of this Postwar epoch; in a hundred years one will be able to give an appropriate

description of the form of the novel for which we are now waiting—if indeed we were awaiting one—in comparing the various successes of the novels which will have appeared in this decade. But we are folks in a hurry. We are in haste to recognize ourselves and judge ourselves. What has been done through the last twenty years is an important step in Western conscience. Under the pressure of history we have learned we were historic. In the same manner that Cartesian mathematics conditioned different branches of knowledge and letters in the seventeenth century, the physics of Newton conditioned the eighteenth, and the biology of Claude Bernard and Lamarck the nineteenth—history has conditioned us. We know our most intimate gestures contribute to the making of history, that our most subjective opinions combine to make this objective essence which the historian will name as the public spirit of 1945; we know that we belong to an epoch which will have much later a name and a face, and of which the large traits, the principal dates, the profound significance will easily be distinguished; we live in history like fish in water, we have an acute sense of our historic responsibility. Was it not told us, at San Francisco, that the fate of civilization was to be decided in the coming years? Did not Hitler repeat that the war he has just lost would decide the fate of man for a thousand years? But the more exquisite our historic sense the more irritated we become, while fighting in the dark, to be judged by a jury which has no acquaintance with our case—to feel ourselves involved in a trial, à la Kafka, whose outcome we shall not know, which perhaps will have no outcome at all. Is it not exasperating that the secret of our epoch and the exact estimation of our faults belong to people who are not yet born, and whom our children and grandchildren will spank for a long time after our death? We wish to cut the grass under the feet of these silly children and we wish to establish, at once and for always, what is to be thought of us. If we could turn back on ourselves, and eliminate the historic scope of our acts at the very moment when we were acting, it might appear that we turn the key finally in the lock, and present our heirs with

⁴A nationalized French Pole, a lone survivor of his French maquis escadrille who wrote a novel of the Polish Resistance without having been in Poland during the war.

an appreciation of our epoch so pertinent and so complete that they will have nothing left to do but ratify it. Thus we pass our time in circumscribing, in classifying, in codifying the events through which we live, writing a manual of history of the Twentieth Century for the uses of posterity. We have long laughed at the melodrama where the author said to the soldiers of Bouvines: "We others, knights of the Hundred Years War." It is very well said, but then we must laugh at ourselves: our youth called themselves "the generation of between-the-wars" four years before the Munich pact. We must laugh at them, even if events have made them right, for they chose to speak of themselves as if they were their own grandchildren. This is still a way of conferring a certain importance to that loathsome "I" which must be covered: one always respects one's own grandfather. On the contrary, let us penetrate this harsh truth: ever so high as we raise ourselves to judge our epoch, future historians will judge us from even higher: the mountain which we had thought to make our eagle's nest will be nothing more than a mole-hill: the verdict that we have rendered on our time will figure only among the notes of our ultimate trial. In vain shall we attempt to become our own historian: the historian himself is an historic creature. We must be content to *make* our history by chance, from day to day, in choosing from all sides whatever seems best at the time, but we can never assume those cavalier notions which made the fortunes of Taine and Michelet. For we are in it.

The same thing goes for the critic: it is in vain he envies the historian of ideas. Paul Hazard is able to speak of the intellectual crisis of 1715 but we cannot treat of "the crisis of the novel in 1945." Do we even know if the novel is in a crisis? We can see clearly what each author or school plans to do, and we can judge if, in their works, they remain faithful to their intention. We can detect certain private ideas, certain hidden notions. But we cannot indicate the position which the work will have for tomorrow's readers, we cannot already consider it as an acquisition of the objective spirit of the epoch: its objective appearance remains always veiled from us, for it is nothing else

but the aspect which it will assume in the eyes of others. We could not know how to be inside and outside at the same time. To treat productions of the mind with a respect formerly addressed only to the illustrious dead, is to risk killing them. Today there is no minor novelist who is not spoken of in the tones which Lanson used for Racine or Bedier for *La Chanson de Roland*. Perhaps certain of them feel flattered, but this is not without its obscure contempt; for, in the long run, it is not nice to be treated like a public monument when still alive. Let them beware of it: this literary year, which is not particularly distinguished by the quality of its works, is already brimming over with monuments; it resembles the Appian Way. We must reassume the modesty and taste of risk; as one can emerge from subjectivity (not individual subjectivity, but the subjectivity of the epoch), the critic must renounce his certain judgment and share the fortunes of his authors. After all, a novel is not basically a concerted application of the American literary method, nor an illustration of Heidegger's theories, nor a surrealist manifesto. Neither is it a wicked act nor an event fraught with international consequences. It is the risky enterprise of a single man. For a contemporary, immersed in the identical historic subjectivity, to read is to participate in the risks of the enterprise. The book is new, unknown, without importance: one must enter it without a guide: perhaps we shall pass through it without seeing its rarest qualities; perhaps, on the contrary, a superficial brilliance will give us the wrong idea about it. Perhaps we shall discover, at the bottom of a page, carelessly slung in, one of those ideas which suddenly make your heart beat and which illuminate a whole life, as it happened to Daniel de Fontanin when he encountered *Les Nourritures Terrestres* (of Gide). And then, finally, we must bet: is the book good? or is it bad? Let's bet: it's all we can do. From fear, from the taste of social consecration, critics today read as if they were rereading. I should be afraid if I were in the place of this petrifying Medusa that is a symptom of the death of art prophesied by Hegel.

But finally, one asks, what is the use of all this?

Why is it that the critic who pretended, twenty years ago, to seize on the most individual virtues of a writer by a quasi-Bergsonian intuition, occupies himself exclusively today in collecting the social implications of his work. It is the author himself who is socialized: he no longer passes in the eyes of the world for the rare specimen he once was; he now assumes the role of ambassador. Formerly, a new writer felt himself quite out of place in the world; he was not expected. The public never expects anything, or rather, if it does, it expects the next book of a novelist it already knows, whose manner and vision it has assimilated. But between the problems of each epoch and their solution through chance or tradition, whether good or bad, a certain balance is always established, and every new figure plays the intruder. Freud was not expected. The psychology of Ribot and of Wundt entirely sufficed to explain everything except one or two small rebellious points, which were assumed quite capable of being hauled back again into their proper place. Einstein was not expected; the experiments of Michelson and Morley could be interpreted without abandoning Newton's physics. Neither Proust nor Claudel was expected; Maupassant, Paul Bourget, Leconte de Lisle were plenty to dazzle the more delicate souls. Today, no more ideas or new styles are expected—but men are. The author is now sought out at home; he is solicited. At his first book, they say, "Well, well now; there's our boy." At his second book, they are quite sure of him. At his third, he is already enthroned; he presides at committees, he writes in political journals, he is considered for this or that mission, or for the Academy; the main thing is that he is canonized as fast as possible. It is already the custom to publish his posthumous works while he is still alive; perhaps they'll have even cast his statue before he's dead. It is, to speak strictly, a literary inflation. There is, in normal times, a usual and constant split between fiduciary circulation and gold coverage, between the reputation of a writer and the works he has produced. When the split is increased, then we have inflation. Today it has split to the extreme. Everything seems as if France had a wild need for Great Men.

There are, in the first place, certain difficulties in this situation. Normally, it is assured by a continued infiltration, into the oldest bedrock, of elements issuing from a younger generation. Also, the change is not very obvious, and the old men, attached to their privilege, serve as sufficient brakes on the ardor of newcomers. After 1918, the balance was broken to the advantage of the old men; the young remained at Verdun, on the Marne and on the Yser. Today we have the reverse; certainly, France again has lost plenty of young men. But the Defeat and the Occupation have hastened the liquidation of our preceding generation, lots of old reputations have turned out badly, others have sought refuge abroad and have been quietly forgotten, others have even died off. A poet, formerly fairly well known, said sadly one day, after having read the as yet incomplete list of collaborationist writers: "Our reputation weighs less than theirs." Traitors or suspects: Montherlant, Céline, Chardonne, Drieu de la Rochelle, Ramon Fernandez, Abel Hermant, André Thérive, Henri Bordeaux. Forgotten: Maurois, Jules Romains, Georges Bernanos (today they are doing what they can to make us remember them). Dead: Romain Rolland and Giraudoux. When Maritain returned to New York, after a short trip to France, he was asked his impressions of the Fourth Republic. He answered: "France lacks men." It goes without saying he meant by that: "France lacks men of my age." But it is true no less that this abrupt sacrifice of the elders has left enormous gaps. They try too quickly to fill them up. Thus, in certain countries, when a new political party assumes power, half the Senate is proscribed, which creates the necessity for a new batch of senators. Knighthood or the marshal's baton were then conferred on those writers who, in ordinary times, would have had to wait for them a bit longer. There is nothing in all this which is in itself blameworthy. Quite on the contrary; when, during the Occupation, disconcerted by the treachery of certain eminent authors, we turned to men, younger but quite loyal, these were given a vote of confidence, and, at the same time, to balance the weight of the traitors, there was conferred on the newcomers a glory that they

had not in the least deserved by their works; there was a force and a moving grandeur in this enthusiasm. I know that their silence has increased, not morally, as one might have believed, but from a literary point of view. That is quite right; the duty of the writer is not only to write, but to know how, when necessary, to keep quiet. But now that the war is over, it is dangerous to try to fish out great men from those who were inspired themselves with the same principles, since the collaborationists are provisionally constrained to vacation; there are no writers still working today who have not cooperated from far or near in the Resistance; at the very least, each one had a cousin in the Maquis. In literary circles, "to write," and "to have resisted" are synonymous. No writer presents his new book naked as a newborn babe; each new work is haloed in personal valor. A quite special mode of confraternity has resulted. "How," a critic asks himself, "can I, a Resistant, say of another Resistant that I do not consider his last book on the Resistance at all good?" However, he keeps this to himself, for he is honest; but he lets it be understood that the book, even though a failure, secretes a quality rare and more exquisite even than if it had succeeded; something like the odor of virtue. One more step, and this inevitable confusion between the value of a man and his talent turns to the advantage of politics. And who is to stop this, half-way—he who has chosen, in all purity, to like such and such a novelist because he has resisted the enemy? How can one not choose to love such another who is his comrade in the party? Sometimes, judgment intervenes; a certain writer—bourgeois and Catholic—would not have any talent in the eyes of a leftist critic; however, perhaps he has a bit because he Resisted. They pull themselves up by their own bootstraps. A hair-raising courtesy reigns in the world of letters. That is why I do not accuse of cowardice those who evaluate books by taking in account their political significance, rather than the essential value of their content; indeed we are now all in that position and I am not sure those who protest the loudest against this state of affairs are not themselves inspired (indeed even these) by political mo-

tives. An author, thus chosen and pushed, sometimes in spite of himself, into the front rank, represents the Maquis, or the Prisoners of War, the Communists or the Christian-Democrats, everyone in fact, but himself. And how is one to know whether his prestige comes from his years of exile, of prison, of deportation, of clandestine action—or, quite simply, from his talent. In order to make quite sure of this, the various political parties make a frightful consumption of Great Men. In 1939, the Communist Party got Paul Nizan the Prix Interallié; he was the favorite—the challenger of Aragon. He quit the Party at the moment of the German-Soviet Pact. He was wrong; I know it quite well—but his staying was no affair of mine. But what happened; first of all, he died, fighting, and then—he was a writer of the first order. Today, silence covers his name; those who speak of our losses speak of Prevost, of Decour; never of Nizan. Must one conclude from this that Aragon, should he ever abandon the Party (an absurd hypothesis, I quite well know) after having been Beranger (the popular poet of the ancien régime), would drop at a stroke to the level of Deroulède?

The entire public is implicated in all this. We are just discovering in our humiliation that France no longer plays, in tomorrow's world, the role she played in yesterday's. Frankly speaking, no one is guilty; our country did not have enough men, our subsoil was not rich enough. The decline of France, which after all, accompanied that of Western Europe, is the result of a long evolution; if we had been progressively aware of it, there is no doubt that we could have courageously adapted ourselves. The role we have still to play remains a splendid one. Only the truth was revealed in disaster. Up to 1939, our past victory (of 1918)—which had merely precipitated everything by decimating our population—the brilliance of our artistic and intellectual life had hidden our actual importance from us. We do not easily suffer so brutal a revelation; our shame of having lost the battle of 1940, our pain at renouncing our exercise of European hegemony, confused us. We were somehow tempted to believe we had not buried our country with our own hands; and at other times, we

lifted up our heads, and swore to ourselves eternal France would not perish. In other terms, we had acquired in the space of five years a formidable inferiority complex. The attitude of the masters of the world was not invented to cure us. We banged on the table; they did not listen in the least. We recalled our past grandeur; they replied: precisely—it was grandeur past. On one point alone we surprised the foreigner; he never ceased to admire the vitality of our literature. "How is it," they asked us, "you have been whipped, occupied, ruined, and you have written so much?" This admiration is easily explained. If the English and the Americans have produced few new books, it is because they have been entirely mobilized, and their writers scattered to the four corners of the world. We, on the contrary, persecuted, hunted, and, in many cases, menaced with death—at least those of us who were in France were at home. Our writers could write, if not openly, then at least in secret. And then, Anglo-Saxon intellectuals, who form a class apart, cut off from the rest of their country, are always staggered when they find again in France literary men and artists who are intimately involved in the life and activity of the country. Indeed many of them share the feeling that an English lady confided in me recently: "The French," she told me, "suffer in their pride. You must convince them that they still have friends in the world and, on account of this, only speak to them now of what we admire in France; of their literature, for example." Consequently from this admiration, at the same time spontaneous and complacently widespread—the United States, England, twenty other countries show a deep interest in our writers; never have our novelists and poets been so invited abroad. To see them, to hear them, and indeed to feed them. Switzerland has fattened up several; America, too. Great Britain will do her best. And suddenly we ourselves begin to take our literature seriously. What was formerly viewed as a mere pastime for the lazy or as a guilty career, now turns out to be an instrument for propaganda. Because known abroad, its prestige increases. Many preferred that we should have been admired for the strength of our

industry or the number of our guns. But we have so much need for prestige that they accommodate themselves perforce to an admiration for literature. They never stop hoping secretly that France again will become the country of Turenne and Bonaparte, but to insure the interval, they can retreat to Rimbaud or Valéry. Literature becomes in their eyes a kind of reinforcement. It was all right to treat a writer badly when the factories were working, when the generals had soldiers under their command. Today, young writers are hastily recruited, and warmed up in artificial incubators, to make them Great Men as fast as possible in order to send them on some delegation to London, Stockholm or Washington.

Never has so grave a peril menaced our literature. Powers, official and officious, the Government, the newspapers, perhaps even big banks and heavy industry have just discovered the force of literature and are utilizing it to their profit. Should they succeed, the writer can choose: he may devote himself to electoral campaigns or enter a special section of the Ministry of Information; critics will no longer trouble to appreciate his works, but to estimate their national importance and their efficiency; as soon as they learn how to use statistics, their discipline will make rapid progress. The author turns into a functionary, and, heaped with honors, retires discreetly behind his work. At the most he will speak easily of a novel "of Malraux" or "of Romain," as one speaks today of Fowler's fluid or Ohm's Law, as a kind of memory test. There are, on the outskirts of large cities, factories used for the transformation of rubbish; old rags burn well, provided the temperature is high enough. Following this effort, society wishes to salvage those materials hitherto considered useless—the writers. Let us take care; there are among all this rubbish some quite superb ones. What shall we gain by letting them go up in smoke? Is it not thus that the task of literature must be understood? Doubtless a written work is a social fact, and the writer even before taking up his pen must be profoundly convinced. He must, indeed, penetrate to his own responsibility. He is responsible for everything—for

wars lost or won, for revolts and oppressions; he is the accomplice of the oppression if he is not the neutral ally of the oppressed. But not in the least merely because he is a writer, but because he is a man. This responsibility he owes to life and the will (and, for him, writing and living are the same—not in the least because art saves life, but because life expresses itself in various enterprises, and it is his to write). But he must never turn against life to try to find out what it will be like for his heirs. It is not for him to know if he is determining a literary movement as an “ism,” but to occupy himself *in his present*. Not to foresee a distant future which he can judge after the fact, but to see from day to day his immediate future. The historian may perhaps judge that the Armistice of 1940 enabled the war to be won. Perhaps he may say, never would Germany have dared attack Russia, so initiating her defeat, if the English had established themselves since 1940 in Algiers and Bizerte. Perhaps. But these considerations could not appear in 1940; no one could foresee the Russo-German conflict on such short-term credit, and hence, taking account of the *actual* information, which we then had at our disposal, the war *had* to be continued. The author does not differ at all in this from the statesman: what he knows is very little, and he must decide what he will do with what he knows. The rest—that is, the fate of his work through the ages—is the devil’s portion. And we must not dabble with the devil. Let us admit there is an aspect of our books which will forever escape us. A love affair, a career, a revolution; how many things are started whose end we never know. Why should the writer escape this common lot? Thus must he accept risk and loss. Everywhere he hears he is eagerly expected. He must know quite well this is not true. An ambassador of French thought is expected, but not a man who seeks, uneasily, to express in words some new idea. His notoriety today is based on a misunderstanding. A great man is always longed for because a nation is flattered to have produced him. But never a great idea, because it is offensive. Let a writer accept the industrial formula: create demands in order to satisfy them. Let him create the need for justice, for liberty,

for solidarity and let him attempt to satisfy these demands by his utmost efforts. Let us hope he can shake off the pack of testimonials which surrounds him, and find in himself the strength to behave badly; let him clear the roads instead of entering the national sweepstakes, even if they give him a thoroughbred. I have never believed that good ideas are ever given ahead of time; each must invent them as he goes along. Perhaps criticism might contribute something in saving literature if it takes the trouble to understand writing rather than idolize it. In any case, we have here⁵ the firm intention of aiding the deflation of literature. It is probable that we shall not make many friends. But literature is asleep; a fine fit of passion—even fury—will get the chance, perhaps, to wake it up.

[translated by Lincoln Kirstein and S. P. Bovie]

MAR.—APR. 1946

⁵I.e., in *Les Temps Modernes*, edited by Sartre.



Photo by Francis Lee
(Yale Beinecke Library)

The Stranger: An Excerpt

BY ALBERT CAMUS

My thoughts had reached this point when the chaplain walked in, unannounced. I couldn't help giving a start on seeing him. He noticed this evidently, as he promptly told me not to be alarmed. I reminded him that usually his visits were at another hour, and for a pretty grim occasion. This, he replied, was just a friendly visit; it had no concern with my appeal, about which he knew nothing. Then he sat down on my bed, asking me to sit beside him. I refused—not because I had anything against him; he seemed a mild, amiable man.

He remained quite still at first, his arms resting on his knees, his eyes fixed on his hands. They were slender but sinewy hands, which made me think of two nimble little animals. Then he gently rubbed them together. He stayed so long in the same position that for a while I almost forgot he was there.

All of a sudden he jerked his head up and looked me in the eyes.

"Why," he asked, "don't you let me come to see you?"

I explained that I didn't believe in God.

"Are you really so sure of that?"

I said I saw no point in troubling my head about the matter; whether I believed or didn't was, to my mind, a question of so little importance.

He then leaned back against the wall, laying his hands flat on his thighs. Almost without seeming to address me, he remarked that he'd often noticed one fancies one is quite sure about something, when in

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"Don't you agree?"

I said that seemed quite possible. But, though I mightn't be sure about what interested me, I was absolutely sure about what didn't interest me. And the question he had raised didn't interest me at all.

He looked away and, without altering his posture, asked if it was because I felt utterly desperate that I spoke like this. I explained that wasn't despair I felt, but fear—which was natural enough.

"In that case," he said firmly, "God can help you. All the men I've seen in your position turned to Him in their time of trouble."

Obviously, I replied, they were at liberty to do so, if they felt like it. I, however, didn't want to be helped, and I hadn't time to work up interest for something that didn't interest me.

He fluttered his hands fretfully; then, sitting up, smoothed out his cassock. When this was done he began talking again, addressing me as "my friend." It wasn't because I'd been condemned to death, he said, that he spoke to me in this way. In his opinion every man on the earth was under sentence of death.

There, I interrupted him; that wasn't the same thing, I pointed out, and, what's more, could be no consolation.

He nodded. "Maybe. Still, if you don't die soon,

you'll die one day. And then the same question will arise. How will you face that terrible, final hour?"

I replied that I'd face it exactly as I was facing it now.

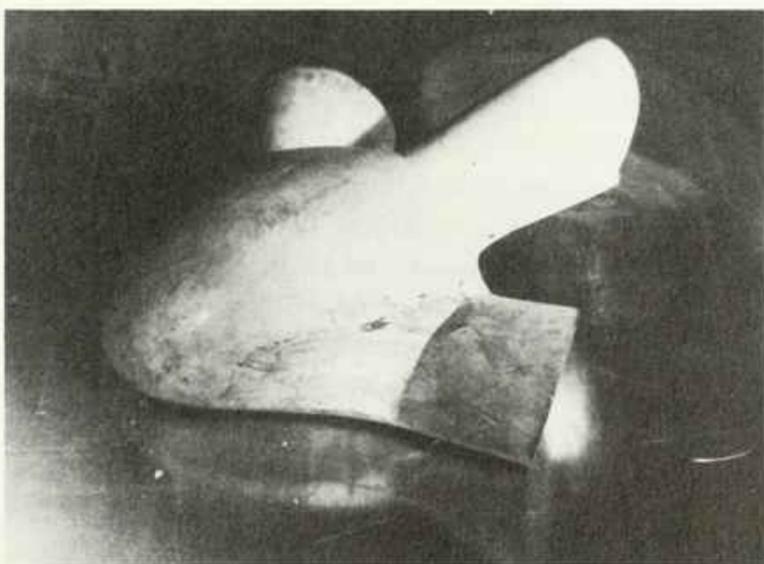
Thereat he stood up, and looked me straight in the eyes. It was a trick I knew well. I used to amuse myself trying it on Emmanuel and Céleste, and nine times out of ten they'd look away uncomfortably. I could see the chaplain was an old hand at it, as his gaze never faltered. And his voice was quite steady when he said: "Have you no hope at all? Do you really think that when you die you die outright, and nothing remains?"

I said: "Yes."

He dropped his eyes and sat down again. He was truly sorry for me, he said. It must make life unbearable for a man to think as I did.

The priest was beginning to bore me, and, resting a shoulder on the wall, just beneath the little skylight, I looked away. Though I didn't trouble much to follow what he said, I gathered he was questioning me again. Presently his tone became agitated, urgent, and, as I realized that he was genuinely distressed, I began to pay more attention.

He said he felt convinced my appeal would succeed, but I was saddled with a load of guilt, of which I must get rid. In his view man's justice was a vain thing: only God's justice mattered. I pointed out that



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the former had condemned me. Yes, he agreed, but it hadn't absolved me from my sin. I told him that I wasn't conscious of any "sin"; all I knew was that I'd been guilty of a criminal offense. Well, I was paying the penalty of that offense, and no one had the right to expect anything more of me.

Just then he got up again, and it struck me that if he wanted to move in this tiny cell, almost the only choice lay between standing up and sitting down. I was staring at the floor. He took a single step toward me, and halted, as if he didn't dare to come nearer. Then he looked up through the bars at the sky.

"You're mistaken, my son," he said gravely. "There's more that might be required of you. And perhaps it *will* be required of you."

"What do you mean?"

"You might be asked to see. . . ."

"To see what?"

Slowly the priest gazed round my cell, and I was struck by the sadness of his voice when he replied:

"These stone walls, I know it only too well, are steeped in human suffering. I've never been able to look at them without a shudder. And yet—believe me, I am speaking from the depths of my heart—I *know* that even the wretchedest amongst you have sometimes seen, taking form against that grayness, a divine face. It's that face you are asked to see."

This roused me a little. I informed him that I'd been staring at those walls for months; there was nobody, nothing in the world, I knew better than I knew them. And once upon a time, perhaps, I used to try to see a face. But it was a sun gold face, lit up with desire—Marie's face. I had no luck; I'd never seen it, and now I'd given up trying. Indeed, I'd never seen anything "taking form," as he called it, against those gray walls.

The chaplain gazed at me with a sort of sadness. I now had my back to the wall and light was flowing over my forehead. He muttered some words I didn't catch; then abruptly asked if he might kiss me. I said, "No." Then he turned, came up to the wall, and slowly drew his hand along it.

I made no reply.

For quite a while he kept his eyes averted. His

presence was getting more and more irksome, and I was on the point of telling him to go, and leave me in peace, when all of a sudden he swung round on me, and burst out passionately:

"No! No! I refuse to believe it. I'm sure you've often wished there was an afterlife."

Of course I had, I told him. Everybody has that wish at times. But that had no more importance than wishing to be rich, or to swim very fast, or to have a better-shaped mouth. It was in the same order of things. I was going on in the same vein, when he cut in with a question. How did I picture the life after the grave?

I fairly bawled out at him: "A life in which I can remember this life on earth. That's all I want of it." And in the same breath I told him I'd had enough of his company.

But, apparently, he had more to say on the subject of God. I went close up to him and made a last attempt to explain that I'd very little time left, and I wasn't going to waste it on God.

Then he tried to change the subject by asking me why I hadn't once addressed him as "Father," seeing that he was a priest. That irritated me still more and I told him he wasn't my father; quite the contrary, he was on the others' side.

"No, no, my son," he said, laying his hand on my shoulder. "I'm on *your* side, though you don't realize it—because your heart is hardened. But I shall pray for you."

Then, I don't know how it was, but something seemed to break inside me, and I started yelling at the top of my voice. I hurled insults at him, I told him not to waste his rotten prayers on me; it was better to burn than to disappear. I'd taken him by the neckband of his cassock, and, in a sort of ecstasy of joy and rage, I poured out on him all the thoughts that had been simmering in my brain. He seemed so cocksure, you see. And yet none of his certainties was worth one strand of a woman's hair. Living as he did, like a corpse, he could not even be sure of being alive. It might look as if my hands were empty. Actually, I was sure of myself, sure about everything, far surer than he; sure of my present life and of the death that

was coming. That, no doubt, was all I had; but at least that certainty was something I could get my teeth into—just as it had got its teeth into me. I'd been right, I was still right, I was always right. I'd passed my life in a certain way, and I might have passed it in a different way, if I'd felt like it. I'd acted thus, and I hadn't acted otherwise; I hadn't done *x*, whereas I had done *y* or *z*. And what did that mean? That, all the time, I'd been waiting for this present moment, for that dawn, tomorrow's or another day's, which was to justify me. Nothing, nothing had the least importance, and I knew quite well why. He, too, knew why. From the dark horizon of my future a sort of slow, persistent breeze had been blowing toward me, all my life long, from the years that were to come. And on its way that breeze had leveled out all the ideas that people tried to foist on me in the equally unreal years I then was living through. What difference could they make to me, the deaths of others, or a mother's love, or his God; or the way a man decides to live, the fate he thinks he chooses, since one and the same fate was bound to "choose" not only me but thousands of millions of privileged people who, like him, called themselves my brothers. Surely, surely he must see that? Every man alive was privileged; there was only one class of men, the privileged class. All alike would be condemned to die one day, his turn, too, would come like the others'. And what difference could it make if, after being charged with murder, he were executed because he didn't weep at his mother's funeral, since it all came to the same thing in the end? The same thing for Calamano's wife and for Salamano's dog. That little robot woman was as "guilty" as the girl from Paris who had married Masson, or as Marie, who wanted me to marry her. What did it matter if Raymond was as much my pal as Céleste, who was a far worthier man? What did it matter if at this very moment Marie was kissing a new boy friend? As a condemned man himself, couldn't he grasp what I meant by that dark wind blowing from my future? . . .

I had been shouting so much that I'd lost my breath, and just then the jailers rushed in and started trying to release the chaplain from my grip. One of them made as if to strike me. The chaplain quietened them down, then gazed at me for a moment without speaking. I could see tears in his eyes. Then he turned and left the cell.

Once he'd gone, I felt calm again. But all this excitement had exhausted me and I dropped heavily on to my sleeping plank. I must have had a longish sleep, for, when I woke, the stars were shining down on my face. Sounds of the countryside came faintly in, and the cool night air, veined with smells of earth and salt, fanned my cheeks. The marvelous peace of the sleepbound summer night flooded through me like a tide. Then, just on the edge of daybreak, I heard a steamer's siren. People were starting on a voyage to a world which had ceased to concern me forever. Almost for the first time in many months I thought of my mother. And now, it seemed to me, I understood why at her life's end she had taken on a "fiancé"; why she'd played at making a fresh start. There, too, in that Home where lives were flickering out, the dusk came as a mournful solace. With death so near, Mother must have felt like someone on the brink of freedom, ready to start life all over again. No one, no one in the world had any right to weep for her. And I, too, felt ready to start life all over again. It was as if that great rush of anger had washed me clean, emptied me of hope, and, gazing up at the dark sky spangled with its signs and stars, for the first time, the first, I laid my heart open to the benign indifference of the universe. To feel it so like myself, indeed, so brotherly, made me realize that I'd been happy, and that I was happy still. For all to be accomplished, for me to feel less lonely, all that remained to hope was that on the day of my execution there should be a huge crowd of spectators and that they should greet me with howls of execration.

[translated by Stuart Gilbert]

MAR.—APR. 1946



Petit garçon à la langouste, *Picasso*

It's Your Funeral

BY JEAN GENET

It was almost at the corner of the rue de Belleville, in front of the numbers 64, 66, or 68. A kid from the block had carefully explained it to me. There was a delicatessen. I didn't know the smell of human flesh, but I was sure of finding, among all those sausages and pâtés, some smack of a corpse. Everyone agrees. I live frightfully alone, desperate, in a voracious society which protects a family of criminal butchers (doubtless father, mother and three little children), despoilers of corpses, feeding all France with dead youth, hiding deep in a shop on the avenue Parmentier. I walked up the left-hand side with the uneven numbers. I was at 23. It was time to cross. I turned toward the empty street, a stream of dangerous light separating me from Hell. Ready to pass over, choking, uneasy with a grief made the more atrocious for fear of being alone in the midst of passersby, facing an invisible theater where death had done away with Jean, where had been played the drama—or the mystery—whose result I only realized by negation. So great was my grief that I wanted to release it in fiery gestures, kiss a braid of hair, sob on a breast, squeeze a face, wrap my hand around somebody's neck, rip up grass, lie there and sleep in the shade, in the sunlight or under the rain, my head on my folded arm. What gesture should I make? What symbol remained? I looked ahead. I saw a girl around ten, just my height, walking along quickly, clutching a stiff bouquet of white carnations in her little hand. I stepped down from the pavement, and an auto which passed on the other side but a little farther up than I, suddenly revealed a French sailor whom I recognized by his white

collar. He was leaning at the foot of a tree where a few people had stopped to look. The sailor's unusual act, accompanied by the passing of the little girl, made my heart pound. Once in the middle of the street, I saw better; at the foot of the tree there were flowers in iron boxes. The sailor had straightened up and was no longer a sailor. I made an effort to look at the house number in front of me: 52. I still had a hope; somebody else could have been killed there at the same time as he. I put my hands in my pockets. Above all let no one see me joining this preposterous popular homage. Forming a roadside altar, and from a distance seeming fresh, on closer view almost all the flowers were withered. I was in the middle of China or Japan, where the dead are honored in the streets, on the roads, on the sides of volcanoes, on riverbanks and the seashore. I suddenly understood, seeing a big wet spot, that water was flowing from the flowers; nevertheless, I couldn't help thinking of all the blood Jean had lost. It was a lot of blood. Hadn't he dried up since his death? Stupid notion; it was his piss. Unless it was the sailor's who had just relieved himself against the tree. Jean's piss! It was no laughing matter. Would he have died of fright? No: sometimes you lose your water. No, not that. The boxes were perforated. The white shop front, spelling out "B U T C H . . ." My God!

First I looked at the sturdy sailor, expansive in the midst of his spreading urine and I took the whole group in with a look: tree, flowers, people. The sailor, apparently a kid just out of the maquis. He was radiant; chestnut hair, bleached by the sun, a straight nose, hard eyes. To put his hands in his pockets, he threw back his trench coat, whose white collar, sheepskin, I imagine had fooled me into thinking he was a sailor. In front of the tree, the little girl was still squatting, putting her white carnations into a box whose green and red label read *Petit Pois* in white. I tried to see if I recognized her face, but certainly I had never seen her before. She was alone. She was doubtless playing at decorating a grave; she had found the excuse to perform openly the hidden rites of a nature cult to those gods children always find and serve in secret. I was there. What gesture could I

make? I would have liked to lean on the arm of this big maquis guy. Would this tree perform marriages or assert the outrageous lapses of adulterers? Its trunk was tied with a tri-color ribbon. This tree contained Jean's soul. It had fled there when the shots riddled his splendid body. If I went up to the kid in the trench coat, fury would make the plane-tree shake its angry feathers. I didn't dare think of anyone but Jean. I felt cruelly clear, under the pitiless scrutiny of things. Since these could read each sign, each secret thought, they would condemn my slightest intention. However, I needed love. What was there to do? What gesture to make? I had too much grief in me. If I opened up the least crack in it, the wave would flood over my gestures and do God knows what. Around the tree trunk, on a piece of ruled paper, and even pinned right on the bark, were fixed Crosses of Loraine, tricolor cockades, a few small paper flags with pins for a staff. And on the paper, in crooked writing, was inscribed: "Here fell a young patriot. Noble citizens of Paris, lay a flower here and observe a moment of silence." Perhaps it wasn't he? I still didn't know. But what idiot wrote the word "young"? Young. I withdrew as far as possible from the drama. I had gone down to the very homes of the dead to weep, to their secret chambers, led by the sweet invisible hands of birds, on a staircase that folded behind me. I bared my grief in the friendly fields of death, far from men: within myself. There was no risk of being caught in silly gestures, I was elsewhere. Indeed, "young" had been written in black ink, but it seemed to me that the certainty of Jean's death should not hang on a word that could be erased.

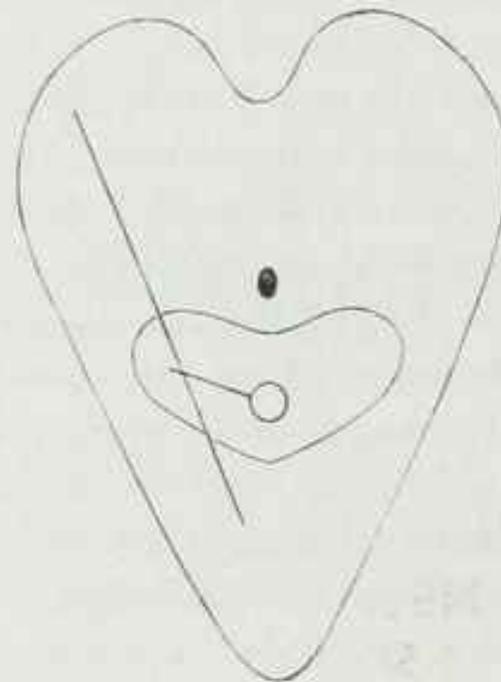
And if I erased it? I realized immediately that I would no be allowed to. The softest hearted people would still keep me from cutting the thread of fate. I would rob them of a deceased, and above all of a deceased endeared by the title of deceased. I thought of an eraser. The one in my pocket was for pencils. I needed an ink eraser, harder, more grainy. No. People would slap my face. You don't attempt resurrection with an eraser.

Boche, they would yell! Pig! Sell-Out! Traitor!

You killed him! The crowd would lynch me. Their cries broke across me, from my feet to my ears which heard them backwards. The little girl who had been bending over straightened up and headed off, probably home, twenty meters off. Could I have been dreaming? Belleville, Menilmontant, are they places around Paris where people venerate the dead by laying withered flowers, in rusty old tin-cans, at the feet of a dusty tree? Young! There's no doubt, I said to myself, it is here. . . . I stopped there. "Here" and the words that were to follow it: "they killed him," pronounced, as if it were, mentally, brought to my grief a physical precision which exasperated it. The words were too cruel. Then I told myself that words were words and that they did not alter the facts. I forced myself to say, to repeat with the grating repetition of a saw: *Here Here Here Here Here*. My mind focussed on the spot marked "Here." I was no longer even at a play. No drama could have been acted out in a space so narrow, stifling any human presence. *Here Here Here Here Here*. Have they killed him; here they killed him, here they killed him, here they killed him, they killed him. . . . and mentally I composed this epitaph: "Here they killed him." People looked at me. They no longer saw me, had no hint of my doings. A dishevelled woman was carrying her market basket. With a sigh she took out a small close-packed bunch of those silly yellow flowers called forget-me-nots. I watched her. She was a little dumpy, and tough-looking. She leaned down and put the bunch of forget-me-nots in to a rusty can, which already held some withered red roses. Everyone (five people, with the maquisard at my left) watched what she was doing. She got up saying, as if to herself, but for all of us too: "Poor things—we must not think who it is."

An old woman in a hat tossed her head. No one else made a sign or said a word. From one second to the next, the tree took on a striking presence and dignity. If it had grown deep in my parks, or on those peaks where I went to give thanks to love, I could have leaned against this plane-tree, nonchalantly carved a heart on the bark, wept, sat on the moss and fallen asleep in an atmosphere still mixed with Jean's

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spirit, reduced to powder by a gust of shot. I turned back. In the glass of the shop-window there were two round starry holes. At that point everything became an unhappy omen for me and the glass immediately was sacred, untouchable. It appeared to me as Jean's clotted soul, pierced but keeping its eternal transparency and protecting the loathsome landscape by its flesh, pounded, hacked and sliced up in the form of pâté de foie gras and sausages. I was about to turn back and thought that perhaps the tree would have lost its ridiculous jewelry, those tin cans, that spreading urine, well—all those things never seen at the foot of a tree and which could only be child's play or dreams. Everything might have disappeared, even. Is it true that some philosophers doubt the existence of

things behind them? How to seize the secret of the disappearing things? Turn around very quickly? No. More quickly? Quicker than anything? I tried a glance behind me. I spied. I turned my eyes and head, prepared for. . . . No, it was useless. The things were still there. You'd have to spin with the speed of a propeller. Then you'd see things had disappeared and yourself with them. I stopped playing. Heavy-hearted, I turned. The tree was there. A woman passed by and made a sign of the cross. This little festive rite, beneath an unselfish tree, was bad taste. I deny anyone the right to invent superfluous gestures beyond the polite and customary rites. For it was indecent. All that was missing was a wooden bowl draped with a ribbon of crêpe to gather in pennies for the widow's brats. These people in broad daylight, by a delicate gesture, if they had wanted to show it, had the nerve to keep their best vases at home and offer a naked hero flowers minus beauty in tin cans stolen from trash heaps, with the sharp edge not even blunted. However, the soul of Jean floated in the air around the tree. Jean was frightfully upset at having this messy wound, this wet, blooming chancre whose fleshly decomposition I sniffed; decay. Because of this chancre, Jean was stuck to earth, he couldn't absolutely dissolve into the blue.

* * *

One evening when I was walking outside a small French town, recently conquered, a rock grazed my trouser cuff; I thought I was attacked or challenged. My hand already on my revolver, ready, on guard; that is, one knee bent, I turned. I was on a small dune in the open country and I saw twenty meters away a lad of about fifteen throwing rocks for a dog to fetch. One of the rocks had glanced off me. First fear, then anger at having been afraid and having made a fearful move under the clear eye of a child, and the fact of having served as a target for a Frenchman, with the nervousness of all my movements, made me snatch my revolver from the holster where my hand clasped its butt. In any other circumstances I would have come to my senses. I would have put up my weapon, but I was alone and I felt it. Immediately, as

I looked at the lad's delicate face, ironically delicate, I realized that the time had come to realize what causes murder. The swift borderless streams of green anger flowed in me, north to south, from one hand to the other, entangling their waters, boiling, twisted or calm and flat. My gaze was fixed in a stiff face, sombre yet sparkling because all the beams converged in a ray at the base of the nose. A cry would have freed me from the muffled rattle rising without escaping from my stomach to my mouth. The child bent over in the twilight to take the stone, slippery with saliva, from the dog's throat. He straightened up, laughing. It was snowing. Before my eyes, on the sorry landscape, fell such a tenderness, to soften the corner of things, the angle of gestures, the thorny crown of rocks, a snow so light, that the hand clutching the revolver bent a little. The gay little black dog gave two yaps as he jumped around the child. The twilight pacified bleeding Europe. At the sight of the tyke's half-opened mouth I half opened mine the same way, but without smiling, by the act of inhaling not air, but rather hatred. The dog leaped silently around his bare-legged master. Across me, the green waves, stilled for a moment, rolled more strongly, quicker. The cataracts were putting electric machines to work, turbines, some kind of dynamos which released a terrible current escaping through the eyes, piercing the veil of snow, ripping apart the muslin that the child's sweet face laid out like milky twilight on this country scene frightened by a maddened soldier's anger.

"Violence calms storms; it is time."

I felt my weapon in my right hand. From my half-opened mouth to the half-opened mouth of the brat twenty meters off, closed in by the forms of lips, a column of shadows or of pure water flowed, joining us together at the stomach. But my pale glance destroyed formal appearances and sought the secret of death. My black police helmet, jolted by the brutal turn-about movement, already too far over one eye, fell on my shoulder and to the ground.

"I'm shedding" was a quickly passing thought which stroked me.

My left hand flicked a subtle gesture at the ground



to snatch the fallen headpiece. On my becalmed streams rose a light green vapor. A little humanity gave me back thought, slowly, and still from the time of the brusque turnabout to the gesture of aiming only three seconds had elapsed. My more humane gaze was even more serious, more insistent on probing the sweetness which the lad's smile snowed on the country scene, settled in emotion, toppled on its bottom without daring to whimper. To aim I needed but a slight straightening of the weapon, an aligning of the cannon whose sly black throat, humiliated a moment earlier by seeing the earth romp beneath it, became suddenly strong, sure of expressing an eternal self-evident truth; I needed but a few millimeters in the new angle. But to get there my hand described a slow, solemn gesture. My arm, loaded, clothed in black, swerved widely away, carried my hand out into

the night, passed behind the mound dominated by the child, circled round it, enveloped the lad several times, bent, went back behind me until it tied up the child still bound to me by the shadow column, then the arm, still longer and more supple, enclosed the countryside, seized the night, piled it up, bucked it in this slow, sovereign, encircling movement of the moment to make a sickening block of it, crossed by the blue ray of Erik's gaze, ever more and more humane. My arm described a few more rings; grasping, strangling every human thing it met, it led the revolver back to me waist-high, higher and slightly more to the right, the revolver with its mind made up. From an unseen tower, the first stroke of seven rang. From the stars to heaven, one, perhaps two. I felt that the revolver was becoming an organ of my body, a private part whose black orifice marked by a tiny

ultra-brilliant circle, for the moment, was my own throat finally having its word. Thumb. Thumb on the trigger. The highest moment of liberty had been reached. To shoot a child was to shoot God, wound God and make him a mortal enemy. I fired. I fired three times.

* * *

At the same time her mistress awoke beneath the flowers at eight o'clock, the maid left the operating room's icy hall blazing with sunlight. She walked behind the hearse. The curé had come running up. He was late, but he had come, because in these little provincial towns the curé always attends the removal of the body. If the deceased lived too far away, the cleric was satisfied to go half way. The family and he, ambassadors of two rival kings, of equal rank, agreed on a place along the route among the fields where the deceased and God met. This morning the curé was accompanied by two choirboys walking in front of the hearse on which rested the tiny coffin decorated with a wreath of beads in the form of a blue-white star. You realized that, of the two choirboys in black cassock and white surplice with a wide border of old lace, one will have the youngest Riton's face and the other, Erik's. Behind the hearse walked the housemaid, followed by an undertaker's assistant.

A hearse (*corbillard*) is a basket (*corbeille*).* I am behind a black crow (*corbeau*). She had come to the hospital very early and when she cleared the door which a sleepy concierge came to open for her, she found herself in the midst of a most luxuriant garden, touched up with dawn (it was seven o'clock when she arrived). She saw the pauper coffin, which seemed to her to be the skeleton of upper-crust coffins; she wasn't bothered. It was hitched up to a skinny old nag. He waited at the operating room door. The maid went in. The intern greeted her very quietly. He was chatting with the driver and the assistant undertaker. The driver told the girl: "It's a bit early, the collection (*levée*) is at seven-thirty."

The maid thought: "They're burying her by mail."

*Untranslatable pun.

The driver heard without her saying it, for he added, "I speak of the collection of the body, as is proper." He sniffled, and with a sleeve wiped off the drop hanging on his nose. In the noblest regions of the housemaid, those which would not succumb to grief, at the height of her soul, a nervous voice fidgeted and exclaimed: "Shet up! Shuddup!" But she herself, poor dear, could only hear a murmur whose sense she did not grasp. As you tighten a kerchief across your shoulders, she tightened Madame's crêpe veil, with heavy hands cracked by laundry soap. She walked quietly, silently.

"I am walking very gently, in the flowerbeds of the king."

Her poverty and wretched salary forced her to wear rubber-soled shoes. In this completely white room, the light had been put in the corner formed by the wall and the ceiling, so that the enormous shadow of the little girl in mourning was thrown on the opposite wall. On two low black horses rested the little coffin which contained her baby girl. "She's asleep, poor thing."

It was quiet enough to hear roundabout the croaking of frogs leaping and splashing in the water of murky pools, in the thick of which they still lived.

The bier was covered with a white cloth over which the nurses had placed that small wreath of blue-and-white beads, star-shaped, brought in the evening before by Madame. Floating among the flower beads, a chubby angel in pink porcelain swung at the end of a brass thread. The housemaid, after mumbling a short Hail-Mary, leaned against the wall to wait for the curé more comfortably. He came. At the church the cortège had to wait in a corner for the end of a ceremonial burial service for eleven German soldiers killed the previous evening. They had to wait three hours. Juliette couldn't sit down.

"They'll think I'm not sorry," she thought.

"They'll think I didn't love my little girl.

"People will think I killed her; who knows?"

The soldiers of the platoon accompanying their dead comrades looked at this small woman in mourning who stood near the ropes hanging down

through a hole from the bell tower. Finally the eleven coffins were taken out and escorted to the station, to rest on the far side of the Rhine.

At the church, the absolution was given swiftly. The short black cassock with missing buttons (round buttons like ladies' shoe buttons) showed the choirboy's legs bare and hairy in the rubber boots often seen on the Nièvre maquisards, and the white lace surplice did not detract from their strength. They served the priest as you serve an artillery piece. The servant passes the ammunition. They served with the same faith, the same devotion, the same promptness: incense, holy water, responses. When the church service was over, they were the first ones to leave, going ahead of the priest, the two undertaker's men, the coffin and the housemaid in mourning. A sacristan closed the church doors behind them. And in this interminable day began the long night of voyage for the maid, from the church to the tomb, and from the tomb to her room.

• • •

The horse drawing the hearse was tired. The two choirboys, one with a holy water basin, whistled a jazz tune silently. The priest carried on a monologue with God. The little maid breathed under her veil, in her black clothing. For a bit she tried to walk as fast as the procession, but was soon tired, and the hearse drew away from her. Her shoes hurt. One of them came untied and she didn't dare tie it because she wasn't supple enough to lean over and, on the burial day of her child, following the convoy, it wasn't right to put your foot up on a rock, since, besides the fact that it immobilizes you in the cavalier pose of a proud lady ascending a staircase, the gesture distracts you from your sorrow (or all that it must signify, which is even more serious) by interesting you in worldly things. The rites allow only a few gestures: wiping one's tears with one's handkerchief. (It is well known that anyone who has a handkerchief, and who still doesn't use it, letting the tears run down the face, shows a greater grief, but the maid was too tired to cry.) One can also wrap up in crêpe. From hospital to church she let the veil fall before her face, and as

she saw the world transparently through the black stuff, she thought it was afflicted and saddened by her sadness, and that softened her. Also, this veil, by isolating her, bestowed a dignity she had never known in her life, and she was a noble heroine of a play. It was death solemnly traversing for the last time the road of the living, exposed to the respect of all, death still alive, marching to the grave.

From the hospital to the church, she was this death, taking upon herself to allow, with the full realization of doing it, her little girl to pursue her daily round. But, in leaving the town for the countryside, to go as far as the cemetery, she put her veil on backwards, turning simply on her head this fantastic headdress. The procession became then for her a duty which she wished piously to fulfill but whose difficulty exhausted her. She was hot. She unhooked her bodice by a single hook, and then by another a hundred meters farther on. The cortège left her behind. Nevertheless she was astonished to recognize the fields, the clumps of trees, the walls of dry stone.

"After all, I am going to the cemetery," she told herself, "and now I am so far from my daughter"—for she felt she could never catch up with the hearse—"I could get there by a shortcut." She didn't dare. More and more her shoes hurt. Soldiers sometimes on forced marches use the slang: "My dogs are killing me." "My dogs are killing me," thought the little maid, but she scolded herself for so thinking, for it too precisely brought up her connection with a *troufion* in a town to the east. Then she thought of her little girl; raising her eyes at the same time, she saw her from so far off that she wanted to walk faster: "It's walk or bust." She was reminded of the soldiers of whom she was still ashamed. All these interior incidents wore her out.

"It's terrible to lose a child. And they force me to bury her. At least, my kid didn't belong to God knows who. She's the daughter of a colonel."

"Is the cemetery still farther on, sir?" She asked this question of the wind, of the sun, of the stones, of nothing. There was nobody at all anywhere near her. The procession moved down a dip in the road and was lost to her sight. She was alone.

"They are seated at table. They are serving themselves all alone. Am I tired. It's maddening that kids die and have to be buried. Couldn't you make some sort of soup out of them? They'd go well enough in their own juice, there'd be quite a lot of fat in the broth." The little maid let the black wood beads of her rosary, of which each was scored with carving, slip through her fingers. These surfaces raised in relief gave the appearance of a plaything to this object, the least serious of playthings. Is it quite certain that grief is greater the more conscious you are? You are sensible of grief when your soul is well-schooled, when you can examine it with a tension which is not upset. Then it dries you out as the sun stared full in the face, its heat devours you to such a point you can feel the burning in your eyeballs a long time afterwards. But it also happens that grief dislocates your faculties, shatters your spirit. The kid from the maquis also had the expression of a man whom too great suffering had disorganized. They say, "It's got him by the balls." Then you suffer from not being able to locate your grief, your actions envelop themselves in an atmosphere of languor and regret which makes your behavior seem false—false by a very little, generally right, but false because it doesn't completely overcome you. Everything is upsetting. You feel that a slight disbalance could wipe out this upset, and make everything go all right. In fact, it would be enough—if we could only watch it happen, that it would do so itself in this world where the one for whom it all happened were still alive, he for whom there is no longer a feeling if love did not one day force you to consecrate it privately to him. Grief disorganized the maid. Rarely did she think of her daughter, but she suffered for not being able to realize a single gesture which could overwhelm her. She passed by a farm whose iron gate was half-open. The dog took her perhaps for a beggar or a vagabond, for it barked. It came sniffing and barking at her.

"If the dog throws a stone at me," she thought to herself, "I'll bring it back in my own mouth."

Finally, turning, she threw up her arms, frightening the dog which ran off, howling louder. This first violent attempt to reconcile herself with life, led almost automatically to the gesture of gathering her veil against her chest which had swelled out like a sail when she had turned around. Her entire body took a kind of reassurance from this, she stepped along and wished to make herself more comfortable by taking her hat off. All the time walking, she held it in her hand and was immediately overcome by an enormous fatigue, for without thinking any longer about the death of her little daughter, nor about her own grief, she had the feeling that all these acts were false. They all happened in the normal daily physical world; and she moved in the same world certainly, but tempered by grief. And only certain symbolic gestures, in such cases, give us the full meaning which everything else takes away.

The poor little thing could only think of her child as a kind of excrescence of hideous and angry flesh detached from its mother's body. Dead at only a fortnight old. She had not lived for her. A housemaid can't make plans for her daughter. Her grief, rather, was physical, caused by this sickening amputation; death made the shred of flesh fall from her breast, which was attached there by the mouth. Her thought split the memory of her child from her which appeared as a little shrunken corpse, hung monstrously on to one of her tits by its nails and this dead mouth. Thus I considered, walking in the sun, on the road to the graveyard which leads a maid to bury her child.

Unmoved, Paulo watched her going on her calvary.

[translated by Lincoln Kirstein and S. P. Bovie]

MAR.—APR. 1946



Photo by Richard Ham

A Soldier Visits Picasso

BY FRANCIS LEE

The first time I saw Picasso was during the liberation of Paris; I was the first American to see him in over four years of German occupation. As a motion picture newsreel cameraman in the Signal Corps of the United States Army I went in with the armored division of General Le Clerc to film the liberation of Paris. In the midst of this joyous, delirious, noisy and also dangerous period, I managed to take time to inquire after Picasso. Was he in Africa, or Switzerland, or Germany or Spain? All these questions and many more filled my mind as I drove my jeep across place St. Michel. I had decided to ask the first Frenchman I saw.

There was still some street fighting going on and stray bullets were being fired in my direction from across the Seine. I cursed the Germans, parked my jeep and entered a café which was filled with people who had come in to escape being shot by the mad rifleman across the Seine (and of course because the French love cafés). As I entered I was greeted with a stony silence and suspicious and even hostile looks. This was quite different from the hysterically joyous welcome we had received on the boulevards earlier in the day and I was puzzled. But I ordered some beer anyway. My American accent gave me away and a mob of people instantly surrounded me, relieved to find out that I was an American. The astounding thought then occurred to me that they took me for a German. They'd never seen an American uniform before and thought my greenish blue "fatigue clothes" were a new kind of German uniform. And my G.I. helmet was mistaken for a kind of German helmet which it resembles

more than the English. "C'est un américain" spread around the café and the faces lit up. I was instantly plied with six or eight glasses of champagne—saved for this occasion. During the ensuing dizziness I found that one of my hosts was a painter and I somehow or other retained enough presence of mind to ask him questions about Picasso. When he told me that Picasso was very much alive and only a little way from the place St. Michel, I decided to go there at once. As there was still small-arms fire coming from across the Seine I took a rather circuitous route and finally located 7 rue des Grands Augustins. Picasso wasn't there but I was given an address on the "Ile," the island in the middle of Paris. After some more devious routes, I found it: a very attractive apartment

house not far from Notre Dame. Picasso was there and he was delighted to see an American soldier. He ushered me into his studio, offered me wine, and was really very elated. I suppose I glowed.

Knowing his political views, I asked him how he managed to escape the Gestapo. He replied excitedly in rapid French with a Spanish accent, that the Gestapo had visited him several times and had ransacked his place but hadn't taken anything, contrary to their usual custom, and were not molesting. "I suppose it was because I am too well known," he said. I then asked him if he had lost any friends through Gestapo operations. He replied: "All victims of the Nazis are my friends." He told me how some German officers came to see him and wanted to buy

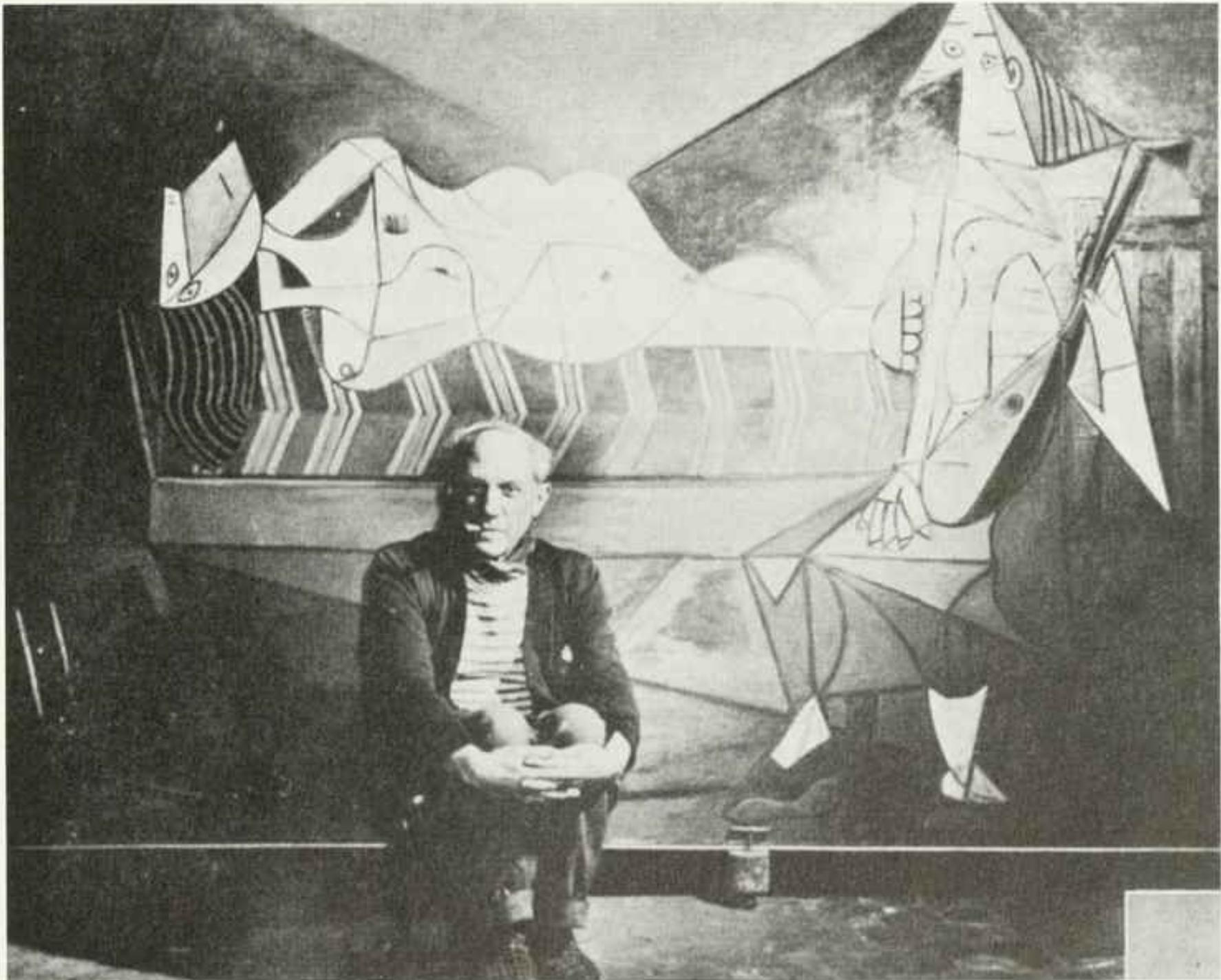


Photo by Francis Lee

some paintings but he wouldn't sell them. Some Nazi officers even offered him precious coal, but he refused. On the other hand, when some German privates came to see him, he gave them some little sketches.

Around the walls were quite a few paintings of his daughter. I asked him what he did when the fighting was right by his quarter, and he showed me a beautiful drawing in charcoal of his daughter, a rather realistic likeness. He also pointed out to me several nicks and bullet holes on the balcony and the windows. The painting on the easel had many agonized shapes and it reminded me of a body-filled ditch I had seen just outside of St. Lo. As I was the first American to see him, Picasso asked me about various friends and acquaintances in America—Duchamp, Breton, Léger, and so on. He was very pleased when I said that to my knowledge they were alive and well. I then asked him if he was planning to travel and perhaps visit America. "After a war," he replied, "people usually get impatient and want to travel, but I'm not thinking of going so far away."

Then his daughter came in accompanied by her governess. She was a very lively, charming, and intelligent child about eight, I should say. Picasso evidently loves her very much. I spent the rest of the time taking pictures. What a warm, friendly, human, charming and essentially simple person he is!

The next time I visited Picasso several months later after spending some time in Germany, he was very cordial, and also surprised because he had heard that I had been killed at the front.

At this time the situation in Greece between the British and the ELAS and the EAM was at its height. I asked Picasso about this and he told me how upset he was. As he talked about it I could see he was profoundly moved.

Several months later, around V-E Day, I visited Picasso again. I took a lot of pictures of him, his studio and his paintings. This time, when I looked at the paintings I got the feeling that Picasso was still absorbed with the macabre aspects of war.

Picasso had just received the news that he had won a large sum of money as a prize awarded by the Italian (Badoglio) Government to outstanding painters. He was quite elated at this success. During the same week, the Louvre had reopened and was making reavailable some of the famous paintings in its collection. I asked Picasso which of the old masters were his favorite now. "I don't see any difference between old and contemporary masters of paintings," he said. Presently some people came in representing a committee of Spanish Republicans, so I took my leave and bade him a very grateful good-bye, thanking him for everything. Shaking hands, he heartily wished me good luck.

MAR.—APR. 1946



L'accouchement, Jean Dubuffet

Dubuffet

BY RENÉ RENNE AND CLAUDE
SERBANNE

Jean Dubuffet's star, first sighted after the Liberation, is still ascending. One could wish it more solitary, less insistently accompanied by the clever publicity campaign now in progress. Its own light is of such brilliance as to make unnecessary all the glowing dithyrambs.

Dubuffet's vision is closely related (on the infantine side) to Klee's. But much more than Klee, the Frenchman has a keen awareness of the physical distress prevailing in certain social strata—his vision is that of a tenement boy. Often enough, a Dubuffet painting takes on the semblance of a game of hopscotch or of the marvelous, deceptive graffiti traced by street urchins on sidewalks and leprous walls. Both cynical and undecieved, his canvases reveal under their humorous surfaces, a morbid, even scatological vein. His turbid colors, which are generally in the dark range, serve to emphasize whatever is incoherent, even automatic, about his vision. In Dubuffet's presence, we find ourselves suddenly removed from the plane of purely intellectual research and of those thesis illustrations on occasion so embarrassing to contemplate. His is a free, spontaneous art in which the most delirious joy is always tempered by self-irony.

MAR.—APR. 1946

Eros, or The Drawing of the Bow

BY PAUL GOODMAN

*Mesonuktiois pot' horais—
Anacreonteia*

In the middle of the night/when the Bear already sinks/toward the hand of the Plowman,/and all the tribes that speak/lie overwhelmed in sleep:/then halting, Love did pound/upon my bolted door./'Who bangs upon my door?/My dream you have divided.'/But Love said, 'Open up!/Only a child—don't fear;/I'm wet; I've lost my way/thru the night without a moon.'/When I heard it I took pity/and taking up the lamp/I opened wide: a child indeed/I saw: he had a bow/and wings and a quiver./He stood beside the hearth/warming the palms of his hands/and shaking the wet water from his hair./But when the chill was past,/'Come,' said he, 'let us try/this bow, whether the string/is hurt by being wet.'/He stretches it and smites me/full in the breast, and stings;/and now he leaps and laughs,/'O friend,' he cries, 'rejoice!/My bow it is unhurt!/but you will ache at heart.'

So in these Trials of the Bow a man returns to his wound, both received and given; and joyfully puts his fear of castration to the test. In this first Trial he is a child again: to make all the world tiny, and be safe.

THE HISTORY OF EROS

This poem is the archetypal dream of the followers of Anacreon. It is a late dream, the result of a long repression. Eros has become a child again; he is no longer the powerful Archer of Homer. The older Desire was not helpless in the grown-up social world, but was one, not the least, of the forces of

constructive and destructive action; his acts were so strong and direct that one did not need (to describe Love) to look for him in one's feelings, in the sting of the heart, but could depict an objective dramatic scene. But by the time of the followers of Anacreon the social action of Desire was moderated, kept within bounds; then one inquired into the feelings of this Eros. Nevertheless, there was as yet no illusion, for there was as yet no repression of the pleasures of Love, but only of all its grown-up social effects. On the contrary, the experience was nothing but pleasure (and pain), and was never released into constructive and destructive, and self-destructive, action. Clinging, all the rest given up, to this pleasure. Then speculating on the polymorphous pleasures that one felt, one came easily to discover the polymorphous child within.

Now later most of these pleasures themselves came to be denied, and even pleasure itself: then one ceased to picture Love as one's real self at all. Instead people developed the illusion of an ideal object, a Mother, close to the original object itself but forgotten and untouchable; then the boy Cupid shrank to the size of an infant, who still decorates our calendars. (And what shall we say of the most recent years when a man, fostered in schools till his late adolescence, thinks that Love is an adolescent like himself, of female sex?)

"In the middle of the night"—when business is intermitted, especially the Anacreontic business of alcohol and roses, and polymorphous pleasures—one is alone.

Then one does not speak, but instead dreams: images, already the mode of thought of early years, but still concerned with grown-up business.

"Then on my bolted door"—for the mind is purposely shut fast against its depths. Yet the child is halted there behind: arrested.

"You have interrupted my dreams!" Surely! for this child is not himself a dream, a dream-thought; but the fact itself, the cause of thought.

It is only a child, no fear. It is the very child that one was. He is wet: newborn. He comes from the dark night: one had no acquaintance there. He was

lost, but now he has halted, arrested. In the Anacreontic day, many an experience might occur by which the child within might suddenly be summoned, and stand arrested.

"Pitying—" these are the idle tears, I know not what they mean, that are shed for oneself. For whom else are idle tears shed? But taking the lamp: now one will know.

So often, opening a door, one sees something framed in the doorway.

A child indeed. The bow and darts are the small penis erect. Winged: for easily a child soars aloft, borne in his mother's arms. This is why the childish Cupid is winged.

Warming himself: for he has come from the cold world of the dead. So it must always seem in the actual hour, that the past is cold and dead. Now reborn dripping, so he must be dried like a newborn child. Soon he is accustomed to the warmth of the present hour, and he looks about.

We must think of this child as about six years old, in the full maturity of childish sexuality, before that sexuality has been blotted from the mind. Is his power lost? This is the question. This is the trial of the bow.

His power is not lost: he stretches the bow. How easily this experimental masturbation must become the rivalry, penis for penis, of the trial of the bow in the *Odyssey!* As yet it is the self-love of childhood; next the love of a man for this little rival within himself. Will he not discover rivals outside himself?

As for the child, he rejoices, says, "Rejoice *with me!*" as if, a new discoverer, he was the first to find how to give oneself pleasure.

But the poet returns to his wound. This is the deepest thing he wishes, to return to his wound. His wound is the weak point in the armor of his ego; it is through the wound that stream the forces from the depths. To return and look into this deep spring. His wound is not the child, but that the child stands there arrested, that he could not merge into the present hour and vanish. That he torments one from the past. This sting leaves a rankling wound. It is a familiar experience that we try to fill up this void, like a

quicksand, with the pleasures of the followers of Anacreon. Also, on the contrary! there streams to us from this void such power and action as we do have. We loose another dart, and still the quiver is not empty.

2.

“Ioxou thesis”

—*Odyssey*, xxi.

Penelope said that “whoever could easily bend the bow in his hands and shoot the arrow, with him she’d go, quitting her nuptial home so fair and full of the means of life (which she thought she remembered as in a dream).”

The suitors could not bend it, tho they warmed the bow at a fire and greased it well. But their hearts ached not because of the woman, they said, but because the people would call them feeble.

But Odysseus (disguised), when he took the bow, turned it all ways and tried it here and there, lest it had been harmed in the absence of the king. “See how he handles it, as if he had such a thing at home!”

This bow that his boyhood friend Eurytides Iphitus gave him. He did not take it to the war on his black ship, but he kept it at home as a memento of his dear friend. There he used to carry it.

Taking the great bow, he looked about him on all sides, then, “as a man skilled in music and the lyre easily stretches a string around the peg, so hastily Odysseus bent the mighty bow.”

He thumbed the string and it moaned like the swallow. A great ache entered into the suitors’ hearts and their flesh crept.

This Odysseus did not have a wound, but the healed scar of a boar that attacked him when he climbed Parnassus with the boys of Autolycus.

Stripped of his rags, “Now this contest is over!” he cried to the suitors, “let us try another not yet proposed, so grant it me Apollo!” And he aimed the arrow at Antinoös.

It is the same penis rivalry, play and earnest, that we met with in the poem of the follower of Anacreon. But now it is not the child who bends the bow, but the man himself. This is the heroic expression of

Love in constructive and destructive action; it is not necessary to linger in the description of feelings.

The man carries not his wound, but the scar of his wound. By this we know him for the king. One has become a whole (scarred) man, with full power (such as it is). But it is worthwhile to mention also the hero Philoctetes, who was suffering a live wound, but then he did not shoot his bow.

“He looked about him on all sides”—posing: so the mutual contest turns into an exhibition of oneself. He exhibits first his scar, then his prowess.

The bow that his dear friend gave him, and the wound that he took in the company of the sons of Autolycus: we have not to do, as previously, with childhood, but with the sexuality of adolescence. From this wound one indeed recovers, and this bow can indeed be turned to slay one’s fellows, after all have drifted apart.

At least Odysseus did not carry his bow off to the war: I take it to mean that Odysseus was not one of your vindictive warriors whose aggression is nothing but the result of homosexual frustration.

“As easily as a musician”—so says Homer! For Homer, to be sure, this prowess and this exhibition are very easy. This handling—this power to stretch as if lifeless the audience of the song.

“my hand is strong, has turned to fire
the arpeggios of the lyre,
and elsewhere we love carelessly
who closely love Saint Harmony.”

At the climax of his poem (we may picture the scene), the poet Homer compares his hero with—himself!

“Stripped of his rags”—Odysseus is not stripped naked; on the contrary, bristling with sword and spear. An armed love. And Antinoös, when the king looses his arrow, is about to lift the goblet to his lips to drink wine: “death was not his concern, among many feasting men,” says Homer—these are the brothers sitting together, but no longer in trust and amity, but selfishness and greed.

“The doors were bolted”—it means that there is

no opening into this conscious slaughter for any access of deeper love. For yes! there is a free and natural love, a mutual aid among all mankind, deeper than these Trials of the Bow.

3.

I have so far omitted the most striking passage.

The son Telemachus spoke up among them: "Zeus has made me crazy. My dear mother in her wisdom says that she will follow another and leave this house, yet I laugh and am happy, like a madman. Come, suitors, since this seems to be the prize, she's not the only woman in Greece. What difference does mother's fable make to me? But I myself shall try the bow, if I can bend it and shoot! Not to my sorrow would the lady my mother leave this house and go with another, when I'd be left behind alone to take father's prizes."

He stood on the platform and tried the bow. Thrice he made it tremble, straining with all his might. Thrice his strength failed him. But the fourth time, he strongly bent it.—But Odysseus shook his head and prevented him from shooting.

The prince mad, and pretending to be mad, at once puts us in mind of Hamlet. The difference is that Hamlet's father was dead and returned to him from within, to stay his hand. No longer a prince of epic destruction, but of tragic self-destruction, and then even, as Goethe said, a prince of feelings rather than acts. But Odysseus has returned alive to Telemachus: there he sits (the doors are not yet bolted), one of the suitors, just one of the suitors. Why should not Telemachus also try the bow?

We may say that Telemachus looked for his father in three ways: (1) in order to *find* him, so as to have a secure father instead of the rout of suitors among whom he grew up—and we may imagine his hostility; (2) in order *not* to find him, to be free finally to make up his own mind; and (3) to *hunt him down*—for the Trial of the Bow. Well, now he had hunted him down.

"She's not the only woman in Greece—" What an

astounding statement for the son to make! What a lie of despair! Does he not hereby include himself among the frivolous suitors?

"When he should be left behind alone, in father's place"—blotting them out of the picture one and all, including Penelope, like a child affirming himself after he has agreed to take every fatal loss.

"Thrice he made the bow tremble!" So one grows up through childhood, boyhood, and adolescence. (By this time many sons have already won, or lost, the trial of the bow; but Odysseus has prudently absented himself for the full twenty years.)

"The fourth time he stretched it!" He is now twenty or twenty-one years old. It is a contest between grown men. This is the most unusual feature of the *Odyssey*, it is the essence of the *Odyssey*: that there is a father who has not struggled with and identified himself with, and succumbed to, his child at some childish age—two or six or thirteen—but he stayed away until it was a manly contest, in which a father has some chance of victory.

"But Odysseus shook his head and prevented him from shooting." So? Is this indeed what took place? And if Telemachus had let fly? And at what would the first arrow be let fly if not at Odysseus, the chief of the suitors?

What a surprise for Odysseus! To come home after twenty years to this young arrow! And as the blood gushes from his nostrils, is there not, nevertheless, a flashing glance of recognition, and love, from the eyes?

But Telemachus has not suffered a wound, therefore he lowers the bow.

These are the three trials of the bow. The trial of the child within; the trial of the boyish rivals; the trial of the father and the son.

The first is the lyric trial; the second the epic trial; and the third would have been the tragic trial.

But indeed, there is a free and natural love, mutual aid among all mankind, deeper than these Trials of the Bow.

MAY 1946

On a Painting of Van Gogh

MEYER SCHAPIRO

Among Van Gogh's paintings, the *Crows in the Wheat Field* is for me the deepest avowal. It was painted a few days before his suicide, and in the letter in which he speaks of it we recognize the same mood as in the picture. The canvas is already singular in its proportions, long and narrow, as if destined for two spectators, an image of more than the eye of one can embrace. And this extraordinary format is matched by the vista itself, which is not simply panoramic, but a field opening out from the foreground by way of three diverging paths. A disquieting situation for the spectator, who is held in doubt before the great horizon and cannot, moreover, reach it on any of the three roads before him; these end blindly in the wheat field or run out of the picture. The uncertainty of Van Gogh is projected here through the uncertainty of movements and orientations. The perspective network of the open field, which he had painted many times before, is now inverted; the lines, like rushing streams, converge toward the foreground from the horizon, as if space had suddenly lost its focus and all things turned aggressively upon the beholder.

In other works this field is marked with numerous furrows that lead with an urgent motion to the distance. These lines are the paths of Van Gogh's impetuous impulse toward the beloved object. Recall how Cézanne reduced the intensity of perspective, blunting the convergence of parallel lines in depth, setting the solid objects back from the picture plane and bringing distant objects nearer, to create an

effect of contemplativeness in which desire has been suspended.¹ Van Gogh, by a contrary process, hastens the convergence, exaggerating the extremities in space, from the emphatic foreground to the immensely enlarged horizon with its infinitesimal detail; he thereby gives to the perspective its quality of compulsion and pathos, as if driven by anxiety to achieve contact with the world. This perspective pattern was of the utmost importance to Van Gogh, one of his main preoccupations as an artist. In his early drawings, as a beginner struggling with the rules of perspective and using a mechanical device for tracing the foreshortened lines which bewildered and delighted him, he felt already both the concreteness of this geometrical scheme of representation and its subjective, expressive moment. Linear perspective was in practice no impersonal set of rules, but something as real as the objects themselves, a quality of the landscape that he was sighting. This paradoxical scheme at the same time deformed things and made them look more real, it fastened the artist's eye more slavishly to appearances, but also brought him more actively into play in the world. Whereas in Renaissance pictures, it was a means of constructing an objective space complete in itself and distinct from the beholder, even if organized with respect to his eye, like the space of a stage, in Van Gogh's first landscapes the world seems to emanate from his eye in a gigantic discharge with a continuous motion of rapidly converging lines. He wrote of one of his early drawings: "The lines of the roofs and gutters shoot away in the distance like arrows from a bow; they are drawn without hesitation."

In his later work, this flight to a goal is rarely unobstructed or fulfilled; there are most often countergoals, diversions. In a drawing of a ploughed field, the furrows carry us to a distant clump of bushes, shapeless and disturbed; on the right is the vast sun, with its concentric radiant lines. Here there are two competing centers or central forms, one,

¹ On the character of Cézanne's perspective there is an admirable book by Fritz Novotny, *Cézanne und das Ende der wissenschaftliche Perspektive*, Vienna 1938.

subjective, with the vanishing point, the projection of the artist not only as a focusing eye, but also as a creature of longing and passion within this world; the other, more external, objectlike, off to the side, but no less charged with feeling. They belong together, like a powerful desire and its fulfilment; yet they do not and can not coincide. Each has its characteristic mobility, the one self-contained, but expansive, overflowing, radiating its inexhaustible qualities, the other pointed intently to an unavailable goal.

In the *Crows in the Wheat Field*, these centers have fallen apart. The converging lines have become diverging paths which make impossible the focussed movement toward the horizon, and the great shining sun has broken up into a dark scattered mass without a center, the black crows which advance from the horizon toward the foreground, reversing in their approach the spectator's normal passage to the distance; he is, so to speak, their focus, their vanishing point. In their zigzag lines, they approximate with increasing evidence the unstable wavy form of the three roads, uniting in one transverse movement the contrary directions of the human paths and the symbols of death.

If the birds become larger as they come near, the triangular fields, without distortion of perspective, rapidly enlarge as they recede. Thus the crows are beheld in a true visual perspective which coincides with their emotional enlargement as approaching objects of anxiety; and as a moving series they embody the perspective of time, the growing imminence of the next moment. But the stable, familiar earth, interlocked with the paths, seems to resist perspective control. The artist's will is confused, the world moves toward him, he can not move toward the world. It is as if he felt himself completely blocked, but also saw an ominous fate approaching. The painter-spectator has become the object, terrified and divided, of the oncoming crows, whose zigzag form, we have seen, recurs in the diverging lines of the three roads.

* * *



Crows in the Wheatfield (detail), *Vincent Van Gogh*

And here, in this pathetic disarray, we begin to discover a powerful counteraction of the artist, his defense against disintegration. In contrast to the turbulence of the brushwork and the smallest parts, the whole space is of an unparalleled breadth and simplicity, like a cosmos in its primitive stratified extension. The largest and most stable area is the most distant—the rectangular dark blue sky that reaches across the entire canvas. Blue occurs only here and in fullest saturation. Next in quantity is the yellow of the wheat field, which is formed by two inverted triangles. Then a deep purplish red of the paths—three times. The green of the grass on these roads—four times (or five, if we count the thin streak at the right). Finally, in an innumerable series, the black of the oncoming crows. The colors of the picture in their frequency have been matched inversely to the largeness and stability of the areas. The artist seems to count: one is unity, breadth, the ultimate resolu-

tion, the pure sky; two is the complementary yellow of the divided, unstable twin masses of growing corn; three is the red of the diverging roads which lead nowhere; four is the complementary green of the untrodden lanes of these roads; and as (the n) of the series there is the endless progression of the zigzag crows, the figures of death that come from the far horizon.

Just as a man in neurotic distress counts and enumerates to hold onto things securely and to fight a compulsion, Van Gogh in his extremity of anguish discovers an arithmetical order of colors and shapes to resist decomposition.

He makes an intense effort to control, to organize. The most elemental contrasts become the essential appearances; and if in this simple order two fields are apart in space, like the sky and the roads, they are held together by additional echoing touches of color which, without changing the larger forces of the whole, create links between the separated regions. Two green spots in the blue sky are reflections, however dimmed, of the green of the roads; many small red touches on the wheat field along the horizon repeat the red of these paths.

* * *

In the letter to which I have referred, Vincent wrote to his brother: "Returning there, I set to work. The brush almost fell from my hands. I knew well what I wanted and I was able to paint three large canvases."

"They are immense stretches of wheat under a troubled sky and I had no difficulty in trying to express sadness and extreme solitude."

But then he goes on to say, what will appear most surprising: "You will see it soon, I hope . . . these canvases will tell you what I cannot say in words, what I find healthful and strengthening in the country."

How is it possible that an immense scene of trouble, sadness and extreme solitude should appear to him finally "healthful and strengthening"?

It is as if he hardly knew what he was doing. Between his different sensations and feelings before the same object there is an extreme span or contra-

diction. The cypress trees which he compared with an Egyptian obelisk for their beauty of line and proportion, become restless, flaming shapes in his pictures. Yet he practiced his art with an extraordinary probing awareness; it was, in his own words, "sheer work and calculation." His letters contain remarkable illuminations on the problems of painting; one could construct a whole aesthetic from scattered statements in the letters. But when he looks at his finished work, he more than once seems to see it in a contradictory way or to interpret the general effect of a scene with an impassioned arbitrariness that confounds us. Sometimes it is a matter of the symbolism or emotional quality of a tone for which he possesses an entirely private code: "a note of intense malachite green, something utterly heart-breaking." In another letter he describes a painting of a wheat field with the sun and converging lines—a picture like the drawing mentioned above, perhaps of the same theme—as expressing "calmness, a great peace." Yet by his own account, it is formed of "rushing series of lines, furrows rising high on the canvas"; it exhibits also the competing centers which create an enormous tension for the eye. To another artist, such lines would mean restlessness, excitement. Similarly, Van Gogh speaks of a painting of his bedroom in Arles as an expression of "absolute repose." Yet it is anything but that, with its rapid convergences and dizzying angularities, its intense contrasted colors and the scattered spots in diagonal groups. It is passionate, vehement painting, perhaps restful only relative to a previous state of deeper excitement, or as an image of his place of sleep.

In this contradiction between the painting and the emotional effect of the scene or object upon Van Gogh as a spectator, there are two different phenomena. One is the compulsive intensification of the colors and lines of whatever he represents; the elements that in nature appear to him calm, restful, ordered, become in the course of painting unstable and charged with a tempestuous excitement. On the other hand, all this violence of feeling does not seem to exist for him in the finished work, even when he has acknowledged it in the landscape.

The letters show that the paradoxical account of the *Crows in the Wheat Field* is no accidental lapse or confusion. They reveal, in fact, a recurrent pattern of response. When Van Gogh paints something exciting or melancholy, a picture of high emotion, he feels relieved. He experiences in the end peace, calmness, health. The painting is a genuine catharsis. The final effect upon him is one of order and serenity after the whirlwind of feeling.

Yes, there is health and strength for Van Gogh in his paroxysmal rendering of the wheat field and the sky. The task of painting has for him a conscious restorative function. He believed already some time before that it was only painting that kept him from going mad. "I raced like a locomotive to my painting," he wrote, when he felt that an attack was coming. He spoke of his art as "the lightning conductor for my illness." It is customary to describe Van Gogh as an inspired madman whose creativeness was due to his unhappy mental condition, and indeed he admitted this himself. Looking back on the intense yellows in his work of 1888, he said: "To attain the high yellow note that I attained last summer, I really had to be pretty well strung up." But he saw also that he was not insane, although subject to attacks: "As far as I can judge, I am not properly speaking a madman. You will see that the canvases I have done in the intervals are restrained and not inferior to the others." Whatever may be said about the connection between his calling as an artist and his psychic conflicts, it remains true that for Van Gogh painting was an act of high intelligence which enabled him to forestall the oncoming collapse. In his own words, he "knew well what he wanted." The psychiatrist and philosopher Jaspers, in a book on great schizophrenic artists in which he examines the lives of Hölderlin, Strindberg and Van Gogh, observes as a peculiarity of Van Gogh "his sovereign attitude to his illness," his constant self-observation and effort of control.² The painter, more than the others, wished to understand his own state. With a rare lucidity he watched his

² The psychosis of Van Gogh, it should be said, is still obscure, and some medical investigators regard it as an epileptic process rather than schizophrenia.

behavior to foresee the attacks and to take precautions against them, until in the end his despair destroyed him.

If Van Gogh derived from internal conflicts the energies and interests which animate his work (and perhaps certain original structures of the forms), its qualities depend as much on his resistance to disintegration. Among these qualities, one of the most essential was his attachment to the object, his personal realism. I do not mean realism in the repugnant, narrow sense that it has acquired today, and that is too lightly called photographic—photography has also a deeper expressive side in its fascinating revelation of things—but rather the sentiment that external reality is an object of strong desire or need, as a possession and potential means of fulfilment of the striving human being, and is therefore the necessary ground of art. When Van Gogh describes his paintings, he names the objects and their local colors as inseparable substances and properties, unlike an Impressionist painter, who might be more acutely observant, but would be less concerned with the object and would, on the contrary, welcome its dissolution in an atmosphere that carries something of the mood of reverie without desire, as if a primordial separateness of man and the neutral things around him had been overcome through their common immersion in a passive state called sensation. For Van Gogh the object was the symbol and guarantee of sanity. He speaks somewhere of the “reassuring, familiar look of things”; and in another letter: “Personally, I love things that are real, things that are possible . . .” “I’m terrified of getting away from the possible . . .” The strong dark lines that he draws around trees, houses and faces, establish their existence and peculiarity with a conviction unknown to previous art. Struggling against the perspective that diminishes an individual object before his eyes, he renders it larger than life. The loading of the pigment is in part a reflex of this attitude, a frantic effort to preserve in the image of things their tangible matter and to create something equally solid and concrete on the canvas. Personality itself is an object, since he is filled with an unquenchable love for the

human being as a separate substance and another self; he is able then to paint himself and others as complete, subsistent objects and through such paintings to experience their firmness and sure presence and to possess them. That is why, standing before the ominous sky and wheat field, with the oncoming crows, he is able to paint not only this sadness and solitude, but also the health and strength that reality alone can give him.

Yet can it give these to him? we must ask. Or is this a desperate effort to obtain from the landscape what it no longer possesses? Is Van Gogh perhaps the last great painter of reality and the precursor of an antiobjective art because his earnest attempt to integrate himself through the representation of things is hopeless? Is this the crucial personal failure, the tragic artistic success for which he pays with his life? We have seen how his devoted vision of the exterior world is disturbed by emotionally charged forms which subvert the perspective relations, how the convergence toward the horizon through which the whole space normally appears ordered with respect to the fixed gaze of the beholder, is confused by divergences and complexities arising from stresses within the artist which resist this harmony, this preestablished coordinating system in the glance. Nature is now foreign to man, its highest consciousness and reflector. It has ceased to be a model of inner harmony and strength. From this time on, external reality will no longer offer artists “healthful and strengthening” objects of love, only random elements for dreams or aesthetic manipulation.

But dreams are just what Van Gogh avoided as the paths to insanity. “To think, not to dream, is our duty,” he wrote. To his friend, Bernard, who described to him his new religious pictures inspired by mediaeval Christianity, the former theological student and missionary replied that such an attempt in our age was an impossible evasion: “It’s an enchanted territory, old man, and one quickly finds oneself up against a wall”; only the reality of our time could provide the ground of art and human satisfaction. But he himself could not survive on this ground. It implied faith in a social order of which he perceived



Starry Night, Vincent Van Gogh

the injustice and cruelty and growing chaos. At this moment already, to artists of insight, "reality" meant for the most part the things that constrain or destroy us. Vincent observed that under modern conditions artists were bound to be somewhat crazy; "perhaps some day everyone will have neurosis." Without irony he opposed to Bernard's painting of the *Garden of Gethsemane* his own picture of the garden of the hospital where he was confined. He would not turn to an inner world of fantasy that might console him, since he knew that for himself that surely meant madness. Toward the end, he was drawn at times to religious fancies, but fought them off as unhealthy. The figure of the human Christ still attracted him. If he wrote of God as an artist whose one great creation, the world, was "a study that didn't come off," he revered Christ as the supreme artist, "more of an artist than all the others, disdaining marble and clay and color, working in the living flesh." But the few Christian themes that he painted while in the asylum were, without exception, copied from prints after other artists, and were significantly images of pathos, like the Good Samaritan and the Dead Christ. His sincerity, requiring always faithfulness to direct experience, kept him from inventing religious pictures.

When inspired by the vision of the *Starry Night*, he put into his painting of the sky the exaltation of his desire for a mystical union and release, but no theology, no allegories of the divine. He had written to Theo some time before, after describing his plan to do difficult scenes from life: "That does not keep me from having a terrible need of—shall I say the word—of religion. Then I go out at night to paint the stars." There is, however, in the gigantic coiling cloud and in the strangely luminous crescent—an anomalous complex of moon and sun and earth shadow, locked in an eclipse³—a possible unconscious reminiscence of the apocalyptic theme of the woman in pain of birth, girded with the sun and moon and

³ A student of mine, Richard Held, has pointed out the unnatural character of the moon. He observed that Van Gogh, in describing a previous painting of the night sky in a letter to Gauguin, speaks of the moon crescent as emerging from the earth shadow. But no lunar eclipse was visible in France in the years around 1888. It is therefore possible that the artist, who might have read of such an eclipse, has confused it with the explanation of the phases of the moon. Mr. Held has suggested further that the relation of moon, earth shadow and sun in this painting symbolizes unconsciously a family—father, mother and child—whence my own comparison with the apocalyptic incident, which is often represented with great splendor in the Middle Ages and identified with an eclipse.

crowned with the stars, whose newborn child is threatened by the dragon (Revelations 12, 1 ff.). What submerged feelings and memories underlie this work is hinted also by the church spire in the foreground, Northern in its steepness and acuity, a spire which in the earlier drawing is lost in the profusion of writhing vertical trees—the monotony of uncontrolled emotion—but is disengaged in the final work where a pictorial intelligence, in clarifying the form, strengthens also the expression of feeling.

This painting is the limit of Vincent's attempt to go beyond the overtness of everyday objects, and it is, interestingly enough, an experience of the Provençal night sky, an image of the actual place and moment of religious incitation to his lonely soul. Here, in contradiction of his avowed principles and in spite of his fear of the vague, the mystical, and the passive surrender to God, he allows a freer rein to fantasy and hitherto repressed trends of feeling. Yet his vision remains anchored to the ground of the given, the common spatial world that he has lived with his own eyes. Thus even in this exceptional work of a spontaneous religious tendency we discern the tenaciousness of his objective spirit.

In the same way, his effusive color symbolism—the “heartbreaking” malachite green or the deeper green which represents the “terrible passions of mankind” and the intense blue background which would evoke infinity in the portrait of an artist-friend whom he loves—all this concerns the qualities of particular visible objects and his feelings about them.

But his interest in symbolic coloring is already a shift in attitude. Together with it, he resolves to paint less accurately, to forget perspective and to apply color in a more emphatic, emotional way. In this change which is legible in certain pictures and letters of the summer of 1888, I think we shall not be wrong in seeing a suggestion from the Paris milieu which Vincent had come to know the year before and with which he maintained his intimacy by correspondence all through 1888, especially with Gauguin and Bernard, the leaders of the new trend of Symbolism in painting. Vincent was a deeply receptive man, eager

always for friendship and collaboration; while in Arles, far from his friends, he constantly stirred in his mind common projects which would reunite him with these Parisian friends. In the letter to Theo, expressing his Symbolist ideas about color, he attributes them to Delacroix; we can scarcely doubt that they are more recent and represent the viewpoint of the young avant-garde in Paris. If, in the following year, he criticizes Bernard severely for his religious paintings, Vincent in that same summer undertakes several himself, not so much to emulate Bernard and Gauguin—we have seen that his religious pictures are copies—but out of sympathy and brotherliness and a desire to share their problems. Yet these impulses toward religious themes are momentary and slight deflections. There is an inner growth in his art, so closely bound to his state of mind and the working out of his interior conflicts, so compulsive in its inventions, that he seems to originate Symbolism and Expressionism entirely from within, apart from all that is going on around him. Most likely he could not have formed his art without the spur of his Parisian experience and the contact with men whose congenial spiritual independence was joined to an attitude of artistic innovation, such as he had not suspected before he met them. He retained, however, to the end the fidelity to the world of objects and human beings that he had sworn at the beginning of his studies. The pictures of his last months, no matter how fantastic certain of their forms may appear, are among the most penetrating in their vision of things, their reality. His self-portrait, with the swirling, flamboyant lines of the background—one of the most advanced works of his time in the approach to an abstract Expressionism—is also a marvel of precise portraiture, with an uncanny liveness of the features. He had given his answer once and for all to Bernard in the summer of 1889, when most tormented by conflicting impulses: “Above all it's really a question of sinking oneself anew in reality with no preconceived plan and none of the Parisian prejudices.”

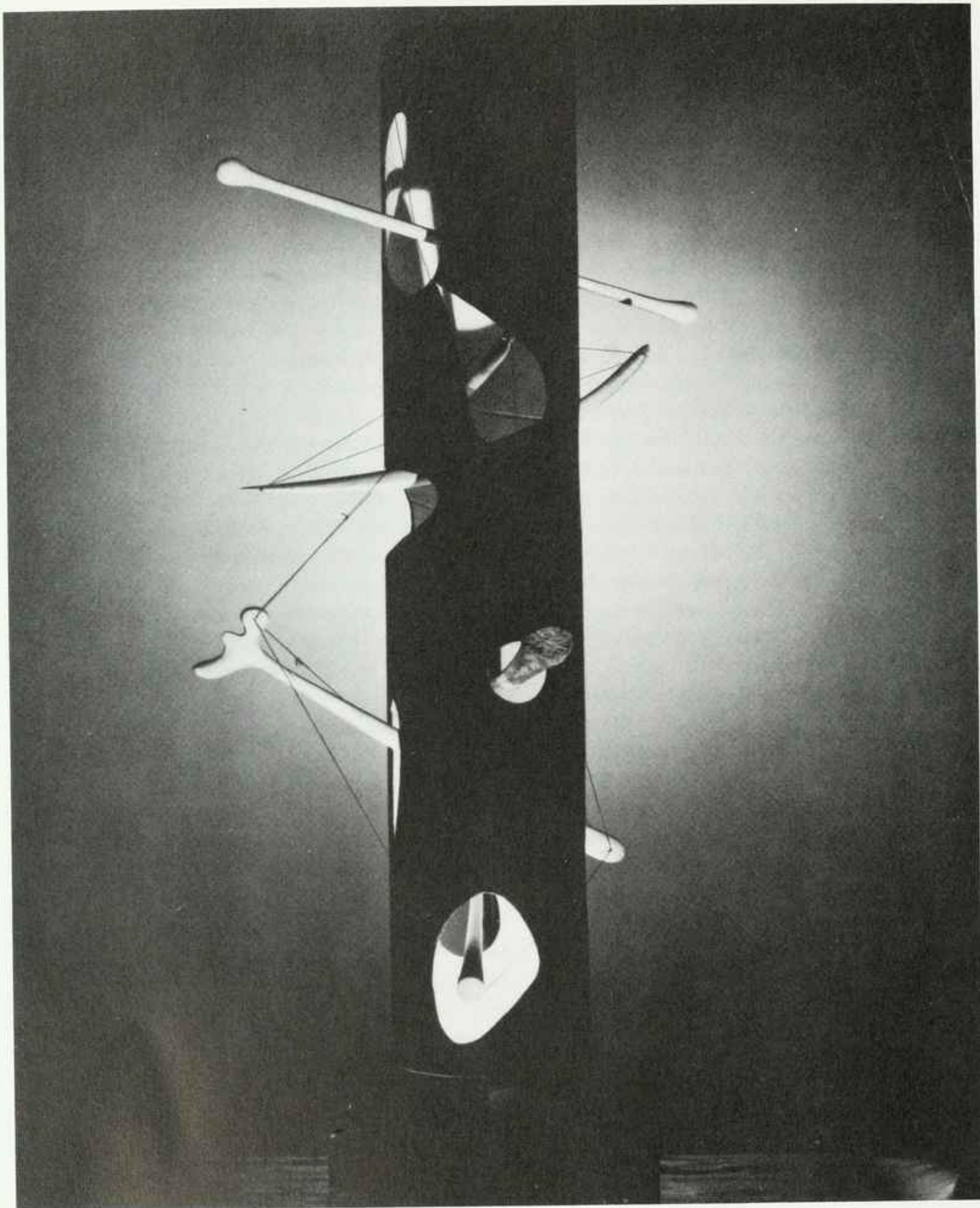
When the self at the edge of destruction holds on to objects so persistently, its protective reaction per-

mits us to see that the painter's attachment to things is not passive or photographic, nor due simply to his origin in a period of naturalistic art, but is a constructive function with deep emotional roots. When he comes as a foreigner to Arles, a strange town, he paints everything—day and night scenes, people, children, whole families, houses, cafés, streets, his own room and the surrounding country—as if to enter completely into this new milieu, unlike an Impressionist, who in painting at a resort or country site gives us little sense of material things and people. Even Van Gogh's choice of still-life objects, however trivial or incidental they may seem, is hardly indifferent; they constitute for him an intimate and necessary world. He needs objectivity, the most humble and obvious kind, as others need angels and God or pure forms; friendly faces, the unproblematic things he sees about him, the flowers and roads and fields, his shoes, his chair and hat and pipe, the utensils on his table, are his personal objects, which come forward and address him. Extensions of his being, they image the qualities and conditions necessary for his health of mind. We may quote here what he said in another context: "It sounds rather crude, but it is perfectly true: the feeling for the things themselves, for reality, is more important than the feeling for pictures; at least it is more fertile and vital."

We understand then why he called imaginative painting "abstraction," although it was still an imagery of living forms, and why, on the other hand, the *Crows in the Wheat Field*, for all its abstractness of composition, represents with a tormented veracity an experienced landscape. But it is also a moment of crisis in which contrary impulses away from reality assert themselves with a wild throb of feeling. There is in the picture of the *Crows* something of the mood of the *Starry Night*. In its dark pulsating sky, the great

motor storm of brush work and the green round spots over the horizon are like the animated clouds and stars of the night painting. After we have seen in the latter its startling, transfigured sky and have felt the pantheistic rapture stirring the immense bluish space with an overpowering turbid emotion, we are prepared to recognize in the later work the traces of a similar yearning. The endless sky of the *Crows* appears to us then an image of totality, as if responding to an hysterical desire to be swallowed up and to lose the self in a vastness. In the abnormal format there is already a submersion of the will. The prevailing horizontal is a quality of the mood more than of the frame or canvas; it has the distinctness and intensity of the blue and belongs to the deeper levels of the work. It is not required by a multiplicity of panoramic objects or a succession in breadth. In the common proportioning of pictures, approximating the golden section (0.618:1), the larger dimension has to contend with a strong subordinate, so that the relation of self and world, expressed in the contrast, is an opposition in which both elements are active and distinct. This is classical in spirit and corresponds to the accepted notion of the harmonious and normal in our own society. In Van Gogh's spontaneous, unconventional format, the horizontal governs the space as an enormous dominant beside which the perpendicular hardly comes into being and is without an echo in the composition. (A similar one-sidedness, but ruled by the vertical, occurs in the *Cypress Trees with two suns*, an obsessive image of uncontainable excitement.) In his earlier landscapes the convergent lines in depth, intensifying the motion inward, gave a certain energy to the perspective flight; here the endless depth has been transposed into a sheer extension that exceeds the individual's glance and finally absorbs him.

OCT. 1946



Monument, *Isamu Noguchi* (Yale Beinecke Library)

The Genius of France

BY WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

Young Cherry Trees Secured Against Hares

BY ANDRÉ BRETON. [View Editions.](#)

André Breton in his verse (which is himself, that is to say, anybody) displays all the conventional virtues of French poetry: the Racine of the drama, the Baudelaire of strict quatrains—expanded to a false looseness. This is not true, there is no looseness in Breton's work, it is all calculated, the tight plot precedes all composition, a coralization microscopic in the detail of its vastness. I was tempted to say its limitlessness—but refrained for good reasons.

As with Catholicism and Sovietism everything is planned in surrealism of which Breton gives here, in his new book of poems, such a balanced display. (All this is contrary to the spirit of the Constitution of the United States.) Complete freedom of enterprise is unknown there. That is why they exported The Statue of Liberty to New York harbor and kept only an insignificant replica for the Seine. A closed system.

That is definitely the enormous virtue of the French and their despair. Breton is well acquainted with all this and for that reason (secretly) has been willing to accept all the imposters from America and elsewhere into the confraternity of surrealism. All but one whose name need not be mentioned since everybody knows it.*

*Avida Dollars (*Ed.*)

I say that by this self-limitation (which solely permits the excess of design familiar to us today) this classic coldness of line, this lack of invention among the physical materials of the poem, THIS COMPLETE EXCLUSION OF THE PERCEPTIONS UPON WHICH THE BEST OF OUR OWN POETRY IS FOUNDED, in this restraint, of French literature generally, we see perhaps the only possible MODE by which such extremes of thought as the world faces today may be disciplined.

American poetry which seeks to smash the line apart, to model it after an expanding universe, to admit to its forms the same character of natural forms—is warned by Breton (in this book) that such an attack is futile and cannot succeed. Opposite our iconoclastic adventures he displays for us the cold

outlines of a classic past—disguised, to be sure, made modern by a reapplication of terms to new mechanisms but in reality the continuing great conservatism of French thought—which no one but he who in himself personifies that pure lineage can fully know.

Look at the titles of his poems: *Sunflower*, *Freedom of Love*, *Fata Morgana*, *War*, *To the Wind*, *The Vertebral Sphinx*. What more usual or prosaic? Simple as green beans. Pure classicism. Oh we do not realize what France means to the world! Especially to this world whose end we think we see—and see nothing clear—nothing but change without reference to THINGS, of which the world is made. Until we learn through such as Breton how to apply our senses anew.

OCT. 1946



René Magritte's cover for View Belgium issue, December 1946

Lifeline

RENÉ MAGRITTE

In my childhood I used to play with a little girl in the old crumbling cemetery of an out-of-the-way provincial town, where I always spent my vacations. We would lift the iron grates and descend to the underground passageways. Climbing back up to the light one day I happened upon a painter from the capitol, who amidst those scattered dead leaves and broken stone columns seemed to me to be up to something magical.

When, about 1915, I myself began to paint, the memory of that enchanting encounter with the painter bent my first steps in a direction having little to do with common sense. A singular fate willed that someone, probably to have some fun at my expense, should send me the illustrated catalog of an exposition of Futurist paintings. As a result of that joke I came to know of a new way of painting. In a state of intoxication I set about creating busy scenes of stations, festivities, or cities, in which the little girl bound up with my discovery of the world of painting lived out an exceptional adventure. I cannot doubt that a pure and powerful sentiment, namely, eroticism, saved me from slipping into the traditional chase after formal perfection. My interest lay entirely in provoking an emotional shock.

This painting as search for pleasure was followed next by a curious experience. Thinking it possible to possess the world I loved at my own good pleasure, once I should succeed in fixing its essence upon canvas, I undertook to find out what its plastic equivalents were.

The result was a series of highly evocative but abstract and inert images that were, in the last analysis,

interesting only to the intelligence of the eye. This experience made it possible for me to view the world of the real in the same abstract manner. Despite the shifting richness of natural detail and shade, I grew able to look at a landscape as though it were but a curtain hanging in front of me. I had become skeptical of the dimension in depth of a countryside scene, of the remoteness of the line of the horizon.

In 1925 I made up my mind to break with so passive an attitude. This decision was the outcome of an intolerable interval of contemplation I went through in a working-class Brussels beerhall: I found the door moldings endowed with a mysterious life and I remained a long time in contact with their reality. A feeling bordering upon terror was the point of departure for a will to action upon the real, for a transformation of life itself.

When, moreover, I found that same will allied to a superior method and doctrine in the works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, and became acquainted about that time with the surrealists, who were then violently demonstrating their loathing for all the bourgeois values, social and ideological, that have kept the world in its present ignoble state—it was then that I became convinced that I must thenceforward live with danger, that life and the world might thereby come up in some measure to the level of thought and the affections.

* * *

I painted pictures in which objects were represented with the appearance they have in reality, in a style objective enough to ensure that their upsetting effect—which they would reveal themselves capable of provoking owing to certain means utilized—would be experienced in the real world whence the objects had been borrowed. This by a perfectly natural transposition.

In my pictures I showed objects situated where we never find them. *They represented the realization of the real, if unconscious, desire existing in most people.*

The lizards we usually see in our houses and on our faces, I found more eloquent in a sky habitat. Turned wood table legs lost the innocent existence

ordinarily lent to them, when they appeared to dominate a forest. A woman's body floating above a city was an initiation for me into some of love's secrets. I found it very instructive to show the Virgin Mary as an undressed lover. The iron bells hanging from the necks of our splendid horses I caused to sprout like dangerous plants from the edge of a chasm.

The creation of new objects, the transformation of known objects, the change of matter for certain other objects, the association of words with images, the putting to work of ideas suggested by friends, the utilization of certain scenes from half-waking or dream states, were other means employed with a view to establishing contact between consciousness and the external world. The titles of the pictures were chosen in such a way as to inspire a justifiable mistrust of any tendency the spectator might have to over-ready self-assurance.

* * *

One night in 1936, I awoke in a room where a cage and the bird sleeping in it had been placed. A magnificent visual aberration caused me to see an egg, instead of the bird, in the cage. I had just fastened upon a new and astonishing poetic secret, for the shock experienced had been provoked by the affinity of two objects: cage and egg, *whereas before, I had provoked this shock by bringing together two unrelated objects.* From the moment of that revelation I sought to find out whether other objects besides the cage might not likewise show—by bringing to light some element that was characteristic and to which they had been rigorously predestined—the same evident poetry as the egg and cage had produced by their coming together. In the course of my investigations I came to a conviction that I had always known beforehand that element to be discovered, that certain thing above all others attached obscurely to each object; only, this knowledge had always lain as though hidden in the more inaccessible zones of my mind. Since this research could yield only one exact “tag” for each object, my investigations came to be a search *for the solution of a problem for which I had three data: the object, the thing attached to it in the*

shadow of my consciousness, and the light under which that thing would become apparent.

The problem of the door called for an opening through which one could pass. I showed, in my *Réponse Imprévue*, a closed door in a room; in the door an irregular-shaped opening reveals the night.

Woman was responsible for *Le Viol (The Rape)*. In that picture a woman's face is made up of the essential details of her body. Her breasts have become eyes, her nose is represented by her navel, and the mouth is replaced by the sexual zone.

The problem of the window led to *La Condition humaine*. In front of a window, as seen from the interior of a room, I placed a picture that represented precisely the portion of landscape blotted out by the picture. For instance, the tree represented in the picture displaced the tree situated behind it, outside the room. For the spectator it was simultaneously inside the room; in the picture, and outside, in the real landscape, in thought. Which is how we see the world, namely, outside of us, though having only one representation of it within us. Similarly, we sometimes situate in the past something going on in the present. Time and space then lose that unrefined meaning in which daily experience alone takes stock.

A problem to the solution of which I applied myself, over a long period, was that of the horse. In the course of my research I again had occasion to find that my unconscious knew beforehand the thing that had to be brought to light. In fact, the first glimmer of an idea was that of the final solution, however vaguely adumbrated. It was the idea of a horse carrying three shapeless masses. Their significance became clear only after a long series of trials and experiments. First I painted an object consisting of a jar and a label bearing the image of a horse, with the following printed letters: HORSE PRESERVE (CONFITURE DE CHEVAL). I next thought of a horse whose head was replaced by a hand, with its index finger pointing the direction: "Forward." But I realized that this was merely the equivalent of a unicorn.

I lingered long over an intriguing combination. In a black room, I placed a horsewoman seated near a

table; with her head resting on her hand, she was dreamily gazing at a landscape whose limits were the silhouette of a horse. The animal's lower body and forelegs were earthen colored, while upward from a horizontal line at the level of the horsewoman's eyes, the horse's coat was painted in different sky and cloud hues. What finally put me on the right track was a horseman in the position assumed while riding a galloping horse. From the sleeve of the arm thrust forward emerged the head of a noble charger, and the other arm, thrown back, held a riding whip. Beside this horseman I placed an American Indian in an identical posture, and I suddenly divined the meaning of the three shapeless masses I had placed on the horse at the beginning of my experiment.

I knew that they were horsemen and I then put the finishing touches to *La Chaîne sans fin*. In a setting of desert land and dark sky, a plunging horse is mounted by a modern horseman, a knight of the dying Middle Ages, and a horseman of antiquity.

* * *

Nietzsche is of the opinion that without a burning sexual system Raphael could not have painted such a throng of Madonnas. This is at striking variance with motives usually attributed to that venerated painter: priestly influences, ardent Christian piety, esthetic ideals, search for pure beauty, etc., etc. . . . But Nietzsche's view of the matter makes possible a more sane interpretation of pictorial phenomena, and the violence with which that opinion is expressed is directly proportionate to the clarity of the thought underlying it.

Only the same mental freedom can make possible a salutary renewal in all the domains of human activity.

This disorderly world which is our world, swarming with contradictions, still hangs more or less together through explanations, by turns complex and ingenious, but apparently justifying it and excusing those who meanly take advantage of it. Such explanations are based on a certain experience, true.

But it is to be remarked that what is invoked is "ready-made" experience, and that if it does give rise

to brilliant analysis, such experience is not itself an outcome of an analysis of its own real conditions.

Future society will develop an experience which will be the fruit of a profound analysis whose perspectives are being outlined under our very eyes. And it is under the favor of such a rigorous preliminary analysis that pictorial experience such as I understand it may be instituted.

That pictorial experience which puts the real world on trial inspired in me belief in an infinity of possibles now unknown to life. I know I am not alone in affirming that their conquest is the only valid end and reason for the existence of man.

[translated by Felix Giovanelli]

DEC. 1946

View Poets: folio

THREE POEMS

by Owen Dodson

METAPHOR FOR MINORITIES

The snow cannot melt too soon for the birds left
behind.

The crumbs fall in the crevices of snow,
And the birds taste winter in their throats,
Wonder where the warm seasons went.
Their wings do not know the directions:

The other flocks have gone; the signals are
covered with winter,
There are no signs. Directionless. Lost. Alone.

Why are the flowers on the trees so white?
Why are these flowers so cold?

Smoke is in the chimneys where the warmth is;
The sky is low and dark in the barns;
The intricate cob-webs are thinner than branches:
They are not singing places, not resting places.
The hay has not the smell of their nests.
Their songs turn like a frozen miracle to ice in
the air.

The dark stiff little compact spots you see on
these white fields
Are not shadows

ON THE BEACH

This is not the hour for oral speech:
Words contending with the wind, with close
sounds
Of other lovers striving on the beach,
With waves, the sand sniffers, the hounds.
No. This is quiet in between the long
Sentences: the lengths of speech at will.
Let the eye remember, the ears catch the song
We sing deep in the bone in the still

Unoutward parts that have their resurrection
In themselves. Cancel the mouth of poetry and
prose;
Be eager now to seek the dark confection
In the flesh and feed until desire goes,
Until we sleep, until we cannot tell
Why midnight walked and did not ring her bell.

FROM POEMS FOR KENNETH

I

Our theatre is a spider's home,
The dust is not disturbed even when the
ghosts we created enact our plays
And sleep after the curtain of morning
moves strangely like a hand,
Sending long fingers to dig through the
ceiling and lay
Their lengths of light on our stage.

II

If we had counted all the stars
And made each constellation clear,
I'd recognize more than that spear
Swinging from the solid side of Mars.

But when we went, not long ago
Exploring all that silver land,
I would not stay because the snow
Turned ice within my hand.

DEC. 1940—JAN. 1941

PATERSON: THE FALLS

by William Carlos Williams

What common language, what to unravel?
The Falls: combed into straight
lines, hung from that rafter of
a rock's lip, a clear speech.

Begin; the middle of some trenchant
phrase, some well packed clause,

picked for the place. Then . . .
answer! This is my plan.

4 sections: begin with
the archaic persons of the drama—
What drama? An eternity of
bird and bush. An unravelling:

the confused streams aligned, side
by side, speaking! Sound
married to strength, a strength of
falling, from a height: Hear

me! I am the Resurrection
and the Life! echoing
among the bass and pickerel, slim
eels from Barbados, Sargasso

Sea, working up the coast to that
bounty, ponds and wild streams—
Third, the old town: Alex Hamilton
working up from St. Croix,

from that sea! and from a deeper sea!
stopped cold
by that unmoving roar, fastened
there: the rocks silent

but the water, married to the stone,
voluble, though frozen; the water
even when and though frozen
still whispers and moans—

And in the brittle air
a factory bell clangs, at dawn and
snow whines under their feet. Fourth,
the modern town, a

disembodied roar! the cataract and
its clamor broken apart—and from
all learning, the empty
ear struck from within, roaring . . .

APR. 1943

THE ISLANDS

by Randall Jarrell

Man, if I said once, "I know,"
Laugh at me, stuff in my angry mouth
Your rueful and foolish laughter. Man is a stone.

Lips own love; did I say once, "I love"?
I said a word. When the hands told they were
love,
I bled and I was beautiful. Man is a knife.

When I said blood, I say I bled.
Is man no more than pain? Speak for me, scars.
Knife holds for me no blood but mine—

When I told I could wish for more than you,
Death, I was dreaming I had died.
Next year's skull perplexed me like a kiss,

I felt my veins contorted with the tongue
That ran through them like my world's crazy
will;

My breath cracks into sleep, time eats my fat,
Friends fall and my mouths fail, I brim to death
—Man's hands were wishes, all my wives were
iron,
Death shades me like a sword, and I am
kissing—

I sweat to my sea like a floe; blue, blue
Were all the islands of my sleep, I wake, I see—
I saw as I lay dying that unbroken sea.

APR. 1943

EIGHT POEMS

by E. E. Cummings

1

old mr ly
fresh from a fu
ruddy as a sun
with blue true two

man
neral
rise
eyes

"this world's made 'bout
right it's the people that
abuses it you can git
anything you like out

of it if
you gut a mind
to there's something
for everybody it's a"

old mr lyman
ruddy as a sunrise
fresh with blue come
true from

a funeral
eyes
"big
thing"

2

applaws)
"fell
ow
sit
isn'ts"

(a paw s

251

3

a salesman is an it that stinks Excuse

Me whether it's president of the you were say
or a jennelman name misder finger isn't
important whether it's millions of other punks
or just a handful absolutely doesn't
matter and whether it's in lonjewray

or shrouds is immaterial it stinks

a salesman is an it that stinks to please

but whether to please itself or someone else
makes no more difference than if it sells
hate condoms education snakeoil vac
uumcleaners terror strawberries democ
ra(caveat emptor)cy superfluous hair

or Think We've Met subhuman rights Before

4

a politician is an arse upon
which everyone has sat except a man

5

ygUDuh

ydoan
yunnuhstan

ydoan o
yunnuhstan dem
yguduh ged

yunnuhstan dem doidee
yguduh ged riduh
ydoan o nudn
LISN bud LISN

dem
gud
am

lidl yelluh bas
tuds weer goin
duhSIVILEYEzum

6

mr u will not be missed
who as an anthologist
sold the many on the few
not excluding mr u

7

pity this busy monster, manunkind,

not. Progress is a comfortable disease:
your victim(death and life safely beyond)

plays with the bigness of his littleness
—electrons deify one razorblade
into a mountainrange; lenses extend

unwish through curving wherewhen till unwish
returns on its unself.

A world of made
is not a world of born—pity poor flesh

and trees, poor stars and stones, but never this
fine-specimen of hypermagical

ultraomnipotence. We doctors know

a hopeless case if—listen: there's a hell
of a good universe next door; let's go

8

darling! because my blood can sing
and dance (and does with each your least
your any most very amazing now
or here) let pitiless fear play host
to every isn't that's under the spring
—but if a look should april me,
down isn't's own isn't go ghostly they
doubting can turn men's see to stare

their faith to how their joy to why
their stride and breathing to limp and prove
—but if a look should april me,
some thousand million hundred more
bright worlds than merely by doubting have
darkly themselves unmade makes love

armies (than hate itself and no
meanness unsmaller) armies can
immensely meet for centuries
and (except nothing) nothing's won
—but if a look should april me
for half a when, whatever is less
alive than never begins to yes

but if a look should april me
(though such as perfect hope can feel
only despair completely strikes
forests of mind, mountains of soul)
quite at the hugest which of his who
death is killed dead. Hills jump with brooks:
trees tumble out of twigs and sticks;

JUNE 1943

I AM COMING

Philip Lamantia

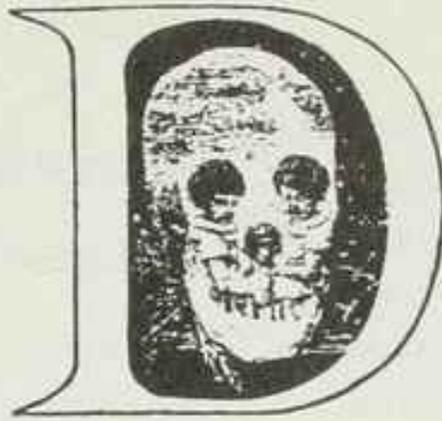
I am following her to the wavering moon,
to a bridge by the long waterfront,
to valleys of beautiful arson,
to flowers dead in a mirror of love,
to men eating wild minutes from a clock,
to hands playing in celestial pockets,
and to that dark room beside a castle
of youthful voices, singing to the moon.

When the sun comes up she will live at a sky
covered with sparrow's blood
and wrapped in robes of lost decay.

But I am coming to the moon,
and she will be there in a musical night,
in a night of burning laughter,
burning like a road of my brain
pouring its arm into the lunar lake.

JUNE 1943

They cannot
stop



Death

by

Joe Massey

THEY cannot stop death.
When He comes to take their breath.
They cannot say death you flee
Or lock him up He is bothering me.

No man nor woman nor Girl or boy
Can get back at him for He is death
And have the win.
You may be a king or a queen but when
Death come you will be seen.

You cannot lie to him because
He bring the news you ware new dress
New Hat new shoes pay you dues
Now you wont be heard or seen while
Here you was might mean.

*They cannot stop death
when He comes to take them
They cannot say death you flee
or lock him up He is bothering me
No man nor woman
can get back at him
and have the win
you may be a king or
death come you will be seen
you cannot lie to him
he bring the news you ware
new hat new shoes pay you
now you wont be heard or
here you was might mean
Completely
got money
75209.*

*regards of the no. after my
name This no. emphasises the fact
that I have made a mistake in my
life and I am trying to make the
best of it I was charged with sec-
ond degree murder. I am trying to
overcome my past mistakes, And
to rehabilitate myself by learning
and writing. I am studying Chris-
tian Science.
I used to be a bell boy and a
table waiter.
Now I am waiting for a better
day. Yours Respectfully
Joe Massey 75209
Columbus 15, Ohio
I will wait
respectfully
Joe Massey*

Sir in regards of the no. after my name This no. emphasises the fact that I have made a mistake in my life and I am trying to make the best of it I was charged with second degree murder. I am trying to overcome my past mistakes, And to rehabilitate myself by learning and writing. I am studying Christian Science.

I used to be a bell boy and a table waiter. Now I am waiting for a better day. Yours Respectfully Joe Massey 75209 Columbus 15, Ohio

APPARITION OF CHARLES
BAUDELAIRE

Philip Lamantia

When an ocean of pain moves rivers and bridges
and black eyes flash in grave dust,
then the rapture of Baudelaire strikes a flaming
note.

By the blood of somber countenance
hang all fifty chambers of voluptuous girls,
entranced by the poet's pulsating gleam,
that nails love only onto his giant queen,
sifting in the rays of forgotten children.

Over the laughing brothel and pale garden,
he sings on the pipe of languor
and prays on a flying altar,
drowning with every touch of the sun.

JUNE 1943

MYTHOLOGY: I

by Lawrence Durrell

A Coptic deputation going to Ethiopia
Disappeared one morning like the ghost in
Aubrey

"With a soft odour and a Melodious twang";
Who saw them go with their melodious odour?

I, said the arrow, the aboriginal arrow;
I saw them go, coptic and mellifluous,

Fuzzy-wig, kink-haired, with cocoa-butter
shining,
With stoles on poles, sacbuts and silver salvers,
Walking the desert ways, howling and shining.
A Coptic congregation, red blue and yellow

With saints on parchment and stove-pipe hats
All disappeared up like the ghost in Aubrey

Leaving only the smell of cooking and singing,
Rancid goat-butter and the piss of cats.

OCT. 1943

MYTHOLOGY: II

by Lawrence Durrell

All my favourite characters have been
Out of all pattern and proportion;
Some living in villas by railways,
Some like Katsimbalis heard but seldom seen,
And others in banks whose sunless hands
Moved like great rats on ledgers . . .

Tible, Gondril, Purvis, the Duke of Puke,
Shatterblossom and Dude Bowdler
Who swelled up in Jaffa and became a tree,
Hollis who had wives killed under him like
horses
And that man of destiny
Ramon de something who gave lectures
From an elephant, founded a society
To protect the inanimate against cruelty.

He gave asylum to aged chairs in his home,
Lamposts and crockery, everything that
Seemed to him suffering he took in
Without mockery.

The poetry was in the pity. No judgement
Disturbs people like these in their frames
O men of the Marmion class, sons of the free.

OCT. 1943

THEY CANNOT STOP DEATH

by Joe Massey

They cannot stop death.
When He comes to take their breath.
They cannot say death you flee
Or lock him up He is bothering me.

No man nor woman nor Girl or boy
Can get back at him for He is death

And have the win.
You may be a king or a queen but when
Death come you will be seen.

You cannot lie to him because
He bring the news you ware new dress
New Hat new shoes pay you dues
Now you wont be heard or seen while

Here you was might mean.

Sir in regards of the no. after my name This no. emphasises the fact that I have made a mistake in my life and I am trying to make the best of it I was charged with second degree murder. I am trying to overcome my past mistakes, And to rehabilitate myself by learing and writing. I am studying Christian Science.

I used to be a bell boy and a table waiter.

*Now I am waiting for a better day. Yours Respectfully
Joe Massey 75209
Columbus 15, Ohio*

DEC. 1943

FULL MARGIN

by André Breton

I don't hold with those in-the-know
I've never lived in that place known as "The
Froggerly"
My heart's lamp smokes and soon splutters on
nearing a parvis

I have always been drawn only to what is not a
sure bet
A tree marked out by the storm
The glimmering boat brought in by the ship's boy
The building as nothing only in the lizard's
unblinking stare and a thousand clustered
leaves

Excluding all others I have looked only at women
at odds with their time
Either they arose towards me borne up by the
mists of some chasm
Or still missing less than a second ago they
preceded me to the lilt of the Dulcimer Girl

In the street that at the slightest breath flamed
with the torches of their hair

Above all others that Queen of Byzantium whose
eyes so transcended the ultramarine
That I never happen in Les Halles where she
appeared to me
Without her being endlessly multiplied in the
mirrored barrows of the women selling violets

Above all others the cave-child whose embrace
prolongs to a lifetime the eskimo night
Even while daybreak out-of-breath etches its
reindeer on the pane

Above all others the nun with nasturtium lips
In the bus from Crozon to Quimper
The noise of her eyelashes disturbs the grey wren
And the book with a clasp is about to slip from
her crossed legs

Above all others she who in times past was the
little winged guardian of the Door
Through which conjectures steal among the
rickshaws
She shows me crates marked with ideographs
lined up along the Seine
And she stands on the broken egg of the lotus
against my ear

Above all others she who smiles at me from the
depths of the lake of Berre
When leaning against me she chances to follow
from a bridge in Martigues the slow procession
of low-lying lamps
Medusas in ball-gowns whirling within the
chandelier
She who pretends not to be the whole of this fête
And to ignore the votive quality of this
accompaniment to and fro each day renewed

Above all others

I come back to my wolves to my ways of feeling
The true luxury

Is that the divan of cushioned white satin
Should be starred with a slash

I need that evening glory striking athwart your
grove of laurels
The gigantic shells of completed systems which
stand revealed in irregular clefts across the
land
With their mother-of-pearl stairways and their
gleams of old lantern panes
Hold me only in so far as vertigo
Is granted to man who lest any part of the vast
rumbling be lost
Has at times gone to the length of smashing the
pedal
I find my needs in the crevices of rock there
where the sea
Hurls its globes of horses ridden by howling dogs
Where conscience no longer is bread in its kingly
mantle
But that kiss which alone is rekindled from its
own embers

And even those who follow a path not mine
A path undiscernibly the contrary of mine
It flounders at the outset in the mythical sands of
the beginning
But suddenly the wind has arisen the balusters
have started to swing widely around the irised
ball

And for them it was the defenestration of the
universe
Without further heed to that which should never
end
Night and day exchanging their vows
Or the lovers in time's flaw finding again and
losing the ring of their source

O great sensitive movement whereby others
succeed in becoming mine
Even those who in life's burst of laughter are
immured in sackcloth
Those whose glance makes a scarlet rent in the
blackberry bushes

Drag me off drag me off where I don't know
how to go
Blindfold you're burning you're colder and colder
However they may have struck their place is laid
at my table
My splendid Pelagius your head crowned with
mistletoe high above those lowered brows

Gioacchino da Fiore led by the dreadful angels
Who still today at certain hours fold their wings
low over the suburbs
Where the chimneys flare up bidding to a resolve
more closely tender
Than the pink heptagonal structures of Giotto

Meister Eckhardt my master in the hostel of
reason
Where Hegel says to Novalis with him we have
all we need and off they go
With them and the wind I have all I need

Yes Jansenius I was expecting you prince of rigor
You must feel cold

He alone who succeeded while living in being
but his own shade
And from his dust was seen to arise threatening
all the city the flower of spasm
Paris the Deacon

The beautiful the ravished the submissive the
overwhelming La Cadere

And you Messers Bonjour
Who have beyond the shadow of a doubt I
believe crucified two women with considerable
pomp

You of whom an old Fareins-en-Dole peasant
At home between his portraits of Marat and
Mother Angélique
Told me that when you passed on you left to
those who have come and who might come
Enough to last a long while

[translated by Edouard Roditi]

DEC. 1944

ANALYSIS OF A THEME

by Wallace Stevens

THEME

How happy I was the day I told the young
Blandina
of three-legged giraffes . . .

ANALYSIS

In the conscious world, the great clouds
Potter in the summer sky.
It is a province—

Of ugly, subconscious time, in which
There is no beautiful eye
And no true tree,

There being no subconscious place,
Only Indytarranean
Resemblances

Of place: time's haggard mongrels.
Yet in time's middle deep,
In its abstract motion,

Its immaterial monsters move,
Without physical pedantry
Or any name.

Invisible, they move and are,
Not speaking worms, nor birds
Of mutable plume,

Pure coruscations, that lie beyond
The imagination, intact
And unattained,

Even in Paris, in the Gardens
Of Acclimatization,
On a holiday.

The knowledge of bright-ethered things
Bears us toward time, on its
Perfective wings.

We enjoy the ithy oonts and long-haired
Plomets, as the Herr Gott
Enjoys his comets.

OCT. 1945

BALLAD WRITTEN IN A CLINIC

by Eugenio Montale

In the emergency's wake:

When the mad Augustan comet
Was loosed across the mountain
In the air's lingering quiet

"But it was dark for us, and terror
And crash of roofs and bridges
Upon us—like Jonah buried
In the belly of the whale . . ."

And I turned round, my mirror
Image was the same no longer
Because they had enclosed
Suddenly your throat and breast
Within a plaster mannikin.

In the hollows of your orbits
Your tears were shining glassy
More thick than these huge
Spectacles of tortoise-shell
Which nights I take from you
And place beside the morphine phial.

The taurine god was not the one
We called our town, but the God that tints
The lilies of the ditch with fire:
Ares I invoked and the flight
Of the horned monster stunned
With ultimate pride a heart
Rent by your cough.

I await a sign, is this
The hour that snatches us away?:
I am ready and the penitence
Now begins in the dark
Sobbing of cliffs and vales
Of the *other* Emergency.

You have put the wooden
Bulldog on the dresser; the alarm
Clock with phosphorescent hands
Which sheds a tenuous light
Upon your wakeful sleep.

The null effort it takes for him
Who wants, to burst the narrow door;
Outside, they unfurl a flag
They layer the white with red, a cross.

With you I too turn to a voice
Erupting in the dawn, to the enormous
Presence of the dead; and then the ululation
Of the wooden dog becomes my own, mute.

FEB. 1946

CHANSON POUR BILLIE

by Charles Henri Ford

Whoa, hillbilly, you've got me where you want
me
In the ferris wheel of that fraudulent wail
Like a baptized woman in a moment of depravity
Your voice rings out, headstrong and dreamy

On a night of desperadoes
You deliver the clearcut message
From the anti-suicides

In the cobalt of morning
Your half-breed brothers find you
And put you to bed tenderly
As though you were their little dead sister

The distress we feel in your presence
Is like hearing footsteps that will take us away

Or reading a threat in an unknown handwriting
Or seeing a guttersnipe die for a fetish

To me, gringo of your insolence
You are the hardhearted gypsy, disreputable as
pleasure
To whom I cast myself off like a drug from the
brain
Your grenadine gums are exciting as a holdup
It would not matter if your songs were in
Cantonese

Popular as crime you've created an army
Of derelicts who await the freight
Of a midnight egocentric singing
It would not matter if your songs were a flying
machine

Healthy as a gangster you go your heartrending
way
And give us gooseflesh because we cannot possess
you
Though we throw ourselves at your feet you
grunt like a mother
Or a chunky Cherokee in front of something
uneatable

In an atmosphere of drowning
Your eggplant lyrics save our hungry lives
On a grown-up dismal day
Your Bedouin children bring contraband sunshine

In the factory of contagions
That douse the world with dusky honeydew
And dupe the studios into getaways
And jerk to his feet the horsewhipped hooligan

How about giving us a job to do
Something secretive and unhygienic
Housebreaker, cardsharp, anything you say
So long as the boss can be Billie Holiday

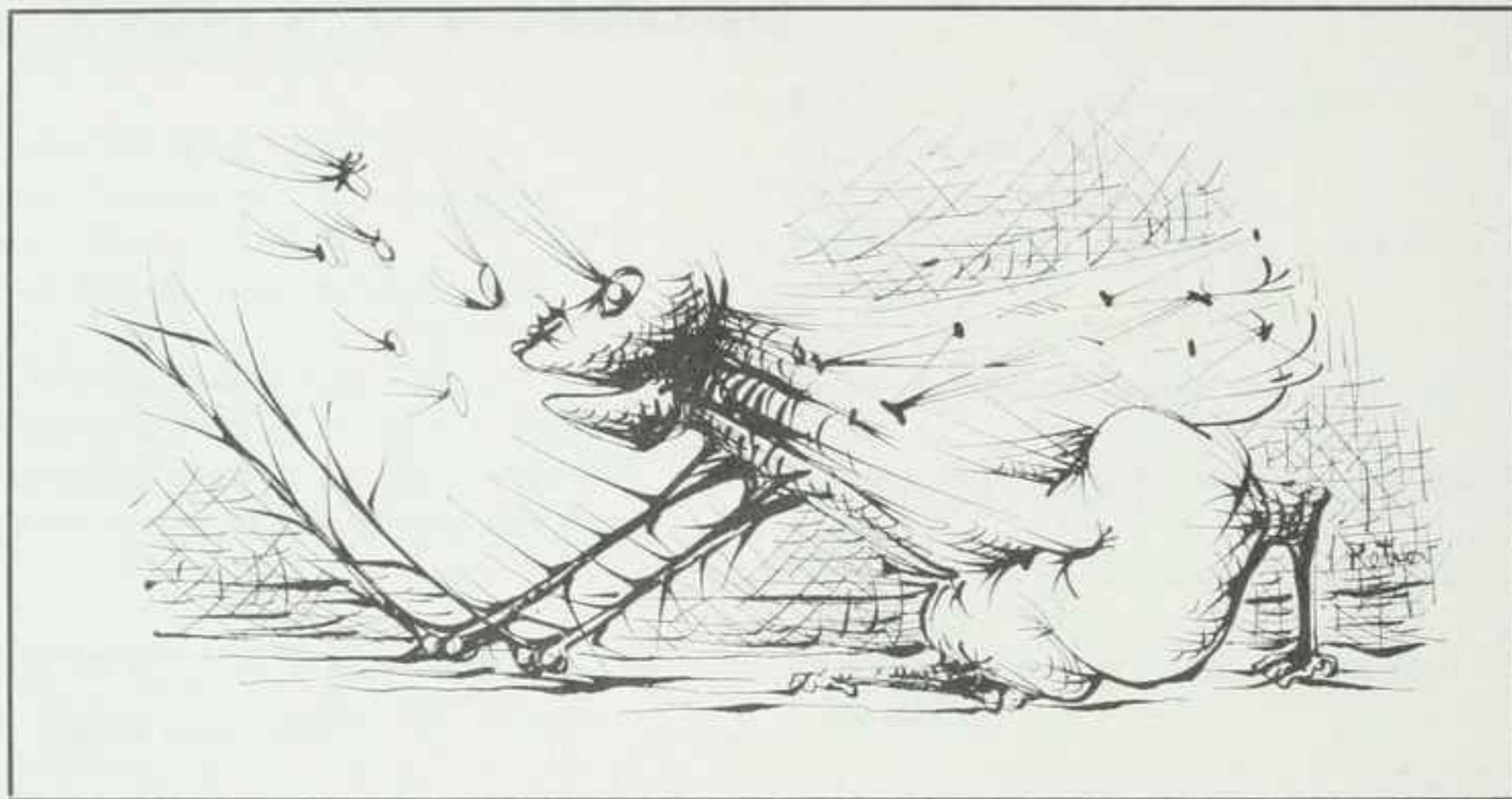
OCT. 1946

Children's Pages

The Praying Mantis, A Bedtime Story

From "The Interstate Third Reader"
by Mary I. Lovejoy (Boston 1893)

Illustrated for View by Dmitri Petrov



XLVII

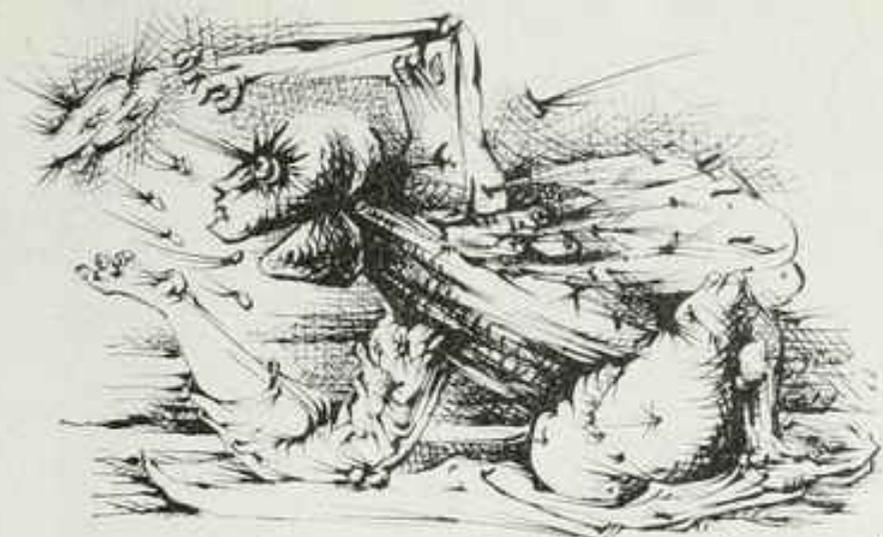
man tis
grass hop per
depths
perched

seized
pray ing
gog gles
gnat

prey ing
In di a
a light ed
or chid

In very warm countries, far away from where you and I live, may be found an insect called the "Praying Mantis." You might think from its name that it must be very good, but after reading what I shall tell you of it, I think you will change your mind.

The mantis is not unlike your friend the grasshopper in form, but it is very much larger. Its body is long and slender, the head, with sharp jaws, has a strange way of turning round and round, and the large goggle eyes stare at you; it is not very pleasant. It has two very long front legs which are armed with sharp spines, or thorns. Armed with these, it will sit upon the limb of a tree with its head moving from side to side, and its long limbs raised as if in prayer; that is why people call it the "Praying Mantis."



Let us look a little longer at this strange creature, and I think you and I will want to change his name.

Here sits a mantis on this willow-tree. It is just the pale yellow color of the changing leaf, and so the tiny gnat or fly buzzing in the sunshine little dreams of the trap set for him, near by. In a moment he has flown too near the sharp thorny arms, and the cruel jaws have seized him—his happy life has ended.

Another mantis we shall find like a lovely orchid of many beautiful colors. The butterfly in its happy flight, thinks it some sweet flower, and stooping to

sip the honey from its depths is caught in the trap and will never fly again through the sunny garden.

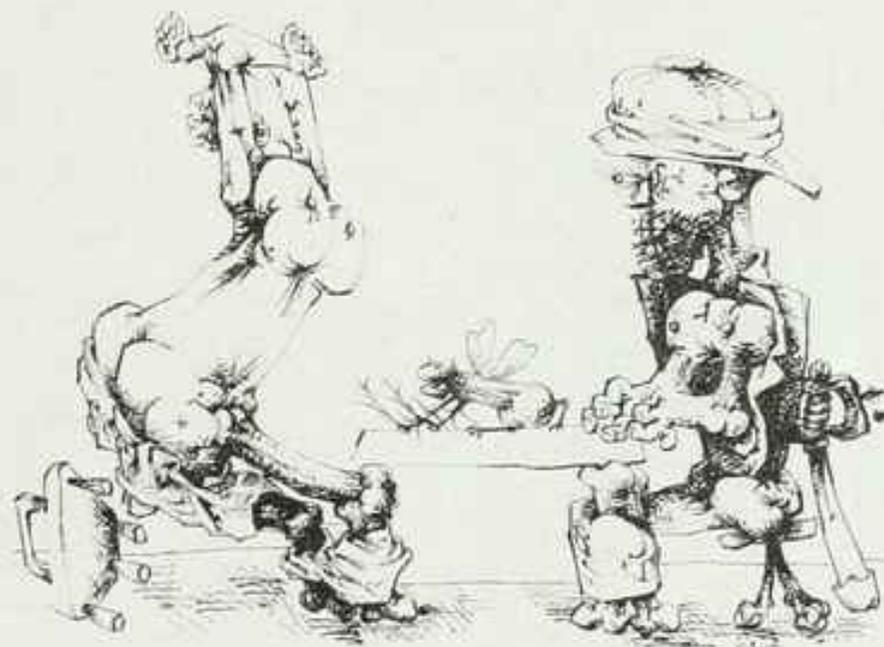
These strange creatures seem to be always fighting with each other. I have already told you enough, I am quite sure, for you to feel that you would name it the preying mantis rather than the praying mantis.

As I have told you something about the cruel mantis, you will not think it strange that I did not care to share my dinner, nor my bed, with one I met when passing through India.

I was spending the night with a friend,

and while sitting at dinner, a curious insect alighted on the table near me. It raised its arms as if in prayer, while at the same time its head moved from side to side. Its goggle eyes seemed to glare at me.

My friend told me many curious things about the mantis. I was glad to move from the table and enjoy the warm evening out of doors.



help. I pointed to the mantis, and after a short struggle the insect was caught, and I could sleep.

I have always felt glad that the praying mantis did not make its home in New England.

Think of my feelings when I had gone

to bed, and had tightly tucked in the netting, to see perched upon the canopy above my head that wicked little creature.

It was not to be thought of as a bed-fellow. What could I do?

Placing the pillow between me and the mantis, I began pulling at the netting, and at last it crawled carefully through the opening I had made.

I rushed to the door, and cried, "Boy! boy!"

In a moment three Chinese servants came to my

CRIME CORNER



The pet was a bat, a creature half-in-a-use, half-third. But it looked so much like almost anything else, that the gentleman who caught it called his companion, saying: "Come and see the big moth I have captured!"

This bat was kept for some time in a room, and was fed with meat chopped into tiny pieces and offered to it on a bonnet-pin—as in the picture.

One day the maid picked up the poor little thing by mistake among some scraps, thinking it was a wad of old paper. Just as she was about to throw it into the fire, the bat flew off, scaring her dreadfully. At last a big, lazy bull-frog, which was kept in the same room, swallowed the poor bat, and that was the last of it.



THE GUARDIAN TOAD



Mama Téngue, having the labor of silence in the depths of the night, emptied of her Moon drink.

With Forty Healer and Scorpion Cuckoo's Head, Eyes and Pin of the Owl, eye of mountain night, necklace of blood, the spirit of shadow glitters.

Exit Spirit, Ecu-Spirit, Mouth of worms, night-rib, ally boxacomb, (thick ticks!)

Living on her belly the little old bag was still, long braided, dirt and Chinese spirit into the conjure box.

She was tracing arrows of ash, serpents of smoke in the ground.

of bells, the Seven Hays, Mama Luisa

Sax and a deep wooden horse. Speak, Tail of Cloud, Evil Wind, airy with it, away with it!

The wood pressed in, the bolts against his back and tied with him anxiously. From his branches hung ears that looked in his beard; his eyes, livid stars, pierced the dense security. Silence spread apart its hook behind him.

Caught by vermilion, the toad left the twigs stretched out on the ground.

"Let it hurt whom it may," Saungung wants blood.

"Let it hurt whom it may," Saungung wants blood.

At the other end of the night, the witch stretched out her hands which were turned hair.

The toad gave a deep snarl and swallowed the twigs.

He traversed the wood flying like a thief, the corns, awakened by a job, were praying.

—Chamato, chekin-dale, Chamato, chekin-dale, Chamato, chekin-dale, Kama, kama in

To, tin! Tumbiyaya! Where are they taking me? Tumbiyaya! Where are they taking me? Tumbiyaya!

Inside the tiny belly. Dust from the cross-cemetery at midnight.

Black earth from the anthill, the leeching ants working diligently—without joy or address—the world, the wax bears...

Belly of Mama Téngue, Mama Téngue who has learned the labor of mystery from the root of Grandmother Seibi; seven days in the bosom of the earth, seven days,

Then were the twins who were walking through the wood alone, they were of the size of a birdcage.

This was the black wood of the owl, which who made the air to fill; this was the wood who carried the wood and its secret.

Walking, walking through the wood, the twins, suddenly, saw.

One day a crooked little path came to meet them and by great luck turned into the wood. When they stepped to the path, the forest had been an interminable blackness without a stray of light.

They went forward, groping, not knowing in what direction, feeling the distance with blind hands and the wind, all the time more intricate, more sinister—trembling silent—sank into the bowels of the starless night.

The twins were seen, and they awoke the man that lay sleeping in his pool of dead water, dead for centuries without a suspension of light.

Never had the old toad heard a child weeping. He made a long journey through the wood, for it had, neither the music of birds nor the sweet sound of branches and reached the twins who were trembling like dry twigs at the cricket in the grass. Never had the old toad seen a child.

When the twins embraced him, without knowing who he was he was filled with delight. Upon each arm lay a sleeping twin. His breast melted, grew warm, the children's sleep flowing into his veins.

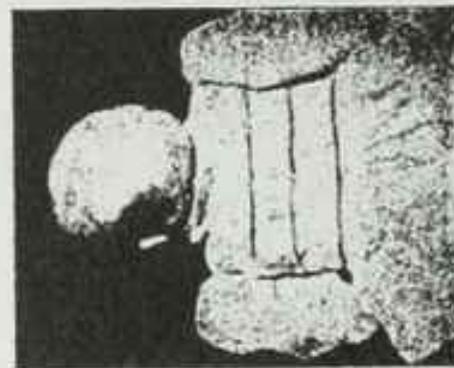
"Tangala, tangala, m-tangala, ci-joran-ganga."

"Curmango, Evi! Devil, new broom sweeping the ground, sweeping the stars."

Breast of fathers, give me light for I can not see!

Fearful sleep, no matter what it thakes, I am overthrowing the Angle

Children's Page



Afro-Cuban Folk Tale Adapted by Lydia Cabrera Translated by H. R. Hays

awake — they began to sweep bitterly again.

The grotesque face of the toad expressed an affable tenderness, he spoke the inextinguishable word, the forgotten word, long older than the sciences of the world, and the word created dawn.

Through their tears the twins saw the wood recede and vanish in some neutral air, vagueness, stirred out on the lake bottom; in a moment the new day had come, the pure calm of morning.

They were at the gates of a town, in complete sunlight and they went singing and laughing down the street.

"Traitor!" screamed the witch, twisting with hate; the toad overcame, with gentleness was draining in his pool of mud and purist water.

The witch was going to kill him, but he was already asleep, having died quietly in the solitude of clear water. Quiet of eternity...

Sea shells were speaking.

"Saungung, Saungung, Saungung, Saungung."

"The hour is passed, and the witch, —Gave me what is mine."

The toad barely opened his mouth and emitted a green, occultic thread.

The witch was shaken with a burst of laughter, a tempest of dry leaves.

She filled a sack with stones. The stones rolled into big rocks; the sack became as large as a mountain.

"Take this burden away, in obedience." The toad lifted the mountain in his smooth arms and threw it on his back without effort.

The toad went leaping through the darkness. The witch followed him by means of a broken mirror.

AN ILLUSTRATION OF CAUTIOUSNESS The organ of cautiousness corresponds to that of the brain where Dr. Ferrier has localized the centre for fright, affecting the muscles of the mouth. —A MANUAL OF MENTAL SCIENCE or Childhood: Its Character and Culture by Jessie A. Fowler

CYMBALS BY MARK TOBEY

A big sound in a little ear. Who let it in?
Anything and Nothing were walking down the street. Anything had a collar on but he had forgotten the size. Nothing moved noiselessly beside him.
"You're nothing!" Nothing said.
Anything flushed. But he knew his friend meant well so he felt the gap between his neck and the collar.
"You're worse than nothing!" Nothing said, putting his shadowless arm around Anything's waist.
Anything was getting pretty hot and was wondering if he had a fever.
"Oh forget it. Let's have a soda."
The place was crowded. They finally squeezed in, sitting like nothing at all on the empty stools.
"What're you goin' to have?" said Anything.
"Oh nothing, I guess," said Nothing. "What're you going to have?"
Anything set his hat well back upon his head. In his lips he twirled a straw.
"Well?" said Nothing.
Anything came to with a start. The straw dropped out of his mouth and fell into his lap.
"Oh anything," he answered.
The soda clerk began to comb his hair in the mirror.



playing at the zoo. She was sick. She got sick when the dog that killed her. It was the dog that grunted. Why did the dog grunt-ed? I heard a fairy knocking at the door.

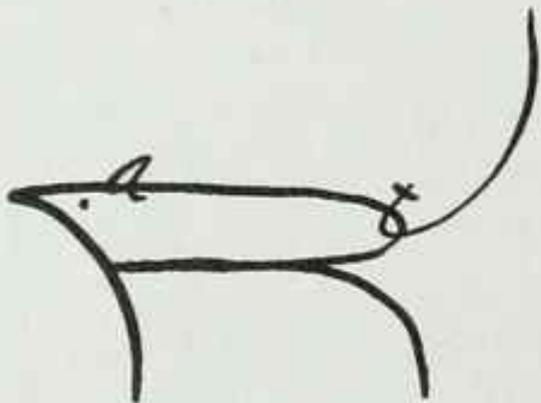
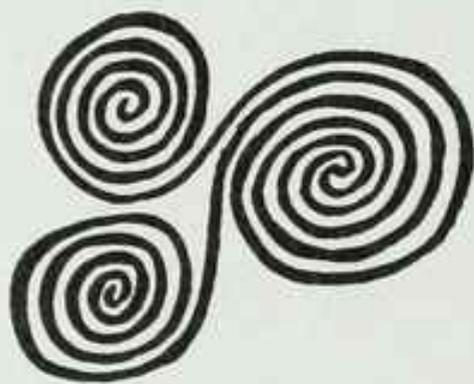
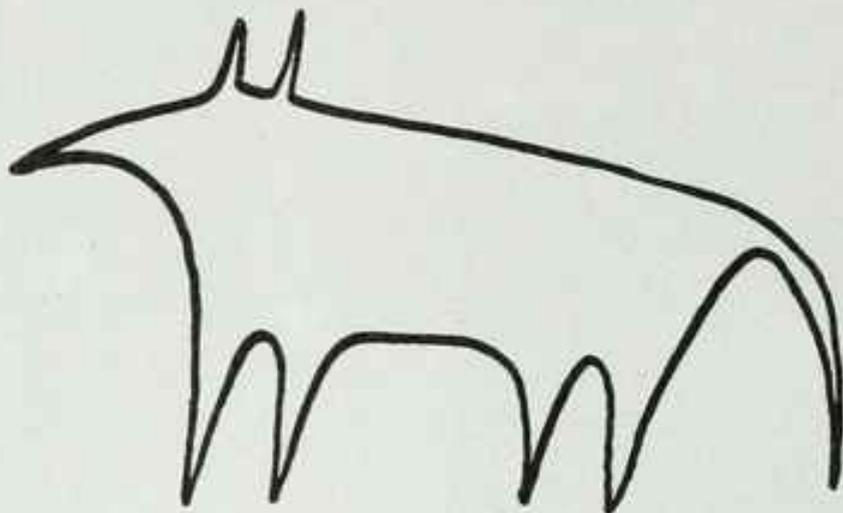


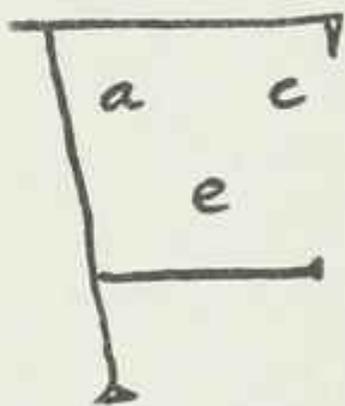
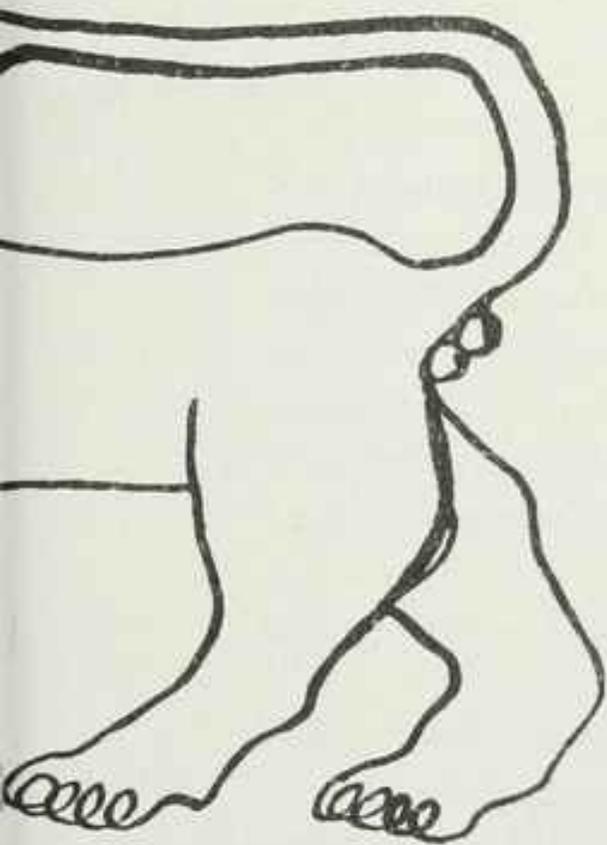
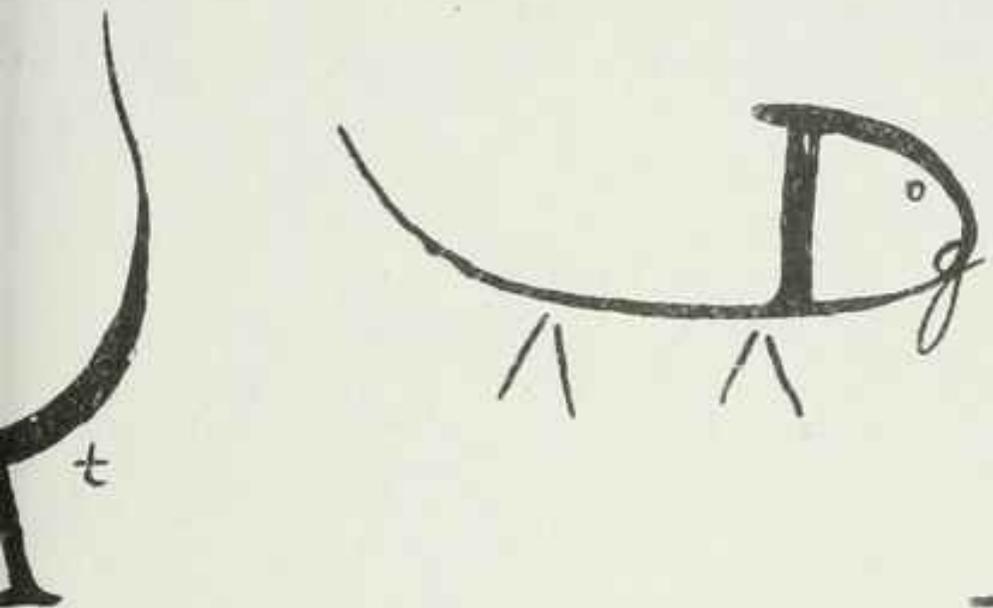
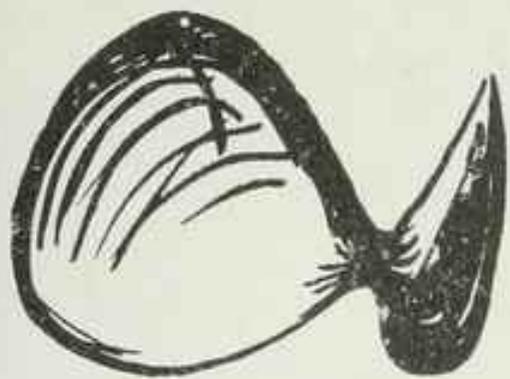
A STORY

There was a little girl. She went to see the bears. She went to see the elephant. She didn't see them because she was naughty. Her Mommy spanked her. She touches the bears and she touches the bears and then she touches the elephant. And then she touches the zoo. She touches babies. She doesn't like babies. She likes the elephant, that's what she likes. She was

by Daniel
Henry
Hays
Age 3

Children's Page





Calder '43

Bibliography

The primary *View* archive, in the Charles Henri Ford collection at Yale's Beinecke Library, includes scrapbooks of press clippings on the magazine's special events (exhibitions, lectures, concerts, theater productions, parties) and reviews of publications by View Editions. Additional material concerning *View*, primarily correspondence, is among the Parker Tyler papers at the Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin.

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- Sitwell, Edith. *Green Song*. New York: Vanguard, 1946. Cover by Tchelitchew.

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COMPILED BY
JUDITH YOUNG MALLIN

The following is a comprehensive index to all the issues of *View* magazine:

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NO. 1: SEPT. 1940

- Calas, Nicolas. "Mexico Brings Us Art"
Ford, Charles Henri. "Verlaine in Hartford: Has the Mystery Man of Modern Poetry Really Another Self?" [Interview with Wallace Stevens] photo: C.H.F.
Garrison, Troy. "I Write This in Los Angeles"
Hays, H. R. "Poetry—The Only Hope of Drama"
Stevens, Wallace. "Materia Poetica," Part I

- Sylander, Gordon. "Review of Reviews"
Treece, Henry. "Literary London"
Tyler, Parker. "Three Movies Reviewed"

REPORTS AND REPORTERS:

- incl. emigrating Europeans; Cecil Beaton; W. H. Auden, J. Laughlin, Archibald MacLeish, Wyndham Lewis

REPRODUCTIONS:

- Higdon Cato [pseud. of C.H.F.], Francis Lee

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- Boyle, Kay. "Communique" [from Paris]
Hays, H. R. "North of Broadway" [incl. Bennington Festival and Martha Graham]

- Roditi, Edouard. "Why and How Lorca Is Translated"
Tyler, Parker. "Hollywood in Disguise; Gods and Goddesses Paid to Be Alive"
Williams, William Carlos. "A New Book of the Dead" [Review of Norman MacLeod, *You Get What You Ask For*]

REPORTS AND REPORTERS:

- Kay Boyle and Laurence Vail; "Poetry at Cambridge, England": Nicholas Moore, W. H. Auden, Dylan Thomas, George Barker; Francis Lee, Edouard Roditi; R. Symmes [Robert Duncan]; Djuna Barnes, Gertrude Stein, Alice B. Toklas; Harold Rosenberg; Salvador Dali; Alfred Barr; Vicomtesse de Noailles; Pablo Picasso; Joan Miró; André Breton

and other emigrating surrealists;
Joseph Cornell on Taglioni

VIEW LISTENS:

Nicolas Calas [on Clement Greenberg's "A New Laocoon," *Partisan Review*, as an attack on surrealism]; Norman Holmes Pearson [on *View and Blues*]

REPRODUCTIONS:

Matta (Echaurren); trompe l'oeil drawing of Pan [not attributed]

NO. 3: NOV. 1940

Calas, Nicolas and Charles Henri Ford. "Thoughts on *Night Thoughts*" [by Edward Young, followed by extracts from *Night Thoughts*]

Heywood, Terence. "Communique from Sweden"

Roditi, Edouard. "California Chronicle"

Tyler, Parker. "Marianne Moore's Views on Writing and Editing: She Reminisces about *The Dial*" [interview] photo: Francis Lee

VIEW POETS: FOLIO NO. 1

Novo, Salvador. "Early"; "Epifania"; "Alien Words" [trans. H. R. Hays]

Reeve, Eaton, Paul. "Marvels"; "When Daddy Removed His Wig"

REPORTS AND REPORTERS:

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REPRODUCTIONS:

Pavel Tchelitchev [not attributed]

NOS. 4-5: DEC. 1940-JAN. 1941

Anderson, Forrest. "Boston—San Francisco"

Ballagas, Emilio. "A Cuban Poet Speaks"

Hays, H. R. "Welsh Bards and Social Motivation" [on Dylan Thomas and Emylyn Williams]

Treece, Henry. "Bulletin from Britain"

Van Moppes, Denise. "Letter from Marseilles"

VIEW POETS: FOLIO NOS. 2-3

Blanchard, Maurice. "The Annunciation"; "To René Char" [from *It's a Holiday and You Don't Know It*, trans. C.H.F.]

Dodson, Owen. "Metaphor for Minorities"; "On the Beach"; [from "Poems for Kenneth"]

Goll, Ivan. "John Landless Loses Himself in the Sun" [trans. Clark Mills]

Guillen, Nicholas. "Ballad of the Guije"; "Street Cry" [trans. H. R. Hays]

REPORTS AND REPORTERS:

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VIEW LISTENS:

"Royal Air Force Subscriber Writes"

REPRODUCTIONS:

Kurt Seligmann; photo of E. E. Cummings [not attributed]

NO. 6: JUNE 1941

Calas, Nicolas. "Anti-Surrealist Dali: I Say His Flies Are Ersatz"

Calas, Nicolas. "Liberty Is Intolerant!"

Garrison, Troy. "Plaza of the Psychopathic Angels"

Tyler, Parker. "Heroes by Welles and Chaplin"

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Chisholm, Hugh. "For N. A."

Heseltine, Nigel. "Epithalamion"

Huidobro, Vicente. "Making the Rounds" [trans. H. R. Hays]

Horan, Robert. "Deceptions of Brass"

Isaacs, Leo, Sanders Russell and Jack Johnson. "Chainpoem II"

Kuroda, Saburoh. "Afternoon 3"

McCraig, Norman. "Poem"

Merton, Thomas James. "Lent in a Year of War"

Scott, Tom. "Poem"

REPRODUCTIONS:

Kurt Seligmann, Yves Tanguy

NOS. 7-8: OCT.—NOV. 1941

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Editor: Nicolas Calas

Calas, Nicolas. "Interview with André Breton"; "The Light of Words"; "Review of Reviews"

Carmichael, Joel. "That Great Man"

Ernst, Max. "La Femme 100 Têtes"

Gysin, Brion. "The Secret Look"

Hencin, Georges. "Message from Cairo"

Masson, André. "The Bed of Plato"

Michelet, Jules. "La Situation Actuelle" [from *La Conversation*]

Riche, Paul. "Nazism and Culture"

Seligmann, Kurt. "An Eye for a Tooth" [trans. Martin James]

POETRY:

Blanchard, Kennedy. "The Dream"

Bréa, Juan. "My Life Is a Sunday"

Ford, Charles Henri. "I Wonder"

Horan, Robert. "Second Geography"

Low, Mary. "Perchance to Dream"

Mangan, Sherry. "Listen to That Wind: Goodbye Now"

Péret, Benjamin. "To Sleep To Sleep, in the Rocks" [trans. C.H.F.]

CORDS AND CONCORD:

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Aube [André Breton], Brauner, Leonora Carrington, Dominguez, Max Ernst, Hare, Hayter, Morris Hirshfield, Lam, André Masson, Matta, Sage, Kurt Seligmann, Yves Tanguy, Gordon Onslow-Ford

NOS. 9-10: DEC. 1941-JAN. 1942
*Prophecy * Cinema * Fable * Art*

- Arm, Hilary [pseud. of Parker Tyler]. "Nostradamus Against the Gods"
Carrington, Leonora. "White Rabbits"
Cornell, Joseph. "Enchanted Wanderer: Excerpt from a Journey Album for Hedy Lamarr"
Goodwin, John B. L. "Remarks on the Polymorphic Image"
Mabille, Pierre. "The Destruction of the World"
Mills, Clark. "A Few Words of Advice to Beggars"
Tyler, Parker. "Every Man His Own Private Detective" [on *The Maltese Falcon*]

POETRY:

- Anderson, Forrest. "Written from Limbo"
Horan, Robert. "By Hallucination Visited"
Jimeno, Manuel Moreno: "The Damned"
Moore, Nicholas. "The Lying Dead": "I Left My Baby"; "Love Paints Its Pictures"; "Song—for Michael Owens"
Valle, Rosamel del. "The Tree More Beautiful Than Paradise"

REPRODUCTIONS:

- Giorgio De Chirico, Leonor Fini, Paul Klee, Laughlin, Pavel Tchelitchev

NOS. 11-12: FEB.-MAR. 1942

- Abel, Lionel. "The Politics of Spirit"
Carrington, Leonora. "The Sisters"
Melville, Robert. "Picasso in the Light of Chirico: Mutations of the Bull-Fight"
Miller, Henry. "A Night with Jupiter"
Seligmann, Kurt. "Magic Circles"
Tyler, Parker. "The Fourth Dimension of Romance" [on Julian Gracq, *Chateau d'Argol*]
"Towards the Unknown": comments by W. C. Williams, Mina Loy, Marianne Moore, Archibald MacLeish, Harold Rosenberg and Lee Ver Duft

POETRY:

- Calas, Nicolas. "Proverbs"
Duncan, Robert. "A Letter to Jack Johnson"
Durrell, Lawrence. "Daphnis and Chloe" (for V.)
Jarrell, Randall. "The Nightmare"
Turner, Alva N. "The Cat that Came Back" (with letters from William Carlos Williams & Turner)

REPRODUCTIONS:

- Cato, Max Ernst, Pablo Picasso

Series II: Apr. 1942-Apr. 1943

NO. 1: APRIL 1942

Max Ernst Issue

- Cover: Ernst [with engraving by Jarrault of "Buer" from Collin de Plancy, *Dictionnaire infernal*, Paris, 1863]

- Breton, André. "The Legendary Life of Max Ernst: Preceded by a Brief Discussion on the Need for a New Myth" [trans. Lionel Abel]
Calas, Nicolas. "And Her Body Became Enormous Luminous and Splendid"
Carrington, Leonora. "The Bird Superior, Max Ernst"
Ernst, Max. "Some Data on the Youth of M. E. as Told by Himself"
Janis, Sidney. "Journey into a Painting by Ernst"
Levy, Julien. "The Children Outside and the Children Inside"
Miller, Henry. "Another Bright Messenger"
Ozenfant, Amedée. Letter about M. E.
Tyler, Parker. "A Gift from Max Ernst"

- "Max Ernst's Favorite Poets and Painters of the Past"; Books by M. E.; books and texts illus. by M. E.; Exhibition catalog, Valentine Gallery

REPRODUCTIONS:

- Berenice Abbott, Hans Bellmer, Leonora Carrington, Joseph Cornell, Salvador Dali, Max Ernst, James Thrall Soby

NO. 2: MAY 1942

Yves Tanguy/Pavel Tchelitchev Issue

- The issue is divided into two parts, one printed right side up, the other upside down, so that it may be read from either end. Both artists supplied covers.

TANGUY SEGMENT

- Breton, André. "The House of Y. T." [trans. Gordon Onslow-Ford and E.L.T. Mesens]
Breton, André. "What Tanguy Veils and Reveals" [trans. Lionel Abel]
Calas, Nicolas. "Alone"
Ford, Charles Henri. "There's No Place to Sleep in This Bed, Tanguy"
Goodwin, John B. L. Untitled fragment
Peret, Benjamin. "Tanguy—or, the Goose-Barnacle Torpedoes the Jivaros"
Sweeney, James Johnson. "Iconographer of Melancholy"
Books and texts illus. by Y. T.; private collections; exhibitions.

COLLAGE PAGE

- by C.H.F.: Tennyson photographed by Lewis Carroll, with unidentified photos captioned "Night" and "Day"

TCHELITCHEV SEGMENT

- Kirstein, Lincoln. "The Position of Pavel Tchelitchev"
Soby, James Thrall. "Return to the North"
Tyler, Parker. "Tchelitchev's World"
Williams, William Carlos. "Cache Cache"

OTHER

- Calas, Nicolas. "Notes on Liberty"
O'Reilly, Montagu [pseud. of Wayne Andrews]. "Once the Soft Silken Damage Done"
Rosenberg, Harold. "Breton—A Dialogue"

Seligmann, Kurt. "It's Easy to Criticize"

VIEW LISTENS:

MacDonald, Dwight. "The Politics of Spirit" [response to Lionel Abel essay in 11-12]

Masson, André. "Re *Minotaure*"

Miller, Henry. "A Pin-Hole View" [on *View*]

Tyler, Parker. "Open Letter to J. C. Ransom" [re Philip Rahv on the death of surrealism]

Williams, William Carlos. "Surrealism and the Moment" [on *View* and surrealism]

REPRODUCTIONS:

David Hare, André Kertesz, Robsjohn-Gibbins, J. R., Yves Tanguy, Pavel Tchelitchew

NO. 3: OCT. 1942

Vertigo Issue

Cover: Hanani Meller

Caillois, Roger. "Vertigo" [trans. C.H.F.]

Calas, Nicolas. "The New Prometheus"

Homer. "Death According to Homer" [from the *Iliad*; trans. Lang, Leaf and Myers]

Masson, André. "Mallarmé, Portraitist of Baudelaire & Poe"

Reeve, Paul Eaton. "Homage to Battling Siki"

Stevens, Wallace. "Materia Poetica," Part II

Tyler, Parker. "The Endless Island" [on Tchelitchew]

Williams, William Carlos. "Advice to the Young Poet"

POETRY:

Bayliss, John. "Seven Dreams"

Ford, Charles Henri. "Epigrams"

Novo, Salvador. "Botany"

Russell, Sanders. Untitled

Wells, Peter. "Two Love Poems"

VIEW LISTENS:

Toni Del Renzio and Randall Jarrell on *View*

REPRODUCTIONS:

André Masson, Kurt Seligmann, Pavel Tchelitchew

NO. 4: JAN. 1943

Americana Fantastica Issue

Cover: Joseph Cornell

"Americana Fantastica," by Parker Tyler [introduction]

Cornell, Joseph. "The Crystal Cage (Portrait of Berenice)"

Turner, Alva N. "A Manuscript Found in an Iceberg"

"FANTASTIC AMERICA OR, THE LAND WE LIVE IN: A TRAVEL ALBUM"

[*View's* version of *Picturesque America, or The Land We Live In*], by _____, 18__]: nineteenth-century engravings; movie stills; photographs by George Platt Lynes, Levitt, Thomas Eakins;

POETRY:

Blanchard, Kennedy. "Whip-Poor-Will Girl"

Chisholm, Hugh. Untitled.

Ford, Charles Henri. "Ballet for Tamara Toumanova"

Workers of the American Type Foundry

CHILDREN'S PAGE:

incl. poems by Don Organ, Betty Smith; photographs by Joseph Cornell, Bern Porter

COLLAGE PAGES AND REPRODUCTIONS

by Kennedy Blanchard, Joseph Cornell, Louis Eilshemius, Wassily Kandinsky, André Masson, K. Sage, Florine Stettheimer (*Portrait of Virgil Thomson*); Virgil Thomson (*Portrait of Florine Stettheimer*)

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NO. 1: APR. 1943

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"The Point of View" [editorial by Parker Tyler]

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Calas, Nicolas. "Within Good and Evil"

Janis, Harriet and Sidney. "Albright: Compulsive Painter"

Man Ray. "Photography Is Not Art," Part I

Masson, André. "Page from a Notebook"

Melville, Robert. "The Triumph of the True God"

Miller, Henry. "Dream of Mobile"

Rosenberg, Harold. "On the Art of Escape" [review of Anna Seghers, *The Seventh Cross*]

Sitwell, Edith. "Notes on Shakespeare"

Tyler, Parker. "The Ivory Tower of Judo"

Woodcock, George. "London Letter"

POETRY:

Andrade, Jorge Carrera. "Seagull and Solitude" [trans. H. R. Hays]

Bosquet, Alain. "The Need to Have You" [trans. Louis Zukofsky]

Forrester, Porter. "Women and Love" [incorrectly attributed to Preston Forrester]

Hays, H. R. "Landscape by Moonlight"

Jarrell, Randall. "The Islands"

Richardson, R. L. Untitled

Williams, William Carlos. "Paterson: The Falls"

CHILDREN'S PAGE:

Alexander Calder

REPRODUCTIONS:

Ivan Albright, Paul Cézanne, Charles Despiau, El Greco, Matthias Grünewald, John Franklin Hawkins, Paul Klee, Jacques Lipchitz, Man Ray, André Masson, Piet Mondrian, Pavel Tchelitchew

NO. 2: JUNE 1943

Cover: Man Ray

Burke, Kenneth. "The Five Master Terms" [from his *Grammar of Motives*]

Etiemble. "Mystery Is Redeemed by Light"

Kochnitsky, Leon. "Shepherdess of the Sphinxes" [on L. Fini]
Macpherson, Kenneth. "Films and the War"
Péret, Benjamin. "Magic: The Flesh and Blood of Poetry" [from *La Parole est a Péret*]
Rosenberg, Harold. "O This Is the Creature That Does Not Exist" [review of Rainer Maria Rilke, Wallace Stevens]
Woodcock, George. "The London Literary Scene"

POETRY:

Cummings, E. E. "Eight Poems"
Lamantia, Philip. "I Am Coming"; "Apparition of Charles Baudelaire"; "The Ruins"; "By the Curtain of Architecture"; "There Are Many Pathways to the Garden"

CHILDREN'S PAGE:

C. H. Ford, "Counting Game"; Howard McConeghey, "Therese the Adolescent Cow"; Nicholas Moore

VIEW LISTENS:

Calas, Nicolas. "[Harold Rosenberg's] 'The Art of Escape'" with reply by Rosenberg
re *View* from Mary Barrett, Gerald Brooks and Philip Lamantia

REPRODUCTIONS:

Pavel Tchelitchev, Leonor Fini, Paul Klee, Howard McConeghey, Quinten Matsys, Marinus van Roymerswal

NO. 3: OCT. 1943

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Cover: André Masson ["You Carry the Weight of Narcissus," drawing from *Mythology of Being*]

Asturias, Miguel Angel. "Tatuana" [adaptation of Guatemalan folk tale, trans. H. R. Hays]

Bowles, Paul. "Bluey: Pages from an Imaginary Diary"

Calas, Nicolas. "The Monstrous Narcissus"

Fowlie, Wallace. "Narcissus: An Essay on the Modern Spirit"

Man Ray. "Photography Is Not Art," Part II

Tyler, Parker. "Christ, Socrates, Stalin in the Role of Narcissus"

Louis Zukofsky. "Dometer Guczul"

POETRY:

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Harwell, Meade. "Ambivalence"

Renzo, Toni Del. "Can You Change a Shilling?"

Johnson, Jack, Leo Isaacs, Sanders Russell. "Chainpoem III"

Lamantia, Philip. "Automatic World"

Moore, Nicholas. "Poem About England"

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VIEW LISTENS:

Beckwith, Osmond. [on *View* and surrealism]

Bosquet, Alain. "Poesie 1943" [on surrealism]

Carlson, Luella H.: [biographical information]

Wallis, C. G. On Burke's "The Five Master Terms," with reply by Burke

REPRODUCTIONS:

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NO. 4: DEC. 1943

Cover: Pavel Tchelitchev [*The Flower of Sight*]

Calas, Nicolas. "Apes, Warriors and Prophets"

Macpherson, Kenneth. "New York Letter" [Paul Robeson in *Othello*; ballets by Anthony Tudor]

Perry, Clay. "Dead Eye Dick Rides Again"

Roussel, Raymond. "Impressions of Africa" (1910), Part I [trans. Edouard Roditi]

Wallis, Charles Glenn. "Socrates and the Master Poet"

"I.Q. on Weight, or Gewichtsinn, Localized by Dr. Spurzbeim"

POETRY:

Ford, Charles Henri. "Xmas Gift"

Massey, Joe. "You Cannot Stop Death"

CHILDREN'S PAGE:

incl. "The Guardian Toad" [Afro-Cuban folk tale, adapted by Lydia Cabrera; trans. H. R. Hays]; "A Story" by Daniel Henry Hays (age 3); "Cymbals" by Mark Tobey; "Crime Corner"

VIEW LISTENS:

incl. Clay Perry, "Alchemy of Nature"; MGM re Ivan Albright's *Picture of Dorian Gray*; Hitler as Narcissus

COLLAGE PAGE:

"Melted Pillars of Wisdom" [photos of caves by Clay Perry with quote from H. P. Blavatsky]

REPRODUCTIONS:

Salvador Dali [Schiaparelli ad], Théodore Géricault, Frederick Haucke, Leon Kelly, Paul Klee, Melchior Kusel, Rico Lebrun, Fernand Léger, Man Ray, Franz Marc, Melcarth, Michelangelo, Pablo Picasso, Jackson Pollock, Georges Roualt

Series IV: Spring 1944–Dec. 1944

NO. 1: SPRING [MAR.] 1944

Cover: Alexander Calder

"About the Banning: The Point of View" [editorial by Parker Tyler]

Duncan, Dudley. "The Morning After Her"

Childs, Paul. "Dark Sugar"

- Macpherson, Kenneth. "New York Letter" [on opera; *The Song of Bernadette; Lifeboat*]
 Roussel, Raymond. "Impressions of Africa," Part II
 Seligmann, Kurt. "Oedipus and the Forbidden Fruit"
 Wallis, Charles Glenn. "Astronomy: Microcosmic and Neo-Classic" [illus.: *The Geography of the Heavens*, by Elijah H. Vurritt, 1835]

POETRY:

- Anthony, George. "The Lion and the Fox"; "Autumn Evening"
 Breda, Tjamar. "Terra Nova"
 Osborne, R. C. "Pestilence"; "Mayhem"; "Moment"; "Crime"; "Chrysanthemums"

VIEW LISTENS:

- About the Banning of *View*; from Marianne Moore (with reply by the editors), M. D. Shipman, George Marion O'Donnell, Man Ray, Jake Trussell, Jr. (*Jazz Quarterly*); re Pavel Tchelitchev cover (Dec. '43) from Harry Bull and Philip Lamantia

REPRODUCTIONS:

- Paul Childs, André Masson, Isamu Noguchi, Kurt Seligmann, Yves Tanguy, Pavel Tchelitchev; View Highlights: "Ossip Zadkine" (photo: George Platt Lynes)

NO. 2: SUMMER [MAY] 1944

Cover: Georgia O'Keefe

- Grosseteste, Robert (1175-1253). "On Light" [trans. C. G. Wallis]
 Roussel, Raymond. "Impressions of Africa," Part III [trans. Edouard Roditi]
 Symposium on Herbert Read's "The Politics of the Unpolitical": comments by Nicolas Calas, Chiaromonte, Parker Tyler, and W. C. Williams
 Wiegand, Charmion. "Ratgeb—Painter of the Reformation"
 Zadkine, Ossip. "The Minotaur Lost and Found"

POETRY:

- Eberhart, Richard. "Les Princes d'Aquitaine à les Tours Abolie"
 Lamantia, Philip. "Hermetic Rose"
 Massey, Joe. "This Is My Life from A to Z"; "Sun Beautiful as Can Be"; "There Have Been No Peace"
 Turner, Alva N. "Poem"
 Windham, Donald. "The Eyes of Ulysses—An Anthology"
 Zapaulski, Childs [pseud. of Paul Childs]. "Durosa's Durosagram"

REVIEWS:

- Roditi, Edouard. On Max Ernst, André Masson, Hélion, Joan Miró, Merida, E. E. Cummings, Hans Hofmann, Ossip Zadkine.
 Lerman, Leo. On de Diego, Walter Quirt
 Wallis, C. G. On George Constant, Steve Wheeler, Mark Tobey
 Ulanov, Barry. "Jazz of This Quarter" [incl. Memorial concert for Fats Waller; Town Hall concerts by Billie Holiday and Eddie Condon, with photos of Lionel Hampton, Lester Young]

CHILDREN'S PAGE:

- drawings by Adolf and Ann (age 4), Anthony (age 6); poetry and prose by Lord Byron (age 12), Ithell Colquhoun (age 6), Leo Isaacs, Julie McCray (age 4) and Samuel Morford

REPRODUCTIONS:

- Ratgeb, Pavel Tchelitchev, Ossip Zadkine

NO. 3: FALL (OCT.) 1944

Cover: Fernand Léger

- Chirico, Giorgio De. "Hebdomeros" (1929), Part I [trans. Paul Bowles]
 Doleska, Joan. "Traffic Will Be Heavy"
 Melville, Robert. "Three Moves in the Big Game" [on Chirico]
 Mirandola, Pico della. "Elegant Speech on the Dignity of Man" (1487) Part I [trans. C. G. Wallis]
 Poch, Leo. "The Watermelons"
 Sweeney, James Johnson. "Léger and the Search for Order"

- Tyler, Parker. "The Erotic Spectator"
 Ulanov, Barry. "Jazz of This Quarter" [incl. Nat King Cole; with photo of Coleman Hawkins]

POETRY:

- Ford, Charles Henri. "The Fortunes of Edith Sitwell"; "Footprints on the Sand"; "The Dagger That Drew No Blood"; "The Orphic Mirror"

REPRODUCTIONS:

- Audrey Buller, Alexander Calder, Gertrude Cato, Giorgio De Chirico, Fernand Léger, René Magritte, André Masson, Florine Stettheimer, Pavel Tchelitchev, Grant Wood

NO. 4: DEC. 1944

Cover: Esteban Frances

- Abel, Lionel. "A, B, and C on Lautréamont" (to Matta)
 Chirico, Giorgio De. "Hebdomeros," Part II
 Hayter, Stanley William. "Line and Space of the Imagination"
 Man Ray. "Ruth, Roses, and Revolvers" [photos of Ruth Ford by M. R.]
 Mirandola, Pico Della. "On the Dignity of Man," Part II
 Rougement, Denis de. "Tie the Gordian Knot Again!" [trans. Edouard Roditi]
 Seligmann, Kurt. "Microcosmological Chart of Man"

POETRY:

- Breton, André. "Full Margin" [trans. Edouard Roditi]

REVIEWS:

- Bewley, Marius. On Marianne Moore, *Nevertheless*
 Calas, Nicolas. "Auden's Time Being" [*For the Time Being*]
 Goodman, Paul. "The Inhibition of the Irrepressible" [cartoonists Gardner Rea, Virgil Partch, Peter Arno, Robert Taylor]
 Harms, Ernest. "MOMA Shows Russian Child Art"

Ulanov, Barry. "Jazz of This Quarter" [incl. Stuff Smith and Harry James with photo of Smith]

REPRODUCTIONS:

Berman, Alexander Calder, Corbino, Edgar Degas, Gustave Doré, Marcel Duchamp, Esteban Frances, Alberto Giacometti, David Hare, Hayter, Hélion, Paul Klee, Man Ray, Joan Miró, Henry Moore, Louise Nevelson, Virgil Partch, Pablo Picasso, S. Reinhardt, Mark Rothko, Sage, Kurt Seligmann, Pavel Tchelitchev, John Tunnard, Vedovelli, Ossip Zadkine; portrait of Pico della Mirandola (Uffizi Gallery)

Mar. 1945–Jan. 1946

NO. 1: MAR. 1945

Marcel Duchamp Issue

Cover: Duchamp

"A numbered edition limited to 100 untrimmed copies was issued in addition to the regular. Each copy of the numbered edition incorporated a reproduction of *Pharmacy* (1914), hand-colored by Duchamp, signed, numbered, and dated lower left, in pencil, M. Duchamp 45." [Schwarz, see Bibliography]

"The Point of View: Testimony 45," by André Breton [trans. Edouard Roditi]

Breton, André. "Lighthouse of the Bride" [*Minotaure*, 1935]

Buffet, Gabrielle. "MagiCircles" [*Cahiers d'Art*, 1936; trans. Edouard Roditi]

Calas, Nicolas. "Cheat to Cheat"

Cornell, Joseph. "¼ Bird's-Eye View of A Watch Case for Marcel Duchamp"

Deren, Maya. "M. D. in *The Witch's Cradle*" (1943)

Desnos, Robert. "Rose Sélavy: 1922–1923" [*Littérature*, 1924]

Henri, Charles. "Flag of Ecstasy" (poem)

Janis, Harriet and Sidney. "Marcel Duchamp: Anti-Artist"

Kiesler, Frederick J. "Les Larves d'Imagi d'Henri Robert Marcel Duchamp" (triptych representing three walls of Duchamp's studio on 14th Street in New York)

Kochnitzky, Leon. "Marcel Duchamp and the Futurists"

Levy, Julien. "Duchampiana"

Lindamood, Peter. "I Cover the Cover"

Loy, Mina. "O Marcel: or I Too Have Been to Louise's" [from *The Blind Man*, 1917]

Man Ray. "Bilingual Biography"

Parker, Robert Allerton. "America Discovers Marcel"

Sélavy, Rose [Duchamp]. "Une Règle de Grammaire"

Soby, James Thrall. "Marcel Duchamp in the Arensberg Collection"

Waste, Henri. [pseud. of Ettie Stettheimer] "Pensée-Cadeau" [from *Love Days (Susanna Moore's)*, 1923]

Epigrams on M. D. by J. B. Myers, C. H. Ford, Parker Tyler

REVIEWS:

Chevalley, Claude. "Theory of Games" [J. von Neumann and O. Morgenstern, *Theory of Games and Economic Behavior*]

Lamantia, Philip. "Young Poets" [Eve Merriam, Jean Garrigue, Tennessee Williams and John Frederick Nims, Alejandro Carrion]

Schapiro, Meyer. "Flemish Art Reconsidered" [Baron Joseph van der Elst, *The Last Flowering of the Middle Ages*]

Tyler, Parker. "The Limit of the Probable in Modern Painting" [Sidney Janis, *Abstract and Surrealist Art in America* (exhibition and catalog); on Motherwell]

Ulanov, Barry. "The New Jazz" [incl. Duke Ellington at Carnegie Hall and *View* concert at Times Hall, with photo of Ellington]

REPRODUCTIONS:

Joseph Cornell, J. E. Davis, Maya Deren, Marcel Duchamp, Louis

Eilshemius, Max Ernst, Arshile Gorky, Gottlieb, Hofmann, Man Ray, Matta, Georges Rouault, Salemme, Florine Stettheimer, Alfred Stieglitz, Yves Tanguy, Vail, Steve Wheeler; Duchamp [readymade: at the age of 35 (by Steiglitz), M. D. at the age of 85 (unidentified)]

NO. 2: MAY 1945

Tropical Americana Issue

Cover: Wilfredo Lam

Editor: Paul Bowles

all translations, unless otherwise noted, are by Bowles

"The Point of View," by Paul Bowles

Aztec Poems [trans. Ramon Sartoris; from *Poesia Indígena de la Atlántida*, Ediciones de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma, Mexico, 1940]

Balam, Chilam. "The Thirteenth Ahau Katun" [a medieval prophecy, from *Libro de Chilam Balam*, translated by Ramon Sartoris, Ediciones de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma, Mexico]

Beteta, Ramon. "Chewing Gum Land" [DAPP, Mexico, 1937]

Flornoy, Bertrand. "Shrinking the Heads" [from *Haut Amazone*, Librairie Plon, Paris, 1939]

Henry, Jules. "Psychic Structure of the Kaingang" [from *Jungle People* J. J. Augustin, New York, 1941]

"John Very Bad: A Story" [Tarahumara story, from *Monofragia de los Tarahumaras*, Talleres Graficos de la Nacion, Mexico, 1929]

Rivet, Paul. "Origins of American Man" [from Ediciones Cuadernos Americanos, Mexico, 1944]

Sender, Ramon J. "The Buzzard" [from *Mexicayotl*, Ediciones Quetzal, Mexico, 1941]

"The Story of Sage Earth-Fish" and "The Fertile Serpent of Bat Mansion": Selections from *Popol Buj* [Mayan; Manuscrito de Chichicastenango. J. Antonio Villacorta C. & Flavio Rodas N., Guatemala, 1927]

"News from the West Indies"
 "Two Documents: Examples of Tropical Journalism" No. 1, as reported by Juan de la Cabada, in *Cuadernos Americanos*, Mar. 1944; No. 2: "Record of Proceedings in the Case of Gabino Chan," as reported in *El Occidente*, 1938" [is actually by Bowles]

"SCRAPBOOK OF TROPICAL AMERICANA":

photos by Bowles and Rudy Burckhardt

REVIEWS:

Bewley, Marius.

"James—Critically Overnuanced" [F. O. Matthiessen, *Henry James: The Major Phase*]

"Modern Mystification" [Frederic Prokosch, *Age of Thunder*; Glenway Wescott, *Apartment in Athens*; Alex Comfort, *The Power House*; Denton Welch, *Maiden Voyage*]

Calas, Nicolas. "Shall the Criminal Be Killed or Cured?" [David Abrahamsen, *Crime and the Human Mind*]

Chiaromonte, Nicola. "The Devil and Baudelaire" [Joseph Bennett, *Baudelaire—A Criticism*; Denis de Rougemont, *The Devil's Share*]

Dodge, Roger Pryor. "Jazz of This Quarter" [with photo of Sidney de Paris and Sidney Bechet]

Kochnitzky, Leon. "Kandinsky and Mondrian"; "European Artists in America" [Whitney Museum, incl. Fernand Léger, Ossip Zadkine, Yves Tanguy, Matta, Max Ernst]

Roditi, Edouard. "Science, Scholarship and Solecism" [Clarence P. Oberndorf, M.D., *The Psychiatric Novels of Oliver Wendell Holmes*; Bergen Evans and George J. Mohr, M.D., *The Psychiatry of Robert Burton*]; "Feminine Ecstatic" [*The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. W. Butler-Bowden]

Tyler, Parker. "Nature and Madness among the Younger Painters" [Matta, Arshile Gorky, Héliou, Jackson Pollock, Donati]; "The Criminal Should Be Put Together

Again" [Theodor Reik, *The Unknown Murderer*]

VIEW LISTENS:

"English Writers Protest Police Raids" [signed by A. Comfort, T. S. Eliot, E. M. Forster, E. Mannin, J. M. Murray, H. Read, R. Reynolds, D. S. Savage, S. Spender, J. Symons, and editors' response; re *View* from Pfc. Lincoln Kirstein and Lt. W. C. Richards]

REPRODUCTIONS:

Credits for "Tropicana America" section appear on p. 48 of this issue; Martinez-Pedro, Petrov, Pablo Picasso, Steve Wheeler; photos: Maya Deren, Francis Wolfe

NO. 3: OCT. 1945

American Issue

Cover: Morris Hirshfield

Bewley, Marius. "On the American Macabre"

Calas, Nicolas. "The Electric Lamp of Diogenes"

Farrell, James T. "Lunch Hour: 1923"

McBride, Henry. "Florine Stettheimer: A Reminiscence"

Naeve, Lowell. "Aircraft under Scarcity Economy"

Stevens, Wallace. "Analysis of a Theme" (poem)

REVIEWS:

Arm, Hilary [pseud. of Parker Tyler]. "A Critic with Brawn and Good Sense" [James T. Farrell, *League of Frightened Philistines*]

Bewley, Marius. "By Any Other Name?" [William Samson, *Fireman Flower*]; "A Post-Freudian Poem" [Parker Tyler, *The Granite Butterfly*]

Harrison, Lou. "Summer Music"

Rosenberg, Harold. "Goodman without Wings" [Paul Goodman, *The Facts of Life*]

Tyler, Parker. "'Encyclopedism' of American Art" [on Edward Hopper]

REPRODUCTIONS:

Alexander Calder, Drummond, Louis Eilshemius, Edward Hopper,

Huppler, Peter Miller, Lowell Naeve, A. Newman, S. Reinhardt, Kurt Seligmann, Florine Stettheimer, Pavel Tchelitchew, Wheeler

NO. 4: NOV. 1945

Cover: Leon Kelly

Alexieff, Alexander. "The Milk of Wild Beasts: A Russian Fairy Tale" [trans. Norbert Guterman]

Duchamp, Marcel [unsigned]: "Classified Personals"

Fowlie, Wallace. "The Example of Max Jacob"

Kochnitzky, Leon. "Rouault, Painter and Moralist"

Massey, Joe. "Poem"

Ponge, Francis. "A New Introduction to the Pebble" [trans. Paul Bowles]

Roditi, Edouard. "William Harnett: American Necromantic"

Tyler, Parker. "I See the Pattern of Nijinsky Clear"

REVIEWS:

Bewley, Marius. "With Comfort and Without" [Herbert Read, *A World Within A War*; Alex Comfort, *The Song of Lazarus*; Louis MacNiece, *Springboard*; Charles Péguy, *Personal Landscape, An Anthology of Exile and God Speaks*]

Calas, Nicolas. "Serving the Empire" [Bronislaw Malinowski, *The Dynamics of Culture Change*]

Goodman, Paul. "Sex and Revolution" [Wilhelm Reich, *The Sexual Revolution, Toward a Self-Governing Character Structure; Character-Analysis, Principles and Technique*]

Harrison, Lou. "Music: Ruggles, Ives and Varese"

Tyler, Parker. "Monument to a Fallacy" [Jules Romains, *The Wind is Rising*, vol. 12 of *Men of Good Will*]

Van Vechten, Carl. "Lens-Pictures" [John LaTouche, *Congo*, photos by André Cauvin; Clark Kinnard, *This Must Not Happen Again, the Black Book of Fascist Horror*; André Kertész, *Day of Paris*; Paul Strand, *Weegee's Naked City*]

REPRODUCTIONS:

Alexander Calder, Marc Chagall, Margaret Bloy Graham, William Harnett, Gina Hohensee, Max Jacob, Leon Kelly, Paul Klee, Joan Miró, Vaslav Nijinsky, Georgia O'Keeffe, Georges Rouault

NO. 5: DEC. 1945

Cover: André Masson

"Ezra Pound: A Point of View" [editorial by Parker Tyler]

Bowles, Paul. "The Scorpion"
d'Archères, Bluet. "Visions of the Comte de Permission" [trans. Paul Bowles]

Ferry, Jean. "She Woke Me Up So I Killed Her" [trans. Paul Bowles]

Ford, Charles Henri. "Walk—for Baby"

Renne, René and Claude Serbanne. "Yves Tanguy: Of the Mirror of Wonders" [trans. Paul Bowles]

Seligmann, Kurt. "Heritage of the Accursed"

Sender, Ramon J. "The Parabola of Poetry"

REVIEWS:

Bewley, Marius. "Gentlemen Who Rhyme" [Karl Shapiro, *Essay on Rime*; Randall Jarrell, *Little Friend, Little Friend*; Marsden Hartley, *Selected Poems*; William Ellery Leonard, *A Man Against Time, An Heroic Dream*]

Goodman, Paul. "Designs For Living" [Lewis Mumford, Frank Lloyd Wright, Henry C. Churchill on urban development]; "Marxian Nature" [Vernon Venable, *Human Nature: The Marxian View*]

Harrison, Lou. "Recent Records and Concerts" [incl. Villa Lobos, Virgil Thomson]

Tyler, Parker. "If They Have No Bread" [Stuart Davis]; "Isherwood Forget-Me-Not" [*Prater Violet*]

REPRODUCTIONS:

Louis Eilshemius, Walter Goldstein, G. Hohensee, George Platt Lynes, Joseph Pickett, Yves Tanguy, Mark Tobey, Mary Wyckham

NO. 6: JAN. 1946

Cover: John Tunnard

"Alienation of Language" [letters of a Corsican boy to his English sweetheart, sent to Ithell Colquhoun].

Borges, Jorge Luis. "The Circular Ruins" [trans. Paul Bowles]

Chagall, Marc. "My Life: Two Excerpts" [from *Ma Vie*; trans. John McNeil]

Mellers, W. H. "Reflections on English Opera," Part I

Sitwell, Edith. "Some Notes on Shakespeare," Part I [from *Work in Progress*]

POETRY:

Popper, A.C.W. "Poem"

Sitwell, Edith. "A Sleepy Tune" (to Violet Gordon Woodhouse)

REVIEWS:

Arm, Hilary [pseud. of Parker Tyler]. "Three Ripe Items" [Cummington Press: *The Book of Job*, wood engravings by Gustav Wolf; *The Vigil of Venus* (Pervirgilium Veneris), trans. Allen Tate; Wallace Stevens, *Esthétique du Mal*]

Bewley, Marius. "Humanity from Two Standpoints" [Richard Eberhart, *War and the Poet*; H. D., *Tribute to the Angels*]

Calas, Nicolas. "A Champion of Humanism" [Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*]

David, Robert. "Russell's Philosophers" [Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*]

Kochnitsky, Leon. "The Phoenix as Narcissus" [on View-sponsored exhibition at Hugo Gallery, "The Fantastic in Modern Art", incl. Berman, Alexander Calder, G. Cato, Marc Chagall, Joseph Cornell, Max Ernst, Leon Kelly, Leonor Fini, Esteban Frances, Morris Hirshfield, Fernand Léger, André Masson, Joan Miró, Isamu Noguchi, Kurt Seligmann, Yves Tanguy, Pavel Tchelitchev, Ossip Zadkine]

McManus, Everett [pseud. of Parker Tyler]. "Black-and-White Culture" [Richard Wright, *Black Boy*]

Tyler, Parker. "Martial Music?" [*Aragon: Poet of the French Resistance*, ed. Hannah Josephson and Malcolm Cowley]

REPRODUCTIONS:

Marc Chagall, Minna Citron, Dominguez, Charles Rain, Alfred Russell, Joseph Solman, Still, Pavel Tchelitchev, John Tunnard

Series VI: Feb. 1946–May 1946

NO. 1: FEB. 1946

View Italy

Cover: Leonor Fini

[assembled, with an introduction, by Peter Lindamood]

Brice, Germain. "Letter from France" [existentialist authors incl. Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Francis Ponge, Vailland, Jacques Audiberti] Clerici, Fabrizio. "Gaetano Zumbo and Death"

Levi, Carlo. "People of Lucania" [trans. Felix Giovanelli]

Mellers, W. H. "Reflections on English Opera," Part II

Moravia, Alberto. "The Open Window"

Praz, Mario. "Leonor Fini: Gothic Painter" [trans. R. A. Alexander]

POETRY:

[trans. Felix Giovanelli]

Montale, Eugenio. "Ballad Written in a Clinic"

Solmi, Sergio. "The Fugitive Reawakes"

REVIEWS:

Calas, Nicolas. "Via Media" [Miguel Unamuno, *Perplexities and Paradoxes*]

Harrison, Lou. "All About Music" [Tchaikovsky's diaries; Donald F. Tovey, *Beethoven*; Karl Geiringer, *Musical Instruments*; Max Graf, *Legend of a Musical City*]

Myers, John B. "Interaction" [art and publishing news]

REPRODUCTIONS:

Henry C. Adam, Cristofanetti, Clerici, R. Costa, Donati, Leonor Fini, Gherbo, David Hare, Leon Kelly, Lepri, Vespignani, Yakovleff, Zaccannaro, Zumbo; "Cadavres Exquis," surrealist collaboration by Clerici, Leonor Fini and Lepri

NOS. 2-3: MAR.—APR. 1946

View Paris

Cover: Brancusi's studio
[assembled by René Renne and Claude Serbanne]

Abel, Lionel. "George Bataille's Repetition of Nietzsche"
Blanchard, Maurice. "Wanderers of the Dark [to René Char; trans. Felix Giovanelli]"
Brice, Germain. "Letter from France" [incl. Jean-Paul Sartre, Louis Jouvet, Jean Giraudoux, Federico Garcia Lorca, Julien Gracq, Raymond Queneau, Henri Michaux, Ponge, Robert Desnos, Tristan Tzara, Paul Eluard, Milosz]
Camus, Albert. "The Stranger: An Excerpt" [trans. Stuart Gilbert]
Char, René. "Farewell to the Wind" [trans. Felix Giovanelli]
Eluard, Paul. "Apropos-Devant"
Fowlie, Wallace. "Existentialist Theater" [Jean-Paul Sartre, *No Exit*; Albert Camus, *Caligula*]
Genet, Jean. "It's Your Funeral" [from *Notre Dame des Fleurs*, 1943; trans. Lincoln Kirstein and S. P. Bovic]
Gracq, Julien. "Ross' Barrier"
Lee, Francis. "A Soldier Visits Picasso" [photos: Lee and Richard Ham]
Mandiargues, André Pieyre de. "The Passageway of Judiciary Pleasures" [to Leonor Fini, from *Dans les Années Sordide*, 1943]
Michaux, Henri. "The Book of Strange Situations" [trans. Felix Giovanelli]
Paulhan, Jean. "Letter to Jean Dubuffet"

Renne, René and Claude Serbanne. "On Dominguez, Herold, Coutaud, Dubuffet"
Richaud, André de. "Little Known Anecdotes" [trans. Felix Giovanelli]
Sartre, Jean-Paul. "The Nationalization of Literature" [*Les Temps Modernes*; trans. Lincoln Kirstein and S. P. Bovic]
Toursky. "Tomb of the Comte de Lautreamont" [trans. Felix Giovanelli]

POETRY:

Genet, Jean. "Un Chant d'Amour"—à Lucien Senemaud
Michaux, Henri. "There Is" [trans. Lionel Abel]
Valéry, Paul. "The Bee" [trans. Lionel Abel]

REVIEWS:

Berger, Arthur. "Modern French Concerts"
Calas, Nicolas. "Nothingness Plus" [Camus, *L'Étranger*; Maurice Blanchot, *Thomas l'Obscure*]
Myers, John. "Interaction" [incl. Sartre's lecture on theater, sponsored by *View*, Mar. 5, 1946, Carnegie Recital Hall]

PHOTO ESSAYS:

Cheronnet, Louis. "Petit Musée de la Curiosité Photographique"
Eparvier, Jean. "A Paris sous la botte des Nazis" [photos: Schall, Francis Lee, Berson]
Verdes, Nicole. "Images du Cinéma Français"

REPRODUCTIONS:

Adam, Cecil Beaton [photo of André Gide], Constantin Brancusi, Coutaud, Dominguez, Jean Dubuffet, Feitelson, Raoul Hausmann, Maurice Henry, Herold, Laurens, Lobo, Seraphine Louis, Henri Matisse, Amédée Ozenfant, Pablo Picasso, Jackson Pollock, Prinner, Ryder, Verdes, Steve Wheeler, Wols

NO. 3: MAY 1946

Cover: Jean Hélion

Goodman, Paul. "Eros, or the Drawing of the Bow"

Lovejoy, Mary I. "The Praying Mantis, A Bedtime Story" [from *The Interstate Third Reader*, 1893, ill. for *View* by Petrov]
Mellers, W. H. "Some Reflections on English Opera," Part III
Melville, Robert. "The Snake on the Dining Room Table"
Renne, René and Claude Serbanne. On Hans Bellmer
Rosenberg, Harold. "Notes on Identity: with Special Reference to the Mixed Philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard"
Sitwell, Edith. "Some Notes on Shakespeare," Part II

POETRY:

Harper, Maurice Ely. "He"; "Water"; "Late"; "Crawl"
Massey, Joe. "Four Poems and Drawings"
Windham, Donald. "A Dark Riddle"

REVIEWS:

Kirstein, Lincoln. "A Princely Contribution" [A. Hyatt Mayor, *The Bibiena Family*]
Kochnitsky, Leon. "A Magic Portico" [South Seas exhibition, MOMA]
McManus, Everett [pseud. of Parker Tyler]. "And So They Took Up Their Pens" [Peggy Guggenheim, *Out of This Century*; Marianne Oswald, *One Small Voice*]
Miller, Henry. "Positions of the Sun" [Jean Giono, *Blue Boy*]
Tyler, Parker. "Towards a Greater Literary Criticism" [Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*]

REPRODUCTIONS:

Hans Bellmer, Berman, Hieronymus Bosch, Feitelson, Harnett, Karin, Lundeberg, Stanton MacDonald-Wright, Petrov, South Seas art, Tanning

Series VII: Fall 1946—Spring 1947

NO. 1: FALL (OCT.) 1946

Cover: Isamu Noguchi

Bowles, Paul. "By the Water"
 Schapiro, Meyer. "On a Painting of
 Van Gogh"
 Seligmann, Kurt. "Magic and the
 Arts"
 Sitwell, Edith. "Notes from a Poet's
 Notebook" [to Pavel Tchelitchew]
 Tyler, Parker. "Dorian Gray: Last of
 the Movie Draculas"

POETRY:

Ford, Charles Henri. "Chanson pour
 Billie"
 Law, T. S. "Eve in the Skelp
 O'Spring"

REVIEWS:

Arm, Hilary [pseud. of Parker
 Tyler].
 "Riches of Word and Image" [Max
 Raphael, *Prehistoric Cave Painting*;
 James Thrall Soby, *The Prints of
 Paul Klee*; MOMA, *Paul Klee*;
 Robert Goldwater and Marco
 Treves, eds., *Artists on Art*;
 Heinrich Zimmer, *Myths and Sym-
 bols in Indian Art and Civilization*,
 ed. Joseph Campbell];
 Bella Chagall, *Burning Lights*
 Bentley, Eric. "The 'Old Vic,' the Old
 Critics, and the New Generation"
 Bewley, Marius. "The Virile Eliz-
 abethans" [Edith Sitwell, *Fanfare
 for Elizabeth*; George B. Johnston,
Ben Jonson: Poet; Paul H. Kocher,
Christopher Marlowe.
 Boultenhouse, Charles [signed C. B.]:
 Grace Roberts, *The Borzoi Book of
 Ballets*
 Downer, Alan S. "The Drama-Lover
 as Critic" [Eric Bentley, *The Play-
 wright as Thinker*]
 Goodman, Paul. "The Big Little
 Magazines" [Frederick Hoffmann
 et al, *The Little Magazine*]
 Janis, Sidney. "Morris Hirshfield
 Dies"
 McManus, Everett [pseud. of Parker
 Tyler]. "Condition Critical" [Cyril
 Connolly, *The Condemned Play-
 ground*; George Orwell, *Dickens*,
Dali, and Others]
 Tyler, Parker. "Fourteen Americans"
 [MOMA exhibition, incl. Isamu

Noguchi, David Hare, Roszak,
 Arshile Gorky, Loren McIver, I.
 Rice Pereira, Robert Motherwell,
 Steinberg]
 Williams, William Carlos. "The Ge-
 nius of France" [André Breton,
*Young Cherry Trees Secured Against
 Hares*]

REPRODUCTIONS:

Ivan Albright, Busa, Foy, Esteban
 Frances, Joe Massey, Isamu
 Noguchi, Yves Tanguy, Vincent
 Van Gogh

NO. 2: DEC. 1946

Surrealism in Belgium
 Cover: René Magritte
 assembled by Marcel Marien

Cabrera, Lydia. "Suandende" [from
 an Afro-Cuban folktale; trans.
 Mary Low]
 Klausner, O. "The Parachute Jump"
 Marien, Marcel. "Psychological As-
 pects of the Fourth Dimension"
 [trans. Felix Giovanelli]
 Magritte, René. "Lifeline" [from "La
 ligne de ma vie," lecture at the
 Musée des Beaux-Arts, Antwerp,
 Nov. 20, 1938; trans. Felix
 Giovanelli]
 Nougé, Paul. "Music Is Dangerous,"
 Part I
 Scutenaire, Louis. "Entries in a Jour-
 nal" [trans. Felix Giovanelli]
 Willard, B. L. "Unheard Melodies"

POETRY:

Chavée, Achille. "Poem"; "To Seize";
 "Iron Fingert" [trans. Mary Low]
 Colinet, Paul. "The Lamp's Stories"
 ["Absence of Color"; "The Thin
 Man's Game"; "Prose Poem"; "The
 Wall on the Bias"; "The Art of Po-
 etry" [trans. Paul Bowles]
 Magritte, Paul. "Prose Poems" ["The
 Soup"; "Dissertation on Rain";
 "The City" [trans. Paul Bowles]
 Wergifosse, Jacques. "Your Bowl
 Rolls" [trans. Mary Low]

REVIEWS:

Arm, Hilary [pseud. of Parker
 Tyler]. [John Donne, *A Sermon
 Preached at Lincoln's Inn*, ed.
 George Reuben Porter]
 Bewley, Marius. "America's Restless
 Analyst" [Henry James, *The Ameri-
 can Scene*]; "A Blakean Harvest"
 [Mark Schorer, *William Blake: The
 Politics of Vision*]
 Boultenhouse, Charles [signed C. B.].
 [Herbert Friedmann, *The Symbolic
 Goldfinch*]
 Giovanelli, Felix. "Extra Added At-
 traction" [Henry Miller, *The Air-
 Conditioned Nightmare*]
 Roditi, Edouard. "Good Spade Works
 in Renaissance Art" [Otto Benesch,
*The Art of the Renaissance in North-
 ern Europe*]
 Tyler, Parker. "Seligmann, Stet-
 theimer, Frances, Leonid, Tanguy";
 Franz Kafka, *The Great Wall of
 China, Stories and Reflections*

REPRODUCTIONS:

Esteban Frances, Hayter, René
 Magritte, Marien, Kurt Seligmann,
 Florine Stettheimer, Neal Thomas,
 Ubac; scene from *No Exit*

NO. 3: SPRING (MAR.) 1947

Cover: Pavel Tchelitchew

Bewley, Marius. "Death in America"
 Goodman, Paul. "The Musical Dogs"
 [from *Kafka's Prayer*]
 Nougé, Paul. "Music Is Dangerous"
 Part II
 McLuhan, Herbert Marshall. *Time,
 Life and Fortune*
 Tyler, Parker. "Human Anatomy as
 an Expanding Universe" [on
 Tchelitchew]

POETRY:

Atkins, Russell. "Poem"
 "Four Primitives": Luella H. Carsons,
 "Shadows" and "A Rhyme"; An-
 drew Demarest; Joe Massey; Anne
 Rush, "The Ponca Flood"

REVIEWS:

- Arm, Hilary [pseud. of Parker Tyler]. James Johnson Sweeney, *Marc Chagall*
- Bewley, Marius. "Perennial and Less" [Francois Mauriac, *Women of the Pharisees; The Portable D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Diana Trilling; Denys Val Baker, *The White Rock*]
- Giovanelli, Felix. Edward Seaver, *Cross Section 1947*

- Goldwater, Robert. "Dubuffet's Dialerie"
- Goodman, Paul. "Hagiography of the Atom Bomb" [Georges Bernanos, *Joy*; trans. Louise Varèse]
- Kochnitzky, Leon. On Miró and Henry Moore
- McManus, Everett [pseud. of Parker Tyler]. Leon Trotsky, *Stalin*
- Tyler, Parker. "Music" [John Cage]

REPRODUCTIONS:

- Blythe, C. Cagli, David Hare, MacKenzie, Lazzari, Esteban Frances, Martinez-Pedro, Mason, André Masson, Joan Miró, Moller, Henry Moore, Sager, Tamayo, Pavel Tchelitchev, Wertz

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