

THE REBEL MAGAZINE

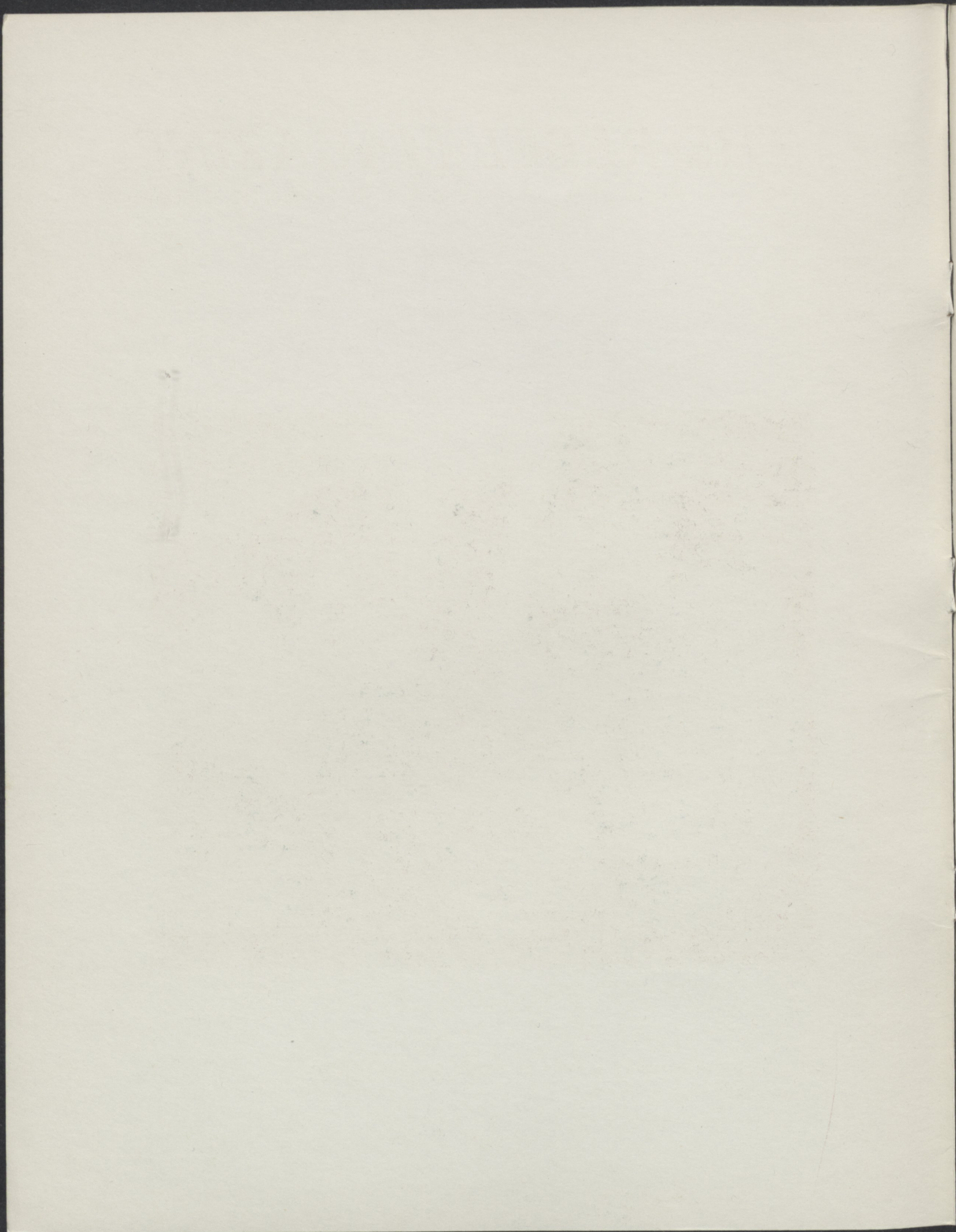
VOLUME IX, NUMBER 1

1965-1966

EAST CAROLINA COLLEGE



RICHARD F. GORDON JR.



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	ALLEN TATE INTERVIEW	3
LARRY BLIZARD	Artist	18
JOHN JUSTICE	<i>The Window</i>	23
JERRY TILLOTSON	<i>Odyssey — 1964</i>	31
DWIGHT PEARCE	<i>Quiet</i>	32
S. CHERNOFF	<i>The Jacket</i>	33
GUY OWEN	<i>Randall Jarrell's Last Book</i>	35

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Cover Painting by Larry Blizard

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BOOKS BY ALLEN TATE

BIOGRAPHIES:

Stonewall Jackson: The Good Soldier (1928)

Jefferson Davis: His Rise and Fall (1929)

POETRY:

Mr. Pope and Other Poems (1928)

Ode to the Confederate Dead (1930)

Poems: 1928-1931 (1932)

The Mediterranean and Other Poems (1936)

Selected Poems (1937)

Sonnets at Christmas (1941)

The Winter Sea (1944)

Poems: 1920-1945 (1948)

Poems: 1922-1947 (1948)

Two Conceits for the Eye to Sing, if Possible (1950)

ESSAYS:

Reactionary Essays on Poetry and Ideas (1936)

Reason in Madness: Critical Essays (1941)

On the Limits of Poetry: Selected Essays, 1928-1948 (1948)

The Hovering Fly, and Other Essays (1949)

The Forlorn Demon: Didactic and Critical Essays (1953)

The Man of Letters in the Modern World: Selected Essays, 1928-1955 (1955)

Collected Essays (1959)

FICTION:

The Fathers (1938)

This list does not include numerous magazine articles, editorships and co-editorships. The most notable omission to many people will be *The House of Fiction*, an anthology widely used in writing courses, which he co-edited with Caroline Gordon in 1959. The commentaries are detailed expositions of the craft in literature. Mention should also be made of the long association between Mr. Tate and *The Sewanee Review*.



ALLEN TATE INTERVIEW

INTERVIEWER: Well, I was going to ask you what you are working on now.

TATE: This summer, for two months, I was trying to finish up a long poem I began about ten years ago — longer than that. I got pretty far ahead on it, but then the T. S. Eliot memorial issue of *The Sewanee Review* has taken up all my time for the past two months. We are getting out a memorial issue in January — a great deal of correspondence; but that's about done now.

INTERVIEWER: Is that the poem *Seasons of the Soul*?

TATE: No. I published three parts of it: "The Maimed Man," "The Swimmers," and "The Buried Lake." In my book of 1960 there are two

parts. It'll be in nine parts. I think I'm going to publish one more part in a magazine but keep the rest for the book, which I hope is going to be out in about a year.

INTERVIEWER: Will these be as you originally published them, or will you go back and change these small parts, or add on to them?

TATE: I would like to change a few things in each. Each part is complete in itself, each is a little narrative. There may be some continuity, but I am not sure; it's probably in my mind rather than on the page. But I have seven parts which I think are finished and an eighth almost, and I have the ninth part to write from scratch. I don't know why nine parts, I just decided that

ALLEN TATE INTERVIEW

arbitrarily at the beginning. There are people — children that walk on the sidewalk and feel they have to step on every crack, or every other crack — you lay down a rule and then you just follow it.

INTERVIEWER: There was something Robert Lowell said in an article that appeared in *The Swanee Review* a while ago called "Visiting the Tates" . . .

TATE: Oh yes, for my sixtieth birthday.

INTERVIEWER: And he said something about you consider each poem your last.

TATE: Yes, I've never expected to be able to write another one. I think that's sort of playing safe, you know. Suppose you can't; then you will have faced it in advance.

INTERVIEWER: I couldn't tell whether he was being facetious or whether you were being —

TATE: I didn't know he'd said that. But I'm perfectly serious. I don't know whether I can write another one.

INTERVIEWER: Didn't he also say something about your cabinet-making? He saw one of your cabinets.

TATE: Oh yes. The summer that Cal [Robert Lowell] spent with us. That was a very amusing summer, in retrospect, but very trying at the time. I had a farm for a long time in Montgomery County, Tennessee, and I had some timber cut on the place — walnut, black walnut. I made some corner cupboards and some other pieces of furniture; I built a garage — Cal helped me with that. He had never lived in the country; he's completely urban, Bostonian. He was very amusing when he first came to Tennessee. He said one day, "I've never seen so many donkeys." He thought mules were donkeys. He was a wonderful boy. Of course he's a man nearly fifty now. He was only about 19 then. When he first came to the house we didn't know anything about him; he just drove up. Nice Spring day. He'd borrowed a car in Nashville. He knew Merrill Moore and Merrill had sent him to friends of his in Nashville. He came up and introduced himself and said that Mr. Ford — Ford Madox Ford — had told him if he wanted to be a poet, go to Tennessee, instead of Paris, and things like that. Shortly after we went into the house he rather timidly asked if he might spend the summer with us. I said I'd be delighted to have him, except that Mr. Ford himself was arriving in a few days with his wife and secretary. Mr. Ford was a very large man, and he took up a lot of room.

And by way of dismissing the idea in a kind of hyperbole, I said, "If you came you'd have to live in a tent. I'm sorry, I wish we could have you." And about a week later — you see Cal had a literal New England mind — and a week later, he drove up in the same car, and he opened the trunk of the car, and he pulled out a nice new green tent — set it up in the yard and stayed there two months. But we became very fond of him. Of course I've been fond of him ever since. He's a very great friend of mine.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned Ford Madox Ford. Amy Lowell and Gertrude Stein seem to be in their heyday, but you find that people have never heard of Ford Madox Ford or Sherwood Anderson. Why is that?

TATE: Yes, and it's very curious. There have been a great many books about Ford recently. There is to be a complete edition to be gotten out in a year or two by McGraw-Hill. And there have been about four critical works. And just recently, an excellent biography by a man named Frank McShane; there is to be another biography by Arthur Mizener, who did a good book on Scott Fitzgerald. For some reason Ford's widow would not let anybody see certain private papers, except Arthur Mizener; Frank McShane didn't see lots of things. It's a fine book nevertheless. Arthur's book will probably be more complete. It'll be what is sometimes called the definite work. All these books have been published, and yet the only novel of Ford's which is still read today is *The Good Soldier*. The others are not at present.

INTERVIEWER: I believe they've reissued *The Fifth Queen* and something else together — in hard-back. They did something on it in the *Times*.

TATE: Well, I should think *The Fifth Queen* would be the thing to get out first in order to bring Ford's reputation back. You know he had a tremendous reputation in the 1920's up to the middle of the thirties; then he disappeared.

INTERVIEWER: What was his real name? Was it Hueffer or —

TATE: It was Ford Madox Hueffer. It was more than that, it was Herman Ford Madox Hueffer — had a great string of German names. Ford was originally in his name and there's been a mystery made of his changing his name. He simply didn't want to have a German name. But a legend I used to hear was that after the great scandal with Violet Hunt he had to change his name. He took Violet Hunt to Germany and got what he thought was a valid divorce from his first wife, Elsie Mar-

tindale. But the divorce was not valid in England. They came back and registered at the Hotel Savoy: Mr. and Mrs. Ford Madox Hueffer. This must have been about 1911 or 12. The first Mrs. Hueffer brought suit against the society column which published this notice, "Mr. and Mrs. Ford Madox Hueffer are registered at the Savoy," and she won the suit. The court enjoined Violet Hunt forever from calling herself Mrs. Hueffer. That's one explanation for the change of name to Ford Madox Ford. Except the time of the change seems to be pretty good evidence that it wasn't really that; it was simply changed from a German name during the war. Yet he had the name all through the war. He was Captain Hueffer, later Major Hueffer.

INTERVIEWER: I didn't know he was active in the war.

TATE: Oh yes he was; he was gassed in the war.

INTERVIEWER: I guess the only ones you read about being active are the ones that were killed.

TATE: Yes, the poets.

INTERVIEWER: T. E. Hulme was killed.

TATE: Well, Siegfried Sassoon wasn't killed, but he wrote war poetry. Wilfred Owen, of course, was killed.

INTERVIEWER: When I was reading *The Fathers* and that section along about three-quarters through the book—it seemed to me to give a recapitulation or something of the sort in classical allegory.

TATE: Yes, Jason and the Golden Fleece.

INTERVIEWER: That really struck me because it seemed to fit so well.

TATE: Well, I'm glad you feel that. I got to that particular place and the boy had to get home. He'd seen all these horrors, the first bloodshed in Alexandria, and run away from the Posey house. I was up against it. I didn't know what I was going to do. I didn't know how to get him home. And I didn't want to say, well, a certain amount of time passed and he got home. I had to show his progress home; and in order to fill that out, I had to use the journey home as a way of bringing the threads of the action together up to that moment. It was a dangerous thing to do because it was a climax and I had to have another climax at the end, and a novel with two climaxes is a little difficult to do. But it suddenly occurred to me that the myth of Jason might work.

INTERVIEWER: I guess that was part of something I was interested in, whether you had been building up to this before . . .

TATE: Well, I couldn't do anything for about a month and finally the Jason thing popped into my head one morning and I rushed to the Vanderbilt Library and got out *The Argonauts* by Apollonius of Rhodes and read it. I didn't use all of it. No, it wasn't something I'd been building up to at all. It was a technical device to get me over a difficulty.

INTERVIEWER: Well, it seems to me to have transcended a device. That was the startling thing about it.

TATE: It had occurred to me that I could also use a part of a poem I had written long before. I have a poem called "The Dream;" it's about a boy walking along a road with an old man who's evidently his grandfather; and so the myth of Jason, plus this walk with the apparition, gave me the suggestion about the device of using the myth. I couldn't just let it occur in Lacy Buchanan's mind. I wanted somebody else to tell *him*. So I had the apparition of his grandfather, and the boy was hallucinated.

INTERVIEWER: You said it occurred to you in the morning. I just wondered, a lot of writers have certain times of day they write. Do you keep a particular schedule?

TATE: Only in the morning. If I can't do it by 12:00, I give up. I used to be able to work all day, but I can't anymore—I haven't for years. I can't work at night. Any notions I have usually come to me first thing in the morning. I never could sleep all day as most boys do when I was your age.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, there's one part in *The Fathers* where—I forget who—tells Lacy, "Hadn't you better go to bed? You must be tired by now." But Lacy thinks, "I've never been tired in my life."

TATE: Yes. I don't think I was ever tired until I was about thirty years old. I'd get physically tired, but not so tired I couldn't do any work.

INTERVIEWER: I got very interested in that piece "Techniques of Fiction." And there was a question about that—wait a minute, I thought I knew where it was. Oh yes. You said something about, I believe, that trade secrets seem to vanish once they get into the province of formal criticism.

TATE: Yes, I think this is true. I think writers learn from one another by word of mouth or through their own works. That little device you've been asking me about—Jason. Now I think the way a critic would go about it is the way you did. That I'd been building up to it. That'd be the

ALLEN TATE INTERVIEW

critical approach, because it *appears* at any rate that I had been building up to it, but I wasn't. I was not an architect. I was a carpenter trying to do something practical. And Ford had an immense knowledge of that kind of thing. He could sort of glance at a manuscript and turn the pages and he could tell you exactly what you were doing. He was an amazing man. What little I know about fiction I think I learned from Ford. And I don't think I could have written *The Fathers* without *The Good Soldier*. I didn't learn everything Ford had to teach me, because I couldn't have used it all. But what I did learn to use in *The Fathers* was how to get a first person narrator who's sufficiently involved in the action to make his report credible and at the same time sufficiently detached to view the whole scene. And the only way I could do that was through the device of having him write the story fifty years later. He gives you the actual scene, you have the feelings and the perceptions of the boy, but the old man is always standing over the shoulder of the boy; and he knows more than the boy does. And that's what — in a much more complex way — that's what Ford's Dowell does in *The Good Soldier*. He seems to be stupid, when he tells you what is happening. He pretends, he says that he doesn't understand it. But in the very act of telling you he doesn't understand it, Ford lets the reader understand, even if Dowell doesn't. *The Good Soldier* is one of the greatest pieces of fiction ever written. I read it every two or three years now, and I'm always surprised, there are surprises in it still. You can never — it's so complex that you never can quite remember the sequence, what's going to happen next. I suppose there are greater novels because *The Good Soldier* is a novel on a small scale. It doesn't have the range of experience of *War and Peace* or *Anna Karenina*. But it's like a French masterpiece on a small scale.

INTERVIEWER: I don't know whether it's legitimate to get at this, but you said it's true that these devices vanish under formal criticism. But do you have any idea why they do?

TATE: Well, I think as a rule the formal critic attributes to the novelist, or to the poet for that matter, a conscious plan in advance of the writing of the work. This is not usually the case, because I think the novelist is usually — well, he has usually only a sense of direction. He knows generally where he's going. But the great problem is to invent the detail that will get him to this

destination. And that can't be foreseen, and the technical problems of fitting that detail into a design which is not yet complete is something that formal criticism can't deal with. As you know, in our time there've been a great many essays by writers explaining how they did it. I wrote one myself. I don't think I really did it that way. Maybe a little of it was true, but I was partly rationalizing. I was trying to — I was giving the whole procedure of my "Ode to the Confederate Dead" a little more coherence and certainty than it had. For some years I had wanted to write a poem on that subject because there were so many bad ones; I thought I would try and see if I could write a better one. The only really fine poem, an elegy on the Confederates, is Henry Timrod's ode after the war at the Magnolia Cemetery in Charleston. It's very short. It must be, what is it, ten or twelve lines, something like that? And the others are all the old — they are mostly done by the United Daughters of the Confederacy, an estimable group of ladies, few of whom were poets. One morning, the first line popped into my head: "Row after row with strict impunity." I said, well, where do you go from there? I had no grand design. Of course it was about a cemetery, it was an elegy, in fact the poem was called *elegy* instead of *ode* at first. And then I wrote the second line and moved on step by step. I think it is true, that what I said in that essay is true, that it's not really about the Confederate Dead. It's about the man who's writing the poem. I think Conrad Aiken feels much the same way about his poems — a kind of free but controlled association is operating. You take what comes and try to see what you can do with it. Wouldn't it stand to reason that if a poet knew what his poem was going to be about, and had a grand design for it — was able to see everything — why should he write the poem? Poets write poems in order to discover something that they didn't know before, something about themselves which they discover through the formal requirements of poetry.

INTERVIEWER: It certainly sounds more reasonable than most . . .

TATE: I'm sure *The Waste Land* was written that way. Everybody knows it was about twice as long as it is and parts of it we know Eliot had written years before; when he wrote most of it, around 1920, he picked up those old fragments. The one about Phlebas the Phoenician was a French poem called "Dans Le Restaurant;" and

the woman who "pulled her long black hair out tight" was written as a fragment years before. Conrad Aiken brings that out in his piece we have in the Eliot issue of *The Sewanee Review*.

INTERVIEWER: Which issue was that?

TATE: The Eliot issue we're bringing out. We're reviving Conrad's review of *The Waste Land* in 1923. It's excellent — astonishing. Everybody else was completely baffled by it. Or hated it. But Conrad was a very sharp fellow. Even as a young man he understood the importance of the poem. And he understood the poem, too, which is better than most of us could have done.

INTERVIEWER: I read at one point that Eliot had considered "Gerontion" as being part of *The Waste Land*.

TATE: Yes, exactly. It was supposed to go in it. The versification wouldn't have done in *The Waste Land*; it's a kind of Websterian blank verse, but it might have worked — you can't tell — he might've been able to turn it into something.

INTERVIEWER: What sort of blank verse did you say?

TATE: Well, it's loose blank verse probably modeled on John Webster — "The White Devil" and "The Duchess of Malfi" — a kind of blank verse very difficult to scan. It has an iambic movement and that's about all. If you put it into prose, it would be very difficult to restore it to verse. You couldn't be quite sure where the lines ended. The sequence of the parts of *The Waste Land* might be changed without much altering the effect; except the first part, in which he announces all the themes he's going to develop in the other sections. But in "A Game of Chess" — well I don't know, I should think in "A Game of Chess" we might have had something very different from that Elizabethan blank verse that begins it, "The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne." We might have had "Gerontion" there because "Gerontion" could have shaded into Tiresias who appears in the next section — two old men, you see. There were all sorts of possibilities. I think it would be a calamity if the original version were ever rediscovered — you know it's lost. It would be a wonderful thing for the Ph.D.'s, wouldn't it? Think of the thousands of dissertations written on that.

INTERVIEWER: I may be displaying ignorance again, but I've never been able to decide for myself whether the notes to that are serious or not.

TATE: In the lecture he gave at the University of Minnesota in 1956, called *The Frontiers of Criticism*, he rather disclaims the notes, repudiates

them, says that the publisher wanted the notes to fill out the book so he could charge enough for the book. I don't know. I think T. S. Eliot wrote those notes with a complete deadpan. He was perfectly serious about them.

INTERVIEWER: Well, I've also heard that since the books were published in 32-page sections it was too big for 32 pages, but too small for 64 pages. TATES It's possible that he did that — Tom Eliot had a unique sense of humor. He may have been pulling our leg in those notes; I don't know. Some of them were so solemn that — for example, the note on the line "With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine." His note on that is "a phenomenon I have frequently observed." But a great change came about in him. When I first knew him, I felt the difference in age was very great. He was eleven years older than I and he was a little solemn. But he mellowed and loosened up greatly in his old age. He was wonderful company, very warm-hearted and responsive. As a young man he was rather formal.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, Mr. Aiken said something about him developing his manners at Harvard, being very shy.

TATE: I think his early formality was even a little pompous; but that was rather due to shyness, which he gradually overcame. He was always a little shy, even up to his death. But in a way that was a kind of protective coloration to keep the — you know a man of his immense fame was bombarded all the time by cranks and people who wanted just to see him and touch his sleeve. He had a formidable British exterior, but his sense of humor remained American always.

I could tell you a joke about — he was at Princeton in the Fall of 1948 at the Institute for Advanced Study. He was just finishing *The Cocktail Party*. He had got the Nobel Prize while he was there. I was in New York then. He invited me down for a weekend — he had a house to himself — and some friends of ours invited us to dinner the first evening I was there. He'd already received a lot of crank mail as a result of the Nobel Prize and after we'd had several martinis, he put on his spectacles, reached into his pocket, and pulled out a postal card. He read it to us; it was from some prohibition or temperance society somewhere in Pennsylvania, exhorting him to stop drinking and join the society. When he had finished reading it, he looked over his spectacles at me, handed me the card, and said, "Allen, I think you need this more than I do." That isn't

ALLEN TATE INTERVIEW

English, that's American humor. I don't know why; I can't define the difference; but I can't imagine an Englishman saying that to anybody. INTERVIEWER: Well, I can sort of see that, I think. There's something I wanted to ask. It was about the general role of the critic. It seems that part of the role of the critic is to clarify. Do you see the critic's role converging with that of the teacher?

TATE: You mean the role of the critic and the role of the teacher tend to merge? Yes, I think the critic is a teacher, in a way. Even if he's not in the classroom, he's the middle-man; he's passing on to either a small or large public, a public of whatever size, certain insights into a given work and comparing it with other works in his own language or in other languages. That is a kind of teaching. So it seems to me that criticism is expendable. Practically all literary criticism is programmatic. The great piece of programmatic criticism in English is the *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* in 1800. Some of Wordsworth's theories are pretty shaky. Coleridge later on pointed that out: It was an unconscious effort on Wordsworth's part to create an atmosphere in which his own poetry could be understood. T. S. Eliot was exactly the same kind of critic, even though he was writing chiefly as a young man about the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. He wrote about those authors because they were the people he was studying and learning from so he could use them. And Pound's criticism has always been overtly programmatic; he was — he said this was rubbish and all that's trivial and no good. And then what he salvages from this wreck of what people ordinarily call the literary tradition are the things he could use, and that's programmatic criticism. There are certainly great critics who survived their time; they're all programmatic nevertheless; their range and depth is so great that they survive. Coleridge, Johnson, Matthew Arnold to some extent, although I think a lot of Arnold is now irrelevant; but most critics are that way — criticism is always in a very bad position. It's neither philosophy nor literature, it's in between, and the great critics who survive are the masters of style. You read them as writers rather than as critics. Now the *Biographia Literaria*, from the critical point of view, is just irrelevant — now useless, but Coleridge was a great master of style everybody can read with pleasure. So is Samuel Johnson. The *Lives of the Poets*, even wrong-headed as most of them are,

are literature in themselves. I think the best of — I think Conrad Aiken is a programmatic critic. He's almost never written any theoretical essays, they're mostly reviews. He doesn't take an abstract literary problem and explore it and develop it. But I think his criticism is going to last. Its intelligence, precision, and just the sheer entertainment of reading it is of value in itself. He writes extremely good prose.

INTERVIEWER: You know, that brings a question to me. I'm not referring to the poet who also writes criticism, but just critics in general. It seems that the woods are full of them.

TATE: I take a rather dim view of all that; I just don't see it. There's Northrop Frye. He invents five new categories on every page. And there's *a* and *a prime*, *b* and *b prime*, and *sub-one* and whatnot; it's the height of academicism, and it's the kind of thing that provokes academic discussion. There are round tables and panel discussions based on Frye, but the discussion is not based on literature. At the end of his book, *The Giant Weapon*, Stanley Hyman has a chapter called "The Ideal Critic." The ideal critic is a man who doesn't have to read the literature; he just reads other criticism. It's like that community the members of which make their living by taking in each other's washing.

Some theoretical criticism is good. Critics like I. A. Richards. In his old age, he's begun to write poetry. Some of it's very amusing; but he's almost a pure critic — that is, in the sense that he didn't start as a poet, and his criticism cannot really be described as programmatic in the sense of criticism justifying the poetry of the critic. I think one of the best English critics today, probably the best, is Frank Kermode. He's not a poet, but he has an uncanny sense of what poets are up to, and the novelists too; he gets inside the works, he's not relating the works to some historical process or some abstraction. In a remarkable collection of reviews and essays called *Puzzles and Epiphanies*, he does very much the same thing that Conrad does as a reviewer. He can bring his intelligence to bear on a great variety of all sorts of literature; I think he has a very great value. But a man like F. R. Leavis leaves me extremely cold when he sets up an abstraction like the Great Tradition. The great tradition for him is what he arbitrarily likes; and he puts all these people on a bed of Procrustes and they have to fit this bed; cuts their legs off or stretches them out and — it's too bad. He has

a mystique of criticism. He'll say this is criticism, that is not. But you can't tell; I can't tell half the time one from the other, I don't know what he means by criticism. I think he means by criticism what he writes.

INTERVIEWER: Another thing of yours I liked was that essay on Longinus. It was completely new to me—I never heard of the man. I was very interested in what you said about subject and language or style. I don't know quite how to approach this, but—well what reminded me of it was the conversation a minute ago about people being read for their style.

TATE: I don't think you can read a man for his style if he hasn't got something to say through the medium of style.

INTERVIEWER: Well—just what do you say through the medium?

TATE: Think of Samuel Johnson's great life of Abraham Cowley, in which he discussed the Metaphysical poets. If you can imagine some ham 18th century critic like John Dennis expounding exactly the same point of view and same opinions, it'd be unreadable today. Suppose we don't agree with Johnson that the Metaphysical poets are deficient in many ways. I think Johnson is unjust to them, but I still read that essay with great pleasure. Because it is a point of view about the Metaphysical poets which you can't dismiss, and it's expressed in a great style.

2

TATE: The fact that a writer will survive into posterity is no guarantee that he's better than somebody who has been lost. For example, in the early part of this century in this country the two most prominent poets were William Vaughn Moody and George Edward Woodbury—God help us. There was a poet who died in 1904, a Bostonian named Trumbull Stickney. He's not a great poet, but very fine. He has been completely neglected for over fifty years. Occasionally you see a few things in anthologies. I did an anthology years ago with David Cecil in England and I put some of his things in. F. O. Matthiessen knew about him. But that's about all. And just the other day Mr. [Andrew] Lytle received an essay on Trumbull Stickney which he's going to publish, and it may help to get him back in circulation.

INTERVIEWER: I think during the 19th century, the big American writers were little old ladies

writing some sort of sentimental novels.

TATE: Certainly. We were always told that the great Southern poet was Sidney Lanier. Certainly the best antebellum Southern poet is Henry Timrod of Charleston. The bulk of his work was slight and it's rather 18th century, but it's very pure diction; it's the real thing, you know. Lanier was a windbag. He wrote one or two nice short things. That's about all. Years ago, the literary society in Macon, Georgia, asked me to come and make a talk to their annual luncheon. They have an annual luncheon in honor of Sidney Lanier. I'll never be invited again.

INTERVIEWER: I don't know how to get into this without getting into some sort of mystique about it, but there's something still unclear to me about the relationship between subject and style. Well, I'll have to fall back and say that I've gotten kicks at various times out of the images used, or metaphors, and things like that. They really seemed rather far from the subject itself, except that maybe it was the appropriateness that was striking.

TATE: You mean these images, metaphors, seem to have an intrinsic interest apart from the poem as a whole? Well I think that is very true. You remember "Ash Wednesday." Remember the passage about descending the stairs—at the top of the stairs. And he speaks of where the figure appears to him of an old man driveling, something like "toothed gullet of an aged shark." Well, there's nothing in the theme of "Ash Wednesday" that would demand that image. It's completely unpredictable. It comes as a shocking surprise. But it gets its power from its context nevertheless. It's a matter of style; but the content of the image is created by what precedes it and what follows. Take any familiar poem, like Andrew Marvel's "To His Coy Mistress," and write a paraphrase of that. A paraphrase would seem to indicate that the poet meant that he wanted his lady to succumb to him as soon as possible. In fact, that's a paraphrase of the poem, just that one sentence. But what gives it its interest is the wonderful invention in the poem, and in the end we see he's not really saying that at all, he's saying something very different. He's saying if you yield to me it's going to be an animal act, and disgusting. Because Marvel was a Puritan, and he didn't like the body, so the paraphrase itself is meaningless. It's the style that creates the poem, out of the abstract content or maybe the—which comes first, the

ALLEN TATE INTERVIEW

chicken or the egg? The style or the content, we don't know. They move hand in hand. They move together. I'm a little suspicious of the lyric poet; I don't know about an epic poet. I don't know anything about that. But I'm a little suspicious of a lyric poet who says "I've got this great theme that I'm going to write about." He doesn't know whether he's got it or not until he writes the poem.

INTERVIEWER: In your essay on understanding poetry . . .

TATE: Oh yes, that was a little thing I wrote years ago. You know, I wrote that so long ago I can't really remember it. I wrote it more than thirty years ago. I think it's called "Understanding Modern Poetry," isn't it?

INTERVIEWER: Yes. And without slighting the Romantic poets, you said something about the tradition that had come down was degenerate romanticism. That the poem was an emotion, and this was what was likely to be taught in high schools.

TATE: Oh, I remember now. I quoted some awful psychologist — a lot of jargon about you just sit there and have emotion, and you don't have to understand it. You turn off your brain altogether, just have emotions. And you know certain theories evolved that sociologists still propagate, a kind of decadent aesthetic. Even John Dewey, a pragmatist: his theory of art was about as naive as this dog here. He doesn't know anything about it at all. I think probably popular criticism has always been a generation behind, somehow, and represents — well, we know that certainly reviewers in *The Edinburgh Review* in the early 19th century, Wilson and Jeffrey, and Lockhart; they were debased Samuel Johnsons. That's why they tore Keats all to pieces. And Wordsworth also. They couldn't read the new poets at all, and they were bringing standards of sixty years before to bear upon them, but not as Johnson would have done. It was just 18th century prejudice operating, decorum and poetic diction and all that sort of thing.

INTERVIEWER: Someone mentioned something about the teacher. What is the background, say training ground, for poets? It seems that right now we're at the mercy of these English teachers.

TATE: Well, we always have been.

INTERVIEWER: I think Frost said one time that the best thing a university could do for a poet was to throw him out.

TATE: Well, that sounds nice doesn't it? If

Cambridge had thrown John Milton out, that would be a marvel. You asked about the education of a poet. I notice you also use the word "training."

INTERVIEWER: Somehow I equate education and training — somewhat the same.

TATE: Yes that's probably true. It seems to me the best education for a poet is just education, and nobody knows what that is — whether any special education is necessary or not. I think he ought to know some language and he ought to know some history. He certainly should read some other literature besides the contemporary literature or literature of his own language. But the proper education for any poet is unpredictable; you can't tell. Robert Lowell knew he was going to be a poet; and he more or less consciously read the things he could use. But lots of poets don't start that way. I don't think John Crowe Ransom started that way. John was a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford back in 1909. I think he had almost no English courses at Vanderbilt. When he went to Oxford he read ancient history and ancient philosophy. He was a fine Greek scholar. And when he came back he taught for a year in some eastern prep-school — I think it was the Hill School, I'm not sure, it was some school like that. Then he came to Vanderbilt. And for many years he taught composition, not literature. He *read* his literature. He was like an Englishman in the 19th century. You know at Oxford, English literature was not taught until 1875. It was assumed that an educated Englishman would read English literature just on his own. Coleridge never had a course in English literature. We couldn't expect a man today to do that. He wouldn't read anything, probably. The education for a poet is sort of a difficult thing to deal with, isn't it? I should think a scientific education wouldn't be the thing, obviously. But maybe he ought to know a little more about science than somebody like me. I don't know anything about it. I just — I simply don't like it. It is always easier to dislike something you don't know anything about, isn't it? What I don't like and what I do know a little about is scientism, the misapplication of scientific ideas to society and the arts. Don't you think a young man who feels he wants to write poetry will have an instinct for what he needs? He can ignore the teacher or not. Here in Tennessee years ago, we were very lucky in having a teacher like John Ransom who was a fine poet.

INTERVIEWER: I was wondering about that. I

mean it seems odd that at one university at one time . . .

TATE: It was just luck. Somebody was asking me about that the other day, about the talented people at Vanderbilt in the early twenties. Did they get there accidentally or did somebody bring them there? We weren't brought there. The university was not sympathetic — we were cranks or a little nutty. And I'm sure there was as much talent at other places. I think John Ransom was the catalytic agent, he made the difference. He was good for the people who were really concerned about literature and we really learned a great deal from him in conversation. It was a little difficult to remember the subject matter of anything he taught. It was the way his mind worked on that subject matter. For one thing, he always treated us as equals. Even if we weren't gentlemen, we had to pretend to be because he assumed we were. There was a certain decorum about it; he was uniformly polite, considerate, and patient. I remember once — I think I wrote this in a little tribute on his 75th birthday — something to this effect, that the only explicit criticism I remember getting from him while I was his student was on a paper I had written for a course and he gave me an A minus; I thought I always should have an A. And I took it to him. "Mr. Ransom, why did I — if you don't mind, would you tell me why I got an A minus?" He flipped over a few pages, and put his finger on the end of a paragraph and said, "Why do you always put your best idea at the end of a paragraph where nobody will see it?" And I learned a great deal from that. And he handed me the paper back and nothing was said again about that A minus. The A minus stood. Then, at our Fugitive meetings he never presumed to be our leader. We were all equal. And I think that made us behave ourselves. You couldn't take advantage of that.

INTERVIEWER: To get away from just the Fugitive group — I mean it seems that at that time, well just briefly in that span of around twenty years, the enormous growth of literature . . .

TATE: Between the two wars.

INTERVIEWER: Well, starting around 1912 to 1925. TATE: Yes, but even up to the Second World War. Faulkner had done most of his great work by the end of the thirties. But there was a tremendous outbreak, not only in the South, but all over the country. It's an interesting fact, isn't it, that the Southerners, up to the last war at any rate, have dominated the novel in this country. There

were more good novelists and short story writers from the South than from any other part of the country. Only Fitzgerald and Hemingway were first-rate from the North.

INTERVIEWER: Well, even today, the Southerner William Styron, is sort of . . .

TATE: He's a very brilliant writer. Yes. I don't think he's as good as Faulkner, but that's a different matter. He's a very talented writer.

INTERVIEWER: There seems to be such a scarcity of them.

TATE: I can't think of any first-rate New England novelists today. Marquand, in our time, that's about all.

INTERVIEWER: Then you don't see a general trend away from — Southerners, I believe?

TATE: I think there is. The young Southerners are not dominated any more by the Southern myths. No reason why they should be. Because consciousness of the myths came out of a certain historical moment after the First World War. It happened all over the South. Malcolm Cowley originally thought that Faulkner invented it. You know his essay "William Faulkner's Legend of the South?" He describes the legend beautifully in that essay. But I saw the original version; I published it in *The Sewanee Review*. I told Malcolm he must change his mind because William Faulkner did not invent it. He used it more powerfully than anybody else. And if he had invented it, it might not have been as good as it is. It was a real myth that everybody believed. And a myth, I take it, is a way of expressing a certain kind of reality; it's not mere fiction. People all over the South had it. It came from the fact that we were aware of the world at large for the first time. The South had, from 1865 to 1914 — now you boys are too young to remember — well we didn't have an iron curtain around us, we had a sort of curtain of lavender and lace. Mark Twain wasn't considered a Southern writer. He really was. There's no question about it. But they didn't like him much. He was considered — well, he wrote boys' books. When I was a little boy, my mother read *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* to me. He wasn't taken seriously as literature. It's incredible to realize that people felt that way. My mother was born at the end of the Civil War. She still read the novels of John Esten Cooke. You've never even heard of him. You ought to look him up sometime. *Surrey of Eagle's Nest*. Things like that. Very popular novels. Or Augusta Evans — *Saint Elmo*. *Saint*

ALLEN TATE INTERVIEW

Elmo was on a showboat all up and down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, and up the Tennessee River. After 1918 people realized that the South was really changing. And the sense of the past in the present: that's the drama of Southern literature of that period. That's what Faulkner wrote about. The Compsons and the Sutpens — the aristocrats and the upstarts of the Old South, destroyed by the Snopeses, who are Modern Man. We get variations of that theme in all the Southern novelists of the time. Stark Young, for example. You get it not so much in a writer like Eudora Welty. It's in Katherine Ann Porter, very definitely. Caroline Gordon has it and Robert Penn Warren — they all have it.

Since the last war, there's a whole new generation, including you boys. The myth is not so dominant any more. There's not any reason why it should be. I think it's up to you people to discover a new one.

INTERVIEWER: I think there are a lot of times when people try to ignore it. They don't even want it to survive. Some people seem to misunderstand what Faulkner was trying to talk about. I think it's generally people who don't read him, they just hear about it. Faulkner, in this thing — he seems to — in his mixing of the time element . . .

TATE: He does it with great skill. It's what Ford called the "time shift." And Faulkner learned it for himself. He didn't learn it from anybody. It's a little different from the way Ford uses it. Ford locates it in what James called the "post of observation." In all his novels and stories there's somebody who sees everything. So the shift always takes place in the minds of his characters; such as in *The Good Soldier*, Dowell the narrator weaves back and forth; but we're always in his consciousness. Faulkner uses it through an omniscient narrator. That's much more difficult to do. He does get it muddled occasionally. But I think on the whole it's very brilliantly done. *Absalom! Absalom!* and — well, in *The Sound and the Fury* each section has its observer. The idiot boy, Benjy — everything is in his consciousness. Then we move on to Quentin, and then we go to the brother, Jason. Well, anyhow, that's the way it works. In *Light in August* he shifts from one point of view to the other, but I think it's justified.

INTERVIEWER: It seems that his technique throws a lot of critics. I read one where they considered the boy in *As I Lay Dying* to be an idiot. I never

figured how in the devil they could get to that.

TATE: Which boy do you mean?

INTERVIEWER: The one who bores the holes in his mother's coffin.

TATE: He's not an idiot at all. *As I Lay Dying* is a more limited novel, isn't it? But it's a brilliant piece of technique. A masterpiece. There's nothing quite like that novel anywhere. Notice the subtle modulations of style. All these illiterate people in their various speeches will rise to heights of great eloquence. But there's no real inconsistency, because Faulkner manages the transitions so subtly and beautifully. Obviously, the Bundren family couldn't speak that way; they're not literate enough. They don't have the vocabulary. But it's always credible the way Faulkner does it. Because, again, he's standing over the shoulder of each of these characters, gradually extending their consciousness beyond anything they could observe or feel.

INTERVIEWER: I was always amazed by "The Bear."

TATE: Yes, that's his great long story. In *The Hamlet*, the "Spotted Horses" episode is a complete story in itself. It's a wonderful story too. It's sometimes reproduced in anthologies as a separate story.

INTERVIEWER: I think the old anthology we had has that and "A Rose for Emily." The only other question that I know anything about which has to do with time — I'm not sure whether this is scientism or not — is Lawrence Durrell.

TATE: Yes, the Alexandria novels, I can't read them with any pleasure at all. I don't know quite why. I think the prose is poetic prose, and I don't like that. I think a poet writing prose should write prose, not poetry.

INTERVIEWER: He also seems to force his vocabulary . . .

TATE: It's exotic and overdone.

INTERVIEWER: Particularly *The Black Book*.

TATE: Yes, I tried to read it and didn't finish it. I like some of his early poems much better than the fiction. He started out as a poet, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Back to Faulkner, a tremendous influence on him in his time theory was Henri Bergson.

TATE: I think maybe that's true.

INTERVIEWER: Do you see this in any other writers?

TATE: I think in Eliot, the "Four Quartets." Maybe in *The Waste Land*. He was very much influenced by F. H. Bradley and Bergson. The

two philosophers he read as a young man.

INTERVIEWER: I may be getting this wrong, but I think I've heard it. I read some place that you were supposed to have been influenced by those same people.

TATE: Bergson? Well, to some extent. The influence has largely been Jacques Maritain. I had some philosophy at Vanderbilt. Then I tried to forget it until I was much older; and began to read some philosophy again. I like to blame the philosophers for my inability to write a coherent sentence until I was thirty years old. Bradley was a good writer. But very few philosophers are. If you've ever come across T. S. Eliot's dissertation in philosophy at Harvard — it's on F. H. Bradley. You wonder that he ever learned to write anything anybody could read. It's the most congested and obscure prose I think I've ever seen. I have it around here somewhere.

INTERVIEWER: I was looking for that one time and couldn't find any trace of it.

TATE: It was reprinted two years ago. As a matter of fact, Eliot had a curious development. The essays in *The Sacred Wood* had an enormous influence. But most of them are badly written. The famous one, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," is heavy and full of jargon. Look at it again. It's a great mystery of literary history that that essay had such a powerful influence. It seems as though — I read it first when I was about twenty, and, well, it seemed to open up a whole new world to me I had never thought of. But I don't think he learned to write very well until he was about thirty. Or even older. Then he developed a beautiful critical style.

INTERVIEWER: Well I guess I've always gotten poetic prose and style sort of mixed up.

TATE: There are a lot of paradoxes about it. Nobody can define it. But isn't style either the vehicle of the subject matter or identical with the subject matter? Hemingway's "The Killers" seems to have no style. It's very much underwritten. The narrative passages are like stage directions, almost. And yet the style is very important. Simply dialogue and stage directions.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, I think I read — I guess it was that essay on Longinus. I suppose he meant that as more or less a definition of style — identity with the subject matter. That the style wasn't noticeable by itself. That tone would be the style.

TATE: I think that's about the way to put it. By the way, I think that essay was a program-

matic essay. I was trying to show that Longinus would be useful to us today. He was sort of a new critic. But wouldn't it be fair to say that in every generation or every period of literature criticism has to be rewritten? We have to think of the past from the point of view of the present and what the present needs, and literature *now*. The way Arnold understood Wordsworth is not the way the modern critics understand him at all. It's something entirely different. Read Lionel Trilling's fine essay on Wordsworth. It's as far from Arnold as possible. Both recognize him as a great poet. For example, nobody would say today that high seriousness is the criterion because that would rule out Chaucer. In fact, Arnold dismisses Chaucer — he didn't have high seriousness. And Keats was a "sensuous" poet. Well, he was a great deal more than that. Arnold was a strange fellow, wasn't he? Keats was a sensuous poet; Matthew sort of dismissed him on the grounds that he and the other Romantics "didn't know enough." Yet in some of Arnold's best poems the influence of Keats is very obvious. Especially "The Scholar Gypsy."

INTERVIEWER: You were talking about tradition a minute ago. I had never read it before, but your essay on Pound's *Cantos* —

TATE: That was on the first thirty. Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And in what few of them I've read, I've always been sort of astonished. And I didn't know what to think. And that seems to sort of put it in place. If he's sort of a cosmopolitan in his writings anyway, do you think that's any indication of the way literature is going? I mean, to be cosmopolitan almost implies a lack of tradition, doesn't it?

TATE: Yes it does. Pound was trying to invent a tradition of his own. Three kinds: the ancient world, the renaissance, and his excursion into the modern world, which he dislikes. But it seems to me a literary tradition is a little different from a historical or social tradition. They're not quite identical. Isn't the literary tradition composed of the writers in the immediate past who can hand something on to the next generation? A while ago I think I was referring to Woodbury and William Vaughn Moody as the only poets in the early 19th century in this country that people were aware of. But they were a dead end; no young poet could take off from them. So that we had no visible literary traditions. T. S. Eliot has a nice essay on that; I don't think he published it in any of his books. It's

ALLEN TATE INTERVIEW

largely a defense of Ezra Pound written about 1946, published in *Poetry* in Chicago. He was not defending Pound's politics; he was trying to defend him as a literary innovator. Eliot made the point that a young American poet, say between 1900 and 1914 had to go to foreign literature to get anything to nourish himself. Eliot went to the Elizabethan dramatists, the Metaphysical poets, and the French symbolists. Pound went to the Provence, the Troubadours, and the minor Italian poets like Guido Cavalcanti.

INTERVIEWER: Eliot said something on the literary tradition — something of his on Milton. I think his point was that Milton didn't leave much to follow.

TATE: Yes, that was that early essay on Milton. Milton was no model for the modern poet, and he'd ruined a great many poets in the 18th century. And some of the Victorian poets. Eliot's attitude toward Milton changed. He took it all back in 1947.

INTERVIEWER: They've published those essays together now. I read them and I can't quite remember the difference.

TATE: Well, in the later one, the second one, he said that we've had a new era in modern poetry, in English, and Milton would no longer be a menace to the young poet. He gave us permission to read Milton again. It was quite amusing. F. R. Leavis was infuriated by that second essay. He wrote a rejoinder that was published in *The Sewanee Review*, saying that Mr. Eliot had let us down. He, Leavis, had been an anti-Milton man all along and had made it possible for Eliot himself to flourish. And that this was disloyalty on Eliot's part.

INTERVIEWER: Did people like Tillyard ever show any reaction to —

TATE: Tillyard? Tillyard was a historical scholar. I don't think he cared one way or the other what Eliot wrote. He was probably one of those scholars who don't believe it is of any importance what a literary man thinks.

INTERVIEWER: This may be a somewhat tangent aspect — do you consider Wolfe something of the same kind of tangent off of the line? There's been no one to follow his methods or style.

TATE: Bill Styron has been slightly influenced by him. I can't think of anybody else. I don't think Wolfe is really a writer. Did you ever hear the anecdote about Bill Faulkner? Wolfe comes into it. About twenty years ago there was an arts festival in a girls' college down in Mississippi;

they prevailed on Faulkner to come. I was surprised he did, to make a talk. And after the talk, a coed held up her hand and said, "Mr. Faulkner, how would you rank your contemporaries, the novelists?" He said, "I'd put Thomas Wolfe first, myself second, and Hemingway third." Ponder that. He told me years ago he thought that Wolfe was awful. Couldn't read him. Well, he couldn't put himself first, and he had to get some sort of gimmick by which he could put Hemingway after himself. Wolfe, Faulkner, and Hemingway. That was Snopes cunning. It's like old Lem Snopes.

INTERVIEWER: I read an apology for that later on. And he said that what he really meant — you know he's always coming back with what he really meant later on — was that Thomas Wolfe *tried* for more. He tried for a little less and Hemingway didn't try for anything at all.

TATE: Bill Faulkner was very cagey. I can't say I liked him much. I knew him for years but never very well. I'd see him from time to time. But I think he was in agony all the time through shyness. He was the shyest man I think I ever saw. It *was* shyness, too. He was just scared of people. He'd get loosened up after several bourbons. The only time I ever really enjoyed his company was once in Rome years ago. He was around there for about a week. And I saw a lot of him and had a good time. But only after about 5:00 when the drinking started.

INTERVIEWER: He definitely didn't like Hollywood it seems. There's some rather amusing anecdotes about all that going on.

TATE: I think he came home back to Oxford and drew his check. Hollywood didn't even know he'd gone.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned that — the speech that he made. Well something along the same subject, all these art festivals and writers' conferences . . .

TATE: I don't know what to think of them. I've gone to a lot of them in the past. They may do some good. I think that Robert Lowell and Gene Stafford profited by them. They got to know people who stimulated them. The best writers' conference I ever went to was in 1931 at Charlottesville. Only writers, no students. We just talked to each other. That was the first time I ever met Bill Faulkner.

3

INTERVIEWER: I started to go on an interview with Ralph McGill. But I found out they were going to fly, with an amateur pilot.

TATE: I haven't seen Ralph McGill for forty years. No, I saw him about 25 years ago. In his autobiography he's pretty rough on the Fugitive group, thinks we're reactionaries. And some years ago he gave one of his columns to a discussion of his old friend Tate and — we were at Vanderbilt together — he said, "This man is an acolyte at the altar of T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. He lives in a world of unreality, no social consciousness about him at all." Ralph's a fine fellow but he never had any literary sense at all. He's a reformer and he reads literature as politics.

INTERVIEWER: Was Randall Jarrell very closely connected with any of the Fugitives?

TATE: He wouldn't be connected. He refused to be. He came much later, of course. He came in the thirties. He was a student of John Ransom and we all knew him. He came to Vanderbilt when he was 18. And some of his early poems are still among the best. He was a strange fellow. That book of his, *Poetry and the Age*, is a fine book, a brilliant book.

INTERVIEWER: Well, I've liked some of his poetry, but I find that quite a bit of his criticism is rather poor, particularly what he spoke of at the Poetry Festival [In Washington, D. C. a few years ago].

TATE: He was "placing" everybody and ranking them. And the only two people he praised were Robert Lowell and Robert Frost. I was a little amused. He said, "Tate is a neglected poet. But certain poems will not be neglected long." Well, I've never felt neglected. And if you want to get a friend neglected, you say he's neglected. Then people will say, "Well, he's neglected." Like Conrad Aiken's situation. People say that Conrad is a "historical figure."

INTERVIEWER: Speaking of politics and literature, I thought that essay in *Who Owns America?* of yours was very good on liberty and —

TATE: I was 36 then. I could never do anything like that again.

INTERVIEWER: Well, right now it seems that politics and the arts, as such, seem to be coming to sort of a boil. What do you think of all this? I know we have Theodore Bikel on one side and Arthur Miller on the other. The subsidies and

that sort of thing.

TATE: You mean the relation of the government to the arts? I don't like it. Maybe the performing arts, theater, ballet, and music accept government aid without being corrupted. Maybe — I don't know. In England they do it very well. The British Arts Council is very intelligent, and the politicians don't meddle with it. They give the money and let them go ahead. Imagine President Johnson, what his opinions would be like. I'm not sure how much Kennedy knew, but he took advice.

INTERVIEWER: This thing that Ciardi made — I was coming back one night and the only thing I could pick up [on the radio] was Monitor, and Ciardi was on there. And he said, what would happen, suppose, that the government was subsidizing a man like Pound, you know, and he came through with his *Cantos*. What would the reaction be there?

TATE: They would withdraw it. The Bollingen Award was awarded in 1948 to Pound through the Library of Congress. And the Library of Congress had to give it up. They couldn't award it any more. There were speeches made to Congress — a terrific row over it. Certainly literature could not be subsidized by the government. You'd have a race of literary geldings. They'd be afraid to say anything.

INTERVIEWER: We just need more rich old ladies. That's something else you covered in one of your essays too, wasn't it? Part of that group, *The Man of Letters in the Modern World*. And somewhere you mentioned the change of situation about the time of Johnson.

TATE: Patronage changed, yes. The rich man became the patron out of his own vanity.

INTERVIEWER: It seems to have worked rather well.

TATE: It did. It wasn't quite the same thing they had in the Italian Renaissance. For one thing, the writers' attitude had changed. Dr. Johnson was an independent man. He wasn't going to be in the *entourage* of Lord Chesterfield. Whereas the Renaissance artists didn't seem to mind that. They were sort of like upper servants. They didn't care. They were doing a job. They were not received as equals. Now the patrons are the foundations and universities. It's all depersonalized, isn't it? It might be better to have a personal relationship between the patron and the artist, even though the artists were in an inferior social situation. At least it'd be personal

ALLEN TATE INTERVIEW

and direct. But the great Italian patrons were highly cultivated men themselves. They knew what they were doing. Not just having them around to — you see, in the case of Chesterfield and Johnson, Chesterfield at the last minute made the offer to get his name on the title page. But Johnson had already done the work and he didn't need the money.

INTERVIEWER: There seems to be this competition among colleges now to see who can have the most renown author in residence. It seems to me that in some cases it would be hard to function under those circumstances. I mean just because a man can write a book, that doesn't make him a critic. Unfortunately.

TATE: It doesn't make him a teacher. I'm a regular professor of English like any other professor, although I never went to a graduate school. But I'm not a writer in residence. I think I got the job because I had published some books. The scholars don't think of that as quite the equivalent of a Ph.D., but it's almost. Just recently one of my colleagues, who's an old-fashioned scholar, a very learned man, well I — a certain university had given me an honorary degree. He didn't mean to be rude about it — just referred to those people who get "unearned degrees." He's an old-line Ph.D.

INTERVIEWER: You know it seems that certain writers could not — they're doing it because of — well, you need money, you know. The poor guy — well, let's admit it, it's hard to make a living writing poetry.

TATE: You can't do it. I don't know of anybody who has except Frost.

INTERVIEWER: Even Sandburg has to raise goats.

TATE: He raised goats for many years. He's made a great deal of money out of his *Abraham Lincoln*. I don't know about his other books. I used to like him back in the thirties, but after he published the *Lincoln*, he became Abraham Lincoln and very pious.

INTERVIEWER: We never could get any response out of him. He won't even give us a "no."

TATE: At a meeting in New York, somebody asked him what he thought about T. S. Eliot. He said, "I couldn't have said this several years ago, but I can say it now" — you see, the war had begun and we all had to be patriotic — "but T. S. Eliot is not as valuable as a truck driver." As a wide-eyed liberal friend of mine in Princeton said, "Now, that's the democratic spirit." I said it isn't, it's the fascistic spirit. That's fas-

cism. The reduction of T. S. Eliot to the level of truck driver is fascism. Sandburg is incapable of the most elementary thought. He's a rhetorician, an old-fashioned ham actor. He wrote some nice free-verse poems when he was young; there's nothing quite like them. He became the spokesman for Lincoln, and then Lincoln himself, with a little of Walt Whitman coming in too.

INTERVIEWER: A friend of mine had an album of Carl Sandburg singing ballads and things like that. I used to hear it through the wall.

TATE: Well, sometimes he was pretty good at that. I used to be a ham fiddler. And he once said to me. "When you give a reading why don't you take your violin?" I said, "Well, can you imagine me getting up there and playing Bach or Vivaldi and reciting the poems?" I used to see him at writers' conferences back in the thirties. Once he — it was at Olivet College in southern Michigan, about 1937. He came first. I was to read, and before he sat down, he said, "Now, here's my friend Allen. He's a nice boy. But culturally speaking, he hasn't come over from England yet." Well, that's the kind of corny act he would put on. And I just couldn't stand it.

INTERVIEWER: Maybe, to change the subject a little bit — do you foresee any more short stories for yourself?

TATE: No, I don't. I've written only one. One short story and one novel. There was one other thing, published in *The Yale Review* years ago called a story. It was really a part of a book that I never finished. It was called "The Migration;" it was to be part of a book that — well, *The Fathers* was to be the other side of it. But I couldn't bring the two things together. I gave up on the other thing.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever read on any of these circuits that they have for colleges? They have certain poets for —

TATE: Oh the poetry circuit? No I never have; it's too strenuous. It's done from New York. Elizabeth Kray, you know, runs that. She tries to organize the circuits all over the country. Poets read every day for two weeks at some place in some region or other — colleges close together. That would be a little too much for me. Well, what they ought to do is pay us for the cocktail party and we would give the lecture free. That's the real work, the parties.

INTERVIEWER: I've been sitting here trying to raise some question about belief. I'm not speak-

ing of religious belief particularly, just belief generally. Do you think that belief has some bearing? On a writer — what he believes in?

TATE: Sure. It has a great deal to do with it. But what, it's hard to say. You've come across the controversy between Eliot and Richards years ago, haven't you? About poetry and belief. It concerned religious belief to some extent. Eliot started it. He said that in order to enjoy *The Divine Comedy* it was not necessarily true that you've got to be a convinced Catholic. But at least you had to understand the theological framework. And Richards had previously taken the extreme position that belief was rather an obstacle to the enjoyment of poetry. Especially if you didn't share the belief of the poet. This was at the time of *The Waste Land*. There's a very extreme statement at the end of his *Principles of Literary Criticism*; he says that in *The Waste Land* at last we have a poem in which no beliefs are expressed whatsoever. It's full of beliefs of all sorts. Well Richards had convinced himself that this is the ideal poem. No beliefs in it at all. I think Eliot had the better of the argument. But anybody in the western world with a fairly good education — humanistic education — can with some application understand the philosophical and religious framework of *The Divine Comedy*. Even if you don't assent to that philosophy, the understanding permits you to understand the relation of the characters to one another. And to Dante, who is their narrator. So I think that Eliot had the better of the argument. But beyond that I don't know what to say about it. Some people said that after I had become a Catholic, my poems

changed. I suppose the only one of my poems which is explicitly Christian is one I wrote in 1928 called "The Cross." And I had no idea then of becoming a Catholic or anything else. So I think it's a very slippery question. I don't see how anybody can write anything without believing in what he's writing. And whether we're practicing Christians of any sect, we live in a Christian society and there are certain ideas that are inevitable. They're in the atmosphere, although they're much diluted now. Now take the novels of Murial Spark. She happens to be a Catholic writer. I'm not sure that anybody could tell it from her novels. It's not overt, as it is in Graham Greene.

INTERVIEWER: I think the Jewish beliefs come out more in writing now.

TATE: There's a kind of Jewish revival now. Robert Lowell said to me recently that first we had the New England domination, then the Southern, now it's the Jewish period.

INTERVIEWER: What about J. D. Salinger? His writing.

TATE: Well I like *The Catcher in the Rye*. What was this later thing? I had a sample of it in *The New Yorker*.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, you mean *Raise High the Roof Beam*.

TATE: Yes, something like that. *Catcher in the Rye* I liked very much. He's a special kind of writer. He's not viable. He can never produce a tradition at all. But that's nothing against him, No reason why a writer should. But he's invented a new literary language. And it's extremely interesting.

NOV. 15, 1965

JAMES FORSYTH

TOM SPEIGHT

DAN WILLIAMS

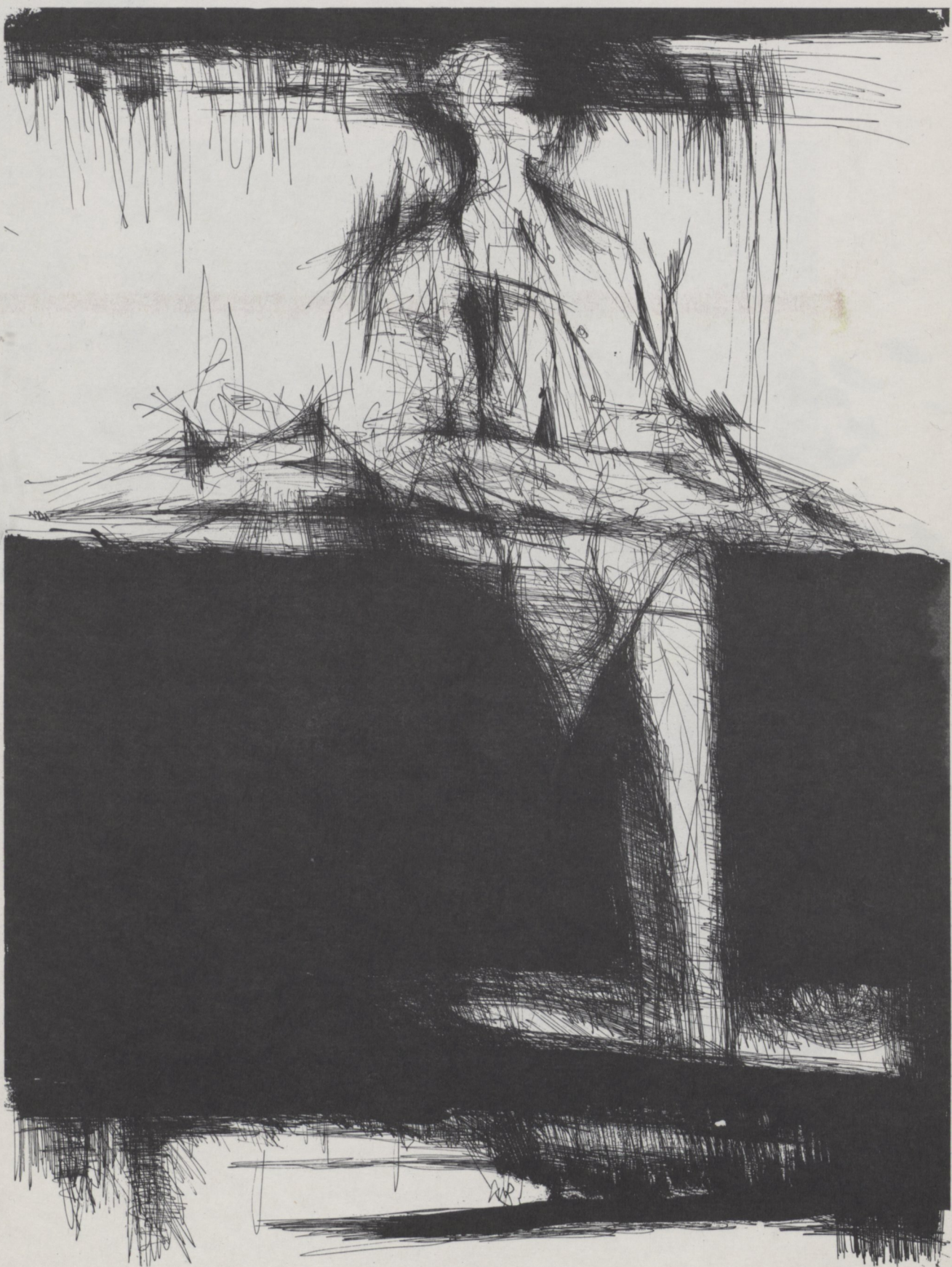


untitled painting

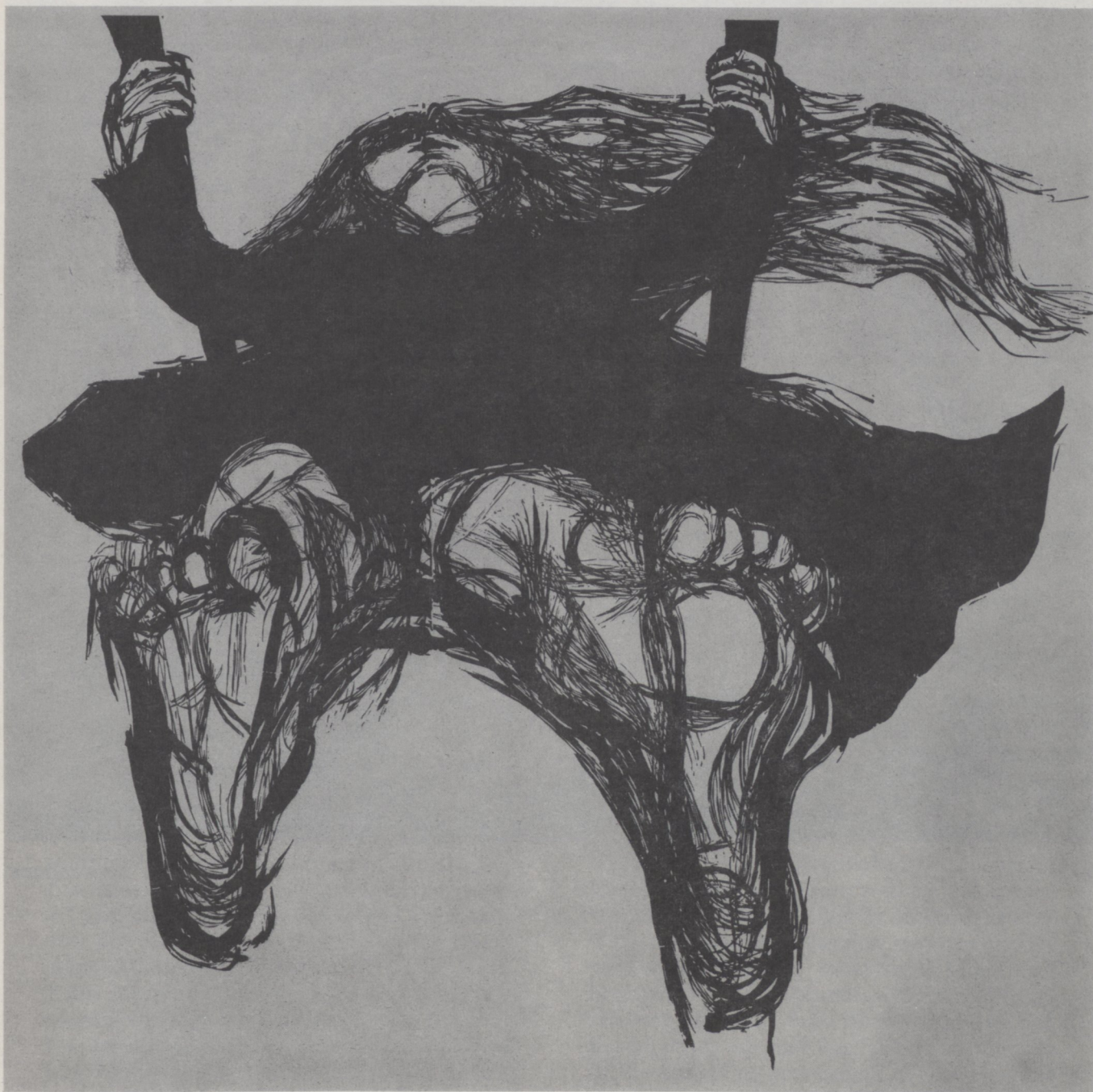


LARRY BLIZARD

He has been noted for a rather noncommittal attitude about art — that is, he hasn't made committing statements. But he paints and draws a great deal. And a seeming diffidence of his about his work is really a tendency of friends to look after exhibitions for him. This year he won the N. C. Print and Drawing Society prize at the State Exhibition with the woodcut on page 21. He was interested in art by a high school teacher in Whiteville, N. C., and graduated in art from East Carolina College with a B. A. and an M. A. He now lives in New York City.

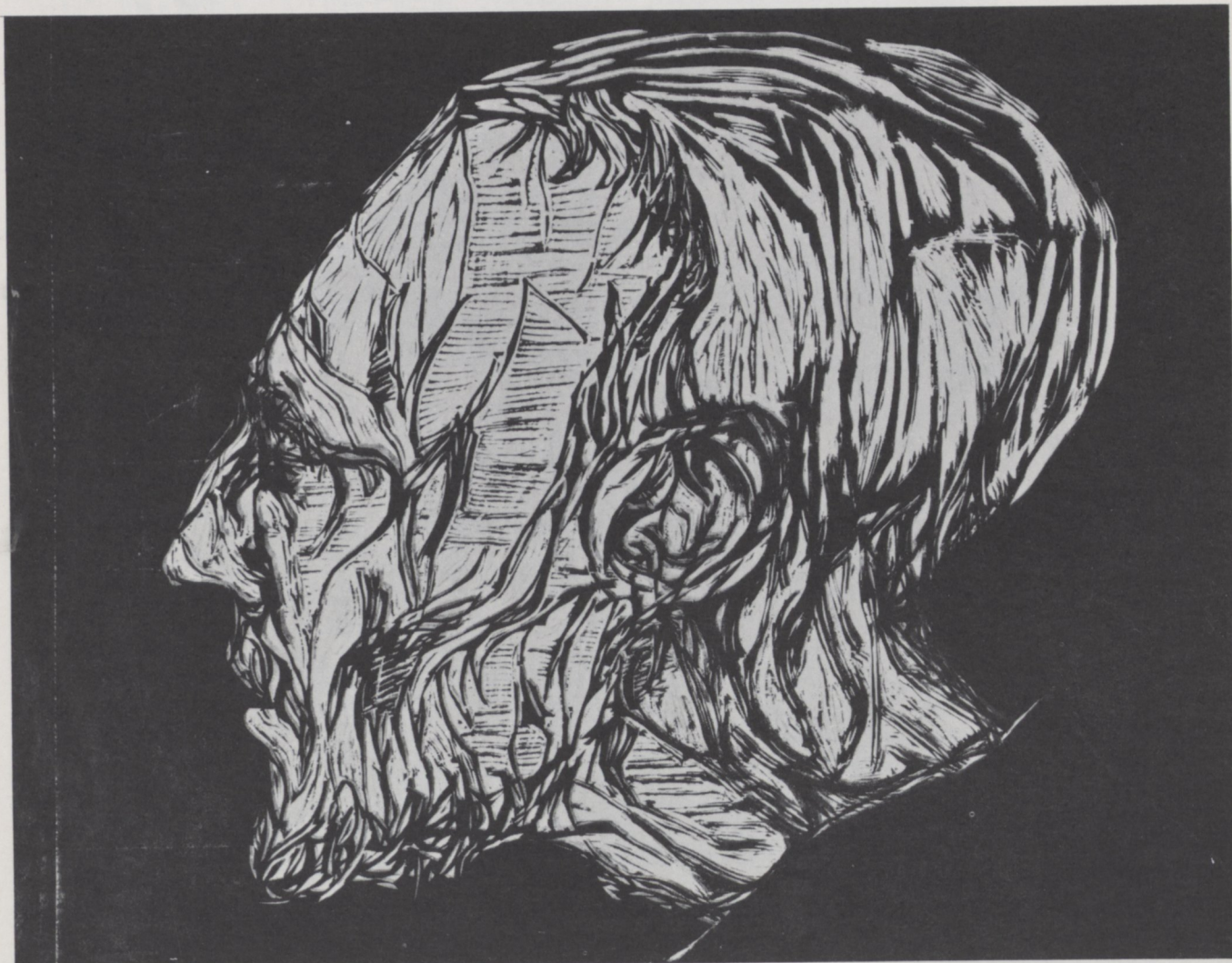


untitled drawing



The Swing

woodcut



Van Gogh

woodcut, two impressions

THE WINDOW

A SHORT STORY

JOHN JUSTICE

What held Ben back was the fear of being ridiculous. Otherwise he would gladly have immersed himself in P. C. and the activities of P. C.'s Campus Peace Union. That fear of exposing one's self made him hesitate. He had evolved from a long line of mountain people to whom public notice of any kind was notoriety, and even though four years at the University had changed him, had loosed the familial bonds, still he listened for his family's laconic, drawled disapproval. He did meet with the Campus Peace Union and wrote its pamphlets and continued to edit the campus newspaper. His campus life was widely divided: he was a Deke, but at night he sat by the open window and battered out pilippics on the clear-skinned, mindless residents of Greek Row. Even his muddy brown eyes could see the nightly writings were pitiful, but he felt that the insistent, nagging drive which forced him to fill the endless long, yellow sheets was anything but pitiful.

Ben slowly mounted the brown gravel path to P. C.'s house, looking up at the twisting branches and racing clouds, thinking it was a fine, appropriate day for the

Warrior to come. The spring-swollen clouds were tossed and driven, and in the distance rolled the occasional rare sound of spring thunder.

The Warrior — Ben had thought him dead until P. C. had announced at a meeting of the Campus Peace Union that he would come and address the group. A man who had fought through five decades for causes whose existence other persons would not acknowledge — he was there when Palmer raged red-eyed and righteous; he provided a running commentary at Versailles when Wilson was sucked in and devoured by voracious old Europe; and when Coxey's Army fell before the might of America, led by McCarthur stiff with holiness, the Warrior was there. He was a confidant of presidents, kings and kingmakers, and tyrants — Wilson, Stalin, Hoover, Churchill, both Roosevelts — he had known them all and outlived them all; yet in the sprawling cornucopia of America, his name was a subject for a joke or curse. Gadfly and agitator, he was the conscience of a conscienceless nation.

The hill leveled off as Ben neared the large weathered house where the peace group

THE WINDOW

met, on a corner three blocks from campus, just past fraternity row. Clouds bellied low and wetly down toward the green shingled roof as he came to the old barnlike place where he had once stayed three solid days while P. C. talked to him about the Campus Peace Union; for three days and nights P. C.'s piercing eyes and deep, honest voice confronted Ben in the large front room which served for sleeping, drinking, debating and on occasion, lovemaking. The two wide beds with bowl-like depressions in the mattresses, the oil stove, and the naked wood floor; rows of paperbacks and a constant odor of dust and burning oil; and always, the insistent, arguing, messianic voices; sunsets and long nights, the red glow of the sun again, rain, wind, stars, moon . . . Ben had joined.

The news raced through classrooms and offices and administrative inner sanctums that the editor of the campus paper was in league with a group of leftwing, possibly communist, shrill-voiced, better-red-than-dead pleaders for universal, unilateral (no matter if the two were compatible) disarmament.

Ben didn't think of the group that way at all, for he found P. C., who was the group, and nearly all the rest as reasonable as most persons and not particularly fanatic; though P. C.'s talks on Russell, Ezione, Szilard *et al*, did have a slightly soporific effect if heard too often. The majority of Ben's acquaintances were puzzled and angered at his joining the CPU. The newspaper crew looked at him skeptically, the fraternity was overly-polite, and not a few persons completely ignored the convert. Most of them could see no gradation between the CPU position and that of groups such as Gus Hall's sad bunch. Perhaps, Ben thought, the abundance of our land has instilled in us an irascibility toward shades of opinion, feeling, and thought. Having been given so very much — land, climate, unlimited resources — and having grown so opulent, we can't deal with middle values. This inability to make fine distinctions worked both ways, though, for he suspected P. C. would, if he could screw his courage to it, go further to the left and cast off the

last vestiges of the values he had acquired in Rome, Georgia. He is one of the most honorable persons I know, Ben thought. P. C., born a Southerner and a Catholic and the sole support of a mother dying of cancer, was presently in debt to several finance companies who were becoming edgy. P. C. lived for the movement, his true religion, which Ben was trying to believe, or at least to see how P. C. believed.

The rusted black mailbox on the front porch was empty for the first time in Ben's memory. Occupants of the large, wooden house changed almost weekly, and the box usually bulged with bills, library overdue notices and third class mail for "Occupant".

"Welcome stranger," P. C. boomed through the screen door, his face dim and gray behind the thin, meshed wire as he opened the door for Ben. His reference to Ben's absences from meetings wasn't sarcastic; P. C. was wholly sincere and assumed others, especially those in the movement, to be equally one-dimensional.

"Is he here yet?" Ben asked, nodding to Norwood Jones, a short, handsome philosophy instructor.

"Yes, he's resting back in my room."

P. C. said. "He said he had a rough trip down from New York."

"He took the train?"

"Uh huh. How've you been?"

P. C.'s collar knot was slightly askew; Ben always felt a petty gladness at P. C.'s sartorial aberrations then felt ashamed at the snobbery in himself. P. C., who looked like an amiable and slightly aging football tackle, always had a missing button or a grimy collar. He was thirty-one and was pursuing a master's in math.

Ben said he was fine, noticing that the room was filled with the village peace crowd: Mrs. Bowers, Professor Cox, Mrs. Cox, the CPU's, and as visitors, the student-body president and the president of the Young Republicans with two companions. These last stood in a line against the left wall, smoking and talking to each other behind cupped hands.

"Have you written any masterpieces

lately?" P. C.'s humor was a bit heavy-handed.

"Not yet. Faulkner can rest easy." One Sunday morning in the the school cafeteria, P. C. had come across him writing. Ben had yielded and handed him the poem which began: *Death will come to me on a silver morn/ borne on trumpet tones past grey veiled woods.* He blushed at the memory. He had been caught up in the excitement of the act of writing, which always convinced him (easily) that what he was doing at the moment was fine, wonderful, fantastic.

The garbled murmur of voices cleared into separate conversations, and he caught the words "Resnais . . . pretentious . . . phony . . . Che Guevera . . . Burroughs . . . world culture . . . Rechy . . ." Mark Pierce stood talking rapidly, obsessively under a Klee print. Mrs. Flowers and Mrs. Cox emerged side by side from the back room, parted and revealed the tall figure of the Warrior. Ben was struck at once by the man's solemn dignity—the great, domed head, the wide, downturned lips, but most of all, the eyes which seemed to have a life of their own: dark and quick, they encompassed the room and everyone in it with a single, swift glance. He wore a plain, dark suit and brown shoes and a wide, wine-colored tie in a Windsor knot. The sun burst through the clouds outside and rushed to the Warrior's face, making it a gold and gray mask. He stood framed in the doorway as he smiled and turned another unblinking look on them all. Then, moving his long fingers through his hair, frowning slightly as if trying to recall something—perhaps a similar scene in a similar room—he carefully sat down.

No one applauded, but Mrs. Cox and old Professor Perkins moved nervously. Mrs. Bowers, the wife of a physics professor who had played a minor role at Los Alamos and had never forgiven himself, poured tea for the Warrior. He had declined a drink. "I hope you rested well," Mrs. Flowers said with a radiant smile.

"Fine, quite well . . . although, at my age, I begrudge each moment wasted on

sleep." Everyone laughed softly.

Mrs. Flowers, a lovely woman, had a low, musical laugh, which was incongruously, disturbingly girlish. She met Ben's eyes, inviting him to laugh with her. He smiled, noticing again the deep vertical line just above her eyebrows. Why is it, he thought, that every decent, honorable person I know has the same tense and nervous expression as if functioning always under intolerable stress? The clouds converged and the floating golden notes disappeared, and the room suddenly darkened. "I don't want to *preach* to you," the Warrior began, "although, God knows, I suppose my life was — has been — nothing *but* a long sermon preached in an empty church." "Oh no-o-o," Mrs. Jenkins cooed. He smiled, "But before I say anything, suppose you tell me what you're doing here on campus."

Everyone looked to P. C., who was leaning against the mantle, beer in hand. Ben saw Mrs. Flowers throw him the peculiar, unreserved smile exchanged only between true believers, a look at once encouraging and beatific, empathetic and smug.

"Well, we're a very young group," P. C. said, his smooth and powerful voice filling the room, "We've been chartered only two months. Mark Pierce, John Burns and myself are what you might call charter members." Mark Pierce, sprawled on the floor at P. C.'s feet, was the campus existentialist. Bearded, intense, extremely knowledgeable, he looked like the young Van Gogh, with the same smoldering potential for self-destruction in his eyes. John Burns, sleek and blond, with clean, soft skin, sat easily on the sofa beside Mrs. Cox. John's father was the twelfth richest man in the United States and no longer communicated with John, who received a monthly check, *sub rosa*, from his mother. John was completely hung up on P. C.

"We are still in the organizing stage," P. C. was saying. "The campus and town are beginning to find out that we're not such a bunch of nuts, I think." He cleared his throat, oiling the smooth machinery of his voice. "And we hope, sir, that your visit

THE WINDOW

will spark some interest in the Campus Peace Union." The Warrior grinned a fighter's grin and seemed about to laugh. While P. C. talked, the old man's wide, sculptured lips moved slightly and continuously, searching for the correct expression. He leaned back on his spine and threw his left leg carelessly over his right, exposing part of his pale skin, the hairs catching intermittent glints from the sun's recurrent glances.

P. C. rumbled on about plans for picketing the computation center or the psychology department, where, it was rumored, experiments were being made with war gases for Asia and perhaps Latin America.

Ben recalled a night in Byron's Coffee Shop when P. C. had surprised him with an offer of a job after graduation. "How would you like to work for national headquarters of CPU?" Before he could answer, P. C. went on. "I've written some letters and made some calls and told the director, James Freeman, about you. He's very interested." This was about a month after Ben began working for the peace group. He had dutifully read Russell, Szilard, N. C., Norman Thomas and Ezione, and had gone to the meetings where resolutions were thrown out like meat to starving tigers. After fierce debate, the motions were passed or rejected, it never seemed to matter which. And he had laughed at the easy jokes made with veiled hatred about those who abhorred the CPU — law students, ROTC, businessmen, etc. He had attended interminable parties in the echoing, dim, wooden house where there were no rugs or glasses or napkins or toilet paper. Candlelight and beer smell; guitars; lovely, pale girls who seemed oppressed with an eternal sadness and seemed to be wafted in and out on the night wind . . . endless talk and a feeling, a most curious feeling which gradually permeated him: an awareness of approaching doom, martyrdom, Jehova-complex, and bitter pain at loss of the world's innocence. He suspected that if he went to New York with national headquarters, he would encounter a more sophisticated and urbane group, but he knew that this strange, choking feeling would follow. "I don't think

I can do it," he had told P. C. The burly, dark-haired leader leaned forward toward Ben, who, resting both forearms on the table with palms upward, continued: "I just want to find out what's in me, not tell everyone else what they should think and do." "But do you think you have a right to that sort of life?" Part of P. C.'s charm was that he was never contentious, he seemed genuinely curious. "Why not?" It was Ben, instead, who felt an argumentative edge creep into his voice.

"After Hiroshima, Auschwitz, Hungary, Selma . . . after all that, does any of us have the right — the luxury. I should say — to a self-concerned life?"

"Of course nothing's changed, really, P. C., cruelty and murder and horrors and hate have always been with us. The Bible, for God's sake, is a charnel house. And all those eternal wars up and down Europe and Asia. The Spanish Inquisition, Salem witch-trials. The only thing is, P. C., now we're more aware of it."

"Yes, now all the stink is crammed down our throats every day. Doesn't that make a difference to you?" Ben thought of the slow mornings in the cafeteria, with the gaily-tinted morning sunrays streaming through the tall, painted stained-glass windows. He drank coffee and read the newspaper's smug shouts of fraud, violence, corruption, murder, genocide, apocalypse. "Yes," he finally said. "It does make a difference. But not all the difference," and hated himself for his lack of conviction.

"It's your decision." P. C. looked blackly over at the record which smoothly, magically produced the *Air for G string*, which for Ben would forever conjure up the low-ceilinged, warm room where they sat, the leader and the one who not only was not a leader but who didn't know whom to follow.

"I don't know," P. C. said slowly, "One reason why I'm so involved in this sort of thing is that my family was always so uninvolved that they got on the wrong side, like my grandfather who started the Georgia Klan." Ben could easily conjure up a craggy, night-riding ancestor of P. C., the burly

peace-hawker. "So maybe I'm just working out a complex. Certainly, my motives for doing CPU work are no more honorable or purer than are yours for not joining."

"Let me think about it," Ben had said as a final answer.

When they left, the air was light and clean, and the sky was green-blue, a translucent, upturned bowl through which the grace of the first morning light poured upon them. Already, the earliest of campus walkers followed the village's gravel paths beneath the heavy cover of shining leaves . . .

The Warrior's eyes — those life-studded orbs which looked as if they would burn even when death had made an easy conquest of his body — those eyes were fixed on P. C. Mrs. Flowers watched too, with a pair of her slender fingers resting lightly on her long, pale throat. P. C. finished.

When the old man rose, his voice was reedy by contrast with P. C.'s. "Well, you're doing fine. I certainly think you're headed in the right direction. I might add, I think you're fortunate in having such a leader as Mr. C. . . ."

Ben looked out the window, where huge, bluish-white clouds billowed up over the house next door, smoke from a heavenly fire. "I don't really know," the Warrior said, "of any advice I can give you, except to remind you, if you need reminding, that the race is not to the swift . . ."

Mrs. Cox's semi-palsied hand wriggled into the air, and she held her breath until the Warrior said "Yes, please."

"I was wondering—" She gathered her body as if to rise, thought better of it, and plopped back into the yielding sofa, "I was just wondering which party you think is more favorable to our cause, the Democrats or Republicans. I mean, I'm so confused . . ."

"Well — traditionally, the Democrats have been quicker to pick up the ideas I've personally plumped for. It's hard to say, because everything is now so sprawling and amorphous that you don't know where to prick to produce an effect. One could go to Teddy Roosevelt or even Franklin and, if

you made your point, something might be done. But whom do you see now to say 'our foreign policy verges on madness?' That just popped into my head, I don't believe it — necessarily."

The president of the Young Republicans stood up. Ralph Fawls was short and blond, with creamy, glowing skin.

"I'd like to ask what you do think of our foreign policy, particularly in Asia."

"That's rather a large question. Generally speaking, I'd say we need to consider the desires of the Asian peoples for whom we're supposedly fighting. And consider the dictates of history and place less faith in the stirring calls of our duty to defend free countries."

"Don't you think," Fawls said, "you're over-simplifying a complicated thing? I mean, it's just possible the State Department and the President may know something you don't about the world situation."

An almost palpable tremor of disapproval rose at the words. The Warrior squinted a little, pushed his glasses back up on his nose and cleared his throat. "Perhaps. But I think — and I'd almost go as far as to say I'm positive — that no knowledge they have could justify the unspeakable game they are playing with the world's life."

"Well, then, Cuba? Would you let it fall to the Communists?"

"I would leave Cuba to the Cubans, to coin a phrase, until a far greater consensus of their people ask for our help."

"And Viet Nam?"

"A negligible country, as countries go, until we made it indispensable for our pride by incessant ranting on its importance." The Y.R. president colored and took a deep preparatory breath, but the older man continued, "I think, if you'll allow me, that Viet Nam and Cuba are fine examples of our attempts to impose our ways on the rest of the world in the name of freedom. What kind of freedom must be won by sending our young men to alien countries to bathe the lands in blood?" His voice steeled into anger for the only time that afternoon, but he caught himself, stopped abruptly and smiled.

"But you may be right, though I doubt it." His tone was a subtle slap. A tall, brown-eyed girl in a black sweater and orange skirt asked the Warrior whom he most admired.

"Oh I suppose Woodrow Wilson, as exasperating as he could be at times. He had the purest vision and most muscular conscience of any American, certainly, and probably of any world figure I've known. His environment unfortunately hampered and eventually killed him."

"How about living persons?" the girl asked.

"No comment."

The questions died down. The room was filled with a rich bronze light that fell on all their faces and turned them the same smooth, golden color. Outside, a woman in a bold red dress was taking clothes from a huge wicker basket and fastening them to the line. As she worked the gusty wind ruthlessly tangled and frayed her hair, and her dress was plastered to one side and hung pennant-like out on the other.

Mrs. Cox broke the silence with "But what can we — what can *I* do for peace? Right here in Spring Hill."

The Warrior tilted his great head a little and looked mildly at the white-haired, dumpy, sincere lady. Surely he had seen a thousand, from Dedham to Berkeley to Spring Hill.

"I, of course, have no panaceas, no miracles, to suggest," he began. "I gave up on miracles some years ago."

His eyes pierced the air over their heads and probed through the swarming years. "Matter of fact, I gave 'em up after the third time I ran for President." The three students politicians swapped quick glances and laughed softly. A ripple of laughter ran through the room. "What I can say, and what I know, is that you can have an effect on those around by your example in the most ordinary things. It sounds banal, I know, but that doesn't matter . . . perhaps a minor tragedy of our age is that we are so conscious and cerebral that we've heard everything one time too many, seen one sight too many that we can't bear. But if, as I say, it sounds

banal to say your behavior at civic meetings, school functions, shopping even, is influential — it isn't at all a banal fact. It's the difference between hearing someone say 'God is love' and having a child kiss you on the cheek. I think the CPU here is doing splendidly. Anything you do in a pure-hearted way toward making your world more human, will help." He stopped and looked at them for a long few seconds, as if transfixing them forever in his endless gaze, as if they were terribly important to him.

"I must say I feel a bit sad, looking at your young faces . . . so much expectancy, and I have so little to offer you, only my old body and old ideas." He arose easily and walked around behind his chair. Placing his hands on the chair back, standing very upright, he continued, "The winds of my life have always been stormy. When I ran for President the third time — when a million Americans voted for me — I was called names publicly you rarely come across, even in today's novels. They accused me of everything from being syphilitic to having a hot line to the Kremlin. That was when they still called 'em Bolsheviks . . ." Head tilted back, a gleam of sun resting cheerfully on his cheek, he smiled as if memory had worked its magic and transformed the old curses into pleasantries. P. C. stood with his weight evenly on both feet and his hands by his side. He was transfixed, Mrs. Flowers's half-smile was imposing a mood on all of them, and Ben resisted.

"The trouble is," the old man said, "I have never been attuned to my time. The things I advocate always come, but always so late." He spoke reflectively as if his words were for other ears than those in the room. "When, in 1910, I pleaded for decent wage and hour regulations, nothing came of it. But there was still time. And when the League of Nations was bludgeoned to death, the world could still weather another senseless war. Now, though, time is suddenly running out. I say with utter certainty — and though I hate to admit it, with despair — I say, if we do not take the lead in halting the arms race, Armageddon will come in

your lifetimes, it may even come within the remnants of my own life. But I'm 75, and I can't expect to see everything. After all, I've seen Bilbo, the Depression, Hitler, and the John Birch Society . . . what more can I ask for?"

Ben suspected a self-pitying tone lay behind the old man's words. The Warrior's voice and manner were strong and compelling. He spoke with the authority of a man who was passionately involved in the great issues of his time. Yet could he be lost in the same howling black maelstrom as Ben? Like Scott Fitzgerald's hero, had the Warrior's "manner remained intact long after the morale cracked?" He saw that everyone—even the truculent Y. R. president and his coterie—was caught up in the Warrior's quiet words.

" . . . to sound defeatist, but I would be less than honest if I failed to tell you that you will let yourself in for many cruelties if you continue to work for . . . for . . ." He stammered, suddenly ancient and dead; his eyes filled and darkened before he caught himself, "My god, they have taken our words, I can't say them . . . I was going to say, *if you work for a cause you're an easy target*. And if you're good enough and tough enough that you have a chance of reaching success, they won't hesitate to crucify you.

"Woodrow Wilson once told me, shortly before he died . . ."

Ben saw the woman in the red dress next door lift the basket spilling over with fresh, clean clothes.

"He said, 'In a way, my death will be the certification of my worth. Had I been less right, they wouldn't have united so very solidly against me'. That was after Versailles and before the suicidal trip about the country trying to get votes for the League."

With swift, sure hands the woman pins the shirts and pants and blouses and blankets to the line. The wind rises and whips frantically at the clothes. Overhead, massed legions of clouds are driven toward the South.

"But as you know, the final judgment of your life's work rests within yourself, or

possibly, with a god, but never, never, in another man's opinion. And I myself could never live just for the sake of avoiding jail and the poorhouse and tip-toeing over the tightrope into the grave."

Outside, the woman's face is in profile: a sparse, lean face which life has stripped of the luxuries of youth and beauty. Yet some beauty remains in the stern lips, the proud, almost Indian features. She pauses a moment, bent in the act of lifting an article from the basket. She seems to cock her ear and listen . . . does she hear him, does she sense the hush that has enveloped the large room?

Now the room is a cloistered shell of silence except for the Warrior's flowing, portentous words. Soul, honor, doomsday, purity . . . And P. C.'s face is suffused with a nameless surging emotion. The sun is behind the racing clouds, but a sort of excited flush glows in the room. Where eyes had met briefly, now they lock in wonder. The Warrior has lifted them all into another world, a silent moment of soul-glancing, in which it seems the very universe hangs breathlessly suspended.

John Burns, the apostate aristocrat, looks over at Mark Pierce who is grimacing as if in terrible anger or the millisecond before sexual release. Pierce will be stabbed to death a year later in the Harlem office of a Marxist party, but now he is the fire-devoured believer who lusts for justice and will fight fiercely for peace.

" . . . may snowball into an irresistible moral juggernaut, smashing the old and stupid ways of power-politics, the deceiving shibboleths.

"You, You, YOU! are the ones. And though it seems sometimes that an invisible, indestructible wall bars you from the power-holders, walls can be smashed, and their existence is no excuse for apathy. For time endlessly rolling is now tired, man is tired. He hungers for a millennium. He yearns for the final catharsis and will settle for a universal purge by blood, a release which will leave children, mothers, fathers all blasted into monsters wandering over a monstrous

THE WINDOW

earth, whimpering through inhuman lips. Oh, we cannot acquiesce. We are everyman's hope"

The woman has not heard. She finishes her work and stands a moment with her hands on her wide, flat hips. She is about twenty feet from the open window. She lifts her face to the wind, her dress is plastered against her body and the whiffing sound of the clothes is wafted past her and through the window to Ben—the tiny flapping of wind-stirred cloth. Surely, as she stands perfectly still—she hears the Warrior say "... on the other foot now. Now we must justify man's way to God, even if there is no God."

But she turns and, with her brown-grey hair flying crazily in the rising wind, she strides back into the white clapboard house. The screen door bangs twice after her.

"... gain the whole world and lose his soul. That, old as it is, is the crux of it all. Thank you, I've talked too long."

They throng to him at once, encircling him. Questions fly, "What is our stand on fallout shelters?" "What about war gas?" "As peace workers, are we morally bound to enter the civil rights struggle?"

The Warrior is the tallest of them all, and his large, great-domed head is above their bobbing, smiling faces.

Ben's feet crunch heavily on the brown gravel path as he hurries outside. The strong breeze is strangely warm and sensuous on his skin. The whole afternoon, plunging toward evening, is lovely. Cloud-banks completely ring the horizon with an almost perfect circle of blue at the sky's zenith. The clouds rolling and roiling are grey and purple, and where great columns of sun streak down, of the whitest white.

"No, sir you're wrong, Dead wrong,"

He sees three workmen digging in the street. Standing waist deep in the hole they have smashed in the concrete, they lean on their shovels, picks and hammers. Their work clothes are completely besotted with sweat. "The hell I am. Read the newspapers, for Chrissake!" A young, muscular, pimple-faced man argues, "Anybody can see we're all going to be blown clear off the planet. It

don't take any brains at all to see that." An older man, too old, really, to be wielding a jackhammer, shakes his head solemnly and says, "Tell me this, George, do you believe in God?" "Well, hell yes. Why?" "He made the earth and man and everything, didn't he?" "Sure, but what's that—" "Then tell me this, George, do you honestly think a God who could do that will let man destroy His earth, God's earth? What kind of God would that be?" The pimply-faced workman's mouth twists in frustrated rage. The older man nods to the third fellow for support. "You know, Bill knows, and I know that He's told us . . . no more water, but fire next time . . . And He did not, no sir, He did not say man would provide the fire. That's for God. Am I right or am I not?" "Oh shit," said the shorter man and absently smashed a crashing blow of his pike into the stone.

Ben turned right on Mallette Street, beside the house, and, glancing over, saw the window of P. C.'s room. The Warrior was still imprisoned by the polite, smiling interrogators. The face framed in the window was solemn and touched with mortality in the late afternoon's light. In profile it was emaciated, his nose sweeping horribly down from the bridge and his adam's apple pulsing irregularly.

At the foot of Mallette Street hangs the cheery, blinking red sign of Clarence's tavern. The tavern is warm and dark, with sturdy old English booths, cold beer, the amiable chatter of law students, English graduate assistants, students who would laugh at the Warrior's name. Or even frown in unrecognition. The street swoops precipitously down toward the warm red sign, and as Ben stands frozen on the gravel path in the marine light of the coming spring thunderstorm, he feels the Warrior's presence, knows that the Warrior's stark profile, now half-hidden in the dusky light, is now engraved in him, that wherever he goes when the day grows dark and green turns black, when the trees lose their gold and the birds flee for their nests, the Warrior's face will remain.

ODYSSEY - 1964

The T.V. screen blears a white horizon
 Into the dawning room;
As mounds of ashes sit stale
 And mist-shrouded in dreg-browned cups.

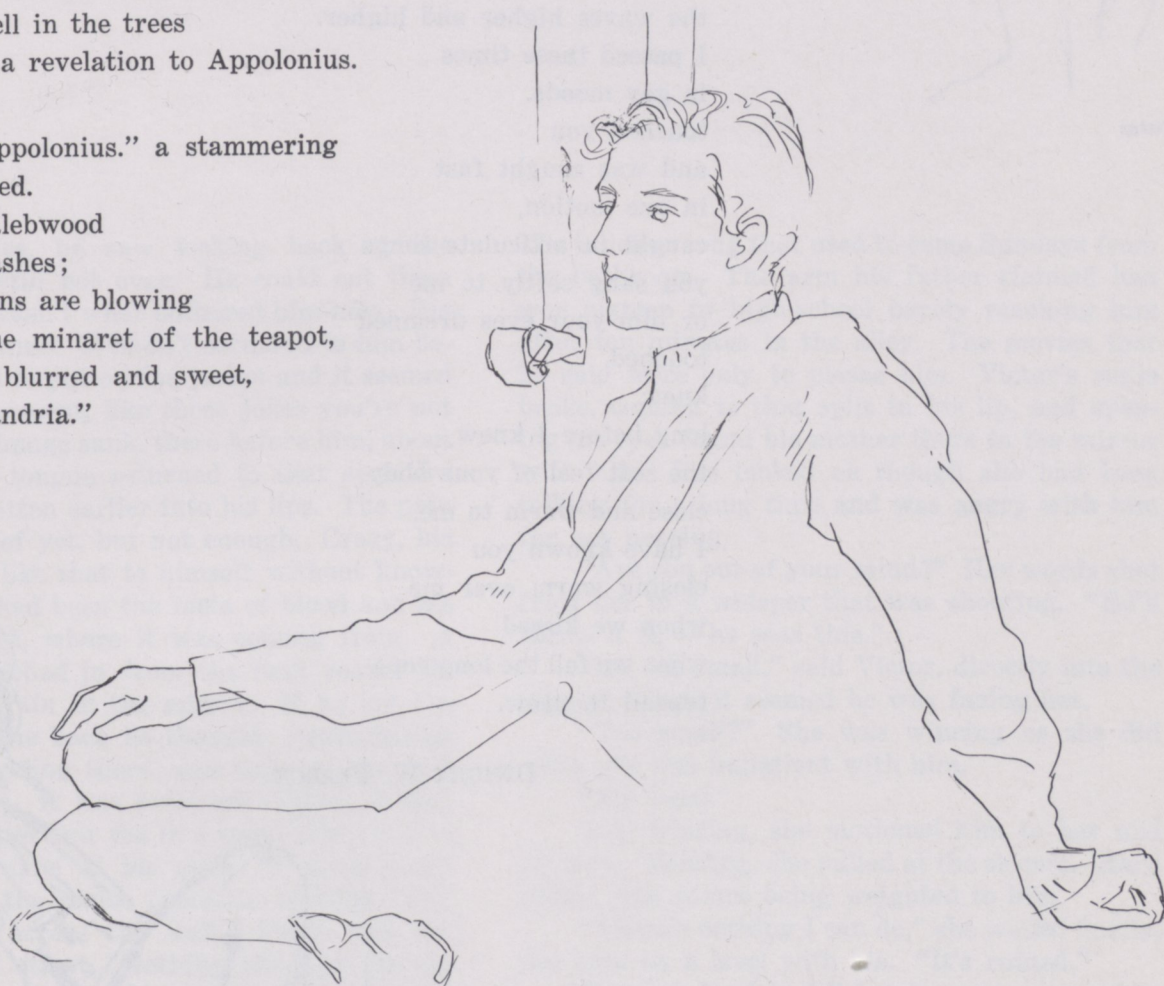
Old Appolonius walks with feet of sandalwood
 Across the floor;
And he waits before the mirror
 For the murmurs
That live only in the light.

The voices in the empty room,
The whirring of the electric broom,
Meet and dwell in the trees
 To become a revelation to Appolonius.

"Apa . . . Appolonius." a stammering
 Voice swelled.
"Smell the calebwood
 From the ashes;
The apparitions are blowing
 Through the minaret of the teapot,
To become a blurred and sweet,
 Dear Alexandria."

In the dawn his vision
 Dies a precocious death,
And he laughs as his stomach
 Calls sharply to the smiling wall.
The retchings of a soul,
 Within his cell.

JERRY TILLOTSON



Jerry Tillotson by Charlotte McMichael

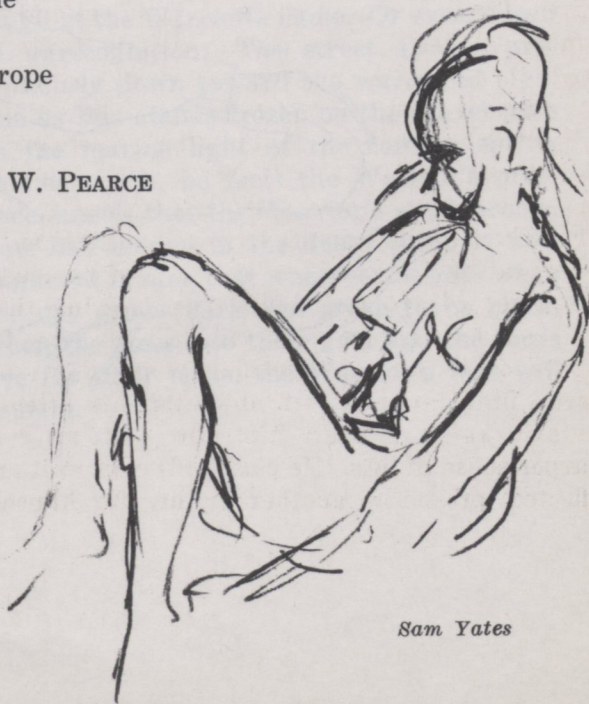


Sam Yates

QUIET

Schooners, docked quiet and dry,
are good for thought or dream
when I am free
of love and logic,
when nights grow long
and no one comes softly
to touch a moon away
from you and me.
We know the feel
of sand together ingrained
and suns peaking
the waves higher and higher.
I passed these times
in gay moods,
touched you
and was caught fast
in one motion,
caught in articulate songs
you sang softly to me
or him your eyes dreamed
touched
knew
long before I knew
the soft feel of your body
close and warm to me.
I have known you
closing warm over me
when we kissed
when we fell the long rope
topsail to prow.

DWIGHT W. PEARCE



Sam Yates

THE JACKET

A FRAGMENT BY

S. CHERNOFF

The sleeves, he saw looking back at the mirror, were still not even. He could cut them again — that wasn't what bothered him now. His head was too small. It hadn't occurred to him before he started to put on the jacket and it seemed now, at this moment, like those jokes you're not let in on. His image sank, there before him, about the eyes. His tongue returned to that sensitive place he had bitten earlier into his lips. The pain gave some relief yet, but not enough. Crazy, his doing a thing like that to himself without knowing it. There had been the taste of blood and his wonder, at first, where it was coming from. A laugh then reached in from the next room. He saw himself again in the mirror. If he cut the hair away in the back he thought, remembering his father's balding there, and took up the scissors once more. It was awkward cutting it that way. The clipped hair fell in a spray and stuck to the sweating nape of his neck. A conspicuous breeze teased the maize curtains, blowing their brief shadow across the wall. There was the clamor of the street. Nothing changed, he observed in the mirror. If anything, his attempt made it worse and left him now with an even sharper sense of loss. He closed his eyes to it and reflected, presently, another picture for himself.

The tuneless song that used to come Sundays from the bathroom. The arm his father claimed had won sixteen in high-school barely reaching him after ten minutes in the alley. The movies that he said were only to please him. Victor's smile broke, coming to that split in his lip, and opening his eyes found his mother there in the mirror with him. She looked as though she had been talking for a long time and was angry with him for not hearing.

"Are you out of your mind?" Her words shot from her in a whisper that was shouting. "Ed'll throw a fit — he sees this."

"It's too small," said Victor, directly into the mirror, where it seemed he was facing her.

"Too small?" She was wincing as she did when she was impatient with him.

"My head."

Still wincing, she motioned him to her and he came. Bending, she pulled at the sleeves. Hard hands, like stones being weighted to him.

"There's nothing I can do," she wailed finally, her eyes on a level with his. "It's ruined."

He was about to tell her he was sorry, when her hand was before his mouth, the tips of her fingers smothering what he had to say. The pointed nails trembled at his mouth, the face set

THE JACKET

for something that had not yet reached him. She appeared to him like an over-wound clock, and himself one of her stuck hands. It was then the back of his neck wanted scratching. He forced his attention elsewhere — her breasts, and again, his ears hot, returned to himself. That he wasn't here, he tried to imagine, that it wasn't him it was happening to. It often worked, but now it occurred to him, and he wondered why it should itch if it didn't have to be scratched.

"What the hell's keeping you?" a male voice said suddenly. Victor felt the hands tighten now around his arm and lead him behind her insistently into the closet.

"You don't even say a word," the man was saying as the closet door was closing, and Victor glimpsed only pieces of him — a perforated shoe-tip, the crease of his trousers, that much of what he said before the darkness came. It frightened him in the beginning — the plunge and the clothes brushing him as if they had come alive. He recognized one, a summer chintz of his mother's, and held onto it. He remembered her in it, the memory somehow adjusted it all and made it easier. He could almost see now and their words too, were almost as if he were right there with them.

"You think I don't know? You're always screaming about honesty. Okay, let's have it once and for all. I feel like I'm screwing around his grave."

"Ed."

"Well that's how I feel."

Victor buried his head in the sleazy material, his hand holding on as hard as he could to it. Yet he heard.

"I can't get near you anymore and even when I'm talking to you sometimes — you think I don't see those things?"

"I need time, Ed."

"You need. What about me? Where do I come in?"

The taste of blood again was there with Victor.

"Oh what's the use."

There was a silence and Victor prayed for it and for them to remain so, locked in it.

"God damn it," Ed's voice broke out of it. "I laid it on the chair, I'm telling you."

He couldn't hear his mother anymore. He squeezed her dress, as for her.

"What do you mean, 'if it turns up.' I'm not leaving here without it. You know what this suit cost me?"

"I know, Victor thought he heard him say. The dress was wet between his hands, the life gone out of it.

It was then the door opened. The sudden light stunned him, then his laugh. He had his arm now, leading him back into the room.

"Here, let me have that," Ed told him laughing, trying to pry the dress away from him. "You can't have them both. Make up your mind." Ed winked toward the bed. Victor looked there. Her eyes seemed somewhere else though they were on him. Victor started to take the jacket off.

"Keep it on," urged Ed forcing it back on him, squatting and turning him back to the mirror. "Take a look at yourself," he said, there with him — his smile, arms surrounding him. In the process the dress had gotten away from him somehow and now he could see it in the man's hand being held behind him.

"It's too small," Victor said softly to the glass.

"What?" asked Ed, and when he wasn't answered, pivoted on his heels partially toward the bed. "What's too small?"

"His head," she answered as if from a distance thought Victor, looking again for her in the glass. Ed's body was in the way; he could see only the places where it cut him off.

"I see what you mean," said Ed, moving closer to him in the glass, so that she seemed swallowed up by him. "Give yourself time. You'll grow into it."

RANDALL JARRELL'S LAST BOOK †

GUY OWEN

Randall Jarrell. *The Lost World*. The Macmillan Company, New York. 1965. \$3.95.

Randall Jarrell's *The Lost World* has been so soundly drubbed that I would like very much to come to its defense — but I cannot, in all honesty, find much in it to praise. For example, Joseph Bennet has allowed himself to write the following in *The New York Times*:

"... the book is taken up with Jarrell's familiar clanging vulgarity, corny clichés and cutenesses, the intolerable self-indulgence of the tearjerking, bourgeois sentimentality. Folksy, pathetic, affected — there is no depth to which he will not sink, if shown the hole."

(Who shows him the hole? One wonders what the source of Mr. Bennet's ill-mannered attack is. Perhaps Jarrell has said something nasty about him in print or at a cocktail party, or maybe he is merely put off by the poet's beard?)

In any case, the book is not all that bad; perhaps few books are. But, unfortunately, most of Bennet's indictment can be supported — though he does not do so in his snarling review. Jarrell is sentimental in the recollections of his Los Angeles childhood ("The Lost World"), he is prone to cuteness, and the language is occasionally tired and too often understated to the point of slackness. Jarrell seems impelled to take the unpoetic things of this world and let them stand

untransmuted in his recent verse: "the tin lunch box with the half-pint thermos bottle" or the opening of "A Street off Sunset":

Sometimes as I drive by the factory
That manufactures, after so long, Vicks
Vapo-Rub Ointment, there rises over me
A eucalyptus tree.

What Bennet does not point out, and more damaging, is that the masterful technique that Jarrell was wielding so brilliantly twenty years ago has hardened into mannerisms: the quirky stammering line, the repeated word in the same line, the word play that is merely clever ("What's seen and what's obscene . . ."), the Ramsonian mixture of the banal and learned ("One spoonful is poured out into my milk/and the milk, transubstantiated, is coffee.") Jarrell seems to deliberately freight his new poems with dull details that do not add up to much, to flatten his diction until the lines read like prose, as in "Next Day," a poem about an aging woman at a supermarket:

My lovely daughter
Away at school, my sons away at school,
My husband away at work . . .

Well, this clearly won't do, not for poetry. Almost everywhere there are the same slack, throwaway lines and low voltage. Too often, then, the poems simply do not engage the reader enough to make him care — no matter how meaningful the exploration of his childhood or his relationship to his parents or his wife are to the poet.

The truth of the matter is that Jarrell's reputation as a poet (not as critic or novelist) has always been rather overblown, and the inevitable reaction has set in. Moreover, there is obviously

† This review was written before the poet's death.—ed.

a growing rebellion against the Academics now — not just from the Redskins, either — and Jarrell, along with John Crowe Ransom, his teacher, has been during the 60's the favorite target of abuse. And it is in terms of Academic verse (though I'd like to see the term retired) that Jarrell's failures here might be defined. For if any volume can be labeled "Academic", this one can. All the earmarks are present: the low-keyed, casual diction, the irony (not very biting), the pedantry, the learned allusions (In "Woman" alone there are references to Disraeli, Freud, Eliot, Middleton, etc.), the mixture of the literary and the prosy, as in "Woman":

Poor medlar, no sooner ripe than rotten!
You must be seized today, or stale tomorrow
Into a wife, a mother, a homemaker,
An Elector of the League of Women Voters.

As much as I would like to disagree with Mr. Bennet, then, I find *The Lost World* a disappoint-

ing book. But would it be that disappointing if it were not by Randall Jarrell, Well Known Poet and Member of the Establishment? And after all, is it fair to expect him to go on re-writing "The Ball Turret Gunner" and "Jews at Haifa"? At least here the poet is courageous enough to take all kinds of risks, even stripping himself naked. And if one looks for them, there are some eminent successes among the failures. The two childrens poems, "The Bird of Night" and "Bats," are as good as Roethke; "A Hunt in the Black Forest" is first-rate Jarrell; and "Well Water" is a superb brief poem where every syllable is just right. Jarrell remains one of the best poets on the subject of women and children, and even when the poems fail to come off, his characters emerge wholly alive. I remain grateful for the risks taken and for the half dozen or more poems that are fully realized. They are their own defense.

CONTRIBUTORS

John Justice has been and is now a student at Chapel Hill; in between, among other things, he was a reporter in Greenville. He now works for the North Carolina Fund in Durham.

Jerry Tillotson is a graduate of E.C.C. (B.A., English), who is now an editor for the Wilmington Star-News.

Dwight Pearce: graduate of E.C.C. (B.S., English); teaching now in a military prep-school in Virginia; formerly associate editor of this magazine.

S. Chernoff is a writer in New York City. He has been published in various other non-slick magazines.

Guy Owen is the professor of English at State College who recently published a picaresque novel *Ballad of the Flim Flam Man*, which has done well. He is also editor of *Southern Poetry Review*.

