

## New Poet to Old

(on reading Robert Frost)

He seems to shun  
This age when things are done,  
When from wounds of time  
Blood has run.  
His life is one long thinking afternoon,  
Taking notes on sun and moon.

He seeks a prophecy  
In rare moth's wings;  
And, finding dust in pockets,  
Writes lines on the millennium.

His is a search for specific:  
The precise trill of whippoorwill,  
The undercurrent of now and still;  
A symbol in a microscopic speck;  
All things brief as a spent breath.

A grandfather in a twilight pose,  
His mind with simplicity shows  
The utter good of evening,  
The still excursion under stars,  
After days which as dried leaves are burning.

In these things he has a part:  
The smell of death between hunter and gun,  
Outracing a deer in the winter sun;  
The quality of heart  
Between neighbors;  
The zealotry of worms  
At undermining earth;  
The strength of hair and grass  
As silently they grow in graves.

But what are epitaphs  
Or delight of secret country paths  
When an age has an engineering eye,  
And vision leaps as with the span of bridges.  
We are still in thrall  
With beasts and angels,

And in a crimsoned world of combat  
Come forward in a cleansing wave.  
The future is cupped in our bringing palms;  
With infinite love we have steeled our arms.

Old poet,  
The thrush is not supreme;  
And harking and halting on tiptoe  
Drowns in a midnight dream.

Out of the blunt hunger of thunder,  
The dark eruption of guns;  
Hear the flute call of morning  
Growing like veins of body  
Over the grandeur of land;  
Soon we will cease and still the storming,  
And come out of our hard house  
To stand for history in heroic story;  
Cool and free with building hands.

And will you, old poet,  
Lover of landscape,  
Whittler of word,  
Wander through our firmament  
Still looking for your bird?

DORIS BAUMAN.



Edith Glaser.

## The German

Fearless on a day of wind  
the child of the free peasant  
sings in the winter forest.

Suddenly bare of snow  
the German soldier leans  
on the tree as though alive:

the museum of natural history  
saved the insignia, the boots  
on their eastward stride, the  
tunic as winding-sheet.

(He came in the white year.  
He talked under the dangerous trees.  
He took the next to the last step.

The Russians passed him  
in the western direction.)

Of the complex metals  
Of the tables of organization  
Of the dream-like maps  
the unmelted gunman remains  
in the year of the child.

The grandfather will tell him what  
is in the forest. . . .

of the glacier: of the pits  
in the terrain of the heart:

of the fathers who endured the  
ice age: of their colder will:

of the numbness upon the enemy,  
the flight to the polar cap.

He saw in the forest the edge  
of the tide, a mauled particle  
thrown up by that weather.

DON GORDON.

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# The Jewish Writer's Dilemma

By Nathan Ausubel

ONE hundred and twenty years ago a sensitive poet of genius, when he realized the disabling reality of his Jewishness, submitted himself for the sake of a career to the mumbo-jumbo of religious conversion. But tormented by an uneasy conscience he tried to laugh it off with an epigram: "Judaism is not a religion; it is a misfortune." Heinrich Heine's bitter quip can apply today with even greater truth to the bare biologic fact of being born a Jew, for that, unlike religion, is not something accommodatingly open to revision.

The casting off by an individual of his national identity when it becomes a liability is a pattern of conduct familiar in Jewish history, just as it is in the histories of other peoples. After Alexander the Great began the Hellenization of the peoples of Western Asia there emerged certain well-known types of Jewish intellectuals under the cultural aegis of the conqueror. Some became Hellenists by choice because their eager

minds were charmed by the manifestly superior civilization of the Greeks. But there were others who were painfully self-conscious of the social and economic disabilities that bound them. So they "de-Judaized" themselves as rapidly as possible out of practical expediency. Three centuries later, when the Greek Empire was displaced by the Roman these "Hellenists" with chameleon adaptability transformed themselves into ardent "Romans." As in the instance of the renegade Josephus Flavius, they allowed themselves to be used by the master-race of antiquity for its own imperialist ends: to keep the rebellious Jewish people suppressed.

Thirteen centuries later, under the harassment of the Holy Inquisition in Spain and Portugal, the spiritual descendant of this "realist," the *Morrano*, embraced the golden doctrine of safety—that discretion is the better part of valor. While the great majority of Jews preserved their identity, and for that were condemned to become homeless

wanderers, he was not at all dismayed by his sacrifice of integrity for the sake of "belonging" and chose conversion. But his adjustment did not help him any for, always suspected of the "Judaizing heresy," he was even more ruthlessly persecuted by the Church than the Jew who did not surrender.

Perhaps the most dismal experience of all was that of certain Jewish intellectuals in Germany. Ever since Moses Mendelssohn initiated among Jews the Enlightenment Movement during the second half of the eighteenth century, assimilation served as much as an instrument for "getting on" as for fulfillment of the genuine hunger for western culture. Many Jews became distinguished writers, scientists, musicians and scholars. They represented the intellectual salt of the earth: men like Heine, Borne, Karl Marx, Felix Mendelssohn, Ehrlich, Wassermann, Toller and Einstein. But there were also others whose success and seeming acceptance as equals by the Germans filled them with parvenu self-esteem. They strutted before the *Polnische und Russische Juden* and despised them openly. "No wonder there are anti-Semites!" they would rage as they looked upon their humble, poverty-stricken, Yiddish-speaking fellow Jews from Eastern Europe. They were determined that there could be no peace between them so long as Gentiles associated them in the same ethnic group. Then along came the Nazis and brutally insisted that they were no Germans at all but just ordinary *verfluchte Juden*! Finally, the most convincing arguments that they were Jews was furnished them by the crematoria of Herr Himmler which, with exemplary impartiality, consumed them as well as East European Jews.

TODAY, more than at any other time in our history, the American Jewish writer stands face to face with his dilemma of clear-cut identity, with the necessity of reconciling his supposedly conflicting loyalties as Jew and as American. Furthermore, he has to make up his mind whether he is going to write about Jewish life or ignore it altogether. To make this decision is by no means an easy matter, for the questions he has to answer for himself are bewildering in number and complexity. Usually he examines this dangerously mined liter-

## To Festus Coleman in Prison

Festus Coleman, caged from your fields of desire,  
more guilty of wing rides the gull, more guilty of hope  
the grain rises, and setting the forest afire  
with his freedom, less innocent runs the antelope  
than you who, being black, are blamed.

Not Festus,  
not Festus Coleman, flung to a shadowy cage,  
clutching the bars of shame, cries out for justice.  
At the great guilt-dripping sun we roar our rage.

Only the blind man, dreaming himself a gull,  
tries laughter; only the blind takes pleasure of stars. . .  
What shadow shrouds the portrait of grain on my wall?  
Can there be bars in each window? San Quentin bars?  
Free! set us free! we roar at the judge-faced sun;  
free! set us free for the forest where antelopes run!

AARON KRAMER.

*Festus Coleman is a thirty-one-year-old California Negro who was imprisoned three and a half years ago on a sensational charge, played up in the Hearst press, of robbery and rape. His trial lasted one day and he could not even get a competent lawyer. Progressive forces in California are demanding a retrial.*

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