

magazines are apt to be hit by hard times, but dress-making patterns and the jungle have a good, steady market. Most periodicals lost many subscribers during the recent depression. The sales of the National Geographic hardly showed it at all. Readers economized not only on fiction but even dress-making patterns, and of course they cut out critical and political organs immediately, but they continued to feel insatiable for a look at the jungle each month.

The reason, the cause for this, is not entirely clear. It is the same old jungle—there is always that native girl with a thick nose and long swinging breasts, staring at us with a sullen expression, while we look at her with the same. Sometimes she is supposed to be in Burmah, sometimes Matabeleville; sometimes a man sits near her, making bread by rubbing his old hat on stones; sometimes they have eaten the bread and are climbing a pass in the back-ground, with groans. But whatever they're doing, we keep right on wanting to see them.

It's like going to the menagerie or the circus. This jungling gets us away from our ruts.

. . . . .

The National Geographic has no copyright on the jungle, however. If scenes of distant regions are as necessary as that to the public, the New Republic is quite as well able to supply them as others. It is regrettable to interrupt the stream of thought to look at such pictures, but after all, their educational value should not be forgotten. We present some herewith. At first sight the educational value of spending the evening faithfully staring at these little scenes may not be plain. But the point is, if enough people do it, it may draw us together. If East and West thus will meet regularly, it may make us all brothers. Our new brothers need our kindly interest, also disinfectants; and we in turn need *their* good qualities, assuming they have some. But all that will come in due course. This is but a beginning.

CLARENCE DAY, JR.

## Song of Praise for Not Being a Poet

I have heard fountains singing in the grass  
I have seen rainbows thrilling to the sun  
I have felt south winds dancing as they pass  
All joy is one!

I have touched heaven's radiance with a star  
I have drunk earth's brown vintage with a tree  
I have plucked splendors where the lightnings are  
Beauty is free!

I have chased angels on a sea gull's wing  
I have learned laughter from the spinning spheres;  
Yet I who am no poet need not sing  
Or care who hears!

Ah, happy is the owner of the sky  
Who is not exiled by the flaming sword  
To seek the phrase that paints it till he die,  
Slave of the Word.

ANNE O'HARE McCORMICK.

## The Flower in Drama

*The Nō Plays of Japan, translated by Arthur Waley.*  
New York: Alfred A. Knopf. \$5.00.

THE stand that the Nō Plays take on actuality is shown best by their ghosts. In nearly every one of these plays that Mr. Waley has chosen from the several hundred in existence, the leading character of the piece is a ghost, is not the hero or the heroine about whose life and deeds the play is made, but an apparition.

Seami, who was born in 1363 and who with his father stands at the head of the Nō, taught his pupils that in imitation there should always be a tinge of the unlike. And to his mind the reason for this is that if we press imitation too far, it will impinge on reality and will cease to give an impression of likeness. If one aims at only the beautiful, the flower, as he calls it, will be sure to appear. If, for example, in the part of an old man the actor merely because he has noticed that old men walk with bent backs and crooked knees and have shrunken frames, sets about to imitate these characteristics, he may indeed achieve an effect of decrepitude but it will be at the expense of the flower. And if the flower be lacking there will be no beauty in the impersonation. What this actor should study, Seami says, is that effect of will without the corresponding capacity for action that shows in old age; and this effect will often be given best by making all movements a little late so that they come after the musical beat. With this in mind the actor may then be as lively as he pleases. For an example of this search for the flower and not for the exact imitation in a play, take the *Miidera*. The mother crazed by the loss of her little boy who has strayed away, is drawn by the sound of the bell over the lake and valley to its temple, where she finds the priests in the garden gazing at the autumn moon, the little boy among them. She is at length allowed to toll the bell herself, and she and her little son recognize each other. In this play everything turns on the sound of the bell, its power over the heart, its memory, its gentleness. But in the presentation, since so much depends upon all that, there is no attempt to represent the bell, only the movement of tolling it is given.

All this is summed up in the ghosts. It is better, the Nō artists believe, to have the hero come again to this life, drawn by some depth of desire in him or in someone in the living world below; for in this way reality is avoided, the outward form is that of a ghost but within is the heart of a man; and out of this heart the actors can draw for the matter of their art those dreams and passions, that sorrow and pride and fate, whose poignant energy were the life of the hero's body when he lived and after death the life of his soul. Freed in this way of the actual reality, the artist works only through the imagination as he chooses, aiming only at the beautiful.

Of the distinction, the flower of these Nōs, Mr. Waley seems to me in his translations to have caught a great deal. Only in one respect does he seem lacking—and it is a great lack—the musical values of the lines; he does not seem to me to have an ear either fine or sensitive enough for the poetic necessities of the best passages. Otherwise it must be said that his selections are admirably varied; the short introductory notes appear where they are truly needed and nowhere else; the original quality of the Nō mind is respected; and the restraint and taste of the original beautifully set forth in their English transcription, no easy

achievement. These Nō plays that Mr. Waley has given us, supply, too, an indispensable commentary on Greek drama, its ritualistic nature, the chorus, the lyrical developments, and the heroic character of the rôles—to take the phrase strictly in the classical sense of the sublimation of the instincts of the multitude in one heroic breast.

The Nōs begin with the entrance of the assistant, the waki, the second character, who names himself, his origin, his destination at the moment. Then comes the Song of Travel, faintly drawn like an old painting on silk, to quicken the imagination so that we may travel with the speaker and be ready at last for the heroic entry. Then comes the shite, the central character, or rather the ghost of him, and tells his story. There the first part of the drama closes. In the second part the hero lives through again his great moment, the climax of his glory or sorrow or last struggle. The chorus, which has been assisting the leading actor when the words interfered with his dance movements, chants a song then that will give us some poem that emerges from the story; and the hero fades from the stage.

The subjects for the Nō are widely diverse. There is the Atsumori, in which the ghost of the young hero tells of his last fight, how he turned back his horse knee-deep in the lashing waves and struck at his enemy, and how afterward they found him lying on the shore, beside him his bamboo flute wrapped in brocade. Or there is the play about Tsunemasa, Atsumori's brother, who had died at the same battle, to whom the Emperor had given a lute called the Green Hill. And now Gyōkei the priest is taking the lute by his master's orders to dedicate it to Buddha, performing then a liturgy of flutes and strings for the salvation of Tsunemasa's soul. In the flame of the candle burning low in the almost spent night the musicians see a shadow dimly appearing, like haze over the fields, they say; it is the ghost of Tsunemasa drawn back to the world by the sound of the strings. And though they cannot see him do it in the faint light, they feel him pluck the lute strings and hear the sound of rain beating on trees and grass. In the Kagekiyo there is the exquisite motive where the unhappy girl, whose sleeve is like a flower wet with rain, and who has come to seek her father, once a hero, now a filthy outcast, to ease his shame asks him to recite the story of his great deeds at Yashima. There is the plot of the Nachi No Ki, where the hero fallen to poverty cuts down the sole treasures left to him, his three dwarf trees, the pine, cherry and plum, to warm a traveller, who turns out later to be the Emperor. Or there is the terrific story of Komachi, once a court beauty, but scornful of her lovers, and now wandering, cursed, old, foul, mad. Or the Hoka priests who avenge their father's murder. And there are plays turning on the lives of children, happy some of them, others bitter and sad. But whatever the subject they are seen in a vision the Nōs, seen always poetically. They illustrate continuously the process by which the poetic mind expresses one part of the world in terms of another; establishes the one thing in terms of the whole, catches the whole in some one happy instance; and thus reveals that kind of antiphonal radiance of all things among themselves which poetry is.

But it is by all odds the security of their essential character that makes these plays most interesting. Nine out of every ten of them, however good or bad otherwise, maintain this essential character of dramatic design. They evince a remarkable proportionment of words, movement, scenic stage details, an emphasis and a pattern of their own; and through all this they attain to a singular freedom.

Through this they are apart from all immediacy. Through this they depend on no direct attack on our emotions but are enabled to avoid it—"in plays," Sieami says, in his book on the Nō, "where a lost child is found by its parents the writer should not introduce a scene where they clutch and cling to one another, sobbing and weeping . . . plays in which children occur, even if well done, are always apt to make the audience exclaim in disgust, 'Don't harrow our feelings in this way.'" Through this security of an essential character of their own, these plays are as independent as a print of Hokusai's. All reality of men and actions and material objects is made to become theirs before these plays can use them, to suffer translation into their own terms; men and actions and objective realities, inns, palaces, temples, waysides, thrones, are turned into dreams, and dreams into reality; the human face in characters where a due degree of emotion will be passed, is hidden under the motionless and subtle incantation of the mask; and even the identity of the actor hero himself is translated into the convention of the chorus, who take his words from him and speak them for him when the fit moment comes. And whether we think them great works or not, we should have to be very ignorant of the fundamentals of dramatic art not to see the singularity and integrity of these plays so securely achieved that they need no heavier device than the dropping of the flutenote at the end of a phrase, which always before went up not down, to show that the scene is ended. And finally, to leave aside the dramatic essence and the rest of it, there is something in the general, all-round quality of these old pieces that is itself like a flutenote, and that is like the oldest painting of China, from whose poetry in fact the poetry of the Nō derives: a kind of strange, high, meagre delicacy and fortitude of the heart.

STARK YOUNG.

## Her Voice

Her eyes have already transfixed him,  
and it only remains for her mouth  
to transport him.

Her mouth just assumes the pert form  
of a cross that is dimpled, then grave,  
as she presses him on  
to the next generation.

What thought can avail to revive him,  
unless he should spy his own boy  
building blocks,  
his own girl playing house?

Herself will be busy with ferns, yes  
and plants in old pots and old vases—  
and she who might likewise be thinking  
won't have to.

The night without, peopled with silent,  
dark cypresses lured on to stars,  
had her voice—  
now the light of the dawn.

Having listened to that, now to this,  
and grown slowly bereft of himself—  
he is quiet.

ALFRED KREYMBORG.