

Leonard E. Nathan



LEONARD E. NATHAN was born in Los Angeles in 1924. Dr. Nathan was educated at the University of California (Berkeley), and he presently teaches there in the Department of Speech. He has published two volumes of poetry: *Western Reaches* (*Talisman*, 1958) and *Glad and Sorry Seasons* (*Random House*, 1963). The two poems he contributes to this *Symposium* are examples of his most recent work. He is presently translating the *Odes of Pindar*.

TWO DOORS

I ENTERED the temple through that golden door
Marked "As You Wish" for men of dreamed affairs,
And there I saw a service shaped of faces
Beautifully come human to their prayers;
The rabbi sang them: "Whole, be whole," and they,
Assenting, O already were. The Law,
Like all good will fulfilled, was gently done,
And Spirit, released, bore up its branch of awe.

Some natural call required my absence, yet,
Still wanting to be found, I came again,
But through the common door, and you know what
I saw: improbability of men
Hardened to face the stone they daily break,
The rabbi muttering in his moody gown,
And no one home. I rose, and cursing, went,
Though gentile darkness roofed the self-made town.

The world can't stand this schism for much more.
Worse—and I feel this in my bones like fever—
The word must come from me. I'd call on God,
But He has left the temple, no believer.

THE PILGRIMAGE

I'M HERE AGAIN; you *must* remember me:
 Last spring the blossoms that I lost—let's see—
 Were apple, cherry, apricot and plum;
 I stood here waiting for the fruit to come,
 Tree by slow tree,
 Into its ripeness; so it did, and fell.
 You promised us some explanation. Well?

Or did you? Someone we trusted wrote that down;
 He'd heard it from a scholar of a town
 Built on mere speculation. Another swore
 He had it from three Asians at his door,
 Each with a crown,
 But begging for a handout. Men *have* lied;
 Sages have bitten too and shortly died.

Bees are content to hive a little good
 And honey out their briefness. Knock on wood,
 I'm not too proud. But what I want I need,
 And, after all, the best men have agreed,
 Or said they could,
 That you, if rightly asked, have once and may
 Again unriddle ripeness. Not today.

I'm going now, but when next year, well done,
 The harvest leaves us naked under the sun—
 The moon-like sun, I'm coming back,
 These cores of gnawing apples in my sack.
 Though it's all one,
 And time seems colder, words less good to know,
 I'm coming back. Where else is there to go?



Harold U. Ribalow

THE JEWISH SIDE OF AMERICAN LIFE

HAROLD U. RIBALOW is a critic who addresses himself almost exclusively to Jewish themes and to the Jewish community. Since 1945 he has edited various Jewish periodicals, such as Congress Weekly and The American Zionist. Mr. Ribalow is a regular contributor to The Jewish Exponent, The Jerusalem Post, The London Jewish Chronicle, Commentary and other Jewish journals of opinion; he has also contributed to Saturday Review, New York Times, New York Herald Tribune, The Nation and Catholic World. Mr. Ribalow is co-editor of The Great Jewish Books, and he is an editor of The Reconstructionist and of the forthcoming Encyclopedia Judaica (to be published in Israel).