

Lament for the Wizard

THE FORLORN DEMON. By Allen Tate. Chicago: Henry Regnery Co. 180 pp. \$3.

By EDGAR JOHNSON

THE forlorn demon of Mr. Tate's title is the man of letters in the modern world. That world, as Mr. Tate sees it, has since the seventeenth century been ever more desperately split by the Cartesian dualism between a mechanized nature of materialist reality and a purely subjective realm of feeling. With these two disastrously divorced from each other and all the prestige of authority imputed to the former, there has been a decline in those sensibilities on which the true understanding or practice of art depends. It has not only made the literary man, Mr. Tate feels, an unhappy exile in a society that hardly supplies a public capable of understanding his insights; it infects the artist himself so that he becomes the victim of his own divided and conflicting efforts both to cater prosperously to a secular society and to explore the world of the spirit. His condition involves an inevitable alienation.

The pressures of our time intensify these difficulties by interpreting lit-

erature as no more than "communications," an endeavor "to sway, affect, or otherwise influence a crowd" which presupposes an automatized psychology of mere manipulation. Such a dogma degrades all art to propaganda and makes men a sub-human mob of preconditioned slaves. Against these perversions Mr. Tate asserts his conception of the true vocation of the man of letters: "to call attention to whatever he is able to see . . . to create what has not been hitherto known and, as critic, to discern its modes"—in short, "to render the image of man as he is in his time." And the true aim of literature, therefore, Mr. Tate insists, instead of being the production of mere affective responses, is a *communion* in which the reader is brought to share fully—heart, mind, and will—in the discovered reality of the writer.

But this is precisely the difficulty. "Men in a dehumanized society may communicate," Mr. Tate remarks, "but they cannot live in full communion." Our mass communications exist for the control of men; the propagandist applies a "stimulus," the public "reacts." In consequence (as in the mass media of advertising) utility sees human nature itself as a mechanism of drives, and words as goads or baits to activate those drives. Hence, Mr. Tate suggests, "our worship of *rapid* and exciting language, an idolatry that in one degree or another is the subject of most of these essays."

Such, in brief, is the viewpoint underlying the eight essays and five briefer articles making up this volume. Since they were, for the most part, delivered as occasional addresses or lectures, it was impossible that Mr. Tate should develop his position systematically from essay to essay, as he might have done in a connected series. No only is much of it stated, however, in the preface and the opening essay, but it is genuinely the unifying principle of them all, and it is genuinely and earnestly exploratory.

In the essay on Dante and "the symbolic imagination" Mr. Tate analyzes a poet in whom the imagery is the dramatic means of conveying a poetic insight flowering from a union of thought and feeling; in that on Poe and "the angelic imagination" he analyzes a writer at the parting of the ways where speculative intellect has broken down the connections between the perceived reality and the will, so that Dante banished from Florence was not so much an exile as Poe throughout his career. And Poe's



—Blackstone Studios.

Allen Tate—"goads and baits."

alienation from his world, Mr. Tate points out, is characteristic: witness "Julien Sorel, Emma Bovary, Captain Ahab, Hepzibah Pyncheon, Roderick Usher, Lambert Strether, Baroni de Charlus, Stephen Dedalus, Joe Christmas—all of these and more, to say nothing of the precise probing of their, and our, sensibility, which is modern poetry since Baudelaire."

Between the extremes represented by the medieval and the modern poet Mr. Tate explores other aspects of his theme, in essays ranging from a moving tribute in memory of Hart Crane to a penetrating reexamination of Longinus, from an analysis of Samuel Johnson's judgment of the metaphysical poets to a defense of Mr. Tate's own reasons for voting to award Ezra Pound the Bollingen Prize. In all of these he is acutely aware of the dangers and problems of criticism itself, an art not autonomous but ambiguously rooted in both philosophy and imagination, an activity both necessary and impossible.

"Like man, literary criticism is nothing in itself; criticism, like man, embraces pure experience or exalts pure rationality at the price of abdication from its dual nature. It is of the nature of man and of criticism to occupy this intolerable position. Like man's, the intolerable position of criticism has its own glory."

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FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT No. 512

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 512 will be found in the next issue.

MLKHGFE HM DLC LDG

BLAHMN'O NLPOG,

QLPRGO LQ FCL

RHSNFE FPHTGM, FNG

TLPGM WDO TLPGO.

TEPLD

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 511
Nothing so resembles a daub as a masterpiece. —PAUL GAUGUIN.

Broadway Postscript

GOON GIRL

THE latest happy event on Broadway is the promotion of a beautiful young actress who for the last four years has been regarded as merely "promising" to a "goonfaced" performer who has definitely arrived. Kim Stanley, by the simple process of chopping off her hair, tying a diaper around her rather full bosom, and remembering how she used to talk when she wore braces, has, in her portrayal of Millie, the awkward younger sister in "Picnic," added her name to an exclusive list of postwar American actresses which includes Barbara Bel Geddes, Julie Harris, Maureen Stapleton, Kim Hunter, and Geraldine Page.

Miss Stanley, whose previous activity had been as a model, a transparent-skirt waitress at the Park Sheraton Hotel, an off-Broadway and TV actress, and a Broadway performer in three short-lived plays, was originally called in to read for the part of Madge, Millie's beautiful sister. But when she looked over the William Inge script, she set her heart on Millie.

"There were so many things about Millie that were in mine and in a great many other people's adolescence," says the actress. "I asked the director, Josh Logan, if I could study Millie a couple of days and come back and do the first scene of the second act for him. When I did return with my hair tied back and wearing a pair of old pants and a man's shirt, I saw Josh make a face and say 'No,' but I went ahead anyway. Then he asked me to do the opening scene to see if I could scream and yell and hit the boys over the head. Finally he gave in, although I'm sure he had doubts about whether or not I'd work out."

Mr. Logan, who had visualized a fifteen-year-old girl in the role, admits that he had reservations about casting Kim as Millie. "But," he adds quickly, "I had never really seen Millie until Kim showed me what was in the part, and I decided that we could take a chance on the less vital visual aspects of her characterization."

Logan rates Miss Stanley extremely high among the actresses he has worked with. "She has amazing control despite the fact that she works on a very high emotional level. She makes an immediate impact on the audience and is enormously successful at giving the illusion of the first time at each performance. In addition,

she is what I wish all actors were—creative. Almost everything she does in 'Picnic' she invented on her own, and all I've had to do is to edit a bit."

According to Miss Stanley, the development of Millie was a collaborative venture. First of all, she was able to borrow a great deal from her own early experience in San Antonio, Texas, where she grew up with the embarrassing handicap of having to wear braces on her teeth till she was seventeen. "They were the real artillery kind," she admits. "What I remember most was that I was always trying to cover up my teeth with my lips. Also the rubber band across the top kept my tongue from working as well as it should, and affected my speech." One of the critics accused Miss Stanley of talking like

Marlon Brando, which she didn't mind because she thinks Brando is a fine actor, but actually she was just articulating the way she used to during her adolescence. Not only the braces, but all the defenses that come from not being considered pretty by boys go into her interpretation of Millie. "During rehearsals, Janice Rule [who plays Madge] and I worked by ourselves a lot and tried to find moments in the play during which we could reveal some of the inner life of the two girls. Mr. Inge helped us by changing the script so that instead of always fighting with me Madge at least had moments when she made a sincere effort to understand my problem. As it turned out at the opening in Columbus, I was playing Millie too wistfully, showing too much of her inner self without

covering it with the defenses Millie would have used, and Josh had to get me to put some of them back into the characterization." This took some effort.

However, it appears that Miss Stanley was working in the right direction, for most of the changes that were made—as "Picnic" worked its way towards Broadway—were for the purpose of showing more inner growth by the characters. Instead of going back to the dime store as she did in the original, Madge grew enough to make the decision to leave and follow the man she loved, and Millie, instead of calling her a slut for having loved this man, now tries to understand her sister and at the play's end shows that she has begun to resolve her conflicts in a more mature way.

IN the process of changing, Miss Stanley's favorite line in the play was deleted. It came during the scene near the end of the second act when the school teacher, Rosemary, asked her unprepossessing boy-friend to



Kim Stanley—"almost everything she does she invented."