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## HANS HOFMANN

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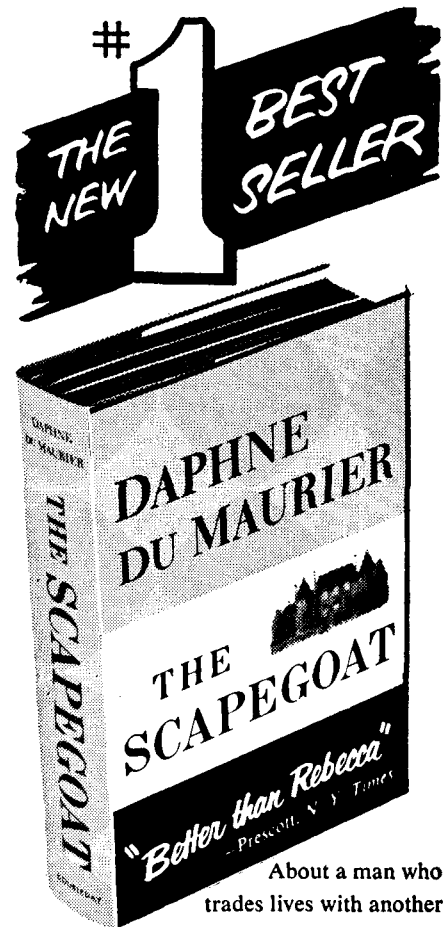
poem from page 53 of "A Wreath" called "Quo Dolore Contenebratum Est Cor Meum" turns out "In the Rose of Time" to bear the title of a prior poem on page 51 of "The Wreath," "Ecce Abstulisti Hominem De Hoc Vita," and so exclude the fine things in the absence of the latter poem such as the memorable final stanza, worthy of Donne:

Now as I turn fearfully away, the last  
Sickening breath impossible, I  
can not  
See or feel the world, and I am  
done.  
I had this love and this perplexity.

The only other complaint might be concerning the small number of new poems—fifteen—included in this collection. Perhaps, with more encouragement there might have been, and be, more poems. Perhaps Fitzgerald has been too good a poet to be widely acclaimed. Taste is not necessarily a universal quality. But it is certainly a loss not to know the work of this sincere and accomplished artist.

**NO SONGS, NO DANCES:** Back in the sad, bad, mad, old Thirties (if memory serves) William Pillin carried a heavy load of "social significance." In his new volume "Dance Without Shoes" (Golden Quill Press, Francetown, N. H., \$2.50), the situation is somewhat changed, but the mood—the passive—is the same: crushed by the Depression then, in these mid-century years he is prey principally to fear of the Bomb. In these terrors, of course, he has not been alone as a person; but a poet can never allow himself to be simply one of the faces in the crowd.

That Mr. Pillin has never accepted this basic obligation of the poet-as-maker is, I think, at the root of his troubles in "Dance Without Shoes." So, though there is much talk of dancing, his words rarely dance. His words too often fall short of song, despite much talk of music. Though emotional to the point of naivete, with a natural leaning to the simple lyric, he seems to have an uneasy conscience, to feel he should be complex, intellectual-emotional in the metaphysical mode. But he is not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be. So there is a plethora of images which stumble one over the other; for example, July "intones," "sucks," gives out "sultry whispers" all in the same breath—while "trees faint, stones burn" in the next. The sum of all the metaphor is less than the parts. —GERARD PREVIN MEYER.



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## The Credo We Call Conscience

**"The American Conscience,"** by **Roger Burlingame** (Knopf, 420 pp. \$6.75), is a study of the credo of the national community before 1890 and, to a lesser extent, since. Eric F. Goldman of Princeton, author of *"The Crucial Decade"* and other books.

By Eric F. Goldman

OF THE many varieties of history, probably the type most satisfying to the general reader is that in which a fully matured mind, deeply versed in the American story, strikes off on a free-wheeling treatment of a major theme. Roger Burlingame's *"The American Conscience"* is such history. The subject could hardly be more important—the United States, as Mr. Burlingame points out, has been a nation with a "peculiar compulsion" to insist upon moral explanations and judgments.

Mr. Burlingame defines the American conscience in a broad sense—not simply the dominant body of opinion concerning matters like integrity or sex but a community credo drawn from and applying to a tangle of political and social circumstances. In all this tangle, he argues, three things made the American conscience unique for many decades. We were isolated, geographically and by our own will; the frontier stretched out invitingly; and tremendous national wealth was encountered on the transcontinental march. Within the framework of these facts, the American conscience grad-

ually took form, divided against itself at the time of the Civil War, re-emerged as a national conscience. All the while, the extent to which the national conscience would whip events into line varied, sometimes operating powerfully, at other times only weakly asserting itself.

The major section of Mr. Burlingame's book concerns the period up to the 1890s. In his opinion, the era before the twentieth century shaped the basic set of American standards. After that, isolation, the frontier, and the sense of unending wealth all slackened in their influence. The past fifty years have simply tended to confuse the original moral concepts.

In the twentieth century, Mr. Burlingame goes on, the nation has clung to these earlier attitudes long after events have rendered many of them obsolete. His usually genial pen takes on a touch of acid as he describes the insistence upon "free competitive enterprise" which has been largely inoperative for seventy years; on 'rugged individualism' which the organizing impulses inherent in our later society work constantly to suppress. . . . on 'grass roots' under a tight network of communications designed to nullify local interests; on the old 'dignity' of labor which not only no longer requires skill but has become nearly unconscious; on the horrors of socialism after all the Owenite, Fourierist, and Marxist propaganda has been almost instinctively rejected by American masses; on fear of monopoly when some form or degree of mo-



—Fabian Bachrach.

"Seasoned wisdom . . . numerous insights."

nopoly is essential to the proper function of mass production; on a minimum of government planning below the social needs of the new community.

The extent to which these attitudes have really been carried over into present-day American life can be questioned. It may well be that after, as well as before, the 1890s the basic American conscience has been changing. Some historians would certainly challenge the great importance which Mr. Burlingame assigns to the frontier. Probably a good many readers, historians or not, will wonder whether he has not defined the word "conscience" so broadly that he is really writing a commentary on general American thinking. These and other questions can be raised, but no doubts can challenge the richness, the suggestiveness, or the high readability of this book.

Nor can they remove the poignance of its conclusion. The American conscience, whatever it is, however it was formed, has frequently gone to sleep only to awake with great vigor. Mr. Burlingame is sure it is quite asleep now. "We are prosperous. We are complacent. Religion has become, for the most part, a social convention. . . . Skill is anonymous, thought is under pressure to conform, security has replaced venture as a dominant aim, intellect is in the discard, and politics are dictated by a cult of mediocrity."

Hesitantly, in a wisp of hopefulness, Mr. Burlingame asks: Hasn't the American conscience always reasserted itself in the past? Is it now possible "to feel, in an hour of quiet darkness when we have turned off the television, the old forces [of conscience] rallying round us?"

## Victor Emanuel Monument (Rome)

By Harold Norse

THE marble typewriter or "wedding cake" is large enough to shelter in its side several armies; as it is, they keep a squad of *bersaglieri* there, the hand-picked of all Italy, the flower to guard this monsterepiece. In scarlet fez and blue pom-pom halfway down the back, like birds of paradise they strut, their bodies hard and flashing flesh by sunlight or moonlight with all the brilliance of the male panache. And this is all they have to do. What else on seventeen cents a day, in Italy? Any night by the white marble ploy discovers them in whispered assignments picking up extra cash, from man and boy.