

which make it necessary to accept the poet, for all his manifest shortcomings or his excesses of naïveté or enthusiasm, as the creator of a native epic which expresses better than any other a young nation's ebullient estimation of her powers and opportunities.

—LEWIS LEARY.

**A QUIET VOICE:** The chief virtue of Robert Hillyer's *"The Relic and Other Poems"* (Knopf, \$3.50) is technical competency in the traditional lyric forms. Permitting his meter to evoke a melancholy mood, Mr. Hillyer rarely raises his voice to a shrill note. These are mainly poems of quiet protest—against society's denuding of nature, against ugliness and destruction and especially against death. Repeatedly the poet sadly recalls feelings of his childhood:

I am afraid of time and of time's  
ending,  
As though the luminous evening  
now descending  
Were the world's last. I am afraid,  
afraid  
Of the dark plunge to endless  
repetition.

Although genuine, the sentiment is hardly profound. His simplicity suggests restraint, but in the section entitled "Observations," demanding philosophical depth, such habituated restraint is not enough. Here Hillyer substitutes a superficial wit, but the result should allay his fears of the New Critic, "Who makes obscure what once was fairly clear. . . ." These are not poems for explication. What they are, for better or worse, they most obviously are.

—ROBERT D. SPECTOR.

**MOMENTS IN THE WEST INDIES:** Tram Combs's *"Pilgrim's Terrace"* (Editorial La Nueva Salamanca, Puerto Rico; \$2) is one of the two substantial and original books of verse by a new poet which has come my way in the past several years. (The other: "The Hawk in the Rain," by Ted Hughes, reviewed on page 43.) In such a rare event, it seems both niggardly and beside the point to be critical. One remembers the criticisms that were made of Keats's first book, and indeed of his second and third books, but one also remembers that, although all of the criticisms stand up today, the critics who made them would, if they were brought back to life, wish they had kept their peace.

This is a loose-jointed book and a loose-jointed poet—the most difficult and hazardous way to write, surely; yet Tram Combs gets away with it through sheer talent, forthrightness, and unwillingness to use any of the familiar tricks of the trade. One of the

slightest of the poems will make the point:

last at night and in the earliest light  
your long eyes, and resin laugh  
are bright in the bed here

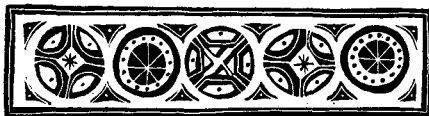
(like waters' fall in the mind's  
mountains  
storms, stars, burning beasts of seas,  
gods in lacquered niches)

I dream your arms and pits  
in the strands of sleep  
mould you—toes, thighs, tongue

It's as deceptively simple as that. The book is a journal of occasional poems on moments in the West Indies. Some are about no more than flowers, cats, and the patterns of light; some are about war and the travail of modern life; a few are addressed to the shades of such free, tortured, burning spirits as Emma Goldman and Hart Crane. The author grew up in the Deep South and lived for a while in the San Francisco area, where he must have learned a lot about writing without fancy circumlocutions and "metaphysics" from Kenneth Rexroth. Mr. Combs doesn't imitate Mr. Rexroth, however. Or anybody else. That is the miracle.

—S. R.

**A DOOR TO DANTE:** Dorothy L. Sayers's basic equipment as a commentator on Dante in her *"Further Papers on Dante"* (Harper, \$4) is devotion to her subject, enthusiasm, and the informed result of wide and seeking reading. These qualities make a combination that can well reward the reader who is willing to tolerate Miss Sayers's sense of the sprightly aside and her (to me, often offensive) convert's sense that in talking about Dante she must run in a bit of sneak-proselytizing for what turns out to be not exactly Dante's Catholicism but, oddly enough, its Anglican stepbrother. I can grow especially weary of the number of amateur critiques of the modern universe that Miss Sayers seems compelled to let go in the process of her discussions. Speaking as one reader, I am grateful to Miss Sayers for her insights on Dante and am happy to recommend them, but I should like to propose a simple reader-treaty: I shall promise to read happily what Miss Sayers has to say about Dante, if she will promise to leave my soul, my moral judgments, and the contemporary universe for me to think about on my own. —J. C.



## Neuberger

Continued from page 11

istrator. He will have charge of the great new interstate road program. In his home state of New York, Mr. Tallamy supervised the 432-mile Thruway from New York City to Buffalo. Signs on the Thruway are restricted to neat, standardized panels which indicate the distance to a general "Service Area" or the fact that a gas station and coffee shop are one mile away. These signs are in precisely the same pattern as those which herald distance, speed limits, directions, or curves. Actual commercial or brand advertising, as such, is forbidden. Two or three times I asked Mr. Tallamy if roadside business had suffered as a result of these controls on signs and billboards. He always answered in the negative.

Despite so categorical a reply from a famous highway engineer with actual experience in this domain, the outdoor advertising companies insisted—right up to the hour that my bill was narrowly defeated in committee—that restrictions on billboards would seal the fate of small entrepreneurs pumping gas, serving food, or patting down beds beside the roads. Yet, if our highways are made more attractive to the eye, will not a larger number of nomads set out upon them with their families—and will not these people need all the commodities and services offered along the way?

With one breath the outdoor advertisers try to hide behind the backs of small locally-owned roadside facilities by mourning that these places will suffer in patronage if signs are controlled. But with their next gasp the advertising firms insist that the ugly signs are not those erected in the interest of the mighty national brand-name corporations but, rather, the on-the-premises signs heralding restaurants, motels, etc.

Regardless of the equity of this claim, it is academic. The new interstate highways are, by law, to be breached by only limited-access conduits of travel for reasons of safety. Motels and filling stations cannot hem in the interstate roads because such direct intrusion would be illegal. These accommodations will be clustered principally around the interchanges—near the widely-scattered clover-leaf turnoffs. My bill, for cooperative Federal-state regulation of signs, would allow a limited number of signs at the interchanges but—to all practical purposes—not in the open countryside.

Such concessions have never budged the big outdoor advertisers. Their appetite for plastering our nation's road-

sides is insatiable. What if Mount Hood is shut off or a thicket of lush cedars barricaded? Who cares? The so-called self-policing imposed by the industry is largely confined to areas where signs do not have a high media value, anyway. The tiger vows not to eat carrots!

Said ex-Senator Lucas: "This country was built on economics, not beauty." Perhaps this explains why, only 150 years after Lewis and Clark were first to span what is now our nation, we have made such awesome depredations upon so many of our natural resources.

The tremendous hardwood forests of the Lake States are all but gone. We wiped out 60 million bison so fast that President Theodore Roosevelt had trouble finding a few hundred to save as museum and zoo pieces. Countless passenger pigeons were slaughtered to the last bird. In my home state of Oregon, greatest of the timber states, one sawmill community after another has cut itself out of logs. "Only God can grow a tree," wrote John Muir, "but only Uncle Sam can save a tree." But what if Uncle Sam gets into the hands of people who are indifferent to the pollution of rivers, to the wholesale shooting for sport of herds of elk and caribou, to the systematic destruction of the few grizzlies left in the Rockies and Bitterroots, to the draining of marshes where migratory waterfowl must find sanctuary, to the choking off of Chinook salmon runs which seek the remote headwaters to spawn, to the commercializing of the last handful of upland wilderness solitudes—yes, and callous, too, to the need for preserving the scenic majesty along our \$33 billion investment in interstate highways?

Is that what we want in America?

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—MORLEY.

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