

stifling it into a generalization. Let the first few lines of an early poem do for all. The poem is titled "Gothic Landscape":

They stand like penitential Augustines  
These trees, and in my Jewboy mind  
they are monks,  
Brown robed, fearful after their long  
sleep in dungeons;  
When I was a child one of them nearly  
caught me,  
But I escaped, tunneling the snow to  
my mother's face;  
Under her grey shawl I saw God's Assyrian beard.

There are not many poets who can say "I saw God's Assyrian beard" and make me believe it. The power of Layton's writing certainly is from the fact that it makes a world visible and imposes his reality upon it. That world will not be especially attractive to the High-Minded, but let me beg the bright young men to put the book into their pockets and Layton into their minds.

Also to hand comes Kerouac's latest excursion into let-it-spill self-expression. This one is billed as poetry, a view of things to which Kerouac has persuaded Grove Press, but not me. Poetry, I insist, is not a jam session in which the poet blows whatever comes into his head; and if it were, Kerouac is not musician enough to sit in with the men.

**LYRICS OF THE SCULPTOR:** Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564), the universally admired painter, architect, and sculptor, wrote during his lifetime a significant, though uneven collection of lyrics. That Michelangelo did not have any literary pretensions is evidenced by the fact that his poetry had to wait until 1623 to be published. "Le Rime di Michelangelo Buonarroti" appeared through the efforts of the author's grandnephew, Michelangelo Junior, who, being something of a perfectionist and a politician, saw to it that Michelangelo's "mistakes" were corrected and the coveted Imprimatur granted by the Church without any objections. The book was, of course, far from being a "correct" edition even in the philological sense since it repeatedly violated both the language and the spirit of the original manuscript, kept in the Vatican Library. It was only in 1897 that the German scholar Karl Frey produced what has remained to this very day the only acceptable edition of the "Rime," accompanied by a useful critical apparatus.

In the past, Michelangelo has frequently been rendered into English by distinguished Italophiles (such as Longfellow and Symonds). Only now,



Head of the Virgin by Michelangelo, St. Peter's, Rome.

however, is a generally faithful translation of "The Complete Poems of Michelangelo" (Noonday Press, \$5) available at last to lovers of Renaissance letters. Joseph Tusiani, the translator, and the publisher should at once be commended for their undertaking and for their faith in the work of a long-neglected artist.

It is unfortunate that the present volume omits the Italian text, making it impossible for the reader who may be either puzzled or dissatisfied with the English rendition to consult the original poem. Translations of poetry are useful, as I see it, primarily because they often lead the reader back to the original, making a fuller understanding and enjoyment of literature possible. If this premise is acceptable, then the translator ought to strive to keep his work as close to the original text as possible.

It is my impression that, in the translation of Mr. Tusiani, Michelangelo ceases being "unpretentious, crude and rough" (three qualities that set him apart from his friends, far more polished and sophisticated than he) and becomes smooth and all too melodic. The translator's implicit commitment to repeat in English the metrical or rhyme scheme of his poet leads him at times to an unfortunate alteration of the tone of Michelangelo's verse. Mr. Tusiani confesses that his intention has been "to recapture poetic thought and not the roughness of its dress." It is easy to see how such an approach dilutes and changes the basic quality of Michelangelo's poetry.

"To translate into English Michelangelo's marmoreal frigidity [the term is un felicitous, to say the least] is absurd, for once the original obscurity

is removed the idea becomes lucid in the new language." I fail to see any necessary correlation between the character of Michelangelo's poetry and its occasional obscurity. His statements about his melancholy, his sense of despair, his loneliness (which, incidentally make him a good deal closer to the modern sensibility than his contemporary Ariosto) may not always be explicit, any more than his references to private events or historical figures. But such difficulties are our own and may be solved only through the achievement of an eventual complete, critical edition of the poet's work.

However much one may take exception to Mr. Tusiani's views and interpretations, I venture to say that his labor will be extremely rewarding. Many readers will now approach Michelangelo's poetry and will leave him with deeper understanding. Only then will they perceive the truth of a statement allegedly made by the satirical poet Berni, who once wrote apropos of Michelangelo: "Enough of you, sweet pallid violets,/ And liquid crystals, and fair beasts astray:/ You babble words, but only *he* writes thoughts."

—SERGIO PACIFICI.

#### A NEW SCHOOL OF TRANSLATION:

Some books make a difference and others do not. "The Poem Itself" (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, \$6.50) does. Stanley Burnshaw and his associate editors, Dudley Fitts, Henri Peyre, and John F. Nims, have called on seventeen good scholars and poet-scholars to develop an almost entirely successful new method for presenting foreign-language poetry to American readers.

Since we have already presented a pre-publication excerpt from the book [SR, May 7], we need describe it only briefly here. The aim of the anthology is not to be definitely representative, but to offer a judicious sampling of European poetry in a way that will make the original poem available to American readers without the inevitable distortions of translation. In place of conventional translation one is offered an explication of the poem. The explication does, of course, contain a translation, but with the essential difference that the explication can pause wherever necessary to discuss the multiple meanings of a given word or phrase, and to relate those meanings to the body of the poet's work.

In any work of art more than one thing is likely to be happening at the same time. The conventional translator, bound by poetic form, comes to a multiple word or phrase and does his best to find an equivalent word or phrase in the second language. He knows de-

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## The Context of Power

TWO WEEKS ago in these pages there appeared an article on CBR—war by chemical, biological, and radiological weapons. A number of letters commenting on the article have asked why the men who design and produce these weapons—whether they go by the name of Americans or Russians or British or whatever—are not brought before the World Court immediately and charged with highest crimes against the human community.

Other letters, in general, want to know what kind of men would be willing to breed virile strains of germs for use against people. How is it that demons such as these are not put away—either in jail or in mental institutions—it is asked.

Our contention is that these men are not demons, despite the fact that they may preside over the misery or death of more people than any other persons in history. They possess the power that can convert an entire planet into a radioactive wasteland. But this by itself does not make them evil men.

In saying this, we recognize that one of the great dangers confronting the world is that the men who have devised the new poison gases or the new explosives or who have been producing bacteriological weapons may not be content to see their work go forever unused. A man wants to justify his work and take pride in it and see it put to use. The most vigorous arguments in the United States for conducting nuclear tests come from the officials of the agency concerned with the manufacture of nuclear weapons. Similarly, the principal arguments in favor of authorizing poison gases and disease

germs in war come from the men in charge of their production.

Yet even these grim realities do not make evil men out of the CBR contingent. These are not brutes bent on projecting their aggressive natures to the society of nations. These men exist inside a context—and the context is the fully sovereign national state. They feel they have been placed in a position where they are compelled to deal with existing conditions and the logic that seems to them to issue therefrom.

Their assignment is to assume that all political measures directed to securing peace may fail. They leave to the citizen and the statesman the business of devising and appraising the non-military approaches—although they themselves must proceed on an entirely different basis. In the context of their own responsibility, they feel bound by the imperatives laid down by the new technology.



In sum, their ideas and their imperatives are shaped by the arena around them. Their job is to function in a world of competitive national sovereignties. Their responsibility is to a national society. So long as the world is divided into sovereign national units, and so long as the units exist in a condition of anarchy, their actions will be dictated by the facts that surround them.

They find historical justification for the view that the only way a nation can be secure against aggression is by being strong enough to deter it or repel it. They point to numberless case studies of national disasters in which weakness invited attack. They argue that the only restraint against the aggressor has been the possession by the United States of the atomic bomb. Otherwise, they contend, military aggression against small nations and eventually the larger ones would have resulted in world conquest.

They oppose all measures that would place any limit on the fighting capacity of the United States. Especially do they resist any efforts looking toward curtailment or control of nuclear weapons. The issue of a ban on nuclear weapons is of particular concern to them not only because it may hamper the development of new atomic weapons but also because it could lead to other measures of control that might deprive the United States of the most vital part of its nuclear protective shield.

They are quick to emphasize any flaws or weaknesses in plans directed to a ban on nuclear testing in particular and on the manufacture of nuclear weapons in general.

First, with respect to a ban on testing, they contend that no foolproof system of enforcement is possible. Even if they accept the position that all nuclear bursts above the surface or in the upper atmosphere are detectable they see no way of guarding against any secret violations through underground tests. They admit that underground megaton explosives and even reasonably large kiloton explosives will create earth tremors that can be picked up on seismograph machines strategically located at inspection centers throughout the world. But they contend that small kiloton test explosions can probably be muffled in deep underground sites. And since the future of nuclear weapons development, as they see it, is in the direction of smaller nuclear tactical devices, they oppose a ban as being both unenforceable and inimical to the national interest.

They are convinced that only nuclear testing can furnish the kinds of answers that are necessary for the development

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