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### **SPECIAL ISSUE OF SR**

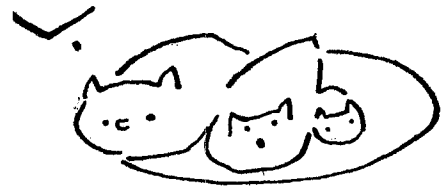
**"The Fouling of the  
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motel outside San Diego see anything funny about the sign they have attached to their handkerchief swimming pool which reads: "No running, eating, drinking, coins, suntan lotion, pets, snorkels, oils, or sores. Ladies must wear caps. No balls or floats. Please dry before entering room. Rules must be obeyed." The cowering guest, retreating to his room, finds tacked on his door fourteen more "Rules of the House."

And few there are who can see anything humorous where regional loyalty is the butt of it. At a Sacramento motel the water was so sulfurous that the proprietress had to let it stand in a basin overnight to get rid of the fumes before she could incorporate it into the coffee (Continental breakfast free) in the morning. In our New York neighborhood, when an unfortunate well-digger ventures too deep and encounters a dash of sulfur, folks whisper about it as though the water emanated from the bowels of hell. So we made the mistake of offering a humorous comment in sympathetic deprecation of the frightful odor from the taps. Our hostess gave us a killing look. "In most places," she said icily, "you have to pay a lot of money for treatment like that!"

And the height of loyal pretense came, as usual, in California. For two nine-



hour days we had been negotiating an unending series of hairpin curves on the edges of that range of coastal mountains that sheers off directly into the pounding sea far below. It was all desperately beautiful. The natives minimize the dangers involved by driving seventy miles an hour and arranging to meet you on every curve, and by scorning to place any barrier between driver and death at the foot of the precipitous cliffs. Through the sheep country an occasional altruistic farmer had tacked up some slats from an old pigpen along the ragged brink, all higgledy-piggledy—sticks that wouldn't have deterred a suicidal lemming. Then at the end of two such days we came upon a terrifying curve around the precipice with nothing but the drop to the sea rocks on our right, and there, stuck on a crooked slat was a handwritten sign reading: "No trespassing." That was the curve we almost didn't make.

## Out West

By William Stafford

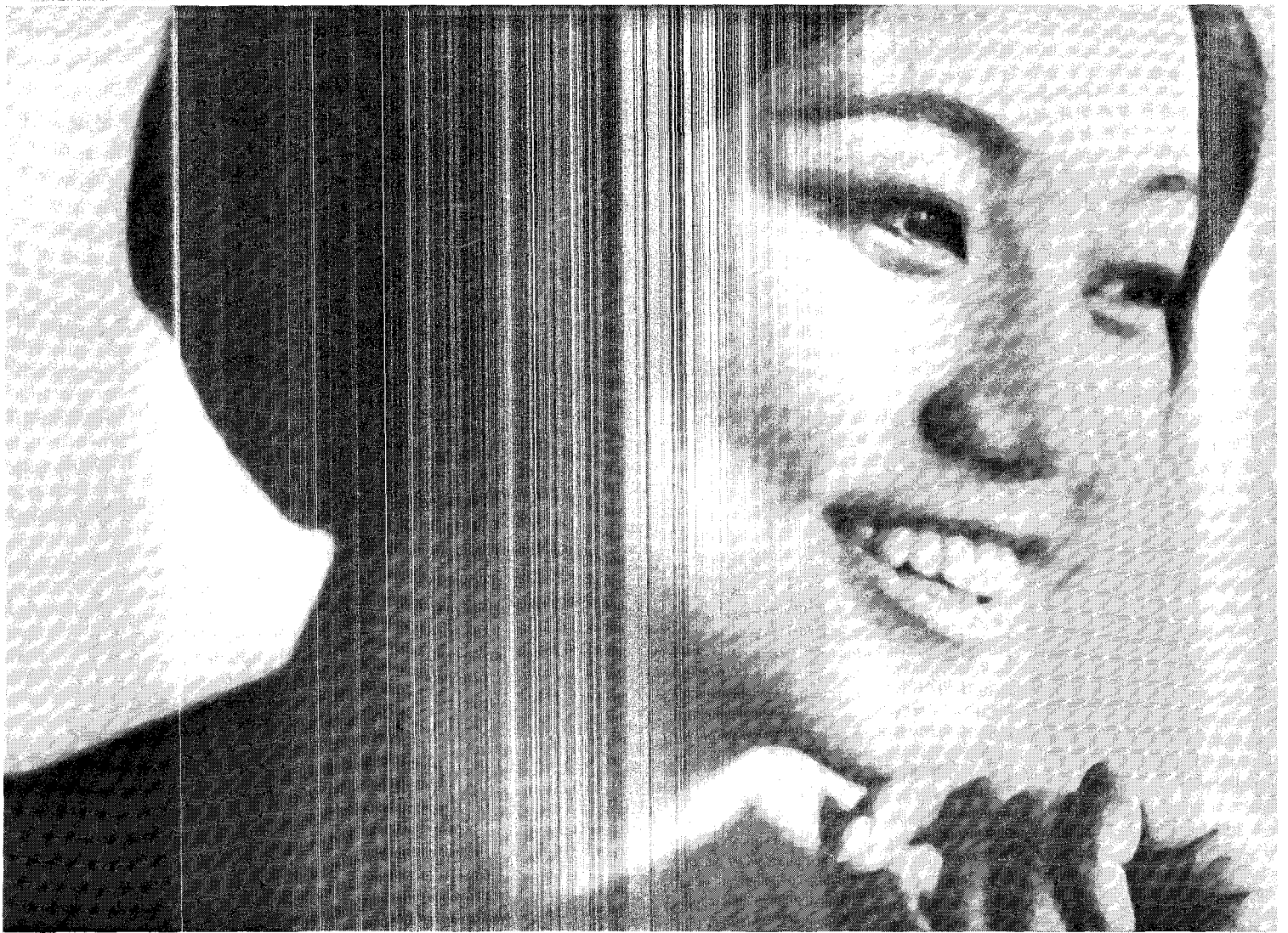
**T**HIS air the mountains watch, in Oregon, holds every flower or tree embraced. You meet the air at the door and stop: it has brought waterfalls in its breath. Kids call, dogs bark, a chain saw climbs the lattice work behind the trees.

We know each day by the space it has and then what fills it. There is a reward here—maybe the mountains, maybe only the sense that after what is must come something else, always. It's a light thing, a bounce, to live here.

At Salem we saw Governor Hatfield wave his hand: his arm was the taffy Oregon pulled, and his voice was drawn by invisible birds as far as geese bob in the reeds near Klamath Falls.

The Oregon day crowds in at the door, its cool air and the smell of rain brought all over as we tremble to smell the fog in its paw, our breath moving to get loose in the woods or over the restless water.

And in the mountains that water is clear, only a reminder of the air it looks at; the trout hang there on their little fin wings, hearing the Governor speak into the microphone spots on their applauding gills.



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## Giraudoux's Womanly Woman

HAVING delighted us with its superb repertory presentations of *Man and Superman* and *War and Peace*, the Association of Producing Artists has put us further in its debt by tackling with some success one of the most difficult plays in modern drama. Written in 1931 by the late Jean Giraudoux, *Judith* reforges the devout biblical widow into a hot-blooded virgin who is innocent yet sophisticated, capricious yet profound. And the play itself, as freely translated by John K. Savacool, contains a disparateness of tone that is not in the American tradition.

It begins amid the gloomily ornate surroundings of a Jewish upper-class home of the second century B.C., where we meet the beautiful and somewhat narcissistic young Judith. Since she is a symbol of purity, she is much less terrified of being offered to the Assyrian captain, Holofernes, than are the people she will be saving by this divinely foretold act of sacrifice. She is witty and composed, and her only modest annoy-

ance is that God has not been in touch with her to endorse the project.

Then a beautiful prostitute, Susanna, volunteers to substitute for her and reveals her Lesbian attraction to Judith as the pure woman she would like to have been. With much witty dialogue about virginity (and about the amusing irony that Judith's purity and inaccessibility help Susanna get customers), Judith lets herself be carried away by the opportunity to fulfil herself as woman and as hero at the same time. She insists upon going herself to Holofernes.

Here the caustically comic undertone increases as Judith is introduced to a homosexual (and therefore immune) officer posing as Holofernes. But before he can complete his humiliation of her, the real Holofernes appears, and it is now clear that what is about to happen is not rape but a pleasurable experience between a sensuous girl and a handsome and tender lover. Their erotic prelude is tinged with comedy as Holofernes entices Judith with the notion that they

are in a godless tent. "Think of breakfast in bed without eternal damnation," he explains, "the gift of utter simplicity without God inside it like a worm." Thus Giraudoux explores the paradoxical Judith, a girl whose body wants to be God. If her beauty is a reflection of God's grandeur, then Judith is also the slave of that grandeur. But if there is a temporary human grandeur to be found in a lover's bed, the problem becomes how to unite the two grandeurs. Judith solves it all intuitively by yielding first to the impulse to make love, afterward to the impulse to kill her sleeping lover, as "the tenderest and most lasting embrace of all."


In the third act Giraudoux investigates the origin of the latter impulse. Judith believes she killed Holofernes because she loved him. Her people need to believe that she killed him out of hatred and to save them. And an angel, disguised as a drunken guard, explains to her that she killed Holofernes because God had instructed him and some other invisible angels to arrange it. Judith reluctantly believes the angel, submits to the will of the people to subscribe to their myth, and becomes Saint Judith in a black cloak. However, because of the ambiguity that a black cloak is suitable for both the bride of God and the widow of Holofernes, the play suggests that Judith may be one thing to the world and another to herself.

While the play calls itself a tragedy, it is, like many of Giraudoux's works, "something halfway between crucifixion and laughter." Certainly director Ellis Rabb's production has exercised great attention to detail in an effort to catch the subtlety of such a mixture. As Judith, Rosemary Harris is the essence of womanliness, alternately distraught and delectable. If she seems more ripe than tragic, she compensates for it by the credibility she brings to her feminine responses. Paul Sparer happily portrays the pleasure-loving Holofernes without underlining a diabolic intent. Nancy Marchand's prostitute seems the most rigidly moral character in the play. And Clayton Corzatte's performance as the angel comes closest of all to catching the Gallic tone of the play.

One finds oneself wondering if this obviously hard-working care for each of the play's moments, which is the hallmark of all of the APA productions, doesn't tend to produce admirable scenes at the cost of not bringing themselves and us to an all-out commitment to the play. Yet one feels inclined to overlook this fault. For the APA has again demonstrated the extraordinary skill and range that makes it capable of excellent productions of anything it attempts. *Judith* is a rare and substantial contribution to the New York theater season.

—HENRY HEWES.

SR/April 10, 1965



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