

with the tender. "Three Bills" is a sharp, disturbing, fully realized moment of horror. "Field and Forest" is refreshingly uncut. If Jarrell can only arrest his drift towards the show-business assumption that the audience really isn't very bright, he may recover his authentic themes and voice. For what is lacking in this latest book of his is exactly a strong sense of a sufficiently worthy audience, and for that we are all perhaps at fault.

Paul Engle, author of *A Woman Unashamed and Other Poems* (Random House, \$4), is apparently too nice a man to write very good poems. His reactions to experience are always decent and occasionally even complicated; but, alas, however humane his general stance, the poems he constructs are sentimental, with little distinction of language or image and without sufficient emotional dynamics to provide many delights of structure. Only rarely, as in "Gulls at the Metropolitan Museum of Art," are we given presentation rather than comment. Here the painted gulls inside address the real ones outside:

We do not lose one feather
To any wicked weather,

And later another gull brags memorably about his life in art:

I am no lifeless thing,
But a created wing.
The artist in his rage
Wept paint upon this page.

But most of Engle's poems constitute a sort of diluted liking for whatever they look upon—a Japanese woman in love, Edmund Blunden, children, animals, the Taj Mahal—and by the end of the book we lust for some lifelike abrasion, some irony, a few burps and giggles from the second-violin section.

The poems in Jean Barker's laudable first volume, *Dream Barker and Other Poems* (Yale University Press, \$3), are intensely personal. By the time we finish the mere thirty poems we know more than is good for us about a woman's first love-making, the deaths of her relatives and friends, her marriage, her childbearings, her daughter's christening, her dream-work. But the poet has happily taken over from the woman, and the poet's achievement has been to figure a world of precise awareness that is—or should be—everyone's. In the same way the poet transforms what might remain as mere bitterness into a valuable wryness. Her precision and delicacy (as in "First Love") are remarkable; her irony (as in "For Teed") is terrifying and persuasive. Her style is unostentatiously her own:

I cannot find the words to leave
you with.
This way love's conversation, the body
and mind of it, goes

On after love: we shall come to call
this love,
And this roar in our ears which before
very long
We become, we shall call our song.

But there is one recent poet who ventures things that are not in any way diminished: Irving Feldman, whose second book, *The Pripet Marshes and Other Poems* (Viking, \$3.50), attains a valuable seriousness. Feldman writes as a survivor, with all the guilt, relief, and sharpened perception of one born too late to have been starved in the Warsaw ghetto or consumed in the German furnaces.

The triumph of this book is "The Pripet Marshes," a poem in sophisticated Whitmanian idiom that reads as if Feldman were actually mindful of Whitman's own words: "Poets to come . . . you must justify me." Here the poet places his young Jewish friends momentarily in a doomed Russian town, only to snatch

them to salvation just as the German motorcyclists arrive. The effect is dramatic, intelligent, and tender, the poem is impossible ever to forget. Other admirable enterprises are the poems on Picasso's paintings, and "In Time of Troubles," "Manhattan," and "To the Six Million," an elegy suggestive of Eliotic ritual:

Survivor, who are you?
Ask the voices that disappeared,
The faces broken and expunged.
I am the one who was not there.
Of such accidents I have made
my death.

Writing as a human being with human values, Feldman restores substance to the materials of lyric, and it is his achievement to do so without rushing into portentousness or politics. This book is an exciting gesture of promise, both for Feldman's future and for the future of American poetry.

Rhyme and Revelation

***The Modern Hebrew Poem Itself*, edited by Stanley Burnshaw, T. Carmi, and Ezra Spicehandler (Holt, Rinehart & Winston. 220 pp. \$5.75), introduces an area of poetry previously unknown to most English readers. Louis Untermeyer is a noted poet and anthologist.**

By LOUIS UNTERMAYER

FIVE years ago Stanley Burnshaw published *The Poem Itself*, a new approach to the problems of translation as well as a fresh appraisal of European poetry of the last century put into English. It did not follow the methods of most translators; it did not offer adaptations of the originals in another language with the usual compromise between music and meaning.

Realizing that an English translation of, say, Baudelaire or Apollinaire is something different from the tone and texture of the French poets, and remembering Frost's quip that poetry is that which gets lost in translation, Burnshaw enlisted three associates, Dudley Fitts, John Frederick Nims, and Henri Peyre. Their task was not to paraphrase or approximate, but, avoiding the cramping requirements of rhyme and rhythm, to offer translations that were not only literal but also meaningful and, first of all, accurate. The French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian poems, printed in their own languages, were

followed by illuminating line-by-line (and sometimes word-by-word) analyses.

In *The Modern Hebrew Poem Itself* Burnshaw has gone further. With the aid of two Hebrew scholars, T. Carmi and Ezra Spicehandler, he has arranged the first anthology of modern Hebrew poetry to appear in English. Moreover, it is presented so that the reader can grasp not only the sense but the sound. Each poem is printed in the original Hebrew accompanied by a phonetic English transcription. Thus the reader can savor the richness of the music made by the contrasting vowels and consonants. To make it easier, there is an appended guide to pronunciation, an outline history of modern Hebrew poetry, and a note on Hebrew prosody.

However, the chief importance of the work is its presentation of an area practically unknown to the English reader; for, with the exception of Bialik, none of the twenty-four poets included has had an appreciable (or appreciative) audience outside of Israel. It is an exciting discovery. One not only hears the accents of a strangely beautiful tongue but feels the impact of a new literature, a poetry that combines an ancient tradition with the most experimental techniques. The book discloses a rebirth that is a revelation.

This almost miraculous achievement is accomplished again and again by the individual poets. Amir Gilboa, one of the most powerful of the moderns, gives Biblical themes a dramatically startling
(Continued on page 45)



—Sigurdur Thorarinnsson.

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SCIENCE & HUMANITY



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Letters to the Science Editor

RESEARCH IN AMERICA

SURTSEY—CHILD OF AN EXPANDING EARTH?

MISS MARIE THARP, a Michigan land surveyor's daughter, was charting the floor of the North Atlantic Ocean. Up and down her pencil went as her drawing hand moved across the charting paper, following the rise and fall of soundings made from ship-board. Patient stroke by slow and patient stroke, she traced a profile from Martha's Vineyard to Gibraltar. When that was done, she traced another along a different route between the same two points of land, followed by still another along a third route from Cape Henry to Rio de Oro.

The pencil moved on. Time passed. At last, on the table before Marie, six profiles lay complete. She could draw no more. All the available sounding data was exhausted.

There had been more data, much more, and much more exact. The Germans had assembled it before World War II. But it had been destroyed in the wartime bombing of Berlin. Those six profiles of Marie's amounted to an encyclopedia of the best that remained in all the libraries of earth.

Marie looked down at her work and wondered what it meant. Not much was known about the ocean floor in that year 1952 that had not been known for a quarter-century and vaguely suspected for half a century before then. The British research ship *Challenger* during its famous cruise around the world in 1873 had dropped a 200-pound weight on a hempen line every 100 miles across the North Atlantic and so discovered that the middle of the ocean was only half as deep as two broad troughs that lay about a third of the way across from either shore. Because of the wide separation of the soundings, the midway elevation could be identified only as a "swell" until the German ship *Meteor* pioneered echo-sounding on a grand scale in 1925-6-7. The echoes destroyed

all possibility that the "swell" might be a flat plateau; it was plainly a rugged mountain range.

Marie looked down at the profile of those mountains and saw what looked to her like a valley which, if it really existed, would dwarf the Grand Canyon of the Colorado. If her supposition was right, this valley ran for hundreds of miles, plunged from a mile to a mile-and-a-half below the tops of the scarps on either side of it, was eight miles wide at its narrowest defile and thirty miles across its widest sweep.

True, she could see the valley clearly only on the first three of her profiles (see page 34). And they were many miles apart. But on all of them the valley occupied roughly the same relative place—the very crest of the mountain chain.

Well, Marie thought, it was at least worth mentioning to her superior on the ocean-mapping project, Bruce Heezen, a young oceanographer who was, like Marie, a midwesterner. He came from Iowa.

Heezen shrugged when she pointed it out. Yes, it might be a valley. But then, again, it might not. With the few bits of data available, nothing could be said with certainty.

Marie filed the six profiles in the slowly accumulating library of original documents of Columbia University's new Lamont Geophysical Observatory, perched on the Palisades of the Hudson River. The observatory had come into being suddenly three years earlier, when Mrs. Thomas Lamont's desire to dispose of an old property on the Palisades coincided with a tempting faculty offer from Massachusetts Institute of Technology to Columbia geophysicist Maurice Ewing. To keep the imaginative Ewing in its own campus family, Columbia had moved his geophysical laboratory out of two basement rooms just off crowded Manhattan's Broadway into the spacious

old Lamont mansion on the cliffs along the Hudson. And Ewing at the start had staked out the sea bottom as one of the major research provinces he intended to explore from his high and airy lookout.

Precisely how long the profiles so patiently drawn by Marie rested in the files undisturbed, no one can now recall. But from the dates of later documents it is evident that less than a year went by before the Bell Telephone Laboratories sought young Heezen's help in discovering causes of breaks in trans-Atlantic phone cables. Earthquakes were obvious suspects, and Heezen asked Marie to chart the cable partings in relation to known quake epicenters.

Although there proved to be no significance in that relationship, Marie was surprised and amused by another coincidence. The earthquake loci were clustered in that valley she thought she saw on the top of the sea-bottom mountains.

When she drew Heezen's attention to this unexpected conjunction, some of her old excitement finally transferred itself to him. Were there signs of a mountain ridge in the South Atlantic, too? Did a valley bisect the ridge there, too? Were the earthquake epicenters clustered in that valley, too?

The quake data was readily available. Existence of some kind of barrier in mid-ocean could be assumed because the deepest water in the South Atlantic was known to be somewhat cooler in the west than in the east. Soundings that could confirm the presence of a mountain chain were rare, however, and the profiles Marie was able to draw from them were scanty. Yet they were enough to give a clear affirmative answer to Heezen's questions. He took the results to Ewing, whose mind always worked in global perspective. Ewing knew that the earthquake belt swung south of Africa from the Atlantic into the Indian Ocean. And there was, on the floor of