

rangues of Castro, which are about as uplifting as the disquisitions of Origen.

The hard historical truth is that the pursuit of power—with all that it means in terms of wheeling and dealing—has triumphed over religious inspiration, revolutionary fervor, or the vision of statesmen. In politics statesmen are as rare as politicians are common. And, when the most powerful position in the free world might come to them through the harsh realities of national politics, who will now bother to speak to and for generations not yet born? The Johnsons and the Walpoles win. After Walpole's defeat it was not Pitt who secured the prizes, but Walpole's disciples, trained in his techniques and nurtured in his arts of manipulation. All they wanted was Walpole's clothes. They kept the war, and made it global.

THESE are sad thoughts under sad, sad clouds in a sadder landscape: but then 1967 is a sad prospect. Increasing war, elusive victory, race riot and turmoil, an adolescent generation that is increasingly bewildered by a vision of life that contains satisfaction without hope, riches without magnanimity, and achievement without purpose. What a change in a few brief years.

A few brief years, therein lies our sole hope: the hope that a statesman will emerge who will raise the dialogue of politics, who will not be afraid to use the language either of scorn or magnanimity. Listen to the words of that William Pitt to the House of Lords when he pleaded in 1775 for peace with the American colonists, which, of course, their lordships rejected:

... Yet, when I consider the whole case as it lies before me, I am not much astonished, I am not surprised, that men who hate liberty should detest those who prize it; or that those who want virtue themselves should endeavor to persecute those who possess it. ... The whole of your political conduct has been one continued series of weakness, temerity, despotism, ignorance, futility, negligence, and the most notorious servility, incapacity, and corruption. On reconsideration I must allow you one merit, a strict attention to your own interest, in that view you appear sound statesmen and politicians. You well know, if the present measure should prevail, that you must instantly relinquish your places. Such then being your precarious situations, who should wonder that you can put a negative on any measure which must annihilate your power, deprive you of your emoluments, and at once reduce you to that state of insignificance for which God and nature designed you.

Would that words such as these were heard again. Would they not waken the Senate and reverberate across the nation? Words, words, we heed words as much as actions. —J. H. PLUMB.

ONE THING AND ANOTHER

When Poets Looped the Loop

IT WAS a great time out there, those years when the literary life flourished so heartily, sometimes bumpily, always excitingly, from the century's turn to the fading out of the 1920s. The Chicago Renaissance, proud Midwesterners called it with a slap-happy inexactness, because how could there be a rebirth of something that until then had not existed in and around the prairie country's metropolis: a whole community of people talking about literature and frequently creating it, poets singing, storytellers telling stories in new forms, critics serving eagerly as midwives to fresh talent: an army with banners, which seemed quite suddenly to spring from all around those wide horizons.

Well, yes, there had been some notable individual literary talents in the Midwest before this ferment got under way: E. W. Howe (*The Story of a Country Town*), H. B. Fuller (*The Cliff-Dwellers*), Hamlin Garland (*Main-Travelled Roads*). They were worthy pioneers but lonely ones, who could not have foreseen the explosion that was imminent. An explosion and not, I repeat, a renaissance. But we might as well stop quibbling about that, and at the same time excuse the late Dale Kramer for going along with a gaudy tag and making it the title of his last book, *Chicago Renaissance: The Literary Life in the Midwest 1900-1930* (Appleton-Century, \$7.95).

So, for the most part, were the stars of Mr. Kramer's pageant. And what a host of memories and pleasures, successes and failure their names evoke—Floyd Dell, Theodore Dreiser, Edgar Lee Masters, Vachel Lindsay, Francis Hackett, Harriet Monroe, Ben Hecht, Arthur Davison Ficke, and, bringing up the end of the procession in a sort of postscript, such latter-day Chicagoans as James T. Farrell and Nelson Algren, who are important here chiefly as inheritors of those who went before. (That is to say, Farrell could not have become the writer he is without the Dreiser influence.) There is danger, of course, in growing romantic about that Chicago dawn when a covey of rebels were raucously cutting loose from the genteel tradition. There is even more danger, I think, in underestimating it or in neglecting, in the American way, what is still so valuable, enjoyable, and instructive in our past.

No doubt there was a naïveté about those somewhat self-consciously defiant men and women, with their endless dis-

cussion of art for art's sake *vs.* realism, their political manifestoes, their tortured adjustments to "pagan love" ("free love" seemed a shade too crude), and their ferocious running fight with the Philistines, of whom pork-rich Chicago had more than its share. What they unquestionably had was a vitality, an essential concern with literature as life, that does not seem to be exactly prevalent today. It ranged from Dreiserian despair to the childlike optimism of the poet Lindsay, who went forth among the farmers to preach "neighborhood democracy and beauty," reciting his ballads as he went in return for lodging and food. How innocent, you seem to hear a Greenwich Village beatnik asking, can a guy get? Moreover, they fell in and out of love, made off with one another's wives and husbands, by turns quarreled and generously defended one another—and, unlike the modern Bohemians, went on working.

Mr. Kramer was neither a literary critic nor a literary historian of the caliber of Van Wyck Brooks, but he was a diligent chronicler and restorer. And so those who know the name of Francis Hackett only as the author of *Henry the Eighth* and *Francis the First* will find him here as the young Irishman who in 1912, not long out of his teens, made the *Chicago Evening Post's* literary pages dance with his wit, his hot-tempered insistence on the right of literature

FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT No. 1225

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 1225 will be found in the next issue.

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Answer to Literary Crypt No. 1224

Some people do not become thinkers simply because their memories are too good.

—NIETZSCHE.

to be born and appreciated. Here are the gallant Miss Monroe, who founded the invaluable and still existing *Poetry* magazine, and another dauntless lady editor, Margaret Anderson, whose *Little Review* was to introduce Joyce's *Ulysses* to America. Sadness goes hand in hand with glory, as when Masters's *Spoon River Anthology*, his still-haunting masterpiece, came too late in his passion-ridden life to allow time for further growth. We smile at Sherwood Anderson's theatricality, and wince at his betrayal by a young writer whom he had befriended, Ernest Hemingway. The troubadour who went out to convert the farmers takes his own life.

Was there something about Chicago, as it then was, that gave them their special exuberance, even those who wound up in dark places? One must believe so. For that was the Chicago of Sandburg's poem, the muscular Tool-maker and Stacker of Wheat. It was still the gateway to the frontier, and rang with the frontier's echoes. It roared with vulgarity and menace. It *lived*. The aspiring writers who came to it, usually from small towns, also had lived. Some of them had ridden the rails, worked with their hands, acquired a rough-and-ready socialism in hobo jungles. By the time they reached Chicago they had something to sing, say, or shout about, and that is what chiefly distinguishes them from their mild-voiced, more "refined" counterparts in our time. It is not to denigrate serious realists of our day to venture the notion that they suffer by comparison with Dreiser because they do not begin to know life as he knew it. Not always for reasons of their own making, they are withdrawn and specialized, delicately self-searching and tiresomely self-pitying. Our major poets now are surely more subtle than Lindsay, but are they more poetic than the Lindsay of "General William Booth Enters Heaven" whose bardic art restored poetry in his time to the people? "Booth beat boldly on his big bass drum. . . ." The music still resounds.

It was the literary capital of America. H. L. Mencken said so, in 1920. But then, in a matter of a few years, it was not. New York glitter and the magnet of money drew most of them away, and most of them never wrote so well again. There were exceptions — Ring Lardner (whom Mr. Kramer unaccountably leaves unmentioned), the Dreiser of *An American Tragedy*, Hackett as a biographer and critic. Others simply became slick, like Ben Hecht, who turned into a roman candle heading off in all directions. Chicago had shaped them and then lost them, and itself was never again to be quite the same place without them. The army with banners had gone, but it made a mighty show before time caught up with it. —JOHN K. HUTCHENS.

Squalls in the Windy City

***Division Street: America*, by Studs Terkel (Pantheon, 381 pp. \$5.95), composed of tape-recorded talks with seventy Chicagoans, conveys the loneliness, aimlessness, and malaise that haunt contemporary Americans. Herbert Mitgang, author and critic, is currently editing Carl Sandburg's letters.**

By HERBERT MITGANG

NOBODY in *Division Street: America* would make the invitation list for a Truman Capote masked ball. They are not Beautiful People or People Who Can Do You Some Good. Studs Terkel, a Chicago radio interviewer [see SR, TV AND RADIO, Dec. 24], created his book from tape-recorded talks with seventy people—landladies, cops, Golden Glovers, senior citizens, homeowners and homemakers, schoolteachers, salesmen, Negroes and other minorities, socialites, and members of the John Birch Society. Out of all this comes an interior sociological study, not necessarily valid and universal for the types covered but effective in conveying the mumbled malaise that haunts many Americans at the two-thirds-of-a-century mark.

All the interviews, running from one to seven pages each, are with Chicagoans, including those who arrived from other parts of the country because this city was somehow their place of dreams. So these are, to begin with, regional people living in a Nelson Algren Gehenna: "It's every man for himself in this

hired air. Yet once you've become part of this particular patch, you'll never love another. Like loving a woman with a broken nose, you may find lovelier loves. But never a lovely so real."

Selection being the essential element of taped talks, the author's personal vision of his city comes across clearly. Despite the vitality that runs through the book the loudest sounds are of loneliness, aimlessness, unhappiness. Listen to the voices of the pseudonymous people:

Lois Arthur, early sixties, ex-domestic: "I'm praying and hoping for just one thing, that the white man does not get to the moon, if there's anybody up there. They don't have to be colored, black, just different. I certainly hope that the white man don't get up there with his prejudices and spoil the moon. . . I like the Bomb, because it's not prejudiced."

Jim Campaigne, twenty-five, neighborhood newspaper editor: "There is a frustration that is horrifying. In my community as well as anywhere else. You can't pin it down to one thing. Some people worry about the big problems. You listen to the chatter of people in supermarkets, on trains, everywhere. . . I'm not gonna lose any sleep over the Bomb. It bothers me the same way the possibility of getting killed in an auto bothers me."

Dennis Hart, twenty-six, cab-driver: "I am now a member of the John Birch Society. It is a great society, one I believe in and one I would fight for. . . Martin Luther King scares me because he's done destructive things in peaceful ways. . . To me the ultimate leader would be General MacArthur."

Elizabeth Chapin, seventy-five, widow: "I can't get this [newspaper photograph of a terrified Vietnamese woman and her child] out of my mind. That woman has the same right to live and the same right for her—shall we say freedom?—or at least her chances to live and not be cowed down, protecting her naked child, while soldiers go by. That picture has moved me a great deal. . . Don't you think at this time in our life, in our culture, we should be able to do something beside shoot each other?"

Jan Powers, twenty-four, magazine staff member: "I don't notice the world. I'm very bored. . . Vietnam? Isn't that a shame? (Laughs softly.) I saw a film on Vietnam, it showed the actual fighting. It looked ridiculous, just a bunch of kids. It was actually embarrassing to watch

