

## *Recent American Poetry*

Yes, I agree that the author himself is very fond of it. But I prefer his apter question, "Do you think rubbish can furnish anything of poetic interest?" Meanwhile, electronic men may wish to ponder the fact that *Urban Poetry* is dedicated to Marshall McLuhan's university.

Oh those eighty greatest living poets. Berryman may ask of himself, "Why then did he make, at such cost, *crazy sounds*?" but his sounds are limpid sanity compared to those emitted from unsmiling non-fantastists. The ushers of Eli Siegel's poetry, for instance. Even if he were a great deal less easily pleased with his own work, he would still be eviscerated by his friends: "There is a Note for every poem. Probably for the first time in history, a poet has said something, in prose, about the meaning of all his poems." But then as Chaim Koppelman, head of the School of Visual Arts Printmaking Department, says, "Eli Siegel is the most important philosopher of the 20th century—perhaps of all time." Berryman, more modestly preposterous, contented himself with calling up Winston Churchill and confronted him with self-comparisons:

Churchill was ever-active & crammed with glee,  
Henry was morbid, inactive, & a child to Angst,  
there the difference ends . . .

No doubt Berryman—despite his Vietnam poem—has done himself no good politically by speaking affectionately of Churchill. America's literary culture is now apparently such that a malignant clown like "Saint Geraud" can claim to be anti-fascist, can win the plaudits of wistful guilties like James Wright, W. S. Merwin, John Logan and Kenneth Rexroth, and can frame his indictment like this:

I don't know but I can't see much difference between John Ashbery  
or Donald Hall or Barbara Guest or David Wagoner or William  
Meredith or Anne Sexton or Sandra Hochman or Thomas Clark  
or Kenneth Koch or others writing  
a poem . . . and a U.S. aviator dropping a bomb on Vietnamese  
women and children: both acts in these hands are in defense of  
oppression and capitalism

## *The Massachusetts Review*

The thoughtful pausing dots are the Saint's. As a take-off of protesting witlessness, it would be quite good except for being in bad taste. Straight, it is badly bent.

Fortunately not everything on the fringes is quite so glowering. Of the unsponsored typewritten poets, it is worth picking out Hale Chatfield. His anti-war poems are less hate-ridden than the boosted pacifists can usually manage. "Sharking" is neither loud nor dainty:

Hanging around off Nicaragua  
for Military Reasons which were beyond  
them, the men invaded  
the mouthwash-blue sea  
with clotheslines half-a-football-field  
long and harsh hooks,  
giant-size, made of welding rods  
sharpened and swaddled in stale  
liver and left-over  
steak . . .

A generous trepidation which in "Sharking" (it ends with "ravenous scions") is elicited from patience of observation is elsewhere occasioned by Chatfield's surrealism. These gleefully self-melodramatizing I's—like Berryman's—seem to me a great deal less narcissistic and more penetrating than the zombie eye/I's who stare out (or is it in? regard the self-regard) from James Wright's or Galway Kinnell's melancholic poems. Chatfield is limber:

thus I burst into alert melancholy  
singing hymns and listening to myself  
where the mirror is: "Tomorrow,"  
I think, "tomorrow," and the elite  
faucet plinks me  
into contorted dreams.

"Alert" evolves into "elite" in a way which itself plinks but is alert. Early E. E. Cummings plays through much else in *Teeth*—see for instance "Opus 5/24/65." In fact Cummings' in-