

poems as he can—but he is not obligated to publish all that he writes. So many poems in this book are simply bad, one is compelled to suppose that Cummings is incapable of self-criticism. Even his most fervent admirers admit there are any number of bad poems and bad lines. But, since no two will ever agree on which are bad, the reader of Cummings must make his own anthology.

What is the lyric, anyway? For Cummings it is the shocked, bug-eyed wonder of the first man on the first day, the four-dimensional experience, the living Now, the *voilà*. His lyricism is an attempt to plunge through mere unreal existence into the real world of feeling. This reality defies Time, "the colossal hoax of clocks and calendars"; it is violently anti-intellectual: the poet "knows nothing and feels everything"; and it does not convince us, it IS. Cummings's lyric world is far from our commonest existence, but it is real nonetheless, with an aliveness that cannot be rubbed off. Like a child, he responds singularly to all "shining things": his poetry is evergreen, spangled with images which forever delight us. It is an impertinence to ask such a poet to "grow up."

BUT, if Cummings has remained the eternal child in his reactions to Nature, he remains the eternal youth in his love lyrics. This is a courtly love, full of *thee's* and *thou's* and ballads to "my lady," and elaborate conceits which would be cloying were it not for the freshness of Cummings's rhetoric. These tender songs, delicate in grace, ethereal in mood, are founded on emotion, the realness of the feeling of this man for this woman. For all their delicacy they are resilient and durable; he is a love-lyricist of timeless appeal.

But even more than love or nature Cummings has celebrated the individual. This distilled essence of New England independence here becomes Cummings the Preacher. He is not a thinker; he feels with all the poet's sensibilities things we ourselves may be only vaguely aware of: the oppressive weight of a restrictive society, the destruction of our personalities and our selves, our slow descent into the morass of anonymity. Cummings has been criticized for his raucous and energetic insistence on his own personality. But is not this assertion of self a sensitive and profound reaction to the most pressing problem of the day: that is, the conflict between the individual self and the corporate collectivity? His burlesque nose-thumb of our faceless monotony would be merely funny were it not so tragically significant.



"... life's warmth perennial . . . in every leafless tree!"
—E. W. Bartlett

Like Thoreau, Cummings is an idealist. Not content to hoe his bean patch in a poetic Walden, he challenges in a lyric version of civil disobedience the entire framework of our *soi-disant* civilization till the whole structure and its inhabitants threaten to fall down about his head.

Cummings has satirized this extinction of personality in some of the most virulent philippics to grace literature since mad Dean Swift. This rejection of all that modern civilization holds dear makes him a negative and hateful poet for many, who do not recognize that his rejection implies a positive value which is, put simply, an Emersonian celebration of the worth of the individual man. One may wonder whether Cummings's lack of popularity in the wider sense may not be due to the decline in public favor of the ideas of which Emerson and Thoreau were the nineteenth-century exponents.

Cummings is likely to be remembered not as one of the iconoclastic experimenters of the between-the-wars period, but as a literary sport, a mutation cropping up after most traces of the once-luxuriant lyric flower had been ruthlessly pruned back. He is, after all, timeless, praising the antique virtues in his modern-antique songs. The effect is comically incongruous: a man terribly behind the times—who still believes in love—and joy!—and freedom! Why, whatever is the world coming to? Who would read such a poet? Answer: lovers of the genuine and the genuinely good.

Taken as a tonic, sipped as a delight, these poems will last and last.

Two Worlds

"Poems: 1939-1952," by Edward Shanks (St. Martin's Press, 107 pp. \$2.50) and **"Octavian Shooting Targets,"** by Arthur Gregor (Dodd, Mead, 74 pp. \$3), offer sharp contrasts in style and content, the first a volume of "romantic, traditional" verse, the latter of "intellectual" and "experimental." Here they are reviewed by Louis Untermeyer, one of America's well-known poets and anthologists.

By Louis Untermeyer

THE SEASON'S greatest contrast in poetry is afforded by two volumes: Edward Shanks's "Poems: 1939-1952" and Arthur Gregor's "Octavian Shooting Targets." The first is everything we think of when we say "romantic" and "traditional"; the second is everything that is considered "intellectual" and "experimental." Perhaps the contrast may be better illustrated by exact quotations rather than by inexact labels, and the opening pages make the difference explicit. Here are the first half-dozen lines from Shanks's first poem, "Images from the Progress of the Seasons":

The year has turned while I have lain abed;
The old snows are melted and the branches free;
Where lately from my pillow I could see
Only the window's white and empty sky,

Now risen, I survey with lightless
eye
The late uncovered fields, bare,
brown and dead.

And here are the first seven lines
of Gregor's first poem, "Ritual":

To Tiberius the aura of the hot
basin,
of towels and oils was like the
whiteness
of flamingoes, and it was here he
brought a book of poems and a
small
revolver, holding Hindu rivers
in his
eyes and virgin bodies yielding to
the Holy Cleansing. . . .

The two excerpts are from two
widely separated worlds. Shanks's
verses consist of an old and discarded
poetic diction, the familiar pictures,
the expected rhymes, the fading
echoes of half-elegant, half-elegiac
bucolics. Mr. Gregor's lines are equal-
ly influenced, although the indebted-
ness is more contemporary. The dis-
cordant juxtapositions, the purposely
jarring symbols of, "poems and a
small revolver," the rapidly shifting
allusions, and the overtone of allegory
are obviously in the current fashion.
The mask of Pound peers out of the
image-crowded, time-confused pages;
the accent of Eliot—the Eliot of "The
Journey of the Magi"—is heard,
somewhat strained, in "Lines of the
Chengtu Boatmen" and "Almost the
Entire Journey."

Nevertheless, Gregor arrests atten-
tion with an unquestionable gift for
drama and flashes of energetic in-
ventiveness. These qualities are most
apparent in "Blackout," "The Daugh-
ters of Jerusalem," "Poem 11," "Kol
Nidre," and "Kenya Drums." A reader
may be puzzled and perhaps irritated
at the first reading of these poems,
but he will not be bored by them.

The same reader may begin by rel-
ishing Shanks's properly phrased and
prettily turned lyrics but, in the end,
boredom will overcome him. After a
dozen poems featuring all the prop-
erties of the Georgian stock-room—
the nightingale nesting in the oak; the
fuchsia "loveliest when her flowers
are fallen"; the ripe fruit smiling on
the laden tree; the bracken golden
and dry; "life's warmth perennial . . .
in every leafless tree"—there are
facile-fluent apostrophes to those who
died in World War II, conventional
poems about Dunkirk and other bat-
tles, followed by other poems writ-
ten on public occasions and more or
less private ones, such as a "Com-
plaint of the Dachshund Elizabeth"
and "Lullaby for a Dog Who Had to
Be Put to Sleep." But by this time the
reader will have disappeared unless
he, too, has been lulled to sleep.



TO THE MOST NOBLE
AND
INCOMPARABLE PAIRE
OF BRETHREN,

WILLIAM
Earle of Pembroke, &c. Lord Chamberlaine to the
Kings most Excellent Majesties.

AND
PHILIP
Earle of Montgomery, &c. Gentleman of his Majesties
Bed-Chamber. Both Knights of the most Noble Order
of the Garter, and our singular good
LORDS.

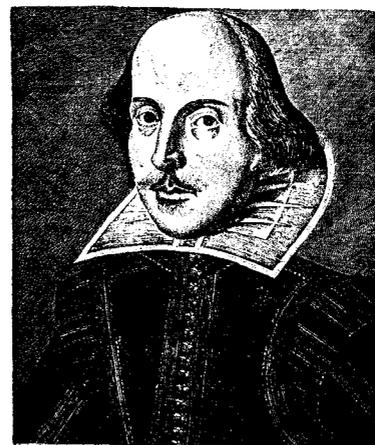
Right Honourable,

VHilst we studie to be thankful for our particular, for
the many favours we have received from your L.L.
we are faine, upon the ill fortune, to mingle
two the most diverse things that can bee, feare,
and rashnesse; rashnesse in the enterprize, and
feare of the successe. For, when we waled the place your H.H.
justaine, we cannot but know their dignity greater, then to defend to
the reading of these trifles; and, while we name them trifles, we have
deprived our selves of the defence of our Dedication. But since your
L.L. have bene pleas'd to thinke these trifles some-thing, here-to-
fore, and have profequed both them, and their A without living,
with so much favour: we hope, that they out-living him, and be not
having the fate, common with some, to be executor to his owne wri-
ting; you will give the like indulgence toward them. . . you have done
1623

Mr. WILLIAM
SHAKESPEARES

COMEDIES,
HISTORIES, &
TRAGEDIES.

Published according to the True Originall Copies.



LONDON

Printed by Isaac Iaggard, and Ed. Blount. 1623

The opening pages—"the fruition of a dream of many years."

THE FIRST FOLIO FOR EVERYMAN: A handsome, almost life-size photo-
graphic facsimile of the First Folio edition of Shakespeare's plays,
"Mr. William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies," has
lately been published by Yale University Press. A scholarly project
of Yale professors Helge Kökeritz and Charles Tyler Prouty, the
facsimile edition has pleased its publishers by showing a most
unscholarly briskness in selling out its first two printings, moving
well even in non-academic bookstores at \$12.50 a copy. Not quite a
rare book and not quite a fountainhead of the pure Shakespeare, the
First Folio appears once more to have excited the curiosity of the
general reader just as it did when Shakespeare's colleagues Ben
Jonson, John Heminge, and Henry Condell gave it to the world
in 1623.

Other editions of single Shakespeare plays had appeared during
the twenty-five years before that date, but they are often quite
unreliable because they were apparently prepared (and sometimes
pirated) from stenographic transcripts of performances, collation
of actors' "sides," and from the memories of the actors themselves.
While these editions honored Shakespeare's memory and helped
to save him from the unpublished oblivion that visited most pro-
fessional playwrights of his day, it was not until the appearance
of the conscientiously edited First Folio that it was possible to put
together the relatively unmangled texts that we have today.

Professor Prouty's introduction gives a clear explanation of
the evolution of these various Quarto and Folio editions as they
passed through Elizabethan and Jacobean papermaking, edito-
rial, and printing processes, and outlines the problems the
modern scholar faces in extracting the best possible readings from
all the sources. The text of this facsimile edition was photographed
from the superbly preserved Huth copy of the First Folio that is
now enshrined at Yale's Elizabethan Club. Almost all of the pages
are completely legible, and they are set in wide margins for the
benefit of scholarly comparers and notetakers. On each page is a
running indication of conventional modern act, scene, and line
numbers, prepared by Professor Kökeritz. An authority on Shake-
spearean pronunciation, Professor Kökeritz sees in this facsimile
edition the fruition of a dream of many years. He had been trying
to arrange a reasonably inexpensive printing in Sweden when the
Louis M. Rabinowitz Foundation underwrote the present ven-
ture. This foundation, a frequent benefactor of the Yale Libraries,
can be proud that it has thus made easily available one of the
two or three most important books printed in English.

—THOMAS E. COONEY.