



## From the Academy

By Granville Hicks

SO FAR as this department is concerned, the university presses are important all the year round. Last fall I reviewed "The Realist at War" [SR September 27, 1958], the second volume of Edwin Cady's biography of William Dean Howells, which was published by the University of Syracuse Press, and this spring there were two other Howells items—"Criticism and Fiction and Other Essays," edited by Clara and Rudolf Kirk (New York University Press), and George Bennett's "William Dean Howells: The Development of a Novelist" (University of Oklahoma Press) [SR April 18, 1959]. From the Harvard University Press came Ernest Samuels's "Henry Adams: The Middle Years" [SR November 8, 1958], and from the Yale University Press Richard Sewall's "The Vision of Tragedy" [SR March 28, 1959]. Robert Elias's three-volume "Letters of Theodore Dreiser" [SR April 4, 1959] was published by the University of Pennsylvania Press.

From other university press books that fall within my range, I have selected a few to comment on in this issue. I begin with a volume that is not strictly literary in scope but does have considerable literary interest—Richard D. Birdsall's "Berkshire County" (Yale University Press, \$6). Mr. Birdsall has written a cultural history of Berkshire for the first hundred years after its incorporation in 1761. He writes about religion, education, journalism, the law, and finally literature. Since Catharine Sedgwick was a native of Berkshire, since William Cullen Bryant spent in the county his most creative years as a poet, and since Hawthorne, Melville, Longfellow, and Holmes were residents for significant periods of time, the literary record is rich.

Birdsall's general thesis is that for a century or so Berkshire had a distinctive regional culture, and he traces its rise and fall. He has dug deep into contemporary sources, and one gets from the book a strong feeling for the way life was lived in western Massachusetts the century before last. Academic in the good sense—i.e., based on thorough research and carefully documented—the book is completely readable. I recommend it to all who know and love the Berkshires.

Robert A. Bone's "The Negro Novel

in America" (Yale University Press, \$5) begins with a couple of little-known books published in 1853 and ends with Ralph Ellison's "Invisible Man," which appeared in 1952. Along the way Bone examines the fiction of Charles Chesnutt, Paul Lawrence Dunbar, James Weldon Johnson, Jean Toomer, Richard Wright, Ann Petry, and many others.

Bone has a pedantic fondness for inventing categories and fitting novels into them, but he does cover the ground, and the book will be useful for reference purposes. More than that, Bone comments with marked insight on some of the more substantial novels he discusses, such as Johnson's "The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man," Toomer's "Cane," Wright's "Native Son," and Ellison's "Invisible Man." His closing remarks on the future of Negro novelists seem unnecessarily cautious.

In "Arnold Bennett: Primitivism and Taste" (University of Washington Press, \$4) James Hall is careful not to make exaggerated claims for Bennett: "He does not have the complexity of perception and the distinction of style that mark the writer of the first rank." But he thinks that Bennett's best novels have meaning and value for our time, and he says why. What he means by "primitivism" (the term is not a happy one) is an adherence to solid, old-fashioned, bourgeois values. Bennett's central theme, he holds, is the conflict between such adherence and a yearning for sophistication and refinement, and he examines this conflict as it is developed in "The Old Wives' Tale," the Clayhanger trilogy, and a few other novels. His analyses suggest that Bennett's best is much too good to be forgotten.

In "The Sympathetic Alien: James Joyce and Catholicism" (New York University Press, \$4) J. Mitchell Morse has written a most erudite book, and I should have to know far more than I do about Catholic theology to criticize it intelligently. Even though Joyce rejected the Catholic Church, he was greatly influenced by its teachings. Indeed, as Morse shows, his concept of the role of the artist was derived from Augustine. Again and again, in all of Joyce's works, Morse is able to find theological influences. So far as I know, the

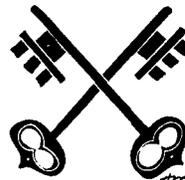
subject has never been treated so thoroughly before, and the book would seem to be a valuable addition to Joycean studies.

The books I have been examining are representative products of the university presses, but now I turn to two less orthodox projects. Between 1948 and 1955 Pamela Hansford Johnson, a talented novelist and critic, wrote for the British Broadcasting Company six sketches based on "Remembrance of Things Past," and these are now gathered together under the title "Proust Recaptured" (University of Chicago Press, \$4). "My intention," Miss Johnson writes, "was to show that Proust's people had been so completely regained from Time that they could continue to exist in any time; that they were so fully created as to be imaginable, in their words and their behavior, in a good many other circumstances." What she has done, then, is not to dramatize episodes from the novels but to put Proust's characters—the Duchesse de Guermantes, Charlus, Swann, Albertine, and so on—in situations that she has invented. The result is entertaining reading and good Proust criticism too.

"The White Hound" (University of Missouri Press, \$3.75) contains four stories by Ward Dorrance and four by Thomas Mabry. Dorrance has published several books, but Mabry, so far as I know, has published only the stories that appear in this volume. They have sufficed, however, to give him something of a reputation, which he fully deserves. "Lulu Borrow," for instance, which portrays a Negro woman of saintly character, seems to me one of the finest short stories to have appeared in recent years, and "Indian Feather" is almost as good.

Caroline Gordon has written an introduction for the volume in which she points out that both men are rooted in the South. Dorrance writes about Missouri, Mabry about middle Tennessee. "But neither of these writers," she goes on, "can be called a regional writer.

"If each of them knows his parish he also knows the world. Every story has reference to a framework larger than the incidents that are being portrayed. In every story events are seen in the light of the universal." This seems to me less strikingly true of Dorrance's stories than of Mabry's, but there are larger meanings even in such stories as "The Iron Maiden" and "The Devil on a Hot Afternoon," which are saturated with regional details. We can thank the University of Missouri Press for a fine collection of short stories.



# The University: Patron of Poets?

By JOHN CIARDI

FOR BETTER or worse, and with only the Beat Degeneration excepted, the younger and the "now-no-longer-quite-so-young" poets have become almost totally absorbed into the universities, which have very largely taken over the role of the patron, putting the poets on the payroll, subsidizing most of the literary quarterlies in which the poets do most of their publishing, and providing most of what-audience-there-is for such quarterlies. The situation is no unmixed blessing, and a reaction may well be overdue, but in the meanwhile the university presses have taken some tentative steps toward extending the university patronage by becoming the publishers of those slim little volumes.

In an effort to find how far the process has gone, *SR* wrote to all the university presses to ask what their policy was toward poetry, and what titles of contemporary poetry they had published in the last two years.

On the basis of the answers received it is clear that most university presses have no intention of being drawn away from their settled business of publishing specialized scholarships, and a large majority answered that they had fixed policies against publishing contemporary poetry.

Of those presses that reported publishing some contemporary poetry, all seem to do so on what may be called a local basis. That is to say, they publish an occasional title or two by a poet connected with the school. True—as in the case of MacLeish's "This Music Crept by Me on the Waters," published by Harvard in 1953—the poet concerned may be both local and far more than locally important. The connection, nonetheless, tends to remain within the academic family.

Thus Dartmouth has published collections of poetry by undergraduates and recent graduates; the University of Florida published, in 1956, a single book of poems by its late faculty member Lew Sarrett; the University of Pittsburgh has just published local-resident Sara Henderson Hay, and Rutgers has published several of my own books. In another sort of local connection, the University of Michigan Press, which lists some translations by Richmond Lattimore (he does

not teach there) also published his excellent "Poems" two years ago.

Two university presses are dedicated to a special poetry series. Stanford University annually publishes an anthology of "best" magazine poetry titled "Borestone Poetry Awards." Without being sure of my facts, I believe the editors of this series to be locally connected with Stanford. And Yale, of course, continues its annual Series of Younger Poets, now under the master editorship of Dudley Fitts. In no case, however, with the exception of the accumulated Yale Series titles, could any of these presses be said to offer anything like a list of contemporary poetry.

Somewhere short of offering a poetry list but perhaps moving toward one is the University of Chicago Press, which has published three good books lately, including Howard Nem-

erov's "Mirrors and Windows," one of the best recent titles in contemporary poetry. Chicago, moreover, seems genuinely interested in adding more titles to its list.

Wayne State University Press may also be mentioned as possibly interested in poetry, having recently published Robert Huff's "Colonel Johnson's Ride and Other Poems," and a collection of Yiddish poetry, though whether these titles indicate the beginning or the end of an interest in poetry, I have no way of knowing.

There remains, as the only university press with a sustained general poetry list, Indiana University Press with fifteen titles in print (two of them translations) and featuring Kenneth Fearing's "New and Selected Poems," along with a generous list of first volumes, as well as Josephine Miles's "Prefabrications" and Padraic Colum's "The Vegetable Kingdom."

We conclude that whatever future may lurk in the crystal ball, the university presses are sticking pretty much to their essential business of publishing scholarship for scholars, and that the publication of contemporary poetry remains very much in the hands of the commercial houses.

---

## An Inquiry Into the Ultimate Loneliness

By Gene Frumkin

THAT park, full of social meaning,  
and I uncertain hummingbird  
stopping and going on  
never sure of my direction.  
The small girls breezy on trapezes.  
The baseball boys pursuing balloons.  
The old man asleep with a dream on his face.  
They were not my airport, these pretenders.  
So hillward on a way I went  
that no one knew or cared about  
to the city on display below me:  
a department store open for business.  
And I, Zeus's Number One Boy,  
sat on a rock  
faking thunderbolts.

Time was a fly crawling on my arm.  
Fascinating. I could have sat there  
watching it for hours.  
But to remain a monk behind a wall,  
spying on the world, was anonymous.  
I had to be a window-glare  
in the tall architectural shadows.  
Coming down from my brief Tibet,  
I met a motorcycle racing up,  
riderless. O proper messenger  
to a mythical place! I hurried now,  
knowing I had missed the big event:  
Messiah had come. The park was miles  
of deserted lawns  
and capsized picnic tables.