

in the experiences of real and believable people. They may at times speak with too much rhetoric, too much self-consciousness, but their lives do involve us.

At one point Elli explains why she returned to the ghetto to aid her fellow Jews: "... we must save what is still human inside us. For later, in case there is a later." Elli's tragedy is that she failed to retain the humanity in herself. Her story should make us more aware of how easily our own fates could be the same.

Leonard Fleischer is assistant professor of English at the University of Akron, Ohio.

DADDY WAS A NUMBER RUNNER

by Louise Meriwether
Prentice-Hall, 208 pp., \$5.95

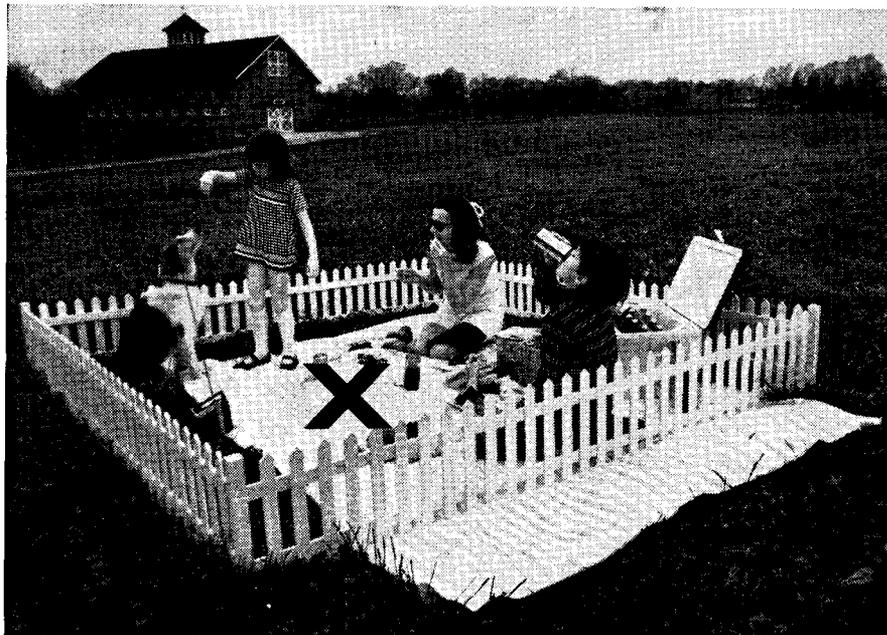
Reviewed by Ruth Bauerle

■ A clear benefit from the civil rights movement of the last two decades has been the rechanneling of energies in many areas from destructive purposes to a new creativity. Literature is among the fields that have profited: A number of young black writers have appeared, showing vigor and vitality, among them, Louise Meriwether, whose *Daddy Was a Number Runner* is not only her own first novel but the first novel to emerge from the Watts Writers' Workshop.

Miss Meriwether depicts a year in a Harlem neighborhood during the Great Depression. It is a predatory society: butcher and baker prey on the young girls who come into their shops on errands; pimps prey on prostitutes, and both prey on the customers; the mob preys on the numbers players and runners, and the police on the mob.

No one protects the neighborhood children from the molestations of the bums who hang about in parks and on roofs, and the children don't feel that anyone owes them protection from such a normal occurrence. Only when a bum is mugged in the hallway of a warehouse do the police act, arresting and forcing confessions from the young members of the Ebony Earls. The teen-aged criminals are electrocuted in the name of law and order. Summer returns, and the bums once more plague the sisters of the "criminals."

In the midst of this corruption Francie Coffin and her family form a loyal, affectionate group striving to escape the ghetto. Francie and her intelligent, violent best friend, Sukie, dodge the perverts and rapists in this black
(Continued on page 62)



If you could shoot on both sides of this fence you could make better movies.

Sit down at X and we'll show you why.

All set? Okay. You've brought a camera along. Any conventional super-8 camera.

This is your picnic. You're going to bring it back alive.

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Stop fiddling with the knob. He's just 2 ft. from the lens. You'll never get him in focus.

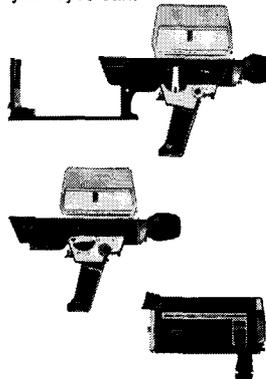


Maybe this would work? 3 1/2 ft. away? Nope. Still too blurry. This tiny visiting frog? If you could focus within inches you'd get him big enough to see. But you've got a conventional camera.

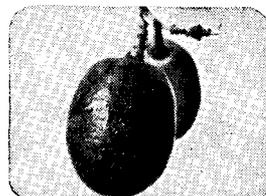


So what can you shoot? See that fence? It's 4 ft. from your seat, the closest most conventional cameras can focus. So you can get any shot—outside the fence. But nothing but blurs inside it.

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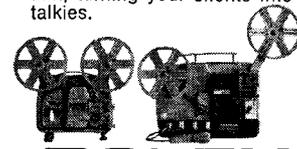


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THE TRUTH OF POETRY: Tensions in Modern Poetry from Baudelaire to the 1960s

by Michael Hamburger

Harcourt, Brace & World, 341 pp., \$7.50

Reviewed by Stanley Burnshaw

■ "If my study has shown anything," Michael Hamburger remarks on his closing page, "it is how many kinds of truth poets have felt called upon to render or enact over the past century and more." Yet the subtitle—"Tensions in Modern Poetry from Baudelaire to the 1960s"—defines the book more usefully. And Mr. Hamburger analyzes some of these tensions with perceptiveness, courage, and a breadth of knowledge that command admiration even from readers who may disagree with his judgments.

Actually agreement, especially on the recent decades, seems almost beside the point, since, as everyone knows, the closer such a study moves toward the present the more controversial it becomes. Rather, a serious reader must be avid for illumination, and this volume cannot disappoint him. I know of none other that offers so much information, guidance, and insight or that serves so well as an introduction to the Western verse of the last hundred years, even though it omits certain poets of importance (Jeffers, Unamuno, Ahkmatova, Ransom) and attends to others less extensively than their contributions—to me, at least—would demand (Frost, Cummings, Alberti, Machado). But a critic no less than an anthologist has a vir-

tually insoluble problem of choice in "a book whose subject, in both time and space, is very nearly limitless."

When does modern poetry begin? Mr. Hamburger starts with Baudelaire, omits the antecedents, and moves chronologically to the present. Yet "this is not a history of modern poetry," he insists. The chronological pattern serves merely as the general highway along which the critic is free to stop and discuss whatever strikes him as most useful for his purpose: "an attempt to understand [the] nature, assumptions, and functions" of modern poetry.

A number of the stops en route become rewarding encounters—with Corbière, Jiménez, Apollinaire, Benn, Brecht, to cite a random few. I admired especially the pages on Jules Laforgue that show not only how misleading it has been to regard him as a Symbolist but also the effect of his "innovations [which] brought poetry closer, not to music, but to speech; . . . to an existential and moral involvement in the cruelties of life." Mr. Hamburger has excellent things to say about Valéry, Enzensberger, Celan. He also raises some highly debatable points on Rilke as an "'imaginative autonomist,' a maker of 'supreme fictions' who could not get himself to believe in those realities which defy the creative imagination."

When does "modernism" end? In my view (as set forth elsewhere), the poetry that followed World War II is a clearly post-modern development, if Romanticism-Symbolism-Surrealism was in fact the revolution we acknowledge it to be. But this new develop-

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