

**THE WEATHER**

Today: Considerable cloudiness and windy with scattered showers followed by clearing in late afternoon or evening; highest temperature in upper 50s.

Tomorrow: Fair and colder.

Temperatures Yesterday: Max., 63. Min., 30

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Section One

FIFTEEN-CENTS

# Experience and Poetry

## A MAP OF VERONA AND OTHER POEMS.

By Henry Reed. . . . 92 pp.  
 . . . . *New York: Reynal  
 and Hitchcock. . . . \$2.50.*

## THE SUN MY MONUMENT.

By Laurie Lee. . . . 58 pp. . . .  
*New York: Doubleday and  
 Company. . . . \$2.*

## BEHIND THE LOG.

By E. J. Pratt. . . . 47 pp.  
 . . . . *New York: The Mac-  
 millan Company.*

## THE SEA FARING AND OTHER POEMS.

By Louis O. Coxe. . . . 55 pp.  
 . . . . *New York: Henry Holt  
 and Company. . . . \$2.50.*

## HYMN TO WRECKAGE.

By Robert McKinney. . . . 45  
 pp. . . . *New York: Henry  
 Holt and Company. . . . \$2.50.*

## FOUR POEMS BY RIMBAUD.

Translated by Ben Belitt. . . .  
 58 pp. . . . *Denver: Alan  
 Swallow. . . . \$1.75.*

Reviewed by  
 M. L. ROSENTHAL

**H**ENRY REED shares with Laurie Lee, another young English "war poet," a kind of hurt pacifism and the familiar irony that sells so cheaply of late. They share, too, in that unhappy vice of young intellectuals—a certain blandness of which the ever-simple irony is a symptom and which allows them, at a moment's notice, to discuss everything as though it were just nothing and vice versa. But Reed has the more inclusive sensibility, and he has been able to protect it by skills of craft, fashioning an armor of rhythmic, stanzaic, and musical structure. Despite their common conviction that the world is flat, Reed has written more verse in the rich "lyric-contemplative" mode and has used mythological themes from Homer to Melville to help him get his bearings. He is further into his art; such pieces as "Judging Distances," "Sailors Harbor," and the title-poem achieve something fine and honest, with a dramatic tension that resolves itself by a narrowing of focus from general to intimate personal awareness: "reversal" with the true tragic shock of painful realization.

Less subtle and complex, Lee seems in technique almost a slavish though an accomplished imagist; in content he leans heavily to the Georgians and the old pastoral landscape fetish—landscape as woman, woman as landscape, and the poet passionately confused about which is which. Nature is joy and life ("Day of these Days" is a happy expression of this), something set off absolutely against the agony of war. The opposition is justifiable, but perhaps too glibly asserted, for the subject after all demands, once it is stated, something more than a charming manner, even when the manner is supported by the most vivid imagery and a pure singing delight in girls and seasons; and it can easily be lost entirely when the poet assumes the false naiveté of such a poem as "The Long War."

is straightforward historical narrative in blank verse. It is a documentary job, the result of detailed research into the problems of Atlantic convoys in the early days of the war. Attention is centered on the dangers attending the crossing of Convoy S. C. 42, and the modest, somewhat pedestrian style has its virtues and is in its way suitable for description of the unpretentious heroism displayed by the men under attack from U-boat "wolf-packs." It is an external recording, however, of the physical action that a war's end abruptly "turns off."

Much the same type of experience lies behind Louis O. Coxe's "The Sea Faring" (in fact, the title-poem and one other deal with a Pacific convoy); but this volume has the compression and emotional qualities of good lyric poetry, and has a number of points in common with the work of writers like Shapiro and Ciardi. Often, in such poems as "Dead Marine," "The Great," and "Epitaph," Coxe catches the realities, bitterness, desires of men in war (and peace) in such a way that the experience can never be "turned off," but must become ever more real. He has willed an identity between himself and the "lonely" figures of our literature—Hawthorne, Very, Bierce, and others—as a bridge to the discovery of universal meanings; and this first volume, unless he should become frozen in what he calls his "dying stringent attitude," promises a great deal.

Still another first volume, Robert McKinney's "Hymn to Wreckage," presents "history" in yet a third way, symbolizing the rise and fall of our civilization in terms of a mythical Chinese, Chia Shih, whose career as dilettante, refugee, and guerrilla unrolls in a series of monologues and songs in the "classic structure of the T'ang poets."

Despite its romantic handling of the Chinese motifs and characters such as the deep-souled flute-player and the patriotic little concubine, its use of language that is bawdy-sentimental, ironically tough, or sweetly melancholy, and its explicit advocacy of revolutionary change, the book does not stumble into triteness or bathos. It is saved from disaster by its pervasive elegance and frankness (even the prose introduction combines these characteristics remarkably) and by an "objectivity" which the remote Chinese setting, with its wide range for wit, for plot-foolery, and for shifting attention from one character to another without loss of essential unity or immediate involvement of the poet, as such, permits. This is effective satire, exploding deadly fragments just when the Mandarin touch seems drowsiest, the flute-notes most wistful.

A brief note on Ben Belitt's valuable treatment of four Rimbaud poems: "Les Poetes de Sept Ans," "Les Premieres Communions," "Le Bateau Ivre," and "Memoire." The experiment speaks for itself; together with the French texts, Mr. Belitt has printed excellent literal translations and also his own versions of the poems, in a sensitive, often successful attempt to "recover" them as living poems in our language. For translator and reader alike this is an exciting adventure, a profound voyage into the poems themselves. A brief introduction, useful notes, and a selected bibliography are also included.

E. J. Pratt's "Behind the Log"