



## books

## PRECIOUS RUBBISH

A "Slashing Attack on Snobbery and Humbug, as Raked Out of Current Criticism" and commented on by Theodore L. Shaw. Stuart Art Gallery, Boston, 35 cents.

by John Barkley Hart

Mr. Shaw, who tries to disguise his hatred of art by pretending a hatred of "absolutist" critics, is no likable buffoon, but a pompous specimen in the worst donkey tradition. Shaw, all ears for any avenue of popularity, parades as average man harassed by fraudulent intellectuals; but Shaw sets himself apart from common herd by claiming special distinction. He's the guy who will champion the small man from all art's pretensions to immortality.

## Watered-Down Chase

"According to Shaw, whenever a guy like Faulkner or Hemingway makes mystical statements on enduring values of art, he's getting to be an 'absolutist' critic—i.e., telling Shaw he's gotta



like something beside himself. Shaw's intellectual lineage (the guy's got hairs on his chest) is a kind of watered-down Stuart Chase. Shaw is typical petty-bourgeois with Marxist orientation, calls himself a "relativist," and hates all "absolutists"—meaning anybody except Mr. Shaw.

Shaw makes a lot of fuss about his critical method, which he calls

## LETTERS

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of such people, for they are few and far between. . . . I would like to help expand the area of Jean's influence. I am planning to form a Night People fan club. Would any of your subscribers care to join? Anyone interested can get in touch with me.

"Thank you for your paper. Enclosed please find monies for full-year's subscription. Will be pleased to join your list of satisfied readers."

—Clifford Levine  
Apt. 4C, 985 Fairfield Avenue  
Bridgeport, Connecticut

## Man Still Wants 'Outsider' Reviewed

Dear Sir:

Your confidence in your reader makes me a little uneasy. Maybe the mock-review by John Barkley Hart that was published in *The Voice* of September 19 ought to have been plainly tagged as comedy—the "review" of Colin Wil-

"the horrible example." Shaw is horrible example of incompetence and opportunism that pervade social fabric. Little bureaucrats, who suck life from reputations of Eliot, Joyce, Faulkner, etc., will not be frightened by clumsy Mr. Shaw. Only good thing in his pathetic book are some quotations held up for ridicule. Shaw has nothing, but comes as personal opportunist seeking his own gain.

**Authoritative Pomp**  
Get off your pretensions, Mr. Shaw. You speak with the authoritative pomp of a man with a second-hand direction. Had you created one good example to displace the tomb of junk which issue from the publishing void, we would be in your debt; but at least, since your natural bent seems to be mediocrity, insult us no further with pretentious assimulations of your petty inclinations. You are not a writer, Mr. Shaw.

son's book "The Outsider." What if somebody read it straight? What did Mr. Hart think of *The Village Voice*?

Understand that Mr. Hart's joke is hilarious. It is a howler: I grant you this. Take it from the beginning. Mr. Hart begins with a barrage of clichés about Sartre that is marvelously ironical. "French culture had become a mental case. . . . Existentialism is disaffiliation, refusal of life, negation of life—not insanity, but death."

## Tongue in Cheek?

Not insanity! Mr. Hart's tongue is in his cheek, of course. Not insanity! Just look at this from Sartre: "Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself. Such is the first principle of Existentialism. . . . For we mean that man first exists, that is, that man first of all is the being who hurls himself toward a future and who is conscious of imagining himself as being in the future." Is this nothing more than refusal of life? Nothing more than negation and death?

Mr. Hart is pretending not to have read Sartre. But the best part of his joke comes when Mr. Hart is pretending not to have read Colin Wilson. I am thinking of those wildly comic remarks about government. A little drawn-out, they are. They take up most of the "review." But their absolute irrelevancy to Mr. Wilson's book makes them funny. For instance, Mr. Hart keeps his face straight and prays aloud for 1984 (when "the literal-minded persons who hold power through their grasp of the mechanics of the distributive apparatus will be automated into retirement. And government will for the first time devolve upon creative genius and the apparatus of government be powered by creative intellect.")

## An Objection

This is very funny stuff, but now I have an objection. It is to those scattered allusions that could be taken to suggest that Mr. Hart has seen a copy of Mr. Wilson's book. A sentence like this,

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## The Night People

by JEAN SHEPHERD



## The Miracle Ingredient

THE office had a clean new aroma, sort of like a crisp, freshly painted \$20 bill. It was large and in excellent taste. Modern, yet with a nice traditional feel. It isn't easy to be both at one and the same time, yet here it was. The deep

rich cinnamon carpeting not only absorbed the bright sunshine streaming in through the south window, but seemed to be creating some of its own. It was beautiful. Most impressive was the desk. There was none. Only a series of low, superbly designed, backless couches, scattered around the room with an artless, carefully arranged carelessness. Foam-rubber cushions, covered with lovely hand-loomed chocolate-tinted fabric imported from Israel. Hand-rubbed walnut done by a Japanese architect now residing in New Hope, Pennsylvania. Altogether an exercise in good taste.

## Handled Himself Easily

Sitting under a Cézanne that hung on the far wall was a large red-faced man who appeared to be answering the questions being fired at him by a crowd of reporters, as though he had spent a lifetime leading, instructing, or, most likely, commanding people. He had closely cropped salt-and-pepper hair that made him look younger than he probably was. His suit was dark-grey hard English tweed, loosely cut and nicely casual. It was obvious that he was at home with this crowd; they loved him, and he felt warm about them.

Standing next to him, his back to the wall, was a short stout man wearing thick horn-rimmed

In reality opposites are one; art shows this.—Eli Siegel.

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## It All Depends On What Disgusts You

NOW don't get this wrong. The author of *PRECIOUS RUBBISH* is quite willing that those easy-going soft-heads who can stomach the tripe critics are dishing out nowadays shall continue getting their bellies full of it—if that's what they want.

His point is that humanity is not composed 100 per cent of these pushovers and that criticism should stop being written as if it were. There is a percentage of cool-headed, thinking men—10, 12, perhaps even 15 per cent—who are interested in art and literature (despite Critics' efforts to keep them out) and feel they are entitled to have at least some criticism available which does not require them to throw their brains overboard in order to read it.

The purpose of *PRECIOUS RUBBISH* is to convince you that no criticism of this kind is now being produced. None at all. I haven't space in this advertisement to present the case as the book does. But I will cite you one "principle" of criticism which the hard-boiled individual especially objects to—and which critics so frenziedly support: namely the theory that art is "immortal," that some little combination of colors, sounds, and words, thrown together by a fellow-inhabitant of the minor planet, Earth, will still be important, aesthetically, a billion years from now. Sensible men very naturally rebel, the author says, at finding so naive a proposition made into criticism's corner-stone—as it is. But that isn't the worst. When they see the cheatings and fakes Critics indulge in, trying to get them to fall for this rather pathetic swindle (that a "great" art work is "inexhaustible") their resentment climbs to a new high.

"If you fire of a masterpiece," one critic has the audacity to proclaim, "it isn't a masterpiece." Can you conceive of anything more insane than the pretense that Fatigue ceases to operate in its usual manner when confronted with a "masterpiece"?

At the risk of making you feel sorry for them, here are two other of the dumb-bells having a terrible time. In the first case the difficulty started when Edgar Allan Poe (the rotten traitor!) made the following obviously candid comment.

The most exquisite pleasures grow dull in repetition. A strain of music enchants; heard a second time it pleases; heard a tenth it does not displease. We hear it a twentieth and ask ourselves why we admired; at the fifth, it induces ennui—at the hundredth, disgust.

And now here's the dutiful critic stepping up bravely and trying to show how wrong Poe was.

I hope it is not true. "In any case, his account of the matter does not agree with my own experience. Even the constantly recurring Sunrise and Sunset, for instance, lose none of its charm by repetition (| | | |); nor, to take a lower instance, is the hundredth strawberry less pleasant to the taste than the first—if you avoid surfeiting.

I can only say that the man who fails to see the utter fraudulence of such an argument might easily go through his entire life abbreviating the word, manufactured, into mfgd and wondering why White Russians were so rare in Australia. Now watch the second martyr crucifying himself for The Cause.

. . . A great work of art like El Greco's "Folies," at the Metropolitan, is one that presents this feeling of shock and delight, of new things to be revealed at every encounter with it. Such works are inexhaustible in their meaning. But with one proviso; one must not go to them too often.

That pathetic, ludicrous, and tragic last sentence, in which the critic gaily (and unconsciously it would seem) tosses away his entire case | | | Yet it passed unchallenged not only through its delivery to Columbia University undergraduates (apparently willing to swallow anything from an "authority") but also its subsequent publication by the venerable Columbia University Press. Would this a monstrously get by in any other department of writing but criticism? I doubt it.

Possibly you are under the impression that aberrations of this kind are rare, or the product of the less reputable critics. Not at all, as *PRECIOUS RUBBISH* will demonstrate. The most distinguished and august members of the profession spout similar drivel with

## Precious Rubbish

As Raked Out of Current Criticism and Commented on by Theodore L. Shaw

This Slashing Attack on Snobbery & Humbug 35¢

Wes Long Overdue. The appalling barrage of rife twaddle about art and literature which critics have been discharging as if for centuries produced it as inevitably as Freshfishes produced Kopeck.

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an abandon and infatuation that makes you nearly blush for them. In fact there's a boomerang hurt to yourself in seeing mature and unusually dignified men jitterbugging and shimmying frantically about, jumping through intellectual hoops, hiding under non-existent tables, swallowing trick words, belching mystic flames out their nostrils to distract yours and the rest of the world's attention from the fact that they're talking nonsense. If you can imagine what it would be like to find yourself in a world of which all the other residents were wearing rings in their noses to ward off the Evil Eye, that will give you an idea of the aversion with which a rational man observes these monkey-shines.

Well, there it is—just a little sample. However, as I said above, perhaps you don't react; it all depends on what disgusts you.

—Reed Ebbaj

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719 Boylston St., Boston, Mass.

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## The Night People

Continued from page 5

glasses was a follower, but an assured one.

"LOOK HERE, you guys, I want you to still call me Charlie. I've been Charlie to most of you for a long time now, and just because this thing came along isn't going to change anything." The crowd grinned at the large red-faced man who had just spoken. He paused slightly and continued: "Now I know you all have a gang of questions about plans and so forth, and Al here has a fine series of brochures and a really great presentation booklet that the boys in the copy department and the art gang have put together. There's a lot of fine stuff that makes good copy there. But anytime you got a question, I want you to fire away."

A tall thin sad-looking man spoke up from the rear of the crowd: "Hey, Charlie, there've been a hell of a lot of rumors floating around that you fellows have really got something good in the works for the kick-off. Can you say anything about it yet?"

"Some Great Stuff"

Charlie grinned and carefully crossed his legs. He spoke, "Look, Buz, I'd love to spell it out for you, but we're afraid that too much advance press might kill the surprise-value of the kick-off, but I can tell you we got some really great stuff ready to go. Without tipping our hand, I can

### UTILITY INFIELDER FOR 'LONG DAY'S JOURNEY'

Actor Al Morgenstern, Commerce Street, has just been appointed double-understudy for "Long Day's Journey Into Night," the O'Neill show opening November 7 on Broadway, under the sponsorship of Ted Mann, José Quintero, and Leigh Connell of the Circle in the Square. Morgenstern will backstop both Jason Robards, Jr., and Bradford Dillman, in the roles of the two Tyrone sons.

say that the boys in the art department have put together one of the sharpest teaser series I've ever seen, and you guys know how long I've been in the game."

A voice from the crowd said: "There's been talk that you got the outfit that came up with the Bert and Harry Piel spots doing some work for you, what about it?" The man in the horn-rims bent over and whispered something in Charlie's ear. "Well, you're going to hear a lot of stuff, but don't jump to conclusions, boys. Now I'm not denying anything but I'm not going to confirm anything either, so whatever you write is your own business, but don't come around crying if it turns out to be the wrong dope. But remember I'm not denying a thing"—all this is what Charlie said after listening carefully to the whispers in his right ear. A couple of men made notes after Charlie had finished. He smiled a kind of knowing paternal beam at them. He knew how to leak a rumor.

ANOTHER man spoke out of the crowd: "Is the Chief himself figuring in the kick-off plans?" Charlie answered: "That, I can't tell you yet, but I can say that he has seen the TV teaser films and thinks they're great. You guys know any client I've ever had has loved my stuff, and there's no reason to think that this is going to be any different." Someone asked: "Do you have any dope on what kind of budget will be involved?" The man with the horn-rims answered that one: "Most of that stuff will be right here." He patted a stack of blue-covered brochures on a table next to him. "We can tell you that this is going to be a real saturation job, and that costs dough, but don't for a minute think that the client won't get it back." He grinned when he finished speaking, and the whole crowd chuckled at the answer. Everyone was in a fine humor, especially since a white-coated porter was discreetly replacing their empty glasses with full ones. The man in the horn-rims spoke: "Go ahead and finish your drinks, boys. Charlie has to go in to the meeting at 10, and it's three minutes to it. It's not a good idea to be late the first day at work."

Again the crowd laughed good-naturedly. Charlie carefully put his own glass down on a low coffee table in front of him, and said slowly: "This is it, guys. Wish me luck." He rose and picked up his cowhide attaché case from the couch. The crowd parted to allow him to walk to the door. Someone raised a glass and called after him: "Good luck, Mister Secretary!" The new, and first, Secretary of Advertising left the room on his way to his first Cabinet meeting.

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