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THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH NEWS-LETTER

VOL. I, No. 2

Hollins College, Virginia

May 20, 1963

MUCH HONORED MAN. For HOWARD NEMEROV, writer-in-residence at Hollins during the current year, on leave from Bennington College, it has been a year of much accomplishment and much recognition of accomplishment. Not only did he receive the \$1,500 Brandeis University award for distinguished writing, but he won perhaps the highest award that an American poet can receive: appointment as Consultant in Poetry at the Library of Congress for next year. In December (cloth) and January (paperback) his new book of poems, THE NEXT ROOM OF THE DREAM, appeared. He has spoken at Bennington, Princeton, the Library of Congress, Mary Baldwin, Carleton, Brandeis, Randolph-Macon, Washington and Lee, Illinois, William and Mary, North Carolina State, Sweet Briar, Purdue, East Tennessee, and elsewhere. He was made a member of the editorial committee for the Wesleyan University Press' poetry series. All this while playing a full role in Hollins activities: he has caught a seminar in modern poetry each term, taken part in the advanced creative writing workshop, and even held an informal poetry seminar each week for a group of sophomores who asked him to do so when, because of limitations of number, they were not permitted to enroll in his regular seminar!

The year 1963 has been and will continue to be a big year for Mr. Nemerov so far as publications go. His first book of critical essays, ESSAYS ON POETRY AND FICTION, will be out with Rutgers University Press in the fall. He has published reviews and essays in the Sewanee Review, Carleton Miscellany, The New Leader, and The Graduate Journal of the University of Texas. New poems by Mr. Nemerov have appeared or will soon appear in Shenandoah, The Nation, Approach, and The Reporter.

PROMOTION. Effective in July, it will be Assistant Professor Chauncey D. Wood. Mr. Wood, who came to Hollins in 1960 as instructor in English, has taught Humanities, Victorian Literature, the English Novel, Allegory, and Introduction to English Literature. Next year he will take over the Chaucer course in the absence of Professor DEGGINGER, who will be in Paris as director of Hollins Abroad. A graduate of Union College, he will be completing work this summer on his Princeton Ph.D. dissertation.

SOMETHING NEW. Instead of a single writer-in-residence next year, the Department will have at least ten! Each will visit the campus for a period of three days or so, where they will meet classes, talk with students, and give public readings. Exact dates have not been set up so far, but here's the schedule by the month:

- October: ROBERT PENN WARREN, Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist, poet and critic;
FLANNERY O'CONNOR, one of the most highly regarded writers of fiction
of the contemporary generation of Southern writers.
- November: KARL SHAPIRO, controversial poet, essayist, editor.
- December: EUDORA WELTY, distinguished novelist and short story writer.
- January: RICHARD WILBUR, one of the best-known and most highly regarded
contemporary American poets.
- February: ANDREW LYTTLE, novelist, editor of the Sewanee Review;
PETER TAYLOR, widely read short story writer and novelist.

March: ALLEN TATE, poet, critic, novelist.

April: HOWARD NEMEROV, the present writer-in-residence (see next item).

In addition to these, WILLIAM GOLDING, last year's writer-in-residence, expects to be here for a few days sometime during the school year, when he will once again visit the United States.

'UNOFFICIAL HONORS'. Hollins doesn't have an official Honors program, but the English Department has one, on an unofficial basis. Six of the best rising seniors were invited by the department's faculty last fall to undertake a two-term project in independent study on a subject of their choice, to culminate in a senior thesis. Of these, five accepted the invitation, and spent much of their senior year working away at sizeable projects. The results: five English majors have been awarded laurels, etc., as follows:

MARY JOHNSTON AMOS, Charleston, W. Va.: "Time in the Novels of Marcel Proust."

JANE GENTRY, Lexington, Ky.: A manuscript of original poems and an essay on poetry.

ELEANOR SEYMOUR KEENEY, Baltimore, Md.: "The Style of Ernest Hemingway."

EVELYN RACHEL LANCASTER, Sewanee, Tenn.: "Image Patterns in Henry James' Later Novels."

CECILIA CLOPIN WHITE, Bronxville, N. Y.: "The Growth and Exploration of the Psyche in the Novels of George Eliot."

In addition, mention should be made of an unofficial "unofficial honors" thesis: "Love, Society, and Art in the Fiction of Marcel Proust," by SUZANNE P. VICTOR, Winnetka, Ill., who, working on her own, completed a two-term, 90-page essay!

With papers such as these, and at this length, English majors are enabled to go beyond classroom involvement in their work, and undertake something of more than the usual scope and depth. All honor to those so honored!

NEW COURSES. Professor JOHN GARRUTO, the Department's specialist in grammar and linguistics, offered a highly popular one-hour seminar in Advanced Grammar during the past term, for majors who plan to teach English in high schools, as so many of our graduates do. So well received was the course that he plans to offer it again in the second term of next year. Professor RUBIN, having grown weary of rereading The Scarlet Letter and Huckleberry Finn every year, has surrendered the American Literature course to Mr. ROBERT FIGG for next year, and will offer a special seminar in the "Form of the Novel." Professor JOHN R. MOORE, back from his year in Ireland, will use the fruits of his research in his Irish Literature course. Professor JULIA SAWYER will be teaching Literary Criticism. And of course, all the Department's heavily-elected standbys will be offered as usual--Professor JOHN A. ALLEN's Shakespeare (one term only this time, however), and his beginning writing courses, Professor JESSE ZELDIN's Renaissance and Russian Novel, Chaucer (taught by Professor CHAUNCEY WOOD since Professor DEGGINGER will be abroad), Professor MOORE's Modern British and American Poetry, Professor WOOD's Victorian Literature, Professor RUBIN's Advanced Creative Writing and Studies In The Modern Novel, the British Novel (taught by Professor SAWYER the first term, Mr. FIGG the second), and so on.

THE NEW MAJORS. Thirty-two rising junior majors, at this count. They are:

JILL ABBOTT, Birmingham, Alabama.
ELLEN AUCHINCLOSS, Darien, Conn.
DIANE AUSLANDER, Hewlitt Harbor, L. I., N. Y.
BARBARA BEAMAN, Nashville, Tenn.
JERAMY CAMPAGNA, New York City.
LYNNE CLUTSAM, Summit, N. J.
DIANA COE, Owings Mills, Md.
SALLY CRAIG, Ellicott City, Md.
ISABEL DAVIS, Towson, Md.
JON DEWEY, Rosedale, Mississippi.
MADELEINE DICKERSON, New York City.
SYLVIA DOUGHTY, Washington, D. C.
MIMI DRAKE, Santa Barbara, Calif.
JANE DYKES, Columbus, Ga.
TAVENNER FINLAY, Chattanooga, Tenn.
PATRICIA GRIFFIN, New Canaan, Conn.
NOLA GOULD, Hobart, N. Y.
PRUDENCE GRAND, New York City.
MARION HINES, Fairfield, Conn.
VIRGINIA HUNTON, Richmond, Va.
PAMELA HUGGINS, Greenwich, Conn.
BIANCA LANZA, New York City.
ANNA LOGAN, Roanoke, Va.
KATHARINE MARTIN, Alexandria, Va.
BREVARD MYERS, Greensboro, N. C.
CYNTHIA PARKINSON, Brightwaters, L. I., N. Y.
KATHRYN RAVENEL, Alexandria, Va.
SALLY THOMPSON, Tampa, Fla.
EDEN WHITE, Atlanta, Ga.
CORNELIA WHITTET, Richmond, Va.
MORGAN WILKINSON, Rocky Mount, N. C.
DINAH WOLFF, Summit, N. J.

And these senior converts:

TOWNSEND DANIEL, Richmond, Va.
CAMERON NAGLE, Wilmington, Del.

Note that the Yankees outnumber the Confederates. Just like old times.

TWO AWAY, ONE RETURNING. Two staff members of the English Department will be away from the campus for all or part of next year. Professor STUART H. L. DEGGINGER will leave in July for Paris, where he will spend 1963-1964 as director of the Hollins Abroad program, which he founded some years ago. It will be his second overseas directorship; he led the first Hollins Abroad group to Paris in 1955-1956. Professor JOHN A. ALLEN will be on sabbatical leave during the second semester, to work on his study of Shakespearean comedy. He plans to remain in residence on the campus. Meanwhile Professor JOHN REES MOORE will be back on the job after a sabbatical year spent at work on the drama of William Butler Yeats in Ireland.

AGAIN A BIG TURNOUT. Hollins College's third annual Literary Festival, sponsored by the English Department and the Grapheon Literary Society, once again drew large crowds not only from Hollins but from colleges and universities all over the area. FRED WHITTEMORE, poet and critic, led off the morning session with a paper on fiction, "The Fascination of the Abomination." At lunchtime WILLIAM STYRON, distinguished novelist, took part in an interview (see the next Alumnae Bulletin). The afternoon poetry session featured HOWARD NEMEROV, WHITTEMORE, the poet WILLIAM MEREDITH, and Professor JOHN A. ALLEN, who conducted a panel at which representative student poetry from various colleges was discussed.

EARLY SUMMER. Such is the title of 1962 graduate ANNA SEVIER's first novel, to be published by Atheneum Publishers in July. Anna wrote the novel as a creative writing student at Hollins in 1961-1962, and it was published, in an earlier form, under the title of "Porphyry" in Cargoes last spring.

INTRODUCTORY CREATIVE WRITING:
a course description by
Professor JOHN A. ALLEN

I have been asked to describe what goes on in the introductory writing course (English 141, 142) and am glad to do so, on the understanding that some entirely different bright bolt may fall there next year or the year after that.

The main purpose of the course is to encourage students to try out their ability to write poems and short stories. As has often been pointed out, no one can actually teach anyone to write. But one can help the student to find her best material, to choose good models for imitation, to learn the technical fundamentals of the craft, and to become a competent critic of her own work.

Most beginning students do not know how to use their experience as material for poems and fiction. They write stories that resemble letters only a mother would read. Or they produce poems modeled upon what they think the instructor thinks a poem should be--generally something your maiden aunt might inscribe in her memory book.

I try to help the student realize that the patterns for her poems and stories are to be found in dreams and day-dreams, and in the myths and fairy tales which they resemble. Toward this end, I have been using Joseph Campbell's excellent book about the monomyth, THE HERO WITH A THOUSAND FACES. This work shocks the students into attention, acquaints them with basic myths, and suggests to them the interesting possibility that in little Susie there resides, among other things, a White Goddess, ravening. Many students are so struck by this discovery that they become sibyls almost overnight, worry their parents, and never permit custom to stifle their infinite variety. To provide models for this outpouring, I have, with student assistance, compiled an anthology of poems which point up, by their classification according to the stages of the monomyth, the ways in which good contemporary poets go to work with mythic material.

What about short stories? My effort here has been to convince the students that short stories have much in common with poems: They are no less mythic at bottom and, like poems, contrive to say much in small space by employing variations upon familiar patterns and symbols. This approach to the short story causes the students to think about pattern rather than thinking too precisely upon themselves or setting up as amateur psychoanalysts of their friends. The students started off this year by trying

a "double" story (on the model of "The Secret Sharer" or Poe's "William Wilson"). They were already familiar, from Campbell and from the anthology, with the notion that everyone has a dark stranger somewhere inside. So they had no trouble conceiving of a conflict between a protagonist and the double whom he must come to terms with. This is a formula for fantasy, but it also provides an approach to realistic fiction. Most of the students soon found that they were better satisfied when they rationalized their highly stylized characters to the point at which their actions and relationships approached the natural and plausible. The result was that most of the stories ended as quite realistic and well-plotted accounts whose mythic overtones were perceptible but not obtrusive. The students had learned from the inside the process by which myth may be used to give form to the materials of everyday experience.

In order to sharpen the students' ears for style--sound, rhythm, syntax, word choice, tone--I have asked them to do a series of imitations: this year, of the traditional ballad, Pope, and Browning. The idea is not to travesty the poems in question, but to produce reasonably exact facsimiles of them. In order to do this successfully, one must work with the same kinds of material that one's model used, and so, for example, the students dug material for the Browning imitation out of Aubrey's BRIEF LIVES. (Ovid, and Thurber's FABLES are good for Pope.) This kind of exercise serves well to focus attention upon the technical skills which all poets must develop, skills which are no less essential to writers of fiction.

In the second semester this year, we read some Jung (PSYCHE AND SYMBOL) and studied a current volume by each of three contemporary poets: Barbara Howes, Winfield Townley Scott, and W. S. Merwin. This kept the myths and the good models in attendance, while the students were free to write poetry or fiction, as they pleased--but always something every week: Practice! There are examinations which call for critical analyses of poems and short stories and for the ranking in order of merit of several poems on the same theme.

I've been midwife to the Muse for seven years now, and it has been most enlightening for me. The course has provided me with useful material and insights for all of my courses and has filled in large previously uncharted areas on my critical map. If all goes well, I may yet come to be recognized as a leading authority on a sadly neglected aspect of literary study: the monomyth from the point of view of the younger White Goddess incarnate.

JANE GENTRY. President of the Grapheon Literary Society, Phi Beta Kappa, Jane added two more accomplishments to her growing list this year. In March she was the only Hollins student to be awarded a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship--she will use it to begin graduate study at Brandeis in the fall. The same month she learned that a poem of hers (see page 7) had been accepted for publication by the Sewanee Review, no mean feat for an undergraduate.

WHAT THE STAFF IS DOING.

When summer comes, the Department staff gets to work fulltime (that is, in between the beach, fishing, golf, and the like) on its professional activities. Here's what the various members will be doing:

JOHN A. ALLEN: working on his book on Shakespearean comedy, at Hollins and at Cape Cod.

- ROBERT M. FIGG: completing his Ph.D. dissertation on "Form in the Naturalistic Novel," here and at Chapel Hill.
- STUART H. L. DEGGINGER: transferring his base of operations from Hollins to Paris in time to take the 1963 Hollins Abroad group on its summer tour.
- JOHN C. GARRUTO: undertaking studies in educational technique and reading procedures at Charlottesville and Hollins.
- LOUIS D. RUBIN, JR.: mostly reading, but perhaps some writing if he can't avoid it, at Hollins and on the York River.
- JOHN REES MOORE: winding up a sabbatical year of work on Yeats' drama in Ireland, and returning home.
- CHAUNCEY WOOD: completing his Ph.D. dissertation on "Chaucer's Use of Medieval Astrology for Purposes of Poetic Imagery," at Princeton.
- JULIA R. SAWYER: writing, revising, and otherwise readying a new book of poems, here and in Baltimore.
- JESSE ZELDIN: beginning a new book on Gogol, here at Hollins.

PUBLICATIONS: Mr. Rubin's new book, "THE FARAWAY COUNTRY: WRITERS OF THE MODERN SOUTH. Eight Essays and a Postscript," will be out, from the University of Washington Press, in October. It represents, hopefully, his last book on Southern writing for some time.

PHI BETA KAPPA. BARBARA LORAIN REED, English major from (most recently) Batesville, Indiana, became the first Hollins student ever to be elected to Phi Beta Kappa in her junior year, when she was chosen by the members of Hollins' Iota of Virginia in February. Junior Phi Bete involves a merit point ratio significantly above that for election as a senior, which goodness knows is high enough as it is. MARY JOHNSTON AMOS, of Charleston, W. Va., a senior major, was likewise voted into Phi Bete in February. Loraine and Mary joined JANE GENTRY, of Lexington, Ky., who was the only Hollins student voted into the chapter in the fall. Thus, of the five Hollins Phi Betes for 1962-1963 (exclusive of any who may be chosen after final exams this year), three were English majors.

ONE WAY TO DO IT. When BETSY FORSYTHE, class of 1960, was a student at Hollins, she used to do some writing herself. Upon graduation, she married a playwright, OLIVER HAILEY, and now his first play, "Hey You, Light Man!", starring Madeleine Sherwood and Alfred Ryder, has been quite a success off-Broadway at the Mayfair Theater in New York. Moral: if you can't be one, go to work for the Dallas Morning News in the summer, meet one, and marry him.

HOLLINS-IN-SEWANEE. The winter, 1963, issue of the Sewanee Review, internationally-known literary quarterly review edited by Andrew Nelson Lytle and published by the University of the South, appeared in effect to be almost a Hollins College number. Hollins writer-in-residence Howard Nemerov was represented with a lengthy essay-review of the poems of James Dickey (1960 Hollins Literary Festival), entitled "Poems of Darkness and a Specialized Light." Next came "Edmund Wilson and the Despot's Heel," an essay-review of critic Edmund Wilson's latest book, PATRIOTIC GORE, by Hollins Professor Louis D. Rubin, Jr. There followed another essay-review by Hollins Professor John Rees Moore, "Swan or Goose?", a discussion of a new edition of William Butler Yeats' poems and a critical study of Yeats by Yvor Winters. Finally came a review by Edward M. Moore of Sewanee of the new edition of I'LL TAKE MY STAND: THE SOUTH AND THE AGRARIAN TRADITION, with new preface by Professor Rubin.

EDITORS. As might be expected, English majors will edit several Hollins publications in 1963-1964. Rising senior BETTY KELLY, of Oak Hill, West Virginia, succeeded soon-to-be-graduated GAIL WILLIAMS, of Ridgefield, Conn., last February as editor of Hollins Columns, her term to continue through next January. Rising Junior DIANA COE, of Owings Mills, Md., is the new editor of Cargoes, succeeding JANE GENTRY.

BIRD AND BEAR

I looked through my black window into black
And saw the great bear on his endless track
That leads him round the pole, back to his start,
Until the hatching sun shall break his heart

He paces in his circle through our sleep
Restless for his own that's long and deep,
Stays till the sky becomes a cave of light,
Retreats into his blazing, brilliant night.

Now comes the golden bird which flies its way
As if a thousand years were but a day,
Whose eye sheds light in watching busy men
And molting, drops to feed its fire again,

In the tall tree of its death and birth,
That stands in Memphis underneath the earth,
It finds the silence of the song it sings
And into ashes folds its glistening wings.

Then from the winter of cold hungry rest
The bear will rise as from a flaming nest
To transfix with a bright but lightless eye
The dreaming men who sleep beneath the sky;

Not as the bird in seeing to create
But, watching through the dark half of their fate,
To see that sleeping eyes shall always find
The black beast at the bottom of the mind.

BIRD AND BEAR (Continued)

The bird can keep the dream that is the day,
But when its time is run, it cannot stay.
Behind the daylight sky I see in black
The bear careening slowly on his track.

--Jane Gentry

GRAPHEON. Twenty-five Hollins students, nineteen of them English majors and one the department's lone graduate student, were elected Fellows of the Grapheon Literary Society, in recognition of accomplishment and interest in things literary. The English majors included: MARY AMOS, Charleston, W. Va.; SUE BARTH, Cleveland, Ohio; PEGGY HARDING, Short Hills, N. J.; JANE HARMON, Danville, Ky.; JULIA BLAKE, Belton, S. C.; KIT DAVISON, Alexandria, Va.; SALLY HOLLAND, Chappaqua, N. Y.; SUZANNE McCORMICK, Atlanta, Ga.; KARIN MYRIN, Kimberton, Pa.; BETSY PAYNE, Shreveport, La.; LORAIN REED, Batesville, Ind.; ROBIN ROUSE, Baltimore, Md.; ELLEN TABB, Alexandria, Va.; FLORRIE WIMBLE, Richmond, Va.; DIANA COE, Owings Mills, Md.; SYLVIA DOUGHTY, Washington, D. C.; MIMI DRAKE, Santa Barbara, Calif.; TAVENNER FINLAY, Chattanooga, Tenn.; RILEY ROGERS, Winchester, Ky.; and graduate student SYLVIA WILKINSON, of Durham, N. C. BETSY PAYNE, rising senior major from Shreveport, La., was elected president of Grapheon for 1963-1964. ELLEN TABB was chosen secretary, and TAVENNER FINLAY, treasurer.

LIBRETTIST. In addition to writing critical studies of Fyodor Dostoyevsky and (beginning this summer) Nikolai Gogol, Professor JESSE ZELDIN goes in directly for the muse herself, as witness his libretto to composer John Diercks' "Christmas Cantata." Diercks, who is chairman of Hollins' Music Department, was recently awarded a summer fellowship at the MacDowell Colony to complete the music to the Zeldin-composed libretto.

MISCELLANEOUS: Five poems by JANE GENTRY led off in the second issue of Ariel, published at Washington and Lee. . . . Hollins students MARY POE, NANCY ROYALL and TINKA MATSON had poems in Vol. II, No. 1 of Journals of Youth, published in Savannah, Georgia. . . . An essay, "What's Wrong with Graduate Literary Study?", by Professor RUBIN appeared in the spring issue of American Scholar. . . . Professor JESSE ZELDIN has been invited to contribute an essay on Rabelais to L'Esprit Createur. . . . Poems by DIANA COE, TAVENNER FINLAY, RILEY ROGERS, and JANE GENTRY were among those selected for reading, from among more than a hundred submitted from schools in two states, at the Hollins Literary Festival in March.

L.D.R.
Hollins College, Virginia
5-15-63