Splendid New Poet:

Time Without Number
by Daniel Berrigan

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tion to Philippine drama is most valuable: she gives encouragement to young and relatively obscure writers just when they need encouragement most, viz. when they are just beginning to write well.

To praise Mrs. Edades' work is of course not to endorse every play in the collection. Nor is this the place to undertake a detailed review of each play. One or other selection deserves especial notice. "The Technique is the Thing" by Amadea E. Medina is a good portrayal of character. "Cowards Die a Thousand Times" exploits an excellent dramatic situation. On the other hand we may be pardoned if we raise an eyebrow over the rather unusual Latinity displayed in the first selection in the book ("The Stake") where we find metern Deus (for etern Deus) visite atque defenedat (for visitet), and habitanculo (for habitaculo). But it is a clever play otherwise.

Two plays in this collection seem especially powerful: "The World is an Apple" and "Cadaver" both by Alberto Florentino, who, at the time of publication, was a student in the University of the East. That writer is worth watching. He has considerable talent.

One other point worth noting. The plays in this collection are not only competently written, but they also show a high moral tone and an awareness of the social and psychological problems of the Philippines. With the rise of juvenile delinquency in Manila and the other cities, it would be well for well-to-do parents to see a presentation of "The Angry Sea" by Elisa Tabuñar. She hits the nail on the head: juvenile delinquents are bred at home, when parents are always lunching out and dining out and there is no home-life for the children.

To Jean Edades, our hearty congratulations for a good selection of plays.

MIGUEL A. BERNAD

SPLENDID NEW POET

ONCE in a great while one comes across a book that is so thoroughly delightful (and we use "delightful" advisedly, recalling a classroom definition of the beautiful as that which, contemplated, summons delight) that one feels he must simply tell others what a wonderful discovery he has made. *Time Without Number* is that sort of a book: sheer delight to mind and heart, surely some of the finest and most authentic poetry to find its way between book covers in a long, long time. "This book changes the *status quo* of current poetry," says Sister Mary Madeleva, a perceptive critic and herself one of the better-known names in American poetry today. She continues "I cannot praise this book highly enough to satisfy my own enthusiasm and admiration for it."

Marianne Moore, who needs no introduction to students of contemporary letters uses the word "magic" to describe it. "This book pronounces judgment on the reader," she says, "rather than we on it; for it is indeed *revealed* as well as written. The whole is most intelligently presented ... familiar subject-matter made potent." And Phyllis McGinley, poetess and critic, in a two-page review article, speaks of "art rich and worth writing." First-rate, she points out, in the field of religious poetry, "a medium both perilous and unusual ... God knows how many travelers enter that country only to disappear forever, bogged down in the mires of sentimentality. Yet there is not a sentimental line here."

The author of *Time Without Number* is a young Jesuit priest, a lecturer in theology at Le Moyne College, Syracuse, New York. But lest that fact make this reviewer's enthusiasm for the work immediately suspect, we hasten to point out that the Academy of American Poets has given this volume its 1957 Lamont Poetry Award. The annual Lamont Poetry Prize competition has for its purpose "the discovery and encouragement of new poetic genius." This year twenty-seven manuscripts were submitted to the Academy by as many publishers. The Academy jury chose *Time Without Number* as its selection of the year and distributed copies of the work to the Academy membership. And critical appraisal has been almost invariably high praise and delighted acclaim.

Taking any page at random, one meets phrases, lines, sequences in which one unmistakably hears an authentic poetic voice.

You may decline a whole night of stars
by lighting or snuffing a candle in a closet.
That is on page one, in "Stars almost escape us." And here are lines from "The Crucifix" (one of the best things in the book) on pages two and three:

Let weathers tighten or loosen his nails:
he was vowed to stand.

Northstar took rise from his eyes,
learned constancy of him.

Let cloudburst break judgment,
sending workmen homeward
whipping their teams from field,
down the rutted road to barn

still his body took punishment like a mainsail
bearing the heaving world onward to the Father.

Let the reader be forewarned, though, that Father Berrigan's poetry is by no means "easy." To quote Phyllis McGinley again: "All is sinewy strong, astringent. If anything, it is too lean for casual enjoyment. It is epigrammatic almost to the point of harshness. Father Berrigan writes what is called 'difficult' poetry in that one must bend the whole mind to the encounter with his mind. He does not offer his reader a little nosegay of pleasant pieties. But there is a garden here, sternly cultivated, rewarding in all seasons." But if one must make the effort to "encounter" the poet's mind, it is an effort well worth making. There is so much here: of loveliness, of feeling, of uncommon insights into the theology of the Incarnation and the regained paradise that is the redeemed universe.

Father Berrigan's language is quite his own, and it is always sure, always adequate, and often superbly, breathtakingly "right." If one thinks of Hopkins or Dylan Thomas in a line here, in an image there, still there are no mere echoes or borrowing. In language and image and feeling there is here nothing second-hand.

"He stands in no one's shadow," says Sister Mary Madeleva. And another critic: "Father Berrigan has a signature and accent of his own."

May we give just one more sample at the end of this review? This is from page thirteen:
Everything that is is not something other:
a ridiculous pablum for the poet's mind
until the wind sing it, or star bring it
ringing its name through the astonishing night:
or on a March day, the selfsame crocus struggle
wildly into air, because its roots, through all winter's
leveling,
remembered their own name.

Or the maple that shook its glory down
puzzle strollers with its identical
and lovely form, four months later assumed again
gradually as a morning.

Such things somersault the mind
backward, inward:
I wonder who knew the stars
from flowers, before flowers were not stars:
before trees spread between one and other, a growth
by night starlike, by day a flowering, and yet itself?

In the last analysis, poetry must speak for itself. These poems do. They call doubtless for no ordinary attention, demand a "searching imagination" to match the poet's own, demand a willingness to let the poet's fine intelligence and sensibility, the disciplined richness of his language, his ingenuity with structure, the subtly-chiselled imagery yield their treasures in their own good time. In a special sense, one must bring contemplation to these pages to capture the deeper delight they hold.

This reviewer felt it was an imperative duty, and an honor, to introduce this slim volume to those of our readers who care for fine poetry.

C. G. Arevalo

PSYCPATHS AND DELINQUENTS