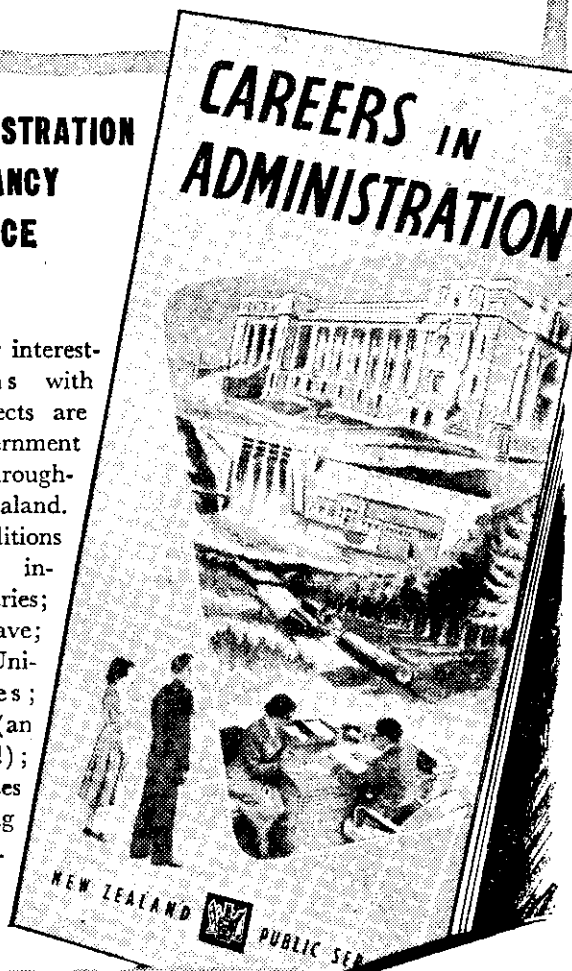


# LEAVING COLLEGE?

HAVE YOU CONSIDERED A CAREER IN THE  
**PUBLIC SERVICE?**

**PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION  
ACCOUNTANCY  
INSURANCE  
LAW**

and many other interesting positions with excellent prospects are offering in Government Departments throughout New Zealand. Attractive conditions of employment include: good salaries; generous sick leave; time off for University studies; superannuation (an income for life!); lodging allowances for juniors living away from home.



For full details inquire from:—

- The Employment Officer, Public Service Commission, P.O. Box 8004, Wellington.
- or The Assistant Public Service Commissioner, P.O. Box 1484, Auckland.
- or The Public Service Commission Representative, P.O. Box 1258, Christchurch.

*Send for this  
booklet NOW!*

1/54

*Every fill  
a pleasure*

**IT'S TOASTED!**



N 6 4

## BOOKS

# How Mad is Any Poet?

FROM A PSYCHIATRIST'S NOTEBOOK.  
by Merrill Moore; Pegasus Press, Christchurch, 12.6. MERRILL MOORE AND THE AMERICAN SONNET. Cartoons by St. John Gorey, with Comment by Denis Glover, Louis Untermeyer and William Carlos Williams; a pamphlet, also from the Pegasus Press.

(Reviewed by Anton Vogt)

EVERYONE who has read about dead poets or met live ones knows that there is something very peculiar about most of them. Some of them were or are mad most of the time and others have been or seem to be mad some of the time. Cowper, Blake and Coleridge are random historical examples; and their own contemporaries gratuitously included Shelley and Byron. Unfortunately, the laws of libel prevent me from adding the names of my friends to this distinguished list. Indeed, I cannot name any living poet, other than Ezra Pound, who has been certified insane. I am very sorry about this, since approbation in one's own time diminishes one's chances of poetic immortality; and I want to name my friends because I am fond of them, however peculiar some of them may be.

The first man in modern times to suggest that divine madness had its own cure was Freud. Roughly, his argument was that we are all neurotics; but that the neurotic artist, including the poet, goes to the root of his problems and solves them in his work. Freud couldn't have said this idly. After all, it suggests that every poet is his own psychiatrist, so he was doing himself and his followers out of a job by saying it. The only conclusion one can come to is that he thought he would find enough clients elsewhere. If this was prophecy, it seems to have come true. But in the kingdom of the mad, as Ibsen has pointed out, a sane man is out of step.

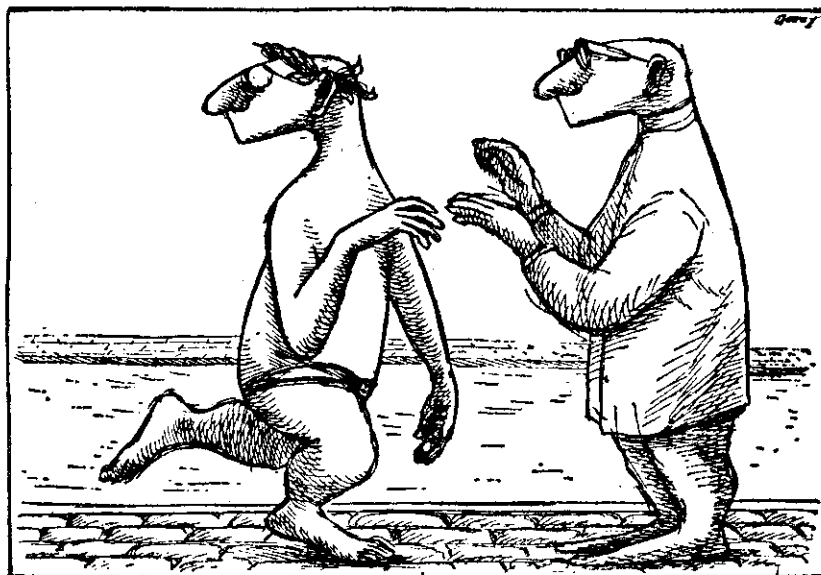
Merrill Moore, whose sonnets provoke these statements, is perhaps less of a poet than a phenomenon. He claims to have written 100,000 sonnets, which he keeps in a special sonnetorium. But one can't jump to rash conclusions from

that. Merrill Moore isn't just a poet; he is a distinguished psychiatrist. Moreover, there is no record of his charging himself any fee for analyses of himself. Instead of that he has had them published, along with analyses of others, and people pay to read them. What greater proof could there be of his essential sanity?

How good his sonnets are is another question. He toys with the original rhyme patterns, which obviously makes him suspect. Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton altered inherited patterns, too; but they have the poetic advantage of having been dead for so long that no one can accuse them of being radical now. He is so shameless that he doesn't even insist on fourteen lines, and every schoolboy knows that a sonnet without fourteen lines just isn't a sonnet. But then George Meredith, as far as one can gather, either didn't know or didn't care; so why should we?

When the pedants have picked over the poetic carcase, we are left with the liver and the lights. They to "the traditional strophes, resounding rhetoric, and oratorical mumbo jumbo"; Moore and ourselves to his "spontaneous . . . unpredictable . . . honestly improvised . . . free thought" (Louis Untermeyer). Whether it's poetry or not, his writing is all of those things. It's not earth-shaking, but it is diverting. If it's crazy, it is astonishingly pertinent in its revelations of quirks in ourselves and others. Studiously avoiding the passion and music of great poetry, it achieves clinical precision in spite of its loose form. And Moore has compassion for the creatures he dissects.

These books are published in New Zealand by historical accident. Moore was here during the war, as Medical Officer with the United States Marines. He met, and was interested in, several New Zealand poets. We have no means of knowing whether he was interested in them in a professional capacity, or as a fellow poet; but these books are evidence of his respect for Denis Glover, himself an occasional versifier, as a printer. And as a printing job the book is beautiful, and the pamphlet a delight.



THE DOCTOR HALTS A SONNET IN ITS FLIGHT FROM REALITY  
(A St. John Gorey cartoon from "Merrill Moore and the American Sonnet")