

# CON

by Ambrose Fierce

On a maimed penis you could count the number of general readers who know the meaning of "eminence gris."

Yet there the term was. Earlier today, in the University Hospital's admitting ward, anxious to get in and get the operation over with (I am having my eustachian tubes tied off), I had been randomly flipping through that biggest and most general magazine in the world, *Time*. If you can read at all, I had always supposed, you can read *Time*. *Time* is for everybody, for everybody reads *Time*. Anyone can, everyone does. Its appeal, in the English-speaking world, is powerful and persuasive. *Time* is, *Time* was, *Time* will be.

But, "eminence gris"? Sure enough. Right there, in the first line, fifth and sixth words, of this February's art department, page 52. It is in this section that, weekly, Robert Hughes educates us, furthers our knowledge and appreciation of the plastic arts, and deserves for this service our gratitude. But, still, "eminence gris"? If Mr. Hughes were not so obviously a man of learning and integrity (he writes for *Time*) and if *Time* were not a repository of wisdom and talent (it employs, for example, Robert Hughes), I could find it in my heart to suspect Mr. Hughes of throwing us a curve right off the bat.

That is the sort of metaphor ("throw curve"/"off bat") which Mr. Hughes would himself admire; he speaks in the first paragraph of "coalescing" a "frail identity," and that is nice to try picturing in one's mind. But it gets better. In the second paragraph, headed "FLINTY INTRANSIGENCE" (Hey Bub! Hey Bub Slug! Know what's this here goddam flinty intransigence? "Suthin' ta do with fuckin' cheap skinflint bastards won't buy their round? Or fuckin' smelly sonofabitchin' transients? Or —" That'll do, Bub. Shut up and listen.) Mr. Hughes really gets going: The result is that (Clifford) Still has become a respected enigma. He is seen as a model of flinty intransigence, and looks it: a gaunt, atrabilious (Bub? ... Never mind.) figure of 71 with a cutting eye, he has managed to control the fate of his work more effectively than any other artist of his generation. He still owns nearly all his output ...

Now this means that Mr. Still, an extremely disagreeable old painter — inside or outside, we never find out which — refuses to sell his work; he prefers instead (we later learn), to hunker about on his Maryland farm, bitching about and bewailing his little and belated recognition. Even Mr. Hughes seems to see something contradictory in this behaviour: "Thus," concedes our critic and educator, "Still's complaints about being misunderstood

have, to a certain extent, been self-fulfilling: there has always been a lack of public evidence of his work." I like that, Bob. I like it a lot.

But that situation is, thank God, a thing of the past. San Francisco now has lots of the old man's stuff — as much as anyone could wish — "ranging from an emaciated and muddily impasted striding figure painted in 1934, to a trio of enormous canvases done 40 years later." See? See how he has improved? Who wants little, old, muddy things when he can as well have huge, new, nice ones? Nobody but a nitwit, Bub.

The Early work is of special historical interest. It illustrates Still's cubist affinities ... a painting like PH-591

(Note here: This work is reproduced in the article, but all the cretinous lead-writer could think of to say about it was, "Black figures appear in Clifford Still's PH-591." Is not that abject poverty of expression utterly pathetic? The works themselves are *Magnifique! juangris! weltschmerz!* Listen instead to Mr. Hughes. Listen and learn.) — a painting like PH-591, which dates from 1936-37, with its sinuous line meandering through black planes, is like a Braque made with an ax (Right! What a dead-on, dynamite simile! Well, Bub, a simile is ...) — but it often shows the common root of interest in biomorphic (Just forget it, Bub.) and mythical imagery shared by Rothko, Newman, and other abstract expressionists, out of which would grow Still's passion for the sublime.

There now! See what a difference it makes getting a man in there who knows what he's talking about. Pay attention now, Bub, because here comes the best part, which even you should be able to grasp.

Elementalism is the recurrent mood of Still's paintings. Many abstract expressionist canvases allude, directly or not (See? It turns out that there are such things as direct allusions.) to landscape ... (Still) is not, of course, a literal landscapist (sky at top, earth below). (Of course not; do you take us for damned fools?) Yet there is every reason (and therefore no need to cite even one) to see in his work a splendid addition to the romantic tradition of landscape ...: A sense of vast, brooding presences, a pantheistic immanence (Bub, quit reading over my shoulder and get the hell away from me and back on the job. If you're so mud-stupid you can't understand the simplest — never mind. Just leave.) Flickering with energy and heavy with foreboding.

By God, I couldn't have put it better myself. What? What's that, Bub? No, you don't. *You don't even know what you like.*

## Dopes see red with L-Dopa

LOS ANGELES (ZNS-CUP) — If you've knocked back a few too many drinks, University of California scientists have just the thing for you: a "sober up" pill which can reduce the effects of alcohol by 50 per cent just 30 minutes after ingested.

Researchers at the university's Irvine campus experimented for three years with a group of drugs called "amethystic agents" containing the drug L-Dopa.

While the pills don't reduce the amount of alcohol in the system they stimulate chemicals in the brain which reverse the effects of alcohol, says project director Ernest Noble.

He says it works in the same way adrenaline does when motorists with a few drinks under their belt see flashing red police lights.



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## SATURDAY 20

9:30 a 10:00

**TOURLOU** ... first of a series of 39 sketches on the history of French Canadian Folk Songs and music ... Producer: Denis Lord; Ass. Prod: Scholastique Huleu; Announcer: Normand Belanger



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Well, we can't both take her to the Saturday night dinwoodie cabaret. What do you say we flip for it?

Okay, what should we flip?

The girl, of course.

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comprising former members of The Guess Who, Musical Odyssey, and Mood JGA JGA

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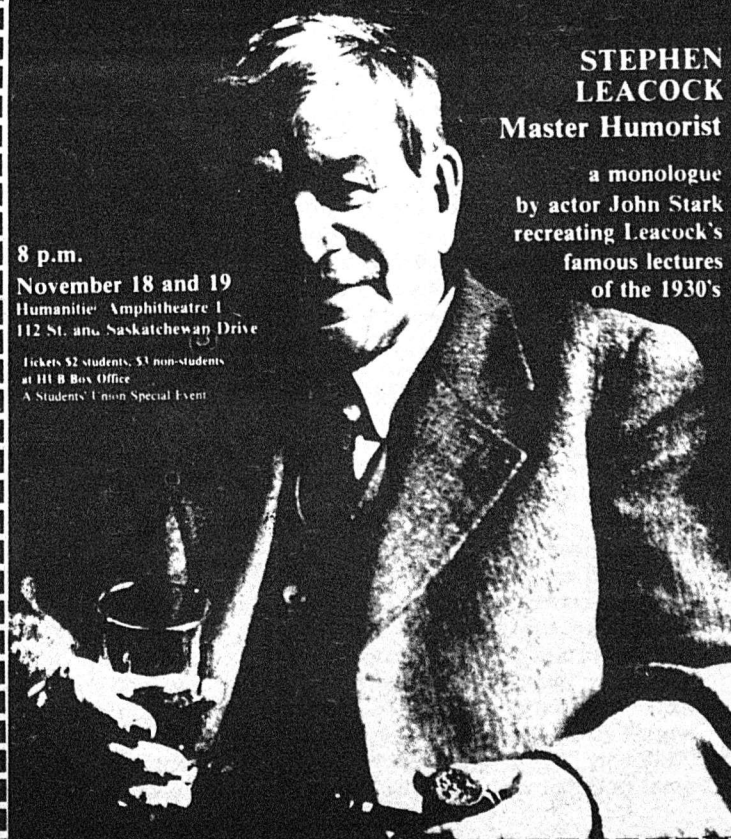
Al  
Purdy

AWARDS: President's Medal, U. of Western Ont., 1964  
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Centennial Medal, 1967  
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