an inseparable feature of society as now constituted. Mr. Krock might find it interesting and profitable to scan some of The Western Socialist articles of the war years. His own limitations as a columnist for capitalist journals might be brought home to him.

RAB

Readers of THE WESTERN SOCIALIST who have become convinced of the urgent need to organize for socialism, write to:
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THE ARTIST UNDER CAPITALISM

After two hundred years of sprawling, consuming, geometrically - accelerated growth, the capitalist system has left nothing untouched. For raw materials it has pried into oceans and atoms; for labor and markets, into jungles and rice paddies. It has affected every sort of relationship, every sort of individual and social function, every sort of class. No one, whether he wants to or not, whether he fancies himself free man or slave, can remain unaffected. The system must and will suck him in, and he will find himself belonging to one of two existing classes: working people or capitalists. There are no other classes. Granted the working class is by far the larger and the more varied, the market value of the labor-power of some of its members running quite high; and granted not all of its members engage in actual production, but instead help to realize profit on the commodities produced. (Others help to maintain the health of their class, or assist in its job training.) However, the complexity of the system does not fundamentally alter its basic social relationships. To speak of capitalism is to speak of conflicts of class interest; there is no way to avoid this.

Individuals in certain occupations like to think of themselves as "classless," as somehow cut off from the system and living independently of it. Yet Marx wrote in **The Communist Manifesto** that "the bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honored and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science into its paid wage-laborers."

Let us consider the place of the writer, or poet, under capitalism. His occupation is rooted in a tradition going back to ancient Greece and beyond. As an artist, his function, from earliest times, has been a social function of entertainment and enlightenment: entertainment through wit, originality, craft, and imagination; enlightment through the clarification of human experience. It must be emphasized that the artist deliberately has done these things for the enrichment of the society; that he has been the inheritor of a craft tradition as well as an innovator; and that if he was a respectable member of his tradition, he did not except in unusual cases, such as the Athenian vase painters, live by selling his work until comparatively recent times. The double task of all art has always been both to entertain, and to enlighten. The greatest artists have been those who could "enlighten entertainingly," that is, those who conceived of the two tasks as one, and did not try to separate them. The criteria of the greatest poets for good work — Chaucer's "sentence and solaas," Keats' "truth and beauty" — have put the two tasks together, and their work exemplifies the combination.

THE MARKETS

The modern writer, beginning his career with dreams of a place by the greats and very soon encountering failure, finds that modern publishing is divided into two overlapping markets: the "commercial" and the "quality." The writers themselves have provided the names. There is no way for a writer to by-pass the markets if his works are to be read. Before capitalism, he could perhaps find patronage in the home of a feudal aristocrat, or circulate his work in manuscript, as was the ideal procedure during the English Renaissance. At that time, a writer who "published," that is, sold his works to the printers and book-sellers, was considered a hack and definitely inferior. Surrey, Wyatt, and Sir Philip Sidney became known by word of mouth; and Shakespeare, whose plays were not published until much later, become known because he wrote for the theater. But capitalism has changed that. The feudal class of patrons is overthrown, and a man trying to circulate his work in manuscript form today would get no further than his immediate family.

Commercial writing especially is openly acknowledged as a business. The commercial writers, who include the vast majority of people who publish, produce commodities for sale on a market; commodities which must meet the specifications of that market in order to sell; that is, in order to be read. The market includes such wide-circulation magazines as **The Reader's Digest, The Saturday Evening Post, The Ladies Home Journal,** and all of what are commonly known as "the slicks" and "the pulps." Their specifications require the manufacture of a fiction life which has at best a distorted relation to life as it actually is. Characters appear, indeed are preferred to appear, as types rather than as people: the typical housewife, the typical business executive, the typical egghead, the typical Sensitive Young Man, the typical teen-ager, the typical Mysterious Woman. Editors look for the use of certain standard "tricks of the trade" in the products which come into their offices; the opening catch, the hook, and so forth; and the author who disdains their use has a slim chance of selling. The stories all conform to a rigid set of standard taboos, areas of life which they must not explore on pain of rejection and obscurity: all types of sexual perversion, insanity, permanent disabilities, extreme ugliness, and extreme poverty, to mention a few. Richard Summers, in an article from **The Writer's Book** (Barnes & Noble, 1956, called "Techniques of the Modern Short Story," lists some other specifications:

"(1) that young love is the essence of living and is best fulfilled in marriage; (2) that every individual has some good in him no matter how bad he may appear superficially (the crusty, unpleasant character with the heart of gold); (3) that friendship is almost the highest form of human relationship, and faithfulness to friendship is sometimes more important than love or duty; (4) that above all, no matter what occurs, a man must do his duty; (5) that true generosity is one of the most selfless and noble of human acts; (6) that renunciation — of child, wife, sweetheart, friend — in justifiable circumstance is a proper necessity for continuing to live; (7) that man is the complete master of his own fate or destiny and that those with sufficient virtue or courage or sacrifice can overcome all obstacles to success; (8) that the young and innocent child can often aid the confused adult; (9) that patriotism is noble and pacifism despicable unless in a minister, (10) that home and family is the only desirable situation in life... (11) that evil people will inevitably repent or be properly punished; (12) and, finally, that good must and will triumph over evil."

In other words, the commercial market has commanded that the writer, above all, provide entertainment, platitude and escapism rather than serious examination, clarification, and honesty. If the writer must clarify, it would prefer that he does not do so too freely, for this would touch upon some unpleasantness that might offend the advertisers.

In other words, the commercial market has separated the two tasks which must never be separated if the writing is to be great, and has preferred a hackneyed, sugar-plum entertainment to enlightenment.

It is sad enough that a short story or a poem should be turned into a market commodity, this would not be