

PAPERBOUNDS

THE MIND READER: New Poems. By Richard Wilbur. Harcourt, 1977. 67 pp. \$3.25

For more than two decades, Richard Wilbur has been called the foremost American formalist poet. This reissue of his latest (1976) collection is a good occasion for dropping the qualifier and admitting that the man who once wrote the line *I am for wit and wakefulness* is one of our better poets of any sort. Again and again in these lyrics Wilbur demonstrates the power of poetry to excoriate and delight us, to shake us while reconciling us, through the charity of intelligence, to the things of this world. Who else could have written "To the Etruscan Poets"? [*They,*] *joining world and mind, / . . . strove to leave some line of verse behind / Like a fresh track across a field of snow, / not reckoning that all could melt and go.*

WRITERS AT WORK: The Paris Review Interviews (4th series). Edited by George Plimpton. Penguin reprint, 1977. 459 pp. \$4.50

Wilfred Sheed wrote the introduction to these interviews, as "partly an act of reparation" for a "lofty piece" on the second series, in which he "artfully concealed" how much he had enjoyed the volume ("I was too young to be honest"). He makes the point that gossip is the very stuff of literature, "the *materia prima* of which both books and authors are made," then goes on to say that these interviews are more than gossip, are in fact themselves art. Writers, seemingly allowed to question themselves, "collaborate in their own limits." This time around, we have 16 collaborators—from the late Isak Dinesen to John Updike. They discuss everything from lust, which Robert Graves tells the interviewer "involves a loss of virtue, in the sense of psychic

power," to the importance of being on time and approaching a novel with "some urgency." This, Anthony Burgess declares, James Joyce failed to do in *Ulysses*: "The ending is different from the beginning. Technique changes halfway through. [He] spent too long on the book."

CALDER: An Autobiography with Pictures. By Alexander Calder. Pantheon Books, 1977. 288 pp. \$7.95 (cloth, \$15.95)

GEORGIA O'KEEFFE. By Georgia O'Keeffe. Unnumbered. Penguin, 1977. \$14.95 (Viking, cloth, \$35)

Painters and sculptors have an advantage over writers when it comes to autobiography—providing that the prose they use to supplement the illustrative material also shines with talent. In both these books, the words work splendidly. *Calder* was first published in 1966. In a new introduction, the sculptor's artist son-in-law, Jean Davison, extends the sense that Calder himself conveyed (to the day of his death in 1976) of a life filled with gusto, joy, family fun, and artistic battles. Davison asked "Pop" the lesson of his 77 full years, which began with Calder posing for sculptures by his father and paintings by his mother and ended with the world enriched by his giant steel "stabiles" and lightsome, delicately balanced "mobiles." "I guess I am very proud of myself," Calder answered.

In Georgia O'Keeffe's world, joy and pride figure, too. But here a quality of austere sensuousness makes the artist's life—and work—very different. A limited \$60 edition of her book was published in slightly larger format in 1976. She wrote the brief text and closely supervised the production. The result is an annotated collection of 108 remarkably true color plates of her flower and desert paintings, many never before reproduced. O'Keeffe's