The Puritans believed that work gave each man his identity. Wyeth laments, above all, the passing of this belief. His paintings frequently show lone, self-absorbed country folk, apparently oblivious to the signs of their labor that surround them. To many critics, these canvases represent a blind yearning for America's rural past. But Brighton argues that they are a protest against dehumanizing industrialism that even Wyeth's critics on the Left should appreciate.

Robert Frost As Critic

"Robert Frost: On the Dialectics of Poetry" by Sheldon Liebman, in *American Literature* (May 1980), Duke University Press Bldg., East Campus, Duke University, Durham, N.C. 27706.

Robert Frost (1874–1963) adamantly refused to publicize his theories about poetry. He nevertheless established himself as a major critic of verse in letters to friends and in interviews, writes Liebman, professor of English at the University of Illinois, Chicago Circle.

Frost believed that the creative process begins with a descent into "chaos." In one sense, he saw chaos as reverie. "All of a sudden something becomes prominent [and] I can pick the poem off it," he said in 1960. But Frost's chaos was also an objective fact, the reality lying beneath the manmade order of everyday life. To appreciate it, the poet abandoned conventional, rational ways of perceiving and cultivated the "hearing imagination," listening for his own "tone of voice" as well as the sounds and phrases of others.

Frost denied that poets bring raw material to life through an act of will. The poem makes itself, he argued, explaining, "Like a piece of ice on a hot stove, the poem must ride on its own melting." Poetry, he stressed, "must be a revelation . . . as much for the poet as for the reader."

Yet Frost denounced modern poets who wrote as if "wildness" and "sound" were all they needed. "Emotions must be dammed back and harnessed by discipline to the wit mill, not just turned loose in exclamations," he maintained. The whole function of poetry is the "renewal of words"—the recovery of lost original meanings, and, through metaphor, the reaffirmation of a word in a new context. Ultimately, poetry was to Frost a "voyage of discovery" beginning in chaos and ending in clarity and insight.

The Beleaguered Acropolis

"Truth at a Loss" by John Appleton, in *Museum Magazine* (July–August 1980), Museum Circulation Service, P. O. Box 1200, Bergenfield, N.J. 07621.

Revered as a great monument of Western culture, Athens's Acropolis has suffered extraordinary indignities.

The site was sanctified by the ancient Greeks in the 5th century B.C.,

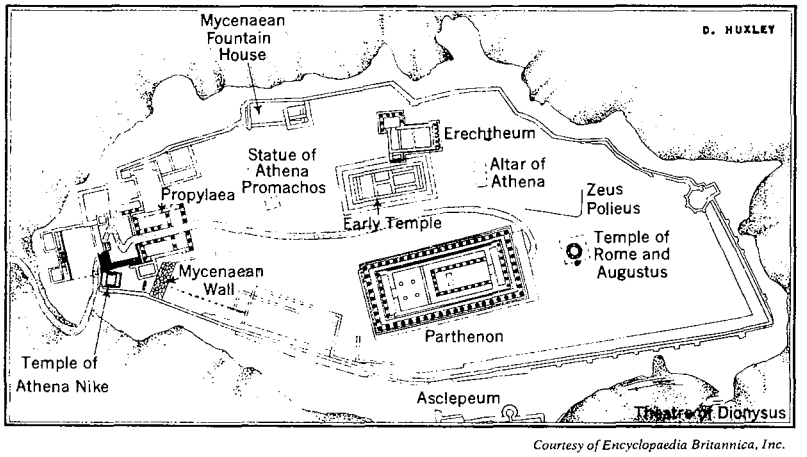
when the Parthenon was built atop the Acropolis as a temple to the goddess Athena. But by 304 B.C., a Macedonian ruler of Athens was using the Parthenon's *cella* (main courtyard) to house his concubines, writes Appleton, former book editor at *Harper's*.

General Marc Antony regularly staged orgies on the Acropolis after Athens's conquest by the Romans in 86 B.C. Three and one-half centuries later, the Goths set fire to the hilltop. During the early Middle Ages, Christians turned the Temple of Athena into the Church of the Virgin Mary—and defaced many of the pagan sculptures.

When the Ottoman Turks stormed the citadel in 1458, the Parthenon became a mosque. The Turks did little deliberate damage but decided the Parthenon and neighboring temples were ideal for storing gunpowder. In 1670, an accidental explosion gutted the north wing of one of them, the Propylaea. The British administered the final insults. In 1800, the Earl of Elgin, England's envoy to the Turkish sultan, began "one of the greatest depredations of works of art ever committed." He was determined to outdo Napoleon, who captivated Europe with ancient Egyptian treasures brought back from his 1798 expedition to the Nile. Elgin later sold his hoard to the British Museum.

Since 1950, Athens has been transformed into a traffic-jammed metropolis where half of Greece's cars discharge pollutants, including sulfur fumes. This turns the Parthenon's marble into soft, crumbly gypsum. Moreover, an old effort to preserve the temple has soured. Iron supports installed in 1894 after a mild earth tremor have rusted, swelled, and cracked the marble.

A new Committee for the Preservation of Acropolis Antiquities, with a $1.25 million annual budget, has made progress toward ending the



Courtesy of Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc.

Industrial pollution is damaging the Parthenon and nearby temples, which have stood on Athens's hilltop Acropolis for 2,300 years.

pollution threat. Buses and cars are no longer permitted in the immediate vicinity, and fuels with a sulfur content greater than 1 percent are banned near the site. Scientists have converted gypsum back into marble in the laboratory. But an estimated 100 tons of industrial soot falls back on each square mile of Athens every month, posing a greater threat to the Parthenon and its neighbors atop the Acropolis than did all the barbarians of the past.

OTHER NATIONS

Syria's Troubles

"Syria: Fin de Regime?" by Stanley Reed, in *Foreign Policy* (Summer 1980) P.O. Box 984, Farmingdale, N.Y. 11737.

Before Syria's President Hafez al-Assad seized power in November 1970, the nation had suffered through 20 military coups in 24 years. Since then, Syria's once stagnant economy has grown by nearly 8 percent annually (though per capita national output is only $800), in a decade of unprecedented political stability. But growing resentment against Assad at home and Syria's failures abroad may doom the regime, reports Reed, a Cairo-based journalist.

Most of the 7.8 million Syrians are Sunnis, the majority sect in the Muslim world. They view their creed as the purest form of Islam. However, Assad, his powerful brother Rifaat, and much of the armed forces are Alawites, who revere the Prophet Muhammed's cousin Ali, and who are considered heretics by the Sunnis.

Sunnis historically dominated Syrian society. But during the 1940s and '50s, lower-class rural Alawites like Assad flocked to the Army and to the avowedly socialist Ba'ath party, the only open avenues of self-advancement. Today, they control the military and the burgeoning intelligence agencies. Sunnis, who still run socialist Syria's remaining private businesses, bitterly resent the Alawites' power.

Foreign policy setbacks have further eroded Assad's popularity. Twenty-four thousand Syrian troops have been bogged down in a "peace-keeping" mission in Lebanon for four years. The 1978 Camp David accords destroyed Assad's post-1973 rapprochement with the United States. Accusing Egyptian President Anwar el-Sadat of signing a separate peace with Israel, Assad has, for the moment, ended any willingness to consider a negotiated Middle East settlement.

Political dissent is not tolerated in Syria and corruption is rampant. The sporadic terrorism conducted by the mysterious anti-Assad forces known as the Muslim Brotherhood (who seem to draw support from all classes in Syria) escalated into full-fledged guerrilla war in June 1979. Political killings by the Brotherhood may have reached 400 in the past year. In April 1980, Assad sent elite troops and tanks into the cities of