

Romanticism, Science Conflict on Moon Shot

Poets and Writers in Trouble: Long Range Plans Had Included Unmanned Space Vehicle Only

"Moon
you were my sadness
pictured in your
solitude
I spoke your name
in syllables
of gold
of languine
of silver tone

That was in reverie
before your fall."

—Robert Lima
Penn State, 1969

Apparently even man's spectacular conquest of the moon has a slight touch of nostalgia.

Because now comes the question, what happens to one of the great inspirations of poets and songwriters now that man's technology has unveiled the moon as nothing more than a pock-marked wasteland of rocks and craters?

"The mystery of the moon is gone," laments one such man, Robert F. Lima, poet, critic, and associate professor of Spanish and Comparative Literature.

"To the poet, the invasion of the moon is something like having a celestial joke played on him. For ages and ages, he has written about the moon in song and verse, linking her to love and fantasy, majesty and divinity; yet, suddenly, he finds

that his place has been usurped and that his symbol has been deflowered."

And now that man's race to space has taken this traditional symbol of romanticism down from her pedestal, Lima says today's poet will have to relate to the moon in ways quite different from those of the past.

"He may either completely ignore the moon, start making light of her as one more absurdity in man's life, or try to create a neo-romantic image of life there, maybe even exclaiming: 'Long live man on the moon!'" the professor suggests.

"It could be that the Apollo mission, despite its purely technological achievement, may inspire the first real epic poem of modern literature. In recent centuries there hasn't been a subject big enough or worthy enough for epic consideration. Certainly the landing by man on the moon generates the excitement and awe necessary for such inspiration."

But the day of the moon as a romantic image is over, Lima maintains.

"Frank Sinatra's 'Fly Me To The Moon' could well be the very last romantic song written about the moon," he says. "The songwriters of today will have to change their style. They can't romanticize about the moon anymore, because the mystery has been explained and its exotic aspect debunked. When you know what something's about, it loses its appeal."

As for the poet, Lima expects many may choose to ignore the moon completely because its moon-ian role in space exploration has made it a stepping-stone for what some call our materialistic society, a new symbol for colonization and exploitation.

"Even before the advent of the space program, even before projects like Vanguard, Gemini and Apollo were heard of, modern day poets began trending away from the romantic image of the moon," Lima points out.

"The contemporary poet is more involved with the socioeconomic problems of the world—pollution of natural resources, hunger, over-population, racial mis-true, law and order, political hypocrisy and other human concerns. Where such subjects abound there's very little room left for poetry that is romantic."

While Alfred Noyes, for example, wrote of the moon as a "ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas," today's poet is writing in the sphere of protest and change.

Yet, while poets are going through this metamorphosis of themselves, Lima feels people as people will continue to take great pleasure in being able to look up and see the moon—even though it is just rocks and craters—because from earth it will still be beautiful.

"As individuals, I think—and hope!—that we will still find beauty in nature, despite our increasing technological sophistication," he says. "The changing moon should always remind us of our relatively humble achievements."

But what of the contemporary poet? What of his view of the moon? Perhaps, offers Lima, the answer lies in sending one there someday.

"The poet on the moon will be able to get a clearer view of the universe," he suggests. "Too many of today's poets have lost sight of the beauty of the macrocosm. In taking them away from the problems of earth, a new creative expansion could take place in them. Such a journey would make it possible for the poet to see the earth from the moon, as we now see the moon from the earth. The beauty and splendor of such a view, indeed its awe, would contrast dramatically with the only grotesque view the poet now has of his mother planet."

Appropriately, on the very eve of man's first daring attempt to actually land on the moon, Robert Lima, poet and professor, has attempted to capture his feelings, in the way he knows best—through a poem entitled "Apollo."

"RUSHING
to barren Moon,
the rape of fertile Venus,
the clash with Mars
are left without a second
in our rhetoric

We are content
to spend ourselves
with reason
Let others put a dream to work."



THOUGH HE MAY be a bit premature, Robert F. Lima says today's contemporary poet might have a better view of the Earth by seeing it and writing about it from the moon.

At the very beginning not even the most visionary of the nation's space pioneers dared envision that the distant moon would be within the reach of man within a decade.

The year was 1958 and National Aeronautical Space Association was but a babe in arms and John P. Hagen could look back on it because he was there.

"Initially, when the long range plans for the future of NASA were being formulated, we weren't thinking in terms of a man on the moon by 1970," he recalled.

"It was clear that it adequate financial support was forthcoming and things went along reasonably well. But certainly could send a rocket to the moon by 1969."

"But that was to be an unmanned space vehicle to either land on the moon or orbit it. It wasn't until two or three years later that man was inserted suddenly into the space program."

Eleven years ago John P. Hagen was director of Project Vanguard, the nation's first venture into the space orbiting business.

Today as heard on the Desert Voice of Astronomy's weekly broadcast on the eve of man's most spectacular leap into the solar system, pull quietly on his pipe and remember.

He could remember that those recent early chilly days for the American space scene and he could remember all the heat that went with it.

"In the early 1950's the international space program was decided on a plan for a new International Geophysical Year in 1958 in which an effort would be made to orbit a satellite around the earth for scientific research," Hagen said.

"The President (Eisenhower) approved the project in 1955 and Vanguard was born. It was to be a civilian project that marked the beginning of the United States' earth satellite program."

His memory was clear now and Hagen went on to list his pipe and remember.

"We had to start from scratch. We had to build our own launch facilities, we had to build a vehicle and we had to develop a tracking system."

"Our plan was to launch a vehicle in 1958 during the IGY year, but even at that we were pushed because we were starting from scratch," Hagen said.

And then, the Russians set the world on its ear.

Oct. 4, 1957, Sputnik I was shot into space by the Soviets and all hell broke loose in this country.

John Hagen remembered that, too.

"Everybody lost all sense of perspective. Everybody was screaming about why were they ahead of us. There was a lot of excitement in political and scientific circles. I assure you."

"In retrospect, the Russians made a decision to develop large military rockets to deliver their heavy, heavy atomic weapons and they had been working on them for sometime."

"The real shock wasn't their capability to space but rather their capability in the art of military rocketry. The Russians had developed a massive intercontinental missile, something our country wasn't ready to believe," Hagen said.

The United States chose to catch up with industrial capabilities the Russians are proud of today. It was his belief by the speech President Kennedy made to the Congress in 1961 making a man on the moon before the end of the decade a matter of national pride and priority.

Looking back, Hagen had this to say:

"If you do some Monday morning quarterbacking of the Russians haven't orbited their satellite, our space program probably would have ended with the IGY year and the Vanguard satellite launched in March of 1958."

"It would have taken years to convince Congress to put billions of dollars in the space program. The total cost of Vanguard was \$30 million and we had to give a highly technical group of scientists support to get for that. The Russians' demonstration ability with an intercontinental missile turned Congress around."

Hagen said the space program in 1962 to return to the moon. The Vanguard program, and the scientific research of the upper atmosphere.

But he can't help but marvel at the giant strides the nation has taken in conquering the wonders of space.

"Twice I thought we would never meet the timetable we set for ourselves," he conceded. "In 1966 when Gemini failed to complete a scheduled rendezvous and then again in January, 1967, when the Apollo I fire killed the three astronaut I didn't think we could make it. In both cases I was overly conservative."

"That's what's been so overwhelming about this, that our moon program has come on top so fast without, except for the tragic fire, any disaster to throw the schedule off."

And then the scientist in him comes out a bit.

"My only hope is that we don't permit our enthusiasm with the success of the program to lose sight of the fact that this is a scientific venture," he said.

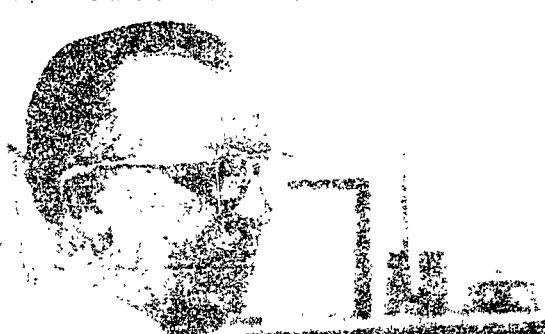
"As spectacular an achievement as the moon landing will be, the real achievement is going to be what the astronauts pick up and bring back from the moon so that we can learn more about it."

If it weren't for a previous commitment to attend a National Academy of Science meeting on solar-terrestrial relationships in Colorado, Hagen would have been at Cape Kennedy for the moon launch.

But like all Americans he'll be watching it.

Asked what he expected to be doing at blast off time, he replied with a smile:

"Keeping my fingers crossed."



JOHN HAGEN, former director of Project Vanguard, the first U.S. venture into the scientific exploration of space by satellite, reflects on the giant strides taken in the nation's space program during the past decade.

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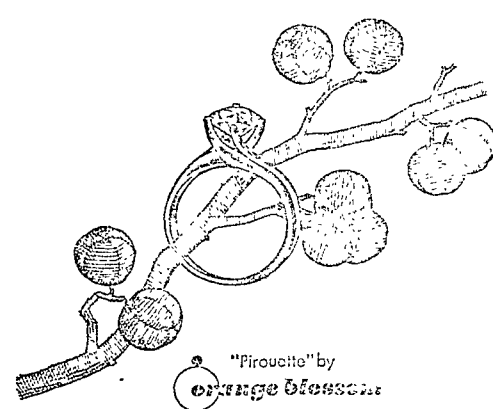
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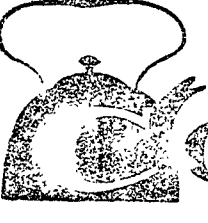
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