

# MICHAEL HAMBURGER:

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## To Poet, Writing Is 'Mug's Game'

Michael Hamburger agrees with T. S. Eliot—writing poetry is a mug's game.

The British poet, spending the fall as a visiting professor at USC, explained that a mug's game is one which is foolish or unprofitable. That's the title he's given his autobiography, which will be published next month in London. Hamburger has been a poet since his teens. His first published poem was at 17, before serving in the British Army, and his first book appeared when he was 19. Since 1950 he has had eight books of original poetry published, the most recent, "Ownerless Earth: New and Selected Poetry," released this year. He will give a public reading of his poetry Dec. 3 at 8 p.m. in the College of Business

Administration building auditorium.

Still, Hamburger would advise any aspiring creative writer, half in-jest, half seriously, "not to do it."

"Don't write because you expect to make a living. Do it because you must and don't expect rewards," he said. "Writing is a compulsion...a lonely occupation."

After release from the Army, Hamburger returned to studies at Oxford, majoring in French and German. The years that followed were filled with two careers—writing poetry and whatever would bring in money to support him and his family.

For four years he lived as a freelance writer, doing articles on poetry, book reviews, broadcasts

and odd jobs. One, teaching French to convicts in a London prison, he termed a "hopeless program." Prison authorities hoped this would encourage inmates to immigrate to Canada when released.

A teaching position at London University was followed by nine years at Reading University, where the country life was conducive to work, and Hamburger had a study where he could write.

Eventually the strain of carrying a full-time teaching load and the desire for more time to write and translate poetry led Hamburger back to London to try again to write for a full-time career.

"This is simply not possible in England," he said. "Even if a poet could give a reading a week, the pay would not keep him up.

Another job or career is essential for a British poet."

An invitation in 1965 to come to America to give readings opened many doors for Hamburger. He was invited as a visiting professor for a semester at Mount Holyoke College and, since then, has spent from a month to a semester at State University of New York in Buffalo and Stony Brook, at the Center for the Humanities of Wesleyan University, the University of Connecticut and the University of California in San Diego.

"Such opportunities for a writer do not exist in England," said Hamburger, explaining that a visiting professor in America can adjust his course load to allow time for creativity. At USC, he is teaching one graduate-level course

in the German Division of the Foreign Language Department and one in the Comparative Literature Department.

"Normally when I come to a new place, I am so absorbed in adjusting to the new environment that I get little writing done. Columbia has been different. I've really gotten quite a bit written," he said.

"Certain American writers become 'personalities.' They are sought after and courted by society and the press. Other writers create and live in obscurity. In England, almost any writer who has established himself will have some small dedicated following. He would not suffer the degree of neglect that he would in America," he said.

Hamburger explained that promotion is important in selling any creative work and blamed publishers for traditionally writing off poetry books as losses. Although recognized in England and internationally as a poet, Hamburger considers his books successful if each sells 2,000 copies.

Other work published by Hamburger include numerous books of translations, principally of German poets. His versions of the visionary and religious poet, Holderlin, are recognized as the definitive translation.

A bilingual anthology of "East German Poetry" was published this year. The reviewer for "Contraries," his first book of original essays, re-issued in 1970, called Hamburger, "one of the foremost commentators on German culture" and the book, "the best essays to date on German literature before and after Nietzsche."

## Spanish Major Writes Book To Fill College Library Needs

When junior Spanish major Kathy O'Quinn of Florence couldn't find a library book with the needed information for her Contemporary University-Independent Study project, she decided to write her own.

Now the book has been accepted for publication.

After searching for a bibliography of female Spanish authors to prepare a survey, O'Quinn realized there was none. She checked with the Women's History Library in Berkeley, Calif., where they said no such work had been attempted. She then began to compile her own bibliography she could set up a

proposal and survey for her CU project.

Ultimately she gathered 1,600 names of female Spanish writers from 19 Spanish-American countries with various biographical information about each one in addition to titles of their works.

The work, accepted for publication by the Espina del Norte Publications of San Francisco, Calif., will be out in the spring under the title "A Bibliography of Spanish-American Authors."

O'Quinn encountered a cross-section of Mexican women from an all female rock group, ages 12-21, who entertained in local clubs to an

80-year-old woman who had been attending bullfights in the area for 76 years. One group surveyed included 15 people who all resided in one home.

She asked the women 32 questions ranging from political views to ideas on abortion. The project is an attempt to outline the sociohistorical aspect of the Mexican feminist movement.

"All of these programs offered at USC should be utilized," she said. "The Contemporary University project enabled me to prepare the bibliography which eventually will lead to a published work. The Monterey Tec program gives the students an opportunity to travel



KATHY O'QUINN

...book published.

and learn. Although the Contemporary University project is independent of the foreign language program, I could not have completed one without the help of the other.