

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

Conversation with the Earth **by Hans Cloos**

Review Author: James W. Skehan

Philippine Studies vol. 2, no. 2 (1954): 187–189

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at philstudies@admu.edu.ph.

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>

With a wealth of well chosen experimental evidence, the author deals with the problems of imagery, learning and memory. He introduces the problem and the tools of the measurement of mental abilities, and finally discusses the nature of intelligence, and the often omitted problem of voluntary control. The unity of human behavior finds its crowning synthesis in the last chapter which deals with personality.

The pedagogical value of the book is undeniable. It combines easy reading with solid scientific doctrine. The illustrations in the book are good, some of the photographs excellent. The division of the matter is very logical and occasionally quite original.

There are, however, two weak points to be noted in this book. The treatment of instinct is completely inadequate, referring solely to the instincts in animals, and even this in a very perfunctory manner. The second weakness is the treatment of the psychological and conscious aspect of emotion, though its physiological aspect takes into account the more serious theories about the role of the autonomic and endocrine system in emotional reactions.

FRANCESCO PARISI

CONVERSATION WITH THE EARTH. By Hans Cloos. Alfred A. Knopf, New York. Pp. 413. \$5.75.

Geology is a branch of nature study that interests and fascinates almost everyone. The work that the geologist does, however, is to the layman almost as mysterious as the science itself. All of us are interested in earthquakes, volcanoes, and glaciers. The secrets of the world's history locked up in rocks have long lured on the mind of man. But it is difficult to find a book that explains these secrets in an interesting way so that the geologically uninitiated may understand and enjoy the beauty and wonder of Nature.

Conversation with the Earth is the exception that proves the rule. Here is a magnificent translation from the German of the autobiography of Hans Cloos, one of this century's greatest geologists, and professor of Geology at the University of Bonn. In this geological travelogue Cloos has described the rocks and mountains of the world around us in much the same spirit in which Rachel Carson portrayed *The Sea Around Us*.

Cloos does not merely explain the geology of those many parts of the world which were his outdoor laboratory, but

what is more important, he communicates to the reader a sense of wondrous grandeur, and enchanting beauty. So vivid is his power of description that the reader is transformed into Cloos, the geologist, the poet, and the seeker after Nature's astounding beauty. He looked on the study of geology as the music of the Earth. "He who hears the music of the Earth will find that pleasure in its melodies is more than a light and gladsome enjoyment. He will find, indeed, that the experience furnishes another and deeper understanding of the language in which the world and its Creator speak to us."

The book was begun for Cloos's wife and children to make them feel at home in foreign lands as they traveled with him in his study of a great part of the Earth's surface. Other parts, richer in geological detail, he wrote for his students to impart to them a profound appreciation for the beauty and magnificence of the Earth which they studied scientifically. Later portions he wrote for the geologically uninitiated whom he wished to win as students and friends of the Earth.

Conversation with the Earth is superbly illustrated with over 75 photographs, maps and diagrams which make more vivid to the non-geologist the wealth of information here presented. Cloos takes the reader through some of the most beautiful and geologically fascinating parts of the East Indies, Africa, Northern Europe, the Alps and the United States. It is a book which will have a great appeal to the wide audience which so enthusiastically welcomed *The Sea Around Us*. Every nature lover, science student and teacher, every artist, poet or writer who depicts the scenes of nature will be richly rewarded in reading this thought-provoking travelogue through Nature's Wonderland.

In three chapters, for instance, the reader is transported to the East Indies. To the traveler it is a scenic view; to the artist, a deluge of beauty and grandeur. But, in addition, the reader becomes a geologist and so he examines the strata of these volcanic islands to unlock the secrets hidden there for 200 million years or more. From these rocks he collects crabs, fish and other animals and plants, some of which became extinct eons ago. And these speechless creatures tell him the story of Eastern Asia's rocks as clearly as if they spoke to him in words. So vivid is the description that the reader will be delighted by the verbal motion-picture of how the East Indies, the Grand Canyon, the Rockies and other natural wonders came to be. Although Cloos does not describe the Philippine Islands, what he says of the geological history of the East Indies is applicable to these islands also.

Cloos had the mind of a scientist, the understanding and

expression of an artist and the heart of a poet. These gifts he used to the fullest in writing this truly sublime story of the Earth which he studied so carefully.

JAMES W. SKEHAN

A CRITICAL HISTORY OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE. A Survey of Children's Books in English from Earliest Times to the Present. By Cornelia Meigs, Elizabeth Nesbitt, Anne Eaton, Ruth Hill Viguers. Decorations by Vera Bock. The Macmillan Co., New York. 1953. Pp. xxiv-624. \$7.50.

Some day, the over-serious students of literature will re-discover the great classics that have delighted the children of many ages; and Miss Meigs and her associates will be partly responsible for the rediscovery. Theirs is a charming book: solid in its scholarship, yet written with a heart. It is a rare thing to find an authoritative work of reference that can be used, on occasion, for bed-side reading. Perhaps the secret is that this book is written by ladies who, besides being painstaking in their scholarship, also love children and good reading.

To appreciate this fact, one needs only compare Miss Eaton's treatment of *Alice in Wonderland* with the more learned, more clever, but hardly more helpful dissertation of Mr. William Empson upon the same work. Mr. Empson, of course, is a literary philosopher, Miss Eaton a literary historian; yet it should be possible to philosophize without destroying the magic that holds the twigs of Wonderland together.

For that is the essence of children's classics: magic. It is the presence of this magical element which explains the curious fact that books, written for adults (like *Gulliver's Travels*), have been taken to their hearts by the children; and books, written for children (like Lewis Carroll's), have been enjoyed just as much by adults. And on the other hand, the absence of this magical element explains the failure of many a well-meant book (written in most cases by overserious ladies), too full of admonitions to please the children. In this, as in many other points of art, the test of excellence is a pragmatic one. The children seem to be the best judges of their own literature. Which, after all, is the old Horatian test of a classic: *decies repetita placebit*, one enjoys it even in the tenth reading.