

cites domestic political disarray as the chief cause of France's unexpected defeat. The chronic feuds between Left and Right in the interwar years polarized French society. Thus, after declaring war against Germany in 1939, Frenchmen were readier to fight a civil war than to form a strong coalition government to battle the Nazis. When the German attack began, the leaders in Paris could not agree on strategy. The cabinet failed to respond to Winston Churchill's June 1940 offer of support, and Prime Minister Paul Reynaud resigned in frustration. Marshal Philippe Pétain, who thought it was "easy and stupid to talk of fighting to the last man . . . criminal in view of [World War I] losses," proposed France's surrender.

BROOKLYN BRIDGE: Fact and Symbol.
By Alan Trachtenberg. Univ. of Chicago, 2nd ed., 1979. 206 pp. \$6.95

One night, shortly before the Brooklyn Bridge opened in 1883, a young New York reporter climbed boldly up the cables to the very top of its Manhattan-side tower. The next day, he declared to his astonished rescuers that he had been "unaccountably drawn to the bridge, almost as to a woman warm and pulsing." Trachtenberg, a Yale professor of English,



Collection of the Newark Museum.

recounts the history of Americans' emotional responses to John Augustus Roebling's greatest engineering feat. Taken as a symbol of everything from democracy to industry to Christianity (human cooperation in the pursuit of perfection), the bridge has been "explained" anew by succeeding generations. Novelist Henry James, for example, found it to be "a mechanical spider in a 'steel-souled machine room.'" Trachtenberg does not neglect the actual history of the bridge's construction. He describes the cutthroat practicality of its Berlin-educated designer and its backers. He notes the corruption: Tammany Hall's William M. "Boss" Tweed was paid \$65,000 for his help in securing the necessary building permits. A portfolio of Walker Evans's stark 1929 photos of the bridge is included.

THE POET'S WORK: 29 Masters of 20th Century Poetry on the Origins and Practice of their Art. Edited by Reginald Gibbons. Houghton Mifflin, 1979. 305 pp. \$6.95 (cloth, \$12.50)

These essays, journal entries, and interviews offer musings on the poet's craft—what editor Gibbons calls a "welter of decisions, dogmas, beliefs, and methods." The authors are well-known and diverse: Wallace Stevens, Dylan Thomas, William Carlos Williams, W. H. Auden, to name a few. Not surprisingly, they emphasize the highly personal nature of their endeavors. "One writes," posits Marianne Moore, "because one has a burning desire to objectify what it is indispensable to one's happiness to express." Poetry can be taken, reflects Seamus Heaney, "as divination . . . as revelation of the self to the self, as restoration of the culture to itself . . . with the aura and authenticity of archaeological finds." For Boris Pasternak, poetry transcends recorded history; it is "the ominous turning of a dozen windmills at the edge of a bare field in a black year of famine."