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C^{the}resset

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A Review of Literature, Arts and Public Affairs

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TODA LA NOCHE ★ BAJARON SUS REDES Y PESCARON TANTOS PECES QUE LAS REDES CASI SE ROMPIAN ★



AD TOILED ALL THE NIGHT ★ THEY LET DOWN THEIR NETS ★ THEY CAUGHT A GREAT QUANTITY OF FISH ★



C^{the}resset

Valparaiso University
Valparaiso, Indiana 46383

ALAN F. HARRE, *Publisher*
GAIL MCGREW EIFRIG, *Editor*

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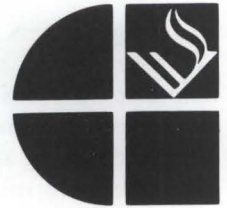
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Cover: John August Swanson, b. 1938, American. *The Fisherman*, 1990, acrylic on canvas, 4 feet x 7 feet. Private Collection.

An exhibition of John August Swanson's work has been shown during the month of April in the VU Student Union. The exhibit is sponsored jointly by The Cresset, the Liturgical Institute, and Bergsma Galleries, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Mr. Swanson is a speaker at the 1992 Institute of Liturgical Studies and Church Music Seminar, held 28-30 April.



IN LUCE TUA

The Nets Are Breaking! The Nets Are Breaking!

This month's cover reproduces a painting by John August Swanson, and brings up into our attention the story of the miraculous draught of fishes, as it used to be called in the old days. The painting barely contains the fish, who seem to desire to leap out of the constraints of the flat surface. They curve and splash and dart before our eyes, the quicksilver of their motion translated into a dozen different colors. Looking at the fish, and at the four puzzled fishermen, I am drawn back into a question that has been uppermost on many campus minds during these weeks: How can we be diverse and be ourselves?

The story in the gospel, at least as John tells it, brings up a number of issues. But it is certainly about what to do with "too many." Here, after a night of nothing, they catch so many fish that the nets almost break, or "tantos peces que las redes casi se rompían," as Swanson's border says. The fishermen in the painting reflect several possible responses to this phenomenon; I can hear the sermon series now. On the far right the First man is earnest—to me he looks tired. He seems to be looking at the fish, but seeing little. Only his fingertips touch the net's edge. In fact, he seems little affected, even by the wind, unlike Fisherman Two, whose hair blows out wildly. This man's eyes are wide; the whites show us that he is astonished. He looks down—whether at fish or nets—engaged and intent, and his hands are in the nets up to his wrists. The Third Fisherman looks out at us, direct and straight-ahead. Could he be the figure who represents John? He is in contact with the observers, as much conscious of the outside of the scene as we are. And the Fourth, the helmsman? He really looks exhausted, all in, ready for the end of this experience, however miraculous.

Well, what is the story for? It surely has something to do with our fears about nets breaking. John's account, in an odd little detail, tells us that the net was full of one hundred and fifty-three fish. Why? Fred Niedner tells me that this was the number of known species of fish in the Galilean world, and so that the number represents inclusiveness. The net takes in all that we know—and it does not break.

Wrestling with plurality has almost replaced baseball

as the great American game. We sought plurality (in some sense), we prided ourselves on it (at moments), we celebrated it (at least on monuments) and we thought we meant it. In the church, we have said that we want to include every kind of believer, every kind of person with the desire for faith. Diversity is good; more diversity is better. We have deferred until another time the question of how much diversity is possible, of how many everybodies we mean.

But moments of crisis, or even moments of decision-making, force us to do more than nod in solemn agreement that the questions are important. We may even have to vote. Can we include so much of the Other that there ceases to be an other because there is no integrity to the element against which it is defined? Many of our institutions face exactly this decision, in terms of real hiring of real people. And the questions, posed in terms of real people, are filled with real pain.

It is good then, to be reminded about nets. There is, in this story at least, an assurance that nets cast widely out on the basis of Jesus' command will hold. Such a reading insists that we be serious about the basis on which we desire inclusiveness or plurality or diversity. If we desire these things so that we photograph well, or so that we will catch a trend, or so that we will foster our own sense of superiority, then at some point we will rightly fear "Too many!" But if we are, as Christians, going about our true work, patiently feeding and gathering, then the nets will hold. And if we're lucky, there will even be breakfast on the beach.

□

We've had a good deal of correspondence this month reacting to Ed Byrne's column in the March issue concerning feminism and film. Ed has answered at least some of this mail, but what was addressed to me deserves some answer here. I did not agree with the sentiments in Byrne's column. I do not believe that feminism fails to represent what most women in this culture want for themselves and their society. But *The Cresset* is, after all, a journal of opinion. As its editor, I choose some things,

encourage writers to take up topics they have told me are on their minds, nudge them in directions I think are helpful or persuasive—and then I work on things like the placement of articles, the setting up and punctuation of poems, checking spelling, and arguing with the post office over labels. In this space I write my opinions, and, having chosen a columnist, I let him make his own mistakes or triumphs in his own space. I reject utterly the idea that *The Cresset* is discredited because I chose to print an article whose position I personally disavow. Though Professor Byrne's piece would not perhaps satisfy every possible criterion for opinion writing, and I think it could be debated whether or not he fairly represented the opposing positions, his subject is one about which there can be considerable disagreement, even among people of good will. And no one could remain an editor without believing that the phrase "people of good will" described her readers—most of the time.

□

This issue brings to a close another year of *Cressets*. Thinking about art, and a number of art forms, has given rise to most of the writing here, and we trust that many of you will find these comments compelling. The prospect of summer advances, and though people in the professoriate no longer enjoy the halcyon days of ease immortalized in *The Professor's House*, Willa Cather's beautiful novel with an academic hero, we do look forward to longer periods of reading, and a reasonable amount of staring out over the waters of Lake Michigan. We will plan a new course, and think about what should be in *The Cresset* next year. Readers with ideas on this subject should write to the editor, who promises not to lose letters while climbing sand dunes.

Peace,

GME

Near One Historical Site

The forest should fill with proper nouns,
History walk forward with its hands up,
But I am so ignorant of names
I think it arms them. These leaves, those stems,
The generals and lieutenants are words
Which slur in a Doppler drift of wind.

For a moment, my son skids, stops, wavers
In the shale, astonished as the newly
Wounded. He demands the right way up
This cliffside, the locations where stone
Sits firm. His drummer-boy face might be
Following a flag towards cannons while

The pines retreat, the bushes squat, and we
Balance above a battlefield, foolish
Snipers believing the war so distant
Everything red oozes into the earth
And the trees until the forest turns
A garish, odd, deliberate green.

Gary Fincke

On the Day of Pentecost

for Calvin Henry Francis, Sr.

Down Westchester Avenue he tramps
Following the tracks of the el
Through the broken borough,
Trains thundering overhead
Like the sound of a mighty wind.
A new kind of Francis, this Francis,
Far from the fields of Assisi,
Far from the flow of nature's beauty
Where birds and moon are family.

He walks with a flame of fire on his head,
The red wool cap pulled over his right ear,
Greeting confused people on the street
In slurred speech, each in native tongue:
Shalom aleichem! Buenos dias! Grüss Gott!
As if he were chief host at Ellis Island
Welcoming novices into the new world.

Hardly anyone notices anymore
As he shuffles from block to block,
Singing "Glory, Glory, Alleluia!"
Stopping to pick up a coded message
On a discarded candy wrapper or match folder
Announcing cryptically an apocalyptic end;
Picking a rose—"Yellow for the Holy Spirit;"
Smoothing out a piece of tinfoil—
"God shine on you and your family."

Losing teeth, losing strength, losing time,
He plods down streets seeking a son or daughter,
Mother or father, human arms
To grasp, to clasp him in comfort and warmth
Removing the chill of lonely hallway nights,
Providing a household believing he is who he is,
Not drunk or drugged, but dreaming
Dreams belonging to old men.

Only phantom folds, not earthly embrace,
Cradle him, guard him, throw him
At the altar prostrate
Where, like home, without shoes, without shame,
Known beneath all knowing,
Drawn yet dreading to such holiness
He hears the gifting-gifted voices
Of angels singing in clear harmony:
"For he's a jolly good fellow."

Fritz Fritschel

The Code

There were three in the meadow by the brook
Gathering up windrows, piling cocks of hay,
With an eye always lifted toward the west
Where an irregular sun-bordered cloud
Darkly advanced with a perpetual dagger
Flickering across its bosom. Suddenly
One helper, thrusting pitchfork in the ground,
Marched himself off the field and home. One stayed.
The town-bred farmer failed to understand.

'What is there wrong?'
'Something you just now said'
'What did I say?'
'About our taking pains.'

'To cock the hay?—because it's going to shower?
I said that more than half an hour ago.
I said it to myself as much as you.'

'You didn't know. But James is one big fool.
He thought you meant to find fault with his work.
That's what the average farmer would have meant.
James would take time, of course, to chew it over
Before he acted: he's just got round to act.'

'He is a fool if that's the way he takes me.'

Don't let it bother you. You've found out something.
The hand that knows his business won't be told
To do work better or faster—those two things.
I'm as particular as anyone:
Most likely I'd have served you just the same.
But I know you don't understand our ways.
You were just talking what was in your mind.
What was in all our minds, and you weren't hinting.
Tell you a story of what happened once:
I was up here in Salem at a man's
Named Sanders with a gang of four or five
Doing the haying. No one liked the boss.
He was one of the kind sports call a spider,
All wiry arms and legs that spread out wavy
From a humped body nigh as big's a biscuit
But work! that man could work, especially
If by so doing he could get more work
Out of his hired help. I'm not denying
He was hard on himself. I couldn't find
That he kept any hours—not for himself.
Daylight and lantern-light were one to him:
I've heard him pounding in the barn all night.
But what he liked was someone to encourage.
Them that he couldn't lead he'd get behind
And drive, the way you can, you know, in mowing—
Keep at their heels and threaten to mow their legs off.
I'd seen about enough of his bulling tricks
(We call that bulling). I'd been watching him.
So when he paired off with me in the hayfield

ROBERT FROST'S "THE CODE": A CONTEXT AND A COMMENTARY

John Feaster

I

In October of 1900, Robert Frost, his wife Elinor, and their daughter Leslie took up residence at Derry Farm near Derry Village in New Hampshire. The farm had been purchased for Frost (though he was not to own it outright until 1911, when he promptly sold it) by his paternal grandfather, William Prescott Frost, who had also arranged, without consulting Robert in the matter, for a hired man in the person of one Carl Burell, a long-time friend of Frost's, an amateur poet, an enthusiastic botanist,

John Feaster is a professor of English at VU. In a long career, he has taught hundreds of works, but has newly re-discovered an engagement with the works of early twentieth century American writers. His essay on Stephen Crane will appear this summer in American Literary Realism. The present essay is part of a longer study of Frost's treatment of the subject of work.

and, most important from an altogether practical standpoint, someone considerably more experienced than was Frost in the practical matter of eking a living out of a rocky farm in southern New Hampshire.

The perfectly sensible nature of these arrangements notwithstanding, Frost, according to his biographer, Lawrance Thompson, was "furious" that his grandfather and Burell had devised them without consulting him. His resentment was made all the greater, Thompson goes on to report, because even though Carl Burell was "a good friend, a hard worker, a conscientious human being, . . . ever since high school days he had treated Rob solicitously, as though Rob didn't even know how to sharpen a pencil. Now he joined in a 'conspiracy' with Rob's grandfather without even asking the person most concerned. 'I take a long time to wreak vengeance, when I've been wronged,' Frost later said of this arrangement, 'but I never forget, and I never forgive a wrong'" (263-64).

To load the load, thinks I, Look out for trouble.
 I built the load and topped it off; old Sanders
 Combed it down with a rake and says, "O.K."
 Everything went well till we reached the barn
 With a big jag to empty in a bay.
 You understand that meant the easy job
 For the man up on top of throwing down
 The hay and rolling it off wholesale,
 Where on a mow it would have been slow lifting.
 You wouldn't think a fellow'd need much urging
 Under those circumstances, would you now?
 But the old fool seizes his fork in both hands,
 And looking up bewhiskered out of the pit,
 Shouts like an army captain, "Let her come!"
 Thinks I, D'ye mean it? "What was that you said?"
 I asked out loud, so's there'd be no mistake,
 "Did you say, Let her come?" "Yes, let her come."
 He said it over, but he said it softer.
 Never you say a thing like that to a man,
 Not if he values what he is. God, I'd as soon
 Murdered him as left out his middle name.
 I'd built the load and knew right where to find it.
 Two or three forkfuls I picked lightly round for
 Like meditating, and then I just dug in
 And dumped the rackful on him in ten lots.
 I looked over the side once in the dust
 And caught sight of him treading-water-like,
 Keeping his head above, "Damn ye," I says,
 "That gets ye!" He squeaked like a squeezed rat.
 That was the last I saw or heard of him.
 I cleaned the rack and drove out to cool off.
 As I sat mopping hayseed from my neck,
 And sort of waiting to be asked about it,
 One of the boys sings out, "Where's the old man?"
 "I left him in the barn under the hay.
 If ye want him, ye can go dig him out."

They realized from the way I swabbed my neck
 More than was needed something must be up.
 They headed for the barn; I stayed where I was.
 They told me afterward. First they forked hay,
 A lot of it, out into the barn floor.
 Nothing! They listened for him. Not a rustle.
 I guess they thought I'd spiked him in the temple
 Before I buried him, or I couldn't have managed.
 They excavated more. "Go keep his wife
 Out of the barn." Someone looked in a window,
 And curse me if he wasn't in the kitchen
 Slumped way down in a chair, with both his feet
 Against the stove, the hottest day that summer.
 He looked so clean disgusted from behind
 There was no one that dared to stir him up,
 Or let him know that he was being looked at.
 Apparently I hadn't buried him
 (I may have knocked him down); but my just trying
 To bury him had hurt his dignity.
 He had gone to the house so's not to meet me.
 He kept away from us all afternoon.
 We tended to his hay. We saw him out
 After a while picking peas in his garden:
 He couldn't keep away from doing something.'

'Weren't you relieved to find he wasn't dead?'

'No! and yet I don't know—it's hard to say.
 I went about to kill him fair enough.'

'You took an awkward way. Did he discharge you?'

'Discharge me? No! He knew I did just right.'

Robert Frost

That Frost found Burell's presence at Derry Farm an irksome reminder of his own incompetence as a farmer appears to be substantiated by the fact that he seized on the earliest opportunity, and the slimmest of pretexts, for pressuring Burell to leave: Carl was off working for the local road commissioner when he should have been working on the farm; Carl didn't strain the milk properly; Carl pruned the fruit trees the wrong way (Thompson 277). What had been a long-time friendship between Frost and Burell, in short, thoroughly degenerated once it was transformed from a relationship between "just friends" into the more stressful terms of owner vs. worker.

I don't intend to read some deep psychological significance into the troubled relationship between Frost and Burell. I do want to suggest, however, that their relationship offers an interesting example from Frost's early life of an ownership vs. labor conflict that was eventually to become commonplace in his art, a conflict nowhere more

pronounced, nor more equivocally resolved, than in the poem reproduced above, "The Code." I should say at the outset that in what follows I have no wish to depreciate the role of the formative imagination in Frost's poetry. What I do hope to do is to make some modest suggestions about the working of that imagination in relation to common anxieties informing the culture in which Frost wrote.

II

Because Frost was a self-proclaimed partisan of the "traditional values" it would seem to follow that whenever he touched on the subject of work he was an uncomplicated and enthusiastic supporter of the idea that being a hard worker is a matter not just of economic necessity but of moral obligation. To think of hard work and moral virtue going hand in hand is of course a fundamental precept of a work ethic as handed down from a Protestant past and as

conventionally articulated by late 19th and early 20th-century moralists. Difficult and wearisome physical labor, as Daniel T. Rodgers has summarized these views in his *The Work Ethic in Industrial America: 1850-1920*, "was the core of the moral life. Work made men useful in a world of economic scarcity; it staved off the doubts and temptations that prey on idleness; it opened the way to deserved wealth and status; it allowed one to put the impress of mind and skill on the material world" (14). Virtually all of these presumably beneficial properties of work are treated somewhere in Frost's considerable body of poetry. Some of his better-known poems (one thinks immediately of such obvious examples as "Mowing," "The Tuft of Flowers," "After Apple Picking," "Mending Wall," "Two Tramps in Mud Time," and "Birches") feature characters for whom physical labor, either factually or figuratively, constitutes the essential terms of their moral reflection and humane worth. On the most accessible material level, and in severely practical and well-worn terms, diligent laborers are worthy of their hire, whether real or only figurative, and hard work is both a measure and a metaphor of the life well lived. In more abstract terms, work is a powerful creative/interpretive activity, providing a joyous and self-reflexive occasion to make some kind of conceptual sense out of material actualities—the "weight and strength" of the physical world, as Frost writes in "To Earthward."

It has often been observed that the remarkable length of Frost's poetic career placed him historically in relation to an exceptionally broad range of literary influences. There has been little corollary acknowledgement, however, that the remarkable length of his career placed Frost in relation to a period of practically revolutionary change in the organization of American society. As Rodgers and others have recently confirmed, a particularly noteworthy aspect of this change had to do with the role of work as a critically-positioned meeting place between "fact and value." Even as Frost implicitly and others explicitly could extol the abstract moral values of the work ethic, they could hardly ignore the socio-economic facts that in the industrial North—and, more pertinent in Frost's case, in the hard-scrabble rural Northeast—physical labor was often neither joyful nor conducive to moral development. In the rise of mechanization and the institutionalized factory system, indeed in the whole complex process of what Alan Trachtenberg has referred to as "the incorporation of America," labor was more often a mind-and body-numbing experience for the average worker than an occasion for peaceful, character-forming reflection. More often than not, the workplace was the place of conflict rather than the place where conflict was resolved.

It seems natural to suppose that such themes could be treated more effectively in industrial settings than in the rural settings common in Frost's poetry. However, in turn-of-the-century America the complex debate surrounding the subject of work was not confined to the factory

environment and it is certainly not confined to that environment in Frost's poetry. It must be remembered that in 1900 the rural population (sixty percent) of the United States outstripped urban population (forty percent) by nearly fifteen million (Douglas 183). It could be argued, and of course frequently was, that the concerns of farm owners and laborers therefore had an even more pressing claim for attention than the concerns of the largely urban factory system. Frost does at least twice deal at some length with the subject of the factory worker (in "The Self-Seeker" and "The Lone Striker") but he more characteristically transports his capital/labor concerns into a countrified setting that may be rural but is rarely pastoral in the standard sense of that term—certainly not "an enamelled world" of "untroubled rural delight and peace," as Raymond Williams has described the content of the classic pastoral form (18). Williams' term "counter-pastoral" therefore seems an altogether more appropriate descriptor of that oppressive world Frost frequently renders in his narratives of rural working life. Frost's realist temperament often leads him to depict situations in which the implied existence of a wholesome labor ideal encounters unwelcome and stubborn resistance from a deeper, more objective recognition of the enervating circumstances in which labor all too often occurs.

These circumstances were brought about, as Frost perceived (with some measure of reluctance), by fundamental transformations in the nature of capitalism in late 19th and early 20th century America. Moreover, Frost's sometimes conflicted attitudes towards the related subjects of capital, ownership, and labor were certainly not unique. On the contrary, his attitudes reflect widespread anxieties towards these culture-defining subjects, anxieties fueled by perceptions that evolution towards a mass-production, mass-consumption society was rapidly changing the face of capitalism and changing it for the worse. In *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, Daniel Bell describes these critical changes as follows:

In the early development of capitalism, the unrestrained economic impulse was held in check by Puritan restraint and the Protestant ethic. One worked because of one's obligation to one's calling, or to fulfill the covenant of the community. But the Protestant ethic was undermined not by modernism but by capitalism itself. . . . The Protestant ethic . . . had worked to limit sumptuary (though not capital) accumulation. When the Protestant ethic was sundered from bourgeois society, only the hedonism remained, and the capitalist system lost its transcendental ethic. (21)

No longer informed by "transcendental ties" or assumptions of "ultimate meaning," working relationships, in the period of transition between an "old" and a "new" capitalism, were rapidly being redefined in terms of efficient productivity and what Rodgers has called a "profit-maximizing mentality" (53), a redefinition that almost inevitably resulted in a disharmony of interests between

owners and their laboring force. It is precisely this conflict, I will argue in what follows, that Frost dramatically renders in "The Code."

III

"The Code" opens harmoniously enough, with three men (an owner and two hired hands) working busily together to put up the hay before the storm approaching from the west arrives to ruin it. Shortly, however, this idyllic scene of cooperative industry is interrupted by the departure of one of the two hired hands, who walks off the job upset that the owner, a "town-bred farmer," has mildly hinted that he might work a little more quickly and efficiently. The hired hand who remains behind thereupon patiently explains that James has taken these hints as an insult: "The hand that knows his business won't be told to do work better or faster." In pushing James to work harder, the owner-farmer has inadvertently violated an unspoken free-labor code of behavior by which workers retain their dignity by at least appearing to be what they almost certainly were not in fact: totally free, sovereign, and self-determined individuals and not mere hirelings or wage-slaves. In its earlier conceptions, the "strike," as Trachtenberg has observed (and that is what James is doing, striking), "represented a defiance of the cardinal norm of everyday [working] life: compliance with the authority of employers" (89). The second worker, who characterizes the now-departed James as "one big fool," now proceeds to tell an elaborate story of how he once dealt with a contentious owner who attempted to introduce principles of "scientific management," the industry-approved circumlocution for what appears in the poem as "bulling."

This lack of sympathy on behalf of one worker for the other is worth dwelling on here, if only briefly. "Most likely I'd have served you just the same," he says, but "I know you don't understand our ways." This is a commendable sentiment, but it seems directly antithetical to what David Montgomery has described as a "spirit of mutuality" among skilled workers (and here skill amounts to "cocking hay" properly), who normally band together, or strike together, to ensure that in the face of the demands of scientific management to perform more efficiently they maintain control over their own work routine and pace: "Technical knowledge acquired on the job was embedded in a mutualistic ethical code, also acquired on the job, and together these attributes provided skilled workers with considerable autonomy at their work and powers of resistance to the wishes of their employers" (qtd. by Trachtenberg 92). Why the second worker (1) chooses not to walk off the job, but (2) decides instead to stay behind and tell his didactic tale, and why he (3) calls his fellow-worker a "fool" are problems we will eventually have to deal with.

At first blush the poem (with this second worker's

lesson in violence at the heart of it) seems little more than a laborer's tall-tale filled with the kind of humorous egotisms that we might naturally expect from such tales. But the deceptively comic surface of the poem fails to conceal an underlying current of deep hostility between ownership and labor, and one can hardly fail to be impressed by how far Frost has come from the "Men work together, I told him from the heart, / 'Whether they work together or apart'" sentiments of his earlier poem "A Tuft of Flowers." Men may work together, in "The Code," but they are certainly far apart in terms of latent class enmity, as abundantly illustrated by the hired hand's exaggerated, but no less illuminating, account of his attempt to murder his "bullish," slave-driving employer by burying him under a load of hay.

*"Weren't you relieved to find he wasn't dead?"
"No! and yet I don't know—it's hard to say.
I went about to kill him fair enough."*

What combination of cultural circumstances, frustrations, and imagined wrongs, it seems fair to ask, could have produced this heightened animosity? It is worth noting, in this context, that recent historical studies of the relationships between economy and culture in the rural Northeast have begun to center on refashioning our understanding of rural class conflict, or what Christopher Clark has referred to, perhaps somewhat euphemistically, as "the structures of opportunity in rural society." These efforts, for Clark, need to take into account the ways in which such material circumstances as "demography, property-holding, wealth-distribution and life-cycle effects" interact with such social circumstances as "cultural, ideological, and behavioral patterns, including what [James A.] Henretta called *mentalités*" (286). In his classic *The Sociology of Rural Life*, T. Lynn Smith is more helpfully direct in describing the typical situation of farm laborers and the kind of material and social circumstances that defined their status:

In family farm areas the agricultural ladder is in operation, functioning as a social elevator to lift persons from the status of farm laborers, through the various grades of tenants, into the ownership and possession of the land they till. In such sections there is little that savors of the closed class system, little to array the classes against one another.

But the situation is very different where there is concentration of ownership in the hands of a few. In this case the great mass of cultivators lack the security that comes with ownership of the soil. Vertical mobility is practically impossible; only a few can ever hope for the ownership of land; and the great masses are doomed to the permanent status of farm laborers. Inevitably this means a closed class system. It contains all the elements necessary for class struggle. (472)

The situation Smith describes in his second paragraph brings to mind yet another of Frost's economic

casualties, the dying (and eventually dead) hired man, Silas, in "The Death of the Hired Man." As Mary says of him in that poem:

*" . . . Nothing to look backward to with pride,
And nothing to look forward to with hope,
So now and never any different."*

Though Frost does not establish their precise demographic situation in "The Code," I think it reasonable to assume that he intends the workers here to be no different from Silas. Like him, they are locked into a capital/labor class division with little hope of ever extricating themselves from it. Upward economic mobility may be a theoretical possibility for them but it remains fantastically improbable. Far more likely, in Smith's words, they are "doomed to the permanent status of farm laborers."

But if it is indeed class struggle Frost is portraying in "The Code," it is class struggle of a curiously repressed kind. Why, if that is what it is, does the second hired hand not join his comrade, James, in walking off the job? Why does the second hired hand instead take such pains to instruct his employer in the protocol of labor relations? And why, at the heart of his instruction, has he placed such a violent exemplum? I suggest that Frost's dramatic display of conflict in "The Code" reveals his own deeply-divided attitudes and uncertainties in respect to the sometimes irreconcilable claims of ownership over against labor, economic progress over against personal dignity, the demands of cooperative productivity over against the demands of a laissez-faire individualism. The second hired hand operates *in situ* as the conservative Frost's cynically-wise spokesman, one who acknowledges the divisiveness of class but recognizes as well that the code functions in a larger, systemic way to acknowledge, formalize, and defuse what would otherwise be a paralyzing and, to say the least, economically disadvantageous opposition between owner and laborer.

James's "foolish" strike and the central narrator's own violent assault of his former employer ("I'd as soon / Murdered him as left out his middle name.") are best understood as extreme representations of what can occur if the code is not mutually observed. Even more to the somewhat didactic point of the poem, these incidents represent what must not be allowed to happen if the "system," whatever its imperfections, is to endure, a compromising sentiment that Frost would have found it difficult to reject out of hand. Just by giving the merest appearance of finding fault with one of his workers, the owner has violated that fragile behavioral ecology in which the opposing claims of ownership and labor, profit and dignity, achieve an efficient, productive, and system-perpetuating equilibrium. The code in effect institutionalizes moral ambiguity, and openly acknowledges the absolute necessity of a functional class division, in such a way that expected and even legitimate capital/labor

conflict is, at least when the code is mutually observed, thoroughly suppressed. By elaborately masking conflict behind a facade of acceptable "ethical" behavior, the code insures a provisional, if deceptive, compatibility of purpose. From a slightly different point of view, the code makes up for what Bell sees as the loss of a transcendental ethic by substituting an entirely pragmatic or utilitarian one. It should hardly be surprising, then, that at the end of the second hired man's narrative, when he is asked if his former employer discharged him, he replies in some dismay: "Discharge me? No! He knew I did just right."

IV

Near the end of his well-known essay "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," Clifford Geertz attempts to explain why the Balinese, a people "shy to the point of obsessiveness of open conflict," should feature the cockfight almost as the central informing event of their culture, an event in which they "portray themselves as wild and murderous, with manic explosions of instinctual cruelty." Surrounded by stratified layers of ritual and carefully structured social meaning, the fight itself, Geertz suggests, comprises a "powerful rendering of life as the Balinese deeply do not want it . . . set in the context of a sample of it as they do in fact have it." Though a cockfighting ring in Bali seems a long way from a hayfield in New Hampshire, one way to view the violent center of "The Code," with its surround of recommended cooperative conduct, is to imagine it too as presenting an image of working life as confrontation—an image of life as Frost and his narrator "deeply do not want it"—set in the context of life "as they do in fact have it," at least during this moment when they have been brought together in a bond of mutual understanding. What finally disturbs, however, is the obvious relish with which the hired hand recollects his story of violent class confrontation. As Geertz writes concerning the cockfight, "the slaughter in the cock ring [like a creatively envisioned encounter in New Hampshire, one might add] is not a depiction of how things literally are among men, but what is almost worse, of how, from a particular angle, they imaginatively are" (446). And how in an environment no longer informed by the old redeeming values, Frost appears to be saying in "The Code," they are likely to remain.□

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Cicadas

We learned about sex from Billy McLeary
that summer of the seventeen year cicadas.
We were seven, barefoot
and sun blonde.

Their mealy exoskeletons littered
the sidewalk like strewn handfuls of dates.
We saw them flailing in our breakfast cereal,
dreaded a crunch into insect flesh,
as if somehow our fruit
could come alive.

They crawled out of the seventeen year womb
of our crabapple tree,
scaled the highest twigs with twitching feelers
and shrilled their cicada lullaby,
a tinny drone over us
in the purple-green August twilight.
They skittered beneath our heels
in our frantic flashlight tag till
the streetlights glowed on
and our moms called us home.

Billy McLeary, seventeen and wise,
told us all about it.
About the white smudge
on the underside of the girl-ones
and some magnetic perfume
that oozed from their bellies.
We scanned the grass for pairs in piggyback,
plucked them apart and tossed them at targets.

And he laughed at us
like he knew something else
about the rustle of those bodies
between the thick green blades,
as if he heard words
in their relentless hum.

Barbara Fischer



'SENSITIVITY TO STRUCTURE': AN INTERVIEW WITH ARTHUR DANTO

Thomas D. Kennedy

TK: A good starting point for us would be to have you reflect a little upon your career. You're both a highly esteemed philosopher, known for your work in the analytical philosophy of history, and books on Nietzsche and Sartre, as well as philosophy of art, and you're also now a prominent art critic for *The Nation*. Would you be willing to tell us about the connection of those two vocations, about how they come together? How did the philosopher Arthur Danto become an art critic?

AD: Well, all right, I'll be glad to talk a little bit about that. It's autobiography, naturally. Like most things in life it was an accident in one sense, but it was an accident I was prepared for. When I published the *Transfiguration of the Commonplace* my interest in that book was that it should really reach a world broader than the professional philosophical world. I had written a series of books of analytical philosophy and I didn't want to call it an analytical philosophy of art. I didn't think that's what it was; I felt that the issues it addressed were issues of concern to artists and other people in the art world, and as a matter of fact, it fulfilled my hopes that it would reach a broad audience. It was widely discussed and reviewed in places like the *Village Voice* and the *Soho News* and places where philosophy books don't very often get reviewed. That led finally to *The Nation*. The editor called me up one day, quite out of the blue, saying we don't know one

another, but we have friends in common and she'd read some things I had written. Would I be interested in writing for *The Nation*? Now, in fact, I would have loved to have written for *The Nation*. It was exactly what I wanted to do but I had no way of doing it if somebody hadn't asked me. I certainly don't feel as though I could have gone to *The Nation* and said, "I'm Arthur Danto. I'm a well-known philosopher; I've written a book on the philosophy of art and I'd like to be your art critic." It couldn't have happened that way. And, in fact, when I published my first piece in *The Nation* they didn't even want me to sign it with my academic credentials. I simply was the author of *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*. They were suspicious of academics.

TK: But why should *The Nation*, or any magazine, care to have an academic—especially a philosopher trained in the analytic tradition of philosophy, serve as an art critic? Of what value could your training in philosophy be for that task?

AD: Although I love writing art criticism I really love being a journalist too. I couldn't be the kind of journalist that I am if I weren't a philosopher. I think that probably the art that I choose to write about in the first instance is work about which I can say something philosophical. I don't ordinarily write what one thinks of as reviews. I write essays on works or bodies of work that people are going to see but which have some kind of a philosophical bearing and I'm able to make that explicit, which gives me an advantage over a lot of art critics who don't have that sort of background when in fact a lot of the work that they address really needs it. A lot of art is more philosophically informed in certain kinds of ways than one realizes. For example, a lot of critics are formalists, particularly those that came up in the late 50s through the early 60s, those whose inspiration would be somebody like Clement Greenberg. They were primarily schooled to write about painting of a certain sort, painting that is visually gratifying painting you can analyze and judge as to whether it's good or bad. But so much of contemporary work isn't formalist

*VU philosophy professor Tom Kennedy spent five weeks in San Francisco this summer as a participant in the NEH-sponsored summer institute "Philosophy and the Histories of the Arts." Perhaps no contemporary philosopher had contributed more to this discussion than Arthur C. Danto of Columbia University, who served as director of the institute. In his 1981 *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Harvard University Press) and his 1986 *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* (Columbia University Press) and his current essays in philosophy of art and art criticism, he has argued for the importance of an awareness of historical context for understanding specific works of art as well as art itself. Kennedy reports here on one of a number of conversations with Danto this summer.*

painting. Much of it is conceptual in ways that certain critics resent, whereas I'm very hospitable to it. I don't feel my job as a critic is to just talk about the work that appeals to me as an individual. I talk about the work that I think is difficult to understand; philosophy is very helpful in that way. So I think there are two things that I've been able to do which I'm grateful for. One is what I've just described, that is to say, bring in philosophy to bear on these works so that they yield up meanings to my readers that they might not have gotten just by seeing the show. But, more than that, I've given a kind of application to philosophy. In other words, instead of just writing for other aestheticians I've shown a way, I think, for aestheticians to write for a larger group. I'm gratified that my column has been so successful from that point of view. I mean, the proof for that sort of thing is whether you do have avid readers and *The Nation* has about 90,000 subscribers right now. And everybody who subscribes reads the magazine, so I'm writing for real readers. But the percentage of readers who have studied philosophy, I imagine, is relatively few—of college educated people probably most have had only one philosophy course. But, it is nice to know that our subject, our discipline, as it were, doesn't have to be restricted to its own practitioners.

TK: It seems to me that most people would be surprised to think that theories about art and rich understandings of art could come from the analytic tradition. How do you see your work in the analytic tradition as contributing to helping people understand art?

AD: Well, one of the great things about analytical philosophy is that it gives you a great sensitivity to structure, to the way structure holds together, to the architecture of thought. And, you can approach things from that kind of structural point of view with a discipline of analytical philosophy as you couldn't, let's say, if you were an existentialist. Heidegger wrote deeply about certain works, but he couldn't write about everything.

He could write about Vincent's painting shoes, he could write about a Grecian temple and so forth, but Heidegger couldn't be a reviewer. I couldn't imagine that kind of thing happening. He wrote about those and only those things that fit his metaphysics. And same with Sartre, who wrote one of the best essays ever written on art. He wrote an essay on Giacometti, but they were personal friends and he was able to fit that into some of the issues about perception and consciousness that he was interested in and he was able to write about Tintoretto from the perspective of being a political rebel. But, I don't think Sartre could have written about everything in the way in which somebody who has taken on the responsibility of writing a column has to do. There's a kind of universality and almost impersonality about analytical philosophy which makes it a wonderful discipline for somebody who is going to take on any body of discourse and see how it holds together and what are the logical points of connection within it. I found no difficulty in applying that to painting.

Of course, like any professional philosopher, I do know a certain amount about the history of philosophy and I've been able to draw on that when it's seemed appropriate. Now and again I bring in Hegel or Heidegger or Sartre; I'm always grateful for my training as an analytical philosopher. As I say, it has enabled me to do a job that another kind of philosophy wouldn't be able to do.

TK: Certainly one of your best known pieces in recent years is the essay "The End of Art" which appears in *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*. I think many artists and people who are familiar with art would at least be puzzled, if not outraged, at your suggestion that art has somehow ended. What were you trying to get at in "The End of Art?"

AD: I think of that essay as a liberating rather than a depressing piece, but before I published it, when I presented it to groups of artists, I think that initially they were relatively hostile. When they saw what I was getting at they found it a very reassuring idea. What I said was that we are at the end of a certain model of art history—a progressive model of art history—and a certain obligation that that model placed on artists to be historically correct. We now have the notion of political correctness but the notion of historical correctness, of doing the right thing at the right time and not doing the wrong thing at the right time, that obligation is something that someone who grew up in the New York art world as I did would be very, very sensitive to. The times when people would say "You can't do this, you've got to do that. We can no longer do the figure, we can no longer do.... That's sentimental. That is literary. That is decorative. That is reactionary." All those kind of things. Artists who didn't want to toe this line of "art-historical correctness" were on the constant defensive. I thought that that model of art history had really come to an end and it came to a natural end.

I do think the structure, the history of art, was defined by that model from about 1300 down to about as I like to say the middle 1960s—maybe 1970, I'm not exactly sure—where the artist felt his or her task to be to carry forward art in a way not at all unlike the way in which scientists think of it as their role to carry forward knowledge, the conquest of the world, the translation of the world into cognitive equivalencies. Artists were required to do that as well. I thought that probably that notion ends when art finally begins to recognize what its own philosophical nature is. That's what I was talking about. I talked about it in connection with Andy Warhol, primarily, and the Brillo Boxes. In my book about what philosophy is, *Connections to the World*, I try to show that all philosophical problems, at least in my view, have a common form. You've got two things belonging to radically different categories that look exactly alike and then you've got to say in what the difference consists. I think that Warhol, and possibly before him Duchamps, had finally seen that that was the problem of art. Once you realize what the philosophical nature of art is, then it's up to the philosophers to carry that on if they want to; artists are liberated to really do

anything that they care to do. That is to say, we're living in an age of extreme pluralism which is very healthy I think and very good. I wrote a piece for *The Nation* last year where I said, "Well, we're into the 90s. What are the 90s like?" I talked about six shows that I had liked particularly, artists that I felt were extremely good. Then I asked myself what have they got to do with one another? They belong to the times but they don't all belong to the same school. As a matter of fact, it would be difficult to think of six more different artists than the ones who happen to have had shows early in 1990. That is the way in which art moves now, in what I call this "post-historical moment." I never thought that *art* was something that would stop. I thought only that a story which had been the moving engine of the production of art had ended. That had come to a natural closure with the philosophical uncovering of art as a philosophical entity. I hope that doesn't sound too obscure.

TK: So artists are liberated from certain historical demands upon them?

AD: That's right.

TK: Are there other demands yet upon the artist that they're not liberated from, say, moral demands?

AD: I do think that in a lot of cases, these days particularly, a lot of artists feel that they ought to be doing something through the art in connection with the causes that concern them as moral beings. I think particularly in the period when Greenberg had his ascendancy, in the great period of abstract expressionism, artists did turn their backs on moral issues. They thought that it was absolutely enough to be a hero of art and that's all art should be. It should be kind of pure, and it was arduous to make great art, to make pure art and there was no other kind of thing that they cared to do. Now, I think that if you're liberated you really are liberated, so that it's perfectly possible for artists to do whatever they want to. I would hate to see a situation where politics became an imperative the way history became an imperative before. I think that if my views have any coherence, then if you are liberated you really are liberated and if you want to be a purist you can do that, abstractionist if you want to be an abstractionist, a minimalist if you want to be a minimalist. You can also be any one of a number of different things, so there's no one thing art's any longer obliged to do. But in that earlier period you had that sense of incredible focus where you thought the business of art is to make art and to advance art in the direction of discovering its essence. The history of art was almost like the history of alchemy. It was an effort to distill out what the essence of art was and I think they thought they were very close to it in a way.

TK: To continue with the idea of the liberated artist, is it ever appropriate for society to say of a given artist that we expect your art, if not to conform, at least not to conflict with certain mores of this society?

AD: Perhaps you have in mind something like the Mapplethorpe issue. Not our society. We do have a free society and I think that if we subsidize art we have to subsidize the freedom of the artist. Let me put it this way. As you know, I'm terribly impressed with certain thoughts of Hegel and in particular Hegel's wonderful idea that in a sense philosophy, religion and art are all what he called moments of absolute spirit. Art is philosophy in another guise and philosophy is religion in another guise and so forth. I think that if we think of it that way and if we think of religion seriously, religion is nothing but strife—nothing but strife. If you've got religion you've got heresy; it's just inseparable from the idea of religion. If you're going to have freedom of religion you've got to have freedom for strife, and in a free society that translates back into art. If you've got art, you've got to expect that you might, if you're supporting it, have to support something that you would be as opposed to, as you find yourself opposed to a religion that's alien to your own. Or, in philosophy I think where the differences finally are so extreme that there's no possibility of reconciliation, we just have to live with it. Differences are not as intensified in philosophy as they are in religion or as they are in art. We celebrate our political values in supporting art that's offensive to the community. That seems to me absolutely appropriate.

TK: To continue your analogy with religion, the institutions of religion have a way of dealing with heretics—maybe ignoring them, maybe saying we won't support you, maybe something more drastic than that. In light of that analogy why wouldn't it be appropriate for a community to say "Well, we will not prevent you from doing art; go ahead and do your art. But, if you violate our deepest beliefs and values you have no claim to our support."

AD: Ah, there is an interesting question as to why the American government should support art in the first place. I think probably we support it because we feel that it's got a kind of spiritual value and we feel a great need for it. It was not a need the framers of the Constitution felt. The 18th century was a very different time. But in the 20th century art has increasingly become something people are concerned about; it does represent a need. On a liberalized view of what a government should be—let us say government should take care of the needs of its people—supporting art in one form or another is very natural. There is a need for art because there is a need for a kind of secular spirituality. The proliferation of art museums is a kind of evidence for that. I read the statistic that in the early 1960s a new museum opened on the North American continent every three or four days. Every three or four days! So we have something like twenty four or five museums per million population in the North American continent. The proliferation of museums is like the proliferation of cathedrals in the Middle Ages. If, as I believe to be true, art has a kind of spiritual value, then there is a spiritual value in having it, and the museums for it, even if you disagree with it.

TK: As a nation, are we sufficiently well-educated to support and sustain the proliferation of museums that you just mentioned?

AD: Let me put it this way, there is this problem for sure: museums are built by cities or communities that have an educated populace to begin with. No question that there are a lot of people who don't have that kind of education, although through a lot of outreach you bring people into the museums now, art enters the media in so many different kinds of ways. The incentive for coming to the museum is stronger than it used to be. When I was a kid, for example, the art museum was a place that you entered with a sense that you probably didn't belong there. It's like a man entering a lingerie shop—you're not quite sure it's your place at all, you feel almost expelled. Now museums are much more open and I think the design of the contemporary museum reflects that fact. Very few people feel alien to the museum. For one thing there are things that people can feel comfortable with right away. There is the cafeteria, there is the gift shop and then, of course, there is the art which makes it all meaningful, but it's possible for people to enter the familiar first. It's symbolic that the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, which is beautiful—it's a McKim, Mead, White structure, I think, anyway, from the gilded age, a great temple-like building—had a new wing designed by Pei and it's very modern indeed. Now, that's where you enter the Boston Museum; you don't enter through those columns, through the great portal, you enter it through the glass structure which looks almost like a shopping mall. And you see the gift shop and you see the restaurant and the place where you buy earphones and then you enter the museum and then it's got its own shows. In the new wing is where people have, for example, the great Monet show, "Monet and the Nineties,"—the serial paintings were shown, and so forth. But it's a portal, *apertura* as the Italians say, an opening to the community. The consensus is that it's a very good thing that children should be brought in, that other people should be brought in whatever their antecedent degree of education would be, and it would be a great shame, I think, if museums were only for the educated. Obviously, the more you know the more you get out of it, but there has to be something that everybody can get. Our times are like all times. Parents are concerned with their children, that the children should have richer lives and that art should be part of that.

TK: We, as philosophers, worry a bit whether students have enough background in philosophy when they graduate from college. What's the minimal education students should have in art in order to understand and appreciate visits to museums, to understand, for example, contemporary art? Is reading *The Nation* enough?

AD: (laughing) No, I don't think reading *The Nation* is sufficient for anything. I don't know that students read *The Nation*, but let me go back since it's come up again. That magazine is written, is read, by well-educated people;

they may not be professionally educated intellectuals, but they are intellectual. I try to write about shows that they're likely to want to see, mostly about shows that they're likely to go see when they come to New York. I feel a responsibility to give them a body of thought about the show that they can react against. They are already relatively well educated, already in the habit of going to see exhibitions of a certain sort. They're not likely to haunt the galleries in Soho, and they're certainly not likely to go to the East Village to see art up-and-coming there. They may be uncomfortable about art galleries in the way in which I was describing people being uncomfortable in museums, at a certain point, because galleries are fairly seedy places and you're not sure you really do belong there. But in museums they do feel comfortable, and it's just part of their idea of what life is like—going to movies or reading certain books. They're not going to read all the books; they may, as a matter of fact, unfortunately, just read the top forty literature, but they do read. For them to understand art, then, I guess what you need is whatever the equivalent of the top forty would be for art. What would that be? I mean you want some sense of works belonging to different periods and what it means if they belong to different periods. You have to understand when the period is or isn't "real." I think you need a certain amount of knowledge of history.

I would like to think that you needed some aesthetics or philosophy of art, but I'm suspicious of a lot of aesthetics in part because it's so ahistorical, and I feel that knowing history is important for knowing art. There are lots of myths that people tell about paintings and painters. I think some acquaintance with some biographies of artists is a good thing, even though they're a little bit mythic. It's nice to know what the reception of the work was, what the obstacles were, those kinds of things I think are a little bit important. It would be nice to read a little bit of philosophy, but then I think you'd have to read relatively contemporary philosophy because I don't think that the philosophers of the past, with the exception of Hegel, (and you couldn't ask people to read that because it's so obscure) were particularly good on art. I don't think Kant was very good on art, I don't think *anybody* was much good on art. But I think that the philosophers of our present time really are. I guess the best thing would be some kind of an adequate art history course so you at least get the sense of progression of different periods. Probably acquaintance with different cultures is a good thing as well, and then it's a good thing for people to know that you can't apply the same criteria to African art or Oceanic art or Chinese art as you do here. Those probably would be the two things that would be best done.

TK: What's the role of the art critic today? Is it just providing background information evaluative assessments to help us in appreciating works of art?

AD: I think Robert Hughes of *Time* magazine said most critics are cheerleaders, that is to say, they've got

certain artists that they support and they try to advance them. I don't have any agenda at all. I do see my role primarily as explanatory. I try to give some sense of how you would make a judgment—that's not so easy. An awful lot of critical judgments are judgments in the form "that's not art," but I don't think such statements are very useful. I'm very open; I never condemn anything that flat out because it's in the wrong category, it doesn't conform to somebody's criteria of what art is, and so on. I think that a philosophically adequate definition of art has to be so abstract that it fits anything anyway, so I feel that what is necessary is explanation and some indication within a category of how you might talk about something being better or worse than something else, more successful, less successful than something else. I couldn't see any other reason to be an art critic and I wouldn't have much confidence in an art critic who simply made evaluative judgments without going into some serious explanation; I think from that point of view what a critic would be doing would be teaching by example, trying to get people, first off, to see that the works really do need explanation, what Richard Wollheim was saying when he talked about understanding the meanings of artworks. They don't wear their meanings on their faces. To get people past "that looks like my butcher" or "that looks like my Aunt Hilda," or "that looks like" or "that reminds me of" or something like that, get past that and start looking at things and try and see what they do mean. I think if you got that—what's it mean?—you would have gotten a lot. Then against that you might say yes, I see what it means, and then the question "is it successful or not?" inevitably rises.

So critics should be paradigms for people who go into shows. I used to do a great deal of drawing. I no longer do it, but I used to draw when I travelled. I'd draw the things that I saw. I felt that was the way in which I'd get to understand art. I call it analytical sightseeing, that is to say, I would take things apart on the paper. I really felt that was very rewarding. I could understand a baroque church by drawing it in a way in which I couldn't just by looking at it. I often thought it would be a good thing if people went home and wrote pieces of art criticism themselves, tried to form ideas and write about art, to think about it from the perspective of having it published almost. I think it would greatly enhance people's ways of going to shows because for the most part we just go in and grunt and groan. We go in and we say, "Oh, you know, that's beautiful," or "wow," or something like that. If everyone tried to do some art criticism, a lot could be gained.

TK: Is there some obligation of an artist to respect her audience?

AD: Recently there was a work of Katie Nolan's that was made of beer cans, Budweiser beer cans and cutouts of Lee Harvey Oswald and Patty Hearst and so forth. I thought the symbols were obvious, that she didn't do more than put them together and beyond that she took up a great deal of space. I mean she took up about a sixth of

the entire top floor of the Whitney Museum. I thought all that space for that message—she didn't do enough. I don't think she respected her audience. I think she just aggrandized all that space. I thought it was a little bit insulting to the audience, not because it showed insufficient technical skill but insufficient artistic skill. There's a difference. The artistic skill consists in putting together your symbols in such a way as to have a certain kind of impact. One felt that this was a thin work even though it was enormous, and I thought that was the consensus. Most people thought that way about that particular work. There were many things I think in that show that were scary and frightening and you thought about them afterward but hers I just thought about as a disappointment, and a failure.

TK: You say you're not a cheerleader for various artists but who are your favorite artists currently? Who are the ones who most enrich you, personally, the ones you most appreciate?

AD: I love Cindy Sherman's work, for example. I find her astonishing. I love Mark Tansey's work, I think that's wonderful. I like Robert Mangold's work. They're all very different artists. Cindy is a photographer; Mark Tansey is a realist and an allegorist of a kind. Mangold is an abstract artist. Those are all artists that I like. Most of the artists that I like best don't have much success. I mean those are people who keep alive the art of painting, which I think is what I personally am most responsive to. There's a deliciousness in the way in which they paint. In California, I think an artist like Wayne Teabow is a delicious artist, I mean the way the paint goes on, it's almost edible, edibly good. I love art of that sort in my deepest self but I would never see myself as a critic just being an advocate or cheerleader for that kind of art. I take it that that's my taste. The artists I first mentioned are extremely successful at it and altogether beyond my means. I'm not sure I want a Mark Tansey particularly when those are large public works and they belong in large important collections. If I buy anything it would be a small painting.

TK: If the history of art has ended then I suppose any sort of predictions about the future of art are nonsense, that anything will go.

AD: The periods where people were prepared to say anything goes were periods of intense philosophical search, as a matter of fact, they were exploring limits. I think the age of exploring limits is now pretty much over, trying to find out what the limits are. Once that's over with, once that's something you're leaving more and more to philosophers to think about, then I think art becomes inevitably richer and deeper and more conceptual. It's got a different mission than the exploration of limits, if you see what I mean. It can become quite unpredictable. We, a number of us, were talking about this artist at the Berkeley Museum, Rosemarie Truckle, a German artist, a German feminist conceptualist. I don't think anybody would have anticipated any of the works that are in that kind of show.

You know what conceptual art is, you know what feminist art might be, you know who's a German, but that the art itself is quite surprising, not on the principle of "anything goes," but the fact that against a background of anything goes she can put things together in such a surprising way. Sometimes they shock, sometimes they surprise, sometimes they move. They always arouse thought, in any case. I think that is great, a great kind of thing. What I like is that you don't just think about it as a breakthrough in the history of art simply because it is almost, I think, that maybe the visual arts are getting to be more like literature now. You're not expecting people to make breakthroughs, you just expect them to write humanly satisfying works and I think something like that might be happening with art.

TK: What is there left for philosophy to do?

AD: To define art, I mean to really solve the problem of what is art. I think that is what philosophers now must do that they couldn't have done until art was ready for it because they didn't know how that history was going to go. Now that the history has shown the philosophical nature of art, what we've got to do as philosophers is put it together. I think in the *Transfiguration of the Commonplace* I went some distance towards that, and I think to make the next move is staggering. I don't know that I'm up to it, I don't know who is up to it. There's a lot to do if you're a philosopher. □

I Have Nothing Rising

A candle's light can rise above a candle.
Its body, always subject to the flame,
Glides up to join the fire
Or down—escaping.

But I'm no light.
I have nothing rising and warmer
Than my body,
Which has set on its bones
And won't flow freely
When the burning starts.
For if I held my finger in the flame,
My flesh could never melt away to safety
Nor stand the pain.

So I can't put my spirit above me,
And I touch nothing of
Greater intensity
Than this thin skin
That will finally roll away
And expose my stiffness.

Barbara Bazyn



Review Essay

THINKING ABOUT ART

David Morgan

Arthur C. Danto. *Encounters & Reflections. Art in the Historical Present*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1990. 356 pp. \$22.95.

Some people have all the luck. Not only do they think and write very well, they get to think and write about what they love—in this case, about great works of art. Philosopher Arthur Danto of Columbia University enjoys the added distinction of an exquisitely perceptive eye. All of which makes his art criticism a joy to read. But like most good thinkers, Danto's work is animated by a deep tension, one that moves restlessly throughout this collection of art reviews since 1986.

After repudiating the search for a “pure distilled essence of art,” Danto provides a definition of art which recalls the idealist tradition of essentialism:

... language achieves the status of art when our sentences embody the ideas they express, as if displaying what the sentences are about. A picture becomes art when, beyond representing its idea, properties of itself become salient in the work of embodiment. (8-9)

As propositions go, these two are elusive. What they mean hinges on the significance of ‘embodiment.’ If art somehow visualizes ideas, gives visible form or body to something within us, how does this occur and what is it that gets embodied? Danto isn't clear on the mechanics (or metaphysics?) of representation. But then, brief columns on art criticism are not exactly the place to pursue such concerns. As for the nature of the idea that becomes embodied in the work of art, it would seem that Danto operates with a broad understanding: it could be passion,

David Morgan teaches in the Department of Art and in Christ College at VU. Interested in varieties of expression, particularly in the relations between art and the spiritual, Morgan has begun a long-term project on the work of Warner Sallman and its reception in the religious community. His last piece in *The Cresset* was on the works of Vassily Kandinsky in May, 1991.

insight, imagination, historical consciousness, even philosophical discernment or intuition in the case of Danto's favorite painter, Andy Warhol. Or, to raise the spectre of Danto's chief philosophical affinity in this book, is what finds embodiment in the work of art something on the order of Hegel's Geist? Although he makes several metaphorical references to the Spirit at work in history (at least one assumes they are metaphorical), evolving toward absolute embodiment or supreme self-expression, Danto's chief location of Geist is in the human person. The work of art, as the embodiment of an idea, “parallels the way in which our minds are embodied in ourselves as persons” (9). It is not reason that art embodies, not pure being or the ideal essence of anything—except perhaps the essence of humanity. When art attempts to visualize reason, it reaches its end, as Hegel argued, and as Danto fully agrees, because it leaves its bailiwick; it seeks to do the work of rational thought, not visual expression (where expression is understood as the virtually sacramental act of transforming what is within into something that is without).

Hegel saw the history of art as an essentially spiritual movement; Danto likewise experiences art as a spiritual affair. He recounts an aesthetic rebirth of 1985, when he saw the work of the Japanese painter, Chuta Kimura:

I had, I realize, grown disenchanted with beauty. I had thought too long of painting in terms of the philosophical questions it raises, as if art were a dislocated form of philosophy itself. Kimura brought back to life for me the irreducible and unanalyzable powers of painting in its highest vocation. (117)

Danto goes on to describe his “first encounter” with Kimura's work. “In truth, one felt in the work the radiance of a religious joy, next to which the ordinary pleasures of even a happy life have barely any weight. Kimura's relationship to his art must have been close to that ecstatic engagement with a radiant reality one reads about

occasionally in the literature of mysticism" (118). Danto's art criticism evokes motifs of contrition, illumination, and transcendence found in the autobiographies of mystics. The attentive reader cannot miss the numerous instances of mystical and sacred metaphor in the author's rich and evocative writing. "The first time I saw David Sawin's work, I felt myself to be in the presence of something irresistible, like a nimbus, self-contained in its intense illumination, which drew and held me with a force like love" (21). It is impossible to look at Abstract Expressionist Robert Motherwell's *Spanish Elegy 132*, Danto proclaims, "without feeling oneself in the presence of some human revelation as deep as painting allows" (195). Cezanne, Motherwell, Morandi, Kimura: "These are all masters of incandescence, that presence in their work of something as difficult to characterize but as easy to recognize as spirit, which is there independently of the discoveries that have earned some of them places in the history of art" (21).

The assertion that a work of art, or the beauty in it, transcends time and place gained a wide currency in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries with the rise of aesthetics and the proclamation of genius as the prevailing force in artistic creation. These developments were linked to the Enlightenment's postulation of a secular spirituality. Sacred art, ensconced in the practices of institutional religion, was replaced by the 'spiritual' in art, and the path from Hegel's *Geist* to Kandinsky's *das Geistige* ensued. The chief characteristic of the spiritual in art is timelessness or transcendence. And if there is one thing Danto wishes to impress upon his readers, it is that the greatest art is timeless, absolute. Goya and Courbet transcend mere periodicity, they are for all times, as is the work of Michelangelo: "We flock to the Sistine Chapel not to be informed as to the values of the sixteenth-century popes. We go to be touched in our essential universal humanity" (327). To the same end, Danto militates against the social construction of such concepts as genius and masterpiece and sees them as transhistorical, absolute. He wishes the term 'masterpiece' to designate absolute and universal value in a work of art. The masterpiece, he writes, "must express humanity . . ." For his notion of 'humanity' and 'genius,' Danto goes to the Enlightenment and the French Revolution (see the insightful and fascinating article entitled "Masterpiece and the Museum"), and thereby proclaims his ties with the tradition of a secular spirituality whose deepest concern is to transpose the sacred mythology of transcendence and revelation to the secular terms of spirituality.

The residues of sacred ritual are quite apparent in Danto's critical response to art. In a review of an exhibition of Siene painting at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Danto writes of a particular panel of St. Thomas Aquinas: "We are drawn in, our feelings are aroused, our curiosity awakened. Like everything else in this extraordinary exhibition, this picture addresses us as participants rather than as witnesses—as if we were among the faithful rather

than mere visual judges—enlarging rather than reducing those for whom it brings messages of great assurance and joy. It is a show you cannot see too many times." It seems only appropriate, of course, that the philosopher-art critic should find this icon of the patron saint of Christian philosophy particularly numinous. But one wonders if Danto's enlightened search for universals in sacred art doesn't amount to the same appropriation (read: stripping) of it which seems so justly offensive in the Western (ab)uses of African or Asian art. Can Christianity or any other religion be so neatly demythologized, its true spiritual essence distilled from its incidental sacred character, its concrete historicity—all in the interest of attaining a universal humanity? What happens to its irreducible and mysterious strangeness that Danto is so keen to preserve on a personal level in his experience of a painting by Correggio?

There is a certain internal strangeness to the painting that remains once one has worked through the external strangenesses that inevitably separate us from the work of a very different time. It is like the mystery possessed by someone with whom one is perfectly familiar. Surrender yourself to that, if you can . . . (93)

The work of art opens up a new world, Danto suggests—but he inherits such rhetoric from the Napoleonic imperialism of the Enlightenment, the will to encounter new worlds by invading and occupying them. The Enlightenment project assumed that everything was accessible to reason, every boundary penetrable to the restless probing of the indomitable human spirit. All difference is cancelled by virtue of the universality of human reason and curiosity. The construct 'humanity' served as a warrant for global imperialism—in the interests of universal human curiosity, of course.

Danto ends his book with a fascinating essay that brings Hegel's diagnosis of the end of art to bear on art since Hegel. According to Danto, art reaches the end that Hegel discerned when it turns to ponder its own existence, at which point it ceases being art and becomes philosophy. Modernism in art is this concern for self-definition. Danto is unsure whether to date this in the second half of the nineteenth century or sometime in the early twentieth, but he finds the issue of self-definition "expressed in its purest philosophical form" in Warhol's Brillo boxes, exhibited in 1964, which pose the question "why something should be a work of art while something altogether like it should not" (343). By 'end of art', Danto does not mean anything so silly as the termination of all artistic production. The end of art, in his view, occurs with the direct embodiment of ideas in form. The end of art is announced when art is used to illustrate something which is foreign to its nature, when art becomes only a means of illustration, when its surfaces become impervious to the idea that formerly animated the work of art. Warhol's Brillo boxes or Duchamp's signed urinal pose the question 'what is art?'

rather than elicit a traditionally defined aesthetic experience. But, in contrast to Danto's thesis, the 'philosophization of art' is not part of an inexorable historical progression as Hegel believed. Art has often worked on the cusp of other modes of discourse. Allegory has linked the visual arts with literature and philosophy; performance has joined art with opera, theatre, and dance; craft has inserted art into the rhythms of daily life; ritual has bound art to religion; propaganda has placed art in the service of the state. In other words, 'art' is forever testing its limits or having them tested. Art is always being defined, redefined. The end of art is perennial.

Despite his intellectual fascination with Warhol, Danto argues for an art beyond the modernist end of art. He joins many in announcing the death of modernism and derides Clement Greenberg's formalist art criticism, which had hailed the self-defining tendency in modernist art. Since it was Greenberg, in a well-known essay entitled "Modernist Painting," who traced this impulse to the critical self-consciousness of Kantian philosophy, it may be

that Danto's disdain for Greenbergianism amounts to a desire to secure the legitimacy of an aesthetic rooted in such quintessentially Enlightenment concepts as 'humanity', 'freedom', and 'universality.' Greenberg's formalism, it would seem, leads to the end of art, which, however it may intrigue Danto the philosopher, is not what engages Danto the art lover. In the final pages of his book, he writes that artists can free themselves from the practice of art-as-philosophy simply by ceasing to search for the essence of art, at which point they will be liberated from the determinism of history and enter a posthistorical age of freedom. Once freed from the historical imperative of working out the Spirit's self-expression, artists will enjoy the opportunity to create as if *ex nihilo*, without a past impinging on them, and will therefore create once again timeless, absolute works of art. What Danto seems to be saying is that transcendence and epiphany are not lost to art. It's a rather facile fiat he pulls on Mr. Hegel, but understandable given the author's commitment to preserving the secularized spirituality and metaphysics of the Enlightenment. □

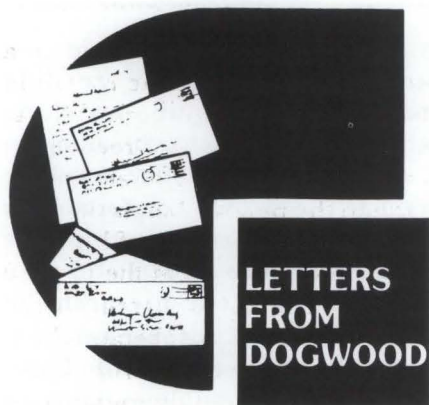
The Face That Told Her Nothing

"This is what I'll do," she told her mother.
"I know who I am." So she went with him,
and when the winds died down and water sluiced
through at the corner of the garden where
the land tipped toward the bottom, they went
to the pasture in boots and he told her
how it would be now with no crops coming in.

Back in the kitchen she got dinner ready,
watching from the window for the men to
come up from the fields, and listened
to the news that said the creeks were out
and bridges were down, to stay out of
the country.

So she watched him eat with the others,
their shoulders hunched over their biscuits
and gravy, and at night held herself stiffly
between cold sheets and watched the moonlight
on the heavy chintz curtains she had from
her mother, hearing the rain in the rain gutters.
Then she would go to the window and press
her body against the glass, hard and cold,
until her face disappeared in the dark rain—
the face that told her nothing now.

J. T. Ledbetter



How Do We Get to Grover's Corners?

Charles Vandersee

Every now and then the last few months the word *citizenship* enters my mind, for no reason. "What is this?" I'm asking myself. Why is this word coming down, no meaning attached, no explanation?

Does it connect with something local? The University here in Dogwood is sometimes charged with "not being a good *citizen*." For one thing, it put up a whopping medical center not made of familiar red brick, a porcellaneous city unto itself, which some people call ugly.

Also, the University attracts students, who have outdoor parties. Plastic and paper litter the neighborhoods. Someone may urinate on a private flower. Partyers turn up amplifiers, and not just on weekends.

But citizenship didn't seem to connect with nuisances. Our apprentice drunks and white medical temple aren't all *that* offensive. We're heavily into tradition here, and town/gown chafing is one of the traditions.

Citizenship also wasn't arriving from reading. I don't poke around much in the two dark and hazardous

Charles Vandersee, at the University of Virginia, is mostly away from the classroom this year, but has been looking with students, and Hemingway and Fitzgerald and Dos Passos, at Americans living in the restless 1920s.

structures called political theory and moral reasoning. Rawls, Lasch, Nozick, Alasdair MacIntyre—are those some of the names? My mind can't deal with this kind of erudite architecture.

A few years ago I did read *Habits of the Heart*, when everybody was reading it. It has stories and people. The word *citizenship* must have been there, though I don't recall. Last summer a student I know pretty well had an internship in Washington with Amitai Etzioni, professor at George Washington University, and his new magazine *The Responsive Community*, interested in people helping each other locally, through strengthening volunteer institutions (churches, charities). At least this is what it sounds like—one kind of citizenship, possibly.

The 1992 presidential campaign didn't seem to be the source of these citizenship blips. Newspaper stories haven't been using the word. A magazine profile finally fixed in my mind a single fact about Clinton, and not a useful fact: He's from one of the two states in the Union that one never, ever thinks of (the other being Idaho). Otherwise, he sounds like just another Rhodes Scholar running for office since cradledom, not a citizen. And no one ever called the current White House occupant a good citizen, so far as I recall.

Had citizenship come up in old school days? Doubtful. We heard about the three-part division of the federal government, and a vague obligation to vote. But small-town wisdom outside the classroom contradicted the latter piety. All politicians were the same, wisdom said, and while no one was going to take your job away if you voted, you better not make a big deal about it.

So I dunno. I ask myself and get no answers. Being careful not to ask too hard—if presidents and presidential candidates aren't necessarily good citizens, maybe I'm not one either. Good citizens are supposed to watch *Meet the Press*, for example (or maybe a postmodern show with a clashier format—isn't there one called *McLaughlin's*

Motormouths?). But here in Virginia all these air on Sunday morning between ten and noon. Maybe for citizenship every narthex in the state needs a wide screen.

Citizenship is hard to figure out, and also non-citizenship. At the university in Dogwood, we still have too few African American students (does that say something about collective citizenship?), but one of them came in a week or two ago to get a recommendation. My favorite type of student: wry, well-read, loves to write, full of miscellaneous information, easy to banter with, ambitious but not cramming for the presidency since cradlehood. As we talked, he mentioned Jonathan Kozol's new book, which I haven't read: about inequality in American schools, because suburbs have lots of money while inner cities and Appalachian valleys don't. Nobody has figured out what to do, and nobody cares; is this an example of non-citizenship?

Also, the NIMBY syndrome of recent years. Nuclear plants and waste dumps and housing projects—needed, but Not In My Back Yard. Is all this stuff going underground in my mind and surfacing with these little blips, like small bubbles of waste from Love Canal, this word *citizenship* over and over, unattached to anything? Because, no kidding, this has really been happening.

And not, as I mentioned, because I especially think about these matters. Jonathan Kozol I admire, from a host of books, especially *Death at an Early Age*, read years ago. I'm glad he's an angry man, also Ralph Nader (is Ralph Nader still alive?), and I'm glad Etzioni is stirring up some new thinking. Maybe these people are exemplary citizens.

Yet I really don't know, but the other day the word came up yet again, with a slightly new angle. It was Catharine Stimpson using the word, one of the country's fine ladies, a literary scholar, dean at Rutgers, recently president of the Modern Language Association. This is the organization that English professors belong to, as doctors belong to the

AMA. The MLA has been attacked lately, especially the year after Stimpson's term, when it protested the nomination of Carol Iannone to the council of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Iannone, an adjunct professor whose publications are mostly partisan essays in a conservative monthly, *Commentary*, isn't all that much of a scholar, said the MLA. Lynne Cheney, head of the NEH, retorted that the MLA just didn't want a conservative on the board.

It was a review of that battle, fought in the media, that Stimpson presented in one of her two lectures here. It was arranged by our Commonwealth Center for Literary and Cultural Change, where I'm helping out this year. Included in the battle rhetoric, Stimpson reported, was a right-wing attack on Phyllis Franklin, head of the MLA, for being a worse threat to the U.S. than Saddam Hussein. On the ground that internal "culture wars" in the U.S. are more serious for America's future than wars with any foreign dictator. The NEH battle and the Gulf war were being fought at about the same time. Oppositions within the American culture have in recent years been so fierce and deeply felt (abortion, pornography, prayer in the schools) that "war" is actually an apt metaphor.

It was after her account of the fierceness over this one appointment to the NEH board that Stimpson paused to suggest that in the America of the next few years the question of *citizenship* is going to be a major issue.

Sitting at her side, as moderator for this brown-bag lunch session, I pricked up my ears. Here was the intrusive word, unsought and undisclosed. Stimpson's concern was that all the cultural issues have become dichotomized, and that every single issue now generates a full-scale war. All issues have only two sides, and all issues are matters of life and death. She began to suggest (but had to stop, to catch a plane) that citizenship must be a capacity for moving beyond the dichotomous and out of full battle dress. Citizenship

means something other than giving every issue two and only two sides, picking one, then going about bludgeoning.

Well, I didn't know what to make of this, and still don't. I call a lot of us good citizens here at the university, because we do our work well, and the work is beneficial to others. We hate fights, and mistrust Manichaeans. But is this enough?

Talking with the student needing a recommendation, I dragged out one of my favorite points, not too passionately, I hope: that literary study—the reading of novels and plays and poems—is really the only effective way of nurturing the imagination. The imagination, that is, moves a person for hours at a time into someone else's experience and *consciousness*. Movies and TV dramas can give you experience, but they can't fully deal with consciousness: desires, motives, fears, construals, and illusions. My further point was the nurturing of the imagination is necessary in order to feel what it's like to be a part of a nation. I.e., a citizen.

You can read magazine articles and see TV documentaries, and be moved and enlightened, but an author who takes you inside the actual mind of a sharecropper or CEO is what's finally wanted. A mind, with its motives, is an evolving construct, responsive to all kinds of things that happen, and in two or three hundred pages of things happening you actually learn about that mind.

You would not necessarily forgive—as Graef Crystal, once adviser to CEOs on how to rake in millions, now campaigns, unforgivingly, against bloated salaries. But you would have insight into how individual human beings chose their respective wars, what it's like to have strong feelings and reject compromise. You then might resist calling every provocateur—Jesse Helms or Robert Mapplethorpe—a bearer of the Apocalypse.

Feeling that you know a bunch of minds in the nation, you might ask how the nation belongs to each, and thus begin conceiving citizenship.

Still, all this seemed beside the point. Not faithfully reading campaign news, or watching Bushbashing and Buchananbaiting on TV, or spending much time in culture wars, I felt somewhat comfortable in aloofness, since I'm not sure people should pretend to understand what they don't, and the hierarchy of important issues in this year's election is not at all clear to me. Nor do I have a vision of the possible sustainable America, some structure of virtue we'll all look at with self-yielding affection.

As part of this year with the Commonwealth Center, I organized some book discussions for the public, at the new branch library in the shopping center. Our research fellows at the Center each chose a book, as did I, on the theme, "No Turning Back." The book I chose is by my favorite anarchist, Henry Adams ("Conservative Christian Anarchist," he called himself): his anonymous and rather bitter novel of 1880 titled *Democracy*. I began the session by hazarding that the U.S. in our time is very likely ungovernable (being too large and complex), but that people in Adams' time did hope it was governable. He thought democracy virtually a failure, but advised no turning back, because monarchy and totalitarianism were worse.

For Adams, corruption was the problem, and he thought that maybe corruption could be stanchied. Today corruption remains a problem, the S & L bandits quite matching any barons of the Gilded Age. But there's a big difference; we have a mammoth federal debt, also an overwhelming mass of data and opinions impossible for a legislative staff to sort through, to reach wise judgment on matters that come before House and Senate.

So all appropriations bills are by definition bad, because they add to the national debt. And on general policy issues most votes yield "no win" situations. Voting for fiscal restraint means an economy in doldrums and people losing jobs; "stimulating the economy" means assaulting the environment.

Local and state governments do

have issues one can get one's mind around, but the nation itself cannot be governed. This does not mean collapse, since a nation doesn't have to be governable to survive, but it does raise the question of what any of us as "citizens" might usefully do, in and for the nation.

That big citizenship question obviously isn't answered by saying that each of us should be content locally with doing our little best. Or that we need a vision only our leaders and would-be leaders can provide. Or that we have to replace wars and polarities with an effort to reason together.

Perhaps what I'm looking for is a wholly new intervention in national culture, produced not by a sociologist or a visionary or a politician, or a Fulghum or an Adams. It would have to be a *story*, I think—a work of art. It would have to be a video cassette—despite its overtly, TV is our one universality, and a video is in reach at any hour. The story too has to be within our reach: not soap opera, also not a lofty and classical ideal. A story about *people*, who are recognizably building some sort of structure, but a story eschewing the tedious and unconvincing moral language of *community* and *society*, and *neighborhood* and *bond*.

Perhaps without language at all, a cassette story with acts and images that would entice equally into its sacralized rectangle the drug dealer and the CEO, the too-sure fundamentalist and all driven treadmillers.

Then, perhaps, there would be a day in the year when the government did not show up for work, and schools were empty and silent, as everywhere at the screen people write themselves into the story's future, preparing to emerge into the sun, artists, rested, with their new scripts for a nation whose parts are willing to coexist just a week at a time.

From Dogwood in election year,
yours skeptically,

C.V.



Super Powers, Super Stars, and Super Salaries

Michael Becker

"How can anybody be worth that much money?" he says, looking up from a newspaper. Or maybe without props, just his mouth descending to a frown. A lively conversation begins in any neighborhood bar or faculty lounge in America. He doesn't need to say more or even respond to questions. Someone will focus the argument. Ryne Sandberg, Arnold Schwarzenegger, or sports or movie stars in general. More and more these days the talk runs to chief executive officers of major corporations.

Presidential candidate Jerry Brown says that astronomical salaries and providing jobs for Mexicans are all corporate executives are interested in. Some congressmen are suggesting that corporations should not be allowed to deduct salaries in excess of some maximum. Will Greider, writing on tax legislation in *Rolling Stone* says, "If business is going to get tax breaks, Congress should impose some new rules. For instance, no company should be eligible if its executives are enjoying scandalously high salaries and bonuses." Some of these people may even be serious.

There's a lot more of this kind of talk recently. It's because of the recession. One economic theory says satisfaction with one's wealth is more related to the person's wealth in

relation to that of others than to the absolute level of wealth. To be able to keep up with the Joneses is a satisfying thing regardless of what the Joneses or I happen to make. As people are laid off or threatened with layoffs they feel less wealthy relative to others and are less satisfied and begin to complain more.

In the 1950s well-orchestrated oligopolies in many American markets, automobiles and steel for instance, made high profits and provided high wages and salaries for their employees. Concern for the consumer was somewhat cavalier as we look at it today. That happens when competition is limited. There was no foreign competition except for sports cars and watches. But in time foreign competitors learned to produce acceptable products with employees, workers and executives both, earning less than in America. They offered a lower price and took market share. Eventually they developed superior products and took more market share. To stay in the game American firms had to lower production costs. They demanded and received wage and benefits freezes, sometimes even givebacks. Why hasn't this happened to the executives at the top? Their compensation has risen while hourly workers and middle management compensation has stagnated or fallen. A countertrend has been at work.

Explaining today's high compensation for corporate CEOs, and likely part of its cause, is the development of agency theory in financial economics. This is the idea that business owners, if they are unable to manage directly their own business, must rely on agents. To assure that agents carry out the owners' objectives, certain costs must be incurred. These include costs of audits, costs of larger and more competent boards of directors to

Michael Becker teaches in the College of Business Administration at VU and shares "The Nation" column with colleagues Berner (law), Juneja (English), and Trost (political science). Next year he will concentrate on a dissertation.

oversee CEO activities, and compensation plans designed to make executive and shareholder goals more nearly congruent.

CEOs, like everyone else, have personal agendas which are not always matched to the goals of their firm's shareholders. To achieve congruence of goals, corporations make CEOs into shareholders, rewarding them in stock, and providing stock options and bonus plans tied to performance of the firm's shares. To avoid CEOs focusing only on short-term performance in order to maximize their bonus for the current year, compensation plans have been developed to reward longer term performance. The theory suggests that CEOs are given more compensation now, not because they work harder but because they pursue goals more closely allied with those of the shareholders, namely increasing shareholder wealth. This has led to embarrassing situations. High bonuses are achieved in a year of low profits, layoffs in this country. That was 1991. These do not seem desirable results to the average person, including newspaper business section reporters who may be concerned about layoffs themselves. They ask why CEOs get rewarded under such circumstances. The answer is that creating American jobs, or withholding jobs in Mexico, or making short run profits are not what CEOs' employers, the shareholders, want them to do. Shareholders are interested in increased dividends and/or rises in stock prices. That's pretty much it. The stock market is up. It is not illogical that CEOs' compensation in general is also up.

Not all stock returns are up however. And the lowering of interest rates may have more to do with some stock price increases than CEO performance. Incentive compensation plans never do work perfectly, whether designed to motivate hourly workers or the uppermost executives in the corporation. Incentive plans are intended only to increase the degree of overlap between worker and company or shareholder goals.

Should self-serving shareholders be allowed to award "scandalously high

compensation" to executives who ignore the "needs" of the country? Who are these selfish shareholders anyway? Well, they are us for one thing, we who hold cash values in insurance policies and shares in mutual funds and interests in pension plans, our savings for down payments on homes, college tuition, or retirement. The College Retirement Equities Fund (CREF), which is where many of us on campus keep retirement savings, held \$34 billion in its stock account at the end of 1990. I haven't seen the 1991 figures yet, but the stock market rise must have brought considerable increases in CREF investment values. Personally, I am not planning to request a reduced pension because American CEOs mainly pursued shareholders' (my) interests in 1991 instead of a goal of full employment in America. Included in CREF stock account, by the way, is \$4.5 billion (about 13 percent of the total) in investments in foreign corporations and governments. This suggests that college professors aren't much into "Buy American."

If American CEOs were somehow pressed into service in behalf of a national goal, creation of American jobs for instance, even though the goal might clash with shareholders interests, how much could they do? The American edge that some critics blame U.S. executives for losing is, or was, a monopoly on technology and resources. The monopoly resulted partly from hard work by Americans, and partly from accidents of history. Like any form of organization, monopoly is subject to entropy. No one person and no one country can command disproportionate shares of the world's wealth forever. Attracted by the promise of economic reward, others find ways to compete. America can work hard and improve itself, but it will enjoy a continually diminishing piece of the world pie. Is it possible that managing a U.S. firm when world trends are against us is more difficult and deserves more reward than in that economic paradise of the 1950s?

The 1992 election year theme of "American First" is fueled by nostalgia

for a time long gone. The Yugo automobile should make us think of the first Japanese cars to hit our shores. We didn't think much of them either. You can bet that Yugo executives have heard all of Johnny's and Jay's jokes and are working on the problem. Competition in the next century, for America and for Japan, will come from places like Nigeria and Paraguay and the Ukraine. And at some point such countries will figure out how to build some product we want with better quality and a cheaper price.

Speaking of Japan, it has been much noted that Japanese corporate executives' salaries are smaller than those of their American counterparts. Are Japanese executives therefore less loyal to their shareholders? It seems otherwise. Japanese executives are said to obtain from their culture a greater regard for their employer and for their fellow employees than is the case for their American counterparts. The Japanese executive probably obtains a greater respect and admiration from his culture as well. He could hardly obtain less. Respect can be as satisfying as high pay. Critics suggest that Americans should emulate these more altruistic aspects of Japanese culture. Why? To sell more products and to take jobs away from foreigners.

If Japanese executives are more competent than Americans and work for less money, why don't American corporations just hire them? Cultural differences, not wanting to be first, racism, who knows? If the economics remain strong it will happen. U.S. Automobile companies started buying Japanese steel twenty years ago because it was superior in quality and cheaper. If Japanese executives are also superior in quality and cheaper, it is only a matter of time until they are hired. It won't be popular. American executives being replaced by Japanese will find sympathy in an unlikely place—blue-collar workers who have felt or fear the same fate. The likely result of such increased competition for CEO jobs will be the lowering of top executive salaries.

On the other hand, would a Japanese take an American CEO's job?

Satoshi Iue, President of Sanyo Electric observes in *Business Week* [March 30, 1992] that American executives spend more hours on the job than many executives of Japanese concerns. "My feeling is that American company presidents work extremely hard and are under a lot of stress. If I had to work in America, it's quite possible I'd want to be compensated like an American." The *Business Week* article from which this comes advocates lower compensation for top executives.

The bigger trend of business internationalization may cause our scenarios to play out in slightly different ways. It may be a fifty percent Japanese owned General Motors that employs the first Japanese CEO. It may be the merged Ford-Mitsubishi-Volkswagen Corporation that builds the first automobile in Nigeria. These are not popular things to think about in the "America First" election year of 1992. Maybe trends toward internationalization will be halted. And maybe General Motors will get back their former fifty plus percent of the American automobile market. And maybe Wayne Campbell's scenario involving those flying monkeys will take place.

The values behind the whole executive reform argument seem a little skewed. The objection seems to be that executives are paid more than they are worth. But it seems to be OK for people to *have* more than they are worth, those who inherit wealth for instance. Is this a new version of "old money is superior to new money"

argument? And what about people who win lotteries? Aren't they getting more than they deserve?

Maybe we can think about this thing in another way. Top executives of top firms work extremely hard, harder than any sports or movie star ever dreamed of. Say they get a base salary of a million dollars or so. Say they can make another million or so by superior performance for their shareholders. But they also get a lottery ticket which pays off really big, tens of millions say, if some rather unlikely things happen to the economy or the corporation or its competitors. Would that be fair? In effect this is pretty much what actually happens, I think.

USA Today tells us [March 27, 1992] that on this issue "the hoopla isn't likely to fizzle soon." This is a strange statement for a newspaper where the hoopla usually fades before the ink is dry. I think the hoopla will fade, maybe even before the fall elections. People will get tired of it. Cool heads will prevail. No laws will limit compensation. Such laws would put most professional ball clubs out of business, for one thing. And once employment picks up, people will have a lot less to resent.

There is a government approach to pay inequity that has been used to good effect in the past. Remember the graduated income tax? Not the wimpy version we have now, but the one where really well-off folks were placed in a 91 percent tax bracket. Ninety-one percent! Later the highest rate was reduced to 50 percent. Now it

is 28 percent. The last reduction was achieved when Ronald Reagan traded away a host of pro-business tax laws. Now Bush wants the pro-business tax features back (capital gains tax, investment tax credit, lower minimum corporate tax, passive losses on real estate), but without reinstatement of higher tax rates for the rich. Will Greider think he may get his way. I'm not so sure. Bush may have made a colossal error in vetoing the recent tax bill (Democratic) which would have reduced most people's taxes in America at the expense of the richest one percent. A Democratic White House and Congress is possible in 1993. Hoopla over the rubber check issue will be gone before the election. A tradeoff of steeper graduated rates for return of some of the pro-business tax features Reagan gave away is likely no matter how the election goes. It would have happened already if it weren't for "read my lips."

A self-evident corollary to Jesus' saying about the poor is, "The rich you will always have with you." Can we try not to be so hard on high-earning CEOs? Clearly such people do something quite uncommon to earn their money. What would we do without them? Remember how Dante reserved a special place in purgatory for princes who were so busy doing their jobs of ruling that they didn't attend to their own salvation. Dante gave them a second chance rather than sending them straight to hell. Can we be similarly compassionate to corporate executives? □

Friday, the Thirteenth

For this day when Eve carried fruit
To the willing mouth of Adam.
For this day, years later, when Noah
Set sail on the eraser flood.
For the morning when the builders
Spoke a thousand tongues in Babel.
For the crumble and collapse,
This noon, of Solomon's temple.
For the death, before dark, of Christ,
All the Bible's subsequent bad luck.

For the moments of ice or water
Or ill-judged curves which swerve our cars.
For the vague ache, for the fierce pain,
Misery arriving on the phone.
For the day some of us were born.
For Friday whose number we whisper.
For anniversaries which turn us
Toward our caves, the thigh bones we brandish
When the family fire blinks out
And we rise fierce with growl and roar.

Gary Fincke



Finding Life in the Movies

Roy M. Anker

In his very remarkable book, *Awakenings*, neurologist Oliver Sacks recounts his long work in the 1960s with sufferers of post-encephalitic Parkinsonianism, a bizarre disorder that physically immobilizes or freezes its victims for decades, usually barring them from self-expression and rudimentary communication. For these forgotten souls, lost in "abysses of affliction," surprising in warehouse-like mental hospitals, Sacks initiated treatment with the the "miracle drug" L-dopa (xxvii). The results, as the book's title suggests, were nothing short of amazing. Sacks' recounting of the medical origins and workings of the disease transfixes the reader (Sacks' book was a best-seller of sorts), but ultimately more is afoot there than high-tech therapy and super-doctors. For as much as Sacks is engrossed and expert in detailing causes, symptoms, and consequences of this puzzling disease, his chief fascination is with what he calls "the full needs and

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feelings of patients" and the "landscapes of being in which these patients reside" both of which he deems worthy of "metaphysical attention" (xviii, xix). After all, as Sacks claims, it is to the patients themselves, as individual stricken people, and decidedly not as medical challenges or ingenious cures, has fallen the task, "through no fault or wish of their own," of exploring the unimaginable "depths, the ultimate possibilities of being and suffering" which life harbors (273). And in these journeys came great ecstasies and desolations, barely fathomable by residents of conventional health and "normalcy." In the end all Sacks knows is that the usual storehouse of medical pathologies, mechanistic in the extreme, do not begin to account for the wonders encountered by his crew of sufferers.

A like sense of profound wonder and amazement, of a "metaphysical attention" approaching enchantment before the mysteries and potentialities of life, is these days finding its way into, of all places, a few Hollywood releases. Perhaps the most notable of these, although maybe not the most satisfying, is the film versions of Oliver Sacks' book. This past winter appeared Meg and Lawrence Kasdan's sober and reflective *Grand Canyon*. Very much a middle-aged film, so to speak, it scrupulously explored notions of meaning and, believe it or not, such terms as "miracle" in response to the ragtag banes and blessings of ordinary life. The effects of everyone's psychological detritus got their due in Barbra Streisand's adaptation of Pat Conroy's *Prince of Tides*. Perhaps such scenarios make good fodder for screenplays, or the yuppies of the nation have reached a fit age for contemplating themselves, their mortality, and "what it all means." Whatever the case, the news these filmmakers report is that, surprise, life is an exquisite and irreplaceable gift,

so replete with meaning and delight that its contemplation elicits nothing so much as deep gratitude.

The trouble is that over and over again in these films, as maybe in real life, it takes the fearsome prospect of death (or some close kin thereof) to provoke even minimal apprehension of life's inmost nature. Indeed, and sad to say, war and sickness have historically proven the best agents for instigating a life-loving metaphysical embrace. In war films, as in Oliver Stone's *Born on the Fourth of July*, dominant emphasis has usually fallen on the horrors of war that imperil the goodness of the ordinary. More often we run into tales of illness and death, no doubt because these subjects are regular and constant, and these stories seem to set out fuller portraits of health, a nebulous condition whose real benefits we fail to appreciate until we totter on the brink of loss. If the hard truth be known, then, it often takes pain and death to scare life and jubilation into us. The scary prospect of pain and death can bring light and gladness to spirits dark or numb, as was the case with Tolstoy's Ivan Ilyich. For most everyone, only the jolting confrontation with illness and mortality proves sufficient to alert one, down to socks and soul, to the inexpressible glory of ordinary human life and love. As in the *Divine Comedy*, the soul-self has to go through hell to find life abundant. And that, to be sure, is not a bad trip for any book, or as we have here, two flicks derived from books, films that really shake people up—both on the screen and in the seats.

The film *Awakenings* is, as it says at the outset, "based on a true story," and as a whole it illustrates well what Hollywood thinks it must supply to keep an audience: namely, increase mystery and romance so the story looks a lot like, to put it somewhat harshly, "the miracle worker goes on a date" or "medical sleuth finds

romance." It is surely clear by the evidence of this film that Hollywood, that amorphous money-making crew out in earthquake land, does not think commonplace experience of reality of sufficient interest to hold anyone's attention for very long. There is in this attitude both poverty of soul and enormous condescension toward ordinary people who they deem incapable of mustering sensible understanding of the import of their own lives. With *Awakenings*, there is some irony in this, for it offers a good example of how far Hollywood, not trusting its own instincts (and a lot of other people's money), will go to dress up a film whose very "message" argues vehemently against any such approach.

Both the book and the screenplay take us to the humble confines of the ward for the chronically insane at Mt. Carmel Hospital in New York City. Here all the heroes-to-be have been in various stages of sleep for many years, sometimes decades. The film follows a withdrawn and socially inept psychiatrist and brain researcher, Dr. Malcolm Sayer (Robin Williams), who seems to be some facsimile of Oliver Sacks. The shy shrink signs on to work in a hospital because he cannot find laboratory work and is ill-suited for regular "people work." To enhance viewer interest still further, the filmmakers make Sayer a brilliant diagnostician who cracks the whole riddle of a peculiar catatonia manifest in a variety of patients. In fact, the sort of knowledge he comes across in the film had long been established, but having Sayer come upon it makes the whole story more dramatic (a lot like Oliver Stone in *JFK* compacting the work of countless assassination investigators into the oration of Jim Garrison). However, as Sacks himself applauds, the film does excel in its portrait of the victims of a "post-encephalitic disorder of far greater complexity, severity, and strangeness" than had before been imagined possible, for while bodies fell immobile, minds remained unimpaired (xxx).

Between 1916-27 some five

million people suffered sleeping sickness, and some few of these developed, often years or decades later, acute Parkinsonianism. The book fully details the horrible physical consequences of the disease but is more concerned with the victims' experience of their own disease and what happens under L-dopa.

Again, differing from the book for the sake of drama, the film casts the patients as completely unreachable and unexpressive, and it is Sayer's good fortune to discover a full and remarkably sane mental life behind their silence. After Sayer's medical sleuthing tracks the mysterious cause, the strange aftereffects of encephalitis, the film begins to assume its full measure of poignancy as Sayer struggles to reach the healthy minds that he alone suspects are merely locked in a mysterious mental prison. Firm in his hunches, he seeks his superiors' grudging permission to experiment with a wonder drug for victims of Parkinson's disease, a common neurological disorder that destroys muscle control. He first tries L-dopa on Leonard Lowe (Robert DeNiro), who in the film had fallen "asleep" in his teens and by 1969 had been so for thirty years (actually he was almost thirty when hospitalized and had just about finished a doctorate in literature at Harvard; throughout his illness he was able to read and communicate by indicating letters on a small letter board).

Miraculously, in both film and book, under the medicants of L-dopa, Lowe emerges to full healthy consciousness and in a short time attains what seems to be complete normalcy. He plunges into life with relish, as if to make up for lost decades. On the basis of Lowe's recovery, Sayer wins permission to treat others with L-dopa, and they too blossom like long-dormant flowers brought into the light. Amid all these abundant miracles of recovery (again compacted in the film), Leonard becomes something of a prophet to normal folks, including Malcolm Sayer, who takes for granted much of the grand gift of life. Leonard lives

and preaches the sheer goodness and "wonderment" of life in ordinary things—friends, walks, books, and even romance. And so do his awakened compatriots, although they seem to have more trouble accepting the loss of so much of their lives and loves. Surely these are the most striking moments in the film, but they pale before Leonard's exquisite savor of being as captured in Sacks's prose:

Everything about him filled him with delight; he was like a man who had awoken from a nightmare or a serious illness, or a man released from entombment or prison, who is suddenly intoxicated with the sense and beauty of everything round him ... Mr. L. was drunk on reality—on sensations and feelings and relations which had been cut off from him, or distorted, for many decades. ... He read the "Paradiso" now—during the previous twenty years he had never got beyond "Inferno" or "Purgatorio"—with tears of joy on his face; "I feel saved," he would say, "resurrected, re-born. I feel a sense of health amounting to Grace ... I feel like a man in love." ... [the] diary which he started to keep at the time was full of expressions of amazement and gratitude. (208-09)

Words, it seems, venture only so far, and while the film evokes the same, it hoards cinema's resources in evoking Leonard's new life, however brief it proved to be. While its portrayal is moving, director Penny Marshall's rendition of Leonard's new-found ecstasy of being is sadly very tame. The screenplay and the director might have presented far more of Leonard's radical embrace of the gladness of ordinary being. In any case, the tale progresses, and for Leonard and the others, the new bright flame of being flickered and then very painfully ebbed as the drug lost its potency. After two weeks on L-dopa, Leonard began to suffer countless side-effects from the drug. These calamities ranged from assorted torturous body spasms to paranoia and all-consuming lust, the latter two

psychological distresses entirely neglected by the film. For these reasons, Leonard would eventually opt to eschew further experimentation with wonder drugs. Having had his fill of glory and misery, he would, so to speak, live quietly.

Awakenings sets forth its portrait of human interconnectedness very nicely. As chronicled by Sacks in an appendix to the 1990 edition of his book, Robert De Niro mastered, with scholarly persistence and acumen, the demanding role of Leonard, and Robin Williams managed to submerge his effervescent lunacy into the shy physician. The story moves nicely, although it feels contrived as the movie makers labor to imbue the tale with, as Sacks describes it in his book, "the emotion, the excitement, and with something akin to enchantment, even awe" that it possessed in real life. Those who have read the remarkable original account by psychiatrist-writer Oliver Sacks, the model for Sayer, will no doubt be disappointed not with the film's desire to capture this mood but with the irksome predictability of its sentimental strategies (overdone music and photography, to name two).

Nonetheless, this quiet film sets forth a remarkable story, and on top of that, dares to tell audiences, albeit tamely, what that story might mean. That is, we should care for one another, even when impractical; that life comes full of surprises; and that life was meant to be something good and grand, full of relish, delight, and gratitude. Admittedly, this implausible scenario resembles the sort of fanciful stuff that comes in fairy tales. Nonetheless, contends Sacks, "real life" at times does hold real surprises, sad and glorious ones alike. The marvel of *Awakenings* as film and book, especially the latter, is that the story amply captures both the tragedy and healing that together spell the life of the human spirit on this globe. In this we can take hope: As Sayer says to a group of visitors at the film's end, there is in each human self a "spirit," and no disease or chemical can extinguish its desperate will to live and walk whole in the sunshine.

If the film of *Awakenings* makes less of, tames and diminishes, its source material, *The Doctor* makes much more of its somewhat meager source, a 1988 medical memoir by Edward Rosenbaum (originally titled *A Taste of My Own Medicine*). In the film, a middle-aged cardiac surgeon, a quick-cut hotshot, gets a sore throat that turns out to be cancer. Expert, elegant, and successful (quite the opposite from Malcolm Sayer), Dr. Jack MacKee (the splendid William Hurt) loves his profession, and himself in it, singing and bantering with his cohorts during surgery. At first, the viewer cannot exactly tell whether Jack's infectious demeanor—handsome, charming, jaunty, and witty—stems from love of life or from arrogance. On one hand, he knows he has the good life, at least contemporary America's version of it, and he seems downright determined to enjoy it. On the other hand, he thinks he deserves it because he knows he is good at what he does. A nagging cough brings him to a colleague, who coolly drops news of a growth on his vocal chords. While radiation therapy cures most such lesions, the chance remains that this one might require a dangerous surgery that could, even if successful, leave him voiceless. Worse still, there is the prospect, however slight, that nothing will work and that this, indeed, is the beginning of the end.

The invincible healer becomes a patient, and he does not like it very much. It is only in this regard that the film takes its inspiration from the book. While very scary, the disease is hardly the problem. Just as bad, seemingly, is the indignity of being a patient. Once god-like atop his medical Olympus, MacKee now suffers hospital waiting rooms and colleagues' often rude indifference. In short, finitude confronts MacKee in more ways than one. Much to its praise, and faithful to the Rosenbaum memoir, the film effectively hauls us through the series of emotional and physical shocks that being a patient entails. Symbolic of this complete assault is an enema mistakenly administered to

MacKee, and he cannot talk to fend off the medical SWAT-team that invades his room. Mildly funny in the film, a last humiliation for the once-arrogant doctor, the event parallels increased emotional vulnerability. The decline in power culminates when Jack finds that radiation treatments have not worked, and he now faces perilous surgery. Assailed by disease, sick unto death physically and emotionally, fast Jack does not know what to do with himself. And it is here that the film begins to supply depths of soul-searching and contemplation that are entirely lacking in the source.

Either out of habit or simple pride, the insular, self-glorifying doctor cannot turn to his long-suffering wife, whom he has kept at a cordial arm's length. Nor does his long-ignored pubescent son offer much hope for solace. Into this self-made void comes another patient, one facing certain doom from inoperable brain cancer. Predictably, the helper is an attractive young woman (don't the old or other males have anything credible to say to confused young men?). Appropriately named June, a seasonal token of new life, she shows Jack the way to relish and intimacy (we can at least be thankful that this message is imparted without the complications of romance, although they flirt with the idea of flirtation). Some reviewers have found the June subplot cheap corn, but it does allow for fine images of how life should indeed be lived, images that assert that life is a gift to be savored rather than frittered or ego-tripped. Indeed, as the plot suggests, for awhile before her death, June becomes a kind of angel who flits into Jack's life before disappearing. For her, as one gorgeous shot argues, life is a dance that hears music from deep within the inmost recesses of being. After such news, Jack sets out to fix a lot of bad things in his life: bedside demeanor, colleagues, marriage, medical education, and so on. The point is that his frailty, and the grace of June, have taught him how to feel and love. And so happily ends the film.

To be sure, the central plot device in these two films is a cliché—at

least, of sorts. Loss and ill-health sober the soul enough to contemplate the sheer sensate and relational goodness of ordinary life, the irreplaceable good gift and wonderment of being alive. Very often, it seems, only the grim prospect of losing everything prods well-encased souls to love the least anything. And then, too, sometimes the best gifts come when and where we least expect them. Staring at death and oblivion, all that we take for granted and seldom pause to relish becomes new and fresh—suddenly of vital importance. That sort of hard-won recognition is as old as Odysseus and Joseph, and in the late nineteenth century Tolstoy rendered its classic formulation in the harrowing *Death of Ivan Ilyich*, a starkly rich tale of terminal illness and new life. Like the assorted characters in these films, most everybody languishes for lack of some firm realism about the costs and gifts of life, death, and sleepwalking. The prospect of mortality can, by God's good grace, prove an ultimate tonic for being, awakening one and all into fervent delight in the majesty of human life. □

At the Shark Tank

We press our faces
to the glass, shudder
under a thread rotted jaw.
Pickets of teeth skim
close as an embrace.
No longer lovers, we deny

an end, hover in the impotent
solace of friendship. I fall prey
to a lidless stare, opaque
as milk, an ancient angry mind
too blank for peace.
I understand the ache

for devourance
and escape, a longing
to shatter the glass
between us. Sharks will thrash
in ecstasy at our feet
and I will reach

to gash my palm
on smooth grey shards
of steel. Still
no climax, just sinister blue
fluctuations on your cheek.
The ocean floor

must be much darker,
only the forward fluid motion
of gills, slits into the body
wide enough for a hand,
and the slow ceaseless longing
for sleep.

Barbara Fischer



Hospitality With An Attitude

Maureen Jais-Mick

I had just received communion and was prayerfully turning toward my seat when the usher hissed, "Stay right there." I froze. Immediately, my transgression was revealed — in *this* church one waits to be dismissed from the Lord's Supper.

I'm Maureen—a recovering liturgist/church musician who's spent years in Lutheran settings. I've planned convention worship and directed worship committees. I've told clergy where to stand, when to move, what to wear and where to go. If anyone knows her way around the liturgy, it's me. However, after I retired from the organist-choirmaster biz and began worshipping in different places, I began to analyze feeling welcome at worship.

I didn't know there were so many ways to distribute communion—individual glasses already filled (the red, white or purple stuff is grape juice), individual glasses to *be* filled (too late! I was supposed to pick up a glass on the way to the railing), common cup. (But wait! do you take it and serve yourself or does the nervous lay assistant aim for your mouth?) Where does the little glass go when I'm done? Swallow the bread

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immediately or retain it for intinction? Consume the elements as they're received or wait for a signal? Kneeling or standing? Line communion or some elaborate formation known only to lifelong members? And, of course, the one I flunked: Take communion and leave or wait to be dismissed? Being a visitor has cured me of sitting in the front rows—a relief to my husband. In all fairness, I wasn't doing too well that morning before distribution, either. Sitting in a forward pew, I had boldly stood for the hymns—only to discover that this congregation always sits.

I like the infrastructure of liturgy—the underlying order—and the way one part flows predictably into the next. I like clouds of incense, splendid vestments, paraments and banners, stained glass, metalwork, sculpture, lively acoustics, substantial preaching, enthusiastic singing, pipe organs and instruments. I like gospel Masses with electric bass, percussion and synthesizer, outdoor worship, traditional folk music, foreign tongues, and a cappella congregational singing. I like children's sermons aimed at kids, not designed as cuteness breaks for adults. I appreciate the potential for hospitality in all of the above.

The best things about liturgical form are (1) you know what to expect next, and (2) there is flexibility, especially with a resource like *Lutheran Book of Worship*. Both predictability and flexibility are necessary for hospitality. People who know what is expected of them are more comfortable in any situation, but people who repeat the same actions over and over again become automatons.

My favorite model for liturgical hospitality is entertaining in the home. When guests arrive, we don't greet them and then wander back to what we were doing beforehand—leaving them to wonder what happens next. Even as children, we weren't excused from being hosts. We introduced ourselves, we fetched refreshments, we made "adult" conversation, and we helped our folks. We learned our families' traditions of hospitality by performing them. But since, as adults, we know these traditions thoroughly, we are also free to shape them to fit a situation or event.

Hospitality has certain parts—rites, if you will—a thorough housecleaning, floral decorations, special refreshments and foods, introduction of the guests to all present, directions for where to sit and how to serve, and conversations that include everyone. We are not casual about hospitality in our home, although we are definitely informal.

So spare me another sermon likening the Eucharist to a magnificent wedding feast. You show me the pastor, musician and worship committee who put as much effort into worship as my family does into a wedding and I'll show you a parish that's turning members away. At family weddings, no member is exempt from playing host. We all keep an eye on the caterer, the bar, the band, and especially anyone who's being left out of the merrymaking. Strangers often get more attention than old friends on these occasions because they need more. We're delighted they came. It's as simple as that.

Contrary to what you've heard,

Lutheran liturgy isn't intrinsically inhospitable—as in, “Lutheran liturgy is too complicated for visitors. They get confused.” Or, “Our services are too difficult for the people who live in the neighborhood (i.e., Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, etc.). That's why they don't come. And our services are too long.” Ah, yes, let us never cease to be concerned for the unfortunate, attention-deficit disordered minorities surrounding our urban churches. What a challenge they are to evangelize. Why some of these people are arriving at other churches before 9 a.m. and not leaving until past 2 p.m. is, like Lutheran liturgy, “too complicated.”

I recall the African American rector of an Episcopal church in Kansas City commenting on those trying to evangelize his parish neighborhood (this was the 1970s). He couldn't understand why they jettisoned the interesting stuff—chant, incense, chasubles, etc. His parishioners relished the sounds, the textures and sweet odors, the beauty and the colors. Who wouldn't? They also enthusiastically introduced their own traditions into the worship. For them, it wasn't a choice between being African American or being Episcopalian, but a melding of many things beautiful and worshipful. The Mass has survived for a long time in many places among many peoples. It won't break if handled. Making it a reflection of the parish and the whole church can only strengthen it.

The question in 1992 is not, “Should we culturally adapt the liturgy?” but “Where do we start?” For me, it is natural to begin with the arts. Here in Washington, D.C., if one walks down 16th or 14th Streets as church lets out, one can enjoy sartorial splendor and a love of liturgical costume without even entering the church buildings. On warm Sundays, the choirs are exotic combinations of purple, red, electric blue and green. The pastor of a local Pentecostal congregation garbs himself all in papal white—cassock, cape, biretta and shoes. He may be only a storefront preacher, but in his heart he and John

Paul II are the shepherds of their flocks and dress the part.

Adaptation of the liturgy is good news for musicians, artists and all who value culture. It implies a knowledge of culture(s), which means that some hard work and study has gone into the process—surely more thought than repeating what we've always done. Someone commented to me that “If rap is what's happening, then rap belongs in church.” Okay by me. How? Where? Give me some practical training. I've tried and tried and still cannot form my mouth to correctly produce those staccato, percussive sounds into the microphone. I'd also welcome some powerful contemporary texts, although I've got enough to get started—compliments of the Watts Man, Señor Long-and-Common Meter, Mister Rap Hymnody, a poet definitely too legit to quit—Isaac Watts (1674-1748). In fact, let's rise and rap together right now. Take a moment to get the beat going (accented syllables italicized):

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!

Let earth receive its King

(choir: He's the King!)

Let ev'ry heart prepare him room

And heav'n and nature sing

(choir: He's the King!)

And heav'n and nature sing

(choir: He's the King!)

“Yo, Paul [Manz],” calls the head usher. “What kind of moves with the Doxology at the 11:00 service?”

Praise God from whom all blessings flow,

Praise him, all creatures here below.

Praise him above, ye heav'nly hosts,

Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Practically speaking, rapping the Doxology solves the last line “What rhythm do you use?” dilemma.

An offertory procession with an attitude, that's what we'd have. But shouldn't all sacred song have an attitude? It's what Paul Manz, John Ferguson and a growing number of my colleagues bring to hymnody and why people are energized singing with them. Vestments and stained glass

need attitude, too. A project unfortunately left undone when I gave up directing the Worship & Liturgical Arts Committee of the Washington Synod (ELCA) was commissioning a set of vestments for the bishop. After being moved to amazement by the Afrocentric textiles of Januar Umoja at The Smithsonian, it suddenly hit me that my committee's task wasn't to order some vestments. Our task was to take full advantage of six opportunities (blue, purple, white/gold, red, green and a cope) to celebrate our people—Asians, Europeans, Africans, Spanish-speaking, Native American—our Lutheranism, and our region.

If hospitality is about making people welcome, we have to look at our architecture and art. Look around you. Ever get the feeling everybody in the Bible was fair-skinned? Isn't Israel near Jordan and Egypt? Didn't Jesus travel from place to place in the hot sun of the Middle East? Our parishes need more art—a continuous stream of it. I know you installed that statue when the building was dedicated 75 years ago. It's very nice, but even the National Gallery changes its displays and, trust me, it's got better stuff than your church. Most likely, your members don't really notice it anymore. But visitors read your building's message. I certainly notice who's included and who's excluded as I visit to worship. What has your parish commissioned lately? Or did you consider the decorating finished for all time once the last stained glass window was installed?

The parish at which I failed communion didn't plan to be inhospitable. The people in charge just forgot what it's like to be the outsider. Like many people, I'm on edge in a strange environment. The worship folder should help, but I've also discovered that most bulletins are not designed for those who need them. As it was recently explained to me, in my capacity as guest organist, by a patient church secretary, “If we include the information you want in the bulletin, the order of service will take up more than one page.” Alert the media.

But, as a former church secretary who scored "highly entrepreneurial" on some trendy 1980s personality test, I propose the *User-Friendly Worship Folder*. Here's the idea—free of charge. Anybody can come to church and be handed the regular bulletin. However, for an additional \$5 participants can purchase a worship folder containing brief notes about the day's significance, complete music titles and composers' names, anthem texts and translations, names of all service participants, and directions for communion distribution. Parts of the service are identified—Confession and Forgiveness, Service of the Word, Service of Holy Communion, etc. All staff names, titles and office hours are printed. Ditto committee directors and times of regularly scheduled committee meetings. Organizations are identified by full name, followed by a concise blurb about their purpose. (This is 1992. It's okay to explain what Lutherans Concerned is concerned about.) "The WELCA invite all members to ..." is about as helpful to a visitor or new member as my all-time favorite, "See Bob after church if you want to contribute to this year's" And it's all wrapped in a piece of cover art worth saving. I may have to up the price to \$6.50, but I'm confident that people will buy it. □



David L. Burrows. *Sound, Speech, and Music*. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1990. 138 pp. \$22.50.

David Burrows would have us consider an "unconsidered ubiquity." While most people exist in their sonic environment without much thought, beyond the occasional outcry "Turn that music down!" or "Can't you speak up?" Burrows writes from his dozen or so years of speculative thought about sound—how is it in our experience?—what information power does it have in human development? why do we use it to define and extend ourselves?—and proposes a bold thesis: **"...the distinctiveness of human beings as a species...is to a great extent an outgrowth of the distinctiveness of the way they use sound..."**

Burrows calls his compact little book a "phenomenology of sound, speech, thought and music." Though he admits a beginning in his academic discipline, he argues that a quest for the ontology of music leads inevitably to roots where sonic implementation includes also that which we usually call speech. So this is not a musicological essay, but rather a systematics—philosophical, psychological, biological, and often poetical— that centers on the living human body, itself a center that tends to treat everything outside itself as peripheral and dependent.

This systematics of the human uses of sound proceeds itself in a systematic,

logical way. The seven chapters are named: SOUND, VOICE, WORDS, WORDS AND MUSIC, WORDS IN MUSIC, WORDS ON MUSIC, INSTRUMENTALITIES.

The human eye sees in straight lines; we are visually unconnected with things behind us or when we shut our eyes. Sound, however, though it may have slight directional qualities, surrounds us like the ocean of air in which we live. We are hard put to shut out sounds that intrude upon our privacy and we employ this sonic ubiquity to our purposes when we send out ourselves as sound waves to engulf, to "en-ocean" the others among whom we live. "The self is the other than other." (4)

Our voice comes from within our self, deep from within, from that which we sense physiologically and psychologically as our center. The unborn child hears sounds but waits to make sounds until birth. With the exhalation that follows upon the first intake of air, the child defines itself as a center among others. Humans learn soon after this initializing of self to control and articulate exhaustion of air from the body with larynx, tongue, lips, and teeth. The waste product of respiration becomes that which empowers the self to reach out to other bodies.

Words—here Burrows considers only oral phonation—are the efficient means humans have developed to leave the bodily center of beingness and take up residence in that freedom from other beings in this incorporeal realm that identifies the human species. Words quickly and precisely transfer ideas from one mind to another and, probably, ideas or thoughts are structured by sound in the process of phonation. Burrows calls speech "post-laryngeal phonation." Sounds produced "pre-laryngeally" are from deeper within ourselves, again physiologically as well as psychologically. It is to this "seat of innocence" that we return when we make sounds into that human phenomenon called music. Music and speech are inseparable through separately locatable.

When words and music coexist, as in a song, the tensions between

experience and innocence, articulated thought and non-verbal feeling are palpable. The composer and the poet live in an uneasy marriage. (Burrows' study at this point of Purcell's "Musick for a while shall all our cares beguile" is almost as lovely as the song.)

Even more uneasy is the coming together of words about music. The attempt to explain in the manner of post-laryngeal articulation the meaning of pre-laryngeal utterance must fail. Even more so the setting down in graphics of that which is not visual. Printed words cannot capture music and notational symbols can never be the sounds.

Burrows implies that the urge to expand beyond our own center the experience of music making which leads us to attempt musical notation is not unrelated to the urge which leads human beings to invent musical instruments. These devices and machines for producing sounds are closer or farther from our musical centers (compare oboe and piano), but almost always the instrumentalist imagines sounds produced by the body to be closer to the ideal. The violinist emulates the phrasing of a singer and senses her instrument as her own body.

What then of the drummer? Or, how does one explain the self-expression of the hot-rodder dragging on Main Street? Where in this systematics is dance, that realization of the self's center in physical movement? How shall we deal with those collisions of self-expanding sounds that we daily encounter: talking during a concert, radio sounds thwarting conversational ambitions, irreverent sounds in a holy silence? It would be asking more of this book than it intends. Burrows has

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chosen not to include any study of extraneous sounds in our environment; we can hope, though, that his speculative thought will take up the fact that our technological accomplishments have been always accompanied by increases in accidental sonic experiences. Burrows has given us some ways of understanding what it is we do in our mostly "unconsidered ubiquity." With his leadership—he claims no particular originality and cites generously others who are similarly considering their sonic environment—each of us can have a go at understanding the other-than-other which is ourselves as well as the others too.

The area in Burrows' study that seems to me most promising of fruition is one he only slightly indicates. At the beginning he posits three fields in which centripetal / centrifugal action of the self happens. Each field has an associated topology, a configuration that defines the action possible in that field. Field one is physical space (the body); Field two is where thought takes place (the mind); Field three is the diffusion of sense-of-self "through the full range of awareness." Field three he identifies as the "field of the spirit" though he is quick to require that we understand "spirit" in a "not primarily theological way." Nevertheless, musicians (and I here include listeners along with makers) who have a care for the practice of music in our spiritual life together may wish to join me in a quest to know better how sound enables us in the topologies of Field three.

Let Burrows' last paragraph lead on:

Sound shaped into music is perhaps the most direct way into Field three, and Field three is a way out of one and two and the strains within and between them. Field three forgives merelessness and mortality. Action here turns back on itself and converges on stasis. When Field three is fully realized, there can be no friction between part and part, part and whole—there are no parts, and so no particulars, and no partiality. There is no possible disorientation, for there is only one possible orientation, and that is to be one with the whole.

W. F. Eifrig

Quentin J. Schultze (Project Coordinator), Roy M. Anker (Project Editor), James D. Bratt, William D. Romanowski, John William Worst, and Lambert Zuidervaart. *Dancing in the Dark: Youth, Popular Culture, and the Electronic Media*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991. 348 pp. \$14.95.

This ambitious book, authored by six scholars, surveys and analyzes the relationships between youth, popular culture and the electronic media. A usual means of editing such a book would be to include essays written by and attributed to individual scholars; the editor would supply the introduction and show how the essays contribute to the overall theme. This book is put together differently, however; the whole is presented as the work of all six through corporate attribution, with Quentin J. Schultze listed as Project Coordinator and Roy M. Anker as Project Editor.

Dancing in the Dark is the result of eleven months of group study at the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship. Although the authors all are Calvin College professors and share a Reformed Christian perspective (and, as they admit, that of white, middle-aged, North American males), differences in point of view appear in the text. This can be seen as a strength of the book, since it mirrors the complexity of the issues. *Dancing in the Dark* is always careful not to make easy, dismissive pronouncements about the worth of any element of popular culture or its effects on youth or the broader society. Individual chapters offer informative and perceptive analyses of the nature and history of rock and roll, MTV, movies, and television and their social and personal effects. In spite of occasional inconsistencies in point of view, the book as a whole serves as an excellent overview of North American popular culture, the entertainment industry, and their relationship to youth. Overall, the authors warn us that contemporary electronic culture, while having beneficial effects, may also be doing much harm.

Chapters on the general electronic media concentrate on their sociological effects. The authors claim that the entertainment industry promotes

generational separateness to more successfully tap the lucrative youth market. The programming offered encourages long-term immaturity by emphasizing adolescent versions of identity and intimacy, promotes consumption as a means to happiness, discourages historical perspective, and substitutes passive entertainment for active participation in the world. Youth depend on the electronic media to gain a (superficial) sense of generational commonality, and the entertainment industry promotes this identification to maintain its economic bonanza.

While sending clear warning signals about negative effects of positive art, the authors also maintain the importance of our taking it seriously. In a chapter on evaluating popular art, the authors attack an elitism which draws rigid (and often unjustified) qualitative distinctions between high art and popular art, and segregates the high arts from their social context through the promotion of the pure formal study of the art form. The authors promote what they call "contextualism," the idea that how "art is produced and how it functions in life and society are crucial for deciding its goodness" (286).

The book also offers chapters on individual media. Among the best are those on rock music and Music Television (MTV), though here the reader gets differing perspectives. The excellent chapter on rock music seems to have been written by someone sympathetic to the genre. It carefully describes both the art and the business, the constructive and the destructive, and concludes that rock music "mirrors the contradictions present in contemporary life" and "celebrates life and freedom but also wallows in self-indulgence and despair" and ultimately "heals but ... also hurts" (176). In contrast, the equally persuasive chapter on MTV sees the network and its effects as an unmitigated social disaster. MTV, the authors claim, offers only the non-stop promotion of consumption and fabricated intimacy, and constitutes "one of the most powerful forms of contemporary propaganda" (204).

Dancing in the Dark is well-written and eclectic—packed with provocative

analyses and ideas. In point of view it sometimes wavers. It often seems to claim that popular culture and the electronic media have apocalyptic negative effects for youth and society. Elsewhere it implies that the today's so-called "youth crisis" is simply the latest manifestation of the age-old problems of adolescence and that the media can help as well as hinder the process of maturing. But this tension is quite healthy; the issues here are so complicated that none of us can claim to have settled them once and for all.

Carl Plantinga

Robert Kolb. *Confessing the Faith: Reformers Define the Church, 1530-1580*. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1991. 184 pp. Paper. \$14.95.

Kolb's research into the Reformation era's middle and later stages continues to sparkle with freshness of information and clarity of presentation. The present volume, in Concordia's "Scholarship Today" series, is no exception. Kolb gathers a wealth of data not otherwise available to non-specialists in order to show what those involved in the Reformation movement in northern Germany in the middle decades of the sixteenth century thought about their act of confession at Augsburg in 1530.

Key is Kolb's argument that theologians at mid-century reflected on the document which came to enjoy formal standing in their midst. The chapters in which Kolb presents his summaries of this information are the heart of the argument and are absolutely first-rate.

The constraints of the series, on the other hand, seem to force the impressively-presented data into the service of an alternative agenda—signalled by the banishing of the rich documentation to the position of endnotes rather than footnotes, and by the appending of a series of "Reflection Questions" (unsigned, but evidently not Kolb's work) whose intent is indicated in their introductory paragraph: "for

understanding religion, confessionalism, and present-day implications and applications."

Despite this ambiguity of purpose, the book contains thoughtful reflections in which Kolb challenges his readers: "It is impossible to live in the spirit of Augsburg and not be determinedly ecumenical (137)" or "the *articles* or topics of the faith (as found, for example, in the Augsburg Confession) are not so many equally valuable pearls on a string, with so many required to make the string a necklace and so many dispensable. Instead, [Luther and Melancthon] believed that Biblical teaching is like a human body. Christ is its head; decapitated it dies" (136). Such assertions, grounded in a rich fare of documentation, will reward the thoughtful reader.

David M. Truemper

Notes on Poets:

Barbara Bazyn lives in Chelsea, Iowa, where she is a freelance writer. Her poem, "The White Ideal Sea" appeared in the December 1991 issue of *The Cresset*.

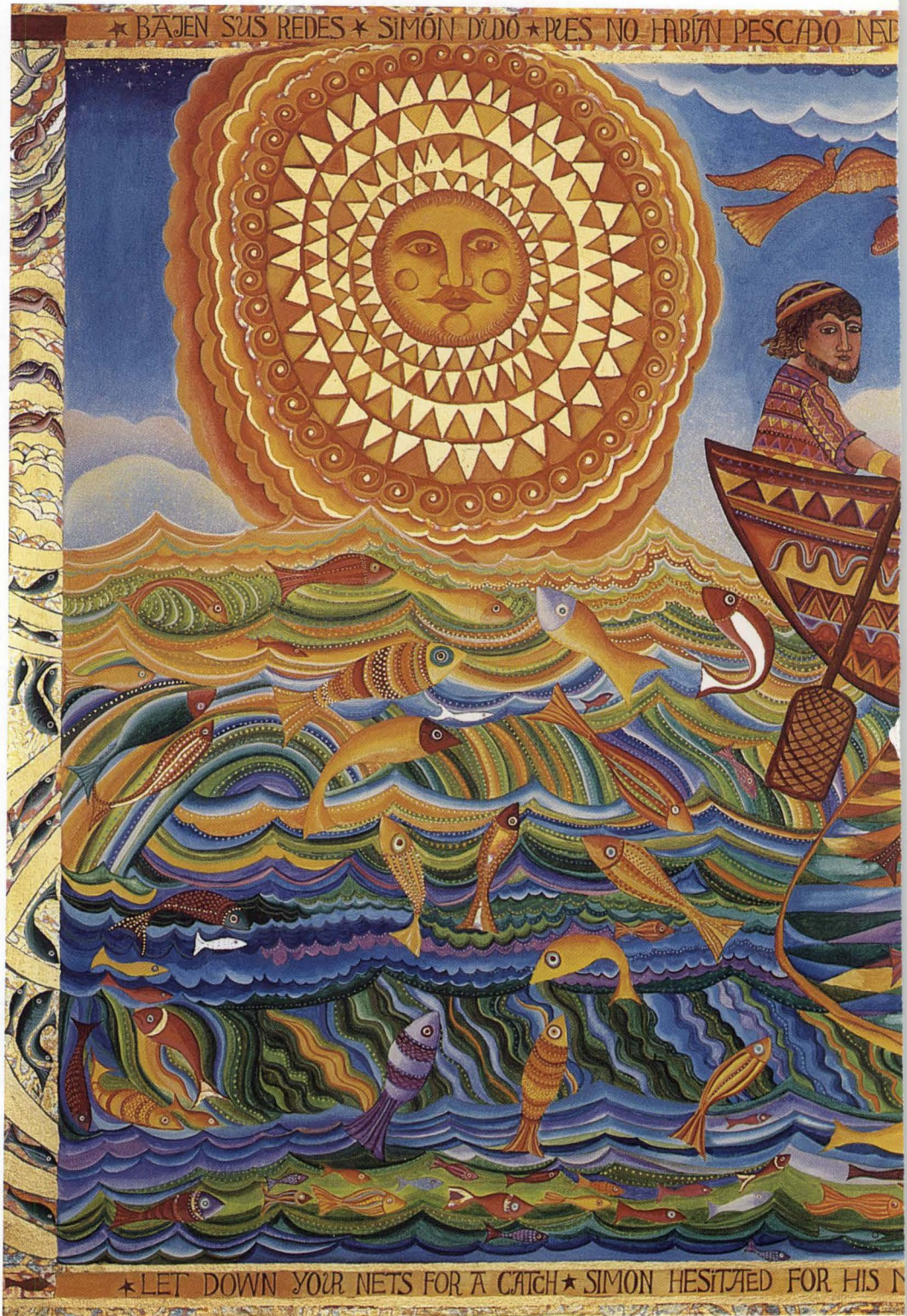
Gary Fincke teaches at Susquehanna University and publishes often in *The Cresset*. In March, his poem "Inventing Angels" appeared in *Harper's*.

Barbara Fischer works with the writers' program at Johns Hopkins University. This is her first appearance in *The Cresset*.

Fritz Fritschel sent us this poem some time ago. If he sees this, we hope he will let us know where he is.

J.T. Ledbetter, a poet whose work appears frequently in *The Cresset*, teaches at California Lutheran University.

★ BAJEN SUS REDES ★ SIMÓN DUDO ★ PUES NO HABÍAN PESCADO NADA



★ LET DOWN YOUR NETS FOR A CATCH ★ SIMON HESITATED FOR HIS NETS