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Cover: Frank V. Dudley, American 1868-1957
Bronze and Gold of Autumn oil on canvas, 27 x 30 inches,
VU Museum of Art. Bequest of Percy H. Sloan

Above: Dudley, Return of the Fishermen, oil on canvas, 20 x 22
VU Museum of Art, Bequest of Percy H. Sloan

Back Cover: Dudley. Shadows and Sunlit Silence. oil on canvas, 27 x 30
VU Museum of Art. Gift of the Friends of Our Native Landscape
Those Few Patches of Mother Earth

Don’t read any further until you have closed the magazine and looked again at the images on the front and back covers.

Ready? That is, if you have come back to this space at all. Dudley’s views of the natural world are so inviting that the joys of print pale out to nothing in comparison. Though these paintings reflect a landscape just minutes away from where I sit writing, a vast distance interposes itself between their sunny world and today’s realities. Despite that distance, however, an exhibition of Dunes artists and their creations currently on the campus provides us with a chance to consider briefly some of the more incontinent intersections of art and public life.

The landscapes do not look as though they had to do with intersections at all, at least those between such apparently unlikely pairs as art and public life. We could easily be seduced into believing that Dudley’s only concern is to show how shadows and sunlight share space on the dune, how blue and gold turn out to be equally the components of an autumn day. One can sink into the image as though here we could escape from the troubling and troubled world of conflict and tension, of hard choices and earnest ethical debate. What more serene than to contemplate those few white clouds just over the horizon, following with a half-closed eye their progress along the top of the dune?

Were we to sink like that, however, we would fail to be true to the demand that this artist, and the dozens of his friends and fellow-creators who lived and worked here, recognized and put before us. For Frank Dudley and his wife Maida, the Dunes of Lake Michigan made as powerful a claim on the spirit as did the Lake District for the Wordsworths. Put most simply: what should human beings do with a place whose beauty and resources surpass anything around them? Can we indeed be judged by a failure to understand this question, and to respond adequately to its demands?

In our tradition—in the poets of the English Romantic Movement particularly—the question and the demand have been variously shaped, but are ever insistent. Wordsworth is the great poet who put into words a precise answer to the question, “What does the natural world mean for us humans?” In “Lines Written A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey, 1798,” he wrote that experience of the natural world’s beauty permanently affects the spirit:

for [Nature] can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e’er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings.

Christians can read this as identifying a mechanism for God’s use of the world’s beauty, almost a blueprint, or a recipe, for how it happens that we can be blessed through the creation. By it we are shaped, molded, fed so that the force of evil will not overcome the corresponding force of belief in the ultimate goodness of God to and through the Creation. Seen in this light, a duty to care for the earth becomes a sacred duty, a tending of the lamps in a temple surpassing any made with hands.

Nothing by the writers about the Dunes makes quite the same spiritual claim. But they are not far off, and, in the American vein, they see the gifts and the demands of the natural world as having a political meaning. Graham Taylor, a Congregational minister and co-founder of the Settlement Movement in Chicago, wrote about the Dunes that, like the ‘commons’ of the settlement, the Indiana Dunes represented not just the idea, but the reality of the most perfect social justice:

The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e’er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings.

(Quoted in J. Ron Engel, Sacred Sands: The Struggle for the Indiana Dunes, Wesleyan UP, 1983)
As Ron Engel's book documents, the struggle for the Indiana Dunes was not entirely won or lost. The steel mills on which the prosperity of the region is based were busy acquiring that "still unclaimed" land even as Taylor wrote. So, in order to buy the gasoline to drive out to the Dunes to see Dudley's beautiful bronze and gold trees, we must share the space with the factories and refineries that are a fact of our life here.

But stay tuned. Another cloud floats now just above our horizon, as some people answer the claims made on us by the land with a counter-claim. They want to put in, on this lakeshore, a new industry of floating casino resorts. Jobs, they say. Development. Income. Tax revenue. Profit. New money for the region, and all for the taking because we don't have to put anything in to get the benefits; private investment will take all the risk, and share the profits. What more could you ask?

Plenty. Scott Russell Sanders, in his fine new book of essays called *Staying Put: Making a Home in a Restless World* (Beacon Press, 1993) says this about living in a time when the natural world's claims seem so fragile next to the other demands made of it:

> What does it mean to be alive in an era when the earth is being devoured, and in a country which has set the pattern for that devouring? What are we called to do? I think we are called to the work of healing, both inner and outer: healing of the mind through a change in consciousness, healing of the earth through a change in our lives. We can begin that work by learning how to abide in a place... Strength comes, healing comes, from aligning yourself with the grain of your place and answering to its needs.

(120)

Wherever you live, you likely have your own Dunes, your own place with its needs, your own place that informs and impresses and feeds you, to use Wordsworth's language. Look at it, and thank God for it, and then work to align yourself with it for its sake and your own. Unless we take up that work, we may have nothing to look at but the paintings. And they will make an accusation we will scarcely be able to bear.

Peace,

GME

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Daniel Tobin

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Web

Almost unseen, this world,
its mythos scribed
in feasted hulls,

begs speech, as though
where nothing broods,
a first word

bespoke itself,
incipient descent,
faint veil

spun out in cellar light,
the spider's
diamond heart.

Daniel Tobin
Those, probably few, who believe that the battle for racial equality has been won and are looking for reassurance on that score should not go looking for it in the pages of Derrick Bell’s *Faces at the Bottom of the Well*. For Bell, racism is simply and ineluctably a permanent feature of the American landscape: “Black people will never gain full equality in this country. Even those herculean efforts we hail as successful will produce no more than temporary ‘peaks of progress,’ short-lived victories that slide into irrelevance as racial patterns adapt in ways that maintain white dominance” (Bell 12). Unfortunately, events of this past summer would seem to indicate that Bell’s pessimism is not unwarranted—events ranging from (1) the celebrated *affaire-Guinier* to (2) the Supreme Court ruling making it necessary to prove absolute, specific, and unqualified discriminatory intent in apparently capricious dismissals to (3) media reports that the white-supremacist “skinhead” movement not only has been caught plotting race warfare but has been gaining membership at an alarming rate in this country. For additional exhibits, check your daily newspaper.

Evidence exists beyond Bell’s arguments, in other words, that the movement towards racial equality in the United States has stalled, a situation brought on by unjustifiable complacency on one hand and economically-inspired middle- and lower-class backlash on the other. What will probably trouble many readers of his book, however, is that Bell includes all but a very few of even the most well-intentioned white sympathizers among those guilty of perpetuating racist attitudes: “Few whites are able to identify with blacks as a group—the essential prerequisite for feeling empathy with, rather than aversion from, black’s self-inflicted suffering .... Unable or unwilling to perceive that ‘there but for the grace of God, go I,’ few whites are ready to actively promote civil rights for blacks” (4).

For Bell, and not just for Bell but for many others, this guilt-by-dissociation is an historical as well as a contemporary fact, and those of us concerned with the general status of the humanities would do well to ponder it. Implicitly, if not explicitly, the absolutist conviction that one can empathize with essential problems of Being only from the basis of direct experience challenges many of the fundamental assumptions involved not just in the current multicultural reform in American higher education but in humane education generally. It could be said without too much exaggeration that in the humanities, and not just in the multicultural part of it, we are in the empathy business. What are we doing if not trying to encourage entry into states of mind or understanding of socio-cultural circumstances other than those with which we are already benumingly familiar? As Henry Louis Gates, Jr., has written in response to the revelation that *The Education of Little Tree* was written not by a Native American but by a white man (and an apparently right wing, bigoted, fascist, anti-semitic white man at that), “no human culture is inaccessi-

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John Feaster is Walter G. Friedrich Professor of American Literature at Valparaiso University and has a special interest in American cultural history. This essay grew out of discussions in the 1993 Cresset Colloquium on the issue of race in America. In addition to Professor Feaster, the members of the Colloquium were Professors Meredith Berg (history); Renu Juneja (English literature); Susan M. Kenyon (sociology); John McGreevy (Lilly Fellow, history) and Derrick Carter (law). Professor Kenyon’s article follows, on p. 11 of this issue. Other contributors will appear in future issues.
ble to someone who makes the effort to understand, to learn, to inhabit another world" (Gates 30).

Considered from the more detached viewpoint of literary history, arguments that assume a proprietary attitude towards certain kinds of experience or dwell on issues of exclusivity, racial/ethnic authenticity, and the like, obscure the historical fact (ignoring for now how unsavory a fact of canonical history it might be) that inequalities of class, gender, and race more often than not have been initially exposed, even if they have not always been most effectively explored, through the work of sympathetic writers who have not themselves suffered from those inequalities but, as Gates indirectly suggests, have possessed the ability to imagine what that suffering must be like. As a corollary proposition, it must be assumed too that not just writers but sympathetic readers as well can imagine worlds of race, class, or gender other than their own.

Having said this, I am not denying the very real presence of a debatable issue. No one, I think, would argue in the case of whites writing about blacks either that imagined experience is absolutely the same thing as "lived" experience or that writers attempting this perilous enterprise have always managed to avoid perpetuating unfortunate stereotypes of racial difference. For example, in his 1925 essay "The Negro in American Literature" (published in Alain Locke's landmark collection of essays, fiction, drama, and poetry of the Harlem Renaissance, The New Negro) William Stanley Braithwaite laments that the earliest treatments of blacks by white American writers were with very few exceptions condescending, exploitative, sentimentalized, and marked by the grossest caricature: "Sustained, serious or deep study of Negro life has . . . been entirely below the horizon of our national art" (Braithwaite 29). Somewhat less caustically, but not without serious reservations, Braithwaite mentions the work of Harriet Beecher Stowe, George Washington Cable, Thomas Nelson Page, Joel Chandler Harris, and William Dean Howells, compassionate writers who tried but failed, "their nonsuccess . . . more largely due to their social view than their technical resources. As white Americans of their day, it was incompatible with their conception of the inequalities between the races to glorify the Negro into the serious and leading position of hero or heroine in fiction" (33).

During the 1920's Braithwaite sees a "new class of work" emerging (in the fiction of George Madden Martin, Mary White Ovington, Clement Wood, and T. S. Stribling), work that, "using the technique of the new realism, is gradually penetrating Negro life to the core" (34). Still, what marks these works, no matter how well-meant, is what Braithwaite calls "a doubtful formula of hereditary cultural reversion," a formula in terms of which blacks are invariably shown struggling against "atavistic race-heredity" and lowly origins, "tragically linked by blood to one world and by training and thought to another" (35). This leads Braithwaite to conclude that presentation of the real tragedy of Negro life is "a task still left for Negro writers to perform."

Braithwaite concedes that given the exclusionary socio-cultural realities of the black situation in the United States, the "dull purgatory of the Age of Discussion," that period during which blacks were the subjects of literature while largely being thought incapable of producing it, was an unfortunately necessary prelude to what was being heralded in the 1920's as the "Age of Expression," an age in which black writers had finally discovered their unique cultural voice. A primary document of this new age, as I have already mentioned, was the very volume in which Braithwaite's essay first appeared, Alain Locke's The New Negro. In his introduction to this impressive collection of work by Jean Toomer, Zora Neale Hurston, Countée Cullen, Claude McKay, James Weldon Johnson, Langston Hughes (and many others) Locke variously announces, defines, and encourages the artistic and intellectual accomplishments growing out of Harlem in the first two decades of the century, but he is also sometimes painfully direct in his critique: "If on the one hand the white man has erred in making the Negro appear to be that which would excuse or extenuate his treatment of him, the Negro, in turn, has too often unnecessarily excused himself because of the way he has been treated. The intelligent Negro of to-day is resolved not to make discrimination an extenuation for his shortcomings in performance, individual or collective; he is trying to hold himself at par, neither influenced by sentimental allowances nor depreciated by current social discounts" (8). But it was one thing for this kind of self-reflexive praise-qualified-by-blame to come from a former Rhodes Scholar, professor of Philosophy, and black intellectual leader, quite another for it to come, as it would come the following year, in a controversial novel written by a white man.

Carl Van Vechten's Nigger Heaven (1926) is in some ways a curious fictional sequel to Locke's The New Negro, simultaneously celebrating accomplishments and imputing blame for shortcomings. Set in the Harlem of the early 20's, Nigger Heaven at least mentions, and often quotes extensively and approvingly, many of those black writers included in Locke's collection—understandably so, since Van Vechten was a close friend of many of them and in fact had used his good offices with his own publisher, Alfred Knopf, to see that their work was published. Van Vechten knew Harlem life intimately and thoroughly. In
1922 the black novelist Walter White had provided what Nathan Irvin Huggins (the acknowledged master-historian of the Harlem Renaissance) describes as an “intensive induction” into Harlem life, taking Van Vechten everywhere and introducing him to everyone who counted. Van Vechten met James Weldon Johnson (in 1937 he would write an introduction to a re-issue of Johnson’s The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man), Paul Robeson, Langston Hughes, Countée Cullen, and literally hundreds of other black artists and intellectuals, developing what he would refer to in a later interview as “almost an addiction” to black culture. Soon Van Vechten was himself conducting visiting notables (William Faulkner was one of them) on tours of Harlem, especially of the night life of the clubs and cabarets, and it is largely in that context of a kind of fin de siècle decadence that the novel is set.

Briefly, Nigger Heaven concerns the ill-fated romance of Mary Love and Byron Kasson. Mary is an attractive, intellectual, somewhat priggish and sexually repressed Harlem librarian with sober tastes. She is of a light complexion and could, and does occasionally, “pass” for white, but is determined to be loyal to her race. During the early pages of the novel she spends her time organizing an exhibit of “primitive” African sculpture for the library (while eagerly anticipating evenings of speaking “only French” with the Haytian consul, who possesses intimate knowledge of Cocteau, Morand, and Proust). Something more of the cultural conflict within Mary can be determined by regarding the literature lining her bookshelves. On one shelf are works by James Branch Cabell, Anatole France, Jean Cocteau, Louis Bromfield, Aldous Huxley, Sherwood Anderson, Somerset Maugham, Edmund Gosse, Elinor Wylie, James Huneker, “and others.” On another we find Charles Chesnutt, James Weldon Johnson, Jean Toomer, Claude McKay, W. E. B. DuBois, Walter White, and Jessie Fauset. Mary is convinced that her coldness has “something to do with her white inheritance,” but, on the other hand, she is equally confident that “the Negro blood was there, warm and passionately earnest: all her passions and prejudices were on the side of the race into which she had been born. She was as capable, she was convinced, of amorous emotion, as any of her friends...” (54). All she needs to awaken her “vital instincts” is to discover a man worthy of joining her in the “primitive consecration” of marriage, a situation in which “each would fight—kill if need be—to retain the other’s love.” In Byron Kasson she is certain she has found such a one.

A recent graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, Byron Kasson is an angry and self-pitying young man who longs to be a writer but lacks the necessary self-discipline—the familiar kind of aspiring writer who talks endlessly about his plans for writing but rarely gets down to the business of writing. Like Mary, Byron could “pass” but refuses to, and while he is consumed by rage and frustration over the discriminatory treatment he experiences in his search for a job, he is unable to translate this anger into material for his writing. Quite to the contrary, he believes it to be the greatest obstacle to his success: “The Negro problem seemed to hover over him and occasionally, like the great, black bird it was, claw at his heart. In his stories this influence invariably made itself felt, and it was, he was sometimes convinced, the very thing that kept him from doing better work” (176).

The character of Kasson in some remarkable respects prefigures the young James Baldwin, who in explaining his expatriation to Paris in 1946 described his need “to escape not only the Negro condition but the condition of being Negro.” Baldwin was convinced that a poisonous combination of fear, hate, and rage was giving the world “an altogether murderous power” over him. “In such a self-destroying limbo,” Baldwin once wrote, “I could never hope to write.” Kasson’s solution, by contrast, is not to escape his situation and thereby objectify it, but rather to revel in it, which he does by immersing himself in a passionate and decadent liaison with Lasca Sartoris, a visiting Parisian probable-cocotte of lavish means who positively refuses to acknowledge that such a thing as the Negro Problem even exists: “... I’ve never bothered very much about the fact that I’m coloured. It doesn’t make any difference to me and I’ve never thought very much about it. I do just I want to.” What about discrimination and segregation, Byron asks. “They just don’t exist for me. I wouldn’t tolerate such a thing. I live in New York exactly as I live in Paris. I do just what I want to and go where I please—to any theatre or hotel—and get what I’m after. You see, most Negroes are so touchy and nervous that they obey the unwritten Jim Crow laws—you must remember that any form of discrimination is quite illegal in New York—to escape getting hurt. Nobody can hurt me, and so, of course, nothing unpleasant ever happens to me” (256-37). Unfortunately for Byron, Lasca discards men once they have become, as he inevitably does become, possessive and boorish. Through all of this Mary remains improbably faithful, but before a final reconciliation can occur Byron, in an alcohol-induced stupor, involves himself in a murder and is arrested.

However much Van Vechten may have felt that he understood the psychology of his black characters, and however well-qualified he seems to have been to make a claim in that respect, this brief summary of the novel should indicate that even Van Vechten was susceptible to perpetuating the image of “atavistic race-heredity” that

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Braithwaite considered so commonplace in white accounts of black subjects. For instance, these are Mary Love's thoughts at that point in the novel where she realizes that Byron is succumbing to the seductive power of Lasca Sartoris: "How she longed for the strength, the primitive impulse that would urge her to spring at Lasca's throat, tear away the collar of sapphires, disfigure that golden-brown countenance with her nails." Torn between the two worlds of civilized library and primal cabaret, Mary is made to feel somehow racially dysfunctional: "I ought to kill her, I want to, but I can't. What's wrong with me?" (166,167).

Byron, in turn, wears his white education and artistic ambitions uncomfortably, and seems most true to himself in the "primitive" and "savage" atmosphere of the cabarets, where he and Lasca "glide softly, dangerously, like panthers" (165).

Even Charles Johnson, notable for his lack of militancy in such matters, has written of Van Vechten that "despite his encouragement of black writers, [he] still saw blacks as most true to themselves when they were most unlike white men" (Being and Race 11). All of this would appear to suggest that (the theme of my earlier argument notwithstanding) the absolutists are right after all—even the most well-intentioned or well-informed white cannot fully enter into, understand, or communicate the authentic black experience. This would be a greater problem for me in Van Vechten's case were it not apparent that Van Vechten was himself aware of the complications he, or anyone, faced in attempting to cross the intimidating barrier of racial exclusivity. On this particular point, Nigger Heaven can therefore be considered a kind of cautionary tale.

In what follows, for example, Van Vechten acknowledges his concern that special problems of authenticity or misapprehension of motive might well confront those who would attempt to enter into states of mind other than their own. Byron Kasson has just described to Mary Love the melodramatic plot of a short story he intends to write about two racially mixed couples. "Unless such a story is written with exquisite skill," Mary responds, "it will read like a meretricious appeal to the emotions rising out of race prejudice." She goes on: "It isn't the story that counts; it's the treatment. . . . Of course you'll understand the psychology of the intelligent coloured man, but as you have related the story, he would be one of the least important characters. In a way, too, I suppose you'd get the coloured woman's point of view, but that's more difficult. I don't think you'd comprehend the motives of the white characters at all. You know it won't be so easy to explain the white girl's attitude, that is, so that the actions will seem credible to readers" (204). Deconstructionist critics would no doubt quickly point out that here, and in other passages like it, Van Vechten (a white man writing of black subjects) repudiates the very terms of his own novel, denies, in effect, that what he is doing can be done. What might alternatively be thought of as self-directed irony becomes even more apparent later in the novel when Byron is called into the office of the editor of a literary journal who has rejected what, as Mary had sensed would happen, turned out to be a poor story after all. "Why in hell don't you write about something you know about?" the editor asks, providing a lengthy list of uniquely black experiences he believes Byron should know about (nightlife in the cabarets being one of them). "I find that Negroes don't write about these matters; they continue to employ all the old cliches and formulas that have been worried to death by Nordic blonds who, after all, never did know anything about the subject from the inside. Well, if you young Negro intellectuals don't get busy, a new crop of Nordics is going to spring up who will take the trouble to become better informed and will exploit this material before the Negro gets around to it" (222-23).

Since Van Vechten was Nordic and blond himself, the passage is clearly, and playfully, self-deprecatory. As metafiction—as writing about writing—it can also be regarded as Van Vechten's way of suggesting a direction and providing encouragement, by way of challenge, to writers of the Harlem circle, something he had been doing in any case in a series of eleven articles and five book reviews written in the two years following his introduction to Harlem life. But at the same time, Van Vechten somewhat disingenuously draws our attention back to where we began, to the obvious problems confronting the white writer concerned with issues of race. Can whites write about such issues from a black point of view with any credibility, obviously lacking the requisite credential of knowing about the subject "from the inside"? James Branch Cabell, Van Vechten's friend and literary confidante, wrote to Van Vechten, expressing both praise and cautious bewilderment: "... Your matter, of course, is strange and incalculable. I mean, I have no way of conjecturing in how much the book is 'true' to the physical and mental life of the Negro colony. Yet if the novel is relatively 'true' I incline to think you have prepared an astounding and invaluable contribution to sociology, a thing of permanent scientific value; whereas, if it is not all, or even not at all, 'true,' it ranks as a work of the most remarkable creative genius. Either way, you thus seem to me to have done a splendid book" (Cabell 157). The public seemed to agree since Nigger Heaven, according to Huggins, sold 100,000 copies "almost immediately," went through fourteen printings in its first two years, and according to another historian of the Harlem Renaissance "did more to publicize black Harlem to white readers than any other work of the period"
Cabell predicted that the novel would create a “row” and he was right. What bothered many black readers (beyond the title itself, which most found incredibly offensive) was that Van Vechten presumed a degree of insider status that the black community was not willing to grant. His credentials may have been impressive, but they did not extend that far. Van Vechten’s closest black friends gave their blessing to the novel (primarily Johnson and Hughes, both of whom had read the manuscript for “authenticity” [Huggins 113]), and Alain Locke mentioned it favorably, but elsewhere the novel evoked scathing criticism, nowhere more so than in W. E. B. DuBois’s review in Crisis, the journal of the NAACP. For DuBois, Nigger Heaven was a “blow in the face,” “an affront to the hospitality of black folk and to the intelligence of white.” DuBois found neither truth nor artistry in the novel, only impressionism, exaggeration, caricature, “an astonishing hodgepodge of laboriously stated facts, quotations and expressions [Van Vechten appends a “Glossary of Negro Words and Phrases” to the novel], illuminated here and there with something that comes near to being nothing but cheap melodrama.” DuBois was particularly angered that Van Vechten had sought to capture the essence of Harlem life in the wild, barbaric, drunken orgies of the largely white-owned cabarets when in fact he knew better. “The overwhelming majority of black folk there never go to cabarets. The average colored man in Harlem is an everyday laborer, attending church, lodge and movie and as conservative and as conventional as ordinary working folk everywhere.” For DuBois, in summary, the novel was nothing more than exploitative, the title “an unhappy catch-phrase for penny purposes,” the whole thing deliberately sensational and “bizarre.”

Whatever the faults of Van Vechten’s novel, and they are apparent from any racial point of view, it probably deserved more humane treatment than it received from DuBois, whose attribution of the sleaziest of motives to Van Vechten was unjustified. But then DuBois never kept secret that he considered black experience to be the exclusive property of black writers and artists. Van Vechten, who met DuBois only once and then only briefly, recalled him as someone who apparently thought “white people shouldn’t say anything about Negroes” (qtd. in Huggins 116). Hutchins Hapgood, a white journalist and Harvard acquaintance of DuBois, once asked DuBois to introduce him to some of his friends whom Hapgood hoped to interview for a series of articles. “The Negroes do not wish to be written about by white men,” DuBois responded, “even when they know they will be treated sympathetically. Perhaps especially then, they do not desire it!” (Cruse 39). In the same year, 1926, that DuBois published his brutal review of Nigger Heaven, he remarked at the Chicago conference of the NAACP that if the white playwright DuBose Heyward had written his folk opera Porgy and Bess about the poor white people of Charleston he almost certainly would have been drummed out of town. “The only chance he had to tell the truth of human degradation was to tell it of colored people.” The white public, DuBois added, “demands from its artists, literary and pictorial, racial pre-judgment which deliberately distorts Truth and Justice, as far as colored races are concerned, and it will pay for no other” (qtd. in Cruse 39-40).

Certainly there is some limited truth in what DuBois says, but as he himself observes in reference to Van Vechten’s novel, half-truths do not add up to the whole truth. It is not too difficult to grasp the conflict at issue here, the ache to be understood warring against the fear that the price of understanding may be the loss of cultural ownership. To resolve the problem by insisting automatically that cross-racial imaginative understanding is impossible, always tainted by inauthenticity and insincerity, motivated by nothing more than a desire to exploit, is to resign ourselves too easily, both in art and in life, to a destructive belief that the barriers of racial difference are real and insurmountable. Admittedly, efforts to overcome them are going to remain difficult. As Van Vechten’s well-meant novel shows, these efforts will probably never be made without some, perhaps even considerable, risk of misunderstanding and disapproval. This possibility notwithstanding, what we surely need are more, not fewer, who are willing to take the chance.

**Works Cited**


Dangerous Acts of an Ordinary Kind

I know the terror of common things
like ending a sentence I've begun
when the meaning drops off in the middle,
a victim of the precipice
my brain has become, that grand canyon
of possibilities for disaster of
the ordinary kind.

Or worse yet, the dangerous act
of speaking up or shouting out,
"I disagree!" Imagine the ruckus
that would cause, a bottle-smashing
riot in my brain—and my heart,
my heart would pound the pavement
to escape before the cops, o my god,
the cops came, their sirens screaming
out my name.

Jan Bowman
DIFFERENCES AMONG REAL PEOPLE:
SOME ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES
ON THE PERMANENCE OF RACISM

Susan M. Kenyon

Helped are those who are enemies of their own racism: they shall live in harmony with the citizens of this world, and not with those of the world of their ancestors, which has passed away, and which they shall never see again.

First verse of the Gospel according to Shug, Alice Walker, The Temple of my Familiar

Racism is an integral, permanent and indestructible component of this [US] society.

Derrick Bell, Faces at the Bottom of the Well

These two very different messages gave me food for thought this summer as I, along with the rest of the world, wondered in despair about the dramatic global increase in crimes associated with racism or its latest euphemistic horror, ethnic cleansing. What is really going on? Have we failed to learn anything from the lessons of the last hundred years? Or have we maybe learned the lessons of cultural relativity too well and are now able to stand back and allow these horrors to be perpetrated with a sad sense of inevitability? Where are all the Miss Shugs of the world, called on above, as inequalities are magnified and whole peoples are wiped out or brutally assaulted, simply because they are perceived to be different? Are we powerless to counter these claims, even when we are identified with the aggressors, the empowered? Do we even agree that inequalities, based on ineluctable physical differences, are a natural part of the contemporary human condition and should therefore be accepted?

Certainly this is a viewpoint which appears to be achieving a certain widespread political correctness, if not whole-hearted endorsement. Earlier in the year, a small group of VU faculty met to discuss some of these issues, generated for us by reading Derrick Bell’s Faces at the Bottom of the Well: the Permanence of Racism, and we found ourselves somewhat intimidated by the implications of his argument. Bell’s thesis is summed up in the second passage quoted above. He goes on to cite earlier political activists such as Franz Fannon as he argues that “racist structures” are so “permanently embedded in the psychology, economy, society and culture of the modern world…” (x), that only by recognizing and dealing with such realities can people of color (and by implication any oppressed people) remain undiminished. It is by acknowledging that they will never gain full equality in this country, that black people can make an act of ultimate defiance (12). Similar arguments, pointing to the permanence and indestructibility of racist structures, at least in the U.S., are echoed in other recent studies from various disciplinary backgrounds (e.g. Omi and Winant 1992), as well as reflected in the growing separation of so-called “racial” groups on college campuses across the nation.

Events of recent years have made it increasingly clear that despite the lessons of the Holocaust, despite the sacrifices of the Civil Rights movements in the U.S., despite the collapse of colonial structures and hierarchies in many parts of the world, it must be acknowledged that notions of human inequalities, based on innate physical diversity, remain potent rallying points in widely distant regions. Should we therefore agree with Bell? How much does he

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October 1993
work was brilliant, sensitive and totally relevant to the public or especially through the rapidly expanding power of the press. Very few scientists are then often in a good position to further shape those ideas, a point which academics have been slow or perhaps unable to grasp. Social scientists are too often concerned with the way things ought to be, with understanding the underlying structures of the human condition, or with circumscribing the "mean" (in terms of average) situation, and frequently fail to address questions of more immediate concern and to speak in terms to which the person in the street can relate. For example, at present there is a fascinating discussion on an Internet general anthropology "noticeboard" about how more than seventy years ago, various founding "fathers" of anthropology confronted and answered those issues concerning race and racism which are still troubling the world today. Their work was brilliant, sensitive and totally relevant to contemporary issues. The problem is that nobody reads their work today, even most other anthropologists, and from the outset they did not make enough effort to try to influence popular ideas, either through general works that appealed to the public or especially through the rapidly expanding power of the press. Very few scientists (Margaret Mead or Steven Jay Gould are exceptions who come immediately to mind) have realized the extent of the influence enjoyed by the popular media, and made the effort to use that power in terms that can be readily understood.

What is frustrating for many of us is that the scientific basis of race and racism has been shown to be groundless for many decades. Notwithstanding this fact, the illusions that nineteenth century science generated have passed into the political ideologies of much of the twentieth century world, and there have proved impossible to dislodge, reappearing with frightening regularity like the various heads of the Hydra. What Herculean effort is now needed to show the illusory basis of these contemporary phenomena? As I shall go into below, theories of race and racism were offspring of the western world, exported with European explorers and colonizers to distant cultures and used to justify all manner of injustice. However, like other cultural ideas, those views of race and racism have been transformed in the process of appropriation, just as they have also been reshaped and revised by the descendants of those who originally elaborated them. The discrimination and prejudice we find in East Timor or Papua New Guinea or the Amazon is not necessarily the same as that we find in the contemporary US, although for those who meet it, it is no less terrible. Furthermore in the writings of authors like Bell, we find that theories of earlier generations are transformed or recast by the very people against whom they were originally framed to discriminate; but in the process they continue to be perpetuated rather than exposed. Herein lies the danger.

Bell himself is well aware of the tautology of his arguments. At the same time that he is arguing that the permanence of racism and white dominance are maintained through ongoing racial patterns, he also urges ongoing resistance to them. While such resistance is bound to fail, in itself it provides a meaning, an outlet for the aspirations of the oppressed, a focus for their common identity. Surely these are contradictions and furthermore suggest a type of determinism which is quite at odds with what is reasonably plausible. Bell, however, is a force to be reckoned with because he is a distinguished lawyer, an erudite and articulate teacher and writer, and he is black. The combination of these qualities forces us to take notice of what he says in a way that we would probably not if he was a whit less distinguished or outspoken, and especially if he was a whit less black. What he writes flies in the face of what is being said by other distinguished contemporary writers (such as Alice Walker through her wonderful character Miss Shug in the passage quoted above) and certainly what many average Americans like to think is happening as gradually and belatedly the diversity of our society becomes more visible. It is also contrary to what social scientists have been trying to show for the past seventy-five years, and certainly what the experience of anthropologists leads them to argue. Any cross-cultural considerations must convince us that the racism of the US is both historically and politically constructed and bounded, and thus is subject to the same dynamic processes as other social institutions.

Speaking through some memorable characters, Bell would probably agree with this view of process, but he (and others, it must be remembered) are so disillusioned by the failure of attempts to undermine the racism of this country that he concludes that race and racism are structurally fundamental to its society. He obviously feels that the social reforms of the later 20th century have been relatively superficial. In expressing his general disillusionment, however, is he also helping set the agenda of political correctness for the next generation? Is this
then to be one of further segregation based on arbitrary "racial" distinctions that are peculiarly culture-bound? Or could it be one of rapid change of such revolutionary proportions that the society we know today will be transformed? These are some of the issues which his work generates, although the studied, moderate tone of his essays belie the implications inherent in their story lines.

While the contemporary political realities these essays depict are recognizable and vivid, Bell's assumption that any type of institution or ideology is permanent is highly questionable. Ideas are constantly changing, according to the socio-political context of which they are a part; in that sense, race and racism can no more be a permanent part of US culture than any other component of that culture. What was never anticipated by those of us who fought against the prejudice it generated in earlier decades, however, is that this would prove so intractable and resistant to legislation and education alike.

Race is one of those words or labels which means different things to different people at different times: scientific/biological, religious, political, cultural and so on. It is not a universal concept, even when we take the broadest possible meaning. Arabic, for example, does not even have a word for race, although it allows for social distinctions on the basis of tribe or nationality or rank even in terms of skin color, though these are quite differently from our classifications. Race is no longer a part of any recognized scientific discipline. Originally a concept defined by earlier generations of anthropologists as a way to classify human beings into distinct stocks, today it is largely irrelevant, and contemporary anthropologists critically acknowledge the errors of their disciplinary forebears. We now generally agree that race is an obsolete and discredited biological-genetic notion which should have little credibility as a social factor either. Except as a social classification to deal with certain global problems (such as the incidence of specific diseases in certain genetic populations), it has very little use in the contemporary world. However, that world still has to deal with the political creed that theories of race gave rise to: racism, which translates into discrimination and prejudice on the basis of perceived physical (and therefore innate) differences. These are of course distinct: prejudice is simply believing on an individual level that you are better than someone else for such and such a reason; discrimination is a social form of prejudice, which may or may not be institutionalized. Both however stem from basic ideas about race.

It is axiomatic in anthropology that cultural identity is, at least in part, developed in opposition to what is perceived as "the other." It is striking, for example, how many tribal peoples of the world describe themselves as "we the people." Thus the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea call themselves "Real People," the Hopi word for themselves is "Good People," while the proud Nuer of southern Sudan call themselves "People of People" (or "Men of Men" as one androcentric source translated it). To some extent racial ideas developed out of this very widespread sense of otherness.

The concept of "race" and theories about race, however, together with the concomitant political ideology, grew out of the western intellectual discourse and can only be properly understood in that context. The earliest known attempt to explain human diversity in racial terms is perhaps the account in Genesis of the three sons of Noah going out from the landfall at Mount Ararat to repopulate the world. The idea that African blacks were the descendent of Ham, the Near Easterners the descendant of Shem and the people of Europe the descendants of Japheth, were conclusions drawn at some later date, exactly when we are not sure. However this notion was obviously firmly established in medieval legend and illustrations, such as those of the three wise men (Brues 1992).

Race consciousness, and its articulation in theories of race, is largely a modern western phenomenon. From the beginning of the fifteenth century, European explorers imbued with Christian fervor encountered peoples who looked very different from themselves. These challenged existing ideas about the origins of the human species, and raised the issue whether all people could be considered in the same "family of man" (discussed in Gossett, Jordan). In the academic discourse of the day, this was expressed in terms of Christian debates about creation and varying interpretations of the Bible. Did God make only one human species (monogenesis) or had He created several separate groups (polygenesis)? This had implications not only for prospects for converting natives of different parts of the world but for how those natives should be treated. If only Europeans were true human beings, children of God, then this was a world view that could be used to justify all manner of ill-treatment, including appropriation of land, seizure of property and the ultimate form of appropriation, that of enslavement.

"Science," like religion, played a significant role in developing ideas about race. By the eighteenth century, scholars of Europe had acquired a fairly broad general knowledge of other people from most parts of the world. It was at this time (1742) that the hierarchical classification of life forms was published by the Swedish naturalist Karl von Linne (Linnaeus). The idea of classifying human variation in a similar sort of taxonomic order was no doubt part of this whole process of ordering, ranking, and thereby
simplifying observable phenomena. Race was regarded, and ordered, simply as a biological concept, and this procedure set precedents which have been very difficult to shake off. Even though the concept of race continues to defy precise biological definition, in the popular mind we continue to see it as something rooted in nature: natural, born of common sense, self-evident and immutable.

Obviously genetic physical differences do exist between peoples, but these are only significant in populations which have been isolated for a very long time. Variation among people within a perceived "race" is often as great, or greater, than the variation between people identified as being members of the same "race." There is no single gene for race (Gould 1981). These differences certainly cannot be the basis for a science. The race concept as it is used today is simply a way of creating social boundaries.

The most lasting of the eighteenth century classifications of humans has been that of Blumenbach (1776). He came up with five major categories of races, the first trait of which was color (though in all fairness he carefully described other factors as well):

1. Caucasian: White. This was based on the prevailing belief that the Caucasus region was the original home of the archetypal Europeans, but the pairing has stuck.
2. Mongolian: Yellow
3. Ethiopian: Black
4. American: Copper (which was translated into English as Red)
5. Malay: Brown

This system is probably still the most influential on popular concepts of race, and is responsible for the common emphasis on skin color as the primary criterion. This is in spite of the fact that, as everybody knows, no human skin color is literally yellow or red, white or black, and shades of skin all merge imperceptibly into each other.

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Blumenbach's original five races were elaborated by his successors. Scientists in the early twentieth century who continued to work with the model of race argued that there were anywhere from three to thirty-seven different races or human lineages. As late as 1962, an extremely influential scientist, Carlton Coon, proposed the so-called Candelabra model. This suggested that five different groups of Homo erectus had evolved into Homo sapiens, modern humans, along separate and independent lines, at different times and places: Caucasoid, Mongoloid, Australoid, Congoid (dark-skinned Africans) and Capoid (Bushmen and Hottentot). Coon totally misunderstood evolutionary biology and his classification is now discredited by scientists both for its racist implications and because by this time there was widespread recognition that we are all one species. However, his work on The Origin of the Races remains on many library shelves (including ours) and continues to reinforce popularly held notions.

Although most physical anthropologists and biologists have abandoned any search for a scientific basis to determine racial categories, they are not entirely obsolete, as is evidenced by the ongoing debate about sociobiology. Today, social scientists and geneticists alike reject biologicistic notions of race in favor of an approach which regards race as a social concept, a variable shaped by broader socio-cultural forces, as a cultural classification designed to deal with social issues. Beginning in the nineteenth century with Max Weber (1864-1920), emphasis has been on the social and political factors underlying racial conflicts. The work of Franz Boas and his students was crucial in refuting the "Scientific Racism" of the early twentieth century, rejecting and disproving the connection between race and culture and the associated assumption of cultural evolution and hierarchy. They showed that the meaning of race and racial categories can only be understood in the specific social and historical contexts in which they occur. Racial meanings have varied and continue to vary enormously over time and between different societies. The content and importance of racial categories are determined by social, economic and political forces, which also in turn are shaped by racial meanings.

When we turn to the United States this point becomes very pertinent. In this country, through the sort of historical and social forces just discussed, the black/white color line has been rigidly defined and enforced over the course of several centuries. For distinct historical reasons, white was seen as a "pure" color. Any racial intermixture makes one "non-white." Almost thirty years ago, anthropologist Marvin Harris (1964:56) defined this way of thinking as "hypo-descent":

By what ingenious computation is the genetic tracery of a million years of evolution unraveled and each man [sic] assigned his proper social box? In the US the mechanism employed is the rule of hypo-descent. This descent rule requires Americans to believe that anyone who is known to have had a negro ancestor is a Negro. We admit nothing in between... "Hypo-descent" means affiliation with the subordinate rather than the superordinate group in order to avoid the ambiguity of intermediate identity.... The rule of hypo-descent is therefore an invention which we in the US have made in order to keep biological facts from intruding on our collective racist fantasies.

In Latin America, on the other hand, such sharply defined racial groupings are lacking, even though slavery was also a feature there. In Brazil, for example, there are a
actively constructed from pre-existing conceptual elements as texts. DeGobineau's race, was not really an issue until the 1850s. Then, textual racialization, whereby theories or ideas about race were self-identification appeared for such people: "white" from western Europe. However, after "proof" were arriving already enslaved (Bohannon 1992:183). Slaves and slave-owners.

a long time. But slavery set in motion a racially-based ideology of exploitation based on racial logic. This was not a sudden thing; indentured servitude had been around for

terms "English" and "free" were also used for the settlers to simply as Christians; in the mid-seventeenth century, the definition of "blacks" or "negroes" as a separate group, outside the definitions of the wider society began to take root.

In Europe racism had a somewhat different history and grew out of the prevailing class conflicts. Until well into the nineteenth century, "race" referred primarily to physical differences among the so-called Aryans, Alpines and Mediterraneans, categories or "sub-species" of Caucasians rather than among the larger populations or "races." It is interesting to read Frederick Douglass's surprise on his visit to Britain in 1845, when despite the extreme hierarchical nature of that society, he found that he was welcome everywhere. His "race" was not an issue, though by the later nineteenth century the idea that human beings were ranked because of their physical appearance/race was to become much more established.

In the United States, race has always referred to the "primary" races defined by Blumenbach: white, black, brown, red and yellow. The racial category of "black" evolved with the consolidation of racial slavery in the seventeenth century. The first Africans in the American colonies were actually indentured servants, like many Europeans who came at the same time. In the late 1600s and early 1700s, masters began to abrogate their agreements with the Africans and keep them indentured after they had worked out their contracts; new Africans were arriving already enslaved (Bohannon 1992:183). Gradually former tribal African identities became merged into a single category of "negro" ("black"), explained by an ideology of exploitation based on racial logic. This was not a sudden thing; indentured servitude had been around for a long time. But slavery set in motion a racially-based understanding of society with distinct identities for both slaves and slave-owners. Originally the latter were referred to simply as Christians; in the mid-seventeenth century, the terms "English" and "free" were also used for the settlers from western Europe. However, after 1680, a new term of self-identification appeared for such people: "white" (Jordan 1968:95).

This is the process social scientists refer to as racialization, whereby theories or ideas about race were actively constructed from pre-existing conceptual elements (Omi and Winant 1992:31). Racism, as distinct from race, was not really an issue until the 1850s. Then, textual "proof" of racial inequalities was found in contemporary texts. DeGobineau's Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races, and Darwin's Origin of the Species together combined the theory of the survival of the fittest with racist ideas (which Darwin himself expressly rejected). In the late nineteenth century this position led physical anthropologists to perfect techniques for measuring people, especially their skulls, to determine their race and thus their place in the human hierarchy. This accelerated the process of racial persecution which has gained increasing momentum throughout the twentieth century. Ruth Benedict's later (1940) comments, when she compared the racist policies of the Nazis with the Spanish Inquisition's policy on religion, says it all:

In order to understand race persecution, we do not need to investigate race; we need to understand persecution. Persecution was an old, old story before racism was thought of.

When US slaves were emancipated at the end of the Civil War, there was no category for them. Most whites were unwilling to share their own status with slaves, and many ex-slaves found themselves in an equally unenviable position after they gained their freedom: the situation of pariahs. The definition of "blacks" or "negroes" as a separate group, outside the definitions of the wider society began to take root.

Meanwhile in the later nineteenth century, the category of "white" was also challenged by immigrants from southern Europe and Jews. This was to lead to the institutionalization of a racial order that drew the color line around rather than within Europe, at a time when the abolition of slavery presented new challenges. Interests, especially of the working class, were defined primarily in terms of racial rather than labor interests. This culminated in, for example, the exclusion laws against the Chinese, as well as the transformation of ex-slaves into this outcaste status.

In the later twentieth century, global and national economic shifts have further developed the process of racialization. Blacks have been transformed from largely rural, impoverished workers to largely urban, working class, and as Bell points out, our "inner cities" have become the American equivalent of the South African homeland. Vestiges of their earlier pariah status persists. Many people in the US still tend to view race as something fixed and immutable, something rooted in "nature." Such a view of course obscures the historically-specific construction of racial categories, the shifting meaning of race and the crucial role of politics and ideology in shaping race relations.

Racialization can also be seen at work in other parts of the world as ethnicity, like race before it, becomes
the biological rather than cultural “other.” In Bosnia-Herzegovina, “ethnic cleansing” is surely a contemporary manifestation of what is also understood by racism, with its assumptions of biological difference and superiority and justification for persecution. There appears to be a worldwide trend in which various ethnic groups are undergoing a process which “racializes” them and which pits one ethnic group/race against another. We see this process at work in Kashmir and in East Timor, in the Amazon and eastern Africa, as well as in Los Angeles. And we seem powerless to deal with it.

Despite the fact that much of this historical deconstruction is not new, racist ideas and racially driven discrimination continue to exert a powerful influence on our contemporary society. It is easy for those who do not feel the force of this prejudice to ignore it, to believe that it is indeed illusory and that with legislation and/or education and/or goodwill it will disappear. To do this is less easy for those who daily feel the force of this discrimination, who are constantly reminded in large and small ways that they are different from the “real people” in their society, that they are “the other” simply because they are non-white or lacking in some important way. Many people are now redefining the whole notion of otherness, as Bell is in fact suggesting, as another way of redressing the ongoing inequalities of our world.

However, that is not the whole story. There is no single gene for race, and there is also no one white or black or yellow culture, popular stereotypes to the contrary. Black voices remain as diverse and resounding as those of any other group of people. Walker’s Miss Shug surely speaks for and to as many people as does Bell’s (and Langston Hughes’) Jesse B. Semple. What we all need to do is listen and enjoy the variety of voices. Maybe in that way we can come to appreciate and enjoy the diversity not just of the larger world, but our own small corner of it.

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THE SUDDEN ANGELS

The text is the story of the Temptation of Jesus, from the Gospel according to St. Matthew, Chapter 4:1-11.

You have witnessed this scene before. Two people face each other. They are alone in a barren landscape. One stands for good; the other, for evil. They are ready for combat. Much is riding on the outcome—the fate of a town, or an army, or a country, or the world. It is likely to be a battle to the death.

Perhaps you saw Matt Dillon in a white hat, standing on the dusty main street of Dodge City, opposite a black-hatted villain, their hands by their holsters, ready for the shoot-out. Or maybe you saw the Star Wars version: Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader, fighting with laser swords on a platform in outer space.

Or maybe you think of the teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle Michaelangelo facing the evil shredder on an urban rooftop. Or maybe you have a war movie in mind, and the hero finally faces one of the enemy in a critical showdown.

Our movies, our literature, our imaginations are filled with this story. And here we see it again, in the Gospel.

Jesus and the devil. As the hymn we will sing characterizes it, "Prince of Peace and Prince of Darkness meet in lonely wilderness."

Why does this kind of story appear so often in our literature? Because we know this story describes our human experience. We know that within us—a battle like this is often taking place. A battle between good and evil, between right and wrong. And we love these stories in which it is easy to tell the good from the bad. Just check the color of the hat. Just listen to them say a few sentences. In the movies, it’s easy to tell good from bad.

And we love these stories, too, when the good triumph in the end. They may suffer setbacks, but in most of these fairy tales and legends and contemporary stories, too, the showdown will be won by the good. We love these stories, because in our lives the choices are so much muddier. Our own choices are filled with gray areas. We know we have moral choices to make. We know that some of our choices will come with extensive consequences. And we wish they would all be as simple as a Dodge City shoot-out.

But our moral choices are so much messier, it seems. So it seems. The story of the Fall has the same shape, doesn’t it? The setting is a garden. There Eve visits with the serpent. We know that she is innocent and the serpent evil. God has given her one prohibition, and the serpent talks her into disobeying. This time the evil triumphs. But we can tell that even in that simple situation—just think, a life with only one rule!—even in that clear situation, Eve is misled. She doesn’t know the serpent is evil. What he says sounds plausible. And what she sees with her eyes seems to support the serpent’s contention. Certainly it must be good to be wise . . .

Morris Wee is Pastor of St. John Lutheran Church, Northfield, Minnesota, where he preached this sermon last year at the first Sunday in Lent. We print it here at this time remembering St. Michael, whose feast day is September 29, hoping that the Norwegians of Minnesota will not find it amiss so to regard the saint whose day marks an entire academic term in English schools.
This story, too, describes human life. That is why it is part of our Holy Scripture. It tells us about our life and our relationship with God. And what it tells us is that no matter how simple God's demands are, we will resist them. We will fail to obey them. It tells us that we will be faced with important decisions concerning God's will for our lives. And that we are likely to hear conflicting voices—that good and evil will wage a battle within us. It tells us that the kingdom of God, God's dominion, pictured in this account as a lovely garden, that lovely life is at stake when we are called to do God's will. God has prepared for us many blessings that we will enjoy now if we live according to God's laws; and if we do not, we will lose some of those blessings, right now.

Adam and Eve turn from God, and they are driven from the garden. This is human life—good and evil, fighting for possession of your life and mine. Even, sometimes, in decisions that seem as innocuous as eating an apple. It is a frightening image, really, because the consequences are so grave—and the chances of losing to evil so great.

But sometimes we may wonder if life offers even that much hope for good. We may look at the world and wonder if the power of good is still in the fight at all, or if all the forces left on the field are forces of evil. When we look at the mess in Bosnia, or Armenia, or South Africa, or Israel, we may wonder where the good is. When we look at the picture of that emaciated crying Sudanese boy on the cover of The Lutheran, we may wonder if good has any strength left in that place.

And occasionally, we may look honestly at our own heart, and at our own sin, and ask the same question. My friends, the answer is yes. Because Jesus Christ has defeated the power of the devil on the cross, good continues to work in the world toward its ultimate triumph over evil. Because Jesus defeated the wiles of the devil in the desert, we are freed to choose the good in our own lives; we are freed to give our lives to him, so that he can bring to us the dominion of God, and set our feet back in the garden for which we were created.

Each one of us will be faced, many times, with difficult moral decisions. And each one of those decisions is a tiny part of the great cosmic battle between good and evil. Often those times of decision will feel like intensely lonely times—when we have to figure it out alone. think how isolating this time was for Jesus. He was alone in the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights. 40 days! I was alone in the wilderness once for two days and have never forgotten it. Then, after 40 days, along comes the devil when Jesus might well be as starved for conversation as he is for food.

And the two engage in a battle, not of muscle, but of wits. And their weapons are not guns or swords, but scripture. Note that even the devil quotes scripture to persuade Jesus, which I suppose should caution us not to trust everyone who can quote the Bible! The devil tempts Jesus to use his power to serve himself. He is famished, so he should turn the stones to bread. If he will worship the devil, the devil presumes to offer him all the dominions of the world. And Jesus, isolated and hungry, finds in scripture the strength to resist the devil's temptations.

And then, when the battle is over, as soon as it is over, suddenly angels come and take care of him. Jesus thought he was alone, no doubt. That's how it felt out there, grappling with the devil. But somewhere near were those angels, who suddenly appear to help him.

The passage reminds me of the Christmas story, when the angel announced the birth of Christ to the shepherds, and, we are told, suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host. The sudden angels. I picture them present all the time, just out of Jesus' sight. Just beyond our apprehension, too, when we struggle with temptation.

The angels, carrying with them God's heavenly dominion, present but unseen in our daily struggles with evil, cheering for the good to triumph, then, when the battle is over, swooping in with a piece of the kingdom. So often, when the hard temptations come, when we know we must struggle, and the battle between right and wrong, good and evil rages within us—so often, at such times, we feel alone.

We may feel so alone that we think no one will judge us if we choose the wrong. And we may feel so alone that no one will strengthen us to choose the right. But we are not alone. Like Jesus, we have the resource of holy scripture. And the scripture will be our strength and weapon against evil. And we, too, have the presence of the sudden angels, invisibly surrounding us. A world of good, the invisible dominion of God, here in our midst, calling us and strengthening us to choose the good.

There's a scene in Jon Hassler's novel Simon's Night that reminds me of such a moment. The central character, Simon, is an English professor at a small college in Minnesota. Simon is 57; he has lived alone since his wife left him 20 years earlier, but they have never divorced. Some years earlier, Simon took a very strong liking to one of his students, but resisted allowing it to become a romantic relationship. They have corresponded at least annually. Now the former student, Linda, has followed him to Ireland, and they begin a love affair as they visit all the important Irish literary sites. They go to visit the rock of Cashel, where St. Patrick was said to have converted King Aengus to the way of Christ. Linda waits below while Simon climbs to the top of a ruined cathedral wall. I will
read a rather long passage from the book:

Then Simon caught sight—40 feet directly below him—of the tombs in the chancel ... Who lay buried there? Abbots, most likely. Kings. Saints ... He imagined the chancel as it must have looked like centuries ago, candlelit and fogged with incense, the monks chanting their Latin orations. The scene in his mind’s eye was more vivid than the presence of Linda below him in the alcove. He looked out across the rolling land. It was here in the vastness of the Irish midlands that civilization waited in repose while the wild tribes of the north and east sacked the rest of Europe, and at the close of the dark ages it was from this rock and from other sequestered sites around Ireland that civilization began its movement eastward to the continent, the faith recrossing the old frontiers and reclaiming the old lands. ... Simon was standing at a pivotal point in the history of humankind, and he felt as never before a bond between himself and the multitudes of teachers who had kept the light burning down through the ages—not only the light of the classics, but the light of the Gospels as well. He felt like going to his knees and thanking God for making him a part of his tradition. This faith, to Simon, was more than a guide to behavior or a hope for eternity; it was a frame through which he viewed the world and his place in the world; it was the source of the light that made sense out of all creation; it was the miraculous order without which all was chaos; it was a gift of God.

And because his faith was all these things to Simon, and because, though it preached love, it forbade adultery, he knew that he must renounce Linda and the love they shared. Granted, his love for Linda sprang from the depths of instinct and longing where Yeats said truth abided; yet running even deeper in Simon’s instinct was a current of longing for God and a love of God’s rigorous ways. He looked down at Linda now and his heart knocked with agony. He must descend to ground level and tell her" (234-235).

This is a terrible moment in the novel, because Simon’s faith is at odds with all the forces of passion and Romance and Irish poetry. And it is not at all obvious to a compassionate reader which choice is the better one. But what happens for Simon is that just when he seems to be all alone in this decision, he finds himself surrounded by the sudden angels. He sees the tombs, and the monks come to life for him, and the long centuries of the church and of the Christian faith.

And that reality—a reality that is always present, just beyond our seeing—at that moment that reality is more vivid to him than his beloved Linda. So Simon makes the bitter decision to give up his love and abide by the rigorous ways of his faith. And his life thereafter is blessed with a consistency of faith and a deep sense of peace that never fails him.

We begin Lent reminded that we are sinners. Like Adam and Eve, we have been placed in a garden and we have turned from God’s ways to our own interests, and we have lost many of the gifts of God’s dominion. But Jesus has defeated the devil, and the power of God still prevails over evil. So we begin each day with renewed freedom to trust in God and to choose God’s ways.

And when, like Simon, we face temptation—when some skirmish in the great cosmic battle takes place within us—we are not alone. For we have the strength of God’s word, and the presence of God’s sudden angels, cheering us on, ready to revive and sustain us. And when we fail, like Eve and Adam and all our ancestors, when we fail, God’s love will not desert us. We lose a portion of the great store of blessings God intends for us here, but even as we are escorted from the garden, it is God’s angels who go with us.

Amen.
Dear Editor:

Reading Mike Rose's Lives on the Boundary last summer, I was struck by one passage in particular, where he depicts the puzzlement of college freshmen. Words like determinism, hegemony, equilibrium, interactionality, and recursion come at them, and they wonder what's going on. Now a professor, Rose had grown up in south Los Angeles, son of Italian immigrants. What's going on, of course, is surprising proof that professors are human beings—scary as it seems at the time. Even professors in the humanities are human, doing what human beings always do, including the rowdy teens next door. They're using their own language. Like, you know, the rest of the population. Except when professors do what professors do, other folks feel, like, alienated.

So of course people, including professors themselves, start kvetching. I've seen professors of English make bright-eyed attempts at career suicide by writing letters to PMLA and College English, complaining of trendy jargon. Since even rampant users of the jargon will deplore—sotto voce, in camera, entre nous—the worst of the stuff, you can imagine their response when seeing it attacked by one of their own. "Just doesn't get it, does he?" That is, literary scholars live and veritably breathe by linguistic explorations and inventions, so why is this creep exiling himself from humanity by attacking our oxygen?

Or, to put it another way, if this upstart thinks the air is that bad, let him open a window. In academia we call these windows wit and satire. You don't call people to account with petulance and grousing. Even plain old parents learn that, when marooned a few years on Teenage Island—where the garbage scows of Beavis & Butthead, Inc., do their offloading.

Parents of course can say to their offspring, and should say, tepidly: "Let's see if we can carry on a conversation for the next ten minutes without those expressions you like so much." The kid will be riled, because after the twelfth time the word conversation will sound like a mantra of the out-of-it generation, and anyway, who can talk with blood relatives for ten straight minutes? But the power of quiet and doomed discipline is subliminal; the kid knows exactly what the mantra means: "The grim future is coming. Some day I'll have to talk the way actual people talk. Some day, so long, good old island!"

But college professors can't discipline, usage-wise, their peers, much less their betters or their inferiors. You can't discipline your peers, because the effort makes you sound superior, and we know you're not. You're just one of us. You can't discipline your betters—an assistant professor, let's say, can't mug a solidly-fleshed and securely chaired deconstructionist. Because that makes you presumptuous, which is to say a doomed character in a comic book. You can't discipline your inferiors—tenured profs cranky over the younger generation and their newest exclusionary litspeak from France or central Europe. That lands you on Fuddy Duddy Island, sort of like Teenage Island except no curly fries.

To return, though, to the main point, which can be promulgated almost monosyllabically: You don't want to stop people from being human. Even Rose's "underprepared" have to be a bit patient. You lose too much entertainment when people stop being human. Even God, we notice, created men and womyn to fall, because their doings were otherwise not interesting enough to watch.

The blandness of a prelapsarian world as actual culture would have developed! Adam to Eve: "I've just finished a critical piece on your newest symphony." Eve to Adam: "But you know it's the same symphony. I write the same music over and over, because

Charles Vandersee, at the University of Virginia, has lately experimented in a new genre, review of a church service, for the journal Anglican and Episcopal History.
something different might be—well, transgressive." Adam: "Yes, and my essay is the same one too. Aren't things special in the Garden—the same yesterday, today, and forever!"

To be human is to be novel and excessive. To learn new languages when one, or the rags of one, obviously suffices. To invent new languages, to skew existing languages, to abandon the skew in favor of some new skew that will horrify some island or other. To be human is to write a sentence like this:

*Despite the ruptures in Western history that have produced different epistemic configurations, the production and consumption of literature (and of all the humanities) has been characterized by a supervisory hermeneutics intended to annul the force that would jeopardize the authority of the dominant structure.*

This is not made up. It's one of thousands by a literary scholar whose brilliant ear picks up every neologism in all the trendy writers in today's hegemonic discourses. I've noticed it over the years, and you'll not get his six-letter last name out of me, or what his brand-new book is *The End of.* There is something almost too human about sentences like that. A sentence like that shows what we can do.

But of course they don't get it, do they? The denizens of Populist Island, where the air is so bad, from so many people, react to that kind of sentence with much aggrievement. Why doesn't everybody just speak like everybody?

A columnist in the *Washington Post,* August 1, wishing we were in Eden, which God himself (as just noted) pretty surely saw as Hell:

"I lost my grip on the study of poetry when it turned to structuralism and deconstruction and all those other words I don't understand. Even in the backwater colleges, we caught wind of a change. There was a new way of thinking about poems, a way that has come to dominate. It said, in my faint understanding, that poems are just sets of words for us to play with. The idea of living poets hard at it, distilling life into treasurable, memorable elements of truth—that was gone. I went with it."

I believe we're on Whiny Island here, which is pretty close to Populist Island. Over on Populist, everybody speaks like everybody, while on Whiny everybody speaks like the 1950s. Whiny has people with arguable critical credentials—people who confide that they "don't understand" any "new ways," or only "faintly understand." It isn't that they can't, it's just that they don't. The Little Engine that sort of sat there, as the tide maliciously stole in. Mr. Post Columnist, meek, says that "simple anthologies circumscribe my small knowledge of poems." The meek blessedly do not inherit the earth; what would they do with it?

So let's see. We're talking here about how every clan is an island, and they all, or a lot of them, are upset that over here somewhere academicians and other happy jargonists are going about being virilely, and usually not virulently, human.

Perhaps happy is not quite the word I want for all of us in academia, dodging sour grapes from the islands. Professor Six-Letter, above, for example. His apparent solemnity—his earnest ploddiness—is more cudlike contentment than alligator in action. From preface to index (a wonderful sedate veldt of an index, luxuriant with Althusser, Derrida, Foucault, Heidegger, and Transcendental Signed), he smiles not, neither does he swim, but instead gracelessly hugs the earth, like a sort of great rhino, bearing nobly the armor of the 1980s.

But this rhino at least has a mind, not a whine. Let me try another sentence on you, and ask you whether anybody on the islands Populist, Whiny, or Teenage would endorse. I do think Professor Rhino would:

*He innovatively exploited the color and texture of a thick, fibrous paper manufactured to line carpets. That let him do lichen truthfully, on the rocks at Newport.*

Teenage Island would, I suppose, say that painter William Trost Richards "used, like, this really heavy paper with, you know, these strings in it, which was really weird, because it was really, you know, for rugs, and what he did it for was to make that stuff on those rocks look real."

That's human in its retro Edenic way, but not as human as such delicious words as fibrous, lichen, and carpets. Delicious and nutritious both; they say what they're meant to say, with a staunch grace. I admire these placards at the recent Boston Museum of Fine Arts watercolor show. This one on a work by Ross Sterling Turner:

"*Seen from a worm's-eye perspective, the garden is a wall of blossoms, including mallow, lark hollyhocks, and hot-pink beach roses.*"

That's not the sort of thing Populist Island or Fuddy Duddy cares for. It sounds just a trifle pretentious—O God of Eden!—and isn't that, in usage, just about as bad as we get? Those hot-pink beach roses! And a word like lark!

Still, it's human, *mon semblable, mon frère,* to be pretentious every now and then. The department chairman who hired me, the late Fredson Bowers, came to the office on Saturdays wearing an ascot. This was in the olden days, when we forced freshman composition at eight in the morning on the young partying gentry who hadn't been to bed. It was gloriously pretentious—an ascot amid the bleary-eyed and sockless. It was human. It was great. All of us untenured slaves felt a bit more alive.

But what about the alleged invasion of pretentious jargon into all the intro courses in even the backwater colleges? We have Mr. Whining Post's word for it, and it must surely be a bad thing, spelling doom for the boondocks before civilization arrives. I have only this suggestion for the sorrowing islanders: Make a large fibrous raft and sail into our classrooms. Mr. Post notwithstanding, I think there's no more jargon in 1990s classrooms than there is a measurable increase in macho sports metaphors among politicians.

Which is probably a bad thing, since life of a genuinely human kind cannot take place on Fuddy Duddy,
Teenage, Populist, and Whiny islands, and if academia became like them, whether serially or synchronically, it really would suggest a suicidal impulse. Some simulacrum of human life exists, no doubt, on such islands, but not the real thing. The university has to stand for the real.

What is all this, this serially and synchronically, and for that matter mon semblable, mon frère? Simulacrum too. Sotto voce? Why, it’s only that same captivating pretentiousness we’ve been talking about. It’s pretentious for virile old ladies to blue their hair and perm the stuff. It’s pretentious to market your house as a home, and it’s pretentious for the newer hymnals to posture as populist by abandoning such fine designations as Kyrie, Sanctus, Gloria Patri, and Agnus Dei, thereby pretending no historical continuity exists in liturgy, and treating pewman as Dum-Dum.

Not disposed toward obfuscation in the classroom, I nonetheless strive every now and then to atone for wimp tendencies. So on the syllabus this fall I used the expression ex cathedra, to suggest that that’s the way Emily Dickinson’s voice often sounds. Boy, does she lunge with mental and emotional authority—godlike and even papal!

Mr. Post probably would object; he quotes at length the famous poem of Edwin Arlington Robinson, “Richard Cory,” about a gentleman rich and envied who walked through town with assurance until one night he “went home and put a bullet through his head.” Then says Mr. Post: “Thousands of lines of newspaper type have been spent on [Clinton aide] Vincent Foster’s tragic death. I don’t think any of us put it any clearer.” Uh-oh. Clarity Island is another of those places you wouldn’t want to buy a home on—only the round sun, round pebbles, the round of simple seasons, and not a cathedra in sight, or dictionary either.

Even your grandmother, the blue-haired quiltmaker, with her nip of schnapps now and then, was always trying something new, with her fibrous avocation. That’s what occurs to me when the islanders want linsey-woolsey language from academia, or Eisenhower-speak. She came up with a new pattern, every now and then, and the other little ladies said “Oooohhh.” I believe that’s the correct spelling, as I think it’s spelled “Duhhhhh,” when we’re using precision-talk to evaluate the island mentality. Human beings need a lot of “Oooohhh” to stay human.

Pretentiousness seems weird and unnecessary, but it’s godly. On the islands they don’t watch public TV—the National Geographic specials with inexpressibly weird specimens of God’s creation, and their totally far-out behavior. Creature behavior (the whole insect-to-rhino spectrum) isn’t simple and uniform, for sure, whether we’re talking reproduction, digestion, or rearing the young. Nor should human discourse be.

If there was noise in the sky over the noise of Babel, it wasn’t thunder, it was God clapping and whooing at the hundreds of new ways people were going to be saying things. And if you wanted to know what people were saying, you didn’t wimp out. You enlarged your humanity by inquiring rather than whining. And with wit rather than whimper.

From Dogwood, yours faithfully,

C.V.
It remains to be seen whether President Clinton will be successful in two of his top domestic priorities, installing a national health care plan and restructuring the national bureaucracy. There is one profound change that his administration has brought about and that is the lowering of America’s profile in the world and the complementary diminishment of attention to foreign affairs in our country.

It is difficult to say whether this change is intentional or not. Part of the change which is out of the control of Washington is that many of our old partners in the dance of global politics have changed. The Soviet Union has disappeared and the Russia that has taken its place (along with the other parts of the former Soviet Union) has not commanded our attention in the same way. As a direct consequence of the fall of the Soviet Union, NATO and our major partners in that alliance make rare appearances on the dance floor. Only Israel and Japan break into our reverie on a regular basis, as in days of old (the Reagan and Bush years).

Israel and its neighbors in the Middle East have been one of the major stories in 1993, and one with a tinge of optimism at this writing. The peace initiative in that region precedes the Clinton administration, but the resources of our government, to our credit, continue to be deeply involved in supporting those negotiations. The American presence in this region is entirely diplomatic. Of all of our foreign policy interests this is the one of most continuity.

The other partner whose importance, visibility and role has not changed much is Japan. To return to the dance floor metaphor one more time, Japan and the United States do not have a smooth dancing partnership, but neither is likely to leave the floor. Each accuses the other of duplicity in its claims to be a faithful free trader and good economic citizen of the world. This relationship has not changed much in the last ten years, and grabs our attention on almost a daily basis.

Little else about our role in the world seems familiar. Except for some Congressional hearing or trial rehashing our role in “Irangate” or “Iraqgate,” the American military or intelligence agencies only seem to be in the news when new ways to trim the budget are proposed. One would have to return to the days before World War II to find a comparable inattention to an aggressive American role abroad. Of course, this change fits the mood of the public at home, and would be generally applauded in most parts of the world. Even if there were more public support for an American military or covert presence abroad, our capabilities are probably not equal to such a role. Our military forces were structured to defend against a nuclear attack, or to fight a large-scale conventional war in Europe. We were a “muscle-bound” super-power, never very good at small projections of power or “street fights.” Because of the break-up of the former Soviet Union and the resulting arms reduction agreements, much of the muscle is gone. Further, and this is where the intentions of the Clinton administration do enter the picture, we are not now defining ourselves as a “superpower” any longer.

The geographical scope of American national interests have been substantially narrowed. This is evident most clearly in our own hemisphere. Haiti and Cuba still clamor for attention, but otherwise the Clinton administration is focused on Mexico and Canada and the North American Free Trade Agreement. In fact, President Clinton has raised this agreement to a priority equal to his major domestic initiatives. The political debate on this agreement is intense and will consume much of our
attention in the next months. It has already excluded the rest of Latin America from our attention, and in formal/legal terms excludes the rest of Latin America from the free trade area itself. Our focus on the North American Free Trade Agreement is also worrying to other major international trading powers like the European Community and Japan. They are worried about their exclusion and possible discriminatory trading practices against them.

With the major conflicts in the world outside of the Middle East, the United States has been careful to defer responsibility either to the region concerned or to the United Nations. Our involvement in Cambodia has been minimal, our main action being to verbally support the role of the United Nations. Similarly, we are almost invisible in Afghanistan, unlike our previous activity in support of some of the rebel forces. Yugoslavia stimulates the occasional pronouncement or threat from our President or the Secretary of State, but we have been very careful to be in a support role to the U.N., or to coordinate our position with those of our European allies. Yugoslavia is one location which has the potential for attracting a more active American role. Such involvement would come only after a complete break-down of the U.N. efforts and an initiation of all-out civil war in Bosnia. The stimulus would have to be great to prompt an active military involvement in a region so far outside of our traditional interest area and the more narrow interest area of the Clinton administration.

Somalia is the other remaining area of conflict and some American involvement. This involvement predates the Clinton administration, and has changed in one aspect, in the last year, in that the U.N. is now more clearly the sponsor of the attempts to stop the civil war. The persistence of casualties among the peacekeeping forces, including some Americans, will test the resolve of the United States to remain in this area even in a United Nations-sponsored role. It is more than a bit ironic that our country, which has never shown much official interest in Africa, should be involved in such an altruistic enterprise so far from our shores and our area of national interest.

The absence of more widespread military commitments by the United States is very popular and fits the tone of last year's presidential campaign and President Clinton's own stated preferences for policy initiatives, almost all of which have a domestic focus. We are still struggling to bring the economy out of recession. The cities remain a festering locus of despair, unemployment, crime and drugs. There are many social strains as we move from the "melting-pot" society to a multi-cultural one. As we tackle these serious and divisive domestic problems, a strong sense of national identity could help to hold us together. In the past, a consensus of our role in the world has been part of this national identity. At times our sense of global mission sounded chauvinistic, at times self-righteous and high-handed, and occasionally peace- and justice-destroying for the rest of the world.

We are still one of the largest economies of the world, one of the strongest military powers, and one of the more vibrant democracies. We still have a global mission and role to fill. We need a global mission and role. It needs to be more widely and explicitly defined than is presently being done. It would have been a fortunate development for us and the rest of the world, if, when we withdrew from active military and covert commitments, we had committed more to the United Nations peace-keeping role, to world economic development, to freer trade, and to global environmental concerns. This has not happened. We have simply withdrawn, in net total, from international commitments.

Though the Clinton administration has attracted a lot of new, bright talent to Washington, even some people with radical vision, these have been in the domestic policy areas. There is no Andrew Young visible in this administration. Andrew Young was the young Georgian clergyman and civil rights activist who was the US Ambassador to the United Nations in 1977. At that time, the Ambassador to the UN sat in cabinet meetings. This formal position combined with Andrew Young's Georgia connection to Carter and his status as a clergyman which President Carter respected, gave Rev. Young clout as a source of vision and advice with the President. His vision was a world aiming for cooperation, peace and social justice, led by the United States, but responsive especially to the views of the weaker and poorer nations. In the long run, over the four years of the Carter Administration, his view did not prevail. But at least the vision was articulated publicly by an administration member. Rev. Young was talking about the cooperation and peace in the world of the Cold War. He was ahead of his time.

The vision of Andrew Young needs to return to policy-making circles in the Clinton administration. It needs to include Rev. Young's acceptance of an active American involvement in global leadership.}

The Cresset
WHAT I SAW AT HARVARD

Arvid F. Sponberg

An inscription on a wall:

After God had carried us safe to New England
And we had builded our houses
Provided necessaries for our livelihood
Reared convenient places for God's worship
And settled the civil government
One of the next things we longed for
And looked after was to advance learning
And perpetuate it to posterity
Dreading to leave an illiterate ministry
To the churches when our present ministers
Shall lie in the dust.
New England's First Fruits

These words adorn the south pillar of Johnston Gate, the main gate of Harvard University. Massachusetts Hall stands just inside the gate. It's the oldest building in Harvard Yard and houses the President's Office.

The gate faces west, toward Cambridge common, the First Unitarian Church, the graveyard where Crispus Attucks is buried, the house where Longfellow wrote "Hiawatha," and Radcliffe College. "New England's First Fruits" was published in 1639. Though its aims were both pious and noble, "First Fruits" was neither a theological treatise nor a work of epic imagination. It was of a more mundane and perhaps more American genre. It was a fund-raising brochure.

Pope (that's Alexander, not The) reminds me that a little learning is a dangerous thing. I drank a lot from Harvard's Pierian spring this summer, felt the intoxication appropriate for scholars who conclude their first days in Widener library with a stately descent of its broad steps into the heavy, dappled, August twilight of The Yard. But I doubt that I drank deeply enough to note soberly features of more than fleeting significance. (Those with long acquaintance of Harvard may correct these lines and render my face crimson.)

So it's probably shallow and wrong of me to say that there's something fitting about The Harvard Corporation nailing to its mast (so to speak) if not an actual doubloon then words that raise a gold standard.

A visitor—again, bear in mind the distortions of brief acquaintance—would say that Harvard has done very well for itself. Its endowment is so high that it is frequently obscured by clouds—the Denali of American higher education. It can be represented only by a number so large and rarefied that it leaves finance officers of other universities gasping for enough air to utter it. (Laypersons, of course, cannot fully comprehend such a number but any random sequence of ten digits will approximate it well enough for federal tax purposes).

And Harvard has kept the promise of "First Fruits." Has it not advanced learning and perpetuated it to posterity? And which university has a more literate ministry, with 34 chaplains on its staff—that's the number I saw in the Harvard Gazette—including an atheist-humanist chaplain (formerly a Catholic priest). Talk about diversity! Here, if anywhere, we can see God's grace abounding, can we not?

But then an acquaintance of mine raised a fine point. You see, I was staying at the Episcopal Divinity School with a cohort of people also interested, as I am, in theater, in this
case actors attending the Russian/American Dramatic Alliance Stanislavsky Workshop. They seemed to fit right in with the Gilded Age ambiance of EDS (which I recommend, by the way, for its adjacency, helpful, knowledgeable staff, and modest prices.) But scattered here and there among us were genuine Episcopal divinity students and one of them, Tom, asked me one evening about the Harvard Seal— the one that says “VERITAS.”

I’d mentioned that I had been doing some research in the Harvard Archives. Tom said, “Is it true that the Harvard Seal once bore the words ‘Christo et Ecclesiae’?”

I said that I didn’t know but I would keep an eye out for a chance to confirm or refute. A day or two later I was reading a memorandum from 1905 on Harvard inter-office stationery bearing the university seal. Sure enough, there was “VERITAS,” the syllabic trinity arrayed, as usual, on three open books. But surrounding “VERITAS” was not the blank field we see today on sweatshirts and backpacks, but the words “Christo et Ecclesiae.”

I reported this to Tom. He asked, “When did Harvard stop using ‘Christo et Ecclesiae?’” I said that I didn’t know, etc..

Now my work in the archives had much to do with the administration of A. Lawrence Lowell (brother of Percival, the astronomer, and Amy, the poet) who was President of Harvard from 1909 to 1933. I also frequently consulted the University catalogs of Lowell’s era. The Seal is prominently printed on the catalog’s title page. It was the work of but a few moments to see that “Christo et Ecclesiae” surrounded “VERITAS” right through Lowell’s presidency. Indeed, it continued to do so in the first year of the presidency of Lowell’s successor, James Bryant Conant. And then, from 1935 on, at Harvard, “VERITAS” stands solitary, unembraced by “Christo et Ecclesiae.”

It would have been interesting to look into Conant’s files and follow the paper trail of the decision to revise Harvard’s seal. But Conant was president until 1953 and his papers are sealed until 2004. Harvard imposes a 50-year moratorium on research in its presidential papers, dating from the end of a president’s tenure.

I knew about the moratorium before I went to Harvard because I had read about it in Martin Sherwin’s A World Destroyed: The Atomic Bomb and the Grand Alliance. I used that book for several years in my Freshman Seminar on Nuclear Weapons here at VU.

Conant figures prominently in that book. President Roosevelt chose him and Vannevar Bush, the President of MIT, to direct the work of the Office of Scientific Research and Development at the beginning of World War II. OSRD had several sections and Section One became the Manhattan Project. Conant and Bush chose General Leslie Groves to direct the project. Groves, in turn, chose J. Robert Oppenheimer to develop the first atomic bombs at Los Alamos. Oppenheimer, in turn, chose the site to test the bombs, naming it “Trinity.” And that’s “VERITAS” that you can take, as they say, to the bank.

Conant, however, was not able to render “VERITAS” solitary everywhere. The Widener Library was built about the same time as that memo I mentioned. When next you make your stately descent of Widener’s steps, pause at the bottom long enough to turn around and raise your eyes to the ample impression of the university seal which adorns the library’s portals. You will see “VERITAS” and embracing it you will see “Christo et Ecclesiae,” perhaps the last reminder, certainly the most public, of the dread that attended Harvard’s founding. ♣

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Readers who missed the June special issue on Spirituality and Higher Education are invited to request a copy.

Please send $1.00 to cover shipping and handling. Multiple copies for cost of mailing only are available for faculty workshops, study groups and the like. Please ask for information from the Editor.

The Cresset, Valparaiso University, Valparaiso IN 46383
Jennifer Voigt

"Here I drew breath and added...in the margin, Why does Samuel Butler say, 'Wise men never say what they think of women'? Wise men never say anything else apparently...Here is Pope: 'Most women have no character at all.'"

—Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*

"History is lunch."

—Allan Gurganus, *Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All*

"Our stellar journeys beyond incarnation by and in patriarchal pens require transcendence of authorized incarnations..."

—Mary Daly, *Pure Lust*


Jennifer Voigt graduated from VU in 1993, and presently lives in Denver. She has written frequently on film as an undergrad, and hopes to combine her interests in feminism and film in graduate study in the near future. Her columns will alternate with Rick Barton's.

The three writers actually discuss Swift's gout until the title character arrives. She is a beautiful woman, a perfect lady (though she has just recently been a man), and the writers, attracted to her, engage her in conversation. Eager to discuss poetry, a realm of thought accessible to her in her former life as a gentleman and a patron of poets, Orlando naively ventures into territory forbidden to women. Swift, Pope, and Johnson, unwilling to waste time and energy talking shop with a lady, deny Orlando the intellectual stimulation she desires, quickly turning the conversation to a discussion about the character and situation of women, quoting their own work to fashion a picture of women as less than men in mind, body and soul. This is her first foray into society as a woman, and the Lady Orlando, unused to indirect attacks on her character and unprepared to believe what she hears, is powerless to refute her companions' claims.

The interaction between the ideas of the eighteenth century concerning gender and Woolf and Potter's insights into the same subject is brilliant.

*Orlando* and another recently released film, *Like Water for Chocolate*, give women voices and choices rarely offered them on the screen. The films envision women as time travelers of sorts, tracking the evolution of women's self-awareness over the centuries and generations. Unlike "women's films" of the *Steel Magnolias* genre in which the women featured exhibit strength only in that they passively weather whatever horrors life surprises them with, these two widest different films create space in which the women in them encounter their own history, shaping past, present, and future according to their experiences.

The Swift/Pope/Johnson scene in *Orlando* is so provocative in this case because of its insight into how the suppression of ideas generated by women and the degradation of women's experience by the literary and social establishments the three writers and their salon represent retard the development of women's own self understanding. The films wrestle women's experience from the clutches of those who would demean it and allow it to live and flourish on its own.

In the beginning, the young, fashionable Lord Orlando, favorite of the first Queen Elizabeth, obeys the Queen's dying command never to grow old. Orlando survives death and the centuries, participating in the male worlds of love, poetry, and politics, property, and power until one day he wakes up to find that he is "the same person" with a "different sex." From then on, Orlando explores life as a woman, learning from encounters with the Great Minds and suitors who propose only marriage or spinsterhood, that she has been confined by virtue of her sex to life without property, or power, or respect. Orlando fights and mourns her loss of status, but eventually overcomes it, finding in the end, at some time in our futures, a peace between herself, her gender, and the world that defines it.

*Orlando* rejects the passivity inherent in other movies "about" women. Potter keeps *Orlando's* journey of discovery literally in motion, making use of the ever shifting rules of fashion and etiquette to move her film though time. She uses costuming to illustrate Orlando's resiliency. Here clothing, as in life, not merely the stuff of shallow trends but a device used to tell the story of the wearer, is an issue at the core of gender. Orlando starts out as a
man in tune with fifteenth century fashion with a feminine appearance to which the men of the day aspire. As the film ends, Orlando sports the androgynous appearance to which the women of her day aspire. For Orlando, gender and gender roles are fashions that both confine and reshape her, but also mark her ability to adapt—a quality valuable in her eventual re-making of her self. Though she is a woman dressed so that she resembles furniture, she evolves.

Freed from the fashion of gender, Woolf's idea of the androgynous person who acts without regard to her or his sex remains. Stripped of the feminine or masculine pronoun, Orlando's basic essence is neither female or male but the "I" by which Orlando defines his/her self at the outset of the movie. The "I" experience from which Orlando expresses her self is also the "eye" experience through which she views the world. For Orlando, the experience of androgyny re-focuses her I/eye's lens. In the end, her appearance is androgynous, but she remains a woman, able after travelling for centuries to tell her story.

It seems that Orlando's awareness and concepts like it are ideas the world is only now ready to take seriously. Women's own stories, pregnant with songs of the self, travel through the years as biographies written in their own handwriting. Take seriously for a minute the film of Laura Esquivel's novel, Like Water for Chocolate: A Novel in Monthly Installments with Receipts, Romances, and Home Remedies. The biographies of several generations of fictional women emerge from the intricate and magical recipes written in the family cookbook.

Like Water for Chocolate's recipes for Wedding Cakes, Quail in Rose Petal Sauce, and Hot Chocolate tell the story of passion aiding women in a revolution against the traditions that imprison them, stifling self knowledge and the expression of the personal witness of history. Here, time travel is inter-generational. The travelers, Mama Elena and her three daughters, Gertrudis, Rosaura, and Tita, victims of rigid social standards dictated by books of etiquette written for socially prominent families, participate in a curious feminist revolution in turn of the century Mexico. Mama Elena, a bitter and tyrannical woman, forbids her daughter Tita to marry, citing as her reason the family practice of requiring the youngest daughter to take care of her mother in her old age.

Mama Elena's adherence to the stifling etiquette of the past and Tita's refusal to reject her passions and accept the injustice her mother lives by, creates a gulf between mother and daughter. The two women find no common ground on which to build a mutual relationship. Mama Elena persists in her cruelty; Tita learns to hate her mother.

However, Tita learns from her mother's history. She liberates herself from her mother's image of women as docile and obedient—an image Mama Elena herself does not resemble—re-creating the image of woman to resemble herself. In this film, one woman's life sets the stage for the lives of the women who follow her in time. As Mama Elena's sordid past reveals itself to Tita's eyes, she begins to understand the forces that made her mother only a shadow of the woman she could have been. Mama Elena's wholesale rejection of passion and emotion and acceptance of self-hatred in exchange for the "fashionable" role of a socially acceptable woman milks her of all happiness.

Tita possesses confidence despite her upbringing, as well as courage, fortitude, resolution, and resilience—qualities inherent to the character of a woman engaged in revolutionary movement. Her passion for the freedom to choose the way to live her own life leaks into her cooking, inspiring those who partake of her food to feel the epitomes of love, desire, sadness, and pleasure, all ingredients in Tita's recipe for revolution. The emotions created in her dinner guests become Tita's signature. She establishes herself in the foods she creates. As her guests eat her art, they witness life through her eye.

At a time when the film induc-
Books for All Seasons,
and for All Sorts
and Conditions


"I decided I better stick with what I knew and go deeper": a Cistercian woman told Patricia Hampl what turned her away from Eastern religions into a Catholic monastic house. So too Hampl and Kathleen Norris have turned to Christianity, the tradition of their childhoods and of their families, as the resource for their exploration of life that is more than surface. Both women are poets in whose prose the poet's care for language—for its beauty and for its work as carrier of meaning—is perceptible. The beauty of these two books is not only in the language describing each woman's search, but also the thing explored and found. Hampl's search for the contemplative life is a pilgrimage that takes her to Assisi, Lourdes, and northern California and returns to moments of her St. Paul Catholic childhood and youth. Norris' exploration is set in western Dakota, where Benedictine houses, tiny Presbyterian congregations, family farms and small towns punctuate a landscape which is both desert and ancient sea.

Like the Benedictines, whose hospitality provides Norris with a second location on the Dakota desert, but without their vow of stability, Norris's spiritual exploration has been in this one place. "Conversion means starting with who we are, not who we wish we were. It means knowing where we come from." Norris' knowledge came on the Plains where, "I found my old ones, my flesh and blood ancestors as well as the desert monks and mystics of the Christian church." This was not what she expected either of Dakota or of Christianity. Rather, "it came as an unwelcome surprise that my old ones led me back to church. It continues to surprise me that the church is for me both a new and an old frontier" (131). Norris returned to western South Dakota in the mid-1970s to live in her grandparents' house after their deaths. She and her husband left behind the lush literary world of New York in exchange for a starker life in a place where few people read; where neither the people nor the land "readily render its secrets or its subtleties" (108). In this marginal place in the center of the nation, Norris looks clearly and with affection at the details of life. She knows the weakness of her neighbors and their land; when she speaks of them it is with sadness rather than disdain, "realism, not despair."

In a few sentences or many pages, the sections of her book report her exploration of and reflections upon Dakota and its people: weather, gossip, landscape, worship, economy. Interspersed with observations about her South Dakota town are her experiences with monastics, both the Benedictines living near her and those long dead. The juxtaposition of the two sorts of community provides Norris with telling insights about how we humans are and are not able to live together. When reading "Can You Tell the Truth in a Small Town?" and "Where I Am" an academic cannot help but think of her own community and wonder about its own resources. Perhaps Norris' realism is what is most attractive about her book. She finds in the limitations of the landscape and of her neighbors, not only smallness but also depth and opportunities for courage. This is a realism of spirit which does not strive for what cannot be, rather it labors to be most deeply and richly what is. Her willing acceptance of what is as the beginning point is a welcome antidote to the frenzy to deny what we are, to escape pain, and to achieve perfection which infects our times. This is a way of living that produces both honesty and
generosity. Let the poet say what she has found:

"Maybe the desert wisdom of the Dakotas can teach us to love anyway, to love what is dying, in the face of death, and not pretend that things are other than they are. The irony and wonder of all this is that it is the desert's firmness, its stillness and isolation, that brings us back to love. Here we discover the paradox of the contemplative life, that the desert of solitude can be the school where we learn to love others" (121).

This realism which is Norris' beginning point finds resonance in Hampl's account of her search for contemplative life. At the outset, flying to Italy, she muses that perhaps as a convent-educated, Catholic child she was "given too much meaning too early." Then like many people who were brought up Catholic she fell away, traveling a course of "outward mobility" away from the soul, away from prayer, away from the attractive mystery of the sisters' dedicated life. "Self-expression had become my true faith" (17). Her search, her return, began with visits to a convent of contemplative Franciscan women, especially with Donnie.

Hampl makes of her pilgrimage three chapters—Faith, Miracles, Silence—that correspond to her walking tour to Assisi, her second visit to Assisi with a Franciscan group and to Lourdes, and her retreat with a small Cistercian community in California. Though more than a year transpired between the trip to Italy and France and the one to the west coast, in the telling the journey is all one, part of the same attraction to life that expresses "the instinct to bow the head, to bend the knee" (35). As she approaches the holy place, the virgin instant when night gives way to day, the pace slows and each day of her retreat gives a heading to her account.

In the virgin time of the summer solstice the retreatants and their hosts sing morning praise with a view of a clear-cut lumber operation. "... to stand on a hill at sunrise with a bunch of nuns who don't look like nuns, everybody wearing sweatshirts and big sweaters, my girlish fury burned, the embers still glowing, joining our light to the new sun of midsummer, mid-life: to find a use for innocence. Tears spiked my eyes. I can't help it, it's how I am. I can't help it, it's how I am. Finally, prayer" (207-208). Hampl arrives at prayer and it is like Norris' realism. It is focus; "fundamentally it is a position, a placement of oneself" (217). Having taken one's place, the words come. Alone or in community liturgy, the words articulate the instinct for praise like the harmony of a song or the stanzas of a poem.

Gifted by their experience and their skill as writers, Hampl and Norris have written shining books, books which will draw their readers into their journeys. These women are remarkable for what they explore, a way of being religious that takes seriously the treasures of the Christian tradition without being put off by the injuries it has inflicted or bound by its faults. Though perhaps strictly speaking neither book would be called theology, surely both are testimonies to the richness of life lived attentive to the Spirit. Any person attracted to that life, from a distance or from within it, will find these works reward the reading with the beauty of their words and of what they carry.

L. DeAn Lagerqust


This book adds one more stone to the already massive edifice Michael Novak has constructed in defense of the tripartite system of market economy, political democracy and pluralist culture. His focus here is on the relation of Catholic social teaching to that system, but particularly to the first part, capitalism. Trying his best to be helpful to readers and reviewers alike, Novak announces his thesis in a single sentence: "Out of the crucible of a hundred-year debate within the Church came a fuller and more satisfying vision of the capitalist ethic than Max Weber's 'Protestant Ethic' (xvi).

Since the late seventies Novak has been a stalwart in advancing a Christian argument for capitalism. In the early days of the great economic debate among religious intellectuals it took a lot of courage to mount such an argument against the whole array of mainstream Catholic and Protestant intellectuals who despised capitalism even more than they adored socialism. I was much encouraged by his public arguments for democratic capitalism when I was coming to similar conclusions myself. Indeed, my book, *The Ethic of Democratic Capitalism*, though it appeared before his *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, was indebted to Novak's earlier public argument.

Novak has gone on indefatigably to elaborate and extend his earlier argument into many arguments. On the way he has taken up many challenges and fended off many attacks. This book takes up another challenge that Novak thinks must be met if capitalism is to fulfill its promise. That challenge involves the tradition of Catholic social teaching, which until lately has been hostile to capitalism as a way of organizing economic life.

In order to bring Catholic social teaching and the spirit of capitalism together, Novak takes up two important tasks. The first is to show how Catholic social teaching, particularly in the form of Papal Encyclicals, has gradually come to accept capitalist practice, if not capitalist theory. The second is to indicate how Catholic social teaching can enrich capitalist theory and practice even more than Protestant Ethic has been able to do.

With regard to the first task, Novak admits that before Leo XIII in the late nineteenth century, Catholic social teaching was hostile to both the theory and practice of economic liberalism. This hostility was strongly exacerbated by the famous book by Amintore Fanfani, *Catholicism, Protestantism and Capitalism* (1935), which Novak believes is "a locus classicus of anticapitalist sentiment among Catholic intellectuals" (32). In that book Fanfani attributed all the vices of
the modern world to capitalism, and then blames the whole bundle on Protestantism. The upshot, supported by earlier Papal teaching, is that capitalism and Protestantism go together and must be resisted by Catholicism.

The author spends five chapters tracing the evolution of the Catholic attitude toward capitalism. It has moved from hostility to critical acceptance, especially that exhibited in Pope John Paul II’s Centimus Annus. In telling this story, Novak is willing to acknowledge the role Catholicism’s teaching has had in the economic retardation of the ‘Catholic lands.’ “Indeed, there is an undeniable irony in the fact that the Catholic spirit, over many centuries, did far less to lift the tyrannies and oppression of the preliberal era than did the capitalist spirit in which Fanfani detects only moral inferiority” (34).

Though a number of Catholic thinkers interpret the present Pope as less appreciative of capitalism than Novak portrays him, it is nevertheless true that the change in posture has been profound. Novak thinks this has great significance because the Catholic countries in Latin America and Eastern Europe will be encouraged by Catholic teaching to construct a humane and productive form of capitalism in their emerging societies. A weakness of his argument at this point is that Novak seems to think that Papal teaching itself will create the kind of ethical capitalism he prizes, in spite of his warnings in other places in the book that capitalism cannot develop properly without deeply-held and long-nurtured habits of mind and practice.

The second major task in Novak's argument is to spell out how Catholic social teaching can enrich the theory and practice of democratic capitalism in ways that Protestant social teaching has not. This involves a critique of Weber's The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism. Novak believes Weber exaggerated the elements of individualism and rationality in both Protestant and capitalist practice, when in fact they exhibited all sorts of associational, cooperative and traditional elements.

Novak argues, however, that Catholic social teaching's emphasis on sociality and creativity are indispensable supplements to Protestant teachings on vocation, self-reliance and initiative. Instead of using Catholic teaching on sociality, which he elaborates in helpful detail, to lambaste capitalism and project some sort of visionary socialism, Novak shows how it can “thicken” the theory and practice of democratic capitalism. He spends a good deal of space elaborating how “civil society” can become the most important instrument for extending social justice and realizing our social nature.

Indeed, in what I take to be one of the most important theoretical break-throughs in this book, I reinterpret social justice as the distinctive virtue of free persons associating themselves together, cooperatively, within a free society. I delink social justice from an uncritical reliance on the blind leviathan of the state, and link it, instead, to the concrete intelligence operative in individuals and their free associations within the 'civic forum' (xvi).

Novak is no doubt on track with his general argument. Papal teaching is now appreciatively engaged with democratic capitalism. The emerging market systems of Eastern Europe and Latin America need the encouragement and guidance of Papal teaching. The Protestant ethic can well be enriched by the thick texture of Catholic social teaching. The spirit of capitalism needs the Catholic ethic.

Moreover, Novak argues these points with great erudition and winsome good humor. And he extends his basic argument into new areas and lends nuance to his earlier reflections. He is a doughty public theologian.

And yet, there is something that taxes, if not irritates, this reader of all this good stuff. Is it because I’ve read so much Novak and find a good deal of it repetitive? Partly, I suppose. Is it because Novak’s public voice on these matters sounds over-confident? Possibly. But these queries don’t really get at my deepest reservation, which is that Novak seems to think that social justice as the distinctive virtue of free persons associating themselves together, cooperatively, within a free society. I delink social justice from an uncritical reliance on the blind leviathan of the state, and link it, instead, to the concrete intelligence operative in individuals and their free associations within the 'civic forum' (xvi).
idence of much of contemporary capitalist culture, he remains altogether too exuberant in his praises of capitalism, America, and Catholicism.

He speaks of the “glory of capitalism” (33) and its “true moral strength...residing in its promotion of human creativity” (235). He writes that “virtue is the pivotal and deepest American idea” (208), that “the primacy of morals is written into America’s very soul” (209), and that “the United States is still the world’s most original and most profound counterculture” (206). He tends to identify the subtleties of Catholic social teaching with contemporary Catholic practice.

It is not that these passionate affirmations are without a measure of truth. I prefer them any day over the jeremiads of our rejectionist left-wing intellectuals. But these writings lack the deeply paradoxical insights that should characterize profound theological reflection. Reinhold Niebuhr argued that the possibility of evil grows right alongside the possibility of good in human history. History, he said, does not solve the problems of humanity but rather cumulates them. Do not these insights apply to capitalism, democracy, pluralism and America?

Further, I suspect that some of my reluctance comes from a Lutheran suspicion that Novak strives too mightily to synthesize Christ and culture, and to see too much continuity between the Christian vision and human historical accomplishment. It was he, one might recall, that likened the business corporation to the Body of Christ.

Even with this hesitancy on my part, however, I have no qualms about recommending this book to a wide variety of readers. Even those who are not convinced about the relative merits of democratic capitalism will learn much. Those who are convinced will gain more ammunition, this time supplied by the arsenal of Catholic social teaching refracted through the fertile mind of Michael Novak.

Robert Benne


To give this book the praise that is due it requires comment on its overall concept, on its sense of the climate of contemporary church life and thought, and on little pieces of the argument that reward the careful reader. Written in the spirit of the World Council of Churches’ report, Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry from a decade or so ago, and organized rather in the shape of Avery Dulles’ *Models of the Church*, Davies’ book offers a guide through the somewhat bewildering landscape of contemporary eucharistic theology and practice. At once learned (the text is generously footnoted with both documentation of sources and additional comment) and accessible (the text is written with clarity and grace and dashes of wit), *Bread of Life & Cup of Joy* can serve both the classroom and the interested lay reader.

Davies chooses eight themes from contemporary eucharistic theological discussion for attention: eucharist as memorial, as thanksgiving, as sacrifice, as eschatological banquet, as communion meal of unity, as mystery, as liberation, and as symbol. With some adjustments as required by the theme under examination, each chapter explores the background of the theme in bible and early church, surveys the contemporary discussion of that theme with fair and sensitive presentations of the arguments of the major participants, and cites extensive passages from recent service books from the wide range of Christian church bodies around the world as indications of contemporary practice, and concludes with perceptive, brief, and even-handed critique of the theme in theology and practice.

The book’s conclusion assesses “Agreements and Disagreements” so...
as to mark the continuing convergence (the theme of the document) of the theologians and the churches, while remaining mindful that we are still painfully short of agreement or consensus on these important matters. Implicitly, more than explicitly, Davies’ book breathes the spirit of the best of ecumenism: unity is both gift and task for the churches, and disunity is both dishonor to Christ and offense to the church’s mission.

This spirit suits well the present state of affairs in the churches. As the early energy of the ecumenical movement wanes and its progress slows, the churches have nevertheless made substantial ecumenical progress by their dramatic liturgical reforms. What the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church promulgated in its Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy has found resounding echoes in the service books of the Anglican Communion, of the Lutheran churches of Germany and Sweden and North America, of the Methodist churches of Great Britain and of North America, of the Presbyterian churches of Scotland and North America, as well as of the United Church of Christ, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and of Baptist churches on both sides of the Atlantic.

There has been notable convergence in the shape of the liturgies and in the texts of the liturgies of these churches. And that convergence has been based on vigorous and committed theological scholarship, scholarship that has both honored the particular traditions and re-connected the particular traditions with the common Christian tradition. Each chapter follows theological analysis with extensive citations from the service books of these church bodies—rich and powerful testimony to the convergence in theology and practice.

Along the way, Davies’ book sparkles with insight, fresh image, clear definition, apt citation. He finds and prints Jeremy Taylor’s description of the eucharist as “antepast of heaven”; Harvey Cox’s suggestion that the liturgy is “the exuberent enactment of fantasy before the eyes of a prosaic world”; John Calvin’s grounding of the churches’ unity in the words, “The Lord in such wise communicates to us his body, that he becomes one with us and we with him”; G. D. Yarnold’s call for one fellowship at the altar, “Are we content to meet our Risen Lord as we do today around separate tables? is the Church of God a restaurant, or a Father’s home?”; and Geoffrey Wainwright’s diagnosis of the root of the church’s malaise, “Disunity among Christians is active counter-testimony to the gospel of reconciliation.” The book is both delightful and disturbing. But then, so is the present state of eucharistic theology and practice.

David G. Truemper


The question of the appropriateness of writing a review of a friend’s work is doubly present when considering a review of the words of one friend edited by another of one’s friends. Matters aren’t made simpler by the fact that the book’s editor is also my editor at this journal. But better that a friend speak even if he should err mildly on the side of generosity than that all rules of propriety be satisfied but praise not awarded where praise is so rightly due.

Cresset readers should be familiar with HarperSan Francisco’s Listening to Your Life: Daily Meditations with Frederick Buechner, compiled by George Connor (1992). Connor has there done a masterful job of selecting and gathering passages from Buechner’s warm and incisive prose. Measuring the Days illustrates for us the difference between a compilation of readings and an edited edition. Admittedly, it would be hard to go wrong with any lines flowing from Walter Wangerin’s heart. (And Measuring is not substitute for reading Wangerin’s sustained reflections; his recent and splendid Mourning into Dancing is as good a place as any to start.) But Gail McGrew Eifrig has done more than compile some paragraphs of Wangerin’s. She has carefully combed through his fiction, his children’s stories, his spiritual and practical wrings and his poetry and has here assembled some of his most telling and troubling thoughts and some of his most grace-filled and comforting observations to guide us from day to day.

There is much to be grateful for in these words, and in this edition, much to assist us as we measure our days. So let me here, for this community, express our gratitude to Walt and Gail.

Thomas D. Kennedy

Notes on Poets—

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Days of Creation

With nothing in the wind's way
who knows it's there?

~

Malignant night. A light streak
carves away absence.

~

Just blink a million years
and the sky's lowing at its reflection.

~

No fee. No cars. No crowds.
The park open through the next millennium.

~

At the master's youza the orchestra starts;
galactic dancers whirl through the ballroom.

~

A geometric pause between sea and sky:
suddenly what could swim can fly.

~

Who knows who I am, word half-uttered,
buffeted by my own breath?

~

Dreaming Yourself into day,
You could sleep forever.

Daniel Tobin
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