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**Anyone for College?**

If American colleges weren’t the principal way our society screens, sorts, and sifts its young, there might be more education going on in them. Indeed, if those colleges weren’t exclusively populated by those young shaking down their credentials, there almost surely would be more education going on in them.

The years from 18 to 22 are possibly the least promising years in the contemporary life cycle for formal education, and slanting the college experience exclusively toward that slice of life considerably distorts college education—not least for the young themselves. Lacking the lived experience to sustain very profound inquiries into the human condition or the emotional flexibility to think very much beyond themselves, many of the young now pass through colleges which can at best condition them with a few saleable skills and age them four more years.

A hopeful sign therefore is the arrival of more mature students on American college campuses. They are potentially one of the more civilizing influences on the campus since coeducation and the G. J. Bill. Campus life arrested and fixated on the young tends toward a campus life of distraction—drugs and drink, sex and sports, dependency and depression alternating with rage and riot. Older students at these overentertained campuses could be a wholesome dose of reality in what is sometimes, to put no worse word upon it, a post-adolescent ghetto.

Colleges possibly have their own reason for being to gain in overcoming their agism. Opening up ready entries to college at many more stages along life’s way than late adolescence can help the colleges return to their task of education. Helping us see that promise and the problems of the older student on campus is our June alumna columnist, Dorothea Allwardt Nuechterlein.

Dorothea graduated from the University in the first class of the Youth Leadership Training Program in 1960 with Honors in Religion. She served three Lutheran parishes as Director of Youth and Education and then took up work as a probation and parole officer in Canada. She holds her M.A. in sociology from Queen’s University, Kingston, Ontario, and now studies for her doctorate in sociology at the University of Chicago.

Dorothea and her husband (James A. Nuechterlein—VU, 1960) are parents to three children whom she recently led in the first wave of a children’s march on her local TV station when it canceled Sesame Street. She enjoys singing and acting in community musical and theatrical productions, and at the moment finds her ambitions alternating between becoming a night club chanteuse or running for congress, whichever follows most appropriately after finishing her dissertation.

The Cresset welcomes alumna Nuechterlein to In Luce Tua.

The Editor

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**IN LUCE TUA**

**A Returning Woman Student Looks At Returning Women Students**

**Education is Wasted on the Young**

Dorothea Allwardt Nuechterlein

Just as “write what you know” is the advice given to new authors, so students are encouraged to “study what you are curious about.” That was the recommendation made to me when I returned to the academic world fifteen years after receiving my B.A.

As youth counselor, probation officer, and wife/mother/citizen, I had become increasingly intrigued with the question: how does an individual develop a self-image, and what effect does that conception have on behavior? In exploring this problem I focused on another topic of vital interest to me, namely, women who return to school.

Today there is much concern about mature students, or adult learners. Those past the usual post-high school age who come back to the classroom represent one of the few bright spots left on the vista of higher education as the baby boom disappears from the campus. Adults may not totally compensate for shrinking enrollments, but great efforts are being made by many colleges to lure back those who did not have the motivation or resources to complete their education earlier, or whose life experience has brought a desire for further learning.

My study examined George Herbert Mead’s concept of the Self, which develops and changes in the process of social interaction within the fluctuating external environment, supplemented by theories of Erik Erikson and others, which show how physiological and emotional alterations occur regularly within the individual during the life cycle. From this Mead/Erikson synthesis an Ideal Type was constructed and compared to real-life persons. My alumna column for “In Luce Tua” summarizes the empirical aspect of my research on women who return to school.

Not all mid-life men experience personal turmoil as they grow older; some avoid the issue, and others find their roles and situations little different from one phase to another. Women are not so fortunate: the term “change of life” was coined to describe that undeniable period which signals the end of the reproductive stage, and no woman can evade or escape its meaning. Furthermore, this change in bodily function brings automatic changes
in roles and relationships. Society, too, has changed; cultural expectations that all women spend their lives following a specific pattern from cradle to grave have gradually given way. Many women were brought up to expect to fit into rather clearly-defined roles when they matured, but now, suddenly, they have reached maturity only to find that the rules seem to have been changed along the way. Increased freedom can bring increased perplexity, and there are pressures upon women today to justify whatever choices they make regarding child-rearing, careerism, and so forth. My Master's thesis is entitled "The Self and the Mid-Course Correction." Like a sailor who finds he must adjust his direction part-way through a voyage, the contemporary person, especially the female, often finds part-way through life that her circumstances have changed, and she has the opportunity to make an adjustment in goals. A mother finds great role transformation; the average life expectancy has increased as the average family size has decreased, so that a woman can expect to live perhaps thirty years after her children have left home. Fortunately, in our society we are becoming used to the idea of re-learning and re-equipping ourselves for whatever may lie ahead.

My concern in this research is upon the woman who grew up convinced that as wife and mother she should remain at home, but who now finds it desirable and possible to make that mid-course correction. Whether to upgrade previous knowledge and professional skills or to undertake new and more challenging interests, she decides to return to the world of education to obtain a university degree.

**Now What Does a Woman Do When Her Motherhood is Nearly Done?**

My study was done in Canada, where post-secondary education even for males was mostly the experience of elites until the 1960s. Though numbers have grown recently, the woman who has "stopped out" of formal education for a decade or more and then returns is still something of a rarity. While the universe from which I could draw a sample is known to be small, it is not yet officially identified, and a systematic study was not feasible. Instead I decided upon certain criteria and then interviewed as many subjects as I could find who fit them. That proved to be twelve women between the ages of 35 and 50, married or formerly married, with dependent children living at home, enrolled not in interest courses but in degree programs. All were middle class. The individual interviews were augmented by two group discussions with other women, some of whom did not fit the age, marital, or child-rearing criteria, so that I could more clearly determine how those factors affect returning students.

Most of these women had completed in earlier years enough schooling to fit them for whatever careers they had chosen to fill the gap between school and marriage. Few had received encouragement at that earlier period to continue: girls in the 1950s were not expected to be intellectuals, and the traditional pattern was to see school and job as temporary way-stations until family responsibilities began. They had been away from formal education for from 9 to 20 years, and previous education ranged from part of high school to the M.A. level.

Most returned to university programs because of a prior decision to return to the work force. As one said, "You wonder what will happen when the children leave, the feeling you won't be contributing anything." Another said: "The whole idea came to me fairly suddenly. It happened one winter when I was sitting around doing my crochet, and I started thinking, 'Am I going to be doing this every winter?'" Some returned because they wanted to be evaluated by someone outside their own sphere.

The greatest preliminary fear related to self-confidence and the possibility of failure. Most tested themselves first with a course or two to see how well they could cope. "I gave myself plenty of excuses in case I quit... You hear all this stuff about all the brain cells deteriorating! But you find out you don't do so badly after all." From
another: "I almost gave up several times, yet I could not have faced other people if I had." There was some anxiety about grades, because so much was invested in the attempt. As one remarked, "You want to prove something, not only to yourself but also to others who think you are crazy for going back."

Making it, though, bolstered self-confidence enormously. There was a growing realization that even though the woman might be at mid-life, she could still learn new things, and learn them well; she could work extremely hard without killing herself; and she could begin to understand and take into account her own limitations. "I always thought a poor mark would be the same as a failure, but one year I got a lower grade than I wanted and my Prof. helped me get over it by saying, 'But remember, you had a baby in the middle of the year.'"

Most of the husbands were supportive and encouraging, and willingly shared household tasks and child care. A few did not object, but needed assurance that their own routines would be undisturbed. "He doesn't care what I do as long as I do everything else I usually do." Totally opposed husbands did not appear in the sample, although some were mentioned in the group discussions. While some children were not entirely pleased with the new arrangement, most women felt the effects on their children to be generally positive, especially when it meant they spent more time with their fathers. Reactions from the outside world (neighbors, friends) had little impact, an indication that these women viewed themselves as somewhat different from others.

**Can She Make Mid-Course Corrections Without Disturbing Her Husband?**

The mature student is a minority member of a classroom, but those interviewed feel accepted by younger classmates and occasionally play a motherly role toward them. Professors, however, are a different matter; mature women are their peers, and may even be older in years. Most faculty-student relationships seemed good, but there was some irritation expressed at being considered a "no-good student" rather than an adult, a taxpayer in a country where virtually all higher education is tax-supported. It is possible that this was for some the first direct experience with a bureaucracy, and adjustment to the inevitable impersonality of the university was difficult.

Every returning student has problems, ranging from finances to moral support to family obligations, but the one that seems common to all is the pressure of time. Lack of time leads one to cut off social ties; to feel guilt over neglect of children, spouse, and household; and to simple fatigue. One cannot create time for reading and study when it has been consumed by the pressures of other responsibilities. Even when schedules are arranged to use every moment to its maximum advantage, the entire plan may come apart through an illness or unexpected emergency. This is the one area that fellow students do not really understand, which creates a sense of isolation. "They say I am lucky because I have only two courses to study for. But I tell them they are, because they have no one else to think about but themselves. When things get rough they can drop everything and do their work, but I still have to cook and clean and take care of everyone." More than one said, "I have given up everything I enjoy to get this degree finished."

However, all seemed to feel that the advantages of being an older student far outweigh the disadvantages, and agreed that "Education is wasted on the young." Maturity means a broadened view of life and leads to a sense of purpose about what is being studied; it also eases certain social requirements. The woman who has an established, stabilized station in life is free to concentrate on what she has undertaken, even when time is limited. Also, she may have friendships with male colleagues without worrying about "entanglements." There was, as well, an undisguised sense of joy at the challenges involved in student intellectual life, and simply in the opportunity to study.

The realities of the current job market have led these women to dream about the future, but not to count on it. "I will probably be a secretary with a B.A." All hope to put their education to use someday in fields of their own choosing, but they tend to emphasize the enrichment part of the experience, as if to show that their hard work will not have been in vain even if it leads nowhere professionally.

The approach and onset of middle age have hit with varying degrees of force, but most have come to terms with the change in outlook associated with mid-life. Nearly all mentioned death; there was a sense that they might as well be positive and make the most of the time remaining. In addition, they felt that intellectual gains more than made up for any physical losses. They might like to look younger, but few would wish to go back and be younger again: "You fall apart on the outside, but at least you know you still have what it takes on the inside."

One striking outcome of this study was the extent to which women who professed little if any attachment to the women's liberation movement have been influenced by it. Aside from the changes in society which have made a return to school possible, the women's debate appears to have brought to many a heightened awareness of roles and Self and potential. However, there is resistance to the notion that feminism has played any part in their actions. This is especially true of the older women, whose ideas presumably have changed most. I believe it is because they have a fear of self-contradiction between past and present stances, that having made sacrifices to stay at home with babies, they will not now willingly reconcile themselves to any theory which suggests that such sacrifices were needless. Furthermore, these women appear to view themselves as not entirely typical; they are much too caught up in meaningful renewal of their own to wish to be seen as partisans in what, for them, is someone else's war.
Finally, when asked whether the effort to return to school had been worth it, the answer was a resounding "yes." Despite the few reservations about long-term effects on employment, all were satisfied to have taken the step, and without hesitation urge others to do the same.

This research was meant to be exploratory, and much remains to be done. Ideally, a comprehensive study of this topic would combine interviews with a broad-based survey. Husbands, professors, and fellow students should be questioned, as well as those who made the effort, but found it necessary to drop out once more. Their experiences would be invaluable in determining the range of discouragements that play upon returning students, the inadequacy of the resources at their disposal, and the effects such a curtailment of anticipated goals may have on the self-conception and confidence of the individual. Mead claimed that "We always present ourselves to ourselves in the most favorable light possible," which would be supported if the unsuccessful blame circumstances—lack of time, money, support, health—for their withdrawal rather than any inherent lack within themselves.

**You Might Like to Look Younger, But You Don't Want to Be Younger**

On the conscious level, the most verifiable theory studied is that the very fact of reaching life's mid-point creates changes in one's viewpoint. Life becomes different, and thinking begins to change; psychology follows biology. On a somewhat less conscious level there is unmistakable support for Mead's emphasis on the social side of social psychology. The ambivalence concerning women's rights is but one demonstration contained in the interview transcripts that the individual is inevitably affected by the surrounding social framework.

Many, perhaps most, human beings are not introspective by nature; while some pay a great deal of attention to the interfusion of their thoughts and their lives, most do so, if at all, in only a limited fashion. There is awareness of one's needs, drives, and goals; there is not much conscious definition of one's Self. In tracing some of Mead's ideas especially, therefore, it is necessary to look to actions as well as words. Few of those interviewed expressed anything which would be translated into the phrase, "I am autonomous." Yet by the decision to return to school, an action taken without coercion and often in the face of great obstacles, these women have shown that autonomy is, in fact, a part of their being—they demonstrate the integrity, unpredictability, and dynamism Mead considered characteristic of humans. They have tried to take charge over part of life, rather than drifting along letting life control them.

There is an inward shift as one puts self-approval ahead of that from others, a feeling that time is limited and in the long run, "I'm all I've got." At the same time, the sense of purpose and meaning in one's life shifts outward, for it is through making some contribution to the wider world that life becomes most worthwhile.

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**Genesis**

Let there be God
someone said
who was alone
and monday was
created day 1
who was alone
and said I am
alone and need
so a sister was
created, tuesday,
and on down the
week, nuclear
family, work,
patience, contin­
nuity and so
forth through
saturday which
was loud, a cele­
bration, the begin­
ing of the
end of that, and
God even with his
new friends
giraffes by twos
tortoises hares
lions people
doves cows
was alone and said
yes, I am alone,
but I can create
a day for the
silent, who walk
on tiptoes away
on the holy earth,
value a day of rest
when the animals
realizing God, can
rest and God can
place himself in
their eyes
& become

thankful for what
he has done, he said,
as if to himself,
parting the clouds.

Peter Brett

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*The Cresset*
A traveling show called “The Treasures of Irish Art” began before and continued during “The Treasures of Tut” exhibit which captured the nation’s interest. The former was overshadowed by the latter in media coverage, but the Irish exhibit remains as emotionally compelling and visually breathtaking as the boy-king’s funerary treasures. The heart of the Irish exhibit is the *Book of Kells*, that calligraphic masterpiece of Irish monks from the time when the confluence of Mediterranean art and Celtic art was occurring—about 700 A.D.

To a calligrapher, the response of the people in crowds flocking to “The Treasures of Irish Art” was as interesting as the exhibit itself, but of course for different reasons. People approach the hermetically sealed glass case bearing the *Book of Kells* reverently, as though giving obeisance to some half-forgotten god. People have been observed to bow and humble themselves, and a visible hush surrounds this keystone exhibit. Individuals seem to lose themselves in reverie, perhaps nostalgically remembering a time when the touch and sensitivity possessed by the craftsman was not foreign to them. Internal tracks of a race of makers and artisans become tangible again in the spirits and minds of those who view this incredible piece of workmanship. Only the exceedingly jaded among them walk away unaffected.

The Spirit of Calligraphy

Jay C. Rochelle

It would seem on reflection that the *Book of Kells*—and other medieval calligraphic masterpieces such as one might see at the Beinecke Library at Yale, the Newberry Library in Chicago, the Bodleian Library at Oxford—inspires such awe in people because it is the spiritually material at is most convincing. It is spiritually material on two levels, one internal and one external. The external is obvious to people who attend the exhibit; the book is there to see, and what a vision it is to see the intricately convoluted paintings, lace-like in their wovenness and yet powerful in the juxtaposition of colors. The people who made that book saw those dragons and demons and gargoyles and griffons they painted, and they compel us to see them. In any event, because it is a *Bible* we know that their work is a glorification of the God who is beyond and spoken of in its pages.

Jay C. Rochelle holds his M.Div. from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, and his Th.M. in biblical literature from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. He is the campus pastor for the University Lutheran Ministry in New Haven, Connecticut, and chairperson for the Yale Religious Ministries. In addition to his special interest in the craft and philosophy of calligraphy, he cuts and prints linoleum and wood blocks, and bakes and bikes.

June, 1979
In the beginning was the Word. Jews, Christians, and Muslims—all “people of the book”—are sensitive to the written word and attuned to a belief that in it is made a crucial and powerful communication. There have been historical periods when the written word and the crucial communication have been counted equal to one another. Until the Gutenberg revolution and, to some extent, beyond it, the manufacture of written words was the province of religious persons. If Christian, they were usually in communities, and they were highly revered whether Christian, Jew, or Muslim. On one hand, reverence was made to the ability to write; from ancient Egypt onward the scribe was a revered, awesome figure in the community and was to remain so in many lands through many centuries. Even today the professional calligrapher commands the respect of others. On the other hand, reverence was paid the subject matter of the scribe—holy writ.

At first, the early scrolls and codices were concerned with passing on the sacred text itself. But then some letters began to be highlighted in a simple way by enlargement and the use of color. As various scripts multiplied, opening sentences of chapters were emphasized by being written in a different alphabetical form from the bulk of the text. Embellishment grew by the variation of both form and color, though the scheme was normally limited to red and black, or in some cases brown.

Since some lines of letters were short and did not fill the allotted space, craftsmen began to make designs—doodles—to fill the lines in. Capital letters at the beginning of chapters, books, and special sections were enlarged and colored, and thus a whole art form grew which we call “illumination.” The light implied in the name was often brought to the written page through the application of gold leaf. Thus the art and craft of calligraphy grew. An external glorification of the text in alphabetical variations, colors, gold, and silver grew in response to the content, and God was glorified in words and sentences and chapters and books.

This much, as we said above, is well-nigh obvious to anyone willing to stop a moment and think through the externals. It is, however, from the inside of the craft that the spirit of calligraphy can best be seen—especially in our day when the presentation of sacred texts is not the major work of most calligraphers. To that I wish to turn.

In Japan there is a calligrapher who is now twenty-six years of age. His goal in life currently is to survive until he is sixty without accident; consequently he leads a circumspect life—little alcohol or other stimulants, no tobacco, regular hours, and a vegetarian diet. You may ask ‘why anyone would set such a simple, perhaps even selfish, goal merely to survive.’ His response would be that he will not genuinely understand the spirit of Japanese language and letters until he is that age, and then he may become a great calligrapher. Calligraphy is thus a TAO, a “spiritual path” like other spiritual paths (swordsmanship, archery, tea ceremony), and it has its own disciplines and rewards like other spiritual paths. This is no less true of Western calligraphy.

What the Japanese calligrapher knows in his way, I know in my own way. The spiritual essence of the material craft is found when there is a marriage between the intention and the technology. Remember the old bit of doggerel: “There’s many a slip ‘twixt the cup and the lip”? It means to say that the intention is often unfulfilled in the deed. I can put this a slightly different way by saying that I aim at perfection. I do not aim at a perverted idea of perfection, but rather the word’s original meaning: *perfectum*, “a making all the way through” or, as we would say, “thoroughly made.” This means I aim at the making of that which is consistent with its own inner principles. As I am in harmony with the inner principles of the things made in my craft (i.e. letters, basically), so the end-products themselves approach more and more the standard of perfection. The gap between intention and technology thus might be called the growing edge of perfection.

When I ask how this growing edge is surpassed, the answer comes: by simplicity. I can express this in terms of motor control by saying that my kinesthetic sense—the so-called sixth sense which coordinates the simultaneity of the brain and the hand—becomes disciplined to the point where, in fact, thought and deed merge. This is a physical meaning for the simplicity within craftsmanship. In its own right, it is true. But, for me, there are two larger contexts in which to discuss simplicity.

The first of these larger contexts is simplicity as a quality in the lettering. Robert Boyajian long ago told me that the first tiny mark you place into the empty space you have to work with alters the space irretrievably. Donald Jackson says that the calligrapher must focus on the tiniest part of one single letter and build out a whole complex of letters and words, sentences and paragraphs, from there. Ieuan Rees claims all calligraphy is made or broken at the point where the curves becomes straights. Hesitation at that point
The miracle of the twenty-six letters which now compose the western alphabet is that they are a community bearing family resemblances to one another and unafraid (as are people, sadly) to touch and caress one another when it makes sense to do so.

loses the game! If a curve cannot decide when to become a straight, or a straight a curve, the lettering as a whole is hopelessly doomed. I myself believe all lettering is reducible to one stroke, and one must work on one's ability to make the one stroke cleanly and with spirit. All the aforementioned calligraphers know the secret: the correct making of the smallest mark determines the final shape. So we concentrate all our energy on making that first mark simply and cleanly.

Calligraphy is a dance of the pen, as Alfred Fairbank observed, involving touch and movement. Equally important are non-touch and non-movement, the lifts between letters and words. All Western calligraphy is based on the inclosure and exclusion of space. Such inclosure and exclusion of space is perhaps at the root of the forms which govern all other arts (if only school systems would recognize this possibility!). Space is important because it is the framework within which the marks enter to fill the void and create meaning.

The miracle of writing is that we agree to fill space in similar, congruent ways so we can interpret the space filled (and left empty) and thus create meaning between us. The miracle of the twenty-six letters which now compose the Western alphabet is that they are a community bearing family resemblances to one another and unafraid (as are people, sadly) to touch and caress one another when it makes sense to do so.

Simplicity might also be called clarity—having no spare or extra parts and having no clutter roundabout to divert the attention. Among the definitions for simplicity is this one from my Oxford English Dictionary: “absence of compositeness, complexity, intricacy; freedom from artifice, deceit, or duplicity; sincerity, straightforwardness; also, absence of affection or artificiality.”

Another Japanese calligrapher, recognizing the truth of my metaphor about the family of letters within his own culture, gave up calligraphy after fifteen years. He gave it up as an art form because he recognized it as life itself. He began to think of the world as the paper for writing and himself as the brush. When last heard from, he was engaged in living with and understanding and preserving the culture of a small Japanese island tribe of fisherfolk.

June, 1979
You see where I am going, of course. The second of the larger contexts is simplicity as a quality within the person. There is a certain emptiness required in the craftsman, a spiritual receptivity. Call it humility if you will (since the word is related to the root from which we get humus, the rich receptive soil in which good things grow with ease). I cannot be overly concerned with questions of my existence. How shall I eat? How shall I clothe my family? How shall I educate my children? I must concentrate on the simplest task at hand, which is the creation of one perfect letter. All else follows from this craftsman's counterpart to the saying of Jesus: "Seek first the Kingdom of God, and all these things will be added unto you." Such simplicity is one way of apprehending the profound truth of Jesus' saying.

A considerable part of this simplicity is learning to live within my own body, to become an incarnation of myself, and a genuine at that. Thomas Merton taught me most about this part of simplicity. I now live with the belief that I, too, am a word spoken by God and struggling—like Jesus—to learn how to pronounce myself. And that word which is me, like the Jesus-Word, has become flesh: pores and pigment and sweat and smell and muscle and bone and hair and energy. Energy! As a craftsman, I celebrate and embrace my sensuality. I languish in my bodily sensations and the tactile thrills my craft gives me. The energy I put out is given back to me. My hands are the bearer of this energy to my work, but the energy is deep within me, fueled by the discipline I have undergone to become myself as a craftsman. The Spirit which hovers and broods over my existence is the Spirit stirring the whole creation.

It does not take much imagination to move from the thoughts above to a picture for a whole way of life. I can only describe this within the framework of my own craft, which is calligraphy, but I suspect that it is similar for all craftsmen. The way of life which suggests itself as at once spiritual and material, which is an expression of one's nature as both maker and creature, is a way which embraces three parts.

In the first place, it is a way of life which focuses energy down to the finest and smallest parts of life and lavishes care and concern for all creatures great and small.

Secondly, it is a way of life which concentrates on simplicity; no pretentious behavior or thoughts are to be found within it. This way of life is prepared to laugh at oneself. It is a way of life which is not relentlessly serious exactly because it is relentlessly simple. It seeks the one thing needful, like the shepherd whose ninety-nine sheep wait in anticipation while the shepherd finds the missing one. It is a way of life which will sweep out the whole house and shout with joy at finding the lost coin.

Finally, this way of life moves toward perfection out of simplicity and singlemindedness. I approach the creation with the mind and spirit of a craftsman, which is to say I approach it expecting to find that which is perfect—thoroughly made. Where this perfection is not found, I know not that the Creator has run afoul the purpose of creation but that there have been perversions within the making. There are cracks in the system, leaks in the building, clay ribbons running through the feet of those who populate the creation.

Life is then the attempt, over and over again, as is witnessed in the biblical story, to get the thing right. We are all of us words written in the chapters of that story as well as parts which, brought together by the Creator, may become the perfect End once sought. 

Simplicity is learning to live within my own body, to become an incarnation of myself. I live with the belief that I, too, am a word spoken by God and struggling—like Jesus—to pronounce myself. And that word which is me, like the Jesus-Word, has become flesh.

Psalm 90:4

A thousand years
in thy sight are
but as yesterday
when it is gone
David Mamet: A Playwright to Watch

Nelvin Vos

Even before the action starts, the setting begins to tell the story. We see a junk shop, a massive clutter of old furniture, beer signs, jars, china, toys, and other useless items. The things, thrown together in incongruous juxtaposition, mirror the lives of the people who will walk amid the debris. David Mamet's American Buffalo, a play about incoherent communication, has already spoken with sensitivity and clarity.

David Mamet has gone far past the category "young and promising new American playwright." He is young—thirty-two—but he has a style and a voice of his own. Born in a Jewish neighborhood in Chicago, he has worked and played in theaters all his life, including the time he spent at Vermont's Goddard College. In 1971, he founded the St. Nicholas Theater Company. The St. Nicholas, now located in Chicago, has produced almost all of his twenty plays. Most of the plays are short; nevertheless, no one else in the last decade has had nine plays produced in New York within a period of three years. His plays show theatrical vitality; David Mamet is someone to watch.

I, as many others, have watched Mamet's plays. Although I missed the Broadway production of American Buffalo, which earned the New York Drama Critics Award in 1977, I have seen two Philadelphia productions of the play within the last several months. Those two evenings, plus an off-Broadway performance of A Life in the Theater and my reading several other Mamet plays, have confirmed what Clive Barnes, the New York Times drama critic, said in his review of American Buffalo: "Mr. Mamet has been making distinct waves in playwriting circles, but this is his first trip to Broadway. It will hardly be his last. The man can write."

Mamet writes for the theater, for the ear. He is a playwright who gives actors the tools to work with and to excite an audience. These tools include not only a score of physical actions far more extensive than might be expected from the plot synopsis but also a dynamic and versatile language.

Indeed, it is language that is Mamet's most noticed and notable characteristic. The profanity and vulgarity no doubt affect some people so that they hear nothing else. The Times critic had a point: "Delete the most common four-letter Anglo-Saxonism from the script and his drama might last only one hour instead of two." Yet, in the speech and within the scatology itself, the theater-goer hears the desperate cadences of loneliness and fear. Mamet concentrates on semi-articulate middle American speech. One commentator revealed that Mamet's apartment contains a filing cabinet crammed with pages of dialogue overheard in pool halls, bars, elevators, gambling halls, and many other such places. The story may not be apocryphal; Mamet has an ear for common speech, speech that is at once grotesquely realistic and, at the same time, lyrical and poetic.

In one of Mamet's early plays, Sexual Perversity in Chicago, Joan asks Deborah her roommate about the man she's been seeing:

Joan: So what's he like?
Deborah: Who?
Joan: Whoever you haven't been home I haven't seen you in two days that you've been seeing.

A second example is that of Teach, an aggressive fellow in American Buffalo, telling Donny about an imagined slight at a neighborhood eating place when he sat down with two women they knew:

Mamet presents something far more complicated than realism while maintaining the external elements of that style. The surface of his plays is usually the Ibsen tradition of photographic naturalism but underneath the cauldron of the surreal simmers. His plays are electrically charged with tensions which cannot be explained with habitual logic.
Down I sit. 'Hi.' 'Hi.' I take a piece of toast off Grace's plate . . . and she goes 'Help yourself.' Help myself. I should help myself to half a slice of toast it's four slices for a quarter. I should have a nickel every time we're over at the game, I pay for coffee . . . cigarettes . . . a sweet roll, never say word.

Spoken, the speech sounds both more natural and more comic. Mamet is able to extract the rich and comic possibilities of the inartificially confident. His dialogue manages to maintain the illusion of normal conversation while at the same time cutting beneath the surface to expose, or at least hint at, deeper layers of meaning. Sentences are stretched and strained, turned back on one another, and the repetition reveals the deliberate attempt to be perfectly clear while no one really hears what the other is saying from the inner depths of the self. The characters speak, as one commentator has suggested, as if calling for help out of a deep well. The involuntions of their language is the evidence of their isolation and tracklessness. In its awkwardnesses and silences, such speech can testify to the opposite of what it seems to say.

In brief, Mamet presents something far more complicated than realism while maintaining the external elements of that style. The surface of his plays is usually psychological realism, the Ibsen tradition of photographic naturalism, but underneath, the cauldron of the surreal simmers. His plays are electrically charged with tensions which cannot be explained away with habitual logic. And the source for most of these tensions lies in the characters' desperate attempts to understand one another.

II

The three characters in American Buffalo do desperately attempt to understand one another. Don, the owner of the junk shop, at the opening of the play is passing on to Bobby, a young neighborhood punk, his own version of street wisdom:

Don: Well, that very well may be, Bob, but the fact remains that it was business. That's what business is.

Bob: What?

Don: People taking care of themselves.

When the third character, Teach, enters, the atmosphere increases in tension. Swaggering all through the junk shop, Teach nonchalantly crushes beer cans flat as he speaks in inventive and compulsive obscenity. Gradually it becomes clear that they are small-time crooks. But they create the illusion among themselves they are on the one hand big-time criminals and, on the other, big-time businessmen pursuing the legitimate concerns of free enterprise. These incongruities are revealed as the three make elaborate plans to burglarize the apartment of a coin collector who has recently appeared in the shop. The collector was willing to pay Don $90 for an American buffalo nickel, but Don convinces himself, with no evidence at all, that the coin is worth five times that. The plot, such as it is, is the plan to rob the man of his entire collection. Not that it matters, for essentially the play is about the atmosphere, real and imagined, surrounding the three characters.

The men are gradually undone by their ineptitude. A highly comic scene involves phoning the planned victim's apartment to see if he is home. Human stupidity and frailty are evident in all their doings, but the major reason for their failure to act is the mistrust each has for the others. Many viewers of the play will be disturbed by the obscenity of the language and the physical violence of the action, but the basic violence and obscenity are what these people are doing to one another in their use and abuse of power.

At the end, the three human beings are as much junk as the inanimate objects around them: broken, cast-off, and valueless. They are not worth a nickel, even an American buffalo nickel.

III

Few would guess that plays as different as Duck Variations, Sexual Perversity in Chicago, The Water Engine, and A Life in the Theater, a play I saw last year in an off-Broadway playhouse, had all been written by the same person.

Yet a common characteristic knits them together: the shaping force of language. Language as a mask which conceals is not only present on theatrical stages but also part of our own reality when we recognize that all the world's a stage.

That metaphor is the core of Mamet's short play, A Life in the Theater. Two actors, a seasoned professional and a young novice, go through a series of roles and an entire wardrobe of costumes. The actors face two audiences: those of us in the theater and the
imaginary audience on the other side of the stage, ingeniously represented by the stage perspective which has a backdrop receding to minuscule exit signs. Reality and illusion, the essence of theater, become both the theme and method of the play. The presence of many mirrors, which for the characters are used in vanity and in search of self-knowledge, become for the audience still greater multi-perspective of our perception.

The aging but still flamboyant actor attempts to teach the ambitious and talented beginner the skills of the profession and the tricks of the trade. Mamet has said that he sees the two characters as two aspects of artistic self-consciousness. The older actor is attempting to codify and prolong what has happened to him. The younger actor is trying to achieve, explore, and enjoy.

Divided loosely into episodes and interludes, the episodes take place while the two actors are backstage, waiting to go on. In the interludes, we see the actors onstage, performing as different characters in various plays. These scenes are often parodies, whether of Chekhov or of romantic melodramas. Gradually, as the play progresses, the distinction between episode and interlude begins to fade. At the same time, the roles of the two actors begin to be reversed. In the end, it is the older man who lights the younger man’s cigarette. The shadow moves from one to the other.

The evanescence of theater—that the theatrical event happens just once and never returns in exactly the same way—is movingly conveyed in each moment of the play. The masking and unmasking which is part of the action on the stage and in the audience raises the haunting question: are any of us ever offstage? Ellis Rabb, the distinguished actor who played the role of the older man, has commented:

As an actor, you use your life to create your work. You’re not using stone, clay or paint, only yourself and your experience to shape a new creation. So you share a very heightened relationship with your fellow actors. We are extremely naked with each other. And therefore we are vulnerable.

Such a statement is also descriptive of the drama called life.

David Mamet has an eye and an ear to catch the frailties, the despair, and the small joys of living. By looking carefully and listening sensitively through his eyes and ears, we gain a deeper perception of ourselves and our world.

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Kathleen Froemming

June, 1979
Model Kathy Timmer wearing a knitted sweater which was hand-painted with iridescent paint and includes knotted, grosgrain ribbons. All photographs by Luciano Franchi De Alfaro III.

BABACHO FASHION FANTASIES
Clothing Designs in Hand-Painted Fabrics By Edwardo Felipe Dulzaides

Richard H. W. Brauer

BABACHO was born in Havana, Cuba, and is finishing his degree in fashion design at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He designs for Ultimo in Chicago, and some of his designs are available at Chicago Couture. In February, 1979, the University Art Galleries and the Department of Home Economics at Valparaiso University sponsored a Valentine’s Fashion Show and Exhibit of Babacho’s fashion drawings, hand-painted fabrics, and clothing designs. For the Show, hair styling was by Russel Gustafson of Timothy Paul, Chicago, and make-up was by artists from Marilyn Miglin, Chicago.

Kathy Timmer, Babacho, Yolanda Moran. The knitted sweaters were in the Fall Collection Show at the May 12, 1979, Adler Planetarium Benefit, “Chicago Fashion Stars.”
Tria and Maria Gonzales wearing folding-paper-cloth-techniques, hand-painted cotton dresses. Shown at the Valentine’s Fashion Show at Valparaiso University, February, 1979.

Sea Shell Sculpture Collection: White Linen dresses for evening, to be accompanied by yards of chiffon scarfs painted with sequins.

Kathy Timmer and Yolanda Moran. Fall wool dresses with iridescent grosgrain ribbons and triangularly folded fabric pieces.
Against The Grain

American Spectator

cent contribution to these...
not wish entirely to repudiate them; laissez faire conservatives remain firm in the faith of Herbert Hoover. What has come to be known as the New Right is difficult to distinguish in most particulars from the old right, and it continues to share more with Adam Smith than with Edmund Burke.

Neoconservatives are stuck with the uncomfortable knowledge that the dominant strand of American conservatism, like virtually all political thought in America, is a variant of liberalism—in this case, a liberalism pickled, as it were, in nineteenth-century juices. For all the New Right's absolute negation of liberalism, it shares with it certain characteristic American qualities. The substance of laissez faire conservatism may have nothing in common with liberalism, but in spirit it displays unmistakable family resemblances.

American liberals and conservatives alike are inclined to a politics of heroic endeavor. Modern liberals still derive their norms of political behavior from the period of the Great Depression and the Second World War. That was a time, of course, of great crisis and of heroic response to crisis, and most liberals continue to approach politics with instincts conditioned by that experience. The great cataclysms of the Thirties and Forties required massive government intervention in areas of national life previously considered to lie beyond the proper scope of public attention. Moreover, both of those crises elicited from government, in its necessary effort to mobilize mass public support, a rhetoric of elevated and enduring purpose, of perpetual crisis management. The sense of the categories of public problems open to government needed to adapt to changing circumstances and the felt needs of the times.

Liberals need to hear that "compassion for the poor" is replacing patriotism as the last refuge for scoundrels.

For more than forty years now, American conservatism has defined itself by negative reference to the New Deal and all its works and ways. It has stood obdurately opposed to liberal philosophy and practice. Yet it has shared with the Left a sense of the heroic and high moral qualities of political action. From Robert Taft through Barry Goldwater to Ronald Reagan, conservatives have called Americans to a great crusade to reject the doctrines of political modernity. Their fervor to dismantle the welfare state has matched the intensity mustered by liberals in its defense and extension. The moral urgency embodied in George McGovern's 1972 presidential campaign served as a mirror image of the spirit of the Goldwater movement of 1964. In both cases, uncommitted observers were struck and troubled by the pervasive mood of moral mission exhibited by the true believers among the candidates' supporters. Ronald Reagan displayed the same approach to politics as a holy calling during his almost successful bid for the 1976 Republican nomination. His address to his followers the night of Gerald Ford's convention victory was a call to perseverance and dedication in the cause of the one true faith.

It is here, if I have the sense of it right, that neoconservatism differs from both liberalism and laissez faire conservatism. If in policy terms neoconservatives stand somewhere between Franklin Roosevelt and Barry Goldwater, in spirit they stand quite apart from both of them. Most neoconservatives have a vision of politics as an important, but limited, enterprise. They begin with the world as it is, not as it might be, and they are moved by an anti-utopian imperative. Suspicious of the crusade spirit, they tend to avoid moralistic rhetoric and emotional appeals. Unlike either liberals or conservatives, neoconservatives neither see the need nor have the desire to make America over. They want simply to keep it going without fundamental alteration but with those incremental changes needed to adapt to changing circumstances and the felt needs of the times.

Here lies the foundation of my skepticism concerning the impact of neoconservatism on American society: things could be changing, but I suspect that over the long run the American people will continue to find the heroic mode of politics—whether of Left or Right—more congenial than one rooted in a sense of limits.

It will further be difficult for neoconservatives to hold their political ground midway between Right and Left. Since the movement originated in a reaction against the New Left and the counterculture of the 1960s, neoconservatism has directed its major attacks in that direction. The dynamic of its political development, in other words, moves it naturally to the Right. When one learns that Irving Kristol, perhaps the most important figure in the movement, is supporting the presidential candidacy of Republican Congressman Jack Kemp, one sees the logic of that dynamic in action. Norman Podhoretz and Pat Moynihan hope to win the Democratic party to their way of thinking, but Kristol will likely have more success among the Republicans than they will among the Democrats. If neoconervatism ever finds a political home—and it has (wisely, in my view) so far avoided that—it will almost certainly be in the GOP.

It would be unfortunate for neoconservatism to be identified unambiguously with the Republican party if for no other reason than that liberals would then find it easier to ignore neoconservative challenges to their political pieties. At a recent lecture before a university audience, Michael Novak induced shock among many of his listeners by suggesting that "compassion for the poor" is re-

June, 1979
placing patriotism as the last refuge of scoundrels. That is precisely the sort of thing liberals need badly to hear and ponder at regular intervals, but only someone who, like Novak, goes on to define himself as a social democrat can get away with saying it without immediately being dismissed as a heartless reactionary—and even then he runs considerable risks. (Novak is particularly vulnerable since he has also been heard recently making appreciative comments about capitalism.)

One hesitates to offer confident estimates of what all this adds up to. Prophecy is no part of the historian’s job. If he is any good, he can tell us useful things about what has already occurred, but he has no special tools for anticipating what might yet become of us. Given the immense variability and complexity of the elements of social change, accurate predictions of the future are likely to issue less from professional knowledge and judgment than from that idiosyncratic knack for canny intuition that makes some people better horseplayers than the rest of us. On the basis of a reading of the American past, the prospects for neoconservatism would not seem bright, and there are in addition particular pitfalls and temptations which it might be difficult for the movement to avoid.

Americans will continue to find a heroic mode of politics more congenial than one rooted in a sense of limits.

But things change, and perhaps the editors of Esquire are right to suggest that this “resurgent and intelligent conservatism” will serve as a beacon for the American future. There are certainly worse fates that could befall the Republic. It is perhaps neoconservatism’s greatest potential value to the nation that it goes so thoroughly against the American grain.

The City in Cinema

PART TWO OF TWO PARTS

Richard Maxwell

The great temptation in exploring or imagining a city is to see it as a fragment of itself. In Italo Calvino’s Invisible Cities, Marco Polo tells one tall-tale after another to a rapt Kubla Khan. He describes a city of stilts, a city of strangers, an underground city, an unjust city, a city which invariably mirrors the observer’s mood. At some point it becomes clear that each of these mythical places suggests an aspect of Venice—Marco’s home city, which he has never mentioned directly. The only way in which he can remember Venice is by playing with fables, with figures of speech. To take the part for the whole or to take an analogy for fact is fallacious, yet cumulatively Marco’s dazzling illogic adds up to imaginative truth.

Having taken his undergraduate degree at the University of California-Riverside and his Ph.D. at the University of Chicago, Richard Maxwell is now Assistant Professor of English at Valparaiso University, where his teaching specialization is nineteenth-century British literature and his co-curricular passion is the chairmanship of the University’s foreign film committee. Part One of “The City in Cinema appeared in the March, 1979, issue of the Cresset.

Imagining a city, be it Venice or anywhere else, is at best a cumulative process. Those artists who have labored to imagine London, over the last few centuries, have tended to write and rewrite an unfinished master work: Pope, The Dunciad; Blake, Jerusalem; Dickens, that memorably repetitive series of gigantic novels, none of which quite conquers its subject. Standing in London, Blake’s Los observes that “I must Create a System or be enslav’d by another Man’s.” Creating a system is a slow process; it can be accomplished only by the mapping out of elusive terrain—on one level London, on another the human mind. Testing images or attitudes or words, using them and then throwing them away and then retrieving them for a new use, a poet or novelist can create a system which does justice of a sort to the inexhaustible urban mystery.

This tentativeness is usually unavailable to the film maker. A writer has years and he also has words. The movies use words too, but more conspicuously they depend on pictures: a few pictures, a few hours. Under these demanding conditions, the illogic of Calvino’s strategy (for example) takes on a new and dangerous potency. The modern city is an assault upon the senses. Under the spell of images, so much more seductively literal than mere words, we cease to care about the distinction between literal and figurative, and this confusion of ours may come to seem a peculiarly urban way of thinking, a reversion to the primitive which could occur only in the wilderness of Hong Kong or Chicago. If the system of Blake opens outward, comprehending as much as possible, then the systems of our city movies lean towards a weird obsessiveness. Imagine a Dickens novel as rewritten by a
Cities blend into a congeries of Adult Theatres, Bookstores, and Bars, all operating according to the same economic and sexual formulas. It is not the point of the film that pornography and Calvinism make equally good sense. Quite the contrary! The hardcore world which seems so sinister and threatening is literally brought down.

Dickensian eccentric. The result would be something very much like Looking for Mr. Goodbar or Taxi Driver.

It is true that these films vary greatly in quality. What they have in common is a fascination with claustrophobic fantasy—a desire, seemingly shared by director and character, to take the part for the whole or to press a metaphor to a literal, bloody conclusion. Diane Keaton, in Goodbar, separates herself from a constraining past only to discover—once family and religion are discarded—that the unlimited freedom of the city is just as suffocating. The movie is unclear about her character. She is motivated sometimes by a drive to help vulnerable people (deaf children, convicts, whomever) and sometimes by a desire for sexual pleasure, which appears to be the only solid comfort left. Alas, her lovers are most insufficient. We come to realize, early in the film, that this is a cautionary tale, like something out of Wilhelm Busch. Her world closes in on her. Her life becomes one big singles bar, until finally it is not even that. In a horrible last scene, one of those stroboscopic party lights trips on and off, so that we are presented with a series of still photographs, each registering a stage in the heroine's violent murder. By virtue of the lighting trick, this murder is presented to us as real—gut level real and analytically real too, for it is literally broken down into parts. The director is making a moral or an epistemological point, perhaps both. Finally, there remains on the screen only a small, pale face surrounded by darkness. The movie does not, however, convince us that this woman came to this end. The superb technical gimmicks are merely exploitative, fallacies which cover over an essential simplemindedness about what life in the city might mean.

Taxi Driver’s descent into darkness is much more successfully conveyed. The strength of the film stems largely from the intricate determination displayed by the Robert De Niro character, especially in the superb sequence where he learns to use a gun. The rhythm of the movie is masterfully hypnotic at this stage, for we are experiencing De Niro’s obsession as he does. Just as irretrievably as Goodbar, Taxi Driver heads toward a violent conclusion. The protagonist attempts to wipe out the sins of the city by “rescuing” a young girl from her pimp. He has created his system—a Manichean system in which one contrary struggles to wipe out another—and we have actually watched him do it. His movement from vision to invention to action is understandable as a pursuit of the literal, the concrete, in an environment where everything seems to slide by. At the end of the film, the status quo is reasserted. The formidable reinterpretation of the city—the attempt to narrow it into a single bloody struggle—has dissipated, leaving us and De Niro to the drifting, abstracted cruise of the taxi through smoothly dissolving streets. Taxi Driver is less a cautionary tale than an account of a common urban pathology, here pushed to its limits.

It is not merely individuals who are provoked to create systems; equally striking are those urban subcultures which grow up out of nowhere—the work of indefinite social groups looking for fictions by which they can live. Two of 1979’s most striking films explore such self-enclosed urban worlds: gangs in The Warriors, the pornography industry in Hardcore. Gangs are, of course, a perennial movie subject; The Warrior has been described as 1950’s kitsch, and I suppose it is. Pauline Kael’s polemical review in The New Yorker (March 5) comes nearer to the point of interest. The Warriors, she argues, is a splendid piece of fantasizing about “the imaginary kids-and-cops city of youth.” The movie begins with a proposal by the biggest gang chief of them all that New York gangs should unite and so take over the city. Apparently the director wants us to believe that this could happen. Never mind whether it could: the leader is assassinated and the Warriors, a small gang from Coney Island, are rumored to be responsible. They are innocent, but must retrace their steps through a Manhattan which has suddenly become hostile territory, for every other gang in town is out to get them.

This movie has been choreographed as a series of combats—not bloody, like those of Goodbar and Taxi Driver, but ballet-like. New York, in The Warriors, is a city of codified, formulaic perils, like those which used to beset knight-errants. Manhattan is fragmented by its division into gang territories, yet united by a single, heroic ethos. The end of the film is puzzling in that it apparently suggests both an affirmation of this code and a rejection of it. Saturday Night Fever tries for a similarly ambivalent conclusion, but there the results are more interesting. In any case, nobody’s going to brood about the resolution of The Warriors; the premise that New York is a playground for adolescent gangs is a reductive truth that we can accept or reject as we please.

The cool, self-assured simplicity of The Warriors can be set against the complexities of Hardcore, which of the films I have mentioned explores most thoroughly the making of systems.¹ George C. Scott is an anxious

¹Hardcore is directed by Paul Schrader, who is also the author of the script for Taxi Driver.
midwestern father, searching for a daughter who has disappeared into the pornography industry of California. Scott makes his way through the nexus of Los Angeles, San Diego, and San Francisco. These cities blend into a congeries of Adult Theaters, Bookstores, and Bars, all operating according to the same economic and sexual formulas. One perspective on Scott's quest is established when he expounds Calvinism to a young prostitute (she is helping him find his daughter). The girl is somewhat confused by the logic of predestination; Scott avers that the whole business makes much more sense when you see it from the inside out. So does everything else, responds the girl—including the world of pornography where she has helped Scott find his way.

Detectives used to offer a perfect vantage-point to survey the clashing systems of the city. City movies could absorb the detective's habit of constantly rearranging his hypotheses.

Now it is clearly not the point of this film that pornography and Calvinism make equally good sense. Quite the contrary! At the climax of the movie, when Scott is on the verge of tracking down his daughter, he pursues a potential informant through a series of rooms designed to indulge sado-masochistic fantasies. Motorcycles and chains crash this way and that; the walls collapse as Scott shoulders his way after a panicked tough. The hardcore world which has seemed so sinister and threatening, literally comes down around them. Back in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Scott is a manufacturer of furniture. The nastiest villain in the movie is named Rattan. No wickerwork for George C. Scott. He is forced to go through the motion of understanding the hardcore world, yet once he has retrieved his daughter he can separate himself from it forever. Or can he? He does abandon the young prostitute, who had wanted, somehow, to replace the daughter. However, he feels the wrongness of doing so. Perhaps, then, his life has been changed, in the sense that he can now make connections, not just from inside his own world but by empathizing with something drastically different. Perhaps. Scott the actor doesn't appear to feel this way, for he has commented about the film, "Our streets are sewers—that's what it says." Nonetheless, Hardcore is far from a jeremiad. It is mixed-up from time to time, but the mixups are under control. The conflict between imaginative or moral worlds is a great subject for urban movies. It has seldom been dramatized better than it is here.

Some final observations: if heroes cross boundaries in these movies, they do so because they must. Habitual boundary-crossers seem to be suspect lately. Most likely they are fakes, as are the "ideal" suitors in Goodbar and the detective in Hardcore. Whatever happened to detectives, anyway? They used to provide a perfect vantage-point from which to survey the disconnected or clashing systems of the city—each system claiming primacy, each (if we're thinking of Chandler and Hammet) infinitely corrupt. The last good American detective movie was The Late Show, with Art Carney, and there the point is Carney's age, his decreasing fitness for the modern world. Maybe the problem with detectives is that they always turn out to be disillusioned relativists. The frantic discontinuities of the city makes a false certainty better than none, whereas detectives can't be sure of anything. Maybe—in the best of all possible worlds—city movies could absorb the detective's habit of constantly rearranging his hypotheses. It is only rarely an advantage for a film to be trapped by its own hypotheses, its own figures of speech. Entrapment of this sort has its pleasures but it also sets limits on a movie's intelligence.

Music

Recording Reviews

James Klein

Haydn: Piano Music


The four works for piano on this recording mark a change in Haydn's style. All were composed after 1766, the year that Haydn's patron, Prince Nicholas Esterházy, moved his court from Eisenstadt to Esterháza. At the same time Haydn was appointed Kapellmeister after the death of Gregor Werner, whom Haydn had served as Assistant Kapellmeister. These works demonstrate the growth of the mature classical style in Haydn's piano works.

The first work in this volume is the Sonata in D, Hob XVI:19 dated by Haydn in 1767. This is one of the first of his works to show a mature Classical sonata form, which consists of three movements in a fast-slow-fast succession. However, some elements of Haydn's earlier style are obvious, especially his use of extensive embellishments common in the Baroque and Rococo periods.

James Klein, a native Texan, is director of University Bands at Valparaiso University and teaches low brass and chamber music. He holds the M.M. degree from the University of Texas and is a candidate for the D.M.A. degree at the College-Conservatory of Music at the University of Cincinnati.

The Cresset
Francois Glorieux, composer with the difficult art of interpreting Lennon-McCartney compositions. In "Symphonie Fantastique," Glorieux' inspiration came from Harriet Smithson, an Irish actress whom he saw in Paris in 1827 during a Shakespeare festival. After several overtures to Miss Smithson were ignored, Glorieux gave release to his passion in the several movements of this symphony; it portrays a young musician's obsession and adoration of an aloof Beloved One.

The symphony in five movements recounts the story of the young musician who has taken opium to kill himself, but who instead falls into a deep sleep broken by strange nightmares. The dream first recalls the emptiness he experienced before meeting the Beloved One, and then it tells of the "volcanic love" which she aroused in him. The dream continues in the second movement as he meets the Beloved One during a celebration in a grand ballroom. In the third movement, the young musician falls into a state of complete serenity with the piping of two shepherds, only to be interrupted by the appearance of the Beloved One. The next movement finds him in more turbulent sleep as he has murdered his beloved and is marched to the guillotine. The final movement finds the young musician at a witches' sabbath held in observance of his funeral. "Symphonie Fantastique," while not straying too far from standard symphonic form, is nevertheless a beautiful display of orchestral textures and instrumental virtuosity. The performance on this disc is a good reading. Bernstein breathes a rather personal interpretation into the performance, but the skill of the Orchestre National de France does not measure up to the brilliance we have become accustomed to in our American orchestras.

Dvorak
New World Symphony
Smetana
Vltava (The Moldau)

Presented on this record are the efforts of two Bohemian national composers of the nineteenth century, Antonin Dvorak and Bedrich Smetana. Both composers' styles are marked by the use of folk tunes and popular dance rhythms in an orchestral texture similar to Brahms or Liszt.

Dvorak's "New World" symphony had its roots in his stay in New York City from 1892-1895. His trip to America was at the invitation of Jeanette Thurber, wife of a New York grocery store magnate. She hoped...
that Dvorak would head a newly formed National Conservatory to serve as the training ground for encouraging native American music.

As a teacher in the National Conservatory, Dvorak encouraged students to bring to him examples of Negro spirituals, plantation music, and songs of Stephen Foster, and Dvorak noted the rhythms. Although his exposure to native American music was extensive, he denied that he used any actual American melodies in the process of composing this symphony. He states, "Please omit the nonsense about my having made use of 'Indian' and American themes—that is a lie. I merely tried to write in the spirit of those national melodies." One still may wonder if he hears reflections of "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," "Goin' Home," and "Three Blind Mice."

Although his exposure to American music was extensive, Dvorak denied that he used any American melodies in the composition of the New World Symphony. One may still wonder if he hears reflections of "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," "Goin' Home," and "Three Blind Mice."

Also included on this disc is "The Moldau" from My Vlast by Smetana. My Vlast (meaning "my country") is a set of six tone poems about Smetana's native Bohemia, the second of which depicts the river Moldau winding its way through the countryside past a hunter, a wedding feast, dancing wood nymphs, and the city of Prague.

Both performances on this recording are first rate, an event one begins to expect when Herbert von Karajan is teamed with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. The recording is in quadraphonic to offer a more spacious sound with greater sound separation.

Canadian Brass Music
The Canadian Brass. Vanguard Records VSD 71253.

This recording is such a joy; it deserves to be a part of every listener's collection. All the pieces on the record were arranged or written for the standard brass quintet—two trumpets, horn, trombone, and tuba—and range widely from works of the Renaissance to the present century.

From the late Renaissance is a madrigal by the English composer Thomas Weelkes, "In the Pride of Mary." An "Aria" and "Gigue" in a similar style by Johann Fux, an eighteenth century Austrian composer, are represented. A "Kanon" by Johann Pachelbel, a German organizer of the seventeenth century, brings the record's survey of music history to the Baroque period. Here a delightful "Air" for trumpets by J.S. Bach, a "Sonata" in three movements by Henry Purcell, and a "Madrigal" by Johann Hermann Schein round out this musical era.

The next works represented are from the twentieth century and show three contrasting approaches to the brass quintet. "Staggering" by William McCauley incorporates an ordered pitch set in an ascending scale pattern emphasizing the acoustical properties of the brasses. The second work, "Golyarde's Grounde" by Malcom Forsythe, uses a Baroque ground bass pattern on which the rest of the composition is built. The third work is one of the masterpieces in brass ensemble literature, "Music for Brass Instruments" by Ingolf Dahl, written in 1944. In its three movements, Dahl demonstrates not only an understanding knowledge of the versatility of the brasses but also his ability as a first-rate composer of this century.

The performances of the Canadian Brass are sensational. Each of the performers is a virtuoso in his own right, and together they could be the envy of the best string quartets. You cannot hear better brass.
though two or three of them can hardly be called stories. All but three of the stories have been published previously, most of them originally in the *New Yorker*. Of the sixty-one stories, thirty-nine are narrated in the third person, twenty-two in the first person. Eighteen of the stories are set in New York City, fifteen in Shady Hill, Bullet Park, or some other clearly identified suburb, nine in New England, and nine in Rome or some other place in Italy. In thirty-seven of the stories a middle-aged married couple figures prominently in the plot. The average age of these couples is thirty-seven, and the average number of children in these families is 2 1/8, although none, of course, have exactly that number. Nineteen of these thirty-seven married couples have affairs, and many other stories include examples of adultery, sexual fantasies, promiscuity, or, to use Cheever's term, "erotic horseplay." Eight stories are about expatriates, usually Americans living in Italy, but in two instances Italians living in America. Such is the variety of plants and flowers in Cheever's garden with a number of weeds already visible. But Cheever's garden is not named Eden; a more appropriate name would be America.

Fiction, for Cheever, is an attempt to impose order on life. In an authorial headnote to the story "The Death of Justina," he writes: "Fiction is art and art is the triumph over chaos (no less) and we can accomplish this only by the most vigilant exercise of choice, but in a world that changes more swiftly than we can perceive there is always the danger that our powers of selection will be mistaken and that the vision we serve will come to nothing." One of the stories in the collection is entitled "A Vision of the World" and another, "Percy," deals with a single-minded artist, a painter named Percy, who refuses to make any compromises to her devotion to art.

As a collection, Cheever's stories have a remarkable vitality that springs out of the author's awareness of the variety and unpredictability of life. Yet the tone is often elegiac. "The Swimmer" is a good example. Set in Bullet Park, the story has only a single major character—Neddy Merrill, middle-aged, married, father of four daughters—who after a Saturday night of drinking decides to swim the eight miles from the party to his home where he imagines his four daughters are playing tennis. The river he swims consists of the swimming pools in the back gardens of all the residents of Bullet Park. As he plunges from pool to pool, we are given brief glimpses of the owners, many of whom treat Neddy strangely. Nearing the end he becomes cold and exhausted, barely able to climb out of the last pool. But he makes it and runs to his house, and the story ends with these two sentences: "The house was locked, and he thought that the stupid cook or the stupid maid must have locked the place up until he remembered that it had been some time since they had employed a maid or a cook. He shouted, pounded on the door, tried to force it with his shoulder, and then, looking in at the window, saw that the place was empty."

**Cheever's characters are more like archetypes—in situations so intensely felt as to claim universality.**

Until the end, this is a very funny story, but then suddenly we feel the loneliness, the desolation, and the extreme desperation of a man pounding on the door of his house, suddenly remembering that his family had left him. Few contemporary writers have Cheever's capacity to be funny and serious simultaneously or his ability to turn the tears of laughter into tears of sadness. Like so many of Cheever's characters, Neddy Merrill is a prosperous suburbanite, enjoying life, who turns an unsuspected corner and falls off the edge of things into outer darkness.

Reading the sixty-one stories in this collection sequentially, I was surprised by Cheever's versatility—his range of characters and the variety of the stories. Partly on the basis of his first three novels—*The Wapshot Chronicle* (1957), *The Wapshot Scandal* (1964), and *Bullet Park* (1969)—Cheever is frequently viewed simply as a suburban writer. Granville Hicks once called him our "chronicler of life in upper-middle-class suburbia in the Age of Anxiety." The label is accurate but I think too restrictive. Among the central characters in these stories one finds not only suburbanites but also the aged, youth, poor, rich, once-poor, cooks, farmers, elevator operators, jaded tourists, faded aristocrats, and Italian peasants. And although some of Cheever's central obsessions and preoccupations are those of upper-middle-class WASPs (desire, women, marriage, adultery, gin, money, travel) his deepest concerns (the family, a sense of home and place, the human condition, a search for order and values, the loss of innocence, love, death, and guilt) are the larger American themes of Hawthorne, Twain, Hemingway, Wolfe, and Faulkner. For the rest of this review, I would like to examine some of these universal themes in Cheever's fiction.

But first a note on Cheever's characters. Cheever is sometimes criticized because his characters are types, or more pejoratively, stereotypes. I would argue that his stories deal less with characters than with archetypes—fathers, sons, brothers, husbands, wives, lovers, all seen in situations so intensely felt as to claim universality. Neddy Merrill, the swimmer, is not so much a typical suburbanite as a husband and father, and in these roles he speaks for all husbands and fathers who have lost their families. That Cheever intends the reader to see his characters as archetypes is evident from some of their names: Clarissa, the Weeds, the Duchess, Gee Gee (for Greek God), Brimmer, Justina, Actaeon, Mallory, Artemis, etc.

One of Cheever's central themes is the family and the intricate web of emotional and moral concerns which

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compose it. Several of the stories—most specifically “The Lowboy,” “Per­
cy,” and “The Jewels of the Cabots”—explore the importance of family herit­
age and ancestry. Some of his Italian characters are also haunted and domi­
nated by their ancestors. The relation­ship of brothers is prominent in sev­
eral other stories. The first story in the collection is entitled “Good­
bye, My Brother.” The narrator, an
English teacher at a boarding school, develops a deep animosity for Law­
rence, one of his brothers, partly be­
cause Lawrence tries to cut himself
off from his past and his family. After
one particularly bad day the narrator
clubs his brother on the head with
the root of a tree, almost bludgeoning
him to death. The narrator leaves
the next morning with his wife. This
is one way—admittedly not a very
pleasant one—of saying “goodbye”
to a brother.

In “The Lowboy” the narrator’s
animosity is again directed against a
younger brother. The story begins:
“Oh I hate small men and I write
about them no more but in passing I
would like to say that’s what my broth­
er Richard is: small. He has small
hands, small feet, a small waist, small
children, a small wife, and when he
comes to our cocktail parties he sits
in a small chair. He emanates, in my
opinion, a disquieting aura of small­
ness. He is also spoiled, and when you
go to his house you eat his food from
his china with his silver, and if you
observe his capricious and vulgar
house rules you may be lucky enough
to get some of his brandy, just as
thirty years ago one went into his
room to play with his toys at his
pleasure and to be rewarded with a
glass of his ginger ale.” Following a
description of his wife and children,
the paragraph ends: “Watching my
brother, I feel that he has marshalled
a second-rate cast and is performing,
perhaps for eternity, the role of a
spoiled child.”

The relationship of parents to their
children is also explored in a number
of stories. Francis Weed, in “The
Country Husband,” comes home to a
house full of children so “absorbed
in their own antagonisms” that they
don’t even hear him when he tries to
tell them at the dinner table that the
airplane he came home in had to make
an emergency landing. One of the
children in the neighborhood is such
a nuisance that the only thing anyone
says to her is “Gertrude, go home,
Gertrude, go home.” But Cheever also
turns the tables in several stories
and provides a view of parents from
a child’s point of view. Have you
ever imagined what children must
think of the “adult parties” in your
home? Cheever has, and in “The Sor­
rows of Gin,” he has Amy, a fourth
grader, describe her impressions:

But she had never seen her parents like
that. She had never seen them hanging
on to a lamppost and singing and reeling,
but she had seen them fall down. They
were never indecorous—they seemed
to get more decorous the more they drank—
but sometimes her father would get up
to fill everybody’s glass and he would
walk straight enough but his shoes would
seem to stick to the carpet. And some­
times, when he got to the dining-room
door, he would miss it by a foot or more.
Once she had seen him walk into the
wall with such force that he collapsed
onto the floor and broke most of the
glasses he was carrying. One of two
people laughed, but the laughter was not
general or hearty, and most of them pre­
tended that he had not fallen down at
all. When her father got to his feet, he
went right on to the bar as if nothing had
happened. Amy had once seen Mrs. Far­
quarson miss the chair she was about to
sit in, by a foot, and thump down onto
the floor, but nobody laughed then, and
they pretended that Mrs. Farquarson
hadn’t fallen down at all. They seemed
like actors in a play.

Again the description is comic, but
later when Amy is in bed Cheever
tells us that “she perceived vaguely
the pitiful corruption of the adult
world, how crude and frail it was,
like a piece of worn burlap, patched
with stupidities and mistakes, useless
and ugly, and yet they never saw its
worthlessness, and when you pointed
it out to them they were indignant.”

When Amy tries to run away, her
father can’t imagine why she would
ever want to leave home.

Most of the “family” stories, how­
ever, deal with the trauma of mar­
riage. (Cheever himself, by the way,
is still living happily with his first
wife and they have successfully raised
a family of three children.) By con­
trast, most of the marriages in his
stories are unhappy. Almost all of
them are middle-aged couples at the
end of their tether. The reasons for
the tensions and rifts in the mar­
rriages are, I suppose, fairly standard:
(1) a wife better educated and more
successful in her career than her hus­
band, like Jill Chidchester in “An
Educated American Woman”; (2) a
husband preoccupied with reliving
his premarital experiences, like Mr.
Hartley in “The Hartleys”; (3) a wife
who falls in love with her husband’s
friend, asks her husband for a di­
 vorce, which he won’t grant, like
Ethel in “The Season for Divorce”; (4)
a husband who makes an ass of
himself by getting drunk at parties,
setting up the furniture in the house,
and running the high hurdles, like
Cash Bentley in “O’Youth and Beauty”;
or (5) a wife who has an affair with a
“meatball” she doesn’t even like sim­
ply because she is bored, like Marcie
in “The Trouble with Marcie Flint.”

Cheever is a chronicler
and an anatomist of
contemporary America,
and his diagnosis is
disturbing and profound.

However, the “trouble” in marriage
is not always as easy to discern as is
Marcie Flint’s. In “The Worm in the
Apple” Cheever describes a typical
Shady Hill couple—inaugural wealth,
social prestige, two happy children,
socially active, successful, etc.—and
tries to discover the “worm in their
rosy apple” that infects their mar­
rriage; but even after their children
are raised and married and one would
expect to find “the celebrated spiritual
destitutions of their age and their
kind,” they simply “get richer and
richer and richer and live happily,
ha pply, happily, happily.” The repeti­tion is obviously ironic, and the
point is that the worm is present and
undetected. The marriage is rich and
happy but ultimately empty and unfulfilled.

The fact that many of Cheever's stories are family portraits suggests the importance that he attaches to the institution of the family. What the stories portray, however, is the decay of the American family—wives, husbands, children, fathers, mothers, mothers-in-law, many of whom are so reprehensible as to be chilling and frightening.

The Kingdom of America is weighed and found wanting, and the message is written, appropriately, on our lavatory walls.

Closely connected with Cheever's concern with family is his preoccupation with home and place. For many of Cheever's characters the tenement buildings of New York City and the identical houses in the suburbs provide little sense of home or place. In an early story, "The Summer Farmer," Paul and Virginia Hollis, New Yorkers, go to their summer home in New Hampshire. As they approach their farm, Cheever writes: "The sense of homecoming—of returning to a place where he had summered all his life—became for Paul such a violent that the difference between the pace of his imagination and the speed of the car annoyed him until they turned off the road onto grass ruts and saw, literally at the road's end, their farm." But summer fades and winter returns.

"The Day the Pig Fell Into the Well" is also a story about a family, the Nudd family, who in the summer go to the Whitebeach Camp in the Adirondacks. Although the family has now grown, married, and separated, they can still all relate to the "day the pig fell into the well." However, in the end Mrs. Nudd realizes that summer is always an island. It is not the mainland; it is unreal, an imitation of a life they once had. In another story, "Seaside Houses," the husband is so haunted by the strange presence of the last occupant that he returns to New York. He realizes that "we are, as in our dreams we have always known ourselves to be, migrants and wanderers—travelers, at least, with a traveler's acute sense of feeling."

For Cheever this sense of rootlessness is endemic to American culture and part of the modern human condition. In a story entitled "The Children" Cheever traces the lives of a middle-aged couple, the "children" of the story, as they move from New Hampshire to Pittsburgh to Maine and finally to Canada and go from one job and place to another. They are American waifs—homeless and unwanted—and Cheever describes them in one of those lyrical passages that come at the end of so many of his stories:

But the tender looks that Mrs. Sauer took for pure love were only the attitudes of homeless summer children who had found a respite. Oh, how sweet, how precious the hour seemed to them! Lights burned on another island. Stamped on the twilight was the iron base of a broken greenhouse roof. What poor magpies. Their ways and airs were innocent; their bones were infirm. Indeed, they impersonated the dead. Come away, come, away, sang the wind in the trees and the grass, but it did not sing to the MacKenzies.

This sense of rootlessness and homelessness is also explored in most of the expatriate stories. In a story called "Boy in Rome" the young American boy living in Rome says at the end of the story, "It seemed to me that a person should live in his own country; that there is always something a little funny or queer about people who choose to live in another country." Another story is entitled "A Woman Without a Country." After seven years of marriage Anne Tonkin leaves America and goes to Europe where she tries to become a European. But she can only produce an imitation, a reproduction. Rootless, homeless, and lonely, she returns to New York, but at the airport she hears a song she associates with her divorce. She returns to Europe, wandering from city to city dreaming of bacon-lettuce-and-tomato sandwiches.

Even in "The World of Apples," Asa Bascomb, an eighty-year-old writer who has lived in Italy for years feels that "he would always be a stranger there, but his strangeness seemed to him to be some metaphor involving time as if, climbing the strange stairs past the strange wall, he climbed through hours, months, years, and decades." Having himself lived in Italy on two occasions, Cheever is very successful in exploring this expatriate theme and the conflict of the two cultures. Stories like "The Bella Lingua" and "The Duchess" have a Jamesian richness of tone and sublety.

But the sense of being an alien or a stranger is also deeply felt in the more familiar suburbs of New York and Massachusetts. Hundreds of commuters pass each other daily at the train stations without a word of greeting or a nod of recognition. There is little connection among the residents of Shady Hill and Bullet Park. Even within a single household life is often that of routine, drudgery, and coexistence. In the closing lines of "The Season of Divorce," Mr. Trencher describes such a scene:

Ethel is still sitting on the stool by the sink cleaning vegetables. I go with her to the children's room. The light is bright. The children have built something out of an orange crate, something prosperous and ascendant, and their sweetness, their compulsion to build, the brightness of the light are reflected perfectly and increased in Ethel's face. Then she feeds them, bastes them, and sets the table, and stands for a moment in the middle of the room, trying to make some connection between the evening and the day. Then it was over. She lights the candles, and we sit down to our supper.

Some husbands and wives like the Trenchers are willing to live with the boredom and monotony of Shady Hill. Others, like Charles Flint in "The Trouble with Marcie Flint," are not. That story opens as follows:

This is being written aboard the S. S. Augustus, three days at sea. My suitcase is full of peanut butter, and I am a fugitive from the suburbs of all large cities. What holes! The suburbs. I mean. God preserve me from the lovely ladies taking in their asters and their roses at dusk lest the frost kill them, and from ladies with their heads whirling with civic zeal. I'm off to Torino, where girls love peanut butter and the world is a man's castle.
Charlie discovers, however, that European girls have little more taste for peanut butter than do American girls and that the castles he dreams of are made of sand. In the end he prepares to return to Shady Hill. "I will catch a plane in Genoa," he writes. "I will see my children grow and take up their lives, and I will gently Marcie—sweet Marcie, dear Marcie, Marcie, my love. I will shelter her with the curve of my body from all the horrors of the world." But this too is a dream, an illusion that again will be shattered. Escape seems finally to be impossible.

Some residents of Shady Hill attempt to escape; others are ostracized. A good example of the latter occurs in a story entitled "The Scarlet Moving Van," a humorous story set in what Cheever describes as a typical eastern hill town. Gee-Gee (short for "Greek God") and Peaches move into town B__, next to the Folkstones who are established residents. "Peaches was blonde, blond and warm, with a low-cut dress and a luminous front. Gee-Gee had been a handsome man, and perhaps still was, although his yellow curls were thin. His face seemed both angelic and menacing." The Folkstones watch them unload their furniture from a scarlet moving van and then invite them over for a drink. One drink leads to another, it gets late, and suddenly Gee-Gee interrupts Mrs. Folkstone by saying, "God, but you're stuffy people." "Oh, no, Gee-Gee!" Peaches says. "Not on our first night!" She then explains that they have moved eight times in the past eight years because of Gee-Gee's penchant for insulting hostesses at parties. When the neighbors have a welcome party for Peaches and Gee-Gee a few nights later, he acts up again, calling the neighbors a bunch of stuffed shirts and springing onto the center of the table to sing a dirty song and dance a jig. He is warned and forgiven, but his actions are repeated. "No one had ever seen anything like it. He undressed at the Bilkers'. At the Levy's he drop-kicked a bowl of soft cheese onto the ceiling. He danced the Highland Fling in his underpants, set fire to the wastebaskets, and swung on the Townsend's chandelier—that famous chandelier." Inside of six weeks, there was not a house in B__ where he was welcome.

The scarlet moving van comes again and Peaches and Gee-Gee move to town Y__. Charlie Folkstone visits Gee-Gee one night when Peaches and the children are in Nassau. Gee-Gee had broken his leg at a party and wheels around the house in the children's wagon. Later that night after Charlie had returned home, Gee-Gee calls to tell him he has fallen out of his wagon and needs help. Charlie doesn't go, but he develops deep feelings of guilt, guilt drives him to drink, and he becomes drunk and obnoxious. "In the end, he lost his job, and they had to move, and began their wanderings, like Gee-Gee and Peaches, in the scarlet-and-gold van."

Although this is a humorous story from beginning to end, Gee-Gee is not simply a comic character. He is also intended to be the conscience of the community. The external narrator tells us:

There seemed to be some tremendous vitality to the drunken man. Gee-Gee was an advocate for the lame, the diseased, the poor, for those who through no fault of their own live out lives of poverty and pain. To the happy, the wellborn and rich he had this to say—that for all their affection, their comforts, and their privileges, they would not be spared the pangs of anger and lust and the agonies of death. He only meant for them to be prepared for the blow when the blow fell. But was it not possible to accept this truth without having him dance a jig in your living room? He spoke from some vision of the suffering in life, but was it necessary to suffer oneself in order to accept his message? It seemed so.

In various ways, Gee-Gee's question is raised in a number of Cheever's stories. Where does responsibility to another end and to one's own life begin?

In "The Scarlet Moving Van" Gee-Gee becomes a spokesman for "the lame, the diseased, and the poor." However, in stories like "The Enormous Radio," "Clancy in the Tower of Babel," "Christmas Is a Sad Season for the Poor," and "The Superintendent," Cheever provides a more direct and naturalistic account of the squalor and sordidness of lower class existence. The reader's vantage point in the last story is through the eyes of Chester Coolidge, a superintendent of an apartment building in New York. Although his tenants are better off financially than those in other tenements, the poverty of their lives still depresses him. He observes: "Watching his self-important tenants walk through the lobby, he sometimes thought that they were a species of the poor. They were poor in space, poor in light, poor in quiet, and poor in the atmosphere of privacy—poor in everything that makes a man's home his castle." At the end of the day, the sky lightens briefly to bring a ray of hope into an otherwise dreary day.

Words like pride, honor, and love abound in his stories and suggest the significance he attaches to these verities.

All of Cheever's stories—whether they describe the suburbanites of Shady Hill, the expatriates of Italy, or the poor in the tenements of New York City—are ultimately a commentary on modern life and the human condition. For Cheever, one of the dominant characteristics of modern life is man's basic inhumanity. In one of the Shady Hill stories, Irene Wryson dreams that Shady Hill is blown up by a hydrogen bomb. "She cried, in her dream, to see this inhumanity as the world was ending. She cried, and she went on watching, as if some truth were being revealed to her—as if she had always known this to be the human condition, as if she had always known the world to be dangerous and the comforts of her life in Shady Hill to be the merest palliative."

This recognition frequently reflects itself in a bitterness about life by Cheever's characters. "The Angel of the Bridge" is a story about a young
man, Ogden, who has a phobia about crossing bridges. But Ogden comes to realize that his "terror of bridges was an expression of my clumsily concealed horror of what is becoming of the world." At the climax of the story he thinks, "And it was at the highest point in the arc of the bridge that I became aware suddenly of the depth and bitterness of my feelings about modern life, and of the profoundness of my yearning for a more vivid, simple, and peaceable world.

Cheever rejects those characters who rely on the past for salvation. His search is for firmer values.

A story that provides a more general commentary on modern American life is "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin." The story is a first person account of an expatriate who returns to this country. On the walls of the lavatory in Grand Central Station in New York he finds scribbled a strange account of a Roman soldier returning victorious from battle. The message strikes him as gibberish, and he sees it only as "some inordinate love of the romantic past." He spends the next ten days traveling in the Middle West, and in Union Station in Indianapolis comes across a much longer message—virtually a complete story about a lonely woman—on the walls of a lavatory. Later on the train back to New York he finds yet another message on the walls of the club car—this time a strange note about the American fetish of having household geraniums. He imagines that these three messages might be a new form of literature. "If these fancies were recorded and diagnosed, they might throw a brilliant illumination into our psyche and bring us closer to the secret world of the truth." He has some friends who work for foundations and decides to call their attention to the phenomenon of writing in public toilets with the hope of raising funds for a study of this new literature.

His best friend tells him simply, "You've been away too long. You're out of touch. We don't go for that kind of thing over here." Feeling out of touch with decency and common sense, he decides to fly back to Paris, the "city of light." However, in the men's room of the toilet at the airport in New York, he finds the first two lines of Keats' sonnet, "Bright Star!"; "Bright Star! would I were steadfast as thou art—Not in lone splendor hung aloft in night."

On the surface this appears to be a weird and comic story. But the title suggests its meaning. "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin" is from the Old Testament story about Belshazzar, King of the Chaldeans. It is the message that appeared to him by a strange hand on the wall of the banquet hall. Daniel interprets the message as follows: "God has numbered the days of your Kingdom and brought it to an end. You have been weighed in the balance and found wanting." This is also the message that the narrator of the story, an outsider, an alien like Daniel, delivers about the Kingdom of America. It has been weighed in the balance and found wanting, and the message is written, appropriately, on the walls of our toilets.

I realize that what I have said about Cheever's short stories to this point might give the impression that he is a trivial and frivolous writer and that his stories lack the substance of great literature. Such is certainly not the case. Cheever is both a chronicler and an anatomist of contemporary American society, and his diagnosis is disturbing and profound. In his portrayal of individual characters and his analysis of contemporary society, Cheever is brutally frank and uncompromisingly realistic.

His typical protagonist has reached middle age and senses a deep loss—a loss of innocence and youth and beauty. In a story entitled "The Chimera" the narrator finds himself in the middle of an unhappy and impossible marriage. To compensate, he invents Olga, a fantasy woman, a chimera, who appears whenever his situation becomes desperate. His imagination revives him, and temporarily he regains a former happiness. "The smell [of a fresh rain] excited me, and I remembered what it was like to feel young and happy, wearing a sweater and clean cotton pants, and walking through the cool halls of the house where I was raised and where, in the summer, the leaves hung beyond all the open doors and windows in a thick curtain of green and gold. I didn't remember my youth—I seemed to recapture it."

The word "seemed" is important because this feeling, like Olga, is an illusion, a chimera. Like Fitzgerald's "Great Gatsby," character after character in Cheever's stories discovers that one can neither repeat nor recapture the past.

Although the dreams and illusions of Cheever's characters are constantly shattered, Cheever also recognizes that man cannot live without dreams and illusions. So the dreams persist and are almost associated with images of light and life. Most of the stories are set in an atmosphere of darkness, where chance and indifference catch up with his characters, but in the end there is usually a ray of light. The ending of "The Housebreaker of Shady Hill" is typical. Johnny Hake, the narrator of the story, has lost his job and becomes a burglar, "the housebreaker of Shady Hill." In the end he has a dream that changes his vision of life. He says, "What I did not understand, as I walked down Fifth Avenue that afternoon, was how a world that had seemed so dark could, in a few minutes, become so sweet. The sidewalks seemed to shine, and, going home on the train, I beamed at the foolish girls who advertise girdles on the signboards in the Bronx." He puts $900 into an envelope and that evening slips it back into the Warburton's house.

And at times even when the darkness persists, it is the darkness of fantasy rather than the darkness of death. In "The Country Husband," as curtains begin to close, "the village hangs, morally and economically,
from a thread, but it hangs by its thread in the evening light." Then it closes and Mr. Nixon is walking in his garden calling his cats. Jupiter comes. "He prances through the tomato vines, holding in his generous mouth the remains of an evening slipper. Then it is dark; it is night where kings in golden suits ride elephants over the mountains." In the two-page preface to this collection of stories, Cheever indicates that the ending of this story came to him first, and he can remember coming out of the maid's room and shouting to his wife: "This is a night when kings in golden mail ride their elephants over the mountains!" And then he adds, "the forbearance of my family has been inestimable."

I suspect that these images of light and dreams are ultimately clues to transcendence in Cheever's fiction. Since, to my knowledge, no biography of Cheever has yet been written and since he maintains a very private life, I do not know much about his religious beliefs or practices. But I suspect that Cheever lives a fairly simple and pious life, and I would suggest that in his fiction he is in many ways an old-fashioned moralist. In the brief preface he makes one interesting allusion to his concern for morality. He says, "the constants that I look for [in my stories] are a love of light and a determination to trace some moral chain of being." And then he adds, "Calvin played no part at all in my religious education, but his presence seemed to abide in the barns of my childhood and to have left me with some undue bitterness." According to Time magazine he is a member of the Episcopal Church in Ossining, New York, where he lives and is a regular church-goer. In response to why he attends church, he said: "I do not think it is too much to get down on my knees once a week to thank God for the coming wonder and glory of life."

Interestingly, churches appear in only a few of Cheever's stories and when they do, they are usually deserted. Unlike Cheever, his characters seldom pray. However, his characters still sense that there are gods to appease, but most of them have forgotten their names. Almost all of his characters have forgotten (or rejected) Leander's last testament to his sons at the end of The Wapshot Chronicle. "Stand up straight. Admire the world. Relish the love of a gentle woman. Trust in the Lord."

It is clear from Cheever's stories that order and simplicity stand in perpetual peril in contemporary society. However, beneath the chaos, disorder, and complexity of life, his characters are searching for ethical and moral values that will give meaning to their empty and desolate lives. Words like humility, goodness, pride, honor, and love abound in his stories and suggest the significance Cheever attaches to these old-fashioned verities. Although his characters are frequently obsessed with sex and money, Cheever rejects those characters who rely on the past, on wealth, and on travel for salvation. His search is for firmer values. And he rejects everything that embraces chaos rather than life. The recovery of meaning and the discovery of love are the ultimate rewards of this search.

I began this essay reviewing indicating that Cheever's short stories are interesting and delightful, and I have also tried to suggest that they have something important to say. In the preface to one of his earlier collections of stories, Cheever describes the task and satisfaction of writing fiction as follows:

One has the impulse to bring glad tidings to someone. My sense of literature is a sense of giving, not a diminishment. I know almost no pleasure greater than having a piece of fiction draw together disparate incidents so that they relate to one another and confirm that life itself is a creative process, that one thing is put purposefully upon another, that what is lost in one encounter is replenished in the next, and that we possess some power to make sense of what takes place.

This reviewer was pleased to receive this gift—Cheever's artistry, good humor, and purpose—and would recommend The Stories of John Cheever to others as well.

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**Books**

**An Adult's View Of a "Children's" Book**

**Review Essay**

*Kathy Piehl*

**The Mouse and His Child**


Since its appearance ten years ago, *The Mouse and His Child* has sparked discussions among children's librarians and critics of children's literature. The 1977 appearance of the animated film with the same title and based on Russell Hoban's work brought the book to the attention of many more prospective readers.

Because most of Hoban's previous work was written for children, *The Mouse and His Child* has been reviewed as a children's book, and the debate about its worth has centered upon its suitability for those in elementary school. The fact that the characters are toys and animals reinforces the tendency to consider the story in those terms, and the animated film version further discourages adults from reading the work. However, *The Mouse and His Child* is a children's book in...
the same way *Wind in the Willows* and *Alice in Wonderland* are. Although children may read and enjoy Hoban's book at one level, the sophisticated use of themes and imagery, many drawn from Biblical sources, makes the work worth thoughtful reading by adults.

Those who are familiar only with Hoban's *Bread and Jam for Frances*, *Bedtime for Frances*, and other volumes in that series will be unprepared for the subject and tone of *The Mouse and His Child*. The story traces the odyssey of a wind-up father and son mouse, who leave a toyshop, are discarded by the children for whom they were purchased, and begin their travels through the world. They first encounter Manny Rat, who makes broken wind-up toys into slaves to forage in his dump. After their initial escape from him, they are aided in their search for a home and territory by various animals but are always pursued by the relentless Manny. Ultimately they do find a home, family, and "self-winding," but the road they have to travel leaves them physically wrecked.

The book's incidents and imagery lead Anne Macleod to characterize it as "a litany of misery, fear, danger, failure, violence, disillusion and apprehension." She particularly objects to the lesson of territoriality which the mouse and his child learn as they travel. "Salvation for the wanderer, they learn, lies in claiming a piece of territory for his own, even if this means—as it does in the story—wrestling it by force from someone else."1

Rather than objecting to the violence, Gillian McMahon-Hill faults the book for its conventional happy ending after the ambiguity of the rest of the story. "A return to a parody of Frances' world is less than one could hope for and less than the rest of the book deserves."2

Criticism of the story along either of these lines overlooks much of the imagery that pervades the book. Although the story is framed by Christmas scenes, the predominant viewpoint about man's (mouse's) existence is not that of the New Testament but the Old Testament.

Hoban's use of Christmas as a focal point can be deceptive. The first character the reader encounters is a tramp, who wanders among shoppers, "his steps too big for the little streets of the little town." After peering in the toyshop window he imitates the dance of the mouse and his child. It is the tramp who later repairs the wind-up mice in the junkyard, where "the only sounds were the bells of Christmas ringing in the town and the cawing of some crows, hoarse and sharp in the cold air." He is the one who sends them off with the admonition "be tramps" and reappears at the book's end with the benediction "be happy" as he gazes on the family's Christmas celebration. On the second and last pages of the book, Lillian Hoban's drawings of the tramp's face encourage the reader's perception of him as a grandfatherly, kindly patron. Those familiar with the Christian tradition might conclude that the tramp is obviously the whiskered figure of God the Father, coming into the people's lives at Christmas, although they may be vaguely uncomfortable about the fact that he is nowhere to be seen when the mouse and his child find themselves in difficulties. Violence, defeat, misery, questioning are somehow alien to the New Testament life we want to read in *The Mouse and His Child*, but they are a basic part of the Old Testament narratives which the book resembles.

When the tramp sends the wind-ups off with the instructions to "be tramps," he is in effect telling them to be like himself, to wander through the earth. One of the predominant ideas which they develop, as MacLeod notes, is the idea of territoriality and the knowledge that they will have to fight to gain a place of their own. This same concept of territoriality is central in Israel's wanderings in the wilderness. The promise that keeps them going for years is that eventually they will live in "a land flowing with milk and honey." Significantly, when the Israelites reach Canaan for the first time, they are dismayed when they hear the report of the spies and want to return to Egypt rather than fight for the land. Because of their fears, they are sent to wander forty years until all the older generation has died, and the children are ready to fight. The mouse father expresses similar doubts about his son's belief that they will find a family: "He fills the empty space inside himself with foolish dreams that cannot possibly come true."

If modern readers are disturbed by the idea of the "good" being involved in violence, Old Testament writers clearly were not.

The violence involved in the final victory of the mice and their allies is foreshadowed in the shrews' wars in which the survivors are eaten by weasels, who in turn become victims of owls. Certainly the description of the weasels, "smiling pleasantly with the blood of both armies dripping from their jaws," is unpleasant, if apt, but none of the battle descriptions can rival the Old Testament chronicles of Israel's battles with its enemies. The first three chapters of Deuteronomy recount Israel's victories in the wilderness. For example, Moses reminds the people that they had conquered the cities of the kingdom of Og. "And we utterly destroyed them, as we did to Sihon the king of Hashbon, destroying every city, men, women, and children. But all the cattle and the spoil of the cities we took as our booty." (Deut. 3:1-7)

If modern readers are disturbed by the idea of the "good" being involved in violence, the writers of the Old Testament clearly were not. There God is one of vengeance, who

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1 Anne S. MacLeod, "Undercurrents: Pessimism in Contemporary Children's Fiction," *Children's Literature in Education* 21 (Summer 1976): 96.
crushes his enemies. When Isaiah questions an approaching figure about the red stains on his garment, he replies,

I have trodden the wine press alone, and from the peoples none came with me: I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their lifeblood is sprinkled upon my garments, and I have stained all my raiment. For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and my year of redemption has come...I poured out their lifeblood on the earth. (Isa. 63:3-4, 6)

In contrast, the exile of the rats on a train and Manny Rat's loss of teeth seem rather tame.

But the mouse and his child learn more than they need a home of their own. In fact, much of what they find out about the animals they encounter parallels what the Preacher in Ecclesiastes learned when he tried to discover the reason for man's existence: "All is vanity and a striving after wind." (Eccles. 1:14)

Although the Preacher chose to make his study of life's possibilities and the mice are compelled to do so in their flight from Manny, the conclusions are similar. The mouse and his child see the ridiculous aspects of aesthetics exemplified in the play staged by the "Caws of Art," a repertory company of crows. C. Serpentina's intellectual pretensions show the futility of abstract thinking when all he offers father and son are aphorisms rather than practical knowledge on how to get out of the mud at the bottom of the pond. Science, represented by Muskrat's tinkering, is no better. He cannot provide them with self-winding because "that's applied thought, you see, and my real work is in the realm of pure thought. There is nothing quite like the purity of pure thought." The Preacher expresses some of the frustration the wind-ups must have felt with the uselessness of learning, "For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow." (Eccles. 3:11)

While they are mired on the pond bottom, the mouse and his child demonstrate the truth of another of the Preacher's observations: "...he has put eternity into man's mind, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end." (Eccles. 3:11) The task that confronts the mouse child is to discover what lies beyond the last dog which is visible on a rusting can of dog food. Despite his best efforts, he always loses his place in his attempts. "The child's glass-bead eyes grew ever dimmer and more tired while the father watched helplessly, infinity at his back." Finally, with the help of Miss Mudd, the child finds the answer: "There's nothing beyond the last visible dog but us." He had discovered, as the Preacher concluded, that man must rely on his own resources, that there are no external answers to ultimate questions.

If the story's darker themes and images have roots in the Old Testament, so too does one image of hope. Just as Israel's fortunes rise and wane through­out the Old Testament narratives, so The Mouse and His Child is organized with motifs of rising and falling. "Low in the dark of summer, high in the winter light; a painful spring, a shattering fall, a scattering regathered."

Frog prophesies (a common Old Testament occurrence). During their journey the mice are carried by birds, stuck in the bottom of a pond, pulled to the surface, dropped on the dump, and shattered to pieces.

The theme of falling and rising, scattering and gathering has its New Testament parallel in the idea of death and resurrection. Miss Mudd, an ugly creature who risks her life to help the mice escape from the pond bottom, changes into a dragonfly, but not without pain. "I feel so odd!" she said. "I can scarcely catch my breath, and my eyes are growing dim. Perhaps I'm dying, and my little muddy life is finished." But she faces not death but transformation into a "new and lovely, emerald green" creature.

Only after the mouse and his child are broken to pieces and rejoined by their friends can they win their territory and fulfill Frog's other prophecy: "A dog shall rise, a rat shall fall."

The ascendancy of the dog should come as no surprise to the reader...
because the imagery of dogs occurs continually in the book. Wherever they turn, the mice are confronted with a Bonzo dog food can. Manny and Muskrat use such a can for spare parts and odds and ends. Two empty cans gleam on the battlefield after the shrews' war. Frog is hoisted upward in a Bonzo can during the assault on the rats' mansion. In addition, the mice are guided by Sirius, the Dog Star, much as the children of Israel followed the pillars of clouds and light. "...the child, hanging from his father's hands, now saw again the bright star Sirius. It seemed to fly onward, keeping pace beside them through the distant sky. As before, the child found its light a comfort."

The creation of The Last Visible Dog, as the mouse family's inn is christened, is watched over by the same star. "With each dawn the Dog Star, progressively higher over the horizon as winter approached, looked down on new improvements... phoenixlike, the place seemed reborn of itself." Appropriately, the emblem for the restored home is a Bonzo label.

When we discover at the end that the tramp's dog is named Bonzo too, we realize that rather than appearing only at the beginning and the end, the tramp has been visible all along, in various representations relating to the dog, his companion. The Dog Star has led and watched over the mouse and his child. Bonzo has been present everywhere they turn. Although the mice have had a difficult journey they have never been totally alone.

This imagery of tramp and god, which ties the book together, transcends the violence to which some might object and offers a foundation for a happy ending that might seem implausible. Even though Israel in the Old Testament lived through violence, disappointment, and despair, they retained the signs of God's presence and a belief that a territory of their own and happiness were possible. These are themes worth considering by adult and child alike.

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And finally... the orchard;
Her green-painted apples beginning to blush.
I've come to ask entrance
To the small, swollen womb of her fruit.
I'd curl inside the seed bed
And listen to the angel-singing sounds of
The sweet stretching.

Oh, friend in green,
Roots and branches,
Ripen me to the stillness of your conversation.

Kathleen Froemming

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Feet to ground
it is possible
listening to the twilight barn
owls swallow back prey
to feel the north
flow from
Betelgeuse, north
stars on across a line of
wing to the curving ground:
to touch it
talons extended.
As one, returning to nest,
they perch outside our loft,
move on wings making
a practice of silence.

And looking full face without moving,
mARRIED to each other for the life
we see them
feed their young, leave, return
with patience, teaching them time
honored tricks of flight.

Feet to ground,
the edge of the twilight
like the touch of damp fur—
to your sacred skin I say:
it is possible.

Peter Brett
Florence Is Still Lovely—Despite Alitalia

Kenneth F. Korby

Spring recess in Florence (the city my wife Jeanne has come to call her place on earth) seemed like a good place to insert a two-week parenthetic clause into the sentences of our daily work.

It began quietly with the decision to fly Alitalia. (They scheduled us—economically—from New York to Milan to Pisa, and by limousine to Florence.) After that decision, all travel became improvisation. The day before departure, Alitalia went on strike—affecting only international flights, we were told.

Because of flooding in the Chicago area, we decided to fly to Chicago’s O’Hare airport on our Valparaiso connector flight. However, an hour before departure, that flight canceled. We had snow in our “Vale of Paradise.” Never mind. We had sufficient time to drive the twenty miles to a limousine connection. Ah, yes; but the fuel gauge of the car indicated “Empty.” Can one drive twenty miles on “E”? To stop for gas was to choose to miss the connection. To run out of gas was to suffer the same fate. We gambled. Arriving two minutes before the limousine departed, our fuel gauge deeper into “Empty,” we began to suffer a short-lived sinful security.

A semi-trailer truck, loaded with hundreds (perhaps even thousands) of bottles of Miller High Life (no less) beer had scraped a divider wall and emptied itself on the road. However, a front loader, scooping the beer and glass off the road, delivered us from our interminable delay, and TWA carried us safely to Milan.

“No,” said the travel agent in Milan, “the strike includes all internal flights too.” Limited amounts of pleading, commingled with not-so-limited doses of irritation ended with Alitalia refunding almost enough lire to pay for the train fare to Florence.

On Monday of the second week I began the process of extracting information from Alitalia about the return flight. “It’s too early to know about the strike,” they said; “come back Wednesday.” Wednesday was also too early. “Come back Friday.” Friday morning Alitalia agents and I held another conference. “Yes, the strike is over,” they informed me. But I became uneasy when they said they wanted to check with TWA. “For all flights, internal and international?” I asked. “Yes.” “For sure?” “Yes,” they assured me.

The limousine ride to Pisa was pleasant. The announcement from the Alitalia agent was not. “Alitalia has struck; tonight’s flight from Milan to New York is canceled.”

Although we were delayed briefly in Pisa while the pilots put oil in the plane’s engines, we were soon in Milan again. TWA’s flight—our last hope—left in two hours and forty-five minutes, and we yet were a considerable distance from Malpensa, the international terminal.

“If you want to get to Malpensa on time, you must take a cab,” said the Information Officer calmly. Armed (or wounded) with that information, I went to the Alitalia desk, the spot of the former ardent debate. Alitalia should pay that fare, I thought. That notion became more “fixed” after the cabbie had quoted the “fixed price” of the fare at 30,000 lire. Alitalia did not share my opinion. “We have no authority to pay cab fares,” the agent kept repeating, as if by machine.

Meanwhile, Jeanne had tried to get information from TWA about seats on their flight. Her effort was unavailing; TWA’s computer had broken down two days earlier. However, when the TWA agent learned we had come on a connecting flight, she ordered a cab for us—at TWA’s expense.

We leaped into the cab and zoomed into traffic. Shifting gears with remarkable ease, as if he were driving the Grand Prix, our “Mario Andretti” of the Milan taxi fleet raced through ten minutes of Milan traffic and twenty-five minutes of Autostrada traffic, reaching speeds of 140 kilometers per hour. On time, safe, and breathless, we were at the TWA gate.

Saturday at midnight we turned back into pumpkins, settled again in the pumpkin patch.

The parentheses furnished the drama, but the substance lies between them. At the center of that substance was our discovery of the “Spanish Chapel” at Santa Maria Novella. Under the tutelage of John Ruskin’s Mornings in Florence, we were led to this little jewel. Ruskin calls it “the vaulted book,” for its walls contain and exhibit a powerful display of fourteenth century Florence’s idea of the relation of the Christian faith to the life of learning and to life in society.

The medieval Florentines subsumed human learning in the city of man under the eternal truth of the Holy Spirit’s work. Human learning calls for a determined choice by the student to engage industriously in the disciplines of the life of the mind. But linked to that study is the fervent prayer for wisdom, a gift of the Holy Spirit, as one studies the various aspects of theology. The picture of that union, painted on the walls of the “Spanish Chapel,” reminded us of the promise and the pain that is Valparaiso University. However, further reflection on this matter must await another time.

For us, Florence is still lovely—despite Alitalia.

The Cresset