A Review of Literature, Arts, and Public Affairs
December, 1989
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Pamela Lang Redick (VU '69)

The three dunes paintings by Pamela Lang Redick shown on the covers of this issue were commissioned by VU's College of Business Administration for permanent display in the lobby of Urschel Hall. They are a gift of Robert Urschel. They will be installed this winter.

Paintings by Redick, a VU art major, have been included in such corporate collections as that of Borg-Warner, Household Finance, Standard Oil of Indiana, and Kemper Insurance. Her paintings have also been included in exhibits at the Art Institute of Chicago, the Worcester Art Museum and other prominent galleries.

Front cover: Dunes, Winter, 1988, o/c, 40" square.
Back cover: Dunes, Spring, 1989, o/c, 40" square.
Inside back cover: Dunes, Fall, 1989, o/c, 40" square.
Speaking Lightly

Editors are too negative, somebody said to us recently. Why not say something nice about the government? Trying hard then, to say something nice about the President, as if we were addressing a group of impressionable children whom one did not wish to disappoint or disillusion, we did think of a positive note. We thought it sensible of him to say, "I don't know" several times in his latest press conference. He didn’t say, "Because of the lack of finalized information resources in the current situation, no consensus regarding our position relative to these issues has been developed that would enable us to present a considered judgment on this matter at this point in time." He said, if we heard him right, "I don't know." Thanks, Mr. President.

Maps look as though they really mean something, and surely that is what their makers intend. On a wall in our study is a map of Europe, five feet by six feet, and it clearly says where the countries are. Each has a label (these happen to be in German) and each contains hundreds of other labels marking cities, rivers, lakes, mountain ranges, bays and islands. The bold colors and the black lines don't in the least look tentative. Yet the news in the last months reports a reality far different from the map's apparently irrefutable pieces of information. Almost our entire lifespan has been lived within the reality of an Eastern bloc, a Germany in two nations. But, last week, we listened to the news and read the papers, and a whole new map seemed to be the subject. It was as though we'd walked into the study to see blue changed to yellow. The Wall, commentator Daniel Schorr said, was not down, it just didn't seem to exist. Just trying to observe the facts is enough for the moment; understanding them, or putting them in perspective, or organizing them into meaningful categories can't be done just yet. In a little while, things may look different again, but right now, we are reminded that a powerful metaphor is nonetheless just a metaphor, and that if an iron curtain can descend, then it can rise again too. Hearing on the news that Thursday night about the people drinking champagne in the shadow of the Wall, we did the only possible thing. We went and got a bottle ourselves, and toasted, however tentatively, the new map.

IN LUCE TUA

Comment by the Editor

Just yesterday, shivering some, I could wear my summer jacket. Heading across the tundra, I ducked my head down, shoved hands in pockets, and touched some beach sand down at the bottom. It was cool, and there was enough that I could sift it through my fingers. But somehow it didn’t feel the way it did a month ago. I know the beach is out there, but the ends of my fingers sense the difference between sand in September, or even on the warm days of fall, and sand in the cold darkness of winter. I knew this difference like an animal, with a strong instinct deriving meaning from the touch of the sand, a meaning that did not go through my cultivated mind at all. No quotations about sand occurred to me, no thoughts about time passing, just the sharp, sudden knowledge that it was so. The time of sand was over, and fingers must feel other surfaces. Now the jacket is put away for the winter, because, like the civilized creature I am, I have a place to put the summer clothes when they're not being used. But I didn't shake it out, and next spring when I put it on, I should feel the sand still there. It will feel different then, though.

December, 1989
Adalbert Raphael Kretzmann
1903-1989

The Reverend Dr. Adalbert Raphael Kretzmann—A.R. to almost everybody who knew him, Putt to his closest friends—was an odd, sometimes contradictory, combination of tough, streetwise urban pastor and gentle, soft-spoken connoisseur of the pictorial and liturgical arts. For three decades, as art editor of *The Cresset*, he graced this magazine with illustrations and essays which, if collected, would fill several book-size volumes. His death last June caused many of us to reflect on the extent to which he was responsible for the respect in which *The Cresset* was held almost from its very beginning.

When he found time to do the research and writing which his editorial duties demanded was always a mystery to me. He was the pastor of a large congregation in Chicago. And he lived, as a matter of principle, right next door to his church in a parsonage that could hardly be mistaken for anything but a parsonage, because, as I once heard him say, a pastor is supposed to be where the troubled and the lonely and the down-and-out would be most likely to look for him.

And he was a churchman. For many years he was active in the leadership of the now-defunct youth organization, the Walther League. He was president of the Chicago Bible Society. A generation ago he played a major role in helping Lutheranism recover its almost forgotten liturgical tradition. He persuaded his congregation to build a fine new church on the site of its old church in a “changing” neighborhood, rather than join the flight of the mainline churches to the suburbs. He served as liturgical consultant in the design and construction of Valparaiso University’s Chapel of the Resurrection. And he served as mentor to a number of young churchmen who enjoyed, or in some cases endured, the privilege of working with him.

A.R. did not suffer fools gladly. But in the twenty years of our association I found him unfailingly patient, understanding, and kind. God give him rest eternal, and may perpetual light shine upon him.

John H. Strietelmeier
IT COMES WITH THE TERRITORY

Edward M. Uehling

The clay hills south of Gothenburg and beyond Farnam have never failed to startle me with their various beauty. On particular days in the early autumn, a softness of their color and texture steals my resolve, makes me dreamy, has me almost stepping out of my skin and into reminiscences of favorite occasions. Under such a spell I am likely to recall, for instance, an early September Sunday afternoon in my fourteenth year when three friends and I rode bicycles through five miles of Platte Valley to the canyons—"Wiggins' Canyon" we called them and the gravel road that wound through them—for a hike. This softness may rob me of a detailed appreciation of the present, adult moment, but I am repaid with a single, almost tangible remembrance of lying on a hillside by myself (I cannot recall where my friends had gone) and gazing at the blue-gray cedars patterned on distant hills, then looking up to a wash of clouds rimming a piece of horizon, and finally, directly above, wondering out of time at billowed clouds and sky a depth of blue beyond imagining.

The sun warmed me, the earth warmed me; I was solitary and alive. At last it was the chill of the late afternoon wind, its moan as sharp-edged as its feel, that brought back the facts of Sunday in September and stiffness in my legs and the ride home before dark.

I am glad for just that kind of day, when the pastures make a profound statement of their own beauty. And given the choice thirty years ago, I would have willed every day to be like this—tender, inviting, merely hinting of change. Or, less grandly, would simply have felt that this was the perfect day. But even at age thirteen I knew and almost believed that contrast matters: that making a shot on a pheasant counts because of all the easy misses; that a friend is dearer because of other categories such as "bully" or even "acquaintance"; that there were people at home who taught me to love this country and try to understand it by paying attention to the right things.

And so I return to this place as often as I can, armed with an appreciation for context and change. There surely have been other days in those hills, days without softness, days when beauty and energy were virtually one. From the warmth of my father's pickup truck I have been briefly charmed by the roar of west wind pelting snow against the cab. But stepping into that brittle, granular swirl of blue light thrills and nearly deafens me. No matter how often I have grabbed the double barrel and heaved open the door, I never quite remember the first sting and contraction of those moments before words can form to register sensation or to interpret. Place and weather own me. Not until I have taken several steps towards the plum thicket (and perhaps pheasants) may I begin to think or at least let words silently form: "my nose hairs are frozen stiff (the freezing makes them seem multiplied); my skin is shrinking open my eyes; I wish I could shoot with a glove on my right hand; when you have to look up, don't face the wind." As spilled words become more a talking to myself, I reclaim myself in the moment. But on such days, and sooner than later, the weather wins. Except for one or two brief walks through pheasant cover, I must be content to observe and then ride home before dark.

In bitter cold the landscape empties, but its silence

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December, 1989
is not simple. One must wait patiently, intently. Late autumn, Thanksgiving week, can include such times. For most of my adult life, I have been fortunate to have this week free for retracing familiar territory. I remember one evening three years ago as we drove north through the canyons towards Gothenburg and felt the silence in pastures without cattle; in the stiff loping of a rare coyote, beginning early its evening hunt and nervous at the sight of us. As we descended into the valley, I felt silence, too, in the small hawk perched on the same length of telephone line where we had seen it watching that morning.

Throughout the years that hawk has been there waiting, more often sentinel than hunter. Always we notice. Sometimes, when we are pleased or amused or almost shy at the prospect of another season of hunting together, we comment—my father's words and mine—touching the bird for luck. And so the following day, my second day home, we marked the hawk almost as if to reassure ourselves that the countryside was still our own. For during the night, piece by piece, an ice storm had crystallized the world. Of course I had walked along the river after a cruel spring storm and seen cottonwood limbs, already gnarled, hang heavy or broken in the thin sunlight. But this, as we entered the hills, this was luminous, stunning, a moment unlike any other.

We were the first travelers that morning: ahead of us the road climbed, a single ribbon gleaming across a steep hill; beside the truck the gravel lay individually brilliant and gemlike. Barbed wire stretched elegant, three strands glowing. Stilled like a half-gasp of delight, the grasses—buffalo, brome, blue stem—showed mut ed blades of gray and brown and rust through their sheathing. A half mile to the southwest stood the first “draw,” a pocket of cover, that might be hunted. Its plum thicket, black and then red, its sweet clover, tan, stone lacquered, almost silver. I, who had watched and walked and cherished these hills through adolescence and all my adult life, hesitated to step into this light which would dim as the morning wind and sun strengthened. I waited for some sign, some motion or voice, to invite the solitary spectator in.

As we continued driving out of the canyons into more rolling hills, I wondered self-consciously how I had ever learned to look at this landscape. The closer we got to Farnam, the more frequently we saw grain fields and an occasional farmstead interrupting the pastures. (Mostly corn and soybeans had grown over the last summer. With two decades of deep wells and pivot point irrigation, farmers have been tempted to transform some of their $100-an-acre pasture or at least to depend less on milo.) In the almost twelve miles since the hawk we had seen no living creature when, from the corner of my eye, I saw a hen pheasant skimming across a field of winter wheat. The familiar wingbeat, silent within the warm truck, seemed to pull us surely along her path. Our parallel courses ran so near that for a moment I could note the flat wilderness of her eye and the soft brown and cream of her breast feathers. Just above the green glaze, speed fixed, she coated, dipped smoothly as if to light, and then inexplicably surged upward, veered west and disappeared from view. The bird broke the spell. So absorbed had I been in the spectacle of the morning that I had not seen this part of it—the hen pheasant crouched or perhaps walking—even though she must have flushed from the barrow pit, no more than six feet from the road.

Being surprised is surely part of it, of learning to look. From my earliest memories of hunting with my father, there was always a keen sense not only of vision but of noticing. On this morning, I turned to Dad, who was driving, and asked, “Did you see her before she flew?” Of course he had, although I thought that on this of all mornings he might have missed for once. But then it was a conversation reminiscent of countless others.

When I was no older than ten or eleven, I remember, I rode along country roads with my father in pursuit of pheasants. In those days the soil bank program created huge areas of nesting habitat and a much larger population of birds. It made all the more sense, then, to keep a sharp lookout for pheasants or quail along the road in the early morning or late afternoon as they came out of cover to feed and take gravel. But even though I now know that Dad sometimes waited for me to see, I could never spot them as quickly as he did. I would be gazing out the passenger window of the car—never a pickup in those days because it would have been impractical to have a vehicle in which the whole family couldn’t ride. (Even owning two used cars was a luxury. The newer of the two mostly sat in the left bay of the garage and was driven on special occasions like family vacations or Mom’s turn to give rides to bridge club. The older car served for what little everyday driving anyone did, for hunting, and for fishing.) So I would be gazing out the passenger window of a ‘49 or ‘50 or finally a ‘52 Chevy fourdoor and lost in the smell of wet wool and muddy boots, the whirring hum of the heater, and the scratch of mohair upholstery when the car would begin to slow, the sound of its tires on the gravel changing pitch. Dad would say, “I think at least one of them is a rooster.” Magic. Amid fumbling for shotgun shells—a number six for the right barrel, a four or five for the left—and sitting bolt upright in readiness, I would scan the roadside and blurt out, “Where?” And Dad always knew, though he
never said, that I had not been oafish or inattentive and certainly not bored, but that I was simply learning where and how to look.

We spent far more time walking than driving in those days, but getting there has always been part of the pleasure. Our route takes us through Farnam, a shrinking community of 300. Heading south down its wide Main Street, now paved, we pass an unused base-ball diamond, a football field for the six-man Greenbacks' team (where once we saw a rooster pheasant sunning himself beneath the wooden goal post), a new Methodist church, comfortable bungalows and tall maples. U. S. Highway 23 divides the two blocks of downtown: there are still a small library, a bank (new, next to its former self), two gas stations (one sells feed), a cafe (under new management every few years, whose best name—The Broken Spoke—we keep), and finally, down the hill to the railroad tracks, a hardware & lumber.

Small buildings stand vacant (a barbershop, an attorney's office, a pool hall among them); but Montgomery's grocery and general store has been partially demolished this fall, its owner, Dale, retired to Florida. Some farmers still park grain trucks and pickups diagonally in the center of the street. When we stop at the Spoke for a snack on the return trip home, the same table of retired farmers look up from their coffee and card game to say hello. If Vern Brouillette is there, he walks over to our booth, smiles almost toothlessly, inquires after our luck, and invites us to hunt his old place; he tells us where the birds have been. The pheasant in the endzone is one of many memories over which I scarcely have control. And so it continues as we swing east up the hill past a cluster of abandoned frame houses, out of town, and meander south towards the day's hunting. There's the old cistern in a pasture against the base of a hill, its bricks balanced without mortar; Piersol's mailbox (with no farm house in sight) where once an odd fellow who called himself Bart came riding a white horse over the hill and flagged down Dad's pickup because he wanted to hunt with him; the pocket of side hill cover where Uncle Ref, on a rare in-season visit, shot the only pheasant I remember him getting; the '59 Ford pickup, unrusted red and white, parked forever by two grain bins at the head of a deep draw where seasons of pheasants have flushed wildly from the buck brush, more often down the canyon to the sumac than south across the picked corn. Even sitting in the pickup, I cannot watch passively or unattached.

Eventually we do get out of the car or pickup, by the way. But the trip is over thirty miles and always lasts an hour or so. No sense in hurrying. Our general idea has been that birds need an hour or two to move out of their nesting areas to the grain field before they settle again in the cover. Weather is a variable, of course, as is simple luck—good or bad. Still we aim to arrive at our favorite hunting spots by 9:30 or 10. If it is raining, we know that we will not get to some of the best places because even with tire chains and pushing we cannot drive up steep, ungraveled roads. "Pretty greasy," Dad says. If it is raining, we also know that the birds will be more likely to stay put or run than to fly. Without a dog to point them, we resign ourselves to a day of tough walking, a rare long shot, and getting soaked to the hips. Snow is a different story. An inch or two overnight produces potentially helpful tracks; more snow means that the birds will favor sweet clover and the side hills of deep draws (in the sun, if there is any), not swales with plum thickets or buck brush. The weather pushes them into larger groups and they are spookier for the extra company.

Walking for pheasants is distinct from hiking or from walking canyon ridges before sunrise for deer, but with them it is part of learning to look. However brisk, hiking, properly understood, is more a form of exploring than exercising. I believe that my only "purposeful" hiking has been in search of wild fruit, camp sites, or Christmas trees. Hiking after Christmas trees, for instance, certainly helps in developing perspective. As child and adult I have spotted several perfect trees one hundred yards away, only to discover up close that they measure fifteen feet against a canyon wall.

Only a few times, and then as an adult, have I walked ridges for deer. I am the better for it, especially since I define myself as scout, not hunter. Walking in that diminishing darkness has shown me the world in layers. At first, still in moonlight, I watch below for shapes and motion, but the harder I look, the less certain I am. Are the dark patterns across the canyon only cedars? Could that be the outline of a shoulder and head in the buck brush, or is it too early for an animal to be lying down in cover? Staring too long at any one thing only complicates my vision, and so I look up and glance from left to right along the opposite ridge. It is tempting to continue my gaze up to stars, bleaching as a hint of pink seeps into the valley, but I will wait for that. I think of my father's words: "It is the coldest moment of the day," then add my own, "and the calmest." I walk ahead, southwest as the ridge runs, eyes sweeping below again until I am positioned to observe the next finger of the canyon. I kneel to repeat the process, this time stealing a glance at my left foot and at the yucca, covered with frost, beside it. As my eyes scan left to right along a ridge, I admit the horizon, now licked with light. "Could you call that magenta?" I wonder. Out of the canyons, north, a patchwork of fields fills the Platte Valley.
of cottonwoods in the river rises the CO-OP grain elevator; "GOTHENBURG"—I know the letters are spelled out on its cylinders, even though it is too far and too dark to see them. I am thinking of the smell of pancakes and coffee. Before it is even possible to think "shape" in that light, I see movement. First three and then, one by one, three more deer materialize upon the ridge about two hundred yards away. I keep waiting for one more that doesn't come. All are does, I guess (I cannot see antlers), but I mark their progress until they descend gracefully from view. Turning back, I see the pickup below, beside the stock tank. Dad is already halfway there. I blow on my hands, quicken my pace, and think "coffee."

Sometimes there are easy pheasants along the road or quickly spotted in slight cover, and that is more shooting than hunting—a pure flurry of action. But walking for pheasants means constant attention to process and place, a frame of mind that melts away day-to-day bother and invites anticipation. It both thrills and calms me.

Small pockets of cover interrupt the perimeter of grain fields; we walk them up from the wide bottoms to their narrow tops. As a boy I usually hunted with just my father. (While I was in high school, my friend Uno would join us; these days it is Charles, my brother-in-law, who often walks with us.) But with three hunters we want a blocker at the top to keep birds from running ahead of my partner and me. Once the pickup coasts to a stop, we travel quickly and quietly, in awkward, uneven steps across the corn. Down the fence line and to the far side of the draw I go, slower now that I am in the cover. Shotgun held diagonally across my chest, eyes level, I weave back and forth through the bottom and halfway up the side, pausing occasionally to listen. When it is dry, I have heard pheasants creep; even when it is not, my pausing might make them fly, I think. We may signal with our hands, but the only talking would be a single calling out—" hen!"—if one flushes towards my partner as he faces the sun. Yet there is a world of sound: the slide and creak of a loose wire on old fence as I step over; the whip and rustle of my legs sliding through brush; the almost deafening snap of my boot on a stalk. Most explosive, the whirring wingbeat and startled crow of a rooster flushing stills all else. Even the gun's thunder is less and separate.

A few draws are almost too large for method or description. Deep and wide, they split cornfields, some extending for several hundred yards before rising to push sweet clover or sunflowers into the corn. Others, unpastured canyons, run for a mile or more, their dark side pockets punctuating grain fields at intervals. Such cover is hard to hunt well. No matter how large the group of hunters, the birds are never surrounded and seldom surprised.

For a time we hunted big cover as part of a group, but there was too much excitement. An occasion that comes quickly to mind is the last one, the opening day of the autumn I had just turned fourteen. Dad and I hunted in a group of nine that shot forty-five pheasants. One, an albino, we had mounted for the farmer, Bill, to put in his living room; he had wanted to shoot it. At noon we put our lunches away when he invited us all to the house for a sitdown dinner. But of that spectacular hunt I remember these things best: always worrying where everyone else was positioned and being uneasy about shooting; watching birds flush wildly from several places at once and hearing shots ring out ineffectually all around; hurrying everything; finally sitting it out in the car, my shoulder stinging where I had been sprayed with buckshot. Too public, merely social, it was a day more filled with talking than noticing.

But even so some of my finest memories are of walking for pheasants in the big draws. One afternoon two years ago, I walked alone in a freezing rain as happily as I can remember walking any cover. Dad stopped the pickup at the bottom of a hill, and we paused to consider what little method was possible for such a place in that weather. I warmed my right hand on the defrost vent and looked through the icing windshield as we exchanged familiar words about staying warm and shooting straight. To the north up the next hill, a picked cornfield spread as far as I could see; the canyon, once pasture, meandered wide and deep through the heart of it. I had agreed to walk it up only to the next fence line where Dad would wait. The door sprang open in the wind. "See you in an hour," he said.

Down the ditch bank, over the fence, and across a pasture I walked. By the time I began to climb the hill to gain the canyon rim, my legs were nearly as raw with damp cold as my hands were. Leaning into the hill, climbing diagonally, I placed my feet at small ridges (cat steps) as I found them. Standing on the rim, I paused to catch my breath and to feel the full force of the driving storm.

As I looked down and along the canyon, the corn field seemed diminished. But my most vivid impression was that the steady, howling wind was itself a kind of silence.

Descending into the cover and beneath the wind, I knew that that was true. I could hear my own breathing again. As I slipped and grabbed and stumbled down the steep wall, I was almost giddy at the prospect before me. Over much of the canyon floor lay a crosshatch of fallen sunflowers. Along the edges, blue stem, colored a deep rust, grew sometimes to six feet.
Sweet clover and plum thickets and sumac, a few small cedars and ash trees—all gave color and texture to this gray day.

I tried to walk the tangled center of the canyon but gave it up, panting from the effort. Moving along the west wall and up into some of the side draws, I briefly wished for the right companion to mind this hour, but I did not feel alone. A startled coyote rose from its bed and bounded through the matted sunflowers. (Perhaps thirty minutes later it repeated the effort, this time reluctantly thrashing up the east wall and into the corn.) Elegant, unmoving, two does faced me from no more than twenty yards; I paused, too, and watched for what seemed like minutes. During my walk I saw several rabbits, flushed a covey of quail, and counted a total of fourteen pheasants (none of the roosters was in range). I wondered how many pheasants I had walked past, but I did not worry about them. I did not shoot at the quail, not because—as always—their chaotic flight startled me, but because they would have been almost impossible to retrieve from such heavy cover.

When I finally reached the pickup I knew, with my father, that the hour had been a great success. The light was almost gone and at home there would be supper and good conversation. Still the speedometer never touched 40 on the way, for there were possibilities of things to see and say, moments to be held in the company of other memories.

Jake

Jake liked putting scrap to use.  
Built a shed from flotsam once.  
Also shelves from Mills’ ditched trellis.  
Then small rooms to house them as more windows, doors, boards turned up curbside.

But that’s not why folks called Jake strange. Not because he hated waste. Other things upset them more. Like how he dressed.

Never wore a tie to church.  
Just the same gray cords. Same leather jacket off St. Bridget’s first Good Rummage table.

Like the way he whistled, grinning, through most any situation.

Like how he buddied with The Poor. Claimed they’d “earned their cover” which he fashioned o’er the years. From whatever.

Stocked them with our tossed-out ranges, couches, beds, chairs, curtains.

Fixed up toys our kids’d shucked for all their grubby children.

Scavenged gardens for leftovers which we’d left to rot.

Oh, Jake was strange all right.  
So when he died last week at eight-six, who came to his wake?

Mostly those he’d proved were useful yet.

Lois Reiner

December, 1989
This is the season when bookstores, normally rather calm and sedate places, become as harried as other mercantile premises. At other times of the year, one has room to put packages down on a stack of those remaindered coffee table slabs, and browse slowly through the shelves, pondering and considering, memory nudged by each title, a slow, perhaps as Marvell would put it, a “vegetable” pace.

But alas, world enough and time do not characterize Christmas book shopping. Everyone and his sister seems to be jostling toward the counter to buy a copy of *Fifty Lite Ways to Make More Money in Your Spare Time by Being Your Best Friend and Winning Through Intimidation*. If you like to give books for Christmas, perhaps you could use our list to help compile a list, and then you could simply dash into the nearest B. Dalton, fill up your shopping bag and go. And when you’re home, put on the kettle and gloat over your choices before you get out the brown paper to send them to their recipients. And may you receive every one you ask for!

The Editor’s choices are clear. She will give, to anyone who looks remotely as if they could be read to, one or more Beatrix Potter books. The problem is to choose, since no one should be deprived of Peter Rabbit, but there is also Ginger and Pickles with their shop, and wonderful Mrs. Tiggywinkle with her hot iron and steamy kitchen, not to mention the Two Bad Mice, and of course the Tailor of Gloucester. Were ever words written more wrung with loss and regret than “No more twist!” And to receive? While waiting for the next Toni Morrison, she would like *A Book of Books*—the *Reader’s Catalogue*, edited by Geoffrey O’Brien, 1500 pages about books, for only twenty dollars. (Reader’s Catalogue Press, 1989.)
Alan Harre, VU President, recommends giving Why Leaders Can’t Lead: The Unconscious Conspiracy Continues, by Warren Bennis. He comments that this book, which describes the current conditions under which leaders in many fields try with varying success to carry out their tasks, “is a helpful social, political, economic and cultural analysis.” (Jossey-Bass Press, 1989.) He would like to receive On Leadership, by John W. Gardner, published in 1989 by The Free Press. “The subject is one in which I am very interested, and the reviews have been glowing.”

Stephen J. Carter, Vice President of Concordia Publishing House, has a choice for giving. It is David J. Ludwig’s new book Renewing the Family Spirit, published (not surprisingly) by Concordia Publishing House in 1989. “Written in a popular style, the book offers a hopeful, creative approach for dealing with the powerful spiritual forces at work in family relationships.” What would he like to receive? Walter Wangerin’s Miz Lil and the Chronicles of Grace. “I delight in Wangerin’s gift for a story-telling that probes the very heart of existence itself.” (Harper and Row, 1988.)

Dot Nuechterlein would like a book she describes as “a fairy tale—Equal Partnership for Women and Men in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Its author, date and publisher are unknown!” Now busier than ever after leaving her job as Executive Secretary of the VU Guild, she recommends giving an old book, A Sheaf of Bluebells, by Baroness Orczy. “It’s my favorite adventure romance, and a nice antidote for a crowded, workaday life.” (Out of print, though you should be able to find several editions of this author’s more popular work, The Scarlet Pimpernel.)

Jim Nuechterlein, former Cresset editor and now an associate with The Institute on Religion and Public Life, writes that he has two favorite books to give. The first is a classic, Kingsley Amis’ Lucky Jim, first published in 1953. It is “the best of all academic novels, and the best thing Amis ever did. An ideal present for a budding academic. Laughing-out-loud funny.” Moving to New York has not affected our predecessor’s penchant for argument. “Recommended for academics because—in the circles in which they move—it’s so countercultural, Real Presences, by George Steiner.” Jim calls it “a profound, learned, and moving argument of the case for transcendence, why Nietzsche and his successors are all wrong and God isn’t dead.” (University of Chicago Press, 1989.)

Alfred W. Meyer of VU’s School of Law, and a member of the Cresset Advisory Board, would give We Are Still Married, a collection of stories and letters by Garrison Keillor, published in 1989. Meyer warns that you should be aware of making a career choice more difficult if you give this book to a young Lutheran who aspires to be a musician. In an essay about Lutherans and orchestras, Keillor observes “To each person God gives some talent, such as writing, just to name one, and to many persons He has given musical talent though not as many as think so. For the young Lutheran, the question must be: Do I have a genuine God-given musical talent or do I only seem gifted in comparison to other Lutherans?” Meyer further advises that “if the receiver of this book does not report having smiled, giggled, or guffawed throughout the reading of these pieces, that person is a Scrooge, and deserves to be stricken from your Christmas list.”

Phil Gilbertson, VU’s new dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, fulfills our request with a list that shows him well suited to his office, since it refers to a wide spectrum of interests. He says he would give “gifts of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” In the first category, King Lear, the greatest work of dramatic literature in the western world. Of liberty, The Worldwatch Institute’s State of the World 1990, a litany of the world’s current slaveries. And finally, under the heading Pursuit of Happiness, Phil places The Best Tree Book Ever, “a book that places the cultivated tree lover amid bark and root, with stunning color photos and plentiful botanical and folkloric detail.”
Finally, with just the words of wisdom and humor we counted on when we asked him, John Streitelmeier, twenty-year editor of The Cresset, and professor emeritus of geography, sends us the following:

I believe that every child, by the age of ten, needs to have begun developing

1. a set of convictions which have the ring of truth and are, therefore, beyond compromise,
2. the capacity to be amused, rather than impressed, by pompous absurdity, and
3. an accurate knowledge of where in the world he is.

I would like, therefore, to give each of my five grandchildren

1. a copy of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, paperback, so that they will read it rather than enshrine it,
2. a copy of Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland with the Tenniel illustrations, and
3. a copy of the most recent edition of the National Geographic Atlas of the World.

In return for which, I would hope that they might pool their resources and give me anything that I don't already have written by Martin Marty or Jaroslav Pelikan, who in my retirement have become my links to that increasingly distant but still lovely country where high religion and high scholarship intersect, as for example, in Pelikan's The Melody of Theology. (Harvard, 1988.)

Waiting for Gabriel

After the wet wool-covered days with their shopping bag frenzies, and after the cranberry-stuffed evenings, I sit with the sacred holiday trash (scraps of wrapping and leftover ham) and sing stale songs about shepherds who abide on window sills watching over elves, and follow the electric stars as they blink aimlessly on the tree, and wait.

No waiting could be more ludicrous than this, not even the nine improbable months of a pregnant virgin. She had a womb. I have none. Yet I wait too, hoping that I can conceive, grow big, and give birth to God. Come, great Gabriel, come to me.

Tim Bascom
Christmas, 1988
One of the largest claims I wish to make forContinental Driftis that it will, as a "novel of the moment," take the prominent place in American literature that certain other such novels have taken. By "novel of the moment" I mean a story like The Great Gatsby or The Sun Also Rises, focusing on a short stretch of time in the immediate past—a year or so ago. Not a retrospective, such as Dos Passos' U.S.A., covering 50 years, or Cather's O Pioneers! covering about 20. By "place" I mean the obvious: we cannot do without certain novels if we wish to understand the times in which they grew—"we" professional readers are much interested in the reciprocity of texts and contexts, the ways that each helps constitute the other.

Here I necessarily evade full discussion of what exactly a "prominent" place means, since literary prominence in the United States has to do not only with merit but with the little immeasurable ripples that go forth every time a teacher puts a book on the syllabus. Gatsby, with 182 pages, and Sun, with 247, are perfect for classroom use, while Continental Drift has 366 pages in the large-format paperback and 421 in the mass-market printing. Since we are probably close to the day when students will mutiny over stories longer than 250 pages, Continental Drift will have to live by word of mouth and obscure scholarship rather than by generations of professors who reread it for teaching and by susceptible college students whose forced encounter may turn into love. As for example Henry James's great novel of a Young Sensitive White Female, The Portrait of a Lady.

To place a novel alongside Hemingway and Fitzgerald and Jamesian masterpieces implies "classic" or "canonical" status. In suggesting a few definitions of a classic, novelist Italo Calvino observes, conventionally, that these books "we find all the more new, fresh, and unexpected upon reading, the more we thought we knew them from hearing them talked about." I can imagine hearing Continental Drift talked about slightly sardonically by our Book-of-the-Month Club reader:

A guy who should know better gets fed up with his life in a perfectly decent New England town, moves his family to Florida (where they have to live in a trailer camp), and starts his downward spiral by working in a highway liquor store owned by his vulgar brother who has a link with organized crime. He has the obligatory extramarital affair (surprise: she's a black woman), and soon runs into an old buddy who sets him up with a boat taking polyester Pennsylvanians and Ohioans out fishing among the Keys. He drifts into danger as it gets harder and harder to make a living in Lotus-land, so that before he wakes up, he and his boat are bringing in Haitians on the last leg of their long illegal pilgrimage. Because he isn't shrewd or suspicious enough (oh, these young sensitive white males!), he's intercepted one night by the Coast Guard, at which point his Jamaican crewman forces all sixteen of the human cargo off the deck. Hearing of one survivor, he takes his wad of cash (the fees for the tragic trip) to Miami, to Little Haiti, hoping somehow to redeem his recent months by giving it to her—so that he can start another "new life." Incautious, a conspicuous interloper, he is robbed and beaten, and dies.

Everything in the above summary is accurate, yet talked about in this way the novel is another garish tale set in the glitz and squalor of the Sun Belt, yet another story of marginal people running up against me-first people, infused with an acceptable amount of irony and producing in readers the conventional portion of pity and terror.

Take another of Calvino's definitions, however, one that runs a little past the commonplace: "The classics are books that exert a peculiar influence, both when they refuse to be eradicated from the mind and when they conceal themselves in the folds of memory, camouflaging themselves as the collective or individual
consciousness.” Talked about in these terms, by the professional reader, Continental Drift looks something like this:

I can’t get it out of my head. Robert Dubois could be almost anybody in the 1980s. It’s a book all about deciding, about making judgments, about figuring out if anybody around you is leading a life you can emulate. About apportioning: how much and what parts of yourself to yourself and to your spouse (assuming as obsolete the era of “total commitment” and “one flesh”). About deciding whether to stay put or venture forth. About whether you’re “supposed” to do one or the other, if you live in a particular country at a particular time. Dubois in New Hampshire and Florida has to decide constantly, and so does Vanise Dorsinville in Haiti and the Bahamas—it’s a luminous and wonderful pairing in the reader’s mind, since the two live separate lives in the book until convergence on the ill-fated boat. The issue faced by Dubois’ mistress, Marguerite Dill, a black nurse, is also the issue of deciding. She’s stable, sensible, but still marginal and uneasy, not sure how her place and time are impinging on her own solid core of integrity, and what moves will maintain that integrity. Endless (but not challenging credulity), the clamoring phenomena that seem to be abiding signals about the nature of the good life: children, and whether they’re happy in school; the little boat you had, that seemed to represent therapeutic aloneness; a steady job (and it seems to matter what kind); the presence of one decent woman to talk to and make love with, and another decent woman to remind you of your past, your continuum, your contracted responsibilities.

I can’t get it out of my mind: the unspeakable horrors of brutality and misery that men inflict on vulnerable women in the Western Hemisphere, islands and continent both. The ways that life, like a malicious tour guide, brings a person to some don’t, and those who don’t will likely get smashed as they drift about there in the traffic. How in America you always think everybody else has more freedom and more goods, but what a terrifying thing it is, often, to learn the concealed costs that others are paying.

A classic, continues Italo Calvino, “does not necessarily teach us anything we did not know before.” But, “In a classic we sometimes discover something we have always known (or thought we knew), but without knowing that this author said it first, or at least is associated with it in a special way.”

Here the professional reader falters. I don’t “keep up” and my colleagues don’t keep up. You can see this by the way we arrange our teaching, the “Americanists” in the department carrying on up to World War I, roughly, at which point the “modernists” take over, responsible for both British and American literature to the present. So the modernists aren’t exactly thinking of Fenimore Cooper or Nathaniel Hawthorne as they construct their syllabi, their continuities; their era began with Ezra (“Make it new”) Pound, though backward glances at protomodernists like Melville, James, and Dickinson occur. And the Americanists are not necessarily up on Sukenick, Cooper, Didion, Bobbie Ann Mason, and Russell Banks—perhaps extrapolations, perhaps not, of Dreiser, Wharton, and Crane.

So I venture with trepidation, not knowing (and therefore not able to use for comparisons) all the important novels of Russell Banks’s generation. As to what it is that “we have always known,” but that is going to be associated with Continental Drift “in a special way,” I am going to say, essentially, that in America-the-unpredictable an ambitious novel has to be a crossroads of histories—schoolbook history, unwritten ethnic/religious history, the private “soul” history of someone reasonably “representative,” and those salient issues of the present moment which will be seen as major strands of history by later historians. This strikes me as Banks’s conviction and his accomplishment, and it’s quite a bit of traffic in the crossroads.

We are still on the subject of why it is that Continental Drift as a “novel of our time” is going to become permanently significant, and how that connects with What The Novel Is Up To. I hazard the assertion that too few novelists of Banks’s era are as ambitious as he is, and as convinced of the importance of multiple histories, and as adept at bringing them into fiction. Clearly that adroitness is of central importance in Continental Drift. William H. Gass, novelist, critic, philosopher, with his customary provocation, observes: “Any novel set in the present will shortly become historical. We need only wait. It is not the subject so much that matters as it is the author’s attitudes and resources”—his skills of traffic management, if you will.

So we are not talking here about the writing of American “historical fiction,” as John Barth has done with such brio in The Sot-Weed Factor, or as Gore Vidal has undertaken in his series of novels on American history. Of concern are novels depicting the present time, in which novels a writer shows how, both conventionally and unexpectedly, the past works upon the present and aspects of the present become the significant (or “usable”) past. In doing so, revealing the dark side of the moon, a fancy way of saying that an ambitious writer—one with significant “attitudes” and abundant “resources”—wishes to startle us by revealing what is
genuinely there in the material at hand but usually concealed from view.

In older American literature a memorable example is Willa Cather in *My Antonia*. There she brilliantly invokes Virgil's *Georgics* (being read by YSWM Jim Burden): "I shall be the first, if I live, to bring the Muse into my country." The text refers to Jim's teacher, YSWM Gaston Cleric, who dies before he can write about his own "rocky strip of New England coast," but the subtext concerns Cather herself, as writer, proud literary pioneer, surprising Americans not only by depicting rude Nebraska but by aligning that accomplishment with a "classical" ambition. Look more closely at my prairie wheat fields, she seems to say. You may see by their side the Mincio River of Vergil.

Look more closely, in *Continental Drift*, at Vanise Dorsinville, and you will see Christopher Columbus and Ponce de Leon:

Columbus approaches from the East in search of Cathay, and Ponce de Leon cruises north from Puerto Rico looking for the fabled Bimini, and now comes Vanise, huddled by the low rail in the bow of a small wooden fishing boat out of Haiti, scouring the horizon for a glimpse of America. None of them is lost. All three know they'll recognized the substance of their idea as soon as they see it, Columbus his Cathay, Ponce his Bimini, Vanise her Florida.

Again it must be said that the voice of the novel is inspired by the all-knowing *loa*, to whom all of history presumably is present and known, for whom such mythologizing of an obscure Haitian woman is natural rather than ostentatious. I would argue against those readers who might find this sort of thing ostentatious, and Banks himself in an interview contributes to the argument:

What I think depresses me sometimes about American writers is our mistrust of history and our unwillingness to discover and apply to our own work and to the world around us any sense of history. Most of us abandon all hope, in a way, of having a historical perspective, so we tend to write about the domestic most deliberately and pointedly. Only a few writers, like Ed Doctorow, Robert Stone or one or two others stick right out because they do have a sense of history, ... [T]hey are obliged to write about different things, not *just* the family, not *just* divorce.

What we are not used to may seem ostentatious, and we are not used to history in our fiction of today, as in American literature we are not used to an African divinity bringing forth a story for us. Which brings me briefly to Banks's novel of 1989, *Affliction*.

VI

There is no need to agree with John Barth about how the career of a writer should proceed. "I feel," he says, "that an important part of being a writer involves one's commitment to keep raising the high-bar jump with each new effort, and giving each new effort as much energy, grace, commitment, and *brio* as possible." Yet the feeling cannot be dismissed; as Joyce Carol Oates observes: "All serious writers are interested in experimentation. It is a means by which they honor their craft."

In advancing claims for *Continental Drift* I have been trying to display Russell Banks at work honoring his craft. This is one of the reasons we keep on with the humanities in schools and colleges: to create occasions for acts of honor. A sense of personal honor is not so mysterious, but the obligation of honoring something abstract (that continuum of human achievement in novel, poem, symphony, building, sculpture, painting, quilt, or garden) is only gradually acquired. Yet it is finally a large part of what we unconsciously mean by "being human." We pay tribute to skill of eye and hand because payment means we have been able to recognize worth. The person unable to recognize past and present worth proves Donne wrong; such a person is an island, a drifting one, unconnected to anything, solipsist, damned.

In the case of his 1989 novel, *Affliction*, Russell Banks acts honorably, in the sense of undertaking serious as well as "commercial" work, but the will to experiment, the energy for the trip behind the moon, seems to have dissipated. A substantial novel (354 pages), *Affliction* is also almost devoid of a sense of history, truly ironic, since the narrator is a history teacher, brother of the main character. The story is a story of "our time," but without the resonance of past and future so satisfying in *Continental Drift*. The main character, a YSWM (well, age 41) named Wade Whitehouse, is shown coming apart as a result of staying in Cbatamount, New Hampshire (also Bob Dubois' hometown), existing marginally as well driller and town cop, rather than seeking a new life elsewhere. The exact opposite of Dubois. As in many novels of today, his relationships (yes, family; yes, divorce) get him down, especially the ongoing persecution by his aged father, who in earlier years has been a child-beater, wife-abuser, a generally disgusting figure. We are to understand that this warped childhood is partly causative when at the end Whitehouse commits two murders and disappears from
The abstract title may reveal something about Banks’s modest undertaking in this new novel. Unlike the confident, all-knowing loa, the voice of the history-teacher narrator seems unable to draw very many firm conclusions as to why people do things, or why bad things happen to ordinary people, or whether something is happening to the continent. To him, Whitehouse and the cosmos are inexplicable, and since he is not particularly adept at either psychologizing or historicizing (he instead runs around with a tape recorder), we are left essentially with local color, with soap opera, with the sense that we have been here before—perhaps with a screenwriter who has been in analysis for a quick couple of months. It is thoroughly interesting, even “gripping”—and also quite hermetic, and not suggesting any new possibilities for the genre or the imagination. The publisher’s “Dear Reviewer” letter confirms one’s intuition: that What Banks Is Up To is exorcising his personal and family past.

VII

Thinking of a famous Henry James story, novelist Cynthia Ozick contends: “The true Lesson of the Master, then, is, simply, never to venerate that which is complete, burnished, whole, in its grand organic flowering or finish.” Through her speaks Postmodernism, which is to say that a large number of professional readers have grown tired of the sense of a whole, whether a whole achieved by artifice (“finish”) or the whole that seems latent in the materials and rhythms of the subject (“organic”).

The objection is not the old one, the crass and faulty analogy—that everything in life is contingent, that life is mere sequence rather than continuum, not a whole, and that a novel should therefore resist tidiness. Ozick, a writer notable for choosing words carefully, does mean “venerate.” There is no necessity to honor a thoroughly finished story, since the imagination of the writer may have found reasons for not rounding things off. Good reasons are better gods than old rules.

Banks has found reasons for rounding off some things and not others, daringly ending Continental Drift with a vigorous authorial intrusion, an Envoi. (The voice here continues, I think, to be that of the author made bold by the loa.) It’s mostly a synoptic account of the futures of his survivors. Elaine Dubois, long-suffering wife, now a widow, will go back to New Hampshire and raise her three children. Her late husband “will be to her as Bob’s father, brother and best friend eventually became to him, an example to avoid.” She will work at the cannery and retire at 65, emphysema coming on. As for the Haitians, they will keep on coming to the United States, though many are “drowned, brutalized, cheated and exploited,” because “where they come from remains worse than where they are going to.”

Clearly this extended revelation—an italic paragraph two pages long—is not what they approve in writing classes. Nor is the tone of it, especially the extraordinary peroration that follows disclosure of these futures and ends the book. It is a pulpit gesture, an evangelist’s cry of moralizing and excoriation. Only if the writer, helped by Legba, has established himself as clear of eye and steady of hand (and I have implicitly argued this for Banks in Continental Drift) can such a peroration as this hope for acceptance:

Books get written—novels, stories and poems stuffed with particulars that try to tell us what the world is, as if our knowledge of people like Bob Dubois and Vanise and Claude Dorsinville will set people like them free. It will not. Knowledge of the facts of Bob’s life and death changes nothing in the world. Our celebrating his life and grieving over his death, however, will. Good cheer and mournfulness over lives other than our own, even wholly invented lives—no, especially wholly invented lives—deprive the world as it is of some of the greed it needs to continue to be itself. Sabotage and subversion, then, are this book’s objectives. Go, my book, and help destroy the world as it is.

The question of whether the world’s economy actually functions like this (the more cheer and mournfulness, the less greed) is debatable, but surely Banks’s real point is that we ought to bring to consciousness what it is we do when we read. If we (Americans) were to ask What The Economy Is Up To, we would probably answer that greed is a large part of it, and even if we affirmed greed we might find it a new and unsettling thought that the hours spent reading a novel have deprived us of hours we could have spent enlarging our fiscal gains.

What we are up to when reading any novel is the act of sacrificing whatever else we might have spent time on. But in this sense reading is just a trade-off, not necessarily sabotage and subversion. Only the so-called “serious” novel is the dangerous type, taking us away from accustomed experience by putting us in touch with unritualized experience. And that special kind of experience compels from us emotions that we have to think about rather than simply indulge—think about whether they were appropriate, adequate. To ponder
the nature and extent of our emotions might bring up in a reader's mind the sense that greed is one of the tackiest and most sophomoric emotions, but I think Banks/Legba is on shaky psychological ground here.

Still, the importance of experiencing unritualized behavior is not to be underestimated. Ritualized behavior—a typical major league baseball game, let's say—is important for individuals. People need what people need: excitement, a sense of belonging, an activity to review and analyze later without being daunted by impossible complexity. But unless the park burns down, or a star player fails to appear (e.g. Ted Williams of the Boston Red Sox, a central traumatic incident in Bob's boyhood), there will be nothing "subversive" about the occasion, in the sense of compelling emotions that are rich or new, and deserving scrutiny as such.

One point to notice is that "celebrating" and "grieving" mean the calling to mind of specifics about an individual. Nuances of emotion vary with the quirks of the individual, and it takes time to think about nuances. It is the "serious" novel, more than the two-hour film or hour-long TV special, that manages to assemble the larger number of nuances. And of course the two emotions named by Banks are emotions of generosity and reaching out; these are the opposites to "greed," and therefore may, in a sense, "deprive" the world of the greed we might otherwise be feeling.

It is to Banks's credit, in Continental Drift, that in prose unfailingly clear (yet often rich and subtle) he suggests such ideas as this, on what the consequences may be when one reads. Also to his credit, as already mentioned: drawing valid relationships, too numerous to mention, between today's "ongoing history of the New World" and the experiences of the past; displaying the courage-and-skill (one finally has to insist on these together) to find a needed new kind of narrator; and demonstrating vividly that the story of religion in America and the story of immigration to America are stories as open-ended as they have ever been. It is also to his credit—in both novels—that he depicts a main character who actually wants to be, in the author's words, "a good man"; the professional reader hopes that the Book-of-the-Month Club reader notices that worthy ambition, since the rowdy mouths of certain characters will otherwise distract from Banks's moral seriousness.

In the interview already cited (in the literary journal New Letters, spring 1987), which I held off looking at until my third reading of the novel, Banks has a great many intelligent things to say, on a variety of topics. Particularly gratifying is the sense of ambition, of obligation, that I later saw and respected in The Book of Jamaica, which one hopes he will return to in novels after Affliction.

A vision of the history of our country is crucial to our understanding of ourselves. This kind of obligation is Homeric. That's what writers have always done: told us who we were, where we came from, where the ends of our lands were, that sort of thing. That's why you brought the bards in from the cold and let them sit around the fires. We've given that function off to the academic specialists, but fiction writers and poets have historically always played that role.
"THAT'S WHEN IT SNOWS": A CHRISTMAS NARRATIVE

Stanley J. Meyer

"I'm not really sure."

It isn't the most reassuring answer that a father can give his son—I know that—but I don't always know what to say that is also honest. Sometimes an answer that sounds non-committal and confused really is the best answer, especially when a child comes along with yet another one of those "simple" questions.

The question had been confoundingly simple, almost silly: "Dad, why do we celebrate Jesus' birthday in December?" Michael's always had a curious curiosity. The suspicious part of me, though, wonders if this conniving little eight-year-old isn't about some trickery, knowing that we don't have a certain date for the birthday. Kids do love to catch adults in their answers, a game I've been known to enjoy myself.

Much to my surprise, Michael seems satisfied. I half expect him to demand something logical, like, "Well, that was nine months after the angel told Mary she would have the baby." Had I given that answer, however, I would have opened myself to all those questions that parents are so careful to avoid. I thought myself clever at having avoided them too!

Michael's question wasn't exactly an important question, mind you, but it did seem to capture my imagination. I mused about it some as I stirred the logs in the fireplace. I love warm fireplaces in the winter; they bespeak a home for the heart and hand. Blowing on the coals I am like God, breathing on them the breath of life.

What scene is this now? I watch Michael doing a headstand on the couch, his head on the seat. My reverie is shaken by his comedy. The child was born upside down and hasn't corrected the defect yet.

"Ya know, Dad..." That's the way he usually begins when his fertile little mind is about to release the product of his cogitations. I grip the arms of the chair for he's liable to say anything. "I think we celebrate Jesus' birthday in December because that's when it snows." I'm never quite sure how his mind works. Perhaps things make sense to him more quickly than they do to me.

"Oh, that's when it snows." It was the leading kind of remark that Michael wants to hear. He'll tell me his idea anyway, without my invitation, but he appreciates my way of inviting his next thought.

"You know. That song. I'm Wishing for a White Christmas."

"Dreaming," I say by way of editorial correction.

"Whatever. I mean if Christmas could have snow it must be winter. Right? So it snows sometimes in December." Logic carries the day; once again Michael has put two and two together and come up with at least three.

But he has started something. Aaron, the ten-year-old, reminds us of the song, Jingle Bells, and the words "dashing through the snow." And he adds, "Don't forget Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer."

My wife, Connie, an ardent hymnologist, reminds us of two hymns: The First Noel, with its "cold winter's night that was so deep," and Cold December Flies Away. No one of us gathered at the fireplace knows this latter hymn; we decide she is too esoteric for our meager mentalities. But Michael sees in her citation an irrefutable proof. "Right," he says, "we don't sing Hot September Flies..."
Away.” He alone among us rolls with laughter. It’s an inside joke, I suspect.

Nothing can break up such a heady discussion more quickly than my wife’s announcement that the hot chocolate is ready. Real hot chocolate, mind you, made of slowly steamed milk and melted bricks of chocolate stirred together with sugar and love and topped with marshmallows—there must be marshmallows.

Snuggled down in the living room before the radiant heat from the fireplace, we pay Mama an homage for so savory an offering as hot chocolate. I watch Danny—the six-year-old—struggle to reach his tongue up to where the marshmallow is clinging just beneath his nose. I realize again how much I love the little clown. I watch Aaron absent-mindedly drifting off deep in thought with a song in his head, letting stray notes out unknowingly so that he appears to be quite peculiar. He is too soon taking on the form of a little man.

I suppose I would have noticed the nip in the air if it wasn’t for this family carnival I so enjoy. The thermostat’s at 68 degrees again; I’m sure of it. But that only makes the fire all the more warm and seductive. And, if the truth’s to be said, I’m having too much fun to care.

It is almost a sacrilege to break up this precious moment with the announcement that bedtime has arrived. They protest. I don’t blame them. But they are past due for sleep. They scamper off to bed; I scamper after them. They recite prayers with procession of words that resemble drum rolls. We kiss; we hug. They ask me to please not to give them “slobber kisses.” We tell each other, “I love you.” It is our ritual, and it is as important to me as it is to them. Blessed sleep seems easier when the holy words and holy actions have been shared first.

I’m drawn back to the fire as to a magnet. It holds me fast; I stare into the flames, watching their excited movements. Connie has gone about some other tasks. I have this warmth for myself, and I rest back, my feet propped up on the hearth. My back is cold; my feet and hands are warm. What a strange sensation! Like a tug-of-war of good and evil going on between hot and cold, and I am the playing field. I have felt this way too many times in my life. And the rules of play elude me.

My mind wanders, thinking of ways in which others may notice the contrast of temperatures also. Uninvited pictures come to mind of those who address themselves to other fires this night, fires struck in old oil drums under bridges in our cities. How I wish I hadn’t thought of that. Life can be cold for many, and I hate it for that. Or those who are alone, who haven’t even someone to hold their aged hands to keep their fingers from the cold. Or those whose patience grows cold, waiting for an end to despair, and end to illness, an end to hunger, an end to a lingering end. Life can be cold; may the whole church on earth ever find its coldness intolerable, do war with it, and crush its evil ugliness. Veni Domine Jesu: Come, Lord Jesus.

Now see what I have done! I hate feeling depressed. Is it the cold that affects me so? Surely some good also comes with the terrible cold, I reason.

There is one thing especially that makes the cold beautiful and desireable. It is the snow. I do love the snow. It is a blanket of softness that absorbs the harsh noises of the city, that covers the trash and decorates the bushes, that laces the homes with a garland of white. Only the snow seems so gracious, so pure.

I remember walking the snow-laden courtyards of the seminary. I remember the nightfall, the sharp cold, the crunch of snow giving way, the reflection of moonlight off its surface, the tracing of paths others had etched as they scurried through the night to the warmth of home. I remember the softness of it all, and the way in which a quiet seemed to descend. I remember that I wanted always to remember.

Pure snow. Gentle Christmas. Dear Christ. They have something in common. A new snowfall is the grace—the Christ—that touches the coldness of the earth with gentleness and peace. Because of the snow—the Christ—the earth is remedied as it is remade, finds a beauty it had forgotten, discovers a good in the midst of its trouble-someness, and begins the hope for a spring of new life. It is in the snow—the Christ—that we begin to see the paths marked in the land for our travel back to home and hearth.

"I’m on to something," I say to myself, moving slightly to prevent my feet from being too well-warmed on the hearth. "Pure snow. Gentle Christmas. Dear Christ." Michael calls from the bedroom, an echo often heard in the house after he has settled into bed. "G’night, Mom. G’night, Dad!"

It’s then that I realize Michael was right. Jesus was born in December because that’s when it snows.
Letter From Syria

Walter Rast

It was midmorning in July when we arrived in the heart of Syria's capital. Along the streets, a sea of cars and trucks pushed forward, their drivers losing patience in the blistering heat. We were dropped off into this mayhem by our taxi driver who had brought us all the way from Jordan, and who would meet us at the same place a week later for our return trip. The first item on our agenda was to call on the Director-General of Antiquities at his office on the second floor of the imposing National Museum of Syria. He and his staff are the overseers of excavation projects in Syria, offering assistance to the various international groups working in this country. They are also in charge of the museum's vast cultural collection unearthed at sites like Mari, Ugarit, and Dura-Europas. Despite tensions between our governments, American researchers are welcome in Syria, and we experienced a gracious reception. At the same time, our proposed visit to American and non-American digs in Syria was granted official recognition.

By the time we left the museum, our rented car was ready and as we drove away from the city we were relieved to abandon its exhaust fumes and noise. Soon, however, we would observe another serious environmental problem. Beyond the green oasis of Damascus, the countryside turns brown, white, and blue. The brown in the natural sandy soil cover. The white and blue are thousands of grocery bags clinging stubbornly to desert scrub and trees, a curse of the plastic age, devastating to a country like Syria where desert winds sweep up everything in their path, spreading it across the landscape. We found ourselves irritated by this sight, partly out of sympathy for local residents who have to live with it, and also because archaeological work today pays close attention to the impact humans have had on the past environment, often with implications important for our own time.

The landscape of Syria possesses a varied and natural beauty. To the east is an extensive desert region continuing into Iraq; to the south the black basalt hills of the Hauran that join with the still-disputed Golan Heights (or Jaulan, as they are known in Arabic); to the north the mountainous country that leads to Turkey; and to the west the splendid Mediterranean coast. Even the desert's monotony is broken by the Euphrates and Habur river valleys. Our objective was to travel across this desert to the ruins of Palmyra, and from there to the northeast, where Americans and others are currently working.

The road to Palmyra crosses a large tract of the desert east of Damascus. Driving on this road for several hours, we passed very few vehicles since the number of towns in this direction is small. Late in the afternoon we caught our first glimpse of the oasis and its colossal Roman ruins. Our carefully-made reservations at the legendary Zenobia Hotel, named for Palmyra's famous queen, proved to be unnecessary. Only three other people were staying there—a young couple from

Walter Rast, Professor of Theology at VU, led an inspection trip to archaeological sites in the Middle East this past summer as second vice president of the American Schools of Oriental Research. He is now on sabbatical leave in Tuebingen, Germany.
France, and a Japanese prehistorian who was investigating Palaeolithic remains around the spring of Tadmor, the earlier name of the site.

Palmyra is a ruin where fantasy can have its fling. Having visited the site twenty-five years ago, I was prepared to enjoy the rapture of being there again. Since the sun sets late in the summer evenings, we had time for several hours of exploring. Later, sitting under the date palm trees of the hotel garden, we watched the last rays of light sweep the ruins as it has for nearly two thousand years, before night fell once again. This is Lawrence of Arabia country, and for a brief moment we could imagine ourselves as another Lawrence, or perhaps an Indiana Jones. Romance dies hard, even in experienced archaeologists!

The gateway to northeast Syria is the modern city of Hasaka, some 200 miles from Palmyra. Beyond this remote town, the great mounds begin to appear. Tell Brak, Chagar Bazar, Tell Leilan are names one sees in the Louvre, and in other major museums of the world. Their excavation has brought to light long-lost people like the Mitannians, whose history parallels that of the civilizations of Assyria and Babyloun.

On one of the days we were in this area we paid a visit to the directors of an excavation on one of these mounds. Professors Markus Waefler and Seyyare Eichler from Bern in Switzerland guided us on a tour of Tell Hamidieh, explaining what is thus far the largest Mitannian palace uncovered by archaeologists. For those who, like myself, are used to excavating more modest structures in Jordan, the building's proportions were overwhelming.

Indeed excavation of cities of this size is a lifetime project. Professor Waefler has already been working at Tell Hamidieh for years, and has build with his own hands a compound of mudbrick for his staff that fits impressively into the Syrian landscape. It was clear that these excavators would like to find an archive of ancient texts, a bonus already enjoyed by many excavators of the great Syrian sites.

Something like a thousand mounds are found in the Habur valley alone. One that stands out for its immensity is Tell Mozan, where Professor Giorgio Buccellati of UCLA is in charge. We stayed at Mozan for two days and were able to become familiar with excavations there that include work on a temple dating to just after 2000 B.C. From Tell Mozan at night we were also able to view the line of security lights on the border of Syria and Turkey. I was told that this string of lights continues for many miles toward the Mediterranean. The lights in this area were less than a mile north of the tell, and it was an eerie sight to see them during the two nights that we were there.

A rare treat came our way the second night, when we were invited to accompany the Mozan staff to a party at the home of a family in the nearby town of Amida. Even by the standards of Near Eastern custom, the hospitality of the family was unreserved. Chairs lined the walls of the living room, and in a corner sat several daughters and their cousins, dressed in their finest. The oldest person present was the grandmother, heavy-set, full of zest, throwing out occasional witty remarks. The males dominated but the mother and eldest daughter were also not to be outdone. The Arabic language lends itself well to evenings of banter and laughter like this. Amida has a fair number of Christians, and the churches in the town are very apparent, a change from farther south where mosques and minarets dominate the horizon. Syrian Christianity is still very much alive, with a history going back to the earliest days of the Christian church.

The last evening before returning to Damascus saw the fulfillment of a long-held wish. We had made arrangements to spend the night at the town of Ma'alula, about 30 miles north of Damascus. What makes Ma'alula significant for anyone interested in living history is that this is one of the few remaining villages where the Aramaic language is still used. Arabic is the national language of Syria, but this little town, isolated in the hills, has clung to the language that reaches back to the earliest history of the Christian church in Syria. Since it was the language that Jesus in all probability spoke, it is a natural place for those with an historical and linguistic interest to visit. During the evening we were there we heard Aramaic spoken in a shop and a cafe, and noticed that several churches in the town also use it in some of their special festivities. In a trip filled with the sights of the distant past, this experience of ancient sounds was a most welcome one.

As we travelled about in other countries of the Middle East on this trip, of course our eyes open not only to the ancient but also the modern world. It is difficult for those of us who live in the United States to comprehend the hostilities that afflict so many areas of the Middle East. Yet it is well to reflect that even though we are a unity of states it was not always so for us either, as our own bloody war of the previous century attests.
In Europe one seems to be somewhere in between the unity of our country and the fragmentation of the Middle East, and one senses a hope that new dynamics are at work in search of ways to surmount national and regional differences.

For anyone who loves the Middle East, the question of its unity perpetually recurs. What kind of unity might be possible? Lebanon was never far away on this trip. The night we stayed at Kfar Giladi in the north of Israel we heard the blasts of ammunition on the hills behind us. In Nicosia on a Sunday morning we walked along the Green Line separating the Greek Republic of Cyprus in the south from the Turkish occupation of the north. Two blocks away stood the classic Ledra Palace Hotel, once the favored getaway for people in the region, but since 1974 headquarters of a tenuous UN peace-keeping mission.

The Middle East has not yet found ways to mediate its problems. Out of the ashes of two deadly wars, Europe has a more sensitive memory. But in the Middle East, rockets are still fired, explosions are set off, and peace-seeking friends in Israel are dismayed by their government’s inability to break the deadlock of conflict. The civilizations of the Middle East (and Europe) have come and gone. In the ground where archaeologists dig lie the buried hopes and disappointments of peoples long ago. The historical moment of the present places before the living the question of where they will go with their choices.

I write this away from the Middle East, in Tuebingen. Nestled along the Neckar River, abounding in culture and intellectual stimulation, it is a gem of a town in the Swabian Alb. Off in the distance from the apartment where we are living are the highrise student residences where several of our exchange students from Valparaiso are living this year as they study at Tuebingen. Not far away is Reutlingen, where more VU students open their eyes to the world and its many problems. All of us—reading, learning, thinking, writing—are, I hope, becoming people who care enough to work where we are for understanding, truth, justice, and love. That is what we talk a lot about in the community at Valparaiso, and now carry with us to various parts of the world.

You, Bethlehem

You, Bethlehem, you warm inside, if I could take your Christmas home with me from church, I would not have these cold, dark thoughts that curve around snowballs. If I could talk to people who pulled at your heavy glory that first rouged the world instead of these, my own, who tinsel up their Tannenbaums and talk in wine, I would not feel one of those cruel clowns who lost a key to Christmas. You Bethlehem, you warm inside, your warm inside.

Marion Schoeberlein
War and Peace in the Academy

Linda Ferguson

"In strategy everything is very simple, but not on that account very easy."
Karl von Clausewitz in On War

Almost everyone I know at the University is drafting a Strategic Plan. Many of us not commissioned to frame the University Strategic Plan—and we are grateful to have been spared—are now conscripted for planning at the "unit" levels. Others wrestle with the tactical and logistical implications for deployment according to plans designed by others.

Critics of the academic profession who have openly proclaimed or secretly suspected that professors cannot produce anything useful would relish the difficulty with which we meet our assignments in the formal institutional planning process. The management model guidelines are quite specific and we can't seem to follow them; the deadlines established by our superiors loom ominously and we doubt that we can meet them. "Do you suppose we could get an extension on this report?" I ask my chairman. "And what, exactly, do you want in this section of the paper?" Familiar questions, but I usually answer rather than ask them.

Why is the planning process so agonizing? Contrary to "prof-scum" speculations, academics are neither too lazy nor too confused to make serious decisions; we can articulate worthy long-term goals and systematically pursue them; we are not, categorically, against change and we do, for the most part, live in the real world. Perhaps our difficulty stems from the warlike attitude which pervades the planning directives. Our own workaday language speaks of "a community of scholars," of "cultivating the life of the mind," and of "the nurturing environment of the University family."

Cultivation and family life are peacetime pursuits. Do we resent strategic planning for its violence to our prevailing metaphors? Unlike our counterparts in business, industry, the military, politics, and sports, we tend not to formulate objectives in terms of conquest. Colleagues here or at other institutions are surely not the enemy; our students are neither commodities to be traded nor territory to be conquered; and our disciplinary domains are enriched, not diminished, by the advances of our individual forays in research.

I do not suggest that individual professors are more peaceable or co-operative than others, but rather that academic work naturally generates a resistance to the tasks mandated by the strategic planning model and even to the language in which those tasks are assigned. Our way of working and of describing what we do is not readily expressed in formats designed for competitive enterprises.

Published "strategy" displays a series of discrete points, each marked with a star, on a clean sheet with lots of white space—a poem from which figurative language is expunged. The academic mind finds it difficult to leave the simple statement unexplained, to detach it, even temporarily, from its historical framework and from its complex implications for future effects. Academics resist simple formulations of objectives because they recognize the consequences, and not only the consequences of the stated objectives, but also the consequences of uttering them. We are specifically trained to avoid the reduction of the admittedly complex to the unqualifiedly simple.

Strategy speaks the language of commands, short, direct, and imperative. It activates nouns, as in "impacting" and "targeting." Its medium is the memo, its message broadcast in crisp points. The discourse of academic community is connective, expressed in prose

Linda Ferguson, Associate Professor of Music at VU, employs guerrilla tactics on occasion to improve her teaching.
and in gesture, in symbol, in nuance, and in narrative, in complex sentences, often interrogative. Strategy is aggressive, action oriented, economical, efficient, and commanded from above. Academic community—like any community—is complicated by ever-changing variables; its character may be lyrical, thoughtful, flexible, messy, inter-active, and responsive; it emerges from within and is not commanded at all. For the strategist, decisions lead to actions; in the academic community, decisions lead to new ways of thinking.

Strategy as applied to university planning, of course, allows some modification: the planning process itself is rightly recognized as a good. It dictates a healthy self-evaluation which is not incompatible with the intellectual tradition of that examination which makes life worth living. It promotes potentially healthy tensions. Like the classical sonata form, the planning process generates dynamic energy through the interplay of the aggressive first theme and its foil, the lyrical second theme.

And our teaching and scholar-

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Season's Greetings

We are peaceable in our small kingdom today.
The neighbor cat purrs against my back
as I sit sipping my coffee on the other neighbor's steps,
watching our common pond, our common ducks.
Mac sniffs out his long nose to the cat.
She is not inviting, but at least she does not hiss.
Satisfied, he trots off to check another smell
across the pond, ignoring in his turn
the ducks—mallards and their mates, a few domestics,
a few whose parentage is wonderfully mixed.
Nobody makes for the water today as Mac swirls by,
since mostly it's ice, thin ice broken only close to shore
and by some bird's morning bath rather than the sun,
as there is none. The day is perfectly gray,
but nobody seems to mind. In an access of approval
one of the crowd of Canada geese walks out on the ice
and flaps his powerful wings. The seagulls,
lighest of the pond's folk today, look up,
then walk delicately away from the commotion,
gather themselves, sweep off in strong arcs.
The middle of the pond mirrors them perfectly.
The ice shakes like high-toned harness bells;
I can hear its cracking run under the water,
reaching for its natural end. The cat purrs again,
flirts her elegant fur of a tail; my nose is getting colder;
oh, miracle, Mac comes when I whistle.
Peaceably we take our leave, make our way home
in the quiet accord of the real season.

Kathleen Mullen

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Kathleen McCullough
Imaginary Innocence in the World of Business

Michael Becker

W. H. Auden defines the vice of Imaginary Innocence in his essay on *The Pickwick Papers*:

No human being is innocent, but there is a class of innocent human actions called Games... a closed world of action which has no relation to any other actions of those who play it; the players have no motive for playing the game except the pleasure it gives them, and the outcome of the game has no consequences beyond itself. The vice of imaginary innocence consists in regarding an action in the open world of reality as if it were an action in the closed world of the game.

Those who are most susceptible to this vice, according to Auden, are those who derive pleasure from the exercise of their calling. Such pleasure can cause them to forget that what is play for them concerns real needs and passions for others. Auden refers to Pickwick’s lawyers in particular, for whom Pickwick is merely one of the pieces with which they play their game, a game which is as enjoyable to the attorneys as it is lucrative.

There is a scene in the early '60s movie *Divorce American Style* in which two divorce lawyers sit at a conference table with their opposing clients and plan a golf outing. We see Dick van Dyke, the estranged husband, grow red-faced and seething. The divorce suit is a matter of extreme passion and serious financial implications to the divorcing couple, but to their attorneys it is a game, of little more consequence than the golf game they will enjoy on Saturday.

The vice of imaginary innocence is not restricted to the legal profession. There are a great many occupations where the sheer pleasure of plying their profession can blind the participants to the human consequences of their actions. Business is one world which can easily become an arena for games with anything but innocent consequences. The most cursory look through the pages of today's newsmagazines reveals how thoroughly some of these games are affecting not just the nation's business, but the nation itself.

Auden's vice works on two levels. First, the distraction of the game's enjoyment causes its players simply to overlook the fact that their actions do not take place in a closed game world. This is the level of the two lawyers in the Dick van Dyke movie. Second, society provides a cloak of innocence for certain professions, the legal pro-
fession in particular. Our society believes that an adversary system of law leads to an optimum level of justice. Legal counsel is made available to all, guilty or innocent. Auden makes the point that to say a lawyer is a good lawyer is an aesthetic and not an ethical description. A good lawyer is one who wins his cases, whether his client be innocent or guilty... and nothing will enhance his reputation for being a good lawyer so much as winning a case against apparently hopeless odds, a state of affairs that is more likely to arise if his client is really guilty than if he is really innocent.

In the business world, a good salesperson is one who makes the sale, who cuts out the competitor and scores points for her employer. Playing the game is fun for the salesperson. Whether her product is really superior to that of the competition may be a matter of indifference. The test of good salespeople is their ability to sell an inferior product.

A good manufacturing manager produces goods at low cost. Accountants devise sophisticated methods for scoring such cost games. It can be fun to devise ways to cut costs. Cost cutting can lead to the manager laying off employees in an abrupt fashion, or dropping a supplier after years of service, or brutalizing employees to increase productivity. These things do not necessarily affect the games' scorekeeping. And these things needn't affect his fun either, if the pleasure he derives from the game and the applause of the employer distract his attention from the human consequences of his actions.

A good controller works at keeping working capital investments down. One of the easiest ways to reduce working capital is simply to pay bills late. Caught up in the game and the excitement of making the goal, it may seem logical to the controller to slow down vendor payments. That this might involve paying later than has been promised in purchase contract negotiations is easy to ignore; besides, the consequences may be minimal, as long as you don't go too far.

Most situations in business are not so easy to analyze ethically as the question of paying bills on time, or the sale of a shoddy product. Corporations contribute to social welfare in many ways, provision of employment among them. But corporations cannot provide employment except by making a profit from the efforts of those they employ. Even if shareholders would allow an unprofitable corporation to employ excess people, the corporation could not do so for long. In time, losses would consume capital and the opportunity to re-employ capital elsewhere would be gone.

Humane handling of employment decisions involves careful consideration of alternatives which avoid layoff and, if a layoff is necessary, liberal notice to employees and assistance in finding alternate employment. When executives view their decisions as happening in an open world of human consequences, rather than within a closed game where the strategy is to reduce expense on line 24, quite different conclusions will be reached.

Teachers may feel they are insulated from the vice of Imaginary Innocence. They face directly in the classroom the people who are most affected by their decisions. The fun derived from the profession lies in seeing students grow in their understanding of one's field. Further, the reward system depends, at least in part, on the students' evaluation of what kind of a teaching job the professor does.

Nonetheless, as I follow the continuing discussion on ethics in America, and the debate on the University's role in teaching ethics to students, I begin to wonder if there is another form of the vice of Imaginary Innocence working here. One of the key questions in the debate is this: where are ethics to be taught? As a teacher of accounting and finance I was tempted early in my teaching career to answer that my classes are not the place. "I teach concepts and systems and methods of analysis that are morally neutral," summed up my response. The same sort of argument is made for other disciplines throughout the curriculum in all colleges of the University. The place to teach ethics is somewhere else.

However, in accounting I teach that there are optional treatments for certain transactions. It is fairly easy to see that selection of the right option can be used to enhance profits in a corporation when business is bad, or, when business is good, to hide away profits to be added back when times are not so good. Accounting texts may call attention to the fact that such accounting manipulations happen in business. Such "creative accounting" can strike students as fun, and something that management may appreciate. To ignore this ethical dimension of the problem on the grounds that I teach morally neutral concepts may allow students to conclude that I condone such practices.

In finance I provide equations by which the precise amount of interest saved by paying bills late...
can be calculated. Large savings can be made with very little expense. Just pay bills late. Students can see the potential pleasure in this game and overlook the fact that a contract is being violated, that someone else is being hurt. These unethical practices are often mentioned in the texts, usually with minimal disapproval. If I do not comment on this issue, students may well conclude that paying bills late is an acceptable business practice for controlling costs.

Ethical issues thus force their way into my classroom, and I suspect that mine is not the only classroom where this happens. To maintain that the concepts I teach are morally neutral in the face of such issues begins to sound like the Imaginary Innocence of the gun salesman. Gun salesmen and guns don’t kill people, although purchasers of guns occasionally do kill people.

I suppose moral issues do not force their way into the classroom in all disciplines, though I suspect they arise in all the professional curricula, in the professional colleges, and in the professional programs in the arts and sciences. Ethical issues are covered in explicit ways in specific classes of course, but certain issues, such as the examples given above, seem to demand attention in the class I am in, and demand something more than a suggestion that students check with their ethics teacher or pastor.

The world of the university is much a closed world like the game, a world of innocence in which students can make mistakes with minimal harm to others. At the same time it is the place where students prepare themselves to enter another world, developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes they will use in their professions. When the world of the university is viewed as extending forward in time, it is a world opening on a future reality. It is a world of innocence then only in the imagination, for the consequence of choosing to ignore ethical issues, under the imagined premise that “only morally neutral principles are taught in my classroom” may be that my students are less well-prepared to deal with ethical dilemmas they will surely face in their business careers.

Students need to know something of the ethical pitfalls which await them in the world beyond schooling. Further, they need to learn about the vice of Imaginary Innocence, whatever words we use to describe it. Students have little idea of how easily one is tempted to unethical behaviors in the world of business—not only because of peer pressure and special rewards, but also because the pleasure of plying the profession itself can distract one from the consequences of his or her actions. In addition, one’s employer may confer innocence as society does for lawyers. Unethical behavior which works to forward the employer’s goal may be overlooked or forgiven.

Auden describes Mr. Pickwick as one who became conscious of the reality of Evil, but, instead of falling from innocence into sin...he changes from an innocent child into an innocent adult who no longer lives in an imaginary Eden of his own but in the real and fallen world.

A characteristic of all imagined Edens, according to Auden, is that “the only motive for an action is the pleasure it gives the actor, and no deed has a goal or effect beyond itself.” It is from this characteristic that Auden developed the concept of the vice of Imaginary Innocence. But innocence can only be imaged in this world, after exile from Eden. Actions do have consequences, and students need to be prepared to consider the human consequences of their actions before they are let loose in our real, and fallen, world. □

Notes:
Intermarriage in American Films

Norbert Samuelson

Is a Jew who has "deep Jewish feelings" and has an intermarriage a good role model? In general the answer most emphatically given by Jews in American films is affirmative. In general rabbis and other professional Jewish community leaders have opposed assimilation while Jewish artists of film, theatre and television have advocated integration. The line between assimilation and integration is fairly subtle. Objectively they describe the same thing, viz., moving out of an exclusively Jewish culture into a more general American society. To a great extent the difference is emotive—good change is integration while bad change is assimilation. (A comparable pair are the terms "assimilated" and "religious fanatic." In general, anyone who observes less than you do is assimilated and anyone who observes more is a fanatic.)

American films almost consistently present intermarriage as a positive value and they judge those who don't share this value to be significantly deficient in virtue. This value is not something that Christians have imposed on Jews. On the contrary, the most notable advocates of intermarriage in film have been Jews. For them intermarriage is a sign of integration rather than assimilation.

A case in point is The Jazz Singer. Samson Raphaelson originally wrote the story, entitled The Day of Atonement, to rebut the Broadway play, Abie's Irish Rose. The latter was natural for the movies. The Jew Abie Levy, "a la Romeo, marries the Irish Catholic Rosemary Murphy, "a la Juliet, over the objections of their narrow-minded, "old world" parents. (The 1928 Paramount movie of the play starred Buddy Rogers and Narcy Carroll.) In contrast, Raphaelson's morality play teaches that loyalty to family ought to take precedence over love. The hero is torn between his Jewish parents who want him to use his musical talents to serve the God of the Jews as a cantor, and his gentile girl friend who wants him to use those talents to pursue the American dream of success (in this case, in the theatre.) The critical event is scheduled for the eve of Yom Kippur when his mother expects him to replace his dying father as cantor in the synagogue. The unlikelihood that a New York play with its predominantly Jewish audience would open on the eve of Yom Kippur need not concern us. It is merely a convention to concretize the problem that Jewish and American values are not entirely compatible, and that at times a choice between them must be made. If the hero chooses to be Jewish (lead the Yom Kippur worship), he will fail to make it in America (have a successful Broadway career.) If on the other hand, he opens on Broadway, he will fail as a Jew. The point of Raphaelson's story is that the hero opts for his Jewish family over his gentile society.

Hollywood's Warner Brothers had no interest in the story. What they wanted was to make a sound movie with Al Jolson, and they were willing to do almost anything to get him to agree. One of Jolson's conditions was that they use Raphaelson's story. (Jolson was attracted to the play because its story paralleled his own life conflict with his father.) While the producers would do almost anything for Jolson, they would not grant him the play's ending. If they could not have the hero, Jakie Rabinowitz (alias Jack Robins) choose the shiksa Mary McAvoy, at least they would pre-

Norbert Samuelson teaches philosophy and religious studies at Temple University. His guest column on film describes a dilemma translatable to any group which finds itself struggling with its relationship to the dominant culture.
vent him from rejecting integration. Consequently, the original 1927 Jazz Singer has two endings. One, where he sings Kol Nidre in the synagogue under the protecting shadow of the spirit of his contented deceased father (Warner Oland), followed by a second ending, where his mother (Eugenie Besserer) approvingly watches him sing on the Broadway stage with Mary McAvoy (Mary Dale) waiting in the wings.

In spite of the final ending, the original film remains to this day a quality motion picture that preserves much of the flavor of Raphaelson's world of the Yiddish theatre. (There are so many Yiddish words in the film that, when it opened outside of New York City, the audience received cards with Yiddish-English translations.) In a sense everyone got what they wanted. Jolson got the story; the film's writers presented an authentic picture of first generation American-Jewish life, and the Warner Brothers made three million dollars.

There is no comparable happy ending for the two later versions of The Jazz Singer. Each is worse than the other. The 1953 version opts exclusively for the Warner Brothers' ending over that of Raphaelson. The hero, Jerry Golding (Danny Thomas) wants a theatre career but he gives in to his father's (Eduard Franz) wishes for him to continue the family tradition by becoming a cantor. In the end, however, he fails as a cantor, which frees him, with familial blessing, to pursue his real talent for the stage. In this sense again there are no choices to be made. Golding goes on the stage, not because he chooses one civilization over another, but because his talents lie in only the one direction. In the 1953 version the protagonists remain Jewish, but less clearly so. These 1950 Jews show few signs of being distinct from other Americans. They are just like everyone else except that they wear little round hats when they pray and have a distinct preference for music in minor keys.

The hero of the 1980 version lacks even this much Jewish identity, and with it has vanished all of the dramatic tension of Raphaelson's story. While the intermarriage issue is not raised directly in the original film, it is fairly obvious that Mary McAvoy is not Jewish, and that Jack Robins will marry her. In the second movie, Jerry Golding's theatrical girl friend, Judy Lane (Peggy Lee), turns out to be Jewish; she just doesn't look Jewish (still a compliment in the 1950s.) In the final (I hope) version, the only tension is whether or not Jess Rabinovitch (Neil Diamond) should leave California, his recording career and the gentle woman he loves, Molly Bell (Lucie Arnaz), or return to home to his father (Laurence Olivier) and his wife Rivka (Catlin Adams) to work in the synagogue. It is never clear precisely what is the father's objection to his son's unequivocal choice. Is he opposed to his son's assimilation, or is he just against popular music and/or adultery and/or living in California?

The list of movies that promote intermarriage is endless, including the ultimate American Zionist film, Otto Preminger's production of Leon Uris' Exodus (1960). Here Ari Ben Canaan's (Paul Newman) beloved Catherine Freemont (Eva Marie Saint), a Presbyterian from Iowa, becomes in effect an Israeli (she joins the Haganah) but not a Jew (she does not convert.) Far more interesting are the few exceptions to the rule where the virtue of intermarriage is called into question. These include The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz (1974) and The Heartbreak Kid (1972.) The latter is based on the story, "A Change of Plan," by Bruce Jay Friedman, who also wrote the ultimate pro-intermarriage story, Splash (1984) where a human (Tom Hanks) weds a fish (Daryl Hannah) and they live happily ever after.

Unquestionably intermarriage is bad for the Jewish community, but so is birth control. From the perspective of the collective, the more Jews who identify as Jews the better. However, no one marries for the good of the Jewish people. They marry to have good partners with whom to share their lives. They have children for the same reason, and not for the sake of the Jewish people. In general, the only Jews for whom being Jewish will matter for sharing a quality life are religious ones. For secular Jews, observing traditional rituals will be at most one among a host of other activities in which Jewish origins have little value.

Hence, rabbis concerned with the survival of the Jewish people in America should know that the battle cannot be fought head on. Rather, the issue is, is it important to observe Judaism in order to lead a worthwhile life? If the answer is yes, then intermarriage is in itself negative. Otherwise it is not. Movies have largely represented the voice of Jews who, in spite of valuing Jewish survival, do not believe that religion is of ultimate importance. Until there is some fundamental change in American-Jewish values, films will present intermarriage as a virtue, an unmitigated good, thereby expressing honestly the world view of most American Jews.
The Catholic Moment Revisited

Michael Novak

... As for the Protestant critics of his book, a Roman Catholic observer notes a persistent misreading of the argument of The Catholic Moment. This misunderstanding characteristically pivots on the question of the church and politics. Surprisingly (to me at any rate), most Protestants who dislike the argument of Pastor Neuhaus seem to be thrown off stride by his (very Protestant) use of the concept of "paradox." For Neuhaus, paradox means that two different viewpoints must often be employed at the same time. . . God's mind is not equal to the human mind, grace to nature, the Gospel to the law, the life of Christ in the Church to the life of the Church in the world, the simul justus in us to the simul peccator.

On the one hand, what comes from the gracious God in these pairs is not to be heard as adversarial to what comes from the other side of the creature. The same God, Creator and Redeemer, creates, sustains, loves, and acts redemptively through both sides of these pairs. On the other hand, while one side of each pair should not be pitted against its partner, as if the whole pair could never be one, it remains true that one side is ultimate, comes from the saving God, and the other side is penultimate, is subject to God.

Paul P. Kuenning, for example, in his at times sympathetic, at times antipathetic, account of the Neuhaus argument, in the Cresset, seems to be thrown for a loss by this (I would have thought) quite Lutheran way of thinking. Kuenning applauds when Neuhaus quotes John Paul II as launching "a fundamental challenge to a habit of mind that pits the infinite against the finite, otherworldliness against this worldliness, the eternal against the temporal." But Kuenning falls off the track when Neuhaus correctly has the pope affirm the inequality between these pairs. The pope holds that "the political is urgent, but not ultimate, and must never be equated with the ultimate." (pp. 228-229) Surely, this teaching is as traditionally Lutheran as it is traditionally Catholic. Nonetheless, Kuenning finds it an "arcane point of logic" and thinks "its effect is more surely to set the eternal above the temporal, rather than to draw them together." Here Kuenning's receiver seems to be set on mono, while Neuhaus listens to stereo. Surely, the eternal is drawn together with the temporal (in the Incarnation and Redemption, for example); grace is simul in the justus and peccator; and the church is not "suprahistorical" only, but incarnated among us in full-bodied "history." Each pair is drawn together, but the internal relation between them is inherently unequal.

Kuenning tries to evade the force of this orthodox teaching by writing that "the eternal (suprahistorical) is unquestionably of ultimate importance in the long run. But the temporal (historical) has a short term ultimacy of its own." This is a serious misunderstanding of eternity. Eternity is not a long run, even a very long run. It is simultaneity. It is within the temporal, although not confined by it. Furthermore, Kuenning thinks that a Church merely preaching the Gospel of Christ, while not corporately becoming a vehicle of partisan politics, is in effect selling out to the political status quo. But Cardinal Ratzinger, as Neuhaus points out, begins his own reflections on this matter with a counterexample that is fresh in the minds of theologians, especially in Germany. The theologians in Germany most eager to be relevant to politics, to take partisan sides, to trim the Gospel to short term political purposes, ended up for the most part supporting the Nazi project of Adolph Hitler. It was, it happens, those who insisted first on the ultimacy of the Gospel, who resisted trimming the Gospel to short term partisan politics, who went over into opposition (often rather in a hidden way) against the Nazis. From this, Ratzinger has learned that to choose the relevant, the partisan, the short term, is not always—and certainly not essentially—to act from an authentic understanding of the relation of grace and nature, faith and history, church and world.

Kuenning's failure to grasp the orthodox paradox, then, seems to confound him in his grasp of short term and long term. Neuhaus, by contrast, often
judged, not the reverse.

Politics is the realm of contingency, irony, and tragedy. Some 200 revolutions have been launched in the name of the "people" and the "poor" since 1776, as Hannah Arendt suggests in On Revolution. But it is not those who cry "The poor! The poor!" who will get into the Kingdom of Heaven. Much depends on the secret motivations, actions, and actual conduct of the so-called revolutionaries, many of whom have agendas quite their own and quite anti-Christian. Regarding appeals to help the poor, persons of faith are neither excused from responsibility for discernment nor exempt from warnings against false prophets. It is not by their politics that humans are saved. Were that so, the church and its preaching of the Word and its sacraments would hardly be necessary. The role of the churches is to judge politics.

Faith is ultimate; politics, though urgent and part of the vocation of all free and responsible persons, is penultimate. Indeed, within the Church, persons of eminent good will are often on opposite sides of the political spectrum. It is the nature of politics, being based upon contingencies and belonging to the realm of practical wisdom, to divide consciences. Across political divisions, the grace of Christ reconciles those who disagree politically. The grace of Christ calls the human community to civil peace, to steady progress towards approximations of the Kingdom of God, and to harsh self-criticism.

Here, too, Pastor Kuenning misunderstands Pastor Neuhaus. He thinks that because Neuhaus labels "a church" that "takes sides on political issues" as "partisan," and proceeds to condemn a "partisan church as an apostate church," Neuhaus exempts his own politics from the criticism of faith. Kuenning fails to say that Neuhaus applies this same logic to himself, to Pope John Paul II, and to Cardinal Ratzinger. In the first place, Neuhaus himself in earlier years ran some risks of confounding his own partisan political views with the mission of the Church. To the extent he did that, he now both repents of it and wishes to build dikes against his ever being tempted to do so again.

Again, Neuhaus is not in the least opposed to individuals and associations of church members giving their energies to partisan politics, as he himself most energetically does. Indeed, he thinks such commitments are urgent, and demanded of us by our vocation as humans incarnated in a world of contingency, irony, and tragedy, obliged in this darkness to work to build up the Kingdom of God as best we can. But Neuhaus is also eager to keep this realm of contingent judgments open to Christian liberty. In the "necessary things" of Christian faith, we must have unity; but not in the "doubtful things" of politics. There liberty is the rule, as the rule in "all things" is charity. No one watching Richard John Neuhaus in practice can fail to see that he maintains close friendships, in charity, across the most unlikely distances of partisan difference. Some of his best friends are the most flagrant leftists in America.

What Neuhaus objects to—and Kuenning wishes to see more of—is the corporate church, the church as an institution, becoming just another partisan political body. For that, we do not
need a church, except as an instrument of political power. For that, Christ did not die on the cross or redeem us by rising again. Christian orthodoxy is not political orthodoxy. To make it so is both apostasy and a horrible curtailment of the Christian liberty of those Christians who have serious political disagreements about political ends and means. It is the totalitarian impulse trying to capture and to direct the Church. It is a temptation very dear to the "new class" in our time.

Richard John Neuhaus is, he confesses, a traitor to this new class, to which he belongs. So it is not surprising that Pastor Kuenning treats him as a traitor. But it is crucial to see what the Neuhaus treason is and is not. True, after having been a leader of the left, he has become a neoconservative. Neuhaus did learn a great deal from close self-criticism regarding his own earlier political activities. He has become as scathingly critical of the illusions of the political left as he once was, and remains, of the political right. This in some circles is treason enough. Indeed, thence came the name that Kuenning brandishes over him: "neo-conservative," the name that Michael Harrington gave to social democrats who began to submit to criticism the aims and practices of social democrats. Harrington meant it as the worst slur he could think of, connoting "backslider," "dissident," and "traitor." But this is, in fact, no ultimate treason. It is simple self-criticism, carried out in practice, on which liberal thinkers once properly prided themselves.

However, what Neuhaus most rejects of today's left is not its particular, contingent political judgments, but the project of many (he gives explicit examples) who raise a merely political vision into a substitute for Christian faith. Neuhaus rejects the subordination of Christian faith to political projects of any kind. He insists that the political vocation is urgent, but not ultimate. It is not superior to faith, or even identical to faith, but under the judgment of faith. He wishes to reach out, hopefully in civil argument and in charity, to those Christians who nurse serious political arguments against him. He does not wish to allow political differences to divide the Christian faith. That would be idolatry. That would be apostasy. Being a responsible Christian, he does not wish to be conscripted against his conscience and will into somebody else's idea of political progress, even if that "somebody" is composed of the topmost councils of a church bureaucracy. Let them not totalitarianize the Christian faith in the name of their own political preferences, putting in the place of the ultimate the dark and obscure penultimate.

This, I think, is what really rankles Pastor Kuenning. Pastor Kuenning and others have redefined the Christian faith in terms of their own political reading of the causes of poverty and oppression, and their own political vision of how to make things right. So sure is Pastor Kuenning of the righteousness of his own political preferences that he says he is quite willing, in the short term, to shrink the size of the church down to the size of his political preferences, as a form of "obedience to its Godgiven mission," as he defines it. This is to confound the Word of God with his own political preferences.

Moreover, in writing glibly about the "status quo," Kuenning too easily skips over different kinds of that beast. Some social orders are indeed static and, when in dire need of change, lack institutions that permit peaceful transformation. Most traditionalist societies of the Third World share many such characteristics. But other social orders are constructed on dynamic principles, and are subject to such rapid and frequent change that one author describes the attendant psychic state as "future shock." In such dynamic social orders, even conservatives mobilize to launch "revolutions" to transform society, and progressives may at times find themselves straining to hold on to the status quo that they had earlier engineered. A church that preaches the Gospel and the stringent demands of the Kingdom of God may have a powerful, even short term effect in such societies, even when it does not take partisan positions and perhaps because it does not, and speaks from a genuinely transcendent position.

The sad part, however, is that the left-wing critics of Neuhaus never actually confront the self-criticism he has written, as a former left-wing churchman himself. There are sound reasons why Neuhaus thinks that the Christian left is empirically wrong in its analysis of poverty and oppression, and in its prescriptions for political progress. Others are free to weigh these reasons and assess them differently. Reasoning on such matters is inherently full of ambiguities. There is plenty of room for serious differences among Christians about such matters. If we really wish to help the poor and the oppressed of the world, one would think, we would wish to argue carefully about the causes of poverty and the causes of wealth; about the sources of oppression, and about the tested and proven
institutional changes needed to correct it. The whole world since 1945 has been a laboratory of experiments of that kind. If left-wing critics really wish to argue about politics, let them argue openly and civilly with those who see politics differently. Instead, they so often merely avoid all empirical argument by the simple expedient of naming Richard Neuhaus with Michael Harrington's intended slur, "neo-conservative," as if that were sufficient.

It isn't sufficient. Perhaps the left-wing view of poverty and oppression and their effective remedies is correct. Surely, experience since 1945 is telling us that many aspects of leftwing analysis are not correct; that left-wing praxis has led to disaster especially for the poor (while protecting left-wing elites). So we could well use a good, empirical, civil argument over how best to end poverty and oppression. In that argument, we can all remain brothers and sisters in one Christian faith, calling us beyond our ecclesiastical and political disunity to be the "One Body of Christ.

The Christian faith, Neuhaus argues, would benefit by having many political wings. No one is right all the time. Even the best of good ideas do not always (even often) produce the desired consequences. There are lots of reasons why the Christian Church should be alive with internal political argument and conflicting tendencies. Let a thousand flow­ers-bloom. But the Christian Church can only shelter such political diversity within it if it does not sell its soul to one single monophonic political project, understood as more ultimate than the faith itself.

The neoconservatism of the political judgments of Richard John Neuhaus, in short, is also under the judgment of faith. It is properly opposed by those who have reason to think his political judgments mistaken. Let them argue these political matters against him: let them make his day. His own theological position, however, is that Neuhaus will be saved, not by his politics, but by his faith. His faith is ultimate, his politics are not. This is also the position of Pope John Paul II and Cardinal Ratzinger. It is in fact the orthodox paradox of both Roman and Lutheran Catholicism, as they have been handed down to us, and which we surrender at our eternal peril.


This large book contains magnificent photographs of artwork depicting the face of Jesus, portrayed by artists from all over the world, of highly varied places and times. The original works, in such diverse media as felt, bronze, silk, stone, ivory and others, are exquisite. The juxtaposition of, for example, Flemish masters with Japanese print, with American child's fingerpainting ("Jesus Happy and Sad") provides the great variety and power of expression which the person of Jesus and the gospel stories have evoked across time, cultures and media is exhilarating.

The book is divided into sections, episodes in Jesus' life: annunciation, nativity, ministry, last supper, crucifixion and resurrection, though these embrace a wider array of incidents than the mere titles suggest. The reflections of popular author Frederick Buechner accompany the art, and his insights touch at various points upon the literary, the psychological, the aesthetic, the philosophical, the biblical, and the theological. His style is that of the storyteller and preacher-colloquial, personal and fluid.

The uncertainty of its genre makes Buechner's text hard to evaluate. Though not writing art history, he nonetheless comments on the art itself. But while it plays a role, art is not always the starting point. (For example, the chapter on the Nativity begins with a quotation from Hamlet.)

Buechner also reflects upon the biblical texts and historical issues behind some of the accounts, providing important information with only a few minor errors, and upon such diverse issues as the problem of evil and the existence of God, the meaning of the Resurrection, and the significance of the Eucharist. On the whole his interpretation strives to be ecumenical, embracing Protestants, Catholics, Jews and others.

Throughout, he gives his own views of what Christianity is, moving the book into the devotional category. Elements of his interpretation may not suit all readers (such as his statement that through suffering in love Christians "can help work each other's redemption and our own too" [65]) and some may be offended by the non-inclusive language. Reading this book, with its wonderfully various artwork, made me wish for a more integrated, less diffuse text to help focus the powerful experience it provides.

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