THE CRESSET

a review of literature, the arts, and public affairs
In Luce Tua

Essays on Current Issues by the Editor

California or Bust!

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Love

We took these readings on our present situation as a people from the bumper stickers on the cars cataracting across the San Francisco Bay Bridge this morning and evening. We are now arranging them for reflection from our notes jotted on our litter bag, road map, and several stray toll ticket receipts. For we are now on what we are laughingly calling our summer vacation, traveling far away from our books, mail, journals, newspapers, and our study desk and chair altogether. However, since we must take our new vacation on vacation, we must perforce do our reading where we find it on the road and our writing where we can when stopping.

We are on the road and stopping mostly in California, chiefly in San Francisco, briefly in Los Angeles, and at several inland points quivering along the San Andreas fault. Much of California is another country to a Midwesterner. Indeed, much of it is another country to our country as a whole. California serves famously, in the terms of Marshall McLuhan, as a counter-environment and anti-environment. It is a horizon against which one can see what America as a whole is all about. And it is in itself an early warning or promise of the future which is already upon us. The questions one turns over in his mind here are whether anything human is on this horizon and whether this future is inevitable.

Geographically, California first offers men freedom through choices of weather and terrain one finds widely scattered elsewhere in our country. Quite alone she can give what all are other states can only offer together, from the mountains to the ocean and from the forests to the desert. Her own most populated, coastal climate strikes us as one of deception for men. For what is softened and blurred by drought-brown grasses, fog, smog, sand, sun-bleached pastel buildings, long and low seascapes, and flat skylines against pink and baby blue skies is the very scenery for a sharp and jagged, convulsive culture.

Her urban life offers choices ranging widely from San Francisco, the city that never was a town, to Los Angeles, the megalopolis that will never be a city, and urbane in between that might as well be in Indiana, Alabama, or upstate New York.

California politics offers extremes of left and right in the widest polarization, yet often bumper to bumper and ying to yang. There seems to be here less of a broad mediating middle than one still finds elsewhere. Part of the reason we believe Hollywood seems
so pale is because so much of its old hoopla has left and right gone into the social and political life of California as a whole. Furthermore, we wonder who would go to the movies in California when the whole state is perpetually flickering previews of the next attraction. Hollywood now produces motion pictures only to see them desublimated before they are released. The true fantasies are all underground.

Demographically, California offers choices of the races of men in America and all together — black, brown, red, yellow, and pink. However, we mix metaphors to emphasize the racial tension in the melting pot at the end of this rainbow. Nowhere else can one see pink power arousing black power arousing brown power arousing yellow power arousing red power arousing retaliating pink power again so clearly. We must observe that whoever thinks California is a fascist state — by whatever definition — is wrong. But only as wrong as whoever thinks it has no fascist tendencies.

California people are often simply everyone else in the forty-nine states, for there is where they have just come from, mostly the young risking hell to reach heaven. The young set California in motion in no particular direction; whether in the junior jet set in Los Angeles or the panhandling "street people" in Berkeley; whether among the thousands of teenage runaways or the "paradise people" on trips on Sundays in Golden Gate or Griffith Parks. Everywhere in summer are hitchhikers - women and children, and especially young men, "Easy Riders" and "Midnight Cowboys," picaresque and phallic heroes in perpetual erection searching for America.

A Rumor of Los Angeles?

Religiously, California is surely our most secularized state. That white stuff atop the Sierra Nevadas, I was told by a remnant Christian, isn't snow at all but drifts of baptismal certificates dropped on the way West. Perhaps a Forest Lawn billboard said California best as we entered Los Angeles: "A Cemetery For All Faiths."

At the same time, California is surely our most religious state, if we are understood to be speaking much in the same sense the apostle Paul spoke of the religiousness of the Athenians. Add to the range of American mainline denominationalism the following: two hundred cults and sects; assorted spoof religions; serious Far Eastern (In California, of course, the near Far Eastern) religions; and several Westernized varieties of Zen and Yoga. You now have half the picture.

The other half would include the religions that varieties of Californians make of drugs, sex, youthfulness, nature, surfing, sky-diving, nudism, bodybuilding, motorcycling, sports cars, the entertainment industry, education, gambling in Nevada, astrology, group therapy, sensitivity training, parapsychology, and politics. One must also take readings and lessons from these and other Wild and Now Testaments to grasp our religious situation.

Admittedly, about the hardest evidence we were offered to show us that the Judeo-Christian and Piscean Age is waning was the observation of a slightly high hitchhiker that Roman Catholics no longer necessarily eat fish on Fridays. But if there should be a dawning of the Age of Aquarius, the symbol we should now like to propose for it is a sun rising in the West. Such a symbol would gather up some of the reversals in our country as more cultural vitalities are seen moving from West to East instead of East to West. At least it is now more culturally vital to suspect that "As California goes, so goes the country."

If so, where are we going? The temptation of an academic, over-thirty, ante-McLuhan man is to say we are going mad in California and to wish much of it would simply wash out to sea on an oil slick and sink. (The trouble with wishes in California, however, is that you may find them fulfilled, and in southern California even that one might be managed.) But America is not beginning to go mad in California. That we do elsewhere as easily at home and abroad. Rather, what may be upon us all if California is much of our future is only a new libidinousness; a new social and psychological flow and mix of images of freedom; a new capacity and willingness to take in everything more omnially; a new mocking humor and playfulness; an expanding consciousness and contemplation of the human terror and transformation; a new love of life that may be above ourselves as we are if we make it over; and more and more protean personalities and communities which are yet trustworthy even if they are no longer predictable.

No, we conclude, America is not at the end of its wits in California. It is only the case that more Americans are out here at the end of our continental frontier seeking new frontiers. They are at the end of their innocence, rurally inward outlooks, and illusions about orderly social mobility for us all. Many are wondering how much time there is left in our economic system and the cohesion of our nation of minorities and migrants by the bonds and remissions of our religious and patriotic traditions.

All of which and more moves many Californians toward the most experimental and exploratory living in our country. They try everything, trivial and profound, in desperation and in hope, raising up novel-
ties and arousing the old repressions of them before any of the rest of us either act or react. As we are now readying ourselves to go east of Eden, the score here in that terminal of dreams is about tied between the old and the new. It is most probably a higher score for the new than we shall find elsewhere in the country ahead of us and surely a lower one than it needs.

Dictionary of Epithets

Now that the disquieting processes of teaching and learning are resumed on American college and university campuses, we would offer their faculties and administrators a short dictionary for a few of the epithets students will be heaping upon them. While we predict a cooler academic year that the last one, we may be their innocence of civility, are not stupid. They are reserved for administrators whose relations with students as educators are non-existent. These epithets are aroused only by the intellectual and you tend to be intellectual about the physical. In the chicken case, the meaning of the epithet is identical with what teachers and administrators themselves mean when they rise on a “Point of Order” or judge any part of an argument to be “immaterial, irrelevant, or inadmissible evidence.” In short, this epithet means that what you are saying at best ill attends the issue and at worst is dishonest. Generally note here that students tend to be physical about the intellectual and you tend to be intellectual about the physical.

In the bull case, the meaning of the epithet is nearly continuous with what a teacher or administrator might remember it meant in the navy, his fraternity, or while working his way through college long ago as, say, a day-laborer or longshoreman. It means, of course, that you are lacking courage. However, since this epithet is now used by middle-class, leisured and idealistic youth, not simply physical courage is meant. This epithet is used for teachers and administrators who lack moral courage.

It is reserved for those who use the campus as sanctuary from the suffering of humanity, misplace their academic suspension of judgment onto questions of right and wrong, and yield in unseemly haste to the reprisals and enticements of other institutions in society who use educational institutions toward dubious ends. Interestingly, this epithet is as often used for faculty who will not oppose students when they are in the wrong as much as it is used for faculty who will not support them when they may be in the right. It is especially used for him who will not decide.

One other animal in the bestiary of student epithets is worth translating. That is the pig. Originally, this epithet was used for FBI agents, policemen, and National Guardsmen who infiltrated student organizations or were called in to repress campus protests with what seemed to the students to be brutish and sadistic force. The pig was generally one who did spying or mindless head-knocking for repressive policy-makers for pay. Until recently, most students were innocent of the fact that this epithet worked against them as a racist term when it was used by middle class students for lower class workers. Now this epithet is used more and more for those faculty and administrators who yet carry out policies that they can be expected to understand and disagree with on moral grounds.
Grassy Glossalalia

For a last example, there are the epithets derived from the drug and hip subcultures of students — epithets used by students who use drugs or not, who are hip or not. These epithets are vaguer, more multivalent, and gentler, befitting their origins we suppose. Teachers and administrators seem susceptible only to a few of them. If they are alleged to be uptight or hung-up, it means superficially that they appear nervous and suspicious or more deeply that they appear anal, ingrown, and fixated. Epithets, of course, like drugs, blind their users to many realities even as they penetrate other realities. In this case, many students are blinded to men and women who happen to have convictions and a sense of vocation. Note that students have lived too little to have suffered long for their convictions and are generally unaware that some bags are not disposable.

These psychedelic epithets, like college catalogs and hallucinations, are subject to change without notice. The ones currently passing for teachers and administrators seem to be bummer, cop-out, and ego-trip. A bummer is a teacher who deflates hope, who perpetually nay says, and is only so old to know everything that will not work and thereby believes himself wise and realistic. A cop-out is one who evades issues, or dissolves them in world history and long views, or perpetually makes referrals out of students and their problems.

The teacher or administrator who is on an ego-trip is one with eyes only for himself. He seeks the advan-

Seeing

A Litany for October

This is August, contrary to the date on the cover. Early August at that. And this is Paris, not Denver or St. Louis or Valparaiso.

The river down there is the gentle Seine, with a heavy black barge drifting by. This is the Left Bank. The American Library is over here, almost under the Eiffel Tower. It is full of American books and magazines, and I need to read about America after a year's absence. What I have been learning, sampling recent magazines, is that American university professors are disgruntled and pooped. Last year was a trying one for the academy.

It's the wretched students, of course. Revolutionary and violent, or else well-meaning idealists tragically duped by radicals. Shallow and unlettered or else dogmatic and four-lettered. Utopian, Marcusian, Guevaran, stoned, arrogant, vagrant, barefoot, and fragrant. It is quite a situation to come home to.

What shall I do when I get back, and what shall I say?

What I really want to do is carry on as usual: conduct a couple of relatively rational courses, work in my office with the door wide open, stop in at the coffeehouse and listen to the folk singing, go to hear lectures concerning current issues that bother me, go home and forget about them, eat lunch in the university cafeteria, and transfer some books from the shelves of the library to the shelves of my office.

But students are everywhere, and all the evidence points to a year of confrontation.

You represent Authority over me and Judgment upon me — what are your moral credentials for this role? Where do you stand? On black enrollment, defense contracts, police conduct, violence, Marx and Cleaver, soul music and rock, the military-industrial complex, censorship of films and books, sexual freedom, marijuana, concrete poetry, Jean-Luc Godard, Easy Rider.

Your degrees mean nothing to me. You are a human being like me. Show me how you reach your opinions, and show me if you have any feelings. Whether spoken or silent, from the majority or the few, this seems to be the challenge.

What to do? Profess the eternal verities and hope the immediacies take care of themselves? Play off the rebels against the docile and stand aside, as Thoreau watched a battle to the death between red ants and black?

Try to be father, uncle, guru, analyst, pundit, fountain of wisdom, and benevolent slasher of Gordian knots? Be conspirator and confidant, endorsing every iconoclastic opinion with a whisper while carefully declining public commitment?

Stand up for Society and Order, defending all the diabolisms as well as the respectable traditions of Congress, White House, executive suite, academia, ecclesia, parent, and clan, because the rebellious younger generation needs to see the other side?

I am resolved what to do:
tage of his discipline or department or the aggrandize-
ment of his office or institution at the expense of jus-
tice and the whole truth. At bottom, of course, he seeks
only his own reflection, and the university is his means
to that end. If doctors of philosophy were literally
"teachers" who "love wisdom," he would need to re-
turn his degree. He may even appear to students to
be advertising himself more sophomorically than
sophomores, so enraptured is he with himself and
his little learning.

A full glossary of terms for reading campus con-
licts would, of course, include translations of more
student epithets than these examples and lead us into
other issues. It would also need to include epithets
teachers and administrators heap upon students. As
the classics faculty knew before the students struck
the phrase, the root meaning of epithet is put-on. The
whole faculty by longer experience has more of the
worst in our whole cultural tradition available to it-
self to put-on its less experienced students. We have
observed that teachers and administrators can be far
more damaging in what they can mean in their ep-
ithets than students can be in what they mean in their
epithets.

Our one and only word for all in the midst of the
coming campus conflicts is still love. It is, we admit,
a four-letter, earthy, psychedelic word. It is also a
deed. We hope love is told and heard and done and
seen this year when so much will be required of its
reality.

By CHARLES VANDERSEE

and other Exasperations

O Lord, if this will not be one of those ordinary Octobers when we
all settle into the new year and go quietly to our books and ritual acti-

vities, give me a portion of Your divine patience, which, like the rest of
You, surpasses all human understanding.

Give me patience with rude interruptions, in case the voices are those
of prophecy:

Patience with ignorance, for I may be perceiving it as in a mirror;
and patience with foolishness, for this is not the special province of
youth, nor is it always harmful;

Patience with radicals, for "radical" means root, and if these are the
roots of trees less worm-ridden than the ones we have now, then more
power to them;

Patience with the unaroused, for if new trees are being planted we
will need diligent gardeners, and if old one come down, lots of people
will have to cart away the bark and branches;

Patience with faculty colleagues and administrators, even if they
seem blind and insensitive, because it is easier for me to criticize from a
distance than for them to make wise decisions under pressures from
students, trustees, taxpayers, parents, reporters, cameramen, politi-
cians, and maybe badgering wives.

But give patience in moderation, O Lord, for patience unduly pro-
longed becomes irresponsible idleness, and patience in the face of un-
fairness and unnecessary pain is nothing other than complicity.

Therefore give me also Wisdom, O Lord, not the serene wisdom of a
detached philosopher who knows the world too well to act or hope or
care, but rather the wisdom to watch closely and to discern whatever
whispers of truth may lie among the loud tirades and distortions and
rumors and third-hand reports.

Give me the wisdom to shut up and stay shut up when I do not know
what is going on, and the wisdom to say Yes, No, or Maybe, at the right
times and in the right places, and to disregard bandwagons, fashions,
and martyred stances as I make up my mind.

If I must speak, O Lord, give me words that cannot be misunder-
stood, and place the resonance of love within my voice.

And, dear Lord, since all of the above sounds like an exercise in
self-congratulatory pomposity, you had better shower down upon me
the rain of humility, piercing holes in my umbrella of self-satisfaction
with the hail of correction and sudden revelation. For my resistance
to You is strong.

Send to all of us a sense of humor and a spirit of objectivity, for a
thousand ages in Your sight are but as our half hour on the moon, and
even now, O Lord, the autumn trees will be turning in Paris. Send to
them, along the boulevards and river, tourists worthy of them, preserve
them from traffic fumes, and spare them from conscription once again
as barricades in street battles. In hours of crisis let them rise to our
minds as images of distant beauty.

P.S. A special blessing, O Lord, upon Andre Malraux for sandblast-
ing Notre Dame and the Louvre and the other great building of Paris.
The noise is ferocious and the scaffolding looks terrible, but the result
is worth it. If sandblasting is what we are hearing and seeing on our
campuses these days, give us a persisting vision of the sparkling results.

Amen.
In the early part of this century an Irish poet and playwright, William Butler Yeats, sailed to Byzantium because he realized that

An aged man is but a paltry thing,
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing.

Once in Byzantium — that is, “out of nature” — he would never take his “bodily form from any natural thing.”

In order to take a prophetic stance, the poem seems to say, one must begin in the body and move out into the region of the soul.

In 1923 a company of prophets, the Moscow Art Theatre, set sail from Byzantium and brought almost the same message to the United States. Like many other prophets before him, Constantin Stanislavski followed his first charismatic preaching by publishing a fable, *My Life In Art*, in 1924. Both the acting and the book seemed to say that unless soul clap its hands and sing, acting is but a paltry thing. After the fable came the commentaries, still prophetic and still in mythical form: *An Actor Prepares* in 1936, *Building A Character* in 1949, and *Creating A Role* in 1961. And of course commentaries were written about the commentaries: Richard Boleslavsky’s *Acting: The First Six Lessons*, for example. Schools were formed with the intensity of a disciple’s devotion to his master. New doctrines based on the prophet’s vision were devised, and this led to schisms, rival bishops, anti-popes. A rebellious Reformation emanated from Augsburg, the birthplace of Bertolt Brecht. And we have witnessed a heresy trial or two.

In a biographical sketch, “Lee Strasberg: Burning Ice,” (Tulane Drama Review 26, 131-154) the inquisition acts swiftly — passing judgment, carrying out the sentence, displaying the ashes, and publishing the court proceedings.

This prophet imagery is not just tomfoolery. It is not hard to find similarities between Stanislavski’s methods and the various spiritual disciplines of the Russian Orthodox Church. An actor, for example, needs to spend long periods before each performance, building his concentration and awareness of the character. This is not unlike the long preparation ritual for each Orthodox priest who is about to perform the liturgy or the different but still very arduous regime of prayer and fasting for each worshipper planning to receive the Eucharist. Similarly, Tortsov in *An Actor Prepares* teaches his students how to have “self-communion”, this in a culture with a long tradition of mystics and hermits who had pursued the same end. I doubt that these similarities were coincidences, if for no other reason than that, whether one uses theological language or not, the forms of one’s thought are influenced by the popular pieties one encounters.

But as a matter of fact Stanislavski did use theological language, much to the annoyance of Bertolt Brecht, who listed some of the offensive words in a note, “The Treacherous Vocabulary.”

A character should be “creative.” The creator is God.

Art is “sacred.” The actor is to “serve.” Whom? Art.

The actor “transforms himself,” just as in the Mass the bread is transformed into the Body of Christ.

Concentration is the “withdrawal into the self” of the mystic.

The imagined fourth wall permits the actor to be “alone” with his God, Art.

And so on. Finally at the end of the list, appearing all alone and without comment, as if its self-evident offensiveness deserved no comment, is the phrase:

“The soul”

We could write off this quibble as one of the dangers of being a prophet, who is not to be understood outside his own culture.

But as a matter of fact, Stanislavski did create some very serious problems with the vagueness of his language, and these have distorted his conclusions. One of the troublesome words is “nature.” Another is, as Brecht pointed out, the “soul.” Third — and this may be either a result or a symptom — Stanislavski found it hard to define the relationship between the “soul” and the body. I should like to attempt an analysis of the connotations of these words, not pretending that verbal analysis will solve all the problems, but suggesting only that it will point the way toward solutions.

First, “nature” — a term that has been very slippery in the history of ideas and that Stanislavski did nothing to clarify. One of its most prominent associations is with creativity. For Stanislavski, nature is not creation but creator. In the impassioned peroration of *Building A Character*, he calls nature “the greatest artist we know,” and distinguishes it from the mind, the emotions, even the Muses. Where is nature located? Or in his words: “Where does she live?” He doesn’t say. Is he talking about something real? We haven’t time to ask, for the
argument rushes to the climax: “There was nothing for me to do except to devote my labors and energy almost exclusively to the study of Creative Nature.” (pp. 287-9) The terms are now capitalized.

The notion of nature as creator recurs in the other books. An Actor Prepares concludes with:

You can go astray only if you do not understand that truth; if you do not have confidence in nature; if you try to think up “new principles,” “new bases,” “new art.” Nature’s laws are binding on all, without exception, and woe to those who break them. (p. 295)

The actor, it seems, is not entirely in control of his art. The secrets of inspiration and the inscrutable ways to approach it are known only to nature. Only nature can perform the miracle without which the text of a role remains lifeless and inert. In short, nature is the only creator in the world that has the capacity to bring forth life. (Creating A Role, p. 82)

And of course this same mood surrounds the references to nature in the earliest book, My Life In Art. If we could assume that the language accurately describes Stanislavski’s feelings, we would conclude that he was smitten with awe when contemplating nature as a free creative force, and that nature became almost an object of worship, a spirit which graciously chooses from time to time to become incarnate in a humble actor. Indeed, the claims made for the creative powers of nature become almost absurd.

Letters, syllables, words were not invented by man, they were suggested to him by his instincts, impulses, by nature herself, time and place. (Building, p. 83)

If nature can do all this, why should an actor go through rigorous training? Simply to make the body and voice capable of exercising their “naturally predestined functions.” (Building, p. 90)

The passage quoted earlier from An Actor Prepares suggests another connotation. Nature has “laws” and it punishes those “who break them.” Nature, then, is a moral as well as a creative force. The punishment, according to a passage in My Life In Art, is bad theatre: “Instead of naked passion there was a bad conventionality, instead of art there was trade. Nature always avenge the violation and the breaking of her laws.” (p. 476)

It is worth noticing exactly where he places the emphasis, not on something physical but on a spiritual quality. He doesn’t mean that unnatural acting will harm the vocal mechanism, for example. Rather, the connotations imply that breaking the laws of nature is punished by conventional art. Conventional theatre, as we are told repeatedly, is untruthful theatre. A violation of nature, therefore, results in spiritual damage.

Stanislavskian Soul

A creative force, a moral law with a system of punishments, a force associated with truth, all of which are good things: these are the attributes connoted by his use of “nature.” We would conclude, then, that nature is also a good thing, if we didn’t already know that. But we already did know that, for appeals to “follow Nature” are part of the stock in trade of the history of ideas. Plato followed nature; so did Aristotle; so did Rousseau, Wordsworth, and Shakespeare; so does Hugh Hefner. And they all have contradictory conclusions. What is new is that Stanislavski develops the appeal to nature in a way one would not have thought possible in the theatre. For example, the connotations of his use of “nature” usually do not include the body. Is an actor’s body therefore a bad thing? The emotional appeals would suggest this. Nor are other material things good. “We are not concerned with the actual naturalistic existence of what surrounds us on the stage, the reality of the material world! This is of use to us only in so far as it supplies a general background for our feelings” (Actor, p. 122) — feelings, that is, which participate in the cosmic creative force of nature. Of course, Stanislavski did not actually operate on the conclusions which his language would suggest. He spent a great deal of time and energy working out the details of his set designs; he spent years working on voice and movement. In many ways his practice was a fortunate contradiction of his theory. It is by no means clear, then, that Stanislavski really believed what his language suggests: it may be only that the emphases of the connotations were intended as an argument against prevailing theatre practices. At any rate, the language seems to depict “nature” almost mystically, a spiritual entity, a good cosmic force as opposed to less important material entities.

His use of the word “soul” implies the same, and the two words are very closely related to each other. An insight which he had discovered by the end of My Life In Art was that

Besides talent, an inner spiritual technique is necessary; without it one cannot find true psychological and physiological approaches to the soul of man for the natural and conscious birth of a superconscious creative impulse in it. (p. 475)

Exactly what this passage means is a little hard to say. But if one cuts through the high-sounding language, it would seem that Stanislavski is talking about the actor’s means of finding a way to base his art on something more enduring and truthful that convention. The actor uses techniques designed to “approach” the soul. Notice that the actor does not “free” the soul or “improve” it or “save” it or “make it whole.” He simply finds it, and having done so, presumably allows it to give birth in a “natural” way to creative powers. This is consistent with the way “soul” is used throughout the books.

There are three important inferences to be drawn from the connotations of this language. The first is that the soul, like nature, is something given. One does not create a soul; one creates from the basis of a soul. The soul is the origin of all good things in creative work. Thus, Stanislavski speaks of the “depths, where the spiritual life of a role begins, to create which is the main objective of our art.” (Creating, p. 154) A second inference
comes from the use of the word “soul” almost interchangeably with “nature.” The “soul” is one’s individual nature, one’s personality. It is apparently that small part of the cosmic creative and moral force which resides within one but which still retains its connections with the cosmic force. In the work on Othello he advises the actors to “draw more and more on your own nature.” (Creating, p. 204) In another passage, interesting for its extraordinary ambiguity, he makes the connection between nature and the soul explicit.

How to plumb the depths of a role, an actor, or an audience? It can only be done with the aid of nature. The keys to the secret places of the creative superconscious are given over to the nature of the actor as a human being. (Creating, p. 82)

The ambiguity retains the connection between “soul,” “your own nature,” and “nature” in the larger sense.

From this there follows a third inference, not of course by virtue of logic but by the power of connotation: the soul justifies the body. The body may not be good in itself but can be made good by the kind of work the soul does under the surface. Stanislavski even goes so far as to suggest that this hidden soul-work is the whole point of the theatre. After referring to the “public’s sense of the inner life of the character,” he asserts that “It is for this that plays are written and theatre exists.” (Building, p. 274) The theatre is not for the purpose of displaying bodies but of revealing souls. He describes the relationship more precisely when he says that a movement exercise was truthful “when it was justified by an inner impulse.” (Building, 0.66) How is the actor justified? By faith, of course, not by works:

Put life into all the imagined circumstances and actions until you have completely satisfied your sense of truth, and until you have awakened a sense of faith in the reality of your sensations. This process is what we call justification of a part. (Actor, p. 122)

Mysticism and the Method

This hidden evaluation of the soul is alarming, I think — and the more hidden, the more alarming. There are times when he is more careful and seems to make an effort to overcome the subtle prejudice in favor of soul. Thus, “In every physical act there is a psychological element and a physical one in every psychological act.” (Actor, p. 132) Or, “there is complete union between the physical and the spiritual being of a role.” (Creating, PP. 208f.) But much of the time his guard is down, and the prejudice is clear. It operates even in metaphors. The words of a play (i.e., the body) are not important: “The point is not the words. The line of a role is taken from the subtext, not from the text itself.” (Creating, p. 139) Both the metaphor and the prejudice are explicit in one of the transitions:

Now that you have created the body of the role, we can begin to think about the next, even more important, step, which is the creation of the human soul in the part. (Actor, p. 136)

Words are discussed in terms of the body-soul conflict: “These are not empty vowels; they have a spiritual content.” (Building, p. 84) In a good performance, he says, the spiritual well springs, the inner essence is released — the real things which inspired the writing of the play, the poem, the score of music. Only in a performance can we feel the true spirit. . .” (Building, pp. 109f., emphasis mine)

Even the intellect, we discover, is part of the corrupted body: “Now the process goes deeper.” (And going “deeper,” “as we all know, is a good thing.) “It goes down from the realm of the external, the intellectual, into that of the inner, spiritual life.” (Creating, p. 25)

In short, Stanislavski’s ambiguous language seems to set up a metaphysic and a value system. There is a great creative and moral force called nature, which installs itself in the bodies of people and things. These installed bits are souls. Apparently this force has little interest in the bodies surrounding the souls. Bodies are only the corruptible shells of the kernels of ultimate reality. Therefore, the art of acting is a spiritual discipline: the motto, you remember, was “Through conscious technique to the subconscious creation of artistic truth.” (Building, p.266)

As I suggested earlier, we cannot be entirely sure that the connotations of the language represent Stanislavski’s deepest beliefs. It is possible that they do. If so, they create a very serious critical question to those of us who want to adopt Stanislavski’s techniques: is it possible to use the methods unless we also embrace the semi-mystical piety that lies behind it? The pious notions of “nature” and “soul” are part of the basis of the method: how much of the method is transferable to another value system, another theology?

It is possible, however, that the connotations do not represent Stanislavski’s considered opinions. As a matter of fact, he often tried to promulgate just the opposite: that an actor’s body is extremely important, that line readings must be carefully controlled, that one must be very exact with set designs, and that a method of teaching actors must be based on empirical observation. The problem then is that the unexamined connotations of his terms lead us to quite different conclusions. My only real objection so far is that these connotations were unexamined.

Unexamined, that is, until late in his life. As he continued to observe and to rethink his theories, he placed less and less emphasis on the primacy of the soul. But it was not until the writing of Part III of Creating A Role that he came close to making the body and soul equal in importance. To be sure, there are still remnants of an older way of thinking: creating the unbroken line of physical actions, he says, “is only half (and not the more important half) of the life of a role.” (p. 227) But still he made it clear that he had discovered a “new secret
and new quality,” the “method of physical action.” This new method rested on a rather simple shift in evaluation.

The bond between the body and soul is indivisible. The life of the one engenders the life of the other, either way around...They are intertwined. A common purpose brings them closer together and reinforces the unbreakable bond between them. (pp. 227f.)

If I may, I should like to invoke Yeats again, who put the new insight succinctly in “Among School Children”: Labour is blossoming or dancing where

The body is not bruised to pleasure soul...

From this small change in evaluation, two very important consequences can be derived. First, it is possible to reverse the direction in which an actor works. The earlier manuals had insisted that inner states were the “sources of action.” (Actor, p. 193) Believability was justified by an inner impulse.” (Building, p. 66) “Scenic action,” like the spiritual technique, “is the movement from the soul to the body, from the center to the periphery, from the internal to the external, from the thing an actor feels to its physical form” (Creating, p. 49. It should be noted that this first portion of the book was written very early, ca. 1916-20.) But now all that could be reversed; the body could lead the soul. “The simplest physical action when executed by an actor on the stage obliges him to create, in accordance with his own impulses, all sorts of imaginary fictions, proposed circumstances, and ‘ifs.’” (p. 239) At the end of the book Stanislavski becomes more emphatic: “when you execute physical actions analogous to your part...then and only then can you understand and feel the pulsing life of your character and do it with your own whole being.” (p. 247, emphasis mine) This change, which Stanislavski kept insisting was a new method, is clarified in an interview with Robert Lewis in the Stanislavski issues of Tulane Drama Review. The questioner remarks:

When he was doing Tartuffe in 1937 he would get the actor on the stage at the very beginning with props and movement...The environment was there and the actor had to move in it right from the beginning.

And Lewis explains the significance of this technique: He was beginning at the end of his life to realize that it may be true that if we are timid, we knock on the door in a certain way, and also true that if we knock on the door in a certain light manner, it creates in us a sense of timidity...How a person behaved and moved fed whatever inner impulse he had. (TDR 26, p. 104)

The Resurrection of the Body

A subtler consequence of the “new physical method of action” was a new attitude toward the actor’s consciousness of himself. Earlier, Stanislavski had insisted that an actor must be aware of the character’s feelings and conscious of his objectives. Now, however, it became possible, even advantageous, to make the physical actions the object of concentration. Stanislavski had come to understand a more complex process of releasing the creative powers of the soul by diverting attention to the body, a process which he could not have understood without first trusting in the unity of the two. His comments on this new insight are worth quoting.

As you are drawn to physical actions you are drawn away from the life of your subconscious. In that way you render it free to act and induce it to work creatively. This action of nature and its subconscious is so subtle and profound that the person who is doing the creating is unaware of it.

It is not within the range of human consciousness to carry out this occult work, and so what is beyond our powers is done in our stead by nature itself. And what induces nature to do this work? My method of creating the life of the physical being of a part. My method draws into action by normal and natural means the subtlest creative forces of nature which are not subject to calculation. This is a new quality, and I wish to stress it. (pp. 240f.)

Now, the idea of nature has not really changed, but its relationship to the body has. The body now also does nature’s work. No longer an effect of soul-work, physical action is also a cause. This change of attitude, this willing acceptance of the physical, is progress of a very significant kind, it seems to me.

But even though the prospects of this new kind of theory are exciting, we can still question whether the “new physical method” went far enough. Stanislavski had progressed only as far as Yeats did in having one of his characters, Crazy Jane, say:

But Love has pitched his mansion in
The place of excrement.

This is still only a forced, jarring, embarrassed celebration of the body.

Suppose, however, that instead of borrowing the concepts of a semi-mystical, romanticized Platonism, Stanislavski had begun with a different theology. Suppose that instead of pursuing universals — the “most pure, immortal, life-giving and appalling mysteries,” to use the words of the Orthodox liturgy — he had concerned himself with the particularities of nature in his theory as well as in his practice. Suppose that he had begun with an understanding of the “choice of the particular to manifest universal truth,” to use the words of Claude Tresmontant’s Essai Sur La Pensee Biblique:

God has chosen a particular people among the nations to manifest the truth. To do this He called a particular man who is named Abraham, at one particular time and in one limited place. The Incarnation is the choice of the particular, of the real with all its historical and geographic contingencies; a particular woman, a particular epoch, a particular with all its sociological contingencies. God Himself becomes someone particular for us, concrete, an individual with his name, country, his face, his history. The

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choice of the particular to manifest universal truth, to
teach the truth which by right is universal, is without
doubt the most profound intellectual scandal, the
scandal par excellence for the Hellenic intelligence... 
This method — which is the method of the Incarnation — contradicts the profound dualism congenital to our thought. (Quoted in William F. Lynch, S.J., Christ And Apollo, Supplement II)
This is the same theme running through Erich Auerbach’s monumental work, Mimesis, where the author speaks of “the sublime influence of God” reaching “so deeply into the everyday that the two realms of the sublime and the everyday are not only actually unseparated but basically inseparable.” (p. 19) It is like John

Donne’s profound understanding of what it means to assert that the soul is incarnate in the flesh:
So, to one neutral thing both sexes fit.
We die and rise the same, and prove
Mysterious by this love—in language so ambiguous that we cannot tell whether he is talking about flesh or spirit. And it doesn’t matter, for they are both the same. This incarnational theology has direct relevance to the theatre, where there is no spirit separable from the bodies on the stage and in the orchestra. Stanislavski’s “method of physical action” moves in this direction. It would not have been inconsistent with his “new secret” to follow the direction to its conclusion, the identification of “soul” and “body.”

Toward a Re-evaluation of Tragedy

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The Art Form

An assumption which often underlies our ideas about art forms is that the art form must mirror life. But this is merely the beginning of art’s objectives. Like all art, tragedy is based on real life, using people, places, things, and situations, but it is a mistake to hold tragedy to the simple function of depicting observed reality. Art often does more than depict life; it draws attention to “other sides” of reality, those truths which ordinarily evade perception by the average, and even above average, man. Art presupposes the narrowly limited awareness of the populace, inflicted by everyday living, and often bespeaks the enormity, perhaps the complexity, of the inward and outward creation. This is the revelatory function of art.

But the tradition of art is not merely to reveal, but also to interpret. It is inconceivable, therefore, for art to assert total absurdity as the substance of human existence, for art presupposes its own intelligibility as a medium of expression. Total absurdity cancels the idea of the logos, and therein contradicts the significance of the artistic impulse. Partial absurdity, on the other hand, is a tenable possibility for the conclusions of art, especially for tragedy. Tragedy may show that a certain principle or attitude or act is absurd; and, implicit in such an interpretation is the suggestion of the “why” of its absurdity. It is at this point that we inescapably confront the ethical nature of tragedy, and perhaps of art in general. Tragedy, with its juxtaposition of order and disorder, fortune and misfortune, success and failure, and life and death, — indeed, meaning and meaninglessness, — is inescapably didactic. It is a pity that that word has taken a pejorative course in modern times; such a fact might itself be didactic of the state of modern man, a state which causes him to laugh at instruction, holding himself above it. In any event, we cannot avoid the logical imperative that where two or more persons or selves are forced to encounter each other, there the ethical question may be said to obtain.

A distinction must be made at this point, however, between mere didacticism and art. Didacticism in its most elemental form is manifested in lectures, sermons, laws, codes, scriptures, and the like. But art is less simply didactic, because it is concerned as much with its style as with its ethic, as much with the achievement of a convincing form as with the achievement of a convincing argument. In fine, the two, in art, are inseparable, the claims of the recent “Art is style” cult notwithstanding.

As an art form, then, tragedy cannot be said to be solely concerned with telling a real story realistically.
Moreover, we are further prevented from seeking a purely social significance in tragedy, although it can be said partly to mirror social dilemmas or social upheaval. Tragedy has reference to human existence, but simultaneously it has reference to unexplored and eclipsed areas of human existence, as suggested earlier. Merely to construct a drama around an historical or fictitious human event and to unfold the plot devoid of any revelation of eclipsed facts usually given no heed in ordinary life is not to construct a tragedy, however pathetic the outcome. The manner in which a true tragedy calls attention to these eclipsed facts is a function of style and is left to the method of the tragedian.

Within this framework, for example, the crucial fact to which Hamlet calls attention is that man is sometimes called upon to perform a deed of ultimate significance and ultimate danger, without being given the commensurate instrumentation and opportunity. This has been a fact of many men’s lives, a fact which most often remains hidden from our perception, but a fact which Shakespeare faced and would have us face. More simply, it is the fact of human inadequacy. Why else would Hamlet cry,

The time is out of joint. O cursed spite
That ever I was born to set it right!

The fact to which Oedipus calls attention, a fact which in all its implications may be termed horrible, is that man is capable of performing atrocities unconsciously, but not the less responsively:

My soul broods over its cares and renews its fears.
That by my crime Laius fell, gods both of heaven and hell affirm; and yet my soul, conscious of innocence and known to itself better than to the gods makes denial.

In Riders to the Sea, for a modern example, the truth revealed is the paradox that the source of life is often the source of death for man, without, of course, his knowledge. In this play by Synge the sea is both the matrix and the murderer of men, themselves unable to detect such a pattern of life and death. But the women detect it, and are powerless to restrain the men from the sea:

Maurya: Isn’t it a hard and cruel man who won’t hear a word from an old woman, and she holding him from the sea?

Bartley: I must go now quickly. I’ll ride down on the red mare, and the gray pony’ll run behind me. . . .

The blessing of God on you.

The function of calling attention to what I have called eclipsed truths of human existence is not, of course, solely within the province of tragedy. The novel, in certain isolated cases, has done quite as good a job of it, as have other types. But the dramatic element which tragedy entails — that immeasurably effective phenomenon of spectator involvement — reinforces the revelatory function of tragic drama in a way that no other genre can boast of.

The Tradition

The next most obvious fact about tragedy, after its being of the essence of art and itself an art form, is that it is not without a tradition, a tradition which can be traced almost as far into the past as the beginnings of recorded history. To ignore this consideration is very possibly to draw incongruous conclusions about the nature of tragedy. We must assume that certain “strands” of the tradition of tragedy are crucial, and a complete avoidance of them by any tragic-appearing drama must be viewed as destructive of, or at least, contradictory to, the art form itself. A so-called “work” — in our case a tragedy — which develops outside the scope of its tradition may not entitle itself to any of the claims of that tradition. A “tragedy” which disregards all the legacies of the tragic tradition is not tragedy, and there is no need for critics to find a way to justify it as such by calling it a mirror of the contemporary scene.

The question as to which vestiges of the tragic tradition are vital and which are not is arguable. But opinions are here given, because they are all that are available.

The two elements of the tragic tradition which, to the present writer, are absolutely fundamental are protagonist (I will not say hero) and disorder (I will not say conflict, because conflict may be said to exist in abundance in comedies). The protagonist has undergone many changes from Prometheus to, say, Willy Loman, and anyone slightly acquainted with tragic criticism has heard critics assert the disappearance of the hero, or trace, like Williams, his course from “hero to victim.” In like manner, the disorder which must erupt in the life of the protagonist has severely mutated during the course of the development of tragedy. Each of these two fundamental but extremely variable ingredients presupposes certain stipulations which further delimit its own nature.

The image of the protagonist which has been consistently preserved, be he god or be he salesman, is that which Williams reserves, erroneously I think, for modern tragedy: the image of victim. What is more peculiar about the tragic hero than his being victimized? That characteristic has remained almost absolutely unchanged over the centuries, while classification as to rank in society, wealth, even sex, has changed fairly constantly. The fact of his victimization is probably that, more than all else, which accounts for our being capable of self-identity with the protagonist. Although it is not requisite to tragedy, bearing Aristotle in mind, the impact of tragedy upon the audience bears directly upon the esteem in which the work is held. In this sense of the perpetuation of the art form, the extent to which the audience is capable of identi-
fying itself with the protagonist may be seen as a major factor. And what man or woman of natural disposition can not see something of himself in the victim of an unperformable obligation, of a misplaced faith, of belated enlightenment, of impending mortality itself? Sometimes, it is true, the protagonist is the victim of himself, but such a situation in the tragic tradition is never reducible merely to being born, or merely to unprovoked morbidity as has been the attempt of some to depict, such as Edward Albee in The Zoo Story.

Tragedy is possible in the twentieth century so long as the protagonist is portrayed as recently-become, or soon to become, victimized by some force within or without himself to which, during the whole of his life to the time of the dramatic action, he has been either immune or unaware of. The occasion of the disruption of his normal mode of life and mental equilibrium must be a form of intelligible provocation, not some inexplicable prompting in a warped mind.

Fate is an acceptable provocation for tragedy, inscrutable though it often is, but it is an inescapable fact that fate never operates alone in the tragic tradition; it is inevitably tied to human responsibility. It is when we fully recognize the element of the fate-responsibility symbiosis in classic tragedy that we salute the glory of the Greek experience. The two are at once operative, and yet in their tragedies the Greeks discovered that neither operates independently of the other.

Friedrich Nietzsche, in propounding his theory that Greek tragedy was born of the marriage of the Dionysian and Apollonian natures of man, proceeded to explain that he had had reference to the unrestrained and the restrained natures respectively. The tragic art form, unlike other art forms which partake solely of the Apollonian dimension of man's nature, represented a unique artistic achievement, for it brought together the agents of chaos and of music, of darkness and of light, of the frenzied orgy and of sober awe. What happens, we ask, when these two cosmic polarities are forcefully fused, as they are in tragedy? Do we have a victory for the god of revelry and wine, or one for the god of poiesis? We have victory for both. Neither god triumphs over the other; neither, moreover, triumphs over man. Instead, each is victorious because he succeeds in impressing himself upon man's awareness; each god gains man's recognition.

Nietzsche did not denominate the god Dionysus as in any way the symbol of fate, or the dread of fate; nor did he denominate Apollo as the symbol of responsibility. But neither the sense nor the analogue is corrupted in doing so.

**Inscrutability and Inexorability**

What are the implications for tragedy of what I have called the fate-responsibility symbiosis? They are peculiar in all literature, for they plant man within a universe which is teleologically ordered at the same time that it is utterly inscrutable, and they bind him forever to the eschatology of his acts and to the intents of his heart at the same time that they imbue him with free will.

Within this framework man becomes the active and determining focal point in a non-sentient universe, for although fate is inscrutable, it unfolds inviolably in its own cause-effect reaction to man's acts. Tragedy is Man Acting and standing alone, hushed under his natural and societal coverings, to behold Creation Acting.

Tragedy teaches us, in this context, that however fearsome the unknowable future might appear to be, it is finally a codified disposition of Man's Self. It further teaches us the necessary converse of that cosmic Pauline exhortation, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap". Whatever is reaped has been sown!

Although it is true that tragedy must be seen to be didactic in order for it to be elevated to its true stature, the essence of its didacticism is not merely the law of retribution, but the law that the means to human greatness leads through a state of ultimate acceptance of responsibility for acts committed. Whether the hero learns this lesson or not is a matter of great moment; the audience too, must learn it if tragedy is to survive.

Tragedy teaches us much more. It demonstrates that while fate must react in an inviolable cause-effect pattern to man's deeds, it has always, by virtue of its dual nature of inscrutability and inexorability, been a stumbling-block to tragic man. Because he knows it must unfold — but does not know how it will unfold — tragic man seduces himself to cancel his consciousness of responsibility. He thinks he can perhaps coerce the disposition of fate to his own favor by means of an ambivalent life, not knowing that his ambivalent life contains the seeds of a subsequently ambivalent destiny.

The second of the two requisite elements of the tragic tradition is that of disorder. Disorder of a general, unintelligible, or unprovoked nature, however, is not material for the tragic action of tradition. There are, it seems to me, only two possible bases for tragic disorder, one rooted in immediate causes and one in ultimate causes. The ultimate cause of disorder, i.e., the refusal of responsibility for the outcome of fate (albeit, this refusal of responsibility is only temporary, for the decline of the hero in the greatest of our tragedies brings about a renewed but belated sense of responsibility), has already been discussed. The immediate cause of tragic disorder, on the other hand, is the hero's temptation to put his trust in something other than his own hitherto invulnerable sense of responsibility for acts committed, i.e., to put his faith in an order, person, or fact which during the action of the play fails or deceives him.

The Cresset
A prime illustration of tragedy’s resulting from a man’s having faith in an order which eventually deceives him is the situation of Hippolytus in Racine’s Phaedra. After becoming innocently enmeshed in a love quadrilateral by learning of his stepmother’s in­centuous passion for him, he agonizes over the ques­tion of whether to expose his stepmother’s illicit love and clear himself, knowing that he should decide to preserve her reputation, it must be at the peril of his own fate. Desiring to save her (Phaedra) out of respect, he informs Aricia, his own true love and confidant, of his decision to keep Phaedra’s incest a secret, remarking,

Let us rely upon the justice of the gods,

For they are much concerned to justify me.\(^6\)

A very short time after uttering this statement of faith, Hippolytus dies a horrible death, precipitated by Phae­dra’s fabrications against him. In fine, the person whom he pitied, slew him to justify herself, and his faith in the gods was of no avail. The hierarchy of the Greek gods, worthy of every Greek’s faith and devotion, were not worthy of the faith of Hippolytus, for he forgot his first and higher obligation to inscrutable and inexorable fate. As for the disorder attendant upon his life, it intruded suddenly, after he was appealed to by a person whose life was lived in contradiction to the ethic of his own. Accepting responsibility for Phaedra, whose ethic was completely opposed to his own, he deliberately if ignorantly — abandoned responsibility for his deeds, and reaped an arbitrary fate.

**Tragedy and the “Two Cultures”**

Failure to understand the tragic tradition’s ab­solutely inviolable commitment to human responsibility is probably one of the root causes behind the noticeable paucity — relatively speaking — of tragedy in our time. Without such an appreciation of tragedy, men can find very little to justify it either as a worthy literary type or as something worthy of spectator involvement. Such is not only the case with the non-literary, but in too many instances with critics, scholars, and playwrights as well. The direction of much modern drama is toward the absurd, with heavy overtones of homosexuality, insanity, suicide, psycho-neurosis, and ultra-sexuality. This has been necessitated by the denial of responsibility in drama. Without responsibility, tragic man becomes not a victim, for a victim may persist — as did Prometheus — in defying his tormentor solely on the strength of his will, but a fore­doomed guinea pig, manipulated by a malevolent and infinitely superior Experimenting Machine. The audience sits and watches, a wryly-smiling inquisitor in the employ of the Experimenter, while Tragic Man is brain-washed, programed, stripped, disassembled, de­souled, and utterly sacrificed.

The denial of the fate-responsibility symbiosis is also probably the cause for the brusque manner in which our lofty art form has been brushed aside by the progress­ives, those denizens of the brave new world for whom means and method represent the highest ends. Typical of the case in point is the now-famous controversy between C. P. Snow and F. R. Leavis which, during the early sixties, raged over the question of the signifi­cance of the humanities for modern times. C. P. Snow, spokesman for the scientist and progressive, insisted repeatedly that humanism, and tragedy in particular, had been having a debilitating effect on human progres­s, and that the scientific culture is more likely to aid man than is the humanistic culture. F. R. Leavis, professor at Cambridge, came to the defense of humanism and the humanities with a number of rebuttals, — equally brilliantly contrived, no doubt, — but ill di­rected at one of Snow’s most powerful attacks. Snow suspected that the Western literary tradition, with its emphasis on the tragic condition of man, had engen­dered a fatalistic attitude, an attitude of passive accept­ance of the horrors of human existence. The “other” culture, the scientific one, is motivated to improve this life, to elevate it — if only a bit — from its present tragic state:

Among scientists, deep-natured men know, as starkly as any men have known, that the individual human condition is tragic; for all its triumphs and joys, the essence of it is loneliness and the end death. But what they will not admit is that, because the individual condition is tragic, therefore the social condition must be tragic, too. Because a man must die, that is no excuse for his dying before his time and after a servile life. The impulse behind the scientists drives them to limit the area of tragedy, to take nothing as tragic that can conceivably lie within men’s will. They have nothing but contempt for those representatives of the traditional culture who use a deep insight into man’s fate to obscure the truth, just to hang on to a few perks.\(^7\)

This attitude, it cannot be doubted, is partly justified by the extremes of absurdity and fatalism to which much modern drama and fiction have stretched them­selves. But there is something of scorn in Sir Charles’ implication that the literature of tragedy in general, unlike the men of science, does not “limit the area of tragedy,” by taking “nothing as tragic that can conceivably lie within men’s will.” It is not a new argument that the chief bequest of science to mankind is the reasonable hope of physical salvation, salvation from drudgery, pain, hunger, disease, and death. Within this context any litterateur or metaphysician who ins­ists on nagging the populace into a sense of loss, whether it be loss of identity, purpose, hope, or humanity, would appear to be not only unfamiliar with the potentialities of science, but “wise in his own conceit.” Earlier in his “Two Cultures” Snow directs his attack with sharper focus: “They (contemporary scientists) regard it as a major intellectual virtue, to know what not to think about. They might touch their hats to

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linguistic analysis, as a relatively honourable way of wasting time; not so to existentialism." This statement serves to suggest that it is not the classic tradition which is so much to account for the contempt of men like C. P. Snow for traditional, or literary, culture, as it is the excesses of "naturalism," "existentialism," and the "Nothing is absolute" syndrome. The relatively recent, burgeoning scientific culture is an optimistic, forward-looking, powerful, and meritorious one which, understandably, would feel nothing but disdain for the desperate die-hard of the new literary aristocracy who retain their hold on their rank by continuing to amplify their own clever insight into man's totally absurd existence.

But as it is true that many of our humanism-bred exponents have atrophied, it is also true that far too many progressives, in their speculations on the humanistic culture, have used an argument like Snow's to relegate all or most of humanism, notably literature, to the hades of insignificance, even to that of the debilitation of society. "Contemplaters of navels" and "idleurs" are the mildest of the names invented by Industry, Science, Business, and Politics for the humanists, - again, notably writers. If it were to our purpose here we could defend the humanists in terms of their being the ones who at the cost of their own comfort delineated the very discoveries which Industry, Science, Business, and Politics have long since claimed as their own. The ideas that man ought to be free to produce and consume; that the universe is intelligible and that man is cognitive; that man ought to be free to buy and sell are not new. The great political discoveries, such as that of the dignity of man, the idea of government of, by, and for the populace, and freedom of speech were dearly paid for by the life of Socrates, the head of More, and the essays of Locke being put on the Index Librorum Prohibitorum.

The Requisite Magnitude

It is more to our purpose, however, to ask if tragedy is fully and fairly represented in the charge, so rampant recently, that it frustrates progress by repeatedly calling attention to individual and collective pathos, that it gives rise to fatalism and widespread dejection, that it does not, in Sir Charles Snow's words, "limit the area of tragedy," taking "nothing as tragic that can conceivably lie within men's will."

The fate-responsibility symbiosis of the tragic tradition enables and compels us to reply, patent and unequivocally, that tragedy is not fully and fairly represented in such an allegation.

The allegation, popular though it is, is yet less widespread than that which gave rise to it, namely, the failure to perceive and to appreciate tragedy's central paragon: human fate and human responsibility.

Tragedy, with the same kind of Titanic compulsion that drives science, has discovered a principle about Man as cosmic as the principle of gravitation is in relation to the outward creation. That principle is that nobility, perfection, and truth consist in recognizing one's absolute responsibility for his acts and their outcome, whether he understands them or not, for they are the expressions of his will, even if, like Oedipus, one does not will to murder his father when he wills to murder a man. In formulaic terms, tragedy posits a series of simultaneous equations: 1, Man equals the sole determinant of Fate (just as in science Principle or Law equals the sole determinant of Phenomena); 2, Fate is directly proportional, qualitatively, to Man's Acts; 3, Man's Acts are qualitatively directly proportional to Man's Will; and therefore, 4, Fate is directly proportional to Man's Will. Although this series is rather over-simplified, it is not difficult to see that it is the very pith of revelation, of exhortation, of constructiveness. And, in Snow's own words, it certainly takes "nothing as tragic that can conceivably lie within men's will," for it concerns itself precisely with the will as seen in the deeds.

The tragic lesson has been quite as difficult for Tragic Man to learn as has been the velocity of light for the physicist. Indeed, every great tragedy is a learning anew of that tragic lesson that fate unfolds in a codified reaction to man's deeds which, in their turn, comprise that for which man is ultimately accountable.

It is not tragic that a man should learn of his responsibility; it is only tragic when he learns of it belatedly, after fate has begun to measure to him as he has measured. But tragedy is "staged" not only from the standpoint of its production, but also from the standpoint that the genre as a whole and as a tradition is not permitted to develop at random. It is held strictly to the development dictated by tradition and playwright. It thus becomes a necessity in tragedy that the hero learn the tragic lesson belatedly; the achievement of the essence of tragedy is contingent upon this. Tragedy, however, goes much further. It does not leave Tragic Man hopelessly alone and undone. Rather, it catapults the tragic hero to the rank of highest laud, for that man alone among men of earth has beheld himself, has bent his stiff neck and looked inward. He has learned the lesson of absolute responsibility, and even if the discovery kills him he at least has not met death as spiritually prematurely as we the non-tragic shall. Tragedy teaches us that there is nobility in trial by fire, even if one is defeated, for death can destroy only the body, not the discovery and not the new-found stature.

Finally, the image of man suggested by the legacy of tragic drama is at the very least comparable to that suggested by science. As science puts its faith in both the intelligibility of the universe and the cognitive faculty of man, tragedy rests ultimately on the faith that fate is not arbitrary and that man can know himself. Beyond this, the tragic image of man is one of
pathos tempered with power, for tragic man has learned, like Socrates, to know himself, and if knowledge is power, then self-knowledge must be power of, or over, self. More than this, it is the power over fate — not over inexorability, for fate will always be inexorable. Rather, tragedy bequeaths to man power over the inscrutability, and therefore the dread, of fate. It ennobles man by demonstrating that he, like Oedipus of old, is capable of the maturity and strength and magnitude requisite to say:

But the hand that struck me was none but my own.9

FOOTNOTES
1. I.S
2. Seneca’s Oedipus, trans. Frank Justin Miller in Samuel Lieber-

From the Chapel

The Reformation and the Revitalizing of our Words

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We have murdered words. They can be killed. They are born alive — implanted by God, conceived by man and brought forth an expression, a piece, a child of man. A word is an act of creation, a sharing in the Creator’s activity. It is an appropriation of his gifts as witness Adam’s naming of the creatures, and of Eve. The life of the triangular relationship was by words. From God to Adam: “For you to embrace, cherish and enjoy.” And Adam embraced the unique wonder of each creature as he named it and received it from God. So he named woman, wife and companion for sharing the splendor with. First the naming, then the knowing, as Genesis puts it. Adultery attempts to reverse this or does not even try to reach beyond the destructive use of the thing requisite for copulation. Words have suffered similar destructive usage. The history of words tells the history of man. It tells of the Fall. Our language is littered with words prostituted and killed, rendered neutral or demonic. We watch the politicians and advertisers throw around the words that are perverted or dead. With one another we find ourselves using words as tools of manipulation. Authors and dramatists have depicted for us the collapse of words, and hence the resort to grunting and screaming.

And there any words left which still have life in them? When the words are all dead then so are we. Hollow men make hollow words. Today we celebrate the Reformation and that was a wordy enterprise, and so appropriately also this Festival sermon. There are those who are impatient with Luther who instead of going on with his endless preaching, saying the same thing over and over again, might have capitalized on his potential political power and furthered various worthwhile social causes. Destalinization in Eastern Europe has produced a bit more hopeful attempts at politicizing Luther, but it is not easy going, for Luther never gets clear of the God question. God is in everything, and not a God who fits the Marxist categories for disposing of God, but the living God, not some thought-up God, some god of an idea, but the living God who speaks. A wordless God presents no problem, but a God who speaks is intolerable and inescapable. Yet what he says looks contradictory and there may therefore, perhaps be escape from some of it by taking refuge in part of it.

Luther’s refusal to suppress any of the evidence is documented in his profound and shocking Bondage of the Will. Luther neither selects what seems satisfactory nor does he excuse God. He does not sentimentalize or limit God to the nice things. Cancer cells derive their vitality from the power of God and He exercises control over them. He wouldn’t be God if he didn’t, not God full blast. To look square at the evidence is to suspect a malignant God. Our particular stomachs are too full for us to see that readily, and fear runs from any such recognition. The biochemists’ work on genes and their manipulation leave little haven for such fear. The God acknowledged in the Bondage of the Will is not discommoded by discoveries of how we are determined, by test tube babies or the chemistry of personality. Luther was prostrated by God. The terrible God whose power and whose wrath are only all too evident and inescapable.

His power hits us at every turn and his demands
are written into our chromosomes and come at us in the claims that are made on us by people and creation. There is no place to hide from the almighty God who has in his hands the cancer, the earthquake, the maggot and the meteor. A merely almighty God is ambiguous, and wordless hidden. Yet God's speaking is not necessarily a help. The Bible has plenty of words of God's holy wrath and curse upon every contradiction of his will. The history of man is full of such contradiction and such wrath and curse. If we would answer back, "Why damnable, if determined?" Luther's rejoinder is, "What God does is right, because he does it." There is no Archimedian point by which we can budge God. Any such claim involves the attempted replacement of God by me, and I, reluctant though I am to admit it, am not really cut out for the job. God can scrap the lot and nobody can say him nay, or call a foul on him.

Why doesn't he scrap it? I would, for I think in terms of returns for me, and also do the gods of human construction. He does not. He gets into the whole gone-wrong mess with us as one of us. He takes the curse and consequence of the contradiction of God and we hear the appalling cry of dereliction, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" If we are dumb-founded by God in the exercise of his power and his wrath what can we make of this? The God who suffers crucifixion, the God who suffers himself to be rejected.

The Word that made the world became flesh and dwelt among us and his glory we behold is this: his throne a cross to which he would draw all men to himself, not with irresistible power but with love and so with resistible words. He draws them to himself through his words, suffering himself thereby to be rejected. This is the way forgiveness, reconciliation and love are given. When he said, "Let there be light," this was a word of irresistible almighty power. When he says "Let there be forgiveness and lived love," he suffers himself to be rejected. Yet when forgiveness and lived love are received they are altogether his gift. They are bestowed by his words which bestow what they say, for they are His words. He is personally involved in his words, pieces of Him which give of Him what they say. With the words of men the deed must be added for them to have worth. With the words of God the deed is one with the word. When it is a word of almighty power its deed is irresistible. When it is a Gospel word of forgiveness and benediction the deed is in the word, but here rejection and contradiction are possible. The application of power in the bestowal of Gospel gifts would eliminate them. Only his love for us can awaken our love for him. We are here close to the heart of God, and here we cannot explain but only adore.

Divine words carry their freight, their deed with them. Either power and judgment irresistibly, or forgiveness and lived love resistibly. The words do their job and the carrier of the words has only to carry them, the rest is God's doing whose words they are.

Hence Luther's quiet confidence in waiting to see what God would do. His victories are the only lasting ones.

They are not, however, just inward, spiritual, or wafted-off heavenly victories, but are worked through the brain and muscle and blood of men. Calvary. The paralytic first received forgiveness of sins and then his body was made whole. Jesus preached and healed. Both.

Healing without preaching is ambiguous. The Pharisees had explanations for Jesus' healings. The devil and antichrist have their miracles too, and a plausible explanation why a man goes off to help the starving Biafrans can be given by a psychiatrist, and on his heels by a biochemist.

The slogan "Feed first, preach later," has only a qualified cogency. When Jesus did not heal because of unbelief it was not because he lacked the power. A healing with his forgiving words rejected would leave a man worse off than before though healed. A deed without a word is as ambiguous and as of doubtful use as a word without a deed. Luther drives this truth to breaking point when he says that if he had to choose between the words and deeds of Jesus he would choose the words.

There is so much healing to be done. But if we are to be saved from going at it as if we had taken over from God, or from using Christ as a club, or from cynical withdrawal because of frustration, we must first receive the words which bestow forgiveness and the love to be for others. We go at it without having to prove anything, without having to justify ourselves, because we know who we are, and what we are for. God has by his word told and made us who we are and by his word supplied the lively courage and guidance. And we shall know what can be given with power and what cannot.

The slums are not your only opportunity. On the college campus where you do not find many hungry, sick, naked or in prison the role of words is vital. Just having time to talk without pursuing some advantage for yourself is vital. Talking with words that are alive, words that carry you — resistibly — there for another's sake with respect and caring implicitly carry Christ. There is no substitute for his explicit bestowing words: the Absolution with its bestowal of forgiveness and the Eucharist with its conjunction of word, bread, and body. It is from His words that our words may be revitalized. With them we serve to quicken one another in embracing, cherishing, and enjoying each creature of God and naming it as we have been named.

A University where Christ's gospel words enliven words and life might well be called Lutheran. Our Reformation Day prayer should ask that Christ in His mercy grant us this for His name's sake.
Military intervention in the politics of a developing state in Asia, Africa, or Latin America is so common that some commentators dismiss it as a permanent feature of the culture, impregnable to the Western democratic reformer. Nevertheless, it is condemned by pious Americans and some Europeans who see themselves as sitting in the highly principled chair of civilian rule, a principle that may be more myth than fact. The view that is held by many Americans is that when the generals or colonels come, the individual is forgotten, be he peasant or intellectual. In fact, however, military intervention in developing states cannot be condemned on the grounds of some Western democratic principle. Many military regimes, Nasser in the United Arab Republic and the present government in Peru, are much more reform-minded than the civilian regimes they replaced. They make a genuine effort to maximize the position of the individual in their nation by extending the voting franchise, breaking the power of large land-owners, and extending some welfare services.

The real problem of military intervention in the developing world is neither the goals of the officers nor their record of achievement. On these two measures they are neither better nor worse than civilian regimes. The real problem is their tenure in office, or to put it another way, the potential stability of their political regime. Military intervention is symptomatic of the underdeveloped state of the political systems. Some political scientists describe this condition as retarded institutionalization. That is, the institutions of the political system (political parties, a National Assembly, a Cabinet, or labor unions, etc.) are not viewed as legitimate by a sizable portion of the politically active people. One might say that the constitution is not legitimate so the political system does not have clearly defined rules or boundaries. Under these conditions, that group with the monopoly of force, violence and technological expertise becomes the arbiter of political conflict. This is the army. When the political institutions or the constitution gain some legitimacy, they can take over this role of neutral arbiter.

To bring real stability the military must do more than simply institute reforms and then turn power back to civilian groups. It must use its monopoly of power to transfer legitimacy to institutions other than the armed forces. It must build up political parties and interest groups, that is, foster institutionalized mass participation. (It should be pointed out that I do not see stability as a goal in itself, or as a desirable condition to further American foreign policy. Rather, stability is required to overcome the crises of economic underdevelopment, poverty.) If the officers do not foster this institutionalization, their political system will continue on the merry-go-round of underdevelopment or instability until some other superior force, such as a mass revolutionary movement, does the job.

The record of military regimes in this regard has been almost entirely negative. At the beginning of 1969, the attention of political scientists and others interested in political development was directed toward Pakistan and the Republic of Korea (South Korea). At last, it seemed that two military-backed regimes understood their task and were taking action in that direction. Pakistan faced the most obstacles, a nation divided into two parts by India, each part characterized by a distinct economy and ethnic group. The more populated and disadvantaged East Pakistan distrusts the politically ascendant West Pakistanis. In addition, Pakistan was troubled by a tradition of political corruption and graft. The obstacles proved too much for the military-supported regime of Field Marshall Mohammad Ayub Khan. In March of this year, the generals consulted and decided that the only way to preserve their ruling position in the face of student unrest and revolt in East Pakistan was to dump Field Marshall Ayub. He was replaced by General Yahya Khan, who scrapped Ayub's failing plan for institutionalization, called the Basic Democracies, and announced his intention to return rule to civilians in a short time. At this time, it looks very doubtful that the military will be able to institutionalize the political regime in Pakistan.

This left only South Korea as a possible bright spot among the military regimes. Economic and social conditions were more favorable here than in Pakistan. The military came to power in a coup in 1961 that replaced a corrupt and divided civilian regime. As is typical of many coups in developing nations, this one was headed by reform-minded military men who were able to produce some impressive short-range results. But one of the leaders in the coup, General Chung Hee Park, began to move beyond the short run. He showed an unusual amount of deference for the constitution, shedding his uniform to run for President in 1963. More important for institutionalization, he used his undisputed monopoly of force and position to build a political party, the Democra-
tic-Republicans. Although undoubtedly discriminated against, an opposition was even allowed to operate in the open and contest elections. President Park was re-elected for a constitutional second term in 1967. This political development fed back into the economic system. Gross national product doubled during his tenure and per capita income rose by more than 50%.

However, during 1968 rumors began to circulate that President Park may want a third term, something prohibited by the constitution. This desire has become almost official during the months of July and August of 1969. It has been endorsed by the Democratic-Republican Party. After having encouraged a legitimacy for a political regime broader than himself through a constitution, General Park now seems headed toward a return to personal rule. A third term, even if the constitutional changes can be made, will tend to make President Park more indispensable than the institutions he helped to build. It may be possible to continue to point to the regressive political development wrought by military regimes in the developing world. Let us hope that General Park changes his mind by 1971.

Books of the Month


That these two books, both now over a year old, have not made major ripples among Christian students of the mass media (not, at least, within eye- and earshot of this reviewer) is not so much a reflection on the worth of the books as on our tardiness to see to it that we are informed on the nature and use of the media that impinge with such regularity, if not monotonously, on our lives. Stephenson’s volume, collecting the psychologist’s studies in media theory, is a frequently technical essay on the role of subjective play in people’s use of the media: Haselden’s book, one of the last pieces from the late editor of The Christian Century, is a thorough survey of the issues posed for morality by the mass media — and vice versa. Together, the volumes do a job for post-McLuhan media students — a job somewhat overdue, in view of McLuhan’s rather uncritical affirmation of “the way it is” in the media as good and proper (which itself may have been a necessary reaction to earlier, merely negative appraisals of the effectiveness and value of the mass media).

In The Play Theory of Mass Communication Stephenson, a psychologist in the School of Journalism at the University of Missouri, applies the “Q-technique” propounded in his earlier volume, The Study of Behavior (1953), to the study of mass communication. Unfortunately, in this reviewer’s judgment, he devotes so much space to justifying the application of “Q-technique” to mass media study that he seems to do little more than assert a “play theory,” without detailed amplification and development of the theory, its grounds, and its implications. But even without that amplification, the book is suggestive of a new direction in media theory that could be especially fruitful for the church’s use of the mass media.

Briefly, Stephenson’s argument is this: while most students of mass communication have focused on the transmission of information (an “information theory”), he proposes a “play theory” as the focusing factor in mass media study. Building on Huizinga’s work in Homo Ludens, Stephenson suggests that “communication-pleasure” is a kind of subjective play which it is the special role of the mass media to occasion. What is meant is not merely that the mass media provide pleasurable entertainment; everyone recognizes that. Rather, what is significant is the way in which mass communication enables people to enjoy themselves.

That significance emerges when one distinguishes between the principle of social control and that of convergent selectivity. While numerous theorists have recognized and worked with the former concept, Stephenson sees a larger role for the mass media in terms of the latter concept: convergent selectivity includes the whole realm of new modes of behavior, fads and fancies, and other factors which allow us to exist for ourselves and to please ourselves in relative freedom from social control. “When one buys this or that toothpaste, car, or cookie, one has a certain freedom to decide for himself, under conditions not available to him before.” These conditions, Stephenson maintains, ought not be regarded as self-destructive but as self-enhancing and self-developing. Thus, far from studying the mass media as means of persuasion or of the transmission of information, one ought to study the media as agents of entertainment, as means for providing materials for that subjective play in which the individual has free choices for his self-development.

Stephenson’s best illustration of the play theory is his analysis of Pope’s The Rape of the Lock. The poet takes a tiny incident and provides lavish embellishments, merely to celebrate the moment and its fun. Freudian interpretations may abound, Marxists may see in it an attack on the profligacy of the bourgeoisie, but Stephenson sides with those who regard Pope’s intent as pure fun.

Instead of dull Marx, nasty Freud, or ponderous metaphysician, all dealing with problems in the real world, Pope gives us a poem to play with in the mind, with joy, wit, fun, delight, freedom, rapture, fancy, ecstasy, and a bit of naughtiness, all in step in unalloyed fantasy.

This is subjective play, regarded as pure communication-pleasure. . . . If we are . . . open to joy, reading the poem gives us the selfsame satisfactions. And this is the core of our theory. Thus, for one schooled in the effective use of the mass media, they provide an almost unlimited source of the raw materials for self-enhancing subjective play, for the fantasy that enriches the human spirit and human culture.

Haselden’s book, Morality and the Mass Media, is a slightly expanded version of lectures prepared in 1967 for a conference of the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. Three basic parts attempt a definition of “authentic morality,” analyze and diagnose several problems posed by the mass media for that authentic morality and propose a Christian response to those issues.

After making the rather obvious distinctions between the two extremes in current (or are they perennial?) ethical thinking, legalism and relativism, Haselden suggests that “authentic morality” so includes elements of both extremes as to be neither of them. Its constituting elements are these: its focus is on people, not institutions or traditions or principles; its objective is to transform people into persons, to “make it possible for human beings to be human”; it requires a habitat of freedom if it is to flourish; its criterion is love, and not merely “benevolence,” but a drive toward unity of persons; and, basic to all of this, authentic morality has God as its source.
Authentic morality then focuses on people to produce persons, a process that requires freedom as an indispensable climate and a love that is more than all loves in its standard and energy. This love, perfectly revealed to us in Jesus Christ, has its origin in the God who is love.

Against that background, Haselden inquires after the effect of the mass media on authentic morality, particularly on the transformation of people into persons.

In a chapter on the "uses of mass media" Haselden adopts a position which Stephenson would regard as equivocating at best. While he grants that "entertainment that has no moralistic or educational value but which simply entertains is greatly to be preferred as a temporary escape from oneself and one's problems to numerous other ways by which men duck the hard challenges of life," he counts it a hazard that "innocuous escapist entertainment will become for most Americans an increasing and unbreakable addiction that gradually diminishes them as persons." From Stephenson's perspective, of course, Haselden is hung up on an information theory of the uses of the mass media. We might add that Stephenson's understanding of authentic morality previously outlined does not seem to inform his argument at this point either. On the contrary, he introduces the totally new concept of escapism which may be either innocuous or harmful depending on whether or not it is addictive and therefore debilitating. A little escapism is harmless, while too much is damaging — like any other "too much." If Stephenson is right, however, that "little escapism" is not just not harmful, but is in fact a positive good, for it is the opportunity for the subjective play that is necessary for the free self-enhancement of persons. Is that old "work ethic" Haselden's bugaboo here? It seems to be.

Subsequent chapters take up the questions of censorship, obscenity, advertising and commercialism, the barbaric invasion of sex-and-violence into entertainment, and the problems of legislating morality. To this reviewer, the outstanding pages in these chapters contain Haselden's critique of McLuhan's pronouncements; these refreshing blunt comments alone are worth the price of the book. He dismisses McLuhan as a "sloganeer, a preacher, an intellectual con man" whose theory "is a great deal of error mixed with some truth for which the author claims too much...he takes a partly true premise — media influence us apart from their content — and moves with it toward a wholly false conclusion; i.e., we should concentrate our attention and our study on the media rather than on their content."

While McLuhan's position is media-affirming, tending to accept as true and beyond criticism whatever is discernable in the role and effect of the mass media in our society, Haselden's position seems to emphasize criticism, seeking to provide grounds for criticizing both the media and the message. McLuhan adopts an affirmative view of the media, Haselden a basically negative/critical view. Stephenson seems to provide for an alternative to affirmative McLuhanism and critical Haseldenism; his principles of convergent selectivity and communications-pleasure provide a ground for discriminating within the realm of the mass media. By stressing the various contexts in which the media reach people and the aspects of life touched by them, Stephenson's theory enables one to discern those areas where the media are really effective and those which are in fact beyond the capability of the media. In the realm of "social control," which includes religious creeds and commitments, the mass media have at best a limited effectiveness; the intimate community there called for is beyond the ability of the mass media to create. In the realm of convergent selectivity, however, with its less intimate kind of community and its emphasis on manners, tastes, and fads, the mass media come into their own. Thus, the media cannot be counted on to produce (that is, in normal situations, leaving the work of Goebbeles and his ilk out of consideration) new kinds of commitments, conversions to new points of view; the media tend more to re-inforce than to convert.

If this is true, and I think it is, then the standard approach of churches to the mass media is, from the outset, doomed to frustrating ineffectiveness. For all the promotional ballyhoo, it does not appear that the "Lutheran Hour" and the "This is the Life" and all the other denominational offerings for broadcasting's "God-ghetto" of Sunday morning public service time are ever going to do more than appeal to those people who are already inclined to receive their offerings. Thus, instead of using space in Sunday bulletins to marshal an audience for the corny and cloying story-lines of the latest full-color episode from denominational headquarters (via Hollywood, of course), pastors would be well advised to stimulate an audience for the best of "secular" programming. The result, at least, would be some improvement in the average quality of programs. Warren Rubel put it well in his report on the Cultural Activities Study at Concordia Seminary (St. Louis):

"The church probably serves the media best when she respects the media for what they are and consequently does not offer "canned" programming to the audience — particularly on television. The church needs to be judged rather than attempt to be something else in her approach to the mass audience. Honesty about the church need not lead the church to be anything but professional in mass media ministries. In fact, under increasing commercial and financial pressure, the church needs to support the missions of the various media with the best talent and support she can muster.

Secondly, recognizing the confirming-rather-than-converting role of the mass media, the church can look to the image it presents to and through the media — not in the sense of creating a false front, but in the sense of reforming itself where it is in need of reforming, so that when, by being its best self, it attracts the attention of the media, it can be seen with its true purposes standing in the fore. In this view, the church is not prostituting the media in a vain attempt to re-make the media into extensions of the evangelistic pulpit; rather the media function with their own integrity, and the church, by being its true self, finds itself worthy of the media's attention. It is not difficult to imagine the infinitely superior results from a newsreport about some bit of authentic churchmanship on, say, the "Huntley-Brinkley Report," than from the entire history of "This is the Life." (The trouble, of course, is that American Christianity is frequently so irrelevant that Messrs. Huntley and Brinkley rarely have their attention drawn to it.) All this is to suggest that basic to any consideration of "the church and the mass media" is a church that really is alive with the Gospel.

Thirdly, this view necessitates serious study of the mass media by the church. Competent administration of ecclesiastical media programs requires study of the media, in all their secularity, and not merely evangelistic zeal. At a 1967 conference of denominational and international staffs of "The Lutheran Hour," for example, there was not a single affirmative answer to this reviewer's question: "Has anyone read anything by McLuhan?" Its operating board could boast not a single professional broadcaster. The church will not succeed in its mass media ministries without studied competence in the media.

A final note: Stephenson's play theory, for all its success in opening new directions for our reflection on the mass media, still fails to provide grounds for discriminating and valuing one kind of media-oriented play over another. As long as it is "conducive to culture" and to "self-enhancement," it gets his approval. Haselden is rightly suspicious of any suggestion that all play is harmless; it may be excessive escapism and not creative fantasy. But both Haselden and Stephenson view play only from the viewpoint of its ends and purposes; theologically, it seems, play may be more significantly qualified by its grounds. For play is a possibility for the Christian on the grounds of his being-cared-for by God. His play is played out as a part of his praise of the God in whose care he rests — and plays — confidently. Play that is not played out in praise of God is bound to go sour, for it must harbor the anxiety that play may, or must, end in order to resume the care of one's life. But the Christian's work, like his play, is part of the doxology of his life. He may therefore play with the media's offerings without Haselden's uneasiness over excessive escapism, when his play is part of his praise. And then, as Haselden advocates, he also has grounds to plunge creatively and correctly into the use of the media, to celebrate there his vision of true humanity in Jesus Christ.
Having reported on Tony Richardson's attempt at the creation of a free theatre last month, I was surprised to find in Switzerland the same struggle for a gratis theatre by Werner Duggelin, the artistic director of the Basel theatres, a man of ideas and great initiative. He has not yet given up his fight, although he has met with ridicule and skepticism. I become more and more convinced that we will soon have two kinds of theatres all over the world, the traditional and the new theatre, ritualistic, democratized, experimental.

In was in Zurich that I caught up with the Royal Shakespeare Company and its extraordinary production of 

Troylus and Cressida. Much has been written about this cleverly staged debunking of the Greek heroes, a truly contemporary approach to a very difficult play. The difficulty lies mainly in staging credible battle scenes, a hurdle that was skillfully overcome. They had a stylized, choreographic appearance, with a touch of cinematic slow-motion at the climactic moment — a perfect example of how movement has become an essential part of modern stage craft.

It is, no doubt, a vacillating play that cannot make up its mind whether it has enough satiric bite or adheres to the classic ideal of the inevitable Moira. It has enough in it of both, throwing the weight of Pandarus, the matchmaker, Thersites, the fool, and the intellectualized Achilles on the scale of the satire. Add to it the heroes, most of whom are characterized as stupid, boasting, blowup zeroes. On the other hand, the Trojan women, Troylus, and Hector walk around with the doom of their fate written into each word and gesture. The lightness and beauty of the love story turns into a bitter farce on love and fidelity in John Barton's staging. It was superbly acted and left a deep impression, proving how much can be done with pointed stylization in contrast to any realistic interpretation.

Another highlight of the Zurich theatre festival was the Noh Theatre of the Umawaka group from Tokyo. Although the Schauspielhaus was sold out each night, the unprepared audience watched these ritual plays with bewilderment, politeness and, toward the end of the evening, with obvious ennui. The esoteric Noh plays are based on symbolic movement and a highly sophisticated text. With the action told by actors and chorus, with a minimum of movement happening on stage, the static impression is hard to take for the length of a whole evening, hardened by the cacophonous music and unintelligible words. The eyes of Western man are concentrated on the beautiful costumes and the bit of motion there is, not understanding, of course, the weighty arguments that lie in the slightest gesture of the hand or in the opening of a fan.

Only the broad comic action of the Kyogen which the company performed between two Noh plays was greeted with relief and laughter. The happenings on stage were sufficiently farcical to help the audience over the language problem. The movements were acrobatically skillful. The singing of the actors — in contrast to the singing of the chorus in the serious Noh plays — was amusing. To make the West meet the East halfway on an intelligible level of theatrical communication, a short lecture-demonstration should precede such performances.

Zurich, too, has its off-Broadway theatres, and one of them, the Theater am Neumarkt, produced Slawomir Mrozek's Once More From the Beginning, a farcical attack on militarism and dictatorship, on the sheepishness of man and the absurdities of his institutions. Mrozek, a refugee from Communist Poland, has become famous for his satire, Tango. The new play is far more diffuse than Tango and less hard-hitting.

It may be all wrong to report first about one of several little theatres in Vienna, famous for its music and opera. But Stella Kadman's Theater der Courage had the courage of producing Jean-Loup Dabadie, who belongs with the Parisian avant-garde. His Scarlet Family is a tragic farce. All members of the family are utter failures who reveal themselves by accusing the other members of the family all the time. The tone of this black comedy is one of a boulevard comedy run amuck. The humor is cruel, the poetic tenderness macabre; everything is wrong with everyone, but in a most amusing manner. The murder of the old man, a most fabulous figure as long as he is silent throughout the first act, is treated with a heartening, at moments hysterical, disinterestedness.

The only trouble with this refreshing idea and forward approach to the theatre of dark humor is that it has a second act at all, which, with its many flashbacks and its supernatural undertone, sounds false. Since Act Two does not, and does not intend to, solve anything, the play goes downhill, adding little new amusement or enlightenment to the first act. The Scarlet Family was very well staged and acted. As a long one-act play it would have been even more hilariously funny and poignant.

That comedies usually suffer from a bad final act is a commonplace. The Theater in der Josefstadt, famous for its ensemble acting, proved this point with Harold Brighouse's Hobson's Choice. The acting
was the best I have seen in a long time, but this somewhat synthetic period play ran out of steam after a short while, and its humor became too clumsy and predictable.

The Volksheater produced an ill-fated dramatization of Raskolnikoff in seventeen scenes by Walter Lieblein, who could not free himself from the mere retelling of the Dostoevski story while skimming over its real depth and religious meaning.

The Viennese still show an attitude of reluctant acceptance toward their great avant-garde composers, Schonberg, Alban Berg, and von Webern, wondering how it could happen that they were Viennese. They were featured in many concerts during the Vienna Festivals, but more English than German speaking people paid homage to these musical giants of our century. However, I saw Alban Berg's Lulu at the Vienna State Opera where it received the best production I have ever come across. The Vienna Opera, as it seems, is still the artistic landmark of this city of "wine, women, and song."

Music

The Winds of Change

By WILLIAM F. EIFRIG, JR.

Readers of this column — their number and patience is unmeasured — have long ago realized there is no plan to the subjects treated monthly. The topic may relate to an anniversary observed in the month of publication. It may be seasonal or current news. Often classroom obligations have suggested items for review. There have been months in which caprice must be held the culprit for the journalistic foibles thrust on an innocent and unsuspecting public.

Now there has come an opportunity to mend ways. The new editor, my own desire for increased idea-abrasion, and sloth have combined to suggest a course of activity new to this column. With every month in the past there came a sharp sensation, not the pain of setting pen to paper but the realization that the column was indeed a platform from which a single voice inflicted upon its audience one man's thoughts, opinions, and fancies. At its best it can be the pulpit of the inspired preacher; at its worst it is the soapbox of the enthusiastic ranter. Most often (we hope) it has been the easy chair of the gentle conversationalist. In all cases the reader was made subject to a single voice simply because the ideas and mode of presentation were so very predictable, even if the topics were not.

To do battle with this state of affairs we propose to bring to the faithful several voices. We hope thereby to catch the reader's mind in a crossfire of ideas and urge it gently or ungently into a position of its own, taken up wherever the reader feels safest in the forthcoming shoot out. Several members of the University's music department have been coaxed, cajol ed, persuaded, and tricked — each according to his particular weakness — into submitting a column. The music editor retires these months to the editing desk as befits his title.

The task of motivating his esteemed colleagues led the editor to the venerable pedagogical device, the assignment. To ask them to write on whatever their minds came upon risked postponed deadlines and would perhaps tempt the Holy Spirit. Better therefore to ask them to address their thoughts to a given. Finally, it promised rich fruit to have all dig in the same field. Each was asked to write at least in the direction of a single topic. The topic itself was suggested by political and ecclesiastical events and by concerns voiced on all sides, the editor himself being one deeply concerned.

The times and our people call for change, but the purposes and goals of the changes are not always clear. The line of battle between conservative and liberal is drawn more clearly than are the distinctions between the uniforms worn on both sides. Prudence and practical necessity have thrown together partisans startled to find themselves joined in a common enterprise with uncommon equipment and experience. Of late a church body meeting in synodical convention has pledged itself to active fellowship with another church body, giving official recognition to unity in diversity.

What then for the musician? An attempt to establish standards of excellence based on a German musical tradition appropriate to the descendents of Saxon immigrants is seemingly obsolete before it has achieved its purpose. What standards are available now? For some the Church is to go into the world; for others the world is to be brought into the Church. Are tradition and innovation so out of balance? Is the future only to the innovators?

The men to be heard in the next months in the music corner of The Cresset will take stands in this maelstrom of cultural thought as they speak to the question: What is Lutheran about music and what is musical about Lutheranism?

To release the reader from the monotony of this single-mindedness and to provide the unreasonable which tempers rational endeavors the music editor will interject columns in the more usual spirit of caprice.
The Visual Arts

Street Art

By CONSTANCE F. PARVEY

A definition of art is as complex and mysterious as the history of man himself. Since the time of the cave paintings of Altamira, man has attempted to master the unknown and the fearful by capturing it in the imagery of dance, movement, and pictorial representation. Art in the earliest expressions known to man was not just storytelling or illustration. It was not self-conscious, nor was it tied up with moneymaking. It was the exploration of a man's dreams, of his fears, and of the magic of life.

There is a little of this feeling in the current street art which is now in mode. In Boston, last summer it was "Summerthing"—a city-wide summer arts program for low and middle income communities. From a cynical point of view, one could call this escapist art, an attempt to heighten the spirits of those who are trapped in the city, in its crowds and in its heat. Though this point is not to be forgotten, there is a cathartic value in focusing on neighborhood art—turning vacant lots into instant playgrounds, wheeling in Jazzwagons for teen-agers, and conducting painting classes for children. The end result is that people come together, they organize in their own neighborhoods, and local talent is developed. All this adds to building a spirit of trust and happiness where there are many reasons for fear and often too few reasons for happiness.

The spirit which "Summerthing" has managed to convey to everyone, whether they live in one of these 14 neighborhoods or not, is that there is new blood coming into the tired veins of old Boston. Within the miles of bleak, treeless, asphalt streets there is a human spirit that is finding a way to transcend the monotony and the static quality of the low-income worker's life—which represents the majority of people in Boston. Any night for eight weeks, people in the neighborhoods could prepare themselves for something to happen, and something always did. In at least half of the neighborhoods there would be free entertainment, food for reasonable prices, and an open atmosphere.

What does this kind of artistic activity really mean? Is the fostering of it just another side-stepping of the economic, racial, and social realities created by urban America? Or is it a new step in the direction of building a society that has more equality, more freedom, and that can be a more enjoyable place to live? If these programs can keep their grass-roots base in the neighborhood, the latter possibility can definitely emerge. We have moved out of the era of the social worker serving the neighborhood from outside into an era when it is the artist living in or relating to the neighborhood who helps the community to find its own expression, to talk about its problems, voice its hopes, feelings, and sensitivities. The drama and dance that have come out of this program are reminiscent of the days of the bard and the jongleur. The content of the drama is not so juicy as Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, but there is a mixture of playfulness and public satire.

In reflecting on street art, I can't help but think that it might provide a very important key to working out a way for cities to be more fit to live in. What we urban dwellers suffer from most is isolation. We lack the opportunity for common work and for casual meeting. The arts of conversation and celebration are atrophying. Yet
there is such a strong urge for coming together that over a quarter of a million young people went to the Woodstock Folk Festival this last summer and about half that many attended its British counterpart on the Isle of Wight — the event that brought Bob Dylan out of his three-year seclusion. But what the youth folk festivals point to besides the need for common meeting, is the need for mass action. There is so much idle energy waiting around to be harnessed that it could be a powerful social force. Good as "Summerthing" can be, and though it touched an impressive number of neighborhoods, it should be thought of only as a pilot project for what might be done. Another year it could reach into the comfortable neighborhoods as well, and direct itself to the old as well as to the young, and to the interests of working men as well as those of teen-agers. If programs such as "Summerthing" are going to help to build the neighborhoods of the cities, they need to be in touch with more of the varieties of the people who live in those neighborhoods, not only with the children and youth.

All of us are searching for ways to master the stresses of present city life. We haven’t yet thought of our skyscraper canyons as caves in which to express our fears in order to overcome them. Programs like this are a move in that direction, because they are helping people loosen up their interior lives and realize that there are things that ordinary people can do to make a better life for themselves if they do them in concert with others.

This street art may not find its way to the galleries of Paris, but on the other hand, it is not spoiled by pretentious prices. Perhaps we are back to a very primitive question: why should people pay for what is free, for the ability of man to use his mind and body to transform the little circle of his life which is the platform for his ideas and the theater for his own life? As an indigenous art grew up in pioneer rural America, perhaps we are at the beginning of an indigenous pioneering art in urban America.

Karl Linn, initiator of the Neighborhood Commons movement and an early advocate of inner city open space, feels that out of the street art movement a new role is emerging for the artist, not to serve the elite patron, but to serve the common man. He helps the ordinary neighborhood to explore the power of its own spirit and message. Some college art departments are already beginning to take steps in this direction by taking the emphasis away from the isolated studio and creating community workshop studies in neighborhoods or among students on the campus itself.

Mrs. Lyndon Johnson started the campaign to improve the quality of our environment by protecting the trees and the countryside. The first urban counterpart of this was the spring cleanup that Monsignor Fox organized in about 400 neighborhoods in New York City in 1968. Those people not only painted and planted, they threw out tons of garbage. The massive organization of Monsignor Fox’s event combined with programs like "Summerthing" could pave the way for enhancing the quality of our urban environment by providing avenues for mass participation that improve both the visual impact and the human relations of our cities.

Street art does not start with the dynamic interaction of colors and cubes, but with the dynamics of people in real-life situations. It is not even a Happening which has a quality of make-believe. It begins with the everyday of life and then moves to drama and dance. It is an art that transforms the movie house projection screen into the neighborhood projection wall. It is too early to judge it by aesthetic standards. That will depend on many things and take time.

Meanwhile, there are vast and unexplored fields for young artists who are willing to venture into the art of enabling others to create expressive new urban environments for themselves, and there are miles and miles of cinder blocks and plenty of vacant lots.

In an effort to develop a continuing forum on art by artists and others in the church, this column will be opened from time to time to invited guest writers. Constance F. Parvey is a writer and lecturer on liturgy and theology, fine arts and architecture, and the social impact of the urban environment. She has been on the Lutheran Campus Ministry Staff of various universities across the country and an executive producer of a TV series on urban problems.
A Hymn for Severe Weather

Last summer, going through some of my great-grandfather's books, I came upon the 1865 edition of a Kirchen-Gesangbuch fuer Evang.-Lutherische Gemeinden ungeaenderter Augsburgischer Confession, and in it, under the heading "Bei schweren Gewittern," the following hymn:

Es donnert sehr, o lieber Gott,
Ach, sieh uns bei in dieser Noth;
Machs mit dem Wetter nicht zu lang,
Es ist uns herzlich angst und bang.

Freely translated, this stanza (the first of eleven) goes something like this: "It's thundering hard, O dear God. See us through this difficulty. Don't let this storm go on too long. It's really scaring us witless."

I must confess that my immediate reaction to this hymn was one of amusement. We know - or like to think we know - all about the mechanisms which create thunderstorms, and not even the most simple-minded fundamentalist of the twentieth century can really believe that some Zeus-like God turns them on and off at will. There may still be here and there some "poor Indian whose untutored mind sees God in nature, hears him in the wind." But the vast majority of us who are neither poor Indians nor seventeenth-century German Pietists can no longer look to prayer for shelter from the "Angst und Bang" that it produces is quite outside his province. The whole story of a thunderstorm runs in an unbroken line from the vigorous convectional overturning in warm, humid air to the trembling soul which hears in its ominous rumbling a reminder that "it is appointed to men once to die, and after this the judgment."

It was no small achievement of the human mind and spirit to liberate man from the terror of capricious deities who hurled thunderbolts at him and burnt up his fields and blew destructive winds across his villages. But the achievement will be no great gain if it leaves us captive to a cold naturalism which allows for no Kindly Light amid the encircling gloom, no Mercy in the clouds we so much dread. And this naturalism is likely to find - as indeed it has found - its first victim in nature itself. What modern man, without hope and without God in this world, has done to his environment could not have been done by either his pantheist or Christian ancestors to whom this world was, in some sense, sacred either because it participated in the divinity or because it was the very personal property of the Deity. The pantheist, looking about him at our polluted air and waters, our denuded hills, our defiled countryside, and our spreading junkyards, could only see us as rapists of God. And the Christian would see us as unfaithful stewards, guilty of the wanton destruction of our Lord's property.

Being of my own generation, I must confess that I could not join Dr. Johann Saeubertus (died 1646) in a prayer for divine intervention in a meteorological process. (I do not exclude the possibility that better Christians than I might do so.) But if I were President of the United States and looking for a Secretary of the Interior, I would much rather have Dr. Saeubertus than Mr. Hickel. Dr. Saeubertus was not up on his meteorology, but at least he was not a "developer."
You've got this medium, see, this vehicle, and you ask yourself: What do you do with it? Oh sure, there are some old stand-bys. You got a magazine, and over the years you specialized in a certain kind of thing. Take Life magazine — you run some picture stories on what happened a week or two ago. Ladies Home Journal — you print the personal story of the part-time secretary of Jacqueline K. Onassis (or an article by her preacher on Mamie Eisenhower's personal faith). You got TV, and you run daytime serials and game shows, and nighttime sit-coms and latenight talk-shows. So much for the bread and butter. But that isn't everything. You got to keep looking, break new ground. So you bring in your best idea-people, and see what they got. Maybe something good. Maybe not.

They figure that with the tremendous interest in the moon shot, what would be better than to televise a State Banquet for the Astronauts? For the format, they say, just do what you did before: Put Walter and Chet and Dave and Frank and Howard K. up there in the booths, overlooking the thing, and have them cut away every so often to men on the floor, or to background pieces, and instead of Wally Schirra or somebody you get a fashion consultant, Aline Saarinen or somebody, to tell you what the women are wearing. You get an advance copy of the menu, which will be sort of a flight plan for this thing, and as each course is served you explain to the folks out there in television-land what all those fancy-French words mean, what the nuts and bolts of the thing is. Don't worry about things getting too quiet. After all, you got the kind of President who will order up the Marine Brass Band to blare out four feet from Caesar Romero and Wernher von Braun as they pick over the fish course. And with luck you'll get a little action out front of the Hotel where you can bet there'll be pickets.

(But it doesn't work. It turns out that a State Dinner isn't anything at all like a launching, that it is, in fact, a big bore to watch, and tasteless besides. Not the food, of course; that, we're sure, is as good as it was cooked up to be. But there's something spooky about millions of people watching the First Lady munch a fillet; something unsettling about watching those fanfarers march out once again to toot in the President like even Napoleon never got greeted; something hollow in watching all those Republican fat-cats revel in a celebration which by rights belong to the Democrats who were in power all the while the moon-mission was being planned; something sickening in watching 2,000 people eat a dinner the arrangements for which cost close to $200,000 when you knew that a lot of the watchers had empty stomachs. The thing is, a five minute television news report could have covered the thing much better, and a photo-story in a magazine best of all.)

The idea-people figure that if you aren't making it big any more with photo-journalism (and let's face it: Life is on the rocks; the August 29 issue carried only 17 1/2 ad-pages, and Time Inc.'s stock has gone a-tumbling on the NYSE) maybe what you need is a little class. So what you do, you get a hot-shot writer for Life, somebody with real credentials, you know, like Norman Mailer, and you have him do an endless thing on the Moon-shot. You already got exclusive rights to the Astronaut's own stories (and their wives' stories, and their children's children's reflections on what it's like to be the grandson of the first man on the moon) but what they are, they're Astronauts, not writers. So you get a writer to tell you what it was like. (Go for prose this time; you already tried James Dickey and his poetry, and that didn't get many red-hot letters.) So Norman weighs in with 26,000 words on, of course, NORMAN on the MOON, but this is just the first installment. What a hooker! They'll be crying out there for more, and you can bet that Norman will give it to them. Why, it could run forever! MAILER on MARS! JUPITER! and so on. Sure, it will cost about 400 G's, but he's a big name. Make your mark with class, and the ads will come rolling in.

(But it doesn't work. Mailer and the Moon are not well-matched. He was good, even great, on political things; his coverage of the Republican convention in 1964 was a classic, and his things on the Pentagon march (Armies of the Night) and on the Chicago convention (Miami and the Siege of Chicago) were brilliant. But he has no place in the space program. He has come up with a vastly overblown and largely irrelevant account of an epic moment. It's overblown because Mailer pads the piece with junk about himself when, for once, his presence on the scene helps not a whit toward understanding what went on; and it's irrelevant because his nose, trained so well to sniff out the human dimension, is (as he admits) up against a scentless quarry. Well, dropping 400 G's on a bust won't kill Time Inc. But it may diminish Mailer's sizeable reputation.)

Idea-people, you came up with a couple of losers. First get your media straight; the messages will follow OK.
My Strange Bedfellows

Did any of you recently hear a suspicious “bump” in the middle of the night? Like something big and soft hitting the floor?

If you did, it was me getting rid of some strange bedfellows that had piled in on me. For several months now I have found myself in partial agreement with The Chicago Tribune, Christian News, the Lutheran Free Press, and other such examples of movable type(s). Last night I woke up screaming and, with one fell swoop, tossed the lot of them onto the floor. I had finally had it with them. I want no more slanted journalism, no more half truths, no more oversimplified answers to complex questions, no more pious neutrality in the midst of great storms.

Of course (before some discerning reader suggests it), I probably should have kicked myself out of bed too. My only excuses for not doing so were and are:

a) It is a little hard to do, and
b) I have never pretended to be half true or piously neutral.

I do not know enough to see both sides of things. Every time I read the “Letters to the Editor” in the publications mentioned above I get all mixed up — more so, that is, than usual. “Somebody,” I say to myself, “must be wrong about this matter, but I can’t tell who.” And with that admission of defeat — or victory — I push them a little closer to the final judgment seat.

That night before I retired again to my restless pillow I remembered the late Westbrook Pegler’s famous remark in similar circumstances. He had said something somewhere which evoked appreciative applause from the Far Left. In his next column Pegler roared: “Gimme my pants! I’m in the wrong bed.”

I must confess that it is tough for me to carry through this purge. I have lived with these fellows journalists of mine so long that I have a certain respect for them. And, inasmuch as many of them share with me the washing of Baptism, I look forward to the prospect of spending eternity in their company. But here — her and now — they trouble me. Often I have wondered what Luther meant when he told Zwingli at Marburg: “You have another spirit.” Is this really the problem? The mind boggles — a “spirit” which fits neither time nor eternity! I must turn this over to the final Judge or go mad.

Perhaps in its nature journalism requires a certain moral flexibility. I would guess that about 80 per cent of the “student restlessness” stuff and an almost equal amount in the church journals of the “Armageddon syndrome” in the various intra-church quarrels are creations of the mass media. Armed with a TV camera and microphone, the electronic journalist approaches some second-year seminarian with the honeyed words: “Just a brief statement for KNUT.” There are other students standing around who have some wise and thoughtful things to say, but the media boys have an unerring instinct for the man who walks the earth with his foot in his mouth. Whereupon, in answer to the question, our youthful brother says: “We are reacting against the system that brought us here.” Whereupon the networks, the newspapers, and even the church journals give the young man nation-wide coverage.

The whole business leaves me aghast. This young man is nothing but his old man plus three courses in Greek. He will make more sense a few years from now when he has learned that systems are good or bad, depending on the use to which people put them. But his “we are rebels against the system” is a sorry business. Yet his words of wisdom race across the wires as though they were a new-found Gospel.

The First Amendment allows broad latitude to the expression of opinion, however wild, however ill-founded. But in these days when so many are appealing to a higher law, let me claim that right, too. There is a law, recommended by the Highest Authority, to which even journalists are bound. It says something about “speaking the truth in love.” I commend it to the attention of the strange bedfellows who have made me more than a little ashamed of my profession as a journalist.

"All the trumpets sounded for him on the other side"

Pilgrim’s Progress

By O. P. KRETZMANN

The Cresset