THE CRESSET

a review of literature, the arts, and public affairs

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In Luce's Light

Days, weeks, and months have been lost and no one to our knowledge has yet claimed the title of the 1969 "Man of the Year." Time magazine, we recall, granted the distinction generally to "The Middle Americans."

Having nearly gained the middle of our three-score-years-and-ten, all the while envying the saints their joy and the sinners their fun, we believe we might be a Middle American. Upon taking stock, we find we are middle-western, middle-aged, middle-brow, and middle-class. We are likely one of the square, straight, decent, majority.

Since we are not likely to be cited again soon for "shaping the course of the nation and the course of the nation in the world," we should like to speak up for the general distinction personally if we should qualify. A powerful, if Laodicean, lot would appear to be wanting a representative.

All we want to know is: If we accept the distinction, does it mean we are only as good as we should be and have to be no better than we are?

As the Time essayist cites us for our latest achievements: The Middle American version of Moby Dick now has the Pequod steering for home with the great white whale's blubber in its hold to light the nation's lamps. Whatever that means — and we much prefer the moral clarity of Melville's Moby Dick to the Middle American version — the essayist surely believes that "the course of the nation" is safe and steady as she blows. Merely resisting listing to the right and left assures him that we are going homeward and forward. We wonder.

Is it enough for us to muffle the peace movement among our fellow citizens with troop withdrawals and a draft lottery while accepting the goal of a Vietnamized war by proxy sustained by 300,000 support troops and a draft itself in alleged peace time?

Is it adequate for us to wring from the mass media still more vapid news programs and talk shows, until all one can believe is what one doesn't hear or the going opinions?

Is it enough for us to caricature the late college student activists into anarchists one and all and to drive them further into oblivion?

Is it sufficient for us to mute and curtain the GI war dissenters from the sound and sight of the rest of us?

Is it fully worthy of us to shrewdly write off the young and the black as ignorable voting blocs in our country, all the while downgrading proposals of an eighteen-year-old-vote and undercutting the enforcement of the Voting Rights Act?

Is it enough for us to have developed further our efficiency in policing the ghettos while economically assuring their existence in perpetuity, now by deflationary policies hitting those least able to bear them?

Is it adequate for us to raise the level of our tolerance to atrocities with our acceptance of war itself as a mitigant of atrocity, especially a war already pocked with napalmings, defoliations, and scorched earth bombings?

Is it fully worthy of us to have hailed the erection of an American flag on the moon when, by our own reckoning, our lunar footsteps were a giant step for all mankind?

Is it wise of us to have unquestioningly shot twenty-six billion dollars into space while the conservationists of the earth are mendicants for the technology needed to restore the beauties and balances of nature?

Is it adequate for us to spend astronomical amounts of discretionary monies on ourselves in a world where the gap between the rich and the poor countries widens every day?

Is it enough for us to try quelling crime by swelling our “preventive detention,” wire tapping, and prosecution powers while accepting our creaky courts where justice is delayed and our creaky prisons where criminality is perpetuated?

Is it sufficient for us to call only upon our virtues of moderation and fair play when there is the pressing need for redressing the balances of power in our society upon which fair play depends?

Is it fully worthy of us to appeal only to our martial loyalties for seeking the peace of the city and the world when there is an internal and planetary need not to further militarize ourselves and the nations under our imperium?

Is it enough for us to cast our heroes from men who only bluntly dissent from dissenters when what we need in public life are men who can marshall majority action behind the agenda of the dissenters and achieve their reforms?

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Is it sufficient for us to go on huffing and puffing about free enterprise while avoiding those serious consumer protections which would make the goods we buy and sell worth having and making?

Is it enough for us to nibble deflationary economies from our military budget, often restoring with the left hand what was taken with the right hand, while gobbling the budget for education?

Is it adequate for us to call out only our virtues of management in our institutions when we are in equal need of imagination for alternatives to much in many of them?

Is it fully worthy of us to aim low so that our victories are assured even if they are not significant?

**Leading from the Middle**

And on and on we could question our latest achievements as Middle Americans while we wonder whether we want to claim the title of “The Man of the Year.”

In our questioning we have one certainty: It is not enough to launch the Middle American revolution of our national history and then expect it would not need to sustain a revolution itself. For it is neither the cultural elites above us nor the economically and politically dispossessed below us who awakened the rising expectations which now engulf all revolutions — but we ourselves. It would be a curious judgment upon our own revolution if we became fixed upon it and ourselves. That achievement is now the means for greater and necessary changes in our national life.

We believe the strength of the Middle American revolution is its wise disbelief in utopias, whether those behind on the right or above on the left. The Middle American revolution is one in which every forward movement expects to uncover fresh discontents, and expects the freshest discontents upon its improving some situation in some way. The heart of its peculiar revolution is its heightening of the quality of discontent while it seeks to lessen the quantity of discontents.

The Middle American revolution does not adapt or adjust to what no human being should adapt or adjust. It requires the ongoing discipline to recognize new discontents, to lay new demands upon its means for reform, and finally to reform its means for reform when they are no longer adequate to the new discontents. The Middle American revolution requires long views — vision to see dangers that are not occurring with dramatic suddenness as well as those which are. And it requires long hopes — to undertake sacrifices for others than ourselves which may bear fruit for all only after the lifetime of the present generation.

The Middle American majority upon which the governability of our society depends is a tricky thing to be. And dangerous, too. A middle majority can repress correction by its sheer weight, trusting as it may that its might makes right. It can invert conventional conspiracy theory and subvert minorities. It may, as De Tocqueville feared, encourage no independence of thought. It can limit a national agenda to what it wants rather than to what ought to be done according to a broader understanding of the public good.

A middle majority peculiarly united in bitterness and fear before twentieth century forces no one can understand perfectly may find itself led by those who fawn over it, leaving it encouraged in those ignoble qualities. It may resist those leaders and those proposals which would build upon its nobler qualities of generosity and courage which are in its greater interest. A middle majority, too, can be divisive of the community and fraternity we so desperately need.

We should like to think the Time designation of “The Man of the Year” is going without a spokesman until “The Middle Americans” are sure it is a distinction worthy of praise and that their best has been expected of them. As it is now, we are only damned with faint praise or praised with faint damns.

**A Drug on the Market**

Vice President Agnew was possibly wiser than he knew when he warned us recently of “the monopolization of the great information vehicles and the concentration of more and more power over public opinion in fewer and fewer hands.” A reality of our mass society is that public opinion, for good or ill, is largely in the control of those who command the mass media. For example, there is the economic power of corporate advertising to monopolize them.

Cigarette advertising on television is a case in point. In recent years the American Cancer Society and the American Heart Association made laudable attempts to counter the frequency of advertisements for cigarettes with their own advertisements against cigarettes. But it was clear they had not the funds to oppose the lavishly produced cigarette advertisements indefinitely. No one did. Nor was it sane to go on seeking “equal time” in a struggle for public opinion in which one side, the worse one, was obviously entrenched. The freedom to view and listen, upon which the quality of public opinion depends, was diminished by the perversiveness of the propaganda through which the average man had to pass to get at hard information.

The case to us was clear for federal intervention and the recent Senate bill banning cigarette commercials on television in another year. We believe the Senate bill wisely redresses one of the imbalances of power in the mass media. Cigarette advertising on television has passed beyond the bounds of rationality which the freedoms to make claims and to make judgments upon claims require. We could wish the commercials were removed yesterday.

At the outset the fact must be faced that cigarettes are physiologically addicting. They diminish our freedom in themselves. It is no exaggeration to say that cigarette advertisements are pushing a drug. As mild
and pleasant as nicotine may be, it hooks. Any exemplary man or woman who is kicking cigarettes can attest to the fact of suffering plain physical pain, whatever purely psychological withdrawal difficulties are also being overcome. After one has begun to smoke, he has conditioned his freedom, however slightly, by a physiological dependency. The rest of his cigarette smoking is done in a condition inclining him more to continue than quit.

Cigarette advertising, therefore, is not simply aimed at the habituee. That poor wretch needs only a Pavlovian brand name before his eyes and ears. Rather cigarette advertising is aimed most forcefully at those who may be taken into the habit, especially the young. It is, in our view, a subtle form of child molesting. Verily, Shakespeare still has the first word for television: "What light light through yonder window breaks. . .she speaks and yet she says nothing." But lately she says her sweet nothings with mindless frequency. Between 1964 and 1968 the number of network commercials in an average month of prime time increased from 1990 to 3022. In all time slots by all network and local sponsors the number of commercials has increased nearly one hundred percent. There can be no doubt that advertisers are patently propagandists in their increasing practice of polluting the air waves with many more, shorter, and widely scattered commercials. Most cigarette commercials are instant images of the “good life” in which cigarettes are subtly featured. They gain their psychological power not only by a saturation bombing of the air waves, but by interrupting the boredom of the programs and the bad news with their excitement and good news. They encourage the values of gratification and release while shielding us from the values of moderation and restraint which make the truly good life possible. They are morally subversive. Cigarette commercials on television present their pleasureful images of smoking without mention of the hazards which the packs themselves feebly bear. They hide the hidden costs.

Most adults, perhaps fewer than we would like to believe, are only amused or irritated by the Marlboro and Virginia Slim images of masculinity, femininity, and the “good life.” The very young can be unconsciously taken in by them. There does, of course, come the happy time when the young can think of better things to do while gambling in sunny pastures than smoke Salems. Or of better things to do over candlelight dinners than pair bonding with an L&M. But that time may come after they have been hooked on smoking.

The young are also eventually struck by the absurdity of cigarette commercials. By the “Latest U.S. Government Figures” invoked to prove Pall Malls are “lower” in the “tars” which would make the whole product questionable to a sane government in the first place. By the building of the better “gas trap” which limits the power of Larks to gas us. By the eagerness of the Tareyton pushers to enfold us in the fellowship of the condemned who would rather “fight than switch” when they should quit and run. But the absurdity of cigarette advertising may not occur to the young until they have been hooked on smoking.

For cigarette advertising is as unconsciously compelling as it is rationally absurd. It is a fitting complement to our national knack for making multi-billion dollar enterprises out of the consumption of things which consume us. We are dismayed but not surprised that the slogan on the Phillip Morris coat of arms is Veni, Vidi, Vici and In Hoc Signo Vinces is curiously emblazoned on Pall Malls.

Smoke Gets In Your Eyes

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Pulling Up the Weeds

When the propagandizing of the young and old into addicting smoking was added to the health hazards of smoking itself, the case was clear to start pulling up the weeds. We agree that the evidence is now in beyond further reasonable doubt that cigarette smoking not only may be hazardous to health but is hazardous to health. How anyone could believe that smoke inhalation could be without dangers is beyond us. We find the man who smokes and who is also for jogging, pollution controls, pure food and drug regulations, and cracking down on drug abuse to be in something of a contradiction.

It is lately argued that there are many products which are hazardous to health besides cigarettes, everything from aspirin to automobiles. We are powerless to grasp what an argument advancing the fact that there are other hazardous products is supposed to achieve in favor of one hazardous product. It surely proves nothing in favor of the televised advertising of cigarettes. Clearly, anything can be hazardous if abused. But there are some things which are deathly if merely used and are despicable if their use is furthered under the influence of addiction and propaganda.

For it is only the advertising of cigarettes on the mass medium of television which we oppose. We leave to the consciences of cigarette manufacturers the decision to market a product whose health hazards far outweigh its pleasures. We leave to the consciences of adults the decision to offer burnt offerings to Thanatos. But we are opposed to conscience dulling advertisements for physiologically addicting substances of known health hazards aimed at the young. That means no more cigarette commercials on television.
In *One-Dimensional Man* Herbert Marcuse writes of the “comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom” prevailing in advanced industrial societies. Written, as it was, before the current ferment, *One-Dimensional Man* is a deeply pessimistic book. Since its publication in 1964 enough has happened to indicate that the unfreedom is not so smooth and comfortable as some had thought. In France, for instance, where De Gaulle had established a smooth and stable government and where prosperity had reached unprecedented heights, some of the most serious disorders of the last decade occurred. Here in America we have troubles of our own. For half a decade our cities and college campuses alike have been centers of strife and dissent. The country is deeply divided over purposes and priorities, as it is deeply dismayed over the weaknesses revealed in our moral fibre. Thousands of young people, lacking aims, devoid of purpose, turn to narcotics or to freakish modes of behavior.

It has become a truisim to say we live in an alienated society. As evidence, it is customary to point to the generation gap, the disaffection of the young from the community and where prosperity had reached unprecedented heights, some of the most serious disorders of the last decade occurred. Here in America we have troubles of our own. For half a decade our cities and college campuses alike have been centers of strife and dissent. The country is deeply divided over purposes and priorities, as it is deeply dismayed over the weaknesses revealed in our moral fibre. Thousands of young people, lacking aims, devoid of purpose, turn to narcotics or to freakish modes of behavior.

First, some definitions. What is alienation? One way to understand alienation is to regard it as a spiritual malaise, a sense of separateness and isolation from the norms the average man is said to live by. In this view, alienation is a cultural phenomenon engendered by the bleakness and impersonality of modern life, an inescapable concomitant of a society based on superhighways, the multiversity, and sprawling industrial complexes together with their hierarchical structure. In this sense, anyone is alienated who flouts the Establishment; the artist in his garret, the dissident on the college campus, the Black Panther in the overcrowded ghetto, are all said to be alienated.

If we think of alienation only as another word for disaffection, it is obvious that alienation is not exclusively a contemporary malaise. Indeed, for three centuries or more it has been found among the literati, although this does not mean, of course, that all literati were alienated. Dryden and Pope, for example, were they alive today, might well be found among the intellectuals who have supported the war in Viet Nam, although they almost certainly would have deplored its crassness and vulgarity.

On the other hand, Ben Jonson, among others, as early as the seventeenth century, was satirizing the emerging bourgeoisie. A century and a half later, one of the hopes of the French Revolution was that it would usher in a new kind of life, so that, at the close of the Age of Enlightenment, the Romantic poets such as Byron and Shelley were calling for resistance against a culture which they considered stultifying to the human spirit. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Thoreau had gone off to Walden because he believed the mass of men led lives of quiet desperation and because he wanted to find out, in solitude, what was really important in life and what one could get along without. Not long after, Gauquin, as we know, took off for the South Seas for much the same reason that Thoreau took off for Walden.

In our own day, the life of D. H. Lawrence can be seen as one continuous, burning quest for meaning in a necrophilic culture of mechanical sexuality and money lust. In Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen Dedalus refuses to participate in the political life of his compatriots, declaring he will rely on the weapons of silence, exile, and cunning. (Joyce himself took no part in the Easter uprising in Ireland. While his countrymen were being slaughtered by the British, Joyce was busy writing *Ulysses* in Italy.) In Gide’s *The Immoralist*, Michel turns his back on bourgeois society to pursue a life of sensation. Today the Theater of the Absurd is an alienated art which places no faith in political solutions and holds man to be victimized by an absurd world in which all values have been shattered.

To creative artists like Gide, Lawrence, Joyce, Ionesco, Genet, and Beckett, there is an irreconcilable antagonism between the individual and society. In their view the artist, being more sensitive than the average man, is doomed to be alienated. This is his cross, his destiny. He cannot, without disgrace, associate himself with any government. He may from time to time throw rocks at
the Establishment, but he will entertain little hope of removing its repression. The characters he writes about are likewise alienated, although they may not be exactly aware of their condition. To men like Beckett and Ionesco there is no way out of the predicament except through death.

**Beyond the Portraits of the Artists**

The understanding of man as separate and distinct from the world has philosophical as well as literary roots. In nineteenth-century Germany, Hegel had written of man as set over against nature and the world. To Hegel, man's suffering consists precisely because of this gap. Hegel points out that "an object means a something else, a negative confronting me." As Robert Tucker says in *Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx*, "For Hegel, alienation is finitude, and finitude in turn is bondage." Therefore man confronts the world as an alien object, as something which must be appropriated and absorbed.

In the opinion of the young Karl Marx, however, preoccupied with the ruthless capitalism of his day, Hegel is mistaken as to its causes. Hegel is wrong, Marx thinks, because he regards alienation, the longing to absorb the All (das Ganze) into oneself, as a spiritual phenomenon. To Marx, pondering the problem, the causes of alienation appear, rather, to be sociological. In *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844,* Marx defines alienation as a sense of estrangement, even a hostility, between a worker and the object he creates. For the first time Marx locates the phenomenon of alienation in the work process under capitalism—specifically, in the capitalist mode of production in which the worker experiences the object he creates as being alien to him, as having a power "independent of its producer." Under capitalism, according to Marx, the object of man's creation confronts man, the creator, and threatens to destroy him. This is because under capitalism, says Marx, work, instead of being an expression of man's nature, is turned into slavery because it is not undertaken for itself but only to acquire the necessities of life. Man works not to express joy and creativity but to keep from starving. And so man is divided from his work, from other men, and finally even from himself. To Marx, alienation can be overcome only by a change in the production relationships.

Some insight into what Marx is talking about can be had by examining the work situation of a typical factory. Industry is well aware of the importance of worker morale in the production process and therefore strives to keep the rank and file as contented as is consistent with good profits. But no matter how hard he tries, the boss cannot overcome the worker's uneasy sense of labor as slavery. This is so because a man cannot feel truly at home in a situation which is not an expression of himself. The crux of the problem is that even though contemporary workers may be well fed, they have little, if anything, to say about the objects they are producing. If the worker protests, if he suggests, for instance, that perhaps a labor-management council would help give the employees a greater sense of participation (this is what the strikes and student uprisings in France were mainly about) he will be told he is trespassing on management's prerogatives.

To take pride in his work, to experience creation as a joyous activity, a man must be more than a mechanical functionary producing commodities for the sake of warding off starvation. A drill press operator in an auto plant must be present not merely to drill holes in an engine block; he must have something to say about the auto into which the engine is mounted. To feel that he is doing more than merely turning out an object which stands over against him, having a power of its own, so to speak, the machine operator must have an input into the car's design, its horsepower, its selling price. He ought to be able to exercise control over its marketing and advertising. Indeed, his word must be sought as to whether it is socially desirable to manufacture the car at all. Put another way, the worker ought to feel not so much that the car belongs to him (this was a misconception of an earlier, cruder socialism) but that the car represents a true expression of his being.

The contradiction of capitalism is that the work process is social (people, that is, produce things together, in groups, not by themselves) but that ownership is private. This, according to the Marxist view, has produced an alienation which penetrates to the heart of life. It is at the root of our sense that the world has been wrested away from us. Even in our leisure moments, away from the job, we experience the same kind of estrangement that we experience at work. Relaxing at the end of eight hours of alienated labor, we watch motion pictures which are manufactured by some strange, occult group in California. Our political candidates are selected by shadowy manipulators operating behind closed doors. Even the news is assembled and disseminated by a remote apparatus we may never see. As a result, no matter where we go, we confront the world as alien, as something not ours. We cross a bridge, we drop a toll into a machine, and the toll, as far as we know, goes to feed some hidden, inhuman bureaucracy. As a result, the world exists as object, as something to be manipulated for private gain. We are not at one with our environment.

Marx held that a revolution was necessary to cure man of his alienation. By revolution, Marx meant the seizure of power by the proletariat. In the Marxist view, it is not possible to think our way out of alienation. If it were possible to think our way out of alienation, we would have done so. It is necessary, rather, to change the concrete conditions which produce alienation.

**The Assumption of Near Madness**

Although the seizure of power by the proletariat no longer seems a live option in Western society, it is pos-
sible to agree with the Marxist thesis that far-reaching changes are necessary if we want to humanize society, if we want to restore man to himself. Such is the goal of a humanistic revolution; it seeks to put man back in the saddle. The humanistic revolution takes as its starting point, as Erich Fromm, one of the humanistic revolutionaries, has suggested, the assumption that modern man stands at the point of madness. Only radical therapy, therefore, can save him. The humanistic revolution, therefore, calls for a change not only in the economic system but the transformation of everything which stands in the way of fulfillment of life.

The first order of business of any revolution calling itself humanistic, therefore, is the reconstitution of the social and economic order. A decent economic order is a sine qua non; an economic order, that is, which is responsive not to the needs of the market but to the needs of man. What are man’s needs? The humanistic revolutionary would reply that man’s chief need is to dwell in a fellowship bound together by ties of love and mutual respect. Because he would likewise hold that such a fellowship is negated by a world in which every man is his brother’s enemy, he further calls for a society built on socialism. He makes the proviso, however, that socialism not be idolized as an end in itself but put in its proper perspective as a means to a fuller life. The humanistic revolutionary regards socialism as a necessary condition, although not a sufficient one, for a more humane society.

As history has demonstrated only too clearly, men can be alienated in a socialist economy as well as in a capitalist one, and a socialist government can be guilty, as the Labour Party in Britain is today guilty, of the most shocking betrayal of humanistic goals. And so the critical question is whether man exists for the system or whether the system exists for man. As Erich Fromm has pointed out, if a society idolizes production as its primary goal, it will, regardless of its humanistic rhetoric, tend to subordinate whatever may appear to detract from this goal. And so, although the United States is a capitalist economy and the Soviet Union a socialist, both are production oriented and in neither country can man be said to have overthrown alienation.

Since man is the center of a truly humanized order, democratic institutions which since the Enlightenment have been considered the cornerstones of democracy will have to be redefined. A time-honored feature of any system professing to be democratic or humanistic is, of course, the franchise. Yet the franchise, in and by itself, has been shown insufficient to bring about a truly humanized order. A system is not democratic merely by having universal suffrage. The really important changes of the past decade in the direction of wider democracy have been brought about by agitation in the streets, not through the ballot box. The gains made by the blacks have not been voted into being at the polls but have been enacted by a Congress and an Administration responding to the pressures from the black community as exemplified by Birmingham and Selma.

What counts in deciding whether a society is democratic or not democratic are the decisions men are to be permitted to make concerning those issues which face them where they live. These are not necessarily decisions that can be made in the voting booth. Much more important are the decisions, for example, as to who shall serve on the local school board, what kind of curriculum shall be taught to their children, and what voice parents will have in the control of the schools. Humanistic revolutionaries therefore place their faith in “participatory” democracy. This means democracy on the working level of the shop, the office, the school, and the neighborhood. Under participatory democracy, workers would assist in formulating decisions at their place of employment. Insofar as possible, power would be decentralized and returned to the communities and neighborhoods. There would be continuous interaction between people and their representatives. Representatives who ignored the mandate of their constituencies would be subject to instant recall.

Humanists are frequently chided for their alleged blindness to what is called the depravity of man. In this view, no social change can be expected to bring about a better society for the simple reason that the depravity of man will subvert it. First must come moral regeneration, it is said. The humanistic revolutionary is not so naive as to suppose that man is perfectible or that evil can be totally abolished or that pain can be banished from the earth. That was an illusion of the Utopians. The humanistic revolutionary does not expect man to be perfect; rather, he calls on him to live up to the best in his human nature. He does not seek to resolve all antinomies but he does distinguish between existential antinomies and factious ones. That man is mortal but that he also longs for immortality is an existential antinomy. In this respect, the human condition is tragic. But the fact that man desires justice and yet acts unjustly may result not so much from man’s essence but from the inflexible institutions he has created for himself. If man were totally depraved, he would not desire justice. There would not even be a word for justice. Because man makes his own history, because he actualizes himself in history, factious antinomies are capable of resolution. Men do make their own history, as Herbert Marcuse has said, even though they may make it under given conditions.

Middle Class Revolutionaries?

The burning question is: who are the agents of change? As I have suggested, the Marxian notion of the proletariat as the maker of revolution is no longer realistic. The present hope, therefore, may be the middle class. Granted it is difficult to break out of our rigid categories to the point that we imagine the middle class agitating for socialism. But why should it not? As C.
Wright Mills pointed out long ago in *White Collar*, we are all white collar workers these days. The individual entrepreneur has long since passed from the scene; today the majority of men do not work for themselves but for others. While the condition of the contemporary middle class is a long way from that of the nineteenth century proletariat to whom Marx looked for revolution, it is also true that the middle class has grievances. It would not be hard to enumerate them. High taxes, high prices, shoddy merchandise are only a few. But disaffection goes much deeper.

It has been the fashion for some time now to characterize the middle classes as staunch if somewhat thick-headed supporters of the status quo. I believe this stereotype is no longer valid. Merely glance at the kind of material *Look* and *Life* are publishing these days. Recall, too, that the anti-war movement in the United States—and for that matter, throughout the world—has been almost exclusively a middle class, white phenomenon. Several years ago, five hundred thousand anti-war demonstrators marched down New York's Fifth Avenue, and nearly all of them were well dressed, well behaved, and well off. They were supported in principle by thousands of others who watched on TV. The recent moratoria need no comment. The support the middle classes have given to organizations like SANE, to the candidacy of Gene McCarthy, and to the draft resistance crusade of Dr. Spock and William Sloane Coffin, is convincing evidence, it seems to me, that portions of the middle class have become a powerful force for change.

The truth is that the winds of change are sweeping through Westchester and Nassau County as well as through Detroit and Harlem. Any politician who considers his district "safe" is deluding himself. According to a Harris Poll, some fifteen million Americans sat out the 1968 Presidential election. Millions more split their ticket. The same poll estimates that close to 50 per cent of America is alienated from the mainstream of American society. It doesn't take much perspicacity to see that people are bitter, frustrated, and angry. Despite considerable evidence to the contrary, I do not believe that the mood of the country is to keep the lid on. I believe, rather, that millions are ready for change, and probably in the forefront are the middle classes. The middle classes do not like Viet Nam, they do not like the draft, and they do not particularly like America's far-flung military commitments.

It would be irresponsible, of course, to underrate the very serious obstacles to change. It is obvious that there are "Middle Americans" with a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. Millions of engineers and production workers depend on the war economy for their bread and butter. It is regrettable that organized labor does not support the anti-war movement. Factory workers are often extremely hostile to anti-war pickets. Bus drivers refused to transport people wishing to go to Washington for the moratoria. And so on. All this is true.

A serious weakness of revolutionaries, humanistic or otherwise, is the failure to provide alternatives to the arms economy. It is this, above all else, which tends to give revolutionary rhetoric its nebulous and abstract quality. One frequently gets the impression that all one needs for revolution are clean hands and a pure heart. Revolutionaries also fail, in many instances, to correctly identify the enemy. The enemy is not the police or even the soldiery, and by treating them as such many opportunities are foreclosed for winning them over. In the same way, those who call on workers to walk out of jobs which are baneful to the commonweal may be idealistic but they are also short sighted and impractical. There is nothing shameful about a man's wanting to provide for himself and his family. Scientists may walk out of MIT or GE but eventually they have to walk back in again unless there is something else they can do. So far workers have not been presented a realistic alternative. As I have indicated in this article, I do not believe there is a meaningful alternative without a socialist economy.

Still, the potential for change is very high. Those who have managed to resist the introjected morality of a culture which is at once craven and hubristic must lead the way. People who have freed themselves—engineers, teachers, salesmen, housewives, students—learned a great deal during the 1960's. The most important thing they have learned is that the affluent society is far from humanistically based, and they have been bruised by its cruelty and stony resistance to change. Through supporting Gene McCarthy and fighting the draft, through their exposure to the naked power and chicanery at the Chicago Convention, the middle classes have gained valuable and sobering first-hand experience of what is required to make things happen. Is it possible to believe that they can any longer be satisfied with the annual trip to the ballot box, with the nominating charade, or with the machine politics which characterizes so much of our urban and suburban life? In dealing with a particular problem affecting the careers and possibly even the lives of their sons, the middle classes have proved out Thoreau's dictum that acts of principle change things. Conscience and concern can and do have an effect on politics. Can anyone seriously believe that Lyndon Johnson would have abdicated had it not been for the anti-war movement?

A Politics United with Morality

Through their parades and street demonstrations, the middle classes have proved out Thoreau's dictum that acts of principle change things. Conscience and concern can and do have an effect on politics. Can anyone seriously believe that Lyndon Johnson would have abdicated had it not been for the anti-war movement?
In short, the middle classes have at long last begun to perceive that Viet Nam and the Bay of Pigs and the shame of the Pueblo incident are not accidents or fortuitous events or tactical errors but rather are the warp and woof of a foreign policy which, irrespective of its relevance twenty years ago, is now sterile. At least many of the middle class are questioning their further support of this farrago of outmoded stereotypes and the alliance of big industry, big education, big labor, and the Pentagon. It follows, then, that the hope of a decent world in which there are no more Viet Nams or assaults against governments whom we do not happen to like cannot be realized until the concentration of power and influence furthering this insane course is broken up as subversive of the welfare of mankind and until a new politics united with morality has taken the place of the old.

As Matthew Arnold said of his own age in the nineteenth century, we in the 1970’s stand between two worlds. The world of exploitation, despair, and alienation, exposed for the fake it is, is now losing its deathly fascination as the only world there can be. Doubtless it will fight back virulently. No one can adumbrate the contours of the new world with certitude, but the least one can say of it is that it will be radically changed—changed in its concepts of power, changed in its understanding of work and vocation, changed in its possibilities for community. Out of the ferment and disorder in the streets, out of the unrest and anger seething in the universities, out of the strengthening of the middle class’s self-image concerning its capacity to lead and to effect changes it is hoped a new and better society will come. For those who can read the signs of the times, it should be clear that a humanistic revolution is under way. It would be difficult indeed to miss the political significance of the 1960’s, which is that the dispossessed have begun to forge the political and institutional tools to reappropriate the power wrested away from them. This is only the beginning.

It does not appear, at this writing, that any of the politicians on the current scene have the qualifications to lead a humanistic revolution—with the single exception, perhaps, of John V. Lindsay. It is safe to say, however, that the leadership which will eventually emerge is now learning the facts of life in the ghettos and on the college campuses. Out of their experiences will issue some bizarre notions and some curious life styles, to be sure, but we also have the right to expect striking and original concepts on how people may live creative and productive lives.

If I have placed what may seem to some excessive confidence in the middle classes as the vanguard of revolution, it is because I believe the middle classes are alienated no less than were the poverty-stricken workers of the nineteenth century. Neither their work nor their lives belong to themselves. The middle classes have no less a stake in a decent world—that is, in a world not headed for self-destruction—than the impoverished and the downtrodden have a stake in a world where there is enough to eat and where there is housing for all. There is no reason, therefore, why blue collar and white collar workers should be enemies, and there is every reason they should be allies. Both must realize, therefore that we cannot have a better world as long as fortunes are to be made in keeping the world as it is. We shall continue to have Viet Nams as long as it is the unquestioned policy of our leadership to oppose revolutionary uprisings throughout the world. (Viet Nams harm both blue collar and white collar workers alike, and most of all they harm the impoverished.) American boys, regardless of their economic background, will continue to be sacrificed for the American imperium until the power of the military-industrial complex is opposed. We shall continue to have unsafe, expensive, polluting automobiles until the car manufacturers are made responsible to the people. The Pentagon will continue to waste taxpayers’ money and have a disproportionate voice in foreign policy until it is brought under the control of a people who have learned to abjure war and until there is no further profit to be made in the sale and manufacture of arms. All these ills will continue, and worsen, under the welfare state. There may be token improvements made within the present system, but the basic malady will remain. We shall continue on a collision course until we have a humanistic revolution in which men and the country-side are once again respected and cherished instead of exploited and ravaged.

The Dream: From Death to Life

At this point I would enter a word of caution. Although I have said there are signs pointing to a humanist revolution, it is by no means a sure thing. The opposite, indeed, could happen; history has a way of frustrating our fondest hopes. There are discouraging signs as well as encouraging ones. Failure to deal with environmental pollution, the increasing use of drugs, the rise of pornography—all this, and more, indicate a basic sickness. We may be sicker than we realize. It could be that the immediate future can promise nothing more positive than additional dosages of welfarism and militarism.

And there is the issue of violence, the violence of those who seek change and of those in the established order. Clearly, the latter have the greater resources for doing violence. Violence, as Hannah Arendt has pointed out, is always a sign of weakness. It is power to attract, not repress, that counts, at least for the long pull. Humanistic revolutionaries go quietly about educational work, community organizing, study, and experimentation with ways of living in more humane ways. This work may, in the long run, avoid the violent reaction to revolutionary violence and attract the undecided and those who are fearful of confrontations. To quote Miss Arendt again: "Bigness is affected with vulnerability, and while
no one can say with assurance where and when the breaking point has been reached, we can observe, almost to the point of measuring it, how strength and resilience are insidiously destroyed, leaking, as it were, drop by drop, from our institutions. We need only observe the condition of our schools—to say nothing of the deterioration of the everyday services we take for granted, garbage collection, transportation, mail delivery—to see how the disintegration has begun in our oversized institutions and why attractive alternatives to them must be ready when they founder.

Essentially, the humanistic revolution postulates that man prefers health and sanity to sickness, order to disorder, as long as order is understood to encompass more than merely an enforcement of rules. This assumes, basically, an optimistic view of human nature. I will admit that this could be a mistaken view; it could be, rather, that man prefers sickness to health. Or, even granted his good intentions, it could be that our superindustrial society is a machine irrevocably out of control and headed for destruction. But I don’t see how anyone can say this for sure. Certainly those who remember the bleak days of the 1950’s could not have foreseen in those times anything like the explosions and breakthroughs of the 1960’s. Man is a strange and wonderful creature and no one can draw the limits of his possibilities.

And so the humanistic revolution aims at nothing less than the transformation of society—perhaps even the abolition of society in favor of more “natural,” more organic relations. It therefore has nothing to do with the freak-outs into Hippiedom and the drug culture. It stands for more than cleaning up the ghettos and providing jobs and housing for the poor, laudable as those measures may be as short-term answers. It goes deeper than reforming our institutions. It calls for a complete break with everything which is anti-human. The criterion is simple: that which is anti-life is anti-human. It dares to dream, along with the great dreamers, that men and women are capable of stepping from death into life.

The American Dream: Antique at Noon

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To write or speak today about the American Dream is to share a common uneasiness. Not that the idea of the American Dream has spent its force. Newspaper editorials (“The American Dream Still Flourishes”), fiction relatively new (Norman Mailer) and reissued (Elia Kazan), plays (Edward Albee), Punch satires of “The Star-Spangled Jack,” commencement addresses (John Gardner, late of HEW), reassuring Look pictorial essays with the late Robert Kennedy, scholarly monographs (Allen Nevins’ James Truslow Adams: Historian of the American Dream), and President Nixon’s state of the union address earlier this year—all keep the knife in the American brain.

We can trace some of our restiveness with the American Dream to two frustrating problems with language. First, tag phrases like “The American Dream,” helped along by the mass media, rush rapidly to thegrave-year of irrelevancy. Ironically and regrettably, words quickly become discardable in the often sick dynamics of change in our culture. Also, because the norms of the American Dream are shifting, we are never quite sure whether to laugh or to weep when we see the gaps between what we seem to have been, what we are, and what we might be.

Yet the idea of the American Dream will rub even more abrasively in our national consciousness during the seventies. We near the two-hundredth anniversary of our country. Are we as close to dusk as we sometimes hear? Or is it merely noon, and we see the shadows behind us? We do not know for sure. Concerned for the future, we sense the strangeness of our past and the opaqueness of much of the present. Perhaps a quick resume from a somewhat literary perspective may help us name our situation and act upon it. Look at the American Dream as a dream about a place, about man in that place, and about man’s future in that place.

From New Canaan to Ecological Catastrophe

However come of age we may be, our American forefather, to use Mircea Eliade’s phrase, was a homo religiosis. The religious man finds the sacredness of his world in a place. His peculiar center was America, and America was the New Canaan, a ripe and abundant wilderness waiting for God’s people. To the New Testament Christian in America, interpreting his world topologically, nothing ever really happened for a first time only. If America was neither an Eden nor a bleak desert, it was the promised land which Americans were to make into a garden. Nathaniel Hawthorne once described it as a sleepy hollow: a thriving field of Indian corn, tasselled out in its maturity, like the lap of bounteous nature filled with bread stuff. The essential feelings are rural, pastoral, and, until recently, expansive. Jefferson caught the expansiveness in his first inaugural address—room for a hundred, a thousand generations.
The people of America coupled hope with expansiveness by placing on their roofs weathervanes of Gabriel, the triumphant announcer of the millennium.

The scene changed. Rip Van Winkle’s twenty year sleep ended; he arose to a changed community. It had become more restless, more given to commerce. Like Rip Van Winkle, each adult generation found itself a vestigial remnant in an ever-changing present. John Greenleaf Whittier’s Snowbound now stands like some quaint tableau in our literary memory, accentuating the disparity between a rural past and an urban present. Now we watch Easy Rider as Captain America and Billy (the Kid?) cycle inward upon the aging entrails of an uneasy country.

We know what happened. As Leo Marx so aptly put it, into the garden came the machine. The steam locomotive was its image. The reaction to that technological image was ambivalent. Ralph Waldo Emerson, hearing the whistle of the locomotive in the woods, could reflect on the happy blending of nature, man and technology. Henry David Thoreau reacted differently. He saw dark correspondences between the iron rails and Atropos, one of the Greek goddesses of fate. She was the one who could not be turned away. The inevitable iron rails become the irreversible future of technological man. Man will become the “tool of his tools.” Thoreau also wrote, “Someday we will gnaw the crust of this old earth.”

Over a hundred years later our reaction to the American Dream about a place and what Americans have done to it leans toward outrage. The modern city, the technopolis, along with commerce and industry, is the necessary locus of our loyalties. And the city cuts us off from nature, wrote Albert Camus, amputating from the disparity between a rural past and an urban present. We watch Easy Rider as Captain America and Billy (the Kid?) cycle inward upon the aging entrails of an uneasy country.

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History is in the streets. At the same time, technology has made that history in the streets synchronous with the present. As Walter Ong put it: “Never before has more of the past been accessible to the mind of the present.”

Yet our great knowledge about man generically severs us from a genuinely specific feeling for the human past. Conrad Richter caught this feeling in The Waters of Kronos. Old John Donner, returning to his hometown, Unionville, Pennsylvania, expresses the irretrievable way in which technology separates the present from the past. As he drives to Kronos Gap, the road suddenly discloses what he had feared: “The high concrete dam breast like the white end of a colossal burial vault whose lid was blue water running back for miles, shutting in forever his grandfather’s Vale on Union, reaching high on the hill and clapping every hollow.” Stopping his car, John Donner tries to remind himself that what he sees and his reaction to it are the price of progress. But he cannot. The narrator continues:

He couldn’t shake off the feeling that under his feet he had come upon something frightening. He had had a glimpse, small as it was, into an abyss whose unfathomable depths were shrouded in mist, a bottomless chasm that he had known existed, if only in the back of his mind and in the back of everyone else’s mind, but which he had never seen face to face or looked down into before. Perhaps one had to be old as he to recognize what one saw, to understand first how man had struggled up so painfully and so long, and then with that sad knowledge to come upon one’s own once living, breathing and thinking people swallowed up in the abyss, given back to primordial and diluvian chaos. Richter captures the certain loss of the past in America and its rural, agricultural, and community values: love of the land; pride in owning land wrested with difficulty from the wilderness; strong independence joined with willingness to help the neighbor in need (that special genius De Tocqueville observed in Americans); and deep family loyalties.

These values rub against the values of the technological world: compulsive orientation to the future—specifically future perfection; focus on efficiency; obsession with the profit motive rather than quality production; an apparent accent upon statistical truth; trends which threaten to abrogate the meaning and stifle the cry of individual suffering. Justice, pity, love, and forgiveness—the values of the ideal village and of a struggling and sinful humanity—stand in sharp contrast to the values of the aerospace world—technical perfection, power, wealth, and invulnerability. Our predicament seems almost impossible. At the same time that technology desacralizes the world, man cannot rescue it without treating it sacredly. The nexus is man, and man is a mixed bag.

From Adam to Disconnected Man

Our encounters with the picture of man in American literature, and consequently with man’s place in the American Dream, usually prove disturbing. Disenchantment with man’s image of himself, suggested Eric Bentley, is the idea of modern literature. Alfred Kazin sized up the modern situation when he claimed of Joe Christmas, the victim of William Faulkner’s Light in August:

More and more, not merely the American novel, but all serious contemporary novels, are concerned with men who are not real enough to themselves to be seriously in conflict with other men. Their conflicts, as we say, are ‘internal’; for they are seeking to become someone. Joe Christmas lives a life that is not only solitary but detached. . . actually he is concerned only with the process of self-discovery, or of self-naming. From a literary perspective, we find man in a dislocated and disconnected world. In this world, man’s search for identity and for self-naming is a desperate one. God seems to have become an exile. Man remains
a creative and estranged symbol-maker in a mute natural world. Civilized, urban, industrial man remains both attracted to an repulsed by the threat and promise of technology. And each of the disconnections we respond to in the literature—man from God, man from nature, man from man, man from technology—feeds the essential disconnection man feels within himself. The result is the alienated man, a nearly grotesque caricature of the American Adam. Unable to establish relationships with a meaningful reality beyond himself, he turns away from history, which no longer seems usable. He turns away from human community, for the lives of those around him often seem as remote and inauthentic as his own. When he searches within himself, he finds no center upon which the passions, desires, and intent of his life may converge in a meaningful way. And at the end, even in fiction, there is death.

The overall impression leads one to a sharp sense of the diminution of man's understanding of himself. The more we know, the less we understand. This particular theme of man's lost, blurred, or attenuated image of himself, beaten fine and thin in the literature and the now ponderous criticism overplaying it, has led to a number of reactions. Some choose not to read. Roger Shinn writes of intelligent and sensitive men who, caught in the overt pressures for decision making in the establishment, turn from imaginative literature. These men cannot afford the sweet luxury of interior meditation afforded by the alienated artist. There is too much else to worry about: pollution, disturbed ecological balances, shrinking natural resources, overcrowding, poverty, crime, famine, noise, racial tensions, loss of privacy, student unrest, disintegrating family, social and political structures.

Some take a carrion attitude. Jan Myrdal cheerfully claims that the writer is "a small, subversive white animal letting out words that like termites eat away the foundations of Western culture." And some light a candle in the dark. Saul Bellow said, "Even if we live in a Waste Land... or if we do not live in an age of gold, we have choices: We can either shut up because the times are too bad, or continue because we have an instinct to enjoy, which even these disfigured times cannot obliterate." But our imaginative literary predicament suggests norms for man caught in the exigencies of the American Dream. And those norms, mirroring our plight, light up our situation. They may even give us legitimate hope. The norms, I think, are partially related to our sense of man's response to heroic encounter, even if that encounter means naming man's despair. Man's possibility for heroic encounter seems to depend on the worth man places on himself in a field of value relationships. Although C. S. Lewis once remarked wryly that man's worth aside from God is zero, the irony of our Western tradition is that man has seldom been discussed apart from that God-man relationship. Even when man claims that God is dead. The key norm in literature seems to cluster about a number of major literary or varbal types. Each is related to a loose generic norm, and all, I think, are still very much alive in the American imagination. I refer to the norm of the heroic type.

From Chingachgook to Humperdinck

Until quite recently, the hero in our popular literature has generally been the common man, the careful craftsman, the honest homesteader and farmer, the dedicated soldier, the stolid and solid man in the gray flannel suit. In our earliest literature he is a Chingachgook or Hawkeye or Deerslayer of Cooper's Leatherstocking Series. In the contemporary world he may be a Eugene Gant or a Moses Herzog or a Willy Loman. Sometimes he is capable of reforming the evils imposed upon him by uncommon men or uncommon conditions. When he is no longer able to fight or comprehend the conditions, he is unwilling to compromise his hopes or aspirations. Often he holds on to hope and trust despite his limited knowledge of the ambiguity of good and evil in men's hearts and in the institutions men serve.

If these common heroes are not offsprings of the gods, nor even Adams in or out of Eden, they are Adam's children who, cast out of paradise, learn to face what they fear. Ultimately they say yes to the universe and to man's place in it. Even our folk heroes in their bright comic absurdity—Paul Bunyan, Pecos Pete, John Henry—point us to men's work in a place. And we trust some of the incongruities of the folk imagination.

A second type is the metaphysical or social rebel-hero. Two mythic examples are Captain Ahab of Herman Melville's Moby Dick and Thomas Sutpen of William Faulkner's Absolom, Absolom. Consider Ahab. The importance of the rebel-hero rests on Ahab's complaint. What Ahab cannot abide is the inscrutability of the gods, the riddling ambiguity of the natural world, and especially the burden of uncertainty that both perceptions leave with him, particularly since he seems to be an unjust sufferer in a world he never made. He did not name Ahab Ahab.

The white whale becomes nature's hieroglyph, the accessible embodiment of inscrutable and malignant evil in the universe. Ahab mourns to the reader as he reaches compassionately for Pip, the demented cabin boy: "Ye believers in gods all goodness, and in man all ill, lo you! see the omniscient gods oblivious of suffering man." Ahab finally strikes the whale. If he could have, he would have struck the sun. In his dying breaths, having heaved his harpoon at Moby Dick, Ahab turns his face from the sun, the life-giving force in nature. Why he turns seems apparent. Once watching the living whale's jetting as a vain attempt to intercede with the sun, Ahab thought: "In vain, Oh Whale, dost thou seek intercedings with ye all-quickening sun, that only calls forth life, but gives it not again." All nature while living turns toward the sun, and like the
dying whale: once dead, the carcass of the whale turns to the old, dark chaos.

Ahab, the human rebel in nature, turns from the sun before death, for nature and the whole universe cheat man in his deepest hopes. Ahab, like the social rebel generally, is placed in a Job-like situation. And his answer to that situation is not accommodation, acceptance, or trust. He uses his mysterious freedom to create his own kind of world. He is a hero of a sort. He faces what he fears with hate. And there is understandable if perverse justice in his hatred.

Most of us have been reared in our own generation on the anti-hero, however. Perhaps because he lacks a heroic self-concept and cannot honestly find one, man in modern fiction, poetry, and drama seldom seems to struggle intensely to defy his fate or to shape his destiny or to confront the gods. He lives in a border situation where he can question what it means to be. But he is thrown back on himself to create his own meaning. Diminished in physical and intellectual and imaginative stature, compromising, resilient, sensitive to the relativity of human truth, accommodating, admirably self-compensating in his search for surrogates—sex, drugs, intellectual mysticism—he seeks to make life bearable if not joyful.

The absurdly tragi-comic heroes of Samuel Beckett, the wisely capitulating characters in the epic-theatre of Bertolt Brecht, and the religious atheists of Albert Camus and Richard Kim suggest that we shift our attentive regard as readers from the tall heroes strutting across the imaginative horizon to men simply living and not living in a disconnected and dislocated landscape. The anti-hero may not face what he fears without fear, but then he or his creator has radically humanized his goals. Instead of cherubims, he may place whalers or even animals on his roofs. And he names his condition hesitatingly.

Two other kinds of heroes in our present consciousness complete one kind of spectrum about man. If the literary artist tries to give us the partial truth about man in the form of an illusion, some hucksters of the American imagination give us lies under the guise of truth. Their verbal instrument is communication media. Their character the pseudo-hero. Randall Jarrell characterized the plot: success, celebrity, periodicity. The product largely of a youth-oriented and journalistic culture, the pseudo-hero awaits his apotheosis, and then quickly his demise and often unsavory and anonymous burial.

The most recent pseudo-hero? A recent newspaper article claimed that he was a quietly effective singer, of English extraction, surnamed Dorsey. Apparently lost in the very anonymity his name bestowed on him, Mr. Dorsey was nothing until his agent recently rebaptized him Engelbert Humperdinck. The shock for Mr. Dorsey was like the shock of water for a newly baptized Christian. In any case, we know what has happened. He has new life in the American consciousness. We do not know how the pseudo-hero faces what he fears.

A final kind of hero is the sick hero. Some of the darkly absurd heroes in Thomas Pynchon's work and Philip Roth's Portnoy's Complaint are recent examples. Comically pitiful, Portnoy, who has his own notions of the American Dream—somewhat unrelated to his complaint—serves primarily as a therapeutic scapegoat for our image of man. This self-lacerating picture of man suggests even to the impious and detached the Hasidic saying, "If you rake muck back and forth, it is still muck." That Roth captured with ringing authenticity the hero of his confession seems true enough. But a ringingly authentic novel so radically disconnected from whatever of common virtue remains in the would around it is like a beautiful woman without integrity, a gold ring in a swine's snout. The rhetoric of the sick-hero is grotesque indeed. Perhaps there lies a saving note in this kind of fiction, and this kind of hero. He illuminates the dark comic negatives of inverted and spiritually diseased man. The reader is left to face what the hero fears.

From Past to Now to Then

We seem to know a great deal about the probable future. The future itself we do not know very much about. It may be foolish, T. S. Eliot reminded us, to think that we can turn the wheel on which we turn. Nevertheless, we need to turn the wheel. How we turn the wheel seems to depend on our understanding of the past. But one remembers the carnival fortuneteller from Thornton Wilder's The Skin of Our Teeth. She rises, puts down her pipe on a stool, unfurls her luminous skirts, gives a sharp wrench to her bodice and strolls toward the audience, swings her hips like a young girl, and berates us: "I tell the future. Heck. Nothing easier. Everybody's future is in their face. Nothing easier. But who can tell your past, eh? Nobody! Your youth, where did it go? It slipped away while you weren't looking. While you were asleep. While you were drunk? You're like our friends Mr. and Mrs. An- trobus; you lie awake nights trying to know your past. What did it mean? What was it trying to say to you?"

Yet the difficulty of knowing the significance of our past does not excuse us from seeking to understand it. So with the American Dream. Coming to us out of our past, its peculiar qualities in the American consciousness suggest that it is like an antique. Alive in our consciousness today as something especially precious from the past, it will in all probability prove useless for the future—except for the human values tied to it and kept alive in human memory. The American Dream is created in its success, as literature is; that is, so long as it remains alive in our thinking and in our nerve-endings. And we see the vagaries of the American Dream in our attitudes toward America as a place and to man's vision of himself in that place.
It would be neat if we could abstract from the literary norms clustering about the American hero those characteristics that would give us an ideal image. Man in the true American Dream nourishes a creatively dependent relationship between Creator and creature. Hence he "resonates to the beyond" in the midst of his secular commitment. In his honesty he faces what he fears just because he is not idolatrous secular man.

Like the true rebel-hero, he hates with perfect hatred the evil and injustice he finds in his world. In his perfect hatred he never forgets that others may be less guilty than he, and he knows that he may aim at justice and bathe the earth in blood. He sees the genuine wisdom in the anti-hero, who pares the distance between what he should be and what he is, between what he expects from other men and what he accepts from those men. He tolerates what he disapproves. And because he is a man and no god, he remains content with proximate goals. He puts whalers or rams on his roofs as weathervanes rather than cherubims.

The hero of the American Dream sees how in the pseudo-hero means and ends can be viciously perverted in the imploding "global village" of our modern communication technology. Yet he sees in that communication technology a means for words as events for informing and sustaining human community, for the eternal presence of the unifying Word. And he sees in the sick-hero the individual cry for healing.

It would be neat. But continuities on a literary scale of values collapse before the discontinuities of life in

From the Chapel

"But If..."

By RICHARD H. LUECKE
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Chicago, Illinois

"But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." Luke 11:20

One of the chief complaints against Jesus—both in the sense of being best known and in the sense of being central to His story—was that He consorted with disorderly elements at the fringes of society. He received public outcasts and ate with people with whom one was not to pass the time of day. He also made free on occasion with religious and social customs that served to knit the society together. This behavior helps to explain the charge that Jesus had traffic with demons.

For demons were opposed to order and meaning. They inhabited the darkness at the edge of the light. They smudged away or scoffed away the lines between darkness and light. What else should be said when Jesus cast out a demon and the people marvelled? "He casts out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of demons."

Much depends on seeing the plausibility and force of this charge. The institutions and customs of society are a product of long habit and present necessity. Those who observe them are pillars, making a space for others to go about their business. Those who ignore them, circumvent them, or (worst of all) scoff at them, shake the pillars of the social house. If they break the law for private gain, we can treat them as criminals. But what are we to do if they flaunt the social verities and customs which underly the law, and make everything seem absurd? Then it is we—and the whole society—who are on the defensive.

It is not possible to enforce all laws, and certainly it is not possible to enforce all social moralities. It was not possible in the days of the gospels to move against those who collected taxes for Rome, nor against all prostitutes. But neither did such people need to be en-
couraged. They could be ignored, ostracized, given to know they operated at the edge or beyond the pale. It was not possible to lock up all demoniacs; nor would it have been proper to do so. But people could and should walk a wide berth around them. They could isolate the sore. There was no need to give claws to those who tore at the social fabric.

Religion has always attached reverence to the limits within which men move, speak, and are productive. The Hebrew spoke of a world called out of chaos and of a community called out of bondage. He was perpetually warned that the world might slip back into chaos and that the people might slide back into Egypt. Chaos always waited at the edge of order. Existing forms of order deserved respect, even if they did not bear close inspection. There was a point to observing rules religiously. There was also a point to observing religious rules about "clean" things and "unclean" things, about washing and not touching, about offering unblemished lambs not spotted ones, and about abstaining from any cups with demons.

Reasonable men know, even when they are not religious, that everything social and constructive takes place within certain limits. One does not go out beyond a shared public language without wandering into nonsense. (The demon referred to in our text was "dumb." His victim could not communicate.) One does not ignore the laws of the physical context in which he finds himself without becoming schizophrenic. One does not leave the sphere of shared labor without becoming either enslaved or an exploiter. Theatre often focuses on and concourse, the witches do a nameless deed in the dark. We know from that moment that Macbeth is undone. Aristotle said we should view such tragedies on the stage in order to get them out of our system, so we can go back to work when the lights come on.

There is a practical wisdom in not loitering on corners, in looking neither to the right nor to the left when we go down into town, in getting in and out of town efficiently on walled freeways. It is sensible to pay only distant attention to unassimilated, unintegrated, unruly and unkempt elements of the society. He who sups with the devil should take a long spoon.

If Jesus spent time with such people, if he encouraged them, then he himself was a force for chaos and confusion. He refused to listen to reason. When His family came to take Him off the street, He pointed to those around Him and said that they were His mother and His brothers and His sisters. The whole thing was becoming harder and harder to ignore. Somebody said something had to be done so the whole society would not fall apart. They had a law.

But the real transgression was ambiguous and hard to name. In every age society has three measures to use with people who are a threat to it, all of which were tried in the case of Jesus. His enemies said Jesus was a criminal and should be arrested. His friends said He was a madman and should be taken off the streets. His later followers said He was a saint and should be kept in church.

**Faith Along the Fault Lines**

“But, if it is by the finger of God,” says Jesus. The finger of God does not stop at the civil limits of society. The finger of God can point beyond accustomed institutions and structures. If it was doing so now, then it would not suffice to respond simply in terms of old conceptions and customs. “Then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”

Religion has always summoned a degree of awe for what lies beyond the present order. In assigning taboos to dirt and slime, it attributed a certain potency to chaotic, unstructured elements at the bottom or at the edges of physical form. The more decay on top, the more potency beneath. The alien was not merely to be separated, ignored, ostracized. In certain primitive tribes, a young man, having attained the age of puberty, is driven outside the compound to engage with unnamed powers in the wilderness, and either to die or to become a man before returning to the tribe. (Some observers hold that the university serves this purpose in our own society.) The theatre also retains this notion: it takes both the ordered household (the righteous father, the chaste daughter) and the toads to bring “the virgin spring.”

In the Bible, God is Creator of all that is. Even the devil is one of the sons of God. In his cynicism and destructiveness, he serves to expose bad faith and to reveal true faith. In his worst attack on Jesus of Nazareth, he helps to reveal the Kingdom of God. He is “God’s devil” after all. The demons are no creators. Their blowings and brewings have no future. Yet, in a left-hand way, they help to bring the future. “I dream of things that never were and say ‘why not?’” Those words from *Man and Superman* were a favorite theme of Robert Kennedy, but in the play they are spoken by Mephistopheles.

There are reasons why unassimilated, alienated elements at the edges of society should be seen. For one thing, they are a reminder of the limitation of all articulated structures, which grow more brittle with age. But they are much more than that. The poor, the outcast, and the exploited who fall outside the priorities and processes of the society—whom the society cannot seriously deal with except by charity nor really accommodate without undoing itself—are more or less articulate signs of the failure of those structures. Finally they reveal something about us all. In a book called *The Voice of Illness*, Aarne Siraala shows the pained members, the sore thumbs, of our society are more than eyesores. They are protruding symptoms of a sickness pervading the body politic, a sickness lodged in its very bones and carried in its blood stream throughout...
the urban sprawl. Such things must be seen, and may be seen with Christ.

Now all the images come back. Jesus is crucified outside the city wall with two insurgents. (The Messiah, who was to divide the sheep from the goats, is Himself to be found among the goats.) Christ dies "for all men," not merely for those within the culture. The water of baptism enfolds chaos and death as well as life. The church is a city set on a hill, a light not hid under a bushel—and it is the offscouring of the earth. The poor are the dirt which falls out of the social sieve—and they are "the poor of the Lord," the 

The poor are signs of the kingdom of God both in that they point beyond present institutions and in that they point to what must now be done. They point not to one final political revolution which brings the kingdom, but to perpetual reconstruction through attention to the poor that are always with us, even at the edge of a new order. What is sensed by faith along the fault lines of society is the Kingdom of God.

Only Earth Out of Place

Today at the margins of our public life, entering through the crevices and over the sills of every public occasion, are some new poor, unruly and unkempt members of our society. They were not all born poor; they describe themselves as forced out of the institutions and into the streets. They reject the goals which served their parents as beyond their reach or beyond their interest, and all the rites of passage pertaining thereto (the braces, the heels, the hose, the pads, the deodorants) which bespoke a manifest destiny and limitless consumption. They reject the civility of their parents, preferring filthy speech. They align themselves in spirit with the poor and the non-white of our society and the world.

If they simply broke the law for private gain, we would know what to do with them. But they make our laws and customs seem absurd—showing up atHUAC meetings in American Revolutionary uniforms or Indian suits, appearing for induction in World War I leggins, reviewing the troops along the curb with one arm stiff like Billy Liar, milling like witches at university disciplinary hearings, handing out jellybeans and oinking under handkerchiefs at their trials. They commit transgressions for which we have no explicit rules or penalties. Even if we hold a trial and put them in jail, people still don't think they're criminals. If they would tell us their plans for the future, we could at least debate with them. But they don't. One observer described their line as "pure Marxist-Lennonist—Harpo Marx and John Lennon." What do they really want? Destruction for destruction's sake?

But if! Is there, amid all this confusion, a finger pointing to something we do not ordinarily see? To something being left behind while the society plows ahead? To some future not presently envisioned? Is there some point in that very lack of a plan? As though that could not be said just yet? As though that is what is being learned in the struggle? As though those still to touch the ferment may have the best ideas of all? The future, as Pat Paulsen says, lies ahead.

There they stand, surd and absurd, as if to say: exclude us or include us, but don't try to buy us. There is SWAFCA, unanticipated child of Selma, in which impossibly poor dirt farmers have joined together not only for economic development but for communal independence—utterly fragile (as the mayor of Selma points out) and utterly uncompromising. There are the tenant unions simply forgetting old laws, and the welfare unions behaving as though welfare recipients had rights. There are the "target area" citizens' groups who resist public programs unless they themselves can write the rules. They are signs to be spoken against, or signs of the future. For the sign of what is to take place in our cities may well be seen in how we treat these people at the edge—whether we consign them to the devil or say "but if."

At the close of Macbeth a new, unpremeditated unity is signaled by the banquet. In the church, Christ Himself becomes the food. The goat becomes the meal. There is a warning in this for all who eat it, for to do so is to look toward a unity we ourselves do not create and to seek a future we ourselves do not choose. There is also a warning for those who do not eat it. To stay undirected by the finger of God is not to stay neutral. It is to stay in service on the other side. "He that is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters." If you're not part of the solution, you are part of the problem.

This is true of universities and all their members. A professor at the University of Michigan recently described the role of his institution in this way: "It is the task of the university, amid the forward thrust of technology, to stand aside and say 'however.'" At this university, we may say "But if."

"But if it is by the finger of God. . ." Dirt, after all, is only earth out of place. It can be excluded, in which case it remains a threat. Or it can be included as loam, as dung at the roots—in which case it enlarges possibilities. If positive systems can be joined with their present negations, there must result an unexpected power for good.

One of this country's best known dropouts put the point of this our text very well: "May the Lord Jesus open our minds and shut our mouth!"
Long before an austerity-minded president found his way into the White House, the United States began cutting back on its foreign aid program. More than most priorities, the extent of our foreign aid seems to be the work of the Congress. From highs of $6 and $7 billion during the days of the Marshall Plan in post-World War II Europe, the appropriation for foreign aid has fallen to levels of $1.7 and $1.8 billion in the last two fiscal years. In the foreign aid appropriation passed in the last month, for Fiscal Year 1970, the President requested $2.7 billion. Congress cut the request by $1 billion, or over 30 per cent. This has been the pattern, at least since 1961.

The coalition in the House of Representatives and the Senate which is responsible for lowering spending for foreign aid could never agree on an ordering of national priorities. They can only agree that foreign aid is an instrument to keep our staunchest allies economically viable. In the present program, the largest amounts of aid go to South Korea, South Vietnam, Turkey, and Indonesia.

The low priority of foreign aid can be partly attributed to the fact that the constituency for this program is a foreign population with no votes. The cities, the farmers, and the “military-industrial complex” ultimately can muster votes. The Nigerians, the Congolese, the United Nations and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development can do little for a congressman’s tenure.

Related to the lack of a domestic constituency is another reason the foreign aid program suffers. It has become a weapon that the legislative branch can use against the executive branch for the purpose of reclaiming some of the foreign policy influence that has been lost to the President by Congress. Specific programs and recipients can be ear-marked in the foreign aid appropriation and authorization, tying the hands of the Executive. The program is so small and has such low priority that congressmen do not accept the need for presidential initiative in this area to guarantee the national security. This is the argument that is used in the battle for defense appropriations. Therefore, by narrowing the amount of money available and by narrowing the range of programs and recipients, many in Congress think they have been successful in asserting authority in foreign affairs.

It is a wonder that there is anything left of the foreign aid program in the face of all these pressures. Instead of this lowest kind of priority, public assistance extended by the United States to other nations should have the highest priority, even using what some claim is the realistic standard of national security. The United States, already controlling a majority of the world’s wealth, is widening the gap between the rich and the poor nations. This gap is far wider than that between rich and poor in the United States. A catastrophe caused by the desperation that comes from hunger and over-population is more imminent than any planned subversion or attack by the Soviet Union.

Prevention of a catastrophe, which seems to be the goal of our nuclear deterrent, also requires the massive channeling of food, capital and technology from the United States to the developing world. The size of this requirement necessitates a direct role by our government. A reformed foreign aid program, perhaps through a multilateral organization like the United Nations, presents a possibility. On the basis of past performance, it seems doubtful that the American political system, especially the Congress, will be able to see the priority of this task.
The Senate has passed and sent on to the House the Organized Crime Control Act of 1969, a measure which has been hailed by Attorney-General John N. Mitchell as “one of the most imaginative and comprehensive proposals to combat organized crime ever introduced into the Congress.”

It may also be one of the most serious threats to the liberties of American citizens that have ever gotten this far along in the legislative process. Three of its provisions, especially, represent serious departures from our traditions of law and justice.

The first of these allows a judge to impose a sentence of up to thirty years on any defendant whom he finds to be a “dangerous special offender.” The purpose of this provision is to get at habitual or professional criminals, such as members of the Mafia.

It would no doubt be eminently desirable to get as many Mafiosi as possible out of circulation. But this country has long had a blind faith that the way to cope with the problem of the hardened criminal is to confine him for the greater part of his natural life, a counsel which Western nations with a far lower crime rate than ours long ago rejected. The experience of these nations indicates that it is not the severity of the sentence, but the certainty of punishment, that effectively deters crime. But beyond this consideration is the larger and more serious question of how a “dangerous special offender” is to be defined. Laws designed to round up members of the Mafia can all too easily be used to inflict unusually vindictive punishment on anyone whose crime is particularly offensive to public opinion. Some members of the House have also indicated a concern that this provision may violate the Constitution’s prohibition of cruel and unusual punishment. Whether it does or not, it certainly does violate the principle that confinement should be designed for reform rather than as an instrument of vindictive justice.

A second provision nullifies a Supreme Court decision that requires the government to make public its transcripts of illegal bugs or wiretaps if the person whose conversations were overheard is later put on trial.

This question of wiretaps and bugs has been before us for a long time. Anyone acquainted with professional police operations knows that devices which are not, strictly speaking, legal are routinely used to ferret out information which would otherwise be difficult to obtain. But it is one thing to wink at such violations of the letter of the law. It is quite another thing to give positive encouragement to the use of electronic eavesdroppers. There is, indeed, no constitutional right to privacy (apart from the provision that the people shall be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects against unreasonable searches and seizures), but the right to privacy has long been one of our most cherished rights as a people and, as our numbers increase, it is a right which we need to cherish more rather than less. No doubt supporters of this bill will point out that it is not intended to intrude upon the privacy of any ordinary, law-abiding citizen. But again it must be emphasized that whatever power the government is given to deal with a Mafioso can be used against any other citizen.

Finally, there is a provision that courts may imprison a witness for up to thirty-six months without a jury trial if he refuses to testify even after being granted immunity from self-incrimination.

The purpose of this provision is, of course, to discourage witnesses from “taking the Fifth.” Put another way, the purpose of this provision is to discourage witnesses from availing themselves of a constitutional right. And it does so by making the very act of claiming that right an act of self-incrimination. I am no lawyer, but I can not imagine that this provision could survive a test in the courts. It is, in effect, an amendment to the Bill of Rights, for all practical purposes rescinding one of them.

No doubt the sponsors of the Organized Crime Control Act of 1969 were fed up, as we all are, by the rising tide of crime in our country and frustrated, as many of us are, by the apparent advantages which the criminal has over the law enforcement officer. But the solution is not to go after the criminal minority with weapons which can all too easily be turned against the law-abiding majority. Fortunately, the bill has not yet passed the House. It is to be hoped that the House will show a greater sensitivity to our liberties than has the Senate.

March 1970
Boulevard comedies are written with one purpose only: to amuse, to while the time away pleasantly. But looking at any successful boulevard comedy more closely, the writer's philosophy towards life will become manifest. His primary purpose to entertain and to make money notwithstanding, the playwright pictures a milieu and creates characters reflecting a social set. However flippantly, a period is being painted.

How much of our time is in Neil Simon's *Last of the Red Hot Lovers* and how important a comedy writer is Neil Simon? The topic he chose is very much of today. Barney Cushman, a middle-aged married man hell-bent on joining the sex revolution is the hero, and his is the old last-fling idea translated into terms of our time. Barney, owner of a fish restaurant, flings himself into the arms of extramarital dreams three times. There are three unrelated acts with different females but without any sexual act taking place. Barney, the loser, gets bolder with each failure.

Undoubtedly, Barney represents the unfulfilled dreams of many middle-class men of his age. The comedy relates to our sex craze, and some of its moments are very funny. There the comedy rests. As in Simon's other comedy of three one-act plays, *Plaza Suite*, we again have a comedy or three one-act plays, this time held loosely together by one central figure. But it is not a comedy which would develop a character with or around an idea treated with satire, compassion, or any kind of vision. Simon knows his audience. Those middle-aged tired businessmen, who have failed like Barney, will feel emotionally involved. Those who know and fare better than Barney will be smugly entertained by the mistakes he obviously makes. The Matinee spectatresses will feel gratified and triumphant over Barney's failures and his wife's defiant attitude at the end. Sex does not pay.

Neil Simon, who earns approximately $45,000 a week or $2,300,000 a year with his comedies (the movie sales not included), feels he embarked with this play on a new phase as a "serious" comedy writer. In fact, it is a play consisting of three funny little farces. But Mr. Simon is miles and miles from being the Moliere of our time. Why should he want to be a Moliere with such a bank account? On second thought, he can afford dreaming of it.

One should write a book on the unwritten plays by the "silent playwrights" who gave up or, whenever they try to have one more fling at Broadway, are given up as lost. There are Lillian Hellman, William Saroyan, S.N. Behrman, and perhaps even Tennessee Williams and William Inge may soon join those who once wrote successful plays. It is as if during the sixties the curtain had come down with an inaudible whimper on one generation of playwrights and a new generation of playwrights dropped in on us with a bang that immediately left little or no artistic echo.

There is no generation gap, but a chasm between the dramatists of the forties and fifties and the dramatists of the late sixties. Two of the old-timers dared to jump lately and failed miserably. There was John Patrick. Who does not remember *The Hasty Heart* of the forties, that appealing picture of life in a military base hospital, or his *The Teahouse of the August Moon*, certainly a comedy with distinction that went over all stages on at least three continents. *Love Is a Time of Day* was John Patrick's naive attempt to be of now. The girl does not want to miss a session of her university class on "the function of ovaries." The boy speaks to her of "the contribution I'd be making to your self-fulfillment gap." Walter Kerr rightly noted that today's audience is not interested in delaying tactics which take the girl a whole evening before she goes to bed with the boy. (Kerr maintained in parentheses that nowadays the current average on stage is thirteen minutes, ten seconds. This may be a rewarding research study and thesis for a doctorate in dramatic literature.)

Dore Schary was another case in point. He has been a fixture of the Old Broadway theater and had that kind of reputation of being a pro with striking ideas. He did not choose a wrong subject for our time, as little as John Patrick did. Love was certainly not oblitered by the new generation, nor will the keyhole view of a famous writer ever lose interest to an audience.

The trouble with Schary's *Brightower* (which lasted one night) is dramaturgical trouble. It is the story of a would-be biographer interested in the life of the great novelist Daniel Brightower. He enters the home of the widow and tries to find out what led to the Novelist's suicide. Brightower is no one else but Hemingway, and Schary goes out of his way to convince us that it isn't Hemingway until it becomes too obvious. The innumerable flashbacks are tiring, and one hopes more and more as the play progresses that the novelist's widow and his young woman secretary will send the biographer packing since they are reluctant to say much anyway. I'm not sure that there isn't a good play in such material, but in Schary's hands it turned out to be a stillborn child with that tired *deja vu* look.

I have always thought that great stars cannot let go of the stage and are apt to give several farewell performances. But playwrights, too?
GNOSIS AND THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Today we are witnessing a growing interest in ancient Gnosticism. Not too long ago, say, a generation, this early Christian heresy belonged to the province of the scholarly specialist: the expert in New Testament studies, or the student of the early Church Fathers, or the historian of ancient religions. Now every textbook for college undergraduate courses in the New Testament not only includes a separate section on Gnosticism, but also incorporates it as an interpretative aid to understanding the Christian Scriptures.

The resurgent interest in Gnosticism has at least two roots. The first, and the obviously more important, is the recent discovery of fresh documents. In 1945 a Coptic Library, dating from the fifth century, was discovered near Nag-Hammadi in upper Egypt. This library consisted of nearly 1000 pages of well-preserved text, including more than 40 documents hitherto unknown. Prior to this windfall our knowledge of Gnosticism was limited to such materials as the Fathers chose to excerpt for their purposes of refutation, together with a handful of rather late documents. Then in 1896 the Berlin Museum purchased a fifth century papyrus codex containing three Gnostic writings; these however, were not published until 1955. But since the Nag-Hammadi find, our knowledge of the Gnostic systems of thought has advanced slowly and steadily.

Some time must, of course, elapse to permit scholarship to digest this rich fare and for scholars to form a new consensus to form. To this end an International Colloquium on the Origins of Gnosticism was convened in 1966 at the University of Messina in Italy. This international gathering attempted to delineate the current state of the problem, to examine its historical value, and to devise an appropriate methodology. Prof. Wilson's own contribution to the Colloquium, a paper which laid the foundation for a more uniform terminology, is reflected in the title of his book. Gnosis, it was decided, would be used for the earlier and broader phenomenon, while the term Gnosticism would be reserved for the later, more fully and systematically developed phenomenon of the second century.

The second root of contemporary interest is that the religious and psychological matrix for Gnosticism is quite congenial to much of our own current mentality. Anyone who reads the available Gnostic documents will be struck initially by their seemingly insoluble maze of myth and esoteric speculation. Yet the patient student can begin to detect some rather consistent underlying motifs. There is the transcendent God, the Wholly Other, who has nothing in common either with this creation or with the Demiurge who created it, and who is, therefore, normally unknowable. There is man, who in his true essence is kin to the Deity, for imprisoned within man is a spark of the divine. There is the myth of a pre-mundane fall to account for the present state of man and his otherwise inexplicable longing for deliverance. And then there is the saving knowledge, the Gnosis, which awakens man to the truth about himself, and in which he finds salvation.

The Gnostic, however, as Robert Grant has observed, was not devoted ultimately to his myths, but rather to freedom: freedom from alien powers through a kind of primitive astrology, freedom from the tyranny of the creation, freedom from all law and restraint. In that freedom the self could be realized, and to the pursuit of such self-realization the Gnostic devoted himself, sometimes by an extreme libertinism, sometimes by an ascetic self-denial, and sometimes by a protean oscillation between the unconventional and the hyper-conventional.

Prof. Wilson's perspective in this contribution to the renewed study of Gnosticism grows out of the difficult question of its relation to New Testament and early Christian thought. The traditional view from the time of Ireneaus down to the close of the nineteenth century was that Gnosticism represented an heretical offshoot of Christianity, or, in the famous phrase of Adolph Harnack, it was "the acute hellenization of Christianity," differing only in degree from Orthodox Christianity as defined by the Nicene Creed. An alternative interpretation grew out of the nineteenth century investigations into the history of religions, which held that Gnosticism represented rather a final resurgence of ancient Oriental religions in the face of the threat posed by the Christian faith. Prof. Wilson suggests distinguishing three stages in the development of Gnosticism. The proper point of departure is the final stage, the second century, when the fully developed Gnostic systems of thought became the target for the polemics of the early Fathers. The prior stage, perhaps the latter part of the first century, saw the initial stirrings of an incipient Gnosticism, which provide the backdrop for some of the New Testament warnings.

So, for example, 1 Tim. 6:20 cautions against what is falsely called gnostics, even as 1 Tim. 1:4 abjures myths and endless genealogies; and 1 Jn. 4:1ff. defines as heretical the teaching that Jesus has not come in the flesh and is not of God. The earliest recoverable stage, then, is that at which we are dealing with a more vague, less clearly defined fund of commonly held ideas and themes, the period of Gnosis as distinguished from later Gnosticism. In this earliest period both Christianity and Gnosticism arose, and developed in mutual interpenetration. He therefore takes a dim view of the tendency to convert parallel themes into influences and influences into sources on the ground that it outruns clear documentary evidence. Hence much in the New Testament that has been called Gnosticism he finds instead to be Gnosis, those ideas and themes which are the common cultural heritage of the Graeco-Roman Oriental syncretism. Indeed, the great merit of Prof. Wilson's work is to preserve the rich complexity of the ancient thought-world from descending into an un-critical and undifferentiated Pan-gnosticism.

The same critical caution attends his discussion of the originating occasion of Gnosticism. It is neither the faith of a particular people, as is Judaism, nor does it take its rise from a particular founder, as does Christianity. Hence any attempt to locate precisely its origins in its rather amorphous and diffuse beginnings in necessarily hypothetical and speculative. Its undoubted Jewish elements have led scholars to look to Judaism as a possible birth-place. So, for example, Hans Jonas speaks of the Judaistic thesis, and Robert Grant traces its origins to the disappointed eschatological hopes of the Qumran community. Without denying this possibility, Prof. Wilson would add also Jewish proselytes, who with the Qumran sectarians reacted in utter despair at the Fall of Jerusalem and consequently denoted the God of the Old Testament to an inferior Demiurge. Christians are another possible candidate for the honors, which hypothesis would account for some of the Christian elements in the final amalgam.

The elusiveness of firm conclusions, however, in no way detracts from the fascination this important subject holds for students of the New Testament era, nor does it in any way compromise the great value of Prof. Wilson's book. Indeed, Fortress Press is to be congratulated for placing it in the steady stream of fine studies that flows from Philadelphia.

WALTER E. KELLER
Music

Music That Goethe With A Tape

By WILLIAM F. EIFRIG, JR.

My editor has called to my attention a promise made in this column last September. I promised him my own writing occasionally to interrupt our series of guest opinions regarding the current state of church music. These interruptions I took to be diversions from that chief topical interest. The editor recalls I promised nonsense and comic relief. As a writer of nonsense I am most successful when applying myself to the logical exposition of some serious matter. As for the role of comedian, I happily take my place alongside my fellows in the comedy of life and leave to the professionals the awesome obligation to provide that laugh promised the paying customers. Allow me, however, to create some diversions with the topic: The Synthesizer: Musical Gadgetry Deluxe.

The manufacture of pieces of equipment that make musical sounds without the intervention of a human agent seems to provide perennial fascination. The general public delights in the spectacle of a musical instrument that plays itself, the collector rejoices in the possibility of possessing a piece of music-making as one possesses a piece of property, and even the composer is charmed with the limited potential of such gadgets. The discoveries of barrel organs and automatic harpsichords from the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries have drawn musicologists to the instruments like vultures to carrion. These machines provide documentary evidence of performance practices in traditions now lost, though anyone who has heard the superhuman tempos and facile virtuosity of the player-piano will read with caution the reports of the scientists.

In the inventory of instruments owned by Henry VIII is listed a "virginal that goethe with a while without playing uppon." There are earlier references than this of 1547, but it is the first to appear for an instrument which is extant. The BBC presented a program during which this earliest mechanical instrument was played. And very old it sounded too. Its bones rattled so that its voice was all but obscured. Still its power to fascinate was undeniable. Over four centuries the kinship of gadgeteers made itself felt.

Carillons and clocks have been fitted with mechanisms to chime the hours with pretty tunes and fanciful displays, frequently presenting the visual spectacle of automated figures in action together with the music.

The 18th century was the age of the clock. God was the Master Clock-Maker, court routine unwound with the regularity of a pendulum swing, armies marched off to war in synchronized step, and the smallest details became the more fascinating as they fit into the mechanism of an intricate whole. Do you know the Mozart fantasies for mechanical organ or the Hayden pieces for musical clock?

Then came the mechanical orchestras: the Panharmonicon, the Orchesstron, the Apollonicon. We tend to call them all Nickelodeons, for the America of yesterday knew them as the business of musical entrepreneurs, the grandfathers of today's vending machine companies. A perforated paper-roll delivered the coup de grace to the barrel-and-pin mechanism, and the player-piano enjoyed a relatively brief but enthusiastic success in parlors all over the world.

The development of the phonograph and of the radio doomed that delight and ushered in the era of orchestras in the living room. One would have thought that the perfection of these machines—hi-fi, tweeter-woofer, transistors, integrated circuits, multiple input-output, stereo—represented the last word in musical gadgetry. But then came the synthesizer.

A synthesizer is an electronic apparatus capable of producing immediately on tape pitches and timbres and intensities infinitely variable yet completely controlled. The avant-garde composers have used synthesizers since the forties, but public familiarity with these instruments and their sounds had to wait for the issue last year of the wacky recording irreverently titled "Switched-On Bach." When its sales took the market by surprise, several records followed suit subjecting more works by 18th-century masters (notice: it's music of that clock-dominated age) to electronic realization. What a blow to the avant-garde! Either their instrument has been prostituted to goals unworthy of it, or its popular status will prove an obstacle to the serious acceptance of compositions created for that medium alone.

I do not attempt to predict the future of electronic instruments nor to pass judgment on their masters. I must confess, however, that I am conscious of a delight in the blithe recreations made on the synthesizer that is quite like the delight I find in Henry's "virginal that goethe with a while," the 18th-century musical clocks, the Orchesstron, and the pianola. Such a splendid thing, the synthesizer! It is the ultimate in musical gadgetry.
There is, I suppose, no good reason to go to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada. Uncounted millions must agree with this assessment, if indeed they’ve ever heard of Saskatoon; and even people who’ve been there might well concur in my judgment. Nevertheless, last week a blizzard and I found ourselves blowing into this town which is situated approximately 100 miles south of the end of northern civilization. Neither of us, fortunately, stayed very long.

No matter how you get to Saskatoon, you have to travel a long way. It’s very far not just from here, but also from anywhere. Still, there are people strewn out between here (wherever that is) and there. Little pockets of people, some in hamlets, some in farm houses. Quite a distance from each other, and yet not all that cut off from the world.

For they are wired up to the rest of us. By phone, by radio waves, by TV signals, by the desolate highways and dirt roads that bring an occasional stray mailman. They know what’s going on; or at least they could, if they had any interest in the world-at-large. And most of them do.

You’d think, wouldn’t you, that once you got a whole country—or several countries—or a huge hunk of the world—wired up like this, pretty soon we’d lose all our differences. We’d develop the same tastes, curse the same politicians, teach our kids the same values, buy the same products, worship the same gods. Yet we don’t. And it’s not because we live in different countries, for if national differences were so important, you’d expect to find a much greater homogeneity within the populace of a given nation than seems to be the case.

I don’t pretend to know all, most, or even some of the sources of the differences people exhibit. But as I say, you’d think that these differences would not be so substantial, when you recall how extensively and directly we’re all wired up to each other. Yet the differences are there. Even my neighbor across the hall has little in common with me, though we read the same paper, watch the same television shows, and in general get visually and aurally battered by the same stimuli. We process these stimuli in altogether different ways. I’m not even sure it’s safe to say that we see and hear the same things.

I’ll get to the point. Considered as explanations of people’s behavior, references to the media fall flat as can be. The media are means, channels, forms, conduits. This is at least true insofar as the media are considered mass media. Considered as “things-in-themselves”, the media are perfectly particular, exhibiting unique time and space coordinates. This column has no interest in the media considered as spatio-temporal entities.

That is why I have had so little to say in these pages about Marshall McLuhan, to take just one example. What has he said that is especially relevant to the mass media? He tells us that some media are hot, others cool, others obsolescent. So what? The Charleston was hot, the Waltz cool, and hardly anyone plays Parcheesi anymore. Doubtless some inventive doctoral candidate has already linked up these facts with dramatic shifts in Western Civilization. And he may, for all of that, have something there. Lots of things are correlated with other things, even help to cause them. That doesn’t detract from my point.

Insofar as the mass media are worthy of scrutiny in these pages, it is because of their contents, and to some extent, the effects their contents have had on people. That means that the subject matter for these pages is as broad as the spectrum of ideas, stories, events, sounds, sights, and claims which appear in one mass medium or another. Reaction to these contents of the media will be, as it has been, indisputably personal. I would like to think that others could see, or would buy, my point of view.

Just as obvious is the fact that my assessments of the effects of the contents of the media will be, and have been, wholly speculative. People in Saskatoon, or in New Orleans, will see even the same things differently from each other, or from their neighbors. So explanations which cite the media are very hazardous, and usually hopelessly incomplete. Still, such speculations are sometimes fun to make.

This is my thirty-fourth column. It seemed a good time to look back, and ahead. At thirty-four thousand feet over Saskatchewan one is impressed with the physical distance which separates people; walking across the hall of one’s fourplex impresses one with the psychological distance between people. The mass media have not destroyed this distance. Should we have thought that they would?
Several years ago, a neighbor who was on leave from his assignment as a Lutheran missionary to New Guinea showed me slides of his mission church. Prominent above the altar was a picture of Christ from one of the New Testament stories. The missionary had painted it himself because pictures helped keep the native’s attention and teach the facts about Jesus. Similarly, Mrs. Carino, wife of a Lutheran missionary in the Phillipines, told me that she helped her husband by drawing flip-chart illustrations of Bible stories he discussed in his sermons. The rural Phillipinos would hardly sit through a service without them.

The Spanish-Americans of New Mexico also made for themselves explicit, skillfully developed imagery of Biblical events and personages (crucifixes, death angels, and saints) called Santos. These panel paintings or in-the-round figures were made in New Mexico from about 1750 to 1900. The best examples are from the first half of the nineteenth century. Their basic style is derived from seventeenth century Spanish art, but given the isolation of New Mexico and the lack of trained artists, the style was both schematized and humanized to better suit the needs and life of the New Mexicans. Men from among their own people made these images for the pueblo churches, the adobe homes, and the penitente meeting houses.

In the early nineteenth century the church in New Mexico was in a serious decline. There were few priests and many of those were corrupt. The unauthorized Penitente Brotherhood flourished. It ministered to the sick, provided religious burials for the poor, and observed Holy week with masochistic reenactments of Christ’s passion in which one of their number takes the role of Christ and is tied to a cross. In the crucifixes here reproduced the carved image of Christ reflects some of the scarification that was inflicted upon the Christ actor. Both figures have marks around wrists, ankles, and waist where ropes had been tied with cactus thorns underneath them.

The basic shape of the figures are very stiff and frontal. Nothing bends but the head. The major parts of the body are blocked out in highly simplified, somewhat geometric shapes. Proportions are altered to stress relative importance. The head is too large for the body. The Christ figure is much larger than that of his mother and disciple John. The simplifications of shape (found in the painting also) help to give the works a universal, more than human quality.

The danger, of course, is that the figure may become nothing more than a doll-like stereotype. I feel the artists have overcome that danger with the addition of very particular elements, such as the real hair on one (anticipating twentieth century assemblage qualities). There is also individuality of the painted wounds and streams of blood. The colors are bright, with the body color blue and the blood painted red. Each figure has its own special character and nuances, but both dramatize Christ’s concrete physical suffering and His quiet submission to the degradation of death. The combination of the abstract and the literal in these crucifixes evokes some of the fearful, numinous aspects of God’s presence. It is quite a different matter from the molded crucifixes found commercially today.

But the truly awesome figure is that of the Death Angel, a female figure with wispy human hair on a slightly fleshed out skull. Her arms, looking more like real bone than wood, swell at the joints in sickly deformation. Nevertheless the large hands and the fat, determined fingers seem truly powerful. The Spanish-Americans looked death full in the face and saw only everlasting damnation. Longing to be with Christ, identifying with his suffering, the penitente was apparently yet never sure that he suffered enough to be with Christ in heaven.

The images of life and resurrection are missing.


The Visual Arts

March 1970
One of our most famous literary critics — Malcolm Cowley, I believe — has for years inserted a spurious and comic detail in his Who's Who entry: member of the Club des Bibliophages, which is to say “book-eaters' society.”

This is almost as fanciful a clan as that concocted by the American historian Henry Adams, who, with two of his young proteges, founded at the turn of the century an improbable political party called the Conservative Christian Anarchists.

There is a certain bizarre logic in these two mini-organizations, and the “book-eaters” fraternity intrigues me especially. I myself have ravenously roamed this country, like a squirrel in November, nibbling books off bookstore shelves from Long Beach, California, to rural Maine. Years of this squirrelish gluttony have alarmingly filled shelf after shelf all around me, home and office both — although I also suspect that these piled-up and crammed-in volumes have now begun reproducing themselves. Lolita I notice up there right next to All the King's Men — something no doubt is going on.

Rationalization, I admit, accounts for some of the excess. How, for example, is it possible to teach Henry James's great novel, The American, with its splendidly wry pictures of Paris about 1870, without owning a copy of his Parisian Sketches? That book is a collection of his articles for the New York Tribune in 1876, his one-year adventure in the exhilarating French capital.

Well, I have taught The American a number of times, deprived of the Sketches, but now these lean years are over. As of a few months ago I own the book, having bought a clean new copy of these very secular Parisian essays on sale for ten shillings, less than half price, in a rather unlikely place: the Methodist Epworth House bookshop in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Studying the essays, I discover the important fact that James was living at no. 29, rue Cambon, just a few pantalooned paces from the old hotel at no. 37, with its creaking stairs and tiny kidney-shaped elevator, which has three or four times been my own home in Paris for a few days.

Another book on my Henry James shelf comes from an equally un-Jamesian city as Belfast. His fat and syntactically epileptic Autobiography I picked up at the Gary Book Store on Broadway of the Steel City — desperately marked down from $7.50 to $2.95, with still no takers from the execs at U.S. Steel or American Bridge.

The book from Maine: That was in August of 1965 at Tebbett’s crowded little store in the heart of the village of Hallowell — $1.50 for a bright and unharmed copy of Herman Melville's crazy allegory Mardi, the 1923 reissue.

It was a hot Saturday afternoon, as I recall, late in a leisurely summer of research and writing in Cambridge, Mass., and the occasion was a spur-of-the-moment drive up to Augusta to see if novelist Henry Roth was at home. Few novels of the 1930s are so satisfactory as Roth's Call It Sleep, a boy's-eye view of the terrors in ghetto Brooklyn and the Lower East Side. Nor are most writers so hospitably at home to a total stranger as Henry Roth.

Not all bargain books call up such sociable memories. The heaviest tome on my living room shelf is Mitford M. Mathews' great Dictionary of Americanisms on Historical Principles. This $12.50 book I bought for $8.75, back in 1961 on the mundane occasion of a moving sale held by the Westwood Bookstore in Los Angeles near the UCLA campus.

The book is eight pounds and 1946 pages of the words we have invented here on the North American continent and dumped onto the English language. In it the other day I discovered the first usage of an elephantine verb revived here in Virginia after the recent gubernatorial election: "Republicanize." The original context was not exactly felicitous; Hinton R. Helper in 1867 wrote that "Sooner or later, Mexico, and all other parts of the vast continent of which it is a section, must be Americanized — Republicanized, Caucasianized, Protestantized."

What one is supposed to do with stale hors d'oeuvres of information like this, I don't profess to know. They're the crumbs that fall from the shelves of book-gluttonous professors.

Pursuit of this food metaphor, by the way, prompted me a few minutes ago to consult my refrigerator shelves for information. It turns out that some bottles of good Norwegian beer are jammed between bookends of salad dressing and cocktail onions and need rescuing. I plan to turn my attention there rather than go on to talk about other bargain books. Henry Cabot Lodge's father, for example, was a minor poet who wrote long plays in blank verse, and a few years ago at a Washington book-store...
No Abiding City

I have done a foolish and dangerous thing... . . . In the sere and yellow time of my life I have moved the base of my lessening operations about two thousand miles west... . . . With much huffing and puffing I pulled up my roots (all of them unpredictably either shallow or deep) and headed toward the sunset... . . . I am here now in a part of the planet called California for the space of one waning moon, making what psychologists call an “adjustment”. . . .

Before I begin to describe this process I must reach to its beginnings... . . . In my former life in Indiana I had an office and a position... . . . The office was old and the position was even older... . . . My task was to make decisions, deal out rewards and punishments, and do the thousand honorable and dishonorable things which seemed to be needed to keep an institution (of which I too was an inmate) alive... . . . These decisions required the frequent appearance of some people in my office and conferences without end, which I managed to survive by watching, just westward of my visitor's head, the tentative pecking of the first robin under the bushes or the falling of the first November snow... . . . It was a nice life... . . .

But it ended sadly and quickly... . . . Most good friends came no more... . . . My years of “clout” had ended and they saw no reason to continue a custom which had always been official... . . . A few still came, mostly fellow warriors of ancient days who talked about their rheumatism and the wayward ways of youth... . . . But the final chapter had been written, and I closed the book amused, dismayed, and a little wiser... . . . Thirty years had ended in a whimper of loneliness made bearable only by the Scriptural comfort and hope that here we have “no abiding city”. . . . I left that Indiana town when there was snow on the ground and no dust to shake off my feet... . . .

And I arrived in Southern California, a recently discovered part of the planet and the last edge of the Western world... . . . Here I found a small circle of good people who come here to build the city without walls... . . . I found also the flamboyant vigor of youth and the uncontrolled expansionism of a young civilization whose marks are almost all materialistic... . . . There are great shopping centers, huge food markets, and horizontal houses which seem to huddle close to the good earth when the season of rain begins... . . . Here and there is a striking church, vertical and neo-Gothic, set down as a final tribute to a forgotten God and an abiding city... .

. . . From this shore there is only Hawaii and the mysterious East beyond the great waters of the gentle Pacific... . . .

I think I shall like it here... . . . The snow and ice, physical, intellectual, and spiritual, are behind me and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land... . . . For one who is close to three-score-and-ten, there is the excitement of newness and the beckoning signs of an abiding spring... . . .

An inch or two back I referred to the newness and brashness of this land... . . . There is, however, another side to this shrugging off the past and this childlike delight in the new... . . . Some of the “boosterism” is giving away to a more mature civilization, a more thoughtful evaluation of life... . . . Los Angeles may have Watts, the other side of a counterfeit coin, but it also holds astonishing opportunities for the arts, music, the theatre, and the authentic marks of a maturing society... . . . Religion is still largely in the vaudeville stage, but its promise is assured by the kind of institution I now serve... . . . I hope to write about it soon... . . . Now I can only say that the task of building a Christian institution at the edge of the Western world is far different from the same task in Northfield, Minnesota, or Valparaiso, Indiana... . . .

The coming of age of Southern California came to my attention in a minor way by a column in the Los Angeles Times... . . . We have heard much about a “Greater Los Angeles”... . . . This column announced the organization of LLA, a group devoted to a “Lesser Los Angeles”... . . . Let it speak for itself:

“Lesser Los Angeles is a modest organization which never meets because it dislikes crowds. Its life style is amorphous but visible, pledged to the preservation of that which is human, the conservation of that which is natural, and the celebration of those common grounds where man and nature meet.”

“Lesser Los Angeles is opposed to crimes against nature, to speculation for sprawl, to consumption for commercial gain.”

“Lesser Los Angeles believes that people are both part of the problem and part of the solution. Only man can make a mess on earth. Only man can make a magnificent city.”

“Lesser Los Angeles does not shrink from challenge. It believes that quality—even magnificence—can live here, still.”

There it is: a maturing civilization... . . . It is still no abiding city but moving toward the best we can do on this side of the golden gates... . . .

By O. P. KRETZMANN

“All the trumpets sounded for him on the other side”

PILGRIM’S PROGRESS

March 1970
Rafael Aragon, CRUCIFIX, detail. Circa 1840.
Gesso on cottonwood. Duran Chapel, Taipia, New Mexico.
Courtesy of The Taylor Museum.