THE CRESSET

a review of literature, the arts, and public affairs

April, 1970
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High School America

"When you get to be our age, you all of a sudden realize that you are being ruled by the people you went to high school with.

You all of a sudden catch on that life is nothing but high school.

In high school you make a fool out of yourself, then you go to college to learn how you should have acted in high school, then you get out into real life and that turns out to be high school all over again—class officers, cheerleaders, and all."

So speaks a friend of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. in the novelist's recent Esquire article, "Times Change."

We had not looked upon our high school years and the years that followed on that slant before, but it makes some sense when you think about it. The American high school is closer to the heart of the American experience than just about anything else one could name. We have all been there, and it does follow after us.

There comes the sudden shock of recognition. How much Richard Nixon puts one in mind of the captain of his high school debate team. How much Spiro Agnew mimes his corridor monitor. How much Hubert Humphrey is like the chief cheerleader. Eugene McCarthy like the historian of the Latin Club. William F. Buckley, Jr. like the editor of the school paper. Jerry Rubin like the Pep Club membership chairman. George Wallace like the leader of the hot rodding pack. And the football captains in our public life are legion.

But if "real life" is "high school all over again," so is high school now more and more "real life." Remembering that makes the upheavals in our high schools more readily understandable if no more readily soluble. They are lately the theatres of violence, vandalism, drug abuse, boredom, cynicism, racial strife, political clamor, and dropping out spatially and mentally.

Were these not symptoms of grave distress, they could be wispishly remarked as worthy initiations into adulthood in America. But they were no educational romantics who recently adjudged many of our high schools to be nearing explosion or collapse, but Secretary Finch and Senator Ribicoff. And the situation is nearly as serious in wealthy, white, middle-class suburbs and some small towns as it is in the cities and ghettos.

A Microcosm of the Macrocosm

In some scripture somewhere there must be the hard saying: "No microcosm can rise above its macrocosm." If so, many Americans would seize it as a scripture to be broken with high schools. We would have the American high school transform American society. It is our favorite agency for cultural change as well as cultural continuity. From the time of Thomas Jefferson until recently, no people like the American people has believed so much in public education for the regeneration of the race. Nowhere in our Constitution, of course, is the right to education inscribed. But it need not be, for it is an unwritten law among us and, more importantly, our New World religion.

The time has come to ask whether we are not now laying more demands upon public education, especially the high school, than it can bear. When something is not working, one possible reason is that it has been given too much work to do. Another is that it has not been given freedom to do its proper work.

Take a step back. In the lyrics of our high school Alma Mater, words revealingly like everybody's Alma Mater, try to remember what we vowed:
"Our hearts will ne'er forget
The carefree ways of high school days
We leave with deep regret."

High school is where we all learned to be Americans. First, there is where we all got our spiritual fathers. Sometimes their names were bronzed on the lintels over the doors we entered—Calvin Coolidge High School, Oliver Hazard Perry High School, Carl Schurz High School, James Whitcomb Riley High School. Our high schools took a disparate bunch of kids and related them to one another as Americans by relating them to the same spiritual fathers. Educationally, it is called appropriating the tradition. Imaginatively, it means that somehow Carlos Fuentes, Juris Primanis, Maria LaRosa, and all the rest of us had to come to share in the act of Washington at Valley Forge, Jim Bowie at the Alamo, and Custer at the Little Big Horn. High School, more than elementary school, was the time of melding our differences.

And we were happy to meld. Perhaps the most lasting memory of high school for us was one of undifferentiated loyalties and institutionalized gaiety and good cheer. In our lunch boxes,writes Richard Luecke, "God, country, and McKinley High got all mixed up in one moist sandwich." We could not get more education outside of high school than in it like the kids can today. We had few, if any, Sony televisions, portable radios, paperback books, records, tapes, cameras, signigicant films, pony cars, and youth fares on the superjets. Whatever America held in store for us, we would get it in high school or not at all. And so we lined up, row upon row, pleased as peas in pods.

Our homes served the high schools, as was fitting a god. Many of our parents urged us to become as unlike them as possible. There was much ambivalence to be sure. For somehow we were to achieve more than they had achieved but nothing less than they hoped. The American high school institutionalized the ritual slaying of our parents, only they ambiguously killed themselves for us.

Next, our high schools began to make new distinctions among us. Out of the melting pot were forged new and approved differences. Status was reassigned according to our willingness and ability to sustain competition. Since we were largely all interchangeable parts by then it was mostly speed that distinguished anybody, "Be the first in your neighborhood to get..." urged the hucksters for the radio serial mail-aways, and in high school it was seriality and speed that counted too.

The best marks went to those who solved the most problems or filled in the most blanks in the time of testing. The highest social standing went to those who were the earliest to imitate the behavior of their teachers, who were themselves seeking higher social standing in one of the least costly and most readily available civil service professions. The citizenship trophies went to those who ran for the most offices in the co-curricular moratorium on adulthood. Even the sports which accentuated speed were the accentuated sports.

High school was the time for abstract achievements as well as speed and seriality. A century earlier, free public secondary education had been created to supply an expanding economy with a labor supply of technicians. But few of us were any longer being trained for trades. (A vestigial shop course remained, but mostly to teach consumers how to repair the appliances they would purchase rather than to make anything they might ever produce.) Rather we were trained for use in the knowledge industry, and the emphasis fell on industry.

The American high school student is far less the successor to the work of intellectuals than he is the successor to the work of mechanical laborers. It is no accident that most modern high schools are scarcely to be distinguished architecturally from the factories in the same towns and cities. The instrumental attitude of the assembly line and the requirement of speed above all else were turned onto our studies in mathematics and literature, languages and history. The way the courses were taught us and the way learning was rewarded as production told us more about the American way of life than any contents of the courses. The one course most can recall that was not a means to gaining college entrance and in which speed was discouraged was driver's training.

CEEB, PSAT, SAT, ACT, NMSQT

Next, we got a record. The American high school was the first administrator of our dossiers. The principal educational influence of the dossier was to teach us how to keep ourselves presentable in the most abstract manner possible. As one wag observed, it further refined our toilet training. In the eyes of the high school, the college, and the wider world, the dossier was where we lived and who we were. We quickly learned that it is a queer bird who soils his own nest. So, we kept our scores on a score of standardized tests as high as we could and rounded out those abstractions with cordial, but never personal, relations with the guidance office.

Since most of us were graduated the number of standardized tests has increased in the high schools. It now takes more than A's, B's, and C's to be packaged and labeled for the various bureaucracies of our mass society. The amount of bookkeeping now needed to get eighty percent of our fifteen million high school stu-
students through to their diplomas and fifty percent of them on to college is immense. It is also the most economically serious part of the American high school for the students. Few want to be among the twenty percent who do not finish high school and the fifty percent who do not go on to college when the diploma curtain falls.

For while most of us were in high school a shift was occurring in American educational and economic life. Underneath us a nation, for the first time in history, was moving its schools toward the center of its economic life and making education its most important capital. If the business of America was business, its business was becoming education. In twenty years it increased the sums it spent on formal education alone tenfold, now amounting to sixty billion dollars annually. Now over thirty percent of the physical capital of the country is tied up in schools and teaching and research materials. Teachers, over two and one half million of them, are the largest single profession in the nation. And over thirty percent of the American people is engaged in some full-time study.

This kind of investment of men and money is economically sound. It pays off handsomely in the productivity of goods and services and taxable incomes. The question, however, remains whether binding education to our economic, military, and technological supremacy in the world has not distorted education beyond rationality. Clearly, those whose rationality has not been distorted in itself can help answer that question for us. And as Randolph Bourne would counsel us:

“It is only the young who are contemporaneous; they interpret what they see frankly and without prejudice; their vision is always the truest, and their interpretation always the justest.”

For it was finally the high school which established our sense of what was important and what not important. While it surely transmitted rudimentary knowledge upon which our civility and skills depended, its deeper educational influence was to define the world of what was thinkable and what was unthinkable.

American high schools positively propagandize no more, and maybe a lot less, than do schools for citizens of the same age elsewhere. True, most of us can remember horror stories like Michael Myerson recalls in his new book, These Are the Good Old Days. (In his high school, for example, Myerson was taught that the Nazis weren’t all bad, after all they opposed Communism; that the slaves in the South had it fairly good until Reconstruction, when their troubles began; and that the Industrial Revolution began when Robert Fulton watched his mother’s teapot perking the principles of the steam engine.) But what induced our sense of what was real and what was unreal was more what we did not hear than what we did. We were channeled silently.

Growing Up Absorbed

Today the kids are more able to ask about what is missing. At least more than a few are asking after the voices of the past and present unheard in their high schools. (As we type this, there is much hubbub in our town over the hair of the high school boys and almost none over the difficulties endured to get a unit on the Selective Service System into their social studies curriculum. The difference sometimes fairly glares between the generations about what is important and what not important.) In our time in high school the student culture we maintained to educate ourselves and filter the influences of our elders was weak and very vulnerable to their manipulation. We had little, if any, diversity in our experience to weigh our high school and find it wanting. The voices unheard in our high schools were our own as well as others. We had almost no reserves of self-esteem to withstand the censure of our high schools or failure in its terms.

That situation is now changed, if ever so slightly for the majority and profoundly for a minority of high school students. Our recent years at work as a college admissions counselor, visiting hundreds of high schools, leads us to conclude that most writers we read on the present student culture greatly overrate its contents and underrate its importance. Its contents have only a little more cultural value than did ours and still exist to be outgrown. But the importance of the present high school student culture is its protest, its latent and sometimes manifest witness to a world not worth growing up to through the high schools.

Americans have never decided whether it is a good thing to grow up or not. Growing up could appear to American high school students to be an unavoidable evil that must be delayed as long as possible and then accepted with whatever grace can be mustered. Suspended as they now are between the “no longer” and the “not yet” in America, they must balance continuity and discontinuity more than the rest of us. The danger is that they will harden their contrast with their elders into islands of heightened sensibility. It will be the peculiar task of high schools in the years immediately ahead to make the best in adult life in America more available and more noble to more students.

Doubtless, some of the student activism that beset and sometimes cleansed colleges in the late sixties will come to the high schools, at least the best of them, in the early seventies. But it will as doubtlessly be differ-
ent and, we believe, less promising of happy outcomes. The students are much closer to the instabilities of their adolescence. The local “community” of racial and ethnic factions will be more angrily involved in the urban high schools. The teachers will be more overworked, authoritarian, and less protected by a tradition of academic freedom. The administrators will be more harried and hobbled by local, state, and federal bureaucracies. Funds will be pinched. The spirit of the times will be more repressive than reforming. Generally, there will be a greater want of freedom—on the part of all parties to the issues—to do what needs to be done.

And it is already quite late. We are already admitting to our colleges more and more emotionally battered students, each making his separate peace and those terrifying interior migrations for meaning we can remember from the fifties May their tribe decrease. For the basic units to American democracy are people with stable selves to respect, and the greatest safeguard for any democracy is a community of self-respecting young people and old people who understand that society as it is and as it remains to be achieved.

_Everybody Up the Down Staircase_

The American high school is now long habituated to its tasks of being the court and church, home and city of the young. There is no other place to grow up in America. Discontented Americans of all racial and ideological shades, from the SDS to the American Legion, will doubtless continue to descend upon the high schools to press their briefs.

For examples: Are we concerned for patriotism and morality? Teach the Navy patriotic and moral code in the high schools. Are we concerned for drug abuse and sexual promiscuity? Put drug and sex education into the high school, even if we are a little late. Are we concerned about automobile carnage on our highways? Put more driver’s training into the high schools. Are we concerned about the armed forces? Put more recruiters into the high schools. Are we concerned about a racially segregated society? First, desegregate the high schools. Are we worried sick for God? Read prayers to Him or Whomever off the Congressional Record in the high schools. And when there is an eighteen-year-old franchise, require assemblies for the candidates in the high schools?

Likely there are many noble causes pursued in our high schools, perhaps as many as the ignoble ones. But can the high schools carry all the causes we put upon them without creaking under their weight? We believe the high schools need to be relieved from much misguided zeal for them and demands upon them. Certainly a healthy alienation from much of tired and angry America impinging upon them would be a wise move by the students against their schools collectivized and mobilized for causes beyond their root education.

It is our conservative bias speaking again when we suggest that the most pressing reforms among the many pressing reforms needed in the high schools are educational reforms in the strictest sense. It will help to focus the issues in all areas if it is the academic work which is seen to be in the most urgent need of freedom for its proper tasks. We mean the study of root questions in history and literature, language and mathematics, science and art. And it is past time for philosophy and religion to be subjects for study in the public high schools too. The high school cannot and need not teach the whole of modernity, nor compete with the mass media of entertainment and topical information. The high school is no longer as necessary as it once was to teach the data of the modern world. That data, and Dada, are taught relentlessly outside the high school by day and night.

Rather, the high school needs to teach the past and the future, very different societies from our own and what ours might be. It needs to teach the criticism of experience and the principles which unite widely ranging experiences. The high schools need to teach what is not being taught or interpreted in the highly stimulating environment in which almost every young person now moves. Students need not spend more time in high school but less time better spent. They need not more courses but fewer courses better taught.

With the possible exception of our Congress, our high schools have probably changed less in their institutional procedures than any other institution in our society in the last twenty years. Their time is up. Underneath the new buildings and the teaching machines are the same units, credits, and fifty-minute periods to string like beads. And there are the same textbooks, workbooks, and impersonal teaching methods to remove students from the primary sources of their learning. Many of our high schools are nice enough. They are just not real enough to teach the real world now at their doors.

Admittedly, curricula and institutional procedures cannot be altered overnight. The democratic process is distinguished more for its wisdom over the long haul than its speed. And so is the educational process. It will take time to raise up teachers who can teach what they have not been taught and who can close the gaps that now yawn ho-hum between themselves, their subjects, and their students. But the learning situation in many of our high schools is now so entropic that even urgent action cannot avoid a worsened situation.

As Secretary Finch intuits, another generation of high school students “cannot be passed . . . through the same rigid institutional structures that its parents and even grandparents traveled.” Not, we concur, without introducing child sacrifice to our old, New World religion. We hope he and others locally and immediately concerned will find the constituency necessary to urge and enact the reforms our high schools require. Many students are ready. Regrettably, they have about as much chance as . . . an American high school student?
We have a vigorous letters-to-the-editor column in the local daily paper, this Virginia town being a poly-opinionated conglomerate of rednecks, conscience-stricken academic liberals, local-history fanatics, retired military officers, undergraduate radicals, ultra-energetic patriots, and a few cranks.

Last fall the main topic in the letters was the Vietnam war and the Moratorium. But that issue is dead, since all the boys have come home and sequoia trees are growing where the Dow napalm factories used to be. So during the winter Spiro has been the issue. As he revved up his engine, the letters flowed in pro and con regarding his emissions. Now, however, his Messiahship is established, and partisans on both sides seem to recognize that mere words cannot do him justice.

Somehow in the middle of war, politics, porn, pollution, and all the other topics that have eluded common sense and rationality, the Bible too has crept in. We have been solemnly debating in letters to the editor whether the Bible has errors and contradictions. A Mr. H has counted them and finds 4000. Then comes Mrs. W, "after 20 years of regular Bible study," who finds not one.

Whenever I run across people like these, earnestly attacking or defending the Bible, I see fig trees in my mind. I see Mr. H standing on one side of a dusty country road, withered to the roots, and I see Mrs. W standing on the other side, equally shriveled and dry.

In short, the debate bores me. Perhaps this is because, as a teacher of literature, I am used to contradictions in great books. What are we to make of Walt Whitman, my puzzled students ask every year. He says in one place that Individuality, the Pure Free Self, is the most important thing in the world, and then he turns around a few pages later and says that the Common People. Collective Mankind, Human Beings En Masse, constitute the most important thing in the world. To the literal mind, this is nonsense—you can’t have it both ways.

But, asks Whitman:
Do I contradict myself?
Very well then I contradict myself,
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)

I do not see why we cannot allow the Author of our Scriptures and of our diverse lives the same privilege. Consistency, after all, is not some yeast that is required before God can attain his proper stature.

This train of reflections comes about mainly because the Epistle lesson a couple of Sundays ago was 1 Corin- thians 13. After reading Mrs. W in the Sunday paper, I went off to church, where the bulletin read: "Love is patient and kind." Then, during the service, instead of the pastor reading the Epistle, the choir sang it. They used a new musical setting which goes through all thirteen verses of the chapter and then comes back and repeats the middle part, so that it ends with "Love is patient and kind."

"Love is patient and kind," I kept think to myself. And so what are we to say of this man Jesus? What are we to think of that scene in the Temple, when his moral outrage welled up and exploded, leaving the overturned tables of the moneychangers in his wake? Where is the kindness—where is the patience—in his dealings with these bankers and brokers?

Has something been left out? Will we one day find a scroll with the reassuring lacunae restored? (Telling us that Jesus went first to the Temple authorities, filed a formal protest, politely requested a redress of the situation, and only after finding these channels blocked by corrupt or aloof officials, took measures into his own hands.)

Where is kindness toward the authorities, and where is the patience, in Luke 6—when Jesus heals on the Sabbath instead of holding off till a more lawful time? We know how the representatives of law and order reacted: "They were filled with fury." And why—since those fig trees are still on my mind—why was he so absurdly impatient with that barren fig tree? "It was not the season for figs."

I find these instances of impatience directly contradictory to Paul’s exhortation. And this contradiction seems typical of the way the New Testament works. Yet I echo Whitman: "Very well," For I am not interested in working out a "higher consistency" to explain away these contradictions, just as I do not wish to dehumanize Whitman by arguing a magnificent overall coherence for his many barbaric yaws. It seems to me satisfactory to let God be God, to accept the idea that sometimes patience is called for and sometimes disorder is. And that the abstract rules and principles and laws in the Bible are sometimes of very little help.

The phrase "situation ethics" is a red flag of vile heresy to a good many people, but to the Christian who rests secure in his God, there is really very little else that the New Testament is all about.
A Business by Any Other Name...  

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As is obvious to the most uninformed observer, American higher education is undergoing a most serious crisis today. Possibly no other event in recent history has been so widely written about and discussed by people of all persuasions. Numerous reasons have been advanced to explain this phenomenon. Probably all of them have some validity, and, possibly, if joined together into a coherent explanation of higher education, the resulting total view of the system might explain the troubles besetting the universities today.

The following discussion is not meant to be a scientific analysis of the situation nor does it pretend to offer a sure-fire solution to the problem. This is only the distillation of the thoughts of one college professor caught up in the current crisis who believes that all of us—administrators, professors, students—must face up to the challenge whether we like it or not.

Basic to any discussion of higher education is the atmosphere that prevails on the individual campus and the attitude of those responsible for operating the institutions. It appears that many of today's institutions are suffering from mental paralysis resulting from the mores of the areas in which they operate.

A few years ago The Texas Observer, by far the most non-conformist and liberal paper in the state, published an article by David Wellborn, a professor of political science at Northern Illinois University, who had recently suffered from teaching in one of the state's major universities. This professor compared higher education in Texas to the operation of a rather large cattle ranch.

In this analogy he emphasize the chain of command and the strict adherence to the rules of procedure from one level of authority to another.

The Board of Trustees or Regents was compared to the owners of the ranch who might be resident on the property or who well might be domestic or foreign (as was often the case in Texas) partnerships or corporations. Under either arrangement the owners were primarily interested in profits and the product produced. The ranch owner's concerns were the number of cattle produced and the expansion of the holdings; the university board concentrates on increasing student enrollment, expansion of operations, and the number of degrees awarded. Quality of the product is important in both cases but only secondarily; the major goal is the growth and expansion of the operation and constant increase in the quantity of the product.

In the modern university the role of the administration is comparable to that of the ranch foreman who was told, or knew by instinct, what the owners wanted and was determined to produce it without question. The next level in the establishment, the faculty, fills the same function as the cowboy of the ranch whose job was to "ride herd" on the cattle—in this instance the students—to see that they did not kill or maim themselves and were ready for market at the appointed time.

Basic to the operation of the ranch and of the university in this analogy is that each sector or level of the operation has a certain function to perform and that each one does it without questioning the motives or goals of the order coming down from above. In such a situation there is no concept of academic freedom for either faculty or students, no way for frustrations to be vented except on the echelon below, and no esprit de corps for the institution.

I contend that Professor Wellborn was essentially correct in his comparison. I will also guess that this attitude generally prevails in most of the western part of the United States. Obviously, in such an atmosphere order, stability, and efficiency are much more important than curiosity, creativity, and quality.

This analogy, I believe, can be carried at least two steps farther, and will include all geographic areas of the United States. The attitude prevalent in such a situation might possibly explain part of the ferment and unrest in the universities today.

The Teacher from Cowboy to Slavedriver

The second comparison would deal primarily with the South. Anyone who has lived or taught in the South knows only too well how the myth and mystique of the Old South in the "Gone With the Wind" tradition lingers in the mind of the Southerner.

Perhaps it might be appropriate to compare the Southern university to the old plantation system. The governing board would be the equivalent of the owner of the plantation—the "Massa"—especially of the absentee variety. The administration would be comparable to the hired overseer whose job was to see that the plantation produced a profit, or that the university had many students and awarded numerous degrees. As with the plantation overseer the administrator might be good or bad in the eyes of the owner. He might have the interests of the owner and the slave at heart and become so devoted to the plantation that he ran it as if it were really his own. He might become so involved that he considered any suggestion for change as a personal attack on himself. On the other hand, he might consider...
his position as a sinecure for his benefit and operate the plantation without regard for owners, slaves, or product. So again it is with university administrators.

In this arrangement the faculty would be in the same role as the slave driver. Many Southern faculty members would agree that the analogy is accurate since the driver was himself a slave, but in a slightly more favored position. His job was to see that the slaves produced the product as efficiently and cheaply as possible or run the risk of returning to the field gangs himself, or worse, to be sold.

At the bottom of this hierarchy would be the students in the role of the slaves who had no rights at all and whose well-being depended upon the humanitarian impulses (or lack of them) from those above him.

The second additional analogy would compare the university to the modern factory. Perhaps the comparison is more accurate here since the modern university is actually organized along corporate lines. In this arrangement the Board of Trustees of the college would be comparable to the Board of Directors of the corporation, the administration to the officers of the corporation, the faculty to the foremen, and the students to the workers.

In all of these situations certain things are apparent: the desire for efficiency; the demand for a large product at the lowest possible cost; and a smooth running operation with each group accepting its position without questioning those in higher authority. If there is profit (or many degrees awarded) the question of quality is only of secondary consideration.

At this point the indictment must be broadened if it is to be meaningful. College administrators must bear much of the responsibility for the atmosphere existing on any individual campus, but the burden does not belong to them alone. Many faculty members find a suitable scapegoat in the administration; to attack the administrators for mediocrity removes the burden from themselves. Obviously, too many professors have found the academic community to be a safe and comfortable, if not financially rewarding, escape from reality. But today reality is catching up to them. They must face the challenge of the crisis but find themselves with little or no intellectual ammunition with which to meet it. They are sterile; creativity is a foreign, alien, and frightening word. The cloistered walls of academia are no longer cloistered, but too many faculty members continue to act as if they were.

Additionally, the student must bear part of the blame for the bland and uninspiring atmosphere of too many campuses. The most enlightened and inspiring faculty and administrators can have little impact if the student remains inert. Creativity and quality education is a two-way street. Yet, despite the importance of the faculty and students, the most stifling effect can, and often does, come from narrow-minded, empire-building, or ignorant administrators.

The Teacher from Foreman to Featherbedder

I contend that too many colleges and universities in America today will fit into one of the stereotypes I have described. Too often these institutions are staffed by hangers-on and incompetents in all levels of authority — trustees, administration, and faculty. The question of relevance today is a vital one. Yet, what relevance can the university have if it becomes (as it has too often) a haven for those social misfits who would fail in any other endeavor just as they fail in education. Anyone who has been around such a system very long knows all too well that a place in a higher echelon can be found for people like this. Of course, in state universities partisan politics also plays a role in the direction the school will take.

Many other charges could be leveled at the universities, but they are only secondary to what is basically wrong. If the atmosphere surrounding the university fits into one of the above-described categories (or others, since I make no claim to completeness) how can there be communication and dialogue, vitality and relevance? Instead, isn’t it only normal to expect unrest, upheaval and even violence in the modern, changing, and insecure world? After all, the cattle sometimes stampeded, the slaves occasionally revolted, and the workers often struck their plants. The fact that these actions usually failed is unimportant. The participants thought they had a chance for success or that they could not live forever under such a system and had little to lose anyway.

It may be true that schools with the best educational programs are the ones that have suffered most disruption. Here the factory analogy would best apply; the students seem to be objecting most strenuously to the impersonal assembly line methods adopted by the university. This situation is similar to labor union activities in the nineteenth century when unions were not recognized. Workers struck on principle knowing full well that the result would probably be the use of company strikebreakers and the permanent loss of jobs. But they did have hope of improvement in their lifestyles. This bears out Eric Hoffer’s contention that mass movements cannot be conducted by oppressed people; only those on the rise (“on the make”) who can see a better world in the future will participate.

Yet, far too many schools, I fear, have taken a repressive position that has intimidated and stifled student activism even where serious grievances exist.

There are schools with free atmospheres that have avoided trouble altogether. It is in these institutions where Percy W. Bidwell’s statement that the “reform of a college curriculum has been compared in difficulty to the task of moving a graveyard” would not apply. These are the institutions (and there are many) where dialogue and communication exist, where faculty and students share in decision-making, and where the institution has relevance to the real world.
The Theatre of Marguerite Duras

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Percentage-wise, probably no other country can boast of so many theater-goers as France. Government-sponsored and enthusiastically supported by the public, theatrical groups prosper in the capital and outside of it. It is no exaggeration to say that, all things being equal, the French intellectual would rather see a play than view a movie, go to the opera or listen to a concert. The reasons for this are both too obvious and too varied to go into here. Suffice it to point out that, in the country of Moliere, the theatrical tradition is so well entrenched, has flourished so persistently throughout the centuries and has renewed itself so boldly that no contemporary deterrent—neither the cinema, nor television, nor the automobile and the weekend exodus—could diminish public interest or box office receipts.

Since World War II great contributions to the French theater have been made not only by authors but even more particularly by imaginative stage directors such as Jean-Louis Barrault, Roger Blin, Andre Reybaz and Georges Vitaly, to mention only a few. These artists have displayed a revolutionary audacity in stripping dramatic productions of traditions dating back to the seventeenth century, and in adopting instead the practices of the "total theater" according to which the spectator must be made to face, directly and without explanation, the conflict on the stage; this without the benefits of story, of exposition, of psychological, or social, or any other form of analysis.

Jean Vilar's Theatre National Populaire became an established institution, responding to the most varied public taste with the most diverse performances which often range from plays by Pierre Corneille to those of Heinrich von Kleist, from dramas by Bertolt Brecht to the poetic dramatizations of Henri Pichette. The more recent popularity of the anti-theater, corresponding on the stage with the movement of the anti-novel, has provided a revitalized and intriguing public interest in the odd activities and apparent meanderings but really meaning-charged cliches of lonely, bored, and extremely depressed personages.

Devoid of tradition and open to all myths, the anti-theater has discovered new vistas and has recaptured that ancient form of tragedy that one found in the Greek theater and in the Mysteres of the Middle Ages. Its total freedom has appealed to most contemporary literary giants who, although in the main novelists or essayists (Francois Mauriac, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, to mention just a few), have all tried their hand at the writing of engaging and absorbing plays. Among the female writers who have made important strides are Francoise Sagan, Simone de Beauvoir, Nathalie Sarraute and Marguerite Duras.

Mme Duras came to the theater, understandably enough, because of her constant ability to pack complexities into the banalities of daily dialogue. Her passage from the novel to drama was not a difficult one. Already in her stories she had been able to avoid long descriptions and to rely mainly on conversation for the development and the diffusion of conflicts. It was an apparently easy task to pursue the process of sobriety in writing to the more demanding style of dramatic composition.

Les Viaducs de la Seine-et-Oise

Mme Duras' first play is based on the newspapers' account of an apparently senseless murder committed by a pair of sexagenarians in the little town of Seine-et-Oise. The event took place in 1954 when parts of a human body were discovered in a number of train cars arriving in different stations throughout France. Anthropological research showed that the parts, put together, constituted the body of a woman. The state-owned Railway Company, S.N.C.F., conducted its own investigation and came up with the curious fact that, no matter what the final destination of the train cars was, on the way, they had all passed under the viaduct of Epinay-sur-Orge.

The police managed to arrest the assassins, an elderly man and his wife, a peaceful couple of retired employees of the S.N.C.F. They discovered further that the victim was their crippled cousin, who had lived in their home for some twenty-seven years. Apparently there had been no friction between the three. At any rate, neither the police nor the Court could establish any motive, nor could the guilty advance any. The case remained, therefore, a mystery for the defenders of justice and for the assassins as well. His condemnation to death and hers to life imprisonment terminated the public's involvement with all concerned.

These curt facts are carefully recalled to the audience before the rise of the curtain. Les Viaducs de la Seine-et-Oise, presented in 1960, is the author's only two-act play and her longest dramatic composition to date. Act I has only two personages, Claire and Marcel, the two sexagenarians. They talk about the murder they had...
committed, about the discovery of the different parts of the body, about their impending arrest. Throughout the monologue-interspersed dialogue there is a desperate search for the reasons which prompted the murder. In the play the victim is portrayed as the couple's servant, and Marcel especially misses the good dishes she used to prepare and serve. Marie-Therese Ragond was not only a good cook, but she also had the added advantage of being deaf and dumb, of living an inconspicuous existence (except for an occasional, nocturnal rape at the hands of Alphonso, a character who will appear in Act II) devoted entirely to her masters.

Looking back, neither Claire nor Marcel can come up with acceptable motives for their crime. Perhaps they did it because they had looked forward to the long, painful, risky job of cutting up the body and getting rid of it. "It was a tough and new type of work," Marcel says at one point, "a job that took so very long, to make all those pieces disappear. . . The key word here is the adjective new. It appears that the couple had always lived the uneventful, dull existence of public employees who have nothing but retirement to look to in their youth, and death to wait for after they no longer work. This is evident in the following bit of dialogue:

MARCEL: How anonymous we used to be. People in town talked about how famous we were in anonymity. They said the Ragonds as one would say (he searches) artichokes or the weather!

CLAIRE: I never heard anyone mention us anywhere. She on the other hand, of course, they spoke about her. Being deaf and dumb is rather unusual, people talked about her . . . but us? Less than of artichokes . . .

MARCEL: Yes, my Claire.

CLAIRE: Wouldn't that be why, after all, because she was among the living in town, even though she was deaf and dumb?

It seems then, that those who merely exist cannot tolerate those who are really alive because they constitute a proof of the former's lack of vitality.

The couple's lucidity is perhaps surprising, for one wonders how, were it not for the author's imposition of her own clairvoyance on the protagonists, simple people like Marcel and Claire could see so clearly the hidden significance of so terrible an act as the murder they had committed. Marcel especially appears to be able to look beyond the appearances, often to surmise correctly and sometime to point out how, far from giving in to the mediocrity of his destiny, he would react, occasionally, he would make a number of efforts, however minute, however futile: "I try," he says. "I make some efforts. A little bit of gymnastics every morning . . . a little walk in the afternoon when I go buy the newspaper . . . a little of this. . . a little of that. . . I try. . . ."

The Search for Meaning in Mediocrity

He also attempts to impress upon his wife the necessity of springing back to life in some fashion, in ways other than violent: "I beg you, one last time, become astonished about something, once, only once. Come back to me, my love, one last time." But for her it is too late. She no longer has the capacity of becoming involved, of attempting to change her lot, of making plans. The best she can do is to live in the past. Once she had been taken to the opera and she had heard La Traviata. The overture of Verdi's work haunts her throughout the play. It is all she has: "The souvenir of La Traviata pursues me. . . it makes me tear. . . melt in ecstasy."

The stage indications specify that the melody is audible, repeatedly, and it is actually heard even at the end of the play when husband and wife are taken away by the police. The sweet tune of Verdi's overture, which Claire cannot forget, contrasts pointedly with the awful crime she likewise is unable to banish from her memory. The two parallel recollections do not cancel each other: they are able to coexist, to give to her life a passable aura of acceptability.

And so it is that, unlike most personages of anti-plays, Claire and Marcel can await, without any notion of self-annihilation, the inevitable end. More than that, Marcel is even capable of loving life in spite of its miserable mediocrity. He not only exercises, walks and reads his newspaper daily, but he also attempts to think of alibis he could use after his arrest, of the explanations he could offer. Although he is hungry, for example, he refuses to eat in the hope that thin criminals are pitied more than fat ones. And he adds: "They must not understand anything about it (the crime). They should understand only one thing, that is that we don't understand anything about it ourselves. Let them be shocked by our good will. We should show a spirit of cooperation (in the vain search for motives)that would make even stones weep. (Aside) I think this is one detail that will save my life."

The conclusion of the defense should be: "Children, children, that's all these murderers are, members of the jury." When Claire points out to him that the strategy might not work, he still refuses to give up: "I shall defend myself nevertheless," he shouts. "I'll say everything, Her affair with Alphonso! Everything! . . . I persist in not wanting to be decapitated. (Enthusiastically) I shall say that she threatened us, I'll say anything. . . anything."

Marcel's optimism in the face of disorder, darkness and death is even more obvious in the second act which takes place in Bill's cafe. Claire and her husband had gone there because there is nothing else to do while waiting to be arrested. The other customers, the Italian Alphonso and a mysterious Amoureux and Amoureuse (the first turns out to be a policeman), talk about the murder, the news of which has everyone in an uproar. The conversation, which first centers on the specific details reported by the newspapers, switches into a discussion on a topic that is at the very core of contemporary communication dilemmas.
The Impossible Obligation of Expression

Samuel Beckett is perhaps the first to have pointed it out concisely: "There is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express." Marguerite Duras' vision of this dichotomy between impossibility and obligation contains a ray of hope which is absent from most anti-dramatists. The following passage exemplifies this view already apparent in her novels:

ALPHONSO: . . . But if one is sure that no one understands. . .
MARCEL: Yes, Mr. Alphonso, it is worth it. A chance in a thousand to be understood is worth the trouble of saying.
ALPHONSO: Why?
MARCEL: I do not know.
BILL: . . . Because there is no limitless desert anywhere, ever. One hopes, then, that what one says will take root some time, somewhere, even if it takes a thousand years, you understand Mr. Alphonso?

ALPHONSO: (desperately and in a low voice) It happens that one time in a thousand I understand, but when it happens, oh, what a joy!

During their wait, then, Claire and Marcel talked, with each other and with others, about what they had done, about the reasons for their act, about its consequences and about the means of avoiding punishment. Their search for meaning, for sense in an alogical world, did not have entirely satisfactory results. But they did manage to perceive certain flashes, a number of dim lights flickering in the distance. For in spite of everything Marcel was able to look back, nostalgically, to gymnastics, walks, newspapers and, yes, to the intriguing job of a cadaver's dismemberment; and to look ahead, hopefully, to how he might exhort pity from jury and clemency from judge.

Claire too, with all her profound pessimism, was able to find a trace of support in Verdi's overture. Marcel will be executed, of course, and Claire will get life imprisonment. But the "essential thing is not to regret anything, ever," Bill says in his penultimate speech, after the policeman identifies the murderers to him. The fact is that Claire and Marcel had acted, had moved against their destiny of placid, apathetic, forgotten pensioners of the S.N.C.F. At the point of a knife they had been able to communicate with the deaf and dumb Marie-Therese and to alert the impassive Universe of their own impassive existence. In terms of any standard morality their violence is inexcusable; in the midst of an absurd world in which the possibility of saying and doing becomes more and more questionable, any act carries with it a ready-made justification.

As in most of her recent novels, Marguerite Duras points also, in her first play, to the absolute necessity of never quite giving up, of never capitulating entirely. Man's dignity requires the effort more than the result, often in spite of the result, as in the case when the action contradicts laws and causes the death of the one who acted. Attempting to give meaning to one's meaningless existence is viewed by her as an eminently worthy deed; and the popularity of Les Viaducs de la Seine-et-Oise demonstrates that the public shares, albeit intuitively, the brilliant preoccupations of the author—as it proves, of course, that she is highly capable of capturing knotty, contemporary problems (the play is based, after all, on an actual case—and of reorchestrating them into lucid, literary compositions that shed light on the terrible impasses we are forced to face in our terrestrial existence.

Les Eaux et Forets

Marguerite Duras' second play was first published in La Nouvelle Revue Francaise in 1962. Three years later, on May 14, 1965, it was presented on the stage. During the course of the same year the drama was incorporated in Theatre I.

Les Eaux et forets owes its title to the following passage in the play: "No, no, no . . . I must not listen, Mrs. Thompson; nothing; I must not pay attention to anything . . . Everyone should be as I am, belong to the Waters and Forests, without any prejudices whatsoever, to belong at the same time to the waters and the forests . . . to have a part in everything . . . in nothing . . . in nothing at all."

This cryptic speech is made by Man. He, Woman 1 and Woman 2 are the only three protagonists of the one-act piece. Man, at the rise of the curtain, has been bitten by a dog apparently belonging to Woman 1. They talk about the event. Man complains. Woman 1 proposes that they all take a taxi and go to the Institut Pasteur for help. Man refuses. Woman 1 and Woman 2 insist. Conversation and monologue succeed each other. Remarks and facts become blurry, to interlocutors and spectators. For example, who is Woman 1? Is she Mrs. Thompson, as Man calls her at one point? Or Mrs. Johnson, as he and Woman 2 address her at another? Or Mrs. Simpson, as she is called later in the play? Or Marguerite-Victoire Senechal, as Woman 2 seems to recollect towards the end? And how does Man know so much about her? How does he guess what she did in 1932, on the shores of the Lac des Settons? Is he the one she used to dance with, those haunting Argentine tangos he refers to? Woman 1 addresses him as Mr. Thompson later in the play. Is he, was he her husband?

Man appears to be young, but the beginning stage indications do not specify his age. Woman 1 believes, on her part, that her husband was, at least one hundred years old. "And I had enough of him," she declares, "up to my neck, right up to my neck. For the most uninvolved type of week-end he needed six weeks of preparation. Shots, vitamins, six weeks, and I had enough,
up to my neck, and I couldn't stand it any longer." When we learn that he died falling in the Rhine, we suspect that she pushed him; actually she confesses the murder in her final speech. Yet Man seems as alive as the other two, unless, of course, the whole scene takes place in hell.

Be it as it may, Man, who at the beginning of the play concludes that he alone is human and that conversation with anyone else is impossible, continues to talk nevertheless, on a number of topics, ranging from dogs to big city problems, from his personal riches, unexpectedly blown out of proportions (seven children, a good job at the Mazarine Library, a superb wife, a Mercedez-Benz which might, incidentally, be the wife he is talking about, first-class furniture, property, property, a great deal of free time, a park full of fruit trees, lots of grass, etc., etc.) to the most obviously phony self-praise and aggrandizement: "And not only I have," he boasts, "but I do, I do, I act, I'm on the go. I do. I think, I change. I do. I think. I change. Sometimes I think, I think (quicker and quicker diction), sometimes I think of what I do, sometimes I don't, I do what I think, I think, I do, I think, I think, I do..." But a comma later he explodes: "I have enough of it, I have enough of it... enough." For, he explains, "sometimes I'm wrong. I want to think, I make mistakes, I'm confused, I don't know where I am, I'm full of despair." Little wonder when at the end of the play, like Woman 1, he confesses that he had lied, that he had no job at the Mazarine Library, that he had never amounted to anything at all. Reincarnation remains utopian, but for a moment he had looked great, he had managed to fool his interlocutors, even himself.

Woman 2, a minor character by comparison to the others, also has a momentary limelight cast upon her. Woman 1 had, perhaps still has a husband, a dog and her visits to the Institut Pasteur; Man had, perhaps still has a wife, a number of dreams and two avid listeners in the female personages of the play; Woman 2 is content with a secret. Her own husband, Duuvier, a vicious man who in his youth had abused her sexually, is now becoming impotent. She hints that the secret might concern an extra-marital love affair. She talks freely about it, but will not divulge what it is—except in her final speech when she confesses that it is simply an absence, a void, that in fact there is no secret at all, there is only Duuvier.

An Abortive Reincarnation

Metempsychosis is utopian, then, in the case of all three characters. But an attempt has been made to raise oneself above the unbearably empty existence one is condemned to. For a while one has talked, has invented, has deluded others and oneself. Little does it matter that the truth finally comes out. There will be other occasions, other listeners, perhaps even the same ones, and the entire game can begin anew after a brief interlude: the stage indications at the end of the drama specify that Man begins to hum a song, and the two women proceed to tap their feet to the beat. The three do not separate, and it is likely that the conversation will re-inaugurate itself. One recalls Man's speech quoted above and containing the title of the play. His apparent desire to remain aloof, to be at the same time of the waters and the forests, to have a part in everything and in nothing, is not fulfilled. He needs Woman 1 and Woman 2 as listeners, to lean on, but also at interlocutors, to listen to, to compare their misery to his and to seek catharsis in theirs. The author's constant concern for Man's solitude and his need of others reappears, then, poignantly, in the dramatic dialogue under discussion.

Les Eaux et forets does not seem to occupy a major place in the dramatist's work. While the play did have a modestly-successful run in a small Parisian theater, it is not of the type that can appeal to a large public. Its vulgarities tend to alienate the elite and the cerebral quality of many of the lines go by the uninitiated who needs time to digest them. Moreover, the continuity of the action lags, as it does in so many anti-plays, because the dialogue is often interrupted by time-consuming, action-stopping subconversations. An American commentator remarked: "(her) plays are good to read but offer only small dramatic interest. One might call them short stories in the form of dialogue." This curt judgment is essentially correct in so far as Les Eaux et forets: however, referring as it does to all three plays in Theatre I, it is, as we shall see, a most debatable and too general an appreciation.

La Musica

Marguerite Duras' last published play is not the product of the modified anti-dramatist we have seen her to be in Les Viaducs de las Seine-et-Oise and Les Eaux et forets. La Musica, presented in 1965 on a double bill with Les Eaux et forets, is rather a traditional piece, a tender, moving one-act play that squarely poses before us the unsolvable problem of the relationship between Man and Woman. Positioned last in Theatre I, immediately following the dramatic version of Le Square, La Musica treats of the post-marital part of this relationship. In Le Square, the novel and the play, the difficulties of communication between sexes had led to a suspended state: neither the maid nor the traveling salesman will pursue the chance meeting in a city park to a more stable, more enduring union. In La Musica the couple had met and married before the rise of the curtain; but it had also separated and divorced prior to appearance on the stage. Thus, in classical fashion, the story begins very near its end.

Anne-Marie Roche and Michel Nollet are the only two protagonists. Several other voices are heard from behind the stage, or at the other end of telephone conversations, but the speakers are not seen, and this adds, of course, to the touching simplicity of the action. Former husband and wife meet on the neutral but terribly
anonymous ground of a hotel lobby, in a town which is familiar to them and to which they had both come for the final divorce proceedings.

The theme of lovers’ return to a site that had witnessed better and happier days is a standard Romantic topic of prose and poetry, likewise treated in the pre- and post-Romantic periods of French and other literatures. It is, because of the frequency with which we encounter it, a banal theme, to be sure, but one of universal appeal nevertheless, because it is so easy to identify ourselves with the feelings that usually arise from it. Spleen, nostalgia, both a reluctance and a need to compare present with past, the surprise caused by change, deterioration and old age, the realization that neither things nor beings could resist the corrosion of time, all these aspects of one’s journey into the good old days are brought out effectively in La Musica.

A feeling of constraint is punctuated throughout the play by the forced smiles and laughter of the two characters. As a matter of fact, stage indications specifically instructing the actors on this point dot the conversation continuously, and these, added to numerous other directions, mar somewhat the reading of La Musica. Viewing it, however, is another matter. Anne-Marie and Michel capture easily the sympathy of spectators who have been or have dreaded being caught in a similar situation. For what should the relationship between a divorced man and woman be? Should it be based on sincere friendship, on cool politeness, on indifference?

Or should the memory of sweeter moments become dominant and cause a rebirth of fondness for one another, of love? Marguerite Duras’ personages seem to fall for the latter version. Not immediately, of course, and it is precisely their gradual fall that gives the play a pathetic, yet cathartic quality.

When Cliches Give Way to Confessions

To begin with, the chance meeting between Anne-Marie and Michel had actually come about because of a reciprocal desire to meet: this pointed out by Michel’ present mistress who remarks in a telephone call she places to him, that the lawyers could have easily handled the final proceedings in their absence. Moreover, neither he nor she oppose more than a faint resistance to the idea of beginning a conversation that is going to last for several hours:

MICHEL: Why shouldn’t we talk to each other?
ANNE-MARIE: Why should we?
MICHEL: Just like that...we have nothing else to do.

True as far as it goes, since they both must wait for transportation till morning, one suspects that the official separation which has just become effective provides, ironically enough, a springboard from which communication is much more feasible than it could ever be in the pre-marital or marital state. It is obvious that there is a certain amount of detachment now, a lack of restraint which makes sincerity less painful, a sad feeling, too, that there is nothing further to lose.

Husband and wife hesitate, of course, and they speak at first only because silence is often more embarrassing than an exchange of banalities; but soon cliches give way to confessions, and it becomes evident that the rapport between them is stronger now than in the past. For example, he no longer hesitates to tell her about the other woman; she has no compunction to talk about her marriage plans and about her projected departure for America. Yet the past interests them much more than the future. Looking back, it is difficult to understand what had happened, how things had deteriorated to the point of divorce. “We were young,” he says, “we were married with the consent of everyone...they were all content, your family, mine, everyone, yes...we had everything we needed, a house, furniture...you had your furcoat...”

The fruitless search for reasons brings back unendurable memories: “For a yes, for a no,” she recalls, “we gave ourselves so many nights of insomnia, we made so many scenes...scenes...and dramas, and...” Later she confesses that she had attempted to commit suicide when he had asked for a divorce, but in retrospect, the aborted act appears vulgar and useless. He admits that once, in a fit of jealousy caused by her repeated adulteries, he had bought a revolver and had planned to kill her. “You knew,” she remarks, “that in this sort of case acquittal is in order.” He knew it, of course, yet he had abandoned the plan and decided to throw the gun into the sea.

Even more important than these dramatic acknowledgments is the couple’s probe into the motives of adultery. Neither had apparently committed it, at any time, because of a sentimental attachment for another person. What then, causes people in love to seek others, whom they do not love? For adultery is always calculated, always willed. And the initial regrets are soon erased by repetition, by habit, and one begins to enjoy it, to depend on it, to be unable to do without. Is it because of such trivial reason as the fact that he did not dance and she liked to? Is it because, without knowing it, they were falling out of love? Or is it in order to find again those first moments, that rapture that one cannot longer duplicate in the arms of one’s spouse?

But none of these possibilities seems plausible. No single deficiency in the other, such as incapability to dance, could prompt so serious a step as adultery. After all, “you know, it’s terrible to be unfaithful, for the first time...it’s simply awful,” she opines, and surely not worth doing it for petty reasons. Moreover, both Anne-Marie and Michel realize, at least intuitively, that the present attraction they feel for each other precludes the possibility of their having fallen out of love at an earlier date. And since their infidelities were not caused by affection for the others, what guarantee was there of recapturing that singular bliss they had known only in the days of old?
Michel, like most of us, must go on facing, permanently, words for granted and live with comfortably: frankness and candor even after the exhaustive effort of communicating with classic personages mirroring our own anxieties and ings of Anne-Marie and Michel permeate and move readers and spectators alike. We feel compelled to share our experiences to tuck conveniently away the cid storehouse we use to tuck conveniently away the secret yearnings lie beneath these casual dialogue summarize the uncertainty Anne-Marie and Michel, like most of us, must go on facing, permanently, even after the exhaustive effort of communicating with frankness and candor on problems we manage to take for granted and live with comfortably:

MICHEL: My wife. (A long pause) Will we see each other again?

ANNE-MARIE: I don't know.

MICHEL: But if this should ever come to be?

ANNE-MARIE: I don't know.

MICHEL: But if ever you and I, once more...

ANNE-MARIE: Then we shall die, undoubtedly, as lovers do.

While it is apparent that Les Eaux et forêts is a play of uneven quality, Les Viaducs de la Seine-et-Oise and La Musica especially, have been well received and have placed Marguerite Duras, the novelist, in the enviable limelight of a playwright of repute. These works have established her ability to transfer successfully to the stage, in the tighter and more difficult format the theater requires, the same, basic, human and humane preoccupations so lucidly exposed in her novels. Willis H. Bowen's comment "none of her novels has been dramatized," is as erroneous in fact as is his earlier assertion: "Although one of the best-known French novelists of today, Marguerite Duras is seldom thought of as a writer for the theater," and those who are more familiar with the author's plays and criticism thereof can accept neither.

The theater of Mme Duras occupies an increasing portion of the writer's output: three original plays so far, an adaptation of a previously-published novel, and two of works by American authors. The title Theatre I indicates that future volumes are scheduled to appear, and theater-goers can look forward to other worthy dramatic compositions.

Footnotes
1. For a detailed description of "total theater" see Antonin Artaud's Le Theatre et son double (Paris: Gallimard, 1938).
2. Michel Corvin's Le Theatre nouveau en France (Paris: P.U.F., 1963) is a useful book on the contemporary French theater; I know of no work in English that can be of much help to the non-specialist as Corvin's.
4. Marguerite Duras (1914- ) wrote her first novel, Les Impudents in 1943. Of the more than one dozen works of fiction which followed and which have been well received in America, the most notable are: The Square (1955), Moderate Cantabile (1958), The Afternoon of Mr. Andesmas (1962) and The Ravishing of Lol V. Stein (1964). Her Theatre I has just become available in this country. It contains her most recent plays: Les Eaux et les forêts, The Square (the wide diffusion of the novel and the closeness of the play to it make a discussion of the dramatic version of The Square unnecessary in this essay) and La Musica. Les Viaducs de la Seine-et-Oise (1960) had established previously her reputation as a dramatist.
Books of the Month

Pastoral Theology in Psychological Perspective


It is generally recognized that Seward Hiltner has been the father and leader of the movement in this country that has come to be designated in a variety of ways as pastoral psychology, pastoral theology, and the dialogue between theology and psychology. Each of these designations represents an aspect of that movement, and on each Hiltner has left his abiding mark.

The New Shape of Pastoral Theology reflects Hiltner’s abiding concern to provide a two-way street between theology and pastoral operations in a manner that would insist that theology needs to be informed by pastoral operations just as pastoral operations need to be informed by theology. The latter has always been taken for granted by the tradition of practical theology. Hiltner argues for a method in pastoral theology that would make the former of equal importance and thus raise pastoral theology from the level of step-child to that of adult participation in the theological enterprise.

Anyone who has studied under Hiltner (as I did for a year) or is at all familiar with his writings knows that his most creative contributions were in the area of pastoral theology, which he defined as “the activity of beginning with theological questions, bringing them to the shepherding material, and returning either with theological answers or with new theological questions.” (Preface to Pastoral Theology, p. 220). This was the theological enterprise which Hiltner set before the community of scholars who gathered around him at Chicago, and he provided the progenomena for the task in his Preface to Pastoral Theology, generally hailed by all reviewers as the first real breakthrough in pastoral theology since Schleiermacher.

Hiltner was modest enough to call his work a preface, “only an introduction to such a statement of systematic pastoral theology.” He recognized that he could only sketch the outlines of what promised to be a whole new field of inquiry, and he urged his students to pick up the gauntlet.

No one did, at least none of the authors in The New Shape of Pastoral Theology. The title is a complete misnomer. Pastoral theology had a shape in the hands of Hiltner; in the hands of his followers it is shapeless. The criticism that is often made of the students of a great man is that the method of the master becomes lifeless in their hands: the criticism that must be directed against the students of Hiltner is that the method has been lost. The one exception to the above judgment is an essay of “Methods of Study in Pastoral Theology” by Coval MacDonald in which he argues that general systems theory provides a better model for pastoral theology than the field theory on which Hiltner relies so heavily. But even this essay is totally theoretical with no suggestions concerning its operational feasibility. By contrast, Hiltner rarely offers methodological insights apart from operational constructs.

It is striking that only two out of the twenty-four essays in this volume include case material, which Hiltner always considered to be the unique contribution of the pastoral care movement in this country and which he believed to be the operational base for pastoral theology. Why have so few failed to take up the challenge offered by Hiltner in the Preface? James Lapsley is close to the heart of the matter when he suggests that “one reason there is so much interest in correlational studies involving psychology and theology is that these do not usually involve the entanglement, false starts, and frustration that hypothesis-testing by quantification approaches ordinarily entails” (p. 44).

Empirical research is always more difficult than putting together pieces that somebody else has already found. For the above reasons Hiltner could not but be disappointed by the Festschrift prepared in his honor.

This is not to say that there aren’t some excellent essays in this volume, such as the provocative piece by Paul Pruysen on the role of blessing in pastoral care. Although there are some essays in the volume that have no obvious relation to pastoral theology, most of the contributions are stimulating enough in their own way to make this perhaps the best collection of essays available in pastoral theology. It is the lack of any shape to that pastoral theology, plus the lack of any serious concern for methodology, that raises serious questions about the future of Hiltner’s dream for pastoral theology.

A quite different assessment must be made of The Dialogue between Theology and Psychology. This is by far the most sophisticated group of essays on the correlation between theology and psychology that is presently available. There is no unifying theme in the book other than the concern to investigate this correlation and a preoccupation with the methodological options for doing so. The evenness of the contributions is quite remarkable, each essay making its own unique contribution to the dialogue. It is my judgment that the best essays are in the first half of the volume. The essays by Berthold, Lefèvre and Homans are concerned primarily with methodological matters; the Homans article is particularly valuable because it contains an interpretive analysis of the major methodological options available in the field. The essays by Elhard and Browning both investigate the relation between faith and identity, and they are among the most stimulating articles that I have read for a long time. This is not a beginner’s book (it assumes a background in both psychology
To gain some perspective in this review we move out of the Hiltnerian school for a brief look at Thomas Oden's new book, *The Structure of Awareness*. Oden has already established his reputation in the psychology-theology dialogue through his oft-quoted books on *Kerygma and Counseling* and *Contemporary Theology and Psychotherapy*. In his latest book Oden provides the kind of preface to the psychology-theology dialogue that Hiltner has provided for pastoral theology. Oden provides exactly what Don Browning calls for when he says that "some kind of ontology of the human is needed if religious symbols are ever to make meaningful contact with other cultural disciplines. An ontology of the human is needed so much to interpret religious and theological symbols, but to serve as common coinage for intelligible discourse between the sciences of man and these religious symbols" (*New Shape*, p. 128).

Oden has provided this kind of framework by using the categories of time and being for a phenomenological and theological analysis of awareness. Although this far transcends the more limited concerns and specific topics of the psychology-theology dialogue, it provides the kind of structure within which such a dialogue can go on most effectively. That much of the inter-disciplinary dialogue results in cross-sterilization rather than cross-fertilization is due at least in part to the lack of a larger framework for discussion within which both partners could feel comfortable. Oden has provided the framework for discourse, even though in the process of the dialogue the framework is likely to be altered and even radically changed.

Oden's thesis is that "the structure of human awareness emerges directly out of man's temporal situation and his relation to being. Both his seven-dimensional human predicament and his sevenfold possibility for authenticity develop as an expression of his sevenfold existential relation to being and time" (p. 19). The categories of past, present and future provide the structure for the awareness of time; the categories of relationship to God, self, neighbor and world provide the structure for the awareness of being. His ontology of human awareness is likely to be subjected to severe criticism, but it is my judgment that the structures of time and being that he perceives in all awareness will prove to be of considerable heuristic value for future studies in the relationship between psychology and theology.

The major portion of Oden's book is devoted to a careful analysis of the structures of guilt, boredom and anxiety in relation to the categories of past, present and future. Oden argues that guilt is rooted in man's awareness of the past, boredom in his awareness of the present, and anxiety in his awareness of the future. Each of these phenomena has a similar dynamic pattern which can be fully discerned only when each is seen in relation to the category of time with which it is associated in the structure of awareness. I find it helpful to think of guilt and anxiety in relation to images of past and future in man's awareness of time.Changes in the structure of awareness are not changes in the structure of reality but changes rather in the way one images the past and the future. To remember is to call into present awareness some past event or relationship which bestows significance upon one's present. Memory seeks to re-image the past deed so that it may impinge meaningfully upon current perceptions and decisions. In a similar way imagination is one's access to the awareness of the future, and anxiety is the awareness of threats to values considered necessary to one's existence.

Oden provides only brief sketches of what he intends by "the sevenfold existential relation to being." He has quite rightly chosen to limit himself in this book to an extensive analysis of the categories of time in relation to the structure of awareness. Nevertheless, the basic ontology of human awareness is there, comprehensive enough to allow a dialogue between theology and any of the man sciences, and I think it offers exciting possibilities for the future.

THOMAS A. DROEGE

**Pastoral Theology in Ecclesiological Perspective**

THREE BOOKS ABOUT THE CHURCH:


The Associate Professor of Historical Theology at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Columbus, Ohio, has done us a valuable service with this piece of work for the Seminar editions. In the forty page essay of introduction on Loehe, Schaaf gives an overview of Loehe's life, development and work, and the setting of the man in the nineteenth-century German church. One can be more appreciative of the "Introduction" when he remembers the paucity of biographical material available on Loehe in English. A good biography in English is much to be desired. Perhaps near the 100th anniversary of Loehe's death (1972) such a biography can be made available to the reading public. It ought to be followed or accompanied by individual studies on Loehe's development and on the major themes that form the ground and content of his work. Schaaf's own doctoral dissertation at Heidelberg, 1961 (*Wilhelm Loehe's Relation to the American Church: A Study in the History of Lutheran Mission*) is a solid piece of work in this direction. Given this lack of materials, it is, in some instances, a matter of judgment about the selection of items to be included (or excluded) in the introductory essay.

Nevertheless, one could wish that some themes had received different emphasis and that other themes had been treated. The Kirchenlaminitz period is handled well in terms of the conflict in which Loehe was caught by the groundless charges against...
him. Schaaf is to be commended for this treatment. But even more significant in the Kirchenlamitz time is the foundation that is laid for the shape of Loehe's future ministry. Schaaf's treatment of these themes must be viewed in the light of the space allotted, but the Kirchenlamitz period was such as to make it worthy of broader exposition.

Mention is properly made of Loehe's home life in Fuert. But one wishes there were treatment of Loehe's relation to the Jews, in his childhood (during which time one citizen in five of Fuert was Jewish), during the University years at Erlangen and later as a pastor. This association and work with Jews played a large role in Loehe's own life and growth, in the shape of his missionary and pastoral concern, and in the formation of his doctrine of the church (with the conversion of the Jews as an eschatological sign to the church), his understanding of the Scarcrament of the Altar and the Liturgy. One can hardly imagine, for example, his series of sermons from the year 1861 (as yet unpublished) on the Sacrament of the Altar without Loehe's having had first-hand contact with Jews and their Passover celebrations.

Finally, the "Introduction" could have been enhanced, had it included a description of the relation between Loehe's doctrine of the church and his pastoral theology. Naturally, the works on pastoral theology are mentioned by Schaaf; but the value of this Loehe volume for our times would be seen more readily if greater attention had been paid to the remarks of Kurt Schadewitz, furnishing a starting point for analysis. Loehe had thought at one time to publish Three Books About the Church as the first part of his pastoral theology. In fact, at the mission house at Neudenettelsau, Loehe's written preparation for instruction in pastoral theology began with headings on the church and her members. The point is not to criticise Schaaf's work but to suggest that the serviceability to the present need for reform in pastoral care could better be served by this work of Loehe by grounding the theology of pastoral care in ecclesiology, as Loehe did. This is especially true in the light of the present orientation toward the non-ecclesial, stimulated by Tillich's theology and by the counseling derived from that theology and from the clinical disciplines.

An Ecclesiologically Oriented Theology

To this reviewer's knowledge, only two thinkers and writers on pastoral theology in the nineteenth century worked so systematically with such an ecclesiologically oriented pastoral theology (including the care of the individual) as did Loehe and Schleiermacher. Given the fundamental difference in their understanding of the Gospel and faith, of the church and the Christian life (Loehe's biblical, confessional and sacramental posture as contrasted to Schleiermacher's experiential, vol-
The Queen in Beggar’s Clothes

Most splendid of all is the display of Loehne’s gifts and passion in the description of the Word and Sacraments as the narrow way of true pastoral care. His great virtue of simplicity as preacher and teacher is surpassed only by his wisdom in pastoral care and his awareness of the liturgical church as the praying church. Every pastor would be more than amply repaid the price of the book by the small section on pastoral care—with its center in private confession and absolution—and its framework in the Catechism, preaching and liturgical celebration. Although the material is brief, its wealth is vast. And in the awareness of liturgical prayer, Loehne is eloquent about the riches of the ancient liturgies, about new liturgies and about the relation of liturgy to pure teaching and prayerful life. The church, he says, is a queen, even if she is dressed in beggar’s clothes. That, of course, does not make it necessary to dress her in beggar’s rags!

At the head of the list of things to be said about the translation must stand a note of sympathetic support for any one who undertakes to translate Loehne’s fine, poetic nineteenth century German. It is no easy matter to put him into English in the manner in which he can express himself in German. As a result, there are moving phrases, stirring characterizations of the church which become prosaic in English Compare, for instance, footnote 5.

Specifically, the English reader is likely to be misled by the translation of the opening heading of Book I. “Wir sind zur Gemeinschaft und zur Kirche geboren,” is rendered “We are born into Fellowship and into the church” (p. 47). It would be better translated, “We are born for fellowship and for the church,” and this translation would more accurately express Loehne’s thought. Furthermore, it is aggravating and unnecessary to have the oft-repeated German “Ja” always translated as “Yes.” “Indeed,” “truly,” “verily,” are all possible (and preferable) variations. And why, in the teeth of the sense of the sentence—and surely against the grain of such images of the church as ‘mother’ and ‘bride of Christ’—is the neuner pronoun used for church? We get combinations like, “When its (i.e. church) children lost their faith. . . now it is no easy task for the mother to bring the old children back . . .” (p. 177); and “It (i.e. the church) remains a queen, even if dressed in beggar’s rags” (p. 178).

The editorial notes are, in general helpful. Since Cyprian played such an important part in the formation of some of Loehne’s understanding of the church and grounds against the Roman claims of supremacy, would not a note on Cyprian have been helpful and consistent (pp. 133 or 134)?

Footnotes
2. The editor of Gesammelte Werke, Volume III, part 2, Klaus Ganzert is general editor for the new critical edition. Schadewitz’ remarks are II/2, p. 687.
4. For comments on this translation, which differs from Schoof, see below in the text.
5. Loehne’s sentence, “Die Kirche ist der schoeneste Liebesgabenk als Herrn . . .” (GW V/1, 90) is translated by Schoof, “The church is the Lord’s loveliest creation of love.” This sentence is one which illustrates the difficulty of making Loehne talk English in the way he talks German.

KENNETH F. KORBY

Worth Noting

Gunn’s Poems and Walther’s Letters


Touch, Thom Gunn’s fifth book of poetry, contains seventeen poems simple in diction, clean in image, disciplined in form, and difficult. Beginning with “The Goddess,” a poem announcing the relentless force of Proserpina timelessly renewing herself, and ending with “Back to Life,” a poem capturing momentarily the common bond of humanity, Touch is an ironic celebration of renewal. I say “ironic” because Gunn’s melancholic tone and his use of paradox tug away from his statement.

In “The Goddess,” for instance, a tension is created between the soft, positive images describing Proserpina’s coming and the harsh if not cynical images demonstrating her arrival. The goddess, “naked and searching/as a wind . . . will allow/no hindrance, none, and bursts up”; yet it is sinewy thyme reeking in the sunlight, rats breeding, breeding, in their nests; and the soldier by a park bench with his greatcoat collar up, waiting all evening for a woman, any woman her dress tight across her ass as bark in moonlight

who stay her to abundance. In “Back to Life,” the luminous transparency of leaves touching lamps in a little park become metaphors of sharing.

As if the light revealed us all Sustained in delicate difference Yet firmly growing from a single branch.

Yet, from a poetically ironic stance, such telling glimpses become

At most, a recollection In the mind only—over a rainswept park Held to by mere conviction In cold and misery when the clock strikes one.

Throughout Touch one responds to the expression of counter-movements rubbing against each other in haunting, subdued discords. Contrasting images of stillness/movement, light/darkness, action/thought, edge/edgelessness evoke in all their ambiguity the counter-currents of the human situation. In the dramatic monologue “Confessions of the Life Artist,” each of the ten lyrics turns upon itself in subtle paradox. Men’s middle state embodies both the form of the rocks and the formlessness of the “disorderd/rhythms of the sea.” man’s position is to “control what you can. and/used what you cannot;” it knows “to give away to all passions . . . is merely whoring . . . but to give way to none/is to be a whore-master.” In “The Vigil of Corpus Christi” it is ironically “the invasion of himself at last/belyly by himself” that awakens the soldier to a new fulness. In “Kiss at Bayreuth,” a cyclone, with its external turbulence and its internal calm, becomes an analogy for two lovers who momentarily escape the weight of self-consciousness. Like the cyclone, they also may be said to both move and be still, move in awareness and be still, to, for one moment and only that moment, not think of themselves.

In “Misanthropos,” a long poem of seventeen lyrics, the theme of ironic renewal is maintained. It is the story of what seems to be the sole survivor of some “monstrous battle,” disillusioned, avoiding the “mournous rhythm/of the sea,” striving to live “without thought or feeling,” “This final man upon a final hill,” in learning like the birds “to keep movement/on the undipped wing of the present,” suppresses consciousness until “Nothing moves at the edges of the mind.” The earth, however, renews herself—“Green overtaking green. it’s/endless.” “The upper slopes are busy with the cricket”—and we are not surprised when suddenly a group of people journey towards him. His first reaction is to shrink, to sicken. Trying to remain unmoved, he notices one of the approaching men is hurt. “The watcher is disturbed, not knowing why.” Involuntarily, if not instinc-

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tively, the “final man upon a final hill” asserts:

And he performs an action next so unconsidered that he is perplexed. Even in performing it, by what it means—

He stops, bewildered by his force, and then Lifts up the other to his feet again.

In a rather unsentimental humanism, the “last man” becomes the “first man,” and the cycle is complete.

In “Touch,” the title poem, Gunn tenderly brings us to the threshold of a larger reality, a “dark/close realm where we/walk with everyone.” It is a reality that touches man, but not one, paradoxically, that man touches. Using a metaphor of sleep, Gunn writes:

It is hard to locate. What is more, the place is not found but seeps from our touch in continuous creation...

This ironic perspective, that we may be touched by that “dark/close realm” and yet not touch it, is the unifying statement central to Touch. In this challenging and, I feel, worthy book, Gunn’s best poems, enduring and sensitively written, enable one to say he has indeed touched the untouchable.

JOHN N. SERIO


The kind of work we have come to expect from the Graduate Professor of Historical Theology in the School for Graduate Studies at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, is represented in this selection of letters. The work is careful, thoughtful and balanced.

The format of the Seminar editions calls for an introductory essay on the life, work and setting of the man or the document. Meyer’s essay on Walther is marked by its balance: “In the perspective of history we learn that he (Walther) was less great than some of his uncritical followers regarded him and more appreciated than some of his detractors would allow” (p. 2). Thus, Meyer shows cautious restraint in some items, without debunking; and he shows sensitivity to the solid and enduring work of Walther, without boundless adoration. In a short compass. Meyer’s presentation on what is considered Walther’s greatest work, The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel (pp. 18-9) illustrates the latter point.

This is a selection of letters. In this work, therefore, we see Walther the man. Such collections are very helpful for our understanding of the man, the problems and the times. We can see Walther himself, with all fervor piety, opening up the anguish and uncertainty felt by many of the early Missourians. We get a glimpse of Walther, the lover and husband in two letters, one a letter of proposal and the other a letter to his children (daughter and son-in-law) describing the death of Walther’s wife. Thus, in these two letters, forty-four years apart, we can watch Walther in the full orbit of joy and sorrow. We can see Walther the churchman. Walther the pastoral theologian, Walther the editor and author, engaged in the wide variety of activities of his busy and fruitful life.

Meyer’s editorial notes are again the mark of his steady and solid craftsmanship. The book is to be commended. May its tribe increase, for we need many more such windows into the men and issues of confessional Lutheranism in its early years.

KENNETH F. KORBY

On Second Thought

By ROBERT J. HOYER

It was a beautiful spring Sunday morning. The air was fresh and the grass was wet with dew. I was walking across the lawn of Eden Seminary on my way to Sunday School. I thought: Why am I doing this? Where am I going and what do I hope to accomplish? What purpose is there is rising early and getting my feet wet? The damp grass itself provided the answer: I was looking for a dry fleece to prove the presence and the power of my God.

I found it. Not literally, of course. The figurative is always on a deeper level of meaning than the literal. My dry fleece was the Sunday School kids—as strong an assurance of the reality and the presence of God as any man could want. They are facing a life of stress with very few certainties. They know what they will be tested and found wanting. They are determined to find their way through it all. They are highly critical of the church and its pretenses. They must have a God and they love their Lord Jesus Christ. They will that His word prevail in the markets and arenas of the world, that His Kingdom come.

It is ridiculous of me to build such hope on so little. There are only thirty of them, and they are ordinary kids. But then Gideon and his army verge on the laughable, too. Our little Sunday School is almost as funny as his three hundred torches blazing in the night. We are as much a joke as his three hundred trumpets, blatantly affirming that we are stronger than we seem to be. I do not underestimate the force of one single confession of faith. It can stampede a thousand camels, or evaporate a thousand misty doubts.

The torch and the trumpet are the honest confession of an honestly felt faith. Thank God for the young of the church. They are not parroting the words our fathers taught us. They are not interested in words. They are not catering to our categories, to pass our paper tests. They are watching us to know the measure of the faith that we confess, to know what we can follow. They know how dark the night is, far better than we who still live in the twilight of the gods, the fading aura of the influential church. They have seen the host of the Midianites camping in our fields, encroaching on our narthex and our nave. They understand their kinship with the enemy, and the plan of the battle in which they are engaged. They have a torch and a trumpet and a God.

In them I have my dry fleece on a dew-damp ground. I know that God is there.
It is ironic that in the face of so much discussion about what the “silent majority” wants in the United States, the United States should so clearly be placed in a minority position in international politics in the United Nations. The twenty-fourth session of the General Assembly in the year just completed may carry some useful lessons on the frustration and alienation inherent in being a minority.

Until 1960, the General Assembly of the United Nations proved to be a fairly hospitable place for the conduct of American foreign policy. The combination of the United States, most of Latin America and Western Europe, and some friends in the Far East and the Pacific comprised the two-thirds majority needed to pass resolutions on “important questions.” It was such a majority that supported the United States in Korea. With the addition of sixteen new members in 1955, including four from Eastern Europe and six from the Afro-Asian group, the two-thirds support became a trickier maneuver. However, it was still possible through the late 1950's to muster votes against Communist actions in Hungary and Tibet. In 1960, seventeen new members were admitted, sixteen of whom were African. In 1961, three more African nations and the People's Republic of Mongolia were admitted.

On almost all East-West, or cold war issues the United States still could find majority support, but not the two-thirds required for substantive resolutions. The United States could still find comfort, if only symbolic, in this new situation. For instance, a majority is all that is required to block the admission of the People's Republic of China. The success of the United States in maintaining this majority is rated to the bellicosity of the Soviet Union and China. Some votes from the Afro-Asian bloc are required for the majority and threatening behavior by the Soviet bloc is required to convince those of neutralist inclinations to take an anti-Soviet stand.

Because of the predominance of East-West issues, it was not apparent until 1964 that the United States was not able to muster even a simple majority. It was in this year, the year of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, that the axis of conflict in the General Assembly swung from East-West to North-South. The Latin Americans now find much in common with the Afro-Asian group, giving the developing states a majority against the United States and its allies, regardless of which side the Soviet bloc takes.

It must be very frustrating for those who urged the United States to get out of the United Nations, because of that organization's domination by Communists, to find the Soviet Union now in the minority with the United States on some questions. One clear set-back that these two great powers suffered in 1969 was a 62-28 (with 28 abstentions) vote calling a halt to the exploitation of the seabed outside of territorial waters. The developing nations were responsible for the victory. A few weeks earlier in the session, the same states had rebuffed the Soviet and American efforts at the strategic arms limitation talks by calling for an immediate freeze in the arms race. This vote was 51 to 0. The United States and the Soviet Union could only abstain in this situation.

The United States was even in a lonelier position on December 10, 1969, when the General Assembly rejected the position of this country on what was to be included in a chemical warfare ban which President Nixon had announced our support of earlier. The United States took the position that tear gas and defoliants being used in Viet Nam were not to be included in the ban. This position was defeated 80 to 3 (36 abstentions). Voting with the United States were Australia and Portugal.

The official response of the United States to these setbacks do not set the kind of example which the Nixon Administration has been trying to urge on our domestic minorities like student protesters and ghetto blacks. Charles W. Yost, the Permanent Representative of the United States to the United Nations, said that each nation had a right to disavow the decisions of the General Assembly when it disagreed with them. Carl E. Bartch, a press officer in the State Department said in regard to the vote on the chemical warfare ban, that the vote “does not in our view represent international consensus on the main issues raised by the resolution,” and “we maintain that the United Nations General Assembly is not the proper forum to decide such disputed questions of international law.”

On a more general level, one should probably call attention to the general downgrading of American representation at the United Nations since our position has been less certain. In the 1950's and the early 1960's some of the most illustrious political figures in American politics served at the United Nations, such as Arthur Goldberg, Adlai Stevenson and Henry Cabot Lodge. Regardless of what his qualifications for the position are, Mr. Yost does not command this kind of attention. One wonders whether Shirley Temple Black is meant to fill this void.

It is to be granted that there is considerable frustration in being in the minority. This represents the real test of commitment to equalitarian democracy. Or is the only valid majority rule a “silent” one?
The Sublimation of the Secular

WILLIAM F. EIFRIG, JR.

The guest columnist this month carries impressive credentials. Teacher, musicologist, performer, composer, and researcher—Newman Powell has managed to wear these several hats during his tenure at Valparaiso University. Achieving the seemingly impossible, he also devotes time to the executive functions of the Lutheran Society for Worship, Music, and the Arts and the Valparaiso Church Music Seminar.

BY NEWMAN W. POWELL

Over the centuries the Church has had to guard against the inroads of secularism. While it must be involved in the world and therefore concerned with secular things, ideas, and institutions, it cannot afford to become of the world and thereby lose its character, its distinctiveness, or it will cease to be the Church and either become simply another worldly institution or pass out of existence altogether for lack of anything significant to contribute.

How to draw the distinction between “in the world” and “of the world” is not, however, always an easy problem to solve. Must the Church avoid all secular encroachments? How is this even possible and still be “in the world”? Can it, then, on the other hand, open its arms to any and all secular influences, adopt secular ways, secular art, secular music, on the grounds that these are “expressions of our modern age,” or “a means of getting the people into the Church”?

Can jazz be used in the Church on the grounds that it is “the musical language of our time”? Can we “transplant” the music from the campfire, from the tavern, from the burlesque show into the Church? Even if we insist that the music must be of high artistic standard, can we “transplant” the music from, say, an opera or a symphony into the Church on the grounds that there is no “sacred” and “secular” music, only “good” and “bad”? Or, to put it another way, does a composer operate indifferently whether he is writing music for the Church or for a “musical” or for an opera or for a cabaret orchestra?

It would be difficult, I believe, to find anyone that would answer this last question in the affirmative. Then it must also be true that merely to “transplant” music from a secular source—whether it be the opera or the cabaret—would be artistically and theologically unsuitable. It would result in the sort of secularization that could lead to the loss of identity and distinctiveness in the Church.

But does this mean that church music has to avoid all secular influences, has to distinguish between secular and religious sources for ideas and inspiration, or has to restrict itself to previously established and “acceptable” musical styles? The history of music answers this question with a resounding “no.”

Bach employed dance rhythms like the menuet, the gavotte, and the passepied, in his church music. The dramatic recitative of early opera was quickly adopted by church composers and used effectively in the oratorio and in church cantatas. Some of the main components of jazz—syncopation, ostinato rhythms, improvisation—were already in use in church music for centuries before jazz was invented. To allow the church composer anything but a completely free rein in choosing his materials would be to stultify church music, to make it stagnant.

What, then, is the solution to this apparent dilemma between a secularization that can lead to the disintegration of the Church and the restrictions that lead to stagnation? I propose the these that the solution lies in a process that might be called “sublimation.” Any secular element, even a whole style with secular associations (e.g., the monodic recitative of the early seventeenth century or the jazz styles of the twentieth century) might be successfully and appropriately introduced into church music if the secular elements undergo a process of sublimation.

This process of sublimation is radically different from the mere “transplantation” of secular elements or styles. It is a process, however, that cannot be defined precisely. It is something that takes place in the mind of the composer writing music for the church, in that he must be totally aware of the sacred purpose his music is to fulfill. If this condition is met in its fullest implications—theologically, liturgically, artistically—and with the highest personal integrity, neither the composer nor anyone in the Church need fear the use of secular elements or secular styles in church music. We need only insist that the church-music composer be not only a good composer, but that he also know the function that his music is intended to fulfill.

It can readily be seen how this process of sublimation cannot possibly take place when music is merely “transplanted” from a secular milieu into the Church. It should also be clear that even a good composer can fail to write good church music if he is not thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the church for which he is writing. Whether or not secular elements used in church music have been adequately “sublimated” is hardly capable of formal analysis; it can only be felt or sensed intuitively.

We must rely on the competence, integrity, and intuition of the church-music composer and then grant him full freedom in his choice of materials without fear of harmful secularization. Merely transplanting secular music into the Church or the toleration of either musical or ideological incompetence in the church-music composer should be rigorously avoided.
Hope, Humor, Horror, and Homocide

By WALTER SORELL

Gloria and Esperanza by Julie Bovasso was seen at the ANTA Theatre.

It has all the bounce and promises of youth, but also its carelessness in structure. It is a play with a raging passion which is hidden behind a nonchalant attitude. Its theatrical power is due to its composite of extremes in form and content. It is staged like a lampooned American with music and deceptive cabaret-lightness while intimating throughout that it was written as a late twentieth-century Peer Gynt.

Basically, it is a morality play in which the good in man is pitted against the evil in the same man. It is the story of a man in search of himself, and this man of course is a young poet pitted against the evil realities of the world. The poet starts this modernized Peer Gynesian journey with the endlessly repeated sentence, “In a few days we are all going to be mowed down like rats.” Accompanied by a sound track of air raids, he finds his way to a psychiatrist’s office, a madhouse, and a TV studio. In surrealist allegory we are shown the inanities of our existence and the terror of being mowed down like rats at a moment’s notice.

The play, staged by the author who plays the part of Gloria, has the atmosphere of a variety show. There is a wonderful French midget act, a male striptease by an impersonator of St. Teresa (a scene as hilarious as it is vicious and malicious) and various skits. One skit in the room of a psychiatrist is the highlight of the show. Naturally, as we might expect, the psychiatrist turns into the madman. This scene is extremely skillfully written and also well played by Kevin O’Connor as the poet and Leonard Hicks as the psychiatrist. Although the idea of the sick psychiatrist is not new, there is a great deal of genuine humor of that gruesome, sardonic flavor in it which keeps you laughing while you are frightened and almost convinced that all that madness is only too real and next door.

Otherwise, Julie Bovasso specializes in a noncommittal, deadpan humor of ingratiating nonchalance. In the middle of a slow-going dialogue, the poet turns to Gloria—who is sitting on an old-fashioned iron bed—with the words, “Let me rape you!” Without moving and hardly moving her lips she replies to this outbreak of faked passion: “Not now, please.” And sitting on the same bed she says with the same facetious calm to the young poet’s Cassandra cry that we are all going to be mowed down like rats: “God is not going to be mowed down like a rat.”

The hero’s name is Esperanza which means hope.

The White House Murder Case, a satiric melodrama, by Jules Feiffer was premiered at the Circle in the Square. To this very day I do not know whether it is a cabaret skit or a walking cartoon, but I am inclined to think it is a cabaret idea executed in the manner of a cartoon.

The trouble with Jules Feiffer seems to be that he takes convictions more seriously than his craft. Since our time is out to destroy all form in art, the theatre may not evade that plague. Julie Bovasso and Jules Feiffer further formlessness even though the stage cries out for some kind of structure. Mr. Feiffer is not so much interested in furthering dramatically his ideas as in lashing out in fury and with wit. This he does with skill. His indictment of the stupidity and callousness of our politicians in the highest office is frightening in the probability, if not in the very truth, of his charges. The cabinet meeting at the White House in which mature, or rather adult, children play at war and how to keep the truth from the American people is burlesque satire. But the daily reality of our life makes it questionable whether the burlesque isn’t so burlesque after all and the satire isn’t really a documentary only.

The play takes place six weeks before an election “several Presidential elections hence.” Our country is involved in one of those interventionist wars with Brazil. Accidentally a new gas is released and, due to adverse winds, kills a few hundred American soldiers. Others are gradually losing limb after limb, while the commanding general is crippled. As the caricature of a maimed soldier he participates in the White House debates.

When the President asks his wife for her moral support and astute advice, her reply is: “I want a divorce.” She has joined the peace movement. While she is about to give secret information to The New York Times, she is murdered with a picket sign bearing the message: “Make Love, Not War.” The second part of the play is a clownish spoof on how the White House would solve a mystery story.

The political cartoon strips illustrating the satiric goings-on in the White House are interrupted every eight or ten minutes by Mr. Feiffer’s “commercials” about the war horrors. Two soldiers, effected by the gas, disintegrate in a Beckettlike manner from scene to scene. But these parallel actions of anti-war propaganda and burlesque White House satire do not go well together. As often happens when viewing TV, I thought that Mr. Feiffer’s commercials had the better lines and bite.
The Visual Arts

Lichtenstein’s American Icons

RICHARD H. W. BRAUER

I am for an art that embroils itself with the everyday crap and still comes out on top.

Claes Oldenburg

The mass produced is more telling than the unique.

Mario Amaya


Claes Oldenburg

The creation and appreciation of high art is usually surrounded by a cultural elite of artists, dealers, collectors, critics, and humanists. This elite is often caught up in its own world of aesthetic issues – issues remote from everyday life and of little direct consequence to the vast majority of people. Such a separation of art and life is of increasing concern to many artists. In the sixties, the Pop artist tried to bring the two together. Using the art techniques employed in mass communications media he introduced to painting and sculpture such aesthetically outrageous subjects as mass produced foods, standardized household objects, newspaper photographs, and comic strips. Before it passed, Pop art provoked a new awareness of the style of American life. The art of Roy Lichtenstein is a case in point.

It was just lately that I realized the ambivalences and the bright beauties sometimes achieved in the Pop paintings of Roy Lichtenstein. A retrospective exhibition of his work in Chicago last winter enabled me to see a full range of his major paintings. The works were from the years 1961-1969, and the paintings reproduced here and on the cover are fairly representative.

At first glance, the reproductions of the early cartoon paintings must look like nothing more than copies from panels in hard-boiled, aesthetically zero, teen-age comic books. However, seen six feet long or eight feet tall, as painted by Lichtenstein, they take on unexpected force. The super close-ups create very tight positive-negative patterns. Staccato repetitions are established by the fingers, gun handle, and bullets in Fastest Gun (page 2). The curved, thick and thin lines make big baroque swirls in Girl (front cover). Explosive diagonals abound in O.K. Hot Shot (this page). Areas of mechanical dot pattern and of flat, full-strength commercial red, blue, and yellow are almost always locked into place with hard, black outlines. All this relates the viewer intimately to unabashed stereotypes of deadly American male aggressiveness (Or is VOOMP! harmless high spirits?) and of the “sharp” (brittle?) and sadly passive (vacuous?) American female teenager.

Though reducing all his subjects to popular stereotype, Lichtenstein achieves elegance and clarity in those paintings in which the subject is given one simple symmetrical shape and placed in the center of the canvas against a neutral background. Also, for sheer beauty, one must see his recent unfocused, all-over, pattern paintings, such as those of Monet’s Impressionist painting of the Rouen cathedral (back cover). In these, the expanded dot pattern and interplay of colors create a handsome, mechanical radiance, reminding one critic of ultraviolet light. Surprisingly, both the centered image and the all-over, no-focus compositions project some of the qualities of icons. For, in a religious icon the form of the deity is shaped into a somewhat idealized, geometrized unit and placed into a position of changelessness in the center of a neutral, often golden background.

Lichtenstein’s work makes us see modern America through some of its crassest public cliches and cheapest illustration and mechanical printing systems. Surprisingly, these drastic, impersonal filters reveal in their own way, a broad world. Simplistic feelings, materialistic conventions and more are revealed to be sure, but unexpectedly, shining through are also elements of strength and new beauty. However, unlike religious images, these summary views of a culture are not mysteriously numinous. As Nicholas Calas said, these are icons not for prayer, but for companionship.

Roy Lichtenstein, O.K. HOT SHOT, 1963. 80 x 68”. oil and magna on canvas.
Roy Lichtenstein, TEMPLE II, 1965. 80 x 68”, oil and magna on canvas.


April 1970
Consider the fat man. If he doesn't lose weight, then the strain on his heart will lead him to an early grave. But if, on the other hand, he goes on a diet, he will meet the same fate. Why? Because he will be poisoned to death. By what? By DDT. DDT has an affinity for fat cells in the body. DDT finds the fat cells, locates there, and begins to plan for a happy old age. The fat man, hoping to get rid of the fat cells in his body, sets about planning their destruction. He wants to burn them up. So he diets. And that releases the DDT into his system. And the DDT poisons him. So he is led to an early grave.

This problem was posed to me recently by a fat friend who has lately become concerned about the problem of our ecology. She is fat. She is smart. She knows what's happening in the world. And she's caught in a dilemma. If she doesn't lose weight, she's ugly but unpoisoned. If she loses weight, she's thin but contaminated. So what does she do?

I tell you about the crunch that has come to one person. But there are more people for whom the problem of ecology has become an issue. Indeed, the problem of ecology, our ecology, has become the issue of the moment, the Topic of Discussion. The media are polluted with articles on pollution, cluttered with pictures of garbage, and the message is coming through.

The more one learns about the problems of our environment the more one is tempted, like my fat friend, to think that the ecosystem is already so fouled up that there is nothing we can do about it. It's just a matter of time before the consequences of our past sins bring about our own destruction. All we have to do is wait. Indeed, there are ecologists who have said as much. But this sort of fatalism is, at the very least, premature. No doubt the damage already done to our environment is immense, and growing apace. No doubt either that the ecosystem has already sustained irretrievable losses and experienced irreversible damage in certain of its aspects. But it does not immediately follow from these sad facts that all is lost. For much remains. If all were lost, then it would be senseless to try to do anything about what's still left, and I think no one knows enough about our ecology reasonably to claim that it's now senseless to make any efforts to change our consumption and pollution practices. It follows that fatalism about our ecosystem is, at least for the present, unreasonable.

Yet it is not difficult to see why some, like my fat friend, are fatalistic about the growing deterioration of our environment. This is because the ecosystem is so complex and gigantic that no one really knows what the implications are for every part of the system when one part of it is significantly affected. This fact raises the specter of shockingly grim discoveries yet to be made concerning things that mave happened to the ecosystem years ago. The news already in is indeed alarming; the news yet to come will probably be more awful still. So why not give up now, and spend our remaining days gulping lasagne (like my friend) or establishing our peace with the God whose handiwork we have managed to murder?

But the complexity of the ecosystem might be a source of good news as well as bad. There is no reason to believe that we have already learned all that is good to know about our environment, and have left only to discover what's bad (and getting worse) about it. There are, after all, some signs of hope. Not the least of these is that so many people already know that there's a problem here to attend to—a prerequisite for their solving it. Now, hopefully, they will themselves take action on the problem, and pressure their fellows to do something too. We have no reason to believe that they cannot be successful. (I only wish we had no reason to believe that they will not be successful.)

Fatalism about the ecosystem is the one sure stimulus to inaction about it. It is, therefore, an emotional luxury we cannot afford to indulge in. But if fatalism is inappropriate, so is optimism. The damage already done is indeed immense, and the possible ramifications of this damage for the ecosystem as a whole are indeed frightening to contemplate. So dismissing the problem as something other people can, and will, take care of is just as unreasonable as supposing nothing can or should be done.

Americans have a special responsibility to face this problem squarely and individually, for we are the world's chief polluters and consumers of irreplaceable commodities. And the place to begin taking action is in the home—specifically, the bedroom. Americans must produce fewer children. Every couple capable of producing children shares this responsibility. And while we are limiting the number of polluters and consumers we create, we must attend to the pollution and consumption rate of those who already exist, even if this involved their (i.e., our) driving fewer, or less noxious, cars, returning bottles to stores, and countless other inconveniences. Man's desires are infinite, but we are learning these days just how finite man's resources are. A balance must be struck for the sake of all, even if those most seriously affected were formerly the privileged few. The deprivations ahead are a small price to pay for the right to life, which they will help to secure.
Whatever else our age may lack, it does not lack for problems. From a Christian perspective, we might consider ourselves the generation upon which the ends of the world have come. It sometimes seems that all of the accumulated ills of our fathers and forefathers have been laid on our doorstep with a demand for rectification, not next year or ten years from now but right now.

Given such a range of problems, it is difficult to single any one out as especially urgent. They are all urgent. Our failure to solve any one of them may mean the difference between survival and catastrophe. But from the background of my own professional training and interest I would, if I had to choose one for most immediate attention, choose the problem of overpopulation.

People in my field do not speak of overpopulation as an absolute thing. They prefer to speak of an unsatisfactory man-land ratio or, more properly, an unsatisfactory man-resource ratio. Some of the most heavily populated areas of the world are not overpopulated in terms of the capacity of those areas to maintain human life at a high or reasonably high material level. The two best examples of such areas are the Northeast Corridor of the United States and the North Sea countries of Europe. Even here, of course, it may not be wholly correct to say that the land is adequately supporting the populations that exist there. While they support their people at a high level of material comfort, they show signs of such serious environmental deterioration that the psychic cost is possibly greater than society, in the long run, can continue to pay. We may not go hungry or naked, but we might very well go mad.

The most grievously overpopulated lands are, however, in Asia—particularly in India and in China. Some would add coastal South America. Here hunger and poverty are endemic and the sheer weight of numbers acts as a drag upon every effort to improve the lot of these unfortunate millions. Even the classical Malthusian checks no longer operate to contain the growth of these populations and so the question arises: How are we to contain this rank growth of population before it upsets all of the natural and cultural balances which make life not merely tolerable but possible on this little planet of ours?

Demographers I have read suggest that the optimal population of our world at our present stage of technology would be somewhere in the neighborhood of one billion. The actual population is in excess of three billion, with forecasts that it will reach six billion by the end of this century. So the problem is, as a matter of fact, already out of control. How can we bring it under control?

The obvious answer is, improve our technology (but there may be a limit to what we can do along this line) or reduce our numbers. Reduction of our numbers can be accomplished, so far as I can see, only in one or both of two ways: Kill off the living or prevent the birth of those not yet born. Of the two, the only morally acceptable way, at least to me, is the prevention of births beyond the number required to replenish, at reduced numbers, the present population.

The only two ways to do that are to prevent conception or to terminate it once it has taken place. It is my personal opinion that contraception has become a moral imperative, despite my great respect for the contrary opinion of the Roman Catholic Church. I can not, however, accept the argument that the urgency of the population problem justifies the termination of pregnancies.

The difficulty that I find with abortion is that it terminates life—and that I consider the sole prerogative of the Lord and Giver of Life. I am not impressed by tendentious arguments about when the embryo becomes a human being. From the little that I know about genetics I conclude that at the moment the sperm fertilizes the ovum a new and unique human being comes into existence, not merely in potential but in reality. Subject to correction by scientists who are more learned in this matter than I am, I understand that the fertilized ovum is fully “programmed” for the whole pattern of development which will gradually take place in the womb and after birth. This, I submit, is life. And the taking of life is murder.

I must confess that on the purely humanitarian level I wish that I could conclude otherwise. So many children would, as far as I can see, be better off if they had never been born. Our mushrooming population would incline me toward favoring any remedy, however extreme, so long as it is effective. And abortion can be very effective, as the Japanese experience has demonstrated. But I can find nothing in either traditional morality or the new morality to ease my conscience when the issue is murder. And so I oppose any liberalization of the abortion laws.

April 1970
47 x 33\" oil on canvas.
One of six screen prints after Monet.