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Comment on the Significant News by the Editors

The Great Renunciation

We were no more prepared than were any of our journalistic colleagues for President Johnson's dramatic announcement that he would neither seek nor accept renomination for the Presidency. We still believe that, had he been a candidate, he would have been renominated and, very likely, re-elected. His decision to retire at the end of his present term must therefore be seen not as the cowardly retreat of a beaten man but as a deliberate act of sacrifice for the national good. And although cynics have suggested that he may be hoping for a draft, we can not imagine that any man as conversant with the realities of politics as the President is would risk his political future on such an unlikely possibility. Why not credit the man with meaning what he said at a moment which he must have known will be remembered as one of the most dramatic moments in the political history of our country?

Or, if one must be cynical and pretend to read the President's mind, why not take his announcement as one last desperate bid to win a place in history as the President who sacrificed himself for his country? This interpretation would at least be consistent with what we already know of the President's determination not to be one of our nation's forgotten Presidents.

But our own interpretation rests upon our comment in last month's issue that President Johnson has struck us as a man capable of being shattered into greatness. We have never bought the calumny that he was merely a cheap wheeler-dealer politician. Particularly in recent months, he has come through as a man of many sorrows caught up in a tragedy not of his own making and apparently beyond his capacity to resolve. It may very well have occurred to him that, right or wrong, he had become so much the symbol of our divisions that the last and greatest service he could give to the country which he has served all of his adult lifetime would be to renounce the Presidency and give us the chance to work things out under a new leader.

Confusion in Both Camps

The President's withdrawal from the presidential sweepstakes created a scene of confusion bordering upon panic in both parties. All of a sudden, all bets were off and it was a new horse race.

By the time these lines appear in print, it may be possible to discern some new patterns of power — in which case anything we write at this moment will seem dated, if not absolutely stupid. But bear with us while we do a bit of musing about the situation.

First of all, on the Democratic side it seems on this day after the President's announcement that Senator Kennedy has clearly taken over the pole position for his party's nomination and will be very hard, if not impossible, to stop. President Johnson was, we suspect, quite right when he said that Senator Kennedy has been running for the Presidency ever since 1963 and it is not a particularly happy thought — for us, at least — that what a Kennedy wants a Kennedy gets.

On the Republican side, the picture seems considerably less clear. As of this moment, the odds are still on former Vice-President Nixon. But the strength of the demand for some sort of detente in Vietnam puts Mr. Nixon in a difficult and dangerous position.
Despite his promise to end the war in Vietnam if elected, he is generally considered hawkish in his views. One can not therefore dismiss the possibility that the anti-Nixon forces in the Republican party will take new heart now and coalesce behind some candidate whose appeal they consider more broadly-based. This could mean that Governor Rockefeller would, whether he wishes to or not, be back in the running.

It would be most unfortunate if we ended up in November with a mere battle of personalities. President Johnson, by his withdrawal, has given us the opportunity to engage in a serious and purposeful national debate on the war, on the problem of our cities, on the bitterness between the races, and on all of the other problems which have accumulated to make this a year of crisis and, one would hope, decision. The ambitions of individual men are of no great consequence at this moment. Hair styles and conformations of the nose are irrelevant to the great issues which demand debate and decision.

We have been given an opportunity, almost unique in our history, to lay aside whatever has divided us in the past and to make a deliberate choice of the direction in which we want our country to move in the future. Out of this present confusion there can come, if both parties will take the responsibilities seriously, a clear choice of alternatives. Let’s hope that the parties, like the President, can rise to this great and awesome occasion.

The Kerner Commission’s Report

The Report of the President’s Commission on Civil Disorders tells us nothing that any reasonably well informed citizen could not have known and should not have known about the nature and causes of the riots which have plagued our country in recent years. It is, nevertheless, a significant document for, unlike so many reports by government commissions, it tells it like it is.

It seems to us that the most significant statement in the whole report is one which has not been given wide circulation in comment on the report: that we are not, and never have been, a tolerant or peace-loving society. We have been a violent people, more inclined to settle our differences with the gun than by any appeal to reason or charity. This atmosphere of violence is almost palpable and must be recognized as one of the realities of our past and present before we can come to terms with its manifestations in particular situations.

Our present troubles arise from the fact that this propensity toward violence has now come to a sharp focus in the relations between the two major races of our country. “Race prejudice,” the report asserts, “has shaped our history decisively; it now threatens to affect our future.” Of this future the report warns that “our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white — separate and unequal.” Who is to blame? “White racism is essentially responsible for the explosive mixture which has been accumulating in our cities since the end of World War II.”

We would like to think that these conclusions of the commission would have a sobering and chastening influence on the white majority of our country. But we do not really think that they will. There is still, so far as we can see, no evidence of a general willingness to re-examine the attitudes which have poisoned relations between the races or to appropriate the vast amounts of money that are needed to give the black man an even break in our society. All over the land, the “solution” which has been embraced by the white power structure has been the purchase of machines and weapons of destruction. And so the breach which we desperately need to heal is being widened.

And what of the Church in all this? Despite the heroism of individual Christians and their pastors the great majority of Christians seem to be not only satisfied but positively happy that “eleven o’clock on Sunday morning is the most segregated hour of the week.” Far from pleading the cause of the poor and needy, most church people have either remained silent or have allied themselves with the forces of “lawnorder” (read“repression”). For this, in due time, the institutional church will reap what it has sown. For judgment begins at the house of God and it falls most heavily upon those who knew to do good and did it not.

Reflections on the Report

People who are in a position to know estimate that a really effective attack upon the problems of the black ghetto would cost us annually what we are presently spending on the war in Vietnam. This means something on the order of thirty-five billion dollars. As we figure it, that works out to $175.00 per capita.

That is, admittedly, a lot of money. But if we were to choose to spend it, it would surely prove to be the best investment we have ever made. The impoverished Negro is our country’s potentially most valuable resource, merely in economic terms. Getting him off the relief rolls and placing him into a productive job would have at least two far-reaching economic consequences: it would greatly reduce the amount of money which we are presently spending merely to keep him alive on a minimum level of subsistence and it would bring him into the consumer market at a time when we very much need to find new markets for our expanding production.

But economic considerations, important as they are, are only a part — and surely not the most important part — of the story. Whether we like it or not, the America of the future is going to be increasingly an urban America. We have it within our power to choose whether this urban America will also be
an urbane America — that is, a country in which large numbers of people can live together with a minimum of friction and a maximum of ordinary civility.

The poor, whether they be black or white, have no stake in an urbane society. It is one thing to embrace poverty voluntarily, as many of the greatest saints have done. It is an altogether different thing to be entrapped in poverty. That which a man chooses is, in some sense, satisfying to him and enhances his manhood. That which a man has thrust upon him rides upon his neck like a galling yoke, burdening him down and dehumanizing him.

It is not necessary for a good society that all men be rich. It is necessary only that no man be doomed to poverty. The black man is not asking for country estates and yachts. He is asking — demanding — decent, rat-free housing; a chance to compete fairly in the job market; an opportunity for his children to enjoy the same educational advantages as do the children of white parents; a voice in the making of public policy; and the respect to which he is entitled as a man and a citizen.

These, we would suggest, are reasonable enough demands. They are nothing more than white Americans have always claimed as a matter of right. The white majority can recognize them and have peace, or it can continue to deny them and live in terror of life and property.

Dealing with Criminals

According to the most recent Gallup Poll, 63 per cent of the American people now believe that the courts do not deal harshly enough with criminals. This is an increase of fifteen percentage points over the results of a 1965 poll on the same question and no doubt reflects the nation's growing impatience with what to many of us seem only half-hearted attempts to counteract the alarming rise in the crime rate.

We wonder, though, what people have in mind when they advocate harsher treatment of criminals. If they mean imposing longer sentences, classifying more offenses as capital crimes, and bringing back the whipping post, we doubt that such Draconian methods will have any great effect on the crime rate. Indeed, they could very well have exactly the opposite effect, as most European countries learned more than a century ago.

There is not, we think, any one simple answer to the problem of a rising crime rate. We would, however, venture some suggestions which, taken together and supplemented by others, may help to bring the problem under control:

1. The professionalization of police work. This means, at a minimum, freeing the police from all political pressures and paying them salaries which would attract more high-quality young men.
2. Removing prosecutors and judges from politics and paying them at a level comparable to what a capable criminal lawyer can earn in private practice. In too many cases criminals go free simply because young, inexperienced, and/or incompetent prosecutors are unable to make a solid case against them.
3. Scraping and rebuilding the correctional system. With rare exceptions, our jails and prisons are graduate schools for criminals rather than institutions in which persons convicted of criminal offences can be rehabilitated and sent back as useful members of society.
4. Providing, by law, the machinery for classifying as incorrigibles those prisoners who do not respond to rehabilitative treatment. These incorrigibles have no business running loose, even if they have "served their time."
5. Increasing the number of judges and prosecuting officers so that justice will be both sure and swift. An alarming percentage of crimes is committed by persons already under indictment for another crime.
6. Concentrating on the rehabilitation of the youthful offender. Many judges are understandably reluctant to send young people to jail or even to institutions which are supposed to be correctional institutions for youthful offenders because they have seen these places and have good reason to suspect that the young boy or girl will come out of them more of a menace to society than when they went in.
7. Controlling the possession of fire-arms, especially hand guns. A very large percentage of crimes, particularly murders, is impulsive and unpimediated, committed in the heat of sudden passion. It is not doubt true that no gun-control law could prevent the professional criminal from getting one. But most murders are committed by non-professionals who, in a moment of passion or an episode of insanity, went and fetched the gun out of the closet or the chest of drawers.
8. Bringing the pressure of public opinion to bear upon the media (newspapers, television, radio, the movies) to desensationalize crime and the criminal in the hope that fewer Bonnies and Clydes will see a criminal career as an avenue to immortality.
9. Performing radical surgery to clear up those sources of infection (poverty, bad schools, racial discrimination, lack of job opportunity, and others) from which crime spreads through the body politic.

These proposals obviously involve spending a lot of money. We suspect that most Americans would be willing to pay higher taxes if it would mean that they could once again walk safely through the streets and parks of their big cities and travel safely on their highways. We would at least be interested to see what kind of response Dr. Gallup would get to such specific, and expensive, suggestions as these which we have offered.
Our Lady, Our Mother

For our Roman Catholic brethren, the month of May is the month of Our Lady, whom even many of us Protestants hymn as “higher than the cherubim, more glorious than the seraphim.” (Cf. Lutheran Hymnal, Number 475, stanza 2.) This seems an appropriate time, therefore, to essay a small contribution to Protestant-Roman Catholic understanding.

It is both ironic and tragic that she who deserves to be seen as the highest human symbol of the unity of the Church has become — actually quite recently in the history of the Church — the center of one of the two greatest controversies (the other being that over the powers of the papacy) which remain unresolved within Western Christendom. No Christian, it would seem to us, who calls Christ brother can refuse to honor the “Bearer of the eternal Word” as, in some sense, his mother. We can dismiss as near blasphemous, therefore, that chauvinistic Protestantism which claims to exalt Christ by insulting His Mother. The word still stands, “All generations shall call me blessed.” And there is still the example of the yet-unborn Forerunner leaping in his mother’s womb when Mary came into his parents’ house.

The question can not, therefore, be whether Mary deserves honor beyond all honors which we pay to other mortals. Clearly she does. The line that needs to be drawn is the line between those high honors which are rightly hers and those which must be reserved for God Himself. We are sure that many Roman Catholics would agree that, especially in the past hundred years or so, an excess of Marian devotion has led large numbers of poorly-instructed Roman Catholics into idolatry. They have raised the most blessed to the level of the holy. It is regrettable, and disturbing, that this has happened with what appears to have been not only the approval but the encouragement of men in very high positions of leadership in the Roman Catholic Church.

The unity which we seek is unity in Christ, who is the Truth. Given the fact that the Marian controversy goes too deeply to be resolved by patch-work compromises, it seems essential to us that both parties to the controversy make a serious attempt, so far as that may be possible, to lay aside the prejudices and the fanaticisms of the past and come together as brethren to re-study the whole question of what Mary means to the Church. Somewhere within that question lies hidden, we suspect, a clue or two to the great mystery of the Incarnation. And so even if we should not resolve the controversy, we might profit greatly from having explored it to those depths beyond which it is not permitted man to go.

Dr. Behnken

In the death of Dr. John W. Behnken the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod lost one of the most respected leaders in its history and, more importantly, a great man of God.

Dr. Behnken would not, during his lifetime, have considered any words of praise from The Cresset a compliment. Nor do we wish to be so hypocritical as to say, now that he is dead, anything that we would not have said during the twenty-seven years during which he was president of the Synod.

He and we differed deeply and irreconcilably on many questions which, for both of us, went to the heart of our understanding of the nature of the Church and its proper role in the revolutionary world of the mid-twentieth century. Differing as we did, both of us felt compelled to neutralize, as far as possible, the influence of the other. Neither of us fully succeeded, and the Church remains torn between two opinions. For us — and we suspect for him also — this lack of unity in thought and word was the occasion for profound sorrow.

Having said all that, we must yet say one thing more: that however limited his theology and however provincial his outlook, Dr. Behnken had an unwavering instinct for the evangelical. He was at his best — and his best was often very great — when the issue involved people rather than ideas. He had the power to destroy his opposition. He used power, often and skillfully, to defeat or sidetrack policies which he considered inconsistent with the Gospel or with the best interests of the Church. But he did not have it in him to destroy a man. No matter how hot the dispute, no matter how deeply engaged he was intellectually and emotionally, at the point where lesser men are tempted to clinch victory by destroying those who oppose them, Dr. Behnken’s essentially pastoral nature asserted itself and he refused to strike the death blow. He was a hard fighter, but never a killer.

Next to a happy family and a few good friends, the best human gift that God can give to any man is a worthy adversary. We are grateful to have known Dr. Behnken, both because to know him was to know a real man and because we learned from him, perhaps more than from anyone else, that the fellowship of the Church is not some sort of Rotarian good-fellowship or even the kind of live-and-let-live accommodationism which keeps civil society from falling apart but the kind of oneness that exists within a family — a blood relationship which can not be denied, even though its members may find it difficult to understand each other or to live together without friction.

And so may God grant him eternal rest, and may perpetual light shine upon him.

The Cresset
While standing on a street corner on Fifth Avenue in New York not long ago, it occurred to me that the art and practice of street corner standing has just about disappeared. In covering a number of miles of New York streets that day and the previous day, I cannot recall seeing anyone who was standing on the corner just to be standing there, rather than waiting for someone to show up. And I do not believe I have observed this practice anywhere else in the country in recent years.

Years ago, standing on the corner and its subsidiary practice, people watching, was standard practice whenever the weather permitted. The cold weather corollary was the habit of sitting around the stove in the general store. Many of the practitioners of this art also took up whittling so they would have something to do with their hands while they were waiting for something to happen.

In our town, certain groups of men had favorite corners on which they practiced standing. The preferred nights for gathering were Saturday, when the stores were open and everyone was downtown, and Wednesday, when the weekly band concerts were held in the park.

I never became a part of one of the groups because by the time I was old enough to join, they had already disappeared. But, as a kid, I admired these men for their patience, for their ability to stand so long in one spot, and for what I took at the time to be their vast knowledge on every subject. While the ones who showed up first had the privilege of leaning against the building on the corner, the others were willing to stand for hours without support. As for their knowledge, I could only get bits and pieces by standing nearby and pretending to look in a store window, but they gave the impression of having the answers to all of the world’s problems, though many did not have, apparently, the right information on how to get a job, since quite a few of them were chronically unemployed.

The corner loafers were a bane to the womenfolk, however, and I can understand why. Passing some of these groups with my Mother, I was aware, as certainly was she, that the conversation stopped the moment we came into earshot. Walking past such a group was not unlike walking a gauntlet — not that anything physical was about to happen, but just because of that unnatural silence. When we were ten feet past, the conversation took up again, and one could not help but feel that he was the new object of the conversation. Another reason the women did not like the standers was that some chewed tobacco and walking past was a hazard, not from a direct shot but from accumulated shots on the sidewalk.

It seems to me these men were somewhat unjustly maligned, for they were harmlessly enjoying each other’s company and enjoying people-watching generally. In watching people pass, they were identifying with their community, and most had few other ways of identifying. Who was going in which direction to do what was a matter of major importance to them.

The corner-standing groups were the closest thing to a private club the small towns could offer, a saloon being the only alternative. On their favorite corner, they could gather and relax with their friends and exchange news and gossip with each other and with the farmers who joined them on Saturday nights.

The groups of corner-standers are gone now. Perhaps those today who would have gone for the practice are home watching television, a rather vicarious method of people-watching. It is questionable whether there are enough modern Americans who have the patience to stand for hours in one spot, or who have enough interest in their fellowman to watch him walk by.

I can tell you that standing on a corner in New York is not without difficulties. When I was standing on the corner of Fifth Avenue and 55th Street with a friend a short while ago, we found it was difficult to find room to stand. Either we were in the way of a show window someone wanted to peer into, or we were blocking the entrance to the store, and I dare say we were within an inch of being picked up for loitering. But while standing there we were amply repaid by seeing every variety of person and every shade and design of mod stocking, and heard every language New York can offer. It was a relaxing and rewarding experience, one more people should practice.

A sign that people-watching is not dead was visible across the street. There the University Club windows were filled with elderly men, relaxing in easy chairs and busily engaged in watching all the girls go by. While it may have qualified as people-watching, it certainly lacked the dash of corner-standing.
A Synthesis in the Contemporary Jewish Novel: Edward Lewis Wallant

By WILLIAM V. DAVIS

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There is a tale that a man inspired by God once went out from the creaturely realms into the vast waste. There he wandered till he came to the gates of the mystery. He knocked. From within came the cry: "What do you want here?" He said, "I have proclaimed your praise in the ears of mortals, but they were deaf to me. So I come to you that you yourself may hear me and reply." "Turn back," came the cry from within. "Here is no ear for you. I have sunk my hearing in the deafness of mortals."

— Martin Buber
Between Man and God

His Short Life

Edward Lewis Wallant was born in New Haven, Connecticut on October 19, 1926. He was the only child of a soldier and salesman. His father, who had been gassed in World War I and later developed tuberculosis, died when Wallant was a child; he was reared by his mother and several maiden aunts.

During his adolescence, Wallant held a variety of summer jobs. He may have been a plumber’s assistant, and he was employed in a pharmacy across the street from a Roman Catholic hospital in New Haven. He attended public schools in New Haven, and, after his graduation from high school, studied at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. During World War II, he served in the U.S. Navy as a gunner’s mate on a destroyer. After the war, Wallant went to New York and was employed as an art director at McCann-Erickson; he had hopes of becoming an artist. Although he was a competent artist, he turned, in his late twenties, to writing.

Wallant enrolled in writing courses at The New School for Social Research in New York and studied under Harold Glicksbery and Don M. Wolfe. In his early thirties, Wallant began submitting manuscripts to publishers. Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc. rejected two novels before they accepted and published The Human Season in 1960. Wallant's talent for fiction then matured rapidly and he was to write three more novels before his untimely death two years later, at the age of thirty-six. He saw The Pawnbroker (1961) through the press; but his last two novels, The Tenants of Moonbloom (1963) and The Children at the Gate (1964), were published posthumously. (The Children at the Gate was actually the third novel to be written but the last to be published.)

Much of Wallant’s material for his novels came from his personal experience. Wallant's father-in-law was a plumber, and The Human Season was “Dedicated to Mae Fromkin, who was a plumber’s wife, too.” According to Wallant’s editor, The Human Season is, to a large extent, based on his father-in-law, who had become a widower only a year or so before the novel was written. The Russian material in The Human Season and the concentration camp material in The Pawnbroker, again according to his publisher, are probably based on Wallant’s faculty for intent listening when friends and acquaintances talked of their experiences. “Talent,” wrote Wallant, “is to a large extent awareness, the sensitivity and receptivity to the world of man and nature.” At least part of the material for The Children at the Gate is drawn from his own experiences as a youth. Wallant died of a stroke in December, 1962.

The Search for Self-Realization

Wallant’s novels are almost obsessively similar in theme and statement, in spite of their differences in character and setting. Each of Wallant’s protagonists, Joe Berman, in The Human Season, Sol Nazerman, in The Pawnbroker, Angelo DeMarco, in The Children at the Gate, and Norman Moonbloom, in The Tenants of Moonbloom, is a man cut off and separated from life, who seeks to realize the potentialities of his being in order to survive. Each of these protagonists attempts to realize his being in isolation from the world; each attempts to realize himself as his own only cause. But all four protagonists discover that the search for self-realization is futile outside the sphere of acceptance and identification with their fellow men. Thus each protagonist experiences and explores an initiation, or reinitiation, to the problems and concerns of suffering humanity, and is thereby afforded the possibility of self-realization.

The Wallant themes center around the examination of suffering, the search for faith and identity and love. All of the novels have a similar ritualistic structure. Each depicts a man who, by his own choice, has cut himself off from humanity and who attempts to maintain his solitary survival in the nightmare of an almost sol-
ipsistic world; but who is finally forced, by the impingement of others into the world of his ritualized activity, to risk everything. In this risk of committal each protagonist discovers the fact of feeling, which affords him the possibility of love. Each of Wallant's protagonists thus undergoes a change from death to life. Each novel details a birth process, a coming to life. Wallant's characters are more obsessed with their pasts, especially their childhoods, than they are with their futures. Berman, Sol, Angelo, and Norman all experience symbolic births, or rebirths, before they come alive to the present and before they are able to affirm their individual presents. Regressions in time are not only in evidence in the individual novels, but Wallant seems to have an overriding system in mind. The first three novels deal successively with the coming-to-life of succeedingly younger protagonists—Berman is fifty-nine, Sol forty-five, and Angelo nineteen. Norman is thirty-three. Angelo, through his experiences, reaches, by the end of The Children at the Gate, a point of departure for life in the world (indeed he walks toward the bus station in the last scene of that novel). Norman Moonbloom becomes the Angelo DeMarco arrived at his destination; the apartment houses in The Tenants of Moonbloom become the world in which he is to live.

The initiation to life by way of the examination of youth and birth is doubly substantiated by Wallant. Just as the protagonists' ages successively decrease from Berman's fifty-nine to Angelo's nineteen, so their realizations of the implications Wallant gives to their futures, their triumphs over death, become successively broader, until both of these themes climax in Norman Moonbloom in The Tenants of Moonbloom. (Berman's quest and its resolution affect only himself; the scope and possible effect of Sol's discovery affect not only himself, but Tessie, and Morton; Angelo's cure releases him to the possible range of the entire world; and Norman's rebirth affects the world at large, represented by the tenants.)

Wallant's Theology

Since three of Wallant's major characters are Jews, and since Jewish tradition, history and culture are so significant in all four of Wallant's novels, Wallant's fictional philosophy, or theology, must be considered. Wallant is most properly placed in the humanistic, or moral, tradition.

In twentieth century criticism the so-called "Neo-Humanist" critics have argued that the chief function of criticism lies in examining literature as a criticism of life. Early in this century Paul Elmer More, with his The Shelburne Essays (1904-1935), and Irving Babbitt, with his books Literature and the American College (1908), The New Laskoon (1910), and Rousseau and Romanticism (1919), launched their attacks on naturalism and romanticism and became the earliest advocates of "Neo-Humanism." More and Babbitt emphasized traditional values, defended the past, and called for order and the subjection of action to a kind of "inner light." Soon other critics joined this movement. Men such as Norman Foerster edited numerous works by members of the school in his Humanism in America (1930), as well as made his own contribution, among which his books Towards Standards, A Study of the Critical Movement in American Letters (1928), and American Criticism (1928), were important.

By the late twenties a division arose among the members of the school with respect to whether or not they should acknowledge a connection between religion and morality. Most of the group followed Babbitt and remained religiously uncommitted, but an important segment of the group opposed this position. Paul Elmer More and G.R. Elliot called for the necessity of the dual concerns of religion and morality. But the most important advocate of the necessary connection between morality and religion was T.S. Eliot, who in his essays "The Humanism of Irving Babbitt" (1927), "Second Thoughts on Humanism" (1929), and "Religion and Literature" (1932), criticized Babbitt and Foerster for their belief that morals can be justified without the necessity of religion, specifically Christianity, and set forth the basis for the school of "Christian Humanism." Since the thirties, the movement has chiefly followed Eliot's lead. More recent studies which may be considered representative of the "Christian Humanist" position are Alan Tate's Reactionary Essays on Poetry and Ideas (1936), Edmund Fuller's Man in Modern Fiction, Some Minority Opinions on Contemporary American Writing (1957), Yvor Winters' The Defense of Reason (1947), and F.R. Leavis' New Bearings in English Poetry (1932), The Great Tradition (1948), and The Common Pursuit (1952). Criticisms of the approach which point out its limitations have been made by C.H. Grattan, in his Critique of Humanism (1930), and by Alfred Kazin in his On Native Grounds (1942). Yet the "Christian Humanist" approach to twentieth-century literature remains an important one, for as Helmut Rehder has said:

Literary Criticism, or as it is sometimes called by European scholars, Literary Science never completely detached itself from its origin—Theology. To be sure, there are obvious differences between these two disciplines—differences which are attributable to varying historical situations, educational demands, or spiritual needs; still in purpose and method, critical occupation with literature reflects an affinity with the venerable "Science" which once satisfied one of the oldest human needs—the exposition of belief through the interpretation of the "Word." Reconstruction and preservation of sacred texts, history of doctrine and church, hagiological and iconographical investigations, study of dogmatics and apologetics, of homiletics, hermeneutics, and exegesis—all these have found their counterparts in various branches and techniques of literary history. Aside from the fact that both disciplines are based on a more or less select body of...
literary tradition—which is often sharply distinguished from the vernacular or the apocryphal—both disciplines share a tendency toward the absolute in that they describe, if not prescribe, man's attachment to a transcendent principle and thereby seek to elucidate, in the one case, the nature of God, in the other, the nature of man. Given this critical approach of "Christian Humanism" then, the critic should attempt to evaluate the work, or works, under consideration in light of a simultaneous critique, assuming that some norm of comparison and concern exists between every reader and every writer. Therefore, given this assumption, with what standard can one approach the novels of Edward Lewis Wallant?

The Influence of Buber

Martin Buber provides such a standard. Buber represents both the Jewish context from which Wallant originated and, at the same time, incorporates within his philosophy-theology certain underlying implications which apply equally to Judaism and Christianity, just as Wallant works with Christian myth, basing it on a Jewish context. In other words, Buber as a philosopher-theologian exists in a similar relation to Judaism and Christianity as does Wallant as a novelist. Both are synthesizers. In the background of Buber's theology is the somewhat unusual form of Judaism known as Hasidism, which stresses the sense of the divine presence in all things. For Buber, revelation is encounter. And further, Buber, unlike most other existentialist philosophers, refuses to consider any individual as solitary or isolated, set outside of a community. In developing his philosophy-theology Buber defines what he considers the two primary word combinations, I-Thou and I-It. "The primary word I-Thou establishes the world of relation." The primary word I-It, the word of separation... "From the former a way leads to God, from the latter only one to nothingness." 

Wallant's protagonists all begin as Its, fixated on their pasts; but each of them moves finally into the present of Thouness. Buber speaks of the difference between objects (Its) and beings (Thous) and relates this difference to temporal considerations. "True beings are lived in the present; the life of objects is in the past." Then the one thing that matters is visible, full acceptance of the present. Being or essence is paralleled with love. Love is responsibility of an I for a Thou. In this lies the likeness—impossible in any feeling whatsoever—of all who love, from the smallest to the greatest and from the blessedly protected man, whose life is rounded in that of a loved being, to him who is all his life nailed to the cross of the world, and who ventures to bring himself to the dreadful point—to love all men.

"The extended lines of relations meet in the eternal Thou. Every particular Thou is a glimpse through to the eternal Thou; . . ." "He who truly goes out to meet the world goes out also to God." "And in all the seriousness of truth, hear this: without It man cannot live; but he who lives with It alone is not a man." Wallant's protagonists all make a change in their existences. They move from the separateness of It to the relation of Thou. In this way they are able to affirm life and their own existences. In Buber's theological terminology, such a reversal can be considered as salvation. "But the event that from the side of the world is called reversal is called from God's side salvation."

The name Satan means in Hebrew the hinderer. That is the correct designation for the anti-human in individuals and in the human race. Let us not allow this Satanic element in men to hinder us from realizing man! Let us release speech from its base! Let us dare, despite all, to trust!

The Influence of Tillich

Wallant continually adopts Christian metaphor and symbol and assimilates the Christian tradition in a way which enriches his theme and his characters. If, in considering a philosophical-theological background for what Wallant has done in his novels, we have used Buber as representative of the Jewish tradition (although, to be sure, his analysis of philosophy and theology is not limited to Jewish tradition or terminology) we may consider Paul Tillich as representative of the Christian overtones in Wallant. Both Buber and Tillich stand, with respect to theology, in a situation similar to that of Wallant with respect to literature—all three are synthesizers.

In several places, Tillich speaks specifically of his debt, and the debt of Protestantism in general, to Buber. Tillich's language is different from Buber's, but their concerns are similar. I begin with the strongest influence of Jewish on Protestant theology of which I know; the influence of Martin Buber's philosophy of religion, especially his doctrine of the I-Thou correlation between God and man. Through the great Swiss theologians, Barth and Brunner, Buber's basic idea has become a common good of Protestant theology and it is still increasing in significance. Tillich speaks of the dualities of being and nonbeing, and of essential and existential being. "Philosophical and theological thought... cannot escape making a distinction between essential and existential being." And Tillich goes so far as to say, "A complete discussion of the relation of essence to existence is identical with the entire theological system." For Tillich, existence is estrangement, essence reconciliation. Existence is estrangement and not reconciliation; it is dehumanization and not the expression of es-

The Cresset
Tillich also has his own individual terminology for what is more commonly known, in theological terms, as revelation. "In the Spiritual Presence, man's essential being appears under the conditions of existence, conquering the distortions of existence in the reality of the New Being." 27

The universal significance of Jesus as the Christ, which is expressed in the symbols of subjection to existence and of victory over existence, can also be expressed in the term "salvation..." Further, we have asserted that where there is revelation, there is salvation. Revelation is not information about divine things; it is the ecstatic manifestation of the Ground of Being in events, persons, and things. Such manifestations have shaking, transforming, and healing power. They are saving events in which the power of the New Being is present. 28

Tillich speaks of "... unambiguous self-integration as a characteristic of Eternal Life." 29 Only by such "self-integration," Tillich implies, can a definition of religion have significant meaning.

Religion is the consequences of the estrangement of man from the ground of his being and of his attempts to return to it. This return has taken place in Eternal Life, and God is everything in and to everything. The gap between the secular and the religious is overcome. In Eternal Life there is no religion. 30

Tillich was very much concerned with the way in which theology relates to all of life. He wrote two books on this subject exclusively (Theology of Culture and Kirche und Kultur) and continually attempted to define what he considered culture in the broadest sense of that term. He speaks of "... the principle of 'convergence of the holy and the secular'..." as one of the principles "... determining the relation between religion and culture..." 31 According to Tillich,

... religion cannot express itself even in a meaningful silence without culture, from which it takes all forms of meaningful expression. And... culture loses its depth and inexhaustibility without the ultimacy of the ultimate." 32

Tillich specifically speaks of "The Courage of Despair in Contemporary Art and Literature" in his book The Courage To Be:

... Existentialism, that is the great art, literature, and philosophy of the 20th century, reveal [sic] the courage to face things as they are and to express the anxiety of meaninglessness. 33

For Tillich, modern art and literature are revelatory. Tillich adopts Buber's terminology to his own. He says, "The name of the 'I-Thou' relation is love." 34

So the history of religion is the history of the fall from the "I-Thou" into the "I-It" relation; but it is also the history of revelation and salvation, namely the reversion from the God who has become an "It" to the God who is the "eternal Thou." 35

Religion for Hasidism, Buber, and Tillich,... is consecration of the world... This attitude removes the dualism of a holy and secular sphere... man is called to re-establish the broken unity in himself and in the moment, it is the simple act which is demanded from a special individual in a special situation, it is the acting of the anonymous people, the children and the simple ones. Such acting, if it is done in consecration, prepares the coming of the Kingdom of God. It is messianic action... Significant is the daily life and the union the "I" achieves in the encounter with the "eternal Thou," and the radiation into the world of him who is united in himself. 36

And finally, Tillich says "... the interrelation and conversation, the 'I-Thou' encounter of Judaism and Christianity, has not yet, and never should, come to an end." 37 It is certainly the case, as Robert Clyde Johnson has said, that "The theology of Paul Tillich is the great monument of synthesis in the twentieth century." 38

Wallant, as a novelist, is in much the same situation as Buber and Tillich as theologians. As has been noted, Wallant places his Jewish characters in settings that lead the reader beyond Judaism toward Christianity through his use of Christian metaphor and symbol.

In this century many of America's productive novelists, and many of those who have received high critical recognition, have been members of one of two groups; either they have been Southerners or they have been Jews. This is possibly the case because both of these "groups" still retain a sense of tradition and their writers can either work within that tradition, or they can flout it.

No Peripheral Jews

Edward Lewis Wallant was a Jew, and he stands within the Jewish tradition in American literature. But Wallant retains his own unique position in this tradition. He is sophisticated without being apologetic. Unlike Bellow's Moses Herzog, Augie March, Tommy Wilhelm, Asa Leventhal, Eugene Henderson, or the "dangling
man” Joseph, and unlike Malamud’s Morris Bober or Seymour Levin, Wallant’s characters are not “peripheral Jews.” Neither are Wallant’s characters, like Henry Roth’s David Scearls, or Ludwig Lewisohn’s David Sampson, or Leon Urs’s Ari Ben Canaan, Jews who are proud, even to the extent of flaunting, their Jewishness. Wallant’s Jews are not intellectuals, nor are they sentimentalists, although the didactic and the sentimental do occur at times in his novels. Joe Berman and Sol Nazerman, both immigrants, unsuccessfully attempt to burn the bridges of their pasts and diffuse their history and culture into the American penchant for anonymity. Sammy Kahan and Norman Moonbloom make no attempt to disguise their Jewishness, yet refuse to sentimentalize their plight.

Wallant can be most accurately placed in a position between the two extremes of Jewish writers—who are concerned almost exclusively with Jewish characters and Jewish tradition (such as Ludwig Lewisohn, Budd Schulberg, Meyer Levin, Henry Roth, and Leon Urs), and those who, as Alfred Kazin says, “... saved Jewish writing in America from its innate provincialism.” Sol Liptzin says of Lewisohn, “Lewisohn saw his own experiences not as unique but as typical. He was, in his eyes, a living symbol of Jewish destiny in America.” Earl H. Rovit says, in reference to Nathanael West and J.D. Salinger, that they “…ignore almost entirely the Jewish background, choosing rather to work within an individualized or abstracted framework.” Wallant neither views himself nor his characters as “living symbols of Jewish destiny” nor does he ignore the Jewish framework in his fiction. His characters are living symbols of human destiny placed, by what is seemingly only chance, in a Jewish context, which, in each case, is only the vehicle for a synthetic treatment of Judaism and Christianity. Because of his syntheses of Judaism and Christianity Wallant stands between the apologetic and the “peripheral” Jewish writers yet represents, at once, both of these traditions.

Not only does each of Wallant’s four novels contain this synthetic treatment of Judaism and Christianity, but the four novels, taken as a whole, illustrate his position even more definitively, moving as they do to a wider scope which becomes more and more inclusive in each succeeding novel. If The Human Season is closer to the practice of Lewisohn, Levin, Urs, Schulberg, and Henry Roth, The Tenants of Moonbloom is closer to West, Rosenfeld, Dahlberg, Mailer, Philip Roth, Bellow, and Malamud. The movement of Wallant’s work reaches its climax in The Children at the Gate with Angelo DeMarco’s preparation to go out into the world at the end of that novel. The Children at the Gate sets the scene for the almost eschatological treatment which is to occur in The Tenants of Moonbloom which climaxes with Norman Moonbloom’s “birth cry”: “I'M BORN.” In this interpretation Norman Moonbloom represents a continuation and elaboration of the Angelo DeMarco who was “born” in The Children at the Gate, and the whole of The Tenants of Moonbloom depicts Norman Moonbloom in the sphere of “realized eschatology.”

Also important with respect to the novels of Wallant, and overriding all consideration of treatment, background, and technique, is the fact that in his fiction we have a turn from the basic pessimism of much of the thirties and the post-war period, and a turn to an affirmation of life. Whereas many of the earlier novelists of this century shouted the death of man, his meaninglessness and his extinction, Edward Lewis Wallant proclaims, with laughter, the horror of man’s life; but, and this is the great difference, the Wallant hero comes to an acceptance of life with humor, not a rejection of it. The Wallant hero will live in spite of the improbabilities of existence, because he looks to an essence beyond existence.

Footnotes


2. Wolfe, American Scene, p. 354.

3. Several valuable insights into Wallant as a writer can be gained from a short essay he wrote for Harcourt, Brace and World, shortly before his death. This essay, entitled “The Artist’s Eyewitness,” was written in response to a request that he write something about the effect his reading had upon his writing.

4. Samm Kahan is a Jew but Angelo DeMarco is an agnostic from a Roman Catholic background. This is significant in light of the mixture of Judaism and Christianity which Wallant concerns himself with in his work.


6. Martin Buber has been so influential with respect to Christianity that a chapter on him is included in a recent book entitled Ten Makers of Modern Protestant Thought, edited by George L. Hunt (New York: Association Press, 1958). And Will Herberg, the editor of The Writings of Martin Buber, says, “Buber is easily the outstanding Jewish thinker of today, but the impact of his teaching has been felt far beyond the limits of the Jewish community. Every important Christian theologian or religious philosopher of the past generation shows the signs of his seminal influence.” (New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1956), p. 11.


17. Buber, I and Thou, p. 120.


22. Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, p. 204.


27. Tillich, Systematic Theology, III, p. 269.

There has been much talk lately about a "new theology" in the church. It is a mistake, of course, because there is nothing new being taught today. If what we today call the "conservative position" can be dated back to the solid orthodoxy of the Reformation, what we call the "liberal position" can be traced back many centuries prior to that. The first century of the church heard all that the various preachers are proclaiming today, from the Pentecostals through the Christian Scientists to the Mormons. Solomon already stated quite wisely that there is nothing new under the sun. Even the "God is dead" theology had a longer life and a stronger following back when the apostles first confessed that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Not even the fact that we argue with heat is new. The church has always staggered under the blows of internal strife, when sincere and convinced leaders accused one another of heresy and excommunicated one another. Our most skillful writers of invective could take lessons in polished vitriol from the post-apostolic fathers. There are examples of masterful use of church politics in these first centuries that make our weak plays look puerile. Even long before the church was openly accepted in the Roman empire, some of its leaders were skilled in the art of using public power against their theological opponents.

At first glance, it seems that we have one thing new in the conflict today. Some of those involved in our contemporary struggles have absorbed the scientific viewpoint that truth can be formulated in printed symbols and fixed with an authority all its own, apart from the conviction of those who hold it. Curiously, those who proclaim this science error make their position seem secure by opposing the specific findings of the science whose philosophy they employ.

A second look will prove not even that is new. Science learned its fallacious attitude toward truth from the teachers of the church. Their passionate particularity, coupled with their medieval control of culture, channeled our stream of thought to entertain only one concept of truth. In our day an even older realization that God is larger than the confines of a human brain is bringing us back in the direction of repentant trust in Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Some among us are able to say that they do not know, as Solomon and St. Paul did. Most of us realize that though we cannot all be right, it is possible for us all to be wrong.

"Great, indeed, we confess, is the mystery of our religion: He was manifested in the flesh...preached among the nations, believed on in the world..."
Two urban American Jews, J.D. Salinger and Nathanael West, have written short, dazzlingly articulate novels on Judeo-Christian themes, containing some arresting observations on the nature and mission of Christ.

Besides the books, the lives of the writers of *Miss Lonelyhearts* and *Franny and Zooey* seem to invite comparison and contrast. Leslie A. Fiedler in *Love and Death in the American Novel* (Cleveland, 1962), tells us (of Kafka and West) that, "... Jews seem not only as uncompromisingly secular as they are profoundly religious. They are peculiarly apt at projecting images of numinous power for the unchurched, and are skillful too, at creating myths of urban alienation and terror" (p. 463).

From the scanty biographical material available to us, we will try to draw conclusions about the ways Salinger and West responded to their Jewishness and whether these responses carried into their work. West by his death (in 1941) and Salinger by his firm retreat from society, have both been rendered unavailable for comment; we will select two or three characteristic Judeo-Christian themes that underlie the major novel of each and try to evaluate their power and validity.

**Unmindful of His Jewishness**

In "That David Copperfield Kind of Crap," chapter one of *J.D. Salinger* by Warren French (New York, 1963), we learn that Salinger is the son of Sol Salinger, drifted so far from orthodox Judaism that he imports hams for a living, and a Scotch-Irish mother. He made a satisfactory, but not distinguished, record in a series of schools public and private, notably Valley Forge (Pa.) Military Academy. After a semester here and there around New York City colleges, young Salinger finally enrolled in Whit Burnett's famous short story course at Columbia University. From there, his entrance into the slicks, and ultimately *The New Yorker*, was launched. His greatest success to date has been *Franny and Zooey* which, one critic observed, his fans regard not so much a book as an epiphany.

*Franny and Zooey* shot to, and remained at, first place on the best-seller list for six months after its publication, in 1961. The book chiefly concerns the two youngest of the Glass family, a menage of seven handsome, brilliant children belonging to an Irish mother and a Jewish father, both retired vaudevillians.

One off-stage brother, Waker, is a Roman Catholic priest, while another, Seymour, seems to be a candidate within the family for beatification. The story concerns a religious crisis in the life of Franny which her brother Zooey, masquerading as Buddy and quoting Seymour, finally succeeds in "solving." Let it be added that Buddy is a recluse of an English teacher and Seymour has been dead, by his own hand, these seven years.

Salinger in real life married as "unimpeachably right-looking" a girl as the mythical "Franny," and this marriage to a Gentile has produced two children, Margaret and Matthew. These choices would seem to be those of a man unmindful of his Jewishness.

**Rebellious Against His Jewishness**

Nathanael West, on the other hand, was loud and vehement in negating his heritage. Born in New York City to Jewish parents, he was an indifferent student in his early years and failed even to finish high school. Later, he entered Tufts University on what must have been a forged transcript and soon afterward withdrew because of academic difficulties. Three months later, using the transcript of another Nathan Weinstein, West entered Brown, where he became an able student and an Ivy League fashion plate.

About West's Jewishness, Stanley Edgar Hyman says:

West received little or no education in the Jewish religion. . . and. . . during his years at Brown [he] threw off what he could of his Jewishness, and suffered from the rest. "More than anyone I ever knew," his friend John Sanford later reported, "Pep [West] writhed under the accidental curse of his religion." West had nothing to do with any organized Jewish activity on campus, hung around the snobbish Gentile fraternities, and was intensely anxious to be pledged and intensely bitter that he never was. . . . He referred to Jewish girls as "bagels" and avoided them." (Stanley Edgar Hyman, "Nathanael West," *University of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers*, No. 21, 1962)

Like Salinger, West married a Gentile girl, the celebrated "My Sister Eileen" of Ruth McKenney's sketches and play. Eight years before he married Eileen, West was engaged for a long period to a Roman Catholic girl.

But, as Hyman says, "The great, happy period of West's life, begun in the Spring, did not last out the year." (p. 11) On December 22, 1941, the Wests were both...
killed in an automobile accident in California. His body was shipped to New York and buried in a Jewish cemetery, a kind of nightmare touch which West the writer would probably, wryly, have appreciated.

Other Differences

It is curious that Salinger, the celebrator of sibling devotion, has had nothing public to say about his one sister, Doris, who at last report was a buyer for Bloomingdale's. West, on the other hand, sought outside the family for his literary themes; but he was, in his personal life, "particularly devoted to his father, and so close to his younger sister that in later life he repeatedly said he could never marry less fine a woman than his sister Laura." (Hyman, p. 5)

Salinger, who has much to say about college students and professors (the Glasses are all college folk; one brother, Buddy, is a professor), had little success in academic life, but moved straight into the slicks via Whit Burnett's Columbia course. West, who graduated from Brown University after editing its yearbook and impressing fellow students as a "genius," has never written of academe.

What is their work about?

Reviewer Roger H. Smith, writing in The Saturday Review of Literature in May, 1957, on the occasion of the first publication of West's four novels in one volume, gives as succinct and accurate a description as any of what West's writing is all about: "He wrote of the dreams by which man attempts to live, and of the violence which perverts these dreams." (May 11, 1957, p. 13)

J.D. Salinger's early work, which is mostly short stories and the novel, The Catcher in the Rye, wavered a bit before it found its major chords. These chords are familial love and, emerging strong in the later stories, what Paul Levine calls in J.D. Salinger: The Development of the Misfit Hero, "the hero's "misfitness in the modern world...as a moral problem" (in J.D. Salinger and the Critics, William F. Felcher and James W. Lee, eds., Belmont, California, 1962, p. 107)

Taking both men's work in its totality, it seems fair to say that Salinger has been by far the more popular, while playing to mixed critical reviews; while West has, from the start, pleased critics more than readers (at least in the mass). Alfred Kazin in an article with the somewhat sarcastic title, "J.D. Salinger, Everybody's Favorite," (in J.D. Salinger and the Critics, p. 159) acknowledges that Salinger has "exciting technical mastery of a peculiarly charged and dramatic medium, the American short story," but has grave reservations about the author's detachment and his sympathetic bond with humanity. Maxwell Geismar and Michael Walzer are similarly disenchanted.

As The Nation reported in 1957 in a commentary by William Bittner, Nathanael West's books were a commercial failure. No less a critic than Edmund Wilson actively championed West, but too late, apparently, to save West from the remainder houses. Says James F. Light, probably the ranking West authority, "These strangely powerful books remained largely unread in West's lifetime. . . . Since his death he (has received) increasing attention. Miss Lonelyhearts is now available in a variety of paperback editions" ("Violence, Dreams and Dostoievsky: The Art of Nathanael West," College English, XIX, 208).

Christian Ideas

Miss Lonelyhearts, West's most popular book, and Franny and Zooey, Salinger's most popular, deal with Christian (or Judeo-Christian) ideas within the secular world, or to repeat Fiedler, "images of numinous power for the unchurched." Everyone is very much unchurched in both books, but it is interesting to note that Miss Lonelyhearts, the newspaperman protagonist of one book, is the son of a Baptist preacher, while the thespian Glass children of the other book have one offstage brother who is a Roman Catholic priest. Mysticism, or mystical union with God, forms part of the subject matter of both books.

Are West's and Salinger's characters Jewish?

The uncommonly beautiful Franny and her equally beautiful elder brother, Zooey (Zachary), are members of the incredibly precocious, sensitive and talented Glass clan, a family of seven children born to Bessie (nee Gallagher) Glass and Les Glass, Jewish-Irish vaudevilians. Since Franny's problem, in Franny and Zooey, is a religious one, there is considerable talk about Jesus, but not a word about the Hebrew Jehovah. The Glasses are like all Salinger's characters of Jewish descent: "the comfortable bourgeois New York Jewish society in which . . . the leading figures are called Ginie, Selena, Franklin, Eric, etc. That is to say, Jewish and not Jewish: this 'assimilated' German-Jewish urban group, not wishing any longer to be identified with their religious and cultural minority group, whose bright children now attend the fashionable American Christian schools. . . ." (Maxwell Geismar, "American Moderns: From Rebellion to Conformity," in J.D. Salinger and the Critics, p. 121)

West's characters are not Jewish in any way. Miss Lonelyhearts, as we have noted, is a Baptist preacher's son with a "Christ complex." The only reference in the book to Jews is as anti-semitic as West's own real-life attitude. At the Aw-Kum-On Garage in Monkstown, during Miss Lonelyhearts' pastoral idyll with his fiancee Betty, the garage attendant explains the presence of deer in the area, "because no yids ever went there. He said it wasn't the hunters who drove out the deer, but the yids" (Nathanael West, Miss Lonelyhearts, New York, 1955, Avon paperback, p. 67).

The Misunderstood Christ

One strong similarity between the books, however, is the frequency and intimacy of the references to Christ.
Franny, in her religious crisis, has been reading *The Way of a Pilgrim*, a Christian how-to book, and has, at the end of the first episode, fainted while murmuring the “Jesus Prayer.” (“Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me...”) Her brother Zooey, in the second episode of the book, succeeds in reconciling Franny’s world with her religious vocation. He begins by telling Franny, “...I've never tried, consciously or otherwise, to turn Jesus into St. Francis of Assisi, or to make him more 'lovable'...which is exactly what ninety-eight percent of the Christian world has always insisted on doing” (J.D. Salinger, *Franny and Zooey*, Boston, 1961, pp. 164-165).

Zooey has here made a good point: a repudiation, one begins to hope, of the Pale Galilean or Loretta-Young-with-a-Beard image of Christ. But he goes on, a few pages later, to describe Jesus as the “most intelligent man in the Bible, the only one who really knew which end was up” (*Franny and Zooey*, p. 169), a description uncomfortably akin to Bruce Barton’s, as Maxwell Geismar points out (“From Rebellion to Conformity,” p. 226).

Zooey goes on:

Jesus was a supreme adept, by God, on a terribly important mission. This was no St. Francis, with enough time to knock out a few canticles, or to preach to the birds, or to do any of the other endearing things so close to Franny Glass’s heart. . . . If God had wanted somebody with St. Francis’s consistently winning personality for the job in the New Testament, He’d have picked him, you can be sure. As it was, he picked the best, the smartest, the most loving, the least sentimental, the most unimitative master he could possibly have picked. And when you miss seeing that, I swear to you, you’re missing the whole point of the Jesus Prayer. . . .

(*Franny and Zooey*, p. 169-170)

As Zooey is missing, it seems to me, the whole point of the New Testament. About the “terribly important mission” upon which Jesus was sent, Zooey is oddly silent, while the orthodox among us shudder, mumbling over the Nicene Creed. Not one word anywhere about Incarnation; nothing about atonement, redemption, suffering; and was this an “adept” chosen from a field of adepts, or was this person “of one Substance with the Father?” May I suggest that the serious, life-or-death implications of Christianity are totally absent from *Franny and Zooey* because the author is merely playing with Christian “symbols” as he plays with his winsome, precocious Glasses. Neither the Glasses nor Zooey’s Christ is real; neither moves us.

At the end of the book, Zooey tells Franny (and this is a “goddam secret”) that the Fat Lady, symbolic of the unlearned multitudes she will face as an actress, and of all the phonies of the earth, is “Christ Himself, buddy” (p. 200). Love the unlovely, Zooey seems to be saying as the book ends; we seem to be reading a parable of caritas for our time. But a second reading, disregarding Salinger’s dazzling prose and sure ear for dialogue, and we see the flaw: the Fat Lady is *audience*, buddy, and you’re always a comfortable distance from your *audience*. You don’t have to touch them, hold their gnarled or sweaty hands, get involved. The book illustrates the non-existent words of a showbiz-oriented Christ saying, “Inasmuch as ye have entertained the least of these, my brethren, ye have entertained me.”

It is as Michael Walzer says, “In Salinger’s stories, love, familial and Christlike together, is primarily the habit and wisdom of precocious children. It is almost inevitably, given Salinger’s style and his subject matter, a bit precious” (Michael Walzer, “In Place of a Hero,” J.D. Salinger and the Critics, p. 135).

Nowhere does Salinger suggest a real encounter with the world, even with “anyone who isn’t in the family, for chrissake” (Walzer, p. 139). Marriage, among the Glasses, is a sorry affair: Seymour killed himself shortly after he was married, and Papa Les, the *paterfamilias*, is never onstage. Friendship of the hoops-of-steel variety is not much of a factor in Salinger. No, it is, as Walzer says, “familial feeling which provides the background for the affection, honesty and love which he seeks to describe...Salinger’s family is an alternative to worldliness, a place of dependence and protection, a safe foundation for fantasy.” (Walzer, p. 131)

Alfred Kazin has something to say about the “love” Zooey discusses with his sister while invoking Christ Himself:

...the love that Father Zossima in Dostoevsky’s novel speaks for is surely love for the world, for God’s creation itself, for all that precedes us and supports us, that will outlast us and that alone helps us to explain ourselves to ourselves. It is what...in one form or another lies behind all the great novels as a primary interest in everyone and everything alive with us one this common earth. The love that Salinger’s horribly precocious Glass characters speak of is love for certain people only—forgiveness is for the rest...What is ultimate in their love is love of their own moral and intellectual excellence, their chastity and purity...It is the love they have for themselves as an idea. (Kazin, p. 165)

The Glasses’s love is for the brethren, blood brethren, and for no one else. The Christ of the Gospels, the one Zooey never invokes, speaks thus of such love:

For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? For sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? For sinners also do even the same...But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be called the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. (Luke 6: 32-36)

Although Zooey states the Protestant (particularly, the Lutheran) sense of vocation, (“Act for God. Be God’s actress, if you want to,” p. 197) rather than the Roman Catholic one of monasticism or withdrawal from the
world, the Glasses' actions speak louder than Zooey's words: Walker has become a (withdrawn) celibate priest, Buddy a recluse college professor, Seymour a suicide. Neither Franny nor Zooey has confronted the real world and come to terms with it.

Zooey also points out to his sister that the holy exists within the secular, if one can but see it. The chicken soup that Mama Bessie Glass is wont to bring to one of her ailing offspring is "consecrated chicken soup," because made, and served, with love. Elsewhere in the story a long letter from Buddy to Zooey (quoted in its entirety) quotes the sainted Seymour to the effect that "all we do our whole lives is go from one little piece of Holy Ground to another," which is a fetching conceit—though powerless, apparently, to save its author.

There is some truth in these theological—or self-help—notions of Zooey's; they are not deep and numerous (as from beyond the world) to qualify, in my opinion, as Christian directives.

Are Salinger's people good?

Well, in name, yes; but in deed, emotionally no. Virtue untried is not virtue at all, as Milton and others have pointed out. Walzer, in perhaps the most damning criticism of Salinger's Glasses, says, "Goodness...has always implied activity, vigor, commitment. Good men—let me put it strongly—are energizing centers of ethical action" (p. 136). And the Glasses, while they are in Salinger's own words "verbal stunt pilots," are not conspicuous for their good works, or for their ethical action in the messy, unethical world.

"The Christ Dream"

Miss Lonelyhearts, on the other hand, attempts ethical action, tries, in fact, to follow the example of Christ Himself in loving the unlovely, at the cost of peace, of happiness and, at the end of the book, of life itself.

Miss Lonelyhearts is a working newspaperman who has been assigned to write his New York paper's advice-to-the-lovelorn column. But what began as a joke has long since ceased to be one, as he suffers over the letters of "Desperate, Harold S., Catholic Mother, Broken-Hearted," innocents all, upon whom senseless evil has been visited. Human suffering among real people in the real world is the stuff of Miss Lonelyhearts; not merely, as in Franny and Zooey, egocentricity and affection on the campus and Madison Avenue.

Miss Lonelyhearts has an admitted "Christ complex." He knows Christ is the answer to the despairing souls who write him, though he cannot contemplate Christ without excitement, sometimes even hysteria. As a newspaperman he knows Christ is the only answer that makes sense in a world where, in West's words, "...in America, violence is idiomatic...." Take this morning's newspaper: FATHER CUTS SON'S THROAT IN BASEBALL ARGUMENT. . . . To make the front page, he should have killed three sons with a baseball bat instead of a knife" (James F. Light, in Contact I, October, p. 132).

And Miss Lonelyhearts is a real, dimensional human, whose faith wavers, who gets drunk, who is capable of cruelty (toward his gentle fiancée Betty, and toward the "clean old man"), and who lusts after, and sleeps with, another man's wife. He brushes against other people; he touches, and is touched by, them. Twice, he is punched in the face by them, for no apparent reason, in a world of the earth earthy, far removed from the Glasses' chaste, rarified, and unreal milieu.

Miss Lonelyhearts tries to love the pitiful, lost and often, even to him, repugnant, letter-writers. It is because Miss Lonelyhearts believes in the "Christ dream," which his malicious but eloquent feature editor, Shrike, describes with devastating sarcasm:

God alone is our escape. The church is our only hope, the First Church of Christ Dentist, where He is worshipped as Preventer of Decay. The church whose symbol is the trinity new-style: Father, Son and Wire-Haired Fox Terrier.... And so, my good friend, let me dictate a letter to Christ for you: Dear Miss Lonelyhearts of Miss Lonelyhearts. . . . (p. 62)

There is some doubt whether West himself believed the "Christ dream." Marc L. Ratner says, "The novel has often been regarded as an example of West's despair. But though the Christian dream had lost its reality for some of West's critics, and for West himself, it had a real meaning for Miss Lonelyhearts. . . . Miss Lonelyhearts was what West dared not be; Shrike was what he dreaded to become" ("Anywhere Out of This World: Baudelaire and Nathanael West," American Literature, XXXI, 463).

Most critics are in agreement that the caustic Shrike is Miss Lonelyhearts's divided other self—the cynical, questioning side of his nature—or, as Ratner says—his "Verbally violent alter ego... whose description of Miss Lonelyhearts's alternatives of escape is exactly what the mentally torn hero would say to himself" (p. 461).

James F. Light quotes a private letter of West's: "If we are to survive, the next one hundred years must belong to Dostoevsky's Christianity." Adds Light, "What West had in mind as Dostoevsky's Christianity is suggested by Dostoevsky's statement: 'If we do not follow Christ, we shall err in everything. The way to the salvation of mankind leads through his teaching alone!'" (p. 213)

And what is that teaching? Is it, as Joan Didion asks witheringly, "...finding the peace which passeth understanding simply by looking for Christ in one's date for the Yale game'? ("Finally (Fashionably) Spurious," Salinger: A Critical and Personal Portrait, New York, 1963, p. 79)

Hardly. The teaching is something akin to Father Zossima's words (in Miss Lonelyhearts's own marked copy of The Brothers Karamazov):
Love a man even in his sin, for that is the substance of Divine Love and is the highest love on earth. Love all God's creation, the whole and every grain of sand in it. Love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery in things. Once you perceive it you will begin to comprehend it better every day. And you will come at last to love the whole world with an all-embracing love (p. 18-19).

Yet Miss Lonelyhearts, the natural fallen man, cannot love everything, and he suffers knowing this is so. In the book's one interval of peace and decency, the pastoral idyll in which he goes away to the country with Betty, the reader, as Hyman points out, is "repeatedly warned that natural innocence cannot save Miss Lonelyhearts: the noise of birds and crickets is a 'horrible racket' in his ears and he finds in the deep shade of the woods 'nothing but death-rotten leaves and white fungi, and over everything a funereal hush!'" (p. 127)

Besides the return to a natural Eden, Miss Lonelyhearts has tried—also unsuccessfully—other traditional escapes, before his final, fatal return to Christ or the "Christ dream." As Ratner summarizes, "In the first seven chapters of the novel, Miss Lonelyhearts tries to rid himself of his Christ complex, first by withdrawal, then by violence, and finally by immersing himself in a sexual sea" (p. 460). The thing worth noting is that Miss Lonelyhearts acts; he does not merely talk. "Perfect love," says the Christian apologist C.S. Lewis somewhere, "casteth out fear. But so do lust, violence, alcohol, drugs, for a time." And Miss Lonelyhearts tries most of these, finds them wanting, and turns at last to the "Christ dream." Salinger's characters, by contrast, do little but talk.

In spite of the violence of his earlier acts, Miss Lonelyhearts, after Shrike's monologue (on the "dreams" or "escapes" open to modern man), undergoes a change. Although Shrike has, as Ratner says, derisively attacked God as an escape, Miss Lonelyhearts realizes that (release) exists in Christ through love. He is overwhelmed by a desire to help the "broken hands and torn mouths" (p. 115), and by a feeling of humility that grows within him like a rock.

"In the next to last chapter, after he has persuaded Betty to have their child, his one truly creative act, Miss Lonelyhearts is prepared for the final stage of the climb out of the pit of night—communion with Christ. . . . Spiritually 'out of this world,' he runs down the stairs to embrace and heal the cripple Doyle, who is seeking revenge for being cuckolded" (pp. 461-462).

The revolver Doyle carries is discharged, the bullet wounds Miss Lonelyhearts mortally, and the two fall and roll part way down the stairs, as Betty watches powerless. There the book ends.

Light sums up the ending in this way:

These letters to the lovelorn columnist ask the eternal question of crippled humanity: "What is the whole stinking mess for?" To the question, Miss Lonelyhearts can find no answer. He therefore must try to find the true Christ. By the end of the novel, Miss Lonelyhearts has, by the negation of his personality, gained a mystical union with God and the peace that comes with grace. But to the contemporary materialistic world, Miss Lonelyhearts has become hysterical, has become "sick" (p. 209).

Light's description is that of the "holy fool" and what happens to him in the modern world. He dies, clutching with Christ-like love, the cripple, Man, in his arms (Light, p. 213).

Franny, though she mumbled the "Jesus prayer" and hated herself for her churlish behavior to Lane, was hardly the "holy fool." Nor is Franny, despite her flirtation with the idea of mysticism, a real mystic; she has never really participated in the world, so it would be mistaken to suggest her withdrawal from it. Zooey has had his moments of self-loathing and world-weariness, but never, one feels, any "dark night of the soul." That experience, perhaps, was what precipitated the bullet through brother Seymour's head, seven years ago.

But Miss Lonelyhearts, though the world sickens him, is compelled finally to put on the new man, or at least to subdue the old one, and thus he becomes a "rock" (Miss Lonelyhearts, p. 99 ff.). He has had a vision of perfect love and reconciliation, and, as Light points out, "it is only fitting though tragically ironic, that in the moment of his vision of perfect love, Miss Lonelyhearts should have a cripple, suggestive of humanity, ring his doorbell. Wishing to succor the helpless with love, Miss Lonelyhearts runs toward the cripple. But no miraculous cure occurs. Instead, the cripple shoots Miss Lonelyhearts so that he is, like Christ, destroyed by the panic and ignorance of those he would save" (Light, p. 209-210).

Miss Lonelyhearts and Franny and Zooey, written by Jews in dazzling style about Christian themes, are very different in total effect because they differ in depth, and I think, in sincerity. Salinger has invoked the name of Christ, buddy, to write what is, in the end, no more than a self-help tract, albeit for the Scarsdale reader. As Joan Didion concludes, "...it emerges finally as Positive Thinking for the upper middle classes, as Double Your Energy and Live Without Fatigue for Sarah Lawrence girls" (Didion, p. 79).

And for Miss Lonelyhearts let us hear Light's summary: "The moral is obvious: only through the perfect love of Christ can the pain of man be alleviated; only through faith can the conflict between the evil in the universe and the goodness of God be reconciled" (p. 210). West's problems are real and profoundly disturbing; he is true to the Christian themes he introduces, treating them with fidelity and respect. Miss Lonelyhearts is faithful, even unto death. So, as a creative artist, was Nathanael West.
To doctor a play was as common a practice in the Elizabethan period as it is today. Even then dramatic material was rewritten and adapted. Although it may have been done before, it is not necessarily the right thing to do. In my opinion it is a curse, not a blessing. In case of Edward Albee, the rewriting of Giles Cooper's play “Everything in the Garden” was utterly uncalled for, particularly because the play was not improved upon, the unspoken things were made more obvious, the play was brought closer to the American taste (whatever that may mean), and the ending was somehow falsified. Mr. Albee claimed that “there was hardly a word left of the original,” which is far from the truth. But basically the question remains: Why rewrite someone else’s play if you can write plays yourself?

Something curious also happened to Clifford Odets’s “The Country Girl” which was revived under the title of “Winter Journey.” This was the title under which it ran in London a year after its Broadway premiere. It has been said that the London version is now being played at the Greenwich Mews Theater, but the obvious topicality of this 1950 play shows that an anonymous doctor must have played around with it. The story of the aging alcoholic actor who makes a comeback on Broadway is still gripping, although the dramatic intensity has now a tinge of the melodramatic. Odets still proves to be a man of the theater. But without challenging implications, without far-reaching social significance, Odets somehow sounds hollow. The great promise that he was in the thirties remains unfulfilled. But apparently it was not Odets’s fault. It was from the thirties on that time began to move faster than anyone could foresee. Particularly in the theater the near past seems so easily old-hat. When in 1950 Odets denied himself, his play lost the inner spark, its raison d’etre, and all that seems left in “The Country Girl”—under whatever name it may appear—is proof of craftsmanship without soul.

There have been two more cases recently in which mere skill without substance triumphed. This being an election year, it was obvious that Gore Vidal would come up with a comedy such as “Weekend,” in which a Republican candidate’s chances are jeopardized when his son announces his intention to marry a Negro girl whose parents are also frightened that their image might be hurt by such miscegenation. It is a polished comedy with a great deal of sophisticated conversation.

The other example of an empty theatrical gesture that caught fire is Neil Simon’s “Plaza Suite.” Any play Neil Simon writes is a hit. He is a master craftsman of the trifle. His three one-acts are revue sketches, farces at best. He knows how to place gags, how to create laughter, how to write improvisation. Perhaps in these days we have to be grateful to Mr. Simon for being such a successful funnyman. But one cannot help thinking what this man could do—if he would—with so much craftsmanship.

True, theater demands craftsmanship. Without it conviction, decency, even substance and a trembling soul can be lost on stage. I was disturbed by Ron Cowen’s “Summertree” produced by the Forum. With the most serious intentions the play pictures the life of a young man killed in Vietnam. We see him grow up, see his relationship to his parents, to the girl he seems to love, we are being told of his dream to become a pianist. We also see him for a few fleeting moments with another soldier on the battlefield.

The attempt is made to show a young man trapped in the bewildering atmosphere of the nineteen-sixties: the wrong attitudes of his father who, in spite of all his decency, holds on to phony values; the helplessness of a loving mother; the ordinariness of the young man’s relation to his girl. Vignette-like scenes reel off in the form of flashbacks and in utter defiance of any sequence. The play is permeated with “mood” written with a capital M, it is full of feelings which are quite real, exposed but not dramatically shaped. A looseness prevails which cries out for structure.

The author comes close to important statements, but never makes them. His protests are kept con sordino. He makes the hero tiptoe through his anxieties. There are nowhere dramatically real clashes, only pretended ones. I don’t say one cannot write such a play, but then its poetry must carry it to its success. However, the ordinariness of the people and situations kills all the poetry that was intended to be there. The play’s photographic images deprive it of all its mystery. But Ron Cowen, its author, is only twenty-two years old. Let us hope he escapes the traps of the nineteen-sixties and has time to develop his dream of becoming a great playwright.
"Our basic knowings are no longer of 'things' and their 'properties' but of structures...."

S. I. Hayakawa

It is a relief to realize that life is bigger than any expression of it. No one art gives the complete picture. The New Figuration art, discussed last month, vividly portrays man's mortality. Art Concrete, the subject of this month's article, on the other hand, creates expressions of optimism about man's rational powers.

The term Art Concrete was first used in 1930 by the geometric painter, Theo van Doesburg, to assert that an ordering of pure lines and colors on a surface was more "concrete" or real than a depiction of objects such as that of a woman or a tree, which was illusory. Later, in the thirties but especially right after World War II, a group of Swiss artists committed themselves to extending the rational judgments and reducing the vague intuitive aspects of personal taste when creating studies of pure formal order. To them even an artist like Mondrian was too subjective. Although Mondrian used rational rectangular elements he organized them irrationally according to his intuitive feelings of balance. He did not use mathematics.

Richard P. Lohse (b. 1902) was one of the leading "concrete" artists. Larry Lange (1920-1960), a Chicago artist and friend of mine, was very much influenced by Lohse. Although artists working in the Art Concrete genre were overshadowed during the fifties by the extreme individualism of Abstract Expressionism, the developments in aesthetic form of the sixties (OP Art, Systemic Painting, Primary Structures) have brought a renewed interest.

Perhaps a good way to understand their point of view is to analyze Symmetric 2. The basic form element has been standardized to a unit 1/4" and 8" and becomes the underlying module or brick for the visual structure. To avoid chaotic or arbitrary "chance" combinations, Lange systematically organized these standardized units into horizontal symmetrical groups. For instance, the top seven bands have as their center a 1/2" band (twice the height of the basic unit). Two 1/4" units are placed above this center and two below. The grouping is then completed above and below by a 3/4" band (obviously another multiple of the basic unit). There are eight of these groupings down the canvas. In the process a larger symmetry is created that divides the canvas vertically into three equal bands. Much to his regret Lange could not bring himself to rationally organize the colors. They are placed randomly according to his own taste. There are thirteen different colors each flat-painted in and each many times repeated. The symmetry provides the stability, although there are so many symmetrical groupings that more of a rhythmic all-over pulsation is created rather than the traditional closed center composition. The effect is bright but orderly.

In the Lohse painting one can see even in this black and white reproduction that regular gradations from dark to light are used. Apparently four colors are reduced in regular steps linked in a systematic way with the halving of the squares stepping toward the center. In this painting both the standardized unit and the format are square.

How can this high degree of rationality be satisfying as art? Such a radical expression of rationality can appeal to a person's need for order and stability, but it also reflects a belief by these artists that the achievements of mankind have come largely through the ability to systematize. These artists are eager to explore and invent systems to see where they will lead. Quality lies largely in the richness of their inventiveness. For them the use of intuition comes mainly before they start to paint. The "concrete" artist designs programs for action, invents rules for his game, creates recipes. In his execution of a work he strives for craftsman-like perfection and an aesthetic feeling of pure, anonymous beauty. His is an art searching for ideals.
SYMMETRIC**2, 1953, Larry Lange, 1953, oil on canvas. Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Brauer.


May 1968
Here Will We Sit and Let the Sounds of Music...

By WILLIAM F. EIFRIG, JR.

At the approach of summer all men condemned by fate to dwell in temperate climates put away the heavy woolen wrappings of winter, sweep off the patio, clean up the barbecue grill, and move out-of-doors for the season. Musicians too escape from the confining concert hall to the fresh air and open spaces of local stadiums, shells, and bowls. The summer concert series is for the man who returns to nature taking with him all the civilized comforts of his winter home.

The seasonal phenomenon is hallowed by lengthy tradition. Medieval garden concerts are recorded in picture and text. Whatever the true story behind its composition, Handel's Water Music Suite is indubitably open air music, as is the Music for a Royal Fireworks. Viennese garden parties of the eighteenth century were the scene for performances of serenades, cassations, and divertimenti by Haydn and Mozart. Berlioz' enormous musical commemorations of national events brought to the Place de la Concorde players and singers numbering in the eight and nine hundreds. Tchaikovsky must hold some sort of record for suiting music and setting to each other when he calls upon the bells and cannon of St. Petersburg to climax an appropriately stirring patriotic overture.

Closer to American experience is the band concert in the park. This institution, idealized by nostalgia for days of political innocence, as much a demonstration of social democracy as a musical event, and typifying the American dream of effortless edification — this musical institution is the humble antecedent of Hollywood Bowl, Grant Park, Lewisohn, and Tanglewood, which today through much greater expenditure of energy, time, and money function like enormous white bandstands in vast parks (parking for an additional fee is available).

The problems of making music out-of-doors are exasperating. Ask any violinist who must play Brahms on a hot, humid evening that turns strings into taffy. Even if he can hold his instrument in tune, he is hard put to balance the tones of his basically intimate instrument with the penetrating sounds of winds that have returned to the setting from which they were abducted for the concert hall. There is no controlled reverberation like that afforded by four walls, no focusing of ensemble tone. Winds blowing across the stage scatter not only pages but notes as well. Amplification tends only to exaggerate what the composer meant to suggest.

And then there are the random counterpoints of auto-mobile traffic, trains that must whistle at the quietest passage, and planes that seem to require the whole exposition or aria to pass overhead. But even these are more predictable than the havoc wrought by insects and rain. Have you heard the story of Edith Mason at Ravinia one summer's evening in the thirties? Madame Mason had just begun Un bel di when suddenly there was no sound from the famous throat and a startled look on usually composed face. With aplomb given only to great persons she removed a fly that had chosen that moment to conduct some sort of laryngeal inspection, nodded to the conductor, and began again! The unexpected shower is a summer impresario's nightmare. While the orchestra bravely continues, the audience seeks what shelter it may and music is lost in the sounds of falling water, noisy plastics, and muted oaths. Some summer homes of musicians are now provided with roofs spanning orchestra and audience; they are in effect auditoriums without walls. Will further refinements do away with even this distinction?

Should that come to pass we might discover our summer house has become much like the winter house and only the calendar distinguishes the season. Certainly the musical fare served from June to September is no different from that served when the picnic basket has been put away. The announcements of summer season guest conductors and soloists and the works to be played read like those for the regular season: a new face or two, a new work or two, and then the long list of famous names and established repertoire. What preposterous ignorance of architectural setting. Until forty years ago musicians exercised some care in selecting music suitable for the accoustical properties of the concert's location. Open air programs require deliberate tempos, uncomplicated textures, apparent designs, and broad contrasts. To translate the nuances of concert hall music to the band shell is to offer the audience a poor representation of the composer's intentions. Subtleties are lost and only the obvious gestures remain.

Let the impresarios of our summer concerts recall the simplicity and directness of the band's park repertoire and its festive spirit and large dimensions. When the good sense of a Mozart serenade and the calculated effect of a Berlioz anthem bear upon the planning of a summer's program, some of the confusion may disappear. Then those of us round about on the grass can lie back knowing that, musically too, summer is a thing that happens but once each year.
Books of the Month

Protestant-Catholic Dialogue

Certain times have a density about them which mark them out as historically fecund; the sixties have been that way in American and world history. Since the church lives symbiotically with the world, it is not surprising that recent church history has shared this density. The church has often hit the front pages during the past decade. Sometimes this has been the appearance of the bizarre and the transient, as much of the god-is-dead and new-morality journalism has been. Sometimes this has been the registration of seismic shifts in the depths of history. The "Catholic-Protestant Dialogue" belongs, we think, to the latter class, and a good account of what has happened is now in our hands through the reporting and interpreting of this historical chapter by a leading participant in the events, Robert McAfee Brown. His The Ecumenical Revolution (Doubleday, 1967, $5.95) enables us to catch our breath and look back to see just how far we have come.

Brown begins his narrative with the Edinburgh Conference in 1910 when the movement surfaced on an international plane. He recounts the familiar history of Protestant ecumenism, setting it in relationship to Vatican church policy. Rome's attitude was one of stony aloofness and, indeed, resistance to the movement. Protestant thought regarding Rome continued to be dominated by the monolithic and legalistic image that was revived each Reformation Day celebration. Little appeared in the first half of the twentieth century to presage Vatican II, which is the main story Brown is telling in this book. Indeed, the proclamation of the Dogma of the Assumption in 1950 seemed to confirm the great distance between Rome and the Protestant churches in both theology and polity, and to defy any prospect of rapprochement. In 1954 the Vatican refused to send observers to the World Council Assembly at Evanston. Yet within a few years the call for Vatican II had gone out and a kind of volcanic outpouring of theological creativity erupted over the calm Roman landscape. The full story of the Roman ecumenical pioneers must still be written; Brown alludes to some of the movements and distinguished names. Certainly World War II, especially in Germany, had created a new situation between groups of Protestant and Roman Catholic theologians. At any rate Brown makes the point that in the new attitude of Rome we do not simply have an example of authoritarian reform leading from the head downward. That remarkable man, Pope John, could not have simply decreed a reform of the magnitude we are witnessing. Rather, he released forces which had been long gathering in France, Holland, and Germany.

Brown's main story is the narrative of what has happened in Vatican II. As we ponder this account the question of how it could have happened becomes the more fascinating. It is a minor flaw in the book that, whereas Catholic pioneers are referred to, Protestant pioneers are largely ignored. It is somewhat misleading to think of the whole ecumenical movement since 1910 as performing that task for Protestants. I do not minimize the impact of Faith and Order on the movement, but do we not have to comment at least on those Protestant writers who helped prepare the way for a Protestant openness to Rome? It is not inappropriate to recall two names who have been associated with Valparaiso University, who have contributed importantly to a Protestant preparation for conversation with the Roman Catholic tradition. Professor Koener's widely known and respected study of the Roman liturgical movement early in the fifties acquainted American students with the French and German thought which emerged powerfully in Vatican II. We might add that this work also served many an American Roman Catholic scholar in acquainting him with the evangelical currents within his own communion. We must further consider the work of Professor Pelikan, both with his students in the history of Christian thought and in his popular The Riddle of Roman Catholicism which established perhaps more than any other event outside of the Protestant observers' participation in Vatican II a basis for discussing and understanding controversial issues between Roman Catholics and Protestants. We might be pardoned some small pride in recalling that just a decade ago, before the reign of Pope John, the theological faculties of Notre Dame and Valparaiso University began semi-annual theological conferences with a great sense of pioneering excitement. No great historical impact is being claimed for these conferences; they were, in their time, novel and do afford however, something of a remembered barometer of the ecumenical weather during those late fifties.

A fuller appreciation of the theme of the book would also require, it seems to us, some greater recognition of the changes in American Protestant theology that have occurred as a result of the new dialogue. If Rome has become more "Protestant" in some of her concerns, the investment of Protestant energy and imagination in the study of dogmatic history, the role of doctrine, liturgy, sacramental theology, prayer and, strangely the Bible itself, has been heavy. It is helped to correct and give depth to the "secular theology" movement in Protestantism, has helped Protestant communion rediscover something of their own "catholic substance," and hopefully might enliven Episcopal and Lutheran churchmen to a more responsible stewardship of their own heritage.

Thus it is significant that, after excellent discussions of the traditional points of controversy (infallibility, Mariology, etc.) from which the reader may greatly profit, Brown brings the book to what is a climax rather than a simple ending: a discussion of the problems of joint worship and participation in the Sacrament of the Altar. That this question can be raised at all, that it comes to be very nearly the central question, is remarkable testimony to the depth and authenticity of the Dialogue. Events continue to move more swiftly and with surprises. The outcome of the dialogue is not predictable, just as its present state could not have been predicted a decade ago. There are Protestants impatient with theological matters who want to get to where they think the action is. There is an underground church of considerable vitality and depth, with eucharistic participation involving Protestants and Catholics of varying positions; this church may be a sign of the future or simply an escape valve for impatient spirits. One cannot tell.

RICHARD BAEPLER

Worth Noting

CHEKOV: A Collection of Critical Essays

Edited by Robert Louis Jackson (Prentice-Hall, $4.95)

As the title suggests, Chekov is a collection of essays written by contemporary and predominantly Russian writers. Each of the essays deals with some aspect of Chekov's work — his style, the special devices he used, the principle of dramatic structure in his plays, his place in Russian literature, or his point of view. At first glance, the book appears to provide a comprehensive though necessarily preliminary discussion of Chekov's prose and drama. Nevertheless, the essays prove to be too divergent in approach and interpretation to function together toward a common goal. Despite the focus of each essay, the primary emphasis of the book is not upon Chekov's work but upon the critical discussion of it.

The collection can be recommended as an introduction to Chekov criticism. The
issues have been clearly articulated and were organized around three central questions: style, structure, and the author's point of view in relation to his work. In addition, the critical positions vary logically as well as historically and therefore provide a representative sampling of contemporary criticism. For those unacquainted with Russian, the book's emphasis upon Russian criticism should be helpful. Ten of the fifteen essays were written by Russian critics, and one of the remaining five — Mr. Jackson's introductory essay — deals with the history of Chekov criticism in Russia.

A book can usually be judged fairly by evaluating it in its own terms, but Chekov suffers, perhaps unduly, when it is treated in this way. The difficulty is not the familiar but questionable assumption that critical discussion can introduce readers to literature. The problem arises because the editor wants the book to serve as an introduction to both Chekov's work and the criticism of it but fails to bring these two goals together. Mr. Jackson believes that divergent critical views are necessary for an understanding of Chekov's work in its totality. A great work (or body of works) is, he says, like a Gothic cathedral. It reveals different facets when viewed from different perspectives. Thus, the work's "whole dynamics...can be comprehended only in the abstract, i.e., in the movement through multiple perspectives." Unfortunately, this approach — which unites the concerns of formal and historical criticism — does not insure that such a collection will in fact achieve the focus necessary for it to serve a single goal. Whatever the merits of his theory and his intentions, Mr. Jackson's multiple perspectives fail, finally, to reveal a single "cathedral."

In view of the book's admitted value as an introduction to the critical discussion of Chekov, it may be unjust to belabor its failure to provide an introduction to the writer's works as well. Yet the matter does not end here. Chekov is part of "Twentieth Century Views," a series that attempts to provide a "twentieth century perspective" on the changing status of major authors in "an era of profound revaluation." Insofar as the volume remains undeniably multiple in its perspective, it cannot provide a contemporary view of Chekov. Just as no single "cathedral" is revealed by the essays, so no single perspective or revaluation of that "cathedral" emerges from them. The anthology, seen as a critical strategy, seems a way to avoid the critical task rather than a way of carrying it out. Even the individual essays leave the impression that contemporary critics have avoided the larger task of revaluation by retreating into limited issues, specialized problems, and the history of Chekov criticism.

Chekov — like the series of which it is a part — is concerned with contemporary criticism and its peculiar stance. In two important respects, the book seems to be a symptom or even the victim of our time more than a commentary upon it. The book does not succeed in moving beyond the facts of pluralism and historicity though Mr. Jackson tried to accomplish this by using both as means to a more comprehensive and complex view of Chekov's work. Instead, the collection succumbs to both simply because it remains not only multiple in its perspectives but divided as well. Second, Chekov reveals the unconscious but no less real Narcissism that characterizes much of contemporary criticism at least in America where critical discussion is prone to be taken as an end in itself. There is, to be sure, a legitimate place for both the history and the theory of criticism. Yet, neither can be mistaken for the critic's proper task or object without risking sterility, pedantry, or both. One is left with the nagging awareness that ours is not only an age of theoretical and historical relativism but also one in which self-consciousness and self-concern are so pervasive that Allen Tate may have been correct thirty years ago when he said that we were solipsists locked up in the squirel cage of our own intellect.

SUE WIENHORST

The Eighth Day

By Thornton Wilder. (Harper & Row, $6.95)
Coaltown, Illinois, early summer 1902. Breckenridge Lansing was murdered by his business associate, John Ashley, during a rifle practice on the Lansing estate. Although Ashley's part in such a murder seemed highly unlikely, the jury was confident in its decision, and Ashley was shipped to Joliet for the death penalty. That is, he would have been shipped to Joliet had not a group of unarmed rescuers come to his aid and enabled him to escape to South America.

Readers who like mystery stories will be attracted to Thornton Wilder's The Eighth Day, for in this novel (his first since The Ides of March in 1948) Mr. Wilder initially raises two questions: Who was Lansing's murderer? Who were Ashley's rescuers? Furthermore, one may ask how will the two families be reconciled? The Ashley and Lansing families had been close freinds for many years prior to the tragedy. Suspense is successfully sustained until answers to these questions are disclosed in the final chapters of the novel.

The settings for the episodes extend from the small mining communities of southern Illinois and South America to the large cities of St. Louis, Chicago, and New York. The nationalities of the characters are as diverse as the settings. All of the scenes are vivid: Sophia (John Ashley's daughter) selling lemonade at the Coaltown railroad station to earn a few pennies toward the payment of the real estate taxes on the Ashley estate; John Ashley in Chile playing cards with Maria Icaza, a "Persian" fortune teller, and drinking tea with Dr. MacKenzie, the managing director of the mining industry in the high Andes; Roger Ashley (John Ashley's son and an orderly in a Chicago hospital) carrying his pillows to the roof of the hospital where he liked to lie under the stars and think. A few melodramatic moments during which George Lansing storms about the Lansing house may be easily overlooked as one becomes involved in the father-son conflict between Breckenridge and George. his son.

The Eighth Day, however, is not an Agatha Christie novel in which intrigue and a quickly moving narrative keep the reader's attention focused on the plot from cover to cover. The novel is highly discursive; the narrative diffuse. Mr. Wilder is fascinated with God's plan for history and raises significant questions on a thematic level. A weakness may be that too many such questions are raised. The initial spokesman for these questions is Dr. Gillies, the local Coaltown physician, who addresses his townsmen at a New Years Eve party: "Life! Why life? What for? To what end? Something came out of the oozie. Where was it going?" As in The Skin Of Our Teeth Thornton Wilder examines the way in which an essential pattern is implicit in every concrete situation. One such is the hereditary pattern. To show that there are "links between the generations" he shows that there is a link between the generations in the Ashley and in the Lansing families. Each of the characters is unique, but the roots of each character are shown to lie in his ancestors. "The oak tree is in the acorn," says Maria Icaza, quoting a Spanish proverb. Sometimes Mr. Wilder becomes overly conscious of his character's parentage: Beatia Ashley (wife of John Ashley) is a descendant of the Kellerman and von Dielen families. "Beata was an exemplary student, though she was not interested in knowledge for its own sake (von Dielen and Kellerman), an accomplished performer on the piano, a superb cook (von Dielen). She gave all of herself to whatever task was set before her (Kellerman)." And Mr. Wilder also illustrates the continuity of history with archetypal patterns. The most important of these patterns is that of Christ. "It has been a mistake of the Jews and Christians to believe that there is only one Messiah. Every man and woman is Messiah-bearing, but some are closer to the tree of a Messiah than others." Such a Messiah-figure was John Ashley.

"History is one tapestry" in which God's plan for the world is unfolded. "It is only in appearance that time is a river: it is rather a vast landscape and it is the eye of the beholder that moves." Every man is "a stitch in the tapestry" and a "planter of trees" just as John Ashley was. A man can only see a handsbreadth of the tapestry in his lifetime; therefore, he must grasp for meanings which are beyond his understanding but in the reality of which he must have faith. As the Archbishop of Chicago said to Roger Ashley, "Life is surrounded by mysteries beyond the comprehension of our limited minds. Your dear parents have seen them; you and I have seen them. We transmit (we hope) fairer things.
than we can fully grasp." The mysticism is familiar to Wilder's readers. This very mysticism may have been Mr. Wilder's reason for choosing a mystery plot and a Christ-like hero for this novel.

"Some see what they have been told to see. Some remember that they saw it once but have lost it. Some are strengthened by seeing a pattern wherein the oppressed and exploited of the earth are gradually emerging from their bondage. Some find strength in their conviction that there is nothing to see."

ELSBeth LIePPeRT

EARL VAN DORN: Life and Times of A Confederate General

By Robert Hartje (Vanderbilt University Press)

This book, while not an apology for Earl Van Dorn's record, certainly places him in a favorable light. Mr. Hartje has written the story of a lesser known Confederate general and has maintained historical objectivity by neither praising him too loudly for his virtues nor crucifying him for his blunders.

This book brings to light the problems which plagued many Civil War officers. Mr. Hartje points an accusing finger at West Point Academy, where many bright prospects were improperly trained to conduct war on a large scale. The Academy's stress on Swiss theories of warfare, particularly the emphasis on speed, caused many young officers to lead their men into uncalled-for disasters. Generally only the cadets who took it upon themselves to do research on other European theories of warfare were able to cope with the problems of the Civil War.

Earl Van Dorn was not the type of man to put forth this extra effort, and consequently in his military life he was unable to gain the personal glory which he sought. He lacked the "fine edge" that makes great generals, especially in maneuvering or large-scale planning. A study of his two major battles, Pea Ridge and Corinth, brings forth evidence of personal weakness and shallowness of academic training. In addition to his lack of understanding of large-scale warfare, Van Dorn failed to put into practice what he had been taught, namely to reconnoiter the field. His great desire to hit the enemy quickly invited defeat. Whether or not this knowledge of European warfare, particularly Jomini's ideas, would have helped is a moot point. It seems the Van Dorn lacked the ability to learn from previous experience, as is indicated in his failure to recognize similarities in the battle of Monterey and Pea Ridge. Perhaps he would not have gained any practical help from studying European masters.

The author does well in Van Dorn's behalf despite the problems at Pea Ridge and Corinth. The exploits of this handsome, dashing officer in the Mexican War and on the frontier are very vividly described. Van Dorn's greatest achievements for the Confederacy -- the defense of Vicksburg and his hit and run tactics with the cavalry units after the Battle of Corinth -- certainly give him well deserved praise. Mr. Hartje takes this lesser known Confederate general and builds a case for him, stating that with a little more luck, more help from subordinate officers, or more training, he would have possibly been classified with the Lees, Longstreets, and Jackssons.

Van Dorn's great desire for personal glory is frequently alluded to by Hartje. His arrogant and proud attitude is mentioned again and again. Records of Van Dorn's personal life are said to be very biased and therefore Mr. Hartje is very cautious in making statements about Van Dorn's private activities. The author alludes to Van Dorn's strange relationship with his wife, with whom he spent very little time. He had a reputation as a ladies' man and many people were sure that the doctor who assassinated him for involvement with his wife was justified for his actions.

This is an extremely readable work and the detailed descriptions of the battles are fascinating. It is a book well worth reading especially for Civil War buffs.

AUGUST PRAHLow

Belief and Disbelief in American Literature

By Howard Mumford Jones (Chicago, $5.00)

The intangible quality usually designated as Faith is, when artistically expressed, one of the essential qualifications for an author to be considered great -- perhaps even an authority on what he speaks or writes. It does make a big difference, however, what he has faith in. Likewise also the opposite -- what he disbelieves -- can assist us in understanding or evaluating a writer's achievement, merit, and artistic significance: a genuine dislike is a helpful key when you interpret life's three major themes, namely God, man, and the universe. To this book's credit it is said that its distinguished writer stresses the former (belief in) principle in reaching his to him (though not to me) valid conclusions. This is literary criticism of spiritual values, based on unobtrusive scholarship.

Each of the six chapters was originally an address in the recent series sponsored by the Frank L. Weil Institute for Studies in Religion and the Humanities. That these essays were spoken lectures probably accounts for their graceful, conversational style of rhetoric (something automatically expected from this Emeritus Abbott Lawrence Lowell Professor of the Humanities at Harvard University, an expert widely acknowledged in the field of American cultural history). Moreover, this fact explains the restricted range of which few authors are discussed, plus why there can here be no in-depth penetration. Unity is maintained throughout the book by means of the vibrant theme (a live topic which does need still more penetration. initiated in 1938 when Professor Randall Stewart published his admirable, expository American Literature and Christian Doctrine).

Without minimizing heterodoxies, Professor Jones presents the neo-republican desism of Tom Paine; the religious implications of the American landscape as interpreted by Irving, Bryant, and Cooper; Emerson's utopian Transcendentalism; Whitman's libertarian doctrine of cosmic process into optimism; the mechanistic pessimism of Mark Twain; and Robert Frost's lonely awe of cosmic vastness. The final sentence in this book asserts: "Imaginative American writing has more or less turned its back upon the church and upon theology; it has not turned its back upon the necessity of belief of some sort in man as man." No doubt such ambivalence is the reason why "American literature has never produced a great religious book in the sense that the Divine Comedy is a great Catholic masterpiece, Paradise Lost a great Protestant masterpiece, and the Book of Job a great Jewish masterpiece" (p. 3). So far, so good; but truly, there is The Scarlet Letter, or Christus: A Mystery Play, or Ash Wednesday, and a high percentage of Christian emphasis in our country's literature. Accordingly I side with previously mentioned Professor Stewart who more accurately says (in American Literature and Christian Doctrine, p. 149) as his conclusion: "Man is a moral agent, and a tragic figure. . . . He is not a machine, but a very fallible human.

But his state, unless by his own perversive willfulness, is not beyond the reach of God's redeeming grace. This is the essence of the human condition, and the Christian hope. And this is the meaning of the dramatization of human experience by the greatest American writers."

HERBERT H. UMBACH
Black Power

BY VICTOR F. HOFFMANN

Black Power is the new "thing" for the black man. Actually it has been coming for a long time. Still, when it did come, it struck surprise to the hearts and minds of a lot of people.

But what is it? What is it like? What does it mean?

The white supremacy type, quick to react, takes Black Power to be a vindication of his position: The black man never did want to live with the white man and certainly did not want to interact with him on a day to day basis. According to this version, Black Power is now telling us that the black man wants no part of integration. So, the white supremacy man is insisting that the black man go his own way, be separate, and with that everyone may hold his peace now and hereafter.

Another version from "whitey" asserts that the black man is now really beginning to show his colors: he wants to take over society. This is what he has been up to all along. Now, after years of submission, the black man wants to run our society. This constitutes an attack on white supremacy. Now, as far as the white man is concerned, this is something more serious. The black man will not let the white man alone. White Charlie does not appreciate this.

The white liberal hardly knows what to make of Black Power. For years he has worked hard in the civil rights movement. Time, energy, money, and all sorts of other resources from the white liberal have been spent for the black minority. And now he hits the white liberal with Black Power. Is Black Power really the answer of a gentleman to all of the white liberals' efforts for the black man? The white liberal has been hurt.

In the bargain, many whites — whatever the type — have really learned how white they really are and how black the blacks really are. The "melting pot" idea of the United States of America has been shaken to its very premises. The idea has not really gotten much mileage out of the black-white dilemma. We Americans are beginning to learn the lesson: cultural mixes, cultural blends, and cultural integrations are hard to come by.

Whatever we are we have been that for a good long time. A Jew is a Jew and one is not going to make him something else overnight. The German Lutheran, especially the Missouri Synod variety, looks like he might remain this for an incredibly long time. More than that, all of us are terribly proud and chauvinistic about our long entrenched behavior and cultural patterns. We do our best over the long haul to hold on to them.

To a considerable measure, this is what Black Power is. Like the Jew and the German Lutheran, the black man wants to concentrate on being what he has been for a long time. Consequently, he asks for and wants to emphasize Negro history, Negro culture, black books and black cooks in the schools, black teachers for black students, black preachers for black congregations. He wants to sing Negro spirituals and to respond with his "amens" and his "hallelujahs."

Simply stated, the black man wants to perpetuate the heritage of the black man.

In these terms, we must all admit, our American society is multiformed, multi-structured, heterogeneous, and pluralistic. In such a system, the game is "to push your thing." If a member of the UAW, you will organize your power, resources, and energy around the "thing" of the UAW. Around that focus, the UAW builds organization, publicity and publications, TV programs, political education and lobbying. To be effective, the UAW strikes at those crucial points in the decision-making processes where efforts are likely to pay off.

Black Power is a way of playing the game of politics American-style. The blacks will be playing the game for a long time. So, ready or not, get ready for them. The black man is on the way.

In Milwaukee we have observed some dramatic instances of the black man coming on. For example, the state administration arranged for a $4,750,000 fund to be expended for education in the Milwaukee Inner Core North according to specific categories. The black man in Milwaukee looked upon this as so much paternalism. A series of meetings was established at which the Negro aired his grievances about administration paternalism and the general state of affairs in the inner city schools. After much airing of grievances, the black man handed the task of negotiation over to a representative committee and the committee met with "the powers that be." The result: some of the black man's demands were met.

In this process, we see the embryo of black power collective bargaining, the American brokerage of interests.
Talking Turkey — With or Without Trimmings

By DON A. AFFELDT

Recent political developments in the Democratic party bear witness to the nation's growing disaffection for the war in Vietnam. Though many war-protesting students in New Hampshire and Wisconsin voted for McCarthy in the primaries, the composition of McCarthy's constituency in these elections revealed support for the senator in all age-groups; the Children in his Crusade may have licked envelopes and pounded doors, but it was their elders who swelled the McCarthy ballot boxes. Why the Silver Senator reaped such a following is not yet fully clear, though commentators have decided that the cause was great anti-Johnson sentiment in these states. This interpretation suggests that people have come to oppose the war because they dislike Johnson; perhaps, had JFK been running this show, Hampshires and Badgers would have scorned an end-the-war appeal. But the direction of causal relations here is a matter for empirical investigation, and I leave it to unemployed psychologists and sociologists to interest themselves in the question. I want to discuss not why so many rallied to McCarthy's cause in recent pollings, but rather why so few have done so.

McCarthy has an image-problem, and I suggest that it is this which has kept him off from many people from seriously contemplating him as a possible president. But whereas the usual recommendation in such a situation is that the Senator set about changing his image, I propose a change in point of view among the people. Images are the proper concern of image-makers; responsible choice of leaders is the proper concern of the people of a democratic society.

I think it safe to assume that there is no very direct relationship between a man and his image. If a man were himself responsible for the creation of his image, one might more plausibly claim that the image is an accurate reflection of the man; but in our society, the media industries have charge of the image — as Dick Nixon and his hapless former make-up man would agree. By common consent, it is the job of the media as image-makers to create accurate images. But since informational media are also media of entertainment, it sometimes happens that the media are less concerned with the accuracy of the images they present than with the interest, or attractiveness, or novelty, of the images they offer. Thus one must know the man before he can judge whether the man's image is accurate. It will not do to assume that familiarity with a man's image creates knowledge of the man.

Suppose, further, that it is possible to come to know the man behind the image. With one problem down, another now confronts us: How is this man to be assessed with respect to the office for which he runs? Here, again, it seems we may run into an image-problem — the problem now having to do with our image of the office. The Presidency, no less than a President, has an image, due in part to the Presidents who have served in that office. The image we have of the Presidency, though, may bear little relation to the office. Once again we can call in for questioning those who supply us with images of the Presidency, to see whether their zeal for informing has checked their pandering urges.

Here is where McCarthy's image-problem lies: not with himself, but with the office for which he runs. And often people who decline to support the Senator do so not because the Senator's image doesn't convey the man behind the image, but rather because the image of the Presidency doesn't include the man Eugene McCarthy.

Americans want God as their President, but, failing that, they'll settle for the most God-like of the options; and in recent years, with the advent of television, the younger the man the more demi-God he has seemed. The demi-God must be something of a demagogue, as well; our passions lie dormant, waiting for excitation. Since the President is so often in the news, we expect him to be a man of action, whether or not he has engaged in contemplation before action. He has to do this, and he there, and say that; if he does these things we take comfort that our leadership is duly leading. We leave it to the historian to determine whether we have been led anywhere worth going.

McCarthy flies in the face of many of these expectations, as did Stevenson before him. Even if you support him you rankle as he grows tedious sketching in the background of the Whitman quotation he promised some sentences back. You want to yell and cheer, but the timing of his phrases makes you mute. You want him to sound like a real President — awesome, imperious, decisive. You don't know what to do with him when he is understanding, open, thoughtful.

Is he to be blamed for my unrest? Or am I to blame for his failure to meet my expectations? The answer hangs on the reasonableness of my expectations. And I suspect they're not very reasonable; in fact, they're out of keeping with my professional standards. But if that's the case, is there any question of what must give way?

Turkey with all the trimmings is indeed desirable, but forced to choose between turkey and trimmings I'll take the meat and let the gravy go.
Yesterday Came Suddenly

It was a sunny, generous day and my friends of the moment seemed to be very happy... At 9:00 a.m., with the warming of the sun, there were on the lake four ducks, five gulls, three stately geese and about a thousand coots... A coot, by the way, is an outlandish species of duck — small, black, and completely inedible... When I asked my friend from northern Minnesota about their history and life, he said that they were totally useless... that if you wanted to eat one, you would have to boil it, cook it, fry it, roast it — and then go out and buy a hamburger... I had never seen coots and their diving under the water (about every eight seconds) for a weed or a minnow seemed to me the almost perfect reduction of life to its essentials... a floating on the water, a headlong dive, a weed, and more floating on the water... Seemingly, they had found some ultimate answers... They must have been at Walden and the Sea of Galilee... to be joyfully viewed by their Creator...

And so there we were — ducks, geese, gulls, coots and I — gathered haphazardly at a small, hidden lake in Florida... Only the geese seemed to be aware of my presence... They came close now and then in the hope of a handout of crumbs... the only human touch in the quiet scene...

I had come to the lake for a few hours of forgetting and remembering... Another milestone in my days and years was coming out of the East, and I was weary of small victories and great defeats... I needed the timelessness — and strange uselessness of the coots... Why should I try to hold superfluous candles to the sun... even on a birthday...

A rain cloud came over the horizon and the coots moved closer to the shore... It was little protection against the north wind but the waves were smaller and one could hide behind an occasional clump of weeds...

So — I had now come quite close to three-score and ten... the figure chosen by inspired writers to be a very special sign of divine grace... If such mercy would continue a little longer, I thought, I might outlive another generation of coots... At the moment the earth was still wide and the skies were clear...

I tried to push my thoughts as far back in time as possible... fifty years... 1918... surely I was entitled to a little history... even though I had made none I had had a good seat for the apocalyptic drama I had seen...

1918: I was making shells to kill the Kaiser... He turned out later to be a doddering old man chopping wood in Holland, but my shells helped to topple his throne...

1928: These were feverish days... madly prosperous with strange old words on the wall: Mene, mene, tekel upharsin... A heavenly weighing machine was at work again: "Thou has been weighed in the balance and found wanting"... A year later the balance tipped sharply and men fell out of office windows in Wall Street... I noticed that the apples sold by my friends at the elevated station on Tremont Avenue were getting cheaper...

1938: More of the same — except that a strange screaming voice came over the short-wave radio... talking about "Lebensraum" and "Blut und Boden"... I did not know that millions would die by violence before that voice would be stilled in a bunker under a city burning to death...

1948... 1958... and now 1968... I must tell you that story sometime... These yesterdays came suddenly... at last to bring me here alone with the symbols of continuity... the trees on the farther shore, the moving water, and the coots... I had no doubt that they were here in 1918, 1928, and 1938... While I was stuffing shells and watching the world's heartache, they were praising God and taking thankfully from His hand the minnows and the weeds...

I added a few lines of half-forgotten verses to my lean harvest of the years:

Master, receive me in Thy way,
For I am spent who followed mine;
Seal me from every alien sway,
Close to me every door but Thine.

And if Thou wilt, I journey on,
And if Thou wilt not, bid me wait;
It is enough for me to know
Whose hand it is that bars the gate.

It is enough that Thou art here;
No other joy is joy to them
Who wake from sleep and find Thee near,
Whose lips have touched Thy garment's hem.