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ALEKSANDR SOLZHENITSYN: NEEDLE ON NERVE AND CONSCIENCE

THE AFFAIR OF ALEKSANDR

Solzhenitsyn reminds us how frustrating, how aggravating, how frightening it must be to be outside the Christian Church and an enemy of the Christian Faith. Despite a sustained program to discredit the worship of God, the preaching of his Word, and the celebration of the Sacraments, the government of the Soviet Union is confronted with this man whose words are like a needle on the nerve of its power. Like the giant fish that swallowed Jonah, the Soviet leaders found they had a man in their vitals whom they could not endure. They had to vomit him out. The pressure of the heel of power did not succeed in suppressing the man. Rather, as they ground down the boot in one place, they (as it were) forced a Rock of confession to jut out in another place. And along with the pointed confession of this one man, they are confronted with the signals of a growing revival in the faith among the citizens of the Russian nation.

If you were a subverter of government in both State and Church, would you not like to have a network of cells comparable to the Church? Reflect for a moment on the sharpness of this maddening needle. Around the world, with a minimum of external pressures, millions of Christians continue to gather in all sorts of groups. They rehearse the central ground for their gathering as Christians. They engage in renewing the vision of their ultimate goal. Young encourage the old; the old teach the young. They revive their will to hope and they correct their lives in conformity with that goal. They fortify and discipline themselves to meet, to bear, and to conquer those forces of threats which impinge on their lives. Like the Rock on which they are built, they themselves, like rocks, are cast up from time to time and place to place—surd boulders to startle and trip those who, with contemptuous arrogance, think they control all because they sit in the seat of power.

No man, no group of men, creates these living clusters of people, knit together throughout the world. Even when some of these Christians foolishly talk about the Church as a "voluntary society," their existence, their conduct, their courage are better than their speech. They are signs and marks of God's will, God's gracious will buying up promises; they are God's "show and tell" indicators to the cosmos about the mystery of his redemptive will.

For many people Solzhenitsyn's words and actions are signs that quicken the courage, fill the inner being with awe, and stimulate a burst of laughter against the puffed-up Leviathan, wherever he pours out his threats. The needle on the nerve may twitch a muscle into action in a remotely different place. For many within the Church, Solzhenitsyn's example needles the conscience and strengthens the will to call to account those in the Church who would subvert the Church's government into a tool of tyranny.

The Renewal of Loyalty

Solzhenitsyn reminds us of the salutary function of loyalty. Neither individual work nor communal existence can continue when loyalty is no longer operative. Indeed, it is true, nothing is so good that sinners cannot pervert it: we have ample illustrations of perverted loyalty leading men and nations into acts of hostility and oppression. But we are also receiving strong warning signals that community life disintegrates and individual work takes on
the smell of futility when loyalty is eroded, or when it is used as an instrument to subvert the government of Home, State, or Church.

The Communist Party in Russia has made a concerted effort for more than fifty years to use the government of that nation to subvert justice. When, as in the case of World War II, it became apparent that the loyalty for Mother Russia was a more powerful force to weld together the life and work in the struggle of the nation, the ruling powers were compelled to co-opt that loyalty. The case of Solzhenitsyn is another sign in the struggle. It heartens all people who cherish a loyalty that aims at making community life coherent and individual work possible.

Both Solzhenitsyn and the Soviet government know clearly the energy at work here. Solzhenitsyn is not interested in a revolutionary replacement of the Communist government by some form of capitalism from the West. Loyalties of the Russian people will have to fasten themselves on things Russian, and the Soviet leaders will have to face the tough fury of that internal development. But the Soviet officials, shrewd manipulators of the government that they are, also recognize the power at work. They execute the meanest of all punishments: they exile Solzhenitsyn from the land of Russia. They turn the power generated by his loyalty into the engine of his pain.

Loyalty, like pietas of antiquity, must nourish and correct itself by reverence for the good, the solid, and the true. As gifts from the past, these realities make coherent community life and individual work possible. There is fact, and it keeps correcting the fictions; there is truth, and it continues to oppose the lie; there is the solid, and it continues to straighten out the devious. Loyalty nurtures the resistance to that kind of utopian and absolutist passion that imagines itself coming into existence only by wiping out that which now is. Loyalty may be blind, but it may also be very clear-eyed as it sorts out the claims and counterclaims for allegiance to those ideas that turn governments into managerial exercises of power.

To Manipulate Power Is Not to Govern

The perversion of government by turning it into the manipulation of power is a widespread condition in Church and State, a condition that Solzhenitsyn’s case accentuates. Rather than governing, people in power give the appearance of governing by justice and truth, but manipulate power by controlling appointments, finances, and the machineries of enforcement. Slogans and platforms are instruments of deception; they have the form of justice and truth but not the power of justice and truth. Hence, those who exercise such power do not use the government in State and Church to govern for the order of justice or the order of salvation. Rather, they turn government into the management of forces to the end of preserving themselves in power.

Solzhenitsyn’s *Gulag Archipelago* is an illustration of loyalty at work, ferreting out, sorting out, and presenting those facts, those truths, and ideas that reveal the perversion of government. He exposes the subversive tyranny by documenting the course of events together with the inner dynamics that perpetrate these tyrannies under the guise of government. With enormous diligence and effort, Solzhenitsyn seeks out and records the history of that perversity.

As Solzhenitsyn protests the use of the government of the State to subvert justice, so he protests the use of the government of the Church to subvert the truth of God’s Word for salvation. In both spheres government, God’s gift for ordering life in the State and the Church, is turned into the management of power and people for the preservation of an idea rather than an instrument for the truth of justice and the truth of salvation. Solzhenitsyn’s case may serve to needle many in their particular places to resist such perversions in both spheres and to insist with all their might that carrying the office of power is for governing.

ADAM, WHERE ARE YOU?

ISN’T IT INCONGRUOUS

that people living in the space age forget the old question, “Adam, where are you?” in favor of the modern question, “Who am I?”

The older question is closer to the deeper reality of human existence. It is the question that corresponds to the fact of lostness. The older question also has the fact of the relational built into it, for it is a question that raises the issue of perverted relations. In answer to that question, “Adam, where are you?” one is compelled to deal with the relation of God to other people and to the created world. Man is not allowed the deceitful luxury of centering the world, existence, and the question in such a way that God, other people, and the created world become mere adjuncts to identifying himself.

Preoccupation with the question, “Who am I?” rather than the question, “Where are you?” does reflect the malaise of deception in the inner being. In a culture where the philosophy, the literature, and the newly devised techniques for self-understanding have abandoned the concern with being, the slippery inner self has no defense against its own preoccupation with the introverted question about its own existence. Answers to the wrong questions can hardly be other than wrong answers.

We would do well to chastise our questions in the light of the ancient question, the question in which man is addressee. In place of the heady
sophomoric mentality that thinks it shall, by its endless questions, fright­
ens its compatriots and surely put God in the dock, the old question,
"Adam, where are you?" puts man in the position of being questioned. It is always easier to raise questions for the sake of evasion or to display one’s clever wit than it is to be caught in the dead center of one’s inescap­
able but twisted relationships. The older question serves the truth by doing the latter.

This presupposition about the “whereness” of human life, and lost­
ness as the reality of the human condition, make it appropriate to deal with considerations of the space in which people live and love, work and die.

Two items in this issue of The Cresset consider space in relation to family life and married love. We are pleased to add these articles as contributions to our on-going reflections on the family.

THE NEW CAVE DWELLERS

Marriage is not the only way for living the adult life. Neither the practice of one’s life as a sexual being, nor theory on human existence, nor the doctrine of man require marriage for the adult life. Each human being is faced not only with the question, “Shall I marry this particular person?” but also with the question, “Shall I marry at all?”

We add this note for the sake of some balance in what we say about marriage and the family. Not all adults are living in marriage or family relationships. And not all such singles live the life of swingers or sexually promiscuous beings. There are also many of them who live the single life with chastity. We do not wish to speak about marriage and the family in such a way as to sug­
ject that these singles are lesser hu­mans or outside the sphere of our concern and interest.

In fact, an additional reason for commenting on this situation of the life and habitat of singles is a report on the work of a young (single) pastor among single people (there are 1400 residents) who live in the International Village in Schaumberg, Illinois. Our interest and con­
cern is about the kind of life these people are trying to live, about the kind of ministry the Reverend Nich­olas Christoff is doing there, and about the call for intensive Chris­tian training among these young singles to equip them for their wit­ness and ministry in their place of living.

As there are particular problems related to marriage, so there are special problems related to the single life. Spouses (especially the godly and Christian) indeed receive their sexuality and each other as gifts. One can adequately under­stand the phrase in the wedding ceremony “... and keep you only unto her/him, so long as you both shall live...” only on the grounds that spouse is given to spouse by the One who makes the new thing when he makes them one. The honor, the love, and the mutual care of spouses for each other are predicated on the action of the Creator giving the each to the other. In the same way, the single life (at least for the godly and the Christian) itself must be seen in this “gifted” sense. It would be just as ungodly for one who has chosen to be “married” to the single life to fail to see the “gifted” character of that existence as a sexual being as it would be for the man and woman who have chosen the life of marriage to fail to see the spouse as “gifted” for their lives as sexual beings.

Temptations indeed vary with dif­
ferent persons, with different stages in life, and with the differences in their places of life and work, but temptations always focus on the hu­man being in the concreteness of the relationships to God, the other peo­ple, and to work. The temptations for married people are of one sort; the temptations of singles are of another. According to the news re­port from Pastor Christoff, there are temptations to the singles especially to live for self-pleasure, in self­indulgence, and in the pursuit of pleasure. While the reader will recognize that these may be tempta­tions of particular attraction and severity to singles, they are by no means exclusive to them.

Owner-developer Norman Acker­berg has developed a number of international villages (Singles Apartment Complexes) of the type in Schaumberg. These dwellings are designed for a particular way of life, a way of life that does not have many precedents. As there must be special attention given to the life of spouses and the family in these days of chang­ing patterns, so there must be special attention given to this new way of living by those who are called “the new cave dwellers.”

Pastor Nic, as he is called, began first with choosing International Village as a place to live. It was not long before he was involved in past­oral work with inhabitants of the village. Now he is full time in past­oral work among them. He says these people are not “turned off” by the churches. But the programs of many churches are designed for the family, and for the children of fam­i­lies; they are not attuned to the sin­gles. Some of the people in the Vil­lage worship with the local congrega­tions (as does “Pastor Nic”) on Sun­day. While the dwellers have wor­ship services (not on Sunday) and while there is discussion among them to form a congregation within the Village, no final decisions have yet been made, according to reports.

As there are dangers in such liv­ing, there are also dangers in such a ministry. We shall watch with inter­est the development of this as yet experimental pastoral work by the young pastor of the American Luther­an Church. Among other needs, one seems very dominant, and of great interest to The Cresset, and that is the deliberate training of the lay men and lay women of the Village to make their Christian witness and do their Christian service in the midst of the place where they live. But then, we need to exercise this same kind of care and furnish this same kind of training for spouses and children in families in more conventional settings.
STUDENTS OF JOHN DONNE HAVE ALWAYS recognized the dramatic qualities of his poetry, his use of what F.R. Leavis called "the presentment of situation, the liveliness of enactment, something fairly to be called dramatic."¹ Nelson Lowry, in particular, has contributed to the study of Donne’s dramatism by analyzing in some detail the rhetorical devices which make Donne’s poems dramatic: the speaker as performer, the exclamation, the question, the interruption, the consideration of alternatives, and the monologue-like outbursts which open some of the poems.² Nevertheless, although Mr. Lowry echoes other critics in saying that "specification of place . . . must be taken into account," relatively little critical attention is given to that important dramatic element—physical setting—in The Songs and Sonnets. Such a study allows us to view these poems of love and death in an unusual perspective, one which reveals some things about the craft and the themes of individual poems, as well as Donne’s attitude toward the world around him.

Donne has his lovers act out their parts in carefully chosen interior and exterior settings which are almost without exception—encompassed in little rooms. It is not surprising that in these poems of interwoven love and death, the sole interior settings are the rooms of love and the rooms of death, the latter including the deathbed and the tomb. Interestingly enough, we also find a thematic balance: there are ten poems set in the rooms of love and ten in the rooms of death.

In three poems—"The Sun Rising," "Break of Day," and "The Dream"—the room of love encompasses the entire poem in a vivid, explicit setting. These bedrooms, into which the sun floods in early morning, are havens of joy which the rude world outside continually threatens. The bed in "The Sun Rising" is the center of the world; the walls of the room are the sun’s sphere. The lovers lie abed as the sun enters, lighting the window and the curtain (a rare descriptive interior detail), while outside the schoolboys and apprentices rush to work, and the king and his court prepare for a day’s hunting. Everything outside the room moves frenetically around the lovers who are stationary in the bed. Kings, wealth, even the sun are reduced in comparison to the lovers. Outside the room, in fact, people are just playing at life: "Princes doe but play us." The real world, the quintessence of life, is here in the room.

"The Dream" is also an awakening in a room of love. The time of day is hard to determine because the references to waking and rising suggest that the beloved has come in to awaken the lover in early morning, but the references to tapers and torches suggest that she has come at midnight. The bed is the center of this poem as well. All actions are relative to the bed. The "rising" from it will always result in the "coming" back to it. It is the center of reality and dream, of truth and illusion, of love and death-in-love.

"Break of Day" is the third poem with the bed at the center, which the room appears to surround; but here the threat of the world outside the room of love produces additional tension. Heart and honor can be joined with body here in the room, but outside the room, love is subordinated to trivia—"business"—and even love itself becomes a duty.

In a fourth poem, "The Good Morrow," the room does not immediately encompass the poem, but the setting in the room of love is gradually made explicit. The title suggests immediately the awakening of lovers as in the previous poems, but we are not aware of the setting until well into the poem. A reflection on the past life of the lovers introduces it, and not until the last line of the first stanza is there a suggestion of the room: beauty, he says, "t'was but a dreame of thee." The suggestion of the room becomes stronger in the second stanza when he speaks of souls waking up. Only in the middle of the poem do we become aware of where we are:

For love, all love of other sights controls
And makes one little room an everywhere.

The room is again the whole world, the true reality in which lovers, who are themselves the two hemispheres of a world, choose to become explorers.

While it is acknowledged that the "specification of place . . . must be taken into account" in Donne's poems, relatively little critical attention has been given to that important dramatic element—the physical setting—in The Songs and Sonnets. "Such a study allows us to view these poems of love and death in an unusual perspective, one which reveals something about the craft and themes of individual poems, as well as Donne's attitude toward the world around him."

The bed disappears from the "set" in "A Valediction, of my Name in the Window," and the window takes the bed's place in the foreground. However, the scene is still the room whose function it is to confine and foster love. The lover's name on the casement window serves to confine his beloved to the room and to faithfulness while he is gone. When she is tempted by the outside love. The lover's name on the casement window serves to push her back into the room, into faithfulness, until the room which is his body can return.

DONNE'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE ROOM of love is just as complex as his attitude toward women and the body. The name, for example, is not inevitably a place of joy. In "The Broken Heart" we watch the lover carry his heart into the room as a youth. However, not only does he leave without receiving a heart in return, but his beloved shatters the heart he has given her, like a dresser mirror, into a million fragments.

"The Apparition" has a vivid gothic setting in a dark chamber in the middle of the night. We watch the speaker projecting himself as a ghost who arises from the grave to creep along the passage to the room of his former beloved. As the tapers flicker, the lady tries vainly to awaken her new lover who is sex-wearyed and pretends to be in a deep sleep. Then down bends the ghost to hiss horrors in the ears of the woman who would never share this room of love with him in life. The romance and holiness has gone from the room of love in the poem. The ghost sees the place that he himself had wanted taken to by another, and he irreverently points out the goatishness of the lady nudging her exhausted lover. This raw humor is not exactly what the speakers of the other poems had meant by the ultimate "reality" of the love-bed.

The coarseness of the love relationship is described again in brief references to the wedding hall and marriage bed in "Love's Alchemy," which is also called "Mummy." Unlike the speakers of the earlier poems, the speaker here is not convinced that the room of love is the center of happiness. The lover enters the room to have "a rich and long delight" only to experience (as Redpath puts it) "a short, cold time of it." The room of love has become, in this poem, an illusion as coarse and brief as physical union and the marriage ceremony itself. The speaker is saying, "Wake up! You won't find any elixir in this room—just a temporary palliative like mummy." The widespread fraudulent sale of "mummy" from the recent dead instead of from real Egyptian mummies heightens the theme of love's fraud.

The room is certainly not what it appeared to be at first.

In each of these poems involving the room of love, the room represents sexual love and woman. The settings reflect the intimacy of love, love's ability to close out the rest of the world as if it did not exist and as if the room itself were all.

In Donne, each room of love becomes, of course, a tomb as well, so pervasive is the idea that the lover's body dies a little in each act of sexual union. In "The Paradox," for example, the body becomes a tomb after love-making. Although "The Cannonization" does not belong among those poems with a room setting, the speaker in the poem connects the room of love with the room of death—in this case, an urn for their ashes.

"A Valediction Forbidding Mourning" also relates these two settings of love and death. After we are well along in the poem we realize that the setting for the speaker's leave-taking is probably the bedroom, which is also where the stationary foot of the compass is fixed. We have only to notice the sexual overtones which Donne appears to have intended in his description of the compass to suspect this. The poem, however, opens with the speaker (in the bedroom presumably) imagining a death-bed rather than a lovebed, and the connection between love and death is made in a stanza describing the partial death of the lover every time he leaves the beloved. The return of the lover implies the return of the compass back to the marriage bed and to a third dimension of death, this time in the physical act of love.

"Sonnet 42" implies the same setting and follows the same pattern as "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning." A parting lover imagines the shock of final death in telling his beloved of how he dies a little each time he

leaves her. “The Fever” and “The Will” are two other poems (almost opposite in their attitudes toward love) which are set around a deathbed in the death roc. “The Fever” is a poem of serious tone about the impending death of his beloved. “The Will,” on the other hand, is a mocking comment on society, including a bitter love affair.

DONNE MOVES THE SETTING OUT-OF-DOORS in his poems, he manages to take the walls of the room with him. There are, surprisingly, only five poems in *The Songs and Sonnets* which use the out-of-doors as dramatic setting. (Of course, there are additional poems which make use of natural imagery and metaphors taken from nature, but which are not exterior dramatic settings.) To perceive these out-of-door walls in Donne, one need only compare a Donne landscape with the wide-ranging freedom of movement in Shelley’s “Ode to the West Wind,” or the wide, horizontal sweep across the ocean in Byron’s “Childe Harold,” or Wordsworth’s infinite field of daffodils, or even Gray’s amble over the village in “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard.” Contrary to the treatment of landscape in these poems, the cameras photographing Donne’s outdoor settings do not move horizontally, but rather, since Donne’s little outdoor scenes are really roofless rooms, they move vertically. The camera sweeps up into the air to view soul’s journey or the galaxy and down to the particular on the earth in close-ups. This vertical movement is particularly well illustrated in “The Primrose.” The poem opens in a rich landscape

“IN ALL THE DEATHBED POEMS, LOVE AND death are connected visually because the deathbed constantly recalls the lovebed. Curiously enough, just as love is a joyful, even somewhat romantic, experience in the preponderance of the lovebed poems, so it is in all of the deathbed poems except “The Will.”

Even though the sun’s rays invade these rooms of love at times, it is almost as if the lovers are happily hidden from the view of God. Donne’s preoccupation with soul and spirit and the sinful body is rarely present in these poems. “The Ecstasy,” which is set out in the open on a hill in full view of the heavens, is a point of contrast which will be discussed later.

The remaining poems set in rooms of death take the reader from the room to the grave. As the room is woman, the grave is man without woman. As benefits this ghastly setting, the grave poems are all basically negative in tone and attitude toward life. Even before the projected death in “The Damp” and “The Funeral,” love had been unrequited, and the tone of the poems is one of mock bitterness. The ghoulish settings of the shrouding and the post-mortem manage to divest love of its romantic trappings. In addition, the women of these poems are no Lauras, but heartless creatures to whom love has been a fashionable game.

“The Relique” has roughly the same ghoulish setting—the digging up of a grave—but the theme is serious. We could chuckle at the ghastly settings of “The Damp” and “The Funeral” but, ironically, a serious treatment of the same grim setting is less successful. The theme of Platonic love is difficult enough to handle to begin with, and the speaker’s moral tone, his amazing comparison of himself with Christ, tend to coarsen the gentle parts of the poem. Also ironic is that physical restraint described in sexual language (“Our hands ne’er toucht the seals”) makes this poem lauding Platonic love one of the most highly charged sexual poems of the group. Like the other poems with grave settings, the poet is, of course, speaking of the absence of physical love.

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“IN ALL THE DEATHBED POEMS, LOVE AND death are connected visually because the deathbed constantly recalls the lovebed.”
on top of a hill. We see the primroses in our little "room" so abundant that the individual drops of rain in a shower would each hit one flower. But we never see outside the room to the surrounding countryside which is so hard to ignore from the vantage point of a hill. Instead, our eyes go up to compare the flowers with the stars of the galaxy and down to scrutinize the petals of particular flowers beneath our feet. As in "Sun's Rising," a contrast in the setting represents a contrast in theme. Here the usual five petaled flowers are contrasted with the unusual four and six petaled flowers, which leads us to contrast usual and unusual women.

The same upward movement occurs in "The Ecstasy." The poem opens with a sensuous scene of violets and lovers on a pregnant bank. Donne even adds a beady-eyed character in the bushes near-by. But we never see anything beyond this spot. We leave the earth for most of the poem to follow soul's movement into the air and we return to earth only at the poem's conclusion. A reference to violets in the middle of the poem insists on a brief and awkward glance earthward. Even the delicate purple violet, because it is earth-bound, is symbolic of reproduction. The contrast between bodies on the earth and souls in the air is similar to the contrast in "Aire and Angels."

There is some horizontal movement in "Lecture Upon Shadows," as the lovers stroll along toward evening. However, the title of the poem suggests the confines of a classroom, the walls of which are defined by the arc of the sun's movement. The significant movement in the poem is between the actual springtime of laughing trees, mandrakes, and fountain, and his imagined winter of frozen, silent trees which is less painful. He cannot be comforted by the trees, to whom he gives human attributes. This paradoxical attitude toward nature in springtime (which is deadening rather than invigorating) echoes the thematic paradox of his being maddened by his beloved's faithfulness to her husband and seeing this faithfulness as falsity to himself.

THE QUESTION OF WHY DONNE MADE SUCH limited use of natural setting in The Songs and Sonnets tempts one to make a number of sweeping generalizations (which are more felt than known) about his subconscious attitude toward sex. And one cannot argue that Donne's poems, because his settings are interiors, convey less freedom than, say, Shelley's. Nor is Donne's world smaller because walls surround it. On the contrary, Donne's freedom is soul's freedom—a soaring upward—and the microscopic view opens up different worlds.

However, I think that one can responsibly conclude that Donne's affinity for the room over the landscape and his intrusion of the room onto the landscape reveal that he is not comfortable with the geocosm, plain and unadorned. He rarely chooses it even as a setting for his idyllic pictures of love, which are usually happily hidden away in a kind of never-never land free from both the dross of earth and eyes of God. When Donne does use a natural setting, he doesn't go far with it: he leaves it by soaring upwards away from it, or by gilding it or changing its apparent reality through the microscopic close-up.
From February 11 to March 4, seventy-three works of textile art were exhibited in the Chapel of the Resurrection, Valparaiso University. This exhibit was part of a growing program of temporary installations of art along the side aisles, balconies, and narthex of the Chapel. Previous displays this school year included an exhibit of painting, sculpture, design, and crafts by VU art faculty and alumni; photo essays on Chicago's architectural landmarks, Chicago's Grant Park,
Indiana's man-made landscapes, and Ethiopia's Lalibela churches; and an exhibit of small stained glass panels. The final Chapel exhibit this school year will be a showing of VU student art. No exhibits were scheduled during the Advent season or Passion week; during these times special visual material was mounted in the Chapel to support and directly participate in the worship services of those seasons.

These chapel exhibits are conducted out of a desire to bring life and faith together. For, to bring art on non-religious as well as religious themes into the chapel is to bring powerful tokens of human sensibility, feelings, and thoughts about life into a context of Christian commitment and corporate worship. In that context life can inform faith, and faith, in turn, can inform life to the benefit of both. After all, from the point of view of the function of art, the intended, ultimate home of most works of art is not the detached setting of a museum, but rather, the hoped for destination of art is that of a place of intimate participation in people's lives, a place where the inspiring and clarifying powers of art can inform daily life.

This conjunction of art exhibition and worship setting is perhaps especially effective at a university chapel; for it is the work of a university to come to grips with the universe of ideas and expressions. The effectiveness of chapel art exhibits is also strengthened at VU by the large scale of VU's Chapel with its extremely dominant chancel which cannot be overwhelmed by a multiplicity of art expressions. Art in such a setting can accommodate, it seems to me, faith strengthening encounters of expressions regarding faith and life on a public, universal level.
THE DAY OF ASHES. THE FIRST DAY OF LENT. It is meant to be a solemn time, a sober time, a time marked by deep repentance—so that we might experience genuine renewal and rebirth.

THE DAY OF ASHES! In ancient times it was upon this day that public, grave sinners were required to enter upon a period of public penitence. Their heads were strewn with ashes and for the season of Lent they were excluded from the fellowship of the sacrament.

THE DAY OF ASHES. And liturgical custom echoes for all of us grave sinners those fateful words spoken by the Holy God to Adam and Eve on that first “Day of Ashes,”—“DUST THOU ART, AND UNTO DUST SHALT THOU RETURN!” Since then the history of the human race has been one continuing Day of Ashes; and we are the ashes. Frail children of dust, we are today again reminded of how these awe-full words, “DUST THOU ART, AND UNTO DUST SHALT THOU RETURN,” will most surely be spoken one day over each of us—and we will not hear, not in the flesh.

As we begin our Lenten preparation, we are invited to meditate on this lesson from the Old Testament. Today, more than ever, it is necessary for us to recover that sense of the living God present and at work in our world which the Old Testament conveys so powerfully. For we live today in a world which grows increasingly secularized and irreligious—not anti-religious, but irreligious. We need the witness of the Old Testament in a most urgent way to remind us that the living and holy God is indeed present and at work in our own immediate history, that He is active in every happening and circumstance of our own time and place.

JOEL UTERED A PASSIONATE PLEA FOR repentance in his time. It was a call to repentance addressed to the entire people of God: “... gather the people... the elders... the children, even nursing infants.” It was a call to a repentance that would be genuine and sincere: “... rend your hearts and not your garments.” Above all, it was a call to repentance that was pressingly urgent: “... let the Bridegroom leave his room, and the

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bride her chamber." It is this note of sharp urgency that catches the reader at once in the book of Joel. Earlier in the book (1:14-15) he cries, "Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly... Alas for the day. For the Day of the Lord is near, and as destruction from the Almighty it comes."

Yet, when we ask what it was that prompted this urgent plea for repentance, this passionate conviction that the Day of the Lord was at hand, we might well find ourselves smiling somewhat patronizingly at the answer. Chapter 1 of the book makes clear that what prompted all of this prophetic passion was—a swarm of locusts.

Joel 1:2-4: Hear this, you aged men, give ear, all inhabitants of the land! Has such a thing happened in your days, Of in the days of your fathers? Tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation. What the cutting locust left, the swarming locust has eaten. What the swarming locust left, the hopping locust has eaten. And what the hopping locust left, the destroying locust has eaten.

It was a plague of locusts that triggered Joel's call to repentance... a bunch of bugs led him to announce the nearness of the Day of the Lord. Well, really, now!

Surely that seems to us a strange connection. What man, or group of men, today would get so shook up over mere insects. Put in an emergency call for a DDT truck, perhaps; or, if the situation seemed more serious, get a squadron of crop-dusting planes to spray the fields—but issue a call to repentance, announce the nearness of the Day of the Lord? Not bloody likely.

Yet it is just this reaction—thinking only about DDT trucks and the like—which points up our need today for a recovery of the Old Testament's witness. The prophet Joel was more right than any modern man. He understood, with an immediacy which we have lost, that in every moment of life, in each circumstance and happenstance, we really do have to do, not just with bugs and viruses nor with mere forces of nature nor accidents of history, but with—THE LIVING GOD. It is in HIM, through HIM, by HIM that all things come. His eye is ever on the sparrow, and the locust; and on us. It is by His mercy that we draw each breath, take each step. In all that happens He is present and at work, and it is with Him that we must deal.

AS WE LIVE OUR LIVES DAY BY DAY, ISN'T it more often with a sense of the absence of God, rather than His nearness? When modern man contemplates a sunrise he is apt to call to mind what he has learned about the solar system, the relative positions of the sun and earth, and all the rest. He needs to be reminded, as G.K. Chesterton suggests, that on a deeper level of meaning it is still the case that the only reason the sun rises every morning is because God says, "Get up there, and do it again!" Today, we need not give up the many valuable scientific insights into the workings of our world which have come through much patient and worthwhile human effort. But just as certainly, we need to be brought again to a lively sense of God's immediacy and nearness. Life—all of life, every moment—is meant to be lived in Him, from Him, for Him; or it is, all of it, worthless, or worse.

The swarm of locusts in Joel's day has become, in our time, a swarm of vexing problems facing the human race—population, pollution, energy crises, continued stockpiling of nuclear weapons, economic disruption, political corruption... a ferment of explosive forces at work in our world and in our church. These, too, are signs of God's presence in ways which cry out for a latter day prophet like Joel. There are signs of our times to be discerned.

And yet, thanks be to God, a prophet in our time can point beyond what Joel saw and could proclaim. We can see when THE Day of the Lord did come, once and for all, into this world of time and space and laws of gravity. THE Day of the Lord has come. It is nothing less than that Day fulfilled in which we live, and which opens for us the deepest ground for repentance and renewal. The holy and living God has spoken His ultimate Word of judgment, His absolute No! against all human rebellion, in the Cross of Jesus. Yet, in that same Cross, He has spoken His YES! to us, the YES which reveals to faith that Christ's death was for us.

THE DAY OF THE LORD HAS COME. WHAT that Day has wrought is the nearest, deepest, most immediate Reality penetrating every moment, every circumstance of our lives. And this is the meaning of Lent, the meaning of true repentance—to let ourselves be opened, by contrition and repentance, to the Reality which this Day of the Lord has established for us—Christ for us, Christ with us, Christ in us NOW, each moment and in all places. This is the Day in which God invites us to become full sharers in the death of guilt and mistrust, of the impulse to live curved in upon ourselves, of despair and shame, of godless living and anxiety. This is the Day in which God invites us to become full sharers in that New Life, that New Creation, that New Relationship with Him as beloved and redeemed children, which the Cross of Christ has won for us. This Day is near, it is Now, it is at hand.

And so the prophet Joel's voice is meant to call out to us across the centuries. He summons us to recover that lively sense of God's nearness in our own lives. He stimulates us to recognize all the many signs in our lives that point to the evidence that we are creatures of dust and ashes because we live in separation and estrangement from the true Source of Life. By means of his prophet's voice, God calls us to repent, to think through anew our present need for the Gift which THE Day of the Lord has brought us; he calls us to abandon our antagonism against his will as we live day by day always in the Reality of that Great Day.

February, 1974
ON HUMAN HABITATION

"A NEW HOME IS YOUR BEST INVESTMENT"—so reads a bumper sticker prominently displayed on a contractor's pickup. That advice, however, is at best a bit dubious. To have a home of one's own is of course most desirable—to make one's home simply an investment may make it less so. In any case, a new house is not a sure bet and perhaps the least productive of several common methods of investment. Money is made in the manipulating of land, the buying and selling, and particularly in the financing of real estate developments. So-called appreciation of property is not automatic—a fact discovered by many people who sell their homes and attempt to buy new ones. Rising prices have pushed the cost of replacing most homes well beyond current sales prices. Ruthless exploitation of land has lowered property values in entire neighborhoods because of the destruction of natural surroundings or pollution of the atmosphere. Although finding a reasonable habitat is a major concern for every family, the problem is less that of changing property values and more a depreciation of the human spirit.

In recent years there appears to be an increasing concern for quality of life—a movement away from the suburban "rambler" or "split level" or whatever is being featured this season. Families are beginning to look for alternatives to the plastic world of massive subdivisions. Older homes, once left as fodder for an expanding ghetto, are being restored and refurbished by people interested in more than permanent aluminum siding. Such a move has not gone unnoticed by the builders. Several are constructing brand new "old" homes—except with all the amenities including (of course) permanent aluminum siding.

One way or another, our homes reflect our ideas and opinions. Frank Lloyd Wright once commented that we may first affect the nature of a dwelling, but after we move in, the building will affect us. There is so little in today's world that is authentic, it is becoming increasingly difficult to recognize authenticity when it is encountered. We are living at a time when the cult of mediocrity dominates our way of life, when "kitsch" is being hailed as the only appropriate and authentic expression of our culture.

The term kitsch has been defined differently. Generally it is used to refer to objects which have been transferred from a "real" status (i.e. the uses for which they were made) to use for a different purpose. Making a lamp out of an old coffee grinder is an illustration of such a transfer. Why not appreciate the object for its intrinsic value? Perhaps it could even be restored to a point where it would be once again usable for grinding coffee. Certainly sticking a light bulb into any object can add little to its value. What is even more a perversion of antiquity is the vulgar reproduction of objects which become known not for their real value but for a sentimental or technical substitute of these values. For example, as there are few old coffee grinders around to make into lamps, plastic ones are produced to satisfy the demands of the marketplace. One does not have to be very perceptive to recognize that our homes are full of such things—formica with wood grain, plastic fruit or flowers, television sets designed for Louis XV, "authentic reproduction" of a painting on embossed paper to resemble brush strokes, and of course fake fireplaces. The following ad appeared in a recent issue of a home magazine:

Like early American fireplaces with crackling logs? This electric fireplace doesn't burn logs, but it does provide the early American sound of logs burning via a special sound maker. It's also available with an aroma unit for a realistic wood smell. (Emphasis mine).

It is not difficult to understand that rapid industrialization and increased consumer demand create a market for substitutes. There are simply not enough of the real thing to go around and price is a major consideration; substitutes are designed to cost less. But what happens to a person so surrounded by substitutes and surrogates? What happens when this individual is confronted with an artistic or natural phenomenon? The drapes are pulled to shut out a brilliant sunset—so the light will not fade the furniture. The only original art worth owning is a rendering of one's dog—and after all a portrait is really a surrogate for the person (or animal) being depicted. Observed from this point of view, our homes have been transformed into inferior environments, filled with false and sentimental objects of little meaning or value. The artificial has replaced the natural, honest function has been obscured by elaboration, individual ideals have

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been replaced by conformity and imitation, and quality by novelty. Certainly new media have contributed to the general falsification by substituting the vicarious for an authentic lived experience. What has been so damaging to the human spirit is that these types of images can become dominant. There develops a need for falsehood—people come to recognize themselves only in a counterfeit image.

SUCH INFERIOR ENVIRONMENTS and false images are reflected in both the government and the church. I do in fact have a theory about the present political crisis. I believe that Richard Nixon really died during his first term in office and, in order to maintain control, his several lieutenants had the Disney studio construct a plastic robot of the man. Because this would have been discovered during the campaign for a second term, the robot had to be used sparingly, and wherever possible other party leaders conducted rallies and pronounced political positions. Of course the dummy had to be programed for some speechmaking, but limited exposure made less obvious the fact that the same comments were being made over and over. This would also explain the third party telephone conversations when Nixon was supposedly in the room; the lack of accessibility to the oval office; officials running amuck with campaign funds and making deals (no one there to direct the operation). Naturally, tapes had to be used since this would be the only way the robot could be programed. Also how else could the coincidence be explained that both of the Nixon estates are located close to Disneylands? Could it be for ease of maintenance and repair?

That which is false in the environment has insinuated itself also into church and home. It seems to me that altar and hearth are quite close together. The church probably reflects the best and the worst in all of us. Certainly many of the rituals used for worship could be placed in the category of kitsch—particularly reducing the Lord's Supper to a cardboard wafer and a shot glass of Mustard. False images abound and what passes for leadership is little more than bureaucratic bullying.

As a reaction to this chaotic world, Americans are beginning to look inward, retreating back to the hearth. Unfortunately, most homes are to be escaped from—the realities of family life rarely being serene. The phenomenon of the camper, or when one can afford it, the second home, does not surprise me. Certainly any kind of semi-natural setting is preferable to the contrived and artificial landscape of the better developments. The lack of space in a camper or cabin can even encourage communication and occasionally improve human relationships. Rustic environments demand less of their detergent-minded occupants. Of course putting everyone into a camper is hardly a solution to the problem of housing, and most people must of necessity try to survive in an urban setting. However, it is not the matter of population density per se that creates most of the problems; it is rather design, the quality of the environment. Sociologists have long lamented the apparent breakdown of the family structure in our society. Perhaps the current retreat back to hearth and home might encourage a re-evaluation of this concept. Before any realization of this hopeful sign would be possible, we will also have to re-evaluate the manner in which we construct our habitats.

THE VAST MAJORITY of habitats—be they houses, condominiums or apartments—are designed by builders rather than architects or designers. By definition builders are incompetent for this work. I would no sooner expect the builder to design a home than to expect the architect to get out to the site with hammer and nails and build it. Of course the builder should know something about planning, just as the designer must know about building, but little joint effort is being made at this time really to upgrade the quality of the typical American home. In fact, the direction is the opposite—higher costs, lack of materials, never-ending demand for novelty have reduced most new housing to all-time lows. Design is the first thing to be cut in order (theoretically) to save costs.

I have heard a great deal about women's liberation in the last several years and yet I see no significant change in the configuration of the American home. For the most part homes are still being constructed along the lines of the familiar holy trinity of spaces for women—the kitchen, the bath, and the bedroom. Inefficiency is a byword and the last dreary remnants of conspicuous consumption can be seen in the cut-out plywood doo-dads passing for the latest style. Perhaps the first step would be to get some of our better architects and planners involved in residential design.

Certainly there can be no more critical problem facing us than the use of the land. Few people can afford a vacation home in the wilds, and parks have become so crowded with recreational vehicles that they resemble the cities left behind. There
are, however, partial solutions to the dehumanizing of people being forced to live with surrogates and substitutes. Playgrounds, green belts, and public squares are devices that have long been used as means to enrich urban life. Suburban sprawl can be somewhat controlled by utilizing concepts of city planning long known to us. Unfortunately, such major concerns are usually beyond the control of the typical family which must try to survive as best it can in what is often a hostile setting.

For most people there are options to help ennoble the human spirit that can be accomplished on a modest scale. One such course is the recognition of each individual in the family unit. The need for each to have defensible space as well as access to common area. Children have all too often been told not to tack things up on their walls because the house will have to be resold. Frequently they must conform to the parents’ idea of what a child’s environment should be like, such as the use of baby blue or canary yellow for a nursery when a small child is only able to perceive such intense colors as red, orange, or deep yellow. This kind of bland environment makes a sterile world for the child, devoid of creativity and imagination. The greatest put-down in the minds of many people is to liken a painting to something even their child could do. Some very obvious alternatives are suggested by the changing role of women in family life—liberated or not. Backroom kitchens could be replaced by common areas which would be used by several members of the family. Cooking utensils and other appropriate accoutrements left out as a celebration of the activities taking place there. The bedroom, which so often tends to resemble a brothel, might be reinterpreted as a place of retreat for both parents—in other words their own defensible place. Where there is space for the father’s “den” there should also be something that is exclusively the mother’s. Of course it would be relatively easy to satisfy everyone’s individual concern if floor space was unlimited. That is almost never the case, so it is really a matter of establishing priorities. When any member of the family is delegated to a secondary role, he or she cannot help but be affected in a negative manner.

**IF THERE IS ONE CENTRAL concern in my own work it is the matter of quality. For most of my clients (as well as my own family) quality is achieved only with the sacrifice of quantity. The profound effect that the home environment has on attitudes of people exposed to it makes this a price well worth paying. In fact I would suggest that it might be expressed in another way—that most families must sacrifice quality to attain quantity. It is not just a matter of money—kitsch is not necessarily cheap nor must the authentic be expensive. Actually, kitsch is very much like potato chips, you just can’t stop eating them—one is never truly satisfied. When cost or availability impose their ruthless sanctions on our plans, alternatives can be sought instead of substitutes. We are all victims of “future shock,” nevertheless an electric light need not look like an oil lamp (i.e., have a base such as a pot for non-existent kerosene). Plastics and other “synthetic” materials have qualities of their own and really do not need to look like wood or slate. Television is a very modern invention and the greatest source of information since the development of movable type. It does not need to look like something George Washington might have sat down to watch after a hard day at Valley Forge.

The quality of the home environment is for the most part determined by the level of human relationships and general attitude toward life. However, these are reflected by the physical properties and the types of objects with which we surround ourselves. Indeed, they not only manifest our opinion but in turn influence it. If there is a common retreat inward away from constant political crisis in government and church this might be a most appropriate time to examine the quality of our life from the inside out. The strength of any nation or any church is in the idealism and commitment of its individual members. And after all “home is where the heart is.”

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**REPRINTS**

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“A Review Essay of

A STATEMENT OF SCRIPTURAL AND CONFESSIONAL PRINCIPLES”

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THE POLITICS OF THE SIXTIES: SOME PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

AS THIS IS WRITTEN, THE Watergate affair remains unresolved—despite Richard Nixon's plea that "one year of Watergate is enough." (He is so right, though not in the way he means.) It will be time enough to analyze that dismal affair in detail once the President's fate is determined, but perhaps it is not too early to place it in a general historical context. One ventures the prediction that historians of the future will view Watergate as belonging, in spirit and significance, more to the Sixties than to the Seventies; it seems less a gloomy augury of things to come than a fittingly awful climax to a dreadful political decade.

The Sixties were nobody's finest hour. Whether of the left, right, or center, we all took heavy casualties, many of them self-inflicted. Watergate has, for the moment at least, wrecked whatever meager hopes existed for any creative new conservatism. On the left, Nicholas von Hoffman, a sympathetic critic of radicalism, admits that "the Movement ran its own car off the road and totaled itself," though he adds that "it was a splendid wreck and the ruins now rust in a better country than we had before." Most Americans would accept readily the judgment of wreck and ruin; that we are a better country for it is, at the very best, a more problematical assessment.

And then there was the liberal center. If radicals and conservatives can agree on nothing else, they will mutually insist that the Sixties marked above all the failure of liberalism. This judgment has sources other than ideological antipathy; a good many liberals have themselves become convinced of the at least temporary bankruptcy of the moderate left. Certainly the 1972 Presidential campaign revealed a liberalism in considerable disarray. Hubert Humphrey seemed a ghostly caricature of the old liberalism of the New Deal; George McGovern's new liberalism was an unstable blend of social gospel and radical chic; and Edmund Muskie, the moderate's moderate, gave, before disappearing from political sight, a memorable object lesson in bland inefficacy.

It is the decline of liberalism that is the most significant fact of the Sixties, if for no other reason than liberalism's traditional hegemony over most of America's political thought and much of its practice. Thus the febrile and disoriented state of our recent politics stems in considerable measure from the beleaguered condition of liberalism. Liberalism in trouble is America in trouble.

It was, of course, the war that was at the heart of it all. Vietnam fractured the American left and thus brought utter confusion to American politics. Lyndon Johnson's landslide victory over Barry Goldwater in 1964 removed the right from serious political consideration or responsibility. The path to the Great Society appeared well-paved with good intentions and lopsided Democratic majorities. A lot was done in the way of reform—far more than either the radicals or, more curiously, many liberals would ever acknowledge—but increasingly the nation's efforts and attentions centered on southeast Asia. Meanwhile the Great Society, always oversold and sometimes underfunded, failed to deliver on its promises, and the war, intensely vulnerable in itself, became as well the scapegoat for domestic failure. The problem was that Vietnam was a liberal war run with liberal groundrules by liberal politicians, and when the critics of the war turned out overwhelmingly to be liberals themselves, the left proceeded to devour itself in internecine warfare.

Inevitably, then, opponents of the war, in that kind of critical overlap so prevalent and so dangerous in politics, came to attack not just Vietnam policy but the philosophical and national weaknesses that they felt underlay that policy. From there the attack spread. Poverty, racism, injustice—it was all intolerable and it was increasingly attributed by a
radicalized left to the intrinsic nature of something called corporate liberalism. With the old enemy on the right at least temporarily crippled, radicals had only the liberal establishment to blame for the condition of a society where things both at home and abroad had gone so badly wrong.

When not only their policies but their principles came under attack, the liberals turned out to be singularly ineffectual in reply. The reasons for this are complex, but not the least of them is that they shared so many premises with their opponents. If human nature was readily malleable, if human institutions were easily responsive to the application of rationality and good will, and if social inequalities were essentially environmental in origin, what then, other than the lack of requisite caring, could account for the nation's problems?

"Liberalism, which has always worked so much better as politics than as philosophy, could not respond convincingly to criticisms based largely on its own premises."

THROUGHOUT AMERICAN history, much of the weakness of political liberalism—its too-frequent ignoring of the constraints placed on social policy by the intractabilities of men and institutions—had been obscured by a pervasive prosperity and by common-sense political pragmatism. But when issues such as war and racism came along that prosperity could not resolve, the common sense evaporated and pragmatism became a pejorative term associated with immoral compromise. Liberalism, which has always worked so much better as politics than as philosophy, could not respond convincingly to criticisms based largely on its own premises.

It is not surprising, then, that many liberals conceded the essential justice of their critics' views and themselves drifted leftward into radicalism. The new radicalism itself generally lacked philosophical rigor; too much of it was simply liberalism grown impatient and stringent. Significant here was the lack of a sophisticated Marxian tradition in America. Critics of "the system" resorted less to class analysis than to tendentious moralizing. "Perhaps the country will destroy itself," declared a typical liberal-turned-radical, "and perhaps it should for its sins against Asian peasants and American negroes." Faith in the working class, long a staple of radical hope, gave way to rhapsodizing over the young; the old analysis of politics as struggles among competing interests and classes was superseded by chiliastic visions pitting evil against good. The most devastating critiques of the new radicalism came from serious socialist scholars like Eugene Genovese, who made a small career of exposing the intellectual deficiencies of Staughton Lynd and other New Leftists.

All of which is to suggest that if liberalism failed in the Sixties, so also did radicalism. There simply is today no serious democratic socialist movement in America. Michael Harrington gets favorable book reviews but no important political support. Christopher Lasch composes eloquent and often incisive analyses of the weakness of radical thought but, like so many other left-wing critics, he is notably reticent about suggesting programmatic alternatives of his own.

Liberalism, in any case, did not "fail" nearly so badly as the critics (including many liberals themselves) suggest, or at least it failed in ways other than normally supposed. The political record was not all that wretched. Blacks did make substantial progress in the 1960's and so also did poor people in general. (Liberal masochism had a lot to do with the fact that the government got less credit than it deserved for its accomplishments.) As for the war, the series of miscalculations and blunders that eventuated in the Vietnam disaster were traceable in no coherent manner to political ideology.

Liberalism failed, as suggested above, where it has always been most vulnerable. Assorted utopians and romantics could put liberals on the defensive precisely because accusers and accused shared many of the same unrealistic notions concerning the way real people actually think and act. Liberals could deliver the political and economic goods better than they knew, but they also were intellectually weaker than they ever suspected.

"Majority coalitions in America have to command the center, and as the center-left Democrats floundered in exhaustion and self-doubt, the center-right Republicans took over."

WITH THE LEFT TORN BY internal guerilla warfare, moderate-conservatism in the person of Richard Nixon could make a political comeback. The liberal drift leftward left a vacuum at the center which the Republicans rushed to fill, though they, too, had a flanking force with which to contend for a time—the Wallace movement. Majority coalitions in America have to command the center, and as the center-left Democrats floundered in exhaustion and self-doubt, the center-right Republicans took over. In foreign affairs and, to a lesser degree, in domestic affairs as well, the pre-Watergate Nixon became America's most effective political pragmatist.

Ideological sectarianism had captured the Republicans in 1964 with the nomination of Barry Goldwater, which left Lyndon Johnson free to mold his huge consensus majority. Eight years later the sectarians of the left helped nominate George McGovern and thus produced an otherwise improbable Nixon landslide. In political terms, Nixon's victory was the more impressive; it was, in fact, the most impressive victory in American political history. All landslides of similar proportion had been won by candidates of the majority party. Nixon demolished McGovern as head of what was still a minority Republican party. The election thus proved all the more convincingly how thoroughly the great majority of citizens had rejected the radical critique of American society,
a critique embodied in part in the McGovern candidacy. What made it all the more astonishing—and significant—was that Richard Nixon was among the personally least popular Presidents of twentieth-century America.

One of the few influential groups in society not to take part in either Nixon victory was the intellectual community. It was the intellectuals who had taken most seriously and reacted most sympathetically to the radical assault on existing American society, and they were overwhelmingly opposed to the counter-revolutionary ethos of middle America, as well as to its spokesman in the White House. From their positions of influence in such places as the major universities and the national communications media, the dissenting intellectuals, far more influential than their numbers would indicate, carried on a running feud with their old enemy, Richard Nixon.

The Ervin Committee hearings revealed to what astonishing degree the men in the White House had developed a fortress mentality by the end of the President's first term. Convinced that their enemies on the left had more strength than they in fact did, persuaded that the message of their accomplishments was being distorted or ignored by a media conspiracy, frightened by apparent left-wing approval of and even participation in leaks of national security information (some important, some not), they created a nightmare vision of a nation deluded and endangered by a radical chic minority—and then proceeded to act on that vision. Ironically enough, they conjured up a radical specter at the very time that radicalism was about to peak and then rapidly decline. It is in this sense that one can speak of Watergate as the last act of the Sixties; it occurred in an atmosphere understandable only in relation to the political events and moods of the previous decade.

(It should not be but probably is necessary to add at this point that the foregoing analysis is intended in no way as exculpation or even mitigation for the Watergate criminals. Those who argue that to understand all is to forgive all should realize that their logic leads to the obliteration of all moral judgment. Even Hitler and Stalin, after all, had their reasons, reasons which the historian or moral critic is bound to try to comprehend, but we do not on that account forgive Auschwitz or mass purges. The men of Watergate were responsible adults fully answerable in law and morality for their actions.)

The future, as Mort Sahl used to say, lies ahead. The one prediction relatively safe to venture is that the political mood of the Seventies will likely be less fevered than that of the Sixties. A politics less inflamed in a culture less politicized would in itself be no small blessing; there is much to be said for cultivating the private vision. There are those who regret the decline of radical protest; there are probably more, however, who are glad that the kids and their friends have stopped marching and that the rest of us can edge out from up against the wall. The vagaries of history are such as to preclude easy confidence about the future, but perhaps it is not too much to hope that the end of the Movement will mark the beginning of wisdom.

Was it Worth the Time and Trouble?

ATTENDING THE SO-CALLED professional theater in the United States takes a major commitment of time, money, and emotion. Time, because most of the commercial theaters in any city still are located in the center of the city and most of the people do not live in that neighborhood. Money, because of the incredible prices for tickets, parking, refreshments, and the inevitable baby sitter. Emotion, because one must invest heavily in controlling—not to mention overcoming—the despair, anguish, and anger which seem frequently to well up after an evening at the theater. This observation received confirmation from two recent theatrical expeditions to Chicago, occasions which would not have materialized had there not been some reason other than “going to see a play” as incentive.

The first play seen was the 1950's
nóstalgia-bash musical Grease. For one whose main point of adolescent reminiscence centers in the early 1940's, the first question is: "Why would anyone in his right mind want to stimulate nostalgia about the 1950's?" Indeed, after reflection, this question seems appropriate for any individual because after sitting through this rock-and-roll musical the flatness, sameness, and dullness of the 1950's is only too apparent. It must be admitted, albeit reluctantly, that the subtleties of 1950 rock-and-roll need ear training for discernment much as Mozart; otherwise everything sounds the same.

If one found the 1950's, generally speaking, an aesthetic, political, and spiritual desert, then his reaction to Grease will be much the same. With the exception of a rather splendid production number in the first act centering on William Lampl, one of the younger members of the company, the two hours came off as exciting as an entire meal of mashed potatoes—filling, but dull. There was a great deal of very hard work on the part of the cast—hard work at being clever; hard work at being energetic; hard work at being "performers." But the question kept coming to mind—"Is it worth it?" There was enough material and plot interest for a good half-hour revue sketch. Thirty minutes of enjoyment can hardly compensate for an hour and forty-five minutes of boredom.

For me, the investment of time, money, and emotional control was too great for two hours of bland, time-filling experience. That is not enough to justify the theater. Taken out of context, lines from a Dylan Thomas poem seemed most appropriate, "Do not go gentle into that good night, . . . Rage, rage against the dying of the light." The large theater was about half-filled, but there was, alas, not one rage to be heard.

The second theatrical experience was quite different from the first in both form and content. In the long run, however, the basic premise of this essay was verified. The play was the Chicago premier of Eugene O'Neill's Hughie, a long one-act written at the beginning of the 1940's, but not produced in this country until recently. It is to be granted that O'Neill is recognized by most critics as America's finest playwright. Consequently, seeing a new play—or indeed any play—by O'Neill is an experience to be sought after by any serious student or devotee of the theatre. But in spite of the fact that this Nobel prize-winning playwright has had a number of very popular revivals on stage and television during the past few years (such as A Moon for the Misbegotten, The Iceman Cometh, Long Day's Journey Into Night, and Ah, Wilderness), it must be conceded that his name is probably not the drawing card that Neil Simon's or Tennessee Williams' would be. So it takes more than a little courage to book a relatively unknown O'Neill play into a relatively unknown and obscure downtown theater. The producer, Sidney Eden, is to be congratulated for taking the risk. No doubt, he will have problems, economically speaking, justifying the selection of this play and economic viability is the name of the game in show business.

Since attending the theater is more than merely seeing a play, reviewing a production should be more than merely talking about script and performance. In this instance it is necessary to begin with a few words about the theater itself. The First Chicago Center is the newest addition to the legitimate theater scene in the Chicago Loop. It is not really a theater at all, in the traditional sense, and for this we should be very thankful. All too often the traditional theater structure mitigates against the full realization of a script or performance. (One has only to try and experience the impact of a play or a musical from the second balcony of the Schubert or, even worse, the second balcony of the Auditorium, to understand what distance, acoustics, and proscenium barrier can do to participation in a theatrical event.)

This theater is in reality a 500-seat conference center at the First National Bank of Chicago. It is situated in what would be called the lower-level of the bank and consists of a rather pleasant foyer and relatively low-ceilinged auditorium with a shallow stage stretching across one entire end, unhampered by proscenium arch, curtain or wings. The simple matter of finding the theater, unmarked by marquee with flashing lights, offers a bit of a challenge. When one has managed to get steered in the right direction it is a pleasant experience to walk the entire stage, perhaps through public rooms with some rather fine art objects to enjoy before and after the performance. The idea of making nighttime use of what would otherwise be daytime space is an excellent concept and one that with a few imaginative extensions could provide, I would think, a bit of an economic boost, not only for the theater, but also for other performing arts. A new, creative use of space is one necessary step which must be taken by the professional theater and the First Chicago Center is to be congratulated for making at least a small move in this direction.

Because of the open stage, as soon as one enters this theater he is aware of the setting for the play that evening. In this instance, Hughie takes place in the lobby of a small hotel on a westside street in midtown New York. The hotel has definitely seen better days and though the crash has not come as yet—since the date is 1928—we feel that this hotel has a running headstart on the era of the depression.

James E. Maronek's setting is rich in detail and the cliched, worn elegance seems to set the mood and spirit of the play long before actors
appear and the story evolves in words. The almost inevitable green marble trim of the registration desk; the iron grill of the elevator with its "Out of Order" sign; the dusty, red-plush drapes; and the slip-covered surface of a lonely, impersonal lobby; together with the "correct" brand and size of cigarette packages on display and vintage wall poster all combine to make one nod with recognition and appreciated verisimilitude and say, "That's right; that's just right." Then, too, one must admire the sheer skill and craftsmanship apparent in the production of a well-constructed and well-painted realistic set. Ultimately, however, the serious critic of theater must pause and ask, "Is there a place in the theater today for Realism as a style when it can be done so much better, and seemingly more appropriately, by cinema and TV?"

**HUGHIE** WAS WRITTEN IN the beginning of the 1940's and forms the only extant part of what was originally conceived of as an eight-part series of one-act semi-monologues under the general title, *By Way of Obit*. In the canon of O'Neill plays, Hughes comes second to last immediately before *A Moon for the Misbegotten*. While any evaluation of Hughes must be based upon the play we have in hand, it is difficult not to bear in mind that it is merely a part of a much broader conceived work, and therefore, incomplete as it stands.

The central figure in this work is Erie Smith, a small-time gambler with big dreams and memories of past successes that have perhaps more of romantic illusion about them than clearly remembered facts. When Erie makes his appearance at the hotel, it is between 3:00 and 4:00 AM of a summer day. He is returning from a four-day drunk undertaken in response to the funeral of Hughes, the former night clerk of the hotel.

During the course of the one-hour drama, we become aware of the depth of their friendship, in spite of the fact that Hughes represented all those things of the straight world for which Erie, the man about town, had little use. For Hughes, Erie too was a needed friend because he provided the necessary excitement and illusion of life which made the drabness of Hughes's hen-pecked and grey existence at least tolerable. In the lobby is a microcosm of O'Neill's world during his later plays, where aloneness, despair, and futility are kept at bay by the tenuous and fragile defense of illusion. Within the environment of the hotel, time either seems to stand still or else be a leftover from the past. There is little sense of forward movement in this almost timeless, weightless, motionless capsule. But there is a world outside; a world that is traveling by, a world that we know of because we can hear it—the sounds of a car moving off, the train going by, the streetcar stopping and then going on.

**In the hotel lobby, where Hughes is set, we have a "microcosm of O'Neill's world during his later plays, where aloneness, despair, and futility are kept at bay by the tenuous and fragile defense of illusion."**

Erie and Hughes are caught and held with but a glimmer of hope that we suspect is yet another illusion. This is the fabric of the play, but it says little of the texture.

The pattern and depth of the play become apparent under the brilliant illumination provided by the virtuoso performance of Ben Gazzara as Erie Smith, supported by the carefully etched characterization of Hughes, the new night clerk, played by Peter Maloney. The chief aesthetic pleasure of the evening may be found in watching a master craftsman at work in terms of the program as well as the actual event, as well as the actual event, he achieves this superior position not only by virtue of his own tremendous talent, but with the considerable aid of his fellow craftsmen—actor, stage designer, sound technician, lighting technician, and costumer.

And what makes Mr. Gazzara's performance such an outstanding theatrical experience? As with any art form, it is ultimately the selection and arrangement of material which makes the final product noteworthy. Mr. Gazzara has selected with meticulous care the details which, when put together and arranged with consummate artistry, convey to us, the audience, the artistic reality of Erie Smith in the place and at the time of the playwright's conception. Mr. Gazzara's star status is probably due chiefly to his general exposure through the media of cinema and television—if nothing else he is remembered as the central character in the TV series "Run for Your Life"—but he is primarily a stage actor who has succeeded in the other two media, rather than the other way around. Still, it comes as a bit of a surprise after being conditioned by an impression of him gained through film and TV when Mr. Gazzara comes on the stage and fills the theater with radiance of a "presence" and the authority of a finely honed vocal and physical instrument.

It is attention to detail that lifts this performance to the level of the extraordinary—such things as: vocal quality after a four-day drunk; the incredibly "right" walk with knees that flex in a particular way and ankles that throw the foot out with an air of reckless assurance; the way in which the cigarette is lighted and smoked; the body that reflects a cocky self-confidence which is merely a veneer over an interior that has been all but consumed by loneliness and insecurity; the incredible timing which allows for interior thoughts and emotions to be eloquently communicated in the silence (this written in long before the cliched Pinter-pause). And then those wonderfully enriching visual touches—black and white wing-tip shoes, white socks, a blue hat to almost match the light blue suit—all these factors combine to present the audience.
with a Real and True three-dimensional Erie Smith. The interior life of the character, that level of reality which goes beyond the externals, is always manifest by the outward signs of the inward condition. Mr. Gazzara lays bare Erie Smith's interior life in giving us a visual and auditory picture which can be classified as memorable.

It did not seem that Hughes, the new night clerk, had more than eight lines during the entire evening, but Peter Maloney managed, again through an exquisitely conceived selection of detail, to show us a man whose life was as bare in substance and as lonely as Erie Smith's. His great economy of movement, subtle changes of focus and expression, his three-piece slightly worn suit with its inevitable accompaniment of white shirt and meticulously knotted four-in-hand, and carefully composed business made Maloney's characterization more than a mere foil for Erie.

IF ONE HAS SEEN A NUMBER of O'Neill plays in production the detail with which the author handles non-verbal sound cannot be overlooked. Having seen Long Day's Journey Into Night, who can forget the forlorn counterpoint of the fog horn? Almost every O'Neill script carries detailed instructions for off-stage sounds to echo the world which surrounds the action on stage. In Hughie the sounds are of the city early in the morning, the sounds of travel and movement, which are lonely, mysterious, and yet reassuring. They not only complement the action going on in the lobby of the hotel, but also lend another dimension to the meaning of the action going on in the lives of Erie Smith and of Hughes as does the incredible use of silence, punctuated by the constant ticking of the lobby clock.

LUIGI

A present patriarch
His gnarled bark
redolent of the must of his own pressing
the potatoes of his own digging
the almonds of his own husking.

Genetically, the father of six.
Spiritually, of hundreds
who worked with him, beside him, under him.
The long vintages of time increasing his bouquet
Sun-warmed by eight score solstices
Eyes bright, spirit soaring
With enduring Swiss-Italian roots
Californian only by transplant

His cycle now complete, fulfilled, ready for harvest
He knew himself
A man of melons, grapes, and walnuts
One created, yet himself a creator
A man who knew the dust of earth
And Who created it
And was ready to return.

T. J. KLEINHANS

For all of the pleasure this performance afforded, the question still intruded: "Was it worth it?" As an individual involved in producing theater, I enjoyed watching Ben Gazzara work with a script which was familiar to me. But the total experience in terms of scope of idea, levels of appeal, duration of time, interaction between those involved in this shared experience, price of ticket, parking problem, and such related items did not seem to fulfill my expectation of what the theater can and should be. If the theater is to be a dynamic factor in the life of a community, it must seek to rediscover and recover that which can happen only in the theater and not on film or the television screen. As interesting and well-done as Hughie was, I felt my commitment of time, money, and emotional involvement did not pay sufficient dividends.
On the Difficult Art of Borrowing

THE FRAUMUENSTER, ONE of the oldest churches of Zuerich with its new Chagall windows, has often played host to musical and theatrical productions. There could be nothing more fitting than to hear and see an oratorio based on the medieval images of The Dance of Death in this church. Walter Kraft, a young composer and organist from Luebeck, had the wonderful notion of creating a scenic oratorio based on passages from The Revelation of St. John the Divine and with dancers enacting the famous scenes of Death calling for the stereotype figures from King and Bishop to those whose only title would be "man."

However excellent this idea may have been, Walter Kraft and his co-artists were unable to master some obvious difficulties. Jean Claude-Ruiz was called from Paris to do the choreography and impersonate the figure of Death. He brought a playful, effeminate quality to this powerful figure, and the mere repetition of Death appearing and reappearing time and again to fulfill his duty in the name of God would have needed a rich imaginative palette to vary the variations of an old theme. To put it very mildly, let us say that Jean Claude-Ruiz is no Holbein of the dance. But—to complicate artistic matters—Walter Kraft is far from being a Bach on whom he leaned heavily and from whom he borrowed freely.

Kraft's concept of building a "musical cathedral" out of medieval, baroque, and modern elements turned against him. The great danger of reworking inspirational sources is imitation. Carl Orff is one of the few great contemporary composers who successfully got away with borrowing from the past. And Orff, too, not only in the Bach and pre-Bach period, was asked by Walter Kraft to help out. The complex production, however—solo voices, chorus, and orchestra—was impressive indeed.

As is the case with drama written for the stage, so the greater part of performed music is doomed to be forgotten. A statistically-oriented mind figured out that 90 per cent of all music composed is forgotten after two generations. This thought may not be sufficient solace for Walter Kraft, whose oratorio has been produced in several German cities and in Coventry, but it comforted me while listening to, looking at, and meditating on the living truths of life, its momentary joys, and the inescapable end of it all.

Luciano Berio, who came to Zuerich to guest-conduct Paul Sacher's orchestra, is considered by many and certainly by his wife and best interpreter, Cathy Berberian, as one of the most many-faceted composers of our time. Undoubtedly, he is in the forefront of today's avant-garde. His fertile imagination constantly tries to extend acoustic means of expression—a fact that added to his reputation the epithet of an eclectlc. But whatever he does has the stamp of his explosive personality and is, if nothing else, fascinating. He always tries to vary the existent forms to be heard in concerts. "We have wonderful soloists, but the form creates new problems," he said. He thinks that the modern composer must find new musical strategies in order to make the old principles meaningful.

One of Berio's favorite phrases is: "Our task is not to create music in application to a system, but occasionally to create a system as a possibility for music." He believes that the classical compositions move like beautiful machines—we immediately recognize the theme and its variations. "Today's music is far more complex. In order to further the familiar elements easily recognized, I am often quoting from the museum of the past and mix those quotations with my own music. In doing this the decisive thing is in which harmony and thoughts one clothes historic reminiscences. I prefer unusual combinations, such as Mahler and Stravinsky, Bach and Pousseur. The kind of wedding that results from it, must be interpolated and developed in channels of strict logic." Berio is fascinated by the human speech and voice, and his most astounding experiments lie in this direction.

I do not know whether Luciano Berio's music will outlast the next two generations (if one can believe in survival and a posterity at all). But in too many cases—Menotti comes immediately to mind—the gesture seems daring and progressive, while the substance is backward pointing. Obviously, it is not enough to have talent; one must have the genius to know what to do with one's talent. Berio has this genius, Walter Kraft has not.

From Austria have emerged a few new dramatists who indulge in the bold gesture of the avant-garde. Peter Handke is the one who is best known internationally. Gerhard Roth is the youngest of whom we have heard. His play, Lichtenberg or the Impossibility of the Natural Sciences, was produced in The Theater am Neumarkt in Zuerich. Georg Christoph Lichtenberg (1742-1799) was professor at the university at...
Goettingen and occupied with the natural sciences as much as with the linguistic wonders of the human mind. His wit exploded epigrammatically: “One really cannot know whether we are not now sitting in an insane asylum.” Or: “The fact that sermons are delivered in churches does not yet make the lightning-rods on their steeples unnecessary.” Or: “Autopsies cannot detect those faults in man which cease to exist with his death.”

Roth created a flimsy dramatic story about a professor who is suspected of having murdered a woman. He tries to use a half-witted boy to take the blame for this crime. The boy, however, finally turns against his tormentor and shoots him. In total distortion of Lichtenberg’s wit, the dramatist has the professor struggle with the world and himself on the edge of madness, has him dangle on the thread of nonsense which pretends to be full of meaningfulness. The action, or rather non-action, moves fast in nine thin, flat, but mostly short scenes. There is no intermission and no relief from the merciless pounding of words and gestures flying around in a cabaret-like style. The blackouts have a salutary effect in the beginning, but then become boring.

The original concept was, as the author tells us in the playbill, that the entire drama takes place in the professor’s mind. The acting characters are not supposed to be realistically perceived people, but dream figures, perhaps in the shape of clowns of Lichtenberg’s days. The professor is not to be taken as a historically correct image of Lichtenberg, but simply as a man possessed by language and wit. No doubt, there should be a kind of dream logic in all that happens onstage.

I have never seen a surrealistic play that works, let alone one that desperately tries to hang its nonsensical wit on an Ionescoesque thread. It is not enough to distort Lichtenberg’s esprit into absurdities when the original proves with its absurd wit how serious and logically lucid his thoughts are about the world.

Roth’s characters are borrowed from Buechner, Grabbe, Handke, and Raymond Chandler. There are linguistic bits of Nestroy and Karl Kraus in the play which Horst Zankl staged with skill and an eye for the grotesqueries which dance on the surface.

To throw epigrams around on stage is a dramaturgically difficult thing. Oscar Wilde mastered this art because he knew how to space them and also because his wit was brilliant and, at the same time, smooth, ready to be taken home. Lichtenberg was a satiric philosopher who “mainly loved those words which are not easily found in dictionaries,” words which ask to be observed and meditated about. “A head with wings is always better than a heart with testicles” is one of those sentences which try to destroy the very meaning the words possess—but on stage they are lost.

It is difficult to write a play about a mind running amuck and making sense in its madness, particularly if epigrammatic wisdom is taken apart and parts of it rearranged and served as poisoned hors d’oeuvres. It is difficult, if not impossible, to dramatize the Lichtenbergian thought. “What is man but a little nation ruled by mad minds?” Making one further step, Lichtenberg came to the conclusion: “Since man can become mad, I don’t see why a whole world system could not do the same.”

Lichtenberg’s wisdom made me forget a minor play and wonder about the madness of our world which now has the advantage of being almost three hundred years older and madder than the one in which Lichtenberg lived.

NEW STATUES IN THE PATIO

Remember the game children used to play
whirling around until somebody shouted,
“FREEZE!”

The boys were always grinning
but the girls were embarrassed.

When the ruins of Pompeii were dug up
the men were fixed in defiant attitudes
but the women seemed resigned to fate.

Women on pedestals in Victorian England
were obstacles in the path of Progress.

What about the Modern Woman entrapped in Immanence
in her cement patio discreetly screened?

MARY GRAHAM LUND

24 The Cresset
you said
the Milk Duds
were soft
and
a fly skipped in a milk-ring
on our table-top—
the wide-bladed fan hummed sadly overhead
flicking black/white shadows over the peeled
linoleum floor—
the beefy policeman toyed with his coffee
watching the waitress
fill the ketchup bottles . . .
the screen door
banged open
and two red-necks wearing FUNKS HY-BRIDS T-shirts
and baseball caps
wrestled each other to the counter . . .
. . . the trucker spat on the floor
and slapped a dime down—
while the man handing out Gideon Bibles
smiled at the waitress
and said “Jesus saves . . .”
she
blinked at him
through straggled blond hair
and held the half-filled ketchup bottle
like a torch—
the hamburger came (burned)
with no cheese
no lettuce
no pickle
and
from the juke box
Ferlin Husky moaned
“I’d walk a mile . . .
and
from the corner the tv glowed
warmly and Walter Cronkite beamed
beatifically
and pronounced the world
good . . .

J. T. LEDBETTER

Books

DISEASE AND HISTORY

By Frederick F. Cartwright in collaboration
with Michael D. Biddiss. New York: Thomas
Y. Crowell Company. 1972. 248 pages. $7.95.

Frederick F. Cartwright, a medical historian associated with King’s
College Hospital in London, sets out in this work to say something
about mankind by portraying the impact of disease upon man’s his-
tory. What he ultimately says about man is in some ways flattering, for
man has survived and even con-
quered a host of maladies which once
threatened to annihilate whole cit-
ties, armies, and nations. But Cart-
wright’s statement about man is also
humiliating. While avoiding the
temptation to say that all moments
of historical consequence were af-
fected by disease in some way, he
does show clearly enough that the
state of the world today is at least
in part the work of mosquitoes, lice,
bacteria, defective genes, and even
hemorrhoids.

The medical expert may find in
Disease and History some diagnoses
which are unwarranted or less than
precise, and the discerning student
of history may detect some erring
or too hastily drawn judgments.
Nevertheless, Cartwright’s book is
delightful reading because what he
is really doing, and doing quite
openly, is indulging in the luxury of
“If-history.”

If Athens had not been ravaged by
scarlet fever in 430 B.C. the entire
history of western civilization might have been different.

If "the cult of Christ the Healer" had not gained a reputation for affecting successful cures during the disastrous plagues in the Roman Empire during the second century A.D., Christianity might never have become a true world religion.

If the Black Death had not weakened the woefully corrupt church of the fourteenth Century John Wycliff could never have challenged as he did the church's authority. John Huss, then, could not have built upon Wycliffe's work, and Luther could not have stood upon the spiritual shoulders of Huss.

Cartwright is really at his best when he describes how the careers of Ivan the Terrible, Henry VIII, and Napoleon Bonaparte were affected by disease. Ivan was actually a wise and prudent ruler until the tertiary stage of syphilis ruined his mind and he became worthy of the title "Terrible." Henry VIII also suffered from syphilis, reasons Cartwright, and that is perhaps one of the reasons he could never rationally deal in a consistent way with the effects of the Reformation upon his kingdom. A settlement was never achieved in areas such as Northern Ireland, and though the situation is compounded now, the smoke of that old battle in Henry's diseased mind is not yet cleared. In the case of Northern Ireland even the compounding problems can be blamed in part on disease. In 1801, King George III, while in a delirious state resulting from porphyria, a genetic disease which results in the poisoning of the blood stream, denied Catholics a place in Ireland's Parliament and placed them under the rule of the alien and hated Protestants. One of the last chances for an "easy solution" had been lost.

Between 1812 and 1815 Napoleon lost two entire armies. The first was almost totally wiped out by disease (most notably typhus) during the disastrous march to and from Moscow. The second, which was defeated on 18 June 1815 in what the French still call the "enigma of Waterloo," was actually deprived of effective military leadership by a severe case of hemorrhoids which kept Napoleon from assuming his duties as general. The man whom the philosopher Hegel called "The World Spirit on Horseback," the culmination of everything it meant to be human, is here seen to be plagued with obesity and stomach ulcers, and is finally done in by something like "piles."

Another quirk of the interplay between disease and history caused Queen Victoria of Great Britain to be indirectly responsible for the success of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. Victoria was responsible for transmitting into her line the genetic disease known as hemophilia A, the disease which causes sufferers to be "bleeders." Victoria's granddaughter Alix grew up to become Alexandra Feodorovna, wife of Nicholas II of Russia and mother of their only son, Alexis. Alexis inherited hemophilia A, and the very presence of the disease introverted the royal family to the extent that effective administration of the state came to a halt. The storied Rasputin filled the vacuum and Russia deteriorated. At the critical moment in 1917, when Russia might have rallied around the young Alexis, his father refused to allow him to ascend to rule because of the disease. When the old government failed the Bolsheviks had no trouble coming to power.

Finally, another bit of history revealed by Cartwright is the description of phenomena we moderns thought were uniquely our own. For example, as early as 1374, the rye in certain towns in Germany became contaminated with a fungus which produced ergot, and one component of ergot is the chemical known today as LSD. The stories about the town dances held during and after such contaminations rival anything we can relate today about Woodstock or other similar events.

If you like "If-history" you will enjoy Disease and History.

FREDERICK A. NIEDNER, JR.
The Latin text is used to fulfill the designation. The musical representation was made by pre-recording the live sections in two- and four-measure sections and then fitting them with electronically-produced sounds. In lesser hands this might produce disastrous results, but Ussachevsky has produced a fascinating and highly musical result. He retains form, rhythm, and contrast, thus giving some reference of identification to the listener.

The Missa Brevis is a more orthodox work for chorus and ten brass instruments, recorded under ordinary studio conditions. This Mass fulfills the designation “Brevis” in that the composer sets the Kyrie, Sanctus, Benedictus, and Agnus Dei, but not in the tradition that such a Mass should have economy of means and spirit. Ussachevsky makes use of some Gregorian-like unison phrases, but even more use is made of block chordal motion that is typical of his Russian Orthodox background. There is a sprinkling of dissonance with a pointillistic use of the brass instruments. The mezzo soloist is moving in her short solo in the Agnus Dei. The chorus and brasses are effective and clear. The diction is clean and Roman in style (excepting typical mispronunciations of the words excelsis and Hosanna). The technical aspects of the recording are good.

PIANO MUSIC by George Gershwin.

George Gershwin, a successor in a long line of composer-pianists, is a unique figure in American Music. He was an outstanding success as a writer of Broadway Musicals who aspired to be taken seriously as a composer of concert-hall music. (This path was reversed in our own time by Leonard Bernstein.) His piano playing was admired by such as Josef Hofmann while at the same time it was the delight of the social gatherings of Broadway luminaries. George S. Kaufman (who hated music) once remarked that Gershwin improvised on a new score so much at parties that on opening night the show was considered to be a revival. In 1992, Simon and Schuster persuaded the composer to publish improvisations on eighteen of his hit songs (included are Swanee, Fascinating Rhythm, The Man I Love, and I Got Rhythm). On the reverse side of the record are a mixture of piano recital pieces and some “pop” items.

William Bolcom, who holds excellent academic credentials, is a composer and musicologist as well as a pianist. He brings to this recording an excellent piano technique as well as an understanding of the Gershwin style. His playing of the Song Book is a sheer delight, and it should be in the libraries of those who love pop music, Gershwin, and good pianism. The sound of the piano is excellent and the instrument is, apparently, one of the new Baldwin Concert Grands. Side two includes Three Preludes, Impromptu in Two Keys, Three-Quarter Blues, and Promenade, all convincingly played. The sound and stereo quality are good.

L’AMFIPARNASO, A Madrigal Comedy, by Orazio Vecchi.


Orazio Vecchi (1550-1605) is largely remembered in Music History for his madrigal comedies, most particularly L’Amfiparnaso. In this work the composer was the precursor of the opera buffa that came into being in the Sixteenth Century. This score is a series of comic madrigals, consisting of a prologue and thirteen scenes, which summon forth all the stock characters of the commedia dell’ arte. Its scope ranges from riotous comedy to deep melancholy.

The approach of the artists is stylistic, lively, and absorbing. The Western Wind comes close to scoring another complete success. This is not a dry-as-dust recording of a museum curiosity but a fine realization of a neglected musical landmark. I have two complaints: the unidiomatic vibrato of first soprano, Janet Steele, and the countertenor’s occasional lapses in pitch. The ensemble is good; the record surface is good, and the stereo balance spacious. Another plus, a libretto is included.

JOSEPH McCALL

February, 1974
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