IN MEMORIAM: Paul M. Bretscher, 1893-1974

Paul M. Bretscher, one time professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, died in St. Louis on 10 August 1974. From March 1941 to January 1954 Dr. Bretscher served The Cresset in a position then designated as Cresset Associate. The present publisher of The Cresset and a former editor, write tributes to this esteemed scholar, colleague, and teacher.

Paul M. Bretscher — Gentleman of God

With the passing of Dr. Paul M. Bretscher, Professor Emeritus of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, on August 10, 1974, at the age of 80, Lutheranism lost a distinguished scholar and theologian.

I first knew him as a faculty colleague at Concordia Teachers College, River Forest, and later served on committees and programs of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod with him. Hundreds of men in the ministry of the Synod remember him affectionately as their seminary teacher, guide, and counselor. Valparaiso University is especially indebted to him for his services as Cresset Associate, and for his staunch support of the University through the years.

Dr. Bretscher was a man of interesting contrasts. He had a quiet humility which was matched with an indomitable faith and a heroic readiness to champion God’s Truth. His scholarship came out of long, hard hours of study and research. He maintained a punishing schedule. Yet he always had time for family and friends, for pleasant conversation and congenial company. Utterly devoted to the Synod, he was appalled at the tensions and divisions that threatened to destroy it toward the end of his life. He who had given so much of himself to the Church felt a strange helplessness to stem the mounting tide of strife and bitterness.
But Dr. Bretscher never gave up his calling to be a teacher of the Church. He, like the Apostle Paul for whom he was named, loved God with all his heart and therefore loved the people of God. With his gentleness and kindness, he exercised a pastoral concern in lifelong emulation of the Good Shepherd whom he delighted to serve.

Now Dr. Bretscher is gathered with the saints and doctors of the Church in the joyful presence of God. I can imagine him engaging in vigorous discourse there on the subjects dear to his heart. He had participated in many international theological conference, and this one must be the most satisfying of all.

We shall miss Dr. Bretscher — theologian, friend, gentleman of God. He indeed fulfilled the Apostle's injunction: "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called."

A. G. HUEGLI
President

Paul M. Bretscher, Christian Humanist

Dr. Bretscher used to say of himself, even when I was still his student: "I have an essentially secular mind." At the time I was so completely preoccupied with theological questions that I tended to dismiss this as the typically self-deprecating comment of a modest man who never realized his own abilities as a theologian.

But as I have grown older — and I am now just about at the age at which Paul Bretscher was when I first came to know him — I have come to appreciate more deeply what he meant. For whereas his odyssey had carried him from an interest in music and philology through a University of Chicago Ph.D. in Germanics to a professorship in the Seminary, mine has moved from an interest in dogmatics through a University of Chicago Ph.D. in historical theology to a professorship in the Arts and Sciences.

Thus I have gradually learned that the "essentially secular mind" of which he spoke was in fact a mind imbued with Christian humanism: basically literary in its intellectual style; aesthetic in its fundamental modes of perception; reverent in its regard for tradition, classical as well as Christian; always somehow preferring both/and to either/or — in short, affirming the teachings of Luther in the spirit of Erasmus.

Perhaps it says as much about me as about Dr. Bretscher when I acknowledge that this combination of Luther and Erasmus, so unrepresentative of our own heritage, is one whose importance for the faith and life of Christendom — and, indeed, also for Lutheran theology — is usually underestimated. "The love of learning and the desire for God" is not only the finest flower of the Benedictine monasticism of the Latin Middle Ages; it is also, in quite another dress, the leitmotiv of the dedication to patient scholarship that I would define as the genius of "Christian humanism."

Significantly, it was the grammarians and philologists who evoked from Dr. Bretscher his most lyrical admiration. He used to tell first-year seminarians in his class in hermeneutics to learn to revere scholarship. They should go into the library, he would say, take down Moulton's Prolegomena or Robertson's Grammar or the Kittel Woerterbuch, stroke the cover, then open it, and give thanks to God for men who had served Him through study.

In ways that I have come to perceive more sensitively over the three decades of our close association — first as teacher and student, then as colleagues on The Cresset, then as colleagues at Concordia Seminary, and as warm friends ever since — I have been the beneficiary of this Christian humanism. On June 9, 1946, Professor Bretscher preached the English sermon at my ordination and on that same day attended our wedding. I am saddened, but honored, at the invitation from my brothers and sisters of his family to pay this tribute to him. He would, I am sure, have wanted me to conclude it with a quotation from his beloved Greek New Testament, and I would not want to disappoint him:

Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." (Phil. 4:8.)

This was the melody of his life, and it remains the legacy of his Christian humanism to all his students, among whom I am proud and grateful to count myself.

JAROSLAV PELIKAN

The Cresset
Before former president Nixon was elected to the office, and again during the speculation about his desire to that office for a second term, there was talk from time to time about his desire to be president in 1976, during the Bicentennial of the country. Presumably he wanted to lead the country in a proper celebration of its birth in addition to the desire to have his name recorded in the history books as the president during that commemorative time.

If one speculates about the kind of leadership for the celebration that would develop on the basis of the directives given in the establishment of the American Revolution Bicentennial Commission (1966), or what different kind of direction would be given by the corrective legislation (February 1973) governing the ARBC, one could never have guessed exactly what leadership Nixon would give to the celebration. It is ironical, given the character of the proposals and their revision direction, that Nixon may have furnished the best possible guidance for the national preparation and celebration.

The initial legislation for the founding of the ARBC came in 1966, two years after the "free-speech" movement had burst onto the scene of America. The subsequent development of the radical and revolutionary movements in America had about them some strange and unpredictable dynamics. For one thing, the generation of "child worshippers" responded to the movements among the student radicals with the passion of devotees whose "god" has failed them. For another thing, the protest against the way America was conducting itself in the face of "revolution and reform" in other lands, engendered a whole mentality about the treatment of radicals, revolutions, and revolutionaries. In that mentality, manifested with monotonous repetition in the testimony before the Senate "Watergate" Hearing Committee, there was a clear failure to understand that there has never been a sustained and continuous radical or revolutionary movement in American history. Such movements have been rendered impotent by a combination of the guarantee of constitutional liberty to express in speech and print those revolutionary ideas whose power resides finally in their ability to persuade the listeners and gather the disgruntled, and the general conditions of life in the country.

With Richard Nixon and his cohorts dealing with the then current "revolution" in the way they did, and at the same time trying to get ready to celebrate the American Revolution of two hundred years ago, the radicals and the revolutionaries derived a counterfeit life longer than they would have had they lived on their own juices. Furthermore, the perplexity about handling revolutionaries when set in the context of the Bicentennial celebration, impels us to consider the birth of our nation not merely in terms of 1776 but in terms of 1789 with the completion of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Independence by revolution is not the peculiar contribution of the United States. The tricky handling of the revolution in such a way that a constitutional democracy is the end product is unique.

Indeed, there would be no constitution without the revolution. But if, in the words of the Act of 1966, the Commission (ARBC) "... shall give emphasis to the ideas of the Revolution which have been so important in the development of the United States, in world affairs, and in mankind's quest for freedom ..." attention must be turned to the establishment of the Union in 1789. The American Revolution differs from the French and Russian Revolutions, and from the many of the present time, not chiefly in the dissolution of a previous empire or nation, but in the subsequent development of a free society, a union of a free people under the Law. Richard F. Gibbs, formerly executive director of North Carolina's official Bicentennial Commission, now at work upon privately financed projects for the national Bicentenary, makes this point well in his short article in The University Bookman (Spring 1974), "The Spirit of '89 Conservatism and the Bicentenary."

Former president Nixon may have contributed a great deal to sobering the nation to reflect not merely on revolution but on the constitution. The birth of our nation will be far more profound and helpful if we see
it in the long and arduous continuum from the Revolutionary War (in which less than a majority gave their support) through the adoption of the Bill of Rights and the Constitution, which had majority support.

**The Congress: Politics and Justice**

The instrument for testing whether the nation is a democracy governed by the constitution (rather than a dictatorship or the victim of revolutionaries) was the congress. In using the constitution to bring a case against the violation of the constitutional powers, the congress reveals itself incapable of managing itself as a functional legislative body under the constitution. In my opinion, the question is not yet settled. Could the congress, had the majority party been that of the president, have pushed the case against Nixon on the grounds of the law and for the sake of the law? I doubt it. The present problem of excessive presidential power (as cancerous as that is) arises more from the dereliction and misunderstanding of legislative power in the congress than the onslaught of an over powerful president.

To my way of thinking the congress is (and for the past forty years has been) the problem. From a body whose constitutional power is to make legislation that restrains “bad” behavior, it has become a body whose conduct has been using legislation to dictate how people shall behave (socially). This misunderstanding of the law manifests itself most clearly in the congressional excesses in the control of money. It is easy to agree with many Americans who think that the problem of inflation at the present time is rooted in the congress. It is not only easy to agree; in my opinion it is accurate. The legislative control of the money is the foundation for legislative control of private behavior.

Correlative to the congress’s misunderstanding of its legislative work is the impulse such failure gives to the Supreme Court to engage in the work of legislation rather than in the work of the law determining what is or is not constitutional; that is, the question of justice by law. Is it not ironical that the congress, pushed finally into the execution of its constitutional obligation in the impeachment process, manifested itself as a legislative body more subservient to politics than to justice. Rather than using legislation to prevent unjust acts, standing also as a watchman against the executive of the state, the congress has long habituated itself to the view of legislation as a way to command how people shall behave. Criminal activity becomes not so much the violation of law and justice as it does a violation of the rules and policies of the party in power.

The problem with the congress still remains, even after “Watergate.” The congressional handling of the problem of inflation will reveal how much congress is able to govern itself in carrying out its vocation according to the constitution.

**Effecting Justice in Society: Vocation as the Sphere of Justice**

I find it awesome to contemplate two individual men in society in relation to the question, “How does one do justice in society?” The one man is the former president; the other man is the night watchman at the Watergate Hotel. One is at the pinnacle of world power. The simplest exercise of his vocation seems to be loaded with possibilities for doing justice and for stemming the tide of injustice. The other, earning perhaps less than one hundred dollars per week, seems to be among the most impotent of agents for justice. Yet both men, each in his vocation, are agents of justice.

Consider these two in juxtaposition to each other as they do the tasks of their respective vocations. The one man, as he goes routinely about his work, notices a piece of tape over a door latch. He removes it and goes on. An hour later he returns, only to find the tape again in the wrong place. With the simple execution of his duty there is set in motion a power that topples the highest man from his high power. With the simple execution of his duty he drives a host of people to make hard and fateful decisions about their own work in their own vocations. Simply by deciding and acting justly or unjustly in relation to his own vocation, each one gets locked inextricably into this lively and moving retributive stream. A president must decide to lie or not to lie; a judge must decide to do the work of a judge; newspaper reporters and publishers must make decisions about their pursuit and publication of the facts, etc.

It is awesome and heartening to contemplate the relation between one’s vocation and the execution of justice in the social order. Hankering after the conspicuous and the dramatic, we have more often fouled our own vocations and impeded social justice, achieving in fact its opposite. To contemplate the “earth-quake” velocity of one’s vocation, justly done, is enough to give one new heart about his own work and to treat with ironic skepticism the bloated claims for justice made by the mighty or promised by those who want power to effect all justice in one fell swoop.
THE FILMS OF INGMAR BERGMAN HAVE captivated and perplexed audiences for more than two decades. A central focus of his penetrating insight into the problems of contemporary life has been his vision of God and man. Bergman weaves together the religious crisis of our age—the question of God—with the existential questions of guilt, anxiety, alienation, illusion, and authentic selfhood. The cinematic result is at once demanding and rewarding for the viewer. It has been said that Bergman has made only one film over and over again. He works with his themes like pieces on a chess set. The same pieces are always used, but one or another is moved into prominence in a given film.

Bergman’s film *Through a Glass Darkly*, made in 1960, deals primarily with the nature and destiny of man, the search for God, and the quest for truth. What is necessary, Bergman asks, for the realization of man as a human being? Does the search for God and the meaning of God for human existence play a central role in that realization, or does the “spiritual” process itself, which the film portrays, make the question of finding or not finding God meaningless?

The plot of *Through a Glass Darkly* seems to yield little by way of an answer to these questions. A writer returns to Sweden to spend a brief vacation on an island with his son, Peter, who is a student, his daughter, Maria, and her husband, Martin, a doctor. Maria is dying of a physical illness which slowly degenerates the mind causing psychological and hallucinatory aberrations separated by increasingly infrequent periods of lucidity. We learn that her mother died of the same disease. Maria discovers in her father’s diary that he has come home to clinically study the course of her disease in order to use it as material for a new novel. She confides in Martin who confronts the writer with his callousness. The father, in turn, accuses Martin of wanting her to die as soon as possible so that he can be free from the burden of her illness, and then recounts his attempt at suicide and his discovery in that moment of a kind of love he cannot yet fully understand nor describe. Maria’s illness progresses and she tells her brother of a vision in which she is in a room full of people waiting for a door to open and for God to come in and walk among them. He is terrified by her increasing insanity, but also attracted to her until at the command of the “waiting people” Maria has an incestuous relation with him. Finally an ambulance-helicopter is called to take Maria to the hospital and while waiting with her father and husband for it to arrive she sees God finally appear. But it is the appearance of a giant spider with a distorted and ugly face who attacks her. Martin gives her an injection to calm her and they leave for the hospital. In the final scene after Maria and Martin have gone, father and son have a brief conversation about God and faith.

It becomes clear that the meaning and significance of the film does not lie in the external action or plot development, of which there is little, but in the interiority of the characters and their dialogical interaction with each other. The physical isolation of the island setting emphasizes the tragic emotional, interpersonal, and spiritual isolation of the characters. The stark interiors of the old summer house symbolize the transience of

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life and the “not-at-homeness” of human existence. The dramatic tension of the film lies in the progress of Maria’s illness and the reaction of the other characters to it. The tension is further heightened by the vacation interlude atmosphere of suspended “kairotic” time. The summer interlude becomes a spiritual pilgrimage, a process in which the characters are forced to come to grips with their own existence and self-understanding.

IN THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY MAN IS SEEN living under threat. This threatened nature of existence is symbolized by Maria’s illness, insanity, and coming death. Various responses to threat are expressed by the various characters: there is innocence (Peter’s unawareness of the darker side of human nature and reality), the writer’s guilt and despair, and the doctor’s illusion that he is in control and that Maria will recover. As the characters go through a spiritual process of self-discovery, they do not find redemption in a fuller awareness of the reality of threat from which their illusions and innocence have protected them. (The writer is further along. He indeed already knows the reality of guilt and judgment but submits to it initially in despair and attempted suicide.) The answer to threatened existence is not denial, evasion, nor submission. Neither is it, for Bergman, a God who “comes down” to intervene and remove threat. (In fact, God is perceived by Bergman as absence, silence, indeed, as death! When Maria finally sees the God she has been waiting for it is the horrible face of death.) Rather, the answer to threatened existence is love. There are all kinds of love, says Bergman, from the lowest to the highest, and only the highest is able to give hope in the midst of despair, the power to live with guilt, and the strength to live with the loss of one’s protective illusions. This love also provides whatever affirmation of life and meaning to existence there is.

The process which leads to this conclusion is the interaction among the characters from illusion and hidden desires and intentions, to “revelation” of the truth about each other in confrontation, to resolution. For some the resolution is a rejection of “truth” and a return to illusion; for others an ability to communicate truthfully with others unhampered by debilitating illusion and guilt which separate people. The enabler for this soul-to-soul communication is love.

Bergman leaves this love curiously formless and ambiguous. It is on the one hand uncovered in the depth of interpersonal relationships (when people move beyond manipulation and exploitation to real concern for the other), and therefore something man has within him as potential; on the other hand, it is also experienced and received as something external to man which is given or “discovered” as hope in crisis, when defenses fail, when oppressive reality impinges, and death seems the only alternative. (This externality will be seen in the writer’s description of his suicide attempt.) The writer makes the choice (decision) to affirm life in love in the face of, and in the midst of, judgment and guilt, despair and death. In this decision man finds his true humanness and the possibility for personal realization.

Is this strange love, perceived of as inner potential, but also as revealed gift, God? Bergman is equivocal at this point. He will not try to prove that God exists (since God is silent and absent), but in some way we are to believe that this special “agape-like” love which liberates us from self-centeredness to being-for-others is (for him) God. Bergman says that this hope sustains him, provides the courage to face life, and gives meaning to existence. This is seen in the final scene in which the writer has the first genuine communication with his son. Peter asks how he can now face life and whether God exists? His father replies that he will not try to prove that God exists but that it is his hope and belief that God is experienced in love. The experience of that kind of liberating love, paradoxically, makes the question of God’s existence meaningless and one that can only be asked from a position of illusory self-sufficiency and uncommitted detachment.

IT IS CLEAR THAT FOR BERGMAN THE ABSENCE of God is not merely a benign condition conducive for the development of human autonomy and self-realization, but it is an absence experienced as threat and accusation. Bergman doubts not so much the existence of God as the meaning and power of “highest” love which seems so precarious and fragile in the face of all that opposes it. Can it really triumph over despair, guilt, and death? One can only live by hope, seeing through a glass darkly. The answer to the search for God is not the presence of a divine problem solver, a supernatural magician, but the answer is found in the experience of that kind of love and affirmation of man that enables the realization of full humanness in dialogue with others. It is a love that is beyond what we ourselves are capable of as people caught in the web of death, despair, illusion, and guilt. Yet it is a love which is accessible in interpersonal communication at the deepest level of our longings, fears, and hopes in the moment we fully communicate our soul to another and when our expres-
sions of love become transparent to that highest love beyond, yet within us.

The doctor remains unchanged. He cannot admit that he wishes his wife to die because he cannot face his own contingency and powerlessness before death. He wants to be in control. When he can finally take Maria to the hospital, he becomes almost cheerful. For now he can act (pack clothes, make plans, give her an injection) in the illusion that he is effective. In fact, however, his actions do not change the reality of death and only prevent real communication with his wife, who does not want his paternal sympathy and professionalism, but genuine understanding and love. He is unable to communicate his real feelings about the situation and can only say over and over that everything will be all right. Maria, too, remains caught between reality where she faces death and her dream world where God will come to her in glory. Like Eve she seeks the face of God, the knowledge of good and evil, tempts her brother in seduction, and the voice of God in the garden becomes the face of death. Peter loses his innocence and knows the guilt of choice.

The real change comes in the writer (Bergman? Everyman?). Bergman often pictures fathers in his films as absent, or as stern, aloof, unloving characters. So also in this film the father has been absent, and when present has been unable to engage in real communication with his children. This distance between man and man is analogous to the distance Bergman sees between God and man. Once again though, this absence is not so much a physical absence as an absence of love and meaning. When the father finally finds meaning in love the distance between man and man is also overcome. When father and son make the first fumbling effort at real communication and understanding in the film's coda we feel that God is present as love and hope.

The key to the writer's transformation and new self-understanding is his suicide attempt. His confrontation with Martin over the contents of his diary is the dramatic turning point of the film. The doctor accuses him of a perverse detachment that would use even his own daughter for artistic gain. The writer replies to Martin that he had been so full of self-hate that he wanted to commit suicide. So he rented a car and was going to run it off a cliff. But just as he pressed the accelerator to run off the cliff the motor stalled. The car rolled to the edge and tottered on the brink of the chasm. Finally he crawled out of the car and lay shaking on the ground. At this moment he experienced love. It is a love which has brought him back from the brink of death. It has laid claim on him, forced him to make the decision whether to trust in guilt and death as the final word about himself and to respond in suicide, or whether to trust in this love which he does not understand but which requires at least that he understand himself in a new way. He chooses love and clings to it against despair, his own guilt, and the meaninglessness of his art as truth which he had valued above all else in life. (The publication of his first novel had been more important to him than feeling and sharing his wife's illness and death.)

So now he has returned to work out the implications for his life of this love. Although the process has only started, he wants to reconcile himself to his daughter whom he deserted in her illness to write a book and exploit for his "art." He also wanted to try to communicate with his alienated son. Because love has claimed him, he can confess to Martin the futility of his art as truth, as his god, which was full of lies and pretension. He now seeks restitution for the betrayal of his daughter and his isolation from his son.

One is struck by the Biblical allusions which Bergman has consciously or unconsciously used. The suicide "experience" is left formless and mysterious and is similar to the experience of Paul on the Damascus road. Paul interprets his experience less as the physical presence of Jesus or as a vision of God but as the experience of the presence and meaning of the Gospel. Bergman's writer does not say that the car's stalling was the miraculous intervention of God but only that he has found love. There is also a parallel to the story of Zaccheaus. Like Zaccheaus the writer has experienced an affirmation of his life, a meaning for life that enables him to give up a false ultimate trust (Zaccheaus in money, the writer in his art). He is able to confess his guilt and the destructiveness of his "god" for others. (Zaccheaus has exploited the poor for his gain; the writer has exploited his daughter and ignored his son.) Finally both seek restitution for their actions in order to overcome the isolation and alienation they have caused between themselves and others.

THE STAGES OF THE SPIRITUAL PROCESS which Bergman sees are represented by the characters' stances toward life. They are not all in the same stage. Maria's illness functions as the ground for the stances which Bergman feels is the nature of existence and the contemporary experience of God as threat and death. Against this concrete threat the other characters react. The doctor's stance is pride. He denies the possibility...
of being questioned or accused. He denies his feelings and makes the possibility of real communication and self-realization impossible. Peter passes through this stage of innocent self-centeredness, losing his illusory innocence in the discovery of the terrifying side of reality. His response to loss of illusion and the guilt he feels is despair. He wonders how he can face life. The writer has gone beyond the self-centeredness of the first stage with its illusions of righteousness and objective detachment, beyond the stage of annihilating guilt and despair to the discovery of hope in love.

The truth of the stages is that one cannot remain a spectator, seeing oneself as the center of all things, detached and aloof. One must make judgments, choices, and actions and take responsibility for them. But criticism, judgment, and action open us up in turn to being criticized and judged. If one accuses others and denies his own guilt at the same time, then he lives in illusion and hypocrisy. The illusion of this stage is that one can judge without being judged. (The doctor confronts and judges the writer but denies that the writer's accusation of him is true.) Bergman has exposed the futility of art (the writer) and science (the doctor) for providing a truth capable of giving an ultimate meaning to life. Meaning will not be found is aesthetic or scientific objectivity but in commitment and decision. Hence we are forced to make choices and incur guilt.

The second stage is further along the road toward becoming a person. It is the realization of one's real condition in life. It is the recognition of responsibility and guilt. But this recognition is not redemptive. Despair is not self-realization and when judgment is taken with ultimate seriousness its results are destructive of self and others.

Finally, there remains the question as to whether the third stage is also illusory. Bergman has been criticized for using the final scene of Through a Glass Darkly to make a clumsy presentation of a wish-fulfillment God in capitulation to the needs of the viewer. But the aesthetic stance of the critic, however necessary to his art, will not answer the question of whether there is an affirming love in which a man can trust beyond our illusory innocence and detached criticism, beyond our guilt and despair. Bergman would suggest that the answer to this question lies in our own experience on the existential road to self-realization. It comes from what we hear in the silence of God, from what we see in those puzzling reflections in a dim mirror.

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Søren Kierkegaard was also concerned with the ways in which a man could orient his life, what could be called life-stances or life-styles. He called these “stages on life's way” the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious stage. These are similar to the stages in the process of self-realization which Bergman's characters represent. But Kierkegaard also describes a fourth stage of self-actualization, for him the highest and most profound, the Christian existence. The careful reader will have anticipated this possibility in the discussions of Paul and Zaccheaus. The Christian faith not only proclaims that such a liberating love exists, but that it is grounded in something more than nebulous, ambiguous experiences such as the suicide “conversion” in Through a Glass Darkly, however mysterious and moving such experiences may be. It is grounded not in some ethereal spirit-world but in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. We are invited to trust Him as the final word about ourselves. He is the real and absolute alternative to trusting judgment and death, to trusting illusions and enslaving self-made affirmations as the final word about ourselves. This Gospel needs to be, and can be, experienced when we trust in Jesus as the affirming friend of sinners, the fountain of the love of God for us.
BLACK MOUNTAIN (1933-56) WAS AN UN-accredited college community founded in the North Carolina mountains. Its social geography lay uneasily between the small-town sophistication of Thomas Wolfe's Asheville nearby, and the tough backwoods clan communities farther away from town. Its founding staff was a group of Rollins College (Florida) staff stranded in the job desert of 1932-1933. Like more secure, conservative American institutions, Black Mountain strengthened itself intellectually with some European-refugee staff. In the symbolic act of "early" Black Mountain, the school's rector, John Andrew Rice, built the key arts program around a refugee German artist, Josef Albers. (Like most of Black Mountain's important appointees, Albers is more famous now than then.) For all practical purposes, Albers spoke no English, and only his wife's presence in the classroom as translator enabled him to survive his first years there.

All the college's original founders—Albers, Rice, every other authority figure—were eventually "putsched" in the "democratic" spring bloodlettings that the staff substituted for the tenure discussions of more established colleges. But Albers, at first by Rice's backing, was the morally dominant figure for Black Mountain's first sixteen years. Perhaps partly because of his language problem and partly because of his candid opinion of his students' U.S. high-school training, Albers enforced the craft-oriented, respect-for-materials ethos of his Bauhaus background. This European emphasis on craft blended more or less with the working-student ideal of the American progressivists among the staff. Their emphasis was of course more social and political than that of Albers; the students were expected to build and maintain the physical plant, as well as run a working farm. (The school needed the cheap labor of the students' maintenance; like Albers', this was a practical stimulus behind the Rollinsites' "idealism").

There was a European-American lifestyle tension, recognized at the time. When the post-Albers Black Mountain was taken over by the late poet Charles Olson and (with the loyal support of a few G.I. Bill "graduate students") the campus became Olson's private turf, there was a good deal of splashy arts activity. This involved not only Olson but such other now-more-famous figures as John Cage, the composer; Merce Cunningham, the dancer; Robert Rauschenberg, the artist; and, to sum up a whole group of other names, Buckminster Fuller: teaching, preaching, and dome-raising.

Side by side with this later faculty arts boom there was a steady decay and rot of the physical plant and the school's farm. Cows became infected; rows of trees were ruthlessly cut back. The campus life-style became decadent Good Ol' Boy:
mostly booze contests on campus and moviehouse disturbances in town. The G.I. Bill ran out, and with it ended the school and the continuing faculty arts festival of the fifties. Perhaps two “students” were left. Everybody was half-starved, full of disturbances in town. The G.I. Bill ran out, and mostly booze contests

II

Higgledy-piggledy
Duberman’s research is
Ivy-league light on the
Black-Mt. trail.

Faculties putched at this
Hillbilly Bauhaus. Its
Dying heart beat to
G.I. Bill-bail.

GOOD OL’ BOY CHORUS:
Ivy League I’s on the
Black-mountain trail!

Change your partners (your wives)
With each new male!
(Everybody chug-a-lugs.)

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THIS ROTTING
ex-farm cleared the way for the more famous
“Black Mountain College” of pure legend. This Platonic ideal of an experimental campus combined what I call the “Albers” years (1933-49) when the farm and school plant were developed, and when there was an arts-crafts predominance in the curriculum, with what I call the “Olson-G.I. Bill” period. The important younger American historian and playwright Martin Duberman was attracted by the legend to produce an ambitious history of the actuality.

Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community (Dutton: 1972) includes, with its some 400 pages of text, another 100 pages of footnotes. Duberman’s history is, first of all, a tribute to his tape recorder and, second, to the photocopy machine at Raleigh’s (N.C.) State Archives. This machine produced 10,000 items for him (p. 416).

Black Mountain should be seen, I think, as one of a series of attempts to provide a history of our arts from the standpoint of postwar American aesthetics. My list of parallel volumes would include: 1970, Don McDonagh’s Rise & Fall & Rise of Modern Dance; 1971, Kenneth Rexroth’s American Poetry in the 20th Century and Hugh Kenner’s The Found Era; 1973, as companion texts to McDonagh and Rexroth, the former’s biography of Martha Graham, Walter Sutton’s American Free Verse, and Kenner’s Bucky, a study of Buckminster Fuller. Most of these books are self-confident summas, not hesitant critical “introductions.” Like the campus behavior of the intellectuals of the sixties, they presume agreement, not objections, from their readers. The choice of poets in Rexroth’s and Sutton’s concluding chapters, for instance, should be studied by the light of the McGovern Commission rules for choosing 1972 Democratic convention delegates.

Of all these books, Black Mountain seems to me to have the freshest subject. Like all good professional histories, it is a mine of information. I consider it a relative “failure” as a history of Black Mountain for two reasons, listed below. But my pretext for discussing it is that I know no more useful topic at present than Black Mountain for a survey of American values. To specify my objections to Duberman briefly: (1) his 1972 liberal-intellectual agreements and objections to the depression-liberal ethos of the college become too predictable to the sophisticated reader, and (2) in the psychic split we notice on faculties between the industrious busy-bee researcher and the Socratic dialectician—like the split between the applied scientist and theorist—Duberman is definitely a busy bee. So he is capable of a useful quotation from McDonagh’s exposition of post-Martha Graham modern-dance theory (p. 287); of an acceptable general account of “modernism” in all the American arts in the fifties (p. 337); and, finally, of noticing—outside any busy-bee blinkers—the dialectical tension between fellow members of the movement (p. 471, n. 38).

But he becomes, for example, inadequate in historicizing the faculty appointment on a “regular” basis of an aggressive (well-known) American literary homosexual. Duberman records with no comment the symbolic connection made at the time by opposing factions between permissive-liberalizing a distinguished faggot on the faculty and ridding the college of the farm that helped represent the older craft ethos of Black Mountain.

On a more demanding level, Duberman’s aesthetic criticism seems to me inadequate. Here it should be understood that the proper historicizing of Black Mountain—especially of its last decade—would require an inclusive explanation of Cunningham’s split with Graham in modern dance; of the Olson-Dr. Williams split with the dominating verse styles of the 1940s; of the relationship of Fuller’s innovations to contemporary technology, etc. Such demands on Duberman are,
in my opinion, no larger than those fulfilled by Leslie Pearce Williams for his 1965 biography of Faraday. But to say that in my opinion Duberman’s book fails by such standards should not inhibit anyone from absorbing his fascinating text. It is presumably the best history ever written of an American college, if that limp compliment sells any copies!

III

LET ME TAKE ONE MAIN THEME OF Black Mountain to show the difficulties in a liberal intellectual’s critical history of an institution run on liberal-intellectual premises. This is the discussion of the rectorial reign of Charles Olson. In the immediate post-Albers months, there appears to have been some sort of official move to firm up the already respectable literature department. (The available faculty seems to have been above average. Pedagogically, the problem seems to have been a consistent failure to put any books in the college “library.” Here, as elsewhere, the simple failure to do necessary library-committee work can only remind the professional reader of Duberman’s book of departmental practices at establishment colleges.) The poet Kenneth Rexroth, a suitable choice, shilly-shallied over a 1949-50 job offer. Rexroth was traveling on the Guggenheim that produced his long poem, Dragon and the Unicorn; and Olson was more conveniently available in a Washington D.C. residence nearby.

Duberman thinks of himself as more admiring of Olson than of Black Mountain’s other “giants.” (He means Rice, the founder, and Albers, whom Duberman dislikes.) Actually, despite his tape-recorder and the photocopy machine, he never succeeded in meeting Olson face to face before the latter’s death in 1970. For a self-styled admirer, he is very cool about the man’s verse, his professional work (p. 371). No, I would say Duberman’s real self-identification is with the hero of his Chapter 9, the psychologist John Wallen.

My point about Olson is that he brings up the question of the on-campus influence of Ezra Pound, then incarcerated in the Washington, D.C. mental asylum, St. Elizabeth’s, but active as a poet and letter-writer, and the target-point of a host of regular visitors, including Olson. It is immediately obvious from Duberman’s description that Olson’s classroom teaching—both in style and content—was modeled on Old Ez (perhaps especially on the 1907-1941 Letters, first published the year of Olson’s arrival at Black Mountain). There is even a common assumption that the “later” Black Mountain of Olson’s rectorship and of Issues 1-7 of Black Mountain Review represented the satellite behavior of a Foundling school. How does Duberman deal with this historical question of Pound’s influence on his (Duberman’s) admired campus?

Well, the first reference to the Black Mountain rector’s visits to St. Elizabeth’s occurs on page 494 of Duberman’s 496-page text; a third-hand piece of gossip printed to “explain” why Olson quit visiting Pound. (The anonymous informant forgot to date the period of her explanation, which is of course pejorative to Pound.) The first Black Mountain Pound reference is on page 317; another, raunchier piece of gossip about Pound’s domestic life in Italy during the twenties.

In this case, Duberman’s bias is obviously intermingled with the automatic bad taste of the American faculty intellectual on sexual matters. Probably he thinks the unverifiable reference on page 317 is “canceled out” by his confessional sincerity about himself (pp. 227 et al). My more serious criticism is of course that Duberman’s tape recorder, actually or symbolically, never followed Pound to Italy; and, secondly, that there is no attempt at sketching the Olson-Pound intellectual relationship. This is the only piece of laziness I notice in an industriously researched work. It reflects partly the traditional liberal-intellectual distrust of Pound and partly, I’d say, a distrust on Duberman’s part of the dialectics involved in tracing “literary influences.”

IV

DUBERMAN’S REAL BLACK MOUNTAIN hero is, I’ve suggested, John Wallen; but the hagiographical Wallen of Chapter 9 can be seen as part of a broader, more interesting topic: the split between the cliche-image of “experimental education” in our books and the actual behavior of work-
To say that Duberman's book, *Black Mountain*, fails by certain standards “should not inhibit anyone from absorbing his fascinating text. It is presumably the best history ever written of an American college, if that limp compliment sells any copies.”

Duberman came to research *Black Mountain* with the ultimate Ivy-League credentials: three student degrees from Yale and Harvard and a teaching assignment at Princeton. (By mutual agreement, he left Princeton while completing his text; there were objections to his residing away from college and from what seem to have been attempts to apply Wallen’s theories to his history classes.) He consciously represents Black Mountain as a sincere but limited attempt to act out liberal-intellectual social theories outside the restraints of the inhibited establishment campuses and types like himself.

It is with growing excitement or resentment that *Black Mountain*'s readers must come to realize that the staff’s moral code and behavior do not fit this role. Though Duberman is disturbed by the evidence he reports, and disapproves of the “failure” of Black Mountainites to live up to his ideals for them, it is highly creditable of him at least to notice the conflict. *Black Mountain* seems to me a case history for the text that permissive behavior, libertarianism of the mind, denotes the subjective codes and shifting values of our “conservative” power class, not of hairy “outsiders.”

This is worth emphasizing because much praise of Black Mountain itself and (in reviews) of Duberman’s history, salutes the college’s staff for goals they never had. Here of course we get my particular bias towards the school. For me the 1933-1949 “Albers years” represent Black Mountain’s only serious era as a working institution. The arts and letters festival of the fifties seems to have relied on the G.I. Bill rather than on many live, working students.

Let’s take a few examples of the difference between Black Mountain’s 1933-1949 campus and the idealized demands (or imitations) made on the school by establishment-liberal education today. Since we are reviewing the social commitments of some 1930’s liberals in a Southern state, the black-white racial issue is probably worth a paragraph or two. There seems to have been a faculty consensus against anything socially daring. (And the quota demands of the 1960s white liberal would have confronted what Duberman calls the “Euro-pean” emphasis on skill in 1933-1949 Black Mountain.) In practice, a couple of scared, isolated Afro-American kids were more or less pitchforked on campus as symbols. The qualified Afro-American student body at, say, Asheville nearby, seems to have distrusted the non-accredited little hill-college for vocational reasons. One would guess also that the metaphysical reforming impulse behind Black Mountain (and Antioch and Reed and Bennington and Sarah Lawrence Colleges) meant literally nothing to qualified Afro high-school graduates. On the racial issue of the 1930s, then, Black Mountain may be said to have taken a called strike with the bat on its shoulder.

For socially conservative types (the USAF people near Antioch, where I once did my service time, for instance) it is accepted that progressive schools were invented to supply them with a source of prurient gossip. Duberman traces a general line of behavior from the puritan (cautious?) thirties through looser and looser codes of behavior, dress, and convention. However, the faculty seem in practice to have found terms acceptable in liberal-intellectual jargon for encouraging restraint. The influence of Albers tended to hold the line (though he himself acted as official rector for only six months).

It is instructive to see the faculty’s treatment of its rectors, for instance. (Black Mountain’s moneymen, their unofficial or anonymous “trustees,” seem to have resided in Long Island, a long way off.) The sexual box score for the 1933-1949 rectors was one “official” cheater and one homosexual: perhaps the behavior average for an unusual private school. It is the vigorous staff reaction that strikes the reader. The homosexual disappeared the night of his first arrest. The cheater went on probationary leave; and his faculty simply “forgot” to invite him back! This community self-policing makes Duberman gargle with liberal rage. That contemporary anthropology and sociology once more take communal codes and restrictions seriously—at least as survival actions—may be news to him. Duberman winces (p. 330) for instance at the suggestion of the late Paul Goodman (who taught at Black Mountain) that he, Goodman, found the radical community of the time tougher on deviants than was the establishment college of Goodman’s time.
Exactly; one emotional drive behind communes and experimental societies in modern America is sexual definition, the attempt of normal men and women to break down the institutional controls of the country's culture to control sex deviance. Black Mountain at least provided a break with the period's rotting graduate-school atmosphere—where normal young people in their healthy twenties endured service time, then a graduate-school economic life, and then a dead-end instructorship—this last position taken with the implied understanding that the young teacher would "teach" his pupils with rote instruction (kept separate from his serious research). Marriage? Marry late, let your wife work, be inconspicuously queer. Institutions like Black Mountain cannot be fully evaluated without the definition for the picture provided by this background of "normal" educational personnel practice.

Buried in its footnotes, Black Mountain has one cinematic anecdote (supplied by Rice on tape) that epiphanizes the 1930's progressivism that Rice and many others wished the school to represent. This is the heart-warming story (pp. 437-38) where Rice—as Jimmy Stewart or Gary Cooper's Mr. Deeds—spreads the evangelical gospel of the unaccredited little mountain college. From the audience arises the dean of Radcliffe—Jean Arthur or Barbara Stanwyck?—to announce that non-accredited liberalism is acceptable at Radcliffe (and also Harvard, Rice learned a week later).

This anecdote is no doubt inspiring to Rice and Duberman; and perhaps even the sophisticated reader, until he reconsiders the plot of this movie later on at home. How would the Jean Arthur dean have reacted if Rice had foreseen and announced the enforcement of a traditional sexual code on himself? if Black Mountain's curriculum had not been programmatically permissive but (in English) intended to revive the English rhetoric program sabotaged in the establishment colleges between the wars?—so that a traditional college rhetoric in the 1960s, like Corbett's, has the appearance of a revolutionary educational manifesto?

My questions are themselves "rhetorical." On the Harvard of the time-period of Rice's movie-story anecdote, read in Wallace Stegner's recent biography of the crusty historian-critic-polemicist, Bernard De Voto, about his attempts to secure tenure at Harvard. The chair in American studies for which De Voto was specifically qualified, was kept (till after De Voto's removal) for a safe Harvard Red.

V

ABOUT THE BLACK MOUNTAIN FACULTY'S RESISTANCE TO AUTOMATIC ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THEIR BEHAVIOR, LET ME CLOSE WITH ONE MORE ACCOUNT FROM BLACK MOUNTAIN. I SHOULD WARN THE READER THAT WHAT FOLLOWS IS AMUSING TO ME BUT, I THINK, TRAGIC TO DUBERMAN.

John Wallen brought to Black Mountain (1945-47) a Harvard doctorate in psychology and the American social dream of the pure community. He was, it seems, literate, properly ambitious, and persevering in his goals. (After he left Black Mountain, he and his family helped found a three-year "family" community in Oregon.) Wallen was in brief, the kind of conscientious, hard-working young family man with a background in social studies who may be found running most American colleges (though European schools seem somehow to suffer along without his administrative help).

Like those other social students, Babbitt (George F.) and Watson, Wallen felt things only needed to be properly organized; and he brought ideas to the faculty meetings to help the programmed new socialization along. Chapter 9 presents Wallen as a somewhat unusual young idealist. Wallen's problem, quite simply, was that he was active in a college not wishing a takeover by a representative of the less learned disciplines. The fear of his colleagues of such a takeover was Wallen's first tactical problem. Wallen was quite consciously on a collision course with the skill-and-craft ethos represented by Albers; and in the contest the "skill" faction did not have its hands tied by an over-riding, outside trustee faction or school board.

The whole issue seems as central to me as any in our school system: is a learned man a craftsman, part of our skilled labor, or a white-collar executive. For a whole section of our middle class, "educated" is purely a social term. For many, many Americans to call a man with a college degree or some other power-class connection, to call such a man illiterate or uninformed is an oxymoron, an unbelievable contradiction in terms. (This matters less than the reverse rule in our society, that the beliefs and codes of people with no academic connection are treated as being outside the rules of logic.)

Since Duberman so much admires Wallen, it is a tribute to Black Mountain's prose that the Albers-Wallen issue is put as lucidly as it appears on pages 242-43 of his book. Probably this is a tribute to the conscious intelligence of both men in the controversy. But since the "Wallens" still in effect run most of our schools (changing their symbols and jargon from decade to decade), I admire the Black Mountain group that eased him out. Duberman doesn't. I think he's wrong; but he wrote an informed, useful history.
THE BURDENS OF BAGGAGE

FREDERICK A. NIEDNER, JR.


Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2.

Frederick A. Niedner, Jr., an instructor in the Department of Theology at Valparaiso University, received the BA (1967) from Concordia Senior College, Ft. Wayne, Indiana, and the M Div (1971) and the STM (1973) from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri.

TWO VERSES FROM TODAY'S READINGS SET our theme. The first is from the account of the commissioning of the seventy in Luke’s Gospel (10:1-9, 16): “Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals.” The second is from the Epistle to the Galatians (6:1-10, 14-16): “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

We are travelers these days, seeking to get away from it all before the rush of the fall. We make our various pilgrimages to the shrines of Disneyland, crowded campgrounds, resort shores, and mountain peaks. A growing number of such pilgrims travel internationally, to Europe and elsewhere. It is difficult to know whether to envy the European traveler or to pity him. You can recognize people who have recently been over there. They are the folks with the four-hour slide shows which they invite you over to view. They are also the ones with the stooped shoulders and the arms which have been stretched, literally, one, two, or three inches as a result of toting half their worldly possessions across several continents. It is not as though they had no warning. Allow me to paraphrase for you a piece from Frommer’s Europe on $5 a Day (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1971, p. 603). From a section entitled “The Burdens of Baggage”:

A light suitcase means freedom. To emerge from a train or plane with bundles and boxes in every hand, means porters, means taxicabs, means that the first hotel you pass must be the hotel in which you’ll stay. To jaunt along with a light suitcase is to avoid all these costs ... to make your hotel choice slowly, carefully, and without desperation. Don’t sneer at this freedom. The traveler whose arms are bursting from their sockets with weight is a prisoner. His problems increase as his trip continues. However heavy your suitcase may have been as you left ... it’ll be twice as heavy as you go along. At every stop you’ll pick up mementos, gifts, books, papers, maps, souvenirs. Unless you’ve had a one third-empty suitcase to begin with, you’ll be festooned with extra parcels and packages near the end. You’ll loop them over your shoulder, you’ll squeeze them under your arm, you’ll carry some with your little finger—and you’ll approach each new city and each new hotel search in a mood of desperation. A light suitcase means spiritual freedom, too, and an ability to concentrate on Europe in preference to mundane, daily needs.

My friends, that is a parable. It is a picture of our lives. We need to be warned of the burdens of baggage not only for our leisure trips, but also for the trip. “Take no purse, no bag, no sandal,” says Jesus in this New Testament travel guide. It is a common theme. Jesus
also once said it was as easy for a man with a lot of baggage to come under God's kingship as it would be for a camel to get through the eye of a needle. Any fool knows the rule: preoccupation with the baggage ruins the journey.

What is your burden? One of our heaviest is worry. We grow stoop-shouldered from bearing it. The health of a family member, the stability of our jobs, the growing stack of bills, and various other worries are all a part of that burden. How do we lay it all down without being totally irresponsible? These are things we must bear, and usually we bear them alone. What shall I do with my life? Who can help bear that responsibility? I must ultimately bear it alone. What shall I say to my son or daughter this time? Or what will they say to me? Will it ever be straightened out between us? These, too, are lonely burdens. It is great to have a friend, lover, or mate upon whom to unload, but on some days even friends and marriages become just one more burden to carry to work or to school where they will preoccupy us, or to other places where we try to forget. There are many other burdens, like that of infallibility, or self-sufficiency, or respectability. The list itself becomes burdensome. It is oppressive. We cannot enjoy life. We attempt only to bear it. The burdens of baggage ruin the journey.

Fortunately or unfortunately, we are not alone. Even the church has her baggage. As an institution she attempts to bear the burden of justifying her existence or proving her worth. I am not so sure she can get it all through the eye of the needle. When Luke records these words of Jesus he is surely thinking of the church being sent out on her mission “with no purse, no bag, no sandals,” instead with only a message and a confession. Jesus sent his people with no sets of commentaries or noted authorities, not even a statement or a card to prove their orthodoxy. He supplied no book of ceremonies, just a few rubrics on how to shake dust off your feet and how to keep moving. When the church’s baggage overwhelsm her you simply don’t hear about the kingdom any more, or even about the King. You just hear a lot of groaning about the baggage.

WHAT WE NEED IS A COSMIC DUMP, A PLACE where we might discard all of that worrisome junk and the burden of our own meaning. Where is there an adequate place? You can’t throw trash just anywhere, you know.

There is such a place, but the name of it is written in Hebrew, so I must tell you about it. In the Bible there is a word which is used almost exclusively of God. Only He has it. In English it is called “glory.” The ancient Hebrews’ word for that was kabod, which translated literally means “weight,” or “heaviness.” He is glorious God, the weighty one. He is accustomed to weight, even the weight of all things and all meaning. He alone can bear it. He alone can bear the burden of responsibility for the meaning of life and death, and he alone can bear the weight of worry over his sons and daughters, over the poor and wayward, or over distraught husbands and wives. It is also he alone who can bear the burden of the church, of her worth, and of her carryings on. In his mercy he wants nothing more—and nothing less!—than to bear it all for us. He would be our cosmic dump.

To prove it vividly for us, in the fulness of time he dumped the whole burdensome mess upon his son, Jesus Christ. The whole weight of meaning of life and death was placed upon him. His was the burden of all human worry, shame, and guilt. And the burden killed him. It is all too much for man, even the man Christ Jesus. But according to Luke’s version of that death Jesus died with this cry on his lips (23:46): “Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit.” Only the Father’s hands could bear that spirit and the weight of everything it meant for the Son to be who he was. In his glorious weightiness he took it and bore it and lifted from his Son the burden of life and death and he gave to him a new life by raising him from death. The heavy stone was rolled away and the unburdened life had been won for men. The burden is lifted from each of us as we die through our baptism into his death and are raised to the unburdened life in Christ. The burden is lifted in forgiveness each time we ask and each time we come to the altar for the meal of forgiveness.

The church’s burden is removed, too. She is forgiven for chasing after her own meaning, for defining her own mission on her own terms, and for dragging the ecclesiastical kitchen sink with her into all the world because “she might need it.” We are purified and relieved by the gracious Word of him who would send us out with no purse, no bag, no sandals, or anything else we lambs among wolves believe we might need.

What do you do with yourself when you have dumped your baggage? Do you give up? Do you stop the journey? No. There is a paradox for us to hear today. I have led you on as though the whole secret of life and of Christianity is the laying down of burdens. That is true, but it is only half of the truth. The rest of it goes like this: “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” You see, the secret of life is in bearing burdens all right, but in bearing the right burdens! I do not have to belabor that. You know the difference between the burdens. Yours are heavy, oppressive, and they kill. But somehow those borne for another, after laying down our own and by the power of Christ offering a hand, a heart, a word, a touch, or a mere presence, are not so burdensome, so massive, so lethal. I suppose that’s why Jesus sent his people out in twos, so they would bear no baggage but each other as they proclaimed the kingdom, the power, and the gracious, weighty glory of the burden-bearing God. Let us bear one another to the cosmic dump. Let us now come together to the altar by twos, or tens, or hundreds, and let us taste of his glory and of our freedom.


The Cresset
NOAH'S ARK

Selections from a series of twelve etchings by Arthur Geisert

This presentation is from an exhibition of Mr. Geisert's art presently showing at Valparaiso University. Mr. Geisert has taught art at both Concordia Teachers College, Seward, Nebraska, and Concordia Teachers College, River Forest, Illinois. He now lives with his wife and son in Galena, Illinois, in a three story, 18' x 18' house which he built himself. Prints are $60.00 apiece and may be obtained directly from the artist by writing P.O. Box 3, Galena, Illinois 61036. Of his art Mr. Geisert writes:

"I like to work with themes of salvation. Salvation is not only necessary but it's fun too. It's fun to be saved.

"So in my work anything goes as long as it is theologically correct and fun. Electric lights in the ark are a long overdue improvement. And the woodburning stove is better and far safer than open hearth cooking popular at the time of the flood.

Arthur Geisert, Sick Day, 1974. Etching, 15 x 24".

"The animals and people are saved together. They are sick both from motion and of each other but at the end they all come out all right.

"My theology is visual, you can't say it or write it, you have to draw it. And you have to be visually literate to understand it."

September, 1974

The Theatrical Genius of Giorgio Strehler

The key to any definitive re-creation of a play, and there are very few stage directors who have the genius to penetrate the manifold layers of such a work as Shakespeare's King Lear. Giorgio Strehler, who heads the Piccolo Teatro de Milano, dares to give a totally new face to a classic play without changing a single line of the original text. So many directors of our time tamper with Shakespeare, cut and rearrange scenes, and, in their rage to be different and in their endeavor to come up with a new interpretation, rephrase everything. Not so Giorgio Strehler. In challenging himself and the dramatist, he takes the poet by his word at the risk of testing the endurance of his audience. His Re Lear lasts four and a half hours with one short intermission.

Strehler seems to be one of the most profound and imaginative stage directors of our day. He strongly believes in every play having its own inner rhythm. He does not block out a play in any conventional sense. He choreographs the rhythmic interplay between the characters, he sees in pauses and movement essential motivations for the creation of everything beyond the obviousness of the verbal implication. Strehler has an ear for the inner music of each character and synchronizes it with the actual happenings onstage. When, for instance, in his staging of Re Lear the two evil-minded sisters reduce willfully Lear's retinue, Strehler has them speak at a rapid speed and has the Fool accompany their verbal outpour with sound effects which underline the ugliness of their thoughts and the rhythm of their venomous words.

Strehler can take a play out of its conventional setting and create a stage realism in a luminous flight of his imagination. He always visualizes the totality of theatrical effects. The decors which he likes to reduce to simple basic sets must immediately convey the essential points of the play in a highly symbolic and suggestive way. His lighting devices are utterly surprising and give special meaning to the actors' movements and gestures. Every face is alive and articulate, even when the lips are silent.

He chose as his decor for Re Lear a bare stage that gave the impression of a muddy spot at a shore by the sea, with the indefinite sky of a hot day or mysterious night, full of thunder and lightning. The front curtain can suddenly turn into the sails of a ship. A battle takes place on a darkened stage with frightening music accentuating the struggle between men who come and go like many shadows.

All that happens onstage seems to be whipped up to a frenzy while, in fact, everything is slowed down with the growing intensity of clashing minds, fighting bodies, and frantic cruelties. Any torture is slow. Strehler underlines it in its visible nakedness. Every movement is heightened, theatricalized, and yet so true to nature. The speech pattern characterizing each figure is not to be separated from movement and sound. Sometimes a speech is as rapid and loud as the trampling noise of horses racing into battle, sometimes a character falls into a whisper, or his sentences sound like the lilt of a lullaby. And the light fitting the feeling of each scene is with him.

Perhaps Strehler's King Lear takes so long and is willfully slow while being visually exciting because it is a play about aging and learning the wisdom of life only gradually. Strehler makes a special point of showing the similarity between Gloucester's and Lear's fates. Their make-up is deceptively similar. When they enter the stage one is not quite sure the very first moment of who is Lear or who Gloucester. There is a scene when the two are together onstage, Lear and the blinded Gloucester who slowly recognizes the King. Suddenly both break out into joyful laughter and they dance together, overcoming their misery and suffering, realizing the inner freedom of age, rejoicing at having found one another in their agony.

This uplifting scene becomes a necessary counterpoint to the maddening events of their lives. Lear's childish attitudes turn into childlike reactions. The man who must wade through the purgatory of his rage learns to laugh. In the blindness of his fury he learns to see and learns to know about wisdom and kindness. This scene is the point of crossing into new realizations. Strehler's most stunning and hotly debated idea was to have Cordelia also play the part of the Fool. First, this notion strikes one as a stage gimmick, as a means of finding a new trick for an old vehicle. But the fact that it works and works brilliantly in his production proves its truth. It is very likely that in Shakespeare's days the Fool and Cordelia were done by one and the same actor. If it was not the case, it would have been logical and credible. Of course, one could claim that
the Fool is a type and Cordelia a character. But Shakespeare’s fools are well defined and characterized. There is an inner identity between these two figures. Strehler sees the “rather hidden truth” in both. These two are the “constancy” of goodness. When Lear rejects Cordelia, the Fool enters. He stays with him as long as Lear is beside himself. As soon as Lear’s schizophrenic rage subsides and the realization of his follies become manifest, the Fool disappears.

When Lear holds the dead Cordelia in his arms, he begins a short monologue with the words: “And my poor fool is hang’d...” Is the word “fool” at this point in the play merely a tender word? Is Lear in his pain so full of despair that he mistakes Cordelia for his fool? Or did Shakespeare wish to remind his audience of the fool without Lear being too conscious of what he says? Or is not the fool Lear’s mirror image as much as Cordelia is his better part? Or did Shakespeare want to say that his hero finally recognizes Cordelia’s disguise as fool? However it may be, it worked beautifully in Strehler’s staging. It was not a stunning stage trick, it was a point of greater insight into the complexity of the human soul. Shakespeare seems to ask whether truth and goodness can only survive in disguise. Giorgio Strehler gave the answer to this question in his staged version of *Re Lear*, probably one of the most theatrically valid and exciting productions of one of Shakespeare’s most difficult and profound ways.

**KING LEAR WAS SHOWN AT**

the Zuerich Schauspielhaus during the June Festivals. Strehler’s staging of Chekhov’s *The Cherry Orchard* had its premiere in Milano in May. This was an equally evocative and provocative production, certainly the boldest staging of this work ever done, in which illusion, the memories of yesterday, clash with the realities of life in a kind of aural-visual symphony. Beyond the individual fate of Chekhov’s characters looms the historic change from a feudal period with its empty lives of the idle rich to an uncertain realistic world of tomorrow. Strangely enough, Chekhov saw in it a comedy and gave this play comic features in his *con sordino* mood: the absurd existence of people who cannot fathom anything beyond the habits of their yesterdays and the strange notion of time, the nostalgic feelings in man, his return and clinging to an already lost hope and home, his expulsion from a nonexistent paradise.

One could easily maintain that the hero of *The Cherry Orchard* is the passing of time. Strehler writes in his program bill:

“The time. The problems of time. In this vaudeville-tragedy-comedy, farce and drama the totality of it appears to me constantly bigger and more perfect in its clarity – I would like to say: in its innocence. I can hear Mozart’s Quintet KV 516 and think of Mozart’s clarity... which is so true and deep... The notion of time is basic.” Like in *Re Lear*, Strehler took every word, every stage direction which Chekhov put down seriously. Chekhov wrote in a letter (February 5, 1903) about the flowering cherry trees in his play: “... a garden, all in white. And the ladies in white dresses... outside snow now falls.”

With the help of his stage designer, Luciani Damiani, he created a white stage image with some real leaves; the furniture is white and so are the costumes of the female characters. Such stage directions as “she jumps up in tears,” “she is happy,” “she laughs” are strictly observed and become part of the great Reigen of the play’s verbal melody. The many changes in mood from sadness to happiness, from hope to despair, from fury to drunken enchantment, as well as the melancholy dance music in Act Three are unnoticeably handled, but with great skill reflecting the world of Chekhov’s characters. It is amazing how Strehler leads his actors through long stretches of a pianissimo with clear articulation, how he sometimes lifts the tone quality to a mezzo forte, only to have the eternal student Trofimov raise his voice to a forte with his thoughts on and demands for the improvement of the world. Most of the play moves in a low key as if this long farewell could not stand loud voices.

Everything is keyed to the memories of the past. In what was once the children’s room there are small chairs and tables and a huge wardrobe which suddenly opens, with all the childhood toys spread out – dolls and even a wooden railroad train. The grown-ups become children again, and this idea is taken up once more in Act Four, as if Strehler wants to stress that these people never stopped experiencing life like a plaything. In Act Two when dream and idyll all of a sudden collapse, a toy train moves from the rear to the footlights, underlining the simile of lost childhood. This idea of the passing train can be traced to Stanislavsky. Chekhov did not object to it, but, on the very same day, wrote his wife: “Stanislavsky wants to have a train pass by in Act Two, but I think one should prevent him from doing so.” Strehler included the running train in his stage concept.

In the second act the play area—which consists of a steel platform covered with white velvet—is raised to create the vague image of a beach. On this strongly raked platform the picnic takes place during which the actors move about as if the entire scene would be choreographed. Strehler prefers to work with only the most essential props and utilizes them in a highly symbolic way. In Act Three a few chairs stand around. One drops into these chairs apparently tired from dancing, but in fact one hides in them in fear waiting for the decision about the sale of the cherry orchard.

In former days Strehler was very
much influenced by Bertolt Brecht whose *Galileo* he staged with great success several years ago. Strehler, who has inherited Max Reinhardt’s position in Salzburg, only recently expressed his qualms about the basic concept of the Salzburg Festival, which he derided as a playground for the world’s richest people.

Stanislavsky thought that Chekhov created “ideal fighters against the terrible realities of the Russia of his time.” Strehler—as a Brecht disciple—must be guided by similar thoughts. To him, the idea of having the cherry orchard divided into lots, dotting them with little summer cottages, points to social progress: “The garden will not quite disappear, nor will its beauty. But in the future many people will enjoy what was claimed by the former owners for them alone.”

Had Chekhov something similar in mind, however sarcastically he may have pictured the new as well as the former owners of the cherry orchard? Ilya Ehrenburg noted in his essay, *À la rencontre de Tchekov*, that the dramatist never expressed any clearly defined political views and that he, Ehrenburg, would never dare ascribe to him any Marxist interpretations.

Whatever thoughts may have prompted Chekhov to write such a vaudeville comedy as *The Cherry Orchard* with so many tragic undertones, he remains a dramatist of the gentle truth. And whatever thoughts may prompt Giorgio Strehler to stage a new *King Lear* or *Cherry Orchard* version becomes irrelevant in view of the genuine, unforgettable theatrical wonders this stage magician can create.

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**BOOKS**

THE RUNNER.


If you don’t like Boyd’s style generally, you probably won’t like this book either. If you do, you might enjoy it; but for my part, it wore thin pretty quickly.

Boyd writes in a kind of bastardized prose/poetry style. One suspects that he would like to be a poet, but can’t quite manage it, so writes his prose in short paragraphs and only half fills his pages to give one the impression that it is poetry. He pares down his language, so that in any one paragraph you will find it concisely written and to the point. Unfortunately, there is paragraph after paragraph of essentially the same stuff.

The book, all written from the vantage point of a single narrator, is divided into four parts. The first comprises the narrator’s self-description before the “Runner” enters his life. It is a kind of surrealistic pastiche of disembodied voices, running through mazes, calling to what isn’t there, flash-backs, and other paranoid visions that give one the feeling he’s listening to a psychotic ramble. Boyd even prints all but brief introductions to each of the part’s three chapters in italics, I suppose to make sure you notice these words as a description of the “pre-Runner” man. The last line of the third introduction sums up the section: “An allegory of capricious fate and sheer meaninglessness was at that time my tortured and puzzling vision of life.” I got that by the end of the first chapter. Having to read the next two was, if not capricious fate and sheer meaninglessness, at least overkill.

The second part introduces the Runner. The narrator is engaged in fleeing from the Runner, who nonetheless holds a fatal fascination for him. Finally, of course, he confesses his sin and receives forgive-
ness from the Runner. (For some reason, lines from Thompson’s “The Hound of Heaven” introduces Part I, rather than Part II.) All this is interspersed with a variety of pious aphorisms.

Now it may appear to you that the Runner is a Christ-figure, and no doubt the author intends this to be true. All too often, interspersed with Biblical allusions in the Runner’s mouth, it is pure Boyd (“The Runner told us that he mistrusted religion when it became highly organized, bureaucratic, overly dependent upon money, and a part of the established order”), which no matter how much you may agree with him (and this writer happens to) are not honestly juxtaposed with “forgive seventy times seven . . . if we lost our life for his sake we would find it . . . whoever would be first must be a slave . . . the gate is narrow . . . ,” as if they were on the same plane of revelation.

The third part is similar, except it deals with the narrator’s observing the Runner in his dealings with a variety of other people, mainly students. (“Youths . . . held the future.”) Each page is a vignette of a pastoral conversation with someone—a student’s problem and the Runner/Boyd’s answer from a Christian/Boyd perspective, which finally give the appearance of being a series of platitudes. These may have merit of themselves, but by now there is nothing left of the quasi-poetry but the form, and its artificiality is obtrusive.

In the fourth part, the narrator has himself become a runner, and we discover that the Runner is going away (shades of Jesus and the disciples). But almost in the same breath the Runner declares that the community’s “life had become too ordered, established in its ways and self-serving,” etc., which, though it might be reflective of Jesus’ attitude toward the scribes, priests, and Pharisees, is hardly connected in Scripture with His “going away.”

The narrator is told that the Runner will never really be far away, and can be found in the traditional places (bread and wine, fellowship, least of the brethren), and finally watches him running into the horizon, not unlike the Lone Ranger.

Now, frankly, few of these criticisms apply to anything but good taste, and taste differs. The worst of the book lies in the popular heresies (or near-heresies requiring explication to be acceptable) that are stated badly in otherwise disarming contexts. Bluntly put, Boyd has evacuated the Gospel. The comments in Jesus’ mouth are almost all Law statements—sin no more, do this, give up that. The purpose of forgiveness appears to be that now your slate is clean, do it right from here on; or that afterwards you need feel no guilt—rather than that you obtain salvation. The way to remain within the circle of the redeemed appears as a form of works-righteousness. “The Runner told me that when I surrendered to love, I would free myself from the chains of my own imprisonment away from the fulness of life,” and love is defined as the “inexpressibly full freedom of willingly accepting responsibility.” What Boyd fails to make clear (or perhaps he fails to understand it) is that loving actions such as he enjoins are responses to the Love of God and the salvation given, not the end of it. Salvation is not a means to the end of our better fulfillment of the Law! It is freedom from the Law, both in terms of its Judgment (Death—not guilt) on us and in terms of its tyrannous as “that which you must do to merit God’s favor.” It is the strictly gracious restoration of men and women to the state of being children of God and co-heirs with Christ, and this is the end of Christ’s ministry and death and resurrection. And it is apprehended by faith, not by love. Faith, to be sure, is a doubtful quantity without love, and this Boyd is right in proclaiming, but let’s put our horses before our carts!

Boyd is concerned that we not allow religion to be “pie in the sky in the great by-and-by.” He wants us to be functioning as Christianly responsible caring persons here and now. Caring “has nothing at all to do with a reward mechanism for admission to a distant kingdom.” His antidote to pie in the sky is that Man should be a do-er. “True religion is not based on any kind of subservience of man. Man/woman is seen as the co-creator with God in the continuing act of creation.” But Scripture points out that man is precisely not that. He is receiver as redeemed, and waits together with the rest of creation, groaning in its disruptedness and confusion for the redemption to be accomplished—not by Man, but by God. Again to be sure, once redeemed we are members of the Body of Christ, and as such are working as something like co-creators with Him, as He uses us.

But all of these things are actions of God upon us, apprehended by faith. “By faith are you saved.” And though I find much of judgment, much of consolation, much of exhortation, I find not one word about faith in all this book.

W. R. RIEDEL
VIOLENT MAN, YOU DIED

Violent man, you died. You lie in state.
You scared me yesterday. . . . How limp the fist!
Did all the violence evaporate,
Or did you will it to a jungle beast,
Or lying statesman? It's not in these flowers,
Or in the saltless tears the mourners show.
(I shrink from power and powers . . .
Are they as doomed as you?)

You cannot lift a leg or bash a head
Or twist a toe, or even roar at us,
And yet I dread
The thought of jeering at your futileness,

This wayward fear: That you may start and stir,
Prying those hands open, facing me.
I scoff at superstition — but you Are
From some odd bristling age of savagery,

Not my fire-opal age of timid tuts;
My certainties and ease
Are overpowered. From the dimmest pits
You may come back, flailing your cruelties.

On all who bleed or fear.
You lie in state. I smile at ghosts, I say . . .
I am imagining that motion there . . . It cannot be.

Henry Hubert Hutto