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THE UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

# KERYGMA

A JOURNAL OF COMMENT Vol. II, No. 1

## *A Note on the Title:*

KERYGMA is a Greek word meaning "proclamation" or "heralding." It originally designated the action of a herald; in the Gospels it takes on the particular connotation of a declaration of the "glad tidings" of Christ's resurrection.

In our context, however, it is a proclamation on a different level—a cultural one. It is an announcement that is meant to be heard. It is one that has direct consequences for modern culture—implications that demand to be either accepted or rejected, but never ignored.

Our major "proclamation" is the fact of an impending choice between a culture that is totally secular and one that is Christian. But this principal kerygma is surrounded by many minor ones, such as the place of the university in society, the grounds and bases of the arts, the place of the sciences in the humanities, and other specific problems.

We do not pretend that what appears in our magazine will always be complete and finished. Sometimes it will be only in the nature of a "kerygma," an idea which is to be developed and expanded later. Ours will be an exploration, an investigation of the implications of Christianity and the University in society.



*A Journal of Comment at*

## THE UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

Fall Issue, 1961

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Heri Bert Bartscht. *Abraham*. Terra Cotta.

ANNE LITTLE

## *Form in the Arts — and* FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Art is essentially a mystery, in the theological sense of the word. Art is no more subject to treatment as a mere problem than is its archetype, being. A mystery cannot be solved in the world of the finite; it can only be explored. This is not to imply that nothing can be said or should be said of mystery or of being or of art. Since mystery remains unbounded regardless of the depth of exploration, it continues to present a challenge to our understanding, quickening the faculties of knowing rather than provoking the response of discouragement or skepticism. Consequently, it is true to say that mystery can be penetrated and known, but cannot be solved and dismissed.

Being and art—which re-presents being—can be known. Both are modes of knowledge and both are known in a similar manner. Knowledge is the union effected between the knowing subject and the known object. Knowledge of being is possible because the mind is able to abstract the determining element of being and mate this form, as it were, with the knower. Art, as a mode of knowledge, has its own unique form, a form not identical with that of being (because art is not being *per se* but the re-presentation of being), but a form analogous to that of being. It is this concept of art as a mode of knowledge which this article attempts to explore.

Art is known by means of its form. Jacques Maritain expresses this idea when he says that the inner powers of man are acted upon by every work of art. Art attacks the mind with "two terrible weapons, Intuition and Beauty," he writes, and the contact is made at "the single root . . . of all (man's) energies, Intellect, Will, Imagination, Emotions, Passions, Instincts, and obscure Tendencies." (*The Responsibility of the Artist*, p. 59.) In *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry*, Maritain goes on to outline the way in which art so influences the mind. In producing a painting, a symphony or a poem, the artist is performing

an act of creation. The artist molds a unique being and instills into it a unique life principle. He is, in the process, affected by the process; it is, however, not the object he creates which is "*formative and forming*," but the creative idea itself. (p. 81, Meridian edition.) According to Maritain, this "creative intuition" is inseparable from the being of the artist. The artist, as distinct from other men, sees things not so much in the speculative as in the metaphorical sense. He sees with his inner eye the "ciphered writings that are at the core of actual existence." (p. 82.) These insights are not seen as isolated things, but as inseparable from his own being. Just as the creation of the universe presupposes God's knowledge of his own divine essence, so the creation of an art object, a special type of universe, presupposes the artist's knowledge of himself—his insights as identified with his being. In Shakespearian drama, for example, contact is made not only with an imaged vision of being, but also with the poet who possesses this vision. Hamlet, Lear, Iago, Falstaff, Bottom, and Dogberry reveal what Maritain calls the "substantial totality of the human person" that is the poet. This revelation is made possible by the spiritual nature of the soul which is "capable of containing itself through its own immanent acts." (p. 82.) In his creation the poet imparts his very self so that the art object is truly made in his image and likeness.

The burden of the foregoing paraphrase is that the art object contains its own peculiar form—its own specific determining element. This form is the embodiment of the intuition or insight which was first in the artist. It is, therefore, the incarnation of a logos, an incarnation which is whole and complete in itself.

In the ontological sense, form is the determination of the essence of a thing; it is this form which the intellect abstracts in the process of knowledge. When confronted with the art object, the mind likewise abstracts the form, not only the substantial form by which the mind grasps being, but also the unique form of the art object as such, the form as embodiment of insight. This action of the mind manifests that art has its own mode of knowledge. In comprehending the art object, the mind is conscious of a certain wholeness. The object is seen as a unit in itself. There may be parts which are realized as distinct from each other, but distinction does not necessarily imply separation or isolation. These parts—scenes from a novel, details of a fresco, measures from a sonata—bear definite relationships to the whole; once they are extracted from this whole they lose their point of reference and their meaning. As soon as the form is lost the art object ceases to exist as art, regardless of its existence as object. Father

William F. Lynch, S. J., summarizes this idea in his book *The Image Industries*: "A work of art is more than an image, it is an organism of images, each conversing with and playing powerfully upon the other, none having a total life of its own." (p. 29.) To treat isolated parts, whether in themselves "good" or "offensive," as criteria for so judging the whole is misleading and dangerous.

The popular evaluation of the film *Francis of Assisi* is based on an isolation of a part. The topic or subject of the film is supposedly religious, a "good" subject, and therefore the film is pronounced "good." But what is achieved by this subject if the film has no form? Does the artistic failure of the film leave unaffected its "message"? Can it still be called worthy because of its topic? Can the whole be sanctified because of a good part? The question of the film in general as an art medium has been the subject of some controversy. It is, however, acceptable to consider the film a "time art" as George Bluestone has done in *Novels into Film*. He maintains that the film has its own metaphoric quality which is the sequential arrangement of space, and is, therefore, subject to critical evaluation as art. (p. 61.)

In order for a film to have form, it must fulfill at least two conditions: The creative mind behind it must possess an insight into reality, and all its parts must contribute to this insight. The individual parts of the film must work together in the production of an integrated whole. Perhaps it is inherent in the Hollywood method of production that the very scope of an extravaganza such as *Francis of Assisi* argues against the possibility of there being behind it a single mind possessed of a genuine metaphorical insight. Without the insight, the idea, it is useless to speak of form.

But even if the possibility of an insight exists, *Francis of Assisi* fails on the second count. Details in the film are distractions rather than elements contributing to unity. The lavish use of technicolor is difficult to accept with the portrayal of the poverty of St. Francis. However much delight in themselves the photographs of Assisi might yield, they cannot be employed solely for this effect. This is not true of the topographical scenes in *La Strada*, the form of which is partly realized by means of the relationship of these scenes to the complete film. Details in film are just as meaningful as details in a novel. They have a definite purpose; otherwise they are superfluous.

The employment of music, too, must adhere to the same economy. There must be reason for employing it. Bluestone says that music is "ultimately determined by and therefore subservient to the demands of the visual image." (p. 30.) Why has Hollywood succumbed to the idea that a story or an episode must be accompanied incessantly by

music? Admittedly, music can have a definite relation to the meaning, and it is this relation which is important. The use of music in *La Strada* and *The Bicycle Thief* contrasts markedly with that in *Francis of Assisi*. Periods of absolute silence in the Italian films are used organically, but the opportunity for such use in the "silent" passages of *Francis of Assisi* is foregone. A rather interesting instance of the relationship of music to the meaning is the ironic effect employed in the television production of *The Power and the Glory*, where bright, happy music is juxtaposed on the socialist-imprisoned village whose public address system beats out the rhythm with the dicta—"There will be no wine, no Mass, no God."

Another detail which does not correspond to the meaning of *Francis of Assisi* is the anti-war attitude which pervades the first half of the film. In the film the saint's notion of peace seems to have its own peculiar significance. It is during the conversation between Francis and the Sultan that the viewer receives the impression that for a Christian, to fight for any reason is wrong. If this detail—and it recurs—does relate to the meaning of the film, then there is illustrated an apt example of the apostolate of the "New Christianity," as Father Lynch calls it, that is, the preachment as to how Christians *should* be living. (*The Image Industries*, p. 49.) If such a "New Christianity" has a relation to the image of the saint, the result is not an image of reality, but a false concept, a fantasy. In the first chapter of his book, Father Lynch equates fantasy and unreality. Both are synonymous with non-being. Needless to say, something is wrong when the metaphoric insight into being produces non-being in an object proposing to be art.

Many more inconsistent details can be found in the *Francis* film. Enough has been said, however, to show that the details, when related to the whole, have little meaning. The essential criticism is that the viewer fails to make contact with the form of the film, simply because there is none. The viewer does not leave *Francis of Assisi* with a mental picture of the whole because there is no integrity in the film to abstract. What the viewer received is a "nice" story which ends with the characters walking off into the horizon. Is it wise, then, for Christians to promote this film simply because it has a religious topic? Such a separation cannot be made. Because the film fails artistically, it logically follows that it fails religiously. An analysis from this latter viewpoint would reveal sentimentality, illusion, and lack of conviction which are hardly concomitant with the concept of religion.

Whether the art object is a fresco or a film, it must have form. The art object is form—the embodiment of an insight. It is this unique

form that is united with the mind of the knower and through which knowledge of the art object is acquired. Either a work of art has form or it does not; without such form an object cannot be called art, no matter what details are employed or how excellent in itself the subject matter is considered. All details, as parts of the whole, must relate and contribute to the whole. No isolation of the parts is possible without an impairment of the integrity of the whole. Form, therefore, cannot be separated from content.

In speaking of art as a mode of knowledge and in discussing form, it is necessary to handle the very essence of art; yet when one does so the exploration has really just begun. The more that is discovered of the nature of art, the farther it is necessary to reach for greater understanding and thus the mystery that is art remains, challenging our minds with all the intensity and profundity that is mystery.

FRANK O'DONNELL

## *The Artist*

When I got home from my route that morning Dad was already up and Mom had gotten home from work; she was fixing breakfast. We were living in San Francisco then and Peggy wasn't born yet.

My mother was standing at the stove, and Dad was sitting at the table in his pajama bottoms. He had his coffee but still he didn't speak to me or even look at me. I dropped my delivery sack in the corner by the door.

"Wash the ink off your hands and come eat, Bobby," my mother said. She didn't look at me either, except when I closed the door hard she frowned at me. She had on Dad's old white bathrobe and those stupid fluffy slippers. Her hair wasn't combed and it looked like the slippers except it was black instead of pink.

"Where's my paper, Bobby?" my Dad said loudly.

"There's two of 'em in the bag," I said from the bathroom, "some people on Grant moved so I got two extras today." My Dad went over to the green Chronicle bag and got one of the papers. He didn't say thanks or anything. He never did. My mother said that it was because my father was selfish and didn't give a damn what people thought about him, even his own family. One time they went to see Father O'Rourke at St. Mary's because they weren't getting along and he told my mother not to judge my father as she would judge other men because he was an artist and was bound to be moody sometimes. So Mom called my Dad a name right in front of Father O'Rourke. They didn't go back to see him anymore or even to go to Mass. Mom said that if he had the gall to call Corbett, my Dad, an artist, then he must not have known what a priest was either. I still served Mass Sundays but Father never asked me how Mom was, just if my poor old Dad was all right.

Mom put the eggs and bacon on the table and sat down across from me. She didn't look at Dad, but she said, "Eat, son," to me. Dad

dropped the paper on the floor and began to eat too. Mom's eyes were all pinched up and she was pale. She said her eyes watered a lot because of all the smoke in the club where she worked. I saw her cry lots of times, too. She couldn't hold a cup of coffee. Her hands shook. She had to bend down to the cup and just lift it a little ways or she'd spill it. Once when she spilled it Dad laughed. I told him not to laugh at Mom and he laughed more. When he did that Mom jumped up from the table and ran across the apartment and fell on their bed behind the divider where Dad hung some of his paintings. She cried and cried. I remember when she ran from the table she looked like a skinny white bird Dad had made a picture of once, because of that old bathrobe and those dumb looking slippers. He didn't have to be mean like that. Mom worked all night and came home and cooked breakfast and made my lunch before she could sleep. Dad never said thanks or anything. Sometimes I met her coming home from work when I was finishing up my route. She wore her black cocktail hostess dress with her name on the pocket and an old gray coat. She always looked tired and old but she used to smile when she saw me coming on my bike. I never saw her smile except when we were alone like that, walking home. She never smiled at Dad. Never.

Anyway, Dad got through eating breakfast and he went behind the divider to get dressed. I looked at Mom to see if they had been arguing but she kept her eyes on her plate. She was just picking at the food and not eating much. I knew she wouldn't say anything behind my father's back.

When I had finished eating and was looking at the comics, Dad came out from behind the divider in his blue peacoat and his oilstained khaki pants. He was skinny like Mom but a lot taller. His hair was blond, like straw. He didn't have much hair down on his forehead, just a lot on top and down over his ears. His face was always red like it was sunburned. He had his easel and a little suitcase of brushes and painting stuff under his arm. He looked at me like he was noticing me for the first time that morning and said, "See you later, kid." Then he went out the door. He hadn't even looked at Mom. I said, "Okay, Dad," but he was already out the door. I hadn't expected him to say anything at all. Mom was still staring at her food. She was shaking and there were tears running down both her cheeks. She looked like she was going to get sick.

"Go brush your teeth," she said. She was shaking more and she looked mad so I put the comics down and went into the bathroom. I turned the water on in the sink. The door was open a little and I saw

my mother get up from the table. She opened the cabinet under the kitchen sink. She bent down and reached around in rags and pots and pipes. She took a long brown bag out of the cabinet. She crushed the paper bag down around a brown bottle and pulled a cork out of the bottle. She tilted it up and I watched her swallow a couple of times. Then she leaned against the refrigerator. I knew what it was in that bottle. She had been drinking from the same kind of bottle once when I came home early from school. She had given me a half dollar and had told me never to tell Dad. I knew it was whiskey. A kid at school told me that his father drank whiskey and he told me what the bottle looked like and how his father acted when he was drinking. It was just the same. I never told Dad, though; I knew he'd get real mad.

Just then a funny thing happened. Mom put the whiskey bottle down and came running over to the bathroom. I thought she had seen me so I got ready for a whipping. But she went right by me—she dropped down by the toilet and got sick into it a couple of times.

"What's the matter, Mom? Should I call a doctor?"

"Go on, Bobby, go to school. Go on. It's all right." She sounded real hoarse. She was just kind of stooped there, swaying back and forth, moaning. She wouldn't look at me. She was shaking real bad. I got scared and started to go out and get somebody but she got up and flushed the toilet. She leaned on me. Her breath was right in my face and it was bad. I had to turn my head away.

"I got to lay down, Bobby," she said, "help me to the bed. God, I wish you were old enough to understand. Poor kid, you can't know what's happening; sometimes I don't know myself." She was leaning hard on me like she was going to faint.

"I'll go get Dad," I said, "I'll just tell him you got sick again."

"Don't tell your father anything about this. You hear me? Don't never tell him anything about it!"

She was shaking so hard her teeth were chattering. We got to the bed and she laid down and fell asleep right away. I went to the table and looked at the bottle. Dad would get real mad. I put the cork in the bottle, put it in the bag, and put the bag in the cabinet. I hid it behind some Ba-Bo cans and rags. Then I made a peanut butter sandwich and took it to school with me. I smelled that whiskey and Mom's breath all day at school.

That same night, real late, when Mom was supposed to be at work, she and Dad sat up and talked at the table. They'd never do that now because they'd wake Peggy up. She's my little sister but she wasn't born yet then. They thought I was asleep, I guess. My Dad was drink-

ing coffee. Mom wasn't drinking coffee. She was doing most of the talking.

"... It's just my stomach, Corbett. I didn't want to go back to that damn club tonight and chance getting sick right there on the job, right in front of everybody." She had on the white robe. One of the pink fluffy slippers rubbed against the other one under the table. I kept my eyes half closed in case they looked over at me. I watched the slippers for a long time, listening. The overhead light was on and the room was so bright that I couldn't have gone to sleep anyway.

My Dad said, "Joyce, is it your drinking again? That's why you're sick after work, isn't it?" He sounded mad.

"Corbett, I swear..."

"Dammit, why the hell else would you just up and get sick mornings?"

My mother looked over at me as if Dad was going to wake me up. I closed my eyes all the way and tried to keep my eyelids from flickering. "Because I'm going to have a baby," my mother said in a soft voice; I opened my eyes a little. "I'm going to have another child," she said, kind of to herself, as if she didn't care whether my Dad heard or not. I looked at my father. He stared at my mother for a long time before he said anything. He looked over towards me, then he said to Mom, "You're forty-two years old. Your son is almost a teenager. Can't you at least come up with a better story than that?"

"Corbett, I'm telling you, I'm pregnant. I'm not going to the club anymore. I'm not going to spend all night trying to convince you. You just keep playing with your paints—but you better look around for a way to make a living on the side, big artist, because you're going to have someone else to feed before you know it!" She started crying. She stood up from the table but she didn't run behind the divider.

My father looked at her face. He looked at her just like she was the biggest liar he had ever seen. I knew she wasn't lying. I think I hated my father then. All of a sudden he began to smile. A little smile, hardly smiling at all. But his face didn't look like he didn't believe her anymore then. My mother was crying and shaking. Dad grabbed her in his arms and she sat on his lap, sobbing on his shoulder. I thought I was going to cry too. My father kept saying, "Joyce, Joyce," over and over. Mom said, "And I swear to you, Corbett, I'm not going to drink anymore—I swear to God!" I think my Dad started to cry too; I couldn't see if he was because his face was in her hair. But he said how sorry he was, I guess for not believing her; I think he really meant it, too.

About a week after that, Mom quit going to work nights. She got

a job in a drugstore down the block, right on Post street.

I was supposed to meet Dad down at Fisherman's Wharf, where he painted, one Saturday afternoon. Mom was working. I walked down Grant street through the tunnel, then through Chinatown. I stopped at the top of a hill and I could see Alcatraz Island and the Bay Bridge. There were a lot of white sailboats out on the Bay. On clear days I used to be able to see all the way across the Bay to the Standard Oil tank near Richmond. But most of the time it was too foggy.

I went on down the long steep hill to Fisherman's Wharf, where Dad's stand was. When I got to the corner of the block where he was working I stopped. A big restaurant kept a pot of crabs cooking right on the sidewalk. I could smell how good they would probably taste if my father would buy me some. I had been collecting my route all morning and I could have bought some with my own money. But Mom had said to give it all to Dad except a dollar, because I was supposed to do my part. I never thought she'd ever tell me to give my money to Dad, but they got along pretty good after that night Mom told Dad about Peggy. They laughed sometimes; Dad even kissed Mom before he went to the Wharf in the morning.

My father was sitting on a stool under the big awning of the restaurant. He was painting a girl who was sitting on another stool on the sidewalk. A guy with a bunch of camera stuff hanging on straps around his neck kept looking at her and talking to her. Then he ran around to Dad's side of the easel. He looked at the painting and laughed. The girl was pretty. She sat real still; she was smiling like Mom smiled sometimes, calm and peaceful.

Dad looked happy. He had on his white cap and a white smock with splotches of paint on the front. The people standing around watched everything he did. They laughed when he did. I walked closer and he saw me. He called me over so I went and stood behind him. When he finished the painting he signed it in big swirly letters in the corner, CORBETT. He winked at me. The people said it was real good and gave him some money. They went away; so did all the people who had been watching. Dad folded the easel up and said, "Let's call it a day, son. After four there's nothing doing."

"I got something for you, Dad," I said, and handed him my route money. He shook his head. His face was kind of sad but he smiled.

"You keep that, son. Save it. A man ought to save his money. What if you need a new bicycle? Then you can buy it." He put his hand on my shoulder.

"But Mom said . . ."

"Never mind, son." I wanted to tell him about doing my part.

## *Kerygma*

"Did your mother tell you about the baby that's coming? Did she tell you we're moving?"

"Well, kind of." She had told me the same time he found out, except I had believed her right away. And I hadn't cried about it.

The baby came a long time later, after we had moved over here to Oakland. I started going to the Christian Brothers school and Mom and Dad go to Mass again now. Mom just takes care of Peggy. She doesn't work at all, not even in a drugstore.

Dad works in the shipyards building big ships, aircraft carriers mostly, he says. He doesn't paint now except when he takes us to San Francisco on Sunday sometimes. We go to the beach in Dad's car, that he bought not too long after we moved. He paints lots of pictures and he still signs them, CORBETT, but he never sells any of them. He just hangs them all in Peggy's room.

CECILIA MAY

## *Amphora*

“And I alone have survived to tell you.”

Amphora, hoary Phoenician vessel,  
rusted and decayed by a life of seaweed dining,  
now reduced to an ornament on the wall  
of the rich possessor  
whose child peels the sores  
from the wounds of your aquatic hibernation:  
would you not rather be redismitted  
into that familiar oblivion known well  
by the forgotten masters of your ancient destiny  
or do you really relish curiosity  
as the measure of an eternal identity?

ANNE LITTLE

## *Parousia*

Penelope intent on queenly cares,  
Keeps vigil secretly in spite of sway  
That seeks to snare devotion for the day  
When chosen wooer sprawls in triumph's fares.

As once Odysseus heard, so now she bears  
The three-versed siren-song the suitors play;  
To nourish, reign, and mystify betray  
The desert-trial she mates with advent prayers.

Odysseus sees from Phaeacia and moves  
To disembark dimension's measured course.  
The temptors soon divine the sign which proves  
That mercy bears the counterpoint of force.

Cry joy, Sion-Spouse, your tarry-nots prevail  
To rouse your Lord to trim and hoist his sail.

RICHARD BAKER

## *Tree and Shadow*

Night and softly feeling breeze,  
And two loving, softly feeling.  
One speaks, the other echoes like a shadow  
on the moonlight lawn.  
Tree and shadow they are: one making in the  
taking of the light the other.  
One, to the same stir quickened yet never quick,  
is the other dimly limned.

DONA SPAWN

*Homo: Per se notum*

This being, not plant, projects gangling  
pseudopodia toward its prey.  
Unhurried, responds to the stimuli  
with its native irritability.

This greenery, not foliage, perpetually  
carries on its undamning photosynthesis;  
obscurely knows, as do chloroplasts,  
the unalterability of change.

Such knowledge, sole animal, cycles through  
the intangible organism and grows,  
encloses, absorbs—osmosis of Aristotle—  
and cycle needs more.

ROBERT DUPREE

*Icare Est Cheut Icy*

after Philippe Desportes

Icarus dropped here, the youth that was rude  
to his fingertips. He had the courage to climb  
halfway to heaven, and, becoming unglued,  
flouted admirers with envious decline.

What a crafty young spirit! The boy sailed aloft  
until sun unburdened his air-craft with grave  
consequences. We sip at a life that he quaffed  
all at once when he gulped down his pride in a wave.

The empirical trial didn't frighten his age,  
and though power failure extinguished his light,  
he played out his part on a star-studded stage.

He died when the plumes intended for flight  
engraved him instead in the sea and the page:  
would his tomb be as gay if his plans had gone right?

ROBERT DUPREE

## *A Pindaric Ode to the Garbageman*

You barge into our backyards faced,  
As Charon of  
Leftover worlds, with waste  
That's lined our lives for days. It hangs a hawk  
Above  
The purer thoughts of dove-  
Smooth flightiness and stalemates all our talk.

So raft our cursed trash in tolls  
of bottle, can,  
And bucket, while damned souls  
Of expiring cardboard boxes wheeze  
And fan  
Rank salvos to a clan  
Of roaring strays, escorted by the breeze.

Then push off from the pail of man. To free  
Our faces from their humbled likeliness,  
You ferry half the world away to be  
Cloistered, veiled, anointed. Yes,  
Sir, your exit spares humanity.  
Garbage is what spoils class-consciousness  
And tips the nose to social equity.

JOANNE LANKFORD

## *Child Oedipus*

Origin sounds in whirls of riddles  
Then it slides and climbs to the dark pore of light.  
There seen first on the hills of Corinth  
It's poised. Then strikes the child blind.

Still child moves still in anchored dimness  
Shouting his grasp under blanched stones for light.  
He crawls late, ankle-pierced, yielding to hands:  
Four-legged. But Merope's child must walk.

Bound child stumbles, bent on the grip of darkness,  
Then strides, fate-pulled, on feet swollen black.  
Man-Child clasps one slit of a three legged road  
And rips. Now he holds black light.

KENNETH MEYERS

## *Mind's Lament*

Oh that Memory's incessant roar  
Would give no voice to stomach's surgent growl  
Or Thought's great eye  
Was not enclosed by double folding doors;

Or that Imagination found no joy  
In trodding rust-red Autumn's fallen ways  
(that blanket summer's fruitful grave),  
Preferring crimson fires to Fancy's blaze.

Then Reason in its passageways  
Would find encompassed on a page  
Its voiceless, sightless, unwarmed self  
And unconfined create its maze.

RICHARD ZACHA

## *Erstwhile*

I saw a smithereen last night,  
A fleck of pompom from a banshee's cap.  
Who's at it, smashing up the universe?  
Whilom, they say, in underwater weather  
The coral clung in liquid love together.  
The toaster browned the toast  
And hand in glove was hardly close enough.  
On nights when no man spoke before the dawn,  
The shepherds hardly hearing sensed the stars,  
Lauding of the lodestone on a lute.  
Long since love lighted fire to warm itself  
While unremarked the cinder idols grew.  
Is that a fragment of a mind I see  
At odds with dissolution?  
See how they shattered Psyche there:  
Look at the strands of marble hair  
Drop from an iron anvil.

WALTRAUD BARTSCHT

## *The Unicorn*

Translated from Rainer Maria Rilke

The saint raised his head, and prayer,  
just like a helmet, fell back from his head:  
for without sound the beast drew near,  
the never believed one,  
the white beast, that like an abducted,  
helpless hind entreats one with its eyes.

The legs' ivory framework  
was moving in easy balances,  
a white gleam glided blissfully through the fur,  
and on the beast's forehead, the quiet, fair one,  
stood, like a tower in the moon, the horn so bright,  
and every step was done to lift it up.

The mouth with its rose-gray down  
was slightly drawn, so that a little white,  
(whiter than anything) shone from the teeth;  
the nostrils took in air and softly panted.  
But its glances, not held in bounds by anything,  
cast themselves images into space  
and closed a blue cycle of legends.

itecture in the past; it was more than decoration to the cathedral. Sculpture pieces served as integral parts in Gothic style. Modern architecture today offers little opportunity to the artist for creating sculptural forms that can be successfully integrated into the whole scheme of the architectural unit. The Christian sculptor finds his modern approach to the materials of sculpture misunderstood and his best creations are left isolated from any context or resting place.

But the fact remains that contemporary artists do exist who think in a Christian way intellectually, believe in a Christian way spiritually, and create in a Christian way artistically. These artists are profoundly aware of Christian truths, the themes of sin and salvation, of creation and destruction, and of the meaning of eternal life and death. They are artists who, consequently, refuse to forsake Christian themes in art for those of a predominately secular and materialistic culture. Among them is the Catholic sculptor, Heri Bert Bartscht.

Mr. Bartscht, a German-born sculptor who is presently an artist-in-residence and professor at the University of Dallas, gives us a Christian view of man and of reality. His is a reality that is simple and yet complicated, in a personal and modern style that is wholly subjected to Christian beliefs. He has said of his approach to Christian art: "This trinity of body, soul, and spirit (the components of human nature) is in my opinion the fundamental basis for the arts. Applied to sculpture it would look like this: Body—Material, Soul—Form, Spirit—Theme. Just as a fortunate combination of body, soul, and spirit (the soul as it functions through the channels of the mind) makes the ideal human nature, so their counterparts applied to the art of sculpture confirm the perfect solution of a statue." Mr. Bartscht approaches his material in a way that is best described as a sacred regard for it, and he bases his philosophy on the very nature of spiritual, finite man. His work echoes his philosophy forcefully; it speaks the language of the Christian faith.

A brief analysis of several of Mr. Bartscht's pieces can provide some insight into the achievement of a Christian artist who meets and answers the challenges posed by the twentieth century. Though he does not imitate any past tradition of Christian art, he does exhibit a definite respect for style. Under no condition is this sculptor untrue to his own personal vision. He does not sentimentalize nor does he disregard the harsh realities of life. This is quite evident in his welded steel figure (p. 32) called "Crown of Thorns," a piece that is extremely competent in its approach and intention. Mr. Bartscht has welded steel rods in vertical lines and created an intricate play of textures and open areas to achieve volume. He unifies the entire piece effectively by means of

the jagging wire that surrounds the head of Christ as the crown of thorns.

The fact that the Christian sculptor makes use of distortion should not, in itself, be astounding. A completely naturalistic piece would be dull; when employed properly distortion emphasizes the artist's idea so that expression is stronger and more powerful. It is only when distortion is deliberately used for its own sake that it violates the integrity of the work and results in deformity.

The contemporary sculptor who would attempt to recapture the purity of early Christian art must care less about self-expression, however, and more about universal truth. It is this objectivity which insures the true function of a work of sculpture in the Christian frame of mind. In the piece (p. 30) called "Annunciation," done in cedar wood, Heri Bartscht finds the mean between a very personal approach to Christian truth and its expression as a universal religious theme. The piece achieves a transcendent quality, particularly in the angel; the dissolution of volume is accomplished by the introduction of space through openings in the form. The theme itself remains as the sculptor's objective point of departure; the expression of its universal truth is given complete bodily form in his control of the material.

The "Prophet" (p. 29) shows the definite feeling Mr. Bartscht has for the craft of bronze-casting. In contrast to the "Annunciation," the mass of this piece seems to outweigh the sculptor's use of space. The forceful upward and downward lines are simple and direct, leading the eye up towards the hands and down again in the sloping movement of the figure's draped tunic. The result is a compelling figure. Every part and line in this piece is ordered to contribute to the unity of the whole, giving the figure both proportion and order. His welded steel figure (p. 31) called "Moses," on the other hand, though similar to the "Prophet" in its stark archaic emotion, makes a greater use of space. Mr. Bartscht has woven three dimensional form out of solid curving metal plates with movement, restraint, and a perfect balance of textural relief and a plastic continuity that stands like a solid in its physical mass. Finally, the terra cotta figure which Heri Bartscht has named "Abraham" (p. 2) is as much paradox as sculpture as the Biblical character himself. Though the figure is certainly monumental and even Expressionist in concept, it is short and squatly in stature expressing both the finitely earthy and eternally spiritual qualities of the character. "Abraham" exhibits the human anguish of the Biblical figure and, at the same time, reveals the transcendent faith that makes him noble.

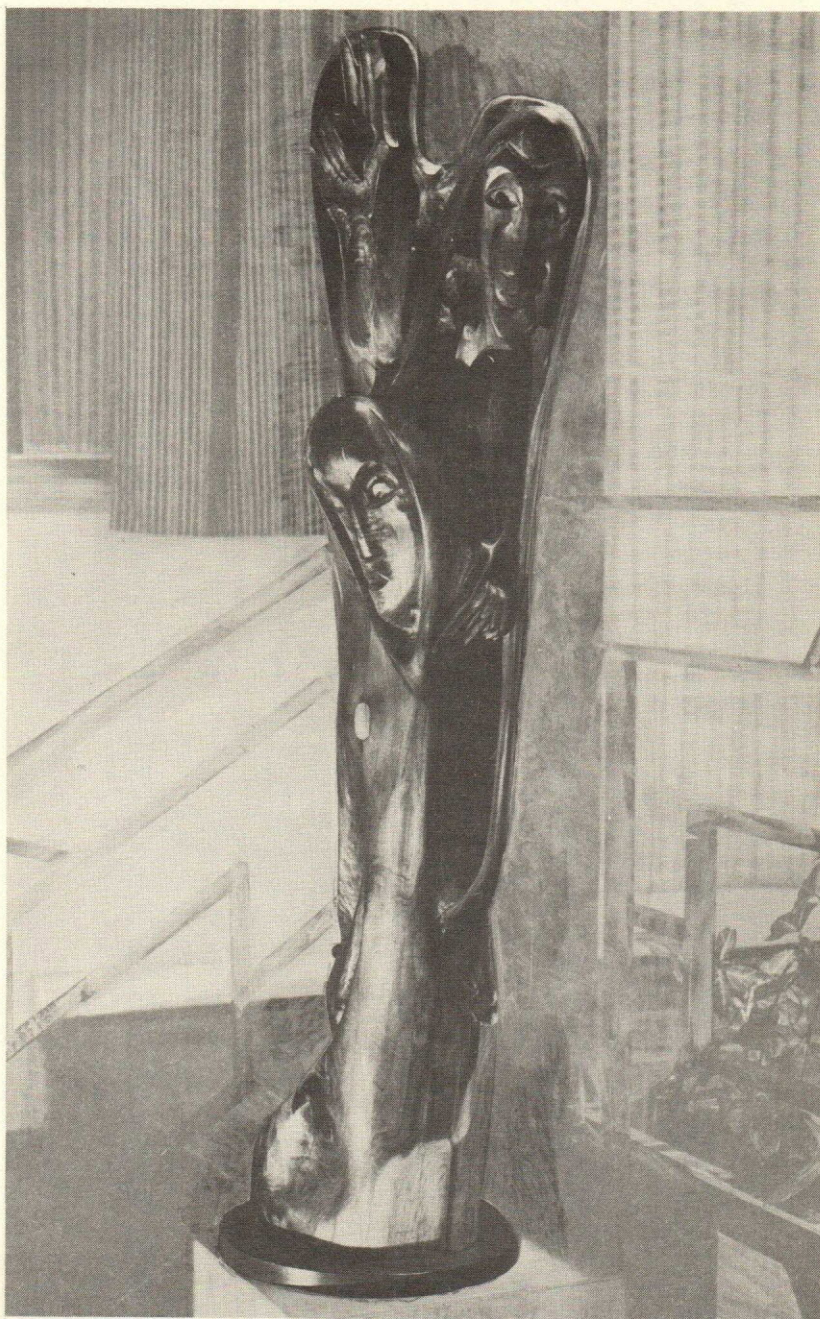
These five pieces embody a passionate intuition of faith; they exhibit

integrity, for every part of each piece is ordered to contribute to the unity of the whole. Neither beauty nor truth can exist where there is no unity, and if any part is not ordered to the whole, the whole can be neither beautiful nor true. In being true at once to the finite and the spiritual orders, these works achieve a philosophical and artistic wholeness; they exhibit a Christian view of reality and, at the same time, evoke a rewarding aesthetic experience equal to any contemporary effort, whatever the subject matter. It is in this combination of aesthetic and Christian principles, this refusal to compromise with the reality of both body and spirit, the finite spiritual nature of man, that Heri Bert Bartscht excels as a truly contemporary Christian sculptor.

In his artistry and his Christian insights he exhibits what a truly Christian culture embodies, a living faith in the sacramental nature of reality.



*Prophet. Bronze.*



*Annunciation. Cedar Wood.*



*Moses. Welded Steel.*



*Crown of Thorns. Welded Steel.*

ROBERT O. BOWEN

## *Aunt May*

In the family we always spoke of Aunt May as having her heart in the right place, and this was so. I can remember her very clearly when she still worked in Singers and would come home looking confused every Saturday because that was payday and every deadbeat that knew her had touched her out of her wages again. This made my Aunt Caroline very short tempered because if the two of them were going to manage the house and Caroline's children as well, it couldn't be done on May's little weekly charities around the East Side.

In those years, before she married and got stout, May was a very thin, frantic looking maiden in her thirties. A stranger could have reckoned the truth of her diet; that she lived on soda pop and hot dogs, but the stranger might not have known about her heart being in the right place. This I have always associated, as indeed the whole family seems to have, with her having once been at the flashing gates of Heaven itself and seen the angel choirs.

May—we do not say “aunt” in the family—was a good deal younger when she made this remarkable tour. In fact she was between ten and twelve as nearly as I can trace, and that was some ten years before my own birth. However, I have had the story in all its details from several principals: my father, the boy who interrupted the heavenly journey, and, a number of times, from May herself. It agrees in all particulars with the scene which I have passed at least hundreds of times while taking the short cut to visit my grandfather's house where May lived when it happened, and still lived, for that matter, as a spinster in my youth.

The house was a white, square, two-storied frame bit of real estate with a picket fence along the front of it and little beds of pansies around the low front porch. Gradually since my childhood the factories have sent out salients past May's neighborhood, and her property, which used to be in Grandfather's day white collar, became somewhat leather jacket.

Though she was quite pretty in a slim, brown-haired way, May

seemed never to have had any particularly concrete ideas about sex. I recall the cat, since legendary in the family, that she called Tommy and continued to call Tommy although it presented her regularly with broods of motley kittens, which she carried around on the bus to leave at our house and at my other aunts' houses. I think, now, that May's ignorance about sex was not a sign of stupidity on her part. Rather she willed herself not to know about it with a precision of foresight that I've been unable to acquire for all that college and a cocktail world have done to put an edge on my perception.

Back during the war, the one before the Korean one, I dropped by to see her on furlough once, and she had a house guest. Mrs. Maple was more patient than guest since she occupied May's front bedroom and did not leave the old four-poster I saw her in until the night she sidled off into an asthmatic sleep and failed to wake for her morning tea. She was completely alone in the world, with no savings or pension. At one time she had been a great stout woman, but being bedridden had left the flesh of her face loose and toneless, and her arms were freckled coarsely.

Where May managed to find the likes of Mrs. Maple no man can say. Her predilection for waifs and strays was undoubtedly known to every deadbeat between Norwalk and Stamford, and her pity rose at the sight of one like one of those magic flowers that fakirs conjure from seed to bloom in a minute or so. I remember once sitting in her parlor when an old boozier from a tavern down the block fell over the picket fence out front. She spotted him through the lace curtains and jumped up, crying: "Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, the poor man is starving and has collapsed." She wasn't at peace until I'd gone out, unfolded the old boy from the fence, and moved him on with a dollar.

She was quite short but very sure on her feet, and her shapeless cotton house dresses didn't conceal that she had actually a very good figure. She wore glasses, and that was the only weakness she seemed subject to. Her teeth were her own, as she put it. Except for those bargain basement house dresses and her big maroon cardigan, she looked like what she was to the world, a nurse. She was always nursing something or someone. She was especially good with terminal cases, and those usually indigent.

"So and so has come to stay with me a little while," she used to say, smiling pleasantly, almost coyly.

Mrs. Maple was only one of a succession that ran on for a full generation, though I remember her better than all the others for a reason that I can explain now that May herself is gone. The furlough

## Kerygma

I met Mrs. Maple on was in the September of 1944. It was a warm afternoon, and the front door was open. I rang, no one came, and I stepped inside to call: "May."

"All right," she said from upstairs, "I'm coming."

The doorbell rang in the kitchen and couldn't be heard upstairs at all.

"Billy! Billy!" she said a little breathlessly, coming down the stairs. "You're home safe, thanks be to God."

I'd only come from my base in New Jersey, but being in uniform I could never explain to her how cushioned life was in some parts of the Army.

"You must come up." She pecked at my cheek dryly and kept patting my arms, to make sure it was me in the flesh, I suppose, and looking up at me. "My, you've gained weight. Mrs. Maple will be so glad you've come. She's expected you all day."

That was more than I would have expected since my furlough had come through suddenly the evening before, and I'd not known Mrs. Maple existed until that moment. We went up the stairs, May running up a few steps and turning back to say again how glad Mrs. Maple would be and then a few more steps and another stop to say how I needed more home cooking.

Mrs. Maple was propped up in bed with one hand holding her place in a movie magazine. Hers was evidently not a disease of age. One might rather have ascribed it to mileage. She brightened up a bit at my uniform and smiled and spoke with a professional sprightliness.

"Hello, dearie."

"Well, hello," I said, rather vaguely.

"Come over here, dearie." She slid her hand along the bed by her waist. "Sit down and tell old Maple about the big world."

"Well, sure," I said.

She had a lot of spirit, that woman. We visited for twenty minutes or so, her asking me if I knew her house up in Bridgeport, and explaining with some exasperation that the trade was all shot to hell with this new war and the bobby soxes.

With May there to see that we had a nice talk, I didn't say much. Probably it wouldn't have mattered. She didn't notice Mrs. Maple's *damns* and *hells* and wouldn't likely have noticed anything I might say. There is one thing for certain that she never did know: Mrs. Maple had been for years one of the best known madames between New York City and New Haven. This I inquired about later downtown just in case I'd confused myself in the matter. Mrs. Maple hung on

there with the good food and tending until well into the next spring, and the only explanatory remarks May ever made to me about her were that she was a poor old thing, had lost her family, and was alone in the world.

All of May's people didn't come and stay in the house. There was old Mr. Finkbine that she nursed through the pneumonia one winter, carrying hot soup a block down the street and up three flights of dark stairs to him a couple of times every day and helping the visiting nurse bathe him once a week. All that without a penny and as often as not no thanks, and she did not even consider it a duty. It was a privilege.

May was not religious in the church-going sense. Her privileges occupied her seven days a week anyway, so she couldn't have been a schedule-following churchy sort. The faith she had had been driven into her immediately and completely one day when she was ten or eleven years old, and it had never thinned out. She had had a religious experience. Quite real it had been, and she spoke of it in a most consistent and not particularly uncontrolled way. It seems that she had once gone to the gates of Heaven, flown there on angel wings and seen through the gates the great glow that lighted all eternity for the saved.

A few blocks from my grandfather's house, back in those days, when May was ten or eleven and there were still open fields in that part of town, there had been an abandoned quarry with about thirty feet of water in it. At one end the quarry angled out into a notch so that the stone ran up from the water like a wall for a couple of feet. May and the other neighborhood kids used to play around the notch because they could just reach the water there from the little ledge, and, I suppose, as my mother said once, because it was out of sight of the houses, and they weren't discovered there so quickly.

An old woman lived at the quarry in the board toolshed that had been left vacant years before. The kids didn't know her, and she didn't seem to belong to anybody. They called her the witch since she was so thin and apparently because whenever she spotted them near the quarry, she ran them off with a great show of emotion. Probably she made the quarry even more attractive. They were regularly told to stay away from it because it was dangerous, and the witch being there added the last little quivering terror that made it impossible to ignore.

One day most of the kids were over there playing. The witch had given up after chasing them two or three times, and they'd forgotten her. May had a bit of shingle with a few pebbles on it, a troop transport of sorts in the little flotilla they'd launched. She was leaning

down from the ledge, trying to push it across toward the other side of the notch.

"I'll get it over there if I drown," she said.

Well, she gave a last push—the water was almost out of reach—and she did drown. She took a header, went down about ten feet, and hung up on some old barbed wire down there. My mother and the others watched her squirming in the clear water and saw some bubbles come out of her.

She couldn't swim anyway, and the oldest one there was twelve, a boy who still lives down in Norwalk, though he's hardly a boy now. While they leaned over the ledge, pushing and watching and not yet really scared enough to scream, the witch came running over from her shack and chased them away from the edge, waving her arms and screeching a little hysterically, I suppose, that they'd all drown. She'd been watching and praying against just that for years, seeing how steep the sides of the old pit were and knowing that all kinds of old trash was in it to snag anyone that went under.

While she was running up and down, the oldest of the kids, the boy dodged around her, yelling, "I'll save her," all very much old time melodrama, except that in the end that's the way things do happen. As it turned out, the boy wasn't in love with her and didn't get rewarded, and I only know by accident through my mother's pointing out his house that he became an accountant.

But at the quarry that day he simply enough dove in and tugged May out of the barbed wire. By that time some men had run over at the noise the kids were raising, and they rolled poor May over a barrel. My mother's family were none of them sickly, and once they got the water out of May she came around fairly quick.

They tumbled her into a blanket, and her eyes were no sooner open, looking up at them, and them waiting to see what she'd say, and she began to wail and lash out at them.

"Why did you bring me back?" were her exact words, as I've heard often enough to know.

No harm done, so they carried her home in the blanket, but it took some weeks for her to forgive them bringing her back. Her version of the incident agreed with theirs up to the point where they watched the bubbles come out of her—my mother confessed once, laughing at the gruesome relish kids have—like air out of a bottle. From that point there had been a rather considerable carrying on with May that no one but herself was witness to, though in their ways I guess her sisters believed it all, or believed it sometimes.

"There was a great roaring in my ears," May said, when she told it to me, "and I wanted the air, you know, just terribly. I could see the light up there over the water, but something held me, the barbed wire—only I've always believed it was more than that. Afterwards when I thought about it, I knew I was never really frightened at all. I wanted a big breath of air so bad, but I wasn't really afraid, you can say, I guess I just didn't have time."

The strange thing about May's telling of the incident was that she never got excited. She would frown a little, straining to remember it all exactly, and fold her hands together in her lap and lean forward genteely. In that stiff pose she always seemed the serious little girl again, even when she was past sixty. I think of her sometimes as she must have sat like that on the old velvet settee in my grandfather's sitting room and told it to him that first evening when he returned from his office. The birdlike but attractive way she would cock her head a trifle, not to insist that you believe but only to see that she had made it clear. She doesn't seem ever to have questioned whether it was believed.

"Then," she would go on, "there was no bad feeling at all, and I began to hear music, and I felt so light. Like a little cloud, sailing way off in the sky. And it got brighter and brighter, and the music came closer. Then I heard better. At first I didn't understand. The angels were singing, you see, and the light was angel light. And I was going up with them, up, up toward Heaven."

Having heard this story repeated through my own life from grade school to middle age, from May's lips, I can be amused now at how she varied never a word or nuance. When she said: "up, up toward Heaven," her hands would fold open and lift a few inches, and she would pause. Such little gestures struck me differently through my own life so that, as with a Bible tale, my aging gave it varied meanings. Once it was a fairy tale, again—this when I was in college—a series of delusions worked on a simple mind. It carried sometimes a pathos for me, nostalgia for that childlike innocence to believe.

"Like beautiful birds," she used to say. "So bright I couldn't see them clearly at all, like looking at the Sun. And they were all around me.

"Then the singing was sadder and we came down and down, slower and slower, and I saw we were in the church with all the people. Crying they were. And as we flew down the aisle, I saw a white coffin by the altar, and we stopped in the air over it so I could see. The angels wanted me to know, I think. It was me.

"Then I felt sad for all the people because they didn't know how happy I was. And as I felt sadder and sadder for them, the angels sang louder, and they got brighter, and we flew up right through the church and up toward Heaven again."

Her voice would drop here, and the words came slow, and a soft radiant sort of smile would ease away her frown of concentration.

"We were coming to the gates of Heaven up above the clouds, and the angel voices drowned out everything and carried me along. The gates were so wide I couldn't really see them well, and it was so bright. But inside just as we were coming there, the way you come over a hill coming home, the millions of angels sang, and the light was like the brightest sun." She would pause and hold that moment in her rapt face and raised hands.

"Then they brought me back," she always said flatly, and the little spell was gone.

May herself is gone now. Her little white house with the gingerbread and picket fence has been torn down for a Pizzaria, and the old quarry was filled up many years ago. I suppose that for others there are Aunt Mays, but in our family there are no more, and often when we come together, all of us, for Thanksgiving, which we still celebrate in the old way with a feast at my mother's place, or at a funeral, I find myself glancing across peoples' shoulders and taking expectant little turns out into the hall for her. For often, in spite of all, I have a quirk at times that she is near.

RICHARD CARVILLE

## *Two Cultures and Three Menaces*

A Review of Charles P. Snow, *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*, London: Oxford University Press, 1959.

"Science has got to be assimilated along with, and as part and parcel of, the whole of our mental experience, and used as naturally as the rest." So C.P. Snow, British novelist and scientist, presents the crucial challenge of our modern world, especially the West. Mr. Snow begins his analysis of the imminent problems of the modern world (The "three menaces," as he calls them: H-Bomb wars, over-population, and the widening gap between rich and poor) by first calling attention to a gap in Western society, a lack of communication between the men of science and other thinkers (especially literary men). This gap, he asserts,

must be closed in order that the Western world may be able to understand and cope with these cultural ailments. "When these two senses (scientific and literary) are grown apart," he states, "then no society is going to be able to think with wisdom." Snow speaks with alarming urgency. As a scientist, he recognizes that the "Scientific Revolution"—the application of electronics, atomic energy, and automation to the operations of our economic and social institutions—will alter the world's face far more quickly and extensively than did the Industrial Revolution. If people do not yet understand the implications of this first large-scale transformation, how much less are they aware of the more basic philosophic change wrought by the Scientific Revolution.

When Snow speaks of "assimilating" science into the world of our mental experience, he does not simply call for an understanding between scientist and non-scientist. Rather, in recognizing the ills of twentieth-century man, he sees the actual absorption of science into every-day experience as a necessity of science and fully use its products to help rather than to destroy, confronting rather than ignoring the actual problems.

Why is there such urgency to "change the face of the world and abolish these evils"? Mr. Snow envisions our position as similar to that of the Venetian Republic. Like us the Venetians were at one time fabulously lucky. The Venetians, he contends, had become "rich as we did, by accident. They had acquired immense political skill just as we have. A good many of them were tough-minded, realistic patriotic men. They knew just as clearly as we know that the current of history had begun to flow against them." Yet they never found the will, he continues, to change their methods. They were crystallized into a pattern which they could not break and were soon swallowed up in the world around them.

The first of the menaces facing us, the danger of H-Bomb war, is obvious to Mr. Snow and to the reader, he assumes. The "west" and the "east" both possess enough nuclear power to make a large part of the earth unfit for human habitation.

Overpopulation, the second "menace," is, Mr. Snow contends, a theoretical problem which can be alleviated, provided a few facts are acknowledged. He is certain that we can feed any number of people if we will only distribute existing food better and, through foreign aid, insure the development of agriculture and industry in poverty-stricken countries.

Mr. Snow proposes a program of major proportions—an international program utilizing large capital and requiring something like ten to twenty thousand engineers and linguists in each underdeveloped

nation. This concerted educational and technical development over the period of a decade or two would bring backward countries up to a condition in which they could help themselves, he supposes. In order to acquire the necessary manpower for this program our very educational system would have to be stepped up and its goals changed. He proposes a concentrated effort to turn out scientists and engineers and to produce a mass awareness of science and its function.

The third "menace," the gap between rich and poor countries, is increasing, Mr. Snow feels. The industrialized countries (the United States, Britain, Russia, and most of Europe) become richer, and the poor countries (all the rest) simply stay poor. The Scientific Revolution—no longer the "hit and miss" or the work of odd 'inventors'—will make it possible, he believes, for the discrepancy in standards between rich and poor nations to be abolished.

Snow's merit is an acknowledgement the existence of dire cultural problems which can destroy our civilization and in making clear our obligation to vanquish them. He is attempting to face reality, but even he acknowledges that his solution is an idealistic one. Could this mass government-controlled program ever become acceptable, much less workable, in parliamentary societies like the United States or Great Britain? Certainly no one could quarrel with the responsibility of men to help the less fortunate, but surely some less extensive program more in harmony with individual freedom could be undertaken. Apparently Snow thinks that only the "egotisms, the weaknesses, the vanities, the power-seekings of men" stand in the way of a successful execution of his large-scale plan. He seems to think that "co-existence" with Communist Russia is an actuality and that a program of aid to impoverished countries can be an integrated effort by both East and West. He would feel that if we used our dollars in foreign aid properly, the opposition we have faced would disappear. Asians and Africans would welcome "men who will muck in as colleagues, who will pass on what they know, do an honest technical job, and get out."

One must wonder a bit at Mr. Snow's readiness to believe that the differences between Russia and the West can be settled by mere "good sense." One must wonder, too, at his view of history in supposing that the scientific age, which we in the West have nurtured and developed, but have largely failed to absorb into our moral and, indeed, our economic structure, can be transplanted into a wholly alien culture and still produce beneficial results.

Snow ends with a note of such urgency that the reader feels compelled to share his alarm: "The danger is that we have been brought up to think as though we had all the time in the world . . . Isn't it

time we began?" Our only reply is that man always has time to refer to principles to guide his actions. Mr. Snow would seem to urge us toward an unexamined course of expediency. He has not succeeded in proving that his solution is the only one or even the right one for us. Indeed, if it is the only answer, Western civilization is already doomed. Snow seems to have cast aside many of the basic Western ideals in his concern to make sure that we flow with "the current of history."

DIANA ROBERTS

## *Here Lies Tragedy*

A Review of George Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961.

The lack of tragedy on the literary scene during the past three centuries is a critical commonplace, but the reasons for this decline are much debated by modern scholars. George Steiner, in his book *The Death of Tragedy*, attempts to present the manifold causes which have prevented the development of modern tragedy.

Steiner begins his ten-chaptered epitaph on tragedy by characterizing the Hellenic notion of tragedy as a "terrible, stark insight into human life." In Greek drama, he states, "the forces which shape or destroy our lives lie outside the governance of reason or justice." Nonetheless, Steiner maintains, "man is ennobled by the vengeful spite or injustice of the gods."

Although he denounces "any neat abstract definition of tragedy as meaningless," Steiner does state the qualities which he believes proper to a genuine tragedy. Not only is a physical destruction of the hero basic to the tragic vision, he believes, but also a corresponding internal, spiritual, and moral deterioration is necessary if the protagonist is to reach tragic heights. "Real tragedy can occur only where the tormented soul believes that there is no time left for God's forgiveness," he comments. Steiner's conception of tragedy is limited by the belief that "tragedies end badly." He would eliminate *Job* and Goethe's *Faust* from the realm of tragedy because they deal with justice and redemption in a way that allows the hero to evade the tragic.

Because it adds an element of hope, Christianity is, according to Steiner, an "anti-tragic vision of life." This contention he asserts despite the fact that previously he has viewed the Christian concept of Original Sin, which the Middle Ages added to the Greek definition of tragedy, as demonstrating that "each man was destined to suffer . . . some part

in the tragedy of death." This inconsistency is never cleared up, and Steiner's defense of the *Eumenides* and *Oedipus at Colonus* is based on an equally insecure point. "The use of music may have given to the endings of these two plays a solemn distinctness, setting the final moments at some distance from the terrors which went before," he suggests.

It is the "decline of the organic world view and of its attendant context of mythological, symbolic, and ritual reference" which Steiner blames for the decline of tragedy. The rise of rationalism in the seventeenth century brought about "conflicts of definition and purpose" concerning the tragic vision. The "new world picture of reason" was responsible for the dissolution of a second great age of tragedy, the Elizabethan era. Coupled with this ascent in rational thought was the parallel development of the prose novel, an eventual replacement for tragic poetry. And though in the nineteenth century the Romantic poets were bent upon restoring "to life the ideal of high tragedy," they failed, Steiner feels, because of their revolutionism and Rousseauistic theories. As a world view which relieves the individual of responsibility for his actions, "Rousseauism closes the doors of hell." However, Steiner accepts the dramas of Schiller, where romanticism and the tragic are united, as belonging to the world of tragedy.

With the rise of the novel came the modern attempt to write tragedies in prose. For Steiner the loss of verse was fatal for tragedy. Verse gives tragic drama its nobility, for if tragedy is to exalt the action "above the flux of disorder and compromise prevalent in habitual life, it requires the shape of verse."

Realistic prose was not the only element to challenge the tragic ideal in the classic and Shakespearean traditions. Steiner continues, "In the second half of the nineteenth century, opera . . . (asserted) a serious claim to the legacy of tragic drama . . . . It may be that the shaping powers of the modern imagination are committed to the symbolic languages of the sciences and to the notations of music rather than to the word. It is not a play but an opera that now holds out the most distinct promise of a future for tragedy."

Since operatic forms and a mature dramatic prose have taken over much of the tragic heritage, the order of drama established by Ibsen, Strindberg, and Chekhov seems lacking in both ideals and a concept of total form. Of the three dramatists, Ibsen comes closest to creating tragedy, but Steiner thinks that "it is a tragedy of a peculiar, limited order."

*The Death of Tragedy* is clearly a challenge to the contemporary Western culture. Steiner believes that tragedy is possible only where

reality has not been harnessed by reason and social consciousness. "It is at least plausible that the complex of Hellenic and Christian values which is mirrored in tragic drama, and which has tempered the life of the western mind over the past two thousand years, is now in sharp decline." Above all, he writes, "tragedy is that form of art which requires the intolerable burden of God's presence. It is now dead because His shadow no longer falls upon us as it fell on Agamemnon or Macbeth or Athalie." It is, then, the total secularism of modern society which Steiner believes has brought about the demise of tragedy.

The book succeeds this far, despite the fact that it is using a shrewd analysis of modern culture to back up a questionable definition of tragedy. Steiner weakens his argument in continuing. He suggests that "perhaps tragedy has merely altered in style and convention. The curve of tragedy . . . (may perhaps be) unbroken." There is a "remote . . . possibility . . . that the tragic theatre may have before it a new life and future." Coming after such weighty evidence for the discontinuity of the tradition of tragedy, this speculation, open-minded as Steiner is trying to be, seems beside the point. Steiner's essay is weakened by his limited concept of tragedy, his conflicting statements, and a conclusion that remains unresolved. Nevertheless, he convinces us that tragedy is truly dead, and accurately locates the cause in the disintegration of Western ideals. Steiner does make us realize that only by a renovation of our culture can we regain the distinctive mark of the tragic.

PATSY YAGER

## *The Magnanimous Man*

A Review of Maurice McNamee, S.J., *Honor and the Epic Hero*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960.

*Honor and the Epic Hero*, by Maurice McNamee, S.J., presents the magnanimous man in his three great eras, Greek, Roman, and Christian, and establishes a strong link between these heroic types. The Christian hero, Father McNamee feels, is eclectic, embodying the best of the former epic heroes. Christ is not only an exterior force in this progression, he maintains, but an intrinsic principle in the creation of the great Christian hero.

Although the book is not a long volume, it is complete in its analysis and resolution of the theme. For each distinct period of literary creation, Father McNamee discusses a commentary by a noted contemporary philosopher delineating the current ideas about the magnanimous

man. Aristotle, Cicero, St. Paul, St. Augustine, and St. Thomas speak discursively of the heroic concept, while the epic works of Homer, Virgil, the Beowulf poet, Spenser, and Milton give poetic form to these respective beliefs.

For Aristotle and Homer, according to McNamee, the magnanimous man was one who "excelled in all virtue and who insisted on the honor proportionate to his virtue." Contrary to his usual stand on virtue, Aristotle holds that there can be no excess in magnanimity; the magnanimous man is entitled to all the recognition that he can claim. Because the Greeks were rather skeptical about life after death, the glory and honor which they achieved while on earth became their immortality. Therefore, if Achilles refrained from battle in order to nurse his wounded pride and to show Agamemnon his worth to the Greek army, he was acting according to the Greek conception of the magnanimous man. His glory was far more important than the welfare of the nation.

Whatever the Roman culture may have borrowed from the Greeks, as Father McNamee makes clear, it did not retain the Greek concept of the epic hero. Cicero's idea of the magnanimous man, embodied in Aeneas, was one to whom duty to the state was elevated far over love of honor. This idea of the Roman hero may account for the greatness of the Roman state.

Christ and His disciples founded a universal religion, the spread of which was greatly aided by the all-encompassing Roman Empire. St. Paul in his letters warns against pride and advises charity and humility in the true Christian spirit. These beliefs, as taught by St. Augustine to the Anglo-Saxons, Father McNamee finds in *Beowulf*. In this hero, the reader encounters a fusion of the acceptance of honor by the Greek hero, the love of state by the Roman hero, and the noble deeds of both into a great man whose inherited heroic characteristics are tempered by the Christian virtues of humility and charity. Thus the Christian hero attributes all his honor to God, as St. Thomas believes a truly great man should, since it is from Him that the hero's talents spring.

In Milton, says McNamee, the reader also sees Christian influence on the epic. Milton presents the Christian hero as living virtuously and performing heroic deeds because they conform to the will of God and the Christian concept of love of neighbor and thus they become a contribution to the glory of God. Milton shows the influence of Augustinian teachings when he advocates for the magnanimous man the rejection of earthly honors and an aspiration toward the glorious immortality of soul.

Though critics would be inclined to agree with McNamee on most of his interpretations, his conception of Beowulf as a truly Christian hero and of the work as basically Christian would arouse some contention. He portrays Beowulf's willingness to help his neighbor as founded on a Christian idea of charity. Beowulf performs his heroic deeds, McNamee feels, not so much for the honors that they will reap as for love of neighbor. Even at the peak of his power Beowulf rules with kindness and wisdom, McNamee points out, whereas if he were less full of Christian magnanimity he could have been tyrannical and cruel.

Father McNamee sees in Beowulf likewise the personification of Christian humility. True, Beowulf does accept the honors which his noble deeds acquire for him, and at the first of the poem he even boasts of the deeds he has performed. But as he accepts this glory he transfers it to God. McNamee cites one example of this humility: the scene following the defeat of Grendel's dam. Beowulf has just received his due honor from Hrothgar when he replies to the king's tribute, "I dared the work with difficulty; almost had my struggling ceased, if God had not protected me." Father McNamee cites episodes from the beginning to the end of the poem which seem to substantiate his proof of a Christian Beowulf.

One of the few weak points in McNamee's argument, however, is his failure to concede that Fate in the form of the Anglo-Saxon Wyrd, plays an important part in *Beowulf*. One of the numerous references to this power in the poem is made by the hero when he says "Fate goes as Fate must." Another occurs after the speech of Wealhtheow when she has given tribute to Beowulf. Here the poet himself says "At the fairest of feasts/Men drank of the wine-cup, knowing not Fate,/Nor the fearful doom that befell the earls . . ." This idea of an indomitable Fate certainly cannot be termed Christian. So does Beowulf's glorious burial run directly counter to Christian teachings. Cremation, in Christian eyes, has always been considered a violation of the body, which is to be reunited with the soul in a purified form at the culmination of creation. And yet the last sixty-eight lines of the epic poem are a description of Beowulf's funeral pyre.

Neither does the poet make any references to Christ himself as do other Christian Anglo-Saxon poets. Thus the student of Beowulf must wonder if, in this chapter, McNamee has rendered complete justice to the poem. Certainly his point is well taken when he compares the composition of *Beowulf* to St. Augustine's consecration of the temples which had housed the Germanic idols. Father McNamee may feel that these pagan motifs are merely survivals of the Anglo-Saxon culture

and not basic to the poem. Yet, even considering this possibility, the reader must ask, "Can *Beowulf* be considered unquestionably Christian?"

In spite of his interpretation of *Beowulf* one can say with certainty that Father McNamee's juxtaposition of philosophic ideas with the epic poems has provided a new insight into the progression of the epic hero from Homer to Milton.

RICHARD McNALLY

## *The Discovery of Faith*

A review of Clayton Barbeau, *The Ikon*, New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1961.

Clayton Barbeau's first novel, *The Ikon*, is an attempt to give form to the chief existentialist tenet that life is always moving, always casting up new problems about which man must always be making decisions, using his free will. In the epigraph to the novel Mr. Barbeau quotes James Collins' *The Existentialists*: "Our souls are made or unmade by the quality of our response to being and the trials of bodily life."

As the epigraph indicates, this novel deals with free will as a means of receiving grace and ultimately finding faith and God. Thomas Warren, an infantryman in his late twenties, is faced with a problem: without a Christian background of first principles, how can a person know why he is alive; and if not knowing, why not die? As if to bolster the negative side of the problem, he has a vision on a Paris subway:

As he watched, the man's long legs were brought forward and the figure thrust upward. He was wearing a uniform and holding an object in his hand; his arm went back in readiness, the object was sputtering. Thin whips of light flashed from the direction the soldier faced and even as his arm shot forward, the figure stiffened, was lifted imperceptibly from the ground and thrown backwards and down. Warren felt some fiery thing tear into himself, a series of dull thuds clocked his own descent into darkness even as he saw the face on the fallen figure and knew the man for himself.

Partly in order to find out the meaning of the vision and partly to ascertain the truth of a friend's letter saying, "In the big fear all men turn to God," Warren enlists in the army, bound for Korea. His

platoon leader, Sergeant Prevot, is beset with a similar problem and a similar premonition of death, and on the day of his death gives Warren a Russian ikon.

Besides Prevot, Warren falls in with White, a strong, atheistic individual with one thought, war—the “why-not-die” half of Warren’s problem—and Rickley, a fervent, vocal Catholic—the “first principle” of the problem. Both appeal to Warren and yet one must be wrong, but which? His seeming dilemma of choice between faith and faithlessness is simplified by Prevot’s ikon because it gives a tangible reason for freely wanting faith. The ikon supports him through this indecisiveness merely by its mystery. Finally, on the night of a hazardous patrol deep into enemy territory, Warren realizes that the moment visualized on the subway has arrived. At a suggestion from Rickley and against his own better judgement, he stuffs the ikon in his battle dress. Then, pinned down by a machine-gun in the course of the mission, he understands the meaning of his vision and the ikon as he sees Rickley, taking his place, cut down by the gun.

To Warren, substitution comes to mean that Rickley and he are the same man joined together by the bond of charity, a product of the will. Charity is tangibly represented by the ikon which saves his life. Following from charity, in an inverted Christian existentialist order, is faith, the solution to Warren’s doubt. This new recognition of the reality of faith is shown by the author in the closing sentence: “With arm outstretched he edged nearer the ikon until his extended finger touched and found its way, hesitantly, into the wound.” So Thomas Warren, in his uncertainty, becomes a modern version of Saint Thomas the Apostle.

Mr. Barbeau has attempted a difficult task in depicting the winding road that leads to an encounter with faith. Yet, for the most part, he succeeds in his task. His book moves swiftly, aided by its lack of division into chapters, despite its disconcerting flashbacks. His characters are strongly drawn, sometimes too strongly as, for instance, Rickley, who moralizes too much. The description in the story does not attract attention to itself, but supports the major idea of the novel.

The dominant theme of the novel is valid and thought-provoking, but the reader is left with a sense of incompleteness. He must wonder if Warren remains a modern apostle of Christian existentialism or is swallowed up by the grayness of decisions in the calm, static world outside of Korea. It will be interesting to see if, in his next book, Mr. Barbeau will make any advance in his attempt to write a modern novel of faith.



