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THE UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

KERYGMA

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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. Our major "proclamation" is the fact of an impending choice between a culture that is totally secular and one that is Christian. 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

Spring Issue, 1963

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David Carson, *Demon Pipes*, etching, 3" x 8"

DONA SPAWN

The Film: A New Genre

When Romano Guardini wrote on the film in 1956 ("Thoughts on the Problem of the Film," *Cross Currents*, Summer, 1956) that what the public expects from the cinema is, as he put it, "real life, only 'better'," he was describing a situation that at the time of his writing was changing radically. Today's audience expects something far more esoteric. Indeed, the modern movie viewer seems to delight in abstracting profound meanings from delicately constructed and subtle plots. In America this change has come in with the imported *avant garde* film, which had been flourishing in Europe since before 1940 but which never before the fifties had a wide circulation in America. The growth of American art film movie houses attests to this strange increase of intellectual appetite. A school of criticism has grown up around the movies; books by such authorities as George Bluestone (*Novels into Film*, Baltimore, 1957), Claude Mauriac (*L'amour du cinema*, Paris, 1954), Rudolf Arnheim (*Film as Art*, Berkeley, 1957), Siegfried Kracauer (*Theory of Film*, New York, 1961), and Parker Tyler (*The Three Faces of the Film*, New York, 1960) treat the film as a poetic form deserving of the same careful and searching analysis commanded by literature.

It is no easy task to evaluate a new art form. Certainly it is no longer valid for the serious critic to say that the purpose of the film is mere entertainment, any more than the art critic could maintain that the purpose of painting is to provide pleasant diversion from the humdrum affairs of daily living. For those who take the film seriously—and it would seem that all of us must—there are important questions concerning the basic aesthetic of the medium which need exploration and solution.

Siegfried Kracauer has commented (*The Theory of the Film*, p. ix) that "films are true to the medium to the extent that they penetrate the world before our eyes." The "world before our eyes," he maintains, is

the outer reality that Gabriel Marcel calls man's relation to "this earth which is our habitat." Several implications arise from this aesthetic, which place limitations on the vision of the film. Perhaps Kracauer's most important consideration is contained in his belief that tragedy is incompatible with the film, a position following from his basic aesthetic; that is, "if film is a photographic medium, it must gravitate toward the expanses of outer reality—an open-ended, limitless world which bears little resemblance to the finite and ordered cosmos set by tragedy." If what Kracauer says is true of tragedy, then his theory must certainly extend to all visions which deal with the interior reality of man. So limited a notion of filmic art would eliminate such movies as *Rashomon*, *La Dolce Vita*, *La Strada*, *No Exit*, and *The Bicycle Thief* as expressions compatible with the medium. And, one must admit, some media are not appropriate for tragedy. Painting is not the vehicle for the tragic vision, nor is music. Since the medium of art does in a sense control and limit the vision to be expressed in it, Kracauer's criterion that the film must express an "outer reality" should be seriously explored. The real question to be considered is whether the film is in fact a photographic medium, a category which implies an adherence to a kind of realism that is somehow different from the imaginative realism of art. This opinion is representative of a large number of critics and film-makers whose primary concern is the medium itself as distinct from what it is attempting to represent.

Yet to limit the cinema to a penetration of the outer world seems to reveal a disregard of essences that renders both the action and the medium subject to the caprices of design. An extreme instance of this concern for spatial display occurs in the Danish film *Day of Wrath*, where scenes degenerate into mere photographic "stills" in imitation of the Dutch *genre* paintings. Several of Ingmar Bergman's films illustrate this same subjection. *The Magician*, for instance, an apparently well constructed film, calls to mind a rather disconnected series of images. These images are as separate as skillfully composed photographic plates taken in the same locale. In one scene in which the magician encounters a supposed dead man, the blackness of the misty forest conveys an almost supernatural atmosphere. Observed as photography, the setting is thoroughly successful, but if one considers the film as a whole, one realizes that there should have been some device revealing the comic situation of an actor stumbling about in the dark in search of a whiskey. In theme, the film is about a charlatan, a magician with no real power. The preoccupation with tech-

nique, however, completely separates the intellectual scheme of the film from its texture. As a matter of fact, the texture of the film really could be said to contradict the vision. Bergman is so concerned with the implications of a given setting that any suggested action becomes accidental rather than essential. Even the characters are forced into a submission to the dictates of circumstance. They move from no apparent interior volition. The scene in which a neurotic woman supplicates Vogler for "some comfort" in her grief for her dead son appears to move him so intensely that he forces the nails of a chair into his hands. The viewer is thoroughly convinced that, although the Christ-like magician is mute, he is possessed of an almost superhuman empathy. But Vogler's communication of the incident to his wife reveals a different attitude: "I hate them. I hate their faces, their bodies, their movements, their voices." The magician has been merely assuming muteness for the purpose of disguise; he is afraid that the police will recognize him. To his wife Vogler does express some regret at his inability to heal people. This scene seems to delineate a man emptied of his onetime gifts: "I become powerless," he says. The removal of his disguise (his beard and wig) deepens our empathy for the magician, for he has a remarkably sensitive (and expertly lighted) face. He speaks in the tones of one who has witnessed the very pits of darkness. Though he is still depicted as tormented and his face remains hauntingly beautiful, there is nonetheless a striking inconsistency between this scene and the one in which he pierces his hands with nails. Finally his character undergoes a complete metamorphosis, in a scene where we see him revealed as little better than a charlatan, performing his tricks for money. There is no development from scene to scene; a later occurrence does not follow from a preceding one; it is merely added to it, like a photograph. So many inconsistencies exist in this motion picture that nothing remains of the action (if, indeed, any was intended). It seems paradoxical that a "motion" picture should be without action, but indeed motion and action are not synonymous. Bergman seems to be so concerned with being true to a physical reality in each scene that he loses sight of the pattern of incidents in the realm of choice that produces art. Human emotions and sensibility are apparently to him merely part of the ingredients of the photographic reality, to be used in an interesting composition of light and dark. But, one must protest, the reality that art embodies is man's and not nature's except in the sense that nature is always involved in man's actions. If it is nature that involves man, then Bergman's forcing his characters to "fit in" to a given surrounding would be justified—but it would not be art.

Bergman's latest film, *Through a Glass Darkly*, deals more obviously

with a theme than do some of his earlier films. But his preoccupation with details mars an essentially religious theme. The quotation from St. Paul is lost somewhere in the caverns of an old ship-hull in which the heroine seduces her younger brother "because her voices told her to." The viewer finds himself confronted with a beautiful (almost Romeo-and-Juliet-like) close-up of the pair. They appear to be hiding from the world, like any pair of ideal lovers. The hull of the decayed ship provides an other-worldly setting for the idyll, yet there is no motivation in the film to justify its use—either before or after the incestuous act. Neither is the use of the soft-focus lens on the faces of the brother and sister effective even as irony. In fact, one of the most striking victories of texture over form is expressed in this scene. For the concern of the film is with the kind of person who is unable to give love to another human being because of a commitment to some direct experience of infinity. If the heroine cannot love her husband in the light of her commitment to God, then a physical relationship should not bring the kind of fulfillment indicated by the soft-focus lens.

The notion of *mimesis*, one of Aristotle's basic criteria for artistic representation, demands that art convey essences. It is this notion that gives art the freedom to distort a physical object in order to reveal an essential one. If we are to accept Maritain's definition of poetry (by which he means the spirit or vision of a work which illuminates the form) as an "inter-penetration between man and things," then artistic representation is done a great injustice when there is no tangible "image referent." By image referent I mean that physical reality which when acted on by man remains intact but at the same time evokes an analogous response which is the correlative to the action. Kracauer emphasizes his reservation concerning the use of the term "art" (in the traditional sense) as applied to the filmic arts, for he believes such a usage "lends support to the belief that artistic qualities must be attributed precisely to films which neglect the medium's recording obligations. . . ." Kracauer has confused that basic distinction of Maritain between art as the craft or use of things and poetry, in the formal definition just quoted. The filmic art is indeed a new *genre*, but its structure must not be mistaken for its form. Though it is true that a film can present a picture of Birnam Wood that is more "true to life" in a literal sense than the image of Macbeth's forest conveyed by the language of the drama, the visual aspect of Birnam Wood is the medium from which the image arises, and not the image itself. Thus the "recording obligation" of the film is no greater than that of any art form, for the image referent must be essentially real if it is to evoke the proper response.

Although the film as *genre* has not been in existence long enough to

develop within the medium its most complete definition, the films of Federico Fellini are most in keeping with the traditional criteria for art. Fellini's *La Strada* is an art object because, as Anne Little comments (*Kerygma*, Autumn, 1961), a work of art "contains its own peculiar form—its own specific determining element." That is to say, the composition is so interrelated to the action that any separation or omission of a compositional part would be destructive to the content. And, though the motion of the film is not synonymous with the action, it is *integral* to it. This motion, which selects the visual objects and makes them image referents, provides that thread of continuity in the motion from one scene to another that unfolds the action. The imbalance of theme and image that is so disturbingly present in Bergman's films is absent in *La Strada* simply because the artist does not allow his reverence for things to disturb his insight. The scene in the convent in which Gelsomina and Zampano have been given lodging contrasts sharply with Bergman's idyllic scene of incest in the rotting ship. The convent is indeed a place of contemplation and prayer, but neither Gelsomina nor Zampano is falsely aligned with the atmosphere. This ironic juxtaposition of place and character provides the viewer with a foretaste of the knowledge that Zampano, relying exclusively on practical reason, lacks the sensitivity to feel even the slightest twinge of conscience at stealing from a religious house, and is thus dependent on Gelsomina's innate sensitivity to reality if he is to be redeemed.

If the vision of *La Strada* is not the tragic vision, the film nonetheless contradicts Kracauer's statement that the unlimited, boundless cosmos of the film is incompatible with the limited and finite cosmos of tragedy. Perhaps art has always set limits on what we like to call an infinite universe. It places matter in the category of the finite and man in the limits of his own nature. Zampano cannot exist without the side of man that is *caritas* (portrayed by the almost irrational Gelsomina). *Caritas* cannot survive without being given direction (as the circus fool gives direction to Gelsomina). The film would seem to say that for man to deny any part of his nature is to render him inoperative. Zampano's downfall is not the downfall of the tragic protagonist. It is nonetheless a kind of falling from the solidarity of man that goes into the realm that many critics would term "beyond tragedy."

La Dolce Vita is another example of Fellini's artistry. In theme, this film bears a marked resemblance to T. S. Eliot's *Waste Land*. Just as Eliot changes point of view, Fellini uses rapid changes of place to express the decadence of modern Rome. From the stratification of scenes in a seemingly disconnected succession comes the realization that the principal

character, by his passivity to time and place, is being limited in his choices of possible modes of existence.

The film is an art form: that point appears to be settled. It is not the drama; it is not the novel. It is itself, but itself is not yet fully realized. Only recently has it become fully apparent that the artist is the producer-director; it is his mind that is the vessel of the art. His work is not orchestral, either as writer or conductor. It is directly creative, the stuff and the concept interacting in a protracted and disjointed medium of time and space made coherent in a mind comprehensive and relentless.

JUDITH ANN FRENCH

The Destruction of Action

One element seems essential in the various definitions of drama from Aristotle to the most contemporary critics: the "imitation of action." Though vogues such as realism, existentialism, expressionism, and nihilism sometimes dictate the form which action may take, action is nevertheless fundamental to drama. Apparently, in fact, it is its very soul, the one element without which drama cannot exist. But not all action is dramatic. Each great dramatist has quite evidently given us an accurate picture of his age, a true imitation of the representative action of his time, but where is such action to be found in life? Where does the dramatist look for the basic action of his era? Where did Sophocles see the action which Oedipus embodies? Where did Shakespeare find the forces that shake King Lear? Hamlet tells us that the "purpose of playing" is "to hold, as it were, the mirror up to nature; to show . . . the very age and body of the time his form and pressure." Admittedly, we cannot attribute the action that would achieve such an end to the ever-fluctuating political or social life of an age or, perhaps, even to its religious life, though manifestly these spheres are certainly affected by the action that we seek. It is the task of the artist to recognize and recreate that universal action which, paradoxically enough, shows both man embodied in time and man transcending all time. Such peculiarly human action would necessarily stem from man's twofold nature and the profound conflicts that result from his efforts to define and resolve its paradox. The "form and pressure" of an age is found, it seems, in this "conflict of definition" that is approached somehow differently in each age, but which is nevertheless probed in every age. And it is the action that reflects this never-ending search of man for self-definition, this search for absolutes, that we call dramatic. It would seem, then, that the action upon which drama is based must be found in the psychic states of man's soul. Here we find man's most significant action; here he dares most intensely to be. And it is here that the playwright must bring his "mirror."

Given, then, that the duty of the dramatist today is to present the

true image of our world through an embodiment of the psychic states of modern man, it is enlightening to turn our attention to the action offered by some current drama.

A Man For All Seasons, by Robert Bolt, has been well received on the American scene. It is a play based on the historic Sir Thomas More, presenting him not as a Christian saint and martyr, but as what Bolt terms "a hero of selfhood." Bolt's hero is, indeed, merely a letter-perfect lawyer—a man more concerned with the strict, literal interpretation of the law than with the principles upon which it is based. When his son-in-law, Roper, insists upon the arrest of a servant-turned-traitor, More refuses, saying, "I know what's legal not what's right. And I'll stick to what's legal." And when Roper says that this is placing man's law above God's, More replies,

Let me draw your attention to a fact—I'm *not* God.
The currents and eddies of right and wrong, which
you find such plain sailing, I can't navigate. I'm no
voyager. But in the thickets of the law, oh, there I'm
a forester.

The conflict that Bolt presents is an escape from the real issue—More does not struggle with principles of good and evil; his mind is already made up: "I see so clearly that I can *not* come with Your Grace that my endeavor is not to think of it at all," he says to King Henry. Instead, More is concerned with the safety he has in the law, a safety that rests on the fact that the wording of the oath is ambiguous. When a new Act is drawn up by Parliament, More's immediate reaction is, "But what is the wording?" Roper replies, "We don't need to know the wording—we know what it will mean!" And More answers,

It will mean what the words say! An oath is *made* of
words! It may be possible to take it. Or avoid it.

Rather than dealing with the true source of More's conflict, Bolt gives a character who desperately clutches at legal asylum for a private, previously-made decision and who appears more conniving than magnanimous. Because Bolt gives us only the externals, because he fails even to mention those basic characteristics of the self which attest the value of one's word and the importance of self-commitment, he fails to create a true hero of the self and he fails to present significant action. What appears to be action is merely a series of intellectual calculations of the sort used in a chess game. The "moves" More makes involve a purely intellectual choice. He never makes a moral decision—one that would

implicate his whole being. Because of his lack of any action of depth—that is, action resulting from a search for absolutes, *A Man For All Seasons* is a purely intellectual play which tends to be boring in actual production.

The next dramatist we shall look to in our examination of the “action” in modern drama is Eugene Ionesco. His *Rhinoceros* is surely full of activity—stampeding rhinoceroses cause constant upheaval, a flight of stairs collapses, a fire engine, firemen, and ladders are involved in the most confused rescue, and people continuously bicker loudly and energetically over senseless details. Surrounded by this absurdity is Berenger, the solitary man who resists the metamorphosis that is turning everyone into rhinoceroses. Berenger argues against the dehumanization with statements like

You must admit that we have a philosophy that
animals don't share, and an irreplaceable set of values,
which it's taken centuries to build up . . .

and he is answered with “Humanism is all washed up! You're a ridiculous old sentimentalist” and “There's no such thing as absolute right. It's the world that's right—not you and me” and “There are many sides to reality. Choose the one that's best for you. Escape into the world of the imagination.” However, at the end of the play Berenger is in a state of vacillation both in his attitude toward the animals and in his very nature, since he is turning into a rhinoceros by the force of the strange outside power that has caused the action throughout the play. Though we must admit that Ionesco has a remarkable wit, a unique insight, and an obvious cleverness, and though we recognize that he understands the problem of the meaninglessness and sterility of our modern language (which is masterfully shown in an early scene in which many conversations are going on at once), we wonder if he, too, does not actually try to escape from the dilemma. Berenger is not the cause of his own action; he is always shown as utterly helpless; he never makes a decision. His most daring act is one of resistance. Rather than the profound questioning and active suffering of a Job, we are given an outraged plea for reasonableness and an awed complaint, ending with a state of flux.

Another representative of this so-called “theatre of negation” is Samuel Beckett. His *Waiting For Godot* is the story of two tramps, Estragon and Vladimir, who come day after day to a section of country road marked only by a tree and spend the entire day in waiting for Godot to come. All their attempts to complete an action of any sort—whether it be to give up waiting for Godot or to leave each other or to communicate with

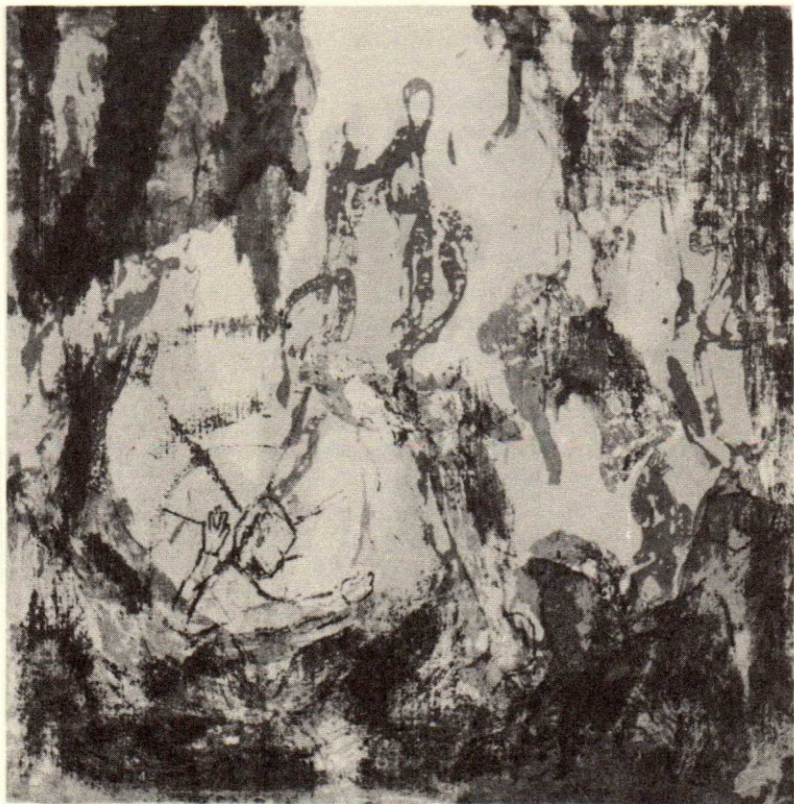
and help a passing stranger or even to commit suicide—are futile. They are incapable of action and of making decisions and are capable only of waiting in passivity. The extreme emptiness is reflected in Estragon's statement, "There's no lack of void," in Vladimir's "Time has stopped," in the complete lack of communication, in the ineffectiveness of all attempted action, in the religious references which have no correspondence to belief ("tree of life," "made in God's image," "Our Saviour") and even in the stark stage setting. Beckett gives us a devastating vision of modern man and perhaps, of the three considered, the most truthful, but his play does not succeed as drama. And this leads us to an important consideration.

When we affirm that the duty of today's dramatist is to embody the actions within the soul of modern man and when we reflect that modern drama is virtually without action, we are forced to decide whether the fault lies in the modern world as a whole or in the modern dramatist.

In his book, *The End of the Modern World*, Romano Guardini tells us that the modern world lacks the sense of being and the communal world view that characterized the Middle Ages and that we have lost our very consciousness of being and have "acted as if the substance of creation would remain as secure as it was in the natural order after it had been brought into the sphere of human freedom." He goes on to say that the modern mind presumes that this "second degree of nature"—that is, being as it exists in the realm of human freedom—"could be depended upon as it could be in the order of nature itself." In other words, modern man's unconsciousness of being is a direct result of his careless destruction or elimination of true action.

In this world where man is being mesmerized by mass communication, mass entertainment and mass education, the so-called "average" man is fast becoming a reality. In a world where the individual is almost afraid to act, afraid to *be*, he is rapidly molded to fit the norm. And the norm is that limp, ineffective, introspective being without convictions, without even questions, that we find everywhere about us. There are no modern Hamlets. There are no modern Jobs.

It is with these mute or paralyzed souls in mind that we wonder if a true dramatist, with the duty of presenting the action of our age on stage—and here we do not refer to those pandering playwrights who present sensationalism in the guise of action—could produce a drama. In a world void of action, is there a possibility of drama?



Betty Boulet, *"Drop Down Dew, Ye Heavens,"* serigraphy, 12" x 18"

RICHARD BAKER

Christ Without Caritas

You had better
Plant me deep when I live
Or I'll fructify winter
And you will never see
A dying or a going
And clocks will have
No meaning and you will
Be marooned and I hate
To think of the evil
I will rude on you
In my unbridled power
By conquering your foes
With my surge.
I will explode names like "woman"
And water will run
So clear that you will
Never see your reflections.
You will be held to perdurance
In a lie
Among virgin orchards
Sterilized of death
And never know the bitter-
Sweet taste of hemlock.
Oh, you will hate me
In the womb because
I'll dislocate your living
With my fracturing power
Over passing.

RICHARD BAKER

Between-Times

In the twilight of early morning creatures move
Singular and as they move at no other
Swallow of the day;

butter-edged

They halt, move softly, slip
From palates to roof another day
With thatched images gleaned darkling from night
And locked in lethal waking:

lightly framed

By yawning time, tastily basted
To destiny's tongue: minute-sized
Morsels perfect for any temporal orifice.

As if by common pretension the table
Is always set with silver rivers and silent
Trees; the same services have been around
To cut eternal repasts,

crossed timbers

Shaping fleshed and fleshy fibers like
Menus made after the food.

Only

At dawn the meal seems between-times,
When the candles are snuffed and victuals move toward
Lunch hours in string-bean lines.

RICHARD BAKER

The Artist, Isolato

Let a thousand eagles dance on my sea
And wing green waves to flecked smiles that reflect

The total sun in dancing delight.

Let

A thousand flying fish unbound from deep
Shared jails and kiss the eagles in feather-
Flurries that fall like snow men already
Mated to unmade snow women.

Let

These people pool their flesh to form again
The whale's home and make Ishmael write.

Let the tree timber from sky to lance
The ore's home for a head. From blue to ply
The blue in unison, let the poles sink
In blood and let Ishmael write.

Let me see the sea with blue eyes
Four-quarters wide and steel bright
So that while the snow race dies
The isolato will come to write.

MADELEINE BECAN

Commentary

In dark streets where the half-man walks,
No weed can raise a petaled crest
To light; nor can the troubled hawks
Be terror; nor can any rest

Until the sun and moon resolve
The problems of the stars, and turn
Diurn and regular — and days evolve
From nights without the solar burn

Or pained white lunatics to stain
The night-roads. In the daystream
Labouring among the patient grain
Man finds the while a chance to dream.

Pity sails above the streets, removed,
And love sprays shatters cold like glass
From mirrors over hearts unproved
And turns to vapor when they pass.

As gas burns out in ancient lamps
To meet the light of greater rays,
Will heaven grasp with quicker clamps
In bright streets where the half-man prays?

MADELEINE BECAN

Wildwood

The winter sun is weak, and seems
To weep its light. Across the weeds
Fingers sift the wind-hulled seeds
That gave the lie to seasoned dreams.

A branch remains where once were trees,
Mute stumps stacked on the stupid grass.
Where once the two of them would pass,
A curious one now, coldly sees

The wildwood in its quiet strain,
That wounds now like a sickly joke,
And once more hears the trees that spoke
That it was love against the grain.

MADELEINE BECAN

Visitation

Spring and winter met. A maid
Crossed hills and rocks in timeless caravan,
And at her cousin's door, displayed
A precious future. Love made man

Was to be born of unstained spouse.
While of a veteran womb, precursing Son,
The son sprang in the wintered house
Prophetic of eternity undone.

Rocks melted, hillsides summered; brooks
Became an ageless rhapsody against the ground
Of Maryam and the old Elizabeth's looks.
The words unspoke were heard. Profound

Magnificat was a silence unassumed.
Time was lost then; it was the point
Where age and beauty touched. The dry branch bloomed,
And youth became an era at the joint.

GEARY BLANKENSHIP

Stations

(to *W. F. Lynch, S.J.*)

Fourteen blocks of gaudy stone protrude,
Carved spike-heads on ancient stucco walls.
A crowlike figure stops before each stone
And robed words drizzle from his hood.
Crossing aisle and soul, he hears the nude
Crag of font and altar whisper thanks
For wearing off their guilt. Now his crude
Flesh senses he has jewed with wordy blanks
Full seven stones. The next four hear his lank
Words thicken with the pain of dire and rude
Want. Then he meets the wan stone god on wood.

There he paused, quickly said the prayers,
Then poured into the brittle corpse's ears
The sweat of God and man. Then spoke Kant's jinx:
I shyly heard the priest's gut rumble airs,
But stone and priest mixed substances in tears.
And as I left, I saw the corpus wink.

SR. ANN ELIZABETH, S.S.M.N.

Maranantha

No one can say why Isaías threw the gage
Within a den of human mesh,
And received for answer the sensible rage
That sawed teeth into his elected flesh.

Why he bellowed a cry that upset the kind,
And stood a barnside
Within the precious range of closed mind,
Unconscious owner of a prophet's hide.

*O root of Jesse tarry not.
The Kings have fled;
The soil is hot.
The promised land is left to rot.*

What is there about walking that likes God so much?
One Exodus suffices for exercise.
The stones and the sand have a steely touch
Beneath feet tendered Babylon wise.

Aggeus says, "Walk, and cut out the talk,"
And Aggeus, being a prophet, already knows
That destiny proffers another walk,
And the dry scratchy thirst of desert woes.

*O King of Nations the corner-stone,
Solder the wall with a savior touch.
Lift from the slime the human moan;
The rocks won't grow; there're tears too much.*

The voice of the prophet is gone from the land,
And the people are safe from troubling looks.
Israel is snug under foreign hand;
No God dominates the worshipped Books.

Wisdom is quiet beneath protocol;
She doesn't speak unless spoken to.
The Creative Word is stilled in awe,
And the manna is safely hidden from view.

*O Wisdom teach us a Godly prudence;
Leap from God's mouth in fleshy haste.
The vomit of man has putrified sweetness;
The smell of God is gone from this place.*

SR. FRANCIS MARIE, S.S.M.N.

Babel's Reversal

"No Jacob's ladder has been granted us
And heaven seems so far away that we
Can never hope to gain a radius
Great enough to grant security.
Why wait until Jehovah's animus
Destroys our chances of felicity?
If we will work as one with arduous
Intent, our tower will reach Infinity."
The work began in unity of speech,
But babble rose to oust the single tongue;
Contention brought an end to work and peace,
And factions grew which strife had thus begun.
On Pentecost all speech in unison
Reversed the doom: the Spirit made all one.

DAVID CARSON

Autumn Rain

The sky runs gray and wallows in the rain
Choosing this cloud or that to tip, and spill
Its singing ocean on the withered, yellow mane
Of Autumn's dying trunks and refuse-laden sill.
The stars have long been drowned, and out
Of their smouldering wicks dull smoke-streams
Shuffle sadly upward into twisted bands, stout
And heavy with the wails of hell, each gleams.
These holy wounds of nature leave no scar
When, in the spring, all fields in bounty bear.
But now this sweeter season plays winter's whore
While summer's locks laugh, mingled with fall's hair:
Adultery among the cycles; fornication among the winds
Is reconcilable to heaven's mind; understandable to men's.



Mary Ann Reneau, *Root Study*, oil, 24" x 32"

RICHARD VELA

Watermelons

The sun was hot through the tin roof, flowing white and gold onto the fine gray dust of the rafters and onto his brown uncovered chest, making all his body damp with sweat as he lay tangled in the wrinkled sheets of the bed. Two feverish eyes stared from the deep sockets, seeing only the haze of light and the long shadows of the room dropping like cobwebs from the ceiling. A single fly soared about the bed, and then landed on his bent quiet fingers.

"*Hora!* Damn fly! The fingers popped up from the sheets, striking at the dark, green fly. "Go eat the pumpkins, *mosca!* They should be ready for you now." He moved his knees to frighten the fly. "The beetles have eaten them open and the wet, sticky seeds are waiting." He struck again at the fly as it rose from a fold in the sheet and glinted gold in the dusty shafts of light. "*Vamos! Afuera de aqui!*" He watched it land on the chair by the window. Maybe it would fly out again through the hole in the screen.

When he had the chance, he should have stuffed the holes with balls of cotton to scare away the bugs. Too late now. His hands, speckled with age and sun, lay quiet again on the sheet; the fingers, broken once under an iron rim, moved slightly and stiffly from the knuckles like the pendulum of an old clock.

"*Dios mio*, it is hot! Even the wind is no good." He squirmed in the bed to make himself more comfortable. "Sweat," he lisped as he ran his fingers across his thin, matted hair.

"*Marta, ven aqui,*" he called.

Roosters at the dawn and old men at their death sound much alike, he thought to himself. Yes, his voice was strained and harsh. "I sound like the bantam cocks crowing in the yard."

Nothing sounded but the wind; no one came. "Where is she," he muttered. He strained and lifted himself by his elbows. He turned and

peered through a long split in the wall board. She was crouching near a pile of bricks between his shack and the house, her thin legs showing past her knees beneath the short dress. Weeds curled in and out through the pile of bricks. "Someday I got to finish this house. Someday when I can. . . ." Small gusts of wind carried spirals of dust across the cracked soil. "*So tightly packed,*" he said and rubbed the thick callous on his palm.

She hadn't moved; she stayed there by the bricks and cropped weeds, her thin dress blowing tight against her, and the black hair streaming across her shoulders. She hadn't heard him.

"Marta!" He waited. She stood slowly, gazing at the ground. Then suddenly, turning, half-running, half-skipping, she came towards the shack. She put her hand to her forehead and pressed against the screen door. Then, reaching high, she pushed the latch loose.

"Come, Marta, *ven aqui*. What were you doing?"

As she crossed the wooden step, the sun from the rafters flashed down on her dark hair. "Nothing *abuelito*," she answered. "Underneath one of the bricks there are millions of white termites carrying eggs and running all around."

"Yes, they are blind. But be careful; it is not always just termites under the rocks."

"Yes, grandfather, but I won't get hurt," she answered mechanically.

"*Bueno*, just be careful." He fingered the heavy sheet. "But right now go and call your mother. I need something."

"Can't I get it for you?" She moved toward him.

"No, you better call her."

She ran off. Her short skirt lifted with the breeze as she ran and her long loose hair shook from shoulder to shoulder. He closed his eyes and coughed for a long time, clearing his lungs. Pulling his arms across his chest, he lay still and listened to the girl's feet padding in the dust. There was a hollow sound as she jumped onto the back step of the other house. The door spring squealed sharply and then the door slammed shut.

The old man settled back on the pillow and thought of his bean patch. It lay to the south of his house—close to the river. It would be nice to be there. The leaves would be yellow and brown around the edges and some of them would have fallen by now and melted into dust and be blown away. The dirt would be dry and stand in great clods around the stems of the plants. It all needed hoeing—a good hoeing and watering. He would feel the rough handle in his hands, and the sharp edge cutting beneath the hard crust, with the weeds falling and the earth turning over.

The sun would stream down on his straw hat and glow hot on the back of his neck. He would sit on the bricks he had placed under the two mesquites, resting quietly with the eternal buzzing of the cicadas and their prayer for water. In the evening he would water the rows of green plants and smell the dampness rising around him. Then the beans and pumpkins and the corn would grow—and the watermelons. More than the rest, the watermelons must grow big and green and watery and he would slice one and eat it before going to bed.

The fly, back again, was buzzing with the deadening monotony of the cicadas. The old man pressed his fingers on his nose mocking the drone of the fly. He moved his legs apart and then together again, feeling the sticky sweat of one thigh against another. He rubbed his hand down his abdomen, feeling the watermelon smoothness of it. The boards of the room and the harsh light seemed to melt together and waver like the dampness steaming from the bean patch when the sun began to set in bright streaks of color. He would sit on the bricks pulling the long rooted weeds out of the cracks in the earth. He pulled his hand from beneath the sheet and stretched it. With one hand he would hold a watermelon in his lap. He would hold it carefully, very carefully as though it were a baby, a small green baby. And then . . . But suddenly bricks crumbled and rose around him in a puff of harsh dust. The watermelon split into two jagged halves.

The old man tried to jerk up from the bed, but he fell back, limp, the sweat running down his face, dripping to his neck.

The watermelons lay red and watery on the ground, red and watery like the bright red river under the sun, curling with foam. Two flies—he had thought they were seeds—soared out from the watermelon and rose up, up past the dust. Then ants like a carpet of living bodies crawled up out of the mounds in the ground and pulled at the halves, tearing them apart.

The old man pressed his hands hard against his temples and ran them again and again through his sticky hair. But the flies were coming back. They settled on each half of the flowing watermelon and began to suck. Their veined wings grew glaring red and they swelled as they sucked the halves white. Drops of red juice fell into the dust and grew into little emerald watermelons. The ants swarmed over to the tiny watermelons, carrying them away into holes. The sun began to set on the horizon like a round red fire and the sky glowed red. Soon the wind came up and blew red dust all around, covering up the mounds and lifting away the green watermelon shells with the flies still sucking. Swirling dust hovered

over the ground, and the ground throbbed as though the ants were moving underneath it with the watermelons.

"Diosito" he cried out, his voice startling him in its hoarseness. The haze began to drop away like a fog. He moved his eyes from the horizon to the ground, about the room, and then over toward the door. He closed his eyes and gulped for the stale air.

"What do you want, papa?" She stood at the doorway, her brown flesh lumpy beneath the tight housecoat. The loose fat of her arms quivered as she walked toward him. "Is it time for your medicine yet?" She looked at the large, man's watch on her wrist. "No, it's too early." She waited a moment. "Then what is it you want?" she said, staring down at him.

Her voice was nasal and dry. She moved heavily across the room and pulled down the window shade. Then she came back by the bed and rested her hips on the brown dresser.

"Well," she said, straightening the plastic rollers in her hair, "*Bueno, papa, pues que quieres.*" Her Spanish had a Texas twang, and she stumbled through English with a Spanish accent.

The old man looked hard at her. "Listen to yourself. You can't speak English or Spanish."

"Look *papa*," she said sharply, "I don't have to sit here all afternoon. If you want something, say it now. I'm going out tonight"

The old man sucked his lips in. "You're going out with the new soldier. So you will wear one of the dresses from that cheap store where you work, and you will paint your face white and your mouth red and your eyes black." He pulled the sheet tight across him. "You will look like a clown instead of a woman."

She stood up straight. "Well what do you want me to wear—a beaded dress and a white blouse and a *mantilla*! We don't live in Mexico no more," she said loudly. "We got to be American. You want people to look at me and wonder if I'm a maid. They look at me and say 'Messican'! Is that what you want? Damn it!"

The old man decided to ignore her. "It's hot here, and I been sweating. Change my sheets and bring me water, *andale pronto.*"

"All right, I bring it in a minute."

He glared at her as she left—the cheap blue cotton with the big flowers and the many rollers, blue and yellow and red in her hair. He sniffed sarcastically. "*Gringa*," he muttered.

She was mumbling as she left the door slam behind her. "Stupid old man."

A few minutes later, the fine clear American music began to beat and wail through the air. She was playing her transistor. The little box would blare out the noisy songs for hours. She would loosen her housecoat and sit there on the yellow couch, or go in the kitchen and sit at the table, resting her arms on the print plastic table cloth with a pitcher of tea left over from lunch. But there would be fresh ice in it and she would read the bride's magazines or the ones about movie stars. Then she would powder her body and dress. Sometimes before she left, she might come by with the sheets and the water but not now.

He stared up again at the ceiling. It was true in a way that he always was a foreigner in this country. Mexico was where he was born; he grew up there and lived there for a long time. It was hard to change. His daughter was young in the United States and now she was not Mexican nor American, just some of the worst of both. Her husband was a soldier from the North, very blond and pale-eyed, who had left her with a daughter and no support. So now she lived in the old man's small brick house and he lived in the wooden workshop. He glanced around the room. Someday he must finish covering the inside with old cardboard and papers to keep out the wind. The dry wood stood uncovered and gray. It was secondhand lumber and coarse grained, but it was worn smooth in places.

He was absentmindedly rubbing his hand up and down along the grain of an exposed board and following the flight of the fly as it soared over a small table which was in the far corner near the window. Perhaps it was the same fly, perhaps not; there were two more flies on the long light string that hung from the socket in the middle of the ceiling. The fly circled the table lighting now and then on a stray piece of hard bread or a browned piece of apple and then taking to the air again. Now two of them flew and the old man glanced up at an assortment of calendars hanging above the table. The Virgin de Guadalupe from the grocery store was next to a picture of an Indian princess from the bar. He turned slightly and reached into a drawer of the old brown dresser. He pulled out the wood-framed glass-covered picture of his wife. She had died of the bad water in the year of the flood. He had married late. He was nearly forty when he settled down. But he had led a good life those early years and after he had married it was still not too bad. She had been a good wife and scolded too much when he got drunk and stayed away for a week at a time. He had not been too bad a man; he was not really a whoremonger like some, and when he was drunk he only went to sleep—

not like those who fight or spend all their money. His wife had been patient. It was too bad the daughter was not more like her. She was as he had sometimes been, but he had always been Mexican and she was not. Maybe, he thought, he should never have left Mexico. Here it was the lifeless who had all the things of life. Like the old lady of the big car that he had cut the trees for. She had only the two big dogs in her house.

He had no more money here than he did in Mexico. There he wore cotton and here he wore khaki; it is not a great difference. His house was better, but he did not live in it. And the land. Why speak? It was dry and hard and cost much for being so little. He rubbed the sweat from his neck and chest. The ranch in Mexico where he had grown up was huge. The fence riders would be out for days. His father was a big man with a moustache, a trusted employee who lived in a small adobe hut a half a dozen miles from the village. He remembered the smell of wood smoke as his mother boiled the great pot of water to wash the clothes. Once a scorpion had bitten him and they put a glass with a lighted candle underneath it on his arm to draw out the poison. How cool and broad the shallow muddy rivers were. And he rubbed the back of his neck in the pillow to absorb the sweat.

"Abuelito."

The old man jerked his head. It was Marta, Martita. She had come into the room and was standing near the foot of the bed. Her little puppy played nervously around her bare feet.

"I'm playing nurse. What will I get you?" she said. A white handkerchief was thrown over her head.

"Bring me the watermelon, nurse." He smiled and pointed to a dish covered with paper. She skipped over to the table, the dog jumping as she did.

He laughed as he watched them. Then he grew sad. What a strange journey is life—from the day of birth to the day of death. What a strange journey—from childishness to madness and back to childishness. How simple, how silly, how ponderous and sad. The old man felt his cheeks harden and he looked out at the bare stump of a burnt mesquite, there in the hot still air.

The little girl walked back and lifted the brown paper that had been covering the red half watermelon. She placed it before the old man who was sitting back against the pillow now. He cut her a slice of the watermelon. "Thank you, *abuelito*," she sang out. Then burying her face in the juicy red pulp, she ate noisily sucking in the sweet juices. He

watched her closely. He looked at the smooth brown curve of her nose. How very different and how very alike they were. He looked at her steadily, his thoughts busy. Her hair seemed crowned by the small glow of light in the room. There was no reason to his thinking, he knew, but still his mind raced. She sat and smiled at him, but he turned his head and looked away. The dog played with an end of the sheet that hung over the side of the bed. Foolish thing, he looked more like a kitten than a dog. It was getting late now. The long stream of light hung on the floor and made long shadows running parallel on the cracked concrete.

"I like the watermelon. She looked up at him curiously. "Do you like the watermelon?" the little girl asked.

"Yes," he answered abruptly, "I like the watermelon. Thank you for bringing it to me. *Gracias* Marta, *Gracias*, Nurse."

A smile broke from the small smeary face and Marta ran out of the room with her watermelon. The dog followed behind, his ears flapping like butterfly wings. Still running, Marta called out, "Bye." The old man ate slowly and when he had finished he set the plate aside and lay back. He stared outside. The sun was setting now. The speckled shadows of the trees were playing across the floor. The sun was lower so that looking out of his window he could see large banks of clouds begin to gather around the setting sun. One small cloud, one directly over the now shielded sun reflected no color. The one cloud remained white. As the sun sank lower, the cloud grew brighter. Dusk fell over the countryside and the blue shadows turned to darkness.

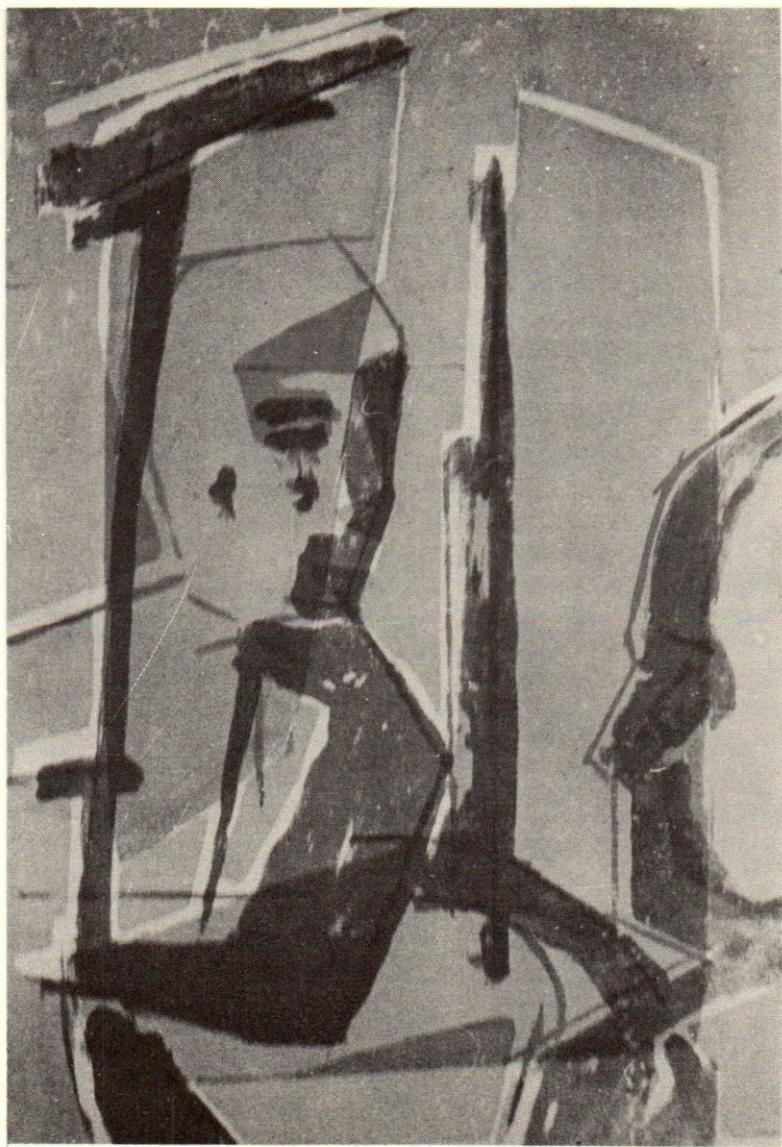
He lay comfortable with the cool white sheet spread over him. It would be quieter now. The cicadas had all gone away. The slight shimmer of the lights from the house lay light on the bare wood of the door. The child would have gone in to eat supper and her mother would soon hear the car stop and then the door would slam and she would leave. At last even the sound of the flies was gone. There was no use to turn on the light; it would only draw many bugs and the green mantis would come and eat them. The light smell of the cornfield came with the night wind and the old man breathed deeply. Now it was time for the bugs to crawl out of the ground and dig into the corn and pumpkins. Now the ground would grow damp and the melons would rot on the bottom. His forehead was cooler now. He stretched his hands behind his neck. The seeds might live. They would fall into the ground and with water they would grow, small and green next year. The old man noticed the pale shadow of the moon just over the horizon. Soon it would be lighter outside than inside.

The moon would be high before the daughter came to the door. She

would look in, then enter slowly and walk over to the bed. The daughter would cry when she came out. She would wail and cry most of the night and all through the funeral the next day. She would wear mourning for at least a year and cry as she sat on the sofa talking to her visitors.

The night was still. The few trees stood silhouetted against the cloudy haze of moonlit sky. A quiet sea of clouds, gentle windswept forms, moved slowly, imperceptibly around the moon.

The little girl would be silent, he thought. One could expect her to whimper when she learned of his death, but after the funeral the next day she would only sit in the middle of the bean patch and eat watermelon.



John Tuggle, *Two Men*, serigraphy, 24" x 32"



John Tuggle, *Little Girl*, lithograph, 10" x 12"

DIANA ROBERTS

Rhetorical Manuever

A review of Richard Foster, *The New Romantics*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962.

The New Critics, according to Richard Foster in *The New Romantics*, have "created or re-created, the dominant Anglo-Saxon literary culture of the past half century." But, he points out, despite their professed classicism, they are "twentieth-century romantics whose sensibilities as *romantics* overbalance whatever traditionalist viewpoints they may explicitly subscribe to"

Ignoring for the most part the traditionalist viewpoints of the New Critics, Mr. Foster begins his description of what he terms their romantic sensibility. He takes as criteria three characteristics of the romantic attitude: first, "the assumption that the emotions are the fountainhead of man's knowing, meaning, even being"; second, "the philosophical interest . . . [in] something metaphysically grandiose"; third, "an impatience with the restrictions and inadequacies of 'rational' and 'logical' discourse."

Mr. Foster presents a catalogue of quotations from the New Critics and the nineteenth-century Romantics, his quotations indicating the similarity of their insight into the nature of poetry. He thus concludes: "In series these quotations might be mistaken for the responsive reading of a Unitarian service . . . they make attributions of large importance to poetry and the imagination; they formulate the attributions in the language of emotion, ranging from piety to virtual ecstasy; they present the formulations . . . in the ambiguous but seemingly definitive forms of oracular statement, of final truth given or intuited."

Further, Mr. Foster has discerned in the New Critics a development of a "mystique of poetry" which is partly based, whether consciously or not, on the literary philosophy of Matthew Arnold. He sees them as holding Arnold's view that "Poetry, in itself and standing for the fine arts generally, now has for the critics that central intellectual-spiritual value once held, before science, to reside in religion."

To prove his point that in reality the New Critics do posit for poetry a religious or metaphysical value (Foster seems to equate the two), he presents an analysis of "four pilgrims" who have proceeded from a generally pragmatic view of art to a more religious (and therefore, to him, romantic) one. I. A. Richards, the first of the "pilgrims," has turned from a "scientistic literary theory to a more speculative one," and "represents the typical history of the modern rationalist romanticized." Richards' pilgrimage becomes more meaningful when related to that of the second critic, Eliseo Vivas. "Vivas' 'conversion' from Naturalism to a kind of humanism is assignable," Mr. Foster believes, "to his having come into possession of the essential prior vision basic to Christian orthodoxy in its darker versions."

Turning to R. P. Blackmur, Foster is particularly concerned with his development of a "mystical" idea of poetry. This is characterized by his "downgrading of intellect," his "ontological view" of poetry, his "rhetoric of definition," and his "dialectic of real-actual." The result is a definite mysticism, characterized by a "rhetoric of negation." Foster further concludes that in the last thirty years Blackmur "has been in pursuit of semantic, emotional, and speculative adventures so wild and so free" that one is justified in characterizing them as romantic.

The last and "most important" of the four pilgrims is Allen Tate. Foster characterizes him as "the type of the man of letters in the modern world" and considers him also a romantic, although a "reluctant" one. He is a "twentieth-century humanist intellectual" concerned with the "dissociation of sensibility" (Eliot's term) in a positivistic world. Foster sees Tate, "the man of letters," then, as flanked dangerously by two opposed chimeras: positivism and intellectual inversion, a kind of solipsism. And Foster believes the latter to be, for the man of letters, "perhaps the more seductive" and sometimes . . . harder for him to recognize." In addition to Tate's supposed solipsistic tendencies, Foster sees in his "recognition of the imagination as the unifying power . . . of man's total life . . .," evidence of a definite romantic character. This is further emphasized by what Foster considers Tate's "romantic solution" to the modern "intellectual dilemma." Foster compares Tate's Critical Intelligence to the romantic mind. And just as the latter often approaches "philosophic madness," so too Tate shows evidence of a "Poeish descent into the romantic maelstrom." And for Tate the only salvation from this turmoil has been his conversion to Catholicism.

Mr. Foster next surveys what he calls the "Mystique of Poetry" established by the New Criticism. His main contention, in characterizing the

New Critics as romantics, is that they have shifted critical emphasis from "the idea of poetry-as-form to the idea of poetry-as-meaning—from a formal-aesthetical to a moral-spiritual view of the nature and function of art." According to Foster, the new critical orthodoxy "looks like a way of dealing with the 'guilt' of romanticism: . . . a penance intellectually grasped and willingly undertaken for sins of instinctive sensibility." Thus their orthodoxy has remained for "most of the major New Critics . . . only a technical orthodoxy—an escape clause—as far as literary criticism and theory are concerned."

To show the Poetry-as-Knowledge doctrine as "an *unorthodox*, perhaps *anti-orthodox*, romantic dogma implicitly in support of a quasi-religion of poetry," Foster turns to John Crowe Ransom, "philosopher general to the New Criticism" and his "'speculative' inquiry into the nature of poetry." Ransom's texture-structure theory, Foster feels, "inevitably implies the stock romantic split between poetry-and-feeling on the one hand and prose-and-intellect on the other." By merging this metaphor with the idea of the "Concrete Universal," Ransom implements his "desire to defend the right of poetry to call itself 'knowledge'." This Foster calls a "rhetorical maneuver that seems to resolve dangerous dichotomies into unity and to restore to poetry an important share in the structure-knowledge-intellect cluster of values."

Turning to a discussion of "Criticism as Poetry," Foster contends that a large part of the New Criticism has been written "under the influence of the Muses." These various critics, he charges, "have generally preferred to use essentially *alogical* means of moving and persuading." He suggests that "the New Critics have tended to think of poetry and speculative philosophy as closely related, as approaching the same high-level or ultra-real Reality from opposite directions, meeting finally, perhaps, in religion."

The literary philosophy of the New Critics, it seems to Foster, tends to be illogical (or at the least, *alogical*) and emotional. He fails to point out that the New Critics' philosophy describes the artistic vision and the role of poetry according to the traditional views of literary criticism dating back even to the time of Aristotle. Further, Foster fails to see how Christian philosophy allows a place for the creative intuition as it is found, for example, in Maritain's system.

Foster goes on to speak of the "metaphysically grandiose" in his evaluation of Blackmur. In this instance, as in others throughout the volume, Foster seems to equate the first philosophy with emotional mysticism rather than with a search for absolute truth. Actually Blackmur does

often tend to go off into "unbounded infinitudes" when speaking of poetry. But Blackmur is not representative of the man Foster is concerned with; nor is his method truly "metaphysical." This misconception of the nature of metaphysics together with his misunderstanding of Ransom's Concrete Universal, seems to indicate that, for Foster, the knowledge of the universal, which the New Critics believe to be a function of art in general, poetry in particular, is a knowledge of the ideal universal of Plato, or the mystic's contemplation of reality, or the transcendental knowledge of German idealism. What Foster fails to note is that the New Critics believe poetry offers a knowledge founded in the concrete particulars upon which the poet bases his images.

We must conclude that, although Foster seems well read in the New Criticism, he not only misunderstands its basic tenets, but does a real injustice to our age when he states: "We are all necessarily, in this place and time, if we are serious and humane, 'romantics' in reaction. The New Critics have created . . . a structure of value in the midst of chaos. . . . And perhaps accusations of romantic heresy are a tolerable enough scourge to bear for the privilege of such felicity." On the contrary, "the scourge of romantic heresy" is, and must be, unbearable to the New Critic, who has attempted to construct a philosophy of literature based on a much older tradition than any taking its origin in the late eighteenth century.

CAROLYN FUCHS

Tucker's Caravan

A review of William Melvin Kelley, *A Different Drummer*, Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1962.

The development and disintegration of the Southern culture is one of the major themes of American literature. In his first novel, *A Different Drummer*, William Melvin Kelley spins a mythical tale in which he envisions the ending of the traditional Southern culture and the beginning of a totally new society. The novel is set in a Southern state, imaginary in its actual geographic location but not in the attitudes and ideals of its people. The story concerns an event quite unusual in the history of this small state:

In June, 1957, for reasons yet to be determined, all of the state's Negro inhabitants departed. Today it is unique in being the only state in the Union that cannot count even one member of the Negro race among its citizens.

For the white population of the state, the implications of such a mass exodus are startling, and somewhat frightening.

It was like attempting to picture Nothing, something no one had ever considered. None of them had a reference point on which to fix the concept of a Negro-less world.

This strange phenomenon begins one day when Tucker Caliban, a simple, uneducated descendant of a wildly primitive African who had been brought to the state on one of the early slave ships, suddenly covers with salt the land which he had bought from his employer and on which generations of his ancestors had worked as slaves. He kills his livestock and sets out on foot with his wife and child for an unknown destination. "As if on signal," the entire Negro population of Tucker's home town of Sutton and Negroes from all over the state pack their

belongings and follow him to the state's borders, leaving behind an astonished, apprehensive, and somewhat resentful white population. Even the old wise man of the town, Mr. Harper, who for thirty years had viewed life from a wheelchair because he had decided it was not worth meeting on foot, leaves his confinement to witness the departure of Tucker Caliban, saying, "Leave him alone. You can't stop him now. . . . He's already started something."

The novel takes us back into the lives of several of the townspeople of Sutton; and as the relationships between these people and Tucker Caliban are revealed, Tucker emerges not as the crusading idealist one might expect him to be, but as a quiet, intense little man, who "had been robbed of something but had never known it because he never knew he owned what had been taken from him." Slowly Tucker realizes that he and his ancestors (except that first wild African, who had allowed himself to be killed rather than be taken as a slave) had been robbed of their dignity as men and that he must regain this dignity for himself and for them. As he says to David Willson, a member of the family for which the Calibans had always worked and to which all the Calibans were bound by that special bond of love between Southern families and their colored slaves, "If I don't do it, ain't none of those things going to stop. We'll go on working for you forever. And that has got to stop." Willson replies, "Yes, it does, doesn't it." And so Tucker buys the land on which his family worked as slaves and destroys it. Yet one of the men who watches Tucker as he throws salt on the land remarks that Tucker is planting the salt as if he were planting seed, "putting it down like it was cotton or corn, like come next fall, it'd be a paying crop." Thus Tucker has taken the first step in becoming free, and leaves the South. But we know that he has planted a "paying crop"; eventually Tucker will return. He will return in the new generation, the generation of Mister Leland, Tucker's ten-year-old friend who dreams that Tucker returns to Sutton, saying he has found what he lost, and smiling.

Although *A Different Drummer* is concerned with the freedom of the Negro in the South, it is not a clever diatribe against racial injustice. Reverend Bradshaw, the crusading Negro minister who has attempted to free his people by means of socialistic, revolutionary organizations,

which Tucker Caliban has rejected, comes to realize that his violent methods result only in failure and disillusionment. Tucker Caliban knows that no one can fight for his freedom but himself; no one can give him freedom. He alone can make himself free. And he leads the rest of the Negroes in the state to the same realization.

Despite the fact that this story is a fable, Mr. Kelley, in a style slightly reminiscent of Faulkner, has succeeded in making both his characters and situation believable. *A Different Drummer* offers no solution to the complex problem it so clearly depicts. Instead it penetrates deeply into the tragic background of a richly ambiguous culture. The real worth of this novel lies not in any panacea but in the vision of man which it presents.

MARY BLACKBURN

Portrait of A Failure

A review of Bernard Malamud, *A New Life*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1961.

S. Levin, formerly a drunkard, after a long and tiring trans-continental journey, got off the train at Marathon, Cascadia, toward evening of the last Sunday in August, 1950. Bearded, fatigued, lonely, Levin set down a valise and suitcase and looked around in a strange land for welcome.

Thus Bernard Malamud begins his latest novel, *A New Life*. His hero, S. Levin, fortified by the repudiation of a wasted, alcoholic past, comes West to a state technical college to begin his "new life" as an English teacher. At the outset, Levin's insecurity allows him rather unpretentious ambitions. He wishes only to find a measure of love and happiness, or even satisfaction, and to play some small part in awakening young people to the meaning of the liberal arts, which have given significance to his own life. But Levin's humble aspirations, transformed somewhat during the course of his stay, fall short of achievement. And the novel does likewise, although Malamud, from the outset, has pretensions toward excellence. In its depiction of Levin's failure, *A New Life* is sometimes convincing, often chilling, but is more frequently flat and contrived. Levin performs in an interesting and lively light, but the fog of ambiguity which consistently surrounds his activity makes the novel dim and, ultimately, in terms of form and meaning, unsuccessful.

That Levin himself has a certain ambiguity of character is undeniable. He is the man with the "right ideas." Conceivably, he could be the "leaven" needed to raise the standards of the sterile, unfulfilled college. He is serious in his desire to transmit the cultural heritage of his country and to preserve the little tradition of the liberal arts which remains at Cascadia College. Although his position as a new, inexperienced instructor

places him in a rather precarious role, he urges that one of the basic textbooks in the composition course, *Science in Technology*, be replaced by a more appropriate book of readings in literature. He also advocates the establishment of a forum in which professors of both arts and sciences can exchange views. And even though it causes him a good deal of trouble and embarrassment, he determines that his mistake of turning in three incorrect grades at the close of the semester must be rectified. These efforts mark Levin as a man of considerable insight, courage, and sensibility. Furthermore, Levin, in the face of formidable opposition, decides to seek the position of the head of the department. But apart from all of this admirable and righteous vitality, there is another side to Levin's character which makes him unconvincing as a hero. Through his involvement in a series of ludicrous and degrading situations, he is robbed of any real dignity or stature. To satisfy his desire for love, Levin becomes the rival of a Syrian student for the "affections" of a waitress, gets lost in the mountains on his way to a rendezvous with a student, and is almost trapped in his office in a compromising situation with Avis Fliss, a fellow teacher. Academically, he also meets with considerable embarrassment, once suffering humiliation when he fails to find evidence that will prove a student's obvious cheating. In instances of this sort, Levin is portrayed as awkward and ineffectual.

Perhaps the intention of the book is to depict Levin's struggle with these two aspects of himself. Admittedly there are the forces of conflict at work within Levin, but the deterministic elements which surround him prevent his psychic struggle from having any emphasis or meaning. Necessity dictated his choice to teach at Cascadia College—it was the only one that offered him a contract. In this original "choice" as in all of his actions, Levin is guided and ruled by outside forces. His "free" efforts, such as his conscientious teaching, as well as his dedication to the tradition of the liberal arts, do nothing to halt the ruin that steadily advances upon him, just as they do nothing to cause it. In his affair with Pauline Gilley, wife of the assistant head of the English Department, Levin is the complete subject of his passions. Pauline precipitates the affair, with Levin being swept up by her power and his own desire. After he has given her up and ceased to love her, when she returns and asks him to continue the affair and take her away from Gilley, Levin is impelled, by no apparent motive, to agree. He makes attempts to rule his life, but is always powerless before irresistible determining forces.

What Malamud has given us is a twentieth-century Lord Jim, desirous of the noble action but incapacitated by a desire directed, erratically, at vague aspirations rather than reality. Perhaps we should be satisfied

with such a depiction; perhaps in a time made diffuse by psychological realism, we cannot demand the sharpness of focus which Victorian morality could supply. But the omission of normalcy from Malamud's work, the lack of a character who can say "let the deep sea bear you up," seems to be more a timidity than a restraint, a failure of nerve for the big statement. Something important is left unsaid in the whole school of modern fiction of which Mr. Malamud's novel is representative.